Nubian Dams, Demographic Engineering and the Deteriorating Situation in Northern Sudan

Solicitors International Human Rights Group

A Lecture

The Dam Building in Northern Sudan: Is it a Tool for the Resettlement of Millions of Egyptian Peasants? Is it a New Darfur Scenario in the Making?

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Introduction

In this lecture (which is adapted from Hashim, 2006) I will try to discuss the deteriorating situation in northern Sudan that has resulted from the policies of demographic engineering implemented by the Government. The components of this policy go as follows: a/ building a series of dams in the northern Sudan so as to evacuate the region and resettling the Nubians and Manasir and Amn-Hamadab people (i.e. the indigenous ethnic groups who are affected by the construction of the dams) far away from their home villages; by bringing in millions of Egyptian peasants to settle in the areas evacuated by the indigenous groups. The plan is being implemented in collaboration with the Egyptian government; it was the Egyptian government who first engendered this plan in its own Nubian region. It seems that this is not the first time for the Khartoum government to adopt such a policy as it was implemented in Darfur leading to the crisis there. In the case of Darfur a whole Arab nomadic tribe from Chad was welcomed into the region. It was armed and supported by the Sudanese government to eventually wreak havoc in Darfur (cf. Hashim, 2008).

My discussion will focus on four points. The first is to discuss the documents related to the plans of the Sudanese government to resettle millions of Egyptian peasants in the northern region. The second point is to try to answer the question of whether the dams already built (taking the High Dam in Aswan, Egypt, as a case) have brought about any development to the affected Nubians after being resettled far away from their home villages. The question raised here is whether the de-population of the region was the first phase of the present plan which aims at re-populating it with Egyptians peasants brought from the delta of the Nile. The third point is to try to answer the questions why do the Nubians firmly reject building any more dams in northern Sudan. The fourth point is to see if the government of Sudan is ready to use violence against the indigenous people who defy its hideous plans to resettle them away from their home villages.

The Settlement of Egyptian Peasants in the Nubian Region in Sudan

In late 2003 news leaked out revealing that negotiations on highest levels with the Egyptian government had been made so as to facilitate the settlement of millions of Egyptian peasants, along with their families, in the triangle of the Nubian basin, Halfa-Dongola-Uweinat. The aim of this move is said, on one hand, to safeguard the Arab identity of Sudan against the growing awareness of Africanism in Sudan generally and among the Nubians in particular. On the other hand, it is said to serve a very cynical purpose; that is to help re-populate the Nubian region from which its people has kept moving away for the last half century. The Sudanese delegation, which was backed by a Presidential mandate, was led by Arabist Nubians, General-Brigadier Abdul Rahim Muhammad Husain (then Minister of Interior, presently Minister of Defence). A cover-up plan named “the Four Freedoms” which theoretically allows the Sudanese and the Egyptians as well to own agrarian lands and settle in both countries was officially declared. The cover-up plan has come out half cooked as both parties were too eager in their scrambling to create a de facto situation before the Nubians become aware of what was going on. There is no agrarian land to be owned by the Sudanese investors in Egypt. But there is land for the Egyptians in the Sudan. On 31/03/2004 a head news press release from the State Minister of Agriculture in Khartoum (Dr. al-Sadig Amara, an Arabist Nubian as well) revealed that 6.1 Millions of feddans in the triangle of Nubian basin had been sold to the Egyptians (investors and peasants) with long term leases, i.e. investment through settlement (cf. al-Sahafa Newspaper, 31/03/2004, No. 3892). There is no mention of the Nubians in all these deals which seem like have been made overnight.

In official visits to Cairo, the two ministers mentioned above held meetings with Egyptian scholars and intellectuals who were sceptical about the viability of resettling millions of Egyptian peasants in the Sudan (for Dr. Sadig Amara, see: http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/index.asp?CurFN=file5.htm&DIID=8359 ; see also: http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/index.asp?CurFN=file1.htm&DIID=8373).

Such a scheme applied in Iraq a few years ago during the war against Iran resulted in physically eliminating the poor peasants immediately after the war ended. However the two flamboyant ministers chivalrously gave their solemn pledges reminding their audience that they are backed by a Presidential mandate.

