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Political Economy of Violence Against Women in Sudan

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By

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Abstract

Violence against women is a global phenomenon that is manifested in different forms. Sudanese women are not the exception; they have been subjected to many forms of violence comprising physical, and mental violence. Further, several agents, and proxies such as family, local community and the state have precipitated violence against women.

Despite its great complexity, and complications violence against women in Sudan, did not pass without resistance from various forces such as women organizations, women in political parties and, exile. Resistance has resulted in both successes and failures.

Sudanese women do not constitute a homogeneous group. Their situations and positions vary depending on their differing socio-geographical, ethnic cultural and religious backgrounds.

Using the premises of feminist political economy as its main theoretical frame work, analysing relevant literature, and the author's own lived, experiences, reality and activism, this paper attempts to map out the various forms of violence faced by Sudanese women in (the north, south¹, east and, western parts of the country). It tries to identify and analyse the main socio-economic, political and cultural factors contributing to the emergence and perpetuation of violence against women especially in conflict prone areas and examining the forces of the

¹ South Sudan: this paper covers the south till the independence in 2011, (from 2005-2011) does not include the eruption of the internal conflict in 2013.

resistance and organizing. This paper focuses on the role of Muslim Fundamentalism and the state's sponsored violence caused by its policies and legislations

The Problem:

Factors, which cause and perpetuate gender-based violence against women in Sudan, vary in their historical, social, economic, political and cultural nature. Moreover, women in Sudan are subject to violence in both public and private spheres. **Context:**

Violence, civil wars, political instability and the force of dogmatic interpretation of Islam have plagued Sudan since its independence from the British in 1956. Such turbulence was a direct result of the postcolonial state that was built on a history of colonial exploitation of the area's resources rather than its development. The British bequeathed power to an elite group who predominately came from the Islamized and Arabicized elements of the riverine social groups who formulated a very narrow form of state identity based exclusively on their interpretation of Islam and on Arabism. This identity totally ignored the other social, cultural, religious and linguistic composition of the country, which led to their overt marginalization and exclusion from major decision-making. Separation of South Sudan, which became an independent country in 2011, was but one result of the narrowly defined state identity that was brought together under the centralized state by physical and ideological forces. Women coming from all walks of life have been negatively affected by the failures of Sudanese state formation, especially under the rule of the current government from 1989 to date.

The Gender and Political Economy of Northern and Southern Sudan:

The Political, Social, and Economic Situation

Sudan was the largest country in Africa with a territory covering 2.5 million square kilometres² (before the secession of South Sudan in 2011)³, bordering Egypt in the north, the Red Sea, Eritrea, and Ethiopia in the east, Uganda, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo in the South, Central Africa Republic, Chad, and Libya in the West.⁴

With an estimated population 40 million, (almost 50% females, 50% males) about 32% are urban, 68% rural, and 7% nomads. Islam is the predominant religion, particularly in the north, while Christianity and animist traditional religions are more prevalent in the south and some areas of south Blue Nile and the west. Sudan is a republic with a federal system of government. There are multiple levels of administration, with 26 states (10 states in South Sudan) (En.wikipedia, 2018).

The elements that constitute national identity in Sudan are complex. The population is made up of a multitude of tribes and its inhabitants speak more than 130 languages and dialects. An Islamic-African-Arab culture has emerged over the years and has become predominant in the north. The Arabic language is spoken throughout most of the country.⁵

Sudan is considered a least developed country, and ranks (171 out of 186) in the Human Development Index of 2012.

² The current territory of Sudan after the secession of South Sudan is 1,886,068 square kilometers (728,215 square miles), total estimated population in 2011 was 36 million (the current total population is estimated as 40 million (50% female ratio). most of its population are rural, with just 33.2 % urban. Khartoum the capital is the most condensed state with estimated population of 7 million, which includes 2 million displaced people from the south and other conflict and drought prone areas in the west, east, north and south.

³ South Sudan territory after independence is 619,745 square kilometers (239285 square miles), estimated population in 2011 8,260 million.

⁴ SIHA(2006) preventgbvafrica.org/.../good-and-bad-practices-in-advocating-for-the-prevention-of-ge..

⁵ SIHA (2006)

Sudan's macro-economic context according to the World Bank (2015), is that of a lower-middle income country with a GDP of US \$ 97.16 billion, GDP growth of 4.9 % and an annual inflation rate of 16.9%. The agriculture and livestock sectors currently contribute less than 40% of the Sudan gross domestic product (GDP). After the discovery of the oil in the south in late 1999, Sudan completely depended on oil revenue covering more than 50% of the government revenue and 95% of its export (World Bank Sudan Overview,2017)

According to data from 2009, labour force participation was only 48 per cent. The level of economic activity was particularly low for women, at 23%, compared to men, at 73%. According to the 2008 Census results about 53% of the total population was less than 20 years of age, with 5-14 years about 28% of the population and less than five years old constituted 15%. This implies a growing need for employment opportunities in the near future (En.wikipedia, 2017)

The total unemployment rate was estimated in 2008 at 16.8% -13.9% for males and 24.7% for females. Disparities also appear between rural and urban areas, with unemployment rates of 17.5 and 12.3%, respectively. Poverty in Sudan varies significantly by region and state.

There are many factors that account for persistent poverty in the country, which include the long and drawn out civil conflicts in southern, western and eastern Sudan that have diverted resources from development to fighting wars; impaired social capital and good governance; and destroyed human and physical capital. The urban bias of development policies and programs in the past, which neglected efforts to broadly increase the productivity of rural production, particularly in the sphere of rain-fed agriculture; the lack of a coherent poverty reduction effort and a sustained reform to promote shared growth and diversify the economy. The absence of development partners to compensate for the under-spending; the concentration of socioeconomic development

in only a few areas; and the burden of an unsustainable external debt, long-held economic international sanctions, including unilateral coercive economic measures, and isolation have had disastrous effects.

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that poverty in Sudan is predominant in rural areas and among those whose income derives from farming and livestock. The incidence of poverty is marginally lower (44.2%) among the small number of households headed by women (17.3%) compared to households headed by men, with an incidence rate of 47.2 %. (En.wikipedia.org, 2017)

The World Bank attributes the key political and socio-economic challenges to the fact that

“Sudan did not use the oil windfalls to invest in human development, diversify its economy or promote private sector growth.” Political instability, corruption and economic uncertainty compromise the enabling environment for growth and employment (En.wikipedia, 2017).

