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UNMIS

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(By Public Information Office)

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UN/ AMIS-UN Transition

CJMC to hold joint press briefing at UNMIS headquarters tomorrow

(*Al-Wahda* – 25th Apr. **Khartoum**) UNMIS says that the calls by Bin Laden for a Jihad in Darfur and his accusations that the international community intends to launch a crusade in Darfur will not stop the UN from carrying out its plans for Darfur.

Bahaa AlKoussy, UNMIS Spokesperson, told *AlWahda* in an exclusive that the UN will continue in its plans and prepare for a transition as instructed by the Secretary-General.

He said that there are still ongoing consultations with representatives of the Sudan government in New York and with members of the Security Council.

The Spokesperson said that SRSG Pronk will be travelling to Darfur in the next two days to get acquainted to the developments in the situation in the region.

On the other hand, the UNMIS Spokesperson said that SRSG Pronk discussed with Vice-President Salva Kiir, during the former's two-day tour of the southern states, issues pertaining to the current operations of UN agencies and NGOs and the challenges they encounter in implementing their programmes.

The Spokesperson further added that the SRSG also met with the Governor of Jonglei State and key officials and toured a camp for returning refugees to assess the humanitarian situation there.

He said that the tour also took the SRSG to Western Equatoria where he held talks with the governor in Yambio on the security situation and the Lord's Resistance Army problem.

The UNMIS Spokesperson further revealed that UNMIS hosts tomorrow a press briefing featuring UNMIS Force Commander and high rank officers of the SAF and the SPLA. The spokesperson declined however to name these officers.

The press conference is likely to focus on the issue of deployment of forces, SPLA withdrawal from eastern Sudan, the recent exchange of accusations between the parties, the southern Sudanese armed factions and the Lord's Resistance Army.

Akhbar Alyaum reports on the other hand that UNMIS Spokesperson Bahaa Alkoussy said that SRSG Jan Pronk will hold talks in el-Fasher today with the AMIS chief, Babagana Kingibe, says Alkoussy,.

The talks, he says, will focus on the issue of an AMIS-UN transition and is a follow-up of the talks between them earlier in Addis Ababa.

Alkoussy adds that SRSG Pronk will be touring the states of Darfur to assess the security and humanitarian situation and the condition of IDPs and that he will also hold talks with government officials in the area.

Security Council expected to vote Sudan sanctions

(*ST* – 24th Apr. **United Nations**) China's UN envoy Wang Guangya, the council's president for April, said the US side wanted a vote on its draft to coincide with adoption of a Tanzanian non-binding statement reiterating the council's full support for African Union-mediated inter-Sudanese peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria.

"My concern is that the draft proposed by the United States might in a way have some negative implications for the negotiations in Abuja," Wang said.

The African Union (AU) and the international community have set a Sunday deadline for the Sudanese rival sides to wrap up their talks in Abuja.

"Regardless we are moving ahead," Benjamin Chang, a spokesman for the US UN mission said. "I would hope they don't veto it."

"I think we're hopeful that it will pass," said a US official in Washington, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Asked whether China or Russia would block the measure, he said, "I haven't heard veto. I haven't heard the 'v' word."

A UN diplomat here meanwhile provided some background on the four Sudanese officials named in the resolution.

- Sheikh Musa Hilal, a paramount chief of the Jalul tribe in north Darfur, was described as "a notorious leader of the (Khartoum-backed) Janjaweed (Arab) militia and as such responsible for some of the worst atrocities in Darfur."

His militia has been blamed for pillaging, rape, and scorching of villages, and directly contributed to the Darfur mayhem.

Hilal was jailed in 1997 for killing 17 people in Darfur, the diplomat said.

- Gaffar Mohamed Elhassan, a former commander of the Western Military Region for the Sudanese Air Force, had direct operational command of Sudanese government forces in Darfur from 2004 to this year and coordinated operations between the Janjaweed and government forces. He was also responsible for supplying arms to the region.
- Adam Yacub Shant, a commander of Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), violated a ceasefire agreement in July 2005 when he ordered SLA soldiers to attack government forces which resulted in the deaths of three government soldiers.
- Gabril Abdul Kareem Badr, a commander for the National Movement for Reform and Development, kidnapped African Union peacekeeping personnel last October and a month later threatened to shoot down an AU helicopter.

