The Abuja peace talks had collapsed in December 2004 due to new attacks and offensive operations by the Sudanese military. The situation in Darfur escalated and even AMIS became involved, suffering casualties from aerial bombings. Nonetheless, the humanitarian situation had majorly improved over the months, as the camps could now be supplied by the huge logistical humanitarian aid that was rolled out. On diplomatic side, the first three months of 2005 were very intensive. Following the publication of the Commission of Inquiry’s report, a further two months were needed to pave the way for the UNSC resolutions of March 2005.

9.1 Situation in Darfur

Although incomparable to the peak in violence and deaths at the start of the previous year, 2005 began with a latent omnipresence of impending anarchy throughout Darfur. The cracks in the rebel movements were becoming increasingly visible, while Khartoum looked set to change its tactics. As Flint and de Waal note, with the government achieving its immediate goals by 2005, its time for self-congratulation would be short given the certainty of the war in generating new rebel recruits and the problematic border areas, especially with Chad, allowing for the easy flow of weapons into Darfur. Khartoum’s response was thus to redouble its mobilisation of the Janjaweed.1

On 9 January 2005, the CPA was signed by the Government of Sudan and John Garang’s SPLA rebels, bringing an end to the North-South civil war. The historic agreement granted autonomy to the South and majority representation for the SPLA in a new Government of Southern Sudan, as well as a role in the government in Khartoum and the chance for the South to secede in a 2011 referendum. Hailed by the parties concerned, as well as outsiders, the agreement inspired the EU to end its 14-year freeze on development aid to

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Sudan by offering 400 million euro. Even the UN Secretary-General and President al-Bashir at least superficially seemed united, as each welcomed the agreement as a model and inspiration for resolving Darfur. Al-Bashir exclaimed, “[f]rom now on we shall work for solving the conflict in Darfur and we shall bring about peace in Darfur as we did in the south.”

Following the CPA’s conclusion, al-Bashir told a crowd of cheering supporters in Khartoum that, “[t]he joy is incomplete because there is suffering in Darfur, but our promise to you is that we will bring peace to Darfur.” The next day government air forces bombed Darfuri villages. In fact, despite various pledges and the commitments at the end of December 2004 to peace and a ceasefire, violence by militias and government forces directed against villages was sustained. One incident alone, condemned by UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, killed as many as 100 civilians and resulted in the declaration of a “no-go” area according to AU forces on the ground. Satellite images, which showed around 370 villages destroyed in June 2004, revealed in January 2005 that the number had increased to 800. The situation escalated and even AMIS became involved, suffering casualties from aerial bombings. Nonetheless, the humanitarian situation had majorly improved over the months, as the camps could now be supplied by the huge logistical humanitarian aid that was rolled out. During the Christmas days of 2004 the Asian Tsunami had struck Indonesia and its wider region, which subsequently called on OCHA and the rest of the aid community to respond urgently to this natural disaster. It has been argued that the already meagre media attention for Darfur suffered from this event. Although this is an intuitive argument there is not much evidence that the humanitarian aid was scaled back or otherwise suffered from this new emergency.

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2 Kofi Annan expressed hope that the agreement would serve as a blueprint and source of inspiration for addressing Darfur, since, he concluded, “the situation remains horrific” (UN News, 9 January 2005, “Annan hails signing of Sudan peace accord but warns of ‘daunting challenges’ ahead”).

3 Agence France Presse, 12 January 2005, “Sudan’s Bashir vows to achieve peace in Darfur.”

4 Associated Press, 12 January 2005 “Darfur conflict dampens joy over southern peace accord, says el-Bashir [sic].”

5 UN News, 27 January 2005, “UN official voices concern over reports of deadly bombing raid on Sudanese village.”