

The Core of the Problem Lies in Khartoum

YOUR opinion piece entitled 'Peace in the south and war in the west', by G. Dyer was welcome, as was 'Africa Action petition on Sudan genocide', which also appeared on page 6 of the Friday June 18 2004 issue of The Namibian.

The war in South Sudan is the longest armed struggle in Africa. To put it in context; war in the Afro-Arab borderlands has been going on since time immemorial. The gradual push southwards of the Africans from the Mediterranean coast is a historical fact. Cheikh Anta Diop the Senegalese nuclear physicist and Egyptologist established in western scholarship that Egypt was originally populated by black Africans. The Arabs came to Sudan through the Nile valley after conquering Egypt and through the desert from Libya and Maghreb.

Dyer's article whets the appetite. He is correct in saying that the core of the problem lies in Khartoum, but like much of the writing on Sudan in particular and the borderlands in general, it fails to address the core issues. By way of clarification, although Sudan is predominantly Muslim no official demographic statistics are available on the religious composition of the country. But that is not the issue. The reality of the Sudan is that Black Africans constitute the majority while those who claim Arab descent are in the minority.

Like the defunct system in South Africa, the minority Arab ruling class dominates the social, cultural, economic and political life of the Sudan to the complete marginalisation, oppression and exploitation of the Black Africans. The demand by Blacks for equality and power sharing precipitated war particularly in Southern Sudan, which until 1946 was administered separately from the rest of the Sudan by the Anglo-Egyptian condominium.

The Arab ruling class has defined Sudan along two parameters of Islam and Arab culture. It considers the Sudanese citizenship a transition to integration into Arab nationhood, while the majority Black Africans, particularly in the South, identify with rest of Black Africa and draw inspiration from there. These two legitimate claims has been source of conflict and war in the Sudan since independence in 1956.

In Dar Fur what is happening is a full-scale

war against the sedentary agrarian Black African communities: Fur, Zaghawa, Masaalit, and others with the objective of dispossessing them of their land. This conflict has existed for about five decades but has of late been exacerbated by environmental factors of desertification. It is worth mentioning that some of the Arab tribesmen, now known as Janjaweed, hail from Libya and northern Chad. They received arms from different regimes in Khartoum as well as from Libya. The National Islamic Front government now ruling Sudan has unleashed scorched earth policy, and ethnic cleansing, techniques under the guise of religious war, Jihad, in dealing with those, mainly Africans, it perceives to be enemies of Islam and the Arab cultural orientation of the country. Paradoxically, the jihad had been declared against the Muslims before in the Nuba Mountains and now in Dar Fur. Imams who hailed from the Fur and Zaghawa nationalities were murdered and their mosques burnt. Linked to the scorched earth policy and ethnic cleansing is the practice of enslavement of the Africans, whom they sell in markets in Khartoum and in Arabian Gulf states. Slavery of Africans in Arabia long predates the western encounter.

Dyer refers to Arabised Muslims and Christian Africans, thus conflating the Sudan situation with the problems of western Christianity versus Islam. Black Muslims have been massacred by the Muslim government in Khartoum. The issue therefore transcends religion. It has become racial. The Sudan Liberation Movement [SLM] and Justice and Equality Movement [JEM] in Dar Fur are Muslim based movements. The picture emerging is that the confusion in the minds of many Black Africans in Dar Fur that being a Muslim was equal to being an Arab, is slowly being cleared.

The international media has been silent on the marginalisation of Africans in the lands of their birth in the broad band of territory stretching from Mauritania on the west coast of Africa, through Mali, Niger and Chad to the Sudan on the Red Sea. The problems found today in Sudan exist on a smaller scale in each of these countries. Slavery exists in these countries today and is particularly well documented in Mauritania.

The media is asking if Dar Fur is a genocide situation or a problem of ethnic cleansing. By virtue of international law if the situation is one of genocide an international force would have to be deployed in Dar Fur to separate the parties. The deployment of an international force would immediately raise questions in Sudan, where matters on the ground are understood by everybody. Would this force keep the peace between the Arabised Muslims (many of whom are black) and the Africans? This would require the force to remain permanently in place, if past history is to serve

as a guide.

