

The impact of Sudanese military operations on the civilian population of Southern Kordofan - April 2014 The Sudan Consortium

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In the last week of April, large numbers of civilians were reported to have been displaced from their homes in Delami County, South Kordofan as a result of a major new military offensive launched in Southern Kordofan by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Although exact numbers are difficult to establish, partners have cited estimates between 45,000 and 70,000.

The government offensive in Southern Kordofan appears to have been concentrated on Rashad, Al Abisseya and Delami counties in the north-east of Southern Kordofan. The situation on the ground remains fluid and information from Rashad and Al Abisseya counties has been difficult to obtain. However the Sudan Consortium's partners on the ground have been able to report firsthand on the situation in Delami County and have interviewed internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing from the fighting further north.

From 12 April onwards, several locations in Delami County, notably Aberi, Mardis and Sarafyi, were subject to heavy bombardment on a daily basis by artillery and multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) deployed by the Sudanese Armed Forces. Having endured this bombardment for over two weeks, on 27 April the civilians inhabiting these locations were finally forced to abandon their homes as SAF ground forces advanced south from their stronghold near Delami town.

Whilst it is not possible to verify the exact number of civilian deaths which resulted from this offensive, in Delami County, Monitors on the ground report that at least four civilians were killed (a man and three girls) and 15 injured. The injured included six women and four girls. It should be noted that villages where the casualties occurred were at least 10 km from the military front lines, did not contain opposition military forces, and could not be considered as legitimate military targets.

In Delami County, monitors on the ground also received consistent and credible reports from IDPs, fleeing the advance of Sudanese government ground forces, in Rashad and Al Abisseya that government troops are systematically burning houses and destroying grain stores and water bore-holes as they advance into areas previously under opposition control.

Reports also indicate that Janjaweed militia, reconstituted as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), are fighting alongside the Sudanese government forces involved in this offensive. Background to the current Sudanese government military offensive in Southern Kordofan On 14 April, the Sudanese Defence Minister announced the onset of a "Decisive Summer Operation", intended to "end the rebellion in Southern Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Nile."

Satellite imagery released by the Satellite Sentinel Project in mid-April shows that, prior to this announcement, SAF had already deployed batteries of multiple rocket launchers and self-propelled artillery to locations close to the confrontation line in Southern Kordofan. Satellite Sentinel also cited sources on the ground who had observed the mobilisation in the same area of increased numbers of Janjaweed militia – formally known as the Rapid Support Force (RSF) -

alongside conventional Sudanese ground forces.

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