



# VOICES

of Darfur

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## **Walking for Peace:** An interview with the Sudanese-American poet Eimtithal Ibrahim



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

**Towards a new phase:  
UNAMID's Jebel Marra Task Force**

**Highlights On Peacekeeping:  
An interview with UNAMID Acting  
Deputy Joint Special Representative,  
Peter Schumann**

**The Struggle for Women's  
Rights in Darfur**

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## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NOTE

**I'm pleased** to introduce the March 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*, Peter Schumann, former Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative, highlights the importance of UNAMID's Jebel Marra Task Force and the Temporary Operation Base in Golo, Central Darfur, including his relationship with Sudan and Darfur, in particular.

The feature article entitled: 'Jebel Mara Task Force and Golo Temporary Operating Base: Towards a New Phase of UNAMID', focusses on UNAMID's efforts to enhance its provision of protection of civilians in the area through the two-pronged approach, combining peacekeeping and stabilization-oriented tasks as stipulated in UNSCR 2363, which will play a pivotal role in fostering peace, security and stability as well as helping to improve humanitarian conditions in the greater Jebel Mara area.

In another feature entitled: 'The Struggle for

Women's Rights in Darfur', we highlight the impact of the armed conflict on women in Darfur and the Life in the IDPs camps which made women vulnerable to unacceptable levels of sexual and gender based violence as women travel out of the camps for water and firewood and in the process sometimes get raped or abused.

The collation of photographs, focusing on the UNAMID's Community Outreach Unit's regular school visits in the Mission's Area of Responsibility, to promote peace and peaceful coexistence among school children as well as raising awareness on the Mission's mandate and the reconfiguration process.

Finally, in our cover feature, 'Walking for Peace', *Voices of Darfur* presents an interview with the Sudanese -American poet Eimtithal Ibrahim, who speaks about her love for Darfur and her commitment to the cause of peace. As *Voices of Darfur* continues to evolve as a news magazine, we welcome your feedback. To send comments by email, please put "Letters to the Editor / Voices of Darfur" in the subject line and send the email to: [unamid-publicinformation@un.org](mailto:unamid-publicinformation@un.org).

**Carlos Araujo**

Chief

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## ON THE COVER



The Philadelphia-based Darfuri, Ms. Eimtithal Mahmoud interacts with University students before start walking a distance of approximately 1,600 kilometers from El Fasher, North Darfur, to Khartoum as part of her Peace Dreams campaign. Photo by Amin Ismail, 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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## MISSION LEADERSHIP



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Priscilla Makotose  
(Zimbabwe)  
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Commissioner

## Discussions with local community leaders and state leadership focus of high-level UNAMID visit to East Darfur



*As part of efforts to support peaceful coexistence across Darfur, UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Jeremiah Mamabolo is pictured with members of the Ma'alia and Rezeigat communities in El Daein, East Darfur. The meeting took place on 5 February 2018 and was part of JSR Mamabolo's extensive agenda which included discussions with native administration leaders, displaced persons, women's groups and youth representatives in the region. Photo by Hassan Ishag, UNAMID.*

**UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR),** Jeremiah Mamabolo, accompanied by senior UNAMID staff recently concluded a two-day visit to El-Daein, East Darfur, which took place on 5-6 February 2018. While in East Darfur, JSR Mamabolo focused on discussions with local authorities, Native Administration leaders, displaced persons and women's and youth representatives.

The Acting Wali (Governor) of East Darfur, Hashim Elwagee, briefed the JSR on progress made in the security situation across East Darfur through fruitful collab-

orations with UNAMID and reiterated his government's gratitude for the Mission's steadfast support. Furthermore, Dr. Elwagee called for continued partnerships with the Mission to ensure the successful implementation of the Sudanese government's stabilization and development agenda.

In his remarks, JSR Mamabolo, while commending the productive relationship between UNAMID and the state government, appealed for redoubling efforts in the interest of the vulnerable and the community as a whole. In this regard, he urged all stakeholders

and communities "to collaborate and support the ongoing arms collection campaign, so that peace can be sustained."

Upon meeting JSR Mamabolo, El Fadil Saeed, Deputy Nazir of the Rezeigat, acknowledged past inter-communal conflicts between the Ma'alia and the Rezeigat and averred that UNAMID's proactive engagements with both groups and the ongoing arms collection campaign have greatly improved social relationships between the two traditional rivals.

Additionally, Mr. Saeed submitted two proposals—one for the

education of children from nomadic communities and the other, advocating for the establishment of a peace museum in El Daein to

support conflict-resolution among the diverse local population.

JSR Mamabolo also visited El Neem camp for the displaced to

obtain a firsthand update on the condition of the displaced people residing there since the camp's establishment in 2004.

## Government of Sudan hands over land for the establishment of a UNAMID temporary operating base in Golo, Central Darfur



*Government of Sudan authorities officially handed over on 28 January 2018, a suitable location to UNAMID, for the establishment of a temporary base in Golo, Central Darfur, as per the Mission's mandate. In the picture, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo (centre), and the Wali (Governor) of Central Darfur, Ja'afar Abdul Hakam (left) look at site plans in Golo. Photo by Kone Mouroulaye, UNAMID.*

**On 28 January 2018**, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, officially received a suitable location allocated by the Government of Sudan for the establishment of the Mission's temporary operating base in Golo, Jebel Marra, Central Darfur.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the Central Jebel Marra Locality Commissioner's office in Golo by Lameck Kawiche, Head of Office, UNAMID Sector Central, on behalf of UNAMID, and

by the Wali (Governor) of Central Darfur, Ja'afar Abdul Hakam Ishaq, on behalf of the Sudanese government.

Speaking at the ceremony, JSR Mamabolo, thanked the Government of Sudan and the Wali of Central Darfur for their support in implementing the Mission's mandate as delineated by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2363.

Mr. Mamabolo added that UNAMID and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) will work together

on community-based and development-oriented projects in the Jebel Marra area, in accordance to the Mission's peacekeeping and stabilization goals. "UNAMID aims to start constructing the temporary base in Golo immediately," said the JSR.

On his part, Mr. Ishaq urged the Mission to support existing law enforcement and judicial institutions in the area and reiterated the Government's commitment to facilitate UNAMID's activities in the Jebel Marra region.

## UNAMID Acting Deputy Head visits East Darfur



UNAMID Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative (ADJSR), Peter Schumann, conducted on 11 February 2018, a two-day visit to El Daein, East Darfur, where he met the Wali (Governor), the Deputy Nazir of the Southern Rezeigat, native administration leaders and representatives of displaced persons as well as women's groups. Photo by Abdurashheed Yakubu, UNAMID.

**El Daein;** 11 February 2018: UNAMID Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative (ADJSR), Peter Schumann, recently conducted a two-day visit to El Daein, East Darfur, where he met the Wali (Governor), the Deputy Nazir of the Southern Rezeigat, native administration leaders and representatives of displaced persons as well as women's groups. The aim of visit was to discuss the role of UNAMID in the state as a peacekeeping mission mandated to maintain security and protect civilians, within the context of the Mission's ongoing reconfiguration. Welcoming ADJSR Schumann, the Wali, Annas Omer Mohammed, expressed his appreciation of Mission's role in reducing inter-communal conflicts, its support to IDPs and facilitating government activities.

