Tales from Darfur’s Heritage:

An interview with Ibrahim Ishag Ibrahim

My First 150 Days as UNAMID JSR - Achievements and Challenges

Direct Dialogue, The Only Way To Resolve Inter-Communal Conflicts In East Darfur

Unamid Provides Protection to Newly Displaced Persons in Sortony, North Darfur
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF NOTE

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

In the interview, “My First 150 Days as UNAMID JSR – Achievements and Challenges” Mr. Uhomoibhi talks about achievements he has made and challenges faced during his first four months as Head of UNAMID. The article “Direct Dialogue, the Only Way to Resolve inter-communal Conflict in East Darfur” reflects the Mission’s mediation efforts with the local communities in the villages and localities in East Darfur.

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

I’m also quite pleased to introduce, in this edition, the Photo Story which is a collection of photographs showcasing patrols conducted by the Mission’s Military and Police components across the region in conformity with the Mission’s protection of civilian’s mandate. Finally, in our cover feature, “Tales from Darfur’s Heritage”, Voices of Darfur presents an interview with a renowned Darfuri Writer, Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim, where he speaks of his published novels, his views on the literary production in Darfur and the role that literature can play in bringing peace to Darfur.

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

Carlos Araujo
Chief Communications & Public Information Section

ON THE COVER

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

MISSION LEADERSHIP

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Ushomri (Nigeria)
Joint Special Representative / Joint Chief Mediation
Bintou Keita
(Guinea) Deputy Joint Special Representative / Protection
Jeremiah Nyamwesa
organiseh (South Africa) Deputy Joint Special Representative / Political
Lieutenant General
Frank Mushyo Kamanzi
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FEEDBACK

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unamid-publicinformation@un.org. Please put “Letters to the Editor / sources of Islamic Studies” in the subject line and send the email to: unamid-publicinformation@un.org.
On 6 May 2016, UNAMID’s Joint Special Representative (JSR), Martin Uhomoibhi, concluded a five-day visit to the Mission’s Sectors across Darfur. During his tour, Mr. Uhomoibhi met with local authorities, internally displaced persons, native administration leaders, refugees as well as UNAMID staff and members of the UN Country Team. In the picture, the JSR addresses South Sudanese refugees at Khor Omer camp near El Daein, East Darfur. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

Over the five days, the JSR traveled across Darfur to Zalingei, Central Darfur, El Geneina, West Darfur; Nyala, South Darfur, El Daein, East Darfur; between 2-6 May 2016. During his visit, Mr. Uhomoibhi held formal meetings, consultations, popular conferences and discussions with a broad spectrum of Darfuri entities, including with key state authorities (Governors of States, Government of Sudan military and police officials and State security authorities), internally displaced persons (IDPs) refugees and their representatives, native administration and community leaders (nazirs, umdahs and chieftains) as well as UNAMID staff and members of the UN Country Team in the sectors, in order to exchange views on UNAMID’s mandate and his efforts as Joint Chief Mediator in relation to the Darfur peace process.

AS PART OF his meetings with senior UNAMID officials, state authorities, and the local community, UNAMID’s Joint Special Representative, Martin Uhomoibhi, visited Zalingei, Central Darfur, El Geneina, West Darfur; Nyala, South Darfur, El Daein, East Darfur; between 2-6 May 2016. During his visit, Mr. Uhomoibhi held formal meetings, consultations, popular conferences and discussions with a broad spectrum of Darfuri entities, including with key state authorities (Governors of States, Government of Sudan military and police officials and State security authorities) , internally displaced persons (IDPs) refugees and their representatives, native administration and community leaders (nazirs, umdahs and chieftains) as well as UNAMID staff and members of the UN Country Team in the sectors, in order to exchange views on UNAMID’s mandate and his efforts as Joint Chief Mediator in relation to the Darfur peace process. First the JSR visited Zalingei and met with the acting Wali (Governor) and state officials of Central Darfur and discussed with them the Mission’s mandate and the impact of the ongoing fighting in Jebel Marra on the state. In this connection, the JSR raised the issue of access restrictions and their negative impact on the Mission’s ability to provide accurate and truthful reports reflecting the reality on the ground.

