

## Yellow Fever is killing dozens of citizens in Darfur

Thursday 15 November 2012

By Adeeb Yousif

November 15, 2012 - The Darfur conflict and genocide of nine years has been widely publicized: the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, widespread sexual assaults, and the displacement of millions from their homes to camps with limited humanitarian services and poor security. But the conflict is nowhere near to an end and the suffering continues.

Today, Darfur today is housing the highest number of Internally Displaced Person (IDPs) worldwide facing two major challenges: protection and survival.

The new method of denial that the government is using is yellow fever, despite the fact that it is clearly killing hundreds of citizens. Not only is the government failing to protect and prevent citizens from being killed, but it has also restricted NGOs from moving and from accessing patients to provide them emergency care.

The Sudanese government represented by the Ministry of Health is continuously arguing that there is no yellow fever. But the fact is that people are dying every day in rural Darfur without being accounted for as a result of yellow fever. The sickness epidemic started in Jebel Ahmer—an area 42 Km east of Zalingei, Central Darfur, and then became widespread across all of Darfur. Information is inaccessible at the rural area, as is care, but the disease is able to access remote areas and to kill people.

It has been estimated that over a hundred women, men and children have died and over 400 hundred more affected. It is likely half of them might die as a result of being ignored and a lack of medical services. Neither the government nor NGOs working in health field are making enough preparation to face the disease and save the lives of ordinary citizens in Darfur by at least by vaccinating those who are healthy. The outbreak is particularly virulent in the concentration camps where millions of IDPs are currently living. Yellow Fever is a deadly sickness thereby it requires urgent action to control it from spreading all over, and because of people interacting within the region it can most likely can reach the neighboring counties. Before it kills more, peace and the international community faces a new disaster.

Sickness in itself has no territory and obviously is cannot distinguish between victims but, circumstance and conditions can.

Rich people, such as the President, Ministers and those elites always have tools, ways and means of taking care of themselves can travel anywhere for treatment because they have a choice. But poor and ordinary citizens - most of the time if not all - do not have that option and quite often they are dying. The government has therefore been discriminating against citizens biased on their political affiliation and it has become clear that those loyal to the regime got vaccinated, while others whom are not are. This practice has become clear in Zalingei-capital city of central Darfur.

The regime in Khartoum has never use the medium of love of respect or of tolerance to govern the people. They use the medium of terror to terrorize the masses and therefore turned Sudan into a state of subjugation. Rather, they use the medium of racism and racial discrimination to divide the population in order to maintain themselves in power. An example of this is the fact that the regime and its militia committed a massacre by killing over 13 innocent civilians, burned their villages displace the rest of people from home village-Shawa in North Darfur on November 7th 2012.

This article is mainly addressed to the government of Sudan, NGOs working the field in particular World Health Organization (WHO) to take care of their moral responsibility, to protect and save the lives of those citizens. It is also speaks to people with compassionate hearts to encourage these action by pressuring these bodies to do so. Indeed it is absolutely imperative that human rights organizations investigate and carry out a campaign to prevent yellow fever, since health is one of basic human rights and it is the core of their work.

*Adeeb Yousif is the director of the Darfur Reconciliation and Development Organization (DRDO). He may be reached at [atadeeb@drdoafrica.org](mailto:atadeeb@drdoafrica.org)*