The Wali briefed on the main causes of conflict in East Darfur as well as the Government's efforts to address disputes related to land ownership and other communal clashes, in coordination with the Mission. On his part, the Acting DJSR spoke about UNAMID's ongoing restructuring as well as its support to development projects in the state. The Deputy Nazir of the Southern Rezeigat, El Fadil Saeed Madibo, stressed upon the need for a continued presence of the Mission to address the root causes of conflict in the region. "We cannot say there is absolute peace in east Darfur, though it is true that there have been marked improvements in the security situation. However, a lot more needs to be done in areas that are still unsecured and lack basic

services as well as rule of law institutions," said Mr. Madibo. The women's representative, Ms. Magbola, stated that UNAMID, in its capacity as one of the main stakeholders that witnessed the signing of the Doha Document For Peace in Darfur (DDPD), should monitor and ensure that all segments of the DDPD, including provisions that speak about displaced persons, compensation, returns, wealth and power sharing, are addressed. Other issues discussed at the meeting included challenges to voluntary returns and provision of health facilities as well as safe drinking water in areas of return. In the course of his visit, Mr. Schumann also met with the UN Country Team representatives from East Darfur.

## UNAMID supports demobilization of former combatants in North Darfur



A UNAMID-supported demobilization process for 500 former combatants was launched on 26 December 2017, at Dar al Argam camp in El Fasher, North Darfur. Participants – who came from non-government armed movements -- received cash and food as part of the programme, which is also supported by the Sudan Disarmament, Reintegration and Demobilization Commission, WFP and UNDP. Photo by Amin Ismail UNAMID.

**EL FASHER** – The demobilization of some 500 ex-combatants -- part of ongoing efforts supported by UNAMID and partners to reintegrate former combatants into the community -- concluded on 10 January in El Fasher.

The fifth demobilization exercise, which started on 26 December 2017, was supported by the Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SDDRC), in partnership with UNAMID's Governance and Community Stabilization Section (GCSS), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The ex-combatants -- among them 85 women and 12 disabled persons -- were drawn from armed move-

ments that signed the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement and the 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

Participants went through a verification process which was conducted by members of the Ceasefire Commission, the SDDRC and UNAMID's GCSS. Additionally, participants received an administrative and reintegration briefing, medical checks, and were registered with the SDDRC database.

Each ex-combatant was provided a reinsertion package from WFP which included dry rations for three months.

One of the participants, a former member of an armed group in her early 30s, explained that her future plans concerning reintegration into

society include investing in agriculture and animal resource projects. She said that she planned to help promote a culture of peace among local communities in Darfur.

Another former combatant from the same group called on all parties to the conflict to address the root causes of the conflict in order to achieve lasting peace in Darfur.

Mr. Mohammed urged all the ex-combatants not to return to war and actively participate in the stability and development projects in the region.

Mohamed Ahmed, Commissioner of the North Darfur SDDRC, said that the demobilization exercise will encourage more combatants to disarm, and benefit from economic and social stability projects.

“We will focus on community stabilization through the provision of service projects in the areas affected by the conflict”, said Mr. Ahmed.

Mr. Ahmed commended UNAMID for its continued commitment, coordination and support to ensure successful demobilization. He indicated that donor community support for the reintegration process contributes to achieving peace in Darfur.

Major Abdul Jaleel Fadol Hamza,

Commander of the 5th Demobilization camp in North Darfur, highlighted the importance of the demobilization process for peace, security and stability in North Darfur. He expressed a readiness to receive more combatants who are willing to join the peace process and reintegrate in local communities.

Ezzedin Adam Mohammed, a UNAMID DDR Officer, said that demobilization represented the first step for ex-combatants to reintegrate into the community and return to civilian life.

UNAMID provided technical and logistical support to the demobilization. In addition, the Mission provided a financial package of 1,500 Sudanese Pounds for each ex-combatant prior to their final reintegration projects with UNDP.

UNAMID has supported similar demobilization exercises that have taken place in the other four states of Darfur since 2011.

## 19 women benefit from two-day training on sexual and gender-based violence in East Darfur



*Some 19 women from Al Manara village, near El Daein, East Darfur, attended on 13 February 2018, a UNAMID-supported awareness raising session on sexual and gender-based violence. The event was part of the Mission's efforts to empower at-risk women in Darfur. Photo by Hassan Ishag, UNAMID.*

**El Daein, 13 February 2018:** 19 women from Al Manara village in East Darfur participated in a two-day, UNAMID-supported training programme on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

The activity aimed at educating participants about different forms of gender-based violence and raising their awareness that violence

against women in any form is unacceptable. Furthermore, they were trained in methods that can be used to prevent such acts.

The workshop also sensitized participants on support structures available for victims of such violence, under the framework of family and child protection principles, through various humanitarian agencies as well

as non-governmental organizations. Speaking on behalf of the trainees, Mustoura Rihan, a displaced women's leader, called upon all participants to disseminate key points of the training activity to members of their community, thereby creating a trickle-down effect which, she hoped, would contribute to a reduction of such incidents.

## 30 rural court judges trained in court adjudication procedures, North Darfur



Some 30 rural court judges from various localities in North Darfur benefited from a two-day, UNAMID-supported training on court adjudication procedures held on 19-20 February 2018 in El Fasher. The workshop, facilitated jointly by the North Darfur Judiciary and the Mission's Rule of Law section, aimed at building the capacity of rural court judges, who often have no formal legal training. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

**Some 30** rural court judges from various localities in North Darfur participated in a two-day, UNAMID-supported training on court adjudication procedures held on 19-20 February 2018 in El Fasher.

The workshop was facilitated by the Mission's Rule of Law section and aimed at disseminating the contents of a hand book for rural court judges developed jointly by UNAMID and the Sudan Judiciary, which takes into account the needs of rural court judges across Darfur, who often have no formal legal training. It is designed as a topical, easy-to-use reference to help them dispose pending civil and criminal cases in accordance with Sudanese law.

In the course of the workshop, participating judges called for reinforcing the role of rural courts in conflict resolution through specific capacity-building exercises. Furthermore, they requested the endorsement of a law clearly identifying the jurisdiction of North Darfur rural courts, particularly with regard to cases and claims of land ownership.

Addressing workshop participants, Sameer Sayed, Chief Judge, North Darfur, emphasized the importance of such training activities in enabling rural court judges to understand and implement due procedures to ensure justice is served; while Shareef Adam, on behalf of participating judges,

spoke of the benefits of the hand-book and said that the manual, along with the two-day intensive training, will greatly help rural court judges.

On her part, Francoise Simard, Head, Rule of Law, UNAMID, stated that this endeavor is part of the Mission's continuing efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of rural court judges to address land disputes and other conflict drivers.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2363 (2017) mandates UNAMID to continue to focus on providing advisory and logistical support to strengthen rural courts' capacity to address land disputes and other conflict drivers. ■

## Fourth free medical clinic in West Darfur by UNAMID peacekeepers



UNAMID's peacekeepers conducted on 8 February 2018, a free medical campaign at Ardamata Prison in El Geneina, West Darfur. The event, which was part of a joint initiative by the Mission's military peacekeepers from Bangladesh and civilian personnel, included basic medical examinations and distribution of medicines among prisoners and prison officers. Photo by Muntasir Sharafadin, UNAMID.

**On 8 February 2018,** UNAMID's Bangladeshi peacekeepers teamed up with the Rule of Law section to organise a free medical clinic for the inmates and prison officers at Ardamata Prison, West Darfur. This joint civilian-military exercise served some 214 people who received basic medical examinations—treatment for common ailments as well as malaria screening—and free medication. Furthermore, toys, school supplies and clothes were distributed among children of women prisoners; prison officers at

Ardamata received sports kits and medical supplies as well.