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

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

In El Daein, the final leg of the JSR’s visit to the sectors, he met with the Wali of East Darfur as well as native administration leaders and urged them to work in mutual cooperation to resolve long-standing tribal conflicts in the state. He reiterated UNAMID’s readiness to do its utmost to support these reconciliation efforts within its capability. Mr. Uhomoibhi also visited the Khor Omer camp near El Daein where thousands of South Sudanese refugees have sought shelter on account of the past period of instability which South Sudan had experienced. He held a popular conference attended by the South Sudanese refugees and interacted extensively with their tribal chieftains and the relief agencies operating in the camp. Ambassador Uhomoibhi commended the efforts of East Darfur State in hosting their South Sudanese neighbors and observed that this is one more reason that Darfur should have peace in order to turn from a troubled region into a safe resort.
On 24 January 2016, UNAMID’s Deputy Joint Special Representative-Protection, Bintou Keita, visited Anka and Umm Rai, in North Darfur. The mission aimed at ascertaining the protection and humanitarian needs of the community living there following attacks on their villages on 3 December 2015. Ms Keita interacted with members of the displaced population who spoke about their concerns regarding the lack of food, shelter, water resources and medical facilities. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

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

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

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

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

UNAMID’s Deputy Joint Special Representative-Protection, Bintou Keita, led an integrated mission to Anka and Umm Rai, 60 kilometers south-east of UNAMID’s team site in Kutum, North Darfur. The objective of the mission was to verify reports of mass displacements in the area following attacks by unidentified armed men on 3 December 2015. The team consisted of members from UNAMID’s Civil Affairs, Protection of Civilians, Human Rights and Communications and Public Information sections, a representative from UN OCHA and a Government of Sudan official.

The team met with community leaders from Anka, Umm Rai and surrounding areas who revealed that most of their livestock was looted while their houses and markets were burnt down by unidentified armed attackers. Following this, they said, the majority of villagers living in the vicinity had fled to the nearby hills for shelter.
On 28 March 2016, UNAMID’s Civil Affairs Section, Sector East, handed over a peace centre to the Ma’alia Native Administration in Abu Karinka, East Darfur. The initiative was part of the Mission’s Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme designed to support the local community. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.

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

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

The construction is part of the Mission’s Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme designed to support the local population and cultivate the culture of peace through mediation, consultation and negotiations.

The Deputy Nazir of the Ma’alia, Ibrahim Bashir, stated that the project is the first of its kind in Abu Karinka and thanked UNAMID for its efforts to support peace and stability between the Ma’alia and the Rezeigat tribes. In his remarks, the locality commissioner, Usman Gazirn, commended the Mission for its initiative and pledged his office’s commitment to increase support to the native administration and to work closely with UNAMID components for the local community.

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

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

Addressing the gathering, UNAMID Child Protection Unit Team Leader in West Darfur, Mr. Paul Buganyaka, stated that the “No Child Soldiers– Protect Darfur” campaign is in line with the Mission’s mandate to protect civilians and emphasised that the campaign is not only aimed at putting an end to the recruitment and use of children, but also to ensure that children are afforded an opportunity to grow and attend school.

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

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

Speaking of behalf of the women in Krinding (1) IDP Camp, Ms. Sadia Ahmed, noted that poverty is one of the key drivers in child recruitment into armed forces or armed groups in Darfur. UNAMID Child Protection Unit intends to roll-out this “No Child Soldiers – Protect Darfur” campaign throughout the region in the next few months.

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DIDC Implementation Committee Discusses Recom mencement of the Locality-level Dialogue

ON 18 APRIL, the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation (DIDC) implement ing committee held a meeting at UNAMID Headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. The meeting was attended by UNAMID’s Deputy Joint Special Representative - Protection, Bintu Keita. Photo by Salah Mohammed, UNAMID.

ON 5 APRIL 2016, UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office (ODO), Sector Central, commemorated the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The event was part of the commemoration of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. Photo by Mohammed Ali Mohammed, UNAMID.

