

Darfuri Journeys to Europe: Causes, Risks and Humanitarian Abandonment

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ABSTRACT

Darfuris were amongst the thousands of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe in 2014, thus becoming part of Europe's so-called "refugee crisis". Rather than creating a crisis in Europe, however, their flight reflects a new phase in Darfur's humanitarian crisis and a new trend in Darfuri migration. This article examines the historical, political and humanitarian dimension of migration to Europe and the risks that Darfuris face at each stage of their journey. It argues that migration to Europe was a result of ongoing conflict and violence but that existing policies made this invisible. In addition, Darfuri journeys to Europe reveal fundamental new challenges to humanitarianism. These include migration and asylum policies that risk complicity with refugee-producing regimes and that create humanitarian crises in Libya and Europe. Darfuris, as some of the poorest refugees coming to Europe, are amongst the most vulnerable. The article examines policy failures, their effects and the implications for humanitarianism.

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, thousands of Sudanese crossed the Mediterranean from Libya into Europe. This trend increased in 2015 and remained high in 2016. Many were from Darfur. While Darfuris have a long history of migration, including to Libya, this clearly marked a new trend. Violent conflict, from 2003 onwards had already displaced hundreds of thousands of Darfuris both within Sudan and to Chad – but initially not as far as Europe. Also in 2014, the EU led the Horn of Africa Migration route initiative (also known as the Khartoum Process), a collaboration between the EU and countries in the Horn of Africa to stem migration to Europe. This initiative particularly focussed on Sudan as a transit country for migrants and refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia (amongst others).

This article examines the trends and causes of Darfuri migration, and the effects of existing policies to manage migration both in Sudan and within Europe. Its main argument is that Darfuri migration to Europe reflects a new phase in Darfur's ongoing humanitarian crisis, and that – rather than addressing the crisis – existing aid and migration policies have maintained the crisis in Darfur and have created a crisis in Europe. Migration policies have maintained the crisis in Darfur because they legitimized the previous Sudan government while it persecuted and waged war against part of its population. Aid practices make Darfur's ongoing violence invisible, which has been convenient

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for Western collaboration with Sudan to stem migration, while at the same time allowing forced migration to continue. At the same time, ongoing migration had both economic and political benefits for the Sudanese government. In Europe, border closures, uneven asylum policies and restriction of assistance have created humanitarian crises in a number of locations. As David Keen notes (this issue), creating a crisis in Europe also appears to function as part of a strategy of deterrence. The article discusses each of these issues in turn.

The effects of migration policies and practices on Darfuri journeys have wider implications for humanitarianism. Much literature on migration and humanitarianism examines forced displacement as a feature of conflict and crisis, and the humanitarian crises that occur when people are displaced. One angle has been how the provision or restriction of humanitarian aid influences mobility, for example the restriction of aid to encourage return (see, e.g. Horst and Nur, 2016). This article reveals how such crises and tactics can also be seen within Europe. In addition, the failure of border controls to stem migration has been well documented as has the effect, instead, of proliferating smuggling networks and increasing the risks for migrants and refugees (see, e.g. Altai Consulting, 2013; Collyer, 2015; Crawley et al., 2016). Refugee Rights Europe has extensively documented the violence and health risks faced by refugees in Greece, Italy, France and Belgium (see Welander, this issue). Others have highlighted the humanitarian consequences of detention, of the hazardous conditions faced during the journey, and of the use of force to stop people crossing borders (Le Bihan, 2017). This article contributes to this literature by examining the journey of recent Darfuri refugees, from point of origin in Sudan to eventual destination in Europe, and by analysing the actual effects and functions of European migration policies at each stage in their journey. We have done this by examining the policies themselves, their interaction with policies and practices in Sudan, and by analysing their effects as experienced by Darfuri migrants. In doing so, we build on the approach to policy analysis suggested by the works of Foucault, Schaffer and Keen (Schaffer, 1984; Keen, 1994; Foucault, 2007). This entails analysing not only whether the aims of policies were met, but also the actual effects and functions of the regimes of practices used, particularly when policies appear to fail (see also Jaspars, 2018).

The article partly draws on previous research reported in Jaspars and Buchanan-Smith, (2018), which explored trends, drivers and constraints in Darfuri migration to Europe. It included over two hundred interviews and discussions in Sudan (Darfur and Khartoum), Italy, France, Belgium and the UK, with leaders, agency representatives, groups of young men and women, Darfuris in Europe and those who wanted to leave Sudan, as well as the families they left behind. Two of the authors conducted a follow-up visit to Sudan in November 2018 and one of the authors lives in Sudan. While the Sudanese government in place when the main substance of this article was written has been deposed, the findings remain relevant as they help inform future migration policy or identify the information necessary to develop it. They are also relevant more broadly in analysing changes in migration and the effects of migration policies.

