

SUDANESE WOMEN IN EXILE: ISLAM, POLITICS AND THE STATE

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Key words:

- **ANSAR** Umma conservative religious party
- **NIF** National Islamic Front
- **PDP.** People's Democratic Party.
- **RP:** Republican Party.
- **SPLA/SPLM** Sudanese people's liberation Army/Movement
- **WLUML:** Women living under Muslim Laws.



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ABSTRACT:

Sudan the largest country in Africa colonized under the British and condominium, [Egyptian and British] Sudan gained independence in 1956. A country with diverse ethnic, cultural and religious realities, such diversity accompanied with economic inequalities shaped the theme of instability and changes in political history of the country.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the political development in Sudan's politics and its relation to women. My understanding is that it is essential and crucial to investigate Islam, Politics and the state position within the context of Sudan, in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of Sudanese women's positions and development. It is equally important to differentiate between different women's position in the country, namely Sudanese women from Southern Sudan and women from the Northern Sudan.

The study focuses on, Sudanese women living in England and Wales. Questions of why Sudanese women took off to England? Whether the exile is politically, economically or socially motivated? How many these women are? And most important how these women construct themselves in their new environment? Their ethnic, religious, and social background and their educational level all are important indicators to be examined in the study, beside mapping and examining different political discourses.



THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL INTRODUCTION:

Politics and Sudan.

The Republic of Sudan (hereafter referred to as Sudan), is located in Northern Africa, bordering the Red Sea, between Egypt and Eritrea. With an area of one million square miles, Sudan is the largest country in Africa. Diverse cultural, social and religious differences have always existed among the peoples of Sudan, and since independence in 1956; Sudan has been involved in a civil war for years. The wars are rooted in economic, political, and social domination of Northern Sudan on one hand, and marginalized Muslims and non-Muslim, non-Arab Southern Sudan on the other hand. Sudan like many African states suffers dilemmas of poverty, social unrest and wars, the war in southern Sudan claimed more than 2 million lives, toppled the social and economic development of the country, the chaotic economic situation reflected in people's lives both in rural and urban areas, with 4 million displaced through the borders and out side the country. {Suliman M. 2000.P.141}.

The southern problem erupted and forced itself into the arena of Sudanese politics as early as 1955, during the multi-party rule of the first government prior independence, when the equatorial corps of the Sudan defence forces went into open mutiny, hundred of people were killed, and the mutiny was ruthlessly crushed. Abboud regime overthrown after October 1964 uprising, and the main traditional political parties came to power, Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist party. Followed again the May 1969 coup by the free officers and in 1985 the overthrown of May regime under the commander of the armed forces General Swaar El Dahab who promised a civilian rule, yet in June 1989 Islamic fundamentalist succeeded in taking over the regime.

Hale 1997: stated that Sudan began the post independence [1956] era as a parliamentary democracy, the military was invited into power by the civilian regime



in 1958 – Abboud military regime took over in November 1958(1) and stayed in power until a civilian overthrow in October 1964. [Hale 1997 P. 86].

On the other hand Lesch stressed that despite of the divisions and diversities within Sudanese society.

“Sudan showed a persistent quest for democracy compared to other much more homogeneous countries in the Middle East and North Africa, nonetheless political life has shifted abruptly three times between a parliamentary system and a military rule, the Sudanese people have experienced vibrant associational life during the democratic periods, alternations with severe repression of autonomous institutions and government efforts to enforce uniform social and cultural codes on population”. {Lesch: 1998. 204} ¹

Agreeing with Lesch, Salih rightly stated, that more than any other British colony, Sudan had relatively long and ironically positive experiences with multiparty democracy prior to independence. During its time under democratic rule, Sudan managed to overcome and somehow to defeat arguments that might refer to the country as Islamic and an insistence that it should therefore pursue Islamic laws in its constitution. Ali on the other hand has asserted that the changes in political systems in Sudan are changes in style while the essence of the Sudanese state system since independence and its responsibilities for the continued crisis in the country remains unchanged. {Ali 1994:P.138}

The problems within Sudanese political development were summed up by Bona Mulwal as follows:

‘As African largest country, Sudan is multi racial multi lingual, multi cultural, multi religious, and the civil war in Southern Sudan was characterized by each of these aspects, the problem of Sudan as for most third world countries, is how to keep the balance between the claims of various groups with pronounced and different interests in government’. { Mulwal 1981.P: 6}



Emerging from such a complicated political history, Sudanese women in England and Wales, as the subject of this study will be examined in relation to the issue of self construction and perceptions as Diaspora women.

