

E41. Darfur Conflict Transcript - Wiser World

Where is Darfur and what makes it unique? How did Darfur go from being its own state to part of Sudan? What happened prior to 2003 that led to violence? What is the Janjaweed? What happened during the conflict? And why is it often called a genocide? How did celebrity activism, especially in the United States, play a role in the conflict in Darfur?

And what is happening in Darfur today? We will answer these questions and many more in today's episode, Darfur Conflict 101. Welcome to Wiser World, a podcast for busy people who need a refresher on all things world. Here we explore different regions of the globe, giving you the facts and context you need to think historically about current events.

I truly believe that the more we learn about the world, The more we embrace our shared humanity. I'm your host, Allie Roper. Thanks for being here.

because there's a lot of context there that will help you to understand this episode. Those episodes largely cover wars between the north and south of Sudan before they split in 2011, and then the civil wars that have happened in both countries in recent years. But sprinkled throughout all of the history, as I was studying it, was this giant elephant in the room called Darfur.

And I realized pretty quickly that while Darfur was associated with that history, it was also And Kind of its own entity in a way, and that it needed more consideration than just a few minutes in those episodes. So I chose to make one extra episode just on the conflict in Darfur to round out Sudan's history in what I feel is a more thorough way.

So listening to the Sudan episodes will have a lot in understanding this episode, but I am going to try to review a little bit along the way to add some context. As usual, I designed these episodes so that people who know very little to nothing about the conflict in Darfur can develop a basic foundation.

There's no way I could ever cover it all in a short episode, and I'm not an expert. I do my best to pronounce things correctly, but I'm sure I don't get it perfect. And as I talked about previously, finding information on this part of the world Especially Darfur can be tricky. There are lower literacy rates, different languages, and just availability of resources with how remote it is.

So we did our best, but this is not going to be completely comprehensive. Just know that going in. And as always, please do independent research from other sources. And if you need help finding some good options, I'll be sharing some ideas through my Patreon, which you can sign up for at [patreon.com slash wiser world podcast](https://patreon.com/wiserworldpodcast).

I also share additional resources there that can help solidify what I teach in the episode. Now the conflict in Darfur is intense and painful, but I do my best to thread the needle here so I can give important details without sensationalizing. Or sanitizing. And I do bring up war crimes,

including rape and sexual exploitation of women and girls in particular, because it was a major tactic that was used in Darfur.

I don't love talking about these things, but I do think this is really important. I recommend giving this a listen before you give it to teenagers. And I do not recommend it at all for children. So there's my two cents on that. All right, let's get into the conflict in Darfur. Let's start off with where Darfur is located.

It is a region in the western part of Sudan with a square mileage of approximately the size of Spain, so it's pretty big. It's long, it's lean, and it's Sudan's entire border with Chad. It has southern borders with the Central African Republic and South Sudan and has a very small northern border with Libya, but most of its border is with Chad.

And Darfur actually means home of the Fur, and was named after the Fir people, F U R people, and the Fir people created the first Muslim state in the 17th century, and it was very powerful. So Dar stands for homeland, Fir stands for the Fir people, Dar Fir. Back then, the people largely spoke both Arabic and Fir, but there are other languages as well.

And Darfur had a lot of wealth for quite some time. The sultan was super rich because of its trade with Egypt and its location in the Sahara. Even Napoleon Bonaparte exchanged letters with him back in 1798. So Darfur was an independent region for three centuries until 1916. And during this time, land was owned.

through a system where tribal groups controlled territories and people who lived in their domains paid fees for it. It was called the Hakura system. And during this time, the 17 and 1800s, a lot of different Darfurians began claiming Arab descent if they could and converting to Islam. Sometimes this was because of genuine belief.

Sometimes it was because becoming Arab protected you against the slave trade. The southern part of Darfur was a slaving machine in a way it would, there was a lot of black Darfurians being taken into the slave trade up into Egypt and beyond. And now at the time that I am making this in 2024, pretty much all of Darfurians are Muslim, whether they're black or Arab or a mixture of different ethnicities.

Almost all Darfurians claim the religion of Islam. Geographically, Darfur is mostly dry desert, again, in the Sahara, in the north and central parts. But again, the further south you go, just like in the Sudan episodes, it becomes slightly more humid and green in Darfur. The rainy season is short, just June to September.

