

# Liberia Civil War and the United Nations' Intervention: Islamic Position

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## Abstract

*The Liberian civil war has severely tested the ability of the international community to maintain humanitarian operations while promoting peace and security. Against the backdrop of fluctuating international interest, Liberia's multi-factional conflict, based as much on material gain as on political objectives, has thwarted peace efforts and frustrated the best efforts of humanitarian agencies. The United Nations has consistently come under heavy criticism from political analysts and observers regarding the body's role in ensuring peace in the world through its conflict resolution tactics. This paper attempts an analysis of the Liberia war and responses from the UN, exploring the body's unrelenting efforts in bringing peace to warring nations. The study concluded that an example of UN peacekeeping in action is Liberia, where a 15 years' civil war that could have totally ruined the country was stopped by the aid of the United Nations. This is an attestation to the fact that despite its inadequacies and limitation of political power to resolve every conflict on the global scene, the United Nations is still a relevant international body whose effort at peacemaking resonates with the intent of Islam to establish peace on earth.*

*Keywords: civil war, Islam, Liberia, United Nations*

## Introduction

As observed by the critics of the United Nations, the Security Council, a core organ of the UN has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Allegedly, many are of the stance that the Security Council has failed to fulfill its designated function of determining the existence of threats to international peace as well as determining what measures to be taken in response. And this failure has been construed to mean the failure of the UN as a whole and thus generated doubtfulness in the minds of people on the competence of UN and the justice and fairness in its conflict intervention, resolution and peacekeeping programmes. For example, the legitimacy of the use of force against Iraq by U.S.A. and few members of the United Nations without the approval or consent of the organization (i.e. the UN) as a whole, and without any punishment (either by way of sanction or embargo) against the actors by the United Nations itself, <sup>1</sup> made many to believe that the UN is just a playground where those with veto power compete and display their power of su-

premacry and their status of being above the charter of the United Nations. The above assertion is evident in the speech of the former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros – Ghali (1992-1996) who said:

As Secretary General I was duty-bound to carry out the resolution of the Security Council to the letter – but as a lifelong student of international law, lamented this situation, which both disparaged international law and displayed the United Nations not as an organization of sovereign states equal under the charter but as a political tool of the major power.<sup>2</sup>

The real truth is that many observers of the United Nations' programmes are asking this question “can United Nations bring peace to the world” bearing in mind the helplessness of the body in preventing bloody conflicts? A month before retiring, the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan questioned the effectiveness of the United Nations, stating, “sixty years after the liberation of the Nazi death camps, and thirty years after the Cambodian killing fields, the promise of ‘never again’ is ringing hollow. He was referring to the horrible situation in Darfur and Sudan, where more than 200,000 people have been slaughtered and over 2.5 million made refugees. His remarks reflected a growing frustration with the U.N's inability to prevent war and enforce international law.<sup>3</sup> Even with the UN unsuccessful mission and its final withdrawal in Somalia, and its failure to stop genocide in Rwanda, coupled with its ineffectiveness in preventing the 1971 Bangladesh genocide, the genocide of Srebrenica, Massacre committed by Serbian troops against Bosnian Muslims and the ethnic cleansing and genocide committed by Arab Janjaweed militias with the aid of Sudanese government against the indigenous population,<sup>4</sup> it will still be unjust and unfair to condemn UN and its conflict intervention programmes or operations in its entirety, and thus, overlook some of its other successful missions in Africa, because in spite of challenges faced, the UN peacekeeping operations in Africa have to a great extent contributed to the stability in some nations with conflicts or crises which would have otherwise degenerated into statelessness and ultimately loss of human lives in astronomical proportions.

United Nations humanitarian operations themselves, begun in March 1990, three months after the onset of hostilities, were a qualified success. But the initial UN response to the crisis was slow. Its humanitarian personnel departed from the country in May 1990 for security reasons, only to return in November 1990. Reestablishing a presence, the UN failed to make adequate arrangements to facilitate work behind rebel lines by its own or associated agencies. Because it based and concentrated operations in the Liberian capital, the UN's humanitarian presence contributed to the perception of political partiality to-

ward ECOMOG and the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). The focus on Monrovia also jeopardized a neutral United Nations humanitarian role vis-a-vis the main rebel faction, the National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL). However, UN humanitarian coordination withstood the test of renewed fighting in Monrovia during October 1992. In 1993, the suspension by ECOMOG of crossborder humanitarian aid from Cote d'Ivoire to areas held by the NPFL was backed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to safeguard peace negotiations. This was a direct result of the UN's heightened political profile and involvement in regional politics. And by 2006, a tenuous peace was beginning to take hold in Liberia. The country democratically elected Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first female President of an African country.<sup>5</sup>

