

Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in Sudan
Statement by Mr. Rashid Khalikov
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Mr. President,

Thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in northern Sudan.

In the two and a half weeks since the Government of Sudan decided to suspend the operations of three national, and expel thirteen international non-governmental organizations from northern Sudan, the United Nations has continued to advocate, at all levels, for a reversal of this decision. The needs of vulnerable people continue to be the first and main consideration of this effort. The Secretary-General has been in close contact with Arab and African leaders and members of this Council, all of whom have expressed their concern about the plight of the vulnerable people across Sudan.

We are equally concerned that the decision resulted in very harsh treatment in Darfur, and in Khartoum, of staff members and organizations that had been invited as guests of the Government of Sudan to assist the Sudanese people.

While continuing to press the Government for the reversal of this, and to underscore the impact of this on the lives of the Sudanese population, the United Nations and the Government of Sudan agreed to complete a series of joint rapid assessments in the three Darfur states. Teams were tasked to ascertain the gaps in four life-saving sectors: food aid, health and nutrition, shelter, and, lastly, water and sanitation. The teams also assessed the capacity available to cover the immediate life-threatening needs. The findings will be finalized this weekend with Government counterparts in Khartoum. We should be able to speak more next week about their impact on the wider assistance effort in Darfur.

Since ASG Bragg briefed the Security Council on 6 March, there are significant signs of an erosion of humanitarian response capacity, with a concurrent impact on the lives of people in Darfur. We see this particularly in the camps, but we believe gaps may also be opening up in rural areas where there is no longer a humanitarian presence. For example, in Zam Zam camp, near El Fasher, the departure of two key NGOs leaves the remaining, smaller agencies to cope with more than 36,000 newly-arrived IDPs. You may recall that these people were forced to flee after fighting in Muhajariya in South Darfur. These began with clashes between Sudan Liberation Army-Minnawi and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and led to fighting between Sudan Armed Forces and JEM that included air attacks in and around the town of Muhajariya by the Sudanese air force in January and February. The departure of MSF-France from Nertiti in West Darfur has left the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and WHO without an implementing partner to carry out vaccination campaigns and treatment for the Meningitis outbreak in the Jebel Mara. The loss of partners has led to a similar situation in Kalma, and prevented the mass immunization campaign that has been so desperately needed.

Overall, it has also become clear that the loss of the support provided to the local NGOs and Government line ministries has eroded operational management capacity in key sectors.

It is also troubling that the Government has continued to seize humanitarian assets. In one particular case, the Government has still not returned control of a UN warehouse, containing shelter and other items, back to the United Nations. We are grateful that UNAMID has helped the humanitarian community protect many essential supplies in the last two weeks, but it is regrettable that this continues to be necessary, especially in the areas controlled by the Government.

I should also note that the impact of the decision is now being felt elsewhere, in particular in the three Protocol Areas of Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Abyei. The delivery of humanitarian and development assistance in these Areas is crucial for the successful implementation of the already fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Mr. President,

The loss of operational capacity is not the only challenge we are facing on the ground. Insecurity affecting both beneficiaries and aid workers has been increasing for quite some time. The kidnapping of two Sudanese and three expatriate staff members of Médecins sans Frontières in North Darfur temporarily halted all operations in rural areas of that state. We are grateful for the work of the Sudanese authorities to help secure their release. Regrettably this abduction is part of a wider pattern. Over the past two weeks, three separate attacks on UNAMID saw one peacekeeper killed and three others injured. We urge the Government to minimize its rhetoric against foreigners in the media, and to ensure the safety and security of all UN and associated staff. We also urge armed groups in Darfur to take active steps to ensure that UN and NGO staff stay safe.

Mr. President,

On 15 March, we noted with concern remarks by President Bashir referring to the possible departure of all foreign humanitarian organizations in Sudan in a year's time. The Humanitarian Coordinator will take this up further with the government.

As the conflict continues, and as many parts of Darfur continue to be unstable, or are under the influence of the rebel groups, the work of the United Nations and its partners will continue to be vital in helping Sudanese citizens affected by conflict receive the aid to which they have the right. We urge all leaders in Darfur – state and non-state –to facilitate the provision of life-saving assistance to civilians in need.

Mr. President,

There is no doubt that our ability to help the people of Darfur and northern Sudan has been seriously compromised. The current atmosphere of fear and uncertainty facing all aid organizations is affecting the assistance available to the people of Darfur. The hard-won partnership between the Government and aid organizations was cast aside in a way that raises

questions as to how this relationship can move forward. We must find a way to decrease tensions and ensure the timely and sustainable provision of protection and humanitarian assistance, based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality.

We urge the Government of Sudan to use the mechanisms established explicitly for the purpose of resolving disagreements. We also believe that the provisions of Sudanese law, and the agreements with the international community including the *Joint Communiqué on the facilitation of humanitarian assistance in Darfur*, should be respected and used. We want to engage in a transparent and productive dialogue with the government, based on these laws and agreements.

The safety and security of all aid workers – national and international – and of commodities and assets, whether owned by NGOs, UN agencies, or Member States, must be assured. We look forward to the results of the joint assessment missions, which will be important to show the scale of the gaps, and the capacity needed to fill them.