

THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SUDAN

ISSUE

The Government of Canada is greatly concerned by reports of grave violations of fundamental human rights by the Government of Sudan (GoS) and southern rebel forces.

BACKGROUND

Civil war resumed in Sudan in 1983 when then President Nimeiri declared his intent to Islamicize Sudan through the imposition of 'Sharia' law. This is opposed by southern Sudanese who, unlike their Arabized northern compatriots, are largely black, Christian and/or animist. A coup d'état in 1989, orchestrated by the 'National Islamic Front' led by Hassan al-Turabi, brought to power an even more militant government headed by General Umar al-Bashir.

During the latest course of fighting, civilians in the south have been victimized by aerial bombardment, forced relocation, and indiscriminate attacks by Government of Sudan troops, allied militia and SPLA rebels. The resulting insecurity has destroyed much of the indigenous trading, productive and support systems, leaving an estimated 3-4 million Sudanese internally displaced, and another 400,000 languishing as refugees. The UN, when permitted by Government and rebel forces, has attempted to deliver relief assistance through a consortia of NGOs, "Operation Lifeline Sudan" (OLS).

Over the past year, the UN was able to negotiate improved access for OLS relief operations throughout the North and South (including opening important land and barge routes). However, many of these gains have proven impossible to implement as fighting intensified in the most directly affected areas.

On the political front, the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) sub-committee on Sudan convened five meetings between the GoS and SPLA factions. A limited breakthrough occurred in May when a draft "Declaration of Principles" highlighting the key issues of religion/state and southern sovereignty was tabled. GoS negotiators refused to discuss this document in September, stalling the process. Discussions to reconvene along a different track are ongoing.

Militarily, the civil war reached a climax in February and March following GoS capture of a number of key towns in Western and Eastern Equatoria. This fighting, combined with GoS aerial bombardments, created a new wave of internally displaced and refugees, many fleeing to Uganda. Inter-Nuer ethnic fighting along the Sobat river basin area also caused severe displacement. Intense fighting recently near Kajo Keji and Nimule, along with Northern Bahr el Ghazal, is likely to exacerbate this trend.

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