Furthermore, the military and security budget varies between 25-70% of the government budget (Reports, 2016) Regarding the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), the national figure remains high, estimated at 311 deaths per 100,000 live births, which reflects an observed decline from the 1990 estimates of 744 deaths per 100,000 live births. However, the latest MICS figures indicate that antenatal care coverage (at least four times by any provider) is still low at 50.7%, with only 27.7% of deliveries taking place in health facilities (Reports, 2016)

Social relations suggest that women have a lower status than men. Despite noticeable progress in efforts to address gender inequality, formal and informal educational institutions do not consistently promote gender equality in all aspects of social, economic and political life. While women in Sudan are economically active, and gender attitudes are changing, significant variations exist across states and between rural and urban environments, and categories of

vulnerability and noticeable gender inequalities continue to persist in the society, as reflected in the rankings (167th) that Sudan receives on both the Gender-related Development Index (GSI, 0.830) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM, 0.428), promoting the need to identify those elements that discriminate against women are the root causes of women's disadvantaged position in areas such as education, employment, and public and political life. 2009 data indicate that the literacy rate among young women remains low. Nationwide, only 45.2 % of women aged 15-24 were literate. The literacy rate also varies significantly across states, ranging from 81% in Khartoum state to 44 % in Western Darfur. The gender parity index in primary school improved from 0.94 in 2010 to 0.98 in 2014; there is a gap of more than 10% in the primary school completion rate between boys (84.8 %) and girls (74.3 %) (Reports, 2016).

Women's economic status continued to deteriorate regardless of the equal distribution of wealth and power, social justice and the right to equal participation in public life that are enshrined in the Interim Constitution 2005. Economic and social economic plans remain inconsiderate to women needs; and barely consider women's imperative participation in the economy (Elsanhori 2014). The absence of the legal provisions implementing the constitutional positive discrimination clause means that only a small number of women assume high ranking positions.

The estimated percentage of women graduates in higher education is 58% compared to men.

However, only 26% of them find their way into formal sector; 77% of them perform administrative work, 87.8% work in farming and 4.8% in industry. Statistics also confirm that of the 90% of Sudanese who live below poverty line, 65% are women. The right to education as stated in the current constitution, and is the key tool for women's advancement but is obstructed by lack of political commitment leaving 50.6% women illiterate. Furthermore, the deteriorated

economic situation of families left its mark on women and girls' right to education, as males are preferred based on religion and customary beliefs on gender roles (Elrayh, 2014).

Southern Sudan gender profile

Gender relations in Southern Sudan are shaped by the social and economic existence of being one of the world's Least Developed Countries devastated by decades of conflict. The country comprises of 48% female to a ratio of 52% male, lower than the global average of 51% female to a ratio of 49% male (CARE, n.d.). A majority of its population is very young, 72% are under 30 years. However, it has the highest rates of maternal mortality rates in the world (one in seven women will die from childbirth or pregnancy). Moreover, infant mortality rates are also extremely high with 75 children per 1000 dying before their first birthday.(CARE, n.d.).

Education rates are profoundly low, with 27% of the adult population literate (40% of men over 15 years compared to 16% of women over 15 years). UNICEF estimates that 70% of children aged 6-17 years have never been enrolled into school. Cultural norms, and traditions especially in rural areas, marginalize women from being involved publicly or having any political or social activities (CARE, n.d.).

South Sudan, the newest country in the world, consists of over 60 ethnic groups and 80 local languages; predominantly Christians, few Muslims, and the remaining practice traditional tribal beliefs. People living in rural areas represent 83% of the country, making cattle culture essential. As a result one's herd is a key marker of wealth, and cattle raiding was the main catalyst of inter-communal violence before the current political conflict erupted. Furthermore, cattle are used as a

currency for marriage (bride price). Additionally, the Northern region of South Sudan contains oil-fields which are still in contest with Sudan (CARE, n.d.).

Since the signing of the peace agreement, South Sudan has recognized the importance of women's role and contribution to the peace negotiation processes; therefore they set explicit laws and policies on gender equality. The Transitional Constitution and Bill of Rights (2011) provides guarantees for the equality of men and women. It recognises the historic inequalities between women and men in South Sudan and sets out a 25% Affirmative Action quota for women in legislative, executive bodies and as a result women currently comprise 26.5% of the National Legislative Assembly. (CARE, n.d.).

Prior to the peace agreement, during the conflict of 1983-2005, gender-based violence included sexual violence, rape of women and men, traditional practices including 'girl compensation', and forced prostitution/sexual slavery were lived realities for women of South Sudan. Moreover, domestic violence was an accepted norm in the society. As well early marriage was a common trend and still is; 45% of girls married before they were 18 years old and 7% of girls were married when they were younger than 15 years old. Polygamy is another norm and divorce is extremely difficult for women to obtain: traditionally only men can ask for one and the wife's family have to pay back the bride price.

Culturally the roles and responsibilities of women, men, boys and girls are clearly delineated but can and do alter. Women and girls have responsibilities for farming, collecting water and firewood, cooking, cleaning, childcare, and brewing beer. Men and boys have responsibilities as decision-makers for the communities and their families (CARE, n.d.).

In times of crisis, gender roles and responsibilities change to take account of the context, the needs and the different coping strategies families and individuals can put into action. Gender and protection concerns for women, men, boys and girls are a crucial issue in South Sudan.

Gender-based violence in South Sudan is driven by a culture of silence and stigma, masculine identity tied to cattle raiding, bride price, a lack of access to legal recourse, and customary practices that favour compensation for crimes like rape. Gender relations in South Sudan are complex. Steps need to be taken to mitigate the harm they cause. Gender relations do affect the needs, coping strategies, participation and access of women, men, boys and girls to humanitarian assistance (CARE, n.d.).

Social and Cultural inequality

The position of women in Sudan varies in accordance to the socio-economic, political, cultural and geographic variations in the country. Therefore, it is always difficult to talk about Sudanese women as a unified group. Patriarchy is the common domain; the state and society are coupled with Muslim fundamentalism.

Women of Northern Sudan⁶

Like many Muslim societies governed by Islamic law, North Sudan is fundamentally patriarchal in nature and it is exclusively controlled by the man whose key role is to maintain the household economically, and socially. However, the women's subordinate position in the north has started to change when the British began paying attention to girls' education, which started in 1907, with the efforts of Babiker Badri who opened the first school to teach his own daughters and relatives after obtaining a permission from the colonial administration allowing him to use his

⁶ As I mentioned women of Sudan are not homogenous, the term women of 'Northern Sudan includes North, West, East and Central Sudan.

house for teaching. However, the British refused to provide him with any support. They started to recognize girls' education during the 1920s. The British colonization made a big shift in the country's economy by introducing capitalism and ending the feudalism system that was introduced by the 'Turko-Egyptian colonization in the Nile Valley (1821-1885). The shift of the country's political economy to introduce capitalism through the process of supplying cash crops of raw materials for British industries, and serving as market for the European manufacturing goods. The British had a gendered and discriminative policy in education, mainly training men as workers while educating girls to become good wives. Despite these differences however, education for girls was used as a vehicle towards emancipation (Hall & Ismail, 1981; Badri 2009; Hale, 1996). A pioneer woman concurs this analysis below:

“We struggled on all fronts even the kind of education that was available for women which was different from men. We believed that education is the tool for women's rights and development” (Ahmed, 2014).

