
Interview: Al-Sharif Zeinal Abdin Al-Hindi

Sudan has reached a turning point

Al-Sharif Al-Hindi, the new vice president of Sudan's National Congress, was interviewed in Khartoum on Feb. 22 by Lawrence Freeman, Uwe Friesecke, and Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.

EIR: Could you introduce yourself to our readers, Mr. Al-Hindi?

Al-Hindi: I am the secretary general of the Union Party, known as the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). This party does not represent a club or a group of people; it represents a social structure of the whole society, mainly the middle class. Its foundation goes back to 1919, from the literary associations that were working in the Sudan before independence. And in elections, this party represents actually all the aspirations of the Sudanese people, because, as I said, this party does not represent a special class.

And this is the party which fought the battle for the independence of the Sudan in 1956. The leadership and the founders of this party in Sudan managed to get its independence from Britain and Egypt. Also this party started drafting the first constitution of the Sudan.

The work of the party was interrupted twice: in 1958, when the first dictatorship took place and the party fought it and expelled it with other political powers in 1965, and continued its program until 1969, when the second dictatorship came along and interrupted its activity. So, the party fought two dictatorships and managed to harbor political forces to repudiate them. Without denying the role of the other political parties, we are really the founders of this modern Sudan.

EIR: Can you bring us up to date from those beginnings, to your presence in the leadership of the National Congress today?

Al-Hindi: This party, with these characteristics, was against usurping power by force, and against the military regimes, because it is democratic by nature and opposed to monopolizing power in any form. It is for religious and intellectual freedom and the freedom of political organizing. Therefore, it has been at war with these kinds of ruling regimes that are opposed to its nature, because they also conflict with the nature of the Sudanese society itself. Thus, the party has al-

ways had to shoulder the burdens of opposing such regimes at any cost, and for that reason, it had to stand in opposition to the regime which overthrew the previous democracy of the government of [Sadiq] Al-Mahdi, despite its [the DUP's] conviction that that was not the kind of democracy which could protect man and his rights in Sudan. And when the current regime overturned the previous democracy, which was suffering from many weaknesses, incoherence, and perplexity, the DUP rejected this new regime, but did not resort to violent, armed, or destructive opposition, due to the state of affairs surrounding Sudan.

Our opposition had been one of prudence, quietude, and clarity, and did not rely on any foreign force, but was concerned with the problems facing the country and the tragedies inflicted upon our people. This kind of peaceful and clear opposition attracted the attention of the existing government, which compared us with the armed opposition factions in the east and the south. So, it invited us to practice all this objective and clear opposition from within the country. And we agreed with the government on dialogue, before entering the country. The government responded positively and pledged to evaluate the result of the dialogue. Our conditions were that we would carry out a dialogue with the people of Sudan in general, in order to know their will. I came [to Khartoum], and we met with the government officials and with the people. Our objective slogan was to reach a reconciliation among the members of the nation under what became known as "the equal word."

Then, the government gave us the possibility of complete freedom of movement. We met with people from all sectors as much as we could, to learn from them and talk with the government. And we proposed five issues before entering the dialogue, issues which we considered crucial to the honor of our stand: 1) releasing all political detainees; 2) declaring general amnesty for the southerners and the northerners; 3) clearing the country of any charges referring to the existence of any terrorist havens, as alleged abroad; 4) improving foreign relations, especially our neighborly relations with Egypt; 5) returning all confiscated properties.

This was achieved. These measures were a proof of the good intentions of the government, and we considered them a means of removing the many barriers blocking the way toward dialogue. Then, we started looking for the foundations which could function as a comprehensive bond for the whole nation and a goal for all the political movements. We extracted these foundations through the Thought Committee, which was then called "Sudanese Thought, How Do We Rule?" The government agreed on all of them. Then they developed into a comprehensive national charter, representing the peaceful exchange of power, and is considered an important and historic turning point, which the government accepted and then was presented to the National Congress, which is a collective organ, not somebody's organization; it is not an organization for a party; and is not an invention for a faction. It includes

the different colors of civil society in Sudan. It was ratified unanimously [by the National Congress Committees]. Its concepts are embedded in the new Constitution, and we considered this as a radical and fundamental solution for the crisis of government in Sudan.

