

Hearings on Religious Persecution in Sudan: Eric Reeves Oral Testimony

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(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

PROFESSOR

REEVES: Although I have not been to Sudan, I have with the eyes of a professional researcher seen the searing, nightmarish sights already described to you, sights which will receive ghastly expansion during the course of this day.

Indeed, long ago, the overwhelming force of Sudan's agony forced me to see with more than the eyes of a researcher. Long hours and days of assiduous reading, archival retrieval, and real-time communications with Sudan experts in and out of government have given me access to a reality that is simply soul-destroying.

What makes the suffering and destruction in Sudan so intensely dispiriting is that it is not the consequence of natural disaster--it is transparently the product of human weakness, ignorance and evil. What I will focus on in my testimony are those actions, decisions and judgments which seem to me most deeply implicated in sustaining a civil conflict which is the most destructive of its kind since the Second World War.

What sustains such destruction and suffering? What has allowed this war to continue for 17 years? I will not presume to give even a synoptic historical account but rather to suggest what is most significant in the circumstances now obtaining. In doing so, my focusing task will be to demonstrate the critical nexus between oil development and continuing civil war.

I have supplied you with a fairly elaborate chronology of oil development in Sudan precisely so that I may concentrate my remarks on the present consequences of that development. They are, I believe, threefold.

First, there are the enormous revenues now deriving from the 185,000 barrels of crude oil per day extracted by the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company, which I will be referring to simply as "the Greater Nile Project." This project has four economic partners--Talisman Energy, Canada's largest independent oil and gas concern, a 25 percent partner; China's state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation, a 40 percent partner;

and Malaysia's state-owned Petronus, a 30 percent partner. SUDAPET, the state-owned Sudanese oil company, is a nominal 5 percent partner, but given the terms of the royalty contracts, approximately 40 percent or more of the revenues go to the Khartoum regime. This will generate between \$300 and \$400 million per year for one of the most bankrupt countries in the world. In addition, the regime has been freed from its formerly onerous expenditures for oil exports.

What is critically important to understand is that all revenues from the Greater Nile Project earmarked for Sudan go to the Khartoum regime utterly unencumbered and uncontrolled by any credible mechanism of distribution. If the regime wishes to use these revenues entirely for military purposes, there is nothing foreseeably or presently that can stop them.

This has clearly provided a profound disincentive for the Khartoum regime to engage in a just peace negotiation. Convinced they have the revenues to win the war militarily and to insulate themselves economically from diplomatic pressures, they refuse to enter into good faith peace negotiations under the auspices of IGAD.

This is precisely the conclusion of the long-awaited Harker report made public yesterday in Canada. African specialist John Harker and a team of investigators were commissioned last October by Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy [ph.] of Canada to investigate the consequences of oil development for Sudan given the prominence of Canada's Talisman Energy in the Greater Nile Project. I will return at a couple points with the findings of this enormously significant report.

Secondly, there are numerous reports of extremely intense destruction and widespread forced civilian population removals in the oil regions of Western Upper Nile Province with related armed conflict extending into Southern Kordofan and Eastern Bahr-el-Ghazal. In my judgment, the most striking and significant finding of the Harker Report is the extent of these forced population removals in service of past, present and future oil development.

The brutal, scorched earth warfare of the Government of Sudan and its local military allies has a clear goal of creating a sanitized security corridor for the Greater Nile Project in all of its forms: the pipeline, the rigs in the oil fields, the attendant infrastructure, and the concessions where future development and extraction will take place.

Thirdly, the resources and personnel of the Greater Nile Project are now being used directly for military purposes. In January, prior to the release of his report, John Harker indicated both to Foreign Minister Axworthy and to the news media that Talisman Energy's Heiglig oil field airstrip was being used for both defensive and offensive military purposes by the Government of Sudan. The evidence, Harker insisted, despite the denials from the Khartoum regime, was completely convincing. Helicopter

gunships and Antonov bombers--key elements of the Khartoum regime's war on civilians--had access to this extraordinarily well-positioned airstrip. The Canadian Government issued a stern demarche to Khartoum at the time.

