

September 26, 2006: USCIRF Commends Appointment of Andrew Natsios as Special Envoy for Sudan and Darfur

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(202) 523-3240, ext. 14 WASHINGTON-The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, bipartisan federal agency, welcomes the appointment of former United States Agency for International Development Administrator Andrew Natsios as President Bush's Special Envoy for Sudan and Darfur, an action the Commission recommended. The Commission had publicly urged the prompt appointment of a full-time envoy who enjoys the trust and confidence of the President and the Secretary of State and whose sole responsibility should be to coordinate U.S. efforts on the peace process for Darfur and the complete implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended Sudan's long North-South civil war, so that a just and lasting peace can be secured for all of Sudan. The mandate given to Mr. Natsios, who previously served with distinction as Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan and spent more than 15 years working with local Sudanese and regional leaders, accords with the Commission's recommendation. "Mr. Natsios is uniquely qualified to hold this position. We hope he can focus attention and diplomatic resources to end the genocidal conflict in Darfur, bring relief and safety to its victims, and establish a just and lasting peace for the entire country," said Felice D. Gaer, Chair of the Commission. "Khartoum is carrying out a genocidal assault on its own people in Darfur, and the United States cannot look away."The Commission visited Sudan earlier this year, and expressed concern about significant delays and shortcomings in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including its provisions for the protection of religious freedom and other human rights. "These problems must be addressed, and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement fully implemented, in order to forestall a possible breakdown in the peace process and potentially a resumption of the North-South civil war that cost 2 million lives," Gaer said.The Commission recommends that the Special Envoy: Be given regular access to the President and Secretary of State to advise them on the policy in Sudan; Call publicly for full implementation of all UN resolutions on Darfur; Fully use U.S. participation in Sudan's Assessment and Evaluation Commission, established under the CPA, to ensure the timely, transparent, and complete implementation of the CPA's power-sharing, revenue-sharing, and security arrangements; Report publicly every six months on the status of implementation of the CPA; Ensure that U.S. government assistance to Sudan advances legal protection and respect for freedom of religion or belief throughout Sudan, in recognition of the central role of religion in the North-South civil war; and Lobby within the U.S. government for the allocation of appropriate personnel resources to pursue a just and lasting peace in Sudan, including a coordinator for U.S. assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons and a ranking official in the Embassy working full-time on human rights issues.A complete list of the Commission's latest recommendations on Sudan can be found in its 2006 Annual Report. The Commission's Policy Focus on Sudan can be found on the Commission's web site, www.uscirf.gov.

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