

Thematic report

**Sudan – Internally displaced persons  
in Khartoum**



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## **SUMMARY**

The civil wars in Sudan have created millions of displaced people, and it is estimated that between 1.2 and 1.5 million of the 8 million people living in greater Khartoum are internally displaced persons (IDPs). Many of those who are referred to as IDPs see themselves as migrants. It is also difficult to differentiate between IDPs, migrants and other urban poor in the city slums, and the areas designated as IDP camps by the Sudanese authorities.

No systematic research has ever been carried out map the situation for IDPs from Darfur living in Khartoum. This kind of research would necessarily involve the Sudanese government, and the political sensitivity of the Darfur issue is likely to make such a study difficult. From the sketchy information that is available, however, it seems that living conditions for IDPs, migrants, and others from Darfur are quite similar to those of the urban poor. The Sudanese security forces continue to harass and imprison political opponents, including people from Darfur living in Khartoum.

## **SAMMENDRAG**

Sudan's regionale borgerkriger har forårsaket at landet i dag har verdens største antall internt fordrevne personer. 1,2-1,5 million av de ca. 8 millioner mennesker som bor i Khartoum-området antas å være internt fordrevne fra andre regioner. Mange regner seg imidlertid ikke som internt fordrevne, men som innflyttere, og det er for øvrig vanskelig å skille mellom internt fordrevne, migranter og andre fattige i byens slumområder og områdene som er avsatt til internt fordrevne.

Det finnes ingen systematisk undersøkelse av situasjonen for internt fordrevne personer fra Darfur i Khartoum. For å få til en slik undersøkelse må myndighetene involveres, og den politisk sensitive situasjonen i Darfur gjør dette svært vanskelig, men levekårene til de internt fordrevne i Khartoum er etter alt å dømme overlappende med byens fattige befolkning for øvrig. Politisk opposisjon og organisering blant darfuriere i Khartoum kan i likhet med annen regimekritikk medføre reaksjoner fra myndighetene.

# CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>2. Background</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>3. Internally displaced persons in Khartoum</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1 Migration and socio-economic factors .....	12
3.2 Ethnic/geographical affiliation .....	13
3.2.1 <i>Internally displaced persons from Darfur</i> .....	13
3.3 Residential areas in Khartoum.....	15
3.3.1 <i>Camp or urban slum?</i> .....	15
3.4 Living conditions.....	16
3.4.1 <i>Access to public services</i> .....	17
3.4.2 <i>Employment and economic conditions</i> .....	18
3.4.3 <i>Is there discrimination against internally displaced persons from Darfur?</i> .....	19
3.4.4 <i>Forced relocation and property rights</i> .....	20
3.5 Security issues .....	21
3.6 Political activity among darfurians and the authorities' reaction .....	22
3.6.1 <i>Are internally displaced people from Darfur associated with the political opposition and armed groups?</i> .....	23
<b>4. References</b> .....	<b>25</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This thematic report mainly focuses on the situation of internally displaced people from Darfur living in Khartoum. Information is based on various written sources and a fact-finding trip Landinfo made to Khartoum in April/May 2008. During this visit, we met a number of representatives of local and international organisations that work on various social and human rights issues. All those interviewed were informed that the information they provided would be published. Most of them consented to publication of the information, but many did not want to be quoted by name or position. With their agreement, this report will refer to them anonymously, either as local source/organisation or international organisation. Certain interviewees have also been omitted from the reference list in order to avoid possible recognition.

Names and Arabic terms in this report are written in the Latin alphabet in accordance with the Directorate of Immigration's practice for the transcription of Arabic.

Landinfo wishes to thank Leif Manger and Gunnar Haaland at the University of Bergen and the staff at the Norwegian Embassy in Sudan for their valuable help in identifying suitable parties to meet and for organising the meetings that were held in Khartoum in April/May 2008.

## 2. BACKGROUND

A result of Sudan's regional civil wars is that the country currently has the world's highest number of internally displaced persons.<sup>1</sup> For the most part, these internally displaced persons are not gathered in ordinary camps. There are therefore no exact figures for the number of internally displaced persons in Sudan, but a key source in this field - iDCM, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2008) – estimates that the number as of November 2007 was approximately six million.<sup>2</sup>

During the first civil war from 1955 to 1972, the majority of those who left, fled from Sudan to neighbouring countries. When the civil war flared up again in 1983, very many people chose to flee internally within Sudan rather than seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Many of these people settled in the area around the capital, Khartoum. At the end of the 1980s, most of the internally displaced persons who settled in Khartoum were from the Southern Sudanese population groups: the Dinka, the Shilluk and the Nuer. They had fled from Arab militias who were operating with the government's support, fighting the Southern Sudanese rebel movement, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, SPLA. Most of them came from the Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile areas, which were affected by the civil war at the time. A return intention survey carried out among internally displaced persons in northern Sudan in 2006 (IOM 2006) showed that 40% of the internally displaced persons came from Southern Sudan. Almost 34% came from Southern Kordofan, while slightly less than 13% came from the three Darfur states.<sup>3</sup>

The threat of armed attacks on the civilian population has been the main reason for the large number of internally displaced persons in Sudan. During the long civil war between the north and south, the civilian population has been subjected to armed attacks from government forces, various militia groups, and the SPLA.

