



### A Brief History

Darfur is comprised of over 90 ethnic groups, and its residents are almost all Muslim. Within Darfur, non-Arabic-speaking groups tend to farm, while Arabic-speaking groups are primarily nomadic herders. Darfur has long been a marginalized region of Sudan, and its struggles have only intensified under the al-Bashir government. Tensions have also grown in Darfur due to environmental changes, as drought and desertification heighten conflicts over land between farmers and herders.

Fed up by disenfranchisement and heartened by the movement for independence in southern Sudan, some Darfuris took up arms in 2003. Groups consisting mostly of non-Arab Darfuris formed two groups: the SLA and the JEM. After several victories, the Sudanese government took action against these Darfuris, recruiting landless Arabs into the Janjaweed, whom they armed and tasked with quelling the rebellion, pitting them primarily against the Fur, Zaghawa, and Massalit peoples. Ever since, these peoples have seen their villages looted and destroyed, men killed, women and girls systematically raped, homes set afire, and survivors chased into the desert.

While violence has slowed in recent years, the Sudanese government re-escalated the conflict in February 2015, when Sudanese armed forces raped over 200 Darfuri women in Tabit, North Darfur. Compounding the attacks directed by the Sudanese government, the militarization of local militias in Darfur has also incited many deadly intercommunal conflicts.

### Darfur Today

In August and October 2015, the Sudanese government and the SRF declared ceasefires in an attempt to negotiate a permanent peace agreement to resolve the conflict. However, deep distrust between Darfuris and the Sudanese government remains, and negotiations have stalled since opposition alliances refused to sign a peace agreement proposed in March. Although the government contends that it is no longer needed, the United Nations continues to extend the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) mandate due to continued issues with weapons proliferation in the region, as well as the unresolved issue of internal displacement.

Approximately 81,000 people were newly displaced in the first seven months of 2016. Peace talks between rebels and the Sudanese government are set to resume in mid-August.



### Key Terms

**Omar al-Bashir:** The autocratic President of Sudan. He has built a strong central state that marginalizes peripheral areas of the country and is wanted by the International Criminal Court for genocide and war crimes.

**Janjaweed:** Meaning “devil on horseback,” in Arabic, the Janjaweed is made up of pastoralist Arab Darfuris armed by the Sudanese government. In 2013, they were officially incorporated into the Sudanese military as the “Rapid Support Forces.”

**Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA):** A prominent Darfuri rebel group, primarily formed by non-Arab Darfuris. It has a more secular orientation than the JEM.

**Justice and Equality Movement (JEM):** A prominent Darfuri rebel group, consisting mostly of non-Arab Darfuris. The JEM has split into factions, with the largest faction led by Minni Minawi.

**Sudan Revolutionary Forces (SRF):** An alliance of rebel groups in Sudan, including JEM and SLA, aiming to coordinate efforts between the different organizations fighting in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile.

**UNAMID:** The joint UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur, formed in 2007. Their presence has consistently been opposed and obstructed by the Sudanese government.