
Interview: Abdalla Deng Nhial

'The U.S. wants to prevent Sudan from becoming a model for the Third World'

Abdalla Deng Nhial is Minister for Peace and Reconstruction of Sudan. Born in southern Sudan, he studied in Sudan and Egypt. He left his teaching position at Juba University in 1989 to become Minister for Guidance, and was later transferred to his current post. He was interviewed by Dean Andromidas.

EIR: The U.S. action to place Sudan on its terrorist nations list represents the implementation of a threat first made by Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger under the Bush administration. How do you evaluate the decision taken by the Clinton administration?

Abdalla: The decision by the U.S. administration to list Sudan among the so-called countries supporting terrorism does not surprise us, mainly because their definition of terrorism is from their own dictionary. If you look at the countries listed, you find that they are countries which are self-reliant and committed to liberty, or are not with the new world order, or even countries who used to support the ex-socialist system, like Cuba and North Korea. The rest of the countries on their so-called list are Arab and non-Arab Islamic countries. We think it is a political decision designed to put pressure on Sudan in hopes of diverting it from its objectives or of clamping down on its own political and economic decisions which is based on Islamic principles open to everybody in all aspects of life—politically, economically, and socially. This, of course, does not fit with the new world order led by the United States. Therefore, Sudan has to be punished by listing it among the so-called countries supporting terrorism.

EIR: Does the U.S. government have any factual evidence to substantiate the charges? What are the charges based on?

Abdalla: The United States of America made some baseless allegations which supported their decision to list Sudan among the countries supporting terrorism. They contacted the enemies of Sudan, the opposition and the rebels, and even countries which are on bad terms with Sudan. This is where the United States of America extracts its information upon which decisions are based. The Sudanese government asked the U.S. administration to produce material evidence

to support their allegations, but they failed to produce any. We, in principle, differ with the United States on the definition of "terrorism." We as a nation are known throughout history as not practicing terrorism. Our history and files are clean, even before independence. These allegations are baseless, and were just directed toward putting political pressure on Sudan, and also at destroying our reputation, at home and abroad, especially the regime of the present government, through the help of their international media and information system.

Therefore we feel that it is an unfair decision. But what could you expect from a country which has been practicing slavery and racial discrimination among its own citizens since long ago and until recently?

EIR: What are the strategic reasons for Washington's targeting of Sudan? When did the targeting begin, and what is the purpose?

Abdalla: We think the strategic reason which led the United States to focus on us, is that we have started to reconstruct the Sudanese citizenry and nation to participate in the development of the country according to Islamic principles, and that this could even become a model and an example to the entire Third World.

Putting our hands together, we will be able to utilize our huge resources, such as mineral, agricultural, and animal resources, including water and wide spaces of land, and within a couple of years we could have economic and political power. However, the United States wants Sudan to be under its control and subject to the new world order within its orbit. Therefore, in order to achieve its objectives, they have to destroy the present government.

The United States claims that we are Islamic extremists, trying to create a new religious extremist country or nation. I don't know exactly what they mean by a religious country or nation; I don't think we can differentiate between nation and religion, and nobody would draw a line between the two. Does peace derive from the "nation"? Are human rights a question of "religion" or of the "nation"? All are mixed together; even the American administration cannot distinguish between what is religion and nation.

EIR: Sudan has been accused of being a “Trojan horse” for alleged Iranian subversion of Africa. Can you outline the nature of relations with Iran and with other Muslim states?

Abdalla: Our relation with Iran is a normal relation between any two Islamic sister countries. Iran, according to my understanding, has relations with most of the countries in the world, and nobody murmured about relations with those countries; even the United States of America has good relations with Iran.

Iran is an Islamic country and we are Muslims, and according to our Islamic belief we must have religious, human, cultural, economic, and social relations with Iran and all other Islamic countries. Why do the westerners stand together in favor of their interests? Our religion teaches us that we as Muslims must live together and that we are brothers and sisters. Islam does not have borders. Therefore, again I say our relations with Iran are normal relations, and I don’t see why the United States government is disturbed about them.

EIR: Sudan was punished for its defense of Iraq during Desert Storm, as was Yemen, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Jordan. Yet recently, Sudan seems to have begun to mend fences with some of the Arab states that were in the anti-Iraq coalition. The recent meeting between General al Bashir and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) conference marked an important step in the direction of easing tensions. This seems especially important, considering that Egypt has been portrayed as a country threatened by “Sudanese-backed Islamists.” Can you comment on this?

Abdalla: Sudan supported Iraq and stood against the coalition attack, but not in support of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. I think we had better make this point clear: that our siding with Iraq was not in taking over Kuwait, but against the intervention of the West. We could have solved the problem internally, alone, as Muslim Arab countries.

Sudanese-Egyptian relations are very strong and everlasting, and no government in Egypt or Sudan can dissociate the two countries from each other. What happened was just a misunderstanding between the two governments which was almost cleared up when the two Presidents met at the OAU conference in Cairo. A committee was formed, chaired by the ministers of foreign affairs from both countries, to clear up whatever remaining issues there may be. We don’t support the Islamic-non-Islamic extremists. These are once again western allegations to divide Muslims.

Islam entered Sudan through Egypt, and we cannot dictate to Egypt what to do, because these are internal affairs. We confirmed this fact to the Egyptians, and also asked them to produce material evidence showing that Sudan is involved in supporting the Islamic extremists in Egypt. I don’t want to go further on this point, because we also have

some reservations about Egypt. They are accommodating the Sudanese opposition as well as the rebels, who have an office in Cairo.

