

VOICES

of Darfur

VOL 07 • NO 01

Darfur's Poetry :

An Interview
with Aida Amed
Abdelgadir

Water Conservation and Management: A key to achieving sustainable peace

UNAMID ensure innovative and sustainable solutions addressing water scarcity in Darfur

**"Yesterday is too late for peace in Darfur"—
An Interview with Abiodun Bashua**

UNAMID's former AJSR speaks about his achievements, challenges and the need for sustainable peace in Darfur.



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Editor-in-Chief
Carlos Araujo

Editor
Musi Khumalo

Associate Editors
Ala Mayyahi
Priyanka Chowdhury

Staff Writers
Salah Mohammed
Mohamad Mahady

Lead Designer
Arie Santoso

Graphics & Design
Mutaz Ahmed

Photographers
Hamid Abdulsalam
Mohamad Mahady

Contributors
Jumbe Jumbe
Samuel Conteh

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

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NOTE

I'M PLEASED to introduce the latest edition of Voices of Darfur, which highlights UNAMID's ongoing efforts to facilitate lasting peace in the region.

The article "Water Conservation: Management for Sustainable Peace in Darfur," describes how the lack of access to water resources continues to be one of the major drivers of conflict and dispute in Darfur, particularly along nomadic migratory routes across the region. Historically, conflicts over limited water resources and tribal clashes were mostly mediated by traditional reconciliation mechanisms locally known as "Judya", or through the native administration, which put climatic variation and groups' mobility into account. Additionally, the article highlights UNAMID's efforts to develop water sources to support the population residing in the proximity of the Mission's premises throughout Darfur.

In the interview "Yesterday is too late for peace in Darfur" with UNAMID's former

Acting Joint Special Representative, Abiodun Bashua, *Voices of Darfur* conducted just before he left the Mission in December 2015, Mr. Bashua speaks about his achievements, greatest challenges and the need for sustainable peace across Darfur.

Finally, in our cover feature, "Darfur's Poems," *Voices of Darfur* presents an interview with Aida Ahmed Abdulgader, a Darfuri poet and a senior radio presenter. Ms. Abdulgader speaks of her intention to publish three new volumes of poetry in formal and colloquial Arabic, her views on art and the role played by poets in bringing peace to Darfur.

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

Carlos Araujo
Chief
Communications & Public Information Section

ON THE COVER



Aida Ahmed Abdelghadir at her office in the Broadcasting Corporation of North Darfur state. Ms. Aida is a Darfuri poet and a senior radio presenter. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.



Sausan Issa Adam, a Darfuri radio presenter in the Voices of Children radio programme produced by UNAMID Radio Unit since 2013 and presented by Darfuri youngsters. Photo by Adam Ahmed, UNAMID.

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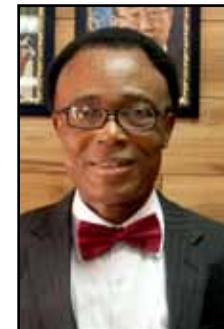
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PUBLICATIONS UNIT
Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) - UNAMID
Email: unamid-publicinformation@un.org
Website: <http://unamid.unmissions.org>

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UNAMID Commemorates the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations in Khartoum

ON 29 OCTOBER 2015, UNAMID, in collaboration with United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Sudan commemorated the 70th anniversary of the United Nations at Sudan National Museum in Khartoum. The event, held under the theme “Strong UN. Better World.” at the Sudan National Museum, aimed at disseminating peace messages and reflecting activities of the United Nations in Sudan. It included a photo exhibition, interactive installations, cultural performances by Sudanese artists and a grand musical concert by the noted Sudanese musician Nancy Ajaj.

Additionally, Information, Educational and Communications (IEC) materials related to UN activities in Sudan, UNAMID’s mandate as well as the work of its various sections, and the newly adopted sustainable development goals were distributed among the general public.

The photo exhibition detailing the activities of the UNCT and UNAMID was also open on 30 October 2015, for special guests and members of the diplomatic community in Khartoum.

The occasion brought together more than 5,000 people including women’s groups, youth representatives, university students, intellectuals and academia from Khartoum and other parts of Sudan as well as UNCT representatives and UNAMID staff

An earlier official event commemorating UN Day also took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs premises in Khartoum; this was attended by government officials, heads of foreign missions in Sudan and members of the diplomatic community, heads of UN agencies and international nongovernmental organizations, the president of the United Nations Association and UNAMID staff.

Addressing the occasion, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and the UNDP representative in Sudan

On 29 October 2015, UNAMID, in collaboration with the United Nations Country Team in Sudan, celebrated the UN Day and the 70th anniversary of the United Nations in Khartoum, under the theme “Strong UN. Better World”. More than 5,000 people attended the event at the National Museum, which included a photo exhibition, interactive presentations, cultural performances and a concert featuring renowned Sudanese musician Nancy Ajaj. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.





Marta Ruedas read out the UN Secretary General's message on the Day, in which Mr. Ban Ki-moon noted that the United Nations works for the entire human family of seven billion people, cares for the earth and defends human rights for all, regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation.

Ms Ruedas explained that the UN is working with the Government of Sudan to address the needs of the vulnerable, including through the implementation of the 2015 Humanitarian Response Plan and humanitarian planning for 2016. "Over the course of the last year, and in close cooperation with national counterparts, the UN helped avoid 1.817 maternal deaths, assisted in bringing 200,000 children back into the school system, and provided support to 2.1 million farmers to ensure their livelihoods," she averred.

On his part, the State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kamal Ismail, expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the UNAMID and UNCT in Sudan and highlighted Sudan's contribution to UN activities worldwide.

The State Minister of Culture and Information, Mohammed Yousif, welcomed the presence of the UN in Khartoum and across Sudan. "We are committed to facilitating the work of the UN and cooperate with its staff to implement the principles of the United Nations charter," said Mr. Yousif.

On his part, Mr. Sidig Wadah, Chair, Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultations (DIDC) implementation Committee, commended UNAMID's efforts in the Darfur peace process and encouraged all Darfuris to work for peaceful co-existence among communities in the region.

On 29 October 2016, noted Darfuri artist Mohamed Yusuf Andokai, performed a theater play promoting peace during the UN Day ceremonies in Khartoum.

Handing Over Weapons Storage Facilities to Government of Sudan Police Station in Nyala



A UNAMID Ordinance and Disposal Officer, Abdunnassir Hussien, explains to a national storage guard the safest way of storing weapons, which is by chaining them after being padlocked as well as separating them from the ammunitions. Photo by Mutaz Ahmed Muna-fal, UNAMID.