The Security Council vote will come more than a year after it authorized sanctions against those held responsible for the bloodshed in Darfur, where rebels and government-backed militias have been battling since February 2003.

Meanwhile Wang said the council's three African members — Congo, Ghana and Tanzania — have prepared a non-binding statement voicing concern about the deteriorating relations between Sudan and its neighbour Chad.

The text urged the two countries to abide by their obligations under a February 8 agreement signed in Libya and urged them to start implementing agreed confidence-building measures.

Washington has also expressed frustration at delays in proposals to bolster security in Darfur by replacing an AU peacekeeping contingent with a larger UN force and giving it greater NATO support.

NATO currently provides air transport for the 7,000-strong AU force. Foreign ministers of the 26-member alliance were expected to discuss a larger logistical role at their meeting in Sofia on Thursday and Friday.

But deputy State Department spokesman Adam Ereli played down expectations of progress at the talks to be attended by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her NATO counterparts.

The Bin Laden tape

Bin Laden rejects Sudan's CPA, calls for Jihad in Darfur*

(*ST* – 23rd Apr. **Doha**) In a new audiotape aired today (23rd April 2006), Osama bin Laden urged militants get ready to fight western forces in Sudan's troubled region of Darfur; he also rejected the peace deal signed last year to end north- south war.

Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden urged his followers to prepare for a long war against Western would-be occupiers in Sudan's Darfur region, according to an audiotape attributed to him and aired on Sunday.

Bin Laden, also described the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed by the Sudanese government and the former rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement on 9 January 2005 as "an unjust agreement that allows the south to break away after six years from signing the deal".

** Translated excerpts of the tape comes as a separate attachment in this MMR*

Darfur rebel group rejects Bin Laden call for jihad

(*UPI,ST* – 23rd Apr. **Dubai**) One of Darfur's two main rebel groups rejected Al-Qaeda supremo Osama bin Laden's call on Muslims to fight the "crusaders" in the western Sudanese region, warning it could encourage Khartoum to step up its repression.

"We categorically reject these declarations," Justice and Equality Movement official Ahmed Hussein said, reacting to remarks made in an audiotape attributed to bin Laden and aired by the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera news channel.

"His words are completely disconnected from the reality in Darfur. Bin Laden is still preaching the theory of an American-Zionist conspiracy when the real problem comes from Khartoum, which is a Muslim government killing other Muslims," Hussein said.

He warned that such comments risked "encouraging the Khartoum regime to perpetuate injustice and its strategy against Darfur."

The Sudan Liberation Movement also lashed out at Bin Laden, accusing his terrorist network of involvement in the genocides that occurred in the war-torn province.

The movement said in a statement Monday that Bin Laden is supporting the Khartoum government in its bid to prevent the deployment of international forces to protect civilians from massacres.

"Bin Laden's opposition to the dispatch of international troops to Darfur is a direct call for exterminating the people in Darfur," the statement said.

Sudan distances itself from Bin Ladin's statement

(UPI/ST – 24th Apr. **Khartoum**) The Sudanese government said it was not concerned by al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden's comment on preventing foreign troops' deployment in Darfur.

"The Sudanese government is not concerned by such remarks or any other remarks made by any party on Darfur," foreign ministry spokesman Jamal Ibrahim said Monday in the first official declaration on Bin Laden's remarks.

The al-Qaida leader, who tops the U.S. list of most wanted terrorists around the world, said in an audio-tape broadcast on the al-Jazeera network Sunday that violence in Darfur "is part of the Crusades' war on Muslims."

Bin Laden called on his disciples to prepare for a "long war" against "the Crusader thieves" in west Sudan.

Ibrahim stressed the Sudanese government's opposition to the deployment of international forces in Darfur without its consent and before reaching a final peace agreement.

He said his country is on the threshold of achieving a peaceful settlement to the Darfur crisis through ongoing talks at the Nigerian capital Abuja, where peace negotiations have been going on under African sponsorship.

He went on to say that Sudan had affirmed that it would cooperate with the international community as well as abiding by all international accords. He also affirmed that Sudan would not accommodate any terrorists.

