

Islamism, Jihadism and Terrorism in Sudan

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today about Sudan. First of all I would like to stress that I'll be talking to you in a strictly personal capacity without in any way representing the Netherlands Ministry of Defense where I am employed, nor any official view held by the Netherlands Government.

The subject of my presentation is Islamism, Jihadism and Terrorism in Sudan. I look at Sudan as one of the seven states that are labeled by the US State Department as states that sponsor terrorism.

Islamism in Sudan started more or less with the introduction of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1950s. Since then they have been trying to mold Sudan into their view of the world. They aim to turn Sudan into an Islamic State which is run by the *Sharia*. Also since the early 1950's there has been one undisputed leader of the Islamic Movement in Sudan, Dr. Hasan al-Turabi. Now 72 years old and once again in jail, he might be free within the coming days.

Jihadism and terrorism were introduced to Sudan in the early 1990s when Usama Bin Ladin and his followers came to the country and built an extensive training camp infrastructure as well as setting up a business and finance network. But it was not only Usama Bin Ladin and al Qa'ida (AQ) who were active in training mujahedin fighters and AQ terrorists. Also the Iranian Revolutionary Guards had their camps in Sudan. And the Islamic Regime in Khartoum itself created the Popular Defence Forces (PDF). The PDF had camps throughout the country where young volunteers were drilled to be a member of this pro-government militia. The PDF was used to militarily support the power of the Khartoum regime, often taking the brunt of the fighting against the SPLA and later was used in the Nuba Mountains against the Nuer people.

Let us return to the birth of the Islamic Movement in Sudan.¹

The Islamic Movement in Sudan has been known by many different names since it first appeared in the early 1950's. In 1954 the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood was established. Although the Muslim Brotherhood still exists in Sudan the Islamic Movement also has other manifestations like the Islamic Charter Front, the Islamic Trend, the National Islamic Front and recently the Popular National Congress. The Islamic Movement in Sudan has changed its name, structure, and working methods, but its main ideology, its objectives and its leader, Dr. Hasan al-Turabi, have essentially remained the same in the 50 years of its existence.

The ideology of the Islamic Movement is founded on two pillars. The first is *Sharia*, the Islamic law, and the second is the Islamic state. This is based on the conviction that the *Sharia* should regulate all aspects of human life, and that the ideal society can only be achieved if its political organization is Islamic.

¹ An excellent study about the Islamic Movement in Sudan, which I used extensively for this presentation, was written by Claes -Johan Lampi Sorensen in 2002 and can be obtained at: http://www.sudansupport.no/english_pages/thesis_islamic_movement.pdf

This ideology ultimately requires the transformation of the present world order into an authentic *Pax Islamica*. To fulfill the objectives of the Islamic movements, the whole international system of states must change from a secular to a religious 'logic'. Dr. Hasan al-Turabi confirms that this ideology contains a risk of conflict: "I admit that we are a threat to the present world order...We just seek to correct the world order. We just seek to express our Islamic values."

"Our aim is to utilize fully the rich heritage of the Ikhwan [Muslim Brotherhood] in such areas as organization, documentation, education, high spiritual and moral standards, specialization, and international relations, and streamline it with the growth in numbers and size of the movement which has now absorbed hundreds of thousands of people," stated Turabi in 1987.

In view of the overpowering role of Dr. Hasan al-Turabi in Sudan, we should have a closer look at this 72 year old Islamist intellectual.

Hasan Abdallah Dafa'allah al-Turabi was born in Kassala in 1932. His father was a religious judge and encouraged his son to study Islam. He studied at Khartoum University (1951-1955, BA in Law), the University of London (1955-1957, MA in Law) and at the Sorbonne in Paris (1959-1964) where he got his doctorate in Law. After serving for one year as dean of the faculty of Law at Khartoum University (1964-65) he left his post, gave up his academic career and embarked upon a political career. He married Wisal al-Mahdi, the sister of Sadiq a-Mahdi, the leader of the Umma Party, former prime-minister and leader of the Ansar sect.

