

SUDANESE WHRDS

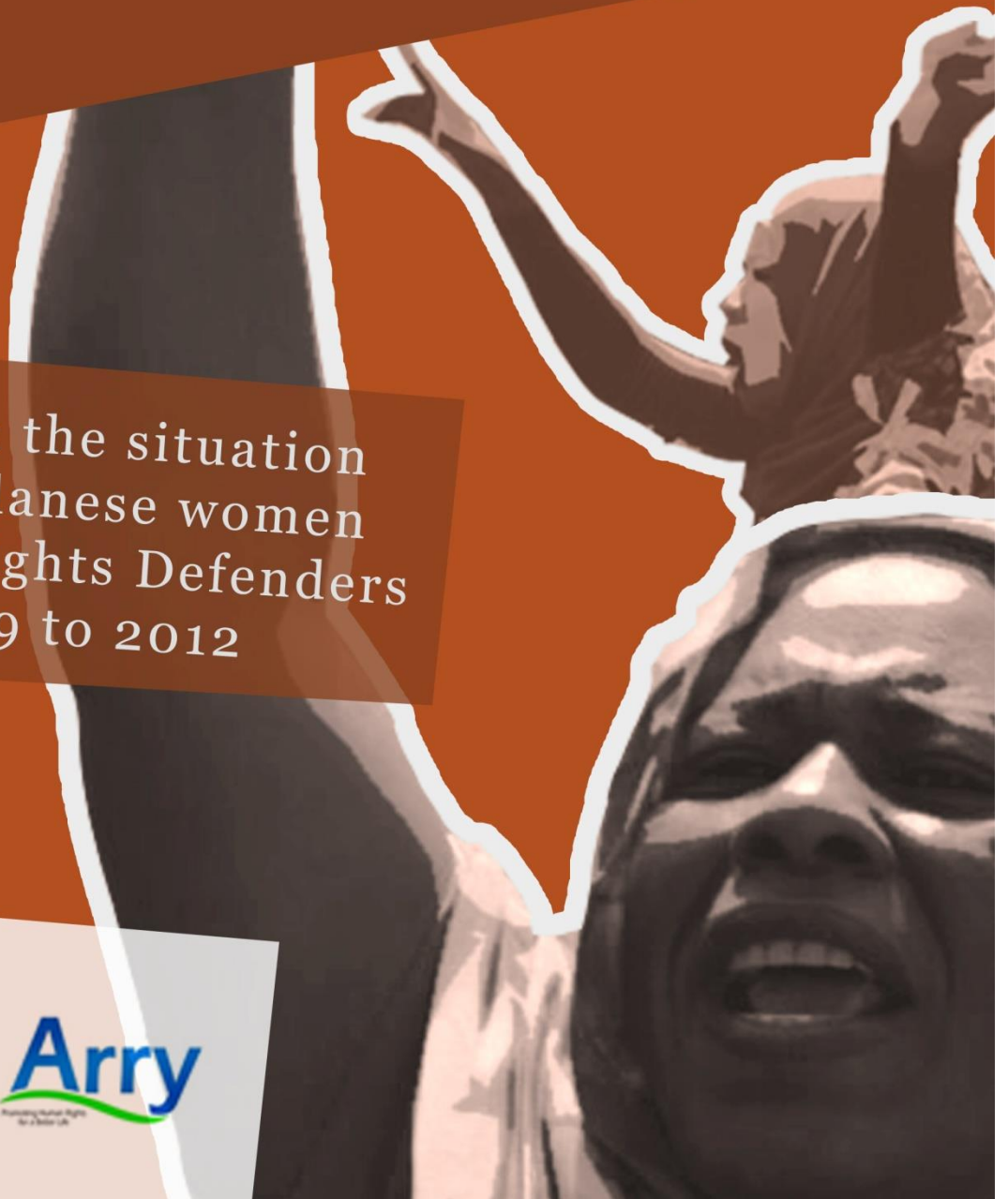
At The
Frontlines

Report on the situation
of the Sudanese women
Human Rights Defenders
From 2009 to 2012

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Sudanese WHRDS on the Frontlines

**Report on the situation of the Sudanese Women Human Rights
Defenders from 2009 to 2012**

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List of Abbreviations:

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement

GoS: Government of Sudan

NSS: National Security Services

NWSI: No to Women Oppression Initiative

SAF: Sudanese Armed Forces

SPLM/N: Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement / North Sector

WHRDs: Women Human Rights Defenders

UNAMID: United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur

Executive Summary:

The report on the Situation of Sudanese Women Human Rights Defenders, reflects the situation of Sudanese Women Human Rights Defenders during the period from 2009-2012. In this report we try to highlight the main challenges facing WHRDs in Sudan, and document the escalating violations against them by state and non-state actors. The work of Sudanese WHRDs in the period covered in this report is the most risky and affected by the fundamental changes which took place during the 3 years this report documents.

The secession of South Sudan in July 2011 created new challenges, especially in North Sudan where just months later a new civil war began in what became known as “the new south” (in the region of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile). Additionally, the conflict in Darfur continued to escalate since 2002.

Women’s Movements in Sudan took many turns through modern history, but the situation of Sudanese women is interconnected with the country’s complicated sociopolitical history, and ethnic power relations, that define the power and wealth distribution in the community. The situation of women, both activists and non-activists, is deeply affected by the historical developments and ethnic power relations which created the modern Sudanese state and society. Throughout this report we follow Sudanese women human rights defenders struggles, triumphs and risks. Reminding us of the situation of Sudanese Women Human Rights defenders, their achievements, the violations they deal with the increased risks they encounter during their human rights work.

Since 2009 a new wave of women’s movement in Sudan began when Sudanese women human rights defenders started the new approach of direct confrontation with the government and the conservative Sudanese community. Women took their rejection of discriminating laws and social patriarchy to the streets, demonstrating against the legislations that degraded women’s dignity. Laws such as articles 151-152 of the Criminal Act of 1991¹, and the Khartoum Public Order Act of 1998 which controls women’s movements and appearances on the public space, and contains humiliating punishments like whipping in public for the crime of wearing so called “indecent clothing”. One of the main challenges facing WHRDs are struggles with Sudanese government officials who act with impunity, hindering justice for the WHRDs.

In 2011 Sudanese people, inspired by the Arab spring, took the streets, demanding regime change. Women and youth led this movement, which was violently cracked down on by the Sudanese authorities. Women found themselves victims of rape, detention and prosecution. At least 150 women were detained, sexually abused or tortured, while dozens were injured and beaten in the protests. The protests against the regime broke down again in June 2012, when the attack on women human rights defenders was more violent. Fourteen women were detained for more than 5 weeks, while another 100 were detained for days or hours during the 2 months of demonstrations. The police used live ammunition against protestors, killing Tahany, a 17 years old female student protester. The police fired rubber bullets against peaceful protester which led to the injury of four WHRDs. Women Human rights defenders in Sudan are living at risk, without supporting networks or protection mechanism from either the government or NGOs. The lack of capacity of human rights NGOs in Sudan and the firm restriction forced on them by the Sudanese government means WHRDs face risks which could lead to them losing their lives, while simultaneously their work is highly underestimated and not documented. Sudanese WHRDs, work in a violent environment, putting their lives at risk, while they have no support or

¹ - see Sudanese Criminal Act of 1991.

protection networks of any kind and they are disconnected from the regional and international protection and support mechanisms.

Introduction

I. Sudanese WHRDs: Overview of the Current Situation

Sudan has been very unfortunate to live through civil wars and constant conflicts for most of its independent history. The war in South Sudan erupted a few months before independence in January 1956, and continued for the next 50 years, except for few years of fragile peace in 1970s. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005², has brought peace for the fatigued country, but this peace was not complete. While the Sudanese government was negotiating the peace agreement for almost three years, another war erupted in the region of Darfur in 2002³. Small armed groups created armed movements and demanded both development and their political participation in the local and central government. During the Darfur war, still being fought a decade later, women have been the greater losers and victims, as they have been displaced from their villages by the aerial bombing and militias attacks, in addition to the use of rape as weapon.

In January 2011, the Southern Sudanese voted in favor of secession in a referendum process granted by the CPA. Before South Sudan declared its separation in July 9th, 2011, another war erupted in the Nuba mountains/ South Kordofan state on June 5th. On September 1st of the same year the Blue Nile state joined the war, putting Sudan as one of the most unstable countries in the world. Women, in result, are the main victims of the country's nonstop wars and militarization's. Women are extremely vulnerable in conflict conditions, while in Sudan women activists and human rights defenders are living under major risks, surviving conflicts, the denial of basic freedoms and discriminating laws.

The interim national constitution (2005) which was based on the CPA is "gender sensitive" and speaks directly to women. For the first time the bill of rights in the constitution (article 15 and 32) explicitly ensures women and men equal rights. The interim national constitution is a step in the right direction, say Sudanese women. Now, they feel that they have a "voice" and that they are recognized as citizens.
Liv Tønnessen⁴

Sudanese women felt more hopeful after the peace agreement but this moment didn't last long, **Amal Habny**, human rights Journalist stated " *after the first three years followed the peace agreement the government resumed its attack on basic freedoms and women oppression, which led to start new movement against women suppression in 2009*"⁵. The struggle for women rights and respect for human rights has begun to take another shape, where women have been the leaders of the direct confrontation

²- After the 50 years of war the Sudanese government reached an agreement in 2005 in Kenya, with the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement SPLA/M, the strongest armed group in the south. See the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 CPA. See "<http://unmis.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=3674> .

³ - see OCHA – Sudan, <http://unocha.org/sudan/>, accessed at August 2 2012

⁴ - Tønnessen, liv . (2007) ' Competing Perceptions of Women Civil Rights In Sudan' CMI Brief , vol. 6, no.4, pp. 2-2 , <http://www.cmi.no/publications/publication/?2703=competing-perceptions-of-womens-civil-rights-sudan> , accessed in August 20, 2012

⁵ - No to Women suppression Initiative has been formed in 2009 in reaction to the high profile case of Lubna Hussain the Sudanese Journalist charged of 40 lashes for wearing trousers, women activists among them Amal Habany the journalist and women human rights, initiated the new resilience women movement, phone interviews with Amal in August 25 and September 4, 2012, . See radio Netherlands world (2009) <http://www.rnw.nl/arabic/article/15927> , accessed at August 15 2012

with the Sudanese government through civil society organizations, newspapers, social media and political activism .

A. WHRDs and the Birth of the New Women's Movement in Sudan:

Since 2009 a new wave of women's movement in Sudan began when Sudanese women human rights defenders started the new approach of direct confrontation with the government and the conservative Sudanese community. Women took their rejection of discriminating laws and social patriarchy to the streets, demonstrating against the legislations that degraded women's dignity. Laws such as articles 151-152 of the Criminal Act of 1991⁶, and the Khartoum Public Order Act of 1998 which controls women's movements and appearances on the public space, and contains humiliating punishments like whipping in public for the crime of wearing so called "indecent clothing".

"Our demonstrations against the public order law in 2009 and the start of our resilience movement was the natural result of years of oppression and hidden pain and humiliation many of Sudanese women went through in the 1990s " stated (H-A) University professor and woman activist⁷.

B. Sudanese WHRDs reach out to the Arab Spring:

In 2011 Sudanese people inspired by the Arab spring took the streets, demanding regime change. Women and youth led this movement and were violently cracked down on by the Sudanese authorities Women found themselves victims of rape, detention and prosecution . At least 150 women were detained, sexually abused or tortured, while dozens were injured and beaten in the protests. The protests against the regime broke down again in June 2012, where attacks on women human rights defenders were more violent. Fourteen women were detained for more than five weeks, while another 100 were detained for days or hours, during the two months of demonstrations. The police used live ammunition against protestors, killing a 17 years old female student protester. The police also fired rubber bullets at peaceful protesters which led to the injury of four women. Women Human rights defenders in Sudan are living at risk, without any supporting networks or protection mechanisms either from the government or NGOs, meanwhile facing firm restrictions forced on them by the Sudanese government

II. The Methodology:

The research group of this report conducted direct and phone interviews with 27 women activists and WHRDs, in a long data collecting process which started in March 2011. Most of the interviewed women preferred not to reveal their identities, due to their fear of the Sudanese authority's reaction, as freedom of expression in Sudan is violated and oppressed by the state authorities.

The definition of Women Human Rights Defenders we used in collecting and analyzing the information in this report is: **(women active in human rights defense who are targeted for who they are as well as all those active in the defense of women's rights who are targeted for what they do).**⁸

⁶ - see Sudanese Criminal Act of 1991 .

⁷ - Phone Interview with (H-A) in September 2nd 2012 . all the women human rights defenders are at risk in Sudan that why w does not reveal their names .

⁸ - This is definition adopted by the Association for women's rights and Development (AWID), see (<http://www.awid.org/Our-Initiatives/Women-Human-Rights-Defenders>), accessed, November, 2012.

In The first part of this report we describe the context in which WHRDs work, aiming at giving a complete background for the complicated challenges WHRDs face.

