

## Butcher of Nuba remains at large

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By Mariana Rodriguez Pareja\*

January 20, 2013 - The conflict in Darfur has ruined the lives of over half a million people. This violence has had the complicit support of a government, which in theory is in charge of protecting its own population, that does the opposite.

The UNSC asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) to intervene and investigate the situation in 2005.

The President of the country Omer Hassan al-Bashir has been indicted as one of the most responsible for the situation in Darfur, as well as his defense minister Abdel-Rahim Mohamed Hussein, now Governor of South Kordofan Ahmad Haroun and militia leader Ali Kushayb.

### **None of them has been held accountable at the ICC or in any court in the Sudan.**

The case of Haroun is particularly outrageous; he has served in senior official capacities for more than a decade. As a state minister for the Interior from 2003 to 2005 he was allegedly in charge of the management of the "Darfur Security Desk" thereby coordinating the different bodies involved in the counter-insurgency, including the Police, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), National Security and Intelligence Service (NISS) and the notorious militia known as the Janjaweed. It is impossible that he was unaware of the situation in Darfur.

Former ICC Prosecutor Ocampo *emphasized repeatedly* that evidence gathered by his office demonstrated that Haroun had the individual criminal intent to commit crimes, as well as the resulting knowledge of the attacks against civilian population, rapes and pillaging of towns, and that in many cases, he encouraged the perpetration of such horrendous crimes.

As a coordinator of logistics, bringing money and weapons and words of encouragement to Darfur's triggermen, Haroun was the spider at the center of a web large enough to entrap millions of his fellow countrymen.

When tribal elders in Darfur approached him as representative of the government and implored him to address violence against civilians, he allegedly called them his enemies and informed them that he had come to Darfur to *destroy* them. The joke is that this man was appointed Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs, following his stint at the Ministry of the Interior.

In 2007, the ICC Judges issued an arrest warrant for Haroun for 42 counts for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Even though, he has not - or at least not that I know of - set foot outside the country since the issuance of his arrest warrant, he continues to hold power within the regime. He is now the governor of South Kordofan, the province that lies to the west of Darfur and to the north of South Sudan, encompassing key border regions like Abyei whose status remain unresolved, and over which Haroun has allegedly recruited tribal militias to try and ensure through violence that Abyei and its oil-rich fields remain part of the Sudan and do not effectively exercise referendum under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which could result in it joining the South.

The result of this militarization is that the region is now one of the most unstable and restive parts of the country, the scene of fighting between the Sudanese army and Sudan People Liberation North (SPLM-N) which is part of the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) coalition of insurgent groups, and the subject of belated hang-wringing by international observers, who ignored or downplayed the threat that Haroun posed to the stability of the region.

Alleged human rights violations occur in that province on a daily basis with total impunity. Victims in the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan remember Haroun all too well from the 1990s, when he was known as the **Butcher of the Nuba**.

The international community has explored the idea of curbing "non-essential contacts" with individuals like Haroun, but it raises the inevitable question, whether any contacts can truly be called essential. The message the Sudan has received is to make Haroun essential to the work of the UN: he was in charge of overseeing the deployment of African Union-United Nations mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

And we end up with the *spectacle* of Haroun transported by a UN helicopter to meetings that could very well have been linked to the militarization of Abyei that has taken place on his watch. The UN acknowledged this transport only when the photos came to light. It is acknowledged in UN corridors that Haroun has become a daily fixture in the UN calendar, and that the UN has come to rely on Haroun's support in South Kordofan, a man one NGO representative argued had been scared straight. This argument comes less frequently, with the rising violence in Abyei.

The video of Haroun in South Kordofan's capital, exhorting government forces to take no prisoners, is a strong indicator that

Haroun has indeed not been scared straight, but continues to operate from the same playbook he has used throughout his government service.

**We must insist on the execution of his ICC arrest warrant: the price of ensuring impunity for Haroun and others like him is too high.**

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