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UN/ Agencies

[UN expert decries human rights violations by both sides in Darfur](#)

10 March 2008 – Sudanese Government military forces and Darfur’s rebel movements have both committed human rights abuses in the war-wracked region, carrying out killings, acts of sexual violence, looting, and the destruction of property, arbitrary arrests and forced displacement, an independent United Nations envoy said today.

Sima Samar, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in Sudan, issued a statement after completing a 13-day visit to the country in which she said she was “extremely disturbed” by the ongoing situation, especially in West Darfur, the scene of a major military offensive in recent weeks.

“The Government and the movements have failed in their responsibility to provide protection to civilians in areas under their control and are violating international human rights law and international humanitarian law,” Ms. Samar said. “I received reports of killings, sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and detention and impunity for such crimes.”

She cited a Government air and ground attack, supported by allied militiamen, on 8-9 February on the West Darfur towns of Sirba, Silea and Abu Suruj in which at least 100 locals were reported killed and an estimated 12,000 forced to flee over the nearby border to neighbouring Chad.

“The attacks were marked by indiscriminate killings, destruction of property and looting and plundering,” she said, adding that the Sudanese armed forces carried out similar attacks on 18-19 and 22 February on villages in the Jebel Moon area of West Darfur.

“Bombs were reportedly dropped on several locations populated by civilians, including one near an internally displaced camp in Aro Sharrow.”

She called on the Government and the movements to comply with all obligations under international law and to protect civilians in areas they control in Darfur, the scene of fierce fighting between rebels, Government forces and allied militia since 2003.

More than 200,000 people have been killed there in the past five years and at least 2.2 million others displaced, and at the start of this year a hybrid UN-African Union peacekeeping force known as UNAMID was deployed in a bid to quell the fighting and humanitarian suffering.

The Special Rapporteur also spoke out today about the case of 19 Massalit men who were arrested by the Minni Minawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), a rebel

movement, in September 2006 after an attack on the South Darfur town of Gereida by a Massalit armed group.

“In October 2006 a mass grave was found containing the remains of some of those who had been arrested. I call on the Government to investigate and inform the families of the fate of their relatives and bring the perpetrators of human rights violations to justice.”

During this visit, her fifth to Sudan, Ms. Samar was not allowed access to Kajbar, Amri, Merowe and Makabrab in Northern state, where she had planned to meet with local authorities and communities affected by the construction of two hydropower dams in the Nile valley.

“The visit was cancelled by the state security committee the day before I was scheduled to travel to the area. The reasons provided by the Government did not justify their decision to prevent access.”

Ms. Samar added that she was particularly concerned about the lack of accountability for the killings of protesters in Amri and Kajbar in 2005 and 2006.

[Hundreds of teachers to be trained in southern Sudan through Japanese grant: UN](#)

10 March 2008 – A Japanese grant of \$8.7 million to the United Nations refugee agency will make it possible for hundreds of teachers to be formally trained in southern Sudan in the next three years, the partners announced today.

The funding will support the construction of Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) in Juba and Aweil, two key cities of southern Sudan, where a decades-long civil-war decimated the education system, Japan and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a joint press release.

Along with these TTIs, the project will also cover the building of five satellite primary schools where teachers in training will conduct classes as part of their hands-on experience.

“The programmes developed by the UN and Partners for the education sector are aligned to achieve the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology’s overall goal of ensuring equitable access to quality education services for sustainable development,” UNHCR Representative Chrysantus Ache said at a signing ceremony held on Friday in Juba, the capital of southern Sudan.

In addition to UNHCR, the project also involves the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the education sector lead, as well as the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), which are expected to provide nutritional assistance and help with school gardens, respectively.

The South Sudan Ministry of Education, Science and Technology aims to have 10,000 fully qualified teachers by 2011.

[Hijackings impeding delivery of critical food supplies in Darfur, UN says](#)

10 March 2008 – Banditry is hindering the delivery of vital food aid on the ground in Sudan’s war-ravaged Darfur region, but limited funding could ground the air transport service run by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the agency warned today.

“This is an unprecedented situation,” said Kenro Oshidari, WFP’s Sudan Representative. “Our humanitarian air operation for aid workers could be forced to stop flying because we have no money, at a time when our helicopters are needed more than ever because of high insecurity on the roads.”

At present, WFP is transporting only half as much food to Darfur as it normally would at this time of the year because truckers are not willing to risk making deliveries on the dangerous roads.

