



FOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Perspectives from the Arab World

This bulletin is part of FRIDE's project "The gap between narratives and practices. Darfur: Responses from the Arab world", funded by the Ford Foundation.

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A monthly selection of Arab official, journalistic and academic sources is compiled to give an overview of the main events, opinions and documents from the perspective of the Arab world.

Introduction

Diplomatic movements concerning Darfur have slowed down in the Arab region after the frantic action of March 2009, in the immediate aftermath of the ICC's arrest warrant against President Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

April 2009 started with Bashir paying another visit to a foreign country, this time Saudi Arabia. The Sudanese president briefly went to Saudi Arabia after the Arab League summit at the end of March in Qatar, where all Arab countries officially aligned themselves with Sudan, rejecting the ICC move. Later in the month, Bashir made a state visit to Ethiopia, the sixth to a foreign country after his indictment, where he was welcomed with a full state reception.

In Sudan, several events this month helped to challenge the idea that the conflict in Darfur could be characterised as a "low-

intensity conflict”, as the joint United Nations-African Union special representative to Darfur, Rodolphe Adada, had described it to the UN Security Council in his briefing on 27 April. Nine men from Darfur accused of murdering a newspaper editor were hanged in Khartoum only days before eleven members of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) were sentenced to death for the attacks on Khartoum in May 2008. JEM, the majoritarian rebel movement of the region, has refused to return to the peace talks in Qatar until all political prisoners and prisoners of war are released.

International action this month included US Senator Jon Kerry and US Envoy for Darfur Scott Graton visiting Sudan to hold talks with official and non official stakeholders in Sudan,

and Graton’s meeting on 30 April with Secretary General of the Arab League (AL) Amr Moussa in Cairo to explore perceptions of the conflict in the AL and Egypt.

Some positive steps that could be mentioned in this regard have been, on the one hand, the AL’s announcement of the appointment of a Special Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs in Darfur, who will take care of humanitarian assistance in the area, as well as the caravan of 40 doctors that the Egyptian government sent over to the war-torn region. On the other hand, a new group of 21 political leaders and military commanders from the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) agreed to merge with JEM, and five Darfur delegations, acting together after the agreement of the Tripoli Charter, arrived in Qatar to hold consultations with Qatar officials on the road to peace.



FOTO: ONTHEDECLINE IN FLICKR

Methodology¹

The main objective of this newsletter is to fill the language gap between the Arab media and western audiences. In order to obtain a complete picture of the information published in Arabic, five different sources have been analysed: the web pages of regional organisations, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, official news agencies, Arab think tanks and, finally, Arabic newspapers.

Our main objective was not to cover all the news published about Sudan and the ongoing humanitarian crisis but to take those pieces of news, editorials and opinion articles that reflect the main trends in the Arab media’s perception of the Sudanese issue.

(1) Due to the lack of attention in the Arab media to the Darfur case in April 2009, a greater number of English sources considered to contain relevant information on the regional dimension of the conflict have been included in the current newsletter. See the list of sources monitored at the end of this newsletter.

April 2009 Arabic News Report

President Bashir holds a telephone conversation with Sultan Ibn Abdel Aziz

Bashir held a polite, protocolar telephone conversation with the Saudi Crown Prince and Vice President of the Council of Ministries.

DATE: 01/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (ARABIC)

<http://www.mfa.gov.sd/arabic/newsViewer.php?id=3019>



UN-African Union meeting

Officials from the United Nations-African Union peace-keeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) were in Addis Ababa where they briefed the AU Peace and Security Council on the latest security and humanitarian situation in the war-torn western region of Sudan. The UN-AU Joint Special Representative Rodolphe Adada briefed the Council on the impact of the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. The UN-AU Joint Chief Mediator, Djibril Bassolé, also attended the meeting.

DATE: 06/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: All Africa Website (ENGLISH)

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200904061435.html>

Sudanese Vice President of the Council of Ministries receives the French Ambassador to Sudan

The officials discussed bilateral relations and the situation of the Peace Process. France reaffirmed its support to this process.

