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The Challenge of Protracted Displacement: The Case of Khartoum

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During the past two decades, the international community has steadily increased its attention on the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and, following traditional models of refugee assistance, focused principally on how to provide relief to IDPs living in camp settings. The unique needs of IDPs in urban settings have long gone neglected. Over the past few years, however, a growing number of academics, researchers, and practitioners have begun to think critically about how to provide assistance to displaced populations who have settled in and around cities. Sudan's capital Khartoum offers a good case study to examine trends and test assumptions about these populations, particularly in a protracted situation.

1. Displacement to the Capital

IDPs in Khartoum: How Many?

There has been massive internal displacement from Sudan's periphery to Khartoum for decades. During the first civil war between North and South (1956–1972), most displacement movements took place within the South or across the border with neighboring countries. The massive displacement from South to North, and towards Khartoum in particular, was triggered by the resumption of war between North and South in 1983 and the drought and famine that struck central Sudan (from Darfur to the eastern regions) from 1983 to 1985.¹ Since 2003, some IDPs fleeing the conflict in Darfur have gone Khartoum.

The causes of displacement in Sudan are numerous and often intertwined. In a context of scarce or unequal access to resources, protracted crisis, and massive violations of human rights, it is difficult to tell if people were displaced because of conflict, natural hazards, or poverty (and thus should be classified as economic migrants). David Keen (1994) has shown how the famine caused by the drought during the mid-1980s was utilized for political purposes in Southern Kordofan and even fostered by warring groups in some instances.² Forced displacements, on a national or an international scale, have been enormous. In fact, as

¹ Gamal Mahmoud Hamid, *Population Displacement in the Sudan: Patterns, Responses, Coping Strategies* (New York: Centre for Migration Studies, 1996), p. 196.

² D. Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983–1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 277.

reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Sudan has the largest number of IDPs (an estimated 4.9 million). According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sudan is also the source of about 350,000 refugees.

In addition to the forced displacements, segments of Sudan’s populations – particularly pastoralists — live highly mobile lifestyles. Furthermore, like many African countries, Sudan has become an increasingly urbanized society in recent decades. Khartoum is by far the largest city in Sudan, comprising 11% of the country’s population of 39 million, and has been attracting large numbers of economic and social migrants as well as IDPs.

Table 1: Greater Khartoum Population

	1955	1973	1983	1993	2008
Greater Khartoum	245 000	784 000	1 343 000	2 920 000	4 273 000

Source: Government of Sudan, National Census.

In 2006, one year after Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), IDMC estimated that over 2 million IDPs were living in and around Khartoum.³ Since then, several surveys and studies have been conducted in the capital. In 2010, IDMC revised its estimate downwards to 1.7 million IDPs to account for southerners returning to the South.⁴ Tufts University conducted a profile study in Khartoum in 2008 and concluded: “we get a range of 1,329,300–1,675,500 IDPs in all of Khartoum.”⁵

Unfortunately, the 5th national census in 2008 did not help to clarify the figure, as many IDPs refused to respond, afraid that the registration forms might be used for political purposes.⁶ The GoS did its own assessment in 2009, which concluded that 623,667 persons could still be counted as IDPs in the capital, with 1.5 million “ex-IDPs” having “been officially allocated land for their ownership.”⁷ Whatever the exact figure might be, IDPs represent a significant demographic in Greater Khartoum.

IDPs in Khartoum: Who Are They?

It is difficult to obtain accurate and consistent figures regarding IDPs because there is no consensus in Sudan as to the definition of IDP. The picture is particularly murky in the context of Khartoum. Region of origin and/or ethnic affiliation, place of living (IDP camps,

³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Sudan: Slow IDP Return to the South While Darfur Crisis Continues Unabated* (August 2006), p. 59. (Note: All numbers except for the Greater Darfur figures are taken from: “UN Support for Spontaneous Returns 2005/2006 Operational Plan,” July 4, 2005).

⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Sudan: Rising Inter-tribal Violence in the South and Renewed Clashes in Darfur Cause New Waves of Displacement* (May 2010), p. 162.