Speaking at the clinic, Oumar Kane, Head of Office, UNAMID West Darfur, stated that the Mission's support to the campaign falls within the framework of the Nelson Mandela Principles that aim to foster treatment with dignity for all prisoners. "The provision of medical care to prisoners is very important because health is a basic need which should be enjoyed by all citizens, irrespective of their status," said Mr. Kane.

On his part, Captain Khamis Mogadam, Director, Ardamata Prison, expressed appreciation for UNAMID's commitment towards improve conditions at Ardamata prison.

This is the fourth free medical campaign conducted by the Mission in West Darfur and falls within its strategic priorities of protecting civilians and supporting rule of law institutions across the Darfur region. Previous campaigns aimed at students, internally displaced and disabled people in various parts of the state.

## UNAMID reconfiguration process focus of school visits in North Darfur



UNAMID's Community Outreach Unit visited on 17 January 2018, Elfajr Secondary School for Boys at Al Salam camp for internally displaced persons in El Fasher, North Darfur. Information and educational materials incorporating messages on UNAMID's activities across Darfur were distributed among the students during the visit along with exercise books, volleyballs, footballs, T-shirts and school bags that carried the slogan, "No Life without Peace." Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

**On 17 and 18** January 2018, UNAMID's Community Outreach Unit (COU), in partnership with the Students Activity Directorate at the Ministry of Education, North Darfur, conducted three school visits to Al Fajr Secondary School for Boys, Al Faroug and Al Raheeg Al Makhtoum Basic School for Boys and Girls, respectively.

These visits aim at educating students on the Mission's mandate and its ongoing reconfiguration. More than 700 students, teachers and members of the Student Activity Directorate as well as community members and kindergarten stu-

dents attended the events, which also included cultural performances and traditional songs calling for peace and unity.

Speaking at one of the events, Ahmed Ibrahim Sirag, Principal, Al Faroug and Al Raheeg Al Makhtoum Basic School, highlighted the challenges faced by students and staff. "There is an urgent need for enough latrines, fence and water storage," said Mr. Sirag.

On his part, Abdul-Aziz Salim, Director, Student Activities Directorate, thanked UNAMID for its continued support to education and development in North Darfur and

emphasized that the Mission's outreach activities play a vital role in supporting students in the region, particularly with sports materials.

Information and educational materials incorporating messages on UNAMID's activities across Darfur were distributed among the students during these visits who also received given exercise books, volleyballs, footballs, T-shirts and school bags that carried the slogan, "No Life without Peace." Additionally, quiz competitions on the Mission's mandate as well as the ongoing peace process in Darfur were held.



## Towards a new phase: UNAMID's Jebel Marra Task Force

Through the Jebel Marra Task Force, UNAMID is gearing up to support local efforts towards achieving a comprehensive socio-economic and political transformation in a previously inaccessible, conflict-ridden part of Central Darfur.

BY KONE MOUROULAYE

**The Jebel Marra** area is located in the center of Darfur, Sudan, bordering South and Central Darfur states, with a small protrusion into North Darfur. The greater Jebel Marra is characterized by medium height peaks and valleys. This agriculturally productive region receives high rainfall but lacks stability and development on account of prolonged

conflict between the Government of Sudan forces and armed movements, especially the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW), which, since the beginning of armed conflict in Darfur, has maintained Jebel Marra as its stronghold.

The first military offensive mounted on government positions by armed movements—the Sudan Lib-

eration Army (SLA) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)—took place on 26 February 2003 in Golo, Central Darfur, and El Fasher, North Darfur. Since that time, Golo became the theatre of regular confrontations between government forces and the SLA/AW. Between 2010 and 2016, after a series of confrontations between the two parties, the Gov-



*UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, officially received On 28 January 2018, a suitable location allocated by the Government of Sudan for the establishment of the Mission's temporary operating base in Golo, Jebel Marra, Central Darfur. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the Central Jebel Marra Locality Commissioner's office in Golo by Lameck Kawiche, Head of Office, UNAMID Sector Central, on behalf of UNAMID, and by the Wali (Governor) of Central Darfur, Ja'afar Abdul Hakam Ishaq, on behalf of the Sudanese government.*

ners until recently.

In an effort to ameliorate the situation and enhance protection of civilians in the area, UNAMID recently established the Jebel Mara Task Force (JMTF) and is constructing a Temporary Operating Base in Golo, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2363 of 29 June 2017 and the recommendations of the African Union Commission on UNAMID of 8 June 2016. The JMTF represents a key part of UNAMID's two-pronged approach, combining peacekeeping and stabilization-oriented tasks stipulated in UNSCR 2363.

The JMTF will play a pivotal role in fostering peace, security and stability as well as helping improve humanitarian conditions in the greater Jebel Marra area which had been affected by fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Darfur armed elements for over a decade.

The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) related to the opening of the Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in Golo, between the UNAMID and GoS on 28 January 2018 represented a milestone in the implementation of the Mission's mandate in Darfur. The MoU on the allocated land to UNAMID was signed in Golo at the Locality Commissioner's office by Mr. Lameck Kawiche, UNAMID Central Sector Head of Office, who is also Head of Jebel Marra Task Force, on behalf of UNAMID, and by the Wali (Governor) of Central Darfur State, Jafar Abdul Hakam Ishaq, on behalf of the government, in the presence of UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Jeremiah Kingsley Mam-

abolo, the UN Country Team and representatives of the Golo Native Administration.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, the JSR Mamabolo described the handover of the plot of land in Golo to UNAMID as a significant step in current mandate implementation. "Through this gesture from the Government of Sudan, the people of Golo will now be able to experience and enjoy the dividends of peace, security and stability in this area affected by conflict for over a decade. The handover of this piece of land for the TOB in this locality, will enable the Mission to fulfill its mandate as per the provisions of UNSCR 2363. This is the beginning of a strong partnership between UNAMID and the people of this community in accordance with the mandate that we have—peacekeeping in Jebel Marra area and stabilization in the other parts of Darfur," Mr. Mamabolo added.

In the same handover ceremony, the Wali of Central Darfur State, Jafar Abdul Hakam Ishaq, commended the cooperation with UNAMID over the past period, hoping the fruitful cooperation and coordination between the two parties will continue for the benefit of the local community. He called on UNAMID and the UN Country Team to involve all segments of the local community in Central Jebel Marra in upcoming community and development projects to guarantee their support and collaboration.

"UNAMID should prioritize the people of Central Jebel Marra in terms of employment in its future base in Golo and support existing government structures and insti-

ernment of Sudan (GoS) succeeded in extending its full control over Golo and surrounding areas in East and West Jebel Marra, including Al Aradeeb, Al Ashara, Katur, Dirbat, Sony, Fanga Suk, Rokero, Guido and Sarong. The latter used to be the stronghold of SLA/ AW in Jebel Marra and was liberated on 8 April 2016.

Consequently, thousands of people fled the area to other places in Darfur due to significant destruction of existing basic infrastructure and services. Within this context of fighting and lack of safety and security for both local populations and humanitarian aid organisations, Golo remained inaccessible to UNAMID and UN Country Team part-



UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, officially received On 28 January 2018, a suitable location allocated by the Government of Sudan for the establishment of the Mission's temporary operating base in Golo, Jebel Marra, Central Darfur. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the Central Jebel Marra Locality Commissioner's office in Golo by Lameck Kawiche, Head of Office, UNAMID Sector Central, on behalf of UNAMID, and by the Wali (Governor) of Central Darfur, Ja'afar Abdul Hakam Ishaq, on behalf of the Sudanese government.

tutions in that area, especially law enforcement and judicial organs," added Wali Ishaq.

