

# Nomads in Chad attack Darfur refugee

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**GAGA, Chad** - Fatma Daoud wrapped a plastic bag as a makeshift bandage around her hand - using a corner of brightly colored robe to wipe the blood from the deep, gaping knife wound that had cut her down to the bone.

The 36-year-old woman, a refugee from Sudan's war-torn Darfur, had left her camp in eastern Chad to gather firewood when she was attacked by young Chadian nomads.

"They were three boys, camel herders. They told me to stop collecting wood and then they stabbed me," Daoud said, calm despite the attack that had happened only minutes before outside the Gaga refugee camp.

At least 230,000 ethnic Africans have fled Darfur to take refuge in camps in neighboring Chad - and their numbers are growing. But the refugees crowded into 12 camps are facing increased tensions with Chadians in a competition for scarce resources in the large, barren border region.

The friction comes despite the fact that both the refugees and the Chadians belong to tribes that straddle the border.

Daoud, for instance, said she recognized her assailants. They weren't the Arab Sudanese janjaweed militiamen who attacked her home in Darfur, but herders from the ethnic African Zaghawa tribe.

On the Sudanese side of the border, the Zaghawas are among the tribes that have been targeted in Darfur and they form the backbone of some rebel groups battling the janjaweed and government troops. But in Chad, they are affluent camel herders with close ties to power, since President Idriss Deby and most of the top military are Zaghawas.

"Life has been quieter in Chad, but now it's getting hard," said Daoud as she stood under the fierce afternoon sun waiting for humanitarian workers to treat her wound. A member of the Massalit tribe, she fled Darfur when the janjaweed destroyed her village, about 60 miles east of Gaga across the border.

The sudden settlement of large numbers of refugees risks exacerbating what has long been a competition among Chadians for land, grazing areas, wood and other resources in the border region.

"There has been age-old tensions between farmers and herders here," said Serge Male, Chad's country director for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. "But it's becoming a regional situation, and Darfur is the essential worsening factor."

The nomad-refugee tensions, though still small scale, add yet another layer of danger in the region's interwoven conflicts.

\_ In Darfur, Sudanese government troops and their allies, the janjaweed, are battling ethnic African rebels in a conflict that has killed at least 200,000 people since 2003. The janjaweed are accused of widespread atrocities against ethnic African villagers, and at least 2 million Darfurians have fled their homes, most of them crowding into refugee camps in Darfur.

\_ In Chad, Chadian rebels based in Sudan and Darfur have launched attacks on Chadian forces and towns. They are often followed by janjaweed fighters, who enter Chad and attack villages, according to

aid workers. Some 110,000 Chadian villagers have joined Darfurians in the refugee camps in Chad. Khartoum also accuses Chad of backing the Darfur rebels.

Proposals have been raised among U.N. officials to deploy peacekeepers in Chad near the border - an idea that has arisen amid Khartoum's refusal to allow U.N. troops to join African Union peacekeepers in Darfur itself.

So far, the Darfur refugees have largely been spared violence in Chad as the conflicts unfurl around them. But increasing violence in all the various conflicts raises fears the refugees could be caught in the crossfire or directly targeted.

Mbaitlham Kaban, the camp manager in Gaga, said the attack on Daoud was the first case he'd seen of African on African violence in the camp, home to 13,500 refugees.

"We're far enough from the border, and there is enough space around here for the camp to stay calm," said Kaban, an aid worker from Africare, a U.S.-based charity.

But Male, the UNHCR director, said tensions were growing.

"The border is a completely artificial concept to local populations ... So people here welcomed their brothers fleeing Darfur when violence began in 2003," he said. "But over the years, other problems inevitably develop."

In the Gaga camp, the few Chadian soldiers guarding the site lay on a carpet playing cards, fields were cultivated and plump cattle roamed the nearby area - a sign that the camp has so far been peaceful enough for refugees to grow their own food.

But refugees keep flowing in. A group Massalit women and their exhausted children huddled in the open on the outskirts of the camp, waiting to register. They had hung garments and cloths in thorn bushes as meager protection from the sun.

"We registered 220 people in January," said Kaban. "But we expect much more to come ... By the end, we think there'll be 20,000 people here."