

Prospects for meaningful peace in Darfur and South Sudan

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Sudan's "Govt of National Unity": Prospects for meaningful peace in Darfur and South Sudan

By Eric Reeves

July 14, 2005 - This past weekend's inauguration of a new "government of national unity" (GNU) for Sudan, while unquestionably an historic event, hardly heralds immediate peace for either Darfur or Eastern Sudan, and does nothing to change the deteriorating situation on the ground in South Sudan, where critical transitional needs continue to be largely unfunded by the international community. This occurs even as famine conditions settle more deeply in Bahr el-Ghazal Province, Western Upper Nile, and elsewhere in this war-ravaged region. And a much larger crisis looms: South Sudan presently has no capacity to absorb the hundreds of thousands of returning refugees and internally displaced persons.

Much has been made of John Garang's inauguration as First Vice President of the GNU; and certainly the head of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) has taken on enormous burdens of governance. But it is far from clear that Garang will be able to have any significant effect on the "northern" policies of the new Khartoum government, either in Darfur or increasingly violent Eastern Sudan.

Indeed, Garang will have exceedingly difficult challenges in organizing the governance of South Sudan, and securing the means for economic development as well as adequate humanitarian capacity. The South has endured over 20 years of extremely violent and destructive war, often directed by the National Islamic Front regime (as well as its predecessors) at civilians and civilian targets such as schools, hospitals, churches, refugee camps, even sites of humanitarian assistance.

Moreover, 300,000 people have already returned to the South in recent months, typically without any substantial resources; and many additional hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees are poised to return. Without emergency transitional aid--of appropriate size and urgency---many of these people will return to die for lack of food, potable water, shelter, and medical treatment. Addressing these issues is John Garang's first obligation, and it is daunting.

The international community has been eager to use the occasion of the new GNU as a means of suggesting that progress can now be made on Darfur by virtue of Garang's role as First Vice President. Though it is clear that Garang is deeply committed to halting ethnically-targeted human destruction in Darfur, a realistic assessment of the political situation in Khartoum suggests how little has changed in the power exercised by the National Islamic Front (which has for several years understandably sought to re-name itself innocuously as the "National Congress Party"), and how little control Garang has over the forces that sustain present genocide by attrition.

Most obviously, the National Islamic Front/National Congress controls 52% of all political power in the national assembly and ministerial posts. But much more significantly, the NIF controls the executive function in the new government, with Field Marshal Omer el-Beshir retaining the presidency. Just as significantly, former First Vice President Ali Osman Taha remains as Vice President, and will use this position in government to continue wielding the extraordinary powers he had before the formation of a GNU.

SECURITY FORCES AND THE "GNU"

For no one controls as effectively as Taha the viciously efficient security forces in Sudan. His close ally is Major General Saleh Abdallah 'Gosh,' head of the Mukhabarat (Khartoum's intelligence and security service). In turn, the relationship between the military and security services in Khartoum has been made seamless by years of tyrannical NIF rule. Notably, the Bush administration has for its part given a clear signal that it is willing to do business with men like 'Gosh,' one of the key architects (along with Taha) of the genocidal policies in Darfur (see below).

John Garang, by contrast, will have to devote considerable resources simply to providing for his own security, and that of the SPLM and other Southerners working within the government in Khartoum. The risk of assassination is all too real. Garang also has no real power over the military in Sudan (excluding his own SPLA forces): the army has during the past sixteen years been fully purged and re-shaped into an instrument of the NIF. Without significant control over either military resources or the operations of the intelligence and security wing of the government, Garang can do little more than exert moral pressure for an end to genocide in Darfur.

More than two years of such moral "pressure" from the international community have yielded exceedingly little. The NIF's military proxy in Darfur, the Janjaweed, remain completely unconstrained, despite the "demand" a year ago that the NIF disarm these brutal militia forces and bring their leaders to justice (UN Security Council resolution 1556, July 30, 2004). No

doubt to obscure their impotence, various international actors—including the US, the UN Secretariat, and many in the EU—have now ceased referring to "the Janjaweed" by name, but rather simply to "the militias." The evident hope is that this lack of specificity will homogenize responsibility for military activities, and thus genocide, in Darfur—to create the sense that there are simply various "armed groups," rather than an identifiable force that has engaged in massive, ethnically-targeted human destruction.

