

# The Protection of Aid Workers

Principled Protection and Humanitarian Security in Darfur

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# Executive Summary

The changing nature of armed conflict has resulted in increased need to safeguard civilians, including humanitarian personnel, which is reflected in the emerging protection of civilians agenda. This report considers to what extent the issues raised in the recently updated OCHA Aide Memoire reflect the security needs of aid workers on the ground, by examining the case of Darfur.

By performing a within-case analysis, this study portrays the humanitarian workers' own perspective of the micro-dynamics of security in Darfur. It argues that the principles of humanitarian action, such as neutrality, impartiality and independence, provide protection and are pivotal for humanitarian security. However, these principles do not protect against all threats and need to be supplemented by other strategies such as protective walls, unarmed guards, barbed wire and security training.

On the other hand, relying too heavily on such measures may diminish security as aid workers are alienated from the local population. This is because proximity to the population is perceived as the most important measure for security. On the backdrop of these findings, the Aide Memoire should focus more on the principles of humanitarian action. In cases where UN peacekeepers are not perceived as neutral, such as Darfur, UN forces should focus more on area protection rather than protecting humanitarian convoys. In addition, the Aide Memoire should stress the importance of mandatory security training for all aid workers, and should outline more clearly the repercussions for host governments that deliberately fail to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access.



# 1. Introduction

In recent years the United Nations (UN) has increasingly addressed protection of civilians (PoC) on the ground in its peace operations. One aspect of this process has been the development of an Aide Memoire by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The Memoire can be described as a set of guidelines meant to assist parties in how to handle the PoC concept both when planning peacekeeping operations and when in the field. As such it does not only address issues pertaining to the conflict-affected population, it also recognizes the need for increased protection of humanitarian personnel on the ground. This report examines how well the recommendations presented in the third edition of the Aide Memoire reflect the protection needs of aid workers in the field by looking at one specific case, Darfur.

The human suffering caused by the conflict in Darfur has resulted in a humanitarian initiative previously unprecedented and potentially the largest UN peacekeeping operation in the world. However, the working conditions for aid personnel in Darfur have not been unproblematic, many humanitarian workers have been attacked and several have been killed. As a result, questions arise as to how aid workers can achieve higher levels of security and protection.

Traditionally humanitarian agencies have located security and protection in the principles of humanitarian action, such as neutrality, impartiality, and independence. These principles, intended to guide the conduct of aid organizations, have their roots in the emergence of the humanitarian system and has served to provide relief agencies with safe passage and security in conflict environments. However, voices are arguing that after the Cold War and even more so post 9/11 the new world order has complicated the work of humanitarian actors by making it more political and ambiguous. This in turn has diminished aid agencies' ability to protect themselves behind the principles of humanitarian action, the argument holds.

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Finding the discussion in the literature often overly theoretical and not often enough informed by the practice in the field, one of the aims of the present report has been to explore the micro-dynamics and practices of security on the ground. By performing interviews with humanitarian personnel themselves, adopting an exploratory approach, this project has sought to depict their perception of these principles and their connections to security and protection issues. On the basis of these interviews, this report argues that neutrality, impartiality and independence are still the main elements of humanitarian staff's security. Consequently, the OCHA Aide Memoire should pay more attention to these principles by fostering and promoting the neutrality and independence of aid agencies. This can be achieved by distinguishing more clearly between civil and military procedures and responsibilities; and by UN peacekeepers focusing more on area security rather than openly protecting individual aid agencies as UN peacekeepers are not perceived as neutral. Furthermore, this report argues the Aide Memoire should highlight the need for mandatory security training for all aid personnel working in conflict environments, such training would greatly benefit the security situation of humanitarian workers in the field and would increase their ability to protect themselves.



## 2. Protection of Civilians: An overview

In the last decade protection has received greater attention by scholars and the international community. This is reflected in the emergence of the ‘protection of civilians’ agenda. As the civilian casualties in war have risen dramatically and civilians have become the main target of war, there has developed a stronger ‘culture of protection’ than prior to the 1990s. Although civilian protection has concerned the international community for decades, it was not until 13 April 1998 when the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, mentioned ‘protection of civilians’ in his article that the term began its institutional history (UNSG 1998). Since then the concept has gained a foothold in international relations, as there was a felt need to incorporate more strongly the protection of non-combatants in UN peacekeeping (Lie & de Carvalho 2010). The result was the adoption of four UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions which centred on the need to ensure protection and safety for civilians, including humanitarian personnel in order for them to be able to deliver aid (Ibid.). OCHA played a vital role in the development of the PoC concept emphasising the importance of humanitarian access and safety and security issues (OCHA 2004). In March 2002, the UNSC adopted the first *Aide Memoire* developed by OCHA, in order to facilitate the consideration of PoC issues in its planning of mandates for peacekeeping operations. The Memoire is a framework to assist in identifying threats that arise to the protection of civilians in country situations (OCHA 2008). In January 2009, the UNSC passed the updated third edition of the *Aide Memoire for the Consideration of Issues Pertaining to the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* (UNSC 2009).

This report addresses only one segment of this *Aide Memoire*, namely “Humanitarian Access and Safety and Security of Humanitarian Workers”. In short, the main components of this section stress the need for all parties to adhere to international humanitarian law and human rights law, and to report to the UNSC on steps to improve protection. It condemns all attacks on humanitarian workers and calls upon UN peacekeeping missions to provide protection and facilitate humanitarian access. As stated in the Memoire, it is not meant as a blueprint for action, but rather as set guidelines on how to handle protection issues in the field. As such, the statements provided in the *Aide Memoire* do not present concrete measurements to facilitate protection. In fact, the language is vague, intended to suit all war-type scenarios and conflict situations. For example, the Memoire advice all actors to take appropriate steps to ensure protection and security, but

there is no mention of what such steps ought to entail. Furthermore, even though the Memoire condemns all breaches of international and human rights law and calls for an end to impunity, there are still no consequences for actors that commit the crimes. This in turn increases the notion that the language and ideas presented in the memoire are unclear.

Despite the vague language and lack of specific suggestions on how to improve security for humanitarian workers and civilians in the field, the Memoire is an important document that puts protection of civilians on the international political agenda. It is a vital step in the right direction as protection and security of aid workers in the field has received little attention to date. This report aims at making a small contribution to this knowledge gap by comparing research data retrieved from interviews with the humanitarian community, with the resolutions of the Aide Memoire concerning the protection of humanitarian personnel.

But what is actually meant by the term ‘protection of civilians’? Lie and de Carvalho (2010) point out that even though the security, development and humanitarian segments of the international community have all adopted the PoC concept, there is a lack of consensus about what is meant by it in practise. The blue helmets of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) are supposed to provide protection for civilians including humanitarian personnel, this is their mandate. However, it is argued that PoC poses a paradox for the humanitarian community, because most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) embrace the idea that the concept should be a priority of all factions of the international community, but on the other hand, they have a fear that other actors providing protection might undermine their perceived neutrality, impartiality and independence (Lie & de Carvalho 2010). This raises a dilemma as such principles are deemed to be the foundation of humanitarian security in the field.

