
Promoting Sustainable Peace in Sudan through Post-Conflict Justice and Reconciliation

The Ammerdown Centre, Somerset, UK, 25 – 29 March 2007

As part of its ongoing Sudanese peace-building process, Concordis International facilitated a four-day consultation in late March for 25 prominent members of Sudanese civil and political society, with international experts providing invaluable perspectives on truth and reconciliation commissions, traditional grassroots processes and more formal national and international justice processes. The neutral, low-profile venue was a very appropriate environment for the Concordis methodology of informal research-based dialogue, away from media pressure. Generous donations from private individuals and grant-making trusts made the consultation possible.



Participants explored some of the complexities of transitional justice, examining case studies from across Africa and applying lessons to the Sudanese context. In vigorous, frank and informed discussion, they considered issues of amnesty, impunity, reconciliation and healing. Although the group recognised that it may be premature to make decisions on such subjects for Darfur, they agreed that it cannot be too soon for Sudan as a whole. Participants attended in their personal capacities, but between them represented a broad and inclusive range of key Sudanese political and geographical constituencies.

The various Sudanese peace agreements cover justice and reconciliation only in outline. Participants recognised that future peaceful co-existence in Sudan requires balancing the needs for peace and security, for truth-telling and for justice. Although justice and reconciliation can only be effected after the establishment of peace and security in Sudan, early action is needed to enforce the rule of law and counter the culture of impunity. Inclusiveness (especially for women), democratisation, institutional reform and the rule of law are all critical in a transitional period. Transitional justice should operate at local, national and international levels.

Historically, the three main ways of dealing with the past have been 'official amnesia' (e.g. in post-Franco Spain), truth-telling (e.g. through South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissions) and prosecutions (e.g. the International Criminal Court). Recognising the value of each of these approaches and Sudan's character as a forgiving society, particularly at individual and community levels, participants believed that a comprehensive Sudanese transitional justice process was needed, building on Islamic and Christian traditions of forgiveness and on Sudan's rich heritage of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms.

Despite political differences, participants agreed a very constructive set of recommendations and practical proposals in the areas of accountability, justice, truth-telling and reconciliation¹ and were very keen to continue this dialogue, in order to establish policies on these issues that will contribute to sustainable peace in Sudan. A typical Sudanese comment:



Concordis have provided us with a good, conducive and healthy environment in which to talk, voice our opinions and understand different positions. The style of their approach is different from other organisations because it does not actively seek any publicity or media. That means that participants do not have to state their official positions and can think creatively to find solutions.

¹ Available at http://www.concordis-international.org/files/PCJR_conclusions.pdf

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