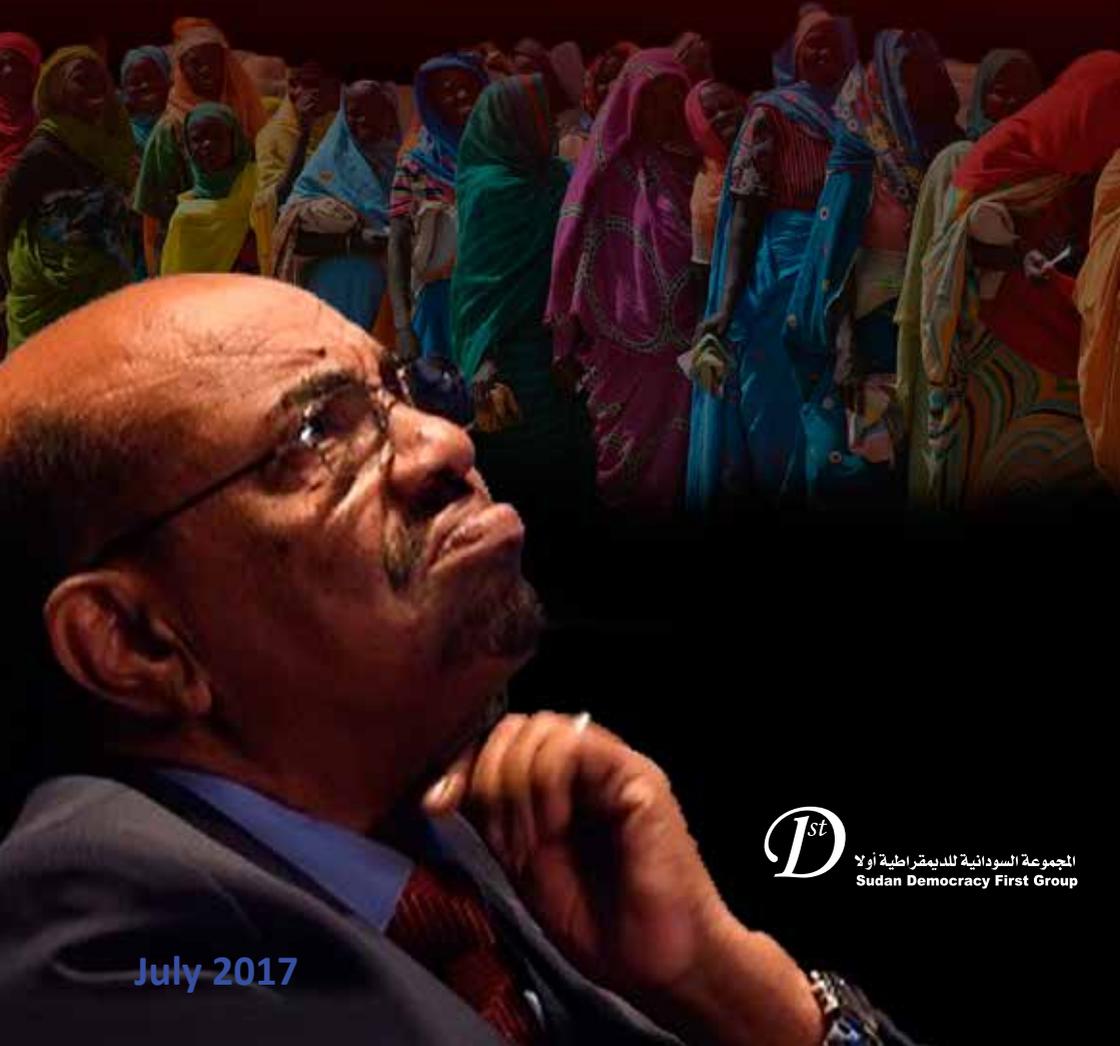


Manufacturing the Illusion of Stability in Sudan



المجموعة السودانية للديمقراطية أولاً
Sudan Democracy First Group

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About Sudan Democracy First Group

Sudan Democracy First Group (**SDFG**) was established by a number of Sudanese Civil Society Leaders, Activists and Academics in ٢٠١٠ in Khartoum. The establishment of **SDFG** was particularly spurred by the failure to democratic transformation in Sudan, which became acutely apparent during the April ٢٠١٠ national elections, as part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. With growing instability, caused by reoccurrence of conflict, lack of justice and accountability, and increasing exclusion and marginalization, **SDFG** emerged with the aim to provide a voice to the voiceless, as well as to promote democracy in its intersection, with peace, justice, and balanced development.

VISION

SDFG envisions a democratic inclusive society in Sudan where justice, equality, peace and development prevail.

MISSION

Sudan Democracy First Group considers its overall mission to promote inclusive democracy. **SDFG** is further committed to the raising up of marginalized groups (whether marginalization is based on culture, ethnicity, class, gender, race, region, age, political affiliation or religion) by providing platforms for inclusive and transparent engagement and promoting opportunities for participation and expression in the public sphere.

APPROACHES AND METHODS

SDFG works on addressing the problem of lack of the inclusive democracy based on complementary and multi-disciplinary approach guided by values of peace, justice and development. **SDFG** focusses on the provision of profound and independent research and analysis; campaigning for justice and contributing to lasting solution to the conflicts in Sudan. **SDFG** further works to promote civil society dialogue, collaboration and the development of a joint democratic agenda. Moreover, **SDFG** is committed to enhancing accountability and promote democratic governance structures. Lastly **SDFG** aims at facilitating the participation and engagement of a democratic and independent civil society and its leadership in the different political processes and dialogues.

AREAS OF INTERVENTIONS

SDFG introduced a number of initiatives and projects since its foundation which can be categorized into three programmatic areas;

- Governance and Accountability
- Civic Engagement in Peace and Political Processes
- Policy and Advocacy

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Introduction

The Sudanese government establishment, including its institutions and officials, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and various international diplomatic circles involved in Sudanese affairs are trying to present a false image of political stability and peace in Sudan. Nevertheless, the reality in Sudan is that there is severe political instability, insecurity and harsh living conditions; the extent of these problems undermines the picture of alleged stability. The creation of the illusion of stability is one of the cornerstones that supports the NCP's maintaining political dominance and hegemony, alongside excluding popular participation, continuing the prolonged military oppression, ever-growing structural corruption and unprincipled and dogmatic international community efforts to create actual stability. This report reviews the complex manifestations of the political crisis in Sudan, which has reached a point of hopelessness in attempts to resolve clear, evident crises – contributing to the ongoing process of creating an illusion of stability. This report aims at covering the following:

Issues of War and Peace in Sudan.

National Dialogue and its Outcomes: What is Next?

The Sudanese Opposition: Gains and Losses.

The International Community and Bashir's Regime: Deadly Lies

The African Union High-Level Implementation Panel: Challenges and Opportunities.

Through these five themes and their sub issues, this report is aimed at presenting a realistic image of crises in Sudan, as opposed to what we are referring to as the manufacturing of the illusion of stability. This will be done by revealing the processes, factors and interactions through which this illusion is created. In addition, we will reveal the local and international actors involved in keeping these deep crises in stasis and facilitating the process of manufacturing an illusion of stability in Sudan aimed at normalizing the current situation and presenting the current situation as if it were a viable alternative to a comprehensive solution to the crisis of the Sudanese state.

Issues of War and Peace in Sudan

The Origins of Current Wars

One fact which is constantly overlooked, despite its clear effects on Sudanese political reality, is that the Sudanese government is one of the few governments today that continues to prosecute a geographically wide ranging civil war against national, political and ethnic subgroups of its own population. The ongoing war in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains has its historical origins in the absence of balanced development on the margins, exclusion from popular participation and racial and religious discrimination against several ethnic and cultural groups. These are manifestations of a structural flaw in the political equation upon which the Sudanese state was established and developed, as are the constant civil wars in Sudan. The outbreak of civil wars is not

Sudan's civil wars exploded as an expression of the inability of political movements to understand and represent the political, economic, and social demands of large sections of the population faced with continuous exclusion and dismissal of their propositions in peaceful political discourse.

aimed at fulfilling direct political goals, as it may seem, but rather a result of the narrow space for, and inability of, political movements to fulfill the demands of the Sudanese people and ensure that their political views are heard within the process of the national construction and development of Sudan. Civil wars exploded as an expression of the inability of political movements to understand and represent the political, economic and social demands of large sections of the population faced with continuous exclusion and dismissal of their propositions in peaceful political discourse. Thus, war in Sudan is explained in relation to the failure of governing powers to take into account the fair demands of the peoples of the current conflict areas, as well as South Sudan prior to its separation. The absence of political space for populations on the margins

and in the Sudanese countryside to freely express their political grievances complicated the demands of these groups for development, equality and political participation. Furthermore, it provided the cultural and intellectual underpinnings of these wars and armed conflicts which were seen as the only option for expressing grievances and achieving political participation in a closed political environment.

Another factor distinguishing current wars in Sudan is that they have all broken out and developed under the leadership of the NCP. Although the wars in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan/ the Nuba Mountains have deep historical roots, the ideological exclusion and political oppression practiced by the National Islamic Front¹ regime since 1989, the widening marginalization of the peripheries in terms of both development and culture, and the regime's failure to implement the various peace agreements that it has signed, all contributed to the growing frustrations of the populations of these areas. These accumulated grievances, as well as the loss of confidence in the NCP to implement politically negotiated agreements, has fueled the expansion of violence as a means of political expression. A quick review of the chronology shows us that the war in Darfur began, in its current form, in 2003, although the historical marginalization of the region clearly stretched far further back. The timing can be explained by the fact that previous governments had respect for the local civil and tribal systems of governance and administration. In addition, previous governments did not interfere with or manipulate the rules of these local systems to impose their authority on the people. In addition, the previous parliamentary system which prevailed in Sudan in the democratic period gave these groups a voice to express their demands and grievances politically, at least to some extent. In contrast, the NCP regime has relied upon discriminating between tribes and arming some of them through tribally-oriented militias. In addition, it has striven to change the demographics of the region by enabling those groups and ethnicities that identify with Arab and Islamic culture and siding with them in disputes with other groups. This has increased tribal tension

1- The National Islamic Front is the former name of the National Congress Party (NCP).

and stimulated conflicts over resources, which eventually exploded into armed conflict. This has been exacerbated by the Al Bashir government's failure to implement, and manipulation of peace agreements in the region. One example is the Darfur Peace Agreement signed in Abuja with the Sudan Liberation Movement of Minni Minawi, which was quickly undermined by the failure to implement key provisions, leading to the resumption of fighting. The government directed the Janjaweed militia to attack, resulting in the burning of 48 villages and the displacement of 45,000 in only a few months after the signing of the agreement².

The same thing happened with Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) which was signed by the government and the Liberation and Justice Movement. The agreement created a regional authority which was to administer all of Darfur as a united region, including all three states that existed at the time. Nonetheless the government did not hesitate to divide Darfur into five states on a tribal basis. It furthermore manipulated the conduct of the Darfur referendum, which under the terms of the DDPD was to allow Sudanese citizens of Darfur to choose between administration as a single region and the existing states. The referendum was delayed for several years and was subject to serious procedural violations according to independent monitoring reports, including by the Darfur Bar Association.³

In addition, the government failed to implement core provisions of the agreement, such as the provision that dictates that the people of Darfur should be exempt from educational fees at national universities. This was done intentionally with the purpose of discouraging students from Darfur from attending higher education institutions in the center.

In the same way, the regime intentionally lost the opportunity made available

2- Statements from leader of Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minawi in a report in Al-Riyadh Saudi newspaper regarding peace in Sudan, available at: <http://www.alriyadh.com/213331>

3- Darfur Bar Association, "The Referendum is Corrupt and its Results are Manipulated: Violations Monitoring Report of Darfur Administrative Referendum," available at: <https://goo.gl/OQqby7>; and Darfur Lawyers and Sudan Democracy First, "Questions and Answers About Darfur Referendum," available at <https://goo.gl/9fD3lQ>.

by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005, which ended the longest civil war in Sudan, and also had a special protocol dedicated to the states of the Blue Nile and South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains. The protocol included political, security and development provisions that could have been employed to engage seriously with the demands of the two states and to prevent the reigniting of war shortly after the end of the implementation period of the agreement and the separation of South Sudan. The return to war was due to the failure to implement the provisions of the agreement relating to the two areas, in particular the conduct of the popular consultations which was to offer the people of the two areas the right to express their views on the constitutional, administrative, economic and security arrangements for their participation in the Sudanese state. The regime, from the beginning, intentionally blocked the application of the agreement, delaying the popular consultations process by delaying the passage of the popular consultations law, manipulating demographic statistics in the two states and committing election fraud in the general elections of 2010 in South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains. In addition, the regime issued a unilateral decree ordering the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) to disarm, despite the fact that the CPA had provided for their continued presence in the area. This action was taken before new security arrangements could be agreed and before the popular consultations could be completed, in essence, before reaching a comprehensive resolution for the conflict in the two areas.

The regime exploited the independence of South Sudan and the end of the CPA period to resolve the situation of the two areas militarily; accordingly, it issued a decree to wage war in South Kordofan/ the Nuba Mountains in June 2011. Despite the peace agreement quickly agreed between by the Sudanese government, represented by the president's then-Senior Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie, and the Chairman of the SPLM-North Malik Agar under the sponsorship of the African Union⁴, President Al-Bashir insisted on refusing to implement the agreement, favoring the continuation of war up to the present.

4- Text of agreement between National Congress and Sudan People's Liberation Movement regarding South Kordofan and Blue Nile, June 2011, available at: http://www.sudantribune.net/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id_article=1383

Sudanese government exchanged the independence of South Sudan for a carte blanche to spread its oppression in the states of the North.

It was evident that time that the Sudanese government exchanged the independence of South Sudan for a carte blanche to spread its oppression in the states of the North with the purpose of regaining the ideological and governing dominance that immediately followed the 1989 NIF coup. Indeed, Al-Bashir celebrated the secession of South Sudan through public statements before the referendum in which he spoke about the disappearance of the manifestations of diversity in Sudan and the supremacy of the Islamic-Arabian culture after the separation of the South, announcing that there would be no further scope for speaking about religious or cultural diversity after that. He described the structure of Sudan before the separation of the South with the colloquial Sudanese Arabic term: “daghmasa”, which translates into: “chaotic nature.”⁵ In addition, recent press releases from Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov revealed that Al-Bashir’s enthusiasm regarding the separation of South Sudan was part of a secret deal ensuring that Al-Bashir would evade personal accountability by standing trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC) which has been requesting Al-Bashir to stand to account for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur since 2008⁶.