### 3. The Principles of Humanitarian Action

Traditionally humanitarian actors and their personnel have sought protection from the principles of humanitarian action. These principles, such as neutrality, impartiality and independence, are intended to guide the activities of humanitarian organizations. They offer aid agencies a trademark that represents a distinct form of intervention, one intended to purely relieve suffering and protect life in conflict. These principles have their roots in the emergence of the international humanitarian system at the end of the nineteenth century. Although the first Geneva Convention of 1864 does not explicitly mention 'principles', the ideas of impartial distribution of aid and neutral status for medical installations are presented (Leader 1998: 293). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), founded in 1864, has been the beacon of humanitarianism and the vanguard in the development of the principles of humanitarian action. Jean Pictet, perhaps the most important individual in the development of the principles, defined them as: "a rule, based upon judgement and experience, which is adopted by a community to guide its conduct" (Pictet 1979: 135). The ICRC has a unique role as the custodian of the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977, and has pushed governments to adopt the rules of war (Weiss 2006: 2). Its prominence in the humanitarian system can be seen by the decision of the Criminal Court of Justice to equate the word humanitarianism with the work of the ICRC rather than defining the term, and by the fact that the agency has won four Nobel Peace Prizes (Weiss 2006: 1-2).

The evolution of the principles of humanitarian action resulted in the formal adaptation of seven fundamental principles by the Red Cross Movement in 1965, which have not changed since then (Leader 1998: 294). These principles are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality (ICRC 1996). However, it was not until the 1980s that NGOs and the UN began to pay serious attention to the development of principles, and since then they have drawn heavily on the work of the Red Cross (Leader 1998: 293). This report focuses on neutrality, impartiality and independence as they are viewed as the most important in terms of security.

### **3.1 Defining Neutrality, Impartiality and Independence**

The principles of humanitarian action are defined here in accordance with the definitions provided by the founding actor, the ICRC. The meaning of neutrality proclaimed by the ICRC, is that humanitarian workers and agencies “may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial or ideological nature” (ICRC 1996: 7). In other words, humanitarian personnel must remain neutral in relation to both the military and to ideology. The second principle, impartiality, signifies that aid must be distributed on a needs basis without discriminating on the base of “nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions” (ICRC 1996: 4-5). Finally, the principle of independence represents the need for humanitarian organizations to maintain their autonomy and not be subject to government control, so as to uphold the fundamental principles of neutrality and impartiality (ICRC 1996: 9-10).

It is important to note that the exact meaning of the principles, especially neutrality and impartiality, has been a source of misunderstanding between the ICRC and other humanitarian actors (Ku & Brun 2003: 59). This may be due to the fact that the elements of neutrality and impartiality, such as code of conduct and constitutional element, might vary significantly (Ibid.). For instance, some humanitarian agencies may choose to vigorously denounce breaches of human rights and even call for military intervention, while others, such as the ICRC, would abstain from such assertions (Ibid.). These differences portray the increasingly diverse approaches of the humanitarian system in the late twentieth century. Generally, there has become a basic divide between humanitarian organizations and academics who continue to uphold the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and those who emphasize and side with selected victims, publicly confront hostile governments, and advocate public policies of donor states (Hoffman & Weiss 2006: 84-85). What is clear, however, is that as civilians are increasingly the targets of war, those who come to their assistance are less likely of being perceived as neutral (Martin 1999: 4).

### **3.2 Acceptance, Protection and Deterrence**

Across the world, including Darfur, aid workers are more at risk, both expatriates as well as national staff. Increasingly news headlines are reporting incidents where humanitarian staff has been beaten, robbed, taken hostage, raped, or even murdered. Although statistics and documentation regarding fatalities among aid workers are incomplete, many studies suggest the number is increasing. One study, reviewing UN humanitarian personnel killed during the 1990s, concludes a disconcerting upsurge in people killed. From 1992 to 2000, 198 UN ci-

vilian workers were killed, and in 1998 alone more civilian personnel were killed than military peacekeepers (Hoffman & Weiss 2006: 111; Schreier & Caparini 2005: 81). The rise in number of deaths among aid workers has become even worse in recent wars, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The six most dangerous contexts for aid workers in terms of security are Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, North Caucasus, Somalia and Sudan (Stoddard et al. 2006: 1).

The literature argues that there are many reasons for why there is an increase in attacks against humanitarian workers. These include: increase in the number and duration of conflicts; more intrastate conflict than interstate; aid agencies are perceived as 'soft' targets that can be attacked with impunity; that there is a loss of neutrality among aid agencies; and that there is a culture of competition between humanitarian NGOs which enhances the pressure to get to a conflict zone first and work closer to the lines of confrontation (Hoffman & Weiss 2006; Marin 1999; Fast, forthcoming).

As a result of increased attacks on aid workers, humanitarian agencies have been forced to take other measures to protect their security besides relying on the principles of humanitarian action. It has become more common for humanitarian NGOs to take precautions by using protection and deterrence tactics. This trend can be summarized in what has come to be known as the 'Security Triangle' paradigm. Until after the Cold War humanitarian organizations relied mostly on acceptance to ensure their security. However, incidents like the massacre of six ICRC personnel in Chechnya in December 1996, demonstrated that passive acceptance was no longer sufficient to provide security for aid workers (Avant 2007: 148). This led a small group of people within the humanitarian community to modify the acceptance approach. They developed what has been named the 'security triangle'. This approach centres on what is required by the mission and has its focus on the acceptance strategy, but in addition there is an emphasis on protection and deterrence (Van Brabant 2000: 11-14).

Acceptance refers to when the community in which humanitarian agencies are working supports and accept their presence, and out of that acceptance grows security (Martin 1999: 5). What is meant by protection is the equipment needed to provide security, such as walky-talkies, barbed wire and helmets; operational policies and procedures, such as curfews, training and clear policies on vehicle operations and finances; and coordinated operations, such as coordination and cooperation with the UN (Ibid.; ECHO 2004: 10-11). Finally, deterrence signifies posing a counter threat, and involves such measures as utilizing guards and coordination of activities with external international military forces in peacekeeping missions (Martin 1999: 6). The latter

is the least common form of deterrence, but has been employed in Iraq, Bosnia and Somalia. Acceptance strategies are favoured by most humanitarian NGOs, as it offers them a way to connect with the local people without taking sides in a conflict.