ON 5 NOVEMBER 2015, UNAMID's Ordinance Disposal Office (ODO), Sector South, handed over two modified containers for safe storage of weapons and ammunition to the South Darfur Police Station in the Al Nahda area, Nyala, South Darfur.

The handover of the two stores is in line with the Mission's mandate of protection of civilians through better control of small arms and light weapons in Darfur. The two containers were constructed under the UN Mine Action project.

Speaking at the handover, UNAMID representative Paul Ebikwo commended the continued cooperation between UNAMID and the Government of South Darfur through its different institutions,

including police and other security organs and noted that the handover coincided with the joint decision of UN Security Council and the state governments in Darfur to collect illegal weapons in the region. He added that such storage facilities aim at enhancing the security situation across Darfur.

On his part, the Government of Sudan Police Liaison Officer, Lt.-Colonel Altom Abduljabar, expressed his appreciation for the cooperation between GoS Police and UNAMID and Sudan Police, especially in the areas of capacity building and project implementation. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of proper weapons and ammunitions storage in ensuring a stable security situation. ■

Handing over a Police Station to Sudan Police in Darfur



Former Acting Police Commissioner, Dr. Mutasem Almajali hands over the project file on the construction of the police station to the GoS Police. UNAMID photo.

ON 9 DECEMBER 2015, the Sierra Leone Police Contingent serving with UNAMID handed over a police station they constructed to the Government of Sudan (GoS) at Abu Shouk internally displaced persons (IDPs) Camp, North Darfur. The six-room facility, comprising a community service center, investigation room, two prison cells and two offices, was built with funds contributed by Sierra Leone Police Advisers, with support from UNAMID.

Addressing Government of Sudan (GoS) Police and the Abou Shouk IDP Camp community gathered at the handover ceremony, the Sierra Leone Police Contingent Commander, Assistant Superintendent of Police, William Faya Sellu, expressed his sincere appreciation, on behalf of his Contingent to UNAMID Acting Police Commissioner, Dr. Mutasem Almajali, for his support and guidance throughout the life of the project. He stated that the initiative of build-

ing a police station for the GoS at Abu Shouk IDP Camp was born out of the fact that a small makeshift structure that was being used by the GoS at the same location had outgrown the ever growing community in the IDP Camp. He stressed that law enforcement is very important in any society and that "law enforcement is the pivot around which the stability, survival and continuity of a society revolves; for without law, society crumbles". He added that the support provided by the Sierra Leone Police Contingent in Darfur is borne out of empathy with the people in the region as Sierra Leone had once experienced a civil war. "I am very much gratified today to see the final stage of this project. This is a dream come true as the Contingent fought hard to complete the project within four months," he added.

Handing over the newly constructed police station to the GoS Police, UNAMID Acting Police Commissioner Dr.

Mutasem Almajali said that he was honored and privileged to be part of this project. "This is one of the biggest projects which have been undertaken during my time in Darfur. I extend my sincerest gratitude to the Sierra Leone Police Contingent for this wonderful project which will enhance the relationship between UNAMID and GoS".

Speaking on behalf of the GoS Police, Colonel Dr. Abdel Mohsen Badawy Mohammed, said that they were very happy and thankful to UNAMID and to the Sierra Leone Police Contingent for building a police station for them in Abu Shouk Community. "On behalf of the Commissioner in El Fasher and the entire community of Abu Shouk, I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Mutasem, UNAMID and the Sierra Leone Police Contingent for this big project you have done for us. We value this contribution and will never forget this, Inshallah," he concluded. ■

NEWS

Intensified Risk Education Programmes across Darfur

UNAMID'S ORDNANCE DISPOSAL OFFICE (ODO) conducted more than 294 educational programmes on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) targeting local communities, especially children, across Darfur. The programme, took place from July to October 2015, aimed to reduce the occurrence of incidents caused by ERW.

“Risk education teams have been active in all five states of Darfur and responsible for raising awareness at all levels,” stated Shaza Ragab, UNAMID ODO focal point on ERW risk education, North Darfur.

Ms. Ragab revealed that UNAMID ODO visited schools and sensitized children through drama and songs and other art forms of community theatre on the dangers of ERW. “Through cogent 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,” she explained.

Additionally, since radio is the most common and effective medium of information and communication

in Darfur, ODO usually informs, educates and communicates to the people of Darfur on safer behaviours through live and recorded programmes broadcast by UNAMID Radio on Darfur FM Radio, which reaches more than two million people in Darfur.

“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,” she added.

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.



PHOTO BY FULAN BIN FULAN/UNAMID



UNAMID Launches Resource Centres in Kutum and El Waha Localities, North Darfur

ON 8 AND 9 DECEMBER 2015, UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) opened its first two resource centres in Kutum and Al Waha localities, North Darfur. The centres were established in partnership with the Sudan Open University and will serve as outreach stations to increase awareness and local support for the Mission's peace mediation efforts and its substantive work.

The event included a workshop where some 150 teachers, community leaders and representatives of civil society, women and youth from Kutum and Al Waha localities discussed the role of education in peace building. Additionally, more than 800 graduates from both localities signed a peace pledge as part of the event.

The Deputy Commissioner of Kutum locality expressed appreciation for the CPIS support for the graduates and "The fruitful workshop which highlighted the role of teachers in enhancing peaceful coexistence, especially in the critical areas in the region."

"We pledged to work for peace in our area and reaffirmed our commitment to raise awareness on importance of having sustainable peace in Sudan as we need it now, rather

On 8 and 9 December 2015, the graduation ceremonies of the Open Sudan University, supported by the African Union-United Nations Mission in Sudan, the university who completed their education between 2006 and 2013. The event which took place in Kutum, North Darfur, was attended by government officials, UNAMID staff, university professors and families of the graduates. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

than tomorrow,” said Adam Hassan, a graduate from Kutum locality, in his remarks.

On behalf of women of AL Waha, Mrs. Zahra Isa thanked UNAMID for the initiative and hoped the Mission continues its support for the locality’s population.

Dr. Simi Jedo, the representative the Sudan Open University, also expressed appreciation for the Mission’s support to various activities of the university and for establishing the two centres. “I hope these centres will help the local community to look for the main cause of the conflict and the suitable solution for all parties,” he said.

UNAMID intends to launch similar centres in Mallit, Um Kadada and Malha in the next two months.