The Minister of Defence went out of his way challenging his audience to bring forward their solutions about tackling the population explosion in Egypt if not by migrating to the vast areas of the sparsely populated Northern Sudan. Furthermore, lamenting the fact that the Egyptian migration to the Sudan has significantly diminished in the late decades after independence, he drew the comparison that the migration from West Africa has steadily increased. The State Minister on his behalf lamented the hesitation of some Egyptian intellectuals and officials, urging them to expedite moving to the Nubian basin before [sic] other people move there (see: http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/1.html&DIID=8359 ; see also:
The advocacy for this second objective was left to a collection of Pro-Cairo writers. In a symposium held in Khartoum and sponsored by the Ahram Strategic Centre (understandably the symposium was presided by an Egyptian journalist) and the Centre for Media Services (CMS, a media arm affiliated to Sudan Security organ) a Sudanese ambassador (Izz al-Din Hamid, cf. al-Rai al-Am Newspaper, 18/4/2004, P. 3) said: "The present integration has not gone beyond the bilateral relations. To have it [the true integration] the top priority should go to food security, agricultural integration and the expansion in wheat cultivation in the northern region of the Sudan so as to encourage the Egyptian peasant to cross the border into the northern region in order to achieve the structural demographic equilibrium, which lacks attractiveness with regard to the Arab countries, especially Egypt, while it is attractive to people of West Africa who knew their way to the Sudan since long ago". In a Newspaper article, Muhammad Sa'id Muhammad al-Hasan, who is fanatically pro-Egyptian, went further to claim that the Egyptian demographic re-population of the Nubian region is not only a necessity, but also a right (cf. al-Rai al-am Newspaper, No. 2351, 8/2/2005). In one of his Egypt-loving articles, which was published in a Sudanese Newspaper, we read "...the population inter-mix between the two parts of the Nile valley should take the first priority as it is necessary for the South [i.e. the Sudan] in the same way as it is a necessary for the North [i.e. Egypt]; it is the core of the integrative and unification process. ... The acceleration of the 'Four Freedoms Agreement', especially the part that deals with facilitating the move of Egyptian peasants towards the southern part [of the valley, i.e. the northern part of the Sudan], will bring about a wide range of benefits in the Nile valley, not only on the level of agricultural produce and expansion and the creation of new productive areas, but also on the level of realizing demographic equilibrium. ... Thus we come to the role of Egypt in securing Sudan and bringing peace to it, and the reinstatement of the Joint Defence Treaty [signed with the May Regime (1969-1985) and nullified by the democratic rule (1985-1989)] ... As strategic necessity, it [Egypt] should restore its influence [in Sudan] and the Nile agreement along with the restoration of life and population density in the area of Old Halfa. During its rule of the Sudan, the British administration intentionally sent back home the Egyptians who worked in the Sudan, completely prohibiting their entry without a visa that was only granted to government officials. At the same time it opened the door for primitive immigration [sic] coming from neighbouring African countries ...". A flow of pro-Egyptian, anti-Sudan newspaper articles began appearing regularly. They were all characterized with particular discursive clauses, such as "the strategic demographic equilibrium" the Egyptians are assumed to realize in de-populated northern Sudan "the dire necessity for Egyptian public presence in northern Sudan", and cynical allusions to the claimed to be "free and un-inhibited move of West Africans into the Sudan".

All these developments lead the Nubians to submit a memo to Kofi Annan (cf. Hashim, 2006) where they raised the alarm and asked to be protected. In that memo they argued that the Egyptian government, right from the beginning, wanted the area of the High Dam and its environs completely depopulated (i.e. all the Nubians affected in both the Sudan and Egypt). They further argued that disrupting the Nubian society of Northern Sudan and Southern Egypt has been a target for the governments of both countries as the Nubians constitute the only indigenous ethnic group with an African tongue on the Nile from Kosti (up the White Nile) and Sinnar (up the White) down to the Mediterranean Sea.

