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SUDAN

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Sudan is one country with two governments. Years of civil war devastated the country, resulting in millions dead or displaced. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) effectively left the country in two pieces until 2011, when a referendum on independence will be held. The northern part, referred to as the Khartoum Government, is headed by Field Marshal Omar Hassan al-Bashir; the other part, known as the Government of Southern Sudan, is headed by General Salva Kiir Mayardit.

Efforts by international and regional leaders to settle the conflict in Darfur, in the west of the country and part of the territory controlled by the Khartoum Government, have not succeeded, and deadly violence continues there. Journalists and members of the international peacekeeping force have not been spared in the conflict.

Predictably, years of strife have taken their toll on civil liberties, including freedom of the press. The press in the north has very little freedom, as the Khartoum Government controls both the state and private press and implements a strict form of *Sharia* (Islamic law) that justifies denying many civil liberties. The government has abolished the law on censorship, but in practice, the situation has remained as before. The few private media that voice critical opinions are closed or operate under tight control.

The media sector in Southern Sudan is establishing itself independently after the signing of the CPA. Southern Sudan is exempt from *Sharia* under the interim constitution, and the media there are allowed more leeway. Nonetheless, press freedom suffers when the private media run stories that authorities consider negative.

Given the present realities in Sudan, journalists believe that total freedom, which they have dreamed of for decades, is a long way off.

SUDAN AT A GLANCE

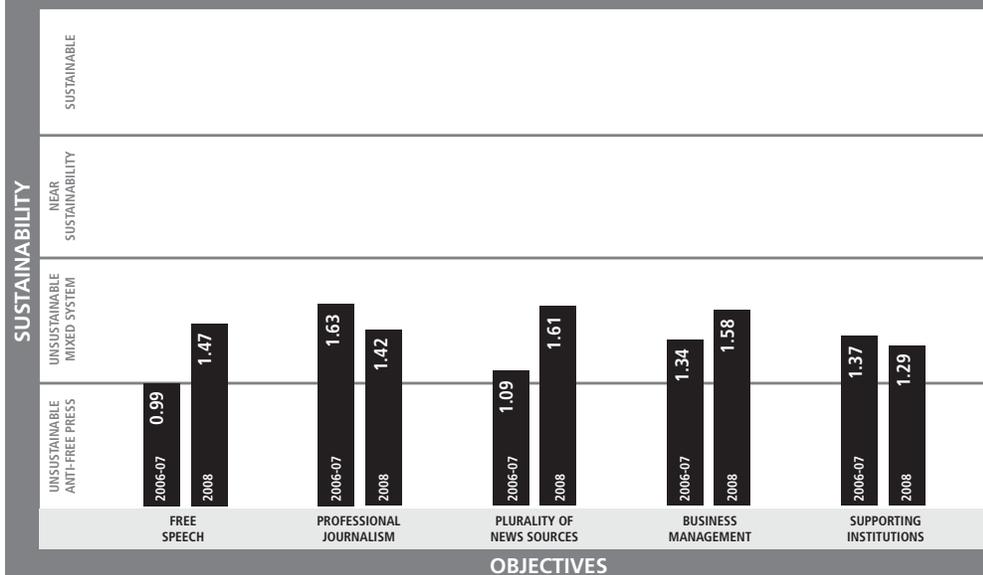
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 41,087,825 (July 2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Khartoum
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** black 52%, Arab 39%, Beja 6%, foreigners 2%, other 1%
- > **Religions (% of population):** Sunni Muslim 70%, Christian 5%, indigenous beliefs 25% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Arabic (official), English (official), Nubian, Ta Bedawie, diverse dialects of Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic, Sudanic languages (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** \$36.70 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** \$1,880 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **Literacy rate:** 61.1% (male 71.8%, female 50.5%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Umar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir (since October 16, 1993)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 7 daily newspapers; Radio Stations: 5 main stations; Television Stations: 2 main stations
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics: Top three by circulation:** *The Citizen Paper* (private), *The Sudan Tribune* (private), *The Juba Post* (private).
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top radio stations: Miraya FM (UN-run, south), Bakhita FM (Catholic Church-run, south), Sudan National Radio Corporation (state-run, north), Mango 96 FM (private, north), Radio Juba (state-run, south); Television: Sudan National Broadcasting Corporation (state-run, north), Southern Sudan TV (state-run, south)
- > **News agencies:** Sudan News Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 3,500,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: SUDAN



