

When Killers Become Victims: Darfur in Context

Sean Brooks

Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (New York, Pantheon Books, 2009).

DARFUR. In 2002, the word meant nothing to most Americans, and little more to the country's journalists, academics, and foreign policy makers. A scant seven years later, though, Darfur represents for many "a place where evil lived."¹ What happened in the intervening years is an interesting story of grassroots mobilization, in which hundreds of thousands of people learned cogent details about the crimes of Darfur, which they repeated to their friends and families and elected representatives. They explained first and foremost that the Sudanese government and its proxy militia, known as the *janjaweed*, were responsible for a large-scale campaign of death and destruction in western Sudan. Their stories highlighted the innocent civilians directly targeted by the government's counterinsurgency operation against rebel movements in Darfur, and invariably listed the grim details of the hundreds of thousands dead, the millions internally displaced, and the facts surrounding the world's largest emergency humanitarian operation. Urging a response from the United States government, many also highlighted how these ruthless attacks on specific ethnic groups and their villages constituted the twenty-first century's first genocide.

Where did these Americans, and later many more around the world, acquire their information? At the beginning, the established human rights organizations—Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and International Crisis Group (ICG)—provided some of the only detailed reporting and advocacy on the emergency that erupted in Darfur in the spring of 2003. These organizations have continued to publish regular reports on the situation, just as humanitarian organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières and CARE continue to issue urgent appeals to support critical relief operations on the ground. In

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the summer of 2004, though, leaders from many human rights groups, a few humanitarian organizations, Sudanese in the diaspora, and other concerned organizations came together at a meeting coordinated by the Committee on Conscience at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. to discuss the situation in Darfur and how to build a more effective advocacy campaign in the United States. Out of this meeting, the Save Darfur Coalition was born—its purpose to help coordinate ongoing advocacy efforts and build a more effective campaign to raise awareness about the violence in Darfur, with the goal of urging the American government to respond.

While a number of groups signed the coalition's unity statement that summer and over the course of the next year, Save Darfur as an organization grew slowly. Until mid-2005, the coalition's staff consisted of a single coordinator with a limited human rights background, a handful of interns, and strategic assistance from a firm specializing in non-profit consulting. An advisory group for the coalition consisted of some individuals with knowledge of Sudanese politics and conflicts in this region of Africa, but the small staff itself lacked such experience. In that first year, though, Darfur as an issue began to emerge as a hot-button item, especially among American college students and those following international human rights crises. The Save Darfur Coalition's efforts to engage grassroots activists contributed to this growing awareness, and overtime the coalition's popularity and resources grew and beget greater popularity and resources. The moment of 'take-off' for Save Darfur probably occurred in April 2006 when its small staff, with the support of its member organizations, held a rally on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. that attracted an estimated 50,000 people—as well as noteworthies like then-Senator Barack Obama and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. Six days after the rally, which garnered international headlines, one Darfuri rebel movement and the Sudanese government signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), thanks in large measure to the heavy pressure that was directly applied by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick. Equally important is the fact that many believed that the agreement would pave the way for a UN peacekeeping force to take over the beleaguered peacekeeping operations of the African Union.

In the days after the signing, some staff within Save Darfur, as well as a number of activists, questioned whether an important step toward ending the crisis had finally been achieved. It became increasingly clear, though, in May of 2006 that the two other contending Darfuri rebel groups would not sign the agreement and that the Sudanese government would continue to object to a transfer of peacekeeping operations from the AU to UN.² Save Darfur and the advocacy community subsequently took their lead from a report put out by ICG in June 2006 that stated, "If the DPA is not to leave Darfur more fragmented and conflict-prone than before, the international community must rapidly take practical measures to shore up its security provisions, improve prospects for the displaced to return home, bring in the holdouts and rapidly deploy a robust UN peacekeeping force with Chapter VII authority."³

