



## At Issue ezine

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## PERSPECTIVES ON DARFUR

No. 5 - September 2009

### LE CONFLIT DU DARFOUR : SES CONSEQUENCES SUR LE TCHAD ET LA SOUDAN / THE DARFUR CONFLICT: ITS IMPACT ON CHAD AND SUDAN

*By Darnace Torou* The conflict in Darfur is not simply a Sudanese problem between different groups vying for power and scarce resources; it is also a regional problem. As Darnace Torou shows here, the conflict especially involves Sudan's western neighbour, Chad, for these two countries have a long history of interaction, citizens from the same ethnic groups, and similar needs and aspirations. To complicate matters, the leaders of both countries have also been exploiting the conflict in Darfur for political gain...

No. 4 - August 2009

### DARFUR: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

*By Wendy Gichuru* There are clear similarities between the causes and methods of conflict in Darfur with those that obtained (and to some extent continue) in southern Sudan. There are also significant differences - and both these and the similarities provide important indicators for the way forward. As Wendy Gichuru shows in this article, the roots of these major conflicts and the lessons they provide lend support to the wisdom of advocating a "whole-of-Sudan approach" to the Darfur crisis.

No. 3 - July 2009

### AU/UN INTERVENTION: CHALLENGES OF PROTECTING CIVILIAN POPULATIONS AND ENDING THE CONFLICT IN DARFUR

*By Wafula Okumu* When the Darfur conflict erupted in 2003, it seemed that the intervention of the newly formed African Union, backed by the international community, would be the most effective response. However, the protection force sent by the AU proved less than successful and its successor, a combined AU-United Nations force, has thus far also largely failed. In this article, Wafula Okumu analyses the difficulties faced by these intervention forces and suggests a new way forward for a more comprehensive peace.

No. 2 - June 2009

### HUMAN RIGHTS IN DARFUR: WINNERS AND LOSERS IN THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE?

*By John Lewis* No one disputes that serious violations of human rights are occurring in Darfur. What is in dispute are the ways to bring these violations to an end, to see that justice is done and to begin reintroducing stability and peace to the region. As John Lewis indicates in this article, these latter disputes got a lot more complicated when charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity were recently brought against the President of Sudan by the International Criminal Court.

No. 1 - May 2009

### SOME THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT GENOCIDE – 10 YEARS, 10 LESSONS

*By Gerald Caplan* The current crisis in Darfur may well be, in the words of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "another Rwanda", that is, another genocide. What is more important than a formal finding of genocide, however, is our response to what is happening in Darfur, which is horrific by any definition or measure. As Gerald Caplan shares some sobering lessons learned from other genocides, including Rwanda, he suggests why and how the only hope for Darfur lies with organized civil society.

### INTRODUCTION – In Memory of Hugh McCullum

*By the Ezine Editorial Committee* Hugh McCullum - early on the scene of many African crises, urging the world to act. JK



# LE CONFLIT DU DARFOUR: SES CONSEQUENCES SUR LE TCHAD ET LA SOUDAN

by Darnace Torou

(For the English version, click on "[The Darfur Conflict](#)".)

Depuis le mois de février 2003, un conflit, celui du Darfour, capte l'attention de la communauté internationale. A première vue, il semble être une lutte ethnique entre les peuples d'origine arabe et africaine. Donc, l'accent a été mis sur les questions de génocide et de race. Cependant, il apparaît plus utile de se rappeler les paroles de l'adage bien connu: on choisit ses amis, mais que l'on ne choisit ni ses frères, ni ses voisins, surtout quand il s'agit des États. Comme la célèbre formule de Napoléon selon laquelle « la politique d'une nation est dictée par sa géographie », plutôt que de parler de génocide ou de race, notre attention se portera sur la géographie et l'histoire de la région frontalière entre le Soudan et le Tchad.

Le conflit du Darfour met en exergue les difficultés héritées de l'époque coloniale puisque l'on retrouve les mêmes peuples au centre de ce conflit de part et d'autre de deux pays, le Tchad et le Soudan. Ce conflit met en évidence la question de la répartition équitable des ressources rares entre les citoyens, de la participation des citoyens à la gestion du pays et, une fois encore, le recours aux armes comme seul moyen d'accession.

Le conflit du Darfour a fait certes de nombreuses victimes au Soudan mais est également devenu un outil politique entre les mains des chefs de ces deux pays.

## Le conflit au Darfour

Le conflit du Darfour éclate en février 2003. Par contre, les origines du conflit remontent à beaucoup plus loin. Dans un article paru dans Jeune Afrique le 1er avril 2007, Christophe Boisbouvier, journaliste à la Radio France Internationale, estime que « tout commence dans les années 1979-1985. [...] À cette époque, les six millions d'habitants [du Darfour] sont frappés par une grave sécheresse. Les éleveurs de chameaux et de bovins doivent faire descendre leurs troupeaux plus au Sud, vers le Djebel Mara, et plus tôt dans l'année. Entre pasteurs arabes et agriculteurs non arabes, les tensions montent, même si tous sont musulmans, noirs et de nationalité soudanaise. En 1988, un premier conflit éclate entre Arabes et Fours. »

En 1996, nouvelle révolte. Cette fois, ce sont les Massalits qui s'opposent aux Arabes. Comme les Fours, ils veulent préserver leurs terres.

**« Ce qui change en 2003, c'est l'alliance entre les Fours, les Massalits et les Zaghawas. »**

Ce qui change en 2003, c'est l'alliance entre les Fours, les Massalits et les Zaghawas. Les deux premiers groupes sont sédentaires et cultivateurs de mil. Les Zaghawas, eux, sont en majorité nomades et éleveurs de chameaux. La présence de ce groupe est une donnée importante puisqu'il incite le pouvoir tchadien à jouer un rôle dans le conflit.

## Le Darfour devient une crise tchadienne

L'importance des Zaghawas est que beaucoup d'entre eux se sont aguerris au Tchad où ils sont allés combattre aux côtés de leurs cousins tchadiens en 1986, sous les ordres d'Hassan Djamous, le vainqueur des Libyens à « Maaten Elshara ». Plusieurs ont aussi acquis de l'expérience en 1990, sous le commandement d'Idriss Déby, le tombeur d'Hissène Habré, et qui, depuis, est resté au poste de Président du Tchad.

En 2003, les Zaghawas du Tchad retournent la faveur. Ils viennent au secours de leurs cousins du Soudan. C'est alors que se forme une association redoutable entre le combattant Zaghawa Mini Minawi et le jeune avocat four Abdul Wahid al-Nour. Le MLS



Problem of sharing scarce resources: a UNAMID peacekeeper in Darfur watches girls carrying water on donkeys.

© UN Photo/Stuart Price

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(Mouvement de libération du Soudan) est né.

Au même moment, un mystérieux personnage entre en scène. Le docteur Khalil est Zaghawa. C'est un homme de réseaux. Il est très proche de Daoussa et Timane Déby, les deux demi-frères du président tchadien Idriss Déby Itno. Il crée le Mouvement pour la justice et l'égalité (MJE). (Pour plus d'informations sur les groupes impliqués dans la région, voir l'**annexe**.)

Ce n'est donc pas surprenant que le conflit qui sévit au Darfour depuis 2003 affecte la politique tchadienne. En effet, depuis le début du conflit, le Tchad a vu arriver plus de deux cent cinquante mille réfugiés du Darfour. Selon les observateurs et les organisations humanitaires présentes sur le terrain, leurs attaquants utilisent les mêmes modes opératoires que ceux observés au Darfour : viols, meurtres et exactions sans distinction, y compris sur les enfants.



**Signed, but not respected: officials witness the signing of the Dakar Agreement (13 March 2006) between President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan (left) and President Idriss Déby of Chad (right).**

© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Le conflit du Darfour se propage donc sur le territoire tchadien en même temps qu'une guerre civile éclate au Tchad, opposant le pouvoir en place de Déby et des opposants armés qui veulent le détrôner. Le Tchad et le Soudan disposent de pétrole et peuvent continuer à se surarmer : la guerre devient un moyen de gouvernement, pour deux régimes qui, certainement, n'aspirent pas à une véritable démocratie. En effet, on passe de tentatives de cessez le feu à des violations constantes des accords de part et d'autre: Tripoli le 8 février 2006, Khartoum le 28 août 2006, une Déclaration à Cannes le 15 février 2007, Riyad le 3 mai 2007, Dakar le

13 mars 2008 et Doha (Qatar) le 3 mai 2009. Les deux pays se servent des rebellions armées pour exercer des pressions l'un sur l'autre. Il est presque certain que ce conflit ne s'arrêtera pas de sitôt, si l'on en juge par le nombre d'accords signés entre les deux, en un laps de temps très court mais jamais respectés.

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### Les buts politique d'Idriss Déby

Il semble donc que le Président Deby se serve de ces deux conflits pour se maintenir au pouvoir – et l'impact de ces conflits sur le Tchad est sérieux. Par exemple, l'est du Tchad accueille 230 000 réfugiés soudanais originaires du Darfour dans 12 camps du HCR. Ils ont fui les raids des milices arabes ainsi que les combats entre les forces gouvernementales et les rebelles. Depuis début novembre 2008, par exemple, quelque 70 villages dans le sud-est du Tchad ont été attaqués par des hommes armés à cheval utilisant les mêmes tactiques que les milices Djanjawid, juste de l'autre côté de la frontière dans la région du Darfour au Soudan. La dernière série d'attaques dans le sud-est a fait plus de 300 morts parmi les Tchadiens et a provoqué le déplacement de plus de 15 000 personnes, portant le nombre total de Tchadiens déplacés internes à 90 000 pour tout l'est du pays au cours de cette année.

Dans tous ces bouleversements, il semble que les forces armées de Deby soit aussi impliquées. Sara Daniel du Journal le Nouvel Observateur.<sup>1</sup> Elle observe que « lorsqu'on arrive à Goz-Beïda, on voit des rebelles soudanais qui, avec la bénédiction de l'armée tchadienne, recrutent tranquillement de jeunes garçons dans les camps de réfugiés pour aller se battre au Darfour. De leurs immenses camions, les insurgés soudanais déchargent des caisses de kalachnikovs et de lance-roquettes qu'ils distribuent à ces adolescents à peine sortis de l'enfance. Les enfants-soldats rient et prennent la pause avant d'être rappelés à



**Some of the 90,000 internally displaced Chadians: a UN official meets with IDPs at Djabal, Chad, in March 2009.**

© UN Photo/Olivia Gray Pritchard

l'ordre par leurs nouveaux sergents ». L'impact du conflit devient déstabilisateur pour toute la zone concernée car on assiste à une militarisation grandissante de tous les groupes ethniques, entraînant par la même une violence intercommunautaire jusqu'ici inconnue.

**« Le problème est que loin d'avoir tout fait pour apaiser et gérer au mieux les retombées - réelles - sur le Tchad du conflit du Darfour, Idriss Déby est suspecté par plusieurs organisations et observateurs d'avoir volontairement jeté de l'huile sur le feu d'un conflit. »**

Le problème est que loin d'avoir tout fait pour apaiser et gérer au mieux les retombées - réelles - sur le Tchad du conflit du Darfour, Idriss Déby est suspecté par plusieurs organisations et observateurs d'avoir volontairement jeté de l'huile sur le feu d'un conflit qui, sur le fond, le servirait plus à court terme qu'il ne le gênerait. Cependant, les cartes que le Président Déby possède dans son jeu en ce moment ne sont pas une garantie solide de son maintien au pouvoir et pourraient probablement lui poser des problèmes.

**Rebelles, alliés et tactiques désespérées**

Récemment, la formation de résistance rebelle au Tchad a grandi et a profité des déserteurs de l'armée. Déby se doit donc de supporter les groupes du Darfour qui représentent une défense importante contre les rebelles tchadiens. Ces alliés du Darfour deviennent un moyen de défense pour protéger son pouvoir. Le dilemme de Déby par rapport à sa sécurité précaire au pouvoir fait du MJE un partenaire indispensable pour Déby. Dans tout son calcul militaire et politique, les groupes rebelles du Darfour sont devenus essentiels dans sa défense contre les opposants à son régime et tout cela a limité sa capacité de manœuvrer avec les groupes rebelles du Darfour. En réponse, le Soudan commence à soutenir des groupes rebelles tchadiens qui sont venus se réfugier dans la région du Darfour.

En 1990, le Soudan avait contribué à porter Déby à la tête du Tchad. Mais depuis 2003-2004 et l'éclatement du conflit au Darfour, la nature des relations entre le Soudan et le Tchad change. Comme mentionné plus haut, les chefs de ces deux pays semblent se livrer à une guerre par groupes interposés. N'Djamena accuse Khartoum de soutenir la rébellion armée à laquelle il est confronté depuis plus d'un an. Réciproquement, Khartoum accuse N'Djamena d'aider les opposants soudanais.



**Pawns in a proxy war between Sudan and Chad? Darfuri refugees at Iridimi Camp in Chad.**  
© UN Photo/Eskinder Dabebe

Aussi, il est important de noter que Déby est poussé à soutenir les groupes rebelles au Darfour du à son appartenance ethnique. Déby est d'origine Zaghawas et ces derniers l'ont aidé à se maintenir au pouvoir. Les Zaghawas du Soudan et du Tchad ont des liens étroits et les groupes rebelles du Darfour, tels que le MJE, s'attendent à ce que Déby les soutienne. Par contre, les liens ethniques entre Déby et les Zaghawas ne sont pas la seule raison qui pousse Déby à offrir son soutien aux groupes rebelles du Darfour. Il tenta d'abord de refuser des réfugiés du Darfour et de ne pas soutenir les rebelles au

Darfour afin de maintenir ces relations avec Khartoum. Mais cette tentative ouvra la voie à certains de ses collaborateurs, tel que Timane Erdimi, pour renforcer leur base politique et se présenter comme l'homme du peuple des Zaghawas. Donc, dans le but de rester à la fois pertinent pour Khartoum et pour les Zaghawas dans son pays, Déby tente de diviser les groupes rebelles au Darfour.

