

Charm Offensive, or Signs of Progress?

Following the visit to Khartoum of an EU Mission, a political dialogue was launched by the European Union on November 11 1999, to be conducted at the Head of Mission level every three months. That is, European ambassadors, or Heads of Mission, will regularly meet Sudanese officials to determine what is being done by Sudan to implement & give effect to promises made by Sudan that its respect for human rights is both broadening and strengthening. In between HOM meetings, the five constituent "chapters" of the dialogue will be discussed roughly every two weeks. The "chapters" are human rights, democracy, terrorism, relations with neighbours, and the peace process. The first meeting was scheduled to be held on December 15th and the agenda called for discussions on human rights and, in particular, "tribal abductions."

It was made clear to the Assessment Mission that the EU was of the view that there has been sufficient progress in Sudan to warrant a renewed dialogue. In this view, there has been a positive change, and it is necessary to encourage the Sudanese, and push them further where there is need. It is the view of the Heads of Mission of the EU that the human rights situation has improved but needs further improvement.

This view echoes, in part, that of the UN Special Rapporteur, Leonardo Franco, who has said that the GOS has adopted some measures deserving recognition and international support, and foremost among these must be the adoption of a new Constitution, which, the Assessment Mission was often told by GOS officials, Talisman executives, and others, protects the rights of the Sudanese people, including their right to properly shared oil revenues.

Mr. Franco has emphasized that the GOS "needs to adopt the legal, political and administrative measures required to ensure the transition from an emergency regime to a political system based on the rule of law."

Mandate

Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy has frequently spoken out against the impact of civil war in Sudan on human security in that country, and he strongly reiterated his concerns regarding the conflict & the human rights situation during a meeting with the Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs in New York in September 1999.

Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail agreed to cooperate fully with a Canadian assessment mission to Sudan to examine allegations of slavery and other human rights concerns. Ministers Axworthy and Mustafa Osman Ismail also discussed the role of the oil sector in Sudan.

By way of an Aide Memoire dated November 22, 1999, the Department of Foreign Affairs advised the GOS of the mandate of the Assessment Mission, which was mandated to: