

*Tomo Križnar & Bojana Pivk Križnar*

## **UNOFFICIAL REPORT ON LEPROSY IN NUBA MOUNTAINS**

From our last visit: December 16 2019 – February 14 2020

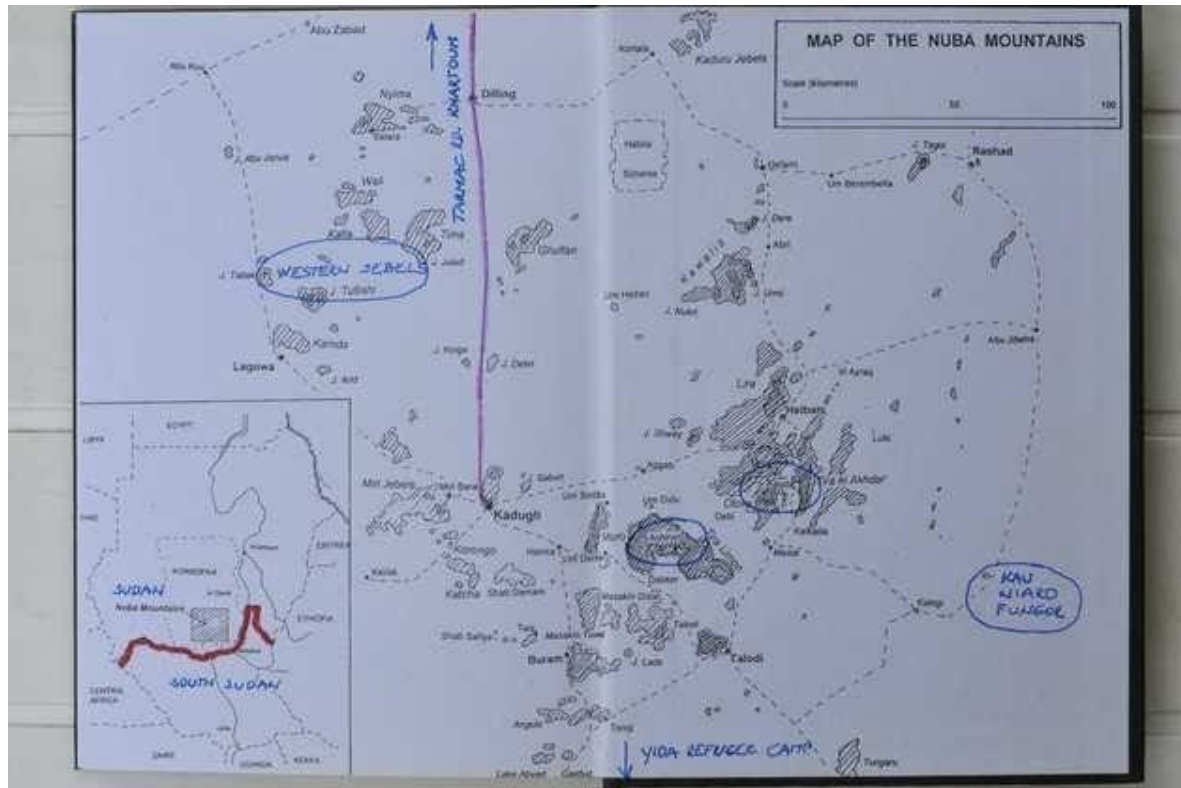
with special Focus on:

1. Western Jebels
2. Lomon & Acheron Mountains
3. Kauniaro
4. Komoganza, Blue Nile

### **BASIC INTRODUCTION:**

We have been recording and trying to count and register cases of leprosy in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile since December 2017. Since then, we have been trying to establish contacts with local actors and authorities on the ground, as well as in institutions in Slovenia, the European Union and UN agencies and all organizations and individuals who could rush to the aid of fellow human beings, rotting alive because of the ignored and unresolved political situation in Sudan. With this report, we appeal to all of you to read it and take responsibly to prevent and stop the senseless continuation of the suffering of innocent outcasts in mentioned areas. There exists anti-leprosy drugs - WHO treatment programs are being implemented all over the world - now they just need to be brought immediately to the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile, where the Sudan People Liberation Movement North (SPLM) is still fighting for basic human rights.





## BASIC CONCLUSIONS:

From our experience in the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile, lepers suffer the most in the most isolated and hard-to-reach areas where no non-governmental humanitarian organizations operate. These areas are: Acheron & Lomon Mountain, Western Jebels, Kauniaro and Komoganza in Blue Nile.

Therefore, we are committed to organise leprosy treatment programs first in this areas.

We are also committed to hire local medical assistants who are best acquainted with the local cultural conditions and specialities. Some of them are already organized by two hospitals that operate in the mountains and are trusted by the locals: the German Emergency Doctors Hospital in Luere near Kauda and the Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel, where also new medical assistants could be trained.

SPLA North Chairman Abdel Aziz will trusts only the help, that will be coming from the South and not from the North, so it is essential to enable visits by experienced foreign doctors and the supply of medicines for the treatment programs across the border from the Republic of South Sudan.

Photos: Bojana Pivk Križnar & Tomo Križnar

KAUDA December 2019

We arrived in the capital of Nuba Mountains Kauda on December 22. A week before the first UN agencies returned after nine years ago all of them - together with the Blue Helmets - left the indigenous Nuba in the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood and their Sudan state terrorism.



*This is the first team of WFP, UNICEF, WHO representatives posing with Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile government authorities in front of governor office in Kauda at historic date Monday, December 30.2020.*

The ministers of all different branches of the indigenous Nuba government and the leaders of native NGOs reported about the basic needs of the civilian population, liberated by SPLA North led by chairman Abdel Aziz al Hilo. Nobody spoke about shame and guilt and nobody was asking for forgiveness. Everybody was appearing happy and welcoming.

There was only one native speaker who mentioned racism as a possible answer on the question why did UN not deliver medicine and school materials to the native people of Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile for so long. That means for nine years. Nine years without any support.



Then the hosts lead the guests to the outside parked cars. We visited the local school, a medical and a woman centre. All of them near the capital Kauda and by far the best they have.



*There was not enough time to visit the worst facilities or institutions less than one hour away, which are hardly functioning or even do not exist at all.*



Then we all together had a meal in the governor's office. And after that it was time to go back to the airstrip and climb into the helicopter, that soon took off and flew the colourful group back to Kadugli and Khartoum.



What we noticed and what shocked us most was, that the departing guests actually knew nothing about history and the people they had been send for an access mission for and what special indigenous people they meet before they returned. From our though short communications with UN workers during lunch, we concluded, that nobody did learn anything more then indoctrinated by Sudan government propaganda, before they came for the first time to SPLA North controlled areas. Nobody, except Mark Stevens from WFP, who lead the team and has years of experiences working with foreign NGOs associated most closely with Nuba people before. Nothing about the history of this most ignored, marginalised, sacrificed and utterly forgotten land and its people. And also noting about South Sudan. We do not want to mention names, lets just illustrate, that one of the guests did even not know the last years report of his own organisation, in which was clearly written, that since the beginning of the civil war in South Sudan 2013 over 400.000 people died with millions of displaced persons and over 11 million suffering from hunger.

We should not be surprised that these UN agents did not know anything about basic anthropological facts of Nuba people. For example, how the so many here existing Nuba cultures fundamentally differ from native cultures of other indigenous people around them and how different they are even among themselves.

One of the first anthropologists who studied Nuba before World War 2, Franz Nadel from Austria, counted more than ninety nine tribes - all with quite or very different ways how they do things.

Nuba are the descendants of the victims of the great slave hunt which devastated the life of the native people south of Sahara, Sahel and the lands in the hearth of Africa centuries before the first European adventurers, who call themselves explorers, arrived.

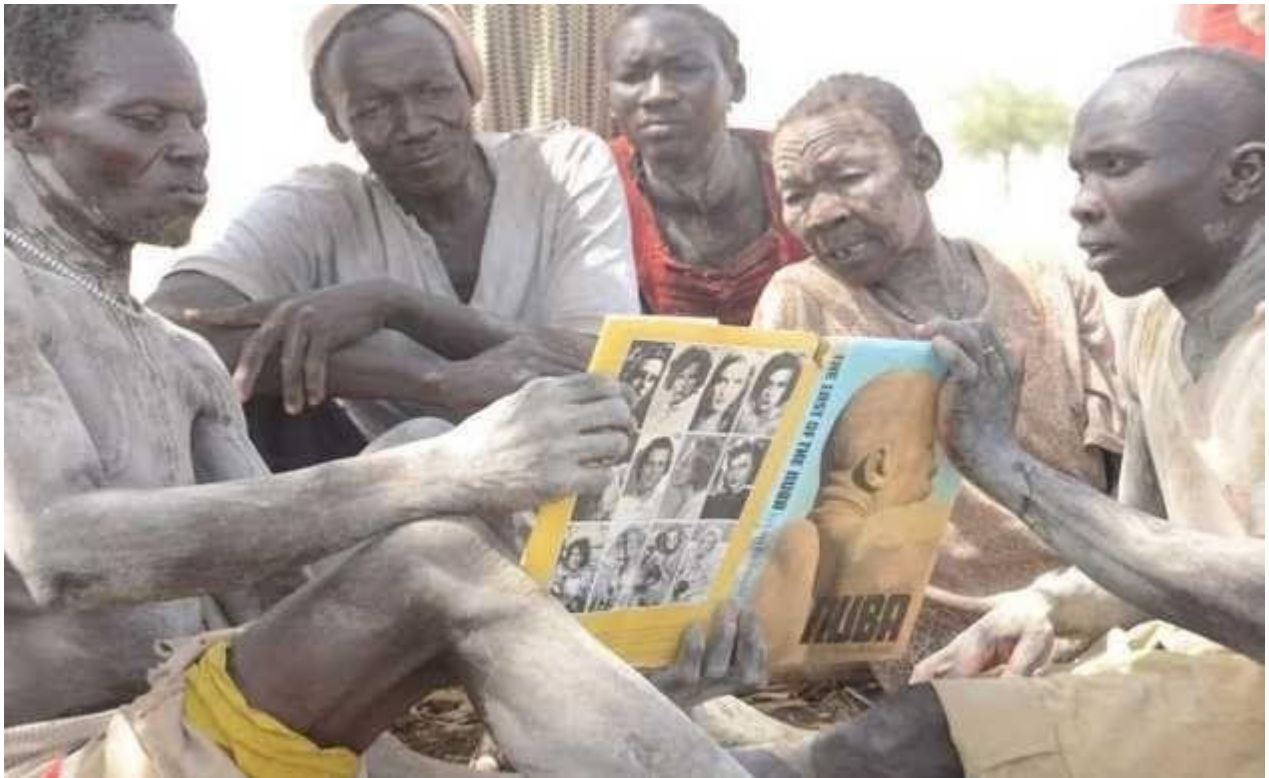
Nuba mountains was and still is a natural refuge for the hunted inhabitants from all around, the Nile valley and even from countries as far as are Chad and Central African Republic. A natural fortress, where fantastical eroded granite rocks of up to 1.300 m high mountains enabled easy defence and protection above the savannah. This granite holds water even in the heights of dry season. And the soil is most fertile cotton black soil. All history long there was enough water and food to survive all the passing hostile armies until they disappeared back to the countries of the Ottoman empire. So many different people from so many different cultures had to develop specific institutions of tolerance, acceptance and respect - a common culture similar to the common culture of some of today's big cities in the new world for example like Amsterdam or Sydney. Well known Nuba traditional wrestling remind us of Olympic games and is still organised between neighbouring tribes to use masculine overflow of adrenalin to replace wars and other human violence. But most of all significant characters for ninety nine Nuba tribes and cultures - living up until today on ninety nine tribal mountains - are also other ways of maintaining peace and stability. Beside colourful and magnificent communal meetings like »sibir«, where people eat, drink, dance and celebrate different passages in life and everybody and also members of other tribes is invited, there is also »nafir« - when people do all the hard boring agricultural work together from one home estate to the next. And then there is a traditional solidarity when some mountains with the tribes living there do not get enough seasonal rain and thus can not produce enough sorghum and hunger is very near. Then the more lucky members of other tribes with better climactic conditions brought their sorghum to help their fellow beings to survive, what prevents in-fighting for food and avoids tribal wars.

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I am studying Nuba cultures since I saw the famous book of the most famous German Nazi film director Leni Riefenstahl and my first visit in 1979, when I visited without clothes Mesakin Nuba, as naked as Nuba were back then. I adapted as much as I could to learn how different they were from my people in Central Europe. It was more than forty years ago when I developed deep respect of Nuba ways of living and



survival, of their perceptions and values, so inspiring, that it can not be sensed anywhere else in no other corner of our planet.



Many of us »havajas«, foreigners, who ever visited Nuba, are sharing the same experience, this is the believe, that Nuba are the nicest people we ever met. For us there are no other humans on Earth so morally clean and so pure.

Please see the pictures of Nuba from the British officer and photographer George Roger. This is the same man, famous for his photos of Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen immediately after liberation. He came to Nuba to recover from complete disappointment about the most primitive behaviour of his fellow Europeans in the great war. He is one of the founding fathers of the Agency Magnum, an organisation of the worldwide best photographers dedicated to prevent any possible future war without guns, but with photographs and their impact on masses. He was depressed in need to gain back trust in humanity. He left healed and de-traumatised. In his book »A village in Nuba Mountains« published in 1949 in France, he wrote that the native people who never encountered British colonialism and the impact of western cultural and indoctrination pass through life much better.



*Two photos from George Rodger book »Humanity and Inhumanity«. Nuba wrestlers and victims of Auschwitz concentration camp.*

The British did not stay long in Nuba mountains. They even tried to apply modern anthropology to discover weakness of Nuba cultures in order to force Nuba to work on cotton plantations and in spinning mills. When they discovered that Nuba are to self sufficient, to proud and to independent to work as modern slaves and, that they were joining other slave work-force only because of kind- and politeness, the Colonialists abandoned the whole project of exploitation and locked down the African part of Nuba Mountains as some sort of reservation. Nuba were prevented to go out, foreigners were not allowed to go in with the exception of missionaries. Everybody needed a permit that was difficult to get. Colonialists in Khartoum claimed that this regime was created “to protect the innocent and fragility of Nuba people”.

But when the British left in 1956, tree tribes from the Sudanese north, that consider themselves genuine Arabs where put in power in Khartoum and immediately continued oppression and exploitation of Nuba and from the Nuba uprising onward in the 80s also with the most cruel extermination, that was even worse as suggested by Alex de Waall in his book 1997 “Nuba of Sudan facing genocide”.

»Every soldier must cultivate his own food – but when I call you, you run and come and fight with me!« - this was the message of the resistance philosophy of Yousif Kuwa Maki, the founder of Nuba resistance SPLA (Sudan People Liberation Army),



which joined John Garang SPLA in South Sudan when the war for land, water, oil and slaves reached the mountains in 1985.

Because of Nuers and their leader Riack Machars rebellion against Dinka and their leader John Garang in SPLA ranks and soldiers in the south of Sudan, Nuba Mountains were from 1993 – 1996 practically completely sealed off the rest of the world. But when that siege from all sites ended with the end of Nuer rebellion, they joined Garang SPLA again, and we - not more then a handful of foreign human rights activist - started arriving for the first time by light air-planes carrying basic aid from Kenya, still noticed this resistance philosophy in practice. And we liked it. In fact we got deeply moved by it.

