

GWANGJU BIENNALE 2004

A DROP IN THE OCEAN

**By Jota Castro (artist)
& Peter Moszynski
(viewer-participant)**

Why have a Peruvian artist and a British development campaigner decided to focus on Africa for a Korean Biennale?

Because the curators of Gwangju 2004 decided to highlight what is normally only clear once the work is finished: the link between the artist and the viewer.

Peter and I have the same desire to inform people though we achieve this in different ways. We have experimented with a kind of role reversal.

Why not show the life and work of a person I met only a few weeks ago as a work of art. Peter has been trying for over 20 years to tell us about Africa's problems.

It is funny to think that for years I may have been reading his work without realising it. Maybe my opinions and knowledge about that part of the world have been influenced by his writing. In this way his work is very similar to mine – it grows out of a wish to interpret and explain our age. I have also discovered, curiously, that speaking about Africa is like speaking about art: neither appeal to a large audience.

This publication is not just a collaboration between two people.

It is proof that art can develop anywhere and that the artist and the viewer have to take risks together.

It is also a tribute to those who are trying to improve the world we all live in.

Jota Castro

WHAT IS GENOCIDE?

Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer living in the United States, introduced the term genocide in 1944 to describe what was occurring in Nazi-occupied Europe.

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the UN Genocide Convention, which defined genocide as the intentional physical destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. In agreeing to the Genocide Convention, nations promised to “undertake to prevent” genocide.

THE TEFLON GENOCIDE

Since I started working on this project with Jota, Sudan has suddenly shot to the top of the international agenda. As an acknowledged expert on Sudan I am constantly in demand by the media asking what can be done to end the horrific humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

There is little dispute that tens of thousands have died and over a million people have been displaced by a scorched earth campaign of ethnic cleansing by groups of militias known as Janjaweed. Who is responsible, and how we should react remain open to question.

The UN describes it as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. US Congress voted unanimously to call it genocide. The Security



Council passed 1556 unopposed, calling on Sudan to rein in the militias within thirty days. The Arab League calls for Khartoum to be given more time. Each day the world procrastinates, it is estimated that another thousand people will die as the inhospitable desert wastelands where they have been forced to flee became virtually inaccessible in the annual rains.

09/08/04

The European Union said today that its fact-finding mission to Sudan had found widespread violence in the afflicted region of Darfur, but there was no evidence of genocide.

After returning from western Sudan, Pieter Feith, an adviser to the EU’s foreign policy chief Javier Solana, told reporters in Brussels that “it is clear there is widespread, silent and slow killing going on, and village burning of a fairly large scale”.

But this did not amount to genocide.

SCORCHED EARTH

Desert sands slowly engulf Darfur village abandoned after Janjaweed plunder.

TUNDUBAI, Sudan, Aug 6 (AFP) *The desert sands are slowly covering what remains of the houses in this abandoned village,*



identical to hundreds of others plundered by Janjaweed militias which, backed by the government, are inflicting a reign of terror on non-Arab minorities in Sudan’s Darfur region. Only the ochre walls, many blackened by fire, remain, the thatched roofs having gone up in blazes set by the marauding militia. The village, 35 kilometres (20 miles) from the border with Chad, used to be home to about 2,000 people. Those who were not killed or abducted in the militia attack in January have likely taken refuge in

camp in this western region of Sudan or over the border in Chad, where up to 200,000 Sudanese have fled. The Janjaweed are the Arab nomads of the region, who arrive suddenly on the backs of horses or camels with their swords and rifles. They murder, maim, rape and pillage, according to aid and rights workers here. Then they melt back into their natural habitat, the desert stretching hundreds of miles across the frontier with Chad. They are accused by international human rights monitors of systematic atrocities against Darfur’s people of non-Arab, black African origin. The United Nations describes the humanitarian crisis in Darfur as currently the world’s worst, with up to 50,000 people dead and more than a million driven from their villages. Crockery, a teapot, a pair of sandals a wicker basket, a child’s toy, a smashed oil lamp, were among the objects lying in the narrow, deserted streets of Tundubai, the sand slowly covering them up. Inside the burnt-out houses blackened cooking utensils and jars of food could be distinguished amid the piles of ash left by the incinerated thatched roofs. Here lies a metal beam and chairs

twisted by the flames. There a metal trunk also turned black by the fire, its padlocks still intact. In most of the houses the large black earthenware jars used to store water or millet lie shattered. A morbid silence envelopes the town. There is no one around to tell what happened. But villagers who have fled their homes across Darfur all have similar stories to tell. The Janjaweed first encircle the village, they say, then round up the villagers before separating the men from the women. Adult males are often executed, the women raped, those deemed the prettiest taken off to serve as sex slaves and servants for the nomadic militia. The Janjaweed then loot the village, taking foodstuffs and livestock, before torching houses and forcing the villagers to flee. Here in Tundubai, the wooden doors ripped from their hinges testify to the violence of the attack. The cattle enclosures have been torn down, their former occupants long gone. Only the bigger houses, those that were made entirely of clay, have managed to survive the fires intact. Today they stand empty in the desert breeze.

OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunk less legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read,
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed,
And on the pedestal this legend clear:
“My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look upon my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

-Percy Bysshe Shelley
1792-1822

SUDAN: A FAREWELL TO ARMS?

*Middle East
International Peter
Moszynski in Kenya
June 10th, 2004*

The conclusion of the final protocols of Sudan's frame-work peace accord marks a significant breakthrough, but much remains to be done to translate this into a workable settlement. Convincing all the different stakeholders that their interests are truly represented will remain an uphill struggle until the crisis in Darfur is resolved, yet there is no agreed strategy on how to extend the road-map for peace in the South across the entire country.

Signature finally took place on the evening of 26 May, after another nine hours of the last-minute delays that have characterised Sudan's long road to peace. Diplomats and dignitaries, journalists and mediators and supporters of both sides had jostled for position since early morning to witness the clearing of what was supposed to be the final hurdle of two years of complex negotiations, patiently supervised by the regional body IGAD and assisted by Britain, the United States, Norway and other concerned parties, collectively known as the Friends of IGAD.

COMPRE- HENSIVE PEACE?

Amid widespread jubilation, John Garang, leader of the rebel Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army, proclaimed: "We have reached the crest of the last hill in our tortuous ascent to the heights of peace. There are no more hills ahead of us." The agreement laid down "the pillars of inviolate and enduring peace", he claimed.

Three protocols outline the formation of a decentralized government of national unity, and the devolution of power in the contested areas. The first, on power-sharing, specifies that Garang will be first vice president in a new government of national unity in Khartoum and also president of an autonomous government of Southern Sudan. Shari'a law will continue to be enforced in the capital, although with limited applicability to non-Muslims. Elections are to be held in three years.

The second protocol says that Abyei – the southernmost district of West Kordofan, along the border with Northern Bahr al-Ghazal (the traditional North-South divide) but populated largely by Dinka – will be administered by the national unity presidency for

the interim period and then allowed to hold a referendum on secession at the same time as the South.

The third protocol outlines administrations for the ethnically diverse Blue Nile state on the Ethiopian border and the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan. Power is to be shared on a 55/45 basis between government and SPLA. The SPLA had been holding out for a 50/50 share and this concession is unlikely to go down well among the people of these areas who, denied the option of self-determination, complain they have been used merely as bargaining chips and warn that, if the government attempts to use its inbuilt majorities to impose Shari'a, the fighting will resume.

These three protocols, together with the Machakos Protocol of 20 July 2002, the Framework Agreement on Security Arrangements of 25 September 2003, and the Wealth Sharing Agreement of 7 January 2004, should form the basis for a comprehensive peace agreement.

"It is a paradigm shift of historical proportions. Things will not and cannot be the same in Sudan," claimed Garang, calling for reconciliation "so that we can finally say a

farewell to arms in Southern Sudan and take up the instruments of reconstruction".

His opposite number (and soon to be predecessor, if everything goes to plan), Vice President Ali Uthman Taha, said: "This is a day for Sudan, for peace, development and stability. It is our duty to put life into the protocols signed today. With the same degree of determination, sincerity and patience, we are resolved to put those words into action."

Government negotiator Sayed al-Khatib said it was probably "the most detailed peace agreement negotiated in history". The US State Department called the protocols "more than just high-minded principles, a detailed blueprint for resolving Africa's longest-running civil war".

The Khartoum newspaper al-Rayy al-Am nominated Taha and Garang for the Nobel Peace Prize, saying: *"We irrigated our land with blood more than with water and we excelled in war and in killing more than in agriculture and work. We built a school and then destroyed a hundred of them, we opened a hospital and destroyed ten of them."*



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged "the two parties to sustain their commitment and persevere in reaching agreement on the remaining issues, especially the cease-fire arrangements, the modalities of implementation and international guarantees for a future comprehensive peace agreement".

“DEAL BETWEEN TWO DICTA- TORS”?

Such an agreement should be finalized within three months, although the numerous delays at every stage so far suggest there could be some slippage in the timetable as the two sides struggle to grapple with the realities of

implementation and somehow persuade both their supporters and the numerous groups that feel excluded that this process is in their own best interests.

The mediators described the deal as a "win-win situation", but this implies that there are only two sides to the conflict. The reality is more complex and neither of the main players has a track record of democracy and pluralism. The lack of civil society involvement in the peace process has led to claims that "this is just a deal between two dictators".

People need to feel confident that promises will be kept.

There is little trust after so many years of war and so many failed peace deals.

It was not for nothing that the former vice president, Abel Allier, entitled his history of the 1972-1983 peace process



*Too Many Agreements
Dishonoured.*

Garang says the most important tasks are reconciliation and development. In a country where over half the population is illiterate, with only one out of 50 children finishing primary education, and where one woman in nine dies in childbirth, he said: "Our duty is first and foremost to dedicate ourselves to ensuring that our people's vital and basic needs are satisfied... That is the only way to consolidate peace."