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

BY ZURAB ELZAROV

IN MARCH 2016, a library rehabilitation project in El Fasher, North Darfur, implemented through UNAMID’s Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme was shortlisted by the London Book Fair International Excellence Awards 2016 for the Education Initiatives Award. The El Fasher Cultural Center is located in the outskirts of the bustling central market, and includes a theatre, music room and a public library. The Cultural Centre has eight departments: art and painting, folklore, music and writing, the library, and a general activities department, which includes handicrafts and languages. The Centre offers language, music and other types of classes for a small fee in order to raise funds, and occasionally organizes handicraft sales. It is also affiliated with El Fasher’s own movie cinema, which is in need of rehabilitation.

The Cultural Centre houses a small public library collection. There is a small English-language book section, donated by the British Council, and a children’s section. The library includes several large rooms which are available for various types of social events. The library is a popular recreation, education, knowledge development and interaction spot, and in the interest of reviving the cultural and intellectual legacy of the people of Darfur, UNAMID rehabilitated the building and funded the project which provided computers, audio equipment, furniture, and more than 20,000 new books with the overall objective of stimulating the cultural activities as a way to address the root causes of instability and violence in Darfur, enhancing peace, and promoting education and expanded opportunities for all citizens of Darfur.

The rehabilitation of the library and the provision of necessary equipment and furniture was funded through two of the Mission’s Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and was implemented through a local non-governmental organization, UNICEF has also made a contribution through the provision of a children’s playground, generator and maintenance of the Cultural Centre. The project created a new learning environment and improved the standards of the library. It now functions as a learning and training center, primarily for the youth and even the elderly. The library is currently serving up to 50 users on a daily basis and by promoting the culture of peace and non-violence, it has gradually become a library of peace in Darfur.

The project closure and handover ceremony turned into a large festive event for the people in North Darfur state. The ceremony, attended by the local authorities, UNESCO representatives, the Government of the Sudan (State Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth), UNICEF, civil society organization and the personnel of the public library. The enthusiasm, motivation and aspiration to restore the effective functioning of the library and the subsequent delivery of its services to the people was remarkable and represented a critical success factor for this important initiative.

The project has clearly demonstrated the need to explore continuously the innovative and inventive interventions to help communities recovering from the consequences of violent conflicts foster peace and resolve conflicts of different natures. It is important to encourage national and international actors in post-conflict settings to promote a culture of peace and non-violence at the grassroots level in conflict affected areas through, inter alia, revitalization of public libraries which are often seen as the key factors for a positive change.
Mr. Martin Uhomoibhi assumed his duties as UNAMID Joint Special Representative/Chairperson of the AU Commission in early January 2016, following his appointment by the UN Secretary General. In this interview, Mr. Uhomoibhi speaks of the achievements and challenges of the first few months of his tenure and reflects on the prospects for UNAMID's joint special representative speaks to Voices of Darfur about his objectives as the Head of the Mission, his strategic vision to achieve UNAMID's mandate and the challenges he has experienced in Darfur.

VoD: How would you describe your first 150 days or so at the helm of UNAMID? What noticeable progress has the Mission made since you took office?

JSR: I assumed my duties as JSR on 6 January 2016. My first 150 days have been eventful, to say the least. The situation on the ground is challenging but, I believe, the Mission is up to the task. These first few months have been devoted to working with my team to define our objectives as a Mission and find a strategic way to achieve these objectives. One of the first things I tried to do as JSR was to try to build confidence and trust between UNAMID and our host authorities. I thought this was a major challenge when I initially arrived in Darfur. I am happy to assure you now that we have a good conversation ongoing between the Mission leadership and the Government of Sudan, at the highest level. We have also put in place appropriate mechanisms to facilitate this objective. If we do not have a conversation, we cannot have meaningful mediation and meaningfully discharge our responsibilities in all the pillars defined for the Mission—political mediation and providing support to distribution of humanitarian goods and services. We now have that. The next step, having built that trust and having established good communication, is to begin to ask for all those things we need to work better.

