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of Darfur

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Singing for peace: An interview with musician Adil Ali Abdalla Daraja



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HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR (UNAMID)

**United Nations State Liaison
Functions (SLFs) :** An interview
with UNAMID DJSR, Anita Gbeho

**Dialogue and reconciliation
efforts, critical to UNAMID's
protection of civilians**

Singing for peace in Darfur:
An interview with musician
Adil Ali Abdalla Daraja

Editor
Musi Khumalo

Staff Writer
Salah Mohammed

Graphics & Design
Mutaz Ahmed

Photographers
Mohamad Almahady
Amin Ismail
Hamid Abdulsalam

Contributors
Mohamad Almahady
Kaltoum Yahia

Translation
Nabil Mohamed
Rindala Eid
Eltahir Nourain Mohammed
Alawad Alawad
Ahmad Ibrahim
Abdalla Abdulraheem
Adam War

EDITORS NOTE

I am pleased to introduce the June 2019 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 an interview with Voices of Darfur, UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative, Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho, highlights the criticality of the recently established UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in the context of the transition process, as UNAMID prepares for its exit from Darfur at the end of June 2020.

The feature article entitled: "Women Protection Networks - An effective early warning mechanism for women in Darfur", focuses on women and children as one of the not-so-silent affected people by the conflict in Darfur, especially women who reside in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and are sometimes exposed to physical assault, harassment, intimidation and extortion, amongst other issues.

In another feature article: "Dialogue and reconciliation efforts critical to UNAMID's protection of civilians", we highlight protection of civilians which represents UNAMID's core mandate,

thereby defining the Mission's Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Liaison Section's critical Mission-wide coordination, advisory and information sharing role on issues related to protection of civilians in Darfur.

This role is accomplished with unwavering support from various UNAMID components, the United Nations Country Team and Humanitarian Country Team (UNCT/HCT).

The Photo Story features a collation of photographs focusing on the handover of UNAMID's former sector Headquarters in El Daein, East Darfur and El Geneina, West Darfur.

Last but not least, Voices of Darfur presents an interview with musician Adil Ali Abdallah Daraja, who talks about his passion for Darfuri music, especially songs he sings in Fur language (his mother tongue) and the intricacies involved in surviving as a musician in a conflict-stricken region like Darfur.

As Voices of Darfur continues to evolve as a news magazine, we welcome your feedback. Send your comments by email, address to "Letters to the Editor / Voices of Darfur" in the subject line and send to unamid-publicinformation@un.org.

Musi Khumalo,
Chief, Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS)

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A boy pulling a water rollers he received at an event organized by CPIS in Terage village, Central Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.



Voices of Darfur presents an interview with musician Adil Ali Abdallah Daraja, who talks about his passion for Darfuri music and the intricacies involved in surviving as a musician in a conflict-stricken region like Darfur. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

MISSION LEADERSHIP



Jeremiah Mamabolo
(South Africa)
Joint Special Representative/
Joint Chief Mediator



Anita Kiki Gbeho
(Ghana)
Deputy Joint Special Representative



Lieutenant General Leonard Ngondi
(Kenya)
Force Commander



Sultan Temuri
(Pakistan)
Acting Police Commissioner

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Publications and Multimedia Unit (PMU)
Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) - UNAMID
Email: unamid-publicinformation@un.org
Website: <https://unamid.unmissions.org>

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UNAMID dispatched a joint integrated assessment team to Kutum town, north Darfur, to identify security challenges facing the local community and to propose appropriate measures to mitigate these concerns. The assessment team met with local authority officials, Native Administration, community leaders and representatives of internally displaced persons. Photo by Mwila Mbwengetta, UNAMID.

UNAMID conducts integrated security assessment mission to Kutum, North Darfur amid security concerns

In responses to reported security tensions in Kutum area, north Darfur, UNAMID on 13 June dispatched an Integrated Assessment Mission (IAM) to the area.

The purpose of the Assessment Mission was to identify security challenges and take appropriate action to mitigate the impact of these challenges on protection needs in the locality and its environs. The Assessment Mission comprised representatives of relevant UNAMID Sections, mainly Protection of Civilians/Humanitarian Liaison, Human Rights, Rule of Law, Governance & Community Stabilization Sections, Military and Police.

During the visit, the IAM met with local authorities, community leaders, native administration representatives, WFP and leaders of in-

ternally displaced persons. The IAM members observed that the main source of the afore-mentioned security tensions was the perennial issue of land disputes, mistrust between nomads and farmers on one hand and farmers and state organs on the other, prevalence of firearms and weak rule of law in the area.

Following submission of the Integrated assessment Team Report to Mission Leadership, UNAMID has undertaken to enhance its engagement with federal and state government officials to carry out a comprehensive and impartial disarmament exercise, to work with the criminal justice institutions to restore trust and confidence in the rule of law institutions and intensify farming, grass and firewood collection patrols in the area.

Kutum has two localities in the same area namely Kutum and Al-wah and both are located on the supply route linking Chad and Libya, lying on a belt inhabited by local farmers, while nomads/herders in search of pasture for their animals are also present in the locality.

In response to reported security tensions in Kutum area, north Darfur, UNAMID on 13 June dispatched an Integrated Assessment Mission (IAM) to the area.

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UNAMID peacekeepers support IDPs at Gathering Site in Central Darfur

In fulfilment of its protection of civilians mandate, UNAMID peacekeepers on 11 June, visited a Gathering Site for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) in Sabanga, located 12 km north-east of the Mission's Golo Temporary Operating Base, central Darfur, to assess the condition of the newly resettled IDPs at the Site and assess the general security situation in the area.

During the visit, the peacekeepers interacted with the Sheikh (Community leader) of the IDPs, Adam Abdullatif, who informed the peacekeepers about the recent arrival of additional IDPs who reportedly fled their homes in Armo, Fared-

lo, Tergy, Karkura, Aronla and Dongola villages in Daya Area, central Darfur, as a result of armed clashes that occurred on 1 June between Government of Sudan forces and armed movements. These clashes resulted in the displacement of an additional 400 families who made their way to the Sabanga Gathering Site, bringing the total number of families in the Gathering Site to 800 families, according Sheik Abdullatif.

During the visit to the Gathering Site, UNAMID peacekeepers, observed the urgent need for food, clean water, sanitation, health services and shelter, especially for the newly arrived IDPs and communi-

cated these requirements to concerned humanitarian agencies in the area, for immediate action.

