

VOICES

of Darfur

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Tales from Darfur's Heritage:

An interview with
Ibrahim Ishag
Ibrahim

My First 150 Days as UNAMID JSR -
Achievements and Challenges

Direct Dialogue, the only way to
resolve inter-communal conflicts
in East Darfur

Unamid Provides Protection
to Newly Displaced Persons
in Sortony, North Darfur



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NOTE

I'M PLEASED to introduce the June 2016 issue of Voices of Darfur, which contains news, features and interviews not only about unique aspects of life in Darfur but also about UNAMID's ongoing efforts to facilitate lasting peace in the region.

In the interview, "My First 150 Days as UNAMID JSR - Achievements and Challenges" Mr. Uhomoibhi talks about achievements he has made and challenges faced during his first four months as Head of UNAMID.

The article "Direct Dialogue, the Only Way to Resolve Inter-tribal Conflict in East Darfur" reflects the Mission's mediation efforts with the local communities in the villages and localities in East Darfur.

In the article "UNAMID Provides Protection to Newly Displaced Persons in Sortony" we describe UNAMID support to thousands of displaced persons who fled their villages and sought refuge near the Mission's Team Site in Sortony, North Darfur.

I'm also quite pleased to introduce, in this edition, the Photo Story which is a collection of photographs showcasing patrols conducted by the Mission's Military and Police components across the region in conformity with the Mission's protection of civilian's mandate.

Finally, in our cover feature, "Tales from Darfur's Heritage", Voices of Darfur presents an interview with a renowned Darfuri Writer, Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim, where he speaks of his published novels, his views on the literary production in Darfur and the role that literature can play in bringing peace to Darfur.

As Voices of Darfur continues to evolve as a news magazine, we welcome your feedback. To send comments by email, please put "Letters to the Editor / Voices of Darfur" in the subject line and send the email to:

unamid-publicinformation@un.org.

Carlos Araujo

Chief

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ON THE COVER



Renowned Darfuri Writer Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim, in Khartoum, Sudan. Mr. Ibrahim highlighted the Darfuri heritage in most of his novels. Photo by Mohammad Nouredin.



Rakubaat Aba Salih is broadcast on radio Al Salam 98:0 FM in Khartoum and 7.2MHz, 41 Meter Band SW in Darfur daily from 8:30 - 9:30 and repeated from 14:00 - 15:00

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JSR Tours the Mission's Sector Headquarters Across Darfur

AS PART OF his meetings with senior UNAMID officials, state authorities, and the local community, UNAMID's Joint Special Representative, Martin Uhomoibhi, visited Zalingei, Central Darfur, El Geneina, West Darfur; Nyala, South Darfur, El Daein, East Darfur; between 2-6 May 2016.

During his visit, Mr. Uhomoibhi held formal meetings, consultations, popular conferences and discussions with a broad spectrum of Darfuri entities, including with key state authorities (Governors of States, Government of Sudan military and police officials and State se-

curity authorities), internally displaced persons (IDPs) refugees and their representatives, native administration and community leaders (nazirs, umdahs and chieftains) as well as UNAMID staff and members of the UN Country Team in the sectors, in order to exchange



On 6 May 2016, UNAMID's Joint Special Representative (JSR), Martin Uhomoibhi, concluded a five-day visit to the Mission's Sectors across Darfur. During his tour, Mr. Uhomoibhi met with local authorities, internally displaced persons, native administration leaders, refugees as well as UNAMID staff and members of the UN Country Team. In the picture, the JSR addresses South Sudanese refugees at Khor Omer camp near El Daein, East Darfur. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

views on UNAMID's mandate and his efforts as Joint Chief Mediator in relation to the Darfur peace process.

First the JSR visited Zalingei and met with the acting Wali (Governor) and state officials of Central Darfur and discussed with them the Mission's mandate and the impact of the ongoing fighting in Jebel Marra on the state. In this connection, the JSR raised the issue of access restrictions and their negative impact on the Mission's ability to pro-

vide accurate and truthful reports reflecting the reality on the ground.

The second leg of the JSR's tour was to El Geneina. After a formal call on the Acting Wali and state officials, Mr. Uhomoibhi and his delegation visited Ardamata camp for the displaced in West Darfur and met with the camp's residents in a popular conference. He shared with Ardamata residents his recent mediation efforts as Joint Chief Mediator and underlined the importance of non-signato-

ry armed movements joining the peace efforts to bring peace to Darfur.

The following day, the JSR visited Nyala and met the state authorities. He then visited Kalma camp for the internally displaced where he met with the residents and urged them to exercise restraint in the wake of a recent shootout in the camp's market by unidentified armed men and assure them of UNAMID's commitment to their protection. He also discussed with UNAMID Sector South leadership ways of augmenting the Mission's protection efforts to meet the needs of the population we serve in South Darfur, particularly the displaced women and children who tend to bear the brunt of such attacks. Additionally, he listened to demands from the IDPs for additional patrolling and support to community policing projects in the camp.

In El Daein, the final leg of the JSR's visit to the sectors, he met with the Wali of East Darfur as well as native administration leaders and urged them to work in mutual cooperation to resolve longstanding tribal conflicts in the state. He reiterated UNAMID's readiness to do its utmost to support these reconciliation efforts within its capability. Mr. Uhomoibhi also visited the Khor Omer camp near El Daein where thousands of South Sudanese refugees have sought shelter on account of the past period of instability which South Sudan had experienced. He held a popular conference attended by the South Sudanese refugees and interacted extensively with their tribal chieftains and the relief agencies operating in the camp. Ambassador Uhomoibhi commended the efforts of East Darfur State in hosting their South Sudanese neighbors and observed that this is one more reason that Darfur should have peace in order to turn from a troubled region into a safe resort.



DJSR-Protection leads Integrated Mission to Anka, North Darfur

UNAMID'S DEPUTY Joint Special Representative-Protection, Bintou Keita, led an integrated mission to Anka and

Umm Rai, 60 kilometers south-east of UNAMID's team site in Kutum, North Darfur. The objective of the mission was

to verify reports of mass displacements in the area following attacks by unidentified armed men on 3 December 2015.



On 24 January 2016, UNAMID's Deputy Joint Special Representative-Protection, Bintou Keita, visited Anka and Umm Rai, in North Darfur. The mission aimed at ascertaining the protection and humanitarian needs of the community living there following attacks on their villages on 3 December 2015. Ms Keita interacted with members of the displaced population who spoke about their concerns regarding the lack of food, shelter, water resources and medical facilities. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

In Anka Central, a conglomeration of 30 villages with 20,000 residents, 14 of which have reportedly been torched, the DJSR and her delegation met with some 600 community members, mostly women and children, many of whom highlighted the pressing need for humanitarian assistance, especially food, water, shelter and medical facilities. The team also observed that more than 80 per cent of the village had been burnt to ashes.

In Umm Rai, a cluster of 50 villages with a population of some 25,000, eight villages were reported to have been burnt. Some 650 community members had gathered to meet the visiting team and spoke about their dire need of food and water resources. Women were observed to have been feeding their young infants raw millet and sorghum.

Additionally, Ms. Keita and the team visited Anka 'B' village, a cluster of 20 villages of which seven were completely burnt down. More than 2000 people were assembled here and they requested UNAMID for urgent humanitarian intervention. Moreover, they expressed their deep concern regarding the insecure conditions in the area and requested the Mission to set up a team site to protect them from further attacks.

The integrated team recorded evidence of burnt houses in all three locations they visited. Upon their return to El Fasher, they have put an action plan into place to provide emergency relief to the affected populations. ■

The team consisted of members from UNAMID's Civil Affairs, Protection of Civilians, Human Rights and Communications and Public Information sections, a representative from UN OCHA and a Government of Sudan official.

The team met with community leaders from Anka, Umm Rai and

surrounding areas who revealed that most of their livestock was looted while their houses and markets were burnt down by unidentified armed attackers. Following this, they said, the majority of villagers living in the vicinity had fled to the nearby hills for shelter.

Handing over of Peace Centre in Abu Karinka, East Darfur



UNAMID's Civil Affairs team in East Darfur, handing over of a peace centre to the Ma'alia Native Administration, on 28 March 2016, in Abu Karinka, East Darfur. The initiative was part of the Mission's Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme designed to support the local community. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.

ON 28 MARCH 2016, UNAMID's Civil Affairs Section, Sector East, handed over a peace centre to the Ma'alia Native Administration in Abu Karinka, East Darfur, in the presence of the locality commissioner, the Deputy Nazir (leader) of the Ma'alia, the Humanitarian Aid Commissioner, representatives from women's groups and youth unions and members of the local community.

