

THE SUDANESE HUMAN RIGHTS QUARTERLY

An ad hoc publication issued by Sudan Human Rights Organization - Cairo

Issue No. 27

June 2008

Editorial Board :

Mahgoub El-Tigani (Editor-in-chief)

Mohamed Hassan Daoud (Editor)

SUDAN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION - CAIRO

SHRO-Cairo is a voluntary non-governmental organization concerned with human rights and is active within the area of Africa and the Middle East.

In addition to anonymous support by Sudanese people,
the Quarterly has been generously assisted by the
National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, D.C.

An ad hoc publication issued by the Sudan Human Rights Organization - Cairo

C O N T E N T S

Editorial

- Editorial: Cautious Moves to Democratic Rule
- Sudan Unity under the Elections' Act
- The Situation of Human Rights: Feb-April, 2008
- CEDAW: Continuous Women's Education
- Activist Contributions
- A Historic Civil Society

EDITORIAL

Cautious Moves to Democratic Rule

The Editor-in-Chief

The concern for a real democratic transition is the foremost agenda of all democratic forces and civil society groups in the Sudanese political arena.

The human rights situation lingers behind the acceptable minimum standards in the levels of the central and regional governance or their states. True several announcements pledging a serious commitment to democratic transition have been emphasized by a few official sources. There is much desirable from the part of the legislatures, however, including the National Assembly and the South Sudan Legislature, as well as the executives and the judicial institutions all over the country.

So long as the situation of human rights continues with gross human rights' violations committed against every single international or nationally-recognized human rights' law, it is indeed too early to assume improvements in the country's democracy or human rights' state of affairs. Still squarely obligated to both national and international laws, the Government of Sudan is held fully responsible before the Sudanese Nation and the International Community for a great many crimes against humanity.

Of these criminal acts, the latest air bombardments of many villages and towns in Darfur by the air force constituted the gravest aggression that offended the Sudanese masses, at large, and the Darfuri peoples and armed movements, in particular; undermined the African Union and the United Nations efforts to apply Security Council's resolutions; and opened the door for repulsive actions by the victimized groups, to say nothing of the unabated policies and practices of the government to frustrate a peaceful settlement to the crisis in Darfur.

The armed attack on May 10th, 2008, by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) on the city of Omdurman and the overall steeper ra-

cialist and other discriminatory assaults that followed the attack by the National Security & Intelligence Service, the Police Force, and the Armed Forces specifically upon the Darfuri citizens in Omdurman, the National Capital Khartoum, and some towns in Central Sudan indicated the unavoidable repercussions of sidelining opposition groups by the ruling regime, as much as it proved that political problems would never be successfully settled by military action.

The Sudanese popular wisdom holds certainly true: it is only by national democratic consensus that the chronic disputes of our Nation would be peacefully settled. Aside from the narrow-focused propaganda by the warring parties, or the government's media claims of a decisive victory over the attack, important popular moves have emerged out of the escalated conflict:

The Sudanese public condemned in the strongest terms possible all acts of violence to assume political power, especially those daily pursued by the Government of Sudan supported by the China-oil exchanges of costly weaponry and a new military pact with Iran. The public condemned the devastating results of both government and armed opposition military warfare at the expense of peace, development, and the urgent needs of the enlarged displaced population of Darfur and Abyei, the impoverished majority in the national level, irrespective of the national and the external pressures on the government to abide by international norms. Furthermore, the Sudanese public awareness has certainly increased, as it did express in most of the banned journals a strong will to: exercise international human rights norms, without any distinctions, especially the right to vote; to surrender the citizens prosecuted by the International Criminal Court; and to call on all parties and civil society groups to unify their efforts and to press strongly on the ruling group to end the ongoing civil war in full cooperation with the Darfur and the Abyei political and civil society groups.

Towards this goal-achievement, the emphasis of the Sudanese civil society groups on non-warring practices constituted a great asset in the global striving to establish peace and development in Sudan.

In the other significant areas of implementing the CPA, especially the issues of population census, national elections, the South-North relations,

and the Abyei dilemma, the same NCP non-constitutional anti-democratic policies and practices that pushed aside influential opposition groups, in general, or excluded smaller parties and almost all non-governmental civil society groups, in particular, from active participation in the national decision making generated continuous threats to the transition of the country to sustainable democracy.

This Quarterly provides a detailed report on the problematic disputes between the government and the opposition parties, which influenced negatively the national climates to help smooth the North-South relations, encourage peaceful co-existence between all inhabitants in Abyei, and help convene an all-Sudanese conference to resolve the most urgent humanitarian and political crises of all, the crisis in Darfur.

Despite the negativity of the government's armed conflicts, a few positive moves developed by several entities in the arena: For one, the SPLM convention ascertained the South Sudan's commitment to the CPA and the Movement's ability to ascertain political unity at this difficult stage of national construction. It is expedient for democracy in the South, however, to allow greater participation for all public activities by both the SPLM and the other non-ruling groups to exercise the full enjoyment of human rights, including competition with the ruling authority.

The discussions at the National Capital on the elections' draft by all political parties, including the ruling group NCP, were indicative of a great need to ensure the freedom of the Press free of all censorial activities or security restrictions for all groups, not only the NCP. Of a prime importance, the Government of Sudan, as a transitional government, should abide-by all provisions of the CPA and the Interim Constitution, particularly those requiring the full enjoyment of international human rights norms, indiscriminately, for all citizens of the land. That commitment alone will not ensure the best possible transition to democratic rule, nonetheless, unless the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the State in all levels of authority abide-by all international and constitutionally-recognized human rights norms, and unless grassroots' organizational efforts manifest a sustainable democratic movement.

Mahgoub El-Tigani

Editor-in-Chief

SUDAN UNITY UNDER THE ELECTIONS' ACT

Mohamed Hassan Daoud

The Sudanese democratic experience in governance surpassed most of the African and Arab nations half of a century ago. The country experienced in its modern history five parliamentary elections in the years 1953, 1958, 1965, 1968, and 1986.

These elections did not include elections by military regimes since they were faked and only meant to coat totalitarian rule with a democratic suit. The democratic experience, however, was rampant with many problems of which a discontinuity of democratic governance mainly caused by military intervention was devastating.

The democratic elections were based on laws guaranteeing only the interests of influential forces in control of the State. All of the succeeding civilian or military regimes consolidated hegemony of the center over marginal regions, which ensued in unabated armed conflicts and political turbulences up to this day.

The 1953 Elections

The first elections in Sudan were processed in the year 1953, three years before its national independence in January 1st, 1956. The Sudanese were represented with 4 representatives in the 8-members non-partisan commission that supervised the elections led by an expert from India and a representative for each of Britain, Egypt, and the United States. Because of an acute differential in the levels of social awareness between urban inhabitants and the majority rural population of the country, the one-vote electoral rule was not adopted for the whole electorate. Both direct and indirect votes were admissible such that several representatives were selected for parliament by indirect voting. All in all, 68 seats were won by direct election, 24 by indirect voting and 5 for graduates.