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Sudan Objective Score: 1.47

According to the panelists, press freedom and freedom of speech remain a nightmare in their country. In the north, neither the constitution nor media laws guarantee freedom of the press or freedom of speech. The would-be “private media” are still in the hands of those with strong connections to the Khartoum Government. Journalists are regularly blocked from covering events, harassed, arrested, and beaten by state security agents; newsrooms are stormed into; and media houses are shut down. Similar problems happen in the south, but on a relatively small scale compared to what goes on in the north, the panelists said.

The Khartoum Government has continued issuing warrants for arrests of Southern Sudan journalists. However, the Southern Sudan government has been ignoring the warrants, as it considers itself independent from the north and is forming its own laws.

Panelists said that there is cause for hope, though. Freedoms can potentially be gained in Southern Sudan as its transitional government continues to work on laws that will govern the area upon its independence. Panelists said that they hope that the government will enact progressive media laws as part of this effort. They are concerned about the length of the lawmaking process, however, and called on the government to speed up.

The panelists said that under the existing media laws, every media outlet must employ government security personnel to review content before it is released. Some media houses have tried unsuccessfully to exercise independence and deviate from the rule.

The panelists noted that the north and south use the same judiciary, as stipulated in the CPA. However, in the north, the judiciary has never been independent and its rulings are influenced by government. In the south, the situation remains tricky, panelists said. The judiciary has no formal structures in place, yet it has become more independent from the north.

The panelists said that the broadcast licensing process is no longer transparent because of government officials who are using their positions to control the media. This problem has affected the initial efforts by government to attract large investors to the media.

In the north, the National Press Council is charged with licensing media. In Southern Sudan, licensing is a two-part process carried out by the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Telecommunications and Postal Services. The

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Ministry of Information provides approval, and the Ministry of Telecommunications and Postal Services issues the license.

The panelists said that the licensing situation is changing, however. Those who want to invest in the media are having more problems acquiring a license. For example, an Egyptian investor that wanted to found a television station in Southern Sudan was blocked; efforts by the Tribune Media Group to start a television station are being thwarted by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Postal Services, despite the fact that the Ministry of Information gave its approval.

The panel noted that crimes against journalists are rampant both in the north and Southern Sudan. The most common crimes are regular illegal arrests, intimidation, and torture—with no action taken against the suspects.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Sudan Objective Score: 1.42

Panelist Paul Jimbo, a Kenyan journalist working with a local radio station, gave examples of his experiences in Sudan. "I have been arrested three times by security agents—twice in the south and once in the north."

Panelist Paul Jimbo, a Kenyan journalist working with a local radio station, gave examples of his experiences in Sudan. "I have been arrested three times by security agents—twice in the south and once in the north. My camera and identity card were confiscated. Once I was forced out of Sudan and went back to Nairobi because the authorities in Sudan were not happy with my media reports."

State media managers have easier access to public information than the private media, noted the panel. And although state media is better situated overall than private media, they have no editorial independence. The government appoints all the state media's editors and top officials, who are under direct supervision and control.

According to panelist Veronica Lucy, director of the English news desk for Southern Sudan Radio/TV, libel is being addressed differently in the north and the south but problems exist in both areas. "Libel is treated as criminal in the north, and several journalists have been handed long prison sentences under the *Sharia* law," she said. "In the south, libel is no longer an issue, as there is no law under which a journalist can be charged. It is incumbent upon the state to prove guilt in such cases. But in a situation of a state-controlled judiciary, most cases are won by government, and journalists end up in prison."

The state has no official restrictions on access to foreign news, but the Khartoum Government has blocked access to some websites, panelists said.