The construction is part of the Mission's Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) pro-

gramme designed to support the local population and cultivate the culture of peace through mediation, consultation and negotiations.

The Deputy Nazir of the Ma'alia, Ibrahim Bashir, stated that the project is the first of its kind in Abu Karinka and thanked UNAMID for its efforts to support peace and stability between the Ma'alia and the Rezeigat tribes.

In his remarks, the locality commissioner, Usman Gazim, commended the

Mission for its initiative and pledged his office's commitment to increase support to the native administration and to work closely with UNAMID components for the local community.

The UNAMID representative, Tahir Cevik, reaffirmed the Mission's support to Darfuri communities through native administration and local authorities and reiterated the importance of peaceful dialogue as a foundation for intercommunal peace and development.

No Child Soldiers– Protect Darfur Campaign Launched in West Darfur



UNAMID's Child Protection Unit distributed vests inscribed with messages promoting protection of children, on 2 May 2016, at the launch ceremony of the Darfur-wide campaign aimed at raising awareness on the need to end recruitment and use of child soldiers, at Krinding (1) Camp for the displaced in El-Geneina, West Darfur. Photo by Elsadiq Daud, UNAMID.

ON 2 MAY 2016, UNAMID's Child Protection Unit (CPU), launched a Darfur-wide campaign, under the theme: "No Child Soldiers – Protect Darfur" at Krinding (1) Camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in El-Geneina, West Darfur. The campaign, aimed at raising awareness on the need to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups and armed forces across the region, brought together more than 90 participants including women and youth groups, children and local community leaders including Sheik of Sheikhs (prominent leaders) of the Camp.

During the launch ceremony, the Mission distributed vests inscribed with messages that promote the protection of children and discourages adults against the use of these children as child soldiers and copies of the definition of child soldier according to Paris principle 2007. In

addition, UNAMID CPU briefed the internally displaced persons (IDPs) on the seriousness of violating children's rights and urged the community to discourage their children, below 18 years of age, from enlisting into the armed forces or armed groups and to report any forms of abuse or violations of child rights to Child protection officers and local authorities for investigation.

Addressing the gathering, UNAMID Child Protection Unit Team Leader in West Darfur, Mr. Paul Bugunya, stated that the "No Child Soldiers–Protect Darfur" campaign is in line with the Mission's mandate to protect civilian and emphasised that the campaign is not only aimed at putting an end to the recruitment and use of children by the armed groups and military forces, but also to ensure that children are afforded an opportunity to grow and attend school.

In his remarks, the Youth Leader in Krinding (1) IDP Camp, Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Issa, explained that some of the children, after observing the vulnerability of their families, decide to join the armed groups as a way of seeking protection through the arms they legally obtain when they are recruited. "None of us would love to see his/her child in the armed forces or with armed groups, but as IDPs, people feel deep pain when our women and children go to farms, collect firewood or water and they are harassed" Mr. Ahmed added.

Speaking of behalf of the women in Krinding (1) IDP Camp, Ms. Sadia Ahmed, noted that poverty is one of the key drivers in child recruitment into armed forces or armed groups in Darfur.

UNAMID Child Protection Unit intends to roll-out this "No Child Soldiers – Protect Darfur" campaign throughout the region in the next few months. ■

DIDC Implementation Committee Discusses Recommencement of the Locality-level Dialogue



The Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation (DIDC) implementing committee held a meeting, on 18 April 2016, at UNAMID Headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. The meeting was attended by UNAMID's Deputy Joint Special Representative - Protection, Bintu Keita. Photo by Salah Mohammed, UNAMID.

ON 18 APRIL, the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation (DIDC) Implementation Committee held a meeting at UNAMID Headquarter in El Fasher, North Darfur. The meeting, attended by UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative, Protection, Bintu Keita, Chairman of the DIDC Implementation Committee, UNAMID DIDC Secretariat and Implementation Committee Members, discussed modalities for the recommencement of the second phase of the locality-level dialogue and consultation process to be held in the five states of Darfur in early May, 2016.

Addressing the opening session, DJSR Bintou Keita, highlighted the importance of stimulating dialogue at the grassroots level in all parts of Darfur, in conformity with the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). Ms. Keita expressed the Mission's readiness to continue to support the implementation of the DIDC process to achieve peace, stability and development in Darfur.

Speaking at the same occasion, the

Chairman of the DIDC Implementation Committee, Sidig Wadah, expressed his appreciation to UNAMID for its efforts in supporting the DIDC implementation process and reaffirmed the Committee's readiness to work closely with the Mission to implement the remaining phases of the dialogue.

Ambassador Osman Dirar, a member of the DIDC Implementation Committee, later stated that the meeting had discussed the continuation of the locality level dialogue in all Darfur states. "We appeal to the donor community to fulfill its budgetary commitments and immediately release funds to facilitate the completion of the consultation process," he added. Ambassador Dirar also commended the active participation of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees in the DIDC dialogue and consultation process.

The Head of the Coordination Office for IDPs in South Darfur, Omda Hassan, who is also a member of the DIDC Implementation Committee, confirmed

that the IDPs have actively participated in the dialogue processes in all the five states in Darfur. He encouraged all parties to implement the recommendations and the outcome of the locality level meetings. "We would like to emphasize the importance of discussing the return of the IDPs to their places of origin and the strengthening of the social fabric in Darfur. I also call upon the non-signatory rebel movements to join peace talks in an effort to achieve comprehensive peace in Darfur," Omda Hassan added.

In 2015, around 21 consultations were conducted at the locality-level across Darfur, in addition to four meetings held in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum for the Darfuri community residing in the city. These consultations have focused on the root causes of the conflict in Darfur including the inter-communal clashes, power and resource sharing, justice and reconciliation processes. Plans are underway to conduct 26 locality-level meetings in all states of Darfur in the near future. ■

Commemoration of International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action



UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office in Zalingei, handed over sewing machines and a power generator, on 5 April 2016, to the disabled women in the area to help them start small-scale income-generating projects. The event was part of the commemoration of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. Photo by Mohammed Idriss Mohammed, UNAMID.

ON 5 APRIL 2016, UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office (ODO), Sector Central, in collaboration with the [Sudan] National Ordnance Disposal Office (NODO) commemorated the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action under the Theme: “Mine Action is Humanitarian Action”. The event, which took place in Zalingei, Central Darfur, was attended by State Ministers of Social Welfare, Youth and Sports, UNAMID Officials and representatives from different local organizations, GoS Police and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).

During the event, UNAMID handed over 12 sewing machines and a 20 KVA generator to the Disabled People Organization. The project is part of ODO’s effort to provide socio-economic support to disabled people who run small-scale income generating projects in the area. The colourful event included a military musical band, drama performances, music concert and a friendship football match between UNAMID and AL-Hilal Football Club.

Speaking at the event, the Officer-in-Charge of UNAMID Sector Central

Office, Ms. Yousra Elgorayeb stated that Unexploded Ordnance (UXOs) continue to pose a threat to the safety and security of Darfur communities. She further explained that 22 people have been injured and 15 killed as a result of UXO accidents in Central Darfur since 2005. “There are different types of unexploded devices in Darfur, some of which, unfortunately, look like children’s toys. These unexploded remnants of conflict not only pose a direct risk to civilians, but are also an indirect obstruction in the delivery of humanitarian aid, they prevent the return of refugees and internally displaced people, and prevent farmers from cultivating their land” Ms. Yousra said. She added that UNAMID’s ODO personnel in Central Darfur have assessed more than 300 square kilometers of land, more than 2,000 kilometers of roadways, declaring them ordnance-free, destroyed 4500 UXOs and trained more than 100,000 people in how to recognize and mark UXOs.

In his remarks, National Ordnance Disposal Office (NODO) representative in Sector Central, Mr. Shamsedin Eltyeb, commended UNAMID for organizing the

commemorative event and also extended his gratitude to the Mission’s ODO for its continued efforts in raising UXO injury or death risk awareness amongst vulnerable communities. He added that risk awareness creation is essential for any process of development, prosperity and stability to take effect.

Addressing guests at the same event, the SAF representative, Colonel Hamza Mohammed Ali, emphasised the importance of awareness creation and undertook to work jointly with UNAMID to conduct risk awareness activities in many parts of central Darfur.

UNAMID’s ODO personnel continue to work closely with other UNAMID components, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), international and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and Government institutions to help raise awareness in the reduction of risk of injury from unexploded ordnance in the Mission’s Area of Responsibility.

