



Delivering Salvation:

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The Women of the Islamist Movement and Popular Mobilisation Discourses and Practices in Sudan

Much has been made of the fact that the Arab uprisings of 2010/11 allowed long-repressed Islamist groups, such as Ennahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, not only to contest power openly, but to win it. Not far from these countries, however, in Sudan, one of the most active Islamist movements in the world has been in power for a quarter of a century.



The Sudanese Islamist Movement, which traces its lineage to the Muslim Brotherhood, dates back to the 1940s. In 1989, members of the movement seized power in a coup d'état which they named *Thawret al-Inqaz al-Watani* (The National Salvation Revolution). The *Inqaz* regime is still in power today. Gender and the ways in which it intersects with ethnicity and class have always been at the heart of the *Inqaz* project in Sudan. Upon seizing power, *Inqaz* began an experiment to radically alter the social reality of the country and set about immediately imposing its vision: a homogenised Arab-Muslim identity. *Inqaz's* attempts at social reengineering, which it termed its "civilisational project", extended to women, who became one of the project's main targets.

While Islamist movements in other countries such as Egypt struggled with the idea of including women in politics, the Islamist political tradition in Sudan had long seen a political role for women. Female political engagement in Sudan's Islamist Movement dates back to the 1960s and goes far beyond party membership or representation in legislative bodies, extending to the very fabric of the Islamist political organisation at neigh-

bourhood level. At various moments, in particular in the 1980s when the movement was consolidating its base and reach and readying itself to seize power, the Islamist movement's women played an important role in mobilisation at local level.

Concentrating on the period from the 1980s to the present, my research project examines gendered discourses and practices of popular mobilisation as deployed by the Islamist Movement in Sudan. In particular, my project seeks to answer the following questions:

- ▶ How does the Islamist Movement's discourse frame women's political agency and how has the discourse changed over time?
- ▶ Who are the women of the Islamist Movement and how do they frame the Islamisation project and their relationship to it?
- ▶ What are the demands and agendas that the movement brings to these women?
- ▶ What are the demands and agendas that Islamist women in turn bring to the movement and how does the movement respond to them?
- ▶ How are popular mobilisation practices in Sudan gendered?

Image at polling station by Tim McKulka/UN.

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