GARANG AND THE DARFUR INSURGENCY MOVEMENTS

Garang may have some political leverage with the insurgency movements in Darfur by virtue of previous solidarity with their cause. But the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement, as well as the much smaller Justice and Equality Movement, are increasingly in disarray; and splintering within the insurgency movements makes Garang's "leverage" of only minimal value. Serious divisions within and between the military and political authority of the two movements have been evident for months.

The split within the SLA/M between President Abdel Wahed Mohamed al-Nur and Secretary-General Minni Arcua Minnawi is particularly ominous, and may portend a full-scale breakdown between the military forces on the ground in Darfur and political elements negotiating in Abuja (Nigeria) (see Reuters dispatch of June 28, 2005 ["Rebel infighting undermines Darfur peace talks"; dateline: Abuja], at <http://www.swissinfo.org/sen/swissinfo.html?siteSect=143&sid=5907522&cKey=1119980132000>). As Reuters further reports, "divisions are also rife within the smaller Justice and Equality Movement, represented in Abuja by Khalil Ibrahim: "Ibrahim's leadership was rejected in April [2005] by Justice and Equality field commanders" (Reuters, June 28, 2005).

Though an exceedingly general "declaration of principles" emerged from the most recent round of Abuja talks (the next is scheduled for August 24—over five weeks from now), this "declaration" does nothing to change the situation on the ground in Darfur, and here Garang is powerless. It remains the task of the international community to halt Darfur's genocide—now a grim genocide by attrition—though efforts to pin excessive hopes on Garang's inauguration show just how little resolve there is. NIF political power within the GNU will continue to define Khartoum's diplomatic strategy in Abuja, where the NIF will pursue the same divisive negotiating techniques that forestalled or undermined negotiations with South Sudan for so many years.

GARANG, DARFUR, AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Moreover, Garang will certainly not be able to change the adamant opposition by NIF leaders to the proceedings of the International Criminal Court (ICC). These men, those most responsible for genocide in Darfur, understandably continue to insist that they will not cooperate with the ICC (violations of international law in Darfur were referred to the ICC by the UN Security Council on the basis of a January 2005 report from a UN Commission of Inquiry). The refusal to acknowledge this obduracy has led to some spectacular disingenuousness, especially conspicuous in recent remarks by Hilary Benn, Britain's Minister for International Development. Commenting on a decline in large-scale military confrontations in recent months, Benn claims that "this has much to do with the threat of prosecution by the ICC now hanging over the heads of Sudanese leaders" (BBC, July 2, 2005).

This is of course expedient nonsense: violence, including violence by both the Janjaweed and Khartoum's regular military forces, has not been halted; and Janjaweed predations and threats of violence continue to terrify internally displaced persons and make impossible the resumption of agricultural production throughout most of Darfur. Indeed, in many ways insecurity has recently increased because of ongoing violence, especially that directed against humanitarian workers. Humanitarian aid and some human rights workers rightly predicted that an ICC referral would actually increase the insecurity facing humanitarian operations in Darfur. On the basis of a significant assessment mission, Refugees International reported in March 2005:

"Sudanese officials greet the ICC recommendation [by the UN Commission of Inquiry] with a combination of annoyance and arrogance. Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail recently threatened the 800 to 1,000 international humanitarian workers in Darfur by warning that referrals to a criminal court could lead to 'a direct threat to the foreign presence... Darfur may become another Iraq in terms of arrests and abductions.' A [paramilitary Popular Defense Force] official told Refugees International that 'if the wanted on the list are penalized, it will not solve the problem. It will start war again.' His colleague added, 'There will be an explosion.'" (Refugees International, "Sudan: A Climate of Impunity in Darfur," March 2, 2005)

For his part, lead ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo has been equally explicit in his commentary on the dangers of an ICC investigation to humanitarian workers and potential witnesses:

"The information currently available highlights the significant security risks facing civilians, local and international humanitarian personnel in Darfur. These issues will present persistent challenges for the investigation." (ICC Report to UN Security Council, June 2005, page 8)

Ocampo has put the matter here euphemistically: the leaders of the NIF have consistently proved themselves more than willing to undermine, obstruct, harass, or even attack humanitarian efforts in Darfur as a means of threatening the

international community: "Don't press us on Darfur, or we will retaliate against those most vulnerable in Darfur and those most instrumental in saving lives."

