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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.

Main issues during June 2009

- Sudan and regional diplomacy
- OIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting
- Human rights situation
- Peace process

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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

During June the Arab and Muslim world focused on regional developments far away from the Sudanese crisis. The core issue in the first week was Obama's speech in Cairo, with its implications for the different countries. In the second and third weeks, the media centred on the consequences of the presidential elections in Iran.

In June Sudan barely featured in the media, in contrast to March (when the ICC arrest warrant was issued), April (when the Arab countries reacted to the ICC and the crisis between Sudan and the international community erupted) and May (when the clashes in Darfur regained importance and influenced Sudan – Chad relations at a moment when the Sudanese government and rebels movements were negotiating the implementation of a peace agreement).

The Sudanese conflict remains on the agenda of regional organisations, but the approach of the Arab League, the OIC and the GCC is largely rhetorical; their declarations and resolutions have almost no practical consequences. The African Union is actively involved and is therefore the most important regional organisation in terms of capabilities and influence, but the peace process is still deeply influenced by Qatar, which has become the leading country on this issue.

The situation at the Sudan – Chad border is worrying since the peace accord signed last month is still to be

implemented and violations are quite common. The international community needs to take into account that the hardest part of any agreement is its implementation and follow up activities.

There is a growing danger that as the Sudanese conflict becomes chronic, it will feature ever less on the international agenda. The human rights situation is deteriorating while President Bashir almost succeeded in his efforts to erode the credibility of the ICC arrest warrant by accusing the international organisation of a double standards policy.



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Methodology

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.⁽¹⁾

Our intention 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) See the list of sources monitored at the end of this newsletter.

Trends

- Somalia and Mauritania were the main issues in Africa on the regional agenda during June.
- The speech President Obama delivered in Cairo and the Iranian presidential elections occupied the Arab and Muslim media's interest. Human rights organisations criticised Obama's speech because it did not make any reference to the human rights violations in Africa and the Arab world.
- The African Union and the UN through UNAMID are the regional organisations with the strongest interest in

Sudan; the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference accept the AU's preeminence.

- The human rights situation is eroding and the conflict on the Sudan – Chad border is still raging as the bilateral peace agreement that was reached in May has not yet been fully implemented.
- News reports indicate that the peace talks will resume in July.
- The US appears to be beginning to take a strong interest in the Sudanese conflict after a period of diplomatic inactivity. The US special envoy to Sudan, Scott Gration, has been working on many fronts to improve the new American administration's position.

June 2009 Arabic News Report

1 - Sudan and regional diplomacy

Sudanese president meets his Senegalese and Algerian counterparts

Omar al-Bashir had a meeting with the Senegalese president during the 13th AU Summit on Agriculture and Food Security in Libya. They also reviewed developments in Darfur and efforts by the Sudanese government to return the situation in Darfur to normality. At the same AU forum the Sudanese president was reunited with the Algerian president.

Date: 01/JULY/2009

Source: Qatar News Agency (Arabic)

http://www.qnaol.net/QNAAr/Foreign_News/Politics1/Pages/qna_sudan_01072009.aspx

Syrian foreign minister meets Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) leader

Dr. Lam Akol Ajawin, the SPLM leader, was received by Dr. Al Moallem, the Syrian foreign minister. Al Moallem reiterated Syria's support for Sudan, its unity of land and people, and Syria's rejection of foreign interference in

Sudanese affairs. In a statement to the Syrian News Agency following the meeting, Ajawin expressed appreciation for Syria's support of Sudan and its causes at regional and international forums, describing Syrian-Sudanese relations as historical and strong.

Date: 30/JUNE/2009

Source: Qatar News Agency website (English)

http://www.qnaol.net/QNAEn/Foreign_News/Politics1/Pages/SyrianForeignMinistermeetsSPLMLeader.aspx

The screenshot shows the Qatar News Agency website interface. The main headline is "Syrian Foreign Minister meets SPLM Leader". Below the headline is a photograph of Dr. Lam Akol Ajawin. The article text discusses the meeting between Dr. Lam Akol Ajawin, the SPLM leader, and Dr. Al Moallem, the Syrian foreign minister. It mentions that Al Moallem reiterated Syria's support for Sudan and its causes at regional and international forums, describing Syrian-Sudanese relations as historical, distinguished, strong and based on agreement on principles, ideas and directives regarding proposed issues. It also notes that Dr. Ajawin expressed appreciation for Syria's support of Sudan and its causes at regional and international forums, describing Syrian-Sudanese relations as historical, distinguished, strong and based on agreement on principles, ideas and directives regarding proposed issues. He also pointed out that his talks with Syrian officials dealt with several issues, particularly the issue of Darfur which is considered Sudan's primary issue, underlining the agreement in viewpoints between the two sides regarding the proposed issues. (QNA)

UNAMID General Director in Sudan

The Sudanese interior minister, Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, received the Director General of the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Mohammad Younis. During the meeting, they discussed the current cooperation between Sudan and UNAMID and other issues of common interest.