Following this, in the 1920s a considerable number of female teachers were trained at the teacher's training institute in Omdurman, which was opened in 1921, to work for elementary schools in the north. (Hall & Ismail, 1981; Badri 2009)

By the early 1930s, the colonial administration began considering women's work in the field of health such as nursing⁷, midwifery⁸, health visitors and teachers. These jobs were considered

⁷ Towards the later era of the British Condominium (during the 2nd World War) there were high demands for nurses and with the expansion of the modern medical institution in Sudan, demands for nursing services was urgent; and with the restriction of the Sudanese social norms of Islam concerning the mixing up of women and men; the British authorities targeted female prostitutes in which they found that former prostitutes are good in nursing jobs. This step made nursing field not a welcoming work for respectable Sudanese women. (Spaulding & Beswick, 2016).

⁸ The British established midwifery training in mid 1920s. However, only older women (60-70s years old), already have children were accepted and recruited. Young, unmarried, committed women, were not welcomed by the society, and the British avoided recruiting them afraid to be labeled perverted or lesbians (Brown, 2017)

suitable for women at that time, and that they were socially acceptable albeit with some reluctance.

The country witnessed the formation of the Graduate Congress in 1938 followed by the foundation of political parties⁹ (Ali, 2015). At the time when the country was in turmoil calling for independence, that helped women to start organizing and forming their own trade unions (mainly the women teachers and nurses trade unions initiated late 1940s), by early 1950s some of them began to join the communist party, which was the only political party that was open for women membership. Soon after, the women's union was formed to be the first umbrella for Sudanese women to work collectively.

Women of Southern Sudan

⁹ The major two parties are the Umma Party associated with the Ansar, and the Democratic Unionist Party associated with the khatmiya founded in 1940s. Educated middle class, traditional merchants, and landlords represented the two parties. Both parties are associated with sufi sects. The Khatmyia sect was established during the Turko-Egyptian colonization (1821-1885) and it was associated with its strong link with Egypt and opposed to the Mahadyia Sect. The Umma party-Ansar associated with the Mahadyia, the radical Islamic movement that over through the Turko-Egyptian colonization in 1885, led by Mohamed Ahmed Al Mahdi.

The Ansar and Kahtmyia religious sects co-opted the all male nationalist movement in the country, organized in the Graduates' Congress under the umbrella of the Umma and the Democratic Unionist/DUP parties. Through this alliance controlled most of the post-colonial politics and society (Ali, 2015,61). No literature on political parties in the South during that time, they started to form after the independence.

The participation of women was relatively limited in these two parties. In the DUP, until 1980s, women's activity within the party was limited to voting in the elections (and as a number within their sectarian affiliation). Female members were either members in the Sudanese Women's Union or focused on charity activities (Ali, 2015,61). Women have been historically more active within the Umma party, but no transformative agenda for women. They however, had number of female ministers during the last democratic period 1986-1989.⁹

The National Congress, was previously organized under The Muslim Brotherhood, National Islamic Front, and later split into two the National Congress (the current ruling party, and the People's Congress Party. The Muslim Brothers movement was established in Sudan in the 1950, following the ideology of Hassan Albana of Egypt, the movement has been mostly militant since is inception (Ali, 2015, 62). Their main membership was expanded through secondary school students, university students and mainly rural population. The movement mainly represents the interest of finance and merchant capital. Its leadership engaged in unproductive economic activities in the 1980s, such as hoarding basic commodities and selling them in an open market, they were also involve in illegal foreign currency exchange operations (Ali,2015,62). Its members felt that to penetrate into the society Islamic education should be introduced. They assumed power through military coup in 1989 lead by Omer Albashir (the current president of Sudan).⁹

The Muslim Brother's movement open its membership to women in 1965 through the establishment of the Women Front-in 1964, which was founded by 10 women being wives or relatives of the male members. Those women were mainly members of the Sudanese Women's Union when they stated asking for women suffrage (Ali, 2015,62), currently they are women ministers, and holding high position in both public and private spheres.

The Sudanese Communist Party was established in 1946, under the placard of the Sudanese Movement for National Liberation. Members of the colonial government and the Sudanese who studied in Egypt introduced the socialist ideology.⁹

The Sudan Communist party organized itself around the labor worker such as the railway worker, the farmers in the Gazira Scheme, trade unions. It was the first political party that accepted the female membership but they recruited only educated women.

Sudan People Liberation Movement/Army(SPLM/A) was established in 1984 representing Southern Sudan resisting the central government in the north, joint later by groups from the Nuba Mountains, South Blue Nile. Women joint the movement and the army in 1985. Their vision of New Sudan sharing power and wealth of the country, calling for equal sharing and unity.

Southern Sudanese women are not homogenous, like women of the north their social position is determined by their rural tribal rules. The southern woman's recognized place is home where she becomes a wife and a mother. Further, the ideal woman is the one who is hardworking, caring for her family and submissive. (Hall & Ismail, 1981) However, women in southern Sudan are not segregated from men in their social life like women in the Muslim north. Yet, they are facing different problems and challenges such as lack of education, poverty and underdevelopment. In the southern society women are not treated as separate group based on gender (Hall & Ismail, 1981). However, very few researches and studies were carried out in south Sudan before the eruption of the first conflict in 1955.

Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has observed an upsurge of armed ethnic and regional outcry movements, which have resulted in massive suffering and causing widespread displacement and refugees in the South. The protest in the South had challenged the newly independent Sudanese state, which was controlled by the Arabized and Islamized elites who strived to define and impose certain understanding of citizenship rights and responsibilities that had ignored to consider the multi-cultural and social reality of Sudan (Idris, 2013)

The Republic of the Sudan was ruled, (under the Anglo-Egyptian administration between-1898-1956). Despite being one country, the British followed widely divergent policies in governing north and south. This dual system reinforced Arabism and Islam in the North and encouraged Southern development along indigenous African lines, while introducing Christian missionary education and embryos of Western civilization in the South. For the British, Sudan was effectively two countries in one. However, the most significant factor of concern in the separation of the North and South, which continued to affect the relationship between the two

peoples', was the colonial concentration of economic, political and administrative development in the North at the expense of the South, thereby, creating severe socio-economic and political discrepancies between the two regions.¹⁰

However, there were many factors that had affected the possibility of building one nation: education was a major element in the content of this unequal development. Therefore, due to the policy of absolute exclusion implemented by the colonial administration, access to education in the South was restricted to missionary education, which discouraged southern Sudanese from engaging in politics, political debates and action, unlike northern Sudanese who had had the opportunity to have political platforms and exposure to the outside world (Idris, 2013). The south had always been conditioned to political, economic, and cultural hegemony and marginalized by the Sudanese state in the centre, which did not have concern for the people of the south, and all that it was interested in were the resources of the region. Accordingly, the region's predominantly rural, subsistence economy has been devastated and negatively affected by long conflicts (1955-1972 and 1983-2005), and evolved in acute abandonment, lack of infrastructure development, death, displacement and destruction of resources (Idris, 2013).