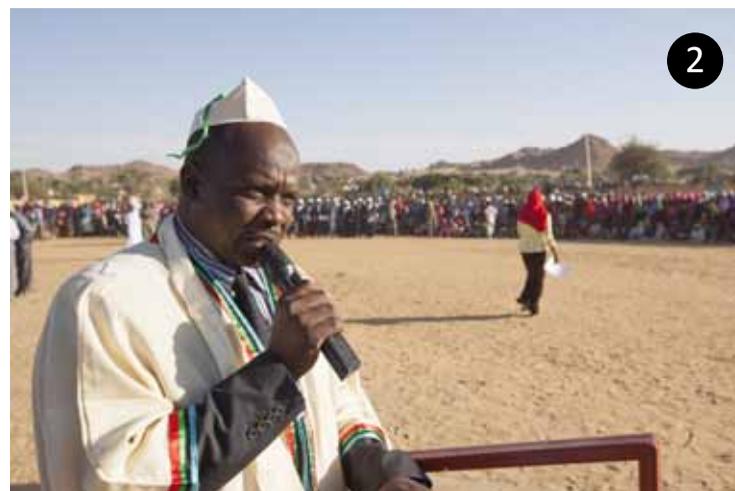


1 On 8 and 9 December 2015, UNAMID’s Communications and Public Information Section, in collaboration with the Open University of Sudan, organized a graduation ceremony for students of the university who completed their education between 2006 and 2013. The event which took place in Kutum, North Darfur, was attended by government officials, UNAMID staff, university professors and families of the graduates. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

2 Dr. Abualbasha Abdurahman, Chancellor of Sudan Open University delivers his speech during the event that organized on occasion of the first graduation ceremony in Kutum since the university began its work in Darfur. The Open University of Sudan, which has more than 20 learning centers in the Darfur region and many others throughout the country, Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID

3 On 8 and 9 December 2015, UNAMID’s Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) opened its first two resource centres in Kutum and Al Waha localities, North Darfur. The centres were established in a partnership with the Sudan Open University and will serve as outreach stations to increase awareness and local support for the Mission’s peace mediation efforts and its substantive work. UNAMID intends to launch similar centres in Mallit, Um Kadada and Malha in the next two months. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

4 On 9 December 2015, Deputy Commander deployed at Kutum, Major Brandon Nel, shakes hands with the representative of the Sudan Open University, Dr. Simi Jedo, during the celebration of the graduation, which is the first in the locality since the university began its work in Darfur. The Open University of Sudan has more than 20 teaching centres in Darfur and other areas throughout the country. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.



Peace Campaign in North Darfur



On 22 December 2015, Saraf Omra, Goodwill Committee and Peace Committee during a peace campaign supported by UNAMID's Civil Affairs Section in Saraf Omra, North Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

ON 23 DECEMBER 2015, a UNAMID-funded peace campaign concluded its activities in the localities of Kabkabiya, Alwaha, Elserf, Saraf Omra, Koma and Mellit, North Darfur. The event, started on 29 November, aimed at ending tension between farmers and pastoralists and strengthening social fabric among the various tribes living in those localities.

The campaign, supported by UNAMID's Civil Affairs Section, Sector North, included open sessions where the community leaders shared ideas on preventing pasturing during harvest seasons and resolving inter-tribal conflicts through traditional mechanisms.

Led by the Goodwill Committee in Kabkabiya and other local peace committees in Elserf and Saraf Omra, the attendees initiated a formation of a committee composed of representatives from the three localities to prepare for a general conference. The conference, proposed to be held in Kabkabiya in the near future, is expected to pave the way for durable peace among the concerned tribes.

Omda Salih Jeed, the Chairperson of the Goodwill Committee, urged all community leaders and intellectuals to play their roles in building trust between pastoralists and farmers to ensure smooth and friendly interaction among them. "I call upon all Omdas and Sheikhs to play a sig-

nificant role in strengthening peaceful coexistence among the local communities," he said.

Mr. Jeed also expressed appreciation for the Mission's support to the peace campaign. "We wouldn't be able probably to carry out this event without the support of UNAMID. Once again we thank the Mission for its continued efforts to bring sustainable peace to Darfur," he added.

UNAMID's representative, Mohamed Ibrahim, a Civil Affairs officer, reiterated UNAMID's commitment to its mandated responsibilities which include supporting mediation in community conflicts and addressing its root causes. "UNAMID is concerned to restore peace, security and stability to Darfur. As part of its mandate, it supports such initiatives with the aim of bringing peaceful living and cohesion into Darfuri communities," he said.

Mr. Ibrahim also urged Darfuri youth to raise awareness on importance of peace among their communities and work together to bring stability, emphasizing also on the importance of education as a key element for development. "It's time for all Darfuris to work for peace and development. Youth particularly can mobilize their community members for lasting coexistence," he added.

UNAMID intends to support similar peace campaign scheduled for the coming months in Kutum, Tawila and El Fasher rural areas. ■

Workshop on Criminal Investigation and Justice in North Darfur



ON 29 DECEMBER 2015, UNAMID's Human Rights Section, in collaboration with the Office of the General Prosecutor of the Special Court for Darfur, organized a one-day workshop on criminal investigation and criminal justice in El Fasher, North Darfur.

The workshop, conducted on the basis of the Universal Periodic Review recommendation, aimed at equipping prosecutors, judges and policemen with knowledge and skills in handling criminal investigations while operating within international human rights standards and improving the judicial system in Sudan, in general, and Darfur, in particular.

Addressing the forum, UNAMID's Human Rights representative, Ahmed Hassan, reiterated the Mission's support to human rights and justice-related issues in Darfur.

"We look forward to maintaining amicable coordination and cooperation with all judicial organizations to ensure respect for human rights and justice remain fully intact during criminal investigations," said Mr. Hassan.

On his part, Darfur Special Court General Prosecutor, Elfatih Taifoor, expressed his appreciation for UNAMID's capacity-building programmes in the human rights domain and underscored the importance of constant coordination between UNAMID's Human Rights Section and the judiciary. "We are grateful to UNAMID for its initiatives to improve criminal investigators' skills in this important field," he said.

A similar workshop was conducted by the Mission's Human Rights Section in El Geneina, West Darfur, while another is scheduled to be held in Nyala, South Darfur. ■

On 29 December 2015, UNAMID's Human Rights Section in collaboration with the office of the General Prosecutor for the special Court for Darfur organized a workshop on Criminal Investigation and Criminal Justice in El Fasher, North Darfur, the workshop targeted prosecutors, judges and police investigators. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.



■ NEWS

UNAMID Organizes Second Job Fair for Sudanese Colleagues

ON 14 DECEMBER 2015, the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) held the second one-day job fair for its Sudanese staff, for them to explore potential future job opportunities in the wake of the ongoing streamlining process for the Mission.