5- Statements from Omer Al-Bashir in Al-Qadarif, 20 December 2010, link: <https://goo.gl/F3QsDc>

6- Statements from Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov in a joint press conference with American Minister of Foreign Affairs, April 2017, available at <https://goo.gl/McNA84>

Wars' Humanitarian Effects: IDPs and the Illusion of Stability

One of the clear and evident effects of the continuation of wars in Sudan is the continuously increasing displacement crisis.

United Nations agencies estimate the number of displaced people in 2017 at approximately 4.8 million citizens⁷. This number does not represent the total number of displaced people, it includes those who are categorized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as in need of humanitarian aid. This indicates that the actual number of displaced people could be more than that. Also, it is recognizable that international aid agencies have started, based on different justifications, using less direct indicators and terminologies in order to avoid provoking and infuriating the government when reporting them. Such as: “citizens of need for humanitarian aid” to dilute referencing to the number of “Internally Displaced People” with all the considerations around their status, “victims of sexual violence” but not number “rape cases”, “those affected by severe food insecurity” but not “those affected by famine” and others. Although these terms might be distinctly defined using them as the main humanitarian indicators does water down the severity of the situation in Sudan and facilitates the creation of the illusive image of peace and stability. This pragmatic strategy probably helps to facilitate the work of the organizations currently working in Sudan and makes the security forces less aggressive. Nevertheless, it has serious negative consequences and implications on the presentation and evaluation of humanitarian conditions and living standards of victims in Sudan. In addition, it has certainly played a role in decreasing the support given to humanitarian activities in Sudan which has affected both international humanitarian organizations and the lives of the displaced.

The ruling NCP regime exploits the deteriorating humanitarian situation as a tool to pressure the displaced and victims of war as well as to manipulate

7- OCHA, “General Preview on Humanitarian Needs in Sudan for the Year 2017,” December 2016, available at:<http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-2017-humanitarian-needs-overview-dec-2016>

IDPs and Refugees represent a tangible evidence of the tragedies of the ongoing war, and they can not be buried under the ashes of an illusive stability. They became the largest social bloc in Sudan with common causes including the issue of the need to achieve justice in Sudan.

international aid organizations and the international community. The NCP has used this pressure on a number of occasions. For instance, in 2009 it suspended the humanitarian aid activities of more than thirteen organizations working in Darfur, including the Oxfam UK, Save the Children, Doctors without Borders, Khartoum Center for Human Rights and Environment Development and the Sudanese Organization for Development (SUDO)⁸. Also, many United Nations employees have been declared persona non grata by the Sudanese government, including the United Nations Special Representative and head of the United Nation's Mission in Sudan Jan Pronk in 2006, Yvonne Helle Country Director of United Nation Development Program and Ali Al-Za'atari the

Resident Coordinator for Humanitarian and Development Affairs in 2014 and Ivo Freijsen the Director of OCHA in 2016, in addition to, suspending and stopping the work of the Red Cross for more than once.

In 2015, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimated the number of displaced persons at 3.2 million.⁹ It is easy to notice an increase in the number of displaced persons due to the continuation of military violence from the government during 2015 and 2016 – especially the constant bombings and airstrikes aimed at civilians in Jebel Marra for more than nine months in 2016. Indeed IDMC reported that around 100,000 people were newly displaced by violence in 2016. The government then denied aid agencies access to the areas hosting new displaced persons for month before allowing limited access for humanitarian aid to areas of Jebel Marra

8- IRIN, "NGO expulsion to hit Darfur's Displaced," 9 March 2009, available at <https://goo.gl/QgLNK3>.

9- IDMC statistics about Sudan for the year 2015, link: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/database/country/?iso3=SDN>

in the beginning of 2017, a year after the military attacks began¹⁰.

On a similar note, the Sudanese government denies humanitarian access and prevents the delivery of humanitarian aid for more than 500,000 displaced persons within the areas under the authority of SPLM-North. The government uses the issue of humanitarian aid as a tool to exert political pressure in the intermittent negotiations with the SPLM-North under the sponsorship of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel. It also uses it for political maneuvering in its attempts at diplomatic rapprochement with the international community. In addition to treating displaced persons in SPLM-N controlled area in Blue Nile and South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains as political hostages, the Sudanese government refuses to count those fleeing the war zones in the two areas to the areas under its control. In this way, the government takes away from fleeing victims even the official title of being displaced. This hinders and handicaps efforts to address the humanitarian situation of the displaced, preventing aid agencies from providing aid and assistance unless they comply with the terms of the administration and the security forces. The government denies and obstructs access for Sudanese local aid organizations to these areas, preventing Sudanese civil and domestic organizations from providing aid in war zones.

The Sudanese government has not stopped striving to get rid of displaced persons and dismantle their camps, which stand as a clear, material evidence of, and bear witness to, the continuation of war and its cruelty. Despite the ongoing, rapid increase in the number of displaced persons in all three war zones, to the extent that they have become the largest social group of people with one unified issue similar in Sudan, the ruling NCP does not care for them and insists on dealing with them according to agendas of political and security maneuvering. As a result, the Sudanese government worked in 2015 and 2016 on executing a comprehensive plan aimed at dismantling the displaced persons camps in Darfur under the direct supervision of Vice President Hasabo Abdalrahman¹¹.

10- Sudan Tribune, "Sudan authorizes humanitarian and medical assistance to Jebel Marra areas," 27 January 2017, available at: <http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article61498>

11- Sudan Democracy First Group, "The Plan of Displacing the Displaced Persons of Dar-

The plan, which was subject to a long analysis by the Sudan Democracy First Group in the beginning of 2016, was aimed at getting rid of the material evidence of war in Darfur by dismantling the camps alleging the voluntary return of displaced persons and demanding the exit of the Joint United Nations and African Union Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur. This was to serve as a preface for completing the process of changing the social and demographic structure of the region in favor of the ethnic groups supportive of the regime alongside settlers from outside of Sudan.

There is, however, a negative side to “voluntary” return. which the government insists on presenting as the only resolution for the issue of displaced persons. A 2014 assessment of returns by the International Refugee Rights Initiative showed that although people were choosing to return, these returns could not really be considered voluntary because returnees were generally responding more to the pressures of inadequate assistance in the camps than a real readiness to return. Further, they were not being supported in return and were being forced into problematic agreements with neighboring groups to essentially buy their return¹².

An evaluation by OCHA in its March 2017 documented the harsh humanitarian conditions and the lack of any type of support to the returnees¹³. Reasons for the failure of government-adopted model of voluntary returns vary from the fact that the displaced return to find that their properties, belonging and homes were looted or destroyed, to the absence of security, to the constant repetition of militia attacks upon returnees, to the absence of basic services that makes it impossible to live again in their indigenous areas. In addition to that, it is also important to include the phenomenon of new settlers and inhabitants who the government offers the property and lands previously owned by displaced persons, all in the context of

fur: A New Crime for an Ongoing Crisis,” 11th of January 2016, available at: <https://goo.gl/sRK8LZ>

12- International Refugee Rights initiative, “‘it’s a joke.’ Ongoing conflict in Sudan’s Darfur region and controversies over ‘return’”, July 2014.

13- OCHA, “Sudan: We have returned home to nothing”, 8March 2017, available at:

<https://www.unocha.org/legacy/top-stories/all-stories/sudan-we-have-retuned-home-nothing>

changing the demographics of the region. Also, the government does not give returnees any fair individual indemnification which is needed in order for them to rebuild their lives in their indigenous areas. Furthermore, the government does not conduct any efforts to rebuild the areas destroyed by war.

Subsequently, despite the presence of substantial evidence that there is a growing need for UNAMID to play a more effective role in the region of Darfur¹⁴, the regime's plan to get rid of the force has succeeded in weakening its effectiveness and its ability to protect civilians, facilitate peace operations and resettlement, and prevent the occurrence of new humanitarian crimes in the region. The crimes committed during the campaigns in Jebel Marra in 2016 remain as evidence of the government's success in weakening the effectiveness of UNAMID.

The displacement of persons is one of the most important and main effects of war and resolving it is one the most important issues in achieving peace in Sudan. There need to be clear and firm approaches to resolving the situation of the displaced including by hearing them out and acting according to their demands as they are the largest group affected by the war and will benefit directly from the reestablishment of real, stable, and just peace. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the importance of participation and rights in the return process just to create the illusion of stability in Sudan.

Regime Militias: The Guardians of the Illusion of Stability

The government counts on tribal militias and arms them to be used in its civil war in the three warzones. This has further complicated the situation in terms of security, working as fuel for extending the course of wars and widening their geographical spread¹⁵. On the top of the list of these militias

14- Sudan Democracy First Group, "Abiding to Promises or Escaping Responsibility: The Increasing Need for a More Effective Role to be played by the UNAMID in Darfur," January 2016, available at: <https://goo.gl/YCxKt2>

15- Sudan Ministry of Defense, "Passing the RSF act in its second review by the parliament," available at <https://tinyurl.com/y7lw9p9o>

The Rapid Support Forces Law came as an attempt to circumvent demands by the international community for the reform of these security forces, formally normalizing them and placing them within the regular framework of the security forces, but without changing their identity, roles and nature in regards to practicing illegal violence, stimulating war, ethnic division and conducting combat and deadly missions on behalf of the ruling party and its president.

is what is being referred to as the Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, better known as Hemeti, who was given the military rank of Lieutenant General. In Sudan, this military rank is two degrees away from the rank of the supreme leader of the armed forces, President Al-Bashir. This rank gives Hemeti authorities parallel to those of the Minister of Defense. Hemeti's forces are nearly totally independent from the Sudanese Ministry of Defense, despite the issuance of a Law on the Rapid Support Forces which placed the forces under the Ministry of Defense rather than the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) which had previously overseen them. Nonetheless, the new law has situated the force under the direct authority of President Al-Bashir without any supervision from executive authorities or the leadership of the armed forces¹⁶.

Whereas the Rapid Support Forces Law came as an attempt to circumvent demands by the international community for the reform of these security forces, formally normalizing them and placing them within the regular framework of the security forces, but without changing their identity, roles and nature in regards to practicing illegal violence, stimulating war, ethnic division and conducting combat and deadly missions on behalf of the ruling party and its president.

16- Radio Dabanga, "New bill to place RSF under command of Sudan President," 10 January 2017, available at <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/new-bill-to-place-rsf-under-command-of-sudan-president>

The Rapid Support Forces rely on recruiting members based on ethnicity; from those ethnic groups what are broadly supportive of the ruling party. Joining this force does not require organized military training in the Sudanese Military College or the Soldiers School conducted for by the Sudanese Armed Forces. This leads Militia members to be less disciplined and more likely to commit violations of human rights. The United Nations and other international organizations have repeatedly referred to this force as “a major factor of concern,” involved in increasing the intensity of violence and committing humanitarian crimes in Darfur¹⁷.

The methodology of these militias is that they recruit the youth of the tribes that do not own land dedicated to its traditional tribal leadership within the traditional tribal system of Sudan such as the Arabian tribes in Darfur or the Rashayda tribe in eastern Sudan - whom the leader of Rapid Support Forces visited recently in attempt to recruit its youth to his forces-. This lack of land ownership makes the economic activities of these tribes limited and strenuous, largely dependent on periodic grazing and long distance mobility under tough living conditions. Nevertheless, the opportunity of being recruited by the militias and the profitable support given to these tribal groups by the government in social terms has created a new reality, wherein joining the militias and becoming a soldier of fortune, is the most favored economic activity for a large number of the youth of these tribes, especially considering the relatively high income that comes along with it, significantly higher than the income of a soldier or even an officer in the formal army. In addition to that, these militia fighters obtain the great privilege of being allowed to keep whatever they loot from civilians during attacks as spoils of war under the condition that they deliver heavy weaponry acquired from rebel groups to the formal army. Furthermore, these privileges include immunity against any legal prosecution relating to any violation committed by members of

17- “Report of Director of UNAMID to Security Council regarding the increase of violence in Darfur,” April 2014, available at: <https://unamid.unmissions.org/3-apr-14-una-mid-head-briefs-un-security-council-alarming-escalation-violence%E2%80%9D-darfur>; and “Report of committee of experts appointed by the UN to monitor the situation in Darfur,” 2016, available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/final-report-panel-experts-sudan-established-pursuant-resolution-1591-2005-s2016805>.

these militias, even those as simple and basic as settling a speeding ticket¹⁸. These facts serve as encouragement for fighters of the Rapid Support Forces to commit many crimes including highway robbery in different areas in Sudan, including Sinja, Khartoum and El Obeid among other urban cities far from the war zones¹⁹⁻²⁰. They commit these crimes without held accountable in any way.

This phenomenon of arming and militarizing tribes has also contributed directly to the uncontrolled spread of weapons, particularly in the western region of Sudan leading to increasing the intensity of tribal conflicts, even within Arab tribes. What used to be limited skirmishes have turned into intense armed conflicts involving heavy weaponry and resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries. Recently, these conflicts have multiplied, for instance the conflict between t of Al-Rizeigat and Malaia tribes in April 2017 and before that the conflict between Al-Kababeish and Al-Hamar tribes alongside the conflicts of Bani Hussein and Al-Mahameid tribes, the conflicts between Al-Habbaneya and Al-Salamat tribes among others. These conflicts resulted in the killing of hundreds of citizens in combat and revenge²¹. All of this is happening in the absence of rule of law and the state, while most of the tribal fighters in these conflicts from both sides are enjoying the legal immunity given to them as militia men.

Official police are unable to deal with this new reality or to face the fighters

18- "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Impunity and Accountability in Darfur," 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SD/ImpunityAccountabilityInDarfur2014.pdf>; and Impunity Watch, Tyler Campbell, Impunity Watch Reporter, Africa "The Atrocities of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces," September 12, 2015, available at <http://impunitywatch.com/the-atrocities-of-sudans-rapid-support-forces/>

19- \$3 million for withdrawal of North Kordofan's Janjaweed, Radio Dabanga; <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/3-million-for-withdrawal-of-north-kordofan-s-janjaweed>

20- Sudan: Three Raped in Sudan's Sennar, Radio Dabanga, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201605310238.html>

21- Radio Dabanga, "Tribal fighting in West Kordofan and Central Darfur," 13 July 2016, available at <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/tribal-fighting-in-west-kordofan-and-central-darfur>; AFP, "Tribal clashes flare in Sudan's West Kordofan state," *Daily Mail*, 3 April 2017, available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-4377124/Tribal-clashes-flare-Sudans-West-Kordofan-state.html>.

of these tribal militias. Former Federal Minister of the Interior Ismat Abdelrahman, who is also former Sudanese Army Chief of Staff, has called for the Sudanese army to get involved and help the police in the Darfur region to curb the spread militias and monitor foreign presence, especially in the gold rich area of Jebel A'amir. This call led him into a collision with the militias of Hemeti and Musa Hilal. The political leadership of the ruling party and the government did not respond to him, fearing backlash from the militias if they did so. As a result, the minister resigned from his position and left the country furious²².