These elections were criticized because they deprived women from the right to vote. The voting age was set at 21 years, which excluded a large section of the youth from elections. In addition, the electoral constituencies were not clearly allocated, which depressed the share of par-

ties in parliamentary representation, regardless of their number of votes.

The results of the first elections in which 6 political parties competed were that the National Unionist Party (NUP) won 53 seats; the Umma Party 22; the independent candidates 7; Southerners 7; and the Socialist Republican Party 3 representatives.

The NUP won 3 candidates in the Graduates' seats and 2 candidates (one independent and the other communist) won the remaining two seats. Mostly supported by the rural population, the Umma Party obtained 47,000 votes more than the NUP which maintained most votes in the urban and most stable regions in Central Sudan.

Protesting a visit by the Egyptian General Mohamed Nageeb to Khartoum in March 1954 to support unity of the Nile Valley, the Umma Party became involved in an armed confrontation with the government force in charge of order at the airport. The March 1954 registered the first public instance of massive political violence in the democratic arena.

It can be said, however, that the 1954 parliamentary experience was quite positive: the Sudanese parliament achieved Sudanization of the Civil Service, ensured evacuation of the British and Egyptian armies from Sudan, and instated independence of the country based on a democratic system of periodic governance.

The 1958 Elections

The second elections occurred in 1958. A new government was composed by an Umma coalition with the People's Democratic Party (PDP), a splitting group of the NUP. The elections' act was amended to favour interests of the ruling party: for example, the Graduates' seats were abolished apparently because the Umma failed to win them in the last elections; electoral constituencies were reallocated to provide additional seats to the rural areas (from 11 to 22 in Darfur, 17 to 29 in Kordofan, 18 to 35 in the Blue Nile, and 8 to 16 in Kassala); and the educational requirement was waived all together from candidacy.

Approved in 1957, a new nationality law excluded a great number of people from the vote, and a new system was implemented by which mandated electoral teams wandered around the countryside to ensure active participation for nomadic groups. As a consequence of this activity, the

Umma won 63 constituencies, the NUP 44, and the PDP 16. The Umma-PDP coalition government ruled the country versus a growing opposition by civil society groups, namely trades unions and professional groups. And in November 1958, the government surrendered the authority to the armed forces.

The 1965 Elections

The country resumed democratic rule with the third elections of 1965, soon after the military government had been overthrown by popular uprising in 1964.

The Modern Forces, i.e., the unions and professionals' groups which played a significant role in the overthrow of the military regime, managed to pass a new elections' act that guaranteed the right to vote for women for the first time, reduced the voting age to 18, allowed 15 graduates' seats, and redistributed geographical constituencies according to the size of electors, irrespective of the levels of public awareness. A total of 233 approved constituencies included 45 in the Blue Nile (Central Sudan), 36 in Kordofan, 33 in Kassala, 24 in Darfur, 17 in the Northern Province, 13 in Khartoum, and 60 in the South.

Twelve parties competed in the elections. The Umma won 92 seats, the NUP 73, the Independents 18, the Beja Congress 15, and the Communists 11 (all in the graduates' seats). SANO obtained 10 seats, the Nuba Mountains 10, and the Front for Islamic Charter (the Muslim Brotherhood) 5 seats.

A coalition government was formed by the Umma and the NUP; then the NUP made a new government with a splitting faction of the Umma. The two ruling parties, however, were not able to tolerate a strong parliamentary opposition by the Communists (despite their limited number). Eventually, they collaborated to dissolve the Communist Party and suspend its members from Parliament.

These governmental acts violated constitutional law, thus leading to a total collapse of democratic rule, as when elected state-managers of the ruling parties surrendered political power to military rule in 1958.

The 1968 Elections

In 1968, the fourth elections were conducted in Sudan over 218 geo-

graphical constituencies which didn't include the abolished graduates' slate.

A coalition of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the PDP won 101 seats; 2 wings of the Umma received 72 seats; 10 Independent winners announced party affiliations; 25 candidates were elected from Southern parties; and the Islamic Charter won 3 seats. Legitimized by the Supreme Court, the Communists won 2 seats. By May 1969, however, the Sudanese elected politicians failed to protect democracy from the armed forces which seized the political power for the second time.

The 1986 Elections

In 1986, the fifth elections resumed after 7 years of dictatorial rule by a non-consensual act. The Modern Forces which played a significant role in the overthrow of military rule was not able to influence the elections' act, as earlier accomplished by the restoration of democracy in 1964.

A Transitional Military Council supervised preparation of the act and run the elections in the service of partisan interests. For example, the act allocated graduate seats in the regional level for which candidacy was allowable for non-resident graduates. Northerners became candidates in constituencies of the South; and expatriates in the Gulf voted for candidates of their choice in any constituency inside Sudan.

With these facilities, the Islamic Front harvested the graduates' seats. The total parliamentary seats were 301, including 28 graduates'. The vote continued for an unusual period of 11 days, thus escaping tight monitoring. The Islamic Front, which accumulated financial and media abilities through a former alliance with the overthrown military rule, came to the fore as a weighty political force and ranked the third after the Umma and the DUP.

The 2009 Elections

After more than a year of deliberations on a new elections' act since January 2007, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the rest of the opposition groups have not yet approved the draft. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) first agreed with amendments proposed by the opposition. Also, the SPLM made an attempt in the aftermath to persuade its ruling partner, the NCP, to compromise.

A dispute developed between the two groups, i.e. the NCP versus the other parties, on the formation of a National Assembly by 450 members of whom "270 should be elected by individual vote to represent the designated geographical constituencies in each State; 112 women to be elected from State slates; and 68 members from party slates by national Proportional Representation (PR)."

On January 22nd, 2007, a total of 13 parties including the Umma National Party, DUP, the Communists, People Congress, and the SPLM, agreed to allocate 50% for geographical seats and 50% for PR. But the ruling NCP proposed 60 for the geographical constituencies and only 40% by PR.

The parties wanted slates in the level of States, not in the national level as the ruling party proposed; the women should be represented by 25% at least of the parties' slate, while the NCP proposed an independent slate for women. Also, the parties asked for prompt reform of the laws restricting public freedoms, as well as an expeditious population census. Some parties called on a unified action vis-à-vis the ruling party if it wouldn't agree to their terms.

Raising the dispute to the Presidency to decide on the matter, the national commission on constitutional revisions admitted its failure to establish agreement on the elections' draft by the end of March.

