



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN
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UNMIS Media Monitoring Report, 26th March, 2006
(By Public Information Office)

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IN THE NEWS TODAY:

- **AMIS-UN Transition**
 - Parliamentary group to tour Darfur to study security situation
 - Nigeria condemns Sudan stance towards AU efforts in Darfur
 - US rally on Sudan crisis led by former NBA star
 - Sudan President says foreign intervention inflamed Darfur crisis
 - Sudan urges Arab support to African peacekeepers in Darfur
 - UN to speed planning for peacekeepers in Darfur
 - Sudan FM reiterates rejection of UN force to Darfur
 - Sudan rebukes UN plan for quick Darfur takeover
- **UN**
 - UN extends peacekeeping mission in S. Sudan
 - Citizens affected by the Meroe Dam project committed to seeking UN assistance
- **GoNU**
 - Army refutes report of Sudanese military bases on Chadian territory
 - Salva Kiir reviews Darfur, peace implementation and Arab summit
- **Arab Summit Meeting**
 - Arab League supports extending African peacekeepers in Darfur
 - Arab League to support peace in Sudan
- **Darfur/ Abuja talks/Chad**
 - Minnawi declares SLM ready for agreement
 - Chad's Deby accuses Sudan of violating Tripoli deal
 - Fighting along Chad-Sudan border threatens Darfur aid - UN
 - UN concerned about new violence on Chad-Sudan border
- **Southern Sudan**
 - 10 villagers killed in tribal fighting in Sudan's Equatoria

HIGHLIGHTS:

AMIS-UN Transition

Parliamentary group to tour Darfur to study security situation

(*AlAyaam* – 26th Mar. **Khartoum**) A parliamentary team headed by Dr. Jalal Tauer, the head of the Parliamentary Defence and Security Team at the National Assembly, embarks on a tour of the Darfur region to assess the security situation in a number of states.

According to sources, their tour takes them to Kassala, Bahr-el-Jebel and Greater Darfur and is triggered by the recent developments with relation to the deployment of international forces between Sudan and Chad and recent Chadian allegations against the Sudan.

The head of the committee said that the team will be in Juba to study the implications of the recent LRA attacks while in Kassala it will get acquainted to the situation in relation to the border row between Sudan and Ethiopia.

The team will report to the National Assembly as it comes out of recess at the beginning of next month.

Nigeria condemns Sudan stance towards AU efforts in Darfur

(*The Tide/ST* – 23rd Mar. **Abuja**) Nigeria has condemned the Sudanese government for instigating the local population against African Union's (AU) efforts toward peace in troubled Darfur region, local press said.

Earlier this month Sudan threatened to withdraw from the AU in an effort to thwart a UN takeover of AU peacekeeping mission in the country's restive western region of Darfur. Also, Khartoum organized demonstrations in Khartoum and orchestrated a press campaign against the AU forces in Darfur.

Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Minister, Olu Adeniji who appeared on a News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) Forum in Abuja at the weekend, said that such blunder was bad for the regional body's painstaking efforts.

With the government and rebel groups yet to agree on a deal toward permanent peace in Darfur, Adeniji said that the least the government could do was to allow the AU to explore all available peace initiatives.

“Before you get peace, you must talk and that is what the AU is doing. That is where we come in. It is imperative that the government takes note of this,” he declared.

He said that the AU at its Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa, resolved that it should maintain its 7,000 peace keeping force in Darfur, but also unanimously resolved that the UN must now be “greatly involved.”

Adeniji said that maintaining the 7,000 peace keepers in Darfur had been “a very huge problem.”

Arguing further on why the UN should be involved, Adeniji said: "Since the world is a global village, every part of the village must share in the joy and misery of the village."

He further said that the African troops in Darfur were not sufficient in number and equipment, hence the need for the entire world to contribute.

The minister, however, disagreed that the UN presence might make the AU irrelevant to the Darfur situation.

"To ensure permanent peace, the parties must talk and this is where Africa comes in," he said. He specifically noted that the final peace deal for Liberia was sealed in Ghana, while Sierra Leone's peace efforts was sealed in Nigeria.

Adeniji appealed to the warring parties in Sudan to sheathe their swords and resolve their disagreements on the round table for the sake of the suffering people of Darfur. "Above all, Africa cannot continue to be the weeping boy of the continent. We have to grow," he stated.

The warring parties - the Government of Sudan and the two rebel groups, JEM and SLM/A- are currently in the seventh round of peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city.