⁵ K. Jacobsen, *Internal Displacement to urban areas: the Tufts-IDMC profiling study. Khartoum, Sudan: case 1*, (Feinstein International Center, Tufts University in collaboration with Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva, August 2008), p. 8.

⁶ The elaboration of the census forms lead to vivid discussions on criteria used to define categories: place of birth, place of living, place of origin, tribe, religion, etc.

⁷ The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs commissioned a study from the IDP Center, a Sudanese public institution, to estimate the number of IDPs in Khartoum and make an assessment of their living conditions. The report is available online: http://www.hac.gov.sd/picture_library1/report/IDPs%20in%20Khartoum0.pdf (IDP Centre, 2010), p.10-11.

long-term IDP settlements, or relocation areas and transit camps), and social status are criteria used by the different stakeholders to cobble together their own unofficial definition of who is an IDP. When drafting the new governmental policy regarding IDPs issued in 2009, Sudanese authorities failed to clarify this point in spite of the pressure put on them by international agencies. The definition given in the official document is: “Internally Displaced Persons: Shall mean Individuals or group of individuals who are compelled or forced to leave their homes by reason of, as a result of, or to avoid consequences of a natural or man-made disaster, and moved to other places in Sudan.”⁸

Unfortunately, humanitarian actors and the relevant members of the international community providing assistance to IDPs have failed to work with the Sudanese government to address this problem. With respect to IDPs’ intentions to return, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) reports, somewhat unhelpfully, that: “Economic migrants are not included in the IDP definition articulated in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. During the implementation of the survey the distinction was not made, therefore for the purpose of this report, all individuals residing within official ‘IDP Camps’ are referred to as IDPs.”⁹

Nor did IOM make the distinction when implementing the joint organized return program to assist IDPs living in Khartoum in returning to their areas of origin following the signing of the CPA. Anyone interested in going back to his/her region of origin (Southern Sudan and Southern Kordofan state mainly) could apply for support. Perhaps due to the complexity of the situation and the sheer scale of displacement in Sudan, the need to delineate and identify the causes of displacement in the Sudanese context is frequently skipped over, as is the issue of the criteria used to define who is an IDP. It is thus difficult to put forward figures and to appraise the forced displacement phenomenon with the degree of accuracy needed to target assistance appropriately, particularly in cities.

This data gap contributes to a frequently distorted picture of what is happening in Sudan, marked by a wide discrepancy between official Sudanese discourses (and figures) and those of the international community. Finally, there is a general trend among humanitarian actors in Sudan to make extensive use of the IDP terminology, which also allows better access to international funding, as “IDP” is a target group population for the international community and donors. On the eve of the Southern Sudan’s independence, and with the problems and concerns raised by Southerners living in the North, this long-standing challenge now has serious implications for international donors.

IDPs in Khartoum: A Protracted Situation — A Slow Return Process

In the 1980s and 1990s, massive waves of displacement pushed IDPs to Greater Khartoum. Most of them settled on vacant lands in and around the city, sometimes joining relatives or people from the same ethnic group, region, or village. This massive influx of people resulted in rapid, uncontrolled urban growth and sprawl. As informal settlements spread inside and around the city, the number of people outstripped the capacity of the government to provide services. And given the animosity and mistrust between Khartoum and Southerners and the

⁸ Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Republic of Sudan, *National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)* (2009).

⁹ *IDPs Intentions Survey, North Sudan 2006, Vol. 1.* (International Organization for Migration, 2006), p. vi.

willingness of relief organizations, at least initially, to provide assistance, the government had little incentive or desire to assist this population meet even their most basic daily needs.

Most of the IDPs living in Khartoum have thus been there for at least a decade; many have lived there for upwards of 20 years. For Southerners, continued war between North and South and chronic insecurity in the South long prevented them from returning to their region of origin. As these IDPs settled more permanently in Khartoum, what was seen by humanitarian actors as an emergency situation has, over time, developed into a protracted displacement crisis with, as discussed below, some obvious implications for urban planning.

