**Link: http://www.sudanupdate.org/WHOSWHO/NIF.HTM**

**[Who's Who](http://www.sudanupdate.org/WHOSWHO/who.htm): Significant People and Organisations**[**Beja Congress**](http://www.sudanupdate.org/WHOSWHO/bc.htm) **|** [**National Democratic Alliance**](http://www.sudanupdate.org/WHOSWHO/nda.htm) **| National Islamic Front**[**Sudan Alliance Forces**](http://www.sudanupdate.org/WHOSWHO/saf.htm) **|** [**Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement**](http://www.sudanupdate.org/WHOSWHO/SPLAM.htm)

**National Islamic Front**

The National Islamic Front began life as the Islamic Charter Front and was known as the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1970s, taking its inspiration as a modern, urban-based Islamic party from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. It has campaigned for the application of sharia law and regularly uses Islamic sloganeering, but represents only a small fraction of the spectrum of Islamic political thought. In the mid-1960s it engineered the expulsion of the Communist Party from Sudan's parliament, and during the Cold War it benefitted both from US anti-communism and indiscriminate Saudi finance for Islamic groups.

The NIF, which engineered the military coup to overthrow the elected government of Prime Minister **Sadiq al-Mahdi** in June 1989, originated as an Islamist student movement in the 1960s. While it still recalls Sudanese student politics in its elements of naivety, it also continues to demonstrate a high degree of ruthless political cunning and a readiness to use unprecedented levels of physical violence. Beneath its surface political activity over the years it has acquired arms and trained loyalist militias.

Sudan's President, General **Omar Hassan al-Bashir**, nominally led the 1989 coup, but is regarded more as a figurehead than as politically powerful in his own right.

**Hassan al-Turabi**  
Dr Hassan al-Turabi, who has been recognised as the eminence grise of the regime, has been the prime architect of the NIF as a modern Islamist party. In doing so he built a secretive cell-based structure, learning from the Communist Party's underground methods as well as those of the ultra-right, both of which he studied closely. The NIF infiltrated placemen by sponsoring recruits in otherwise poorly paid professions including the police, education and the civil service. In the 1986 general elections, however, the NIF won less than 10 per cent of the popular vote, and Dr Turabi failed to secure a seat in his Khartoum constituency.

**Ali Uthman Muhammad Taha**  
Replacing **Zubeir** as First Vice President in February 1998, former judge Ali Uthman Muhammad Taha, 51, ranks second only to Hassan al-Turabi in the National Islamic Front hierarchy. He has been an NIF member since his days in Khartoum al-Gadeema secondary school, which he attended at the same time as Omar al-Bashir. A hardline leader of the opposition during the 1986-89 democratic period, he refused to join in the shortlived coalitions between the NIF and then-PM Sadiq al-Mahdi's Umma party. It is widely asserted that Taha was a planner of the 1989 coup against Sadiq, and that he visited army bases in the south shortly beforehand to meet NIF officers who then took part in it.

Taha's principal role as a social affairs minister in the Bashir regime has been as designer of the massive Islamization programme in the non-Muslim south and Nuba Mountains, with overall control over a web of local government and parastatal activities.

**AbdelRahim Hamdi**  
Former Minister of Finance in the current Sudan government. A member of the Muslim Brothers / National Islamic Front since his student days, Hamdi has nonetheless been accused in an NIF newspaper of insufficient commitment to the party's interests above his own. His high-flying career with al-Baraka Bank took him to live in London. When the Bashir regime made him Minister of Finance after its 1989 coup, he insisted on holding on to his old post as an al-Baraka representative, and commuted between London and the Khartoum Hilton. After Arakis secured the contracts for its work in Sudan, it was reported that Hamdi's daughter had married the son of **Lutfur Rahman Khan**, Arakis' CEO, but Hamdi refuses to discuss the matter.

Responsible for shaping the government's privatisation and structural adjustment program and fending off the threat of suspension by the World Bank / IMF, Hamdi continues to play a key economic advisory role despite leaving the post of finance minister.

(A number of cosmetic changes and emollient announcements have been made by Khartoum, but in order genuinely to regain the favour of the multilateral institutions, the Bashir-Turabi regime would have to alter its entire raison d'etre, which it has no intention of doing. It claims to have begun repaying its arrears to the IMF, but this is difficult to accept at face value because the arrears have reached such an intolerable - and arguably unpayable - level.)

Hamdi's attempt to introduce policies which were at the same time "Islamist" and friendly to the IMF was supported by the NIF, but he eventually became the focus of blame for the failure of the economy and opted for a less public profile. He became the chair of the Sudanese Stock Exchange and is still influential in politics.

**Sharif al-Tuhami**  
A geologist and member of the Umma Party, became Nimeiri's Minister for Energy and Mining after Nimeiri's 1976 National Reconciliation overtures to his hitherto banned opponents. Although Sadiq al-Mahdi's Umma Party soon fell out with Nimeiri, Tuhami remained until the bitter end. When Nimeiri was toppled in April 1985, Tuhami was one of a limited number of ex-officials to be put on trial, accused of making millions of dollars through an audacious fraud. Through his appointee at the government's General Petroleum Corporation, Tuhami had arranged for several oil tankers en route to Sudan to be diverted before arrival, and their contents sold abroad. The result was a worsening of Sudan's already critical shortage of fuel. Sentenced to several years in prison, Tuhami was eventually released ahead of schedule and became a senior advisor to the NIF's oil committee as well as an appointee to the National Assembly. He resigned in late 1998 after being cleared of allegations of influence-peddling on behalf of his son.

**Mohamed Hashim Awad**  
University of Khartoum economist and Sudan's former commerce minister under Nimeiri, drew up the blueprint in the 1970s for the country's role as "breadbasket". His original idea was to invest surplus Arab petrodollars in agriculture to forestall Western threats of a food sale embargo to Arab countries, to force down Arab producer oil prices and Arab oil embargoes against allies of Israel. The Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID), based in Khartoum, was to coordinate and finance food production projects. Its success has been negligible.