

UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

VOICES

of Darfur

MAY 2011

UNITED NATIONS
PEACEKEEPERS DAY EDITION

**STRENGTHENING
THE RULE OF LAW**

**MORE HUMANITARIAN RELIEF FOR
DARFUR'S COMMUNITIES**



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS
MISSION IN DARFUR
(UNAMID)

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Front Cover Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran

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APRIL AT A GLANCE



APRIL

03

UNAMID Force Commander Lt Gen Patrick Nyamvumba inaugurates an elementary school, built by members of the Mission's Rwandan military contingent. The school will allow more than 100 students from Turba and Manara villages, near El Fasher, North Darfur, to attend school close to their homes.

APRIL

05

A UNAMID female police advisor from Sierra Leone is killed and two other staff members are injured after an ambush by a group of armed men on a Mission patrol near Kutum, North Darfur. Peacekeepers swiftly respond and, in an exchange of fire, one of the attackers is killed.



APRIL

07

UNAMID's peacekeepers pay respect to the victims of the 1994 Rwandan genocide which claimed more than 800,000 lives. The ceremony at the Mission's headquarters in El Fasher includes a minute of silence and the laying of wreaths by UNAMID leadership and Rwandan representatives of the military, police and civilian components.

APRIL

13

UNAMID, OCHA and internally displaced persons (IDP) camp leaders successfully mediate the release of twelve Sudanese aid workers who were taken hostage by a youth group at Kalma IDP camp in South Darfur. The workers were taken on 11 April in retaliation for the arrest by security officials of an IDP who worked for a national non-governmental organization on 9 April.

APRIL

14

A delegation of eight women ambassadors, led by Kenya's Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union, Dr. Monica Juma, arrives in El Fasher to meet with UNAMID officials, women's groups and female legislators, representatives of internally displaced women and state officials to discuss concerns facing women from all walks of life in Darfur. They later meet with women community leaders in Nyala.



APRIL

17

A disarmament programme starts in El Geneina, West Darfur, where more than 1,000 former fighters in the Darfur conflict surrender their weapons and begin the process of reintegration into civilian life. The ex-combatants are former members of Sudanese armed forces and several armed movements. The ten-day exercise is organised by the National Sudanese Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Coordination Council, with logistical support from UNAMID and local partners.



APRIL

20

UNAMID in collaboration with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) donates computers to all prisons in the three Darfur states. The equipment is handed over in a ceremony at the Office of the Director of North Darfur prisons in El Fasher.



APRIL

26

UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Ibrahim Gambari distributes a large number of high-capacity rolling water containers to the village of Kuma Garadayat, North Darfur. UNAMID hands out thousands of these containers to eight returnee villages throughout Darfur, which were selected due to their poor access to water sources and severe drought during the dry season.

APRIL

29

JSR Gambari meets with members of the SLA/ Historical Movement. The group briefs the JSR on the background of the Movement, its interests and objectives. He reaffirms UNAMID's continued commitment and support to the peace process. SLA/ Historical Movement signed a peace agreement with the Government of the Sudan in January 2011.



Female prisoners develop basket making skills through rehabilitation projects organized by UNAMID Corrections Officers

Strengthening the rule of law

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

To promote human rights, access to justice and responding to the immediate needs of the legal infrastructure in Darfur, UNAMID has embarked on an ambitious rule of law programme to assist in the strengthening of an independent judicial and corrections system and to develop institutional capacity of the rule of law institutions operating in the area.

“This has led to an improvement in living conditions, health facilities, and respect for human rights as well as improvement in prison management, infrastructure and data handling,” says Col. Muntasir Abdel, Sudanese Acting Prison Director, North Darfur.

The Mission’s rule of law component and, in particular the Prisons Advisory unit, is engaged in a variety of activities based on the core elements of the mandate. This includes a provision of advisory and mentoring support to prison management and staff, advising



Male prisoners make bricks in a project spearheaded by UNAMID

PHOTOS: RULE OF LAW

on reforms and restructuring of the prison system in Darfur to operate in accordance with international standards, building the capacity of the local prison staff to improve standards of treatment and care to prisoners.

UNAMID is engaged with Sudanese corrections officials in the region, advising them on strategic prison issues and day to day operations and functioning of the prison systems. John Omondi, a Corrections Officer from Kenya, says when he first arrived in Darfur in 2009 the prisons were faced with numerous challenges most of which required multilateral approaches to finding solutions.