## 4. Comparing Issues Raised in the Aide Memoire to the Needs in the Field

Since the end of the Cold War a new form of military humanitarianism has been surfacing. New UN policies of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building strategies saw the increased deployment of UN military forces in complex emergencies (Slim 1995: 112). These so-called integrated missions have become a favoured response by the UN to complex emergencies that concurrently calls on the political, military, humanitarian and developmental sides of the UN system (Eide et al. 2005: 10). Although there is no universal agreement of what constitutes an integrated mission, the aims of such operations are to restore stability, law and order, protect civilians, and provide the foundations for long-term recovery, development and democratic governance (Eide et al. 2005: 12). Such goals are not easily reconciled with the principles of humanitarian action, and have caused parts of the humanitarian community to raise concerns about the infringement of neutrality, impartiality and independence. They argue that given the political leadership of integrated missions, such operations will inevitably end up prioritizing the political goals of the mission, even when this contrasts humanitarian concerns for saving lives (Eiden et al. 2005: 14). Another side of this argument is that by working side-by-side with the political and military factions of these missions, humanitarian actors runs the risk of being identified with these non-neutral components (Eide et al. 2005: 14). Consequently, aid personnel become “soft targets for enemies of the mission, and their operations are undermined by the resulting security concerns” (Ibid.). In other words, the deployment of UN peacekeepers to protect humanitarian staff might cause a blurring of the lines between security and humanitarian segments of a mission, resulting in relief agencies loss of perceived independence and neutrality (Lie & de Carvalho 2010).

### **4.1 The Security Situation on the Ground – The micro-dynamics of security**

When researching one specific case, in this instance Darfur, it becomes quite clear that the micro-dynamics on the ground are important in terms of security. Security is not static; it changes constantly and rapidly, maybe even from one minute to the next. Consequently, there can never be any guarantees that security incidents will not oc-

cur in a conflict context (Læg Reid 2009 [interview]). The security situation for aid workers in Darfur has changed dramatically over the past six years, and continues to change to this day. Political decisions, misunderstandings, and competence of humanitarian staff all affect the security situation on the ground and has the potential to improve or deteriorate it. This is reflected by the arrest warrant issued for President al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in March 2009, which has deteriorated the security situation for humanitarian workers in Sudan as a whole.

Statistics on security incidents involving humanitarian workers in Darfur in 2008 are worrying. They reveal an unpredictable and insecure environment. In 2008, 277 humanitarian vehicles were carjacked, there were 192 break ins or armed assaults on humanitarian premises, 218 humanitarian personnel were temporarily kidnapped in relation to the carjacking, and 11 people were killed (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]). Whilst the security situation has improved slightly for the internally displaced people in recent months, it has grown even worse for the aid personnel working in Darfur (DanChurchAid 2009). This can be seen as a direct result of the arrest warrant issued for President al-Bashir by the ICC. Following the warrant thirteen humanitarian organizations have been expelled from Sudan,<sup>1</sup> these NGOs employed 40 percent of all humanitarian staff working in Darfur (Human Rights Watch 2009). The expulsion has affected the health-aid sector the most, and has resulted in increased precautions and less movement on behalf of the remaining organizations. Security has also become more time consuming for humanitarian actors still in Darfur as attacks seems to become more targeted (Jepsen 2009 [interview]). This in turn limits the time spent on aid distribution.

According to a OCHA Humanitarian Official (2009 [Telephone interview]) stationed in Darfur, the area can be seen as one of the worst environments in the world in terms of the security of humanitarian operations. This is not because of specific targeting of aid workers, he elaborates, but because of banditry of assets (see also Flint & de Waal 2008: 188). Apart from the related abductions, the target for attacks has always been assets such as vehicles or communication equipment for the purpose of financial gain. Most killings of aid personnel have happened during such carjacking (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]). However, there is a new trend in 2009 that has not been seen previously in Darfur, and that is the kidnapping of aid workers for the sake of abduction itself (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]). Such actions are believed to be a direct

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<sup>1</sup> The agencies expelled are: NRC, MSF Holland, MSF France, CARE, Save the Children UK, Save the Children US, IRC, Oxfam, Mercy Groups, Action Contre la Faim, Solidarites, Corporate Housing Foundation International, and PADCO.



result of negative propaganda of humanitarian organizations by the government in Sudanese media, which has taken place after the arrest warrant was issued (Ibid.). Such publications greatly affect the perceived neutrality of aid actors and therefore have severe consequences for their security

Security micro-dynamics, described as localized factors and happenings that affect the situation on the ground, can often not be attributed to global trends. They can only be recognized by looking at specific operations, but are extremely important for the security of humanitarian personnel on a case to case basis. As Adam Combs (2009 [interview]), Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) Program Coordinator for Somalia and Sudan explains:

Security situations vary from place to place. In Somalia, for instance, the security situation is very different for humanitarian workers compared to Darfur. Although they are both incredibly difficult, in Somalia aid personnel are targeted and international staff is at great risk of being kidnapped. Thus, different strategies are applied here than in Darfur. It is extremely important to understand the context you are working in, which changes daily and can change quickly. Non-understanding of the conflict in which you are working is the biggest threat to security.

There seems to be an overall agreement between the interviewees that it is vital to stay flexible in terms of security, so as to adapt to new risks and be able to react to them. Without doing so the humanitarian organization and its workers may not be prepared when new situations occur, thus making the security situation worse than what it could have been. This is to some extent what happened to Save the Children UK in 2004. As noted by one of the interviewees, this humanitarian organization had been working in Darfur for about twenty years. It had several developmental projects on different locations throughout Darfur. However, when the war commenced in 2004 the organization did not adjust into a war-type setting, which had severe consequences for their personnel's security. Save the Children UK's projects were implemented mainly by national staff, some of whom had high positions in Khartoum. When the war exploded these nationals were targeted and some were killed, eventually forcing the organization to pull out of Darfur completely.

The security context has continued to change during the course of the conflict. In the early stages, it was easier to identify the different groupings or parties of the conflict, and thus easier to predict levels of security (Lægreid 2009 [interview]). However, in recent years the groupings have been increasingly fragmented thus making it extremely difficult to tell who is who and predict what motives they have. In addition, the map of which areas are perceived as perilous in

terms of security has varied greatly in Darfur. In 2005 the situation was more stable than in later years. It was easier to pinpoint on the map where incidents had occurred and were likely to occur in the future. In 2006, however, this became more difficult as the political and military situation was continuously changing (Lægreid 2009 [interview]). Tony Marchant (2009 [interview]), an Emergency Coordinator for Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), worked in Darfur on two different occasions, first in 2004 and then again in early 2007. He says he found it interesting how much the security situation had changed when he was there the last time. In 2004, the main security threat was the fighting between different groups and wide scale bombings. During his last visit, this was no longer the case. Instead, banditry had become the main concern. There was, and continues to be, an increased lack of control of various elements and groups of people who are targeting humanitarian agencies to steal their vehicles and equipment (Ibid.).

This changing security landscape makes it difficult to have an all-encompassing Aide Memoire that addresses every security scenario. When the security situation changes dramatically, there might be a need for different security measures. OCHA, for example, based on the relative stability of 2005 planned its operations for 2006 based on a stable scenario. This decision turned out to be wrong, and consequently OCHA decided to plan for unstableness in 2007, which meant they had to change their security strategies (Lægreid 2009 [interview]). The result was focusing more on access, negotiations, and security analysis, and on how to have a more flexible humanitarian response to minimize risk (Ibid.). However, does the changing micro-dynamics of security affect the reliance on the principles of humanitarian action by aid agencies?

