

December 1992

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN

ISSUE

The human rights situation in Sudan continues to be of great concern to the Canadian Government. The Government is especially troubled by the plight of victims of the civil war, and by abuses on all sides perpetrated under the guise of the necessities of war.

The on-going civil war pitting the Government of Sudan (GOS) against the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has been marked by the use of food as a weapon. Both the GOS and various factions of the SPLA have blocked relief efforts when it has suited their purposes. Juba and other centres have been cut off from regular aid deliveries despite an agreement reached in September between the GOS and UNHCR. (A follow-up agreement which included the three major SPLA factions holds more promise). There are reliable reports of mass executions. The plight of women is particularly onerous. In August and September, a number of relief workers (with USAID, the EEC, and UNICEF) were killed by the GOS and SPLA.

Peace talks, brokered by Nigeria, continue in an on-again off-again fashion. The GOS's determination to militarily impose fundamentalist Islamic rule on non-Moslem Southerners continues to be a major stumbling block.

BACKGROUND

The 1989 coup which brought Lt. General Omar el Bashir to power also intensified the conflict between North and South. With the National Islamic Front as a major ideological force behind the GOS, the pressure to extend Islam into civil society throughout the country has been increased, with a resulting counter-offensive by the SPLA. But in the past 18 months, the SPLA has splintered into three and perhaps four factions. The split between the two major factions (SPLA-Torit and SPLA-Nasir) is largely along ethnic lines (Dinka in the first instance, Nuer in the second) although there is also disagreement as to the future of Southern Sudan, with the Torit faction favouring an autonomous South within a united Sudan and the Nasir faction calling for all-out independence.

The war has caused great suffering on the part of civilian populations. Perhaps the most dramatic example is an estimated 500,000 displaced persons who, after becoming squatters in Khartoum, were forcibly removed to ill-prepared camps in the desert outside of the city. Both the GOS and the SPLA have blocked the delivery of relief supplies (by denying flight clearances, for example) when it has served their purposes. Effective channels for delivering food and other vital supplies have become fewer and fewer.

7
8
9
10