UNAMID organized similar events to mark the Day in El Daein, East Darfur; El Geneina, West Darfur; Nyala, South Darfur; and Zalingei, Central Darfur.



A Library of Peace in Darfur

BY ZURAB ELZAROV

IN MARCH 2016, a library rehabilitation project in El Fasher, North Darfur, implemented through UNAMID's Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme was shortlisted by the London Book Fair International Excellence Awards 2016 for the Education Initiatives Award.

The El Fasher Cultural Center is located in the outskirts of the bustling central market, and includes a theatre, music room and a public library. The Cultural Centre has eight departments: art and painting, folklore, music and bands, drama, children and youth, poet-

ry and writing, the library, and a general activities department, which includes handicrafts and languages. The Centre offers language, music and other types of classes for a small fee in order to raise funds, and occasionally organizes handicraft sales. It is also affiliated with El Fasher's own movie cinema, which is in need of rehabilitation.

The Cultural Centre houses a small public library collection. There is a small English-language book section, donated by the British Council, and a children's section. The library includes several

large rooms which are available for various types of social events.

The library is a popular recreation, education, knowledge development and interaction spot, and in the interest of reviving the cultural and intellectual legacy of the people of Darfur, UNAMID rehabilitated the building and funded the project which provided computers, audio equipment, furniture, and more than 20,000 new books with the overall objective of stimulating the cultural activities as a way to address the root causes of instability and violence in



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1 Left to right, Xima Awada Yakub (4 years) and her sister Zamai, are pictured reading books at the newly restored library at the Cultural Center in El Fasher (North Darfur). UNAMID sponsored the rehabilitation of the library with more than 140,000 Sudanese pounds. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID

2 The newly restored library at the Cultural Center in El Fasher (North Darfur). UNAMID sponsored the rehabilitation of the library. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID

3

improve the standard of the library and will serve as a learning and training center for our boys and girls, kids and even the elderly in the community.”

The success of the project has proved that public libraries in Darfur have great potential for bringing peace and stability in the war-torn society through improved access to education, cultural heritage and knowledge development. However, lack of sufficient technical and financial support, and poor access to information services and facilities limit the capacity of public libraries in Darfur to reach and provide effective services to the local community members.

The implementation of the project was a model of successful cooperation between the peacekeeping mission (UNAMID), the Government of Sudan (State Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth), UNICEF, civil society organization and the personnel of the public library. The enthusiasm, motivation and aspiration to restore the effective functioning of the library and the subsequent delivery of its services to the people was remarkable and represented a critical success factor for this important initiative.

The project has clearly demonstrated the need to explore continuously the innovative and inventive interventions to help communities recovering from the consequences of violent conflicts foster peace and resolve conflicts of different natures. It is important to encourage national and international actors in post-conflict settings to promote a culture of peace and non-violence at the grass-roots level in conflict affected areas through, inter alia, revitalization of public libraries which are often seen as the key factors for a positive change. ■

Darfur, enhancing peace, and promoting education and expanded opportunities for all citizens of Darfur.

The rehabilitation of the library and the provision of necessary equipment and furniture was funded through two of the Mission's Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and was implemented through a local non-governmental organization. UNICEF has also made a contribution through the provision of a children's playground, generator and maintenance of the Cultural Centre. The project created a new learning environment and improved the standards of the library. It now functions as a learning and training center, primarily for the youth and even the elderly. The library is currently serv-

ing up to 50 users on a daily basis and by promoting the culture of peace and non-violence, it has gradually become a library of peace in Darfur.

The project closure and handover ceremony turned into a large festive event for the people in North Darfur state. The ceremony, attended by the local authorities, UNESCO representatives, UNAMID officials, women and youth associations and local community members; it included traditional music performances, a drama representation by the “Ashorooq As Salam” theatre group and photo and art exhibitions. Mr. Ibrahim Abbaker, General Secretary of the El Fasher Cultural Centre, which houses the library, noted that “the project will



Martin Uhomoibhi's first 150 days as UNAMID JSR—Achievements and Challenges

UNAMID's Joint Special Representative speaks to Voices of Darfur about his objectives as the Head of the Mission, his strategic vision to achieve UNAMID's mandate and the challenges he has experienced in Darfur.

BY MUSI KHUMALO

MR. MARTIN UHOMOIBHI assumed his duties as UNAMID Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator for UNAMID in early January, 2016, following his appointment by the UN Secretary General and Chairperson of the AU Commission. In this interview, JSR Uhomoibhi speaks of the achievements and challenges of the first few months of his tenure and reflects on the prospects for peace in Darfur.

VOD: How would you describe your

first 150 days or so at the helm of UNAMID? What noticeable progress has the Mission made since you took office?

JSR: I assumed my duties as JSR on 6 January 2016. My first 150 days have been eventful, to say the least. The situation on the ground is challenging but, I believe, the Mission is up to the task. These first few months have been devoted to working with my team to define our objectives as a Mission and find a strategic way to achieve these objectives. One of the first things I

tried to do as JSR was to try to build confidence and trust between UNAMID and our host authorities. I thought this was a major challenge when I initially arrived in Darfur. I am happy to assure you now that we have a good conversation ongoing between the Mission leadership and the Government of Sudan, at the highest level. We have also put in place appropriate mechanisms to facilitate this objective. If we do not have a conversation, we cannot have meaningful mediation and meaningfully



On 29 May 2016, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Martin Uhomoibhi, presided over the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers ceremony held in the Mission's liaison office in Khartoum, Sudan. In the picture, Mr. Uhomoibhi pays tribute to UNAMID peacekeepers who lost their lives in the line of duty. Photo by Ahmed Abdelrazik, UNAMID.

“One of the first things I tried to do as JSR was to work towards building confidence and trust between UNAMID and our host authorities. I thought this was a major challenge when I initially arrived in Darfur.”

discharge our responsibilities in all the pillars defined for the Mission – political mediation and providing support to distribution of humanitarian goods and services. We now have that. The next step, having built that trust and having established good communication, is to begin to ask for all those things we need to work better.

VOD: How has the Government of Sudan responded to your arrival?

JSR: I remain extremely grateful to our host authorities for the warmth, generosity and friendship I have enjoyed since my arrival. I have been here for just over four months and have had no less than four

meetings with the Sudanese Foreign Minister. I think this is a new development. I have been received by His Excellency, the President of Sudan, which is, in my opinion, an extremely magnanimous gesture on his part. I have also been received a couple of times by the Director General of the National Intelligence Security Services (NISS). Additionally, I have held other strategic meetings with numerous government functionaries; I feel this approach has placed us in good standing to advocate on access to areas of conflict which have been previously denied to the Mission and paved the way for us to work with greater pro-

ductivity. I consider my first few months to be more than fulfilling as far as my relationship with the Government of Sudan is concerned.

VOD: Could you tell us a bit about your initial impressions of Darfur and its people?

JSR: One of my biggest priorities has been meet with the people of Darfur. The Mission is here to serve Darfuris and, keeping this in mind, I have toured four sectors in the region, and visited camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) to see for myself what it means to be an IDP. Of course, the major pillar of our responsibilities here is the protection of civilians. One needs to go to these camps to see face-to-face what it feels like to be displaced, to suffer the pangs, the agonies, the tortures, the pains of living in camps without any certainty as to what tomorrow will offer. What security do they have, except that offered by UNAMID personnel?

It has been up and down, mixed reactions, mixed feelings that I have on these situations, but UNAMID is a mission worth doing and I am grateful to all those who have supported me in my first 150 days. For the rest of my tenure here, I will continue to count on this invaluable support, the cooperation of our hosts, the understanding and the empathy of all those who ensure that UNAMID survives and does what it can as a responsibility for the people of Darfur.

VOD: What challenges has the Mission, and you personally, faced in implementing the Mission's mandate? How have you addressed those challenges?

JSR: Well, as a Mission, we have serious challenges. By definition, the concept of a hybrid mission pre-supposes that you have a hybrid situation. The mandate is complex. The conflict is complex. The solutions are complex. The environment is challenging, complex in itself. So, it is a mixed bag of difficulties and intricate, multi-layered issues. However, UNAMID is affirmative in its approach to the situa-

On 27 April 2016, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Martin Uhomoibhi, briefed the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), in Addis Ababa, on the situation in Darfur and the Mission's activities. The meeting was chaired by the Ambassador of Algeria to Ethiopia and the AU, Abou Bark Hefny Mahmoud. Photo by Orlando Bama, AUPSC.

tion. If Darfur was free of trials and tribulations, the Mission would not be here in the first place. As long as challenges exist, what defines you, what makes you feel you have achieved something of worth at the end of it is how well you overcome those challenges. I want to assure everyone that difficulties will not daunt us and with the kind of cooperation we are getting from all, including our principals and all stakeholders, we hope to attain sustainable peace for Darfur at the end of the day.