Prior to undertaking above-mentioned visit to Sabanga Gathering Site, UNAMID peacekeepers from the Chinese Engineering Contingent, on 21 May travelled to Turangew IDPs Gathering Site, also in central Darfur, and erected seven heavy duty tents at the site to address urgent shelter needs of the newly displaced persons in the area, a move appreciated by the IDPs community. The peacekeepers also alerted their humanitarian counterparts on the socio-economic needs in this area.



UNAMID supports demobilization of 729 ex-combatants in Zalingei, Central Darfur

Zalingei: UNAMID’s Governance and Community Stabilization Section (GCSS) in collaboration with Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SDDRC), concluded on 5th of May 2019, the demobilization of 729 ex-combatants from former armed movements as per the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) (2011) and residual caseload of the Darfur Peace Agree-

ment (DPA) (2006) in Central Darfur. The demobilized ex-combatants were out of the planned caseload of 838 that were planned for demobilization. Among the demobilized, 123 were female and 606 male combatants from Justice and Equality Movement/Peace Wing (JEM/PW), Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will (SLA/FW), Sudan Liberation Army/ Mustafa Terab (SLA/MT), Justice and Equality Movement/Da-

bajo (JEM/D) and Popular Forces for Democratic Rights (PFDR). The demobilization exercise that commenced on 17 April and ended on 01 May 2019, represents the second demobilization camp in Central Darfur. The Mission’s resources and logistics support included the provision of cash for the payment of transitional safety net allowance (3,000 Sudanese pound per ex-combatant), camp construction, tents,

transportation, electricity, water and security. The UNDP to facilitate assistance after the demobilization exercise, including support through income-generation projects. In his remarks, the Acting Wali (Governor) of Central Darfur, Maj. Gen. Nagmeldin Karar, commended UNAMID’s support to the DDR implementation and pledged the government’s continued commitment to the implementation of DDR and civilian arms collection in Sudan. Head of UNAMID’s GCSS Pierre Ubalijoro highlighted the positive collaboration between UNAMID

UNAMID’s Governance and Community Stabilization Section, in collaboration with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission began the demobilization exercise of 729 ex-combatants from former armed movements who are signatories to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), bilateral agreements and the residual caseloads from the Darfur Peace Accord. Photo by Salah Mohammed, UNAMID.



and SDDRC in the implementation of the Final Security Arrangements (FSA) provisions of the DDPD. However, he stated that the end of the demobilization activities in Central Darfur marks the end of UNAMID’s support to demobilization of ex-combatants in Darfur, unless a new agreement is reached before the Mission exits in June 2020. Islika Borbor Sisay, UNAMID DDR officer, noted that the DDR process will create stable environment for other developments and recovery activities to take place. “It is important for DDR in every country that witness war to set the ground where other recovery activities can take place through sensitizing the ex-combatants on the importance of peace and to change their minds to be civilians to resolve their differences by dialogue and peaceful means,” said Islika. Capt. Abubaker Hassan Abdullah, Commander of the demobilization

camp, praised UNAMID for supporting the process and explained the ex-combatants’ willingness to go through the exercise to achieve peace, development and stability in Darfur. Some of the ex-combatants interviewed during the session emphasized the importance of peace and urged non-signatory movements to put down their arms and join the peace process. A former combatant, Daoud Hussein said that his group considers peace a strategic option, hence their decision to sign the document to bring about peace to end the suffering of the people of Darfur from the scourge of war. Another combatant, 37-year old, Ms. Tomayia Abdallah Al Nour, from Free-Will movement stated that she would choose to train in handi-craft making to support her family and the local community. The Mission has so far supported the demobilization of over 10,000 former combatants of armed movements across Darfur under the DDPD.



UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in partnership with Prisons Administration, East Darfur organized a two-week capacity building workshop for 50 prison officers in El Daein. The workshop, which commenced on 12 May 2019, is aimed at enhancing participants' capacity and skills in prison management and related operations. Photo by Dominick Mshana, UNAMID.

United Nations State Liaison Functions conclude training for Sudanese prisons officers in East Darfur

UNAMID State Liaison Functions (SLFs) and UNDP, in collaboration with East Darfur Prison Administration, concluded on 7 March 2019, a two-week training program for 45 in-service Government of Sudan (GoS) prison officers. The training was focused on human rights approach in prison operations and the application of appropriate Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) in prison management, in El Daein.

The training was aimed at building capacity through enhancement of knowledge and skills for participants in prison management, operations and human rights to assist them to carry out their mandated reformation tasks in accordance with international standards and human rights principles.

Workshop discussions focused on topics related to prison management and operations such as juvenile justice, Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) on key control, discharge procedures, counting of prisoners, transfer of prisoners, search and admission of prisoners, minimum standard rules and rights of the people in detention and gender mainstreaming.

During the Workshop closing ceremony, East Darfur SLF representative, Mr. Dominick Mshana, who is also a UNAMID Rule of law officer, commended the positive interaction of participants with facilitators during the training and encouraged the participants to reflect the knowledge acquired in their daily prison duties. "We urge you all to

share the same knowledge with your colleagues who did not manage to participate in the training," Mr. Mshana stated.

In his response, East Darfur State Director of Prisons, Colonel Alam-alhuda Abduelhammed Mohamad, expressed his gratitude to UNAMID and the entire UN family for the numerous training courses organized for prison officers in East Darfur and appreciated the support they continue to receive from UNAMID.

The training was funded by UNDP under the SLF transitional programme as part of UNAMID transfer of its mandated tasks to UNCT, in conformity with the Mission's current drawdown and eventual exit by end of June 2020. .



UNAMID and UN Country Team State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in South Darfur state, in partnership with the state police, conducted a two-week Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop, on human rights for Government of Sudan (GoS) police. The training mainly concentrated on international human rights and international humanitarian law standards, with special focus on Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV). UNAMID photo.

UN State Liaison Functions conduct training on human rights for GoS police in South Darfur

From 19 to 20 May 2019, UNAMID and UN Country Team State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in South Darfur state, in partnership with the state police, conducted a two-week Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop on human rights for Government of Sudan (GoS) police. The training mainly concentrated on international human rights and international humanitarian law standards, with special focus on Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV).

Thirty-nine police officers, including nine females, attended the Workshop aimed at building the capacity of the GOS police on human rights and subsequently promote human rights in south Darfur.