Final talks should begin in Nairobi on 22 June, hopefully finishing by the end of July. Details of a comprehensive cease-fire will be agreed before discussing implementation of the accords. The Machakos Protocol calls for a six-month "pre-interim period" to inaugurate the institutions for a six-year interim period, after which a referendum will be held in the South.

TOO MANY PARTIES EXCLUDED

Whether a final agreement will also include Darfur remains to be seen – Khartoum resolutely refuses any linkage with the Southern peace deal – but it will be difficult to make a comprehensive settlement that fails to include western Sudan or the Northern opposition.

Norwegian Development Minister Hilde Johnson warned that many groups across Sudan felt excluded from the peace process, warning:

"It is a precondition for lasting peace that the peace process includes all people including civil society, political parties and other political forces. Sudan is a complex country and its complexity should be taken into account."

A British statement called for "an all-inclusive political process throughout Sudan" for a "successful transition to peace and stability".

As well as the numerous political and civil groups eager to be included in the talks, there are some 30 militias and assorted armed groups operating around Sudan and they are likely to present formidable challenges. One of the former pro-government militias, the Southern Sudan Defence Force led by Riek Gai, said it would "reject all attempts to dissolve or disarm" it. "We are not party to any peace agreement being negotiated by the SPLA and the government and therefore we will not recognize it," he insisted.

Bishop Mazzolari of Rumbek said the deal was "a decisive step forward but on mined and insidious terrain". He claims it is imposed by outsiders, based on the familiar tactics of divide and rule:

“The peace does not resolve the real causes of war.

I do not understand why the international community pressed for a prompt signing of an accord that does not in any way resolve the situation in Darfur.” He went on: “The long war between North and South not only fomented hatred towards the regime in Khartoum but also among the tribes; in my diocese 21 conflicts are currently under way among the Dinka, who do not accept the new nominations of political and civil administrators imposed by the rebels.” The bishop told MEI there were some 96,000 SPLA combatants currently active who would need to be disarmed.

TIMETABLE

The modalities of military and technical implementation will almost certainly be more complicated than first realized, especially as the delays in the talks have meant that the rains have already started and overland movement will be severely curtailed until the dry season in October.

There is now some experience learnt from the various international monitoring missions already deployed — the Joint Military Commission in the Nuba Mountains, the US-backed Civil Protection Monitoring Team, and IGAD’s own Verification and Monitoring Team — although their effectiveness to date has been somewhat curtailed by the same obstruction, bureaucracy and security meddling that has disrupted humanitarian operations in general, and because their reports of violations have been routinely ignored. A new European-supported African Union monitoring mission was approved for Darfur in late May but has not yet deployed.

Monitoring and peace-keeping will be a major task, as will quartering forces and establishing the Joint Integrated Units that are to be formed between the different

armies. A JIU of 24,000 troops, half government, half SPLA, will be based in the South, with 6,000-strong units in both the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, a 3,000-man unit in Khartoum and a battalion for Abyei. All other Sudanese army troops will leave the South and SPLA units will leave the North. All other armed forces are to be disbanded.

This will require international agreement, supervision and funding, all of which will take time.

The US’ United Nations representative, Stuart Holliday, said a draft resolution welcoming the accord would soon be introduced in the Security Council. “The monitoring mission would be in the thousands and be fairly significant because of the size of the country.” There would be a resolution in the “next month or so”, authorizing an assessment mission. Four-to-six weeks after that, “we would be ready to go for a comprehensive peace-keeping resolution”. Although gathering the assets would be difficult because “there’s a very real demand on peace-keeping forces”, Holliday said the UN “feels confident it will have the troops”.

Although such a timetable implies a mission would not be ready before September or October, it would be unfeasible to deploy a mission of any size before then as much of the country remains virtually inaccessible until the end of the rains — and some of the most heavily contested areas are in the most difficult terrain.

This inaccessibility has allowed the numerous bands of warlords, militias and bandits to operate with relative impunity, and those armed, allied with or sponsored by the government some degree of plausible deniability. All of them need to be brought into the peace process if the South is to regain stability.

Road access remains critical. Sudan has the world’s largest internally displaced population and huge numbers of refugees in neighbouring countries and they

need to be able to return and rebuild their lives. An emergency road building programme has been initiated, accompanied by a wide-ranging mine-clearance programme, although rains are now severely hampering progress.

The situation on Sudan’s borders remains highly unstable. In addition to Darfur on the border with Chad there are numerous other conflicts across the country that have cross-border dimensions. Fighting continues in Upper Nile adjacent to the Ethiopian frontier and there is no settlement to the conflict in the Red Sea Hills, adjacent to Eritrea. The problems in these two areas date back to a controversial land exchange between Sudan and Ethiopia in 1947, when Kassala (part of Eritrea) was exchanged for Gambella in Upper Nile.