VOD: How are you handling the persistent issue of access restrictions faced by the Mission?

JSR: This question really summarises the challenges I spoke of: access denials to areas where UNAMID is desperately needed and the containers that are held up in Port Sudan for months without clearance. These are serious issues. We cannot under-estimate this at all because under the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFa), the Mission is supposed to have unfettered access across Darfur. However, on the ground, we have significant access challenges, particularly in the Jebel Marra area where there are ongoing military operations between government forces and armed movements. Such access issues mean that we have not been able to carry out our essential function of support to the distribution of humanitarian aid by humanitarian actors, particularly in areas that are felt to be strictly under military activity.

Having said that, I would like to reiterate that we are working with all the parties to develop a comprehensive access strategy to enable us implement our mandate.

VOD: You mentioned that containers with essential supplies for the Mission are held up in Port Sudan. Could you shed some light on this issue?

JSR: Currently, another critical issue for us is the prolonged delays in the release of UNAMID food ration containers in Port Sudan. We are almost back to the crisis level we were at last year when peacekeepers had



no food rations. I will share with you a personal experience—a couple of weeks ago, during my visit to the sectors, one of the tyres of the vehicle I was riding in, which was supposed to be the safest around, exploded as we headed for the Ardamata IDP camp in West Darfur. Thankfully, no one was injured. Some of the cars that we are driving are over used. The tyres we use have overstayed at the port and when you use them, they are like ‘time bombs.’ I want to plead with our host authorities to see how they can facilitate the speedy release of the UNAMID supplies held at the port.

VOD: Could you tell us about the visa denials faced by the Mission and its effect on operations?

JSR: Regarding visa issuance, I must say we have good news. We have made some considerable progress; when I came on board in January, we had a list of 97 rejected visa cases. I reviewed this list and prioritized 29 of them since some of the selected staff had gone on to find other jobs on account of the delay. As of today, we have since had 20 of the 29 visa applications granted. We will not

rest on our laurels until we get remaining requested visas issued. In the course of this year, because of our pressure and the good rapport that exists between the Mission and the host government, we are now getting subsequent visa applications issued even for staff in sensitive areas such as Human Rights where visas were not issued before I came on board.

This is not to say we have gotten to where we want to be. We want to ensure that all those who legitimately apply for visas here, get them without any impediment. The bigger picture here is more important than the visa issue; as visas should not pose a challenge to anybody, anywhere who wants to work for UNAMID. The Mission is a neutral, impartial body set up by the United Nations and African Union, of which the Sudan is a member. So it cannot be detrimental to the interest of Sudan to have people who come to work for UNAMID. This is the message we are trying to carry through.

VOD: Jebel Marra is indeed a hotspot for the Mission in terms of conflict. Thousands of people have been displaced since



“As a Mission, we have serious challenges. By definition, the concept of a hybrid mission presupposes that you have a hybrid situation. The mandate is complex. The conflict is complex. The solutions are complex. The environment is challenging, complex in itself.”

the beginning of this year alone. How is UNAMID protecting and assisting these displaced persons? What challenges are you facing in this regard?

JSR: The crisis in Jebel Marra erupted in early January, as you mentioned, and continues at lower level until now. The consequence of the Jebel Marra conflict is that it led to the displacement of tens of thousands of innocent Darfuris. This has really escalated the number of IDPs in our region. Beyond that, we have had problems in Sortony and Tawilla, North Darfur. These are the most critical areas for those who want to deliver humanitarian services and for our peacekeepers who want to offer protection to displaced civilians. We

are hoping that access issues will become a thing of the past and the Mission's mandate can be implemented by removing obstructions in the path of UNAMID personnel to enable them discharge their responsibilities fully.

In terms of the Mission's response to the Jebel Marra conflict, I am proud of the collaborative way in which UNAMID and the UN Country Team have worked during this crisis to provide essential assistance such as water, medical care and other needs, for the displaced. UNAMID peacekeepers have been providing protection to the people at the IDP gathering sites. We also have mechanisms in place in these gathering sites that provide early warning

so that in times of crisis, UNAMID patrols are able to respond and protect civilians. This should be underscored in any conversation on this matter. This is complemented of course by around-the-clock patrols conducted by UNAMID in these gathering sites to ensure adequate protection of the newly displaced.

VOD: Mediation and reconciliation, aimed at preventing and mitigating inter-communal conflicts across Darfur, is a core mandate for UNAMID, and for you keeping in mind your role as Joint Chief Mediator. What progress has the Mission made towards fulfilling this aspect of its mandate?

JSR: Mediation is key to our mandate as you rightly mentioned. Since I came on board, I have been working very hard on this at my level as the JSR and at the local level through our Civil Affairs Section. At my level, I held a meeting in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, with leaders of two non-signatory armed movements, Minni Minawi and Gibril Ibrahim in January, just before the annual African Union Summit. After that, I had another meeting in Addis Ababa recently in April to carry forward some of



the things we had agreed upon in Debre Zeit and I look forward to a third meeting in Doha, Qatar very shortly.

All of these meetings are aimed at two things: to ensure that those who are not signatory to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) buy into the process, and, secondly, to ensure that we come to some kind of an agreement on the cessation of hostilities among the armed movements and the government.

These are not easy tasks but I am happy to inform that as a result of the last meeting we held in Addis Ababa last April, we agreed with Minni Minawi and Gibril Ibrahim to meet in Doha to continue these talks. This is a remarkable achievement because these two armed movements were not keen on the role that Doha is playing in Darfur.

VOD: The Government of Sudan is seemingly vocal about the need for UNAMID to exit from Darfur, since according to the media reports, they believe that peace has returned to the region. What is the Mission's position in this matter and what processes are in place to tackle this issue?

JSR: There has been progress on the road to peace, compared to where we were a couple years earlier. The Darfur Administrative Referendum was held recently. As I said, we are having good conversations in bringing the other two non-signatory armed movements to join the Doha process. We can say that, statistically, there is a reduction in the number of fatalities from inter-tribal, inter-communal conflicts, a 61% decrease over the same period last year.

Additionally, there is a clear understand-

ing from all parties that UNAMID's exit should be smooth, orderly and on the basis of clear AU-UN-endorsed benchmarks.

Nevertheless, let me also say here that the discussion on exit strategy does not mean UNAMID is being asked to leave tomorrow. The relevant section of the UN Security Council Resolution that we are implementing provides that a Mission that has an entry into a field must also have an exit. So, it is not a discussion on how we exit by, say, tomorrow itself, but a discussion on how we fulfil identified benchmarks that are endorsed by the UN Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council. The timelines for which those benchmarks are executed is what will determine how UNAMID exits.



1 On 30 May 2016, UNAMID Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator, Martin Uhomoibhi, started consultations in Doha with the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, and the leaders of two non-signatory movements: Gibril Ibrahim of the Justice and Equality Movement and Minni Minawi of the Sudan Liberation Army. The two-day meeting is aimed at exploring the possibility of the two movements joining the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. UNAMID photo.

2 On 9 May 2016, the 11th meeting of the Implementation Follow-up Commission of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur was held in Khartoum, Sudan. It was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the State of Qatar, H.E. Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud and hosted by Mr. Martin Uhomoibhi, UNAMID Joint Special Representative. Also seen in the picture are Ibrahim Kamara, the AU representative (extreme left) and Salah Halima, the Arab League representative (extreme right). Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

3 On 10 March 2016, UNAMID's Joint Special Representative, Martin Uhomoibhi, attended the closing ceremony of a week-long peace activity, organized by the Mission's Communications and Public Information Section, in Korma camp for the displaced, North Darfur. The event, held under the theme, "Partnership for peace: Dignity for all," included sports tournaments, a musical concert as well as traditional dances. It was attended by community leaders, youth and women's representatives, residents of the camp and UNAMID staff. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

UNAMID is doing incredible work; there is no doubt about this. I think even the Government acknowledges this. However, there must come a time when a mission that comes to a place must discuss how it leaves. That is the spirit.

At the moment, this conversation is on-going. There is a Joint Working Group that has resumed work on this process. It is travelling across Darfur looking into all the issues and the benchmarks to see how that exit strategy can be achieved. But no one is in any doubt that these benchmarks are critical in assessing that point of departure, when that departure becomes a reality. It is a process and we are working very hard on this process to ensure that when UNAMID eventually gets there, that is, after

the Mission achieves the objectives that brought it here in the first place, the interest of all stakeholders are met, including the safety and security of the more than two million people reported to be living in the IDP camps.

