

Foreword

We are particularly pleased that the Refugee and Forced Migration Series is able to make available this valuable historical document, *Refugee Policy in Sudan, 1967-1984*. Social historians, students of refugee issues, Africanists, not to mention officials who continue to face the human drama of refugees – all of them deserve this rich documentation of the Sudanese experience.

Ahmad Karadawi was a pioneer among government officials in refugee-receiving countries during the 1970s and early 1980s. His dedication to the refugee cause was well known. The intellectual insights he cast on the development of policies towards refugees and the manner in which he promoted holistic and humane durable solutions for refugees are captured in this book. He was also a pioneer in having the vision to promote refugee studies as a field of academic concentration.

This book captures the hopes and failures of the 1970s and 1980s as African countries had to grapple with ever growing refugee numbers and increasing length of sojourn in countries of asylum. During this period, Sudan changed from a country with one of the most constructive and generous refugee policies and legislation, to one beset by growing economic, social and political problems, where the burden of supporting refugees became a further destabilising factor. The transition in government policy towards refugees is captured by Karadawi and analysed in a fair but forceful manner.

Both of us became acquainted with Ahmad Karadawi in 1982, when we began our research among refugees in Sudan. Having failed at the time to convince colleagues at the University of Khartoum to do research in this area, he rose to the challenge of helping to establish the Refugee Studies Programme at the University of Oxford. So many students learned from him during his years in Oxford in the 1980s. He was the one who always insisted that refugees must be at the centre of our work. It was his inspiration that led to the first international conference in Oxford in 1984, which was

attended by as many refugees as aid workers and academics. As one journalist put it, ‘Suddenly the silent ones get a voice’.

It was not only researchers that he influenced. As one UNHCR staff member has written:

...do mention the uniquely stimulating and convincing way Ahmad kept UNHCR (and all other foreign aid deliverers) on the right track, insisting in his inimitably clever fashion that refugees should be the first to be consulted about their needs and that they themselves were the most important resource to be tapped in meeting those needs, the next being the people and authorities in the countries of asylum. And he did this with a cool good humour even in the midst of the most dire emergencies. He was a rather blindingly bright light for many of us fumbling about on the messy humanitarian stage in Sudan in the 1980s.

In fact, it was his academic work on refugees that led to Ahmad Karadawi spending his last years as a *de facto* refugee himself in Addis Ababa. With colleagues at Juba University, an annotated bibliography of research and documents on refugees in Sudan was produced; the government at that time disapproved. He was able to leave Sudan by exchanging a pair of shoes for an exit permit from a policeman. He returned to Oxford from Addis in October 1995 to write up his research on Qala en Nahal refugee settlements in eastern Sudan. A few weeks later a death in his family led him to take the risk of returning to Sudan. On 20 November he died there. He is survived by his wife, Selma Mahmoud Maarouf, a son, Jihad, a daughter, Sarah, his parents, five brothers and three sisters.

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