In fact, the plans to evacuate the Nubian region so as to facilitate the settlement of millions of Egyptians peasant to resolve Egypt's chronic problems of population increase on one side, and the scarcity of resources on the other, seem to be endorsed by political forces other than the present Islamic regime. In 2000 al-Sadig al-Mahdi, the elected prime minister in the last democracy (1985-1989) and the Imam of the Ansar sect and leader of Umma Party published a book while in exile in Cairo with the title: Miyāh al-wa`id (The Nile Water: the Expectations and Menace) where we read under the heading ‘the Demographic Map’: “The present demographic map of the Sudan has a defect; the provision of services and the demands of development necessitates a population improvement by which the dispersed villages, whose number is about 65, are regrouped into bigger villages. The investment map of the Sudan also needs to be fundamentally reconsidered. The demographic map in Egypt suffers also from defects because almost the whole population of Egypt are settled on the Nile bank and its delta, which is about 3% of its land. There are repeated attempts, since the time of the Tahrij Province, and presently al-Wa'di al-jadid (the New Valley) and Toshka, to break away from the known human settlements so as to achieve demographic dispersion-a matter completely contrary to the Sudanese case. The new demographic map [sic] will show the need for demographic injections in various areas in the Sudan. The thought of organizing Egyptian migration to the Sudan is far more feasible than trying to develop lands reclaimed from the desert which cost much water and money." In a symposium held in Khartoum in 2007, al-Sadig al-Mahdi withstood with his suggestions that it would be wise for the Egyptians to move to Sudan (cf. Al-Wasit Newspaper, 29/11/2007). This shows that the threats facing the Nubians may not come to an end with the dismantlement of the present Islamic regime.

The government officials kept denying their intentions of resettling millions of Egyptian peasant in the Sudan while working for it openly. This was thought by many Nubians as a way to de-sensitize the issue. The al-Masri alyoum Newspaper [the Egyptian Today] of 3/4/2008 wrote: "Jalal al-Dugeir [Secretary General of Democratic Unionsist Party], the Sudanese minister of industry, has revealed that his country had received offers from Egypt, Qatar and the Emirates to cultivate about 6 million feddans of wheat". On asked about the expected mass migration of Egyptians to the Sudan, the minister resignedly said: "The Egyptians are coming in all cases, whether we like it or not". This statement is also available online: http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/articl...icleID=99842. The number given by the said newspaper for the Egyptians was only 5,000. However, on 26/5/2008 the al-Sahafa Newspaper [Sudan] appeared with the following head news: "Arrangements for the Resettlement of 5 Million Egyptians Peasants in al-Gezira Region [just south of Khartoum]. The Nubians also took the naming of al-Gezira as a de-sensitization tactic, expecting it to eventually be their own region as it is their region that has all the lands greedily sought by the Egyptian government.

In the early years of the Islamic government in the Sudan (1989-1995) the relationship with Egypt was very hostile. In 1995 Egypt accused Sudan of plotting to assassinate its President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. By the turn of the century, in seeking regional allies, the Islamic government of Khartoum befriended Egypt, but apparently with a very high cost. Since then Egypt and other Arabs states began scrambling on the Sudan to do business, with a host of secretive development projects being hatched.
Sudan has never been so submissive to either Egypt or the Arabs. This has encouraged the Egyptian not to show any bashfulness or diplomacy when dealing with internal and sensitive Sudanese issues. In a workshop held by the Middle East & African Studies Centre under the title of “Towards National Striving in the Sudan” at I-Jubeir Muhammad Salih, Khartoum, 2/9/2007, the Egyptian Ambassador went out of his way to attack the Sudanese who stood against building the dams in northern Sudan (cf. Fikri Abul Qasim, "Nadwat al-miyah wa ‘uzlat al-saafir" [The Symposium on Water and the Isolation of the Ambassador], Elilaf Newspaper, 10/09/2007). In a press conference held in Cairo the Egyptian minister of Investment (Mahmoud Mohyildin) commented on the Egyptian and Arab scrambling on the Sudan for investment by saying: “Investment in the Sudan is for the swift who first catches it up” (Al-Sahafa Newspaper, 16/04/2008). This is the same Egypt which has been occupying the Sudanese territory of Halayib on the Red Sea since 1990. It is worth mentioning that in the national census held in 2008, the Sudanese government failed to cover the triangle of Halayib; the Egyptian government did not allow it to go there. The Al-Sudani Newspaper, 10/03/2008, appeared with the following mainsheet: “The Egyptian Authorities Impede undertaking the Census in Halayib”.

The High Dam and the De-Population of the Nubian Region in Sudan and Egypt

The construction of the High Dam in Aswan was completed, resulting in an area of 500 km along the Nile course (310 km in Egypt, 190 km in the Sudan) to be submerged under the reservoir. The reservoir, i.e. the lake, bears two names, ‘Lake Nasser’ in Egypt, and ‘Lake Nubia’ in the Sudan. This has lead to the resettlement of about 16500 Nubian families in Egypt (with a similar number of Nubian families on the Sudan side) away from their historical lands. In the case of Egyptian Nubians, the area resettlement was a barren place called Koum Ambo near Aswan. In the case of the Sudanese Nubians the area of resettlement was a place called Khasshml-Girba in middle-eastern Sudan, known to be of rainy autumn, contrary to the Saharan Nubian region.