Historical background on Sudanese Society:

Many Sudanese scholars articulated the issue of diversity, representing the percentage of Sudanese people. The northern from non- Arab descent comprise of 30% of the population, they consist variety of groups, Nubian along the Nile bordering with Egypt, Beja nomads in the red sea hills, Nuba and Nuba mountains of southern Kordofan, the Ingassan and other tribes southern blue Nile province, and the Fur Masalit and other Darfurian tribes.

Southern Sudan 30% of the population, with two main groups, the Nilotic, Dinak and Nuer, the second group includes the Fertiet , Azandi and the Bari and other tribes, living along the border.{Eltayeb 2001 P.135}

Post independence era on the 1950th and after, the nature of the political parties gave no room to a secular and civil society to emerge. The dominance and hegemony of the Islamic and Arabic culture, the uneven distribution of wealth and the unequal development, fuelled the tensions and aggravated the situation, creating new troubles in an already troubled country. Women's history in the country experienced and emerged under those differences and discourses.

Women and Islamic discourses:

‘One of the central themes in northern Sudan is sectarian namely Sufi, politics every one who writes in Sudanese politics history, geography anthropology or religion pays homage to this ambiguous boundary between religion and politics, Sudan Islamic political heritage has deep roots in the Funj Islamic state, the Islamic policy of Muhammad Ali during ottoman empire, the Mahdist state, the Sudan Islam is Sufi Islam’. [Hale 1997. P: 80]



According to Tucker, the growth of a modern capitalist economy and its extension to almost all areas and sectors of the Middle East and the emergence of states that actively intervened in economic development underlie many of the changes in women's lives in the twentieth century. {Tucker 2005. P: 80}. Whilst, Pearson calls for a gender perspective on contemporary globalization must be framed in terms of historical reality of international economic and social policies. {Pearson: March 2000}. Quoting Kandiyoti at length, she as well stressed that:

'The emphasis on appropriate Islamic conduct for women might not be the result of Muslim doctrinal imperatives or fundamentalist impulses but regimes pragmatic needs to maintain social control, the pressure of the accommodation of the demand of the new macro economic and global policies and the conflicting demand of the internal constituency create an environment where social order may experienced as chronically precarious, in an increasing globalize world the are of social life where an Islamic will and intend my be fully expressed and actualized have narrowed, and have become more rigid, there are many reasons why the control of women and regulation of gender relations may emerged as issue which generate broad political consensus'. [Kandiyoti 1997:8]

The importance of the market and money economy and its influence was equally articulated by Tucker, she stated that "The 20th century has gradually brought changes that are heaving an adverse impact on the productivity and economic power of nomadic women in the Middle East. The increasing strength of the nation-state and the growth of the market and money economy draw nomadic groups ever closer to the society outside tribe". { Tucker 2005. P.81 }.

Maghissi in another articulation of women of Muslim world stated that:

"Women from Islamic countries cultures are as diverse in their lifestyle and their social and moral standards as aspirations as women elsewhere, it is more one's class status ethnic origin and rural or urban location and least of all one's affiliation with religion that determines a woman's status and life choices and yet is only women in Muslim societies that are persistently identified as in terms of one religion, ignoring the diversity of their lives, and their widely varying expectations and experiences". [Maghissi, 2005:1].