Fatuous optimism about the effects of the ICC process, of the sort expressed by Hilary Benn, only emboldens the most brutal instincts in the National Islamic Front. And suggestions from US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick that Garang must be of particular help in negotiations---"[Zoellick] indicated he would press John Garang to help in negotiations between tribes in Darfur" (Agence France-Presse, July 5, 2005)---represent what the NIF will consider a significant and encouraging misapplication of pressure.

Khartoum is equally encouraged by the willingness of Bush administration State Department officials to lie about the nature of cooperation between the CIA and the Mukhabarat (again, Khartoum's intelligence and security service). Though Major General Saleh Abdallah 'Gosh' was recently flown by the CIA to Washington for talks concerning Khartoum's knowledge of international terrorism, Michael Ranneberger (principal deputy assistant secretary of state for Africa, and the primary conduit for terrorism intelligence from Khartoum) outrageously prevaricated:

"Mr. Gosh met with top CIA and State Department officials because we wanted to use that opportunity to deliver a message to him to end the violence in Darfur," Mr. Ranneberger said." (Washington Times, July 7, 2005)

Genocidaire 'Gosh' was flown to Washington, DC on executive jet by the US Central Intelligence Agency not to receive a "message" about "violence in Darfur": he was flown to Washington because it was what he wished, and the evident price for terrorism intelligence valued by Bush administration officials. The willingness to pay such a price sends a disastrous signal of expediency to the still-dominant NIF members of the new "government of national unity."

[Various efforts by this writer to query State Department officials about Ranneberger's remarks were unsuccessful.]

SOUTH SUDAN

Garang's greatest challenges as First Vice President are to provide effective and inclusive governance for South Sudan, including the efficient use of oil revenues that come to the new Government of South Sudan per the terms of the revenue-sharing arrangement that was central in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (January 2005). Most urgently, Garang must work to press the international community to fulfill its promises to assist South Sudan in the near-term with a transition from war to peace. The extraordinary ravages of war, the widespread destruction of the very limited civilian resources in the South, the loss of agricultural resources (particularly cattle), and the impending arrival of as many as 1 million additional returnees over the next twelve months, all make for a situation that is fraught with acute threats to civilian life and livelihood.

The threat of famine in various parts of South Sudan requires the most urgent response. As the "Famine Early Warning System Network" (FEWS), recently reported, there is presently "extreme food insecurity" in areas in northern Bahr el-Ghazal province and "high food insecurity" in areas of Western Upper Nile. The detailed FEWS account offers a recipe for instability and violence:

"'Poor households and returnees will face significant food gaps between June and August 2005,' [the FEWS report] said, referring to the thousands of displaced southern Sudanese expected to return to their homes in the coming months. 'Lack of sufficient (international) response may result in the failure of returnees to cultivate, a reduction in cultivation among some of the host population, poor weeding, reduced capacity of host populations to support current and future returnees, and tension between the host and returnee populations,' the famine warning network said." (Agence France-Presse [Nairobi], June 13, 2005)

Wealthy donor nations are simply not honoring funding commitments, and the results can be measured in starving children.

WFP reports that the results of an April 2005 nutritional study in various regions of northern Upper Nile province yielded extremely ominous figures for children: "a Global Acute Malnutrition Rate of 28.1% and a Severe Acute Malnutrition Rate of 4.5%" (WFP Southern Sudan Operation Lifeline Sudan, Monthly Report: May 2005, page 6).

The number of beneficiaries planned for in southern Sudan has reached one and a half million people (up from just over 400,000 in January 2005), even as the number of beneficiaries reached has slowly declined in the last few months (from just over 800,000 in March 2005 to under 800,000 in May). A similar disparity exists in planned food aid and actual food aid distributions (in metric tonnage) (WFP Southern Sudan Operation Lifeline Sudan, Monthly Report: May 2005, pages 7, 8).

Reporting more recently on conditions in South Sudan, Action Contre Faim (AFC) finds that,

"global [acute] malnutrition rates [GAM] in Wau [northern Bahr el-Ghazal] have increased from 12.5 % in March 2004 to 13.1% in April 2005 and that [Severe Acute Malnutrition] SAM increased from 2.4 to 2.7% over the same period. The worst situation was recorded in the Eastern Bank [internally displaced persons] camps where GAM rose from 16.7 to 25%, and SAM from 3 to 3.8% over the same period." (UN Sudan "situation report" of July 5, 2005)

These are extremely alarming numbers, and portend huge loss of life (especially among young children) from malnutrition; and yet the international community is providing only a fraction of the funding it has promised to Sudan. Warehouses in Lokichokio (the northern Kenyan base for humanitarian operations in Southern Sudan) are largely empty, a clear indication that the food crisis will only deepen during the current rainy season.

