

Sudan

SPLA's John Garang Makes New Year Speech

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[Speech by John Garang, commander in chief of the SPLA and chairman of the SPLM-SPLA Political-Military High Command, on the occasion of the New Year and Sudan's 33d independence anniversary; date and place not given—recorded]

[Excerpts] Fellow countrymen, on behalf of the SPLM-SPLA Political-Military High command and on my own behalf, I take this opportunity to greet very warmly all the Sudanese people everywhere, inside and outside the Sudan on the two occasions of tomorrow. Tomorrow—1st of January 1989—we will mark the beginning of a new year; it will also mark the 33d anniversary of Sudan's formal independence.

The New Year often affords an occasion for an individual and for society to reflect on the ups and downs of the year just ended and to plan and hope for the best for the

year just beginning. Similarly, an independence anniversary provides society with an occasion to have a long and deep assessment of its independence period so that past mistakes are avoided and lessons learnt from them, while successes are extended and deepened. [passage omitted]

On the economic front, you all know that little good—if any—happened in 1988. The year was worse than the year that preceded it. Prices skyrocketed with the sack of dhurrah [sorghum] selling for over 2,000 Sudanese pounds in some places. Commodities disappeared from the markets even the basic necessities such as life-saving drugs could not be found. The war continued and intensified and hundreds of thousands of our people in the south and southern Kurdufan were displaced and suffered death, hunger, unimaginable hardship, humiliation and erosion to their human dignity.

In Darfur, Sadiq al-Mahdi opened a new war front, as if that in the south was not sufficient drain on the country. Sadiq invited foreign troops into Darfur in the form of the so-called Islamic Legion. For a long time, the Sudanese people were told obnoxious lie that was happening in Darfur was local armed robbery without being told who was robbing who. True there was armed robbery.

Robbery was and continues to be meted out on the indigenous people of Darfur by foreign troops invited in by Sadiq al-Mahdi to create in Darfur the murahilin [militia] situation he sponsors now in Bahr al-Ghazal. The SPLA long ago alerted the Sudanese people of this danger. I take this opportunity to once more assure the people of Darfur that the SPLA is aware of their plight, that their pleas have reached the SPLA leadership and that the SPLA stands firmly in solidarity with their struggle as it does for all oppressed masses of the Sudan.

Compatriots, on the question of relief, the SPLA did everything to appeal to international organizations to alleviate the immense suffering our people are facing. One of the positive developments of 1988 was that both the SPLA and the regime in Khartoum reached agreement with the ICRC to provide relief assistance to those in need on both sides of the conflict. I take the opportunity to assure our people and the international community that the SPLA will continue to respect this agreement on relief and to create more conditions for the extension of relief to cover rehabilitation so that the people can cultivate next rainy season to become self-sufficient.

On the political front, there were many attempts at peaceful resolution to the conflict. The movement met with the Sudan African parties and both called for peace. The movement united with Anyanya II [roman numeral two] and called for peace. The movement met with the Sudanese bishops and both called for peace. And last month, on 16 November 1988, the movement concluded a peace initiative accord with the Democratic Unionist

Party, the DUP. This was a historic agreement that, like Koka dam, was applauded by all peace-loving forces all over the country and by the international community that wishes the Sudan well.

In fact today, the last day of this year, should have marked the beginning of the national constitutional conference and we should have started the new year tomorrow with high hopes for peace and prosperity. But you all know what happened. Sadiq and Turabi would have none of this. Sadiq and Turabi were determined to see to it that the Sudanese people ended 1988 in frustration and to begin 1989 in despair. The Sadiq-Turabi government formally rejected peace as the year ended and had only war to offer.

I take this opportunity once more to congratulate the DUP for their courage to reach the peace initiative with the SPLA to begin with. I further congratulate the DUP for ending the year by doing the honorable, expected, and patriotic act: to resign from the Turabi-Sadiq government. This action by the DUP will go a long way towards bringing about peace to our country.

The forces of war and disaster are now known and isolated, specifically they are Sadiq and Turabi. I also take the opportunity to call on others still on to get off the sinking ship of Sadiq and Turabi. I specially call on my friend, General 'Abd al-Majid [Hamid Khalil, defense minister] to follow the DUP lead. Since Gen 'Abd al-Majid openly came out in support of the peace initiative, he should resign now in honor rather than wait to be fired in disgrace and replaced by [Major-General Mahdi Babu Nimr, the chief of staff and son of the Baqqarah chief the] son of Babu Nimr.

I also take the opportunity to express our firm stand and complete solidarity with and to congratulate the trade union federation, the alliance, the African parties and all the forces of the uprising for ending the year appropriately by forcing Sadiq and Turabi to swallow their own bitter pill to cancel the 500-percent price increase. If nothing went well for the Sudanese people in 1989, Sadiq's about-face to cancel the price increases is a major victory for the people and has revealed that the new monster, like Numayri, is after all easily perishable.

Fellow countrymen, where on earth are prices increased by decree overnight by 500 percent? This is an act that amounts to a stab in the heart—murder. But then, this is not a surprise. When he came to power as prime minister, Sadiq al-Mahdi said he was going to work without a salary and he probably still works without a salary.