There are some 60,000 metric tons of WFP food aid – enough to feed the two million people in Sudan who are now relying on the agency’s assistance – in the region. Needs are expected to surge by 50 per cent as the May-October rainy season approaches, but the agency could be forced to slash rations in some areas.

This year alone, five of the agency’s passenger vehicles and 45 trucks contracted by WFP have been hijacked, and 37 trucks remain missing with 23 drivers unaccounted for.

In the most recent incident, on 4 March, seven trucks were stolen and the driver abducted while on their way to El Fasher, in North Darfur. The bandits unloaded the food and left it behind, driving off with the vehicles.

Meanwhile, for its budget of \$77 million this year, WFP’s Humanitarian Air Service (WFP-HAS) – utilized by approximately 8,000 humanitarian workers per month, 3,000 of whom use helicopters to reach remote areas – has received no confirmed donations. Without an immediate contribution towards the \$6.2 million needed for monthly costs, the Service will be forced to halt operations.

Most passengers using WFP-HAS, which began operations in 2004, are staff members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) providing assistance in health care, water and sanitation or food relief.

“With a recent upsurge in insecurity in West Darfur and increased banditry on the roads throughout the region, the air operation is more important than ever,” said Mr. Oshidari, noting the heavy reliance of the humanitarian community on the Service. “If it [is] shut down, even for a brief period, vital relief would be denied to vulnerable civilians in Darfur.”

Last year, 160,000 people from 170 agencies and NGOs were served by WFP-HAS on two dozen aircraft, including six helicopters costing \$4,000 per helicopter per hour, in Darfur. In addition to Darfur and other parts of northern Sudan, it also serves the country’s south, which is rebuilding from a 21-year north-south civil war that ended in 2005.

Although it has received no funding this year, it has been able to remain airborne until now thanks to \$11 million carried over from 2007. WFP-HAS funds are raised separately

from the agency's Sudan food aid budget for this year of nearly \$700 million to feed 5.6 million people.

More than 200,000 people have been killed and at least 2.2 million displaced from their homes since 2003, when rebels began fighting Government forces and allied militia in the arid and impoverished region on Sudan's western flank.

Meanwhile, troops from the hybrid UN-African Union (AU) peacekeeping operation deployed to Darfur, known as UNAMID, have donated their own warm clothes and blankets to internally displaced persons (IDPs) taking refuge in Mallit, a small town in North Darfur.

"We have come to realize that Darfur still has a long way to go," said one soldier who preferred to stay anonymous. "Yet we are believers that each and every one of us as individuals can and has to make a difference."

UNAMID peacekeepers also contributed their own money towards purchasing stationery and school fees to ensure that one of the pre-schools in Mallit re-opened to hold new classes.

[Sima Samar to brief Human Rights Council on situation of human rights in Sudan](#)

(Al-Rai Al-Aam) The Special Rapporteur of Human Rights for Sudan, Sima Samar, will present to the Human Rights Council meetings in Geneva on Wednesday, a report on the situation of human rights in Sudan.

Samar concluded her visit yesterday and commended the transparency on the part of the Sudanese officials in discussing issues of human rights. At a press conference she addressed yesterday said Darfur issue can not be resolved militarily and called upon the International Community, the United Nations, GoS and the Sudanese leaders to launch a more viable and practical political initiative to resolve Darfur crisis.

With regard to Kajbar she said the Government did not refuse to give her information adding that the information was not available because investigation had not been finalized. She said the decision to deny her access to Kajbar was taken by the authorities of the Northern State.

Concerning elections, she said the responsibility of the Government in the forthcoming elections is to ensure that they are free and fair.

[WFP threatens to cease humanitarian operations in Darfur](#)

(Al-Rai Al-Aam) WFP warned that food aid to Darfur could be cut by 50% due to attacks on relief convoys.

The Programme announced yesterday that seven of its trucks and drivers were hijacked while en route to El Fasher last week and that 37 trucks and 23 drivers were still missing.

It said the drivers were not willing to work so as not to risk their lives.

[Sima Samar accuses armed movements of using civilians as human shields](#)

(Al-Intibaha) The Special Rapporteur of Human Rights for Sudan, Sima Samar, at the conclusion of her visit to Sudan, has accused Darfur armed movements of violating human rights in Abu Suruj and Jebel Moon by using civilians as human shields. She added that human rights were also violated by SLM-Minnawi in Gireida by imposing taxes on citizens.