South Darfur Police Commis-

sioner, Chief Prosecutor, Appeals Court Judge, South Darfur Judiciary training coordinator, South Darfur legal administration representatives, Head of UNDP office in south Darfur, Head of UNAMID SLFs Police and senior local police officers attended the Workshop opening ceremony.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, South Darfur Police Commissioner, General Niazy Salih Ahmed, expressed his appreciation to UNAMID and UNDP for their efforts in supporting police in South Darfur. He urged workshop participants to clearly focus and absorb training content through cooperation and active participation during discussion sessions. "I also urge partici-

pants to further transfer skills acquired from this workshop to other police officers in the state through internally organised training," General Salih Ahmed emphasised.

In his remarks, the Officer-in-Charge of UNDP in South Darfur, Mr. Salaheldin Ibrahim, stated that the workshop is part of the SLF activities geared towards capacity building of GOS police in relation to the critical need to engender respect and promotion of human rights in their daily work.

Workshop participants also echoed their gratitude to UN SLFs in the state for conducting this workshop and pledged that going forward, they will apply all acquired knowledge to their daily work. .



UNAMID and UN Country Team State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in North Darfur, in partnership with the state level Judiciary Directorate, organized a workshop for District Court Judges focusing on international fair trial standards and adherence to the rule of law in transnational crimes and offences. UNAMID photo.

UN State Liaison Functions train district court judges in North Darfur

UNAMID and UN Country Team State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in North Darfur, in partnership with the state level Judiciary Directorate, from 30 to 31 March organized a workshop for District Court Judges focusing on international fair trial standards and adherence to the rule of law in transnational crimes and offences. Over thirty district court judges, prosecutors, police and members of the Bar Association participated in the workshop aimed at exploring practical ways to meet set UNAMID exit benchmarks in the areas of protection of civilians, monitoring and reporting on human Rights trials monitored by UNAMID to ensure these are conducted in a fair manner, in accordance with international legal standards and practices. The workshop also addressed the need to ensure promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with national and international fair trial standards] and enhancing access to justice in line

with the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). In addition, the workshop covered training and practical guidance on internationally accepted fair trial standards which respect human rights and promote the rule of law in the context of emerging threats involving transnational crimes. The training also sought to strengthen the capacity of the judiciary to effectively balance the application of fair trial standards, adherence to the rule of law, preventing the risk of violation of human rights while ensuring respect for fundamental rights of both the victim and the accused. The workshop further put in context the transitional strategy of UNAMID and the coordination role of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in the SLF as provided by the Security Council Resolution 2429 (2018), which stipulates, among other things, the need to strengthen the human rights and rule of law capacity of national institutions, local community networks

and civil society groups, who will ultimately take over key mainstreaming responsibilities in Darfur. “This is the first Workshop in Darfur covering compliance with fair trial standards and respect for the rule of law in the context of countering transnational crimes such as terrorism, trafficking in humans, smuggling weapons, drugs, and cybercrimes”, said Ms. Cecilia Tillada, Rule of Law officer in the SLFs. The selection of the topics for the workshop was based on a participatory process, with the judiciary in North Darfur defining area of preference for training to be linked with relevant Sudanese Law, the international standards on the right to fair trial including good practices with respect to the protection of human rights and promotion of the rule of law in the context of counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, trafficking in persons among other identified transnational crimes. ■



UNAMID Police in the State Liaison Functions (SLFs) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), West Darfur, in partnership with the Government of Sudan Police began a ten-day Training of Trainers (ToT) for 19 police officers in El Geneina. The course is part of SLFs’ efforts aimed at enhancing the capacity and skills of local police in criminal investigation techniques. Photo by Mohammed Idriss, UNAMID.

United Nations State Liaison Functions train Government of Sudan police officers in West Darfur

Zalingei: 7 May 2019, UNAMID’s State Liaison Functions (SLFs) Police and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Government of Sudan (GoS) Police, organized in El Geneina, West Darfur, a ten-day Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops for 38 local police officers in criminal investigation techniques and protection of civilians, respectively. The two training courses that began on 28 April 2019, were part of SLFs’ efforts aimed at building the capacity and skills of local police in different areas of policing including crime scene management, criminal investigation, protection of civilians, human rights, community policing and crisis management.

Joseph Zanu, UNAMID Police Training Officer, explained that the objectives of the training courses was to build the capacity of Government of Sudan police officer to be capable to train other police officers after UNAMID exit from Darfur. He emphasized that the participants

have benefited significantly from the courses and commended the cooperation between UNAMID, SLFs and GoS police.

Col. Nadhem Ahmed, Officer in Charge of UNAMID SLFs, West Darfur, said that through close coordination with UNDP the SLFs would implement eight ToT workshops for local police in West Darfur. “Additionally, the SLFs will implement an infrastructure enhancement projects in West Darfur including the construction of police training and community policing and rehabilitation of police stations,” he added.

West Darfur Police Director for Legal Affairs, Col. Sufian Iutfi Ahmed, who presented a lecture on the “Legal Framework of Protection of Civilians in the International Humanitarian Law”, emphasized that protection of civilians course would help the participants to respond effectively during armed conflicts.

Mohammed El Sheikh Bagadi, West Darfur Police Liaison and Coordination Officer, thanked UN-

AMID police and SLFs for organizing such training courses and for the construction of police stations and police training and community policing centres in West Darfur. “Building of these facilities will help to maintain rule of law and promote reconciliation among local communities,” said Bagadi.

One of the participants in the training on criminal investigation techniques, Mazin Saifeldin Abdelaziz, commended UNAMID continued efforts to support local police and underlined the importance of exchanging expertise between police officers from different countries in building the capacity of local police

UNAMID police also funded the construction police station and family and child unit consisting of two waiting cells, three offices and an armory in El Genaina. The project that was implemented through UNAMID police programmatic funding projects aimed at improving security condition and creating a conducive working environment for local police. ■



UNAMID officially handed over its Headquarters in El Daein, East Darfur to the Government of Sudan. The handover is part of the Mission's ongoing drawdown as mandated by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2429 (2018). Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

UNAMID hands over its Sector Headquarters in East Darfur to El Daien University

UNAMID concluded on 30 April 2019 the closure and handover of its sector headquarters in El Daien to the State Government of East Darfur.

In line with UNAMID's insistence that the facilities be used for civilian purposes, the State Government of East Darfur indicated that the former sector headquarters, with associated assets, will become an extension of El Daein University, and that the level 1 hospital within the Camp will be a health center providing maternity services.

The handover documents, which include an understanding regarding the future use of the premises as well as an inventory of related UNAMID assets, were signed by the Head of Office for Sector East, Mr. Landing Badjie, on behalf of the Mission and Director General in the office of the Wali (Governor) Mr. Ismail Adam Abdallah, on behalf of the state.