UN dismisses bin Laden call to oppose Darfur force

(Reuters/ST – 24th Apr. **United Nations**) U.N. diplomats brushed aside on Monday a call by Osama bin Laden for Muslims to rise up against the West in Sudan, and vowed to go ahead with plans to send peacekeepers to the embattled Darfur region.

"The comments made by this guy (are) always, always negative. We should not be influenced by whatever comments he made," said Chinese Ambassador Wang Guangya, the Security Council president for April.

U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said: "That's a mark of bin Laden's desperation and certainly won't affect our planning."

The al Qaeda leader, in an audio tape broadcast on Al Jazeera television, said the United States and Britain, by pushing for a U.N. force in Darfur, were plotting to dismember Sudan. He urged his followers to rise up against them.

He called the United Nations an "infidel body" and "a tool to implement Crusader-Zionist resolutions" including measures aimed at dividing and occupying Muslim lands.

The Sudanese government, which hosted bin Laden in the 1990s before expelling him, is resisting pressure for U.N. peacekeepers to deploy in Darfur later this year. The U.N. mission would take over from an underfunded African Union force that has failed to end violence and protect civilians there.

U.N. chief spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the world body felt no need to respond to bin Laden's comments but would do whatever was required to ensure its staff's safety in Sudan.

"The people in Darfur are clearly in need of protection and of humanitarian assistance, and the international community's efforts are aimed at that," he told reporters.

Bin Laden call for Darfur jihad clouds UN mission - analysts

(Reuters/ST – 24th Apr. London) For now, there may be more symbol than substance in Osama bin Laden's call for jihad in Darfur, but that could change if U.N. peacekeepers go to Sudan's troubled western region, al Qaeda experts said on Monday.

Most doubted the Saudi-born militant had any direct links with Arab militias involved in the Darfur conflict, but said his appeal, in an audiotape broadcast on Sunday, could inspire violent resistance to any U.N. military mission there.

"I don't believe it will have an impact until there are U.N. troops in Darfur," said Kamil al-Tawil, an expert on Islamist groups who writes for London's al-Hayat newspaper.

"If Darfur becomes a U.N. mandate in spite of the Sudanese government's opposition, people will flock there. I fear it could be another Iraq," he said.

Bin Laden said the United States and Britain were seeking to dismember Sudan and urged his followers to fight them in Darfur, calling the United Nations an "infidel body" and a U.S. tool.

"I call on the mujahideen and their supporters in Sudan ... and the Arabian peninsula to prepare ... to wage a long-term war against the Crusaders in western Sudan," bin Laden said.

Sudan is resisting pressure for U.N. peacekeepers to deploy in Darfur. It has said it fears the presence of international troops would make Darfur a magnet for foreign jihadists.

Bin Laden resided in Sudan in the early 1990s, building his militant network and investing in roads and farming projects for the Islamist government there, until U.S. and Saudi pressure prompted Khartoum to expel him. Afghanistan was his next haven.

After militants blew up the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the United States bombed al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and a medicine factory in Khartoum that it said was an al Qaeda chemical weapons venture — a charge Sudan denied.

Bin Laden has rarely spoken publicly about Sudan from hiding, but his audiotape acknowledged rifts with Khartoum.

He criticised President Omar al-Bashir for signing an "unjust agreement" that could let the south secede and for failing to enforce Islamic sharia law across the country.

"He senses Sudan will soon become a failed state that will be dismantled," said bin Laden biographer Abdel-Bari Atwan.

He said the Qaeda leader had once told him in an interview that he had sent militants to Somalia shortly before U.S. troops joined an ill-fated U.N. military operation there in 1992.

"Now he is preparing his fighters to combat any U.N. troops sent to Darfur to replace African ones there," Atwan said.

Bin Laden appears to have become an embarrassment for the Sudanese government that once hosted him and a Foreign Ministry spokesman rejected his call for jihad in western Sudan.

"We are not concerned with any mujahideen or any crusade or any war with the international community. We are keen on reaching a peaceful solution to the crisis in Darfur," he said.

Alani said bin Laden was trying to project Darfur as an issue for the whole Islamic world, not just a local conflict.

"This undermines Khartoum's authority when they are already under pressure and on the international community's radar. They feel bin Laden is trying to hijack the Darfur issue," he said.

Alani said Arab militias, needing legitimacy after being publicly disowned by Khartoum, might respond to bin Laden. Any guerrilla attacks could sow doubts in Western capitals about the wisdom of committing troops to a U.N. operation in Darfur.