At the same time, the ruling NCP has engaged the Rapid Support Forces in new tasks, both regionally and internationally such as fighting illegal immigration and participating in Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen. The Sudanese regime is giving these tasks to the Rapid Support Forces in an attempt to force the international community to accept them in spite of their domestic ongoing crimes. They also seek to present them as effective forces that can conduct missions and tasks that regular army does not want to undertake to avoid being accused of violating international laws, acting as mercenaries and serving interests other than the national interest. Actions that the Rapid Support Forces do not hesitate to undertake. It appears that this attempt might actually succeed, with important actors regionally and internationally desperate to control Sudan's border and to change the balance of power in the region. In addition, the Sudanese government is seeking financial, economic and diplomatic benefits for marketing the services of the Rapid Support Forces regionally and internationally.

In light of all this, the government and the ruling party's reliance on, and strong support for, tribal militias has created many complications. These complications are further evidence of President Al-Bashir's personal reliance on this militia to preserve his rule. Illustrating this, he has called the Rapid Support Forces "my protection". The ruling regime has normalized and

22- Radio Dabanga, "Tribal fighting in West Kordofan and Central Darfur," 13 July 2016, available at <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/tribal-fighting-in-west-kordofan-and-central-darfur>; AFP, "Tribal clashes flare in Sudan's West Kordofan state," *Daily Mail*, 3 April 2017, available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-4377124/Tribal-clashes-flare-Sudans-West-Kordofan-state.html>.

legalized the presence and development of these militias in wars inside and outside the country in an effort to present them as forces guarding peace and stability, when in reality they represent a huge obstacle to reaching any just peace or real stability in Sudan.

The Illusion of the Cessation of Hostilities

Despite the Sudanese government's announcement of a six-month unilateral ceasefire, military attacks in all three warzones did not stop during the past five months. For instance, the last week of April 2017 alone witnessed two days of continuous aerial bombing of villages east and west of Jebel Marra in Darfur²³. Also, the Sudan Liberation Movement - Abdelwahid faction - reported on 25 April 2017 that it had faced government attacks against one of its bases in the area of Turantora. It furthermore revealed the names of the casualties both from its side and that of the government and its militias. On 27 April 2017, the areas of Mara and Barkuro in Jebel Marra witnessed another attack by the Janjaweed militia; nine persons were killed and a large number of cattle were looted. UNAMID documented a case in which a militia member raped a -13 year-old girl living in Kabkabia camp, before stabbing her horribly with a knife in her genitals²⁴. On 28 April 2017, one woman was killed and another was injured in an attack by Janjaweed militias in the Gallab region of North Darfur. The area of Shangile Tubay witnessed an attempted kidnapping and rape of women²⁵ Zamzam camp was also attacked by the Rapid Support Forces at the same time as large trucks loaded with foreigners were brought to settle in the area²⁶.

As these examples illustrate, it is possible to track daily violations of cessation of hostilities by the Sudanese government and its militias. The last week of May 2017 witnessed large scale military operations conducted

23- Radio Tamazuj, "Sudan's interior minister resigns," 23 February 2017, available at: <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/sudan-s-interior-minister-resigns>

24- Report from Radio Dabanga, available at: <https://goo.gl/Xke4pS>

25- Afiya Darfur Radio station: Death of a Woman and Rape Attempts Against Other Women in North Darfur, listen to full report here: <http://www.afiadarfur.com/woman-killed-three-injured-rape-north-darfur/>

26- Radio Dabanga report, 29 April 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/OvSKOc>

by government forces and the Rapid Support Forces against forces of Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minawi faction and the Transitional Council of the Sudan Liberation Movement in North and East Darfur²⁷. These military operations resulted in dozens of civilian casualties, including deaths, injuries and displacement, especially in the areas of Ein Seiro and the western Kutum mountains. Several reports claimed that governmental forces conducted these attacks, in direct violation of its announced suspension of hostilities. Apart from that, there is no mechanism set up to monitor the unilateral ceasefire. The Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim Ghandour's meeting with diplomatic missions prior to the attacks, in which he notified them formally about upcoming attacks and justified them citing the movement of SLA troops, worked as a preamble and configured the international community's response to the attacks. In addition, the statements from the leaders of the Rapid Support Forces and the governor of East Darfur, Anas Omer, about the military operations were full of racial discrimination and incitement.

It is likely that the Sudanese government's most recent violation of the ceasefire was a reaction to what was accomplished in the unofficial negotiations between the Sudan Liberation Movement-Minawi faction and the Justice and Equality Movement from one side and the Sudanese government on the other side under the sponsorship of the German government in Berlin just days before the attack²⁸. These negotiations made significant progress towards reshaping a path to a peaceful solution for the Darfur crisis. This progress was considered by the government to be a political threat, blocking its attempts to market the illusion of peace and stability while using military means to end the conflict in Darfur and forcing it to make concessions in an actual political process aimed at creating real peace and stability in Sudan. This is a price that it does not need to pay with

27- Sudan Tribune, "Sudan, rebels resume heavy fighting in North Darfur," May 2017, available at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article62577>; Sudan Tribune, "UNAMID expresses concern over recent fighting in Darfur," 23 May 2017, available at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article62523>.

28- Sudan Tribune, "JEM and SLM meet Sudanese officials in Berlin over peace in Darfur," 17 May 2017, available at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article62485>.

its illusion creation process. Thus, the government intentionally created tension regarding the military situation in Darfur in order to block the path to a negotiated peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Attacks by government forces and its militias during the end of May 2017 were accompanied by serious crimes against captured fighters of the forces of both factions of the Sudan Liberation Movement. A number of detainees were killed, including Commander Abd Alsalam Tarrada²⁹, a commander that had wide popular support. The governor of East Darfur directed that the corpses of the murdered victims be left in the open for the wild animals to feed upon³⁰.

Furthermore, security forces belonging to the ruling party humiliated detainees by recording and publishing footage of them. All these crimes are not only a breach of the government's unilateral ceasefire, they are also violations of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, the continuing commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the ruling party is an indication that the regime is in a state of tranquility due to the unannounced immunity given to it by the international community as part its marketing of the illusion of a cessation of hostilities, which in turn is part of marketing the illusion of stability in Sudan.

Within the same context of continuing military attacks against innocent people and lack of commitment to a peace process, Amnesty International issued a report in September 2016 documenting crimes committed by government forces and the Rapid Support Forces in Jebel Marra. The government attacks on Jebel Marra started in December 2015, short time after the end of a ceasefire that was announced in September 2015³¹. Amnesty's report included evidence indicating the use of chemical weapons by the Sudanese governments during the attacks³². Nonetheless,

29- Radio Dabanga, "Rebel commander killed, chief captured in Darfur battles," 23 May 2017, available at <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/rebel-commander-killed-chief-captured-in-darfur-battles>.

30- Radio Dabanga, "Arrests as security forces clamp down in North Darfur," 25 May 2017, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201705250420.html>.

31- "Sudan's military on high alert in Darfur as war looms," The Daily Nation, 8 December 2015, available at: <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/1066-2987778-tt335vz/index.html>

32- Amnesty International, *Sudan: ScorchedEarth, Poisoned Air: Sudanese Government Forc-*

the international community chose to overlook this evidence and did not demand independent investigations to examine the evidence included in the report be conducted. This dishonorable disregard from international and regional organizations was followed by electing Sudan, a few months after the publication of the Amnesty International report, as Vice-Chairman of the Organization for the Control of Chemical Weapons³³.

This review of the issue of war and peace in Sudan from the perspective of the process of creating the illusion of stability in Sudan confirms a key fact: establishing peace in Sudan cannot be accomplished through the segmentation and fragmentation of issues, political bargains and the distribution of quotas. It rather requires attention and responses to the core issues connected to the ongoing wars. Continuing to ignore these issues, manipulating them and ignoring their widespread humanitarian effects, whether through partial solutions, temporary bilateral agreements, foreign support, military solutions or even marketing the illusion of peace and stability, will not lead to anything but the accumulation of historical grievances and their negative effects. And these will only stimulate more intense, violent and widespread wars.



es Ravage Jebel Marra, Darfur, September 2016, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/4877/2016/en/>

33- Al-Rakouba Newspaper, "Sudan wins the position of Vice-Chairman of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons," March 2017, available at <https://www.alrakoba.net/news-action-show-id-267863.htm>

The New Ingaz³⁴:

The National Dialogue and Next Steps

On 28 January 2014, the ruling NCP announced via its president, Omar Al-Bashir, the call for a national dialogue, which was to be a political process aimed at creating comprehensive stability in Sudan³⁵. This announcement was the official start of one the main cornerstones Al Bashir's strategy of creating the illusion of stability. Analyses and understandings of the motives behind the NCP's presentation of this initiative vary. There is consensus, however, that the most likely factors were the need of the ruling party to:

- Deflect popular anger which escalated after the events and calamities of the September 2013 uprising. The regime could not escape from the protest's inevitable demands for change and the toppling of the regime. The regime could not do otherwise but release the Rapid Support Forces³⁶ to practice violence and oppression against the peaceful demonstration, ending with the deaths of more than two hundred peaceful protesters in the streets of Khartoum and other Sudanese cities by the hands of the said militias³⁷. The massacres committed by the Rapid Support Forces proved that the ruling party does not hesitate to commit massacres against anyone working on destabilizing its position in power. This includes those who are regarded as a cultural and social constituency for the regime, who are living in the center of Sudan largely belonging to the Arab-Islamic cultural circle.
- The second motive for Al-Bashir's National Dialogue initiative was to get

34- "Ingaz" meaning salvation, is another name for the National Islamic Front regime.

35- Daily Nation, "Bashir calls for national dialogue," 28 January 2014, available at <http://mobile.nation.co.ke/news/-Bashir-calls-for-national-dialogue--/1950946-2163892-format-xhtml-898ufuz/index.html>

36- Statements from Director of Operation of the National Intelligence and Security Services, Major General Ali Al-Naseeh Al-Gala'a regarding the role of Rapid Support Forces in the Uprising of September 2013, 22 of May 2014, available at: <https://goo.gl/qUJUSI>

37- Human Rights Watch, "We Stood and they Opened Fire", April 2014, available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/sudan0414_ForUpload.pdf

out of the international political isolation that had reached its epitome; wherein, international criticism for the regime and demands for reform had increased and escalated. In addition, the effect of economic sanctions grew and affected the state – especially after the separation of South Sudan and the loss of its oil income and the disappointment of the ruling party regarding the benefits it gained from facilitating the referendum and subsequent separation of the South. Political isolation helped worsen the economic crisis, especially as political reforms were presented as a precondition for lifting of American sanctions generally, and economic sanctions specifically. Debt relief was also tied to such reforms³⁸.

These factors interacted with one another before the announcement of the National Dialogue and the scene was prepared through a meeting between President Al-Bashir and former US President Jimmy Carter³⁹, in an attempt to suggest international blessing for the regime's the political procedures. Al-Bashir's speech in January 2014, known as the Al-Wathba speech (the leap speech), laid out four main objectives of the dialogue:

- Reaching peaceful resolution of armed conflicts in Sudan.
- Democratic transformation and assuring basic freedoms.
- Approaching the issues of poverty and marginalization.
- Approaching the issues of identity and citizenship in Sudan.

A National Dialogue or an Islamist Unification Project?

From the beginning, it was evident to President Al-Bashir that the cost for creating the illusion of political stability was getting rid of those who were recognized as the radical wing in the ruling party, including Ali

38- "US sanctions take toll on Khartoum," *Financial Times*, 23 July 2012, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/96af3278-d1a5-11e1-bbbc-00144feabdc0>; "IMF & World Bank call on Sudan to maintain reforms, secure debt relief," *Sudan Tribune*, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article48512>

39- "US ex-president Carter arrives in Khartoum for talks with Bashir & other officials," 21 January 2014, <http://debirhan.com/2014/01/us-ex-president-carter-arrives-in-khartoum-for-talks-with-bashir-other-officials/>

Osman Mohamed Taha (first vice president) and Nafie Ali Nafie (chief presidential assistant) while at the same time maintaining the core and spirit of the Islamic movement which brought him to power and which acts as a social womb to keep him in power. Getting rid of these hardliners served another purpose: relegating the power centers that were fighting over succeeding Bashir. The elimination of the two men from their positions in the first lines of authority, in December 2013⁴⁰ prepared the field for the illusive process of creating stability in three different ways:

- Getting rid of the hardliner wing inside the regime;
- Settling internal conflicts aimed at inheriting the position of presidency from Al-Bashir, and so getting rid of any direct threat against the position of the president; and
- Increasing the unity of Islamists by the returning the spiritual power represented by Hassan Al-Turabi and his Popular Congress Party to the fold. Both Taha and Nafie had played a significant role in excluding him from power in the NCP division in 1998. Turabi held both men -among others- responsible for the Islamists division in public on several occasions.

With this background and objectives, Islamist political organizations, such as the Popular Congress Party, the Reform Now Movement and the Platform for a Just Peace of Al-Bashir's uncle, which have been divided from the NCP at various times, have fully and unconditionally engaged in the dialogue put forward by the NCP. The experience of the Reform Now movement under the chairmanship of Ghazi Salahuddin, which withdrew from the dialogue several times and returned to it without clear explanation, revealed that the purpose for Islamists of entering the national dialogue is to reunite the ranks and wings of political Islam in Sudan after the multiple divisions with the NCP since the departure of Al-Turabi in 1998. The insistence of the Popular Congress Party on continuing to engage in the dialogue and

40- "Sudan's Bashir replaces top officials amid ongoing protests," 29 December 2013, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/12/sudan-bashir-replace-officials-anti-government-protests.html>.

The aim of the Islamists from joining the National Dialogue was to re-unite the ranks of Political Islam in Sudan, and the divided fragments of the NCP had a greater motivation to return to power seats and restore economic perivileges.

participation in the next government⁴¹, despite the many deviations and the departure of many organizations and personalities, and the ruling party's refusal to abide by Al-Turabi's terms on freedoms after his death, is further evidence of the hidden goal of uniting Islamists through the national dialogue process.

