

Darfur victims say for sake of peace Bashir must face ICC

Author:

Abdelmoneim Abu Idris Ali | AFP

ID:

1571581576933917600

Sun, 2019-10-20 10:55

CAMP KALMA: For Jamal Ibrahim, whose sisters were raped by militiamen in Darfur, only the handover of Sudan's ousted dictator Omar Al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court can bring peace to the restive Darfur region. "Two of my sisters were raped in front of my eyes by militiamen who stormed through our village, setting our houses on fire," Ibrahim, 34, told AFP at Camp Kalma, a sprawling facility where tens of thousands of people displaced by the conflict in Darfur have lived for years.

"Bashir and his aides who committed the crimes in Darfur must be handed over to the ICC if peace is to be established in the region."

Ibrahim, who is from Mershing in the mountainous Jebel Marra area of Darfur, said his village was attacked by Arab militiamen in March 2003 soon after conflict erupted in the region.

The fighting broke out when ethnic African rebels took up arms against Khartoum's then Arab-dominated government under Bashir, alleging racial discrimination, marginalization and exclusion.

Khartoum responded by unleashing the Janjaweed, a group of mostly Arab raiding nomads that it recruited and armed to create a militia of gunmen who were often mounted on horses or camels.

They have been accused of applying a scorched earth policy against ethnic groups suspected of supporting the rebels – raping, killing, looting and burning villages.

The brutal campaign earned Bashir and others arrest warrants from The Hague-based ICC for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

About 300,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million displaced in the conflict, the United Nations says.

Bashir, who denies the ICC charges, was ousted by the army in April after months of nationwide protests against his ironfisted rule of three decades. He is currently on trial in Khartoum on charges of corruption, but war victims like Ibrahim want the ex-leader to stand trial at the ICC, something the northeast African country's new authorities have so far resisted. Ibrahim said his father and his uncle were shot dead when militiamen, riding on camels, rampaged through their village.

"We fled from there... and came to this camp. Since then we have not returned to our village," Ibrahim told an AFP correspondent who visited Camp Kalma last week.

Established near Niyala, the provincial capital of South Darfur state, Camp Kalma is one of the largest facilities hosting people displaced by the conflict.

It is a sprawling complex of dusty tracks lined with mud and brick structures, including a school, a medical center and a thriving market, where

everything from clothes to mobile phones are sold.

Hundreds of thousands of Darfur victims live in such camps, subsisting on aid provided by the UN and other international organizations.

In Camp Kalma, hundreds of women and children queue up daily to collect their monthly quota of food aid.

"Often the officials here tell us that we must return to our village, but we can't because our lands are occupied by others," said a visibly angry Amina Mohamed, referring to Arab pastoralists who now occupy large swathes of land that previously belonged to people from Darfur.

"We won't accept any peace deal unless we get back our land. We will leave this camp only when those who committed the crimes are taken to the ICC." Even as instances of violence in Darfur, a region the size of Spain, have fallen in recent years, there are still regular skirmishes between militiamen fighting for resources and livestock.

Sudan's new transitional authorities have vowed to bring peace to Darfur and two other conflict zones of Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

A Sudanese delegation led by generals and government officials is currently holding peace talks in the South Sudan capital of Juba with two umbrella rebel groups that fought Bashir's forces in these three regions.

On Wednesday, the chief of Sudan's ruling sovereign council, General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, announced a "permanent cease-fire" in the three regions to show that authorities are committed to establishing peace.

But residents of Camp Kalma are not convinced, with hundreds of them staging a protest against the talks in Juba.

Musa Adam, 59, who hails from the village of Dilej but has lived in Camp Kalma for years, is in no mood to forgive Bashir.

Seven members of his family were shot dead by militiamen when they raided his village in 2003, Adam said.

"I know those militia leaders... I am ready to testify at the ICC against them as a witness to their crimes," he said.

"Until these criminals are taken to the ICC, we cannot have peace in Darfur."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Darfur](#)

[ICC](#)
[bashir](#)
[victims](#)

Years after militia raid, fear still grips Darfur village

[World's oldest pearl found in Abu Dhabi](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1571577591613525300

Sun, 2019-10-20 12:57

ABU DHABI: An 8,000-year-old pearl that archaeologists say is the world's oldest will be displayed in Abu Dhabi, according to authorities who said Sunday it is proof the objects have been traded since Neolithic times. The natural pearl was found in the floor of a room discovered during excavations at Marawah Island, off the capital of the United Arab Emirates, which revealed the earliest architecture found in the country. "The layers from which the pearl came have been carbon dated to 5800-5600 BC, during the Neolithic period," Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism said.

"The discovery of the oldest pearl in the world in Abu Dhabi makes it clear that so much of our recent economic and cultural history has deep roots that stretch back to the dawn of prehistory," said its chairman Mohamed Al-Muabarak.

The excavation of the Marawah site, which is made up of numerous collapsed Neolithic stone structures, has also yielded ceramics, beads made from shell and stone, and flint arrowheads.

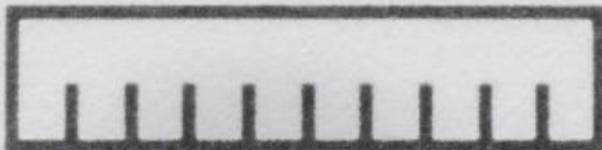
The "Abu Dhabi Pearl" will be shown for the first time in the exhibition "10,000 years of Luxury" which is opening on October 30 at the Louvre Abu Dhabi – the outpost of the famous Paris museum.

Emirati experts believe that the pearls were traded with Mesopotamia – ancient Iraq – in exchange for ceramics and other goods. They were also likely worn as jewelry.

