

2300

CHAD

Abdel Kerim Aboubakar The Teenage Refugee

ONE DAY'S FOOD

IN NOVEMBER

BREAKFAST FROM FOOD AID Aiysh (thick, congealed grain porridge) of sorghum, with a coating of vegetable oil, 1.5 lb • Thin vegetable soup, 2.9 fl oz

LUNCH FROM FOOD AID Aiysh, 1.5 lb • Thin vegetable soup, 2.9 fl oz • Orange drink, powdered, mixed with water, 16 fl oz

DINNER FROM FOOD AID Aiysh, 1.5 lb • Thin vegetable soup, 2.9 fl oz

THROUGHOUT THE DAY Water trucked in from an Oxfam borehole, 16.1 fl oz

CALORIES 2,300

Age: 16 • Height: 5'9½" • Weight: 110 pounds

BREIDJING REFUGEE CAMP • Violent clashes and civil unrest have been a fact of life throughout much of Sudan's modern history, most recently between government-backed Arab Muslims and non-Arab black African Muslims in the Darfur region. When pro-government Janjaweed militia began burning villages and killing people near teenager Abdel Kerim Aboubakar's Masalit village in far west Darfur, he and his family were forced to flee.

They escaped over the border into Chad with thousands of other refugees, carrying little more than a cooking pot, a sack of grain, and a small bundle of clothes, to dwell in a hastily erected tent city.

Back home in Sudan, Abdel, the oldest of five children, had helped his widowed mother, D'jimia, manage their small farm and attended school when he wasn't needed at home. They owned a grove of mango trees, farmed a large vegetable garden, and kept a cow for milk. Their herd of sheep gave them income and a bit of fresh meat to eat.

In the camp D'jimia cooks the same staple grain porridge for breakfast, lunch, and dinner that she cooked at home, but instead of the bounty of her own land, she uses inter-

national food aid rations: sorghum or millet, sugar, salt, lentils, CSB (a corn-soy blend), and vegetable oil. The rations are doled out twice a month, and they get their grain ration milled by a local villager who takes part of it in exchange for the grinding. Water is trucked in by the relief agency Oxfam, and Abdel's mother and sisters haul it to the tent daily.

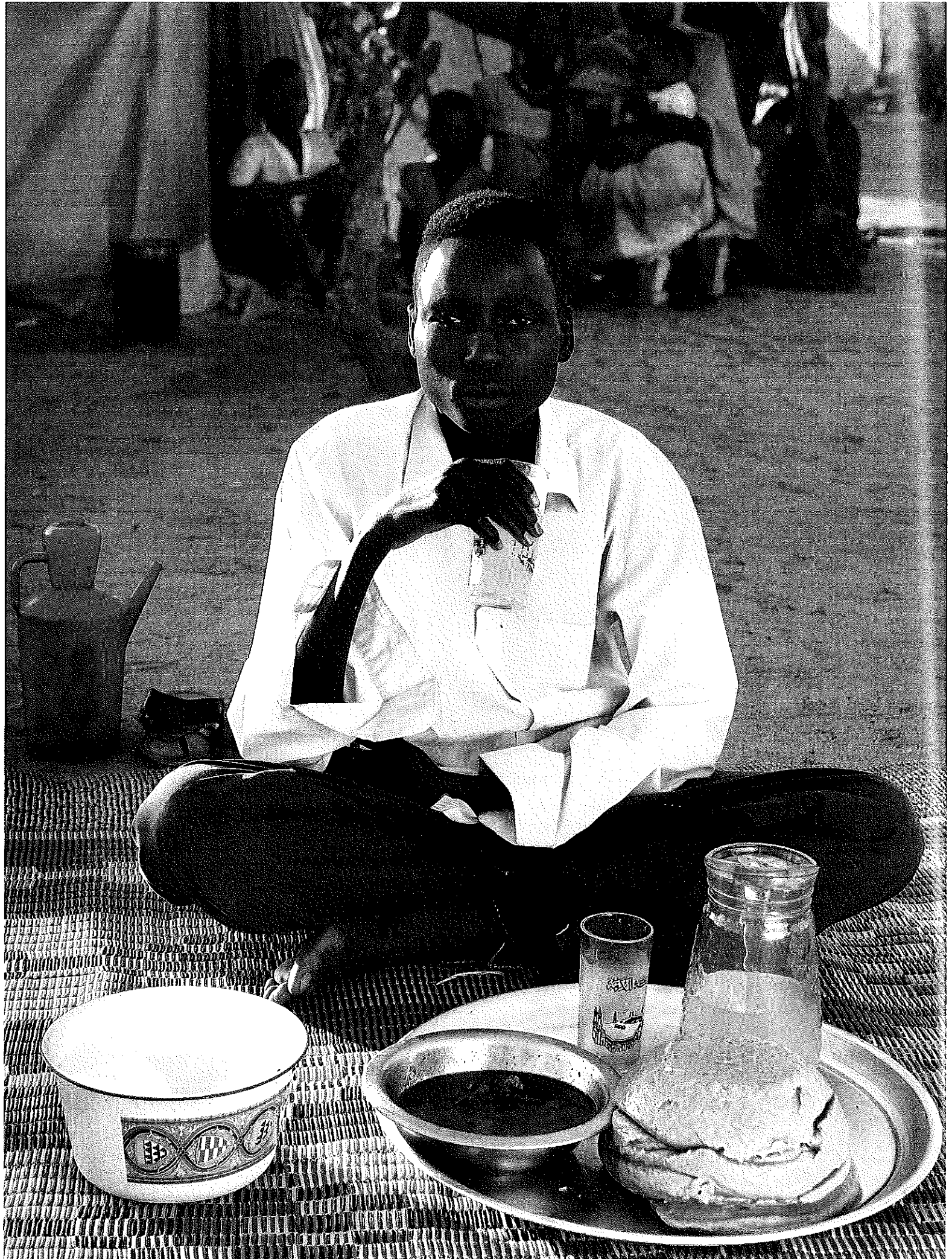
The amount of food each family is given is dictated by the number of people in the family. Since the smaller children in his family don't eat as much, Abdel gets a bigger share. Yet his mother worries that this still isn't enough to feed a growing boy. She hires herself and