US rally on Sudan crisis led by former NBA star

(AP/ST - 23rd Mar. **Philadelphia**) Former NBA star Manute Bol and others rallied near Independence Hall on Thursday to push for intervention in the humanitarian crisis in Sudan's Darfur region.

The rally was part of a 300-mile (483 kilometers) trek being made by a former Sudanese slave, Simon Deng, who is marching from United Nations headquarters in New York to Washington, D.C., in an attempt to bring attention to the violence in Darfur.

Bol, a 7-foot-7 (2.31 meters) native of Sudan who played for several NBA teams including the Philadelphia 76ers, said his homeland needs more assistance than just food and money. The people there need protection from the ongoing violence and help from the United States and United Nations, he said.

"You cannot send food to Darfur without protection," Bol said. "Those people are in trouble."

The United Nations has described Darfur as the world's gravest humanitarian crisis. Along with the thousands of dead, more than 2 million people have been displaced by the fighting between ethnic African tribes and the Arab-dominated government and militias it supports.

Other speakers at the rally, which was attended by about 100 people, compared the crisis to past ones in Bosnia and Rwanda and said the world needs to pay attention.

"Most of the fellow Sudanese, they don't want to talk about it," Deng told the crowd. "I am standing here for the simple reason (that) I need a solution."

Sudan President says foreign intervention inflamed Darfur crisis

(AP/ST - 23rd Mar. **Khartoum**) Mar 23, 2006 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese president Thursday blamed the Darfur crisis on foreign intervention motivated by economic interests and rebel "intransigence."

Speaking to a gathering of Arab finance ministers, President Omar al-Bashir said his government could resolve the three-year conflict in Darfur, western Sudan, if "foreign intervention ceases" and "Darfur rebels end their intransigence."

He claimed the dispute began with "a fight over a camel" that was inflamed by foreigners who were interested in Darfur's natural resources, which included petroleum.

"The enemies of the country wanted to set a fire of sedition in Darfur, which until then had been a mere tribal problem," al-Bashir said.

Sudan urges Arab support to African peacekeepers in Darfur

(*ST* – 23rd Mar. **Khartoum**) Sudan has urged Arab countries to support African Union peacekeeping force in war torn region of Darfur, and to contribute to Darfur reconstruction and development programmes.

The Federal Minister of Finance and National Economy al-Zubair Ahmed al-Hassan called for contribution by the Arab countries to logistic and financial support to the African Union (AU) forces in Darfur to qualify it to carry out its tasks fully.

He invited Arab league to convene — in coordination with the AU and Sudan Government — a conference for reconstruction and development in Darfur after signing a peace agreement in Darfur which is expected to be reached soon.

This came when the minister was addressing the inaugural session of the Arab Economic and Social Council Thursday at the Friendship Hall here under his chairmanship.

On the efforts being exerted to solve Darfur crisis, the minister pointed out that the negotiations between the government and the rebel movements in Darfur are progressing ahead. He expressed appreciations for the Arab League and its active participation within the mediation team in the current Abuja talks.

Al-Zubair also urged support for the outcome of the second meeting of the donors in Paris earlier this month, which was attended by the Arab League and a number of Arab counties.

The final communiqué which was issued by the first donors' conference in Oslo welcomed the Arab League commitment to close cooperation with the United Nations, the World Bank and other partners for supporting the development and reconstruction efforts in Sudan.

The minister said Sudan looks forward that the fourth coordinative meeting of the Arab finance institutions and funds which is to be convened before the end of this year would mobilize more resources for supporting rehabilitation and development programmes.

The donors conference which was held in Oslo in April 2005, in the presence of a number of Arab countries and the representative of the Arab League, had pledged a sum of 4.6 billion dollars about 70% of it concentrated on the humanitarian aid and 30% for development in southern Sudan and the war-affected areas, besides the less developed areas during 2005-2011, which represents one third of the needs. Sudan Government shall provide the remaining two thirds.

UN to speed planning for peacekeepers in Darfur

(Reuters/ST – 23rd Mar. **United Nations**) The U.N. Security Council voted on Friday to speed planning for a new U.N. peacekeeping force to be sent to Sudan's western Darfur region later this year to relieve underfinanced African Union troops.

A resolution adopted unanimously by the 15-nation council gave Secretary-General Kofi Annan until April 24 to prepare "a range of options for a United Nations operation in Darfur."

