



# Peace and Pain in Sudan

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**Better the desert than  
a bad companion.**

—north Sudan

The proverbs displayed in sidebar columns were collected by Annetta Miller from the public domain. Thanks to Harold Miller for assistance in compiling this issue.

## War and Peace in Sudan

by Harold Miller

**S**udan, Africa's largest country by area, is host to the world's largest humanitarian crisis, so declared (before the December 2004 Asian tsunami) by the United Nations. This crisis is focused in Darfur, a region in western Sudan the size of Kenya where an estimated 1.6 million of its citizens are designated as internally displaced people.

But the Darfur region is only the most recent flash point attracting international attention to this vast country. South Sudan, demarcated by a 1956 colonial "boundary," is just emerging from decades of civil war that resulted in the deaths of an estimated 2.5 million people and in the displacement or exile of millions more.

Today Sudan is attempting, at once, to contain a burgeoning conflict in Darfur and to manage an impending peace for south Sudan. Together, these disparate dynamics provide entry points for a consideration of the country's torturous political, religious, and economic circumstance.

### Background

Sudan is situated in north/central Africa, with a coast on the Red Sea. It bridges desert and tropical forests, Africa and the Middle East, Arabs and Africans, Muslims and Christians, subsistence livelihoods and modern oil production. How can Sudan's diversities be integrated into a cohesive modern state? Are its integration issues to be addressed by African statecraft, by Islamic, Middle Eastern, or Arab polity, or by a combination of these?

Without recourse to the annals of history, current events in Sudan remain opaque and inaccessible. Constant to the story of Sudan is the theme of violence and conflict, instigated and sustained by the quest for human chattel from southern Sudan for markets in the Middle East, by the tension between imposed foreign and in-country governance systems, on the one hand, and modern notions of self-determination, on the other.

One of the reference points in Sudan's modern history is the year 1821, when the Turko-Egyptian (Ottoman) administration claimed much of today's Sudan. In so doing, the Ottomans brought some semblance of perverse "order" to a thriving slave trade, which had until then functioned in a geographic and economic free-for-all.

By 1881 nationalist sentiments flared into an armed revolt against the Ottoman administration, instigated by a "Mahdi" (Muhammed Ahmed al Mahdi, "the sent one"), a revivalist Sudanese Muslim patriot who achieved Sudan's first short-lived sovereignty. In 1898, the Mahdi's successor was overthrown by the British Lord Kitchener and replaced by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Government, which ruled until Sudan's independence in 1956.

In 1955 southern soldiers of the Sudanese army staged a mutiny that led to a civil war between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Anya Nya, a rebel movement led by General Joseph Lagu. Together with other rebel southern Sudanese, he objected to the lesser status accorded to south Sudan and to the prospect that this would continue after independence.

## The Heavy Price of War

Abraham Nimeri has escaped death many times and he has five bullets and assorted shrapnel lodged in his body. Doctors say his days are numbered unless he undergoes an operation.

Nimeri would like to live to see an independent southern Sudan. His eight brothers have died fighting for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and he is the only survivor among family members who joined the rebels. His wife died when she stepped on a land mine, leaving behind twins who are also at a rehabilitation center.

Beside him is Joseph Lwal, 21, who has three bullets and shrapnel in his body. A pellet lodged between his eyes can be felt by touch. Like Nimeri, Lwal volunteered to fight against the Sudan government armed forces.

With them is Jam Mabior, 35. He was shot in the ankle in the battlefield in 1997. His swollen foot has been treated, so far unsuccessfully. Doctors told him he was well because he could now move his toes. "They told me to keep flexing my toes and I would be okay," he says, taking swipes at flies hovering around the swollen, twisted ankle as he bakes in the scorching heat and dust.

Nimeri has served in the rebel army for 21 years and has fought in all the major centers in south Sudan. Things started going wrong for him in 1985, when he was shot in the leg at Kurumkuk. A year later government forces shot him in the stomach, but he survived and continued the battle. In 1991, he was hit twice in the back and chest.

At the camp where Nimeri stays he relies on relief food, which comes once a month. Malnourished and ringworm-infested children litter the compound. Shade trees act as classrooms, while stones and sewing machines serve as seats.

—David Mugonyi, adapted from an article in the *Nairobi Daily Nation*, December 14, 2004

In the wake of the rebellion, a 17-year civil war persisted until 1972, when Canon Burgess Carr of Liberia, then general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), with Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia as witness, brokered the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement. Relative peace prevailed in Sudan for nearly a decade, only to be disrupted when Sudan's President Gaafar Mohammed Nimeri abrogated the agreement, igniting the second phase of the civil war. Colonel John Garang, a Sudanese army defector, led the southern rebel forces known as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), during the second phase.

By the early 1990s the SPLM/A had achieved a military stalemate with the GoS's armed forces and felt pressure from various quarters, including Sudanese churches, to negotiate a settlement from this position of strength. But just as such negotiations were about to commence, the SPLM/A was convulsed by an internal leadership wrangle, thus forfeiting most of its military gains. The rebel war was renewed but rendered vastly more complex as the leadership struggle persisted.

By 1993, the civil war in south Sudan was affecting cities in northern Sudan, Sudan's neighbors, and the larger world. Refugees from south Sudan were exiting across the borders while mass displacement was taking place within the country. Nearly half the population of the capital, Khartoum, eventually consisted of displaced Southerners, many of them Christians. For both northern and southern Sudanese, it was an unprecedented and uncomfortable situation.

### The Peace Process

In response to this conflagration, the governments of Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, and Somalia established a special secretariat in the early 1990s within the existing Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) to negotiate peace between the GoS and the SPLM/A.

During the following decade, the IGAD peace process sauntered along, with the protagonists abusing it to their respective propagandist advantage. But with the shock of September 11, the related U.S. focus on Sudan as a terrorist haven, and the prospect of oil exports from south Sudan, there was growing pressure to move the peace process forward. By late 2003 the vice president of Sudan and the SPLM/A leader—both deemed intractable hardliners—became the primary negotiators within the IGAD framework. Following this dramatic shift in the

profile of the negotiators, the peace process quickly accelerated.

