

The longest war of this century is still in progress and is intensifying - in the largest country in Africa, Sudan. The Muslim Arab North has been attacking the Christians in the Black South. The death toll since 1955 is estimated at 2 million.

The atrocities have been the most severe in the Nuba Mountains. Most of the villages and churches have been destroyed, hundreds of Christians crucified, and over one million people have been forced into concentration camps. Christian soldiers, who are literally fighting for their lives, point out that the Christians in Sudan have a heritage of standing firm as a bulwark against the expansion of militant Islam into Central Africa - for 14 centuries.

The Nuba - A Nation at Risk

The Nuba mountains lie in the centre of Sudan, covering about 30 000 square miles in South Kordofan. The rocky mountains rise sharply 500 to 1 000 metres above the surrounding clay plains. The land - some of it forested and some farmed - is amongst the most fertile land in Sudan. That is both a blessing and a curse to the Nuba.

The Nuba are a cluster of 50 ethnic groups estimated to number 1 200 000 people. There is more linguistic diversity within the Nuba than in the rest of Sudan combined. The Nuba possess a wide cultural diversity - all of which share a love of music and dancing. Many of the tribes are also known for their body painting, elaborate scarification, wrestling and stick fighting. Most of the Nuba are farmers cultivating the hills in elaborate terraces or the clay plains. Their main crops are sorghum, beans and sesame.

Over the centuries many powerful states have raided the Nuba for slaves. The Nuba retreated to the mountains in order to better resist external invaders. They successfully resisted the Turko-Egyptian armies and the Mahdi's forces. The Nuba also resisted the British vigorously. Between 1900 and 1945 there were over 30 uprisings and rebellions in the Nuba mountains. The first aerial bombardments of the Nuba were carried out on 4 Feb. 1926 at Tima and Julud.

Some of the Nuba date their Christianity back to the early centuries. Modern Christian missionary activity began in the Nuba in 1874 with some groups such as the Kawalib and Otoro embracing Christianity. While the mystical Sufi sect of Islam has spread widely amongst the

Nuba, Christianity has also been on the increase. Christianity has become very attractive to the Nuba youth in particular - precisely because it has been opposed by the government!

Church Burning

The Muslim government began their campaign of church burning in the Nuba in August 1985. The church at Um Derdu was destroyed and 4 Christians killed. The most prominent Christian village, Lubi, was burned down in July 1988. The destruction of churches has become so commonplace that people interviewed by an African Rights delegation seldom even mentioned it. When asked if their church was burned during any specific attack the answer always was *"Of course!"*

The leaders of the Episcopal Church in the Nuba Mountains reported to a CSI delegation in April 1996 that the Government of Sudan (GOS) troops had burned down 26 Episcopal Churches during the past years. At the beginning of 1996 the churches in Toror and Berera were also razed to the ground. Five Episcopal clergymen had been murdered by the GOS forces: Rev Koko from Heiban, Rev Haroun Fadil, Rev John Fadil, Rev Bolis Al Marcus and Rev Anyarko El Haraba from Omdurain. There still remained 7 Episcopalian pastors and 72 churches in the SPLA controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains.

A leader of the Evangelical Church reported that his church, with 2 000 members, has no ordained clergy left in the Nuba Mountains. Two Evangelical catechists, Kamal in Dere and Kabugi in Agar El Ful have been executed by the GOS. The church was also without Bibles.

Gun Control Precedes Genocide

One Christian leader described the process leading up to the wholesale destruction of church buildings and slaughter of Christians:

"In 1985 we were told to register our arms so we could be given ammunition. But it was a trick. All the ammunition was given to the Arabs. And in 1987 the government came and confiscated all the rifles."

From 1985 the military council began to arm the Baggaras (literally *"cattle people"*) - Arab Muslims who live in the Nuba area. This seemed to be a charter for the Arab nomads to become more aggressive and violent towards the Nuba. Sudden attacks, theft of cattle and abductions of the Nuba escalated. A Muslim force called the Murahaliin began to forcibly disarm

the Nuba population, stealing as many cows as possible in the process.

One Christian described the process:□

"They had modern guns. We had old guns, marmatons, but we still chased them. The Arabs left and brought the army, and armed themselves more. The government began to attack us and continued attacking us. The problems never stopped."

Resistance

In 1986 a tiny "*Jebels Task Force*" entered the Nuba to recruit for the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA). The harsh oppression of the Arabs led many Nuba to join the SPLA. In 1987 the first SPLA fighting force - the "*Volcano Battalion*" entered the Nuba mountains. They won several important battles and secured a substantial area. Nuba youth flocked to join the SPLA and in 1989 the "*New Cush Division*" (six battalions of freshly trained new recruits) were mobilised in the Nuba.