BORDER IMPLICATIONS

A simmering border crisis between Sudan’s eastern neighbours constantly threatens a return to full-scale warfare. As Khartoum is allied to Addis Ababa and the rebels to Asmara, a breakdown of peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea could have a serious impact on its own peace process.

The deal should help Uganda. Baker Ochola, chairman of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, trying to end 17 years of fighting by Joseph Kony’s Khartoum-sponsored Lords Resistance Army (LRA), commented: “The house in Sudan was on fire and the fire has been put out. Ours is still on fire. The fire can only be put out by emulating what has happened in Southern Sudan.”

Ugandan army spokesman Maj. Shaban Bantariza said his country would benefit if the SPLA gained jurisdiction across Southern Sudan because the LRA would no longer be able get assistance and shelter from Khartoum-held terri-

tory along the border. “This ping pong of Khartoum saying Kony is in our territory and SPLA saying he is in government territory will not continue.”

Everyone is clamouring for an end to war, but peace requires more than the agreement of just two parties.

John Garang claims the deal fulfils his vision of a new Sudan, although most Southerners would say they were fighting for independence. Ali Uthman Taha says it guarantees the success of the National Salvation Revolution, although most Northerners yearn for regime change. Creating an opportunity for other civil, political and military forces to become involved in the process is vital for its success, but if the crisis in Darfur is not resolved and the deep-rooted causes of conflict throughout Sudan fail to be addressed, the aspirations for peace are unlikely to be met.

GIRLS IN SOUTHERN SUDAN ARE MORE

likely to die in childbirth than complete primary school

Girls in Southern Sudan are more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than complete primary education, says a Unicef report published to mark the International Day of the African Child.

“After 21 years of war, southern Sudan ranks as the worst place in the world for many key indicators of women and children’s well-being, including its rates of chronic malnutrition, primary school completion, immunisation and antenatal care,” says Unicef, announcing the study.

Describing the state of women and children as “shocking,” Unicef calculates that: “A girl born in southern Sudan has a better chance of dying in pregnancy or childbirth than of completing primary school. To put it another way, one in nine women dies in pregnancy or childbirth but only one in a hundred girls completes primary school.” Some 95000 children aged under 5 years are estimated to have died last year in southern Sudan (population 7.5 million), mostly from preventable disease. The total death toll of under 5s in the world’s 31 industrialised countries (with a combined population of 938 million) was 76000, the report says.



REBORN WARRIOR

I first met Emmanuel in 1992, when he was being demobilised from the army. At the age of 11 he was already a veteran soldier who had spent five years with the SPLA. He was spotted by my friend Emma McCune, who was married to rebel commander, Riek Machar. Emma subsequently adopted Emmanuel and took him with her when she went to Kenya the following year.

Sadly Emma was killed in a Nairobi car accident and he was left alone again – one of countless millions displaced by Sudan’s endless civil war.

He was badly traumatised by the tragic loss of Emma, and his subsequent experiences, when he was forcibly taken to Khartoum before managing to escape and flee back to Kenya.

Since Emma’s death I have stayed in contact with Emmanuel in Kenya and tried to help with his education and welfare. I have seen him go through hell and back and been let down more often than he can remember, and turn into the most talented and altruistic young man I have been privileged to encounter.

When he finally settled down to school in Kenya, he became an

outstanding pupil and an upstanding member of the community. He managed to secure offers of places in UK universities after less than five years formal education.

Last year he won the school prize for community achievement, after he organised a series of fundraising concerts to house Nairobi street kids.

He became active with his local community church and formed several gospel music groups, his latest being a gospel rap band called Reborn Warriors. He produced his own CD single All We Need is Jesus.

Emmanuel finished school in July and was at risk of being sent to Kakuma refugee camp as he only has a student visa for Kenya. I thus arranged for him to come to London in September. His aunt, Angelina Teny (Riak’s Sudanese ex-wife, resident in the UK) was concerned for his safety if he remained in Kenya as he has frequently spoken out against SPLA abuses of children; she was warned that he had to be silenced after he spoke of his experiences on the BBC World Service.

This is an issue that the politicians at the current Sudanese peace talks agree that they want forgot-

ten but was one of Emma’s key concerns before her death, and Emmanuel is keen to tell the full story about the use of child soldiers in Sudan. He is currently approaching publishers with the outline of a book called Emmanuel’s War.

At present he is in a particularly vulnerable state emotionally. A sensationalist book about his adopted mother Emma’s War by Deborah Scroggins – in which he figures - became a bestseller this year and is currently being filmed with Nicole Kidman in the leading role.

Emmanuel seems to believe that it will be easy to get such people to assist him, saying “God will always find a way” but unfortunately he has had little material support to date apart from the meagre sponsorship my girlfriend and I have been able to afford and the kindness of his “aunt” Angelina. We took out a bank loan to pay his first year’s fees when he started college in September.