VOD: Where do you see Darfur in the next five years?

JSR: What I can gauge from the people of this great country, especially this great region of Darfur, is that they are like all human beings everywhere in the world. They need peace and they deserve peace. It is very sobering when you go to the camps and you look into the faces of those living there. I implore all of us to draw on our empathy, our capacity to put ourselves in the shoes of those women, men and children who have no homes

but have to live under makeshift tents and sheds that they call home.

We must not talk to them about peace. We must encourage them and provide the means to enable them to enjoy their fundamental right to peace and to freedom. This is our collective responsibility. We need to make life worth living for them. The fact is this that most people, and I'm using people in a very generic sense, always think of them as "Them" and not all of us together. We are in one world: peace in Darfur is peace in Sudan and peace in Sudan is peace in Africa and peace in Africa is peace in the world.

VOD: Do you have a final message for the people of Darfur?

JSR: Do not lose hope. Do not give up. Peace is achievable.

UNAMID Provides Protection to Newly Displaced Persons in Sortony, North Darfur

BY MOHAMAD ALMAHADY

THOUSANDS of new internally displaced persons (IDPs) who fled their villages due to the ongoing clashes between the government forces and an armed movement beginning in mid-January 2016 in Jebel Marra area sought protection and refuge in a gathering site, adjacent to the African Union – United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) Team Site in Sortony, North Darfur.

Jebel Marra, is located in Central Darfur and covers an area of approximately 12,800 square kilometers. Jebel Marra is the second highest mountain in Sudan, with an altitude of more than 3,000 meters above the sea level. This area has been inaccessible to UNAMID and UN humanitarian agencies in the region due to continued fighting, despite repeated efforts by the Mission and the UN agencies to reach the people in desperate need of protection and humanitarian assistance.

Thousands of people, mainly women and children, are now living at the gathering site adjacent to the Mission's Team Site, following the mass displacement that occurred in the area. While UNAMID's peacekeepers, as per the Mission's core mandate, are providing protection and safety to these IDPs through patrolling, including in relation to livelihood activities such as fetching water, the UN



“UNAMID has restored security among the IDPs through its 24/7 presence in around the camp, thus, criminality has been greatly reduced. This round-the-clock presence of UNAMID peacekeepers has driven out lawbreakers found in our midst and saved lives”
— Omda (Community Leader) Zakaria

agencies are providing the displaced people with basic essential needs like water, food, health, sanitation, education and shelter

As part of the Mission's core mandate to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel,

UNAMID plays an important role in facilitating the access of the United Nations' agencies such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Program (WFP) as well as international and national non-governmental organizations through the provision of escorts for the delivery



Tens of thousands of newly displaced persons, who fled their villages due to clashes between the government forces and armed movements, which began in mid-January 2016 in the Jebel Marra area, North Darfur, have sought refuge in a gathering site adjacent to UNAMID's Team Site in Sortony. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

of humanitarian assistance and for humanitarian personnel to conduct visits to the site.

As the security situation remains unpredictable in the area, new arrivals continue to arrive. The acute shortage of drinking water remains a major challenge for all IDPs despite collective efforts made by UNICEF and other partners, with the support of UNAMID, to provide thousands of liters of water per day.

UNAMID Sortony Team Site Commander, Engelbert Kiondo, who is also the Senior Assistant Commissioner of Tanzanian Police, empha-

sizes the Mission's commitment to its mandated tasks towards providing protection, safety and security to the civilians who took refuge around UNAMID's Team Site. "To meet the ever increasing demand for protection in the area, UNAMID plans to deploy additional peacekeeping personnel to Sortony to ensure safety and stability of the newly displaced population. The plan involves expansion of our patrol space in the area to include firewood and grass collection zones so as to enable internally displaced persons to do their normal daily activities, without fear of being attacked,"

Mr. Kiondo stated. "We are ready to cooperate with the local community leaders and state authorities to ensure that civilians are well protected and that we facilitate humanitarian assistance as per the Mission's mandate" the Team Site Commander urged the local community.

UNAMID peacekeepers deployed in the area, monitor the situation on a daily basis to assist the various ethnic groups at the IDP gathering site to co-exist in a harmonious, peaceful manner. The Mission engages in dialogue with individuals in the IDP Community, including leaders and



women representatives, who are supposed to alert the Team Site of any impending or potential conflict situation to ensure that corrective action is taken before it erupts into serious ethnic rivalry at the site.

Community leaders in Sortony, especially those living in the IDP gathering site, welcome the support of UNAMID, UN agencies and international and national organizations. “UNAMID plays a very significant role in providing protection and se-

curity to our displaced people. If UNAMID was not here, none of us would have survived this tough life as we ran away from all the fighting but now have to deal with the criminality that has erupted in this place due to infiltration by criminals who have blended with the ordinary IDPs in this site. However, we have brought this to the attention of UNAMID and other agencies and they are keeping a keen eye on all the activities in the area and despite some of these criminal at-

tacks on innocent civilians, UNAMID has restored security among the IDPs through its 24/7 presence in around the camp, thus, criminality has been greatly reduced. This round-the-clock presence of UNAMID peacekeepers has driven out lawbreakers found in our midst and saved lives” state Omda (Community Leader) Zakaria.

“We travelled all night with absolutely nothing on us except the clothes on our back and the few food items I brought for the children. When we



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Tens of thousands of newly displaced persons, who fled their villages due to clashes between the government forces and armed movements, which began in mid-January 2016 in the Jebel Marra area, North Darfur, have sought refuge in a safe zone adjacent to UNAMID's Team Site in Sortony. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

A newly displaced Darfuri family is pictured building their makeshift shelter at the Gathering Site, near UNAMID's Team Site in Sortony, North Darfur. Tens of thousands of people have gathered around the Mission's base in Sortony after fleeing their villages due to the fighting between the government forces and armed movements in the Jebel Marra area. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

arrived, my family and I did not know what to expect but we are glad we are getting some support from the Mission and the UN agencies are helping too with social needs," said Ms. Fatima Ahmed, a 45-year old, mother of 8 children living at the gathering site.

"Despite the challenging environment and conditions in Sortony, UNAMID is doing its utmost to ensure that the IDPs at the gathering site are well protected, and renders the necessary logistics and armed escort support

to aid organizations who provide IDPs with food and non-food items and access to basic services," Mr. Zurab Elzarov, Acting Chief of UNAMID Protection of Civilians/Humanitarian Liaison Section explains.

Provision of assistance to the IDPs in the gathering site is a temporary measure. A concerted political solution and support from state and federal institutions is necessary to provide a conducive environment for the IDPs to return safely and in a dignified, voluntary basis to their areas of origin. ■

Direct Dialogue, the only way to resolve inter- communal conflicts in East Darfur

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

IN DARFUR, inter-tribal and inter-communal conflicts continue to be a serious threat to peaceful co-existence in the region. Throughout history, inter-communal conflicts in Darfur, have been caused by many factors including ownership of land rights “hakura” and competition over natural resources. These conflicts are quite common between pastoralist and farming communities. Historically, inter-communal conflicts were resolved through traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as the “judiya system” through interlocutors like the “ajaweed”. In recent times, there seem to be marked departure from the classic two dimensional disputes which were devoid of external influences. Since 2013, inter-communal conflicts became more complex and were characterized by increased violence, expansive in geographical spread resulting in high fatalities, affecting livelihoods and negatively impacting social cohesion of the region.

Socio-economic marginalization, high levels of illiteracy, poverty and displacement among others, leave few life options particularly among the youths making them susceptible to criminality and recruitment into different militia groups. As a result, communal conflicts including the actions of armed militias now constitute the most serious threat to the civilian populations and continue to be a major feature of events in Darfur.

UNAMID’s Civil Affairs Section (CAS) plays a vital role in supporting the mediation of community conflict, including through measures to address its root causes, which is one of the Mission strategic priorities endorsed



by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). CAS constantly engages with key partners and stakeholders in this regard. “A core aspect of the UN Security Council mandate for UNAMID is to support the mediation and reconciliation of communal conflicts. To achieve this, CA supports the local authorities, Native Administrations and other local partners in addressing inter-communal conflicts in Darfur” says Mr. Guang Cong, Chief of Civil Affairs Section. “Our priority areas include institution of early warning and prevention mechanisms, support to the key reconciliation processes, promotion of peaceful co-existence among farm-

ers and herders and support to local capacity building as well as efforts to address the root causes of the conflicts in close collaboration with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT)” Mr. Cong added. The Section also use the Quick Impacts Projects (QIPs) to support communities and build confidence in the Mission.

