

Sudan Democracy First Group

War Against Sudanese Women is the New Front

Sunday 20 February 2001

Rape and sexual assaults: the National Congress Party uses the weapons of the Darfur war against the women and girls of Khartoum.

Tens of thousands of Sudanese women and young girls in Darfur and in the south of Sudan were exposed to crimes of gender based violence, including rape and sexual abuse that were practiced by the National Congress Party (NCP) for more than two decades. Now, and following the victory of racial and sexual cleansing policies which drove the South of Sudan to separation and could drive Darfur on a similar path, the regime of the NCP is employing the weapon of rape and sexual abuse against women and girls in their peaceful struggle. The NCP's security forces targeted the women and young girls who took part in the recent demonstrations in Sudan, asking for justice, peace, democracy and an end to discrimination.

The crimes of sexual violence that are practiced by the security forces now are unveiling the tens of thousands of crimes of rape and sexual violence which have led to the indictment of suspected perpetrators, including the head of state¹. What the Sudanese women and girls have been facing over the past weeks from rape to harassment and sexual violence, physical and verbal, does not represent a new trend in the history and record of the NCP. However, what is new with these crimes is their use of repression and oppression outside of war affected zones and transferring them to urban settings, and to the capital, Khartoum.

The examples below are but illustrations of the savage reaction of the commanded security forces when dealing with women and girls after Sudanese citizens rose in January / February and held the NCP historically and politically responsible for the secession of the South, the widespread corruption and nepotism, the absence of justice and accountability, the incitement of hate and divisions, the continuation of the war in Darfur, in addition to the widespread poverty, homelessness, unemployment and growing economic decay.

S.E. (Sunday 13 February 2011)²

She was arrested in Al Jamhouria Street in Khartoum, around 10:30 in the morning of Sunday 13 February. She was arrested after she had been buying some papers and office material and was forced into a car by two members of the security service. She remained under arrest until around ten in the evening. She was driven to the National Intelligence and Security Service offices in Khartoum Bahri and was subjected to appalling sexual assault. She was beaten on all parts of her body during her interrogation. She was asked about distributing pamphlets and inciting people to demonstrate, and also about her political affiliation. She then had her clothes forcefully removed while still being beaten. She fainted and woke up to find a one of security men on top of her, raping her while the

¹ See the warrant of arrest against Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir: Considering that, for the above reasons, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Omar Al Bashir is criminally responsible as an indirect perpetrator, or as an indirect co-perpetrator, under article 25(3)(a) of the Statute, for: 7. Rape as a crime against humanity, within the meaning of article 7(1)(g) of the Statute.

² Interview and personal testimony of the victim with the Sudan Democracy First Group, in addition to the inspection of copies of the evidence documents.

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others verbally assaulted her with revolting sexual language. Official medical reports and the registry of the General Prosecution verified the occurrence of repetitive rape.

Samah Mohammed Adam (30 January 2011)³

Political activist, she was arrested while she was taking part in the 30 January demonstrations. She was pushed by force into a truck which contained around 14 members of the national security. She was violently dragged by her clothes and one of the national security men tore out the front buttons of her blouse, leaving her almost topless. She said that one of the security men held himself against her body and said to her that if they did not want this, then what forced them out to the streets. Samah said she was scared and hanging on to her blouse and attempting to cover her chest with her headscarf. She said I was crying all the time as I was afraid from being raped.

Marwa al Tijani (3 February 2011)⁴

An activist from January 30 Youth Movement, she was arrested close to Aqrab square in Bahri around four in the afternoon following the clampdown by the security services on the protest which was organized by students and youth groups in the square. National security members pointed their guns at her face and those of her two friends to force them to get into one of their cars. She was first taken into the offices of the security service in Bahri but was then transferred to another location she was not able to identify. She found herself amongst tens of young girls sitting on the ground, and that were being harshly insulted and addressed with language that's offensive to their honour while being constantly flogged with large whips. Marwa was shocked during her arrest and said: "I usually wear a black Abaya (cloak) so they told me take off the Abaya. I was so surprised that I did not imagine they were serious so they shouted at me to take it off. I took off the Abaya while crying from humiliation and that is when they started beating me up with black sticks on my back and on my legs. I was not crying from the pain as much as I was crying from the humiliation and insult that I felt. The more I cried the more they hit me. They also threatened that "they will take us to the women's prison and put us with the women that make Araqi (local alcohol) and the whores like us and that they will take our pictures and tell our parents that we are bad girls. Marwa was also emotionally blackmailed as they insistently accused her of having a sexual relation with one of her colleagues from university who was also arrested. The men insulted her over thoughts of her sexual relationship with the colleague. Marwa reiterated again and again that during the entire period of her detention, torture and intimidation, she was not asked at all about any political issues or about the protest. The national security men's address to her was centred on insults and threats relating to sex.