**« Les Zaghawas du Soudan et du Tchad ont des liens étroits et les groupes rebelles du Darfour, tels que le MJE, s'attendent à ce que Déby les soutienne. »**

Soutenir les groupes rebelles n'est pas la seule arme que possède le Président Déby. Premièrement, il est aussi en mesure de gérer et manipuler la politique interne. La crise du Darfour et ses retombées régionales lui ont permis de faire réécrire sans trop de difficultés la Constitution tchadienne, de réviser de nombreux accords sur la question pétrolière et d'obtenir de l'aide matérielle pour sa réélection. Arguant des difficultés



auxquelles il fait face, le président tchadien est également parvenu à imposer la tenue prochaine dans l'ensemble du pays de scrutins législatifs et municipaux qui, de fait, devraient être réalisés sous le règne de « l'exception », le pays étant soumis à un rude « état d'urgence » et à la « censure » préalable dans les médias. Par contre, cette emprise totalitariste que Déby maintient sur la politique domestique crée aussi un problème en nourrissant les motivations de ces opposants de renverser son régime. En effet, le régime de plus en plus répressif de Déby alimente la colère de ses opposants. Par exemple, après l'attaque rebelle de février 2008, qui a menacé le fauteuil de M. Déby, trois haut-placés de l'opposition légale ont été arrêtés, accusés « d'intelligence avec l'ennemi ». Pendant ce temps, les opposants au régime de Déby l'accusent de corruption, de patronage et de siphonner les réserves de l'État afin de s'enrichir, lui et son entourage.

Deuxièmement, l'autre arme du Président Déby est de faire appel à la communauté internationale qui regarde d'un mauvais œil l'instabilité croissante qui règne sur la région et qui craint que de remplacer Déby par un gouvernement pro-Khartoum envenimerait la situation. Un journaliste explique, « ...on craint qu'un gouvernement pro-soudanais puisse prendre le pouvoir...N'Djamena a amené la plupart du monde à soutenir Mr. Déby, en dépit de la répression croissante sous son règne. »<sup>2</sup>

### Les liens français

La France est l'acteur de la scène internationale apportant le plus de soutien au Président Déby. La France a continué de maintenir une présence militaire au Tchad depuis 1986 et a nourri des liens très serrés avec le Président Déby. A l'intérieur du contexte des Nations Unies, à la suite des attaques de février 2008, la France a clairement signifié qu'elle pourrait intervenir au nom du gouvernement tchadien pour combattre les forces rebelles. En fait, l'armée française a déjà ciblé les rebelles tchadiens par l'entremise d'attaques aériennes. De plus, la France a pris le contrôle de la mission EUFOR au Tchad, mandatée par l'Union européenne, afin de protéger les civiles, faciliter l'arrivée de l'aide humanitaire et assurer la sécurité du personnel de l'ONU.



French support for Chad: transfer of authority ceremony from EUFOR to the UN in Abeche, Chad, on 16 March 2009.

© UN Photo/Olivia Gray Pritchard

La France semble enthousiaste à l'idée de maintenir sa politique clientéliste dans un effort de poursuivre la notion 'Françafrique'. Ajouté à cela, il apparaît que Paris ait de vraies inquiétudes par rapport à la stabilité de la région. Selon Roland Marchal,<sup>3</sup> « Idriss Déby semble en effet avoir su convaincre certains responsables français, et peut-être lui-même, que toute cette crise était en fait un coup de boutoir des Arabes qui, après avoir pris le contrôle du Tchad et tout en y maltraitant les Africains, se précipiteraient vers le Niger et le Nigeria pour y remettre en cause les équilibres sociaux... Que cette géopolitique de supermarché puisse obtenir l'attention de décideurs civils et militaires français ne laisse pas d'étonner ».

### « Le fait que le Président Déby dépende tant d'un seul pays pour supporter son régime pourrait lui poser de sérieux problèmes. »

Par contre, le fait que le Président Déby dépende tant d'un seul pays pour supporter son régime pourrait lui poser de sérieux problèmes. La France pourrait se retrouver de plus en plus isolée dans sa position de soutien au régime en place, surtout alors qu'elle essaye d'encourager ses partenaires européens à plus d'implication en Afrique. Si cette situation devait se produire, la France pourrait faire face à des pressions de la part de la communauté internationale afin de pousser le gouvernement tchadien à résoudre cette guerre avec le Soudan. Cette possibilité pourrait mettre en péril le pouvoir de Déby.

### En guise de conclusion

Le Tchad et le Soudan partagent plus de 1 300 km de frontières par lesquels transitent commerçants, nomades, mais aussi rebelles en tous genres. Cette zone est devenue aujourd'hui une terre de conflits récurrents entre les deux pays.

La crise actuelle trouve ses racines dans les politiques domestiques du Tchad et du Soudan. Les Présidents respectifs de ces deux pays pourraient survivre à la crise – à

tout le moins pour le moment – s'ils coopéraient et arrêtaient de soutenir les rebellions dans la cour du voisin. Mais s'ils décident de continuer cette guerre par procuration, un des deux pourrait en payer le prix ultime, dépendant de leurs forces militaires et diplomatiques. Celui qui semble le plus probable de perdre le pouvoir est évidemment le Président Déby. Tant qu'il continuera de concevoir la perte totale du pouvoir comme une possibilité bien réelle, il continuera sur la même route : celle de mener la politique interne avec un gant de fer, celle de soutenir les groupes rebelles qui servent son but et celle de compter sur le soutien continu de la France.

En attendant, la situation de ni guerre, ni paix persistera entre les deux voisins.

## Annexe : Les protagonistes du conflit

### A. Côté soudanais :

**1. La rébellion du Darfour :** L'accord de paix pour le Darfour, signé le 5 mai 2006 à Abuja (Nigeria), a provoqué l'éclatement des mouvements rebelles au Darfour :

- **Mouvement de libération du Soudan - Fraction Abdel Wahid An-Nour** (MLS-AWN). Dirigée par M. An-Nour, fondateur « historique » du Mouvement de libération du Soudan (MLS) aujourd'hui divisé en trois groupes, cette fraction est la plus importante numériquement. Elle est principalement composée de Fours et opère surtout sur les pentes du djebel Marra, le massif volcanique situé au centre du Darfour. Le MLS-AWN est aussi connu sous le nom d'armée de libération du Soudan (ALS).
- **Mouvement de libération du Soudan - Fraction Minni Minnawi** (MLS-MM). Dirigée par M. Minnawi, cette fraction s'est séparée du MLS originaire en novembre 2005 lors du congrès d'Haskanita. Presque entièrement composée de Zaghawas (l'ethnie de M. Minnawi), c'est la seule qui ait accepté de signer l'accord de paix d'Abuja. A la suite de cet accord et de l'accession de son chef au poste de conseiller présidentiel sur le Darfour, le MLS-MM est devenu un auxiliaire politique et même militaire du gouvernement de Khartoum. Cette volte-face a entraîné la désertion d'une grande partie de ses combattants. Le MLS-MM est aussi connu sous le nom d'armée de libération du Soudan (ALS)-MM.
- **Mouvement de libération du Soudan Al-Ikhtyar Al-Hur** (MLS - Libre choix). Essentiellement composée de représentants de petites tribus noires du Darfour (Tunjurs, Dajjus) cette fraction est dirigée par M. Abderrahmane Moussa, ancien porte-parole du MLS-AWN aux négociations d'Abuja. Cette toute petite fraction s'est ralliée à l'accord de paix, non pas parce qu'elle y croyait, mais parce que les populations des petites ethnies, très touchées par la guerre, n'ont pas eu accès aux camps de personnes déplacées et que les leaders tunjurs espéraient bénéficier des « corridors sécurisés pour l'aide humanitaire » prévus par l'accord. M. Moussa a été nommé ministre d'Etat, mais les tribus n'ont pas bénéficié de l'aide espérée.
- **Groupe des 19** (G 19). Ce groupe est formé par dix-neuf commandants et leurs hommes qui ont choisi de se tenir hors de toutes les fractions. Mais le G 19 a en fait apporté son soutien au FRN (voir « Darfour, la chronique d'un "génocide ambigu" »).
- **Forces de combat populaires** (FCP). Ce mouvement apparu en novembre 2006 est le premier qui ne soit pas « africain ». Formé de membres de la tribu arabe des Rezeigats, il opère dans le sud du Darfour, dans la région comprise entre Kutum et Nyala.
- **Mouvement pour la justice et l'égalité** (MJE). Il s'agit d'un mouvement très ambigu, car il est étroitement lié à la branche tourabie des Frères musulmans. Dirigé par M. Khalil Ibrahim, il est exclusivement zaghawa. Son jeu est complexe, notamment par rapport au régime tchadien du président Idriss Déby Itno (le MJE s'est battu contre et pour M. Déby selon les circonstances). Riche de l'argent des Frères musulmans, il exerce une influence sans commune mesure avec ses forces militaires réelles sur l'ensemble de la guérilla, et a notamment réussi à phagocytter financièrement le FRN (voir ci-dessous).
- **Forces pour la rédemption nationale** (FRN). Dirigé par l'ancien gouverneur Ahmed Ibrahim Diraige (ethnie four) et par l'intellectuel Sharif Harir (zaghawa), le FRN est une « organisation ombrelle » qui fédère tous les combattants des diverses fractions refusant la « paix » d'Abuja, y compris de nombreux combattants du MLS-AWN irrités par les atermoiements de leur chef et ralliés au commandant Ahmed Abdel-Chafiq. En juillet 2006, les FRN ont attaqué les positions gouvernementales dans le Kordofan Nord

(voisin du Darfour), offrant au régime soudanais le prétexte à l'envoi de plusieurs milliers de soldats en renfort.

2. **Les « janjawids »** Les janjawids sont des milices issues des tribus « arabes ». Leur nom signifie approximativement « cavaliers armés de kalachnikovs ». Elles n'ont pas de « mouvement » ou d'unités organisées. Ce sont soit des bandes, soit des auxiliaires rattachés à des unités de l'armée régulière soudanaise.<sup>4</sup>

## B. Côte Tchadien :

"Les mouvements de la résistance nationale du Tchad, membres de l'Union des Forces de résistance, réunis du 22 au 24 janvier 2009 à Hadjer Marfain, ont procédé à la désignation par consensus du président de l'UFR. Le camarade Timan Erdimi (Rassemblement des forces pour le changement (RFC) a été élu président" dont l'objectif est de "libérer le peuple tchadien".<sup>5</sup> Tom Erdimi a été directeur du cabinet civil du président de la République, coordonnateur national du projet Pétrole, après avoir été représentant du Tchad auprès du consortium pétrolier Exxon, à Houston. Son frère Timane, a été directeur de la société nationale Cotontchad, la société d'économie mixte détenant le monopole de la commercialisation de l'"or blanc", qui était la première source de devises du pays avant que le pétrole jaillisse de terre.<sup>6</sup>

Les autres mouvements adhérents sont :

- le Front pour le salut de la République (FSR) de Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane
- l'Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (UFDD) du général Mahamat Nouri
- l'Union des forces pour le changement et la démocratie (UFCD) de Adoum Hassaballah
- l'Union des Forces pour la démocratie et le développement-Fondamental (UFDD-F) d'Abdelwahid Aboud Makkaye
- le Conseil démocratique (CDR) d'Albadour Acyl Ahmat Achabach
- l'Union démocratique pour le changement (UDC) d'Abderaman Koulamallah : et,
- le Front populaire pour la renaissance nationale (FPRN) d'Adoum Yacoub Koukou.

## THE DARFUR CONFLICT: ITS IMPACT ON CHAD AND SUDAN

by Darnace Torou

Since February 2003, the conflict in Darfur has held the attention of the international community. At first sight it appears to be an ethnic struggle between peoples of Arab and African origin. Thus, the emphasis has been on genocide and race. However, it might be more fruitful to remember the words of the well known proverb: we can choose our friends, but not our brothers or our neighbours—especially if we are talking about states. As Napoleon said, "A nation's politics are dictated by geography." Rather than genocide or race, therefore, our focus will be the geography and history of the border region of Sudan and Chad.

The conflict in Darfur emphasizes problems inherited from the colonial period, since the people involved in the conflict on both sides come from two countries, Chad and Sudan. It also highlights the problem of a fair sharing of scarce resources among citizens, their participation in the running of their country, and, once again, the use of force as the only way of



**Problem of sharing scarce resources: a UNAMID peacekeeper in Darfur watches girls carrying water on donkeys.**

© UN Photo/Stuart Price

obtaining these things.

The Darfur conflict has certainly claimed many victims, but it has also become a political tool in the hands of the leaders of these two countries.

### The Conflict in Darfur

The conflict in Darfur broke out in February 2003. However, the origins of the conflict go further back. In an article in *Jeune Afrique* (1 April 2007), Christophe Boisbouvier, a Radio France International journalist, gave his opinion that "it all started in the years 1979-1985... At this time the 6,000,000 inhabitants [of Darfur] were suffering from serious drought. The camel and cattle herders had to bring their herds further south towards Djebel Marra and earlier in the year. Tensions mounted between the Arab herders and the non-Arab farmers, even though both were Muslim, black, and Sudanese. In 1988 the first conflict broke out between Arabs and Furs."

In 1996, there was a new rebellion. This time it was the Massalits fighting the Arabs. Like the Furs, they wanted to preserve their lands.

