Quasi-Customary Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in Israel's Darfuri Refugees

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About 3,500 Darfuri male (and a few female) asylum seekers live in Israel. The majority are 25 to 40 years old. Older men, including village and community dignitaries, stand little chance of surviving the brutal trek.

In Darfur, where most inhabitants live in small villages, inter- and intracommunal conflicts are traditionally resolved through the customary justice process of Judiya. *But in Israel, Darfuri asylum seekers no longer reside with their kin groups (villages, tribes, clans); instead they often cohabit with asylum seekers from other tribes, clans, and villages, living in crowded conditions, mostly in the poor south side of Tel Aviv—a situation that gives rise to multiple small conflicts.*

In the absence of their familiar tribal structure, dignitaries, and other interveners, the refugees have no access to the traditional dispute resolution mechanisms they have grown up with. Furthermore, these asylum seekers avoid bringing their conflicts to the attention of the Israeli authorities, for fear of endangering their asylum petitions. The result is that this community finds itself trying to cope with difficult, intracommunal, conflict-rich conditions, without being able to use either traditional conflict resolution mechanisms or local formal justice processes.

The response of the Darfuri asylum seekers community to this circumstance has been to develop their own multitier, quasi-customary intracommunal dispute resolution mechanism. This new mechanism combines elements of their traditional, Darfur-based processes, along

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with newly constructed modifications designed to compensate for the missing elements (e.g., lack of village elders) and make use of available resources (e.g., young community activists).

This article employs analysis of multiple interviews and review of relevant literature to identify and describe the unique, informal dispute resolution mechanism that the Darfuri community developed in Israel.

Insights developed in this article may help community activists, municipalities, policy makers, nongovernmental organizations, and other individuals and organizations in understanding and facilitating alternative dispute resolution mechanisms within similarly structured and similarly affected displaced persons and asylum seeker communities around the world.

Introduction

Upon arriving in their new country of residence, immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees often encounter a culture that is unlike the one they were used to back home. As they strive to normalize their lives, find work, educate their children, tend to health issues, and do other "regular" activities, the newcomers must navigate a social and economic landscape that is mostly alien to them. There is a significant amount of literature exploring such experiences, though much of it focuses on economic or labor aspects or on derivative policies of the adoptive states (Algan, Bisin, and Verdier 2012; Bauer, Lofstrom, and Zimmermann 2000; de Palo, Faini, and Venturini 2006).

One aspect of life that is not left behind when individuals and/or populations move away from their indigenous locations is conflict. Conflicts seem to crop up and demand attention and management, regardless of immigrants' and asylum seekers' new locations or conditions.

In the absence of the familiar conflict management mechanisms they grew up with back home and with scant familiarity or confidence in local dispute resolution mechanisms, asylum seekers often find themselves bereft of proper conflict management infrastructure.

Research concerning the ways asylum seekers deal with intracommunity conflicts is scant; most research focuses on conflicts between migrants, asylum seekers, and their host communities (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe 2012).

This article tries to fill in some of the unexplored spaces in this area, by exploring intracommunal conflict management issues faced by a group of Darfuri asylum seekers in Israel, specifically in the south of Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city, and the mechanisms that the asylum seekers evolved in order to cope with the absence of a functioning conflict resolution infrastructure.

Literature Exploring Conflict Resolution Practices within Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities

Theoretical and descriptive exploration of cultural integration mechanisms, including that of migrant and asylum seeker communities into host communities and cultures, divides roughly into three main streams: assimilation theory, multiculturalism, and structuralism.

Assimilation theory stands on three assumptions: that diverse cultural groups "melt" into a common culture through a natural process, that the process consists of a gradual merging of original cultures into new ones, and that such processes will inevitably culminate with complete assimilation (Alba 1985; Chiswick 1978; Gordon 1964; Lieberson and Waters 1988). This classical convergent view is challenged by a perspective that describes a divergent, rather than a convergent, process (Becker 1963; Goffman 1963; Kao and Tienda 1995; Landale and Oropesa 1995; Perlmann 1988; Rumbaut and Ima 1988; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 1995).

Multiculturalism is an alternative approach to assimilation, viewing multicultural societies as a mosaic of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups, containing small and large groups that actively mold their identity next to each other, rather than melt into the dominant culture or create a single, new derivative culture (Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Handlin 1973).

Structuralism views cultural integration through the prism of different socioeconomic opportunities and their impact on access to wealth, education, and power. This approach recognizes the existence of an ongoing conflict between cultural groups and doubts the very viability of the concept of integration (Blau and Duncan 1967; Portes and Borocz 1989).

Although there is a significant amount of literature exploring the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in their new domiciles around the world, the attitudes of hosting communities toward the newcomers, and

the impact of the dislocation on both hosting and hosted communities, there is no current literature specifically examining the ways these displaced populations have been dealing with intracommunal disputes. The following review examines some of the available explorations.

Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson (2006) focus on, among other issues, the conflicts that cause people in what they call the "third world" to move to the "first world." Roger Zetter and Martyn Pearl (2000) look at refugee and asylum seeker community-based organizations in England; they examine the vital role such organizations fulfill, particularly as government policies toward these populations become more restrictive and exclusionary, and as access to resources of all types affects the provision of proper, quality social services to these marginalized communities.

An area that does get a lot of attention is the mental state of refugees and asylum seekers. This is an important and relevant aspect of every inquiry into conflict-related situations. Such studies demonstrate a possible connection between premigration trauma, postmigration stress, and psychiatric symptoms. For example, Derrick Silove, Ingrid Sinnerbrink, Annette Field, Vijaya Manicavasagar, and Zachary Steel (1997, 355) write, "Although based on correlational data derived from 'a convenient' sample, our findings raise the possibility that current procedures for dealing with asylum-seekers may contribute to high levels of stress and psychiatric symptoms in those who have been previously traumatised." Still, none of the currently available research proceeds to examine the conflict behavior and its attendant conflict management mechanisms that may be associated with such stresses and traumas.