In 1954 he was one of the founding members of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood.² After the October Revolution of 1964, in which a civilian government was replaced by a military regime, Turabi went into politics. He became secretary-general of the Islamic Charter Front (ICF), a political offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, and in the mid-1960s he was elected a member of parliament and appointed attorney general of Sudan. During the period of 1964-1969 he headed the Front of the Islamic Pact and the Party of the Islamic Bloc. After several changes in the central government, a coup in the spring of 1969 brought Colonel Jaafar Numeiri to power, which turned the country to the left. Turabi was arrested and detained for seven years because of his opposition to Numeiri. In 1977 Turabi was released and appointed as a member of the leadership council of the Sudanese Socialist Union.

His appointment as justice minister in 1979 brought him to the fore. In this period Turabi started to implement the *Sharia* as the code of justice in the Sudan. After four years Turabi was relieved of his post and became the presidential advisor on foreign affairs. In early 1985 he was arrested and sent to jail but after a few months he was released after General Dahab brought the Numeiri government down. In the same year Turabi established the National Islamic Front (NIF) together with other Islamic leaders. In 1988 the NIF joined a coalition headed by Sadiq al-Mahdi, who had won the elections of 1986 and thereupon became premier. Turabi was appointed first minister of justice, then minister of foreign affairs and deputy prime minister.

²The movement appeared in the mid-1940s as an offshoot of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, based on the teachings of among others Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. In a founding conference in August 1954, they established the Unified Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood Organisation.

Turabi clearly rejects the nation-state and feels a strong allegiance to the Umma, or the world community of all Muslims. The ultimate objective for the Islamic movement in Sudan has been to establish an Islamic state on the principles of the *Sharia* and the unity of the Umma. Furthermore, Islamic movements “are committed to fighting secularism and to establishing God's order in society.” According to Turabi, the ultimate goal should be the freedom to address the whole world through Islam without any restrictions whatsoever: “We are calling for a unified strategy of life for all humanity that transcends the narrow divisions of creed, colour or national origins, and allows us all to co-operate freely and equally for a better world. This is our gift to humanity. This is our main task as Muslims today.”

To achieve the Islamic state on the principles of the *Sharia* and the unity of the Umma, Turabi underlined three ways of access to power: revolution as in the case of Iran, through the “military institution” as in the case of Sudan, and through the ballot box as in Algeria. He endorsed all of these examples as legitimate.

“Fellow Muslims living in alien countries have to be supported, albeit never in contravention of any treaty obligation. ...Islamic movements, already emancipated from nationalist ideology, are interacting more intensively across the world.”

On 30 June 1989, Omar al-Bashir seized power in a bloodless military coup and Turabi was taken back to prison. He was released early in 1990 and declared his readiness to work with the new regime for aims that he considered identical to those of the NIF. He became Speaker of Parliament in 1996.

During the 1990s, the Islamic Movement and the Islamic regime in Sudan had overlapping membership and power structures. The phase between 1989 and 1999 was a period of co-operation and consolidation between the military regime and the Islamic movement. It started with the military coup of June 30, 1989 and ended with the dissolving of the Sudanese parliament on December 12, 1999. This dissolution of parliament was the culminating result of a power struggle between President Bashir and the Speaker of Parliament Turabi.

The Government of Sudan provided a safe haven and support for members of several international terrorist groups operating in Sudan. The regime also permitted Tehran to use Sudan as a secure transit point and meeting site for Iranian backed extremist groups.

Turabi denies that there exists an international organization that embraces all Islamic Movements or that they operate as terrorists. He also denies all accusations of Sudan having served as a playground for terrorists. However, many Islamic groups that Turabi distinguished as religious movements are perceived as terrorist organizations by the US. At a conference in 1994 Turabi claimed that he knows all Islamic groups on earth with his bragging statement: “I know every Islamic movement in the world, secret or public. But I also meet Heads of State of Arab countries, Muslim countries and many non-Muslim countries. ...I know the fundamentalist movement from Indonesia to Morocco, say, and I know the movements in countries where Muslims are in a minority, from Japan to America.”