So rather than shutter its doors, Save Darfur pressed forward with its calls for a UN mission, unhindered access for humanitarian workers to

reach those in need, and further regional and international diplomacy to craft a peace deal that could work. A surge of new online activists and their generous donations buoyed this stage of the campaign. For the next two years, the coalition grew rapidly and focused on establishing international partnerships, running a multi-million dollar advertising campaign in the United States and abroad, and supporting larger-scale events in U.S. cities and around the world. Even Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir took notice of these multi-dimensional efforts, and in January 2007, actually invited Governor Bill Richardson as a citizen-envoy to meet with him to negotiate ways to improve the security and humanitarian conditions in Darfur. Save Darfur helped Richardson prepare for the trip, and the Sudanese government even welcomed the participation of Save Darfur's International Director, Ambassador Larry Rossin (a former American diplomat and UN peacekeeping official in Haiti and Kosovo), as part of the official delegation.

However, Richardson's trip ultimately failed to achieve any lasting political success, and in its aftermath a few months later, the Save Darfur Coalition received one of its first major rebukes, delivered in the form of an essay published in the *London Review of Books*, and written by a well-known professor of government at Columbia University, Mahmood Mamdani.⁴ Mamdani's article drew parallels between the conflicts in Iraq and Darfur, questioning why only one of these conflicts was labeled a genocide, and attacked Darfur activists for depoliticizing the region's violence and supporting an external military intervention in Sudan. The force of Mamdani's critique raised some eyebrows in academic and leftist circles, but largely fell silent in the mainstream media and human rights community. The president of Save Darfur wrote a letter to the editor that defended the coalition's own advocacy and stated that the coalition's "support of a multilateral protection force for the civilians of Darfur" should not be confused with an intervention to "overthrow . . . Sudan's government."⁵ In the aftermath of Mamdani's article, an adviser to Save Darfur, who was a co-founder of Women for Women International and former negotiator for the Palestinian Liberation Organization, also met privately with Mamdani to try to resolve any misunderstandings—seeing substantial ground for general agreement with Mamdani on the necessary political solutions to resolve the Darfur issue, and also agreeing with him on the need to promote further Sudanese, African, and Arab voices in the global advocacy campaign.⁶ With the exception, though, of two subsequent encounters between Mamdani and Save Darfur staff at conferences—one Save Darfur-funded conference at Columbia in which Mamdani spoke on a panel and another Save Darfur-funded conference in Kampala, Uganda—the debate lay largely dormant.⁷

Mamdani's Case

With the publication of *Saviors and Survivors* in the spring of 2009, Mamdani has reentered the fray, this time selecting Save Darfur as his primary target. Denouncing the coalition for its ignorance of the historical and political realities in Darfur and Sudan, he writes that his book "is an ar-

gument against those who substitute moral certainty for knowledge, and who feel virtuous even when acting on the basis of total ignorance.”⁸ His

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more damning charges contend that Save Darfur intentionally portrayed the conflict simplistically as ‘Arab’ versus ‘African’ to appeal to Americans’ post-9/11 fear and antipathy of ‘savagely’ Arab jihadists. He writes, “When Save Darfur advocates described the nature of evil in Darfur, it is unfailingly in the language of race.”⁹ This narrative, Mamdani

argues, also serves as the basis for Save Darfur’s erroneous claim of genocide, which for American activists opens the door to humanitarian intervention directed by major international powers against weak states.

Mamdani does not stop with this sovereignty-based argument against new doctrines, like the UN’s Responsibility to Protect, which are espoused by liberal interventionists and hawkish neo-conservatives alike. He also insinuates that the coalition is driven by an expressly anti-Arab intent:

The Save Darfur lobby in the US has turned the tragedy of the people in Darfur into a knife with which to slice Africa by demonizing one group of Africans, African Arabs. For undergirding the claim that a genocide has occurred in Darfur is another, born of colonial historiography, that Arabs in Sudan—and elsewhere in the African continent—are settlers who came in from the outside and whose rights must be subordinate to those of indigenous natives.¹⁰

Much of the middle third of the book, therefore, details the historical relations between tribes in Darfur to demonstrate that Arabs were no less indigenous to the region than Africans. After setting this record straight, Mamdani also describes how the recent ecological crisis of the Sahel and the proxy wars in Chad between Qaddafi and Reagan serve as important backdrops for the current conflict in Darfur.

