



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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16 May 2003

### SDN41450.E

Sudan: Replacement of SDN38394.E of 8 February 2002 regarding the Sudanese Women's Union (SWU)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Sudanese Women's Union (SWU), whose current President (*New Internationalist* Feb. 1996) and founding member is Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim, is banned from operating in the Sudan (*Sisterhood Is Global* 1984, 650). In 1971 an "official" organization known as the Sudan Women's Union was created by the government in place of the original outlawed group (*ibid.*). Also known as the Sudanese Women's General Union (SWGU), the Sudan Women's Union marked its 13th anniversary on 20 January 2003 with a public celebration that included the Vice-President of the Republic of Sudan, Moses Machar, and secretary-general Raja Hasan Khalifah of the women's union (Suna News Agency 22 Jan. 2003).

Recently returned from southern Sudan, the Africa Partnership Coordinator of KAIROS, "a coalition of Canadian churches, church based agencies and religious organizations dedicated to promoting human rights, justice and peace" (KAIROS n.d.), stated that, in 1989, the government of Sudan "banned" and in some cases "dismantled" all unions, including the SWU, and recreated them using the same name but replacing their membership with government supporters (16 May 2003). He also said that the banned Sudanese Women's Union is a member of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), is headed by Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim and operates "clandestinely" within Sudan (KAIROS 16 May 2003). The SWU members who operate within Sudan work to "promote the rights and interests of women" by gathering information on the condition of women and documenting human rights abuses, the reports of which they send to international organizations who can "expose the repressive measures of the government" (*ibid.*).

The Secretary General of the Sudanese Women's Union (SWU) in Toronto provided the following information in correspondence received by the Research Directorate:

The Central Committee of the SWU is based in Khartoum. It has branches in all towns of Sudan. The SWU has many branches abroad, e.g., Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Australia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Canada and [the] Gulf. ...

SWU [was] one of the founders and a signatory of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Convention in October 1989. Since then the SWU has continued to be an active participant in all the activities of the NDA inside and outside the country. In fact, Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim has been a member in the Leadership Committee of the NDA. ...

[M]embers have been subjected to forced layoffs from their jobs whether they are employed in the public or private sector, detention, harassment by being forced daily to report to the security forces. Also, there are cases of elderly women who were beaten by security officers and police forces at demonstrations against the war in the south. Amnesty International has documented most of these incidences. ...

The Sudanese Women's Union [was] established in 1952. Its mandate is to struggle for Sudanese women[']s rights, empower them and support their struggle for equality through a wide range of activities and advocacy. ...

SWU has branches in almost all towns of Sudan with sub-branches in neighbourhoods. The representatives of the branches constitute the General Conference membership, which elects the Central Committee (CC). [The] CC carries out the responsibility of the organization's leadership between the two conferences. It assigns among its members an executive committee which leads the day-to-day activities of the organization between the CC meetings, which occurs usually every three months. ...

All Sudanese women have the right to join the SWU irrespective of their political affiliation. Branch members follow direct free election processes to choose their executive office (14 May 2003).

The Secretary General also stated that the SWU is still banned from operating within Sudan (SWU 14 May 2003).

Documentary references to the SWU activities in Sudan could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate 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. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

KAIROS, Toronto. 16 May 2003. Telephone interview with the Africa Partnership Coordinator.

\_\_\_\_\_. n.d. "KAIROS: Who We Are." <<http://www.kairoscanada.org/english/who.htm>> [Accessed 16 May 2003]

*New Internationalist* [Oxford]. February 1996. Wayne Elwood. "Interview with Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim, Human Rights Activist - Sudan." <[http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Heroes/Fatima\\_Ibrahim.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Heroes/Fatima_Ibrahim.html)> [Accessed 16 May 2003]

*Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology*. 1984. Edited by Robin Morgan. New York: Double Day.

Sudanese Women's Union (SWU), Toronto. 14 May 2003. Correspondence received from the Secretary General.

Suna News Agency [Khartoum, in English]. 22 January 2003. "Sudanese Government Voices Support for Women." (BBC Monitoring/NEXIS)

#### Additional Sources Consulted

*Africa Research Bulletin*

IRB Databases

NEXIS

Unsuccessful attempts to contact the Sudan Human Rights Organization, the Sudan Council of Churches and other oral sources.

Project Ploughshares (Waterloo) and World Vision (Ottawa) could not provide information on the above-mentioned topic.

*Women's International Network News* (WIN)

#### **Internet sites, including:**

*Africa Confidential*

Africa Online

AllAfrica.com

Amnesty International

BBC News Africa

*Daily Arabic News*

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)

Kosti Web Page

Sudan Update

*Sudanese Human Rights Quarterly*

Sudan.net

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

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