13 water projects have been implemented and 100 rihoods have been rehabilitated with funds from the Government of Japan. The Mission also conducted 127 dialogue meetings to support the measures taken to mitigate conflicts between farmers and nomadic herders and organized 28 peace campaigns for



On 01 June 2016, UNAMID's Deputy Joint Special Representative - Political, Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo, during his familiarization tour visit Abu Karinka, East Darfur, was received by the Nazir of the Maaliya, (Mr. Mohammed Ahmed Mohammed Assafi, and other Maaliya Umdas and Sheikhs. Issues pertaining to security, tribal conflicts and the ardent need to deploy UNAMID in Adilla and Abu Karinka localities were discussed during a meeting attended by all segments of Abu Karinka. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.

according to Dr. Nagla Mohamed Bashaer, the Director of Peace Studies and Research Centre at Nyala University, “the blocking of migratory route of nomads’ seasonal movement from South to the North and absence of developmental projects” are also reasons that led to the conflict. In addition, the discovery of oil fields and the high market value of the land in the area has attracted a number of speculative interests in the area says Mr. Mohammed Banani Hamad ,the Acting Nazir of the Southern Rezeigat.

Repeated clashes have negatively impacted the socio-economic aspects of the lives of the communities in East Darfur state because whenever the conflict flares up in the area, the markets are closed for many days, making life extremely difficult for the inhabitants. “We suffer a lot when there are clashes between these two tribes as our families depend on the income we get from selling goods in the market. We call on both sides to lay down their arms and resolve their disputes through direct talks,” says Ms. Amani Ali a widow selling Sudanese peanuts at El Daein market.

According to results of a recently conducted partial survey, there is an increase in the number of registered widows and orphans in El Daien, currently standing at 197 widows and 6436 orphans, mainly due to this inter-tribal, inter-communal conflict explains Ms. Tayseer Zakaria the Director of Women and Family Directorate at the Ministry of Social Affairs, East Darfur. “These people are in need of help, particularly the psychological support for the children. We call upon the international organization to support the implementation of a comprehensive survey to identify the total number of widows and orphans in East Darfur and provide

over 9000 participants across Darfur. As a result of these campaigns more than 6000 seasonal farmers from the internally displaced persons returned to the villages at Korma Locality in North Darfur.

One of the longest running inter-communal conflicts involves the Southern Rezeigat and the Ma’alia tribes in East Darfur. The Southern Rezeigat, also known as the Baggara or camel herders consider El Daein as part of their “hakura” and the Ma’alia who are nomadic herders as well as agriculturalists, claim ancestry and rights to land and natural resources in the state. This conflict between the two groups dates back to the late-1960s when disagree-

ments arose over tribal territories and competition over water and agricultural land, but now the conflict has evolved with the discovery of subterranean oil resource primarily in Adilla locality. Cattle rustling and demands for political power are also a source of conflict between the two groups.

Although the disagreements between the two groups is mainly on ownership of land, , political interventions have also fueled the conflict as some members of both groups are aligned to either the government or armed movements, explains Dr. Ibrahim Mohammed, the Director of Peace studies Centre at El Daein University. Whilst



On 01 March 2016, UNAMID's Civil Affairs Section organized a capacity-building workshop in conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence for 15 Rezigat Umdas and Sheikhs in El Daein, East Darfur. The participants discussed the role of peace and reconciliation mechanisms and the Native Administration in reconciliation and resolving conflicts. Photo by Hassan Ibrahim Ishag, UNAMID.

them with income generating projects, added Ms. Zakaria.

The Director of High Schools in East Darfur, Mr. Jalal Adma Hussein, opined that the conflict has also hindered the development and rehabilitation of school projects, such as the planned rehabilitation of schools across east Darfur state. "The inter-tribal conflict has also resulted in the closure of Um Rakooba Secondary school resulting in 100 students being sent to another school (Abukarnika) which is a long distance away from their locality, to facilitate the completion of their School year" added Mr. Hussein.

A significant number of children are out of the schools, as the conflict has directly impacted their course of study with as many as 3000 girls and 4000 boys out of the schools in the Adilla and Abukarinka Localities stated Mr. Sitana Adam Musa, the Director of Girls Education in the Ministry of Education, East Darfur State. "We are working tirelessly with different stakeholders to increase the student's enrollment and absorb these students in the Bahar Alarab and Abujabra Localities in the state" Mr. Musa said.

This inter-communal conflict in East Darfur has also touched families in a different way, through availability of weapons and sometimes some am-

munition is abandoned in pastoral areas, where people, especially children, unwittingly pick the items to play with and these explode, causing great harm to the physical and mental condition of the children, beside disability and death. These remnants of war needs great efforts and high cost for raising awareness programs and for the clearance activities. Hence, the strong urge from all concerned that the two tribes should reconcile and chart a better future for its younger generation.

In an effort to resolve the conflict between the two groups, a cessation of hostilities agreement was signed by their representatives on 22 August 2013 in Al Taweisha, North Darfur, which stipulated the hosting of a peace and reconciliation conference to address the root causes of the conflict. After several postponements, a reconciliation conference was convened on 10 June 2014 in Al Fula, West Kordofan State but it failed to reach any agreement. A number of integrated United Nations humanitarian assessment and confidence building missions were carried out to hot spots in the immediate aftermath of clashes.

UNAMID Civil Affairs both in Sector East and in Khartoum work closely with different stakeholders and directly with the disputing parties to discuss

mediation efforts. UNAMID facilitated two preparatory workshops in November 2014 for the Ma'alia in Abu-Karinka and the Southern Rezeigat in El Daein and subsequently a peace forum for both communities representatives in Khartoum in December to sit together for the first time since the June 2014 Al Fula conference. The participants reaffirmed commitment to the cessation of hostilities agreement reached in Al Tawaisha (North Darfur) in August 2013, and agreed to participate in the February 2015 government-organized reconciliation conference in Marawie, North Darfur. To build on the momentum generated by the UNAMID interventions, the national government which is constitutionally responsible to lead the process, hosted a peace and reconciliation conference for the two groups in Marawie, North Darfur from 17 – 28 February, 2015. The Southern Reizeigat, the mediators, and the Government of Sudan, as guarantors, agreed to sign the outcome document but the Ma'alia refused to sign because according to them it did not comprehensively address the hakura issue which is at the core of the recurrent conflict. This refusal to sign the document by the Ma'alia reinforced the strong animosity between the two tribes leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high level government delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abu Karinka as part of the government's efforts to mitigate conflict between the Ma'alia and the Rezeigat. These interventions created the enabling environment and provided a solid platform for the process to continue. UNAMID also facilitated the travels of the southern Reizeigat Nazir and eight of his Omdas from El Daein to Khartoum. In addition, the Mission constructed the Native Administration office in El Daein and a peace centre in Abukarinka. In an effort to support the mediation efforts, the Mission also hosted lunch for the members of legislative council from both tribes in El Daein, East Darfur. In addition, the Mission constructed the Native Administration office in El Daein and a peace centre in Abukarinka. In an effort to support the mediation efforts, the Mis-

sion also hosted lunch for the members of legislative council from both tribes in El Daein, East Darfur.

On the ground, the leaders of both tribes are constantly appealing for direct dialogue and local solutions, with state and federal support, where feasible. “Direct dialogue between the two tribes is the only solution to the conflict and we are ready for the reconciliation with Reizeigat tribe,” says the Nazir of Ma’alia Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed Alsafi. “Our role is integrated with the executive authority and we work together to resolve the conflict between the Ma’alia and Reizeigat and to achieve social peace and stability in the area explains Mr. Ali Mohamed Ahmed the Deputy Speaker of Legislative Council, East Darfur State. “The implementation of real development projects in education, Health, Roads, Water dams and hafeers and investment in the human resources and the construction of highways linking East Darfur to Nyala and Alnihood in Kordofan will help to achieve social peace and peaceful coexistence among local communities in east Darfur State, and it eases the exchange of cultures with neighboring communities,” Mr. Ahmed added.

The need to gainfully engage the youth through education and vocational training is seen as a viable way of discouraging the youth from either triggering or participating in these conflict situations. “The implementation of joint peace building projects for income generating activities for youth in the border areas between both tribes will achieve social cohesion among local communities” says Dr. Nagla Mohamed Basheer, the Director of Peace Studies and Research Centre at Nyala University.