The panelists agreed that entry into the journalism profession is free in Sudan, provided, however, that the journalist fulfills certain educational requirements in order to acquire a license. Previously, in the whole of Sudan, the National Press Council tested all editors to determine qualifications, and journalists had to pass stringent language tests in order to receive accreditation, but this no longer applies to the south. A person can decide to start writing and become a "journalist," noted some Southern Sudan panelists.

Sudanese journalists who have been educated do their work professionally. However, some journalists do not bother to crosscheck their facts even though they have the necessary skills and facilities, panelists said. They noted also that journalists in the north do more professional work than their less trained counterparts in the south.

"We need training in the basics of journalism, but at the same time, even some editors need to be retrained, because many of them make obvious mistakes and end up causing problems for themselves," said panelist Apollonia Mathia, senior editor with *The Juba Post*.

The panelists noted two separate codes of ethics. One is a general code followed by some journalists working from Khartoum and other parts of Sudan. Journalists in the south have refused to adhere to this code after the signing of the CPA. The second code is specifically for journalists working in the south. However, that code is not in conformity with international standards, and journalists have agreed to have the code redrafted by the Association of Inter Media in consultation with other media associations.

Censorship and self-censorship occur daily at all levels of the media in Sudan, and it is a disease afflicting the whole country, said panel moderator David Aruai de Dau, a senior journalist with Southern Sudan Radio Service. Some reporters kill stories at the source in exchange for money, and sometimes reporters write good stories that end up not being published because of certain interests, he said.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Some broadcast media owners do not interfere with the daily management of their media outlets and are just interested in profits. Others, however, do interfere and go to the extent of dictating programs to be run at particular times. Other media owners undermine editorial independence by censoring some of the programs that they think do not serve their interests.

Most key events are covered by journalists, provided they hear about the event in time or are invited by the organizers. But according to the panelists, some media houses are blocked from covering some of these events. They gave the example of the signing of the CPA in Khartoum; some journalists were not allowed to cover this monumental event. In other cases, journalists are not allowed to cover some issues related to security.

Pay levels are very low in the south, with an average pay of \$200 to \$250 per month for a staff reporter. Some journalists working in the north receive between \$400 and \$600 monthly. Working for the state media is more lucrative, with salaries ranging from \$250 to \$600 per month, depending on the position. Freelancers in the south are paid about \$7 per story, and those affiliated with only one media outlet are paid a retainer of about \$250.

The panelists said that poor pay has resulted in increased corruption in the media, especially in Southern Sudan, where the standard of living has become disproportionately high for journalists. But the panelists added that even some of the editors and reporters who are well paid have been cited in cases of corruption.

According to the panelists, advertisements and entertainment are allotted more broadcast airtime than news. In the print media, however, stories are given more space than advertisements.

In the north, facilities and equipment for gathering news are relatively modern, and several printing companies are supporting the work of print media. However, Southern Sudan has no modern facilities or equipment. Private broadcasters lack good recording equipment, editing facilities, and cameras. Print media owners depend on Khartoum and Kampala to print their publications. The products are of poor quality and there are some delays in delivery and distribution.

The panelists suggested that if foreign assistance is to benefit journalists, equipment such as recorders, digital video and still cameras, and computers should be channeled through specific media houses identified with the help of Sudan's professional associations.

"We need training in the basics of journalism, but at the same time, even some editors need to be retrained, because many of them make obvious mistakes and end up causing problems for themselves," said panelist Apollonia Mathia, senior editor with The Juba Post.

A few journalists, especially those in the north, specialize in certain areas of reporting. There is need for training and encouragement to increase niche reporting, panelists said.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Sudan Objective Score: 1.61

The panelists agreed that Sudan has multiple sources of news. They include daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers; magazines; and television and radio stations. The majority are in the north. Southern Sudan has only one television station, which is state controlled and mainly used as a government mouthpiece. A number of radio stations are in operation in the south, with one being government-controlled and the rest in private hands.

