



# UNAMID Police and the Protection of Civilians in Darfur

Festus Kofi Aubyn

## SUMMARY

This Policy Brief reflects on the Protection of Civilian (PoC) strategies of UNAMID Police and some of the challenges hindering their effective implementation in Darfur. It argues that for PoC to be successful, UNAMID Police should focus its attention on a number of issues including overcoming the frequent access denials to some areas in Darfur by the Government of Sudan (GoS) through enhanced cooperation and political dialogue; and the provision of adequate resources for police personnel to carry out their mandated activities.

## Introduction

Sudan's Darfur region has been described by the United Nations as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Since 2003, local people have been under constant attack from government troops, pro-government militias and rebel groups, leaving millions displaced and killed.<sup>1</sup> In response to the continuing violence against the population, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1769 of 31 July 2007, which authorized the deployment of the African Union/United Nations

hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID), made Protection of Civilians (PoC) a core mandate of the mission.<sup>2</sup> Due to the constant deterioration of the security situation in Darfur, subsequent reviews of the mission's mandate and strategic priorities of all mission components (police, military and civilians) have focused on PoC as a prime issue.<sup>3</sup>

This Policy Brief reflects on the PoC approach of the UNAMID Police within the context of the mission-wide strategy and some of the challenges hindering effective civilian protection in Darfur.<sup>4</sup> It suggests

<sup>1</sup>Reliefweb, Darfur: UN humanitarian office reports mass displacement among ongoing hostilities, 21 January 2015.

<sup>2</sup>UNSCR 1769 was renewed by UNSCRs 1828 (19 June 2008), 1881 (6 August 2009) 1935 (30 July 2010) 2003 of (19 July 2011), 2063 of (29 July 2012), 2113 of (30 July 2013) and 2173 of (27 August 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Special Report of the Secretary-General on the Review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, S/2014/138, 25 February 2014 (henceforth Special Report 2014).

<sup>4</sup>United Nations, Revised Concept of Operations for the Police Component in the United Nations – African

that to be successful, the PoC strategy of UNAMID Police must focus on issues such as overcoming the frequent access restrictions to certain areas in Darfur by the Government of Sudan (GoS) through enhanced cooperation and political dialogue; improve early warning information analysis; increase the number and resources of the Formed Police Units (FPU's); and strengthen its interactions and capacity building for GoS Police, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and civil society organisations (CSOs). The paper is based on field research conducted by the Training for Peace in Africa (TFP) research network in Sudan in November 2014.<sup>5</sup> After a brief overview of the UNAMID Police, the Policy Brief discusses the PoC strategy within the context of mission-wide strategy and the challenges confronting its effective implementation. The conclusion details some measures that can be considered to enhance civilian protection in Darfur.

### Overview of the UNAMID Police

UNAMID Police is made up of individual police officers (IPOs) and Formed Police Units (FPUs, with 140 personnel each). Out of the 3,403 personnel strength authorized by UNSCR 2173 – comprising 1,583 IPOs and 13 FPUs – 3,165 are at post as of May 2015.<sup>6</sup> UNAMID Police has a three-tier organizational structure. There is the mission headquarters which is located at El Fasher; five main Sectors spread across the Darfur region – Sector North (El Fasher), Sector West (El Geneina), Sector South (Nyala), Sector Central (Zalingei) and Sector East (El Daein); and 35 Team Sites located within these Sectors. The Police Commissioner is the overall commander and reports to the Joint

Special Representative (JSR) through the Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR).<sup>7</sup> The mandate and strategic priorities of UNAMID Police comprise: supporting physical protection of civilians; facilitating humanitarian assistance; and creating a protective environment through GoS police capacity development and community-oriented policing activities.<sup>8</sup>

### Approach to Civilian Protection

#### *Mission-Wide Strategy*

PoC is a key element of UNAMID strategy, and works through a combination of general and specific tasks of all mission components – military, police and civilians. The protection strategy of the UNAMID Police draws from the overall mission-wide PoC programme which is coordinated by the Humanitarian Affairs Section. The mission-wide strategy follows the UN three-tier approach to PoC: protection through dialogue and engagement; provision of physical protection; and establishing a protective environment. UNAMID has an operational PoC strategy that was approved in 2013 with 11 structures. As of December 2014 when the research team visited the mission, only four of the 11 structures were functional. These four structures, represented at both mission headquarters and sector level, comprised the: (i) Protection Management Group of mission managers; (ii) Joint Protection Group, which brings together the different components of the mission including all chiefs of substantive sections; (iii) Early Warning Group comprising all mission components; and (iv) Field Protection Team.<sup>9</sup> In practical terms, what happens is that the Field Protection Team conducts daily patrols at all UNAMID team sites and channels

Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), July 2014, para 3 (3.2).

<sup>5</sup> Caparini, M., Aubyn, F.K., Davies, O.V., Dessu, M.K. and Peter, M. (2015). *The Police in UNAMID*. ISS Monograph Number 190.

<sup>6</sup> See UNAMID. Available at:

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unamid/>. [Accessed 10 May 2015].