We got moved by the innocence of the still very indigenous native families, honesty, love for freedom, will for independence, determination to resist slavery with all means, tolerance among themselves the peasants and pastoralists, a special respect to each other, even among the members of Muslim and Christian and Pagan religions... And in the same time we got moved by the democratic leadership of Yusif Kuwa Maki, the teacher of Nuba, who thought Nuba self-respect as a way to neutralise the negative impact of Arab and Turkish slave hunters, among them the worst rapist of all, who wanted Nuba only to be slaves. Kuwa became also the teacher of some of us. And in my case, I was so impressed by Kuwa, who answered all my questions, so, that I recognize him as my second father, becoming the second father after my first one survived three years in Dachau, a Nazi death-camp in Hitler-Germany.

Instead of destroying indigenous cultures and traditional values with dictatorial power, so common in Sudan, Kuwa was teaching his Nuba to respect their heritage and spiritual values of their ancestors.



*The Founder of SPLM (Sudan People Liberation Movement) in Nuba Mountains Yousif Kuwa Makki. Lomon, 1997.*

This is why we tried to support Nuba with media. We wished that the Nuba way of resisting the worst enemies will become known to all humanity.

I even wish that the same pattern of resistance will become the philosophy of the United Nations.

We told this in our books and documentary films, articles and lectures in the Western world.

Nuba survived three years of practically complete isolation 1974-77 on their own, independently producing food and fighting in solidarity, helping each other, sharing everything. This is why the fanatical Islamist, the Jihadists, the foreign mercenaries, the militias and even the Sudanese army did not succeed to exterminate them from the mountains.

But this sort of revolution is efficient mainly in war. When peace came and foreign aid flew in, this traditional way of resistance could hardly stop the policy of "divide and rule". It does not provide protection against the development of elitism and new marginalisation.

We saw this happening when Joint military commission (JMC), a special peace monitoring group, whose professional military observers coming from USA, Europe, Australia and New Zealand entered the SPLA held areas in Nuba Mountains after Sudan government and resistance leader Abdel Aziz al Hillo signed a cease fire-agreement in Switzerland in January 2002.

Afterwards even some Nuba got rich by adapting to the foreigners. But most of the Nuba far away from Kauda did not gain anything from all the so called humanitarian aid of so many international NGOs in the time of JMC that ended with the new war in June 2011 after Sudan split up in two parts.

So this is a warning for all of the International Agencies and NGOs returning to Nuba Mountains after nine years of absence.



2011 poster of Chairman SPLM North Abdel Aziz al Hilu - walking in the footsteps of Yousif Kuwa Maki.

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When at December 2019 the UN team left, they promised again to come back and start the programs to support native people in Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile with food and medical aid and educational facilities in two weeks. They will bring anti lepra medicine and start programs to eliminate leprosy from the mountains.

»We do not need food now!« was the comment of many Nuba we talked to in next days. »We are just after harvest and have enough own food!«

»We are farmers. Every one over here knows how to cultivate and produce sorghum, beans, peanuts, tomatoes... What we really need now is medicine, schooling and ... development.«

»And peace!«

»We need secularisation of religion and state. Or Independence.«

“How here - on this geostrategic crossroads – peace can be achieved?”



## KAUNIARO

Bojana and me asked Nuba chairman Abdel Aziz al Hilu to help us to visit Kauniaro, the most eastern and the even by local standards most marginalised part of Nuba Mountains, because we believe, that the former JMC approach has to be abandoned in order to avoid the same mistakes made 2002 – 2011: »The once Last must now become the First«. This means, that the Aid of UN agencies and NGOs that will come to Nuba Mountains, after a peace agreement between the Sudanese new Transitional government, the Nuba military and Civil resistance will be signed and also an agreement found, about how the aid will be allowed to be distributed in the eastern mountains and that the aid must primarily reach the now most forgotten and neglected and most vulnerable and most suffering native Nuba, before it will be distributed to Kauda or somewhere else.

This is also in accordance with the will of ordinary and of good willing foreign donors, who always demand, that people suffering worst must be helped first, before the people in lesser need receive aid.

In the winter of 1998 I visited Kau, Niaro, Fungor and Verni by bicycle on my own. Back than all four Nuba tribes - already world-famous because of Leni Riefenstahl's book »The People of Kau« - were conquered by Sudanese army after Islamists in Khartoum got frustrated observing traditional nakedness and pagan spiritual practices, that were pictured in Leni Riefenstahl's book. In the 70s the progressive but in the same time dictator-like President Nimeiri send militias, holding in one hand the Holy Koran and in the other a AK-47 Kalashnikov, to convert the naked pagans - regarded as being “a shame” for Sudan - into proper Muslims as President Nimeiri became more and more influenced by the Muslim brotherhood from Egypt. In 1998 I discovered, that all the specific Nuba culture was systematically eradicate, most of all man pictured in Leni Riefenstahl's book were killed and the survived young man already recruited by the Popular Defence Forces, fighting their brothers in SPLA west of Kauniaro to enforce Khartoum's plans of structural demographical changes.

For more information please see the documentary film »Nuba, Pure People« (TV Slovenia 2000, directed by Maja Weiss & Tomo Križnar).



*Starving Kauniaro children eating bush food (»lilob«), the only food available in the village of Kua end of May 2015.*

When I returned to Kauniaro after five years, in May 2015, four years after the new war in Nuba Mountains began, Nuba of Kauniaro were already liberated by SPLA. I was helped by a SPLA special resupply convoy that brought the first American evangelical preachers.



*American Evangelist missionaries distributing sorghum in Verni, Kauniaro, May 2015.*

For the first time in known history humanitarian aid was delivered to the native people in Kauniaro, who were so poor and so sick, I did not see anywhere else in no other suffering part of the world.



*The one and only medical centre in Kau, receiving medicine from American missionaries. May 2015.*

Some of them were fleeing from death and starvation, crossing the border into the land of Shiluks on the Nile and settled on the outskirts of Kodok town. But UNHCR did not want to grant the Nuba from Kauniaro a refugee status, claiming that they were settling illegally, because refugee camps were not allowed here. UN-Refugee camps for Nuba are organised five hundred km west in Yida and Ajuang Thok. But Kauniaro Nuba were too weak to be able to walk five hundred kilometres and cross the border with both Sudans, or walk for weeks and months inside Sudan with Sudan soldiers and militias attacking, stealing, killing and raping them. What we hear from refugees who did succeed to come to Ajuang Thok in late 2019 is, that most of people in Kauniaro are still sick and hungry. Nothing much changed since our last expedition in 2015 with over hundred soldiers on two big military trucks and a speedy Toyota-Pickup with mounted anti aircraft machine guns on top for protection against rebelling south Sudanese soldiers of Riak Machar, who are camping on the brinks of flooded swamps, with undrinkable water polluted from wild animals and hiding in a jungle of thorny trees, through which



we had with axes and machetes to cut our way out more than a week long before we reached the first rocky mountains of Kauniaro.



*SPLA North soldiers bringing bad news to the civilians in Kauniaro. May 2015.*

Bojana and I wanted to go to Kauniaro just before New Year 2017 to provide new footages and proof of the desasterous situation to convince UN-agencies and NGOs to start the distribution of most urgent aid in Kauniaro first. But like in the past years – actually for three years in a row - our permit and necessary escort was not granted by Chairman Abdel Aziz, saying that the way is still to dangerous for travel.

*Omda from Kau and his family with Leni Riefenstahl's book »The People of Kau«, May 2015.*



#### LOMON AND ACHERON MOUNTAINS 2017 & 2018

Instead of travelling to Kauniaro in December 2017, Abdel Aziz advised us to climb on two of the highest and also these days most quite mountains, Lomon and Changaro, in the centre of SPLA held territories, where Yousif Kuwa in 1985 established his first resistance headquarter and training camp for native Nuba soldiers. We came to film mass hunger, but then on one very cold morning, we were shocked to see through the lenses of our cameras for the first time people with no fingers on their hands or legs, with no ears or eyes. We found ourselves among the lepers.



*Komi with leprosy disease in front of the Coptic Church on top of Acheron Mountain.*

This rough experience completely shocked us. The awareness, that we are part of a human community, that has in abundance medicine and programs to fight this middle age sickness, transmitted by a bacteria similar to the ones, that are spreading tuberculosis, but that this very same human community does nothing to stop the live rotting of fellow humans and does not care to send medical professionals, who are paid to control and eliminate this medieval plague, completely changed our focus.

We spent Christmas 2017 with lepers. Since then we are working to get WHO involved in Nuba Mountains with an anti-Leprosy program.





June 2018 WHO general secretary Dr. Tedros answered the Slovenian minister for Health, that he can not send UN-workers to Nuba because Khartoum does not allow it.

We contacted all kinds of organisations working with leprosy in other parts of the world and received similar answers. Novartis, that is producing and distributing anti-leper antibiotics for free answered, that they can deliver medicine to the WHO and their national representatives only. On the end we tried to buy medicine on the black markets of Uganda and South Sudan – but we learned, that this is not only illegal, but also unfair, because there is a general lack of medicine and to get medicine for leprosy-treatment we eventually were taking it away from these, who were depending on it – what means, that the already treated leprosy patients would run out of their medication threatening their survival.

We have been desperate until President Omar Beshirs kleptocracy fell last year. In September 2019 Slovenian Ministry for Foreign Affairs where we lobbied in the same time, as at the Institute for Public Health and Ministry for Health, finally decided to donate 30.000 Euros to fight leprosy in Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile in Sudan under SPLA North.

We were told, that by Slovenian law donations from the Government can be given directly to WHO only.

We informed our administration immediately about the distrust we share with Nuba about UN agencies in general, stressing, that WHO has had never done anything in

the two liberated areas in Nuba Mountains or Blue Nile. We recommended to send the donation of Slovenian taxpayers straight to a German NGO who we do trust, because they did not betray Nuba, when all others left when the new war started June 2011. This NGO is known as the German Emergency Doctors (GED) or Cap Anamur. In my opinion they represent the best of European humanism. With a by GED rented air plane I entered SPLA Nuba Mountains in august 1998, after I did not succeed to get there by bicycle or any other way. GED has a small hidden hospital, that was also helping leprosy patients until the German government stopped delivering them anti-leprosy medicine in that very same June 2011. They are ready to start their leprosy aid again, but they depend on the delivery of Novartis antibiotics as well as on some donations, to start educating local health workers, that will diagnose leprosy and supervise the therapy that must be applied to the patients day by day.



*Dr. Bento Goeken at Ljubljana meeting with the Slovenian representative in WHO Dr. Vesna Petrič and respected colleges from Ministry for Foreign Affairs, November 13th 2020. We decided to work together to get medicine to Nuba.*

Like in the whole world also in my small country Slovenia the common public is still not recovering from common mistrust of all global institutions, that every body knows now are not organised to meet the conditions on our planet to be able to serve the needs of our time. Donations are not popular our-days – and if the WHO will abuse Slovenian taxpayers money and not spent the donation with most efficient results - the last hope for working together and solidarity on our common problems will be destroyed, maybe once and forever. The glue will disappear and particles will fell apart





Because Abdel Aziz told us year after year that it is not safe enough we never succeeded to visit Western Jebels until this last January. To reach there you have to cross the main tarmac road Kadugli – Dilling, that is under control of the Sudanese army, constantly patrolling up and down with their Toyota's loaded with heavy guns and nervous young man in the uniforms of Janjaweed militias. December 2019 Abdel Aziz wrote to us from negotiations in Juba immediately after UN left and New Year celebrations began, that we need to ask governor Alnour Salih about crossing this very road. In an audience Governor Salih and his deputy told us, that a crossing of that scary road to the Western side of SPLA controlled lands is possible by motorbikes only. But he could not provide us two motorbikes with two trusty drivers. We should wait. But we could not wait because Bojana had to return home soon. She is not only a volunteer but also a mother of a teenager girl ... and a schoolteacher. She had to fly January 9<sup>th</sup> from Nuba refuge settlement Yida, 120 km away across the border inside South Sudan, with an air-plane of American protestant humanitarian organisation Samaritan Purse to Juba. And next she had to take a bus to Kampala, a ride for fourteen hours, before she can reach the airport in Entebbe.



*Governor of Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile Salih with his family.*

It was our Nuba friend Jakob Williams from Kauda who organised the needed transport. But one motorbike only. The other one was his own. It was him who was ready to leave the New Year celebrations in the capital of Kauda and his wonderful wife and his

daughter and two sons, to lead us to Western Jebels. The price to rent one motorbike was high. We had to pay eight hundred Euros for ten days. Petrol not included.



*Our old friend Jakob Williams guiding us to Western Jebels, January 2020.*

Not many foreigners who ever visited SPLA North Nuba Mountains crossed that road. It is tough. You have to join a convoy of traders all on motorbikes, that are very experienced because they are driving to the other side often.

*We have to travel together escorted by as many guns as possible.*





They drive from the surrounding hills down to the tarmac with full speed. In the early darkness, without seeing well. On a very bad road. Actually not a road, it is just a trail. In fact a speedway track you use because there is no other way. Everybody is rushing.



Nobody is looking back, everybody is competing on its own. If someone would stop to help somebody behind, he may not be able to make it through, because the Sudanese military and militia Toyota's are somewhere around. We saw them. Not on our first crossing but on the way back next week. Two SPLA soldiers with machine guns suddenly appeared, escorting us by foot left and right, me driving the motorbike through the bush toward the crossing point, Bojana sitting behind, a Sudanese military Toyota pickup unpredictably appeared some ten meters in front, a mirage passing smoothly on a dark oily flat straight road.

I do not know if they saw us. We definitely did not want to meet them, so we pretended that they are not there, passing the road in a hurry after a while.

Up till now we do not know if things went normal or not. Did maybe the Nuba further up the tarmac road, who is every evening sending informations by his mobile phone, if there is some Sudanese military car in sight and the crossing safe or not, giving the command to go ahead, made a mistake. But now we did not need to know nothing

else then just to drive. Run, almost blind in the twilight, up the hill, as fast as we could, not daring to look back.

I do not feel the need to pray. I believe if one does good things, one does not need to pray. Good actions are enough eventually to reach the paradise. Because the paradise is just a state of mind. We are doing good things, we are trying to reach the lepers in Western Jebels. We wish to film them and hand the footages to the UN in support of the best of them, the ones, who still feel empathy, to come and help the ignored, forgotten and suffering ones with medicine and the light of Enlightenment.

No lights here! All lights in the liberated areas after the road crossing are prohibited, even torches. Because the Janjaweed, the Jihadists, the Janizars of the Omar Bashir government are still present. They are there in Khartoum and everywhere else. The Muslim Brotherhood will not leave Sudan. Sudan is their war pray since the Great Mahdia (1881-1898), who resisted the Christian missionaries, who on the one hand declared war on slavery, but on the other had the mission to impose a new, a colonial type of slavery by themselves. The first missionary ever reaching this part of Africa was the Slovenian hero and scientist Ignacious Knoblehar; 1848 he brought Christianity far up the Nile in Sudan, up to the cataracts near the today's border with Uganda and is today known in both Sudans not only as the agent of the Holly father in Rome, but also as an Austro-Hungarian agent, a representative of the most enlightened Emperor Franz Joseph, who also wanted to have his share in The Scramble for Africa, much before the famous and most real Scramble for Africa began. This time with French and British and Italian hero explorers, leading into a new, special imperialistic enslavement of the whole »Black continent«, for the need of the new Industrial Revolution of the West.

It was all quite and beautiful on the other site after the leading motorbike with Jakob ahead, the other and me with Bojana following, crossed the black cotton soil fields still covered by the yet not collected sorghum storks. Then we stopped after an hour or so at the first tea shop by the track, still open late in the night. We ate »full«, this is backed beans with chicken and plain bread and drunk hot sweet tea with mint and fell asleep, with the feeling of complete satisfaction with the world and all its inhabitants.

Next day we met the SPLM-North deputy governor Godi Ramboy, who gave us full support for our investigation into the struggling of Nuba with leprosy in order to survive in Western Jebels.





