

Risk to individuals from Nuba Mountains in Sudan

March 2018

Executive Summary

Individuals of Nuba ethnicity are at risk in Sudan, both as targets of a war effort in the region itself, and of the regime's campaign of 'Arabisation' and association of 'being Nuba' with rebel loyalties, that makes them ready targets of persecution, ill-treatment, torture, or worse, and particularly so in Khartoum, where security, military, and police officials are headquartered. This, as well more systemic forms of discrimination - limiting Nuba individuals' access to equal citizenship, employment, religious freedom, education, healthcare, and housing - present intolerable obstacles when trying to relocate internally to the capital.

This risk is increased at times of political upheaval, because of the perception that all Nuba are associated with, or at least sympathetic to, rebel and opposition activity. Given the wide-scale protests in early 2018, which were marked by the arrest and ill-treatment of hundreds of opposition figures, this is a particularly inopportune and dangerous moment to arrange removals, and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.

Nuba individuals will also be at high risk due to their profile as rejected asylum-seekers. The recent normalisation of relations between Sudan and various EU Member States has led to the return of many individuals that allege they were subsequently detained, interrogated, ill-treated, and tortured, whereas others have simply disappeared on arrival. This testimony supports the conclusions of our work on the issue of post-deportation risk over more than six years.

Who we are + basis of expertise

Waging Peace is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that campaigns against human rights abuses in Sudan. Together with our sister charity Article 1 we also work closely with the Sudanese community in the UK, with a focus on those made most vulnerable by the immigration system.¹ We have commented on hundreds of individual cases involving claims for asylum or humanitarian protection from Sudan, and also contributed to case law on the country. For instance, in 2009 we sourced a death certificate for a Darfuri man killed by Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) after he returned home from the UK. This contributed to the determination that non-Arab Darfuris should be granted protection in the UK.

We have also been able to source substantial evidence on post-deportation risk, particularly, but not exclusively, when individuals are rejected asylum-seekers and have engaged in *sur place* activity. Our reports on this are 'The Danger of Returning Home' (2012),² 'The Long Arm of the Sudanese Regime' (2014),³ and 'Recent cases of post-deportation risk' (2017),⁴ and contain between them dozens of testimonies of individuals targeted on return to Sudan. Their

¹ <<http://www.article1.org/>>

² Waging Peace, 'The Danger of Returning Home', 2012, accessed 19.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/pdf/Exclusives/2012_09_THE_DANGER_OF_RETURNING_HOME.pdf>

³ Waging Peace, 'The Long Arm of the Sudanese Regime', 2014, accessed 19.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/The_Long_Arm_of_the_Sudanese_Regime_-_COMPRESSED.pdf>

⁴ Waging Peace, 'Recent cases of post-deportation risk', 2017, accessed 19.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/Post-deportation_update_January_2017.pdf>

conclusions form part of the Home Office's reporting on the country via its latest country policy and information notes, receiving citations throughout.⁵

Through our work with the wider Sudanese diaspora, we also come into regular contact with Nuba groups, though there are fewer of these than groups from elsewhere in the country, a reflection of the smaller size of this community in the UK, estimated at around 2,000 according to our contacts. Our support to them has included legal casework, as described above, but also campaigning and advocacy activities. For instance, in December 2016 we hosted an early screening of the film 'The Heart of Nuba'⁶ about Dr Tom Catena, a US surgeon working in the Nuba Mountains (whom we consulted for this report, as detailed below). The film was shown in Parliament in London, complete with virtual reality headsets showing life in the region by TFM Digital.⁷ We have annually engaged in demonstrations alongside the community, marking the June date of the start of the conflict. We regularly meet community leaders and members at events, and help facilitate relationships between them and decision-makers, including in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. We stay up-to-date on the situation in Sudan through our contact with these individuals, but also through our involvement in networks of NGOs operating on or in Sudan, receiving their news updates. In short, we work from a solid position of trust with the Nuba community in the UK, so are uniquely placed to collect information on the topics under consideration in this report. We also do so at the request of the community, who want us to cast light on the risks facing Nuba communities in Sudan.

Methodology

For this report we have relied on conversations, over the phone or in person, with individuals we judge to be expert in the current situation of Nuba tribes in Sudan. There are a great many Nuba tribes, so the term 'Nuba' is used throughout this document to refer to those from the Nuba ethnic group more broadly.⁸ In particular, we conducted three lengthy interviews, lasting several hours each, with three individuals, Ms A, Ms B, and Mr C, all themselves from the Nuba Mountains. Where we had interviewed these individuals for our previous reports on related topics we included their original testimonies in the Annexes. We questioned community leaders in UK-based groups, but also those with on-the-ground experience in aid delivery in the region, to whatever degree this is possible. In total, we approached dozens of organisations for information or input to this report. This report is also informed by our individual casework with Nuba individuals over ten years.

We group our response around two questions:

1. Whether Nuba tribes should be classed as a risk category
2. Whether Nuba can be internally relocated to Khartoum

Background

The war in the Nuba Mountains has its roots in the Sudanese civil war that ended with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Although South Kordofan was also the target of the brutal military tactics employed by the Sudanese

⁵ Home Office, 'Sudan: country policy and information notes', accessed 19.03.18 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sudan-country-policy-and-information-notes>

⁶ theheartofnuba.com

⁷ <http://www.transformedia.org.uk/>

⁸ For a description of the Nuba tribes, see Housing and Land Rights Network, accessed 19.03.18 at [http://www.hlrn.org/img/Solidarity/History%201%20N%20v.%20\(4\).pdf](http://www.hlrn.org/img/Solidarity/History%201%20N%20v.%20(4).pdf)

government at this time, the desire on the part of the international community to conclude the negotiations meant the political concerns of the Nuba people were largely ignored in favour of a broader consensus. The failure of the international community to ever uphold provisions in the CPA for South Kordofan to decide its modalities of governance adds to the perception among the Nuba that they are the victims of a 'forgotten conflict' in Sudan.

As such, Sudan watchers were not surprised when in June 2011 the war in the Nuba Mountains resumed, though it was noted that the Sudanese government placed even more of an emphasis on disrupting civilian lives there. Attacks focused particularly on civilians, disrupting farming schedules, and using indiscriminate and targeted bombing of civilian targets like schools and hospitals.⁹ We asked Dr Tom Catena, currently the only surgeon present in the Nuba Mountains, to comment on the bombing. He responded in an email dated 07.02.18:

"... the areas bombed were not military barracks or even places which had any strategic importance. They were random market places, schools, hospitals (ours included twice) and farming areas. Many casualties of the aerial bombardments were civilians who were far from the front lines. We also had many civilians wounded as a result of indiscriminate artillery shelling."