Representatives of the intended beneficiary institutions, Mr. Ali Ibrahim Adam, Director of Health Services and Social Development, Pro-

fessor Mohammed Ali Elhag Alloba, Vice Chancellor of El Daien University, as well as community representatives from key constituencies in the state signed the documents as witnesses.

In his remarks, UNAMID Chief of Staff, Mr. Luke Mhlaba, who represented the Mission leadership, emphasized the importance of honouring the commitment to use the facilities for civilian purposes, as well as the need for community involvement and transparency in the transfer process.

"In preparation for the handover of UNAMID facilities to the host country authorities, the Mission has conducted extensive consultations with the government of Sudan, state governments and representatives of civil society. All agree and indeed the government has committed to the principle that all such facilities will be used for civilian purposes," Mr. Mhlaba said.

Mr. Abdallah expressed appreciation to UNAMID for the facilities and pledged to use them for the benefit of the community as outlined in

the memorandum of understanding signed by UNAMID and the State Government of East Darfur. He called on the community to work together and expressed hope that the two institutions, namely the University of El Daein and the Ministry of Health, would fully utilize the facilities for the benefit of the people of East Darfur.

Apart from prefabricated buildings on the land, most of which are furnished and include air conditioners, items handed over include motor vehicles, a water treatment facility and power generators.

"The Mission looks forward to the early take over and use of these facilities by El Daien University and the Ministry of Health, so that East Darfur communities can derive the benefits of these assets," Mr. Mhlaba concluded.

This is the first sector headquarters to be closed and handed over, in line with the second phase of the Mission's ongoing drawdown, as mandated by United Nations Security Council resolution 2429 of July 2018.



UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) handed over solar wind-up radio sets to members from the Union of Visually Impaired People in Zalingei, Central Darfur. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

UNAMID hands over solar wind-up radio sets to vulnerable local groups in Central Darfur

UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) handed over solar wind-up radio sets to members of the Union of Visually Impaired People and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) at Taiba Camp in Zalingei, Central Darfur on 14 and 21 May 2019, respectively. The project is part of the Mission's ongoing support to vulnerable communities in Darfur and is meant to assist the host communities gain easy access to information on local and global events, in addition to listening to peace messaging derived from various UNAMID activities and its ongoing transition process.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Al Nazeer Al Silaik, the Secretary

General of the Union of Visually Impaired People in Central Darfur, highlighted the importance of radio in educating local people in Darfur, particularly the visually impaired people living in the rural areas. The Sheikh of Sheikhs (Traditional Leaders) at Taiba IDP Camp, Mr. Alhadi Hamid Abdallah, expressed his appreciation to UNAMID's continued support to IDP Camp community and highlighted the importance of radio in educating the people in the Camp, especially through peace and health related programming. "The distribution of these solar radios will enable recipient families to listen to reconciliation, peace and health awareness programmes", Mr. Abdallah added.

UNAMID representatives at both handover ceremonies, Lameck Kawiche and Said Msonda, commended the continued cooperation between UNAMID and IDPs community in Taiba camp and the Union of Visually Impaired persons in promoting the culture of tolerance and coexistence in Darfur. They also underscored the user-friendly nature of the solar powered radios that rely on solar power, straight from the sun, with no need for batteries. Recipients of the solar-powered radios also collectively extended their gratitude to UNAMID for the gesture stating that having these radios is a means of empowering them and providing them with a myriad of sources of information.



UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS), in partnership with North Jebel Marra Locality and local Youth Union, organized a football tournament and musical concert for peace in Rokero, Central Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

UNAMID organizes Football Tournament for Peace in Rokero, Central Darfur

UNAMID's Communication and Public Information Section, in partnership with the North Jebel Marra Locality and local Youth Union, organized on 22 April 2019, a football tournament and musical concert in Rokero town, Central Darfur.

The event, held as part of the Mission's "Together for Peace" campaign, was attended by representatives of UNAMID, Government of Sudan, Native Administration, Civil Society organizations, women and youth groups. The event aimed to promote social peace and stability in the Locality and included a football match featuring the two semi-finalists, modern and traditional songs.

Addressing event attendees, UNAMID representative, Mr. Kone Mouroulaye, emphasized the importance of sporting activities in consolidating social peace in Darfur as UNAMID believes that engaging local communities in such social activities, enhances constructive cooperation and relationships among all segments of

society, resulting in consolidation of peace and stability.

Mr. Mouroulaye added that as UNAMID prepares to exit Darfur at the end of June 2020, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2429 (2018), the Mission has established State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in the four Darfur States (north, south, east and west Darfur) where UNAMID is withdrawing, to prevent relapse into conflict in the post-UNAMID era. "The concept of SLFs is an outcome of a solid partnership between the Mission and the UN Country Team in Sudan, with support from the Government of Sudan. Establishment of these SLFs will facilitate seamless repositioning of UN presence in Darfur, following the Mission's exit," Mr. Mouroulaye added.

In his remarks, the Acting Commissioner of North Jebel Marra Locality, Mr. Issam El Deen Rajab, commended joint efforts made by UNAMID and the Locality authorities in organizing the sporting and cultural event, un-

der the banner of peace. He applauded UNAMID efforts in consolidating peace in Darfur, especially the Mission's support to the transition from peacekeeping to development. Mr. Rajab, further appealed to UNAMID to provide additional support to their Locality, through the rehabilitation of the Golo-Rokero Road, construction of rural courts and a youth center in Rokero and capacity building of Native Administration officials, especially in the area of good governance.

The Acting Commissioner of North Jebel Marra Locality, commended the armed factions that have joined the peace process, and called on the local community to embrace peace and work together for its consolidation.

Speaking on behalf of the Native Administration, El Shartay (Traditional Leader), Adam Al Nour Ateem, requested for more UNAMID support in empowering the native administration, women and youth sectors in the Locality.



Under the theme: "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change", UNAMID celebrated the United Nations International Women's Day with a colorful event that included cultural performances, Hakamat traditional dances and a Darfuri women handicraft market held at the Mission's Headquarters in Zalingei, Central Darfur. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

UNAMID Celebrates International Women's Day

Under the theme: "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change", UNAMID celebrated the United Nations International Women's Day on 7 March 2019, with a colorful event that included cultural performances, Hakamat traditional dances and a Darfuri women handicraft market held at the Mission's Headquarters in Zalingei, Central Darfur.

Hundreds of women from surrounding Camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), women's organizations, civil society, youth as well as UNAMID staff and Government officials attended the event.