Bin Laden, on the run since Washington ousted his Taliban allies in Afghanistan in 2003 after the Sept. 11 attacks, wanted to burnish his pan-Islamic credentials, Alani said.

"He wants to show that al Qaeda has responsibility for every part of the Islamic world, to reinforce the universal nature of the jihad idea and of al Qaeda's role," he argued.

"Let Bashir and (U.S. President George W.) Bush know that this agreement is not worth the ink it was written with," he said, accusing the Americans of seeking to steal Sudan's oil.

Sudan could be vulnerable to al-Qaeda - experts

(AP/ST – 24th Apr. **Khartoum**) Sudan dismissed Osama bin Laden's renewed calls for "jihad" in its troubled Darfur region, saying on Monday that it will not harbour terrorists or allow foreign interference in the country.

But outside experts said the chaos in Sudan — already spilling over to troubled neighbours like Chad — is exactly the kind of place al-Qaeda has successfully exploited in the past and might again.

In a tape issuing more threats against the West on Sunday, bin Laden urged followers to go to Sudan to fight a proposed U.N. peacekeeping force for Darfur.

The call made headlines in most of Sudan's newspapers Monday, but Khartoum's leadership seemed eager to dissociate itself from bin Laden, who was based in the country through much of the 1990s but thrown out in 1996 and a spokesman for Sudan's foreign ministry said Sudan "will cooperate with the international community to solve the ongoing humanitarian crisis".

However, experts said that although Khartoum was trying to distance itself from al-Qaeda's leader, his words might nonetheless play into the government's hands.

Sudan's government has opposed the idea of shifting the peacekeeping mission in Darfur to the U.N. from the current African Union force, noted John Pendergast, a Sudan specialist with the International Crisis Group in Washington.

"The statement by bin Laden greatly serves their interest in Darfur," he said, and would "give a good pretext to those who are bent on preventing that from happening."

Yet few believe the government would deliberately allow al-Qaeda into Sudan again.

Instead, most experts said bin Laden's appeal was aimed at attracting the Muslim world's attention to his vision of a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West. Few expected large numbers of fighters to take bin Laden up on the call.

"He's trading on the prominence that Darfur has regained to push his own agenda and prove he's still around," said Eric Reeves, a Sudan specialist and a professor at Smith College in Massachusetts.

Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at the RAND think tank in Washington, said the prospect of Western troops in another Muslim country is "an issue he can exploit. It proves his point about the West's war against Islam."

Al-Qaeda has targeted Western forces in Africa before - including its attacks against U.S. troops trying to bring peace to Somalia in 1993.

On the streets of Khartoum, feelings ranged from scorn to angst.

Eating lunch at an open-air market in the Sudanese capital, Muhammadain Salih called bin Laden's call nonsense.

"I don't think his people can do anything in Darfur," said the 32-year merchant, himself from the western region. "The place is so remote, if (outside) Arabs went there, they'd be spotted straight away ... It's not like Iraq."

But Said Muhammad, a 35-year-old electrician, said "people should take what this guy says very seriously. Look at what he did in America."

Bin Laden was thrown out of Sudan by the authorities in 1996, under U.S. pressure, and Pendergast said he doubted authorities would let his group in again and give up the benefits of cooperation in the U.S.-led war on terror.

Furthermore, although Sudan's hardline Muslim government could be perceived as a potential "ideological ally" of al-Qaeda - and bin Laden may still have contacts he could take advantage of - the terrorist group has little clout with the population, he said.

Bin Laden, in his tape, said the goal of his new call for jihad "is not defending the Khartoum government but to defend Islam, its land and its people."

CPA

South Sudan child soldiers return home

(*IRIN/ST* – 24th Apr. **Nairobi**) At least 300 child soldiers in southern Sudan handed in their guns and uniforms on Monday and will return to their families as part of an ongoing demobilisation exercise supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the agency said.

"The exercise was a success," said Ben Parker, spokesman for UNICEF's southern Sudan office. The demobilisation at Khorfulus, near Malakal town in Upper Nile state, was the biggest of its kind since the signing in January 2005 of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), Parker said. Under the agreement, both parties committed to releasing all child soldiers in their custody.