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

JSR: I remain extremely grateful to our host authorities for the warmth, generosity and friendship I have enjoyed since my arrival. I have been here for just over four months and have had no less than four meetings with the Sudanese Foreign Minister. I think this is a new development. I have also been received by His Excellency, the President of Sudan, which is, in my opinion, an extremely magnanimous gesture on his part. I have also been received a couple of times by the Director General of the National Intelligence Security Services (NISS). Additionally, I have held other strategic meetings with numerous government functionaries; I feel this approach has placed us in good standing to advocate on access to areas of conflict which have been previously denied to the Mission and paved the way for us to work with greater productivity. I consider my first few months to be more than fulfilling as far as my relationship with the Government of Sudan is concerned.

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

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

VoD: What security do they have, except that offered by UNAMID personnel?

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

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

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

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

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

By Musi Khumalo

One of the first things I tried to do as JSR was to work towards building confidence and trust between UNAMID and our host authorities. I thought this was a major challenge when I initially arrived in Darfur. For the rest of my tenure here, I will continue to count on this invaluable support, the cooperation of our hosts, the understanding and the empathy of all those who ensure that UNAMID survives and does what it can as a responsibility for the people of Darfur.

On 29 May 2016, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Martin Uhomoibhi, presided over the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers ceremony held in the Mission’s liaison office in Khartoum, Sudan. In the picture, Mr. Uhomoibhi pays tribute to UNAMID peacekeepers who lost their lives in the line of duty. Photo by Ahmed Abdelnazi, UNAMID.
They were at last year when peacekeepers had been deployed in Sudan. We are almost back to the crisis level that we were facing in the beginning of this year alone. How is UNAMID protecting and assisting these displaced persons? What challenges are you facing in this regard?

JSR: The crisis in Jebel Marra erupted in early January, as you mentioned, and continues at lower level until now. The consequence of the Jebel Marra conflict is that it led to the displacement of tens of thousands of innocent Darfuri civilians. The Mission's activities are felt to be strictly under military activity and political interventions from all the parties involved. We have serious challenges. By definition, the concept of a hybrid mission presupposes that you have a hybrid situation. The mandate is complex. The conflict is challenging, complex in itself. The solutions are complex. The environment is challenging, complex in itself.

The population of Darfur is in no food rations. I will share with you a personal experience—a couple of weeks ago, during my visit to the sectors, one of the vehicles of the Mission was hit by a roadside bomb, which was supposed to be the safest around. We are driving are overused. The tyres we use are like ‘time bombs.’ I want to plead with our host authorities to see how they can facilitate the speedy release of UNAMID supplies held at the port. We want to ensure that all those who legitimately apply for visas here, get them without any impediment. The bigger picture here is more important than the visa issue; as visas should not pose a challenge to anybody, anywhere. Where who wants to work for UNAMID should not delay getting their visa. The Mission is a neutral, impartial body set up by the United Nations and African Union, of which the Sudan is a member. So it cannot be detrimental to the interests of Sudan to have people who come to work for UNAMID.

Regarding visa issuance, I must say we have good news. We have made some considerable progress; when I came on board in January, we had a list of 97 rejected visa cases. I reviewed this list and prioritized 29 of them since some of the selected staff had gone on to find other jobs on account of the delay. As of today, we have since had 20 of the 29 visa applications granted. We will not rest on our laurels until we get remaining requested visas issued. In the course of this year, because of our pressure and the good rapport that exists between the Mission and the host government, we are now getting subsequent visa applications issued even for staff in sensitive areas such as Human Rights where visas were not issued before I came on board. This is not to say we have gotten to where we want to be. We want to ensure that all those who legitimately apply for visas here, get them without any impediment. The bigger picture here is more important than the visa issue; as visas should not pose a challenge to anybody, anywhere. Where who wants to work for UNAMID should not delay getting their visa. The Mission is a neutral, impartial body set up by the United Nations and African Union, of which the Sudan is a member. So it cannot be detrimental to the interests of Sudan to have people who come to work for UNAMID.

JSR: The Mission’s response to the Jebel Marra conflict is that it led to the displacement of tens of thousands of innocent Darfuri civilians. This has really escalated the number of IDPs in our region. Beyond that, we have had problems in other sectors, including in Darfur, and to a lesser extent in South Darfur. These are the most critical areas for those who want to deliver humanitarian services and for our peacekeepers who want to offer protection to displaced civilians. We are hoping that access issues will become a thing of the past and the Mission’s mandate can be implemented by removing obstructions in the path of UNAMID personnel to enable them discharge their responsibilities fully.