*In the office of the Deputy Governor of Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile Godi Ramboy.*

During our investigation we were guided by Walid Ahmed, the medical assistant in charge all Health in Western Jebels, a huge area bordering Darfur and without one single doctor. All foreign organisation left after 2011. Samaritan Purse returned and left again when their compound was burned. Since December 31th even the German Emergency Doctors stooped supporting two field clinics with medicine. There was no medicine in the beginning of January left. No pain killers. No antibiotics. No bandages. No nothing. Nothing of nothing.



*The deputy governor ordered his medical assistant Walid Ahmed to escort us to the leprosy patients in Western Jebels, one of them Kaka Atom Arah (right side of the picture).*

Guided by the governor assistants we motorbiked together for a week, driving on goat paths, meandering between rocky mountains, through extremely poor villages, all far apart, no cars or trucks ever in sight. We met tens and tens of lepers and TB patients in all kinds of tough conditions without any medical care. We heard tens and tens of stories about negligence, ignorance and arrogance.



*Wife and husband Musa Arkain and Zanab Musa.*



On the last day we came to the following conclusion: foreign humanitarian organisations left this people because of Islam controlling most of local people. A somehow special Islam. A sort of »Coca Cola Islam« designed especially for the Nuba people so far north on the border with Sudanese tribes, who are believing, that they are Arabs, because of tiny benefits they get, when they take Arab identity. Identity in Sudan is a matter of conditions. Mostly the ones, that see an opportunity to get some material advantages, claim to be of Arab identity. All Sudanese people are Africans, they are born in Africa and they are dark. But only the ones, that are getting money to work for the interests of an institution called Arab Gathering, are considering themselves as Arabs.

With “Coca Cola Islam” we understand a powder of Islam, created specially for the survivors of the Great Slave Hunt. As it is specific for the Nuba from the Blue Nile, so it is true also for the Muslim Nuba in Western Jebels: a special combination of believes, that make believers accepting whatever is happening to them. It is all happening by the will of god. Even the foreign organisations left them because of the will of Allah.



*Warsile Nowai with her family and friends.*

It is not fair to compare people in Western Jebels with fanatics of any other stock, especially not with militant ones. The native people we met were the most hospitable and friendly. Every one we met, driving on motorbikes through narrow paths through the bush, showed us a string of white pearls like teeth as a smile, immediately recognising

the two foreigners in front of them. But what is obvious is, that they lost their indigenous cultures, which are now in the New struggle for souls in Sudan being replaced by far more »Coca Cola Islam« then by »Wahhabi Christianity« or »Fundamentalist Humanism« we believe to be fascist-like. People of Western Jebels had been isolated from the rest of humanity all the years of this last and all the previous wars, especially from the contacts with the broader non Sudanese world. We feel they are very traumatised and so they need special care.



*The hands of Kalmala Kafi Abuzma, January 2020.*

Lets your respected organisations come back with special respect and limitless care.

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January 9th the biggest event in the recent history of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile took place. The Sudanese Prime minister Hamdok, together with chairman Abdel Aziz al Hilu, representatives of the Troika (USA, Britain, Norway) and UNHCR, visited Kauda.



*Chairman SPLM Abdel Aziz al Hilu, UNHCR representative and Sudanese Prime Minister Abdala Hamdok on Kauda airstrip, January 9th 2020.*

We could not be present because I had to drive Bojana by motorbike to Yida. But our friend Jakob William filmed with one of our cameras everything in detail and helped after my return to translate all speeches, together with the introductory speech of chairman Abdel Aziz, who explained what SPLA North under his guidance is negotiating with Sudan Transitional government in Juba about and the speeches of special UN-representatives and other international guests.

Please see selected footages included. Find out by yourself directly about the political situation in Nuba and in Khartoum from them:



Feel the power of the SPLA North also in the manifestation of its soldiers with their weapons as a message they send to the generals of ex-dictator Omar Bashir in Khartoum and the protesters, who are now partly represented in the government, that the freedom fighters from Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile are stronger then ever and, that they do not think to give up their struggle to gain respect now and forever.

None of this footages was honestly distributed and published in the main stream media around the world although Sudan media came and left with the same helicopter as Prime minister Hamdok, UN-representatives and the Troika.

What probably surprised the visitors was the fact, that after the ceremony the masses peacefully left the airstrip and returned home. Nobody in the crowd went begging for UNHCR sorghum stored in big white tents close by.

»We thanks for the food, but we do not need food now. We need a political solution. We need to address the deepest rooted problem of Sudan. This is racism. We need a new Sudan and the separation of state and religion in Sudan – or independence from Sudan«!

\*\*\*

Without Bojana I asked once again the governor to help me to visit Kauniaro. He replied that there is still too much water on the way from south for a military convoy and that we need to wait until May or June. And that walking straight from refugee camp Ajuang Thok could take more then then days through dry land without clean drinking water – this can be done only in the rain season, which usually starts in May or June.

It was in that very time, in mid January 2020, when I send the following mail to WFP in Khartoum, asking Mark Stevens to organise a visit to Kauniaro and fly there together with with a WFP helicopter:

*Kauniaro*

*Jan 14, 2020, 10:09 AM*

*from: tomo kriznar, [tomo.kriznar@gmail.com](mailto:tomo.kriznar@gmail.com)*

*to: mark.stevens, [mark.stevens@wfp.org](mailto:mark.stevens@wfp.org)*

*Abdalaziz Adam alHilu*

*bojana pivk, [pivkbojana@gmail.com](mailto:pivkbojana@gmail.com)*

*Klemen Mihelic, [klemen.mihelic@compress.si](mailto:klemen.mihelic@compress.si)*



*“Dear Mark,*

*I am writing to you because you are the only one in UN last mission to Nuba that I know for same years. And also because you always supported my wife and my filming and reporting from Nuba and Blue Nile.*

*Kauniaro is hungry and need medicine and school attention more then any other place mentioned to you in Nuba speeches before Christmas.*

*I visited Kauniaro on an illegal bicycle trip when was under GoS in 1998. I sow disaster - comparing to what was illustrated in the book The People of Kau by Leni Riefestahl in 70s. It was not better in 2015 under SPLA North when I returned in a convoy with com. Salih Atlan. Nearly total Isolation, marginalisation even by Nuba standards, common decay as result ... this facts are al calling to react. As a humanitarian I see Kauniaro need to get priority first. First Kau-niario where people suffering the most, then Western jebels - from where my wife Bojana and me returned after ten days motorbike trip last wensday.*

*Yes, Western Jebels are left with SP suplied medicine only (after GED decided that after December 31 2019 their support finished). People there fear that nobody can control Janjaweeded (Baggara) even if there once will be political will. We filmed leprosy - open wounds. We could not count number of cases, but deputy governor promised to get the numbers and necessary data in the next tree months.*

*I sow leprosy in Kau-niario in 2015 more then on the top of Lomon and Acheron mountains the last two years. It is easy to go this two mountains - but it looks impossible to me to go to Kau-niario. Chairmen Abdel Aziz last night answered that Bojana and me we can not go walking neither by bike because it is not safe enough - peace agreement has not been made yet.*

*Aziz supported our filming in Lomon and Acheron. With photos and short film on leprosy there we was with the Slovenian Health minister to approach WHO general director dr. Tedros. Before replacement of Omar Beshir in Khartoum he answered in may 2018 that he can not start an anti leprosy program in Nuba and Blue Nile Komoganza (where we also video and photo documented leprosy cases) because he can not risk the lies of his employees. This is why Bojana and me asked Slovenian ministry for foreign affairs to support an independent program illegally. 30.000 Euros was organised to be donated to GED in November 2018. With "great revolution" starting December 2018 we all wait. We wait until September last year when German ministry for health called Slovenian ministry for health and offered money to fight leprosy in*



*Nuba and Blue Nile too. We invited head of GED to Ljubljana end of October last year and call in an video conference the head of WHO in Khartoum dr. Al Gasseer. She promised to visit areas with leprosy. This is why Slovenian Ministry for Foreign Affairs send 30.000 EUR to start anti leprosy program in Nuba and Blue Nile to WHO. German ministry for foreign affairs promised to donate more money, German leprosy program promised to cooperate with professional assistance and GED promised to organise the start in the field.*

*Media and common public in Slovenia applauded.*

*Now we are waiting action.*

*But Aziz last night wrote that will take time before the money being send to Khartoum will materialise as healing for leprosy suffering in Kauniaro.*

*Mark this is why I am sending you now this mail. Please can you organise WHO helicopter to Kauniaro? Can we all go, can I fly with you? World need footages of the Riefenstahl "super human bodies" forgotten on bookshelves of western artists and anthropologists . I believe, if seen how they look today - rotting with leprosy alive, broader public may find a bigger interest to look for an answer why, why suffering is continuing.*

*Aziz informed last night that there is a convoy to resupply to Kauniaro every year once. If I can wait I am welcome.*

*This year a lot of rain fall on South Sudan. There are lakes on the way convoy can not pass until may at least. I remember how we struggled on big trucks through swamps even end of may in 2015.*

*I am sure, donors wish to support - not the first ones in the line of suffering, they want to help the last ones of the last ones, first too.*

*Mark, thank you for your answer in advance.*

*With respect. Tomo Kriznar, [www.TomoKriznar.com](http://www.TomoKriznar.com)”*



*WFP Mark Stevens during his speech to SPLM/A North in Kauda, December 30th 2019.*

\*\*\*

After a week of waiting for an answer - and there was still no answer - Jacob took me to the catholic hospital Mother of Mercy.

This is the second in Nuba mountains established hospital, founded in the peace time between the wars 1985 and 2002. It is located in Gidel, a tree hours walk across the mountain east of Kauda or one hour drive by road through savannah around the Kauda-mountain. It was founded by bishop Macram Gassis of El Obeid, who left Nuba in the beginning of the previous war and returned when cease fire was agreed upon after 2002. With donations of his American sympathisers he built the second hospital in Nuba, who is more known in the west because it is lead by the American surgeon Dr. Tom Catena. He married a local Nuba woman and did not leave the place even when the Sudanese government bombed him with Ukrainian made Antonovs. All this can be seen in the documentary “The Hearth of Nuba”.

Please see trailer at: <https://www.sheencenter.org/shows/nuba/>



*Sister Cecilia, Dr. Tom, Jacob and visitors from abroad in the Hospital Mother of Mercy, Gidel.*

Many Nuba believe Dr. Tom is a saint.

I was visiting and interviewing Dr. Tom every year since 2011, when the new war started. Two years ago I meet with him Sister Cecilia. After I told them where Bojana and me encountered leprosy, she immediately expressed her wish to go with us to count leprosy-cases in the mountains of Lomon and Acheron, south of the hospital and only a two to tree days walk or a fife to six hours drive away. Sister Cecilia is from South Sudan, where she was working all her professional live also with leprosy patients. She took me to a bit separated corner of the hospital, where she introduced me to a dozen of not bad looking patients with leprosy. Last year she could not leave the hospital, because Dr. Tom was away, building a new hospital in Armenia, but this year she is ready to leave with us in tree days.





*Leprosy patients in the hospital Mother of Mercy, Jan. 2019.*

Both, Dr. Tom and Sister Cecilia asked for help to get antibiotics against tuberculosis. They said they are nearly out of stock.

This is the moment when I wrote a mail to all of WHO, WHP and UNICEF addresses I found on my mailing list:

*MOTHER OF MERCY HOSPITAL IN NUBA Mwww.sheencenter.orgND LEPRnubaD  
tomo kriznar <tomo.kriznar@gmail.com>  
Jan 18, 2020, 5:45 AM*

*to Naeema, Hoda, bernd.goeken@cap-anamur.org, Burkard, Laxmikant,  
Dagmar.Reitenbach@bmg.bund.de, EM, Betigel, Annette, Imadeldin, Olushayo,  
pivkbojana@gmail.com, Polonca.Mrvar@gov.si, Aiga, Saskia, Anita, me, Vesna-  
Kerstin.Petric@gov.si, mark.stevens@wfp.org, Abdalaziz, bcc: tom.catena, bcc:  
sranitacecilia, bcc: Alexander, bcc: Maja, bcc: Klemen, bcc: uros.vajgl, bcc: bostjan,  
bcc: Milinkovic, bcc: Erik, bcc: helena.drnovsek, bcc: Vid, bcc: Vito, bcc: Ingo, bcc:  
Miglar*

*Dear all of you who still care.*

*I was completely shocked with what I see and heard! When I visited Dr. Tom Catena and sister Cecilia in the over crowded Hospital of The Mother of Mercy in Gidel yesterday at noon. Although I am used and was emotionally prepared on the suffering I was*

*immediately out of my mind by the way how desperately sister Cecilia and Dr. Tom Catena asked to help the hospital to get medicine against TB and leprosy.*

*The Hospital run out of it, they have nearly none left and they can not get medicine fast enough yet.*

*We know that if the patients abruptly stop using antibiotics – all the previous months of day after day controlled using is in vain. The bacteria can adapt and develop in to a new form ...*

*The hospital is overcrowded because new and new patients are coming not only from the SPLA North Abdel Aziz controlled Nuba Mountains – but also from the other site. From the government of Sudan sites of Nuba Mountains., and also further. I spoke with man and woman and children who arrived from Kadugli and even Gezira, which is far north between two Niles. And El Obeid, and even Khartoum. And also from the south, from across the border from the new Republic of South Sudan, from Phariang in Unity state. All they said they are attracted to suffer to cross the bush land and mountains with practically no roads because every body knows that Dr. Tom helps everybody, and that he and his people do not work for money, and they are the most professional in the whole of Sudan. And more and something very important - they trust because they know that Hospital Mother of Mercy together with the Hospital of German Emergency doctors is the most devoted to patients in Sudan.*

*I understand the sick and suffering people why they feel hope in the Hospital of The Mother of Mercy in Gidel and the hospital of German Emergency doctors, the another of the two small and the only two hospitals in an area not much smaller then the old Yugoslavia with more then two million people. They trust they will get best possible help because this two institutions did not left them when new war started in the mountains in June 2011.*

*Not like agencies from World Health Organisation, World Food Program to UNICEF who left and silently betrayed their human mission and the Nuba and the ingenious people of Blue Nile once the separation and the independence of the South Sudan was declared and the Islamic military dictatorship of Omar Hassan and his Muslim Brotherhood in Khartoum started what they announced well ahead they will do in case the south will – with support of their foreign godfathers – vote to separate with water, good soil and minerals reach land from the north.*

*I understand why indigenious people from near and far away do trust the Hospital of The Mother of Mercy and the German Emergency doctors hospital in Germany better known as Cape Anamur – because I was bombed and haunted by mad kleptocracy from Khartoum together with doctors, sisters and assistants in Nuba ... myself all this years thereafter.*

*But Nuba they do forgive!*

*Incredibly easy they accept back all, even their enemy!*

*It is in their culture. it is because of their indigenous values. They do forgive and forget because of The way of traditional survival of their ancestors ...*

\*\*\*

*»Why you send 30.000 EUR to WHO in Khartoum?!« screamed sister Cecilia on me yesterday. »It will never reach here! Everybody know this! Why your government did not send donation straight to us, or German doctors? To us - working in the field!«*

*Yes! I fear that too. Namely that 30.000 EUR Slovenian Minister for Foreign Affairs located and donated to WHO will never materialise in the form of the program to heal leprosy in Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. But in Slovenia we have the law - Ministry for Foreign Affairs can not send any money to NGOs without tender, its representative Uroš Vajgl convinced me that we can not avoid WHO at all tough we heard from WHO officials in Ljubljana that their usual provision is 19.2%.*