It is noteworthy to mention that, not a single party would be able to pass the law through the National Council unless by two thirds of Council vote. This situation coincided with an agreement signed between the SPLM and the NCP to maintain 55% for geographical seats and 45% for PR. The agreement generated various reactions amongst the political parties: the DUP, the Communists, and the People Congress criticized the SPLM retreat from its former position; but the Umma appreciated the SPLM/NCP agreement.

The NCP-parties dispute might have been founded on fears about election results, rather than a conflict on the electoral system. The NCP pursued a policy to retain the 53% majority it had been enjoying by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), if not increasing it, while the parties endeavoured to weaken the NCP share.

The NCP relied on strong financial and organizational abilities ac-

quired in the long years of sole control of the State (1989-2008) to influence recruits from the other parties, and to weaken political rivalries with restrictive security laws. Equally importantly, the NCP continued to manipulate internal conflicts to offset external pressures on the ruling regime.

The NCP attained some success in these policies vis-à-vis the DUP, the Umma (despite some disagreements), and the People Congress (a splitting group of the NCP).

The ruling party maintained alliance with the SPLM by flexible implementation of the CPA. Notwithstanding, the commitment to a principled enforcement of the CPA has been a major condition for the SPLM to ally with other groups. Apparently, the SPLM/NCP seemed to undertake occasional rapprochement with the Northern Opposition whenever the NCP acted elusively in the CPA implementation.

On the other side, the parties realized they would enter the elections' contest with limited financial and organizational resources due to two decades of harassment and estrangement, in addition to the impact of emigration and brain-drain on party memberships.

The change of the political map deprived political parties from significant historical allegiances (Western Sudan in the case of Umma and East Sudan for the DUP). For example, scores of newly-formed parties or political movements placed regional claims and agenda over their former partisan commitments.

Most parties suffered stringent finances, although they called insistently for equal access to the State-controlled media, as well as lots of land to build their premises, in addition to tax exemptions for office equipments, instead of direct financial assistance from the State.

Above all, the enforceable restrictive laws of the State have not been removed to ensure fair elections. The parties were often required to obtain security release to hold party conferences or public assemblies, only to be denied in the aftermath.

Similar to the experience of the 1986 elections, which carried several surprising results, the 2009 elections might bring about unexpected findings. A large proportion of the electorate, for example, belonged to the

18-40 age groups which might be participating for the first time in democratic elections. Indeed, it might be difficult to speculate how they would actually vote.

There has been a lack of institutional work and democratic practices among the old opposition parties, whereas certain leaders maintained leadership for 30 or 40 years. Many parties might be unaware of the specific schedule of the upcoming elections.

By the Interim Constitution, the next elections should be processed before end of the 4th year of transitional rule on the 9th of July, 2009. But the implementation schedule of the Naivasha Agreement (signed in December 2004) allowed the partners (the NCP and the SPLM) to extend the transitional period to the end of the 4th year - thus deferring elections for another whole year. This meant that the two partners might well continue to control the situation; but the NCP seemed more inclined to expedite elections.

It might be concluded that the planned elections would certainly pass through many difficulties concerning the elections' act; the formation of a constitutionally-realized National Electoral Commission (NEC), councils and sub-committees; the extreme handicaps of running partial elections in a Darfur not yet prepared for elections or population census; and the required reform of the restrictive laws that might definitely inhibit fair elections.

More than 60 laws needed revisions and reforms to be compatible with standards of the public freedoms and human rights stipulated by the Interim Constitution. Chief of these laws included the national security and intelligence law, criminal law, police law, law of the Press, and the elections' act.

The Elections' Draft

Thinking it would be a majority winner, the NCP has been determined to increase proportions of the geographical seats, as well as those of women's candidacy and party representatives. The women would elect women candidates in a "non-partisan" slate. Accordingly, all of the 112 seats of women might belong to a presumably NCP majority winner on the assumption that the latter must have been qualified to arrange such victory.

Added to the fact that this arrangement might defeat the idea of PR, it was strongly criticized because it would provide women with an extra vote in a special voting list for women's candidacy against the "one vote for one person" electoral rule.

Although the other parties proposed party-specific slates for the women electorate versus the NCP unified slate, every party would actually vote for its own candidates in the final analysis. Lacking both financial and organizational abilities, however, only the women's independent candidates might be at a great disadvantage of the two proposals.

The worst anticipated result of women's representation via a special slate for women candidates in the next elected parliament might be related to the continuous tradition of representing women with the male agenda of the same male-dominated parties that have historically curtailed the women's rights.

The formula suggested by the NCP made it conditional for a party or an alliance of parties to obtain 7% of the total cast as a minimum to be included in the PR list else the party(ies) would be excluded from distribution of the PR seats. Assuming 20 million persons might vote, the party that wouldn't obtain a million and 400,000 votes would not be represented in parliament.

This rule would virtually pre-empt the PR principle from its meaningful implications, i.e. allowing participation for all small and/or regional parties. The conditions of candidacy and financial deposit in the elections' draft might also be defaulting: a presidential candidate must be supported by 15,000 registered qualified electors from 18 States at least. Also, the candidate must deposit 10,000 pounds (US\$5,000).

A candidate of the South presidency would be required to ensure the support of 1,600 registered qualified electors from 6 States and a payment of 5,000 pounds. The support of 5,000 registered electors from one half of the localities of a State, plus a deposit of 2,000 pounds, would be required for candidacy of State legislatures. Candidates would lose their financial deposits were they unable to ensure votes amounting to 10% of the total correct votes of a constituency, a State, or the Nation in toto, as the case might be.

The NEC and the councils and sub-committees related to it were es-

established by the CPA's two partners' peace agreement in 2005. Partisan by nature, the agreement excluded the other parties (even if they accepted the peace provisions or showed reservation), of which some became equally engaged in bilateral agreements with the ruling party. For example, the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA, 2006) stated clearly in section 5 it should be incorporated in the Interim Constitution, which never happened; thus failing the Darfuris representation in the national institutions and commissions, including the NEC and the national council for population census by section 84/13 of the DPA.

The NEC membership required a person free of convictions during the last seven years in any crime of dishonesty, gross indecency, or elections fraud. The tasks of the NEC, however, (namely the preparation and supervision over elections to select a head of State, a president for the South, besides State governors, and members for the National Council and State legislatures) should be delegated to Members above all possible suspicions. Moreover, the lapse of only 7 years after commission of a crime related to dishonesty and corruption should normally deprive a culprit of competing for the NEC membership.

The act of the NEC read that the commission might hold closed meetings by a majority vote. The NEC might reserve the right to publish decisions by majority. These clauses violated the public right to have open access to NEC work and decisions.

The act also said that any registered candidate might object in writing to any posted information about his/her candidacy or others' within three days of posting. Obviously, these days might not allow sufficient time for a corrective procedure to occur.