In terms of the Mission’s response to the Jebel Marra conflict, I am proud of the collaborative way in which UNAMID and the UN Country Team have worked during this crisis to provide essential assistance such as water, medical care and other needs, for the displaced. UNAMID peacekeepers have been providing protection to the people at the IDP gathering sites. We also have mechanisms in place in these gathering sites that provide early warning so that in times of crisis, UNAMID patrols are able to respond and protect civilians. This should be underscored in any conversation on this matter. This is complemented by course of around-the-clock patrols conducted by UNAMID in these gathering sites to ensure adequate protection of the newly displaced.

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

JSR: Mediation is key to our mandate as you rightly mentioned. Since I came on board, I have been working very hard on this at my level as the JSR and at the local level through our Civil Affairs Section. At my level, I held a meeting in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, with leaders of two non-signatory armed movements, Minni Minani and Gibril Ibrahim in January, just before the annual African Union Summit. After that, I had another meeting in Addis Ababa recently in April to carry forward some of the positive developments I had started recently in April to carry forward some of the positive developments I had started recently to resolve some of the challenges we faced during my first months in office.
the things we had agreed upon in Debre Zeit and I look forward to a third meeting in Doha, Qatar very shortly.

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

These are not easy tasks but I am happy to inform that as a result of the last meeting we held in Addis Ababa last April, we agreed with Minni Minawi and Gen. Gibril Ibrahim to meet in Doha to continue these talks.

INTERVIEW

From conversations that I had with the heads of states of course, I said, we are having good conversations in Addis Ababa. The thing is there are nine armed movements that have not signed the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) and the signatories to the document agree that the exit of UNAMID is linked to the ending of hostilities.

That is why we held a meeting in Addis Ababa last April, we held in Khar-toum, and there the hostilities were discussed. The idea was to come up with a road map and an exit strategy. But the way forward is not easy because we always think of them as ‘Them’ and I’m using people in a very generic sense. The fact is this that most people, they don’t have the means to enable them to enjoy their fundamental right to peace and to freedom. This is our collective responsibility.

We need to make life worth living for them. The fact is that most people, and I’m using people in a very generic sense, always think of them as ‘Them’ and not all of us together. We are in one world. Peace in Darfur is peace in Sudan and not all of us together. We are in one world. Peace in Darfur is peace in Sudan and peace in Sudan is peace in Africa and peace in Africa is peace in the world.

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

On 9 May 2016, the 11th meeting of the Implementation Follow-up Commission of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur was held in Khartoum. UNAMID Joint Special Representative. Also seen in the picture are Ibrahim Kamara, the AU representative (extreme left) and Salah Halima, the Arab League representative (extreme right). Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

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

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

At the moment, this conversation is on-going. There is a Joint Working Group that has resumed work on this process. It is travelling across Darfur looking into all the issues and the benchmarks to see how that exit strategy can be achieved. But no one is in any doubt that these benchmarks are critical in assessing that point of departure, when that departure becomes a reality. It is a process and we are working very hard on this process to ensure that when UNAMID eventually gets there, that is, after the Mission achieves the objectives that brought it here in the first place, the interest of all stakeholders are met, including the safety and security of the more than two million people reported to be living in the IDP camps.

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

VOICES OF DARFUR

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

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

JSR: Do not lose hope. Do not give up. Peace is achievable.
UNAMID Provides Protection to Newly Displaced Persons in Sortony, North Darfur

BY MOHAMAD ALMAHADY

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

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

Thousands of people, mainly women and children, are now living at the gathering site adjacent to the Mission’s Team Site, following the mass displacement that occurred in the area. While UNAMID’s peacekeepers, as per the Mission’s core mandate, are providing protection and safety to these IDPs through patrolling, including in relation to livelihood activities such as fetching water, the UN agencies are providing the displaced people with basic essential needs like water, food, health, sanitation, education and shelter.

As part of the Mission’s core mandate to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel, UNAMID plays an important role in facilitating the access of the United Nations’ agencies such as United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP) as well as international and national non-governmental organizations through the provision of escorts for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and for humanitarian personnel to conduct visits to the site.