The government has also blocked the delivery of humanitarian aid to the region for years, but as this issue has now been subsumed within wider political negotiations, it remains deadlocked.¹⁰

The situation on the ground has largely played itself out away from public attention. International NGOs and humanitarian agencies were already largely absent in the Nuba Mountains, and in 2011 were in any case still reeling following their 2009 *en masse* expulsion after the indictment of President Omar Al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court. Press coverage of events in the Nuba Mountains is almost non-existent, following the regime's deliberate obstruction of media freedom. Covering the conflict in South Kordofan has become a 'red line' issue for NISS, who are tasked with keeping the press in check. In its 2013 Freedom on the Net report, Freedom House commented on the prosecution of a number of activists for their coverage of the conflict areas in Southern Kordofan.¹¹

In fact, one of our interviewees for this report whom we spoke to on 16.11.2018 (Ms B, an interview conducted with her in 2014 is also included in Annex I) was a former journalist in Sudan. She was tasked with covering South Kordofan, or the Two Areas (this term is used to refer to both South Kordofan and the Blue Nile). She described intimidation tactics including an unwarranted search of her family home, being barred from relevant press conferences, or having an invitation revoked at the last minute, and causing financial hardship. For instance, she was removed from a flight to attend an event, questioned by security officials, and not allowed to board. More seriously, she was also sometimes dragged to the police station when interviewing witnesses, and even held overnight on occasion. She says her only course of action was to self-censor to avoid harassment. The paper for which she worked was also harassed due to the issues it covered. Its editor had to flee abroad, sending money to his team via couriers on cross-border flights, and paying a security guard as they were regular victims of 'random' crime like knife attacks.

⁹ Nuba Reports provides good reporting on this, including a counter of the number of bombs dropped on civilian targets, which as of 14.03.18 said 4,082 had been dropped, at <<https://www.nubareports.org/>>

¹⁰ BOND, 'State of the World's Emergencies report', Sudan section, accessed 14.03.18 at <https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/state_of_the_worlds_emergencies_2017_-_sudan.pdf>

¹¹ Freedom House, 'Freedom on the Net 2013: Sudan', October 2013, accessed 14.03.18 at <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/FOTN%202013_Sudan.pdf>

It should also be noted that there is a long history of slavery from the Nuba Mountains,¹² which in the modern age takes the form of military 'conscription' to government forces. One interviewee said the names of slavers are still included in popular songs, including by *hakamas*, or war singers. Certain families also continue to live with the legacy of slavery within their names. A Nuba gentleman with whom we have worked in the UK explained how, in his substantive interview with the Home Office, he used the phrase 'belonging to' and then a tribal name. Understandably, the Home Office believed he was saying he was a member of that tribe, when he meant his family had historically belonged to the tribe in question.

This legacy of slavery also extends to the modern day, and to our doorstep. Mende Nazer was a girl in the Nuba Mountains when she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. She was eventually brought to London in the early 2000s to work as a slave for a Sudanese diplomat, before escaping. She has since written a book about her experiences, and gained leave to remain in the United Kingdom.¹³ At an event marking a screening of a film about a journey she undertook back into the Nuba Mountains, in Parliament in London in December 2017, a representative from the Nuba Mountains Solidarity Abroad group mentioned that Mende's experiences are far from unique, explaining how communities in the Nuba Mountains continue to live in fear of abduction into slavery.

The current situation in Nuba Mountains

The Nuba Mountains intermittently suffer from famine conditions because their farms have been repeatedly targeted by the regime's campaign of aerial bombardment. The most reliable information about food security comes in the form of humanitarian updates from the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit, which are shared privately with agencies and NGO partners. The latest of these, released in January 2018, stated that although January and February are historically the least lean months in the year because of harvest times: "Based on key informant interviews performed by the CU [Coordination Unit], it is likely the current harvest's food stocks will not last beyond April. With the following early harvest beginning in August, this will create at least a 3 month food gap." Furthermore, The Famine Early Warning Systems Network reported that the rate of chronic malnutrition in SPLM-N-controlled areas in South Kordofan was estimated at 38.3% due to long-term food deprivation and recurrent illness.¹⁴ Dr Tom Catena commented on 07.02.18:

"Food security in our area is poor again this year. The rains were not very good and we had one major flood which damaged the sorghum crops of many. There are still many internally displaced people who are unable to cultivate to any large extent. Insecurity prevents farmers from cultivating in areas with good farmland as they fear attack by Arab nomads and cattle raiders."

There has been no aerial bombing activity in 2017 because the government of Sudan has been on its best behaviour, negotiating a normalisation of relations with the United States, culminating in the partial lifting of sanctions on the country in October 2017.¹⁵ Although the cessation of offensive military activity should be celebrated, it is not indicative of a change in approach or policy towards the region by the Sudanese government, and was driven by political

¹² Anti-Slavery International, 'Descent-based slavery', accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/descent-based-slavery/>>

¹³ Mende Nazer foundation, accessed 15.03.18 at <<http://www.mendenazer.org/en/content/mende>>

¹⁴ Amnesty International, 'The State of the World's Human Rights 2017/2018', accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/POL10/6700/2018/En/>>

¹⁵ Financial Times, 'US to lift sanctions on Sudan', 06.10.17, accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://www.ft.com/content/52b43d52-9ed7-3c6d-a5f8-a010bfe6da23>>

expediency. It remains to be seen how the government will respond once the next stage of the normalisation of US-Sudan relations, the lifting of Sudan from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list, is concluded.

The media black-out on events in the region continues. For example in May 2017, the Press and Publications Court in Khartoum convicted Madiha Abdala, former Editor of Sudanese Communist Party newspaper *Al-Midan*, of “dissemination of false information”. She was fined her 10,000 Sudanese pounds (around \$1,497), for publishing an article on the conflict in South Kordofan in 2015.¹⁶ It would be wrong to conclude that the lack of information coming from the Nuba Mountains suggests there is no news, an argument sometimes cited in Home Office refusals of which we have had sight.

Meanwhile, a fresh leadership dispute within the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) since March 2017 has seen the movement split into two rival factions,¹⁷ triggering wider conflict and displacement, though primarily centred in nearby Blue Nile state. The dispute also places at risk the political negotiations with Sudan’s government, in addition to discussions about humanitarian aid delivery.

Particularly precarious is the fate of mothers in the Nuba Mountains. According to a 2017 Human Rights Watch report, women and girls living in rebel-held areas of the Nuba Mountains “have little or no access to contraception, adequate antenatal care, or emergency obstetric care—leaving them unable to control the number and spacing of their children, and exposing them to serious health complications and sometimes death.”¹⁸ Moreover, the latest South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit report in January 2018 mentioned that: “Pediatric care in particular is substantially lacking throughout the region. As reported in August of 2017, access to basic pediatric medicines or nutritional commodity was only 22% for the Central Region and 0% for the Western Jebels. The CU is not aware of any changes to these metrics over the last 6 months and anticipates the child population still faces substantial disadvantages in their access to health care.”