According to law, the State Legislature might run a vote of trust according to a State Constitution on a governor by two thirds of the membership. In another paragraph, the act stated that a governor might not be placed under a vote of trust unless he/she would have completed twelve months in office. This protection clause was not necessitated at all.

In section 103, the law stipulated that a candidate or a political party would not be permitted to use the State resources, except for free media in the elections' campaigns. The fees that might be fixed in such cases, however, should be proportionate with the service and equally levied.

But this latter clause failed to alleviate discrimination between candidates with different resources.

The provision for national and international monitoring of the electoral process, enumeration, registration, voting, counting, and announcement of the results constituted a significant issue. Paragraph 3 of section 108 said that it would be a right for candidates, agents, supervisors, and media representatives to enter into election centers and to stay there any time during the election process, according to availability of space. This latter mention, nonetheless, might curtail supervision of the process as a whole.

Para 3 of section 140 made it possible to form monitoring electoral committees in the national level and in the South or the States to supervise the elections or the South referendum by judges, attorneys of the ministry of justice, former civil service employees, other well-reputed persons, civil society groups, the Press, the media, and political parties. These entities, however, should have full right to exercise censorial tasks in the elections.

The reference to a political party was consistently linked to Registrar or registration. The act definitions defined a party as one registered by the Law of Political Parties 2005, or the parties in coalition according to that law. In actual fact, most parties (including members of the SPLM, the DUP, and the Communists participating in the existing National Council) have been pursuing regular political activities, although they were never registered by the nationally rejected law.

The Population Census

It was decided that a population census would be enforced according to the CPA in the beginning of the transitional period (July 2005) to end by July 2007 at most, by section 215 of the Interim Constitution. The concerned committees worked slowly for sometime before mid April was designated a date to start the census. The appointment of the presidential adviser former minister of defence General Bakri Hassan Salih as a chair of the Census Council, however, disappointed both observers and political groups at the time the Constitution required a non-partisan national person for the job.

It should be expected, furthermore, that un-favourable security condi-

tions, transportation difficulties including mined fields in the South, and the constraints of accessing 100,000 citizens in the region of Halaib Egypt annexed to its own administration, might seriously handicap the process of a full census.

The rebel movements of Darfur and those in alliance with the government agreed that it would be impossible to make a census in Darfur unless war would be firstly ended and peace insurable with security and stability, as occurred in the South.

The Minawi-led faction of the Sudan Liberation Army, although allied with the government, considered the census a contradiction with the DPA (1006). The latter produced a road map for a permanent peace in the whole country, in general, and in Darfur, in particular. The DPA was based on peace making; the voluntary return of the displaced people by good preparations and ensured security; the compensation for all losses; the issuance of identification cards for Darfuris; and then the conduct of census.

A Southerner official admitted the difficulties involving the census process in the South. The chairperson of the South census and statistics commission, Asaya Kul Arwi, said they suffered a serious financial crisis. The government in Khartoum owed \$7.2 millions to the census in the South. Even if they got this amount, there would be a \$4.5 millions' default; as well they would need about 14,000 census enumerators, supervisors, and field workers.

Darfur

Under the prevailing situation of civil war in Darfur, three options seemed extremely difficult: The first option would have Darfur covered in the preparatory procedures of elections before peace making. This would mean reaching citizens and counting them in the internal or external camps of displaced population in Sudan, Chad, and Libya, etc.

This option would be likely hindered by the inability of the NEC to reach the electorate. Also, a great many citizens have been living in areas controlled by armed movements. The citizens in question have been deprived of the basic needs, including the right to life, personal security, housing, food, and clothing, which must be made available for people to exercise the right to expression, assembly, and election. The realization

of these fundamental rights should be fully guaranteed at any moment of time.

The second option rested on the voluntary return of people to their homelands as soon as peace, security, and stability would be made, which unfortunately might not be clearly determined within a given period of time.

The third option rested simply on the exemption of Darfur from elections.

Conducting partial elections (without Darfur in the upcoming round) recalled certain precedents in the Sudanese political history. In the 1956 elections, the South was excluded until two years later. It was repeatedly excluded from national elections in 1996 and 2001 due to security tensions. In the last two cases, however, according to elections' laws, representatives were appointed to the National Council by the President. In the present time, however, neither the proposed elections' act nor the Interim Constitution condoned such appointments.

Since Darfur constituted one of the most densely populated regions (the second after Gezira) with 8 million people (about a quarter of the Parliament) its absence would deal a serious blow to the elections' results and the efficiency of the would-be National Assembly and its legitimacy to the Darfuris, who might find themselves outside the arena of government affairs.

THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

February 1 – April 30, 2008

Human rights violations were committed in the Sudan in the report period, especially gross violations against freedoms of expression and the Press, and other public freedoms. Scores of citizens were arrested or detained, and many newspapers suspended:

In Darfur, acts of violence killed hundreds of citizens and caused the displacement of thousands, following massive military action by the government aimed to defeat opposition armed groups and reoccupy land.

On January 28, the Federal Minister of Defence said in a meeting at Genaina with UN agencies that the authorities would not allow the UN and civil society groups to enter rebels controlled territories until they would be controlled by the government. This decision deprived more than 160,000 people from humanitarian relief.

The unsettled dispute between political parties and the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) continued about a draft of the elections act, which motivated the National Electorate Commission (NEC) to call on the Presidency to decide on the draft in the absence of Opposition.

About mid-April, 18 parties and NGOs submitted a Memorandum to the President demanding the insurance of pre-elections democratic climates by abrogating all restrictive laws, most particularly those of the National Security & Intelligence Service (NS&IS), press and publications, criminal procedure, and political parties, among others, to comply with provisions of the Interim Constitution.

The opposition insisted the electoral constituencies might be distributed on the basis of 50% for geographical constituencies and 50% by representation, with 25% at least of the total parliamentary seats for women's representation according to a slate representing all competing parties.

The parties called on the president to select the nine members of the NEC from a list of 15 persons agreed upon by the parties. In addition, the opposition called on the representation of political parties in the top and

bottom sub-committees of the NEC to be able to raise proposals about the size of geographical constituencies, and to supervise directly the electoral process.

The parties also called for a reduction of the money required for candidacy to only 50 pounds. They said it sufficed to rely on party approval of a candidate, as well as approval by two electors of an independent candidate.

The Memo called on the Authority to allow the parties, the candidates, and civil society groups to participate actively in the supervision of the elections' registration, voting, and vote counting and the announcement of results. A NEC should be formed from the NCP, SPLM, and the political groups to accomplish an elections law by consensus.

Disagreements erupted between the two peace-partners regarding a population census originally scheduled on April 15. The SPLM, for instance, wanted the census to include census data about ethnicity and religion.

The census was processed, however, on April 22 following instructions by the Presidency to use census surveys and analyses of the cultural and social diversity of the country, without direct reference to ethnicity or religion in the census questionnaire.