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<sup>1</sup> Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) are people who have been forced to flee their homes and communities as a result of – or to avoid the consequences of – armed conflicts, situations of general violence or breaches of human rights and natural disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised national border. They are also called internal refugees but internally displaced persons is the correct term (Norwegian Refugee Council, see <http://www.flyktninghjelpen.no/?aid=9073424>, downloaded 23 June 2008).

Internally displaced persons live in the country of which they are citizens and are therefore still the responsibility of the state. The sovereignty principle has made it difficult for the international community to get involved and help these people. This did change somewhat, however, after the Iraq crisis in early 1990s, when the international community – led by the EU and the USA – established Kurdish safe zones inside Iraq; this was a turning point in the way in which the international community regards internal refugees.

<sup>2</sup> OCHA, the Regional Office for Central and East Africa estimates in its report *Displaced Populations Report, January-June 2007* that the number of internally displaced persons in Sudan is 4,465,000 (iDMC 2008).

<sup>3</sup> This interview survey was carried out among 6,480 households (with a total of 40,048 family members) in 54 locations in Northern Sudan., i.e. in the states of El Gezira, Gedaref, Kassala, Khartoum, Nile, Northern, Red Sea, Sennar and White Nile. On account of the large number of internally displaced persons in Khartoum, the survey was carried out in 30 different locations in ten places and representatives of 3,600 households (with a total of 22,608 family members) were interviewed.

While the government in Sudan and the SPLA were involved in peace negotiations in 2003, a conflict flared up in Darfur in Western Sudan between the non-Arab rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and various militia groups that identify with Arabs and Sudanese government forces.

In addition to several hundred thousand dead, it has been estimated that the Darfur conflict has resulted in more than two million internally displaced persons so far, in addition to over 200,000 refugees in the neighbouring country of Chad. Around a third of the population of Darfur has been affected by the conflict.

On 9 January 2005, the Government of Sudan and the SPLM signed the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) peace treaty, which marked the end of the civil war between Northern and Southern Sudan. A result of the peace agreement has been that a large number of internally displaced persons voluntarily returned to their home areas in Southern Sudan.<sup>4</sup> One of the tasks of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which was established in 2005,<sup>5</sup> is to provide support to internally displaced persons and refugees who return voluntarily.

The years of civil war led to the destruction of schools, health facilities, and water and drainage systems in Southern Sudan. There is also a severe shortage of houses and employment. Despite this, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) reports that more than 77,000 internally displaced persons have returned to Southern Sudan since 2005 through organised return programmes (OCHA 2007).<sup>6</sup> The United Nations Security Council (2008) points out that approx. 320,000 internally displaced persons returned to Southern Sudan, Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei in 2007. This means that the majority of internal refugees who have returned home have done so at their own initiative. This was also confirmed by, among others, the Norwegian Refugee Council's local representative in Khartoum at a meeting with Landinfo in May 2008. It is estimated that a total of approx. two million people have returned to Southern Sudan since the peace settlement, but the basis for this figure is very uncertain (IOM 2008). The internally displaced persons who have been living in Northern Sudan for years are, however, generally well-integrated, particularly the second generation, and this means that fewer than one might think wish to return.

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<sup>4</sup> In the political framework agreement signed by the SPLM and the Northern Sudanese government in July 2004, the parties agreed that the country's internally displaced population had a right to return to where they came from or resettle in a different part of the country with the same rights as the country's other inhabitants (IOM 2006). In the survey carried out by IOM in 2006 in relation to returning home, 62.5% of the those asked said they intended to return home, while 25% said that they did not wish to return to where they came from.

<sup>5</sup> UNMIS's mandate is: '(a) to support implementation of the CPA signed by the parties; (b) to facilitate and coordinate, within its capabilities and in its areas of deployment, the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons and humanitarian assistance; (c) to assist the parties in the mine action sector; (d) to contribute towards international efforts to protect and promote human rights in Sudan, as well as to coordinate international efforts towards the protection of civilians, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including internally displaced persons, returning refugees, and women and children, within UNMIS' capabilities and in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies, related organizations, and non-governmental organizations.' (See UNMIS's website <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmis/background.html>)

<sup>6</sup> At a meeting with Landinfo in May 2008, IOM stated that it provides practical assistance, transport etc. and is responsible for running information campaigns aimed at camps for internally displaced persons in Khartoum. Two major surveys have been carried out (2005 and 2006) relating to people's wishes/intentions in relation to returning home. The registration of internally displaced persons wishing to return home is still ongoing at 35 registration centres, and around 500,000 people have been registered so far.

