

Dr. John Eibner
CEO, Christian Solidarity International (CSI-USA)
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**Africa's Newest Nation: The Republic of South Sudan
Slavery**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for affording me the opportunity to testify about slavery in Sudan. This internationally recognized crime against humanity continues to blight the lives of tens of thousands of Sudanese men, women and children. It furthermore darkens the prospect of a genuinely comprehensive and sustained peace, and threatens the security of Africa's Newest Nation.

May I begin by introducing you to Achol Yum Deng. My colleague, Charles Jacobs and I recently wrote about her in *The Wall Street Journal*.¹ For about 15 years Achol served a master in Northern Sudan and was only recently liberated and repatriated to her home in Southern Sudan. The war booty of a man named Adhaly Osman, Achol was threatened with death, gang-raped, genitally mutilated, forced to convert to Islam, renamed "Mariam" and racially and religiously insulted. She lost the sight in one eye when her master thrashed her face with a camel whip for failing to perform Islamic rituals correctly. This mother of four said she saw two of her children beaten to death for minor misdemeanors. She also lost the use of one arm when her master took a machete to it in response to her failure to grind grain properly. Hopefully, Achol will now enjoy the fruits of freedom in an independent South Sudan. But she left many other badly abused slaves behind.

As Sudan enters a new era of crisis on the eve of Southern independence, with fresh waves of mass killing and displacement occurring in Southern Kordofan and western Upper Nile, it is timely to revisit the slavery aspect of what Francis Deng calls Sudan's historic War of Visions² – a conflict that transcends the late civil war between Khartoum and the Southern-based SPLA, a battle that continues today notwithstanding the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005.

Some American policy-makers have been inclined to dismiss slavery as little more than a grotesque, but irrelevant side-show to Sudan's political dramas, or to use it simply as a stick with which to beat the aggressive Islamist power in Khartoum – a power which indeed bears primary responsibility for the revival of slavery in Sudan and its use as an instrument of collective punishment in its declared jihad against non-submissive Black African communities in Southern Sudan and other marginalized areas during the late civil war (1983-2005).

It has been a grave mistake to sweep slavery to the margins of Sudanese politics, as all parties, including western partners, have done since the signing of the CPA in January 2005. Not only

¹ John Eibner and Charles Jacobs, "Will Freedom Come for Sudan's Slaves", *Wall Street Journal*, January 14, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704803604576077980847024402.html?mod=googlenews_wsj.

² Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions, Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*, Brookings Institution Press, 1995.

does this evil institution warp and destroy human lives on a mass scale. It also reflects and perpetuates the religious and racial intolerance that fuels Khartoum's use of mass violence as collective punishment against communities that it deems - according to the norms of *jihad* - outside the law. Unless the American government, together with the international community, addresses squarely the cultural and religious roots of Sudanese slavery, it will have failed to address the sources of the ongoing War of Visions.

Sen. Danforth, as Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, understood the political significance of slavery. In his February 2002 report to the President, the Special Envoy rightly noted: "There is probably no issue other than civilian bombings that concerns Americans more than the continued existence of slavery in Sudan."³ But more importantly he identified progress on the eradication of slavery as one of his four tests of the willingness of the belligerents to embark on a course of peace.⁴

In accordance with Sen. Danforth's recommendations, the U.S. Government sponsored an investigation by the International Eminent Persons' Group on Slavery and Forced Servitude, headed by the late Penn Kemble and Ambassador George Moose. Their findings largely corroborate those of Christian Solidarity International's own field research. They observed that slavery in Sudan was "commonplace", and included a disturbing pattern of abuse:

"Capture through abduction (generally accompanied by violence); the forced transfer of victims to another community; subjection to forced labor for no pay; denial of victims' freedom of movement and choice; and, frequently, assaults on personal identity such as renaming, forced religious conversion, involuntary circumcision, prohibition on the use of native languages and the denial of contacts with the victims' families and communities of origin."⁵