DATE: 06/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (ARABIC)

<http://www.mfa.gov.sd/arabic/newsViewer.php?id=3025>

Arab League to appoint humanitarian coordinator for Darfur

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amr Moussa, announced that the organisation would appoint a special coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs in Darfur to coordinate Arab humanitarian assistance in the region.

DATE: 09/April/2009

SOURCE: Sudan Tribune (ENGLISH)

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30828>

John Kerry visits Sudan

Senator John Kerry, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate of the United States of America, arrived in Sudan on an official visit. Over three days he had meetings with important Sudanese officials to discuss bilateral and humanitarian issues.

DATE: 12/APRIL/2009 (ARABIC)

SOURCE: Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website

<http://www.mfa.gov.sd/arabic/newsViewer.php?id=3036>

New group of Darfur rebel commanders merges with JEM

Some 21 political leaders and military commanders from the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) – Unity announced their merger with the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), thus joining another group that merged with JEM recently.

DATE: 12/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Sudan Tribune (ENGLISH)

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30841>

OIC Secretary General urges Sudan and Chad to exercise restraint

The Secretary General of the OIC stated that the OIC has been following with concern the disturbing news

about the deterioration of the situation along the borders of Chad and Sudan. He appealed to the two OIC member states to exercise maximum restraint and to live up to their commitments contained in the Dakar Agreement signed by the two parties on 13 March 2008.

DATE: 13/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Organization of the Islamic Conference Website (ARABIC)

http://www.oic-oci.org/topic_detail.asp?t_id=2119

Situation calm in Darfur

The joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission in the Darfur region informed that the security situation remains calm as scheduled troop rotations begin among some units. The rotation of troops in Darfur began on Tuesday with the Nigerian Battalion stationed in South Darfur, with a total of 200 personnel arriving while another 200 finished their mission.

DATE: 18/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Tripoli Post (ENGLISH)

<http://www.tripolipost.com/articledetail.asp?c=1&i=3055>

Bashir in Ethiopia

The Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir arrived today in Addis Ababa heading a high level delegation to discuss bilateral issues with their Ethiopian counterparts at a two day joint high committee meeting.

DATE: 21/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Gulf News (ENGLISH)

<http://www.gulfnews.com/Region/Sudan/10306398.html>

United Nations informs that more than 20,000 Sudanese refugees returned in 2009 from Uganda

The number of Sudanese refugees returning home from Uganda this year with the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has topped the 20,000 mark. This brings the total number of people helped home by UNHCR since the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended Sudan's long-running north-south civil war, to nearly 150,000, including 85,000 from Uganda. An additional 160,000 others have returned by themselves from neighbouring countries.

DATE: 23/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: To Understand Darfur Web Page (ARABIC)

<http://ifhamdarfur.net/node/933>

Five Darfur rebel delegations arrive in Qatar

Delegations from five rebel groups arrived at the Arab Gulf state of Qatar to discuss joining a stalled peace process that began last month with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

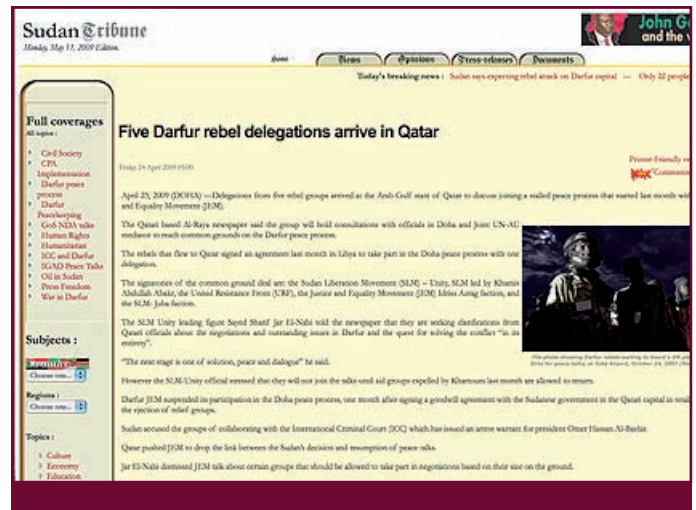
The Qatari based Al-Raya newspaper said the group will hold consultations with officials in Doha and the joint UN-AU mediator to reach a common ground on the Darfur peace process.