During the Anglo-Egyptian rule, issues of women's development in the southern region left to be controlled and decided by the tribal norms and customary laws. This process had affected girls' enrolment in school. The role of women was determined by their reproductive role and economic contribution that was based on women's agricultural work and marriage (when reaching the age of marriage, girls in southern Sudan became the family wealth). As such, women have no choice but to follow the family's decision (Hall & Ismail, 1981; Badri 2009).

¹⁰ Perspectives on the Political Economy of South Sudan, African Development Bank, 2011

Co-education was not restricted in the south, but it was never accepted in the north. Due, to early marriages it was difficult to sustain female teachers to maintain the continuity of girls' education in the south. However, the gap between girls' education in the north and south was affected by the divide and rule policy adopted by the colonial administration in Sudan. This realization was achieved during 1940s with the rise of the national movement calling for independent Sudan (Hall & Ismail,1981; Badri 2009).

By the time women in the north were obtaining for the first time their political rights, women in the south remained with little education, suffering from poverty, and regional instability, until the first Peace Agreement in 1972 (Hall & Ismail,1981; Badri 2009).

The Structure of Inequality

The Family

Gender disparity is quite perceptible in Sudan in both north and south. As men are seen as active and dynamic, while women are constructed as passive members of society. They are subordinate to men's power, and they are more often seen as purely maternal capacity (Ahmad, 2014). There are many socio-economic and cultural factors supporting gender discrimination and inequality, which sequentially sway women's social, political and economic advancement. These factors are embedded in the socialization processes, education, and everywhere in the public sphere. This institutionalized discrimination, which favour's males over females within the family and the society at large, also induce many women to regard their role as limited to caring for children, obeying their husbands and becoming good housewives (Ahmad, 2014)

It is imperative here to examine the role of the extended family as it relates to the women's position and situation. Although as an institution it has under gone changes (the nature of these

changes must be seen in relation to class, and regional differences), it remains among the most dominant in Sudanese society. Within it, sharp role distinctions between women and men continue to exist. Most social life and activities circled around the family and these are primarily the domains of women. Births, deaths, marriages, circumcision are the important celebrations and women have to contribute (either financially, or by providing labour), and be present, they will be subjected to ridicule or loss of the family support upon which they all depend if they do not submit, especially the working women (El Bakri, 2015). As concluded by El Bakri (1995) that the extended family in Sudan is not only the locus of women's oppression (as witness by the reproductive gender roles, the socialization processes), but also one of support. The extended family however, has fulfilled many important needs for women in Sudan. Nonetheless, it is difficult to prove that the extended family has replaced the women's organizations. It is merely an aspect of Sudanese social structure that requires extensive research analysis.

Marriage is another crucial component that thwart the life of Sudanese women especially within the 1991 Personal Status Law. However, it is recognized as vital to a fulfilment of Muslim adult role and is highly valued in all Sudanese cultures and religious groups. It is considered necessary not only for its societal value but also for its economic stabilization impact (Gruenbaum, 2006).

Marriage allows both women and men to gain access to the work of the other in the gender division of labour, child bearing, and social reproduction and, social recognition and prestige. (Gruenbaum, 2006). In addition, marriage is the only legitimized institution and leeway where women can be sexually active and enjoy or fulfil there sexual needs.

According to the 1991 Personal Law article (40-2) confined the minimum age of marriage to the age of discretion, which is 10 years, although Sudan has ratified the Child Rights Convention

(CRC) in 1990, which prohibits child marriage (Musawah, 2009). Article 75 stipulates “the wife will be declared disobedient if she leaves the matrimonial home without legitimate justification, i.e. work outside, or visit her parents without the husband permission” (Musawah, 2009).

Given the above background it is obvious that throughout Sudan’s history, women from the north and the south have had no chance to unite and build one nation or challenge their diversities and identity politics. This was made difficult and complex due to many ideologies and concepts such as (Arabs versus Africans), ethnicity (slavery) and religion (Islam versus Christianity and other traditional religions), or Arabic as a language and an identity in the north, and tribal language, Juba Arabic and/or English in the south.

The Sudanese Women’s Movements

The Sudanese women’s movement mainly emerged from the anti-colonial and nationalist movement, calling for independence and the sovereignty of the country as the main goal. Gender and women’s rights were not their main focus of activism (Ahmad, 2014).

The Sudanese women’s movement modern organizing started in the late 1940s when women started forming different organizations mainly led by educated women. However, 1952 witnessed the founding of the Women’s Union as part of the nationalist movement. The women’s union despite its socialist ideology, sought to unite women in one organization regardless of their political affiliations (Ali, 2015; Hall, and Ismail, 1981; Badri, 2009; Hale, 1996).

Like the Nationalist movement the Women’s Union was essentially urban, educated, and middle class. Southern and rural women remained at the extreme periphery of the movement. However, this was the trend for all anti colonial movements during 1950s and 60s, Jayawardera (1986-in

Ahmad, 2014) highlights the interdependence of nationalism and feminism in the Third World countries and confirm the gains women can achieve by participating in nationalist struggles. She analyses the idea that nationalism projects allow women some space for resistance and strengthens both their capacity and self-confidence by allowing them access work and education. However, she maintains that in India and other countries in which the local bourgeoisie replaced imperialist rulers through a process of negotiation and gradual reforms. The women's struggle did not move beyond the sphere of limited reforms, i.e. equality for women within the legal processes, the right to vote, education and property. Such reforms did not address the basic question of women's subordination within the family and society. Ahmad (2014) concurred with Jayawardena that "these reforms" did not directly deal with women's subordination in society, but women did benefit from these "reforms" to strengthen their existence in public life. These reforms do not have the same effect on all women. Differences of ethnicity, religion, and geographical location, especially in the case of Sudan, resulted in deprivation of many women from benefiting from such reforms. Women in nationalist projects express modernity by practicing their rights through suffrage, education, and employment; however, rights within the family are kept untouched.

The Women's Union is a clear example, when they were calling for political participation and right to vote, this step was met with resistance from the Islamist sisters calling it un-Islamic. This was the first split within the women's union, resulted in a rising of new women organization (the National Women Front, established in the early 1960s as a wing of the Muslim Brothers, now ruling Sudan since 1989 (Ahmad, 2014; El Bakri, 1995). In conclusion, the Socialist ideology of the women's union versus the Islamist women's ideology remains divided to date, and women

organizing in Sudan remains fragmented, falling between political parties and the state ideologies, therefore issues of violence against women, family and sexuality never become a priority.

Women's contribution to the nationalist movement is also connected to their variations across gender, race, ethnicity, and religion and its intersection. Certainly, only women who belong to the dominant nationalist project benefit from it. Women who are part of a minority nationalist project, within the same geographical space (i.e. because they are different in ethnicity, religion, or race), mostly, suffer oppression at the hands of the dominant nationalist men and women. In Sudan as mentioned early the "nation building and the formation of the state efforts often entail to foster or impose notions of cultural hegemony" as demonstrated by the northern Sudanese elites forcing Arabic and Islamic culture. This narrow definition of the state resulted in north south civil war (1955-2005) (Ahmad, 2014).

