

These crises made the people's choice the only choice after failures and corruption struck at the roots of politics, society, and the economy. General living conditions deteriorated, while the homeland slid backward and its international reputation suffered. [passage omitted]

The institutions of the legislative and executive authorities established by the Constitution had become empty premises because the officials were often absent. They became meaningless because they were emasculated, and particular departments took away their initiative.

As to lassitude in the general national effort, it can be attributed to the absence of a target, a weakness of faith, a lack of responsibility, poor efforts, and frustration. All this was manifested in the increasing contradictions in our energies and the continuing decrease in our revenues until the political situation became characterized by laxity in commitment and withdrawal in every field.

Defense and national security are the first duty of every government, yet our national defense began to shrink due to the shrinkage of our political changes [as heard] until a grave situation was reached in the recent era. Security was disrupted in the whole national arena. The war in the South grew beyond all its former lines to such an extent that the threat to national security developed into a threat to national existence in its entirety. Fear for [words indistinct] tranquillity of society and the stability of the government developed into panic over the fragmentation of Sudan's national integrity.

Despite all this, the (?politicians), in the face of that national threat, agreed to submit weakly or to employ themselves in political intrigues and rivalries. They went ahead and bargained over everything for party gains. They conceded that which they did not own of the values of this nation to the broken remnants of the rebellion. They did not care about selling the Islamic character and the patriotism [of Sudan] to gain the favor of a rebellion which had come to strike against Islam and patriotism.

Some betrayed their religion and patriotism yesterday, and today they are betraying the same things by [word indistinct] alliances and lowly scheming with every kind of lurking enemy.

It became imperative for the revolution to introduce earnestness in work, to defend national unity, and to fend off threats against its security by a balanced political tolerance and defensive strength. With its tolerance, the revolution succeeded in silencing the tongues of the rebellion and its propaganda. With its strength it had the power to cut the rebellion's external lines of supply, so much so that it became divided against itself and split apart.

Brothers and sisters, I wish to assure you that the efforts to secure the territory of the homeland will continue to proceed, God willing. The peace efforts will continue

## **Al-Bashir Addresses National Assembly Session**

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[“Excerpts” of speech by Lieutenant General ‘Umar al-Bashir, chairman of the Revolution Command Council, RCC, and the Council of Ministers, at the opening of the Transitional National Assembly, TNA, in Omdurman on 24 February—recorded]

[Excerpts] In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. Our Lord, we praise you for the teachings of guidance that you have given us. We pray for and salute your final prophet, the imam of the clear sunnah, and his family and companions, the guided leaders and all those who follow them until the last day.

Brother speaker of the TNA, brother and sister members of the Assembly: I salute you all. May God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you all. In the name of God and with His blessings we witness with you the start of the TNA's proceedings, happy with God's bounty by means of which good works are achieved. Our joy is made greater by the fact that attending this great occasion are brothers who are dear and noble from friendly countries, from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and from the state of Palestine. I salute brother President [as heard] Yasir ‘Arafat, who was prevented by weather conditions from landing at Khartoum airport; he is now at Port Sudan. The Republic of Iraq, the Republic of Yemen, the Republic of Turkey, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Ethiopia, fraternal Eritrea, the Libyan Jam'ahiriyyah, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the UK [United Kingdom], the large regional press contingent, the FRG, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I welcome them all very warmly from the bottom of my heart. I thank them very much for responding to our invitations and honoring us with their presence. [passage omitted]

Brothers and sisters, political crises have been inseparable from the history of our country since independence. The changing political systems with their various parties and military and transitional forms grew worse.

today and tomorrow, God willing. By these efforts peace will be restored to all parts of our dear homeland. [passage omitted]

There were some who attacked us from far and near. They wanted to boycott us and force us to become political and economic subordinates of others. But we endured patiently and relied on ourselves. We dispensed with humiliating relief supplies because we wanted to rise above being obligated to others and subject to their annoyance. [applause] Some sympathizers feared for us, but the masses understood, endured, worked, and they are now about to see the fruits of prosperity coming near. There is an increase in food, energy, and ample good things, God willing. [passage omitted]

The revolution has turned its attention to social institutions, revived religious marriages, and promoted [words indistinct] and morality. It has rehabilitated societies by forming organizations. All this is to educate, mobilize, and reform society. The revolution is persevering with its social programs. The revolution was an inevitable salvation. It restored health to Sudan, the despised sick man of Africa. It strengthened Sudan's foreign relations in a manner which expressed its people's affiliations and interests.