To ensure immediate operationalization of the JMTF, especially the construction of Golo TOB, UNAMID dispatched an Integrated Team from its Sector Central Headquarters and Nertiti Team Site in Central Darfur, comprising police, military and civilian components to conduct a field mission to Golo, Rockero and surrounding villages from 4-11 February 2018 to assess protection needs of the civilian population in these areas. The Team engaged with local authorities, Native Administration, civil society organizations, women and youth leaders, as well as factions of SLA/AW.

The Integrated Team also met the Locality Commissioner, Mr. Ga'afar Mohammed Abaker Hamid, and representatives of the Locality Security Committee and discussed pertinent

"Through this gesture from the Government of Sudan, the people of Golo will now be able to experience and enjoy the dividends of peace, security and stability in this area affected by conflict for over a decade."

—Jeremiah Mamabolo

issues. The Locality Commissioner informed the Team that the security situation in Golo has relatively improved and requested humanitarian actors to provide required basic services to enable sustainable returns for people who fled the conflict. "We request UNAMID to support the renovation of the police station in Golo, establish rural courts, rehabilitate prisons, construct a training hall and build a Native Administration office and a women's centre. We also appeal to UNAMID to support and assist the rehabilitation of

the Nertiti-Guldo-Golo-Rokero road to open the area for development," Mr. Hamid emphasized.

According to local authorities in Golo, the total population of Central Jebel Marra locality is estimated to be 148,000, although during the most recent outbreak of conflict in 2016, many villagers fled to Nertiti, Zalingei, Sortony, Tawila, Nyala and other areas. Nearly 72,000 have returned to Golo town in 2017 and were registered by the International Organization of Migration (IOM).

Additionally, Native Administra-



*The first Jebel Marra Task Force (JMTF) Conference was held in UNAMID Zalingei Headquarter, on 27 February 2018, the meeting which was chaired by Sector Central Head of Office/ Head of JMTF, Mr. Lameck Kawiche and attended by the newly established UNAMID body military commander, police Sector Commanders,. Photo by Mohammed Idriss, UNAMID.*

tion leaders confirmed improvement in the security situation, mainly due to the signing of the Koron Peace Agreement (KPA) on 4 November 2016, the arms collection campaign in Golo and an effective Peaceful Coexistence Committee. However, they urged UNAMID to facilitate the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between GoS and non-signatories to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) without further delay. "We are quite concerned with the existence unexploded ordnance in areas around Golo and on the road to Rokero. UNAMID should dispatch ordnance clearance and risk education teams as we have received reports of three incidents related to Explosive Remnants of War since early February 2018," stated Umda Saeed Abdulatif Sharafadin

Other issues highlighted by local representatives in Rokero were lack

of essential services such as food, water, health, education facilities, as well as other basic infrastructure. "We request UNAMID to advocate with national and state authorities to consider conducting examinations for secondary students within their localities due to unsafe road conditions between their areas and the nearest major town," entreated Umda Adam Yagoub.

Taking into account the feedback from such Integrated Teams, moving forward UNAMID will not only exert additional efforts in instituting confidence-building measures amongst the various ethnic groups residing in the area, but will also continue to engage with the Darfur armed movements, especially SLA/AW leadership, to join the political process without any preconditions.

Considering the rugged terrain that affects road movement linking the different locations in Jebel Mar-

ra area, the newly established JMTF and humanitarian actors will need to redouble efforts in reaching the community in terms of protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Golo TOB will provide the much-needed coordination point for humanitarian and developmental assistance in the area. Appropriate measures are also being put in place by all stakeholders to address recovery issues in Jebel Marra, primarily, provision of essential services to reduce chances of recurrence of active armed conflict.

Through the JMTE, UNAMID and Country Team partners on the ground, therefore, are gearing up to support local efforts towards achieving a comprehensive socio-economic and political transformation and support the establishment of justice and human rights institutions in Darfur, to ensure lasting peace and stability.

INTERVIEW

## Highlights on Peacekeeping: An Interview with UNAMID Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative, **PETER SCHUMANN**

**Peter Schumann, UNAMID Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative, highlights the importance of UNAMID's Jebel Marra Task Force and the associated Temporary Operating Base in Golo, Central Darfur.**

INTERVIEW BY ALA MAYYAH





*UNAMID Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative Peter Schumann, was interviewed by Voices of Darfur at his office in UNAMID's headquarters, El Fasher, North Darfur, on 22 February 2018.*



**Peter Schumann**, a national of Germany, has worked for more than 35 years with the United Nations and its Agencies, Funds and Programmes, in various capacities, such as UN Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Representative; Senior Development Advisor and has spearheaded complex development, peace building and reconstruction projects.

In the course of his career, he has served in various capacities in New York, Albania, Tajikistan, Somalia

and Kosovo. Additionally, he was Section Chief, Area Development Programme in Darfur, Kordofan and eastern region (1986-1988), UNDP Sudan. As Head of the Emergency Coordination Office in Sudan (1988-1990), he was responsible for the start-up of Operation Lifeline Sudan.

Mr. Schumann has also served as Chief of Staff, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), followed by a stint as Coordinator and Regional Representative of UNMIS in South Sudan from 2006-2007. Furthermore, He also advised on

the transition of the African Union Operation in Darfur to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Mr. Schumann retired in September 2007. He is currently an independent advisor /researcher with the University of Konstanz on intra-state armed conflict and external interventions, in particular UN peacekeeping operations. He is a regular trainer at the National Military Academy Senior Staff Training Programmes; the National Police Academy and other institutions, in



UNAMID's newly-appointed Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative (ADJSR), Peter Schumann, (third from right), visited on 10 January 2018, Zalingei, Central Darfur, where he met with senior Mission officials and local authority representatives. The familiarization visit included discussions on the establishment of the Mission's Jebel Marra Task Force and a Temporary Operating Base in Golo. Photo by Mohammed Iddris, UNAMID.

of professional experience, most of which were spent serving in different capacities in the United Nations, how would you describe your short tenure with UNAMID?

**ADJSR Schumann:** I worked in different United Nations organizations in different capacities and I have spent considerable time in Sudan. The decision to come back to Sudan, in particular to Darfur, is closely related to the work I have done in this country through my earlier professional roles. I believe that the situation in Darfur has evolved since I was last here. We need to seize this opportunity to find a more durable solution to the Darfuri conflict.

**VOD:** You refer to the situation in Darfur as having evolved, how did you observe that?

**ADJSR Schumann:** I have had a long relationship with Sudan and with Darfur; I have carefully observed and monitored the evolving nature of the situation here. Even when I was in Germany, before I knew that I was coming here, I was very aware about what is going on in Darfur, including the complexity of the Mission's operational environment. I have a focused idea of what I can contribute professionally to help the Mission provide enhanced solutions to the conflict in Darfur.

I came to Sudan, for the first time in 1983, so I have been evaluating the situation in Sudan from multiple angles over a long period of time. I am certain that this was the reason why colleagues from the UN Headquarters in New York requested me to come to Darfur. I believe I was asked specifically because of my background, my knowledge and my engagement with the situation in

Sudan and Darfur, in particular.