In trying to understand why, as we shall see, refugees and asylum seekers are reluctant to turn to the host country's formal law enforcement or other administrative authorities to receive help in managing intracommunal conflicts, we can get some insight from Sharon Pickering (2008, 169) who writes, "Overwhelmingly, however, the most repressive approaches to refugees have come from developed nations taking in much smaller refugee populations. Moreover, developed nations have increasingly sought to identify refugee populations as suspect, often criminally suspect."

Methodology

The information used to perform the analysis presented in this article came from existing literature and from a series of eight semi-structured interviews that the author conducted with four Darfuri asylum seekers in Tel

Aviv, Israel. The semi-structured interviews were preceded by about ten informal meetings with the interviewees, in various combinations, meetings designed to increase familiarity, build confidence, explain the purpose of the research, and clarify the methodology and the rights of the interviewees. The interviews took place mostly in English, with some Arabic and Hebrew interspersed intermittently, depending on the need for additional clarity by the interviewees or the interviewer. Notes were taken in longhand. No recordings were made, at the request of the interviewees. In most cases, the interviewees did not object to being identified by name; in one case, the interviewee insisted on total anonymity.

The interviewees were interviewed separately. After the transcript of each interview was ready, another meeting took place where the interviewee had an opportunity to go over the transcript and make specific comments with respect to accuracy and completeness. When all the interview transcripts were ready, another joint meeting took place with the four interviewees, where the transcripts were read to them by the author and they made comments. After the article was written, another joint meeting took place, where the interviewees were presented with the analysis and asked to comment on it.

Analysis started with transcribing the interviews, rereading them and trying to detect common themes, frames, and issues. Attention was paid to the origin of the interviewees, their position in the community, their relations with each other and with the disputants, and the type of disputes they were involved in or with.

The author also paid attention to the dynamic and procedural aspects presented in the analysis, including who initiated the dispute resolution process, at what stage in the conflict the process started, and the practices used during the process. Particular attention was paid to a comparison between the "traditional" processes—those reported (by the interviewees and existing literature) to have taken place in the indigenous settings of villages in Darfur—and the new processes that evolved by necessity in Israel.

Darfur and the Conflict

Darfur (Arabic for home of the Fur) is a large region (493,180 km² or 190,418 mi²) in Western Sudan, inhabited by about 7.5 million people. The region was an independent sultanate for hundreds of years until it was incorporated by the British into Sudan. It is largely populated by traditional cattle-herding semi-pastoralist nomads and sedentary small farmers, living in scattered villages, raising crops and livestock (Kritz and Wilson 2013).

Because of its remoteness and diverse indigenous populations (largely African tribes), central control has never been strong in Darfur, including after the independence of Sudan in 1956. Still, it is known that the area experienced extensive demographic changes over the past 40 years, with the population increasing six-fold (United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP] 2010).

There are approximately 80 tribes in the Darfur region. A minority of them (about 27) are Arabs, including: Beni Halba, Beni Jarrar, Beni Hussein, Ateefat, Rizzeyqat, Ta'aisha, and Habbaniya. The non-Arab tribes include: the Fur (largest tribe in Darfur), Masalit, Zaghawa, Tama, Mima, Berti, Bargo, and Bideyat (USF Libraries n.d.).

The current conflict in Darfur started in 2003, with a conflagration between Sudanese government forces and armed organizations striving for Darfuri independence (Sudan Liberation Army, and Justice and Equality Movement). Yet, the roots of the conflict probably date back to severe droughts that hit the region in the mid-1980s, causing mass migration of mostly (but not exclusively) Arab pastoralists, resulting in increased conflict with non-Arab sedentary farmers, whose land was invaded by the nomadic tribes.

The government in Khartoum (the capital of Sudan) responded to the 2003 clashes with the establishment of an armed proxy Arab militia, the Janjaweed, who were tasked with displacing the African indigenous tribes from their land and from access to existing and potential resources throughout the region (Human Rights Watch 2008; Jones 2010).

The armed conflict resulted in a major human disaster in Darfur. Between 200,000 and 500,000 people died, and more than three million villagers lost their land and livelihood and were forced to find shelter in crowded and malfunctioning displaced persons camps (Mai-Linh 2008).

The conflict also resulted in massive population migrations to neighboring countries, such as Chad and Libya, with extensions to many other African countries. The Darfuri asylum seekers community in Israel is another expression of this mass population movement.

Customary Justice in Darfur

Evidence of the centrality of customary (traditional) justice practices in Darfur is plentiful. In a paper published by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), the authors (Tubiana, Tanner, and Abdul-Jalil 2012, 3) note

that: "*Judiya* is the main reconciliation and justice mechanism." Another article examining the role of local justice in the region notes that: "Darfur has a long history of locally-administered justice, with tribal leaders playing a key role in maintaining security and good relations within and between different tribes" (Tajeldin, Assadig, Jennings, and Evans-Pritchard 2010, para. 4). In addition to establishing the centrality of the *Judiya* (also spelled *Judiyya* in many places) in Darfur, the authors proceed to place the source of the power of the *Judiya*, writing that:

> The strength of traditional justice lies in the fact that the local leaders who administer it have the backing of the majority of the community they represent. Disputes are mostly resolved through the mediation of elders, sheikhs or mayors, with no formal paperwork or official records. This is a system known as judiya. In cases where mediation on its own is not sufficient, customary courts can handle cases such as theft or more minor misdemeanors. (Tajeldin et al. 2010, para. 6)

Elsewhere, in a United Nations Development Program study titled "Rule of Law Darfur Joint Assessment Mission (DJAM)" (Babiker 2012), the author stresses the central role and the importance of customary justice practices in Darfur. The author writes: "Informal justice institutions play a vital role in peaceful settlement of communal disputes, particularly in rural areas where the formal justice sector is unable to cover the vast Darfur region given the limited resources, limited presence of police, attorneys and judges" (Babiker 2012, 10).

The following sections explore in some detail the *Judiya* and its elements, including the *Ajawid* (elders, mediators), and the *Mutamarat al Sulh* (reconciliation conference).