*My wife Bojana and me - the old friend of Nuba since even before the beginning of the resistance of noble teacher and founder of SPLA com. Yousif Kuwa Maki, me known in Nuba Mountains as »Tomo Kuku« and among the staffs in NGOs coming back now after the »great changes« in the north as »Tomo Greasy« – we started filming cases of leprosy on the top of Lomon and Acheron mountains for Christmas December 2017. With footages we succeeded to convince Slovenian government, Ministry for Health and Ministry for Foreign Affairs to react. With that horrible photos and teaser edited for our new documentary film half year later, in may 2018, our minister visited general director WHO Dr. Tedros in Geneva and demand action. Dr. Tedros answered he can not risk the lives of his personal to visit the land Khartoum at that time prohibits to. We searched then to help to stop because of the war, hunger, stress and common neglect spreading leprosy - illegal. We tried to buy medicine on black markets somewhere else in Africa. But we learned that the the tree antibiotics produced by Novartis and all donated to WHO for free are all under control of WHO. To start an independent program we would need to get antibiotics from patients who need them for their own sake. To safe some - we would need to kill same.*

*Then Omar Bashir lost power and the new government in Sudan promised to cooperate.*

*In an video conference on Slovenian Health Ministry in Ljubljana end of November last year attended by Dr. Bento Goeken, head of German Emergency doctors and followed among others on Skype by Mr. Burkard Koemm from DAHW (German leprosy and TB programme) and Mr. Dagmar Reitenbach from German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ms Dr. Naeema Al Gasseer, representative of WHO in Khartoum expressedthankfulness*



*for Slovenian initiative and donation and promoted the willingness and readiness of the new government of Sudan to help the suffering people in all accessible lands of Sudan. We filmed all. We have it all on external discs. Before the end of 2019 Ms. Dr. Naeema Al Gasseer was replaced by Doctor Hoda Atta.*

*Abdul Baseer Qureshi, representative of WHO in Khartoum who landed (in the first WFP air-plane after nine years since all UN agencies left) before Christmas on Kauda airstrip, he told us he do not know nothing of Slovenian initiative to fight leprosy in Nuba and 30.000 donated Euros.*

*\*\*\**

*I am writing this in Nuba Rehabilitation Relief Development Organisation here in Kuda this morning. Together with native staff I am waiting WFP, WHO, UNICEF ... to come back soon. As soon as possible,. ASAP please. Thank you to take time and patience to read this my mail in my bad English. I beg you together with sister Cecilia, Dr. Tom and hundreds of patients and thousands of of common people, please bring antibiotics to fight TB and leprosy with you.*

*Thank you.*

*And please know, that Gidel and Lu ere and Kauda are New Yorks comparing to the conditions on the top of Lomon and Acheron Mountains, Western Jebels, Rashad and particularly Kau-Niaro.*

*"The last – should be the first!" At least now when it looks that political environment is changing fast!*

*Dear Mark Stevens, I did not get your answer on my last call to help us to reach – by the words of chairman Abdel Aziz still inaccessible Kau-Niaro (unless in military convoy) - with a UN helicopter. Lets go! Lets push! History is watching us ...*

*With all do respect. Tomo Križnar.*

*(author and co-director of doc. films "Nuba, pure People" (2000). "Nuba, people from the other site" (2001), "Dar Fur - War for water (2008), Eyes and Ears of God (2011) Kauda, January 17 2020, 10.33am. [www.TomoKriznar.com](http://www.TomoKriznar.com)*

One of the WHO international members asked me for the contacts of Dr. Tom and Sister Cecilia which I send them. And I gave the WHO-contacts to Dr. Tom and Sister Cecilia. Both wrote and begged for medicine too.

With Jakob we immediately went to the German Emergency Doctors Hospital to invite Dr. Johannes, one of the four foreigners, to join us. He replied that he can not go with us because he must go to Yida to liberate the car which got stuck with resupply in the mud on the way from Juba to somewhere south.



*Dr. Johannes (4th from left) with stuff.*



*German Emergency Doctors in Luere hospital theatre room. December 2019.*

\*\*\*

*Liza Zorman <Liza.Zorman@gov.si>*

*Jan 20, 2020, 3:30 PM*

*to Naeema, Hoda, bernd.goeken@cap-anamur.org, Burkard, Laxmikant, Dagmar.Reitenbach@bmg.bund.de, EM, Betigel, Annette, Imadeldin, Olushayo, pivkbojana@gmail.com, Polonca.Mrvar@gov.si, Aiga, Saskia, Anita, Vesna, mark.stevens@wfp.org, Abdalaziz, Uros.Vajgl@gov.si, Eva.Nastav@gov.si, Mojca.Grandovec@gov.si, me*

*Dear Tomo,*

*Thank you for informing us about the situation in Sudan.*

*As we had received alarming information from you, we have taken seriously the issue and reacted immediately.*

*Today we had a meeting with Head of WHO Country Office in Slovenia Dr Aiga Rurane who assured us that WHO will follow-up the money from Slovenian donation. Dr Aiga Rurane promised that she will talk with the new WHO Representative in Sudan Dr . Hoda Atta and inform her about the scope of our initiative and planned activities.*

*Immediately after receiving money WHO Country Office in Sudan will start to work to assist and to assure access to health care and medication for leprosy for the Nuba population in Sudan. WHO in collaboration with other partners and NGOs will follow up the agreed action plan for the activities to be implemented in the year 2020 (the action plan will be prepared by DAHW German Leprosy and Tuberculosis Relief Association by end of January 2020).*

*Please continue to keep us informed on ongoing situation on the field.*

*Kind regards,*

*Liza Zorman*

*Direktorat za javno zdravje /Public Health Directorate  
Štefanova ulica 5, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija*

*\*\*\**

Two days later a car of Mother of Mercy Hospital arrived in the compound of Nuba Relief Rehabilitation and Development Organisation, where I have been staying with the full support of its management in Kauda. But Sister Cecilia was not there. I and



Jakob apologised to the driver and his assistant, telling them that we will not go without Sister Cecilia.

“Sista know leprosy, we need sista”.

That evening we both travelled on Jakob's motorbike to Gidel to make sure Sister Cecilia will join us. Jakob projected the known Jesus Christ film on the wall and after that excited her with speeches from Prime Minister Hamdok, from chairmen Abdel Aziz from January 9th and a video with Lomon traditional dances, showing Priest Zakaria from Luge at the eastern side of Lomon, dancing in trance high above the valley. Then we projected also same photos of Nuba leprosy patients.



*This is one of the hundreds of photos of leper patients from 2017–2019 in Nuba Mountains we showed Sister Cecilia.*

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Two days later, after four or five hours of driving, coming from Kauda, we all arrived by the same car with lots of blankets, boxes of soap and salt ... and including Josephine, a young beautiful student ... who told us that she is Cecilia's daughter ... to Lugi.



Lugi is the last settlements and catholic mission on the other side of the great sea of savannah. It is situated at the foot of an ancient canyon that leads up to the plateau, where quite special indigenous people live. This are Lomon, Acheron and Tacho native people who, some of them, still do not want to came down and settle in the flat lands. They still believe that life above in the mountains is more secure.



*Feb. 2020.*

We settled in father Zakaria's mission.



*The Church is in the right upper corner. Below in the middle is the mission compound.*

We started walking next midday from the market of Karkar, where we rented five porters and one security boy with a gun.



*A relaxing rest on the way up. And a welcome from local native people. Marisa! Sorghum beer.*

We meet the first leper just after fifteen minutes walking. A very old lady, bones and skin only and blind. She was sitting on a rock in front of the entrance into her very poor hut with practically nothing, except a clay cooking pot, a spoon, remains of dirty skirt and a shirt. Blind, no fingers, neither on the hands, nor on the legs, just some remains of extremities ... But no open wounds and very happy that we came to her. She was talking, greeting, blessing us.





*Nimeti, an old friend of the founder of SLPM/A Yousid Kuwa Maki.*

We gave her a blanket - part of donation of a teacher Tanja Smrtnik in Bojana's school "8 Talcev Logatec" in Slovenia. We gave her also some soap and salt as given by Hospital Mother of Mercy.



*Nuba lepers on the wall of the Primary School "8 Talcev Logatec" Bojana teaches at, December 2018. Not only teachers - also pupils reacted and start thinking how to help.*

She wanted to kiss us all. All at once. And then one by one.

»This is Nimetie« said Jakob. »This lady is an old friend of Yousif Kuwa. A revolutionary friend! A friend of our revolution!«

»What would Yousif say now?« I asked myself.

We followed the same trail from the savannah up the hills, like at the first time, when I landed on the same Karkar airstrip with German Emergency doctors in 1998. Half way up there was still the same huge baobab waiting there, just when the midday heat became unbearable. In its cooling shadow we rested like twenty years ago, in the very time, when that famous picture of Yousif Kuwa was made by Julie Flint, that spread like a virus all over the mountains.

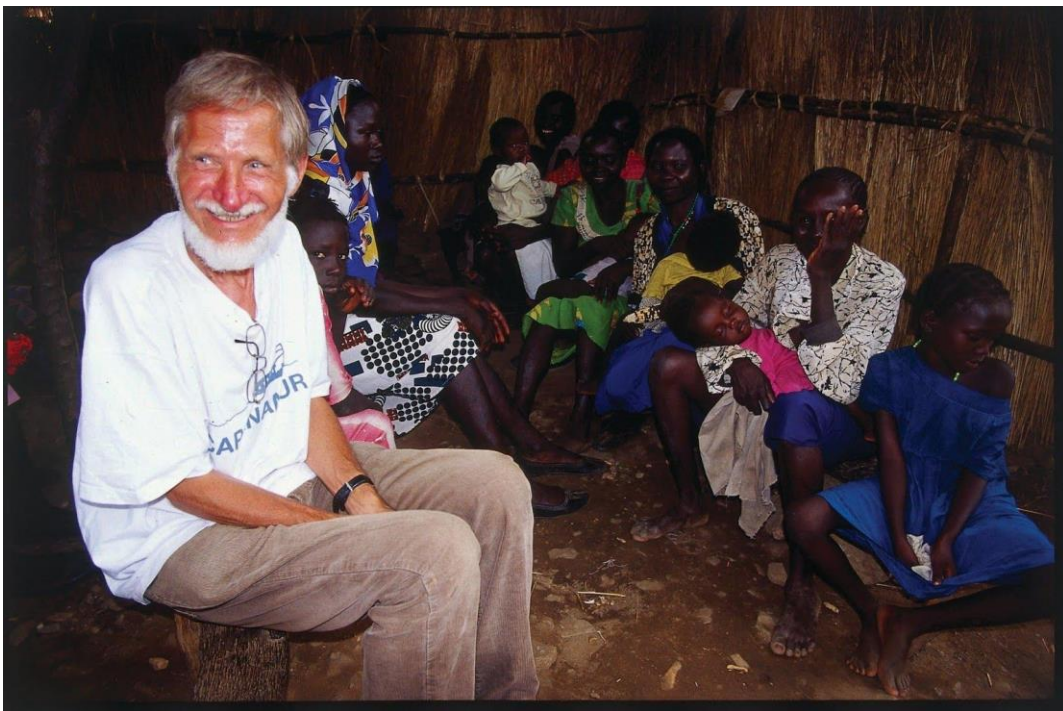


*Jacob Williams posing under the big baobab tree in Feb. 2020. "Just like Yousif Kuwa Maki in 1997."*



We remembered the famous founder of SPLA/M who is still most respected by all Nuba who still resist arabisation and enslavement by anybody. Kuwa never corrupted nobody - from his politicians, officers and soldiers he demanded to share everything. When some of them lost them selves and start stealing from civilians he send them to the firing squad.

Not far from here, the logistician from the GED hospital Roberto Villone started building a hospital in 1998. But he died from a strange lunge infection in August that year. Most likely a consequence of collecting toxic remains of bombs we believe - and just a couple of days after I experienced my first bombardment by the Government of Sudan, in which four children and two native woman were killed.



*Rupert Neudeck, founder of German Emergency Doctors. Luere, Kauda, 2000.*

Not even some remains of the hospital are left. There are only bricks of the Comboni church present in different stages of erosion. When Yousif Kuwa died from cancer in London 1999 in care of Julie Flint, Abdel Aziz, who was chosen by Kuwa to replaced him, signed a ceasefire agreement in 2002 and moved away. And when peace came most of natives moved away too. They went down to Luge and build there a new and bigger church, a market and settled around them.





*Abdel Aziz el Hilu in 2000.*

Yes, nowadays it is very quite on the top of Lomon, Acheron and Tacho Mountains.

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*Tacho people in Sarafat Jamus in August 1998.*



*In the time of The Great Hunger.*



*Girls of Lomon receiving their first clothings in 1998.*

On my photos and footages from 1998 we can see many half naked man and woman. Now most of people on Lomon, Acheron and Tacho mountains, the next generation, even children are clothed. But the clothes are old and worn out, dirty and broken. Some boys and even children wear old, oversized military rugs. The bodies of most Lomon people we met on the way to the medical centre in Changaro were short, skinny and weak. Very weak. Not many looked energetic. Some felt really exhausted. Actually sick. Many have problems with their goitre. This is the sign that they are lacking iodized salt. When we stopped the youth encircled us, looking at us as if we arrived from outer space.





Obviously they did not know how to behave. And I myself also didn't know how to behave. I felt shame. Ashamed because I was late and alone without help. Ashamed, that I brought only Sister Cecilia with tree escorts and Jakob. But not WHO. Nor UNICEF.



*Traditional welcome. Marisa! Low-alcohol beer made from sorghum.*

The Medical centre in Changaro is just a compound with cleared earth in two huts. There are no walls or any kind of fence. The medical assistant Nimeiri , who introduced Bojana and me to leper in 2017, told us that people are tired because of worms they get infected with from bad water that they are raising from the water holes with the help of ropes and plastic containers. Animal excrements are easily concentrating in the water holes. There are no manual hand water-pumps on this mountains. No wonder pigs, cows and goats are spreading hookworms.



*This is all of the medical equipment and medicine what we found in Nimeiri Medical Center in Changaro in January 28th 2020.*

»We need a microscope. There are two medical centres on Lomon and Acheron mountain. And two further down in Luge and Sarafat Jamous. No one has microscope!«

In the main hut that Nimeiri and three other assistant are using for consultations with a store, just a couple of small plastic bags with tablets to reduce pain and inflammation could be found.

»And of course we need everything else.«



Soon dozens, then hundreds of local people gathered outside. All obviously believing I am a doctor, a long time awaited support for medical assistant Nimeiri , who finally arrived together with a nun to help them physically and spiritually.



More and more people arrived. What kind of beautiful people. Not only wonderful figures of girls and boy-wrestlers, also very thin but strong bodies of old man and grandmothers. See the photos on the next page.





Soon some sort of a panic was lying in the air. We completely disturbed the slow daily pace of life on the top of the mountain.

Sister Cecilia asked the chiefs, who sat themselves down under the tree to inform all people near and far away, that we had come to meet the lepers and that this time we are interested in patients with leprosy. Lets everybody spread this news to all corners of the mountain and let all persons with leprosy disease come early in the morning to this place.

In the first darkness I opened the backpack and took out my drone. The red and green lights on it and the electronic sound appeared completely alien in this stony, stone age like land. Not only the skinny indigenous people in rags all around us and even we foreigners looked like being on drugs, when I tried to send the flying robot with a moving camera into the psychedelic orange sunset. This is my way of inviting people to come and see what's up – it always works. If the locals do not get scarred of that strange flying object, because it may be spying for the government of course. I got all kinds of reactions from Nuba this way, even panic, mass hysteria and a couple of times they even tried to shoot it down with AK-47 Kalashnikov. But this time the drone did not want to fly. The sensors detected high magnetic fields nearby. This means that the rocks contain a lot of iron-like minerals.

