
Interview: Abdel Mahmoud Alkoronky

U.N. campaign against Sudan is based on lies and political manipulation

Abdel Mahmoud Alkoronky is press counsellor for the Sudanese embassy in London. He travelled to the United States to attend the Schiller Institute's Presidents' Day conference Feb. 17-18, and to meet with policymakers in Washington. Mr. Alkoronky was interviewed on Feb. 26 for the cable television "The LaRouche Connection" show, and by EIR.

EIR: Mr. Alkoronky, can you give us some background on Sudan?

Alkoronky: The Sudan is one-third in area of the United States of America, 1 million square miles. We are 26 million people. Sudan is known as the "heart of Africa," which refers both to its geographical location, and its cultural role. We represent an ancient civilization, which knew iron mining 4,000 years ago. The agricultural potential of our country is immense. British Foreign Minister Rifkind once remarked to an ambassador, that he was not sure that the Sudanese realized the potential they have. We have ample water resources, and, potentially, a parallel second Nile beneath the Earth's surface. The basin of the great underwater resources in Libya, is in northwest Sudan. We are swimming on a lake of oil. There are oil resources in the southwest, middle, and eastern parts of the country, as well as natural gas in the east. The climate is extremely varied, allowing for year-round cultivation, and the soil is extremely fertile. According to a study done at Georgetown University, an investment of \$20 billion in Sudan, would make it possible for the country to feed the whole of the Arab world and Africa.

Now, we have achieved food self-sufficiency. This was not the case under previous governments. Twenty-nine African states have not succeeded in achieving this, according to the United Nations report. We have achieved 8.5% growth rates, certified by our "friend," the International Monetary Fund [IMF]. We have doubled five times, the number of people enjoying higher education; we have extended highways in the west, the center, and the east.

We have 76 local tongues, dialects, with which to communicate. At the same time, our national language is Arabic.

In our long history, we have known independence for much of that time. Actually, over thousands of years, we have been under the heel of a foreign power for only 114 years: The Turks ruled over us for 57 years, and the British Empire controlled us for 57 years. Otherwise, we have been free. It is important to underline, that Sudan was an Islamic State, with Is-

lamic law, long before the British arrived. When the British came in 1898, they slaughtered and massacred tens of thousands of people, out of a population, at the time, of 2 million. The British destroyed our Islamic law and by the same gun, imposed British Common Law on the Sudanese people. We launched 127 movements of armed struggle, and got rid of the British at last, in 1955.

When the current government came to power in 1989, we resumed the Islamic legal system in Sudan, which is a normal and natural extension of our history and background. And we are notable for our peaceful way of life, our appreciation for differences, and our tolerance.

EIR: Is it true, that the current campaign against your country aims at changing Islamic law again?

Alkoronky: Yes, it is. In fact, the first demand of the rebels [led by John Garang of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, engaged in war against the central government], is that Islamic law be eliminated. But that is not all. Amnesty International has demanded that we give up Islamic law. The same is true of the U.N. The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations for Human Rights, Gaspar Biro, came to Sudan, and demanded that we relinquish Islamic law, saying that it violated international law. We told Mr. Biro, that our law is part of our religious system, as set down in our holy book, the Koran. We told him that for us, the source of this law is God. Mr. Biro said, "I don't care who the source is." At that point, we informed him, that that would be his last visit to our country.

As I told one person from an international agency, who objected to our Islamic legal system, I could not imagine myself coming to the United States and saying, "Please, forget about the First Amendment." Yet this is the situation we have been in for years. Paradoxically enough, those who are writing fourth-rate reports about Sudan, and criticizing us, are extremists, who are not mainstream in reasonable circles. For example, Baroness Cox of Great Britain, who told us to relinquish the Islamic legal system. To do what? To be governed by British law. We told her she was wrong. We said, here you are representing Christian Solidarity International, and you are holding meetings regarding Sudanese politics in the House of Lords. That is mixing religion and politics, isn't it?

EIR: Can you explain what the Islamic legal system is?

