

Rights and responsibilities in Darfur

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A combined UN-military-police-humanitarian initiative has been promoting civic rights and responsibilities among IDPs in order to increase security throughout Kalma camp and its surroundings.

Kalma camp was established in early 2004 as a place of refuge for displaced persons fleeing violence throughout Darfur. Over time, however, Kalma has come to be seen as a haven for criminal activity, with growing numbers of rival armed elements and rampant violence against minorities in the camp.

On 25 August 2008, Sudanese security forces entered the camp, allegedly with the intention of disarming and arresting those residents in possession of weapons. Although there are conflicting reports on the number of people who died or were injured, an estimated 47 people were killed during the operation, among them many women and children.¹

This incident served as a catalyst for UNAMID – the African Union/UN hybrid operation in Darfur² – to establish a 24-hour presence in Kalma and highlighted the need for a concerted effort by political, military and humanitarian actors to support activities to depoliticise the camp and promote a sense of collective responsibility for security among IDPs. Protracted displacement in camps may generate a feeling among displaced persons that their security is primarily the responsibility of external agencies – the military, UN, NGOs – but camp security is intricately linked to residents' degree of tolerance of arms and political violence inside the camps.

With the deployment of UNAMID's forces in the camp came a strategic effort by the mission to persuade the inhabitants of Kalma that while protection is their right, they also hold important civic responsibilities. A Task Force was established and chaired by UNAMID Civil Affairs and Human Rights, and UNHCR with the objective of providing workshops where agencies and IDPs could discuss the mandate of UNAMID, the Guiding Principles on IDPs, conflict resolution, and gender-based violence. The aim is to spread two main messages: first,

that the mission is there to work with IDPs and to liaise with – but not replace – the government and, second, that IDPs have the right to protection but they must also work to maintain the humanitarian and civil nature of the camp. This second message is of critical importance in such a politically charged camp where many IDPs have voiced their discontent with the government and armed movements. False expectations of the mission as the sole answer to the conflict are dangerous and show a lack of collective responsibility for the security of a community.

Kalma's approximately 92,000 inhabitants are divided into sectors led by community leaders ('sheikhs') who have been designated by the IDPs as their representatives in terms of working with the international community and for internal camp management. The camp sheikhs are not the traditional tribal leaders but have been selected by communities of IDPs for their ability to lobby for the interests of Kalma's displaced persons, and for their skills in maintaining order within the camp. Many traditional leaders did not join the IDPs in camps and the IDPs therefore had to organise their own leadership.

Workshops

Participants at the workshops, which followed up on previous workshops on UNAMID's mandate, included camp leaders and elders, women and youth representatives, and teachers. As the groups most excluded from the decision-making process in the camp, the youth and women gained much from the chance to better understand the role of the international community, and their rights and responsibilities as IDPs not to tolerate criminality in the camp and to promote security within and on the outskirts of the camp. Furthermore, the distinction was made between the role of the military and

humanitarian international agencies working in the camp. Explaining these different roles is critical to supporting the security of the humanitarian community that provides important services within the camp.

The workshops also served as a support mechanism to UNAMID police's programme of community policing volunteers. Kalma's community police centres and community police volunteers report crimes and promote a zero tolerance stance against the possession of arms in the camp. The sheikhs of the camp support these efforts and have been asked to promote the community volunteers as good examples of civic responsibility in Kalma.

The workshops also led to a greater appreciation by agencies of the urgent need to work with the youth who are targets of violence and recruitment into the armed militias that infiltrate a number of camps in Darfur. UNDP has subsequently funded a programme of vocational training for IDP youth, supporting them in leadership roles.

The strategy of the Kalma Task Force represented a joint effort by its members to focus on the promotion of civic responsibilities in IDP camps. Since the establishment of a 24-hour presence of UNAMID in the camp, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of reports of criminal activity in the camp and its immediate vicinity. Equally important is the strong message received by the community of IDPs that their security starts with their own refusal to tolerate arms and criminality in the camp.

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1. <http://tinyurl.com/AIKalma2008>

2. <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamid/>