Judiya (Mediation)

Judiya (mediation) is Darfur's main customary justice practice (Tubiana et al. 2012). The name of the practice comes from *jud*, which means generosity or magnanimity in Arabic (Tubiana et al. 2012).

The *Judiya*, much like the Sulha, Islam's most ubiquitous customary justice process, is an informal, mixed arbitration-mediation customary justice practice, designed to facilitate "averting or containing violence" (O'Fahey 2007, 715) and to transition the disputing sides from a desire to avenge to a willingness to forgive, reconcile, and move on with life, through a restoration of their sense of honor and respect (Tubiana et al. 2012).

The origin of the *Judiya* is traced to a combination of adaptation of traditional Muslim customary justice practices to local approaches at the tribal level and a concurrent adaptation of central rule (Turkish, English, and Sudanese) formalizations of existing informal practices. It appears that both tribal leaders and formal local representatives of the central government in Khartoum found the administration of local customary justice a very practical and useful tool in controlling the region (O'Fahey 2007).

Almost every new ruler or administration in Darfur since the 19th century has tried to tinker with and modify the *Judiya* system (Kritz and Wilson 2013). The result was the evolution of two distinct types of *Judiya*: a community-sponsored *Judiya* and a government-sponsored *Judiya*. The latter type reflects continuing attempts by multiple administrations, starting with the British Condominium period in 1932 and ongoing today, to "semi-formalize" the *Judiya* in order to provide the central government with additional control over the region and its administration (UNEP 2014, 8).

The *Judiya* is an informal process, although like most informal customary justice practices it adheres to a rather rigid set of rules and rituals that must take place for the process to be considered "proper" and to proceed toward a resolution (Tubiana et al. 2012).

The *Judiya* is used to promote reconciliation at five levels of disputes (Tubiana et al. 2012, 35–36):

- within the family;
- within the village for sedentary communities, or within the *damra* or *feriq* (nomads' small settlements) for nomads or semi-nomads;
- within a broader geographic or even identity community spread out over several locations;
- within the tribe; and
- between different tribes.

The Weakening of the Judiya

There is significant evidence that the status of *Judiya* in Darfur is declining. For example, Adam Azzain Mohamed (2009, 10) writes: "The Judiyya as a whole used to have considerable sanctity. Failing to abide by Judiyya ruling subjects one to communal disdain and loss of solidarity much needed for livelihood and sustenance in self-supporting communities." Yet Tubiana et al. (2012, 3) conclude in their report that: "The tribal justice system in Darfur is in tatters after years of conflict and political manipulation from

Khartoum," and "The Native Administration has been compromised, disempowered, and delegitimized."

In "Traditional Justice: Improving Access to Justice in Darfur," Sarah Nouwen (2010, 50) also discusses the weakening of Juidya, and the challenges it faces, writing: "Transformation challenges tradition; transformation of societies challenges traditional justice, including *judiya*."

The evidence of the weakening of *Judiya* and the way it adapts to various pressures provide a useful hint that may be helpful when trying to explain the evolution of an old-new, quasi-*Judiya* in Israel.

Ajawid (Mediators)

The practitioners of the *Judiya* are called *Ajawid* (mediators; *Ajwad* is the singular). There is considerable disagreement on the exact spelling of the term; in this article, the spelling will be *Ajawid*.

The *Ajawid* are mostly local elders and dignitaries (e.g., village heads). They are known in the community for their integrity, wisdom, and sincere desire and ability to act constructively in support of conflict mitigation, and usually have decades of experience mediating inter- and intracommunal disputes (Mohamed and Badri 2005; Tubiana et al. 2012; author interview with Idris Ismael, December 8, 2015). The *Ajwad* position is not permanent, nor is it a formal one. It is also not an inherited position, though some *Ajawid* are the sons of former *Ajawid,* reflecting a sense of quasi-inherited respectability (Tubiana et al. 2012).

Old women are occasionally invited to sit as an *Ajwad,* although only on cases where all the disputants are women (Tubiana et al. 2012). This is a rare instance in Muslim customary justice where a woman is allowed to occupy a "formal" position as a mediator.

Although the post of *Ajwad* is informal, legal knowledge (civil and/or religious) is considered an advantage.

The number of *Ajawid* assigned to mediate a conflict is determined by the severity and complexity of the conflict. Some conflicts are mediated by a single *Ajwad*, while others require large teams of *Ajawid*. The number is determined by the traditional leaders in an internal consultation (Tubiana et al. 2012).

The *Ajawid* are not passive facilitators. Indeed, mediators tend to practice a rather blunt form of evaluation and intervention. They use a variety of tools including persuasion, goading, and even coercion to move the disputants toward an acceptable resolution (Bradbury, Ryle, Medley, and Sansculotte-Greenidge 2006; Mohamed and Badri 2005).

The *Ajawid* do not try to adjudicate in the Western sense of discovering the "right" and "wrong" sides of the dispute equation. Rather, they try to bring about reconciliation between the disputants, to increase the willingness to forgive, and to help move the disputants and the community as a whole on with life (Wilson 2014).

Since, as we have seen, there are community-sponsored *Judiya* and government-sponsored *Judiya*, there are also community-appointed *Ajawid* and government-appointed *Ajawid*. One of the differences between these two types of *Ajawid* is that community-appointed *Ajawid* are local dignitaries and elders, while the government usually appoints religious leaders as well as external mediators (Tubiana et al. 2012).

Mutamarat al Sulh (Reconciliation Conference)

The *Mutamarat al Sulh* (reconciliation conference) is the functional vehicle through which the *Ajawid* (mediators) facilitate conflict management and resolution activities (Bradbury et al. 2006).

The *Mutamarat al Sulh* usually takes place at the home of one of the *Ajawid*—one who is not a party to the conflict (Bradbury et al. 2006). It follows a rather rigid "choreography" consisting of meetings, consultations, and rituals. The process starts with a recitation of selected verses from the Koran (usually verses extolling reconciliation and forgiveness). The head of the *Ajawid*—usually the most senior intervener—speaks afterward, using general terms, thanking the disputants for agreeing to the *Judiya*, and reiterating a narrative designed to increase the willingness to compromise and forgive (Bradbury et al. 2006; Tubiana et al. 2012).