With support from many UN agencies, the Mission has developed multiple projects including organizing and facilitating trainings for corrections staff on basic prison duties and documentation and record keeping; developing livelihood programmes for the rehabilitation of

prisoners; infrastructural upgrades to improve living conditions; legal aid and logistical support; and continued joint technical assessments.

In early 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of Sudan Directorate of Prisons and Reform and the Mission. This provided UNAMID more access to the prison facilities in Darfur. "Before the Memorandum was signed, admission to prison facilities depended on UNAMID corrections officers and the relationship that was established with the local prisons administration," explains John Omondi.

Through the Mission's quick impact projects, and in collaboration with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) four training centers have been constructed in El Fasher, Nyala, El Geneina and Zalingei. The centers will go a long way to support the training programmes for the local police. UNAMID female officers are

currently working on various projects in support of their local female counterparts, to assist them in playing an advocacy role for the recruitment of more women in Darfur. Today there are ten female investigation officers in El Fasher.

"Prisoners have also gained skills from organized rehabilitation programmes which are meant to be useful to help them prepare for reintegration into their communities once they are released from prison," says Mr. Omondi.

The principal objective of UNAMID's rule of law effort in Darfur is to build on the existing legal infrastructure by strengthening the support for human rights violations, assist in the protection of civilians and improvement of security. The Mission works with all legal stakeholders in Darfur, including the judiciary, the Attorney-General's office, universities, the police and the prisons system. ■



Lieutenant Vittaya Jiraanankul (a doctor with the Thai battalion based in Mukhjar) examines sick children in Buru, more than 50 km to the south of the team site in Mukhjar

PHOTOS: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

Culture clash and cohesion - West Darfur's Thai peacekeepers

BY MAYADA UMBADDA

Moments after the large white trucks and armoured vehicles thunder into the West Darfur camp, a large crowd of children gathers, cheerfully yelling out Thai greetings to the peacekeepers stepping out to meet them. For the blue helmets, this simple and open show of trust from people who've been left guarded and wary by the near decade-long conflict, has been hard-earned.

Long before leaving Thailand in December 2010, Lieutenant Colonel Narong Suankaew and the more than 800 military peacekeepers he commanded began preparing for their deployment to Mukhjar in West Darfur. As the first Thai troops coming to Darfur, they had done exhaustive research on Sudan and the Darfur conflict, pored over maps and intently followed the unfolding events. But there was little that could prepare them for one of the most challenging and vital aspects of their job: gaining the community's trust.

A peacekeeping force protection unit such as this one is charged primarily

with carrying out daily patrols to towns, villages and displaced persons camps and with providing an escort for aid groups on field missions. These men and women are often the first line of defense for civilians in remote locations.

"As members of the United Nations, we feel that we must do our utmost to support other countries. One of our most important tasks is building relationships with the people we came to help and protect," says Suankaew. He recalls that the contrast between the two cultures seemed very great at first. "People we met were receptive and welcoming but wary. However we did not simply want to say 'hello' and be done with it. We wanted them to know us and trust us. Instead, we said 'we are not so different, we are friends.'"

And so, almost immediately after their arrival, despite a grueling schedule of day and night field missions, the Thai battalion began a series of community outreach initiatives to develop relationships with local communities, in addition to meeting

regularly with locality commissioners and tribal leaders to exchange information on security and to hear their concerns. The battalion's engineers repaired and expanded a bridge and one kilometer stretch on a crucial trade route between Mukhjar and the town of Garsilla before seasonal rains made the roads dangerous. In March, the peacekeepers delivered building materials to help refurbish an elementary school in Buru, an almost inaccessible village about 60 km southeast of Mukhjar. While they were there, the team also shared some of their limited medical resources and expertise with people who were travelling the nearest hospital in the next state. Most recently, they drilled a well for a school in the town, providing a source of clean and safe drinking water for the community.

But perhaps the battalion's most ambitious project to date has been a programme to share Thai agricultural methods with students and local farmers. Using techniques developed in the north of Thailand, whose soil and climate is somewhat similar to West Darfur, the

battalion set up low tents of green mesh inside their camp, dug small, shallow ponds in each one and then proceeded to plant everything from cabbage and coriander to watermelon and banana trees. The soldiers all take turns tending to these gardens, making sure the rows of sprouts are always watered and fertilized to compensate for the unforgiving heat and soil quality. The soldiers take pride in tending to these gardens, verdant bursts amid the harsh yellow sands, an act which they find relaxing.