Samar made the statements at a press conference she held yesterday.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

[Fresh fighting in Sudan's Abyei region - Salva Kiir](#)

(ST) March 10, 2008 (JUBA, Sudan) — fresh fighting has flared between Arab nomads and former southern rebels in an oil-rich border between north and south Sudan, First Vice President Salva Kiir said on Monday.

The clashes began on Sunday, a week after fierce gun battles left around 70 dead and displaced more than 100.

"Yesterday...instead of fighting in Northern Bahr al Ghazal, (they are) fighting in Unity State," Kiir, who is also the leader of south Sudan, told a governors' forum in the southern capital Juba.

"There was very serious fighting there," he added.

Unity State, which produces a huge amount of Sudan's oil, borders Northern Bahr al Ghazal state, home to the oil-rich region of Abyei whose status is not yet decided despite the 2005 peace agreement between north and south Sudan.

No information on casualties was immediately available.

Kiir said Misseriya tribesmen want people in the south to take up arms and fight in order to provoke a full-scale war.

"The fighting lasted the whole night, and they (the southern army or Sudan People's Liberation Army) fought back up to this morning," Unity State governor Taban Deng told AFP on the sidelines of the forum.

Fighting first erupted in December, near the disputed oil areas, leaving up to 100 dead, when Khartoum-backed Baggara Arab militia attacked a southern army garrison, after it refused to allow armed nomads into the south.

The clashes ended after Kiir told his forces to let the nomads move south and graze their animals, with hopes that they would return to the north during the dry season.

Relations between the Khartoum authorities in the northern, mainly Arab part of Sudan, and Kiir's SPLM have remained tense despite their power-sharing arrangement that followed the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended a civil war.

The key sticking points are the status of the Abyei oil region and where the north-south border will be drawn.

Under the terms of the CPA, elections are due in 2009 and a referendum two years later will allow southerners to say whether they want to continue with the north or become an entirely independent state.

[Census on course as more returnees head home](#)

(Sudanese online) Preparations for the national census are moving ahead, with the mapping of enumeration areas in Southern Sudan completed and the UN starting to deliver materials by air to various states, a senior UN official said.

After being postponed several times, Sudan's fifth census is scheduled to take place from 15 to 30 April. Analysts say the exercise is key to the 2009 elections.

"Material is being transported to the 10 states of Southern Sudan in readiness for census night of 14 April," David Gressly, regional coordinator of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) for Southern Sudan and UN Deputy Resident Coordinator in Sudan, said.

UNMIS flew the first batch of census materials to Malakal, Upper Nile State, on 5 March. Subsequent flights were planned to leave Juba, capital of Southern Sudan, for Rumbek in Lakes State, and Wau in Western Bahr El Ghazal State. Other flights would follow to the remaining states and capitals.

"The Southern Sudan Commission for the Census and Statistical Evaluation has trained 40 principal trainers, who will instruct enumeration supervisors in state capitals," UNMIS said in a statement. "The UN Population Fund is working to bring staff from census offices in neighbouring countries to assist with additional training in Sudan."

However, funding was a problem, according to a senior government official, who urged Southern Sudanese authorities to provide the South Sudan Census Commission with enough money to conduct the census.

The commission chairman, Issaia Chol, told UN Radio Miraya on 9 March that the government had not yet provided the US\$7 million needed for the exercise.

Preparations for Sudan's census have been dogged by controversy over questions of religion and ethnicity. It is expected to ask interviewees if they are from the North or South or another country and about religion, but Southern leaders have demanded that it also detail language or ethnicity.

[Uganda: Sudan reluctant to hunt for LRA Rebels](#)

(Sudan Vision) THE Sudanese government is reluctant to join regional forces to pursue the Lord's Resistance Army if the rebel group fails to sign a peace agreement at the end of the month. The President of the Government of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, said as mediators, no such decision had been taken.

"We are mediators. We still hope peace is imminent," Kiir said on Saturday.

Uganda, Rwanda, DR Congo and Burundi, under the Tripartite-Plus arrangement, signed an agreement to fight negative forces in each other's territory. They are waiting for the

outcome of the peace talks hosted in Juba to take a decision on the LRA currently in Congo.

President Yoweri Museveni and the ministers of defence have repeatedly said the LRA can only get a soft-landing after signing the pact. "If they don't, they will perish," Museveni said recently.

Kiir pointed out that Museveni was ready to sign a peace agreement with the rebels if they are committed to the Juba peace process.

"What plan 'B' he has, he is keeping it to himself. He did not share it with me."

Kiir, who is also the First Vice-President of the Sudanese government of national unity, was speaking at Entebbe Old Airport shortly before he flew back to Juba. He was seen off by the Minister for Security, Amama Mbabazi.

Kiir said if the LRA failed to sign the peace deal, a decision to hunt for them would be taken by the government.

He said there was no need at the moment to be pessimistic or talk about what will happen before the LRA declines to sign.

"Let's give them the benefit of doubt that they will come and sign. Once they refuse to sign the agreement, (whether to attack them) will be a decision of the top leadership of Uganda," Kiir stated.

On his two-day visit, Kiir held closed talks with Museveni at State House Entebbe and with several Ugandan and Sudanese ministers later.

He also met the Sudanese living in Uganda at the Imperial Botanical Beach Hotel, Entebbe. He advised them to avoid AIDS, respect Ugandans as their hosts, and concentrate on education and work hard as leaders of tomorrow.

He briefed them on the progress on the government of national unity. He said a population census would be held by April and general elections held in 2009, while a referendum which could determine South Sudan's self-determination was set for 2011. South Sudan has been brokering peace talks between Uganda and the rebels since July 14, 2006. The talks have been marked with walkouts by the LRA and many adjournments to allow the rebels consult their leaders holed up in Garamba National Park.

When the peace talks resumed this year, the parties signed several protocols including the permanent ceasefire and the pact on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the rebels.

The rebels are infamous for brutalizing northern Uganda and South Sudan. Three commanders, including the LRA leader, Joseph Kony, are wanted by the UN court for crimes against humanity.

[Dr. Nafie describes his visit to Japan as successful](#)

Khartoum, Mar. 10 (SUNA)- Assistant of the President of the Republic , Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie, Monday afternoon returned home after a several-day visit to Japan in response to invitation from the Japanese Foreign Minister. At a press conference he held upon return at Khartoum Airport, Dr. Nafie described his visit to Japan as successful and realized its objectives. He was received at the airport by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mutrif Siddiq. Dr. Nafie hoped that his visit to Japan will pave the way for consolidation of the relations between Sudan and Japan in all fields, besides consultation and coordination between them in all domains, especially in the economic issues and regional and international affairs. Dr. Nafie has met during the visit with the Japanese Prime Minister, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Finance as well as leaders of the economic sector, the trade chamber and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JAICA). He said that his talks with the Japanese officials were focused on ways to

consolidate the relations between Sudan and Japan, adding that he acquainted the Japanese officials with about the situation in Sudan, especially in Darfur and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Dr. Nafie said that he was interviewed by Japanese media, press, TV and the national News Agency, adding that he also held a press conference and gave an open lecture in Japan and informed on the situation in Sudan.

[Aspects of cooperation between Ministry of Industry and UNIDO discussed](#)

Khartoum, Mar. 10 (SUNA) - The Ministry of Industry underscored promotion of the industrial sector through training and development of human resources, indicating to a number of vocational training centers set up in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). This came Monday when State Minister for Industry Engineer Ali Ahmed Osman met Training Director at UNIDO where they discussed aspects of cooperation between the Ministry and UNIDO specially on boosting activities as part of strategic program signed by the two sides. The meeting indicated to vocational training center established in Malakal town for training Southern Sudan youth in industrial fields. The meeting also referred to establishment of other four vocational training centers in Khartoum State.

[Director of Mercy Corp expelled from Abyei](#)

(Ray Al-Shaab) SFRRRC, the body in charge of regulation of work of NGOs in Abyei, yesterday expelled Mr. Jeje, the Director of Mercy Corp. It delivered a memo of expulsion to Mr. Jeje and copied other NGOs for information.

Mr. Jeje was accused of interfering in security issues of the area.

[President Bashir: Abyei will be resolved soon](#)

(Akhbar Al-Yom) The President of the Republic, Omer Bashir, addressing a gathering of the Sudanese Community in UAE said Abyei issue would be resolved soon.

The President also said that dialogue with America was continuing to arrive at understandings consistent with sovereignty and independence of the country.

[Malik Aggar demands secession of the Blue Nile and accession to Ethiopia](#)

(Al-Intibaha) The deputy chairman of the SPLM and governor of the Blue Nile State made controversial statements while addressing a symposium held in Kurmuk recently, broadcast by the State TV.

At the symposium, he spoke about issues of unity, secession and relationship between the north and the South besides the issues of religion and secularism.

He said Sudan was heading toward disintegration and confirmed the existence of tendency to separate the Blue Nile area to accede to Ethiopia, eastern Sudan to Eritrea and Darfur to Chad.

