

Areneo, a 17 year old Sudanese refugee teenager living in South Africa

Areneo intends to become a movie star. Then, after an acting career of 30 years, he would like to enter politics in his home country, Sudan. This could be possible. He has already gained a certificate in modelling and acting from the Pretoria State Theatre, and says he would go back to Sudan immediately if peace and stability return to the country.

Areneo is a 17 year old Sudanese refugee. He was only 4 years old when he had to flee his home country. His father was a commander in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Areneo was visiting his father at the SPLA barracks when government troops surrounded the barracks and killed his father and several other SPLA soldiers. His father's bodyguard took Areneo to his uncle's house for safety.

The uncle made arrangements for Areneo to flee to Ethiopia. The little boy left Sudan in the care of his uncle's bodyguard. From the age of 4 until 7, Areneo lived in a refugee camp in Ethiopia. He left Ethiopia and made his way to Kenya. He stayed first in Kakuma refugee camp in northwest Kenya, and then lived in Nairobi until he was 16. He then left Kenya and travelled by land to South Africa for he had heard that South Africa was rich and developed.

When he was in Sudan, Areneo had gone to nursery school. His parents could afford it. His father was an army commander and his mother worked in the local clinic as a medical doctor. He did not attend school during his time in Ethiopia. He went to school in Kenya but only attended classes for one year in South Africa. His favourite subjects were Geography, English, Biology and Agriculture. He had to discontinue his studies to earn money to pay his way.

Areneo lives in an apartment, which he shares with another refugee youth. He earns money through occasional modelling jobs. In South Africa, Areneo has enjoyed, "Getting to know people and learning – education is good". When asked to comment on what he finds to be negative in South Africa, he says, "When people try to embarrass refugees publicly."

Areneo has no information concerning the whereabouts of his mother, his three sisters and a brother. However, he would go back to Sudan immediately if the Government and the SPLA signed a lasting peace agreement and stability returned to the country.