

A Call for a Cool Sudan*

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In most science fiction films, aliens attack the earth hell bent on eradicating the human race. However, our brave defenders, all Americans of course, always seek and destroy the enemies. I keep asking myself why aliens would bother to destroy us. If they are so advanced in science and technology and are able to travel such long distances, some thirty or forty light years, to reach us, they could have easily and correctly guessed that we are capable, indeed very capable, of self-destruction! Using the same logic, I would argue that a species scientifically so advanced, must belong to a friendly civilisation, otherwise they would have already destroyed themselves.

I am sure that when we achieve first contact, we will be communicating with species very eager to hear from us as we will be very eager to hear from them.

The really dangerous aliens are the ones that look like us, talk like us and generally behave like us except that they are endowed with insatiable greed for power and worldly possessions.

When the Islamists carried out their military coup against the democratically elected government in 1989, they unleashed a torrent of atrocities against fellow human beings that stunned the Sudanese people. Their utterly uncivilized and inhumane behaviour led the famous Sudanese novelist El Tayeb Salih to pose the question openly

"Where have these people come from?" "Min Ayn atta haolla al Nass"

The answer is simple: they have come from within us. They are our own bad aliens.

Let me reiterate my earlier hypothesis on where these people came from.

It all began in 1979 with the victory of the Iranian revolution. That victory exerted tremendous impact on the Islamic world. At that time, the argument went around that if a few dedicated Islamists can topple the mighty regime of the Shah, well-organised and disciplined Islamic movements elsewhere could surely aspire to similar success.

And see there, a few months after the victory in Tehran, a group of over four hundred armed Islamists from 11 nationalities attacked Mecca and occupied Al Haram Al Shareef. That first multi-national armed Islamist insurrection was defeated. So was the fate of several uprisings in Syria and other places.

Unlucky for him and, of course, for his CV, Osama Ben Laden was certainly not the first to lead a multi-national armed Jihadist group! This questionable honour goes to Juhaiman ibn Muhammed ibn Saif al Otaibi, who declared his brother in law, Abdalla Hamid Muhammed Al Qahtani to be the awaited redeemer, the Mahdi.

Since 1979 and everywhere in the Islamic world, Jihadist or Action Islam began to push Political Islam from the command posts. The Islamic movement in the Sudan was no exception to the growing trend. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the leadership of the movement began to work diligently towards an armed take-over of power in Khartoum. The politicians around Al Turabi allowed the Actionists around Ali Osman Taha to dictate the future direction of the movement. Most work was henceforth dedicated to the goal of an armed coup. Clandestine recruitment of members of the armed forces was intensified, civilians trained in insurrection and arms smuggled into the Sudan. The preparations culminated in the June 1989 coup d'état, not by the activists of Political Islam, but by the rising generation of young eager Jihadists of Action Islam. They are the ones that have been ruling the Sudan ever since.

After the coup, our Action Islamists had to tackle the practical problems of ruling rather unwieldy peoples with such diverse ethnic, religious and cultural affiliations. They had to learn to make compromises, a course of action that runs against their deep-rooted Jihadist convictions. They tried and will continue to try everything possible to stay on their planned course and will only deviate from it as much or as far as the strength and determination of the force applied against their schemes.

We have seen them time and again resort to all the tricks and lists in their repertoire to dissipate the pressure and later, when forced to accept the inevitable, to dilute their obligations and commitments, even if they are legally bound by them.

It took more than 10 years of negotiations to force them to sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the CPR. Since then they have tried very hard to re-interpret its terms and reduce their burden of obligation. They will never give up attempts to manoeuvre themselves out of legal and humanitarian

commitments. Look at what they have done to the Darfur Peace Agreement, the DPA, signed in Abuja May 2006. In less than 3 years, they managed to hollow the DPA of its essence. Many concerned observers know that that agreement is already dead and buried.

I actually came here today to speak on just three issues: on the CPA, the unity of a new Sudan and the resistance against the machinations of the Jihadists. So, please excuse the lengthy introduction.