**VOD:** UNAMID has now established the Jebel Marra Task Force and commenced construction of the Temporary Operating Base in Golo, Central Darfur, as part of its reconfiguration process and focus on peacekeeping in the Jebel Marra area. What difference do you feel this will make on the ground in terms of enhancing peacekeeping in Jebel Marra?

**ADJSR Schumann:** In Jebel Marra, we have an armed movement operating in different parts of that area. Its fighting capacity has been massively reduced but still this is a classic peacekeeping set up. UNAMID has the instruments, the expertise, and the knowledge on how to deal with this scenario. It is a classic example of ongoing internal conflict, where I think UNAMID can do a lot. In my analysis, the Mission should focus on this particular scenario—the remaining elements of an armed movement challenging governmental authority in a particular region, thereby creating a massive threat to the civilian population. In such situations, it is the local populace that suffers, with many displaced and some choosing to hide in the Jebel Marra mountains.

I have visited this area, seen abandoned villages and talked to community leaders about their situation. This is a definitive need for peacekeeping. I think the decision to establish the Jebel Marra Task Force, create Golo as a Temporary Operational Base and enhance the Mission's existing office in Zalingei for planning and implementation of programmes, is a very important move. In my opinion, the center of gravity for UNAMID must shift fully

support of UN peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction as well as development operations. He also serves as a member of the expert panel advising the Parliamentary Committee on Civilian Crisis Prevention and peacekeeping issues in the German Parliament.

In this interview, Mr. Schumann talks to Voices of Darfur about his experience in peacekeeping missions, UNAMID's Jebel Marra Task Force as well as its Temporary Operating Base in Golo, Central Darfur.

**VOD:** With more than 35 years



UNAMID Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative (ADJSR), Peter Schumann, is pictured meeting on 16 January 2018, representatives of the nomadic community at the Kube water point, 6 kilometers from Sortony, North Darfur. During his visit, the ADJSR also discussed the security situation in the area and the relationship between internally displaced persons and nomads, with leaders of the displaced population and members of the Sudan Liberation Army-Peace and Development. Photo by Zurab Elzarov, UNAMID.

towards the Jebel Marra area. This is the focus and my recommendation would be to throw all Mission resources into the Jebel Marra.

One thing we should never forget, is that when the conflict started in 2003, the fighting started in the Jebel Marra area. At that time UNMIS was on the verge of being established as the advanced mission, after signing of the north-south peace agreement. Prior to that we had AMIS, an operation funded by donors. It was neither a peacekeeping option nor a proper African Union funded operation, but was backed by a group of donors, such as Canada, Netherlands and others. The consequence was that these organizations did not have the capacity at the time to

“I think the decision to establish the Jebel Marra Task Force, the creation of Golo Temporary Operating Base and the enhancement of the Mission facilities in Zalingei to facilitate peacekeeping implementation in the area, is a very important move.”

tackle the heart of the problem inside the Jebel Marra region. Humanitarian agencies established centers around Jebel Marra to distribute humanitarian aid. This resulted in a pull factor, where people came out of Jebel Marra to receive humanitarian aid but could not return, due to continued fighting between the rebel movements and Government of Sudan forces. 50 years later, the United Nations

finally has access inside the Jebel Marra area. The pull factor is re-established as the people will have confidence in the presence of the UN and hopefully return to their places of origin. This is the heart of the matter, the core of what peacekeeping should do in Jebel Marra.

**VOD:** What would be the best approach for the Jebel Marra Task Force to adopt in order to be effective?



UNAMID Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative Peter Schumann, accompanied by UNAMID staff, met on 30 January 2018, with representatives of the displaced community at the Internally Displaced Persons Gathering Site in Sortony, North Darfur. Issues discussed included protection of civilians and the facilitation of inter-communal dialogues. Photo by Armands Pupols, UNAMID.

**ADJSR Schumann:** The Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's Report, states that peacekeeping must be nimble. It must be smart, flexible and creative. I would like to see UNAMID presence in Rokero, and other smaller places. It doesn't have to be a huge base, but the Mission's presence always counts for the host community. We can have a couple of tents; we can rent existing buildings and base ourselves in these localities, stay for a month to three months and then move to another base. It has to be smart and nimble, using the UN Secretary-General's emphasis again. We have to create a pull factor with the people in these nine team sites around Jebel Marra, which are part of the Jebel Marra Task Force area, thereby building and urging peaceful coexistence

amongst the communities in the area. UNAMID has to be seen in the villages and all these remote places. When trust is achieved, UNAMID can create an attraction factor and encourage people to return to reoccupy their villages of origin, at which point the difficult work will start, that of rebuilding the local economy.

Jebel Marra was the bread basket in Darfur. It was a major economic contributor to the budget of the local Darfur state. The area was rich, with local farmers and merchants exporting fruit and other agriculture products to the whole region and beyond into countries such as Chad and Libya. For instance, Jebel Marra oranges are famous all over Darfur and entire country.

I travelled to Zalingei and Golo recently and when I talked to the

community leaders and I informed them that I had remarkable memories of Jebel Marra during the times of its richness; they fully agreed with me and shared the same sentiments.

This connection and the pride of host community in its home area needs to be re-established. Again, the Mission has to be nimble, smart, flexible and creative. We will need additional expertise in the Mission—people who know about food production and irrigation. Jebel Marra had a very sophisticated irrigation system for local agriculture. The community leaders said there is an urgent need for the repair of small dams or reservoirs in the valleys to store water, so they can irrigate the fruit trees. This is what needs to be done.

## The Struggle for Women's Rights in Darfur

While international organisations and the Government of Sudan are taking steps to ensure greater participation of women in decision-making bodies, much remains to be done to ensure that Darfuri women are fully empowered in a region where conflict is endemic and cultural and religious norms do not recognize gender equality

BY HUMAN RIGHTS SECTION





*UNAMID peacekeepers during a daily routine patrol in the new Rwanda IDP Camp in Tawilla, North Darfur. UNAMID conducts 24/7 patrols across Darfur as per its core protection of civilians mandate. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.*



On 19 May 2015, women leader in Tabit area, North Darfur addressing meeting during a visit of Mis Rashida Manjoo, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

**The impact** of the armed conflict on women in Darfur has been severe. Data has shown that 45 percent of households in Darfur are female-headed with a higher percentage of 65 – 70 in the internally displaced persons camps (IDP). Similarly, 65 percent of the agricultural labour force before active conflict was provided by women and they also engaged in subsistence farming to feed their households. The armed conflict which has seen the proliferation of small arms and the recruitment of many able men into militia groups have disrupted agricultural activity and thus impacted on women's livelihoods. Women cannot sell their labour on a large scale nor engage in their "backyard gardening"/subsistence farms as before, but now engage in seasonal agricultural activities in their original homesteads or seek alternative livelihood options in the IDP settlements such

as fetching water and firewood.

Communities in Darfur have always had both temporary women-headed households and long-term women-headed households. 45 percent of households in Darfur are women-headed, compared to average of 28 percent women-headed households in other regions of Sudan. "The conflict in Darfur has changed the family-head structure in IDP camps where about two-thirds of the households are headed by women." Significant proportion of women-headed households in Darfur are poor and vulnerable. The protracted conflict and displacement in Darfur has worsened socio-economic indicators and increased gender disparities by impeding livelihood opportunities and access to basic services. Poverty and violence characterize the lives of women in Darfur, with many women having suffered harassment, rape and

other forms of sexual abuse. The conflict has affected women differently than men. Disproportionate number of men have left their families – to fight, to escape being killed, or try to earn living outside family locations. Women have stayed to support their remaining family members comprising mainly of the old and children.

