

Concerns were raised about the role of Canada in the IPF and the recent proposal that Canada establish a monitoring mission in Khartoum. Great concern was raised as to whether that office can be effective under the gaze of the GOS, and uncertainties were raised as to the procedures, operations and mandate of that office. Participants hoped that it would be effective and have integrity. Furthermore, there is disappointment that Canada has done little with the conclusions and recommendations of the Harker Mission Report. Participants called on Canada to be more proactive on the critical issues related to oil extraction and the role of the Canadian oil company, Talisman Energy, in Sudan.

The role of Talisman Energy of Calgary in exploration, extraction and financing of oil operations in Sudan is large and of great concern. There were few participants who expressed confidence that Talisman was accomplishing anything other than assisting the GOS, inadvertently or otherwise, in its efforts to maintain and extend the war in Sudan.

The participants felt strongly that the revenues from oil should not benefit the current regime and its war effort. Nor should oil revenues go only to one region of Sudan. Rather, corporations involved in oil operations in Sudan must cease operations until an agreement is made for the equitable distribution of the revenues from oil. This agreement can only be achieved in the context of, or following, a peace settlement for the whole of the Sudan.

Participants did not express support for the Government of Sudan and its policies and practices. The regime is seen as undemocratic, hostile to the interests of the vast majority of the people of Sudan in all parts of the country and serving only the interests of a few who use the mechanisms of government to do business for themselves. Participants agreed, however, that there are many severely aggrieved and disempowered persons and communities throughout the country. Participants expressed support for the dialogue on peace and the Declaration of Principles of the IGAD mediation process.

4.2 Human Rights and Civil Society in Sudan

A strong gender analysis of the human rights situation and a detailed description of the role of women within civil society came through from many speakers at the Forum. Historical notes on civil society that were presented described the structure, role and difficult operating circumstances of civil society today. The presentations were gripping and real. Women are among the most negatively affected, though women are also 'refreshing' the peace process now by speaking out.

Women are speaking out not only about the war but also about their general role in society. There are hopes for important changes towards equality. There is, however, a particular concern about the impact of the war on women and children, especially those displaced by the war, those in so-called 'peace camps' and those in prisons. Women in Sudan are among the poorest of the poor and suffer the highest illiteracy rates. The war had made the situation for women in Sudan much worse than the impact of colonialism. Few health facilities are available in the country for women and children; access to food is skewed against women and children; and land mines severely affected women and children. In this adverse context women are struggling to be heard. Women want to ensure that in any negotiations and resolution of the conflict that women are full party to the outcomes and find a way to ensure significant moves towards gender equity in any new dispensation. Women are demanding the reinstatement of human rights and the rule of law and demand an end to the recruitment of children into the war.

With the incarceration of members of civil society by the military and police throughout the country,