Asked about the people of Kordofan he said, "They will be the new slaves of the north".

He described NCP and SPLM as “two different creatures between which you can not inseminate”.

[Kiir: No Abyei renegotiation](#)

(The Citizen) The chairman of SPLM said on Monday that Abyei Protocol would not be renegotiated.

General Salva Kiir, in his keynote address to the 5th Governor’s – and 3rd Speakers – forum yesterday said that skirmishes at north-south would continue because the enemies of peace were instigating the Messeriya.

“We will not and are not going to renegotiate Abyei Protocol,” Kiir who is also the President of Southern Sudan declared yesterday.

He said NCP made certain proposals to break the deadlock in Abyei.

Kiir announcement came a day after heavy fighting between armed Messriya nomads and the citizens of the Unity State in Abiemnhom County on Sunday.

Governor of Unity State Taban Deng said the nomads had been defeated, following fierce confrontation.

GoSS

[Jonglei declares 50% reduction for women business charges and 100% protection](#)

(ST) March 9, 2008 (BOR, Jonglei) – Women in Jonglei state will enjoy 50% reduction on charges related to business and maximum protection from women rights violation, Jonglei, government has announced.

The message, delivered on March 8 (world women day) at Bor town Freedom square by the state governor, will pave way for a comfortable competition to women in business and making them richer than men though women makes less than 10% in trading section.

“Women owned business will be charged 50% of the taxes levied on goods, trading license and shop or restaurant plot,” Governor Kuol declared outlining that “this will help women to feed their children, educate them, maintain good health status but not for alcohol.”

The government also assured women of maximum protection against “early-force-expensive marriages, oppression, domestics work loads and assaults” but maintained that “polygamy is a necessary evil.” “There is over 65% women estimated population in Sudan, and this means that a man should marry at least two wives, provided he can care for them,” Speaker of the state legislative Assembly Judy Boyris said.

Women, according to South Sudan policy, take at least 25% in all government organs and free to compete with men in the remaining 75%. However, the granted percentage is not adequately used due to low level of education among women triggered by cultures and girl child negligence. Jonglei, in particular, faces a lot of challenges in bridging the gap

between man and woman since cultures remain deeply rooted and girl child education campaigns poorly understood.

Majority of women contacted by Sudan Tribune says “parents are the best decision makers concerning their rights and girls are, solely, the source of family wealth.”

However the decrees, made by the state government, may open a new believe in Jonglei women that there are humans too.

[Jonglei government will chase idle NGOs – governor](#)

(ST) March 9, 2008 (BOR, Jonglei) – Jonglei government will carry out ‘a very tough check to the performance’ of Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) and will be forced to dismiss idle organs, Governor Kuol has said. NGOs say it is inevitable to rest as jobs dies and will try their best to avoid quitting Jonglei.

The governor, in a speech he delivered on Women Day (March 8), has assigned the evaluation of NGOs work to his deputy Hassan Mar. The governor said NGOs are very idle or slow in their works but deceives people for nothing. “They fly over us in planes but you do not what they are doing!” Mr. Manyang bitterly said sending UN agency representatives at the rally to look in depressing faces.

Polish Humanitarian Organization - PHO, United Nation Development Program – UNDP, World Food Program – WFP, Intersos, Handicap International, and UNHCR are among the NGOs operating in Jonglei and probably in question.

UNDP staff, who attended represented NGOs at the rally, contacted freshly by Sudan Tribune says “we are here for a purpose and the government has right to chase us if found idle.”

The governor however declined to name any poorly working NGO and silent to detail how slow the NGOs are performing but continue to call on their assistance to help the government to control the number of street children in Bor town.

“I call upon the UN agencies to help the state government, in providing food for these children. The government will build a boarding school for them,” he said.

But the major questions, NGOs in Jonglei, are likely to answer includes: why they stay in one compound (UNHCH and UNDP for example) - thus taking low number of casual workers, failure to complete projects in time and employing of foreigners as their staff in Jonglei. It will be a sad Easter holidays for some NGOs and/or staff.

Darfur

[Darfur rebel says Sudanese army painting tanks with UN colour](#)

(ST) March 3, 2008 (LONDON) – Darfur rebel movement has accused the Sudanese army of painting tanks of UN Hybrid force saying it plans to attack its position in West Darfur.

Ali Wafi, the Military Spokesperson of the Rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) claimed that his movement is in receipt of eye witness's accounts in Al-Fasher speaking of Sudanese armed forces actively engaged in painting nine (9) military tanks white.