For the Islamists excluded from power by the regime, one of the great motivations for engaging in the national dialogue with the ruling party was to negotiate a return to power and restore the privileges that had been available to them. The long political monopoly of the Islamic movement on power

since 1989, brought with it also a monopoly on wealth and economic privileges and activity known as the empowerment (*tamkeen*)⁴². This led to structural transformation within the Islamist movement and most of the Islamists transformed into to market traders under the protection of the regime, which sponsored their monopoly on the joints of the state economy for many years and led to a rise in corruption. The successive divisions of Islamists have affected these preferential economic advantages that power had given them, leaving them waiting for the right moment to return to those privileges. As such, they saw the National Dialogue, as a train suitable for those who are divided from the ruling party to return and re-enter power and wealth. The economic motive was one of the biggest attractions for former members of the Islamists to participate in the industry of creating an illusion of stability through their unity, in the face of the united opposition then under the umbrella of the Sudan Call Alliance. This temptation has been increased by promises of material returns from

41- "Sudan's PCP says dialogue outcome 'gone with the wind'", *Sudan Tribune*, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article62227>

42- Sudan Democracy First Group, *Sudan's Islamist Regime: The Rise and Fall of the 'Civilization Project'*, July 2014, available at: <http://www.democracyfirstgroup.org/sudans-islamist-regime-the-rise-and-fall-of-the-civilization-project/>.

openness to the international community under the banner of a reinvented moderate political Islam operating in unity with the regime.

A National Dialogue without Nationals

The National Umma Party, led by Sadiq Al-Mahdi, participated in the process of national dialogue at its inception as a means of finding a peaceful and conciliatory solution that could move the country to true and comprehensive stability. However, Al-Mahdi soon realized that the reality of the National Dialogue was that it was a curtain behind which the illusion of stability in Sudan was created. With the predominance of the elements of the National Islamic Front within the halls of the dialogue, their perceptions dominated the debate. For example, they insisted on the presidency of Al-Bashir to shepherd the process.

The limits of the national dialogue were exposed to the Umma Party after the arrest of its chairman, Sadiq Al-Mahdi, in May 2014 after political statements criticizing the danger of recruiting tribal militias and allowing them to act freely⁴³.

It turned out Al-Bashir's national dialogue had red lines that could not be crossed and about which the government and its security services wanted no discussion. These included criticism of the militias, the Rapid Support Forces or the security services, guardians of the illusion of peace. Later, Sadiq Al-Mahdi was released and left both the national dialogue and the country angrily to engage with other forces opposed to the dialogue in the process of building a broad alliance of the Sudanese opposition⁴⁴.

While the coalition of National Consensus Forces has taken clear position since the start of the national dialogue against participation, there are some differences in views about the process. A number of political parties within the coalition have advocated the need to create a conducive political environment, for example by stopping the war opening up freedoms, before engaging in dialogue. Other parties within the National Consensus alliance

43- "Arrest Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi," available at: http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2014/05/140517_sudan_mahdi_arrested.

44- Radio Dabanga, "Sudan opposition parties sign for toppling regime," available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-opposition-parties-sign-toppling-regime>.

have expressed their lack of confidence in the ruling party and its willingness to fulfill any of these conditions to participate, rejecting reconciliation with the ruling party in full and rising the overthrowing of the regime as a political goal⁴⁵.

From the start, the armed political movements had a clearer position, refusing to participate in the national dialogue without a package of political and legal changes necessary for its establishment⁴⁶ and helped them to achieve this position of rejecting the ruling party's dialogue. Their involvement in dozens of rounds of bilateral negotiations with the regime without reaching successful resolution has made them keenly aware of its political limitations. For its part, the ruling party has taken no serious steps towards engaging armed political movements to join the dialogue process. On the contrary, the government has continued military campaigns throughout the years of national dialogue against the four armed political movements - the Sudan Liberation Movement (Mini Minawi and Abdelwahid factions), the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North and refused to reach compromises in negotiations. Finally, the ruling party replaced the participation of the armed movements with supporting and funding divisions among them and paying off dissidents within the movements to participate in its dialogue.

The positions of independent civil society forces on the dialogue process have diverged. The absence of complete intellectual and political unity, which is the nature of civil forces, has led to disparities within civil society. There were numerous positions on the national dialogue and how to respond in various constituencies. Some were afraid of being politically identified with opposition forces, and chose to expand the margin of freedoms that the dialogue process could offer to continue its civil work with its local and foreign partners. Those who didn't care about being portrayed of being

45- Radio Tamazuj, "Sudan opposition clarify boycott of 'national dialogue'," available at: <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/politics-sudan-opposition-clarify-boycott-of-national-dialogue>

46- Radio Dabanga, "'Political and legal basis needed for Sudan dialogue': Yasir Arman," available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/political-and-legal-basis-needed-for-sudan-dialogue-yasir-arman>

opposition decided to reject and resist the national dialogue by raising awareness, mobilizing and coordinating with the political forces who also opposed the process. However, the most important thing that grouped the various independent civil society forces was their agreement that attempting to influence the dialogue process as imposed by the NCP was futile and would not bring about any positive change or real stability.

The National Dialogue and Its Interactions with the AUHIP

The African Union (AU) responded to President Omar Al-Bashir's initiative by agreeing with reservations. These reservations were reflected in the boycott of the opening of the dialogue by AU institutions. At the same time the AU considered the national dialogue as window of opportunity after dozens of rounds of failed bilateral negotiations between the Sudanese government and armed political movements.

The AU regional organization established a methodology based on the need to create a conducive political environment, paving the way for the launching of a national dialogue where all parties would participate. Indeed, the AU Peace and Security Council's position in this regard is laid out in the communiqués of its 456th session in September 2014⁴⁷, and its 539th session in August 2015⁴⁸. These communiqués extended the mandate of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AU HIP), under the chairmanship of former South African President Thabo Mbeki, to include the supervision of the national dialogue process. The decisions of the African Union Peace and Security Council also stipulated that the Sudanese government should carry out a series of measures to ensure the integrity of the national dialogue process and to create a conducive environment

47- AU Peace and Security Council, "Communique of the 456th meeting of the Peace and Security Council," available at:<http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-456th-meeting-of-the-peace-and-security-council>

48- AU Peace and Security Council, "Communique of the 539th meeting of the Peace and Security Council," available at:<http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-539th-meeting-of-the-psc-on-the-activities-of-the-au-high-level-implementation-panel-auhip-for-sudan-and-south-sudan>

for the start of dialogue including the cessation of war, ensuring the flow of humanitarian relief and the respect of freedoms. The AU suggested that the dialogue process should be preceded by a preparatory meeting outside of Sudan, with the participation of all concerned parties, in order to agree on the procedural aspects of the dialogue, its agenda and mechanisms of work. These decisions were accepted by all Sudanese opposition forces and were carefully approved by the National Consensus Forces, who were skeptical of the Sudanese government's acceptance of those decisions⁴⁹.

The African mediation sponsored a previous agreement to the national dialogue known as the Addis Ababa Agreement between the opposition parties, represented at the time by the Paris Forces (the Revolutionary Front Organizations and the Umma Party) and the 7+7 mechanism⁵⁰ which is constituted of the main parties participating in the national dialogue in Khartoum. Despite the participation of the government and its ruling party within the framework of the 7+7 mechanism, it has reneged on the agreement, claiming that the delegation of the national dialogue mechanism overstepped its authority by signing the Addis Ababa agreement with the Paris Forces.

In the same vein, the Sudanese government did not respond positively to the decisions of the AU Peace and Security Council. It refused to implement the recommendations for the creation of a conducive environment for the dialogue as provided for in the communiqué the 456th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council. The Sudanese government's reluctance to engage positively with African mediation angered the AU Peace and Security Council, which clearly criticized it in the communiqué of its 539th meeting, urging "the Sudanese parties, in particular the Government of the Sudan, to show the needed leadership stance and to commit again to the required procedures to achieve the goal of achieving democratic transformation in

49- Radio Dabanga "More opposition parties applaud AU statements on Sudan," available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/more-opposition-parties-applaud-au-statements-on-sudan>

50- Text of Addis Ababa Agreement about *National Dialogue* and the constitution creation process, Hurreyat Newspaper, available at: <http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=162658>

The AU roadmap represented a gift to the ruling party in Khartoum, allowing it to gain time to continue the internal national dialogue and to try to use the roadmap as a mechanism to bring in opposition forces to its illusive process.

Sudan⁵¹.”

The ruling party has not been too preoccupied with the criticism of the African Union or the African mediator’s insistence on contributing to the national dialogue process and his efforts to turn it into a real mechanism for peaceful transition to peace and democracy. At the same time, the Sudanese government did not directly confront the AU HIP, but simply continued its internal dialogue with those allied with the NCP. It is clear that the strategic objective of the government in engaging in the dialogue was to create the illusion of stability and that implementation of the decisions of the AU Peace and Security Council and engagement of the AU HIP would have fundamentally changed the nature of the dialogue.

Continued obstinacy by the ruling party in dealing with the African Union on the national dialogue process, accompanied by political and diplomatic progress by the Sudanese government in regional and international relations and the change in the balance of political forces in favor of the government, in addition to other reasons of the AU HIP - discussed later in this report - has led to a weakening of the AU HIP’s position. The panel has made successive concessions in favor of the government’s position, including the waiver of the AU Peace and Security Council’s resolutions and marketing the ruling party’s dialogue in the framework of the African roadmap.

Since the launch of the AU HIP’s roadmap project in March 2016⁵², it has been one of the most important points of disagreement among the Sudanese

51- Communiqué of the 539th meeting of the PSC on the activities of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan and South Sudan; Available at: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-539th-meeting-of-the-psc-on-the-activities-of-the-au-high-level-implementation-panel-auhip-for-sudan-and-south-sudan>

52- Sudan Tribune, “A roadmap for (Addis Ababa negotiators), signed only by the government and not by the opposition,” available at: <https://goo.gl/67lqEk>.

parties, especially after its unilateral signature by African mediation with the Sudanese government. It was rejected by the opposition Sudan Call forces for several reasons, including that it deliberately excluded important political

The national dialogue has not succeeded in providing real solutions to Sudan's problems, and inherited the same failure to the new government and the upcoming constitution making process, because no political process can achieve real stability without the participation of the genuine political and civil forces.

opposition groups, violating the provisions of the AU communiqués cited above, and circumvented the preparatory meeting to the national dialogue process and replacing it with a consultative meeting with limited objectives and powers. Facing international and regional pressure, the opposition forces, represented by the Revolutionary Front organizations and the National Umma Party, have accepted and signed the African roadmap, with the AU HIP pledging to add an annex reflecting the demands of the opposition, which was not include.

The AU roadmap represented a gift to the ruling party in Khartoum, allowing it to gain time to continue the internal national dialogue and to try to use the roadmap as a mechanism to bring in opposition forces to its illusive process. In addition, the signing of the roadmap created differences among opposition forces. It also caused a loss of confidence in the AU HIP and damaged its ability to act as an impartial mediator with a group of opposition forces because of the accumulation of concessions

to the intransigent government. The African roadmap has been a scourge. It has caused polarization and divisions within Sudan's opposition alliance, freezing out the national consensus coalition. Furthermore, the relationship the government's national dialogue and the African roadmap has been left unclear.

The National Dialogue Produces a Quota Government

The NCP continued to pursue its dialogue with its allies. It did not abide by any of the requirements laid down by the African Union roadmap. It paid no heed to the positions of the main political forces in the country. In October 2016, it announced the end of the national dialogue and delivered its output, known as the national document, to the president of the republic.

The announcement of the end of the dialogue prompted the government to make a number of constitutional and legal amendments related to fundamental freedoms, beginning with the separation of the posts of Minister of Justice and the Attorney General, and reducing the powers of the Minister of Interior by granting some of them to the Director General of Police. However, the purpose of these amendments was actually to circumvent the outputs of the national dialogue as was revealed through the powers placed in the hands of the President of the Republic, who in turn appointed loyalists to the positions of Attorney General and Director of Police. The government also declined to implement the recommendations of the national dialogue with regard to the role of the national security and intelligence apparatus. The national dialogue called for amending the authority's powers to limit its powers of arrest and detention and turn it into a professional body that collects and analyzes information and makes recommendations to other competent authorities. However, the great resistance to these recommendations by the security apparatus and the ruling party led them to be rejected. Attacks on public freedoms have been further legalized through the establishment of the state security prosecution. Where security forces have opened the communications of and arrested politicians and activists, and subjected them to prolonged interrogation, they have done so under the authority of the same security and prosecution agencies. This was the case, for example, in the case of human rights defender Mudawi Ibrahim, who has been detained since the end of 2016⁵³. The legal amendments accompanying the dialogue also included the Rapid Support Forces law discussed above.

53- "The Parliament Refuses to Decrease the Authorities of the National Intelligence and Security Service," *Al-Sudan Al-Youm Newspaper*, 18 April 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/2XwWtI>.

The process of national dialogue ended with the signing of the national document by forces that had not even participated in the dialogue process, such as the Liberal Party, the Sudan Liberation Movement of Abu al-Qasim, Imam, Mubarak al-Fadil factions, the Just Peace Platform under the leadership of El-Tayib Mustafa, the reformist group led by Ghazi Salahuddin, and other groups and individuals, converging to take advantage of the quotas in the national consensus government resulting from the dialogue, and concerned with the implementation of the second phase of the process of creating an illusion of political stability.

The purpose of that race was clear: to get part of the power package that Al-Bashir warned his new allies was small and not enough for everyone⁵⁴. Al-Bashir found no one other than his first deputy, Bakri Hassan Saleh, to appoint to the new post of prime minister, bringing together two ranks in the executive branch in a political and administrative farce that revealed Al Bashir's lack of confidence in his political allies⁵⁵. The appointment of the new government came three months after the appointment of its prime minister on 12 May 2017, reflecting conflicts over the approach to quotas and among the centers of power within the NCP. There was a notable struggle over the post of minister of finance, which the circle of corruption close to President Al-Bashir insists on retaining, while others preferred a new face for the post. The large size of the national accord government, including 31 federal ministers and 45 ministers, reveals that the quota system left behind by the national dialogue was to include everyone without a clear political program⁵⁶, only to contribute to the creation of an illusion of stability. Perhaps one of the most prominent examples of political appeasement in this government was the announcement of the Minister of Justice who was suspended while taking the oath of office after fraud was discovered in his university degrees

54- The Sudanese President: "“New Governments Cake is Smaller than the Hands of Everyone”/Not Everyone Can Get a Share of the New Government for Its too Small”, *Al-Nileen Newspaper*, 3 March 2017, available at: <http://www.alnilin.com/12850645.htm>.