The rest is really dry. And the primary feature of Darfur is the drought. Is the Mara Mountains, which is this rugged mountain chain stretches west to southwest and the mountains reach more than 10,000 feet or 3000 meters. They are so important because they are the only permanent water source in the region.

During the dry season, there is some fertile land. But really not a whole lot. Living conditions in Darfur are mostly quite primitive. Homes are typically made of straw and mud brick. As Julie Flint and Alex de Waal put it, Northern Darfur is a forbidding place. It has landscapes of elemental simplicity, vast sandy plains, jutting mountains and jagged ridges, and watercourses.

A village sometimes comprising no more than a cluster of from straw and branches. branches may be a day's ride from its neighbor. Every place, however humble, counts. A hand dug well in a dry riverbed can be the difference between life and death for a camel herd trekking from the valleys of central Darfur to other desert edge pastures.

End of quote. So the people of Darfur are hardy and resilient because they have to be. They have learned how to gather wild grasses to supplement their diets of goat and camel milk, cultivated millet and vegetables. Many tribes in Darfur are nomadic. or semi nomadic, so they move around with their livestock, and they can travel up to 600 miles a year, heading south in the dry season and north in the wet season.

Most of these tribes consider themselves to be from Arab descent, meaning from the Arabian Peninsula and they are camel herders, but there are farmers who remain settled on their own land. And even though they have to move some to keep up with water, which they find near these big seasonal rivers called wadis, they dry up, dry up in the dry season, most farming tribes consider themselves to be black African.

However, this doesn't quite cover the various identities in Darfur. It's not super simple. Most villages have some ethnic mixing. Some of the major tribes are the Zagawa, Fir, Tundra, and the Tundra. Kitinga, but there are many more ethnicities as well, people who have become interwoven with intermarriages.

And it seems to me from most of my research that prior to 2003, most conflicts that happened in Darfur were over ancestral tribal lines, which sometimes ran along ethnicity and land rights that people felt had been denied to them. Culturally, money in Darfur is typically animals. Animals are money in many communities.

People will pay for bride wealth or blood money in livestock. Now, blood money is typically a penalty that's used when someone is killed. So, let me give an example. Let's say that John kills Mark. Mark's kinsfolk, his family, are going to come after John based on the rules of revenge, which we talked about in part three of the Sudan 101 episodes.

In many areas of the world, especially in Sudan and South Sudan, revenge is morally accepted and encouraged. So if John The murderer doesn't want Mark's family to come after him. He pays what's called blood money or a fine to kind of clean the revenge, you know, in a way. So in these areas of the world where banks and money are not very common, people typically pay for the vengeance fee, the blood money with livestock.

They also will pay for a wife, the bride wealth with livestock. And the history of Darfur is really riddled with evidence of marginalized people who have had to deal with much of the same kinds of political violence that the people in the south of Sudan had to live with, largely being neglected and underdeveloped, with many of its people being ethnically seen as immigrants.

Inferior. And I mentioned earlier that Darfur was an independent state for three centuries until 1916. For about four decades before 1916, Darfur had seen a lot of intertribal warfare, that it had made it more violent and volatile. During World War One, this independent Darfur Sultanate, and in January of 1917, Darfur became part of the British Empire.

Now, Darfur then soon after became part of Sudan as a whole. And the systems of governance in Darfur during the Sultanate had You know, they've been more nuanced and subtle, and this was difficult for British administrators and Egyptian administrators to understand. Because remember, it was an Anglo Egyptian agreement that was going on at the time.

And in order to create a uniform hierarchy, they set up a chief and tribal hierarchy with racial undertones that ranked Arabs as superior to non Arabs in Darfur. And, by the way, the book that I read on Darfur was actually written by British researchers, so this is interesting to see the juxtaposition here and the way that they put this.

Britain also invested very little in terms of infrastructure in Darfur. It wasn't until 1945 that they really even looked at it. Quote, In 1935, Darfur had just one elementary school. One tribal elementary school and two sub grade schools. This was worse than neglect, these British researchers say. British policy was deliberate to restrict education to the songs of chiefs so that their authority would not be challenged by better schooled Sudanese administrators or merchants.

In the health sector, things were no better. 1940s. And at Independence in 1956, This is when Sudan became independent from Britain and Egypt. Darfur had the lowest number of hospital beds of any Sudanese province. 0. 57 per thousand population. The only one lower was Bar al Ghazal in the South. End of quote.