The Non-Nubian Re-Population of Nubia

The Nubians in both Egypt and the Sudan did make many attempts to go back and establish small colonies of settlements and agriculture. They farmed the drawdown areas by pumping water from the reservoir (Fernea & Rouchdy, 1991). However, all these attempts were occasionally aborted by the fluctuating water level of the reservoir, a matter the Nubians believe it to be intentional by the authorities which never encouraged them to go back.

By the 1990s the Egyptian government began following a policy of repopulating the evacuated Nubian regions. It began encouraging Egyptians other than Nubians to settle in the evacuated areas around the reservoir lake. It did while the Nubians were kept away from their own historical lands, living in a pigsty style of life in their barren area of Koum Ambo. However, two economical activities had been available to develop in the evacuated area, namely fishing and agriculture. And indeed there are such projects, but with no Nubians among either the fishers by the Egyptian government (for fishery, cf. Lassaily-Jacob, 1990; for agriculture, cf. Fernea & Rouchdy, 1991). The same thing happened in the Sudan, with tacit encouragement from the government to the Arab Bedouin who began settling in the evacuated area. The full and open selling out of Sudanese Nubia by the Sudanese government was to wait for a few decades to come yet.

The re-population of the Nubian region in Egypt has become an official policy entrusted to both the Minister of Agriculture and the military Governor of Aswan. Villages with full facilities and utilities were built by the Egyptian government and distributed to individuals and families from outside the regions with bank loans to start with. The latest of this is the inauguration of the settlement at the old Nubian village of Kalabsha with 150 non-Nubian families, which was opened by the Minister of Agriculture Amin Abaza (cf. al-Wafd Newspaper, 18/05/2006). On 11/06/2006 the Al-Ahram Newspaper (the unofficial voice of the government) announced that tens of thousands of feddans were to be distributed in the Nubian region to people other than the Nubians. When the Nubians demanded that their lands be returned to them, they got an arrogant reply from the military Governor of Aswan: “If you want your lands, go fetch them beneath the water (cf. Rajab al-Murshidi in Roussas Al Yousef Newspaper: www.rosaoonline.net).

At the same time, the Nubians who ventured building their own colonies and farms in their old lands began facing obstacles at every corner. No one from the international community has come to help the Nubians in Egypt. They began voicing their problem through the internet, making use of the numerous Nubian websites, which mostly evolve around the home-villages bearing their names (cf. www.abirtabag.net; www.jazeratsai.com; www.karma2.com; www.karma2.com; www.nubian-forum.com; www.nubnubian.com).

This policy is adopted by the Egyptian government in order to contain the discontent among its Arab population who had been negatively affected by the 1992 Agricultural Law, which has come into effect by 1997. This law has liberalized the land tenure market by abolishing the old land rental and tenure by returning it to its old feudal owners, thus compelling the peasants to re-hire it all over again, with the threat of rental price increase looming over their heads. During the 1990s the price actually tripled (Roudart, 2000/1). This has caused a turmoil and unrest among the peasants who began seeking other jobs. Migration of the peasants to other areas of agricultural schemes of reclaimed land, away from their home villages, was encouraged by the government. The Egyptian government adopted the policy of inter-migration so as to solve (1) its chronic problem of population explosion, and (2) to compensate those who have been negatively affected by its land liberalization law. Re-settlement in the reclaimed land of the New Valley in Sinai was officially encouraged, a matter the peasants were not enthusiastic about. Being riverain all through history, such a move was too much for them. That is how the Egyptian government began re-settling them in the Nubian regions which was evacuated four decades ago against the will of its historical people, the Nubians.

The Argument against the Dams in Northern Sudan

The presidential-mandated Dams Implementation Unit (DIU) declared plans to construct more than 20 dams with five of them in northern Sudan: Dagash and al-Shireik Dams at the 5th cataract (affecting Rubatab trib); Minwi dam at the 4th cataract (affecting all Manasir tribe and part of Shayqiyya tribe); Kajbar dam at the 3rd cataract (affecting the southern part of Mahas Nubians and the northern part of Dongola Nubians); and Dal dam at the 2nd cataract (affecting all Sukkout Nubians and the no Mahas Nubians).
Dams are built either for productive (agriculture and power) or preventive (against floods and draught) objectives; their function however is not eliminatory as a dam can serve one, two, or even all the above functions (as the case with the Aswan High Dam). However, it is deemed necessary to clearly state the function of dam when building one. If a dam is built to irrigate water, then the agricultural scheme should necessarily be conceived before the idea of the dam; the same rule applies when the dam is built to generate power for industry. So far, aside from generally speaking that these dams are meant for both agriculture and industry, the Sudan government has failed to publicly bring forward the details of any development project in relation with the dams it intends to build.

