



United Nations Mission In Sudan  
UNMIS

## PRESS BRIEFING

Mr. George Somerwill  
Deputy Spokesperson  
Press Room - April 6, 2005

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of the press briefing of 6 April 2005 by the Deputy Spokesperson, Mr. George Somerwill:

### **SRSG**

SRSG Jan Pronk is today wrapping up a trip to South and West Darfur. Today he is visiting Kalma Camp where he will speak to humanitarian staff of UN Agencies and NGOs. He will also have discussions with the African Union. Yesterday, 5 April, Mr Pronk met with the Wali of South Darfur and local authorities. Earlier in the day he visited two areas in the Jebel Mara, where he met rebel leaders and members of the humanitarian community, as well as addressing a meeting of community leaders and dignitaries. His message to both the rebel leaders and the Wali was clear; that it is time for both sides to commit to a peace settlement.

On Monday 4 April, Mr. Pronk met with UN agencies in El-Geneina before a visit to Riyadh camp in West Darfur. He met with the deputy Wali and five tribal leaders in Geneina and discussed the recent Security Council resolutions on Sudan and the prospects for peace in the country.

### **Political Issues**

SRSG Pronk met with Foreign Minister Mustafa on 3 April to exchange views on the recently adopted Security Council resolutions. The meeting clarified some of the questions raised by the Government, including issues related to Darfur.

DSRSG Zerihoun met with Nihal Deng Nihal and other members of the SPLM/A delegation in Khartoum on 4 April. A further meeting between UNMIS and the SPLM team that will include James Wani Igga, the leader of the delegation and Secretary-General of the Movement, is scheduled for 7 April.

### **Security Issues**

North Darfur: Some 800 IDPs from the Abu Shouk camp staged a demonstration, protesting the continuing insecurity and high level of rapes around the camp, claiming that the organizations responsible are not properly executing their mandate. IDPs were throwing stones at GoS soldiers while marching. OCHA and UNMIS representatives addressed the meeting with representatives of the demonstration, explaining the roles and responsibilities of the various actors operating in the location. Despite the large crowd the

situation remained under control with no injuries reported. Cooperation between UN and AMIS was good throughout.

South Darfur: On 2 Apr., a group of armed tribesmen entered several sections of the Kalma camp throughout the day, harassing the camp population. The local police, claiming no evidence of wrongdoing, did not take any action against the group. At around 1400 hrs the AU Civilian Police decided to intervene after requests from humanitarian organizations, and the armed men left the camp.

The Nyala town police continue to demand ‘incentives; in the forms of fuel and food for carrying out security patrols around IDP gatherings in the area, despite a clear understanding that this is the responsibility of the GoS

South: A spiritual leader from the Leek clan was killed on 3 April in Bentiu by an unknown assailant. This has led to tension in the town between the Leek and Bul clans.

The security situation in Juba remains calm with no new reports of LRA activities in the past days. However, a UN chartered plane bringing fuel to Juba was shot at on 2 April. The incident happened north of Juba while the plane was making its final approach to the Juba airport. It is not known who is responsible for the shooting.

## **Humanitarian Affairs**

North Darfur: A vaccination campaign started on Saturday April 2<sup>nd</sup> in the town of Saraf Omer in response to a meningitis outbreak in the area. As of 25 March, there were 71 cases and 5 deaths reported among the IDPs in the area. More than 75,000 people between the ages of 2 and 30 years will be vaccinated over eight days. The vaccination campaign will cover about 70% of the population in the area and is a joint effort between WHO, MoH, MSF Belgium and MSF Switzerland, UNICEF, WFP and Oxfam.

South Darfur: Alarming malnutrition rates among children under five have been reported in Ed Daein. As previously reported, malnutrition rates across Darfur have broadly improved, although there remain pockets of severe malnutrition. According to the preliminary findings from a nutritional survey conducted by the NGO Tearfund, together with UNICEF, the Sudanese NGO SUDO and the Ministry of Health, between the 14–18 March, Global Acute Malnutrition amongst children is 25% -- well above the emergency threshold while severe acute malnutrition is 4.3%.

Insecurity has been the key factor preventing people from harvesting their crops, displacing population, and limiting access and availability of health care, as well as water and sanitation facilities. This has also led to high rates of diarrhea – a contributing factor to malnutrition - in Ed Daein, as well as throughout the state. More than 85 percent of severely malnourished children reported having had diarrhoea in the past 2 weeks. Less than 20% of families reported having soap available in the household. Tearfund is planning to conduct a one month blanket feeding to all children under five in the Khor Omer, El Firdous, El Neem, Abu Matariq and Abu Jabra IDP camps, to be followed by targeted feeding to moderately malnourished and pregnant/lactating mothers for both local communities and IDP populations together with out and in-patient therapeutic feeding to severely malnourished children.