Sudan in 1989 was more or less bankrupt. Previously smooth relations with the US had soured after the coup and the preferential relations which the new Sudanese government kept with the regime of Saddam Hussein. Its relationship with Libya was excellent in the eighties but cooled down in the early nineties. Soon after the coup the Sudanese regime sought a deepening of its relationship with Iraq but after the Gulf War and the UN-installed sanctions regime against Iraq, Sudan had to find a new financially strong partner. Under the instigation of Turabi, the Sudanese government started courting Iran. In the spring of 1991 a strategic partnership was concluded. Both countries would not only work together in the economic and political fields, but also in the military and intelligence fields. The partnership was sealed during a visit of Iranian President Rafsanjani to Khartoum in December 1991. Rafsanjani flew from Senegal to Khartoum with a delegation of over 150 officials. During his visit to Khartoum he described Sudan as “the vanguard of the Islamic Revolution in the African continent.”

The fresh Iranian-Sudanese cooperation got an extra dimension due to the input of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and especially the, at that time newly established, Qods Forces. The Qods Forces main task within the IRGC is to perform special operations, which are mainly sensitive and clandestine operations. Furthermore the Qods Forces are responsible for external IRGC activity and for exporting the Iranian revolution. This branch of the IRGC is also the liaison with ‘revolutionary’ or radical Islamic extremist groups.

In the early nineties experienced IRGC personnel was flown from Lebanon to the Sudan, first to train the Sudanese paramilitary Popular Defence Force (PDF) and later to train all sorts of mujahedin, Jihadis, or terrorists. With the help of the Pasdaran, an infrastructure was created to train thousands of combatants. For specialized training courses, for instance working with explosives, specialists from outside were brought in, especially from the Lebanese HizbAllah.

Also flown in from Lebanon was Iran’s new ambassador to Sudan. This was Majid Kamal, a heavyweight revolutionary who was Iran’s ambassador in Lebanon during the time of the kidnappings of Westerners in Beirut. Within a few years, it was said, thousands of Iranians were active in Sudan. In early 1992 Sudan emerged as a strategic outpost and key part of the infrastructure for Iran’s export of the Islamic Revolution throughout the Near East and Africa.

The Iranian military presence in Sudan was scaled down after the election of President Khatami in 1997 for a number of reasons. The Iranian presence in Sudan was halved from an estimated 3000 (in 1996) to about 1500 persons (in early 2000). It was even stated that this presence was still too large and that it would be brought down below 1000 persons.

In short the relations between Islamist Sudan and Revolutionary Iran were of mutual benefit. Sudan sought assistance and financial help, and Iran could use Sudan as its springboard in Africa.

In 1991 Hasan al-Turabi invited Usama bin Ladin (UBL) to come and live in the Sudan. After sending a reconnaissance team UBL accepted the invitation and settled in Khartoum. There he got special privileges and tax exemption as a businessman

and started construction, import-export and agricultural enterprises. UBL ran a complex network of 70 to 80 businesses and charities from Sudan.³ It was one of UBL's construction companies that finished the construction of the new airport of Port Sudan, a project that was started by the Ben Laden family business in the eighties. The construction and pavement of the 700-kilometer Al-Tahaddi road linking Khartoum, Shindi, and Atbarah was another achievement of UBL's construction companies.

Usama bin Ladin got a free hand to build and exploit 23 training camps for his followers. The Sudanese government denied that there was a terrorist-training camps infrastructure in the country. Hasan al-Turabi said: "As for harboring terrorists, let me say this: We have no interest in terrorism." According to the Sudanese regime's definition of the concept of terrorism, this statement was probably correct. This definition is that all fighting in the name of Jihad, including the fight against Israel, is legitimate, and in accordance with the duty levied on all Muslims. However, many of the Islamic groups that Turabi distinguished as religious movements are perceived as terrorist organizations by the West. For instance al Qa'ida, The Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (IG), Hamas, HizbAllah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

During the early 1990s extensive discussions took place between UBL, Turabi and representatives of Iran in Khartoum. Once Turabi defined the theological compromise between Sunni Qutubism and Shia Khomeinism on the role of Islam as the supreme force in the modern world and applied the compromise to the Islamist Revolutionary process, the road was open for a close and genuine alliance between Iran and AQ. Turabi and Sheikh Muhammad Said Nou'mani, an adviser to the Iranian minister of culture, 'preacher of Khomeinism in the Horn of Africa', jointly went to UBL in Khartoum and they concluded that such an alliance was possible. During the discussions an agreement was reached between the Sunni movement of UBL and the Shiite hard-liners in Tehran to co-operate. Both had a common priority to fight the Great-Satan (US) and the Little-Satan (Israel) first, before settling any intra-Islamic quarrels and attacking each other.