The 1960s was the peak for the women's union, women gained their right to vote, stand for election; the first woman who was elected to parliament was the president of the women's union (1965); women also gained the right to equal pay for equal work 1968 (Hall and Ismail, 1981; Badri, 2009; El Bakri, 1995), they made minor demands challenging the traditional roles of women. Although, in the late 1970s and early 1980s some of the younger generations within the women's union raised some concerns on violence against women, such as FGM, domestic violence and forced marriage this was met with resistance from the union leadership (El Bakri, 1995).

Despite the split of the women's union, and the Islamist women groups, they were faced by a "state feminism" between (1971-1985) (Tonnessen, 2017)¹¹.

Some of the Women's Union members joined the newly formed women organization named the Sudanese Women's Union, mainly controlled by the state, and monopolized interventions within the field of women's rights (Tonnessen, 2017). As stated by (Khalid, 1995), this period of history of the women's movement witnessed many fundamental changes in the social, political and economic relation, which more or less reflected the state ideology.

This regime known as May Revolution ended a democratic elected government replacing it with a one state party. The economic situation was challenged by the 1980s economic recession in the Middle East; natural disasters; famine in Western part of Sudan; and the structural adjustment policies. It is worth mentioning that the regime succeeded to sign the first peace agreement with the South, which ended the conflict in 1972 in Addis Abba-Ethiopia; it erupted again in 1983 due to the implementations of the Sharia laws in 1983 with the influence of the Islamist (Khalid, 1995).

However, unlike the Women's Union that was financially dependent on its membership's contribution, the Sudanese Women's Union were fully supported by the state in all its financial needs. During this regime improvement in educational services especially rural areas and in the south expanded enormously. Moreover, women became ministers; judges and many women got middle management ranks in the civil service departments; confirming equal opportunity to training and higher education.

¹¹ After the failed coup by the Communist party, the government took a step and ban all political parties, including the Communist Party and the Women's Union, which was affiliated with it. The state however took a sharp shift from left to right. ¹¹ In 1972 they formed a new women organization under the Socialist Union Party (the only party that represent the government).

After the fall of the military government¹² and the dismantling of the government institutions, the Sudanese Women's Union included, left a vacuum on the collective representation of women.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism attracted many young urban women; the most serious indicator of all is the inability of the existing women's organizations to deal with women's problems or attract enough women to transform them into a critical mass (El Bakri, 1995).

After the uprising in 1985, the government failed to uplift the economic crisis; inflation continued to skyrocket; consumer goods shortages were accompanied by a flourishing black market. The Islamic and other repressive laws were not abolished. The state of emergency was not lifted. There were no plans to end the conflict in the south. Women were not represented in any decision-making processes (El Bakri, 1995).

As mentioned earlier the Islamic laws of 1983 that enumerate several restrictions on women's legal status were not abrogated. Instead a new dress code was introduced for government workingwomen; as well married women working in the government would be entitled to two-third of male officials' housing allowance (El Bakri, 1995). This was mainly based on the belief that married women have a reduced financial responsibility since they have a husband who is the primary breadwinner. A women committee was founded at the department of passport and immigration, to enforce restrictions on the women travelling abroad when not accompanied by the male relatives. The pretext for this was to curtail the travel abroad of women who were going

¹² Due to the instability and the economic crisis faced by the previous government (May Revolution), the uprising of the April 1985 was in the making since the imposition of the Islamic Laws in September 1983 (known as September laws), as a result of the government inability to sustain any kind of development in the country causing severe economic deterioration, accompanied by rampant political oppression. Beside, this was the growing of arm conflict in south Sudan, which the government was not able to control.

for reasons of prostitutions to the various oil-rich Arab countries and were causing serious damage to Sudan's reputation abroad (El Bakri, 1995).

During this period the women's union revived its activities and opened doors for new membership, however, they announced that any women regardless of her political ideology could be a member provided she did not have a bad reputation and had not been involved in the organization during May regime (El Bakri, 1995). The Sudanese women organizations both through their political parties association, and /or the state, made the women's agenda less important and fragmented when compared with their primary ideological affiliation. In addition, restrictions that curtailed women's membership due to women's reputation and morality, as such they leave some women out of the mainstream politics as issues of (morality are hard to measure) they just maintain patriarchal norms, sex workers are an example.

The National Women's Front emerged after the uprising as one of the strongest and well-funded women's group. Their ideological position is same as that of the Muslim Brothers. Their main aim is to spread Islam and establish an Islamic nation. They vigorously propagate images of the ideal Muslim women and family, especially through the use of mass media. They further created a voluntary organization, during its establishment meeting their main recommendations were: fight sex discrimination in employment; calling for extension of the maternity leave to six months instead of three months with full payment; urging employers to provide transportation for their female workers; and organizing women in the informal sector, to mention a few (El Bakri, 1995).

The Women's Union's position is anti-feminist: it did not challenge women's subordination within the family or issues of violence against women. The union disapproved of the

International feminist movement and did not build any connections to it, it only maintained its connection with (the Women International Democratic Federation), and considered discussing women's positions as a matter of class issue, deflecting attention from the "real problems". As stated by El Bakri (1995) given the Women's union concentration on class analysis, issues related to marriage, sexuality and virginity of great importance for young Sudanese women subject to far-reaching social control were never raised.

In 1986 during its rule (1986-1989) the elected government signed and then ratified the International Covenant for Political and Economic Rights, and The International Covenant for Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was not considered, as women agenda was not a priority (El Bakri, 1995).

In the second wave women continued again caught between the state support and meagre political parties i.e. the Muslim Sisters currently named the Sudanese Women General Union supported by the Islamist government, their main doctrine towards women based on the idea of gender equity in which women and men have different and complimentary roles and responsibilities due to their biological differences. This confirms Moghadam's statement below: " One may hypothesize that in the earlier stage of the Islamist movement the influx of women in the workforce raised fears of competition with men, leading to calls for the re-domestication of women, as occurred in the Iranian Revolution. In the current stage with the labour force participation of women now a fait accompli, Islamist in Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Sudan and Yemen are not calling on women to withdraw from the labour force indeed many of their female

adherents are educated and employed, but they also insist on veiling and on spatial and functional segregation.” (Moghadam, 1999)

This grants women rights in the public domain to participate in politics, work outside home, and get educated, as long as they behave piously and dress in a modest way. In this regard the Muslim women organization turn to be the strongest with the current period maintaining the government policy towards women (1989-to date)

During the course of the preparation for the UN Forth Conference on Women-Beijing in the mid 1990s, Sudanese women organizing took a new shift establishing women organizations away from the political parties and the state, paving the way for a new wave to emerge. They began considering issues such as violence against women, sexual violence; legal reforms this includes the (Personal Law and the Criminal Code of 1991). Legal aid, peace, citizenship rights; capacity building, women political participation/the quota; women rights awareness, using the international human rights frameworks such as CEDAW, the African Protocol for Peoples’ Rights for Right of Women; the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Security Council Resolution 1325, The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to mention a few (Hashim, 2009). The nature of activism changed markedly during the 1990s and 2000s, especially after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, witnessed an influx of donors and International Organizations to support both Sudan and South Sudan. The women independent organizations started to receive training and concentrate on issues such as women’s rights, peace and violence against women (Ahmad, 2014). This has further, helped to foster an interest in gender relations, to bring women together to build alliances which allowed them to fulfil some of those rights. In Sudan women independent organizations tackling issues of

violence against women and sexual violence, Personal Status Law and peace brought women together across ethnic, regional, and religion divides, reaching for Sudanese women in exile to build a strong women solidarity (Ahmad, 1994) (Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace-SuWEP, 149 alliance to reform the rape law, the solidarity group against the Khartoum Governor decree 2000, they took the Governor of Khartoum to the Constitutional Court, they won the case; No for Women Operation against the public order law).

