

Abdul Rasoul's Personal Vendetta against President of JEM

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By: Abdullahi Osman El-Tom

Izzadine Abdul Rasoul's "Dr. Khalil Ibrahim an empty bravado" was referred to me by several friends for comments. The article was published in the reputable venue "Sudan Tribune", May 2009. I was reluctant to respond to the article for several reasons.

Although Abdu Rasoul signed himself as Managing Editor of the Citizen Newspaper-Sudan, the article is steeped in amateur journalism that bedevils many of Sudanese newspapers. To begin with, the author fails to distinguish between facts and government propaganda, a rather embarrassing flaw for a managing editor of a newspaper. Instead of focusing on substance, the author dwells on a personal vendetta against Dr. Khalil Ibrahim and his brother Gibril Ibrahim (hence Khalil and Gibril). The connecting the two together skews the article away from focussing on a major regional and national issue and turns it into a personal assault on a family. Much worse, the author displays an incredible level of laziness and lack of aptitude for research as evidenced by the fact that the work is based on readily available rumours rather than time spent gathering hard facts.

The author describes Khalil as an "Islamist fundamentalist", whose "problem with the current regime in Khartoum is not ideological rather that of power positions [ie. A fight over power and jobs]". As Abdul Rasoul claims, in raising arms against Khartoum, Khalil is "revenging his sheikh and spiritual leader, Dr. Hassan Al-Turabi, rather than fighting for the sake of the people of Darfur". This stuff is familiar to us in that it is everyday propaganda from the Khartoum government. It is understandable that such fallacious information would circulate in trash media where "anything goes" and would be regurgitated by common internet writers. However, it is unforgivable for someone like Mr. Abdul Rasoul, aspiring to become a good journalist to repeat it as a given fact and make no attempt to consult Khalil's declared policies or JEM official documents. Disapproving references to Khalil seeking power in Khartoum reflects a broad worrying tendency by this writer and indeed among many marginalised intellectuals of Darfur. Khalil and other Darfuris are justified in seeking high office in Khartoum in tandem with Al-Bashir and his northern people. Abdul Rasoul must rid himself of this subservient mentality and accept Khartoum as a contested place for Darfuris and others alike.

The naivety of Abdul Rasoul reaches its zenith in his assumption that Khalil is acting "to avenge his Sheikh Al-Turabi". To imply that JEM is a wing of Turabi's party is to commit a cardinal mistake that is not without a touch of racism. Among others, the assumption implies that the Darfur people cannot act without being led by a northerner. I urge Mr. Abdul Rasoul to revisit the Black Book and learn his ABC of the changing politics of Darfur. The Black Book exposes the collusion of all northern-based parties, including that of Al-Turabi, and holds them responsible for the injustice that led to current uprising. Lesson one for Abdul Rasoul is to comprehend is that neither JEM nor SLM will fight to uphold one of the political parties which they have condemned in the first place.

Abdul Rasoul narrates that “Khalil Ibrahim was a leader of the mujahedeen who turned the South of Sudan, Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains into hell” and that he “waged war against these three mentioned areas”. Well, Khalil was never involved in fighting with any Mujahedeen in the Blue Nile or the Nuba Mountains states. To date, Khalil has never visited the Nuba Mountains in any capacity. Khalil was indeed posted in the medical corps that served government army in the South. He later served as State Minister for Social Affairs in the Blue Nile, a position that had nothing to do with Jihad.

Khalil also served as Advisor to Bahr Al Jabal State. The position was a transformative episode in Khalil’s thinking leading to his current rebellion against Khartoum. In his words, “he felt that citizens of Sudan were not treated as equals and that Ministers in the South could not dream of having two meals a day”. Failing to induce Khartoum to rectify the situation in Bahr Al Jabal, Khalil resigned his ministerial post, a rarity among Sudanese elite and went in pursuit of post-graduate studies abroad, in Holland.