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

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

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

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

UNAMID peacekeepers deployed in the area, monitor the situation on a daily basis to assist the various ethnic groups at the IDP gathering site to co-exist in a harmonious, peaceful manner. The Mission engages in dialogue with individuals in the IDP Community, including leaders and
women representatives, who are supposed to alert the Team Site of any impending or potential conflict situation to ensure that corrective action is taken before it erupts into serious ethnic rivalry at the site.

Community leaders in Sortony, especially those living in the IDP gathering site, welcome the support of UNAMID, UN agencies and international and national organizations. “UNAMID plays a very significant role in providing protection and security to our displaced people. If UNAMID was not here, none of us would have survived this tough life as we ran away from all the fighting but now have to deal with the criminality that has erupted in this place due to infiltration by criminals who have blended with the ordinary IDPs in this site. However, we have brought this to the attention of UNAMID and other agencies and they are keeping a keen eye on all the activities in the area and despite some of these criminal attacks on innocent civilians, UNAMID has restored security among the IDPs through its 24/7 presence in around the camp, thus, criminality has been greatly reduced. This round-the-clock presence of UNAMID peacekeepers has driven out lawbreakers found in our midst and saved lives,” said Ms. Fatima Ahmed, a 45-year old, mother of 8 children living at the gathering site.

“Despite the challenging environment and conditions in Sortony, UNAMID is doing its utmost to ensure that the IDPs at the gathering site are well protected, and renders the necessary logistics and armed escort support to aid organizations who provide IDPs with food and non-food items and access to basic services,” Mr. Zurab Elzarov, Acting Chief of UNAMID Protection of Civilians/Humanitarian Liaison Section explains.

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

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

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

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

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

Socio-economic marginalization, high levels of illiteracy, poverty and displacement among others, leave few life options particularly among the youths making them susceptible to criminality and recruitment into different militia groups. As a result, communal conflicts including the actions of armed militias now constitute the most serious threat to the civilian populations and continue to now be a major feature of events in Darfur. The Mission also conducted a number of interventions in AMID in Adilla and Abu Karinka localities were discussed during a meeting attended by all segments of Abu Karinka. Photo by Abdulnasser Yakubu, UNAMID.

The socio-economic conditions in the region have been characterized by increased poverty, displacement and lack of access to basic services such as education and health care. These conditions have contributed to the outbreak and escalation of inter-communal conflicts in Darfur. The conflicts are further compounded by the presence of armed groups who have been using the region as a base for their activities. These groups have been involved in various forms of violence including attacks on villages, looting of property and theft of livestock.

Despite the efforts of the United Nations and other international organizations to resolve these conflicts, the situation remains tense. The UNAMID mission in Darfur has been working on mediational efforts to resolve these conflicts. The mission has been working closely with local leaders and community members to promote dialogue and reconciliation.

The UNAMID mission in Darfur has been working on mediational efforts to resolve these conflicts. The mission has been working closely with local leaders and community members to promote dialogue and reconciliation. The mission has been assisting communities in rebuilding their local governance structures and promoting sustainable development projects to help reduce the drivers of conflict. Despite these efforts, the number of conflict-related deaths and displacement remains high.

The situation in Darfur remains delicate and requires sustained efforts to achieve lasting peace. The international community must continue to support the local leadership and civil society organizations in their efforts to work towards a peaceful and prosperous future for the people of Darfur. It is only through sustained effort and cooperation that we can hope to achieve lasting peace and stability in the region.
in a different way, through availability.

