

Hearings on Religious Persecution in Sudan: Panel 2 Question and Answer

February 15, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

Panel II (left to right): Eric Reeves, Adlan Abdelazziz, Baroness Caroline Cox, Victoria Ben Ding.

COMMISSIONER SHEA: Yes.

I'd like to thank all the panelists. It is just staggering what you have described that is continuing to this day in Sudan.

I would like to direct my question to Professor Reeves. We are very concerned by the findings in the Harker report, especially his finding that Talisman helicopters have been used in the military effort to transport generals of the Sudanese military, that the roads they have built and are using are being used to mobilize the tanks and that the airstrips have been used to stage their bombing raids. But the argument that they put forward in Talisman's defense--and by the way, I note the weakness of the Harker recommendations; they are totally out of sync with his findings, I think, unresponsive to his findings--but the argument that Talisman has used in the past in Canada to a certain extent is that, well, their presence had a beneficial effect. I don't think they can argue that anymore. I think Harker has laid that to rest. It is not a beneficial presence whatsoever; it is a pernicious presence. But the argument that they advance in opposing sanctions or in rejecting sanctions on Talisman in Canadian companies is that if Talisman pulls out, won't some other company--maybe the Chinese--take their place, or some other Western oil company.

I'd like to hear your response to that and also ask you about the

evidence that you mentioned about Chinese military involvement and what is the basis for Mr. Hammond's conclusion that there is military involvement.

PROFESSOR REEVES: I believe that it is no doubt a difficult course of action we set for ourselves if we are going to bring sufficient economic pressure to bear on the Khartoum regime to negotiate a just peace by means of working to deny American capitalization, either to Talisman, who presently enjoys it by virtue of its New York Stock Exchange listing, or to deny capitalization to China National or its surrogate, PetroChina, which is presently seeking New York Stock Exchange listing but is eminently doable.

I believe there are both practical and legal powers available to the President to deny to any who would enter into partnership with the Government of Sudan in its Greater Nile Project to deny capital participation in the American capital markets. This would be a brutally effective signal to send to OMV of Austria or Lundine [ph.] of Sweden or to Total Fina of France or to those others, who indeed may look at Talisman's 25 percent stake as there for a fire sale price. I think we have to make it clear that there is no fire sale price, that enormous consequences will follow upon the acquisition of this 25 percent share. China, it looks to me, very likely will be denied and indeed already has been denied billions of dollars of capitalization because of the way in which Goldman Sachs has had to restructure their IPO; originally scheduled to be perhaps \$10 billion, they will be lucky to get \$5 billion now. So we might argue that \$5 billion of American capital has already been denied to China National by virtue of its participation in the Greater Nile Project.

If we can build on those successes, I believe that ultimately, the signal to Khartoum will be: You will be denied access to what is most valuable in the modern economy--American capital markets.

As to Hammond's reports, he reports extensive engineering developments on the part of Chinese nationals building a bridge across the river, the Bahr-el-Ghazal, at Bentiu, which will give access to the Southern regions for the enormous garrison just north of the river as well as heavy armor and ferried armaments; he reports an extensive road-building project 18 to 19 miles south of Bentiu to a new Chinese oil right; tar roads. He also reports very ominously of repeated sources on the ground that tell him that Chinese nationals are ferrying Government of Sudan troops.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Thank you. Dr. Kazemzadeh?

COMMISSIONER KAZEMZADEH: Thank you.

Mr. Abdelaziz, you mentioned Iran in connection with the Sudanese situation. Is there any connection between the Government of the Sudan and the Iranian Government? Is there support, military or economic, flowing from Iran to the Sudanese?

MR. ABDELAZIZ:

In the past, there has been some relation. They are friends. But for the time being, there are not conflicts, but there is no obvious relationship between the two countries.

I mean by my statement that Iran follows a different school of Islam, which is Shi'a; and Sudan is Sunni. The majority of Muslims are Sunnis. If there are any extremists from other Muslim countries, most of them are Sunnis and will not find Iran an ideal place for them to go. I am an example--as someone who has lived in Sudan, I am not going to Iran. I believe this makes Sudan the only country in the world that is governed or ruled by a Sunni extremist Muslim regime.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Thank you. Ambassador Seiple?

COMMISSIONER SEIPLE: Thank you.

The war comes and goes with ups and downs and so on. The persecution, as we listened to you all talk about it, comes from your own experience and your own readings at a particular point in time.

Trends--can you comment at all on whether things are getting worse? I realize that this question gets biased by the events of last Tuesday, but trends in the escalation, de-escalation or status quo of persecution--comments at all from any one of you?

PROFESSOR

REEVES: Certainly in the Bentiu area, the Harker [ph.] Commission Report released yesterday goes well beyond the last report of the UN Special Rapporteur in establishing just how intense the scorched earth warfare in Western Upper Nile is. I think, although the report is abominably written, badly organized, reaches dismal conclusions, it nonetheless provides a wealth of greater empirical evidence, including massive evidence of an escalation of the scorched earth warfare in the oil regions directly tied to oil development and extraction.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Let me combine a couple of questions that came from the attendees here.