Students from South Kordofan also suffer routine harassment. For instance, as recently as January 2018, there were mass arrests of protestors at Aldalang University in the area. Students there were demonstrating after an officer of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) indiscriminately shot and killed two students on the university campus. Joint security forces (including NISS, Military Intelligence, SAF and police) raided the university in response, detaining at least 49 students.¹⁹

Nuba as a risk category

Political profile

It should be clear that Nuba individuals are persecuted in a direct and sustained fashion as part of the regime’s war in South Kordofan. It is of particular relevance that it is this context of conflict that provides the basis for the persecution

¹⁶ Amnesty International, ‘The State of the World’s Human Rights 2017/2018, accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/POL10/6700/2018/En/>>

¹⁷ Enough Project, ‘A Question of Leadership: Addressing a Dangerous Crisis in Sudan’s SPLM-N’, July 2017, accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://enoughproject.org/reports/a-question-of-leadership>>

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, “‘No Control, No Choice’: Lack of Access to Reproductive Healthcare in Sudan’s Rebel-Held Southern Kordofan”, May 2017, accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/05/22/no-control-no-choice/lack-access-reproductive-healthcare-sudans-rebel-held>>

¹⁹ African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, ‘South Kordofan: Students from Aldalang University arbitrarily arrested after SAF officer shot two students to death’, January 2018, accessed 14.03.18 at <<http://www.acjps.org/south-kordofan-students-from-aldalang-university-arbitrarily-arrested-after-saf-officer-shot-two-students-to-death/>>

of Nuba as an ethnicity in Sudan. Nuba individuals are by their nature assumed to be either an active part of, or sympathetic to, the SPLM-N, and this then often forms the basis of their targeting and ill-treatment. It is important to note that actual membership or allegiance to the SPLM-N is not required for this to be the case. It is sufficient for such qualities to be imputed, although of course an active political profile would significantly increase an individual's risk profile. And besides, most Nuba individuals are in some manner connected to the SPLM-N through large family networks.

Moreover, the number of people assumed to have a political profile varies according to how vulnerable the Sudanese government believes it is at a given moment. Its perception of risk is due to how it assesses external circumstances, in particular when the threat being posed originates with the SPLM-N. The testimony of Mr C, sourced from one of our earlier reports and included in full in Annex II (we interviewed him separately for this report, however), describes his poor treatment at the time of the elections for the governor of the Nuba Mountains region, saying "tensions were high". Accordingly, in late 2012 and early 2013 there were many arrests of Nuba due to their supposed, and sometimes actual, involvement in a coup attempt by Brigadier-General Mohamed Ibrahim Abdel-Galil, better known as 'Wad Ibrahim'. Most notably, crackdowns followed an April 2013 attack by joint forces including the SPLM-N, named the Sudan Revolutionary Forces (SRF), in the towns of Um Rawaba in North Kordofan state, and Abu Kershola, in South Kordofan state. The attack represented the high watermark of the rebel military advance. In response to their humiliation, the Sudanese government arrested and detained a wide variety of Nuba individuals accused of supporting this coalition.²⁰

We have spoken to several individuals who were targeted during this particularly restive period. One gentleman was detained for several days and then released, only to be re-detained for sixteen days and tortured in a manner that included sensory deprivation and solitary confinement, as well as beatings to the head later requiring stitches. While detained he also saw several other Nuba individuals being tortured. He eventually collapsed and had to be put on a drip. He still suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, and a fear of the dark.

It is therefore clear that at times of political upheaval, when the regime feels its survival is threatened, the first targets of the security services and other actors are marginalised groups that are assumed to be from conflict areas, and so sympathetic to the aims of rebel groups. Nuba individuals, identifiable by their skin tone and other factors, are presumed to be associated either formally or informally with the SPLM-N, and so often bear the brunt of these attacks.

Current political context

Based on the situation described above, Nuba individuals could be more at risk right at this moment given the current political and economic upheaval underway in Sudan. The beginning of 2018 saw widespread protests against the government's mishandling of the lifting of subsidies on wheat that caused bread prices to double.²¹ In response, the government killed at least six demonstrators when live ammunition was used to disperse groups, and arrested hundreds of activists and opposition figures.²² It has subsequently released tranches of arrested individuals at various times,²³ but at the time of writing, many remain detained, some of whom we are in contact with directly.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, 'Sudan: Wave of Arrests After Rebel Offensives', July 2013, accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/10/sudan-wave-arrests-after-rebel-offensive>>

²¹ Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, 'Sudan eliminates wheat subsidies', January 2018, accessed 14.03.18 at <<http://www.fao.org/giews/food-prices/food-policies/detail/en/c/1096022/>>

²² The Guardian, 'High school student killed in protests as price of bread doubles in Sudan', January 2018, accessed 19.03.18 at <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jan/08/high-school-student-killed-in-protests-as-price-of-bread-doubles-in-sudan>>

That the government sees this at a time of political crisis is highlighted by President Bashir's moves against his inner circle, and replacement of individuals in key positions. For instance, he replaced the head of the NISS with a regime old timer, Salah Gosh (coincidentally accused of being a co-conspirator during the time of the Wad Ibrahim coup, mentioned above, and actually himself arrested at that time), and also the replacement of the ruling party (the National Congress Party, NCP's) deputy chairman, Ibrahim Mahmoud, with the local government minister.²⁴

There is an established pattern to the crackdowns and arrests following a perceived threat to the regime's survival. Thus it can be predicted that a Nuba individual returned to Sudan at this juncture would readily be assumed to have a prior political profile on their arrival. Hence, they would be more likely to suffer arrest, detention, ill-treatment, torture, or worse. This period of heightened risk will continue for the foreseeable future.

Treatment by NISS of rejected asylum-seekers

It is also important to understand how the very act of claiming asylum is viewed as a political act in Sudan. The government sees Sudanese who have travelled abroad as more easily connected to opposition and rebel activity, as is evident from the lines of questioning outlined in the testimonies compiled in our reports on post-deportation risk: 'The Danger of Returning Home' (2012),²⁵ 'The Long Arm of the Sudanese Regime' (2014),²⁶ and 'Recent cases of post-deportation risk' (2017),²⁷. Individuals are routinely questioned about their political activities and connections in the country that have travelled from.

During our interviews for this report, this fact was corroborated. One interviewee (Ms A) mentioned a Nuba individual who was questioned for hours on his arrival into Khartoum about his political activities and support for the rebels, despite having a French passport. Another interviewee (Mr C) talked about a human rights activist who returned to Sudan in 2014 with a British passport, but was nonetheless interrogated for one hour about the activities of the UK community group, NMSA. They believed the security officers limited themselves to one hour because he owned a British passport. Two of those whom we interviewed, Ms B and Mr C, had their own stories of harassment on arrival, as included in the Annexes. The testimony of those who have returned may explain why we were told that even those people with British documentation are fearful of returning to Sudan because of their treatment on arrival. As a consequence, they may fear returning to Sudan even to attend the funerals of close family members, including their parents, as recently described by Mr C. Ms A also said that she was advised by family members never to leave her British passport at home when travelling around, for fear she would be arrested and detained without paperwork.

This fear is also owing to the fact the NISS continue to enjoy complete discretion as to who it targets and what techniques it employs, as per the conditions of the 2010 National Security Act – judicial oversight is not stipulated. This means the NISS makes arbitrary judgments about whom they believe has a sufficient political profile to warrant their

²³ Amnesty International, 'Sudan: Further Information: Some Critics Freed, Others Remain in Custody', March 2018, accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/7976/2018/en/>>

²⁴ For more on the key political developments during this period see StillSUDAN, 'What to do with Salah?', February 2018, accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://stillsudan.blogspot.co.uk/2018/02/what-to-do-with-salah.html?m=1>>

²⁵ Waging Peace, 'The Danger of Returning Home', 2012, accessed 19.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/pdf/Exclusives/2012_09_THE_DANGER_OF_RETURNING_HOME.pdf>

²⁶ Waging Peace, 'The Long Arm of the Sudanese Regime', 2014, accessed 19.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/The_Long_Arm_of_the_Sudanese_Regime_-_COMPRESSED.pdf>

²⁷ Waging Peace, 'Recent cases of post-deportation risk', 2017, accessed 19.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/Post-deportation_update_January_2017.pdf>

interest - there is no checklist they consult - and that following this judgment, they can detain someone for up to four and a half months without independent oversight.²⁸ They are also granted complete immunity for any actions they take.