At the gathering, UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR), Jeremiah Mamabolo, conveyed the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres's message for the Day in which he urged all to work hard to create an environment in which

"women and girls can shape the policies, services and infrastructure that impact all our lives. And let's support women and girls who are breaking down barriers to create a better world for everyone."

In her remarks, the Central Darfur Minister for Health and Social Development, who also represented the Wali (Governor) of the State at the event, Ms. Samia Hassan, thanked UNAMID for organizing the International Women's Day event and highlighted the increased participation of Sudanese women in local decision-making mechanisms and legislative councils. "Participation of women in decision making institutions in Darfur is at almost 30%. My presence at this occasion, representing the Wali of Central Darfur, is a real example of advancement in women's rights in Darfur. I encourage all

the women of central Darfur to look for opportunities to improve themselves educationally and participate in capacity building programs that focus on the protection of women and children's rights," Ms. Samia stated.

Ms. Afaf Kunjom, Chairperson of Central Darfur Women's Union, commended UNAMID for inviting the women from Central Darfur to participate in the observance of the International Women's Day and noted that the 2019 theme for the Day truly inspires women to search and embrace their social and economic rights.

UNAMID organized a similar event in Golo town in central Darfur where it partnered with the local women's union and the Locality Commissioner. Golo town is adjacent to the Mission's Temporary Operating Base.



UNAMID Sector East in collaboration with High Council for Youth and Sport in East Darfur State held a graduation ceremony after a three-month training for 100 at-risk youth in different fields of vocational skills, implemented by El Nafeer Charity Organization (ECO).

100 At-Risk Youths participate in vocational skills training in El- Daein, East Darfur

UNAMID Sector East in collaboration with High Council for Youth and Sport in East Darfur State held on 14 March 2019, a graduation ceremony at the end of a three-month training program for 100 at-risk youth in different fields of vocational skills, implemented by El Nafeer Charity Organization (ECO).

The training, held in El Daein,

capital of East Darfur, included motor vehicle mechanics, general electricity, masonry, tailoring and food processing.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Sandog Tindil, Head of the High Council for Youth and Sport thanked UNAMID for supporting the at-risk youths and vulnerable community members by assisting them

to develop alternative livelihoods through diversification of relevant skills for self-employment in areas plagued by tribal conflicts.

He pointed out that the project will reduce poverty rate in the area and contribute to the stability and security in the state, adding that it will improve income-generating opportunities for at-risk youth and

women. “The impact of this project will be immense especially in terms of the socio-economic indicators such as unemployment and livelihood alternatives and reduce community violence, especially in the case of the youths,” he said.

The Head of ECO, Mr. Mahmoud Burma, extended his gratitude to UNAMID Governance and Community Stabilization Section (GCSS) for the continuous support it provides to local communities through the implementation of projects that

reflect the need for both the local government and the community.

“We will do our best to serve our communities despite the challenges we are facing; the overall economic crisis, the unexpected increase of prices, lack of transportation and infrastructure in East Darfur,” he said.

Ms. Sylvie Kiba, Officer-in-Charge of UNAMID’s Sector East, thanked government officials for their continuous support to the Mission in fulfilling its mandate.

She explained the main objective of Community Stabilization Projects (CSPs) in relation to maintenance of relative peace and stability achieved in Darfur.

“There are other three ongoing projects implemented in different localities and other six projects completed. We will do our best to serve our stakeholders and look for the need of the communities based on the Mission mandate and capabilities,” Ms.Kiba said.

In his remarks, The Executive Director of El Daein Locality, Mr. Yousif Abdulmahmoud, said that the security situation in East Darfur is stable and there are many voluntary returns. However, he underlined that lack of livelihood opportunities is a key challenge.

He praised the training initiative and its positive impact on unemployed youth, ex-combatants, IDPs, returnees, refugees, women, and communities in the affected areas in general.

“In my opinion, this project reflects the real need of both returnees and the local population. It is expected to create a positive movement because it will reduce unemployment among the youths particularly those who missed the opportunities for education and training as a result of the conflict in the state,” he said.

During the graduation, 100 tool kits were distributed to the trainees based on their field of specialization. The ceremony was also attended by the local government officials, representatives of law enforcement organs, youth union, IDPs, women groups and other residents.

United Nations State Liaison Functions (SLFs) - a plausible way to address some of the conflict drivers in Darfur, Sudan:

An interview with UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative, Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho

Anita Kiki Gbeho, UNAMID DJSR highlights the criticality of the recently established UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in the context of the transition process, as UNAMID prepares for its exit from Darfur at the end of June 2020.

VoD: UNAMID is in the throes of its drawdown from current configuration as the Mission prepares to leave Darfur at the end of June 2020. Describe the transition process the Mission is going through.

DJSR Gbeho: A transition process takes place when a UN Mission prepares for a drawdown or withdrawal of its operation in a country. In this case, UNAMID is working on its transition through a two-pronged approach: peacekeeping activities continue in the Greater Jebel Mara where there are pockets of conflict, while peacebuilding activities are undertaken in Darfur states where it has withdrawn.

As the Mission withdraws from Darfur, the national government is expected to assume the responsibility of protection of civilians and continue with peacebuilding efforts. On the latter, the Mission is working

UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative, (DJSR), Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho, UN humanitarian actors and Sudan Non- Governmental Organizations Forum, signed on 16 July 2019, a Joint Framework for Action on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). The joint framework will develop an integrated approach to prevent any form of SAE and to develop a mechanism to support survivors/ victims and maintain zero tolerance policy on SEA. Photo by Ayman Suliman, UNIC.





UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR), Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho, visits the Mission's Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in Golo, Central Darfur. Where she met with UNAMID peacekeepers in the area, local authorities and community representatives. Photo by Mohammed Idriss, UNAMID.

with the UN agencies to support local authorities to work on addressing some critical drivers of conflict through what is known as the State Liaison Functions (SLFs).

VoD: UN Security Council Resolution 2429 (2018) requested the Mission to collaborate with the UNCT to consolidate the whole-of-system-approach to Darfur focused on peacekeeping and providing sustainable solutions to the drivers of conflict as part of the stabilization and transition processes. In this regard, you personally oversaw the creation of the State Liaison Functions (SLFs), in partnership with the UNCT in Sudan. What stands out for you in terms of forging such a partnership between peacekeeping and development and humanitarian entities?