Last year Emmanuel was enrolled on a one year foundation course at the University of Westminster and accepted to go on to study a degree in engineering. He came to London but had mistakenly

obtained a tourist visa so had to return to Nairobi and attempted to arrange for his tourist visa to be converted into a student visa. Despite supporting documentation from Prof. Richard Grey, Emeritus Professor of History at London University, the administration and Students Union from University of Westminster and the Sudan Studies Association his application was refused in January by an immigration officer who didn’t believe his story. I - and numerous others - petitioned the High Commission, but have been continuously fobbed off.

I have thus had to find and finance a place for him at Brook House School in Nairobi to complete his A levels - or else he would have been sent to the hell-hole of Kakuma refugee camp. He now has only one year left to complete and is spending his summer holidays trying to complete his first album

Emmanuel’s life story is soon going to feature in a major motion picture. His adopted mother’s life is being made into a film called Emma’s War, starring Nicole Kidman. Hopefully the publicity we help his recording career and his ambition of going to college.

Some **6,000 children** die every day from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.

Children don’t have birth certificates –

One rough test for a child’s age used by child protection officers is whether he or she has wisdom teeth.

Oxfam calculates that the international community has donated to Kosovo **60 times** as much per capita as it has to similarly war-torn countries in Africa.

According to the Red Cross, there were around 400 reported disasters each year between 1993 and 1997. Between 2000 and 2002 there were **more than 700**.

2004: A year of living dangerously.

January: Mudslides triggered by torrential rains kill more than 30 people in south-east Brazil. Dozens more are injured and **3,000 homes** are destroyed or damaged.

March: 172 people killed and a further 879 injured as tropical cyclone Gafilo hits Madagascar. A further **113 people** are feared dead after a ferry they were travelling on failed to arrive on the island as scheduled. More than **214,000** lose their homes and 773,000 people are affected by the strongest cyclone to hit Madagascar in 20 years.

April: Tornados tear through around **20 villages** in the Mymensingh and Netrokona districts of Bangladesh killing around 65 and injuring about 2,000 others.

May: Severe flooding in Haiti (above) and the Dominican Republic kills more than **3,000** and leaves tens of thousands without shelter. A cyclone in Burma kills 220 and leaves **14,000 homeless**.

June: Twenty people killed and **2,000** left homeless following heavy rains and mudslides in the north-east Brazilian state of Alagoas. Most of the damage is from mudslides in hilly slums around the state capital, Maceio.



July: Nearly **2,000 people** killed in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh by the most severe monsoon floods in **15 years** in the region. The flooding triggers landslides, destroys crops, washes away roads and leaves millions homeless. Heavy rains and severe flooding in China kill 381 people. 3.066 million hectares of crops and **45 million people** affected.

Child deaths from hunger & disease in the world:
18,000 deaths per day
750 deaths per hour
12.5 deaths per minute
1 child dies from hunger and disease every five seconds

There are more than **1 million** land mines buried in Sudan.

The average distance that women in Africa walk to collect water is 6 km.

In Sudan over **one million civilians** have been internally displaced by the conflict and 170,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

Over **30,000 people** are believed to have lost their lives since the Darfur conflict erupted in February 2003.

In Europe **\$105 billion** is spent annually on alcoholic drinks, more or less ten times the amount required to ensure water, sanitation and hygiene for all.

In 1998, **308,000 people** died from war in Africa, but more than **two million** (six times as many) died of diarrhoeal disease.

One flush of your toilet uses as much water as the average person in the developing world uses for a whole day’s washing, cleaning, cooking and drinking.



Deaths from hunger & disease in the world
25,000 deaths per day
1041.66 deaths per hour
17.36 deaths per minute
1 death from hunger and disease every four seconds.



VISIT TO THE SUDAN

- 1 TO 13 JUNE 2004

As you know, my mandate as Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights is that of an independent expert. I have been mandated to report on my findings regarding violations of the most fundamental right – the right to life. My country missions, such as this one to the Sudan, seek information regarding extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions allegedly committed by Government or Government sponsored actors. This would include situations where civilians are killed by Government actors or where Government actors are otherwise responsible for the unlawful killing of civilians. My mandate also involves cases of deaths in custody as well as violations of the minimum standards with regard to the imposition of death penalty. This includes cases when due process has not been followed or death penalty has been awarded to persons who were under the age of 18 when the offence was committed. I also address the issue of impunity and accountability. My findings are reported directly to the Member States of the United Nations through the Commission on Human Rights.

My mission comes at a time when Sudan is witnessing the tragic humanitarian and human rights situation in Darfur. At the same time there are also emerging signs for optimism in renewed efforts at building peace. The ceasefire in Darfur and the peace negotiations between the government and the SPLM/A are positive develop-

ments. These are welcomed developments and the momentum needs to be encouraged so that the process grows into being more inclusive and all comprehensive. The rights of the people must remain central in negotiations.