Small amounts of development happened after that, but Darfur was really not invested in much at all, even after Sudan became independent from Britain. Britain and Egypt in 1956. So over time, the people of Darfur had to assimilate to certain practices to kind of become Sudanese. Over time, people began speaking more Arabic, dressing in more Sudanese ways, giving up their more unique Darfurian cultural heritage.

However, in the 1980s, most Darfurians continued to feel like the government in Khartoum was not treating them as full citizens of the Sudanese state. There was an economic crisis at the time and the people were barely surviving, and Darfur was kind of seen as a backwater. Geographical isolation is a real thing.

We learn that both now with Darfur and also with the south of Sudan, where geographically these two regions were more isolated from the rest of Sudan and therefore become hotspots for violence. In part two of the Sudan and South Sudan episodes, we talk about how the northern part and southern part of Sudan were in a terrible civil war from 1983 to 2005.

And the northern part of Sudan was, Darfur is part of it, right? So a 22 year long civil war was between the north and the south. And the reason for it, if we simplify it down, really, really simplify it, was that the north declared an Islamic state, according to ideals of Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood, and the South did not ethnically nor culturally fit the bill that the Islamic State and Sharia law was pushing.

And we know that the North, the government of Khartoum, used tribal militias in the North to launch scorched earth campaigns in the South, wiping out entire villages and causing massive displacement and a humanitarian crisis, right? We learned that in part two. Well, during the beginning of the war in the 1980s, the Northern Sudanese government made a deal.

with Libya's colonel, Muammar Gaddafi. Okay? Now, Gaddafi in Libya He wanted to annex, which is a fancy word for kind of add, he wanted to add Chad into Libya and create this huge Sahel empire, kind of an Arab belt into Central Africa. That was Gaddafi's plan. And the Sudanese government allowed Gaddafi to use Darfur as a base for his wars with Chad.

Thousands of troops from Libya and also from Chad crossed into Darfur, which led to many villages being burned, many people being killed, and many Chadians also came over seeking help and still remain displaced today in Darfur. Darfurians tried to be patient, but in this time there was drought and famine that also occurred, and many Arabs in Darfur began to feel like they were kind of being politically excluded in parts of Darfur.

As a result, a new political trend emerged, which was Arab supremacism. Now, yes, Arab supremacy had been a thing since the British, but this was kind of a new brand. It was much more militant and inflammatory. And in early 1982, there was even an incident where, quote, armed men went to a market and ordered everyone to lie on the ground and ordered their victims to declare their tribe.

Arabs were allowed to take their belongings and leave. and non Arabs were robbed, beaten, and kicked. Security reports on the incident said that the bandits wore army uniforms and carried modern firearms. There was even a document that outlined plans for an Arab gathering in Darfur, outlining that Arab tribes deserved more leadership in governments, and that quote, anyone who could trace their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad are the true custodians of Islam and therefore entitled to rule Muslim lands.

So many non Arab Darfurians began to be very disillusioned and bothered by this movement and begin speaking out in the next couple of decades. In 1994, Khartoum decides to divide Darfur into three administration zones, the North, the West, and South Darfur, which all have kind of capitals of administration.

Now, this is significant because it divided the largest tribe in Darfur, the Fir, between the three states, which made them minorities in each state. Now, being the minority in this case meant less influence. Quote, in 1995, the governor of West Darfur created eight new administrative chieftaincies and gave all but one.

to Arabs, meaning Arabs got everything, pretty much. So we can see that things had been moving for some time toward Arab supremacy. The issue was not religious, because most, if not all, of Darfurians are Muslim, but rather it was tribal, racial, ethnic, and there were divisions along those lines. In 1995, some Arab raiders came to a Masalit village, which Masalit is mostly black Darfurians, destroyed the village, killed 75 people, stole 650 cows.

In time, the unrest began to grow and the government began arming the Arabs. Outbreaks of violence happened over the next five years, from 1995 to 2000, with most of these attacks happening at night when villagers were sleeping. Arab militia groups would set fire to the houses while people were sleeping, and those who could escape were usually shot.

They burned their crops to the ground, which was on purpose. This was literally to starve the people out. The non Arab Darfurians, the black Darfurian tribes, retaliated the violence. And the Sudanese government in Khartoum began to be more and more present, meaning that they started to put military men in place of civilian leaders.

