

# **The scorched earth**

Oil and war in Sudan

# Who's who in oil

## The investors

### BP

Through its \$578 million stake in PetroChina, created in an initial public offering on the NY Stock Exchange in March 2000, and more recent \$400 million investment in Sinopec along with oil majors Shell and ExxonMobil, BP is a substantial investor in two subsidiaries of China's national oil company, CNPC. It is the largest minority stakeholder in PetroChina, with 2.2% of shares (having purchased 10% of the offering). To prevent allegations that BP was contributing to human rights violations, the company erected a 'firewall' which would, it said, stop its funds from contributing to the parent company which operates in Sudan. CNPC retains 90% ownership of PetroChina. Given the nature of Chinese state-owned corporations, concerns persist about fungibility. Many observers argue that a dollar for PetroChina is essentially a dollar for CNPC – and therefore potentially for its Sudanese operations. Sinopec's expansion in Block 6, and CNPC's expansion in the Adar oilfield, will both need additional funds.

## The concession holders

### GNPOC

The Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company is currently the sole operational consortiums developing Sudan's oilfields. It is made up of Talisman Energy Inc, which holds a 25% stake; CNPC, the Chinese national oil corporation, with 40%; Petronas Carigali Overseas, which holds 30%; and Sudan's national oil corporation, Sudapet, which owns 5%. GNPOC's Blocks 1, 2 and 4, particularly the Heglig and Unity oilfields, are the scenes of greatest conflict and displacement to date. GNPOC also owns the 1,600 km pipeline to its oil supertanker facilities near Port Sudan on the Red Sea. Talisman, Canada's largest independent oil and gas company, is currently drilling in the North Sea's Moray Firth.

### Lundin Oil AB

A family-run Swedish oil company based in Geneva, Lundin suspended operations in Block 5a, adjacent

to GNPOC, in 1999, because, it said, of 'logistical difficulties'. Sources claim that the construction of the oil road through Lundin's area – essential to develop the concession – has been accompanied by a military drive and the burning of villages. In March 2001 Lundin announced that it had struck oil at Thar Jath in Block 5a, one of the regions's richest deposits, and will be continuing oil exploration further south. Lundin is the lead operator in Block 5a, with 40% of shares. Other stakeholders in this concession are Petronas (28.5%), OMV of Austria (26%) and Sudapet (5%).

### TotalFinaElf

Block 5, a vast expanse of 120,000 km<sup>2</sup> running all the way south to Sudan's border, was sold to TotalFinaElf in the 1980s, but it has remained unexploited because of security problems. Called an 'oil goldmine', the concession is alluring – both for the company and for the government, who will see the area around Bor as the next big lucrative prize.

### CNPC

The China National Petroleum Company, along with Malaysian and Gulf state companies, is expanding in the Adar Yel oil fields in Block 3. CNPC holds 23% and is the lead in the GNPOC consortium. There are reports of increased attacks on NGOs and civilians in eastern Upper Nile near Adar, which may presage the rumoured building of a pipeline to Ethiopia.

## The suppliers

Weir Pumps (Glasgow) and Rolls Royce are suppliers of pumping stations, pumps and engines to the pipeline and pumping stations. Without this vital contribution, there would be no oil moving to the Port Sudan terminal along the 1,600 km pipeline.

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## Oil and war in Sudan

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'Christ was sold for 30 pieces of silver and our people are being sacrificed in exchange for barrels of oil.'

Catholic Bishops Conference, September 2000.

## **Christian Aid's programme in Sudan**

Christian Aid's programme in Sudan dates from the early 1970s when an end to the first civil war since independence gave the country hope for a new start. Yet the renewed outbreak of war only 11 years later, in 1983, marked the beginning of a context which has been ever more challenging to relief and development work and ever more frustrating as the constraints have continuously outweighed the efforts of local churches and agencies and their supporters. Today Christian Aid works with 24 local partners in both the north and south of the country with an annual programme expenditure of over £2 million.

The challenges and constraints affect every aspect of Christian Aid's work: relief, development and advocacy. The displacement and hunger caused by warfare and drought create the constant need for both food and non-food relief amongst millions of displaced families existing on the outskirts of Khartoum, and amongst remote and dispersed communities right across the southern part of the country from Wau to the Nuba Mountains, to northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Western Upper Nile. Relief efforts are exorbitantly costly because access both north and south is usually only possible by air. In the south aid flights take place at great risk because of fighting, and are also often banned by the government in Khartoum.

Christian Aid has called southern Sudan a 'development disaster'. Constant warfare has left neglected all basic infrastructure and all institutions of governance and welfare. Almost 20 years of conflict has devastated health and education services. Christian Aid's partners are struggling to provide people-focused development through building civil society and community organisations which can deliver a voice to the people as well as education and other basic services. Support to independent voices in the north is also a key priority in Christian Aid's programme. But development work is hampered by a lack of funding from government and other official institutions whose definitions of humanitarian assistance preclude an adequate longer-term response to situations of chronic conflict.