This mission has been extremely important as I have been able to appreciate the complexity of the situation but at the same I have been disturbed and alarmed by the gravity of the human rights abuses perpetrated in the Sudan.

My mission is not confined to Darfur, yet in the face of a humanitarian crisis that persists; my main focus has been on this region. I received numerous accounts of extrajudicial and summary executions carried out by Government backed militias and by the security forces themselves. According to credible information members of the armed forces, the Popular Defence Forces and various groups of Government sponsored militias attacked villages and summarily executed civilians. Some location of graves and mass graves have also been reported to me, which I was not in a position to verify as visits to these locations were not possible due to security concerns or the distances to travel involved. In Malakal there have also been reports of killings of

civilians by militias armed and supported by the Government.

According to the information I collected, many of the militias are being integrated into the regular armed or the Popular Defence Forces. There is no ambiguity that there is a link between some of the militias and Government forces. However, I am also aware that some loss of life occurred as a result of the actions of armed criminal elements who have taken advantage of the conflict.

During my visit to the Kober Prison I came across a number of individuals who were awarded the death penalty for crimes committed when they were under the age of 18. This is clearly in violation of international standards. I understand that this is also in violation of the national laws of the Sudan. I will be urging the Government to conduct an inquiry and to ensure that death penalty is not imposed on minors. I have other concerns in this context which I will be addressing in my report.

In my report I will forcefully stress the question of accountability as a fundamental principle in addressing violations of human rights. The Government of the Sudan must make every effort to end the culture of impunity. In the context of Darfur, a positive development is the setting up of the National Commission of Inquiry, and I hope that the Commission will take into account violations of human rights allegedly committed by the security forces. However, the

Commission of Inquiry can only partly address the issue of accountability. Ultimately, it is the obligation of the Government to ensure the delivery of justice and to ensure that witnesses and victims are protected in this process.

Finally, I am deeply concerned about the current humanitarian situation in Darfur.

Millions of internally displaced persons and other civilians are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance and protection.

The crisis is not over and the right to life of all these people is seriously threatened.

The Government must ensure that immediate and complete access is provided to humanitarian actors as well as human rights monitors, so that the international community is given every opportunity in cooperation with the Government to protect the life of vulnerable populations in Darfur.

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

Aid workers and journalists are increasingly subject to attack from all sides as the concept of neutrality becomes eroded by the War on Terror and what is increasingly seen as a global Clash of Civilisations.

As someone who has been involved in Sudan for many years I have frequently found myself on the frontline of this conflict but never more chillingly than when we started receiving death threats from Al Qaeda.

This terrorist group was based in Sudan from 1992 to 1996

- at the invitation of the military regime that still rules 15 years after seizing power in a military coup. When the journal where I worked started investigating the movements of the Jihadis - the Arab volunteers that went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet invasion - we realised that many had headed to Sudan, where the National Islamic Front regime was trying to establish itself as the new global centre for radical Islam.

When we published details of Bin Laden's activities in Khartoum, it started to get really nasty. Death threats, bomb scares and threats of legal action made it very difficult to discuss the issue in a world that had yet to realise the danger posed by Al Qaeda.

I have thus far escaped unscathed, and the Sudanese government has tried to present itself as totally reformed. It has attempted to distance itself from Bin Laden and its other main ally, Saddam Hussein, and it is busy with a diplomatic

charm offensive so these days confines itself to legal action rather than death threats against foreign journalists. However as the international community continues to debate whether the catastrophe engulfing Darfur amounts to genocide or merely much ado about nothing, I feel very constrained about what I can say on the subject and need to choose my language really carefully.

It's amazing how many people listen to the BBC World Service, some news bulletins get audiences counted in the hundreds of millions. One unguarded word over a live microphone and you can have half the crazies in the world out to seek personal vengeance. And Britain's notoriously-lax libel laws make it surprisingly easy for foreign dictators to bring legal action on the flimsiest of grounds.

The Sudanese government recently threatened to sue the BBC for libel for reporting the fact that the bodies of a group of children in Darfur had been discovered chained together and burnt alive in a village that had been torched by militias.

The BBC was merely reporting the findings of the African Union human rights monitors sent to investigate the atrocities but Sudan's government has learnt from Tony Blair how easy it is to try to blame bad news on the journalists that report it, in a modern-day spin-doctors version of the

age-old favourite of dictators and despots alike: shoot the messenger.

Like the countless thousands of displaced civilians currently perishing in the rain-soaked deserts of western Sudan, journalists and relief workers are increasingly becoming victims of the violence, as has been so tragically evident in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sometimes theses things can strike very close to home. One day I was buying something from a local shop and I saw a picture of my close friend and colleague, Maria Grazia, a brave and talented Italian journalist with whom I'd worked on several assignments in southern Africa, smiling up at me from the front page of a newspaper.