About the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the CPA

Wherever I go and whom ever I meet in the West, everybody wants to talk about one thing and one thing only, the CPA. Since its inception, the West has been ecstatic about it. This enthusiasm could be due to the fact that the West needed a good success story after the debacle of Iraq and Afghanistan. But the CPA is not the cure-all for our country's huge problems. What about Darfur and the Nuba Mountains? What about the East? What about the IDPs in the camps and the IDPs in the towns, more than 7 million of them in fact? I am also concerned about the economy, the collapse of the industrial sector and the deterioration of agricultural production as well as the wholesale of huge tracts of land to so-called foreign investors. The list is long. But most concerned people in the West equate the CPA with the 2011 Referendum and are thus waiting patiently for the coming of this saviour.

True, the CPA has brought peace to the land and that is a huge achievement, but it has already highlighted some of the old problems and created its own new challenges. Living together in harmony, sharing wealth, agreeing on political borders and maintaining peace and managing economic and social development are part of these challenges.

Behold this. The friends of the CPA, read the West, immediately intervened when the regime tried to tinker with some clauses of the referendum a few months ago and Khartoum promptly retreated *in the same day*. But these friends were not there when we wanted them to stand with us against the new Security Laws and other clear violations of the Agreement. The regime in Khartoum knows it can get away with murder, as long as it does not touch the referendum!

According to the new Security Laws you can be detained without trial and if an officer of the law accidentally tortured or killed you he or she will not be charged. Security people have free hand to do what they want with impunity. For example, three weeks ago Mohamed Musa Abdullah, a university student, was abducted tortured and his body was then thrown in a school yard. This is

certainly a clear violation of the CPA Principals. The CPA Principal 1.6 on human rights and fundamental freedoms is followed by the clauses from 1.6.1 to 1.6.2.16; the last affirms that men and women are equal. These clauses cover almost every democratic right, from personal liberty to freedom of expression to equality before the law.

When it comes to the CPA, some sort of football mentality is prevalent. If we win the game even with one goal, it is a win to celebrate. One is a win even if we come out bruised and half our players may not play in the next game. It is OK, though, it is OK. It is a win! We get the referendum, we win! What happens before or after is irrelevant.

The referendum is an important part of the CPA, no doubt about that. There are, however, other important clauses pertaining to how the Sudan should look like before and after the DPA. Separation of the South without achieving stable governments in both parts, without the rule of law, human rights and democracy in both parts, without economic and social development in both parts, can only lead to destabilization not only in both parts, which is certain, but also in the region as a whole.

State collapse in Sudan will be much, much worse than state collapse in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo put together.

Still about the CPA and on the West and the Jihadists in Khartoum

At the beginning of their encounter in 1989, the West had no problem recognising who the Jihadists were. The West had by then accumulated huge literature on Islamic Movements all over the world. But the West became perplexed when the same Action Islamists showed readiness in late 1990s to provide information about brother Islamists and after 9/11 to be ready again to help in the fight against terrorism. The West was interested, but sceptical and of course still perplexed.

In the negotiations preceding the signing of the CPA, the Action Islamists were very tough; however, the intervention of the USA and the EU was tougher. The Islamists had to accept the proposed terms and conditions. The West liked what it saw, but was still perplexed and still slightly sceptical.

And later, when the West scrutinised the information about terrorist activity world-wide, it found few recent traces hinting at involvement of Khartoum in jihadist international terror.

What is going on? The Khartoum Islamic regime is ready to submit information on fellow Islamists, has already signed a peace agreement that would almost certainly lead to the division of their country and they also are abstaining from taking part in the holy Jihad against the infidels of the Western world! It was difficult to believe then; it is difficult to believe now. But it is apparently true. Why are the Khartoum Jihadists acting like that? What do they actually want in return?

Let me tell you what they want in return. In return, they want to have the freedom to sit on our backs, to reign supreme in North Sudan. They want to continue to exercise power and control over the economy and the lucrative returns of oil exports and the just as good, the returns of expatriate Sudanese, some two million of us. They direct their terrorism against us, the Sudanese people.

