

March 14, 2007: USCIRF to President Bush: Press Khartoum to Stop Delaying Tactics on CPA and Darfur

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WASHINGTON—The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent, bipartisan federal agency, has sent a letter to President George W. Bush urging renewed U.S. leadership to achieve implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of January 2005 that brought an official end to the North-South civil war in Sudan and to advance United Nations protection efforts in Darfur. The Commission urges President Bush to use his personal prestige to enlist international support to press Khartoum to end its delaying tactics on CPA implementation. USCIRF is concerned that the North-South peace is in jeopardy and that the crisis in Darfur, in addition to being a dire human tragedy, has contributed to severe delays in implementing CPA mechanisms, including promised commissions to resolve disputes over distribution of Sudan's oil wealth and boundaries, elections, revenue-sharing, local governance and human rights. At a reception March 13 honoring the Congressional Human Rights Caucus' Task Force on International Religious Freedom and highlighting its upcoming work on Sudan, Commission Chair Felice D. Gaer said: "In this dark hour, when the progress enshrined in the CPA is imperiled, we urge you to exercise leadership in pressing Khartoum to end its delaying tactics on CPA implementation and United Nations protection efforts in Darfur." "The high-level attention of the Administration was pivotal to bringing about the CPA in January 2005 and is sorely needed today, when we note the palpable lack of progress in implementing the CPA's mechanisms and the genocide in Darfur," Gaer added. Following is the full text of the letter, including recommendations. March 13, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States of America
The White House

Washington, D.C. 20500 Dear Mr. President: The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, bipartisan federal body, respectfully requests your leadership to prevent the Sudanese people from losing the hard-won gains that owe so much to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of January 2005. In addition to the grave situation in Darfur, North-South peace in Sudan appears to be in jeopardy. Now is the time to renew the high-level attention of your Administration that was pivotal to bringing about the CPA in 2005 and is so sorely needed today. In this dark hour, when the progress enshrined in the CPA is imperiled, we urge you to exercise leadership in pressing Khartoum to end its delaying tactics on CPA implementation and United Nations protection efforts in Darfur. Sudan is now almost halfway between the signing of the CPA in January 2005 and national elections that should be held by July 2009. Although the CPA brought a halt to Sudan's North-South civil war, there has been a palpable lack of progress in implementing the CPA's mechanisms, including the promised commissions to resolve disputes over the distribution of Sudan's oil wealth and boundaries, elections, revenue-sharing, local governance and human rights, and the Commission for the Protection of the Rights of non-Muslims in the National Capital. The genocide in Darfur is necessarily a huge focus of the world's attention. In addition to the tragic consequences for its victims, the Darfur crisis has severely delayed implementation of the CPA. Since 2003, government forces and "Janjaweed" have carried out a genocide in slow motion. Though Darfur is a Muslim region, Khartoum's policies and tactics regarding Darfur are shockingly similar to those it used previously in the South, where the victims were predominantly Christians or followers of traditional African religions. The Darfur conflict illustrates a broader pattern of deliberate marginalization and resource-deprivation of all of Sudan's regions with non-Arab or non-Muslim populations by an unrepresentative and unelected elite drawn from a handful of tribes in the Khartoum area. Implementation of the CPA, including elections to establish representative democratic institutions and governmental accountability at all levels, would go a long way to end the concentration of political power that has led to so much bloodshed. More efforts are obviously needed, not only by the United States, but by others concerned with stability in a volatile and resource-rich part of the world: our European allies, Sudan's neighbors, and countries such as China and India that are Khartoum's economic partners in the oil sector and whose expanding international roles entail increased responsibilities for international peace and security. The Commission calls on your Administration to lead others in ensuring high-level action on implementation of the CPA. Specifically, we ask you to use your personal prestige to enlist international support, including from the European Union, Sudan's neighbors and nations such as China and India to press Khartoum to end its delaying tactics on CPA implementation. Other specific recommendations are included in an appendix to this letter. Mr. President, success in Sudan is still achievable but it is absolutely contingent on sustained and far-reaching U.S. leadership. Thank you for considering the Commission's recommendations on how that success can be secured. Very truly yours, Felice D. Gaer

Chaircc: The Honorable Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State

The Honorable Stephen J. Hadley, National Security Advisor

The Honorable John Hanford, Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom

The Honorable Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs

The Honorable Michael Kozak, Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights, and International Operations, National Security Council

Andrew Natsios, Special Envoy for Sudan

The Commission on International Religious Freedom recommends that the U.S. government should take the lead in the following areas:

- Coalition Building Build on the Special Envoy's efforts by lending your personal prestige to enlist international support, including from the European Union, Sudan's neighbors and nations such as China and India that have major economic investments in Sudan, to press Khartoum to end its delaying tactics on CPA implementation.
- Verification and Follow-through Continue to press for the complete and timely implementation of the CPA's human rights, power-sharing, revenue-sharing, and security arrangements; complete compliance must include Khartoum's unconditional acceptance of the decision of the Abyei Boundary Commission, the verifiable termination of all support for militias or elements of the Ugandan insurgent Lord's Resistance Army operating in the South, and the lifting of restrictions on peaceful political activities throughout the country in advance of elections;
- Hold both the Northern leadership and the SPLM/A to the current schedule for elections and referenda, ensuring that these are true expressions of popular will and that their results are accepted and implemented. Investigate and publicly report to the Congress every six months on the status of implementation of the CPA, with a particular focus on violations, assessing responsibility and indicating what actions are to be taken by the U.S. government in response; violations to be investigated should include the role of the Sudanese Armed Forces and associated militias in the November 2006 fighting in Malakal and Khartoum's possible continued support for the Lord's Resistance Army; and Consider new sanctions as needed to respond to non-compliance with the terms of the CPA, including targeted sanctions such as asset freezes and travel bans against individuals and institutions, e.g., the National Congress Party, identified as responsible for serious human rights abuses or for impeding CPA implementation.
- Strengthening the Peace Continue to support and strengthen the Government of Southern Sudan, assisting in the development of institutions and infrastructure necessary to protect human rights, to deter a resumption of civil war, to support the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and to prepare the South for the 2011 referendum on the South's political future;
- Remove remaining U.S. sanctions from all areas under the control of the Government of Southern Sudan and local institutions in the border areas of Abyei, Southern Blue Nile, and the Nuba Mountains, including sanctions on communications equipment; and Provide, well in advance of the 2011 referendum, specific security guarantees for the South in the event that Khartoum seeks to renew the North-South civil war or otherwise impose its will by force in violation of the CPA.
- Increasing Resources Ensure that Special Envoy Natsios has the personnel and other support needed to fulfill his mandate of facilitating the implementation of the CPA and of pursuing peace in Darfur;
- Appoint a high-level official to ensure that U.S. resources and influence are used effectively to assist the safe and voluntary return of Sudan's refugees and internally displaced persons; and
- Strengthen the capability of the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum to monitor implementation of the crucial human rights provisions of the CPA and to report on human rights abuses, including religious freedom in the North, as well as to advance the U.S. human rights agenda in Sudan by appointing a ranking official reporting to the Ambassador and working full-time on human rights.

Felice D. Gaer, Chair • Michael Cromartie, Vice Chair • Elizabeth H. Prodromou, Vice Chair • Nina Shea, Vice Chair • Preeta D. Bansal • Archbishop Charles J. Chaput • Khaled Abou El Fadl • Richard D. Land • Bishop Ricardo Ramirez • Ambassador John V. Hanford III, Ex-Officio • Joseph R. Crapa, Executive Director