



An interview with Dr. Abdurahman Baadiyow

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Editor's Note: *Dr. Abdurahman M. Abdullahi (Baadiyow) is a Somali activist, educator, politician and the chairman of National Unity Party (NUP) and deputy chairman of the Forum for Unity) and Democracy(FUD), the largest political coalition in Somalia. Dr. Baadiyow was one of the top candidates of the 2012 Somali presidential election. WDN had an insightful and multi-faced interview with Dr. Baadiyow on the current situation in Somalia, both the challenges and the prospects. Abdelkarim A. Hassan has conducted this interview for WDN.*

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WDN: Mr. Baadiyow since our [last interview in April 2013](#), are there any progress in the country, and what is your current assessment of the socio-economic and political situation in Somalia?

Dr. Baadiyow: Despite the fact that Somalia has been an independent country for 55 years (1960 independence), more than a quarter of a century has passed in which its people are living in state of statelessness or dysfunctional governments. In such difficult circumstances, the people of Somalia have demonstrated exceptional resilience and durable coping mechanisms. A small but resilient private sector has thrived, and has provided economic opportunities and social services in the absence of a functioning government. Despite having a newly recognized Federal Government, the input of the government in the socio-economic development remains marginal at best. The current government has dashed the aspirations of the Somali people and the expectations of the



international partners who offered an enthusiastic support. Alas to say, the government has been characterized by the same ills of the previous transitional governments since 2000 such as infighting, mismanagement, rampant corruption, low capacity of institution building with more dictatorial proclivity and the appetite to recycle the culture of predatory elites.

WDN: Your party- National Unity Party with some members of Somali parliament and Politicians that include the former PM Abdiwali Sh. Ahmed recently formed a new alliance called "[The Forum for Unity and Democracy \(FUD\)](#)". What can you tell us about this coalition and its agenda?

Dr. Baadiyow: The formation of The Forum for Unity and Democracy (FUD) should be understood as a positive political development in Somalia. FUD represents a *third wave* of political evolution since the collapse of the state in 1991. The first one being the decade of warlords (1991-2000), the second being the era of clan power sharing (2000-2012), and third is expected to be citizen-centered era. This last stage is what FUD represents and advocates through conducting free and fair elections in 2016. Of course, FUD is in its early stage of leadership formation and public mobilization. It aims to furnish a traditional Somali style of dialogue, a dialogue under the tree of dialogue known as "shir," in which Somalis can participate to shape the future of their country. FUD envisages a united, prosperous and modern Somalia, founded on popular democracy and social justice countering the culture of impunity that feeds on public resources and clan divisions- a country where all citizens enjoy equal political, economic and socio-cultural rights - a country that is corruption free and aspires to create a new political culture based on unity and democracy.

WDN: "The Forum for Unity and Democracy (FUD)" members include such a large number of politicians with diverse interests, some mostly known to oppose the current president. Can it be said that the FORUM lacks a coherent national agenda to bring Somalia back to a secure and stable country, but a coalition brought together only to oppose a common adversary and that is the current President Hassan Sh. Mohamud?

Dr. Baadiyow: As a general rule, political coalitions are formed to oppose certain policies and to promote common agendas, and that is true with FUD's formation. The initial idea of building a political coalition started after the eruption of the disagreement between President Hassan Sheikh and Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh and the subsequent polarization of the Parliament and the Cabinet Ministers in two camps. The later development was an alliance of the many emerging political parties with the camp of the former PM and thus, FUD was formed. Members of FUD agreed on certain principles outlined in its Manifesto issued on January 5, 2015, including that of

holding free and fair elections in 2016 was paramount in bringing back citizen-driven democracy to Somalia. In addition, members of FUD stood against the current political culture of: dictatorial tendency, bad governance, damaged internal unity, all of which had paralyzed state institutions and frustrated international stakeholders. Moreover, FUD members have taken a more responsible approach than simply criticizing the regime by allocating a lot of resources in programs that enable our people to have responsible government through democratic elections in 2016. The first of such programs was the election model of "Proportional Representation" and other programs are forthcoming.

WDN: There is a belief that current members of the Somali Parliament play a major role in the protracted political and civil unrest in Somalia, by enabling the President's abuse of power in return for monetary incentives, since the forum (FUD) has a large number of these parliamentarians. Isn't it counter intuitive to provide opportunity to these same people to lead Somalia once more?