Having spent the first 230 pages of his book undermining Save Darfur and then restoring the historical context of Darfur, Mamdani finally presents his version of events from 1987 until the present. Relying primarily on secondary sources, much of Mamdani’s story, which describes the root causes of tribal tensions in the region, has been told repeatedly by scholars like Alex de Waal and Julie Flint. What’s partly new is Mamdani’s submission that one tribe, the Fur, “first claimed ‘genocide’ and attempts at ‘a total holocaust’ in 1989” at a reconciliation conference that ended two years of skirmishes. He highlights this portrayal of victimization to show how both Arab and African tribes increasingly “saw themselves as victims” and adopted “exclusionist rhetoric that inevitably opened them to outside influences that further racialized and inflamed the discourse.”¹¹ This analysis most resembles *When Victims Become Killers* (2001)—Mamdani’s

controversial work on the Rwandan genocide—as it judiciously examines the breakdown in relations between groups and traditional methods of conflict resolution. Mamdani also correctly highlights the history of double-marginalization of Darfuri Arab tribes, from which the government recruited the *janjaweed*, and explains their mobilization. While Save Darfur as an organization has for years intentionally avoided framing the conflict as ‘Arab’ versus ‘African,’ the advocacy movement should consider integrating further historical details in its narrative of the Darfur conflict, especially as the message of Darfuris in the diaspora and of certain rebel leaders in exile grows increasingly ideological and the fate of Darfuri Arab tribes remains severely neglected.

And Yet, Is Mamdani Wrong?

Anger blinds analysis, and many parts of *Saviors and Survivors* read like an angry harangue against the Darfur advocacy movement, the history of British imperialism, and American foreign policy in Sudan and all of Africa—often done in a tone that equates all three. Somewhere in the midst of these excoriations Mamdani also takes time to account briefly for the mass killings and displacements that have occurred in Darfur over the last six years, although in this telling of the Darfur conflict, the Sudanese government avoids the long-arm of Mamdani’s wrath. He writes, for example, “[T]he conflict in Darfur began as a civil war in which the government was originally not involved.”¹² This sentence is especially interesting since it seems to contradict Mamdani’s own writing from 2004 in which he states, “the security cabal in Khartoum . . . responded [to the first Darfuri rebel attacks in what became the civil war] by arming and unleashing several militia, known as the Janjawid. The result is a spiral of state-sponsored violence and indiscriminate spread of weaponry.”¹³ While opposing external intervention as a solution, back then Mamdani does hint at the International Criminal Court as an avenue for investigating crimes committed in Darfur.

In Mamdani’s new view of Sudanese politics on display in *Saviors and Survivors*, victims seem to have a greater responsibility than their perpetrators to uphold the sovereignty of their states. Mamdani argues, for example, that “the key debate in Sudan on Darfur is between those who see internal reform as the best way out of the crisis and those who call for an externally driven humanitarian intervention.”¹⁴ This dichotomous presentation fails to consider sufficiently the disastrous escalation in 2003 of an ongoing—but relatively contained—conflict: the Sudanese government’s calculated campaign of terror in Darfur. The 2004 Mamdani recognized this fact by writing that even though “the janjawiid were not a single organization under a unified command . . . [w]e must hold the patron responsible for the actions of the proxy. Those who start and feed fires should be held responsible for doing so; but let us not forget that it may be easier to start a fire than to put it out.”¹⁵ Yet the 2009 Mamdani treats the counterinsurgency campaign of President Bashir as a *fait accompli* and something not to be lingered upon at great length. Mamdani suggests, instead, that what is most needed now to end the conflict is the

emergence of “an internal force” representative of Darfuri society and “capable of effective leadership” to sign a peace agreement with a conciliatory counterpart in Khartoum.¹⁶ As Khartoum continues to make considerable mischief in Darfur,¹⁷ this prescription for conflict resolution sounds remarkably similar to the message of hardliners in the Israeli and Palestinian conflict: the past does not matter for negotiations, our controversial policies in the present will not affect the viability of negotiations, and the future is wholly dependent on a currently unwilling peace partner.