By May 2004, the GoS and the SPLM/A had signed six protocols as precursors to a comprehensive peace agreement. The reelection in November 2004 of George W. Bush and the extraordinary meeting in the same month of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in Nairobi, Kenya, together sustained pressure on the negotiations. The protagonists agreed during the UNSC meeting that the GoS and the SPLM/A would sign a peace accord by the end of 2004. In the event, an accord was signed on January 9, 2005, in Nairobi, Kenya.

This peace agreement provides for a popular referendum to be called within six years of its signing to review the progress made toward implementation of the peace. It also provides south Sudan with an option to secede from the country.

### The Darfur Crisis

Meanwhile, the Darfur region in the west of the country was experiencing a growing military confrontation between the GoS and three Darfurian rebel groups: the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the splinter Reform and Development Movement (RDM). The conflict so far has claimed an estimated 70,000 lives and caused internal displacement of 1.6 million people as well as the departure of several hundred thousand refugees to Chad.

Basic to the tension in Darfur is competition between farmers of African origin in the south and pastoralists of Arab origin migrating seasonally from northern Darfur. While the northern desert is expanding, both population groups are also expanding and requiring more land. Although both Arab and African communities of Darfur are Muslim, the African farmer communities claim that the GoS is promoting a policy of cultural Arabization, favoring the pastoralists.

In 2003, the grievances of the African community in Darfur escalated and took the form of two, then three armed rebel groups. The predictable response of the GoS was to provide arms and logistical support for the Arab pastoralists, widely referred to as the Janjaweed, or "armed horsemen."

Negotiations regarding a possible cease-fire between the rebels and the GoS are ongoing in Abuja, Nigeria, under the auspices of the African Union, Africa's continental political umbrella. The parties have agreed to the dis-

tribution of humanitarian assistance to displaced people within Darfur and to a provisional cease-fire. Meanwhile the United Nations special representative to Sudan, Jan Pronk, claims western Darfur no longer responds to the authority of the GoS or its surrogates, the Janjaweed.

In response to strong international pressure, the GoS has permitted humanitarian agencies to deliver relief aid even as Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir accuses faith-based agencies of exploiting the plight of Darfurians for proselytizing purposes. The negotiations in Nigeria have been recessed until early 2005, while armed conflict continues and aid workers are being killed. As of this writing the United Nations Security Council is considering the imposition of sanctions against the GoS for its role in the Darfur debacle.

### **Darfur in History**

In the 1600s, Darfur was an independent sultanate, which survived until the 1890s, when the Condominium Government integrated it into the larger Sudan. With independence in 1956, the GoS insisted that Darfur continue as part of Sudan, much to the resentment of Darfurians.

Darfurians who identify themselves as Arab to this day sustain the memory of the famous Darfuri, Muhammed Ahmed al Mahdi, who in 1881 established Sudan as a politically independent Islamic entity. The Mahdi advised his followers that Africans with their land, wives, and livestock were "there for the taking" in fulfillment of the mission of "the sent one."

As a religiously motivated patriot, the Mahdi was greatly exercised by the compromised nature of the Ottoman administration of the Sudan, at the head of which was General Charles Gordon, the Christian British general. Gordon was speared to death on the steps of Khartoum's state house by the Mahdi and his followers in what was considered a miraculous victory over Ottoman rule.

As a Muslim revivalist, the Mahdi (and his successor, the Khalifa) was committed to the propagation of orthodox Sunni Islam in Sudan. In pursuit of this goal, the Mahdiyya state administered Sharia rule, with the most dire economic and social consequences. In 1898 the British replaced the Mahdiyya with the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Government, leading to a reassertion and expansion of Sufi Islam. These respective poles are rep-

resented in Sudanese politics today by the Umma Party, led by a direct descendant of the Mahdi, and the Democratic Unionist Party, with its Egyptian connections.

Sudan's moderate Sufi Islam was assaulted in 1989 when the current government came to power, after a long gestation period nurtured and guided by Dr. Hassan al Turabi, a Sudanese political ideologue with longstanding relationships with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, advocates for a strong Islamic manifesto. Under his tutelage, Sudan was declared a Muslim state and promoted itself as a beachhead for spreading Islamic faith throughout Africa.

Turabi's political agenda and that of his ruling colleagues eventually diverged, with Turabi being ousted from the government, imprisoned, and publicly tried for challenging Sudan's ruling clique, which since 1956 has been drawn almost exclusively from Dongola, northern Sudan. In his ascent to power, Turabi had made opportunist cause with politically marginal groups such as the African farmers in Darfur and the SPLM/A. He has been sidelined but his political influence has not been fully quelled.

John Garang, SPLM/A head, has spoken of including all of the country's marginalized peoples in a unified Sudan and has suggested that the recently signed peace accord could serve as a blueprint toward resolution of the problems in Darfur. Interestingly, this possibility was reported as a "sticking issue" in the final IGAD negotiations.

In the final analysis, the upheavals in Sudan have been about who benefits from and who controls the country's considerable resources, including oil. As master strategist in a complex political contest, Turabi was widely perceived to have played the religion card in opportunist fashion. In fact, the most intense debates about religion in Sudan have occurred within Muslim-Muslim rather than in Muslim-Christian discussions. Religious-political dynamics in Sudan have much in common with the larger Middle East, where active civil society groups challenge the ruling elite.

### **The Role of the Church**

Although the Sudan is predominantly Muslim, a Christian minority—southern Sudanese plus Coptic (Egyptian) Christians—has become conspicuous in recent decades by speaking out on war and peace and by providing humanitarian services. Already in 1972 the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) was implementing relief,

## **Statement on Sudan by All Africa Conference of Churches**

On behalf of the 170 Member Churches and the Presidium of the All Africa Conference of Churches across the continent of Africa, we wish to take this momentous time in our History firstly, to welcome the entire delegation of the Security Council to Kenya. Secondly, we wish to congratulate the entire membership of the Security Council for choosing to meet in Africa for the first time, to discuss the situation in the Sudan. . . .