#### **4.2 Neutrality**

As mentioned in the introduction, most of the informants for this study believe the principles of humanitarian action are the main pillar for humanitarian personnel security. The occurring securitization of aid visible in other complex emergencies like Afghanistan and Iraq (Frangonikolopoulos 2005: 58-59; Harmer 2003: 529; Shannon 2009: 18), seems to be less apparent in the Darfur context. Although tactics may change according to which threats are more predominant, the underlying principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence seem to guide actions of aid agencies in Darfur, at least in theory. Turid Lægreid (2009 [interview]), the former Head of OCHA's sub-office in North Darfur, believes "the more difficult the situation is the more important are the principles of humanitarian action. Without upholding these principles the situation would have been even worse".

As illustrated above, banditry is the main security problem for aid agencies in Darfur today. In terms of neutrality strategies this is a problem, because banditry affects everyone whether you are perceived to be neutral, impartial, and independent or not. Thus, it may be questioned how these principles can be the foundation for security in the Darfur context. On the other hand, it may also be, although difficult to prove, that for the very reason these principles are applied by the humanitarian organizations to ensure security, banditry is the only main threat. If aid agencies in Darfur would have openly taken sides and distributed aid partially, the security situation would most likely have been worse. This is because the organizations would then be perceived as part of the conflict itself and thus evident targets of attack by enemy groups.

Evelyne Schmid (2009) argues that effective protection strategies should be developed by focusing on the reasons why civilians are deliberately attracted. In this case, we might say that the motivation behind the banditry is desperate poverty. Thus, improved living conditions for the Darfur people would increase protection. This, however, *is* the overall aim of the humanitarian agencies and the reason why they are there. Consequently, and as pointed out by Schmid herself, there might not always be “a system out there that can protect people in ongoing conflict” (Schmid 2009: 357). In addition, as stated by Adam Combs (2009 [interview]), the line between banditry and political revolt are traditionally gray. Often governments in power will not admit they have an armed political opposition and will instead decide to call them bandits as it is less threatening to their powerbase (Ibid.). Because there are so many fragmented groups in Darfur, it is almost impossible at times to know who is behind the actions of banditry. Darfur is a complex political landscape and several of the interviewees admit they cannot be certain that there are no alternative motives behind the carjacking and thefts. But most of the informants believe these actions are committed by groups of people who have no jobs or income and are desperate for money in order to survive.

#### **4.2.1 Identification**

If neutrality is one of the main elements to aid agencies' security, waving their organization's flag should ensure a great deal of protection. In the early stages of the conflict it was particularly important to mark cars with stickers and flags to show they were not part of the conflict but humanitarian vehicles. For example, Tony Marchant (2009 [interview]), describes an incident in South Darfur:

A team of MSF staff was driving along the road. On both sides of the road there were cornfields with crops that were quite high, so the land-cruiser was not seen in the area. Consequently, the MSF team put an extra

flag on an extra rod so that the flag could be seen above the cornfields. Later, one of the commanders told them as they were going through a checkpoint that it was good they put up the extra flag because, as he said, “we nearly got you”.

In such circumstances identification is still important in Darfur. However, because of banditry, marked vehicles are now increasingly becoming targets. As a result, some humanitarian agencies have resorted to new tactics by hiring local vehicles from different groups of people. These vehicles often belong to an important person in the area who rebels would not want to disrespect. Therefore, by driving around in his recognizable car the agencies would not be targeted (Marchant 2009 [interview]). Consequently, choosing to have a high or a low profile depends on the situation and on how you are perceived as a humanitarian organization (Læg Reid 2009 [interview]).

#### **4.2.2 Advocacy**

Advocacy may affect how a humanitarian organization is perceived by the parties in a conflict and by the international community. The reason given for the expulsion of the thirteen humanitarian agencies by the Sudanese government was that it believed them to be spies for the ICC (BBC 2009). Although the organizations deny this, there might be some reasons why exactly those thirteen were expelled. First, they all chose to have a high profile in Darfur, making them well known and quite visible in the area. For example, the NRC received a great deal of attention when it was running the Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camp in Kalma in 2004, one of the biggest in Darfur. The situation in and around this IDP camp has been one of the main sources of conflict between humanitarian NGOs and the Sudanese government. As a counter measure to the increased pressure on NRC by the Sudanese government, the NGO received extensive support from the UN system, however, this turned out to be both a blessing and a curse (Læg Reid 2009 [interview]). Second, they all worked directly with the local population and had a close relationship to victims, which may have led the government to fear the organizations were in possession of dangerous information or that they were taking sides with the victims. Finally, the advocacy against atrocities and human rights violations by some of the organizations may have been a deciding factor for expulsion by the government (Ibid.). As noted by Roger Håland (2009 [interview]), a nurse who has worked for MSF in Darfur:

In addition to the principles of humanitarian action, MSF also has a principle of being a witness to the atrocities that are being committed. This may sometimes hamper our security and might also affect to what extent we are wanted in a country or an area. It can lead to getting thrown out and it can lead to people questioning if we are spies. And if people have that perception of us it can quickly lead to deterioration in security for our

staff. Advocating may also affect our neutrality, because if we speak out against one party of a conflict because they are the ones committing the worst crimes against humanity they may see us as taking sides.

#### **4.2.3 Difference between International and National Staff**

In terms of security there are differences between international- and national recruited staff. The majority of security incidents involving humanitarian workers have affect national personnel rather than internationals. There are several reasons for this. First, the majority of aid workers in Darfur are Sudanese nationals, for Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) for instance there are seven expatriates compared to 250 national staff in the region (Thorsen 2009 [interview]). This, of course, increases the odds of national staff being attacked. Second, because so many people have been killed in Darfur it is seen as more 'normal' to kill a national Sudanese (Marchant 2009 [interview]). Third, the conflict in Darfur is to a certain extent characterized as an ethnic conflict between various tribal groups. As all national staff is from a tribe, they are in some ways partly involved in the conflict and may be seen as biased (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]). Finally, it is widely held that there will be more repercussions for the attacker if an international aid worker is wounded or killed than if the same happens to a national (Ibid.).

As a result of these factors, international staff conveys some neutrality to the aid operations in Darfur. International personnel are not part of a tribe in Sudan and are therefore seen as more neutral in relation to the Darfur conflict (Horntvedt 2009 [interview]; Marchant 2009 [interview]). Håland (2009 [interview]) explains that when driving from one location to another the convoy experienced more security when an international was present, as it increased the threshold for attack.

Even though national staff are more at risk and is the group of humanitarian workers who have suffered the most from security incidents like rape and killings, they are also an important asset to humanitarian operations in terms of security. Because national staff blends in with the local environment they are able to move more freely in some contexts than internationals (Læg Reid 2009 [interview]). Furthermore, they know the area well and are aware of political dynamics that might not be obvious to an outsider. National staff usually also have access to vital security information that would not have been given to international personnel, such as the likelihood of an attack or crossfire between tribes along the rout chosen for a humanitarian convoy (Marchant 2009 [interview]).

