

## *Fostering Inclusion? Analysis of the IGAD Negotiations*

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This paper is about the inclusion/exclusion of Darfur from/in the current talks between GOS and SPLM in Naivasha, and the prospects of peace in the whole country. The paper also investigates any possible link/s between the war in Darfur as spearheaded by SLA/JEM and the Naivasha talks, and the implication of this war in the security of the whole region. The paper will also explore possible reasons for GOS' involvement in the current conflict, not merely in fighting the rebellion, but in committing genocide against innocent civilians of Darfur.

### **Introduction**

Darfur shared borders with three countries: Central African Republic, Chad, and Libya, and covers 510, 888sq. km. representing one fifth of the Sudan. Its population is about 7.77 Millions, which is approximately 20% of the country's population. Rural Darfur is dominated by nomads who practice camel/cattle/sheep herding, or farmers who keep some animals for their subsistence. Darfur is also home to various indigenous ethnic groups, some with kins in Chad and beyond such as the Daju, Tunjur, Masalit, Zaghawa, Bornu, Tama, Salamat, etc. Other groups have kins in central Sudan, as with the Arab groups of Darfur. Other groups have linguistic affiliation with the Nubians of northern Sudan, e.g. Meidob, Birged. Although the Arab groups represent a sizeable percentage of present day Darfur, this group, as in Chad and due to its nomadic life style, has no role in the political development of the regional kingdoms that existed in the area prior to the

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defeat by the European powers in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.. These traditional entities were:  
Zaghawa (8<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup>), Daju (11<sup>th</sup> Century), Tunjur (12<sup>th</sup> Century), and the Fur (1650-1916).

### **Darfur in National & Regional Contexts**

Darfur relation with eastern/riverain Sudan dates back to 1785 by its annexation of Kordofan, which it lost to Turco-Egyptian forces in 1821, which also ended the independent Funj Sultanate, Darfur rival in Sudan. Darfur came closer to riverain Sudanese orbit during the Mahdist period (1882-1898), and with death of the Mahdi, the Darfurian: Khalifa Abdullahi assumed power. But his arrival witnessed first regional/ethnic confrontation between *awlad al bahar* (people of the Nile), and *awlad al ghareb* (people of the west), about the legitimacy and eligibility rights of the Mahdi's successor. Darfur was only incorporated into the rest of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in 1916, while some parts of its western frontier were only incorporated in 1923.

Due to lack of job employment, more Darfurians found their way as laborers in central Sudan, and the army; and on the reverse riverain Sudanese administrators, military officers, doctors, judges, and merchants, were comfortably stationed in Darfur. This uneven bi-directional relationship has its implication on both parties. With lack of services in the areas of education, health, transport over the years, the growing dissatisfaction has lead to establishment of various ethnic groupings by mid 1960s, one of which was DDF, whose leader was immediately absorbed by the Umma party, and 1981 was appointed the Governor of Darfur when Numeri was forced rescind a decree and recognized Darfur as a separate region. Thus, politically, Darfur is taken for granted as a

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closed district for the Umma party to maintain dominance in Sudanese politics, and now by the two factions of NIF.

Regionally, Darfur borders with Libya and Chad are both a curse and a blessing.

Members of the same ethnic groups are sometimes found in Chad and in Darfur, some along the borders, and others in the hinterlands. Political and environmental conditions have affected group movement, and hence the borders do little in hindering infiltrations in periods of peace and war. Another dimension was added to this when the Sudanese and Libyan governments started meddling in Chadian affairs, by siding with one adherer against another, and sometimes with the involvement of certain ethnic groups, which opened Darfur and Chad to flood of arms, waves of refugees, and rebel groups. But the same border at times serves as a blessing for Darfur, where traded items from west and central Africa, had helped in alleviating the poverty for many Darfurian residents. The Libyan oil boom of early 1970s provided Darfurians with work opportunities and became a prelude of economic successes for many. It even affected the life style of whole groups (e.g. Zaghawa), due to the availability of cash, which they used in furthering trade investments not only in Darfur, but in other place in the Sudan (*suq Libya*).

