

The Darfur Peace Agreement: Part 9 The Future of the Movements' Combatants

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This is the ninth in a series of articles concerning the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), explaining how different parts were negotiated, what the paragraphs mean, and how they should be implemented. This article focuses on the controversial question of the future of the armed forces of the Movements: how many should be integrated into the national army and other security services, and in what way, and what should happen to the remainder.

The question of the integration of combatants was one of the very last issues to be resolved in the Abuja talks. The version of the DPA presented to the parties on 25 April did not contain figures for the numbers to be integrated: it just had “x” where each number would be. And it did not contain details on how those numbers would be integrated: would rebel units be absorbed into the army, would individuals be integrated on an individual basis, or would special integrated units be formed? The Movements’ negotiators pressed for the largest number of their fighters to be integrated, forming special units. The Movements’ negotiators also demanded that they should keep their forces intact under separate command for at least five years. Their aim was something as close as possible to what the SPLA had achieved for Southern Sudan.

The GoS delegation at first insisted that all the Movements’ combatants should be disarmed and should return to civilian life. The GoS argument was that the guerrillas were not professional soldiers who could easily become part of a regular army, and that the CPA demanded that the national army should be reduced in size rather than expanded. They also said that there was already sufficient representation of Darfurians in the army. The Movements’ negotiators won their case: after making strenuous objections, the GoS delegation backed down.

When the GoS accepted the principle of integration, the SLM/A negotiators also abandoned their demand for keeping a separate command throughout the interim period. Only Khalil Ibrahim of JEM stuck to that demand until the end—while also demanding that the GoS pay the salaries of his army.

Throughout the three stages of the Comprehensive Ceasefire, which last five months, the Movements' forces remain intact under their existing command and control structures. They disengage from the Sudan army, redeploy, and have their heavy weapons limited to secure areas under AMIS supervision. But the processes of assembly, integration and disarmament begin only on the completion of these phases, 160 days after "D-Day." This depends on the completion of the previous phases—including verification of specific steps in controlling and disarming the Janjaweed. The Movements only lay down their arms when the Janjaweed are already disarmed and the Sudan army has withdrawn to its main garrisons. This sequence of steps represents an important concession by the GoS and a success for the Movements' negotiators in Abuja, notably Ali Tirayo, Mohamed Adam and Tajudeen Nyam. Minni Minawi also took a close personal interest in negotiating these elements of the DPA.

During the first months of the ceasefire, AMIS must identify good locations where the Movements can assemble their forces. These places must be chosen carefully so that they have all the essentials to support a camp. They must also be secure. For guerillas used to moving and hiding, assembling in camps is a sensitive issue—the fighters fear that they may be attacked and wiped out. Assembly of the Movements will only begin when security is assured: when the Janjaweed and other militia have been disarmed and removed from the vicinity of any assembly sites, and the Government army has also redeployed back to barracks, with its heavy weapons under inspection and its airfields also closely monitored.

The purpose of assembly is to allow the Movements' soldiers to be fed and housed, and kept under control. It will be possible to select those who are going to go forward for integration into the army and other security services, on the basis of their fitness, skills, qualifications and their own personal choice. They can also be given some training. The remainder who are going to be demobilized and return to civilian life can meanwhile be given assistance, reorientation and training.

One of the most controversial issues in the Abuja talks was the number of combatants from the Movements who should be integrated. While the GoS tried to minimize the number, the Movement leaders tried to maximize it. If the SLA and JEM really had the 60,000 troops that their leaders jointly claimed at some points, it is astonishing that they didn't win the war—while if they just had the 5,000 fighters claimed by the GoS, it is amazing that the Sudan army didn't defeat them years ago. The question of numbers was resolved only in the very final days of the Abuja negotiations, when the U.S. delegation arrived, and took this question on as a priority.

In the end, the formula agreed was: 4,000 fighters from the Movements should be integrated into the national army and 1,000 into the police and other security services. A further 3,000 will be given special training for other positions in civilian life—a better deal than normal disarmament and demobilization. When AMIS carries out the process of verification of the positions of forces it will also verify the numbers of fighters that the Movements have, so that the correct proportions of combatants can be chosen from the different Movements.

One of the fears of the Movements was that their fighters might be integrated, but then dispersed in small numbers throughout army units across the country. The SLM/A negotiators were insistent that when their fighters were integrated, they should be integrated in sufficiently large numbers in every integrated unit that they could, if need be, protect themselves. However, the

GoS was equally insistent that the army should only have one command structure and that units should have only one loyalty. There were to be no “Joint Integrated Units” such as those that had been set up with the SPLA.

