

such protection does not result in further human rights abuses. Companies have a duty to avoid both complicity in and advantage from human rights abuses, and a company that fails to speak out when authorities responding to corporate requests for security protection commit human rights abuses will be complicit in those abuses.

Similarly, the interests of foreign businesses in Liberia played a crucial role in fueling the conflict. Strictly driven by profit motives, foreign businesses exploited the country's resources in diamonds, timber and gold to finance the rebel insurgency.<sup>14</sup> Ethnic Lebanese businessmen had constituted the most powerful economic force in the country even before the civil war. To exploit the war economy to their advantage, they formed close working relationships with the warlords and regional peacekeeping officers for protection against any unpredictable factions. European multinational corporations with prewar interests continued to do lucrative business in Liberia during the civil war. While foreign multinationals paid fees for protection of their region of operations, these protection fees provided factions with the financial means to procure arms that would empower rebel movements to sustain the conflict.

In Sudan, oil has been one of the contentious issues at the core of the civil war waging since 1956. The recent media frenzy over the actions of a Canadian oil company (Talisman) operating in Sudan demonstrates the difficulty of finding the data to correlate the variables of oil development and human rights violations. Human rights organizations played a pivotal role in bringing the issue to public attention, leading the divestment campaign, and pressuring governments to further investigate the situation. It is argued that Talisman has direct culpability in the conflict in Sudan for two reasons. Firstly, the Greater Nile Oil Petroleum Consortium is a partnership with the Sudanese government, a China based oil company, and a state-owned Malaysian company. Any revenue from this project provides funds for the government to fuel the war, especially a government that the southern Sudanese perceive as illegitimate. Secondly, there are allegations of massive population displacements as a result of the Sudanese government trying to secure a buffer zone around the oil field and development.<sup>15</sup> A report released by the Canadian government following a mission to Sudan indicated that the implications of the oil issue have exacerbated the conflict and led to deterioration in the overall situation of human rights and the respect for humanitarian law.<sup>16</sup> The report seemed to point in the direction that Talisman has to live up to individual and collective responsibility by conducting its profit-seeking in full compliance with human rights, and should proactively seek assistance to develop and implement practical means of monitoring and reporting forced removals, displacements, and human rights violations.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Dunn, Elwood, "The Civil War in Liberia," in Ali, Taiser M. and Robert Matthews eds., Civil Wars in Africa: Roots and Resolutions. (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), pg. 107.

<sup>15</sup> These factors by no means covers the extent of issues addressed in the report. The recommendations from the mission provides a good framework to start considering the issues and roles of multinational corporations operating in conflict situations and can be applicable to other cases.

<sup>16</sup> "Human Security in Sudan: The Report of a Canadian Assessment Mission," Prepared for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ottawa, January 2000, pg. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pg. 70.