

# Association for World Education

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: 11th Session (2–19 June 2009)  
STATEMENT by Representative David G. LITTMAN – ~~Monday~~, 9 June 2009

## Agenda Item 4: Matters requiring the attention of the Council Slavery in the Sudan

[Small type passages in square brackets were not pronounced – as time reduced to 2 minutes]

Thank you, Mr President. This is a joint statement with the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

According to a leading member of the Government of Sudan's Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children, James Aguir Alic, between 35,000 and 200,000 Southern Sudanese slaves remain in bondage in Northern Sudan.<sup>1</sup> Many of the slaves are Christians or followers of traditional Dinka beliefs, being held in Southern Darfur and neighbouring Kordofan.<sup>2</sup> Most of the Sudanese slaves were captured as booty in the context of a Jihad war declared by Sudan's President Umar al-Bashir in 1992.

Liberated slaves report subjection to beatings, death threats, female genital mutilations and rape – among other ordeals.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, reports from the UN Secretary General's International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur [Jan. 2005] and from the Darfur Consortium [Dec. 2008] confirm that slavery is being used as a weapon of war against Africans in Darfur.<sup>4</sup>

Sir, the former prime minister of Sudan, Sadiq al-Mahdi, imam of the Ansar movement, explained this Jihad War context 10 years ago in a letter of 24 March 1999, addressed to High Commissioner Mary Robinson & widely circulated at the Commission. Here are his words [Section III: War Crimes]:

["The traditional concept of *JIHAD* ... is based upon a division of the world into two zones: one the zone of Peace, the other the zone of War. It requires initiating hostilities for religious purposes.]

**It is true that the [NIF] regime has not enacted a law to realize slavery in Sudan. But the traditional concept of *JIHAD* does allow slavery as a by-product [of jihad]."**

[The continued presence of chattel slavery in Sudan is clearly in contravention of both Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 8 of the International Covenant of Civic and Political Rights, which states that "*No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited*". We are extremely concerned that despite its ratification of the Covenant, and its signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, the Sudanese government has been totally ineffective in reducing the vast number of its people consigned to a life of slavery. Furthermore, we are alarmed at the lack of attention paid by the Human Rights Council to this problem. Despite mention in the final outcome document of the Durban Review Conference of the historical trans-Atlantic slave trade and current human trafficking, the document completely ignored the existence of hundreds of thousands of modern-day chattel slaves.]

**We pointed out in an oral DRC statement on 24 April that article 62 refers to the 'slave trade' in the singular and not in the plural. Why omit the mass slavery for centuries of non-Muslims in the Middle East [documented extensively in Arab, Syriac, Greek and Armenian, Turkish and Indian texts], and the equally infamous Arab Slave Trade in Africa for over a millennium that continues today in some countries, particularly in Sudan. Why refer only to the transatlantic slave trade?**

**We urge the Council and the international community to insist that the government of Sudan honour its obligation to eliminate slavery and the slave trade on its territory, to improve its legislation and enforcement where necessary, and to improve measures on the ground to release the enslaved, and bring the slave traders to justice. With others, we wish to highlight the need not only to release all slaves but also to reintegrate them into society and to provide socio-psychological care and education so that they may be fully restored to their proper status in the community.**

Thank you, Mr. President

<sup>1</sup> Reuters, Skye Wheeler, "Misseriya and Dinka Grapple with History of Child Abduction, Aweil, November 14, 2008; BBC News, Joseph Winter, "No Return for Sudan's Forgotten Slaves", March 16, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.csi-int.org/press\\_090311.php?sld=01244065334&sucHL=slaves](http://www.csi-int.org/press_090311.php?sld=01244065334&sucHL=slaves)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.