

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) applauds the adoption by the U.S. House of Representatives of H. Res. 1588 today, a bipartisan measure introduced by Representatives Michael Capuano (D-MA), Michael McCaul (R-TX), Donald Payne (D-NJ), Chris Smith (R-NJ), and Frank Wolf (R-VA).

The passage of this resolution underscores the importance of the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended more than 20 years of a bloody civil war between the northern-dominated National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in the south. USCIRF identified Sudan as the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion or belief for acts that took place during the civil war, and has recommended that Sudan be named a "country of particular concern" for its systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religion or belief.

"Full and fair implementation of the CPA is critical to help ensure peace and stability in Sudan," said Leonard Leo, USCIRF Chair. "And central to the CPA's implementation are the January 2011 referenda on self-determination for southern Sudan and on whether Abeyi will remain in the north or join the south."

"The stakes are high for Sudan, for the region, and for the international community," said Mr. Leo. "With less than 100 days before the referenda, and less than one year before the end of the CPA, USCIRF applauds this resolution for highlighting this urgent period for Sudan and the importance of continued high-level U.S. engagement in Sudan during this critical phase and beyond, as well as ensuring that those obstructing CPA implementation are held accountable."

The resolution reflects many of the recommendations USCIRF has advanced to ensure a peaceful and stable future Sudan including provisions to help ensure that the referenda are held on schedule, in a free, fair, peaceful, and credible manner and that the popular consultations are inclusive and successful, including through provision of technical and monetary assistance; resolution of the North-South border and issues of common concern to the North and South in a post-referendum state, including oil revenue sharing and citizenship; and increased technical assistance and capacity to the Government of Southern Sudan.

The resolution also highlights the importance of holding the NCP accountable for its human rights violations and addressing continuing insecurity in Darfur.

"The clock is ticking. The United States needs to act clearly and decisively to work with the international community to ensure the successful implementation of the CPA. At the same time, the United States needs to work to enhance civilian protection, promote peace in Darfur,

increase human rights protections, and build a strong Southern Sudan,” concluded Mr. Leo.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF’s principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

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