This conflict has led to the deaths of over 2 million Southern Sudanese. . . .

The effects of conflicts have now extended to Darfur Region. It is estimated that about one million people have so far fled their homes into neighbouring country—Chad. . . . Over 50,000 have been killed. . . .

The Church in Africa, therefore wishes to raise the following fundamental concerns . . . :

1. That it is in the interest of the People of the Sudan, the International Community and the Church in Africa that the Security Council puts her utmost and unequivocal pressure on all the parties of the peace process in the Sudan to find a lasting solution to the conflicts in Sudan and to achieve a just and sustainable peace.
2. That the final comprehensive peace agreement be signed and its implementations be witnessed and guaranteed by the International Community.
3. That Good Governance be established throughout the Sudan to allow groups of the Civil Society to play their full part in building a Culture for Peace.
4. That the International Community through the United Nations and African Union be mandated to provide mechanisms for peace keeping and to ensure the smooth implementations of the Peace Agreement in the South and the Darfur Regions respectively.

—Excerpted from a statement of November 15, 2004, signed by AACC General Secretary Mvume Dandala and World Council of Churches Africa President Agnes Abuom



## The UN Comes to Africa

On November 18 and 19, 2004, the Security Council of the United Nations held its regular session in Nairobi, Kenya. Since its inception, the Security Council has met outside of its New York headquarters only four times. . . .

With the convening of the UN Security Council in Nairobi, Kenya's reputation as regional peace maker is both recognized and enhanced. For Kenya has successfully chaired hugely complex negotiations leading to the formation in 2004 of a fledgling government-in-waiting for the collapsed state of Somalia. During the same year Kenya also brought negotiations between the GoS and the SPLM to significant, if not comprehensive peace agreements. Both of these undertakings have been carried out under the auspices of IGAD [Inter-Governmental Agency for Development]. . . .

Since the demise of the Cold War in the early '90s, there is a palpable sense abroad that African problems are being addressed and resolved by means of African diplomatic initiative. African instruments of diplomacy such as IGAD, the Southern Africa Development Conference-SADC, the Economic Organization of West African States-ECOWAS and the African Union (amongst others) have created space and momentum toward a reconstructed African future.

With the meeting of the UN Security Council in Nairobi, notice is given that the open sores in Africa do matter to the rest of the world. And the meeting gives recognition to Kenya's role as regional peacemaker.

—Based on news reports by Mark Agutu and Henry Owuor, *The Daily Nation*, November 18, 2004

**He who tells you much about others tells others much about you.**

—south Sudan

rehabilitation, and resettlement programs following on the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement. Support for this Sudanese church engagement came from an ecumenical network of church-related agencies, including Mennonite Central Committee. MCC personnel were first seconded to the SCC in 1973, followed by significant numbers of personnel and other forms of support. MCC's relationships with the SCC and later with the New Sudan Council of Churches in the south have been sustained to this day.

The entry of the Sudanese churches into the public arena has stimulated many auxiliary interests and activities, including a revisiting of Sudan's Christian antecedents, recorded in considerable detail in the Faith in Sudan book series (see Werner, *Day of Devastation* [Resources on Sudan, p. 10], pp. 21–120). Sudan's ancient (Nubian) church (500–1500 A.D.) traces its beginnings to early missionary outreach from the Coptic Church and the ancient Church of Constantinople. The first African Christian reported in the Bible was the “Ethiopian eunuch” mentioned in Acts chapter 8, a person who lived in what is today north Sudan. Today Sudanese Christians are bold to claim Nubian Christianity as part of their faith heritage and as part of Sudan's officially acknowledged history.

Modern Christianity came to Sudan in the mid-1800s, championed by the illustrious Italian Catholic missionary leader, Daniel Comboni. Anglicans entered Sudan at the formation of the Condominium Government, followed by Presbyterians. Coptic and Armenian Christians have long been present though now in declining numbers.

By 1983, civil war in south Sudan had escalated, isolating SCC services to government-controlled areas. In response, the churches of Sudan agreed in 1990 to establish a second Christian Council—the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC)—to serve member churches in rebel-controlled south Sudan. Church leaders have affirmed the two Councils as an expression of a common ecumenical reality.

Since the 1990s, the two Christian Councils have increasingly collaborated under the ecumenical framework of the Sudan Ecumenical Forum (SEF), comprising churches from Sudan and the international ecumenical support community. Meeting approximately every 18 months, the SEF helped to sustain common Christian purpose in Sudan during the civil war. It also sponsored high-profile consultations convened by the two

Christian Councils to address issues of war and peace. Emanating from these deliberations came statements and initiatives widely publicized to all levels of Sudanese society and beyond.

## Sudan's Transformation

Sudan is grappling with the complexities of war and peace. If transition periods in other African crisis situations serve as precedents, transition time is testing time for government, for church, and for all civil society agencies working for the shift from a highly conflicted to a more peaceful body politic. Sudan has been radically transformed by both its war and reconstruction experiences.

Not since the height of the slave trade in the 1800s have so many southern Sudanese been present in north Sudan. Nearly half of the population of Khartoum comprises southern Sudanese. All major towns throughout northern Sudan now feature significant numbers of southerners. Along with this shift of people, the Christian church has become more visible in the north.

Years ago, a tattered, soiled poster “graced” the entrance to Khartoum's National Museum featuring, as memory recalls, the following words: “Sudan, the country with a glorious past!” Today, visions for the future of Sudan are challenging and various.

For the GoS, the paramount goal in this transition time is to maintain political and economic power. For rebel politicians such as John Garang, the challenge is to include all of Sudan's marginalized peoples toward the elusive goal of national unity. For rank and file southerners, deep feelings of fear and distrust remain. For many the goal is separation or some degree of autonomy. The southerners exiled in neighboring countries want to return to south Sudan, but only after peace and stability are assured. For rebels in Darfur and other marginalized areas, the aspiration is for full participation in the political and economic fortunes of the country.