Advocacy is thus a key priority for Christian Aid and its partners. Partners including the Sudanese Councils of Churches stand up to advocate on issues of human rights abuse in circumstances of personal danger and engage, particularly in the south, in groundbreaking programmes of grassroots people-to-people peace-making. Partners have also spoken out against investment by foreign oil companies as the war has become ever more destructive.

'The Sudanese churches believe that the oil in southern Sudan is a national resource that should be used for all the peoples of Sudan,' said the Sudanese Councils of Churches in a statement issued in late 2000. 'Instead, oil revenues have been used for the purchase of weapons used for killing and displacing people in the oil areas. As shepherds of the population in the Sudan and eyewitnesses, we call upon the international community to take immediate action... [and for] the withdrawal of the oil companies.'

# Executive summary

IN THE OILFIELDS OF SUDAN, civilians are being killed and raped, their villages burnt to the ground. They are caught in a war for oil, part of the wider civil war between northern and southern Sudan that has been waged for decades. Since large-scale production began two years ago, oil has moved the war into a new league. Across the oil-rich regions of Sudan, the government is pursuing a 'scorched earth' policy to clear the land of civilians and to make way for the exploration and exploitation of oil by foreign oil companies.

This Christian Aid report, *The Scorched Earth*, shows how the presence of international oil companies is fuelling the war. Companies from Asia and the West, including the UK, have helped build Sudan's oil industry, offering finance, technological expertise and supplies, to create a strong and growing oil industry in the centre of the country. In the name of oil, government forces and government-supported militias are emptying the land of civilians, killing and displacing hundreds of thousands of southern Sudanese. Oil industry infrastructure – the same roads and airstrips which serve the companies – is used by the army as part of the war. In retaliation, opposition forces have attacked government-controlled towns and villages, causing further death and displacement.

Exports of Sudan's estimated reserves of two billion barrels of oil are paying for the build-up of a Sudanese homegrown arms industry as well as paying for more arms imports. Without oil, the civil war being fought between the government of Sudan and the main opposition force, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is at a stalemate; with oil, it can only escalate.

The Sudanese government itself now admits that oil is funding the wider civil war. 'Sudan will be capable of producing all the weapons it needs thanks to the growing oil industry,' announced General Mohamed Yassin just eleven months after the oil began flowing out of the new pipeline into the supertankers at the Red Sea port. The government now earns roughly US\$1 million a day from oil – equivalent to the US\$1 million it spends daily fighting the war. The equation is simple, the consequences devastating.

Christian Aid visited southern Sudan last year to gather first-hand information about the impact of the companies' involvement. Eyewitness accounts show that government forces are ruthlessly clearing the

way for oil over an ever-larger area. In one area of Eastern Upper Nile where a new consortium began prospecting in March 2001, 48 villages have been burned and 55,000 people displaced in the past 12 months. Along a new road in one European oil company's concession, said one eyewitness, 'there is not a single village left'.

In a war against the SPLA, virtually all southerners – the ordinary people who have always lived in the oil-rich areas of Western Upper Nile – are regarded as potential enemies. For them, the legacy of the oil beneath their feet has not been new schools and roads, but displacement, destruction and death. The SPLA opposition is targeting the oil installations and fighting government forces. It is civilians who are dying from the abuses perpetrated by both sides.

## **'When the pumping began, the war began... Oil has brought death.'**

Chief Malony Kolang,  
Western Upper Nile

Western Upper Nile now has the highest proportion of people in need anywhere in Sudan. Its children are at the highest nutritional risk. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which includes the protection of civilians during war, is being violated each and every day. Organisations

such as Christian Aid and its 24 local partner organisations cannot fulfil their humanitarian mandate. Aid flights are banned by the government, leaving people in even greater need.

Extracting oil in a country at war with itself is, without question, problematic. In Sudan, geography compounds the problem. Although the oil is being exploited by the government, most oil reserves lie in southern Sudan – in areas where the SPLA and other southern groups are fighting against the government in pursuance of demands for a more equitable share of economic and political power. The oil is transported north through a 1,600 km pipeline built with foreign hardware, including British pumping stations and engines. Khartoum has signalled its intentions by selling oil concessions across the entire south as far as the Ugandan border. These are the areas next in line for armed clearance.

Oil companies such as Canada's Talisman Energy, Sweden's Lundin Oil, Malaysia's Petronas and China's state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) are business partners of the government of Sudan.

Under contract, oil revenues are shared between the companies and the Sudanese national oil company,

Sudapet. Military protection is also part of the partnership. As in many conflict-ridden countries, the oil companies are themselves targets. The SPLA has declared oilfields and oil companies to be legitimate military targets; one of its local commander has attacked oil installations.

The companies require protection so that they may operate unhindered and so their staff are secure. But the relationship between oil and security has moved far beyond simple defence. A strategy of clearing potential enemies – Nuer and Dinka civilians – from the oilfields is seen by the government as a prerequisite to making way for oil.