The human face of this food crisis was recently captured in an extraordinarily compelling Reuters dispatch from Matthew Green. Green's reporting, here from Paliang (Bahr el-Ghazal) represents a resourceful and intrepid journalism that is far too rare in South Sudan:

"Sprawled on the ground with his face pressed into the earth, the boy looked like he might already be dead. Naked but for a pair of bangles on his ankles and white dust caking his skin, the four-year-old had collapsed a few steps from a group of starving children sheltering under a tree. It was as if he had been discarded."

"Working as a reporter in Africa, it's not uncommon to see people dying. For it to be a child, in a village in southern Sudan, during a drought, makes the event even less exceptional. What made this boy different was that just a few weeks before, the world had promised to help" [i.e., promised at the Oslo, Norway donors' conference for Sudan, April 11-12, 2005---ER].

"Southern Sudan is sprinkled with thousands of Paliangs, villages of mud, wild dogs and short lives. [In Paliang] aid workers were talking about the worst crisis since a famine in 1998 when more than 60,000 people starved to death in the Bahr el Ghazal region, fearing failed rains would force history to repeat itself." [Human Rights Watch and others have established that the burden of responsibility for the 1998 famine in Bahr el-Ghazal lies overwhelmingly with the National Islamic Front regime---ER.]

"The F-word is used with caution by [humanitarian organizations] with a strict definition for what constitutes a true 'famine,' linked to the number of successive failed harvests, but vocabulary seemed immaterial. In Paliang, it was obvious that people were soon going to die, starting with the youngest. Dozens of women cradling children with stick-like limbs had gathered under a tree where Desma, a Medecins Sans Frontieres [MSF] nurse from Kenya, had set up a table to dish out rehydration sachets for babies in danger of dying from diarrhoea." []

"Heading back to the MSF Land Cruiser, I passed the boy lying in the dust. A faint movement stirred his ribs: he was breathing. I realized I had been mistaken---he had not been abandoned---a woman was sitting a few yards away watching. Mother and son would starve together." (Matthew Green for Reuters [Paliang, Bahr el-Ghazal], June 27, 2005)

Garang and the SPLM leadership, along with other Southern political leaders, must address not only the most urgent humanitarian issues but the virtually complete lack of infrastructure. There are very few schools, no transport or communications systems, and barely any health facilities. Indeed, there is nothing that might be designated an economy in the modern sense. And again, these most basic tasks of construction and reconstruction must be undertaken against a backdrop of massive and acute humanitarian needs, needs that will only grow as people continue to return in huge numbers.

MILITARY THREATS TO SOUTH SUDAN

Garang and the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) also continue to face the serious threat posed by NIF-allied southern militia forces. These militias, long an immensely destructive military proxy of the NIF regime, have still not included themselves in the peace process. Their ability to hold out following the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) can only signal that the NIF is not ready to surrender this instrument of instability in the South, and continues to supply and support the militias (several militia leaders have been incorporated as senior officers into Khartoum's army). Indeed, many of those within the NIF who have opposed the CPA regard the militias as a means of renewing war, particularly in the southern oil regions (here we should recall that the GOSS is supposed to receive 50% of oil revenues from oil production in South Sudan).

Though the massive UN peace support operation has begun to deploy in various parts of South Sudan, this operation continues---despite its excessive size and expense---to be without a mandate that allows it to confront militia movements or attacks. Though violence currently is relatively low and localized, there are a number of flash-points, in both Eastern and Western Upper Nile, and in the Dinka enclave of Abyei (on the north/south administrative border). Even with a peace agreement, some areas are listed by the humanitarian security service for South Sudan as Level 4 ("red no-go"). This included the important Akobo area in Eastern Upper Nile for an extended period earlier in the year, with ongoing military threats posed by Khartoum's militias. Currently the Lekongole area of Eastern Upper Nile is "red no-go."

