



Sudan Seeks African Support Over US Sanctions

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Guided by the objectives of the AU to achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries, and bearing in mind the negative socio-economic impacts and human costs of the American's unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Sudan since 1997, particularly on the civilian population, and cognizant of Sudan tireless efforts in peace-making locally and regionally, the 26th African Union head of states and governments summit has adopted a declaration calling upon, not only the US to lift all sanctions and restrictions imposed on the Sudan, but likewise, upon all states of the world, not to recognize or apply these measures, and to effectively counter them as appropriate.

Such courageous African position affords valuable impetus to the ongoing mass rallying, spearheaded by a coalition of Sudanese civil rights organizations and activists in Sudan and diaspora, to mobilize 100,000 signatories for a petition to the US Administration, to promptly lift this stifling and politically-motivated sanctions on Sudan which actually deprive the whole nation of basic and life-saving health care.

According to doctors and scientists in Khartoum, these sanctions have become increasingly complex and difficult to navigate over the years, making it tough to import equipment, even such basic items as sutures. They have struggled to import supplies and conduct research that could eventually save lives. They often make do with old or inadequate technology, rely on black-market imports or simply go without. Inevitably, it is ordinary citizens who suffer the consequences.

Such grim reality has already been highlighted by a UN top official, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and International Sanctions, IdrissJazairy, who in a press conference, called for revising these sanctions, stressing their full impact on innocent populations, and how they do contribute to social stratification, inter-regional disparities and to the broadening of the black market, as well as to the loss of control over financial transfers. More importantly, Mr. Idriss called for setting a time frame to lift US sanctions on Sudan.

COLLECTIVE SANCTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW:

Economic sanctions run contrary to the spirit of human rights, as they explicitly and implicitly

expose the ordinary citizen of the sanctioned country to considerable suffering. The ensuing scale of such suffering amounts to the crime of collective punishment.

The Human Rights Council adopted resolution on 26 September, 2014 on human rights and unilateral coercive measures. The resolution stresses that unilateral coercive measures and legislation are contrary to international law, international humanitarian law, the Charter and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among states, and highlights that on long-term, these measures may result in social problems and raise humanitarian concerns in the states targeted.

To that effect, the UN General Assembly Resolution 44/215 (December 22, 1989), reaffirming that developed countries should refrain from threatening or applying trade and financial restrictions, blockades, embargoes, and other economic sanctions, incompatible with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and in violation of undertakings contracted multilaterally and bilaterally.

Further, under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, collective punishment is a war crime. Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states "No protected person may be punished for an offense he or she has not personally committed", and "collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited".

The UN General Assembly, Resolution 2131 (XX), 21 December, 1965, states that "No state may use or encourage the use of economic, political or any other type of measures, to coerce another state in order to obtain from it, the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights or to secure from it advantages of any kind". Note citing here, this very resolution was adopted without any vote against, and with only one abstention.

Paradoxically, "Genocide Convention" protects what could be described as a "collective right to life" and would prohibit deliberate starvation of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group if committed with intent to destroy the group, as it would then be subsumed into the definition of genocide. It is an irony of fate, the prohibition of genocide applies in time of peace and in time of war. It makes no sense that something illegal during war is not only legal but a preferred tool to pursue aggressive foreign policy agenda in peace time.

Adding insult to injury, the US introduced extraterritorial sanctions, which in essence violate the legal equality of states, and principles of respect for and dignity of national sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of the state nations, and deprive them of their right to development and self-determination. The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Sudan had been tightened, and its extraterritorial implementation had also been strengthened through the imposition of unprecedented fines, totaling \$11 billion against 38 banks, among them French Bank BNP Paribas, for carrying out transactions with Sudan and other countries.

SUDAN AND THE UNITED STATES:

For more than two decades, Sudan has left no stone unturned, trying to normalize relations with the United States. However, it takes two to make a tango; foreign policy hawks in the successive

US administrations, regrettably continue to block all potential routes towards a real rapprochement with the Sudan. The US keeps on turning a blind eye to Sudan's ongoing constructive efforts in maintaining peace and security in the region. Sudanese government's significant and tangible assistance to regional anti-al-Qaida and recently ISIS, Houthi and Boko Haram operations, not only continue to fall on deaf ears in Washington, the latter continues shamelessly, nevertheless, to link Sudan with terrorism, to justify the extension of its regime of sanctions every year for the past two decades.

Interestingly, on last October, 2015, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has removed Sudan from the list of countries with strategic deficiencies in their legal and regulatory framework for combating money laundering and terrorism, whereby, Sudan will no longer be subject to FATF's monitoring under its ongoing global AML/CFT compliance process.

Mr. Doug Bandow, the senior fellow at the Cato Institute (Washington NGO), appealing for sanctions against Sudan to be scrapped altogether, pointed out that the US sanctions have remained in place, and even though the State Department acknowledges that Sudan's cooperation in efforts to limit the reach in Africa of groups linked to Al-Qaida.

