



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 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'.

In mid-2010, before a government offensive that led to heavy casualties on both sides, JEM was the strongest insurgent force in Darfur, 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, despite its efforts at building one.

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.

From the outset, JEM had a strategy for nationwide reform and regime change, using the atrocities in Darfur to delegitimize the government internationally. It refused to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement 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.

Areas of control/activity

Expelled from Chad in February 2010 and under attack by Sudanese government forces since April 2010, 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 al Daein, along the main supply route to Nyala, and south of Um Kadada.

In May 2010, Khalil 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'.

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 and allowed Khalil to pass. This was only possible with the assistance of sympathizers within the Chadian inner circle. Relations between the two states did not suffer



greatly as a result 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 armed insurgent groups—including JEM, the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW), and the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM)—which subsequently announced that regime change may be the only solution to the national problem of Sudan, of which Darfur is only one expression.

The bulk of JEM's forces are in Wadi Huwar in North Darfur. Between 15 and 20 vehicles are located in South Kordofan, where they support SPLM-N (led by Chief of Staff Suleiman Sandal). Smaller liaison units have a presence in Juba, South Sudan, and Kampala, Uganda. Finally, a small unit is based in Eritrea, near the eastern border with Sudan. Eritrea's renewed support is a result of the improving relationship between the GoS and its arch-rival Ethiopia, which Eritrea seeks to counterbalance.

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.

Towards the end of 2010, JEM established a political presence in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, along with several other Darfurian 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.

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 accusing the other of not respecting it.

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 on the basis of reopening the entire substance of the agreement. The GoS has refused to revisit the agreement in its entirety, 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. On 26 September 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. Further lower-level splits followed, largely along ethnic lines. Most involved non-Zaghawa, Arabs (Missiriya from Kordofan and some Darfur students from the ex-Sudan Revolutionary Front), and some Zaghawa previously aligned with SLA-MM. The Government of South Sudan arrested eight JEM cadres, based in Juba as political liaisons, at the request of JEM's leadership.

Between 22-24 December 2011, Khalil Ibrahim was killed by a GoS airstrike while leading the entirety of JEM's forces east from their rear base in Wadi Huwar on the Chad/North Darfur border. Tahir al Faki has been chosen as a replacement until a JEM leadership conference can be convened. There is speculation that Khalil Ibrahim's brother, Gibril Ibrahim, could be a likely replacement since a critical criteria is that the Kobe clan of the Zaghawa remains dominant in JEM. Gibril lacks his brother's military experience, which may lead Abubakr Hamid Nour, a JEM military field leader to take on greater prominence.

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