But U.N. officials and council diplomats acknowledged they could not send in U.N. troops or even an assessment mission to help in the planning without the approval of the government of Sudan, and they encouraged Khartoum to cooperate in an eventual transition.

"Obviously this is a mission that will deploy with the consent of the government of Sudan," U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Guehenno told reporters.

An African Union peacekeeping force of some 7,000 troops is already in Darfur, seeking to protect villagers from marauding Arab militias that the United Nations and the United States say are being armed by Khartoum — an accusation the government denies.

But the AU force has proven ineffective in ending the violence, prompting Annan to call for its replacement by a bigger and better equipped U.N. force.

Sudan's government, however, has said it does not want U.N. troops in Darfur until a peace agreement is reached in talks taking place in the Nigerian capital Abuja.

The African Union's Peace and Security Council, bending under pressure from Sudan, voted this month to extend its mission in Darfur through Sept. 30, while affirming in principle its plan to eventually hand off to a U.N. force.

Mustafa Osman Ismail, adviser to the Sudanese president for foreign affairs, told reporters in Khartoum on Friday his government would be asking Arab leaders attending a summit in Sudan to contribute to the AU force in Darfur.

"We will be asking them to give funds at this summit," he said. Arab leaders meet next week in Khartoum for the annual summit of the Arab League.

The main donors to the AU mission in Sudan are Canada, the United States, Britain and the European Union.

The Security Council resolution also extended the mandate of a separate U.N. peacekeeping mission in southern Sudan, due to expire on Friday.

It also asked Annan to prepare recommendations within a month on how the U.N. mission in the south could help crack down on Uganda's notorious Lord's Resistance Army, an armed group that has wreaked havoc in the region for decades.

The LRA has terrorized communities in Uganda's remote north for two decades and some of its fighters have recently crossed over into neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

Led by self-proclaimed prophet Joseph Kony, the LRA has killed tens of thousands of unarmed villagers, slicing off survivors' lips or ears and abducting more than 10,000 children as fighters, porters and sex slaves.

Sudan FM reiterates rejection of UN force to Darfur

(*AP/ST* – 25th Mar. **Khartoum**) Sudan Saturday repeated its rejection of U.N. peace keeping forces to Darfur, reacting to the Security Council's decision to expand the monitoring operations.

"We reject sending any further troops to Darfur," Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol Ajawin said at a preparatory meeting of his Arab counterparts in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, ahead of the Arab summit next week.

Ajawin asked Arab foreign ministers for their countries' support for Sudan's position.

Sudan rebukes UN plan for quick Darfur takeover

(*Reuters/ST* – 25th Mar. **Khartoum**) Sudan on Saturday urged the United Nations to stop sending negative signals to Darfur rebels after the U.N. Security Council voted to speed planning for a new peacekeeping force there.

Sudan has rejected the deployment of U.N. troops to its western Darfur region to relieve a 7,000-strong underfunded and under-equipped African Union force currently monitoring a widely ignored ceasefire there.

Darfur rebels have from the beginning of the conflict demanded U.N. troops be deployed in Darfur and the government feels the U.N. takeover would encourage intransigence from the armed groups.

"They should refrain from mentioning these negative messages and taking the wrong decisions at the wrong time," state minister of foreign affairs al-Samani al-Wasiyla told reporters in Khartoum.

Wasiyla added Sudan did not reject a U.N. force outright, but had to decide when or if it was necessary for U.N. troops to take over from the Africans already deployed. He said that time could be after a peace deal was agreed in the Nigerian capital Abuja, where faltering talks continue.

Sudan signed a separate peace deal last year to end Africa's longest civil war in its south. Under that deal 10,715 U.N. troops and police are being deployed to monitor the ceasefire.

Wasiyla said that should be used as a model for the international community for Darfur.

Wasiyla said Sudan was opposed to U.N. forces because that would imply a failure of the AU mission, which is unable to complete its work because of a lack of funds and equipment. He said the international community should fulfil those needs.

"We do not want to be the reason for the failure of the African Union," he said, adding the United Nations should be trying to strengthen the AU as a regional peacekeeping body.

Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail on Friday told reporters Sudan would be asking Arab leaders meeting in Khartoum for an annual summit next week to provide more money to the AU mission to continue its work.

UN

UN extends peacekeeping mission in S. Sudan

(*AP/ST* – 24th Mar. **United Nations**) The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously Friday to keep U.N. peacekeepers in Sudan to monitor a peace deal ending a 21-year civil war and authorized planning for the expected extension of the U.N. force's operations to conflict-wracked Darfur.

