

President Bush “Hurts” for Darfur
Darfur Is Safer than US Urban Cities

By Ali Baghdadi

(arabjournal@aol.com, arabjournal@hotmail.com, Chicago)

If you look carefully at the eyes of President George W. Bush, as I normally do, you will easily see that they are too red and too swollen. The man cries the whole night. He has been crying for the last four years, since the day the war in Darfur, Sudan’s western region, started, to be exact. As a matter of fact, our First Lady Laura Bush is tired of wiping her husband’s tears.

What is breaking the heart of our President, the most “powerful” man in the history of mankind, is the Darfur tragedy! He has been hearing that Arabs are massacring black Africans; Arab Janjaweed militia is carrying out “ethnic cleansing”, “genocide”, and “rape” against blacks. To emphasize the gravity of the situation and the degree of concern, the President even went to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and threatened the Sudanese government that they must immediately stop the carnage or he will order additional sanctions.

Two years before the Darfur conflict erupted, President Bush expressed his dissatisfaction with the policies and conduct of the Sudanese government. He expressed his desire to see a regime change in Khartoum, similar to the one he brought about in Baghdad. He wants Sudan to become an oasis of freedom and democracy for the entire black continent, Iraqi style. One million Iraqis have lost their lives and four million have become refugees since he stood on top of an aircraft carrier and told the world, “Mission Accomplished”. Iraqi infant mortality, which was lower than the United States prior to the 1991 invasion by his father, is today the highest in the world. Iraqis lack clean water, their sanitation plants are destroyed, they receive no more than 2 to 3 hours of electricity per day, and their lands are polluted by tons upon tons of depleted uranium.

In late April, I joined a delegation of 31 African-American journalists in a fact-finding mission to the Sudan. Included in the entourage were: Akbar Muhammad, the trip organizer, a writer, a historian and the founder of Youth 4 Africa; James Mtume, KISS FM Radio – Talk Show Host; Alesia Powell, TV One – Producer; Kenneth Carr, PFW Radio –Talk Show Host, and others. I had the opportunity to meet with many members of the Sudanese

government, on the national, state and local levels, including President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, as well as members of the opposition who had, until recently, carried arms against the central government. Darfur is the size of France, and is comprised of three states. I visited two, the North and the South. I talked to Darfurians in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, as well as people in the marketplace, men, women and children.

Members of my family and some of my friends and their friends were too worried about me. They doubted that I would come home alive. They were overwhelmed by the news reports of Sudanese violence that Americans are bombarded with daily. In their perspective houses of worship, some also prayed for my safe return.

First, I must inform my President, who is greatly concerned about the safety and well being of every US citizen, particularly Palestinian Americans, that I am home, safe and sound.

After viewing the facts as they are on the ground, and not according to the US news factories, it is my utmost duty to relate to the President, his cabinet, the Congress, the US corporate media, as well as all who “championed” the Darfur cause, the good and bad news.

The United Nations and Doctors without Borders have been right all along. No genocide! No ethnic cleansing! No rape! Our politicians and media don't seem to understand geography. They don't seem to know how to read a world map. Darfur is not in occupied Iraq. It is not in occupied Palestine. I felt safer in Darfur than in US urban cities.

I also discovered the obvious, what I had known all along. The Sudanese citizens of Darfur are all Africans, all blacks, all Sunni Muslims, and all speak Arabic, the language of the Quran, the Muslim holy book. My African-American companions often asked, “Where are the Arabs?” However, I repeatedly asked, “Where are the Africans?”

The Janjaweed are not a militia that the central government arms and equips. They don't belong to a specific tribe or ethnicity. They are bandits, outlawed, and the army and local police severely prosecute them when caught. The Janjaweed phenomenon has existed for centuries in this vast land, and the tribal chiefs were able to deal with it through the traditional

tribal justice system. The situation has worsened due to outside interference and desertification caused by global warming.

It is true that there is a tragedy in Darfur. Approximately 9,000 civilians have lost their lives. There are refugees who escaped the violence. There is a rebellion and there are rebels that are sheltered in neighboring countries. There are also opposition “leaders” who refuse to sign the Abuja Peace Agreement sponsored by the African Union, and are waiting to enter Darfur behind US tanks. Darfurians, young and old, have assured me that Darfur will become a new Iraq; their land will become a graveyard for invaders.

An old man in his eighties that I had met at one of the IDP camps made it clear that his people reject donations collected in their names by US anti-Muslim Jewish organizations. The American Jewish World Service, one of the sponsors of the “Save Darfur” campaign, collected approximately \$31 million; \$28 million of the relief funds were channeled back into Jewish lobbying efforts. Most of the remaining \$3 million earmarked for Darfur was spent on advertisement. The organization has made it clear that its objective is to create Jewish “presence” in world “humanitarianism”.

