

January 26, 2001: Press Conference on Religious Freedom and the Civil War in Sudan

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WHEN: Tuesday, January 30, 2001 at 4:30 p.m. **WHERE:** 1530 Longworth House Office Building (5th floor) **WHO:** Chairman Elliott Abrams, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and other Commissioners Dr. Susan Rice, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-Pa.) and other interested Members of Congress **BACKGROUND:** The press conference will follow a briefing of members by Dr. Rice on the situation in Sudan and her recent trip to the war zone. During that visit, Dr. Rice saw first-hand evidence of the atrocities committed by the government of Sudan in the civil war that has raged there since 1983. These atrocities, as catalogued by the Commission, include the bombing of schools, hospitals, churches, and feeding centers; the deliberate starvation of the population in rebel areas by denying permission for relief flights, and the use of Arab tribal militias to attack, burn, and loot African villages, and to kill, rape, and enslave the villagers. The Islamist extremist government's war against the mostly Christian and animist south has killed more than 2 million people, many through starvation, and displaced more than 4 million, currently the largest displaced population in the world. The situation has been exacerbated by foreign companies' development of oil fields in southern Sudan, which has created new funds Khartoum can draw on to step up the war. The record has led the Commission to label the Sudanese government "the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion and belief." The Commission in its May 1, 2000, Annual Report to the Administration and Congress, made a series of recommendations for U.S. policy to help end the war, including a proposal that the U.S. government prohibit any foreign corporation participating in Sudanese oil-field development from obtaining capital in the U.S. market. For their part, several members of Congress have introduced bills to deal with various aspects of the Sudan Crisis.

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