They also began sending Black Darfurians to South Sudan to fight there, to kind of take them out of leadership in Darfur. And around 1999 to 2000, a military group called the Janjaweed began to emerge. So Janjaweed translates to men on horseback or devils on horseback. In the past, it was used to refer to gangs of outlaws from Chad, typically in Darfur, but the Janjaweed became a militia group, mostly made up of Arab nomads who were traditionally camel herders.

If you look up the Janjaweed on Google, you will probably see pictures of men carrying machine guns on camelback or horseback. So the Janjaweed started to become a thing in late 1990s. early 2000s in Darfur. So we see there are issues going on inside of Darfur itself, internal issues between Arabs and non Arabs, this Arab supremacy thing, as well as drought and competition for resources and an already inhospitable place to live.

But some Darfurians, mostly non Arabs, also had issues with Khartoum, with the government of Sudan feeling neglected, and like they were, you know, They weren't getting the development and the attention that they felt that they needed. And in the year 2000, some people in Darfur were becoming more vocal about this neglect.

The political and economic power in Sudan was dominated by only three tribes. And they all lived near the river in Khartoum. And that only represented about 5 percent of Sudan's population. So pretty much everywhere else in Sudan, they were saying, was marginalized. They pointed out that it wasn't just the south of Sudan that was having issues too.

Hey, look at us here in the west. We're having issues as well. The governmental power was centralized in Khartoum, and Darfur wanted more support. A group of people in Darfur actually wrote a pamphlet called The Black Book, which they distributed to people as they left the mosque on Fridays. The Black Book outlined what was wrong with Khartoum's governmental leadership over Darfur, and in time, the two major rebel groups emerged, and one was called the Justice and Equality Movement, or J E M, the other was the S L M, or the Sudan Liberation Movement.

I don't think knowing those names is as important for us, but knowing that there were two rebel groups who were upset with the government of Khartoum, were upset with the way that Darfur had been neglected, that's what's, I think, the most important. And also to know that they were mostly non Arab. From the year 2000 to 2003, various rebellions began happening here and there against the government of Khartoum.

Tribes began stockpiling weapons, things like that. There wasn't too much attention from Khartoum over it. Now, the civil war going on between the North and the South had been going on for 17 years at this point, and Darfur experienced it not just from the North South violence perspective, which was terrible, but also on its western border with conflicts with Chad and Libya.

So Darfur was kind of trapped in this, uh, Violent place, tough, tough neighborhood, and the people are tired. In 2003, the leaders of the two rebel groups became aware that there were peace talks going on between the North and the South to end the Civil War, and that independence was on the table for the South.

So they started thinking, Wait a second. If the South can become independent, what's going to happen to Darfur? They, too, wanted more autonomy and power sharing. They wanted more development projects in Darfur. They wanted recognition as a political movement. And as political tensions grew because Khartoum was not recognizing them politically, violence also began to escalate.

And in March of 2003, Arab militia ambushed an important non Arab leader. And word spread quickly that one of the most famous Maasai leaders had been murdered by the government of Khartoum. Later that month, the rebel groups seized a town that had a lot of weapons on the border of Chad, and they began to stockpile arms and equipment.

And chaos soon broke out. President Bashir in Khartoum announced that the army was going to be unleashed to quote crush this rebellion, end of quote, but here's the thing, the National Army of Sudan was not equipped at the time to handle the rebels hit and run tactics in this desert landscape. The rebels had an advantage there.

And then the rebels decided to make a huge move. They went to an Air Force base and they shot down two Russian Antonov planes and five gunships that were sitting on the runway. Some

of them even had their engines running and the rebels shot them in. Blew them up and the rebels captured more weapons than they could actually transport and inflicted such a huge blow on the army that it kind of changed everything.

It certainly got Khartoum's attention. It was humiliating for them. So from then on Khartoum refused to recognize the rebels at all. They were worried that if Sudan lost both the south and Darfur that it was not going to be a good look for Sudan. And the rebels were at the time running circles around the army.

So, Khartoum decided to invest in local Arab militias to fight the rebels, and one of these Arab militias was called the Janjaweed. And by investing in the Janjaweed, they wanted the retaliation against these rebels to be brutal. It was brutal. An unprecedented campaign of violence, as one researcher wrote.