**History of current crisis**

Since early 1970s, Darfur witnessed waves of climatic changes that affected different places, and pushed some groups to migrate, internally. Zaghawa moved from their home land (Dar Zaghawa) to different places inside Darfur. Their presence was not limited to one area, but they settled in lands of various ethnic groups, e.g.: Fur, Arabs, Masalit,

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Birged, and in many urban centers of Darfur and beyond. This gradual movement was done, without reported incidents that put an end to their migration and without assistance from the government. The same could be said with the movement of nomad Arabs with their livestock looking for pastures. Throughout the years, land ownership, and ethnic boundaries (Fredrick Barth) were respected amicably by these groups, who for centuries defined their way of settling their disputes on traditional conferences (*ajaweed/muatamarat al sulh*). This mechanism was quite effective and its rulings are always respected and honored. Even at times when the government has a presence, it served as a facilitator and not as an enforcer. With the existence of ethnic conflicts in Darfur in the past, the neutrality of the government has always contained these conflicts within their boundaries, and never flared to other areas. This situation was not only limited to ethnic conflicts within Darfur, but among other groups in Kordofan and the South. These formulas however have changed with the military tactics in fighting SPLM. Although conflict over pastures, and others tend to be solved amicably between the Baqqara/Misseiriya and the Dinka, however, with the infiltration of SPLM in the Nuba Mountains the Sudanese government created the Murahleen militia group, fighting parallel to the Sudanese army. This has resulted in polarizing the neighbors in the current conflict, and by arming the Baggara in this war the government has poisoned the relationship between these groups who have co-existed and inter-married for decades. It's also under this atmosphere that Ed Dein Massacre of 1986 took place against the Dinka, which was followed by the creation of Arab federation at the time of the democratically elected government of Saddiq Al Mahdi. The Federation in its declaration talked about the marginalization of Arab groups in Darfur, and called for more representation for them

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in the government. There was no condemnation against the federation, and today some of those who signed that document have high esteemed positions with NIF government.

Another precursor of the Federation is the appearance of Quraish 1, and Quraish 2 leaflets instigating Darfur “zurqa” Blacks; but there was no condemnation against the discourse of their backers by the government.

The government use of one ethnic group against another in fighting the SPLM, has been repeated also in Darfur which in 1991 against Daoud Bolad in Jebel Marra, who was a disgruntled NIF member, reborn SPLM fighter. The government used Arab militias in a highly dramatized fashion, which was the same tactic used by the British forces in 1916 in Jebel Marra in killing the last Sultan of Darfur. The government was also deliberately silent and biased in the war between the Masalit and the Arabs, who mostly came from Chad. Not only that, but it limited the power of the Masalit Sultan, and started by appointing it's own brand of local chiefs, using it's own nomenclature, and give them land entitlements in the Dar Masalit. During the recent conflict between the Fur and the Arabs in Jebel Marra, the government and its troops adopted systematic policies against the Fur through detentions of Fur students, lawyers, teachers, government officials, confiscation of arms. This was paralleled by systematic attacks against their villages and possessions. The same also is true in the on-going conflict between the Masalit and the Arabs. This period also witnessed flare in banditry which became a livelihood for many due to economic conditions inside the country, and in Libya. But the government instead of addressing banditry at its core, it waged war against the Zaghawa as the main group behind it. With the decentralization, polarization across ethnic lines became the rule,

which due to lack of adequate funds, made the struggle over jobs, and the scarce resources to be influenced by ethnic politics.

The dissatisfaction of some Darfurian elites who were in power aligned with this regime, were quickly turned into “freedom fighters” when their services were no longer rendered by the NIF. Good example of this is with JEM leadership who was a NIF Minister, and Bolad who was a NIF student union leader, before ending an SPLM martyr.

### **Reasons for Conflicts and Solving Mechanism**

Ethnic conflicts in Darfur are not new, nor the conflicts between Arabs and non Arabs throughout history. Causes of ethnic tensions are many, which could be triggered by: conflict over pasture or grazing areas; nomad encroachment on farmer’s land, political dispute in local politics, water resources; or as result of any mundane daily life action that could exacerbate to a bigger form. In all, there's always a way for solving these conflicts amicably, and within the traditional framework of decorum. It's for these reasons that the rulers of Darfur have used marriage alliance to bring adverse groups into their kingdoms, and to pacify them. However, NIF involvement in Darfur these days shatters all peaceful co-existence among all these groups.

SLA sudden appearance in Darfur was not a complete surprise within the context of aggravated violence committed against civilians, and the sporadic attack against the army and top government officials. It was under these circumstances and chaos that a conference was held in El Fashir in February 2002, to discuss the escalating violence.

