

An Interview with Artist Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS
HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR (UNAMID)

Impacting the next
generation through
education

Interview with
UNAMID Force Commander

UNAMID ODO: Assisting
Victims of Explosive
Remnants of War

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NOTE

I am pleased to introduce the June 2018 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 Force Commander, Lt General Leonard Ngondi, shares his thoughts on the Mission's current reconfiguration exercise, with special focus on the complex role of the Military component in this herculean task.

The feature article entitled: Impacting the next generation through education focusses on UNAMID's efforts to support education in West Darfur, through handing over its former sub-camp in August 2015, to El Geneina University to be used as its Campus. Since then, the University has evolved into a well-reputed institution of higher learning, drawing students from various parts of Sudan and neighboring countries.

In another feature entitled: 'UNAMID ODO: Assisting Victims of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)', we highlight the Mission's support to victims through an assistance pro-

gramme designed to fund the rehabilitation of those injured in ERW incidents. This programme is designed to ensure that the families affected by these incidents get the economic and social assistance they need. In its pilot project in North Darfur, UNAMID ODO has provided income generating support to 20 ERW victims.

The Photo Story features collation of photographs, focusing on the establishment of UNAMID Temporary Operating Base (TOB), in Golo, Central Darfur, as mandated by the UN Security Council Resolution's 2363 (2017).

Finally, Voices of Darfur presents an interview with the fine arts painter, Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry, who speaks about the origins of his love for painting, his philanthropic support to his local community as well as challenges faced by artists in East 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

Carlos Araujo

Chief

Communications & Public Information Section

ON THE COVER



Artist Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry, paints at UM Aldiyar Park in El Daein. Mr. Elmasry speaks to Voices of Darfur about the origins of his love for painting, his philanthropic support to his local community and the challenges faced by artists in East Darfur. Photo by Hassan Ishag, UNAMID.



On 30 March 2017, UNAMID and the Al-Mourada club, held a peace and peaceful coexistence festival in El Fasher, North Darfur. Hundreds of people attended the event, which included traditional dances, a music concert and drama performances highlighting the importance of social peace among local communities. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

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Lieutenant General
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Darfuri women call for participation in decision making, reconciliation and peace process



UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, and North Darfur Minister of Social Affairs, Osman Yousif, received on 27 March 2018, the recommendations issued from a two-day workshop on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace and Security. The event, organized by the Mission's Gender Advisory Unit and the Social Affairs Ministry, in El Fasher, North Darfur, was part of the Darfur wide Global Open Day. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

On 26 and 27 March 2018, some 100 women from Darfur's five states, representing the state government, parliamentarians, localities, civil society organizations and internally displaced persons (IDPs) gathered in El Fasher, North Darfur, to attend the Global Open Day on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security.

The two-day event held under the theme "Women Count for Peace" was organized by UNAMID's Gender Advisory Unit (GAU) in partnership Ministry of Social Affairs and the State Committees on SCR 1325. The Global Open Day provides a platform for women to discuss and share views on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, and its impact on women in Darfur, as well as the achievements and the challenges in terms of strengthening established mechanisms for the same.

The participants called for in-

creasing women's participation in the decision making, reconciliation and peace process mechanisms and the establishment of women forum for peace to monitor the implementation of peace in Darfur. Additionally, they urged for the establishment of Gender Advisory Units in all five state and endorsement of the National Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. They also requested endorsing laws that criminalize the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriage.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Yousif Ishag Adam, Representative of the Wali (Governor), North Darfur, expressed the Government's commitment toward implementing the recommendations related to the UNSCR 1325 and commended the participants for exerting efforts to discuss and explore ways for the implementation of the Resolution.

On his part, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mam-

abolo, stated that women in all situations are concerned about the entire society and urged for their participation in the determination of a solution of peace and stability. Mr. Mamabolo explained that the recommendations of the meeting support progress of peace and development in Darfur.

In her remarks, Ms. Ruth Kibiti, Chief, UNAMID's Gender Advisory Unit, said that the participants discussed and deliberated to identify key recommendations for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and commended the Ministries of social Affairs Darfur's state for their support to the Global open Day on the Resolution.

Hikma Adam Musa, one of the participants from East Darfur called for effective implementation of the recommendations, especially those related to the women rights and protection of children across Darfur.

Demobilized ex-combatants in South Darfur to return to civilian life

Some 800 former combatants will soon be reintegrated into civilian life following the conclusion of a two-week demobilization exercise in Nyala, South Darfur, which began on 26 February 2018.

The exercise was jointly organized by the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SDDRC); UNAMID's Governance & Community Stabilization Section (GCSS), World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The former fighters come from the Sudanese Armed Forces and several rebel movements and all participants underwent a security screening, medical examination, psychological assessment, reintegration briefing and subsequently they will receive SDG 1500 each from UNAMID as a reinsertion allowance.

According to Amani Hawit, GCSS Officer, during the demobilization process, UNAMID provided logistical and technical support, while WFP distributed food rations and UNDP will facilitate the reintegration exercise, including support through in-



Some 800 former combatants, including women, were registered in Nyala, South Darfur, during a two-week exercise, organized collaboratively by the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the Sudan Armed Forces and the Darfur Security Arrangement Implementation Commission. UNAMID's Governance and Community Stabilization Section supported the initiative which began on 26 February 2018. Photo by Mutaz Munafal, UNAMID.

come-generating projects.

Speaking to the press last Sunday at the National Service Camp in Nyala, Sabeel Ahmed Sabeel, Deputy Wali of South Darfur, said, "We are grateful for the tremendous efforts that have been exerted by the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and its

partners in organizing this camp to demobilize former fighters and reintegrate them into society."

For his part, Id Musse, Officer in Charge, South Darfur office, thanked the organizers for supporting the demobilization process, noting that the initiative would help ex-combatants have a better future. ■

UNAMID supports workshop on Good Governance in Central Darfur



More than 50 participants representing local Councils, senior public Servants, the Native Administration and Civil Society attended a UNAMID's Governance and Commu-

UNAMID's Governance and Community Stabilization Section, in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and Public Service, organized on 10 May 2018, a training workshop on good governance in Zalingei, Central Darfur. Participants were drawn from state government bodies and civil society. Photo by Mohammed Idriss, UNAMID.

nity Stabilization Section supported workshop organized on 10 May 2018, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Public Service, in Zalingei, Central Darfur.

During the workshop, participants made several recommendations including, the implementation of good governance principles to combat corruption as well as empowering,

encouraging civil society to monitor the performance of government institutions, expanding revenues of the localities as well as promoting the role of the Native administration.

Addressing participants, the UNAMID representative of the Governance and Community Stabilization Section, Mr. Manuel Hernandez, highlighted the importance of good

governance for peace and the development process in Darfur.