Ironically then, Mamdani’s apologetics for the Khartoum regime are most striking when juxtaposed with his condemnation of the recent employment of collective punishment by the Israeli government. In *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (2005), Mamdani writes:

The practice of collective punishment involves the denial of both individual responsibility and individual agency . . . In the annals of the modern state, the practice of collective punishment is identified with colonialism and racism. It has involved abrogating notions of individual responsibility central to the rule of law in favor of collective responsibility for all political acts . . . Security triumphs rights.¹⁸

Having provided such a useful description, it is hard to believe that Mamdani avoids labeling the Sudanese government’s policies in Darfur as a form of collective punishment in *Saviors and Survivors*. Surely the widespread targeting of civilians—rather than rebels—between 2003 and 2005 qualifies as such. Surely the years of obstruction and the recent expulsion of humanitarian aid to the victims reminds us of Gaza.¹⁹ And surely the refusal to prosecute government officials or paramilitary leaders for crimes committed reminds us of America’s dirty wars in Central America or of certain decisions made by U.S. officials with regard to Iraq.

Yet, instead of condemnation, Mamdani gives the reader only history and “context” for the Sudanese government’s actions. References to reports from Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International on Darfur do not appear

within the pages of *Saviors and Survivors*. Instead of engaging these accounts in any way, Mamdani primarily focuses on Save Darfur’s labeling of the conflict as “genocide” and the coalition’s past misuse of mortality figures. In doing so, though, Mamdani—wittingly or

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not—promotes the Sudanese government’s central narrative that Darfur was and is chiefly a tribal conflict that spiraled out of control thanks to foreign interference and exaggeration. So ready to draw parallels between Save Darfur and the Bush administration’s media tactics in the “war on terror,” Mamdani never acknowledges that Khartoum has been operating its own spin-room.

At every stage, Bashir and his inner circle have effectively framed international concern regarding the crisis as the product of a duplicitous western campaign to destabilize the country. In a detailed analysis of Bashir's speeches in regional summits and forums, Sarah Washburne shows how the Sudanese president "constructs a perception of the malicious 'other,' which serves to demarcate the boundaries of control over internal predicaments. When discussing why the government is not culpable in terms of internal security, Bashir places the blame on conspiracy, a dangerous media, or colonialism."²⁰ While Mamdani's notes and bibliography include dozens of references to western news articles, activists' statements, and advocacy organizations, he includes exactly zero direct quotes from Bashir and exactly zero articles about Darfur from the local, largely state-controlled Sudanese media. Lacking this layer of analysis, Mamdani foolishly claims in an online conversation about *Saviors and Survivors* that "the Sudan government's weakness lay in that it lacked its own version of soft power."²¹ The rampant conspiracy theories about Darfur, especially in the Sudanese and Arabic press, belie such a weakness.²²

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In the end, dealing a blow to the new propagators of imperialism—the so-called "human rights fundamentalists"²³—is the true concern of *Saviors and Survivors*. While Mamdani attempts to paint Darfur as yet another scene of battle between western imperialists and their resisters, many advocates in Africa and the Arab world have not fallen into this same intellectual trap set by President Bashir. Polls conducted in six Muslim countries in 2007, for example, revealed genuine concern about the ongoing crisis in Darfur; another set of polls in 2009 supported these findings and even suggested surprising levels of popular Arab and African support for the ICC's case against Bashir.²⁴ In Africa, the Darfur Consortium—which Mamdani mentions in only one line—consists of over fifty civil society organizations working around the continent to pressure African governments to promote a just, peaceful, and sustainable end to the ongoing political and humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Their sister group, the Arab Coalition for Darfur, was founded in 2008 by over thirty Arab organizations. They have also shown the courage to expose the underbelly of Bashir's anti-western narrative for what it is and to compare the gross human rights abuses in Sudan to other violations by autocratic governments and occupying powers in the region.