### "What changed in 2003 was the forging of a new alliance between the Furs, the Massalits, and the Zaghawas."

What changed in 2003 was the forging of a new alliance between the Furs, the Massalits, and the Zaghawas. The first two groups are non-nomadic farmers, while the majority of the Zaghawas are nomadic camel breeders. The presence of this last group is an important fact because it has impelled the Government of Chad to take part in the conflict.

### Darfur Becomes a Crisis for Chad

The significance of the Zaghawas is that many of them were hardened as soldiers in Chad where they went to fight alongside their Chadian cousins in 1986 under the command of Hassan Djamous, the conqueror of the Libyans at Maaten Elshara. Many also gained experience in 1990 under the command of Idriss Déby, who toppled Hissène Habré and has been in power as the President of Chad ever since.

In 2003, the Zaghawas of Chad returned the favour, coming to the aid of their Sudanese cousins. A formidable association was formed between the Zaghawa fighter, Mini Minawi, and the young Fur lawyer, Abdul Wahid al-Nour. The Movement for the Liberation of Sudan (MLS) was born.

At the same moment a mysterious personage, Khalil Ibrahim, appeared on the scene. Dr Ibrahim is a Zaghawa, a man with connections, very close to Daoussa and Timane Déby, the two half-brothers of President Idriss Déby. He created the Movement for Justice and Equality (MJE). (For more on these and other groups involved in this region, see the **Appendix**.)

It is thus not surprising that the conflict which has raged in Darfur since 2003 has affected politics in Chad. Since its beginning, more than 250,000 refugees from Darfur have entered Chad. According to observers and humanitarian organizations at the scene, their pursuers used the same methods of operation seen in Darfur: rape, murder and extortion, without distinction as to persons, even children being victims.



**Signed, but not respected: officials witness the signing of the Dakar Agreement (13 March 2006) between President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan (left) and President Idriss Deby of Chad (right).**

© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

The Darfur conflict spread into Chad at the same time as Chad's own civil war broke out, pitting the current leader Déby against armed rebels who wanted to overthrow him. Chad and Sudan have oil resources and can continue their arms race: war has become a means of government for both regimes, neither of which has any desire for real democracy. Indeed, attempts at a ceasefire have met constant violations of agreement from one side or the other: Tripoli, February 8, 2006; Khartoum, August 28, 2006; the Cannes Declaration, February 15, 2007; Riyadh, May 3, 2007; Dakar, March 13, 2008; and Doha (Qatar), May 3, 2009. The two countries are using

the armed rebellion to exert pressure on one another. It is almost certain that there will be no early end to the conflict, to judge by the number of agreements the two have



signed in such a short time, but never respected.

**"Chad and Sudan have oil resources and can continue their arms race: war has become a means of government for both regimes, neither of which has any desire for real democracy."**

### **The Political Purposes of Idriss Déby**

President Déby seems to be using the two conflicts to support his own power—and the impact of these conflicts on Chad are serious. For example, the east of Chad holds 230,000 Sudanese refugees originating from Darfur in 12 HCR camps. These refugees fled raids by Arab militias and the fighting between government forces and the rebels. Since the beginning of November 2008, 70 villages in southeast Chad have been attacked by armed men on horseback, using the same tactics as the Janjaweed on the other side of the frontier in Darfur. The last series of attacks in the southeast left more than 300 Chadian dead and caused the displacement of more than 15,000 people, bringing the total number of Chadians displaced internally to 90,000 for the whole of the east of the country in the course of this year.

As part of all this upheaval, there is the unsavory fact that Deby's armed forces are also involved. Sara Daniel, of the *Nouvel Observateur* newspaper, noted that "when you arrive in Goz-Beïda, you see Sudanese rebels, who, with the blessings of the Chad army and without anyone stopping them, are recruiting young boys from the refugee camps to fight in Darfur. From their huge trucks the Sudanese insurgents unload cases of Kalashnikovs and rocket-launchers which they distribute to these adolescents scarcely out of childhood. The child-soldiers laugh and take a break before they are called to order by their new



Some of the 90,000 internally displaced Chadians: a UN official meets with IDPs at Djabal, Chad, in March 2009.

© UN Photo/Olivia Gray Pritchard

sergeants."<sup>1</sup> The impact of the conflict is destabilizing for the whole region because of the growing militarization of all ethnic groups, bringing with it a previously unheard-of inter-community violence.

**"Far from doing everything possible to pacify and manage these developments, Idriss Déby is suspected by several organizations and observers of having deliberately thrown oil on the fire of the conflict."**

Far from doing everything possible to pacify and manage these developments, Idriss Déby is suspected by several organizations and observers of having deliberately thrown oil on the fire of the conflict which, basically, helps him in the short term rather than hindering him. However, the cards which President Déby presently holds are no guarantee of his keeping power and will probably produce problems.

### **Rebels, Allies and Desperate Tactics**

In recent years, rebel resistance in Chad has grown and has profited from deserters from the army. So Déby has to support the groups in Darfur who represent a defence against these Chadian rebels. His allies in Darfur have become a way of defending his power. Déby's dilemma with regard to the precariousness of his hold on power has made the MJE an indispensable ally. In all his military and political calculations, the Darfur rebel groups have become essential in his defence against those opposing his regime, and this has limited his ability to negotiate with Darfur rebel groups. In response, Sudan is beginning to give support to the Chadian rebel groups who have taken refuge in the Darfur region.

In 1990, Sudan had played a part in bringing Déby to power in Chad. But since the outbreak of conflict in Darfur in 2003, the nature of relations between Sudan and Chad has changed. As mentioned earlier, the leadership of these countries seems to be fighting a war through intermediaries. N'Djamena accuses Khartoum of supporting the Chadian armed rebellion which it has been confronting for more than a year. Khartoum, for its part, accuses N'Djamena of helping the Sudanese opposition.



**Pawns in a proxy war between Sudan and Chad?  
Darfurian refugees at Iridimi Camp in Chad.**

© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

It is also important to note that Déby is drawn to assist the rebel groups in Darfur because of his ethnicity. He is a Zaghawa, and this group has helped to keep him in power. The Zaghawa in Chad and Sudan have close ties, and the Darfur rebel groups, like the MJE, expect Déby to support them. However, ethnic ties between Déby and the Zaghawa are not the only reason he supports the rebel groups in Darfur. At first he did not support the Darfur rebels and he tried to refuse asylum to refugees from Darfur in order to maintain relations with Khartoum. But this attempt opened the way for some of his

colleagues, such as Timane Erdimi, to reinforce their political base and present themselves to the Zaghawa as men of the people. So in an attempt to remain relevant both to Khartoum and the Zaghawa in his own country, Déby tried to divide the rebel groups in Darfur.

### **"The Zaghawa in Chad and Sudan have close ties, and the Darfur rebel groups, like the MJE, expect Déby to support them."**

Supporting certain Darfurian rebel groups is not the only weapon that President Déby has. First, to some extent he can also manage and manipulate the internal politics of Chad. The crisis in Darfur and its regional repercussions have enabled him to get support for rewriting the constitution of Chad, for revising many oil agreements, and for obtaining material aid for his reelection. Emphasizing the difficulties facing him, the Chad president has also been able to impose on the next meeting of the national assembly a legislative and municipal voting system which will, in fact, be introduced as constituting "exceptional conditions", so that the country will be submitted to a crude "state of emergency" and to prior "censorship" of all media. On the other hand, Déby's totalitarian grip on domestic policies also creates problems by nourishing the motivation of his opponents to overthrow his regime. Indeed, Déby's increasingly repressive regime fuels the anger of his opponents. For example, after a rebel attack in February 2008, which threatened Déby's position, three senior leaders of the legal opposition were arrested and accused of "intelligence with the enemy". Meanwhile, opponents of Déby's regime have accused him of corruption, patronage, and siphoning off state reserves to enrich himself and his cronies.

A second additional weapon employed by Président Déby is that of appealing to the international community which casts a disapproving eye on the growing instability throughout the region and which fears that replacing his government by a pro-Khartoum government would make the situation only more toxic. As one journalist put it, "There is fear that a pro-Sudanese government could take over... N'Djamena has convinced most of the world to support Mr. Déby, despite the growing repression of his regime."<sup>2</sup>

#### **The French Connection**

On the international scene, France is the country giving most support to President Déby. It has continued its military presence in Chad since 1986 and has fostered very close ties with President Déby. Inside the United Nations, following the attacks of February 2008, France clearly indicated that it might intervene on behalf of the Government of Chad to fight the rebel forces. In fact, the French army has already targeted Chadian rebels through air attacks. In addition, France has taken control of the EUFOR mission to Chad, mandated by the European Union, to protect civilians, to facilitate the arrival of humanitarian aid, and to assure the safety of UN personnel.



**French support for Chad: transfer of authority ceremony from EUFOR to the UN in Abeche, Chad, on 16 March 2009.**

© UN Photo/Olivia Grey Pritchard

France seems enthusiastic about the idea of sustaining this patron-client policy to further the notion of "FrancaAfrique". In addition, it seems that Paris has real concerns about the region's stability. According to Roland Marchal, "Idriss Déby really seems to

have been able to convince certain people in charge in France, and perhaps himself, that this whole crisis was in fact an Arab thrust for power. After taking control of Chad, with the ill-treatment of the Africans that it would lead to, their next goal would be Niger and Nigeria where once again they would threaten the social equilibrium... Is it surprising that this supermarket geopolitics should attract the attention of civil and military policy makers in France?"<sup>3</sup>

**"The fact that President Déby depends so much on a single country to support his regime could cause him serious problems."**

On the other hand, the fact that President Déby depends so much on a single country to support his regime could cause him serious problems. France could find itself more and more isolated by its position of support for the current regime, especially when it is trying to encourage its European partners to become more involved with Africa. If this is to happen, the international community could pressure France to push the Chadian government to resolve the war with Sudan. This possibility could endanger Déby's position.

**In conclusion**

Chad and Sudan share a border more than 1,300 km long and across this frontier pass merchants and nomads, but also rebels of all kinds. The zone along this frontier has today become a major theatre for conflict between the two countries.

The current crisis has its roots in the domestic policies of Chad and Sudan. The respective presidents of these two countries could survive the crisis—at least for the moment—if they would cooperate and stop supporting the rebellions in their neighbour's yard. But if they decide to continue this war by proxy, one of the two could pay the ultimate price, depending on their military and diplomatic forces. The one who seems most likely to lose his power is President Déby. As long as he continues to conceive the total loss of power as a very real possibility, he will continue on the same path: conducting internal politics with an iron fist, supporting the rebel groups which serve his end, and relying on the continued support of France.

In the meantime, a situation neither of all-out war nor of peace persists between the two neighbours.

**Appendix: Protagonists in the Conflict**

**A. The Sudanese side**

**1. The Darfur rebellion:** The Darfur peace agreement, signed May 5, 2006, at Abuja (Nigeria), produced several breakaway rebel movements in Darfur:

- **Sudanese Liberation Movement – Abdel Wahid An-Nour faction (MLS-AWN).** Led by M. An-Nour, the "historic" founder of the Sudanese Liberation Movement (MLS), now split into three groups, this is the most important faction numerically. It is composed mainly of Furs and operates mostly on the slopes of the Djebel Marra, the volcanic mass situated in the centre of Darfur. The MLS-AWN is also known as the Sudanese Liberation Army (ALS).
- **Sudanese Liberation Movement—Mini Minnawi faction (MLS-MM).** Led by M. Minnawi, this faction split from the original MLS in November 2005 at the Haskanita conference. Composed almost totally of Zaghawas (M. Minnawi's ethnic group), it was the only group to sign the Abuja peace accord. After this accord, when the group's leader was given the post of presidential advisor on Darfur, the MLS-MM became a political or even military support for the Khartoum government. This about-face led to the desertion of a large number of its fighters. The MLS-MM is also known as the Sudanese Liberation Army (ALS-MM).
- **Al-Ikhtyar Al-Hur Sudanese Liberation Movement (MLS – many names).** Essentially made up of representatives of Darfur's small black tribes (Tunjurs, Dajjus), this faction is led by M. Abderrahmane Moussa, a former spokesman for MLS-AWN in the Abuja negotiations. This tiny group supported the peace accord, not because it believed in it, but because these tiny ethnic populations, who were badly affected by the war, had no access to the displaced persons camps, and the Tunjur leaders hoped to take

advantage of the "secure corridors for humanitarian aid" provided for in the accord. M. Moussa was named as a State minister, but the tribes have not benefited from the help they hoped for.

- **Group 19** (G 19). This group was formed by nineteen military leaders and their men who chose to stay outside all the other factions. But the G 19 gave support to the FRN (see "Darfur, Chronicle of an 'Ambiguous Genocide'").
- **Popular Combat Forces** (FCP). This movement, which appeared in November 2006, was the first which was not "African." Formed from members of the Arab Rezeigat tribe, it operates in the south of Darfur, in the region between Kutum and Nyala.
- **Movement for Justice and Equality** (MJE). This is a very ambiguous movement, with strong ties to the "tourabie" of the Muslim Brotherhood. Led by M. Khalil Ibrahim, it is exclusively Zaghawa. It plays a complex game, particularly with regard to the regime of President Idriss Déby Itno in Chad (the MJE has fought against and for M. Déby depending on the circumstances). Rich with money from the Muslim Brotherhood, its current military forces exercise a disproportionate influence on the guerilla war, and it has been particularly successful in financially gobbling up the FRN (see below).
- **Forces for National Redemption** (FRN). Led by the former governor Ahmed Ibrahim Diraige (a Fur) and by the intellectual Sharif Harir (a Zaghawa), the FNR is an "umbrella" organization bringing together all the fighters from the different factions who have rejected the Abuja "peace", including many fighters from the MLS-AWN, annoyed by the procrastinations of their leader and rallying round Commander Ahmed Abdel-Chafiq. In July 2006, the FRN attacked government positions in North Kordofan (next to Darfur), giving the Sudanese regime the pretext for sending in several thousand soldiers for back-up.