<sup>7</sup> UNAMID, *Standard Operating Procedures for UNAMID Police*, 2014, para D1.1.2 and D1.1.3.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, *Revised Concept of Operations for the Police Component in the United Nations – African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)*, July 2014, para 3 (3.2).

<sup>9</sup> Caparini, M. et al., 2015, op. cit.

reports on its findings of the day to mission headquarters through POC structures in the sectors. The Early Warning group and Joint Protection Group analyse and deliberate on the reports and prepare responses if necessary with the involvement of the Protection Management group.

### *UNAMID Police Strategy*

UNAMID Police PoC strategy rests on four pillars to facilitate civilian protection as part of mission-wide strategy. These four pillars are: building the institutional framework and procedures of GoS Police; capacity building; community policing; and programme implementation and evaluation.<sup>10</sup> In operationalizing this strategy, UNAMID Police works with the military and civilian components, GoS Police, UN Country Team (UNCT) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that seek to protect civilians in accordance with their own mandates and capacities.

Regarding institution building, UNAMID Police has helped the GoS Police to develop and implement long-term strategic plans for policing in Darfur. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the GoS Police Directorate of International Cooperation was signed in August 2013 to address deficiencies in the areas of institutional framework and procedures, capacity building, community-oriented policing, and project implementation and evaluation.<sup>11</sup> To enhance the reporting of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases, four gender desks within the GoS Police in Darfur (Kutum, Mellit, Umkadada and Kabkabiya) have been created. Trust and confidence building through support and regular interaction with GoS Police has facilitated the protection of IDPs and vulnerable groups in the camps, albeit with some difficulties.

To enhance capacity for civilian protection, UNAMID Police has focused its efforts on increased patrolling, community policing, and training Sudanese law enforcement officials. In terms of training, for instance, over 30,000 people including GoS Police and IDPs have been trained on different subjects since 2008. Some topics covered include: criminal investigation; crime scene management, SGBV; human rights; child protection; HIV; treatment and detention of suspects; and community policing.<sup>12</sup> Besides training, support is also provided in collaboration with other civilian actors to promote and protect human rights, justice and the rule of law. The IPOs, for instance, monitor criminal incidents that are reported to GoS police, follow their responses, and where necessary, advise and guide them according to international standards.

Providing support for community policing to increase local safety and security is a key priority in the civilian protection strategy. In that regard, the GoS Police and several Community Policing Volunteers (CPVs) in IDP camps have been trained and sensitized on the basic understanding of community policing, basic crime detection, conflict resolution skills (mediation and negotiation), and handling of SGBV cases. Community Safety Committees (CSCs) have also been established in the IDP camps to identify and tackle crimes in collaboration with the IPOs and GoS Police. Furthermore, Community Policing Centres (CPCs) have been built in or near vulnerable IDP camps in an attempt to proactively engage IDPs, local communities, and government authorities. The training of CPVs in particular is meant to help bridge the gap between GoS Police and IDP communities. In the Kalma IDP camp in Sector South (Nyala), for instance, confidence-building measures by UNAMID Police has been instrumental in bridging the gap and defusing tensions between the GoS police (who are seen as pro-government) and IDP

<sup>10</sup>Caparini, M., et al, 2015, op cit.

<sup>11</sup>See Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Police Component of the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the Ministry of Interior, The Republic of Sudan, Represented by the Sudanese Police

Forces on Cooperation and Support in the Fields of Development and Capacity Building of the Sudanese Police Forces in Darfur, 20 August 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Caparini, M. et al., 2015, op. cit.

leaders.<sup>13</sup> Thus, building the capacity of GoS police and CPVs aims to protect civilians by redressing grievances and rebuilding trust, while addressing some of the root causes of the conflict (such as impunity) through greater community engagement in crime prevention and detection.

In the effort to protect civilians physically, different types of patrols (confidence building, escort, investigation, monitoring, and verification) are conducted and they include both medium-range (less than 50km) and long-range (more than 50km) patrols. They are usually conducted in the IDP camps, market centres, villages, towns, during the fetching of firewood and water, farming and harvest seasons. These monitoring activities have contributed to the physical protection of civilians by preventing and deterring attacks.

### Civilian Protection Challenges

Despite the robust PoC capacities of UNAMID Police, there are obstacles that hinder effective protection. A general challenge that affects all mission components is the uncertainty and deterioration of the security situation in Darfur since 2013. Security has been eroded by the increasing number of armed actors, continued weapons proliferation, banditry, crime, and frequent attacks on UN personnel and property, including robberies, carjacking and kidnapping.<sup>14</sup> The worsening situation has required the imposition of measures that include the requirement that all visits to IDP camps by police and civilians are accompanied by armed escort – FPU where they exist, or military. However, due to the ongoing downsizing of the mission coupled with the slow deployment of FPUs by Police Contributing Countries (PCCs), there are inadequate personnel for frequent patrols.