55- “Appointing Bakri Hasan Salih as Prime Minister,” *Al-Jazeera*, 2 March 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/eV6UBj>

56- “Sudan: Announcement of the Formation of New Government After Hard Labor,” *Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed*, 12 March 2017, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/ycd3czpc>

The “Al-Wathba” dialogue concluded with the installation of the new government more than three years after its launch in January 2014, without achieving any tangible progress in the four goals set by the president of the republic at the outset. The facts reveal that civil wars continue in all three regions affected. And indeed, as is shown in the first part of this report, the number of victims is increasing. The hardship of citizens is exacerbated by the high rate of inflation, which exceeded %30 in early 2017⁵⁷, despite the partial lifting of US sanctions at the end of the previous year. In addition, the double discrimination against Sudanese Christians from the Nuba Mountains and the ongoing destruction of churches and evangelical schools are examples of the contribution of the national dialogue to addressing issues of identity in Sudan⁵⁸.

The national dialogue achieved its main purpose as an important lever in the creation of the illusion of stability by the ruling party and its leadership. The national dialogue has now left a national consensus government, paving the way for the second phase which starts now with the establishment of a permanent constitution. This process is likely to resemble the national dialogue process, without complying with universally accepted norms in the drafting of constitutions, dedicated to the exclusion and total isolation of national parties, and jumping over the environmental conditions required for such a process. A new constitution may be in place to govern the 2020 elections, but it will merely reproduce the Ingaz rule.



57- “Inflation in Sudan Exceeds 30%,” *Al-Jazeera*, January 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/MFv0yv>.

58- Sudan Democracy First Group, *Updates Regarding the Development of Religious Discrimination Against Christianity in Sudan*, April 2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/gtLC4u>

Sudanese Opposition: Gains and Losses

Since the 1989 coup, the NCP has deliberately fragmented and weakened opposition political movements and parties to achieve hegemony and monopoly of political action in Sudan. Their strategy seeks to weaken partisan and civil political institutions by dividing them, eliminating dissidents, criminalizing the activities of the opposition parties, confiscating their real-estate and property, arresting and torturing their cadres, confiscating their personal property, firing many of them from the civil service and exerting pressure on activists to either leave the country or abandon public work. These policies and practices have weakened political institutions, hindering party and political action, and obstruct the development of political institutions to this day.

Despite the systematic efforts made over more than two decades to destroy political and civil opposition forces, the political will to form important platforms and alliances in resistance and opposition has not disappeared. This is evidence of the urgent need for change. Despite local and regional changes, the continuation of wars and the increase in their size and severity, the escalation of violence and repression, restrictions on freedoms and violations of human rights, the organization of protest movements and resistance work has continued and been renewed for the past twenty-eight years. This has re-shaped the political arena and brought in new agencies and seeking to bring about a just peace and democratic change.

Shutdown of Political Possibilities and Suppression of Resistance

The current political climate is witnessing a marked decline in the effectiveness and influence of the political and civic resistance forces, and a weakening of their role in leading the processes of change. This decline is compared with the situation prior to the September 2013 uprisings, which resulted

from sustained civic and political mobilization over a long period of time⁵⁹. The forces of change benefited from the increased margin of freedoms provided by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to improve their capabilities and efforts. This led to a rise in grassroots activity by various social and civic resistance groups, such as youth groups, interest groups and parallel trade unions as well as independent civil society organizations. This mass organizing culminated in the uprisings of September 2013. Then those forces lost momentum and remained lethargic until the announcement of the Wathba dialogue by the president of the ruling party in December 2014. This was driven by a combination of factors including the inability to link political action to daily life and to mobilize resistance actions.

Sudan Call: Building a Broad Front to Resist Ingaz

The signing of the Sudan Call charter in December 2014 marked the birth of a broad alliance between a number of civilian and military opposition parties. It works to create a positive consensus among opposition political movements which set common goals to achieve a just peace and democratic transformation in Sudan⁶⁰. The alliance rehabilitated the role of civil society in political action and its direct involvement in the process by adopting civil society as one of the four pillars of the alliance, alongside the Sudan Revolutionary Front, the National Consensus Forces, and the National Umma Party.

The announcement of the Sudan Call document was not separate from the political history of the opposition, but rather one of its main events. It is the product of accumulated and continuous experience in developing unity among the forces of change. Sudan Call is rooted in the experience of forming the National Democratic Alliance in the early days after the Islamic coup in 1989, the establishment of the National Consensus Forces, the Juba

59- Protests in Sudan (2011 – 13), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protests_in_Sudan_\(2011%E2%80%9313\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protests_in_Sudan_(2011%E2%80%9313))

60- "Sudan's political opposition unites under new call for democracy," *The Guardian*, 11 December 2014, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/sudan-call-political-opposition-bashir>

Unity of Opposition Forces, the New Dawn Alliance in January 2013, the Paris Declaration between the Umma Party and the Revolutionary Front and the joint program between the National Consensus Forces and the Revolutionary Front, which paved the way for the announcement of the Sudan Call, in its broader form, calling for the formation of the broadest possible front of the opposition in Sudan⁶¹.

Sudan Call has faced several obstacles since its birth, beginning with the Sudanese government's rejection of the alliance. Not only did the government reject the formative declaration, the work was banned and the chairman of the national consensus committee Farouk Abu Isa and the head of civil society initiative, Amin Mekki Madani, were arrested, detained and put on trial for signing the document⁶². The resistance by elders of the opposition movement Abu Isa and Madani built mass support for Sudan Call, and their trial turned into a strong mobilization on behalf of the coalition. This led the ruling party to retreat and release them⁶³.

It was not only the government, but also a number of regional and international circles, that expressed hostility. Some individuals who had criticized the lack of unity in the opposition preferred to support a political settlement within the framework of the national dialogue as the only solution to the Sudanese crises which was one of the main pillars of the process of establishing the illusion stability, as discussed in the previous section.

In the first year of the signing of the charter, Sudan Call forces achieved a broad public movement, reinforced by collective action, during a campaign to stand against the arrest and trial of coalition leaders. The mobilization and support of the masses widened during the campaign to boycott the

61- "Mahdi briefs Arab League on Paris Declaration with Sudan's rebels," *Sudan Tribune*, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article52028>

62- "Two Sudan Appeal signatories, SPLM-N official detained," Radio Dabanga, available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/two-sudan-appeal-signatories-splm-n-official-detained>

63- "Sudan frees opposition leaders days before elections," *Aljazeera*, 19 April 2015, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2015/04/sudan-frees-opposition-leaders-days-elections-150409140857096.html>

2015 elections, which formed a platform for collective and public action, organized in large areas of Sudan. These actions achieved great success and opened the way for the formation of work structures at the regional level⁶⁴.

After the successful campaign to boycott the elections, Sudan Call began to lose its public strength and engage more intensively with high level politics. That failure began with the inability to agree on the organizational structure of the alliance. As a result, the nature of the structure and its relevance continued to be questioned, especially by the National Consensus Forces. Others saw a general coordination without a detailed structure as sufficient. Some within the National Consensus Forces opposed dealing with the armed opposition organizations represented by the Revolutionary Front, driven by its Arab ideological orientation, and rejected participation in the Sudan Call alliance. This obstructed its development.

Sudan Call's evolution was also affected by the dissonance among the various organizations within the coalition, restricting the vitality and political activity of the individual parties. The individual parties appeared to have little interest or inclination to work on marketing and promoting the name and momentum of Sudan Call. For example, the return of Sadiq Al-Mahdi⁶⁵, the leader of the Umma National Party, from his voluntary exile in January 2017 presented an opportunity to consolidate the principles and experiences of the collective action of Sudan Call during his successful public tour in various regions of Sudan. It was an opportunity to mobilize and organize the people behind the Sudan Call's principles and the slogans.

The split of the Revolutionary Front into two streams, due to internal administrative and organizational issues, further weakened Sudan Call⁶⁶. The leaders of Sudan Call managed to overcome this quickly by recognizing both factions and allowing both representation within the structure, but it

64- "Opposition forces call for boycott of Sudan elections," *Sudan Tribune*, 6 April 2015, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article54521>

65- "Sudanese opposition leader Sadiq al-Mahdi returns from two-year exile," Reuters, 26 January 2017, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-politics-idUSKB-N15A1TF>

66- "Sharp differences over SRF presidency threaten unity of Sudanese rebels," *Sudan Tribune*, October 2015, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article56767>

accelerated the decline of public support for Sudan Call's message. Recently, the organizational and ideological differences that have struck the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement-North, and its role in the Sudan Call, have posed challenges to the cohesion and unity of Sudan Call the full implications of which have yet to emerge clearly.

The rise of the ethnic politics in Sudanese opposition forces has demonstrated the lack of preparedness or ability to deal with this complex issue and encouraged by the absence of national political and popular initiatives.

In addition, the rise of the ethnic politics in Sudanese opposition forces has demonstrated the lack of preparedness or ability to deal with this complex issue and encouraged by the absence of national political and popular initiatives. For example, political leaders have been weak in developing messaging around the connections between the effects of continuing war in the marginalized areas, and the lack of freedoms and the high cost of living in the center. Ethnic politics has been left open to the mobilization and counter-mobilization by activists on the subject of identity and its ramifications without deep comprehension to handle it. The only sign of breaking the rise of

ethnic politics at the grassroots level was the success of the Sudan Call in organizing a mass campaign to stop aerial bombardments in the heart of the capital, Khartoum, in response to the massacre of children in Heiban, South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains in May 2016⁶⁷. In turn, war victims from Blue Nile and Darfur were strong participants in the campaign to boycott the elections of 2015.

At the level of civil society, the birth of the civil society initiative, and its presence as a mainstay of Sudan Call was a bold step in the right direction. It has re-energized civil society engagement in political change. Despite opposition from some political forces and foreign actors who have criticized

67- "650 Sudanese sign petition on Heiban children's massacre," Radio Dabanga, May 2016, available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/650-sudanese-sign-petition-on-heiban-children-s-massacre>

the birth of the civil society initiative, and its presence as a mainstay of Sudan Call was a bold step in the right direction. It has re-energized civil society engagement in political change.

this engagement and attempted to reduce its role by forcing it into narrow frameworks of what they define as appropriate civil society work, the civil society initiative has succeeded in defining its objectives and principles, as evidenced by its contributions to the development of unity within Sudan Call and its leadership of the process of developing alternative policies and its contribution to the drafting of key coalition documents. Although the initiative focuses on broadening the base of participation and institution building, it has not yet been able to reach a broad base of civil society working for positive political change. In order to succeed

in supporting the Sudan Call, especially in the areas of mass mobilization and organization, it must innovate around the means of participation and work with social organizations, unions and build up a grassroots base that nourishes the resistance without falling into destructive competition with political forces. The experience of the initiative in the three years since its birth calls for analysis and critical evaluation by civil society forces and leaders to contribute to learning lessons about civil society engagement and its implications.

Another issue that weakened the Sudan Call was the lack of agreement on a general political line, evident in the hesitant acceptance by the alliance of the AUHIP's roadmap⁶⁸. Some members of Sudan Call saw the AU roadmap as making too many concessions to the ruling party and its national dialogue and a tool to pave the way for the so-called "soft landing deal." They thus rejected the roadmap. The position of the AUHIP and the international community has strengthened the position of those who reject the roadmap within Sudan Call, by proposing to include only some opposition forces and exclude others. This position adopts that of the ruling party in refusing to

68- "Sudanese opposition groups sign peace roadmap, say ready to engage in peace talks," *Sudan Tribune*, August 2016, available at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article59869>

deal with Sudan Call as a unified entity and coalition. This led to an internal conflict within Sudan Call around the stand on the proposed roadmap. The conflict ended with the exit of National Consensus Forces from Sudan Call and splitting of several members from it, choosing to keeping their membership in Sudan Call⁶⁹. As a result, two major groups of opposition forces are now situated outside Sudan Call and the AU-mediated process: the Sudan Liberation Movement-Abdelwahid and the Alliance of National Consensus Forces.

Sudan Call plunged itself into the details of meta-politics, which made it overlook the importance of strengthening and framing the platforms of future action transcending the differences among its membership. An example of

The transformation of opposition political discourse and its preoccupation with topical political issues has negatively impacted the effectiveness of grassroots and community-based organizations in addressing, mobilizing and organizing around, and promoting their issues.

this is ignoring promising opportunities such as the alternative policies project: “an initiative to draw agreed upon developmental and reform policies by technocrats and specialists that to be implemented by the political forces upon changing the regime.” This project had the potential to deflect differences about daily political tactics of the parties and encourage thinking about strategic issues. In addition, it was a real opportunity for an alternative national dialogue parallel to the deceptive government one. Where Sudan Call has been, and is still, able to employ its alternative policy project this has exposed and mobilized individuals against the process of creating an illusion of stability, which is one the main pillars of the national government dialogue, as reviewed in the previous section of the report.

The transformation of opposition political discourse and its preoccupation with topical

69- “Five parties pull out of Sudan’s opposition NCF,” *Sudan Tribune*, September 28, 2016, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article60375>

political issues has negatively impacted the effectiveness of grassroots and community-based organizations in addressing, mobilizing and organizing around, and promoting their issues. This has contributed greatly to the loss of vitality of opposition work and resistance activities in general, and led to the fragmentation in approach to the issues. As a result, interest groups, for example, have begun to work alone to achieve their demands. Civilian and partisan forces for change need a transparent and profound critique to strengthen their roles and their unity. In contrast, all factors of weak opposition, both objective and subjective, contribute to creating a political vacuum, which the ruling party is now filling with its strategy of creating the illusion of stability in Sudan.



The International Community and the Ruling NCP: Deadly Lies

Important Historical Milestones in Foreign Affairs

Over the past three years, the ruling NCP has succeeded in re-making its image as one of the pillars of regional and international stability by providing security and intelligence services to foreign interests by proxy. Through these proxy services, the regime aims to reform its relations with the international and regional community, thereby reducing economic distress by opening up external support, and forcing the international community to accept its illegal institutions - such as the Rapid Support Forces— by using them to provide these services. On the other hand, the international community plays a large and influential role in the domestic and external stabilization processes that the ruling party markets, including through its support for the government national dialogue process.

Throughout the years of Al-Bashir’s rule, the relationship between the Sudanese government and the international community has generally been characterized by severe tension. The Security Council has passed more than 60 resolutions condemning the actions of the Sudanese regime, most of them under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The US administration also put the Sudanese government on the list of state sponsors of terrorism⁷⁰ less than four years after the military coup that brought the Islamic movement to power in 1989, followed by a package of economic sanctions in 1997⁷¹.

