



A SOLIDARITY MISSION TO SUDAN

SUMMARY

From January 30th to February 14th, 2003, a French delegation composed of members of Caritas France, members of CCFD, two bishops, two MPs, visited Sudan, both South and North. For the past 50 years this country has endured 2 civil wars and a number of internal local conflicts, and it is now under a continuing process of Islamisation.

Apart from showing evidence of the Church of France's solidarity, the aim of this mission was to better appreciate the prospects of the current peace process as well as the human rights situation, and to assess the needs for humanitarian aid and for development.

The French delegation had several opportunities to witness the deep sufferings of the people caught in the main conflict between the army of the Government of Sudan and the rebel Southerners gathered under Sudanese People's Liberation Army SPLA.

The civil war arose from an old dominating habit of the mainly Arabic and Muslim northern populations over the animist and Christian Negro-Africans living in the South. Then the discovery of important oil fields in the South gave an economic dimension to this war.

From then on, the Government ensured the security of the oilfield areas by bombing and slaughtering, which forced the populations to move away. The internal displaced populations (IDPs) receive no official aid whatsoever and are therefore totally destitute; moreover they are often arbitrarily expelled from the camps where they were living and find themselves forced to settle deeper and deeper away in the desert. Because of the lack of humanitarian aid from official bodies, the Churches have a major role to play. They are also very much involved in the peace process, together with other members of civil society. In the South they do manage to have a dialogue with SPLA/M, whereas in the North their action is strongly hampered by the government's passivity and its lack of response to their requests ; for instance, they are not granted permission to build places of worship ; the school system also imposes manuals inspired by Islamic rules. It has also been generally observed that many Sudanese in the North are victims of various types of discrimination, whether they are Moslems or not.

The strong international pressure, concomitant to the current peace process which led to the Machakos agreement last July, gives hope for an end to the conflict, even if civil society and political parties are at present completely excluded from the negotiations. But some major and difficult issues still remain to be solved, such as power-sharing, wealth-sharing, or the conditions for the return of the displaced people.

The French delegation's recommendations :

- The international community should continue supporting the current peace process both financially and diplomatically, and monitor the implementation of the peace agreement after the cease-fire.
- The UN Security Council should adopt a resolution which guarantees peace in Sudan and nominate a special envoy from the UN General Secretary.

- The European Union should, in relation with the UN, set up an organisation to watch and monitor the cease-fire. With the help of NGOs, the EU should also implement assistance and development schemes to prepare for the return of large numbers of people to South Sudan. When peace is established, it will be necessary to update the European assistance programmes and to promote civic education in order for the population to prepare for the referendum on self-determination. France should consider a deeper involvement in the peace process and its subsequent steps : a first initiative in that direction was the appointment of a special envoy for Sudan who will have contacts with the government as well as with SPLA/M.
- The Church of France should show its moral and financial support to the churches and the people in Sudan e.g. by informing the Christian community and the public opinion in France and by strengthening the organisations working on development issues (Secours Catholique-Caritas France, CCFD and others).
- Through their training, information and development activities, the churches in Sudan will carry on with the peace and reconciliation initiatives which they initiated long ago, so that the long-expected just and lasting peace may at last prevail.

Paris, March 5, 2003



A SOLIDARITY MISSION TO SUDAN

(30 January – 14 February 2003)

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The first aim was to show the solidarity of the Church of France and of the civil society to the people who suffer in Sudan and to those who act in favour of peace, particularly the churches. The next aim was for the delegation members – through field visits and exchanges with civil society members particularly the churches, and with the authorities both governmental in Khartoum and SPLA/M in the South - to build their own opinion regarding the current peace process, human rights, and the needs in terms of assistance and development.

THE SITUATION

Covering 2.506 million km², Sudan is the largest country in Africa (8% of the continent). The population is scarce : 31 millions, 60% being Negro-Africans and 40% Arabic. Several hundreds of ethnical groups, with 62% Moslems, 18% Christians and 20% belonging to traditional religions.

The longest civil war in Africa started in September 1955, just a few months before independence. It caused 2 million deaths and the displacement of over 4 million persons into camps in the North or in the South. To this date, Sudan enjoyed only 11 years of relative peace (1972-1983).