The opening ritual leads to the "practical" part of the process, during which the disputants lay out their perspective of the conflict (Bradbury et al. 2006). This is an opportunity for both sides to vent, familiarize the other side with their perspective, and impress the interveners with the seriousness of their argument. In addition to verbal arguments, each side submits a written list of demands that in their view will be sufficient to cause them to consider movement toward resolution (Bradbury et al. 2006). The mediators listen, ask clarifying questions, and then retire for private discussions.

The end result of the *Mutamarat al Sulh* process is a verdict, which the *Ajawid* hand out after they review all the available evidence and have listened to the disputants and to witnesses.

The *Ajawid* tend to take a rather aggressive interventionist posture during the *Mutamarat al Sulh* process. They do not shy from explaining to

the disputants in bleak terms the consequences of the dispute not being resolved. Such exchanges often include cajoling the disputants to move toward reconciliation, including threats and other coercive language (Egemi and Pantuliano 2003).

Non-Citizen Foreigners in Israel

In addition to Jewish immigrants, who are eligible for Israeli citizenship by virtue of the "Law of Return" legislation, and regular tourists, who arrive in Israel on a tourist visa and depart by the end of their allowed stay, the state of Israel defines three relevant classes of non-citizen foreigners (Finkelstein 2014):

1. Infiltrators: Foreigners who entered Israel illegally through its borders—in the case of Africans, mostly thorough the Israel-Egypt border—and were apprehended at the border or inside Israel. This group is estimated to number about 55,000 people, 85 percent of whom are men. They are mostly Africans, particularly from Sudan, Eritrea, Congo, Nigeria, and Ivory Coast.

2. Foreign workers: This group includes (a) foreign workers who entered Israel with valid work permits that are still valid; and (b) foreign workers who entered Israel with a valid work permit, but their work permit expired and they overstayed. This group, mostly from China, Thailand, and the Philippines, numbers between 85,000 and 110,000, and is divided about equally by gender.

3. Tourists without work permits: Foreigners, mostly from Eastern Europe, who entered the country on a tourist visa but remained in the country illegally, mostly for work purposes. This group numbers about 90,000.

Israel's Attitude Toward Asylum Seekers

Refugees and asylum seekers are a challenging and sensitive subject in Israel. Israel's national ethos paints the people of Israel as almost eternal refugees, who have a deep understanding and empathy for what it means to be refugees.

The Jewish biblical narrative, purportedly one of the central guides to ethical and practical conduct in the "Jewish State," is rife with references to

empathy for refugees. For example: "Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you in your land. Treat them like native-born Israelites, and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners living in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Lev 19:33–34).

In fact, since its founding, Israel has had very little to do with non-Jewish immigration. In 1975, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin reflected and amplified the established Israel ethos when he welcomed about 300 Vietnamese "boat people" and told then–U.S. President Jimmy Carter:

> We never have forgotten the boat with 900 Jews, the St. Louis, having left Germany in the last weeks before the Second World War . . . traveling from harbor to harbor, from country to country, crying out for refuge. They were refused. . . . Therefore it was natural . . . to give those people [Vietnamese "boat people"] a haven in the Land of Israel. (Bryen 2012)

However, the facts on the ground present a somewhat different picture. In reality, most Israeli Jews—who, according to the country's Central Bureau of Statistics (2013), amount to about 80 percent of the country's population—view the asylum seekers with a mixture of fear, loathing, and derision. Kritzman-Amir (2012, 98) writes: "Among other things, this opposition [to asylum seekers] has taken the form of severe violence against asylum seekers and their property, and of serious manifestations of hatred and incitement."

Minister of Culture and Sports Miri Regev, at the time a Likud Member of Parliament, referred to asylum seekers in a 2012 public speech as "a cancer in the body of the nation" (Lior and Zarchin 2012).

A survey that followed Regev's utterances found that "fifty-two percent of Jewish Israelis identify with the statement by MK Miri Regev last month that African migrants are 'a cancer in the body' of the nation, and over a third condone anti-migrant violence, according to the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) Peace Index for May 2012" (*Times of Israel* 2012, para. 1).

The official terminology used in Israel to describe most asylum seekers and refugees is "Mistanenim" (Hebrew for "infiltrators"; Knesset Report 2007). According to Israeli law, every person who enters Israel without permission is an infiltrator (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society 2014), but in public perception, the term, coined in the early years of the state of Israel to describe mostly Arab Palestinians, is associated strongly with belligerent attitudes and violent intentions (Ziegler 2011).

Furthermore, the government of Israel is actively evading and avoiding taking any action that may result in granting eligible asylum seekers and refugee status seekers the treatment mandated under international refugee conventions. Ziegler (2011, 1) writes:

> Israel ratified the refugee convention and its subsequent protocol in 1954 and 1968, respectively. It is hence obliged to implement all of its provisions and to adopt necessary legislation to that effect. Nonetheless, to date, Israel has not incorporated the convention into its domestic law; the convention is thus not directly enforceable in Israeli courts, although treaty-compatible interpretations are customarily preferred. Moreover, the Israeli government decided last July that, at present, it would be "ill-advised to adopt legislation regarding refugees and asylum seekers."

An article in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* (Lior 2015) provides the essential data, gleaned from the government's deposition to Israel's Supreme Court, regarding a petition by human rights organizations:

> Since July 2009, Sudanese citizens in Israel, most of whom came from the Darfur region, submitted 3,165 asylum requests. The state answered only 45 of the applications, rejecting 40 of them and granting temporary residency to five people on the basis of a cabinet resolution from 2007, under then–Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

In addition to their challenged legal posture, the social status of these asylum seekers in Israel is at rock bottom. According to Amit Kama, an Israeli sociologist (Kama 2008, 31), such people are "framed in Israeli media as threatening, dangerous or inferior human beings. No wonder they are completely disenfranchised from the public domain, from the society at large and from every activity that takes place within it." (See also: Kemp, Raijman, Reznik, and Gesser 2000; Raijman 2003; Schnell, Benjamini, and Ben-Adiva 2000; Semyonov 2003.)