Dr. Baadiyow: The Forum members have agreed in signing the Manifesto for Change on January 5, 2015 to promote good governance, restore public trust and fight against corruption. Therefore, our parliamentarians have pledged to fight the prevalent culture that had tainted the image of parliamentarians. As you know, corruption begets corruption and the clan power sharing system became a shameful enterprise that makes it difficult for any decent person to gain a seat in the parliament without substantial cash on hand. However, that system has failed to sustain itself, and our parliamentarians are more aware, experienced and convinced that such a system should be changed. We will work collectively for what is good and beneficial for Somalia, and we will not tolerate spoilers who destroy the trust of our people. Somalia can change, can rebuild itself, can democratize and can reconcile the diverging positions of its peoples.

WDN: Much discussions have been said about the prospects of having a fair election in Somalia come 2016. You have recently [written an Op- Ed piece](#) about such important milestone for Somalia, with the view of the elections taking place as scheduled. Given the short comings such as security, completing revisions of the draft constitution and the preparatory work needed to conduct the elections in little over a year, do you think such elections are still possible to take place as planned? If not, are there alternatives that you deem acceptable to regional states and the Somali populace?

Dr. Baadiyow: Yes, I still believe elections are possible in 2016, and there is no other viable alternative for Somalia. Other intermediary proposals will keep the political status quo

unchanged in Somalia. Continuing the current clan power sharing formula rewards predatory political elites and usurps the rights of the Somali citizens to elect their leaders, which in turn keeps Somalis in a vicious circle of poverty, which robs them of opportunities and access to basic public services. We urge the people of Somalia to come out and demand their rights. We demand Somali intellectuals to forsake lame excuses and to challenge their leaders to account for their inability to accomplish what they had promised, as set forth in the Vision 2016 political document. Elections are achievable if the government and international partners are serious about it. The FUD's agenda is to advocate and commit themselves to the cause of holding free and fair elections on time. As such, we have proposed a Proportional Representation (PR) election model as the only electoral model that can guarantee the holding of free and fair elections in 2016. This election model is simple and transparent, no population census and demarcation of districts required, ideal for women, youth and minorities, encourages coalition building, least vulnerable to security problems, reduces corruption, and accommodates Diaspora and refugee voting.

WDN: As part of preparing the country for general elections, the government recently created a Judicial Service Commission, Independent National Electoral Commission and Boundary and Federation Commission, however the FORUM issued a press release on May 15, 2015 opposing such commissions. What are the specifics of opposing these commissions and its members?

Dr. Baadiyow: FUD welcomed the formation of these commissions in principle. However, FUD believes that the selection and appointment process did not meet the required parameters. There were no pre-agreed and publicly declared criteria used for the nomination of candidates and the appointments of members were inadequately scrutinized. Moreover, political parties, civil society groups, and Federal Member States should have been involved to ensure the transparency needed to secure stakeholder confidence. The Forum believes that there were politically vested interests in the selection of members. Without transparency and due diligence, the integrity and the competency of the commissions will be compromised possibly derailing democratic transition and free and fair elections in 2016. The Forum shares its concerns with the Federal Parliament, all stakeholders and the Somali public and calls for a timely rectification of the selection in order to ensure the integrity, competence, and the independence of these commissions.



WDN: Somalia is host to AMISOM's 20,000 strong contingent of troops. To build sustainable peace and security, it's however, critical for Somalia to have its own national army, as it can't

remain outsource its military needs to the African Union. Since you are a former military officer, what do you suppose Somalia thus far cannot form its own national army to assume the responsibility of its security to serve its people and protect its borders?

Dr. Baadiyow: It was an honor to serve my country as a military officer for 16 years, and I strongly believe that Somalia can take the responsibility of its security within a very short period. The country has a history, culture and human resources capable of realizing that goal. I also believe that the dilemma with building a capable army is not a problem of scarce resources, but rather a lack of political will of the current government, which depends for its survival on the presence of AMISOM forces. The deficit of the political will is evident in the management of the war with Al-Shabab. The country that is at war requires total national mobilization, putting all resources to win the war, curtailing wastage of meager resources on non-priority sectors, annulment of grandiose celebrations and lavish foreign travels. I am very sure, our brave soldiers and officers in the front lines are demoralized since they are not paid well and not equipped properly compared to the AMISOM forces that they fight side by side with. They feel humiliated and are not confident that the whole population and government apparatus are with them in the war and that they receive the material and moral support that they deserve. Our soldiers and officers deserve our utmost support in order to win the war and to avert keeping the country bleeding.