For nearly 20 years the biggest emergency scheme in the world has been operating in Lokhichoggio at the border between Kenya and Sudan : Operation Lifeline Sudan OLS, which provides food and medicine to the southern populations and generates increasing dependency behaviours, thus jeopardising sustainable development.

Following the construction of a 1,400 km long pipeline to bring the oil from the oilfields in the South to Port-Sudan on the Red Sea, both the fights and the massive displacements of populations were intensified due to oil exploitation.

At the end of 2001, the USA prompted a mediation which resulted first in a cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains, and later in the peace talks of Machakos, Kenya, under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) whose members are 7 East African countries.

MAIN FINDINGS...

After nearly 50 years of civil war, two feelings prevail among the populations – first victims of the conflict – and among the political and religious leaders : a deep weariness... and a strong aspiration towards peace. The first Machakos agreement, signed in July 2002, then the subsequent meeting between President Bashir and the SPLA leader John Garang, raised a wide hope together with a great fear that these agreements be no more respected than the thirteen previous ones and that the country consequently have to face another far worse war.

The real efforts from the parties involved should certainly be acknowledged and encouraged. The negotiations on the most delicate issues which are still ahead require every possible support from the international community and every attention from the friends of Sudan..

1. Sufferings of civilians

In the South (SPLA-controlled areas)

- The delegation heard reports from people who had escaped manhunts organised in the oil areas by militias with the help of helicopter gunships from the governmental forces. After 8 days of walking, those displaced people had just joined those who had already been forced to do the same over the past three years. They reported what they saw before fleeing : people forced into huts then burnt down, people crucified on trees, people whose temples had been driven nails into; a woman had seen her children's throats cut before her.
- In Ikotos, the delegation saw the impact of 23 bombs dropped by an Antonov plane on the house and offices of the Auxiliary Bishop of Torit last June. In Isoke an Antonov dropped 72 bombs, mostly in the vicinity of the school and health centre ; fragments are still there, and according to what we were told, some of these bombs seemed to contain a chemical substance, something yellow with a horrible smell. The people are still traumatised by the noise of the planes.
- Near Rumbek, the delegation met the young Kenyan nutritionist, employed by CEAS (Church Ecumenical Action in Sudan), who was abducted in April 2002 by Murahleen militias and then handed over to the government forces in Khartoum ; she was released after 12 days thanks to international pressure; but two of her Sudanese colleagues were killed.
- According to various reports heard by the delegation, the forced enrolment and brainwashing of child soldiers go on, on both sides.

According to the new agreement signed between the Government and SPLA while we were there, any continuation or resumption of the above crimes is theoretically outlawed.

In the North, Government-controlled areas :

The war situation is less visible in the capital than in the South, yet the consequences can be noticed :

- ◆ In the first place, the IDP's camps for people from the South and Nuba Mountains are huge arid places, with very few decent infrastructures, located as far as forty kilometers away from Khartoum. Hundreds of thousands of people are abandoned there.
 - The displaced people, forced out of their home by war or by economic difficulties, receive assistance only from the churches, UNICEF and NGOs ;
 - They survive in very precarious conditions, as the camps are constantly pushed away from the cities. They get expelled without notice : houses, schools, churches (or other places of worship) are destroyed by caterpillars, and everything has to be rebuilt further away until the next destructions. In Djebel el Aoulia camp, UNICEF, who built water-pumps, can no longer repair them because some pieces of land have been sold to Libyans for agricultural purposes ;
 - Until very recently, it happened that young men going to their daily work in Khartoum were arrested in the bus taking them and enrolled in the army ;
 - In such unsafe and dire conditions, it is impossible to implement any development programme since nobody can make plans.
- ◆ Basic freedoms, particularly religious freedom, are constantly denied :
 - The Arabic text of the present constitution has a stronger Islamic orientation than the English text, since words do not have the same impact, which means it can be interpreted in a more liberal way or in a more fundamentalist way.
 - The churches are not NGOs and therefore have no legal status, consequently they are not allowed to build places of worship, which paves the way to any arbitrary Islamic administration.
 - The school manuals only refer to Arabo-Islamic culture which makes things easy for Islamisation.
 - The country is still under emergency law, and sharia law is applicable to any citizen, whether Moslem or not.
 - Press is kept under control, subject to censure and to frequent controls; journalists are imprisoned, newspapers are suspended or heavily fined. Only the government has access to major medias, radio and television.
- ◆ Negro-Africans at large, whether Christians or Moslems, are victims of discrimination and abuse :
 - In professional life, they may have similar positions but certainly not the same responsibilities and prerogatives as Arabs from the North.
 - The state of emergency, established in 1999, make possible all sorts of arbitrary measures.