The Darfuri Community In Israel

There are about 3,500 Darfuris in Israel—all men, with the exception of a handful of women. Most live in the Tel Aviv area; the rest are spread throughout the country, from Eilat in the south to Kiryat Shmone in the north. There are an additional 1,500 non-Darfuri, Sudanese in Israel.

According to a Darfuri asylum seeker in Israel (interview with author, November 3, 2015), one of the major reasons Darfuris chose to come to Israel is their belief that due to the formal state of war that still exists between Sudan and Israel, Israel will be forced to avoid repatriating them to Sudan, where they may face legal and personal retribution as a result of coming to Israel in the first place. This was a particularly sensitive issue that interviewees were reluctant to broach, and were always insistent on doing so under conditions of anonymity.

The Darfuri community in Israel falls under the definition of "infiltrators." Most of them entered the country illegally through its Sinai Desert border with Egypt, and most of them have petitioned the Israeli government to grant them refugee status in order to protect them from the current civil war in Southern Sudan and Darfur.

Most Darfuri asylum seekers in Israel are young men, 25 to 40 years old. Older men stand little chance of surviving the brutal trek from Darfur through Egypt—sometimes starting in Libya—and the Sinai Desert as they cross from Egypt to Israel. Also, women are neither allowed nor expected to leave their families and migrate.

Darfuri asylum seekers in Israel come from a large number of tribes (partial list presented previously in the "Darfur and the Conflict" section). In a rough reflection of the tribal distribution, there are five community centers that service the Darfuri community in Tel Aviv: Fur, Wadi Hawar, Tama, Masalit, and Bargo. Each center services a single or more often several tribes (mostly smaller tribes that do not have the resources to establish their own center).

These centers serve as gathering places for formal and informal activities and rituals, as well as educational hubs, where people can receive basic instruction in English language and introductory computer literacy from volunteers within and outside of the community. In addition, community members gather in these centers to hear periodic reports about their petitions' status, about legislative changes that may impact their lives, and about the situation in Darfur (Idris Ismael, interview with author, Tel Aviv, December 8, 2015).

The centers are managed and operated by community activists, men who for extended periods volunteer to help the community and have gradually received the community's stamp of approval as informal leaders (Adam Ahmed, interview with author, Tel Aviv, November 31, 2015). These same activists are those who also act as third-party interveners, practicing the

dispute resolution mechanisms that will be described in detail later in this article.

Most Darfuri asylum seekers in Israel work at minimum-wage jobs (at the time of writing, minimum wage in Israel is about US\$7/hour), including in the food industry (mostly as bus boys, dishwashers, and junior kitchen aids), the retail industry (as warehouse workers), the hotel industry (as janitors and room maids), and as janitors in shopping centers and office buildings. Many of the workers in these jobs do not receive all the payments they are entitled to by law (Kaufman 2013).

Most Darfuri asylum seekers live in crowded conditions in south Tel Aviv, with five to eight men sharing a small (about $60\,m^2$) two-room apartment, with a single bathroom/shower room and a small kitchen. That means that each room accommodates three to four (often more) adult men (Adam Ahmed, interview with author, Tel Aviv, November 31, 2015).

Although the cohabitants try to share housing with men of the same clan or at least the same tribe, that does not often work out and they have to share rooms or apartments with men from different tribes or clans. Sometimes, the cohabitants do not even share the same dialect or language (Idris Ismael, interview with author, December 8, 2015).

In the words of a Darfuri asylum seeker who insisted on anonymity (interview with author, November 3, 2015):

> Life here is completely different from anything we ever knew. People are living under a lot of stress, a lot of uncertainty, and many are confused and often get into arguments, conflicts, even fights with others, sometimes from other tribes, but we cannot really ask the Israeli police to solve these disputes. They would only make the situation worse for all of us.

Dispute Types

Most disputes would probably fall under the classic definition of "domestic dispute," except that in the case of the Darfuri community in Israel, "domestic disputes" typically involve only men. Crowded conditions, widely different work and relaxation schedules, and varying habits contribute to the eruption of conflicts.

Overall, the kinds of conflicts that Darfuri asylum seekers in Israel report can be classified roughly into two groups.

Small "Domestic" Conflicts

According to one community leader, "Some people end up cooking and others don't. Some people end up cleaning, and others, who live in the same apartment, don't" (Mousa Adam, interview with author, March 4, 2016).

Other conflicts often revolve around the desire of one person to turn on the light in a room where others are sleeping. Television and viewing habits are also a frequent cause for the eruption of small disputes, where disputants, using a single television set, fail to agree on who decides what to watch and when (Idris Ismael, interview with author, December 8, 2015).

These small conflicts, combined with economic stress, uncertainty regarding their status and their continued stay in Israel, as well as the lack of a balanced community life, both from a cultural (e.g., parents, siblings) and a gender perspective, lead to occasional clashes between roommates. When one roommate wants to sleep, for example, the other wishes to cook, wash clothes, or listen to or play music. Incessant speaking on the phone and similarly omnipresent playing of various games on smartphones are also reported to be frequent causes for friction between roommates.

More Complex Conflicts

More complex conflicts tend to be those involving money or property, including unpaid small loans, property theft (mostly of cash and cell phones), and the odd scuffle between young men, sometimes under the influence of alcohol. Such disputes are usually handled by a team of community leaders (Idris Ismael, interview with author, December 8, 2015).

Challenges to Darfuri Intracommunal Dispute Resolution Practices in Israel

When it comes to the ability to access any kind of familiar or acceptable dispute resolution mechanism, Darfuri asylum seekers in Israel find themselves caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Their "old" way of life (e.g., villages, clans, families, rural, dignitaries) was left behind in Darfur; the Darfuri community in Israel does not have access to the traditional dispute resolution mechanisms they grew up with back home.