As companies cast their eyes on the prize – huge reservoirs of untapped oil deep inside SPLA-held territory – the oil war promises to spread. TotalFinaElf's 120,000 km<sup>2</sup> concession near the town of Bor cannot be exploited unless the area is controlled by the northern government. There is nothing to suggest that the government will not practice its scorched earth policy here, too.

With this report Christian Aid joins a long list of organisations which have exposed these human rights violations: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the UN, the New Sudan Council of Churches, and official delegations such as the Harker commission from Canada. Shareholders in the major oil companies are mounting a campaign reminiscent of the South African movement for divestment. A new report by the influential Washington-based Center for Strategic and Investment Studies concludes that: 'Oil is fundamentally changing Sudan's war' and calls for the US to enlist the support of the UK government in an effort to end the war.

Yet, despite the evidence, the oil companies remain largely silent. Those directly engaged in production claim that they have no knowledge of oil-related human rights violations on their land – that, however deplorable, human rights violations are not linked to their activities or to their need for government-supplied security. The companies argue that their presence, and the production of oil, will help bring peace and prosperity to Sudan. British companies, from Rolls Royce to Weir Pumps of Glasgow, have supplied pumps and engineers for the pipeline. The companies say that they will help bring peace and prosperity to Sudan. But there are signs neither of peace nor of prosperity – only of more war.

In Sudan, oil and war are inextricably linked. For this reason Christian Aid, which has been working for 30 years in Sudan, and its partners, recommend that:

- Oil companies directly involved in oil in Sudan, such as Talisman Energy and Lundin Oil, should immediately suspend operations until there is a just and lasting peace agreement.
- Companies such as TotalFinaElf, which own concessions in Sudan but are not yet operational, and those which have invested in the Sudanese oil industry, should refuse to take any further steps to begin operations or supply equipment until a peace agreement is reached.
- BP, Shell and other foreign and institutional investors in Sinopec and PetroChina, two subsidiaries of CNPC, should divest their holdings.
- The Government of Sudan should cease its abuse of civilians and breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law. It should publish reports of the use of oil revenue to demonstrate that it is used to benefit people in all of Sudan, north and south.
- The SPLA should also cease its breaches of international humanitarian and human rights laws.
- The UK government should take steps to put in place strong and enforceable regulation of transnational corporations to ensure that they cannot be directly or indirectly complicit in human rights violations.

Oil should be Sudan's peace dividend – the incentive which makes peace desirable. Without peace, oil cannot be safely extracted. Foreign oil companies can no longer claim that they do not know of the scorched earth policy which has swept the oilfields. Western industry, including UK companies, have a choice: they can either continue to turn a blind eye to the atrocities carried out in their name, or they and their governments can help make peace possible.

# Introduction

ONE OF THE BLOODIEST and longest running of Africa's wars is being fuelled by oil. This report shows, through eyewitness accounts, how foreign oil companies have helped to build Sudan's oil industry and demonstrates the cost of oil to ordinary people. It also demonstrates that – far from being a force for peace, as the oil companies argue – oil is threatening to extend the scorched earth strategy from the oil-rich area of Western Upper Nile to vast new oil concessions further south.

Oil – developed, exploited and financed by foreign oil companies – is both the justification and the means for a larger, more brutal war. From the government's own mouth we hear that oil is paying for arms.

How complicit are foreign oil companies? Report after report in a long list of authoritative human rights documents has made it clear to governments and companies alike that oil is integrally linked to the war, and that companies bear a responsibility. A year after an official Canadian delegation led by John Harker condemned foreign corporate complicity and recommended concrete areas for change, Christian Aid has found that:

- In the oilfields and surrounding areas, government forces and government-sponsored militias are carrying out a 'scorched earth' policy bent on emptying the areas of civilians.
- Oil company infrastructure, including airstrips and oil roads, are being used by government forces fighting in southern Sudan.
- Government bans on UN and NGO humanitarian flights go unremarked by the companies, whose own personnel more freely. Increased fighting plus the aid flight bans is leading to acute food shortages and fears of famine.
- Companies have failed to take proper responsibility for displacement and other human rights violations. Codes of conduct have had no visible impact. The benefits of oil are not accruing to the people from whose land it is being taken.
- Sudan, which two years ago was an oil importer, is now an exporter of oil and, with oil money, able to fund an expansion of the war. A new industrial complex in the north has been developed and reported to be used for dual civilian-military use. Defence spending has doubled.
- Companies such as Lundin, Petronas and CNPC are contributing to the extension of the war by permitting government forces to clear new areas for them to exploit. The offensive which will be necessary to take control of TotalFinaElf's concessions will take the scorched earth close to the borders of Uganda and Kenya.

It is no longer possible for companies to claim ignorance of the effects of their operations. Investigation after investigation, by the UN's Special Rapporteur, Amnesty International, Canada's Harker commission, Human Rights Watch, church agencies and this report by Christian Aid, tell the story of systematic, overwhelming human rights violations of innocent people. If the companies turn a blind eye now, it is a deliberate one.