For Baroness Cox, what is the best source on the numbers of slaves in Sudan, and how can we be sure that slave redemption does not lead to further taking of slaves?

BARONESS COX: Thank you for that question. I'm glad to have a chance to answer it, because I know it is in many people's minds.

First, as far as numbers are concerned, of course, it is extremely difficult to estimate precise numbers, but having been in the area since the NIF regime started escalating the policy of slavery as part of its policy of jihad in 1994, the leaders went down to the borderlands--Kordofan and Darfur--and mobilized a lot of the local Arab militia and armed them--this was a key thing--with fast horses and Kalishnikov automatic rifles, at which the asymmetry of the military events has become so serious that the local African communities cannot defend themselves with spears against rifles. We have seen a dramatic increase in the size and seriousness of the slave raids and have been in many of the areas immediately after those raids and seen again and again the kinds of pictures--I just wanted to give an indicative example.

We estimate that there must be tens of thousands who have been abducted into slavery. Now, some have been returned, and this comes to the second question--doesn't redemption encourage slavery? We have obviously thought very deeply about this issue, and our answer is basically, no, it does not, partly because the slave raids will take place as part of the policy of jihad. They form very effective weapons of jihad because, of course, the people taken into slavery become very vulnerable to the policies of forced Islamization, as we heard in one of the testimonies, but we hear again and again, and forced Arabization by the sexual exploitation of the African girls and women who--as we heard again in the testimony, but we heard again and again and we see the half-Arab babies--after forced sexual relations, then, of course, their children are half-Arab, and that begins to change the genetic identity of the Africans.

So slavery is a very powerful tool of jihad and there is every incentive for the regime to continue that policy.

We have been conscious of the fact that people will say that if we help communities by providing them with money to redeem their relatives who have been taken into slavery, that will encourage more slavery. The evidence does not prove that at all. The people who bring the slaves back are, on the whole, peaceable traders who over time immemorial have

come South to graze their cattle in the dry season and to trade. They risk quite a lot bringing back the women and children who have been abducted, because it is undermining the policies of jihad. If they are caught, they are punished. Therefore, they do do this at the request of the African communities and to maintain their trade and grazing rights.

They have not exploited the situation, as horrible as it is to talk in these economic terms in terms of human beings, by using the availability of Western money to put the price up--rather they have allowed economies of scale, and the price is actually reduced from what was originally five head of cattle to three head of cattle, which turns into more familiar currencies, from something like US\$150 to something between \$50 and \$100.

So the local people are not exploiting it, and we just feel there is a moral obligation that if it is possible to reunite a mother, to reunite a child with a family, then it is an obligation so to do, but that is not the answer. The answer is to shatter the silence, to stop slavery, and to bring an end to that abominable practice.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Thank you. Elliott Abrams?

COMMISSIONER ABRAMS: Thank you.

I wonder if I could ask Baroness Cox about the question of an international conference. Why would it help, I guess is really the question. I always worry that, of course, on the Sudanese side, there is a government which has the full accreditation of the United Nations and certainly greater status than other parties, and one always worries that it will end up delaying things rather than really contributing to change and to solution.

Why do you think that would work?

BARONESS

COX: As I indicated, the principal warring factions have tried to negotiate--they have expressed their own versions; they have identified the bottom line for both of them--and there is an impasse. While the impasse continues, the war continues, and people suffer and die on this huge scale.

The worrying factor is that we heard in the earlier testimony related to oil that maybe with the oil revenues, the government may have less incentive to participate in a conference which would genuinely bring peace and justice for all people of Sudan.

That having been said, I think there is war weariness on all sides, and therefore, any step that can be taken to try to bring an end and peace with justice for all the people of Sudan, I think every possibility must be explored.

Emphasis was placed in the first session this morning absolutely rightly on the agreement to the principle of self-determination, and that is embedded in the IGAD principles, and there has been formal credibility given to that by all parties.

A conference just might be one arena where those people who are engaged in this long-running, deadly conflict would have a chance in a more open arena to state the bottom line of the conditions on which they might feel they could accept some kind of negotiated peaceful settlement plus the identification of the conditions which would ensure that the agreements were kept. Again, those were touched on by Dr. Biro in his earlier presentation--for example, the idea of no-fly zones or safe havens internationally monitored; the opening up of all of Sudan to human rights organizations and aid organizations, again monitored. It could just be an arena in which external pressure could be brought to bear to bring about some of those things that at the moment are formally agreed but being noticeable by the absence of implementation.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Thank you. Our Executive Director, Steve McFarland.

MR.

McFARLAND: Ms. Ding and Mr. Abdelaziz, could you address a question--will, in your opinion, additional pressure on the Khartoum Government hurt or help victims of that Government?

RABBI

SAPERSTEIN: Several of the attendees had asked this question in one form or another--is it better to continue to pressure and increase it, or to withdraw it?