Furthermore, we are told that: "Affiliation to tribe and party are necessary for both survival and success" (Tubiana et al. 2012, 3). Yet in Israel, this affiliation remains only in name and memory; in reality, members of multiple tribes mix together, nullifying the advantages of tribal and party affiliation.

The other option—seeking the help or intervention of Israeli authorities, formal and semiformal, to help mediate in intracommunal conflicts—

is also not a viable option; the Darfuris mistrust Israelis, particularly those of official standing, and are reluctant to expose their disputes to scrutiny by Israelis of official standing. Furthermore, they believe that Israeli dispute resolution methods, including alternative dispute resolution approaches, are unsuitable for them.

Darfuri Community Dispute Resolution In Israel

A series of interviews (described in "Methodology") with Darfuri asylum seekers in Israel brought to light the existence of an alternative, quasi-traditional dispute resolution mechanism that was established through a process of trial and error by current community leaders.

The following sections describe the new type of interveners (mediators) that took over conflict management roles, and the specific stages of practice they devised to attempt to provide a response to conflicts that arise in Israel.

The Interveners

In the absence of elders or village leaders, active members of the Darfuri community in Tel Aviv (those who have taken upon themselves to work voluntarily to help their community and were gradually accepted by the entire community as de facto leaders) selected informally a group of young men, aged 28 to 36, who act as quasi-official interveners. They are mostly literate, having acquired fragmented education in Darfur and during their trek (in various nongovernmental organization [NGO] and UN facilities in Darfur, Sudan, Libya, and Egypt; Mousa Adam, interview with author, March 4, 2016).

A typical Darfuri intervener in Tel Aviv is community activist Idris Ismael. Idris (28) comes from the Fur tribe, Darfur's largest tribe. He received his primary education in Darfur, while also fulfilling his duties within the family (e.g., helping his mother and his father with tasks such as fetching water, herding animals). At some point (dates are unclear), Idris enrolled in a residential secondary school in Al Fasher, where he combined schooling with work as a market merchant to finance his schooling. As the war expanded, Idris moved into a displaced person's camp, where he used courses offered by missionaries, NGOs, and the UN to expand his English-language skills and general education. After he left Darfur and lived in Cairo, Egypt, Idris continued his education, using various NGOs, embassy libraries, and other educational opportunities that were made available to

the refugee community on an ad hoc basis (Idris Ismael, interview with author, December 8, 2015).

In Tel Aviv, Idris is considered one of several young "community activists." That means that Idris and about four other colleagues, all Darfuris, attend to the community's needs by organizing language (English) and professional (computer) courses at the community's five centers, around the Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv (Adam Ahmed, interview with author, May 18, 2016). These activists are also responsible for updating the community about changes in government policy, keeping in touch with interred members (members of the community who are being held in the south of the country in one of Israel's internment camps for refugees and asylum seekers), helping facilitate communication with family members around the world (and in Darfur), maintaining contact with Israeli and foreign media and educational institutions and researchers, and conducting meetings with Israeli officials.

Since Idris and his colleagues already function as ad hoc community leaders, it is natural that people come to them with requests to intervene in disputes, and indeed that is what has been happening (Idris Ismael, interview with author, December 8, 2015).

The following section describes in detail the multitiered, quasi-traditional dispute resolution mechanisms developed by Darfuri asylum seekers in Tel Aviv to help handle a variety of mostly small disputes.

The Stages

A detailed exploration of the newly evolved dispute resolution mechanisms employed by the Darfuri community in Israel revealed the existence of a multistage process, consisting of five stages:

- Stage 1: Prevention through planned placement
- Stage 2: Internal discussion, coordination, and duty scheduling
- Stage 3: Discussion with a community activist
- Stage 4: Mobilization
- Stage 5: Intervention

Stage 1: Prevention Through Planned Placement

The crowded conditions, stress of daily life, and external economic and administrative pressures by an unsympathetic host country create ample opportunities for conflicts.

The first mechanism that the asylum seekers resort to in attempts to minimize or preempt intracommunal conflicts is to encourage a more rigorous preselection process of roommates, mostly by their prospective roommates and sometimes with the participation of community activists. The purpose of this is to maximize the compatibility of roommates. "We always try to find housing with like-minded people," says Mousa. "Religious people try to live with religious people; people who like to go out at night [to partake in the area's night life] try to live with similar people." Mousa added that cohabiting with people who speak the same language is also preferred and encouraged by community leaders, though it is not always possible (Mousa Adam, interview with author, March 4, 2016).

Other informants stressed that efforts are made to encourage cohabitation of same-tribe members, people who have a common tribal, clannish, or familial affiliation, in the hope that such preexisting cultural and familial affinities will improve communication and act as inducement to avoid and mitigate budding conflicts.

However, with such a small population of asylum seekers, coming from such a wide variety of regions, tribes, and clans, it is impossible to avoid the cohabitation of people from disparate Darfuri origins, people who often are not familiar with the language of their roommates, least of all with their cultural routines, customs, and conflict mitigation traditions.

Stage 2: Internal Discussion, Coordination, and Duty Scheduling

When the preemptive steps described in Stage 1 do not provide a conflict-free environment and small conflicts erupt, it is now up to the disputants' immediate social environment as well as community leaders to take steps to mitigate against deterioration of conflicts.

According to Idris, most budding conflicts are resolved through internal discussions between the apartment's roommates (Idris Ismael, interview with author, February 9, 2016). The leadership encourages and promotes this approach, in an attempt to deal with conflicts fast and as close as possible to their point of origin, with the understanding that there is not a lot of flexibility available in terms of people moving around, changing residences, and acclimating into another social circle.