Talisman and Lundin have told Christian Aid of their concern for human rights in the area and their desire for peace. Both companies have brought in some humanitarian relief. But in the wider context, deliveries of tents for temporary shelter for displaced villagers, or support for water boreholes or a 60-bed hospital look very feeble indeed. A sticking plaster while disaster spreads.

Should the companies be given the benefit of the doubt? The Canadian government, failing to apply sanctions in the wake of the Harker report, thought so. The companies, notably Talisman, argue that their presence will lead to positive change – 'islands of peace', as Talisman expressed it. But a year on, as Christian Aid has found, there are ever more villages lying in ashes.

Sudan needs oil: its people, north and south, need oil wealth. But under current conditions this is not happening. Oil is bringing few benefits to the people under whose land it lies. The development of oil must take place under a new set of terms.

Foreign oil companies can help in this process. Corporate Britain and major multinationals are talking the language of human rights and corporate social responsibility. If the ethical criteria declared publicly by these companies – BP's signature to the UN Declaration on Human Rights, for instance, and Talisman's signature to the International Code of Ethics for Canadian Business – are to have any meaning, they must be applied. Companies directly involved in Sudan must end their 'business as usual'. Investors, such as BP, must take a serious look at their portfolio.

# Map



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**Oil concessions owned by foreign oil companies**

Blocks 1 & 2 (Heglig and Unity oil fields) in production:

GNPOC consortium: Talisman (Canada), CNPC (China), Petronas (Malaysia), Sudapet in (Sudan)  
 CNPC and Gulf Petroleum Corporation (Qatar)  
 Talisman, plus other members of GNPOC consortium  
 Lundin (Sweden) and OMV (Austria)  
 TotalFinaElf (France)  
 CNPC

Block 3 (Adar Yale oil field), in production:

Block 4 (Kaikang oil field), under exploration:

Blocks 5a and 5b, 5a in production, 5b not:

Block 5, no production:

Block 6, no production:

# Glossary

CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation, China's state oil company which owns 40% of GNPOC.
GNPOC	Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company, the consortium made up of Talisman Energy (Canada), Petronas (Malaysia), and Sudapet (Sudan's state oil company) which runs the major oil fields in Blocks 1, 2 and 4, including Heglig and Unity, the two biggest producing oilfields. Also owns the 1,600 km pipeline to the Red Sea and the supertanker facilities near Port Sudan.
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, the grouping of governments which provides the principal forum for negotiations between Khartoum and the SPLA. Governments include: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. IGAD is backed by the IGAD Partners' Forum, consisting of European states including the UK.
Mujahadeen	Islamic 'holy warriors' in the service of the government of Sudan, made up of Baggara tribal militias placed to fight in Western Upper Nile and Bahr el-Ghazal.
NIF	National Islamic Front, led by General Omar el-Bashir, which came to power in a coup in 1989. The NIF is now renamed the National Congress.
OMV	Austrian oil company and investor (28%) in Block 5a, along with Lundin and Petronas.
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan, set up in 1989 and now the world's largest aid operation. Led by the UN and made up of 40 NGOs and UN agencies, principally the World Food Programme (WFP) and Unicef. OLS is divided into two sectors: a northern sector based in Khartoum and a southern sector, which operates from the northern Kenyan city of Lokkichokkio.
PetroChina	A 90% subsidiary of CNPC in which BP and other international investors hold a major stake. BP invested US\$578 million when CNPC launched its initial public offering on the stock exchange in March 2000 and argued that it had erected a 'firewall' between its investment and Sudan. But concerns over fungibility and investments in Tibet have made it controversial.
Petronas	Malaysian national oil company with a 30% stake in GNPOC and 28.5% stake in Block 5a.
Sinopec	A subsidiary of CNPC floated on the New York Stock Exchange in October 2000. BP, Shell and ExxonMobil together invested \$1.83 billion in it.
SPLM/A	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army, the main armed opposition movement in Sudan. The SPLA controls most of the south with the exception of garrison towns. In this report we refer to it as the SPLA.
SRRA	Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, the humanitarian wing of the SPLA.
WFP	World Food Programme, responsible for most food aid deliveries to southern Sudan and a leading UN agency within OLS.

## Sudan's civil war

For more than four decades Sudan has been divided in a bitter and bloody civil war between the central government of Khartoum and armed opposition movements. The strongest of these is the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA), based in the southern part of the country. The war is being fought over a complex and changing set of issues which encompass the identities and cultures of diverse African and Arab peoples; control over natural resources such as land, livestock, water and now oil; and the balance of power between a powerful minority population in the riverain centre and a weak majority spread across the more remote marginal areas of this vast country.

This war has caused untold harm to all the Sudanese people, both directly from the use of arms, but even more from the famine, malnutrition and disease that results from the government strategy of grinding the SPLA down by undermining the population's livelihoods. It has cost millions of lives – over two million dead and four million people internally displaced – in the last 18 years alone.