Below I am going to discuss the feasibility of building dams with regard to irrigation, industry and duration.

The total power to be generated from all the dams in the Sudan will not exceed in any way 5,000 MW (according to Makkawi al-Awad, the Director-General of National Electricity Corporation, cf. Al-Ayyam Newspaper, 16/2/2008). The cost of Mirwi dam has so far exceeded $2.25 billion, borrowed from China and various Arab states and banks; the dam has not yet come to completion. With such little amount of power the dam is thought not feasible with regard to the high cost. For instance, the non-industrial consumption of power in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, is 8,000 MW. This raises a host of questions such as: if Saudi Arabia, as an oil country, is able to generate all this power (35,000 MW in total), why not Sudan which has also become an oil country? What will Sudan do when Khartoum becomes the size of Riyadh? Makkawi al-Aawad (ibid) gives us the following options for power generation covering the period up to year 2030, thermal and hydro as well:

- Hydro-power generation: 4,587 MW (%28)
- Thermal-power generation: 18,491 MW (%28)

Dams are often built to provide irrigation for the agricultural development projects. However, this presupposes that there is enough water to be irrigated. The total share of Sudan in the Nile water is 18 billion cubic meters (BCM), while its consumption is 14 BCM, with a surplus of 4 BCM only. This means that it can rely on these 4 million cubic meters for its agricultural development projects. But building the five dams in northern Sudan will waste more than its surplus in evaporation as the region is known of its very hot climate. To make things worst, the region is also known of its relatively flat topography, a matter that results in the dam reservoirs being extensively stretched thus providing big water surface for evaporation. Of the five dams, I will bring the evaporation loss of only three of them: Mirwi, Kajbar and Dal. These figures are taken from: Dr. Seif al-Din Hamad Abdalla (2008), “al-qudra al-takh2aniyya illi-surddi’ ‘ala al-mill wa rawafidhi dakhil al-Sudan” [The Storiation Capacity of the Dams on the Nile and its Tributaries in the Sudan], Workshop of the Middle East & African Studies Centre under the title: Towards a National Strategy of Water in the Sudan. Al-Zubeir Muhammad Sulaih Hall, Khartoum, 2/9/2007. The importance of this reference is that the writer, more than being a highly qualified person on water resources, is the expert of the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources and in this capacity he submitted this paper:

- Mirwi Dam evaporation loss of water: 1.5 BCM
- Kajbar Dam evaporation loss of water: 1.7 BCM
- Dal Dam evaporation loss of water: 800 Million CM

This shows that the building of these three dams only will literally leave Sudan without any water surplus that may allow it to undertake further agricultural development projects. The same author, speaking in the same capacity in a symposium held by the government in Khartoum, stated that only 2 BMC of Sudan’s surplus of water will remain after the completion of Mirwi dam (cf. Al-Khartoum Newspaper, 24/6/2008); the remaining 2 BMC will vanish into the thin air by the completion of Kajbar and Dal dams. In the conference of Arab ministers of water resources held in Sharm al-Shaikh resort in Egypt, the Sudanese minister, Kamal Ali, admitted that the dams of northern Sudan are being built only for power generation (cf. Al-Masri alyoum Newspaper [The Egyptian Today], 22/3/2008).

Dams built on rivers with high alluvial sediments, such as the case with the river Nile, are deemed unfeasible (Abdalla, 2007). The dam of Khashm al-Qirba on the river Atbara in eastern Sudan was built to irrigate the agricultural projects set up solely to sustain the Nubians affected by the Aswan High dam who had been resettled there. It was built at the same time with the Aswan High dam. The last 40 years have been enough to relegiate it into redundancy as a result of the river’s annual 170 million tons of sediments (ibid). This has lead to the deterioration of the Khashm al-Qirba agricultural scheme to the extent that it could not sustain the Nubians who have found themselves compelled to mount another exodus, this time to the marginalized outskirts of Khartoum. The situation of the Aswan High dam with regard to sedimentation remains a matter of guess due to the secrecy enveloping it. However, it is known that the USAID had funded $154 million in improvements to the High Dam since the late 1980’s: (http://egypt.usaid.gov/Default.aspx?PageID=84; http://www.usaid.gov/stories/egypt/cs_egypt_dam.html).