**2. The "Janjaweed":** The Janjaweed are militias from "Arab" tribes. Their name approximates to "cavalry armed with kalishnikovs." They are not a "movement" nor organized units. They are either gangs or auxiliaries attached to units of the regular Sudanese army.<sup>4</sup>

## B. The Chadian side

"The national resistance movements in Chad, members of the Union of Resistance Forces, meeting at Hadjer Marfain, from January 22 to 24, 2009, adopted this name by consensus of the president of the UFR. Comrade Timam Erdimi (Association of the Forces for Change – RFC) was elected president with the objective of 'freeing the people of Chad'.<sup>5</sup> Tom Erdimi was the director of the President of the Republics Civic Office, National Coordinator of the Petroleum Project, after being Chad's representative with the Exxon Petroleum Consortium in Houston. His brother Timane was the director of the national enterprise Cotonchad, a mixed economy group holding the monopoly for the commercialization of 'white gold', the premier source of taxes in the country before they discovered oil."<sup>6</sup>

The other participating movements are:

- **The Front for the Safety of the Republic** (FSR), led by Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane.
- **The United Forces for Democracy and Development** (UFFD), led by General Mahamet Nouri.
- **The United Forces for Change and Democracy** (UFCD), led by Adoum Hassaballah.
- **The United Forces for Democracy and Fundamental Development** (UFFD-F), led by Abdelwahid Aboud Makkaye.
- **The Democratic Council** (CDR), led by Albadour Acyl Ahmat Achabach.
- **The Democratic Union for Change** (UDC) led by Abderaman Koulamallah.
- **The Popular Front for National Renaissance** (FPRN), led by Adoum Yacoub Koukou.

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2. L. Polgreen, « **Rebels' Border War Prolongs Darfur's Misery and Engulfs Chad in Conflict** » *New York Times* (April 12 2008).
3. Roland Marchal, « **Tchad/Darfour: Vers un système de conflits** » *Politique africaine* N°102. pp.134-154.
4. « **Les protagonistes du conflit** » *Le Monde diplomatique* (Mars 2007) <<http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2007/03/A/14504>>.
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## DARFUR: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

*by Wendy Gichuru*

The conflict in Darfur, now into its sixth year, is perceived in at least two ways. One perception is that what is happening in Darfur is genocide – a violent attempt by the Arab-dominated central government in Khartoum and its proxy Arab militia to rid Darfur of its Black African, non-Arab population, in whole or in part. The second is that the conflict in Darfur is the Khartoum government's brutal campaign to crush an armed insurgency that is fighting Khartoum because of decades of marginalization, neglect, discrimination, and the exploitation of the tensions between farming communities and pastoralists. A number of Sudan experts might suggest that the latter perception is more accurate. What is agreed is that the causes of the rebellion in Darfur, and the government's response are not a new phenomenon in Sudan. A conflict rooted in similar causes and with similar consequences occurred in the all too recent past – the north-south Sudan conflict.

The 21-year civil war between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in the south and the central government in Khartoum which ended with the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) had its root causes in a similar reality for southern Sudanese to that of Darfur. The Sudanese government has long been accused of ignoring and neglecting whole regions over the years unless there are resources present to be exploited. So patterns have been established by groups seeking change in Sudan, as well as by the government.



**Jubilant SPLM supporters in Juba, Sudan, after the signing of the CPA in 2005.**

© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Darfur's rebel groups likely observed very closely the processes that led to the signing of the CPA. What lessons might they have taken from those processes? In its response to the Darfur rebellion, launched in February 2003 (two years prior to the actually signing of the CPA), what adjustments in strategy did the government make to deal with this new insurgency compared to its response to the SPLM/A? Had the international community learned anything from the past that could have served to prevent the conflict in Darfur, or halted it before approximately 300,000 people died and 2.7 million were displaced? Is the situation in Darfur any different from what we witnessed before with the war between government forces and the SPLA in South Sudan? In fact, there are several important similarities between the Darfur situation and that of South Sudan, which should have provided lessons to prevent the situation in Darfur. There is also a very real danger that conflict is now on the verge of erupting in the east, and that events in the south are in danger of repeating themselves unless some solid efforts at prevention are made

### **Marginalization, neglect, discrimination, lack of representation and tribal tensions**

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, very diverse in its tribal, linguistic and religious make-up. In the 1970s, oil and uranium were discovered in the south and west, which should have provided a strong foundation for the sustainable development of Sudan's

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people and economy. Unfortunately, the oil and uranium resources have attracted those seeking personal profit, not the sustainable and equitable development of Sudanese society at large. The government has exploited the mineral wealth, along with the ethnic diversity and complexities of living in a pluralistic society, causing growing anger and frustration. Tribal communities try to eke out a living side by side, competing for and fighting over the same declining resources. Many of these tribes are also found in neighbouring countries, and move across borders, bringing with them conflicting loyalties and adding to the existing pressures on already limited resources. Both in South Sudan and in Darfur, the sedentary, farming communities and pastoralist tribes have fought each other over water and land.<sup>1</sup> Various groups in Darfur have complained for years about the lack of representation in Khartoum. Legitimate grievances of various communities have been ignored. As a result, the frustrations of marginalized and exploited tribal groups in South Sudan and Darfur are predictably unleashed through violence. The government arms tribal militias, as have neighbouring countries which fight their own proxy wars within Sudan's borders. They have found sympathetic ears among fellow tribes-people who could be mobilized to take up arms to deal with their concerns. There is a saying in Sudan that the government only understands violence.

**"Various groups in Darfur have complained for years about the lack of representation in Khartoum. Legitimate grievances of various communities have been ignored."**



**Competition for increasingly scarce water: nomads near Nyala, Darfur, watering their camels.**  
© UN Photo/Fred Noy

In Darfur's dry, semi-desert environment, tribal clashes were becoming more frequent prior to the start of the conflict in 2003, due to competition for increasingly scarce water and fertile land to grow food or graze cattle. Far removed from the sight of the government in Khartoum, the needs of the people in the region have gone largely unmet, their concerns unaddressed. Akin to what had occurred in the south, frustrations mounted, erupting in violence with the rebel attack on government installations in El-Fasher in February 2003. The Khartoum government responded with brutality in

Darfur, fire-bombing villages and killing people and livestock. The Janjaweed, a government-backed local militia group, razed villages, killing civilians and livestock. These tactics are not new. The use of armed local militia groups had proven to be an effective government tactic in the war with the south. In South Sudan, different tribal militia groups were armed by the government to fight the rebels. During the war with the south, the Baggara<sup>2</sup> were armed as proxies by the Sudanese government to fight the SPLA. As it did regarding the violence in the south, the government denies arming and providing air support for the Janjaweed and their raids in Darfur. It denies that it has targeted civilians, and destroyed whole villages. Instead, the government attributes most of the violence to "tribal clashes", a claim few, if any, believe.

This strategy has a toxic affect in the long term, severely undermining possibilities for these communities to find ways to share the same space peacefully in the future; to deal with what they have done to each other and move to a place of real reconciliation. Tribal groups in South Sudan like the Nuer, Dinka, Shilluk and others know this well, as they now work toward reconciliation. This is where the role of the churches is critical. Churches have been facilitating people-to-people dialogue and reconciliation workshops, trying to help different groups to voice their concerns and be heard, so that they can develop solutions together that will enable peaceful coexistence.<sup>3</sup> Women especially are taking the lead in peace-building, and were doing so in the South even before the CPA was signed.

**"Churches have been facilitating people-to-people dialogue and reconciliation workshops... Women especially are taking the lead in peace-building."**

#### **Divide-and-rule: tried and true tactics**

Divide-and-rule is an often-utilized strategy which has served the various Khartoum governments well over the years. It prolongs conflicts, and the more fragmented the rebel movements are, the easier it is to discredit and discount them as authentic

representatives of their communities. Sudan's tribal diversity feeds into this strategy as well. The first Anyanya rebellion (1956-1972), which erupted after British colonial rule was ended in 1956, sought the independence of South Sudan from the rest of Sudan because southerners felt that independence from colonial Britain had merely replaced one colonial master with another (the Islamic Arab-dominated north). Joseph Lagu, leader of Anyanya I, signed the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement with the northern-led government of Ja'far Numeiri. The World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) worked together with the national Sudan Council of Churches to facilitate the signing of this agreement because there was no national structure in place at the time trusted enough to organize peace talks between the conflicting parties. What followed was a brief period of relative calm in the South which, sadly, did not last. Dr. John Garang, a southerner, a Dinka tribesman, and a former army officer had, for a brief time, been part of Anyanya I. The Addis agreement was signed not long after he joined. Garang was reportedly disappointed by the signing of the Addis agreement, which he felt did not address the real concerns of the south. A little over a decade later, Garang, together with other mutinying army battalion leaders, formed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its armed wing, the SPLA, in Ethiopia.

However, not all southerners supported Garang's objectives or his leadership of the Movement. Anyanya II, supported largely by Nuer people, was a separate rebel group. While Garang and the leaders of rebel army battalions had once been part of Anyanya II, tensions subsequently arose within the movement. There was disagreement regarding its goals, namely whether it sought the creation of an independent South Sudan (Anyanya II's goal) or a semi-autonomous South Sudan within a united, pluralistic, secular and socialist Sudan (Garang's goal). Some of the tensions in the movement clearly had tribal undertones. A split occurred within the SPLM/A ranks in 1991. Two rebel factions emerged. Disagreements escalated, and several Anyanya II leaders were killed and the group driven out of Ethiopia. The remaining members of Anyanya II then sided with Sudanese government, which armed it to fight the SPLA. The fragmentation within the ranks of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) rebel group in Darfur echoes this earlier split. By 2006, the SLM/A had split, with the larger faction led by Minni Minnawi siding with the government and signing the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement. Two other rebel groups, namely the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the faction of the SLM/A led by Abdul Wahid al Nur, co-founder of the SLM, did not sign on to the 2006 agreement, stating that the document did not address their concerns. At times, it is not clear just how many different armed groups exist in Darfur, and which one most represents the interests of the diverse groups within it



Echoes of an earlier split: SLA combatants at a meeting in 2006; their commanders did not sign the peace agreement.

© UN Photo/Fred Noy

### Rape: a new strategy

The Khartoum-backed militia groups and the rebels have adopted a new tactic in the conflict in Darfur, the likes of which was not seen in the north-south war. Rape has become prevalent as a weapon of war, particularly in its scale and intent. Rape in Darfur is used ultimately to destroy the community. When its women are violated, the community's sense of self is violated as the ties that bind family units together are shredded. Destructive feelings of shame and guilt enter into the family; repudiation and abandonment are carried out by the community itself, weakening it and leaving it more vulnerable to further attacks from without. In the war with the south, rape, while it did occur, was not as widespread, nor was it used deliberately as a weapon.<sup>4</sup> In Darfur, the number of women and even children as young as nine years old who have suffered rape is not entirely known for sure but the United Nations estimates that the number is significant. The world has learned that there is a more insidious and long-term way to divide communities, to undermine their sense of self, and to destroy lives – through sexual violence.

**"Rape in Darfur is used ultimately to destroy the community. When its women are violated, the community's sense of self is violated as the ties that bind**



## family units together are shredded."



**UN/AU civil affairs officers meet with women at an IDP camp in Northern Darfur to learn about their health and security situation.**

© UN Photo/Olivier Chassot

Rape in situations of conflict is now a war crime. The challenge for communities in Sudan will be to support victims in coming forward so that those responsible for this crime can be held accountable. Victims' rights must be respected, and there is the additional hurdle of cultural taboos to be overcome so that justice can prevail and healing can begin.

### Neighbours and borders

The conflicts in Darfur and in the south have been fuelled by interference from neighbouring countries. A number of

African conflicts stem in large part from the shameful and tragic legacy of colonialism. Borders drawn by colonial powers served the interests of the colonizers and ignored local needs and tribal claims of territory and affiliation. The Zaghawa people are found in Darfur and across the border to the west in Chad. Nuer people are found in Sudan and in Ethiopia. Tribal affiliations are strong, and have existed for centuries. They can supersede claims to national loyalty. Conflicts in one country spill across borders, drawing in neighbouring countries which fear that affiliated tribes in their own countries will also be incited to rebel, or which seek to benefit from the chaotic circumstances conflict presents to exploit the natural resources in the conflict zone. Former Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam supported the SPLM/A in its rebellion against Khartoum, in part because he feared that Anyanya II's Nuer leadership would fuel rebellion among Ethiopia's own Nuer tribes. Muammar Qaddafi, president of Libya, also supported the rebellion in the south to further his campaign against Numeiri in favour of his ally, Sadiq al-Mahdi (twice former Prime Minister of Sudan). In retaliation, Khartoum supported Eritrea in its war against Ethiopia. It is widely reported that Chad has been supporting rebel groups in Darfur in their fight with Khartoum. Weapons flow across borders in violation of UN Security Council resolutions banning arms trading with both the rebels and the government. The World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches have urged neighbouring countries to stop supporting and fuelling the conflict in Sudan because this is harming the region as a whole. Refugees fleeing the conflict are flooding into neighbouring states, placing enormous pressure on the meagre resources of host countries and on the environment. The porous nature of borders and the fact that the communities affected straddle borders adds a layer of difficulty for humanitarian agencies and peacekeeping forces. Neighbouring governments must take responsibility for the security of the region, promote effective leadership to end the conflict in Darfur, and support the implementation of the CPA between the north and the south. Failure to do so has the potential to set the entire region on fire.

