



U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan General Scott Gration
Transcript of August 19, 2009, Interview with Shamsaddin Dawalbait
Courtesy of Radio Omdurman - Sudan

GENERAL GRATION

My purpose here [in Sudan] is I work on behalf of our President, and there is two main issues that I am responsible for: the first is to ensure that we end up with a peace in Darfur -- that is durable, that is lasting -- where the people that currently live in IDP camps and refugee camps have an opportunity to return to their homes or places they desire, in dignity, security, and safety, and where we can get an end to the conflicts, to the banditry, and the forces that have terrorized the people out there. The second issue that I am working on, on behalf of our President, is full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the agreement that was signed in 2005 in Naivasha, and that will culminate in 2011 with the Referendum, in January, and then the end of the interim period, in the middle of the year.

SHAMSADDIN DAWALBAIT

You know one of the obstacles to negotiate a peaceful settlement in Darfur is the fragmentation of the Darfurian movements. What have you been doing, what has the United States has been doing so far to unite these movements towards negotiation of a peaceful agreement?

GENERAL GRATION

What we are doing is several things. We started out with a heavy emphasis on making sure that the people living in IDP camps and the people living in remote areas of Darfur have all the food and the healthcare that they need to survive through the rainy season. So when the 13 NGOs were expelled, our goal was to try to restore the capacity for humanitarian assistance. And we worked very closely with the government in Khartoum to ensure that new NGOs were able to come in. We worked with existing NGOs that were there to expand their capacity, and we worked with the United Nations to expand their capacity. In addition to that, we believe that we needed to work very hard on security and so we have worked with Chad and, again, the Government of Sudan to reduce the tensions along the border and support for movements and groups that were involved in the proxy war. We are also working on rebel unification. Right now in Addis Ababa there is meetings going on between several different rebel groups that represented the SLA, Unity, some from Abdulwahid, some that will come from Abdulshafi, some from Yahyia. And there is other groups that are also there that are involved in the re-unification process, and we are working very hard with Libya to make sure that we will complete this process so that we can enter into the peace talks in Doha, later on in September. And probably the most important piece is giving voice to the civil society. We are working with diaspora leadership. We are working with leadership in the IDP camps and in the refugee camps, and we are working with other organizations that represent the people of Darfur -- the Zaghawa, the Fur and other tribes -- to ensure that everybody has the voice in the process. So that when we can have the peace process, we will have consultations on things like land reform, on things like compensation, and the democratic process. So those are the things that are going on to try to bring a lasting and durable peace to Darfur.

**Embassy of the United States of America
Khartoum, Sudan**

SHAMSADDIN DAWALBAIT

OK, that is one area. What about the other area, that is the CPA? You know that now we are well in the fourth year of the interim period. So how do you evaluate the progress in implementation of this agreement?

GENERAL GRATION

What we have been doing very hard is exactly what you pointed out. We have, in this six-year period, we have already spent about four years and so we have about sixteen months remaining to fully implement the CPA. So we have been involved in trilateral talks, those are talks where the NCP and the SPLM are talking, and the United States is trying to facilitate or create an environment that we can come to with an agreement. Today we initialed a document that brought about an agreement on ten major issues, including things like Abyei, the north-south border, some of the legislation issues, making unity attractive -- things like that. We have two issues where we need to have further work, consultation, and that is on the census, and the last one is on the Referendum. And so we will continue working with the NCP and the SPLM to reach agreement on these remaining issues. Our goal is to have the CPA fully implemented so that people in the south can take part in the elections and take part in the Referendum, and the people in Abyei can have their Referendum, and all these other issues resolved so that the south can choose to be united, as they are now, or they can choose to become a separate country. We want to give them the opportunity to have a Referendum that is free, fair and credible. There is a lot of work that has to be done, but we believe we can do it. In addition to that, whether they chose to stay united in unity or choose to become separate as a nation, there is a lot of development work that needs to be done, and we want to partner with the south to work on the social infrastructure; schools and healthcare; to work on governance, security; and to work on economic development. So whether they are united or independent, they have an opportunity to be economically viable.

SHAMSADDIN DAWALBAIT

Mr. Gration, you mentioned elections, you know, this one of the important components of the CPA. The general elections at all levels are expected to be conducted in the year 2010. I am asking whether you think the progress in the electoral process so far is satisfactory enough to lead to a political opening in the Sudanese context?

GENERAL GRATION

You are correct to say that there are many challenges in both the electoral process and the Referendum process. Not only do all the legislative laws need to be passed, but there is also election training, voter education, the security that is involved in it, the ballot boxes, the monitoring -- all those kind of issues are very, very difficult, but we have a process where we are working with the United Nations, where we are working with other folks in the international community to ensure that these elections are free, fair, and credible. And it is very important to us that the election is a process that represents the will of the people because it is that same process that will be used in the Referendum. So, we are working very hard as partners with the NCP, as partners with the SPLM, and partners with all the other parties to ensure that this election comes off in a way that is expeditious, free and fair, and we will use those same processes to ensure that the Referendum works out as well.

SHAMSADDIN DAWALBAIT

Thank you for allowing us the time, Mr. Gration. Thank you.