Returns to the South following the signing of the cease-fire in 2004 were far below the levels expected by the international community.¹⁰ After the first waves of spontaneous return, the international community (through the UN agencies) supported, in collaboration with the government of National Unity (North Sudan) and the government of South Sudan, an organized return program in 2006. The program initially aimed to assist the return of 150,000 IDPs to the South. However, given its slow implementation and the low number of returns, the program was extended for a second year. According to IOM, 116,000 individuals were finally assisted through this program and about 2 million persons returned home between 2005 and December 2009 (including South-South and North-South movements).¹¹ Among North-South movements, the majority of the returnees departed from Khartoum.

Nevertheless, IOM underlines that those figures should be considered cautiously. IOM recalls that mobility is very high in Sudan. For example, population movements between Southern Kordofan (state which registered the highest figures of returnees) and Khartoum are significant, and should be taken into account when considering return figures. In fact, seasonal migrations between Southern Kordofan and Khartoum are regular, and trips to this region should not all be considered as permanent returns.

Although it is difficult to obtain accurate figures, it is nonetheless clear that there were fewer returnees than expected. The peace negotiations and the signing of the CPA had created high expectations among humanitarian stakeholders, the South's political elite, and IDPs themselves about the prospects for return. In the IOM "IDPs intention surveys" in 2006, 62.5% of the IDPs settled in Greater Khartoum declared that they wanted to return.¹² Regarding the joint organized return program, many logistical challenges and hindrances emerged. Criticisms arose among the displaced population regarding the methods used (the gathering of IDPs in departure centers a few days before departure, for medical screening and practical reasons, was often considered a degrading process), the insufficient volume of personal items permitted (people had to leave most of their personal belongings in Khartoum, giving them the impression that they were again condemned to start from nothing back in the South), and lack of information regarding the selection of the return areas (it was left to the government of South Sudan to decide to which areas people should be repatriated). In

¹⁰ Before the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005, a ceasefire was signed in 2004. The first significant spontaneous return movement started after this date.

¹¹ The word "home" is widely used but is sometimes misleading. It was noticed that in many cases, returnees are not resettling in their village of origin, but rather in a nearby town, or even a bigger town in their state of origin or in the South. IOM uses the term "state of origin" in its report, to avoid the confusion. "Total Returns to Southern Sudan and Southern Kordofan Post CPA to December 2009," IOM tracking of returns project, is available online at www.iom.int.

¹² *IDPs Intentions Survey, North Sudan 2006 Vol. 1.* (International Organization for Migration, 2006), p. 11.

addition, lack of infrastructure in the South, difficult or disrupted communication during rainy season made the planning and the organization of return very difficult.

Nevertheless, making the decision to return can be very complicated for people who have been displaced place for 10, 15, or even 20 years. This is especially true in the case of children born in Khartoum, who have known only urban life and have thus developed expectations about their future that differ from those of IDPs living in camps near their areas of origin. Several factors weaken displaced people decision to go back. The South remains highly insecure in many places, and the situation might not improve dramatically after the separation. The level of development in peripheral regions (the South, Darfur, and the East) is far below that of Khartoum. Uncertainty regarding acceptance by receiving communities and opportunities in return areas to rebuild a new life is high.

Assessing return intentions is particularly sensitive and tricky. Asked the question “do you want to go back?” most southerners living in Khartoum will answer “yes.” But delve into greater detail — asking about the conditions for return, the criteria to make the decision, date/period set for the return, and the strategy planned for the family (return with all the family, disassociation within the household, etc.) — the answers are far more complicated and less self-assured. Tufts and IDMC conducted a profiling study of IDPs in Khartoum in March 2007, and concluded that 50% of the IDPs living in Khartoum wanted to remain in the capital, while only 22% expressed a strong desire to return home.¹³ Urban settings foster protracted displacement in that economic opportunities for IDPs are often far better there than in peripheral regions. Being in the capital for years, many IDPs prefer to seek local integration — even if life in Khartoum comes with a high level of marginalization — rather than to return to uncertainty.