- The numerous security forces and intelligence services remain very powerful : opposition parties, students, journalists, are subject to all kinds of pressure and harassment.
 - Women who produce date brandy to earn their living – it is the main source of income in IDP camps – get imprisoned, with their children sometimes, and ordered to pay fines.
 - In the government-controlled towns in the South, children are indoctrinated at school.
- ◆ The whole population in Sudan suffers from the various conflicts which divide the country : in the South, also in Darfur and along the Erythrean border. In every family, members have been killed.

2. The real causes of the conflict

Their roots are to be found in religion, racism, and inequitable sharing of power and wealth:

- Freedom of worship exists, but Islamisation, together with Arabisation, is thoroughly carried out through various channels : education, army, the media. There is no religious war as such, but religion is used for the sake of power. The cause of the conflict is related to identity issues : Negro-Africans, Christians or Muslims, are the majority in the country – women even more so - but they feel they are not recognized or respected as far as their culture and identity are concerned. They are victims of discriminations, even persecutions, from the Arabic minority, both the fundamentalists who still hold many key positions and those who use race, culture, religion as means of discrimination in order to strengthen their power.
- The other cause is related to inequitable sharing of power and wealth. An old usage is the domination of the South by the North who once exported slaves and ivory... Oil and water are now the issues at stake.

These causes are still there and foster the conflict. Hopefully they will be eradicated, in theory at least, by the current peace negotiations. Changes in behaviour will need a long time.

3. Role of the Church

- Committed to an ecumenical approach, the churches are an important and coherent power to conduct grassroots actions and, above all, to advocate efficiently for the most vulnerable groups.
- They have to act in place of the administration to assist the people in terms of education, food, health etc...particularly the displaced both in the North and the South.
- For a long time, they have been active in the peace process and are involved in reconciliation between communities at local level (people to people peace process).
- They are an important agent likely to mobilise the civil society, particularly in the South : they organised three major meetings in Entebbe between August and December 2002 where Christians and officials jointly identified the conditions to fulfil for a just and lasting peace.
- Some embassies and representatives of the international community often wrongly see them as allied to SPLA. In the South the churches are able to challenge SPLA upon their abuses and obtain the proposed changes through a fruitful dialogue.
- In the North, the lack of response to the churches' requests and the passivity of authorities make it difficult to have an open dialogue with the administration.

4. The image of France

How is France perceived by the various persons whom the delegation met ?

- Since the Carlos affair (in exchange of whom France is to have delivered to Khartoum some sensitive equipment), some Southerners mention a “French connection” and consider France to be allied to the Sudanese government.
- In the South, this French mission was the first one in the past 10 years that was received by the SPLA authorities. The previous one was Bernard Kouchner's official mission.
- The French diplomatic representation in Khartoum can, in view of its duty, only grasp Sudan through its capital and some government-held cities in the South. Consequently they cannot have a good view of daily realities in the SPLA-held areas and they hardly have any contact with SPLA/M. The French diplomatic representation in Kenya occasionally have contacts, in Nairobi, with some Church leaders from the South and also with SPLA representatives. This situation undoubtedly impacts France's official position.
- France's present position somehow stays behind regarding the peace process and is misunderstood both in the South and in the North. Among the persons the delegation met, it is everyone's wish to see France get more involved¹.

¹ A special envoy for Sudan has just been appointed by the French Government.

- The image of Total is unclear : there is a fear that oil exploitation might be very soon resumed, to the benefit of the government and consequently of the war process. Yet, people still remember positive actions initiated in the early 80's in terms of infrastructures for the benefit of local people.

