Sudan

Response to Information Request Number: SDN03001.ZAR

Date: December 31, 2002


From: INS Resource Information Center

Keywords: Sudan / Armed forces / Armed resistance movements / Civil wars / Coup d’etat / Discrimination based on political opinion / Ethnic minorities / Executions / Government policy / Human Rights Violations / Military bases / Military government / Military personnel / Military repression / Security forces

Query:

1) Were human rights violations committed in Juba in 1963?

2) What were the duties of the Republican Guard in Sudan from 1966-1969, and was this group linked to human rights violations during that period?

3) Were local leaders forced to comply with government policies during the final years of the Nimeiri regime, from 1983-1985?

4) Were soldiers tried and executed by the Sudanese military between 1985 and the military coup of June 1989?

Response:
1) HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN JUBA IN 1963

Under the military government of Ibrahim Abbud (1958-1964) armed conflict in the south, which had broken out prior to the country’s independence in 1956, intensified. According to a US Library of Congress study:

"The government suppressed expressions of religious and cultural differences and bolstered attempts to arabize society. In February 1964… Abbud ordered the mass expulsion of foreign missionaries from the south. He then closed parliament to cut off outlets for southern complaints. Southern leaders had renewed in 1963 the armed struggle against the Sudanese government that had continued sporadically since 1955" (US LOC 1991).

In July 1965 an incident occurred in Juba that led to major human rights violations by Sudanese troops against civilians. There are some differences in the accounts of the circumstances that sparked the killing of hundreds (and perhaps more than a thousand people) in Juba, but consistency in the reports of major rights violations. One study of the civil war in Sudan reported that on 8 July 1965:

"[A]n incident occurred in Juba between a Muslim soldier and a southerner, in which the soldier was wounded. This caused the Muslim troops in Juba to run amok in the town. Soldiers cordoned off certain districts along the banks of the Nile, set fire to grass-roofed huts and shot the occupants as they emerged. Many people were drowned as they jumped into the river to escape. On the 10th there was an unsuccessful Anya-Nya [the southern rebel force] attack on the army HQ at Juba. Southerners claimed that over 3,000 huts had been burned, and according to official government figures, 1,018 people were killed in two days (the population of Juba was then thought to be about 40,000). On the 12th the commanding officer of the Southern Command stated that his soldiers had opened fire on southern ‘outlaws’ attacking his HQ, and that 25 of them had been killed” (O’Ballance 2000, 37-38).

An earlier work by the same author discussed the level of control that Sudanese military officers exercised over their troops in the south of the country:

"The Juba incident gave credence to persistent southern claims that discipline was poor in the northern army in the south, that the officers had little control over their men when away from the camps and garrisons, and that the men were allowed to roam into the forests killing and burning much as they liked. [Prime Minister] Mahgoub insisted this was not so and that discipline was good and that the officers had full control over their men. He admitted that they occasionally gave them a ‘free rein’, but claimed that they could instantly reassert control when required. This tends to indicate the possibility of a military policy of reprisal that was separate from the political policy” (O’Ballance 1977, 80).
Following the killings in Juba, another major incident occurred on 11 July 1965 in Wau, the capital of Bahr el-Ghazal Province, where seventy-five people leaving a marriage service in the cathedral were gunned down by northern soldiers. The Sudanese military carried out other operations in the south of the country leading to serious human rights violations: “The military mounted several operations, burning many villages and rendering numerous people homeless, many of whom fled into the forests. In particular, southerners alleged that Muslim soldiers had destroyed the few hospitals and medical centers in the south to prevent people from obtaining medical treatment” (O’Ballance 2000, 39).

Other studies of Sudan provide information on the July 1965 incident at Juba:

"On a day in July 1965, over 1,400 people were killed in Juba and two days later 76 Southern Government officials were massacred at a wedding party in Wau. These sort[s] of incidents were not exceptional and they continued for the next three years" (Gurdon 1984, 18).

"On 8 July 1965 northern troops at Juba went on a rampage that left hundreds dead and whole sections of the town in ashes… The Juba and Wau incidents sparked a new exodus of southerners into neighbouring states, where tens of thousands settled in refugee camps… The Anya Nya… responded with atrocities of their own… Government control was soon limited to the major towns and heavily fortified posts, and elsewhere ceased to exist, to be replaced in some areas by a rudimentary Anya Nya administration” (Holt and Daly 2000, 160).

"One Southern source claimed that the [Juba] incident was sparked off by a quarrel which developed between a Southern nurse in one of the local hospitals and a Northern military sergeant, over a transistor radio. "The sergeant received injuries, and when news of this reached the Arab soldiers… they took their weapons from the armoury and started systematically to burn and to kill” [citing Albino]. The death toll was difficult to ascertain but something in the area of 1,019 to 3,000 persons were killed" (Akol Ruay 1994, 134).