## "Neighbouring governments must take responsibility for the security of the region... Failure to do so has the potential to set the entire region on fire."

### Empire and global geopolitical shifts

The global context has changed since north-south war in Sudan began. The end of the Cold War and the shift in global politics have played a role in the conflicts in Sudan. The so-called "war on terror" has added a new and complex dimension, in which the Darfur conflict poses a challenge for those opposed to both US imperialism and Khartoum's autocratic belligerence. New lines have been drawn in the sand with the so-called "new world order" that Washington proclaimed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. While Jafar Numeiri's government was once aligned with the US, and courted major US oil companies like Chevron,<sup>5</sup> successive Sudanese governments enjoyed close ties with the Soviet Union. With the end of the Cold War and the break up of the USSR, the US became the only game in town, and the neo-liberal economic model was touted as "the one" to follow. But global events would soon present new complexities.

In 1991, a key SPLM/A ally fell. Ethiopian dictator Mengistu, a close ally of the Soviets, was overthrown. His regime had provided sanctuary and support for the SPLM/A. The SPLM/A, in need of arms and support for its rebellion had no other power broker to whom to turn but the United States. Then during the first Gulf War, Khartoum sided with Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Whatever amicable relationship might have existed between Khartoum and Washington deteriorated rapidly. The rise of Al Qaeda and its attacks on



US interests around the world brought in another player – a non-state actor with a reach far beyond the confines of state borders. The Sudanese government found an ally in Al-Qaeda for its opposition to US policy. The US placed Sudan on its list of state sponsors of terrorism. In 1998, the US bombed a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, accusing Sudan of producing chemical weapons and harbouring terrorists.<sup>6</sup> The US has also applied sanctions against Sudan, banning US corporations from any dealings with the country. The former Bush administration also publicly called the situation in Darfur "genocide", seeking to increase the isolation of Sudan not only economically but politically. However, while publicly thumbing its nose at Washington, it is reported that Khartoum has been a valuable ally for the US in its so-called "war on terror"<sup>7</sup> — a contradictory policy that suggests a desire by the Sudanese Government to end its increasing isolation from the international community whilst also appearing not to cave in to international pressure.

Opposition to US foreign policies in the Middle East and elsewhere grew rapidly in the 1990s. These policies are experienced in the global south as imperialism.

Opposition also stemmed from the fact that global financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank reinforce these policies in their dealings with governments in the global South. With the advent of the internet, cell phones and other technology, the ability to communicate almost instantly to distant parts of the world has increased the level of political awareness. People hear about policies and decisions that are affecting the lives of others thousands of miles away. They understand the implications of these decisions for their own lives. Crippling debt, unjust trade, and corporate greed continue to exacerbate conditions of poverty in the global South. Sudan is affected and involved.

In this context, China has emerged as a major global economic powerhouse, with India's economic clout on the rise as well. Khartoum can now look east for investors to exploit its oil resources. Oil money buys arms and munitions from Russia and other countries, weapons which can be used against the insurgency in Darfur. Rebel groups also have a variety of sources of funding to arm themselves in their struggle against the government. Both the conflict with South Sudan and now Darfur have been lucrative for arms dealers. Meanwhile peace continues to elude the people of Sudan. Weapons continue to flow, human rights abuses are ignored and the conflict rages on. It would seem that conflict pays, especially for those in the arms trade, and that economic and political interests trump human rights. Solidarity among civil society groups globally is critical in order to challenge systemic injustice that puts corporate profit and political goals ahead of human rights.



**Oil money buys arms used against the insurgency in Darfur: aerial view of an oil field under the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company.**

© UN Photo/Tim McKulka

**"Khartoum can now look east for investors to exploit its oil resources. Oil money buys arms and munitions from Russia and other countries, weapons which can be used against the insurgency in Darfur."**

### Civilians pay the price



**Civilians suffer the brunt: a victim of violence receives treatment at a hospital in Akobo, Sudan.**

© UN Photo/Tim McKulka

Much of what has resulted from the uprising in Darfur is tragically similar to the consequences of the conflict between north and south Sudan. In both cases, civilians have suffered the brunt of the violence. An enormous number of people have been forcibly and violently displaced, both internally and as refugees. Hundreds of thousands have died from hunger, malnutrition and disease. Rape is being used as a weapon of war. The Darfur rebels are also accused of raping and killing civilians. The international community, under the auspices of the

United Nations, has failed to stop the fighting before hundreds of thousands of people were directly affected. International power brokers support either one side or the other. Where South Sudan served as a pawn during the Cold War between the United States

and the former Soviet Union, and their respective allies, Darfur is now a pawn in the current reality of an economically bi-polar world, with China and its allies supporting the Sudanese government and the United States and its allies on the other side. The response of the international community to the unfolding humanitarian disaster in Darfur was slow, given what the world witnessed unfold in the South. The situation in Sudan remains precarious, and although officially the conflict between north and south has ended, there continues to be skirmishes and alarming outbreaks of violence. People have yet to realise the dividends of peace, which gives rise to frustration, anger and despair. Decades of reconciliation, psychosocial counselling and rebuilding will be required to bring about healing.

### The way forward

On July 2, 2005, Sudanese church leaders gathered in Mukona, Uganda, issued a pastoral letter to the people and leaders of Sudan and all people of good will. It stated:

The suffering of the past challenges us to examine the root causes of conflict. The dawn of peace offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address important issues within wider Sudanese society. We need to look at the roots of the war in bitterness and injustice and learn from these so as to avoid repeating them and risking a return to conflict. We reject a resort to violence and call on all people to promote peaceful co-existence and to resolve problems through peaceful means using traditional and other mechanisms. Our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us confidence that we are not condemned to repeat the past – the way to a new future is presented before us. To enter this new future we need to learn from the lessons of the past and define together the kind of future we want for our nation.

### "Peace advocates, civil society and human rights organizations have issued repeated calls for a whole-of-Sudan approach to resolving the conflict in Darfur."

Peace advocates, civil society and human rights organizations have issued repeated calls for a whole-of-Sudan approach to resolving the conflict in Darfur. Integral to this approach is the recognition that those in Sudan and the international community working for peace must heed the lessons of the past and put more effort into the full implementation of the provisions of the CPA. These provisions address some of the same concerns that led to armed rebellion in Darfur in February 2003. These include: a lack of representation in the central government in Khartoum; marginalization and neglect of regional concerns; unequal distribution of resource wealth; and discrimination against non-Arab Sudanese, to name a few. The question we struggle with remains: what lessons must those governing in Sudan and the international community learn from the north-south war and the current conflict in Darfur that will serve the interests of the Sudanese people to secure a just and lasting peace? The churches have learned lessons over these years. The churches have always known that they must not lose their prophetic voice. Speaking truth to power is essential if there is to be a just peace for the people of South Sudan and Darfur. The government of Sudan, oil companies and the international community must continue to be challenged to seek justice and peace above economic and political gain. Justice and respect for human rights must be the basis upon which agreements, trade and political relationships are formed. The obligations of all parties to first protect and promote the rights of people must be met. And there must be consequences for failure to do so in order to challenge impunity but also to secure justice for the victims of conflict in Sudan. What the nature of those consequences should be is for the people of Sudan to decide but they need and deserve the full support and resources of the international community.



**Calls for a whole-of-Sudan approach: a woman in Nyala, Darfur, joins others in greeting a UN visitor.**  
© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

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## AU/UN INTERVENTION: CHALLENGES OF PROTECTING CIVILIAN POPULATIONS AND ENDING THE CONFLICT IN DARFUR

by Wafula Okumu

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### Introduction

When the Darfur conflict between the Government of Sudan and armed rebel groups broke out in 2003, the attention of the world was focused on the United Nations (UN) and the newly formed African Union (AU) to see how they would respond to the then biggest humanitarian crisis. This interest was not surprising in view of what had happened nine years earlier in Rwanda when the international community flimflammed while almost one million lives were senselessly lost. The UN was expected to intervene in Darfur under its mandate to maintain international peace and security and the AU was facing a litmus test on its commitment to intervene in situations where egregious human rights were taking place in Africa. Darfur presented the international community with a golden opportunity to put into action the resolve made after the Rwanda genocide of 1994 to "never let another Rwanda take place". A lot was expected from the UN in terms of using its abundant experience in building peace; from the Western countries to provide technical and financial support for the operation; and from the nascent AU to learn fast how to undertake rescue missions.



**High expectations: former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan listens to Alpha Oumar Komare, former Chair of the Commission of the AU, at a meeting on Darfur in Brussels, in July 2006.**

© UN Photo/Mark Garten

**"Darfur presented the international community with a golden opportunity to put into action the resolve made after the Rwanda genocide of 1994..."**

How then did the international community respond to the Darfur conflict? How effective was the AU intervention? Did the AU pass the acid test of implementing its newly adopted principle of "non-indifference" to complex emergencies in Africa? Did the

international community provide adequate support to the AU? After attempting to answer these questions and reviewing a more recent intervention by the AU and UN, the article proposes a way forward for ending the plight of Darfuris.

## AU to the rescue

It has been five years since the Darfur crisis was brought to the attention of the international community and the African Union was pushed to respond. It took the UN more than three years to partner with the AU to try to end the suffering of the people of Darfur. During the period of its intervention, the AU was criticised for its performance, particularly its weakness in providing greater protection for the civilian population and implementing the peace agreement that was reached in May 2006.

Before the UN assumed a peace support role in Darfur, the AU, with very limited resources and no substantive experience in peacekeeping, tried to fill the void created by international inaction, to protect civilians victimized by a failing state. Initially the AU's role was primarily to protect its military observers who were monitoring a humanitarian ceasefire agreement signed in April 2004 between the Government of Sudan and the Darfur rebels.

A 2005 report released by the Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement pointed out that, contrary to popular belief, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) made a significant difference in the region. Within a year of its presence in the region, AMIS "deterred the rape of women, reduced the recruitment of children into armed forces, protected humanitarian corridors and aid convoys, reduced the looting of animals belonging to Arab nomads, and helped displaced persons who returned to their homes."<sup>1</sup>

**"AMIS made a significant difference in the region...  
However, the ability of the AU to provide more protection  
of civilians was undermined by a lack of troops and police,  
a weak mandate, and limited equipment."**

However, the ability of the AU to provide more protection of civilians was undermined by a lack of troops and police, a weak mandate, and limited equipment. According to the last AU force commander, Martin Luther Agwai, his troops were outgunned and outnumbered by rebels and militias in Darfur.<sup>2</sup> AMIS never reached its full-authorized strength of 15,000 for a number of reasons. Some African countries preferred to contribute their troops to the more lucrative UN missions that reimbursed countries for their troop contributions. Others calculated the costs and risks, and found them to outweigh the benefits. But most African countries did not have forces with the right capabilities to keep peace anywhere on the continent.



**Operating under a weak mandate: M. Vanstaden, head of the UN's military and police officers in Darfur, meets Major General L.K.F. Aprezi, Force Commander of AMIS, in December 2006.**

© UN Photo/Fred Noy

Following the deployment of AMIS, reports came from the field revealing that its troops were unpaid and that there were other problems related to rotation and deployment, poor equipment, lack of transport and communication equipment, and so on. Furthermore, its mandate was so weak that AMIS police did not even have the mandate to arrest anyone nor were the troops allowed to intervene in the fighting. Ironically, the responsibility to protect civilians was relinquished to the Sudanese government. These absurdities prompted President Paul Kagame of Rwanda to point out the irony of giving "security to peace

observers while the local population is left to die."<sup>3</sup>

Although AU visibility through patrols deterred violence against civilians by the Janjaweed militias and other armed groups, it was too thinly spread to be able to restore "a secure situation throughout Darfur."<sup>4</sup> It is also noteworthy that AMIS was not able to create "a safe environment for the return of IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] and refugees" after more than three years of deployment.

## Problems of implementing the intervention clause

In Article 4(h) and 4(j) of its Constitutive Act, the AU committed itself to protect civilian



populations against war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. However, the implementation of this praiseworthy intention of protecting civilians has a number of complications. In the first instance, its application is meant for civilians in weak states. The AU could only intervene where a complex emergency threatens the lives of civilians and the government asks for assistance. In the second instance, the AU could intervene in a complex emergency that has resulted in a state failing to protect its civilians and exposing them to severe suffering. In the former case, the AU has to be invited, while in the later case it can intervene on its own.

In either case, the process lacks precise triggers and is strewn with landmines. For example, there is no threshold laid down on the number of civilian casualties that can prompt the AU to take action. The type of assistance that a weak state can receive when faced by a complex emergency is not specified. This means a state such as Sudan can request the AU to boost its capacity to contain the rebellion in Darfur, thereby reinforcing its security apparatuses to maintain law and order.

**"The AU could only intervene where a complex emergency threatens the lives of civilians and the government asks for assistance... This partly explains why the AU and UN peacekeeping mandates were crafted to recognize Sudan's sovereignty."**

In other words, Articles 4(h) and 4(j) could only have been invoked if the state of Sudan had been deemed as collapsed, as Somalia's was in 1991 after the ouster of Siad Barre, or if it had requested the AU to intervene on its behalf to quell the Darfur uprising. This partly explains why the AU and UN peacekeeping mandates were crafted to recognize Sudan's sovereignty and empower it to determine the nature and level of the missions.

The second instance would have arisen from defining the situation in Darfur and categorising it in a way that would enable an AU intervention. Besides lacking a definition that provides criteria for intervention, the trigger mechanisms themselves are not established or stipulated in the rules of procedure of the Assembly that has the authority to invoke this clause. Assuming that the criteria for intervention were there, activation of the clause would have required enormous political will, which the AU lacked at the time. Assuming further that the will was available, the nascent organization still had no human and financial resources to enable it to undertake such an ambitious and almost impossible task, as its member states lacked the requisite force, capabilities, logistical capacity and equipment to launch a rescue operation.