The layout of these gardens, modeled after the Thai king's socio-economic theory of self-sufficiency, makes the most use of small plots of land to sustain families. Once the crops sprouted, farmers and schoolchildren were invited to the UNAMID team site to study the battalion's farming methods and exchange ideas and techniques.

right. UNAMID peacekeepers from Thailand interact with community leaders in Buru

below. UNAMID peacekeepers from Thailand on patrol in Buru market

Lt Col Suankaew believes that such an earnest meeting of minds on a subject beneficial to both sides can be a bridge between the two vastly dissimilar cultures. And in the few months since they first set foot in Darfur, he has seen immense changes. Endorsements from state officials and locality commissioners and the confidence of residents in the most far-

flung villages have helped the battalion to expand the radius of their patrols to help secure the region.

"We are very proud of our work here," he says. "We will continue to do our best and hope to make the people of Darfur and Thailand proud. After all, the best Thai weapon is a smile."





The Indonesian FPU commander makes a presentation to teachers at a school in El Fasher

PHOTO: INDONESIA FPU

UNAMID police contribute to protecting civilians

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

UNAMID peacekeepers have significantly stepped up their patrols, conducting more than 200 each day in and around towns, villages and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps to help protect and build confidence among Darfuris.

Captain Victor Mackbon arrived in Darfur more than six months ago. He is the Operations Officer for the Indonesian formed police unit (FPU). On a daily basis, he works with his team and other officers to coordinate patrol activities.

A few weeks ago, the Indonesian FPU, while on patrol in Zamzam camp near El Fasher, intercepted five armed men who held two police advisors hostage during a carjacking incident. The vehicle was recovered and the two officers were released unharmed.

“Contributing to protection of civilians is our core mandate as is protection of UNAMID personnel. We will do whatever it takes to protect civilians and to win the hearts and minds of the people here,” Captain Mackbon said.

The duties of the unit include conducting patrols in and around villages and IDP camps, where UNAMID military and police officers accompanied by FPUs patrol around the clock to build trust. They interact with the local population, organize social events for youth, work with local police, as well as assist in investigations and follow-up of cases, among others.

UNAMID Police Commissioner James Opong-Boanuh emphasized that “despite the challenges that the peacekeepers may encounter, we are committed to ensuring the safety and protection of civilians and UNAMID personnel in order to achieve our mandate.”

Every month, the Indonesian community here, with the assistance of their Government, provides the local population with social and physical amenities in El Fasher, North Darfur. “Apart from providing them with security, we try to assist the community in any way we can,” explained Captain Mackbon.

Every peacekeeping operation poses a different challenge. As Police Advisor Al Mas-

ud Khan from Bangladesh says, in Darfur, peacekeepers are faced with many challenges including the weather and difficult terrain. “Yet, nothing will deter us from performing our duties. We are working together with our colleagues in the military and civilian components to support and motivate each other to resolve situations that may arise, as we build relations with Darfur’s communities. We are trying to do our best for the sake of Darfuris in our efforts to achieve our mandate.”

Commissioner Opong-Boanuh said, “peacekeepers work to bring safety and hope to the lives of families who have lost their homes, loved ones and stability in a vicious conflict.”

Currently the largest peacekeeping mission in existence worldwide, UNAMID is working with local partners, UN Agencies and non-governmental organizations in the region to bring lasting peace and stability.



Members of the Nepalese special forces from UNAMID conducted a medical treatment campaign among the population in Kuma Garadayat, a village located in North Darfur

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

More humanitarian relief for Darfur's communities

UN Humanitarian agencies and UNAMID forge close operational links to bring assistance to vulnerable Darfuris

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

A comprehensive initiative has been launched between UNAMID and the UN country team, to reach vulnerable communities in Darfur to conduct humanitarian needs assessment and provide relief assistance.

Dubbed 'Operation Spring Basket,' the project began in En Siro, Killin and Sarong, Kuma Garadayat, Tine and Kaguro in North and West Darfur. A vaccination campaign was carried out in Kaguro village by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the North Darfur Ministry of Health. This action is a part of a national campaign to vaccinate 9,000 children against measles.