DJSR Gbeho: The forged relationship with the UN Development System (agencies, funds and programmes) translate the UN Secretary General's reform agenda on peace and security, which calls for close alignment between the peacekeeping and political missions with the development and human rights pillars to create greater coherence. The SLFs presents an opportunity to bridge the gap between peacekeeping (as the Mission leaves) and peacebuilding, thereby laying a foundation for development. Moreover, this presents an opportunity for development partners to invest in Darfur's development based on a joint UN conflict analysis and planning.

VoD: Some observers have noted that UNAMID transition is one of

the most challenging transitions globally. Why is that the case?

DJSR Gbeho: Indeed, that is true. UNAMID is transitioning in a context where there is no peace agreement and the root causes of conflict largely remain unaddressed. There are nearly two million IDPs remaining in camps across Darfur. In addition, the political changes in the country and the situation in Khartoum have impacted on the situation in Darfur. While this development has necessitated adjustment in programming, adopting a human rights-based approach and focusing on community-based support, the situation has not reached a critical point that warrants a change in the exit date, June 2020.

The daily evolution of the political



UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR) Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho, along with the Mission Headquarters integrated team visited on 22 June 2019, Nyala, South Darfur to assess the situation in the area as the Mission prepares for its eventual exit from Darfur in June 2020. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

and security situation in Sudan, makes the situation, even more challenging. We can only hope that the ongoing negotiations between the Sudan Transitional Military Council and the opposition parties involved in the transition discussions, will conclude soon with a positive outcome.

Transitioning in a non-integrated mission with three different geographic locations is very challenging in terms of communication. The Mission Headquarters is based in Zalingei, central Darfur, the logistics base in El Fasher, north Darfur whilst the Head of the Mission and the UN Country Team are based in Khartoum.

VoD: The SLFs are being implemented around four priority areas: rule law, human rights, du-

rationable solutions/ livelihood, durable solutions basic service delivery? Why the Mission prioritized these areas?

DJSR Gbeho: Following a joint situational analysis by UNAMID and UNCT on the causes of conflict, 3 issues were identified as some of the major drivers of conflict in the 4 Darfur states: identified. These included:-

Land, as well as enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms and awareness of tenure rights (particularly by women); Scarcity of resources and inter-communal conflict including over livestock and water and IDP and refugee returns to areas with limited infrastructure, services and livelihood opportunities.

Based on the above, the Mission looked at its capacity and identified

AFPs that have the required capabilities and comparative advantage to work together in addressing the above issues thereby contributing to the achievement of the 4 priority areas, which are Rule of Law, Human Rights, Livelihoods/Durable Solutions, and Immediate Service Delivery as well as overall, the Mission mandate.

VoD: Any lesson or observation drawn from the SLFs concept thus far?

DJSR Gbeho: We have noted the great need and importance of coordination and communication. This is critical in ensuring a common understanding and managing expectations, given the vast array of UN, federal and state level Government of Sudan authorities and other local entities involved in the SLFs.

Dialogue and reconciliation efforts critical to UNAMID’s protection of civilians

BY SALAH MOHAMMED



A UNAMID peacekeeper provides protection for bricks makers during a patrol conducted recently in Azoom valley, near Zalingei town in Central Darfur. As per its protection of civilians’ mandate, UNAMID routinely conducts farming, fire -wood collection and water-fetching patrols in its area of operation. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID

Protection of civilians represents UNAMID’s core mandate, thereby defining the Mission’s Protection of Civilians (POC/HLS) and Humanitarian Liaison Section’s critical Mission-wide coordination, advisory and information sharing role on issues related to protection of civilians in Darfur. This role is accomplished with unwavering support from various UNAMID components, the United Nations Country Team and Humanitarian Country Team (UNCT/HCT).

Through its various interventions, both at preventive and corrective stages of its operations in the Mission’s operational area in Darfur, UNAMID’s PoC/HL Section contributes to the stabilization of security conditions thereby facilitating the protection of civilians and the safe and timely provision of humanitarian

assistance to populations in need throughout the region.

When volatile security situations erupt which threatens civilian lives, as recently happened in Kalma IDP Camp in south Darfur, where two rival IDP groups clashed resulting in the killing of 16 people including a humanitarian-field

worker, with 17 injured, and a significant number of IDPs displaced, UNAMID PoC/HL Section conferred with the Mission’s Formed Police Units (FPUs), who immediately positioned its Armored Personnel Carrier (APCs) in tactical emplacements for the creation of a buffer between the two rival groups and thereby diffused the tensions and reduced significantly the number of casualties, which therefore prevented further harm to civilians.

In addition to the physical protection, an integrated Mission engaged in strong advocacy and immediately met with the local authorities and the IDP leaders and youths in the camp to engage in reconciliation efforts through two separate sessions with the rival groups. The UNAMID integrated mission was reinforced by a joint OCHA-UNAMID team.

As a result of UNAMID and UN Agencies joint protection and mediation efforts, the two groups showed their commitment for the creation of conducive environment to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers. The various meeting concluded with an agreement that the leadership would provide a written undertaking to formalize guarantees necessary to ensure the safety and security of the humanitarian space in Kalma, while arrangements would be made for the resumption of humanitarian service as means to test the safety guarantees.

Commenting on the nature of protection of civilian support UN-



AMID provides to emergent volatile situations as the one described above in Kalma, Miriam Ghalmi, Chief of UNAMID’s Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Liaison Section, restated to all parties who choose to engage in violence in any IDP Camp in the Mission’s operational area, that such acts or threats of violence against the civilian population are strongly prohibited by International Humanitarian principles.

“UNAMID would like to remind all IDPs that their camps are consid-

ered humanitarian space which should be free of weapons, places where displaced people must not be subjected to threats, harassment, attacks or harm. Violence must be renounced to ensure the protected space in line with international humanitarian principles,” Ms. Ghalmi emphasized.

Previously in November 2017, UNAMID mediated between the IDPs in the same IDP Camp in Kalma and Government of Sudan (GoS) authorities, when the latter

tried to implement an arms collection exercise in the Camp. In this instance, UNAMID intervention led to the establishment of a tripartite mechanism involving the IDP leadership, the GoS and UNAMID thereby mitigating the escalation of a potentially volatile situation, although this did not result in the collection of arms in the Camp.

In volatile situations where a complex web of tensions exists, UNAMID PoC/HL Section, takes a conflict-sensitive approach in dealing

with the situation giving due consideration to the dynamics between the actors involved when formulating options for UNAMID interventions all the time maintaining its impartiality, transparency and inclusive approach as articulated in international humanitarian principles.

UN staff invariably urge conflicting parties to resolve internal differences amicably as well as requesting them to provide assurances that humanitarian personnel would not be exposed to violence.



