



FLICKR/RADIO NEDERLAND WERELDOMROEP

Perspectives from the Arab World

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Main issues during September 2009

- International efforts to bring peace to Darfur
- Humanitarian issues
- Israel in Africa: the Arab perception

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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

This year Ramadan took place during September, which meant that developments in the political and social life of Muslim societies decreased significantly. In the political arena, the most important meeting was the United Nations General Assembly. The only comment that the Sudanese representative made regarding this event was that the ICC decision was 'rejected by regional and international organizations'. Unfortunately for the Sudanese people, it seems that their problems do not feature on the international security agenda.

Another significant international meeting was the 2nd African–South American Summit that concluded on September 28. Its final declaration (the Nueva Esparta Declaration) did not refer to the Darfur conflict or to the ICC arrest warrant against Sudanese president Omar Al Bashir. In fact, Sudanese vice

president Ali Osman Mohamed Taha was the head of the delegation instead of the president. Even though many Latin American countries often refer to 'Colonialism' and 'European biases', Al Bashir's file was not officially incorporated into this framework, and they refuse to add another problem to their already overloaded agendas.

In terms of the Arab World (and African countries), the Libyan return to the international arena was one of the most important events. Great attention was paid to the visit of President Gaddafi (also the president of the African Union) to the United Nations General Assembly. If we bear in mind that during September there were important issues in the Arab peninsula (clashes in Yemen, attempts to assassinate Saudi prince Mohammad Ben Nayef and growing suspicions regarding the Iranian nuclear program) and in other Arab countries (contact between Syria and the United States, the chronic Lebanese crisis and the humanitarian situation in Palestine), it is quite understandable that Sudan did not appear on the agenda.

African affairs were only considered because of the visit of the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Avigdor Liberman, to Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana. The Arab media felt that this was a kind of Israeli 'interference' in Africa, but Darfur and Sudan did not enter into this situation.

The most important event was the visit of the US special envoy to Sudan, and the failure to sign an agreement regarding the implementation of the already signed agreement of 2005, showing that US policy towards Sudan still has many difficulties to overcome.



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■ Methodology

The main objective of this newsletter is to bridge 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: websites of regional organisations, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, official news agencies, Arab think tanks and Arabic newspapers.¹

Our intention was not to cover every article published regarding Sudan and the ongoing humanitarian crisis, but to consider news items, 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

- UNAMID acknowledged that the security situation is 'calm but unpredictable', so the international community must continue its efforts to improve the situation.
- The United States appears to maintain its interest in Sudan, but a comprehensive policy has yet to be implemented. Mr Gration's visit and the failure to sign an agreement regarding the implementation of the 2005 agreement highlight the many difficulties remaining in the region.

- Arab countries – including Libya – are once again focusing on 'Arab' issues (the situations in Yemen and Palestine, and Iranian–Gulf relations), removing Sudan from the list of priorities.
- The Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs visited five African countries: the Arab media's response was to attempt to categorise this visit as 'Israeli interference' in the continent.

September 2009 Arabic News Report

1. International efforts to bring peace to Darfur

New book published: The Question of Southern Sudan and Looming Threats on Sudan's Unity

This book by Dr Abdu Mukhtar Musa was published by the Center for Arab Unity Studies. Musa argues that the problem of southern Sudan has been aggravated in part by the inability of the Sudanese elite to harmonise the different sectors of Sudanese society. For both historical and other reasons there exists a crisis of confidence between the two political parties at the level of the elite.

Date: 30September2009

Source: Al Hayat (Arabic)

<http://www.daralhayat.com/portalararticlendam/61335>

Sudan to participate in a workshop with Russia regarding Darfur

The Sudanese government welcomed the Russian invitation to participate in a workshop that will be held on 6 and 7 October to develop ideas and proposals concerning peace in Darfur. Mikhail Margiloff, the Russian envoy to Sudan, recognised the importance of reaching a solution to this conflict.

Date: 27September 2009

Source: Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Arabic)

<http://www.mfa.gov.sd/arabic/newsViewer.php?id= 3287>

Announcement of the Arab–African Ministerial meeting on Darfur

The Ministerial Committee endorsed the joint efforts of the African Union, the United Nations mediator and the State of Qatar to launch talks in Doha by the end of October in order to reach a comprehensive peace agreement in Darfur. In a final communiqué published in New York, the committee praised the efforts made by Libya and Egypt in this area.

