

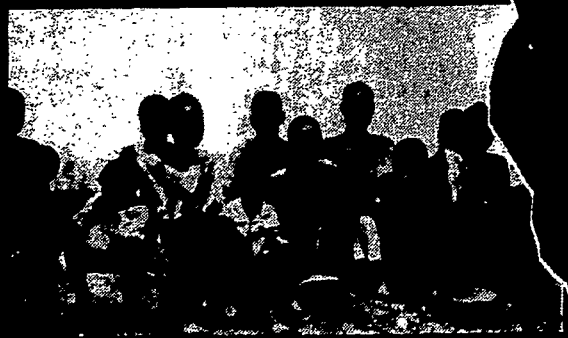


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Tom Price/CNS
Mossan sponsored



in front of the
Rumbek.

Sudan

The scenes have become so tragically familiar they are almost clichés.

Children with swollen bellies and feet, and matchstick arms and legs. Skeletal adults with vacant stares. Endless lines of people, bowls in hand, at feeding stations.

But the situation in Sudan is rapidly becoming more than just another famine, according to Msgr. Caesar Mazzolari, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Rumbek in southwestern Sudan, one of the nation's hardest-hit regions.

"It will be the biggest famine tragedy of the century if we don't take measures to stop it by next year," the monsignor predicted in an Aug. 7 telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier* from Nairobi, Kenya, where he is staying temporarily to help coordinate relief efforts.

Indeed, in July the United Nations' World Food Program estimated that 2.6 million people in Sudan are now in danger of starvation.

Their predicament is a product of a civil war that has raged on and off for 40 years and almost continuously since 1983.

Fighting has displaced hundreds of thousands of people from their homes and disrupted agriculture. That disruption, coupled with a drought in 1997, has led to a small harvest this year.

Meanwhile, relief efforts this summer are being hampered by continued outbreaks of fighting — despite a tenuous cease-fire — the theft of food by government and rebel forces, inadequate transportation and, ironically, heavy rains.

And the aid is simply too little too late, Msgr. Mazzolari contended.

"No matter what we do, we are trying to cure a wound that's much too large for international (agencies) or private donors to treat in a short time," he declared.

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STORY BY LEE STRONG