

NEWS FROM SUDAN

MONTH 7

Thirty weeks since the fighting began.



The Sudan crisis has few equals

In November fierce clashes between the warring parties continue in Omdurman. The sounds of heavy and light weapons are said to echo through the streets until sunset, with plumes of smoke rising from airstrikes. Homes have been turned into cemeteries. The combatants violate international humanitarian law with impunity.

In western Sudan, away from the cameras of the media, **multiple atrocities have been committed, as bad if not worse than in the Israel/Gaza conflict.**

IS THIS EXAGGERATION?

November 10th the UN Coordinator for Sudan said: "We keep saying that the situation is horrific and grim, but frankly, we are running out of words to describe the horror of what is happening in Sudan. We continue to receive unrelenting and appalling reports. **What is happening is verging on pure evil.**"

"What keeps me awake at night are the faces of the people I have met in Sudan – people like you and I – who desperately want to live in peace, feed their families, get health care, and send their children to school. More than 6 million people have fled their homes. They are not just

numbers; they are individuals whose lives have been uprooted and changed forever."

"The world is beset by crises, many that garner much more attention than the crisis in Sudan for a multitude of factors, but not because of the scale of the crisis or the depth of misery there which has few equals."

Indiscriminate bombing and shelling of residential areas continues apace. They say they are targeting combatants but a witness reports "all the armed groups were off the streets: the only thing hit by the bombs were local residents, traders and tea ladies." Across Sudan, thousands upon thousands of people are struggling to find shelter. Many are sleeping under trees by the roadside without access to food, shelter, clean drinking water or other basic essentials. Schools are refugee camps. There are 'peace' talks in Jeddah to allow humanitarian access, but the big relief agencies are only working on the peripheries of Sudan, with no safe access to its towns.

Important buildings are getting trashed, including an important bridge across the Nile, and **the Church of the Saviour in Omdurman**. At one time, the church building served as a pro-cathedral for all Sudan. It has

a big place in the affections of many Christians who were baptised and married there. On November 1st its wooden pews and roof beams became a fierce bonfire. This renews anxieties about the fate of Khartoum Cathedral which the RSF has commandeered as a military base.

COMING DOWN TO PERSONAL LEVEL

Bishop Ismail of El Obeid writes:

“Our people are alright, but living in fear not knowing what is going to happen day to day. We continue to hold a church service on Sundays, but when the fighting within the city is serious then we pray under our beds.

“The whole of our diocese is unsafe as most of the states are in the hands of the RSF paramilitaries. In Nyala, South Darfur, there is just one deacon, with his family and a few Christians. The people are in great suffering. Most fled over the border to Chad.



Our church property is not safe as there is no one left in the church compound. In Geneina, W Darfur, our school has been completely destroyed and looted.

El Fashir, N Darfur state, is under government control,

and our pastor is still there. Fighting is escalating around the city, and most people are fleeing to rural areas where there is peace, and some to other neighbouring countries, e.g. South Sudan, Central Africa Republic or Chad.

“In El Obeid things are worsening, but government soldiers are in control up to now. Food is available in the city but some of it is very expensive. There are approximately 40 schools here, full of displaced people from areas surrounding the state. Security is very bad: every day you hear about or see someone killed in front of you. What is most needed in this difficult time is urgent funding for relief and for emergency operations for those who are injured or wounded, with bullets still in their bodies.

“The diocese is responding by helping those in need. I believe that is our church’s calling. We have formed an initiative with mosques and other local churches, joining our efforts in order to help whoever we can. For example, we collected many clothes and other items, and distributed them together.”

A SECOND VOICE

A contact of the Women’s Education Partnership writes “Most of the population has fled the atrocities. Some were killed by bullets, bullets of ignorance, treachery and betrayal, others from disease due to lack of medicines and hospitals being destroyed. Some of them fled with the hope of reaching physical safety but were psychologically destroyed. Some evacuated to escape threats and intimidation.

“The city is devoid of cats and dogs and even the birds are gone because the air is polluted by the smoke of a city in flames. Rivers of blood – it’s war, real war, not a joke. Despite all this, though, we will never lose hope for a Sudan of peace, freedom and justice.

“It’s a very harsh reality. It’s affected me to the core. War to me is the lingering smell of burning buildings and fuel, the sound of air raids, the sound of shelling, a child holding bullets thinking they are date kernels, smoke rising from buildings.

“People are overwhelmed by the pain of forced migration and war. It has a great impact on their lives, affecting their families and work and daily life, causing great distress and worry. They are in need of psychological support and healing. One woman described her feelings to me, saying it’s like life has stopped: she has no taste for food, she’s lost her concentration, has sleepless nights and nightmares. She’s worried about her family; about everything.”

HOW ARE WE RESPONDING

In July, Archbishop Ezekiel issued an ECS Survival Relief Response Program, seeking support for church personnel and those needing humanitarian aid. Relay Trust pledged to fund the first part, £50,000 which ensures a network of ECS staff is kept in place across Sudan.

The target for relief is £80,000 of which £47,000 has been raised so far - £13,000 from a CASSS appeal, £14,000 from the Anglican Communion Fund (Lambeth), and £20,000 from Salisbury Diocese. Leeds diocese sent generous funding in the previous months. **Could your church give to the Sudan appeal this year end from its mission giving?**

A CASSS member’s church in Norfolk has voted £1,000 from theirs.

And we are encouraging prayer.

Resources are available from Leeds Diocesan website and from ‘Prayer points’ on CASSS website.