Identifying and locating Muslim women in the non-western societies as one homogenous group, proved to be problematic, Sudanese women are case in point. The attempt to situate the country itself within the Middle Eastern arena seems to have its problems as well. Hale{ 1997} in studying women in contemporary northern Sudan, and the relationship between state/party, gender ideology, and the status of women, stressed that:

‘Sudanese women present a number of contradictions; Northern Sudan has one of the highest concentrations of the customs world wide, namely FGM. while numbers of Sudanese women doctors, is among the most in the third world, high proportions of lawyers, judges and other professionals are women, and there is a history of strong women’s organizations and politicians, labour rights for women, equality before law, equal pay for equal work, and supportive work laws that protected women as workers and mothers, do support the claim that Sudanese women have a great deal of autonomy’. {Hale 1997:105}.

Islamic Discourses in Muslim Societies Versus Sudanese Society.

Sudan’s politics was long dominated by Sufism political parties, Ansar and People’s Democratic Party, Khatmiyya. Sectarianism/Sufism Islam dominated the political arena since early independence.(2) Elshahi saw Sufism as Sudan’s orthodoxy, he emphasizes Sufism and politics are related in Sudan. One of the most famous religious/political movements in Sudan was the Republican movement, led by Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, it has a great reformist attitudes to Islam, and has a Sufism background. The history of Sudanese Sufism and the development in politics versus the Political Islam of the National Islamic Front- the orthodox political Islamic party, show a great discrepancy in their positions, and reflect the different Islamic discourses prevailing in Sudan compared to the one in other Muslim societies.



El Shahi argued that politics and Sufism are one in Sudan, he perceived Sufism as Sudan's orthodoxy, as the main difference between Sufism and orthodox Islam concerns the positions of saints, and the heads of Sufi orders, Sheikhs, {see Elshahi: Sufism in Modern Sudan P: 24}.

Stewart {1985} illustrated further that Islam as a receptive religion has ability to incorporate diverse obscure practices, sub Saharan African Islam is a case in point, how the Muslim is identified, was proven of a continuous concern for Islamist and reformers through out the history of Islam. {C Stewart 1985:365}.

Anaiem stated that advocate of women's rights needs to develop and articulate their own Islamic justification for human rights of women. Muslim men and women alike have the right to debate among themselves the meaning of what the Qur'an says regarding the rights of women or any issue in challenge so called established orthodox interpretations and advance their own in this regard. {Abdullah.A: 2005. PP: 411- 413}.

Examining the Islamic regime that took over in 1989, Muhamed Mahmud gave a full account on religious fundamentalist Islamist, and the establishment of the so called - Islamic State- in Sudan. The nature of Sudanese Islam, which is characterized by its tolerance and disregard for Sharia, except in the areas of personal status law and inheritance, as well the Sudanese politics usually inclined towards secularism, accommodates the country's religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, all created a context that inheres powerful resistance to Islamization whether in its revivalist or fundamentalist versions.

Yet in another articulation of Sudanese identity, and the fact that the ' Islamic Dragon has not evolved from the sky' as articulated by Dr Abdalla Bola, in his famous article, tracing the history of Islamic discourse within Sudanese elites, and the Arabic/ Islamic discourse produced and advocated by northern elites who took over right after independence, a position that lately led the ex-prime minister Saddig Elmahdi to admit that' we northern people excluded and marginalized non-Muslims and non-Arabs and we thought wrongly that we have the right to



establish this Arabic/ Islamic identity as the only identity for Sudanese people'(3).

Sudanese women under Islamic laws:

The WLUML {Women Living Under Muslim Laws] described the situation in Sudan, in the following words:

‘The different face of Islamisation is visible in Sudan where it is being promoted by an authoritarian regime with much more brutal effects, women’s job and promotions opportunities in the government have been severely restricted, their mobility made dependent on male and state approval at various levels, their rights to land ownerships curtailed and even their dress regulated, girls and women enrolled in educational institutions are formally subject to a dress code and many be expelled in the event of violation of this code, further various state-instituted bodies have been established to patrol streets to ensure appropriate behaviour’. [WLUML] [Dossier No 18 October 1997]

Further Abdullahi Anaiem’s attempt to provide an Islamic reform methodology- to reform Sharia Laws interpretations- aimed at achieving greater legitimacy for human rights in the Muslim world, has well been criticized by the WLUML, on the ground that the methodology does not offer an easy or quick solution to all human rights problems.