The next stage for us includes the presentation of this political charter to all the opposition members abroad. We are confident that it includes all the goals which every patriot looks forward to achieve. We are also absolutely confident that [the opposition] will come forward to add, delete, and amend it. But all this reveals that this is a real turning point in government and the beginning of the peaceful exchange of power.

The transitional period will coincide with peace in the south to repair the damage which has been brought to the basic infrastructure of Sudan, to coordinate foreign relations and take the path of a comprehensive development policy, then to prepare the country for general elections, in which political parties are founded, parties with objective contents and established according to the rule of law, devoid of any religious politicizing, tribal politicizing, and tribal dependencies and prejudices.

EIR: What can you tell us about forces from abroad which have been trying to destabilize the country, often working through opposition groups? I'm thinking of the British in particular, and Baroness Caroline Cox.

Al-Hindi: The British people know the Sudanese nation pretty well, and they know that we are a very peaceful nation, we love freedom and are very friendly. The British lived here for 60 years, during which they did not find any problems. I think what Baroness Cox is doing, is not clear even to the British people.

She is working in a very narrow pocket, which is that of the rebels in the south. She cannot speak about the intentions and goals of the Sudanese people at all, simply because she does not know the Sudanese people. She does not even know the people of the south; she knows only those in the south who are against the government. I hope that Baroness Cox will be able to visit the Sudan.

EIR: Legally, you mean?

Al-Hindi: (Laughing) Yes, legally.

EIR: Do you think Mohammad Othman al-Mirghani, the secretary general of the DUP, will follow you?

Al-Hindi: I am very positive that al-Mirghani, Sadiq al-Mahdi, and all the other political opposition leaders will come to the Sudan, very soon.

Please convey our best wishes and greetings to all people of Europe, and especially, to the American people. The prophets of freedom in America are known to us; we know John Adams, we know George Washington. So, best wishes to the American people.

Interview: Dr. Riek Machar

Why southern leaders want to end the war

Dr. Machar is chairman of the Southern Coordinating Council and vice chairman of the National Congress. He was interviewed in Khartoum on Feb. 22.

EIR: Dr. Machar, can you just give us some background on the peace agreement, and how you came to make the historic decision to join in the peace treaty?

Machar: Peace, to us, in our organization, is a strategic aim. In the south we have been fighting for a long time, since 1955, and we have seen wars, we have seen insurrections, we have seen conflict through that period. The last war is the current one, which I have participated in, mentally, physically; but then, having fought from 1983 to April 10, 1996, one felt that the option of war, the military option, is not going to solve the conflict in Sudan.

There are historical reasons for the war, there are political reasons, cultural reasons, there are military reasons, there are religious reasons, and they date back to the foreign interference of 1821 when Mohamed Ali from Egypt moved southwards to Sudan, and after that, the British conquest of Sudan. When the British left, the problem had already started. Now, these differences were not corrected by the previous governments that ruled Sudan since 1953 or since 1956, after Sudan was ruled by the Sudanese themselves. So, the war continued.

But then, what are the demands by the South? They varied. The South represented solutions, in political slogans, like demanding that if the British left the country, the country should be run on a federal basis, it shouldn't be run as unitary state, because the Sudan is so diverse, culturally, ethnically. So, the South requested the implementation of a federal system of government; that was not acceded to, at that time; federalism was considered a taboo, was considered separation. Then, the thinking of the rulers in Sudan was to create a homogeneous Sudan, in which two twin policies were advocated: one, Arabization, and second, Islamization. Those did not succeed.

At a second stage, the South requested self-rule, which was implemented from 1972 to 1983, at a time when there was relative peace in the country, but then that was destroyed by the very ruler who brought it about.

The other demand made by the South in 1947 was the exercise of the right of self-determination of people of the South, which should determine peacefully and freely whether they are part of Sudan, or would opt for a different course of action. In this, we tried our best in negotiating with the previ-