

Simon Deng: Speech Before the DurbanWatch Conference

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“Thank you for those kind words:

I want to thank the organizers of this conference, The Perils of Global Intolerance. It is a great honor for me and it is a privilege really to be among today’s distinguished speakers.

I came here as a friend of the State of Israel and the Jewish people. Like you, I came to protest this third Durban conference which is an effort based on a set of lies and organized by nations who are themselves guilty of the worst kinds of oppression. Durban III will not help the victims of racism. It will only isolate and target the Jewish state. It is a tool of the enemies of Israel. The UN has lost its way. It’s obsession with the Jews is obvious: For over 50 years, 82 percent of the UN General Assembly emergency meetings have been about condemning one state – Israel. Hitler couldn’t have been made happier.

Given all the good Israel does in the world, given its democracy and its striving to follow the highest standards of human rights, even in the face of the most brutal, the most fanatic enemies, the Durban Conference is an outrage. All decent people will know that.

But friends, I come here today to make a different case. I come with what you might at first think is a radical proposition: I come to tell you that there are peoples who suffer from the UN’s anti-Israelism even more than the Israelis. I belong to one of those people. Please hear me out.

By exaggerating Palestinian suffering, and by blaming the Jews for it, the UN has muffled the cries of those who suffer on a far larger scale.

For over fifty years the indigenous black African population of Sudan — Christians and Muslims alike — have been the victims of the brutal, racist Arab Muslim regimes in Khartoum.

In South Sudan, my homeland, about 4 million innocent men, women and children were slaughtered from 1955 to 2005. Seven million were ethnically cleansed and they became the largest refugee group since World War II.

Everybody at the United Nations is concerned about the so-called Palestinian refugees. They dedicated a separate agency to provide for them; this agency, UNWRA, treats them with a special privilege.

Meanwhile, my people, ethnically cleansed, murdered and enslaved, are relatively ignored. The UN even resisted using the word “slavery” to describe the enslavement of tens of thousands of my people. Why? Because slavery is a crime against humanity.



When Khartoum insisted that the term “abducted people” be substituted for the word “slaves,” the UN caved to Arab pressure and agreed. Try that in America. Try calling Frederick Douglas an “abducted person.” It’s outrageous.

The UN refuses to tell the world the truth about the root causes of Sudan’s conflicts. Take Darfur, for example. Who knows really what is happening in Darfur? It is not a “tribal conflict.” It is a conflict rooted in Arab colonialism, as it has typically been practiced in Africa. In Darfur, a region in the Western Sudan everybody is Muslim. Everybody is Muslim because the Arabs invaded the North of Africa and converted the indigenous people to Islam. The Darfuris are not Muslim enough in the eyes of the Islamists in Khartoum. And they also do not want to be Arabized. They like their own African languages and dress and customs. They resist Arabization. The Arab response is genocide! But nobody tells the truth about Darfur.

In the Nuba Mountains, another region of Sudan, genocide is taking place as I speak. The regime is targeting the black Africans – Muslims and Christians. This happened to the Nuba people before. In the 1990’s hundreds of thousands were murdered; a large number of women were raped; children were abducted and forcibly converted to Islam. Nobody at the UN told the truth about the Nuba Mountains.

Do you see a massive amount of outrage and reports and protests about this coming out of the UN or Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International? Do you hear them condemn Arab anti-black racism?

Look at the pages of the New York Times, or the record of the UN condemnations, What you will find is “Israeli crimes” and Palestinian suffering. My people have been driven off the front pages by exaggerations of Palestinian suffering. Why? Because what Israel does is portrayed as a Western sin that we are all supposed to address. The truth is that the West commits a real sin when it abandons us: the actual victims of non-Westerners. Our suffering has become almost taboo.

Let me return to the topic of slavery. Because, while there are issues that divide public opinion, we can all agree that for one man to own another is a sin, and it should be stopped. The Americans tore themselves apart over the issue of slavery. Chattel slavery, a centuries-long practice in Sudan, was revived as a tool of war in the early 90’s. The Islamist regime in Khartoum declared jihad and therefore legitimized taking slaves as war booty. Arab militias were sent to destroy Southern villages and were encouraged to take African women and children as slaves. We believe that up to 200,000 were kidnapped, brought to the North and sold into slavery.

I am living proof of this crime against humanity.

I don’t like talking about my experience as a slave, but I do it because it is important for the world to know that slavery exists even today.

I was only nine years old when I was made a slave. An Arab neighbor named Abdullahi tricked me into following him to a boat destined to Northern Sudan where he gave me as a gift to his family. For three and a half years I was their slave going through something that no child should ever go through: brutal beatings and humiliations; working around the clock; sleeping on the ground with animals; eating the family’s left-overs.