Abdel out to local farmers for \$1 USD a day so she can purchase dried meat and vegetables.

Mealtimes are different for Abdel than they were at home. According to Masalit custom, at age 16 he's a man and too old to eat with his mother and younger siblings. So he carries his *aiysh* and a bit of thin vegetable soup to a neighboring tent, where he eats with a man and his sons. Their meal looks exactly the same. All pick up handfuls of the hard, congealed porridge, dip it in their soup, and talk as they eat. Invitations to meals are always extended, but in a refugee camp, guests must arrive with their own food.



Abdel Kerim Aboubakar, a Darfur refugee, at the Breidjing Refugee Camp on the Chad-Sudan border, with his typical day's worth of international food aid, his family, and their tent. The camp (at right) houses 42,000 refugees—more than twice the number they planned for.



2300

USA

Ted Sikorski The Man on the Street

ONE DAY'S FOOD

IN JULY

MORNING MEAL, IF HE HAS EXTRA CASH Bananas (4), 1.6 lb

HOT LUNCH PROVIDED BY HOLY APOSTLES SOUP KITCHEN Pasta, beans, and hot dogs in a flour and butter sauce, 10.7 oz • Collard greens, 1.5 oz • Salad of lettuce, tomato, onion, and carrot, 2.3 oz • Fruit salad, 3.1 oz • Bread with butter, 2.8 oz

SNACKS, IF HE HAS EXTRA CASH 2% milk, 1 qt • *Snickers* candy bars, fun size (3), 0.7 oz

THROUGHOUT THE DAY Tap water, 1.3 qt

CALORIES 2,300

Age: * • Height: 5'8" • Weight: about 168 pounds

*Ted declined to give his age

NEW YORK, NEW YORK • Every day is different for Manhattanite Ted Sikorski, but every day is also the same: a struggle to get himself fed, bathed, and sheltered. He dresses well, purposefully, but has been living on the street for over a decade. Why? "I got fired...and lived on my savings until they ran out," he says. He prefers not to say what he did for a living but says it was on Wall Street: "I'd rather not go into it." He also doesn't want to give his age because of the years he says he's lost.

He detests the word "homeless" to describe his situation, preferring instead the phrase "less fortunate."

He moves from place to place around the city, fitting in because his hair is trimmed and neat and his clothes are as spotless as those of any Wall Street professional on a day off. A casual observer wouldn't know that he's been walking for over an hour to get to a bathroom that he knows won't turn him away. He stows his belongings in various storage lockers. He doesn't want to say where he gets the money to pay for them, but he says he doesn't panhandle.

Where does he sleep? "I'm all over the place. During the summers I might be sleeping on the street, or in a bodega, or sometimes up near Central Park." Where did he sleep last night? "I'd rather not say." But he details at great length his struggle with the inevitable bureaucracy that attempts, with varying degrees of success, to provide services

to the people of New York City who don't have a permanent roof over their head.

He knows most of the city's meal programs well, and volunteers his time at the one he thinks is the best: Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen in Chelsea, which has been serving thousands of weekday meals, without judging people's need, since 1982.

The food served up by chef Chris O'Neill and a staff of cooks and volunteers is well-balanced: pasta with meat, fresh vegetables, canned fruit, dessert, and bread with butter. "The food is very good," Ted says, but the nonjudgmental and caring atmosphere is what keeps him coming back.

"When I had some savings, before I fell into the street, I'd have one good meal a week, and twice a day I'd make a whole bunch of rice... I did this before I started going to soup kitchens. Before I went, I didn't even know if they'd allow me to go to a soup kitchen. The first time I came here was around the holidays one year. I still had an apartment. I started coming and no one said anything; they just fed me. If I had known that, I would have come a few years earlier," he says.

"My perspective is, this is a very big, unusual problem that I'm facing. And I think that everyone has to fight his own battle in life. I never thought that my life would turn out like this. It was very difficult in that first six-month period. I thought it was only going to be for a few months."





Ted Sikorski, an unemployed resident of the streets of Manhattan at Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen with his typical day's worth of food. Although Ted spends many hours a day walking, he admits to having to watch his weight, adding that many of his "residentially challenged" friends have the same problem. Over 1 million low-income residents use more than 1,200 nonprofit soup kitchens and food pantries in New York City. Some of the soup kitchens offer other benefits, such as showers, counseling, and entertainment. As in most big U.S. cities, it's easier to find a free meal in New York City than a place to sleep. Each night, more than 39,000 people sleep in the city's municipal shelter system, while thousands more sleep on the street.