It is further complicated, especially in the south of the country where most of the oil is, by the interplay of different armed factions. Initially the result of internal dissension between Dinka and Nuer groups within the SPLA, the rivalry is now exploited by the government as part of a sophisticated divide and rule policy to strengthen its cause. It arms proxy forces to fight its battles including both Arab and southern militias, and holy warriors or mujahadeen. The warlords who have been encouraged to develop are often only loosely aligned and effectively operate in isolation. None of the protagonists respects the rights of civilians and all sides have been accused of committing atrocities.

The current government of General Omar el-Bashir seized power in a coup in 1989, but its hold on the country has never been strong. It has engaged in negotiations with the SPLA through the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace process. But despite the fact that both sides signed up to a 'Declaration of Principles' for peace in the mid 1990s, the IGAD process has faltered. Commentators are painting a bleak picture at the start of 2000, with reports of heavy fighting between opposing factional commanders Peter Parr and Peter Gadet. The suffering of the civilian population will be devastating yet again.

# The war for oil

The government of Sudan is clearing huge tracts of southern Sudan to make way for oil production. Troops are terrorising civilians, burning homes and attacking villages from the air in a war for oil

WIDE STRETCHES of southern Sudan are being subjected to a ruthless 'scorched earth' policy to clear the way for oil exploration and to create a cordon sanitaire around the oilfields. As new areas of exploration open up, and oil companies facilitate troop movements by building roads across swampland and bridges across rivers, the war expands and the scorched earth advances.

While all parties are guilty of flouting Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law, what marks the government out from the opposition forces is the extent of its attack on civilians living in and around the oil rich areas. This is having a devastating impact on the life of the South's two main tribes: the Nuer, the main victims of the current oil war, and the Dinka.

Since construction of the pipeline to the Red Sea began in 1998, hundreds of thousands of villagers have been terrorised into leaving their homes in Upper Nile. Tens of thousands of homes across Western Upper Nile and Eastern Upper Nile have been burnt to the ground. In some areas, the charred remains of the humble mud huts that got in the way of oil are the only evidence there is that there was ever life in the region.

Government forces and militias have destroyed harvests, looted livestock and burned houses to ensure that no-one, once displaced, will return home. Since the pipeline opened, the increased use of helicopter gunships and indiscriminate high-altitude bombardment has added a terrifying new dimension to the war. 'The worst thing was the gunships,' Zeinab Nyacieng, a Nuer woman driven hundreds of miles from her home, told Christian Aid late last year. 'I never saw them before last year. But now they are like rain.'

The inter-tribal warfare that has plagued the south for the last decade has been fomented by strategic arms deliveries from government garrisons. By the middle of last year, hundreds of cases of ammunition had already been delivered to one of the southern factions fighting for control of Western Upper Nile and its vast oil reserves.<sup>1</sup> This is warlordism – as the government and the oil companies call it – but warlordism provoked and encouraged by the government with the express intent of depopulating oil-rich areas.

One of the most tragic episodes in the history of Sudan's war is unfolding with scarcely a word of protest, or even acknowledgement, from any of the

foreign companies operating in the region.<sup>2</sup> Their silence is tantamount to complicity.

The areas around the Heglig and Unity oilfields, the first to be opened up, are already virtual wastelands – government-controlled no-go areas where impunity is the rule. Independent observers are rarely permitted in and, when they are, are tightly controlled. Without international pressure on the government of Sudan and the oil companies working with it, other oil-rich areas will soon suffer the same, irreversible, fate.

Here we report on displacement from three oil areas, based on interviews with people displaced from those areas:

1. Block 5a, south-east of Bentiu, operated by Sweden's Lundin Oil, Austria's OMV and Malaysia's Petronas. Testing operations here began in January 2001<sup>3</sup> after a ruthless, year-long government assault to secure the environs to the concession and the access road leading to it. Oil was struck again in early March 2001.
2. Block 3, east of Bentiu, where production from the Adar Yei oilfield will be boosted by a new consortium of Malaysian and Chinese companies.
3. Blocks 1 and 2, north of Bentiu, where the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC) is exploiting the Heglig and Unity oil fields. Displacement here began in the 1970s but continued, after the formation of the GNPOC, in mid-1999.