Jamal Ahmed Fadl, a former AQ member turned witness for the prosecution in the Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam bombing trial, named the businesses which were all a front for AQ and describes a web of worldwide Islamist groups, with AQ handing out guns, money and expertise at its center in Khartoum. He further stated that this assistance went to Islamists in Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Syria, Chechnya, Turkey, Tajikistan, the Philippines, Lebanon, and nearby Eritrea. It is plausible that Turabi and the NIF knew about this and it may be one of the reasons why UBL was expelled from Sudan. This was a decision probably taken by President Bashir without knowledge of Turabi. Turabi had no interest in letting UBL go. Bashir, by contrast,

³ Three of his first Sudanese companies were Wadi al-Aqiq Holding Company and al-Themar al-Mubaraka, agribusiness traded extensively in machinery and agricultural produce - corn, sugar, sesame seed, fruit., al-Hijra Construction Company and Taba Investments. Other UBL companies in Sudan were the investment company Ladin International, a leather company the Khartoum Tannery and a transportation company Qudarat Transport. Also UBL invested in The Gum Arabic Company Ltd and he owned a daily newspaper and the al-Shamal Islamic Bank in Khartoum.

was becoming a nationalist Islamist while Turabi remained an ideology-driven internationally oriented Islamist. However, after UBL left Sudan in 1996 a part of the AQ infrastructure remained intact and since 9/11 has continued to provide more than useful services to the AQ and Jihadist networks.

In early August of 1989 the leadership of the International Muslim Brotherhood (IMB) held a meeting in London and decided to transform Sudan into a base and safe haven for Islamist movements in the Arab world, Africa and Asia. Bashir's Khartoum and the IMB reached an agreement in which Sudan would become a "springboard to Arab and African countries" in return for substantial financial assistance. Toward this end an IMB leadership board of nineteen members was established in Khartoum. At the Islamic Arab Peoples' Conference (IAPC) in Khartoum from 25-28 April 1991 a Sunni Islamist revolutionary international was created, called the Popular International Organization (PIO). The objective of the PIO is to work out a global action plan in order to "challenge and defy the tyrannical West, because Allah no longer remains in our world, in the face of the absolute materialistic power." The PIO established in Khartoum a permanent council comprising fifty members, each of whom represented one of the fifty countries where Islamic liberation struggles were taking place. The Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC) was in 1993 renamed to also include non-Arab Muslims. The organization was originally set up as a counterweight to the Saudi dominated OIC.

Training camps: With the said 23 camps⁴ constructed by UBL and under his direction, there were at least an additional 12 camps under the guidance of the Pasdaran. In the largest country of Africa it is easy to hide certain training facilities. But some training camps nevertheless became known, like the Okba Ibn Nafaa camp, west of Khartoum, the Oum Doumma camp, 25 kilometers south of Khartoum, and the Khartoum Bahry camp. Certain training camps were for special groups or people from certain countries. Camp al-Maokil near Shandy was for training Algerians and Tunisians. In the al-Khalafiyya area north of Khartoum training took place for the Algerian Islamic Salvation Army and the Armed Islamic Group. In Akhil al-Awliya on the banks of the Blue Nile, south of Khartoum more than 500 Palestinians, Syrians and Jordanians were trained. In al-Mrihat, north of Omdurman members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, al-Gama'a a;-Islamiyya and the Vanguard of Islam were trained, and Mukhayyat al-Mazari (NW of Khartoum) served as an equal opportunity training center for all nationalities. Also near Port Sudan there were certain training facilities in Aaroussa and Erkowit for 1,500 persons (mostly Palestinians).

In August 1992, George Logokwa, the Sudanese minister of Labor defected to Egypt and described the situation in the training camps: "They receive tough training in all types of combat, violence, and assassinations," and are "to be sent, from time to time, to some neighboring countries to explore the situations, carry out limited and swift operations, and await the major plan devised by the (National Islamic) Front to send its members to countries chosen as targets for intensive activity."