While in Kuma Garadayat village, the team delivered school furnishing as well as medicines to treat more than 5,000 livestock, as well as school furnishings. UNAMID Nepalese peacekeepers offered medical check-ups to over 200 residents as well.

"Operation Spring Basket is aimed at providing humanitarian organizations with the necessary security and logistic support to access some areas of Darfur

that had remained inaccessible in recent months," said Oriano Micaletti, UNAMID's Officer-in-Charge of Humanitarian Protection Strategy Coordination Division.

Since the Darfur conflict erupted in 2003, a significant portion of the population fled their homes and many now reside in internally displaced persons camps while others have been scattered throughout the vast region. Humanitarian agencies have provided much aid to the community and millions of lives have been saved. Nonetheless, due to a variety of obstacles including insecurity and subsequent inaccessibility a significant portion has been left without sufficient external support from the humanitarian agencies.

"One of the foremost priorities for UNAMID is facilitating safe and free access for humanitarian agencies which will allow UNAMID to fulfill its primary mandate to support humanitarian action," UNAMID Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari said.

"UN agencies and UNAMID have established a partnership on the ground

to deliver humanitarian relief to those who are in need," the JSR noted. "In order to help fulfill our primary mandate to help ensure that humanitarian relief reaches out to the vulnerable populations of Darfur, we have undertaken intense negotiations and outreach to secure access to these areas, which are controlled by various parties. We will provide security and logistical support to the humanitarian community intending to bring assistance to the region, regardless of who controls the territory."

The success of Spring Basket is expected to lead to more such opportunities in the future and enhance the effectiveness of the international community working in Darfur.



UN Volunteers working to strengthen civil society in Darfur

BY NATALIA HERRERA ESLAVA

While seeking the means to put an end to violence in Darfur is paramount for UNAMID, the Government and different partners in Sudan, two United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), Frank Adarkwah-Yiadom and Aimee Mwenyi Ntumba, have been paving the path to make the Doha Declaration (civil society inputs to the peace agreement) successful in bringing Darfuris closer to peace. Working on capacity building activities focussed on women, this team has brought their professionalism, experience and knowledge to communities in Zalingei, West Darfur.

As you enter the main conference room of University of Zalingei, filled with Darfuri women sitting with their notebooks open and pens ready, you can barely perceive that Aimee and Frank are preparing for one of the more than 19 workshops they have organized and conducted in

Zalingei during the past two years, and 20 civil society workshops to support the mediation process in Doha.

As happens when things are working well, everything looks effortless but, in fact, this UNV team as Frank explains “develop the proposals, organize, plan, prepare presentations, and conduct every bit of the institutional strengthening and capacity building programmes in West Darfur.”

Frank is Ghanaian while Aimee hails from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Both joined the UNV programme as peacekeepers in Darfur because of their deep commitment to peace.

As the workshop moves forward, you realize that Aimee and Frank have the responsibility of not only taking care of planning and logistics for the event, but

they also have to convey the importance of Darfuri civil society speaking up to stop the conflict.

“We maintain regular contact and interact with local authorities, political and tribal leaders, civil society organizations, peaceful coexistence committees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to promote peace, conflict resolution, reconciliation, negotiation, mediation, effective leadership, good governance, and even the inclusive participation in dialogue, and to promote democracy as well. We also get information on their concerns and needs, their perception of the peace process, and other issues related to UNAMID’s mandate,” Aimee stated.

As to the main objectives of the workshops, these UNV colleagues explain that “like any other conflict area, the civil society in Darfur believes that their



left. Aimee Mwenyi Ntumba (right) with a female Darfuri civil society representative

top. Frank Adarkwah Yiadom (second from right) with Aimee and another colleague at a civil affairs forum

PHOTOS: UNV SUPPORT OFFICE

role in the implementation of any peace agreement is crucial and they have to voice their concerns for consideration." For example, the commissioners of the eight localities in Zalingei and the native administration (traditional leaders), with support from UNAMID's Civil Affairs section, have been able to form what are called peaceful coexistence committees in the communities.

Furthermore, they help change behaviours in Zalingei's communities, especially of women. "To take necessary measures to train women as mediators to be involved in the Darfur peace process, we have to advocate and empower them to champion their concerns at all levels, ensuring that their problems and priorities are reflected in the official agreements." Also, Frank explains that thus far, "Darfuri women have not joined the conflict as combatants; however, they do group

themselves and sing war and cultural songs whilst dancing to motivate and encourage the armed movements in the fight. But the trend has changed now they are gradually contributing prominently to the search for peace."

