

Re-shaping the Sudan Roadmap to End War, Economic Crisis and Establish a Genuine Political Process

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The Roadmap Agreement of 2016, which is the only political document to have been signed by the major political organisations to Sudan's conflicts, suffered a serious setback when the Sudan Government decided unilaterally to conduct and then terminate its non-inclusive national dialogue. A genuinely inclusive, transparent and credible national dialogue carried out in a conducive environment was supposed to have been central to the political process envisaged in the Roadmap Agreement. The Government's decision created a political vacuum; it left the issues of stopping war and addressing the humanitarian crises in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile hanging in the air without anchoring them to an inclusive political process that could resolve the root causes of conflict and address the historical question of how Sudan should be governed before who governs it.

The Sudan Government and the international community now seem to be keen to replace the national dialogue with a constitutional drafting process. Such a process is not viable in current circumstances, as it first requires a political agreement that would address the root causes of Sudan's conflicts and lead to a process of democratic transformation that would end the one-party monopoly of power and establish national institutions based on the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights.

Sudan Call Leaders met in Paris last month, and in addition to agreeing on a new organisational structure, decided to recommit to the Roadmap Agreement and try injecting a new momentum into it. However, it takes two to tango; the Sudan Government, which is the other party to the conflict, also needs to recommit to the Roadmap Agreement in good faith, if it is to provide a path for future engagement, addressing the political crisis and resolving Sudan's conflicts. There is no point in drafting a new constitution without having a political agreement between the parties to the conflict, which can then be transformed into a constitutional text, as was the case with the Interim National Constitution of 2005. This was meant to govern Sudan, including after the secession of South Sudan. Sudan already has a perfectly good constitution based on respect for diversity and including a Bill of Rights that safeguards human rights and basic freedoms.

The problem is not the need to draft a new constitution but lack of political will by the Government to respect and implement the existing Constitution. For example, key provisions in the current Constitution, such as requiring the National Intelligence and Security Service to focus on information gathering, analysis and advice has never been reflected in the National Security Act, which gives them extensive powers of arrest and detention. Moreover, the Constitution was arbitrarily amended in January 2015 to abolish the election of State Governors and incorporate the Rapid Support militia into the national regular forces. Drafting another constitution is simply a gimmick by the Government to buy time until the 2020 elections and to remove term limits on the office of the President so that General Bashir can stand again. There is thus a real risk that any new constitution drafted under the current regime would be a retrograde step. The Government has always

been opposed to any genuine political process that would address the root causes of the war and effect democratic transformation.

There is an elephant in the room that the NCP government has failed to acknowledge. That elephant is walking on four big legs i.e. the war, the ICC arrest warrants against Bashir and two state governors, the economic crisis and an unjust political system that led to the marginalization of the overwhelming majority of the Sudanese people while concentrating power and resources in the hands of a few. These four issues are all interrelated and none can be resolved on its own unless the others are also addressed. For instance, it was the Government's war in Darfur, that led to the ICC arrest warrants, and its massive military expenditure on the wars and grand corruption in the interests of the few, that contributed significantly to the economic crisis.

There will also be no normalization of relations with the outside world, unless these internal issues are addressed. Normalization has to start from the inside as the crisis emerged from the inside through the agenda of Political Islam. This caused the displacement of millions of people, denied them basic freedoms, internal political and economic spaces in their own country, and drove many of them in desperation to seek asylum in Europe and elsewhere, even at the risk of drowning in the Mediterranean. It is the same agenda of Political Islam that supported terrorism and as long as this ideology continues, it will be impossible to cut the organic link with terrorism. It is the same political agenda that has contributed to destabilising the region from Libya to South Sudan. Democratic transformation is the only remedy for these ills; without addressing the root causes of the war and having a genuinely inclusive transformational process that will create a political space and a level playing field for all Sudan's opposition forces, there is no way of ending Sudan's multiple crises. Such a process should culminate in free and fair democratic elections. Those elections cannot be free and fair without first ensuring unimpeded humanitarian assistance, allowing millions of internally displaced people and refugees to return to their homes, ending wars, and guaranteeing basic freedoms. Ending wars is key for the armed organisations to transform themselves fully into the political life and maintaining the status quo will never result in peace, prosperity and democracy.

We believe that the Sudan Call has taken an important step in Paris towards peace and a renegotiated political settlement by recommitting to the Roadmap Agreement on the basis of its provisions to stop the war and address the humanitarian crisis. The Sudan Call also highlighted the importance of the African Union Peace and Security Council's Communiqués 456 and 539, which set out in detail the conditions for creating an enabling environment for the political process on the basis of the Roadmap Agreement that will include, among others, releasing all political detainees and prisoners of war, and addressing the humanitarian crisis.

In the meantime, the Sudan Call, together with the wider oppositions, will continue their efforts to overthrow the repressive one-party NCP regime. It may be a difficult task, but it is not an impossible one, given Sudan's growing economic and political crises. The only difference between the Sudan Call and other opposition forces is that the Sudan Call can walk and talk at the same time. It can work to overthrow the regime through an uprising, while at the same time being ready to negotiate a just and peaceful settlement, which

would be less costly in terms of human and material costs if a truly inclusive political process were to be available. Other opposition forces are reserved out of the lack of a genuine process; therefore a genuine process is the demand of all opposition forces. By consolidating its national unity and stability through a negotiated peaceful settlement and democratic transformation, Sudan could set an example to the rest of the region and contribute to enhancing regional stability, including making the positive contribution that is needed from Sudan, particularly in South Sudan and Libya.

The African Union High Level Implementation Panel chaired by President Mbeki, which has the lead in mediating the Sudan's peace process, the African Union Peace and Security Council, the region, the United Nations, Troika, Europe and other international partners need to develop and reshape the Sudan Roadmap Agreement by setting out clear steps that can address the root causes of Sudan's conflicts and lead to democratic transformation. This in turn, would also have a major positive impact on addressing the economic crisis. Thus, it is time for the international community to refocus attention on creating a truly inclusive political process in Sudan.

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