However, current assumptions need to be revised in light of the current post-referendum and pre-separation context in Sudan. The Government of Southern Sudan has been strongly encouraging returns in the last months, in order to gain returnees’ vote in the referendum (registration and vote of Southerners has been particularly low in Khartoum State). Many southerners settled in the North were repatriated to the South. According to the first observations, it seems that this process mainly affected the most vulnerable groups (i.e., those with no secure future in the North). At the same time, some better off Southerners have been preparing for their return to the South: leaving their jobs and travelling back to the South before secession. Although some, particularly those within the Khartoum Government seeking to discredit the process, have raised questions about the voluntary nature of return, there is little evidence that southern Sudanese officials have coerced Southerners to go home. A deeper concern is the conditions for returnees in the South. Reportedly, very little was done before in order to prepare their arrival, and the settlement of those “newcomers” is again raising tensions and livelihood uncertainty. Some reverse processes of returnees coming back to the North have been observed, making the situation difficult to read and analyze. This is not a new phenomenon. However, the lack of preparedness and lack of attention devoted to reintegration to the communities in the South is certainly partly responsible for this tendency.

The rate of return has risen over the past two years for a number of reasons, and could accelerate dramatically between the referendum vote and Southern Sudan’s independence.

¹³ K. Jacobsen, *Internal Displacement to Urban Areas: the Tufts-IDMC Profiling Study. Khartoum, Sudan: Case 1* (Feinstein International Center, Tufts-IDMC August 2008), p. 54.

The future of the Southerners settled in the North remains highly uncertain, and is the subject of intense discussions and contradictory declarations among the officials in Khartoum. Some claim that Southerners will be pushed out of the North, while others insist that they will not be granted the right to work. Still others claim that they will have to request citizenship in the North. A minister sometimes cools down the dialogue, saying that North and South will remain interdependent after separation of the South and that a *modus vivendi* has to be found. In any event, the climate is not conducive to confidence for Southerners still living in the North, and the decision-making process regarding return is undoubtedly influenced by fear.

2. An issue of urban planning

Spatial Regulation by the State

In Sudan, and in Khartoum in particular, the government exhibits strong control over the space and location of settlements in the city. Frequently, Sudanese authorities resort to force to impose its regulatory role on the urban space. Moreover, settlement of displaced populations goes hand-in-hand with segregation and discrimination dynamics. In a general article related to urban refugees, Gaim Kibreab offers several reasons to explain the government's inclination to put urban refugees in spatially segregated settlements sites, reasons which fit well with the urban IDPs situation in Khartoum:¹⁴

- Prevention of integration of refugees into host societies;
- minimization of actual or perceived risk to national security;
- prevention of refugee competition with national for employment, self-employment, resources, and services; and
- aversion to ethnic imbalance in border areas.

The IDP population in Khartoum has long been perceived by the government as outsiders who pose security and public health risks; constitute a burden on public expenses, urban planning, and social services; and, by upsetting the ethnic, religious, and demographic balance in the capital, place the social order in jeopardy. Access to IDP camps by foreigners, and by Western humanitarian actors in particular, is controlled and restricted. A permit delivered by the Humanitarian Aid Commission is required to enter those areas, and checkpoints allow the government to know who is entering the areas, when, and for what purpose.

By the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s, the Sudanese government sought to control this staggering urban growth, taking steps to organize the new arrivals and fight against squatter settlements. The government established new settlements around the agglomeration, bordering the desert. Four official IDP camps were created at that time.

In its attempt to plan large parts of the city invaded by squatters, the government demolished informal settlements across large swaths of the capital and transported the ousted populations to relocation sites around the agglomeration, namely the IDP camps and the area known as Dar es Salam. According to some studies made in IDP camps and Dar es Salam in the 1990s, the major difference made between those two types of settlements was the origin of the

¹⁴ Gaim Kibreab, "Why Governments Prefer Spatially Segregated Settlement Sites for Urban Refugees," *Refuge*, Vol. 24, No 1 (2007), pp. 27–35.

population.¹⁵ While Southerners and Nubas were preferentially placed in the camps, Dar es Salam gathered more diversified population groups. The composition of the population in those relocation sites might have been modified over time and with the settlement of newcomers.