The question of return is not only an issue for the refugees themselves but also for the authorities in the south and north of the country. At meetings with Landinfo in April/May 2008, some sources pointed to the Southern Sudanese government's wish that people of southern origin living in Khartoum should move south because this would be an argument in favour of allocating greater resources to the south.

The regime in the north, on its part, is unclear about whether it wishes the internally displaced persons/migrants in Khartoum to stay or return to the areas they originally came from. If they stay, they will ensure a large population in the north and in Khartoum (again in relation to resource allocation), but at the same time they constitute an electorate among whom there is widespread support for southern political parties. This could lead to established northern parties receiving a lower percentage of votes.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the internally displaced population is an important labour resource.

A solution to the conflict in Darfur has yet to be found, and environmental factors also contribute to difficult conditions in the region. In the long-term – desertification may mean that very few people from Northern Darfur have anything to return to (meeting with an international organisation in May 2008).

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<sup>7</sup> A general election is scheduled to take place in 2009.

### 3. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN KHARTOUM

#### 3.1 MIGRATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The population of Khartoum has increased rapidly over the last 20 years through migration from the countryside. Desertification, famine, the desire to find employment and improve living conditions, and conflicts all lead to migration. Public services and infrastructure are poor in the countryside with few opportunities to work and earn an income. Khartoum, like other big cities in the third world, is characterised by large-scale migration from the countryside to the city.

At meetings with Landinfo in April/May 2008, the interviewees agreed with the perception that these migrants settle in the slums that border on areas that the authorities have defined as camps for internally displaced persons. Everyone pointed out that it was generally difficult to distinguish between internally displaced persons and economic migrants – and, in the words of the prominent human rights activist Azhari al-Hajj, ‘The authorities don’t differentiate between these groups, the provision of services is poor regardless – in Khartoum as well.’ Moreover, the settlement pattern in Khartoum is based more on social class than ethnicity and regional background, and in rich areas there are no ethnic divisions. Azhari al-Hajj also referred to a new trend whereby people were moving from central areas of Khartoum to the slum areas around the city because the increase in the cost of living was forcing people with low incomes to sell their property in central areas in order to be able to survive on the proceedings from the sale of their property.<sup>8</sup>

Between 1.2 and 1.5 million of the approx. 8 million people who live in the Khartoum area are assumed to be internally displaced persons from other regions (iDMC 2008).<sup>9</sup> However, many of them do not regard themselves as being internally displaced but rather see themselves as migrants. The estimated figures are uncertain and are based on rather vague information (meeting with international organisation in May 2008).

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<sup>8</sup> Azhari al-Hajj also defined these people as internally displaced persons.

<sup>9</sup> The population of Khartoum varies depending on the source – iDMC operates with a figure of five million, while SOAT (2006) uses a figure of eight million.

## **3.2 ETHNIC/GEOGRAPHICAL AFFILIATION**

The vast majority of internally displaced persons in the Khartoum area come from the western and southern regions of Sudan, including the states of Kordofan, Bahr el-Ghazal, Darfur, Unity, Nile and Equatoria. The largest ethnic groups in the internally displaced population in Khartoum are the Dinka, the Nuba, and the Fur. Several sources pointed out in meetings with Landinfo in April/May 2008 that many people from the Darfur region have lived in Khartoum since the 1980s, when many left the region because of drought. Many people also fled from Darfur after the war flared up in 2003. It is difficult, however, to obtain conclusive figures (see also the following paragraph). Labour migration from this region to Khartoum has also increased since the border with Libya was closed in May 2003.<sup>10</sup>

According to the IOM's 2006 return intention survey (which is a sample survey), 51% of the internally displaced persons in Khartoum are men and 49% women. Roughly 30% are children under the age of nine and the average age of an internally displaced person is 20. This means that very many of them have spent the greater part of their life as internally displaced persons.

### **3.2.1 Internally displaced persons from Darfur**

No systematic surveys have been carried out on the situation for people from Darfur who live in Khartoum. In order to carry out such a survey the authorities would have to be involved, and the politically sensitive situation in Darfur would make this very difficult, according to an international organisation Landinfo met in April/May 2008. The return intention surveys conducted by the IOM in 2005 and 2006 are therefore the only surveys that contain information about living conditions and certain other conditions for internally displaced persons. The survey from 2006 (a sample survey carried out among 6,480 households that can be assumed to be representative) showed that approx. 13% of the internally displaced persons in Khartoum come from Darfur. Sixty-six per cent of the 826 households from the three Darfur regions that were included in this survey were living in Khartoum, and they had been internally displaced for an average of 18 to 21 years (IOM 2006).