In his remarks, the Minister of Local Government and Public Service in Central Darfur, Mr. Najmadeen Adam Abdalla Breaka, observed that the workshop will equip the recently appointed members of local councils with the necessary knowledge to undertake their duties in a professional manner. ■

UNAMID assists displaced persons extinguish fire at El Neem camp, East Darfur



More than 2500 families were affected by a fire that ravaged parts of El Neem for internally displaced persons, in East Darfur. A UNAMID Team, led by Mr. Innih Akpan, Officer in Charge, East Darfur office, visited the Camp to identify the damage and losses caused by the fire. Photo by Gamal Hamad, UNAMID.

On 17 March 2018, more than 2500 families were affected by a fire that ravaged parts of El Neem C for internally displaced persons, in East Darfur.

A UNAMID Team, led by Mr. Innih Akpan, Officer in Charge, East Darfur office, visited the Camp to identify the damage and losses caused by the fire.

Speaking on behalf of the elders, Sheikh Usman Abdulrahman, indi-

cated that the fire broke out when a woman was preparing a meal. The flame apparently rapidly spread, due to windy weather (Haboub), to the surrounding houses and the market, which all caught the blaze and were burnt to ashes.

Mr. Abdulrahman estimated that the losses of property, grain and general livelihood could amount to around 200,000 Sudanese pounds. "We extend our gratitude

to UNAMID for its warm gesture of dispatching fire fighters and fire engines to assist in the efforts to extinguish the flames and prevent further damages," Sheikh Abdulrahman stated.

UNAMID is organising a meeting with the UN family and other humanitarian actors in East Darfur to agree on a concerted line of intervention and support to the affected communities. ■

UNAMID commemorates International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers



UNAMID commemorated on 29 May 2018, the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers at the Mission's Headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. The event was attended by UNAMID's Joint Special Representative (JSR), Jeremiah Mamabolo, the newly appointed Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR), Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho, the Deputy Wali (Governor) of North Darfur, Mr. Mohammed Birama Hassab Alnubi, Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

On 29 May 2018, UNAMID commemorated the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers under the theme “UN Peacekeeping: 70 Years of Service and Sacrifice.”

The event, which took place at the Mission's Headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur, was attended by UNAMID's Joint Special Representative (JSR), Jeremiah Mamabolo, the newly appointed Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR), Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho, the Deputy Wali (Governor) of North Darfur, Mr. Mohammed Birama Hassab Alnubi, representatives of internally displaced persons as well as the Mission's military, police and civilian staff.

Highpoints of the events included a military and police parade, lowering of the AU and UN, Sudan flags; observance of a minute of silence as well as a wreath-laying ceremony

in honour of peacekeepers who lost their lives in the line of duty. Children from Abou Shouk IDP Camp in north Darfur performed a peace song with a contemporary drama performance by Ashwag Al Salam group being the grand finale.

JSR Jeremiah Mamabolo conveyed the UN Secretary-General's message on the occasion, stating that “United Nations peacekeeping is a proven investment in global peace, security and prosperity and we pay tribute to the fourteen missions working around the clock today to protect people and advance the cause of peace. We also are committed to reinforcing the important role our forces must play in promoting human rights and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.”

In his remarks, the Deputy Wali (Governor) of North Darfur, Mr.

Mohammed Birama Hassab Alnubi, expressed his Government's readiness to work closely with UNAMID to achieve lasting peace and stability in Darfur.

Omda (Community Leader) who is also the Chief Native Administrator in Abou Shouk IDP Camp, Yahya Mohamed Adam, expressed his gratitude to UNAMID for its role in peacekeeping and protection of civilians in Darfur.

29 May is celebrated annually worldwide as International Day of UN Peacekeepers to pay tribute to all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations for their high level of professionalism, dedication, and courage and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace.

UNAMID organizes interactive installations and a photo exhibition in El Fasher, North Darfur



UNAMID's Communication and Public Information Section organized a photo and cultural exhibition On 24 and 25 April 2018, at the Mission's headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur, as part of its current campaign "Together for Peace". The event was included a handicraft market benefiting local artists. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

On 24 to 25 April 2018, UNAMID's Communication and Public Information Section organized a peaceful coexistence festival as well as a photo exhibition with interactive installations of a traditional Darfuri village at the Mission's headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. The event was held under the theme "Together for Peace."

The activities also included traditional songs by local musicians, performances by cultural groups while renowned Sudanese musician Shomoos Ibrahim sang peace songs.

Additionally, participants of the UNAMID-facilitated Darfuri Women Talking Peace campaign signed a peace pledge. Other attractions included a local handicrafts market

where women's groups put up their creations for sale. Information and educational materials were distributed among the attendees as well.

Speaking on the occasion, Fayiha Karameldin, Presidential Commissioner for Women and Children in North Darfur, expressed the government's readiness to collaborate with UNAMID to work for development and peaceful coexistence in Darfur

In his remarks, Carlos Araujo, Chief, Communications and Public Information, UNAMID, stated that the objectives of the Mission's outreach activities is to sensitize local populations about UNAMID's interventions across Darfur. On her part, Musi Khumalo, Head,

UNAMID Publications and Multimedia explained the event is an opportunity for the local community to interact with UNAMID staff and thanked the women from Abu Shouk and Al Salam displaced persons camps as well as women representatives from the Development Centre, who participated in the exhibition.

Finally, Nafisa Ismail, displaced women's representative, called upon all people of Darfur to work for peace and stability and urged all the non-signatory movements to join the peace process. "Any step we take without peace will not be a step forward and any development without peace will not be fruitful," stated Ms. Ismail.

UNAMID hands over police post to the Government of Sudan police in West Darfur



UNAMID handed over On 23 April 2018, a police post at Al Riyadh camp for internally displaced persons in El Geneina, West Darfur, to the Government of Sudan police. The project is part of the Mission's efforts aimed at strengthening rule of law and enhancing security in the area. Photo by Elsadiq Daud, UNAMID.

On 23 April 2018, UNAMID handed over a police post at Al Riyadh camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in El Geneina, West Darfur, to Government of Sudan police forces. The project is part of the Mission's efforts to strengthen rule of law and enhance security in the area. The police post is expected to help to boost the Sudanese police capacity to prevent and respond to incidents within the location.

Addressing the occasion, Luke Mhlaba, Chief of Staff, UNAMID, emphasized that rule of law and the protection of civilian populations are key ingredients in restoring peace in Darfur. "The presence of a police force upon

which the population can depend on is a critical element of rule of law, in addition to the court system," Mr. Mhlaba.

On his part, UNAMID Police Reform Adviser, Hatim Taraneh, noted that the project reflects close cooperation between Government of Sudan police and UNAMID police personnel and is an example of peacebuilding initiatives in Darfur. "The project is the fruit of mutual cooperation between Government of Sudan police authorities and UNAMID, and falls under the Mission's ongoing capacity-building initiatives aimed at enabling local police to serve their communities more effectively, he stated.

