



Welcoming a world rogue

By Nat Hentoff

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I have reported often on President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan amid his arrest warrants on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The last offense recognizes his murders of more than 300,000 of his subjects in Darfur. Many thousands more Sudanese have been hurled into wretched refugee camps, suffering further killings and rapes by his troops.

Despite the warrants, al-Bashir has been welcomed in Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya and China. His avoidance of punishment has been received with indifference by most American media. However, London-based Reuters reported last month that he was going to the U.N. General Assembly and had already booked a hotel in New York.

I was sickened, but not surprised. Reuters quoted the monster: “Nobody in the U.S. can question me or hold me.”

But human rights organizations began urging action by President Barack Obama, whose administration at first didn't have much to say about this multidimensional war criminal's arrival.

With al-Bashir awaiting his U.N. appearance, I saw only one reference to a report from Smith College professor Eric Reeves, the leading global documentarian of al-Bashir's heinous crimes. His report, “Killing U.N. Peacekeepers: A Ruthless Proclivity of Khartoum's Sudan Armed Forces, Militia Proxies,” describing al-Bashir's troops' killings of U.N. peacekeepers in greater Sudan, emphasized that “the weakness of the U.N. in responding to such incidents, implicating the Khartoum regime, has for many years been contemptible.”

While these horrors were largely omitted from the demonstrations against al-Bashir's planned visit to the U.N., the heat of protesters' contempt continued to rise until The Washington Post reported “Sudanese president cancels U.N. address.”

“The cancellation,” wrote Colum Lynch, “followed several days of diplomatic efforts by the United States to convince Bashir not to come to the United States, warning it could not guarantee he would not be subject to arrest, according to U.N.-based diplomats.”

Because al-Bashir could no longer look forward to dining in New York, nearly all mention of him ceased in various forms of our media covering his desire to come here to the U.N. His genocide and other merciless crimes against humanity still continue — unpunished.

Ruth Messinger, president of American Jewish World Service, which not only orates against human rights abuses but also keeps working against them, wrote:

“Our nation has failed to address the fundamental problems at the center of Sudan's many civil wars, ethnic, religious and regional conflicts, including the concentration of resources and power with the country's ruling elite in Khartoum. Now is the time to change our fundamental approach to Sudan through a sustained high-level engagement.”

But our “leading from behind” president cannot be counted on to awaken Americans and others throughout the world to end the ghastly terror.