

Sudan Under Bashir: Trajectory of Shame and Agony

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By Luka Biong Deng

December 27, 2012 - Sudan like other nations will celebrate the New Year but it will uniquely celebrate its 57th anniversary of independence. The real question for the Sudanese people is what the future holds for them and whether the year 2013 will be the same year like previous years of shame and agony. As I will write a piece on the South when it celebrates its third anniversary of independence in July 2013, Sudan under Bashir requires more reflection as it becomes increasingly cancerous to the continent. Although it is a common knowledge among Sudanese and international observers that Sudan under Bashir has deteriorated to the worst level since its independence in 1956, it is important to provide more objective diagnosis of Sudan's tragedy.

Mr. Idris Hassan, a columnist of El Sahafa Newspaper, lamented the 57th anniversary of the independence of Sudan by rightly saying that "if our national heroes who brought our independence were to rise from their graves to witness the current situation of our country they would return back to their graves with pain and sadness for their wasted sacrifices". Indeed Sudan that used to be a source of pride to the Sudanese people has turned to be a source of their shame. Sudan is the only country in the world with its head of state being indicted for crimes against humanity in Darfur. As Bashir is being hunted by the ICC, his visit to any foreign country creates anxiety and diplomatic embarrassment to the Sudanese people.

The real question is why the image of Sudan deteriorated so much under the NCP that governs Sudan with Sharia law? In attempting to answer this question, I would use some objective measures rather than subjective rhetoric to assess why Sudan under Bashir has been very defective.

One aspect that is critical for the image of any country is the level of peace and security. Global Peace Index (GPI) has been developed to assess the global levels of peacefulness. GPI ranks 158 countries using 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators from highly respected sources, which gauge three broad themes: the level of safety and security; the extent of domestic and international conflict; and the degree of militarization. According to the 2012 GPI, Sudan is not only among the 10 of the least peaceful countries but it also ranks number 156 after Afghanistan and Somalia as the world's least peaceful nation. It is likely that the level of peacefulness in Sudan may decline further in 2013.

Also the level of terror is used to assess the level of peacefulness in any country. A political terror scale has been developed with five scale levels. These scales range from countries with Score 1; where countries are under a secure rule of law, people are not imprisoned for their view, torture is rare or exceptional and political murders are extremely rare, to countries with Score 5 where terror has expanded to the whole population and the leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals. One the basis of the 2012 Political Terror Scale, Sudan is among the seven worst offenders countries that scored 5 on the basis of US State Department Scores and among the 10 worst offenders on the basis of Amnesty International Scores. Sudan is likely to continue with this path of creating terror not only among its citizens but also with all its neighbours as it did before with most of its neighbours such as Egypt, Libya, Eritrea, Chad and currently with South Sudan.

Political stability is also used to measure the level of peacefulness. The Economist Intelligence Unit developed a Political Instability Index that shows the level of threat posed to governments by social protest. The index scores are derived by combining measures of economic distress and underlying vulnerability to unrest. The 2012 Political Instability Index shows that Sudan is among the top four countries with the highest political instability index scores after Zimbabwe, Chad and Democratic Republic of Congo. Given the deteriorating living conditions and increased political terror, Sudan is likely to face more social unrest in 2013.

The level of freedom is one of the critical aspects for the image of any country. The Freedom House has developed two indices to measure the level of political rights and civil liberties as critical aspects of freedom in any country. The 2012 Freedom Indices show that Sudan is not only "not free" but it has the worst scores in political rights and civil liberties ratings. Specifically, Sudan received a downward trend in freedom indices due to a surge in arrests of opposition political activists and leaders, the banning of the SPLM as a leading political party, the violent response to public demonstrations in Khartoum and other cities, confiscation of newspapers and a crackdown on the activities of journalists. Sudan is considered as worst of the worst in terms of level of freedom as it is ruled by a leadership that has elements of both radical Islamism and traditional military junta. It is most likely Sudan under Bashir will be more brutal in 2013 in suppressing the freedom of the Sudanese people.

Last but not least, the level of corruption prevalence shows the critical aspects of good governance in any country. The Transparency International developed Corruption Perception Index (CPI) to measure and assess the prevalence of corruption

in domestic and public sectors. According to the 2012 CPI, Sudan has been among the least performing countries and it is ranked number 3 after Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia as the least performing countries. Interestingly the 2011 CPI ranked Sudan number 4 after Somalia, Afghanistan and Myanmar as the least performing countries. It is most likely that Sudan under Bashir will continue to remain in the zone of shame.

Certainly these appalling statistics of Sudan under Bashir clearly paints Sudan in a negative perception and place Sudan on the path of indignation, shame and suffering. In fact the NCP has failed not only the Sudanese people but also the political Islam with which they govern Sudan. Equally, Sudan under Bashir and with these statistics will not be able to forge good relations with most of its neighbors including South Sudan. One is not surprise that the dishonouring of Sudan of the nine agreements that it recently signed with the South is a reflection of a decaying and rotten regime that is out of control with no sound leadership capable of cleansing the tainted image of Sudan.

Although one is not sure how long the people of Sudan will continue to endure such shame and agony under Bashir, one is certain that one day the people of Sudan will rise up to restore their dignity and to put Sudan on the path of great nations. Certainly, the Sudanese people will celebrate the 57th anniversary of their independence with deep sense of distress and sadness of how they have been misruled by the National Congress Party.

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