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The conferees, sent representative to contact the main ethnic groups in the fight to list their demands/grievances. There was considerable development, and in contacting the SLA fighters, they disclosed nascent political demands as expressed by a local government Minister. Their main demand was for the government not to attack their bases; but it did, and their response was attacking El Fashir, Maleit, and Kutum. The government showed less interest when a group of Darfurian ministers and parliamentarians met with SLA and listed their demands, and came to Khartoum to announce it at a Press Congress, when it was cancelled, abruptly. With the SLA capture of large numbers of troops, a ceasefire was signed in Abeche, Chad. GOS and SLA also agreed to curb the Arab militias, release of war prisoners, and delivery of aids to affected parties. Ever since, that ceasefire which lasted briefly more ferocious war tactics are now taking place between the government and it's militias against SLA/JEM forces and the innocent civilians. New tactics include, heavy aerial bombardment, burning of villages, bombing of water sources: wells, dams, killing livestock and home possessions, destruction of farms, forced migration to Khartoum area, and lately gang rape, and abduction of women and children: Slavery/Forced Labor/Abductees. Since straw is main material used in rural houses, the destruction of villages through fire is quite easy especially for defenseless civilians.

**Calls for Inclusion:**

From the first contact between the traditional rulers of Darfur during Elfasher conference in February 2003, to al Tina meeting in Sept 2003, to Abeche conference, all there was no hints from the press releases that settling the problems in Darfur, must be in Naivasha.

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In all the diplomatic contacts with the SLA, their disclosed demands are centered on: amnesty, recognition of SLA as a political party, conduct of development projects, curbing of janjaweed militias, securing aid delivery to the needy, and presence of international peace keepers. All of which were reasonable agendas that are possible to be accepted by a mature government if it really wants peace in the country.

However, in December 21, 2003, and in a press interview with Alhalyat Newspaper, SLA President, Mr. Abdelwahid Osman, declared that the ongoing talks between Taha and Garang will not bring peace to Sudan, unless the issue of Darfur is addressed, and that they want equal development for the whole Sudan, and that his movement is not a secessionist. The call for inclusion in Naivasha talks, though came late from SLA, goes in line with it's rhetoric of being a national movement, and not merely for Darfur. To substantiate this, talks and joint declarations were signed and announced between SLA and the Beja Congress, and later SLA became an NDA member.

Talks about inclusion came also within the background of the government escalation of the war. The vicious reaction of the government against civilians, and not SLA/JEM, will eventually lead to more radicalization. The talk about the inclusion of Darfur in Naivasha or at another international forum is now more urgent than ever, everyday with the current daily atrocities committed by the government and its militias.

**Why there's no arm revolt by the Darfurians, why they waited too long:**

With all the injustices inflicted on the region, its inhabitants have stayed resilient. Part of this could be ascribed to the favorable economic condition of the large sector of its

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population in rural areas, who were self sufficient in terms of their basic needs. However with population increase, and education opportunities, more people have other priorities in life that pushed them to urban areas. On the other hand, trade between Darfur and its neighbors, provided its citizens with goods, and luxury items some of which traveled to other parts of the Sudan. Part of the delay could be ascribed to lack of political awareness of the region's problems by its elites as top priorities. [Dr. Ali Alhaj, a Darfurian and 2<sup>nd</sup> to Turabi, he and others have embezzled millions of Darfur taxed money to build a highway that link the region with Khartoum, an act that could best be described as a banditry committed by the government.]

Darfurian elites were corrupted by these "national" parties, and were subjected to what one called it "riverization", by assimilating them as riverain elites, who only realize the suffering of their people when forced out of power. For both NIF and Umma, any genuine political movement in Darfur, is real threat to their existence, as a majority, and as such they have to extend their courtship to large numbers of Darfurian. All this has lead to delay in comprehending the problems that faced the region.

**Why Darfur Issue at Naivasha?**

The limitation of the current talks to North/South could only stop the war in the South, which it really deserves, but doesn't necessarily solve the problem of the whole Sudan. Naivasha is at best is a good framework for peace, if the intention is to end the suffering of one group, but not all. Although Darfur has only entered the scene recently, however the government conduct of this war has now proven to the international community the

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shortcomings of Naivasha, and that NIF, can't be trusted. This means, the international community may find itself instituting Naivasha-2 to solve the current crisis in Darfur now or reserve that to a later date when war becomes unbearable and consume Naivasha-1. This raises the question on whether to be inclusive in the peace process consider establishing another forum to solve issues not included within Machakos framework or wait & see. While the international community shows lots of commitment in Naivasha meeting, and had great leverage, one questions what leverage they will have in forcing the govt. in changing its policies towards other regions comparable to the south?

