

FIFTEEN months after the United Nations' Security Council issued an ultimatum to the government of Sudan to clean up its act in Darfur or face action, shocking new evidence of atrocities is emerging. Various governments have labelled the campaign of murder and forced displacement in Darfur as genocide and the UN last year described Darfur as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

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A UN report from last month sheds light on the worst recent incident involving aid workers, describing how the group of 22 people travelling in seven vehicles was ambushed on the road from Beida to Geneina in west Darfur on 1 September.

"The bandits took cash, cameras and other personal belongings and ripped out all VHF communication equipment," the report says. "The bandits then beat the staff members with sticks and rifles while they were lying on the ground. Seventeen persons suffered injuries such as blunt trauma, head injury with stitches, back injuries, haematoma on the scalp, etc."

Aid workers say the security situation has deteriorated badly in recent months. There is a reluctance to speak publicly because of the action taken by the Sudanese government against international workers who have spoken out in the past, but one worker - who did not wish to be named - yesterday described how there were attacks every day in August against aid convoys.

"There has been a massive increase in attacks against humanitarian agencies," the worker said, adding that the victims of the 1 September ambush were also stripped of their clothes during the attack.

"The few cars that were moving have stopped and no-one can use any of the roads outside Geneina the capital of west Darfur . People cannot move and that means they can't get to any of the camps in west Darfur."

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