The Sudan Consortium

African and International Civil Society Action for Sudan

The Impact of Aerial Bombing of Civilian Settlements in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Republic of Sudan
February 2014

Despite the AUHIP-sponsored peace talks that took place between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the SPLM-N between 14 February and 2 March 2014, the GoS did not halt its campaign of air attacks against civilian targets in SPLM-N controlled areas in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States. Indeed, during the month of February, the number of civilians killed and injured in Southern Kordofan was the highest recorded by the monitors on the ground since the current conflict began in 2011.

As talks were about to begin, aircraft from the Sudanese Air Force systematically bombarded six villages in Andulu District and in neighbouring Umserndiba on 12 and 13 February 2014. In one particularly egregious incident on 13 February, 13 civilians were killed and 16 injured when Sudanese air force jets fired 28 rockets into the crowded market area of Thorlatiso village in Andulu District, Um Dorein County, Southern Kordofan. The dead included five women, two of whom were pregnant. The attacks on the other five settlements killed 14 and injured 22. The villages that were attacked were entirely civilian in character and can in no way be defined as legitimate military targets.

In Blue Nile State, while the number of air strikes on civilian settlements was also significantly lower than was recorded in January (down from 16 to 5), the attacks nonetheless continued throughout the period of the peace talks, with monitors on the ground documenting five air strikes on civilian settlements in Wadaka and Uabos districts of Kurmok County between 12 and 24 February. Although no civilians were killed in these attacks, they nonetheless caused widespread property damage and population displacement.

The Sudan Consortium works with a trusted group of local Sudanese partners who have been working on the ground in Southern Kordofan since the current conflict began in late 2011. All the attacks referred to in this report were launched against areas where there was no military presence and which were clearly identifiable as civilian in character. We believe that this information provides strong circumstantial evidence that civilians are being directly and deliberately targeted by the Sudanese armed forces in Southern Kordofan.
Two injured victims of the air strike carried out by the Sudanese Air Force on Thurlatiso market, Um Dorien County, 13 February 2014. Thirteen civilians were killed and 16 injured in this attack. The dead included two pregnant women
Civilian casualties from air strikes at highest recorded level

Although the number of air strikes on civilian areas in Southern Kordofan was slightly lower in February than in January, the number of those killed and injured by the Sudanese Air Force in Southern Kordofan was the highest recorded since the current conflict began in 2011, with the number of fatalities more than double those recorded for last month.

Southern Kordofan: Civilians killed by aerial bombardment: June 2011 – February 2014

Southern Kordofan: Civilians injured by aerial bombardment: June 2011 –January 2014
**Southern Kordofan: Number of Bombing attacks on civilian settlements: June 2011-February 2014**

![Graph showing the number of bombing attacks in Southern Kordofan from June 2011 to February 2014.](image)

**Blue Nile: Number of bombing attacks on civilian settlements (April 2013 – Feb 2014)**

![Graph showing the number of bombing attacks in Blue Nile from April 2013 to February 2014.](image)

**Use of more destructive weaponry against civilians by SAF**

The inverse correlation between rise in casualties and the decrease in the number of air strikes can be explained by the fact that the Sudanese Air Force is now making increasing use of its fleet of second
hand Sukhoi SU-24 and SU-25 attack aircraft (reportedly supplied by the government of Belarus, along with support personnel and flying crews\(^1\)) in carrying out its attacks on civilian settlements. These aircraft are able to fly faster and lower than the lumbering Antonov AN-26 bombers which have, until now, been the main platform from which the Sudanese Air Force has launched its indiscriminate aerial bombardment of civilians in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.

These “new” SU 24 and SU-25 Sukhoi aircraft are also able to deliver a wider range of more deadly and destructive weaponry, including parachute-retarded bombs (FAB 500), and S-8 rockets.

Monitors on the ground have been able to photograph both bomb fragments and unexploded ordnance in order to record markings which clearly identify the new types of munitions which the Sudanese government is now using to target and kill increasing numbers of civilians as part of its ongoing military campaign.

The photographs below show clearly the identification markings (in Cyrillic script) of FAB-500 (left) and S-8KO (right) bombs dropped by the Sudanese Air Force in Southern Kordofan in February.

- **Parachute-retarded bomb (FAB 500)**

The FAB 500 is a huge free-fall bomb, made distinctive by a parachute that slows the flight of the munition as it drops. These Russian-made bombs, which have also reportedly been used in Syria, weigh 518kg, and almost half of this weight is its high-explosive content.\(^2\) Each bomb has a destructive area as big as 1,500 square metres. However, while the destructive potential of these bombs is clearly enormous, significant numbers are failing to detonate, with the consequential increased danger to the civilian population from large quantities of unstable unexploded ordnance lying in or close to populated areas. The attacks on villages in Um Dorein County in Southern Kordofan this month left significant amounts of unexploded ordnance (UXOs) in village markets, cattle grazing areas and close to village water pumps – all amenities that are essential to the subsistence of the population, and which it will be almost impossible for them to avoid as they go about their daily lives. As the local population lacks the


technical capacity required to safely de-activate these UXOs they now face the significant and open-ended risk of suffering injury or death from their unexpected detonation.

Unexploded FAB 500 (Parachute Bomb) dropped on Ekpol village, Southern Kordofan, 13/02/2014

Bomb crater caused by FAB 500 (Parachute Bomb) dropped on Nayin Yiapjo village, Um Dorein County, Southern Kordofan, 13/02/2014

• S-8 Air to Surface Rockets

The S-8 is a family of Russian-made rockets, which the Sudanese Air Force is using increasingly in its attacks on civilians in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. The S-8 is an unguided free-flight rocket, and targeting is achieved by pointing the launch aircraft in the direction of the target. A 20-round rocket pod can be fired in only a few seconds.³

More than 50 S-8 rockets were launched by attack jets of the Sudanese Air Force during their air strikes on civilian villages in Um Dorein between the 12 and 13 February.

These weapons, generally launched from low-flying fast attack jets from distances of between 2 and 4 kms from their targets, are a major factor in the increased numbers of civilian casualties reported this month, as those on the ground simply do not have sufficient time to seek shelter before the rockets strike.

The images below shows fragments of an S8 rocket launched on Andulu village on 12 February 2014. The markings indicate that the rocket is an S-8KO variant – a fragmentation warhead designed primarily for use against infantry or unreinforced buildings. Instead, the Sudanese government is using these weapons to target unarmed civilians and to destroy their livelihoods, property and social amenities.

Fragment of an S-8KO air-to-surface rocket launched against Andulu village, Um Dorein, 12/02/13

Two victims of the attack on Andulu village.

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4 See weaponsystems.net (ibid)