At a meeting with Landinfo in April/May 2008, the Norwegian Refugee Council's local representative also pointed out that people from Darfur do not constitute a large percentage of the internally displaced population in Khartoum. Most people do not have the means to travel from Darfur to Khartoum, and there has only been a minor increase in the number of people in the camps around Khartoum since the conflict started. The Norwegian Refugee Council's representative agreed with other interviewees that the people who come to Khartoum usually already have contacts or family members there, while the greatest migration was taking place within Darfur itself.

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<sup>10</sup> There are no official figures for the number of Sudanese citizens in Libya, but it is estimated that 150,000 – 250,000 people from Darfur are living in Libya, legally and illegally. This corresponds to approx. 4% of the population of Darfur (Young 2007).

The head of the Darfur Peace Initiative,<sup>11</sup> Dr Yusuf Bakhit Idris, stated at a meeting with Landinfo in April/May 2008 that roughly one third of the internally displaced persons from Darfur living in Khartoum do not have close family / relatives in the city. This group also includes a number of street children, some of whom have travelled to Khartoum because they do not wish to join militia groups. Bakhit Idris also stated that 300,000 of the estimated 500,000 internally displaced families from Darfur were living in urban areas, including around 32,000 families<sup>12</sup> in Khartoum/Ummdurman.

Bakhit Idris claimed that new internally displaced persons from Darfur are currently arriving on a daily basis in Khartoum, particularly from Southern Darfur. According to Bakhit Idris, most Darfurians in Khartoum originally come from the northern and western areas of Darfur. No other sources, however, have been able to quantify how many people have arrived since 2003.

Nor has there been any systematic form of mapping or registration of the ethnic backgrounds of internally displaced persons from Darfur. But IOM's return intention survey from 2006 shows that approx. 52% of the 826 households in the sample of internally displaced persons from Darfur belong to the Fur group.<sup>13</sup> Four per cent Zaghawa and just over 6% were Massalit. Only 3% were from Arab tribes.

### **3.3 RESIDENTIAL AREAS IN KHARTOUM**

#### **3.3.1 Camp or urban slum?**

Four areas have been formally reserved for internally displaced persons on the outskirts of Khartoum: Mayo, Jabal Awliyya, Ummdurman as-Salam and Wad al-Bashir. During Landinfo's visit to Khartoum in April/May 2008, we were able to accompany the IOM to Ummdurman as-Salam.

It is difficult to talk about camps in this context. Neither Ummdurman as-Salam nor the other areas, which some people refer to as camps, are delimited areas. They appear to be permanent residential areas that hardly differ from ordinary residential areas in the slums around the capital, where poor Arabs from the countryside in the north live in conditions that are no better than those for people from the south, east, or Darfur.

In addition to the formally reserved areas, there are two large slum areas, Soba Aradi and Hajj Yusif, and other slums, where poor people from different backgrounds live – places which an international source referred to as so-called 'low-income high-density areas' at a meeting with Landinfo in April/May 2008. Al-Fatih is another of these marginalised areas.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Bakhit Idris, the Darfur Peace Initiative was established in 2003, and its objective is to provide background information to the parties involved in the Darfur conflict. The organisation also organises peace negotiations both in and outside Darfur. The group has a religious basis (*Da'wat ahl Allah*: 'appeal from God's people'), and consists of intellectuals and tribal leaders from Darfur. The organisation has also run a programme for social reconciliation between Fur tribes and Arab groups since 2005, and it has drawn up a 135-point programme in relation to reconciliation and the conflicts that have to be solved in order to bring an end to the violence.

<sup>12</sup> If each family is assumed to have approx. five members, this corresponds to approx. 160,000 persons according to Bakhit Idris.

<sup>13</sup> 830 households were interviewed.

It is evident that the authorities actively endeavour to prevent permanent structures being built in both the official and unofficial camps, because this would make it more difficult to close the camps if the areas they are situated in were to be used for other purposes. During the visit to Ummdurman as-Salam, Landinfo was able to see, for example, that water pipes had been laid to the outer edge of the camp but no further. The inhabitants of the camp have to buy water transported by cart and donkey. The Norwegian Refugee Council has also only been able to build temporary schools. In general, there is no electricity supply in the unofficial camps. The general trend, which is otherwise prevalent in the third world, whereby more permanent structures are gradually built in slum towns, is actively prevented in Khartoum, according to one international organisation (meeting April/May 2008).

