

[Hala Alkarib](#) [1]

Thursday, October 3, 2013 - 03:00

While the anger is accumulating in Sudan and peaceful demonstrators are being injured and killed by the Sudanese regime forces, this comes as a natural result of years of injustices. Sudan has been exposed to the brutality of the dogmatic ideology of political Islam, and the people have been stripped of their dignity. The story here is just a tip of the iceberg. Sudanese women are the mirror of the cruelty and disparity imposed by the ruling regime.

For 25 years now, women in Sudan have been flogged publicly. The current Sudanese regime's ideology was clear from day one; terrorizing women - which amounts to paralysing a whole nation. Like all dogma in political Islam, the regime sat and agreed that the road to secure their position was through controlling women's bodies, minds, existence and interaction in public. Their misogynistic ideology is based on women being problematic and in need of being disciplined and controlled: that women are both dangerous and the main instigator of immorality, equally responsible for all evil in society, hence the need to be told how to behave in public.

### CRIMINALISING WOMEN TO JUSTIFY MISOGYNY

'It's not enough to talk to them; we have to punish them and install fear in their minds because they are not intelligent and are spiritually unfit. Their fathers and husbands are unable to control them.' These are the beliefs that underpin Article 152 of the Sudan criminal code, 'Indecent and Immoral Acts' - on the basis of which Amira Osman, a Sudan activist, is currently facing trial, and under which thousands of invisible poor women have already been tried, sentenced and publicly lashed. Their laughter is seen as a crime, their presence provoking sin.

This is how the regime vaguely drafted Article 154 of the criminal code, 'Practicing Prostitution.' The article defines a 'place of prostitution' as "any place designated for the meeting of men and women between whom there is no marital relationship, or kinship, in circumstances in which the exercise of sexual acts is probable to occur". Hundreds of women are being charged under this article every day, inside their homes and work places. The breadth of interpretation effectively allows women in any public place in which a woman can be in the same room as an unrelated man to be tried under this article.

The offence of 'possession of materials and displays contrary to public morality' of Article 153 has exposed thousands of young women to the madness of the public order police and deprived them of simply living normally, and with dignity. The Sudan [public order laws](#) [2] are written in a vague and elusive way in order to allow judges and the law enforcers to employ their own interpretations of the law. This has turned the legal system into self serving machinery manipulated and twisted against women's presence and participation in public.

Sara is a 25 year old artist and school teacher at a private school. Early this year, while on her way back home, she was stopped and picked up by the public order police. She was wearing trousers and a long sleeved T- shirt. She was sexually assaulted, verbally humiliated and then charged under Article 152 for wearing trousers. According to her story, by the time they picked her up, there were twelve other women inside the vehicle all of whom had been picked up randomly by the public order police while walking on public roads. None of them had committed any crime, all were just walking along minding their own business. They were detained for 24 hours, their phones were confiscated.

In the morning the judge called them out by name and when her name was called Sara says the judge asked her, 'what do you want 40 lashes or paying 1000 SDP?' She said she only had ten pounds, then he yelled '40 lashes' and the soldier grabbed her. They took her to the yard inside the detention block, made her sit on the sand floor and they started whipping her. 'After 10 extremely painful lashes', she said. 'I was numbed and I could only hear the mocking and the laughter of the soldiers standing around and asking the flogger to beat harder.'

### BEATING WOMEN TO SUBMIT

Forty-four year old Halima brews alcohol locally and sells it to men from all over Khartoum. She is the breadwinner of her family of six children and two elderly parents, all of whom depend on her for their care. She said she has been flogged and jailed many times, 'every time they come they take away the alcohol, re-sell it to consumers or they drink it, and beat me for making it.'

### THE DEAD ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN THE LIVING

Amena, 56 years old, sells tea next to a private hospital. She says, 'they keep taking my kettle and cups all the time, sometimes they flog me, or if I have some money I give it to them. These days I have found a place next to the graveyard to sell my tea. I still get customers, but the police rarely come close to me - I think the dead in our country are more powerful than the living.'

The tales of these women reflect more or less how millions of Sudanese women are living.

### FAILURE TO COVER HER HAIR

Hundreds of women flocked to court to attend Amira Osman's trial, a Sudanese activist who was charged under Article 152 for not covering her hair with a scarf. Her trial has now been postponed until 4 November 2013. These women will not give up their humanity and dignity, despite the whip being held to their heads.

The battle against Sudan's public order regime, which has been infused within the criminal code of the country, has been going on for years across the country. This regime has been utilized to repress women, to compromise their livelihoods, to impoverish them, to limit their participation in public life, sport, cultural activities and mobility, as well as to limit their political participation. The Sudanese discriminatory laws and the public order regime are affecting communities for generations to come by imposing the subordination of women in the mindset of the younger generation, and hence taking away any potential for progress and peace.

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## **Sudanese women: you can beat us but you cannot break us**

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### **Article-Summary:**

Political Islam in Sudan remains very strong and manifests itself in floggings of Sudanese women that are justified by the constitution in the Indecent and Immoral Acts. Yet, Sudanese women remain defiant and resist these unjust and misogynistic laws

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