Then Jakob fixed on the wall of the main hut a big white screen, prepared a small video projector and connected it to a battery, charged by a solar panel before. The white light surprised Lomon people, but when the first moving images of south African Zulu appeared, dancing half naked, wildly the traditional, they could not keep their mouth shut. We heard voices of surprise every time when something new appeared on screen. On the screen an Eritrean war hero was inviting everybody to revolution, then in the next scene, suddenly people showed up, that the Lomon villagers knew personally. Them! Themselves dancing traditionally, also half naked, on this very same plateau in the high rocky Changaro mountain, everything as Jakob had filmed exactly here with of our cameras last summer. And there was dancing also half naked, coloured with white ash the Lomon catholic priest Zakaria from Lugi village. When they viewing public recognised the priest of their own tribe, enjoying with them the video projection, the viewers fell into an ecstasy like mood. It looked like they could not believe their eyes.

After an hour or so Jakob projected the speeches of SPLA chairman Abdel Aziz and Premier Hamdok in Kauda ending the show with our teaser of our last documentary on leprosy in Nuba mountains.

The people with leprosy from our documentary looked the least attractive to the viewers. They are something so common, a part of their daily life, usually not worth watching, something completely normal and accepted. Nothing needs to be done about it.

Nimeiri ordered Sister Cecilia and beautiful Josephine to sleep on the floor in the hut behind, Jakob and me were offered traditional beds inside the consulting room. About midnight Josephine woke us up to eat rice and beans she and Sister Cecilia had cooked on fire among three rocks in a corner of their separate room. It was a cold night. Unbelievably cold.

The next morning nobody came. It was not clear why. Even medical assistant Nimeiri did not have a clue. Sister Cecilia got frustrated.

»Why this people do not obey what they are told?«

The Chiefs came. We had meetings with most of Lomon tribal chiefs who all, one after another reported what they need. They needed so many things. They need everything, from roads to electricity and schools and hospitals.



*Meeting between Sister Cecilia, Jakob with Chiefs of local Lomon People in Changaro, Feb. 2020.*

It was not before midday that patients start to come. The compound was finally full of people reporting about all kind of illnesses. But there were only some, maybe five or seven, who claimed their suspicion of having leprosy.

Sister Cecilia guided them behind the huts where she examine them one by one with a piece of cotton, touching with it parts of their body, trying to find out if their skin is sensitive, if they feel the touch of the cotton scroll or not.



Patients in front of Nimieri's Medical Center in Changaro, 2020.



In the worst heat we walked across the plateau and over the hilltop to another valley on the other part of the plateau to meet patients who were unable to walk. An old man with open wounds for whom Sister Cecilia immediately diagnosed that his skin insensitive and thus he must have leprosy. And a not much younger woman, blind and skinny, another rough skin-bag of bones, a living skeleton. Sister Cecilia made both of them talking and joking before we gave them blankets and salt.







Although Nimeiri told us, that they are many more lepers around, Sister Cecilia expressed her wish to move further ahead to other villages to meet as many people with leprosy as possible, before she run out of time for Lomon mountain as she was expected to return on Sunday in two days. Jakob on the other hand wanted to stay to do another video-projection in the same place for people still coming. So we left him behind and walked down to a deep valley on the other side of the plateau and then, with the sun burning on our backs up again to the top of the next mountain range. It was incredibly hot and dry, I admired the stubbornness of Sister Cecilia, coming straight from her cool comfortable office in The Mother of Mercy hospital, not being trained to undertake such efforts at all. She did no complain once, not even when we arrived breathless in the village of Tuderong and faced Roya.

Roya! The same Roya from the page of October in the calendar 2020 of our Foundation Tomo Križnar.



*Roya el Rahim, January 2019.*

Roya was sitting there on a wooden bed among her people in the very same red rags from last year when I photographed her for the first time. And with the same open wounds – just this year a bit bigger. She definitely lost weight, she was skinnier and had less hair. But she smiled immediately when our eyes met.

This is the woman I carried in my memory with me to Europe more than any other image of this forgotten mountains.

Around her was a cloud of terrible smell and swarms of flies. More than last time. Unbearable...

This is because of elephantiasis said Sister Cecilia pointing on her horrible swollen feet.

I was shocked how close Sister Cecilia was sitting with the patient with leprosy and elephantiasis. She even touched that legs and the open head wounds and hugged her fellow sister.

Then she said: »This lady can die very quickly because of her many open wounds.

I gave Roya my calendar and showed her picture in it. She gave us all another most beautiful smile.





*Roya el Rahim January 2020. Same place, same clothe, but more sick.*

But I could not film her when she received the blanket and salt from one of Sister Cecilia assistants because Sister Cecilia suddenly stood up and said that her time is over and that she musts immediately return to Luge.



She actually walked away and down to the hut where we left our baggage and started the preparations to leave. I followed her and asked her to stay at least one more night. We needed to cheque also Roya daughter and son, since a year ago Nimeiri convinced me, that they were also infected with leprosy, we needed to get them to Gidel to. I said »Tomorrow is Saturday, after tomorrow is Sunday, we still have two days, please stay«... But Sister Cecilia still insisted to leave and Josephine and both assistants started already packing too and positioned themselves like a little caravan ready to move. But it is at least a six hours walk to the mission of father Zakaria and in one hour it will be dark and dangerous walking up and down above the abysses winding goat trail into the savannah on the other side of the Lomon mountain.

Then I said in despair: »OK, then I will also go with you, because I, as a European gentlemen, I can not leave you two girls alone in the jungle, especially not in the night!«  
Sister Cecilia finally gave up and said she would stay.

I did not understand actually why.

I also did not understand medical assistant Nimeiri why he did not wish to take Sister Cecilia to the next village closely above this place, to show her Royas two children. At first he refused to go there, only when I started climbing by my own, he joined me.

The home where Royas two children were staying is really not far, on the other side of valley, in fact so near, that villagers communicate across shouting to each other. Royas brothers family had problems to understand why the kids had to be chequered by Sister Cecilia immediately. Nobody understood me that Sister Cecilia would leave the next morning at the first light. Nimeiri convinced them only after much talking, which of course I was not able to follow. It was already pitch dark. There was no moon, I was ascending with a torch, but the kids, the kids were running down the mountain with such an easy and speed that I was last in the row all the way.

But our torches emitted not enough light to examine the children, so Sister Cecilia send them back home, agreeing they will come back early in the next morning.

Sisters Cecilia slept in the only empty hut, the crew and myself on the rocks outside. About midnight both two wives of the village chief Omda brought us a traditional porridge cooked from sorghum. We all agree to eat to show respect. Although I was a bit reserved. It was right here at this compound where a year ago I was drinking dirty rotten water, that made me sick for weeks. I recovered later in the Slovenian Clinic for Infectious Disease after two bilharzia treatments, in the middle of the last I had to be even hospitalised for two weeks.

The Children did not came back next morning.



There were all other children, hundreds of children, many very weak, some could have leprosy too, many with typical body deformations from polio infection, but none of Royas children.



We activated the »local mobile phone transmitter” and shouted across the valley and insisted the kids must come. Just before the great burning heat they finally appeared.

Royas son has eleven years. He is a tender soft boy, that he may be sick is shown only by some tough skin abnormalities on the upper foot and palms. Sister Cecilia ordered him to close his eyes and there, in the middle of crowd, she started touching the skin of the boy with a peace of cotton. He was confused, he did not understand why all this procedures, sometimes he said yes, that he feels some sensations from the cotton on the skin, sometimes he denied it.





Royas daughter is 13 years old, she is already cooking, bringing water and wood and working all and everything. Being a very shy girl she did not want to pull down her shirt and was hiding her face, then she started to cry.





»But you must go with us!« decided sister Cecilia.

And so must go the other six children she inspected.



Everybody started packing, a caravan of people was created.

»What about Roya?«

» She does not want to go!«

»But she is the one who infected all this children!« I insisted.

We waited. And waited. And waited. But Roya did not appear from her hut above the rocky village. Her mother pretended not to see me. Her uncle disappeared. Other villagers left too. After half an hour the snake like caravan with two assistants in front slowly started moving. Sister Cecilia was waiting up on the pass with a great view on the savannah and further too Talodi far south and Kauda far north.

Sister Cecilia said: »Roya can not walk. And there are in the whole village of Tuderong no boys left to carry Roya«.

Then she let her hands down and started using her legs also.

It was true. All man and boys disappeared too. I pushed Nimeiri to run quickly to ask Roya once again and to come to Lugi later together, when the village people will be somehow back. Maybe tomorrow, or Sunday afternoon, before the car of the Hospital Mother of Mercy will leave for Gidel.

»She said, she will not go« Nimrey said.

»Why Roya, why not?«

Nimeiri translated, that she knows she will die now soon. She does not want to go to the hospital, because she is fearing that there her body will be burned. She wants to die here so she will not be burned but buried in the ground like her ancestors.

»Doctor Tom is burning lepers. Lepers alive?«

»Yes, she believes that!«

It was in that moment I realised that I can not do nothing. At least not alone. But I will be back. But not alone.

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Nimeiri agreed – we needed SPLA army to transport Roya.

I filmed the children Sister Cecilia chose to be taken to the hospital in Gidel – all together eight of them – on a crowded pickup of the hospital the next day afternoon, after they left the mission for the hospital - a five hours drive away. Then I met Yousif, the medical assistant in Luge medical centre, supported by the Mother of Mercy Mission. He confirmed that Sister Cecilia definitely will have to send the car back to resupply the centre with medicine in a week, because he run out of most medicaments. So the car will come back, what meant, that I had one week time to get Roya down from the mountain.





The next afternoon we went back with three soldiers in plain clothes after meeting with Luge civil authorities on the market, who convinced us, that leprosy will be much more ready to go to a leprosarium, if the leprosarium would be here in Luge. Or it would be even better if a leprosarium will be one day on the top of Lomon and Acheron, where most with leprosy infected people are living. One in Lomon and one in Acheron. This way the native people, still very indigenous - will not break their deep attachment with the soil of their ancestors and loose contact with their spirits. Like they feel it always happens with them when they go down from the mountains, which to indigenous people mean much more than to us living in cities in Europe or even here in Africa. Mountains are not only a natural fortress where the defence is easier, but also a spiritual home, a place of identity. Any time Lomon people must go down to flat lands in the savannah, it is for them like entering an alien environment, they feel they are losing their identity and traditional values. Even here in Luge they do not feel comfortable. Though people living in this settlement are also claiming to be Lomon, but the mountain Lomon says, that they are our lost brothers and sisters because they do not follow our traditional way of living any more.

I do understand this because I lived together with aboriginal people in Australia, Central America and some Pacific Islands. I did experience how very vital and potent ancestral spirits can be, the same like on the top of some other tribal mountains here in Nuba.

I respect the indigenous spiritualities much more than the beliefs of the three monotheistic religions and the perceptions of scientific materialism.

All the way up my soldiers and Nimeiri have been informing villagers who were coming to the trail to greet us while we were climbing up. Our present mission was to bring leper Roya to the mission and medical centre and to send her with the first car to Mother of Mercy hospital. We were going to carry Roya down the mountain even by force if necessary.

I did not understand their talking, but I surely did feel, that the villagers were very surprised. And I was not really convinced if my intentions were this good. On most faces I read, that they do not accept, do not agree. The closer we came to Royas village, the more people openly complained.

Then the first protest erupted. The family in the house of Royas uncle got angry. They argued, that we should never take their daughter by force. She should not go away anyway. And if she does not want to go – then she must not go.

Who is this havadja, this foreigner, who thinks he can take away also the mother, after he already has taken away her two children? Who is he to command everybody around here?

Nimeiri was in serious problems. For me it was easy. I was hiding my face behind the lenses of my cameras. I was non stop photographing, filming everything that was going on: filming is no problem in these mountains, its not like in South Sudan, where native Dinka, Nuer and Toposa or Turkana in Kenya believe, that this way you are stealing their spirits, or if they are Christians, stealing their souls. Nuba do not have any reservations, I practically never encounter any difficulties with the camera in my hand.





*Nimeiri was the one to explain, to convince, to win the battle against lack of education and all kind of superstitions.*

Of course these people do not know what leprosy is. They never took a true microscope to look into the micro-world and never saw the bacteria of Hansen disease.

Nimeiri was not winning. Not that first evening. Royas family refused to let their member go. We saw Roya through the entrance in her hut above the village lying on her bed. She came out to urinate in the field behind. And then she went back while negotiations still continued until we all went to sleep.

Next morning the tree soldiers came with a rope. They announced, that now they will enter the hut and use force to fix the woman with the rope on the bed and started to shout loudly. They said, that the time is now over, they need to go back to their families in Luge. But Royas mother started to cry and to run up and down the path. And suddenly the soldiers gave up. Now even I was not sure any more, if that, what we were doing, is correct.

Am I not selfish? Am I not insisting to heal my human sister because I need to relieve my own inner burden? The burden of an old white man. We in the Western civilisation, yes we do have this burden to help others all round the world to enlighten them with our ideas. But the people in Africa do not have this same defect. Likewise the Nuba people also do not know about this.



»We did not kill Jesus«, I heard in the time of my first visit in Nuba Mountains end of 70s an old Nuba answering to an Australian Catholic Missionary. »If Jesus would have come to us, we would have given him to drink, to eat and a bed to rest. We are not guilty of nothing. Our children do not need your fears. Leave our boys alone!«

Pictures from a massacre in Merawi in August 1998, a place not far from here, appeared in my memory. Footage of indigenous mothers covered in green grass skirts only, crying loudly, grabbing her heads, winding their hands into my lenses. Behind them blood, pieces of human tissue on rocks, dying children, dead unrecognisable bodies.

It struck me suddenly how many times I was present as the only white man to prove, that native people here in the mountains are dying because of some interferences of white people from the civilized West.

Merawi was bombed in 1998 because government forces in the army post of Talodi saw our little air plane flying over to land on a bush strip in today Karkar. Probably some Muslim generals did not want to kill us, us being also people from the holy books, as they are – but by bombing innocent natives they send us a message. Keep away. Do not come back ever again!

I was very very patient. So very patient, that I surprised even myself.

It was then, about midday, when Roya suddenly appeared among us, joined the smoking soldiers and villagers sharing porridge in the shade under a huge granite statue. Then she walked to the bed, lied down, now ready to be carried down the mountain.



The soldiers quickly fixed her and walked through the village, so quickly, that I was hardly able to follow the caravan with all my cameras.



It was a steep and dangerous descent above the abysses, following the canyon of a dry seasonal river.

We needed to rest a couple of times: Roya had her eyes closed most of the time, I was able to face them. I could not read any emotions. The Porters were quietly smoking, other travellers were passing by without the traditional greetings.







When we reached the first trees in Luge medical centre Roya was parked in the shade, then her uncle invited us all to drink marisa – a local sorghum beer – served by a lady in big wooden bowls under another group of trees nearby. We all were drinking still not speaking a word. Then I paid the whole calabash. But we still did not talk like usually we do when we get a bit drunk. I asked Roya if she wished to drink too. She refused.

Because nobody came from the medical centre to take Roya in, I went there and asked my new friend Yousuf why nobody came to hospitalize her. He agreed to do the consultation, but I was supposed to go to speak with father Zakaria first. I went and told father Zakaria that we succeeded and asked him if he can go and see Roya. He said he did not need to meet this woman. Considering Royas terrible smell I understood and went back to make sure Yousif took her in one of the little separate huts in the back of the main building as he promise to do. When I walked to the still drinking porters, I saw Roya was still there under her tree. Yousif needed somebody to wash her. It had to be Nimeiri , who came the following afternoon from his medical centre on Lomon Mountain, who send Roya with a piece soap I had to buy to the toilet to wash herself.

To wash herself – with that hands full of open wounds and without fingers?



It was Nimeiri who disinfected Royas open wounds and covered them with bandages.