Stripping Victims of Agency

On his mission to teach Save Darfur a lesson, Mamdani himself ignores critical elements of the violence in Darfur, and in the process, strips the

victims and perpetrators of their political agency. (Similar charges have been leveled at Mamdani's treatment of the Rwandan genocide in *When Victims Become Killers*.²⁵) Mamdani is right to highlight the historical and political realities that led to the most recent outbreak of fighting in Darfur at the beginning of this decade. Save Darfur and others in the movement have been guilty at times of simplifying the nature of the conflict in order to attract and retain supporters. Indeed, Save Darfur shares this fault with advocacy organizations working on a whole host of other domestic and international issues, all of which vie for the same media space. Mamdani is right to point out the problematic consequences of such simplification. But Mamdani is wrong to use such instances to reason away the catastrophic violence and its impact on Darfuri society. Unable to delink his frustration with uninformed American liberal (or neo-conservative) interventionism from his analysis of facts on the ground, his book attacks the victims of violence for distrusting a brutal regime in Khartoum and seeking external assistance from the international community. To that end, he demeans Darfuris living in IDP and refugee camps as "consumers" who have abdicated their responsibility as "citizens" and committed all their hopes for salvation to humanitarian intervention.²⁶

Is this the same callous advice Mamdani would give to displaced civilians in Sri Lanka caught between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan military, or to innocent Palestinians in Gaza caught between the violence of Hamas and Israel? To be sure, it is true that there exists genuine concern about the dependency psychology that may well be growing within a number of war-affected Darfuri communities. But these facts notwithstanding, Mamdani shows no willingness to explicate the political limitations of the 4.7 million Darfuris still affected by the violence of the last six years. Reading Mamdani, the Darfur and Sudan of the last twenty years appear like an oasis of freedom of expression, association, and political mobilization. Nothing could be further from the truth, as noted by Alex de Waal in his critique of *Saviors and Survivors*.²⁷ Having endured an oppressive military regime since 1989 and then a campaign of ethnic cleansing, it is not surprising that Darfuris have struggled to unify under various rebel movements or to put forward a civil society alternative today. The last serious peace talks between the Darfur rebels and the Sudanese government revealed a glaring gap in the capacity of Darfuri groups to even state their collective demands clearly and to negotiate effectively.²⁸ Since the failed Darfur Peace Agreement of 2006, the vicious cycle of rebel fragmentation has only made the voices of the average Darfuri even more difficult to discern. One must remember that facing similar human capacity challenges and the divide-and-conquer tactics of Khartoum, the rebels in South Sudan remained internally divided for years before unifying around the leadership and vision of John Garang.

Having so easily dismissed the concerns of three million displaced Darfuris by labeling them "consumers" as opposed to responsible "citizens," it is natural that Mamdani can find no moral or political role for an advocacy organization like Save Darfur that works to amplify these concerns. To be

fair, the advocacy movement must acknowledge that it has been slow to recognize its influence over the decision-making of Darfuri rebels who assume that the advocacy movement will remain quiet about their negotiating intransigence and human rights abuses in Darfur and neighboring Chad. With that said, though, some of the most useful efforts of the more mature Save Darfur Coalition have sought to provide platforms to Darfuris to tell their own stories and to provide time and space for Darfuris in the diaspora and civil society to articulate their concerns in future negotiations with the Sudanese government. The coalition funds and supports, for example, various efforts to engage these leaders in the peace process, given that both the Sudanese government and the personal ambitions and ideologies of Darfuri rebel leaders have stripped average Darfuri citizens of these opportunities. Not only does Mamdani fail to engage this part of Save Darfur's work, he fails to acknowledge the importance of empowering victims in Darfur who are pitted in an asymmetrical set of negotiations about their futures with the politically astute Sudanese government.²⁹

In fact, based on Mamdani's writings, it is an open question as to whether he has greater animus for the policies of the Bush administration or the grassroots mobilizing tools of the Save Darfur Coalition, which he regards as the "humanitarian face of the War on Terror."³⁰ Such outlandish claims demonstrate the shallowness of Mamdani's research of Save Darfur. All of his quotes detailing the supposed race-based tactics and neo-imperial objectives

of Save Darfur come from activists, journalists, or celebrities who are not formally linked to the organization.³¹ The book lacks reference to even a single interview with any members of the Save Darfur Coalition or its close partners. As the above narrative of the coalition's emergence eludes, such interviews would have revealed a more interesting history of an organization that ultimately recognized its policy deficiencies and attempted to fill them with highly knowledgeable and experienced Sudanese and American policy makers and human rights defenders.

