

Zurug Umdas Interview

LOCATION: Zurug, North Darfur
DATE: 21st March, 2020
INTERVIEWER: Anton Lin

The Three Umdas of Zurug

- ◇ An Umda is a tribal leader under a Nazir
- ◇ The three Umdas, from left to right, are Zaghawa, Mahariya, and Quraan
- ◇ They are the Umdas for the mixed peoples of Zurug

PEOPLE

On Zurug in the past:

'Zurug became a complete desert in the 1985 drought. Since that time only a few people were able to live here, as the only water was very far away. You had to walk for an entire day to reach the old British wells.'



'Before we returned here recently, we were in this land for many years. All the tribes had good relations. The drought drove us away and we all became travellers, but even during that time our relationships between tribes were good. That only changed when the rebel groups came.'

On Zurug today:

'Now we have seven wells which allow 2,000 people to live here, spread between the villages. Without these wells, we couldn't live here.'

'We have schools, clinics, and a market. People will keep moving back here for these things and our population will grow.'

'Life is good here today. We have water, phone signal, the camel herders are happy, and it is safe.'

'Our message to the world: we want to develop our cities and live in safety.'

On tribal relations:

'Zurug is a mix of races. From here, there is not much before Libya, and most of what is on the way belongs to Zurug or its people. We are all one family with all the tribes together, we use the same schools, same wells, and live in peace again like we did before the rebels came. All of the services here, like the wells, are free for everyone to use.'

POLITICS

On politics in Khartoum:

'Who is in control in Khartoum makes no difference to our lives here. We don't know anything about them. Only the military make any difference here. Food, water, roads, safety, schools- all should come from the government and we ask them but they don't give it, so we ask the RSF instead.'

POWER

On the security situation:

'The Darfurian wars had a huge impact here. Killings and robberies were the main problem, as well as people being forced from where they lived.'

'The rebels are gone completely. This place is safe.'

'The RSF built our wells and secured our roads, which were dangerous before, allowing us to live together peacefully here.'