While Islam recognises that life in the world often involves conflict and that it is inevitable, it also advances the understanding that peace is the highest goal.<sup>6</sup> This itself is seen from examples taken from the life of the Prophet (SAW) where he was faced with situations of conflict as well as seeking peace. For example, Khan noted that there were only three real instances when the Prophet (SAW) entered into battle (Badr, Uhud and Hunayn) when it became inevitable to engage in physical contact, but the battles lasted for half a day from noon to sunset. Consequently when presented with the chance for peace and to establish the conditions for justice, the Prophet (SAW) chose to sign the peace treaty known as 'Sulh al-Hudaybiya' despite unfavourable terms to the Muslim community.<sup>7</sup> As such, peace is the most important element in the human life and achieving must take the first line of priorities. When conflict becomes inevitable, Islam encourages that there should be utmost effort in restoring peace. This is what is to be seen in the United Nations' efforts at re-establishing peace in Liberia after years of war.

### **Brief History of Liberia**

Portuguese explorers established contacts with Liberia as early as 1461 and named the area Grain Coast because of the abundance of grains of Malegueta Pepper. In 1663 the British installed trading posts on the Grain Coast, but the Dutch destroyed these posts a year later. There were no further reports of European settlements along the Grain Coast until the arrival of freed slaves in the early 1800s.<sup>8</sup> Liberia, which means "land of the free," was founded by free African-Americans and freed slaves from the United States in 1820. An initial group of 86 immigrants, who came to be called Americo-Liberians, established a settlement in Christopolis (now Monrovia, named after U.S. President James Monroe) on 6 February 1820.<sup>9</sup> Thousands of freed American slaves and free African-Americans arrived during the following years, leading to the formation of more settlements and culminating in a declaration of independence of the

Republic of Liberia on 26 July 1847. The drive to resettle freed slaves in Africa was promoted by the American Colonisation Society (ACS), an organisation of white clergymen, abolitionists, and slave owners founded in 1816 by Robert Finley, a Presbyterian minister.<sup>10</sup> Between 1821 and 1867 the ACS resettled some 10,000 African-Americans and several thousand Africans from interdicted slave ships; it governed the Commonwealth of Liberia until independence in 1847. In Liberia's early years, the Americo-Liberian settlers periodically encountered stiff and sometimes violent opposition from indigenous Africans, who were excluded from citizenship in the new Republic until 1904. At the same time, British and French colonial expansionists encroached upon Liberia, taking over much of its territory.<sup>11</sup>

### **Political Background to the Liberian Civil War**

Politically, the country was a one-party state ruled by the True Whig Party (TWP). Joseph Jenkins Roberts, who was born and raised in America, was Liberia's first President. The style of government and constitution was fashioned on that of the United States, and the Americo-Liberian elite monopolised political power and restricted the voting rights of the indigenous population.<sup>12</sup> The True Whig Party dominated all sectors of Liberia from independence in 1847 until 12 April 1980, when indigenous Liberian Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe (from the Krahn ethnic group) seized power in a coup d'état. Doe's forces executed President William R. Tolbert and several officials of his government, mostly of Americo-Liberian descent. One hundred and thirty-three years of Americo-Liberian political domination ended with the formation of the People's Redemption Council (PRC).<sup>13</sup>

Over time, the Doe government began promoting members of Doe's Krahn ethnic group, who soon dominated political and military life in Liberia. This raised ethnic tension and caused frequent hostilities between the politically and militarily dominant Krahns and other ethnic groups in the country.<sup>14</sup> After the October 1985 elections, characterized by widespread fraud, Doe solidified his control. The period after the elections saw increased human rights abuses, corruption, and ethnic tensions. The standard of living further deteriorated. On 12 November 1985, former Army Commanding Gen. Thomas Quiwonkpa almost succeeded in toppling the government of Samuel Doe. The Armed Forces of Liberia repelled Quiwonkpa's attack and executed him in Monrovia. Doe's Krahn-dominated forces carried out reprisals against Mano and Gio civilians suspected of supporting Quiwonkpa.<sup>15</sup> Despite Doe's poor human rights record and questionable democratic credentials, he retained close relations with Washington. A staunch U.S. ally, Doe met twice with President Ronald Reagan and enjoyed considerable U.S. financial support.<sup>16</sup> On 24 December 1989, a small

band of rebels led by Doe's former procurement chief, Charles Taylor, invaded Liberia from the Ivory Coast. Taylor and his National Patriotic Front rebels rapidly gained the support of many Liberians and reached the outskirts of Monrovia within six months.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Liberian Civil War and International Response**