Further afield, the options for Sudan are being shaped by a kaleidoscope of dynamics. From the United States there has been pressure for a timely conclusion to the peace negotiations. The United States is also concerned that Sudan be weaned from its empathy for fundamentalist Islam. Sudan's tantalizing oil reserves are controlled and exploited by China, Malaysia, and India, just beyond easy reach of the West. With regard to Darfur, the U.S. government has used the word “genocide” but has not

implemented the sanctions associated with the use of that term.

As a bridge between Africa and the Middle East, Sudan has long managed divided loyalties. The GoS has maintained close ties with the Arab League and has thus been beholden to the political and religious dynamics of the Middle East. The cauldron that is Iraq and the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian problem ensure that the Middle East agenda retains priority status. Meanwhile, the demise of apartheid in South Africa in the early 1990s and the “African Renaissance” constitute dynamics that are also not easily ignored. The GoS has done its best to be on good terms with both Middle Eastern and African political demands.

The distinctly African nature of the IGAD peace negotiations has ensured—contrary to earlier GoS insistence—that war and peace in Sudan is an African concern. In the case of Darfur, the GoS has negotiated with rebel groups under the African Union, initially to arrange a cease-fire, but possibly working in the longer term toward power sharing on the model of the peace agreement signed between the GoS and the SPLM/A.

### Something New

In the Horn of Africa region over the past several years, two predominantly Muslim African states—Sudan and Somalia—subjected their respective conflicts to mediation/resolution by African institutions (IGAD) and African mediator personalities.

Today, many would agree with Pliny the Elder, the ancient Africanist observer, when he exclaimed, “Ex Afrika semper aliquid novum!” (“Out of Africa, there is always something new!”). Indeed, there is new momentum underway in Africa; these negotiations followed the larger cross-continental pattern in which African mediators and processes—enjoying growing strength and trust—have been resolving African conflicts.

Within the faith community, similar precedents are being established. During the 1997 general assembly of the AACC, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Peace Prize was awarded to two representatives—one Christian and one Muslim—of the Inter-Faith Council of Liberia for mediating and resolving conflict between contending Liberian political dynamics. Meanwhile, at the level of the AACC there is encouragement to establish Inter-Faith Councils in African countries with significant Muslim and Christian populations. While they may not function perfectly or conclusively, they can be recognized and appreciated as an African response to an African situation.

Today Africa is far from stable, but institutional patterns and general expectations suggest some positive directions. Appreciation of these dynamics provides perspective through which to express solidarity with the people of Sudan and the people of the African continent.

*Harold Miller and his wife Annetta served as MCC co-representatives for Sudan from 1998 to 2004.*

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## Surviving the War

by Pauline Riak

*When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled.*

—AFRICAN PROVERB

The founders of the Sudanese Women’s Association in Nairobi (SWAN) were a group of southern Sudanese women, displaced by the ravages of “forgotten war” in the Sudan. SWAN was founded in 1992 and incorporated in 1994.

The birth of SWAN came in the wake of the most difficult and critical period of the current liberation war in Southern Sudan.

In 1992 the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) experienced a most tragic and difficult period of internal upheavals as a result of a split in 1991. The unity of the movement was shattered as comrades turned guns against each other and against their own people with utter ruthlessness.

When the founding group of SWAN met in Nairobi in 1992 there were already social, economic, political, ethnic, religious, factional, and cultural cleavages evident amongst them due to deep-rooted fear and suspicion instilled by the war.

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### Press Statement on the Sudan

I have just returned from a visit to the Sudan, extremely heart-broken from a shocking experience.

The Sudan, as you are aware, is everything that embodies pain. It is a huge cauldron—a boiling pot, burning, bleeding and hurting all at the same time.

While the graphic media reports have caused all of us the world over to focus attention primarily on Darfur, we were informed that government backed militias are raiding villages in the Upper Nile around Malakal with a zeal equal to that exercised in Darfur. The scenario illustrates the sad perversity of human nature that has been allowed to exist in our modern and supposedly civilized world.

Reports reaching us last evening from our contacts in Sudan said that within the last four days, homes of an estimated 23,000 villagers have been razed down in the Upper Nile. . . .

What is even [more] sad is that blacks [southern Sudanese of African descent] are conscripted into the militia gangs to raid and kill their own innocent people, mostly the Shilluk and Nuer tribes, who from time immemorial have lived in the Upper Nile region as their home.

Together with Darfur, the recent unfolding situation truly lends itself to a genocide in the making. It resembles Rwanda ten years ago when the world merely watched as tragic events took place. . . .

The AACC believes there are strong grounds for investigating and monitoring reports of crimes against humanity in Sudan.

—adapted from a statement of May 20, 2004, by Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala, General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches

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**He who rides a camel should not be afraid of dogs.**

—north Sudan

## UN Meeting a Unique Chance

After receiving international accolades for bearing the burden of the long drawn out Sudanese and Somali peace talks, Kenya will this week (November 15–21, 2004) host a meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss issues of the region, but specifically to focus on Sudan and Somalia.

Being the first time for Kenya and the second for Africa to host a UN meeting whose decision is binding on all UN member states, the meeting is in essence a major boost for Kenya's diplomacy and a recognition of the country's endurance and patience in its relations with its warring neighbors.

The meeting is also an indication of seriousness on the part of the international community about a final and lasting solution of the differences in the two countries which have so far agreed in principle to live in peace, save for a few hitches. . . .

The gray area for the comprehensive Sudanese peace agreement remains the war in Darfur, which has had a direct impact on the final peace settlement between the Sudanese government and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army/Movement. . . .

Successful settlement of the Sudanese and Somali problems could provide the continent with a blueprint for solving similar problems elsewhere. We would like to believe the stand taken by the Sudanese government's head of delegation in Abuja, Nigeria, Dr. Magzoub Al-Khalifa, who affirmed the government's commitment to the peace process. The same commitment is also required from the SPLM. . . .