The simple truth is that many powerful men in Khartoum are not prepared to accept peace, and this threatens not only Garang and Southern governance, but the entire CPA. An important Los Angeles Times dispatch (dateline: Rumbek, South Sudan) records the assessment of a number of "analysts [who] say Garang will need to survive the political machinations in Khartoum, where hardcore Islamists view him as an 'infidel' who should not even be allowed into the capital" (Los Angeles Times, July 8, 2005). Moreover, as Robert Collins, arguably the most distinguished historian of modern Sudan, notes:

"Arab extremists will be looking for opportunities to sideline Garang. 'The hardliners in Khartoum are keeping their mouths

shut and sharpening their knives,' [Collins] said." (Los Angeles Times, July 8, 2005)

It is no accident that several northern Sudanese have forwarded to this writer news of a "fatwah" issued against John Garang and the SPLM in Khartoum. The "fatwah" appeared on www.sudaneseonline.com (July 10, 2005), and a translation from the Arabic was provided to this writer:

"Twenty-five Muslim clerics in Sudan issued a Fatwa against the SPLM. The Fatwa forbids joining the SPLM as a political party, or even co-operating or dealing (in trade, renting of buildings, offices or houses to its institution). The Fatwa quotes numerous Islamic verses that a true Muslim shouldn't follow, support, co-operate or join the SPLM. The Fatwa stated that SPLM followers are either non believers or secularists who oppose the implementation of the Islamic Sharia (law) in Sudan. The Fatwa claimed that the SPLM is plotting against Muslims and Islam and that joining the former rebel Movement is like dealing with the devil and an enemy. And that forming an alliance with the SPLM is like fighting the Prophet Mohamed, which is the biggest offence in Islam. The Fatwa warned Muslims from cooperating with the SPLM, and that those who disobey the warning will be condemned to hell. The Fatwa was issued by 25 Muslim clerics who represent the little known Sharia Association of Sudan." (www.sudaneseonline.com, July 10, 2005; translation provided)

Another northern Sudanese has sent this writer an email (July 8, 2005) reporting:

"The Al-Jazeera website reported that a fatwa was issued in Khartoum describing anyone who joins or cooperates with the SPLA as 'Kafir' and warned people not to join any political group formed by the SPLA or cooperate with it. The fatwa described such actions as apostasy and 'Kufr.' It warned landlords not to rent property to the SPLA in whatever form."

The radically Islamist character of the NIF/National Congress, as well as other political forces in Khartoum, must not be underestimated; nor must their threat to Garang, the SPLM, and the peace agreement for South Sudan.

DARFUR HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

Human mortality in Darfur continues to exceed 6,000 human beings per month, and this rate may soon accelerate rapidly.

Total mortality, even when accepting the lower global mortality rate recently established by the UN World Health Organization for November 2004 to May 2005, still approximates to between 350,000 and 400,000 (see June 30, 2005 mortality assessment by this writer at:

<http://www.sudanreeves.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=58&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>).

There are numerous reports that seasonal rains are already isolating parts of Darfur. The UN recently reported on key routes in West Darfur (Marnei-Garsilla-Mukjar and Mornei-Zalingei): "The routes were blocked on 27 June [2005] by excessive water levels, approximately 1.5 meters deep and 500 meters wide, at Wadi Azum" (UN Joint Logistics Committee; Bulletin 66, July 7, 2005).

The Famine Early Warning System Network (Africa) reports:

"After soaking rains during the first ten days of July, additional heavy rains are expected across central portions of the troubled Darfur region in Sudan and the adjacent Chadian prefectures of Ouaddai and Biltine. The heavy rains are expected to hamper overland travel in the region and disrupt the movement of humanitarian aid to IDP and refugee camps. In addition, the heavy rains may result in areas of standing water which raise concerns over sanitation and the spread of water/vector borne disease in the vicinity of the camps." (Weather hazards assessment, July 14-20, 2005)

And things will get worse during August and September, traditionally the months of heaviest rainfall. The consequences for health, and ultimately human mortality, have been made fully clear:

"The combination of crowded conditions in the settlements, shortage of clean water, inadequate latrines, insufficient soap, and the mire caused by rain-soaked mud mingling with excreta, have combined to make hygiene an impossible goal for people living in small, tarpaulin-covered huts, and these conditions need to be solved," said Guido Sabatinelli, the World Health Organization Representative in Sudan." (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, July 6, 2005)

Air transport for critical non-food items has been suspended in West Darfur since June 15, 2005, ensuring that many communities are beyond reach for delivery of medical supplies, shelter, and clean water equipment; the funding limitations that have necessitated restricting aerial operations have also "severely restricted medevac capacity for the humanitarian community" (UN Joint Logistics Committee [Bulletin 66; July 7, 2005]) in West Darfur, the Darfur state most affected by seasonal rains. Also in West Darfur, a UN review of the al-Geneina camps revealed that "90% of all latrines are in need of urgent rehabilitation" (UN Sudan "situation report," July 3, 2005). This is an extremely serious matter so early in the rainy season.

