

# Participatory Democracy Conference South Africa, 14-16 August 2008

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## **Darfour: Negotiating Peaceful transitions.**

### Prologue

- In the ancient history of Darfur, the existing region had been characterized by waves of migrations due to the movements of Arab and African tribes. These waves of migrations had significantly influenced the shaping of Darfur history as well as its norms, traditions and customs. Clearly, migrants had brought with them cultural, social, economic and religious currents, some of which had made radical changes in Darfur. Due to Darfur's natural and climatic diversity, a number of tribes had settled in different parts of the area. Each tribe had its own chief assuming the management of its affairs independent of any other authority. The tribal customs were the term of reference that had governed the relations between different tribes in Darfur. Indeed, Darfur had been known to the world since the ancient history. It has been mentioned that some pharos had once visited the area, while the Romans had made attempts to subjugate Darfur in order to exploit its resources. Admittedly, the 40 Days Road linked Darfur to the Egyptian Governorate of Asute. Moreover, a number of merchants and explorers, from across the world, had visited Darfur as it had been one of the important commercial stopping places in the African continent.
- As an independent entity, Darfur had been ruled by different kingdoms and sultanates, usually named after the dominant tribe, such as Al Dajo Sultanate (between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century AD), and Al Tungor Sultanate (between the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD). In 1445, Sultan Suliman Solong established an Islamic state in Darfur, which lasted, as an independent sultanate, until 1874, when it was conquered by the Turk-Egyptian colonization, following their invasion of Sudan in 1821. Under the new rule, Darfur became part of Sudan up until the Mahdia era. However, following the collapse of the Mahdia state after its armies were defeated while resisting the British invasion, in the battle of Karari, in 1899, Darfur had, again, become an independent entity with external representation, besides being a member in the League of Nations until 1922. Yet, due the support given by Sultan Ali Dinar to Turkey in its struggle against the Allies during the 1<sup>st</sup> WW, Britain invaded Darfur and subjugated it to become, yet again, part of Sudan in 1916.
- The area of Darfur is approximately half a million square Kilometres; it is the size of Iraq, or the State of California in the USA. Also, its size is equivalent to that of France, Holland and Portugal combined. At the time of independence of Sudan, in 1956, Darfur used to be governed as a single administrative unit (province) known as Darfur Province. However, following its seizure of power, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1989, the National Islamic Front regime has divided Darfur into three states: State of North Darfur, State of South Darfur and the State of West Darfur.

*Al Fashir* (capital of North Darfur), *Nyala* (capital of South Darfur) and *AlGinena* (capital of West Darfur) are the largest towns in Darfur; besides Zalingi, Al Dienn, Buram etc.

- Darfur has a vast border open to Libya, Chad and Central Africa Republic. Tribal interactions across such vast border, made Darfur exposed to existing and renewed conflicts in the region. Victorious, in these conflicts, often advance from Darfur, while the defeated retreat to Darfur to regroup for a new attack. Moreover, Darfur shoulders the burden of the fluctuations in the central government's foreign policy towards such neighbours.
- The population of Darfur is 6 million represented in diverse groups of tribes amounting to 100, some of which are of Arab origins, while others are of African origins. African tribes include: Al Fur, Al Zagawa, Al Masleet, Al Berti, Al Tama, Al Falata etc, while Arab tribes include: Al Rizegat, Al Ta'yshaa, Al Habania, Beni Helba, Al Misiriah, Al Ma'liah, al Salamat etc. The origin of the name *Darfur* can be traced back to the African tribe of *Al Fur*, which is the largest and the most famous in the region. The word Darfur means: *Home of Al Fur*.
- All Darfurians are Muslims and they speak different local languages besides the Arabic language. Due to the nature of its problems and its racial and cultural diversity, Darfur is considered as a *mini-Africa*.
- Darfur is renowned for being the biggest producer and exporter of Gum Arabic in the world. Also, it is renowned for its substantial animal wealth. Some studies indicate that a huge wealth of oil and other minerals such as Uranium exist in Darfur.

