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**SLM Demands Self-determination Right for Darfur People**

Khartoum, Asharq Al-Awsat-A high-level delegation from the Sudan Liberation Movement [SLM], led by Abdul-Wahid Muhammad Nur, has left for the capital of south Sudan (Juba) on the first visit of its kind by the movement to south Sudan since the signing of the peace agreement between the north and south in 2005 which gave self-rule to the south.

Yahya Bulad, the SLM spokesman, told Asharq Al-Awsat in a telephone interview from London that the delegation represents the movement’s leaders and the visit has two aims: The first is to congratulate the People’s Movement [SPLM] for the passage of the referendum law for the self-determination of the south and the second is to benefit from the SPLM’s expertise in the “self-determination fields.” He denied in reply to a question that the visit has military aims, such as obtaining military support from the SPLM, and said “the visit is primarily a political one”, adding: “We are not asking for any military support. Crimes would not have been committed against our people had we been seeking it.”

Bulad reiterated the SLM’s new vision involves placing the right to self-determination “for the people of Darfur at the top of its agenda’s moves” and said this new vision indicates that there would be no negotiations “if the Darfur people’s right to self-determination is not included in the agendas of the upcoming negotiations.”

Asked for the reasons for the change in the movement’s stand and the inclusion of self-determination in its agenda, Bulad said: The National Congress Party’s [NCP] experience with the SPLM through the Nevasha agreement partnership proved to us that the NCP makes unity “unattractive.” He added that “the experience underlined for us the need to include self-determination in the negotiations agenda. One of the reasons for this demand is the continuing concentrated injustice meted out to the people of Darfur since Sudan’s independence till now.” He appealed to the other Darfur movements and civil society organizations in the province to work together with his party so as to enable “the people of Darfur obtain the right to self-determination.”

On the possibility that promotion of this right might lead to the province’s separation from Sudan, the SLM spokesman said this demand “does not mean secession. But we want to achieve real peace in Darfur through it.” He added: “Real unity comes through self-determination. Secession would definitely happen if this right was not exercised.” He pointed out that “his movement is raising this demand because it tried all the solutions for the problem but the government has proved that it does not solve the Darfur problem and does not want to give its people their rights.” He added that the SPLM got the first vice president post while Darfur was given in the so-called Abuja agreement “a nominal” post that did not meet the demands of the people of Darfur. He was referring to the post of senior presidential aide which is at present held by Mani Arkoy Manawi, leader of the Sudan Liberation Movement which signed the peace agreement with the government in the Nigerian capital (Abuja) in 2006. He added that the self-determination demand falls within the framework of the movement’s natural development and said: “We used to say that unity was attractive and Sudan was united and that the NCP would work for the attractive unity. But it has been proved that it does not want a unity based on rights and partnerships and we therefore concluded that the self-determination demand is our new proposal. The NCP is now talking about the attractive secession and this means they are not working for Sudan’s unity.