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Simpsonconstitue

Oh! Citizen, stand up; participate in making your constitution

By: Safiya Asideeq

Prior to the emergence of national movement, writers and poets and many people were inspired by political events. Men of pen dedicated their work to enhancing patriotism, respecting religions and the other; in addition call for restructuring the Sudanese community since independence. Such efforts managed to involve all members of the community in public affairs in being aware of and claiming their rights. According, SICM wanted to involve artists, musicians and poets in its awareness campaigns for constitution making. As a result, Badr Adeen, a poet, wrote a poem that reads: Oh, citizen stand up; participate in making your constitution, to urge for further involvement of the public. His contribution came as a result of a recent workshop held at Pop Songs Theatre in Omdurman.

Enlightenment and propagation

Within context of awareness campaign, SICM's information coordinator, Mohamed Ahmed Al-Feelabi presented a paper citing previous futile experiences in constitution making and application in Sudan, arguing that excluding the public from participation led to disrespect of most of previous constitutions. It is important to involve residents in constitution making in addition to raising awareness about civil rights so that the product is respected, owned by all and the principle of rule of law prevails to protect fundamental rights to put an end to violating constitution caused by lacking institution to enforce the law and ensure that the state respect the constitution – which is lacking. We cannot do that except under a democratic system, where all are accountable before the law.

Effect of words

The supreme objective of SICM is to reach public awareness, therefore no wonder in its reaching out to many parties, especially artists who are able to get the message across in a simple fashion to the ordinary people. In fact, poets, musicians and actors can break down most complicated ideas so that people with limited knowledge can understand and share their views. Artists are now before a mountain of challenge to prepare works on awareness to address people from all walks of life in their own language to get the supreme message across by setting words to music.



"we have to have a clear vision for our mission in this connection if we are to effectively contribute to raising awareness about the constitution," said Al-Fateh Al-Nao, a musician. He added "we are in need special studios to broadcast our work on FM radios to address all groups to create popular lobby to compel institutions respect the constitution, and at the same time we carry on with our civic education campaigns."

Mr Senhour, one of popular musicians, noted that special songs about constitution need be produced and played on radios and TVs to promote awareness about the constitution, adding that such songs should be performed even at various social occasions so that the message reach as far as possible, including schools and universities.

Ali Azain, another musician pledged ability to struggle through songs and music in the cause of public awareness despite doubts about incapability to challenge politicians when it comes to advocating and espousing change. He cited that the Red Indians were the most oppressed race in human history but managed to claim their rights due to their unwavering struggle and their artists' efforts to carry on the message. Mr Rabie Abdel-Majid argued that a great part of awareness campaign should be directed at musicians so that that they are able to form artistic

bodies to lobby for public affairs so that the awareness process involves as many components of the civil society as possible; and most importantly energizing the role of the media and mobile cinema to bring about wide-spread popular move.

Masses' role

Khataab Hassan Ahmed, a poet and radio producer, lamented that awareness of constitution and feeling of citizenship is poor at this stage compared to previous periods, adding "we should revisit the idea of belongingness for its natural role in activating grassroots role in regions, in addition to connecting musicians with what is happening in those regions so that they are able to produce works up to people's expectations to contribute producing a constitution at the end of the day satisfactory to and respected by all." At the end of the workshop, artists stressed the need for mobilizing the grassroots and establishing artistic body to carry through messages and information to target groups; besides necessity for mechanisms for involving artists and the media in awareness campaigns.

In the frame

A child: we also have our dreams and expectations that we want them written in the coming constitution!!

When Japanese wanted to make their country talk of the world they decided to teach their children the world top popular game ever: football. They managed to host World Cup to wow the entire world in terms of organization. The Japanese created a cartoon film about football known in Sudan as "Captain Majid"

Last week we were discussing with radio and TV presenters and producers the issue of constitution. I was amazed to learn that some youth came up with the idea of special show called "Simpsonconstitue" after popular English show "Simpson". The aim of such child show is to draw the attention of families to constitution related issues after it was turn out that many of the families watch children cartoon films with their children. I was fascinated by the idea as child writer because it is in line with the objectives of the Initiative regarding promoting constitutional culture to get across concept and content to the public. A participant noted that TV channels have opened up to the issue of constitution over the past and started to conduct interviews with various parties. However, we are still confusing dialogue with argument. The thing is that most of these debates were more like dogmatism rather than dialogue where counter views and opinions are respected in order to reach common ground. Our children will not see current developments in the future. Let's engage them in their affairs through the proposed show I cited earlier so that it sees the light.

