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**Excerpts from the Statement of Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)  
Hearing: Sudan's Unraveling Peace and the Challenge to U.S. Policy"  
United States Commission on International Religious Freedom  
September 24, 2008**

I commend and thank the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom for calling this important hearing to re-examine the on-going, indeed worsening, political and humanitarian crisis in Sudan. We all know that when the conflict between the north and the south ended in 2005, more than 2 million people had died, an estimated 600,000 were refugees in other countries, and 4 million were displaced within Sudan. While almost 2.1 million have returned to their homes, there has been little to return to and the added numbers have stretched scarce resources even closer to the breaking point.

The violence and deprivation shifted west, and the world has been witnessing with horror the carnage taking place in Darfur. According to the United Nations, the genocide has resulted in the deaths of over 200,000 people, while others put the death toll as high as 450,000 with about 2.5 million people displaced.

Like many of my colleagues, I have visited Darfur. I have been to Mukjar and Kalma camp. And I have seen firsthand, the unspeakable agony and the devastation, whole families exterminated, entire villages killed, women who have been raped. It is beyond words how much sufferings has been endured--you can see it on the survivors' faces. And when I hear news such as the heavy rains that flooded Kalma camp and others in August, and the violent clashes in Kalma that heaped misery upon misery, I remember those faces, and wonder how these women, men and children can possibly continue with their struggle to survive.

I have actually had a face-to-face with General Bashir, the President, the dictator in Khartoum, pushing for peace and an end to this slaughter. Unfortunately, he was far more interested in discussing the end of U.S. sanctions than he was in discussing how to end the suffering that he, his government and government-sponsored rebel groups are inflicting on countless, innocent lives.

While it is important that this hearing also examine what further action the United States can take to address the crisis, we have not been lax or under-engaged in confronting this overwhelming challenge. We are the largest bilateral donor to Sudan

and have contributed more than \$3 billion for humanitarian programs in Sudan and eastern Chad since FY 2004. USAID, the U.S. Department of State and President Bush himself, and certainly our special envoy Richard Williamson who we are fortunate to have with us at this hearing, have been very robust in their efforts to try to mitigate the suffering and bring an end to the Darfur crisis, as well as ensure the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

But certainly, far more needs to be done. In addition to the numerous, grave issues that I know are being addressed at this hearing, I would hope that some of the spotlight is placed on that of the slaves of Sudan. The issue of slavery in Africa is what motivated many of us in Congress to become involved in Sudan originally. The stories of women and children kidnapped from the south to become slaves in the north or in Middle Eastern countries – now, in what we consider a civilized world - were shocking. Those stories continue, though they seem to be rarely highlighted in the media these days, perhaps overwhelmed by the other tragedies occurring in the country.

Just recently I was told a story about one Sudanese slave, Simon Deng, who escaped and is now living in freedom in the United States. Simon says that every night while he was in captivity, he would go to sleep thinking, “maybe tomorrow, someone will come to rescue me.” He now goes to sleep every night thinking of those fellow slaves he left behind, and knowing that they are thinking the same thought, living on the same hope, that tomorrow, someone will come to rescue them.

In order to respond to that hope, I am proposing a bill to create a commission to investigate the fate of those abducted into slavery in Sudan and to develop a plan to free them and return them to their homes. Southern Sudan President Salva Kiir has highlighted the need to take action on these slaves from the south. I have informed him of this bill, and he is happy that the Congress is considering taking action to help these forgotten, suffering people.

The Eradication of Slavery in Sudan Act will:

- 1) create a commission of independent persons for six years,
- 2) provide for hearings and other activities to investigate the fate of slaves in Sudan and
- 3) provide reports and recommendations on U.S. policy on eliminating slavery in Sudan.

I would welcome your support in this important endeavor, and I assure you of my support in our common effort to bring peace and hope to all the peoples of Sudan.

Thank you, again, for holding this hearing.