### **The roots of the conflict in Darfur:**

The conflict in Darfur is decades older than the date of its recognition by the media and the international community. It is considered as one of the manifestations of the Sudanese crisis which started conjoined with independence and continues until now. According to our perception in the Communist Party of Sudan the main direct causes of this conflict can be grouped under the following two categories:

- 1- The historical roots of the conflict.
- 2- The role which was played by the different consecutive political regimes that governed the Sudan, and which eventually resulted in the escalation of the crisis till it was transformed into an international humanitarian tragedy, largely due to the atrocities committed by the Islamic Front regime, which took over power in the Sudan in June 30<sup>th</sup> 1989.

#### **1- Historical roots of the conflict:**

This conflict has a traditional tribal nature, resulting from dependence of these tribes on deteriorating natural resources, and the use of these resources by both nomads and farmers. In these terms, the conflict is as old as the existence of these tribes and their co-existence together. It was clear that the Darfur tribes did not lack awareness and wisdom to face and solve these conflicts. During the period 1957 until today more than 20 tribal conferences had been convened in Darfur. These conferences had summarized the main points of the problem in the following: (a) respect of the historical rights of these tribes

regarding their Hawakeers<sup>1</sup>; (b) agreement on determination of the routes of movements of these tribes (some routes are western to “Jabal Marra” mountain, and other routes are eastern to the mountain.) with a very accurate and precise citation of the fixed natural land-marks for each movement; (c) determination the time of movement; (d) respect towards, and adherence to the tribal norms for resolving the intertribal conflicts, and to the traditions of hosting or providing a safe haven for other tribes.

The participants in these conferences always come out with sound and practical recommendations. But these recommendations remain only on paper without implementation by either the central or the local authorities. And, as usual, under the present regime those conferences were transformed into some sort of political and public relations show, targeted towards the media! However, if the authorities had implemented only part of these recommendations, the security, political and social situations in Darfur wouldn't have deteriorated to the current level.

Despite the total black-out, and tight control over information and media imposed by the government of the NIF since taking over power, there were always eminent warnings in the media related to tribal conflicts in Darfur. For years, the Sudanese newspapers have been covering the news about killing, burning villages and stealing of cattle and properties...etc, in Darfur, but what the newspapers could not publish at that time were the most violent crimes committed by the pro-government Militias resulting in the increasing numbers of the victims, the use of highly advanced artillery in the conflict by the government army, mass rape...etc. And so, since early times it became clear, that the conflict in Darfur is not between the Arab and the African tribes ( Arab vs. Zurga<sup>2</sup> ), but it was very clear that Arabs fights Arabs and Zurga fights Zurga, and that no tribe or ethnic group is safe from this dangerous situation .

However, it is very important to state that the tribal conflicts in Sudan have outreached their traditional nature and form, and have changed from only conflicts over the deteriorating natural resources into the natural aspirations towards real participation in power and administration as well as political decision-making, and also towards just wealth sharing, noting that these tribes live in the wealth producing areas.

## **2- The role of the successive governing regimes in the escalation of the crisis**

Despite the special characteristics and the geographical space, the Darfur crisis is regarded as an extension of the general national crisis existing in Sudan since its independence. This general national crisis is a direct result of the wrong policies and mal-treatments pursued by the successive governments that ruled Sudan during the previous decades, since these authorities had focused only on their control over power while neglecting the constitutional issues related to the building of the newly independent Sudan. Among these most distinctive constitutional issues are:

- 1- The suitable form of governance which realizes just power sharing in the Sudan between the various national and tribal components, and which could lead to healthy political practices.

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1- The land of a particular dan or tribal group.

<sup>2</sup> The local name for the tribes of African origin.

- 2- Reviewing the sharing of wealth and development plans so as to alleviate negligence and unfairness from the underdeveloped areas in the South, West and East, giving priority to areas of ethnic and social conflicts; and all this to be carried out within the context of a scientifically planned economic project which aims to stop the deterioration in the economic surplus-producing areas, without exhausting the center.
- 3- Introduction of political democratic practice that takes into consideration the political reality of the Sudan.
- 4- The issue of the relationship between state and religion.
- 5- The issue of the Sudanese identity ...etc.

The National Islamic Party regime has played a great role in escalating the conflict in Darfur i.e. transformation into a real tragedy and grand disaster. This role is connected to the strategic plans of the National Islamic Party which aim to build an Arab – Islamic entity in Darfur that extends to Western Africa, and constitutes the first line of defense for the Arab – Islamic state in Sudan, the ever lasting dream of the National Islamic Party. This role of the National Islamic Party regime can be seen in the political practices of the regime as well as in its developmental plans.