Despite the recent improvement in the Sudanese government’s relations with key players in the international and regional community, there are

70- U.S. Department of State, “State Sponsors of Terrorism,” August 12, 1993, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/list/c14151.htm>

71- Executive Order 13067--Blocking Sudanese Government Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Sudan, November 7, 1993, available at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-1997-11-05/html/97-29464.htm>

dozens of international actions that isolate the Sudanese state from normal and independent communication with other countries, particularly the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court against the President Omar Al-Bashir⁷². It remains in force against the current Sudanese government and is encouraging documentation of the subversive actions, internal and external, being carried out by the NCP. Actions such as this tend to favor changes in the Sudanese government. This motivates the regime to attempt to escape the sword of these decisions and accountability for its crimes, not to serve the interests of the Sudanese state and bring real benefits to its people.

There are serious reasons that the world has isolated the Sudanese regime. These are related to the regime's actions that it is a threat to regional and international stability and security, including:

- Declared support for terrorism: Sudan has been placed on the list of countries that support terrorism. The most prominent reason for this was that the Sudanese government sheltered the founder and leader of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, in Sudan before he went to Afghanistan. This period was exploited to build up al-Qaeda's economic and military infrastructure, confirmed by some documents that pointed out that the establishment of Bin Laden in Sudan played a pivotal role in the transformation of al Qaeda from a small fundamentalist cell to a large multinational organization working to fund and spread the terrorist activities of al Qaeda and its allies around the world⁷³. An investigation also condemned Al-Bashir's involvement in the bombing of the USS Cole on the Yemeni coast⁷⁴.
- Jeopardizing the stability of neighboring countries and the region: The

72- Albashir Case, International Criminal Court; <https://www.icc-cpi.int/darfur/albashir/pages/alleged-crimes.aspx>

73- "Agent of Bin Ladin's Projects in Sudan is Imprisoned in Egypt, Saeed Salama Managed 50 MillionDollars," *Middle East Newspaper*, 2001, available at: <http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?article=60011&issueno=8346>

74- Joseph Ax, "Banks must turn over Sudanese assets to USS Cole victims: U.S. court," 23 September 20015, *Reuters*, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-security-lawsuit-idUSKCN0RN2MK20150923>

most prominent manifestations of this was the attempt to assassinate former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, planned and organized by leaders of the ruling NCP in Sudan⁷⁵. This led to widespread international and UN Security Council condemnation of the attempted assassination, and resulted in the imposition of a series of political and economic sanctions on the Sudanese government. The destabilization of neighboring countries also included both logistical and military support for the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony. In addition, Al-Bashir regime has tried to destabilize the countries of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Chad and Central Africa, with the support of opposition groups in these countries, especially Islamic ones.

- The dark record on human rights: The human rights situation in Sudan has resulted in a series of condemnations from international human rights bodies. This followed a horrendous decline in the enjoyment of human rights, beginning with the use of unofficial prisons - ghost houses - to torture politicians and cases of killings and enforced disappearances, in addition to the excessive violence which killed millions of Sudanese in the civil war, under the banner of Jihad.

These three main issues with the international community show that the government of Sudan does not respect international law, international peace and security or any diplomatic rules. The isolation increased after the outbreak of the fighting in Darfur in 2003 and the crimes of ethnic cleansing carried out by government forces and their militias against civilians in Darfur. These crimes led the US government to issue new sanctions under the Darfur Peace Act⁷⁶ in 2006, and the United Nations and the European Union to issue other packages of sanctions that prevent the export and sale of weapons to the government of Sudan and restrict economic dealings with them.

This isolation and the sanctions have exacerbated the economic crises in Sudan, but did not affect the ruling regime's militaristic and corruption

75- Al-Jazeera interview with Hassan Al Turabi. See <https://tinyurl.com/khg14u>

76- "H.R. 3127 — 109th Congress: Darfur Peace and Accountability Act of 2006," 2005, available at: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/109/hr3127>, (accessed June 6, 2017).

structure. The government has directed most of its resources and the state budget to spending on security, the military, and tribal militias, especially as countries such as Belarus and China continue to sell arms and military equipment to Sudan. In addition, the regime has excelled in using to import European and American arms through intermediaries⁷⁷.

The Current Opening in International Relations

With the worsening of the economic crisis after the independence of South Sudan in 2011, the regime's loss of the largest source of national income with most of the proceeds of oil going to South Sudan, the sword of more than sixty international condemnations, diplomatic isolation, the inability of the president to represent the Sudanese state abroad, and the escalation of polarization and political violence and the continuation of civil wars, the ruling party had no choice but to try to open up communication and push at any price for normalization of relations with the international and regional actors.

The process of re-positioning Sudan to the international community began with the process of creating the illusion of stability in Sudan and exporting this illusion about three years ago. This process made use of the national dialogue process, through which the government claimed to work for peace and political participation, and to sell this narrative to the community and regional actors. This strategy was to be implemented via para-governmental powers centers in President Al-Bashir's trusted circles to bypass the official state apparatus. Foreign policy has been run by the president through his personal secretary and office manager Taha Osman al-Hussein, against

77- See UK Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and Foreign & Commonwealth Office, "Embargoes and sanctions on Sudan," issued 13 August 2012, and last revised, 19 February 2015, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/arms-embargo-on-sudan>; Amnesty International, "Darfur: New weapons from China and Russia fuelling conflict," available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2012/02/darfur-new-weapons-china-and-russia-fuelling-conflict/>; Nii Akrofi Smart-Abbey, "Sudan accused of bypassing arms embargo to import weapons," 24 May 2017, available at: <http://www.africanews.com/2017/05/24/sudan-accused-of-bypassing-arms-embargo-to-import-weapons/>

whom there are documented allegations of corruption. Taha's influence has increased at the expense of the Sudanese foreign ministry and its minister, Ibrahim Ghandour, in a similar manner to the way in which increased dependence on the Rapid Support Forces has weakened the role of the official Sudan Army Force.

The Sudanese foreign policy position of marketing the illusion of stability has created confusion. The positions of the government have fluctuated, and even gone in contradictory directions, for the lack of guidance at the national level. For example, the ruling party worked to exploit the tension between Ethiopia and Egypt on the construction of the Ethiopian renaissance dam on the course of the Blue Nile, which Egypt opposes due to the impact on the flow of water towards the Nile. The Sudanese government has changed its position and supported each side at different times, according to its immediate interests, without taking an independent, objective and strategic view of the effects of the dam on Sudan's economic and water interests. Sudan announced its position on the construction of the dam early with President Omar Al-Bashir supporting the Ethiopian position. Later, however, the Sudanese returned and engaged in negotiations to build the dam taking positions supportive of the Egyptian government⁷⁸ under the rule of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi. Later, after the overthrow of Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood's President of Egypt, Sudan fully backed the Ethiopian position on the building of the dam and its technical details at the expense of antagonizing Egypt, in violation of the Declaration of Principles, known as the Khartoum Agreement, agreed by the three countries in March 2015.

The second example of the dysfunction of the Sudanese government in the management of foreign relations and the reduction of official diplomacy, is the diplomatic embarrassment that hit Sudan due to the unwillingness to have President Al-Bashir attend and participate in the Arab-American Islamic Summit in Riyadh in May 2017, after the ruling party pushed to

78- Tesfa-Alem Tekle, "Sudan's Bashir supports Ethiopia's Nile dam project," *Sudan Tribune*, March 8, 2012, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article41839>

ensure that Al-Bashir received an invitation⁷⁹. This prompted Saudi Arabia to send one of its ministers urgently on an undeclared visit to Sudan to convey to Al-Bashir Saudi Arabia's unwillingness to host him at the summit⁸⁰.

This incident exposed the weakness of the regime's claims about the importance of its strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia, which deals with the Sudanese regime in the context of serving Saudi interests in the war in Yemen, but no more. More recently, the Sudanese diplomatic situation has become increasingly confused by the lack of national interest in regional relations and because of the current major conflict between Qatar, one of the strategic ideological allies of the ruling NCP on the one hand and Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt on the other hand. The loss of independence, the deviousness and mismanagement of foreign relations and the provision of mercenary services are all exposing the regime's opportunistic approach to foreign relations and the absence of any national guidelines and the lack of independent decision-making in international relations.

Contrary to these positions, which are stark examples of the contradictions and vagaries of the ruling party's foreign policy in the context of the strategy of creating the illusion of stability, the Sudanese government has taken strong positions on three key issues:

- Engagement with EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, known as the Khartoum Process. The Sudanese government relies on this process as a means of dealing with its diplomatic crises and as a source of income that contributes to solving the economic crisis. It also contributes to the de facto legitimization of the Rapid Support Forces, which have been mandated by the Al-Bashir regime to play a key role in the implementation of the EU-Horn of Africa Initiative.
- Getting out of the political and security alliance with Iran and moving quickly to engage in a Saudi-led coalition waging war against the

79- Tom Miles, "Sudan's Bashir to attend Saudi summit, no word on Trump meeting: minister," Reuters, 17 May 2017, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-president-idUSKCN18D1LB>

80- "Al-Bashir's participation in American-Islamic meeting shrouded in mystery," *Sudan Tribune*, 19 May 2017, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article62487>

The expanding operations of US intelligence agencies and its effort to turn Sudan into its proxy in the region, especially with regard to the US war on terror, was the main reason for the partial lifting of sanctions

Houthis in Yemen, in which the regime is involved hiring out the Rapid Support Forces as mercenaries.

- Increased intelligence cooperation with the US intelligence agency, which has contributed to the partial lifting of US economic sanctions, whose completion was linked to the US government's assessment of progress on five tracks set for July, although a final decision has now been pushed to October.

These three axes are the current pillars of the ruling party's plan to return to the embrace of the international community by creating the illusion that the Sudanese government is engaging productively in promoting international peace and security by involving the countries of the world in working with the same apparatus and forces used locally to commit crimes of ethnic cleansing, war crimes and systematic violations of human rights.

The European Deal with the Devil: Stopping Immigration for Immunity

The fight against illegal immigration is a new term used to criminalize the human right of seeking asylum provided for under international law. The right to asylum is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution⁸¹." The right is further expanded in the 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees. However, the rise of the populist right in the West and the growing hatred of others, including in particular Islamophobia, have led governments in Europe, in particular, to

81- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14, available at <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

develop and pursue new policies that stigmatize immigrants and to avoid being bound by the obligations to grant humane asylum. The Khartoum Process one mechanism for stripping the right to asylum from its moral and historical context in Europe.

The Sudanese government and the European Union have begun discussing the role of Khartoum in the process and cooperating directly on its implementation. The process was discussed in the presence of the European Union envoys to the AU Regional Conference on Human Trafficking and Smuggling in the Horn of Africa held in Khartoum in October 2014. EU ministers announced the Khartoum Process in November of the same year⁸². Following this, the EU committed 100 million Euros of support to the Sudanese government to combat migration through its borders⁸³. However, this support reached up to 215 million Euros by April 2017, with an increase of 38 million from what had been formally announced⁸⁴. Financial support is not the only form of cooperation planned with the Sudanese government, there is also a bilateral cooperation agreement agreed by the Sudanese government which allows German military and police institutions to conduct training for their Sudanese counterparts in the fight against illegal immigration and border control. Germany also provided separate bilateral support to fight immigration amounting to 12 million Euros⁸⁵.

The Sudanese government and the European Union's handling of the issue of migration and asylum, and the use of the border and eastern Sudan as security arena to combat it, seems in line with the neglect of the crisis of millions of Sudanese refugees from persecution and the war zones caused by

82- Declaration of the Ministerial Conference of the Khartoum Process, (EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative), Rome, 28 November 2014, available at: <http://italia2014.eu/media/3785/declaration-of-the-ministerial-conference-of-the-khartoum-process.pdf>

83- European Union, "EU announces 100 million Euros for Sudan to address irregular migration and forced displacement," statement from the European Union Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, 6 April 2016, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/l7nac2k>

84- Vivek Shah, "EU funds for Sudan may worsen fate of refugees," *EU Observer*, 10 April 2015, available at <https://euobserver.com/migration/137489>.

85- "Sudan and Germany in joint cooperation to combat illegal migration," Sudan Tribune, 16 October 2016, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article60551>

the same Sudanese regime and institutions with which the EU is partnering. Displaced persons in Sudan and thousands of victims of torture and political repression are the most obvious component of feeding migration and asylum to the West. The deal turns a blind eye to the fact that Sudan is an export country for migrants and not just a transit country as the Khartoum Process agreement frames it. In addition, the process ignores Sudan government informal support to thousands of Syrian refugees in Sudan who are now making use of facilities by officials to obtain Sudanese travel documents for onward migration to Western and Gulf countries.

EU ignores in its partnership with the Sudanese government in the Khartoum Process is the lack of clarity in the separation between the migration crisis and the organized crime associated with it, such as smuggling of goods, including drugs, arms and trafficking in human beings, and human organs, in which the Sudanese government security services and militias have significant roles.

The Sudanese government does not conceal its reliance on the Rapid Support Forces in implementing the security aspects of immigration control. In May 2017, Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir praised its performance in this regard⁸⁶. On more than one occasion in 2016, Hemeti, the leader of the Rapid Support Forces, called on European countries to provide logistical support and military supplies to allow his militia continue to protect Europe from the influx of migrants, threatening that if they did not, his forces would open the desert to immigrants to Europe⁸⁷. Thus, the role played by these militias, whose character and crimes are detailed in the first section of this report, in the implementation of the European plan is not a secret. It shows that the justification of the European officials that their support to stop illegal immigration is only through development support is nothing but a

86- "Al-Bashir: 'Rapid Support Force succeeded in fighting human trafficking, smugglers and secured the borders of Sudan,'" 13 May 2017, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/km3vrf9>

87- "Hemeti: 'We protect Europe,'" August 2016, available at: <http://sudanmotion.com/home/31705.html>

deceit, exposed by the media and official statements by the Sudanese side. The Rapid Support Forces often cite the numbers of illegal migrants arrested, even more than the government, in order to highlight their importance in implementing the European plan, and thus encourage the notion that the international community should turn a blind eye to their crimes and give them some kind of immunity in return for their current role⁸⁸. The presence of military attachés in the US, British and French embassies in their official military uniforms at the graduation of the fifth batch of Rapid Support Forces bears witness to the legitimacy accorded by the international community to the role played by this militia⁸⁹.

It has become clear that the Sudanese government's attempt to attract material support through the anti-immigration plan was aimed at strengthening and legitimating the Rapid Support Forces and using the EU, as an institution of great influence and credibility, to create the illusion of legitimacy for the militia, which includes legitimizing their roles in the commission of international crimes and in internal civil wars. In addition, the Sudanese government is trying to suppress and silence political and civil voices critical of the militia and the Khartoum Process and to encourage the European Union and its members to fund civil society organizations to work on immigration control projects. On the other hand, civil society organization from within Europe have taken a strong stand, for example Médecins Sans Frontières announced in 2016 that it would no longer accept any funding from the European Union or its institutions after the extent and securitized nature of the anti-immigration plan was made public⁹⁰.