### **3.4 LIVING CONDITIONS**

The factual information that is available about the background and living conditions of internal refugees is largely based on the return intention surveys conducted by the IOM in 2005 and 2006. The surveys that were conducted in 2005 painted a very gloomy picture of the situation for internally displaced persons in Khartoum. Eighty percent of the inhabitants lived in temporary homes made from plastic/tarpaulins and cardboard. The 2006 survey showed a clear improvement in terms of housing standards – approx. 19% stated that they still lived in the same type of accommodation, while approx. 60% stated that they lived in brick-built homes (clay bricks) and approx. 14% lived in traditional mud huts. While only 10% of the children ate three meals a day in 2005, this had increased to almost 30% in 2006, and half the children ate two meals a day (IOM 2006).

Other information from sources that Landinfo met in April/May 2008 was anecdotal and based on the sources' impressions. However, the main impression of both the local and international sources Landinfo met in April/May 2008 is that the living conditions of the internally displaced population in Khartoum largely overlaps the living conditions of the rest of the city's poor. If something is to be done about the living conditions of internally displaced people in Khartoum, it must be done in the context of improving conditions for the poor urban population in general. One problem, however, is that fewer and fewer international aid agencies run projects in Khartoum (meeting with international organisation, May 2008).

Dr Maryam as-Sadiq al-Mahdi<sup>14</sup> explained at a meeting with Landinfo in April/May 2008 that the country's increasing oil revenues had also failed to result in an improvement in conditions for people as a whole. This information is confirmed by independent studies (Ahmed 2008, p. 8):

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<sup>14</sup> Maryam as-Sadiq al-Mahdi is a medical doctor; she is a member of the Umma party's politburo, and its spokeswoman, and she is responsible for contact with other parties. She is the daughter of the party's leader, Sadiq al-Mahdi.

*The economic growth has not trickled down to the most needy people and regions. The possible cause is that income inequality is accentuating and the benefits of growth have not been shared by all income classes. Especially the poor have not gained much means by which to improve their welfare conditions. There is a rather vulnerable situation socially, economically and politically throughout the whole country. The country has suffered greatly from civil strife, violent disputes, and internal insecurity in the southern, western and eastern regions.*

In Al-Mahdi's opinion, the middle class has disappeared and the majority of people are becoming poorer and poorer while the price of food is rising steadily. A family's consumption of bread amounts to a monthly cost of around 300 pounds, i.e. NOK 750, while the minimum wage is around 400 pounds, i.e. NOK 1,000. While it is true that more and more people have access to education, the quality of teaching has generally become very poor. In terms of health, Sudan is now number 173 of 177 on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) list of living conditions (2008), compared with number 165 previously.

### **3.4.1 Access to public services**

Both the Norwegian Refugee Council<sup>15</sup> and the IOM explained at meetings with Landinfo in April/May 2008 that people needed ID papers<sup>16</sup> in order to be able to gain access to public services. This applies in particular to education. However, people are often able to gain access to health services without such documents.<sup>17</sup> But health and educational services are limited in the city's poor areas and the scarcity of public services in the slums also applies to infrastructure such as water supply, sewage systems and electricity. Few foreign aid agencies provide health care for internally displaced persons in Khartoum.

Other international and local sources Landinfo met also said that all public transport in Khartoum is privately run, and transport expenses are high since people usually have far to travel between their homes and jobs.

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<sup>15</sup> The Norwegian Refugee Council operate centres in six of the camps in Khartoum and runs ICLA programmes (ICLA = Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance, cf. <http://www.nrc.no/?did=9221023>) for internally displaced persons. The ICLA programmes in Khartoum have four main focus areas: legal assistance (actual legal aid in a few cases), mediation, helping people to obtain ID documents and property law.

<sup>16</sup> The IOM's 2006 return intention survey shows that, of the 228 households from Southern Darfur living in Northern Sudan, 51.8% had proof of nationality and 10.5% had ID cards, while 22.8% had no form of identification documents. Of the 261 households from Northern Darfur, 41% had proof of nationality, 20.7% had ID cards and 26.8% had no form of identification documents. Among the 337 households from Western Darfur, the figures were relatively similar to the figures from the two other regions – 47.5%, 12.8% , and 21%, respectively. For more information about documents in Sudan, see Landinfo, 2008, Thematic report: *Dokumenter i Somalia og Sudan*.

<sup>17</sup> At a meeting with Landinfo in May 2008, Médecins sans frontières Belgium explained that the private health care available in Khartoum is almost on a par with services in European cities. But access to private health care is limited to an elite who can afford to pay for it. The public health service is limited, not because of a shortage of health personnel, but because the authorities' declarations that various types of treatment are to be free often do not include funding for the provinces, and the reforms are not monitored. Nor is it certain that people who need immediate help receive the help they need from the public health service.