The rebels that flew to Qatar signed an agreement last month in Libya to take part in the Doha peace process with one delegation.

DATE: 24/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Sudan Tribune (ENGLISH)

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30969>



A medical caravan of 40 Egyptian physicians heads to Darfur

The Egyptian government will send a caravan of 40 Egyptian physicians on 28 April to provide medical services in Darfur. This initiative aims to respond to any humanitarian needs which may result from the departure of many foreign aid organisations from Sudan.

DATE: 26/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (ARABIC)

http://www.mfa.gov.eg/MFA_Portal/ar-EG/MFA_News/Press_Releases/2742009darfurdoctor

Sudan rebels sentenced to death

Eleven members of the Darfur rebel movement, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), have been sentenced to death by a Sudanese court for an attack on the capital

Khartoum in 2008. JEM rejected Qatar's efforts to broker peace talks with the Sudanese government in April.

DATE: 28/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Al Jazeera News Network (ENGLISH)

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2009/04/200942613425604632.html>

Fahmi Huwaidi interviews President Bashir

Egyptian writer, Fahmi Huwaidi, interviewed Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. This was the first interview given by the Sudanese president since the ICC arrest warrant. In the interview Bashir refused the charges of the ICC and said also that the activities of the American envoy will be very important to resolving the conflict. He also referred to the fall in international oil prices and its impact on the Sudanese economy.

DATE: 28/APRIL/2009

SOURCE: Al Jazeera News Network (ARABIC)

<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/BAC475E6-6EA4-4D70-97BE-8F82DD1DA5DB.htm>

UN says Darfur is now a low-intensity conflict

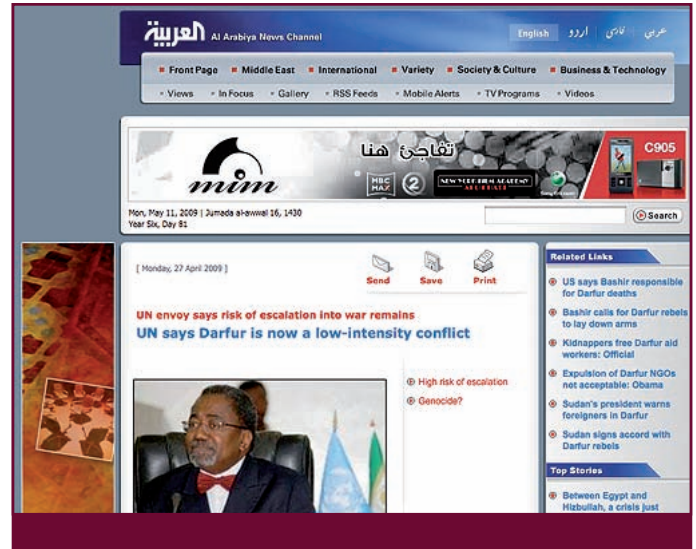
Briefing the UN Security Council, the joint UN-AU special representative to Darfur, Rodolphe Adada, said that "Darfur is a low-intensity conflict".

According to figures collected by the UN-AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur, known as UNAMID, some 2,000 people died from violence in the region during the 15 months between 1 January 2008 and 31 March 2009, one third of them civilians.

DATE: 28/April/2009

SOURCE: Al Arabiya (ENGLISH)

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/04/27/71572.html>



Arab audiences vote for Bashir's trial by the ICC

In an unexpected move, an Arab forum approved efforts by the International Criminal Court to try Sudanese President Bashir for war crimes in Darfur since 2003. Some 350 people participating in the Doha Debates TV show on Monday evening supported a motion calling on the Arab states to hand President Bashir to the ICC. The audience voted 55 to 45 percent in favour of the motion.

DATE: 29/April/2009

SOURCE: Sudan Tribune (ENGLISH)

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article31025>

Arabic media trends

- Media attention to the Darfur issue and the international arrest warrant issued by the ICC has strongly decreased.
- The Darfur peace process is at a stalemate.
- The NGOs working in Sudan have had to leave the country, leaving no possibility of responding to the humanitarian crisis. Egypt and the Arab League are trying to provide some form of help.
- The situation in Darfur has been considered "stable" of late and described as a "low-intensity" conflict.
- President Bashir has continued visiting foreign countries (Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia) and making contact with officials of other Arab countries (Egypt, Somalia, Djibuti).
- France (through its ambassador in Khartoum) and the United States (through the visit of the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee) have exercised some pressure on the Sudanese government, but other regional and international actors do not include Darfur on their political agendas.