5. The current peace process

- The population is very hopeful as to the outcome of the Machakos talks but keeps most cautious, as this agreement is the 14th since the beginning of civil war... even if, this time, the fairly strong international pressure gives more credit to the whole process.
- Both parties are suspecting each other of untruthfulness. The opinion is quite common that they negotiate only because of international pressures.
- Until very recently, the cease-fire violations in Western Upper Nile have neither been condemned nor sanctioned for that matter.
- Political parties (even if National Democratic Alliance NDA gave a mandate to SPLA), civil society, militias, are not included in the peace negotiations, and people are given wrong information, if any, on the development and the implications for their own situation : right to return ? when and under what conditions ? what is self-determination ? preparation of the referendum on self-determination after a 6-year interim period ?
- Despite the agreement signed in July concerning the relationship between state and religion, many people doubt that the North really intends to implement a lay state, and they fear that Islamic law will keep being applied to Christians in the North.
- However, it should be noted that the current negotiations and the first agreements mean a historical breakthrough, and that they take place in a particularly positive environment : cease-fire agreement in the Nuba Mountains, commitment of the international community in the framework of IGAD. Despite several peace violations, a new agreement was signed while the French delegation was in Sudan.

Remaining issues

The current discussions cover particularly delicate matters :

- Sharing of power and wealth.
- Status of the 3 regions North of the South-North line which was defined before independence, namely : Southern Blue Nile, Abyei, Nuba Mountains.
- Programming of actions to be taken : no precise figure is available, particularly the number of displaced Southerners, which makes forecasts difficult.
- Implementation of an efficient scheme to accompany a potential massive return of displaced people when the cease-fire is effective ; considering the present lack of infrastructures in the South.
- Follow-up and monitoring of cease-fire, linked with a capacity to apply penalties for violations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, a strong support is necessary, both diplomatically and financially, to the on-going peace process which, till now, is the best opportunity for Sudan to put an end to the war since its beginning in 1955. The delegation makes the following recommendations :

To the belligerents, Government of Khartoum and SPLA, and to the IGAD :

- To honour the already signed agreements, then continue to support the on-going negotiation process till its end, without neglecting any aspect ;
- To renew the temporary cease-fire agreement which will end on March 31st 2003 if a global peace agreement is not concluded before this date² ;
- To make sure that the various militia operating under their respective control are also engaged by the different agreements and by the cease-fire ; otherwise, the GoS and the SPLA could be seen as responsible for the abuses made by their militias ;
- To disarm the militia and then dissolve them as soon as possible ;
- To put an end to forced conscription and then demobilise immediately the child soldiers, from any part they are ;
- To consider the whole southern Sudan as a no-fly area for the air-crafts and helicopters of the GoS army specially to put an end at the population traumas and fears when an Antonov engine is listened ;
- To associate the civil society and the political parties as partners of the peace process in order to ensure that the populations will take it over and support it ;

To the Government of the Sudan

- To ensure that the new constitution to be drawn up will be adopted by a national consensus ;
- To solve urgently the issue of the official recognition of the Churches in Sudan from the suggestions already elaborated by them and give the authorisation for the worship places to be constructed in permanent materials ;
- To revise urgently the contents of the school books currently used in the schools in order to ensure that the general syllabus (mathematics, history, languages, etc...) in the public schools will respect the diversity of the Sudanese society ;
- To eliminate the discriminating practices, racial, cultural or religious, in regard to the access to the civil service and its career cursus.
- To facilitate the entry to Sudan and the circulation of religious staff in the country.

To the international community, to the European Union, to the Security Council and to the UN Human Rights Commission :

- To associate, as partners of the negotiations, some observers representing the civil society (one of them at least from the World Council of Churches), as the Holy See and France ;
- To provide an appropriate support to the new system of verification and monitoring (VMM) so that it will be able to detect and impose urgent sanctions to the potential cease-fire violations ;
- To allow and diffuse in due time the information, mainly about the humanitarian situation, collected by the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT) in order to give opportunities to answer exactly to the needs as soon as possible ;
- To deploy a sufficient number of observers, specially in the oil areas, for example in Mankien and south of Leer;
- To renew the mandate of the special rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission (expiration at the end of March) ;
- To get adopted by the Security Council a resolution in order to confirm the support of the United Nations to the current peace process at the title of the 6th chapter, then in this context to obtain the appointment of a UN General Secretary special envoy for Sudan ;
- In the context of the “critical dialog” between the EU and the GoS, to insure that the benchmarks already enounced are being respected ;

² The agreement has been already renewed till June 30th

- At the end of the interim period, to be very careful and, if necessary, to put pressure in order to ensure the referendum for self-determination by the southern populations will be really implemented.