There is one critical difference between IDP camps and Dar es Salam, now responsible for the further marginalization and vulnerability of the displaced population in Khartoum. Dar es Salam was a planned area from the beginning. The public authorities demarcated plots that were parsed out to the relocated population, opening the path for the development of the area and the future provision of services. On the contrary, IDP camps were conceived as temporary settlements, the organization of the settlements left to the decision of the community and IDPs being given temporary rights to use the land. According to Sudanese government standards, an area has to be planned first (i.e., plots demarcated, and straight streets delineated between blocs) to receive public services. As a consequence, if service provision has been slow in Dar es Salam and is still not achieved in some part of those areas, service provision by some part of the government has been extremely weak in IDP camps. For example, IDP camps have not been connected to water networks. This is not an exception in Greater Khartoum, as many peripheral neighborhoods still rely on local water provision systems (i.e., wells, water tanks, micro networks, *karo*¹⁶). Nevertheless, none of the four IDP camps were connected to the water networks, even partially.

Another very hampering consequence for the population is that there were no property titles in IDP camps, whereas it did exist in the Dar es Salam, even if few inhabitants consolidated this property right by seeking to obtain legal titles from judicial authorities. As a consequence, when the government launched new measures of planning and illegal settlements eradication during the 2000s, it concentrated on the four IDP camps for a future development of these areas. Once again, IDPs were ousted, their houses were demolished, and they had to stand for plot allocation in their neighborhood, or in new relocation sites created further at the fringes of the desert.¹⁷

In 1996 and 1997, in an attempt to determine the number of IDPs settled in Khartoum, the GoS had issued a document called an “IDP card” to those who participated in the census and identified themselves as IDPs. Subsequently, IDPs in Khartoum had to show this document as proof of their condition in order to be eligible for access to a plot of land in the IDP camps under planning. This proved to be difficult for a number of IDPs who had lost this document, or did not get it, and were forced to relocate in far relocation sites. El Fath, an empty land 30 kms North of Omdurman, has been the main relocation site since the demolitions of 2003.

When designing this urban policy at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s, the government sought to separate the populations pushed out by the drought and the famine of the 1980s in the Dar es Salam areas, from the populations displaced by war relocated in IDP camps. This segregation policy was not driven by a specific humanitarian concern regarding IDPs (i.e., by

¹⁵ J. Loveless, *Displaced Populations in Khartoum: A Study of Social and Economic Conditions*. Report commissioned by Save the Children Denmark (1999).

¹⁶ Donkey carts selling water.

¹⁷ Given the very strong urban growth and sprawl, IDP camps and Dar es Salam are now connected to the urban fabric, and new relocation sites have been created further in the desert.

the desire to accommodate them and respond to their basic needs). It was most probably driven by security and public health concerns.¹⁸

Service Provision: Substitution of Humanitarian Actors to the State?

The IDP camps and Dar es Salam were established in 1988, following massive flooding in Khartoum. Humanitarian actors and religious stakeholders worked to respond to IDPs and relocated people basic needs and provide basic services — including water, food, health care, and education — in these relocation areas. Over time, informal services spread to IDP camps and other new settlement, but the situation varied from site to site.

For example, there are numerous systems of water provision: boreholes equipped with water tanks; wells equipped with hand pumps; some small informal water distribution networks; donkey carts selling water, collecting it from the water point and bringing it to the users; some areas connected to the urban formal water distribution network; a small minority collect the water directly from the Nile or from irrigation canals. The manner in which water is accessed in the informal system strongly affects the price. Some get water for free, collecting it directly from the collective water point and some have to pay very expensive fees. The inhabitants relying on the donkey cart system have to pay highest price, and the price vary according to the distance between the water point and the delivery point (when a water point is out of order, donkey carts have to go further to collect water, which increases the price of water), according to the season (more expensive during rainy season), according to the day of the week (more expensive on Fridays).