Sudanese WHRDs face many different risks and hardship created by the circumstances they work in, a politically unstable country where grave human rights violations are part of the daily life of thousands of Sudanese peoples. In the second part of the report, we tried to categorize the WHRDs, according their carriers and the rights they mostly focus on during their human rights activism. The report sheds light on the achievements of Sudanese WHRDs, as well as the disappointments and challenges they face, while tracking the enormous violations and risks they go through for their work, and for who they are.

Sudan Geography and Ethnography:

The Sudan, once the largest country in Africa and the Arab region with one million square miles, lost one third of its land and population after the secession of South Sudan in July 2011. The Republic of Sudan is in north eastern Africa (15 00 N, 30 00 E), with a total area of 1,861,484 sq km, and borders with 7 countries (Egypt, Libya, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Central Africa, and Chad)¹ and a coast on the Red Sea bordering Saudi Arabia. Sudan is mostly desert and Savannah, desert and semi desert covers 55% of the country¹. It is mostly plain lands except in the east the Red Sea Hills , Darfur in the west Jabal Marra and in the south west Nuba mountains in addition to the Ingessana Hills in the south east¹. The Nile and its tow tributaries the White Nile and the Blue Nile cross Sudan from the south to the upper north forming the Sudanese part of the Nile basin.

Sudan is an extremely diverse country in terms of population, resources and cultures. This diversity is a manifestation of the environmental variety from the desert and savanna in the north to the wet south. Sudan is considered an agricultural country for its water resources and its fertile soil. The country also is rich in mineral resources and oil especially in the south and west regions. The population of Sudan is 34millions, 70% are of Arab origin and the rest are Nuba, Fur, Beja, and Fallata. Sudan's population is a unique combination of African tribes, Nubian , Nuba and western African tribes, nomadic or Bedouins, and Arab tribes. Due to this diversity the countries identity is still a matter of debate between all the Sudanese ethnic and political groups, leading to a civil war which has lasted so far for sixty year, and has failed to yet settle the question of whether the country is African/ secular or Arabic /Muslim.

The official language is Arabic and the second language is English, but there are more than 100 local languages spoken by the Sudanese tribes of which there are more than 150. The majority of the population is Muslims, with the government claiming after the secession of South Sudan that 96% of Sudanese are Muslims., But minorities from the Nuba mountains, Darfur and the Blue Nile are fighting against the government's claims, arguing bias on the part of the ruling party who they claim intend to create an Islamic state, which does not recognize full rights of the minorities from non-Muslim and non-Arabic origins, whom either follow traditional African believes or are Christians.

Chapter 1 : The Context Characterizing the Work of Sudanese WHRDs

1. The Sudanese Women's Movement Context:

Women movement pioneers started their activism during the 1940s and 1950s, but the first Sudanese woman to become political activist and WHRD, in addition to be tortured for her activism was **Alaaza Mohamad Abdu Allah**⁹. She was the wife of **Ali Abdu Allatif** the leader of the 1924 revolution against British colonialism. **Alaaza** had been tortured and beaten by British officers to force her reveal the revolutionary documents she was keeping . She was also the first woman to participate in a political movement, and she motivated the masses to support the revolution of 1924.

The major step forward in women's rights movement in Sudan was the **Sudanese Women's Union**, formed in 1952, as it was mostly led by women from urban areas in North Sudan. The first president of the union was Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim. The union was already active and has its own magazine (Women's Voices)¹⁰, by independence in the 1956. After independence and for 3 years, Sudan enjoyed democratic rule led by the two major parties in the country, the Umma Party, and the National People's Union Party¹¹. However soon a military coup ended the democratic period, beginning the repeating cycle in Sudanese political history of democratic governments followed by military coups, eventually thrown by popular revolutions, beginning the cycle again

A. Women Activism during the Independence and the first two military coups (1958-1985):

Women activists in Sudan have a very long history of resilience and fighting for their rights. "*From the outset the Women's Union and the voice of women played their rules* ". **Fatima Ahmad Ibrahim**¹², said

⁹ - Alaaza M. Abdu Allah is the first Sudanese woman to publicly protest, to be tortured by official authorities and to attend a political court. The story says that when she heard that the judge had sentenced her husband to be executed, she made celebrating – not sure what you mean here? women chanting in Sudan they call " Zagrota, see her biography by SuWEP, "<http://www.suwepmovement.org/SWHistory.asp#7>), accessed , 17 August , 2012

¹⁰ - see Fatima Ahmaed Ibrahim Biography , "<http://ibnrushd.org/pages/int/Awards/2006/documents/cv-long-en.html> , Accessed at August .24. 2012

¹¹ - Umma Party led By Sadig Almahadi the great grand son of the leader of Mahdist revolution , is one of the major historical parties in Sudan and party led the 3 democratic government since the country independence. The National Peoples Party , is the second biggest and oldest party in Sudan led by Mirgani family the Sufi group , and they were allied in ruling the country during the 3 democratic governments with Umma party , see See Badri, Balgis ,2006" Feminist Perspective in Sudan an overview", Gender Politik online ,February ,2006 (http://web.fu-berlin.de/gpo/pdf/tagungen/balghis_badri.pdf) , accessed 3 September , 2012

¹²- Fatima Ahmad Ibrahim is the first president of the Women Union she was born in Khartoum and living now London her biography founded in Ibn Rushd Fund for freedom Thoughts as she had been awarded the Fund award in 2006 , and the quote is in her CV in the website : <http://ibn-rushd.org/pages/int/Awards/2006/documents/cv-long-en.html> , Accessed at August .24. 2012

in her biography. Ibrahim is the first woman to be a member of parliament in the Sudan, the Middle East and Africa, and was elected in 1965. Women's rights activists like **Fatma Ibrahim** opened the road for the next generations of Sudanese women, who themselves faced the hard challenge of protecting gains made by the older generation.

The democratic period which followed the 1964 revolution didn't last for long, but in 3 years of democratic governance women gained most of their political rights and the right to enter all fields of work except those prohibited by international laws. During that period Sudanese women gained the right to vote and to be candidate for parliament and legislative councils, plus the rights of equal pay for equal work and maternity leave for 3 months. But in 1969 another military coup ended this democratic rule and **Jafaar Numairi** became the president of Sudan for 16 long years¹³. During this time all parties and unions were prohibited and freedoms were highly oppressed, with the security services arresting, torturing and executing the president's political opponents. "*Al-Shafie, my husband was subjected in July 1971 to torture in al-Shagra military camp and he was executed by -Numairi's soldiers, I was arrested and sent to the Ministry of Interior to meet the Minister. I was detained in my house for two and a half years*", Said **Fatim Ahmad Ibrahim**¹⁴.

During Numairi's rule the country was subject to the sweeping winds of his personal views and ideas. While he started his era as leftist or communist, by the early 1980s he had adopted Islamic identity for Sudan and his government. **Numairi** announced the famous September laws in 1983. The laws were written and designed by **Hassan Alturabi**¹⁵ then the leader of the National Islamic Front. Under Shari'a laws **Alturabi** and **Numairi** changed the face of Sudan, which led to the end of the peace agreement of Addis Ababa of 1973 with South Sudanese rebels, because of the discriminating laws against Southern non-Muslims who were mostly the victims of the Islamic laws and Hudood. Whipping sentences for drinking alcohol -which was allowed in the southern culture- or for having sex out of marriage were practiced often, but the amputation of hands for stealing was the most common punishment and at most devastating Hudood sentence. "*Numairi was always saying that he was proud for executing amputations sentences in one month more than Saudi Arabia in all its living time*" Haydar Ibrahim¹⁶. During this period bars were closed, and women working in professional prostitution – which was legal before Shari'a laws- were punished and their properties were confiscated and people had their hands and legs were amputated. The most affected during these years of Islamic laws were women and non-Muslims, as they were the most vulnerable and targeted by those laws.

The **Numairi** period in Sudan was a major set-back to the women's rights movement because of restraints on freedoms and the prohibition of public activism. Like most of the other political and civil organizations, the Women's Union was forced to work underground.

2. Islamization Context:

¹³ - Layish, Aharon and Gabriel R. Warburg(2002) "The reinstatement of Islamic Law under Numairy", August 1, 2002, ISBN-10: 9004121048

¹⁴ - see Fatima Ahmaed Ibrahim Biography, "<http://ibnrushd.org/pages/int/Awards/2006/documents/cv-long-en.html>", Accessed at August .24. 2012

¹⁵ - see BBC profile of Hssan Alturabi "<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3190770.stm>", accessed, September 20, 2012.

¹⁶ - Ibrahim, Haydar (2012) "Alsudan Alriba wa Afion Alshyaoob", Sudanile website (<http://www.sudanile.com/2008-05-19-17-39-36/124-2009-02-06-09-31-42/42897-2012-07-25-21-47-10.html>), accessed 6 August, 2012.

Numairi's regime started in 1969 with a military coup and was overthrown by a popular uprising in April 1985. After 4 years of fragile democratic government, the national Islamic Front seized power by another military coup led by **Omar Albashir** on June 1989. The regime announced its self as an Islamic regime and "salvation revolution". **Hassan Alturabi**, the same designer of **Numairi's** Shari'a laws, designed the new criminal law of 1991, also based on Shari'a. Women under this new Islamic regime were subjected to discrimination and high trends of violence, either directly from the police, security and justice system, or from the institutionalized violent and discriminative policy of the new military/Islamic state.

The 1991 criminal act was the reason for the suffering of thousands of Sudanese women, especially women IDPs from South Sudan and the Nuba mountains. In that period more than five million IDPs displaced by the war were living in Khartoum, in many estimations most of them were women and children living in inhuman conditions. Many women worked in prostitution and made alcohol. Both jobs were forbidden by the 1991 law and so this eventually led to the prisoning, whipping and prosecuting of thousands of women, especially non-Muslims and low income women. Articles 79 of the 1991 act, punish anyone dealing or manufacturing alcohol with "one year" in prison, in article 146 punishment of adultery is lashing and stoning, but the most used articles in undermining women and humiliate them during the current Islamic regime in Sudan are articles 151 & 152, which are gross indecency and indecent and immoral acts. Both articles punish women for "indecent clothes" by 40-80 lashes". These two acts had been aggressively adopted in the state of Khartoum and the capital of Sudan by the Public order law of 1998. This law interpreted the articles 151-152 of the 1991 criminal act and implemented them on the ground through massive attacks on women in public spaces. The **Hijab** was imposed, and because the interpretation of indecency has no legal measures it was all left for the consideration of the individual police officers. Thousands of women had been whipped for wearing the same clothes they had worn during the last 20 years. In late 2010 a video of a Sudanese woman being publicly whipped by police disturbed the world and women rights defenders¹⁷.

Women in Sudan continue their fight against the discriminative laws and called for radical reform, in addition to their struggle for more public space and participation. The Islamic ruling party, the National Congress Party (NCP), is pushing for more female participation through quotas, where 28% of the parliament members are women. However these women are representing the political views of their party in most issues, such as in the debate for the ratification of CEDAW, which is strongly opposed by the ruling party for its differences with Islamic rules.

On June 2012 one of the oldest Islamist women leaders and member of the parliament ' **Soad Alfatih**'¹⁸ called for universities to stop accepting female students who didn't already reside in the area, to prevent them from turning to "sell themselves" to cope with the big cities high costs of living expenses.

This move to push women back to their homes, limiting their freedom of movement, participation in public spaces and their education opportunities demonstrates the thinking of some of these female leaders regarding women's issues. Therefore any changes of legislations or laws that discriminate against women are not fought against by the women of the ruling party, who are the majority of women participants in the parliament after the secession of South Sudan.

¹⁷ - see the video in this link : <http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-527066> , accessed , 7 August , 2012. See also : Time to end Corporal punishment in Sudan, by Redress and pother NGOs "

¹⁸ - see Soad ALfatih in the Parliament ' <http://www.alnilin.com/news-action-show-id-45617.htm> " , accessed , 18 August, 2012 <http://www.pclrs.org/downloads/Corporal%20Punishment%20-%20English.pdf> " accessed, 22 September , 2012

3. Militarization and Jihad Context:

In the early 1990s the Jihad campaign in the Nuba mountains and South Sudan, began by the current Sudanese government and dominant by the Islamic movement in Sudan and its political wing the national congress party, , aimed at Islamization and Arabization of the African / non-Muslim peoples of the Nuba mountains and South Sudan. This resulted in the displacement of an estimated 500 thousand people from the Nuba mountains and another 5 million from South Sudan, as well as the deaths of several hundreds of thousands of people¹⁹. This wave of violence was derived by Islamic Jihadists in the government and caused a catastrophic humanitarian crisis where women were the main victims, of sexual violence, slavery, forced displacement, inhuman livelihoods in the big cities slums and refugee or IDPs camps. Twenty years later and after the secession of South Sudan, women are facing similar circumstances as a result of the conflict in the Nuba mountains and Blue Nile region after more than a year of war in the two areas.

a. The ICC and the War Crimes in Darfur:

In Darfur the militarization of the Sudanese state took a dangerous turn. The conflict was extremely racial as the **Janjweed** (the Arab tribes men fighters riding horses), were the main cause of terror for thousands of African tribes in Darfur. Rape in the Darfur conflict became a weapon of war, used by the Sudanese government and its supporting militias from the Arab tribe of the region. The numbers of women raped in Darfur is unknown, but most of the women in IDP camps are reported to have been raped or sexually harassed. There are currently two million IDPs in Darfur. Al Bashir the Sudanese president has been indicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court "ICC", for the atrocities committed in Darfur²⁰, one of the crimes he is indicted for is mass rape of Darfuri women. The militarization and Jihadi campaign led by the Sudanese government over the past 20 years has escalated the violence against women to dangerous levels, and created inhuman livelihood situations for millions of women in the conflict regions of Sudan in South Sudan before the secession, in the Nuba mountains, Darfur and recently in the Blue Nile state.