From 1989 to 1996 one of Africa's bloodiest civil wars ensued, claiming the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and displacing a million others into refugee camps in neighboring countries. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened in 1990 and succeeded in preventing Charles Taylor from capturing Monrovia. Prince Johnson – formerly a member of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) – formed the break-away Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL).<sup>18</sup> On 9 September 1990 Prince Johnson's forces captured and killed Doe. Taking refuge in Sierra Leone and other neighboring countries, former AFL soldiers founded the new insurgent United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), fighting back Taylor's NPFL. An Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was formed in Gambia under the auspices of ECOWAS in October 1990, headed by Dr. Amos Claudius Sawyer. Taylor (along with other Liberian factions) refused to work with the interim government and continued fighting.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Sawyer, for the Liberian People's Party, LPP, remained in power until 7 March 1994, and was succeeded by a rapid succession of heads of state (David Donald Kpormakpor, Wilton G. S. Sankawulo, and Ruth Sando Perry) acting as Chairmen of the Council of State for the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG). Ruth Perry was Africa's first non-elected Female leader.<sup>20</sup> After more than a dozen peace accords and declining military power, Taylor finally agreed to the formation of a five-man transitional government. A hasty disarmament and demobilisation of warring factions were followed by special elections on 19 July 1997. Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Party, NPP, emerged victorious. Taylor won the election by a large majority, primarily because Liberians feared a return to war had Taylor lost.<sup>21</sup> For the next six years, the Taylor government did not improve the lives of Liberians. Unemployment and illiteracy stood above 75%, and little investment was made in the country's infrastructure. (Liberia is still trying to recover from the ravages of war; pipe-borne water and electricity are generally unavailable to most of the population, especially outside Monrovia, and schools, hospitals, roads, and infrastructure remain derelict.) Rather than work to improve the lives of Liberians, Taylor supported the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone.<sup>22</sup> Taylor's misrule led to the resumption of armed rebellion from among Taylor's former adversaries. By 2003, armed groups called "Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy" (LURD) and "Movement for

Democracy in Liberia" (MODEL), largely representing elements of the former ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J factions that fought Taylor during Liberia's previous civil war (1989-1996), were challenging Taylor and his increasingly fragmented supporters on the outskirts of Monrovia.<sup>23</sup> On 4 June 2003 in Accra, Ghana, ECOWAS facilitated peace talks among the Government of Liberia, civil society, and the LURD and MODEL rebel groups. On the same day, the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone issued a press statement announcing the opening of a sealed 7 March 2003 indictment of Liberian President Charles Taylor for "bearing the greatest responsibility" for atrocities in Sierra Leone since November 1996.<sup>24</sup>

In July 2003 the Government of Liberia, LURD, and MODEL signed a ceasefire that all sides failed to respect; bitter fighting reached downtown Monrovia in July and August 2003, creating a massive humanitarian disaster. On August 11, 2003, under intense U.S. and international pressure, President Taylor resigned office and departed into exile in Nigeria. He was succeeded for an interim period of two months by President Moses Zeh Blah of the NPP. Taylor's move paved the way for the deployment by ECOWAS of what became a 3,600-strong peacekeeping mission in Liberia (ECOMIL).<sup>25</sup> On 18 August, 2003 leaders from the Liberian Government, the rebels, political parties, and civil society signed a comprehensive peace agreement that laid the framework for constructing 2-years National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL), headed by businessman Charles Gyude Bryant—he became head of state on 14 October, 2003. The UN took over security in Liberia in October 2003, subsuming ECOMIL into the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), a force that grew to nearly 15,000.<sup>26</sup> The October 11, 2005 presidential and legislative elections and the subsequent November 8, 2005 presidential run-off were the freest, fair, and peaceful elections in Liberia's history. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf defeated international soccer star George Weah 59.4% to 40.6% to become Africa's first democratically elected female president. She was inaugurated on 16 January 2006 formed a government of technocrats drawn from among Liberia's ethnic groups, including members of the Liberian diaspora who have returned to the country to rebuild government institutions.<sup>27</sup>

