



## **Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)**

### **Origins/composition**

The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) was established early in 2003 by a group of educated, politically experienced Darfurians, many of them former members of the Popular Congress Party (PCP) of Hassan al Turabi, architect of Sudan's Islamic revolution. Most of its leaders and membership initially came from the Kobe tribe, a Zaghawa sub-group more numerous in Chad than in Darfur. Since 2007 JEM has worked actively to recruit Darfurian Arabs, including from government-supported militias or 'janjaweed'.

From the outset, JEM wanted nationwide reform and regime change, and used the atrocities in Darfur to delegitimize the government internationally. It refused to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in May 2006, and two years later won new support in Darfur after attacking Khartoum's twin city, Omdurman. Despite the broadening of its base, JEM's real political and military power remains with the Kobe inner circle.

In mid-2010, before a government offensive that led to heavy casualties on both sides, JEM was estimated to have more than 5,000 men armed with mounted anti-aircraft guns, rocket-propelled grenades, heavy machine guns, AK-47s, several hundred vehicles (possibly as many as 1,000, according to one informed source), and at least two tanks, seized from the government. To this day, JEM remains the strongest and most cohesive military force in Darfur. Its weakness continues to be the lack of a wider constituency among Darfurians.

### **Leadership**

JEM's late chairman, Khalil Ibrahim, was a Dutch-trained doctor, devout Islamist, and superb organizer feared by the government because of his inside knowledge of the ruling party, in which he held a number of important posts before 2003, including as an organizer of the paramilitary Popular Defence Forces.

On 25 December 2011, Khalil Ibrahim was killed by a government airstrike while leading the majority of JEM's forces east from their rear base in Wadi Huwar on the Chad/North Darfur border. Tahir al Faki was made interim leader until a JEM leadership conference could elect a new permanent chairman. On 26 January 2012, Khalil's brother, Jibril Ibrahim, was elected chairman.

### **Areas of control/activity**

Expelled from Chad in February 2010 and under attack by Sudanese government forces since April that year, JEM lost its main strongholds in North Darfur, including in the mountainous Jebel Mun area, over the course of the year and reactivated a largely dormant presence across South Darfur—south of Ed Daein, along the main supply route to Nyala, and south of Um Kadada.

In May 2010, Khalil Ibrahim was refused permission to transit through Chad to Darfur and was expelled, without papers, to the Libyan capital, Tripoli. He remained there through the turmoil in that country, 'escaping' across the Libyan desert to Darfur from 5–11 September 2011 in what JEM termed 'Mission Sahara Leap'.

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Despite the Sudan–Chad rapprochement, JEM re-entered North Darfur via Chad. Chadian elements of the Chad–Sudan border protection force turned a blind eye. This was possible thanks to the assistance of sympathizers within the Chadian inner circle. Relations between the two states did not suffer greatly as a result, however, because the Government of Sudan (GoS) has come to accept that Chadian President Idriss Déby does not have complete control over the Zaghawa ruling elite.

The eruption of tensions in South Kordofan and Blue Nile between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and the GoS following South Sudan's secession set in motion new alliances among the Darfur insurgent groups—including JEM, the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW), and the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM), who came together as the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). They subsequently announced regime change by either political or military means as the only solution to the national problem, of which Darfur was only one expression.

In keeping with the new alliance under the SRF which is based in South Kordofan, the bulk of JEM's forces were being moved to South Kordofan under Khalil Ibrahim's command when he was attacked and killed in Wad Banda, North Kordofan. Smaller liaison units are present in Juba, South Sudan, and Kampala, Uganda. A small unit is based in Eritrea, near the eastern border with Sudan. Eritrea's renewed support is the result of an improving relationship between the GoS and its arch-rival Ethiopia. JEM also retains a presence in North Darfur, near its traditional bastion of Wadi Huwar.

#### **Sources of financing/support**

JEM's main external supporter, following its expulsion from Chad, was Libya, which, according to officials in Khartoum, rearmed the movement with B-10 recoilless rifles and anti-aircraft guns, and supplied vehicles and fuel. JEM is rumoured to have received anywhere between USD 10 million and USD 100 million from Libya during the unrest there in return for a role in supporting the government, either directly or by mobilizing fighters in its tribal network. With the fall of the Gaddafi administration, and its replacement with a Libyan government more sympathetic to Khartoum, prospects of further Libyan funding are slim. In the future, JEM will need to rely on funding from Darfuriian diaspora, sources close to PCP leader Hassan al Turabi, and also hope for increased support from South Sudan and Uganda.

Towards the end of 2010, JEM established a political presence in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, along with several other Darfuriian factions. The Ugandan government has organized military training for JEM recruits outside Kampala. Uganda has good relations with the SPLM and Libya, and extremely strained relations with Khartoum, which it accuses of supporting the Ugandan rebel Lord's Resistance Army.

Chad, JEM's main backer early in the insurgency, expelled JEM in February 2010, reportedly with a 'severance package'. JEM has also been generously financed by supporters in the Zaghawa and Islamist diaspora—especially by Arab Islamists who sympathized with the PCP but were expelled from Sudan, losing many of their assets, after the Islamist movement split in 1999 and Turabi was stripped of all his power.

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## **Status**

In February 2010, JEM signed a 'framework agreement' with the GoS at the Doha talks. The agreement committed both sides to a cessation of hostilities and a prisoner release, and set an agenda for substantive talks, including on a permanent ceasefire. The agreement soon collapsed, however, with both sides blaming the other.

In May 2010, JEM withdrew from Doha, accusing Khartoum of not seeking peace. It returned to the negotiating table in March 2011, but refused to sign the 14 August 2011 agreement between the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) and the GoS, stating its readiness to continue negotiations, but only if the entire substance of the agreement was reopened. The GoS has refused to do this, permitting discussions on the security protocol only. JEM's current rhetoric focuses on building an opposition coalition for regime change, although never explicitly ruling out a negotiated settlement.

The movement was seriously divided over the decision to reject the Doha agreement and more generally the national versus Darfur-specific agenda. The succession of Jibril Ibrahim to JEM chairman has agitated simmering fault lines, which are largely along ethnic lines. Most involve non-Zaghawa, Arabs (Missiriya from Kordofan), and some Zaghawa previously aligned with SLA-MM.

On 26 September 2011, Mohamed Bahr Hamadein, deputy chairman and head of the Kordofan sector, was relieved of his post. JEM alleged he was plotting to sign a separate peace agreement with the GoS in Doha. The Government of South Sudan arrested eight JEM cadres linked to Hamadein and based in Juba as political liaisons, at the request of JEM's leadership (they are still being held pending JEM's review of the case). Hamadein has been waiting to finalize negotiations with the GoS in Doha but, impatient with the lack of progress, has recently made sounds about joining the SRF alliance. He is unlikely to join the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) thereby subjugating himself to LJM and the GoS is not seriously considering a separate agreement.

Another breakaway group, JEM Corrective Leadership (JEM CL) under Zakaria Musa, emerged in mid-January 2012 following Khalil Ibrahim's death. Musa said the split was a result of the Kobe clan's dominance of JEM, the continuing imprisonment of the Hamadein-linked JEM cadre in South Sudan, and the desire for peace. Soon after JEM CL emerged, it was welcomed in Khartoum as a new signatory to the DDPD. But since the announcement, the group has returned to Darfur saying a final agreement has not been reached.

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