Life in the IDP camps has made women vulnerable to unacceptable levels of sexual and gender-based violence. Women travel out of the camps for water and firewood and, in the process, get raped or abused by armed militia. Due to the breakdown of social services such as health, education, protection and justice sectors, the well-being of women and girls is further compromised. Maternal mortality rates are high – 605/100,000 live births compared to the national average of 435/100,000 live births; school enrolment is low for girls and per-



*Women in Malha, North Darfur attend a Workshop on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security organized by UNAMID Gender Advisory Unit. This Resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. Photo by Sojoud Elgarrai, UNAMID.*

centage of literacy levels for women aged 15 to 24 years is 32 percent compared to the national level of 45 percent. Similarly, access to justice is limited, with women having a low appreciation of their rights. For example 68 percent of Darfuri women between 15 to 45 years believe a husband is justified to beat his wife compared to the national average of 47 percent. There is widespread impunity for rape and gender based crimes as most perpetrators are not brought to justice, and due to lack of the functioning of the judicial system, sexual violence and other cases are often dealt with in traditional settlements in contravention of international human rights standards.

The level of awareness of HIV/AIDS and an acceptable attitude to people living with HIV is 5.3 percent for Darfur, compared to the national average of 8.3 percent. This is in a context where recognition, protection and promotion of women's

rights are facing challenges from cultural and religious norms that do not recognize gender equality and women's rights and where the mechanisms for enforcing rights granted by the Constitution, policies and federal and state laws are either non-existent or ineffective and where armed conflict has become endemic and a way of life.

Several political factors related to the ongoing conflict can be read from a gendered perspective as well. "In principle, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) incorporates gender considerations for good governance within several of its key provisions." Article 1 of the DDPD calls for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and includes reference in particular to the needs of women, children and vulnerable groups during early recovery, reconstruction, rehabilitation and education policies and programmes.

Article 7 outlines provisions for the creation of a National Civil Service, which should include affirmative action provisions, taking into consideration the need for gender balance among civil service officers. Article 10 outlines core competencies for the DRA, including responsibility for several gender issues such as women's advancement, motherhood and childcare, and the development of a gender policy. Under Article 16, the DDPD calls for socio-economic development and improvement in human resource development, with particular emphasis on educational attainment and the elimination of illiteracy among women. Article 27 further outlines a system of grants to be dedicated toward development initiatives related to poverty alleviation, attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and realizing gender equity. Article 55 further enshrines the role

of women and youth related to prevention and resolution of conflicts.

These gender equality provisions in the DDPD, taken in conjunction with those outlined in the Interim National Constitution (2005), present an optimistic picture for the advancement of women's rights in Darfur. Protection and enforcement of these provisions, however, has been and will likely, remain a significant challenge in the region. Notably absent from the DDPD is a concrete quota mechanism targeting women's participation in various bodies prescribed in the document. On the other hand, women's participation in the political sphere has progressed moderately in Sudan due in large part to the National Election Law of 2008, which specifically establishes an affirmative action target of 25 percent for women's representation in parliaments in Sudan, but short of the international threshold of 33 percent women's representation in parliament.

The representation of women in the governance structures, in public institutions in Darfur, is poor especially at higher levels of decision making. Women also rarely exist in traditional structures of Native Administration at the locality level. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Darfur therefore provide an opportunity for women to have a voice and to participate in different issues of concern, especially issues regarding peacebuilding and human rights. However, the cooption of the civil society and the control assumed by the government and security entities, have rendered this opportunity ineffective. Further, CSOs are often directed by political and ethnic allegiances and over-represent educated elite and often urban populations, excluding the perspective of rural constituencies.

In the existing representation by women across Sudan, including Darfur, capacity gaps exist at all levels of leadership among wom-



*UNAMID, in partnership with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, on 11 July 2017 launched eight community stabilization projects in Mournei locality, West Darfur. More than 200 people participated in this vocational training. Photo by Umal Hassan Abdallah, UNAMID.*

en as aspiring political candidates, leaders within party executive bodies, members of parliament, government actors, academic leaders, youth, and representatives of civil society, and in traditional leadership roles at the community level. Presence in office does not necessarily translate into active participation nor does it imply inclusion. It is noted that the few women occupying public offices in Darfur and across Sudan tend to reflect Sudan's most elite voices and are not representative of broader spectrum of interests, particularly of rural communities they are supposed to represent.

At the root of this gender iniquity lies the fact that women are supported more as beneficiaries than as actors in decision making. Virtually all international development assistance partners and national CSOs involved in humanitarian and recovery programmes/projects in Darfur aim at promoting women's benefits to enhance women survival and livelihoods conditions from such interventions. The major role played by women is that of beneficiaries from programme/project activities. However, development

partners recognize that while the role of women as beneficiaries contribute to improvement in their living conditions and livelihoods, it does not empower women to make choices for their current needs and aspiration towards recovery and development of Darfur.

For instance, some international and national CSOs consulted on the gender dimension of interventions in Darfur, claim that they do implement some women-specific programme activities such as female reproductive health, education of the girl child, food and livelihood support to women-headed households, among other activities, by virtue of their respective mandates and organizational objectives. However, many such activities are directed at providing benefits in terms of better conditions for women only as beneficiaries. Efforts to promote women in leadership positions and participation in decision making are undertaken only within project management arrangements in local communities. Hence, interventions to support promotion of gender equality in Darfur through advocacy and technical support for enhancing women leaderships and participa-



UNAMID staff members, students from a Midwifery School and three Technical Schools for girls, march in ElFasher, North Darfur, to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, organized by UNAMID Gender Advisory Unit. The event intends to raise awareness in communities about gender violence and its implications for communities, women and girls' lives and livelihood. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

tion in decision making on humanitarian and recovery issues within the public service and local communities is lagging behind in Darfur.

Government structures and mechanisms exist to support gender equality and women's empowerment in Darfur. For instance, there is a Ministry of Social Affairs, in each of the five states in Darfur, to coordinate activities of state ministries on gender equality and empowerment issues in Darfur. The states ministries on gender issues are linked to the federal-level Ministry of Social Welfare and Social Security in Khartoum on gender policy and programme towards promoting women empowerment in Sudan. There are also gender focal points in each of the state line ministries for coordination with the gender-ministries on women issues. A highly placed position of Adviser on Gender to each of the five State Governors in Darfur was also in existence but was removed.

Opportunities for advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment, therefore, exist in various strategic institutions in the five states in Darfur. However, capacity is limited within the gender minis-

tries as in other government institutions in the region. There is also lack of coordination among development assistance partners who work with various line ministries across various issues related to gender equality and women-specific issues. In this respect, coordination between the gender-based ministries and line ministries is weak across the region. On the other hand, civil society organizations lack adequate capacities and suffer weak coordination within their networks which hinder them from forming a common front on advocacy and seeking accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment in Darfur. Hence, while opportunities exist for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Darfur, there is need for concerted efforts in capacity building, and promoting coordination, and networking.