Always showing an enthusiastic spirit and deep commitment to their work, the two talk about what they enjoy the most about being volunteers in Darfur: "I feel great satisfaction about the way the Darfuri ways of thinking and their acceptance that they must be involved in the peace process are changing. Darfuris are now volunteering for the promotion of peace in their areas," says Aimee. Meanwhile, Frank adds that "building the confidence of the citizens and the capacity of civil society in conflict management and offering them the support to facilitate reconciliation at the local level" are some of his greater rewards.

When it is time to close today's workshop, Frank invites some women of the audience to share their stories and their thoughts about the conflict. Pain and tears can be clearly seen in their eyes while they relay their experiences. He then thanks all attendees, while Aimee meets with the community leaders to arrange their transportation back home. At the end of the day something beneficial just happened in Darfur, thanks to Aimee and Frank.

NATALIA HERRERA ESLAVA WORKS IN UNAMID'S UNV SUPPORT OFFICE

UNAMID peacekeepers helping Darfuris

BY ALA MAYYAH

In each division, section and unit, UNAMID peacekeepers are engaged in implementing the Mission's mandate, which is primarily to contribute to the protection of civilians and help the people of Darfur have a better life. All staff members of the Mission assist through their job functions. Moreover, almost all of them use additional direct initiatives in their efforts to bring peace to Darfur. They consider themselves privileged to have the opportunity to better know the people of Darfur and earn their trust. Here is a sample of stories portraying the spirit of the UNAMID peacekeeper.



Musarapasi Nduna is a Corrections Officer from Zimbabwe and she works in UNAMID's Rule of Law Division.

One day during a routine visit to the Shallah Juvenile Prison, we discovered that the 15 boys detained there had only two cups which they were sharing during breakfast to drink their tea. They also indicated that they were lacking other basic needs such as bedding. We returned to the office very disturbed. On our way back, we had immediately bought cups for them, but felt this was not enough. So we sought donations from Mission colleagues which resulted in collection

of physical goods and items worth more than SDG 172,000 -- almost \$55,500 -- as well as medicines for adults and children who were born and being raised by their mothers in prison. These were distributed to the seven prisons in North Darfur and, although they were not enough, will go a long way in alleviating suffering on the part of the inmates. We are continuing to seek donations from our colleagues.



Jin Wen is a Human Rights Officer who came from China less than one year ago in June 2010 to help to promote the rights of Darfuris.

Part of my work affords me the opportunity to participate in human rights awareness-raising activities in Darfur's communities. I was recently in Mellit and Kutum to facilitate sessions on education and on gender-based violence. The time spent with Darfuris from different backgrounds and the post-training discussions gave me the opportunity to listen and learn about life in Darfur and a better understanding of the culture of the region.



Lt. Col Achamyesh Debela is the Chief Military Public Information Officer and hails from Ethiopia.

I am very grateful to be deployed as Military Public Information Officer in UNAMID as I have had the chance to visit almost all areas throughout the region. I remember during our visit to the team site in Mukhjar, the Darfuri Commissioner of the area, Mr. Hazim Hassan, expressed his community's gratitude for the work of UNAMID. He stated that "regardless of your projects, once you are helping our people, we will work with you." I was impressed by that as it reflects the trust that the people of Darfur place in us and the pleasant relations that are being cultivated and exist between UNAMID troops and Darfuris.



Ahmed Mohamed Hassan, Human Rights Officer, is a Sudanese national committed to bringing peace to Darfur.

Sometime in early 2011, there was a security operation at Zam Zam [internally displaced persons] IDP camp and an integrated UNAMID team was despatched to monitor the situation and contribute to providing protection for civilians in the aftermath of the operation. I led the Human Rights component of the integrated team and felt a sense of fulfillment for having contributed to assisting vulnerable Darfuri civilians. I was also proud that my Section had played an integral role in monitoring that incident and its after effects.



Albert Fiawosime, Humanitarian Liaison Officer, is Ghanaian and has been based in UNAMID from the Mission's inception.