Water can represent a very big expense for the household. According to interviews conducted in 2005 and 2006 in Omdurman es Salam IDP camp, water bought from donkey carts could cost up to 1.30 or even 1.50 Euros for 30 liters on certain occasions (Friday, during a sand storm, or during rainy season). The formal urban water distribution network follows a differentiated pricing system according to the neighborhood's income classification, with richer neighborhoods paying higher fees than their poorer counterparts. However, most marginal and peripheral inhabitants live outside the coverage of the formal urban water distribution network and thus are not beneficiaries of this redistributive mechanism.

The water case illustrates quite well the general situation for service provision and access to services for urban IDPs and other vulnerable populations in Khartoum. The peripheral areas lack services and it can take a long time for the State to upgrade those settlements and perform the service-provision role it plays in established neighborhoods. Clearly, the government has calculated that the population will find a way to access basic services — whether through NGOs or through local or private initiatives (it is not unusual to find a water point dug and equipped by a sponsor). Unfortunately, IDPs, often far from their own family and tribal networks, lack such connections and sponsorship.

¹⁸ Sharaf el Din Bannaga, Khartoum State Minister of Urban Planning during the 1990s, wrote several papers on the arrival of forced displaced population in Khartoum and the related urban problems and decline. The settlement of IDPs in and around Khartoum was clearly analyzed as a threat, both for security and public health reasons. These papers include: “Unauthorised and Squatter Settlements in Khartoum: History, Magnitude and Treatment” (1992); “Mawa, Unauthorized and Squatter Settlements in Khartoum” (1996); Al Shorouk, the Organization of Villages in the State of Khartoum” (2000); and “Peace and the Displaced in Sudan (2002).

When the government resumed its policy of destroying informal settlements — including IDP camps — in 2003, the international community took notice, denounced these policies, and began to more closely monitor the government's actions in and around Khartoum. NGOs and donors have engaged in a discussion with the Sudanese authorities on steps to reform its urban planning practices, improve its compliance with human rights, and foster its involvement with and accountability towards these populations. The pressure exerted by international actors finally pushed the Governor of Khartoum to sign a commitment to respect fundamental principles in compliance with human rights and the Guiding Principles on Forced Displacement.¹⁹ It is difficult to say what the tangible effect of this document has been, however, since the authorities have now legalized the vast majority of the districts in Khartoum. The climate is tense for aid actors, and is not conducive to their taking a bold stance. All sorts of red tape and administrative delays and bottlenecks at times jeopardize access to the target groups and indeed the actual implementation of the project. The pressure placed by the government on aid actors successfully discourages mobilizations and lobbying attempts.

3. Dynamics and Reasons for Intervention (or Non-Intervention)

A Strategic Population at the National Level

There are several rationales driving the strategies of the different stakeholders regarding IDPs settled in the capital. First, the central government undoubtedly considers IDPs as a political threat; most IDPs blame the government for its role in driving them from their homes and are unsupportive and deeply suspicious of the ruling party. Moreover, by disrupting the tribal and religious demographic dominance of the Riverine Arabs, Khartoum's IDPs — particularly Southerners — challenge the national identity project supported by the government.²⁰

On some occasions, the massive presence of IDPs and migrants in the capital has been perceived as an acute danger. Immediately following the death of John Garang in July 2005, Southerners in Khartoum went to the streets to vent their anger against the North, Northerners and their assets, and the symbols of an oppressive state. After a day of violence and looting by IDPs and others, Khartoum's northern residents retaliated against Southerners living in the city's peripheral areas. An unknown number of Sudanese were killed during the violence, which only ended when political leaders from the North and South appealed jointly for calm. In May 2008, the Darfur rebel group Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) raided the capital and again, several dozen Sudanese were killed. The government responded with the mass

¹⁹ The initiative started in 2003 with a small French NGO, *Enfant du Monde Droits de l'Homme*, denouncing the demolitions made in Shekan, a neighborhood of Omdurman, without previous notice, leaving the inhabitants in dire conditions during winter season. This occurred during holiday season (end of December, beginning of January), and many expatriates were outside Sudan. As demolitions by part of the government were increasing, several international NGOs (FAR, Medair, NRC, WarChild Holland, IRC, Care, EMDH) decided to gather on a regular basis to monitor the phenomenon and report to UN agencies and donors. The European Union and United Nations took the lead on that time to start discussions with Khartoum state authorities (with the support of UK, France, and Switzerland). The EU conditioned allocation of fund to Khartoum agglomeration to the Governor of Khartoum's signature of a document called *The Guiding Principles on Relocation*. The document was signed in 2005.

