



Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development
Office of International Justice and Peace

Background on Sudan/South Sudan
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We call for open, transparent and democratic governance in both nations. The two nations must learn to live in peace with each other, but also with their own citizens. We reject all policies which oppress, marginalise and dehumanise any citizens. Both countries are poor, and all their energy should be devoted to development and peace.

--The Church God Wants Us to Be, Catholic Bishops of Sudan, October 2011

BACKGROUND

On July 9, 2011, after over five decades of civil war and repression, the new Republic of South Sudan celebrated its long road to independence. Bishop John Ricard represented the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at the ceremonies along with leaders from Catholic Relief Services and other international Catholic institutions. Led by Bishop Ricard, the USCCB and CRS have actively and persistently worked for peace and justice in Sudan for more than a decade. The peaceful birth of South Sudan is a testament to the integrity and hard work of the Sudanese people and the Church in Sudan [with its many partners like Catholic Relief Services (CRS)], as well as the international community, the UN, and the U.S. Government.

Seven months later, the realities that lie ahead weigh heavily on the people of both countries. Many of the key provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), such as the new border, sharing of the oil wealth and the national debt, and citizenship rights for minorities, have still not been resolved. Without an agreement on transport fees for southern oil, Sudan has confiscated large shipments of oil from South Sudan worth hundreds of millions of dollars. South Sudan has filed a legal suit, but has also shut down all oil production -- which could be an economic disaster, especially for South Sudan. Christians still in Sudan face increasing threats to religious freedom, persecution and discrimination. By April 2012 all southerners must register with the Sudanese government if they wish to remain in Sudan. It is unclear how they will be treated.

Even before independence, fighting between South Sudan and Sudan started over the disputed territory of Abyei. The Sudan armed forces invaded and occupied Abyei, forcing almost the entire local population of 110,000 people to flee. The army and northern populations destroyed homes and pillaged the city. The city is still occupied with no solution in sight despite the presence of 3,000 troops under an African Union mandate.

A month later, northern armed forces attacked the state of Southern Kordofan, a border state in Sudan claiming that it intended to disarm former rebel forces. These attacks (including aerial bombardment) targeted civilian populations, killing thousands and displacing around 300,000 in the state and another 20,000 into South Sudan. Sudan is denying humanitarian agencies access to the internally displaced people, which could create severe hunger, if not famine, if allowed to persist. Fighting could escalate in the coming months of the dry season.

The Sudanese army then launched another fierce attack in the border state of Blue Nile, causing significant destruction, death, displacement and suffering. It is estimated that around 66,000 people are homeless in Blue Nile while another 67,000 have fled the state into South Sudan, or Ethiopia. Sudan accuses South Sudan of supporting the rebels in these border states. South Sudan denies this and counters that Sudan is sending arms into South Sudan and training armed groups to destabilize the young country.

In recent months South Sudan has witnessed a serious upsurge of ethnic violence between the Lou Nuer and the Merle people in the state of Jonglei. Cattle raiding between these two ethnic groups has existed for decades, but the scale of attacks and the displacement they have caused surpass past occurrences. It could spread to new areas and involve different ethnic groups if it is not resolved through dialogue and negotiations. Continued fighting could lead to a civil war that would threaten stability in South Sudan.

The fate of Darfur must not be ignored. Military confrontations between the Sudanese army and rebel groups continue today. Both armed forces are reportedly attacking civilian populations in violation of international norms. Currently 1.9 million people have been displaced. UN troops have been prohibited from monitoring and reporting on the fighting and the condition of civilians.

Since May 2007 the U.S. has maintained targeted sanctions against 160 Sudanese companies that prevent them from conducting business in the U.S. The sanctions also targeted seven Sudanese individuals for fomenting violence and human rights abuses. The U.S. has also kept Sudan on the State Sponsor of Terror list, which further isolates the country. In addition, President Al Bashir and others in Sudan have been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide.

USCCB POSITION

Sudan remains an urgent priority for USCCB. Our Bishops' Conference continues to work closely with the Catholic Church in Sudan. USCCB leaders will continue to visit Sudan and play an active role in the U.S. policy debate. The Church in Sudan has been vocal in its calls for a halt to the violence, full implementation of the CPA, adequate humanitarian and development relief to those in need, and the respect of human rights.

ACTION REQUESTED: The U.S. Government should:

- Continue intensive pressure on Sudan to stop the fighting in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and allow immediate access to humanitarian agencies to supply urgent relief assistance. Call for the Government in Khartoum to hold credible popular consultations in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states once the violence has ceased.
- Pressure the North and the South to resolve post-referendum disputes, including guaranteeing citizenship rights, sharing oil revenue, demarcating the border, and identifying the solutions needed to ensure a peaceful establishment of the two new countries.
- Push for a withdrawal of forces from Abyei and a sustainable resolution to the status of Abyei.
- Continue pressure on all parties to stop the violence in Darfur and negotiate a credible and sustainable peace. Ensure that humanitarian assistance is sufficient and humanitarian access to vulnerable populations in Darfur is secured.
- Ask the U.S. to work with its international partners to provide the equipment and transport that the AU/UN forces require to protect civilians, stop the fighting, monitor an eventual ceasefire, and assist international humanitarian relief organizations.
- Continue honoring the U.S. commitment to South Sudan to provide substantial financial and political support for reconstruction and long term development. Act in the UN Security Council to continue support for the peacekeeping mission. Provide adequate funding and logistical support so that peace and security might be achieved.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: visit www.usccb.org/about/international-justice-and-peace/ or contact *Stephen Hilbert*, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3149 (phone), 541-3339 (fax), shilbert@usccb.org.