As requested by the Security Council, the Secretary-General submitted on 11 September, 2003 a report [S/2003/875] providing update on the situation in the country, and containing his recommendations on the role the United Nations could play to facilitate the effective implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as well as on the size, structure and mandate of a peacekeeping operation in Liberia. The Secretary-General recommended that the Council, acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, authorize the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation with a troop strength

of up to 15,000, including 250 military observers, 160 staff officers, up to 875 UN police officers and an additional five armed formed units each comprising 120 officers, and a significant civilian component and necessary support staff. He said that the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) would be a multidimensional operation composed of political, military, police, criminal justice, civil affairs, human rights, gender, child protection, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, public information and support components, as well as an electoral component in due course. The Mission would include a mechanism for the coordination of its activities with those of the humanitarian and development community. UNMIL would coordinate closely with ECOWAS and the African Union. In order to ensure a coordinated United Nations response to the many sub regional issues, UNMIL would also work closely with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Mission in Cote d'Ivoire (MINUCI) and the United Nations Office for West Africa. The Mission would be headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who would have overall authority for the activities of the Mission and of the United Nations system in Liberia. The Special Representative would be assisted by a senior management team consisting of, among others, two Deputies, a Force Commander with the rank of Lieutenant General, and a Police Commissioner. A senior gender adviser, with staff, would be part of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to undertake and support gender mainstreaming within the various pillars of the Office and with civil society and other external partners. An HIV/AIDS policy adviser, with supporting staff, would also be attached to the Office of the Special Representative, to coordinate activities in the Mission area for the prevention of HIV transmission among civilian and military personnel and host communities.

The Secretary-General proposed that the mandate of UNMIL would be to support the National Transitional Government of Liberia and the other parties in the effective and timely implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; to monitor adherence to the ceasefire agreement of 17 June; to assist the National Transitional Government in extending State authority throughout Liberia; to provide security at key government installations, in particular, ports, airports and other vital infrastructure; to ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel; to facilitate the free movement of people, humanitarian assistance and goods; to support the safe and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons; and to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence in the areas of immediate deployment of United Nations formed military units. In addition, the force would advise, train and assist the Liberian law enforcement authorities and other criminal justice institutions; assist the National Transitional Government in the implementa-

tion of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme; guard weapons, ammunition and other military equipment collected from ex-combatants and assist in their subsequent disposal or destruction; assist in the preparation of elections; monitor and report on the human rights situation and provide training and capacity-building in the field of human rights and child protection; provide support for gender mainstreaming, including training; support the establishment and operations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and cooperate with ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations on cross-cutting political and security issues.

In his report the Secretary-General observed that the transfer of power from President Charles Taylor to Vice-President Moses Blah and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement by the Liberian parties offered a unique window of opportunity to end the suffering inflicted on the people of Liberia and to find a peaceful solution to a conflict that had been the epicenter of instability in the sub region. While the United Nations and the international community at large stood ready to support the Liberian peace process, the effective and successful implementation of

the Peace Agreement remained the primary responsibility of the Liberian parties themselves, he stressed.<sup>28</sup> On 19 September, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1509 (2003) welcoming the Secretary-General's report of 11 September 2003 and its recommendations. It decided that UNMIL would consist of up to 15,000 United Nations military personnel, including up to 250 military observers and 160 staff officers, and up to 1,115 UN police officers, including formed units to assist in the maintenance of law and order throughout Liberia, and the appropriate civilian component. The mandate of the Mission was established for a period of 12 months. The Council requested the Secretary-General to transfer authority to UNMIL on 1 October from forces led by ECOWAS, which it commended for its rapid and professional deployment. Among other things, the Council also took note of the intention of the Secretary-General to terminate the mandate of UNOL and to transfer the major functions performed by that Office to UNMIL. As scheduled, UNMIL took over peacekeeping duties from ECOWAS forces on 1 October. Some 3,500 West African troops who had been serving with ECOMIL vanguard force were provisionally "re-hatted" as United Nations peacekeepers. In a statement issued on that day, the Secretary-General welcomed this very important development and saluted ECOWAS for its role in establishing the security climate that paved the way for the deployment of UNMIL. He commended the Governments of Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo who have contributed to UNMIL, as well as the United States for its support to the regional force. The Secretary-General expressed confidence that UNMIL would be able

to contribute in a major way towards the resolution of conflict in Liberia, provided all parties concerned cooperate fully with the force and the international community provides the necessary resources.<sup>29</sup>