This arbitrary targeting, in addition to NISS's immunity, are the sources of the fear felt by Nuba individuals living in Khartoum. Ms A commented as per our notes:

"Every day we heard of someone kidnapped, detained, disappeared from Nuba. We felt we had to leave, people we knew were being detained, even killed. Normally because of political values, but government can always level bogus charges - arrest first, ask later."

More often, individuals are detained for only a few days if NISS cannot immediately prove wrongdoing. In these cases, NISS's tactics change; they will release the individual, intending to collect information from them later, at a given date, or when they re-detain them in a 'cat and mouse' pattern.²⁹ They will usually force a person to sign a document that releases them on family guarantee or personal security, which obliges them not to engage in any political activities, or possibly leave the country, and gives the police the right to detain them at any time. Several of our interviewees mentioned this tactic. Mr C commented, "If you give information you're fine, but if you resist you face difficulties".

Recent cases of post-deportation risk

The risk faced by returnees into Sudan has become particularly evident recently because of reported cases of ill-treatment following forcible repatriation over the past couple of years. This risk is not unique to Nuba individuals, but shared by all rejected asylum-seekers, including those from other marginalised groups, such as non-Arab Darfuris. Therefore some of the cases outlined below do not strictly fit the profile under consideration for this report, but they do demonstrate the risks facing those returned. It is clear that Nuba individuals returned to Sudan face a range of responses by security officials on arrival, routinely involving arrest, detention, interrogation, and intimidation, but also regularly ill-treatment, torture, and even death.

This change in approach is tied to the normalisation of relations between Sudan and various European Union Member States, which we outline below. It should be noted that the instances of post-deportation risk that have been reported publicly are likely only a tiny percentage of the cases of abuse. Governments are not required under relevant international refugee law to monitor the fate of those they return. In fact, Waging Peace is listed as the only support organisation that can provide post-deportation support on public forums.³⁰ We get requests from NGOs and support organisations across Europe, including from France, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands, etc. But this is despite the fact that at present we possess no practical means to monitor someone post-return, particularly as we would advise anyone being returned to delete our contact information or conversation history before arrival, as phones are routinely searched by security officials for evidence of foreign involvement or activities.

We are also unable to advise that a returnee be met at the airport, as this itself could put them at risk, as it would show engagement with local human rights defenders or groups, and it would in turn put those human rights defenders or groups at increased risk. Ms A confirmed this in her interview, saying that if you were met by someone at the airport it

²⁸ Amnesty International, 'Agents of Fear: The National Security Service in Sudan', July 2010, accessed 14.03.18 at <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AFR54/010/2010/en/>>

²⁹ Waging Peace, 'The Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service', August 2011, accessed 14.03.18 at <<http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/The%20Sudanese%20National%20Intelligence%20and%20Security%20Service%204.8.11%20Waging%20Peace.pdf>>

³⁰ Rights in Exile Programme, 'Sudan Post-Deportation', accessed 15.03.18 at <<http://www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/sudan-post-deportation-monitoring>>

will be assumed that “you have networks and communications with rebels.” Therefore, given the difficulties compiling such information, the fact that any testimonies or stories of abuse have been made public is surprising. We detail this testimony by country below.

Belgium

In December 2017 it was reported that several individuals deported to Sudan from Belgium alleged they had been tortured.³¹ The decision to deport them was made by the Federal Secretary of State responsible for Asylum and Migration, Theo Francken. This followed Francken inviting Sudanese officials on an identification mission to assess Sudanese migrants, some of whom had been arrested in a raid on a makeshift camp in Brussels’ Maximilian Park.³² The delegation was widely believed to have been from Sudan’s NISS, and they were allowed to question Sudanese without Belgian officials present. The episode eventually threatened the survival of the coalition government in Belgium, as tensions mounted between Francken, a Flemish nationalist, and Prime Minister Charles Michel from the other Francophone liberal party, over a charter flight scheduled after the allegations came to light.³³

In total, the testimonies refer to nine Sudanese who were sent home, including one gentleman from the Nuba Mountains. We are in touch with the organisation that compiled this evidence, the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. Hence we have seen the original testimonies, most of which were obtained over the messaging service WhatsApp. All describe a period of detention on arrival at the airport and interrogation lasting several days, then being released on family guarantee/personal security. A few describe physical torture (being beaten with a stick) or emotional torture. One testimony is from a gentleman from the north of Sudan. He credits the fact that he is not from one of the more marginalised areas (Darfur or the Nuba Mountains) with his relatively benign treatment.

As it stands, the Belgian Commission which independently handles asylum claims, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), reported that it did not find the testimonies credible. Hence, Sudanese identification missions will continue, though with more oversight by Belgian officials.³⁴

Italy

Italy was one of the first European governments to put in place a formal bilateral agreement on returns and readmission. It signed a Memorandum of Understanding in August 2016 aimed at increasing police cooperation in the fight against transnational organised criminality, and especially irregular immigration.³⁵ Like the Belgian arrangement, it included provisions for missions of officials from the respective territories to help investigate details to facilitate returns, as well as of training and equipment for the Sudanese police.

This led to the forcible return of around 40 individuals on a charter flight to Sudan in August 2016. Again, testimonies received by NGOs confirm accounts of detention and interrogation on arrival, with some individuals witnessing beatings,

³¹ FlandersNews.Be, ‘Deported Sudanese migrants say they were tortured’, December 2017, accessed 15.03.18 at <<http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News/1.3117089>>

³² The Daily Telegraph, ‘Belgium criticised for inviting Sudanese ‘secret agents’ to Brussels to identify migrants’, September 2017, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/20/belgium-invites-sudanese-secret-agents-brussels-identify-migrants/>>

³³ New York Times, ‘Belgium in Uproar Over Torture of Sudanese It Deported’, January 2018, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/world/europe/belgium-sudan-theo-francken.html>>

³⁴ FlandersNews.Be, “Doubt About the Truthfulness of Testimony”, February 2018, accessed 15.03.18 at <<http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/Politics/1.3140963>>

³⁵ Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione, ‘Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Sudan: a legal analysis’, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Report-Memorandum-of-Understanding-Sudan-Italy-SL-Clinic-UniTO.pdf>>

as documented by Amnesty International.³⁶ The human rights monitoring group Huqooq also provided the testimony of a gentleman nicknamed 'Barakat'.³⁷ 'Barakat' claims he was beaten by NISS during the period the group was detained, and he has since gone into hiding. Other testimonies seen by us also suggest that the deportees now live in fear for their physical security, as well as that of their families, and that they believe they are being monitored by NISS, including via their mobile phones.