The resolution adopted by the council also urged the U.N. force "to make full use of its current mandate and capabilities" on rebels from Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army and other armed groups who have been attacking civilians and committing human rights abuses in Sudan.

The top U.N. envoy in Sudan, Jan Pronk, warned Tuesday that much of Sudan is in trouble and the international community is still not acting fast enough. The violence in Darfur is getting worse, the LRA has terrorized the south, and new violence could engulf the east unless the Security Council helps push for a peace deal, he said.

A year ago, the Security Council voted to send 10,700 U.N. peacekeepers to monitor a January 2005 peace agreement between Sudan's mostly Muslim north and the Christian and animist south, in which some 2 million people died. More than 7,000 peacekeepers are currently deployed, and the resolution adopted by the council extends the U.N. force's mandate until Sept. 24, "with the intention to renew it for further periods."

Citizens affected by the Meroe Dam project committed to seeking UN assistance

(*AlAyaam* – 26th Mar. **Khartoum**) The committee representing the victims affected by the ongoing construction of the Meroe Dam in northern Sudan say they are committed to seek a possible UN role to address their grievances.

A high ranking member of the committee said recent reports that they committee does not want a UN role to help address their problem is a blatant lie as they are in contact with the UN Mission in Sudan in the framework of their efforts to seek a just redress to their grievances.

He said they are also committed to dialogue with the government on condition that the government recognise the committee elected by their people.

GoNU

Army refutes report of Sudanese military bases on Chadian territory

(*AlAyaam* – 26th Mar. **Khartoum**) The General Command of the Sudan Armed Forces says the SAF has no military air base inside Chadian territory and does not launch or support any military operation along the border region with Chad.

The office of the official spokesperson for the SAF says the SAF is fully committed to the agreement reached with Chad in Tripoli summit.

This comes in response to a recent accusation by President Deby accusing Sudan of violating the Tripoli agreement by setting up military bases in Chad on which military flights operate to strike into Chadian territory.

Salva Kiir reviews Darfur, peace implementation and Arab summit

(*ST* – 23rd Mar. **Khartoum**) The First Vice President, let. Gen. Salava Kiir Mayardit on Thursday reviewed in a meeting with the Presidential Advisor Mansour Khaled Darfur peace process, peace implementation and preparations for the Arab summit.

In this meeting, Salva Kiir renewed the keenness and commitment of the Sudanese government to find a peaceful settlement to the crisis of Darfur. He described Darfur crisis as the question number one in the country.

He reviewed with Mansour Khaled the process of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement CPA, as well as the Arab league Summit Conference set to take place in Khartoum this week, and its expected outcome.

Mansour Khaled pointed out that the CPA implementation was going on and that the government of National Unity works to resolve any question relevant to this matter within the framework of the CPA provisions.

On what he expects from the summit, the Presidential Advisor pointed out that the outcome was of two facets. He said the first deals with what the Government of National Unity, expect from the summit and the second would be what the SPLM expects from the Arab League in boosting its efforts for development and peace in the south.

On the contribution of the Movement to resolve the question of eastern Sudan, Mansour Khaled pointed out that the efforts being exerted by the SPLM have never ceased, pointing out to the visit of the First Vice President to Eritrea to review a number of questions including questions relevant to Eastern Sudan.

Arab Summit Meeting

Arab League supports extending African peacekeepers in Darfur

(*Xinhua/ST* – 23rd Mar. **Khartoum**) Amr Musa, Secretary General of the Arab League (AL), stressed here Thursday his support for African Union Peace and Security Council's recent decision to extend the mandate of the African peacekeeping forces in Sudan's western region of Darfur.

"Sudan is a sovereign country and the deployment of foreign troops on its land should not be carried out without an agreement of the Sudanese government," Musa told a press conference.

Musa arrived here Wednesday evening to attend an AL foreign ministerial meeting in preparation for the coming Arab summit to be held here on March 28-29.

At the press conference, the AL chief disclosed that the Arab summit would discuss in closed-door sessions a number of political issues, including the situation in Iraq, the relations between Syria and Lebanon, the situation on the Palestinian lands as well as the Darfur crisis in Sudan.

He expressed his belief that all Arab heads of state will attend the Khartoum summit meeting, saying "the attendance will be intensive" and "no head of state of any Arab country has submitted to us an apology for his absence."