Because Darfur is a landscape of fragmented groups that are sometimes in conflict with each other, and in terms of neutrality, an impar-

tial recruiting of national staff from various tribes is important. Without doing so the organizations might be perceived as taking sides or as spies, which is what happened to the example of Save the Children UK mentioned above. In Tony Marchant's (2009 [interview]) words: "with the amount of national staff we have, we were very much aware of that if they all came from the tribe Fur, which was often the case, we would run the risk of being perceived as taking sides with the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)."

### **4.3 Impartiality**

Impartiality in terms of the distribution of aid is also imperative in terms of aid workers' security. While impartial distribution of aid is based on need, giving aid to one group while ignoring another may cause the ignored group to feel overlooked, believing the aid agency to favour the other group. Roger Håland (2009 [interview]) illustrates this problem:

We were based in Kabkabiyah in North Darfur, which is a government held area, and also had another project in a village in the mountains outside Kabkabiyah. When driving from the town up to the mountains we experienced getting stopped by the nomads who lived in the area in between. They believed it unfair that we would drive up to the mountains to give aid without setting up a clinic for them as well. The reason for why we had not done so was that we had not identified any needs with these nomads, and thus did not see it as necessary to have a project there. However, we quickly realized that it was necessary to give some aid to this group for diplomatic reasons, and to make sure we were not attacked on our way up to the mountains.

It is also important for humanitarian organizations to be transparent in how they perform their work as this builds trust. An example given by Tony Marchant (2009 [interview]) exemplifies this. He describes one time his MSF team was driving through a checkpoint in a rebel area to open a clinic there and was stopped by a commander who wanted to take their drugs and equipment. The team asked him what he would do if it was his wife who was ill, and after some tension they were allowed to continue. Later that day the same MSF team returned to the checkpoint carrying a pregnant woman who had to have a caesarean operation or else she would die. Such actions build trust, Marchant explains, because it shows the organization is actually performing the work it set out to do.

### **4.4 Independence**

When discussing humanitarian agencies' independence in the Darfur context, interviewees generally focused on NGOs relation to UN peacekeepers and to what extent they coordinate security with the UN.

This varies greatly from organization to organization, but in general NGOs have coordinated their security to a high degree in Darfur (Lægreid 2009 [interview]). The UN is a large organization with a well established network; therefore the organizations that choose to coordinate their security prefer to be informed of the security levels of the UN, and will often decide to follow these. For instance, if the UN decides to close a road for UN movement, the NGOs that coordinate security with the UN will be informed and subsequently decide whether they will follow the advice. In situations of evacuation of UN staff, the NGOs will usually be offered to be included, but will make their own decisions. Some organizations choose to partly coordinate their security with the United Nations. NRC, for example, is not against integrated missions per se and do coordinate with the UN to a great extent (Combs 2009 [interview]). However, as Adam Combs points out: “it is important to disengage from parties who have a political stake in the conflict, which is not always easy because everyone has a political stake one way or the other”. In addition, the United Nations tend to amplify security levels compared to many NGOs, meaning it perceives the situation as more severe than other humanitarian actors. This is viewed by many as unnecessary and as a disadvantage because it limits mobility and thus restricts the distribution of aid (Marchant 2009 [interview]; Thorsen 2009 [interview]).

The UN system has a governance module where the Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holms, has the mandate to coordinate humanitarian operations globally (Lægreid 2009 [interview]). In order to do this, the Interagency Standing Committee has been established in which the OCHA is the secretariat and UN organizations and several NGO networks participate (Ibid.). The ICRC also participates in this committee as an observer. This system is supposed to be implemented on the ground under the name Country Teams in order to coordinate security and humanitarian operations. Although it has taken time to engage the NGOs, it is now in the beginning phase of implementation (Lægreid 2009 [interview]). Under this system OCHA offers to perform the important security task of lobbying and advocating on behalf of NGOs in towns that are seen as insecure (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]). In such insecure places it is usually OCHA that will negotiate with the different parties to the conflict in order to set up night patrols, security hot lines and so on (Ibid.). Turid Lægreid (2009 [interview]) believes most humanitarian actors have seen the general humanitarian access negotiations as beneficial, but it varies whether the NGOs have preferred OCHA’s (and UNDSS) to negotiate access for their specific organization. Some see it as convenient that OCHA already is in dialogue with the respective parties and have an established network, while others prefer independent dialogue. The

choice depends on capacity as well as policies for independence and impartiality.

However, there are humanitarian NGOs that wish to stay completely independent from the UN system and UNAMID for security and operational reasons. These organizations agree with arguments posed by authors like Eide et al. (2005: 10-14) that working side-by-side with the political and military factions of these missions infringes their neutrality. The ICRC and MSF are entirely independent from the United Nations, and would never let anybody else negotiate access for them (Lægreid 2009 [interview]). Tony Marchant (2009 [interview]), for instance, described integrated missions as a “nightmare”, informing that MSF is against the whole system of the AU-UN hybrid mission and is probably the organization most vocal against it as well. He argues that although the UN wishes to be perceived as a neutral actor, it is not. The UN works to support Sudan’s government, which creates problems in terms of neutrality when the government is a big party in the conflict itself (Jepsen 2009 [interview]). Moreover, before UNAMID was established the African Union had troops patrolling the region, and many people did not see them as neutral. Now when the UN has taken over, the same troops are still in Darfur they have only exchanged their green helmet with a blue one (Marchant 2009 [interview]). As a result, Marchant believes UNAMID hampers the security of humanitarian NGOs rather than improving it. He explains that MSF would never let UNAMID troops defend their agency or convoy, because it would be too dangerous as they have been attacked on many different occasions. Marchant (2009 [interview]) admits that MSF have on several instances become reliant on the UN system of air transport, because security levels on the ground made it too difficult to travel by vehicle. But travelling in UN helicopters is not risk free either. As the mission becomes more and more integrated the military are also flying around in similar helicopters, consequently it has been shot at several times. The same problem relates to UN vehicles, because UN humanitarian groups drive around in white land-cruisers with *UN* written on them as does the UNAMID (Ibid.). This can easily be misunderstood by the local population.

All the people interviewed for this project agree that UNAMID has had little if any positive effect on the security situation of humanitarian organizations. A Humanitarian Official (2009 [Telephone interview]) working for OCHA stated that UNAMID can only have a positive impact on the security situation of aid workers in Darfur as long as they are seen as relatively neutral. He points out that as of now UNAMID is quite new, little over one year, and that they are generally very well accepted, but that they should be very careful not to become a party of the conflict. The previous African Union Mission in Sudan



(AMIS) was perceived as taking side in the conflict by many. Partly because they negotiated the Darfur peace agreement which included some parties but not others (Ibid.). For this reason they were targeted and lost more than 20 people in 2007. As African Union was clearly seen as biased no humanitarian organization wanted to be affiliated with it (Ibid.). The UN Humanitarian Official believes the jury is still out when it comes to the new UNAMID, but that they are, as of now, fairly well accepted. They are working on a new peace agreement and if this is seen as biased by some people they may come into a more dangerous light themselves and that might, in turn, be hazardous for humanitarian workers (Ibid.). Consequently, most humanitarian organizations have chosen to stay far away from UNAMID thus far, only very few would accept an escort by UNAMID peacekeeping forces. What aid agencies do ask for is more area security, such as night patrols. UNAMID has a great deal of bases also in relatively remote places in the desert. Just the presence of such bases may sometimes facilitate security, especially for UN humanitarian organizations, which would always choose to stay at the base and take advantage of the security it offers (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]).