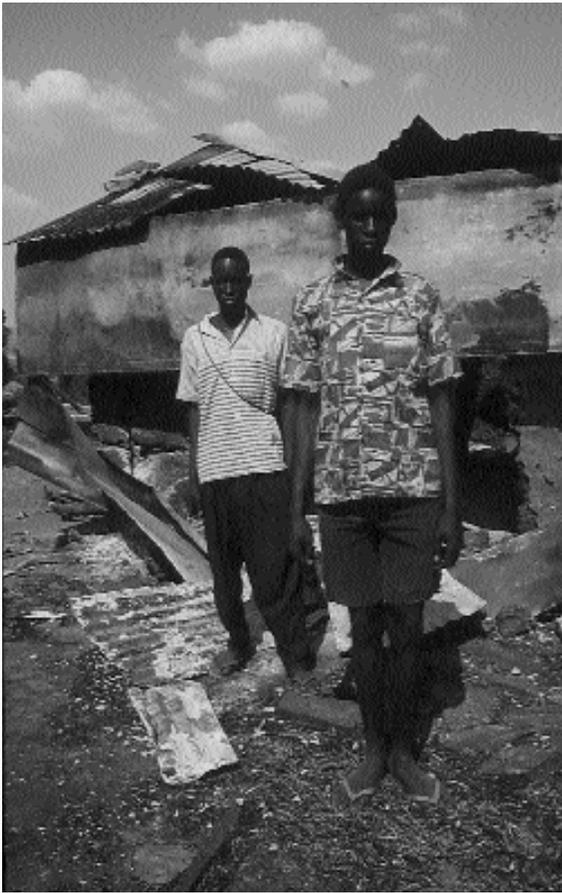
'The only signs of life are the lorries travelling to the oilfield'

## 1. Block 5a: Lundin Oil

In April 1999, Lundin Oil of Sweden drilled an exploratory well at Thar Jath, 10 miles from the Nile, and reported finding as many as 300 million barrels of 'excellent' reservoir quality oil. A month later, according to Human Rights Watch, the government moved troops to Thar Jath and adjacent areas, displacing tens of thousands of people.

This was the start of a still-unfolding tragedy in the area that has a single cause: the lack of a national consensus on the country's single most important resource, oil.

In March 2000, amid fighting for control of the Thar Jath site, Lundin said it was suspending drilling because of 'logistical difficulties and safety considerations'. It announced the resumption of drilling in January 2001 'within days of the inauguration of the 75 kilometre all-weather road'



*Boys stand outside the remains of their village, Pageri, after government forces destroyed it.*

from its base camp at Rub Kona.<sup>4</sup> Taban Deng, a former Minister of State for Roads in the Khartoum government, told Christian Aid the road was built by Chinese workers and paid for by Lundin at a cost of up to \$400,000 per kilometre.

What Lundin did not say in its press release was that in the intervening 10 months, as the oilfield tripled in size and its airstrip was extended, government troops and militias had burned and depopulated the entire length of this oil road. In visits to Western Upper Nile in August and November 2000, Christian Aid found thousands of Nuer civilians displaced from villages along this road, hundreds of miles away in Dinka Bahr el-Ghazal. They all told the same tale. Antonovs bombed the villages to scatter the people.

Then government troops arrived by truck and helicopter, burning the villages and killing anyone who was unable to flee – in most cases, the old and the very young.

Chief Peter Ring Pathai said that government troops airlifted to Kuach were shooting at villagers from the air, hanging out of the doors of their helicopters.

‘All the villages along the road have been burned,’ said John Wicjial Bayak, a local official who had been driven from a village close to the oil road.<sup>5</sup> ‘You cannot see a single hut. The government doesn’t want people anywhere near the oil.’

Aid workers who have flown over the oil road confirm these claims. An independent aid worker familiar with the area said that all the villages<sup>6</sup> that once existed along the road to Pulteri have been razed to the ground. ‘As one flies along the new oil road, the only sign of life are the lorries travelling at high speed back and forth to the oilfield,’ said the aid worker. ‘Small military garrisons are clearly visible every five kilometres. The bulk of the population that once lived in villages along the road and within walking distance of OLS airstrips are now nearly beyond reach. Communities in need cannot be assisted.’

Officials of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) who have visited the area also say military traffic on the road is heavy. OLS is the major national and international relief effort bringing aid to the people of the Sudan, a consortium of the UN and non-governmental organisations.

According to village chiefs, systematic attacks on the villages along the oil road began in March 2000, the month Lundin suspended drilling. First, Antonovs would bomb the villages to scatter people, then government troops would come into the village by truck and helicopter to burn huts and kill any people who had stayed. One village was bombed ten times before government troops finally burned out the residents.

