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Compensation and Darfur people suffering

JEM Welcomes Albashir's Positive Move on Darfur Compensation Fund.

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October 6, 2007 — Early this week, Khartoum received a high level delegation of International Elders including Ex-US President Carter, Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu, Garca Michel – Mandela's wife - and international businessman Richard Branson. Their visit included a stop-over in Darfur as well. The acrimonious turn of events in Darfur and the unfortunate obstruction of the work of the mediation are beyond the interest of this article. This is so as the author sees those events as well in line with the callous and albeit ungrateful and humiliating way with which Albashir deals with the international community and its efforts to clear his mess in Sudan.

Despite, there was a positive move which should not go unnoticed by Darfur Movements, particularly at a time when hopes are raised regarding the coming Libyan Mediation, scheduled for October 27th 07. In his meeting with the International Mediators, Albashir declared voluntarily that he is willing to raise Darfur Compensation Fund from \$30 million as stipulated in the defunct Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) to \$300 million, exactly the figure previously demanded by DPA Non-Signatory Movements. The amount included a Chinese loan of \$200 million.

cynics might opt to view this as yet another media circus solution for the conflict of Darfur, designed to rehabilitate China and at the same time embellish Albashir's image in the international arena. In his peculiar attempt to outshine the international mediators, Albashir often proceeds to undermine the very institutions that he establishes to tackle the Sudanese crisis in Darfur. Those, like me, who had attended the Talks leading to the so-called DPA recall how Alkhalifa, the head of Sudan's team refused attempts to raise Darfur Compensation Fund from \$30m to \$300m. But we also remember how hard Alkhalifa fought to block restoration of Darfur Borders to 1956 as demanded by Darfur Movements. Alkhalifa's refusal to heed to the second demand was cut short by no body other than Albashir himself. To the surprise, if not outrage of his delegation in Abuja, including their SPLM coalition partners, Albashir grabbed a microphone and granted the Movements their wish regarding restoration of 1956 Darfur borders. Both the Movements and the Government delegation had to endure the humility of hearing the good/bad news, depending one's stand, in the media; News about a verdict both sides thought they had exclusive mandate over.

The urgency of the situation in Darfur allows no luxury for cynicism. It does not allow time to play politics either. If we are doubtful about whether Albashir actually means what he says, we should be justified. To vindicate ourselves, we need to go no further than Albashir's declarations regarding the current contentious UN-led hybrid force to Darfur. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that Albashir's Darfur compensation declaration is positive. It must be commended and taken on board in our strife for peace in Darfur.

Having said that, we must remind Albashir that history does not standstill. Since the DPA was launched, the catastrophe has continued apace in Darfur and so has the damage that calls for compensation. Albashir cannot say he was not warned. In a Conference convened days before the DPA document came out of its drawers, Khalil Ibrahim, President of JEM revealed that warning in no uncertain terms. He declared that the longer the war goes, the higher the demand ceilings will be. The case of south Sudan and to which Dr. Ibrahim referred was inspiring in this regard. In 1955, the southern Sudanese were simply demanding equal citizenship within a united Sudan. With the continuation of war, that demand progressed and by 1972 Peace Agreement, it had settled at regional autonomy status for the south. Unfortunately, Nimeiri single-handedly dismantled the Agreement that was presumably his only indisputable achievement throughout his 16 years brutal rule. The war then resumed. By the time the CPA was signed, the southerners had already secured full right to secession. Wether we like it or not, the unfortunate departure of the south is now almost eminent. However, JEM prefers to remain hopeful against all odds. We therefore appeal to our fellow citizens in the south of Sudan not to let go of the dream of New Sudan. As it has been declared in numerous occasions, JEM is ready to act responsibly and work with them as well s others to remove the very reasons that may tempt them to secede. But let go back to Albashir's compensation revelations. While we commend Albashir for his bold step-forward in this regard, we remind him that the longer the suffering of Darfur people, the higher the cost will be. Moreover the figure of \$300 demanded before was no more than mere seed money for the Compensation Fund. Final compensation figure can only be worked out when investigation of the damage is completed. For the moment, and if Albashir needs fresh ideas for his coming media surprises, we refer him to one of the documents which we proposed to redeem the DPA at the time. We do that while reminding him that things have not remained equal since then:

Gap between DPA and Non-Signatories and Manoeuvre Areas

Item	Offered in Proposed DPA	Just/ Ideal offer	Possible Deal
Compensation per IDP family	None	\$1000	\$1000, Per IDP family
Compensation seed money	\$30m	\$300m	\$300m
Reconstruction Of Darfur	\$300m (2006), \$200m for 2007 and 2008	\$300m (2006) +6.5% for 10 years	\$300m + fixed % / amount for 10 years
Region with Government	Darfur Transitional Authority	Full Regional Government. No referendum	Full government with referendum later
Former Combatants	4,000 National Army, 3000 civic training and 1000 for police	Keep army paid for by central government, Interim period	50% into National Army, 37.5% civic training and 12.5% for police and security service
Representation in Darfur	Absolute majority for GoS	Absolute majority for Movements (MVTS) & allies	Majority for MVTS & allies
National Parliament	12 Seats for MVTS (previous offer 30)	80% for MVTS	Majority for MVTS & allies
National Cabinet	1 Minister and 2 State Ministers for MVTS	4 Ministers and 6 State Ministers for MVTS (for a total of 20% for all Darfur)	3 Ministers and 4 State Ministers

Albashir's media offer reflects one important fact that we must all take in consideration, that Darfur problem is not insurmountable. In fact, it doesn't need even to wait for an international peace conference to it sort out. Rather, and given political will, Albashir can bring the suffering of Darfur people to an end in a single set of media declarations. He knows the demands of the Darfur people as much as we do.

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