Between 2006 and 2008, the ‘Better World Campaign’ successfully advocated for Congress to pass needed funding of more than \$1 billion to fulfill U.S. financial commitments to UN peacekeeping. This funding ensured that critical missions impacting life for millions of people were able to continue. With 16 peacekeeping missions and 100,000 troops and personnel deployed to conflicts around the world, the UN is positively impacting the lives of hundreds of millions of people. These forces prevent the outbreak of conflict, assist in implementing peace agreements, stabilize conflict areas after a ceasefire, and help nations transition to stable governments. In 2003, the UN Security Council authorized a peacekeeping mission to deploy to Liberia. The force, known as UNMIL, provided security guarantees that let the UN and other international agencies embark on a series of humanitarian and infrastructure-building projects throughout the country. UNMIL grew to be 15,000 strong, working to oversee the disarmament and demobilization of former fighters, and helping the UN and international agencies to restore basic services to the Liberian people. By 2006, a tenuous peace was beginning to take hold in Liberia. The country democratically elected Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first female president of an African country. Through continued international support for UNMIL, peace has taken root in Liberia. In January 2007, the world first-ever all-female peacekeeping contingent deployed to there. This group was uniquely positioned to make an impact on Liberian women, who were routinely targeted during the civil war. The presence of this all-women’s peacekeeping group from India resulted in increased reporting of gender-based violence and a decrease in the crime overall. The Liberian National Police followed the example and recruited more women to serve in its ranks, showing the lasting instructional impact by UNMIL’s presence in Liberia.<sup>30</sup>

### **Islamic Position on the United Nations’ Intervention in the Liberia Civil War**

Muslims consider conflict a negative phenomenon, destructive to the social order, and thus, should be avoided.<sup>31</sup> Since conflict is viewed as harmful to both divine and communal harmony, Islam instructs Muslims to take action to resolve conflicts and restore harmony. This perspective is based on the Qur’anic verses such as:

If two parties among the believers fall into a fight, make ye peace [*Sulh*] be-

tween them make peace between them with justice, and be fair; for Allah loves those who are fair (and just). (Q49:9)

Obey Allah and His Apostle; and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart; and be patient and persevering: For Allah is with those who patiently persevere. (Q8:46)

Conflicts especially rooted in ethnicity, tribalism, racism, and nationalism (*Asabiyyah*), among others is strongly discouraged as the hadith narrates: "He is not one of us who proclaims the cause of tribal partisanship, and he is not of us one who fights in the cause of tribal partisanship, and he is not of us one who dies in the cause of tribal partisanship." (Sahih al-Bukhari).

Ethnicity and tribalism are divisive phenomenon since the members of a particular ethnic group strongly identify themselves with the group in terms of feelings and sentiments against other ethnic groups. The dominant ethnic group usually has a feeling that no other ethnic group should take the lead in every sphere within the polity. This reality was evident in the Liberian crisis, to which Islam greatly frowns at. Furthermore, the provisions of man power and fund that led to the success achieved by UN mission in Liberia through the ECOMOG intervention mechanisms is corroborated from Islamic point of view with the Allāh's injunction in *Sūratul-Anfāl* chapter 8 verse 60, where Allāh says:

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the heart of) the enemies of God and your enemies, and others besides, whom you may not know, but whom God does know. Whatever you shall spend in the cause of God, shall be repaid unto you, and you shall not be treated unjustly

In the exegetical analysis of the above Qur'an verse Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali submitted that the immediate occasion of this injunction was the weakness of cavalry and appointments of war in the early fights of Islam, but the general meaning follows. In every fight, physical, moral, or spiritual, arm yourself with the best weapons and the best arms against your enemy, so as to instill wholesome respect into him for you and the cause you stand for. Because there are always lurking enemies whom you may not know, but whom God knows, it is your duty to be ready against all, for the sacred cause under whose banner you are fighting. Thus, you should be always ready and put your resources into your cause. You do not do so in vain; God's reward will come in various forms. He knows all, and His reward will always be more generous than you can possibly deserve.<sup>32</sup>Almighty Allah went further by saying:

But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in God: For He is the one that hears and knows (all things) (Q8:61)