I serve as an interface between the Mission and the humanitarian community, and get a lot of fulfillment from my interactions with the UNAMID military and police components on civil and military coordination. For example, we facilitate escorts for our UN country team partners to ensure that humanitarian aid is safely delivered to Darfuris who are in need. I feel very privileged to have this opportunity to participate in bringing humanitarian relief to the people of Darfur.



Real stories from a peacekeeper

Interview with Colonel Yusuf Musa

BY ALA MAYYAH

UNAMID Military Chief of Operations, Colonel Yusuf Sani Musa, talks about his tour of duty in Darfur.

Since he joined the Mission on 7 March 2010, he has travelled throughout Darfur meeting UN peacekeepers to have direct updates on the operational status and security situation. During his patrols, although Colonel Yusuf, along with the military personnel, faced many challenges and critical circumstances, nothing deterred them from carrying out their task of contributing to providing protection

for civilians and escorting humanitarian aid convoys and missions to ensure safe delivery to the vulnerable people in Darfur.

Q. How do your soldiers face the constant risk of attack?

Military personnel are trained to confront all kinds of challenges. As UNAMID peacekeepers, while we contribute to providing protection to civilians, we sometimes come under direct threat, but that does not hinder us from conducting our duties. UNAMID peacekeepers face all

risks courageously and are fully ready to protect vulnerable Darfuris.

Q. Can you share an incident when UNAMID soldiers were in direct danger, yet did not withdraw?

Not so long ago, precisely on 22 March 2011, a vehicle with two UNAMID soldiers was attacked while returning from a patrol mission in Masteri village, West Darfur, about 800 meters from their camp base. They were shot. The driver continued driving despite his wound and managed to arrive at the camp. A quick reaction platoon was immediately dispatched to chase the perpetrators. They eventually caught up with them about 5 kilometres away from Masteri town. The perpetrators with their rifles and ordnance were handed over to the Government of the



top. Colonel Yusuf Musa during the Nepalese police medal parade at UNAMID Super Camp

left. Colonel Yusuf Musa (center) in Meeting of Tripartite Mechanism in African Union Head Quarters in Addis Ababa

PHOTOS: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

Sudan Police for prosecution. Meanwhile, the wounded soldiers received medical care and are now fully recovered.

Q. This incident delivers a good message. How would you put it in your own words?

This true story, among others, tells perpetrators of such acts, as well as bandits, to be wary of UNAMID troops.

Q. What if at anytime UNAMID peacekeepers have to withdraw from a risky area, where people are expecting you to reach them for help?

Withdrawing and fear are not on our agenda. We try our best to reach people who need protection. And we give high consideration to the confidence and trust Darfuris have in us. I remember another

incident. On 24 February 2011, a UNAMID team of 60 personnel from military and other components in South Darfur, were planning an escort for colleagues to El-Ferdous, north east of Buram Team Site, and areas around west Bahr Al Ghazl on the border of South Sudan who were going on a security assessment mission and confidence building with the people there. Despite prior coordination with local authorities, the team was intercepted by an officer from the national brigade, who advised that the patrol should be aborted for security reasons and because it was unsafe for UNAMID to patrol the area. The Sector South Head of Office, who was part of the patrol encouraged the team to proceed, so they departed El-Daein Base camp at about 10:40 hours. Fifteen minutes later, approximately 4 km away from the camp base, the convoy was blocked by a vehicle belonging to the national authorities at a newly established check point. The patrol commander and the Head of Office came down to enquire why the convoy was stopped and negotiate with the national soldiers, but were still not allowed to proceed. The national military officer finally agreed that the convoy could head to El-Ferdous only and return to base afterwards. However, the Head of Office insisted that the mission must be completed. Finally, the convoy was allowed to move on.

Despite the potential risk, the convoy successfully conducted its mission and reached the people who were expecting them for support.

This is the kind of situation the Mission passes through in trying to carry out its main tasks that lie at the core of our mandate.

Q. As a committed and seasoned UN peacekeeper, what would you like to say on the occasion of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers?

I consider myself privileged to have the chance to come to Darfur as a peacekeeper with UNAMID, and to know the Darfuris. Each place has its own wealth. Darfur's lies in its good people, who really want and deserve peace by all means. I hope there will be a day in the near future when I visit all Darfur cities and villages, and see no camps. Darfuris will live together in their homes in peace.

Colonel Yusuf has 26 years of professional experience in military service, which includes participation in UN operations in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Darfur.



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