Moreover, it has been clear from the first stages of design and construction that the 1,000-mile pipeline which reaches to Port Sudan on the Red Sea would pass by one of Sudan's most significant refineries, that at El-Ohbed [ph.]. This refinery, which previously has required imported oil, now siphons off its full 10,000-barrel-per-day capacity from the pipeline of the Greater Nile Project. There is not nearly enough civilian consumption in this part of Sudan to justify such refining production. It is clearly the key forward source for aviation fuel and diesel fuel used by the aircraft and combat vehicles of the Government of Sudan. I will return to the significance of the El-Ohbed [ph.] refinery in my concluding comment.

I also wish to point out the implications of an on-the-scene report that has recently emerged from a humanitarian mission to the Bentiu region of Western Upper Nile. It comes from Derek Hammond, the South African who for 3 years has been conducting humanitarian missions to the most dangerous areas in Southern Sudan, areas to which the Khartoum regime has denied regular humanitarian access. He very credibly reports evidence of direct support by Chinese nationals for combat efforts by the armed forces of the Government of Sudan. His report to me--and I have provided copies for you of his full account, as well as a very detailed map he supplied of the immediate Bentiu region, indicates, I believe quite convincingly, that the putative neutrality of the Greater Nile Project is simply a convenient fiction. In other words, the partners of the Greater Nile Project are not simply the key economic allies of the Khartoum regime, in the form of Chinese logistical support, they are now providing direct military aid.

This conclusion comports fully with another related form of Chinese military assistance to the Government of Sudan--massive amounts of combat weaponry. I have also made copies for you of the relevant section of an August 1998 report by the widely respected Human Rights Watch which provides a compelling digest of the evidence for an extensive arms trade between China and the Khartoum regime. What I believe this report also clearly suggests is that China, a net oil importer since the mid-1990s, and the utterly bankrupt Khartoum regime have been engaged in massive in-kind trading--Chinese weaponry for anticipated Sudanese oil and oil revenues. Indeed, there is no other way to account for Khartoum's ability to conduct a war that has been repeatedly characterized as costing \$1 million a day. Nowhere is the nexus of oil and ongoing civil war more obvious or more consequential.

There is no simple way to end testimony about such cruelly indifferent pursuit of oil profits or to summarize the immensely destructive consequences of present oil development for the Nation of Sudan. But I also have been deeply haunted, and I will go further and say traumatized, by the news reports from this past week in the Nuba in the town of Kauda. Reliably, it has been reported by Reuters News Service and by the BBC that a Government of Sudan Antonov bomber deliberately targeted a

primary school of over 300 students. Thirteen students studying English under a tree outside the rudimentary classroom buildings were torn apart and killed when one of four high-explosive, shrapnel-loaded bombs dropped on the school area. Another student and a teacher died subsequently. Many more are severely wounded and may not live.

What you should know is that the aviation fuel for this Antonov bomber was almost certainly refined at the El-Ohbed [ph.] refinery not far north of Kauda. The El-Ohbed refinery is, as I have indicated, directly on the pipeline route of the Greater Nile Project.

In other words, crude oil from a well developed by the Greater Nile Project, flowing through a pipeline built by the Greater Nile Project, daily supplies the refinery that produces the fuel that enables these bombers to fly on their deadly missions.

Again, according to Reuters, officials of the Government of Sudan have defended the attack on Kauda, saying that the school was a legitimate target in the war. In the unfathomably callous words of Dideri Ahmed [ph.], a Minister in the Sudanese Embassy in Nairobi, who had seen graphic video footage of the carnage following the attack, "The bombs landed where they were supposed to land."

So I must ask how can any of us countenance complicity in such cruel and barbarous forms of human destruction. What oil profits can possibly justify acquiescence in policies of war that deliberately target schools for young children? But that complicity is precisely what defines the economic partnership of Talisman Energy, China National Petroleum Corporation, and Malaysia Petronus with the Government of Sudan.

For this reason and for the others I have indicated, I believe it is our profoundest moral obligation to respond vigorously and with decisive effectiveness to this obscene nexus of oil development and ongoing civil war in Sudan.

Beyond resolutely independent humanitarian aid, America's most effective means of response to what is finally genocidal destruction in Southern Sudan lies ultimately in the enormous strength of our capital markets. In the present extraordinary case, I believe it is both practical and legal to deny American capital market participation to all companies presently partners with the Government of Sudan in its Greater Nile Project. I urge you with all possible conviction to make this recommendation to the Congress and to the President.

Thank you very much.