So from 2003 to 2004, the government in Khartoum is fighting back against these Darfur rebels using not only the army, but using These Arab militias such as the Janjaweed and violence and chaos ruled Darfur quote much of the violence was directed at civilian populations. Antonov jets dropped barrel bombs from the sky while military forces and camel mounted Janjaweed militias.

Waged a scorched earth campaign on the ground. They raided villages and burned whole settlements to the ground, massacring civilians in huge numbers, and driving hundreds of thousands more from their homes. They employed rape as a weapon of war while systemically destroying food, stocks, and water sources.

End of quote. By the end of 2003, a large part of Darfur's population had either been driven into Chad or into government controlled areas that had overcrowded and insecure camps. By 2004, the United Nations said that the ongoing events amounted to, quote, ethnic cleansing. And the term ethnic cleansing really does seem to be about right from what I can gather.

In August of 2004, A powerful sheik, a powerful leader who led the Janjaweed actually spelled out his objectives. He said, quote, We are to change the demography of Darfur and empty it of African tribes, end of quote. So there's ethnic cleansing against non Arab peoples in Darfur. They waged jihad, or holy war, against these non Arabs, quote, cleaning out the land of agents, mercenaries, cowards, and outlaws, as they put it, end of quote.

Now, the Janjaweed wore sandals, turbans, and an emblem of an armed man on camelback on their uniforms, if they had uniforms at all. The government in Khartoum denied any responsibility. But the head commanders of the Janjaweed and other Arab militias all said that they were getting their orders from Khartoum.

Another statement made by a Janjaweed commander that backs up this idea of ethnic cleansing is, quote, He said, quote, we are the lords of this land. You blacks don't have any rights here. We are the original people of this area. End of quote. So we see here that there's a lot going

on. There's racial and ethnic discrimination, of course, but also complex views of the land and who has rights to it.

And like I said earlier, the government in Khartoum supported the Janjaweed. As Cheadle and Prendergast write, quote, Put simply, the government of Sudan cut a sinister deal. The regime promised land, livestock, war booty, and impunity to its Janjaweed allies. In return, the Janjaweed would attack villages belonging to the non Arab Fir, Zagawa, and Mossilate.

To swell the ranks of its proxy army, the government released criminals from jail, recruited fighters from neighboring countries, and gave cash handouts of around 100 to anyone who would take up arms against Darfur's non Arab tribes. The UN called it ethnic cleansing. The United States called it genocide.

Here is an example of one example. Real life account quote on February 27th 2004 hundreds of armed men mounted on camels and horses Attacked the town of Tawila on the eastern slope of Jebel Mara. That's in the mountains by the time The attack was over three days later 75 people had been killed 350 women and children abducted and more than a hundred raped to including 41 teachers and girls from Tawila boarding school Six of the women were raped in front of their fathers, who were then killed.

Some of the schoolgirls were gang raped. Overseeing this mayhem, moving between a temporary headquarters in a large canvas tent and a convoy of land cruisers protected by mounted men, was 44 year old Musa Khalil, the most powerful leader of the government supported militias that had come to be known as Janjaweed.

In the days before the attack, more than 500 militiamen had converged on Tawila from different directions and congregated, without interference from any of the government forces in the area, in a makeshift camp on a nearby hill. This was more than Arab raiders settling old scores. These militiamen had light and medium weapons, communication, internal structure, and impunity.

The attacks made by the Janjaweed militia were documented and quickly received international attention and have since been condemned as war crimes or crimes against humanity. The most common crimes are ethnic cleansing and genocide because they targeted civilian populations of mostly the Fir, Mosulite, and Zagawa ethnic groups.

Again, these are non Arabs. They also are condemned for launching mass killings. They would coordinate their attacks on villages with the Sudanese Air Force. Transcripts provided by Transcription Outsourcing, LLC. had looters, they would steal extensively, especially animals, again, basically money in Darfur, and they also have been reported to recruit and use child soldiers.

Now, as I mentioned earlier, they were particularly known for using rape as a weapon of war, and as much as I hate talking about this, there's The sexual violation of women and girls and

children of all ages, usually in front of their families, was done extensively, and I just don't think it can be ignored.

Because this was a psychological terror in addition to physical terror, and it was a Deliberate. It was a way to demoralize and assert control over people because Darfur has tight knit communities that are very conservative and so sexual acts are stigmatized. So victims of rape are usually ostracized from their communities.