This article is divided into four parts. The first part of the article provides a historical overview of migration and displacement in and from Darfur and describes who has recently left and why. The second part examines the Khartoum Process, how engagement with Sudan is made possible despite ongoing conflict in Darfur, and its effects. The third part examines the Darfuri experience along the journey, followed by a fourth part which looks at their experience in relation to migration policies in Europe and their actual effects. The conclusions explore some of the humanitarian challenges and dilemmas posed by the apparent abandonment of humanitarian values as part of efforts to stem migration.

TRENDS IN DARFURI MIGRATION AND THE CAUSES OF FORCED MIGRATION

Migration of Darfuris has evolved over time; from labour migration or migration for pasture, in part in response to food insecurity and famine, to forced displacement caused by conflict and, more

recently, migration to Europe. This section discusses these trends in migration and the reasons why Darfuris left Sudan for Europe in unprecedented numbers between 2014 and 2016.

The globalization of migration

Migration has long been a key part of livelihoods in Darfur, but its nature changed with conflict from 2003 onwards. For centuries, Darfuris have been engaged in migration for work, pasture or trade, sometimes within Darfur and sometimes further afield, for example to Libya and the Gulf countries. Migration increased with economic decline, drought and famines from the 1970s onwards, particularly when these conditions in Sudan coincided with an oil boom in Libya and the Gulf (Young et al., 2007). Some migrated more successfully than others. The Zaghawa, for example, from the northern arid part of Darfur bordering Chad and Libya, successfully transformed their livelihoods from pastoralism to business and trade, and maintained links with kin in their homeland (Ibrahim, 1998). For others, migration has been linked to the seasonal movement of livestock, in particular for nomadic groups claiming Arab descent (O'Fahey and Tubiana, 2007; Young et al., 2009).

Violent conflict from 2003 changed Darfuri migration completely, with destruction, killing and sexual violence by government and allied militia forcing many from their homes. By 2005, an estimated 2 million people had been displaced within Darfur and another 200,000 to Chad (Flint and De Waal, 2008). Conflict, violence and displacement have continued, including in large numbers from 2013 (see below). In 2018, the UN still reported 1.6 million people displaced in camps and 3.1 million in need of humanitarian assistance in Darfur (UN OCHA, 2018c). These numbers are similar to those at the start of the conflict and supposedly the height of the humanitarian crisis in 2004/5 (see, e.g. WFP, 2006). Over time, other forms of migration resumed; some sought work in South Sudan, Libya and Uganda, while others fled and sought asylum in Chad, Israel, Egypt or Europe.

The increase in Darfuri migration to Europe coincided with key changes within Sudan and the region. First, violent conflict and displacement increased in Darfur with the creation of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in 2013 from former Arab militia and paramilitary groups. Widespread violence and destruction led to the displacement of over 1 million Darfuris between 2013 and 2015 (UN OCHA, 2018a). Second, political unrest in the region restricted opportunities to migrate to neighbouring countries. Conflict in South Sudan from 2013 meant that Darfuri migrants returned. A reduction in opportunities for asylum in Egypt led to Sudanese seeking safety in Israel, but by 2010, Israel had instituted policies to keep migrants out (Feinstein International Center, 2012). At the same time, political conditions in Egypt from 2013 made it less safe. Conditions for refugees in Chad also deteriorated, with the relocation of camps away from the border, reduced food aid and a change to education in French rather than Arabic. Finally, the Libyan civil war from 2014 onwards and the collapse of the formal economy led to a proliferation in smuggling activities, which has also facilitated migration to Europe. These limitations in regional opportunities for work and safety occurred while conflict and persecution continued in Darfur.

Over 27,000 Sudanese arrived by boat in Italy between 2014 and 2017, compared to 919 the previous four years (Fargues, 2017). This is likely to be an underestimate as not all arrivals in Italy are recorded and others arrive by air or elsewhere in Europe. Even though numbers migrating to Europe are small relative to the number of internally displaced within Sudan, the increase highlights the ongoing crisis in Darfur.

Conflict and persecution as causes of migration

The vast majority of interviewees who fled Darfur for Europe were young men or teenagers, with a history of displacement within Darfur. For many therefore, their migration to Europe was the last

phase in a journey which can be traced back to 2003. Most belonged to the ethnic groups associated with the rebellion (mainly Zaghawa, Fur and Masalit); some of whom also had experience of migration before the conflict. A key change with historical migration patterns, however, was that many who left were poor. The evolution of smuggling and trafficking networks, with a new system of paying in instalments, made it possible for them to migrate. For most Darfuris interviewed, this also made them vulnerable to being held for ransom or sold into bonded labour in Libya. As one Darfuri in Brussels told us: “when I arrived [in Libya] we were sold. Arrested on arrival. It was as if we had already been sold in Sudan. . .”.