Southern Sudanese Women's Organizations

The participation of South Sudanese women in the public sphere is a recent phenomenon. During the 1960/70 women of the South were able to venture into the political arena, men mainly occupied public spheres, such as business, join the army, and assume political positions, women were usually relegated to their stereotypical role of nurturing and caring. However, after the signing of Addis Abba Peace Agreement in 1972 women visibility in politics was limited in comparison to the North, but it was vivid to South Sudan. Moreover, some women from the South joined the Sudanese Women's Union during May regime (1969-1985) (Edward, 2011).

The major breakthrough for southern women political involvement and representation at the government levels was after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005-2011, which granted women 25% representation at the General Legislative Assembly. The former government of South Sudan witnessed an increased number of women at decision making levels, state governor, ministers, ambassadors, presidential advisor, including presidential advisor for gender, to mention a few.

However, women's political journey in the South did not pass without challenges, some of which are socio-cultural factors, education, ethnic/regional, family background and class. However,

practices such as forced, and arranged marriage, hindered women from pursuing their education, and further affected their political participation and future career. Late Dr. John Garang the head of the SPLM/A (who died in a plane crash in August 2005) was the first South Sudanese leader to acknowledge women's role in the public sphere.

Customary laws remain a real complex to the life of women in the South; it makes it difficult for women to escape the bondage of domestic role, which relegate women to second-class citizens.

Violence Against Women in Sudan: prevalence and manifestations

The most widely used definition of violence against women is provided by the United Nations' legal framework set out in the general assembly's Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women (resolution 48/104 of December 1993) (True, 2012) Articles 1 and 2 define violence against women as:

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. (True, 2012), stated further that “the UN definition embraces, but not limited to, physical, sexual, psychological/emotional, and most recently, economic violence or exploitation occurring in the family or community and/or perpetrated or condoned by the state. She further, highlighted, that violation of the right to life, liberty, and security of the person shapes the enjoyment and fulfilment of all other human rights, including economic and social rights such as the right to work, health, social security, education, food, housing, water, and land.” (True, 2012).

However, most of these forms and patterns of violence behaviours have been embedded politically, culturally and economically by the community, family and the state in Sudan. To focus more on specific forms of violence that have been enforced by the restrictive Islamic laws such as stoning, flogging, forced veiling, restriction of mobility in public sphere, forced marriage, marital rape and, domestic violence¹³ Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), as well as the implications of the on going conflict in which the state is an integral part. Examples are displacement, rape and sexual violence used as a weapon of war, abduction, ethnic violence, forced prostitution, and trafficking to mention a few. ¹⁴Access to justice is complicated and almost impossible due to the system of impunity especially among the state actors i.e. the police, security, army and militias; the ambiguity of some articles in the criminal code 1991; the stigma of violence especially sexual violence; lack of case documentation; lack of disaggregated data on violence against women.

The State Policies and legislation

The Islamist government has embarked on several policies to suppress the status of women in Sudan, under the banner of alleged demands of Islamic propriety. Their first step was massive dismissal of women from public services which, represented almost 80% of women in the

¹³ Marital rape is not criminalized under the Criminal Act. Sections 52 (a) and 91-95 of the Sudanese Personal Status Law for Muslims state that a wife has to obey her husband. These provisions contribute to the interpretation and expectation that women have to comply with all orders from their husbands, including sexual demands, irrespective of consent.

¹⁴ The Sudan has ratified numerous core international and regional human rights instruments. It has signed but not ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Sudan is a party to the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development of the Great Lakes Region, but is not a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance or the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.¹⁴

government offices, especially women in the legal profession, Medical, Ministry of labour, journalism, they have been dismissed due to their political affiliations, and secular ideologies, and they were all replaced by Islamist cadres. In addition, they violently attacked women street vendors in the informal sector; they stated that they make the city of Khartoum ugly (Africa Watch Report, 1993)¹⁵.

The regulatory measures that the Islamists pushed during the early 1990s shows their preoccupation with women appearance, dress, conduct, laws, policies, state regulations, decrees and order (Nageeb,2004). These measures were specifically stressed by institutions like the mosques, the media, the school system and implemented by the public order courts, police and security services, and men as social and religious guardians are also entitled to correct women's conduct according to the state regulations, or to Muslim men's "correct" sense (Nageeb, 2004). In addition, the new military government added new elements to the conflict by aggressively imposing an Islamised program in the south calling it Jihad war (a holy war). Accordingly, they formed a new "Arab only" militia groups (named the Popular Defence) backed by the army. Women supporters of the Islamist project supported the Jihad war by providing assets (personal gold and money) and serving food for the Mujahideen (Hale, 1996). Violence against women carried out by the popular Defences, Sudanese Army and the Sudan People Liberation Army (South Sudan who fought for peace and equality) was not documented, and violence against women during the 1983-2005 was not highlighted in the international media, unlike the case of Darfur. However, this new formation was considered a threat to the social and cultural fabric of

¹⁵ Threat to Women's Status from Fundamentalist Regime in Sudan, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, No. 11/12/13, May 1993

the non-Arab groups in Sudan especially in other parts of the country (Darfur, and the Nuba Mountains and south Blue Nile) (Kameir, 2012; Tonnessen, 2017).

Restricting Women in the public space

In September 2000 the Governor of Khartoum issued a decree that restricted women's rights to employment. Despite the fact that women's rights to work was gained since 1960s, with the right to equal pay, maternity leave and pension by early 1970s. He issued a decree banning women from working in hotels, restaurants, and gas stations. The decree was issued with a recommendation "those service providers to hire those women in another places and with clear directives to authorities of social affairs; local government; and the police and security forces to put this decision into immediate effect", it was circulated to all news papers. The justification he made is that: "this in consideration of the state which sought the dignity of women and situate her in the right place which they deserve as per the civilization project of the nation and in the line with our traditions and values of our religion". The justification undermined the position of those women as the sole breadwinners in their families and highlights the Islamist's reshaping of gender role at the public level.