Date: 25 September 2009

Source: Arab League Website (Arabic)

http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/arabic/news_details_ar.jsp?art_id=1675#

Sudan's Takfirists: the other face of Al Qaeda

Ismail Adam, Asharq Al Awsat's correspondent in Khartoum, analysed the growing influence of the 'Takfir' activities in Sudan. The Sudanese Assembly of Ulemas (a religious organisation) described the opposition Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) as a 'cancer' on Sudanese society. The Assembly of Ulemas denied that its fatwa had any political motivations and said its opposition to the SCP is because of the party's atheism. Many analysts fear that such statements could lead to a polarisation of the religious situation in Sudan.

Date: 25 September 2009

Source: Asharq Al Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=45&issueno=11259&article=537333&search=&state=true>

Northern and southern Sudan fail to agree on the referendum on self-determination

Representatives from north and south Sudan failed to reach an agreement on a key referendum law at the break of the latest round of talks with US special envoy Scott Gration. An agreement would have broken the deadlock over framework details and paved the way for the referendum due in 2011 on the south's possible full independence.

Date: 10 September 2009

Source: Al Arabiya News Network (Arabic)

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/09/10/84572.html>

Egyptian Ambassador visits Darfur

The Egyptian Ambassador to Sudan, Mohamed Abdel Moniem Al Shazly, visited Darfur again. His visit focused on the Southern area, particularly Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. The Egyptian delegation analysed the programmes implemented with their support, and discussed projects planned for the future. Egypt is expected to participate in the peacekeeping efforts in Sudan, contributing 2000 soldiers

Date: 09 September 2009

Source: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Arabic)

http://www.mfa.gov.eg/MFA_Portal/ar-EG/MFA_News/Press_Releases/Press_Releases_Archive/992007darfur_visit.htm

Arab Foreign Ministers on Darfur

The final decision of the 130th Arab Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting referred to the Darfur conflict. The officials reiterated their support of the peace process underway between the Sudanese government and the insurgent forces.

Date: 08 September 2009

Source: Arab Program on Human Rights Web site (Arabic)

<http://www.aphra.org/pcd/aphra/news/sudan%20a%209-9-2008.doc>

Letter from the Arab Alliance on Darfur

More than 50 member organisations of the Arab Alliance on Darfur sent a letter to the Arab Foreign Ministers who will meet in Cairo. The main objective of this letter is to bring ideas to the debate on Darfur and generate initiatives..

Date: 08 September 2009

Source: Arab Program on Human Rights Web site (Arabic)

<http://www.aphra.org/pcd/aphra/news/sudan%20a%208-9-2008.doc>

Am I Dreaming Again?

Jihad Al Khazen, editor of Al Hayat, proposed in his column that a political and economic unity must be established between Egypt, Sudan and Libya, as these countries complement each other economically. An Egypt-led unity between them would end Sudan's isolation, and the accusations of ethnic cleansing currently being levelled at the country. It would also help Sudan to avoid facing the international war crimes tribunal, end forty years of Colonel Gaddafi's rule in Libya, and benefit the Egyptian people.

Date: 01 September 2009

Source: Al Hayat (Arabic)

<http://www.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/52343>

The screenshot shows a news website interface in Arabic. At the top, there are navigation links for 'الصفحة الأولى', 'أخبار', 'سياسة', 'رياضة', 'الأسواق العربية', and 'الصفحة الأخيرة'. Below this is a search bar and a date: 'الخميس 08 أكتوبر 2009, 19 حول 1430 هـ - السنة السادسة، العدد 231'. The main headline reads: 'المبعوث الأمريكي أعرب عن خيبة أمله شمال السودان وجنوبه يفشلان في الاتفاق حول استفتاء تقرير المصير'. Below the headline is a photograph of two men, one in a suit and one in traditional Arab attire. The text below the photo mentions 'الخريطون - كونا' and discusses the referendum process.

2. Humanitarian issues

Intelligence control over Sudanese newspapers lifted by the government

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) welcomed the decision announced by Sudanese president Omar Al Bashir to lift state control over newspapers. This censorship, carried out by intelligence services, removed articles considered 'sensitive'. Several Sudanese reporters said to ANHRI that the government is trying to improve its public image as the presidential elections approach.

Date: 28 September 2009

Source: The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information Website (Arabic)

<http://www.anhri.net/press/2009/pr0928.shtml>

Interview with Luis Moreno Ocampo: Al Bashir is still hunted and justice will follow

Moreno Ocampo, prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), affirmed regarding the Sudanese case that the 'African Union complains that I am not listening when they are requesting to delay the case but I don't feel any legal problems. I mean, no one is saying that my case is wrong or that the evidence is wrong'. He added that 'President Bashir is a fugitive President trying to show that he is free and he is not free by visiting some foreign countries. His fate is to face justice'.