—Adapted from the editorial of November 15–21, 2004, in *The East African*, a regional newspaper published in Nairobi

**Do not mend your neighbor's fences before looking after your own.**

—south Sudan

From the outset, the founders of SWAN sought to create a group environment in which members would feel free, yet obliged to participate in decision-making processes affecting SWAN as an organization and thus their own lives. Members soon realized that good policies came from open discourse and vigorous exchange of perspectives. Soon healthy, constructive criticism and respect for each other became the norm. SWAN's environment has been characterized by open collaboration coupled with an underlying understanding that all SWAN members are important and all have equal worth.

SWAN members represent 23 Sudanese ethnic groups, 13 linguistic groupings, and various religious faiths. At one point SWAN members were sympathetic to 11 actively warring factions including the SPLM. This perceptual and attitudinal "common ground" may be due in part to the fact that all members felt marginalized and powerless. In SWAN democratic discourse and respectful articulation of each member's ideas were encouraged.

As they pursued mutually beneficial activities, SWAN members perceived their interests to be inextricably linked even with those whom they considered adversaries. The women affirmed that they were all proud to be Africans and southern Sudanese, members of the same community, with shared aspirations, visions, and challenges. While appreciating the reasons why their men went to war, they were totally against the killing of southern Sudanese by southern Sudanese! Nonviolent conflict management and healing began to take shape.

### Achievements

SWAN, as an organization of mothers, wives, and sisters of those who were engaged in mutual bloodletting, was in great agony as its members lived through a conflict they did not create. SWAN resolved to be an instrument of reconciliation and unity among the entire Sudanese community in Kenya.

Today, SWAN's 800 members have in great measure achieved self-esteem and dignity. Through SWAN's services, Sudanese women have been trained and are able to participate in good governance. Many have received training in peacemaking and reconciliation. Some women have been equipped to seek redress for violation of their rights. Youth (boys and girls) have been trained in HIV/AIDS awareness. Knowledge of the centrality of women in the New Sudan has been heightened among the membership.

SWAN also catalyzed the formation of civic groups both inside and outside the Sudan, including the Sudanese diaspora.

It is estimated that women account for 53 percent of the population of Sudan. While more women than men vote in Sudan, women have experienced a long history of marginalization. Glaring gender disparities continue in women's access to decision-making institutions.

Access to basic education remains a challenge for the whole of the Sudanese population. Literacy levels in Sudan are therefore low, especially among women. The majority of Sudanese women are marginalized from lifelong learning. There is also a general lack of gender awareness, reinforcing stereotypical traditional female and male roles that deny women full opportunities.

### Women and Peace in Sudan

The efforts of Sudanese women in creating an environment for peace in southern Sudan and in Kenya among the Sudanese community are widely known.

Currently no comprehensive policy exists in Sudan to address gender concerns. Core concerns of Sudanese women need to be incorporated into emerging policy options, including issues such as women's right to ownership and inheritance rights, access to resources and wealth, equal opportunities, access to education and health facilities, and protection from violence.

Sudanese women are concerned that existing protocols and resolutions are silent regarding women's participation and even U.N. resolutions calling for women to be included in peace negotiations have not been implemented. Despite this exclusion, Sudanese women continue to make constructive contributions to their country.

While women and other groups engage in grassroots reconciliation and peacebuilding, at the leadership level there is little sense of common ground. Trusting interethnic relationships are the exception rather than the rule. Even though a peace agreement has been signed, trust remains fragile.

Sudanese women and men are tired of the war. There can be no military solution. A common vision is needed as a basis for the Sudan's postwar construction. The women of SWAN believe that their experience may offer some replicable patterns toward reconciliation and reconstruction in Sudan.



As peace comes to Sudan, SWAN has been mandated to go home in 2005 as the Sudanese Women's Action Network to facilitate the future growth and development of women's organizations, especially in southern Sudan in the interim period. The new SWAN will focus on four thematic areas: human rights and the rule of law, social ser-

vice delivery (plus adult literacy), economic empowerment, and political empowerment.

*Dr. Pauline Riak, a Jamaican married to a southern Sudanese, has lived and worked in Africa for many years and is a founder and the first chairperson of SWAN. She is also the executive director of the Sudan Relief and Development Agency.*

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## Forgiveness: A Biblical Perspective

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by Isaiah M. Dau

*In the act of forgiveness we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that caused us the wrong. . . . It is an act of faith that the wrongdoer can change.*

—ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (LONDON: RIDER, 1999), p. 220

**F**orgiveness is a declaration of faith in the potential of the wrongdoer to reform and change. In this act, both the wronged and wrongdoer benefit. One is won over as a dear brother or a sister and the other is no longer an enemy to dread. But that should not spell the end of the process of forgiveness. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa: "Once the wrongdoer has confessed and the victim has forgiven, it does not mean that is the end of the process. Most frequently, the wrong has affected the victim in tangible, material ways. [Therefore] confession, forgiveness and reparation, wherever feasible, [should] form part of the continuum" (Tutu, *No Future*, p. 221).

But forgiveness is difficult. The Holy Bible acknowledges this in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21–35).

Peter triggers the conversation by asking Jesus, "How many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Peter has gone way beyond the limits of forgiveness set by Jewish rabbinical schools, which had limited this to three times. Peter might have expected a hearty commendation from Jesus for exceeding the wisdom of the rabbis.

But Jesus, in his usual radical approach, surprises Peter. He tells Peter to forgive wrongdoers seventy times seven times. By clear implication, Jesus is telling Peter and all of us that there is no limit to forgiveness.

Jesus dramatically tells the story to an audience mesmerized by the kindness of the forgiving master and the cruelty of the unforgiving servant. The master, bowing to a desperate plea for mercy, canceled a huge debt sufficient to have the unkind servant and his wife and children sold in order to repay. This, continues Jesus, the master did because he had pity on him.

But when the turn of the unmerciful servant came, he failed to measure up. He grabbed his fellow debtor by the neck to the point of choking him and demanded to be paid here and now the little amount of money owed. When asked for kindness and time, the unkind servant brazenly refused and committed the debtor to jail until he could pay.

Eyewitnesses brought reports of this shameful but common behavior to the master. Infuriated by this, the master reinstated the debt previously canceled and sent the unkind servant to jail. He is treated in the same manner he has treated his fellow debtor. Jesus then concludes: "This is how my heavenly father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (v. 35).

