

El-Turabi plot and Khartoum's orchestration of the ethnic cleansing in Darfur

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KI-MOON-DARFUR CONFERENCE : WHICH WAY TO GO ?

National collaborative strategies for the UN in Darfur by Mahgoub El-Tigani

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The Islamists' escalation of the crisis : escalating ethno-administrative cleansing

The current NIF government is directly responsible for the ethnic cleansing of the non-Arab people of Darfur. According to O'Fahey, 'The ethnicisation of the conflict has grown more rapidly since the military coup in 1989 that brought to power the regime of al-Bashir, which is not only Islamist but also Arabic-centric. This has injected an ideological and racist dimension into the conflict, with the sides defining themselves as 'Arab' or 'Zurq' (black). Despite this racist attitude, which is the major reason Sudanese regions have revolted one after the other against the central government, several writers have wrongfully reduced the crisis to a matter of **tribal feuds or scarcity of natural resources**. But as opposition activist Suliman Hamid al-Haj emphasizes, 'Darfur's crisis is a fully fledged state conspiracy plotted by Hassan al-Turabi (Secretary-General of the NIF party, the National Congress; Speaker of the state parliament, the National Council; and thus top guide of the NIF political bodies) and subsequently pursued by Arab militias in full collaboration with the Sudan government and its ruling party, the National Islamist Front'.

It is thus the government, to a much greater degree than the militias it established and systematically manipulated, that is squarely responsible for the crisis in Darfur and the heinous atrocities resulting from it.

According to Hamid's documentary, 'Wad al-Nuqat fi al-Hurof, Hassan al-Turabi, at the height of his power with the NIF regime, issued a degree clearly stating the following : the Islamists of Negro tribes became hostile to the Islamic Movement. The Islamic Front aims to support the Arab tribes by these steps : forced displacement of the Fur from Jebel Merra to Wadi Salih, followed by complete disarming of the Fur people, for good: they are to be replaced with the Mehairiya, Itafat, and Irayqat (Arab tribes). Arms must never return to the Zaghawa, who must be moved from Kutum to Um Rwaba (North Kordofan State); the Arab tribes should be armed and financed to act as the nucleus of the Islamic Arab Alliance.

This official fatwa is the basis of the state plot in Darfur. It has been literally executed, as revealed by current events in the region, even after al-Turabi was purged from the party. 'This plot represents the class interests of Islamised capitalists, which include strata of the Arab tribes as well as some of the Zurqa (tribes of non-Arab descent). The majority of Arab tribes have not participated in this scheme; they have not rejected it ; but actively

resisted it since it was first implemented', claims Hamid. Only the few Zurqa who share class interest with the ruling party have taken part in the government's plot.

A great many Sudanese consider the NIF military government disqualified to rule the country. 'They have no heritage of political leadership and their ideology is alien to the Sudanese people, particularly in the rural areas' writes Ahmed. But the NIF government 'started from day one to find a niche in the Sudanese society through which to impose "the civilization, the Islamisation and the Arabisation of the Sudanese state and society". It requires that the total Sudanese cultural, political and religious heritage that had cumulatively taken shape since time immemorial be abandoned and a new political culture based on NIF ideology be adopted'.

Demanding allegiance to the NIF and its ruling junta, the new administrative system of the regime in Darfur and Kordofan is known as the Emirates. Ahmed continues, 'Such traditional tribal titles as King, Demangai, Nazer, Omda and Sheikh have been cancelled and replaced by 'Amir'. But the local tribes are used to their old system of native tribes, which automatically convey a lot about the tribe, rank and status of the holder'.

The Massalit exemplify the resentment among Darfurian Africans toward the Muslim Brotherhood and the Arab emirate system. The Massalit administrative system, Ahmed writes, has been divided into 13 emirates, five of them belonging to migrant Arab tribes in accordance with a decree proclaimed by the NIF Wali (governor) in March 1995. The Massalit feel that they are the ones targeted by this policy, which aims at balkanizing their territory and giving away large portions of land to migrant Arab tribes. This is the real cause of the violent conflict, which recently erupted between the Massalit and the Arab tribes in their area. The regime-organized peace conferences have been ineffectual because the regime really never addressed the basic causes of the conflict. Instead, it turned them into its sloganeering and sweet talking without really solving the disputes in issue.

In May 1991, members of the Zaghawa tribe presented a political memorandum to the President of the Republic. The memorandum referred to the recent events which took place in the areas of Chazzan Jaded, Sheridan, Argo, Await and Um Kato, all of which were tribally motivated and were aimed at undermining the security situation in the region. We hold the Governor of Darfur Region responsible for these incidents, together with the security committee, the commanders of the military convoys and leaders of the native administration in the area. There were indications that these incidents were planned.

The document ended with 'urgent demands' for immediate government attention 'to 1)

bringing to justice the culprits who perpetrated the above-mentioned crimes, involving massacres, burning of homes and property, robbery, looting and torture targeting our tribe: and 2) ending the state of siege imposed around the water points’.

The Darfur Rebellion

Early in 2003, with the NIF’s escalation of the Darfur crisis, the Sudanese political arena witnessed the emergence of two Darfurian non-Arab parties: the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) led by lawyer ‘ Abd al-Wahid Mohamed Nor and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) led by the Turabi disciple Cahill Ibrahim, a former minister in the Bashir administration. Seeking to establish immediate autonomous rule, independent from Khartoum, both the SLA and JEM advocated armed struggle to force the NIF government to allow a politics of self-determination as well as fair wealth sharing. While the SPLM/A is strongly antagonistic to the NIF’s Islamist ideology, many members of the SLA and JEM, by contrast, were once part of the NIF ruling systems.

In addition to the hegemony of Khartoum over the Darfurian native system, according to Lobbing, ‘ there are many long standing economic grievances that precipitated the SLA and JEM to initiate this round of fighting’.

The NIF government responded by unleashing the Jonahed/Janjaweed on the rebels, side by side with the PDF and the army troops. Since then the Jonahed, formerly known as the mural, or Beggar horse riders, have been accused of widespread killings, rape, abduction, torching of villages and crops, and cattle looting aimed at black Muslims in Darfur. Aid agencies say up to 50,000 people have died from the conflict, while more than 1.4 million have been displaced. About 170,000 of these have fled into neighboring Chad for fear of being attacked by the Jonahed. The indigenous people’s resistance to the NIF assaults on native administration and land ownership was sporadic before the emergence of the SLA, which opened a massive offensive by twice seizing a major town in Northern Darfur in February 2003. Unable to cope with the rebellion, the Government opened negotiations but quickly breached the cease-fire. In retaliation, the SLA now joined by the JEM, attacked El-Fisher, Melee and Kutum. The capture of large numbers of troops from El-Fisher and north of Kutum forced the Government to sign a cease-fire and agree to negotiations in Apache, Chad on 3 September 2003.

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NIF = National Islamist Front

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