



Print: Printed with the permission of the Colourful Network.

Terror in Sudan Update: Is rape still being used as a weapon of war and is tribal conflict the cause or ethnic cleansing?



Deborah Gabriel

Deborah Gabriel speaks exclusively to the Head of the AU Mission in Sudan about the current situation on the ground including the recent killing of AU troops, the use of rape as a weapon of war and the vast funding needed to keep the operation going.

Tribal conflicts or crimes against humanity?



© IRIN

“Everyone has their own share of responsibility for what is happening. So let’s just get on with the business of bringing a lasting political solution to the problems in Darfur”

Baba Gana Kingibe, Head of the AU Mission in Sudan

Earlier this year Black Britain reported on widespread rapes taking place in Darfur and the way in which sexual violence against women was being used as a weapon of war by the Arab Janjaweed militia.

Six months on and Darfur has become a more dangerous place, even for African Union (AU) peacekeeping troops, six of whom were ambushed and gunned down in October.

Reports of rape persist and despite a UN enquiry on Darfur that concluded earlier that **“heinous crimes against humanity”** had taken place in 2003, the Sudanese Vice President, Ali Osman Taha recently dismissed this, insisting that the problem is down to **“tribal conflicts.”**

Baba Gana Kingibe has a huge responsibility on his shoulders presiding over one of the most dangerous places on the African continent equal to the size of France, trying to maintain peace and protect civilians under the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

When the question was put to Mr Kingibe about whether ethnic cleansing had taken place in Darfur or if it was all down to tribal wars, he told Black Britain: **“I think that one is the cause and one is the effect.”**

According to Mr Kingibe there is: **“an historical struggle”** in that part of Sudan and: **“a long history of inter-tribal conflict which also coincides with a competition for resources – especially between the herdsmen and the farmers.”**

But that is only one part of the picture. Political reasons also play a part coupled with a lack of participation in the governance of Sudan by some groups. The end result being: **"that thousands and thousands of people have died."**

Referring to the UN Secretary General's Commission of Enquiry to establish whether genocide took place in Darfur, Mr Kingibe told Black Britain that he was: **"comfortable with the report's findings."**

Inside the 176- page dossier which stopped short of saying that genocide took place in Darfur, nonetheless the report states:

"The conclusion that no genocidal policy has been pursued and implemented in Darfur by the government authorities, directly or through the militias under their control, should not be taken in any way as detracting from the gravity of crimes perpetrated in that region.

International offences such as the crimes against humanity and war crimes that have been committed in Darfur may be no less serious and heinous than genocide."

Black Britain asked Mr Kingibe who he thought was to blame for the current situation in Darfur, but refusing to point the finger in a single direction he said:

"Everyone has their own share of responsibility for what is happening. So let's just get on with the business of bringing a lasting political solution to the problems in Darfur."

The Head of AMIS said that the priority is to ensure that the millions of unarmed civilians who fled to refugee camps in neighbouring Chad are able to return to their homes and regain their livelihoods, warning that: **"There cannot be a military solution"** to the problems in Darfur.

Continued rapes and the killing of AU Troops

In July 2004 Amnesty International produced a report documenting the incidence of mass rape in Sudan and earlier this year a damning report by Medecin Sans Frontiers (MSF) suggested that there were up to 500 reported cases of rape in Darfur which was being used as a weapon of war.



Two of its officials were arrested by the Sudanese government for **"spying"** and **"publishing false reports"** but were later released following international condemnation.

“ I would certainly be surprised and it has not been my experience

In recent weeks NGOs in Sudan have reported that the rapes

have continued unabated and that women do not even bother to report the attacks anymore because they don't feel that the police will take any action.

Black Britain questioned Baba Kingibe on what measures have been put in place since May to address the problem. Whilst admitting that rapes are still occurring, he said that since AU troops had been working with the Sudanese police **"to escort vulnerable women outside the camps, especially to collect firewood, the incidents have greatly reduced."**

Mr Kingibe said that the Sudanese government's **"state of denial over whether rapes existed in Darfur"**, had not helped the situation:

"If they had admitted to that fact right from day one, perhaps we could have taken more effective measures to reduce it even further. But at any rate we are getting on top of it."

that the SLA has made it their policy to rape women but in any society there are incidents of rape and Darfur is no exception "

Baba Gana Kingibe, Head of the AU Mission in Sudan

When Black Britain repeated claims by women in Darfur reported to NGOs that the Sudanese Liberation Army had also been raping women, Mr Kingibe stated that the targeted rape of women **"to dehumanize and humiliate them"** was being carried out by the Arab Janjaweed militia.

He continued: **"I would certainly be surprised and it has not been my experience that the SLA has made it their policy to rape women but in any society there are incidents of rape and Darfur is no exception."**

Mr Kingibe said that he believed that rape had been used as a strategic weapon of war, stating **"There are indications that indeed that has been the case."**

AU Troops have recently come under greater pressure than ever following the killing of six personnel last month. Mr Kingibe recently said that: **"there is only so much provocation that AU troops can tolerate."**

Black Britain asked the Head of AMIS whether his troops were likely to be pushed over the top. Mr Kingibe said that his 7000+ strong contingent of peacekeeping troops from various parts of Africa, despite being trained military personnel **"are only human."**

But he commended the incredible restraint they have demonstrated in adhering to the strict rules of engagement which prohibits them from reacting: **"even in the case of extreme provocation."**

Black Britain asked Mr Kingibe who was responsible for the killing of the six AU troops in that fateful attack. He stated that whilst an investigation is still in process, the evidence given by AU troops present during the ambush is that the SLA were responsible:

"The vehicles belonged to the SLA, the manner of dress was that of the SLA and the area that the troops were in is controlled by the SLA."

Is the AU Mission in Sudan running out of cash?



“ Without the cooperation and support [of the international community] there would be no African Union Mission on the ground, quite frankly ”

Baba Gana Kingibe, Head of the AU Mission in Sudan

Still on the point of the recent killing of AU troops in Darfur, Black Britain put to Mr Kingibe, the suggestion by former UN Force Commander Romeo Dallaire that the AU troops ran out of ammunition pointing to a serious funding problem.

Dismissing this as factually incorrect, Mr Kingibe said it was true that the troops ran out of ammunition, but: **"it had nothing to do with our cash flow."**

Pointing out that the ambushed AU troops were: **"an observer military group patrol team."** Mr Kingibe said that they were there only to perform patrol duties and were therefore not: **"armed to the teeth."**

He explained that they ran out of ammunition because they were engaged with the ambushers over a prolonged period of time, which: **"had tragic consequences."**

Expanding on the rising costs of increasing the AU peace-keeping force to 7,700 troops, Mr Kingibe said: **"They need to be paid"**, referring to duty service allowances and other associated costs.

The biggest expenses however for AMIS are its air assets, on which it is heavily dependent to negotiate the vast landscape comprising 150,000 square miles. With 25 helicopters and four six-winged air aircrafts in constant use, Mr Kingibe stated:

"They need to be fuelled and the cost is tremendous." Appeals have been made to the international community for cash donations. AMIS estimates that \$50 million is needed over the next four months to maintain operations in Darfur but he is sure the funds will come through.

The bulk of international assistance to AMIS has mainly been in terms of logistics and training, but Mr Kingibe stated resolutely: **"Without the cooperation and support [of the international community] there would be no African Union Mission on the ground, quite frankly."**

Copyright © 1998 - 2007 colourfulnetwork.net & Colourful Network. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.