

## **Sudan: Analysis and Prospects**

### **December 2005**

#### **Overview**

1. The prospects for peace in Darfur are gloomier than at any time in the last eighteen months. The focus of the problem has shifted from Darfur to the SLM, letting the Government off the hook. The internal power struggle in the SLM shows no sign of rapid resolution. The NCP and SPLM are therefore under no pressure to adopt a united position and make concessions.
2. The Darfur situation is paralyzing the implementation of the CPA.
3. The greatest threats to the CPA lie across Sudan's borders, in Chad, Libya, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Uganda.

#### **The SLM**

4. The SLM has been cursed in its two leaders. In recent months the main problem has been Minni Minawi and his ambition to take over the movement, but Abdel Wahid Nur can be relied upon to squander every opportunity for leadership that comes his way. Inadequate preparations have been made for discussing issues such as power sharing and security. In these circumstances the Abuja peace talks cannot make any progress.
5. Minawi's ambition and ruthlessness appeared to commend him as a potential strongman for Darfur, someone with whom it would be possible to strike a deal. That assessment has turned out to be mistaken. Minawi's political-military style is divisive and his leadership capability does not extend to any form of serious negotiation.
6. Minawi's political ambition is to be the sole leader of the SLM. The Haskanita conference was designed to be his ticket to political legitimacy. Haskanita did indeed have strong elements of legitimacy: Abdel Wahid had agreed to it in February and sent a delegation. Although Minawi's supremacy was certain from the outset, Haskanita did have elements of genuine consultation, that Minawi could have used as the basis for bringing in others. However, Minawi squandered his chance through an all-or-nothing approach. His strategy was to make his leadership a fait accompli by military unification of the movement (detaining or eliminating dissenting commanders). To this end he detained several rivals and launched military operations against others. His next aim was the political removal of Abdel Wahid Nur, which would be accomplished if the international community refused to recognize him at the peace talks. Should he ever succeed in this, his next move will be against JEM.
7. Minawi's strategy is not succeeding. His main problem is that he used Haskanita as a pretext for moving against his critics rather than accommodating them. His power base is currently fragile.

8. Minawi has no political experience and has not participated in any peace negotiations at all. He tried to block the last round of peace talks in Abuja including trying to prevent his commanders from attending. (The charges against the detained Suleiman Marajan includes that he was not authorized to go to Abuja and spend the SLM's finances on that trip.) He sent a delegation to Nairobi without proper briefing or any authority to say anything other than 'no.' Should he control a delegation to the Abuja talks it is inconceivable that it would demonstrate any flexibility.

9. It is unfortunate that the U.S. was perceived by Minawi and his acolytes to be endorsing his legitimacy by sending a representative to Haskanita and continuing to consult with him. The message that he is one leader of the SLM rather than the sole leader has simply not been heard. This reflects the political naivete of Minawi, his limited horizons, and the fact that his subordinates are too afraid of him to pass him a different message. Some of his team discount messages from the most senior U.S. officials saying that 'the Americans on the ground know us better.'

10. Minawi's motivation is complex. He comes from a traditionally-despised low caste group of the Zaghawa and was repeatedly humiliated by his clansmen, including the former military commander of the SLA Abdalla Abbaker (who died in 2004). He is backed by Libya and opposed by Chad. He has been advised that he is likely to be on the list of suspects for war crimes to be investigated by the ICC. Underneath all this is simple ambition. The press is awakening to Minawi's human rights record and articles have already appeared in respectable Middle Eastern newspapers portraying him as a criminal and dictator. It is only a matter of time before a major U.S. newspaper profiles Minawi in very negative terms.

11. Abdel Wahid has repeatedly shown himself incapable of leadership. He is respected because of his early role in the SLM, his civilian character, and the fact that he consistently holds to the principle of tribal balance (including insisting on including Arab interests). But his political style has frustrated his colleagues.

12. The majority of SLA commanders would prefer a united movement with a single delegation to Abuja. But they are unable to force this on the leadership. The main factor preventing the fragmentation of the SLM into more factions is that only one SLM is recognized at Abuja, and the breakaway JEM factions (e.g. NMRD) were not recognized. The middle ranks of the SLM are ready and willing to engage in serious peace talks. The obstacle is the top leadership.

13. The fact that Minawi and Abdel Wahid were obliged to meet in the Government-controlled city of el Fasher, because they could not agree on an alternative location, was a humiliation for them both. The Government press has exulted over this. The NCP's preferred option is for the peace negotiations to be transferred to Sudanese territory (Khartoum or el Fasher) and this meeting serves as ample justification for their claims.

## **The GNU on Darfur**

14. The GNU has not made progress towards a united position on Darfur. A National Committee on Darfur has been established that includes the NCP and SPLM but it has not made any progress towards agreement. The Government delegation to Abuja is headed by Majzoub al Khalifa, as before, with a junior SPLM representation.