She further stated that there is a need to accommodate the young people from the two tribes in development projects of mutual interest, such as the oil fields, which will help in reducing the unemployment and bring stability to the area, and that the government should take measures and implement developmental projects to end the conflict between both sides that includes roads connecting Eldaein to Nyala and Alnihood in North Kordofan. “We should also design special training programs for the “ageeds group” (War leaders) on the importance of dialogue in resolv-

ing conflicts. This will transform their behavior and thinking and help them channel their energies towards positive outcomes,” Dr. Nagla stated.

“We need peace and stability and to end conflicts for the benefit of all the people to move freely in the area,” says Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed Alsafi the Nazir of Ma’alia. He emphasized direct dialogue between the Ma’alia and Reizeigat is the only way to resolve the conflicts. While the Nazir of the Southern Reizeigat, Mr. Mohammed Banani underscored the fact that resolving the conflict between the two tribes will achieve security and stability in whole Darfur.

Despite this long standing conflict between the two communities, a historical social relationship exists between the two and has been greatly enforced by the cross marriages from those who have settled in area, on both sides. Mr. Ali Mohamed Ahmed, the Deputy Speaker of the East Darfur Legislative Council says there is more than forty tribes living together in peace and harmony in the state and living in such proximities, cross marriages are common. A couple, comprising the husband from Reizeigat and wife from Ma’alia, explained that they enjoy a good relationship, even with the community, however, any inter-tribal conflict tends to complicate these social relations.

UNAMID Civil Affairs Section in collaboration with GoS authorities

and other stakeholders have continued to support the mediation of other inter-communal conflicts by focusing on early warning, preventive measures, capacity building as well as efforts to address the root causes, a notable example is the support provided by the Section for the mediation between the Salamat and the Fallata in South Darfur, and between the Berti and the Zayadiya, in North Darfur. However, there are many challenges facing the Mission efforts of mitigation of inter-communal conflicts in Darfur, such as the lack of comprehensive peace agreement, politicization of the conflicts, lack of sustainable reconciliation agreements, general mistrust amongst communities and lack of sufficient funds to support the mediation and reconciliation initiatives.

To resolve the conflict between the two tribes, the Government needs to take the lead, own the process and integrate the efforts of federal and state authorities, the Native Administration and Civil Society Organizations, with the UN/international partners playing a supporting role. The success of any strategy to effectively address intercommunal conflicts can only be attained through a cohesive and comprehensive approach, including direct talks between the disputes tribes and an effective Mechanisms to implement the outcome of reconciliation conferences to achieve peace and stability in East Darfur. ■

On 31 May 2016, UNAMID DJSR-Political, Kingsley Mamabolo, and his delegation paid a two- day familiarization visit to Sector East where he met with the Native administration and Umdas from the Rezigart tribe. Issues pertaining to security as well as the role of the native administration in brokering peace between conflicting parties were discussed. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.





Patrols include providing protection for the displaced in camps, as well as for women and children during farming and fetching firewood and water in various villages and localities.

UNAMID

In IDP

UNAMID peacekeepers often ^{IV} go beyond their mandate and provide assistance to the local population as humanitarian ini-

tiatives, such as facilitating capacity –building training and providing medical assistance upon urgent situations. ^{IV}





UNAMID runs an average of 70,000 patrols a year across the region.

Patrols CAMPS

As part of its mandate of protection of civilians, UNAMID conducts daily routine patrols in the five states of Darfur.





Darfuri Writer Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim at his house in Umdurman, Sudan, reviewing a draft of his book "The Verbal Tradition, the Spine of Darfur's History". Mr. Ibrahim, one of the most renowned writers in Sudan, fully reflects Darfur's heritage in his written work. Photo by Mohammad Nouredin.

Tales from Darfur's Heritage: An interview with Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim

Renowned writer, Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim, speaks of his published novels, his views on the literary production in Darfur and the role that literature can play in bringing peace to Darfur.

BY ALA MAYYAH

BORN IN WADA VILLAGE, North Darfur, renowned Sudanese writer Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim displays a deep understanding of Darfuri heritage, especially the region's ancient and modern history, in his novels. His work has been likened by the Sudanese critic and researcher, Mohamed Al Fatih, to international writers such as William Faulkner, James Joyce and Mikhail Bulgakov.

Mr. Ibrahim received his basic education in El Fasher, North Darfur, and continued his studies in Omdurman, near Khartoum. He studied English and History at the Higher Teachers Institute (now the Faculty of Education, University of Khartoum). He graduated in 1970 and went on to obtain

a Master's degree in Folklore from the Institute of African and Asian Studies.

In 2008, Mr. Ibrahim was appointed as the Chairman of the Sudanese Writers Association. Additionally, he was awarded the Arts and Literature Award at the Culture and Arts festival held in Khartoum in 1979 as well as an honorary doctorate from Al Fashir University in 2004.

Currently, he is a panel member of the Tayeb Salih Award for Creative Writing, organized by Zain Telecommunications Company, Sudan, and a member of the National Languages Development Council.

Ibrahim Ishaq has published six novels—"Haddath Fi AlQaria," "Amaal Al ile wa

Balda," "Mahrajan Al Madrsa Al Qadima," "Akhbar Al Bint Mia Kaya," "Wibal fi Kilimindo," and "Fadihat Al Norrian." Furthermore, he has published three groups of short stories, books on history and heritage and more than 60 articles on Sudanese and Arab history and heritage.

Mr. Ibrahim is married with seven children and lives in Omdurman.

In an interview with Voices of Darfur, he speaks about his career and the literary situation across Sudan and Darfur.

Voices of Darfur: Tell us about the beginning of your literary career. What inspired you to write your first story and when did you decide to become a professional writer?

Ibrahim: I used to read Arabic and translated books when I was studying at the intermediate school in El Fasher. I was convinced that our lives in the villages needed to be literarily presented to the readers as they involved interesting human experiences. I wrote my first novel in 1968, when I was in college, which was published in 1969.

VoD: How many novels did you read before writing your first novel?

Ibrahim: I read hundreds of Arabic and translated novels, I guess.

VoD: Who influenced your writing at the early stages of your career?

Ibrahim: I think I was influenced by some famous British, American and Russian novelists, such as Hemingway, Faulkner, Joyce and Sholokhov.

VoD: Your first novel, “Haddath Fi Al Qaria” (Happened in the Village) provoked a lot of criticism and controversy among some Sudanese writers. Can you tell us about that?

Ibrahim: That novel caused a language shock among intellectuals in Khartoum, as I wrote the characters’ dialogue in the rural Darfuri dialect. This wasn’t usual in writing at the time, but it was a matter of honesty for me. Now, three decades after publishing the novel in 1969, people from different rural areas in Sudan started interacting with urban people and eventually their dialects became familiar to others.

VoD: How did literary production in Darfur function at that time?

Ibrahim: There is no literary production without printing houses. That’s what we need up until now but they don’t exist, except in the capital, Khartoum. There are many Darfuri novelists and poets who live in Khartoum and they are considered part of the literary circle of the capital since their works are produced there.

VoD: In your novel “Akhbar Al Bint Mia Kaia” (News of the girl Miyakaya), you stated that “Tandely” is an ancient name for El Fasher town. Where did that name come from? And how did it change to El Fasher?

Ibrahim: The name Tandely was used for both El Fasher and Tandely town, located south-east of North Kordofan. It’s an ancient word that refers to a place where waters meet from different directions. This can be clear for those who visit El Fasher as seasonal rain waters come from the north and west and meet in a pool called “Al



Darfuri Writer Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim presented the Darfuri local dialect in his first novel “Happened in the village” which was a first in the Sudanese literature. Photo by Mohammad Noureldin.

“People should support dialogue removed from racism or prioritization of personal interest over group interest.”

Foula.” As for the name ‘El Fasher,’ it comes from the Bornu language in northwest Chad and refers to the council of the sultan. In 1791, the Sultan of the Fur, Abdurrahman Al Rashid, moved his council to the current town, and so the name ‘El Fasher’ overshadowed the name of Tandely.

VoD: In some chapters of your book “Hajrat Alhilalyeen” (The Migrations of the Hilalies), you reviewed the biographies and journeys of the Arabic Hilali families to Darfur in the 14th century. Can we consider it

a historical reference in terms of accuracy of information or is it an approximation between history and the oral literature in the region?