Asmaa Hassan Al Turabi (16 February 2011)

In a press conference organized by the Popular Congress Party (PCP) in its headquarters on Tuesday 16 February 2011, Asmaa Hassan Al Turabi stated that the security service had dispersed the women as they went on a peaceful and silent march asking for the release of their people who had been detained. She described the disrespectful and harsh treatment of the national security service where they almost took off her dress. She also added that the women were shocked by this behaviour despite the silence of their protest.

³ A complete personal testimony of the victim is available at Hurriyat website, together with a video of an interview with the victim. <http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=14111>

⁴ A direct testimony of the victim after she recovered from the shock can be found on Hurriyat newspaper's website at <http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=14398>

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Najat Al Haj (2 February 2011)⁵

A leading member of Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). She was arrested after having taken part in a meeting of the National Consensus Forces. Her head was covered with the dress she was wearing and a rifle was pointed to her head and she was forced into a national security car. Najat said that after she was driven to the national security buildings, she found four arrested journalists who were blindfolded and standing against the wall. They were being interrogated collectively and while being verbally abused and laughed at and spoken to in humiliating terms. She mentioned that while looking through her bag, the national security agents found some medicine on which they commented by saying: “Pregnancy pills!! You can sleep outside your house and it’s normal, no? and now you are accompanying young men who carry condoms !!!). Najat also mentioned that the person in charge of the investigation asked her the following: “where is your husband? And if you had a husband, would you be here now...” She was then released very late that night and told “you are all used to returning home at such very late times!!!”

Suad Abdallah Jumaa (10 February 2011)⁶

An activist from Umma National Party. She was chased and arrested from a public transport shuttle after the bus was forced to stop by members of the national security. She was beaten, insulted and threatened for refusing to give the national security men her phone’s memory card. When Suad remained on her stance and she refused to tell them whereabouts the memory card. She protected her self in the corner of the room where there were two chairs next to each other, while seven security agents and policemen were threatening her. One of the security agents walked towards Suad, saying to the other security agents with him ‘leave her with me for three minutes only and she will admit where the memory card is and get it out on her own’. My fear was doubled with what I already know about the way security forces treat girls.

As we previously mentioned, crimes of sexual violence such as rape, harassment and sexual assault, do not represent a new pattern in the behaviour of the regime of the NCP when facing up to those who stand up for different opinions, whether in matters of peace and war, or justice and rights, or ways of governance and democracy. In the nineties, during the era of the Ghost Houses, men were raped and harassed and a number of cases were documented. Tens of thousands of women and young girls were also subjected to sexual violence in Darfur and in South Sudan and the Nuba mountains and this was documented by reports and regional and international, as well as national, fact finding missions. What is happening now, through the limited samples above and through the courage of these young girls and women, shows once more that the NCP has no value system or intellectual doctrine.

The Sudan Democracy First Group believes that crimes of sexual violence, in their various forms and wherever they occur represent the foundation of the decadence, oppression and ruthlessness that have been established by the NCP for over two decades. We also believe that these crimes are the worst offence to the struggle for dignity and for the humanity of all Sudanese People.

In light of the above, we consider the following:

⁵ Direct testimony of the victim on Hurriyat newspaper’s website at <http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=12760>

⁶ Testimony on the website of Hurriyat newspaper at <http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=14270>

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- That justice and accountability are a cornerstone to and inter-linked with all matters of peace or struggle for democracy; one cannot exist without the other;
- Revealing and documenting all records of sexual violence crimes, and shedding the light on the destructive moral and security structure that committed these crimes, while placing issues of justice and accountability at the top of all legal and political considerations and focusing on the rights of women victims and survivors;
- Peace in Darfur is meaningless unless it comes through accountability and reparation for women victims and survivors, through international mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court and national mechanisms including transitional justice;
- Efforts for democratic transformation and the struggle for civil and political rights, including any coming constitutional arrangements, would remain incomplete unless they direct the tools of their daily struggle towards fighting crimes of sexual violence, especially against women, young girls and children. That would include repelling the laws and practices of the public order regime and removing the powers granted in the National Security Act, in addition to ratifying the international and regional treaties for women's rights;
- The attention given to peace and "stability" by the international community which turns a blind eye to closely linked issues such as justice and democracy makes the idea of "stability" in Sudan, under the auspices of the NCP, a way of maintaining crimes of sexual violence against women and girls in Sudan. The international community has to play roles of reconciliation and rapprochement with the peoples of Sudan, especially its victims, through learning early lessons from the present upraising of the Middle East.

Sudan Democracy First Group is an independent civil and non-governmental organization that works on building wide alliances and coalitions through research, campaigns, advocacy and publishing amongst individual and groups of democrats and actors in the field of human and women's rights, independent trade unions, students and Youth initiatives, in addition to journalists, academics, and democrats from the different cultures and regions of Sudan.

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