To minimize conflicts, cohabitants often take preemptive steps. According to Mousa, once people find themselves in a cohabitation situation, they often agree on a set of internal house rules designed to promote peaceful cohabitation. He said:

We come together and draft a schedule of duties and rules. So every-
body has to do the same things. Also, we decide on rules. For example,
if you come home after 22:00, you cannot turn on the light and cannot
make noise; you can only warm up food in the kitchen and then go to
sleep. (Mousa Adam, interview with author, April 6, 2016)

According to multiple interviewees, such arrangements hold most of
the time, and people cooperate and fulfill their duties. Mousa added that:

When circumstances force a change in schedule [of duties], we speak
on the phone and change the schedule temporarily so people have
food and the place gets cleaned. (Mousa Adam, interview with author,
April 6, 2016)

If these preemptive steps are insufficient to forestall conflicts, cohabi-
tants are encouraged to discuss and resolve their grievances among them-
selves to attempt to find a locally fostered remedy.

The actions described in Stage 2 do not appear to have a distinct corol-
lary in Darfuri dispute resolution practices back in Darfur. Probably because
in their indigenous settings, surrounded by kinfolks, and without the special
circumstances prescribed by the crowded conditions, people communicate
regularly and are in no need for quasi-formal, dispute mitigating actions.
Adam Ahmed described a special process whereby in each village, elders
circulate between the huts every morning, greeting the families as they set
about their daily tasks, asking about their welfare; this is the time when fresh
grievances are aired and ventilated—in the presence of a familiar, respected
elder, a figure of authority in the context of local conflict management and
resolution (Adam Ahmed, interview with author, May 18, 2016).

Also, it is important to note that direct negotiations between dispu-
tants in community disputes are not always conducive to resolving the
disputes, because of the direct emotional involvement of the disputants
as they try to act as facilitators in their own disputes. As Charles Carver
(2015, 231) writes: "Disputing neighbors usually endeavor to resolve their
disagreements through negotiations, but such interactions may fail due to
the highly emotional issues involved."

Stage 3: Introducing a Third Party Intervener—Discussion with a Community Activist

The mitigating steps described in Stage 1 and 2 do not always achieve their
goal. Sometimes, a roommate refuses to accommodate his cohabitants.

Idris gave an example of two Darfuri roommates. One of the men insisted on listening to loud music and on speaking for hours—loudly—on his cell phone. When asked to be more considerate, the man said "this is my freedom" and refused to modify his behavior (Idris Ismael, interview with author, February 9, 2016). When the situation deteriorates and remains unresolved through internal discussion between roommates, and as Idris said, "when someone becomes disruptive and crude," it is time to move to the next stage—bringing in a third party intervener.

The people who typically contact an intervener are friends of the disputant who feels he has been the victim in a dispute (Mousa Adam, interview with author, April 6, 2016). The self-perceived victim's friends invite the intervener and ask him to come and listen to the arguments of both sides—separately, in private caucus.

Idris reported that as an intervener, he was called in by the perceived victim's friends. He made an appointment with the perceived offender. They met at a neighborhood coffee house, where, according to Idris, he explained to the man that life in Israel is different from what it was like in Darfur, that here men live in crowded conditions, without much privacy, and that men must understand that change and make accommodations.

Idris went on to explain to the perceived offender that a man must not create a situation where there is anger in his home. In Idris's words (Idris Ismael, interview with author, February 9, 2016): "I told him that anger destroys the harmony and causes everyone to be upset."

Idris explained to the disputant that the rooms where the asylum seekers live now are the equivalent of a family home in Darfur, and that, just as back in Darfur, people and the community at large would have done all in their power to find a solution to a dispute within the family, they should do so here in Israel.

"Home is where you're supposed to feel safe and good. Outside is rough, and if you don't have a place where you can feel good and safe—like home—you will lose your mind," Idris explained to the offender. He suggested to the man that it is possible to "keep his freedom, but also make time for all the things that ensure that you don't disturb everyone at home."

Idris reported that, upon hearing this, "the man became very angry and aggressive," but that "at the end of the discussion, he was convinced." The dispute was resolved with the man agreeing to reduce the level of his music and curtail his telephone conversations while his roommate was asleep. "Don't lounge about idle," Idris reported saying to the man. "If you're busy, you'll be relaxed, so find something useful to do and the rest will take

care of itself." To that end, Idris mentioned that one of the community's major agenda items is to create conditions that will enable as many Darfuris as possible to study a profession and to learn a language (English in most cases). Community activists recruit volunteers (mostly Israeli) who come to the community centers in the evening and provide instruction in Hebrew, English, and computer literacy.

This stage seems to be part of the "traditional" tribal conflict management practice back in Darfur. Informants reported that in Darfur, village elders communicate with families and individuals in their village on virtually a daily basis, soliciting narratives of evolving conflicts, to create the ability to deal with conflicts at an early stage. The elders do their best to maintain neutrality and are respected by both sides in the dispute (Adam Ahmed, interview with author, May 18, 2016).

Stage 4: "Mobilization"—Persuasion Through Personal Example

If the attempt at convincing the perpetrator does not succeed, the process moves into the fourth stage: mobilization.

According to Idris (Idris Ismael, interview with author, May 18, 2016):

> If the conciliation attempt fails, we "mobilize." For example, I try to befriend the offender; I try to show him by personal example how a man that treats others with respect receives respect in return and has a good life.

Apparently, the "mobilization" stage includes several steps. First, the intervener tries to learn how the disputant behaves in the company of his close friends. The assumption, according to Idris, is that if he treats his friends well and his roommate badly, that says something about the man and about the chance of changing his behavior. The intervener also tries to learn if the disputant behaves differently inside and outside the house. Again, this is done to provide necessary intelligence about the general attitudes and practices of the disputant.

Having acquired this information, the intervener proceeds to take active steps aimed at becoming the disputant's friend. As Idris explained, "I invite him to spend time with me, visiting my friends, and going to places where I go as my friend. In this way, I hope to show the man how good relations with people make life good." According to Idris and Mousa, this process has been tried several times with success over the past few years.

As we can see, the actions taken by the interveners in Stage 4 vary considerably from the processes used by conflict resolution practitioners back in Darfur.

1. Because in many cases, the disputants come from different backgrounds and tribal origins and are essentially unfamiliar with each other, it is understandable that the first step the interveners will take is to try to add to their knowledge of the disputants—hence the "intelligence gathering" phase.