Our independent efforts were a source of fear to some people judging by the reaction of such quarters, because they wanted Sudan to remain humble and subordinate to others, to lack any identity of its own. The fact that these reactions emerged, however, indicated that Sudan, God be praised, was great to the extent of the greatness of the pain of others. They have to adjust to the realities.

Sudan's steadfast stand has won it brothers and friends. We have gained more friends and brothers among our neighbors and in other parts of Asia and Africa. Doubts about the strength of the revolution and its survival have begun to vanish. The false estimation of its internal policies has been shown to be false. Propaganda and evil allegations against Sudan have rebounded against the perpetrators. Moreover, Sudan enjoys in its official friendships the most extensive popularity enjoyed by any of the despised peoples. This age is the age of the people. Tomorrow belongs to them.

If there are people in this world wishing us harm, we are under the protection of God. We shall be victorious with the people's confidence and strength and with Sudan's growing weight, which will impose awe and respect. We have not caused anyone harm and we shall not do so. We have not lent a hand to terrorism or aggression against anyone and we shall not do so. However, we shall not ever bargain over our identity or interests. [passage omitted]

Sudan, as you know, is a country of diversity. However, the bond which links its people is religion, which unites affiliations, culture, and conduct. Arabic is the predominant language of conversation. Then there is the social intermixing, contacts, and mutual support for one another and the (?national) structure for Sudanese unity.

As Islam is predominant, tolerance will also be predominant, and the other religions will maintain their positions and respect. As Arabic spread, the older Sudanese vernacular languages were preserved and their [word indistinct] spread—Arabism mixed with Africanism and the tribes, groups, and cultures became elements of enrichment and links for awareness of one another. Tolerance, rivalries in piety, and all-embracing faiths exist under the banner of monotheism and within the framework of Sudanese unity.

It is on the basis of the aforementioned things that we permit ourselves to talk about a Sudanese nation linked to a greater nation in Africa and the Islamic-Arab world. We may also emphasize a political theory derived from religious principles and human experience but formulated in such a way as to fit a particular country. [passage omitted]

Brothers and sisters, the TNA, which should be understood within a framework of developments arising from the experience of consultations and conferences since the beginning of the revolution, should also be understood within its original political context. We should not treat it as a model, for otherwise it will lapse into what was practiced in the past. We must all be aware that we are embarking on an unfamiliar transformation. This is unprecedented because the Sudanese people for the first time have gathered in conferences for extensive consultations to ponder their political experiences and to evaluate these for purposes of comparison in light of the experiences of others. [passage omitted] We should avoid imported systems from the West such as liberal capitalism with its classes and conflicting parties, or from the dreary East and the universal one-party or military coercion. [applause]

We turn to an original system chosen by [the Sudanese] themselves to fit their circumstances and society.

We must remember when returning to parliamentary forms that we are entering a system that we ourselves have chosen consciously, freely, and independently. We have not inherited it from colonialism or imported it from others. It is a system enhanced by all of our experiences, which will keep the good things and discard the bad ones. It is a system based on the creed of a believing people opposed to conspiracies and bargains cooked up by a group of military, sectarian, or party leaders. Our entry into this political system is the result of reliance on believing, free, and wise people. [passage omitted]

As a country in which a majority of the population are Muslims, Sudan has chosen Islam as a source of its political system and a guide for its public life. The TNA is founded on this basis. However, we do not take Islam as a sham emblem to misguide the ordinary people. There will be no sectarianism to tear apart the people's ranks, and there will be no bigotry to cause strife between Muslims and followers of other religions. Freedom of belief is not only guaranteed according to the laws and norms of the country but is also in accordance with the higher values of man's freedom as enshrined in Islamic law.

There is no coercion in religion; guidance has been differentiated from misguidance, and that is not all. Citizenship must be kept in mind. Positive cooperation must be maintained, and the need for overall justice for all citizens no matter what their religion must be observed. [passage omitted.]