The other thing that the EU has ignored in its partnership with the Sudanese

88- "Hemeti: 'Rapid Support Force blocked the smuggling of 1500 persons through the Libyan borders,'" *Sudan Tribune*, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/lu74p7y>; "Rapid Support Forces: 'We stopped 2700 illegal immigrants and arrested gold smugglers last year,'" January 2017, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/m5br99c>; "Rapid Support Force arrests 600 illegal immigrants," July 2016, available at: <https://www.assayha.net/play.php?catsmktba=12928>

89- "US military attaché attends graduation of Rapid Support Forces," *Sudani Newspaper*, May 17, 2017.

90- MSF, "MSF to no longer take funds from EU Member States and institutions," June 2016, available at: <https://www.msf.org.uk/article/msf-no-longer-take-funds-eu-member-states-and-institutions>

government in the Khartoum Process is the lack of clarity in the separation between the migration crisis and the organized crime associated with it, such as smuggling of goods, including drugs, arms and trafficking in human beings, and human organs, in which the Sudanese government security services and militias have significant roles⁹¹. In addition, the process deliberately fails to deal with migration and asylum in its historical, social, and cultural context.

Decisive Storm in Yemen: Fighters for Rent

At the end of 2015, the Sudanese government severed its diplomatic relations and military and intelligence cooperation with the Republic of Iran, responding to the pressures and promises made by Saudi Arabia⁹².

This was followed by Khartoum's announcement of its involvement in the Saudi-led sectarian alliance to fight against the Houthis in Yemen, Operation Decisive Storm. The NCP got the Sudanese state into a regional conflict that is not in the interests of the state and the people except to capitalize on sending its soldiers to fight for something other than defending the homeland and protecting national sovereignty. The Sudanese government has sent thousands of Sudanese soldiers and fighters to the front lines in field battles against Yemeni Houthi groups. The participation of Sudanese forces with on ground troops in the battles of Decisive Storm – which was an act of clear mercenaryism- came to replace fighters from other Arab countries who were withdrawing their troops due to the increasing numbers of fatalities.

In contrast to the Sudanese fighters in the internal war with the Houthis

91- Sudan Democracy First Group, *Human Trafficking and Smuggling: The Context and the Implication of the Sudanese Government in the Crimes*, February 2016, available at: <http://www.democracyfirstgroup.org/human-trafficking-and-smuggling-the-context-and-the-implication-of-the-sudanese-government-in-the-crimes/>

92- Krishnadev Calamur, "Sudan Cuts Ties with Iran, Widening Middle East's Sunni-Shi'a Divide," *Defense One* report, available at: <http://www.defenseone.com/politics/2016/01/sudan-cuts-ties-iran-widening-middle-east-sunni-shi-divide/124833/>; "Why has Sudan ditched Iran in favour of Saudi Arabia?," *The Guardian*, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/12/sudan-siding-with-saudi-arabia-long-term-ally-iran>

in Yemen, the ruling party benefited from the financial support provided by the Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia, amounting to about 2.2 billion dollars after President Omar Al-Bashir announced the participation of Sudan in that alliance in 2015⁹³. It has also been reported that Saudi diplomatic support for Sudan's effort to convince the US to lift sanctions were part of a deal in exchange for Sudanese support in the war in Yemen. Several reports, including from the Sudanese presidency, affirm that Saudi diplomacy played a major role in American decision-making to lift economic sanctions on Sudan in December 2016⁹⁴.

Sudan's participation in Operation Decisive Storm is a new tactic in the ruling NCP's playbook, but it follows logically on from the policies of the sale of Sudanese lands⁹⁵ and wealth and the long investment in smuggling and selling weapons to terrorist groups in the region to move soldiers and militias to other countries in the region in an external military intervention that doesn't provide Sudan any benefit other than extending the life of the ruling regime. During the Yemen war, the Sudanese government assigned new tasks and roles to the Rapid Support Forces, which represented the military fuel of this war. Six thousand fighters were initially sent, doubling the number fighting in Yemen and increasing the demand for troops by the Saudi alliance. This prompted the Al-Bashir regime to increase the number of troops by graduating large numbers to join the ranks of combat troops after a brief military training⁹⁶.

Since the beginning of their involvement in the war against the Houthis in Yemen, the Sudanese government and leadership of the Rapid Support Forces have rarely mentioned the number of casualties in the Yemen war.

93- "Sudan gets \$2.2B for joining Saudi Arabia, Qatar in Yemen war," *Al-Monitor*, 23 November 2015, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/sudan-saudi-arabia-war-yemen-houthi-economy.html>

94- "KSA succeeds in lifting American sanctions off Khartoum," January 2017, available at: <http://www.alyaum.com/article/4175601>

95- Sudan Democracy First Group, *Threats of Corruption in the Usage and Ownership of Lands in Sudan, a report*, available at: <http://arabic.democracyfirstgroup.org/>

96- "Janjaweed fight for Gulf states in Yemen," *African Intelligence*, 24 March 2017, available at: <https://www.africaintelligence.com/ION/politics--power/2017/03/24/janjaweed-fight-for-gulf-states-in-yemen,108227395-ART>

However, Yemeni news agencies have been publishing pictures of large numbers of Sudanese soldiers involved in the war. They reported that the number of casualties may be up to 300 people. As well, an increasing racial discourse against Sudanese in general is recognized in the Yemeni media due the participation of these forces in the war⁹⁷.

The mercenary Sudanese fighters in Yemen angered, and were rejected by most political and social forces in Sudan. For example, Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Chairman of the National Umma Party, has rejected Sudanese military engagement in a war that would only deepen the sectarian conflict, shed the blood of the people, destroy their facilities, displace them and provide an opportunity to expand agendas of bigotry⁹⁸. He recalled that the participation of the Sudanese army outside its homeland has historically only been for the preservation of peace and humanitarian aid, as happened in Lebanon and Kuwait, and not for combat, except in response to Israeli aggression on Egypt.

In a similar rejection of trading Sudanese lives, the head of the “Revolutionary Awakening Council,” led by one time Janjaweed commander Musa Hilal, a former ally of the ruling party, criticized the participation of tribesmen under the Rapid Support Forces in the Yemen war, inciting them to disobey orders and refuse to participate in this mercenary war⁹⁹, which shows the growing gap between the various militia leaders and the government.

Now, more than a year after Sudanese fighters began participating in the war in Yemen, the Saudi-led alliance has moved to a new phase, especially after the US-Arab Islamic summit in Riyadh in May 2017. The new US administration seemed willing to challenge Al-Bashir, who did

97- “Fifth Batch of Rapid Support Forces to Graduate,” *Sudan Vision*, available at: <http://www.sudanvisiondaily.com/index.php/new-posts/local-news/7497-fifth-batch-of-rapid-support-forces-to-graduate>

98- “Sudanese troops killed in Yemen: Military sources,” *Sudan Tribune*, 27 May 2017, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article62567>

99- “Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi: ‘Sudan’s participation in Yemen’s war is a big mistake,’” *Al-Arabi*, March 2017, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y9qbxyks>

not attend the summit after the US publicly objected to inviting him¹⁰⁰. This alliance is moving to a new political stage as a consequence of the Saudi-Qatari divide. This divide put a strain on Sudanese participation in the Decisive Storm alliance and its support for the Saudi alliance against Iran due to the regime's ideological and practical links with the Muslim Brotherhood movement supported by Qatar. However, the regime has so far remained on the Saudi side, motivated only by its mercenary logic and need to contribute to the illusion of regional stability.

Lifting of US Sanctions: “A Carrot without a Stick”

In early 2017, a week before the end of the term of former US President Barack Obama, the efforts of the governments of Sudan and Saudi Arabia succeeded in persuading the US administration to partially lift the economic sanctions imposed on Sudan. US officials have justified the move as seeking to gain the Sudanese government's confidence in order to push for political reforms in return for other incentives, including the removal of Sudan from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. However, the subsequent statements and actions by officials from the two countries revealed that the expansion of US intelligence operations and their attempt to turn Sudan into an agent for its actions in the region, especially the war on terrorism, is the main reason for lifting the sanctions. Statements attributed to a Sudanese security official also revealed that the CIA opened its largest office in the region in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum¹⁰¹.

The announcement of intelligence cooperation between the Sudan and the United States reveals only the official presence, which was preceded by contacts and relations dating back to the nineties by Qutbi al-Mahdi, the then-director of Sudanese intelligence, followed those of former security director Salah Gosh. Other joint agreements confirmed the extent of the

100- Fox News, “Sudan president will not attend Saudi summit with Trump,” 19 May 2017, Available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/05/19/sudan-president-will-not-attend-saudi-summit-with-trump.html>

101- “National Intelligence and Security Services: C.I.A.'s office in Khartoum is one of its biggest offices in the Middle East,” available at <https://tinyurl.com/m8utp76>

infiltration of the US CIA in the decisions of the Sudanese state for more than two decades under the rule of the Islamic movement¹⁰².

Open US-Sudan cooperation began with the partial lifting of sanctions in January 2017. The full lifting of the sanctions was linked with the Sudanese government's achievement of positive progress on five tracks identified by the US government¹⁰³, including increased cooperation in the war on terror, cessation of LRA support, the maintenance of a ceasefire in areas of conflict in Sudan, and allowing the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The final decision is slated to be made in October.

On the same day that Obama issued the executive order, US Treasury Department issued a general license that amends the Sudanese Sanctions Regulations to authorize all prohibited transactions, including transactions involving property in which the government of Sudan has an interest¹⁰⁴. This effectively represented a decision to lift this set of sanctions completely although other sanctions imposed in 2006 in response to the war in Darfur remain in place. The dialogue and cooperation between the Sudanese government and international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have begun to pave the way for the completion of the second package of incentives promised by the international community to Al-Bashir regime, including the prelude to debt forgiveness¹⁰⁵.

These developments reveal that the six-month assessment period was a formality through which the Obama administration tried to lessen its embarrassment over the lifting of sanctions for the Sudanese government altogether.

102- Available at <https://www.alrakoba.net/news-action-show-id-46374.htm>.

103- Executive Order -- Recognizing Positive Actions by the Government of Sudan and Providing for the Revocation of Certain Sudan-Related Sanctions, 13 January 2017, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/13/executive-order-recognizing-positive-actions-government-sudan-and>

104- US Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, 31 CFR Part 538, Federal Register / Vol. 82, No. 10, available at: https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/SSR_amendment.pdf

105- "World Bank to discuss Sudan's debt relief next April," *Sudan Tribune*, March 2017, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article61874>

US administration's assessment tracks did not include gross violations of human rights, fundamental freedoms and efforts to achieve a just peace, which were part of the justification of imposition of sanctions in the first place.

The US administration's assessment tracks did not include gross violations of human rights, fundamental freedoms and efforts to achieve a just peace, which were part of the justification of imposition of sanctions in the first place¹⁰⁶. Although the assessment period has been extended for three months, it seems that no positive progress has been achieved in these areas. For example, as detailed in the first section of this report on the issues of war and peace, the facts confirm that attacks in Darfur have continued and even escalated, most notably by the government forces against the forces of Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni and the Transitional Council of the SLM in May 2017. This constituted an open violation by the Sudanese government of its declaration of cessation of hostilities.

In cooperating with the government of Sudan in the fight against terrorism, the US government has based its strategy on a short-sighted approach. It has focused only on intelligence exchanges and investigations with the security institutions of the ruling party, while ignoring the terrorist infrastructure that the NCP has developed over the years in the educational, cultural and social curricula and systems. The regime has even succeeded in adapting to keep abreast of the developments of new terrorist groups such as Daesh (also known as Islamic State or ISIS), Boko Haram and Al Shabaab in Somalia, as well as the global ties with Muslim Brotherhood organizations. The ruling party's support of terrorism is also revealed by the indirect recruitment of fundamentalists loyal to the regime, which has resulted in increasing numbers Sudanese students

106- US Government, Executive Order 13067 of November 3, 1997, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/13067.pdf>

and their joining the ranks of the Islamic State in Syria and Libya¹⁰⁷. Pro-government sheikhs, such as Yusuf Abd al-Hayy, Mohamed Abdel Karim and Mohamed Ali al-Jazuli, are exploiting the state of social repression and curtailment of freedoms, which are based on fundamentalist interpretations of religion, to deepen the alienation of those students from Western culture and education, and give them a new sense of belonging as a prelude to extremism and recruitment by terrorist groups outside Sudan. In addition, the government in Sudan and in the capital, Khartoum, support centers for the recruitment of African students in Sudan into the ranks of terrorist movements such as Boko Haram and Al Shabaab. The International African University is one of the most important centers of mobilization and recruitment of terrorist elements, and provides financial support and documentation for recruited students, granting them Sudanese passports to facilitate their movement. This has been confirmed by a number of leaked intelligence reports, revealing that counterterrorism experts knew that these centers had been recruiting grounds for terrorist organizations for some time¹⁰⁸.

The issue of stopping the support to the Ugandan Lord's Army (LRA) has been included in the conditions for the full lifting of sanctions in an absurd and imprecise manner. Uganda itself has declared an end of the LRA case and the search for Joseph Kony has been suspended since that time¹⁰⁹. The Sudanese government also lost any possibility of continuing to support it after the independence of South Sudan and the loss of control over the borders with Uganda. To make these conditions more serious, the Sudanese government's support for the radical Islamic

107- "UK, Canadian, U.S. students may have left Sudan for ISIS," AlArabiya, 28 June 2015, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/africa/2015/06/28/UK-Canadian-U-S-students-may-have-left-Sudan-for-ISIS-.html>

108- Secret CIA report, Wikileaks, available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/94KHAR-TOUM6366_a.html

109- "Uganda Ends Its Hunt for Joseph Kony Empty-Handed," *New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/20/world/africa/uganda-joseph-kony-lra.html?_r=2

Séléka movement in Central Africa¹¹⁰ should have been addressed. Many reports confirm that its leader, Michel Djotodia, received fundamentalist ideas during his tenure as consul for his country in Sudan, and then received military and logistical support from the Sudanese government¹¹¹. Several reports have shown that most of the weapons, ammunition and combat vehicles used by Séléka troops are from the Sudanese government¹¹². In addition to the issue of supporting the hardline forces in Central Africa, the US conditions for lifting sanctions avoided multiple Libyan complaints about Sudanese government smuggling weapons to Islamic extremist groups there. These complaints escalated to the point that Sudanese aircraft were forbidden in Libyan airspace by the Transitional Council, the ruler in Libya at one time¹¹³.