The political practices include:

- 1- Establishment of new administrative bodies without consideration for the conflicts over land ownership.
  - 1- Division and strife of some local administrations which were against the central authority; and imposition of new administrations pro to the authority.
  - 2- Distribution of weapons brought by what the government calls “Mujahideen<sup>3</sup>” from South Sudan to be used in the tribal conflicts.
  - 3- Discrimination between the tribes in disarmament procedures and weapons distribution.
  - 4- The situation further deteriorated because of the atrocities committed by the “Walis<sup>4</sup>” who wanted to use the tribal historical conflicts to realize political gains for the ruling party, so, they used to award their friendly tribes a province or an administrative area at the expense of other tribes.
  - 5- Conflicts with the neighboring countries and the tribes’ integration in the area resulting in the flow of weapons and warriors.
  - 6- The government policy of soliciting the support of the tribes in neighboring countries; and in return granting their members the Sudanese nationality.
  - 7- Adoption of a clear cut racial policy through direct involvement of the regime leaders in recruitment, finance, and armament the pro-government Janjaweed<sup>5</sup> gangsters. These gangs have committed severe atrocities against Zurga which included mass murders and massacres, mass rapes, burning down houses and villages, ethnic cleansing...etc. The aim of these crimes is expulsion of millions

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<sup>3</sup> - Holy fighters.

<sup>4</sup> - Governors.

<sup>5</sup> - A local word in Darfur which means a Satan mounting a horse, carrying a G3 Gun and then arousing terror & destructions. The government recruited the Janjaweed from some pro-government tribes, mostly Arabs, but also from mercenaries & criminals who had escaped from justice in the countries of the west of Africa.

of Zurga from their very fertile home lands and then transformation these lands to be owned by the class<sup>6</sup> of big businessmen who are either part of the regime or loyal to it. All these crimes have led to the intervention of the international community to fetter the hands of the culprits, as well as to enhance solidarity with the Darfur people from all over the world. In this regard, the Security Council has adopted many resolutions including the submission of the case to the International Criminal Court to prosecute the Janjaweed leaders and the government ranks responsible for those crimes.

The Development aspect of the causes of Darfur conflict includes:

1- It is very true that reversing the economic backwardness of the region represents the basic solution for the Darfur problems. But, in the same time, it is very difficult to deceive the people of Darfur by repeating the same slogans of development programs while not implementing them. The people of Darfur have suffered from failure and collapse of, as well as corruption in tens of programs such as: Jabal Marra mountain project, the Savanna project, Khor Ramla and Sag aneam projects, the closure of Nyala tannery, the negligence of the seasonal maintenance of the clean water streams successful project which was technically and financially funded by the Saxony state of Germany, the abolishing of mobile medical and veterinary clinics project, the suspension of the schools and hospitals due to the delay in salary payments...etc, in other words, there were no development projects; in addition to the total collapse and failure in the services sector.

2-Darfur tribes who have historical rights in the land ownership, were always very generous to provide their lands for the development and revenues generation projects for the benefit of all the population in the region, whether nomads or farmers. And, despite the scarcity of the natural conditions, Darfur can still maintain all its people and animals. The development issue remains a pressing priority since October Revolution<sup>7</sup> of 1964, and uncountable feasibility studies and project files have been accumulated, but the missing circle remains in the political will to take decisions and to mobilize the human and financial resources for the implementation of the plans and projects.

The National Islamic Front regime believed that it could reformulate the Darfurians and their social fabric, norms and traditions according to its engineered designs of it's the so called "The Islamic Project", but this project has exploded from within itself. The explosion was clear even before the coup and foes of the regime. The first indicator for the failure of the project was highlighted when two parliamentarians, both from Darfur, resigned from the National Islamic Front block during the democratic period 1986-1989. The second indicator came after the Islamic Front coup on the 30th of June 1989, when a prominent leader in the Islamic Front, he is a native of Darfur, organized an armed uprising in Darfur but he was caught and executed by his fellow brothers in the Islamic Front. The third indicator was the increase of tribal polarization within the Islamic Front in two groups: 1- Quraish: the symbol for Arab tribes and 2- The Black Book: the symbol for African tribes! Then, as a fourth

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<sup>6</sup> - Our party calls this class "The Islamic parasitic capitalist class".

