

**November 11, 2011 | by USCIRF**

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) condemns yesterday's aerial bombing of the Yida refugee camp in the Unity state of the Republic of South Sudan, the world's newest nation, reportedly by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) of the Republic of Sudan. Located approximately 10 miles south of the border with Sudan, the camp holds more than 20,000 refugees who had fled the SAF's attacks in Southern Kordofan state in the Nuba Mountains region.

According to reports, four bombs were dropped on the camp at 2:55pm local time yesterday. One bomb landed in a schoolyard, but fortunately did not explode. More than 300 students were in class at that time.

"The bombing of innocent civilians in the Yida camp is unconscionable," said USCIRF chair [Leonard Leo](#). "These civilians fled bombardments in Sudan, only to have bombs follow them across the border into South Sudan. These assaults are clearly an outgrowth of Sudan's hostility toward religious freedom. They target the innocent, violate South Sudan's sovereignty, and threaten the fragile peace between the two nations."

In late October, USCIRF met at the Yida camp with refugees who described Khartoum's aerial bombardment in the Nuba Mountains and how SAF planes targeted them as they fled south toward Yida. Christian pastors said they were targeted and their churches burned and looted because Khartoum does not want Christianity in Sudan. Refugees witnessed soldiers killing Christians and declaring Christianity to be the enemy of Islam. Muslim refugees were threatened by soldiers in the mosques in which they sought safety and witnessed mosques being destroyed. They claimed that Khartoum does not consider them legitimate Muslims because they are Nuban.

“While Khartoum continues to attack innocent civilians, it is seeking debt relief,” said Leo. “The U.S. government should deny debt relief to Sudan until the bombardments stop and unrestricted, international humanitarian assistance is permitted.”

Authorized and initiated by Sudan’s President Omar al-Bashir, Khartoum has attacked churches, mosques, schools, and markets in the Nuba Mountains and the neighboring Blue Nile state, but not the Sudan People’s Liberation Army – North (SPLA-N) in these regions. Khartoum also has been denying humanitarian assistance which is needed due to the destruction of crops resulting from the bombing of farms.

According to local sources, more than 230,000 persons are internally displaced in Southern Kordofan, 20,000 from Southern Kordofan have sought refuge at Yida refugee camp, 29,000 from Blue Nile have sought refuge at Tongo refugee camp in Ethiopia, and an unknown number from the two states are in Juba, South Sudan.