4. The Slavery Context:

Under Egyptian–Turkish rule in the 19th century, the slave trade was at its highest levels in Sudan, especially in the region of the Nuba Mountains and South Sudan. Yet slavery still exists in Sudan today. During the civil war in South Sudan and the Nuba mountains, it is estimated that 100 thousands women and children were enslaved by the Arab militias supporting the Sudanese government during the 1980 - 1990s²¹. This new wave of slavery started in 1983 after President Numairi announced the beginning of an Islamic state, Shari'a and the forced Arabization and Islamization policy among the non-Muslim non-Arab peoples of South Sudan. The slaves were taken by the militias as rewards for fighting beside the government, as most of the militia members were nomadic tribesmen. Female slaves were taken to work as house hold slaves or to look after animals. But in many cases they were sold to families in urban areas

¹⁹ - see Sudanbomb.org : www.sudanbombing.org/.../Update%20to%20bombing%20report , accessed , 3 august , 2012.

²⁰ - see insight conflict.com (Sudan conflict Profile) , <http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/sudan/conflict-profile/> “ accessed on October 10 .

²¹ - Eibner, John(2000) , " Slavery in Sudan " , Middle East Forum , November 7, (<http://www.meforum.org/182>) , accessed , August 7 , 2012.

to work as house servants²². The policy of slavery of the peoples of Nuba mountains and south Sudan has continued during the rule of **Omar Albashir** the leader of the coup de'Etat designed and derived by the National Islamic Front, which ruled the country since 1989 until now.

Under the **Albashir** government Jihad had been announced against non-Muslims in the Nuba mountains and south Sudan. In the early 1990s the civil war took a turn towards jihad and became a religious war. Just as **Numairi** had, **Albashir** used the Arab Militias to Fight beside him, and awarded them with the freedom to take slaves. Women were the most affected by this policy because the militias would usually kill the men and burn the villages leaving women alone with their children to face sexual abuse and torture.

Modern Slavery: Mende Story:

The Story of the bestselling author **Mende Nazer**¹ the Nuba woman and former child slave, was big shock to the world. **Mende**, whom had been abducted by the militias from her village in the **Karko** tribes area in the Nuba mountains in 1993, traveled to England with her owners. After a few months she managed with the help of another Sudanese refugee to escape and start a new life. **Mende** escaped in 2000 after 7 years in slavery, having suffered inhuman treatment and losing her childhood. She later became a human rights activist and wrote a bestselling book about her life of slavery which was turned into a movie in 2010. Her Story reminded the world of thousands of slave women and children still suffering in Sudan. In 2002 the Sudanese government formed the National Commission for the eradication of Abduction of Women and Children, after a decision from the UN human rights committee on Sudan in 1999¹. The commission's work had been suspended after the secession of South Sudan in July 2011, but South Sudan's negotiation team leader claimed in the March 2012 peace negotiations in Addis Ababa that there are 30 thousand Southern Sudanese still living as slaves in Sudan, and that the topic should be included in the negotiations¹. The current war since June 2011 in the Nuba mountains has raised the same fear of slavery and abductions among the Nuba peoples¹.

5. Racial Discrimination and Conflicts Context:

The diversity of the Sudanese community was more of a curse than a blessing for most of Sudan's history. This curse has manifested into 60 years of conflict and civil wars, between the controlling central Arab – Muslim governments and the marginalized peoples of African ethnicities, Muslims or non-Muslims. The war in Darfur which started in 2002 ended assumptions held during the south Sudan war which described Sudanese wars as purely religiously driven conflicts, because Darfur is mostly a Muslim region, yet the atrocities committed there in less than 5 years are considered crimes against humanity and Genocide by the International Criminal Court²³. One of these crimes was rape, and Sudanese president **Omar Albshir** has been considered responsible for his armies and militias crimes of mass rapes committed in Darfur.

²² - same reference in 23 , see also Concluding Observations Of The Committee On The Rights Of The Child (CRC) (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 4 October 2002 : <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/crc/sudan2002.html> , accessed , 1 October , 2012

²³ - see the ICC website (<http://www.icc-cpi.int/menus/icc/situations%20and%20cases/situations/situation%20icc%200205/related%20cases/icc02050109/icc02050109?lan=en-GB>) , accessed , August 2, 2012

Racial discrimination in Sudan is deeply rooted in the country's complicated sociopolitical history, and ethnic and religious power relations, that define the power and wealth distribution in the community. Women and marginalized peoples, are the most effected by this discriminative community hierarchy. The long history of slavery in Sudan resulted in divide in the community into two parts, the masters and slaves. These boundaries were drawn based on color and religion. The slaves were mostly non-Muslims, descending from the African ethnicities living in this regions such as the Nuba in Nuba mountains or the Nilotic Africans in South Sudan, and west African tribes in Darfur. These slaves were abducted by Arab/Muslim tribes of North and central Sudan.

This ethnic/religious discrimination between the Sudanese peoples is manifested today not just in the civil wars and major human rights atrocities committed in the war zones, but it also demonstrates the reality of Sudanese women's daily lives their development perspectives and the challenges they face socially, economically, politically, and legally.

In October 29th, 2012 the Sudanese National Security arrested the journalist and activist from Darfur **Somaya Hendousa**. Her family confirmed that **Somaya** called her sister screaming: "let me tell my family", on the afternoon of October 29th when on a visit to the super-market. They have had no knowledge of her whereabouts since that phone call. The next day one of her family members received an SMS informing him that she was in detention. Her family explained to **GIRIFNA**²⁴ that **Hendosa** is a mother of a 3-year old child and that her origins are from the **Darfurian Rizaigat** tribe. While she was in detention she was subjected to physical "torture and beating with whips and hands". She was also subjected to "verbal racist slurs directed at her and her tribe", and her hair was totally shaved with the excuse that "her hair looks like the hair of Arabs while she belongs to the slaves in Darfur". **Somaya** said after she arrived in a safe location "I am in need for medical care as I have been beaten severely in my eye and face". This is one of the examples for the race based torture against women activists from marginalized areas in Sudan.

Women from the marginalized regions (Darfur, the Nuba mountains, the Blue Nile), have been living through conflicts for 6 years which derived from racial discrimination, a lack of political participation and the denial of civil rights for the peoples from this regions. As a result of the conflicts women were displaced and became victims of all kinds violence, sexual, physical and psychological, in addition to the discriminating laws they have been forced to adapt to in daily life, especially when they leave their original homes to become IDPs in the big cities in north Sudan. In addition to the conflict and violence which is based on racial discrimination, Sudanese society and state institutions are highly discriminative.

"In one month I defended 35 cases for women from marginalized and conflict regions , because the local authorities prohibited them from selling food in the street in Shandi, North Sudan)" (A -Z)²⁵ ,woman lawyer and human rights defender , " the local city governor issued local order to prohibit women from selling any thing by the public road and prohibited women working in the market from working after 5 after noon, in early 2012, I was taking 35 -40 cases by a month for the effected women , as they were punished by paying 100\$ fine, but we succeeded to reduce it to less than 5\$, with some cooperation with the judges and the strong resilience from the women affected by this laws". (A-Z) continued. The affect of racial discrimination on Sudanese women is one of the most complicated challenges facing the Sudanese women's human rights defenders and activists as they fight collectively to accomplish deep cultural and social reform critically needed to end the conflicts in Sudan and ensure political stability and

²⁴ - see Girifna statement : <http://www.girifna.com/7006> , checked on November 7th , 2012 .

²⁵ - Phone interview September 3 , 2012 .

peace. WHRDs work on this issue of racial discrimination is still restricted by community refusals to open up about this taboo, but without courageous encounters with this problem Sudanese conflicts and instability will continue to worsen the suffering of Sudanese women especially from an inside marginalized and conflict regions.

6. The Economic context:

Economic development in Sudan after independence failed to end poverty, while conflicts in the country continued to cut national income and worsened the suffering of the peoples in the conflict regions, especially women. Even the discover of oil and its production which began in the late 1990s didn't save the country from deep poverty. After the secession of South Sudan, north Sudan lost 75% of its oil and the state income decreased by the same percentage. Sixty per cent of Sudanese people live in rural areas and 8 percent of them work in Agriculture, "85% of the farmers are women particularly located in the Western and Southern Sudan. Poor women in urban centers sell food in urban markets and pursue several activities including begging, liquor brewing or prostitution to meet their family needs"²⁶, which put them under attack by the authorities through discriminating laws against women like Public Order Law of 1998²⁷ and the criminal act of 1991, which prohibited women from working at night or selling liquor and prohibited prostitution. This law resulted sending thousands of women to prison and punished them by public whipping for working for their living²⁸. Sudanese women -still lack full access to resources and participation in economic development, and are most affected by poverty, the unjust distribution of wealth, conflicts and gender based discriminating laws.

The latest indicators of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Sudan indicate a poverty ratio of 46% , while the rate is 55% in the rural areas where 60% of the population resides. 32% of children under five are malnourished and the maternal mortality rate is (216/100.000 LB) . These figures are drawing a dark picture for Sudan's race to achieve the millennium goals, especially the women equality and empowerment goal where girls enrolment in primary schools is 64% girls compared to 69% for boys, and the unemployment rate for women is 20% compared to 41% for men. The factor that reported improvement is women political participation and secondary education, women's participation in parliament is at 28% , while the enrolment of girls in secondary schools is 23% compared to 21% for boys. Another factor is women's share of the non agricultural employment sectors, which is at 59%²⁹, mainly because of work in the public sector of the government and work in the informal sectors (street food making, house services). However the figures regarding the political participation of women in parliament does not actually reflect a real participation of women, it is a quota rule implemented to comply with the countries Election law of 2008. The presence of elite women in parliament or the state cabinet does not translate to the reality of the life of regular women and the laws and policies that effect them as there is no actual reform in the discriminatory laws such as the Public Order Law³⁰.

7. WHRDs and the International Human Rights System

²⁶ - and Badri, Balgis ,2006" Feminist Perspective in Sudan an overview", Gender Politik online ,February ,2006 (http://web.fu-berlin.de/gpo/pdf/tagungen/balghis_badri.pdf) , accessed 3 September , 2012.

²⁷ - see Khartoum Public Order Act of 1998, and see the Criminal Act of 1991.

²⁸ - Redress and the Sudanese human Rights monitors report (2012)" No for whipping : the time foe stopping physical punishments in Sudan, Arabic" March (<http://www.redress.org/downloads/publications/Corporeal%20Punishment%20-%20Arabic.pdf>),

²⁹ - see UNDP – Sudan , MDGs (http://www.sd.undp.org/mdg_fact.htm#3) , accessed , September 12, 2012 .

³⁰ - Sudan Gender assessment by USAID, (2003) (http://www.sd.undp.org/mdg_fact.htm#3) , accessed August 4 , 2012.

The Sudanese Government is extremely allergic to relations between local activists, journalists or human rights defenders and their global support networks. Most of the WHRDs we interviewed have been either accused of spying or working for, or sending information's to "foreign countries and organizations", or they are accused of collecting information to compile a new case against Omar Albashir, the first president wanted by the ICC. Albashir is wanted for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, and so the Sudanese authorities are very afraid of any leaked information about the major atrocities they continue to commit all over the country. The WHRDs in Sudan are living in isolation from the international human rights system that should provide them support, protection, and empowerment in implementing their work of advocating and raising the awareness about human rights in the unstable state of Sudan.

Sudan refused to ratify the CEDAW convention, despite the efforts of many women rights activists, CSOs and human rights defenders to negotiate the agreement with the government. However no progress toward accepting open dialogue was made. The government considers CEDAW against Islamic and Sudanese values and argues that the WHRDs advocating for ratifying CEDAW are following western customs and denying their own³¹. Sudanese women activists are pushing Sudanese society to develop a better understanding of CEDAW, but the Islamic tendency of the community during the past two decades stands against this effort. Sudan also did not sign or ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and this position from the regional and international women rights legal instruments is translated into the grave violation of women rights in the country.

Sudan also refused to take further action on the Convention Against Torture (CAT) and all forms of ill treatment, even though it has been a signatory to the covenant since 1986, although it has not ratified it yet. But without enough pressure from Sudanese or international NGOs to push Sudan to ratify CAT, the Sudanese people, especially women and activists, continue to suffer torture. The Sudanese government commitment to the African human right mechanisms are not met, especially to the African charter of human and people's rights, as Sudan continue to violate most of the rights protected under the charter.