According to the panelists, there is no clear demarcation between state-owned and private outlets, as most toe the government line. A few media houses that have tried to

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

According to the panelists, there is no clear demarcation between state-owned and private outlets, as most toe the government line. A few media houses that have tried to be more independent have faced various threats, ranging from closure to harassment of their reporters and editors.

be more independent have faced various threats, ranging from closure to harassment of their reporters and editors. Television is state-controlled in both the north and south, and both governments have monopolized television stations in order to spread their propaganda.

There is no community media in the north. In the south, community media exists but it is in its infancy. Private media outlets in Southern Sudan are totally independent of government and provide the public with alternative information unavailable from the state media.

Citizens in the north and south have free access to information, including Internet access for those who can afford it. The panelists agreed that urban populations have better access to the media and are able to compare different news sources available to them. Those who live in rural areas have no Internet access, and depend on radio as a major source of information. Most print media outlets include national and local coverage, but very few people can afford to buy newspapers.

Panelists agreed that the Khartoum Government places no official restriction on access to local and international media, nor laws to prevent access to foreign media. But through its security personnel and technical means, the government has managed to regulate access to mainly Western media. The Khartoum Government is more lax regarding media from Arab countries, panelists said. They agreed also that in the south, access to local and foreign news is not restricted and those who can afford it enjoy it fully.

Panelists noted that most state media broadcast time is dedicated to promoting government programs. In the north this also applies to other media, save a few newspapers that have tried to be critical of government but ended up closed, with their reporters prosecuted. However, the panelists agreed that state media promote educational programs in Arabic. In the south, educational, cultural, health, and peace-building programs are given priority on state radio and television.

The north has only one local news agency, Sudanese News Agency, which was established by the government. It is fully under state control and is not independent. It provides news for the electronic and print media that need information, but mostly for those that support the government. In Southern Sudan, media professionals made a failed attempt to establish an independent news agency, but the Ministry of Information has proposed setting up a state agency. In both the north and south, media houses selectively use news from foreign news agencies such as AFP, AP, and Reuters.

Private broadcasters do produce their own programs, but the degree to which they differ from state media programs depends on whether the outlet is in the north or south. Those in the north differ only slightly and do not offer a unique perspective. Programs in the south might differ but are guarded in their criticisms. The quality of programs is increasing, with facilities in the south improving but still wanting.

Media ownership is not very clear, and obtaining this information from any government office in the north is difficult. In most cases, media owners do not want the public to know their revenue, circulation figures, area of coverage, or audience size. But according to the panelists, most people have no interest in knowing this information. In the south, ownership of media can easily be determined, based on the content of print media and the programs aired by the electronic media, panelists said.

The panelists agreed that media in the north do not cover social issues that contradict Islamic laws, but this is not the case in the south.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Sudan Objective Score: 1.58

Panelists reported that private media are run efficiently and as profitable businesses. In the north, media companies employ professionally skilled staff in most management positions.

Printing and distribution of newspapers are carried out privately and are not subsidized by the state. Southern Sudan had one printing press before the signing of the CPA, but the facility was damaged and is currently being reconstructed. The facility is a government property and will remain under state control when it reopens.

Sources of revenue have remained the same for private media in Sudan. They include advertisements, sales of printed copies, and in the case of Southern Sudan newspapers, sponsorship

from the state and donors. Panelists said that the editorials of state media are often influenced by donors.

The panelists agreed that the independent private media outlets that exist in Sudan have problems operating due to a lack of funds. Some community media have been forced to close for similar reasons.

The size of the advertising market is difficult to judge, as media managers will not reveal their advertising revenues. But the advertising industry is clearly well developed in cities in the north, and several advertising agencies there work with all types of media. In Southern Sudan, the advertising sector requires significant development in order to streamline operations, panelists said. They also said that media houses employ commissioned salespeople to solicit advertisements from companies, but the salespeople are not trained.

According to the panelists, advertising represents about 15 percent of broadcasting time. In print media, advertisements are given more space as well because of the revenue they attract.