The opposition Beja Congress of the Red Sea State boycotted the census due to exclusion of the Halayib and Fashaqa regions that Egypt and Ethiopia claimed, respectively. The population census was obstructed by acts of violence and other obstacles in the States of Darfur, especially in the Kas and Kulma camps, the North-South border districts, and some areas in South Sudan.

By the end of April, seven census employees were arrested in the State of Eastern Equatoria and later deported by intelligence of the Government of South Sudan (GSS). In Wau of Bahr al-Ghazal, 12 enumerators were returned to Khartoum, disallowed of collecting data since "they had not entered the South from Juba."

All in all, 170 local or international census employees appointed in Khartoum by the Presidency were deported from the South.

By mid April, the UN International Food Program said it would re-

duce by 50% the monthly rations of Darfur starting May 2008 due to armed robberies. The Program said that 60 trucks had been kidnapped since beginning of the year of which 39 disappeared with 26 drivers. The Program provided food for more than 2.4 million humans whose number might increase to 3 millions in the May-September rainy season.

In February, the authorities prevented "for security reasons" the Human Rights Special Reporter in Sudan, Mrs. Sima Samar, from visiting the area affected by the Kajbar Dam in the Northern State, which witnessed earlier last year the extra-judicial killings of citizens by police and security forces.

The situation of human rights remained unchanged in South Sudan. Early in February, Margaret Peter, Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission in the South Sudan National Council, admitted the situation was not improved due to lacking of respect to the rule of law.

The minister of parliamentary affairs Martin Elia affirmed that a lot of illegal spending had been exercised by members and/or governors of the Southern States, which led to tensions and disenchantment among citizens, especially in Jongeli, the Greater Malakal, and Western Equatoria.

In March, the living conditions of people worsened in the Unity State due to oil activities by the Malaysian Petronas-led White Nile companies. A great number of citizens were infected with unknown diseases.

Last year, 27 people at least died of drinking water polluted by oil in a region well-known as the largest water surfaces and swamps in the world. Thousands of families were forced to abandon their homes by the processed oil concessions and deteriorating environment.

The period covered by this report witnessed a troubling increase in death sentences and executions by a total of 20 court decisions.

On April 3, the President approved recommendations by the Committee on Appeals by employees retired "for the public good." The approval reinstated 269 workers and increased pensions of 1360 retirees. Still, the cases of tens of thousands of the unlawfully purged employees were not yet resolved.

The Freedom of Expression and the Press

The authorities violated the freedom of expression and the press suspending several papers and arresting arbitrarily many journalists. Beginning with February 6, security officers inspected on a regular basis the journalist materials of all papers before they could be published. In many a time, the editors of newspapers were ordered to obliterate or to amend published materials.

February 7, the Director of the NS&IS accused writers and editors-in-chief of the Press of receiving salaries from certain embassies in Khartoum. Angered by the accusation, the journalists in question asked the top security official to unfold the names and evidence of his allegation.

On February 18, the police force arrested 7 journalists, including 4 editors-in-chief, because they published news about the promotion and dismissal of some police officers, which was news not officially announced by the spokesperson of the police force, in accordance with Section 29-G of the Press and Publications Act.

The detainees were lately released in response to intervention by the Press Council. The journalists condemned the arrests as abuses violating the right of journalists to impart and disseminate information, as well as abuses breaching the Press and Publications Act which conferred the prosecution of journalists only upon the Office of the Press Attorney.

The arrested journalists were editors-in-chief Seed Ahmed Khalifa of al-Watan, 'Adil al-Baz of al-Ahdath, Mustafa Abul-'Azayim of Akhir Lahza, Kamal Hassan Bakheit of al-Ray al-'Am, Mohamed Seed Ahmed al-Mutayib of al-Wifaq, in addition to editors Mayi 'Ali Adam of Akhir Lahza and Hafiz al-Khair of al-Ray al-'Am.

March 3, the Khartoum North Criminal Court annulled accusations by the NS&IS against al-Midan editor-in-chief al-Tigani al-Tayeb Babiker regarding news posted about the disappearance of some youth.

In March, many journalists criticized bitterly a new draft of a journalists' act proposing a "general union of journalists." The journalists in opposition, however, reported that the so-called "general union" never informed them about the new act.

March 9, the minister of justice 'Abd al-Basit Sabdarat issued a mini-

sterial order to establish an ad hoc committee to identify and to classify issues related to State activities to be approved before publication in the daily newspapers. Composed of representatives of the ministries of justice, information and communications, as well as the NS&IS, the committee was entitled to submit reports, as soon as possible, to the minister.

This order meant practically that another authoritative instrument was added to curtail the freedom of the Press, which had been earlier restricted by security, press council, and other government agencies.

March 10, the NS&IS disbanded al-Midan for the second time in two weeks. The security censor omitted an essay by Suliman Hamid, part of a page devoted to celebrate the Women's International Day in a detailed report on the violation of women's rights in Darfur. Midan was further suspended by censor on April 1 and 8.

April 13, the NS&IS required by phone all editors-in-chief to deposit a copy of the paper before publication for security approval. On April 15, the NS&IS suspended Ajas al-Horiya, al-Ayyam, and Ray a-Sha'b papers because they refused to comply with NS&IS orders.

On April 16, during meeting of the Journalists' Union, the NS&IS ended implementation of the new order and re-instated the former censorial procedure by which NS&IS visited the office space of papers to oversee the contents before publication.

In the same day, the Ray a-Sha'b, Ajas al-Horiya, al-Sudani, and al-Hadath were suspended. Al-Sudani was further suspended on April 17, as well the English Citizen was suspended on April 16-17.

Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions

February 4, the police and security forces sacked the al-Sawaqi area at Koko, demolishing and removing homes, and beating up a number of owners. This sudden assault incurred losses in millions of pounds, although the Sawaqi land belonged to the assaulted inhabitants.

The first week of February, students supporting the NCP attacked a students' public festival by the Democratic Forces Alliance at the Sudan University for Sciences and Technology complex in Shambat. Twelve students were injured by the attack.

February 23, 9 Darfuri students were arrested, humiliated, and tortured

in North Kordofan because they had apparently criticized election rigging of the Students' Union. Those arrested were Daoud Ahmed al-Tahir, Mohamed 'Ali Hamdo, Isma'il 'Obaid Abbakar, Adam Abbakar Na'il, Ahmed 'Abdin Hamad Yunis, al-Fadil Omer Shamo, Mubarak Bakheit Ibrahim, Mohamed Na'il Mohamed, and Khalid Ahmed Mansour.

The students were detained for one day at the security office before transferred to the police station. The four students earlier mentioned were released on March 6, whereas the remaining ones were released on April 26.