Interpreting the above Qur'anic verse exegetically, Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali submitted that: 'while we must always be ready for the good fight lest it be forced on us, even in the midst of the fight we must always be ready for peace if there is any inclination towards peace on the other side. There is no merit merely in a fight by itself. It should be a joyful duty not for itself, but to establish the reign of peace and righteousness and God's law.<sup>33</sup> The similitude of the above divine instruction to incline towards peace if there is such inclination on the other side is what transpired between the warring parties in the Liberian civil war and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, when on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2003. Leaders from the Liberian Government, the rebels, political parties, and civil society signed a comprehensive peace agreement that laid the framework for constructing a 2 years National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL), headed by businessman Charles Gyude Bryant. The UN took over security in Liberia in October, 2003, subsuming ECOMIL into the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), a force that grew to nearly 15,000. Thus consequently the October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005 presidential and legislative elections and the subsequent November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005 presidential run-off were the freest, fair and peaceful elections in Liberia's history. Ellen Johnson – Sirleaf defeated international soccer star George Weah 59.4% to 40.6% to become Africa's first democratically elected female president. She was inaugurated on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2006 and she formed a government of technocrats drawn from among Liberia's ethnic groups, including members of the Liberian diaspora who have returned to the country to rebuild government institutions.<sup>34</sup> Again, the mediation practice of the UN paid off in the Liberian crisis. Mediation as a nonviolent dispute resolution approach in which a third party, that is not a direct party to dispute, helps disputants through negotiation, is one of the most widely employed tools of conflict management and resolution.<sup>35</sup> The practice of mediation has been part of Islamic conflict resolution processes since the early days of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) often used mediation to resolve conflicts and he himself acted as a mediator-arbitrator. Having a reputation for being trustworthy – he was nicknamed "the Faithful One" (al-Amin) – allowed the Prophet to be a good mediator in helping to resolve conflicts in Makkah. He was also accepted as the mediator-arbitrator between the tribes in Yathrib (Madinah) by all the communities. His role as a mediator-arbitrator was recognised in the Constitution of Madinah.<sup>36</sup> One of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) well-known interventions involved the process of relocating the Black Stone from *Ka'bah*, when he was the only person who was

trusted by the three major Makkan tribes to mediate their dispute over who would have the honour of carrying and moving the Black Stone. His mediation and problem solving skills inspired him to suggest that they all participate in carrying the stone by placing it on his cloak. Many mediation efforts in the Muslim world are often inspired by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) examples and are derived from Islamic principles and values rooted in the Qur'an and hadith.

## Conclusion

Even with the UN unsuccessful withdrawal from Somalia and its failure to stop genocide in Rwanda, coupled with its ineffectiveness in preventing the 1971 Bangladesh genocide, the genocide of Srebrenica, massacre committed by Serbian troops against Bosnian Muslims and the ethnic cleansing and genocide committed by Arab Janjaweed militias with the aid of Sudanese government against the indigenous population, it will still be unjust and unfair to condemn UN and its programmes or operations in its entirety and thus, overlook some of its other successful missions in Africa, because in spite of challenges faced, the UN peacekeeping operations in Africa have to a greater extent contributed to the stability in many areas which would have otherwise degenerated into statelessness and ultimately loss of human lives in astronomical proportions. The ECOMOG and UN was able to achieve this success in Liberia because all resolution and intervention mechanisms were put in place by the ECOMOG and UN itself, through the then Secretary – General Kofi Annan who provided on Security Council's request, the update on the situation in the country and his recommendations on the role the United Nations could play to facilitate the effective implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as well as on the size, structure and mandate of a peacekeeping operation in Liberia.<sup>37</sup> The Secretary – General recommended that the council, acting under chapter VII of the UN charter, authorize the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation with a troop strength of up to 15,000, including 250 military observers, 160 staff officers, up to 875 UN police officers and an additional five armed forces units each comprising 120 officers, and a significance civilian component and necessary staff. Further, he said that the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) would be a multidimensional operation composed of political, military, police, criminal justice, civil affairs, human rights, gender, child protection, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, public information and support components, as well as an electoral component in due course. The mission would include a mechanism for the coordination of its activities with those of the humanitarian and development community. UNMIL would coordinate closely with ECOWAS and the African Union. In order to ensure a coordinated UN response to the many sub regional issues, UNMIL would also work closely

with the UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNMISL), the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire (UNMICI) and the UN office for West Africa.<sup>38</sup> On the whole, the effort of the United Nations together with regional bodies such as ECOMOG and ECOWAS to find a solution to the Liberian war is not just a physical process, but involves personal healing on the part of the warring parties and, ultimately, giving peace the chance to reign. The Qur'an says:

The recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoever forgives and thereby brings about a re-establishment of harmony, his reward is with God; and God loves not the wrongdoers (Quran 42:40)

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