Sudan's commitment to the Conventions and Covenants³² it has already ratified is very weak, while the government constantly ignores its international obligations. The government has poorly respected the rights of its own peoples during the past two decades, especially the rights of minorities, and civil and political rights, while the government already has acceded the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights since 1986, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In addition to the Sudanese government's actions in the war zones and conflict areas violate international humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention which Sudan ratified in 1957. Therefore the role of WHRDs as human rights defenders is very complicated and critical in advocating for more commitment by the Sudanese government to its international obligations and to bring about international attention to the human rights violations in Sudan, and for doing that WHRDs in Sudan are in need of recognition for their important role and the major sacrifices they face doing their activism, including putting their lives in danger.

³¹ - see Sudan Vision (2009), 'Why Sudan should ratify CEDAW ', <http://www.sudanvisiondaily.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2573> , accessed august 1 2012 .

³² - see university of Minnesota Library of human rights, ' ratification of international human rights treaties- Sudan ' <http://www.sudanvisiondaily.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2573>, accessed august 28 2012 .

Chapter 2 : WHRDs Categories: Challenges and Risks

1. WHRDs Protestors:

Women protesters have challenged the traditional culture and gone out in streets, demanding their rights or calling for change. This provoked the authorities who used all their powers to intimidate women, while the community is using stigma and shame to put obstacles in the path of the women resistance movement and their presence in the streets and public events and places. The current government used the law to force women to remain in their houses, especially through the Khartoum state Public Order Act of 1998, which prevents women from sitting in the same place with men in public transportation vehicles, and from sitting with men in parties including family parties. Act 152 and 151 of the criminal act of 1991³³ is the main reason for the punishment most Sudanese women go through when they are out in the street for work, study or protest. The community uses stigma and religion to force women to stay passive and not express their opinions openly in the public places.

The current regime consider itself Islamic, yet it has allowed women to protest when in support of the government.

In April 10th, 2012 the South Sudanese troops entered the oil production area of Heglig in South Kordofan state³⁴. When the Sudanese Army succeeded in retaining the area on April 20th the female supporters of the ruling party organized a big demonstration celebrating their victory. But when a group of female students from Khartoum University refused to participate in their victory demonstrations the police arrested two female students and accused them of terrorism, as they were not supporting their countries army. Their lawyer said " we found both (A-F) and (I-M) looking very tired inside the police custody cells in Khartoum station after remaining detained for one day , and they told us they had been subjected to inhuman treatment and verbal sexual assaults"³⁵ .

Women in all sectors of the Sudanese community have been in the front lines of protests against the ruling Islamic/ military regime as they are the main victims of its policies. On June 24th 2012 a group of women with NWSI organized a protest called the the empty cooking pots, referring to the unbearable food prices caused by the governments decision to raise oil and food subsidies , "*we were dozens caring our empty pots and drumming on them with spoons and in Omdurman major street, the protest was cracked by the police in few minutes, and they beaten us and fired tear gas on us, also they had closed all the streets so the other women from the near houses don't join us, so they just stood in front of their doors supporting us but the security prevented them from doing so*" said (H –A) one of the protest organizers.

A. Kandake Day in #Sudan Revolt:

Despite this major attack on female protesters women continued to lead and participate in protests

³³ - Tønnessen, Liv and Roald, Anne , (2007) , ' Discrimination in the Name of Religious Freedom: The Rights of Women and Non-Muslims after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan' , Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen, Norway , <http://www.cmi.no/publications/publication/?2704=discrimination-in-the-name-of-religious-freedom> , accessed August 5 2012 .

³⁴ - see Huffington Post, ' Sudan-South Sudan War: Heglig, Disputed Town, Full Of Dead Bodies, Circling Antonovs', http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/17/sudan-south-sudan-war-heglig_n_1430851.html , April 17 2.012 , accessed August 10 2012 .

³⁵ - phone interview with lawyer of the tow students , August 15 2012.

The **Kandake** protest on Friday July 13th 2012³⁶ was a female only protest during the Sudan Revolt, Kandake (or Candace) meaning ‘strong women’ in the Cushitic language and used by the Kushites to refer to their queens in 2000 B.C. As a strong statement to the government, large numbers of women participated that day, mothers and daughters were detained, demonstrating that Sudanese women of all generations were standing against the regime. This protest was one of the most violent, especially against women, as heavy tear gas was fired against those inside the Wad Nubawy Mosque in Omdurman. At least 40 women were arrested, either by police or security forces. **Zeinab Badr Aldain**, a female activist and member of the Sudan Women’s Union was arrested with her daughter **Walaa Salah**, a lawyer and activist. The well-known woman activist **Azza Altijany** was also arrested with two of her daughters that day. Her daughter **Khalda** tweeted from during the protest “[@AliahKhaled](#): I was holding my mom's hand & by the mosque's gate there was a tear gas bomb that no one could've escaped. #SudanRevolts”.

B. #Sudan Revolt and the Effect of Arab Spring:

During the Arab Spring inspired demonstrations in Khartoum and other Sudanese cities in 2011, women protesters were in the front lines. Demonstrations took place sporadically during the year of 2011, and women were also behind the scene the organizers. "I was the one first three wrote on the Facebook, that we should all go to street and overthrow this regime, we started with a page about the high prices a month earlier hoping to turn our presence on Facebook to something useful, and after the Tunisia revolution we started our page "youth for change" and called for demonstrations on January 30th, 2011, in front of the presidential palace" said (A-H)³⁷, a leader in the youth movement "youth for change". The demonstration on January 30th 2011, saw 150 people arrested, more than 30 of whom were women, some students and other activists³⁸. The call for protests continued for the next 11 months and more youth movements became engaged. **Girifna**, the youth led movement to end the National Conference Party, was on the front lines and so most **Grifina** women members had been subjected to arrest and harassment by the security services. In the 2011 protests sexual abuse was very common, not just inside detention but also during apprehension, "*the security members grasped me from my blouse until the buttons opened in the street and thrown me inside their open pickup, while they were calling me the worst names, like "you whore" and another words I can't say*" said (N-H)³⁹, a student in Sudan University. During December 2011-March 2012 security forces raided the house of (A-H)⁴⁰ three times and detained her for hours. In the same period they raided the houses of another four women activists, and arrested two of them. In all the raids they confiscated the computers, phones and documents which were never return. In 2011 at least 100-150 women protesters had been arrested, investigated or harassed by the NSS. Protesting on the streets became a fatal action for Sudanese Women as police began to use extreme force against peaceful protestors and enjoying full impunity for any violations. The security forces now have free hand to practice all kinds of oppression against peaceful protesters, from detention and torture to rape and intimidation, putting women protesters lives at serious risk.

2. WHRDs Students: On the Front Lines

Sudanese female students have a strong presence in students movements in the country, and have been participating in political parties inside the Universitis. e This is especially important when we consider

³⁶ - see Girifna , <http://www.girifna.com/6315> , accessed August 6 2012.

³⁷ - interview in Khartoum 3 January 2011.

³⁸ See Amnesty International , 'Sudan end Protest crackdown' , <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/sudan-end-protest-crackdown-2011-01-31> , accessed August 22 2012 .

³⁹ - Interview in Omdurman February 14 2011.

⁴⁰ - Interview in Khartoum February 2012.

the fact that the two Sudanese revolutions against military governments (in 1964 and 1985⁴¹) started inside universities. This important role of students in demanding political reform and greater freedoms continues, and female students are leading the campaign for change .

"It was 6:00PM June 16th ,when I and other 6 girls sat down in our very crowded room in Alzahraa dorms in the Khartoum University compound decided that ⁴²we have to act and speak out against the unbearable food prices in the dorm and the university"said (S.A), a female student leader, describing the decision making process which led to two months of demonstrations that overwhelmed ten Sudanese cities. These six girls inspired thousands of Sudanese to protest against the government's austerity measures and high prices. The Sudanese authorities cracked down on the protest movement, using extreme violence which ended with 12 people dead⁴³ , dozens injured and 2,000 detained.

(S.A)⁴⁴ and her colleagues in the Khartoum university girl's dorms faced attacks from the police and security forces who considered them leaders of the unrest four times during the two months of protests. The police and NSS members beat the girls with sticks, threaten them with rape and sexually assaulted them using bad names and sexual gestures, "While we were running back to the dorms the police men were making sexual signs by their bodies to us".(S-A), a Sudan university student who lives in the dorm, said "they thrown the tear gas inside our rooms, and told us they will attack at night while we sleep". (S.A) confirmed and continued saying in a frightened voice "you can't believe it we didn't slept that night we remained awake for three nights after it". This attack on the dorms occurred on the first day of the protests on June 16th 2012⁴⁵.

(S-A) and her colleagues did not stop their protests, which spread to many Sudanese cities, increasing the government's anger at them, so that "the dorms department in the Education ministry decided to close down the dorms and evacuate it in 48 hours, the male and female students refused to evacuate in the determined period, so on July 16th , we took the street refusing to leave, as our universities were open ". The move made the police furious, "police and the NSS used brutal force against students specially girls, they unzipped their trousers in the street to intimidate us and starting trying to grab the girls from their blouses" said (S-A). The demos continued in Khartoum university, and students, especially girls, refused to evacuate the dorms. On July 16th,2012 more than 50 female students were arrested by police and released later the same day. In the dorms the girls were living under tough pressures to evacuate. The administration turned off the water and electricity in an attempt to force the girls to leave, but they remain there. While the girls from near states to Khartoum returned home, others from far states such as Darfur had to stay, and won their fight against the administration evacuation. However the high living costs in the dorms and across Sudan remained, and the protests were brutally crushed after two months.

A. The Female Student Martyr Tahany Hassan:

Female student's courage reached another level, when **Tahany Hassan**, a 17 year old high school female student was shot in the head and killed on July 31st by the Sudanese police in Nayala, South Darfur. She and hundreds of high school students were protesting the big increase in transportation fees, which meant

⁴¹ - Elsayy, Zaynab.(2011) ' Women Building Peace : The Sudanese Women empowerment for Peace in Sudan' http://www.awid.org/content/download/117348/1335455/file/CTW_WomenBuildingPeace_ENG.pdf

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), accessed August 7 2012.

⁴² - See Sudanese WHRDs Project , <https://sudanwhrds.wordpress.com/> , accessed 20 September 2012

⁴³ - see Amnesty International,(2012) <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/sudan-security-forces-must-stop-using-live-rounds-against-demonstrators-2012-08-02> , August 2, accessed September 7 2012

⁴⁴ - Phone interview in July 27 2012

⁴⁵ - see Amnesty International, (2012), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/sudan-end-crackdown-protesters-and-journalists-2012-06-22> , June 26, accessed September 8 2012.

that most of them were no longer able to go to school. Her death and the injury of dozens of her fellow female students who were demanding their right to education considered a big threat to the local government of South Darfur , and led the authorities to use such violence against not just peaceful protesters, but very young girls and boys dreaming of education , in a region that witnessed the most violent conflict in the past years, which led by the Sudanese government and the president **Omar Albashir** , whom his crimes in Darfur considered crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court⁴⁶ . Those young girls among them **Tahany** seen as enemies of the state on the base of their ethnicities and the region in Sudan they belong to.

The student struggle for their rights to education or a better learning environment has taken place during most of Sudan's modern history. The demands of these students has always exceeded their own networks, to reach the whole country and lead a bigger movement demanding basic freedoms, especially the freedoms of assembly, of free expression and political participation. During the Islamic and military regime of Omar Albashir⁴⁷ students have been fighting to form student unions and hold fair elections of these unions.

Female student's human rights defenders have been under constant attack during the current Islamic/military regime in Sudan. One of the ongoing battles for rights led by female students is the fight against the Public Order Law of Khartoum State of 1996⁴⁸ and against the articles 151 and 152 of the Criminal act of 1991 in particular, which has led to the arrest of thousands of women and girls for mostly "indecent clothes" which seems to mean, not wearing "Hijab", as women are supposed to cover their hair, arms and legs.

The government's implementation of these laws meant appointing female guards in every University and even girl's high schools to monitor the clothes of the female students. These guards have the authority to prohibit girls not wearing 'decent clothes' from entering the university or school, *"the female guards in the university gate were beating us some times when we argue with them and insists to enter the university, sometimes our fights with the guards over the short sleeves of our blouses, develop to a demonstration, especially when the male guards interfere and the male students support us"* said (S-H)⁴⁹ a now graduated student leader from Alneilain University.

B. The Risks of being Student WHRD:

The risks of being a female student and active as a human rights defender in Sudan are unlimited, while the dangers are various. Laws, local authorities and police are the main actors but families and communities are part of the picture too, in addition to male students and activists.