February 24, students supporting the NCP attacked with Molotov students of the Democratic Front at the mosque of the Ahliya College in Omdurman. In the next day, another attack took place using Molotov and fire arms in response to a decision by the university administration to suspend all political activities in campus.

March 9, the university dormitory at Shambat witnessed a confrontation between students supporting the NCP and others pro-'Abd al-Wahid's wing of the Sudan Liberation Army. A student was hurt.

In addition, the students' center of the Omdurman Islamic University was burnt. The confrontation broke between the two parties following an invitation by the NCP supporters to ban 'Abd al-Wahid SLA activities since he established an office to assist Darfuri refugees in Israel.

In mid March, the police inspected by force, without legal warrant, the house of Yasin Ahmed al-Faki the DUP political bureau representative at the State Council in search of drugs. The inspection violated grossly both constitutional rights of al-Faki citizenship and his parliamentarian immunity.

In March, the Umma Party spokesperson relayed that party delegates led by the deputy chair and secretary general of the party were harassed by the NCP and authorities of Gubaish town in Kordofan, March 20-22. The authorities obstructed the delegates at the entrance of the town, shot firearms at other delegates visiting the town from Omdurman, and further disconnected electricity from the party meeting space.

On March 22, 4 police officers assaulted Abbakar Musa 'Abd al-Gadir, a taxi driver, and injured him severely in his neck and back. The

citizen was hospitalized but the police refused to provide him with Form No.8 which contained a medical report on his case.

By the end of March, student 'Issam Babiker 'Abd al-Hadi was stabbed by an opposition political group at the Neelain University.

In April, the authorities denied entry visa to the Netherlands minister of defence who was scheduled to visit 2 employees from Holland working with the UN in Darfur. The visa denial was related to a Dutch movie considered insulting to the faith of Islam.

About mid April, the security authorities arrested in Managil 'Isam Salih, a member of the communist party, because he had been disseminating a party leaflet on the April Popular Uprising.

In mid April, an unidentifiable number of Darfuri students were arbitrarily arrested while they were protesting an amended version of the general certificate of education because it removed guarantees of providing national equal education. The detainees were accused of riot and breaching of the public peace. A number of detainees, including Bashir 'Abd-Allah Adam, said they had been subjected to ill-treatment and tortures by security and police elements.

April 20, the security elements arrested student Bashir 'Abd-Allah Adam following troubles at the University of Khartoum. Released for 3 days and then rearrested, Adam said he had been subjected to humiliation and tortures in detention.

Extra-Judicial Killings

January 31, 6 persons were killed and others injured by a rebel attack on Kalmando east of al-Fashir in North Darfur. The victims were Ibrhaim al-Haj, Salih Yaqub, Yasir Kenain, 'Abd al-'Aziz Mohamed Ahmed, and Mohamedain. Amongst the injured persons were al-Haj Ahmed Omar, 'Asim Mohamed Zain al-'Abdeen, Ayman Mohamed Abbakar, Hussain Mohamed Ahmed, Nasir Abbakar al-Doma, Nuraddin Nasraddin, and Haroun 'Osman.

February 4, 136 citizens were killed in areas around Kajo Kaji in the farthest border of the South. Some villages were attacked and plundered by the Lord Resistance Army of Uganda.

February 8, the government intensified military action in West Darfur.

The air force bombarded the villages of Sarba, Siliya, and Abu Soroj. A joint attack by the army infantry and Janjaweed militias followed the aerial raid causing hundreds of deaths and injuries, besides a wide range of robberies, destruction, and rapes.

The UN officials accused the government of the attacks which were described as "a deliberate part of a strategy" aimed to restore government control over the area. The attacks were "violation of the international humanitarian law and human rights." According to sources of the international organization and the African Union in Darfur, 115 persons were killed; but other sources estimated more than 200 victims.

February 26, 16 members of the Missiriya Bedouins were killed and scores injured at Bok south of al-Mayram town by a group of fifty dressed in military uniforms. The victims included the elderly person Ibrahim Qadim Wanees.

February 27, a group of Janjaweed militias attacked al-Sunut east of al-Mayram in South Darfur killing 23 citizens and demolishing the whole region.

In the first days of March, armed conflicts continued between Missiriya and SPLA elements at Daliba and al-Jerf in Bahr al-Ghazal. Guns, katusha rockets, and tanks were used in the fight resulting in 43 deaths and 70 wounded Missiriya.

On March 1, a police officer and 2 regulars were killed, added to five police regulars injured by an attack launched on their commercial truck in route from al-Fashir to Niyala.

In March, scores of people were killed in armed clashes between Missiriya Bedouins and SPLA elements in Abyei north of Bahr al-Ghazal on the South-North border. Southerner Officials accused the NCP of armament and abetment of the Missiriya to handicap a peaceful settlement to the border dispute in the oil-rich area. The victims included 69 Bedouins and 6 soldiers in the recent conflict, according to SPLA sources. A Missiriya chief, however, said that 37 persons were killed and 62 wounded.

March 15, 2 Missiriya were killed and others wounded in an armed conflict in Girinti, South Kordofan.

March 16, 2 Missiriya were killed and 3 others injured in a fight with SPLA at the Toaisha south al-Mayram in the State of South Kordofan.

In another conflict on March 18, Ahmed Yaqub was killed and another citizen wounded in Noor Abyad near al-Hijlij.

March 18, about 20 members of the al-Burgud group were killed or wounded by attacks on the Kasib area in Shi'airiya of South Darfur. The victims' families accused forces of the Minawi-led Sudan Liberation Movement, which supported the Government of Sudan.

March 22, six persons stabbed to death two drivers working with the International Food Program while they were shipping relief to Abyei in the Unity State.

March 24, an armed group killed another driver working with the Food Program and injured his assistant on the main road to Niyala, the capital city of South Darfur.

March 24, two citizens died while they were detained under police custody at al-Haj Yusif. The detainees were suspected of drug taking. On March 25, a police official said they conducted an investigation with a number of officers on the incidents.

On March 25, subsequent to a riot inside the prison, four prisoners were seriously injured or killed by the firearms of guards at the Rombeik Prison to restore order and to stop escape.

On March 29-30, nine persons were killed and 24 persons injured in a fight between al-Turjum and the Abala Rizaygat in Dogrees and Kassar to the south-east of Niyala.

About the end of March, three drivers of the International Food Program were killed on the way to Niyala. Two other citizens were injured at Abim Nom in the Unity State.

April 1, a person was killed and seven others injured in renewed fighting between al-Turjum and the Abala Rizaygat at Dugrees south east Niyala in South Darfur.

April 6, a person was killed and three citizens injured in a riot at the al-Fashir market due to armed attacks by soldiers of the Border Guards who opened fire indiscriminately on citizens protesting late delivery of their emoluments. The Governor considered the events as "some individual action by members of the Border Guards." The diseased person was Adam Mohamed Suliman. The wounded ones were Suliman Hassan Mohamed, 'Eissa 'Abd al-'Aziz Hamid, and Saifaddin Hamid Sharief.

