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## Central Reserve Police (al Ittihad al Merkazi)

The Central Reserve Police (CRP) are combat-trained forces, known in Darfur as ‘police soldiers’ and armed with weapons not used by regular police. These include light and heavy machine guns, RPG7s, 82 mm mortars and, when they participate in joint combat operations under the tactical control of the Sudanese Army, reportedly also 105 mm and 130 mm artillery. They drive Land Cruisers mounted with 12.7 mm machine guns.

The CRP has become increasingly important in the conflict in Darfur (and neighbouring Kordofan), and on several occasions has been specifically targeted by the Justice and Equality Movement. Like other forces, members have staged visible protests, including against alleged non-payment of salaries. Most recently, in October 2010, 103 men posted in South Darfur mutinied, accusing the government of ‘deceiving’ them, including by sending them to fight the insurgents before they had completed their training. They said they would join the armed opposition movements in fighting *against* the government.

Some analysts believe the new importance accorded the CRP reflects the reduced effectiveness of the Popular Defence Forces, which has taken on a political dimension that makes it more useful as a political rallying tool than a fighting force. In 2004, the CRP opened a training centre in Musa Hilal’s Misteriha barracks. The training lasted for three months—three times as long as in an adjacent centre run by the army.

Confidential documents received by the Small Army Survey put the CRP in Darfur in February 2009 at 20,603, third-placed behind Khartoum with 43,210 men and CRP headquarters (location unknown) with 22,716 men.

Human rights organizations, including the Sudan Organization against Torture, have pointed to ‘strong militia connections’, including with the North Darfur Border Guards of Musa Hilal. In a September 2008 report, Sima Samar, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Sudan, highlighted ‘janjaweed’-like behaviour by the CRP in May 2008 in an attack on a civilian target—a camp for displaced persons in Tawila, in North Darfur. The report said ‘CRP personnel responded [to the killing of one of their men] by burning and looting of huts and destroying the market... Representatives of the local community complained about killings, violent assaults and rapes that occurred during the attack. No action has been taken for accountability and justice.’

In January 2011, CRP forces opened fire on university and high school students in al Fasher, killing three and wounding seven, according to an eyewitness. The witness told the Dutch-supported Radio Dabanga that the trouble started when uniformed CRP beat a student who was blocking the path of their vehicles. When fellow students came to the young man’s aid, the CRP opened fire on them, killing three on the spot.

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