They are the bad aliens who sprang from within our middle and took over our destiny. They will give you almost all you want because you are strong and capable of challenging and defeating them. But to the people of the Sudan they only give misery. They have changed the country almost beyond recognition. I say almost and will explain later what I mean by that.

This genre of Jihad may perplex visitors from the West. The smooth talking, well-dressed gentlemen, because they are mainly men, who speak English with a good accent, they seem so harmless. Believe me they are not. They have been responsible of mass murder. Even today they order the Sudanese Army to attack innocent civilians, with not the slightest remorse or pang of conscience. They share many traits with the Schreibtishmörder, the so-called desk-murderers of the Nazi regime.

The Sudanese people do not want you to tackle the bad aliens on their behalf. We are doing that already. All we want is that you understand the nature of this regime and the difficulties people encounter when confronting their terrorism. And of course we need your help and support, especially for the institutions of our civil society.

Back to the CPA

People of the Sudan have accepted all terms and conditions of the CPA because it was bound to stop the blood shed and because it was supposed to give the right of self determination to *both the South and the North*. The South decides on the issue through a referendum, the North decides on it through free and fair elections.

The South will get its chance in 2011. In the North, the people are supposed to get their chance this April, but it will be denied them, because the clauses pertaining to this issue will be implemented in the South but not in the North. It is patently the responsibility of the two signatories, the SPLM and government of Sudan, to honour this pledge of self determination. The SPLM and the NCP failed to honour their commitment. But the consortium that supported IGAD in bringing about the treaty bears some responsibility too. The United Nations, the USA, the World Bank, the EU and Britain are understood to be the Guardians of the Agreement. What have these powerful guardians done to ensure that the elections will be free and fair? In short, nothing. The people in the North have been cheated of their right to opt for the rule of law and the democratic government they deserve.

The summary of the Proceedings of the Sudan Consortium, Oslo, May, 2008 says, "The CPA is broadly on track. However, there are concerns that peace remains fragile". Actually nothing is broadly on track, except the referendum.

Once again, the West sees the CPA only as an agreement to stop the war and give the South the right of self determination and not as the name implies a comprehensive agreement to establish peace, democracy and economic and social development in both North and South. What a pity.

In defence of Cool Sudan.

Believe me I did not come to bury Caesar, but to praise him. It is easy to critique the West. And I just did. But I am here actually to bring to the forefront the positive plea for a new and united Sudan. The banner of this new Sudan shall be held until 2011 and beyond. I stand openly for the unity of north and south Sudan on new practical and just principles.

Most people I approached with this plea looked at me with wide sympathetic eyes and told me to my face, "It is too late, Mohamed, it is too late" "How about a nice chocolate ice cream instead!"

The unity I stand for is the unity of the peoples, not of governments. It is a call for peaceful coexistence and cooperation. It is a plea for mutual respect and for friendship. It matters if the South opts for separation, but not that much. The separation should only be of governments, not of peoples.

We want to live together in peace, because violence lurks ready to return.

Let us be united for a cool Sudan. A cool Sudan is not necessarily a politically united Sudan.

The first right or principal I would like to evoke and emphasis in this cool Sudan is mutual safety; safety of the individual as well as the group.

There are a few million Southern Sudanese living and working in the North. Irrespective of the results of the referendum, they and their families as well as their jobs should be safe. The same security should be available to all Northerners working and living in the South.

The second is the right to work, travel and trade and for shelter anywhere one chooses to do so.

The right to vote and be elected to public office should be available to all Sudanese in a united Sudan or in a two state Sudan.

Equality before the law, respect of human and women rights must be guaranteed to all Sudanese

The idea behind cool Sudan is to ensure peaceful transitions if and where they occur. We have gone through some tragic and bloody episodes and we pray we shall never encounter one again.