More than harming the turbines of the dam, the high alluvial sediments of the Nile water have caused acute problems of salinity in Egypt. In R.J. Oosterbaan (1999) (online http://www.waterlog.info/ ) we read: “The salt concentration of the water in lake Nasser [read Lake Nubia] in the Sudan at the High Dam is about 0.25 kg3 salt/m. The salt import into Egypt’s water use systems thus amounts to about 14 million3 3 tons per year (55 billion m water/year x 0.25 kg salt/ m water) or roughly 1.6 ton/feddan/year over 8.7 million feddan of irrigated land, i.e. 4.0 ton/hal/year”. So, if the last 40 years were enough to turn the Khasm al-Qirba dam into redundancy, then it is quite possible that the dams being built in northern Sudan will face the same fate. When the river Atbara joins the Nile, the alluvial sediments reach 270 million tons. All the five dams down the confluence of the Atbara and the Nile. This makes one questions the feasibility of building these dams. Are they built to save the Aswan High dam from the fate that has befallen Khashm al-Qirba dam? If this is so, then why should the Sudanese tax payers pay for building them? Such were the questions raised by the Anti dam Nubians.

In a newspaper interview, when faced with such anti dam arguments, the Director of DIU, Osama Abdalla, defiantly retorted back:
“The more they attack me, the more projects I will come up with” (cf. Al-Wifaq Newspaper, 30/4/2008).

The Government Shoot-to-kill Policy against the Anti Dam Villagers

Building dams is a technical matter where transparency is most needed along the technical qualification. The unit responsible for building dams in the Sudan used to be under the authority of a technical ministry that is of Irrigation and Water Resources until it had been put it under the direct authority of the Presidency in 1999 with a law of its own that immunes it from litigation and auditing. Since then building dams has been politicized to the extent that a number of specialist and experts feared that this might have compromised the professionalism and technicality of dam building.

As the policy of total de-population has been adopted in all these projects, it was decided that the people affected by Mirwi dam to be resettled in areas far from their historical homelands under the point of gun. To make it even worse, the government was so secretive about the project, totally ignoring to consult the concerned communities. Those who lived immediately behind the dam, i.e. the Hamdab, were compelled to resettle in an arid area covered by sand dunes about 100 km down the river from its bank. They had to submit to that because by they were not fully aware about the plight to befall them. The people next to them, i.e. those of Amri region, resisted the plans of resettlement, demanding to be allowed to resettle on the bank of the artificial lake of the dam, just above the contour the rising water would stop at. The government declined them this right. The Manasir who are the only ethnic group to be wholly affected by the dam, adamantly rejected evacuating the area, demanding, like their brethren in the Amri area, the right to resettle on the bank of the lake. They were also denied this right. Up to the moment, one third of the Amri people and the majority of the Manasir are there sticking to their home villages notwithstanding the rising water of the dam as on 16/4/2008 the last gate of the dam was closed. The tragedies of the people who have remained is all over the web. One only needs to google either ‘Amri’ or ‘Manasir’ such as:

http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=81t_0SSa4k&feature=related.

The Nubians have been traumatized by the dams that were built on the Nile since 1902 when the first Asuan dam was constructed. Their trauma continued on all through the raising phases of it (1910, 1933) to the construction of the High dam in 1964. All this has prompted the Nubians of Dongola, Mahas, Sukkout to organize themselves to resist building any more dams. The Nubians of Halfa region that were affected by the High dam and long since have been resettled in the eastern Sudan joined their brethren in the fight against dam-building. The President announced that dams are not going to be built without the explicit consent of the people in the affected area. The exact maps showing the boundary of the areas to be affected by the dams of Mirwi, Kajbar and Dal were kept secret. However, rumours leaked from the DIU telling that the water reservoir of Kajbar dam will extend to 105km up the river to Dongola city; the water reservoir of Dal dam will extend to 65km up the river to a small village called Kid Urma, just 6 km down the dam of Kajbar. To curb for these wide spread rumours, the DIU began speaking about the areas to be affected, with every time increasing the size of the reservoir and submerged areas.