"The Venetian jewel merchant Gasparo Balbi, who traveled through the region, mentions the islands off the coast of Abu Dhabi as a source of pearls in the 16th century," the culture department said.

The pearl industry once underpinned the economy of the United Arab Emirates, but the trade collapsed in the 1930s with the advent of Japanese cultured pearls, and as conflicts rocked global economies.

1cm





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Abu Dhabi](#)

[Pearl](#)

[Libya coast guard intercepts dozens of Europe-bound migrants](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1571577205213476500

Sun, 2019-10-20 12:02

CAIRO: Libya's coast guard says it's intercepted dozens of Europe-bound migrants off the country's Mediterranean coast.

Spokesman Ayoub Gassim said Sunday the migrants were returned to shore and would be taken to a detention center in the capital, Tripoli.

Gassim said a rubber boat with 89 African migrants, including 16 women and two children, was stopped Saturday off Libya's western town of Khoms, around 120 kilometers (75 miles) east of Tripoli.

Libya has emerged as a major transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty to Europe. In recent years, the EU has partnered with Libya's coast guard and other local groups to stem the dangerous sea crossings.

Rights groups, however, say those policies leave migrants at the mercy of armed groups or confined in squalid detention centers rife with abuses.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Libya](#)

[migrants](#)

[Europe](#)

Conjoined twins from Libya arrive in Saudi Arabia Rival Tripoli government restricts Libya's oil revenues: Benghazi-based PM

Lebanese celebrities join Beirut protests as anger rises over tax reforms

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1571502539405908500

Sat, 2019-10-19 19:26

BEIRUT: Lebanese celebrities joined thousands of protesters on the streets of Beirut on Saturday to voice their anger at the country's ruling elite. Singers, actors and playwrights were among a host of high-profile artists who backed demands for action over government corruption and to counter Lebanon's spiralling economic crisis.

Beirut has been shrouded in smoke for three days following widespread protests and rioting over government tax plans.

A video emerged on social media showing actress Nadine Al-Rassi preparing to set fire to a car tire in downtown Beirut and crying inconsolably about her financial state.

The actress, wearing jeans and her face blackened, told protesters: "I am Nadine Al-Rassi. I was hungry for seven days. I have debts. Banque du Liban (Lebanon's central bank) seized my house and I am unable to rent a home. Corrupt people should be held responsible."

الممثلة نادين الراسي #لبنان_ينتفض #بدنا_نحاسب
pic.twitter.com/hpNPuW6enP

– Rania El Khatib (@rania_elkhatib) [October 18, 2019](#)

In a series of tweets, Lebanese recording artist Elissa, who is abroad, supported the protesters' demands, saying: "This is the first time I wish I were in Lebanon. My heart is with you."

In another tweet, the high-profile singer, one of the Middle East's best-selling performers, said: "I proudly follow the news of Beirut and its citizens ... who are demanding a decent life. It is time for people to get back their dignity."

Meanwhile, singer and composer Ragheb Alama expressed his dismay at a Council of Ministers plan to impose a daily fee on WhatsApp calls.

"The people's misfortunes are not funny. Why don't you tax the polluted air people breathe? It is a great idea that brings money to your fathers' treasury, too," he wrote.

Alama accused the Parliament of responsibility for the country's dire economy: "Why do deputies receive money, privileges and overheads, and what

have they done? They covered up for looting and stealing for decades. They are responsible for destroying the economy and the country.”

Nancy Ajram, one of the Arab world’s most popular singers, wrote on Twitter: “My heart goes out to my country every moment and with every heartbeat. We are a people who deserves to live and it is our right to live with dignity. May God protect Lebanon.”

Singer and actress Haifa Wehbe tweeted: “There is nothing better than the Lebanese people when they stand in unity and under one slogan, without any political affiliation. We are all for our country.”

Comedian and prime-time TV host Hisham Haddad was among celebrities who joined protesters at Riad El-Solh Square, near the Prime Minister’s office, site of the biggest centralized demonstrations.

Actress Maguy Bou Ghosn, singer Moeen Shreif, actors Abdo Chahine, Badih Abou Chakra and Junaid Zeineldine, playwright Ziad Itani and musician Ziyad Sahhab also joined the protests.

Actor Wissam Hanna called on Twitter for protesters to close the Beirut Airport road to stop corrupt officials fleeing the country.

“I am all for closing down the airport road to stop thieves from fleeing. I am all for recovering stolen funds. Lebanon rises, revolts and it is time to hold them accountable,” he wrote.

Actress Gretta Aoun said: “We have to take to the streets. They must know the extent of our pain.”







Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon protests](#)

[Nancy Ajram](#)

[Elissa](#)

Tens of thousands gather across Lebanon for third day of protests
Saudi Embassy evacuates 300 tourists from Lebanon

[Libya's navy intercepts about 150 Europe-bound migrants](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1571486507264147500

Sat, 2019-10-19 11:20

CAIRO: Libya's coast guard says it has intercepted around 150 Europe-bound migrants off the country's Mediterranean coast.

Spokesman Ayoub Gassim said Saturday the migrants had been returned to shore and would be taken to a detention center in the capital, Tripoli.

Gassim said the three rubber boats with 148 Arab and African migrants were

stopped off Libya's western towns of Zuwara and Sabrata Friday, and included 15 women and 11 children.

Libya has emerged as a major transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty to Europe. In recent years, the EU has partnered with Libya's coast guard and other local groups to stem the dangerous sea crossings.

Rights groups, however, say those policies leave migrants at the mercy of armed groups or confined in squalid detention centers rife with abuses.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Libya](#)

[Europe](#)

[Africa](#)

[migrants](#)

At least two die, 22 rescued from migrant boat off Sicily
Libya's coast guard intercepts 31 Europe-bound migrants