### **International inadequacy**

Although the US, NATO and the EU footed the bill for AMIS, and provided its troops with extensive training and uniforms, this support did not initially include force multipliers like armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and the helicopters that were desperately needed. Certainly the AU did not have a force that was ready for deployment in a real conflict situation. The African peace and security architecture that calls for regional peacekeeping brigades was still on the drawing table. Allowing the two-year-old AU to intervene in Darfur was tantamount to allowing a child to contain a neighbourhood disturbance or flying a prototype airplane that was still on the drawing board.

The greatest need for AMIS was its quick transformation into a UN operation. AMIS should never have been in Darfur for more than one year. The international community should, by the end of 2004, have taken the responsibility of aiding Darfuris with a real protection force, with adequate equipment and a robust mandate aimed at ending the conflict and rebuilding the livelihoods of the local populations. Darfur needed an international solution due to the complicity of some international actors and the lack of African capability and political will to end the crisis.

During the AU intervention in Darfur, the international community made a number of grievous mistakes. Among these was the false assumption that there are "African solutions to African problems". The second was the misplaced notion that the AU, despite its good will and stated intentions, had the capability to protect civilians in complex emergencies. Third, the use of phrases such as "genocide", "humanitarian intervention", and "responsibility to protect" should have been used with care so as not to render them meaningless.

### **The question of genocide**

This does not mean, however, that silence or excessive caution should be the new

mantra, as it could lead to a game of semantics—as witnessed during the Rwanda genocide and in the second half of 2004 when the US and AU disagreed on whether to call what was happening in Darfur "genocide". In a communiqué issued in July 2004, the AU Peace and Security Council stated that "even though the crisis in Darfur is grave, with the attendant loss of lives, human suffering and destruction of homes and infrastructure, the situation cannot be defined as a genocide."<sup>5</sup>

The US went ahead in September 2004 to label the situation in Darfur "genocide" but stopped at that, despite the international law that obliges states to act when they deem that genocide is taking place. The fact that the US called the situation in Darfur "genocide" but did not take action to stop it contributed to the confusion over how the international community should address it. Considering the nature of the conflict, it was not advisable to call the horrendous acts taking place a "genocide" since the groups fighting each other were not Arabs versus Africans, as was then understood in the West.

The crimes against humanity being committed in Darfur should have been classified as "war crimes" rather than "genocide" or "ethnic cleansing", which have very high defining criteria.



**Need for a robust, fully equipped protection force: UN Special Envoy for Darfur, Jan Eliasson, meets the press at AMIS headquarters in Khartoum, in March 2007.**  
© UN Photo/Fred Noy

**"The crimes against humanity being committed in Darfur should have been classified as 'war crimes' rather than 'genocide' or 'ethnic cleansing', which have very high defining criteria."**

This was also the conclusion of a UN panel, which in January 2005 "established that the Government of the Sudan and the Janjaweed are responsible for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law amounting to crimes under international law."<sup>6</sup> On the issue of genocide, the UN Panel found that some "individuals, including Government officials, may" have committed "acts with genocidal intent" but it could not conclude that there was a "genocidal policy" being "pursued and implemented in Darfur by the Government authorities."

### **Who bears responsibility?**

Interestingly enough, the AU's formation was heralded as a turning point in Africa's international relations simply because it adopted the radical objective of intervening in a member state where grave circumstances, such as war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity, were taking place. Despite giving itself the political bite to stem egregious human rights violations such as those that took place in Rwanda in 1994, it was still teething when Darfur happened. By that time, the AU could have been said to be a lactating baby. Additionally, it had inherited some of the bad genes of its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which turned out to be costly.

Who then bears the responsibility for what has happened in Darfur? The UN bureaucrats who should have taken decisive action to intervene in early 2004? What responsibility should the Security Council, particularly the permanent five, bear? Should China be held responsible for supplying arms to Khartoum in exchange for oil and at the expense of the lives of Darfuris? Should the US be held accountable for declaring the situation in Darfur as "genocide" and then violating international law by doing nothing? What responsibility should the AU bear for biting off more than it could chew? To what extent should the international community shoulder responsibility, for believing African leaders when they shouted from the rooftops that they had "African solutions for African problems"? Ultimately, all the actors involved were responsible to a certain degree for letting the actions of the Sudanese government go unchecked.

This critical assessment of responsibility should not be misconstrued as a blame game but rather as aiding a comprehensive understanding of why Darfur was allowed to happen. Unless such a critical assessment is undertaken, we should not be surprised to hear more rhetorical proclamations of "Never Again!" Such an assessment would greatly assist the AU to fully understand its severe limitations and to expeditiously set up its

peace and security architecture, which includes the international community, particularly the UN, as a key player in the promotion of peace and security in Africa. The full establishment of the AU peace and security architecture should ensure that the broader international community does not hide behind the cliché of "African solutions to African problems" to shy away from its responsibilities.

**"The full establishment of the AU peace and security architecture should ensure that the broader international community does not hide behind the cliché of 'African solutions to African problems' to shy away from its responsibilities."**

At the beginning, AMIS appeared to be a "win-win" arrangement for Africa and the international community. The AU was able to showcase itself as being different from its toothless predecessor, the OAU, by putting into practice its newly coined phrase, "from non-interference to non-indifference". Recast under the mantra of "African solutions to African problems", this newly acquired principle allowed the international community to disavow responsibility and gave the Government of Sudan an opportunity to keep the UN at bay and to manipulate African countries' weaknesses, particularly in the processes of making and implementing decisions. The AU lost a golden opportunity to establish its peace and security architecture and thousands of Darfuris lost their lives and livelihoods through displacement, violence and death.

### UNAMID – a new beginning?



**From AMIS to UNAMID: military personnel don UN blue berets in December 2007, at a ceremony in Darfur marking the transfer of authority.**

*© UN Photo/Sheraan Zorba*

Now that AMIS has been transformed into the hybrid United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has the situation improved? Since its launch in 2007, UNAMID has struggled to transform conditions on the ground. Indeed, it has been set up to fail just like AMIS. In the first instance, it has no peace to keep, since the Abuja-negotiated Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) died before reaching Darfur.

The ability of UNAMID to help bring peace, security and justice to Darfur is being severely undermined by almost the same obstacles that hamstrung AMIS: an inadequate mandate, lack of equipment,

poor training and lack of the support necessary to carry out its mission. Currently UNAMID lacks logistics, medical gear, night vision equipment, heavy transport, medium transport and aerial reconnaissance.

The current mobility and operational impact of UNAMID is severely undermined by the lack of military helicopters. Although the mission needs 24 utility helicopters, for more than a year it has failed to acquire them, even though NATO could easily provide more than 100. So far only Ethiopia has offered tactical helicopters, five in number. The critical importance of such helicopters was most pronounced in September 2007 when AMIS troops were attacked in Haskanita and the wounded had to wait for 18 hours for relief to arrive by road. Among the reasons given for the reluctance of Western countries to provide helicopters is their lack of confidence in the command and control structure of UNAMID.

This lack of military helicopters, as well as force protection and adequate equipment, has severely undermined the mission's mobility and overall impact. UNAMID's force protection is so weak that, according to the Deputy Force Commander, Major General Emmanuel Karenzi, it would not be able to defend itself if it was attacked with "big weapons."<sup>7</sup>

The lack of transport to patrol an area the size of France has been compounded by a lack of cooperation from the Khartoum government to allow free movement of UNAMID staff and consignments, to issue visas for personnel and to re-supply the mission by air, road and railway. Since the Sudanese government is still recognized as having the primary responsibility for providing security to local populations, it regularly undertakes bombing and military operations that makes UNAMID's mission more difficult.

Deploying forces is proving to be a colossal challenge for UNAMID, as it was for AMIS. Originally the Security Council authorised a UNAMID force of 26,000 troops. This was

later lowered to 19,555, but by March 2009 the force stood at 12,737, more than one year after its authorization. Although UNAMID has been able to deploy 58% of its lowered troop target, it has only received 40% of enabling materials such as APCs. Besides the reluctance of the donors to provide personnel and equipment, another reason for the low deployment includes the strict rules imposed by Khartoum on countries contributing troops. For instance, Khartoum has demanded that the force be composed mainly of troops from African countries, many of which lack proper training and equipment and do not meet UN standards. Sudan has also demanded the right to approve the nationality of all UNAMID pilots.



**Hamstrung by similar problems faced by AMIS: UNAMID Deputy Force Commander Major General Emmanuel Karenzie (right) and Force Commander General Martin Luther Agwai in December 2007.**  
© UN Photo/Shehane Zorba

Integrating AMIS into UNAMID has had a number of problems. The assumption that AMIS was to provide the experience on which to build the hybrid force proved to be costly and has continued to dog the joint mission. For instance, there have been problems related to the compatibility of the UN and AU systems, standard operating procedures and organizational cultures. There is a concern that the frequent disappearance of fuel from AMIS depots, attributed to late payment of the troops, could in fact be occurring for other reasons.

### **What can be done?**

For UNAMID to succeed there will have to be a change of approach in dealing with the conflict, putting more emphasis on a political rather than a military solution. The new approach must aim at seeking a solution at the negotiating table rather than on the battlefield; revising the DPA to be acceptable to all parties in the conflict; and establishing a positive, rather than a negative, peace—that is, establishing a peace that includes comprehensive political, economic and social solutions. The cost of peacekeeping in Darfur has raised eyebrows and led to the former Chairperson of the AU Commission, Alpha Oumar Konaré, to question the rationale of spending billions of dollars on maintaining UNAMID instead of spending it on the development of the region.<sup>8</sup>

**"For UNAMID to succeed there will have to be a change of approach ... establishing a peace that includes comprehensive political, economic and social solutions."**

Both AMIS and UNAMID have proven that intervening to protect civilians in Africa, and elsewhere, needs more than good intentions. Darfur has been a critical test of Africa's ability to protect civilians in complex emergencies and also an opportunity to build its peace and security architecture. It also presented the AU with an opportunity to forge genuine partnerships with the international community in order to promote peace and security in Africa. If this partnership had succeeded it would have substantially contributed to the AU's ability to resolve future complex emergencies in Africa. The patchy record of both AMIS and UNAMID calls for a return to the drawing board to explore other more effective ways of promptly and decisively protecting civilians in complex emergencies such as Darfur.

So far UNAMID is a fledgling mission. Since the collapse of the DPA, there has been no peace to keep. The future of Darfur will, to a large extent, be determined by a political solution reached through negotiations, as well as by Khartoum's ability to keep the Janjaweed satisfied, to hold on to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) so that its collapse does not unite the South with Darfur, to deal with the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant against President al Bashir, and to normalize its relations with neighbouring Chad.

Ultimately, the real solution lies in ending the marginalization of the Darfur region, equitably distributing national resources, guaranteeing land rights to indigenous populations, promoting a culture of respect for human rights, and reforming the state to enable it to govern well and provide human security for all its citizens regardless of their ethnicity, race, creed or religion.



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## HUMAN RIGHTS IN DARFUR: WINNERS AND LOSERS IN THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE?

by John Lewis



Sudan's new Government of National Unity leaders, President Omar Al-Bashir (right) and the late First Vice-President John Garang, in 2005.  
© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

### Introduction

The conflict in Darfur may be the first conflict to result from a peace agreement. Just as peace was being signed between southern Sudanese rebels and the Government in Khartoum, the conflict in Darfur erupted. In Darfur, the fighting emerged out of a similar situation of desperation as in the South in which the local population had almost no access to the central government. While the people of Darfur provided the central government with bodies for service in the military – many to fight in the South, ironically –

Darfuris received poor and abusive government in return. In the mid-1980s, when drought and famine hit the region, the central government's response was negligible and inept. When the rebellion broke out in 2003, the government unleashed a terrible counter-attack with bombardments from the air and paramilitary forces on the ground.

**"When drought and famine hit the region, the central government's response was negligible and inept. When the rebellion broke out in 2003, the government unleashed a terrible counter-attack ..."**

While the consequences for the civilian population in Darfur have been horrific, peace in Darfur, like peace in the South, may require a weak commitment to justice, at least in the short- to medium-term.

### Early developments

During the mid-1980s the people of Darfur, western Sudan, suffered a terrible famine. As a result of the spreading Sahara, reduced rainfall, and increasing pressure on the land, between 100,000 and 200,000 people died. Many northern tribes moved South to avoid the advancing desert and find pasture for their herds. Given the local and national

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governments' inability to deal effectively with new demands on land, conflict between settled and nomadic groups erupted.

In 2003, a rebellion of mostly settled Darfurians broke out against the national government for its failure to deal with the region's problems. Rebel groups launched a surprise attack on El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, damaging government aircraft and helicopters and looting fuel and arms depots. This was followed by another major attack on Mellit, the second largest town in North Darfur, where rebels again looted government stocks of food and arms. In response, the Sudanese government dismissed the governors of North and West Darfur and other key officials, and increased its military presence in Darfur, unleashing the now-infamous *Janjaweed*, a group of nomadic fighters on horseback armed by the national governments of Sudan and Libya.



Reduced rainfall, advancing desert and famine: a UN aid vehicle near El Fasher in North Darfur.  
© WFP/Diogo Fernandez

**"The Sudanese government's supply of weapons ... became available for use in Darfur with the onset of the peace talks in the southern regions of the country."**

As its people starved, the Sudanese government's supply of weapons improved considerably as the country began to export its oil – with the help of foreign companies – and these arms became available for use in Darfur with the onset of the peace talks in the southern regions of the country. More than 2 million people perished in the decades-old conflict in the South, largely through government intransigence and war-induced famine. But while negotiators in Nairobi were deadlocked – on the issue of whether Khartoum should be governed under Islamic law – and while the fighting in the South had essentially dropped off, Darfur became a "region in flames", according to human rights activists, once the government unleashed its counter-insurgency.