²⁰ Omar el Bashir took the power through a coup in 1989 and set the *Inghaz al watani* regime, the regime of national salvation. The civilizational project behind this government is based on Arab belonging and Islam. This project clearly ignored the Southern part of the country.

arrest of Darfuris settled in Khartoum. These events have made a lasting impression on the inhabitants of Khartoum, fuelling mistrust and suspicion. As a result, the political management of IDP-related issues in Khartoum has, by and large, been framed by security concerns; and segregation and containment measures via urban planning are illustrations of this.

Implementation of the CPA has had a profound impact on Southern IDPs living in Khartoum. As per the CPA, a national census took place in 2008, national elections were held in 2009, and the referendum was held in January 2011. The fate of Southerners settled in the North acquired a new dimension in the light of these events. Long considered as a security threat with no political value, their importance in shaping the future of Sudan has become steadily clear. IDPs began returning shortly after the CPA was signed, with encouragement from the Government of Southern Sudan.

If the strategy of the Southern government has been clear since that time, calling the Southerners to come back to the South to support the reconstruction process and build the “new Sudan”, the Northern government’s position on the return of IDPs has been ambiguous.²¹ It has long been unclear whether the planning policy was to fix IDPs and Southern population in the capital, or to push them out. According to Southerners consulted over the last six years, it was critical to wait for urban planning to be conducted in their neighborhood, in order to access a plot of land, before making the decision to go back. This strategy can be explained by several factors:

- Southerners did not want to jeopardize everything returning to the South. Access to land in the North was seen as a way of securing their future, in case the return would not be successful, or in case they need a financial income (possibility to sell the land).²²
- Southern households in Khartoum have often hedged their bets: part of the nuclear family returns to the South, while another part remains in Khartoum. Elders and young children go back to the South, while children enrolled in secondary school and university stay in Khartoum; the mother sometimes stays in Khartoum or returns to Khartoum, in order to earn and remit some money to the family. Reportedly, returnees coming back to Khartoum are women for the majority, arguing it is easier for women to find a job in the city and make money.

The Sudanese government certainly tried to fix part of the IDPs, and Southerners in particular, through this planning process, in order to get the highest demographic possible in the North for the census of 2008, given that the census figures were used to determine wealth sharing and budget distribution from the federal to the state level. The fate of more than two million IDPs, and more than one million Southerners, in Khartoum was critically important in this

²¹ The Government of National Unity is the transitional government set during the interim period (2005–2011), as set forth in the CPA. It was constituted by a majority of National Congress Party members (ruling party), and a minority of Sudan People’s Liberation Movement members. Most of the time, it represented the interest of the North Sudan, and was actually considered as the government of North Sudan.

²² Land plots allocated through the planning process in IDP camps and peripheral areas is most of the time very cheap, if not free (the population has to pay the fees for the process and for the land title acquisition, which can be prohibitive for the most vulnerable population, but government is most of the time not charging the price of the land. Land speculation is thus very high in those locations, and competition sometimes prevent IDPs from accessing land in their neighborhood and push them further to relocation sites).

context. National elections again put pressure on this population. The campaign of the National Congress Party has been strong in IDP sites, in an attempt to expand its constituency.

Similarly, in an effort to expand its own constituency, the Government of Southern Sudan again was calling back Southerners. Nevertheless, the real turning point for Southerners still living in the North was the January 9, 2011 referendum and the upcoming independence of the South. Both before and since the referendum, South Sudan has been sending buses to Khartoum to organize returns. Whereas returns had been far lower than expected after the CPA was signed, the process strongly accelerated during months leading up to the referendum. Southerners settled in Khartoum are deeply worried about what will happen after the separation of the South in July 2011. The citizenship issue for Southerners living in the North remains unresolved, and political tensions surrounding the fate of Southerners still in the North are high.