It is also reported that soon after the coup of 1989 the first cadre of the NIF and al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya (DA'WA) were trained in Iran by the Pasdaran. Later, after the

⁴Other sources mention more than 30 training camps of which 12 were under direct Iranian command.

opening of training camps with massive Iranian logistical help (weapons, ammunition, clothing and supplies) training took place in Sudan. Also Pasdaran instructors were sent to the Sudan. The best students of every class received an additional specialized six months training in the HizbAllah camps in Baalbeck in the Bekaa Valley.

One of the largest camps was 10 kilometers south of Khartoum, near Soba. Instruction was focused on three major areas: the fabrication of documents and the forgery of documents, low-tech covert communications from basic encryption to the use of invisible ink, and the use of arms and explosives.

With the help of Iranian experts and Afghanistan veterans, Sudan began upgrading the training provided in local camps to include preparations for spectacular operations. The results of this training were seen in the first half of the nineties. In 1993 we see the attack on American forces in Mogadishu for which AQ fighters were trained in Sudan and AQ instructors were sent to Somalia. Also in 1993 the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York had a link to Sudan. In the end some Sudanese diplomats from the Sudanese diplomatic mission at the UN were expelled from the US. In 1995 the failed assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa had a direct link to Sudan. Some of the attackers lived in Sudan and were trained there.

The inner Sudanese power struggle between President al-Bashir and Speaker of Parliament al-Turabi culminated in December 1999 when Bashir dissolved parliament. The relationship between Bashir and Turabi was seemingly a good one from the beginning. But the elections of 1996 changed a lot in their relationship. Bashir was elected President with 75.7% of the votes and Turabi was elected Speaker of Parliament. This was the birth of the power struggle between the two. In the fall of 1999, Turabi presented a draft bill to parliament amending some provisions of the constitution. The proposed amendments would have stripped Bashir of his power to appoint provincial governors and required him to give up the post of prime minister that he holds in addition to the presidency. It would also have removed his power to appoint a vice-president.

Turabi further tried to push new legislation through parliament giving the prime minister wider powers and giving parliament the right to remove the president from office with a two-third majority. In early December 1999, Bashir asked Turabi to postpone his amendments, but Turabi ignored Bashir's request. Consequently, to preempt a vote on constitutional changes that would have severely reduced his power of the presidency in favor of a parliament and a ruling party dominated by Turabi, Bashir dissolved parliament, declared a state of emergency, suspended the constitution, and dispatched troops to take over the national assembly on December 12, 1999.

Turabi condemned Bashir's dissolution of parliament as a 'military coup' and rejected the state of emergency as unconstitutional. Both Egypt and Libya supported Bashir's declaration of the state of emergency. It was quiet in Tehran. After weeks of waiting and anticipation, Iran decided to stand by Bashir in his power struggle against Turabi. In February 2000 General Mohammad Baqer Zolqader, the number two of the IRGC, visited Sudan. It thus clearly seemed that Iran's siding with this or that side in Sudan

was based more on pragmatic considerations of its strategic interests than on ideological considerations.

Prior to this, the National Congress Party held a 12-hour long meeting in January 2000 which strengthened Turabi's position within the NCP, but did not resolve the conflict between Turabi and Bashir. Back in early 1996 Turabi dissolved the NIF and created the National Congress Party (NCP), which was the only legal party at that time. While Turabi was its Secretary General and the de facto leader from the beginning, Bashir later became its president and the chairperson of its political sector. In early May 2000 Bashir announced a series of decisions, including the suspension of Turabi from the position of Party Secretary General and the removal of most of his supporters from influential posts. After his forced resignation as Secretary General of the ruling NCP, Turabi set up his own political opposition party in August 2000, the Popular National Congress (PNC).

Within this political turmoil, longtime confidants of Turabi and also longtime hard-line Islamists like Ali Uthman Mohammed Taha (presently first vice-president), Dr Ghazi Salahadin (presently presidential advisor for peace affairs), Dr Nafi Ali Nafi (presently minister of federal government), and Dr Awad Ahmed el-Jaz (presently minister of energy and mining) shifted their alliance and became part of the nationalist-Islamist camp of President al-Bashir.