The systematic violence of the Muslim government against the Nuba had forced many to turn to the SPLA for protection. After the 1989 coup, the extremist National Islamic Front (NIF) government unleashed a ferocious scorched earth campaign. In February 1990 the government called all the chiefs to assemble at Lagowa. All the 14 chiefs who came were arrested, bound, and shot by the GOS.



Frontline Fellowship conducts chaplaincy services amongst SPLA soldiers

In 1992 the GOS declared that Jihad (Holy War) officially existed against the Nuba. Iranian military Helicopter gunships, MIG-23 fighter bombers and Antonov aircraft began the aerial bombardment of many

Forced Removals

A mass 'peace talks' in 1992 attempted to resolve the conflict but failed. Hundreds of thousands of Nuba people were

Military Stalemate

By the middle of 1992, the SPLA and the GOS had fought one another to a standstill. The SPLA had rep

For their part the SPLA also had their own problems, mainly due to the August 1991 split in the SPLA w



Peter ministering with SPLA soldiers.

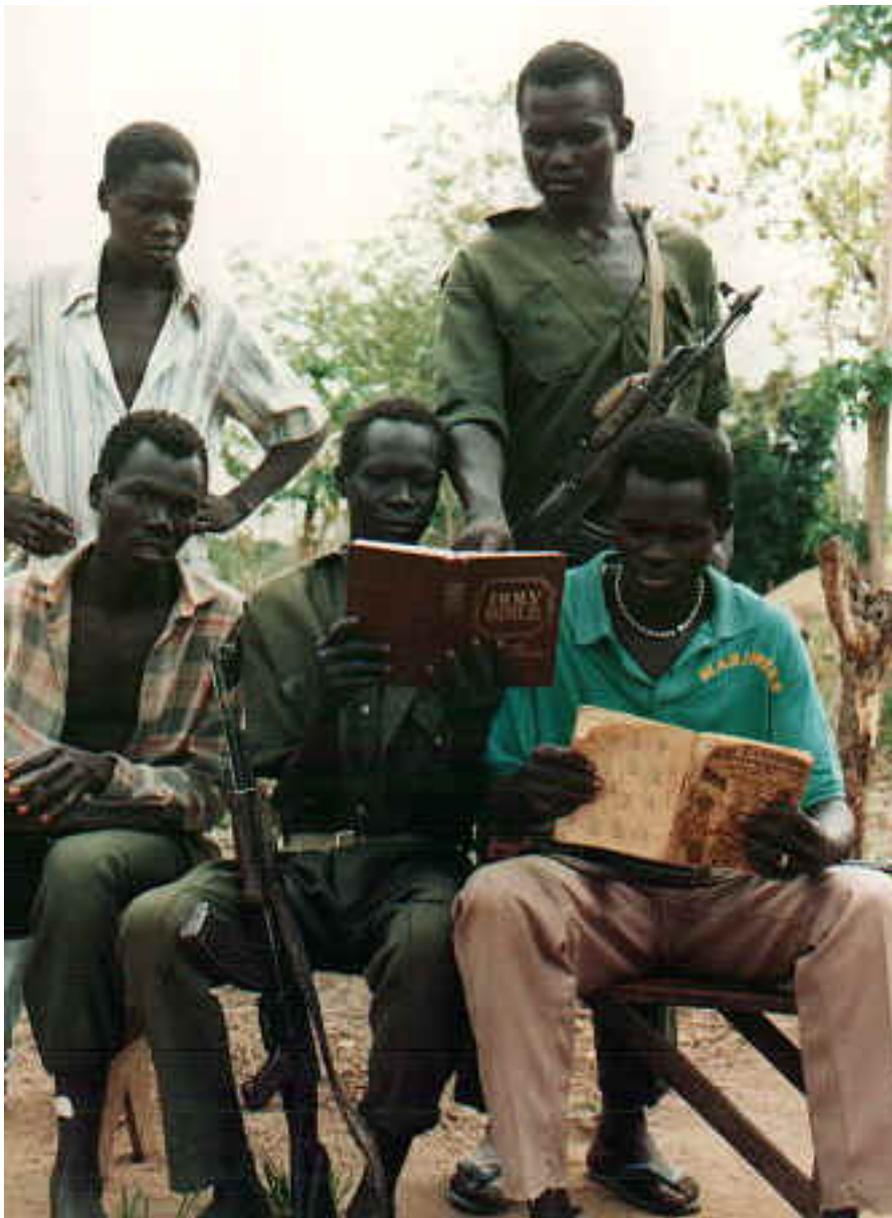
Scorched Earth

In February 1993 the worst massacre occurred when the Muslims attacked el Abyad. Over 1 900 civilians were massacred, 12 000 cows were stolen and the village and crops were burned down.