Lieutenant Abdurrahman Sirelkhathim, Representative, Government of Sudan Police, explained that the police post is expected to contribute significantly towards enhancing security and stability in Al Riyadh and neighboring areas.

UNAMID's Police component focuses on supporting the physical protection of civilians, facilitating delivery of humanitarian assistance, and creating protective environment by building the capacities of the Sudanese Police Force in Darfur. Furthermore, they implement community policing ventures in collaboration with UN Country Team.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and AU Commissioner for Peace and Security conduct joint visit to Sudan



Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, concluded on 10 April 2018, their trip to Sudan with a visit to ZamZam camp for internally displaced persons near El Fasher, North Darfur. In the picture, Smail Chergui addresses community leaders at the camp. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID

On 10 April 2018, the United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the African Union (AU) Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, concluded a joint visit to Sudan, which aimed at strengthening the important partnership between the UN and the AU, as emphasized by both UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat.

Upon their arrival in Khartoum, USG Lacroix and Ambassador Chergui held discussions with various interlocutors on the overall situation

in Darfur and the implementation of UNAMID's mandate, including the Mission's ongoing reconfiguration. They attended the 25th meeting of the Tripartite Coordination Mechanism on UNAMID on 8 April. The Mechanism, composed of representatives of the Government of Sudan (GoS), the AU and the UN, is a forum at the strategic level aimed at resolving issues and challenges related to UNAMID.

Additionally, USG Lacroix and Ambassador Chergui held meetings with government officials, including the Sudanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ibrahim Ghandour before travelling to Darfur on 9 April 2018,

where they met Acting Wali of North Darfur, Mohamed Braima; spoke to members of the local and international media as well as visited ZamZam displaced persons' camp, near El Fasher, North Darfur, where they interacted with community leaders on the current security situation as well as other concerns.

This joint visit to Sudan is part of a larger regional--USG Lacroix and Commissioner Chergui are visiting Bangui, Central African Republic, where they will meet with senior Government as well as UN and AU officials and others. They are expected to highlight the ongoing cooperation between the UN and

the AU in seeking political solutions to the country's conflict. They will also co-chair the first meeting of the International Support Group on the Central African Republic

aimed at encouraging the international community to re-engage in the peace process and support the urgent humanitarian needs of millions in the country.

USG Lacroix and Commissioner Cheruiyot will also travel to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where they will jointly brief the African Union Peace and Security Council on 13 April and meet senior AU officials. ▀

120 rural court judges trained on techniques for mediation of disputes in Darfur



Some 30 rural court judges from various localities in South Darfur recently attended a two-day UNAMID-supported workshop on Sudan civil and criminal procedural laws and mediation techniques, in Nyala, South Darfur. The training was aimed at building the capacity of rural court judges to mediate intercommunal conflicts, including land disputes. Photo by Mutaz Munafal, UNAMID.

UNAMID Rule of Law recently organized training workshops for rural court judges in four Darfur states-- El Fasher, North Darfur; El Daein, East Darfur; Zalingei, Central Darfur; and El Geneina, West Darfur. Some 120 judges received training on Sudanese laws, legal procedures and techniques for conducting successful mediation of disputes. They were also given a copy of the Legal Handbook in Arabic published by UNAMID Rule of Law, in collaboration with Sudan judiciary.

This Handbook was conceived as a guidance manual for the Rural Court Judges working in Darfur localities which can be used as a legal reference text. This book contains different aspects of Sudan civil pro-

cedure laws, criminal procedures and elements of mediation all of which are crucial for rural court judges to do their work efficiently and effectively. The 'Town and Rural Court Regulation 2004' is also included as an Annexure to the Handbook, which was released by H. E the Chief Justice of Sudan.

Rural courts are extremely relevant across Darfur because the population invests a greater level of trust on traditional justice systems than formal justice mechanisms. Rural court judges are also community leaders in their respective localities who resolve disputes, including land issues, often through mediation and reconciliation, but they are

not formally trained lawyers and lack legal knowledge.

UNAMID, within the context of its current mandate, is contributing to resolving land disputes by strengthening the capacity of rural courts to mitigate and mediate disputes on land and other conflict drivers.

Land ownership is one of the root causes of the decade-long conflict in Darfur, partly due to ill-defined land tenure systems and partly owing to the breakdown of the rule of law. According to the legal enactment of 'Town and Rural Court Regulation 2004' rural courts have jurisdiction over disputes regarding damage to farm or pasture land or livestock loss as well as cases related to disputes over land boundaries. ▀

A photograph of a person's hands writing in a small notebook on a dark, reflective table. The person is wearing a gold watch. In the background, there are several shelves filled with books, suggesting a library or study environment.

Impacting the next generation through education

BY MATILDA MOYO

Twenty-two year old Selma Suleiman has big dreams. She imagines a world where she can teach and mold thousands of young people into professionals and responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to society.



Students make use of the library at the University of Geneina, which was once a UNAMID sub-camp. Thousands of students are benefiting from the facility and look forward to a bright future after their studies. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.



The former UNAMID sub-camp is now a vibrant University campus that's churning out graduates in diverse fields, who are contributing towards the development of Darfur and Sudan at large. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.

"I am studying education because through it I want to influence the younger generation," she says.

A first year student in Education at the University of El Geneina, Selma says her studies are the first step to making her dream a reality. She is one of thousands of students for whom tertiary education and a bright future have become possible thanks to support from UNAMID.

In August 2015, UNAMID gifted its former sub-camp to El Geneina University to be used as a campus. Since then, the university has evolved into a well-reputed institution of higher learning, drawing students from various parts of Sudan and neighboring countries.

"Although I'm from Nyala town in South Darfur, I chose this university because it has a good reputation and I feel that will help me in future when I look for a job," she says with confidence.

Over the years, the University of El Geneina has grown exponentially. Narrating the institution's history, the Vice

Chancellor, Professor Eltayub Ahmed says it started with three faculties in October 2014 as part of Zalengei University and was operating from a former high school donated by the government. However, the creation of Central and West Darfur as separate states justified the need for an autonomous institution and led to the establishment of the University of El Geneina. The timely handover of UNAMID's former sub-camp in 2015 paved way for expansion and the creation of a fully-fledged university.

UNAMID Sector West Head of Office, Oumar Kane says the decision to gift the former premises to the university was made after the construction of the Mission's current super camp. UNAMID wanted the sub-camp to be used in a way that would benefit the local community, while the number of students at the university was increasing and the institution required suitable premises that could accommodate this growth, hence the

decision to hand over the premises to the institution.

"The youth are the future of this country and if we can support education in Darfur and bring together students from diverse backgrounds and cultures, that can contribute to peace building, reconciliation and development," he says.

Mr. Kane says the University of El Geneina is a contribution that UNAMID can look back at with pride because of its impact on the lives of ordinary Darfuris.