April 8, a tribal armed conflict between al-Fellata, al-Habbana, and al-Salamat at the Buram locality in the State of South Darfur resulted in 20 deaths and 41 injured cases.

April 10, the IFP in South Sudan reported two of its workers killed by unknown armed people while they were delivering food relief.

April 11, government troops suffered an ambush at Toor, north-west the locality of Kas in South Darfur; 19 regulars were killed and others wounded. In the same day, 400 houses were burnt by unknown sources in the village of Malibeda in the vicinity of Kas.

April 22, while protesting the population census, two persons (a man and a woman), at least, were killed at the Kulma Camp of displaced people in Darfur by an armed group.

April 26, seven citizens were killed and several persons wounded in armed conflict between Missiriya and the SPLA at Ghatasna in the State of South Kordofan, a few days after an agreement was recently signed by the two parties which indicated that the agreement had not yet been approved by all warring groups.

Death Sentences and Executions

On February 24, five citizens of the Nile State were convicted and hanged to death at the Central Prison Kober in Khartoum North. The executions included Yasir Sa'eed, 'Ismail al-Haj, Ayub Ahmed al-Musbah, Mohamed 'Abd-Allah Mustafa, and 'Adil Belal Dafa'a-Seed.

March 10, the Court of Appeal confirmed sentences of death on ten citizens convicted of assassinating journalist Mohamed Taha Mohamed Ahmed last year. The ten convicts were Ishaq al-Sanoasi Juma' Salih, 'Abd al-Hay 'Omar Mohamed al-Khalifa, al-Tayeb Adam Mohamed Suliman, Mustafa Adam Mohamed Suliman, Mohamed 'Abd al-Nabi Adam 'Ismail, Sabir Zakariya Hassan 'Abd al-Gadir, Hassan Adam Fadl Khamis, Adam Ibrahim al-Haj 'Omar, Jamaladdin 'Eissa al-Haj, and 'Abd al-Mageed 'Ali 'Abd al-Mageed Ahmed.

On March 24, the Khartoum East sentenced with death a citizen condemned with murder.

On April 30, the Khartoum Criminal Court sentenced four citizens accused of bank robbery in Bananusa with hanging until death,

CEDAW

Continuous Women's Education

Based on CEDAW, the Quarterly discusses the Women's Rights in the CPA and the Interim Constitution

On 18 December 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It entered into force as an international treaty on 3 September 1981 after the twentieth country had ratified it. By the tenth anniversary of the Convention in 1989, almost one hundred nations have agreed to be bound by its provisions.

The implementation of the Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter the Convention). The Committee's mandate and the administration of the treaty are defined in the Articles 17 to 30 of the Convention. The Committee is composed of 23 experts nominated by their Governments and elected by the States parties as individuals "of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention".

The Convention was the culmination of more than thirty years of work by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, a body established in 1946 to monitor the situation of women and to promote women's rights. The Commission's work has been instrumental in bringing to light all the areas in which women are denied equality with men. These efforts for the advancement of women have resulted in several declarations and conventions, of which the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is the central and most comprehensive document.

At this point, it should be mentioned that the refrain of African and Arab States, including the Sudanese government, to allow full women's representation at the Commission's work has always curtailed the right of women to voice their concerns in full scale.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the Interim Constitution (IC) realize the ultimate significance of the Bill of Rights in the democratic life of the country:

Article 27 of the IC reads : "1) This Bill of Rights is a covenant between the Sudanese people and between them and their governments at every level and also a commitment to respect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in this Constitution; it is the cornerstone of social justice, equality and democracy in the Sudan; 2) The State shall guarantee, protect, and fulfill this Bill; and 3) All rights and freedoms enshrined in international human rights treaties, covenants and instruments ratified by the Republic of the Sudan shall be an integral part of this Bill."

Article 32 of the IC states: "(a) The equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and all economic, social, and cultural rights set forth in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights shall be ensured."

The CPA from its part emphasizes "The human rights and fundamental freedoms embodied in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) shall also be reflected in the Interim National Constitution. No derogation from these rights and freedoms shall be made under the Constitution or under the ICCPR except in accordance with the provisions thereof and only with the approval of the Presidency and the National Legislature" (Equality of men and women: 1-6-2-16)

Unfortunately, however, the Sudanese constitutional documents fail to recognize the country's need to ensure full observational role to the non-governmental human rights organizations over governmental bodies.

For example, the CPA/IC provision for a Human Rights Commission appointed by the President and the First Vice President to monitor human rights. This executive body contradicts and might seriously obstruct the popular essence of human rights as a movement free of governmental control, especially in the prevailing commission of gross human rights violations by the Government of Sudan and the reported failures of the constitutional law.

Moreover, both the CPA and the IC fail to include in specific terms the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which "Among the international human rights treaties, takes an important place in bringing the female half of hu-

manity into the focus of human rights concerns."

Rooted in the goals of the United Nations, the spirit of CEDAW reaffirms faith "in fundamental human rights, in the dignity, and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women. Spelling out "the meaning of equality and how it can be achieved, the Convention establishes not only an international bill of rights for women, but also an agenda for action by countries to guarantee the enjoyment of those rights."

Altogether, the Convention provides a comprehensive framework for challenging the various forces that have created and sustained discrimination based upon sex. As defined in article 1, discrimination is understood as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made of the basis of sex...in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field".

In its preamble, the Convention explicitly acknowledges that "extensive discrimination against women continues to exist", and emphasizes that such discrimination "violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity."

The Convention gives positive affirmation to the principle of equality by requiring States parties to take "all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men" (article 3).

Civil rights and the legal status of women are dealt with in great detail. In addition, and unlike other human rights treaties, the Convention is also concerned with the dimension of human reproduction as well as with the impact of cultural factors on gender relations.

The legal status of women receives the broadest attention. Concern over the basic rights of political participation has not diminished since the adoption of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952. Women are guaranteed the rights to vote, to hold public office and to exercise public functions. This includes equal rights for women to represent their countries at the international level (article 8).

The Sudanese CPA/IC agrees with CEDAW on the women's right to vote: "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without dis-

tinctions and unreasonable restrictions, to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections, which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors."

The Convention draws attention to the fact that often women's legal status has been linked to marriage, making them dependent on their husband's nationality rather than individuals in their own right. Articles 10, 11 and 13, respectively, affirm women's rights to non-discrimination in education, employment and economic and social activities.

These demands are given special emphasis with regard to the situation of rural women, whose particular struggles and vital economic contributions, as noted in article 14, warrant more attention in policy planning.

