

ESSDAY

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ENTASISBy **Wale Adebawwi**

Professor of African politics and the politics of resources, University of California, Davis, United States

**Palestine in Darfur**

Our common humanity is indivisible at its core. When we summon that essence that defines our commonality as human beings, we cannot impose a particular logic in Gaza and enforce a different logic in Galilee. Every battle for human dignity, liberty, justice and equity in every part of the world is linked to that basic core of our common humanity. This is one thing that escapes the Arab world, particularly its leadership, since the second half of the 20th century.

The world has come to witness a long-drawn battle for justice and human dignity, not to talk of peace co-existence, in Palestine since the start of the second half of the 1940s, which subsists till now. There is no denying the fact that, at the core of one of the world's most famous and longest running territorial battles, is the idea of human dignity and the values of self-determination that is woven into that - in political terms. Blood has been shed, and blood is being shed as I type this, in that region of the world in what, for many, has become a fruitless search by either side to define our common humanity in exclusionary terms.

It is expected in the civilized world, and this is only a given, that any people who are engaged in a battle for freedom and dignity would see how their just struggle is linked to every such battle for justice and dignity in every other place in the world. But Palestine seems to be the historic exception; particularly for the leadership of the Arab world. The Arab world has been defined by a certain mentality that not only singularizes what ought to be a universal claim, but also circumscribes the application and

benefits of the logic that underwrites such universal claim. Anyone who loves freedom would be expected to love it for himself or herself as well as for others.

In Palestine, the Arab world invites the rest of humanity to witness what it sees as historic injustice perpetrated by the State of Israel. Despite all international efforts, violence and blood continue to define the relationship between the sworn enemies in a region of the world whose regional name belies the idea of shifting grounds. No one comes to the middle in the Middle East.

The leadership of the Arab world continues to remind the rest of humanity, particularly black Africans, that we are not as human as they think they are, and that we are not welcome to the benefits and dignities of the common humanity that they pretend to summon over Palestine. Forget, for now, the dark history of Arab engagement with Africa in centuries past and the attendant slavery and slave trade. While the West has attempted in practice and rhetoric to make amends for these twin historic evils, the Arab world has carried on as if it never did anything wrong and does not owe the black world any other thing - other than to force it, willy-nilly, into the fold of its religious order. The dumb senselessness of racial bigotry and hate that the Arab world has exhibited towards Africa ought to deny it any request that the humanity of its own racial category be proclaimed, let alone respected by the rest of mankind.

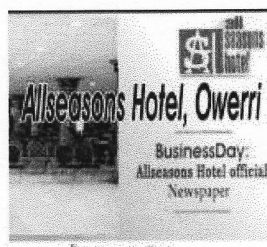
Yet, collectively, humanity cannot, and should not, descend to the less ennobling logic of its parts. As the Arab world pretends that the criminals it proclaims as brothers in Khartoum are immune from the responsibilities of our collective humanity, we might as well ask its leadership what it requests for the long-suffering people of Palestine. A different morality from the rest of the free world?

The Arab leaders have even gone beyond their shameless

Omar al-Bashir - who someday in the near future would be forced to spend the rest of his life behind iron bars for his crimes against humanity. Let us assume that the Arab leaders had a right to request evidence for the atrocities against black Africans in Darfur and the rest of Southern Sudan over the decades. Let us assume that they had no civilized capacity for independent assessment of the gross violence imposed on the defenceless people of Darfur on the basis of their skin colour by the criminals in Khartoum. After an indictment was prepared against al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court (ICC), you will expect civilized members of the international community to be reminded that they could not stand outside a common morality and common humanity and then still hope to claim the benefits of that commonality in moral and human terms.

By embracing the indicted mass murderer of Khartoum, al-Bashir, at their last meeting, the leaders of the Arab world have forfeited their moral right to demand justice for Palestine. The Palestinian Question remains, but it can no longer invite an answer from those who aid and abet genocide. The Arab League, to quote Jack Schwartz, "concerned about rights in Palestine could have brought their enthusiasm closer to home by addressing the fate of black Christians (and Darfurians) being slaughtered and enslaved in the Sudan." But no, they are exempt from global morality once it does not involve Arabs and Muslims. As Schwartz concluded, "The Arab representatives and their followers were not interested in the persecuted millions throughout the world..." For them, whatever is good for the Arab goose is not good for the Black African gander.

With the genocidal al-Bashir in attendance at their recent summit in Qatar, the Arab League announced that, "We stress our solidarity with Sudan and our rejection of the ICC (International Criminal Court) decision." They have chosen solidarity with genocide and evil and forfeited their credibility over Palestine, because, whether in



For reservation: