Sexual violence and other human rights violations in Darfur

Alexander Tsai
RWJ Health & Society Scholars/Harvard
Collaborators

- Mohammed Eisa, Physicians for Human Rights
- Sondra Crosby, Boston University
- Susannah Sirkin, PHR
- Michele Heisler, University of Michigan
- Jennifer Leaning, Harvard School of Public Health
- Vincent Iacopino, PHR
Data on atrocities in Darfur

- U.S. Atrocities Documentation Survey, 2004
  - Hagan et al., ASR (2008), AJPH (2009)
- Physicians for Human Rights, 2004-05
  - VanRooyen et al., *J Genocide Res* (2008)
- Physicians for Human Rights, 2008
  - *Nowhere to Turn* (2009)
Study aims

- To characterize the nature and geographic scope of sexual violence and other human rights violations allegedly perpetrated against civilians in Darfur
- To substantiate the allegations with forensic review and analysis of the evidence
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Data

- Initial visits of all 325 patients seen at the Amel Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture in Nyala, South Darfur

Sept 28 ‘04  Dec 31 ‘06  Mar 5 ‘09

Clinic operational
Initial visits of all 325 patients seen at the Amel Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture in Nyala, South Darfur

- Opening:
  - Sept 28 ‘04
  - Dec 31 ‘06
  - Mar 5 ‘09

Clinic operational
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Clinic operational

cease-and-desist
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Sept 28 ‘04  Dec 31 ‘06  Mar 5 ‘09

Available  Hidden
Data abstraction

- Structured abstraction tool
  - To record details about victims and perpetrators for quantitative assessments

- Forensic expert review
  - To assess (a) whether the records contained sufficient detail, and, if so, (b) the extent to which the signs and symptoms were consistent with the alleged attack [NR/NCW/CW/HCW/VDO]
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[NR/NCW/CW/HCW/VDO]
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## Characteristics of patients (N=325)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>% or median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brought in by relative</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days elapsed since attack</td>
<td>101 (22-365)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>35 (4-82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence in South Darfur</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Characteristics of perpetrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation of perpetrator(s)</th>
<th>% or median</th>
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<tr>
<td>Janjaweed</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Sudan (GoS)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Both</td>
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<td>Other (e.g., bandit, rebel)</td>
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Geographic distribution of attacks
### Sexual assault data (N=45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>JJ-GoS</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced undressing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insertion of objects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted rape</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape by &gt;1 perpetrator</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sexual assault data (N=45)

- 36 women had been sexually assaulted
  - 18 (50%) in close proximity to an IDP camp
  - 31 (86%) raped by one or more perpetrators
    - 5 (16%) became pregnant, and other pregnancy outcomes were unknown
- 9 men had been sexually assaulted
  - Typically during the context of detention
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## Characteristics of other attacks

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<th>JJ-GoS</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy weapons</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliation/psychological</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custody-related</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property theft/destruction</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>6</td>
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Forensic review of all cases (N=325)

- 96% agreement ($\kappa=0.92$) on whether records contained sufficient detail for evaluation
- 198 (61%) records sufficiently detailed
  - 0 unrelated to alleged abuses (0%)
  - 0 not consistent with (0%)
  - 101 consistent with (51%)
  - 81 highly consistent with (41%)
  - 5 virtually diagnostic of (3%)
- 11 cases of disagreement ($\kappa=0.89$)
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Review of sexual assaults (N=45)

- Sexual assault cases triggered referral to outside gynecologist for evaluation – only general clinic records available for analysis

- 25 (56%) records sufficiently detailed
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Limitations

- Likely under-documentation of signs/symptoms
- No data on victims who did not survive
  - May underestimate severity of atrocities
- Lack of access to gynecologic records
  - May reduce consistency of expert reviewers
- No data from 2006-09
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Conclusions

- Widespread and sustained attacks by GoS and Janjaweed forces upon non-Arab civilians living in Darfur
  - Sexual assaults near IDP camps raise specific questions about security provided to IDPs
- Allegations substantiated by review of medical records by forensic experts
  - High inter-rater agreement increases our confidence in their opinions
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Acknowledgments

- Patients, for courage in coming forth
- Amel Centre staff, for courage in service
- Holly Atkinson, MD, Adrienne Fricke, JD, MA, Frank Davidoff, MD, and Mark Russell, MA, for internal peer review
- Long list of funders

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Funding

- Sudan Aid Fund of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
- Harvard Humanitarian Initiative
- Scholar Rescue Fund of the Institute for International Education
- Physicians for Human Rights
- Open Society Institute/Eastern Africa
- RWJ Health & Society Scholars Program
- RFK Center for Justice and Human Rights
19 year-old man captured by *Janjaweed* forces and detained. He reported being kept in a hole in the ground for 3 weeks, severely beaten, raped, and forced to witness the killing of 7 other detainees.

17 year-old girl who fled to Kalma IDP camp was attacked by *Janjaweed* forces when she and 9 other women ventured outside the camp to collect hay. She was beaten and raped until she lost consciousness.
Representativeness of the data

- Medical services entangled with criminal procedure documentation requirements
  - Victims required to fill out a “Form 8” prior to receiving medical care, even in cases of sexual assault
- Amel Center was the only dedicated local NGO provider of free clinical and legal services to civilian victims of torture or other human rights abuses
## Tribes represented (N=325)

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<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dago</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bargo</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 other tribes (Masalit, etc.)</td>
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