

Is Sudan not an Apartheid State?

Last Saturday, at an extraordinary meeting, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1564 which threatens sanctions on the country's vital oil industry. Four countries abstained.

It warns that the Security Council "will envisage" sanctions against Sudan's oil industry, after consulting with the AU (African Union), unless Khartoum keeps its promise to protect the Black population of Darfur.

For at least one abstaining country, its reason may probably have been that the crisis in Darfur is an "internal matter". That might also be Sudan's argument. When it last met, the AU, led by Alpha Konare, Mali's former President, reportedly agreed to "move from non-interference to non-indifference".

Initially, we may recall, at its last meeting the African Union's reported first reaction to the crisis was to refrain from describing the massacres as "genocide" or as "racist".

"Though the crisis in Darfur is grave, with unacceptable levels of death, human suffering, and destruction of homes and infrastructure, the situation cannot be defined as genocide," read the Communique of Heads of State summit in Addis Ababa.

I noted, then, that it's almost like saying "It's bad, but not so bad". I asked what the AU body count for genocide was.

Last weeks' Security Council resolution was drafted by the US, but that is no reason for anyone generally opposed to Bush's neo-fascist policies, to oppose the resolution on that score. It should be remembered, as I pointed out earlier, that millions of Americans,

descended from Black African slaves, and are concerned about what happens on the African continent.

Non-interference was used by South Africa's Apartheid regime to counter UN criticism but was overruled by the UN on the grounds that ethnic oppression or "cleansing" was totally unacceptable by the world and invited sanctions. How different is Sudan today, from what South Africa was under Apartheid?

Those who did not vote for Resolution 1564, need to answer a number of questions regarding Sudan's apparent racist policies.

Does anyone doubt that 50 000 Black Darfur Muslims have been killed by the Janjaweed, and one million uprooted by them. Is the Janjaweed not a pro-Government, racist militia of Arab cattlemen, like the *skiet-kommandos* that supported Apartheid?

Is the Sudan democratic? Has it had more than just two general elections – in 1956 and 1986 - since independence in 1956? Has

it not had Arab military rule for 37 years? Have the military rulers not sought to make Sudan an Arab and Islamic state? Did General Nimeiri not impose *sharia* law in 1983? Did el-Bashir not declare the war with the South a *Jihad* on taking power in 1989?

Have the Black Christians of the South not been at war with the Arab Muslim North for forty years or so? Why? Is the Arab North not interested in controlling the extensive minerals, oil reserves, hardwoods and vast tracts of unexploited land in the South and in the Darfur-inhabited West?

Why, in 1980, did the North scrap the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord reached with the South, providing for limited autonomy in the South, with regional self-government through a Regional Assembly and a High Executive Council?

Did that not lead to resumption of the civil war with the South now led by the Sudan People's Liberation Army founded under leadership of John Garang? Can the IGAD Protocols, giving a measure of regional autonomy and maybe separation by the South at a given future date, which South African negotiators brokered, survive the outbreak of a new civil war in Darfur? Would el-Bashir see that through?

Is the uprising led by Black Muslim movements in Darfur not a war of liberation like that of the ANC? Is el-Bashir's cruel response to the uprising by unleashing the Janjaweed in Darfur any better than the Apartheid Government's vicious hanging of ANC cadres opposing Apartheid through Armed Propaganda?

UN resolution 1564 requires consultation by the UN with the African Union, the Chairman of which within a year will be Sudan's el-Bashir. Is he not playing for time so that he can control the situation completely, internally and externally?

The Sudan is, in many ways, not unlike South Africa. As Africa's largest country, with one of the continent's greatest rivers and a population of 35 million people, it has considerable resources.

It has different ethnic and religious groups, with a population that is 60% Muslim, 15% Christian, and 25% belonging to older and traditional religions. There are 19 major groups and 597 ethnic sub-groupings.

Sanctions helped bring Apartheid down, and the UN should be ready to apply and intensify sanctions against Sudan if its leadership does not change its ways, as it did in the case of South Africa.

The Sudanese majority must decide whether it is African or Arab. Membership of the Arab league creates potential conflicts of interest and helps perpetuate an unacceptable ethnic domination. Religion and state need to be separated.

It is absolutely essential that the AU meets soon to take some tough decisions about what is happening in the Sudan. Sanctions are essential both for short term aims - like ending the Darfur killings and helping its people resettle - as well as for longer term aims, like bringing about democracy, as in South Africa, by hurting the rich economically.

The SADC Heads of State, or at least its Foreign Ministers, need to meet urgently to call for an AU meeting to review who should chair the Union's next annual meeting. Can Botswana not take some initiative towards this?