Darfuri interviewees identified attack, arrest, surveillance and loss of livelihoods as key reasons to leave Sudan. A related reason was the impunity with which abuses could be carried out. Like the Darfuris interviewed in Chad by Müller and Bashar (2017), what made them desperate to leave was “the perceived unwillingness by the government or any other actors to protect them . . . combined with the inability to arrange protection on their own” (p. 776). Surveillance was a particular issue for IDPs in camps, who informed us of being picked up, interrogated and ill-treated even after leaving the camps for short periods. For Darfuri students, particularly the politically active ones, arrest, detention and ill-treatment were common, as was pervasive discrimination in getting work opportunities. Contributing reasons for leaving were an inability to earn a living, either because of discrimination, or because of protracted displacement. Access to former farmland remains unsafe or limited because of occupation by groups aligned to the former government (see also Abdul-Jalil and Unruh, 2013). One young man’s analysis was typical of many: “the situation is not going to improve; I am leaving because of the miserable situation and the daily problems in the camps, each day someone dies or is injured. . .”. The combination of fear of attack, no means of protection, loss of livelihoods and no hope for improvement led to feelings of complete despair. They were aware of the risks of migrating – in particular of crossing the Mediterranean, but as relatives of a Darfuri refugee said: “A quick death in the Mediterranean is better than a slow death in Darfur”. Whether and how this has changed since the revolution and with the new Prime Minister’s efforts to negotiate peace will be a key area for further research.

DEALS WITH SUDAN AND MAKING CONFLICT INVISIBLE

The prevailing narrative on Darfur amongst aid organizations and Western governments in 2017 and 2018 was very different from the picture presented in the previous section. Their narrative was that the conflict is over. This section analyses how this narrative is maintained, how it enabled the Khartoum Process and its actual effects on the previous Sudan government, Darfur and on migration.

Deals with Sudan

The previous Sudan government and the United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) have claimed since 2009 that the conflict is over (Feinstein International Center, 2011), but in 2017 these claims gained greater traction. The UN has asserted that Darfur is more stable, that violent conflict and displacement have ceased and that any remaining violence is due to crime and failures of the local police and justice system. As a UN representative explained in November 2018, the reference to “crime” essentially means the absence of armed conflict between two sides, meaning that ongoing militia violence, impunity and persecution have been excluded from their notion of conflict. Furthermore, migration from Darfur, if discussed at all, tended to be linked to climate change and lack of development, rather than conflict and persecution. These developments need to be seen in the light of greater engagement by the EU and Western governments with Sudan

through the Khartoum Process and the partial lifting of US economic sanctions in October 2017. Both initiatives benefit from a narrative that the conflict is over.

The Khartoum Process was launched in 2014 in response to increasing levels of irregular migrants entering Europe. The stated aims of the Khartoum Process include the following: cooperation in tackling criminal networks, improving migration management, implementing preventive measures such as information campaigns, protecting and assisting refugees and victims of trafficking and promoting sustainable development (EU, AU and EU member states, 2014). It largely addresses migration through the lens of criminal justice (Oette and Abdelsalam Babiker, 2017). Sudan is central to the Khartoum Process because of its importance as a transit country, meaning that interventions have focussed on migration *through* Sudan, rather than *from* Sudan. Building on the Khartoum Process, the EU Emergency Trust Fund was launched in 2015. In Sudan, the main component has been Better Migration Management (BMM), the aims of which were similar to those for the Khartoum Process overall and includes capacity development of government institutions responsible for migration and border management (e.g. training of law enforcement and security agencies), and the protection of victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants (GIZ, 2017). EUTF-funded programmes largely focus on refugees in eastern and central Sudan and in Darfur are limited to health, agriculture and market support. Combined, these interventions can be seen as attempts to contain migration. However, none of these interventions addressed the causes of forced migration from Darfur. Furthermore, engaging with Sudan as a partner in managing migration relied on a narrative of the conflict in Sudan being over. So how was this narrative maintained (or created) and what effect did the Khartoum Process actually have?

The creation of a narrative that the conflict is over

A number of practices have contributed to the creation of a narrative that the conflict is over. These include the limited ability to gather information about violence in Darfur, the focus on smuggling and trafficking through Sudan, and shifting responsibility onto migrants themselves for poor decision-making.

First, limited information: the problems that young Darfuri men face in Darfur and in Khartoum are invisible. Protection monitoring, even by organizations with protection mandates (such as ICRC, UNHCR and UNICEF), as in monitoring attacks, harassment and violence against IDPs and other conflict-affected populations, has largely ceased since 2009 – when international aid agencies were expelled and local NGOs prosecuted following the indictment of President Omar al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court (ICC). In 2017, international organizations still considered such protection monitoring as too politically sensitive. Instead, protection activities included, for example, community empowerment, care of minors and addressing domestic violence. It also included addressing the needs of women and children exposed to malnutrition (UN OCHA, 2017; 2018b). UNAMID has had responsibility for monitoring human rights abuses but has also been extremely constrained in its actions. Despite its failings, however, organizations have been concerned about the planned drawdown of UNAMID (due to end in June 2020 at the time of writing), in particular because of the ongoing risks to IDPs and reports of renewed violence (see e.g. UN, 2019). The situation remains fragile in 2020, as peace negotiations have been delayed and the COVID-19 pandemic presents a new threat.