That night the car from Mother of Mercy arrived. But the driver left the resupply in the house on the brink of Luge – he did not enter the hospital or the church compound where all of us, Zakaria, Yousif, Nimeiri and me had been sleeping. We were drinking tea in the eating room when medic Yousif informed us that the car was already full with same other passengers and that the driver was in a hurry to return to Gidel.

I understood that the driver was the same as the one, who brought us here with sister Cecilia, Josephine and Jacob. Before he drove the women and children to Gidel a week ago, he wanted to be paid by me. Payment for walking in the mountains and looking for lepers? I answered, that I was not aware I had to pay him or the other two assistants, who claimed a salary as well. Dr. Tom had send them together with the sisters, so I understood all this as combined efforts and a part of the work of Mother of Mercy medical staff, who are regularly paid by the hospital. He said, walking the mountains and exposing to difficult environments is not included in their regular salary. It is extra. If I do not pay him and the other two now – next time nobody from the hospital will go with me, he said.

I told this sister Cecilia. But before they left she confirmed it, saying of course I had to pay them.

“Medics came from Uganda, Kenya and South Sudan to work in the war area here to get good money. They are working for money. “

She said: “I am sacrificing myself for lepers because of my faith. And you, I believe you also. Bad this gays are here because of money.“

I filmed every word. Not with a hidden camera – openly, with active microphone in front of the lens.

Did the driver intentionally avoid to meet me again and take Roya with him as was agreed he would do?

Nobody knows when the car will arrive in Luge again.

Nimeiri told me that the porters from the village of Tuderong, who also helped to carry Roya down the mountain, also expected money. They wanted to be paid as the solders were paid – 3 \$ each. Because I did not pay them now they are talking everywhere and to everybody that they will kill him.

They want to kill Nimeiri!? The man, this medical assistant, who is working for them, for the people of his tribe Lomon for so many years? This is the man who stayed

on the mountain although he has all chances to work somewhere else, in the flat lands down under, in Urchin for example and Dagheba, where the conditions are so much better.

I feared that Roya may escape back to her village. Her people may come and take her back. In despair I said to father Zakaria that I am ready to pay 200 \$ for petrol to drive Roya to Gidel with his car.

Father Zakaria accepted my offer.

I said I got 200 \$, a donation from a philosophy teacher Alenka Hladnik at a Gymnasium named after a national hero, general Rudolph Maister, from Kamnik, Slovenia.

He was happy with that. I told him that the teacher got this money from the savings of her father, a great man, a great humanist, who died last summer from cancer.

He did not say that 200 \$ is too much for five, six hours of driving across the flat savannah to the hospital.

I said that after I actually realised what I was talking. I said 30 \$ may be enough.

That is when he said: "No!" And I said: "O. K. No!" too.

There was no dinner at the mission that night. And no sugar as usually every morning when we were drinking tea. Father Zakaria did not come to watch Al Jazeera English news as every day.



*Dining room in the Mission of Luge with the only TV hundreds of miles around.*

Yousif explained to me, that my problem is not that father does not want money, he wants money, but 30\$ is not enough. He needed the whole of it as I offered first.

When I approached father Zakaria again he refused to talk to me saying, he is not allowed to make business like I want him to do. His church is saving lives, he is here to save lives.

Then, the third day of waiting for any transport that may be available, Nimeiri discovered, that there is another car in Luge. Gold has been found in savannah not far from Luge and now many local people are mining there. In a most primitive way, but there is already now a quickly growing market where all goods are available. Even on the other site of the Lomon mountain I noticed new motorbikes. There even is a successful gold trader who has a car. Nimeiri suggested to talk with the owner, he may agree to drive Roya and us to Gidel for just some money for petrol. Maybe 30\$ will be enough, plus something little for the driver and his food on the way there.

He did no want me to go with him to negotiate, saying the price will go up if I will appear.

Nimeiri left, then on the way to the toilet I saw him up the road standing by the church with father Zakaria. I intuitively went there and that was when Zakaria eventually said, I will take you, you pay just 30 \$. Nimeiri agreed. They already agree both. Nimeiri explained that negotiating with the driver will take too much time. Lets go.



And so we left Luge the same day in the afternoon. Roya sitting in the back of the Toyota pickup, in the open.



*Roya el Rahim sitting in the back of father Zakaria's pickup on the way to Gidel.*

Suddenly the car lost power. Father Zakaria said it is because of a dirty oil filter. A car passing by stopped and the driver cleaned the filter for us. After a while, again no power. Next we tried to fix the motor in the SPLA North military mechanic workshop just before Kauda. While waiting Roya left the car to seat herself in the shade. I noticed that nobody brought her water as the tradition demands. Nobody came closer to her and took a notice from her, although obviously everybody in the open yard and from the nearby road could see her for sure.

But driving on the car lost power again. We struggled around Kauda mountain, up and down the hills, and finally reached one of the biggest weekly markets of Gidel and finally passed the entrance to Hospital Mother of Mercy.



*Dr. Tom and Roya. February 2020.*

The first sentence Dr. Tom said when we brought Roya inside his small consulting room with at least one hundred people waiting outside, was: “We both, Sister Cecilia and me, did write to the same people at the UN agencies as you did, but up until now we did not get any answer”. We requested antibiotics to cure our TB-patients.

I hardly believed my eyes watching how Dr. Tom examined with his fingers Royas elephantiasis and open leper wounds on her legs, hands and head. No gloves on his fingers, with naked fingers, inside the small office without any windows, the terrible humid stink of Royas body nearly suffocated me.

I don't know how Nimeiri fell – I knew it only for myself: I need to vomit. I need to run out immediately.

Dr. Tom registered Roya, then he send us through the hospital compound, covered in the wonderful cool shade of many new and quickly growing trees and with patients of all shades of black and white colour from all Sudanese tribes, considering themselves African and Arab origin, to the fence and the open gate of Mother of Mercy Hospitals leprosarium.

The first who came to meet us in the big crowd of patients there was Royas son and daughter. Her son was crying.



*Roya and her son in the hospital Mother of Mercy, February 2020.*

“He feels pity for his mother that she needs to stay here too“ said the most attractive woman medical assistant.

She was of such a vibrant emphatic personality that I believe many man would stay in this leprosarium because of her.

»Roya, when I came back, in December, I need to see you healthy, strong and beautiful, with a new husband and already pregnant« I said to the woman I cared for, even dreamed about her in the last year more often then my own wife.

Before Nimeiri and I were “Gone with the Wind” I left 200 \$ in south Sudanese pounds – the donation of Alenka Hladnik, a philosophy teacher at the Gymnasium Kamnik.

This money was to be spend for the food of Roya and her children - as asked for by Sister Cecilia. Patients usually get from the hospital only some sorghum, what is not enough to survive. Families had to provide additional food and cook for them.

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*Kreibich, Dr. Saskia <Saskia.Kreibich@dahw.de>  
Attachments*



*Feb 5, 2020, 5:11 PM*

*To Liza, Laxmikant, jplate37@gmail.com, Olushayo, Hoda, Annette, bernd.goeken@cap-anamur.org, Burkard, Dagmar.Reitenbach@bmg.bund.de, pivkbojana@gmail.com, Polonca.Mrvar@gov.si, ruranea@who.int, stefina@who.int, me, Vesna, Eva.Nastav@gov.si, Mojca.Grandovec@gov.si, Uros.Vajgl@gov.si, Nina*

*Dear Liza Zorman, Dear All,  
very kind greetings from DAHW.*

*We would like to thank you for your patience – as well as Dr. Chavan (WHO Sudan) and Dr. Bernd Goeken and Johannes Plate (Cap Anamur) for the already valuable support received - so that we can now present our project concept including the financial framework for the implementation of important measures over the next 10 months.*

*We believe in the quality and impact of the proposed activities to achieve a first improved medical and social care for the persons and families affected by leprosy in the Nuba Mountains. More important, however, is our conviction that this first project phase can set the first decisive milestone for the establishment of a strong and sustainable leprosy control system in the Nuba Mountains, if we succeed in achieving longer-term commitment together.*

*It is important for us to use, integrate and strengthen the local structures of the health system in order to promote potentials and synergies, the effect of which will go beyond that of improved leprosy care and control, and can contribute to a generally improved health and life situation of the Nuba population.*

*Given these prospects for a region that has been neglected for many years, we hope for positive feedback on the proposed project concept itself and to pooling our efforts to ensure strong future cooperation.*

*Of course, we look forward to your suggestions, comments and observations and are prepared to revise and adapt the project proposal accordingly if it is jointly perceived and agreed as useful.*

*Kind regards by the whole team of DAHW involved (see page 1),*

*Saskia*

*Public Health Advisor*

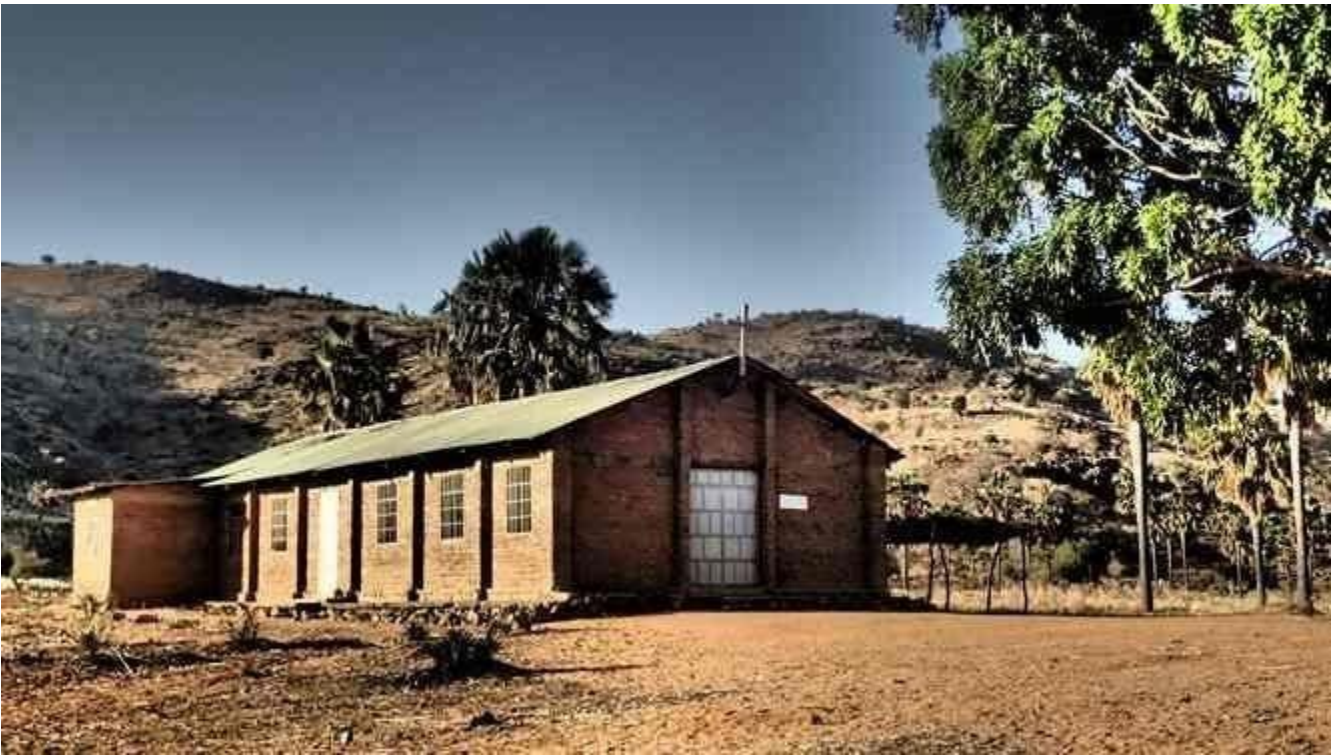
*Deputy Head of Medical and Social Projects Department*

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It happened after I got very sick. I read about corona spreading from Wuhan in China to Iran and Italy on the internet when we brought Roya to Gidel that night in the native Nuba Rehabilitation Relief Development Organization in Kauda, where Nimeiri and I slept before father Zakaria drove us in his car back to Lugi. Zakaria walked with us to Nimeiri medical centre in Changaro to get one of the cameras I got from Canon Slovenia to support Nuba to record the war in the Mountains. The camera was in my luggage I left behind with Jacob, who was the last days screening videos in the villages on the top of Lomon Mountain. Zakaria said he had to go to get camera by himself because he could not trust anybody else to bring it to him. The symptoms of my lung infection started to develop when I with Jacob reached the market in Karkar, where Jacob wished to have another video projection before we would recharge my batteries in the Zakaria mission in Luge and climb the Acheron mountain to visit and film the even by Nuba standards most isolated lepers. I could not breathe, started to suffocate. Trying to sleep that night in a hut in Karkar I thought for the first time in my live I will die this night.

But the urge to return home to Bojana and the children pushed me to find the next morning a motorbike and a driver, who took me half conscious to medical assistant Yousif in Luge. He did not have any medicine to help me. In fact I did not complain much to him, for when we reached the hospital I was already better. It was like a miracle. But maybe it was not a miracle, perhaps I was sick I my head. I felt so terrible frustrated, very very traumatized from all what I experienced last months in the mountains.

Jacob followed me by walking and arrived to the Mission in Luge early next day when I was already negotiating with Zakaria to drive us with his car once again and for the last time, just an hour to the foot of the Acheron Mountain.



*Father Zakaria's church in Luge.*

I chose return to Europe via Acheron. It was a crazy decision but I needed some crazy actions to de-traumatize myself. I still had one week left to reach Entebbe airport in Uganda to board the air plane who will took me across all the dry swamps and these mountains and further across the Sahara and Mediterranean sea to the airport in Vienna where Bojana will come with her car to take me somewhere safe, where things are soft and quite ...

Zakaria needed money, again. When we reached the final destination I offered him some, but he said that it was not enough, turned around and left back to the mission.

We got local porters, a woman and three friendly girls, who put two of my backpacks and the one with my drone on their heads and we started walking. In the middle of the way up I remembered the microscopes. Yes, the medical assistant needs microscopes, how else they could find all these microorganisms, bacteria, flat worms without seeing them first. I will ask WHO in Khartoum to use Slovenian donations to bring microscopes in all medical centres in the mountains.

Nimeiri got immediately excited with this idea. I asked him to talk on camera excited as he is so I can take the footage with me and he will be able to apply the UN-representatives directly by himself. He gave an emotional speech, encircled by girls and in the background the endless savanna. Then we reached the first Acheron summit and the first Omda (chief) of the village I remembered from the year before, when his great mamas provided me with shelter and food. It was all the same again. They gave us water to drink, peanuts to eat, followed with asida, a sorghum porridge. Then we all went to the small market nearby. Jacob needed to drink some marisa, sorghum beer, I joined him but Nimeiri rejected to drink. When we two have been already quite "spirited" a strange man showed up and seated himself on rocks in the shade under the



big thorny tree. Young, exceptional strong, with dark hypnotic eyes. Jacob immediately started a deep conversation. I did not understand much about what they were talking because they forgot I do not know enough Arabic.

This is kujur, a traditional spiritual healer, told me Jacob. "A very strong kujur! He was chosen by the local Lomon elders to learn all spiritual acts, thus protecting its heritage for the new young generations before it will be too late. He told us that not much Acheron culture is left because the Acherons very stupidly threw it away and that the Acheron tribe are less and less in numbers because of a strange custom, with which some members of the tribe are accusing others to be sick from a strange disease, an infectious sickness so bad, that some members believe the sick persons must leave the tribal lands and join the Mooro tribe not far away on the other side of the mountains, where they are accepted. That is why the number of Lomon people is decreasing and the Mooros are getting stronger, breaking the old balance of population, threatening in the near future to lead to a war between these two tribes. When I heard this I started to feel sick again.