Just recently, these returnees received permission to appeal their cases before the European Court of Human Rights for violating the principle of *non-refoulement*.³⁸

France

There are rumours that bilateral discussions have been held between the French and Sudanese governments to arrange for the return and repatriation of Sudanese living in France. Documents produced by Sudan's Foreign Ministry have come to light that mention Sudanese concerns about a particular community in a Paris suburb that Sudanese authorities wanted to see returned to Sudan, and a request for France to share a contact database (this document can be provided on request). This letter indicates Sudan's clear interest in the behaviour and members of its diaspora, particularly insofar as they may be loyal or merely sympathetic to rebel and opposition activity.

A French journalist, Tomas Stadius, has also recently started documenting cases where it seems individuals slated for return to Sudan were interviewed by a Sudanese delegation, in a manner that resembles the approach taken in Belgium.³⁹ The mission delegates seemed to show particular interest in those individuals who had been formerly imprisoned in Sudan. Mr Stadius suggests this may be because the security services are able to verify their presence and activity in the country through fingerprint technology implemented in 2012. Mr Stadius has identified four people deported to Sudan following a Sudanese delegation visit. However, he encountered the same difficulties as we have when trying to monitor those returnees and report on their well-being post-return.

Viability of internal relocation to Khartoum

The experiences of those returned to the Sudanese capital via the airport highlight the first difficulty in relocating internally to Khartoum. It is likely that individuals returned will be detained, and interrogated upon stepping off the plane, and released only on the condition that they do not leave the country, or worse, that they gather information on rebel and opposition activities to prepare for a future period of questioning. The concentration of NISS, police, and other military or security activities in the capital means returnees will have fewer opportunities to escape the attentions of these bodies. It is highly likely that they will be re-detained at a later stage, particularly if they have signed a document on release for family guarantee/personal security, which enables the police to arrest and detain them at any stage. This type of process will be considerably easier if plans to digitise citizenship records under the aegis of the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, in particular the Better Migration Management project run by Germany's development body, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), are carried out.

³⁶ Amnesty International, 'Hotspot Italy: How the EU's flagship approach leads to violations of refugee and migrant rights', November 2016, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur30/5004/2016/en/>>

³⁷ Huqooq, 'Human Rights Monitoring Sudan-Report No:10 1st – 31st August 2016', August 2016, accessed 15.03.18 at <<http://www.sudanrights.com/2016/09/05/human-rights-monitoring-sudan-report-no10-1st-31st-august-2016/>>

³⁸ InfoMigrants, 'ECHR accepts anti-Italy appeal for forced removal of Sudanese', January 2018, accessed 15.03.18 at <<http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/6989/echr-accepts-anti-italy-appeal-for-forced-removal-of-sudanese>>

³⁹ Street Press, 'Comment la France a livré des opposants politiques à la dictature soudanaise', accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.streetpress.com/sujet/1506702391-la-france-livre-opposants-politiques-dictature-soudan>>

Systematic discrimination

By far the biggest obstacle to Nuba individuals relocating to Khartoum are the systemic forms of discrimination individuals face there. The routine denial of these rights and opportunities, and the underlying racism of the Arab elite that brings Nuba individuals more readily to the adverse attention of police and security officials, amounts to a high degree of persecution.

Racial animus/‘Arabisation’

That race plays a role is clear from the language used towards Nuba individuals, both in everyday life, and more specifically when being held by NISS or other military and security bodies. This is also the primary factor that would easily distinguish an individual as being of Nuban heritage – their ‘blackness’ is what would easily differentiate them from others in Khartoum. Mr C mentions this factor in his full testimony, included in Annex II, saying he was verbally abused because of his heritage, and we regularly hear similar scenarios in the testimony of other Nuba asylum-seekers we support. The language of slavery is often employed, with the word ‘*abid*’, meaning ‘slave’, being used. This reflects the Nuba legacy of slavery, described above.

This residual racism also helps explain why the use of skin whitening creams is so popular among Nuba women. Having lighter skin, or “trying to look Arab” in the words of Ms A, is seen as a gateway to success. All our interviewees mentioned this – “everybody’s whitening their skin” commented Ms A. What is more, because these creams only work temporarily, they are a purchase individuals need to repeat in order to see the benefits, a cost few can bear. There are also a multitude of medical side-effects that will disproportionately affect those with Nuba heritage.

The context to this is the Sudanese regime’s stated aim to ‘Arabise’ the country. This has historically involved the suppression of the black, African, and animist (or other religious) expressions of Sudanese culture, in favour of those that are Arab and Muslim. All of our interviewees mentioned attempts to erase Nuban culture in the capital, either by omission (there is “nothing non-Arab on TV” said Ms A, or “very rare to see black faces on TV”, said Mr C, except when the African Union is in town), or by deliberate cultural destruction. For instance, we hosted an All Sudan Cultural Day in March 2017, and there was a performance of Nuba dancing. Many non-Nuban Sudanese in attendance approached us afterwards and said that they had never seen this type of dancing in their own country because of the media black-out.

Additionally, we know some people by certain names. Yet, during our interviews, these individuals disclosed that these names are not their original or family names. Mr C said that his name, which is Arabic-sounding, originated because a school teacher declared that his Nuban name was hard to pronounce. The teacher announced that the Arabic-sounding name was Mr C’s new name. It thereby appears on school leaving certificates and official documents. Most people we spoke to expressed outrage at this now that they are safe in the UK. Many are currently in the process of changing their names back to what they would have been originally, and so reclaiming their Nuban identity.

Citizenship

Often the suppression of Nuba identity is total. Hence, individuals may find deliberate or practical barriers to obtaining a national identity card entitling them to state services and entrenching their rights, (for instance shielding them from undue attention at road check-points). Ms B said that in order to obtain an ID card, or a ‘national number’, one needs a birth certificate. Yet, in a May 2013 report on marginalisation in Khartoum, the organisation International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) found that people may further be required to provide “a residency certificate; a nationality by birth certificate, ID, or passport; a certificate of blood type or group and an employment letter.”⁴⁰ Nuba communities do

⁴⁰ International Refugee Rights Initiative, ‘Marginalised in Khartoum’, May 2013, accessed 15.03.18 at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Marginalised%20in%20Khartoum%20FINAL_0.pdf

not customarily own these, and where they might be acquired by travelling to their home regions, it is to be noted that the costs of travel may be prohibitive for some. The IRRI report further adds that some individuals are refused even where they do possess these documents because they possess a 'Southern' name. Ms B said that her parents were denied citizenship on that basis.

This denial of citizenship is crucial, because an ID card is required for access to most opportunities and services, such as employment, housing, and education.

Education

An ID card is required in order to sit the exams to leave secondary school, as was confirmed by Ms B. By not taking this exam, Nuba students are then also prevented from attending university. This of course presumes they received primary and secondary-level education. Schooling is not free, so many are unable to afford it, or if they can, it will only be for one child out of a family of many more children. In addition, there are often few, or no, schools in the areas in which most Nuba communities live (the so-called 'black belt', discussed below). This effectively bars the Nuba youth from educational opportunities.

Where individuals do get to university, their achievements may be disparaged. For instance, one Nuba gentleman we support faced severe discrimination while at university: he had to repeat a year, and was only given a pass grade, despite the fact that his peers, whom he had tutored, received high marks.