Under the current Islamic/Militarized state laws and authorities have been a source of danger as the violence committed against women is justified by the current system's religious beliefs and the continued status of war, which allows the authorities to oppress the basic freedoms and provide the police, security and army members with impunity. While laws and legislations are highly discriminatory against women, they build on religious and traditional morals and practices that have also been violent and discriminatory against women. These laws have empowered the traditionally defined roles for women, meaning women human rights defenders are now more in danger of being punished for any transgressions against their gender roles.

⁴⁶ - In April 3rd 2009 the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrant against Omar albashir for committing war crimes in Darfur. See <http://www.icc-cpi.int> , accessed August 4 2012

⁴⁷ - Omar Al Bashir came to power by military coup in 19989, after few days of the coup he reveled his political affiliation to the Sudanese Islamic Front , Led by Alturabi .

⁴⁸ - see Khartoum pubic Order Act of 1998.

⁴⁹ Phone call interview August 29 2012 , and interview in Khartoum in common friend house July 10 2012 .

After the recent arrests of WHRDs in Sudan in the wake of June protests⁵⁰ families of some of the detainees were very ashamed of telling their relatives that their daughters were detained for demonstrating in the streets against the government. (S-A)⁵¹ one of the women detainees said "*my family couldn't tell any of our relatives and neighbors, that I am in detention until it came out on the press, then they had to face the reality*". (L- K)⁵² who fled the country at risk of detention said "*I can't tell my family about my situation, they just can't handle it*".

C. Student WHRDs Subjected to Rape and VirginitY Tests:

I. Safia Ishaq Story:

In a very rare move, Safia Ishaq, student of art in Sudan University and member of Girifna⁵³, the youth and student nonviolence movement, went public in February 2011 and told her story of rape, torture and sexual assault by three National Security Services "NSS" members⁵⁴ while she was detained after demonstrations in early February 2011. **Safia** used social media and put her story on YouTube⁵⁵. In matter of days the Sudanese security started confiscating news papers reported the story and filing cases against the journalists who wrote on the subject, but the main target was **Safia** herself and her family. The security members intimidated the victim and her family after **Safia's** decision to file a case against the NSS members. But the problem according to one of the lawyers who volunteered on **Safia** case was "*we didn't have any proof because the police report was against unknown peoples, because Safia couldn't identify the criminals, because she said she was eye covered all her detention period*".⁵⁶

Safia's case was very ground moving for the Sudanese security and the whole government. In an Islamic state governed by Shari'a, the security members were identifying themselves as Mujahedeen, and protectors of community traditions that are highly protective to women. The case was a big shock for the government, but also led to a strong debate between all sectors of the Sudanese community. While women activists and NGOs were writing about the serious human rights violation in the case, many Sudanese in the streets, after watching Safia's video⁵⁷ on social media or through the heavy international and regional media covering for the story were mostly doubting Safia's story. According to her internet video, Safia's aim was to encourage other women to continue to fight, and to to inform the NSS member that what they did to her didn't break her.

The women-led rights and nonviolent resistance movement "NO to Women Suppression Initiative" organized a sit in on International Women's Day on March 8, 2011 in solidarity with Safia, demanding a

⁵⁰ - see Amnesty International, (2012), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/sudan-end-crackdown-protesters-and-journalists-2012-06-22>, June 26, accessed September 8 2012.

⁵¹ - Phone interview August 30 2012 .

⁵² Phone interview September 3 2012

⁵³ - Girifna means ' we fed up' in Arabic , its youth movement that formed in 2009 to campaign against the ruling party National Congress Party (NCP) . see <http://www.girifna.com/>, accessed August 1, 2012.

⁵⁴ - Safia Ishaq case of speaking publicly and publishing a video on Youtube about her sexual abuse and rape by the security members was a turning point in the Sudanese women activist history, where the whole country divided in supporting or condemning her action. See Cairo Institute for human rights studies 2011, http://www.cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Sudan_en.pdf

⁵⁵ - see Safia YouTube video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mb2960uQfg4>, accessed September 10 2012.

⁵⁶ - interview in Khartoum in the lawyer house , March 20 2011 see also interview with Safia Ishaq , in Hurriat news website "<http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=24465>"

⁵⁷ - see in this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mb2960uQfg4>, accessed in 12 October , 2012

full and independent investigation on her case. At 4:00PM the women went to the sit in place in Omdurman and found the area surrounded by 11 police riot cars carrying about 100 police men. In addition to another five NSS cars and an unknown number of security personnel in the protest location, the women decided to go across the street from the square they had planned to demonstrate in, in front of Alazhary's house⁵⁸, and made their sit-in on the street. They prevented the movement of the cars coming from Shambat Bridge to Omdurman and the police became furious. Police started pulling the women sitting down from their Toubs (Sudanese traditional clothes) when they refused to get up from the floor. 50 women were arrested that day. "*They threw us like animals in a very high pickup where old women couldn't climb it, so they just pushed them up*" said (N- K)⁵⁹, one of the women detained that day.

Safia's decision to speak publicly about her rape by the NSS members, eventually forced her to flee the country after enormous pressures from the Sudanese security⁶⁰. The risk Safia took was dangerous in the very conservative Sudanese community, where societies reaction was to take the perpetrators side rather than the victim's. The stigma and shame was tagged to her because of taking the decision of speaking out and extended to reach her supporters too, "*I think Safia case was very extreme in challenging the traditional society, it divided the views even of women rights activists and human rights defenders*" said (H-A⁶¹) the leader in (NWSI).

II. Virginty Tests:

In the demonstrations in Khartoum in July 3rd 2012, two WHRDs had been detained for participating in the protests which took place in Haj Yousif, east of Khartoum. In these protests, two WHRDs were detained by police. The WHRDs reported that they had been subjected to virginty tests at least three times during their 10 days of detention. Student "G-S" said "*the police took us to a clinic near to the police station and they ordered the doctor to run virginty tests on us, they did the same thing the next day and two days later also, I felt very humiliated and abused*".⁶²

Sudanese WHRDs are in danger of rape, virginty tests and various kinds of gender based violence and sexual abuse by the Sudanese authorities, but also families, society and in some cases even fellow activists. This is especially true when women fight for their rights and challenge the traditions and historical discriminatory ruling mentality. In this situation WHRDs in Sudan find themselves surrounded by danger from all sides. The refusal of the authorities, the community, families and even coworkers or colleagues to talk about sexual harassment is a serious challenge for WHRDs.

This is demonstrated through the case of a student protestor arrested and subjected to sexual harassment in January 2011. After her arrest she gave an interview to an independent journalist and released a video statement about her case. However her family forced her to ask the journalist to remove the video, because she named the people responsible for her assault, she said "*my family told me that good girls don't say those words ever*" (S-B)⁶³. This pressure forced many WHRDs to quit their activism to comply

⁵⁸ - Reuters ' Sudan police arrest women in rape protest : witness' March 8 2011, <http://af.reuters.com/article/sudanNews/idAFHEA84761520110308>

⁵⁹ - personal interview March 8 2011.

I. ⁶⁰ -See Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kampala, Uganda ' Dutch Diplomats meet with Sudanese' <http://uganda.nlembassy.org/news/2011/04/dutch-diplomats-meet-with-sudanese-human-rights-defender-safia-ishaq.html> , accessed august 29 2012.

⁶¹ - - Phone Interview with (H-A) in September 2nd 2012.

⁶² - Phone interview : August 27, 2012

⁶³ - Interview In Umma Party offices , Omdurman, February 20, 2011.

with the "good women/girls" stereotypes, for fear of losing their families support and their good reputation in the community.

3. Women Journalists: The Price of Courage

"In one year (2011-2012) I had seven law suits against me , for writing about corruption, women rights and the human rights situation in the country, 5 of them filed by the National Security, and now I am prohibited by the NSS orders to newspapers from writing in any newspaper in Sudan." said (**Amal Habany** – journalist and woman human rights defender)⁶⁴ . Sudanese women journalist have been a loud voice advocating for greater freedoms and speaking out about sensitive social, political and human rights issues in Sudan. *"In the past 10 years Sudanese women journalists took the risk to move forward and gain their place in the top of journalism profession in Sudan, writing stories that broke the silence on many issues, for example the first reports about Darfur conflict has been written by women journalists , which opened the eyes of the public for the situation there"* said **Amal** .

Freedom of expression in Sudan is one of the most oppressed freedoms. The Sudanese Security has a free hand to censor newspapers⁶⁵ and there are continuous prosecution and arbitrary arrests of journalists, writers and bloggers. **Amal Habany** is a cofounder of independent journalists network which aims to defend journalists rights and protect their freedom of expression. *"After the 2005 peace agreement between the government and the SPLM/A, which ended the 50 years war in South Sudan, more space for freedom has been opened, but in 2008 the government returned to the censorship on newspapers and decreased the freedom space, that was when me and another journalists in Ajras Alhurya newspaper⁶⁶ started."* The Sudanese Journalists Network was established to defend our rights " **Amal** stated, dozens of journalists held protests in front of the parliament in 2008 , calling for major changes in the proposed journalism law in that time and succeeded in changing some of the articles in the proposed law , specially the punishments of some violations of the new law, but on June 8th, 2009 the Journalism and Publishing Law passed⁶⁷ in the Parliament and the Sudanese Journalists Network protested against the new constrains to be impose by the new law. The police was violent against them and arrested many journalists among them one woman journalist .

A. Women Journalists Fight for the Freedom of Expression:

Women journalists face many opponents in their fight for free expression, not just from the government and legislations but also newspaper owners, editors, male journalists and community traditions. The women journalists I talked to were very sadly describing the hostile work environment they survive through every day. *"Although women journalists proven their selves professionally in the past 10 years, and the sexual harassments in the work place is less now, but we still living in very discriminating*

⁶⁴ - see Amnesty International, Sudan: Silencing dissent: Restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression persist in Sudan <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/journalists-face-increasing-harassment-sudan-2012-05-02> , May 3 2012, accessed September 4 2012

⁶⁵ -see Amnesty International, Sudan: Silencing dissent: Restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression persist in Sudan <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/journalists-face-increasing-harassment-sudan-2012-05-02> , May 3 2012, accessed September 4 2012

⁶⁶ - Ajras Alhurya is one of the 14 newspapers closed by the Sudanese government after the secession see Amnesty International, Sudan: Silencing dissent: Restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression persist in Sudan <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/journalists-face-increasing-harassment-sudan-2012-05-02>

⁶⁷ - See Human Rights Watch, 'Sudan Revise Repressive press law' April 23 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/04/23/sudan-revise-repressive-press-law>, accessed September 5 2012 .

environment experiencing many forms of violence against us from the newspapers administrations and work colleagues" said Amal. She continued "I as a woman columnist, my income is humiliatingly low comparing with any of my colleague men, and this happening to all women journalists, our rights in equal pay for equal work are totally violated and we are still fighting now to reach our rights in equal income ".

"I write mostly about women issues in depth, and I focus on bringing out the feminist point of view in all issues, political or social etc. but inside the newspapers I have worked in I have been always a subject of laughter from my editors and male colleagues, calling my articles (dreamy, unrealistic and too girly). I quitted my last journalism job because my editor in chief refused to publish my articles on basis of his personal views, and he edited and cut my peace without my permission", said (H-A)⁶⁸, opinion writer and university professor. The violence against women human rights defenders in journalism is similar to that which other women campaigners face. The patriarchal social order in Sudan ensures that women journalists are harassed on the basis of their different opinions and due to their fight for greater freedoms and rights.

B. Women Journalists Behind bars:

Women journalists defending women and human rights have been subjected to detentions, prosecutions and have been suspended from working or writing in newspapers in Sudan. At least four women journalists were prohibited from writing in 2012, while 10 women journalists were detained during the revolts in June-August 2012. Their detention period varied from one day to two months, during which time the women were subjected to inhuman treatment and sexual assaults. Female journalists and opinion writers were prosecuted in 2011 after writing and calling for an investigation into the rape of **Safia Ishaqu** by members of the security forces. **Amal Habany** and **Fatma Gazali** were found guilty by the court for publishing "false stories". The court decided that they should pay fines of around \$1000 (US) or face one month in prison. Both journalists refused to pay the fines. *"I am free to write what I feel is right, and I believe I was right in righting about Safia, and I will continue write about her, so I will not pay the fine to prove them right, I don't accept this"* said **Fatima Gazali**⁶⁹ from her prison on July 8, 2011. She spent two days in Omdurman women's prison before her colleagues insisted on her to accept to pay the fine. As they said to her after, *"you proved your opinion"*.

In an effort to avoid a negative reaction from society and the media, the security services tried to pay the fine of the other journalist, **Amal Habany**. To avoid this a group of women social media activists started a campaign on July 26th, 2011 to raise the \$1000 needed for **Amal's** release. The aim was to raise awareness about the issue of freedom of opinion and to challenge the Security Service's attempt to pay the fine. The Campaign asked peoples to contribute one Sudanese pound and transfer it through mobile phones as credit. They called the campaign "**Genaih Amal**" (Amal's Pound)⁷⁰, the one-day long campaign was a great success and Amal was released on the second day due to the support of the Sudanese people. Amal went to jail to defend their people's rights, and in return they paid for her freedom.