The Eminent Persons proposed a comprehensive 16 point policy for eradicating slavery in Sudan, and concluded:

"Eliminating the abuses described in this report will require, in our view, major political initiatives on the part both of the government and of the SPLM/A. The initiatives we propose can only succeed with assistance from the international community. This assistance must be substantial, long-term, carefully conceived and, above all, rigorously monitored."⁶

³ The historic 1996 Africa subcommittee hearing on slavery in Sudan, presided over by the current Chairman, Mr. Smith, and the 2001 arrest of the current ranking member, Mr. Payne, and myself in the course of a non-violent, civil disobedience demonstration against slavery and related crimes against humanity in front of the Sudanese Embassy were among the many powerful reflections of the American public's deep concern, prior to the launch of President Bush's Sudan peace initiative in September 2001. There were, of course, others in the vanguard of the campaign against Sudanese slavery, such as former Sudanese slaves Francis Bok and Simon Deng, former Congressman Walter Fauntroy, Charles Jacobs of the American Anti-Slavery Group, Joe Madison of Sirius/XM Radio, Faith McDonnell of the Institute for Religion and Democracy, Nina Shea of the Hudson Institute, and Barb Vogel of the STOP Campaign.

⁴ *Report to the President of the United States on the Outlook for Peace in Sudan from John C. Danforth, Special Envoy for Peace, April 26, 2002.* <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/10258.pdf>.

⁵ *Report of the International Eminent Persons Group, Slavery, Abduction, Forced Servitude in Sudan, Khartoum, May 22, 2002.* <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/11951.pdf>.

⁶ *Report of the International Eminent Persons Group, Slavery, Abduction, Forced Servitude in Sudan, Khartoum, May 22, 2002.* <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/11951.pdf>.

Regrettably, significant long-term, carefully conceived assistance has not been forthcoming. While the CPA created an historic opportunity for ending the civil war and the broader War of Visions, it failed to include a mechanism for the liberation and repatriation of slaves.

Some bold efforts were made following the signing of the CPA to restore slavery to the peace agenda of Khartoum, Juba and the international community. According to Sudan Radio, a Southern Minister in the Government of National Unity in Khartoum, Bona Malwal, reminded the world in October 2005 that “many Southern Sudanese are still held in bondage in the North”, and “urged the National Unity Government to find a solution to the problem ... as part of the peace process.”⁷ The President of Southern Sudan, Salva Kiir, declared in a 2006 address to parliament that his “government remains deeply committed to the retrieval of Southern Sudanese women and children abducted and enslaved in Northern Sudan”.⁸ Here in Washington, two members of this committee, the current Chairman, Mr. Smith, and Ms. Watson launched HR 3844 the Eradication of Slavery in Sudan Act of 2007.⁹ But these constructive initiatives failed as a result of a lack of political will in Khartoum, Juba and Washington.

The signing of the CPA did, however, have a beneficial byproduct. It produced an end to Sudanese government sponsored raids in Northern Bahr El Ghazal and western Upper Nile. Slaves ceased to be captured in these regions. But those already enslaved during the war and their offspring, as Bona Malwal noted, remained in bondage.¹⁰ According to a prominent member of the Sudanese government’s former showcase anti-slavery organ, the now dissolved Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC), approximately 35,000 slaves from northern Bahr El Ghazal remain in bondage in parts of Southern Darfur and Kordofan.¹¹

In addition, the UN Secretary General’s International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur confirmed the use of slavery as a weapon of war against Black Africans in Darfur.¹² The

⁷ Sudan Radio Service, Khartoum, October 21, 2006.

⁸ CSI, Press Release, “President Kiir of Southern Sudan Calls for Retrieval of Slaves”, April 17, 2006.

⁹ <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:H.R.3844>.