So to do this to so many Women and girls, they did that on purpose to destroy the social fabric of communities and that led to lack of family unity, lack of community closeness, and that causes everything to unravel, right? If communities lose their ability to trust and cooperate, then the Janjaweed has more control.

They have weakened the people at their core. I really don't feel I can be clear enough on this that this trauma was a strategy that they used as a weapon of war. It was not just some militiamen doing this. It was a widespread thing. It was strategic and it was from top down. There, of course, as a result of this, there were revenge killings and revenge rapes from the other side.

And the circle of violence and trauma continued round and round and round. If you're horrified by this, so am I, and so were many people who learned about this at the time. So what was done about it? How did the international world react? Well, in 2003, South Sudan, the SPLA, sent weapons and trainers to help the people.

The rebels, they wanted to get a peace deal signed with Sudan, and the more pressure they could put on Sudan, the better. They also encouraged the Americans to shine a light on what was happening in Darfur. And in 2005, the Second Sudanese Civil War ended with a peace agreement that allowed a ceasefire.

Six year interim period before South Sudan could become its own nation, which it did in 2011. But from 2003 to TH 2010, the crisis in Darfur actually got more attention than South Sudan, at least in the United States because the un, the US, and various human rights organizations began to condemn the violence under.

Therefore, and it got a lot of attention in 2004. A ceasefire agreement was agreed upon, it was signed, but the Janjaweed just ignored it. They kept attacking and the death toll kept rising and rising, and the developed world became very concerned about it. Especially because the Rwanda genocide had happened in 1994, and this was fresh on the collective mind.

They did not want another genocide like that happening again. Not on their watch was a common phrase at the time. The Western media began showing images of the Janjaweed on camelback or horseback and showing the rebels trying to stop them and a movement called Save Darfur was launched to raise public awareness.

With the rise of the internet at this time, social media was booming. Brand new. It was kind of a new humans, human rights advocacy that had never been done before. And celebrity activism became a huge part of it. People like George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Steven Spielberg, other celebrities in Hollywood began backing and giving voice to the Save Darfur campaign.

Zach Verton, a U. S. diplomat, wrote, quote, The Save Darfur movement would come to epitomize a new kind of popular human rights advocacy, buoyed by the rise of the internet and social media, celebrity activism, and an expanding discourse about universal human rights and a global responsibility to protect those in grave danger.

Congress followed suit, ramping up the rhetoric while adopting resolutions and tightening sanctions at the behest of the campaign, end of quote. Now there were lots of ways that the Save Darfur movement acted. Church groups, universities, student groups, youth groups, organizing fundraisers, mass rallies, video games sponsored by major companies, billboards, social media calls to action.

This was again when social media was so new, so sensitive. Save Darfur is probably one of the first humanitarian movements of its kind. For example, since China was an ally of Sudan, they began calling the 2008 Olympics the Genocide Olympics. However, Verton writes, quote, as the campaign gained more attention and more followers, the echo chamber grew louder, as did the rhetoric of righteousness and the calls for intervention.

But the activism lacked context and seemed to prioritize action and moral certitude over all else. Ends 1 In time, the righteous finger wagging became increasingly disconnected from the realities of Darfur and its people. One afternoon at a Berlin airport in 2007, a middle aged, well educated Sudanese man found a seat at his gate and sat down, dropping his bags on either side of him.

Sitting across from him were a young man and young woman, 20 something Germans, one of them wearing a Save Darfur t shirt. They struck up a conversation, and the Sudanese traveler learned that they were going to a Darfur rally in the U. S. But when he told them that he was from Sudan, the data point didn't register.

Confused, it took a few moments to dawn on him, they didn't know Darfur was in Sudan. His positive impression of the young idealists was surpassed by sadness at their apparent ignorance, not only of the conflict, but of the map itself. He could hardly make sense of it, spending all that money to travel to the United States to rally, but they didn't know that Darfur was in Sudan?

He wondered whether the celebrities, concerts, and zeal had eclipsed the very reason for the rallies themselves. End of quote. Now, this is just one example in one couple, and Verton writes that most of the motivations for the movement were pure. People did not want another Rwanda, another Holocaust, and they did shed light on Darfur and probably intervened in such a strong way that they likely prevented the Sudanese government from finishing its horrific campaign.