- 1 UNAMID peacekeepers during a routine patrol on 8 April 2019, in Azoom valley area, near Zalingei, central Darfur. UNAMID conducts daily routine patrols in various parts of Darfur as part of its protection of civilians mandate. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.
- 2 UNAMID peacekeepers during a routine patrol on 8 April 2019, in Azoom valley area, near Zalingei, central Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.
- 3 UNAMID peacekeepers providing protection of civilians to community members during a daily routine patrol in Koron village, 4 kilometers south-east of Golo temporary operating base (TOB). On 1st May 2019. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.



Women Protection Networks - An effective early warning mechanism for women in Darfur

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

One of the silent effects of conflict in Darfur, is the exposure of women, especially women who reside in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to physical assault, harassment, intimidation and extortion, amongst other issues. These women and young children in their

care, initially fled violence in their original villages and sought refuge in the more than 90 IDPs camps in different parts of Darfur. After escaping these attacks in their villages and walking for days, these women are further exposed to various forms of violence including Sexual

and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) when they find some semblance of life in the IDP Camps. In addition, women’s health, as a result of traditional norms and customs, is often threatened by harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriages,

yet their limited participation in the community-protection mechanisms deprive them from enunciating their concerns.

Although a multi-sectoral approach for victims of Sexual and gender based violence has been put in place by UN Agencies and UNAMID in collaboration with the government of Sudan as well as NGO’s this including extended programs relating to medical, legal and psychosocial support, have been put in place the trends and

UNAMID Gender Advisory Unit (GAU), in collaboration with the South Darfur State Ministry for Social Affairs (MoSA) conducted a two-day workshop to establish Women’s Protection Networks for internally displaced persons (IDP) in the state. Mutaz Munafal, UNAMID.

patterns of sexual violence remains unchanged when it comes to attacks during farming, water and firewood collection.

Above reasons pointed to a critical need for the establishment of an early warning mechanism to mitigate as well as have a timely response procedures on how to best seek and access physical, legal, health and psychosocial support in the event of violations occurring to IDP women when they venture out for livelihood .

Through the implementation of the women peace and security agenda, there was a clear indication after various interactions with women at different levels of social strata in Darfur, constant reporting of cases of insecurity UNAMID Gender Advisory Unit (GAU) discussed the prospects of empowering women to take change of their security by organizing themselves in protection arena. This would intern mitigate and reduce the cases of SGBV as well as increase the reporting and seeking medical legal assistance for the victims.

In 2013, GAU initiated the establishment of 43 Women’s Protection Networks (WPN) in Camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in five Darfur states, primarily as an early warning mechanism with the aim of mitigating attacks when women venture out for livelihood activities. The women protection network function by identifying hotspot areas where attacks frequently take place. The information is relayed to the UNAMID Patrol teams who intern conduct targeted patrols to the areas of concern. The women protection network is also equipped to respond and refer victims for support using the referral pathway. This

is done through regular capacity building sessions and meeting with the gender Unit.

In addition, GAU continues to enhance the Women Protection Network’s capacity to respond and prevention of SGBV. As an early warning mechanism women protection networks are the gatekeepers of their own safety. This has enabled the early intervention in response and protection of women from SGBV. The women protection networks also work very closely with other protection players such as UNFPA, UNWOMEN, UNICEF UNNDP and most recently GAU partnered with WFP in Central Darfur on a food for work program for total number of 150 members of the women protection networks. The women receive food for the work done as women protection networks. The program is a pilot project and will soon be duplicated in other areas. area where food for work is given to the women protection network..

Each Women Protection Network consists of ten women, drawn from the IDP camps and tasked with identifying early warning signs of SGBV occurrences or other physical violence and to immediately share the information with relevant actors such as Government of Sudan police, IDPs camp leadership, UNAMID, UNCT and INGOs for action. In most cases, WPN members visit rape survivors and utilize these visits to urge families to take rape survivors to the nearest health facility for medical attention and solicit their opinion on the need for legal aid or psycho-social support.

“It is important to note that women and children bear the most brunt in the conflict in Darfur. They



UNAMID's Gender Advisory Unit met with members of Women Protection Network at Hamidia camp in Central Darfur on 29 May 2019 to discuss the displaced women concerns. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

are the most vulnerable. It is for this reason that UNAMID GAU established these Women Protection Networks to support and empower these women in the IDP Camps to effectively and efficiently handle the challenges they face as they engage IDP camp leadership and security apparatus to address SGBV concerns” says Judith Mirembe, UNAMID Chief, Gender Affairs Unit.

Women Protection Networks also provides a viable platform to raise awareness among IDPs on women’s rights; to fight against sexual and gender-based violence in the IDP camps; strengthen strategies for the protection of women by encouraging dialogue between women IDPs, the camp leadership, the Mission, UN agencies and the state security apparatus; create a forum in which IDP women discuss their protection needs and share

with the Camp leadership and other protection actors for action and ensure that mechanisms for referring gender-based violence victims to service providers is in place.

“Women Protection Networks have another critical role focused on the identification of hotspots to inform UNAMID patrol plans through sharing of early warnings indicators in and around the IDP camps. This partnership between WPNs and UNAMID, has greatly improved communication links between IDP women, camp leadership and local authority as they jointly address women protection concerns. It is also very important for the Mission to have these Networks rolled out in all localities in Darfur within the Mission’s Area of Responsibility to serve as sources of information for these occurrences and referrals,” states George Odon-

go, UNAMID Gender Affairs Officer.

Women Protection Networks also close the gap created by insufficient presence of relevant SGBV support structures and organizations in Darfur, especially through the WPN’s links with affected families and encouragement they extend to rape survivors to report incidents to the police station for follow-up and action, and urging survivors to go for medical treatment, even before filling form 8 in line with Circular No.2 of 2004 issued by the Sudan Ministry of Justice . Women Protection Networks have also been instrumental in diminishing stigma and discrimination meted on the survivors of SGBV as they encourage them to speak out.

Ms. Hassania Mohammed, the Chairperson of Women Protection Network in Hamidiya Camp for In-



UNAMID Gender Advisory Unit (GAU), in collaboration with the South Darfur State Ministry for Social Affairs (MoSA) conducted a two-day workshop to establish Women’s Protection Networks for internally displaced persons (IDP) in the state. Mutaz Munafal, UNAMID.

ternally Displaced Persons (IDPs), in central Darfur, says women are still vulnerable to SGBV exposure, especially when they go for firewood and other livelihood activities but most of them refrain from reporting these incidents due to fear of SGBV stigma. Although WPN members always encourage rape or physical abuse survivors to report these incidents and seek medical treatment, most of them opt for local treatment not only because of stigma but because the medicine is out of their reach, it is very expensive,” stated Ms. Mohammed.