The suppression of the Nuban identity is also evident in attempts to eradicate languages other than Arabic in schooling. Ms A described that during her schooling she would have her hands "beaten raw" for using her mother tongue, rather than Arabic, in class. She lamented the fact that traditional Nuba languages are becoming lost, as newer generations speak only Arabic. Nuba individuals are also not represented in school textbooks or study problems. For instance, exam questions will say '*Mohammed* has 5 pieces of fruit', or so on.

Housing

As mentioned, most of the Nuba live in certain peripheral areas of Khartoum, nicknamed the 'black belt'. Ms A called the conditions "heart-breaking", describing a situation where individuals were living in slums without permanent structures, electricity, government service provision, or even food in some cases. She described how the slums had become 'no go' areas for other Khartoum residents. Slum dwellers are also demonised by the public and politicians, often in ways that associate them with rebel activity.

Healthcare

There is no access to the admittedly inadequate healthcare accessible to Khartoum's other residents, because there are no facilities in the 'black belt'. Article 46 of Sudan's constitution determines that emergency and primary healthcare should be free, but, in practice, it is not. Hence the majority of doctors refuse to work with the Ministry of Health (a figure as high as 70% according to a conversation in February 2018 with someone in the sector). There have been widespread strikes among the the medical profession (as in December 2016) in recognition of the fact that the system was near collapse.

Even were adequate healthcare on offer, Nubans would struggle to access it, because they lack an ID card, or their ID card identifies them as a Nuba. This means they cannot access the limited health insurance schemes on offer, and one-

off payments can push poor families into ‘catastrophic health expenditure’, where the sum paid would seriously disrupt household living standards.⁴¹

Employment

All our interviewees mentioned the difficulties in gaining employment, even though those who spoke to were from wealthier backgrounds and had relevant qualifications. For instance, Ms B said she had to recite verses from the Quran in interviews, and was asked questions such as, “Where are you really from?” because of the colour of her skin. As a result, she ended up performing outsourcing roles for a computer company or a teaching association, where she would be paid, but her name or identity would not be recorded. This adversely affected her ability to prove her employment history and skills to future employers.

Ms A also described the difficulties her husband faced. From his home in Khartoum, he started an organisation focused on development, and particularly water security, in the Nuba Mountains. However, the government effectively barred him from work on local development projects. Mr C also said that although there is a government-run microfinance scheme for small businesses, aimed at graduates, and theoretically accessible to individuals from the Nuba Mountains, a successful application requires a guarantor from the government or ruling NCP, something unlikely for Nuba to receive.

Nuba individuals sometimes limit their horizons as a result. But unfortunately, even some of the lower-skilled work available to Nuba individuals is the target of police action, as it forms part of Sudan’s informal economy. For instance, many Nuba women in the capital work as tea-sellers, while also selling a lightly alcoholic drink called *marissa*. Some Nuba families even give it to children before school. There have been numerous cases of these women being arrested or submitted to degrading punishments as a result, under the aegis of the Public Order Laws.⁴²

Religion

Another aspect of the ‘Arabisation’ programme is religious. The Nuba Mountains is a fairly equal and harmonious mix of Christian, Muslim, and animist believers. However, in Khartoum there is a sustained assault on the right of worship and belief as a Christian, or simply as a non-Muslim. This is problematic, because as Mr C noted, Nuba individuals often gather, or build additional infrastructure, around churches as a place of sanctuary.

Faith-based discrimination has a long history in Sudan, and some of our interviewees described the process by which young men in the Nuba used to have to pay a *dignia*, or tax, when they reached a certain age, as they were presumed to be non-Muslim. Ms B claimed this sometimes happens even today.

The non-profit group, Open Doors, ranked Sudan the fifth-worst country in the world for Christian persecution in 2017, ranked just above Syria.⁴³ The US State Department’s 2016 International Religious Freedom report said of Sudan, “The government arrests, detains, and intimidates clergy and church members. It denies permits for the construction of new churches and is closing or demolishing existing ones.”⁴⁴ The report details egregious violations of freedom of religion or

⁴¹ Waging Peace, ‘Mental health in Sudan – the psychiatric and psychological infrastructure’, 2016, accessed 15.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/Mental_health_in_Sudan_-_the_psychiatric_infrastructure.pdf>

⁴² REDRESS, ‘Report: Public order laws in Sudan continue to be used to punish and control women’, December 2017, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://redress.org/news/public-order-laws-in-sudan-continue-to-be-used-to-punish-and-control-women/>>

⁴³ Open Doors, ‘World Watch List – Country Profiles 2017’, January 2017, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/countries/>>

⁴⁴ US Department of State, ‘Remarks on the 2016 International Religious Freedom Annual Report’, August 2017, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/08/273449.htm>>

belief in Sudan during 2016 and comprehensively details a pattern of discrimination, harassment, and persecution of religious minorities in Sudan that has worsened since the independence of South Sudan in 2011.⁴⁵ A letter from the United States Commission of International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) adds further detail, saying that since 2011, the government of Sudan has arrested nearly 200 Christians, including 14 religious leaders; prosecuted three religious leaders on spurious national security charges; demolished or partially demolished 20 churches and threatened at least 10 others; and refused to issue permits for church construction, arguing that no new churches are needed due to the secession of South Sudan and the presumed exodus of ethnic Southerners, who were predominantly Christian. The government has also failed to make necessary amendments to the 1991 Criminal Code which criminalises and permits death sentences for apostasy and prison sentences, lashing, or fines for blasphemy.⁴⁶

In Khartoum specifically, there is a battle between the Khartoum State Ministry of Education, and Christian faith leaders. On 26 July 2017, the Khartoum State Ministry of Education issued a directive requiring Christian schools to open on a Sunday, taking Friday and Saturday as the weekend break. The Coptic Church of Sudan was the first denomination to speak out against the order, and noted that Christian schools have been permitted to take Sunday as a holiday for religious observance since the creation of Sudan.⁴⁷ The matter remains unsolved at present.

Annexes

Annex I

Ms B

Testimony taken on 8 July 2014 in person, first included in our report 'The Long Arm of the Sudanese Regime' (2014).⁴⁸

Ms B has asked for anonymity to protect her identity.

Before coming to the United Kingdom in 2008 to study, I worked as a journalist in Khartoum, Sudan. I am originally from the Nuba Mountains but lived mainly in Khartoum with family. I originally come to the UK with a student visa and I completed a Master's degree in Agriculture in the UK in 2009 and 2010. I now have refugee status in the UK.

My last visit to Sudan was in 2010. My colleagues expressed concern about me visiting Sudan, but I thought that they must be paranoid. I chose to go home to see my family, and because I wanted to make an impact at home. I wanted to do a real project for my dissertation that would influence my people.

I flew to Sudan at the end of July 2010 with my Sudanese passport. I flew with Qatar Air, with a layover in Qatar. I flew into Khartoum airport. On the plane, all of the citizens had to fill out a form, which is a standard thing to do. The form was simple – it asked for my name, family name, and address.

⁴⁵ US Department of State, 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2016: Sudan', August 2017, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=268700#wrapper>>.