### 3.4.2 Employment and economic conditions

Unemployment is high among the internally displaced population in Khartoum. More than 80% work outside the formal labour market.<sup>18</sup> People who are in employment primarily work in the agricultural sector, small-scale commerce and the building industry, but the earning opportunities for many women with children are so poor that they start illegal activities such as brewing beer. This often leads to women being arrested. However, internally displaced Darfurians dominate trading in the markets in the camps for internally displaced persons around Khartoum. According to an international organisation (meeting in April/May 2008), it is particularly Darfurians with such backgrounds who are in a position to be able to house relatives who have arrived more recently from Darfur.

Despite the high level of unemployment, many people decide to stay on in Khartoum, and several of the international and local sources Landinfo met in April/May 2008 stated that, for many people, the economic opportunities are an important argument for staying – even though the opportunities are poor, people see them as being considerably better than in the rest of the country.

Moreover, many of the people who are classified as internally displaced persons in Khartoum are second-generation displaced persons who have grown up in the city and therefore have no relationship to their parents' place of origin.

The situation in the capital in terms of education and job opportunities is far better in all respects than where their parents came from.<sup>19</sup>

The authorities have no great interest in exerting pressure on these sections of the population to return to their places of origin, regardless of whether they come from Darfur or other parts of the country. These groups constitute an important reserve army of labour – not least in relation to all the construction activity in Khartoum (meeting with international organisation, April/May 2008).

The general economic and social situation, not only for internally displaced people in the Khartoum area but also for the rest of the city's poor, can be characterised as bad, however. And it is difficult to differentiate between internally displaced persons and other poor inhabitants of the city. According to several international organisations (meeting April/May 2008), internally displaced people from Darfur largely live under the same conditions as displaced persons from the rest of the country and poor migrants in general.

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<sup>18</sup> 18.4% are in employment, 12.5% are housewives, 35% are students and 20.6% are under the age of 14 (IOM 2006).

<sup>19</sup> On account of the unrest in the country, migrants in Sudan have not had the same opportunity to maintain contact with their areas of origin as is normal when migration takes place under more peaceful circumstances.

### 3.4.3 Is there discrimination against internally displaced persons from Darfur?

At a meeting with Landinfo in May 2008, the IOM's representative in Khartoum stated that people from Darfur have the same access to public services as everyone else in Khartoum. This information was confirmed on the whole by other sources Landinfo met in Khartoum in April/May 2008. Human rights activist and journalist Faysal al-Baqir emphasised that Darfurians were not discriminated against in relation to schooling etc., but he pointed out, as did the other sources, that the level of public services is lower in the slums around Khartoum, where people from Darfur largely live, than in central parts of the city. However, in al-Baqir's opinion, there is no difference in access to public services between internally displaced persons from Darfur or other places and other poor migrants who have come to the capital for other reasons. At the same time, al-Baqir pointed out that the police generally view the poor and marginalised groups as being a problem and a security threat. Marginalised persons who come from areas where there are ongoing conflicts experience more problems than people who come from peaceful areas.

Several sources said that the large waves of migration from the south since 1983 have had a pronounced effect on the composition of the population in Khartoum. Many of the people Landinfo interviewed in April/May 2008 said that skin colour has a major bearing on social standing in Sudan. Sudan expert Alex de Waal described this as follows: '*Sociocultural classification based on skin color corresponds closely with power and wealth, and [...] members of the northern establishment justify their dominance with reference to racial categories.*' (2007, p. 25)

While the light-skinned Nildal Arabs still hold economic and political power in Sudan, they are now in the minority in Khartoum.

Internally displaced people who have lived in the north for a long time, including those from the south, have also been strongly influenced by Arab culture,<sup>20</sup> and the fact that Khartoum has changed so dramatically as a result of immigration from other regions of the country makes it difficult to identify people as, for example, Darfurians and harass them on the basis of a specific geographical/ethnic background.

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<sup>20</sup> Arabisation (ta'rib in Arabic) is an ongoing process that started several hundred years ago. This process involves the spreading of Arab identity and the Arabic language. At the end of the 1990s, several linguists and other analysts believed that the language map of Sudan had changed in three ways: several of the Sudanese languages were in the process of dying out; Arabic replaced English as the most important language in upper secondary education, and Arabic as a spoken language continued to spread in Darfur, Southern Sudan and among the Southern Sudanese in the Khartoum area, as well as among Hausa and Fulani-speaking immigrants who had come from Northern Nigeria in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Sharkey 2007). However, the political and economic elite in Sudan consists of a small group of Arab clans in the Nile valley (Flint & de Waal 2005).