MS. DING: I did not hear the question.

RABBI

SAPERSTEIN: Will it hurt victims of this regime, of this government, if the international community or the United States puts more pressure on Khartoum to change its policies? Does putting pressure on the government hurt the victims or help the victims? Mr. Abdelaziz, do you want to begin?

MR. ABDELAZIZ: That depends on what kinds of punishment or measures would be applied to the regime in Khartoum. Anything that is related to food or medicine in my belief will help the people and victims in Sudan.

I support the idea that the umbrella of IGAD must be expanded to include Northern parties, or NDA, the National Democratic Alliance. In my believe, self-determination under this situation will lead to two weak countries, one in the South and one in the North. I believe in democracy, and in my own belief, the self-determination is ideal when there is democracy, because there is a war in the South, there is famine, there are human rights violations. If you ask the people if they would like to stay in a united country or to separate, they would definitely choose separation. That is not the ideal situation for self-determination.

I am with the self-determination, but not under this situation.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Thank you. Ms. Ding, did you wish to add anything?

MS.

DING: Yes. Depending on what kind of pressure the United States puts on the government, because the people back there are victims of the war, and some of them don't even know where their relatives are, so if the pressure is put, some people will be help and others not, according to where you are, also.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Thank you.

There were a number of other questions that came from the attendees that we felt would be more appropriate for some of the later panels. Let me conclude with one for you, Professor Reeves.

You talked about what your vision is in regard to the use of capital markets, but let's talk about it in real terms for a moment. Do you

think that the U.S. could prevent further development of the Greater Nile Project by depriving access to U.S. capital markets? Is that a symbolic step, is it a functional step? And what else would need to be done or might be done that would prevent or impede the further exploitation of oil, and to what extent is an international response indispensable, and to what extent can a unilateral response be effective, either from the United States or Canada or anyone else?

PROFESSOR

REEVES: Well, there are a few questions there. One, understand that the Muglad [ph.] Basin, which is where this oil development is taking place, guesstimates of how much oil lies underneath the Muglad Basin--which may spread all the way from Chad to the Red Sea--are many, many times the present 185,000 barrels-per-day capacity. The pipeline itself that runs to the North Sea has a capacity, with augmented pumping stations, of 450,000 barrels a day. So this is a vast development project that is really, in some ways, just beginning. This may be the first of one or two or three pipelines.

Sudan and its oil project are in need of many things. Most of all, they are in need of moral cover, and that is what Talisman Energy shamelessly provides them. There are any number of quotes I might supply you by the Government of Sudan speaking about what Talisman's presence means. It all boils down to the fact that Talisman gives them their key ingredient, moral cover. But it is clear that they need massive amounts of capital. Talisman's predecessor, Iraqis [ph.] Energy, was forced out of the Greater Nile Project because its own capitalization fell through. It is clear that China, having invested billions of dollars not simply in the oil pipeline but in infrastructure projects as well, is desperate for capital. The PetroChina IPO that China National is trying to engineer by means of Goldman Sachs will allow PetroChina to inherit \$15 billion in debt, much of that accrued in Sudan.

So when we are talking about capitalization of the oil project, we are talking about a very fundamental part of the project now and as it will unfold. Certainly we need help, but we have in some sense the last remaining monopoly--that of our capital markets. If you do not participate in American capital markets, you are at an extreme disadvantage. It is one of the things that distinguishes the situation now from apartheid-era pressures on the regime in South Africa. Now it is extremely important to make sure that our capital markets first of all are transparent and that we know where American capital is going, and when a sufficiently egregious situation has been reached, when we have a situation such as that in Sudan where we have genocidal destruction, where we have 2 million dead and between 4 and 5 million refugees. And when we have transparently direct corporate servicing of that genocide, I think we have reached the point where we can say that we will use the strength of our capital markets to forestall those companies from participating by means of American capital.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Thank you very much.

This was very helpful. Let me make two concluding comments now, one logistical about what is going to happen here, and a second subsequent one.

The issues for us, of course, are the issues of religion, which is our particular focus, and you all have helped to illuminate those as did the panel before you. I was particularly glad that in the earlier panel, there was discussion of the diversity of views within Christianity and the diversity of views within Islam. This is not about Islam or Christianity per se; it is about a government's use of religion as a tool of harassment. It is about a government's targeting of people on a variety of bases--political, ethnic and religious. And it is about the inability of people to live out their religious lives. We have heard that from you, Mr. Abdelaziz in terms of the Muslim encounter with that, and we heard it from Dr. Deng as well, here as an academic, and that was helpful. And Baroness, your comment at the beginning about the complexity and diversity of uses of jihad, something that this Commission has heard experts talk about before, was also helpful contextually as well.

So I am deeply appreciative of the testimony and deeply appreciative of the ability of this panel and the one before to illuminate both the religious component of this crisis in Sudan and also to begin us in our thinking of how we can most effectively respond. That will be the subject and the focus of our panels this afternoon.