■ Chronology - April 2009

1 APRIL

- Bashir visits Saudi Arabia for a short pilgrimage (his fifth visit to a foreign state since the ICC's arrest warrant).

2 APRIL

- US envoy in Sudan, General Scott Gration, visits Sudan for the first time since he was appointed.

6 APRIL

- UN-AU meeting in Addis Ababa on the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur.

7 APRIL

- Bashir tells a rally in Zalingei, Darfur, that his own officials will track down war criminals.

9 APRIL

- The Arab League's Secretary General announces that a new humanitarian coordinator for Darfur will be appointed.

12 APRIL

- US Senator John Kerry visits Sudan.
- South Darfur kidnappers threaten to kill the two Aid Medical International (AMI) workers.
- 21 members of the SLM announce their merger with JEM.

13 APRIL

- 9 Darfuri men are hanged in Khartoum accused of killing a newspaper editor.

14 APRIL

- 5,000 people attend funerals after Darfuris are executed.

15 APRIL

- A Sudanese court sentences to death 11 members of the JEM for the May 2008 attacks in Khartoum.
- The Arab Coalition for Darfur holds a two day meeting in Cairo to activate the cause of the Arab and regional movements on Darfur by discussing the case with Arab parliamentarians.

21 APRIL

- Bashir visits Ethiopia.

24 APRIL

- Five Darfur rebel delegations arrive in Qatar.

26 APRIL

- Egypt is to send a caravan of 40 Egyptian doctors to provide medical services in Darfur.

27 APRIL

- Joint Special Representative of the UN and AU for Darfur, Rodolphe Adada, presents his report to the UN Security Council, in which he refers to Darfur as a "low intensity-conflict".

29 APRIL

- Kidnappers release the two AMI foreign aid workers.

30 APRIL

- US Envoy to Sudan Scott Gration meets the Arab League's Secretary General Amr Moussa in Cairo in order to find out about Egypt's and the AL's approach to Darfur.

■ Annex – Information Sources

Web pages of regional organisations

Arab League	http://www.arableagueonline.org/
African Union	http://www.africa-union.org/
Organization of the Islamic Conference	http://www.oic-oci.org/
Gulf Cooperation Council	http://www.gcc-sg.org/

Web pages of Ministries of Foreign Affairs

Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.mofa.gov.qa
Saudi Arabia - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.mofa.gov.sa/
Libya - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.foreign.gov.ly/
Egypt - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.mfa.gov.eg/
Sudan - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.mfa.gov.sd/

News agencies

Al Jazeera	http://www.aljazeera.net/
Al Arabiya	http://www.alarabiya.net/
Qatar News Agency	http://www.qnaol.net/
Saudi Press Agency	http://www.spa.gov.sa/
Emirates News Agency-WAM	http://www.wam.org.ae/
Jamahiriya News Agency	http://www.jananews.ly/
Middle East News Agency (MENA)	http://www.mena.org.eg/
Sudan News Agency	http://www.suna-sd.net/
Radio Dabanga	http://www.radiodabanga.org/

Web pages of Arab think tanks and institutes

To understand Darfur	http://ifhamdarfur.net/
Arab Program on Human Rights	http://www.aphra.org/pcd/
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information	http://www.anhri.net/
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies	http://www.cihrs.org/
Al Academy for Graduate Studies	http://www.alacademia.edu.ly/

Newspapers

Ash sharq al awsat	http://www.asharqalawsat.com/
Ash sharq al awsat	http://www.asharqalawsat.com/
Al Hayat	http://www.alhayat.com/
As Sahafa	http://www.alsahafa.sd/
Sudan Tribune	http://www.sudantribune.com/
Al Ahram	http://www.ahram.org.eg/
Al Watan Al Libi	http://www.alwatan-libya.com/
Tripoli Post	http://www.tripolipost.com/