



news release

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CANADA AIRLIFTS EMERGENCY RELIEF TO SUDAN

External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall and the Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Kim Campbell, announced today that Canada is airlifting emergency humanitarian aid to the people of southern Sudan, in response to a request from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Canada has provided a Canadian Forces Hercules C-130 plane for a 10-day period to assist UNICEF's "Operation Lifeline Sudan" in transporting medical, supplemental food and shelter materials from Lokichokio, Kenya, to famine- and conflict-affected areas in southern Sudan. Operation Lifeline Sudan was established by UNICEF in 1989 to co-ordinate the efforts of UN agencies and non-governmental organizations in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan.

An agreement reached in December 1992 between the United Nations, the Sudanese government and opposition forces has allowed relief agencies expanded access to the most severely affected regions of southern Sudan. UNICEF is accelerating its relief activities to respond to this increased need, and to do so before the fast-approaching rainy season makes available airstrips unusable. UNICEF requested assistance from the Canadian government who, with aircraft and experienced personnel in the area, were capable of responding quickly to this limited "window of opportunity."

- 30 -

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BACKGROUND

CANADIAN ACTIONS ON SUDAN

The long-running civil war and tribal fighting, exacerbated by drought, continue to cause famine and large-scale movements of people in southern Sudan. Fighting is preventing relief organizations from reaching large pockets of the populations most in need in southern Sudan. There are reports of widespread torture, executions, religious persecution, and detention of civilians without trial. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have died from the fighting and famine, and many more have been displaced.

The 10-year civil war between the southern rebels of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudanese government continues to interfere with relief efforts, with both sides using control of food as a weapon. Since 1991, the SPLA has splintered into several factions, and recent fighting among them has added to the bloodshed.

Civil conflict continues to cause large-scale population movements, driving tens of thousands of refugees into Kenya, Uganda, Zaire and Ethiopia and leaving hundreds of thousands more trapped in inaccessible areas of Sudan. An estimated 2.8 million displaced and drought-affected persons will require food aid this year.

In December 1992, discussions between the United Nations, the Sudanese government and three SPLA factions resulted in an agreement allowing relief agencies improved access to southern Sudan. Nevertheless, the situation remains precarious; the civil war persists as does fighting among the SPLA factions.

Where Canada Stands

The situation in Sudan poses a humanitarian and human rights challenge to the international community.

Canada is deeply concerned about the continuing conflict and deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in Sudan. Canada maintains that a negotiated peace among all parties is the only avenue toward a resolution of the conflict.

With this in mind, Canada continues to provide humanitarian assistance, make representations in international forums, and support UN initiatives on peace and human rights.

In an attempt to stop the violence and suffering in Sudan, Canada has co-sponsored a UN resolution condemning the human rights situation in Sudan and has expressed Canadian concern in meetings with Sudanese officials. At the current session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Canada successfully pressed to have Sudan moved from consideration under confidential procedures, to public debate.

Humanitarian Assistance

Since January 1990, the Government of Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has provided almost \$77 million in food aid and humanitarian assistance to the Sudanese people. Of this amount, over \$54 million was for food aid. The food aid is delivered, both in the South and in the North, exclusively through non-governmental institutions and UN agencies and is targeted to the most vulnerable groups: the displaced and refugees. The balance, close to \$23 million, was for non-food humanitarian assistance. The funds were distributed to a number of international agencies, including the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), for activities such as relief and shelter for displaced families and unaccompanied children, reuniting children with their families, emergency health care and water, and sanitation and hygiene education. Funding has also been provided to Canadian non-governmental organizations such as the Canadian Council of Churches and Médecins sans frontières (MSF) Canada, whose work includes emergency medical care within Sudan and for Sudanese refugees outside Sudan, and the provision of shelter and clothing.

Refugees

There are currently some 22,000 Sudanese refugees in Kenya, 22,000 in Ethiopia, 86,000 in Uganda and 103,000 in Zaire. Canada provides financial assistance through the UNHCR and resettlement opportunities for small numbers of vulnerable refugees.

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