Date: 29/JUNE/2009

Source: Saudi Press Agency Website

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/details.php?id=679815>



GCC Secretary General invited to Sudan

The GCC Secretary General received a letter from the Sudanese minister of foreign affairs inviting him to visit Khartoum. The Sudanese ambassador to Saudi Arabia delivered the letter to the GCC official during a meeting where they discussed bilateral relations between the GCC and Sudan.

Date: 15/JUNE/2009

Source: Gulf Cooperation Council Webpage (Arabic)

<http://www.gcc-sg.org/index.php?action=News&Sub=ShowOne&ID=1275>

Saudi ambassador to India receives the Sudanese ambassador

The acting Saudi charge d'affaires in New Delhi, Mohammed bin Abdullah Barri, received the Sudanese ambassador to India, Al-Khidr Haroun Ahmad. The Sudanese diplomat highlighted the regional and international importance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and issues of mutual interest were reviewed.

Date: 08/JUNE/2009

Source: Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (Arabic)

<http://www.mofa.gov.sa/Detail.asp?InNewsItemID=94989>

African Union Panel on Darfur concludes its mission

The African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD), chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki and including former Burundian President Pierre Buyoya, former Nigerian President Abdulsalami Abubakar and other African dignitaries, has concluded its third mission to Sudan. The AUPD held public hearings on the Darfur conflict to determine how best to expedite the peace process to urgently create conditions to promote justice, healing and reconciliation in Darfur. The AUPD will conduct several additional hearings and consultations and draft recommendations to be presented to the AU before making them available to the public.

Date: 26/JUNE/2009

Source: Tripoli Post (English)

<http://www.tripolipost.com/articleDetail.asp?c=1&i=3309>

Dr. Ahd About Gheit and Mr. Mohammed Othman El Mirghani examine Egypt's position on solving the critical situation in Sudan

The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs received Mr. Othman El Mirghani, chairman of the National Democratic Alliance, to analyse the delicate situation in Sudan and the serious challenges that threaten the country's security and sovereignty. All efforts are needed to close ranks and reject internal divisions in order to reach a minimum of national reconciliation to solve the different issues.

Date: 22/JUNE/2009

Source: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (Arabic)

http://www.mfa.gov.eg/MFA_Portal/ar-EG/MFA_News/Press_Releases/2262009sudansituation.htm

2. OIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting

OIC Secretary General statement

"The situation in Sudan is given serious attention by the OIC, as the international efforts to achieve progress in the

Darfur peace negotiations continue. Not too long ago, I paid a visit to Sudan and met with a number of officials, foremost of whom is H.E. President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir. I have informed His Excellency that the OIC rejects the International Criminal Court's decision and its double standards. However we also requested that the Sudanese judiciary should do all that is required by justice to prosecute those involved in criminal acts in Darfur.

I returned from another important visit to Sudan on the 18th of this month. The visit was in response to an invitation from the Sudanese president, Omar Hassan Al-Bashir with the aim of inspecting the totality of the security and humanitarian situation and the efforts of the Sudanese government to improve the situation in Darfur. On that visit I underscored the OIC's determination to continue to provide humanitarian and developmental assistance in Darfur and to embark on an ambitious project to build 120 model villages that can absorb more than 400,000 displaced persons from the 3 regions of Darfur at the cost of USD485 million. In this regard we praise the Qatar-sponsored Afro-Arab initiative".

Date: 28/MAY/2009

Source: ISIRIA Webpage (English)

http://www.isria.com/RESTRICTED/D/2009/MAY_28/23_May_2009_58.htm

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OIC: Statement by Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu at the 36th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers

Your Excellency President Bashar Al Assad,
President of the Syrian Arab Republic
Your Excellencies,
Honorable Heads of Delegation,

It is an honor for me to welcome you all as we embark – with the help of Allah – on the Thirty-sixth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It is also a distinct honor and privilege for me to address your august council in this centuries-old Arab Islamic city where Islam flowered in its early days, a city which has witnessed the great historical glories of Islam and has always been a hospitable host for its eternal heritage.