That's nice, I thought. Maria has made the front page. Then I looked again and recognised that she was sitting inside an ex-soviet transport helicopter and assumed she must be in Afghanistan, and then suddenly it occurred to me why her picture was there. The story confirmed my worst fears: she and five other western journalists had been captured and executed by Taliban fighters.

As the world tries to contain the spiralling chaos in Iraq and Sudan, people forget the ongoing tragedy that continues to torment

Afghanistan, and the forgotten heroes who try to bring assistance to the needy and world attention to their plight.

I was thus really upset and concerned to hear of the recent murder of five volunteers from the international medical relief agency Médecins sans Frontières.

I have visited MSF projects in a dozen or so countries, reporting on their vital assistance behind the lines in some of the world's worst conflicts and they are some of the bravest most dedicated humanitarian workers one could ever hope to meet.

I remember once staying in an MSF field hospital in south Sudan, during a serious epidemic of kala azar, a horrific wasting disease that had killed a third of the population of the area. We were kept awake night after night by the sound of hyenas digging up the bodies. My hosts just shrugged and said: "You know, now that so many people are sick or have died, there aren't enough left to give them a decent burial. Unfortunately we have to concentrate on saving the living." They carry on working in the most difficult circumstances and delay encounter situations which haunt your nightmares for years after.

Now agencies like MSF are finding it increasingly difficult to fulfil their humanitarian mandate as the very concept of neutrality is being challenged in this newly bipolar world.

IT'S RAINING FOOD

The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) has begun airdropping food into the most inaccessible parts of Sudan's western Darfur region, where more than 70,000 displaced people and villagers have been cut off from aid by the rainy season and insecurity.

The airdrops, the first since the Darfur crisis broke, are part of the WFP's plan to reach 1.2 million people with food aid in August - a goal made increasingly difficult by violence, banditry, bad weather and a shortage of resources.

"Dropping food by air is always an expensive last resort, but for many parts of Darfur we simply have no other option at this time of year,"

said Ramiro Lopes da Silva, WFP's Sudan director.

Some years ago I filmed an airdrop from inside the C130 Hercules drop-aircraft. It was one of the most spectacular sights I've ever seen from an aircraft and also the worst weather I've ever flown in. For much of the six-hour round trip we were thrown around the huge storm systems that dominate the skies at that time of year, and we were thrown all over the place.

Fortunately the weather is clear over our target and we finally descend and circle down towards the designated drop zone. X marks the spot.

Literally: a huge white canvas cross has been stretched out over the desert scrub below by a ground team flown in earlier.

We climb again and circle round for our final approach. The massive cargo door is lowered hydraulically and the howl of wind suddenly drowns out the roar of the engines. I strap on a safety harness and carefully make my way to the edge of the cargo ramp.

The ground shoots past below at over 300 kph and then it's time for the first drop. A series of palletes is lined up on tracks and as they're released they roar out of the back the aircraft like a freight train leaving the rails. I carefully move across to the other side of the

cargo hold and another set of palletes rains food sacks down to the ground below. Finally the loadmaster readies a small home-made parachute and attaches it to a six pack of sodas, which wafts gently down to the hot and thirsty ground crew below.

Then we lazily circle back for the three hour flight back to base.



THE FACE OF SLAVERY

Mende's eyes light up as we enter the shopping Mall. The escalators have been carved out of an artificial mountainside, complete with boulders, forest and waterfalls. "They even have mountains here. It looks just like my home." As we ascend she is briefly transported back to the Nuba Mountains and the home she has missed for over ten years, since the fateful night her idyllic childhood was abruptly ended when she was abducted by Arab Mujahidin raiders and sold into slavery.

"You know, I was a young child when I last saw my home. Now I'm in London but I'm still not used to doing things for myself or being able to move around freely."

Mende is a shy, pretty girl in her early twenties. She is still very apprehensive but her face lights up when she smiles, and as we chat while awaiting our lunch order, she gradually begins to relax and starts to describe her recent experiences. I can't think of many people who have been through such traumas and can still discuss them so matter of factly.

In her book she describes watching other girls being raped by their captors. "I tried to curl up into a ball and make myself look as small as possible, so as to avoid the attention of the guards. But, thinking back on it now, if they had just raped me that night and left me behind in the forest, that would have been a good thing compared to what really happened to me."

She remembers in chilling detail the hell on earth that was unleashed by the Arab militias

after they were issued with arms to fight against Nuba rebels that the government had recently declared apostates.

These self-declared holy warriors were a fearsome sight. "A long line of men came marching out of the gloom from the direction of the village. As they went past, I could see that all of them were carrying knives. Some had small pistols and others had bigger guns. Many had blood all up their wrists, others blood smeared around their belts where they carried their daggers. And others had blood all over their loins. They looked crazed with violence and evil."