The event, which was held under the theme “Sharing Our Talent, Building Your Future,” took place at the Mission’s headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur.

14 job providers, including Sudanese companies, organizations and industries as well as international companies and UN agencies, participated in the event.

Welcoming the participants, UNAMID’s Deputy Director of Mission Support, Anthony Nweke, expressed his hope that the fair would be the beginning of a continuous close partnership between UNAMID and employers in a collective effort to explore future job opportunities for our colleagues

The presence of this diverse range of businesses and industries here today is but an example of the many future job opportunities available to you in Sudan,” said Mr. Nweke while addressing Sudanese colleagues.

Mr. Nweke praised the skills, talents and experiences which our national staff have acquired in the Mission to participating enterprises.

“I hope that today’s event will give you an opportunity to tap into the substantial range of professional talent that we have amongst us at UNAMID,” stated Mr. Nweke. “These are highly skilled professionals who have consolidated their competencies and experience while working in this multinational organization. They represent a rare pool of talent—a well-trained and culturally diverse manpower whose contribution would make a positive difference to your respective organizations,” he added

The Mission’s first job fair was held on 4 March 2015 and had brought together more than 25 job providers.

Water Conservation and Management: A key to achieving sustainable peace

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

UNAMID's Water and Environmental Protection section strives every day to ensure innovative and sustainable solutions addressing the problem of water scarcity in Darfur are implemented across the region.

THE DECADE-LONG conflict in Darfur conflict has resulted in degradation in most essential aspects of life, including water facilities. Some two million people across this region have moved from villages and rural areas to the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), located

around the major towns. Such displacements have put a strain on already overstretched water resources.

Lack of access to water resources continues to be one of the major, non-political drivers of conflict in Darfur, particularly along nomadic migratory routes. Histori-

cally, disputes over limited water resources and tribal clashes were mostly mediated by traditional reconciliation mechanisms, locally known as "Judiya", or through the intervention of the native administration. Over the years, however, these traditional methods have been weakened.

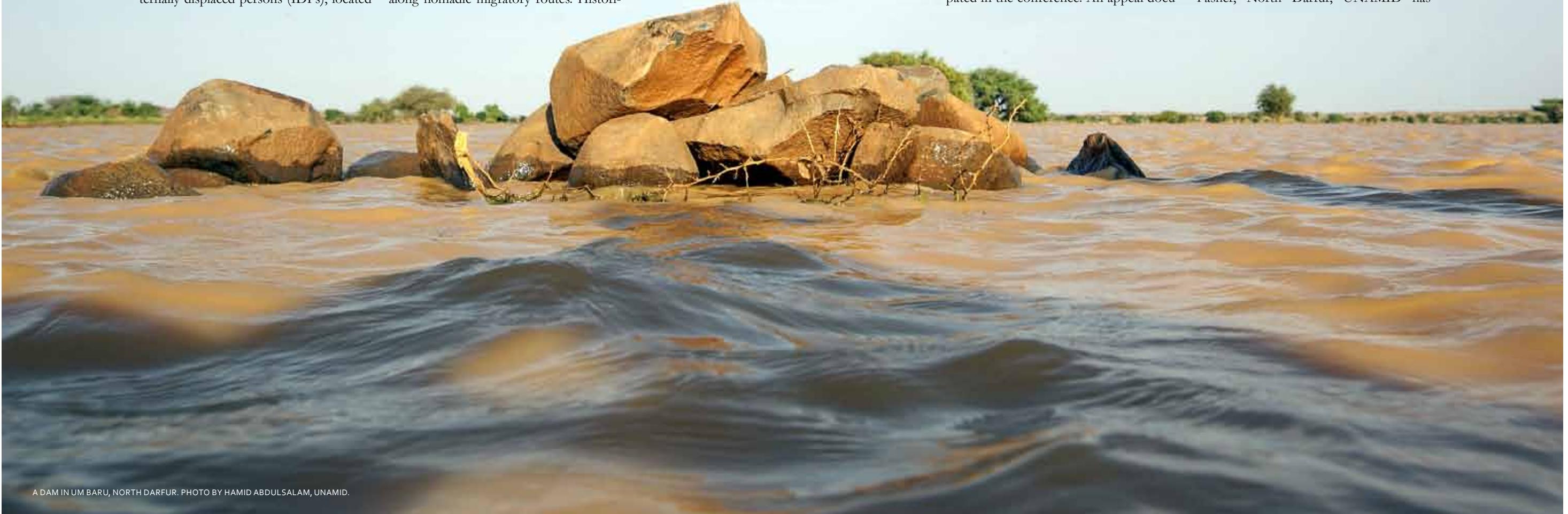
Efforts are now underway to address the lack of this precious resource in different parts of Darfur. UNAMID's Water and Environment Section (WES) has collaborated with the governments of all five states in Darfur to focus on water and environment management, to reduce and manage the risks of conflict and climate change through innovative solution and initiatives.

In June 2011, an International Conference on Water for Sustainable Peace in Darfur was held in Khartoum to increase the donor community's awareness on the scarcity of water in Darfur as well as its crucial role in the resolution of the existing conflict. Some 500 delegates participated in the conference. An appeal docu-

ment was prepared for the mobilization of resources for the implementation of 65 water- and sanitation-related projects across all rural and urban areas in Darfur for easy access to improved drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities; some projects were implemented, such as, for instance, the water services project in Mellit, North Darfur.

UNAMID continues to develop water sources to support the populations residing in the proximity of the Mission's bases across Darfur. The Mission's WEP section has rehabilitated three dams--Sail Gassa, Seraigay and Takaro—in the South Darfur State. These dams provide livelihoods for the local community by irrigating crops and providing drinking water for livestock. They also recharge groundwater aquifers.

The Mission has also drilled 112 productive boreholes which are currently in use across Darfur. Water extracted from these boreholes is shared with local communities. For instance, in Shagra near El Fasher, North Darfur, UNAMID has



A DAM IN UM BARU, NORTH DARFUR. PHOTO BY HAMID ABDUSALAM, UNAMID.



On 03 September 2015, UNAMID Water and Environmental Protection Unit (WEP) completed the installation of submersible pump and operation of UNAMID Water Well at El Daein, sector East. The well serves UNAMID compound and the local community in the area. Photo by Kassahun Amante, UNAMID

drilled two boreholes and provided two generators and operators for the general maintenance of these boreholes. Some 60 per cent of water extracted from these boreholes is added into the El Fasher urban water supply network to support the local populations living in the city, while the remaining amount is used by the Mission.

