

Sudan's President Bashir Was Almost Arrested and We Thought of You

Written by Kimberly Hollingsworth

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<https://www.e-ir.info/2016/03/04/sudans-president-bashir-was-almost-arrested-and-we-thought-of-you/>

KIMBERLY HOLLINGSWORTH, MAR 4 2016

It is a strange thing to have several friends call and say the same thing, "I heard that Bashir was almost arrested in South Africa and I thought of you."

Yes! Almost arrested.

Mind you, these are my friends who are not normally involved in social justice activism.

Last year, we took a step forward while the Government of South Africa took a step backwards. To receive confirmation that Sudan's President Bashir was already in the air at the same time that the South African government was lying to a judge about his whereabouts...well, it was a blow to us, to a South African court, to South Africans, not to mention all the Sudanese refugees who have been waiting for justice since the International Criminal Court issued the first arrest warrant against Bashir seven years ago today – on the 4th March 2009.

In July 2015, I went to an event at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Most of the people in attendance had never heard about the Government of Sudan's targeting of civilians in the Nuba Mountains. They did not know that Bashir was, and still is, bombing their hospitals, schools, homes, farms, and innocent civilians – old and young – since June 2011; and they did not know that the genocide in Darfur was still happening. The only newsperson that speaks about Sudan on a regular basis is Greta Van Susteren. She still tweets about Evil Bashir.

A representative from the U.S. Mission seemed very pleased with the event and asked me, "Well, what did you think? Did you like the program?"

He had asked the wrong person. I replied, "It wasn't enough. You only scratched the surface. What are you guys doing?"

He seemed surprised and fumbled, "Wha...What do you mean?"

I continued, "When Samantha Power became the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, we thought that she would finally do something. Instead, she spends more time making appearances on talk shows while being consistently silent about the genocides in Sudan against the marginalized groups. At least Susan Rice had made time to meet with the Sudanese groups and activists."

He was still listening.

So, I went for it, "Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Ahmed Karti was invited to our National Prayer Breakfast, Secretary of State John Kerry was in a group photo with Bashir in Egypt, we lifted the personal communications sanction on Sudan; and the tribal leaders working with the Government of Sudan were invited by the State Department to the U.S., in fact they even stopped in front of the White House to take a "tourist" photo (*I know because I was there*) – all of this happened within months. Why is the U.S. normalizing relations with Sudan?"

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He had no answer, just gave me his card.

I am so tired of all the cover-ups and lack of accountability on this issue: the wasted tax funds used to pay UNAMID for pretending to protect civilians; the deeply concerned statements from governmental officials that amount to not even a slap on the wrist for targeting and killing innocent civilians; and the forced peace talks, knowing that no peace agreement has ever been honoured by the Government of Sudan.

If we are ever going to actually end genocide, we need to intervene while it's happening, not apologize or regret our lack of action years later, after it ends. Former U.S. President Clinton has two regrets: Rwanda & Lewinsky. If Obama does not fulfill his promises to end genocide in Sudan before his term ends, Darfur will not only be Bashir's triumph, but also Obama's legacy.

I have wondered, when Obama's daughters, as mothers, ask him about the mass rapes in Tabit, will he remain silent? More than 221 women and girls were raped by Sudanese army troops in 36 hours; it was reported that the youngest victim was only 8 years old. When Obama's grandchildren ask him about the multiple mass graves in the area of Kadugli, will they be shocked? We know that he receives daily updates from his administration on the situation in Sudan.

Too many Sudanese refugees have cried already because they believed that Obama would not forget them. For a man that ran a campaign on hope, he's done a good job of killing it in Sudan.

Why is Bashir's arrest so important to me? Simply put, genocide is wrong. And, we all know it.

About the author:

Kimberly Hollingsworth is the founder of Humanity Is Us, a non-profit organization responsible for the Arrest Bashir campaign. A former senior legal assistant, Kimberly works with other non-governmental organizations, activists, members of the diaspora, governmental agencies and State Parties to the International Criminal Court in the campaign to end the genocides in Sudan. On Twitter you can follow @HumanityIsUs and @ArrestBashir.