

PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN SUDAN

BRIEFING

DECEMBER 2000

Overview

Political developments have been in something of a lull for the last month. Khartoum has been preoccupied with the elections, with the return of Sadiq el Mahdi and its implications, and with the increased militancy since the NDA-SPLA attack on Kassala. None of the peace processes have marked significant development.

More on the Kassala Raid and its Implications

As more details emerge about the NDA raid on Kassala, its implications are becoming more complex. Some important aspects of the raid include the following:

1. The attack was virtually the sole work of the SPLA. Other NDA forces were informed only on the day previous to the raid itself. Some forces that participated in the raid were not aware of the target until the attack was underway. Others were not involved at all. This contributed to some of the shortcomings of the attack, which could have achieved much more if available intelligence within all the NDA parties had been fully utilised.
2. The Eritreans were not actively engaged. Earlier, the Eritrean government had provided some materials to the NDA to assist them in their withdrawal from Hamush Koreib (in which losses among the SPLA troops were in fact significant); this was utilised for the Kassala raid. The absence of Eritrean assistance also led to some shortcomings. For example, of the 13 captured tanks, only two were driven away intact: the remainder were burned.
3. As a result of the lack of coordination with Eritrea, relations between the Eritreans and much of the NDA are now less cordial. Senior figures in Eritrea are reportedly saying that the NDA is 'not serious' about making peace.
4. The attack is being used for propaganda value by the most militant elements in the NDA, which are least keen on peaceful accommodation. This is especially the case for the SPLA and SAF.
5. The level of repression and violence against the Southern and Nuba population in Eastern Sudan continues to escalate. Attacks and killings have spread from Kassala itself (especially

the areas of Wau Naar and Kadugli) to Khasm el Girba and Gedaref, where there are substantial numbers of labourers from these areas.

6. The expected crackdown against the NDA leadership in Khartoum has duly occurred. Six internal NDA leaders were arrested following a meeting with the US Charge, and a seventh was later detained along with their lawyer, Ghazi Suleiman. The seven arrested are: Joseph Okell, Ali Sayed, Mohamed Wida'a, Tijani Mustafa, Ali Mahmoud Hassanein, Dr Stans Jimmy and Mahjoub Osman. Other lawyers have been detained also after signing a petition demanding their release.

Khartoum Politics

Sadiq el Mahdi returned to Khartoum as promised to a tumultuous reception. At minimum two million people turned out in Khartoum and Omdurman to meet him. It was a dramatic display of the continuing loyalty of Umma Party supporters, and a marked contrast to the numbers who could be expected to give their public backing to Bashir or Turabi. Sadiq is confident that he still has the popular base to win an election, and the turnout in Khartoum can only have reinforced this belief.

There is widespread speculation that Sadiq has done a secret deal with President Bashir. However, Sadiq has denounced both the current elections, and the NDA-SPLA attack on Kassala.

President Bashir has proceeded with the elections despite the conspicuous lack of any form of popular enthusiasm, and the boycott by any credible elements in the opposition. Results from early voting indicate that Bashir has gained about 60% of the votes cast, with former President Nimeiri in a distant second place with 17%.

The Asmara Initiative and the LEI

Progress on the Asmara Initiative and the joint Libyan-Egyptian Initiative has been slow. The IGAD Summit in late November was preoccupied primarily with the issue of the re-admission of Somalia and the status of President Abdikassim Salat. Sudan is actively backing the new Somali administration, and Islamic philanthropic agencies that have been active in Sudan are increasingly active in Somalia too.

The NDA's progress towards full and active engagement with these initiatives has been hampered by continuing lack of funds. The committees dealing with the constitution, interim arrangements and decentralisation have not met since the September Congress in Massawa.

IGAD

Conclusion