From late 1993, however, the sheer scale of human suffering had exhausted all concerned. There were no more frontal assaults on SPLA positions and there were fewer large massacres. The vicious *"ethnic cleansing"* of 1992 had been modified to the *"tamshit"* - *"combing"* - strategy of depopulating the rebel controlled areas by scorched earth and forced removals ("draining the sea to catch the fish" as one put it). Everything necessary to sustain life was destroyed or removed.

"Pseudo- guerillas"
were also infiltrated for arson, assassination and abduction.

A CSI delegation to the Nuba in April 1996 documented the destruction of three villages: Toror, Teberi and Tendri. The attacks were at midday and were supported by heavy bombardments with artillery and aircraft. As the civilians fled the bombardments, the GOS troops arrived in 8 trucks (3 of them with mounted machine guns) and 1 tank. One eye-witness, Noah, gave this account: *"The enemy first came to Toror, shelling with heavy artillery and then shelled our village, terrorising the people to flee. When they reached the stream, they opened fire intensively and the grass began to catch fire. Some advanced to the market, others remained stationed behind trees or in the river bed, so they surrounded the whole village. The tank patrolled around. They took our food and burnt what they could not take. They slaughtered the goats, leaving them as carcasses."* □



SPLA and the Sudanese Government what happened:

"When we heard the enemy coming, we scattered our belongings before escaping. But the enemy collected them and took them to the SPLA camps."

The GOS is moving the GOS strategy of concentrating the GOS forces with the SPLA in the Sudanese Government held areas.

"Peace Camps"

Central to the GOS strategy is attracting international assistance to the garrison towns and "*peace camps*"

. Since the war began there have been no humanitarian programmes in the SPLA held areas. In contrast, since 1993, some international relief agencies began operating in Kadugli and other government held towns, enticing the Nuba people to leave the liberated areas and surrender themselves to be interned in the concentration camps.

In these camps an aggressive Islamisation and Arabisation indoctrination campaign seeks to force inmates to convert to Islam. Children as young as twelve - though most are fifteen or over - are forcibly conscripted into the Popular Defence Force (PDF). The "*Peace Camps*" are also used as labour camps - providing a pool of slave labour for the government

"*communal*"

farms and military projects. Christians have been warned not to gather for prayer or worship.

"*If you pray again - you will be killed*"

is the common threat. Those who attempt to escape have been subjected to a whole range of penalties from confiscation of all property, including clothes, to torture and summary execution.

The entire "*Peace camp*" programme is dominated by the objective of converting the internees to Islam and the Arab culture. The only schools allowed are Khalwas (Quranic schools).

The GOS strategy is to depopulate the rural areas and provide a captive civilian population in their concentration camps. At present there are an estimated 200 000 Nuba in the SPLA "*liberated areas*"

and about 1 million under GOS control in the "*peace camps*"

. These are concentration camps in the truest sense of the word: the rural population has been forcibly concentrated in these camps to control their movements, to provide a captive population for indoctrination, forced acculturation, forced labour and conscription.

A central component of the genocide is the Sudan government's policy of mass rape. Every Nuba woman who has been in a "*peace camp*" has either been raped or threatened with rape. Girls as young as 9 years old have been raped - with the soldiers justifying this child abuse from the Hadith - that Mohammed had married Aisha at 9 years old! Women have been raped as they were abducted, gang raped on arrival at garrisons and repeatedly raped in "*peace camps*" or labour camps, or forcibly "*married*" to Muslim soldiers for the duration of their tours of duty. The aim of this sexual and slavery policy has been to destroy the social fabric of Nuba society.

Cut of from Aid

Another component of GOS policy is the strict blockade of SPLA areas. No trade is permitted and no relief agencies have operated there. So far the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies have failed to effectively challenge this exclusion. When cease-fires have been called in the South the war has always carried on relentlessly in the Nuba Mountains.

So far this year Frontline missionaries have managed to smuggle over 500 Arabic Bibles into the Nuba Mountains. Many more are needed along with medicines, clothing and blankets.

The exceptionally severe human suffering, human rights abuses and persecution of Christian communities in the Nuba mountains must be the very worst experienced anywhere in the world today. At this critical time the Nuba need the prayers, solidarity, and practical support of Christians worldwide.

"Is it nothing to you all you who pass by?" Lamentations 1:12

Dr Peter Hammond

For further documentation of the incredible atrocities perpetrated against the Nuba write to:
African Rights, 11 Marshalsea Road, London SE1 1EP, England (or Fax: 44-171-717-1240) and
purchase a copy of their book *"Facing Genocide: The Nuba People of Sudan"*.

Related Resources:-

[3 Films on Sudan on 1 DVD](#)

[Faith Under Fire in Sudan](#)