Turabi and his supporters started to operate in opposition to Bashir's NCP. On 20 February 2001 Turabi's newly created Popular National Congress (PNC) signed a 'MOU' in Geneva with the most powerful armed opposition group in Sudan, John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). This came as a surprise to both external observers and local politicians. In response to the MOU with the SPLA, security forces arrested Turabi on February 21, 2001. After being held for more than two years under house arrest, he was set free on 13 October 2003, only to be arrested again on 31 March this year. The latest announcements are that Turabi will be released soon.

When the Islamists in Sudan are not working through politics and violence, they also use the Islamic mission or Da'wa as a tool to accomplish their goals.

The Sudanese NGO Munazzamat al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya (MDI) is financed mainly by the Sudanese government and is involved in Muslim missionary activities in the Balkans and Africa. The MDI is active in the fields of culture, reconstruction, aid, rehabilitation of injured people and development. MDI is also associated with trying to link aid for famine relief to conversion to Islam. Recent activities of MDI are focused on central and southern Africa. It is also known that activists of MDI are on good terms with the Jama'at al-Tabligh, a proselytizing Muslim organization with roots in Pakistan but which is known to be an entrance hall to Jihadist and Salafist extremist groups.

Sudan After 9/11: After the US led coalition attacked and defeated the Taliban regime and al-Qa'ida forces in Afghanistan at the end of 2001, the 'solid base' that AQ had there was gone. A part of the AQ leadership and a certain number of fighters remained in the remote tribal areas of Pakistan and in the eastern part of Afghanistan. Others traveled (with their families) through Pakistan and through Iran to

return to their home countries. Another part stayed in Pakistan. A large group went to Yemen. What was remarkable was that many of the students within AQ were asked by their teachers to come with them to Mauritania (most of the members of AQ's Religious Committee are Mauritanian Ulema). Others ended up in the Sudan.

Also soon after 9/11 and the start of the campaign to oust the Taliban in Afghanistan, information arose that large quantities of gold and gemstones were transferred from Afghanistan through Pakistan, Iran, and the UAE to the Sudan. This gold and gemstones belonged to the Taliban and AQ and were brought by ship and plane to the Sudan to be put in safe places. Probably, they were deposited in Islamic banks in Khartoum.

By now we can say that Sudan has again assumed a role as one of the training centers for AQ and Mujahedin fighters. Like in the first half of the 1990s Sudan contains an ample number of training camps where Muslim extremists and jihadists are taught the techniques of guerilla warfare. They come from Europe, Central-Asia, the Middle Eastern countries, and Sub-Sahara Africa. After being trained they are facilitated by an organization that is still in place and is able to deliver high quality false documents, means of communication and organize travel arrangements. The newly trained fighters turn up in southern Sahara countries, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, where they fight against coalition forces. We also see Sudanese who were trained in (PDF) camps turning up at the border with Israel. It is interesting to note that during the latest prisoner swap between Israel and HizbAllah, in January 2004, three Sudanese citizens were included.

Sudan has never made a secret out of its relation with Palestinian terrorist organizations like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and HAMAS. In addition, links with HizbAllah are almost institutionalized. Against Western pressure Sudan will not concede that HAMAS is a terrorist organization. HAMAS is among friends in Khartoum. "We have an Islamic project. Sudan has the same project, and we are going to carry out this project in all Islamic Countries," said a former HAMAS representative in Khartoum.

The Sudanese Government cannot expel the mentioned organizations because the country has a political relationship with HAMAS. Foreign Minister Isma'il refused to call HAMAS, Islamic Jihad and HizbAllah terrorist organizations because, in his view, they are fighting to end occupation and are exercising their right to self-defense.

Turabi has indirectly supported acts that the US and many other Western countries define as terrorism. In a press interview on the suicide bus bombing in Tel Aviv by HAMAS in October 1994, which left 22 people dead, Turabi called the attack "an honorable act."

In Sudan HAMAS has not only a political bureau, but also other organizations like the Palestinian Students Union and the Sudanese Ansar Movement, which is active in fundraising. Also HAMAS has a little business empire in the Sudan consisting of profit making companies.