Two other sources of information are UN OCHA and WFP. The former provides information on displacements but reporting has changed from overall displaced, to newly displaced and IDPs in need, to people targeted for assistance, leading to a general decline in numbers. For example, in 2016, 5.8 people in Sudan were estimated to be in need but only 4.6 targeted for assistance (UN OCHA, 2016). The Sudan humanitarian overview for the same year reports 2 million IDPs in need in Darfur which had decreased to 1.7 million by 2018 (UN OCHA, 2015, 2018a). With proposals from the previous government for the integration of IDP camps into towns, their numbers would be

removed from reporting altogether (personal communication, UN OCHA). IDPs outside of camps have not been included in any information system. In 2017 and 2018, WFP assessments were limited to IDP camps and the use of a limited number of quantitative indicators to estimate the severity of food insecurity provides little analysis of the dynamics of conflict (Jaspars, 2018, WFP Sudan, 2018). For international organizations, access to conflict-affected populations was limited for many years but has improved since the formation of the transitional government (UN OCHA, 2020). Gathering information in Darfur was controversial under Sudan's former government, which perceived international organizations as Western spies and who – through their practices – were thought to undermine Sudan's sovereignty and support rebel movements. Aid agencies were forced to live in a constant depoliticized present.

Second, focussing on smuggling and trafficking as the “cause” of migration, rather than a symptom or facilitator of migration, takes attention away from conflict and persecution as a cause. The emphasis of such management to reduce migration to Europe, within Sudan or elsewhere, is on tackling smuggling and trafficking networks. In Sudan, for example, it encouraged the formulation of the Combating Human Trafficking Act in 2014 (although it has many weaknesses, including the impunity of government officials and law enforcement organizations). Interventions have focussed on capacity building of judiciary and border enforcement agencies as well as the organizations that deal with the protection of trafficking victims (Oette and Abdelsalam Babiker, 2017). Evidence from Darfur, however, shows that while smugglers and traffickers may be facilitators of migration, they are not the cause of forced migration. In addition, the closure of borders, in particular with Libya, has led to an increase in smuggling operations out of Sudan. The failure to address ongoing persecution in Darfur has pushed young men into exploitative and risky smuggling arrangements. Blocking migration routes diverts migration to other and often less safe routes (see also Tubiana et al., 2018).

Third, blaming migrants themselves diverts attention from the structural causes of migration. Intervention that aims to provide information to potential migrants about the dangers of the journey places responsibility for the dangers faced on individuals rather than those who are responsible for the causes of migration. While at the time of our fieldwork BMM had not started this intervention in Sudan, information campaigns are a common feature of migration management elsewhere and rarely work in deterring migration (Oeppen, 2016). The Darfuris we interviewed were well aware of the dangers of crossing the Mediterranean but felt the risks of staying in Darfur were greater. Perhaps more importantly, no one involved in the Khartoum Process had gathered evidence on who is leaving Sudan and why. For the EU, the political imperative of curbing migration has been greater than its commitment to promoting human rights.

The actual effects of the Khartoum Process

So what effect does the Khartoum Process actually have? First of all, simply by collaborating with the former Sudan government, the EU and its member states gave legitimacy to a regime whose actions actually caused the migration of Darfuris from Sudan. According to Darfuris in Europe, or who wanted to leave Sudan in 2017, government and militia actions were a major cause of migration.

Second, key informants in Sudan believed that the EU supported the deployment of the Rapid Support Forces along the Libya border, to stop migration (who were earlier involved in causing displacement, see page 5). While the EU has insisted it has not provided direct funding to Sudan's former government – and thus the RSF – to stop migrants from crossing the border, it sent out a strong message that it wants migration to Europe stopped. In a number of news items in 2016, the head of the RSF (Hemedti) boasted of stopping migrants and demanded compensation from the EU (see, e.g. Radio Dabanga, 2016; Sudan Safari, 2016).¹ Furthermore, Tubiana et al. (2018) noted

that in Sudan the distinction between police, army and paramilitary is blurred, meaning that training and material assistance to police may also benefit others. In mid-2019, five years after the start of the Khartoum Process, its funding to Sudanese government institutions for migration control was suspended for precisely these reasons (DW, 2019).

Third, regardless of any direct support to Sudan government, migration gave Sudan's former government an important point of leverage over the EU. It can threaten to allow thousands of migrants to cross into Libya and thus potentially to Europe; this is what Keen and Andersson (2018) have called their ability to stoke the threat in the "double games" between the western instigator government and its partner Sudan. Other elements of double games are as follows: appearing to collaborate while also being involved in criminal activity and seeking impunity for domestic oppression while joining in the global struggle to stem migration (the latter being re-enforced by stoking the threat). Tubiana et al (2018) refer to "double games" in migration as working with one set of official and another set of unofficial rules at the same time. This particularly applies to the political and economic benefits Sudan's security apparatus has gained from allowing ongoing migration while at the same time collaborating to stop it.