Additionally, through its Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme, UNAMID has implemented more than 80 water projects across Darfur. These include the construction of water points, drilling of boreholes and the rehabilitation of earth dams, particularly in rural areas and camps for the displaced.

UNAMID is also involved in the implementation of water projects, such as the connection of water supply lines in the Beida camp for the displaced, West Darfur; the installation of a water network in Shagra, North Darfur; the completion of a geophysics survey, drilling, and installation of hand pumps at Umdwaina village, South Darfur; and the completion of Um Baronga dam in Tawila, North Darfur; aimed at contributing to the current conflict which is largely attributed to inequitable sharing and availability of natural resources such as water.

Likewise, to facilitate the harvesting of rainwater, Water and Environmental Protection Section (WEPS) of the mission,

has constructed infrastructure at the Mission's Major Camps such as those in El Fasher, Nyala, Zalingei, and El Geneina in Darfur, which has a capacity to harvest some 5.3 million litres per year. Emmanuel Mollel, Chief, WEPS, emphasises that, rainwater harvesting reduce damages to expensive infrastructure and buildings caused by flood water if not properly managed and directed. Moreover, harvested water functions as a water supply security measure, and sources of clean water, when boreholes become inaccessible due to flooding during the rainy season.

The Mission has also installed 122 wastewater treatment plants at its camps throughout Darfur which use an activated sludge treatment process, to treat wastewater generated in UNAMID's various locations to a level acceptable for reuse as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). This treated wastewater is used as a substitute for fresh water to meet the non-potable water demands of the Mission's personnel—toilet flushing, tree planting, car washing, construction works, dust control and firefighting—and has reduced the need for fresh water in the Mission's camps where these systems have been installed, by some 40 per cent. "Through reuse of treated wastewater, environmental pollution, pollution of groundwater in particular, by untreated wastewater, has been eliminated," adds Mr. Mollel. The trees planted near UNAMID's camps are watered with treated wastewater, and assist the mission in reducing its carbon footprint and reduces the encroachment of desert.

To further eliminate pollution of groundwater and promote

the concept of 'waste to wealth,' a composting facility, which uses the organic part of the waste stream from UNAMID's headquarters, and a briquetting capability, which converts shredded paper into briquettes for cooking, have been established at the Zam Zam waste disposal site near El Fasher, North Darfur. Capacity building activities such as training local youth and students on composting and briquetting have also been undertaken.

To date, 100 informal waste pickers and 60 students from El Fasher University have been trained. Some 4 cubic meters of compost is produced weekly by the local community from food waste and sold to farmers to use as natural fertilizers on their farmlands. Such training activities enhance crop production as well as the purchasing power of people. "The local community has shown great eagerness in embracing innovative solutions to tackle their day-to-day challenges such as lack of water resources. Additionally, they are willing to undertake any training programme that enables them to acquire livelihood skills," avers Mr. Mollel.

According to Amna Osman, Head, Technical and Guidance Sector, National Forestry Corporation (NFC), "the protection of forests in Darfur can help increase water conservation from rain, ground and surface water, which will positively contribute to the resolution of the on-going conflict and disputes in Darfur." Keeping such a view in mind, UNAMID WEPS has established ten nurseries producing tree seedlings and rehabilitated another similar venture for the North Darfur Agricultural Research Centre (ARC) with a production capacity of 50,000 seedlings per year.

In addition, the Mission has signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with the NFC to meet the high demand of seedlings in North, South, West and Central Darfur. As of November 2015, a total of 330,000 trees, which include both drought-resistant and fruit trees, have been planted in the aforementioned locations across Darfur. NFC uses funds derived from the sale of these seedlings to establish nurseries in remote locations for easy access by the local communities. This strategy facilitates a collective approach toward increased vegetation cover in Darfur, enhances the carbon dioxide uptake, and thereby combat global warming.

"The local community has shown great eagerness in arriving at innovative solutions to tackle their day-to-day issues such as lack of water resources. Additionally, they are willing to embrace any training programme that enables them to acquire livelihood skills."

—Emanuel Mollel

While UNAMID continues to partner with the local communities and national authorities to institute workable approaches for water management and protecting the environment, the ongoing conflict has created a major gap in the demand for this life-giving resource and its supply. Adequate availability of water resources for all, especially in rural areas, is a long-term goal for the Darfuri people, which, if achieved, will go a long way in promoting peaceful coexistence and communal harmony among the local population, and contribute to achieving sustainable peace in Darfur. As Nasreldien Mohamed, Director-General, North Darfur State Water Corporation, says, "We are working with UNAMID as well as other international and national stakeholders, to promote peace building and harmony among Darfuris, through the construction and rehabilitation of dams, hafers and rihoods, to provide water to all communities and prevent tribal clashes in our state. The objective is to reduce water

scarcity generally and, thereby, eliminate a major cause of the ongoing conflict."

On 29 July 2015, UNAMID's Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Liaison Section handed over a water supply connection two Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in the areas of Shagra Hilat Abu Baker and Shagra Hilat Musa to Shagra community, near El Fasher, North Darfur. The project is part of the Quick Impact projects (QIP) funded by the Mission. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.





On 24 November 2014 Addis Ababa: The African Union-United Nations Acting Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator a.i. for Darfur, Abiodun Bashua, participated in the opening session of the negotiations between the Government of Sudan and non-signatory Darfuri movements in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The opening session was chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, the Chairman of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), and attended by representatives from the African Union (AU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Government of Sudan, Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi and Justice and Equality Movement/Gibril. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID

INTERVIEW

“Yesterday is too late for peace in Darfur” — An Interview with Abiodun Bashua

In an interview with Voices of Darfur conducted just before he left the Mission in December 2015, UNAMID’s former Acting Joint Special Representative, Abiodun Bashua, speaks about his achievements, greatest challenges and the need for sustainable peace across Darfur.

BY JUMBE OMARI

UNAMID’S FORMER Acting Joint Special Representative (AJSR) and Joint Chief Mediator (JCM), Abiodun Oluremi Bashua has held four different positions in the Mission. He joined UNAMID in August 2008 as Director of Political Affairs and served in that capacity until February 2011 when he was assigned to Addis Ababa as the Director, Joint Support Coordination Mechanism (JMST) of UNAMID to the African Union, a position he held until May 2014. In June 2014, he returned to the Mission to serve as Officer-in-Charge of the Deputy Joint Special Representative Pillar One, responsible for the political and substantive components, following which AJSR/JCM, a post he held until his departure in December 2015. In an interview with Voices of Darfur, Mr. Bashua spoke about his experiences, achievements and the need for sustainable peace across Darfur.