More generally in Darfur, there continues to be considerable evidence that Khartoum's security and military forces are engaged in the forcible deportation of displaced persons. Further, the huge Kalma camp in South Darfur remains under

Khartoum's blockade, with the evident intention of dismantling it. A humanitarian worker reports to this writer from Darfur that the floods of July 3, 2005 forced many people out of Sector 3 in Kalma. Moreover, the aid worker writes, Khartoum "is still intent on breaking Kalma up; it's suspicious that there have been several armed break-ins on international nongovernmental organization [INGO] compounds recently (CARE and Oxfam, with Oxfam having been broken into three times now, even when the compound has been empty). This is in addition to armed groups of men occasionally entering camp at night and shooting at water points. Clearly, an effort is being made to intimidate internally displaced persons and [humanitarian] nongovernmental organizations." (Email received from Darfur, July 14, 2005)

Women and girls continue to face intolerable risks of rape and violent assault if they leave their villages or the camps for displaced persons (Kofi Annan highlights in his most recent report to the UN Security Council the growing tendency by the Janjaweed to target for rape the youngest among groups of girls and women). Banditry continues to accelerate in the terrible wake of Janjaweed violence, contributing to the general "climate of impunity" (this phrase has been used by numerous human rights and UN officials, including UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour).

Most fundamentally, it remains quite unclear how current humanitarian resources can provide the food and critical non-food items that will be required by millions of vulnerable civilians in the coming months.

The best recent summary of the international response to Darfur comes from Suliman Baldo, Africa Director at the International Crisis Group (ICG), speaking on occasion of the release of ICG's critically important report, "The African Union's Mission in Darfur: Bridging the Gap" (Nairobi/Brussels, July 6, 2005):

"It's disturbing that the daily death and suffering are becoming 'status quo' for some members of the international community," says Suliman Baldo, Director of Crisis Group's Africa Program. "The situation has the potential to become another never-ending conflict in which donors spend large sums feeding the displaced but otherwise fail to protect civilians and to address the underlying political causes."

SUDAN'S "GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY"

The controlling force within the new government---the National Islamic Front---will strenuously attempt to turn Garang into a figurehead in responding to Sudan's various crises; the NIF will seek to make clear, in very threatening terms, that Garang's purview extends only to South Sudan. In turn, Garang will have only as much of a voice in shaping government policy in Darfur (and increasingly restive Eastern Sudan) as decisive international support permits him. There are very few encouraging signs here, even as the international community gives no evidence of responding to the inadequacies of the African Union mission in Darfur---or of accepting the compelling arguments in the International Crisis Group's "The AU's Mission in Darfur: Bridging the Gap" (at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3547&l=1>).

The mortality rate in Darfur is poised to explode upwards; insecurity continues to pose a threat to all humanitarian operations in Darfur and may still force the exit of essential organizations; girls and women continue to be raped mercilessly; military attacks by the Janjaweed and Khartoum's regular forces are less frequent, but continue to terrify amidst a "climate of impunity"; and Darfur's agricultural economy continues to collapse, exacerbating an already catastrophic food crisis (the UN World Food Program estimates that 3.5 million people will need food assistance in the very near future).

Amidst this vast crisis, the international community is content with inadequately funded humanitarian efforts, a referral of Darfur's genocide to the ICC, and the obvious inadequacy of the slowly deploying, under-sized AU force.

The "government of national unity," and John Garang as titular First Vice President, become in this context another means for deferring to the glib notion of "African solutions for African problems." Realistic expectations of what Garang can accomplish have been brushed aside for excessive, and expedient, expectations that give yet further excuse for Western inaction in the face of genocidal destruction.

Darfur has witnessed no greater cynicism to date.

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