Alkoronky: There are three aspects to Islam: one is the reli-



Abdel Mahmoud Alkoronky, press counsellor of the embassy of Sudan in London, briefs EIR staff members during a visit to Leesburg, Virginia on Feb. 24.

gious belief, which involves articles of faith; another is religious practice, or ritual, which concerns the relationship between the believer and God; and the third is the organization of economic, social, and political life. As for the political organization, the basic concept is consultation, or *Shura* in Arabic, which corresponds to “democracy.” One of the reasons why many Arab governments oppose the Islamists, is that the latter insist on the participation of the population in political life, as a religious duty.

As far as the economic organization is concerned, we have provisions to protect wealth which is lawfully earned, and to protect the poor as well. We believe that what one does in the economic sphere is of this world, but that one will be accountable for his actions, also in the next world. The British violated our law, when they colonized us; they destroyed our agricultural production, which was necessary to feed our population, and converted the fields to cotton plantations, to feed their textile industries in the United Kingdom.

Finally, regarding our legal system: It flows from our religious worldview. Thus, when according to [British] Common Law, it is stated that consenting adults above the age of 18, can lawfully engage in sexual intercourse, for example, this is unacceptable to us. We see it as against nature, and against the institution of the family. We could never accept it.

This is what the British want us to give up, but we will not. We ask those who would force a change in our religious laws, why they do not try to force Hindus, who worship the sacred cow, to become beef-eaters, and why they do not try to force Mormons to be monogamous, or Catholics to accept divorce? These are different religions, different norms, different ways of life. We ask them, why they have singled out Sudan? And we have told them, that we will not change.

Although we have been told to give this up, by many centers of power, we will not. This is a pillar of our civilization. We will not blink one second in this regard.

There have been a number of public statements made by persons in positions of authority, which indicate a campaign against Islam. Dan Quayle, while still vice president of the United States, gave a speech, saying that following the demise of Nazism and communism, what now remained was Islam. Willy Claes, at the time he was the secretary general of NATO [1995], said, that following the collapse of communism, the new enemy was Islam. And, Samuel Huntington presented his thesis on the “Clash of Civilizations” in the journal of the Council on Foreign Relations, which is *Foreign Affairs*. The same magazine launched the first Cold War, against the Soviet Union, in the 1940s.

EIR: On Jan. 31 of this year, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution against Sudan, and gave it 60 days to hand over three persons suspected of having been involved in last year’s attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Can you tell us something about these charges?

Alkoronky: It goes back to Aug. 19, 1993, when the U.S. State Department placed Sudan on the list of countries supporting terrorism. At that time, I was in Washington, and I know what happened. When a member of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee asked the State Department whether or not they had evidence to support their claim, the State Department person said, “No.” This is on the record.

In the case of the assassination attempt against President Mubarak, one should remember, that when Mubarak returned from Addis Abeba to Cairo, and held a press conference, he

did not accuse Sudan. In fact, he attacked European countries for harboring terrorists, and said they would pay for it, meaning Britain and many other European states. He said, the assailants were not blacks, which meant they were not Ethiopians or Sudanese. Then, a journalist asked him if he thought Sudan were involved, and he said it was possible.

He also said, that the Ethiopians had not been careful enough to provide him security. Because Hosni Mubarak had hidden the time of his landing even from Ethiopian security. Who knew the time of arrival of President Mubarak's plane at the airport? This is number one. From the airport in Addis Abeba, the capital of Ethiopia, there are three highways to reach the downtown area. Which one was Hosni Mubarak to take? This is a very important piece of information. So, who collected the pieces of information and made the plan? Then, the Ethiopians themselves engaged in armed battle with the assailants, killing some, arresting some, and hunting the rest.

Eleven persons had been involved in the shooting, all of them Egyptian, according to the information provided about them, and according to the Ethiopian report. Thirty-two days later, the Ethiopians came to us and said, hand over to us the three suspects, who are hiding here. Three people? we asked. They came to your country, we said, they resided there, one of them even got married there, then they did what they did. You killed some of them, arrested some of them, and pursued some of them, and 32 days later, you come to us to say we should "hand them over"? It was very fishy. We knew, that this was an early signal, that a new campaign would exploit the assassination attempt.