Ibrahim: The book is a research project based on a collection of verbal narratives from 14 tribes across Darfur, which I verified through comparison with the available historical facts and stories of foreign explorers who visited the area. Scientifically, the book is accurate in treating all evidences; so it can be an accredited historical reference but it doesn’t cover the whole area’s history. The book tries to link the Arab migrations since the 10th century from the south of the Arabian peninsula through the north of the Arab lands, east and south of Egypt across the Greater Arab Maghreb and back to the south of the Saharan desert to the African savannah, which led these tribes to the White Nile in South Kordofan, south

of Bahr El Arab up to Central Africa. Such tracking tries to interpret the inter-marriages and cross-cultural exchanges that took place between the Arab nomads and the indigenous Sudanese over the years.

VoD: What inspires you most to write a new story? How do you decide whether to write it as a short story or a novel?

Ibrahim: What inspires me most is the human experience that can be taken as a lesson by the reader. When the story contains many interrelated events and characters, it is suited for a novel. When the events and characters are few, it could be better as a short story.

VoD: How is Sudanese literature differ from Arabic and African literary works?

Ibrahim: We, in Sudan, are located in the heart of Africa, but our literary heritage is linked to the “one thousand and one nights” or “The Arabian Nights” and Arabic folk tales. We use Arabic words, some of which are very old. As for Sudanese stories and novels in towns, they do not differ greatly from Arab and African literature in the towns of the Arab Peninsula because of the similarities in the modes of life.

VoD: As a panel member for the Al-Tayeb Salih Award for Creative Writing, tell us about the competition and its importance for the young writers?

Ibrahim: The Award was launched by The Sudanese Company for Mobile Phone Service (Zain) in 2010 to mark the first death anniversary of the outstanding Sudanese novelist, Al-Tayeb Salih, whose novels were introduced to the world through translations. The competition consists of three categories: novel, short story and another category that changes annually. Participation is open to all who can creatively write in Arabic in any part of the world, at any age group. Each contender should submit a complete work of not less than 100 pages; it could be either a novel, a number of stories or studies. In 2015, there were 705 contenders from Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, the Arabian Peninsula, Levant and Sudan. Nine awards amounting to USD 72,000 are awarded annually. It is a good incentive that competes with The International Prize for Arabic Fiction, which awards USD 100,000. The Sudanese won one-third of the awards as the prize is in their country; thus, they are more



Darfuri Writer Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim with his two children at his house, in Umdurman, Sudan. Mr. Ibrahim has published six novels, three groups of short stories, books on history and heritage and more than 60 articles on Sudan and Arab history and tradition. Photo by Mohammad Noureldin.

encouraged to participate than the others.

VoD: Are young people willing to buy books these days? Do you think that electronic versions of books will supersede printed ones in Sudan?

Ibrahim: In fact, young people do not have much time to read. You can easily read an electronic version of a book, but reading a print book gives you a nice psychological atmosphere that is difficult to get rid of. I believe the two modes will continue for some time. Online books provide facilities that are not available for printed books; however the latter provides a psychological situation which is not available in the electronic ones.

VoD: One of the most famous classical novels is “War and Peace” by the Russian author Leo Tolstoy, which revolves around the beginning of the Russian-French war in 1805, but the author wrote the first version 60 years later, in 1863. What about conflict and peace in Darfur? Do you think now is the best time to write a story reflecting the importance of peace and reconciliation or, later on, after achieving peace?

Ibrahim: The best time is later on, after achieving peace. There must be a clear picture of a new stable life. The writer can then address the challenges that occurred in the conflict and the issues to be addressed for a better future. Lessons cannot be learnt during ongoing events, but rather later.

VoD: Some believe that Doha Document

and the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultations are the best ways to achieve comprehensive and fair peace in Darfur; what is your opinion?

Ibrahim: In old times, people in Sudan resolved their problems through Judiya, traditions and wisdom that was learnt from the past and the present to find solutions for such problems. The reconciliation experience of South Africa in the early 1990s is a good African model. War occurs between enemies but people who live in harmony resolve problems through rational understanding. I appreciate those who helped the Sudanese and the Darfuris to find peaceful solutions to their problems. I believe wise people should support dialogue removed from racism or prioritization of personal interest over group interest. We hope that the plans for development projects, Sudanese ones and those coming from friendly entities, will result in a peace that is based on empowering development in the lives of the Darfuri people. It is only development that can guarantee social satisfaction as there will be no lack of resources, work or prosperity, and, hence, no need for conflict.

VoD: What is the message you would like to convey to the people of Darfur?

Ibrahim: I would like to tell the people of Darfur to establish peace with everybody and to develop their lives without relying entirely on external funds.



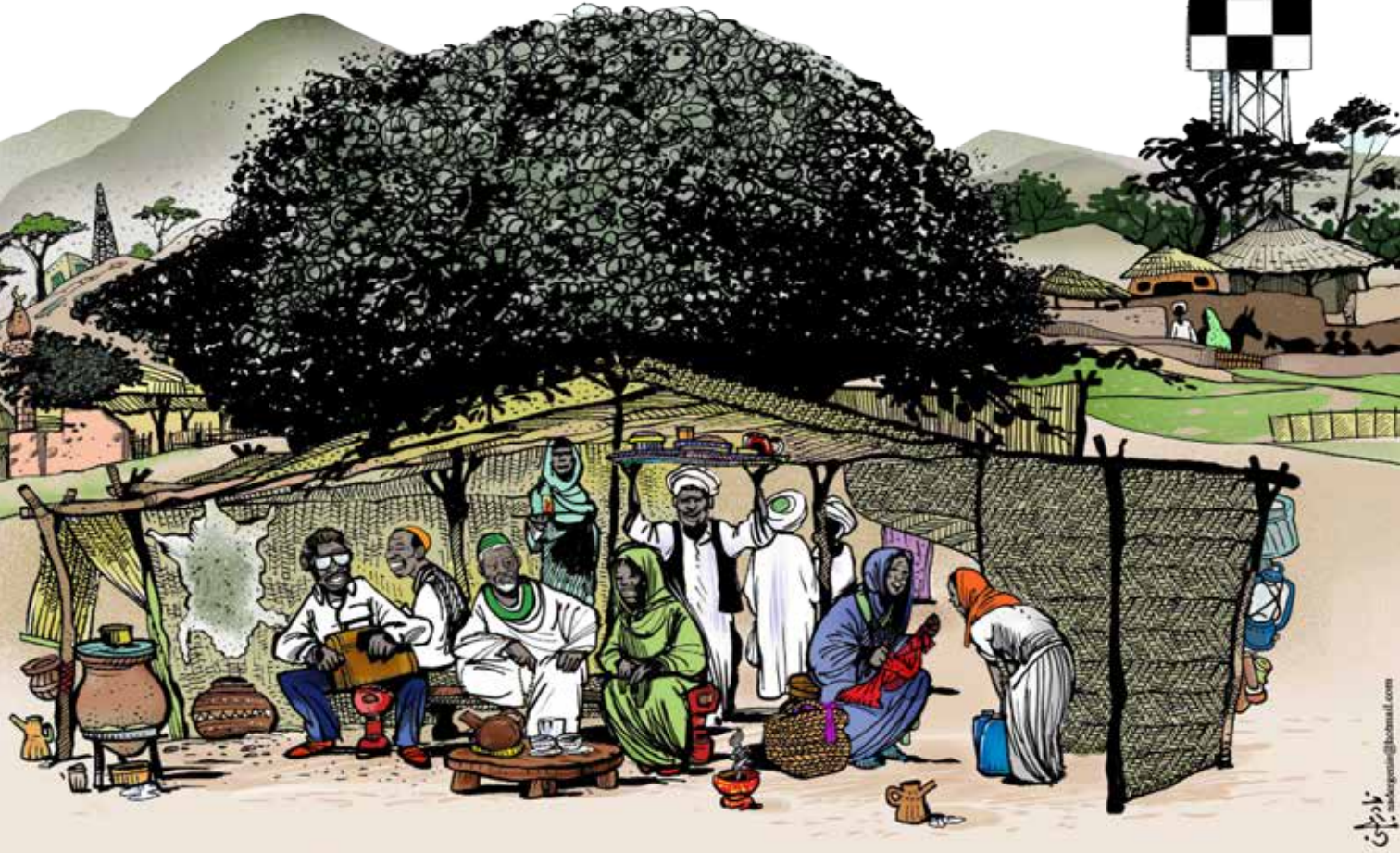
Darfuri Writer Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim at his house in Umdurman, Sudan, reviewing a draft of his book "The Verbal Tradition, the Spine of Darfur's History". Mr. Ibrahim is one of the most renowned writers in Sudan, who fully reflects Darfur's heritage in his written work. Photo by Mohammad Nouredin.

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