I went to Omdas compound and lay down in my sleeping bag. When Jacob came back late he wanted me to move to the bed inside the hut. But I refused. I did not feel good sleeping so often in all the houses of the village chiefs the last months, eating their food, practically like exploiting Omdas traditional hospitality.

I told this Jacob the next morning, when he wanted to stay and have one another screening of his videos. I accused him that he wants to continue a comfortable life in the Omdas houses while I want to use my last few days at the Acheron for the hardest work. I wanted to visit a young family which impressed me a year before so much with their move to the highest top of the Acheron mountains, where they pulled out rocks creating terraces and started living traditionally and self-sufficiently and completely independently from the way most Nuba are trying to survive our-days in the lowlands, where the big majority of them are migrating to now. Since one year ago I wished to film the twenty four years old husband and his twenty years old wife, who gave birth to five beautiful, strong and confident children already. And all the extended family of aunties and uncles, who all left the more and more corrupt and arabized life down in the savanna in exchange for freedom of pure symbiotic relationship with the nature I dreamed about myself since I went to primary school. No primary school, no church over there, no hospital and no medical assistants there ...

That's when Jacob got angry. And I got angry too.

He said emotionally that he is not eating and shitting only - like all Europeans are - and I replied, that indeed he does it so as well. You just want to live in comfort and with a full stomach.

His anger grew further. I added, that he does exploit Nuba culture of hospitality, which demands to serve every traveller. Indeed, that he is exploiting the local Omdas and their tradition to help and feed foreigners. And that he belongs to the Nuba elite now, and that this elitism is destroying Nuba now, just as was and is destroying my people in Europe. Soon he will be like my people.

He asked me if I am aware, that he is leading me, feeding me, guiding me through the mountains for more than a month, that he is taking care for all my needs, voluntarily and without any payment. And he has a family. He should be with his family. And so should be Nimieri.

I did not reply back that I have a family too, that I have children, tree of them, who did not see me often all these years, actually decades, in fact the last 22 years since I encountered war in 1998 in Sudan and from that moment on I can not think much more besides Nuba, Nuba, Nuba ...

I grabbed my backpacks. Two backpacks, a drone suitcase and all three bags with cameras, turned around and started to walk away. Away from them all. Nimieri tried to stop me, interfered and tried to calm me. But I couldn't stop myself running alone down the track to the waterhole, even when I remembered that I promised to Jacob one of the tree mobile phones I brought with me from Slovenia.

Bojana and me brought the first mobile phone to the Nuba Mountains a year ago. We gave it to Nimieri to take pictures from leper cases and to send photos out to the doctors secretly via wireless connection at a UN military base in the refugee camp Yida, a full day of driving away across the border in South Sudan. When he touched the magic screen for the first time he got so excited with the phone for some hours and ... actually days, he nearly forgot his patients, his wife and children and even us. With this new toy he soon started producing such good photos of the most vulnerable people, that we were really surprised. The photos made with the donated second hand and cheap phone were much better than the ones we can make with our heavy expensive cameras. There is something so very special on Nimieri's pictures ... So I promised Nimieri an even newer, better phone. Not now, but after we will finish our experiment. A test with three phones connected with tree small transmitters, a wonder of technology developed from an idea of professor dr. Maša Jazbec from Kunstuniversität in Linz a year ago and is now supported by her team of international professionals and good willing artists in Trbovlje Novomedijsko mesto. Maša's idea is, that technology must serve the needs of humanity and not primarily to enslave humankind making people insensitive to each other. Not bigger than a gas lighters to ignite cigarettes, the transmitters are supposed to connect lepers among themselves with radio waves – this is to ensure that the leper patients receive and take their daily medicine.



*Dr. Maša Jazbec with the mobile transmitter and her team of artists in Trbovlje Novomedijsko mesto. December 2019.*

This way maybe the lepers will not need to be concentrated and isolated from their families in leprosariums. With Jacob we had been testing this transmitters after we fixed them on trees and positioned them on mountain tops, with phones in the hands walking away to measure how far the signal can reach and still transmit the message »Did you take the pill this morning?« We got quite good results, we can connect lepers more then kilometre and a half away, with more work and development done on the transmitters we can connect all lepers and also their families and actually all villages on Lomon and Acheron mountain. This sounds fantastic! That is what is my dream: to connect the suffering ones among themselves, to make the ones that are now the Last, to be the First and to give the new First the chance to help all others to educate themselves with the use of modern media and the treasures of all humanity, books, films, art, spirituality ...

But that moment I lost my spirit. I just could not spirit myself any more. At the water hole the two girls asked if I needed help. My hearth finally open. I let them help me with my backpacks. I did not look back if anybody was following us. I was running ahead with both children carrying my things on their heads. We walked all the way to the Coptic church where Bojana and me met leper Komi at Coptic Christmas day 2017. It was a Sunday and the church service inside in full swing. I went inside, made myself small in the corner, started photographing all the wonderful faces that turned towards me. I knew some of them. They wanted me to give a speech as so many times before.



Though I am not religious, at every occasion I did address them with some words. Mainly saying how I respect them because SPLA North is fighting against evil even for us in the comfort zone in Europe. But this time I could not. I felt sick at once. At once I just wished to go home. No more climbing the mountains. Not even up to the young family. There is no time any more anyway. No enough time. Jacob consumed all my available time. Because he wants me to stay with Omdas and eat and sleep, while I came from so far to see as much as possible and film all and take home all...

At that time somebody came and told me that Nimieri and Jacob arrived and that they are calling me to come outside.

I said I am filming now, I will come out later.

When the service was finished and I came out, there were neither Jacob, nor Nimieri in sight.

I ate lunch together with old friend Andrew from the hut nearby, then he helped me to get porters to escort and guide me to leper Komi compound not far down the valley. There I met Komis brother. He confirmed that Komi died in August. Komi did not die from leprosy, he caught a lung infection. The whole family came together. I expressed my and Bojana's sorry giving my hand to all of them.

Then I asked to show me Komis grave.

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[tomo.kriznar@gmail.com](mailto:tomo.kriznar@gmail.com)

to bojana

*February 11 2020, Yida, Nuba Refugee Camp, Republic of South Sudan.*

*My love I have read your letters now and I am now moved. Otherwise, I am exhausted - because in the last few days I have been hiking up the hills to the end, to the end I have used my forces and just like last year I cannot move from the horizontal to the vertical. I am pale, traumatic, confused - it looks like my body has already adapted a little and learned how to overcome all these parasitic bacteria and viruses. Enjoying their symbiotic dictatorship with the natives, they are barely lying to all the weak and without energy, except when drinking beer from millet. This year, I made sure that they were weak and look lazy, because everyone from the kids to the old people share pigs and cows with specially fucked ribbons.*

*When we spoke for the last time about a messenger in Kaudi a thousand years ago, the pastor Zakaria was waiting for me in the SUV, and Nimeiri was annoyed with the urge*

*to take his phone. I couldn't even tell you that we transported not only the most outrageous Royo (a woman and mother from our calendar) to Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel, but also two of her children. And there are four other children who were also infected by Roy in the same village of Tuderong.*

*There was no time to tell what kind of drama was taking place on the tops of the black granite rocks before the traditional tribal superstition dropped from the clutches. And also the cleanest, usually fucked up African slave slave trade. Not only the family, the whole village was nagging and protesting and blocking you and ... eventually selling your mother to whom you could feel the most mercy, but years and years of watching her develop beautiful and elephantiasis and smell smelling there in the cavity between the rocks made nothing to all the other Nubian culture that demands to take care of the most vulnerable first.*

*Roya herself claimed that it was not because she knew that the leprosy was being burned alive in a Catholic hospital. She said she knew she was going to die soon - but that she wanted to die at home and be buried in her land.*

*After three days of persuasion in this village, where last year they gave me to drink toxic water so that I was lying there because of the dizziness, I bribed below in the mission and brought up half a day on foot through the unbearable heat and wind of three SPLA soldiers, each for about three each dollars agreed that Royo should be nailed to the bunk bed and taken to the savannah where Zachary's mission is by force. We waited all night again for the hard rocky pumpkins to realize that the harder rock of Gorenjska would not give up. And then she showed up in the morning and came out of Roy's cottage by herself.*

*She seemed to me as beautiful as Mary. Better than Mary. So later, when it was over, I suggested to Pastor Zakaria in Lugi that a statue of the immaculate white Anglo-Saxon Mary was removed in his church and replaced with a picture of a black three-headed Roye on our calendar.*

*"Why not" he replied.*

*And that into my camera lens!*

*After that, we were friends for a few hours. It seemed to me that I had helped him transcend some of what he had against strangers. Let's say that for him all UN workers are criminals. He seemed to understand, and that he, too, was sent by his parents as a seminarian, but now the bishop, who sees his primarily logistical abilities, wants to send him to study economics, knows that we are not all white. Until he started doing his tricks again to make as much money as possible.*

*All this no longer matters. Most importantly now, I think we have proven that we can overcome our fears and thus ourselves.*

*We were all pleased. Even Jacob, who did not participate but spent the evenings in the middle of a borrowed projector, showed us a short film about leprosy in the mountains - accompanied by a propaganda address by Sudanese President Hamdook on his first visit to these rebellious mountains on January 9 and the welcome of rebel president Abdel Aziz, who insists on its efforts to separate religion from the state or to declare independence if the first is not possible in the Juba negotiations.*

*What worries me the most is Nimeiri is now the villagers who helped carry Royo across the abyss, constantly following and threatening to kill him unless he pulls me out and gives them some money too.*

*Plus: when Royo took us to the parish priest's car - the only car in the area of half a dozen or so in Slovenia - they brought in a mother medical center in Luge to assistant Yousif, who suddenly started to ache from the pain and vomit blood.*

*This father of eleven children died the next day after his abdomen was broken while we were stuck in a Catholic mechanical workshop in Kauda fog after an oil filter broke.*

*If he returned in time, Father Zakaria could take him to Dr. Tom and probably rescue him.*

*The day after the funeral, I went to both women and ... eleven orphans.*

*Nobody condemned me.*

*I judge myself!*

*I was at another grave yesterday. From the leper Komi in a village under a Coptic church of mud and straw on Mount Acheron. Komi, whose picture we also published in our 2020 calendar, died in August.*

*According to his brother, something like pneumonia - because Younis, a medical assistant at the medical centre, received no more medication from German doctors. At half a day away, they were unable to get him to Luere near Kauda because they could not get any vehicles for several days.*

*I left my family a calendar with his and your picture and gave about \$ 5 - voluntarily! Everyone remembers you and greets you well and invites you back. I promised we'd be back in December.*

*That is why I gave Alenka a donation of 190 EUR for healing Komi for food for Royo at Mother of Mercy Hospital - because Cecilia's sister refused to accept it without money. Royo is provided with this donation for the whole year as long as she has to take*



*antibiotics under control. Roya and her 10-year-old son will cook, in that hell of a leprosy corner in the corner of a hospital with three patients on bunk beds, Samir's 13-year-old daughter.*

*I can't type this any more either because I broke my glasses and lost my spare.*

*Please just send this unfinished as it is and attach it to our 2020 calendar - maybe someone decides to support us with the purchase. I am - besides you dear, I have had more of you in my mind and heart, in fact all of whom I believe to have made you sensitive and alive.*

*What would I give to get as many of you, hundreds and thousands of you, as possible to meet the millions and millions of people I met in those seven years after I cycled around the world in my biggest 1985 crisis, and everyone after me the species I met on those long slopes across Asia and the America in every possible way helped to maintain confidence in the kind of life that calls itself homo sapiens. What would I also give for everyone to have the privilege and prestige of experiencing what is given to us among lepers and refugees and rebels and freedom fighters in the Nuba Mountains and South Sudan.*

*One year of my life left, I am immediately ready to trade and sacrifice in return for Maja, Lara, Melita and Jan to find themselves at least here in Yida, at least among the Nubian refugees in the Republic of South Sudan.*

*Please write to the logistics of the American Samaritans in Juba that I have returned from the mountains to Yida and that I will arrive in their compound in half an hour and that I will be very grateful for the free flight to Juba in the circumstances. Please do not book anything further in Kampala. I just want to sit on a bus for seventeen hours, no more marching with six cameras and a drone on my worn backbone, but just napping and staring out the windows of fellow humans lucky to live in a tropical paradise. , no more matting and straining, just reliving and digesting and waiting for me to find out what was really going on between the rocks and the sand for two months.*

*Yours and your Tomo*

*P.S.: I forgot to list what we've been doing since Roya's transport to the hospital. We have been constantly documenting and registering new lepers on all three mountains: Lomon, Acheron, Tacho. Nimeiri has a list of more than 40 lepers who need immediate treatment in the area of his Lomon people only. As the Moro tribe's attack on the Acheron tribe on the mountain of the same name is reportedly being prepared, Andrew claims that he failed to enumerate and document the lepers in Acheron. Andrew greets you well but is poor. I didn't meet Younis.*

*Jacob stayed on the mountains to project leprosy films and document further.*

*Sister Cecilia has stated that she will return to the mountains alone and ride mushrooms to Mother of Mercy.*

*Now we will see if we have learned from each other and if so we have really exceeded the bare personal benefits !!!!*

*I already know I should stay longer*

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*Kreibich, Dr. Saskia <Saskia.Kreibich@dahw.de>*

*Feb 21, 2020, 12:55 PM*

*to emile.tanyous@dahw.org, Liza, Laxmikant, jplate37@gmail.com, Olushayo, Hoda, Annette, bernd.goeken@cap-anamur.org, Burkard, Dagmar.Reitenbach@bmg.bund.de, pivkbojana@gmail.com, Polonca.Mrvar@gov.si, ruranea@who.int, stefina@who.int, me, Vesna, Eva.Nastav@gov.si, Mojca.Grandovec@gov.si, Uros.Vajgl@gov.si, Nina*

*Dear Liza Zorman, Dear All,*

*Very kind greetings from DAHW Germany and Sudan. I hope this email finds you all well.*

*May I kindly ask you for confirmation of the receipt of the project and budget proposal that we have shared with all of you a few weeks ago; and more importantly on some guidance on the way forward.*

*We are very eager to start supporting the Nuba population.*

*I am very happy to hear and to inform you that Dr. Chavan (WHO) and Dr. Emile (DAHW) have met yesterday already together with Dr. Musab (NTD programme director of the Federal Ministry of Health) to plan the next steps. These encompass the provision of sufficient medicines and related cargo transport to the Nuba Mountains, together with necessary information materials, patient registries, etc.*

*Moreover, they would ideally wish to conduct first activities (as indicated in the proposal) by End of March/beginning of April. Of course, this requires several logistical steps of preparation and we need to consult with Cap Anamur on this matter.*

*To do all this, we, however, first need to understand how to proceed and also what to do in terms of the existing funding gap.*

*Therefore, we would highly appreciate feedback from your side, ideally as soon as possible, as the timing is relatively tight. We hope for your understanding and thank you in advance.*

*All the best, Saskia*

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*anita cecilia*

*Mar 19, 2020, 3:57 PM (17 hours ago)*

*to me*

*Dear Tomo*

*Greetings from Gidel. We are all fine and working towards the prevention of the corona virus infection. Much work but God is with us.*

*Roya and all are fine , she is charged and New can you believe. I shall send you here photo soon.*

*We went back to lumon and came with more patients. We shall go back soon with Jacob next week.*

*WHO has not come, no news but we are going on.*

*Greetings your wife*

*God bless*

*Sr. Anita*

*On Thu, 19 Mar 2020, 1:33 p.m. tomo kriznar, <tomo.kriznar@gmail.com> wrote:*

*Hallo dear sister Cecilia, dr. Tom and Josephine,*

*how are you this days when corona virus is changing the whole world in a big prison?*



