
Interview: Abdel Budri

Military Intervention Would Destroy Sudan

Abdel Budri is an attorney, who was jailed after fundamentalist Islamist Hassan al-Turabi seized power in Sudan in 1989. He later managed to flee, and spent the next 18 years in exile, 16 of them in the United States, where he became a U.S. citizen.



EIRNS/Lawrence Freeman

Originally from northern Sudan, Mr. Budri was able to return to his native country in 2006, after President Bashir made a peace agreement with the South. He was interviewed in Khartoum, on April 11, by EIR Africa desk chief Lawrence Freeman.

EIR: You left Sudan in 1989, and recently returned, in 2006. What were your reasons for leaving, and what were your reasons for returning?

Budri: I left the country in 1989, because, at that time, the elected democratic government was overthrown by the military group. And the group at that time—the situation was very crucial, and they actually dismissed the political parties and the union, and actually, the country became totally a dictatorship regime. After that, I was in Cairo, and I left to the United States of America. I applied for political asylum, and my case was granted. After five years I became a citizen.

During my time in the United States of America, we were with a Sudanese group, and we actually started working to install democracy for Sudan. And we put pressure on the regime, and gradually the regime actually started to change, and started accepting the other group, until the government reached an agreement with the group in the South of Sudan—Dr. John Garang and his group—and they signed the Naivasha Agreement, and the situation then totally

changed. Now, we can actually talk, and we can actually participate in every political aspect, and we can talk to our people, and the situation now is changing. Now there is a national government, and this is why I came back. All politicians and professionals came back to Sudan to work from inside. This is why I came back to Sudan.

EIR: When you said, “the regime in 1989,” were you referring to General Bashir and Hassan al-Turabi overthrowing the government of Sadiq al-Mahdi? How do you view the relationship between General Bashir and al-Turabi?

Budri: Actually, there is no relationship now. Bashir and Hassan al-Turabi became two [separate] groups, and two political parties, actually. Turabi has his Islamic National Party, and Bashir is president of the National Congress Party now. Turabi is now standing against the Bashir group. So there is actually no dialogue between these two groups. This is why the situation started changing, because Turabi is now not controlling the country.

Upcoming Elections

EIR: You are a member of the Democratic Union Party, called the DUP, and that is headed by Mr. al-Mergani. You are going to be actively campaigning in the upcoming election. Could you tell us more about the plans of your organization?

Budri: The Democratic Union Party, led by Mr. Mohammed Osman al-Mergani, is one of the biggest parties in Sudan. Mr. Mergani came back recently from exile, and we are working to participate in the upcoming election, in February 2010. Sometimes the leaders are outside the country. Now we are thinking about the conference, to put the strategic planning for the election and for the political future for the party.

EIR: So you are optimistic about the changes that have taken place in Sudan, in terms of freedom for political parties, freedom of expression, the media, open dialogue. And you think that this is a good period in which your party may actually make some political gains?

Budri: Of course. This is the right time, and the atmosphere of the country now is open—not only for our party, but for the other parties to address their people, address their group, and this became open society, and free media. It is easy for us to participate in any political activities.

EIR: Obviously the major issue in the media, around the world today, is the arrest warrant for President Bashir, the arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court. How do you think that this arrest warrant by the ICC is going to affect Sudan?

Budri: Of course, the issuing of the arrest warrant for the President of Sudan, Hassan al-Bashir, is actu-

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ally making him more popular. And even people from the different parties and different views, are now standing with the President, because all Sudanese think that this issuing of an arrest warrant is not going to affect Mr. Bashir as an individual, but is going to affect the country. The whole country is in a dilemma, because arresting Bashir is going to open some problems, not for the regime, but for the country. This is why the whole Sudanese people from the different parts of the country, and from different groups stand with him: because the issue is not Bashir, but because the issue has now become Sudan. And this is why Mr. Bashir gets more support after this issuing of an arrest warrant.

EIR: You spent 16 years in the United States, so you got to know America quite well. What kind of message do you want to give to the American people?

Budri: All I can say—the Sudanese people—they love America. The Sudanese people know the relationship historically, the relationship from America to Sudan. Because the relationship between the Sudanese and the Americans started earlier, during the regime of Ibrahim Abboud in 1958. At that time, the Sudanese got

aid from America which had a different outlook. Now the Sudanese are looking for a good relationship between Sudan and America, between the Sudanese people and the American people, especially after Obama became President of the United States. They hope America will make a change, through dialogue. Not through any military action, because to intervene with the military in Darfur—.

In the case of Darfur we need the American government to open a dialogue with the Sudanese government, and with the Sudanese people to polish the bad image of the Bush Administration. I am now happy when I am hearing and reading that [General] Gration is actually working well, and I hope soon the relationship between the government of Sudan and the government of America is going in the right direction through dialogue, not through any other direction.

Sudan: The ‘New Africa’

EIR: What do you think the effects would be on the rest of Africa if there is a destabilization in Sudan?

Budri: I think it is better not to make any military action against Sudan, because this is going to be another Somaliland problem. Africans saw what happened in Somalia after the interference of the American military, and now the situation in Somalia is very bad. Africans now don’t want to see any interference or military action against Sudan. Because Sudan is surrounded by nine countries, and if something happens to Sudan, it is going to affect the whole area. It is going to open the country for the fundamentalist group to come and dominate the country. This is a bad idea, and I hope it is not going to happen to Sudan, because this is going to be very crucial and would dismantle the largest country in Africa, and affect all African countries and people.

EIR: You mentioned earlier that Sudan should be seen as the new Africa. What did you mean by that?

Budri: Sudan is a big country, surrounded by nine countries. And the people of Sudan are a group of different tribes and different colors and different groups. Most of the Sudanese people come from different groups, like the tribes from Chad like the Zaghawa, groups of people from Uganda, Kenya, Egypt. This is the Sudanese people. People from different African and Arab countries. Sudan is the example of how people from different groups and different areas can live peacefully in one country.