<sup>7</sup> - The popular uprising that overthrew the military dictatorship during the period 1958 – 1964 in the Sudan.

indicator, the Volcano erupted in the large rift in the leadership of the Islamic front which divided it into a ruling National Congress party and the opposing Peoples Congress party led by Dr. al-Turabi!

However, the best summary and assessment of the crisis of the “Islamic Project” in Darfur was offered by one of the founders of the Islamic Front<sup>8</sup> when he wrote: (The security situation in Darfur is deteriorating gradually from bad to worse. The acts of armed robbery have started because of poverty, unemployment and drought. But then this developed into a tribal conflict between some tribes because of the bankrupt policies of some governors who wanted to use the historical tribal conflicts to achieve political profits for the benefit of the ruling party. The current situation marks the beginning of a civil war in the region under the slogans of political injustice represented in the absence of developmental projects in the region and the lack of education and health services, besides the isolation of the natives of Darfur and preventing them from holding positions of authority in their homeland.)

The continuous marginalization of Darfur since the independence, and the letdown by the traditional political forces who failed to fulfill the demands of the people of Darfur, in addition to the policies of the Islamic Front government which are marked with violence and suppression..., all these factor encouraged the youth of the tribes in the region to organize themselves and rebel against the status quo through the waging of armed resistance to wrench the rights of Darfurian people on equitable sharing of power and wealth, within the frame of a united Sudan.

On the other hand the policy of the partial approach to the problems of the Sudan which was imposed on the country by the international community through concentrating on the Civil War in Southern Sudan and recognizing only the armed group SPLA and Khartoum government as the only negotiators, this policy encouraged other regions to wage rebellion since it was seen as the only way to attract attention to their demands. Thus the region of Darfur witnesses a true Civil War that raises the slogans of genuine political, social and economical equality and justice.

### **The Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA)**

On the fifth of May 2006 in the Nigerian capital Abuja the government of the Sudan and the Sudan Liberation movement (Mr. Mani Arko Manawi Faction) signed the Darfur Peace agreement (DPA) – also called Abuja agreement. The agreement was signed after the international community; mainly the U.S.A, and the African Union have exerted great pressure on the negotiating parties.

In spite of many reservations and remarks on this DPA, we considered it as a base or starting point for the peace process in Darfur. However, our party reaffirmed that the agreement can only succeed if annexes and additions are made to satisfy the demands of the factions which did not sign it saying that it does not fulfill the basic demand of the people of Darfur. Now, it is well known that in spite of that agreement, the situation in

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<sup>8</sup> Dr.Eltayeb Zein Alabdeen: “Darfur and the Political solution” in Al Bayan Newspaper, the Emirates, 18/9/2002.

Darfur has deteriorated and the military conflicts increased in number of victims, severity and destructive nature.

The Communist Party's reservations on the agreement are as follows:

1- The negotiations in Abuja, and therefore what the agreement entailed, was governed by the CPA, between the SPLM and the GoS which created an inescapable frame and ceiling /limit which could not be crossed. It is known that the protocols of Machakos and Naivasha extended beyond the issue of the civil war in the South to deal with all aspects of the Sudanese crisis represented in issues such as: peace, identity, unity, democracy, system of government, development and division of resources, the army, security, foreign affairs... etc. Also the CPA strived to create basic changes in the structure of the current political system including self determination (a single united state or two states) during the transitional period. These issues were decided on by two parties only: the Islamic Front government and the SPLM, while all the other political and social forces including the armed factions in Darfur were not involved. Therefore it is not logical to commit the factions of Darfur and confine them within a framework or ceiling they did not contribute to.

The Communist Party believes that to solve the national problems and to stop armed confrontation in the country, it is necessary to achieve a comprehensive national consensus which deals with all aspects of the national crises. This can only succeed provided that all political forces will be actively engaged in this process, both at the level of decision making and implementation.

2- In the Abuja negotiations, the international community used the same methodology that it adopted at the Naivasha talks. The methodology of the partial approach to the conflict without paying attention to the fragility of the resultant solutions which in all cases will remain as temporary solutions and under real threat shall collapse at any time. It was the same approach used in Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Siera Leone and Chad...etc. This approach does not look at the Sudanese crisis as a whole, or as a one crisis that manifests in many conflicts, but breaks it up into partial solutions imposed under increased pressure. We do believe that this approach is not successful in the case of the Sudan.