15. The NCP is continuing business as usual. It anticipates that the SLM disarray will mean that it can escape censure at the Khartoum summit of the AU in January. It announced and then postponed a conference on Darfur. Had this proceeded it would have allowed the GNU delegation to claim that its positions had been discussed and agreed by a wide cross-section of Darfurian leaders. The NCP is having some success in co-opting other Northern political forces into this strategy, including the Umma Party (which has historically had strong representation in Darfur) and the Popular Congress Party (of Hassan al Turabi). These groups concur that the problem of Darfur should be settled internally in Sudan without international engagement. But the majority of Darfurian opinion is against this approach. However, as mainstream Darfurian leaders become more and more frustrated with the SLM, it is unclear whether they will be able to hold out against this pressure for long. Public opinion in Khartoum and the South is also swinging away from sympathizing with Darfur.

16. The SPLM has yet to adopt a coherent position. The Darfur file remains in the hands of Abdel Aziz al Hilu, Secretary General for the SPLM for Northern Sudan. He has not stated his preferred position and has nominated two of his subordinates to the GNU delegation (Yasir Arman and Walid Musa). Salva Kiir has not established an SPLM office for Darfur nor appointed an SPLM special envoy for Darfur. Equally seriously, the SPLM is not conveying a consistent message to the SLM. Salva Kiir and Lam Akol met the SLM delegations in Nairobi on November 10 and gave a strong message that the SLM should avoid internal division, above all bloodshed, and should send a united delegation to Abuja. Representatives from Abdel Aziz al Hilu's office subsequently went to Nairobi and reportedly gave a different message, encouraging the SLM to take a tougher stand.

17. The best step for the SPLM to take is to designate a senior minister (ideally Lam Akol, the foreign minister) as their member of the GNU delegation to Abuja. Such a delegate would outrank the NCP chief delegate and immediately become a key broker.

18. Members of the National Assembly are expressing their discontent over the GNU handling of the Darfur peace talks. Currently there is no-one who can be summoned to parliament to answer questions on the Darfur peace talks.

## **Abuja**

19. The African Union is only moving slowly on the substantive agenda for Abuja. It still lacks its full complement of advisers.

20. The positive side of the Abuja talks is that they keep the SLM leaders engaged in a political process and make it less likely that they will fight in Darfur.

## **The Security Cabal**

21. The security cabal headed by Salah Abdalla Gosh and Nafie Ali Nafie (now vice-president of the NCP) remains as influential as ever. Security continues to threaten, harass and detain individuals and act in an arbitrary manner.

### **Humanitarian Issues**

22. The old GoS Humanitarian Affairs Commission continues essentially unchanged. It is run by security. The minister (an SPLM appointee, Kosti Manibe) has little power. Meanwhile, key humanitarian issues fall under state governors. This is particularly significant in the case of Khartoum State, given that this is the location of a large displaced population. The CPA gives the SPLM only 10% of the posts in Khartoum State despite the fact that displaced Southerners represent a much larger proportion of the population. Khartoum State is proving obstructive to humanitarian agencies and their attempts to work with the displaced.

23. The GoSS lacks a minister for humanitarian affairs. The only Southern humanitarian institution is the SPLM's Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. This is emerging as an important institutional weakness in Southern Sudan.

24. Parliament has created a permanent committee for humanitarian affairs and internally displaced persons. This is encouraging.

### **The Region**

25. The situation in Chad remains deeply worrying. France, which could play a constructive role, appears completely wedded to Idriss Deby's failing regime. France admits, however, that there is no Plan B should Deby die or a war begin. Khartoum is acting with the utmost irresponsibility in sponsoring Chadian rebel camps in Darfur. Should a war begin in eastern Chad it will inevitably have a cross-border dimension and it could easily make the Darfur conflict insoluble. Sudan's CPA depends on stability in Chad.

26. The Libyan role in Darfur and Chad is unclear. Libya undoubtedly broke the arms embargo on Darfur by supplying Minawi in advance of the Haskanita conference. It appears to have renewed interest in Chad, perhaps partly driven by a desire to put right the Libyan army's humiliation in Chad in 1987. Libya is also one of Eritrea's few friends.

27. War between Ethiopia and Eritrea is a distinct possibility. It is in the interest of neither country, but cool calculation of outcomes has not deterred the two leaderships from war in the past. While Eritrea is in the wrong on most issues, on the specific issue of the border demarcation and the handover of the town of Badme from Ethiopian control, Eritrea is right. But Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi cannot back down on this without jeopardizing his own position domestically. He is less vulnerable to protest from the opposition parties, who have staged rallies in Addis Ababa, than he is from his own party members. Meles's own party blames him not only for having taken a weak stand on Eritrea (he ordered the army to stop its victorious advance in June 2000 and agreed to arbitration on the border rather than dictating the boundary

on the basis of military occupation) but also for weakness in allowing the opposition to organize and win so many seats in the 2005 elections.

28. If war were to break out between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Sudan would be identified as an ally of Ethiopia. This has the strategic advantage for Sudan that Ethiopia is almost certain to win. It has the danger that Eritrea will use the pretext of Eritrean opposition presence in Sudan as a reason for widening the war to include Sudan. For the Eritrean president this would be a way of raising the stakes and obtaining maximum international pressure to stop the war and save his government.

29. To complete the circle of instability, Uganda is in political crisis, with President Museveni pressing charges of treason against his political rival, Dr Kizza Besigye, in a military court. His army continues to show itself wholly incapable of defeating the Lord's Resistance Army.

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