Earlier on Thursday morning, the AL Social and Economic Council started its two-day meeting with attendance of ministers of finance, trade and social affairs from all the 22 Arab states.

Arab League to support peace in Sudan

(*ST* – 25th Mar. **Khartoum**) Among draft resolutions to be referred by the Arab League Ministerial Council to the Arab Summit, to open here Tuesday 28 March, is one calling for supporting peace, development and unity in Sudan.

The draft resolution, which also covers Darfur problem, affirms that the African Union will continue its efforts and accomplish its mission in tackling the problem, the Egyptian MENA reported.

It says that sending any troops other than those of the AU requires approval by the Sudanese government. The draft also calls on Arab countries in Africa to boost their participation in the African Union forces in Darfur.

The Ministerial Council urged parties involved in the Sudanese peace negotiations on Darfur to work on reaching an overall and final settlement to the problem during the current round of negotiations.

The Ministerial Council called for supporting Sudan's efforts to tackle its humanitarian crisis and restore peace and security in Darfur.

It thanked member states that offered humanitarian aid to Darfur and urged member states, Arab organizations, specialized ministerial councils and NGOs to offer urgent humanitarian assistance and technical aid to Darfur.

As for eastern Sudan, the draft resolution stresses the necessity of reaching an urgent peaceful solution to the crisis through peace negotiations under the sponsorship of Libya and the participation of the Arab League.

As for southern Sudan, the foreign ministers welcomed steps taken to put into force the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Nairobi 9 January 2005.

The council also called for an urgent meet to discuss how to tackle the problem of Sudan's debts.

Darfur/ Abuja talks/Chad

Minnawi declares SLM ready for agreement

(*AlSahafa* – 26th Mar. **Khartoum, Abuja**) SLM leader Minni Minnawi has announced he is ready to sign a final peace agreement with the government within 24 hours.

He accused the government delegation to the talks of putting obstacles before a possible agreement but said a change in the strategy of the government team will facilitate the process.

He said that the SLM as a movement does not support any form of “colonialization” but international forces normally come in when the parties to a crisis have failed to resolve the crisis. He said that government has failed to resolve the problem in Darfur and that is why the UN feels it has to come in because there is a humanitarian crisis in the area.

Asked why the SLM insists in its demand for the Vice-presidency, Minnawi said that they do not have any problem with the positions and their only problem is that they want their complete rights. He pointed out that they supported the Naivasha agreement in principle because it gives the south its full rights. The share in power and wealth granted to the National Congress Party is that for the whole of northern Sudan and it is from this share that they demand to be given their rights.

He further pointed out that the Naivasha Agreement “is not scripture” and the 52% granted the NCP can be reviewed.

Chad’s Deby accuses Sudan of violating Tripoli deal

(*Reuters/ST* – 24th Mar. **N’Djamena**) Chad’s President Idriss Deby called on Libya and the African Union on Friday to press Sudan to respect an agreement to ban insurgents operating in its violent western Darfur region after a string of attacks.

Chad and Sudan accuse each other of backing rebels fighting governments in N’Djamena and Khartoum but agreed at a summit hosted by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in Tripoli in February to stop insurgents setting up bases on their territory.

"We signed an agreement and since it was signed it is certain that the Sudanese government has not respected this agreement. I would even say it has violated certain clauses," Deby told French radio in an interview broadcast on Friday.

"I appeal to the international community, the African Union mediation, the mediation of (Libyan leader) Gaddafi, to put pressure on the Sudanese government so that it respects the terms of the agreement we signed as quickly as possible."

Diplomats have said the uneasy relationship between the two countries risks spreading the conflict in Sudan’s Darfur region, which borders Chad, even more widely.

Chad accused Sudan earlier this month of backing a cross-border raid by militia fighters.

Human Rights Watch said last month that Chadian farmers were being beaten, harassed and killed in cross-border raids that were sometimes supported by Sudanese army helicopters, citing interviews with Chadians who had fled their homes.

Sudan denies the charges.

In the Darfur region, feared Arab militia known as Janjaweed have conducted a campaign of rape, killing and looting which the United States has called genocide.

Khartoum accuses Chad of supporting the Darfur rebels.

The conflict has spilled over into Chad, with Chadian refugees from along the long and porous border area swelling camps already overcrowded with civilians from Darfur.