But in time, The movement began to be criticized by insiders and outsiders for focusing more on action rather than seeking to understand or acting before seeking to understand. Verton writes, Darfur, millions were told, was about government backed villains on horseback and helpless victims on foot. It was about Arabs killing Africans, a campaign of racial hate.

Except that it wasn't quite so simple. There was a deeply troubling racial component at the center of the violence. And the government's culpability for the worst periods of violence in 2003 2004 was as indisputable as the violence was shocking. But, Darfur was also a complex environment, involving local politics and governance, land disputes, migration, competing livelihoods, desertification, national marginalization, and regional security politics, including its neighbors, Libya and Chad.

And it was by no means static, its crowded field of players and shifting interests. Was not easily reduced to good guys and bad and its solutions. Were not as straightforward as the righteous sloganeering sometimes suggested, end of quote. I think that this is such an interesting perspective and the topic of humanitarian aid and activism is a complicated and thorny topic, and I don't think that his perspective is the only perspective to have on this, but I think it's worth some thought.

No group or. Persons or people are going to do aid and humanitarian work perfectly. And that shouldn't keep us from doing good things for each other and for humans across the globe. But I thought the concept that harm can come from acting before seeking to understand, I thought that was a really powerful thought.

Instead, I like the idea that we seek to understand before we act. That we Get a full education and that we learn more about the movements that we support and to be cautious of movements that rely very heavily on slogans and oversimplification, and that shy away from true education. This is a conversation that I think has to happen in person.

It has to happen online. one on one face to face with people on what we think about this topic, so I'm not going to go more into it, but I like the idea of seeking to understand before acting, and I think that's a great takeaway for the Save Darfur movement. Okay, now that we've talked about the international community a bit, let's talk about life in the refugee camps during the height of this conflict.

These camps were quite isolated, and while some food was provided to the camps, fuel for cooking that food was not. And the Janjaweed knew this, and they would stay outside of the camps, and when women would go to collect wood, tinder, or whatever. Uh, to cook their food or water, they would be attacked. So these women were faced with an impossible situation.

Avoid being attacked and starve, or risk attack and stay alive. The lack of water was also a huge issue. Many aid groups were not permitted to enter the camp to give aid. any aid. Unfortunately,

some of these camps still have the same problems today in 2024 due to lack of basic needs and contaminated water.

Diseases like hepatitis E, which is infectious. It damages the liver. They spread throughout camp and many aid groups called the camps catastrophic. Well, you know, when they use that word, I think it's like, stand to attention, this is bad. We've talked a lot about the Western nations who donated humanitarian aid, gave diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict, and sanctioned against the Sudanese government, but African nations also got involved in Darfur.

The African Union, the AU, intervened by deploying a peacekeeping force to monitor the ceasefire and protect civilians. However, the AU mission really struggled with insufficient resources and lacked an ability to efficiently and effectively intervene, largely remaining neutral and observing and reporting on the issue more than anything else.

In 2005, the International Criminal Court, ICC, became involved when the U. N. Security Council referred the situation in Darfur to the court. And in 2007, the U. N. Security Council authorized a joint U. N. and African Union peacekeeping mission. This was known as UNAMID. It was short for United Nations Assistance Mission in Darfur.

Darfur. U N A M I D. And they had a stronger mandate and a larger force, but they also faced significant issues with logistics and resistance. In 2009, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for President Omar al Bashir, that's the president of Sudan, on charges of war crimes. Crimes Against Humanity, and Genocide, which is the first time a sitting head of state was indicted by the court.

By 2010, three counts of genocide were also added to the list of charges, and despite this, Bashir remained in power, and traveled freely to several countries without being arrested. He only recently stopped being the president of Sudan in 2019, and was arrested. So this violence began formally in 2003.

But you may be wondering, is it still going on? Well, the height of the intense violence was in 2003 to 2004, even up to 2007. But the violence has continued, but has become more intermittent. It has evolved and changed over time. By 2007, when Operation UNAMID was put into place, about 25, 000 troops from the UN and from African, the African Union were deployed to more or less protect civilians, right?

To deliver aid and to hopefully contribute to the rule of law and to just monitor the situation. And for the next 13 years, the violence decreased over time and Khartoum became more wrapped up in other issues it was facing, like the South, its neighboring nations. Internal government issues. And again, in 2019, as we know from part three of Sudan, there was a coup that removed the president from office.