Historically gender oppression has been practised against Sudanese women as part of the general social economic and political structure, patriarchal hierarchy and biases have mediated women’s cultural identity, during independence, and particularly after 1960 women obtain a significant number of political and civil rights, as equality before laws, in job opportunities, right to vote, right to equal pay, right to maternity leave, ownership rights, right to hold public office. { Babiker.F. 2002}.

The most vulnerable to all form of Islamic government abuses, are southern Sudanese women as they were subjected to Islamic laws, forced to wear veils, imprisoned under decency laws, and for alcohol brewery.etc.(4)



The practices of the present regime in Sudan replaced the previous constitution of the country 1973-1985 which provide for equality of women in law and which upheld the diversity of the nations and its multi ethnic and multi religious composition with another ruling that violates women's rights. The WLUML provided a full account on those laws and procedure targeted women and violated their rights.(5) {Dossier 18 :October 1997}.

The Role of the State, In the Reproduction of Gender Inequalities:

The treatment of women and Islam has for a long time been dominated by a historical account of main doctrines of Muslim religion and their implications on women. Kandiyoti provided critique for the predominant approach in tackling issues of inequalities in non western societies, and the attempt made by Muslim feminists to read the religion differently and progressively. She stated that:

Muslim feminists attempting a progressive reading of the Qura'n, and the Hadith, along with a few radicals who argue that Islam is intrinsically patriarchal and inimical to women's rights. This tendency has produced a rather paradoxical convergence between western orientalist whose ahistorical and ethnocentric depictions of Muslim societies have been the subject of an extensive critique and Muslim feminists and scholars with a genuine interest in radical change'. {Kandiyoti .D. 1991:P. 1}

The case of Sudan may well fit into the very conceptualization of the relationship between Islam and the political system.

More over Karam asserted that how the Islamist would articulate the use of a hegemonic language of Islam to influence audience and people, and to generate large audience to their cause, and the fact that secular feminist antagonistic attitudes towards any discourse that involves Islam, could easily find justification as the Islamic hegemonic language of the Islamist, exceeds the using of words to call for eliminating of those who oppose the discourse. [Karam A 1998:235]. While Kazi resorted to raise questions as:



‘Indeed the question no longer is what Islam says or does not say but who has said what on behalf of Islam and for what purpose, arguments justifying discrimination in family codes and laws mirror the political projects of regimes and are a reminder that law is not a neutral agent but reflects dominant power relations in society’. [Kazi. S. 1997: P.142]

A further critical account on Sufism and Islam in Sudan is given by Gabriel, he stressed that the relationship between Islam and the state has been a problematic feature of Sudanese politics both before independence and after; the history of Sudan has been affected by several socio-political factors which complicated matters even further. ‘first Sufism, was predominant in popular Sudanese Islam, while the so called orthodox Islam lagged far behind, secondly the Sudan achieved its first period of independence under a millenarian movement led by Sayyed Muhamed the Mahdi, these two factors connected since Mohmed Ahmend himself was a Sufi sheikh before he declared himself as the expected Mahdi, those Sufi order survived and re emerged in the Anglo Egyptian period generally viewed prospects of new-Mahist rule with trepidation. {Gabrial:1985.P:.400}.

Sondra Hale’s on the other hand summed up a dominant pattern in Islamic discourse in Sudan, by stating that:

‘There has always been political Islam, or an Islam intertwined with politics, this is true for the colonial intruders. As for Sudanese, the post independence democratic party politics, the religious frame work of the republican, and the strange fellow beds coalition that the Sudanese communist party formed with various sectarian groups and its strategies of coexistence with Islam is another reality’. {Sondra Hale 1997. P.90}

In his article, women and politics in Medieval Sudanese history, AL Hag Hamad gave a thorough historical account on women in Sudan, he mentioned that the matrilineal system of succession was instrumental in the transfer of political power from the Christian Nubian royal



families to the encroaching Muslim Arabs, yet the matrilineal system continued to be of significance in the political organization of the Islamic kingdom in Sudan, this social institution is deeply rooted in Sudanese's history. {Hag Hamad .1977. P. 9}(6).