Then we said, let us sit together, Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia, and have a joint security committee to take over this affair. They did not respond. We talked on the level of foreign affairs ministers. They didn't respond, three times. We asked for more credible information. They didn't respond. The information they had provided us with was scanty and inadequate: there were names and passport numbers and photographs, but there was no indication of how old the photographs were. There were no descriptions, for example, of color of eyes or hair. There were no fingerprints. We said, the information was weak, and would lead nowhere. We could publish the photographs and information, but it would make no difference, we said. If, as was alleged, these assailants had entered Ethiopia from Sudan, they could have left and crossed many other borders in the period of time that had elapsed.

Now, the U.N. is saying, essentially, that the three wanted men are in Sudan, and that the Sudanese government knows where they are. There is no proof for this, not a shred of evidence. Usually, in international law, the burden of the proof is on the shoulder of the accuser. You cannot accuse people and then ask the victim to prove he is innocent. Regardless of whether the Security Council resolution has been supported by this or that state, it has no legitimacy. It is based on no evidence.

Sudan does not have a history or a culture of terrorism. We do not believe in assassination as a means of politics. We

turned over the internationally notorious terrorist Carlos, to the French authorities, when we discovered that he was in Sudan. We turned over the kidnapers of a civilian Ethiopian airliner. We condemned the assassination attempt against Mubarak, and condemned the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, although we do not agree with Israeli policy. We condemned the explosion of the military facility in Riyadh.

It is important to understand how the case reached the U.N. Egypt, which depends on foreign aid for its daily bread, took the case to the Organization of African Unity [OAU]. Then the report of the general secretary—this is very important—said, that the Sudanese government had been asked, *if* the suspects in questions were in Khartoum, to find them and arrest them. We sent an official letter to the general secretary, the Egyptians, and the Ethiopians, again, and said, let us sit together and form a joint committee. No response. Then just two days later, they went to the U.N. Security Council. We said, the regional body had not exhausted all possible means to find a solution to the problem. Even the Nigerian representative, said that they did not want the OAU to be used as a clearing house for issues that would be handed on to the U.N. Security Council. But, after two days it was taken there. At the same time, we lodged a complaint against Ethiopia for its invasion of Sudan, by the end of December. When dealing with our complaint, they said they did not have "sufficient information." When dealing with Egypt's complaint, they said it was a question which threatened the international community and world peace, so it must be dealt with in the most serious manner. Sudan is given 60 days to hand over these people.

The Russians, the French, and the Chinese agreed with us. But they voted for the resolution. The Russian representative said, I will vote for this with the understanding that it includes no punishment of Sudan. The Chinese representative, who is also a permanent member of the Security Council, said the same: this should not be understood to include any punishment or condemnation of Sudan.

The treatment of Sudan was unjust. With the resolution, Sudan has been set up for an embargo after 60 days, for political reasons.

EIR: Now, we understand there is a campaign, again led by Baroness Cox and the Christian Solidarity International, to condemn Sudan for slavery. There are Congressional hearings planned to discuss slavery in Africa, and two countries to be considered are Mauritania and Sudan.

Aikoronyk: This is absurd. When we are outside the country, everyone says we are Africans, but now, they are claiming that inside Sudan, we are Arab racists. This is purely political. Many people do not know the geography of Sudan, nor do they know the complex composition of ethnic groups, so they will believe anything.

EIR: In addition to the U.N. action, there is the civil war in the south, which continues to threaten the country.

Alkoronky: We have been trying to find a negotiated solution to the conflict, for many years. There have been 14 rounds of talks between the government and the rebels, mostly held in Abuja in Nigeria. The last round of talks has been documented in 25 volumes. At that round, the rebels were about to reach an agreement, but an ambassador of a Western country, who was sitting in a nearby room and advising the rebels, told them not to sign.

The war costs the central government about \$1 million per day, in addition to the sacrifice of our people. We pay \$1 million a day, as a premium, to ensure the unity of the country. We have been doing this for more than 13 years. The question this raises is: Who is providing the rebels with their \$1 million per day to continue the war?

