

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

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| <b>Bilagsnr.:</b>               | <b>371</b>                                                                                                          |
| Land:                           | Sudan                                                                                                               |
| Kilde:                          | UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office                                                                                  |
| Titel:                          | Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 – Sudan |
| Udgivet:                        | 8. februar 2017                                                                                                     |
| Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet: | 24. maj 2017                                                                                                        |



## Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 - Sudan

The overall human rights situation has not improved during the last 6 months and our concerns have increased in some areas. The level of fighting in the conflict areas has reduced over the reporting period, but there have been incidents of violence between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Abdul Wahid's SLA-AW in the Jebel Marra area. We welcome the unilateral ceasefires that have been declared, but remain concerned about the wider human rights situation across Sudan, including the detention of political opposition figures and restrictions on freedom of expression.

The UK and Sudan held their second session of strategic dialogue in London in October 2016. The discussions covered a range of issues, including the human rights situation. The new UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan, Chris Trott, was appointed in August and visited Sudan from 19 to 21 September. During his visit, the Special Representative met with activists and NGOs to discuss the role of civil society, as well as raising concerns over the human rights situation with senior figures in the Government of Sudan.

During the reporting period, there was progress in the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) Peace Process with the opposition movements signing the Roadmap document on 9 August 2016. The government of Sudan had already signed the document in March. The UK government released a statement welcoming the signing of the document as an important first step in ending the conflicts in Sudan and moving towards a process of dialogue. However, despite lengthy negotiations in Addis Ababa, there has been no agreement regarding a cessation of hostilities, which would bring a lasting end to the fighting in Sudan's conflict areas.

There has been a decrease in the level of fighting in both Darfur and the Two Areas over the past 6 months. The unilateral ceasefires declared by the government and armed movements have largely held and the government has announced an extension until the end of January 2017. However, there have been skirmishes and incidents of fighting between the SAF and the SLA-AW in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur. Moreover, the general security situation in Darfur remains fragile, especially outside the large cities, with regular reports of inter-communal fighting, banditry and militia attacks on internally displaced persons (IDPs). In September, Amnesty International released a report detailing a number of human rights abuses in the Jebel Marra, including allegations of the use of chemical weapons.

The humanitarian situation remains critical. Over 5.8m people are now in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of 400,000 on the first half of 2016. Despite the ceasefires, access for international humanitarian staff and the peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in Darfur remains a problem, particularly in the Jebel Marra region. Discussions during the AUHIP talks have so far found no resolution to the issue of providing humanitarian access to the 2 areas. We welcome the revised Humanitarian Directives, reissued by the Humanitarian Affairs Commission in December. If implemented, these Directives would represent an improvement in the operating environment for humanitarian organisations providing assistance to those most in need.

Shortly following US Special Envoy Don Booth's visit to Darfur on 27-28 July, 15 individuals were arrested, with others questioned by the security services about the nature of their contact with the Special Envoy. The US State Department made a statement expressing its concern about the detentions and calling for the detainees' immediate release. All of the individuals who met with Special Envoy Booth have since been released. Sexual and gender based violence remains a particular concern in the conflict areas, with low levels of accountability leading to a culture of impunity in some regions. Over the past 6 months, a UK-funded project has provided legal and psychosocial support to victims of sexual violence in Darfur.

The National Dialogue, chaired by President Bashir, concluded on 10 October. The National Dialogue Secretariat produced a list of 913 recommendations and outcomes, including a number which refer to the human rights situation. These included recommendations around protection of women and children in armed conflict, strengthening the role of civil society and reinforcing freedom of expression. The process has now moved into the implementation phase and we look to the Government of Sudan to ensure that the committees taking these recommendations forward do so in a timely and inclusive manner, with all views being heard.

In November, the government of Sudan announced a number of economic reforms, including the lifting of subsidies on fuel. This resulted in a number of small protests around the city and the detention of over 70 political opposition figures and

activists. The Sudanese Congress Party was particularly affected, with a number of its leaders being detained by the security services. The detainees were not charged, had no access to legal assistance and were held at undisclosed locations. The UK, along with our Troika partners (the United States and Norway), EU and Canada released statement expressing concern over the detentions and calling on the Sudanese authorities to allow the people to exercise their right to freedom of expression. Around 25 individuals were released on 26 and 27 December, but a number remain in detention, including Mudawi Ibrahim Adam (member of the National Dialogue Identity Committee) who has previously received Front Line Defenders' 'Human Rights Defenders at Risk Award'.

Restrictions on press freedoms have increased during the reporting period. In the past 6 months, there have been 55 incidents of media outlets being suspended and newspaper print runs being confiscated (compared with 20 such incidents in the first half of 2016). Such incidents peaked towards the end of the year, around the time of 2 organised displays of civil disobedience. Some outlets, including Aljazeera and Altayaar newspapers were suspended on several occasions. A number of journalists have also been detained. In their December statement, the Troika, EU and Canada raised concerns over the seizing of newspapers and other forms of censorship. The UK is funding a project aimed at building the capacity of the media sector, in order to improve access to balanced and independent sources of information.

The environment for civil society in Sudan remains challenging. Three individuals from the TRACKs Centre for Training and Human Development remain in detention following their arrest in June. International NGOs have expressed continued concern about the case, including the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders who called for the defendants to be immediately released. The case is ongoing and hearings have been attended by representatives from the international community, including the British Embassy in Khartoum. We have raised our concerns over this case with the Government of Sudan on a number of occasions.

Freedom of religion or belief remains a concern for the UK. Christian organisation Open Doors ranked Sudan as the 8th most difficult country in the world for Christians to live in. Christian Pastor Hassan Abduelraheem Kodi remains in detention in Sudan, along with aid worker Petr Jasek and activist Abdulmonem Abdumawlla. They are facing a number of charges, including waging war against the state and espionage. The maximum sentence for these crimes is the death penalty. Officials from the British Embassy in Khartoum have attended hearings in this case and are in close contact with the defendants' lawyers. There are also worrying reports regarding the potential demolition of churches in Khartoum. Churches in the El Haj Yousif and Bahri areas have received notices of demolition, with no alternative place of worship offered by the authorities.

At its 33rd regular session in September, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) passed a resolution which extended the mandate of the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights in Sudan, Aristide Nononsi. In his report to the Council, the Independent Expert highlighted his concerns around press censorship, harassment of human rights defenders, restrictions on freedom of religion and human rights violations in the conflict areas. The HRC session also saw the adoption of Sudan's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). We welcome the government's decision to accept 130 of the UPR recommendations. However a number of important recommendations, including the UK's around the need for reform of the National Security Act of 2010, were not accepted. In a UK statement at the HRC, we expressed disappointment at this decision and urged the government of Sudan to review the powers given to the National Intelligence and Security Services.