

## **Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM)**

### **Origins/Composition**

SLA-MM evolved out of a Fur-Zaghawa split in the SLA, with old fears that drought-affected Zaghawa coveted Fur lands, exacerbated by Minawi's desire for leadership of the SLA—both for himself personally and the Zaghawa as a tribe. It is led by, and composed mainly of, Zaghawa, a non-Arab people who share Darfur's northern desert with the camel-herding Arabs whom the government recruited as proxy counter-insurgency forces. Most Zaghawa joined the SLA to fight the Arabs—not the government.

### **Leadership**

Minni Minawi, a former primary school teacher with only secondary school education, became the leader of the strongest military faction of the SLA in his early 30s despite having no military experience or training. In 2006 he signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) with the Sudan government, thereby becoming senior assistant to President Omar al Bashir and chairman of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority. The positions are nominal; his real power is negligible.

### **Areas of control/activity**

Thanks to its alliance with the government, SLA-MM is active in two extended areas of north Darfur—around the towns of Um Berro and al Fasher—and in a pocket south-east of the South Darfur state capital, Nyala. In the April elections, boycotted by DPA non-signatories, SLA-MM won parliamentary seats in North Darfur (Kutum) and South Darfur (Gereida).

### **Sources of financing/support**

Many of Minawi's men now have government and DPA salaries; the SLA-MM office in Khartoum reportedly costs USD 1 million a month. The government arms SLA-MM fighters when it needs them.

### **Status**

With the Darfur peace talks in Doha flagging, and no new leaders emerging with a Darfur-wide mandate, Minawi retained his position as senior assistant to Bashir in the government formed after general elections in April 2010. The military strength of the former rebels he commands is said to 'change by the day', depending in large part on the needs of the government. At the end of 2009, United Nations estimates put the strength of SLA-MM at one or two battalions, or 600–1,000 men.

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