While never the war-mongering caricature that Mamdani paints, this more mature organization has added increasing layers of nuance and depth to its policy recommendations. Whereas Mamdani contends that the coalition irresponsibly demands "military intervention rather than political reconciliation, punishment rather than peace," the coalition never advocated for an Iraq-style intervention.³² Calls for a no-fly zone and a Chapter 7 mandate for a UN peacekeeping force have been the most hawkish appeals of Save Darfur, and the coalition has even stopped advocating for a no-fly zone after listening to the concerns of humanitarian groups on the ground and heeding the advice of other experts. The coalition's policy prescriptions have instead consistently called for a fully resourced UN-led

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peacekeeping force and internationally supported peace process. Other policies like the coalition's support for the International Criminal Court's proceedings against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, while controversial to some, nevertheless reveal a comprehensive understanding of the current conflict in Darfur and politics across Sudan. Notwithstanding a difference of opinion on the ICC matter, great overlap and little difference actually exists between the coalition and Mamdani's own policy recommendations for the Obama administration on how to resolve the crisis in Darfur and hold together Sudan's fraying parts.³³

On the other hand, some actors, writers, and activists who advocate on behalf of Darfur's victims continue to distort the realities of Darfur, thereby giving continuing credence to Mamdani's accusations. At a time

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when violent deaths and hunger in Darfur have reached their lowest levels since the beginning of the conflict, some individuals have chosen hyperbolic messaging over a realistic accounting of the still dangerous and unpredictable conditions in Darfur today. For Save Darfur, it could have benefited more

from Mamdani's critique before the summer of 2006, when the coalition first began to fully appreciate that the American government alone could not "save" Darfur or, for that matter, Sudan. At that time, the coalition decided to establish an international component to its advocacy that focused on forming working partnerships with leading NGOs in Africa, the Arab world, and Europe. These partners, often with the financial support of Save Darfur, crafted tailored messages about the conflict in Darfur that would particularly resonate with people in their countries and move their governments to support peacekeeping, peacemaking, and political reform in Sudan. Yet, nothing about this important element of the coalition's advocacy is part of Mamdani's depiction of Save Darfur.

Detailing the coalition's close partnerships with Arab and African civil society organizations would have forced Mamdani to alter many of his more slanderous conclusions about the objectives and strategies of the coalition. After reviewing Save Darfur's efforts in other countries, perhaps Mamdani would have realized that the coalition's advertising in American media markets was not designed to racialize Arab perpetrators, make Americans feel good once again about their powers abroad, or engender a constituency to support unilateral intervention in Sudan—but only to wake up Americans to a human rights crisis of the first order happening once again below the radar of most American policy makers. The coalition's 30-second advertisement with the Arab American Institute that aired throughout the Arab world in early 2007 strikes at the heart of Mamdani's almost conspiratorial

claims about the coalition's motivations. Rather than marginalizing the issue of Iraq or stereotyping Arabs, the appeal from Darfuris in their native Arabic ends with a note of shared suffering: "Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, DARFUR. We must pray for all of them together."³⁴ This ability to amplify and translate the very real pain of Darfuris for a diverse array of audiences may ultimately explain why so many people have responded to Save Darfur's campaigns around the world.

The Politics of Idealism and Pragmatism

In *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, Mamdani warns us that "the danger of bringing good and evil into politics cannot be underestimated."³⁵ This warning also seems to underpin U.S. President Barack Obama's preferred foreign policy strategy of diplomatic engagement. His new Special Envoy for Sudan, Major General Scott J. Gration, has spent his first seven months on the job aggressively negotiating with Khartoum to "unclench its fist" and take important steps towards resolving the conflict in Darfur and salvaging the peace agreement that brought an end to the decades of civil war between the north and south. Gration also demonstrates no great concern about the debate over genocide and believes that a resolution in Darfur is directly associated with the issues of reform, justice, protection, peace, and democracy for all Sudanese.