It is noted that international and national development partners make some efforts to promote women's roles as actors in leadership positions and decision making within community-based projects. However, many partners recognized their inadequate ca-

pacities for influencing leadership role and participation of women in decision making in government institutions and traditional community settings. Hence, their main focus remains providing benefits to enhance women survival and livelihoods conditions, as short-term results are needed to ensure visibility and accountability for their interventions. The longer-term, advocacy-demanding interventions, women leadership development and inclusion of recovery activities, are not addressed by large pool of partners either due to their lack of capacity to do so or such interventions being outside their mandates on achieving tangible humanitarian and recovery results.

The roles of women in leadership positions and participation in decision-making in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and wider recovery issues, are virtually lacking in rural communities in Darfur due to cultural barriers excluding women from such issues. Women are also systematically excluded from leadership positions and participation in political and administrative issues in public institutions as shown by their low representation in legislatures, judiciary, prosecution, police and prisons and in top position in several line ministries.

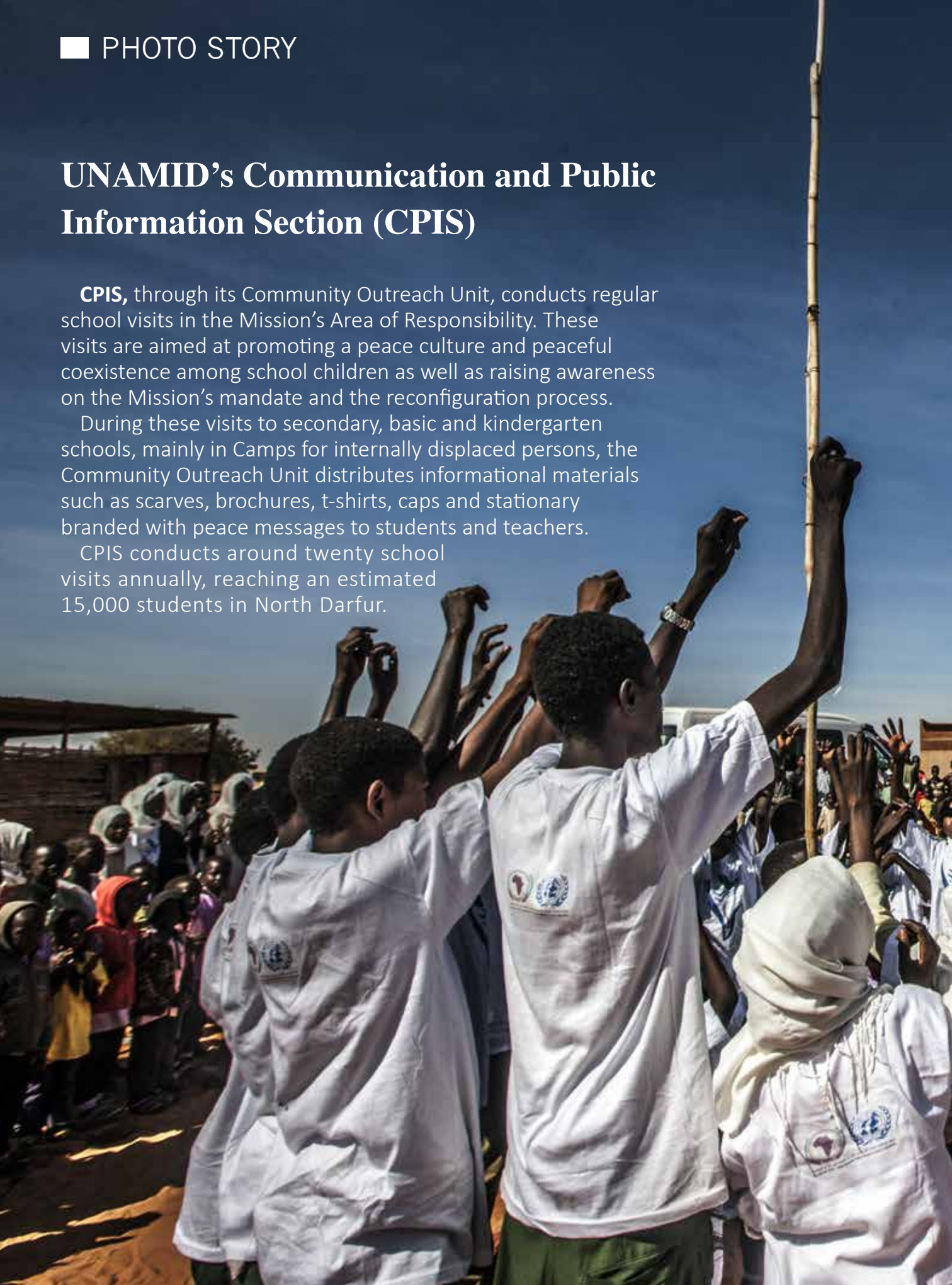
However, consultation reveals that a gender transformation phenomenon causing changes in gender relationships and existing inequality is emerging in urban settings, especially in IDP camps. In these camps, women are increasingly included in leadership roles, even though most of their roles primarily revolve around displaced women's issues. What remains to be seen, however, is if this inclusivity will continue when such women leaders return to their communities, and are faced with cultural barriers that could exclude them from leadership roles and decision-making in their villages of origin.

## UNAMID's Communication and Public Information Section (CPIS)

**CPIS**, through its Community Outreach Unit, conducts regular school visits in the Mission's Area of Responsibility. These visits are aimed at promoting a peace culture and peaceful coexistence among school children as well as raising awareness on the Mission's mandate and the reconfiguration process.

During these visits to secondary, basic and kindergarten schools, mainly in Camps for internally displaced persons, the Community Outreach Unit distributes informational materials such as scarves, brochures, t-shirts, caps and stationary branded with peace messages to students and teachers.

CPIS conducts around twenty school visits annually, reaching an estimated 15,000 students in North Darfur.











*In a bid to raise awareness about the importance of lasting peace and development in Darfur, Eimtithal Ibrahim Mahmoud (middle), walked a distance of approximately 1,600 kilometers from El Fasher, North Darfur, to Khartoum as part of her Peace Dreams campaign. A Philadelphia-based Darfuri, Ms. Mahmoud dedicates her time to spreading understanding through poetry and advocacy for disadvantaged communities the world over. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.*

## Walking for Peace: An interview with the Sudanese -American poet Eimtithal Ibrahim

Voices of Darfur speaks to young activist and poet, Elmtithal Ibrahim, about her love for Darfur and her commitment to the cause of peace.

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

**Sudanese-American** poet and activist Eimtithal Ibrahim Mahmoud decided to walk a distance of approximately 1,300 kilometers from El Fasher, North Darfur, to Khartoum, as part of her Dreams for Peace campaign. A Philadelphia-based Darfuri, Ms. Mahmoud is devoted to the cause of sustainable peace and dedicates her time to spreading understanding through poetry and advocacy for disadvantaged communities the world over.

**VoD:** Tell us about your 'Dreams for Peace' project?

**Eimtithal:** I am here to do a project called Dreams for Peace, which is a series of civilian peace talks that

center around the idea that we can make dreams come true together. The whole thing is similar to a journey home. Through this walk I want people literary put forward steps toward peace, because every step toward peace is a potential future step toward home. When I sat in the peace talk I told them I came to listen and try to do anything that can organize our thoughts and dreams. It seem that everyone wants to go home and have concerns whether the family is going to be safe or not. The hope is to create this collective responsibility through the walk; that we are going to take steps and responsibilities together on our shoul-

der in order to help people organize their thoughts and initiate workable civilian peace plans for getting everyone home. This is a walk for solidarity, for home and for peace.

