

Journalists must adhere to an unwritten code or face government pressure and prosecution. Within that framework there is scope for discussion of issues such as the merits of various forms of government considered by the Constitutional Committee. There was also a measure of increased press freedom in the south following the signing of the April 1997 Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and factions which had split from the SPLA. A newspaper banned in July recently won a court case and has been allowed to re-open.

The displaced continue to face particular problems. Many in the large resettlement camps around Khartoum are being moved, apparently as a result of urban planning. Communities are given no warning before the bulldozers arrive to destroy their homes and community centres. Lately, there has been some prior consultation before the action. Although inhabitants are to have tenure in their new locations, there is no guarantee on how secure the tenure will be. While residents of the settlements are free to come and go, it is difficult for them to hold jobs. Jobs in factories are insufficient to cover the cost of one meal per day plus the transport to and from work. There are many female-headed households but little or no income-generation projects. Children leaving resettlement camps are picked up from the streets of Khartoum and sent to other camps where there is a program of islamisation.

The extent of slavery, an outgrowth of traditional practices which have been exacerbated by the civil war, is difficult to estimate. However, captured Southern women and children, including Muslims, are forced to work as household servants, on the land or as concubines in the households of Northern families. In 1997, the Government-appointed Special Investigation Committee on Allegations of Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and Reported Cases of Slavery issued a report that found no evidence of the existence of slavery. As many Committee interviewees were linked with the Government, the report is seriously flawed.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada maintains a dialogue with the Sudanese authorities and rebel factions on questions of peace and security, human rights and good governance issues. During such discussions, in particular, during visits to Sudan by representatives of the Canadian Embassy in Addis Ababa, Canadian officials have underlined that respect for human rights is a fundamental conditioning factor of the bilateral relationship.

Canada regularly speaks out at the United Nations General Assembly 3rd Committee and the Commission on Human Rights about the human rights situation in Sudan and co-sponsors resolutions in both fora which call on Sudan to respect international human rights conventions, and urge the placement of human rights monitors. The resolutions call for visits by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression and the UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, and encourage unimpeded access for international human rights observers. Recent resolutions also called on all parties to allow Operation Lifeline Sudan to have unimpeded access to civilian populations to deliver humanitarian assistance and encourage a negotiated settlement of the conflict. At CHR 53, the resolution renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Sudan and was adopted by consensus. Canada is also supporting the IGAD peace talks under Kenyan chairmanship to bring a mediated end to the civil war based on the IGAD Declaration of Principles.