"Within three years the university has grown and now has nine faculties, which the administration feels are relevant for the people in the state," Prof. Ahmed says. These include include medicine, health and applied sciences, law, education and information among others, which are contributing towards addressing the shortage of professionals in key disciplines within the state.

The university currently has five centers of excellence, including one for Is-

Islamic Studies, Peace and Development, Strategy and Planning, Arts and Culture as well as Human and Demographic Studies. The Strategy and Planning center has become a key training hub that conducts specialized courses for state government ministries.

"We are still expanding and will be introducing studies in Agriculture and Animal Resources in Habila and Forobara respectively," Prof. Ahmed says, adding that the two team sites that UNAMID closed and handed over to the state government in October 2017 will be used for the two new faculties.

"We currently have about 8,400 students, compared to about 1,300 in 2014 when we started. Sixty percent of our students are girls while 40 percent are boys," he says, attributing the skewed demographic in favor of girls to their preference to stay close to home, unlike boys.

Beyond Darfur and Sudan, since 2017 the university has attracted a sizeable number of international students from countries such as Chad, Egypt, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and South Sudan, with more expected as the institution's reputation grows.

The students are aware of UNAMID's contribution towards their education and appreciate its impact on the development of both individuals and communities.

"UNAMID has given us the opportunity to get university education, as we would not have been able to further our studies in Khartoum because our parents cannot afford it," says Khalda Ebrahim, a 20-year-old law student. She adds that tuition is cheaper at the University of El Geneina which makes the institution cheaper and more accessible to most people.

Ahmed Arbab Bilal, a 21-year-old law student from Kongo Haraza in Beida Locality supports this view and says he chose the University of El Geneina because it is close to home and more

affordable. The third year student says the university is also better equipped and administered than similar institutions across the country, while he enjoys learning in airconditioned classrooms with access to water and power throughout the day.

Adam Ismail, a 20-year-old first year law student says he hopes to impact lives by defending the legal rights of individuals. The El Geneina-born prospective lawyer says by gifting its former sub-camp for use as a university, UNAMID has made tertiary education accessible in his home town, which is a worthwhile investment in the community.

"UNAMID is supporting the young generation and improving our lives through education. They have helped us to set a good foundation by supporting the university in this town," he says.

These sentiments are echoed by Saad Mohamed, 35, who is studying law because he would like to work for civil society and help people to access their rights by providing legal advice.

"This is one of the biggest projects that UNAMID has supported and we are pleased with it because as the com-

munity, we are aware of the Mission's contribution towards improving our lives," he says, adding that young people who would have been idle are now preoccupied with studying and investing in their future.

"We also want people from other localities to come and study here then return to their homes and help to develop their communities," Mohamed adds.

Beyond academic studies, the university also has sporting facilities for football, volley ball and ping pong. In 2017, regional games for 1200 from all over Darfur participated in tournaments hosted by the university.

"We are grateful for these facilities and we are constantly looking for ways to improve," Prof. Ahmed says.

He adds that the mission of universities is produce knowledge and develop ideas, hence their vital role in development and the University of El Geneina is making such a contribution through its diverse and relevant faculties.

Most of the graduates are absorbed by government ministries and local companies, thus contributing to the economy. ■

A student writes an examination at the University of Geneina. The institution has afforded thousands of Darfuri students the opportunity to get tertiary education and contribute to improving their communities. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.



Interview with UNAMID Force Commander

UNAMID Force Commander, Lt General Leonard Ngondi, shares his thoughts on the Mission's current reconfiguration exercise, with special focus on the complex role of the Military component in this herculean exercise.

INTERVIEW BY MUSI KHUMALO



UNAMID Force Commander, Lt General Leonard Ngondi, working at his office in UNAMID's headquarters, El Fasher, North Darfur, on 26 April 2018. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.



On 8 August, 2017, Lt General Leonard Muriuki Ngondi of Kenya was appointed Force Commander of UNAMID by the UN Secretary-General and African Union Commission Chairperson.

In this interview with Voices of Darfur, Lt General Ngondi, talks in detail about the ongoing reconfiguration of the Mission and related adjustments in the structure and operations the Military component is making to conform to the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)'s 2363 two-pronged approach involving peacekeeping in the Jebel Marra area and Stabilization/Peacebuilding for the rest of Darfur.

MK: The first phase of UNAMID reconfiguration entailed military component reduction, with the requisite closure of 11 Team Sites. How is UNAMID Military coping with its assignments in this reduced form?

FC: UNAMID is currently implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2363 (2017) in two phases – the first phase involved Mission reconfiguration into the ‘two-pronged approach’ which comprises peacekeeping in Jebel Marra where armed elements of Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA)-Abdul Wahid Nur operate and peacebuilding/stabilization for the rest of Darfur. The Mission has progressed well with the first phase where the re-

quirements were for the Military component to reduce by three Battalions. In fact, we have surpassed that figure as we have repatriated not only three Battalions from Pakistan, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, but closed the Mongolian Level 2 Hospital too. Additionally, we have closed and handed over 11 Team Sites to the Government of Sudan (GoS) as required by UNSCR 2363.

UNAMID Military is currently operating as a reduced security force. The impact of this reduction is mostly felt by former recipients of our services. However, we are not deterred in our commitment to the Mission’s mandate and continue to operate with remaining capabilities.



UNAMID Force Commander, Lieutenant-General, Leonard Ngondi (second right), conducted on 25 April 2018, an operational visit to Golo, Central Darfur, where he met the local authorities and inspected progress made in the construction of the Mission's Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in the area. Photo by Marong Lamin, UNAMID.

“The third and most important issue is the establishment of Golo Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in the middle of the Jebel Marra area where we have not had easy access before.”

officer posts, in order to reach the required strength.

UNAMID Military has in effect re-configured and structured itself to adapt to the two-pronged approach. According to the new structure, the Military now has only two Sectors – the peacekeeping Sector in the Jebel Marra Task Force area of operation and the other Sector, comprising the rest of Darfur. We adopted that structure from 1 March 2018, with the reduction of the three Sector Headquarters in North, East and West Darfur, to facilitate establishment of two Sectors in the Area of Responsibility.

The third and most important issue is the establishment of Golo Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in the middle of the Jebel Marra area where we have not had easy access before. The Mission felt that in order to have effective peacekeeping operations in the area, we need to establish a base in that area as a matter of urgency, which we have since achieved following the GoS's allocation of a plot of land on 28 January this year. Within one week of the allotment of the land, UNAMID Military moved in and started mobilizing the construction of the TOB by our engineers. The construction will be completed soon despite the challenges associated with construction in virgin land. As far as UNAMID Military is concerned, we started operating the moment we landed in Golo but other Mission components will eventually

join us when construction is complete. The Military is now anchored at the TOB and is already conducting its peacekeeping operations in terms of facilitation of humanitarian aid to the local community.