### The combatants



An SLA rebel in South Darfur.  
© Jean Nordmann

The present conflict in Darfur essentially sets the Government of Sudan and its allies against an insurgency composed of two main groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), each with their own interests and supporters. From the outset, however, the rebel groups were chiefly composed of three ethnic groups, the Zaghawa, Fur and Masaalit. Over the last few years, under increasing attack by the Janjaweed, members of some smaller groups, including many "arabized" peoples, have joined the rebellion.

Like the conflict in the southern part of the country, the Darfur conflict has developed racial and cultural overtones, threatening to shatter a historic but fragile pattern of co-existence between Arab-speaking northerners living around Khartoum and Afro- and arabized-Sudanese spread throughout the West of the country. Whereas the earlier conflict in the

South pitted Christian and other religious Afro-Sudanese against the mostly Arab and Islamic government of the country, the conflict in Darfur is being fought between Muslims, who largely self-identify as either African or Arab.

By mid-2004 the mounting toll of death and displacement forced the crisis in Darfur onto the stage of world affairs. A formerly unreported conflict over natural resources escalated into what many have referred to as "the first genocide of the twenty-first century".

**"By mid-2004 ... a formerly unreported conflict over natural resources escalated into what many have referred to as 'the first genocide of the twenty-first century'."**

## The results

The conflict has escalated since 2003, with fighting concentrated in North Darfur. The government has launched offensives against the SLA in Um Barou, Tine, and Karnoi, in response to the SLA attacks on El Fasher, Mellit, Kutum, and Tine (the latter on the border with Chad and an important trade route to Libya). Government response consisted of heavy bombing by Russian-made Antonov aircraft plus ground offensives of government troops using heavy equipment including tanks, many of them supplied by China.

As with all conflicts, a disproportionate number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by the conflict are women and young girls who are most at risk of sexual abuse and gender-based violence. Since the outset of the conflict, there have been disturbing reports of sexual attacks on children under 10 years old.<sup>1</sup> Violence against women surged in 2006, with more than 200 instances of sexual assault in five weeks around the Kalma camp in South Darfur alone.<sup>2</sup> Most of the victims are assaulted when they leave camps and villages to collect firewood, a necessity that forces them to walk miles into the bush where they are vulnerable to attacks by Janjaweed militia or members of the rebel groups.



**A mother and daughter at IDP Camp Otash, Nyala, South Darfur: a disproportionate number affected by the conflict are women and children.**

© WFP/Lizette Karlsson

By the end of 2008, 300,000 people had been killed during the conflict according to the United Nations, and at least two and a half million more displaced. While food and water delivered by aid agencies to the remaining population of Darfur is an attempt to address survival needs, humanitarian assistance continues to be endangered by the insecurity of the region. Both sides in the conflict, the rebels and the government-allied forces (the Janjaweed militia) continue to violate ceasefire agreements, including attacks on the displacement camps and humanitarian workers. Planting crops is almost impossible for people living under the threat of such attacks.

## Who's responsible?

In 2008, Darfur was referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for investigation. In early March, 2009, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Sudan's President, Omar Hassan al Bashir, after charging him with war crimes and crimes against humanity. This followed the request on November 20, 2008, by the prosecutor of the ICC for arrest warrants for three rebel leaders believed to be responsible for attacks on international peacekeepers.

Evidence continues to show the Sudanese government's support for the Janjaweed, however, and its responsibility for the greatest number of atrocities in Darfur. Human Rights Watch research indicates that, in spite of all the evidence of massive atrocities committed by its allied militia, the Sudanese government resumed recruitment of new militia forces in late 2006.

Few would disagree that Sudanese President al Bashir has presided over a regime responsible for gross crimes against humanity, nor that the culture of impunity amongst world leaders must be challenged. But beyond that there is wide disagreement over important elements of peace and justice.

**"Few would disagree that Sudanese President al Bashir has presided over a regime responsible for gross crimes against humanity... But beyond that there is wide disagreement ..."**

## Peace vs. justice

Those who support the ICC indictment talk of the gravity of the alleged crimes and the need for justice. Even if it can be demonstrated that the President took no steps to encourage rogue security force elements and their Janjaweed auxiliaries to attack civilians at Darfur, supporters of the ICC argue, he is still accountable for not restraining them. They suggest that the indictment will force the Khartoum regime to make peace in Darfur, and prosecution — even if it fails — would be a salutary deterrent on potential

tyrants elsewhere.

Desmond Tutu, the former archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, argues that Africa cannot afford to let al Bashir off the hook: "African leaders argue that the court's action will impede efforts to promote peace in Darfur. However, there can be no real peace and security until justice is enjoyed by the inhabitants of the land. There is no peace precisely because there has been no justice. As painful and inconvenient as justice may be, we have seen that the alternative - allowing accountability to fall by the wayside - is worse."



**Sudan's President briefs correspondents on Darfur at UN Headquarters in 2006: Al-Bashir is now indicted for crimes against humanity.**  
© UN Photo/Erin Siegal

Those who urge caution offer a more nuanced argument which does not sit well in the world of good vs. evil, or black and white solutions. These people are not necessarily rejecting the ICC. Few outside al Bashir's own circle would suggest that he does not have crimes to answer for. However, the current indictment risks causing further violence and suffering in Sudan.

### **Peace now ...**

In a worst case scenario, according to long-time Sudan-watcher John Ashworth, destabilising al Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) could lead to the collapse of the already fragile peace agreement with the South, which ended 22 years of war. This puts southern Sudanese, including their government, in a difficult position. While they have no love for al Bashir due to the atrocities committed during the war in the South (crimes for which he is not being indicted), for better or worse they are stuck in a partnership with the NCP as co-signatories of the CPA. If the CPA collapses, the prospect of peace in Darfur, already very distant, will recede still further.

In the shorter term, the grip of the state security organs has tightened. Sudanese civil society organisations have been closed, students arrested, public rallies orchestrated to raise the ante, and a climate of fear created amongst moderates who might support the ICC indictment or oppose the regime. Despite the easing of some restrictions after the signing of the CPA, there is still a formidable state security apparatus which has not been reformed since the years of military dictatorship.

The Khartoum regime has also retaliated against international aid agencies in northern Sudan. Humanitarian agencies have faced rising numbers of attacks on their workers and restrictions on their work by government forces and armed opposition groups. Sudan expelled 13 international and three local humanitarian organizations from Darfur in March in response to the ICC's arrest warrant of al Bashir. As fighting escalates with the ending of the rainy season, and fresh attacks on civilians drive thousands more people from their homes, humanitarian access to civilians in Darfur will remain seriously compromised.

### **... justice defined ...**

The ICC is seen as a tool of Western interests. The perception of the ICC is that it has so far concentrated on African issues and has not addressed cases which are of interest to the non-Western world. Since the establishment of the ICC in 2002 to prosecute individuals suspected of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, the court has issued arrest warrants against 13 people, including al-Bashir. All the people indicted are Africans. ICC investigators are all located in Africa, investigating atrocities in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Darfur. Seen in that context, it is unsurprising that al Bashir has accused the ICC of a colonialist conspiracy against Africa by ignoring crimes among the "neocolonizers" in Gaza and Iraq. Pakistan, too, another "friend of the West" has not attracted much attention in the name of "justice".

Without minimising the atrocities committed against civilians in Darfur — by Sudanese security forces and Janjaweed militiamen — it is easy to understand why there may be perceptions of anti-African bias and wilful ICC myopia towards American actions in the Middle East. But prominent political and military figures who were not African have been indicted by a UN tribunal following the internecine fighting in the former Yugoslavia in



the 1990s. And the ICC is considering cases outside Africa, including national leaders like President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia. But a more fundamental question concerns the nature of justice during a conflict like Darfur, according to Ashworth and others with connections inside Sudan.

Many see only the narrow terms of retributive justice: finding someone guilty and punishing her/him. But there are other models. Restorative justice recognises that something has gone wrong and must be put right, that relationships have been broken and must be healed, in such a way as to bring the most benefit to the most people. It may involve trials and punishments, but only as part of a broader process.

There is a thread of this in Darfur, according to expert Alex de Waal, although it is more difficult to discern a single clear message from Darfuris. When Darfuris speak of their right to justice, according to de Waal: "They talk about restorative justice. They talk about returning to their homes. They talk about compensation. They talk about being able to resume the life they've lost. I do not see how [the ICC process] has taken a single step forward in terms of all those other components of justice."<sup>3</sup>

**"Many see only the narrow terms of retributive justice... But there are other models... 'There should be holistic justice that encompasses accountability, truth recovery, reconciliation, institutional reform and reparations'."**

The Sudan Council of Churches, a force in the southern Sudan peace process, states: "The Church believes in justice without compromising peace and stability of the nation. There is no dichotomisation.... societies in transition like Sudan need other instruments and other models in order to supplement one form of justice. There should be holistic justice that encompasses accountability, truth recovery, reconciliation, institutional reform and reparations." And Thabo Mbeki, heading an African Union panel on Darfur, says that while ICC indictments may strike a blow against impunity, they will do little to soothe the hatreds that have spawned rapes and massacres.

### ... justice delayed

The government in Khartoum has been largely uncooperative with all attempts to establish peace and justice in Darfur. Investigators of the ICC, whose mandate was established by the Security Council of the UN, have been blocked in their investigations by the government. The Sudanese Minister of Justice has implausibly declared that Sudan is better equipped than the ICC to investigate human rights violations occurring within its borders. In the six years since the outbreak of violence in Darfur, no major actor in conflict has ever been charged by the Minister or his courts.

The government remains convinced of a military solution to the conflict. But the decision to expel NGOs made by the NCP was accomplished without consultation and against the will of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (the NCP's partner in government) and that puts an additional strain on relations between the two parties. Many fear a return to war in the South as a consequence of the NCP's recalcitrance.



**UN humanitarian aid helicopter in Darfur: new challenges confront remaining agencies after the expulsion of over a dozen international NGOs.**  
© WFP/Diego Fernandez

Nations in transition need stability and peace. Justice can be broader than trials and punishment, particularly during the search for peace. But justice, in some form, will come. Peru has just tried their former leader, Alberto Fujimori, finding him guilty of acts he commissioned as President 18 years ago. Argentina has done the same. In order to begin to establish peace and reconciliation in Sudan, the punishment of al Bashir may need to wait.

### International responsibility

The international community has once again become culpable in large scale loss of life in Africa through its inaction. With ample warning of the crisis, coupled with the twenty year history of abuses committed against southern Sudanese, the UN Security Council refused to authorize the resources necessary to halt the Janjaweed and force the government of Sudan to make concessions at the negotiating table, as deaths continued to mount. The cries of "never again" heard since the genocide in Rwanda have rung regretfully hollow.

**"The international community has once again become culpable in large scale loss of life in Africa through its inaction... It would be convenient to say that 'it's all about oil' ... but it's not that simple."**

It would be convenient to say that "it's all about oil", that the world's thirst for hydrocarbons is the reason for the world's silence on Sudan, but it's not that simple. It's a tidy argument to link oil to Darfur, as some have done, but the situation is far more complicated and difficult to understand. All conflicts have multiple causes and interpretations, and the one in Darfur is no different. It is about oil, but it is also about climate change, genocide, neo-colonialism, and religious fundamentalism.

Regardless, the impact of the conflict on the civilian population of Sudan and, like Rwanda, the consequences of inaction will be evident for years in Darfur. Villages have been burned to the ground, water sources poisoned, and populations traumatized through large scale loss of life. The region will need sustained costly humanitarian support for decades to come as the result of a crisis that, sadly, could have been avoided.

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## SOME THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT GENOCIDE – 10 YEARS, 10 LESSONS

*by Gerald Caplan*

In 1998, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) appointed an International Panel of Eminent Persons to investigate the genocide that had occurred in Rwanda four years earlier. Several months later, the Panel asked me to write their report. First conceptualized as a relatively brief statement, the report was subsequently published as a 300-page history of Rwanda from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 21st century. So there would be little ambiguity about its conclusions, the Eminent agreed with my suggested title. The report was called "Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide".



I had previously shown what I imagine to be the conventional interest in the Holocaust, at least for a Jew, and read as widely about it as my primary obligations permitted. For many years I made it a point to read at least a book a year about the Holocaust. But since histories, memoirs, novels and plays on the subject continue to pour off the printing presses with no apparent sign of slowing down, I never considered myself anything more than a casual browser in the grisly subject.

At the same time, I knew next to nothing about other genocides. I knew something about the German annihilation of the

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Heresos of South-West Africa in 1904 from my academic work on African history. So far as I can now recollect, I didn't have a clue about the Armenian genocide by the Young Turks; I can't even say I was aware it had happened. My longstanding interest in the way Stalin had betrayed the Russian Revolution introduced me to the famine in the Ukraine, but once again the issue of genocide was marginal at best. Despite perpetually trying to keep abreast of African matters, I had never heard a word about the anti-Tutsi pogroms unleashed by the new Hutu rulers of Rwanda in the 1960s, and certainly knew nothing whatever about the vast massacre in 1972 of educated Hutu by the Tutsi soldiers who ran Burundi, which some consider the first African-inflicted genocide.

I was very much aware of the pathological reign of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, but that was related to my fury at the US aggression against Viet Nam and the secret bombings of Laos and Cambodia. I remain persuaded that Pol Pot and Company could probably not have been able to seize control of the country without the destabilization caused by American B-52s, and I still consider this to be among the many counts against Henry Kissinger that the International Criminal Court should be warranting. But whether the Khmer were guilty of genocide according to the UN's 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was not my major concern.