Hamad stated : remnants of the matrilineal system continued to be of significance in the political organization of the Islamic Kingdoms that supplanted the Christian ones. {Hamad 1987: P.8}. A further exploration of the high status of royal women in Sudan history, was tackled by Hamad, starting from the queen Mother Nasalsa, the first Cushite to claim the title RE- ancient Egypt title- . Nasalsa lived in Meroe, northern Sudan. The Funj sultanate of Darfur shows the importance of the role of royal women, as land owners, the queen mother called Abo. In the Funj and Fur kingdoms in western Sudan queen mothers played influential role in ruling and supporting kings, in the Islamic kingdom of Takali in southern Kordofan queen mother played pre-eminent role, in deciding the succession. An account has been given as well on numbers of queen mothers. See [Shuqayr 1903- Nachtigal 1971] .

Women's Movement in Sudan

At least two types of women movements emanating from secularists and Islamists coexist in contemporary northern Sudan and contest its social terrain, their platform are similar in the sense of positioning women at the centre of an authentic culture and claiming the elevation women as a goal, part of the similarity derives from the fact that both of these politics of authenticity are class interested. {Hale. S.1997.P. 104}.

The phrase 'Sudanese women' is used here to refer to women who are from Sudan. These women, however, do not form a homogeneous group but are differentiated by class, ethnicity, age, religion, language, educational level, and other forms of social difference. The paper is to explore the different ways in which the situation of these women in exile is constructed, investigating their experiences with focus specifically on their roles, and their involvement in



economic, and organizational work to challenge the dependent and victimized image of a Sudanese woman, By increasing participation of rural women in the economy; the movement has acquired a wider support base. Women's concerns have widened from personal laws, to issues of economic empowerment, domestic violence and their public roles. The women's movement achieved some success in influencing state policy.

In 1952 the first women's union was established by women graduates and teachers, with its main agenda being the emancipation of women and the full public ownership of the means of production and anti- privatization for women... fighting against illiteracy and poverty. {Babiker 2002: P.261 }.

In 1965 Sudanese women gained their political rights, and the first Sudanese woman was to be elected in the parliament. The Sudanese women's union was very effective in transforming women's opinion in Sudan and in shaping a bright history of struggle for emancipation. The rights gained by the Sudanese women association shaped later the very movement of Sudanese women and shaped their struggle for better life and for equality in Sudanese society. It helped as well in transforming and shaping public opinion in Sudan.

Gender Profile of Women in Sudan:

Women's movement in Sudan suffered major obstacles in its development as part of the general struggle for other groups in the society battling against different kind of governments, and political systems, and as military was for long the dominant force in Sudanese politics, and even where there was a civilian regimes, they find it difficult to survive without military support, such systems with its declining capacity for stability and development, affecting the social and the class structure of the state and hence affecting the cause for women development and emancipation.



The attacks on Sudanese women rights began severely during the Islamic regime of 1989, public orders- council of ministers decisions- were introduced that targeted women, forcing them to wear the Higab [veil], women's attempts to protest the existing system of Islamization was always toppled. This period in Sudanese history witnessed a set back for women's liberty in Sudan. Aggression started from targeting women at work and public areas, veiling them and considering work done by women i.e. waitresses, sellers etc. as an act of indecency.

Gender profile of Sudan shows as follows:

Education	Labour force	Work force	Work force agriculture	Civil Service	Industry	House hold	Political participation
42%	26.5%	7.6	79.2%	10%	6.7%	25%	10%

Form Sudan Gender Profile WFP March 2004

Sudan has one of the first and most active women's movements in Africa and the Arab World, from the table above, examining the gender profile in depth, taking into account women's role in agriculture, food security, education, and decision making process, Sudanese profile is as follows(7)

Women in Sudan acquire greater space for participation and education compared to women in the region. The table suggested that women are actively involved in economic activities that affect the economy of the country, their contribution reflects the position they occupied generally, since the independence of the Sudan in January 1956. At the level of political participation the table shows a reasonable percentage of women involved politically, those percentage reflect the active role played by these women to pave their way and to contribute economically as well as politically.