Date: 12 September 2009

Source: Al Hayat (Arabic)

<http://international.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/55960>

Storm clouds over Sudan

According to the Sudanese government, more than half the country's population is now living below the poverty line. In addition, 'The country's oil production has fallen and with falling government revenues, health and education services have deteriorated'. According to the author, Sudanese problems will continue unless the peace talks lead to genuine reconciliation.

Date: 10–16 September 2009

Source: Al Ahram Weekly (English)

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/964/re6.htm>

Lubna Hussein freed

The Sudanese authorities released journalist Lubna Ahmed Hussein from the Omdurman Women's Prison on 8

September after the Sudanese Journalist Union (SJU) paid the fine issued by the Khartoum courts. In a statement to Asharq Al Awsat, Lubna Hussein revealed that she had not wanted the SJU to pay the fine and secure her release. She said, 'I thank Mohi Din Tetawi (the SJU chairman) for his visit but not for paying the fine'.

Date: 09 September 2009

Source: Asharq Al Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11243&article=535247&search=&state=true>



Lubna Hussein trial

Khartoum Criminal Court convicted Lubna Hussein of 'disrespectful dressing'. The court fined Lubna \$250, with a month's custodial sentence in case of non payment. Lubna decided to go to prison rather than pay the fine, as she insists that she is not guilty. The verdict did not mention flogging, as was expected under Sharia.

Date: 07 September 2009

Source: The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information Website (Arabic)

<http://www.anhri.net/press/2009/pr0907.shtml>

3. Israel in Africa: the Arab perception

Sudanese Presidential Advisor

Mustafa Osman Ismail says there are Zionist trends behind the aggravation of the Darfur crisis

The AU Committee on Cooperation, International Relations and Conflict Resolutions held a meeting in

Khartoum. Mustafa Osman Ismail accused Israel of being behind the continuation and aggravation of the Darfur crisis, saying that 'a group of Darfurians have recently admitted that they have provided the ICC with false evidence, which supports our assurances that there are Zionist trends behind the aggravation of the Darfur crisis and the undermining of the stability in the region'.

Date: 29 September 2009

Source: Arabic News

http://arabic.news.cn/arabic/2009-09/29/c_1356327.htm

Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister visits Africa

Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman visited key Nile basin nations and energy-rich West African countries at just the wrong moment for Arabs. This article noted that 'Lieberman's tour of five key African nations spells disaster for Arab interests on the continent. Israel collaborates closely with the US in Africa and cannot function separately from Washington'.

Date: 10–16 September 2009

Source: Al Ahram Weekly (English)

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/964/fr2.htm>

■ Chronology September 2009

29 September

- A UNAMID peacekeeper died after his convoy was attacked.

28 September

- AU Committee on Cooperation, International Relations and Conflict Resolutions held a meeting in Khartoum.

26 September

- Meeting of the major opposition Sudanese parties (Juba conference).

24 September

- Clashes between the Sudanese Government and rebel movements in Korma, North Darfur.

23 September

- United Nations Secretary-General condemned the attack in southern Sudan in which more than 100 people were reportedly killed.

10 September

- Scott Gration, the US special envoy to Sudan, visited the country.

04 September

- Mohamed Yonis of Somalia was appointed Deputy Joint Special Representative for Operations and Management in UNAMID.

01 September

- Lieutenant General Patrick Nyamvumba (Rwanda) takes over as the new UNAMID commander.

■ Annex

United Nations General Assembly, 64th session. Sudanese representative, HE Ghazi Salahuddin Atabani, Adviser to the President.

'[...] on the pretext of mendacious justice allegations using the International Criminal Court (ICC) in a dubious move and flagrant selectivity targeting the leadership of the country and the symbol of its sovereignty in a loosing attempt to hamper the process of peace and stability in the Sudan and to prolong the suffering of its people. That move was condemned by all peace loving forces and rejected by regional and international organizations with a decisive and deterrent response coterminous with the stand of our people that has been used to peaceful coexistence, reconciliation and tolerance'.

Date: 28 September 2009

Source: United Nations Website

http://www.un.org/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/SD_en.pdf

'Urgent Priorities: Sudan Issues at the United Nations' by Scott Gration, United States Special Envoy to Sudan

Date: 23 September 2009

Source: Department of State Blog

http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/entries/sudan_united_nations/

Arab Human Right Development Report 2009 'Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries'

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Arab States

<http://www.arab-hdr.org/>

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

Qatar - 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.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

Asharq 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/