I did communicate to President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir about the tears that our President, together with Prime Minister Tony Blair and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, shed daily for the people of Darfur; and of their desire to see him go.

The Sudanese President told me that next year Sudan will have a new and free presidential election; and it is the right of the Sudanese people, not the US President or his cronies, to decide.

As far as Darfur is concerned, Mr. Al-Bashir insists that foreign intelligence is behind the rebellion, and that the conflict will cease the moment the West, particularly the US government, stop financing, arming, and supporting the rebels. He stated, “It is my duty as President, in accordance with our constitution and international law, to preserve the unity and sovereignty of the Sudan and bring peace and security to the country.” He does understand that the Darfur affair is, among other things, a key factor in the fraudulent “War on Islam” and Arabophobia, as well as a diversion tactic from the atrocities committed in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

Mr. Al-Bashir was too polite. He said nothing about the need for regime change in Washington. President Bush's ratings in the polls show two-thirds of the American people will be happy to see him pack up and leave, now. He mentioned nothing about Mr. Bush's lies to Congress, the American people, and the international community. Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction, no moving trailers of chemical and biological weapons, and Saddam had no ties to al-Qaeda. Certainly, he didn't speak a single word regarding the US President's contempt and disregard for the American people who want to see their boys and girls come back home from Iraq and Afghanistan today.

President Al-Bashir wondered why the US administration didn't show concern for the one million Africans who were massacred in Rwanda? For Africans who are getting killed in the Congo? For the genocide that is taking place in Iraq and Palestine? At least, for the American boys and girls who come home in boxes, daily, under the cover of darkness? The Sudanese President smiled. I could tell; it was a sad and painful smile!

When I asked him for the real reasons for this enmity towards his country, Mr. Al-Bashir stated that Sudan, the largest country in Africa (2.5 million square kilometer) is rich in oil, uranium, copper, iron and many other minerals. The land is fertile; water is abundant; they have the White and the Blue Nile rivers and underground reservoirs. The land, with the proper infrastructure, can become the bread basket of Africa and the Arab world. This would not only provide the Black continent with food security but will also bolster its political and economic independence, which the US overtly and covertly opposes. "We welcome cooperation between Sudan and the United States in oil and other fields, similar to that which we have with China, Malaysia and India", he emphasized. "The US is a great country, with great achievements. Certainly, we insist to be respected as sovereign and independent."

In a May 21 editorial in the Financial Sense titled "Darfur Oil could result in second Cold War", William Engdahl spells up the Sudanese tragedy in clear terms, "What's at stake in the battle for Darfur? Control over oil, lots and lots of oil.

"Darfur and Chad are but an extension of the US Iraq policy "with other means"- control of oil "everywhere"... China is challenging that control

“everywhere”, especially in Africa. It amounts to a new undeclared Cold War over oil.”

The American people should know that despite internal conflicts created by the West, Al-Bashir’s government made great strides in agriculture, industry, education, health, and other services. National growth, which the previous regime left in the red, is now 11 percent. The country, which ranked number 95 among developing nations in 1989, now occupies number 51. In the past, 80% of the budget depended on foreign aid. The budget today depends on local resources. Agricultural land increased from 16 million to 60 million acres. Exports increased from 480 million to 8 billion dollars. Universities increased from 7 to 37. Although al-Shefa, the major pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, was hit and destroyed by ballistic missiles by former President Bill Clinton to divert attention from the Monica Lewinski scandal, Sudan today has 37 factories that meet 70% of the local needs. The destruction of al-Shefa, whose ruins I inspected, was disastrous to Iraq. Iraqis depended on the vaccine produced by the plant for the treatment of their cattle. Some medicines manufactured in the Sudan are exported to other African countries.

I do understand the reason for Mr. Bush’s wish for a regime change in Khartoum. Unlike the great majority of Arab and Muslim leaders that walk all the way to Washington on their hands and knees and enjoy Bush’s blessing, approval, and support, President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir is quite different. Certainly, he is not Husni Mubarak of Egypt.

The Arab-African leader and the members of his government are known to be uncorrupt. They do not squander the resources of their country. They do not have Swiss banks accounts with money stolen from the poor. They do not accept bribes from foreign governments or multi-national corporations.

Despite the economic sanctions and the enormous pressures imposed on the Sudan, Mr. Al-Bashir refuses to submit to the will and dictate of the United States government. When it comes to the sovereignty and welfare of the Sudan, Mr. Al-Bashir is unwilling to compromise. The Sudanese are solidly behind their President. The Organization of Islamic Conference headed by the Malaysian Prime Minister whom we had met at As-Salaam IDP camp in the state of North Darfur, representing fifty-five Muslim nations, has just reaffirmed its endorsement.