EIR: Can you tell us about the background of the civil war?

Abdalla: The current civil war in the South has nothing to do with the implementation of *Sharia* laws, but started long ago, especially during the British colonization. They placed barriers between the different areas in Sudan, and restricted movement of citizens, especially in the South and the Nuba Mountains. There used to be some kind of a visa to enter those parts to prevent penetration of Islamic-Arabic culture. The Islamic national costume was prohibited. These were all pre-set bombs, which created the first 1955 civil war. Therefore most of our problems were caused by the British colonialists with their policy of creating a cultural and social gap between the different groups in Sudan.

We are not angels; sometimes we do make mistakes, and in any society we find mistakes, politically or culturally. These mistakes can be straightened out through dialogue.

EIR: The Abuja II talks to end the war seem to have failed. What are the reasons? And what are the economic dimensions of the war in the South? If peace were secured, what kind of economic development approach would you take, and what kinds of joint projects would you propose to neighboring states, especially Egypt?

Abdalla: No agreement was signed in Abuja II, because while we were holding talks, the rebel Garang was on a tour to the United States, talking about the problems of Sudan. He returned with instructions from his supporters not to sign any agreement with the government, although we had agreed on some points and differed on others. The two delegations could have signed a preliminary agreement on the points agreed upon. The entire blame is to be put on the rebel Garang for the continuation of this war.

Since the current government came to power, it has been genuinely looking for peace. The National Dialogue Conference was convened in 1990, proposals were placed on the table on how to achieve peace. Nearly all the political bodies in Sudan participated in the mentioned conference. We are ready to sit down with the SPLA [Sudanese People’s Liberation Army] anywhere and at any time for talks.

We as the government are genuinely for peace, because there is a huge disaster in the South and economic disaster in Sudan in general. The war is consuming a lot of money every day. Therefore, to stop the war and achieve peace is the only way to development. *No peace without development, and no development without peace.* When peace is achieved, then development has to start by rehabilitating the damaged areas, especially in the South. With the Egyptians, I think we ought to put our hands together and make joint efforts to achieve and secure food for the two countries and the whole world.

EIR: Before the United States announced its decision to blacklist Sudan, the International Monetary Fund had withdrawn your voting rights. Prior to that, the IMF had withheld a loan which had been promised. What is your view of the IMF's strategy and policy?

Abdalla: The IMF is one of the U.S. toys, and is used as a weapon against Sudan. Again I say, it is a political decision, not an economic decision against Sudan, and we are still not surprised. Before we came to power, aid and loans were suspended from Sudan, and yet we have been making great achievements, especially in agriculture. We should be encouraged by the IMF, not discouraged.

EIR: Can you explain what Sudan, as an Islamic state, wants to achieve?

Abdalla: Sudan wants to practice Islam in its everyday life to establish a just and clean nation. Why should we not do that? Even the United States as a democratic country would like to achieve better social life.

EIR: A delegation of U.S. congressmen was scheduled to visit Khartoum recently, but according to reports, crossed the border from Kenya illegally to conduct a secret "fact-finding" mission. Is this the case? What has your government done to protest this border violation?

Abdalla: The U.S. Congress delegation visited some neigh-

boring countries and held talks with the rebels. They did not come to Sudan to find out facts. How can you try a guilty person without listening to what he has to say? The U.S. Congress delegation conducted their fact-finding among the rebels and enemies of Sudan in Nairobi, and did not even come to Sudan, although there was an open invitation extended to them. This shows that their decision was already taken.

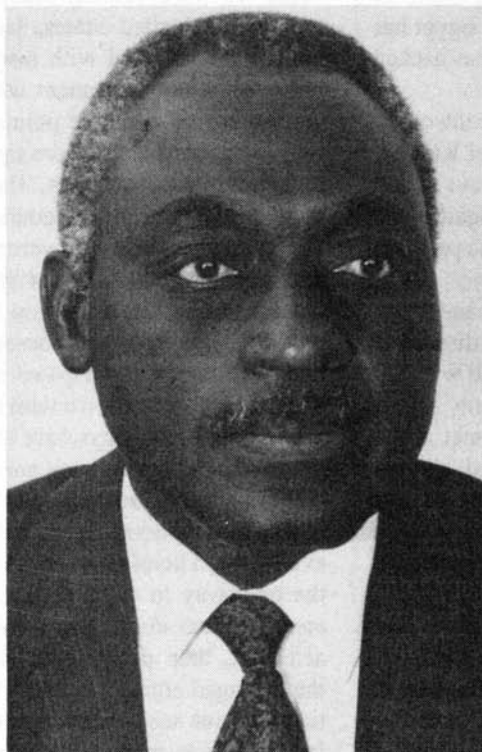
Violation of borders is against international law, and reflects badly on the country violating them.

EIR: General al Bashir has indicated that he would reject the \$50 million in humanitarian aid which the United States would send this year, because it would involve an "American intelligence presence in Sudan." Can you explain how humanitarian aid groups, non-governmental organizations, really function in Sudan?

Abdalla: Since the current government came to power, we have been rejecting, and will reject, any pre-conditioned aid, as mentioned by the President in one of his speeches. Humanitarian aid is usually welcome if it is really meant to aid the concerned country.

As for the NGOs in Sudan, we have a commission to organize their activities, and they signed with the commission voluntary agreements to work according to jointly agreed-upon terms of reference.

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