The Sudanese laws, in general, seldom cared for the situation of rural women or the national need to improve their life based on the full enjoyment of human rights and democratic freedoms. Even Sudanese women's organizations hardly provided public awareness programs to the rural women, except for a few ones notably the non-governmental Sudanese Women's Union (SWU) for long decades, the governmental Social Welfare Department in the 1970s, and a few newly-established groups most recently.

Article 15 of the Convention asserts the full equality of women in civil and business matters, demanding that all instruments directed at restricting women's legal capacity "shall be deemed null and void". Such irrevocable wording is not evident in the Sudanese constitutional literature, although Article 15 (2) of the IC rules: "The State shall emancipate women from injustice, promote gender equality and encourage the role of women in family and public life":

The Sudanese IC stipulates in Article 15 (Family and Marriage): (1) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to the protection of law; the right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized, according to their respective family laws, and no marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses."

The mention of "respective family laws," however, might contradict the right of women to inheritance, independent business, or the right to vote, despite the specific mention of "the free and full consent of the in-

tending spouses" in marriage decision.

With greater details, the Convention returns in article 16 to the issue of marriage and family relations, asserting the equal rights and obligations of women and men with regard to choice of spouse, parenthood, personal rights and command over property. Aside from civil rights issues, the Convention also devotes major attention to a most vital concern of women, namely their reproductive rights. The preamble sets the tone by stating that "the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination".

The link between discrimination and women's reproductive role, which is not clearly specified in the Sudanese laws, is a matter of recurrent concern in the Convention. For example, the Convention advocates, in article 5, "a proper understanding of maternity as a social function", demanding fully shared responsibility for child-rearing by both sexes. Accordingly, provisions for maternity protection and child-care are proclaimed as essential rights and are incorporated into all areas of the Convention, whether dealing with employment, family law, health care or education.

Society's obligation extends to offering social services, especially child-care facilities that allow individuals to combine family responsibilities with work and participation in public life. Special measures for maternity protection are recommended and "shall not be considered discriminatory" (article 4).

"The Convention also affirms women's right to reproductive choice. Notably, it is the only human rights treaty to mention family planning. States parties are obliged to include advice on family planning in the education process (article 1 O.h) and to develop family codes that guarantee women's rights "to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights" (article 16.e).

We should recall at this point that "The third general thrust of the Convention aims at enlarging our understanding of the concept of human rights, as it gives formal recognition to the influence of culture and tradition on restricting women's enjoyment of their fundamental rights. These forces take shape in stereotypes, customs and norms which give rise to the multitude of legal, political and economic constraints on the advance-

ment of women."

Noting this interrelationship, the preamble of the Convention stresses that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality of men and women.

States parties are therefore obliged to work towards the modification of social and cultural patterns of individual conduct in order to eliminate "prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women" (article 5).

Since its inception in the early 1950s of the 20th century, the SWU, a winner of UN Prize in the mid 1990s for distinguished human rights and democracy activities, has done a great service to the women of Sudan, as well as their men, by lifelong public awareness campaigns on women's rights. The SWU focused closely on the legal rights of women in the public domain, including among many rights and freedoms the right to vote, the right to compete in all public jobs, the right to choose a spouse, and the right to live free of the customs that inhibit the full participation of women in the good life.

Here, the cultural patterns which define the public realm as a man's world and the domestic sphere as women's domain are strongly targeted in all of the Convention's provisions that affirm the equal responsibilities of both sexes in family life and their equal rights with regard to education and employment. Article 10.c. of the Convention mandates the revision of textbooks, school programmes and teaching methods with a view to eliminating stereotyped concepts in the field of education.

This is an extremely important part of women's life in contemporary society. SHRO-Cairo has persistently advised the State and society to change the male-dominated socio-legal and cultural patterns of the sort.

Earlier, the Organization dedicated the Sudanese Human Rights Quarterly Issue 16 to address in particular the national urgent need to revise family laws, as well as educational textbooks, school programs, and teaching methods to ensure the human equality, regardless of any distinction by religion or race or any other enforceable criterion in the multi-religious multi-ethnic Nation of Sudan.

ACTIVIST CONTRIBUTIONS

A government that fails to implement the Constitution over all other laws and executive powers, to say nothing of personal or presidential desires, must give way to a constitutional one!

Ahmed Hassan al-Rayah – Medani

It was interesting to learn something about the state of affairs of the Gezira Scheme in the present time from the reports by economists and development experts in Quarterly 26. I wish to criticize the technical language that the experts used in the articles. We need to read simpler statements that might enlighten us, the ordinary readers, with fair knowledge about the Gezira situation as a very important part of our national economy.

Editor: Thanks for your insightful critique. We have conveyed your message to the authors.

John Kung – Juba

I am saddened with the human rights situation in Sudan as posted in your previous issue: I can't believe that, despite the Naivash agreement, peace is still unsecured and the fears of civil war are openly invited by the authorities in North and South Sudan in Abyei.

The thing is that, so much as Dafur is continuously made a battlefield for competing groups to play down the essence of humanity and all that is desirable about development and good administration, civil wars will never leave the Sudanese warring energies to rest in peace! When can we speak of peace leaderships, rather than glorifying warlords?! There is a vote for every eligible citizen by law, after all. The same rule should reflect in our national conferences to stop war in Abyei, Darfur, and the developing conflicts elsewhere – without this destructive control of society by this group or that party!

Fatima Hamid – Port Sudan

The Sudanese Human Rights Quarterly needs to provide more information on women's rights. Previous issues contained women contributions. What reasons motivate the Government until now to reject CEDAW? Is it government claims that CEDAW is against religion?

Editor: CEDAW is not against any specific religion or culture. We will attend to your important inquiry starting with this Issue in a series of reports and analytical articles.

Zaroug Al-Fadli – Omdurman

The article in Quarterly 26 on reforming security and intelligence service gained immediate support in the aftermath of the May 10 events in the city of Omdurman. The JEM attack was not acceptable, since human rights activists reject all attacks that hurt the innocent civilian population in the South, the North, East Sudan, and Darfur in recent years.

The racist attitude of the government, however, culminated in unprecedented daily attacks by security and intelligence forces on all Darfuris in the National Capital. The unconstitutional powers the President invested in Salah Gosh, and his aids in the army, police, and security forces must come to an end.

The Interim Constitution is straightforward about the establishment of a civilian police and a security information agency all over the country, and that the Central Government of Sudan should act appropriately as a model for all other State, or regional authorities.

A HISTORIC CIVIL SOCIETY

SHRO-Cairo Report on the historic meetings of the North-South non-governmental civil society organizations will be published in the next Special Issue of the Quarterly on New Prospects for Democracy by Grassroots Modern Forces and Human Rights Groups. The Report will include the proceedings, papers, deliberations, and resolutions of the Conference.