⁴⁶ United State Commission for International Religious Freedom, 'USCIRF Letter to Secretary Tillerson Urging Continued Sanctions on Sudan for Religious Freedom Violations', May 2017, accessed 15.03.18 at <<http://www.uscirf.gov/advising-government/government-correspondence/uscirf-letter-secretary-tillerson-urging-continued>>.

⁴⁷ Radio Dabanga, 'Sudan's church schools ordered to follow Muslim week', July 2017, accessed 15.03.18 at <<https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-s-church-schools-ordered-to-follow-muslim-week>>.

⁴⁸ Waging Peace, 'The Long Arm of the Sudanese Regime', 2014, accessed 19.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/The_Long_Arm_of_the_Sudanese_Regime_-_COMPRESSED.pdf>

WagingPeace

G12, The Foundry,
17 Oval Way, London,
SE11 5RR, United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3752 5815
W www.wagingpeace.info
E info@wagingpeace.info

Upon arriving and stepping off of the plane and before we arrived at customs, I stood in line for about 45 minutes and we had to fill out another form which was very similar to the form I had filled out on the plane. After this, I stood in another line to give my passport. But before I got through this line, an officer took me aside and took my passport. Then another officer asked me, 'Do you have another passport?' I said no, this was my only passport. Everyone else was allowed to come and go except for me. A smiling man then came up to me and said, 'I told you she was genuine.' No one explained what was going on to me. Also, I had made a friend while I was on the plane and I had told her that I was surprising my family with a visit. She waited with me because she was concerned for me. There was a mean officer who came up to me – he looked horrible. He asked me where I lived, and I gave my family's address in Khartoum. They also asked how long I had lived there. They asked about what jobs I had had in Sudan. I said I had been a journalist, and they mocked me. They also asked me what I did in the UK, to which I answered that I was studying. They asked me if I worked in the UK. All of this questioning happened in the public, it was very humiliating. The friend I had made was nice enough to stay with me this entire time.

Then another officer came up with my passport and asked me when I had renewed it last. I couldn't remember exactly, but I remembered I had renewed it in London between 2008 and 2009. He handed me my passport and asked me if I was ok. Then he said, 'Welcome to Sudan.' I didn't feel very welcome.

Although I can't be sure, my instinct is that they stopped me because I had come from the UK, as no other passengers on the plane had come from there. The reason I suspect this is because of the types of questions they were asking me about the UK.

Once I saw my family I pretty much forgot about this incident. I travelled on to the Nuba Mountains from Khartoum. I was in Sudan 15 days altogether before returning to the UK, and I only spent 3 days in Khartoum.

Because of the research project I was working on, I was told I had to register with the main office in the Nuba Mountains in Dilling. I went by myself voluntarily. They asked me if I had a translator. They asked me where I was living. They took a copy of my passport. They took down my name, telephone, email, and my family contact details in Khartoum. I was then told to leave the office and accompanied out. I was told that they could not be held responsible if anything happened to me. They finished by saying, 'You have been warned.' After this, I was always accompanied by at least 10 people, usually volunteers helping me on my project or friends of mine.

One day I went to the market in Sonjokayaa the area of my research, and was talking to a seller there. 2 men sipping tea came towards me and one of them said, 'Who gave you the right to question the people here?' I think word had gotten out about what I was doing, and then they had followed me to the market. They tried to drag me away, physically grabbing me in the middle of the day, and saying they were taking me to the police station. Other people started to get involved at this point, and some of my volunteers got involved and a fight erupted. One of the volunteers dragged me out of the market to get me away from the two men. This is when I decided to leave the area. I started getting text messages shortly after this incident. They told me to go to the police station. They were threatening, saying I would get arrested if I didn't go there because I had assaulted a police man. I was scared not to go because I thought I may get in trouble, but I was even more scared to actually go. In the end, I chose not to go. I ended up throwing out the SIM card connected with this phone number.

When I got to Khartoum, I received an email and I opened it. It put a virus on my computer and I was then unable to access any of my other emails. I then later got a second email, and when I opened this one, it was able to hack into my account and spam all of my contacts.

There is a lack of security and trust in the Sudanese government and its apparatus. This experience made me very scared to even go to the Sudanese Embassy in the UK.

Annex II

Mr C

Mr C provided his first testimony to Waging Peace on 6 February 2012, first included in our report 'The Danger of Returning Home' (2012),⁴⁹ as Mr Y.

Mr C was studying for a PhD in the UK at the University of Wales. His studies were being funded by the GAC which is part-owned by the Sudanese government.

Whilst in the UK Mr C attended three demonstrations to protest about the situation in Sudan. Two of which were outside Downing Street to call upon the UK government to push for a peaceful implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and one was outside the Sudanese embassy during the 2010 Sudanese Presidential election. On Tuesday 30 November 2010 Mr C attended an event at the House of Lords called 'The Ticking Time-Bomb: Preventing a Return to War in Sudan' which was organised by Waging Peace. This meeting was about the future of the so called 'Three Areas', South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei. Kamal Kambal, the then head of the Nuba Mountains Solidarity Abroad (NMSA - the primary organisation for the Nuba diaspora in the UK) spoke at this meeting.

Mr C returned to Sudan on 6 January 2011 in order to carry out field work as part of his studies. His family lived in Khartoum. He had no problems entering Sudan.

On 9 January 2011 whilst Mr C was working at the GAC headquarters in Khartoum two plain-clothed people came to see him there. They said they were from 'external security' and produced identification to that effect. They told Mr C that they had they were not formally questioning him but would like him to answer some questions as they were collecting information.

They first asked about Mr C's studies and then they asked Mr C about a meeting in the UK Parliament in December 2010. The two men said that they had heard about the meeting in Parliament, and that the press release put out by NMSA following the meeting was a crime against the state of Sudan. During questioning, Mr C denied that he attended the meeting and claimed he had heard about it from an article on Sudanese Online. The two men asked him who attended the meeting and Mr C said that he did not know. Mr C stated he was an academic, and was not interested in politics. Mr C was questioned for two to two and a half hours about the meeting in Parliament. The men took his mobile number and said they were to call him if he had any more information.

On the 16 January one of the security men who questioned him a week earlier phoned Mr C and told him that they would return to see him at the company. They came back and took him by force to the National Intelligence and Security Services headquarters in Khartoum, near to the Christian Graveyard, Army Road.

On this occasion the men were much more aggressive with him. They told him that they knew he took part in the meeting in Parliament and that he had to tell them the truth. Mr C said that he was in the UK to secure a better quality

⁴⁹ Waging Peace, 'The Danger of Returning Home', 2012, accessed 19.03.18 at <http://wagingpeace.info/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/pdf/Exclusives/2012_09_THE_DANGER_OF_RETURNING_HOME.pdf>

of life for himself and his family; he did not go there for political reasons. They asked Mr C specifically about Kamal Kambal. He admitted knowing Kamal Kambal, as a friend from primary school, but mentioned nothing about the meeting in Parliament. The security officers accused Mr C of preparing a petition, as a result of the Parliamentary meeting. Mr C denied this, though he had in fact prepared the petition together with Kamal Kambal and one other. The two men once again told Mr C that the press release following the Parliamentary debate was considered a crime against the state.