Voices of Darfur: What would you consider to be your biggest achievements and greatest challenges in UNAMID?

Bashua: The first achievement for me is leaving behind a Mission that is now more coordinated, more col-

laborative and working together as a team. That was a major challenge when I took over this function as AJSR in October 2014. The second achievement is that I was able to get the three major Darfur armed movements to agree to work together and to agree to have a common position on all the issues related to the peace process. In the past 13 months, I think I succeeded in narrowing their differences. When I took them to Paris from 15-17 August 2015, one of the outcomes of that consultation was that they were going to meet and formulate a common position. I was working on making that possible, to facilitate that by taking them for a retreat in Accra. The Kofi Annan International Peace Training Center had agreed to facilitate that. But, knowing that I had to leave means that I will not be able to see it through.

VOD: Has this coordinated position now been stopped?

Bashua: I would say that it is suspended as it is up to the new JSR to agree with my perception of the way forward and resume it.

VOD: Are there any current pressing issues that you have not been able to deal with?

Bashua: Regarding the peace process in Darfur, there are a few major pending issues: one is the need for the armed movements to have a common coordinated position. I think that is critical. It would be easier to have sustainable peace when all who, so far, oppose the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) have a common position. We need to know what that common position is. Only then, can we sit with them to devise how to reach agreement on those positions and see how they can be negotiated with the government in a way that everybody then signs on to a sustainable peace process.

VOD: What, according to you, is the fate of the DDPD in light of the fact that the major rebel movements don’t really recognize it?

Bashua: With or without these three major movements I spoke of in answer to your earlier question, the DDPD is alive. It is functioning and is being implemented. The pace of the implementation is not very impressive for different reasons, including inadequate equipment and financial resources. The government is committed to the DDPD. The international community has endorsed it initially as the basis for peace in Darfur. However, between the time it was signed in 2011, and now, and because some important provisions of the DDPD have not been implemented, it is now considered by the AU and the UN as one basis, not the only basis to move forward. This still makes the document very relevant, if not perfect. In

“It is my hope that with the coming of the new JSR, the AU, UN and the Government of Sudan will agree to resume discussions to formulate a comprehensive, Darfur-wide exit strategy.”

my opinion, the provisions of the DDPD could bring peace to Darfur, if they were to be implemented faithfully by the signatories and those who are still outside of it. So I don’t think we need a separate, brand new peace process to achieve peace in Darfur. Everything is in the DDPD. The challenge is whether those who are outside of it want to negotiate on the basis of DDPD or on the basis of something else.

VOD: There has been a lot of news about the Mission’s exit strategy. Could you shed some light on this for us?

Bashua: The exit strategy is nothing uncommon. Actually, I think the problem we have had up to now is that there has not been an exit strategy. The Security Council, in 2014, and in the mandate in June of 2014,

requested the Secretary General to submit a report including proposals for an exit strategy. The intention of the UN Security Council (UNSC) at that time was not that UNAMID should leave Darfur, but like every other peacekeeping mission, it will have to have a plan for leaving some day. The UNSC wanted to know how the Mission would begin its withdrawal and, ultimately leave, at the agreed time.

In order to assist the Secretary General in making recommendations, the UNSC, in April 2014, determined a number of benchmarks which will be used in assessing the timeline for UNAMID to depart. Those benchmarks are now attached in the latest UNSC Resolution which seeks to know how much of this has been achieved and how much time the Mission needs to complete these benchmarks, so that a determination can be made whether UNAMID should leave in one, two or three years. That is what the exit strategy was supposed to do.

Unfortunately, the Joint Working Group that met on the exit strategy, comprising AU, UN and the Government of Sudan focused on UNAMID’s withdrawal from West Darfur

On 20 November, the Acting Head of UNAMID, Abiodun Bashua, meets with native administration leaders in El Daein, East Darfur. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.

rather than on an exit strategy. So the discussions that were held between February and April 2015 by the Joint Working Group focused only on UNAMID's withdrawal from West Darfur, rather than formulating a Darfur-wide exit strategy.

It is my hope that with the coming of the new JSR, the AU, UN and the Government of Sudan will agree to resume discussions to formulate a comprehensive, Darfur-wide exit strategy, based on the benchmarks.

VOD: We often hear the government expressing their displeasure with UNAMID. What is your take on this?

Bashua: In my opinion, with all due deference and respect to the Government of Sudan, this is a repetition of a mantra from four years ago. At that time, UNAMID'S armed contingents were not as robust as they ought to be. There have been situations in the past in which UNAMID patrols have been ambushed by a few attackers and the Mission's peacekeepers have given up their weapons even though they outnumbered their assailants greatly. I would like to reiterate, however, that these incidents took place in the past. It needs to be situated. UNAMID'S contingents, the Military and Police components that I leave behind, are as robust as in any other peacekeeping mission, today.

In fact, in the past year and few months, one of the things I initiated, and I am grateful to UN Headquarters in New York for supporting me in this, is that any contingent that sends out a patrol that is unable to defend itself when under attack, will be sent back home. We have sent back four such patrol members for failing to defend themselves effectively in the time I was in charge of the Mission.

VOD: Is the government aware of that?

Bashua: Yes, the government is aware of this. I am very proud of the men and women in all our contingents today. They are as robust and effective as any other in any peacekeeping mission, anywhere in the world.



VOD: What, according to you, are some of the practices UNAMID should adopt to improve its image and give it more visibility, internally and externally?

Bashua: One of the things we should be doing is airing radio programmes, even if it is once a week or once a month. The agreements with different radio partners is a big step forward and I commend the Radio Production Unit. However, personally, I don't think it is about publicity, but rather about disseminating what we do. There is not a single day that UNAMID does not make a positive contribution to the people of Darfur, whether it is helping the displaced, rebuilding schools or rehabilitating infrastructure. As a Mission, we do something good for the community every day, but we do not put out sufficient numbers of these stories in the public domain. People in the communities know what we do for them, but few others are aware; this is a big challenge.

VOD: Do you feel that UNAMID is doing far too much good but is portrayed in a bad light?

Bashua: I think we have bad press because we don't have a sufficient, effective propaganda to disseminate what we do. I don't think it is the fact that people don't appreciate what we do. Also, generally, as a thumb rule, negatives sell faster than positives across the world. Therefore, for example, when we were attacked in Kass, South Darfur, people knew about it because that was bad news. When we build schools for communities and health centres, nobody really wants to know. It is our responsibility to let them know.

VOD: What about the challenges faced in bringing in journalists, whether local or international?