Mende was captured along with some thirty other children, aged between seven and twelve. She describes how "A little boy started to sob out his story. His whole family had fled to escape the flames, but in the confusion, his little sister of eighteen months was left behind in the burning hut. The first another boy knew of the raid was when the Mujahidin threw open the door of his hut. He saw his mother try to hide his twin baby sisters, but the raiders grabbed her and cut her throat. Then they killed the two babies. The boy was hiding under his bed.

Those were the last things he saw before the raiders dragged him out and took him away."

They were sent to an army camp in the regional market town of Dilling - evidence, she maintains of official support for the slave raiders - before being sold to a wealthy Arab family in Khartoum, where she was subjected to appalling physical, sexual, and mental abuse. She slept in a shed eating leftovers like a dog.

"I wasn't even treated as well as a dog" she complains. "At least an animal is given affection and is stroked by its owner. I had no rights, no freedom, no life of my own."

Brought up a devout Moslem, she couldn't understand why the slave-raiders were shouting "Alluha akbah" while burning, killing and raping. "Did they think it was halal to do this? We were Moslems, just like them. So how could they think this."

But she insists that slavery has nothing to do with religion - it is based on racism and a grab for land. It's a form of ethnic cleansing.

"For me there was no difference between Arab and Nuba, just like there is no difference between black people and white people. So I couldn't understand why they could treat Nuba people like that. I began to realise that for them we're not human. They call Nuba "abid" - the Arabic word for slaves."

"But whatever they do they can't destroy our humanity. The only difference between Arabs and Nuba is that the Nuba are poor - and it is them who made us poor. They are stealing our land, raping our women, enslaving our people because they want to keep us poor, they don't want us to be able to compete with them.

One of the most startling aspects that comes from her book is the unthinking day to day racism of her "owners" and their lack of concern regarding the abuses they routinely unleashed on fellow human beings. She describes a conversation on why slaves are a good investment:

"Let me tell you, if you have an abda (slave-girl) in the house, it's a blessing. Your life's just never the same again."

"But does she never make any trouble? I mean, does she just do whatever you tell her to do?"

"You know," said Rahab in a hushed voice, "that's the most amazing thing. She never causes any trouble. I think these blacks are just made for it. I suppose these people have been slaves for generations. They never complain. They just get on with it."

Seven years after being sold into slavery, she was sent to work for her owner's sister, the wife of a Sudanese diplomat in the London Embassy. She managed to contact a fellow Nuba who helped her to escape and find her a lawyer.

Extraordinarily, the Home Office initially denied Mende's request for political asylum: "They told me

that they didn't recognise slavery as a form of persecution." But the ensuing public outcry soon changed their minds and they reversed the decision before it went to appeal. "They were really apologetic"

"I am lucky that I have been able to escape and describe my experiences and that I have found so many supportive people to help me. People think that slavery is something from history - no one can believe that is still goes on today. With my book and my testimony I hope we can persuade the western countries to pressurize the government in Sudan to change its appalling record of slavery. In Khartoum they deny everything routinely but how can they know what is really going on in places like the Nuba, they just sit

in their luxury offices and deny what is happening on a daily basis."

Slavery is a matter of record in today's Sudan - although Khartoum insists it is referred to as "Abductions" rather than slavery. The Sudan Abductee Database of the Rift Valley Institute lists over 11,000 named abductees. Thousands of people still live through the nightmare Mende experienced yet there is little international condemnation.

One of the aspects of Sudan's current peace process that most worries observers is the lack of any provisions for punishing human rights abuses.

Similar horrors now routinely occur in western Sudan, where

almost a million people have been displaced by pro-government militias. Last week Amnesty International said it had details of "horrifying attacks against civilians in villages by government warplanes, soldiers and government-aligned militia." In one attack on February 11, some 80 civilians were killed and 30 girls were allegedly abducted. "Our reports from Darfur show that respect for international humanitarian law is not observed."

Hopefully, Mende's story will help push calls for greater scrutiny and action against these ongoing crimes against humanity.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE IN A MINEFIELD

If you find yourself in a minefield, remember the letters M.I.N.E.D :

M MOVEMENT stops immediately. Remain still.

I INFORM and warn people around you.

N NOTE THE AREA. What else can you see (mine fuses, tripwires, nearest safe area such as hard road for rescue agencies' reference)?

E EVALUATE the situation. Be prepared to take control.

D DO NOT move from your position. Wait for qualified help to come and assist you.



Did you know that...

Because landmines are normally buried or concealed under foliage or other objects, you may never see them. Still, it is important to know what they look like. Avoid dangerous areas where accidents have already occurred. Stay away from former areas of fighting, roads and paths not in use by the population, abandoned buildings, wrecked or abandoned vehicles, skeletons and dead animals and, overgrown areas in otherwise cultivated surroundings, etc. Ask people who live near minefields which areas they consider dangerous or safe, but do not assume that you will receive totally accurate or current information.

Altogether there are 800 million people in the world who do not have enough to eat each and every day. And nobody talks or writes about it. John Powell, deputy executive director, World Food Programme



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