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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Written statement* submitted by the Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development, 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.

[28 August 2016]

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

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The students' activists in Khartoum

In his initial report following his last visit to the country, the Independent expert for human rights issues in Sudan, adduced some incidents took place against some students activists in Khartoum such as the detention of nine students from Darfur, eight students from Holy Quraan University after being charged with causing riots when taking part in a peaceful protest. He stated that these students were protesting against the suspension of study fees exemption for the new students by the university authority and their protests were forcibly ended by the riot police which led to some injuries.

In another case during April this year, the security forces detained five students activists with no charge when they were accompanying their injured colleague to the dental hospital, and also detained 27 students out of which were five female students who participated in Khartoum university demonstrations erupted on 11th and ended on 14th of April over reports informing that the government was planning to sell some of the university premises, then students were set free on 16th of April.

The Independent expert added that during his visit to Sudan he discussed with Sudanese authorities the case of the five students who were still under detainment and he welcomed the decision taken by the authorities to free them on 19th and 21th of June.

The Independent expert tried to take these incidents as an evidence to prove that some students' activists are allegedly being chased and restricted by Sudanese authorities.

Having commented on that, we at Maarij and the National Group for Human Rights (NGHR) stress that these incidents are sporadic, isolated and not efficient enough to establish such allegations against Sudan for, they are mere attempts intended to create instability within the university or outside by a small groups of students never exceed two hundred out of the total number of Khartoum university students amounting to thirty seven thousand. This is what has been informed by the Vice Chancellor of Khartoum University Professor Ahmed Suleiman and the Dean of students Dr. Elrasheed H. Sayed when being investigated by the National Group for Human Rights on the phenomenon of the armed violence among university students. After a thorough investigations and information gathering, NGHR has prepared a complete report on this issue in order to identify the root causes of the armed violence among university students and to find out the best ways of addressing them. The main findings of the report are as follows:-

First, previously, some students activists used to conduct protests on specific issues but quickly ends peacefully, but the recent ones at the Khartoum University were accompanied by a strange and alien phenomena where protesting students assaulted former Khartoum University's Vice Chancellor, Professor Abdul Melik Mohammed Abdel-Rahman, despite his age as well as they attacked the deputy commander of the university guards and dragged him on the asphalt road for a quite long distance and finally confined him inside a bathroom throughout the day.

Second, there are also new developments accompanied the recent students demonstrations at the University of Khartoum and some other universities where the Khartoum University's Vice Chancellor revealed that there were some well-organized armed elements belonging to the armed movements infiltrated inside the student demonstrations and tried to exploit the students to create security chaos in Khartoum State and a number of other States in addition to the discovery of other groups who were not students and bearing locally manufactured meltoves which were chemically modified also bearing large quantities of firearms, machetes and knives trying to convert universities that constitute the arenas of science and peaceful dialogue into arenas of clashes and armed violence between students themselves or between students and police forces. The University's Vice Chancellor added that the neighboring students' hostels have become nests for manufacturing of explosives and grenades; they were warehouses for storage of different firearms.

Third: responding to a question by the investigation team on the expulsion of a number of students out of the university, the Vice Chancellor and the Dean of Students explained that these six students who have been dismissed have proven with material evidence and confessions that they were involved in an organized sabotage that led to total destruction of many vital utilities of the university, they burned furniture and offices, broke the exams monitoring screens and other

losses estimated to nearly thirty thousand US dollars. They were convicted according to university bylaws which are in force since the sixties of the last century.

Fourth, we here agree with the Vice Chancellor and the Dean of Students that those protests accompanied by acts of violence are not justified since they were based on mere rumors that authorities had sold the university premises to foreign investors, and the second that the university administration is intending to transfer some university faculties to remote areas, these rumors are baseless, they came out due to an irresponsible press release by a government official, who must be immediately held accountable. But the transfer of some university faculties is an ongoing plan aimed at expanding and developing the university and not aimed at emptying it.

Recommendation:

1. Studying the new phenomena that accompanied the recent students' protests and led to the closure of the university so as to take a series of arrangements that would restore the university to field for study and scientific research.
 2. Appealing to the police not to use excessive force to break up the students' violence while working on strengthening the university guards and build their capacity to properly play their due role.
 3. Adoption of peaceful dialogue as a viable way to resolve all problems and issues that arise between students themselves and between the university administrations and student groups.
 4. Appealing to the university administrations not to go severe penalties as a final resort against students as the expulsion from the University whatever the reasons, but it is better to adopt progressive light penalties against students such as the temporary suspension from the university.
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