Bashua: Yes, obtaining visas and travel permits to Darfur for journalists is a big challenge. I hope someday soon the government will appreciate that, us being portrayed in good light, has spin-over effects on them. If the community

accepts UNAMID as doing a good job, it is because the Government of Sudan allowed the Mission to perform well. So it is a win-win situation for the Mission and the Government. Our success is the success of the Government. The more we can prove to the world that there is stability in Darfur, the better perception people and the international community have of the Government of Sudan.

VOD: The Mission's current mandate expires by the end of June next year. Do you have any idea what will happen after that?

Bashua: We can't finish the work required of this Mission by June next year. So the mandate will have to be renewed. What I hope happens between now and the next mandate, is that the Government of Sudan will sincerely work with the AU and the UN and the Mission's leadership in ensuring that a number of the benchmarks on the three priority tasks are achieved. It is doable.

VOD: Will UNAMID have enough support for a mandate renewal when the Government of Sudan itself says there is no problem in Darfur?

Bashua: I think the whole world and the people of Darfur are with us. In my opinion, the challenge is an objective assessment of the situation in Darfur. There is still a security challenge which needs to be resolved through negotiations under Thabo Mbeki. There needs to be a secession of hostilities and everybody needs to be on board the peace process. As long as there are two million displaced persons who have nowhere to go, or are afraid to go home for different reasons, we cannot say the job is done and UNAMID should leave. I believe that UNAMID should not leave in June 2016.

VOD: On another note, where are you going from here?

Bashua: Let's put it this way; whatever begins anywhere must end. I see my

departure from here as a continuation of my career in life whether in peacekeeping, at a national capacity, or so forth. I think God has determined it is time for me to move on and I am moving on.

VOD: Are you considering retirement as an option?

Bashua: Retirement might not be it. I may still be within the UN system, most likely.

VOD: Finally, do you have any message for UNAMID and the people of Darfur people?

Bashua: I want to appeal to my colleagues at UNAMID, military, police, civilians, to stay the course and not be discouraged. The challenges may be compounded, but time is on our side and, I think, God is on our side. To the people of Darfur, I would like to exhort you to remain steadfast; peace is on its way. It will come sooner than you think. Yesterday is too late to have peace in Darfur. May God help all of us to get that peace in the shortest possible time. ■



Aida Ahmed Abdelghadir is pictured here at her office in El Fasher, North Darfur. Ms. Abdelghadir is a Darfuri poet and a senior radio presenter. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

Darfur's Poetry: An interview with Aida Ahmed Abdelgadir

BY ALA MAYYAH

Renowned poet, Aida Abdelgadir, speaks of her intention to publish three new volumes of poetry in formal and colloquial Arabic, her views on art and the role played by poets in bringing peace to Darfur.

BORN IN EL FASHER, the capital of North Darfur, Aida Ahmed Abdelgadir, published her first book of poems titled "The suffering Kingdom's chants," in 2013, printed in Cairo, Egypt. A uniquely gifted woman, Ms. Abdelgadir's poetry and articles have been published in numerous local newspapers and magazines. In addition to this, she is a senior presenter at the State Broadcasting Corporation, which she joined in 2004 along with being a women's rights activist and a member of the Sudanese Women Union. Ms. Abdelgadir has participated in many forums across Sudan and represented her country abroad; she reveals that her travels to China, Egypt, the UAE and Libya have greatly sharpened her experience in life and in the intellectual aspects.

Ms. Abdelgadir holds a Master's degree in Social Psychology, focusing on psycho-

logical and social aspects which drive women to criminality. She is currently working on acquiring her doctoral degree in media studies. She lives in El Fasher with her husband and three children.

In an interview with Voices of Darfur, Ms. Abdelgadir speaks of her intention to publish three more volumes of poetry in formal and colloquial Arabic, her views on literature and poetry and the role played by poets in bringing peace to Darfur.

VoD: Could you tell us a bit about how you became interested in poetry and discovered your own talent as a poet?

Abdelgadir: My interest in literature and poetry started when I was at the secondary school level. This was the time when I began reading the works of many international and Arabic novelists and poets such as Ernest Hemingway, Colin Wilson, Nizar

Kabbani, Najeeb Mahfouz and Ihsan Abdelkadoos. This eclectic reading enriched my intellectual reservoir. I wrote my first poem in the 1990s when my father passed away. I said in it: "I departed from him and my eyes went blind with heavy tears/I departed from him and sorrow sank inside/ We lost you as our flag of content, and lost everything to wait for/Sadness covered every child and even those of cold hearts cried." When I read these lines to my siblings, they were very encouraging. Soon after, I wrote a novel; however, I did not get it published as I had discovered that my main mode of artistic expression was poetry. I continued to write poems and publish them in Sudanese newspapers and magazines.

VoD: Were you influenced by any other male or female poets when you began your literary journey?

Abdelgadir: Yes. The atmosphere was ripe for that. I used to visit the library at the Cultural Centre at El Fasher regularly. It has a good collection of books and I read many local poets whose writing left an indelible influence on my work. I was greatly influenced by poets such as Alim Abbas Mohamed Nour, who is now the President of the Sudanese Writers Association; Mohamed Osman Kajaray and Poet Mustafa Sanad. There were also others such as Al-Teenawi, Faisal Malik and Khalil Gamaraldeen whom I met at various literary gatherings; they encouraged me to continue to write poetry. I would participate in poetry readings where I read my own work and was the youngest member in the writers' community at that time.

VoD: What inspires you to write poems?

Abdelgadir: Life experiences are the major drivers for me when it comes to writing poems. However, I can perfect a piece only after some time elapses and I am emotionally distanced from a particular experience.

VoD: Tell us about your first published collection of poems. Did you face any challenges in printing and publishing it, and have you received support from any entity to help produce it?

Abdelgadir: My first collection of poems was approved by the Artistic Classifi-

cation Authority in 2003 but I was unable to publish it until 2013. This was because I could not find support from anyone. However, I managed to print and publish it on my own. After working for several years, I printed it in Cairo as printing costs are rather high in Khartoum. Additionally, it is difficult to market such works locally. With regards to support, I have always received great encouragement from my family. As a family, we inherently love poetry and believe in its importance in the cultural development of Darfur. Members of my family often ac-

"By nature, Darfuris are people who believe in consultative solutions. Judiyya (amicable solutions) is an established social method of solving problems by bringing all concerned parties to the negotiating table. It is a traditional dispute-solving mechanism, known well before the current conflict, and relies on the concept of peaceful solutions."

company me to poetry functions. The moral support of my family is as important to me as financial support. Without it, I wouldn't have been able to continue writing poetry with passion, or published my first book.