Intervention of the International Community: Barriers and Constraints

In this context of protracted urban displacement, the reluctance of the international community to intervene is understandable. The international humanitarian community is not as involved with issues in Greater Khartoum as it is in Darfur, the South, and other peripheral areas. According to the Sudanese humanitarian staff, international NGOs' involvement used to be much higher during the 1990s, after the 1988 floods in Khartoum and the massive arrival of IDPs in Khartoum. Nevertheless, most of the stakeholders progressively withdrew from Khartoum (or scaled down their activities) with the outbreak of the Darfur conflict in 2003 and the signing of the CPA in 2005. For many humanitarians, the "real" issues are considered to be outside Khartoum. Further, some donors — including the United States — are restricted by sanctions from providing anything but humanitarian assistance in northern Sudan, while other donors have shied away from development projects in the North because of the Sudanese government's reputation for violence and corruption.

Points of friction between international actors and Sudanese authorities are numerous, and international actors certainly consider that the Khartoum agglomeration is not worth adding to those conflictive relations. According to international NGOs, it has been very difficult since 2003 to raise funds for projects drafted for the Khartoum agglomeration. Moreover, the International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrants issued for Sudan's President and other top officials in March 2009 and the subsequent expulsion of 13 international NGOs from Sudan adversely affected international intervention on behalf of IDPs in Khartoum. In parallel, the Sudanese authorities have been conducting a policy of "Sudanicization" of assistance, encouraging international NGOs to implement their programs through Sudanese NGOs. This process decreased both the visibility of the Western international community intervention and its management control and influence on international funds. It also opened a space for other donors and other NGOs to intervene, notably Islamic donors and organizations.

With newfound attention to IDPs in Khartoum, some stakeholders have been trying to bridge part of the gap. For example, UN-Habitat is leading a national reflexive exercise, attempting to gather urban political decision makers from different regions of Sudan, to foster a common reflection on urban planning and urban IDPs related issues, in an attempt to shift to long-term solution and incorporate the urban IDPs related issues in a larger "pro poor" strategy. This shift, which can be observed in other contexts of urban protracted displacement, came from the assessment that singling out IDPs, once the acute crisis of their arrival is over, can be

counter-productive in many situations. IDPs sometimes refuse to be still considered as IDPs (i.e., as outsiders with no right to stay where they are). A differentiated intervention in favor of the displaced can generate tensions with the host communities, in urban contexts where IDPs are living alongside other highly vulnerable populations. Most of the stakeholders adopt a need-based approach regarding IDPs settled in the capital. Nobody really dares deal with the human rights side of displacement, unless the national government takes the lead, as doing so would be too “political.”

Conclusion

Urban protracted displacement, as many protracted crisis, slowly sinks into oblivion. Intervention in the capital city is often more subject to pressures and tensions, being the seat of the central power and the place where organizations establish their headquarters. It is the place where tensions with the administration and officials can reach their apex. To this assessment, it is worth adding that NGOs and IOs to some extent lack the experience and know-how when it comes to intervention in urban areas and dealing with long-term urban planning issues. The generalized reflex of setting camps, even in urban areas, in situations of forced displacement, isolates and confines those populations in precarious and temporary solutions — sometimes for decades, as is the case in Khartoum. The shift should certainly be made from the very beginning of the crisis, working for local social and economic integration of the displaced people, instead of singling them out and segregating them. But assisting IDPs spread throughout the city is more complicated, less visible, and takes longer. Regarding this general issue, the current work being done at the international level by universities, think tanks, IOs and NGOs — studying the specific features of urban displacement, and urban protracted displacement in particular — is certainly an encouraging step forward to raise awareness of the States and donors that camps should not always be given preference in the early times of the crisis. Regarding Southerners in Khartoum, not necessarily IDPs, the challenge ahead is now to help protect those who will choose to remain in the North after the separation of the South.