WDN: Many believe that President Hassan squandered the opportunity to lead Somalia to stability with functional institutions. How would you characterize the president's performance thus far?

Dr. Baadiyow: In the beginning, the Somali people and the international community had high hopes for President Hassan, as he was a vibrant and educated civil society activist. However, that image had been tarnished after the first years of low performance and concentration of power in Villa Somalia. The first year of President Hassan could be characterized as the era of dominance of "Policy Unit" over the Council of Ministers, prominence of shadowy circle around the president, appearance of his dictatorial tendency and skyrocketing corruption. Obviously, this culture had paralyzed the institutional building process and had shattered the high hopes in him. The second government under PM Abdiweli was paralyzed by the continued culture of the President and internal conflict was mounting. As result, the President lost the support of the people and under his rule, the country is more divided, waddling economically and the international community is frustrated. It is true that the current leadership has squandered the unprecedented opportunity of rebuilding Somalia available to them. The six pillar plan of the President has evaporated, and we do not hear of anymore pledges being committed to the New

Deal, which has become a daydream of sorts. The country requires a new approach and the concerted efforts of all stakeholders. However, the first step is changing the political culture of the Presidency.

WDN: Many critics don't see the current government as an inclusive government, but a government dominated by a small group called Damul Jadiid. Is there any truth to that, or there are other competing interests that wield power?

Dr. Baadiyow: The notion that a small group monopolizes all the power of the current government is wide spread amongst the public, and there is some truth in it. However, I objectively believe that pouring all the blame on Dam-Jadiid group is not fair and misleading. The responsibility is not on the shadowy group or individuals. The responsibility is on the shoulders of the President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who was elected to unify Somalia and protect and abide by the constitution as the head of the state. If he fails to lead the country and to exercise his duty, he should be accountable. To scapegoat a shadowy group of individuals for the burden of rebuilding Somalia is nonsensical, and shifts the burden of responsibility from the President. If he lacked experience in the beginning, and we may excuse him for the mistakes he committed, however we cannot accept the continuation of bad politics and misrule .

WDN: There is a growing rift between the Regional Administrations and the Federal Government. What is the position of FUD in that situation?

Dr. Baadiyow: The FUD has issued a press statement in which it notes its deep concern of the strained relationship between the Federal Government and the emerging regional states. As Somalia strives to realize a democratic and stable Somalia, the unity and concerted effort of our institutions and people are of paramount importance. The FUD is particularly disturbed by ongoing differences between [the Federal Parliament and the Jubaland Regional Administration](#) and urges that all sides refrain from any antagonistic rhetoric and work together to resolve their differences, and build bridges through constructive dialogue. The FUD emphasizes that the role of the federal government is to facilitate the process of forming regional administrations and warn against destructive interventions that may ruin public trust and may even instigate hostilities among local communities.

WDN: In our last interview, you were optimistic about the future of Somalia, what are your thoughts now?

Dr. Baadiyow: I am always optimistic for I believe in Allah's will and the limitation of our responsibility to do our utmost for our people. I am also convinced that Somali people are more

prepared than ever to take the true path of rebuilding their state. Meeting our young generations and following their discussions in social media, I am convinced that they are more nationalistic, more educated and have better awareness for their debacle. Somali women are becoming intolerant to the culture of bad governance of men and are beginning to look for leadership roles. I believe the daybreak is near and a brighter future for our country awaits us all. We should not be frustrated by our current condition. In comparison to where we were since the outbreak of civil war, I believe Somalia has changed for the better. The FUD is a critical voice because we believe that much more could have been achieved with accountable and credible leadership.

WDN: Thank you so much Dr. Baadiyow for your time.

Dr. Baadiyow: Thank you Abdelkarim once again for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts with the Somali people through WardheerNews media.