I have the pleasure to start with paying tribute to the great Syrian people and to their leader, His Excellency President Bashar Al Assad, and to extend my thanks and appreciation to him for his kind patronage of this important meeting. We look forward with great interest to his opening statement which will contain his invaluable directives that will guide our proceedings. I feel duty bound to extend to His Excellency and to his Government my sincere gratitude and appreciation for all the efforts and arrangements that have been made to ensure that this session is held in optimal conditions. I am equally thankful for the warm welcome and generous hospitality offered to all participants in this blessed meeting.

I should not forget to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Republic of Uganda, Chair of the previous session of the CFM, for the sincere efforts they have made to assume the chairmanship of the Council for one full year and for their initiatives to consolidate joint Islamic action.

Your Excellency the President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the first time we get together officially since I assumed my second term in office as OIC Secretary General, after my unanimous election at the Dakar Summit in 2008. I wish to take this opportunity to say how greatly honored I am to be offered this opportunity to continue to work in this important post in order to make every effort to serve the Member States and the Islamic Ummah and to advance its glory and progress, being fully aware of the tremendous responsibility placed upon our shoulders.

It is reassuring and comforting that the past four years have been an opportunity for us to test our capacity to achieve, to progress, and to get the world to listen to our views. Over this period, we have managed, with the grace of Allah, and thanks to your sincere support, cooperation and solidarity and with our unflinching perseverance, to

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Damascus Declaration (Thirty- sixth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference)

"On the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the OIC, which was directly instigated by the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque, we emphasise the necessity for the OIC to assume an effective role in protecting the interests and rights of Muslim states and peoples; reiterate our firm commitment towards the aims, objectives and principles of our Organization; reemphasise our support to it so as to be able to confront, in the best manner, the challenges facing the Ummah in the twenty-first century; and acknowledge that effective cooperation and coordination among the Islamic states are essential to ensure the good of our Muslim peoples".

Date: 25/MAY/2009

Source: Syrian Arab News Agency (English)

<http://sana.sy/print.html?sid=228111&newlang=eng>

3. Human rights situation

Emirates World Mobile Hospital to leave for Sudan

A team of medics and paramedics working within the recently launched Emirates World Mobile Hospital are leaving for Sudan to provide humanitarian help.

Date: 29/JUNE/2009

Source: Emirates News Agency

<http://www.wam.org.ae/servlet/Satellite?c=WamLocAnews&cid=124107314>

[0115&pagename=WAM%2FWAM_A_Layout&parent=Collection&parentid=1135099399933&rendermode=preview-admin-1135099398363](http://www.wam.org.ae/servlet/Satellite?c=WamLocAnews&cid=1241073140115&pagename=WAM%2FWAM_A_Layout&parent=Collection&parentid=1135099399933&rendermode=preview-admin-1135099398363)

Activist is released after six months

According to Sudanese sources, Nahla Bashir Adam, a human rights activist, was released after spending 6 months and 7 days detained without trial or charge in Omdurman prison for women in Western Sudan's capital Khartoum. Nahla Bashir is vice president of the "Youth for Children Association", a non-profit organisation active in the south of Cord Fjan.

Date: 23/JUNE/2009

Source: To understand Darfur (Arabic)

<http://ifhamdarfur.net/node/968>

Joint written intervention on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur

“The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) in collaboration with 13 Arab NGOs would like to express its deep concern over the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Darfur [...] The conflict in Darfur has been continuously deteriorating as a result of national and regional impunity practiced by the Sudanese as well as Arab and African governments. Not only is the Sudanese government failing to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of its citizens and offer adequate protection to the civilian population, it is a flagrant perpetrator of war crimes and crimes against humanity [...]”

Date: 16/JUNE/2009

Source: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (Arabic)

<http://www.cihrs.org/Arabic/NewsSystem/Articles/1666>

4. Sudanese peace process

Presidential aide meets with the new American charge d'affaires in Sudan

Presidential assistant Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie held a meeting in his office with the new American charge d'affaires, Robert White, where they discussed bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest, including progress in the application of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the upcoming elections as well as the Darfur negotiations and the situation in Sudan.

Date: 29/JUNE/2009

Source: Saudi Press Agency (Arabic)

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/details.php?id=679638>

Peace talks to be resumed in the next month

The United Nations Secretary General spokeswoman, Michele Montas, said that the current round of ceasefire negotiations between the Sudanese government and the Justice and Equality Movement had been suspended. She announced that the ongoing negotiations, which had been held in the Qatari capital Doha, are scheduled to recommence at the end of July.