### **3.4.4 Forced relocation and property rights**

According to the sources Landinfo met in April/ May 2008, large-scale forced relocation and the demolition of internally displaced persons' residential areas, of which there were a number of examples prior to 2004, has not occurred since May 2005, when a large police force entered Soba Aradi to force people out. They met a great deal of resistance from the inhabitants, and army reinforcements from the army and the security forces were sent in. Most of the water supply to the area was cut off and several hundred people were arrested (SOAT 2006).

A well-informed international source also told us that the local authorities had drawn up a set of rules – 'Guiding principles for relocation' – based on previous forced relocations. However, these rules have hardly been used since the governor and the UN system endorsed them. The forced relocations that occur today are very limited and rare.

The Norwegian Refugee Council's representative pointed out that all the camps are located on private property, and it is therefore natural that conflicts will arise. The forced relocation of internally displaced persons and other poor people is often linked to ambiguities about property rights. Another well-informed international source also pointed out that property rights legislation is unclear and has not been adapted to address the challenges that exist in Khartoum today. However, this source believed it was difficult to decide whether ethnicity played a significant role in the distribution/redistribution of property rights.

The organisations that work in this field do not just focus on internally displaced persons or refugees but also on the poor urban population as a whole, as this issue relates to urban development in general. Several sources that Landinfo met in April/May 2008 also expressed that relocation undoubtedly was a necessary tool in urban development in Khartoum, but relocation had to take place in a manner that also would take the needs of the people into consideration.

## **3.5 SECURITY ISSUES**

On 10 May, approximately a thousand armed JEM soldiers entered Ummdurman. Heavy fighting broke out between the government forces and the rebels in several places in Ummdurman and in some areas of central Khartoum. This attempted coup failed and it is estimated that approximately 60 people were killed in the clashes. The authorities imposed a curfew until 12 May and hundreds of people were arrested in the wake of the attack, most of them members of the Zaghawa tribe from Darfur. The attack came as a surprise to most people. Neither the civil war between the north and south nor the Darfur conflict had previously led to this type of armed confrontation in the capital, where security is generally regarded as good.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The US State Department (2008) referred to an incident in Ummdurman in March 2007 in which 13 people, including three police officers, were killed. At the meetings held by Landinfo in April/May 2008, Dr Yusuf Bakhit Idris, among others, explained that the site of the incident in question was a guest-house for commandants from the Minni Minnawis fraction of the SLA who had been injured during the war. The entire incident was the result of a misunderstanding in which a security guard misunderstood a police officer, which led to shooting and escalation of the situation. The reason why the police visited the guest-house was to check that an agreement that specified that no weapons were to be stored there was being complied with.

However, the slum areas in Khartoum, like slums in most countries, do experience security problems because of crime. The Darfur activist Dr Yusuf Bakhit Idris pointed out that the centre of Khartoum is very safe, however.

Security in the official camps for internally displaced persons and the other slum areas of the city is largely administered by the inhabitants themselves. The Norwegian Refugee Council's representative explained that the authorities are very little involved in law and order in these areas, where people generally dispense their own justice.

Human rights activist and journalist Faysal al-Baqir said that the personal safety of people from Darfur living in Khartoum was generally better than it is in Darfur. While people who are politically active and leaders are more liable to experience problems with the authorities, it is ordinary crime that can create difficulties for most people. This impression was confirmed by other sources Landinfo met, but the Norwegian Refugee Council's representative said that Darfurians without ID documents were especially liable to be harassed by the police. The Norwegian Refugee Council cooperates with the Sudanese authorities to obtain such documents for people as part of its ICLA project.<sup>22</sup> According to another international organisation Landinfo met, the problem of not having ID documents was not a phenomenon that primarily applied to internally displaced persons. It is a problem for the whole poor population of the city.

### **3.6 POLITICAL ACTIVITY AMONG DARFURIANS AND THE AUTHORITIES' REACTION**

Political activity, criticism of the regime and any attempt to unite opponents of the regime is met with strong reactions by the authorities:

*The Special Rapporteur expresses her concern at the repression of fundamental rights and freedoms, the excessive use of force, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment of human rights defenders and political opponents (UN Human Rights Council 2008).*

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<sup>22</sup> See footnote 15.

All the relevant sources Landinfo met during its visit to Khartoum in April/May 2008 confirmed this gloomy picture. The authorities' reaction to political opponents from Darfur does not differ significantly from the abuse and reactions meted out to other political opponents.<sup>23</sup> The Sudanese authorities focus on people who are politically active and high-profile opponents of the regime i.e. human rights activists, journalists, students etc. irrespective of their ethnicity or regional background. A well-informed local source Landinfo met in Khartoum in April 2008 explained that the security service (*al-Amn al-'Amm*) has a dedicated tribal branch (*Idarat al-qaba'il*) that monitors intellectual and politically active Darfurians and opponents of the regime from other parts of the country. The arrests that are made are highly targeted, and both the local and international representatives Landinfo met agreed that torture was commonplace in Sudanese prisons and detention centres. The length of time people spend in prison varies, and the next of kin of those who are arrested are neither informed about the arrest nor about where they are imprisoned (see also HRW 2008a).