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Saviors and Survivors, then, may already be outdated, as it ultimately seeks to demonstrate the manifold consequences of the Bush administration's Manichean "war on terror" by taking us to Darfur. Mamdani's book cannot accomplish this feat, though, without dismissing the voices of victims and downplaying what at one point Mamdani calls "Bashir's own little war on terror."³⁶ There is no question that in some instances Save Darfur overreached in its advocacy—but its intentions have always been similar to those who advocate for unheard victims in places like Iraq and Palestine (both causes that seem very close to Mamdani's heart). To Save Darfur's credit, the coalition has constantly been evolving and seeking to redress its deficiencies and errors. Its real test will be how it responds to the decisions of an administration that purports to understand the complexities of the issues in Sudan and desires to craft a comprehensive strategy to deal with them.

Advocating for American leadership and a responsible set of policies that will create opportunities for Sudanese to reach their own durable political solutions is certainly more challenging than raising an urgent alarm about mass atrocities and genocide. Showing few recent signs of internal reform, the Sudanese government now seems interested in playing up the

relative stability in Darfur to draw attention away from its failure to fully implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the South, and its unwillingness to pursue further democratization and political liberalization in the North. To avoid future bloodshed and the possible violent disintegration of Sudan, Save Darfur and others should continue to be a political and human rights watchdog for the Obama administration as it attempts to facilitate an inclusive Darfur peace process, encourage free and fair elections in Sudan in 2010, and deal with the seismic consequences of a referendum for southern secession in 2011.

Notes

¹“Darfur Was Just a Place Where Evil Lived.” Interview with Mahmoud Mamdani. Inter Press Service June 19, 2009. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200906190264.html>.

²The AU first sent monitors to Darfur in June 2004 and subsequently deployed a peacekeeping force of over 8,000 by the spring of 2006. The European Union and United States provided a bulk of the funding for the mission, but became increasingly skeptical of its abilities. In March 2006, the AU extended its mission for six months to give its mediators more time to reach a peace agreement and to allow the UN time to prepare for an eventual takeover. In the background of a failing peace agreement reached in May 2006, the UN Security Council approved a peacekeeping mission in August 2006; however, it spent almost another year negotiating with the Sudanese government over the composition of the force. Finally in July 2007, the UNSC authorized a hybrid peacekeeping with the AU that satisfied Khartoum’s demands. This formal transition from AU to the AU/UN joint peacekeeping force (UNAMID) took place in January 2008.

³International Crisis Group. “Darfur’s Fragile Peace Agreement.” June 20, 2006.

⁴Mamdani, Mahmood. “The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency.” *The London Review of Books*. March 8, 2007. http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n05/mamd01_.html.

⁵Rubenstein, David. Letter to the Editor. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n07/letters.html>

⁶Mamdani later alleged that this off-the-record meeting and series of email exchanges with Amjad Atallah, who only later became a senior director at Save Darfur, counted as a serious attempt to engage with Save Darfur after writing the first piece on Darfur cited above. Except for a request to Mr. Atallah for information about Save Darfur’s structure and finances, Mamdani made no other contact with the coalition or directed any other inquiries to it.

⁷The Columbia University conference took place on December 2007 and the Kampala conference was organized by the Darfur Consortium in July 2008.

⁸Mamdani, Mahmood. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009, 7.

⁹*Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 300.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 245.

¹²*Ibid.*, 17.

¹³Mamdani, Mahmood. “How can we name the Darfur crisis: Preliminary thoughts on Darfur.” Pambazuka News 177 (October 7, 2004) <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/24982>.

¹⁴Mamdani, Mahmood. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009, 292.

¹⁵Mamdani, “How can we name the Darfur crisis: Preliminary thoughts on Darfur.” Pambazuka News 177 (October 7, 2004) <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/24982>.