The same was true of the 1965 massacres by the Indonesian army of perhaps half a million so-called Communists as well as countless ethnic Chinese who ran much of the country's commerce—the opposite of Communists, in other words; the American embassy in Jakarta was smack in the middle of that one too, giving the killers lists of alleged Communists whom they duly murdered. The slaughter of political rivals could be called politicide, though under Soviet pressure the 1948 Convention had dropped the proposed use of that designation. I knew and wrote about this appalling tragedy, but it was the insidious role of the US that most troubled me. For some reason, I read long ago (and still own) Robert Payne's *Massacre*, a harrowing account of the vicious 1971 Pakistani attack on what was then East Pakistan which resulted in millions of Bengali deaths and countless rapes. Many Indians and Bangladeshi have always considered this a genocide. I'm less certain, and Payne didn't use the word, but concepts like politicide and femicide certainly seem to apply.

I acknowledge sheepishly but frankly that the genocide of Rwanda's Tutsi largely floated beyond my consciousness in 1994; I was immersed in reviewing the Ontario education system for the province's NDP government and had eyes for little else. But I was quite aware of the Bosnian Serb massacre, now judged genocidal, of 8000 Bosniak males a year later in Srebrenica. But I also better concede that much of the time I felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the decade-long Balkan crisis.

All this changed with the OAU Panel. For my report I spent some time reading in the literature of genocide generally, most of which I never knew existed. Once the task was completed and the report released, it soon enough struck me that for a lifelong social and political activist, the real purpose of knowing something about genocide was to have something to say about genocide prevention, which is what in fact motivates most scholars in this gruesome field.

Besides beginning to throw myself into reading, writing, thinking and discussing these issues, I developed and spent the better part of two years running a virtual international organization called Remembering Rwanda, devoted to gathering attention around the world for the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide in 2004. That experience too influenced my thinking about the subject, as did the tragic emergence in 2003 of the Darfur crisis, which former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan began describing as early as the following year as "another Rwanda". Towards the end of 2008, the decade-old crisis in eastern Congo had also won the dubious distinction of being described as potentially "another Rwanda", even while Darfur continued to smolder. Whether or not either constituted a Convention genocide, both were horrific beyond words and demanded interventions that never materialized. Perhaps I should say "that of course never materialized".

Working through my experiences and new understandings over these past 10 years, I find 10 lessons that help me convey some of what I've learned.

### **1. All genocides are morally equal.**

There are some who would create a hierarchy among genocides. This is an unworthy and unhelpful exercise. It is inherently divisive, insulting those whose genocide is considered somehow less monumentally terrible than one's own. We need, as historian Peter Novick put it in his remarkable book *The Holocaust in American Life*, no Olympics of victimization. Instead of demanding a gold medal in suffering, we should seek the solidarity of victims. Those who have been targeted for total annihilation share a singularly terrible place in history.

## **2. Survivors of genocide and their descendants care primarily about their own tragedy.**

Generally, most genocides are remembered, commemorated and fought against by their own survivors. This is no doubt human nature. It is especially true of Jews and Armenians. Rwandans are far more interested in the Holocaust than Jews are in the genocide of the Tutsi. There are of course individual exceptions to this generalization, and after largely ignoring the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, many Jewish organizations got active seeking to end the conflict in Darfur.

## **3. All of us are capable, under certain circumstances, of committing unimaginable acts.**

Every genocide on record was carried out by a combination of some sadistic and psychotic leaders and plotters (mostly but not solely men) and a majority of ordinary people. Such people have been, and can be, found in every corner of the world. This includes the Europeans and Americans who decimated the native peoples of the Americas; the Europeans who ran the slave trade and the Americans who exploited those slaves (even without killing them all, slaves were by definition robbed of their humanity, thereby constituting genocide according to the 1948 Convention); the German soldiers who forced the Herero people into the desert to die of thirst and the ones who later ran the death squads and death camps; the countless good citizens throughout central and eastern Europe who willingly became Nazi collaborators; the Hutu peasants who got caught up in their leaders' propaganda and slaughtered their own friends and neighbours; the Sudanese pastoralists who have been killing Darfuri villagers.

## **4. Never trust anyone who vows "Never Again".**

No one who has pledged Never Again has ever lived up to the promise. The phrase has become the empty rhetoric of blowhard politicians and small-time dignitaries on solemn occasions. Often these bloviations are repeated by those who have no capacity whatever to carry out the promise but feel they are obligated to sound serious; instead, they just make themselves ridiculous. Too often this solemn commitment is made by those who have real influence but have no intention to act on their vow. In practice, almost no potential genocide has ever been prevented in advance and no ongoing genocide (loosely defined) has been halted by outside intervention. This is true of Armenia, the Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur, and now the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## **5. There will be more Holocausts.**

Primo Levi, a Jewish Italian survivor of Auschwitz, first believed, and wrote, that because it had happened, it could not happen again. Later he understood the real logic of the Holocaust: Because it happened, it *could* happen again. Rwanda happened. Darfur became "another Rwanda". Congo may become "another Rwanda" or—who knows?—perhaps another Darfur. There will be others, as sure as humans inhabit the globe.

## **6. Genocides are never just about the killers and their victims.**

Genocides always involve outsiders in certain ways direct or indirect, immediate or historical. Rwanda is the most obvious example, given the role of the Catholic Church and Belgium in exacerbating divisions between Hutu and Tutsi and France's close cooperation with insiders in the Habyarimana government who were plotting the genocide. In Congo, Mobutu, openly backed by the US and funded by the World Bank, was allowed to turn his mineral-rich country into an anarchic non-state where war lords and resource companies could conspire to plunder whatever Mobutu left behind. When in 1994 France allowed unrepentant Rwandan genocide leaders to escape into Congo, the scene was set for the subsequent Central African wars that have never ended. America's secret bombing of Cambodia (and Laos) during the American invasion of Viet Nam so destabilized the country it allowed the Khmer Rouge to take over. In other words, more often than not the western world shares responsibility for the tragedy. The imperative to intervene follows from that responsibility, not from our vaunted superior morality or our humanitarianism.

## **7. Most ordinary people will be bystanders. Acting righteously in a dangerous situation is more than we have the right to expect from most people.**

Activists too easily scorn ordinary people who simply want to live their own lives. NOT



being involved in the crises of others is the default position for most of the world, and nothing else can be expected. It is no doubt gratifying to look down on the majority as ignorant, indifferent or self-absorbed. It is more accurate to think of them as unaware, busy trying to cope with life's adversities, and having their own perfectly reasonable priorities. For most, coping with everyday life is hard enough. We should give praise to the minority who always emerge to join a campaign rather than being disappointed about and scornful of the majority who don't.

As for the righteous, the surprising thing is not how few there are but invariably how many. The gentile who saved Jews, the Hutu who saved Tutsi, the Congolese women who stand up to their rapists, the Zimbabwean human rights activists—these few show a courage unimaginable to most ordinary people. How many among us would risk "doing the right thing" if it meant risking imprisonment, excruciating torture, or even death? How many would give their lives to save another's? It helps nothing to have unreasonable expectations of others when most of us would not act any differently in the same circumstances.

### **8. Don't expect those with the means to intervene seriously.**

Ever since it was decided not to destroy the train tracks leading to the Nazi death camps, the powerful have always found good reasons not to intervene. Look at the Permanent Five members of the Security Council—those who really control most of the UN's agenda—during the Rwandan crisis. The Russians and Chinese didn't give a damn, the French had their usual diabolical political agenda, the British slavishly followed the US line, and the Clinton administration, for its own good partisan political reasons, was prepared to face any public humiliation and self-debasement rather than send reinforcements to bolster the existing puny UN mission.

For Darfur, all five once again had reasons of self-interest, persuasive to themselves, to oppose any attempt to force the Sudan government to call off its armed forces and Janjaweed militia. China wants Sudan's oil and its weapons market. Russia too wants to sell oil-rich Sudan weapons to use against Darfuris. France plays its usual geopolitical games revolving around language. Britain is content to follow the US leader, and the US plays an astonishingly two-faced game. The Bush administration led the way in publicly declaring the Sudanese government to be guilty of genocide in Darfur, yet has worked actively and openly with the Sudanese intelligence and secret services on the "war on terror". The US State Department's 2007 Annual Report on State Sponsors of terror states that "The Sudanese government was a strong partner in the War on Terror and aggressively pursued terrorist operations directly involving threats to US interests and personnel in Sudan." Why then did we expect the Bush administration to seriously undermine that same government?

To add insult to injury, one of the states that has been most protective of the Sudanese government, both within the African Union and at the United Nations, is South Africa. Important recent business ties between the two countries apparently take precedence, in the eyes of the South African government, over the atrocities orchestrated by Sudan in Darfur.

### **9. We don't need a finding of genocide to intervene in a humanitarian disaster.**

Determining a full-blown 1948 Convention genocide can be very tricky and controversial. Even now there is disagreement over whether Darfur constitutes a genocide. Determining a crime against humanity is much less problematic or controversial. It is widely agreed that the Sudanese government is responsible for committing or orchestrating appalling crimes against the Darfuri people.

Strangely enough, an eloquent statement of this position was articulated by none other than Colin Powell. In 2004, Powell, as Secretary of State, informed the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the US had decided, based on evidence it had commissioned, that genocide was taking place in western Sudan. But he then added the following critical sentences: "Mr. Chairman... let us not be preoccupied with this designation of genocide. These people are in desperate need and we must help them. Call it a civil war. Call it ethnic cleansing. Call it genocide. Call it 'none of the above'. The reality is the same: there are people in Darfur who desperately need our help."

Exactly. This is why the Responsibility to Protect doctrine is potentially more effective than the Genocide Convention. Assuming the political will to intervene—a huge assumption—it is far easier if actual genocide need not be proven or agreed on.

### **10. Genocide CAN be prevented. The pattern of betrayal can be broken.**

Way back in 1935, already distressed by the impunity with which Hitler was re-arming Germany, Winston Churchill shared his deep frustration with the House of Commons. Human behavior, he complained, demonstrated the "long dismal catalogue of the fruitlessness of experience and the confirmed unteachability of mankind." Imagine what he'd say almost three-quarters of a century later. The record shows there is ample reason for great cynicism about the possibility of genocide prevention in the future, let alone ending the ongoing conflicts in Darfur or eastern Congo.

Heaven knows we have the tools, if anyone wants to use them—the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, the 2005 UN General Assembly Declaration on the Responsibility to Protect, the moral authority of Never Again, not to ignore international outrage. But none of these tools is worth a Zimbabwean dollar if the major international actors lack the political will to invoke them. To date, national self-interest has always trumped all other humanitarian considerations. To complicate matters further, the American invasion of Iraq by the Bush administration, in the name of democracy and freedom, has significantly muddied the waters. It has become difficult to distinguish a genuine humanitarian invasion from an imperial adventure. Differing opinions on the Afghanistan conflict among women and men of good will is a fine example. These complications can't be dismissed.

Still, there are pretty clear-cut causes on the agenda at this very moment, eastern Congo and Zimbabwe being among the most obvious. Humans being their own worst enemies—"I have seen the enemy and he is us" (Walt Kelly's Pogo)—we can be only too confident others will present themselves momentarily. And then there is only one method of moving a recalcitrant or self-interested Security Council—public opinion, the weight of organized civil society making demands. We must put so much pressure on our own governments that they will make our concerns their own, and take them to the United Nations. Nothing else will work. It's never easy, but yes, we can too.

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## Introduction – In Memory of Hugh McCullum

*by the Ezine Editorial Committee*

This series on Darfur is dedicated to Hugh McCullum who died in October 2008.

Hugh was part of the *At Issue Ezine* Editorial Committee from the beginning. He brought to us a lifetime experience of working for and writing about justice issues in Africa, Central America and northern Canada. Without Hugh our committee meetings would have been routine. His wealth of experience and love of language provided insights and anecdotes that enlivened every session he attended and his no-nonsense approach to editing articles was a constant guide.

He is sorely missed.

The approach we take in "Perspectives on Darfur" is Hugh's final legacy to us. Even though in his last months Hugh spent much time flying back and forth to the Yukon in Canada to help the Dene with land claims, he found time to lead our thinking on the next topic we had planned for the *Ezine*.

In 2008, Darfur was less in the news than it had been previously; however, we felt there were many unsettled problems and unanswered questions that needed clarification:

- Displaced people were still in camps and refugees still lived across the border in Chad.
- Was the peace agreement signed by some in Nigeria and not by others meaningful?
- Had the Janjaweed been disbanded?
- What about human rights abuses and thousands of deaths? Was impunity still the rule?
- What to do about a government that bombed its own citizens?
- How would the unresolved problems in west Sudan affect the proposed settlement in the South?
- What about the accusation of genocide and the international action that should follow?
- Could the UN, in conjunction with the AU, do anything to resolve these problems?

And since our earlier discussions, one more issue has arisen that may answer some of the questions but raise another:



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- How much worse will things be for thousands of Dafurians and other Sudanese since the International Criminal Court's indictment of President Al Bashir had led to his banning of key NGOs?

The articles that follow by people who know the issues and the region well should take us some way towards the clarification that the complexities of Darfur require:

1. Gerry Caplan (activist and writer) – the issue of genocide.
2. John Lewis (Kairos) – human rights abuses.
3. Wafula Okumu (Institute for Security Studies, in South Africa) – the possibilities and problems involved in UN/AU intervention.
4. Wendy Gichuru (United Church of Canada) – similarities and differences with the situation in South Sudan.
5. Darnace Torou (Chadian educator and activist) – the impact of the war in Darfur on Chad.

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