**Why Darfur Matters?**

The establishment of peace in Darfur is of vital importance, not only for its own inhabitants, but also nationally, regionally, and globally; and here Darfur situation is not different from that of the southern Sudan. With the involvement of the government in the current war in Darfur, siding with some groups against others, it shattered all the bases of peaceful co-existence among Darfurians, and even raises the question of allegiance to the Sudanese state. Peace in Darfur is necessary for stabilizing the surrounding regions which include southern Sudan, Chad, and CAR. Due to the proximity of these regions, and with cross-border activities, it's very possible for the current conflict to consume all these regions, in future events.

Although Naivasha was structured to solve North/South problem, the urgency is there for comprehensive peace that will include all unrepresented parties. For Darfurians, their concerns stem not in reaction to the arm groups that are fighting the government, but in

response also to the government involvement in the current genocide. These concerns include:

### **Local Grievances**

Due to years of political and economic marginalization, the people of Darfur are prey of the following grievances:

- Lack of economic opportunities for large numbers of population, especially with the current schemes of privatization which resulted in job loss for many workers;
- Lack of services especially in areas of education and health, and the deterioration of existing ones, and the appalling condition of teachers who received no pay for years;
- Lack of reliable means of transport, which resulted in high prices for fuel and other basic life necessities;
- Political marginalization by under-representation of Darfurians. Proportionally in the central government, often in specific post.
- Cultural hegemony which present the culture of those in power as the "national" culture, and suppressing other cultures from having an equal representation through the state's organs.
- Polarization across ethnic lines which came as a result of governmental policies of decentralization, which due to lack of adequate funds, made the struggle over these jobs, and the scarce resources to be guided by ethnic politics.
- Ecological factors: Due to desert encroachment into several parts of Darfur and the inaccessibility of pastures of southern Sudan, nomads were forced to move into areas of the farmers, and hence it's one of the reasons behind the current fighting. The region also witnessed several cycles of draught (1973, 1983), and in each the reaction of the national government to the catastrophe was very slow.
- Migration from rural to urban centers which was partly triggered by the drought where people lost their animal resources, and crops, and due to lack of job opportunities and services in rural areas. This immigration however, is not followed by parallel increase in the areas of services: health, education, transport;

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- Government intervention in land ownership: In Darfur, each ethnic group has its own Dar (homeland), with set of defined borders. At time of crisis, affected groups were sheltered as guests by the land owners, but they have no right to claim power based upon their temporary presence on their land. Currently, the government is working to change this tradition, by arming some groups to occupy by force lands that were not theirs, and by promising, and rewarding with their policies.
- Although Darfur is rich in animal and agricultural resources, very little has been done to benefit farmers and herders in terms of re-settlements, pastures, and the transport of their produce to local and national markets, on regular bases.

Addressing these issues, doesn't mean bending to the demands of armed groups, but in response to GOS as an aggressor in fueling the on-going conflict, siding with one group in the conflict, and adopting a policy of burning and destruction disguised as janjaweed. All these listed issues of concern, are not unique for Darfur, but addressing them and defining them as core issues, and working for solving them could benefit other areas with similar situations. The war policy now perpetuated by the government in Darfur is not new, it adopted the same policy in the South for years, what is new is that the government with all its accumulated experiences is conducting this war in Darfur openly, clandestinely. The densely populated areas that witnessed these conflicts have resulted in high number of casualties in very short time; comparable to the government losses in the same period with regard to its air force. The current war in Darfur exposed the core of GOS, in its stand, as fundamentally anti-peace and always pro-war, that could only succumb to "peace" when it's under intensive pressure from the international community, REAL PRESSURE. While it tries to show it's "sincerity" in negotiating in faith in Naivasha, it now creates another war of it's own making; which raise the question as

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whether it could be trusted, since it has a room for maneuvering. This suggests that comprehensive peace that will honor these agreements, for the whole country is important, even for the secession of the South. Hence, looking at the current events in Darfur as merely humanitarian crisis will result in even greater tragedy, if efforts were not exerted toward the roots of the problem.