MK: How has UNAMID Military engaged with other Mission components and external interlocutors, especially during this ongoing reconfiguration process?

FC: UNAMID is an integrated mission where uniformed personnel and civilians work in a collaborative manner. No component can achieve the Mission's mandate on its own. All components need each other. Collaboration is key. As an integrated Mission, Military, Police and Civilians work in a very coordinated way to achieve set goals and we acknowledge that the Military provides the glue that binds the Mission together. Military is proud of its achievements in this regard.

The Mission also works with the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the Government as the Mission sections have experts who can deal efficiently with the Government, the UNCT and the general populace.

MK: Can you highlight any achievements and challenges UNAMID Military has encountered during this restructuring process? How is the Military coping?

FC: I can confidently state that the objectives set by UN Security Council Resolution 2363 (2017) are being

MK: The Mission is now in its second stage of reconfiguration, what does this involve in terms of Military operational adjustments?

FC: The second phase is actually the final phase of this reconfiguration exercise during which we must attain the figure of 8735 troops assigned by the [UN] Security Council by end of June 2018. This target involves an additional reduction of three more Battalions with a strong possibility of further reduction of forces to attain above figure. The three Battalions targeted for reduction in the second phase are from Ethiopia, Senegal and Rwanda. In addition, the Engineering Battalion will be reduced, including almost 100 staff



On a recent visit to Sortony, North Darfur, UNAMID Force Commander, Lieutenant-General Leonard Ngondi, assessed the security situation and was briefed on issues related to displaced persons, farmers and herders in the area. He also discussed operational challenges faced by peacekeepers at the Mission's Gathering Site. The Force Commander's visit, which took place on 27 February 2018, is part of the Mission's continued efforts to protect civilians affected by displacement and conflict across Darfur. Photo by Ansumana Colley, UNAMID.

achieved despite existent challenges but we acknowledge that there will always be challenges in any operational environment.

Military experienced challenges in its troop repatriation exercise undertaken during the rainy season. The exercise was tough due to the rough state of the local roads and lack of state infrastructure. The other major challenge was on the adherence to the proposed reconfiguration structure which all Mission components were supposed to conform to. However, despite all the attendant challenges, we still persevere and retain that integrity of working as a team.

The Military has also put in place extra protocols, in terms of having coordination teams to ensure that whenever the area of responsibility cuts across any other component's responsibility, there is a coordination team to ensure that everyone has the radar of what the Military is doing in their respective radius and if they have to plug in on the Military necessity, they plug

in as appropriately as possible to ensure timely implementation.

MK: Is it too early to assess the impact of this reconfiguration on the host community?

FC: UNAMID has delivered its services to the needy communities in its AoR in an effective manner, although communities residing in areas where the Mission has withdrawn probably really feel the Mission's absence.

The Darfur region is challenged as far as the economy, the terrain, the weather, safety, security and humanitarian support are concerned. The host Government, despite its concerted efforts, does not have adequate institutional capacity to deliver basic social services. Other international aid organizations also lack full capacity to deliver the required support. Indeed, that is why UNAMID is strongly advocating for a transitional plan that would facilitate the conduct of a needs assessment and available capacity in the region to facilitate the passing on of the baton when UNAMID eventually departs.

“The second phase is actually the final phase of this reconfiguration exercise, during which we must attain the figure of 8735 troops assigned by the [UN] Security Council by end of June 2018.”

MK: The United Nations is committed to gender equality, zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, the protection of human rights, and respect for the rule of law among others. How has UNAMID Military component encouraged upholding these values?

FC: Discipline is the cornerstone of any military. This is what makes the military different from other professions. Obedience to instructions, to orders as well as observance of UN rules and regulations or related on



UNAMID Force Commander, Lieutenant-General, Leonard Ngondi, handed over on 23 May 2018, a rehabilitated classrooms, a drinking water tank as well as educational materials and sport equipment to Zu Alnorin Basic School for boys in El Fasher, North Darfur. The project, implemented by the Mission's Nepalese peacekeepers, is part of UNAMID's continued support to education across Darfur. Photo by Marong Lamin, UNAMID.

the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse are all part of Military culture. UNAMID has actually conducted itself quite well in this regard because for the last three years, no single allegation or report of sexual exploitation and abuse has been laid against the Military. Again, discipline is key in keeping the soldiers focused on mandate implementation and the need for them to fully respect the local culture and the people they came to serve.

On gender equality in the Military force, note that any General in any army fights with the force availed to him. In UNAMID, the Force Commander fights with the troops he has been given by the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs). Some of the TCCs' deployments are very masculine (male dominated), whilst others are trying their very best to maintain the gender balance. Advocacy is still the best way through which TCCs could be further encouraged to increase female participation during troop deployment. The current trends points to a marked improvement in this area but the pace could be faster.

Currently, UNAMID Military has 3.9% female participation in its force. Our figure always vacillates between 3% and 4% females of the total number of the Force. It is worth noting though that although we do not have a comfortable balance in the genders, the mainstreaming of gender issues is part of our daily planning and operations. We should all continue to advocate for the correct gender balance in our military work, to urge men and women to work together for peace and security in our countries, our forces and anywhere in the world where we operate. Peace is likely to be achieved when everyone is involved.

MK: Any message of encouragement to your forces and also to the people of Darfur?

FC: I am very proud to be part of UNAMID, more so being a soldier. I am very proud of my colleagues, the soldiers who operate tirelessly to achieve the given mandate, despite the challenges. We know that soldiers are not there to work in a comfortable zone. They are deployed in conflict areas, trouble

zones and tasked to bring peace and security and improve the quality of life to the host communities. So, I urge them to remain steadfast on mandate implementation which should be delivered as one with all other UNAMID components and continue, as the Military, to provide the glue that binds us together.

For the people of Darfur, know that the solution to the conflict is not out of reach. The best approach is to focus on the solution to the underlying problems in this region and find amicable ways to resolve them. Various strategies are currently on the negotiation table, we urge the people to take advantage of this window of opportunity to achieve durable peace in the region.

I would also like to say "Thank You" to the people of Darfur for allowing us to serve them. We look forward to serving them further knowing that they are our brothers and sisters needing our support at this critical juncture of their lives. We will continue to provide support, as needed, to ensure that sustainable peace is attained and quality of life is improved.

UNAMID ODO: Assisting Victims of Explosive Remnants of War

BY SALAH MOHAMMED





The risk of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) is real in Darfur. These are deadly objects. In February 2018, two children were killed by an ERW incident at their School in El Fasher, North Darfur. Seif El Dein and Mohamadeen Musa, both 11 years old, found a hand grenade while they were playing, as boys usually do. Unbeknown to them that this is a dangerous item, they examined the grenade and it exploded, killing them instantly. “ERW are not toys, they are the consequences of conflict. They can kill and injure as surely as actual battles do. The best way to prevent deaths and injuries is to find and destroy all known ERW”, says Mr. Jeffrey McMurdo, Programme Manager, and UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office (ODO).



UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Kingsley Mamabolo, presented on 15 January 2018, an appreciation award to Abel Tesfai, on behalf of the Mission's Ordnance Disposal Office (ODO). The award recognizes an ODO project that aims to educate people in remote areas of Darfur about the dangers of explosive remnants of war. The solar-powered Risk Education Talking Device – which contains audio material designed in part for people who may not be able to read -- also received a 2017 UN Secretary-General's Award. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

Recently, six children were also killed and two others seriously injured when Unexploded Ordnance (UXOs) exploded on 6 May 2018, while a group of children, aged between 4 – 14 years of age were playing with the object at Karkar village in Um Dukhun locality, Central Darfur. A tragic incident indeed but one that could have been avoided with prior knowledge on how to deal with UXOs.

18-year-old, Hussein Muhajer from El Fasher, North Darfur, is a survivor of an ERW incident that occurred in El Fasher, north Darfur

in 2015. In this instance, Hussein grabbed an object from his younger brother and while examining it, the object exploded blowing off his right hand fingers in the process. Following his recovery process, Hussein is now a strong advocate for the destruction of ERW and dedicates his time to urge people in his community, particularly children, to refrain from touching or handling unknown objects and advises them to report any strange objects found in the streets to the local police. “I consider myself very lucky because now I know

that ERW, when it explodes, it kills or maims people”, says Hussein.

Higazi Ibrahim, Victim Assistant officer, UNAMID ODO, relates how whilst they visiting one of the ERW victims at El Fasher Hospital, Hussein Muhajer was brought to the same hospital with serious injuries caused by an ERW explosion in which, sadly, he lost all the fingers on his right hand. After a long treatment period, Hussein was rehabilitated psychologically and physically, eventually returning to school. “UNAMID ODO assisted Hussein’s family with an income generating project

in the form of a small grocery shop meant to assist Hussein to continue his education and complete his treatment”, explains Mr. Ibrahim.

“Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) are a serious threat to the safety and security of UNAMID personnel, local population and humanitarian personnel during the delivery of humanitarian aid in Darfur. Remnants of war are spread out in all Darfur states, particularly in the areas affected by the conflict and are sometimes found in the streets and in farming areas. We always urge people to remain alert, vigilant at all times and that when they spot an ERW or any suspicious looking item, they shouldn’t touch it under any circumstances but immediately report the issue to the local police or UNAMID ODO”, emphasized Mr. Ibrahim.

To reduce the occurrence of such incidents, since 2005 to date, UNMAS has conducted more than 2130 ERW risk education sessions targeting local communities, especially children, across Darfur. Additionally during the same period, UNAMID ODO has registered that 349 people have been injured and 152 others killed as a result of ERW accidents. Types of unexploded devices found in Darfur include mortar rounds, tank and artillery projectiles, hand grenades, rocket-propelled grenades, aircraft rockets, ground-launched rockets, and sub-munitions. These unexploded remnants of conflict not only pose a direct risk to civilians, but indirectly obstruct the delivery of humanitarian aid, hindering the organised and safe return of refugees and internally displaced people, and preventing farmers from cultivating their land. In addition to focusing on raising awareness about ERW directly and through the assistance of its partners, UNAMID supports victims

“ERW are not toys, they are the consequences of conflict. They can kill and injure as surely as actual battles do. The best way to prevent deaths and injuries is to find and destroy all known ERW”

through an assistance programme designed to fund the rehabilitation of those injured in ERW incidents. This programme is designed to ensure that the families affected by these incidents get the economic and social assistance they need. In its pilot project in North Darfur, UNAMID ODO provided income generating support to 20 ERW victims. The identified victims were provided with water vending materials, grocery shops, and animal breeding

projects to enable them to become economically empowered and continue their treatment in the future.

“Risk education teams are very active in all five states of Darfur and are responsible for raising awareness at all levels. It is also our responsibility to clear the contaminated areas of ERW and make them safe so that people can go about their normal activities without fear or threat,” stated Shaza Ragab, UNAMID ODO focal point on ERW risk education in North Darfur state.

Ms. Ragab further stated that UNAMID ODO visits schools and sensitizes children through drama and songs and other art forms of community theatre on the dangers of ERW. “Through close collaboration and coordination with the Ministry of Education, ODO trains teachers on approaches, knowledge and precautions on ERW. They, in turn, impart this knowledge to the local community,” explains Ms. Ragab.

Additionally, since radio is the most common and effective medium of information and communication in Darfur, ODO usually informs, educates and communi-

18-year-old, Hussein Muhajer (left), is a survivor of an ERW incident that occurred in El Fasher, north Darfur. Muhajer receives a grocery shop items from UNAMID ODO as part of the income generation projects. UNAMID photo.





A UNAMID-contracted team is pictured during a recent ordnance demolition process at a government military shooting range in Adarr, West Darfur. The operation was conducted under the supervision of UNAMID's Ordnance Disposal Office and the Sudanese Armed Forces . The Mission continues to destroy explosive remnants of war (ERW) across Darfur as part of its mandate to protect civilians. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.

cates to the people of Darfur on safer behaviors through live and recorded programmes broadcast by UNAMID Radio on Darfur FM Radio, which reaches more than two million people in Darfur.

Nada Alazhar, a Sudanese NGO is an example of the kind of risk-awareness education programmes undertaken in Darfur by other non-state partners. Mr. Alhadi Abdallah Adam, Director of Nada Alazhar in North Darfur office, explains that previously, there was a high percentage of ERW incidents reported in rural areas or on the outskirts of towns where children play or graze their family's animals but that "due to the intensive awareness program implemented in close coordination with UNAMID ODO since 2013, these incidents have re-

duced", explains Mr. Adam.

To raise awareness among the local population in Darfur, UNAMID's Ordnance Disposal Office (ODO) has also developed a 'Solar Powered Risk Education Talking Device' (RETD) which has the ability to play multiple pre-recorded explosive remnants of war awareness materials such as songs, drama, interviews and focus group discussions. It is particularly suitable for use when engaging people across the vulnerable communities in Darfur in the language they understand.

This initiative has been recognized by the UN Secretary-General and it is helping to raise awareness in Darfur about the dangers of explosive remnants of war.

The RETD device is a solar-powered audio talking device through which improved and risk education

and innovative methods such as the RETD, at-risk communities across Darfur are able to receive messages in a more cost effective manner. The first phase of the project is designed to benefit 75,000 people and by June 2018 the project will cover over 200,000 at-risk people across Darfur, mainly children and women.

Jeffrey McMurdo, Programme Manager, UNAMID ODO, said that the RETD project aims to disseminate risk education messages widely across Darfur. This includes areas that have traditionally been hard to reach by the national risk education teams, either due to lack of road infrastructure or because of the security situation.