The nearer we approach the day of the referendum, the louder the ugly voices of racists in North and South would scream and holler. The structural faults in the edifice of the Sudan are numerous and serious. They make the whole country susceptible to racial and religious tensions. It could certainly raise the spectre of wide-spread violence and may be mass murder. Remember the tragedies that accompanied the birth of India and Pakistan!

If we sit back and say let things take their course because unity is a lost cause, who do you think will stand up and take the floor? Alarmists, racists, religious fanatics, every ugly face in the spectrum of hate and bigotry would come forward to preach its venom. No one in his right mind should allow this to happen. Remember that things can get out of hand. Let us start now. The campaign for unity is a serious responsibility upon us all.

People and trade should cross the borders peacefully, so should tractors not tanks. The North needs the South and the South needs the North. So let us collectively agree on everyone's human and social rights, NOW. And let us pledge to respect these rights NOW.

Destabilising the government in the South can only lead to aggravations and then further aggravations. We demand that Khartoum should stop its support for militias in the South. We also demand that the South should receive its fair share of the oil revenues in full now, and if the South opt for secession, in full then.

We know how easy it is to incite racial tension. We have experienced this terrible situation in Khartoum a few times before. A movement for cooperation and peaceful coexistence and ultimately for unity will give people hope and assurance.

Please support those who are working for a peaceful, democratic and developed Sudan.

Our big country is capable of producing big problems for itself and its neighbours. That is why we need Cool Sudan.

The guardians and creators of our culture are fighting back

In her book *The Shock Doctrine* Naomi Klein describes the military doctrine for the US war on Iraq as a means to achieve rapid dominance. It is:

Shock and awe are actions that create fears, dangers and destruction that are incomprehensible to the people at large.

The shock and awe doctrine was developed by the CIA during the 1960s. It became more awesome when it was later combined with the teachings of Milton Friedman, the advocate of total capitalism. However, it was left to General Pinochet to apply it on Chile in 1973.

In 1989, the Action Islamists employed the same doctrine and we saw barbarities completely alien to our culture. And same as in Chile, while the leaders of the people languished in terror in so-called ghost houses, their Friedman boys began plundering the Sudanese economy. The next attack was on the Sudanese culture. As in Chile thousands of professionals and intellectuals fled the Sudan. The onslaught on our culture was, however, on the name of Islam. The first to feel the pain were women and creative artists, writers, poets, politicians, trade unionists and of course many others.

Of the thousands who resisted and fought back in defence of our culture and our human rights, I would like to mention only two names: Lubna Hussein who stands for all the women who said no, *no passaran*, and Mahgoub Sharief, the people's poet, who in the grimmest days raised his voice with defiance and hope.

The greatest achievement of our people is their strong civil society, which was created over many years of struggle. It is our civil society that has begun patiently to dismantle the absurdities and injustices of the current regime.

Small actions of defiance accumulate into a powerful force. Take the example of women scarf. Security ordered women to wear a head scarf'. When approaching a policeman, a woman would put the scarf on, but few paces away she would take the scarf off. Women called their scarf '*just in case*'. Just in case a policeman was around. What a nice form of creative resistance.

I came here to praise them all and to appeal to you to support our civil society, inside and outside the Sudan. Civil society it is that always makes the big difference, whenever the Sudan crosses a dangerous corner.

I am sure you are surprised by now that I did not mention the coming elections. My judgement is that the elections will be free and fair. Why? Because the ruling party has rigged the census, rigged the number and whereabouts of constituencies, rigged the voter registration and made sure that it will comfortably win the election. So, why cheat at the final phase? On the contrary, they will show the international observers and everybody else all they want to see. The NCP will make sure that observers, delegates, visitors from the UN, the EU, the AU, the Carter Institute, and everybody else are taken everywhere they want to go and will be allowed to see all that they want to see.

The actual elections are really over. The show elections will take place in April *the first*.

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February 2010
London - UK

* This paper was initially presented in a meeting organised by Liberation at the House of Commons on the 3rd of March 2010

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