

COUNTRY FOCUS - SUDAN



Country name: The Republic of Sudan

Population: 38.6 million (UN, 2007)

Capital: Khartoum (including Khartoum, Omdurman, and North Khartoum – population 6-7 million, including two million internally displaced persons)

Largest city: Omdurman

Area: 2,505,813 km

Major languages: Arabic and English

Major religions: Islam, Christianity, animist or indigenous religions

Life expectancy: 58 (2006)

Monetary unit: Sudanese dinar

Main exports: oil, cotton, gum arabic; also sesame seeds, peanuts, camels and sheep

GNI per capita: \$810 (2006)

Internet domain: .sd

International dialling code: +249



SUDAN

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



The Republic of Sudan, in eastern Africa, is the largest and possibly most geographically diverse country on the continent, with sandy deserts, tropical rainforests, mountain ranges and swamps. Its name comes from the Arabic '*bilad al-sudan*' or 'land of the blacks'. It is bordered by many countries, including Egypt and Libya to the north, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, and Chad and the Central African Republic to the west and south-west. The Red Sea also forms part of its border.

Important Dates

- Union with Egypt 1821–1885
- Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1899–1956
- First Civil War in Sudan 1955–1972

Because of its large areas of fertile land, Sudan has seen many colonisers: the French, the English and the Belgians have all laid claim to it. It gained independence from joint British/Egyptian rule as recently as 1956. The first civil conflict between the mainly Arab Islamist north and the Christian and animist (traditional African religions) south erupted in 1955, just eight months before independence. This civil war lasted for seventeen years, cost many lives and destroyed the country's infrastructure before it was halted by a peace agreement that in 1972 gave the south regional autonomy. Sadly, this agreement was broken in 1983 and civil strife resumed.

Second Civil War 1983–2005

The war restarted in 1983 with the founding of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army after the then president violated the agreement known as the Addis Ababa Agreement. The Northerners continued to try and unite the country under Sharia (Islamic religious) law, introduced in 1983, despite the fierce opposition of the marginalised tribes to the west and east, and of the southern Sudanese. In 1989, a bloodless military coup brought Khartoum under the control of Omar al-Bashir and Dr Hassan al-Turabi's National Islamic Front. On taking power, al-Bashir dissolved parliament and established the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation, before dissolving this in 1993 to concentrate power completely in his own hands. Elected president in 1996, he dissolved parliament three years later and declared a

state of emergency during which he imprisoned his former friend and ally Dr al-Turabi, accusing him of treason.

Before peace talks made any real progress (in early 2004), this war had cost over two million lives, displaced more than four million people and divided the country on racial and religious/regional grounds. It damaged the economy and led to food shortages, resulting in starvation and malnutrition. A peace deal was eventually signed in January 2005 which gave southern Sudan autonomy for a period of six years. The UN Security Council established a UN mission in Sudan in March 2005 in order to support the somewhat fragile peace agreement and to enable humanitarian assistance to be delivered to the suffering population. That year, a UN commission found that while the Sudanese government and militias had acted together in committing atrocities in Darfur, this did not amount to genocide. Efforts to resolve this conflict have failed due to several factors – including distrust and ill-feeling between Sudan and neighbouring Chad – and Sudan continues to suffer the aftermath of civil war: famine, disease and food shortages.

In mid-May 2008, the International Criminal Court's (ICC) chief prosecutor filed ten charges of war crimes against President al-Bashir, and called for his arrest, accusing him of genocide and crimes against humanity.

For further information, look up the following links to access the articles listed below:

- 1 'Warning of more violence and blood as President al-Bashir faces war crimes charges' by Jonathan Clayton, Monday, 14 July 2008, *The Times*
www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article4327102.ece
- 2 'Darfur genocide charges for Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir' by Peter Walker, James Sturcke and agencies, guardian.co.uk, Monday, 14 July 2008
www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/14/sudan.warcrimes1?gusrc=rss&feed=worldnews
- 3 'With a jig President al-Bashir plays peacemaker in Darfur' by Rob Crilly, *The Times*, 24 July 2008 (accessed 8 August 2008)
www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/14/sudan.warcrimes1?gusrc=rss&feed=worldnews





TEAM SPIRIT

DARFUR

DARFUR – BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Conflict in Darfur

Darfur, in the west of Sudan, is made up of three states: Gharb Darfur, Shamad Darfur and Janub Darfur. The name means ‘home’ (*dar*) of the ‘Fur’, the Fur being a tribe living in the region. Other tribes are the Zaghawa, the Masalit and Dinka. Some of the problems in Sudan arose initially because of tension between nomadic Arabic camel-herding groups and settled farmers, many of whom have converted to Islam. The nomadic tribes wander through land that the settled farmers have tilled and planted by hand, and the herds of the nomads eat their crops. These differences go back centuries and so are incredibly difficult to resolve.

