



Africa Is Not Neutral towards Sudanese Plight in the Face of Stifling US Collective Sanctions

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The 26th African Union head of states and governments summit scheduled to take place 30-31 of January 2016, is expected to officially demanding Washington to lift the sanctions imposed on Sudan, forming a follow up mechanism to ascertain that sanctions are removed completely. The courageous renewed African position, synchronizes, with the ongoing mass rallying, conducted 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, was further highlighted by a UN top official, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and International Sanctions, Idriss Jazairy, 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 concluded by calling for setting a timeframe 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 (Dec. 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 that, 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 agendas in peace-time.

Adding insult to injury, the US introduced extraterritorial sanctions, which is described as "economic terrorism" ,as it is 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 the 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 keep 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-Qaada 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 last 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 Qaeda.

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 co-operation 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 remains 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 California in 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, fits into a larger strategic context, subsequently, dwarfing all the US hollow and unruly sanctions' discourse, into a mere double standards 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 U.S. Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, goes to the extreme, when he once describe 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 ,Avi Dichter, 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 Darfuri-driven American sanctions, it was Israel which, not only wrote the script, but continues to select and train its local, regional and international actors.

The “Save Darfur” farce was the campaign that began, as an exclusive project of the American Jewish community, with hardline 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 Israel sinister agenda in the Sudan, as spelled out by Avi Dichter.

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:

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. Unlike these two other countries, however, 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 with Iran).

The US, had to eventually succumb to international pressure, and officially lift its 50 years sanctions against Cuba, 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 voted 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 unrelenting solidarity, exhibited by the group of 77 developing countries and China.

As the African support for Sudan galvanizes today in Addis Ababa, and deriving strength and inspiration from the aforementioned historical victory in the General Assembly hall, one wonders, is it not high time, for Africa, to support the people of the Sudan, in rallying and mobilizing further worldly support for their just cause, in the UN, against such unjust sanctions, and in the footsteps of the Cuban victory? And for how long yet, Sudanese people are destined to wait?