We can assess that HAMAS and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad have training camps in Sudan. Especially after President Bashir told his fellow countrymen on 4 April 2002

that "We now order the Popular Defense Forces and all the political and military leaders to now open all the military camps to be opened in estates and villages...No peace with Jews or surrender to the Jews, for war is war, Jihad is Jihad." Two days later the PDF announced the opening of open military training camps and preparation of mujahedin in all Sudanese states, starting today. The PDF commander affirmed it was determined to pursue public mobilization in support of the Palestinian issue...in support of al-Quds, we have started implementing it in all our sectors and institutions.

The contacts with HizbAllah are less institutional. But since the early 1990s HizbAllah instructors came to Sudan to train the PDF and others in different training camps. In 1995 Imad Mughniyah was in Sudan and other political leaders of HizbAllah visited Sudan regularly.

Sudan is being used as a hub for Palestinian terrorist groups, AQ and the Jihadist networks. In the Arab controlled part of the country there are training camps for a wide range of groups, including the IMU, al-Qa'ida, Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement, HAMAS, Saudi oppositional groups and Mujahedin who turn up as volunteers in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Some of the camps are located near the border with Eritrea, north of Port Sudan in the Jebel Kurush mountains, or near the Libyan border. Other camps are in the Nuba Mountains or in Darfur. Sometimes camps are not more than 100 square meters, but the same goes for camps in the Afghan-Pakistan border area.

It is said that mujahedin were used in the Darfur conflict. Groups of foreign fighters were used by the government to side with the Janjawid against the people of Darfur. For the mujahedin it was kind of "training on the spot." After these "exercises" some of the mujahedin were sent back to the southern Sahel countries where they came from or back to Nigeria, Cameroon, Togo or Benin. It was opposition leader and former Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi who stated only recently (July 29) to Reuters press agency: "Many of them (Janjawid) come from Cameroon, from Chad," he said. "The Arabs of Darfur have so far taken a very responsible attitude not to get involved."

Recently, training camps were also established in remote areas of Sudan, like in the Jebel Kurush mountains north of Port Sudan, for Saudi radicals. In June 2003 nineteen AQ suspects with Salafi roots were captured and deported to Saudi Arabia. They were trying to set up new training camps in the Nuba Mountains. In August 2003 a Syrian national and two Sudanese were convicted of running a terrorist training camp in the West of Sudan that taught Palestinians and Saudis how to carry out anti-US attacks in Iraq.

Conclusion: The question remains if the Sudanese government as such is supporting the activities of the training camps in their country as a matter of policy. This is a question that I am unable to answer as I simply don't know. However, one can probably state that certain Islamist hard-liners within the government must know to a certain degree what is going on. There are entities within country that benefit from the situation. Although Hasan al-Turabi is once again in jail it fits within his worldview: Islamic fighters who are trained in Sudan and from there go to multiple areas to try to topple governments, fight the West, all in the name of Islam.

At the end of July Sudanese government officials started to give sharp warnings to the international community not to intervene in Darfur. If US and British forces would intervene according to these officials the locals would see them as occupation forces and attack them like in Iraq. Also leaders of the Janjawid warned that foreign intervention would lead to attacks. In view of the above, these warnings, in all probability, need to be taken seriously. A Western intervention, though seen within the West as based purely on a humanitarian imperative, will easily be seen as an attack on a Muslim nation and draw in Islamic fighters like a magnet, as had happened in Iraq. It might be the start for a new round of fighting between the Western forces and Muslim radicals.

Lastly, Sudan is a complicated country with its power structures and networks. Even seasoned diplomats from the Arab world are sometimes exasperated by the complexities of the Sudanese power networks. However, the recent external pressure on the government in Khartoum has evidently led to a closing of ranks. It is interesting to note that right now government officials and opposition figures are setting aside their differences and are united. For the past week we hear rumors that Turabi may be released. Also, robust statements have been coming from Khartoum, like claims that the Janjawid are in the process of re-training and re-arming and setting up new camps to halt any possibility of foreign military interference. Other leaders of Turabi's party have already been released at the end of July. It seems that the nationalist Islamists like Vice President Ali Uthman Taha and the international Islamists have, at least for the moment, reconciled their differences.

One can conclude that the government leaders still need Turabi when it comes to international Islamist support and contacts with jihadist and terrorist organizations, which can help them in the event of a military intervention.