Abdu Rasoul then launches into a heroic confrontation with Khalil, which allegedly took place in Egypt in 1990. In a venomous and a Zaghawaphobic provocation, Abdu Rasoul addresses Khalil: “if you remember in 1990 when you were sent by your spiritual leader Dr. Turabi to Egypt to preach Islamic Fundamental ideology to Sudanese students”. Well, there is little point debating the confrontation between Abdul Rasoul and Khalil that followed and wisdom displayed by the former in the debacle. Khalil never visited Egypt during the entire decade of 1976 -2006. To show poor analytic rigour is bad enough but to fall into sheer fabrication of heroic stories is pitiful indeed.

In a bizarre twist of logic, Abdul Rasoul also dragged Gibril Ibrahim into his article. In a desperately cheap and despicable attempt to play with Western fears against Islam, the author tries to connect Gibril with Bin Laden. Thus he says: “.. Jibrieel (Gibril) Ibrahim was the person who signed the contract of the house rented for Bin Laden at Menshia in Khartoum”. For a start, Bin Laden lived in a rented house in Riyadh and not Menshia quarter as stipulated by the Abdul Rasoul and long before Gibril came back from Saudi Arabia where he was working. Furthermore, Gibril has never owned a house in Riyadh or Menshia quarters. His house is in Ed Alhisain quarter. For anybody with the faintest command of Khartoum culture, the name “Ed Alhisain” indicates a status socially incomparable with the high life of Riyadh and Menshia.

It is incredibly queer of Abdul Rasoul to expect a house owned by Gibril to be good enough for Bin Laden, let alone exchanging contracts bearing their names. Bin Laden would have lived in a house rented by one of his numerous companies. After all, Bin Laden’s economic empire in Sudan enjoined Hijra Construction companies known for Khartoum-Port Sudan Highway and extension of Khartoum International Airport; Taba Investment with its monopoly of over Sudan’s major agricultural export of gum, corn, sunflower and sesame products; Al-Thimar Al-Mubaraka company connected with large agricultural schemes and Al-Kifah NGO which later turned into a front for the terrorist establishment. Bin Laden moved among high echelon of power in Khartoum. Sources indicate that he married a niece of Turabi with Turabi’s wife Wisal Almahdi claiming to be a close friend of Bin Laden’s wife Om Hamza. With connections like that, it is foolish to expect Bin Laden to commission Gibril for assistance with accommodation.

Abdu Rasoul must also recognise that at the time, even the CIA did not register Bin Laden’s terrorist credentials. But let us assume that Gibril rented his house to Bin

Laden, does that make him responsible for his crimes? Apparently, no, even though Khartoum's interested intelligence might want us to say otherwise.

The motive of the article is clear; namely, to drive a wedge between JEM on the one hand and the Fur people, the SPLM and the international community on the other. As for the Fur, there is little evidence that Abdu Rasoul is succeeding. They are now joining JEM in droves and many Fur personnel occupy prominent positions in JEM leadership.

The SPLM is maintaining a positive engagement with JEM but admittedly further work is due. The SPLM knows Khalil as the first leader outside the south to recognize the leadership of the late Dr. Garang. He told Garang personally that he was the one who could rescue Sudan and that he was ready to support him as president of Sudan. That was in the year 2002, when such suggestions would have been viewed by northern politicians as bordering on lunacy. Sadly enough, and unlike Khalil, some misguided northerners are not ready to see a Christian from the south acting as their president.

Abdul Rasoul must recognise that the current international profile of JEM cannot be shaken by slanderous articles. JEM is a national and regional power that engages the international community at various levels. It firmly believes that Darfur problem can only be settled through reshaping the seat of power and centre of decision-making in Khartoum, and not in Darfur, let alone the top of Jabal Mara mountain.

Let me end by offering a humble advice for our young journalist: Do your home work before putting pen to paper, distinguish between propaganda and facts and stop thinking as a tribal stooge.

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