Mr C was detained for three days, incommunicado, unable to telephone his wife to let her know where he was. He was kept in a cell on his own and did not see or hear any other people who were detained. He was given food and water. Mr C was questioned from 11pm throughout the night by another security officer. He was questioned for two consecutive nights.

He was verbally abused during the interrogation and was called a black African slave. He also suffered physical abuse; his hands were tied behind his back, he was slapped in the face, pushed to the ground and was stamped on. He was told he was brainwashed in the UK and told that he could not call his boss in the UK now. The men repeated the same questions, asking him who attended the meeting in Parliament and who was the boss of the delegation to the Parliamentary meeting. He denied attending the meeting throughout the interrogation.

On the third day they told him he could leave. They said that they would accompany him back to his house and that they wanted to see his laptop. Once at his house they took his laptop and searched it. They said that they wanted to check the laptop thoroughly and that they would return it later. Mr C did not get the laptop back.

Mr C stayed at home for the next few days, scared. He messaged Kamal Kambal from NMSA and Louise Roland-Gosselin at Waging Peace. Kamal Kambal contacted the then Minister of Health, Dr Abdullah, who was SPLM. The Minister of Health got in touch with Mr C and advised him to leave Khartoum and go and stay with his relatives in the Nuba Mountains out of harm's way. Mr C decided to try to finish his field work quickly so that he could return to the UK. As part of his work he was meant to visit six gum Arabic plantations; three in the West and three in the East of the country. He went to a plantation in El Gedarif, in Eastern Sudan, where he stayed and carried out his work for a day and a half before returning to Khartoum.

On Saturday 5 February two security men, one of whom had come the previous time, arrived at Mr C's house, telling him that he had to go with them. Once again he was taken to the National Intelligence and Security Services headquarters and was imprisoned in a cell where he was detained for a week.

He was once again questioned about the meeting in Parliament. Mr C was told by the security men that they were certain that he attended the meeting, and he was asked who else attended the meeting. He was told again that the NMSA press release that followed the meeting represented a crime against the state. Mr C was asked why he had left Khartoum in the days previously. He explained that he was doing fieldwork. The security officers did not believe him, and kept questioning him about why he had left Khartoum so close to the date of the South's vote for secession (9 January 2011). Mr C was asked why he was attending university and why he had a scholarship. It felt to Mr C as if they were trying to create a backstory for him of a man who was actively anti-regime.

During his imprisonment he was verbally abused about his political beliefs and about his Nuban heritage. He was told he was a black slave, not equal to Arabs. He was told he was sent to the UK to become human but that he would never be able to go back again. He was told that his sponsorship to study in the UK would be terminated.

WagingPeace

G12, The Foundry,
17 Oval Way, London,
SE11 5RR, United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3752 5815
W www.wagingpeace.info
E info@wagingpeace.info

After a week Mr C was released due to the intervention of the ex-Minister of Health, Dr Abdullah. Mr C was allowed to leave subject to the conditions that he was not allowed to leave Khartoum or Sudan, and had to sign in at the security headquarters on a weekly basis. Mr C returned to his family who had not been harmed during his detention. His wife had assumed he had been taken by the security services again. Mr C received a letter following his release, on or around the 11 March 2011, informing him that his company would no longer support him and sponsor his PhD in the UK.

Mr C met with Dr Abdullah who told him that due to the increasing tensions between the NCP and the SPLM his power within government was on uncertain ground and that he may not be able to help Mr C again. He advised Mr C to leave Khartoum and to go to his relatives in the Nuba Mountains, where he would have SPLM protection. Mr C followed this advice. Dr Abdullah lent Mr C his car which offered diplomatic immunity and enabled him to enter the Nuba Mountains. He stayed with his mother there.

Tensions were high in the Nuba Mountains at this time as elections for governor of the state were about to take place. Mr C became involved in the election campaign working with a small organisation which encouraged people to vote. He was able to use a computer and was put in charge of tabulating results. Following the election, tension in the Nuba Mountains increased and on the 4-5 June 2011 war broke out. Mr C was staying in Kadugli at the time with his cousin who ran a radio station in South Kordofan. Mr C's brother, an SPLM officer, rang and told Mr C that he must leave Kadugli as it was going to be attacked by SAF.

Mr C and his cousin took shelter in the mountains at night in order to avoid bombings. Houses in Kadugli were being looted; Mr C's brother's house was looted. He talked to his auntie who had a child and they decided to leave Kadugli. They fled to a small village nearby where they found a man who had been taught by their uncle who agreed to let them stay with him. From the village they went to the UNMIS camp outside Kadugli where IDPs were gathering. Security officials were visiting the camp and Mr C and his cousin were worried about their safety as Mr C's cousin was the media advisor for Abdul Aziz's campaign, and thus was likely to be a target. They decided to leave the camp, leaving behind Mr C's auntie and her child. They smuggled themselves out of the camp hiding under women's clothes in the middle of the night.

Mr C's cousin worked with the UNAMIS head in Lewait North of Kadugli. They called him and he told them he would be able to get them on a flight to Juba. They went to the UNAMIS office which was near to the airport. There was a high security presence. Their journey from the camp to the UNAMIS office was perilous with numerous checkpoints, and they could see people being shot and killed by the Police Reserve Forces. They went with the UNAMIS head to his relative's house. The head received a phone call and was told that the security services were searching houses and that they had to leave. They paid three-hundred Sudanese pounds for a private car to get out of Lewait into Kosti in White Nile; from there they took public transport to get to Upper Nile in the Republic of South Sudan. They adopted fake South Sudanese names in order to do this as they thought it would offer them greater protection.

In Upper Nile in South Sudan they went to see the State Commissioner who provided them with food and accommodation. They warned the commissioner that lots of refugees would be on their way fleeing the violence in the Nuba Mountains. Mr C and his cousin were early arrivals in Upper Nile, within two days a further forty people had arrived. Whilst in Upper Nile they met with Alasdair McPhail, the UK's ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan, and with Brian Jones, the UK's representative to RoSS from Dfid; both were there to visit IDPs and refugees. Mr C informed them of what was happening in Kadugli. They told Mr C that they would help him in Juba.

From where they were in Upper Nile they got a bus to the capital Malakal and then UNAMIS took them to Juba. It was in Juba that Mr C emailed Olivia Warham at Waging Peace. Whilst they were there Mr C gave information to and worked

WagingPeace

G12, The Foundry,
17 Oval Way, London,
SE11 5RR, United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3752 5815
W www.wagingpeace.info
E info@wagingpeace.info

with various NGOs such as the Sudan Sentinel Project and Amnesty International. From Juba they went to Yida refugee camp in Unity State, there they would see SAF Antonovs flying overhead daily. Abductions of intellectuals were taking place in the camp by Southern militias supported by the Sudanese government attempting to push the people from the camp back to the Nuba Mountains. Mr C and his cousin then returned to Juba and Mr C flew on to the UK where he still had a current student visa. He later claimed asylum in Croydon. His cousin is still in Juba, operating a radio station for Unity state.

On talking to his wife in Khartoum he found out that she continued to be harassed by security services who asked after Mr C's whereabouts. His wife and three children are planning to move to RoSS where they think that they will be safer pending the decision on Mr C's asylum claim in the UK.