Date: 16/JUNE/2009

Source: To understand Darfur (Arabic)

<http://ifhamdarfur.net/node/965>

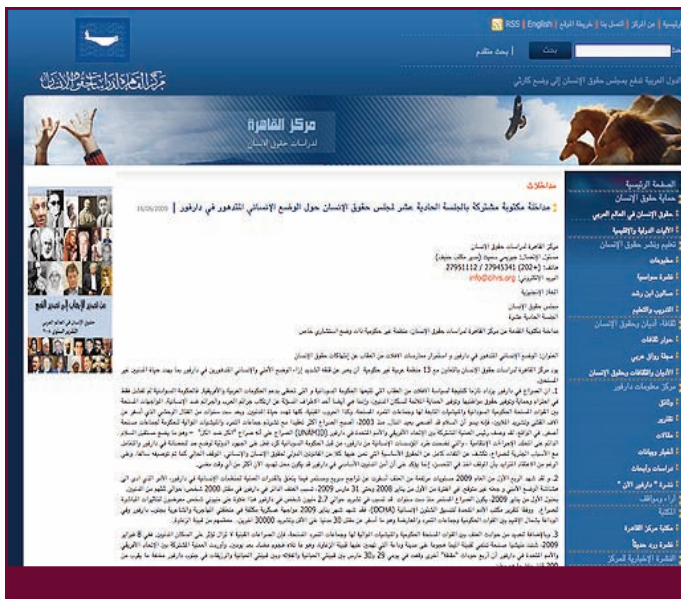
UN Secretary General expresses concern about escalating tension between Sudan and Chad

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has expressed concern over the deteriorating situation between Chad and Sudan, which further destabilises the already volatile Darfur region. Despite the agreement signed by the two countries in early May, the UN Secretary General said that the last two months in Darfur have been characterised by an escalation of violence along the border with Chad, and by several incursions of Chadian national forces into the area.

Date: 15/JUNE/2009

Source: To Understand Darfur (Arabic)

<http://ifhamdarfur.net/node/964>



Sudan: new oppressive press law

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) stated today that the Sudanese parliament's approval of the press draft law, which was widely opposed by Sudanese journalists and civil society inside and outside Sudan, is a severe blow to press freedom in Sudan and paves the way for more suppression and confiscation. Despite the amendments made by the parliament to some articles so as to cancel the imprisonment penalty against journalists, the remaining articles shackle and oppress journalists.

Date: 10/JUNE/2009

Source: Arabic Network of Human Rights Information (Arabic)

<http://www.anhri.net/press/2009/pr0610.shtml>

■ Chronology - June 2009

30 June

- UN-AU joint mediator meets with Darfur URF leader.

29 June

- Sudanese vice president will begin Europe tour in July.

28 June

- UNAMID spokesperson says Darfur peace process is progressing.

27 June

- AU-UN mediator meets with North Darfur leaders.

26 June

- US engages Sudan's National Congress Party (NCP) and the SPLM in tripartite talks.

22 June

- Sudan criticises Ugandan president over Darfur remarks.

21 June

- Sudan signs MOU with Chinese agricultural company.

20 June

- Dutch delegation begins 4-day visit to Darfur.

18 June

- US presidential envoy highlights constructive dialogue with Khartoum.

17 June

- Sudan declares itself open to international monitoring of its elections.

16 June

- Sudan expects to be removed from US list of states sponsoring terrorism.

14 June

- Sudan and Ethiopia agree to strengthen military cooperation.

13 June

- Sudan accuses ICC prosecutor of attempting to divide Arabs.

12 June

- Sudan dismisses new delay of general elections.

11 June

- AU-UN joint representative meets JEM rebel chief in North Darfur.

10 June

- African countries back away from ICC withdrawal demand.

08 June

- Sudan criticises Obama's labeling of Darfur as 'genocide'.

07 June

- Bashir visits Zimbabwe in defiance of arrest warrant.

06 June

- UN rights rapporteur expresses concerns over violence in Southern Sudan.

04 June

- US to host conference on Sudan peace accord.

03 June

- British envoy discusses Sudan peace process.

01 June

- Sudan refuses to release JEM prisoners before ceasefire.

List of Sources

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/

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.jananeews.ly/
Middle East News Agency (MENA)	http://www.mena.org.eg/
Sudan News Agency	http://www.sunas-sd.net/
Radio Dabanga	http://www.radiodabanga.org/

Arab think tanks and information

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/
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/