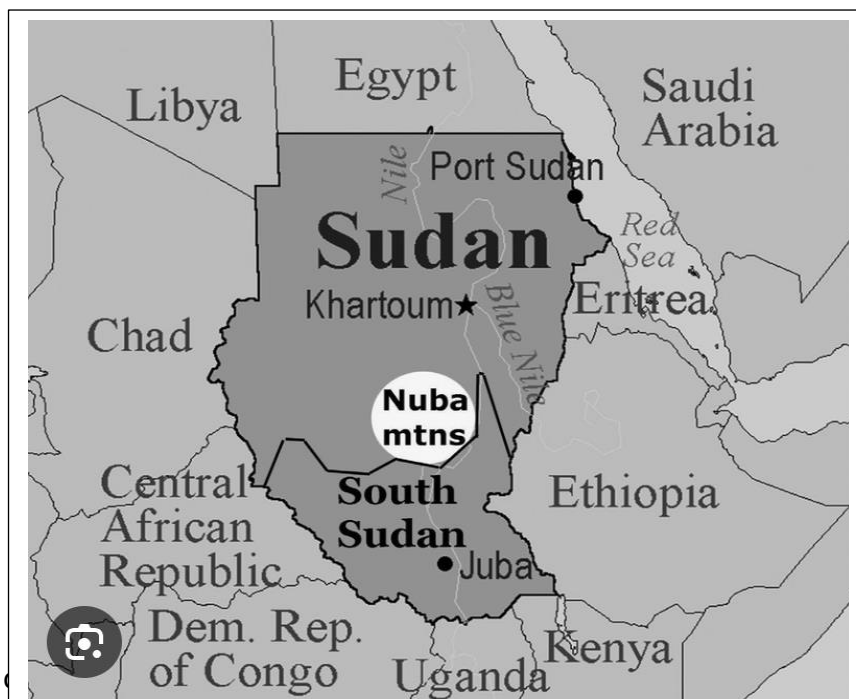


The Nuba Mountains



The Nuba Mountains have an ancient history, with the first known mention of the African tribes living here and other nearby areas dating to around 200 BCE by Greek scholars Eratosthenes and Strabo. They are inhabited by roughly 100 African tribes who have been referred to collectively as *Nuba* for centuries. These tribes are likely remnants of previous, larger tribal groups of varying languages and cultures

Although this geographic area has been inhabited for millennia, little direct documentation of life here is known to have been recorded before the 1900s. This undocumented history may have roots in just how isolated the region has always been; even today, the Nuba Mountains remains one of the most isolated and marginalized regions of Sudan.



Sitting directly on the border between Sudan and South Sudan, this demarcation highlights the roots of historical grievances and, more recently,

north-south civil wars and two attempted genocides against the Nuba people by national military regimes in Khartoum.

Today, virtually all the people living here identify with their tribe *and* also collectively identify as *Nuba*. Estimations vary wildly; however, it is generally thought that roughly 45% of the Nuba people are Christian, making the mountains home to the largest community of Christians in Sudan. Other religious affiliations include 45% of the population identifying as Muslim, with the remaining 10% following local tribal regions or identifying with no religion at all.

Cultural Oppression & the Removal of Rights

The First Sudanese Civil War began in 1955. The war itself had little direct impact on the Nuba Mountains; however, as Sudanese politics in Khartoum drifted toward extremism during the war, the Nuba people began to face increasing oppression that set the stage for two devastating wars and genocides in their homeland.

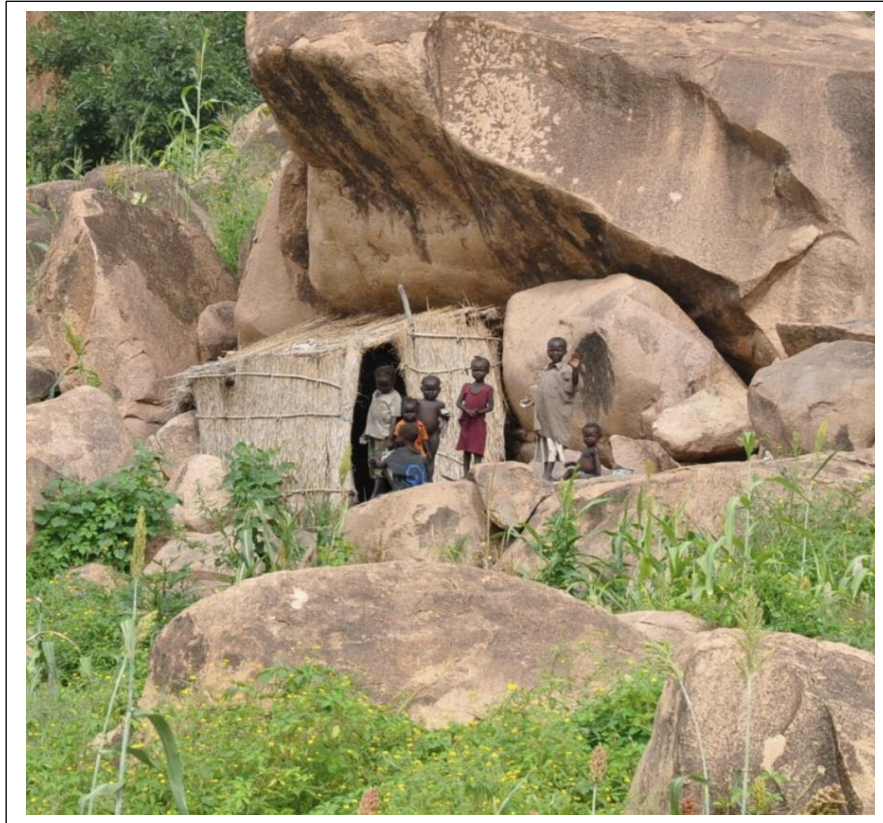
Khartoum's oppression of traditional Nuba culture included attempts to force name-changes (from local names to Arab ones) and replace tribal languages with Arabic. Elements of the Sudanese government and Islamic political allies in Khartoum pushed an intolerant strain of Islam onto the Nuba people.