The political system is based on the consultation embodied in this Transitional National Assembly because the revolutionary system is a popular system, and consultation is with the people. Consultation comes from the spirit of the people in particular, and it is one of the Islamic principles and a distinctive mark of the society of believers. [passage omitted]

This council shall be distinguished by its extensive duties. These duties include what is already familiar, such as approving of federal bills and temporary orders with a freedom of expression that was not available hitherto in previous parliaments. It will approve the draft general budget with the right to amend it in a manner never before enjoyed by a legislative assembly in Sudan.

The TNA will also have the power to approve draft laws ratifying international treaties and to provide advice and consultation to the RCC or the head of state. It will also have the power to monitor the performance of the federal executive and to assist the minister [words indistinct].

The duties of the Assembly go beyond this, however, because it will also have the duty of approving national plans and programs and holding consultations on any matters of public interest. It will have the power to make any political decision or issue guidance on matters of public interest. It will participate in the general mobilization of government and popular work to achieve the moral and practical objectives of the revolution. This assembly will be distinguished by greater seriousness in its work so that laxity, absenteeism, bigotry, or ill-prepared debates do not recur. There will be a need for drawing up agendas and preparing initiatives and positions ahead of time.

You will find in the TNA all that is needed for a free and independent assembly: openness in its work and debates. Meetings will also be public. What it does will be published under the freedom of speech. The members will express themselves freely and responsibly. No member can be taken to court and no legal proceedings can be brought against him because of the ideas or opinions he has expressed. Members will also enjoy the scheduled privileges and immunities.

However, you will find this assembly distinguished by its members' commitment to the oaths that they took of being free of any partisan leanings or bigotry, by virtue of

the original organization of the leadership of debates—that is if we overlook polarization between government and opposition and between leader and head. [sentence as heard]

There will be three leaders of the debates. Studies will have to be prepared for them and opportunities provided for them to enrich the debates with freedom and flexibility with due regard for diversity in the field of options and opinions.

The Assembly, in the spirit of debate, however, will avoid the phenomenon of polarization between the majority and minority and should seek a consensus that will unify the decision of the nation however split opinions have been during the debates.

This is a course started by the revolution based on the traditions of its popular conferences, which were open for every view and opinion from every direction but which finally reached a consensus acceptable to everybody. [passage omitted]

Brothers and sisters, perhaps the skeptics might criticize this assembly as being an appointed and not an elected assembly. By this they mean to try to discredit its legitimacy, capability, and freedom. As for legitimacy, just look at the members' backgrounds, and note their evaluations. They are all citizens who have been subject to all forms of academic, professional, social, and political elections. [passage omitted]

Some of you are here because you have reached the highest levels in your fields. Some of you are representatives of popular sectors and organizations and have been leaders at the helm by virtue of being elected. Some have been symbols in their own groups and organizations for a long time. Some of you are leaders in religion and science, having high status among the public and having attained a leadership position. Some of you are representing your geographical regions through traditional and popular selection known to all. Some of you have confirmed your preeminence by natural selection through experience and politics. Indeed, very many of you have been deputies in actual legal elections in the past. As to capability, we leave that to God.

However, we do not believe that there has ever been a legislative assembly in the history of Sudan which has included a group like this blessed gathering in which so many experts have been mobilized.

Some of you have been formed by the experiences of politics and age. Some of you come from the best levels of society. You represent intellectuals and all sectors of the public. There are people here from all professions working to build Sudan with expertise and wisdom. The politician, the administrator, both local and national, are here. The economist, the agriculturist, the engineer, the

doctor, the veterinarian, the teacher, the academician, the journalist, the diplomat, the lawyer, the merchant, the farmer, the industrialist, the worker, the employee, the artist, the sportsman, and the man of letters are here. There is the military sector and the policeman and the executive arm of the federal government, as well as that of the states. There is also the Sudanese political sector. There is also a large group of women representing half of society which used to be neglected before the revolution.

As to freedom, brothers and sisters, you have been appointed voluntarily after extensive consultations in which many people of different opinions took part; these people are also unbiased and know their people very well in the capital and the states. Now that you have been appointed, however, we leave you to your free and sincere consciences. [passage omitted]