Fourth, migration has not actually stopped and can provide significant economic and political benefits to elements of Sudan's ruling elite. Migration had not stopped in 2017 but instead migrants had to pay, yielding important economic benefits to government officers. Sudan's military and security apparatus were directly implicated in smuggling and trafficking. This ranged from taking bribes, or charging fee at the border or at checkpoints, to actual involvement in smuggling migrants (Collyer, 2015; Strachan, 2016). A recent study by Tubiana et al (2018) provides direct and substantial evidence of the involvement of the RSF in smuggling migrants into Libya. In addition, the political benefits of continued migration included facilitating a government policy to dismantle the camps and integrate them into urban areas. This would also consolidate the occupation of land by Arab groups aligned to the former government (and which prevents many of the displaced from returning home) (Abdul-Jalil and Unruh, 2013). It was, of course, mostly young men who are considered to support base of the rebellion who were leaving. Some Darfuri interviewees suggested that the former government did not mind them leaving. As long as they continued to Europe, rather than joining the rebellion in Libya, this benefited the previous Sudan government in the short term.² The lack of a national migration policy, and numerous overlapping policies and institutions dealing with migration, facilitates the maintenance of such vested interests. The aim of existing migration policies and institutions of Sudan's former government may in fact have been to maintain the status quo.

To conclude, ongoing migration gave the previous Sudan government enormous political power in relation to European governments and the EU. Sudan's former government benefited politically by claiming it could stop migration and therefore potentially have sanctions further lifted and attract development funds (see also Amin, 2018, Radio Dabanga, 2016). At the same time, it benefited economically from ongoing migration and politically from much of the potential rebellion leaving. These "double games" also continue a long tradition of the West's ambivalent relationship with Sudan – during the Cold War Sudan's geopolitical importance led to continued support for the government when its famine-creating war strategies in the south were well known, and in the War on Terror, Sudan was seen as both an Islamist pariah state and a provider of intelligence (Keen, 1994; Williams and Bellamy, 2005). The actual effect of engagement with Sudan on migration was that it maintained and possibly worsened the risks faced by certain Darfuri ethnic groups. The Khartoum Process did not address the causes of migration from Darfur and legitimized the former Sudan regime, while in reality allowing migration to continue. This left camps and villages more vulnerable to attack thus facilitating the former government's counter-insurgency operations, including consolidating the occupation of land. Border controls make it more difficult, risky and expensive to leave Sudan.

DARFURI EXPERIENCES ALONG THE JOURNEY

Darfuris continued to experience violence throughout their journey, whether in Libya, Italy, France, Belgium or the UK. Their journey was rarely straightforward or linear. Destinations changed, often because of the violence they experienced, and some were deported – either within Europe or back to Sudan.

About half of the Darfuris interviewed in Europe fled to Libya first. However, once they got to Libya, they found conditions were so bad, they fled on to Europe or were enticed by smugglers or traffickers to do so. In Libya, many Darfuris end up in some form of detention and/or were held up for ransom or sold into slave or bonded labour. Whether detained by Libyan government officials (irregular entry into Libya is an offence), by militia or by traffickers, detention centres are overcrowded, unsanitary, with limited food and water, and people are exposed to abuse and exploitation (see, e.g. UNHCR, Impact and Altai Consulting, 2017). Darfuri interviewees had often ended up staying for 2–3 years – exploited not only by the traffickers who brought them to Libya but also to pay for the Mediterranean crossing. Others had Europe as a destination from the start, mostly the UK – for reasons of safety, language but mostly because family and friends were already there. Those who had money could travel through Libya quickly (or even fly to the UK or France by bribing government officials). The crossing to Italy was for many the worst experience, as Darfuris mostly crossed in basic rubber dinghies.

In Europe, they moved on because of variations in asylum procedures, risk of deportation or conditions in country. Upon arrival in Italy, Darfuris soon learnt from other Sudanese of the difficulties that migrants faced and that even people with refugee status slept rough. This worsened with the antimigrant and refugee policies of the Salvini government (see Pusterla, this issue). Darfuris attempted to pass quickly through Italy to France, only to get stuck at the border in Ventimiglia. Most faced their first experience of police violence in Europe here. One Darfuri told us: “I tried six or seven times to cross into France . . . The French policy say: welcome Sudani, now go back. . . I have been beaten twice”. Sometimes Darfuris were returned to southern Italy where they first entered the country. This return is part of the Dublin III regulations, whereby newly arrived refugees have to claim asylum in the first country of arrival. This meant that if Darfuris did make it further into France, they tried to move as much as possible under the radar. Some interviewees claimed asylum in France, usually because of the difficulties of getting into the UK, but found that it takes a long time to register and even longer for claims to be processed, often without shelter being provided. Darfuris talked about finding other Sudanese sleeping in the street in Port de la Chapelle in Paris, and in Calais, they had to sleep in forests or derelict warehouses, with the risk of being tear-gassed or arrested and detained by police. Local authorities have actively restricted assistance since the destruction of the “Jungle” camp in October 2016 (see below). This drove people to move on to Belgium or the UK. In Belgium, Darfuris again slept rough, but their biggest fear was deportation, in some cases back to Sudan.