C. Attacks on Bloggers and Social Media Women Activists:

⁶⁸ - Phone Interview with (H-A) in September 2nd 2012.

⁶⁹ - Interview in her house in July 11 2011

⁷⁰ - Sudanese social website Alrakoba, 'Hmalt Jenaih Amal', <http://www.alrakoba.net/vb/t67406.html> accessed September 6 2012.

The attack on freedom of expression in Sudan, is not focused on newspapers alone. Online activists, citizen journalists and bloggers have also been subjected to harassment and detention. During “Sudan Revolts⁷¹”(S- M ⁷²) a blogger and free-lance journalist was arrested many times.he said "*on June 26, 2012 the NISS raided my house in the middle of the night confiscated my lap top and took me for investigations for hours*". (D-S)⁷³ another citizen journalist said "*from January to June they raided my house twice in five month and confiscated my computers and cameras*". WHRDs work in breaking the silence about human rights violations in Sudan through writing and reporting the stories to the outside world. They are living in danger of detention, prosecution, sexual harassment, and even losing their jobs and face many forms of gender based violence from the government, legislations and the justice system, their employers and their male counterparts.

4. WHRDs in Civil Society: The Change Makers

A. No to Women Oppression and Lubna case:

"*We were 5 women , among us were 2 journalist, a University professor, a doctor and woman's activist, in the first meeting we all decided that we must come up with a strong plan to support **Lubna Ahmed Hussain** on her case, and after two meetings we all agreed that we must speak very loudly and start a movement that bring the life for the women rights activism in Sudan*"⁷⁴ said (H-A) No to Women Suppression Initiative cofounder . The initiative started in response to the high profile case of a female journalist arrest in early July 2009 for wearing trousers⁷⁵. The police arrested **Lubna Hussain** on the bases of the article 152 of the Sudanese Criminal Act, which entails that : "***Whoever commits, in a public place, an act, or conducts himself in an indecent manner, or a manner contrary to public morality, or wears an indecent, or immoral dress, which causes annoyance to public feelings, shall be punished, with whipping, not exceeding forty lashes, or with fine, or both***".

Lubna, a journalist and at the time a UN staff member, wrote a public letter and distributed 500 invitation cards encouraging people to come and attend her court hearing and public whipping⁷⁶. **Lubna's** first court date was on July 29th, 2009 but by then the news of her situation had shook the country. NWOI used the incident to protest loudly about women suffering as a result of article 152, the thousands of women and girls who had been whipped in public, while dealing with the trauma and social stigma privately and in silence. "*More than one thousand woman were standing in the street in front of Lubna court holding signs and*

Sudanese criminal code 1991 Gross indeceny

Article 151(1) There shall be deemed to commit the offence of gross indecency, whoever commits any act contrary to another person's modesty, or does any sexual act, with another person not amounting to adultery, or sodomy, and he shall be punished, with whipping, not exceeding forty lashes, and he may also be punished, with imprisonment, for a term, not exceeding one year, or with fine.
(2) Where the offence of gross indecency is committed in a public place, or without the consent of the victim, the offender shall be punished, with whipping not exceeding eighty lashes, and he may also be punished, with imprisonment, for a term, not exceeding two years, or with fine.

Indecent and immoral acts

Article 152.(1) Whoever commits, in a public place, an act, or conducts himself in an indecent manner, or a manner contrary to public morality, or wears an indecent, or immoral dress, which causes annoyance to public feelings, shall be punished, with whipping, not exceeding forty lashes, or with fine, or with both.
(2) The act shall be deemed contrary to public morality, if it is so considered in the religion of the doer, or the custom of the country where the act occurs.

⁷¹ - #Sudan Revolts, was the campaign on Twitter to support the Sudanese protest started in June 2012, see <https://twitter.com/#!/search/?q=%23SudanRevolts&src=hash> , accessed September 8 2012.

⁷² - Phone interview July 13 2012.

⁷³ - phone interview June 28 2012.

⁷⁴ - see Arabic Network for Human Rights Informations, ' Lubna court suspended' , <http://www.anhri.net/press/2009/pr0729-2.shtml> , Accessed September 9 2012.

⁷⁵ - radio Netherlands world (2009) <http://www.nmw.nl/arabic/article/15927> , accessed at August 15 2012

⁷⁶ - Lubna distributed invitations cards to the journalist opposition leader , NGOs , activists to attend her court and whipping

holding each others hands, we determined that we will not leave the street for two hours at least, despite of the heavy tear gas and police men insults and whipping on us, we remained there holding on each others hands in a human chain sitting on the ground for almost 2 hours, declaring to the public that we are absolutely not ashamed of our selves as women, and we have the right to wear or do what we want" said " (H-A) the leader of NWOI. On that sunny day of July 29th, 2009 the police arrested 144 women and injured another 18.

By taking to the streets in support of **Lubna**, NWOI took the lead in the women's nonviolent movement. The movement was acting not just a response to **Lubna's** case, but as an explosion of the anger of thousands of women who had suffered due to article 152 over 20 years of military/Islamic ruling.. The NWOI continued protesting against not only the gender based discriminating laws but also the Sudanese security force's impunity. When **Safia Ishaqu** declared to the public that she had been raped by National Security Services members while she was detained in March 2011 they also protested against police impunity. They demanded retribution on the police on behalf of Nuba woman and political activist **Awadia Ajbna**⁷⁷ who was brutally attacked and killed on March 6th, 2012 by a police officer in front of her house. Her entire family was beaten and injured whilst they were defending their brother from arrest without charge. The NWSI participated alongside hundreds of **Awadia's** friends, family members and activists in three days of protests in the neighborhood of Aldaim, where she had been killed. They demanded the arrest of the guilty police officer which didn't happen until now,. Dozens of protestors were arrested that day and injured by police and authorities, while **Awadia's** neighborhood, in middle of Khartoum, continued to remain under siege for a week after the demonstrations had ended.

"NWOI revived again the Sudanese people's and activist's appetite for open struggles and protesting on streets to demand rights and basic freedoms, while the Sudanese civil society and women movement was working very detached from the street and living in fear for the two decades" said (A_H) cofounder of NWSI. Sudanese women working in the civil society sector had been targeted by the government and the security forces for years. In addition to restrictions on their freedom of association through close censorship by the security forces on the CivilSocietyOrganizations work and the restricted Law on Regulating Voluntary and Humanitarian Work of 2006⁷⁸, but the government consider women activists as the fetal danger on the community . On March 18th, 2012 Akhir Lahza newspaper [reported](#) that **Nafie Ali**, the ruling party leader and the President's close consultant, said at a gathering of his party's female members, "you all know about those women activists working with international organizations to implement destructive plans against the community"⁷⁹. The Sudanese official statement , has been strongly applied on the ground, through a security crackdown on female civil society activists. The Security services raided the houses and offices of eight women civil society activists in the period between January and August 2012, and arbitrarily arrested seven women for the their work on CSOs. Three of these women were detained several times while one of the others was detained for a month, the another for three months, and the final one, Nuba Activist **Jalila Khamis**, has been detained since March 14th , 2012. she has been held in a solitary cell for three months. On July 29th she was transferred to the regular prison where the security forces presented her charges, based on her speaking about the war in the Nuba mountains and the government's rights violations, as crimes against the state. She is a teacher and an active member of many women's NGOs and networks like SuWEP⁸⁰. She was presented the court on

⁷⁷ - see Arry organization, ' Awadya Ajbna : the Sudanese government racial discrimination restraining justice ', <http://arry.org/?p=518> , accessed August 12 2012.

⁷⁸ - see *Law on Regulating Voluntary and Humanitarian Work of 2006*.

⁷⁹ - see Kabalo, Nazik .(2012) ' the call of Sudanese women human rights defenders' , <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/84054> , accessed September 17 2012

⁸⁰ - SuWEP is the Sudanese women empowerment for peace , www.suwepmovement.org/

December 2012, and on January 20, 2013 the judge dropped all the charges against and released after 10 months in detention.⁸¹

B. The Work of Human Rights NGOs and WHRDs :

The attack on NGOs and on women working in the civil society in general has intensified since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against the Sudanese President **Omar Albashir** in 2009 for committing War Crimes in Darfur since 2003⁸². The Sudanese government fears that CSOs act as the link between the international community and the local communities where the great human rights violations take place. Most of the women civil society activists detained in 2012 told us that they had been asked in interrogations about their relations with the international community and been accused of spying and providing international human rights organizations with "false" reports about human rights violations in Sudan. In addition to working with these international organizations to build new cases in the ICC against Albashir and his government officials, therefore women civil society activists are considered enemies of the state by the Sudanese authorities and are living under the constant threat of prosecution, the termination of their organizations licenses, detention and torture. At the same time, the governments extreme restrictions mean these women are isolated from potential international support networks.

5. Women Lawyers: Triumphs and Disappointments

Female lawyers are standing tall defending women's rights and human rights in Sudan. But their work has never been more difficult. *"I am living in fear for 7 or 8 years now, since I started working as human rights lawyer"* said (A-N)⁸³. She explained *"in my work in legal aid center in Darfur for three years from 2005-2008, I have participated in filing or defending in 4-5 thousands cases in Darfur, while more than 50% of them were rape cases where I have been presenting the victims"*, in 2009 the Sudanese authorities closed down many organizations working in Darfur, and (A-N's) center was among them. That is when the security harassment began *"I had to hide for more than 6 months, where I had change my location, I am living in serious fear since that time"* said (A-N). During the ongoing war in Darfur thousands of women had been raped⁸⁴ by government forces and their supporting militias. Lawyers and human rights defenders like (A-N) were working in extremely dangerous war zones, trying to bring justice to helpless victims, putting themselves and their lives in danger.

A. Rape as A Crime in The Sudanese Code:

Women lawyers are fighting for extreme reforms in Sudanese laws, as *"In the Criminal Act, rape is defined as adultery without consent. Adultery is a crime based on Shari'a law that is subject to strict evidentiary requirements, i.e. the presence of four male eye-witnesses or a confession."*⁸⁵. The Sudanese women lawyers fight to reform the Sudanese law definition of rape witnessed major triumphs through the work of (A-N) and her colleagues in collaboration with local and international NGOs working in Darfur, where rape has been a daily occurrence during the ongoing conflict in the region. (A-N) explained *"we*

⁸¹ - Phone call with Jalila Khamis on January 22, 2013.

⁸² - see the international Criminal Court , <http://www.icc-cpi.int/> , accessed September 5 2012,

⁸³ - Phone interview September 6 2012.

⁸⁴ - see OCHA – Sudan , <http://unocha.org/sudan/ocha-reports> , accessed August 4 2012 .

⁸⁵ - see criminal law reform project in Sudan, <http://www.pclrs.org/english/gender-crimes> , accessed July 4 2012 .

succeeded through strong awareness campaign and laying on the special circumstances in Darfur, we succeeded to convince the judges in the region to consider the doctors reports and the social workers reports as enough evident in rape cases in Darfur , and by this break- through , we had some of the extreme sentences against rape crimes of 10 years in prison". However this major legal reform is applied only in Darfur. (A-N) and other human rights lawyers are seeking to expand this across the country, to replace the current law.

B. Women lawyers and the New Sudanese Constitution:

After the secession of South Sudan, the country had to write a new constitution⁸⁶. Sudanese women lawyers are working to present their own views on the new constitution of their country, hoping for more reforms regarding the gender discriminatory laws greater freedoms to be granted to the peoples of Sudan. and the increased participation of women in government bodies . Many women's groups and CSOs are very concerned about the constitution making process, especially due to the attempts of some radical Islamic groups to pressure for an Islamic constitution based on Shari'a. Women's groups fear this would jeopardize the women's civil rights which were gained from the current interim constitution of 2005. This interim constitution was based on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005, which granted women their civil rights according to the article 15 and 32, which entail: "*the equal rights of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights and all social, cultural and economic rights, including the right of equal pay for equal work, shall be ensured.*"⁸⁷ Sudanese women consider this article and the interim constitution to be a real step forward in reaching their civil rights, but these gains under threat. Women lawyers are defending their rights by participating in the constitution drafting, ensuring gender sensitivity in cooperation with many CSOs and political parties and calling for at least 35% of the parliament seats for women whilst maintaining the important articles from the 2005 constitution .

Women lawyers are working from within the Sudanese community to protect women's rights and defend them. Human rights lawyer (K-H) said "*I am visiting the women prison in Omdurman basically every week to provide legal help and some other needed support for women prisoners, many of them are more victims than criminals, especially those with imprisoned with their children as they are their only providers*"⁸⁸. She continued, "*through my work I lately founded a woman sentenced of stoning for committing adultery, but what I learned from her later that her husband accused her of adultery, and she confessed just to tease him , but the judge, against the law, didn't informed her the consequences of her confession and didn't provided her a lawyer to defend her, but after me and my colleague lawyers presented appeal and mobilized an international campaign against her sentence, the women is now free*" .. This case and other ones explain how discriminatory the Sudanese justice system is. But the problem is that lawyers like (K-H) who are working to fight this injustice are living under constant concerns for their own safety, especially when they speak publicly about their work .