Abel Tesfai, an ODO staff member who developed the project concept, explained that raising awareness through technology is a good



People gather at a celebratory event on 28 February 2018, declaring Kereinik locality, West Darfur, free of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. This event, organized by the National Mine Action Centre and supported by UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office, marks the second such community safety and stabilization milestone in West Darfur, following the successful completion of a similar exercise in Forobaranga in 2017. Photo by Elsadiq Daud, UNAMID.

fit for insecure areas, with the RETD being an effective tool for reaching isolated communities.

UNAMID's ODO personnel have taken bold steps to clear large tracts of land of ERW in Darfur. From 2005 to the present, ODO officers assessed more than 3891 square kilometers of land and more than 24,980 kilometers of roadways, declaring them ordnance-free. In the process, they destroyed 22,043 UXOs and trained more than 1,220,346 people have received mine risk education. It is worth noting that between 2017 and 2018, UNAMID ODO has cleared all known ERW affected areas in Foro Baranga and Kereinik localities in West Darfur and declared both localities free of all known Explosive Remnants of War.

UNAMID's ODO personnel con-

“Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) are a serious threat to the safety and security of UNAMID personnel, local population and humanitarian personnel during the delivery of humanitarian aid in Darfur”

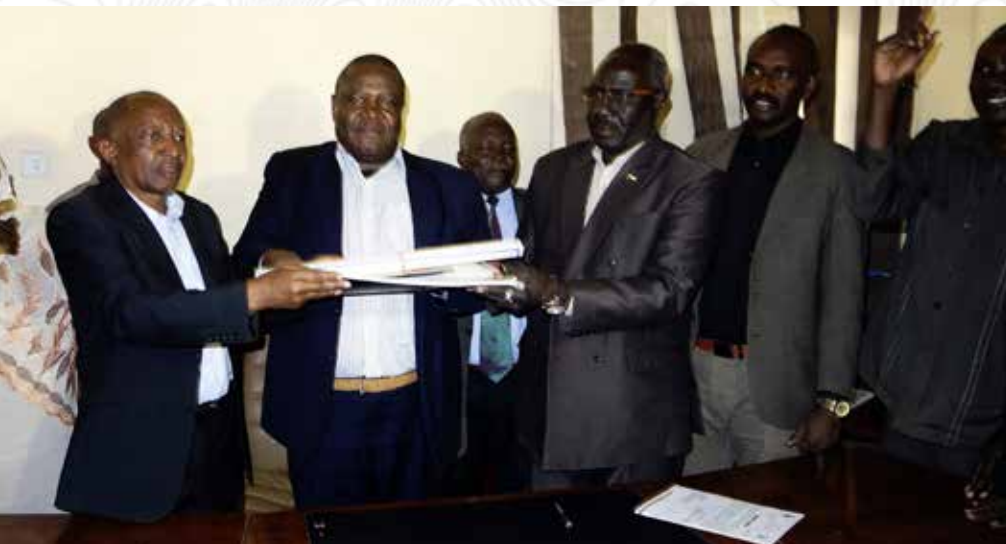
tinue to work closely with other UNAMID components, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), international and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and Government institutions to help raise awareness about the issue and reduce the risk of injury from unexploded ordnance.

UNMAS (United Nations Mine Action Service) began its operations in Darfur in 2005 and through UNAMID ODO, has delivered risk edu-

cation to conflict-affected populations. UNAMID ODO pays particular focus on vulnerable groups such as hosting communities, returnees, internally displaced persons and children, along with peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel. Beside education and sensitization campaigns and destruction of ERW, UNAMID ODO has also been supporting victims/survivors of ERW through psychological counselling, treatment and vocational training. ■

UNAMID Temporary Operating Base in Golo, Central Darfur, taking shape

UN Security Council Resolution's 2363 (2017) involves adoption of a two-pronged approach comprising peacekeeping in the Jebel Mara area and Stabilization/Peacebuilding for the rest of Darfur. The Mission felt that in order to have effective peacekeeping operations in the area, it needs to establish a Temporary Operating Base (TOB) there as a matter of urgency. This has been achieved following the GoS's allocation of a plot of land on 28 January this year. Within one week of the allotment of the land, UNAMID Military moved in and started mobilizing the construction of the TOB by its Engineers. It is anticipated that the construction of the ToB will be completed soon despite challenges associated with construction in virgin land. The new site will enable the Mission to work closely with the