The Public Order Law which was passed in Khartoum state 1996 is emblematic of the politicization of ethno-religious identities (Arab-Islam), is also an authoritative statement on the status of minority cultures living under Sharia, as well as women. This law was passed by the government to curb practices that the government considered un-Islamic, and people who do not comply with it are taken to courts, the law covers range of activities, it affects women's employment and forces an Islamic dress (hijab), banning women traditional wares (Abusharaf, 2009)

The writer's own memories regarding the passing of the law is as follows: "I remembered when the law was issued in 1996 myself and group of my friends were very angry, we felt that we have lost our agency to choose and decide for ourselves not only what to wear? It was totally unacceptable we refused to wear it, however, anytime we want to walk out of our homes we were very fearful to be attacked or taken to courts, for that we used to have a scarf in our purses most women named it "Just In Case". Any time we leave home we were never sure that we will be back to our homes, we lost our security and inner-peace."

For the government to ensure the implementation of this law it has been extended to selected articles from the criminal code of 1991 and vested the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, General Criminal Courts with full authority to imprison, fine, whip, confiscate, and enforce any punishment they see fit on noncompliant (Abusharaf, 2009) The articles from the Criminal Code of 1991: (mainly offences of honour, reputation and public morality, the act defines a range of offences related to what generally understood to be the maintenance of "public order". This part identifies a series of crimes and penalties, which regulates the interaction between men and women in public and private places. Section 152 "indecent and immoral acts" reads as follows:

- Whoever commits, in a public place, an act, or conducts himself in an indecent, or immoral dress, which causes annoyance to public feelings, shall be punished with whipping not exceeding 40 lashes or with fine, or both.

The trial of Lubna Hussien in 2009, and Amira Osman 2013 both convicted under article 152 of the Criminal Code (1991) was made public locally and internationally.¹⁶

¹⁶ Lubna Hussein, A journalist was convicted with article 152 for wearing trousers; she was punished with 40 lashes or fined 500 Sudanese pounds. She invited people for her trial in September 2009. This trial was organized by many women organizations and attracted international attention. Say No For Women Oppression was founded to fight the public order law.

The Public Order Law affects women's socio-economic and professional lives at many levels. Women from the peripheries, and displaced camps are more vulnerable to the law and their livelihoods directly affected by it.¹⁷

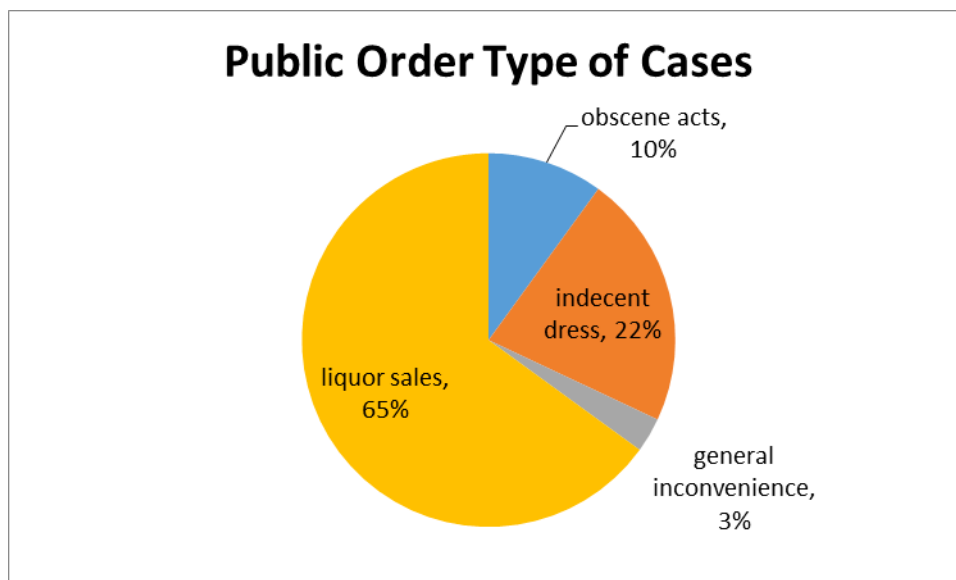
According to 3ayin report on the Public Order Courts¹⁸, 70% of the Public Order Courts cases involved women. The Public Order Law has significantly impacted the lives of many women in Sudan especially poor women and women in the marginalized areas, as well as female students in schools and universities. Types of penalties imposed by the Public Order Courts on women as follows: physical punishment, fines, and imprisonment; the types of punishment affects women and girls before the court are: indecent dress; liquor sales; obscene acts. Once South Sudan seceded in 2011, Khartoum lost 75% of its oil revenues, the Sudanese government started to expand the number of public order courts across the country to aggressively expand revenue collection. Sabir Saeed a lawyer said, now there are 22 public order police courts in Khartoum alone and in almost every town across the country.¹⁹

Amira Osman is an engineer and a member of No For Women Oppression, was charged because she refused to cover her head.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ 3ayin in Khartoum report, titled Inside the Sudanese Courts: profit above principle <https://mailguardian.atavist.com/inside-the-sudanese-courts-that-put-profit-above-prin>.

¹⁹ Ibid



Displacement as violence against women

The north/south conflict was the main catalyst for the suffering and the deteriorating position of women in South Sudan, Nuba Mountains and Darfur. Over 1.9 million were killed and 4 million forced to flee the south and sought refuge in the north or the neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia. Some even managed to reach Europe and North America. Women and children were the majority among the displaced persons and refugees. However, the suffering of women did not hinder them from setting peace as a priority on their agenda. The southern refugees in Kenya and Uganda managed to organize and form groups including SPLM\A chapters. Also for the first time women of the south fought in the front lines with men for the independence of South Sudan. Many women managed, as well, to engage with the humanitarian aid agencies registering women and making sure that families in refugee camps in Uganda and Kenya have enough food available for them. Literacy classes were also provided to women and their children with the help of the governments of Kenya and Uganda. The IDPs in

the north were mostly settled around Khartoum where they were also supported by the UN agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP), UNISEF, and CARE. The role of the UN and the international Aid organization varies from food distribution, building of schools and camps, awareness raising, sanitation, etc.

For the southerners IDPs living in the north, in addition to the complications and poverty that they were experiencing, particularly women faced many cultural challenges such as forced assimilation (for example, practicing FGM) in order to be somewhat culturally accepted. The majority of the displaced women, however, lacked many skills that were required to compete in the job market in Northern Sudan. As a result, many worked in tea and food selling, or brewing of alcohol, which was prohibited along with sex work²⁰ by Shari'a. It was not a surprise that the majority of incarcerated women in north Sudan' prisons were those from the South, Nuba mountains and Darfur. They were also subject to this law that affects their economic contribution at risk of flogging, fines and imprisonment.