Women lawyers are defending their rights as lawyers by participating in independent unions or groups that they feel better represent them, like the Darfur Bar Association which was formed in 1997 in response to the ruling parties domination over the Sudanese Lawyers Bar. "*Darfur Bar Association, is defending human rights defenders and detainees, and present the opposition leaders in front of the courts, which the government to consider it as an opposition supporting group*" said (A-N), an active member of the association. She continued, "*in July 1st 2012 , I have been arrested with another 5 of my colleagues in the association, after we got out of a meeting in Khartoum, where we had been discussing*

⁸⁶ - Mutawinat for Legal Aid, <http://www.mutawinat.org/tgarer.html> , accessed July 21 2012.

⁸⁷ - see the Interim Constitution of Sudan of 2005.

⁸⁸ - Phone Interview August 25 2012.

the release of Dr. Bushra Gamar⁸⁹, the Nuba activist, whom had been detained for one year, as the association was his defending committee until his release". (A-N) explained that "few moments after we got on the car the NSS, stopped us and arrested us, in the next 12 hours they accused me of spying and supporting the armed groups after they let stand for hours under the sun, and sexually assaulted me, they released at 2:00AM the next day and ordered me to come every day for days, to just sit there, for 12 hours, without even the talk to me".

The Sudanese authorizes strongly target human rights lawyers, especially over the last year. Women in particular are being targeted, five women lawyers have been detained and harassed by the security services while many others are living in danger of such harassment every time they take up a new human rights case.

6. WHRDs In Conflict Regions: Victims and Heroes

"I have been arrested while I was fleeing Kadugli with my family on the midday of June 9th, 2011, when 4 army men took me to the military base outside Kadugli in (Saraf Alahmar) and when we arrived they started interrogating me, they told me that I am supporter of the rebels and I have to give them information's about some names in a long list they show me, they told me that they know I was working in election awareness, and all the peoples supported the Sudanese Peoples Libration Movement/ North Sector (SPLM/N⁹⁰), in the South Kordofan elections are considered enemy of the state now" said (S-M)⁹¹ civil society activist and Nuba women. When we met in July 2012 she seemed terrified. She had just fled the war which had erupted in the Nuba/ mountains/South Kordofan state in June 5th, 2012 between the government and the SPLM/N, after disputed elections held in the region a month before the war started. (S-M) continue describing her detention "they started threatening of killing me if I didn't gave them information's about the names in the list, in this moment I was very afraid because I know many peoples killed just for their support for the SPLM/N in the first 3 days of the war, but just before I broke down, one of my relatives working in police came on and begged them to release, because I don't have information's, so after being held for 9 hours they released me and ordered me to leave the region at once".

A. WHRDs and The War in Nuba Mountains:

Thousands fled the warring region of the Nuba mountains after the war erupted in June 2011. The Nuba ethnic group supported the SMLM/N in the South Kordofan governor elections, has been targeted by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and its supporting militias. Nuba activists have been subjected to arbitrary arrests, racial assassinations and torture⁹², while Nuba villages and neighborhoods have been destroyed by aerial bombardments and land attacks. The civil society organizations working in the region had their offices looted and burned, and their staff were forced to leave the region. Some of them were detained or killed, **Zeinab Balandya**, the director of **Ru'ya** Organization, a women peace building NGO, told us in Khartoum in July 2011, before being forced to flee the country "*my offices in Kadugli had been*

⁸⁹ - Dr Bushra Gamar is a Nuba activist, detained for a year after the war erupted in Nuba mountains, and Darfur Bar association played key role in releasing him in June 2012.

⁹⁰ - Sudanese peoples Liberation Movement /north sector, is fighting the Sudanese government in Nuba mountains since June 2011, after disagreement between the ruling party the National Conference Party and the SPLM/N over the election results of may 2011.

⁹¹ - Interview in Omdurman July 21 2011.

⁹² - see Arry organization, www.arry.org, Accessed July 5 2012. OCHA – Sudan, <http://unocha.org/sudan/ocha-reports>, accessed July 20 2012.

completely destroyed, I have nothing left of it, the whole organization is not existed now, I have to start over again". Zeinab and some of her staff from the Nuba mountains, who were all women, were subjected to harassment by the Security forces in Khartoum, which led them to flee the country a few weeks after our meeting with her in July 2011⁹³.

After the war in Nuba mountains began, Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) started fleeing into Khartoum every day. Thousands arrived in a matter of weeks, while the government was denying their existence. Most of the IDPs were hosted with family members already living in Khartoum, leading to a catastrophic humanitarian situation. Some families hosted 50 peoples in a two rooms house, and people were forced to sleep on the streets outside of their families homes. Nuba activists decided to call an urgent meeting with other women civil society activists, human rights defenders and NGOs to discuss how to provide aid and take action to help the Nuba IDPs and their hosted families as well as break the silence about the war crimes in the region. After two meetings the activists forced the "No for War Campaign" which was led by women activists from the Nuba mountains and other Sudanese regions. The women divided themselves into teams and began collecting aid and distributing it very secretly to insure their own safety. Others were engaged in collecting information about the situation in the region and documenting the atrocities the Nuba peoples faced, *"we were taking the small packages of food, and distributed it hand by hand house to house, in hush, so the hosting families would not be in danger and also us"* said (M-S)⁹⁴ one of the campaign leaders. *"I was distributing aid in one "Jabarona" (one of the slums in Omdurman), when the security officers knew about me and started chasing my car until I managed to hide and escape later after the local residents covered for me, but they had been threaten later to ever host me again"* said (Y-A)⁹⁵. These challenges didn't stop most of the women from continuing to assist the IDPs⁹⁶.

Nuba woman activist (H-A)⁹⁷ was arrested four times in April 2012. She had to flee the country after she was arrested in April 19th, 2012 and tortured by the NSS, *"they arrested me from my house and took me to their offices in Khartoum, they told me you have been arrested many times before and we told you to stop providing aid to those IDPs and holding meetings in your house but you never stopped, I told them they are just my relatives and I have to host them and help them, but they just kept beating me and sexually abusing me for 12 hours, then they released me the next day"*. A few days later (H-A) fled the country, leaving behind her three young daughters and her sick mother. Speaking to her after she fled the country it was clear she was devastated.

She told us that she is suffering psychologically due to the torture, beatings and sexual abuse she went through, as well as the intense concern she has for her children who have not been able to go to school since she left. She told us that at the same time she was detained, four of her fellow female Nuba activists were arrested and investigated, and all are living in fear.

B. Mass Arrests of Women in Nuba Mountains:

The Sudanese security forces in Kadugli, the capital city of South Kordofan/Nuba mountains state, started an arrest campaign against women in Kadugli. The campaign began in early November when

⁹³ - Ru'ya registered again in Juba and working now with Nuba refugees in South Sudan .

⁹⁴ - interview in Omdurman July 18 2011.

⁹⁵ - interview in Omdurman July 16 2011.

⁹⁶ Most of the IDPs came to Khartoum were women and children , and the local government denied their existence to the international NGO , and the UN , so they were only relying on their already poor relatives living in Khartoum slums. An estimation of more than 50 thousands came to Khartoum after the war In Nuba mountains . see www.arry.org .

⁹⁷ - interview on Phone June 15 2012.

women were called in for investigation in the Security offices in Kadugly. They were asked about their relations to the Sudanese Peoples liberation Movement/North which had been fighting the Sudanese government in the region since June 2011. Witnesses informed us that women in the first week were consistently released by the end of the day, but after November 10th the campaign intensified with 32 women called for investigations who were not released after three months while this report was written⁹⁸.

During the first week of November 2012 reports indicated that dozens of women had been investigated about their relationship with the SPLM/N, and accused of supporting the rebels. In November 11th, the arrest campaign of women in Kadugly increased and the numbers of women in detention rose to 33, alongside one man who is the father of one of the women detainees. Most of the women are married with children to look after.

C. WHRDS and The war in Darfur:

In another war region in Sudan, women activists are being also targeted by the security and armed militias in the disturbed states of Darfur, *"in Darfur IDPs camps which hosting about 2 million peoples, women IDPs from the camps are working in documenting and monitoring the human rights violations against the IDPs community, especially rape incidents, which mostly occurred when women go out the camp to bring fire woods or water, but those women IDPs activists, are living under constant threats of arrest and detention by the security forces in the camp"* said (N-A)⁹⁹ a Darfurian woman lawyer working in the IDPs camps. (N-A) continued describing the working conditions of the women human rights defenders in Darfur and especially in the IDPs camps. She said *"In Darfur it's extremely difficult now to hold any training or workshop under direct title including the word 'Human Rights' , its simply dangerous and not allowed by the authorities, and they will never give you a permission to hold an event to speak about human rights or to raise the awareness about it especially after the arrest warrant of the president by the ICC for war crimes in Darfur"*.

Women's activities were very important in raising awareness of the human rights situation in Darfur during the first five years of the conflict. (N-A) also noticed that the level of human rights awareness among Darfurian people is very high compared to the other regions in Sudan. Women in particular were the main target for most of the human rights awareness campaigns held Darfur by many local and international NGOs, because women were the first victims of the conflict in Darfur.

Women human rights defenders in Darfur are subjected to violence and harassment by the Sudanese security forces in the region, *"in 2011-2012, three women human rights defenders working in the IDPs camps experienced severe violence by the NSS, one of them had been subjected to assassination attempt and they tried to shoot her, and the another one received threats, and the to hit her by a car, while the third was **Hawa Jango**, she was arrested in Abue Shoke IDPs camp north of Darfur, on May 6th, 2011, and held in detention for two months"*, said (N-A).

They all had been in great danger due to their work in monitoring and documenting human rights atrocities in the IDPs camps, as they were the connection between the IDPs, the lawyers and the NGOs that provide the needed legal support. **Hawa Jango** the Darfurian woman human rights defender was heavily tortured according to Amnesty International's statement of June 1st, 2011: *"**Hawa Abdallah (Jango)**, who works for the joint United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), has been held incommunicado since 6 May, when she was arrested for "Christianizing" children and being*

⁹⁸ - see Arry.org, Dozens of women arrested in NUba mountains" <http://arry.org/?p=600> ,accessed in Dec.12.2012.

⁹⁹ - phone interview September 8 2012

linked to an armed opposition group. She is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment."¹⁰⁰. **Hawa** was released 2 months later. As a community activist and human rights defender she had been injured in previous detentions when she was arrested back in 2009. She has survived very difficult conditions during the conflict and while living in IDPs camps for eight years after her village was attacked by government militias in 2003. On March 8, US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton hosted the 2012 International Women of Courage Awards Ceremony with special guest First Lady Michelle Obama and **Hawa Abdulla Jango** was honored as one of the most courageous women of the world due to her community activism¹⁰¹ and human rights advocacy in Darfur. Hawa's award was an honor for her colleague human rights defenders who are striving to survive dangerous condition every day in the IDPs camps or in the big cities like Khartoum and Nayla, south Darfur, putting their lives on the edge to defend their people's rights and protect their freedoms.

D. WHRDs in War Zones and The 1325 Resolution:

The 1325 resolution¹⁰², which is considered a major step in protecting women in conflict areas and ensuring their participation in peace-making, peace building, and humanitarian operations, is far from being implemented in Sudan war zones. Even in Darfur where the UNAMID forces basic task is protecting women, women are attacked and raped at the same ratios before the deployment of the UN peace keepers, and often even more.. Meanwhile the government is committing serious violations in Darfur, which are considered crimes against humanity by the ICC. One such crime is the use of rape as a weapon by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and its supporting militias, a process that has taken place from 2003 until now. In the Nuba Mountains it seems similar patterns have taken place, but the figures are unknown because access to the region is restricted by the Sudanese government.

E. WHRDs from War Zones Face Extreme Risks:

Women human rights defenders, women activists from conflict areas or in conflict areas, and even the women supporting them from other areas, are increasingly at risk of detention, sexual abuse, prosecution and even death. **Awadia Ajbna**, a 40 year old Nuba woman activist and Khartoum parliamentary candidate was been assassinated by a policeman on March 6th, 2012. In ambiguous circumstances, Awadia, her mother and her two brothers were victims of severe police violence. Her two brothers were injured and her mother's hand broken. **Awadia's** death sparked three days of demonstrations by her family, her friends, civil society and women's groups demanding an end to impunity and justice for **Awadia's** death¹⁰³. This justice was never delivered and her killers remained free. One week after **Awadia's** death, **Jalila Khamis**¹⁰⁴, Nuba woman activist was arrested in the most humiliated way. At two am in the morning, while still dressed in pajamas, she was arrested and taken to unknown place where she was subjected to torture and ill treatment and locked in a solitary cell for four months. **Jalila** was

¹⁰⁰ - see Amnesty international about Hawa Gango the Darfurian WHRDs , <http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/uaa15911.pdf> , June 1 2011, accessed September 4 2012

¹⁰¹ - see Bloomberg , ' michelle obama joins hillary Clinton to honor women of courage', <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-08/michelle-obama-joins-hillary-clinton-to-honor-women-of-courage.html> , accessed August 25 2012 .

¹⁰² - Sudan is falling behind most of its international obligation in protecting women , and end violence against them , and in the conflict situation in Sudan for the past 50 years women has the victims of the war and completely isolated from the peace process and reconstruction , therefore the UNSC 1325 resolution has to be implemented in Sudan with effective mechanisms and strong monitoring . see Mutawinat for legal aid, 'women empowerment through the resolution 1325', <http://www.mutawinat.org/tgareer.html> , accessed August 20 2012 , and see the Resolution 1325 , UN.org , http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf , accessed August 29 2012.

¹⁰³ - see Arry organization , www.arry.org , accessed September 5 2012.

¹⁰⁴ - see Sudanese WHRDs project , <https://sudanwhrds.wordpress.com/> , accessed September 9 2012 .

transferred to the prosecutor of crimes against state office and was moved to a regular prison in Omdurman in July 29th, 2012. The security services accused **Jalila** of charges that could lead to her death sentence such as crimes against the state and spying. **Alawya Kebieda** and **Izhar Jomaa** have been detained for three months, from May to August 2012. They are political activists, detained for their advocacy for victims of the atrocities committed by the government in the war zones. Dozens of WHRDs from war zones or inside war zones had been subjected to arbitrary arrests, detention, torture threats, sexual abuse and death inside and outside Sudan, while at least 20 women were detained from June 2011- July 2012, because they are from conflict areas or because they were advocating for the situation in the conflict areas.

7. Risks Facing WHRDs in Exile:

The effect of conflicts does not stop when Sudanese women activists flee the country, even outside of Sudan, women human rights activists are facing increasing risks in exile, specially the WHRDs from conflict areas. Nuba woman activist (R-M)¹⁰⁵ fled Sudan many years ago but continued her activism from exile. After the conflict erupted in the Nuba mountains in June 2011, thousands fled the area to South Sudan, more than 60 thousands refugees from the Nuab mountains are now living in Yida camp in the Upper Nile state of South Sudan. (R-M) with another Nuba activist decided to collect some aid and visit their people in the camp, after she came back from the visit in April 2012, (R-M) started receiving threatening phone calls from the security officers in the Sudanese Embassy in the country where she is living now¹⁰⁶. (R-M) said "*they called and told me that we know about your visit to Yida camp, and we are watching all your movements so be careful, and some calls were just racist insults to me as a Nuba woman*". When she asked her colleague women activists living in the same country she founded out that she was not the only Nuba woman activists receiving such threatening calls.

Women human rights defenders flee their country to seek safe refuge but they continue to face risks, in addition to the harassment by the Sudanese embassies abroad they also face the great challenges of adapting to their new lives, including the new culture. They often struggle to deal with the social stigma of being a refugee especially when they leave the country alone. They also find it very difficult to provide for themselves financially. The poor living conditions they find themselves in are an assault on their human dignity, and often leave them vulnerable to sexual abuse.. The fear of these conditions sees many women refusing to leave Sudan despite the dangers they face. Moreover the international laws and agencies regarding refugees are still not gender sensitive enough, and women living in war zones or fleeing them are still often not protected sufficiently by the international mechanisms and the local governments of the hosting countries or the original countries.

8. WHRDs Peace Makers and Nonviolence Leaders

"The secession of south Sudan in July 9th, 2011¹⁰⁷ was a great disappointment for us, so we chose to express our grieve in traditional yet effective way, we started the campaign of "The Clairvoyant Grieve", we decided to wear our traditional white Toubes, for most of Sudanese white is the grieving color, we also

¹⁰⁵ - phone interview July 14 2012.

¹⁰⁶ - see Arry organization , www.arry.org , accessed September 4 2012 .

¹⁰⁷ - On July 9 2011 , South Sudan declared its independence after the January 2011 referendum result of voting for the separation from Sudan by 98% of South Sudanese population .

started visiting Southern families living in the slums of Khartoum, and just carried with us home-made food with so all remember that we had "broken bread together, we sat down and chat after that with them and their northern neighbors whom shared with us the this meetings" said (H-A) NWSI leader, and the coordinator of the campaign.

"We always felt that the laws like the Public Order Act of 1998 and other discriminating against women laws has been one of the reasons South Sudanese voted for separation, they were the most effected by this discriminating legislations, that does not respect their cultures, where women can wear what they want, and they can make alcohol or as part of their traditions, but the central government was applying the Islamic laws upon them by force, especially women" said (Amal Habany), journalist and human rights defender.

In reaction to the new war in the Nuba mountains, a group of youth and women activists organized a campaign calling for an end to the war, aid for the displaced peoples, and an end to the government bombing of civilians areas. The campaign was a silent 'stand-up' in front of the UN Mission to Sudan on June 21st, 2012, where the Security services arrested 16 of the protestors, among them were eight women, and took them to the police station where they were held for eight hours. After one week the 16 protestors were called to court, where they were accused of causing a public disturbance, despite the silent nature of the stand-up. The Judge dropped the charges after three sittings and three weeks of wasted time.

The Sudanese authorities see the call for peace as a threat and public disturbance because the military government uses state media and religion to mobilize the Sudanese people against eachother. The Sudanese president called for military mobilization against the state enemies, whom are citizens of the country, instead of going to the negotiation table. The Sudanese women's call for peace goes long back since 1997, when a group of Sudanese women started the Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace (SuWEP) organisation¹⁰⁸. It is an initiative began to empower women in Sudan to play an active role in the processes of peace-building, democratization and post-conflict construction and reconstruction, and includes women from Northern and Southern Sudan. SuWEP has been fundamental in bringing together Sudanese women to unite their efforts to call for peace in Sudan, and to end the 50 year war between the South Sudanese and the central government in Khartoum. **SuWEP Coordinator Zaynab ElSawi**, wrote: *"Transforming people from a culture of war and violence to the level where they could discuss peace, social justice and development is SuWEP's greatest achievement. SuWEP women overlooked their cultural, religious, racial and political differences and came together in search of peace."*¹⁰⁹ However after secession of South Sudan, the SuWEP movement is now focusing on raising awareness on nonviolence issues while SuWEP members and supporters work in a restricted space for civil activism. as the government raises its militarization campaign in the Sudanese community and oppresses peace and nonviolent movements through legislations and harassment of the activists.

"I am a co-founder of the Sudanese Nonviolent Forum, our work during the past 7 years was focusing on youth women and IDPs, in Khartoum and other states, we had trained at least 5000 thousands peoples on the methods of nonviolence and peaceful coexistence, alternative to violence, our work results in y view was very obvious in the peaceful referendum, and secession process in 2011, we also are very proud of our trainees whom most of them were the leaders of the peaceful demonstrations in 2011 & 2012, and what I am more proud of is that most of the committed and active members of the forum are women as we

¹⁰⁸ See Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace (SuWEP) , <http://www.suwepmovement.org/> , accessed September 6 2012 .

¹⁰⁹ - Elsayy, Zaynab.(2011) ' Women Building Peace : The Sudanese Women empowerment for Peace in Sudan'

http://www.awid.org/content/download/117348/1335455/file/CTW_WomenBuildingPeace_ENG.pdf

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), accessed August 7 2012.

have great believe in peace and nonviolent as women" said (R- L)¹¹⁰ woman activist and nonviolent leader and trainer.

The nonviolent movement in Sudan has been attracting women and youth and as (R-L) mentioned, women had been the main leaders of the movement of peaceful protests in the country. However a new wave of nonviolent movement is promising to change this history, this new wave is practically led by women, not just in the nonviolent civil society initiatives, but by becoming part of the culture of young men and women in Sudan. As we saw through almost two years of protests against the government led by women, youth and students, where violent incidents were extremely rare, this trend relies on women's motivations as leaders of change, and their tendency towards peace and coexistence.

Women peace makers and nonviolent activists and leaders have been under attack in the past two years, during the crackdown on protestors and the campaign against the peaceful change movement. Nonviolent activists have been at risk "*all of my colleagues had been either already arrested or investigated with, while I was keeping a low profile as trainer to continue doing my work, but in mid July, 2012, I had to flee the country to protect myself¹¹¹*" said (R-L), nonviolent trainer. Nonviolence is a term that is incompatible with the brutal attack the nonviolent activists go through and the risk they take in their peaceful struggle for change in Sudan. Yet it has been the vital element of this movement which put them in even greater danger of detention, torture and sexual abuse by the Sudanese authorities, in addition to the crackdown on freedom of association and assembly which is the core mechanism of the nonviolent and peace building movement. Withholding these rights has created more obstacles for the protestors, and disconnected them from the international movement that could provide them more support in such difficult environment.

9. Mothers, Daughters, and Wives: Defending Rights

Many ordinary, non-activist Sudanese women found themselves in confrontation with the Sudanese government and its security forces and police, when their family members were detained, tortured, forcibly disappeared, or even killed by the government forces. Those women fought their fear, grief and limited power, to stand up for their family members rights and demand their freedom and dignity. "*It was one month since my son went missing after he was participating in Khartoum University demos in December 25th, 2011, when I decided to speak out and demand from the Security and the government to reveal my son location, I spoke in a press conference organized by civil society organizations in support of detainees, and I said that the government that unjust, does not deserve to rule. In the next day I was doing job as a teacher and we had public event where we took all the students to attend, I was late to catch the cars, when I found I women calling me from a white car and she said get up we will take you, when I got in the car, I founded other two men and they told that I must shut up my mouth and never speak in public again I will never see my son again"* said (T-K)¹¹² a teacher and mother of a student detainee.

Mothers, wives, sisters and daughter have been the courageous people demonstrating in front of the head offices of the National Security Services, demanding the freedom of their family members, which

¹¹⁰ - Phone interview August 30 2012.

¹¹¹ - see Partera website, 'help for Suda, for Widad and Rudwan' <http://www.partera.ca/lees-blog/2012/7/23/help-for-sudan-help-for-widad-and-mai-and-rudwan-and-2000-de.html>, accessed August 29 2012.

¹¹² - Interview in Khartoum, January 16 2012.

embarrassed the security forces. But the embarrassment did not prevent them from using violence against the women. *"They attacked us very violently using hard sticks, shouting on us to leave the street where we were standing, I was holding my mobile taking pictures of them, but when they noticed me I ran until I found a public bus, and I got in the bus, but few minutes they stopped the bus in the middle of the street, and got on the bus and dragged me down and took in their cars, to near police station, then the harassment and threat started, they sexually harassed me, as I found myself alone with four men in a closed door room, they told me to give them my mobile and its memory card or they will start to be nasty, this when I felt really afraid and I gave them my mobile memory card and the mobile"* said (D-S)¹¹³ relative to a detainee, describing the security attack on mothers and families stand up in front of the NSS head office in Khartoum on February 10th, 2011. Women defending their families members rights and demanding their freedoms have been in danger of violence and detention in addition to sexual assaults, in the same pattern as used against all other WHRDs.

Conclusion:

The context in which WHRDs work in Sudan, is extremely complicated and dangerous. This context is characterized by violence and conflict, where women are the most vulnerable victims. This hostile environment for their work, and the violations and risks they face, exacerbate the danger they already experience due to their gender. In the recent years the political Islamization, the conflicts and racial discrimination, have shaped the sociopolitical platform in which the Sudanese WHRDs work. This has raised the need for protection and supporting mechanisms to ensure at least a safe environment for WHRDs to continue their work without putting their lives at risk.

After the Arab spring in 2011, WHRDs, led the demonstration for peaceful change in Sudan, which made them the first target of the Sudanese government. WHRDs, subjected to gender based violence during detention and on the streets while protesting, but lacking supporting instruments either from the government or the civil society, faced enormous atrocities such as rape, sexual assaults and torture, prosecution and even death. The need for strong and practical protection and support mechanism for WHRDs in Sudan is time critical, as is the need for legal, psychological and medical support, among other special needs. Sudanese women human rights defenders need highly gender sensitive mechanism to support their work, to ensure their safety and protect them when they are most at risk, giving the highly violent conditions in the country.

Recommendations:

- The Sudanese government must end the impunity of the Sudanese security forces and the immediately end all forms of the state sponsored violence against WHRDs, and live up to its responsibility to protect them against the non-state actor's violations and violence.
- The Sudanese government must release all the WHRDs in detentions or present them to fair and public trials.
- The Sudanese government must recognize the work of the women human rights defenders and acknowledge the risks they face, in result the Sudanese government must ensure the protection of WHRDs, and create effective protection and security mechanism that are gender sensitive and respectful for the women defenders special needs.
- The Sudanese government must investigate all the violations against the Sudanese WHRDs, and present the responsible persons to justice, disregarding their positions or impunity.

¹¹³ - interview in Omdurman February 14 2011.

- The protection mechanism for the WHRDs must be accessible to all WHRDs, regardless their race, religion or political affiliation. In support of this mechanism strong monitoring and documentation instrument is urgently needed to monitor the situation of the WHRDs in Sudan.
- Urge The Sudanese Government to ratify the conventions that protect WHRDs, in their general contexts especially, CEDAW, CAT, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.