**‘The aim is to depopulate the oilfields so oil surveys can be done in peace.’**

Operation Lifeline Sudan official, May 2000

**‘You cannot see a single hut. The government doesn’t want people anywhere near the oil.’**

John Wicjial Bayak, November 2000, Sudanese official

### **The scorching of villages along the Lundin oil road**

- One of the first villages attacked was Chotyiel, in October 1999. On hearing gunships, 80-year-old Liu-Liu ran to the forest with six of his grandchildren. 'We dug a hole for the children and put a blanket on top,' he said. 'Then soldiers came to burn the houses. Helicopters flew overhead. If they saw you, they killed you. We stayed 20 days in the forest eating wild fruit. It was not easy to move as we had blind people there. The Arabs are forcing the road to the village. They're going to Rier [Thar Jath], to the oilfield.'<sup>7</sup>
- Then in March 2000 government troops supported by Antonovs and helicopter gunships attacked the village of Dhorbor, on the first stretch of the oil road. Local officials reported more than 30 villagers killed.
- On 11 May 2000 it was the turn of the village of Guit. Mary Cuoy heard shots at 4am. 'I had a 3-year-old grandchild sleeping with me,' she said. 'I took her by the hand and left everything. In the morning, some people went back and saw soldiers taking the cows. Every hut was burned.'<sup>8</sup>
- A few days later, the village of Kuach was attacked by troops who arrived in lorries. 'When I heard bullets I took one child and ran naked to the forest,' said Simon Dual, a father of two. 'But it was far and three people were killed as they ran. When I went back the next day to see what had happened, I found the house burned and the body of my child, Stephen, in the fire.' The SPLA tried to fight back, explained Simon, but the Arabs had very big guns in their vehicles. 'My home was right beside the road works. Bulldozers passed within feet of it. They want to take the oil from the south for the north. They want to chase us off our land because they want the oil.'<sup>9</sup>

### **Burned alive**

An estimated 11,000 people displaced from Block 5a by the above attacks settled in the SPLA-controlled village of Nhialdiu. The village was already swollen by Nuer who had been driven south from the Heglig area in earlier years. Then on 15 July 2000, government militias attacked Nhialdiu – burning every hut bar one and displacing every inhabitant. A local chief, John Lou, said that the militias rounded up the elderly, put them in one hut and burned them alive. He said some of the dead were also very young children – five of them his own children.

Thousands more displaced people fled west into the neighbouring province of Bahr el-Ghazal, where a

### **'I found the house burned and the body of my child, Stephen, in the fire.'**

peace agreement signed between Nuer and Dinka in the village of Wunlit offered a safe haven after years of inter-tribal fighting. John Wicjial Bayak was one of them: 'We crossed five rivers,' he related.<sup>10</sup> 'It took 12 days. We had no supplies, so the children just ate wild fruit. Five children in our group drowned because they couldn't swim. I swam with one hand and supported my two children in the other. We encountered crocodiles and elephants. So many enemies.'

The children who reached Bahr el-Ghazal safely were in a pitiful state when Christian Aid visited the region in November 2000. Most were naked or semi-naked and covered in scabies, having crossed miles of mosquito-infested swampland. Many had lost a parent or a sibling. All were hungry. Most families that had any cows left had begun slaughtering them – a sure sign that they had exhausted all other resources.

### **How much further will it go?**

In early March 2001 Lundin announced that it had struck oil at Thar Jath, a source of an estimated 4,260 barrels a day. 'This is a significant and exciting event for Lundin Oil,' said company president Ian Lundin. 'We have confirmed that the trend of prolific oilfields as seen in Blocks 1,2 and 4 [Heglig and Unity] extend to our Block.' He also announced further exploration, 12 miles south east of Thar Jath, at the Jarayan-1 well and an 'extensive seismic campaign over the block'.<sup>11</sup>

More death and destruction may take place unless the international community takes action to prevent it. The Lundin road is currently being extended beyond the Thar Jath site to the port of Adok on the Nile. Efforts are also reportedly underway to build two spurs radiating out from the road: one to SPLA-controlled Boaw, site of an old capped well, and another to Leer, a government garrison. If Lundin's advance so far has been accompanied by the destruction of dozens of villages, what guarantee is there that its plans for development will not lead to more razing of homes?

'Graves of children litter the area'

### **2. Adar oil fields in Block 3**

The devastation in Block 5a chronicled above is, at the time of publication, being repeated in a wide swathe of Eastern Upper Nile, from the Adar oilfield east to the Ethiopian border. Local chiefs and opposition commanders say that here too the government is attempting to drive civilians from the



*A child looks for firewood in the wreckage of her home, burnt by government troops in a policy of 'scorching' the area.*

area in order to allow oil exploration to proceed unimpeded. They say the attackers – primarily government militias, some of them newly organised and armed – are avoiding military targets and attacking only civilians.

OLS officials say privately that they believe the government has one aim in the area: 'to depopulate the oilfields so oil surveys can be done in peace.'<sup>12</sup>

Churchmen in the area say that in the year 2000 government militias burned 48 villages and displaced some 55,000 people around Adar. This area, Block 3, is where Malaysian and Chinese state oil companies have recently extended their investment under a new \$30 million exploration programme.<sup>13</sup>

In January this year, four villages in the Guelguk area south-east of Adar were attacked and burned by government militias and mujahadeen. Some rode in on camel-back. First reports said dozens of villagers died. It was difficult identifying the bodies because they had been attacked by birds. Survivors said many of the displaced fled for 48 hours, shot at and

pursued the entire time. OLS officials said the displaced were sleeping under trees, without blankets, medicine or water.