2. During the next step in the mobilization, the intervener essentially strives to create, at least in part, the social environment of a clan. He does that by bringing the disputant into his own social circle and by using this social circle as both a framework and a potential lever (on the disputant). No doubt, being invited by one of the community's leaders to enter his social circle is flattering and may in itself create an initial incentive to "behave" so as not to dishonor oneself and the intervener.

3. By removing the disputant from the immediacy of the dispute, it is easier for both intervener and disputant to communicate.

4. Rather than stressing sanctions, this approach is designed to provide the disputant with positive inducements to move toward accommodation.

Stage 5: "Intervention"—Direct Communal Pressure

The fifth and last stage in this newly evolved quasi-customary process is probably the most radical application of a conflict management and resolution process within this context, and perhaps not surprisingly it was labeled—by the practitioners themselves—intervention (Idris Ismael, interview with author, May 18, 2016; Mousa Adam, interview with author, April 6, 2016). The process is linear in its progression, and the interveners conduct internal consultations among themselves to coordinate the process and their roles within it. Despite the appearance of a rigidly scripted process, the interveners improvise and modify their application of the various tools, depending on the particulars of each case, the reaction of the disputants, and the progress achieved.

According to Idris, when all else fails, the intervener gathers up the friends and acquaintances of the disputant that can be located in Israel. These are usually people from the same village, possibly the same clan or even family. Barring that, the intervener tries to locate people who have

known the reluctant disputant either on the long trek from Darfur to Israel or, if the disputant has been living in Israel for a substantial period, those individual Darfuris who have spent significant amounts of time in his company, as friends, cohabitants, or coworkers.

Idris stressed that it is not enough for the aforementioned people to have known the disputant; they must also fulfill the condition that they are, in Idris's words, "people he must respect and obey."

Having located such people of potential influence, the intervener gathers as many of them as possible in a neutral place, usually a community center. Both disputants are invited to come on a set date and hour.

The intervention starts with an ad hoc inquiry. According to Idris and others, the interveners invite the disputants—separately—and ask them to describe their side of the dispute. The perceived victim—the person who lodged the initial complaint—is invited to present his side of the situation first. This is in step with many reported and recorded Muslim/Arab customary justice practices, such as the Sulha (settlement), where the victim's side is traditionally invited to be the first to make their case—a ritual designed to help the victim's side restore the perceived damage to his sense of honor (Pely 2016).

Having listened to the perceived victim, the interveners invite the perceived offender and listen to his side of the argument. They can ask questions, but at this point they don't voice opinions.

After listening to both disputants, the interveners have an internal discussion among themselves to evaluate all the arguments and try to determine both the facts of the disputes and the extent of culpability of each side in the eruption or continuation of the dispute. The interveners then perform a ritual that Idris called "making a report." "Making a report" is actually a ritual where the interveners declare their verdict (to the disputants and the participating friends). The verdict includes a description of the conflict, the sources of its eruption, relevant events in its evolution, and a determination of culpability, along with a list of sanctions or fines.

According to Idris, the disputants "must obey that verdict." When challenged to explain what can compel a disputant to obey such a verdict, Idris described why disputants chose to obey verdicts that he was involved with:

> Because I have been a community activist for many years now [smiles] even if I'm still young. All my free time is given to the community. People know that and they respect me. I, for my part, must behave in a way that will make sure the people respect me. I always participate in

community activities, and never try to act in a way that will make me look like I'm above people.

This description is almost identical to the description that members of the Sulha committee (*Jaha*) give when asked to explain the source of their authority (Pely 2010).

Conclusions

All interviews with Darfuris in Israel showed a clear preference for resolving disputes through internal mediation over the option of taking disputes "outside" for external intervention. This attitude strongly reflects attitudes in Darfur; one of the conclusions of a USIP paper exploring traditional dispute resolution in Darfur (Tubiana et al. 2012, 3) was that "Darfuris believe that the first step in addressing a conflict should be a mediation and that the government should be the last resort."

A comparison between the elements of Darfuri customary justice—*Judiya*, *Ajawid*, and *Mutamarat al Sulh*—as they take place in Darfur and the process that the Darfuri asylum seekers community in Israel have evolved to manage intracommunal conflicts demonstrates close similarities between "indigenous" elements and the comparable process in Israel. With that in mind, it may be useful to define the entire indigenous process in its Israeli manifestation as a "quasi-indigenous" process.

More specifically, we see that the "evaluative" part of the process has been moved in Israel to the end of the process, to be employed only after all other "softer," less interventionist measures have been tried without producing the desired resolution. This is a major difference between the "original" and the modified approaches, and possibly reflects an attempt to accommodate the radical change experienced by the Darfuris during their transfer from Darfur to Israel. This change includes a weakening of the tribal structures and foundations, the absence of dignitaries, and the reported increase in the sense of independence, with its attendant behaviors.

There is evidence of the lack of familiarity with Darfuri indigenous dispute resolution mechanisms in Darfur (Murphy and Tubiana 2010). The authors write:

Foreign actors tend to misconstrue the nature of what was known as the Native Administration (*idara ahliya*) system. They imagine hierarchies frozen in time that apply Darfur-wide and neglect the complex,

dynamic and highly diverse history of which the *idara ahliya* is the product. (6)

It would be reasonable to assume that a similar lack of familiarity will characterize the interaction between national and local authority functionaries in the many Western countries where refugees and asylum seekers from multiple communalist cultures find themselves—disconnected from their indigenous cultures and having to coexist with people from very diverse tribes, nations, and cultures.

Since the data described in this article is based on a few interviews with members of the Darfuri community in Tel Aviv, including some of the leaders of this community, it is important to continue the examination of the processes described here to determine whether this is a private (isolated) case or a more generalizable phenomenon—both within Israel among other asylum seeker communities, and outside Israel in asylum seeker communities in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America.

Further research should focus on the broader, possibly indirect results of these and similar newly evolved mediation mechanisms on the relevant communities, and on the relations between these communities and formal and semiformal dispute resolution mechanisms in the host communities.

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