

Opening Remarks, Darfur Peace Talks, Tripoli, Libya

Salim Ahmed Salim, November 7th 2007

Friends, countrymen, Africans

Lend me your ears!

I come to raise your spirits not to bury them,

For today, a turning point in history is reached.

In what history? You may ask - only time will tell

Indeed, the toll of time is told in my weary eyes,

Who have, for many moons been set on this sight;

This night, whose many nights without sleep did produce

My fellow Africans, people are dying! Many years from now, history will judge our actions. Will we be numbered among those who stood by and bickered over petty disputes while unimaginable atrocities were committed? No. I call on all of you, not only as Africans, but also as human beings, to rise up and seize this opportunity to write the history books. To write verses of love and compassion, and to not stain it with the blood of innocent civilians. *Today* we are gathered here with a very specific purpose, and that purpose is not only to end the brutal conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan, but to also ensure that it stays that way.

My fellow Africans, peace is at hand. We have asked the world for help, and the world has delivered. The UNAMID force is on its way and their deployment will open the floodgates for aid and, eventually, a resolution to the humanitarian crisis which currently grips Darfur. It is true, that many of us here have blood on our hands, but that is in the past now. We are here to build bridges and what happened in the past is water under those bridges. *Today* we must forget about the past and focus on the future, a future of peace, stability and dialogue.

My fellow Africans, the world's hearts may be with us, but time is against us. With every passing moment, more people are being displaced, more people go hungry - more people die. A miscalculation here, a poor decision there, these can be reversed. Death is irreversible. We, as Africans... as Humans, call for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Once we have established this, then and only then may we move on to the urgent task of disarmament and the implementation of bringing humanitarian aid to the people who really need it. *Today* we end the killing and begin the healing.

My fellow Africans, In the long term, once these goals have been established, we can move into addressing the deeper causes of this conflict - issues of property rights, land rights and the sharing of power and wealth. These are important issues, nobody is denying that. But we can only move on these issues when we have opened the channels of dialogue between the powers - and this is the dialogue which we intend to facilitate today. This is the dialogue which will ensure that the important work we do here today is not undone in the long term. *Today*, we make it happen and we make it last.

My fellow Africans, the world is watching. There was a deafening silence when Rwanda went the way it did. People are no longer willing to stomach the injustice and violence which wracks... and wrecks Darfur. This is our time, we must rise to this challenge, we must make this our peace - and we *will* do it, piece by piece. A war-torn Africa will never achieve the African dream of development, peace benefits us all. *Today*... we right the wrongs; we stop the killing, we heal the wounds that have spilled civil blood on civil hands. We begin... **today**.