UK border controls and the Dublin III regulations led to a number of circular movements within Europe. First, people moved between Paris, Brussels and Calais, based on information about the best place to cross to the UK at a particular point in time. Second, the Dublin III regulations mean that undocumented refugees can be returned to Italy (usually the first country of entry for Darfuris) if stopped or arrested (e.g. if found illegally on trains or trucks) from the UK, Belgium, France or any other country in Europe. Once returned to Italy, most attempted the journey to the UK again. The journey of one interviewee in Brussels illustrates this well: “in France I was caught by the police and sent back to Italy . . . where I first arrived. I went back to Nice. I did not apply for asylum in France because I saw many people waiting in La Chapelle [Paris]. I went to Calais and made it to the UK. I was in the UK for 10 months, but then deported to Rome. In Rome, the police asked if I wanted to claim asylum, I did not, and was given papers to leave the country. I

returned to France and claimed asylum. I waited 4 months without a place to stay and then decided to take my chances again to go to the UK. This is why I came to Belgium”.

Darfuris faced police violence in Italy, France and Belgium. This included being tear-gassed in France and Belgium, having possessions taken and tents destroyed or confiscated, and assistance being restricted by authorities in France, and criminalized in Italy and the Mediterranean. Local authorities have destroyed camps in or near Calais numerous times. In the UK, those who are appealing against failed asylum claims (which are often ultimately successful) are denied state assistance. As can be expected, levels of trauma amongst Darfuri refugees are high. They escaped violence and persecution in Sudan, suffered extreme abuse in Libya and then experience a continuation of violence in Europe.

POLICIES IN EUROPE AND THEIR EFFECTS

European policies on migration and asylum present a combination of containment and deterrence. The previous sections provided information on attempts at containment using border control and development measures in Africa, with the effect being largely to make journeys more costly and more dangerous. Within Europe, policies have similar stated aims and actual effects. Containment again plays a role, in the form of strengthened border controls along the Italy–France border and the UK border. Deterrence forms a key part of policy within Europe. Despite official attempts to create a common European asylum system (CEAS), member states interpret and apply this differently (European Commission, 2015; Borton and Collinson, 2017). The 2013 Dublin III regulations are part of the CEAS and stipulate that the member state where a refugee was fingerprinted (usually the country of arrival) is responsible for processing their asylum claim. Other member states that refugees subsequently enter can legally return them to the country where their fingerprints were taken. The Darfuris interviewed for this study were mostly fingerprinted in Italy – sometimes by force, and more rigorously since 2017. These policies, and their failure to meet official aims, function as deterrence measures and create a humanitarian crisis in the centre of Europe. These issues are discussed below.

Humanitarian crisis in Europe

Border closures and restrictions in assistance are causing a humanitarian crisis in Europe. In Ventimiglia (Italy), Calais (France) or Brussels³ (Belgium), hundreds or thousands of people are camped along borders because authorities prevent them from crossing. Sudanese have suffered disproportionately. Whereas only 6–7% of those who crossed the Mediterranean were Sudanese, 30% of those in the Calais “Jungle” (in 2016) were Sudanese and 80% of migrants in Ventimiglia (in 2017) (UNHCR, 2016; Refugee Rights Data Project, 2016, 2017). In June 2018, 41.5% of refugees sleeping rough in Maximilian Park in Brussels were Sudanese (Refugee Rights Europe, 2018). Only few Darfuris are able to pay smugglers in Europe to cross borders; they usually tried to cross without a smuggler, increasing the risk of police violence or injury or death when hiding in trucks and trains. In addition to police violence, people had little or no access to shelter, food or health or sanitation services. The latest “Jungle” camp in Calais was overcrowded, with few of the traditional humanitarian organizations present. A health assessment in 2015 found that the conditions constituted a humanitarian crisis due to inadequacy of shelter, food, water, hygiene, sanitation, water (Dhesi et al., 2015). Refugee Rights Europe continued to report a poor health situation in 2016. Since the destruction of this camp in October 2016, volunteer groups have had to take the local authorities to court to be allowed to provide basic assistance (see below); and refugees have to sleep rough and are frequently forcibly dispersed. Government authorities deliberately restrict

assistance. In Calais, this is an explicit part of a strategy of deterrence. In March 2017, following the official demolition of the Jungle camp in October 2016, the mayor of Calais banned the distribution of food, water, blankets and clothing, arguing that the availability of assistance would attract more migrants to the town. The decision was overturned in court on the grounds that denying assistance is inhumane. In June, volunteers could provide assistance but within a two-hour window and frequent monitoring and disruption by police continued (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Since then, destruction of property and dispersal has occurred on a more frequent basis. In addition, in Italy, France and Belgium, new laws have made it more difficult to claim asylum and have reduced responsibilities of the state towards those who do not (see, e.g. Torrissi, 2018). Italy and the EU have criminalized NGO Mediterranean rescues, accusing them of collusion with smugglers. As a consequence, most NGO rescues have now stopped, making drowning a new form of deterrence. The effect on Darfuri migration has yet to be determined. In March 2020,⁴ the COVID-19 pandemic is amplifying these strategies, with the closure of the borders, movement restrictions for volunteers and efforts to remove, contain or quarantine migrants.