Wafi described the move as "an apparent breach and violation of applicable norms of International Humanitarian law and agreements."

He further spoke about huge military build-up of troops arriving from Northern State (Shimalyia), and deployment of forces from El-Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, in a bid to storm Jebel Moon.

Since February 8, 2008, Sudanese government troops and "Janjaweed" militia backed by Antonov bombers and helicopter gunships have carried out a series of attacks that have killed hundreds of civilians.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced by the ongoing bombardments, which are also preventing life-saving humanitarian assistance from reaching some of the worst-affected areas.

The February offensive was the largest in many months and aid agencies say it affected 50,000-60,000 people, less than initial rebel estimates of up to 200,000. Up to 12,000 refugees fled into neighbouring eastern Chad, the U.N. refugee agency said.

[Rampant banditry delaying food delivery to Darfur](#)

(ST) March 10, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — The UN World Food Programme (WFP) warned today that rampant banditry is delaying vital food deliveries to Darfur, while a lack of contributions may ground its Humanitarian Air Service at the end of the month.

Since the beginning of this year, five WFP passenger vehicles and 45 WFP-contracted trucks have been hijacked. A total 37 trucks remain missing and 23 drivers are unaccounted for.

"This is an unprecedented situation. Our humanitarian air operation for aid workers could be forced to stop flying because we have no money, at a time when our helicopters and aircraft are needed more than ever because of high insecurity on the roads," said Kenro Oshidari, WFP Representative in Sudan.

WFP is currently transporting about half as much food into Darfur as it normally would at this time of year and the turnaround time for deliveries has slowed because truckers are unwilling to risk driving on the dangerous roads.

WFP currently has about 60,000 metric tons of food in Darfur, equal to about two months' rations for the 2 million people who currently rely on WFP food assistance. As the May to October rainy season approaches the number of people needing humanitarian assistance and their food requirements will go up by as much as 50 percent. If WFP cannot maintain deliveries it will be forced to reduce rations in some areas.

"It's vital that the main transport routes are secured. Our trucking contractors are delivering food under immense risks and the situation is unsustainable," Oshidari said.

In the latest incident, seven trucks were stolen and the drivers abducted on 4 March on their way to El Fasher in North Darfur. The bandits unloaded the food and left it behind when they drove off with the trucks.

On 23 January WFP announced that 22 contract trucks had been stolen and 18 drivers were missing in the first three weeks of the year. WFP warned ration cuts were likely in February because its two largest trucking contractors were refusing to continue service.

Since then, the trucking firms agreed to continue transporting food and ration levels were maintained. However, the continuing high rate of banditry — now more than double the incidents since the last announcement — means that WFP is unlikely to be able to maintain commodity stocks as the rainy season approaches.

Meanwhile, WFP's Humanitarian Air Service (WFP-HAS) has received no confirmed donations this year to its annual budget of US\$77 million. Without an immediate infusion of cash, the operation will not be able meet its US\$6.2 million monthly costs and will be forced to cease flights at the end of this month until new funds can be found.

An average of 8,000 humanitarian workers per month use WFP-HAS in Darfur; 3,000 of them on helicopters to remote areas unreachable by road. The majority of passengers on WFP-HAS are staff of non-governmental organizations carrying out crucial health care, water and sanitation or food relief work.

"The entire humanitarian community depends on WFP-HAS. With a recent upsurge in insecurity in West Darfur and increased banditry on the roads throughout the region, the air operation is more important than ever. If it shut down, even for a brief period, vital relief would be denied to vulnerable civilians in Darfur," Oshidari said.

In 2007, the air service managed by WFP carried almost 160,000 passengers from 170 different agencies and non-governmental organizations in Sudan.

WFP-HAS also conducted 267 emergency medical and security evacuations and relocations. Its current fleet has 24 aircraft, including six helicopters in Darfur.

Despite the lack of donations in 2008, WFP-HAS has been able to stay in the air until now using US\$11 million carried over from 2007. The air operation's funds are raised separately from WFP's food relief budget in Sudan, which stands at \$697 million this year and plans to feed up to 5.6 million people throughout Sudan.

Each of WFP's six helicopters in Darfur flies an average 80 hours per month. It costs \$4000 per hour to operate each helicopter in Darfur.

WFP Humanitarian Air Service Sudan started in 2004 to serve the humanitarian community. In addition to Darfur and other parts of northern Sudan, it serves southern Sudan, recovering from a 21-year war that ended in 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Miscellaneous