

Sudan Interior Minister Says Israel "Backing" Darfur Rebels
Interview With Sudan Interior Minister by Sawsan Abu-Husayn on 7 June 2005;
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Backs Darfur Rebellion; Washington Encourages Talks"

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Sudanese Interior Minister Abd-al-Rahim Husayn has said that Israel has been backing the rebel movements in Darfur but Washington has been urging them to participate in the upcoming Abuja talks (between the government and the rebels). He also said the security situation is continuously improving, and that his ministry has deployed 14,000 police officers throughout the Darfur states. He also praised Arab support for the Darfur cause.

The interior minister was speaking to yesterday.

(Abu-Husayn) Is the state having a hand in the current reconciliations between the tribes?

(Husayn) The state is trying to resolve the problems that were the main reason of the current conflict between the tribes by encouraging reconciliation between the tribes at the Public Prosecution (offices) and at the courts. Reconciliation is usually reached when bereavement is established and blood money is paid.

(Abu-Husayn) Who pays the blood money?

(Husayn) The tribe that causes bereavement. If the state were to pay blood money the strife would continue forever because people would continue their disputes knowing that the state would pay.

(Abu-Husayn) People are not sure that the security situation is stable. We hear from time to time about fighting between the rebels and citizens. What is really happening?

(Husayn) What has been happening is more than individual acts. The security situation is generally stable and improving. The government troops are continuously on the move to control the tribal militias. A number of recent developments are proof of this, i.e. the containment of the rebels and their reaction. We have 14,000 police officers in the three Darfur states. The African forces are helping the Sudanese armed forces and police; their presence gives a kind of assurance to the people that the

Sudanese police are acting correctly. However, the African forces are not replacing the Sudanese police and doing their job, i.e. all acts against people are referred to the Sudanese police for investigation.

(Abu-Husayn) Are the rebels targeting the African forces, especially those from Egypt?

(Husayn) The rebels have been targeting the African forces and voluntary agencies' workers. Last month the rebels committed a number of violations when they raided and robbed relief and humanitarian convoys.

(Abu-Husayn) Has the Tripoli declaration, especially on the need to improve the social fabric, had any impact on relations between the tribes and the rebels?

(Husayn) The rebels are not committed. A ministerial commission under the chairmanship of a Chadian minister was set up to establish and monitor the positions of both the government and rebel forces. But the rebels have rejected this. The issue is now with the African Union. The government has accounted for its troops' positions, however.

(Abu-Husayn) Are the rebels being backed from outside?

(Husayn) The rebellion is being backed by Eritrea.

(Abu-Husayn) Is that still the case even after the meeting between Presidents Umar Hasan al-Bashir and Isayas Aferwerki?

(Husayn) The situation is still the same even after that meeting. Their talks did not change anything on the ground. All the efforts have been to no avail. The rebellion also receives backing from Chadian tribes, but not from the Chadian Government itself. And we are very sure of this because the Chadian Government's position has been excellent in view of the colossal efforts it has made to bring under control the tribes that have been backing the Darfur rebels. Everyone is aware that intertribal relations in Chad are as hard to handle as those in Sudan.

(Abu-Husayn) What about Europe's and church organizations' support for the rebels?

(Husayn) Aid is reaching the rebels from Israel via Eritrea. They are also receiving aid from a number of church organizations in Europe.

(Abu-Husayn) How do you assess the US position following Zoellick's recent visit to both Khartoum and Darfur?

(Husayn) Robert Zoellick, the US assistant secretary of state, is doing his best to push the rebels to sit around the negotiating table. And this is what is needed. We also want a dialogue on how stop foreign aid to the rebellion in order to be able to get down to the political issues at the Abuja talks.

(Abu-Husayn) How do you view Arab support for this problem, especially following the visit of the Arab League secretary general?

(Husayn) We appreciate Amr Musa's tireless efforts and his ability to move quickly, effortlessly, and effectively among all sides. The Arab League has a clear role in Sudan. And we do feel that the Arab nation is sharing our crisis with us. Amr Musa's visit to Darfur gave new momentum to the problem, especially when a number of tribes rushed to broker reconciliation in his presence.

(Abu-Husayn) What about the voluntary return of the refugees?

(Husayn) In the southern Darfur state, we are heading toward reconciling 90 percent of the tribes, especially in Nyala Province. The state encourages the refugees' voluntary return by encouraging development efforts and containing the rebellion. At the Tripoli summit we came up with a number of proposals on how to bring about reconciliation and improve the social fabric (in Darfur). However, the rebels rejected our initiative and asked that our proposals be disregarded. We told them we welcome the voluntary return of the refugees to their villages; they retorted: we will resist forced repatriation.

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