Patterns of violence in Darfur: rape as a weapon of war

During the conflict in Darfur, particularly in the period 2003-2005, women were increasingly subject to mass rape, more than 600,000 were killed and over 2 million people were displaced. Amnesty International, stated that the rape of women in Darfur was systematic, and used as a

²⁰ Prostitution was not criminalized until 1983. During the Turko-Egyptian colonization in the nineteenth century prostitution and sex services for money was dominated by the women of slave status with the disruption of the market economy female enslaved were used as a commodity and self enrichment for their lords; this was turned down by the British in late 19th century by abolishing of slavery. During the British colony prostitution was regulated licensed with regular medical inspection to protect their troops, later they started regulating the consumption of alcohol in the Brothels. Brothels were spread and tolerated almost in every town and villages. Prostitutes were never part of the women's movement because they considered immoral. However, after independence they continued the British regulated system paid taxes to the government. After the implementation of Sharia, prostitution became criminalized, punished by 100 lashes, paying fine, or stoning. I argue here that, prostitution remained as revenue to the government being criminalized or not. History confirms that women of Khartoum Red District celebrated the Sudan Independence Day on 1st January 1956 by refusing services for white men for two days. (Spaulding, and Beswick, 2016).

weapon of war. A refugee woman from western Darfur living in west Darfur in May 2004 described the situation:

“I was sleeping when the attack took place. I was taken away by the attackers in Khaki and civilian clothes along with dozens of other girls and had to walk for 3 hours, during the day we were beaten and the Janjawid (the government militia) they told us: “you black women, we will exterminate you; you have no God”, we were taken to a place in the bush {where} the Janjawid raped us several times at night, for three days, we didn’t receive food and almost no water” (Hashime, 2009).

Many victims of rape and their families are deeply traumatized, since rape specifically aims at terrorizing and subjugating entire communities, and affects their social fabric. In the conservative culture of Darfur, the stigma of a rape is difficult to overcome, as a Fur woman remarked” No one would accept to marry a raped woman” (Human Rights Watch in Hashim, 2009). Indeed, violence against women in Darfur has been woven onto the everyday life and is poignantly underscored in the following statement by a woman from north Darfur “when we leave the camp to fetch for fire wood we prefer to go as women rather than sending our men. When we go we only get raped but when our men go they get killed, we would rather get raped and come back” (Hashim, 2009).

However, the issue of rape in Darfur conflict has drawn the attention of the international community and allowed for its publicity in the international media unlike the situation of southern Sudan. The government of Sudan, however, denied the incidence of rape in Darfur. Not only that but also some members of the ruling party considered rape as part of Darfur’s culture. The late Magzoub Alkhalifa (the governor of Darfur), for example, alleged that the “Darfuri

women are known for being promiscuous, and shameless”. Al-Bashir, on the other hand, completely denied that the government’s militias and the armed forces had used rape as a weapon. In March 2007 he stated in the media “it is not in the Sudanese culture or in the culture of people of Darfur to rape. It does not exist”. This denial is compounded by the fact that prosecuting rape cases in Sudan is exceedingly difficult to do and places a greater burden of proof on women than on men due to the unjust law especially article 149 in the Criminal Code of 1991 which, defines rape as adultery.

However, AlKhalifa and President Elbashir’s statements are no doubt related to the prejudices of many Northern Arabized Sudanese from the centre towards gender-relations in Darfur, which differ considerably when it comes to the economic and socio-cultural position of women. Darfuri women are known for significant economic contributions and their participation in the market and agricultural economies, particularly as handicraft sellers, food, and construction work. women in Darfur are the major economic providers in many parts of Darfur, therefore they are occupying public spheres. Their main role is to feed their families therefore; they have larger fields in which they grow staple crops (millet and sorghum) and larger grain storage rooms than their husbands (Hashim,2009). Men on the other hand have to provide only the amount of grain they need for their own consumption. This allows them to grow cash crops, such as irrigated citrus fruits, to trade or to engage in waged labour since they are expected to pay for anything that cost money (clothes, utensils etc.) in order for men to earn this money they spend great deal of time outside their villages while women take care of daily life inside the village-women are the de facto “keepers of the land”. In practice women need to have some income and men are not always around to provide when the need arises. However, this has led to the misconception

among men in the North that Darfuri men are not responsible enough because they do not control their women (Hashim,2009).

The International Organizations was the main source of reporting and documenting violence in Darfur, through their work MSF-Holland, CARE, International Rescue Committee, and some of the UN offices provided health and medical and psychological services to the victims of rape, and most of these reports were made public, which paved the way to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to announce the indictment against President Elbashir in 2009. As a reaction to the ICC the government expelled 13 organizations varying from international to local suspecting their contribution to the ICC decision. This reaction created a huge vacuum in the service provision for rape victims.

In response to international pressure, the government of Sudan established a committee mostly funded by the UNFPA under the Ministry of Justice to deal with violence against women in Darfur (Hashim,2009).

Learning from the women of South Sudan, the Darfuri women showed effective presence in peace negotiations and insisted that there should be real representation for women in all matters concerning their lives and their families.

Women Organizations Building Collectives: Selected Examples

Women in the Islamic movement remained of a strong support to the government policies, including the Public Order Law, despite this complex and challenging situation women civil society organizations (CSOs) were able to strategize and build connections both locally and

globally. I would like here to briefly highlight some initiatives campaigns, such as 149 Alliance²¹ Campaign to reform the rape laws, started in 2008 with the support of Women Living Under Muslim Laws; the campaign was launched in 2010, the campaign succeeded through many efforts to separate the definition of rape from adultery in 2015; yet access to justice for women remain challenging.

The SuWEP was another unique initiative in 1997 supported by the Netherlands Embassy in Khartoum to bridge the gap between women from the north, south, and Nuba Mountains. This initiative brought women from Sudan and exile to work for peace. They received intensive training allowed some of south Sudanese women to work in the government. Despite the differences women managed to unite and work for peace, by reaching a minimum agenda in 2000 in Maastricht Netherlands, however, their contribution to the peace negotiation remained minimal.

Conclusion

It is difficult to talk about political economy and women inequality in a context like Sudan in isolation from the global inequality and its neoliberalism means and mechanism. The State in Sudan (north and south) is the main catalyst of the deteriorating position of Sudanese woman as well as the key instigator of gender-based violence. Moreover, as essentially being a patriarchal construct, together with a fundamentalist reading of Islamism the state strives to privilege the male population and subordinates the female. Additionally, the fact that there has never been an independent women's movement in Sudan that would prioritize women interests, the new

²¹ The alliance was led by Salmamah women resource centre, which was shut down by the regime in 2014; Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace SuWEP, Sudan Development Organization (SORD), Mutawinat Group, Alalag Centre for media services, Sudanese Society for Environment Prevention; Amel Centre for Victim of Torture, Khartoum Center for Human Rights (the last two were shut down by the government in 2009)

wave of independent women organizations completely dependent on donors funding, faced by a restrictive regime that controls women's freedom and autonomy. Coupled with restrictive registration procedure controlled by the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) (the government body for registration of association). The structure of inequality (the family); the personal status law in the north and the customary laws in the south and violence against women remains in a desperate need for further research in both north and south Sudan.

DRAFT for discussion

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