¹⁶Mamdani, Mahmood. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009, 296.

¹⁷The Mo Ibrahim Foundation, for instance, attempted to organize a gathering of over 300 Darfuri civil society leaders in Addis Ababa in May 2009 to set out a common negotiating position. The conference was canceled at the last moment, however, when the Sudanese government blocked the safe passage of a number of the attendees.

¹⁸Mamdani, Mahmood. *Good Muslims, Bad Muslims*. Random House, 2005, 215.

¹⁹Justice Richard Goldstone makes this parallel in his appeal to western governments to support possible ICC investigations for war crimes committed in Gaza and Israel in January 2009. See "Justice in Gaza" New York Times 17 September 2009.

²⁰Washburne, Sarah. "Legitimation Crisis: Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order." *Khamisin* 3 (Spring 2009): 68.

²¹Mamdani, Mahmood. "Mamdani Responds to His Critics II." <http://blogs.ssrc.org/darfur/2009/05/12/mamdani-responds-to-his-critics-ii/>

²²Darfur as a secret Zionist plot to divide Sudan, or an American effort to steal the country's resources, are regularly discussed by journalists in Sudanese and Egyptian papers, as well as many pan-Arab publications. As mentioned, Bashir and the National Congress Party routinely propagate these stories in the Sudanese and Arabic press.

²³Mamdani, Mahmood. "Beware of human rights fundamentalism." *Pambazuka News* 425 (March 26, 2009). <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/55143>.

²⁴"Arab and Muslim Public Opinion Takes the Lead on Darfur." Arab American Institute and Zogby International. May 7, 2007; "Many Approve of ICC Indictment of Bashir: Poll of 7 Muslim and African Nations." *World Public Opinion* July 16, 2009. http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/btjusticehuman_rightsra/624.php?lb=braf&pnt=624&nid=&id=

²⁵See David Rieff's critique of When Victims Become Killers. "Problematizing Evil." *The New Republic* 224 (May 21, 2001): 42-7.

²⁶Mamdani, Mahmood. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009, 296.

²⁷Mamdani, Mahmood. "How can we name the Darfur crisis: Preliminary thoughts on Darfur."

²⁸Brooks, Sean. "Enforcing a Turning Point and Imposing a Deal: An Analysis of the Darfur Abuja Negotiations of 2006," *Journal of International Negotiation* 13 (2008).

²⁹Mamdani actually claims that Save Darfur and its allies "worry that bringing together political figures and representatives of civil society for an open discussion risks conveying a feeling that normalcy is returning to Darfur, when it is actually the depth of the crisis that should be emphasized" (297). This statement ignores multiple efforts by Save Darfur and its partners to bring together the diaspora and civil society leaders for this very purpose.

³⁰Mamdani, Mahmood. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009, 7.

³¹In attempting to make the case that Save Darfur uses the language of race to "describe the nature of evil in Darfur," Mamdani's lone reference from the coalition is an employment recruitment letter (64). All other examples are from non-coalition affiliated journalists, newspapers, and organizations. Mamdani acknowledges that the unity statement of the coalition found on the website avoids race-based terminology.

³²Mamdani, Mahmood. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009, 17. Despite Mamdani's charges, Save Darfur never used the slogan: "Out of Iraq, into Darfur."

³³Mamdani signed an open letter to President Obama around the time of the publication of *Saviors and Survivors*. The policy recommendations in the letter (the appointment of a special envoy with sufficient diplomatic resources for negotiations, financial and logistical support for the AU/UN peacekeeping force, and American support for the CPA among other things) were remarkably similar to the calls from Save Darfur at the very same time. Furthermore, the letter was signed by six individuals with whom Save Darfur has collaborated in the past.

³⁴Arab American Institute's Darfur website (in Arabic); <http://www.aaiusa.org/darfur>.

³⁵Mamdani, Mahmood. *Good Muslims, Bad Muslims*. Random House, 2005, 254.

³⁶Mamdani, Mahmood. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009, 281.