The withholding of assistance to influence mobility is a well-known strategy in many African refugee, displaced or famine contexts, to encourage refugees or IDPs to return home or to leave camps (see, e.g. Horst and Nur, 2016). Similar tactics have been used in Sudan itself to encourage the movement of displaced out of camps (Jaspars, 2018). In Europe, the politics of deterrence and containment has become more important than human rights and humanitarianism. However, the Darfuris we interviewed in Italy and France still felt that even the terrible conditions in Italy, France and Belgium were better than what they experienced in Sudan. This was particularly true in relation to police violence. As one Darfuri said: “In France, at least the police do not kill you”. In addition, when in France, Italy or Belgium, they still had hope of their life getting better. For Darfuris, therefore, deterrence measures of police violence, destruction of assets and restriction of assistance were not working as a form of deterrence.

Failed migration policies? Violence, deterrence and the functions of the “migrant crisis”

In addition to the active deterrence measures described above, the failure to develop a common European asylum system, flawed and lengthy asylum procedures (sometimes without shelter being provided), the Dublin III regulations and the failure to share responsibility for refugees within Europe have in themselves become a form of deterrence. Combined, these conditions amount to a policy to make it both undesirable and difficult to claim asylum. This serves a second function in that it creates undocumented migrants or refugees who can be deported – either to Italy or to Sudan. Undocumented migrants can be arrested and detained when caught on trains and trucks. In this way, the failure to develop a common asylum system policy is to the advantage of receiving countries because it leads to undocumented migrants who can be deported. All countries along the Darfuri journey received missions from Sudan to screen Sudanese for repatriation. Only the Italian government signed a formal MOU with Sudan in 2016, “to combat crime, illegal migration and border issues” to deport people (ANSA – Infomigrants, 2018). In other countries, arrangements have been informal but also resulted in a number of forced returns to Sudan (see, e.g. Belga, 2017).

The fact that people are undocumented in some sense explains why legally they do not receive assistance or protection. However, it does not quite explain the humanitarian situation and violence against refugees in Ventimiglia, Paris, Calais or Brussels, why these camps (or just groups of people sleeping rough or in tents) can be regularly demolished and refugees dispersed, or why they can be continuously subjected to police violence. Keen (this issue) and Welander (2016, 2017, and this issue) write how the conditions of migrants and refugees in places like the “Calais” jungle,

create violence and disease, which in turn is used to justify the destruction of camps, including Calais “Jungle” camp. Our own findings support this with information on the destruction of a smaller camp in Norrent Fontes (also in northern France), which housed many Sudanese. The mayor of Norrent Fontes justified the destruction of the camp in September 2017 because the land was at risk of flooding, it was a health hazard, a hygiene risk and that people should not live like that. This too will be amplified with the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2017 they had to live rough in the surrounding forest but were no longer visible to the authorities.⁵ In these circumstances, it is left up to volunteers not only to provide assistance but also to humanize them with solidarity and respect.

A similar situation is found in Libya. Migrants and refugees are prevented from leaving for Europe because of the EU deal with the Libyan coastguards and, more recently, the closure of the Schengen borders during the COVID-19 pandemic. The appalling conditions in Libyan detention centres can also function as a form of deterrence, thus providing little incentive for the EU and its member states to improve them. Furthermore, it has provided a justification for “voluntary” returns from Libya on humanitarian grounds (see also Brachet, 2015). IOM voluntary returns from Libya to Sudan increased from 2 in 2016 to 523 in 2017.⁶ Given the conditions in Libya, including in the detention centre, the voluntary nature of returns must be questioned.

Finally, ongoing migration can provide economic incentives anywhere: whether in Sudan, Libya or Europe, thus illustrating another function of the “failure” of migration policies to stop migration. Since Europe introduced the Schengen agreement (the opening borders within Europe), a large security industry has developed to enforce Europe’s external borders. The budget for Europe’s border agency, Frontex, for example, has massively increased since 2005 (Keen and Andersson, 2018). Border enforcement contributes to economy of northern France; with the UK funding the French police and the construction of walls, and in the UK detention centres and housing for asylum claimants have largely been privatized (Arbogast, 2016). The vested interests in ongoing migration, while simultaneously maintaining a front of stemming “illegal” migration is not limited to Sudan but is also found at the heart of Europe and all along the Darfuri migration journey. Industries of border control and smuggling networks are intimately linked (Andersson, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

This article reveals the stark reality of Darfuri journeys to Europe, the effects of policies that try to contain and deter them, and the similarities and interconnectedness between migration policies and practices in Sudan and in Europe. In Sudan, the Khartoum Process legitimized a government that waged war and persecuted part of its own population, and which appeared to collaborate with the EU on migration control but at the same time benefited politically and economically from ongoing migration. Sudan’s border and security forces were directly implicated in smuggling activities, and political benefits included much of the rebellion’s support base leaving.

