KACE: On the closure of Al Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Development

Saturday 5 January 2013

Al Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Development (KACE)

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Khartoum, Sudan - 31\12\2012

A delegation of six members representing the Humanitarian Aid Commission, suddenly and without prior notice, burst into the center on Monday 31\12\2012 at 1:30 pm asking for the director. They immediately handed him an administrative decision number (20) for the year 2012 signed by the General Registrar of Organizations Dr. Mohamed Fadellalh Suraj Eldin, dated on 26\12\2012. The decision announced “the cancellation of the registration of Al Khatim Adlan Center for Consultancy [sic] and Human Development and the removal of its name from the general record of the voluntary organizations authorized to work in Sudan, and requests all bodies to put this decision into effect.”

It was clear that the purpose of their visit was not only to convey this decision, as the delegation also stated that they were directed to list and put their hand on all the removable and non-removable assets of the center, taking over the building. KACE’s administration requested a letter from the General Commissioner of HAC or the director of national organizations at the Commission with the names of the persons assigned to list KACE assets, however this was denied.

The delegation members were clearly rushed. It seemed that they intended to take the center by surprise, having refused a previous request by the KACE director to call his staff in order to inform and involve them in the implementation of such decisions. They also rejected the director’s request to wait for KACE’s legal advisor in order to witness the handover, protect KACE’s rights, and conduct expected procedures of legal appeals.

The committee started a property survey in the center and listed anything without exception, even staff personal belongings, despite the repeated reminder that these particulars are personal and should not be included in the list. The survey and listing process lasted for five hours, with the delegation staff acting in an inconsiderate manner, abusing their position and refusing to acknowledge reasonable requests. The number of the HAC delegation members increased within an hour from 6 to fifteen, including armed security forces. The inventory record was signed and both the delegation and the director of the center received a copy. The keys of the center were then taken by the delegation after evacuating everyone from the building.

The closure of Al Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Development (KACE) by the authorities was not a surprise. The indicators began long time ago, since the increasingly violent crackdowns on freedom of expression targeting newspapers and actors for change and which banned a number of journalists from writing. In July 2012, government newspapers started an aggressive media campaign against pro-democracy civil society that defamed its affiliates, either by accusing them of spying and treason or by abusively banning their activities.

The closure of KACE came a week after the closure of the Sudanese Studies Center (SSC) by the Ministry of Information and Culture, indicating that the government is most likely carrying out a larger plan to shut down any public spaces not under their control, especially independent civil society groups.

The closure of KACE on New Year’s Eve and Sudan's Independence Day indicates that Sudan is slipping deeper into complete control by the government with little to no space for any dissenting opinions.

KACE staff, board, and general assembly members express their gratitude to the people of Sudan, especially intellectuals and colleagues in civil society, for their support and solidarity. KACE is resisting this unjust decision through all legal and media means and will continue to work for a democratic and multicultural Sudan.