Right angle

Transparency is an international key principle to constitution making and dissemination of available information among individuals through providing fair opportunity of the media to ensure people get enough information or people concerned at the right time to achieve common goals. We are duty bound to acknowledge the positive role our press has been playing over the past despite challenges put before by opposing views, which in return will help increase public awareness about different views and orientations of different parties regarding the constitution. As agents of civil society organizations, we are required to redouble our efforts to awareness raising activities based on popular conviction that will help us oversee the steps to take us and our people to owning the constitution. We are not only waiting, but seriously demanding the government insure the principle this transparency in every step to come.



"We also have our aspirations and dreams which we want to be included in the upcoming constitution"

Activists are hopeful of success of their steps

Titawi: no need for new press law before endorsing the new forthcoming constitution

(1)

Al-Gezira Online reported the government to have called on all political forces to take part in drafting a new constitution for the country, arguing that the present interim constitution is no longer useful in the wake of the secession of South Sudan. The opposition on the other hand, reiterated its rejection of being part of any pre-cooked affair. Meanwhile, the political secretary of opposition Popular Congress Party (PCP) said that talk of constitution at this time is useless as the country is going through wars in different parts in addition to curtailing freedoms by some state's institutions. The opposition calls for involvement of all civil society organizations and people in the process, while the government confines the matter to the participation of certain opposition groups excluding many key players, especially rebels in Darfur, South Kordufan and Blue Nile states. The director of Gender Organizations called for putting the forthcoming constitution to referendum, including allowing civil society organization to reach rebel held regions to prepare



people there for taking part in this referendum. Dr Mohuyaddeen Titawi affirmed Sudan's commitment to its right to the membership of Arab press associations despite opposition by some Islamist Arab leaders who came to power out of the Arab Spring. He said that there is n no need for drafting a new press law before endorsing the new constitution. He commended the constitution of 2005, to which he said



former Sudan People's Liberation Movement and opposition National Democratic Alliance were party.

(2)

In an essay to Al-Sahafa daily, Al-Sheikh Hassan Fadlallah, journalist and lawyer, described attempts to mobilize the opposition for participation as useless under the dominantly one-party government because constitution should reflect a natural reality of governance not to domi-

nate power or attempt to undermine the opposition or ridiculing them. Therefore, this situation will undoubtedly such situation will produce distorted constitution reflecting one-sided view. Experiences have proved that it is impossible for one party to manage the country. Now time is ripe for an interim government including all political affiliations to form a constituent assembly that will draft a constitution satisfactory to all parties to help the country get out of its present mess.

By editor

Ongoing moves at civil society level and dialogues on the TV are assuring that steps toward the forthcoming constitution are on the right track evident in the remarks of president of press association who argued that no need for amending the press law before settlement to the issue of new permanent constitution for the country; in addition to calls for a transitional government, which the incumbent government have always termed useless. Away from that, civil society organizations are carrying on with their awareness campaigns for transparency and all-inclusiveness to prepare people for participation in the constitution making process to meet people's expectations.

Reflex angle

Obtuse angle

Political awareness
Political awareness is the ability to identify hot-button issues and know what the relevant parties' stances are on these issues. Note that this is independent of having any personal opinion yourself on any issue or with identifying yourself with a particular party.

The foundation of awareness begins with your basic needs and your immediate environment. A clear understanding of what originates and perpetuates your mundane surroundings: your clothes, your house, your food and kitchen your car, your school or job. Furthermore, acquiring social and political awareness de-

pends primarily on your willingness and the courage to question your own values and beliefs. Intellect, research and education can only take you to a point where you can chose if wish to depart from the safety of numbers and popular wisdom, and start thinking for yourself.