

Explaining the Darfur Peace Agreement
Part 15
Personal Reflections

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This is fifteenth and last a series of articles concerning the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). In this concluding piece, I give my personal reflections on the DPA and what has happened since its signature. I wrote this series of articles based on my experience as an advisor to the African Union Mediator in Abuja during the seventh round of the Darfur peace talks. The articles were not commissioned by the AU and neither did I check them with the AU before sending them for publication. The reason why I wrote them was that many people were writing commentaries on the DPA without fully knowing what had happened in the negotiations and what was contained in the Agreement.

In my personal opinion, there is much that is good in the DPA. Some of its provisions are very good indeed. There are also gaps and shortcomings. Some of these are the fault of the Mediation, others came about because the GoS and Movements' negotiators agreed on a paragraph without fully examining what it would entail.

Most Darfurians and other Sudanese have not read the DPA. They reacted to the DPA not on the basis of its XXX pages of text and XXX pages of annexes but on the basis of page 107, which is the most important page—the signature page. They looked for four signatures and found only two. And they listened to the condemnations of the two who did not sign. Some of Abdel Wahid's and Khalil's criticisms of the DPA are based on fair considerations. Some are not: they are misrepresenting the Agreement for their own political purposes.

It is much easier to condemn than to find a solution. After six frustrating months in Abuja and a further month chasing Abdel Wahid al Nur and his group from one place to the next, I could equally have written fourteen articles explaining the problems with the DPA and how it could have been done better if the AU had employed more specialists, brought in more independent Darfurians, and had another three months to negotiate.

There are many shortcomings in the text of the DPA. With more time and effort, and especially more consultation with Darfurians in Darfur, a better document could have been produced. But, whatever the problems with the AU Mediation, any peace agreement is ultimately the responsibility of the two sides. The most important thing that the AU provided was a forum in which the GoS and the Movements could meet. The Mediation knew that the most important meetings were not those in the conference chamber, or the Chief Mediator's office, but the private discussions between senior members of the GoS and the leaders of the Movements. It was in these direct meetings between the parties that the deal would be made, or not. It was only because no agreements were reached in those meetings that the Mediation found it necessary to produce a document.