A recent academic study of the conflict in Sudan confirms intensified war and repression in the south of Sudan in the early 1960s without specific reference to violations in the city of Juba in 1963. Abbud interned a dozen leading politicians for seven months in 1961. Railway strikes, protests at the Mahdi’s tomb, and student demonstrations broke out, inducing Abbud to release the imprisoned politicians.

"Meanwhile, the south exploded when Abbud tried to stamp out unrest, impose Arabic, and limit the rights of Christian churches… The government required Arabic in schools… [which] provoked strikes throughout the southern school system in April 1960 and October 1962… As unrest spread, the armed forces bombed and burned villages to the extent that half a million southerners fled into exile” (Lesch 1998, 38-39).
Professor Lesch, the author of the study, confirmed in an electronic mail communication that under Abbud, “the civil war became very intense, especially in Equatoria (Juba is its capital)” (Lesch 28 July 2001). A Sudanese human rights activist, in an electronic mail message, stated that while he had “no figures… on the victims of the [Abbud] government assault,” the “general’s overall offensive…exempted” nowhere in the south from military action. There were attacks on southerners even in Khartoum and suspected rebel collaborators were “systematically dismissed” from work, “tortured, and/or killed” (El-Tigani 12 Aug. 2001).

2) THE DUTIES OF THE SUDANESE REPUBLICAN GUARD BETWEEN 1966 AND 1969 AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT, IF ANY, IN HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

No information about the role and conduct of the Republican Guard in the late 1960s could be found among the sources consulted by the RIC. Passing references to the Republican Guards in Sudan can be found in electronic sources, but for a time period later than the 1960s. For example, a 1999 news account reported that a delegation bearing a letter from assembly members to President Bashir requesting that he dismiss the legislative assembly and form an “interim government with the outside opposition while awaiting new elections… was dispersed by the Republican Guard” (Vigilance Soudan 1999). Professor Lesch indicated that the 1990's Guard would likely have been completely different from the Republican Guard of the 1960's, except in name. (Lesch 24 Sep. 2001).

3) FORCING LOCAL LEADERS TO COMPLY WITH THE NIMEIRI REGIME'S POLICIES FROM 1983-1985

In the early 1980s, opposition to Nimeiri's regime increased and repression intensified. Drought and famine affected more than two million people in Dar Fur, Kordofan, and the Red Sea hills. “In 1982 the Gross Domestic Product shrank by 3.6 percent and the foreign debt soared” (Lesch 1998, 53). Nimeiri instituted austerity measures, and strikes, demonstrations and riots broke out and were quelled by the military. Senior officers who opposed Nimeiri’s harsh response to the protests were dismissed.

In September 1983, Nimeiri issued a decree that shari’a, or Islamic law, “be the sole guiding force behind the law of the Sudan.”

"Repression peaked in 1983-1985, generating a rebellion in the south and protests in the north. [Nimeiri’s] overthrow in April 1985 resulted from that groundswell of dissent and from rising discontent within the armed forces” (Lesch 1998, 55 and 61).

According to another expert on Sudan who conducted research in Sudan as a Fulbright Fellow from 1986-87, there was forced compliance with the September 1983 decrees that imposed martial law and made shari’a the basis of Sudanese law. In Khartoum there was much stricter regulation of behavior than in the rural areas. In the rural areas, a military
governor would be required to monitor local life and enforce national policies. People were forced to comply to the extent that they were recognized and watched. But the harshness of enforcement depended a good deal on the individual(s) in authority. It appears likely that some were forced to comply and faced consequences if they did not. But this authority did not know of specific cases (Kramer 19 July 2001).


The period of the mid-to-late 1980s was a low point in the Sudanese government forces’ war against the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). In 1986 and 1987, the regular army suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the guerrilla movement and by early 1988 the SPLA had become a major threat to the government’s survival (Prunier 1998, 12). Morale was low, newer recruits “felt isolated and threatened in the besieged garrison towns,” and large numbers of government troops whose homes were in the south had reportedly deserted to the SPLA” (US LOC 1991). In these conditions, harsh treatment of soldiers who were in breach of discipline would not be surprising. However, specific cases of executions of soldiers by the Sudanese military between 1985 and 1989 could not be found.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

References:


Associate Professor of History, St. Norbert College. 19 July 2001. Telephone interview.


Kramer, Bob, Associate Professor of History, St. Norbert College. 19 July 2001. Telephone
Lesch, Ann Mosely. 24 September 2001. Electronic mail communication with the INS Resource Information Center.

Lesch, Ann Mosely. 28 July 2001. Electronic mail communication with the INS Resource Information Center.