Darfur activist Dr Yusif Bakhit Idris emphasised that people from Darfur have historically been over-represented among student activists and political leaders in student circles. But he underlined that it is more a case of students' political activity in general being a problem in the authorities' eyes than of students from Darfur being over-represented among politically active students. The Darfur conflict dominates political demonstrations organised by students in Khartoum, while other political issues are much less to the fore. However, the students are also interested in other questions, i.e. problems relating to the payment of places at universities<sup>24</sup> and the availability of student accommodation etc. but these issues do not mobilise students in the same way as the Darfur conflict does. Human rights activist Azhari al-Hajj claimed that the majority of Darfurians and not just people from a Fur background support SLA Abdalwahid<sup>25</sup> whom the authorities have attempted to scandalise on the basis of comments he made about opening an office in Israel.<sup>26</sup>

### **3.6.1 Are internally displaced people from Darfur associated with the political opposition and armed groups?**

In March 2008, the UN reported that a number of Darfurians in Khartoum had been arrested in autumn 2007 for suspected affiliation to SLA-Abdel Wahid:

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<sup>23</sup> See Landinfo 2008 for a broader account of the situation for the political opposition in Sudan.

<sup>24</sup> University places in Khartoum are financed by the authorities in the individual states. They are always behind with their payments, which can lead to students from the provinces not being allowed to sit for their exams etc. This leads to general discontent among students at state-run universities. Very few Darfurians have the funds required to attend private universities and university colleges.

<sup>25</sup> Abdalwahid Mohammad al-Nur (together with Minni Minawi) led the SLA until October/November 2005. Following internal schisms in the movement, Abdel-Wahid formed his own fraction. See Landinfo thematic report: *Opprørsbevegelser i Darfur* (2008). Available at <http://landinfo.no>

<sup>26</sup> This is probably linked to the fact that many Sudanese refugees have applied for asylum in Israel.

*Prior to the start of the peace talks on Darfur in Sirte, Libya, a wave of arbitrary arrests and detentions of Darfurian supporters of the Abdel Wahid Al Nur branch of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA/AW) by NISS began in and around Khartoum. The majority of those arrested were students at Khartoum universities. From 20 September to 4 December, a total of 30 presumed SLA/AW supporters were arrested, sometimes repeatedly, and held incommunicado for different periods of time. Many were reportedly tortured or ill-treated (UN Human Rights Council 2008).*

Sources in Khartoum confirmed that Darfurians had been arrested in recent years, for example, on suspicion of collaboration with rebel groups, although there were relatively few reports of arrests and persecution of people from Darfur living in Khartoum until the JEM attack on the Ummdurman camp in May.<sup>27</sup> Almost all the reported arrests and/or other persecution have involved people who are either high-profile human rights activists or opponents of the regime. This picture was largely corroborated by the sources Landinfo met in Khartoum. Arrests and other types of persecution of people from Darfur living in Khartoum do not seem to occur on the grounds of their regional or ethnic background alone. It is also clear that people who actively participate in different forms of political opposition against the government are subject to surveillance. The arrests that followed the JEM attack in May confirm that the authorities reactions are targeted.<sup>28</sup>

Politically active students are also accused of supporting rebel groups, and there is unquestionably a great deal of sympathy for the rebel groups among students from Darfur.

We cannot rule out that persecution and arrests do take place but are not reported. However, given the international presence in Khartoum and the fact that several national human rights organisations operate relatively freely in the capital, the scope of such abuse is unlikely to be extensive. Nor is there anything to indicate that there is a general under-reporting of cases of persecution of persons from Darfur who are staying in Khartoum.

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<sup>27</sup> In 2004, Amnesty International reported that people from Darfur living in Khartoum had been arrested as a matter of routine since 2002. According to Amnesty, people from Darfur risked being arrested purely on the grounds of belonging to one of the ethnic groups represented in the armed opposition groups in Darfur (Zaghawa, Fur, Masalit and other small ethnic groups) or families who enjoy a certain social standing in these groups. Many of the arrests to which Amnesty referred, however, were of students, lawyers or human rights activists. According to Amnesty, some of the people who were arrested were tortured and imprisoned for months without being charged or convicted.

In addition to Amnesty, the Sudanese human rights organisation Sudan Organisation Against Torture (SOAT 2004) also reported that students and other people from Darfur living in Khartoum had been arrested.

<sup>28</sup> See HRW 2008a for documentation of the authorities' actions following the JEM attack.

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