Thus, the Aide Memoire should focus more on the principles of humanitarian action and peacekeeping forces' ability to foster and uphold these. Perhaps rather than providing physical protection for humanitarian personnel, peacekeepers should assist in the lines between civil and military operations are not blurred. Such a principled approach to the humanitarian community has worked for the Norwegian government. Norway's policy attempts to separate humanitarian and political objectives in order to uphold the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence (Solheim & Støre 2008: 9-11). In the words of an OECD (2008: 78) development assistance report on Norway: "this principled, yet pragmatic, approach gives Norway considerable credibility within the international community and bolsters its reputation as an influential actor within the international humanitarian system".

There is a cleavage between the academic literature and the view of humanitarian personnel. While the existing literature to a great extent argues aid agencies' neutrality, impartiality and independence are diminishing due to the politicization and securitization of aid, the organizations themselves, though expressing concerns of these developments, still hold that these principles are the core of their structural foundation and of their security and protection. One may question if these humanitarian actors are upholding the principles out of their own interest rather than they actually being the groundwork of security. Authors like O'Brian (2004), Barnett (2005), and Belloni (2007) argue

that humanitarian action is and should be political and that aid agencies should speak out against injustices of war and accept funding from belligerents. This argument holds that neutrality, impartiality and independence do not provide security as they are virtually non-existent and merely exhortations. However, the humanitarian community represented by the informants for this study disagrees with this assumption. They maintain that the worse the security situation is the more important these principles are. They argue that by taking side, or distributing aid partially, humanitarian workers are viewed as legitimate targets of enemy groups as they become associated with the conflict itself. As demonstrated by the examples of security incidents above, the micro-dynamics on the ground in Darfur seems to confirm this assertion.

## 5. The Security Triangle: Acceptance, Protection and Deterrence

As mentioned above, the security triangle paradigm was developed by a group of individuals within the humanitarian community in response to new threats and security concerns. The strategies of the security triangle do not necessarily conflict with neutrality, impartiality and independence. To a certain extent these strategies are utilized to enforce and inform about the principles of humanitarian action.

### 5.1 Acceptance

In correspondence with the existing literature (see Cockanye 2006; Krähenbühl 2004; Martin 1999), the interviewees for this study agree acceptance is still the main strategy employed by aid agencies to ensure security. In the words of an UN Humanitarian Official (2009 [Telephone interview]): “the main way in which humanitarian organizations seek protection is to create acceptance by the local community through neutrality, impartiality and independence.” Constant communication with the population is a vital security measure, and access is often negotiated through this dialogue (Ibid.). Adam Combs (2009 [interview]) states that “you cannot work without acceptance, because without acceptance you have no access”. In order to maintain neutrality and impartiality it is important to communicate with all main groups in a given area. In the case of Darfur this would entail negotiating with the Arab militia, the police, the local authorities, different rebel groups in opposition to the government, and the local population (Pettersen 2009 [interview]). In such negotiations acceptance and access are often achieved by the aid agency informing about the principles of humanitarian action, what sort of aid the organization will provide, who they are, where they are working, and why they are there (Læg Reid 2009 [interview]). This type of negotiations has been executed fairly well in Darfur compared to other complex emergencies (Ibid.).

Security and access are very closely related (Læg Reid 2009 [interview]). It is therefore essential to know who is in charge of an area so as to get security clearance from this group. By successfully communicating with the people in charge of a territory, they are able to assure the organization will not be attacked, and thus safe travel in that given area is to some extent ensured (Ibid.). There are of course no guarantees that attacks or carjacking will not occur, but by making rebel

groups or the Arab militia promise their safe passage, humanitarian agencies have increased their level of security. Tony Marchant (2009 [interview]) explains that when an organization has security clearance from the various groups in charge of an area but are still attacked, it often annoys the people who have given their green light because it may affect their respect and reputation.

Staying in touch with all groups in control of a region may be difficult. Turid Læg Reid (2009 [interview]) explains that in North Darfur, the ICRC was better than OCHA in maintaining a dialogue with the Arab militia. OCHA's contact was more sporadic and this was mostly because the Sudanese government did not want them to have a dialogue with the Arab militia. For instance, when OCHA went to have access negotiations with Musa Hilal,<sup>2</sup> the Sudanese government often obstructed contact. Because of the ongoing process of the ICC, the government became nervous when OCHA was talking to Hilal, fearing they were inquiring on behalf of the Court. This happened despite the agency, as the humanitarian part of the UN, had nothing to do with the ICC (Ibid.).

### **5.1.1 Proximity to Population**

All of the informants interviewed for this study emphasized the significance of maintaining a close relationship with the local population. This is supported by Krähenbühl (2004: 509) who argues that “the closer one is to populations at risk, the better-placed one is to analyse events and formulate strategies to address them”. Several of the interviewees pointed out that this proximity, together with being clear about the work they perform, is the most important factor for humanitarian personnel security. Such ordinary activities as international humanitarian staff drinking tea with the population in the local market may not seem to be a strategic action. However, in terms of security this is essential (Jepsen 2009 [interview]; Marchant 2009 [interview]). Walking around and talking to people on the streets shows that aid personnel are approachable and may debunk possible beliefs that they are spies or have alternative motives. On the other hand, having a close relationship with the population may also have negative effects for aid agencies. As previously discussed, proximity to the population might very well have been one of the main reasons for the expulsion of thirteen humanitarian organizations from Darfur in March this year.

Martin (1999: 5) notes that in emergency operations, pressures to get the relief projects up and running may limit the time and ability to en-

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<sup>2</sup> Musa Hilal is one of the major leaders of the Arab militia in Darfur. He has acknowledged his role in the recruitment of Janjaweed militias, and has been accused of initiating ethnic conflicts.

gage with the local community. However, this seems not to have been the case in Darfur, despite the extent of the humanitarian emergency, as the interviewees working for different humanitarian agencies all stated that this was highly prioritized in Darfur.

## 5.2 Protection

The main security equipments used by humanitarian actors in Darfur are: communication equipment, protected walls and gates, barbed wire, safe-rooms, and bomb-shelters. Which physical protection measures are employed depends on the local environment and may vary on a day-to-day basis, although communication equipment is always used by all humanitarian teams. This is because it is essential for these teams, who might be spread around a vast territory, to be able to contact their base (Horntvedt 2009 [interview]; Læg Reid 2009 [interview]); Marchant 2009 [interview]). If a humanitarian team is traveling in an insecure area they are often ordered to report back to base every thirty minutes or so to make sure they are not harmed. If the team fails to do so, measures are set in motion to find out what has happened and to trace their location (Marchant 2009 [interview]).