What does this story teach us in our human relations? We mention the following:

### 1. As human beings we find it hard to ask for or grant forgiveness.

The unmerciful servant could not let off the man who owed him a small amount even though his own huge debt was written off. When others wrong us we find it hard to forgive them as the Lord has forgiven us.

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## No Person Should Hate Another

No person should hate another.  
God our Father it should never happen,  
that one person hates another anywhere,  
even to the end of the earth.

So that we know God,  
no person should hate another.  
God our Father it should never happen,  
that one person hates another anywhere,  
even to the end of the earth.

So that we love [him] . . .  
no person should hate another.  
God our Father it should never happen,  
that one person hates another anywhere,  
even to the end of the earth.

So that we love one another . . .  
So that we keep his Law . . .  
Respect your father, your mother and the elders . . .  
So that we do not kill one another . . .  
There should be no adultery . . .  
No person should hate another . . .  
There should be no deception . . .  
There should be no falsehood . . .  
There should be no greed or self-inflation . . .  
Look after your duty without laziness . . .

—a Dinka (Sudanese tribe) song from Marc R. Nikkel, *Dinka Christianity* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications, 2001), p. 383

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## A stranger is the friend of every other stranger.

—north Sudan

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## In the Desert

A voice of one calling:  
“In the desert prepare  
the way of the LORD.”  
—Isaiah 40:3 (NIV)

I travel the road  
between Khartoum  
and Atbara, North Sudan

The black ribbon  
(built by Osama bin Laden)  
winds through the scorching  
nothingness  
of the Sahara Desert

The Sahara  
silent  
featureless  
barren waste

timeless  
lifeless

The Sahara  
aridity of war  
two million dead  
nakedness of displacement  
thousands of refugees  
thirst for peace  
The beginnings of a peaceful  
agreement  
between the Government  
of Sudan  
and the Sudan Peoples'  
Liberation Movement  
was signed on May 26, 2004

In the Sahara  
prepare  
prepare  
prepare the way  
of the Lord

The Prince  
of  
Peace

—Annetta Miller, former co-country  
representative, MCC Sudan

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## Food from the people you love is healing.

—south Sudan

Many times we delude ourselves into believing that we can hold grudges against other people but will be forgiven by God and others when we go wrong. It is hard to forgive, but we are required to forgive in the same manner that the Lord forgave us, and it is possible by the grace of God. As Christians, we can draw from the all-sufficient grace of our Lord to overcome bitterness, grudges, and other destructive emotions.

These resources include the example of believers who battled with unforgiveness and overcame it, such as Joseph, who forgave his brothers (Gen. 50:15–21), and David, who overcame evil with good by not killing Saul (1 Sam. 24:1–7; 26:1–12).

Jesus, who is our supreme example, forgave his killers and prayed for them as they were killing him (Luke 23:34; Acts 19:33; Rom. 12:19; 2 Tim. 4:14). Commenting on this, the late American civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, said: “Jesus eloquently affirmed on the cross a higher law. He knew that the old an eye for an eye philosophy would leave everyone blind. He did not seek to overcome evil with evil. He overcame evil with good.”

### 2. When we forgive we obey God.

Forgiveness is an essential act of willing obedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ. He himself granted forgiveness to the most undeserving lot of people imaginable: his killers.

When we fail to forgive we disobey. Similarly, when we refuse to receive God’s forgiveness we fail to forgive those who wrong us. To be unforgiving closes one’s life against God. This is why Jesus says, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your heavenly father will not forgive your sins” (Matt. 6:14). By refusing to forgive those who wrong us, we spurn the grace and forgiveness of God. In so doing we become objects of God’s wrath just as the unforgiving servant became the object of his master’s. Our fellowship and relationship with God and fellow humans stagnate.

This is why many believers do not enjoy meaningful family relationships. They lose their joy, spiritual vitality, and effectiveness in the process of being unforgiving. Unchecked, this may lead to depression and health problems. A bitter heart causes sickness to the body. “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the

bones” (Prov. 15:13). Who can deny that what goes on in our hearts greatly affects how we look outside?

When we forgive we engage in active obedience, a mark of true discipleship. We can and must forgive because we are disciples of the one who forgave all and who continually does so even to us.

### 3. We express humility when we forgive.

Forgiveness is also a very humbling experience. Both the unforgiving servant and the one he refused to forgive literally went on their knees to beg for forgiveness. Forgiveness touches our pride and self-esteem. It reminds us that we often fail. It teaches us that our self-righteousness is self-delusion; we need to ask to be forgiven by God and humans.

Forgiveness brings all these issues to bear on our pride and strikes us at the core of our being. It is only when we humble ourselves that we can ask for and grant forgiveness.

In gender relations, in Sudan men are too proud to ask for forgiveness from women, since this might be considered a sort of weakness. We believe this is wrong in biblical terms. Civility and Scripture demand that we ask for and grant forgiveness.

### Applying It to Sudan

We would like to apply this to recent events in our country Sudan. From 2001 to the present, the forces of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace have been gaining momentum. There have been great changes and softening of attitudes toward peace. One should not forget church peace initiatives at the grassroots in Upper Nile in the late 1990s.

But for real forgiveness to be effected in Sudan, all Sudanese must endeavor to lay down their selfish ambitions and put up the interests of the country. From 1821 to the present, peace and stability have eluded the southern part of Sudan, eliminating chances of meaningful development and progress. But now we seem to be at the brink of lasting peace in our country.

While we must guard against being over-optimistic, we maintain hope and faith that peace and reconciliation are possible in Sudan—but only if all Sudanese put the past behind them and truly forgive one another. Because forgiveness is a great triumph over the powers of evil, Sudanese can chart their destiny by forgiving one another.



We must confront the past and deal with it appropriately. We should not deny the hurts of the past or try to bury them in the shallow soil of hypocrisy, only to resurrect them later. As Archbishop Tutu puts it, “Forgiving and being reconciled are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth” (Tutu, *No Future*, p. 218). Dealing with the situation this way brings real healing and peace.

