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| **Source 1** | Events 223, 233, 230 |
| **Two foreign aid workers kidnapped in Darfur** |  |
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| Gunmen kidnapped two foreign aid workers in Sudan's Darfur -- a French national and a Canadian -- as relief work becomes increasingly dangerous in the war-torn region, officials said on Sunday.   The two international staff of the Aide Medicale Internationale (AMI) were abducted at Ed el-Fursan in southern Darfur on Saturday night, said the French group, which has been targeted twice so far this year.   "There is one French and one Canadian," senior foreign ministry official Ali Yussif later told AFP. "The government is doing its best to free them."   The Sudanese Media Centre, which is close to Sudan's intelligence services, said the kidnappers were demanding a ransom, a report which the official would not confirm.   Two Sudanese staff of AMI were also kidnapped and later released, a local official said.   The workers were snatched on Saturday night from the group's offices south of South Darfur's capital Nyala and around 100 kilometres (65 miles) from the border with Chad, the source said, requesting anonymity.   AMI, without identifying its two missing staff, said it "strongly deplores this kidnapping of members of its team who work daily to improve the health of the local population."   The group, which has been providing medical relief in Ed el-Fursan since 2004, was spared from Khartoum's decision last month to expel several non-governmental organisations from Darfur.   "We were continuing our programme, we weren't targeted," said Frederic Mar, a spokesman for AMI.   French authorities were alerted and the foreign ministry in Paris set up a crisis response cell to deal with the kidnapping, saying it was acting because the incident involved a French NGO.   Sudan expelled 13 NGOs after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant on March 4 for President Omar al-Beshir for alleged war crimes including genocide in Darfur.   Two Sudanese workers for AMI were shot dead when their bus was attacked by men on horseback in February in southern Darfur. Four others were wounded in that attack.   On March 23, a Sudanese man working for a Canadian aid group was shot dead at his home in Darfur, reportedly because his attackers wanted his satellite telephone.   Four workers with Doctors Without Borders (MSF), three of them foreigners, were kidnapped at gunpoint from their Darfur home on March 11.   They were all released four days later, with no signs of violence or ransom payment, according to Sudanese and MSF officials.   That abduction was the first of international aid workers since civil war broke out in Darfur in 2003 and took place just 10 days after the ICC issued the arrest warrant for Beshir.   The Darfur conflict erupted in February 2003 when ethnic minority rebels took up arms against the Arab-dominated Khartoum government and its militia allies.   Over the past six years, the rebels have fractured into multiple movements and the war has widened into overlapping tribal conflicts, making the region increasingly dangerous for humanitarian relief efforts.   The United Nations says up to 300,000 people have died from the combined effects of war, famine and disease and about 2.7 million fled their homes. Sudan puts the death toll at 10,000. |