So Sudan had a lot going on. In 2020, the conflict in Darfur had been labeled resolved. And so UNAMID was taken out. And the Sudanese government was responsible for providing aid and

protecting civilians. And Darfurians did receive a little bit more political representation in the government at that time.

However, while Darfur hasn't been in a raging war since roughly 2007, it hasn't been stable either. Darfur is pretty much all of Western Sudan. So Sudan is now in the middle of its own civil war that began in April of 2023. And that war has displaced over 8 million people due to the violence. So, yes, I think it's safe to say that Darfur is not getting the support that it needs and it has been in crisis for a very, very long time.

I talk about that war in part 3 of the Sudan 101 episodes, but Darfurians You know, are still a target, thousands are still fleeing over the border into Chad. And in December of 2023, the U. S. Secretary of State stated that both conflicting groups in Sudan that are the civil war, they have committed war crimes and are again ethnically cleansing Darfur.

So the conflict has not ended. Overall, the conflict in Darfur has obviously been devastating and has had enormous consequences. It's estimated that roughly 300, 000 people died as a result of violence, disease, starvation. Millions were displaced, both internally within Sudan and also into bordering countries.

And the humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by the Sudanese government restricting access for aid, making it very difficult to assist the affected populations. Overall, Darfur has been in a very tough situation for a very long time, and peace does not look like it's on the horizon given that Sudan is in a civil war.

While this is so disheartening, I also believe that it's really important to be aware of it. And so that's why I've made this episode. I hope that it has helped shine a little light on this region of the world. So let's review a little bit. Darfur is in the western part of Sudan. It's mostly a desert, has many tribes, some Arab, some non Arab.

After 1916, Arabs were favored, both by Khartoum and by the British, and the infrastructure of Darfur remained very underdeveloped. The people of Darfur assimilated to Sudanese culture but felt not represented by Khartoum, and this sentiment was strengthened in the 1980s. Darfur became a base for Libya's Gaddafi to fight his war against Chad, and there was a lot of displacement going on at the time.

In 1994, Arab supremacy began to take hold as a mentality, and non Arabs began to speak out about it, and violence began occurring in smaller amounts. Darfur at this time was feeling violence from all sides, north, south, east, and west. Wars all around, and around 2000, the year 2000, a militia group called the Janjaweed emerged and were essentially given permission by Khartoum to do what they wanted and reap the spoils.

Rape was used as a weapon of war. Violence against the Darfurians escalated and the international community took notice. In 2003, it was named a genocide. Activists flocked to the

cause of Darfur, some did good, others more or less got in the way. A huge Save Darfur campaign came to fruition, it was filled to the brim with celebrities.

And in 2007, the African Union, along with the UN, created a peacekeeping mission. Darfurians were generally in refugee camps at this time. The ICC issued an arrest warrant for Bashir. No one cared. There's a period from about 2007 to 2019 where it seems like violence lessened, but did not completely subside and in 2019 Bashir's government was ousted and in 2023 Khartoum went back into disarray and is currently in a civil war, the violence in Darfur escalated again in April 2023.

There are currently roughly 400,000 refugees in Chad. The number is growing. The current situation in Sudan is not making mainstream news very much, and most of the general public in the Western world is unaware that it's going on, but we know now. So.

I usually do a takeaway at the end of every episode, but I slipped my takeaway in earlier when I was talking about seeking to understand before acting, and I am not perfect at this. This is something that I need to work on in my life, but I really do think it's important for the audience to be able to understand before acting.

Developed worlds to seek understanding before action and yes to act but to make sure that we're seeking understanding and education I just really love that thought and that's kind of my major takeaway for this episode Thank you so much for listening If you would like to have more options of resources to look into darfur You can sign up at my patreon patreon.

com slash wiser world podcast And hopefully that will help solidify some of what I taught here. I also have an instagram wiser world podcast And a website, wiserworldpodcast.com on my website, you can keep up with me for free by signing up for my email newsletter. It comes out once a month. I share what episodes came out that month, any announcements, and of course, don't forget to follow the podcast on your favorite podcasting app.

So you know, when new episodes drop, I have some really fun episodes coming up this summer that I'm really excited about. really excited about. Thank you for listening. Thank you for sharing the podcast and thanks for trying to make the world a little wiser.