During those three years I was unable to say the word “no.” All I could say was “yes,” “yes,” “yes.”

The United Nations knew about the brutal enslavement of South Sudanese by the Arabs from the early days of the conflict. Human Rights Watch issued extensive reports about the issue. These reports gathered dust on UN shelves. It took UNICEF – under pressure from the Jewish–led American Anti-Slavery Group — sixteen years to acknowledge what was happening.

As soon as the Sudanese government and the Arab League pressured UNICEF, the UN agency backtracked, and proceeded to criticize the NGOs that worked to liberate Sudanese slaves. In 1998, Dr. Gaspar Biro, the courageous UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Sudan who reported on slavery, resigned in protest of the UN’s actions.

My friends, today, tens of thousands of black South Sudanese still serve their masters in the North and the UN is silent about that. It would offend the OIC and the Arab League. So much for “human rights for everybody”.

As a former slave and a victim of the worst sort of racism, allow me to explain why I think calling Israel a racist state is absolutely absurd and immoral.

I have been to Israel five times visiting the Sudanese refugees. Let me tell you how they ended up there. These are Sudanese who fled Arab racism, hoping to find shelter in Egypt. They were wrong. In 2005, the refugees camped outside the offices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Cairo looking for mercy. Instead, the United “do-nothing” Nations closed their doors and left the helpless women and children at the mercy of the ruthless Egyptian security forces who brutally slaughtered at least twenty-six of them.

After this event the Sudanese realized that the Arab racism is the same, whether it is in Khartoum or in Cairo. So they continued looking for a shelter and they found it in Israel. Dodging the bullets of the Egyptian border patrols and walking for very long distances, the refugees’ only hope was to reach Israel’s side of the fence, where they knew they would be safe.

The fact that even Darfuris, who are Muslims chose Israel above all the other Arab-Muslim states of the area, speaks volumes. Israel is racist? Israel is against the Muslim world? Ask the thousands of black Muslim Darfuris who found shelter inside the Jewish state!

When I asked the refugees about the treatment they receive in Israel, their response was absolutely the opposite of what the United Nations alleges. They were welcomed and treated like human beings. Compared to the situation in Egypt, they described their lives in Israel as “heaven.” No-one called them “abid” – an Arabic word for slaves often used in Sudan, Egypt and other Arab nations.

Is Israel a racist state? To my people – the people who know racism – the answer is absolutely not. It is a State of people of the colors of the rainbow. Jews themselves come in all colors, even black. I met with Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Beautiful black Jews. And Israel is a state that has taken my own black people in, rescued them, and helped them.

So, yes ... my claim may be a radical claim: I claim that the victims who suffer most from the UN anti-Israel policy are not the Israelis but all those people who have to be ignored in order for the UN to tell its big lie against Israel: all those victims of non-Western abuse, especially all those victims of Arab/Muslim abuse: women, ethnic minorities, religious minorities, homosexuals in the Arab/Muslim world. These are the biggest victims of UN Israel hatred.

So far, the Israelis have only been cursed by the UN. But look at the situation of the Copts, the Christians in Iraq, and Nigeria, and Iran, Hindus and Bahais who suffer from Islamic oppression. The Sikhs. We all suffer. We are ignored, we are abandoned. So that the big lie against the Jews can go forward.

Before I conclude let me tell you a story that reflects a special connection that the people of South Sudan feel towards Israel. In 2005, I visited one of the refugee camps in South Sudan. I met a twelve year old girl who told me about her dream. In a dream she wanted to go to school to become a doctor. And then, she wanted to visit Israel. I was shocked and numb. How could this refugee girl who spent most of her life in the North know about Israel? When I asked why she wanted to visit Israel, she said: "This is our people." I was never able to find an answer to my question.

On July 9 of 2011 South Sudan has become an independent state. We achieved freedom despite the opposition from the Arab world and despite the United Nations whose General Secretary Ban Ki Moon lobbied for the unity of Sudan. For South Sudanese, that would mean continuation of oppression, brutalization, demonization, Islamization, Arabization and enslavement.

In a similar manner, the Arabs continue denying Jews their right for sovereignty in their homeland and the Durban III conference continues denying Israel's legitimacy.

As a friend of Israel, I salute the President of the Republic of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, who had the courage to publicly state that the South Sudan embassy in Israel will be built — not in Tel Aviv, but in Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people.

I also want to assure you that my own new nation, and all of its people, will oppose racist forums like the Durban III. We will oppose it by simply telling the truth.

My Jewish friends taught me something I now want to say with you.

AM YISROEL CHAI!

The people of Israel lives!

Thank you."