Officially, private media do not receive any subsidies from the government, but the panelists said that some media outlets in the north quietly receive support from the Khartoum Government, and in the long run that affects editorial independence. Only those outlets that are sympathetic to the government are given subsidies through advertisements from state agencies. Although common in the north, this phenomenon has yet to be observed in the south—some private media houses are given advertisements from government, but with no conditions attached.

To get feedback from their readers and listeners, a few media outlets conduct market research. Some of the

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outlets that follow and implement the research results have benefited through increased sales and volume of advertisements. Media have also used call-in programs, questionnaires, focus groups, and commissioned research to acquire information on the preferences of their readers and audiences. However, no companies monitor circulation figures or measure broadcast audiences.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Sudan Objective Score: 1.29

To defend their rights and advocate for their welfare, journalists have formed many new associations, especially in Southern Sudan. They include the Association for Media Development in Southern Sudan (AMDISS) and the Association of Inter Media.

The panel noted Sudan's other older associations, which include the Sudan Journalists' Association, covering the whole of Sudan; the Association of Independent Media in Southern Sudan, and; the Union of Journalists of Southern Sudan. Panelists said that although these associations still exist, some have been of no help to the journalists due to the political situation in the country and the high number of members not paying their fees.

The Sudan Journalists' Association is well funded—mainly by the state—and its independence is questionable, according to NGOs working in the media field in Sudan.

Some of these associations have tried to lobby government on several issues, but instead of being given attention, leaders have been harassed, intimidated, and arrested on fake charges. Those tactics have not stopped associations from advocating for their members' rights, however.

The panelists agreed that more NGOs are showing interest in media development. Among these organizations are

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Norwegian Church Aid, AMDISS, and the BBC World Service Trust. Their interest is focused on Southern Sudan and in the areas of defending press freedom and freedom of speech. They also assist in media training and providing facilities to some media houses.

Several universities and other institutions in the north offer journalism degree and diploma courses that are of good quality, according to the panelists. However, these courses are in Arabic, which is a big problem to the people of Southern Sudan, who are English speaking.

The government of Southern Sudan has introduced a degree course in mass communication at the Juba University, and the coursework has started benefiting a few journalists. The panelists also said that Juba Post Media is in the final stages of opening a new media training school, with funding from the UNDP. The school will be the first of its kind.

In-house trainings are held at some media companies, and opportunities to train abroad are also taken whenever they are available.

Several private printing companies exist in the north as profit-making businesses. They import newsprint for themselves. However, state security agents monitor most of these printing facilities, and the moment they detect any story critical of government, they immediately stop the printing. Media distribution agencies in the north are in private hands. In the south, each newspaper handles distribution informally.

The panelists noted that in the past, broadcast transmitters were controlled and owned by the government, but the situation is changing slowly. Today, some transmitters are in private hands but they remain monitored by the state. The panelists said also that the government still limits areas of coverage for all transmitters.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

List of Panel Participants

Charles Achire, journalist, *The Sudan Tribune*, Juba

Paul Jimbo, correspondent, *The Southern Eye* newspaper, Yei

Apollonia Mathia senior editor, *The Juba Post*; union committee member, Juba

Veronica Lucy, director, English news desk for Southern Sudan Radio/TV (Radio Juba/TV), Juba

Alcyone Poni Ruben, freelance journalist, *Juba Post* and others media outlets, Juba region

Christopher Opoka Amanjur, journalist, War and Peace Institute, Juba

Gladays Lanyero, journalist, Bakhita FM, Juba

Maal Maker, journalist, Miraya FM, Lumbek

The following participants submitted a questionnaire but did not attend the panel discussion.

Olwenyi Kinodo, member, Human Rights Defender Network for Sudan, New Site

Ahmed-Salif Bashir, journalist, *The Sudan Vision*, Khartoum

Amir Abdel-Magid, assistant coordinator, Sudan Press Watch, Darfur Region

Moderator

David Aruai de Dau, senior bureau chief, Sudan Radio Service, Juba

Coordinator

Herbert Mukasa Lumansi, vice president, Uganda Journalists Association, Kampala, Uganda in cooperation with the Association of Inter Media