One of the few organisations operating in Northern Upper Nile is the Johannesburg-based International Relief and Development agency (IRD). IRD's director, Derek Hammond, visited the region several times last year and said he saw graves of children 'littering' the area.<sup>14</sup> 'People do not build shelters or huts or stay in one area because this immediately presents them as a target,' Hammond said. 'Families live under trees in the bush, mile after mile, hiding under trees. They eat leaves to survive because their crops and livestock have been destroyed by government raiders. Just eight miles away, trucks travel continually up and down a bush road carrying oil from the rig to the Nile.'

The evidence of the atrocities committed along the Lundin oil road and in Eastern Upper Nile appear to condemn these areas to the fate already suffered by areas north of Bentiu, around the Heglig and Unity oilfields.

'This is not your place any more!'

### **3. Heglig and Unity oilfields in Blocks 1 and 2: GNPOC, including Talisman**

The depopulation of the Heglig and Unity oilfields began when Chevron first discovered oil there in 1980, and has continued under the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC). This is a consortium made up of Talisman Energy (Canada), Petronas (Malaysia), and Sudapet (Sudan's state oil company).

Canadian company Talisman maintains that it found an 'empty landscape' when it joined GNPOC in 1998. It says the area was not depopulated by oil because it was never inhabited. Despite a body of evidence to the contrary, Talisman repeated this assertion in late 2000, insisting that 'oil development had proceeded... without incident' in the five years before the company began working in Sudan.<sup>15</sup> At best, Talisman is guilty of failing to do its homework; at worst, of deliberately turning a blind eye.

In 1999, the UN Special Rapporteur Leonardo Franco accused Khartoum of using its army to create a 60 km security zone around the oilfields. He reported that half the population in Ruweng county, the county in which Heglig and Unity lie, was displaced in

### **UN Special Rapporteur Franco reported that half the population in Ruweng county, the county in which Heglig and Unity lie, was displaced in attacks**

attacks between April and July 1999. He said thousands of villages, and 17 churches were destroyed.<sup>16</sup> In the Gumriak area, one of the areas targeted, a visiting team from the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) was told that government officials had warned local people to move before the attack: 'We don't want anybody here. This is not your place any more! We have business to do here.'

In May 1999, the village of el-Toor was attacked and burned by government forces using troops and aircraft. Taban Deng, governor of Unity State at the time, told Christian Aid the village was within walking distance of a Talisman site. He said an agricultural programme he had set up at el-Toor to encourage southerners to return to the area was burned by the troops that attacked the area – the very troops assigned to 'protect' the oilfields. He said the troops looted four of his 10 tractors and arrested his state police.

'The government's policy is to drive people inside the towns,' said Deng. 'In the bush either you run away or you are shot, burned and killed. Inside the towns they make life difficult for you.'

Survivors of the offensive interviewed south of Bentiu said they fled empty-handed. Stripped of their

## **Government suspicion of southerners**

Government suspicion extends not only to local people but to all southerners who might be security threats. In March last year, William Gatjang, a student at a Catholic school in Khartoum, travelled to Heglig to look for work. Within minutes of asking for directions, he says, he was seized in Heglig market by five plainclothed men armed with pistols.

'They took me into an office and registered my name,' Gatjang said.<sup>i</sup> 'They asked me what tribe I came from and I said: "Nuer." They said: "You'll spy on us and then you'll inform on us! You are SPLA!" I said: "No, I'm a student from Khartoum." They laughed at me and gave me 50 lashes with a leather whip.'

Gatjang says he was imprisoned in a rat-infested room with six other young southerners who told him that four fellow prisoners had died in the prison from injuries sustained in the two weeks before he arrived. His daily ration was a piece of bread and a glass of water. For 12 consecutive days, he claimed, he was beaten and kicked in an attempt to extract a 'confession' from him. 'They tied my hands and ankles,' he said. 'Four people took hold of me and threw me up and down. When I was weak, they interrogated me. I understood that they didn't want a southerner, and especially a Nuer, to work in the oilfields. In Khartoum they abuse us; when we come to our area looking for work they imprison us.'

homes and livelihoods, and weakened by sickness and hunger, some walked as far as 200 miles south. Others fled into the swamps bordering the Nile or to other inaccessible areas like forests. Many died on the way.

‘We heard about one group of displaced who ran into a tributary of the Bahr el-Ghazal river straight into the jaws of crocodiles,’ a WFP official said.<sup>17</sup> ‘That gives you an idea of the extent of their desperation. These are the stories you get to hear. What about the stories you don’t hear?’

Did GNPOC and its members, including Talisman, know about this displacement? Taban Deng says Talisman officials asked him in February 1999 if their operations had caused displacement. He told Human Rights Watch: ‘I told them about the market that existed before the locals were burned out. I told Talisman about the displacement from Heglig... Our people are not safe there.’

Talisman says Deng made no mention of displacement until a meeting with Talisman executives in Khartoum in December 1999.<sup>18</sup> Deng recalls that meeting. But he also recalls other, earlier meetings with Talisman officials in Bentiu at which he raised the issue of displacement and told company officials of his concerns.