UNICEF is supplying materials to schools in southern Sudan and encouraging communities to send their children to school in a bid to revive the education system, which was destroyed during two decades of war between the government and the SPLM/A. "It is time for these children to go home, go to school and enjoy the fruits of peace," said UNICEF Sudan representative Ted Chaiban.

The SPLM is now the governing party in southern Sudan.

"We are determined to demobilise all child soldiers this year," said Benjamin Goro Gimba, the executive director of the Southern Sudan Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration Commission — the southern Sudanese authority in charge of the process — during the ceremony.

Since 2001, an estimated 20,000 children from the former southern rebel forces have been disarmed and demobilised and returned to their families and communities with UNICEF support. However, there are an estimated 2,000 children still associated with the SPLA, mainly in noncombat roles and in remote areas.

The children who left the military on Monday were mainly from an armed group called "Mobile", which recently joined forces with the SPLA. Many of their families lived in villages around Khorfulus and would rejoin them immediately. Arrangements were being made to transport those from further away back to their homes.

The recruitment or use of children under age 18 in armed conflict is prohibited under international law.

GoNU

President Bashir visits Iran

(*AlAyaam/SUNA* – 25th Apr. **Tehran**) Speaking to the press in Tehran following talks with his Iranian counterpart, President Bashir said that Iran, as all other Islamic states, has the right to possess nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

The Sudanese president called for the consolidation of solidarity between Muslim states and underlined the need to unite in order to face the challenges they face. He said such unity over fundamental issues and improving the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) will consolidate the position of Muslim peoples regionally and internationally.

On his part, the Iranian leader also underlined the need for unity and underlined the need for the two countries to coordinate on a number of issues.

Presidency forms commission of inquiry on Amri

(*AlAyaam* – 25th Apr. **Khartoum, Dongola**) The Presidency of the Republic has formed a commission of inquiry to look into the recent developments that led to violence resulting in the death of at least three and more than 10 injured in Amri, northern Sudan.

The commission is composed of Bakri Hassan Saleh (Minister of the Presidency of the Republic and chairman of the commission), Mirghani Saleh (governor of Shimaliya [*Northern*] State) and the director of the Merowe Dam Implementation Unit.

A member of the committee representing the people affected by the dam says however that there are no signs the government is trying to meet their demands.

He says the police contingent in the area has been reinforced with 100 more personnel.

He said the people are prepared to preserve security in the area and pointed to the fact that they recently staged a march in protest in which 8,000 people participated peacefully.

On his part, a member of the local legislative assembly said it was regrettable that the issue took a violent turn. He said the demands of those victims could have been met through coordination between the federal and state governments but the federal government chose a unilateral approach to the issue.

The member said the blood of the victims who fell is a lot more expensive than the dam under construction itself.

DUP says the dam authorities should be disbanded

(*AlRai AlAam* – 25th Apr. **Khartoum**) The Democratic Unionist Party under Mohamed Osman el-Mirghani called upon the authorities yesterday to disband the Merowe Dam administrative body.

The party says the administration of the Merowe Dam could be likened to the governments of the Medieval Ages.

The party has strongly deplored the recent violence in which 3 people lost their lives and called upon the government to form a commission of inquiry to look into the issue.

Darfur/ Abuja talks/ Chad

AU to end Darfur peace talks if no agreement by end of April

(AP/ST – 24th Apr. **Abuja**) The African Union will end talks among warring parties in Sudan's Darfur region by April 30 if the Khartoum government and rebel factions fail to agree to a peace deal, a senior mediator said Sunday.

Sam Ibok, head of the African Union team mediating peace negotiations between the Sudan government and rebels fighting in Darfur, said his team was still working toward a United Nations-backed deadline to achieve a final peace agreement by the end of the month.

"We will respect the deadline and if there are no indications that a deal is possible, we will wind up" talks by April 30, Ibok told reporters at the talks in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

Representatives of the Sudanese government and the two Darfur rebel movements will be presented with the final draft agreement this week, Ibok said.

The document will represent a "just and acceptable compromise" to end the Darfur conflict if indeed the warring sides are interested in peace, the chief mediator said.