Another member of the Women Protection Network at Hamidiya IDPs camp, Ms. Mariam Adam, affirmed the continuance of SGBV against women in IDP Camps in Darfur. She further stated that the WPN in their Camp plays an important role in reporting and

following up on these incidents as well as raising awareness on women’s rights emphasizing that “the creation and provision of seed funding for income-generating projects will reduce the violence against IDP women. Whilst we commend UNAMID for its efforts to provide protection for women in IDP Camps and elsewhere in Darfur, we appeal to the Mission to rehabilitate the women’s center’s at in our Camp and conduct capacity building trainings to empower IDP women before its exit from Darfur at the end of June 2020.”

Darfuri women still face challenges including insecurity, limited opportunities for women at decision making levels; lack of health centres and police stations at rural areas; lack of female police investigators; access to land; delays in voluntary and safe return of IDPs

to their land of origin; protection as they partake in their daily livelihood activities and crop harvesting during the farming season; lack of prosecution of perpetrators of SGBV and the critical need for the establishment of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) data base for reference and establishment of women mediators’ networks in South and Central Darfur.

As UNAMID focusses on its draw down and transition processes, in preparation for its exit from Darfur in June 2020, GAU has partnered with UN Women in Sudan to further strengthen ground capacity of these Women Protection Networks which have proved to be a viable entry point in the UN’s quest to promote women’s rights and empowerment in the Camps for internally displaced persons in Darfur and tackle SGBV.

EL Geneina and El Daein HQs handover

UNAMID closed and handed over its Sector headquarters in El Daein, East Darfur and in El Geneina, West Darfur on 30 April and 15 May 2019 respectively. These are the first sector headquarters to be closed and handed over, in line with the second phase of the Mission's ongoing drawdown, as mandated by United Nations Security Council resolution 2429 of July 2018.

UNAMID, after conducting extensive consultations with the Government of Sudan, state governments and representatives of civil society in the areas where it hands over its facilities, always ensures that the government agrees and commits to the principle that all such facilities will be used for civilian purposes.



El Daein HQ handover



EL Geneina HQ handover





Singing for peace in Darfur with Musician Adil Ali Abdalla Daraja

BY KALTHOUM YAHIA

Gifted with an amazing singing voice, well known Darfurian musician, Adil Ali Abdallah Daraja was born in Rockero Locality, central Darfur. He now lives in Zalingei, the state capital of central Darfur state in Sudan. Whilst studying for his degree in women in development at Alazahri University in Sudan’s capital, Khartoum, Daraja discovered his passion for music and immediately joined the Omdurman Youth Centre, later moving to Bahri Youth Centre for his basic music lessons and to fully pursue his love for music.

In an interview with Voices of Darfur, musician Adil Ali Abdallah Daraja, talks about his passion for Darfuri music, especially songs he sings in his Fur language (his mother tongue) and the intricacies involved in surviving as a musician in a conflict-stricken region like Darfur.

VoD: Which local musicians have influenced your musical career?

Daraja: Singers like the late great Darfurian musician Abdu Kayoka, singer Mariam and of course, Omar Ihsas. When I started my musical career, I used to sing songs of these musicians. I have since progressed from that stage and perform my own material. I have composed many songs over the years. These songs are also

played in social media by many of my followers. This has helped me to advertise my music, even beyond Darfur and Sudan.

VoD: Have you done any stage performances?

Daraja: Indeed, I have conducted many stage performances. I worked with many groups, including Darfur Stars Group and Daka Bella Group. I learnt a lot from these groups. I salute Adam Barbar, head of the Daka Bella Group who me a lot of guidance on the sometimes-difficult music scene in Darfur.

VoD: Where do you normally perform?

Daraja: In fact, I have performed in many theatres at different universities in different parts of Sudan. I have also participated in numerous social functions, especially wedding parties and student graduations.

VoD: In your assessment, in what areas do you feel Darfuri musicians need support?

Daraja: As musicians, we are lacking in a lot of things that are critical to our profession. There are no formal institutions to care for the arts in Darfur. Cultural work needs a lot of effort and skills. Whilst the talent is abounding, however things like professional musical instruments are hard to come by. Darfuri musicians and artists need professional music producers and managers to guide the production and marketing of the music and artists.

We have a recently established Darfur Music Association (DMA), but it is still in its infancy. More than fifteen musical groups are now registered with DMA in Zalingei. It is a good start, but we need a lot of support.

In general, music and the arts have given me a lot of satisfaction, professional and socially. It introduced me to a wider society. I have visited many places in Sudan, covering about 90% of the country. Art plays a big role in creating relations with society.

VoD: Does your music only focus on socio-economic issues only or is it influenced by daily life in general?

Daraja: Whilst i emphasize social life in my songs, I have also written two poems about the suffering experienced by the people of Darfur. We in Darfur were among the first to feel and be affected by the big problems of this country since 2003 until things began to cool down in 2014 and 2015. The songs speak for themselves. For instance, I wrote a song for Darfur that hopes and prays for Darfur to “stay safe and keep progressing for real peace will come.” This is just to encourage our people to look ahead to a positive outcome and have hope for sustained peace in the not-too-distant future.

VoD: What is your view about Darfur’s heritage?

Daraja: As a matter of fact, Darfur is full of many wonderful cultures. All tribes have their distinctive



rhythms. Some tribes have more than 11 different dances. We should pay attention to these differences. We as Darfur artists are not close to TV and radio stations because of the war but we hope that regional and international organizations will also pay attention to the beautiful Darfur culture and help us not only to save it but also propagate it beyond our borders.

VoD: Where do you place the women of Darfur in this cultural environment you describe above?

Daraja: Women are very special to us. They are our mothers, sisters, grandmothers, mentors and counselors. In fact, I have written two poems espousing the amazing strength of a woman in a Darfuri home. Darfur women can compete effectively in many aspects, on the world stage. They fought for their societies and contributed a lot to the wellbeing of family's region wide. However, although they are economically enabled, they are missing at decision-making tables.

VoD: Any special message to the people of Darfur?

Daraja: I hope and pray for peace to prevail all over the Sudan. I sincerely hope and wish that the green, lush landscape lands and natural habitat in Jebel Marra, including the amazing waterfalls, will become a major tourist attraction for all Sudanese people and the rest of the world.