To achieve true forgiveness in Sudan, all Sudanese must overcome fear and cherish dignity and courage. They must be deter-

mined to make right the injustice and the degradation of the past. They must have the courage to let bygones be bygones and build together a future characterized by freedom, peace, equality, progress, and justice for all. Forgiveness is a must if peace will prevail in this beloved but suffering nation.

*Dr. Isaiah M. Dau is an ordained minister in the Sudan Pentecostal Church and is principal of Nairobi Pentecostal Bible College and director of mobile Bible and leadership training for the Sudan Pentecostal Church, South Sudan. This article is reproduced with permission from the South Sudan Post, June 2003.*

**Eggs and iron must not be in the same bag.**

—north Sudan

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## Sudan's Wars: Genocide or Global Indifference?

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by Rev. Basil 'Bugu Nyama

**T**he Sudan is a suffering nation. Its people are bleeding to death from premeditated attacks. [This article was written in 2004, before the peace treaty was signed in January 2005.]

Sudan's murky conflict leaves one with few words to describe Africa's phenomenal war, where the Sudanese people have become synonymous with misery, mass displacement, and killings. Many people use different terms to describe the absurdity that the wars mean. But the words of All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) General Secretary Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala perhaps most conclusively describe Sudan's wars. Mvume says, “Sudan is everything that embodies pain. It is a huge cauldron—a boiling pot, burning, bleeding and hurting all at the same time.”

These vicious tensions paint the government of Sudan as a dual dealer that wages war and pursues peace concurrently, placing the fate of millions of civilians in the balance. The continued inflictions have immersed people in maximum torture, killings, rape, maiming, and displacement.

### **Ethnic Cleansing or Genocide?**

The war in Darfur has been termed “ethnic cleansing” because it expresses abhorrence for African Muslim Darfurians. It is a scorched-earth policy because of a deep

desire to Arabize and Islamize the entire country. The wars are characteristic of Rwanda's 1994 genocide because they aim at eliminating a particular race as well as non-Islamic adherents. The U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, and AACC President Rev. Dr. Nyansako Ni Nku and General Secretary Dandala, among others, see Sudan's wars as genocide!

The war in Darfur exploded in February 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) cited economic and political marginalization by the Khartoum government. In addition, Khartoum abetted raids conducted on the Darfurians by the Janjaweed, a militia group that cleared areas of civilians on the suspicion that they were treacherous to the government. This is in utter contravention of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit attacks on civilians.

The SLM prefers to be known as Mu'uminiin (Arabic for believers) and not Muslimiin (Muslims). As African Muslims, they are resisting the Sudanese government's policy of advancing a faith that has more to do with Arabization than encouraging Muslims to surrender to the will of Allah. In the same cause of Arabization, the Janjaweed feel motivated to purge the land through this bloody violence, which could threaten the regimes in Sudan and Chad and inspire other insurgencies.

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## Resources on Sudan

### BOOKS

Abel Alier, *Too Many Agreements Dishonoured: Southern Sudan* (3rd ed.; Khartoum, Sudan: Abel Alier, 2003).

Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995).

### Faith in Sudan Book Series

Paulines Publications Africa, P.O. Box 49026-00100, Nairobi, Kenya; e-mail: publications@paulinesafrica.org

A sampling of titles:

Isaiah Majok Dau, *Suffering and God: A Theological Reflection on the War in Sudan*.

Diocese of Rumbek [Sudan] (Ed.), *Church in Sudan: Journeying Towards Justice and Peace*.

Father Matthew Hauman, *Travelling with Soldiers and Bishops: Stories of Struggling People in Sudan*.

Marc R. Nikkel, *Dinka Christianity: The Origins and Development of Christianity among the Dinka of Sudan with Special Reference to the Songs of Dinka Christians*.

Roland Werner, *Day of Devastation, Day of Contentment*.

### PERIODICALS

*Hope* (bimonthly; New Sudan Council of Churches, P.O. Box 66168, Nairobi, Kenya; e-mail: nssc@iconnect.co.ke).

*New People* (bimonthly; New People Media Centre—Comboni Missionaries, P.O. Box 21681-00505, Nairobi, Kenya; e-mail: npeople@kenyaweb.com).

*SCBRC Voice* (biannual; Sudan Catholic Bishops' Regional Conference, P.O. Box 66057-00800 Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya; e-mail: communication@scbrc.org).

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Some pessimists think that peace between the government and the SPLM/A [signed January 9, 2005] is likely to be deceptive unless it will generate the political will to put out the fire in Darfur.

A worse puzzle of Sudan's fractious warfare is how a world that calls itself "civilized" can ever reconcile its conscience when it is doing too little to halt the fighting! It makes mockery of the word "civilization" if the Western powers cannot concert the political will to do this. Many people fear that an international intervention might come too late, especially when hundreds of thousands of innocent people have already been massacred.

The Darfur violence is a litmus test for the international community's role and mechanisms for conflict resolution. Now that the African Union has launched its security council, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development may need to be restructured to intervene and stop any barbarianism. Under the steady eyes of the international community, it will be hard for those who carry out ruthless violence to achieve impunity.

Annan warned in April 2004 that an outside military action may be needed to halt the ongoing ethnic cleansing in Darfur and to pave the way for humanitarian workers to administer aid to those who have been driven from their homes.

The recently signed peace agreement, it is hoped, will stop the ethnic-group fighting in south Sudan. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced and an unknown number of others killed or wounded. Killings and counterkillings in this region must be addressed and stopped. It is unlikely that the continued loss of lives and mounting insecurity will help the people to build a culture of peace and coexistence.

Many have called for an investigation into what Dr. Mvume of the AACC terms "crimes against humanity" in southern Sudan's Upper Nile state, which have left some 150,000 people displaced.

President Ni Nku has passionately urged the AACC's constituent Christian Councils to lobby their governments to act on the civil strife in Sudan. He also called upon the churches themselves to "prepare to render their support to rebuild Sudan" once a peace agreement was reached.