Protected walls, barbed wire, safe-rooms and bomb-shelters are used to shield humanitarian workers from criminals, bullets and bombs. It is always necessary to have a certain degree of physical protection in conflict environments (Pettersen 2009 [interview]). However, although recognizing the need for such protective measures in certain contexts, some of the interviewees believed it to be important to limit this security strategy as much as possible. In Tony Marchant's (2009 [interview]) words:

We have houses and compounds with big walls and barbed wire. But in the end how much protection does it give you? It gives you more protection to rely on the classical concepts of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and that people know what you are doing. The way to achieve this is by being in proximity to the population, by talking to them, telling them why you are there, and by doing the work you said you would do [...] When you bunker up too much, suddenly people may start thinking: "what are they doing in there, maybe they are spies".

This argument has support in the literature that argues protection measures only provide a certain degree of protection as it does not confront the threat which is the main source of insecurity (Eguren 2002: 14).

### 5.2.1 Security Training

There is a lack in the literature focusing on security training for humanitarian personnel. Authors who do touch on the subject usually

mention that organizations vary to a great extent in their framework of and emphasis on security training of their staff (McCall & Salama 1999; Moresky et.al. 2001; Van Brabant 1999). Insufficient security training is a recurring trend when looking at the interviews performed for this thesis. Although most of the agencies interviewed seem to offer their staff a theoretical course before sending them to the field, security is only one part of it. Roger Håland (2009 [interview]), for instance, admit he would have liked to have some practical security training before he went to Darfur. In his words: “It is not enough to have a good heart; you also need a good head on your shoulders to evaluate the situation and to understand the context you are in.” The security course that is given is often quite generic, lacking country-specific security problems and measures. This instead is given in a document, a so-called country briefing, where there is one section on the current security situation in the designated country. Moreover, several of the informants admit that due to time restraints, sometimes aid workers are sent out without any training whatsoever. Instead, humanitarian organizations seem to base the security knowledge of their staff more on experience rather than training. Experienced staff is supposed to look after and guide their new colleagues. However, as Tony Marchant (2009 [interview]) has pointed out, such experienced personnel can sometimes be hard to come by.

While the Aide Memoire notes that organizations personnel should receive training in international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, it does not mention security training. By emphasizing that security training should be mandatory for all aid personnel, the Aide Memoire would highlight a specific task that would greatly increase the protection of humanitarian workers in the field.

The only organization that seems to have a sufficient training system for its staff before they are sent into the field is the ICRC. Newly recruited workers for the ICRC first have to attend a beginner’s course consisting of nineteen hours of generic theory of working in the field. Of this course there is a significant section on security, and at the end of the course the new staff has to attend an exam (Parelius 2009 [Telephone interview]). After passing this exam, new recruits participate in a second course with approximately the same duration, which focuses on preparing and performing international humanitarian work (Ibid.). In addition to this, new personnel attend a whole day devoted to security. This day consists of a theoretical part, but also has a practical segment in which personnel participate in simulation exercises of ambushes, carjacking etc. (Ibid.). Furthermore, the ICRC has specific security guidelines and strict security rules for its staff partly in order to protect and uphold the organization’s neutrality. If a humanitarian

worker of the ICRC breaks any of the rules or regulations they are sent home with no questions asked (Ibid.).

Although the UN varies in its consistency with security training, it is increasingly improving (Læg Reid 2009 [interview]). Taking after the ICRC module on training, UN international humanitarian staff has three different security segments they need to accomplish before departing for Darfur. First, there are two different online training programs called 'Basic Security in the Field' and 'Advanced Security in the Field', which they need to pass (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]). Second, there is a two-day practical training course in which humanitarian personnel participate in simulation exercises similar to the ones undertaken by ICRC staff (Ibid.).

Although a minority of humanitarian organizations provides extensive security training before they send international aid workers to the field, some aid personnel receive training while they are there. RedR, an organization dedicated to training humanitarian staff, is offering aid agencies this service in Darfur (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]). RedR is also committed to the principles of humanitarian action and view these as the founding pillars of their organization. This is in order to maintain the confidence of all parties and to be viewed as an impartial actor. However, there is another limitation to the NGO, UN and RedR security training. The beneficiaries of the security training are disproportionately international personnel; despite the fact that national staff usually runs duty stations in the more insecure areas (Bolletino 2006: 9-10).

RedR also provide security training courses in the host countries of western international humanitarian organizations. Elaine Jepsen (2009 [interview]), a humanitarian worker for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), attended a five-day training course provided in her home country New Zealand before departing for Darfur. Although participating in the course was her own personal choice and on her own initiative, IOM paid for the training session. This course was provided by RedR in cooperation with the New Zealand army, and consisted of simulation exercises of various security scenarios. In Jepsen's (2009 [interview]) words:

The security course was incredibly helpful, and when I experienced a security incident in Darfur I realized just how useful it was to have run through simulations exercises beforehand. When a security incident occurs you are obviously in a high risk situation, and being able to draw on things you have learned, such as if an attacker reacts in a certain way he is likely to do A, B, or C next, is extremely valuable. I was also quite surprised of how directly what we learned in the exercises transferred into reality.

In addition, Jepsen points out that it is beneficial for international staff to receive such security training outside the conflict environment and *before* they are sent to the field. There are several reasons for this. First, receiving training before going to the field gives international humanitarian personnel time to digest and dwell on what they have learned. Second, such training functions as psychological preparation for the context humanitarian staff are about to work in, making them more aware of what to expect. Finally, it helps international humanitarian personnel decide if they would want to work in a conflict environment and if they are able to handle tense security situations. In Jepsen's (2009 [interview]) words: "When I did the training there were a couple of people who had quite strong reactions to the simulation exercises, so for them it was a good reality check as to where their threshold fell". Practical security training in the form of simulation exercises should be mandatory for all humanitarian staff, including national staff, before they enter and start working in the field. Aid agencies should adopt such training into the organizational framework. This would greatly benefit newly recruited aid workers and their ability to handle tense security situations in conflict areas and would increase their protection in the field. As pointed out by Van Brabant (1999: 7), there is a need for "agreed sector-wide standards that clarify the minimum requirements in terms of awareness, knowledge and skill with regards to security issues for aid workers, and similar minimum requirements for organizations sending personnel to dangerous environments."

### 5.3 Deterrence

Humanitarian organizations in Darfur do not employ armed guards for protection and deterrence. Rather they have unarmed guards that are more like watchmen by definition.<sup>3</sup> These guards look after agencies' compounds on a twenty-four hour basis, making sure unwanted people and criminals do not have access to the buildings. However, in cases of armed robbery or attacks, these guards are briefed not to stand in the attackers' way and to give them what they want. There is no reason to shoot back when objects and equipment, not human beings, are the targets of the attack (Marchant 2009 [interview]). Consequently, the informants for this project speak of the employment of guards in Darfur more as a protection strategy rather than a deterrent. There are, however, some instances in which armed guards have been used by humanitarian agencies in Darfur. Because movement from one location to another is characterized as the most dangerous circumstances in Darfur, some agencies have utilized armed escorts (Læg Reid 2009

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<sup>3</sup> Having watchmen is a general policy for humanitarian agencies throughout the world. Only in Somalia do all organizations have armed guards. This is because there is no working government in Somalia, they have no police, humanitarian staff is targeted, and the situation is too dangerous not to have a proper deterrent.