While the endless peace talks were underway throughout 2003, a rebellion broke out in Darfur, led by two rebel groups whose members were mainly non-Arabic African Muslim farmers, one of these groups being the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and Army. The government immediately increased arms and financial support to local militias in an attempt to defeat these rebels. These militia groups, now known as the Janjaweed, or ‘armed horsemen’, are composed mainly of Arabic African Muslims who would formerly have herded camels and other livestock.

Despite the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in 2006, the conflict continued to intensify and nearly three million people required food assistance in 2007.

Sudan’s population reached an estimated 30 million in 2007 and the conflict in Darfur entered its sixth year in 2009, affecting some four million people, including those millions internally displaced, and the estimated quarter of a million refugees in twelve camps in neighbouring Chad. The savage attacks by the Janjaweed on civilians, often with the direct support of government forces, have led to the deaths of tens of thousands of people in Darfur, and 2.4 million people, more than one third of the population, have been displaced, terrorised and driven from their homelands.

Refugee Camps:

For information on refugee camps and for suggested class-based activities around the topic, see People in Exile in this pack.

GENOCIDE

In July 2005, George W Bush, then President of the United States of America, said that the situation in Darfur was ‘clearly genocide’.

Previously, in 2004, his former Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said that ‘genocide has been committed in Darfur, and the Government of Sudan and the Janjaweed bear responsibility’.

from *Washington Post*

www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A8364-2004Sep9.html

See also CNN:

www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/africa/09/09/sudan.powell

What Is Genocide?

Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) defines genocide as ‘any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.’

No other country or international organisation classified the Darfur crisis as genocide. The United Nations stated that mass murders had been committed by the Janjaweed, but not genocide (‘Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General’, United Nations, 25 January 2005). Amnesty International stated that, ‘The grave human rights abuses ... cannot be ignored any longer, not justified or excused by a context of armed conflict’ (‘Darfur: Too many people killed for no reason’, Amnesty International, February 2004).

Further sources of information:

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudan

www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sudan_statistics.html





TEAM SPIRIT

IDEAS TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR CLASS

COUNTRY FOCUS - SUDAN

- Locate Sudan on an atlas or on Peter's Projection wall-map: draw the country and name all its borders. You may notice that many of the country borders are extremely straight, as if they had been drawn with a ruler. Compare these borders with those of some central European countries. Can you suggest why the country borders are so different on the two continents?
- On your map of Sudan, draw in the major rivers and cities. Find out where Darfur is and mark the region on your map.
- Find the Sudanese flag and draw it – can you find out what each colour represents?
- Look at a world map and locate Ireland and Sudan. Try to work out a route for the plane that took Sadiq's family to Ireland from Darfur. Can you find out what airlines they might have used?

EXPLORE FURTHER

Choose another country, and try to fill in information about your chosen country under the headings on page 1 of this section. You might choose to study China, as there are more Chinese newcomers in Ireland than there are newcomers from any other country and China also has strong economic links with Sudan. The class could make wall-displays about Ireland, Sudan and China, or whichever country has been chosen, presenting the facts learned in a colourful and attractive display.

HOMES

How do people live in Sudan? What are their houses like? Compare with Irish/European homes and discuss how homes are partly a response to climate, partly to money. Materials: what are Sudanese/Irish homes made of? See Homes section in 'The Memory Box' teaching guide.

DERMOT SOMERS is an Irish mountaineer, explorer, writer, and broadcaster. He has written and presented several TV programmes, mostly commissioned by RTÉ and TG4, including *Turas Tréadacha (Great Nomadic Journeys)*, a series of films in which Dermot joins local nomads on some of the world's great nomadic journeys, including Siberia (2001), the Sahara (2002), Iran (*An Bealach in Airde*) (2004). If possible, children might watch some excerpts from these programmes and then, in their own words, write an account of how they might feel if they were living in a desert region.

CLIMATE CHANGE/GLOBAL WARMING

The earth's climate has changed dramatically over the past few decades and the effects of climate change are particularly harsh on communities in developing countries. Extensive drought and unpredictable rainfall patterns limit agricultural success for families dependent on this income for survival.

In 'Team Spirit' we see children playing outside; behind them, crops try to grow in dry and arid soil. The ominous clouds overhead are reminders of the uncertainty faced by the communities living in this region in Sudan and in many other regions in other African countries.

- Carry out a class project to determine the effects of climate change in the world and in developing countries in particular.
- Investigate global warming and the ways in which we can change our habits to reduce the amount of CO₂ we produce. See Sustainable Energy Ireland's website for further information: <http://www.combatclimatechange.ie/>
- Use the Trócaire schools' pack for senior primary classes to focus on climate change in Kenya. This pack has a particular focus on water, and is available for download at: <https://www.trocaire.org/lent/pdfs/seniorprimarylent2008.pdf>

CONFLICT

You might explore problematic parts of the world at different historical periods:

- Ireland 19th century-early 20th century/
- Northern Ireland 1969-2000
- Germany, France, Italy 1939-1945.

Children might present findings to the class.