The compromise proposal is found in Paragraph 410. This details that groups of between 100 and 150 of the Movements’ combatants are to be integrated into SAF battalions, so that they compromise approximately one third of the force strength of those battalions. In certain areas, the integrated combatants will comprise half the force strength. These areas may be where refugees and IDPs are returning and need additional assurances for their security. There are also provisions for selected commanders from the SLA to become officers in the SAF. One of every three battalion commanders in the integrated units is to be a former guerrilla.

The Movements’ negotiators were determined that the DPA should ensure that their fighters should be deployed in Darfur after integration and that they should not be quickly demobilized as part of the national plan for reducing the size of the army. The GoS was insistent that there should be a unitary command structure for the army and all officers and men should be treated alike. But the Government negotiators accepted that, in view of the unique conditions in Darfur, some exceptions needed to be made for the transitional period. As a result, Paragraphs 404 and 405 specify that integrated fighters are to be deployed in Darfur for five years and that during this time they cannot be removed from the army because of army restructuring. The overall size of the armed forces in Darfur should also not be increased as a result of the incorporation of former combatants.

Both the GoS and the Movements were concerned that the guerrillas should be given sufficient training to be full and equal members of the army. This is one of the reasons why the Government accepted the idea of “integration”. While “absorption” is merely a process of bringing individual soldiers or units within the army, “integration” involves giving them training and orientation so that they become fully part of the army. A Technical Integration Committee is to be set up to oversee this. The principles for the TIC are laid out in Paragraphs 399-407. It is important to note that the whole process of integration will be closely coordinated with the process of reforming the Sudanese Armed Forces in line with its restricted peacetime duties, as laid out in the CPA.

The most important institution for the entire security arrangements plan is the Darfur Security Arrangements Implementation Commission (DSAIC). The head of this is to be a Darfurian of integrity, respected by all, and nominated by the Movements. The composition of the DSAIC is specified in Paragraph 392: it includes the Governors of the three Darfur States, a representative of the army command, representatives of the Movements, and representatives from the international community (the Joint Commission, AMIS and the Security Advisory Team). One of the biggest concessions by the GoS at Abuja was that the DSAIC is not headed by a GoS appointee and it reports to the Senior Assistant to the President, not to the President himself. Dr Majzoub al Khalifa specifically expressed this reservation for the record on the morning of 5 May, before saying he would sign the DPA.

In addition, one thousand former combatants are to be absorbed into the police and other security services. This provision was not discussed in great detail in the Abuja talks and much of the detail of this will need to be worked out by the DSAIC. For example, it was generally agreed that

former guerrillas rarely make good policemen, and that it is better to recruit and train civilians to the police force. It was also agreed that many of the security institutions in Darfur—such as the Popular Defence Force, the Border Guards and the Nomadic Police—would need to be reformed during the coming years. The principles and procedures for that reform are laid out in Paragraphs 446-449, which are some of the most important details in the entire DPA. The DSAIC has to review each of the security institutions and make recommendations for their size, mandate, composition and activities, and the Government is then required to institute the reforms.

Paragraph 447 in particular lays out how official security institutions in Darfur should function, undergoing transformation from their current status as belligerent organizations in wartime, to their future status of serving the people in peacetime. Their size, capability and mandate must be commensurate with the tasks to be performed by them; they are to be run impartially and professionally, with members drawn from all groups and without political or ethnic bias; they must be controlled by the correct civilian authorities and respect human rights; they must include women in all ranks and be respectful of women; and they must carry out their tasks in such a way that they are trusted by the people of Darfur. Many of these organizations (such as the PDF) will need to have their size reduced—but at the same time they will need to recruit new members so that their composition better represents all Darfur's communities.

In the meantime, the capability of the Police Force is to be built up, so that it is truly representative of the people of Darfur and can serve their interests and enjoy their confidence. Paragraphs 450-452 on the police need to be read alongside Paragraphs 272-273 which deal with the establishment of the Community Police force for IDP camps and returning IDPs.

It is likely that implementing the long-term security arrangements for Darfur will be a lengthy, complicated and difficult process. It will need patience, goodwill and careful monitoring—combined with a good understanding of the spirit and letter of the DPA by Sudanese people and their representatives.