¹⁰ I would encourage Members to see CNN’s recently produced television feature entitled “Slavery in Sudan very much alive”, <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/tag/cnns-david-mckenzie/>), and to read the appended post-CPA articles:

Michael Gerson, *Washington Post*, “Putting the face on Sudan’s legacy of slavery”, April 2, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/01/AR2010040102803.html>.

Michael Gerson, *The Washington Post*, “Stories of Slavery in Sudan”, April 2, 2010, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/postpartisan/2010/04/stories_of_slavery_in_sudan.html

Ellen Ratner, *Talk Radio News Service*, “Helping souls Recover from a Living Hell”, March 31, 2010, <http://talkradionews.com/2010/03/helping-souls-recover-from-a-living-hell/>.

Joseph Polak, *Boston Globe*, “A Passover Ritual for all Enslaved Peoples”, April 19, 2011, http://articles.boston.com/2011-04-19/bostonglobe/29447891_1_slaves-sudanese-civil-war.

John Eibner and Charles Jacobs, “Will Freedom Come for Sudan’s Slaves”, *Wall Street Journal*, January 14, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704803604576077980847024402.html?mod=googlenews_wsj.

John Eibner, “Eradicating Slavery in Sudan”, *Boston Globe*, February 22, 2006, http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2006/02/22/eradicating_slavery_in_sudan/

¹¹ Skye Wheeler, Reuters, “Misseriya and Dinka Grapple with History of Child Abduction, Aweil, November 14, 2008.

¹² UN Secretary General’s International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, January 2005, http://www.un.org/News/dh/sudan/com_inq_darfur.pdf.

enslavement and horrific abuse of Sudanese captives of the Lord's Resistance Army in Equatoria is yet another appalling and neglected facet of Sudan's slavery problem.¹³

I would encourage all Members to search for ways to implement the constructive proposals set forth in the Report of the Eminent Persons Group and in HR 3844 of 2007. In particular, I would like to highlight the need for:

- 1. A financially transparent and functional Sudanese national institution for locating, liberating and repatriating slaves;**
- 2. A program of research on all aspects of Sudanese slavery;**
- 3. An institution, with international and indigenous components, to monitor slavery and its eradication.**
- 4. An international mechanism to follow-up the Eminent Persons' recommendations.**

Such initiatives, like the investigation of the Eminent Persons Group, should ideally involve the international community. The United States has the opportunity to use, together with its partners, the instruments of the United Nations to combat slavery. Can it be, as I am informed, that slavery – a crime against humanity – is not within the human rights mandate of UNMIS? How is it that slavery has fallen off the agenda of the UN Special Expert on Human Rights in Sudan?

Twelve years ago, then Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice, now the head of our Mission to the UN in New York, came face to face with liberated slaves in the Southern Sudanese town of Marial Bai. She pledged that the United States would work tirelessly to stamp out slavery in Sudan, adding “we have an obligation not only to speak out but to ameliorate the suffering”.¹⁴

Let us all work persistently to achieve the goal established by Ambassador Rice. In so doing, we can bring liberation to the captives and weaken the forces of religious and racial intolerance that fuel Sudan's ongoing War of Vision, for its continuation places at great risk the security of Africa's newest nation. It serves neither the interests of the United States or the victims of slavery for the lofty rhetoric of American statesmen to remain empty. Failure to eradicate slavery – with all its overtones of racism and religious bigotry – will leave in Sudan a deadly cancer, destroying possibilities of reconciliation, and undermining chances of sustainable peace and stability for the new state of South Sudan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity to testify, and also for all you do to achieve the eradication of slavery in Sudan and elsewhere.

¹³ John Eibner, “The International Response to Slavery in Sudan”, Conference on Slavery in Sudan and Its Impact on the Peace Process, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, November 5, 2005.

¹⁴ Reuters, “Plight of Sudanese Slaves Witnessed by Top US Official in Africa”, Rumbek, Nov. 20, 2000. <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/africa/11/20/sudan.slaves.reut/>.