Many Sudanese women are in the UK, every year, and with more number during the years after 1989, estimates of around 4000 Sudanese women in different areas in the UK, an assessment of the degree of success of their resettlement and their lives in primarily quantitative terms is usually done by the country they settled in. In the UK they examined statistics such as the percentage of employed people, numbers who have learned English, and the degree to which they are no longer dependent upon government resources, etc. Although this information is useful, it does not provide a holistic picture of these women's experiences and how they participate in shaping and reshaping images on their history and their country, and as well these women's perception of their exile need to be examined.

Equally true is that the UK is home to many Sudanese, representing different ethnicities, faiths, and socio-economic backgrounds. The challenges facing this diverse Sudanese Diaspora as they attempt to forge a new, united Sudanese identity reflect and mirror the challenges facing Sudanese living in Sudan, with the notable absence of imminent physical and human insecurity. Given this relative level of peace and stability in the UK, how do Sudanese women in the UK attempt to connect such diverse threads into a more structured and ordered one?

Some anatomy, structure and statistical account on numbers of Sudanese women living in the UK would help identifying the target of this study, their location, numbers and positions and perceptions. Statistical information acquired from national statistics of the UK, shows the number of women living in the UK. Identities then worked within the interaction of many different social factors, as race class gender, and what is important is the specific culture, social and historical position in which this or that identity is situated.

The question of how exile and Diaspora construct or transform women's identities is important because positioning women within different cultures and different social surrounding, might influence women's perceptions and ideas on issues of politics religion and state.



Statistics and profile of Sudanese living in England and Wales:

I attempted to verify the statistics and the population information, from the sources, and it is obvious that there is still discrepancy in numbers of Sudanese women living in the UK. Statistics and data collected from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development: accordingly the total numbers of Sudanese people living in the United Kingdom estimated as:

Country of origin	Year	Numbers
Sudan	2006	6973

SDN: Sudan SDN: 0.220159091

Note:

Numbers of Sudanese women living in the UK obtained from statistic offices of the UK, vary from those obtained from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development. OECD. The statistics above excludes as well large portion of Sudanese migrated from the European countries. The following table shows the number of Sudanese women living in the UK as obtained from the national statistic office classified by age group.

Table of number of Sudanese women in the UK since 2001

Ages of women	Number	Total of age 15-74 England and Wales	Total
15-19	410		
20-24	369		
25-29	384		
30-35	610		
35-39	643		
40-44	444		
45-49	340		
50-54	229		
55-59	161		
60-64	72		
65-69	82		



70-74	44		
75-79	38	3788	3788

Source: 2001 Census, Created on 16 April 2004 (8)

Searching through the social, civil and political Sudanese groups acting in the UK, I managed to locate many of these groups, and investigate their activities and the participation of women, beside the independent women groups acting in fields of politics, education within the Sudanese community in the UK. A wide number of professional societies exist as well where women play crucial roles in its activities.

Sudanese Civil Society Organizations in the UK:

There are number of Sudanese civil societies active in the UK, many of them accommodate women's groups and committees, with different and diverse interests, ranging from religious, civil, political, and social groups, women seem to be active in all these groups. The following table shows numbers of Sudanese women in the UK.

- Sudanese women's rights group: London/ Manchester and Cardiff.
- Sudanese supplementary school. London/ Leeds / Manchester/Cardiff .etc
- Nuba mountain group. And ethnic group, from Nuba mountains with women members.
- Kosh group. A northern ethnic group with women committee
- Sudanese lawyers group. Women members
- Sudanese organization against torture. Women members
- Sudanese medical group. Total of 3000 medical practitioners in the UK.
- Southern Sudanese women group./ part of SPLM.SPLA
- Nuba mountains women group.