Although U.S. President George W. Bush has stricken Sudan from the list of countries deemed uncooperative in the war against terrorism, the United States has cautioned that Sudan should not expect "a significant flow" of aid or assistance until its "behavior in Darfur has changed." But the average suffering Sudanese may not understand such talk. The only comforting words that Sudan's victims of violence hunger to hear are "The war is over." If the peace treaty does not stop the government and dissident groups from pursuing the agenda of war, Sudan's genocide may continue as the international community looks on indifferently!

### Reversing the Nightmare

A just peace in the Sudan will not only end the suffering, but also relieve thousands of internally displaced persons, who currently live in hell-on-earth camps. It is time for the so-called global village to mobilize resources toward reversing the whole nightmarish life that the Sudanese people have seen and continue to experience!

There is need for international observers, namely the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Italy, to "pursue more vigorous and public diplomacy" (*ICG Africa Report* no. 76, March 25, 2004). They must condemn violations of international humanitarian law in Darfur more vocally in a coordinated manner "with other interested countries, including France and Chad" to create a framework for internationally facilitated political negotiations.

A broad process of interethnic and tribal reconciliation must be purposely pursued, as it has the potential to promote reconciliation, peace, and equitable distribution of resources among communities and foster economic recovery and development across the nation.

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# Smoke and Mirrors in the Desert

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by Mepukori ole Karam

**F**or the past two years . . . , the insurrection in Darfur has increasingly attracted international attention. It is a case of too little, too late. While African countries seem unwilling to commit themselves in pressurizing the government of Khartoum, European and American diplomacy played a game of wait and see. Only in the past months did the international community try to stop the genocidal activities of [Sudanese] President [Omar Hassan al-] Bashir and his government. . . .

The government is also finding a strong opposition in the activities of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM). *New People* met Ahmed Abdelshafi Yagoub, in charge of Foreign Affairs of the movement. . . . Ahmed Yagoub accepted to answer a few questions.

*What are the causes of the insurrection in Darfur?*

The cause of the insurrection in Darfur is quite clear. It is a common problem with the rest of the Sudan. Since independence, the central government has always enacted a politics of marginalization. The decisions taken by the government of Khartoum have cornered Darfur into a position of powerlessness. . . . We Darfurians have a clear understanding that the government is fighting us because we are Africans, and this does not go well with the Arabisation policy of Khartoum. We do not accept this policy. We feel we are Sudanese. We want to live together with other Sudanese people as we did for centuries. The tension reached so high a level that we had to take up arms to fight for our freedom, our well being. I must say we are fighting to survive.

*What is the situation on the ground?*

The situation is very bad. Our people try to find refuge wherever they can: in the mountains, in the bush, running to Chad. The humanitarian situation is shocking. Most people have nothing and relief agencies cannot reach them. Thousands have died, killed by militias—the Janjaweed—paid by the government. . . .

The Janjaweed are still attacking people, even those sheltered in refugee camps. In government controlled areas, there is no one to defend people from attacks. The attacks on civilians by government sponsored troops are a serious breach of human rights and international law. The international commu-

nity has exercised pressure on the system, but the system does not respond. . . .

*What is the relationship between your movement and the people of Darfur?*

The movement is the hope of the people of Darfur. The movement enjoys the support of the people. I can say that all are behind the movement. . . . The movement is also the only organized group that can speak on behalf of the people of Darfur, and on behalf of other marginalized people of the Sudan.

*You claim that the SLM is the only movement that can speak on behalf of the people, however there is another movement fighting for Darfur.*

Yes, this is true. There is the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). It is a movement that fights for the people of Darfur. However, we are totally different because our visions are different. We are a liberation movement and our vision is very clear. This is why the international community looks at us with interest.

*You have been accused of endangering the life of people when you capture an area and then retreat. The government can then re-enter the area and punish the population.*

This is an unfair accusation. The reality is quite different. We are fighting the system and we would never do anything to endanger the life of our people. It is not our policy to put our people on the spot. We are fighting so that the people of Darfur might have the opportunity to be citizens with full rights in their own country. It is true, on the contrary, that the government fight innocent people and instead of facing the fighters in the rebellion they turn their weapons against civilians, they recruit the Janjaweed to fight civilians. . . .

*Most Darfurians are Muslim. Muslim is also the government you oppose. When the United Nations wanted to intervene in the Sudan, most Islamic countries voted in favour of the government of Khartoum. Do you feel betrayed by other faithful or the faith?*

In Darfur most people are Muslim, but there are some who follow traditional religions. It is true that Islamic countries did not support us. However, I believe this is so because they do not know exactly what is happening.





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Many are misled by the government controlled media. My hope is that the international media will help us state our case, will help us to let everyone know exactly what is happening in Darfur. If we succeed in this plan, I am sure no one of these countries would stand by the government of Khartoum.

I also would like to underline that yes, we are Muslim, but we cannot get along with this government that calls itself Muslim. In the past, the government declared a Jihad (a holy war) against the South. They said they were fighting the Christians in favour of Islam. But we have seen them in concrete action against us, who are brothers in faith. In reality, this system is against the very people it is supposed to protect. . . .

*What are the perspectives for the future?  
What do you foresee?*

Personally I am optimistic. I believe we are on the side of righteousness. It seems to me that most Sudanese are now ready to raise their voice for their rights, that they are ready to stand up for their freedom. We in the movement are very much committed to create a new system, a social-political system

that would accept everybody. We foresee a society where all would have the right to express themselves, whether they are Africans or Arabs, Muslims, Christians or followers of traditional religions. . . . Since we have agreed on this principle, I am sure we will realise that aspiration, giving life to the dream of our people, who have been waiting for a long time. . . . We are a secular movement and we foresee a secular government. We are trying to separate religion from the system of the government. Sudan is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country. We have to respect that. I am quite sure we will realise this dream. As a movement, we are committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. This now depends on the other side. If the government is serious, we can find a peaceful solution.

*This article was written by Mepukori ole Karam of New People. Excerpted with permission from New People, no. 93, November–December 2004, p. 4; P.O. Box 21681, Nairobi, Kenya.*