VoD: Do you have a favourite poem in your collection? If so, does this poem hold a special meaning for you?

Abdelgadir: All my poems are important to me. However, my favourite one is called "Not like Eid." I wrote it at a time when I was living with my husband in China and was really yearning for my country. The poem reflects the sadness I felt being away from my loved ones during an occasion like Eid. I read the poem in China during a few cultural events and all audience members

from the Sudanese community and other Arab countries loved it.

VoD: Can you recite a verse from this poem?

Abdelgadir: The first part of it reads: "Two clouds are bleeding on the threshold of my heart/my homeland and a mother's heart are far away/ what if this flying in the open could put me on a twig/what if it puts me on its wings for an ecstatic trip to land me in the heart of my homeland/ I am all alone and Eid is here."

VoD: Do you write poetry in classical Arabic only or do you write in colloquial Arabic as well?

Abdelgadir: I write in colloquial Arabic as well. I wrote a number of poems in colloquial Arabic while simultaneously composing others in classical Arabic.

VoD: Which version of the language is closer to your heart?

Abdelgadir: Both are close to my heart. I write in the colloquial which is referred to as the moderate Sudanese dialect or the dialect of central Sudan. It is used by most people of El Fasher and is understood across Sudan.

VoD: Do you see yourself more as a media professional or as a poet?

Abdelgadir: When I am with my colleagues in the media, I am a media professional and when I am in the midst of literary functions and circles, I find myself totally committed and affiliated to them. So, I can say I am loyal to both arenas.

VoD: How do you see acceptance for women poets in Darfuri society?

Other than yourself, are there a few published female poets currently in the region?

Abdelgadir: Darfuri society accepts female poets in a very natural way. Some women in Darfur compose poems innately, like the Hakamat. Others read stories to their children in a poetic, rhymed fashion. □□□□ There are also women who write modern poetry that promotes peace, urges cessation of war and calls for peaceful coexistence. However, the number of female poets with published works is relatively small. Maybe this can be attributed to the difficult conditions in Darfur and the absence of institutions that support and encourage artistic as well as poetic innovations.

VoD: Popular poetry writing is one

of the old literary forms in Darfur; has it changed with time?

Abdelgadir: The only change that has taken place are the subjects tackled by such poetry. The artistic or linguistic craft of writing popular poetry has remained intact. In the past, poems used to mostly describe a beloved woman and her beauty. With the ongoing conflict, however, most poems speak of the poet's wishes for improved circumstances and a return to their peaceful past.

VoD: Is popular poetry still more prevalent than modern poetry?

Abdelgadir: Yes, popular poetry is more prevalent here in Darfur. People do write but not necessarily for publishing. A poem comes as a production of that inspiring moment when, for instance, you have to solve a problem, settle a dispute between two tribes or to praise a community leader.

VoD: You are now preparing to complete your Ph.D. What is the subject of your dissertation and are you facing any challenges in your studies?

Abdelgadir: My dissertation is on the role of the media in the onset of war and peace. It is a social study focusing on how the conflict in Darfur has been influenced by the media. I need a lot of time for research and preparation; this is the most pressing challenge I am facing due to the demanding requirements of my work at the radio station.

VoD: In your opinion, which type of media is more effective in promoting peace in Darfur— broadcasting stations, poetry and cultural gatherings, theatre or popular songs?

Abdelgadir: All of these means are important in promoting peace in Darfur. However, popular songs are the most effective, followed by radio stations. Popular songs are presented in many functions and gatherings, while radio stations promote peace through their programmes. Moreover, radio stations also present songs and broadcast live events, including drama. Listening to radio stations is very popular here in Darfur. It is inexpensive and everybody can own a radio to listen to stations even while riding his/her donkey.

VoD: Has the popularity of peace poems increased in Darfur since the beginning of the conflict or is it a recent phenomenon?

Abdelgadir: Yes, the love for peace poems increased when the conflict in Darfur started. But let me say that peace rhymes are a type of poetry that has been newly in-



Aida Ahmed Abdelghadir presenting a radio programme at the Broadcasting Corporation of North Darfur state. Ms. Aida is a Darfuri poet and a senior radio presenter. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

troduced into Darfuri culture as Darfur has never before experienced any conflict of this magnitude. Previously, there were only minor feuds between different tribes.

VoD: Some people believe that internal dialogues and consultations are the best way to achieve a comprehensive, lasting peace in Darfur. What is your view?

Abdelgadir: Generally speaking, consultations and dialogues between Darfuris are very important. All concerned parties have realized this and have also realized that arms will not end the conflict. By nature, Darfuris are people who believe in consultative solutions. Judiyya (amicable solutions) is an established social method of solving problems by bringing all concerned parties to the negotiating table. It is a traditional dispute-solving mechanism, known well before the current conflict, and relies on the concept of peaceful solutions.”

VoD: Are young Darfuris interested in poetry?

Abdelgadir: Young people in Darfur love poetry and they exchange poems through social media. Poetry in Darfur has been popular for a long time and older generations pass their poetic experiences on to younger generations. The “social media” of the old days was represented by entertainment nights and family and public occasions that lasted for weeks.

VoD: Do most poets in Darfur use social media to publicize their poems or do

they prefer printing and publishing?

Abdelgadir: Of course, most of them resort to social media like Facebook, Twitter and even WhatsApp because these platforms are readily available, cost nothing and do not require time for printing and publishing. Social media has made it easy for artists and poets to promote their works across the world. Darfur is no exception to this.

VoD: Are there social activities such as organized poetry readings in El Fasher?

Abdelgadir: Yes, there is the Group of Development through Cultural Reality which was started in 1999. It performs multiple activities, including inviting poets to recite their poems once a week. I wish there were more of such forums in the town.

VoD: Are you planning to publish any new collections of your work in book form?

Abdelgadir: I am preparing to publish three poetry books; one in classical Arabic named “Northwards to the Heart Side,” and two in colloquial Arabic called, “The Heart of Speech” and “Sightsees,” respectively. I intend to print in early 2016.

VoD: Do you have any special message for the people of Darfur?

Abdelgadir: I would like to inspire the people of Darfur to go back to the life of unity and peaceful coexistence. Pay no attention to trivial things. Disown violence, tribalism and everything that disturbs the stability of our homeland. ❖



Aida Ahmed Abdelghadir, a Darfuri poet and a senior radio presenter at the Broadcasting Corporation of North Darfur state. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.



UNAMID Communications and Public Information Section
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