## **Protection issues**

West Darfur: Four women collecting firewood on 1 April outside the Hamidiya camp near Zalingi were attacked by armed men. Three women were abducted while one managed to flee. Three were later released, one reported she had been raped, a claim supported by the subsequent medical examination. Reportedly, the HAC instructed the police to arrest the culprit but no information has surfaced as to whether this has taken place.

Khartoum: There have been some positive developments in terms of planning for the provision of some basic services for IDPs in and around the Khartoum area, following the visit of a government delegation to the area. A delegation made up of the Khartoum Legislative Council, Khartoum Peace and Unity Council, HAC, and the Commission of Voluntary Humanitarian Work, visited the Shikan and El Fateh III squatter areas on 29 March. The group was very concerned about the lack of services in the area and met with the Wali of Khartoum State to brief him on the situation and request basic services such as water and health facilities for those areas. The Wali has instructed the MOE that new basic primary schools should be erected in all Khartoum camps for IDP children. This is a very positive start in recognizing the needs and rights of the populations living in camps and squatter areas in Khartoum.

The SRSG met on 27 March, with First Vice-President Taha and the Governor of Khartoum on the situation in the camps. The First Vice President assured the SRSG that that movement of IDPs in and out of camps was conducted with due warning and never without the agreement of the popular committees and the sultans of the camps. The Governor then listed numerous projects the Government has initiated for the IDPs and offered to accompany the SRSG on a tour of a camp. The SRSG agreed, but said they should visit two camps – one of the Governor's choosing and another selected by the SRSG.

**Q:** What is the UN's reaction to yesterday's demonstration which was quite obviously targeted against the United Nations?

### **D/ Spokesperson**

The UN's response to the demonstration is that it was a perfectly legal demonstration. In a democratic country people have the right to demonstrate, to raise issues that they don't like. I believe that the authorities have given permission for the demonstrations to take place and they were, as I said, fully entitled to do so.

Beyond that, we don't have any other comment.

**Q:** Do you think it was a general expression of what the Sudanese people think about the United Nations?

### **D/ Spokesperson**

We have to assume that it was a general expression, yes. And that is why the letter that was handed in to the UNDP building for onward transmission to the SRSG has in fact been passed to him – it was passed to him yesterday afternoon.

**Q:** Does it worry you that this is happening in Khartoum where the United Nations is significantly going to start its operations?

**D/ Spokesperson**

Clearly, we do not like events or demonstrations like this that are happening when they are aimed at us. But, having said that and as Mr. Pronk said, we are here for the Sudanese people. We are here to listen to them, we are here to listen to what they want and to help to ensure that a comprehensive peace happens, takes place, is implemented inside Sudan. Those are the reasons we are here.

**Q:** It is okay that you are saying that, I mean you have said that for a long period of time. But if this is a genuine expression of what Sudanese people really think, perhaps your message is not getting across and perhaps you should be concerned for the safety of your personnel. This could just be the start of further deterioration. For example, if the Security Council decides to take further measures against Sudan if it didn't comply with the ICC.

**D/ Spokesperson**

Thank you, Jonah, for your advice on how we should deal with our public information campaigns. I will certainly pass your word on that to Mr. Pronk. But I would also say that I don't want to speculate, at this point, as to what would happen. I think it is totally wrong to speculate. Clearly these are issues which are being dealt with at the highest levels, there is continuing ongoing conversations and dialogue between the senior management in the mission and the authorities and that is really what I can say at this point.

**Q:** So you are not concerned if things are taking a turn for the worst?

**D/ Spokesperson**

No, I am not saying that.

**Q:** You stated in your briefing that a fuel-laden United Nations chartered aircraft was shot at while in its final approach over juba. Do you accuse any party for this attack? What future pre-emptive steps do you have to prevent such incidents from recurring especially considering that south Sudan requires a major rehabilitation operation which demands an extensive transportation of equipment required?

Mr. Pronk is currently touring Darfur. The GoS had earlier announced that it was on the verge of dismantling this camp for security reasons and because some rebel elements are inside the camp thus posing a threat to security. What is it that has taken place in this regard?

**D/ Spokesperson**

First of all on the issue of the aircraft: at this point, we have no knowledge of who may have shot at the aircraft. I understand that it was a single shot that was fired and it was north of the

city of Juba as the aircraft was on its final approach. And at this point, obviously, we have no idea as to who was responsible for shooting it.

Clearly, everywhere where the United Nations operates, not just in Juba, not just in the south, but all over Sudan and in other countries where we operate, we take our security very, very seriously indeed and we will work with the local authorities to try to identify any people who might have a reason to fire at UN aircraft, UN vehicles or UN people.

On your second question, let me just ask you a question first, are you referring to Kalma camp?

