

Mohammed Ahmed

Typed by Corinne Squire

My name is Mohammed Ahmed, from Sudan, Darfur district. I was born in a Jebel Marra village, and I love my village. We used to live in a good type of house; it is called 'gotya' and is made of grass on the top side, and the bottom part is made from mud, in a round shape. We also have 'rakoba', which is also made from grass, and we use it as a hall for rest in summertime, because of the sunshine. Our life is so simple, as you know, in the village. The regular job is that of the farmer. We used to plant different types of seeds, including sorghum, semsem, Sudanese peanut, pearl millet, watermelon and okra. We do all this in the autumn season. Also, we have animal breeding, like sheep, cows and poultry farming.

The leader of the tribe we call 'sheik'. I belong to the Fur tribe to which Darfur has been given, and which belongs to it. The sheik of our tribe is my grandfather. He deserved to be our tribe leader; he used to help the people and solve all the problems among them, whatever the problem was. I am so proud of him, and proud to be his grandson. All these years, we were staying safely, and everything was pretty cool.

In 2003, the government started to sow problems among the tribes in Darfur which are called the regional tribes. I think that they succeeded in doing that, and then the tribes started to dislike and fight each other. Especially the ethnic Arabs disliked people of Black ethnicity - and I belong to the Black people - because the government told them Sudan belongs to the Arabs. But it does not, and history knows that Sudan belongs to the Black people, and everybody around the world knows that. The Arabs came to the Sudan through trade, from the Arabian peninsula.

So then the Arabs started killing Black people, especially in Darfur, and raping people, for no reason. The people who are killing and raping are a group of Arabs who used to live in and around our villages. They are not that much stronger than our people, but they have been mobilised by and supported by the government with weapons and cars, materially and morally, to kill us. Therefore they killed and raped and burned our villages and stole everything, and they replaced us.

Now, most of the people are in Kalma camp which is the biggest camp in Darfur; it is in South Darfur – Nyala. Other people are in the Abu Shouk camp in North Darfur – Al Fasher. Now these people are still suffering from health, food and even water problems. There is no education and even no safe place. There are diseases, people are dying every single day, and there is not any cure. People are suffering from everything, and famine too. There is no organisation to help these people at all. There were a few organisations, but the government did not allow them to help these people. I feel so bad for my people. I hope I can help them in this situation.

The government is targeting students at the university, especially those who come from Darfur, generally Black people, and arresting and torturing them. Some get released and the

others, they get killed. The reason is that we have some people in Darfur who became the opposition. They are in the bush and are still rising up against the government to protect our people and change the regime, which committed a lot of crimes against the community, and genocide. I hope peace comes to Sudan, to let the people live in safety.

Because of our people who are rising up and trying to protect our people, the government thinks the students are also part of the opposition. That is why they are arresting and killing them. I saw all these things happening, and I told my father about leaving Sudan, and he said that 'If you don't leave, they may kill you too, the same as happened to the other people'. He helped me with some money to travel to Libya.

I travelled to Libya by car through the desert for 15 days; then we reached Libya. We tried to find out how to get a job, and then we got a job; but the country is not safe and does not have a government. It just has militias and rebels. Sometimes when they see you on the street, especially when you are Black, then they stop you and check your pockets, and take all that you have got, and they tell you, 'We don't want to see you again in these places'. Sometimes, when you go to work, after you did your work, they just tell you that 'We don't have money for it'. If you talk, they just kill you for no reason. And also, they call Black people slaves.

At last we got some money, and we asked the smugglers, the people who are taking others to Italy by boat, how much the journey cost. Then we gave them money and they took us to Italy. When we reached Italy, we spent some days in a refugee camp, but the camp was boring and there was not enough food, and the place was so cold. Then we decided to cross to France, because people told us to leave Italy, because there is nothing there at all. We found some other people who were also going to France; then we crossed to France and went to the Calais camp which was full of refugees. We met some friends in the camp but we found the same things: there is not enough food, and the weather was so cool, and there were no houses in which to stay, and no covers, and no clothes to wear. We suffered a lot, and until now we are still suffering in the Calais camp.