Sudanese political groups:

- Umma Party. Women committee/ London
- Democratic Unionist party. Women committee/ London
- Communist party of Sudan. Women committee/ London
- Justice and equality movement, JEM women committee/London
- SPLM/SPLA Women committee/ London.
- The republican party Women committee.
- Haq movement. Women members/ London

Sudanese women living in the UK, could be classified into different categories and groups, part of them politically active, others are part of ethnic groups, and minorities within the country- southern Sudanese- another part with no political affiliations, and came following families and spouses, all these differences should be taken into consideration when examining women from Sudan.

Concluding Remarks:

Giving women migration a historical perspective, is important, when applied to Sudanese women, given the statistics used to conduct this study on Sudanese women in exile, a qualitative approach as well will be tackled.

Employing a historical perspective on female migration, Usher stated that the twentieth century has marked a turning point towards far greater female migration over long distances, the enormous increase in the female labour force has partly resulted from the greater number of women migrants, today women account for approximately half of all the global migrants, while historically migration in Africa and South Africa and East Asia and the Caribbean has been male dominated. {Usher 2005}.



In Sudan case the policy of the state bear great responsibility on the increase of numbers of women leaving the country since 1989. There is no recent study available that outlined the principal explanations for Sudanese women to live in exile, one can suggest as many as economic social and political reasons are behind the phenomenon.

Yet questions to be tackled as reasons behind exile, why these women took over to the UK? Whether the exile is politically, economically or socially motivated? Whether Sudanese women choice to live in exile, was motivated as practical solution to the problems in side the country? Or as an effect of Islamic fundamentalists' regime and its rule imposed over women? When exploring and examining reasons for exile, questioning how these women constructed themselves in the UK? It is equally important to study these women's social background, religion, ethnic group political/ social affiliations etc. to be able to reflect difference and similarities within the new construction of identity among them.

Understanding identity issues within Sudanese women in the UK, requires levels of analysis at the ethnic, religious, class levels. As Diaspora communities may resort to create in a sense an identity that reflects its religious background to challenge marginalization in the new home.

The study is an attempt to draw a map and an understanding to the political, social, economic, reasons behind women's exile, and their perceptions and understanding of their new positions, considering links between issues of marginalization, politics, and identity, positioning these women in different context, a full account on the role played by these women, will be tackled. Questions need to be answered, within this Diasporas community, their new identity and the factors that help in shaping and formulating this identity in question.

It was suggested that education poses a threat to gender relations within Diaspora, as the exposure to new ideas, the labour market, and all increase women's capacity to undermine the



old or originally traditional setups. Does this apply to Sudanese women living in England and Wales is yet to be explored.

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UK: Customer services consulted:

Mr. Trevor Foote, Census Customer Services, Office for National Statistics
Segensworth Road, Titchfield, Fareham, Hampshire, PO15 5RR
Tel : 01329 813800 Fax : 01633 652981

(1) The military coup of Abboud was more a civilian handover of power instigated by the prime minister Abdulla Khalil, as documented in the committee enquiry held in 1964. see First 1970.

(2) see El Shahi: Sufism in Modern Sudan

(3) In talks

(4) Making local alcohol is a long living tradition in many parts of the country including northern and central Sudan among Muslims.

(5) These are new laws to the Sudanese legal tradition and were issued after the 1989 coup which also witnessed the suspension of the Constitution. They originated as constitutional decrees, their source is the President of the Republic. The paper investigated all laws that tailored to attack women in Sudan, namely, the The Public Order Act, Family (Personal) Law, The Marriage Contract, Guardianship, Polygamy, Administrative and Labour Laws, Dismissal for Public Interest, Recruitment, Promotion and Public Appearance. The most famous law, called by the paper of WLUIL as the Draconian Law; the law of Public Decency passed in Sudan passed on October 22 1996. A full account is given in the article for each of these laws.

(6) See Susan Kenyon on Sudanese women for further details.

(7) Sudan Gender Profile Compiled by – WFP Sudan Gender National Officer, March 2004.11.

(8) Crown copyright C 2004 Northern Ireland source: web: nisra.gov.uk

Scotland sources: Linda Taylor customer service, on behalf of GROS. 25 January 2006

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