**VoD:** Is your initiative aimed at ending the suffering of the people in Darfur?

**Eimtithal:** The idea came because my family and I are from Darfur and we don't hear people talking about Darfur anymore, though the people still living here are bearing the consequences of the conflict. It's high time to address it and find a way to move forward and take on the responsibility that this crisis never happens again.

**VoD:** What you want to achieve from walking these 1,300 kilometers from El Fasher to Khartoum?

**Eimtithal:** This walk has many purposes. It is a healing journey and through it we create space for tolerance and talk about what happened, as Darfuris and Sudanese, in general, are most resilient people. I have learned that resilience is not something that just happens. It takes hard work and an everyday choice to go forward.

**VoD:** What are you planning to do during this long journey?

**Eimtithal:** I will listen to poetry, music, see art and send our thoughts and dreams to the communities, as far as we can reach. When any child in a camp in the depths of Darfur, seeing someone in Washington DC or Paris sending a video saying I dream for peace too and I respect your dream and I stand with you—it was something that spoke volumes.

**VoD:** What challenges do you expect during this long walk from El Fasher to Khartoum?

**Eimtithal:** It will be cold sometime in the morning and the food will be hard to deal with. Also, along the road a lot of people will be asking why I am doing this. To them I say come and walk with me a little bit and I will tell you.

**VoD:** How you will disseminate your ideas to the community?

**Eimtithal:** Capital Radio is going to do a daily broadcast directly from me. I will be recording along the walk, and I will be sending statements from me and the walkers to the Court magazine. The reality is that anything public and international can have a lot of voices and people around it saying different things and I already experienced that in Sudan during the five months I was planning for this walk. My Facebook page and website and the specific radio stations and articles I am going to post there are the main source of information about the walk.

**VoD:** Do you think the Sudanese



*The Philadelphia-based Darfuri, Ms. Eimtithal Mahmoud interacts with University students before start walking a distance of approximately 1,600 kilometers from El Fasher, North Darfur, to Khartoum as part of her Peace Dreams campaign. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.*

will accept your ideas along the road, walking for peace?

**Eimtithal:** The reality is that people have started to taste the first ideas of peace. In the big cities we have started to feel a little bit more comfortable but we are still very aware of the dangers that are out there. There is a need for lot of work to be done before we can truly say that Sudan and Darfur have peace and everyone is comfortable, happy and safe. I am surprised to see so many people standing with me because, during the first five months of planning this walk, everyone was saying that I will be walking alone with no one to help me. But once the human beings I met opened their hearts and their minds to the idea, including my family, the grandmothers in ZamZam and Ottash camps, the students of El Fasher University, most of them became open to the idea.

**VoD:** Are there any groups or individuals who have decided to join your project?

**Eimtithal:** Some 110 students from El Fasher University have already registered for the first day of the walk. Some of them will walk to the gate of El Fasher, and some to the next points such as Jugu Jugu and Karkar villages. Some other stu-

dents have shown interest in walking all the way to Khartoum. However, so far, I have one person who will be walking with me to Khartoum and this is my cousin.

**VoD:** Have you gotten enough support from civil society organizations and Government of Sudan institutions?

**Eimtithal:** I requested in-kind support from some businesses and I was surprised with other support I received when the idea become so popular. Everyone is trying to contribute, but at the end it's my decision whether or not to accept any support. At the kickoff event a lot of people volunteered to speak. People I asked for help are helping and even those, who were not approached by me are supporting the event.

**VoD:** Is there any political agenda you want to achieve through this project?

**Eimtithal:** Absolutely not. The reality is that I am a Darfuri-Sudanese-American and I don't have any political say in Sudan but I am trying to understand the politics in Sudan, as there are a lot of differences in the spaces I am navigating and engaging with. This is the risk when you create an open invitation; I can engage with everyone but the people behind the walk are my family, the specific students around me



*The Philadelphia-based Darfuri, Ms. Eimtithal Mahmoud interacts with University students before start walking a distance of approximately 1,600 kilometers from El Fasher, North Darfur, to Khartoum as part of her Peace Dreams campaign. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.*

and the media sources that I will be highlighting during the walk. These are the reliable sources for information about my walk.

**VoD:** In your opinion, how does the international community view the situation in Darfur?

**Eimtithal:** Unfortunately, people don't really talk about Darfur anymore. I don't really see anything in the media. However, in truth, people are still living in suffering every day. Of course the people who worked in Darfur still care about it and they will never forget. I think the public eye has turned away from Darfur. This walk for peace can bring the attention to the human element of peace. The idea is that instead of depending on one peace plan and a model that people have been using for centuries, which has been usually put together by men in a room. I don't think that is a viable solution for the reality of the work that needs to be done here. There are seven billion of people in the world and there are millions in Sudan. How can they depend on two or three people agreeing on something which impacts so many?

**VoD:** How do you think peace can be achieved in Darfur?

**Eimtithal:** The first step is defining peace by allowing people to tell their individual ideas and dreams

for peace. Peace is a word but you can decide how to define it and how to implement it. The first step for achieving peace is understanding the people collectively and then sorting through individual ideas and responsibilities toward peace.

**VoD:** How can the young generation, poets and artists contribute to achieving peace in Darfur?

**Eimtithal:** They can start hosting a peace talk and help each other to get together and finish these dreams for peace, because the more people contribute with their ideas for peace, the more beautiful ideas we will have for understanding what peace looks like in Sudan and in Darfur specifically. I am opening an avenue through my walk for people to sign up for their dreams for peace and to commit themselves to hosting peace talks until we can finish these civilian peace plans.

**VoD:** What is the message you want to send through this initiative to the international community?

**Eimtithal:** It is very complicated because I am also part of the international community as someone from Darfur who grew up in Philadelphia in the United States. My message to the international community, to my community, I guess, is that we usually think the problems we see in other places are far from

ourselves and our lives. These problems couldn't possibly happen to us but they could be reality in another place. If we didn't contribute to the peace process in Darfur as if we were contributing to peace processes in Philadelphia, New York or Washington DC, that responsibility will lie squarely on our shoulders.

**VoD:** What is your message to the people of Darfur including youth and women?

**Eimtithal:** My message to the people in Sudan and Darfur, who tell me that I am so small to walk all these kilometers, is that the hard thing is being faced by people who lost their homes for 14 and 15 years and lost families. My family lost people as well and some are also in the camps. You have to still be willing to move forward and every day I choose to move forward myself.

**VoD:** What is your message to the conflicting parties in Darfur?

**Eimtithal:** We all have different responsibilities and the reality is that a lot of people in Sudan haven't lived up to their responsibilities. It is important for us to live up to our responsibilities, and if we wait for people who have never agreed to try and agree, we will be waiting for many more years. We don't have that kind of time.

**VoD:** What is your special message to the artists in Darfur?

**Eimtithal:** I have been doing workshops around the world and using art platforms to let people be able to speak productively about everything that makes them human. When I do my poetry sessions, people cry but they cry because they feel. To all artists out there, I want to tell them that the reason, even though I am a scientist, I choose art to speak because it allows me to say anything I want to say in a productive way. I think our language in Sudan and Darfur is very poetic, and speaking with humanity allows us speak productively. We Sudanese share a country and if we don't start collaborating it is going to be a very hard space to share.



*Eimtithal Ibrahim Mahmoud (middle), with female university students, while walking from El Fasher, North Darfur, to Khartoum as part of her Peace Dreams campaign. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.*



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