Sadiq must be among the very few of the world who are spared the agony of having not to plan and manage a family budget that is limited by an income constraint. Since he does not have a salary, Sadiq does not know what it means in the kitchen to increase prices by 500 percent. His breakfast, his lunch, his dinner and all that he desires are always available irrespective of the level of prices.

Sadiq must have been shocked and surprised and probably still is as to why the people demonstrated at the 500 percent price increase. Sadiq cancelled the price increase not out of compassion for the suffering of the people, but out of fear of the wrath of the people and the prospect of losing of power. But then the people have smelt Sadiq's weakness and they will not stop.

Compatriots, I very much wish to wish you 1989 as a year of peace, but Sadiq and Turabi are determined to do everything in their power to see to it that peace does not break out. Yet I still wish the Sudan and our people 1989 to be a year of peace. Although the prospects appear so bleak, given the warmongering and intransigence of Sadiq and Turabi, there is yet hope in despair.

Human experience shows that in oppression and misery there is strong solidarity. And in that solidarity there is hope and happiness. That is why slaves are seen to be dancing, laughing and singing despite the cruel yoke of oppression and slavery. At the end of the day the human spirit prevails and the struggle is victory. It is in this context of solidarity in suffering and in struggle that I wish you a happy new year.

Fellow countrymen, tomorrow is also Sudan's independence anniversary, the 33d one. In 33 years of formal independence, our country has been at war within itself for 23 years, punctuated by 10 years of blatant corruption, nepotism, legalized robbery of public funds, and destruction of institutions. I ask you to reflect why our country has been at war within itself for 23 of 33 years of independence. I submit to you that the reason is not so hard to find.

It is common sense that in a multi-nationality country in which one of the nationalities poses and imposes itself as the only nationality with history and culture and goes to the absurd unnatural extent to force the other nationalities to convert, that country is pregnant with discontent, instability, and crisis that eventually erupt in open warfare. This has been our case in the Sudan. The same is true for a multi-religious country in which one of the religions legislates itself as the official state religion. This has also been our case in the Sudan. This is simple common sense, but then common sense is not that common, and people like Sadiq, Turabi and the like, fail to see this common sense truth.

Fellow countrymen, I end this New Year and independence anniversary message by taking advantage of the occasion to comment briefly on the recent developments in our country.

Firstly: There was no reason for Sadiq and Turabi to refuse peace. This is an obvious indication of lack of leadership and statesmanship.

Secondly: There was no reason for Sadiq and Turabi to increase prices by the unbelievable figure 500 percent. This simply is an indication of lack of compassion. By

about face to cancel the price increases—although welcomed of course—shows that decisions are taken in Khartoum at random. There is simply no government in Khartoum and this complicates the peace progress.

Thirdly: I want once more to affirm and reassure the Sudanese people that the SPLM-SPLA stands with the people and will always stand with the people and will never at any time or for any reason betray the people's cause. The new Sudan is attainable and together with the people we will realize it.

Fourthly: I take the opportunity to call on the (? other) army—the Sudanese Army—to abandon Sadiq and Turabi. Their government cannot be salvaged.

As military men you should know that you never reinforce failure, and Sadiq and Turabi are failures. They have shown it time and time again by words and deeds. In this connection, I repeat my call of 22nd March 1985 to the Sudanese Army, especially those fighting in the south, to open direct dialogue with the SPLA in the field, so as to initiate the process of change and peace from the trenches, since this has been made difficult by Sadiq and Turabi in Khartoum.

Each officer and soldier in the trenches of Torit, Nasir, Juba, Wau, Malakal, and so on should ask himself why he fights the SPLA when the SPLA stands for the unity and territorial integrity of the Sudan, when the SPLA stands for peace justice and prosperity for the Sudan. For us in the SPLA, we fight because there is no justice in Khartoum. There has never been justice for all in Khartoum since independence, and those who have ruled the Sudan from Khartoum have looted and ruined the country and brought the country to the brink of bankruptcy and collapse. We want to change all this for a better, proud and prosperous Sudan. What about you, the Sudanese officer and soldier? Why do you fight?

Fifthly, the SPLM-SPLA adds its voice and weight to the call by the Sudanese people on Sadiq al-Mahdi and his brother-in-law Turabi to resign and quit public life. Enough is enough. Sadiq and Turabi are a liability to the Sudan. I ask the Sudanese people to reflect, as they observe the New Year and Independence Day tomorrow, to reflect on why Sadiq and Turabi should continue in power. What good will these two do for the Sudan in 1989 after rejecting peace?

Finally, if Sadiq and Turabi's government does not resign, I repeat my call of 12 July 1988 on the Sudanese forces of the uprising to prepare for a third intifadah and for all of us this time to insure that the peoples victory does not get stolen again. On this I wish to assure you that the SPLM-SPLA will play its maximum expected role in the intifadah.

Again, I wish all the best that is possible in the New Year that begins tomorrow. Despite the intransigence and warmongering in Khartoum, I assure you that SPLM-SPLA will never abandon the search for peace and justice. Thank you very much.