

October 11, 2000: Commission Hails Defeat of Sudan's Bid for Security Council Seat

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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom today applauded the defeat of Sudan's bid for a United Nations Security Council seat and the election of Mauritius as the African "representative." The Commission also commended the Clinton Administration, particularly Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Ambassador to the U.N. Richard Holbrooke, for their active and successful diplomacy in rallying the forces opposed to Sudan's bid.

Sudan is currently under Security Council sanctions for its sponsorship of international terrorism. In addition, the U.S. has unilateral sanctions on Sudan both for its terrorist connections and its status as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. The Sudanese government has for more than 17 years waged war against the mostly Christian and animist south and persecuted dissident Muslims nationwide.

"Sudan's defeat is a victory for religious freedom and human rights," said Commission Chairman Elliott Abrams. "This is a message to the government in Khartoum that civilized nations condemn its horrendous record of human rights violations - including aerial bombing of civilians and aid centers, use of starvation as a weapon of war, toleration of slave raids - and its foot-dragging in peace talks."

"It would have been an intolerable mockery of the Security Council to have a sanctioned nation sitting on the body that sanctioned it," said Mr. Abrams, himself a former U.S. assistant secretary of state for international organizations. "If those nations who voted together to elect Mauritius would now band together to press for peace and human rights in Sudan, perhaps we would see some real progress in ending genocidal levels of religious persecution there."

The Commission's Annual Report on May 1 characterized Sudan as "the world's most violent abuser to the right to freedom of religion and belief. The Commission recommended to the Clinton administration and Congress a comprehensive 12-month plan in which Sudan would be rewarded for improvement in human rights. If no improvement was forthcoming during that time, however, the Commission called on the U.S. to supply non-lethal aid to appropriate opposition groups. The Commission also issued a July 6 statement urging the Clinton Administration to move to block Sudan's Security Council bid.

Hon. Elliott Abrams, Chair

- Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh, Vice Chair Rabbi David Saperstein Laila Al-Marayati, M.D. Hon. John R. Bolton Dean Michael K. Young Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick Nina Shea Justice Charles Z. Smith Ambassador Robert Seiple, Ex-Officio Steven T. McFarland, Executive Director

