

Justice and Reconciliation during Sudan's Post-2011 Transition

Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, 19– 22 September 2010

The participants in this consultation, from a wide range of political and geographical backgrounds, came to discuss the future possibility of justice and reconciliation in Sudan, as the country goes through a period of significant change. Lasting three days, the consultation heard presentations on a number of relevant topics, such as 'Lessons to be Learned from Elsewhere' and 'The Religious Contribution to Reconciliation in Sudan'. These presentations were made by members of Concordis staff and by experts on the topics under discussion, Professor Lars Waldorf and Dr Sarah Nouwen.

The initial discussion on the principles of Post-Conflict Justice and Reconciliation raised a theme which recurred repeatedly throughout the discussions. This was the difficulty to be found in striking a balance between truth-telling, reconciliation in the face of potentially difficult revelations, and justice which should not be equated to persecution, in order to promote the highest possible chance of reconciliation.

The subsequent discussion on existing and traditional Sudanese conflict resolution methods highlighted the agreement in the room that it would be necessary for Sudan's problems to be tackled using a Sudanese solution. Participants accepted that there remain flaws in existing Sudanese mechanisms of conflict resolution, such as the difficulty of tackling taboo crimes such as rape, and the impunity of those to whom immunity is extended by their tribe. Nonetheless, it was felt that the existing



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community-based Sudanese conflict resolution methods would continue to have an important role to play in at least some levels of Sudanese society. However, participants also acknowledged that where those mechanisms were weak, more legal structures may be useful to back up more traditional social functions.

The fact that so many other countries had gone through conflict and a subsequent process of reconciliation also provided hope to the participants that, given the appropriate approach, and the opportunity to make it fit to Sudanese culture, such a process would also be achievable there at both a local and national level. In particular, the example of the Truth and Friendship Commission between Indonesia and Timor-Leste was cited as a possible example for encouraging positive relations between North and South, in the event of Southern secession. Particularly important for peace would be a genuine preparation from all sides, and a willingness to discuss matters of mutual interest, such as border security and economic agreements.

The conclusions agreed at the end of the Consultation (available at www.concordis-international.org) gave an indication of the other themes present throughout the discussions. There was broad agreement that shared religious themes of peace and forgiveness should be promoted, instead of exploiting religious difference as a cause for conflict. This was matched by a sense that there could be no peace without genuine communication with each other. It was in that spirit of openness and communication that this consultation took place, and allowed the participants to agree a constructive approach to healing many of Sudan's wounds, as the country undergoes a process which will decide its future direction.