To France and to the different diplomatic representations in Khartoum :

From now, deploy a diplomatic and support system which will be able to cover the whole Sudan, and not only the areas under the government control, in order to obtain the most realistic picture of the political, military and humanitarian situation, of all the country. France could appoint a special envoy³ who could be in permanent contact with the different players who are in the not-controlled by the GoS areas (amongst them the SPLA/M).

To the companies and the states working in the oil exploitation in Sudan :

To suspend the exploitation activities on their concessions until a just and sustainable peace will be signed between the belligerents.

To the NGOs and international organisations :

Immediately :

- To provide an urgent support to the displaced populations, specially in the context of the recent fights ;
- To put in place a support system to the many displaced population who will not be able to return back to their homes, even after the settlement of peace ;
- To engage as soon as possible a census of the displaced population in Sudan (and of the refugees abroad too) in order to make clearer the future with some accurate figures ;
- Immediately, revise and update the EU document for Sudan as the poverty reduction strategy papers of the World Bank taking into consideration the current situation and the future needs of the whole south of Sudan; it will be useful to associate the different south-Sudanese humanitarian and development actors (grass level groups, specially the women; local and international NGOs; Churches; the SPLA/M ministry for the reconstruction of the southern Sudan) to the updating process ;
- To lead to an end as soon as possible the development plans to be conducted in case of a heavy moving to the south of the displaced populations ;
- To support the deployment of the basic infrastructures, administrations and services all around the South in prevision of the return of the displaced;
- To support the current civil society efforts to maintain the people to people peace process ;
- To support the Sudan Ecumenical Forum in its initiatives in order to inform the populations about the evolution of the Machakos negotiations and the agreement violations ;
- To promote a general civic and citizen education in order to prepare the populations to the referendum for self-determination;
- To recognise a special status for the Churches despite the current lack of a legal frame; to support the development, rehabilitation and peace building activities, specially, the work of the Sudan Council of Churches, the New Sudan Council of Churches and their Justice and Peace commissions.

After the peace agreement signature and the transition government installation :

- To support the displaced and refugees reinstallation programs ;
- To be along the Churches and Sudanese NGOs to help them to cross the critical intermediary period : democratic governance, self-determination referendum preparation...

To the Churches

In France

- To raise the awareness of all the bishops, the Christian community and the public opinion in France about the situation in Sudan and its evolutions;
- To express solidarity with the Sudanese Churches and people, specially, by reinforcing the engagement and cohesion of the French solidarity NGO in their activities : Secours Catholique – Caritas France, CCFD, AED, others... ;
- To provide a financial support.

In Sudan

- Despite the lack of any answer, to carry on with their efforts to settle a dialogue with the civil administration in order to contribute to the progress of the different controversial cases or in instance ;

³ see note 1

- To carry on the ecumenical actions which are giving some hope to the whole society ;
- To reinforce and support strongly their Justice and Peace departments ;
- To raise all the communities to become a partner of the peace process knowing that they are not alone fighting for their dignity.

The delegation has been witness of the suffering of many Sudanese women and men; they met many women and men of goodwill who are working for the advent of peace and promoting reconciliation initiatives. All are relying on the solidarity of the other people and the believers of all Churches to make know their distress and to support their actions for a just and sustainable peace.

MISSION MEMBERS

CLEMENT Pascal, member of French Parliament (Loire)

COURTIN Christophe, projects officer, CCFD

GARCIA Nathalie, Eastern & Southern Africa officer, Secours Catholique - Caritas France

JOUANNO Bernard, journalist at “La Croix” daily newspaper

LABILLE Daniel, Bishop of Creteil, president of the Universal Mission Commission

LACRAMPE André, Bishop of Ajaccio, president of the National Solidarity Council

LUCET Jean-Louis, vice-president of Secours Catholique - Caritas France

MAROLLEAU Jean-Louis, volunteer, advocacy officer Africa department, Secours Catholique-Caritas France

PETER Marina, co-ordinator Sudan Focal Point - Europe,

ROY Michel, Director of International Division, Secours Catholique - Caritas France

VERCKEN Nicolas, Great Lakes and Horn of Africa officer, CCFD

VOISIN Michel, member of French Parliament (Ain)