Additionally, logistical limitations have hindered mission-wide deployment of FPUs, which has affected the work of IPOs and their civilian counterparts who cannot go on patrol without escorts. The protection provided by the FPUs to the civilian population is also limited to IDPs located in camps, leaving the vast majority of civilians in Darfur unattended. Furthermore, the presence of UNAMID Police in the IDP camps is limited.

The IPOs who usually conduct patrols and CPV training are also often confronted with the high and unrealistic expectations of IDPs about services they cannot provide (such as livelihood training, jobs and other development activities), and which are not part of their mandate. The situation is further worsened by the limited presence of the UN Country team (UNCT) in Darfur, which is mainly responsible for providing welfare services to IDPs. Related to this is the lack of funding and inadequate consultation among stakeholders before the implementation of relief activities and Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) as part of PoC. The consequence of this is that some of the QIPs provided have turned out to be at variance with the pressing needs of the IDP camps and communities, creating discontent among the people and the Government.

Another critical constraint is the denial of access by GoS to areas that UNAMID personnel seek to visit outside the camps and team sites. Such access restrictions have been a significant factor in curtailing the ability of the mission to verify alleged attacks on civilians, giving rise to accusations that the mission is failing in its reporting duties.<sup>15</sup> A typical case in point was in November 2014 when a verification team from UNAMID was denied access to the town of Tabit in Darfur to investigate a report that government troops had raped 200 women and girls.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, UNAMID is also challenged by

<sup>13</sup>Caparini, M., et al, 2015, op cit.

<sup>14</sup> Special Report of the Secretary-General on the Review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, S/2014/138, 25 February 2014 (henceforth Special Report 2014).

<sup>15</sup> See allegations by former UNAMID spokesperson Aicha Elbasri in Hedda ten Holder, UNAMID is distorting the truth

about Darfur. Free Press Unlimited, 19 December 2003.

Available at:

<https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/news/unamid-is-distorting-the-truth-about-darfur>. Accessed on 8 May 2015.

<sup>16</sup>Reliefweb, (2014), Denial of Darfur rape case by UNAMID shocks Tabit victims. Available at:

misinformation often provided by a radio station called 'Radio Dabanga' in its coverage of events in the region. Radio Dabanga is cited as being notorious for broadcasting false information that causes tensions between UNAMID and GoS. In November 2014, the radio station reported that Sudanese troops entered the village of Tabit on 31 October after a soldier went missing and raped 200 girls and women. But later, the information turned out to be false when the UN verified from other sources within the area after being prevented from visiting the area.

It is also instructive to note that UNAMID is hamstrung in implementing the PoC mandate in areas where GoS police are not present. In areas where they exist, their limitations as a result of the ongoing conflict dynamics and insufficient equipment make civilian protection very difficult. There is also frequent interference by paramilitary forces in the investigation by UNAMID of serious crimes such as murder and SGBV through the removal of suspects in custody. In some cases, GoS police themselves have been targeted by armed movements looking to acquire weapons and vehicles. All these challenges make civilian protection a very herculean task in Darfur.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Civilian protection is a core element of UNAMID's mandate and a major strategic priority of the police component. Although, there have been successes in protecting civilians in Darfur, several challenges remain. For effective protection of civilians, the following recommendations can be considered by policy makers, UNAMID Police and the various stakeholders:

- UNAMID Police must improve information analysis through intelligence gathering and accurate reporting. The role of civil society and local communities can be vital in this regard;

- UNAMID should enhance its relationship with the Government of Sudan as part of the effort to reestablish trust and credibility to facilitate access to IDP camps and areas in Darfur where civilians are under threat;
- The UN, AU and other stakeholders should provide adequate funding and support for the implementation of Quick-Impact Projects and building the capacity of GoS Police, as well as CPVs in IDP camps;
- The downsizing of UNAMID ought to be done in accordance with local realities and dynamics to prevent the problem of insufficient personnel especially, FPU's for patrols, and escorts;
- FPUs should be well trained and adequately resourced by PCCs and UN/AU to carry out their protection activities effectively.

### About the Author

**Festus Kofi Aubyn (PhD)** is a Researcher with the Peace Support Operations Programme at the Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research (FAAR), Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC).

[Festus.Aubyn@kaiptc.org](mailto:Festus.Aubyn@kaiptc.org)

### About the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC)

The KA IPTC is an internationally preferred centre of excellence for research into and training for conflict prevention, management and resolution, research and innovative thinking in integrated peace support operations and sustainable delivery of enhanced regional capacity building for peace support operations.

[www.kaiptc.org](http://www.kaiptc.org)

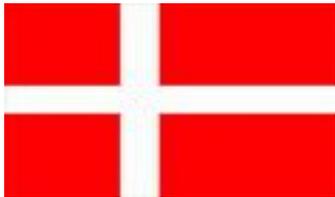
---

<http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/denial-darfur-rape-case-unamid-shocks-tabit-victims>. [Accessed on 10 May 2015].

*The opinions expressed in this policy brief do not necessarily reflect those of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, its Governing Board or donors. Authors contribute to KAIPTC publications in their individual capacity.*



The Government  
of Norway



The Government  
of Denmark



The Government  
of Sweden