The situation in Sudan, in all its facets (economic, cultural, political, security, etc.) compares neatly to Namibia during the South African occupation and apartheid South Africa, which might explain the current active cooperation between South Africa and South Sudan, especially in the area of education. In these matters Khartoum does not act alone, but fronts for larger Middle-Eastern cultural and economic interests, which wish to maintain the pressure and the push southwards to the Equator. The control of the headwaters of the

Nile has been a matter of concern to Egypt. It will be recalled that Egypt stands opposed to the people of South Sudan exercising their inalienable right to self-determination. It has also resisted Ethiopia exploiting the Blue Nile waters to address its food security through irrigation.

Dyer, like others, compares the Dar Fur situation with the Rwanda genocide. In the matter of wanton killing there may be some similarity. However the continuous carnage, death and enslavement pushing southwards in Sudan and the borderlands in

general, long predates the Rwanda situation and serves no useful basis for comparison.

Eric Reeves of Smith College, Massachusetts, USA, in his contribution to the 2004 copy of the Cape Town journal Tinabantu (see www.casas.co.za) researches the findings of Amnesty International, Medicines Sans Frontières, The International Crisis Group, USAID, Human Rights Watch and others, as regards the Dar Fur situation. He concludes by asking 'why are we still prepared to accept genocide in Africa?'

Given forceful Arabisation and the steady

push southwards of Africans in the borderlands and their trajectory into the inhospitable desert areas, it would be foolhardy to think that the Naivasha Peace Talks between Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) will bring everlasting peace. The internal problems of Sudan and the borderlands are not problems for the Sudanese alone. They represent challenges for Africa in general and humanity at large.

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POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

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NOTICE

TO POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS

REGISTRATION DATES - SEMESTER 2, 2004

FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME STUDENTS

DAY	DATE	TIME	PROGRAMME
Monday	12 July 2004	08:00 - 16:30	All Engineering Programmes All Information Technology Programmes
Tuesday	13 July 2004	08:00 - 16:30	Agriculture Business Administration Land Management Travel & Tourism
Wednesday	14 July 2004	08:00 - 16:30	Accounting & Finance Information Administration
Thursday	15 July 2004		Commerce Human Resources Management Hotel Management Nature Conservation
Friday	16 July 2004	08:00 - 16:30	Journalism & Communication Technology Marketing Public Management

DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENTS

Distance Education students must visit the Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning or one of the Polytechnic/UNAM Regional Centres during the 12 - 16 July 2004 for registration and to collect study materials. THERE WILL BE NO LATE REGISTRATION period

DEPOSIT ON TUITION FEES PAYABLE AT REGISTRATION (PER SEMESTER)

First Year Students	N\$ 1000
Second Year Students	N\$ 1500
Third Year Students	N\$ 2450
Fourth Year Students	N\$ 3150

If the total fee account is below the minimum amount specified above, then the whole fee account is payable at Registration.

DEPOSIT ON RESIDENCE FEES PAYABLE AT REGISTRATION (PER SEMESTER)

Residence Deposit	N\$ 2 000
Residence Breakage Deposit	N\$ 350
Total Residence Deposit payable	N\$ 2 350 (per semester)
Residence Fees (Namibian & SADC Citizens)	
Single Room	N\$ 3 500 (per semester)
Double Room	N\$ 3 100 (per semester)
Residence Fees (International)	
Single Room	N\$ 5 000 (per semester)
Double Room	N\$ 4 600 (per semester)
Meal Fees (including VAT)	N\$ 5 820 (per semester)

Students with outstanding accounts will NOT be allowed to register.

All students, including bursary holders, must pay the breakage deposit fee of N\$350.

Students may pay directly into the Polytechnic of Namibia's current account number 55500126319 at First National Bank, Aussparplatz Branch. Please ensure that your valid student number is indicated in the reference block. Retain and present the deposit slip upon registration or alternatively fax a copy at (061) 207-2273 for the attention of the Assistant Bursar.

CONTACT PERSONS

All bursary holders must submit at registration an original valid award letter specifying items and fees payable by the sponsor. For enquiries, contact the Student Financial Aid Officer at (061) 207 2069.

All account enquiries should be made before the registration date to the following officers in the Office of the Bursar:

Ms. Angeline Fisch Tel.: (061) 207 2189 - for surnames starting from A - M
Ms. Melissa Izaks Tel.: (061) 207 2187 - for surnames starting from N - Z