3- The international community and the African Union have exerted great pressure with the aim of obtaining signatures of the movements of Darfur. In this regard the agreement does not differ much from what had happened at Naivasha. But, here, the result was the signing of only one faction of one movement of the warring movements. We wonder, concerning this approach, if the mediators did not notice, or had noticed but did not care and did not take into consideration the composition and the structural nature of the armed movements of Darfur; being connected to the tribal divisions in the region. For everybody, it is clear that the way the agreement was signed will only encourage the continuation of bloody tribal conflicts in the area.

### ***Our vision towards the comprehensive settlement of the crisis***

**First:** The top priority should be given to address the disastrous and the tragic situation in the region through immediate measures under the auspices of the UN and African Union as agreed to in Addis Ababa. These measures include the following:

1-Deployment of international troops in the region to assist the already deployed African troops in prohibiting all the military operations, protection of refugee camps dwellers and the displaced and ensuring the delivery of aid, food and medication through safe corridors, imposing a no flying zone as well as international and regional supervision to the cease fire, introduce an effective mechanism to disarm the region and supervising all means of land transport and entrance points to prevent the smuggling of arms into the region.

2-To introduce effective mechanisms to disarm the Janjaweed, and bring them to justice.

3-To activate the international mechanism which was assigned to investigate the atrocities and ethnic cleansing genocide...etc and to identify the criminals and forward them to justice.

4-To work towards the return of the refugees and the displaced to their home lands and to ensure their protection and compensation for their losses.

**Second:** To bring the factions that did not sign the Abuja agreement to the negotiating table with the government. This should be done under the supervision of the UN and the African Union with the purpose of adding annexes to the Abuja agreement.

**Third:** To organize the Darfurian –Darfurian conference with the purpose of giving the people of Darfur the chance to address the Abuja agreement and the possible annexes that may be added to it. The resolutions of the conference should be annexed to the peace agreement. The conference should be held in a free and democratic environment, away from the government and with the help of the UN.

**Fourth:** The Communist Party believes that the right approach to the Darfur problem is to recognize it, not as just a tribal conflict, but as a result of the general crisis of the Sudan which is characterized by the continuous marginalization of the peripheries, and Darfur is one of these peripheries. Consequently, the problem is political and requires a national political solution. Hence, the idea of convening a national political conference on Darfur becomes a necessity. Such conference is to be attended by all the political forces in the country including the Darfurian armed movements as well as the all sectors of Darfur people. The conference must embrace all the initiatives tempting to resolve the conflict.

**Fifth:** Darfur bears the effects of the demographic changes and the geopolitics of the Sudanese State in the western border of the country. This border is a vast open and unprotected boundary with the three African countries: Chad, Central Africa and Libya. During the Libyan -Chadian conflict the factions started their attack from Darfur in Sudan and the losers took refuge in Darfur to reorganize their troops before re-attacking again. Central Africa launches frequent attacks through Darfur in revenge for the intervention of the Khartoum government in Bangui conflicts. These vast open and unprotected boundaries can only be protected through the policy of good neighborhood, and that the Sudan should see to it not to be used as a bridge for the ambitions of this nation or that ruler to cross to Africa under the name of Islam and Arab Nationalism.

**Last:** The Communist Party of the Sudan believes that the final solution to the problems of the country can only be achieved through addressing these various problems in a comprehensive approach. The best mechanism for such an approach is convening a national conference attended by the all Sudanese political forces. In this conference, all the agreements: Naivasha, Abuja, The East, Cairo...etc, should be tabled not to open them for re-discussion, but to accommodate the other opinions aiming at further



improvements of these agreements, and to participate in the implementation and the monitoring of the implementation of these agreements. This will pave the way for the political forces in the conference to adopt a national consensus project which is the only tool that can save the country. The project considers the multi-ethnicity and the development disparities in the different parts of the Sudan and confronts, through democracy and the participation of all the Sudanese, the problems of imbalanced development and equitable and just share in power and wealth so that the Sudan can be preserved united and secured for all of its peoples.

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**Communist Party of the Sudan**  
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