The U.N. Security Council agreed on Thursday to ask Secretary-General Kofi Annan to greatly speed up planning for a new U.N. force in western Darfur to support a poorly equipped and under-funded 7,000-strong African Union peacekeeping force.

Fighting along Chad-Sudan border threatens Darfur aid - UN

(AP/ST – 24th Mar. N'Djamena)—Fighting on both sides of the Chad-Sudan border has sparked a new influx of refugees and threatens aid to thousands who had fled violence in Sudan's western Darfur region, the U.N. food aid agency warned on Friday.

Most of the people affected by recent clashes between government troops and rebels only have enough food to last them a month or two, the World Food Program said, appealing for urgent financial support to stem an even bigger humanitarian crisis.

The warning came days after Chadian troops launched a major offensive against rebels who had set up bases along the unstable frontier. The operation came on top of raids into eastern Chad by armed groups involved in a civil war that has devastated Darfur.

"We are at an extremely delicate stage in Chad — right on the edge," Stefano Porretti, WFP's Country Director, said in a statement released in the capital, N'djamena.

"The longer the insecurity in the area persists, the more serious the situation will become" for the 207,400 Darfur refugees sheltering in 12 camps in eastern Chad.

"Guarantees of both financial commitment to our operations and security in the region are essential to help stave off an even more serious humanitarian crisis, which we could have on our hands within weeks," he said.

Some 46,000 refugees fleeing violence in the Central African Republic have also crossed into Chad, with the numbers growing, WFP said. Food supplies for those refugees are expected to run out by June without more help.

Since October, scores of defectors from the Chadian army have joined Chadian rebel groups on the border with Darfur. Hundreds have been killed in regular clashes between government troops and rebels.

UN concerned about new violence on Chad-Sudan border

(Xinhua/ST – 25th Mar. Nairobi) UN World Food Program (WFP) has warned that an escalation of the violence along the Chadian border with Sudan's Darfur region, which has forced thousands of people to leave their homes, could seriously impede humanitarian assistance.

In a statement received here Saturday, WFP said "It is clear that the security situation along the border has deteriorated in recent weeks."

"WFP is coordinating with partners, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, to ensure the situation is closely monitored. But the longer the insecurity in the area persists, the more serious the situation will become," it said.

An initial WFP assessment of the most affected areas in the eastern Chad border zone indicated that most people affected by the recent violence had enough food for another month or two, largely because the last harvest was one of the best in recent years.

"But after that, things are far less certain. Financially, our operation in eastern Chad is already clinging on by its fingertips— significant new requirements will require significant new resources from our donors," said the statement

Southern Sudan

10 villagers killed in tribal fighting in Sudan's Equatoria

(*Juba Post/ST* – 24th Mar. **Juba**) Inter tribal clashes between Dinka Bor and Moru villagers occurred in Bambu, Ibba country in Western Equatoria State, with the death toll reaching 10 people, the Juba Post reported.

Many Bambu villagers have taken refuge in Madebe village, nine miles from Ibba, where they were reported to be sleeping in the open without adequate food and other daily needs.

The cause of the fighting is not known.

Southern Sudan government was confronted by the tribal fighting in this region since the signing of the Sudan Peace Agreement. Earlier this month, the Deputy Governor of Western Equatoria, Joseph Ngere Pachiko, said that the security situation in his state has improved.

In December 2005, the southern authorities with the UNHCR started to relocate the Dinka to their home land in Jonglei State.

The Dinka had been involved in a series of clashes with members of another tribe in Mundri, Western Equatoria, where they have been living for the past 14 years. The other tribe accused the Dinka of allowing their cattle to encroach on its grazing land and destroy its crops.

Moru and Azande people are peasants whose livelihood depends entirely on agricultural products. The Dinka on the other hand are pastoralists and farmers.

The influx of the Dinka Bor Population into Western Equatoria State was attributed to the split in the SPLM/A on 27th August 1991.

The split was along tribal lines, with the dissidents drawing support mainly from Nuer, while the Dinka ethnic groups largely supported the mainstream movement. Confrontation between these factions culminated into Bor massacre in 1991.

Taking the advantage of the split, the Government of the Sudan (GoS) attacked and recaptured Bor town in 1992.

These incidents resulted in mass exodus of Dinka Bor westwards. Initially, the IDPs had wanted to settle in Bahr El Ghazal, but after they were refused settlement, they continued

their movement until they arrived Mundri and were only allowed to settle there after Bishop Nathaniel Garang pleaded with Church leaders in Mundri to allow his people to settle.