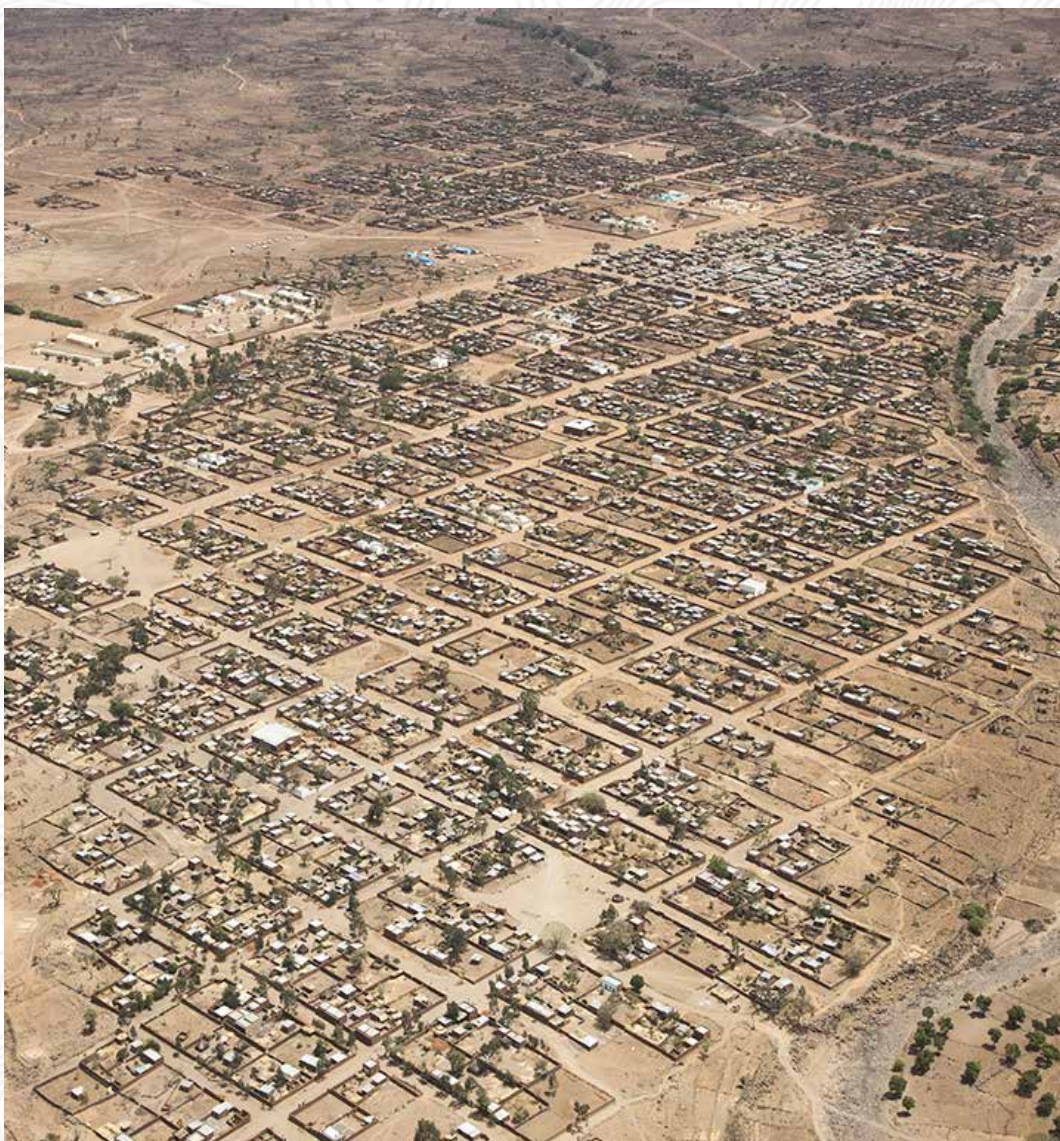


■ PHOTO STORY

Government of Sudan to enhance security, peace and stability in and around Jebel Marra area ruled by armed movement.

UNAMID Military started operating the moment its troops landed in Golo. The troops are now anchored at the TOB and already conducting peacekeeping operations in terms of facilitation of humanitarian aid to the local community.







An Interview with Artist Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry

Forty-two-year old Mohamoud Elmasry, was born in El Daien, East Darfur. He attended Algharbiya Basic School and Alshamaliya Secondary School in the same town, although he did not get a chance to further his studies through tertiary education.

BY GAMAL HAMAD

Mohamoud's talent was evident from an early age, as he gravitated towards painting, while demonstrating his love and unique skill in the art form. His family and teachers quickly recognized his gift and encouraged him to take it up seriously. Since then he has been involved in fine arts and now earns a living through his paintings. Mohamoud

is currently a member of the Forum of Sudanese Association of Painters and dreams of setting up a Fine Arts School for his community.

VoD: What attracted you to the field of fine arts and what motivates you to continue in this field?

Mahmoud: Initially, drawing was a hobby for me when I started dabbling in art as a boy. Personal

circumstances and positive feedback on my early work from my friends and close family members, most of whom were artists, channeled me towards taking art more seriously. My teachers at primary school also recognized my talent when I used to paint on the school walls. Painting therefore became part of my life and, over time, I



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honed my skills and focused on drawing for peace, as well as painting children and nature.

As artists, we do not have any political, tribal or ethnic affiliation, and should only be guided and inspired by our human conscience. As painters, we express the suffering of the people through our paintings because we can fully capture their innermost thoughts and emotions, regardless of their tribes, ethnic origin or political affiliation.

We also support the poor in our communities through selling our art work on the market and donating the proceeds towards initiatives that assist vulnerable people in various parts of Darfur, particularly those living in camps for internally

- 1 *A paint created by Artist Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry, who is currently a member of the Forum for Sudanese Painters and dreams of setting up a Fine Arts School for his community. Photo by Hassan Ishag, UNAMID.*
- 2 *Art work created by Artist Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry, who is currently a member of the Forum for Sudanese Painters and dreams of setting up a Fine Arts School for his community. Photo by Hassan Ishag, UNAMID.*
- 3 *Artist Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry, paints at UM Aldiyar Park in El Daein. Mr. Elmasry speaks to Voices of Darfur about the origins of his love for painting, his philanthropic support to his local community and the challenges faced by artists in East Darfur. Photo by Hassan Ishag, UNAMID.*

displaced persons (IDP).

For example, following the recent fire outbreak at Neem IDPs camp in East Darfur a few months ago, fellow artists and I contributed our work for sale, with proceeds being used to provide relief for the affected families.

VoD: How is your passion for painting contributing to peace building in Darfur?

Mahmoud: All my paintings reflect and urge people to contribute to and strive for peace. I have also personally contributed to building peace and peaceful coexistence in



Artist Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry, paints at UM Aldiyar Park in El Daein. Mr. Elmasry speaks to Voices of Darfur about the origins of his love for painting, his philanthropic support to his local community and the challenges faced by artists in East Darfur. Photo by Hassan Ishag, UNAMID.

Darfur in general, and East Darfur in particular, through many paintings and drawings such as wall murals on streets, at schools and in public areas. These painting have a strong message that encourages people to live together peacefully, renounce violence and opt for peaceful means to resolve their differences rather than resort to violence.

During the recent local arms collection exercise, I painted murals on street walls to encourage people to cooperate and participate voluntarily in this important process.

Most of my artwork and paintings embody the tolerant culture of Darfurians, and encourage people to cooperate and help those in need, irrespective of tribe and social status. I especially encourage what we locally call “nafir,” which simply means a gathering of people to assist one another to complete tasks on the farms during the farming season.

VoD: What are the challenges

that artists face in their work in East Darfur?

Mahmoud: Although some successes have been registered in the past in the area of fine arts, huge challenges remain for artists in my field, particularly in East Darfur. These include, amongst others, the absence of financial and moral support from government, lack of painting tools, materials and equipment, as well as the unavailability of technical essentials such as paints and other supplies.

The other difficulty we face is the absence of fine arts educational institutions for aspiring artists, as well as the lack of exhibition opportunities to showcase our work. This contributes to the general population’s lack of awareness and interest in the field, as they are largely ignorant about the value of fine arts to our society. All these challenges have contributed to the decline or lack of interest in fine arts and painting in East Darfur, and this is

reflected in dearth of arts products from the state in region-wide and national competitions.

VoD: What are your future plans?

Mahmoud: As a matter of fact, I have many plans for the future. These plans relate to the further development and advancement of fine arts and painting in our state and beyond. I intend to catch up with new technology in my field and to switch to using digital art software for my paintings, instead of traditional equipment.

I also plan to set up a Photo and Painting Exhibition Centre for the people of East Darfur, which will reflect and include the cultural heritage and legacy of Darfur. In the future, I also cherish the dream of establishing a training institution for Fine Arts in East Darfur to facilitate formal education and training for future generations in fine arts. This is a legacy worth leaving in my community where I have spent most of my life painting.



Artist Mohamoud Dafalla Elmasry is pictured at UM Aldiyar Park in El Daein, East Darfur. Photo by Hassan Ishag, UNAMID.



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