*I believe you do not have the same problems as we have in Europe yet.*

*I wonder if you got any replay from WHO yet about TB medicine. Did WHO returned to Nuba as they promised on December 30?*

*Please inform how is Roya and her lepra children also.*

*I am finishing a report about our visit in Lomon Mountains. I am still selecting photos. I am looking you and remembering you with all my respect and admiration.*

*Please great dr. Tom too, your employees who escorted us, and a special Roya and all lepers we brought to your hospital. Tell them we are think on them every moment.*

*With best wishes. Tomo and Bojana Križnar*

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*Bernd Göken | Cap Anamur <bernd.goeken@cap-anamur.org>*

*Jun 5, 2020, 9:23 AM*

*to me*

*Dear Tomo,*

*how are you ? In the last message in March, you wrote about your infection and then Covid came . Hope you are better now !*

*here some News. From DAHW i got the message that the Lepra medicine should be soon in South-Sudan , hope we can get this Lepra medicine after it reached Juba fast to the Mountains. Now WHO and DAHW have to arrange the Lepra Medication. The Visit oft he Doctors from our new partners is postponed. If the Medicine is in the Mountains we*

*start, that i can promise. It takes very long , but you put all on the track and now we hope to start soon to help the people with Leprosy ! Thanks a lot for your engagement*

*Our own transport with medicine for the next 6 month reached in time the Nuba Mountains , but it is very difficult in this time with all the closed borders. Finally we made it to send Trucks all the way from Nairobi to Kurchi.*

*In general the Situation is not good , you know better than me. The conflict between Malik and Abdelaziz is a big problem. I have no idea , when we will see the next steps for peace in the region. In January i thought that we are now on the Highway for a better future ... I am a bit sad about the actual situation. hope that i can travel in the next two month , the first flights to Africa are possible by End of June.*

*Greetings to Bojana and her daughter ! Take care and i hope that you are back with full power !*

*Best wishes and stay healthy*

*Yours Bento*

*tomo kriznar <tomo.kriznar@gmail.com>*

*Jun 8, 2020, 1:55 PM*

*to Bernd*

*Dear Bento,*

*thank you for your email and care for my health. I was very weak and I am still weak, I am still not ok.*

*Problems started after I returned from Nuba in February a year ago. Bloody flat worms of Schistosoma, chronic infections called schistosomiasis - known also as bilharziasis. I eat medicine first in the spring 2019 and then again in autumn 2019 after I had to spend weeks in hospital. This last February in Nuba I got very sick again. Back in Slovenia a doctor in the Infection clinic in Ljubljana confirmed the worms are still with me.*

*Then corona panic stops further treatment.*

*At the moment I had no medicine - I may get it on the next test on July 15.*

*I feel like I have worms even in my brain and that this is why I can not focus properly. Bojana and I should finish our report on Leprosy in Nuba as we experienced in December - February a long time ago. We should send it to you and all respected institutions involved, but I am still working on it trying to improve it.*

*In the meantime sister Cecilia is bringing lepers from Lomon and Acheron to Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel. I met her a year before, at that time she said she could not go with me because dr. Tom was away and she was in charge of the whole hospital. This year, after Bojana and me visited Western Jebels and returned back to Kauda in January, she got a blessing from dr. Tom. He provided a car and a couple of assistants. I asked to join as also Johannes, but he said he can not go because he was running up and down Kauda and Yida busy with the transport of your medicine.*

*We slept the first night with the priest Zakaria in the church of Lugi and the next day we climbed the mountains.*

*We meet many lepers on the top. After some days of negotiations we succeeded to take with us to the car in Lugi for further examination in Gidel the first lot of 8 lepers. Roya el Rahim, the lady affected very badly (you can see her in our calendar 2020 - month October), did not want to follow sister Cecilia although two of her children already left with her. She said she wishes to die and be buried in her village and that she do not want to be burned alive in Gidel as supposed to happen to all lepers who die in hospital. There was a lot of resistance and all kinds of drama also from her family members and practically the whole village before we succeeded to move her down the mountain. We did that finally actually with the help of the SPLA North army. It was scenic and exciting in*



*fact just like in one of the Hollywood action films. I filmed it all, with Bojana we will start editing a new documentary immediately we succeed to get necessary financial support.*

*We hope with this film we will convince and attract more attention to the political situation in Nuba.*

*Yes, I do agree, conditions now are very very complex. I believe Aziz more than any other Sudanese resistance fighter and this is why I am very worried. Aziz is the one that should be most known all round the world.*

*Common values are changing in Nuba. On this last trip we did experience native people becoming more interested in individual gains. This is another reason why we had problems finishing our report.*

*We wish to help local natives to get more engaged to fight lepra ...*

*Will try to send it before the end of this week. Greetings. Tomo and Bojana*

## MAJOR CONCLUSIONS:

We apologize that this report is so long. It is complex because unconsciously the bigger story wants to be told, later on becoming a book and a documentary film also. We are not professional aid workers, we believe we are reacting the way as most common human beings would, if they could see what we did in all this years of filming among lepers on the top of Nuba mountains and Blue Nile. And writing letters and, and lobbying, and, and, and lecturing all over West ... All to end that bloody unnecessary suffering. This great shame of humanity.

## General recommendations for all of you who still care:

I. Please consider that native people who have been under siege for so long are lacking so many things which they do not share with us, even today in the time of a sort of relative peace. Of course they are traumatized.

II. Respect indigenous people! Give whatever you will give to them with care. Do not repeat the mistakes of JEM - Joint military commission - whose first head was an

anthropologist, the only one since then. That was “Quechackoro”, a great man of perfect integrity who worked with indigenous people in South Sudan before and even published a book on the people of Anuak. All others were professional soldiers only.



*“Quechackoro” with Julie Flint and chairman SPLA/M Abdel Aziz al Hilu.*

In 2002 I saw a Frenchman throwing to children candies through the car window while driving through villages. Children were following him any time he appeared begging for sweets. A situation not much different than we for us children of the industrialised world, who got trapped in scientific materialism and can not free ourselves from consumerism. And please do not corrupt also the adults with some sort of “sweets”. Do not divide them on the Ones working with you and the rest that does not. We, the old activists, who are - even now after decades of almost systematic destruction of unbelievably pure Nuba cultures - still hooked on the values, perceptions, systems of cooperation and solidarity (“nafir”, “sibir”), dignity, proudness, tolerance, respect, common freedom..., we saw too many times how foreigners did divide and consciously or unconsciously tried to conquer Nuba as most idealistic and enthusiastic people up till recently. Indeed up till now.

This process never really succeeded – at least not completely, but the Nuba are changing, no culture is static, yes, Nuba and other indigenous people have the right to go ahead as they wish. Yes, from our diary you can sense that even my best friends in Nuba are now looking what they can get from me first for their personal benefits. Walking on the top of Lomon they did not think about how to save the lives of their lepers first – I have experienced them thinking how to get smart phones from me first. And I was never throwing lollies – I was just distributing cameras since the beginning of the new war June 2011. They got used to ask for cameras now, any time they see me.

Please do not work too much to make them as we are. Otherwise we will lose something most beautiful.



III. The first paper we read was from Khartoum WHO “Leprosy elimination in Darfur, Kordofan Blue Nile, Sudan” WHO Sudan Proposal - from November 2019. We took notice of all the basic philosophy involved and hereby we are informing you all, that we have nothing against it. What we are sceptical about are the official numbers of



the population of patients in SPA North liberated areas mentioned, but actually they are much higher. Omar Bashkir from National Islamic front spoke of Nuba in terms of mosquitoes, the NIF claimed “there are no much people left in the mountains except for some bandits”. In fact there are hundreds of thousands of most vital, productive, creative people there... you will be very surprised how very human and alive and strong they are by all means.

We also read “Improvement of Medical Care for Leprosy Patients and Initiating the Establishment of Systematic Leprosy in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan”, as send by DAHW/GLR in February 2020. We agree with all experiences having been written about and especially: *“Control based on DAHW's experience in more than 20 countries worldwide, adequate care of these rural, often marginalised communities requires extensive efforts over a longer period of time, including resource-intensive active case identification and appropriate investigations of contact persons. Therefore, sufficient and sustainable financial support together with strong national/international cooperation (e.g. WHO to ensure the availability of sufficient drugs) should be among the most important prerequisites for achieving the described goals.”*

We completely agree with this sentence from Dr. Saskia Kreibich, DAHW, mail from Feb 5th, 2020 also: *“It is important for us to use, integrate and strengthen the local structures of the health system in order to promote potentials and synergies, the effect of which will go beyond that of improved leprosy care and control, and can contribute to a generally improved health and life situation of the Nuba population.”*

Let this perception be the new foundation now: we are convinced that both of the two hospitals should be involved in the leprosy program and supported in their activities:

1. German Emergency Doctors in Kauda / Luere
2. Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel.

Both should cooperate with the existing native medical infrastructure, for example in Lomon & Acheron mountain, Western Jebels, Komoganza in Blue Nile that we visited:

1. Medical Center in Changaro on Lomon Mountain, lead by Nimeiri team
2. Medical Center in Acheron on Acheron Mountain, lead by led by Younis
3. Medical Center in Luge in the savanna under this two Mountains north lead by Yousif.
4. Medical Center in Sarafat Jamus in the Savanna under this two Mountains lead by Nabil.

5. Medical Center in Western Jebels led by medical assistant Walid Ahmed
6. Medical Center in Blue Nile, Komoganza, Jabous.

Clearly all this “micro centres” should be developed, enlarged, added and equipped with small leprosy yards.

We apologize for using only the first names of the idealists and enthusiasts, many other were not mentioned by their names.

IV. We found lepers everywhere in Nuba mountains but most of them we saw on the top of the highest rocky plateaus. It is probably because microorganisms do not like hot climate and also because high places seem to be more neglected – there is less education. We know that in Western Jebels many more leprosy cases are prevalent as well as in some other regions we did not had the chance to visit. So a proper registering and mapping of leprosy-cases in all of the Nuba mountains is required to develop an effective anti-leprosy program.

V. What is first necessary is to correct the counting and identifying of leprosy cases. Although we asked local authorities, chiefs, SPLA North commanders, religious leaders and others to help counting leprosy cases, we have difficulties to get the correct numbers. Actually a house to house search/investigation is necessary.

VI. Naturally lepers wish to stay near homes and families – so we suggest to take to Gidel and Luere only the most demanding cases. Nuba cultures traditionally do not react on leprosy.

To motivate Nuba to stay in the leprosy centres, simple educational facilities (to learn to write and read, learn English, etc.) should be established.

So the last will be the first. The first in knowledge.

Our idea to support this “leprosariums” with a new sort of motivation, for example lets somebody teach leprosy patients how to read, deliver them some books, let leprosy patients shorten their time reading. Another of our dreams we have is to provide the educational facilities with a video projector charged by cheap solar systems and screen them videos, that may be interesting or educational for them. Every evening when Jakob William screened his videos there was a large crowd of people who did not came for entertainment only, but also for education. This may help to avoid what happened after the Declaration of Independence in the Republic of South Sudan. Thereafter in South

Sudan the many indigenous people with their ancient cultures were confronted with the worst parts of western cultures only. Nothing noble and enlightening – only the bottom line of western films, ideas, religious perceptions. That is why I believe it was so easy to pull them into a new civil war for the benefits of some corrupt domestic and foreign interests of course.

We suggest also to reward leprosy patients to stay until the end of their treatment with something material: for example one blanket. The ones who will finished all treatments could get even a cow, a pig or goat.

News will spread fast what the first patients get, others will come to leprosariums more easily.

After reading our unconventional report you quite sure already now why and what we are warning you about. But just in case we don't succeed, I wish to tell you one more story.

VII. Microscopes! One of the first tools necessary to fight all kind of worms, bacteria, parasites, ...

#### VIII. KOMOGANZA, BLUE NILE – THE MOST MARGINALISED!!!!

Please do not forget a part of the liberated area under SPLA & M North control in Blue Nile named Komoganza. This is where we meet the most isolated indigenous people of all of them. Discriminated by all its standards and marginalised even by their own Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile standards, because they are so special, so soft, so in touch with nature and the tribal world, that they have the biggest problem to cope with the so called modern world.





*The People of Komoganza, Blue Nile, 2015.*

We equipped them with mini cameras, lap tops and satellite phones to send images to the world, with the call for urgent help just before the government of Sudan attacked them again on September 1st 2011. But nothing much was photographed and filmed and now is not secured in archives, because their donated photographic gear was stolen by other tribes.



*Komoganza with mini spy cameras just before the new war started in September 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.*

Therefore almost nothing is known about Komoganza people, neither about their special and exceptional culture in the eve of the New War for Natural Resources, which again lead to the extermination of indigenous people of Sudan – nor about their new plight and incredible new suffering in the face of what already other more adapted neighbours went through, known as process of modernisation, urbanisation, industrialisation and in the western cultures as globalisation.





Developed material goods and money does not mean the same to indigenous people in Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile as it means to us more complexly developed urbane homo sapiens. When I met them for the first time at the end of seventies and even nineties, they did not care much for the first laptop computer or other toys I brought to the mountains for the first time in 1998.



*First computer in Lomon, 1998.*

IX. Last warning: New NGOs should not offer native people higher salaries for their work than they are now earning in GED and Mother of Mercy, because they may leave this organisations, that faithfully stayed with Nuba in the most critical times, in order to get more money somewhere else.





We are looking forward to be informed about Your impressions of this report and Your ideas how to help to improve the situation of this very special people in dire need.



We will keep you informed on Roya el Rahim recovery ...  
With all respect. Tomo and Bojana Križnar

Naklo, 16. July 2020

Post Scriptum: 24<sup>th</sup> of July, Beirut/Lebanon.

I felt sorry, had a bad conscious, felt guilty.

I escaped from the mountains. For the first time since 40 years of visiting Nuba people and all kind of activities there. I should have been strong and firm. Much more stronger. I should have withstood everything, should have understood everything. But in this very moment, when Jacob accused me of “him leading me around the mountains and taking care of me”, I was not. Maybe because of my illness, that strangely enough resembled Corona-like symptoms with severe breathing difficulties combined with fear from dying. Maybe because I was so desperately missing my wife Bojana, that I felt like loosing my mind.

After I commemorated leper Komi, for whom unfortunately everything was too late, I was almost running down to the valley together with two porters Komi's brother found. The priest in the village Sarafat Jamus, who was helping me all the previous years, was away, the parish locked. I left all my belongings at the house of the first family and went for sleeping to Santos, with whom I started the first school in Sarafat Jamus in 1998. The school was named after Dr. Jan Kokalj, my friend and idol, a Slovenian humanist, medical doctor, alpinist and awakener of consciousness, in order to honor him and his wife, who became my first donor.

The next day Santos helped me to find some transport to commander Jackot in Dagheba, from there the only operational ambulance in Nuba Mountains took me to the checkpoint at Abulela, where I hitchhiked an off-road vehicle, crossing the border to the refugee camp Yida. From Juba I was airlifted by the American Samaritan's Purse.

In Europe my wife Bojana waited for me at the Vienna Airport, from where we continued the journey not to my home, but to the death camp Auschwitz.

I felt ashamed and guilty.

And merely in Auschwitz I slowly calmed down.

I managed to finish this report only some hours ago. Writing it I felt like being infested with worms in my brain. Not because of Bilharzia, that is treated by Dr. Kokalj at the Clinic for Infectious Disease in Ljubljana-Slovenia, but because I feel like being invaded by parasites, parasites of guilt since I, with Bojana, up till now did not succeed to organize a medical treatment for every human being, rotting alive in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile.

Tomo Križnar and Bojana Pivk Križnar, 29. July 2020. Beirut.