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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2013]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Persecution of human rights defenders in Sudan

Since August 2012 Sudanese authorities have been accusing leading non-governmental organizations in Sudan of being agents of foreign nations who threaten the national security of Sudan. By utilizing the Sudanese media the government launched a defamation campaign against independent voices in Sudanese society. The campaign, started by the publication of a critical article in the newspaper al-Intibaha in August 2012, claimed that numerous cited NGOs receive funding from the United States. The authors of the article supposed that therefore these NGOs have been manipulated by the United States with the intent of deliberately hurting the positive image of Sudan and its national security. The pro-government newspaper Akhir Lahza informed the public on December 24 that the government would start a campaign to ensure that these NGOs will not violate the national interests of Sudan any longer.

But the decision to close some of these NGOs was taken prior to these events. Some of the NGOs have been summoned to justify their activities to the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in autumn 2012. In November 2012, in an evident attempt to intimidate them, HAC officials visited several NGO offices without prior notice. The intimidation and defamation campaign against independent NGOs culminated in the closure of at least four reputed NGOs in November and December 2012. The Culture Ministry closed the cultural group “Beit al-Fanoon” in November. The NGO had been committed to promote Sudanese culture and traditional values. On December 24 the Culture Ministry instructed the closure of the “Sudanese Studies Center (SCC)”. The well-known organization had been actively involved in supporting peace and democracy.

On December 19 Sudanese security officials interrogated four representatives of the NGO “Arry” which had been promoting human rights and peace in Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile. Human rights violations were committed by all conflict parties in both provinces. No perpetrators of massive human rights violations have been brought to justice until now. Testimonies indicate that crimes against humanity may have been committed by Sudanese soldiers. Therefore the research and documentation of human rights violations by Arry is a vital step in order to stop stop impunity. Ultimately, Arry was closed down by Sudanese security officials in December 2012.

When these NGOs and the Confederation of Civil Society Organizations in Sudan decided on December 30 to submit a written complaint to the National Human Rights Commission, police and security service officials attacked the activists and prevented them from handing a memorandum to the Commission. Dozens of security agents surrounded the commission office before the arrival of the delegation and deliberately prevented the NGO representatives from entering the building. The Commission sharply criticized the police action as an attack on the integrity and immunity of the Commission and as a flagrant violation of the Interim Constitution of 2005 and the National Human Rights Commission Act of 2009.

On December 31 HAC cancelled the official registration of the “Al-Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Development (KACE)” which promotes dialogue, democracy and cultural diversity.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge the Government of Sudan to:

- Respect Sudanese law and its Constitution with regards to the civil society;
- Stop the crackdown against NGOs and the criminalization of independent human rights defenders;

- Acknowledge the independence of human rights defenders;
 - Respect the freedom and property of NGOs.
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