In Europe, migration policies are creating a humanitarian crisis because people get stuck on borders with limited protection or assistance, which in itself functions as a form of deterrence or an excuse to destroy camps and disperse refugees. These tactics will be amplified with the COVID-19 pandemic. The crises and tactics previously seen mainly in Africa or the global South are now also seen in Europe. In both Sudan and in Europe, migration policies are numerous, overlapping and fail in meeting their official aims. Their actual effect, however, is to maintain vested interests and, in the case of Europe, to create undocumented migrants and refugees who can be deported. In Libya, EU policies to contain migrants and refugees increase populations in abysmal detention conditions and thus again promote deterrence and “voluntary” return to Sudan.

In 2017, the restriction of aid to influence mobility could be seen in both Europe and Sudan. In Sudan, to encourage people to leave the camps (and possibly Sudan), and in Europe, to deter

people from migrating there. For Darfuris, however, restricting aid in Europe does not function as a deterrence, because even when sleeping rough and receiving only limited assistance, they felt it was still better than in Sudan. In each case, existing aid and migration practices functioned to make much of the abuse or crisis invisible. The ongoing crisis in Darfur was invisible because of a narrative that the conflict was over. This narrative was maintained because information on conflict, violence, and persecution was limited, and because the emphasis of migration management is on smuggling and trafficking and it transfers responsibility to migrants themselves (through information campaigns). This in turn enabled the EU and its member states to do deals with Sudan. In Europe, the destruction of informal camps and the dispersal or detention of refugees also function to make the problem invisible and therefore remove the need to provide assistance and protection. For Darfuris, the effect is that in all countries along their journey violence against them continues.

This situation has profound implications for humanitarianism both locally and globally. Globally, it can be seen as part of a strategy of deresponsibilization or counter-humanitarianism (Keen and Anderson, 2018; de Waal, 2018). In many of today's crises, political and military aims trump humanitarianism – or more concretely – some lives are not considered worth protecting. UK- and US-supported Saudi actions in Yemen are another case in point, as is the US restriction of aid in areas where terrorist groups are thought to operate. The laws and practices that make it more difficult to claim asylum, that create concentrations of people along borders and that restrict the provision of assistance to migrants and refugees are part of this trend (de Waal, 2018). They involve either the abandonment of humanitarian values (Keen and Anderson, 2018) or its co-option. What is clear, however, from the analysis of Darfuri journeys is that in analysing migration, it is necessary to consider interconnected national, regional and global trends, systemically, and from a humanitarian, livelihoods and protection perspective.

Darfuri migration to Europe raises a number of humanitarian challenges, some are familiar to humanitarians and others are new because it is borders themselves that are causing suffering. Familiar challenges include the possibility that assistance facilitates abusive practices, such as detention or lack of state provision. Humanitarian organizations have faced these moral dilemmas for a very long time and know to carefully balance immediate risks against long-term harm, but not in Europe. New dilemmas include the difficulties and in some cases impossibility of maintaining a neutral humanitarian stance. As Scott-Smith (2016) has pointed out, to really assist in the alleviation of suffering humanitarian organizations or actors need to help “illegal” people complete their journey safely, which would be a political and illegal act. The recent criminalization of Mediterranean rescues means that officially NGOs are similarly involved in illegal activities by saving people from drowning. And this leads to perhaps the most insidious humanitarian challenge, the co-option of humanitarian language. This includes calling the cessation of rescue operations a humanitarian action (as it deters people from crossing the Mediterranean and thus risking their lives), voluntary returns’ from detention centres in Libya in which migrants are abused or exploited, and the destruction of camps for humanitarian reasons.

In order to resist this abandonment of humanitarianism, our study points to a number of actions. First is to make the problems of Darfuris – and of other undocumented migrants and refugees – visible. Protection monitoring has been difficult and politically sensitive in Sudan, and particularly Darfur, but the current change in political context may offer opportunities to do this. In Europe, volunteers providing food and other material assistance function in part to keep migrants and refugees and the conditions in which they live visible. Finally, the study has shown the importance of analysing what policies are actually doing, particularly if they are not having their intended effect. For migration, examining the experience along the entire journey is a particularly powerful tool.

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NOTES

1. Note that at the time of writing, Hemedti is the Vice President of Sudan's Transitional Military Council
2. In the long term, however, some Arab youth commented that the higher education some Darfuri refugees might get in Europe could further increase inequalities in Sudan.
3. Not strictly a border location but Darfuris were attempting to board trucks or buses in Brussels to enable them to cross to the UK.
4. The time of making the final edits to this article
5. Interviews with key informants in northern France
6. Figures provided by IOM Khartoum

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