As for the provision of humanitarian aid to the victims of the war in Blue Nile and South Kordofan /Nuba Mountains, the Sudanese government has persisted in its continued position over 13 rounds of negotiations by refusing to deliver relief through internal and external routes. The partial lifting of US sanctions had already been proposed by the former US administration to oversee the delivery of limited humanitarian aid through internal routes as part of its settlement and to legitimize the decision to lift sanctions altogether. However, the SPLM- N's rejection of that proposal in its first form and its request for amendments prompted the US administration and the US Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan to become extremely hostile, criticizing the armed political movements in the three regions. As a result, the many of Sudan's political forces have lost confidence in the United States as a neutral

110- Elizabeth Kendall, "Central African Republic (CAR): Genocide Looms," November 20, 2013, available at: <http://www.sloppynoodle.com/wp/central-african-republic-car-genocide-looms/>

111- Conflict Armament Research and Itrace, "Non-State Armed Groups in the Central African Republic," January 2015, available at http://www.conflictarm.com/car_publications/NONSTATE_ARMED_GROUPS_IN_CENTRAL_AFRICAN_REPUBLIC.pdf

112- International Peace Information Service, Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic, November 2014, available at: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20141124_CAR.pdf

113- Chris Stephen, "Libya accuses Khartoum of flying weapons to Islamist rebels in Tripoli," *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/07/libya-khartoum-weapons-islamist-rebels>

party¹¹⁴.

The US proposal was made under a lot of urgency and ambiguity. The urgency was clear in that the US pressured opposition parties to agree quickly in order to achieve a policy victory for the US administration before leaving the White House. This victory was needed to legitimize its decision to freeze economic sanctions imposed on the Sudanese regime. They thus sought the opposition's consent to break the isolation and reward the ruling party for the full and final lifting of the sanctions, despite the continuation of wars and corruption and continued repression of freedoms, which was not given. However, six months after this decision, US is still lacking a clear policy towards Sudan.

The bilateral dialogues, which were conducted in secret and without any participation of, or consultation with, the Sudanese civil and political agencies, have led to the omission of various aspects, information, and views as well as a realistic framework for assessing and measuring the development in the five pillars that were put by the framework.

The international community, which has opened up to the regime of President Al-Bashir and re-engaged with the Sudanese government, contributes to the process of manufacturing the illusion of stability in Sudan. They do this at a time when the ruling party does not care what paths it takes to the normalization of its foreign relations - whether through mercenaryism like what's happening in Yemen, or employment and intelligence cooperation as with the United States in the fight against terrorism, or recruitment of militias in support of the European Union in the fight against migration. What is important for the ruling party in Khartoum is only that external normalization serve its interests to reproduce itself and market the illusion of stability in Sudan, and by reaping the proceeds of its external services, to stabilize its stay in power.

114- US Institute of Peace, "U.S. Special Envoy Speaks on Sudan and South Sudan," January 18, 2017, available at <https://www.usip.org/events/us-special-envoy-speaks-sudan-and-south-sudan>.

The African Union High-Level Implementation Panel:

Challenges and Opportunities

The African High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), chaired by South African President Thabo Mbeki, dates back to 2009 when it was known as the African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD) with a mandate for peace and stability in Darfur. Suspicions were raised about the purpose of the panel, including by one of its members that its purpose was to secure a safe exit for President Al-Bashir from an ICC arrest warrant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur¹¹⁵.

The African panel has been moving from one mandate to another, with little success in addressing complex Sudanese crises, and without achieving solution in anyone.

The African panel has undergone various stages and developments over the past eight years, including changes in its membership, areas of operation and competence in dealing with Sudanese crises, but the only constant has been President Mbeki¹¹⁶. The mediation moved from its initial specialization on Darfur, to the implementation of the recommendations of its comprehensive report on that issue, through the failed democratic elections in 2010, to conflict between the states of Sudan and South Sudan after the secession of the south, mediating conflict in the areas of Blue Nile and South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains, returning to the conflict in Darfur through the Doha process, confused about how to deal with the issues of

115- "Darfur rebels express no surprise over Mbeki panelist statement," *Sudan Tribune*, 2 November 2009, available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article32994>.

116- Monim El Jak, "Alex de Waal: the Rebirth of a Principled Activist?" World Peace Foundation, 19 June 2013, available at: <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2013/06/19/alex-de-waal-the-rebirth-of-a-principled-activist/>

the national dialogue and the African roadmap.

The African panel has been moving from one mandate to another, with little success in addressing complex Sudanese crises, and without achieving solution in anyone. Perhaps the greatest achievement of the panel was in its comprehensive report on Darfur¹¹⁷, when President Mbeki used to go to the camps for displaced and refugees, listening to their problems and issues, as well as engaging with opposition and government politicians alike. Thus, the report which was validated by the African summit and presidents of the African countries in Abuja in October 2009 stands as a landmark in the history of African mediation. But it was soon abandoned by the panel, which moved to another field of action in the Sudanese crisis, until it was recently laid in the thicket of manufacturing the illusion of stability in Sudan through the African Union roadmap.

Since February 2017, the high-level African panel has begun to restore its initiatives in dealing with the Sudanese crisis, after a break of six months of direct meetings. The head of the panel also visited Khartoum, which was preceded by meetings and statements by the staff of the panel and the African Union on the readiness to resume the negotiations process as provided for in the African roadmap.

In March 2016, the African panel proposed a roadmap for the resolution of the Sudanese crisis, which was first signed by the Sudanese government, followed by the consent of Sudan's opposition forces in July of the same year. But the first steps outlined by the roadmap collapsed less than a week later as a result of Sudanese government intransigence in reaching an agreement to stop hostilities and to deliver humanitarian aid. That intransigence effectively killed prospects for a peaceful solution through the cessation of hostilities in the three regions (Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan / Nuba Mountains). This was followed by a series of steps that expressed the indirect rejection of the African roadmap by the ruling party.

The measures and steps taken by the ruling party to disavow the African

117- Report of the African Union: High Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD), October 2009, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ccfde402.html>

AUHIP suffers from a conflict of vision and the vagaries of the approach between comprehensive and piecemeal solutions, and the lack of clarity on how “African solutions to African problems” should be interpreted by the panel.

roadmap and violate its main articles included its insistence on moving forward in its national dialogue, announcing its conclusion and recommendations, and dissolving the 7 + 7 committee, which was supposed to participate in the preparatory meeting with opposition forces according to the roadmap. They also created a new government with only national dialogue participants to form and pass constitutional and legal amendments that express only the interests of the ruling party and its allies. This new government would also launch the process of creating a permanent constitution for the country without complying with accepted standards, excluding national parties and failing to observe the principles and arrangements of constitutional participation by all.

The AUHIP and President Thabo Mbeki are not only facing a rejection of the roadmap by the NCP, they also face the dilemma of absorbing and dealing with a number of new developments on the Sudanese scene. They can address them, whether through a roadmap (modified) or through tabling a new political process. Some of these new developments include:

- The widespread civil disobedience witnessed in Sudan late last year, which formed a referendum to reject the policies of the ruling NCP in Sudan;
- The increasing violence of the regime and the continued influx of refugees in Darfur during the ongoing military campaigns in East and North Darfur and in Jebel Marra;
- The tactic of repeatedly calling for a cessation of hostilities by one party without monitoring mechanisms, making it a mere declaration of commitment, while military operations continue, as has happened in North and East Darfur;
- The escalation of stances that reject the approach of the African panel by a number of influential political and civil forces (such as

the National Consensus Forces and the Sudan Liberation Movement-Abdulwahid and a number of refugee and displaced organizations) which makes ignoring them a real obstacle to any future solutions.

In addition, as noted above, the ruling party has taken a number of steps to kill or disavow the African roadmap, which adds to the package of major structural challenges that the high-level African panel and President Thabo Mbeki have faced. These structural challenges include:

- 1-The conflict of vision and the vagaries of the approach of the African panel between comprehensive and piecemeal solutions, and the lack of clarity on how “African solutions to African problems” should be interpreted by the panel.
- 2- The abandonment and change of mandate of the panel, and change of interests associated with those areas of competence.
- 3- Taking positions and bias towards the intransigent parties and the inability to influence and exert pressure on the parties to the conflict on an equal footing.
- 4- Neglect of the daily humanitarian crises and human rights violations by the panel by not giving sufficient attention to these issues, failing to visit with, and hear from, war victims directly.
- 5- The shift from a neutral intermediary role to being seen as a party to the conflict, as in the dynamics associated with the African Union roadmap and the process of national dialogue.
- 6- The waste of resources and time in more than thirteen rounds of negotiations without real breakthroughs.
- 7- Lack of transparency, communication, and involvement of all actors affected by Sudanese crises, especially independent civil society and war victims.
- 8-Lack of competent staff and expertise, especially among the Sudanese, to advance the thinking and activities of the African panel.

This list, and any other challenges, does not mean that the efforts of the AUHIP to find durable solutions to the complex Sudanese crises must fail. The real response is to transform these challenges into opportunities for the panel to exit from the trap of manufacturing the illusion of stability,

and to make it an effective contributor to the achievement of just peace and democratic change. In this context, the foremost challenge is restoring confidence in the panel by the Sudanese parties, establishing its neutrality and its ability to contribute to the reaching of just and lasting solutions to the Sudanese crises.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The report on the manufacturing of the illusion of stability in Sudan through its five axes, is issued on the occasion of the 28th anniversary of the Islamic movement's military coup, has shown the variables and factors affecting the current political climate in Sudan. At its heart, the rise and implementation of the NCP's method of manufacturing the illusion of stability in Sudan, represents an alternative to serious and sincere work to reach comprehensive solutions to protracted and complex Sudanese crises. As the report indicates, the most dangerous thing about this strategy is that it covers up the crises and suffering that Sudanese are living through across the country with a glossy finish of false stability and deceptive peace. Meanwhile, the regime continues to commit serious crimes with impunity and spread corruption in order to escape political accountability for crimes committed over the past 28 years.

The second major danger in manufacturing the illusion of stability is that it further weakens official state institutions. As it has progressed, the influence of new centers of power has increased. Their main tasks have been to implement this strategy through pragmatic policies and practices unrestricted by any organizational, political, diplomatic and security constraints nor guided by serving the interests of the Sudanese people. The growing influence of informal centers, who respond directly to the head of state, President Al-Bashir weakens official institutions. For example, the legitimization of the Rapid Support Forces weakens the regular armed forces. The rise of influence and authority of the State Security Prosecution office which is a subsidiary to the National Intelligence and Security Services weakens the whole legal framework by giving legal cover to the violations of the security apparatus. The rise of the director of the president's office and

his control of foreign relations undermines the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other new centres are growing in all economic, political and social spheres, and will accelerate the collapse of the Sudanese state apparatus definitively, under the guise of manufacturing the illusion of stability.

At the heart of the strategy of manufacturing the illusion of stability in Sudan, the report examined the national dialogue, which is one of the pillars of that strategy, paving the way for other stages of creating the illusion through the national consensus government created by the dialogue and inaugurating the second phase that begins now with the creation of a permanent constitution. This process will, like the national dialogue, be dedicated to the exclusion of national forces and establishing the dominance of the ruling party, reaching a new constitution governing the 2020 elections ready reproduce the Ingaz rule.

The following set of recommendations covers the themes addressed in the report; which aim to contribute to the expansion of the discussion on the prospects of getting out of the impasse of the Sudanese crises, by developing these recommendations and building upon them, whenever possible.

Achieving a Just Peace and Lasting Stability

- Peace in Sudan cannot be achieved through fragmented response to Sudan's various conflicts and political challenges. Ignoring the common roots of these conflicts, and responding to them through separately negotiated agreements, or through military means, will only add to the accumulation of grievances and exclusion. Only a comprehensive political solution will end the cycle of violence
- The situation of refugees and displaced persons must be resolved urgently, including through genuine consultation with these communities. A conference of Sudanese refugees and displaced persons might be considered. All parties involved in the Sudanese crisis should put the situation of displaced persons and refugees at the heart of their political proposals and discourse.
- The Sudanese government must review the status and composition of the Rapid Support Forces militia, including in the context of any

future national security arrangements. This must include holding their leaders accountable for the crimes they have committed.

Sudanese opposition and seeding positive change

The Sudanese opposition must develop its discourse and working tools and strengthen its understanding and response to the basic issues in people's daily lives. To do this, forces working for civil and political change must:

- continue efforts to unify around a common platform, refine the clarity of their discourse and develop detailed alternative policies for the transition period;
- support the restoration of a genuinely independent political role for civil society by encouraging its active participation in the process of change and building bridges with political forces.

The efforts of the international community to support stability

- If United States (US) sanctions are lifted, increased oversight of Sudanese financial flows will be vital: mechanisms must be established to prevent increased weapons flows, support for militias and expansion of the architecture of state corruption. The biggest beneficiary of any lift of sanctions will be the ruling party, its security institutions and its private companies.
- Removing Sudan from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, provision of debt relief or grant of economic and political incentives to the ruling party must also be conditional on an increase in political freedoms, an end to the conflicts and human rights violations: these conditionalities are currently not part of the US five track process. Involving the political and civil opposition partners in monitoring and evaluation will be critical to ensuring the effectiveness of any deal.
- In terms of countering terrorism, dealing with the intellectual and political roots of the phenomenon must be paramount. This work should include strengthening the participation of democratic actors in

the societal and political response and challenging laws and practices being promulgated by the state that encourage and propagate extremist religious tendencies and fuel the growth of extremist movements.

- Political and civil forces must be involved in official efforts - both domestic and international – in response to illegal migration and other organized crime. The content, orientation and partnerships created by the European Union and the Sudanese government and their impact on the security, political and social conditions in Sudan, and in East Sudan in particular, must be considered.

African Union (AU) mechanisms' efforts to achieve stability

- Work to restore political confidence in AU processes by talking to all parties—and not just the NCP—on an equal footing. This should include the National Consensus Forces, the Sudan Liberation Movement-Abdelwahid, independent civil society, and victims of war. The AU must also insist that all parties comply with the decisions of the Peace and Security Council of Africa at its 456th and 539th sessions: repudiation by the NCP of what was previously approved and agreed should not be accepted.
- Develop the structure of the AU High-Level Panel by regularly using Sudanese experts in its daily work and maintaining staff in Sudan. The establishment of a new partners platform which would include international and regional partners from neighboring countries and European countries with interests and influence should also be considered.