Southern Sudan

20 killed in interethnic clashes in Western Equatoria

(ST – 24th Apr. **Juba**) Over twenty people have been killed in a series of clashes between the Jur and the Dinka in Mvolo a disputed county between the Lakes state and Western Equatoria.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) further said in its weekly report that clashes have displaced over 18,000 people.

There have been a high number of rapes. The Dinkas have used rape as a particular method to intimidate the Jur community.

"This is an alarming development and reflects the inability of the state authorities to protect women" said the report.

Part of the Jur-Dinka tension lies in the fact that the Dinka would like to utilise Mvolo as grazing lands for their cattle.

The local authorities need to address this issue rapidly and restore calm.

The report did not give a date for these events but it covers the period from 18 to 24 April.

Since the Dinka/Zande/Moru Ethnic clashes erupted violently in Yambio and spreading to other Western Equatoria towns last year in November/December, inter-ethnic tension had been building up again.

During the clashes that time a lot of civilians from both sides died and the clashes led to the exodus of thousands of displaced Ethnic Dinka Bor from the state making their way towards their home counties.

Eastern Sudan

Government delegation for talks with Asmara and the Eastern Front

(*AlAyaam* – 25th Apr. **Khartoum**) A high level government delegation travels to the Eritrean capital today for talks with Eritrean government officials and representatives of the Eastern Front.

Talks with the Eastern Front will focus on agreeing on a timetable and agenda for talks between the Sudan government and the Eastern Front.

The Eastern Front has confirmed it will meet the government officials.

Other Developments

Sudan's Turabi considered apostate

(*ST* – 23rd Apr. **Khartoum**) A Sudanese Islamist leader who once protected Al Qaeda supremo Osama Bin Laden was branded an apostate by the country's Muslim scholars on Sunday for taking a liberal stand on women's rights.

The clerics proposed trying Hassan al-Turabi for apostasy following recent declarations by the Popular Congress Party leader that women were equal to men, had the right to marry a Christian or a Jew and could even lead prayers.

"Turabi should declare repentance or face the Sharia Hadd for heresy," said the statement by the Muslim Scholars Committee, which has the support of the government and controls many of the country's mosques.

Hadd is a word in Islamic law that applies to punishments inflicted for some of the most serious offenses. The traditional punishment for heresy or apostasy in Sharia law is the death penalty.

During a conference in Khartoum earlier this month, Turabi - the country's most famous Muslim theologian - sparked an intense debate by expressing liberal views on Sudanese society and Islam.

The white-turbaned 74-year-old cleric described the Muslim teachings that a Muslim woman should not marry a Christian or a Jew as "backward" and that adherence to such principles was aimed at hampering women's rights.

He sanctioned mixed prayers so long as men and women did not sit too close to each other, in order to avoid "arousing sexual feelings" that could distract worshippers from their praying.

Turabi, who spent several years aggressively promoting a hardliner Islamist ideology, also said a woman's testimony was worth a man's and even more in cases when a woman commands superior expertise in a specific field.

Once the power behind President Omar al-Bashir's throne, Turabi fell from grace in 2000 and was detained several times. He was last released in June 2005 and remains one of Sudan's leading opposition figures.

It was on Turabi's advice that former Sudanese president Jaafar Nimeiri ordered in 1985 the execution by hanging at age 75 of Mahmoud Mohamed Taha for refusing to recant his unorthodox views on Islam.

Taha, who founded the Republican Brothers organisation and held liberal views notably on the place of women in society, was then Turabi's arch rival.

The Islamist leader now faces a taste of his own medicine but defiantly reiterated his views several times in recent interviews and lectures, sparking the ire of Muslim traditionalists worldwide.

He hit back at his critics on Saturday night during a gathering at the University of Khartoum, accusing them of defending "stale ideas". He justified his statement on marriage by explaining that Christians and Jews are "People of the Book" and therefore not infidels.

Turabi also advocated dialogue with the West in order to improve the image of Islam and stressed that jihad [holy struggle] should only be waged "in self-defence and not in aggression against others".

He deplored that the West had "a wrong idea and a bad image of Islam". "We seek to present a good model and I have even spoken with the Pope on this matter," he added.

It was Turabi, then the gray eminence of Bashir's Islamist regime, who invited Bin Laden to Sudan in 1990 and provided him with a safe haven from 1991 to 1996, when the Al Qaeda chief was eventually expelled under mounting international pressure on Khartoum.