East Darfur has also touched families in Bahar Alarab and Abujabra Localities. Under the UAEF initiative, Mr. Sitana Adam Musa, the Director of Education, asked their representatives to increase the student's enrollment. Mr. Sitana added that he expected 4000 boys out of the schools in the area, as the conflict has also resulted in the closure of schools across Darfur State. Mr. Ali Mohamed Ahmed the Deputy Speaker of Legislative Council, said that the UAEF interventions, the national government which is constitutionally responsible to lead the process, hosted a peace and reconciliation conference for the two groups in Marawe, North Darfur from 17 – 28 February, 2015. The Southern Rezeigat, the mediators, and the government leaders, the National Administration Council members, agreed to sign the outcome document but the Ma’alia refused to sign because according to them it did not reflect the will of the people. A conflict issue which is at the core of the recurrent conflict. This refusal to sign the document by the Ma’alia reinforced the strong position of the two tribes. A number of the two tribes led to the holding of a peace conference in Kordofan. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high-level delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abkarinka as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate inter-tribal conflict in the region and leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high-level delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abkarinka as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate inter-tribal conflict in the region and leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high-level delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abkarinka as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate inter-tribal conflict in the region and leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high-level delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abkarinka as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate inter-tribal conflict in the region and leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015.

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

them with income generating projects, added Ms. Zakaria.

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

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

This inter-tribal conflict in East Darfur has also touched families in a different way, through availability of weapons and sometimes some ammunition is abandoned in pastoral areas, where people, especially children, unwarily pick the items to play with and end these explode, causing great harm to the physical and mental condition of the children, beside disability and death. These remnants of war needs great efforts and high cost for raising awareness programs and for the clearance activities. Hence, the strong urge from all concerned that the two tribes should reconcile and chart a better future for its younger generation.

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

UNAMID Civil Affairs both in Sector East and in Khartoum work closely with different stakeholders and directly with the disputing parties to discuss mediation efforts. UNAMID facilitated two preparatory workshops in November 2014 for the Ma’alia in Abu Karinka and the Southern Rezeigat in El Daein and subsequently, forums for both communities representatives in Khoroum in December to sit together for the first time since the June 2014 Al Fula conference. The participants reaffirmed commitment to the cessation of hostilities agreement reached in Al Taweish (North Darfur) in August 2013, and agreed to participate in the February 2015 government-organized reconciliation conference in Marawe, North Darfur. To build on the momentum generated by the UNAMID interventions, the national government which is constitutionally responsible to lead the process, hosted a peace and reconciliation conference for the two groups in Marawe, North Darfur from 17 – 28 February, 2015. The Southern Rezeigat, the mediators, and the government leaders, the National Administration Council members, agreed to sign the outcome document but the Ma’alia refused to sign because according to them it did not reflect the will of the people. A conflict issue which is at the core of the recurrent conflict. This refusal to sign the document by the Ma’alia reinforced the strong position of the two tribes. A number of the two tribes led to the holding of a peace conference in Kordofan. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high-level delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abkarinka as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate inter-tribal conflict in the region and leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high-level delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abkarinka as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate inter-tribal conflict in the region and leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high-level delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abkarinka as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate inter-tribal conflict in the region and leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015. In September 2015, the Mission facilitated the visit of a high-level delegation comprising of federal and state government officials to Abkarinka as part of the government’s efforts to mitigate inter-tribal conflict in the region and leading eventually to the violent conflict between them in May 2015.

On 31 May 2016, UNAMID DJSR-Political, Kingsley Mamabolo, and his delegation paid a two-day familiarization visit to Sector East where he met with the Native administration and Umads from the Rezigart tribe. Issues pertaining to security as well as the role of the native administration in brokering peace between conflicting parties were discussed. Photo by Abdulrahed Yakubu, UNAMID.
As part of its mandate of protection of civilians, UNAMID conducts daily routine patrols in the five states of Darfur. Patrols include providing protection for the displaced in camps, as well as for women and children during farming and fetching firewood and water in various villages and localities. During patrols, UNAMID peacekeepers often go beyond their mandate and interact with the local communities, listen to their concerns, facilitate capacity-building training and provide medical assistance upon urgent situations. UNAMID patrols consist of military and police personnel.

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

BY ALA MAYAYA

**BORN IN WADA VILLAGE,** North Darfur, renowned Sudanese writer Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim displays a deep understanding of Darfuri heritage, especially the region’s ancient and modern history, in his novels. His work has been likened by some Sudanese writers to that of famous British, American and Russian novelists, such as Hemingway, Faulkner, Joyce and Sholokhov.

Mr. Ibrahim received his basic education in El Fasher, North Darfur, and continued his studies in Omdurman, near Khartoum. He graduated in 1970 and went on to obtain a Master’s degree in Folklore from the Institute of African and Asian Studies.