[interview]). Although such escorts are usually avoided as much as possible, NGOs like MSF and ICRC would never make use of them, some organizations resolve to the deterrent effect of this measure when the situation permits it. These escorts can be performed by UNAMID or by guards recruited from private security companies (PSCs) (Ibid.).

As noted by several of the interviewees, it is extremely important that deterrence measures are not seen as a provocation as this may escalate violence. However, the very presence of guns may in some cases deteriorate the security situation. Roger Håland (2009 [interview]) admits, when driving through checkpoints, he would ponder whether young and armed teenage soldiers had the competence and maturity to know when to, or more importantly, when *not* to pull the trigger. Moreover, when both the guerrilla soldiers and humanitarian escorts have guns tensions may increase and cause a potential deadly situation. As noted by one of the interviewees, this is what happened in South Darfur when one of the managers of the Italian Corporation came to visit its humanitarian projects. The manager was travelling with his own armed bodyguards, and when they were stopped at a checkpoint tensions increased and the bodyguards began shooting at some of the soldiers. It should be noted that such incidents are quite rare.

### 5.3.1 Recruitment of Guards

Guards or watchmen are usually recruited from the local population. As with the recruitment of national humanitarian staff, it is vital that this procedure is done in an impartial manner. There are few available jobs in Darfur, and because it pays quite well, these positions are quite sought after. Thus, if an organization recruit guards from one tribe only they will be perceived as biased, which may restrain their security (Combs 2009 [interview]). In addition, some humanitarian agencies recruit guards from PSC. For example, NRC has made use of local private security companies when recruiting guards (Pettersen 2009 [interview]). Glenn Pettersen, NRC's Chief of Security, emphasizes that the NGO does not hire *international* PSCs as this is a disputed issue. However, he points out that in some contexts the need for private security might be increasing.

Humanitarian organizations do not recruit UNAMID soldiers to stand guard as this may infringe their neutrality and independence (UN Humanitarian Official 2009 [Telephone interview]). However, in certain areas UNAMID has been requested to do additional patrols around humanitarian compounds, especially during night time, so as to provide an extra layer of security (Ibid.). This is also true for government

troops. Their presence in an area is seen as beneficial as they can be contacted directly if security incidents are to occur (Ibid.).

#### **5.4 Humanitarian Access Issues**

The three strategies of the security triangle are centred on the mission. However, in Darfur humanitarian actors have experienced obstacles by the Sudanese government in the implementation of their aid missions. Even before the arrest warrant for President al-Bashir was issued by the ICC, humanitarian agencies experienced difficulties in relation to obtaining travel permits and visas. Although this is not directly linked to humanitarian staff's security, it affects the mission on the ground and may have an indirect effect on the security situation. This is because travel restrictions and withdrawal of organizations due to orders by the government affects humanitarian actors' proximity to the population which in turn may affect their acceptance. As indicated by Elaine Jepsen (2009 [interview]), the bureaucracy can be more of an impediment to humanitarian work than some of the security incidents, and after the arrest warrant was issued there has been an increase in national security checks and visa problems (Ibid.). In this regard, the Aide Memoire rightly highlights the responsibility of host governments to ensure security and protection of civilians in its territory, and to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance. However, the Memoire does not include specific measures to be implemented if a state refuses to do so. It merely says that in circumstances where a state denies humanitarian access the UNSC "expresses its willingness to consider such information and, where necessary, to adopt appropriate steps" (UNSC 2009: 23).

Turid Læg Reid (2009 [interview]) point out that the obstructions by the Sudanese government were performed in a clever manner, making it difficult for humanitarian agencies to object. This obstruction of the delivery of aid by the government of Sudan has received a great deal of attention in the literature as well (Hagan 2006: 330; Ryle 2004: 2). Hugo Slim (2004: 812), for example states that there has been a massive obstruction of humanitarian access from the highest levels in Khartoum. For instance, the government would declare that they would like all humanitarian organization to establish projects in Darfur, but that the laws of Sudan required them to apply for several permits, so as to delay them as much as possible (Ibid.). Moreover, the Sudanese government would invent new laws and change the rules constantly, which made it difficult to start and close projects as there were increasingly new procedures that needed to be implemented by the aid agencies themselves (Ibid.).

The OCHA Aide Memoire calls upon host governments to resume responsibility in ensuring access and safety to humanitarian personnel. This is a vital point that greatly affects the protection and security of humanitarian organizations. However, as illustrated by the case of Darfur, this becomes difficult when the government itself is part of the conflict and expels and condemns aid agencies as part of their tactics.



## 6. Conclusion

As a result of the information analysed from the interviews and literature, this report argues neutrality, impartiality, and independence are still pivotal for the security and protection of aid workers. While the principles in themselves may not provide protection, how humanitarian actors convey them through their proximity to the population, by performing their work in a transparent manner, and courteous individual behaviour affect how they are perceived and thus their security. These principles, however, are not sufficient to ensure security for aid personnel and need to be supplemented by protection strategies. Although, relying too heavily on such measures may in turn diminish security as aid workers are alienated from the local population omitting valuable security information. On the other hand, evidence found during the course of this research suggests proximity to the population may reduce security as well, especially in cases where the national government is a party to the conflict. This is because aid agencies that develop a close relationship with the local population may be viewed as taking their side, and thus faces risks of being expelled by the government.

The OCHA's Aide Memoire is vague in its language and lacks specific measures on how to improve aid workers' security. While changing security dynamics makes it difficult to establish a detailed, all-encompassing Aide Memoire, some improvements are called for. First, the primary means to achieve higher levels of protection for aid workers is to ensure they receive sufficient security training. This study concludes that most humanitarian agencies lack proper training modules for their staff before sending them to dangerous environments. There needs to be mandatory security training for newly recruited national and international staff, and this should be state in the Aide Memoire. Such training should consist of a theoretical as well as a practical section where staff participate in simulation exercises. Although some international humanitarian workers receive their training in the country in which they are to work, security preparation should preferably take place in expatriates' home countries. This is in order to make sure they are prepared for situations that might arise in the field and to give them time to digest what they have learned.

Second, while the Aide Memoire calls upon UN peacekeepers to provide protection for humanitarian personnel, this is made difficult because they are not perceived as neutral. Instead, UN peacekeepers should assist in aid agencies maintaining their independence and neu-

trality by making the divide between military and humanitarian segments of an operation more apparent, and by providing area protection instead of individual protection. For instance, UN peacekeepers and UN humanitarian workers should utilize different cars with clearly distinct markings when travelling in the field. That way there will be no confusion as to who they are. In addition, DPKO should encourage military divisions not to distribute humanitarian aid, because it contributes to the blurring of the lines between civil and military operations. Finally, while the Aide Memoire rightly stresses the responsibility of host governments to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access, it should outline more clearly the repercussions when a government deliberately fails to do so.

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