The shooting of Amri People

On the 22nd of April, 2006 in Amri island government security forces, militia groups and special paratroops belonging to the DIU opened fire on a small congregation of people who resisted being evicted. Three people were killed immediately with others in critical condition. The Sudan Human Rights Organization reported the murderous attack with strong condemnation: “As relayed by several witnesses, as well as families of the injured citizens, the attack was planned and executed by the assaulting troop in collaboration with the security headquarters of the dam administration, which had been threatening with ‘severe reactions’ the natives opposing the dam’s location and the resettlement plans for the natives far away from their ancestral land at the Nile bank” (for more details of the incident, see:

http://www.sudantribune.com/article.php3?id_article=15235

Unlike the Nubians, the people affected by Mirwi dam did agree to the project, but not without a condition that is to remain living in their home areas, i.e. not to be evacuated. However, the government seemed to have other agendas. By then the regions of northern Sudan were reeking with wild rumours and conspiracy theories telling of secret agreements between the Sudanese and Egyptian governments upon which Egyptians peasants will be marauding the region. In fact they were far from being either rumours or conspiracy theories as they contained a grain of truth; the Four Freedoms has paved the way to bring about and realized this fears and rumours.

The shooting of Kajbar People

Kajbar is a small village in the middle of the Nubian Mahas region about 111km down the river from Dongola, the capital of the northern state. The most northerly part of the third cataract ends at Kajbar, where the government declared in 1995 its plans to build a dam. So it was natural for their reaction to the project to be negative and to reject the idea with the intention of resisting it.

Such were the contentions the Nubians had had when they began organizing village-scale demonstrations, especially in Kajbar area. Believing in the Presidential and official promises, they wanted to express their total rejection to the dam-building. On the 10th of April 2007 they organized a peaceful demonstration in the small villages overlooking the cataract, which was assumed to be the site of the dam. The special security force, which was putting on an army fatigue, opened fire wounding at least five people. Taking the injured people and heading back to the nearest hospital, at a certain river-mountain strait (called in Nubian ‘Kidin Takkār’) that allows for only one vehicle to pass at a time, the demonstrators came across a group of about 20 heavily armed soldiers apparently meant as reinforcement. Outnumbering the armed men, the angry demonstrators encircled the two vehicles and took the soldiers as hostages after stripping them of their arms for about two hours before releasing them.
On the 13th of June 2007 the villagers organized another peaceful demonstration that started from a village called Farrēg and then headed down the river toward the cataract. About five km up the river from the cataract, exactly at the same strait where they had held the armed men as hostages, the demonstration was ambushed by a group of heavily armed force that was positioned atop the mountain. The force opened fire killing instantly four people with one of them (Muhammad Faqir) a teenager of only 18 years old. More then 15 people were injured. The whole massacre was filmed by a video amateur; it shows the armed men cheering and dancing when shooting the villagers (see: http://www.youtube.com/user/nabielogr ). In the coming weeks more than 20 people were arrested, among them journalists who tried to report (see: http://www.copts.com/english/files/index.php/2007/08/07/amnesty-calls-for-release-of-sudan-detainees/ ). Leading figures of Nubian senior activists resisting the dam-building were also arrested for months (see: http://platform.blogs.com/passionofthepresent/2007/07/new-arrest-to_... ). Young Nubian activists were also arrested in northern Sudan and Khartoum. (see: http://www.amnesty.org/en/alfresco_asset/55c51b81-a2ba-11dc-8d74-6f45f39984e5/afr540532007en.html ).

Conclusion

The situation in Nubia and northern Sudan is very critical. There are evidences that both the governments of Khartoum and Cairo are working so as to facilitate the settlement of million of Egyptian peasants in the northern region. This policy of demographic engineering is believed by many to be the major factor that have lead to the devastation of Darfur, with hundred thousands killed in a way that have made the international community to look at it as a case of genocide. The Nubians have already raised the alarm a few years ago in their memo to the then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan. The question they raise now is whether the international community is waiting for them to be killed in tens and hundred of thousand before paying attention. They believe that to stop a war before it goes off is far easier than to stop it after it has started. They believe that to wait for a war to be launched and then intervene is a stance loaded with hidden agenda, whereas to come in support of the people inflicted before it is war shows true human solidarity and spares the inflicted country the trauma of neo-colonial intervention that capitalize on the calamities of the developing countries.

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