In 2008, Mr. Ibrahim was appointed as the Chairman of the Sudanese Writers Association. Additionally, he was awarded the Arts and Literature Award at the Culture and Arts festival held in Khartoum in 1979 as well as an honorary doctorate from Al Fashir University in 2004. Currently, he is a panel member of the Tayeb Salih Award for Creative Writing, organized by Zain Telecommunications Company, Sudan, and a member of the National Languages Development Council. Ibrahim Ishaq has published six novels—“Haddath Fi Al Qaria” (Happened in the village), “Wibal fi Qaria” (In Qaria), “Akhbar Al Bint Mia Kaya” (News of the girl Miyakaya), “Fadihat Al Norrian” and “Tales from Darfur’s Heritage: the Spine of Darfur’s History”. Mr. Ibrahim, one of the most renowned writers in Sudan, fully reflects Darfur’s heritage in his written work. Photo by Mohammad Noureldin.

**Tales from Darfur’s Heritage: An interview with Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ibrahim: The name Tandelty was used for both El Fasher and Tandelty town, located south-east of North Kordofan. It’s an ancient word that refers to the council of the sultan. In 1791, the Sultan of the Fur, Abdurrahman Al Rashid, moved his council to the current town, and so the name ‘El Fasher’ overshadowed the name of Tandelty.

VoD: In some chapters of your book “Hajrat Alhilalyeen” (The Migrations of the Hilalies), you reviewed the biographies of some Sudanese writers. Can you tell us about that?

Ibrahim: The book is a research project based on a collection of verbal narratives from 14 tribes across Darfur, which I transcribed through comparison with the available historical facts and stories of foreign explorers who visited the area. Scientifically, the book is accurate in treating all evidences; so it can be an accredited historical reference but it doesn’t cover the whole area’s history.

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

VoD: In some chapters of your book “Hajrat Alhilalyeen” (The Migrations of the Hilalies), you reviewed the biographies and journeys of the Arabic Hilali families to Darfur in the 14th century. Can we consider it a historical reference in terms of accuracy of information or is it an approximation between history and the oral literature in the region?

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Ibrahim: “People should support dialogue removed from racism or prioritization of personal interest over group interest.”
of Bahr El Arab up to Central Africa. Such tracking tries to interpret the inter-marriages and cross-cultural exchanges that took place between the Arab nomads and the indigenous Sudanese over the years.

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

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

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

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

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

Ibrahim: The Award was launched by The Sudanese Company for Mobile Phone Service (Zain) in 2010 to mark the first death anniversary of the outstanding Sudanese novelist, Al-Tayeb Salih, whose novels were introduced to the world through translations. The competition consists of three categories: novel, short story and another category that changes annually. Participation is open to all who can creatively write in Arabic in any part of the world, at any age group. Each contender should submit a complete work of not less than 100 pages; it could be either a novel, a number of stories or studies. In 2015, there were 765 contenders from Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, the Arabian Peninsula, Levant and Sudan. Nine awards amounting to USD 72,000 are awarded annually. It is a good incentive that competes with The International Prize for Arabic Fiction, which awards USD 100,000. The Sudanese won one-third of the awards as the prize is in their country; thus, they are more encouraged to participate than the others.

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

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

VoD: One of the most famous classical novels is “War and Peace” by the Russian author Leo Tolstoy, which revolves around the beginning of the Russian-French war in 1805, but the author wrote the first version 60 years later, in 1863. What about conflict and peace in Darfur? Do you think now is the best time to write a story reflecting the atmosphere that is difficult to get rid of. I believe the two modes will continue for some time. Online books provide facilities that are not available for printed books; however, the latter provides a psychological situation which is not available in the electronic ones.

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

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

Ibrahim: I would like to tell the people of Darfur to establish peace with everybody and to develop their lives without relying entirely on external funds.
Rakubat Aba Salih is broadcast part of Yala Nebni Darfur (Lets Build Darfur) radio programme on radio Al Salaam 98.0 FM in Khartoum and 7.2MHz, 41 Meter Band SW in Darfur every day from 08:30 to 09:30 and repeated from 14:00 to 15:00.