**Q:** Yes.

**Blalock**

There are plans to relocate some of the IDPs from Kalma to an alternate location because Kalma has apparently upwards of 100,000 people. But this is because the relocation plan, the plan for relocation of the IDPs is not simply finding them another appropriate spot. It is because it is overcrowded and it has reached a level that is internationally unlawful. That is all I can say.

In terms of specific security threats, I am not sure what you meant by that but there are planned relocations.

**Q:** The government said that it had three places; one north of Nyala, the second east of Nyala and the other is the others will be distributed in other areas.

**Blalock**

I am not sure if the place for relocation has been finalized but I will check on that for you.

But in terms of relocation, it is being done in planning with the government, the United Nations partners and the NGOs who are doing the camp coordination. The decision will be taken by the GoS and the government in Nyala and they go out and assess the area where they would like to move people and draw a plan and organize relocation.

In terms of the actual locations, I wasn't aware of that but I could follow up on that for you this afternoon.

**D/ Spokesperson**

Two things I would just like to add briefly: first of all, before you go, make sure that you give us a number where we can contact you with any further information.

Secondly, of course the important thing here with regards to closing camps and relocating people is that it is done with full cooperation of the people involved, that it is done with the full cooperation with the community leaders and that the people know at all times what is being done. The very important issue here in all of the camps is that people know what is happening and that the move, any relocation, is handled smoothly and without any problems, without any violence.

**Q:** Have there been any tangible events on the ground in Darfur since resolutions 1591 and 1593 that you would consider to be effects or consequences of these resolutions?

A lot of people have been talking about harassment of agencies and United Nations staff in South Darfur. Can you give us some detail about what is actually happening?

**D/ Spokesperson**

Let me deal with your second question first.

Yes, there have been discussion ongoing – and as you know, the question about the treatment of United Nations and NGO humanitarian agencies in South Darfur – has been ongoing for a long time nearly since last December. It is something which is being dealt with. There has been a lot of discussion, a lot of talk, including in the highest levels. Most recently between the First Vice-president Mr. Taha and the SRSG. And the SRSG has been assured by the First Vice-president that this issue has been taken care of.

Clearly, we have to keep monitoring the situation; we are still discussing the situation because decisions can be taken at the highest levels which are not always necessarily translated into changed behavior or changed action lower down the chain. So we obviously have to keep monitoring and watching that situation.

But I would say that at this point the situation appears to have improved but, obviously, we are in close contact with all of the agencies – both United Nations and NGOs that are operating in the area – and we have instructed them to let us know the moment that anything should happen.

**Q:** What has happened; I heard people released but they still have quite serious charges against them?

**D/ Spokesperson**

Those cases are being handled and dealt with in direct contact with the authorities at several levels and those cases are being worked on, shall we say, so we will have to see how it develops.

**Q:** What are the cases? What has happened?

**D/ Spokesperson**

I can't give you any details at the moment.

You had another question I think. Could you repeat the first question?

**Q:** Is there any tangible evidence on the ground in Darfur, anywhere, that you think might be a consequence of the resolutions 1591 and 1593?

**D/ Spokesperson**

No, not that I am aware of. However, I think that we should wait until Mr. Pronk comes back because I am sure that these last three days that he has spent in Darfur he will have further information than we have here in Khartoum.

So, at the moment there is nothing that I can tell you but let us wait and see what happens when he comes back and we will report to you, obviously, anything we are able to report.

**Q:** Mr. Pronk said that after all this, a national trial could be held to prosecute the suspects so why the ICC?

There is a growing perception amongst Sudanese after the resolution exempts United States bodies that the UN bodies are not fair. What is your comment?

**D/ Spokesperson**

I am not at this point going to comment any further on that particular resolution and on the ICC except to say that yesterday there was a, if you like, symbolic handing over by the Secretary-General to the ICC and that is the reason why the UN can no longer comment on the issues relating to the ICC. It is now their file. The Secretary-General was ordered to hand over the file by the Security Council resolution. He has now done that so it is no longer in the hands of the UN, it is in the hands of the ICC and we will have to see what happens and whether the ICC is going to comment on it later but it is not for the UN to comment what is now an ICC matter.

I think that what I have just said to you applied to both of your question because the decision was taken to pass the issue to the ICC.

**Q:** According to Mr. Pronk a national trial could be held.

**D/ Spokesperson**

I know that is what he said and I don't want to add anything to what he said. He did say that, I believe, in his statement in his press conference last Monday. I don't want to add to that. You can obviously report what he said last Monday but I will not add any more to that.

**Q:** Following the demonstrations that took place in Darfur, what is the assistance the United Nations can give in solving the problems of the IDPs in Darfur as insecurity continues?

Secondly, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April as you said, some tribesmen came and harassed the camp in Darfur that the African Union Civil Police decided to intervene after request from humanitarian organizations. The armed men left the camp. My question is: what is the role of the African Union there if they have to intervene after they are requested?