More revealing, however, was landmark testimony before the Congress in 2009, of General J. Scott Gration, the US's presidential Envoy to Sudan, where he called for Sudan's removal from the US State Department's state sponsor of terrorism list. The General noted unequivocally, that there was "no evidence" for Sudan's inclusion on the list which he called a "political" (rather than a national security-related) decision; reminding the Congress that the CIA has already referred to Sudan's strong record on counterterrorism cooperation as having "saved American lives".

THE HIDDEN AGENDA OF THE UNITED STATES:

Despite all the above rationale, the mind boggling question remains "why should the Sudan remain amongst very few countries that are still under comprehensive unilateral coercive sanctions?" The subsequent statements conspicuously opens the Pandora's Box on the hidden agenda the American Administrations, and perhaps more importantly, on how powerful is the Israel lobby in the US?

Wesley Clark, the former NATO Commander, in an infamous video recorded on October 3, 2007, at the Commonwealth Club of Californiain San Francisco, talks about the neocon plan, to invade seven countries in five years including the Sudan. This video gives more credibility to the understanding that, the current sanctions on Sudan fit into a larger strategic context, subsequently, dwarfing all the US hollow and unruly sanctions discourse into a mere double standard and hypocrisy.

THE ROLE OF ISRAEL:

The perplexing question has always been how powerful is the Israel lobby in the US? Chuck Percy, the three-term Republican Senator from Illinois, said to have been defeated in 1984 as a result of an AIPAC-led campaign against him. Pat Buchanan, the senior advisor to US Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, goes to the extreme when he once describes the Congress as "Israeli-occupied territory", whether true or false, one thing is incontestable: the Congress is overwhelmingly supportive of Israel. In fact, both Democrat and Republican

neocons are decidedly Israeli-centric in their geopolitical stance - Sudan is not an exception.

To highlight this fact beyond any doubt, let us be reminded that AviDichter, the former Israeli Minister of Internal security, gave an important lecture at the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies in 2008, where he said that since the independence of Sudan in the mid-1950s, there were some Israeli estimates that this African state must (not) be allowed to become an added force in the Arab world because if its resources continue under stable conditions, it will make it a power to be reckoned with. "We had to weaken Sudan and deprive it of the initiative to build a strong and united country. That is necessary for bolstering and strengthening Israel's national security. We (produced) and escalated the Darfur crisis to prevent Sudan from developing its capabilities."

Darfur, said to be sitting atop lakes of oil with large supplies of uranium, and other minerals, remains one chapter in the history of Israeli sinister role in pillage of African continent. Hence, make no mistake, in all blatant Darfur-driven American sanctions, it was Israel which, not only wrote the script, but continues to select and train its regional and international actors.

The "Save Darfur" farce was the campaign that began as an exclusive project of the American Jewish community, with hardliner Zionist groups, leading the way in the propagandistic assault on the government of Sudan. The ensued American consecutive bogus warnings that Darfur is heading for an apocalyptic humanitarian catastrophe have been widely exaggerated by administration officials to justify military intervention in Darfur, in conformity with Israeli sinister agenda in the Sudan, as spelled out by AviDichter.

The dimension of the Israeli lobby influence, with regard to Darfur, was made clearly manifest, when on May 28, 2008, in what has been promoted as a historic display of solidarity, presidential candidates John McCain, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, issued a joint statement, demanding an end to the violence in Darfur and pledging to pursue this goal with unstinting resolve once elected.

SUDAN IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CUBA:

Needless to say, the African solidarity with the Sudan, is very crucial at this juncture, and as Ahmed Badawi, the Managing Director of the Sudan Centre for Strategic Communications (SCSC) in Khartoum, put it "Just like Cuba and Iran, the unintended consequences of US sanctions on ordinary Sudanese have been devastating to living standards, however, and unlike these two other countries, the Sudanese government has zero leverage with America to engineer a mitigation of the embargo's impact on vulnerable social groups. It lacks advocacy support from the diaspora in the US (as in the case of Cuba) or even the potential nuclear capacity that would pose a strategic threat to the existence of US allies (as in the case of Iran).

The US had to eventually succumb to international pressure, and officially lift its 50 years sanctions against Cuba, particularly in the aftermath of the general Assembly of the UN which almost unanimously adopted a resolution in 2014, calling for an end to the United States economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba. With only US and Israel voting against, that vote was the strongest support, the world body has expressed for ending the embargo on Cuba, during the 24 consecutive years it has taken up the issue. Thanks go to the

staunch support and solidarity exhibited by the group of 77 developing countries and China.

Taking stock of the latest African support for Sudan in Addis Ababa, and deriving strength and inspiration from the aforementioned Cuban historical victory in the general Assembly hall, may warrants wondering is it not high time for Africa to follow suit? Mobilizing yet another similar worldly support for the people of Sudan, in the very hall of the General Assembly? Being the unique forum of international issues and in the footsteps of the Cuban landslide victory.