The war in the south, as it has dragged on for 13 years, is essentially over. The rebels control about 73 miles of territory. In Sudan, according to our federal system, we have 26 states, 10 of them in the south. There, Islamic law is not applied, because one-third of the citizens are Christians, one-third are animists and one-third are Muslims. Nine out of the ten states in the south have state governments, and they live more or less a normal life. The so-called southern Sudan conflict is taking place in only part of the tenth state, which is East Equatoria. This state borders Uganda in the south. When Uganda invaded Sudan last October, the rebels were able to occupy 73 miles.

So the traditional war in Sudan is over. Now the war has entered a second phase, of the southern Sudan problem. There is a foreign intervention, in the form of recruitment of some neighbor states, manipulating them against us. There is a publication called *Africa Confidential*, which has strong connections to the centers of decision-making in London. In its Aug. 4, 1995 issue, it reported that Egyptian and Israeli military experts were training Eritrean government troops, to launch military activities against Sudan. On Oct. 25, 1995, Uganda invaded Sudan, with Eritrean tanks and arms, shipped into Uganda from Eritrea by the Egyptian Air Force. When we said this, people tried to challenge us. They said, you can not distinguish between the southern Sudanese and Ugandans, people look the same. But we said, we were not judging by physical features, we were judging by the equipment and arms which we had captured.

The aim of the invasion was to retake the southern city of Juba, and to split the country in two, but it failed. Perhaps, they will try now by political means. Now, the U.N. Security Council is threatening an arms and oil embargo, while the rebels are being supplied, in hopes that they will gain the upper hand. Many "humanitarian" organizations there, are engaged in intelligence operations, and are supplying the rebels. The *Christian Science Monitor* in December 1994 spoke of arms shipments from the United States to Uganda.

There was a price for the cooperation of these other nations against Sudan. Uganda received \$45 million, before the invasion, from the International Monetary Fund. The Ethiopian government received \$270 million in debt relief. Accord-

ingly, Ethiopia invaded three locations inside Sudan, between Sept. 27 and Jan. 11. These were not disputed areas on the border, they are Sudanese. And Egypt receives \$3 billion per year in foreign aid, as well as wheat to feed its population.

EIR: Who are the rebels, politically speaking? What can you tell us about John Garang, and the opposition forces, who are in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)?

Alkoronky: There has been a process of assimilation of the former opposition into the current government. Eighty percent of the last parliament are now part of this government. Over the past months, there has been a process of elections for the new parliament. About 7 million Sudanese elected 4,862 representatives to the National Conference. These people include regional and tribal leaders, who are now working with this government.

As for the official opposition, Sadiq al Mahdi, the leader of the Umma party, has made known that he will not run in the upcoming elections. The Umma party was founded in 1937 by British administrators. When the British occupied us for 57 years, there was no talk of democracy. Instead, they created collaborators, in the Umma and Unionist party. So when the British withdrew, they left assets behind. The Unionists received their name from their demand in the 1940s to be united with the Egyptian monarchy. In 1955, at independence, the name was supposed to be changed, but it was not. As for the communists, they represented a foreign hand in our country. Some intelligent communists abroad, like Gramsci, understood this, and even criticized Lenin. The communists in Sudan were asked to come to the ballot, but they preferred the bullet. Now, the communists are in favor of the U.N. decision, even though it is against their country. Finally, as for Garang, he is, like Museveni, a communist.

The opposition parties and figures do not represent the population. In the south where Garang's forces are fighting, the politicians in the administration, in the civil service, and the military, are working with the government, not with Garang. The NDA has never held a meeting on its own, unless it were organized by Baroness Cox; it is apparently too weak to do so.

The so-called democratic parties are not very democratic. Their leaders are not elected. It is like a family business, which is passed on from father to son. There have been no party conferences in 60 years, and there is no secondary leadership there.

On March 7, there are national elections in Sudan. There are 9.5 million Sudanese who have been registered to vote, as opposed to 5 million, the last time elections were held. We have called on all international and regional organizations to attend, the Arab League, the U.N., the OAU, the European Union, the European Parliament, and many others. At this moment, when we are confident that the government has a broad base of political support, we are faced with the threat of international isolation. This is the attitude of "I don't see, I don't hear, I don't want to know."