These colonizing efforts achieved mixed results. Arabic was largely adopted as a communication language, but virtually all Nuba tribal languages remain in use. A sizable number of the Nuba people consider themselves Muslim, but Nuba Muslims and Christians live largely in harmony to this today.

In 1970, the Sudanese government introduced the *Unregistered Land Act*. This law effectively abolished communal land ownership and was an attempt to destroy the centuries-long tradition of Nuba tribes considering the farming areas around the Nuba Mountains as belonging to their communities. It stipulated that all lands not privately owned and registered would automatically belong to the government in Khartoum.

Extremism grew in Khartoum throughout the eighties and in response to this threat, Nuba leaders worked together with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and although a peace agreement was almost reached in 1988. This was thwarted by the Bashir regime and by 1990 the Nuba Mountains had been surrounded by the army and Arab Islamist paramilitaries, the most notorious being the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) who behaved more like members of a jihadist terror organisation.

In the summer of 1992 the Bashir regime launched a massive military offensive that swept around the Nuba Mountains and pushed deep into southern Sudan. The SPLA was driven into Sudan's southern borderlands and could no longer offer help to the Nuba.



It is estimated that in 1992 alone, the Bashir regime mass murdered over 70,000 of the Nuba people. By 1993 hundreds of thousands of Nuba civilians had fled into mountain caves and villages. Those who did not escape were forced into “peace camps” where they were enslaved, tortured raped and starved. The SPLA tried several times to help their allies in the Nuba Mountains but didn’t manage to. In 1994 the Bashir regime began aerial bombing the places where Nuba civilians were hiding, and violently prevented humanitarian aid and the media from the area.

Entire Nuba communities were facing living conditions that went well beyond emergency humanitarian thresholds; **thousands were starving to death**. Preventable disease outbreaks had become more deadly than daily aerial bombings. The PDF prevented civilians from farming by repelling Nuba attempts to retake critical farming areas. These early years of the regime’s genocide against the Nuba people represent one of the darkest chapters of Sudanese history.

Thanks to the good relationships the Nuba leaders had built with moderate Arab tribes over decades, help came in the form of Arab tribesmen who, over the following years, risked their lives to smuggle food, medicine and other basics through to the mountains.

By 1995 the world was beginning to hear about the Nuba Genocide.

British journalist Julie Flint managed to slip into the Nuba Mountains and returned with a documentary film. World leaders were not moved to action by the film but many private

organisations were inspired to assist the Nuba people by smuggling relief by ground transports and small aircraft. These efforts did not make a big impact on the larger crisis, but the situations of many were improved during this time.

The Bashir regime's genocide against the Nuba people began to wane in 1998. Over the years of fighting, the Nuba soldiers, who knew the terrain by heart, had become highly motivated and battle-hardened, which began to exhaust the regime forces. Bashir was experiencing regional pressure to end the war in southern Sudan, and this started to have an impact on the Nuba Mountains as well. And then as the new century began, the world outside of Sudan began to pull together a plan to help end the crisis.

In November 2001, over a decade after the Nuba Mountains was cut off from the outside world, the United Nations began to airlift emergency humanitarian relief directly into the Nuba Mountains. In October 2002, the United States government passed the Sudan Peace Act, comprehensive legislation that dramatically increased American support to the southern Sudanese and Nuba cause. Underneath the Bush administration, the US government began providing direct humanitarian relief and confronting the Bashir regime on the international stage. The Sudan Peace Act finally declared that regime crimes amounted to genocide.

On January 9, 2005, the Bashir regime and the SPLA signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA secured a referendum vote on southern independence after an interim period of autonomy and provided solutions for a variety of other issues as well. A small UN peacekeeping and ceasefire monitoring force was deployed to the Nuba Mountains in June 2005. The war and genocide against the Nuba people had finally come to an end although the government were still in control of some areas.

On 15th April 2023, civil war broke out in Khartoum, Sudan. Tens of thousands of people have been murdered.

Once again the Nuba are facing increased challenges, with thousands fleeing to IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps or to Egypt.

The roads to the Nuba Mountains have been blocked and, although the SPLA are protecting people from attack, food is in very short supply and the Nuba people are on the verge of starvation.