**Blalock**

Sorry that I came in late but I assume you are referring to the demonstrations that happened in Abu Shouk.

The leaders of the demonstration met with OCHA and AMIS immediately after to express their concerns and OCHA and AMIS are actually discussing how to increase patrols and their

presence in the camps. Right now it is limited actually by capacity but you may know there was an assessment mission that took place about ten days ago, African Union, EU, the United Nations and USAID assessing the situation in Darfur and how to further deploy more African Union forces especially Civilian Police. The recommendation is that 745 Civilian Police should be deployed and thus we will increase their presence in the camps.

#### **D/ Spokesperson**

Thank you Dawn.

On your second question about the role of the African Union, I want to make it clear that security in the camps is the responsibility of the Government of Sudan. Those are the only people, the GoS, who are responsible for security in the camps. If the GoS would do nothing then inevitably those in authority in the camps, by which I mean the humanitarian aid workers, are, and were in this case, forced to bring in the African Union Civilian Police. They had to ask the African Union Civilian Police to do it. But the primary task of protecting the people in the camps in Darfur is a task for the Government of Sudan. If nothing happens, then of course the African Union will have to come in and intervene and protect the people. That is how it works.

So there was a wait. People were waiting to see if the government police would make any response. When they didn't they then requested the African Union to come in.

**Q:** You stated that there is an assessment of the role of the United Nations agencies between the GoS and the United Nations. Why should such an assessment take place?

There are also accusations that the United Nations is lacking in its operations in the camps in Darfur. Is this connected to the assessment being carried out?

#### **D/ Spokesperson**

Are you referring to the humanitarian assessments which are going on?

#### **Blalock**

There are ongoing assessments for other needs and food needs throughout Sudan. Those assessments you mean are interagency and NGO assessments to determine what are the needs, not only of IDPs but also of resident populations that we are not reaching.

These assessments are going further and further afield and reaching more and more populations.

I think you may have been confused when I said earlier that an assessment mission of the African Union, NGOs and the United Nations on the role of the African Union in Darfur. So please, I hope you are not confusing matters.

Secondly on what you said that the United Nations, partners and the NGO community is not doing enough in Darfur, I beg to differ. We are doing as much as we can. There are over 10,000 humanitarian aid workers in Darfur now. Apparently a year ago there were about 100. It is one of the largest humanitarian aid missions going on now and we are doing as much as

we can to address the situation and the humanitarian crisis that is continuing. We are now meeting the needs of 2.5 million conflict-affected people in Darfur everyday.

**D/ Spokesperson**

I would just like to add a general point here. This aid operation in Darfur has now been going on for a long time and it has in fact saved a lot of lives. Many lives have been saved. Remember that people are dying from many reasons. They are dying of shortage of food, they are dying because of poor sanitation or lack of sanitation in some cases, they are dying because of lack of healthcare as we noted in the other parts of the first report that we gave this morning. There is shortage of food, there are many reasons why people are dying and I think that the international community, not just the United Nations, but the international aid agencies – the NGOs – have all been working on doing this and in responding to the needs.

If you ask why assessments take place, assessments take place so that we can target exactly the people who need the most assistance. If resources are limited, you have to prioritize who needs those scarce resources; who needs them the most.

Certainly Dawn, or myself, will be very happy to give you specific details of specific projects that are going on but there is a lot of humanitarian aid happening in Darfur so I cannot accept what you say that there is not enough humanitarian aid going on.

**Q:** Do you consider that Sudan has rejected the United Nations resolution on the ICC?

**D/ Spokesperson**

As I said to you earlier, I don't particularly want to comment on the ICC resolution at this point. I think nothing really, no real purpose, is served for us, for UNMIS, by commenting on it at this point.

**Q:** But Jan Pronk spoke about it at the weekend he said that as yet he has not been communicated any decision one way or the other. So as an update on that, has any decision been communicated to the United Nations or do you consider, having seen the weight of the reports in the press, that Sudan has rejected?

**D/ Spokesperson**

I don't think that that is a question that I can answer. What I can tell you is that the situation is that dialogue is taking place between the UN, between UNMIS and the GoS. I am not going to say any more than that because if I say anything about it it could jeopardize dialogue which is taking place. So that is the way I will leave it now.

**Q:** So you don't consider it a rejection; if dialogue is taking place you don't consider it as black and white as it would appear?

**D/ Spokesperson**

These issues are never black and white and this is an issue which is now in the hands of the ICC. So that is one other reason I don't want to say anything.

**Q:** Then why are you dialoguing?

**D/ Spokesperson**

At a local level, of course, conversations go on. But I am not going further than that. That is all I can tell you at the moment.

Any more questions?

No? Alright thank you all for coming in and we look forward to seeing you all next week.

— *End*