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One year ago tomorrow, June 5, the Government of Sudan in Khartoum launched its current brutal campaign against the Nuban people, bombarding civilians and denying humanitarian assistance in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, in gross violation of international human rights and humanitarian law and in defiance of continued UN and United States condemnations.

Interviewing more than 80 refugees from Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states in Yida refugee camp and Juba, South Sudan in October 2011, USCIRF documented reports of Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and government-backed militia arresting and killing people in the Nuba Mountains based solely on their religious, ethnic, and political identifications. USCIRF also documented Khartoum's bombing houses of worship and denying humanitarian assistance, leading to nearly half a million people being displaced.

"The situation was dire last October and is far worse today. People have been forced to hide in caves and face starvation, because Khartoum refuses to tolerate Sudan's religious and ethnic diversity," said Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, USCIRF's Executive Director. "The international community must do its utmost to protect civilians and prevent Khartoum from displacing or slaughtering hundreds of thousands more innocent Sudanese. We cannot remain silent and allow a repeat of Darfur and the North-South civil war."

Khartoum's aggression began on June 5, 2011 in Southern Kordofan. On September 1, fighting commenced in Blue Nile when Blue Nile Governor and Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) chairman Malik Aggar was illegally removed from his post and his house torched. In early July, President Bashir denounced the Addis Ababa Agreement on political and security arrangements reached just days earlier, and has since banned the SPLM-N and refused to enter into bilateral or multilateral peace negotiations. As the U.S. government warned of near-famine conditions in Southern Kordofan by mid-March, the United Nations, African Union, and Arab League in February proposed humanitarian assistance for the two states. While the SPLM-N agreed to the terms of the tri-party proposal, Sudan has been silent.

"Khartoum is defying the international community by denouncing the African Union-led Addis Ababa Agreement and remaining silent on the tri-party agreement," said Ambassador Wolcott. "The international community must ratchet up its efforts to protect civilians, continue its calls for peace and unrestricted humanitarian access, and tighten the sanctions regime if Sudan continues breaking its international commitments."

USCIRF continues to recommend that the U.S. government support a national, inclusive, and transparent constitution drafting convention to address nationwide political and economic injustices, including those in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, as well as religious freedom violations throughout Sudan.

Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile are religiously and ethnically mixed states bordering South Sudan. Many of the Nuban people in Southern Kordofan and in southern Blue Nile sided with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) during Sudan's 20-year North-South civil war. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended the North-South civil war, called for the two states to hold "popular consultations" in 2011 to address core political, cultural, and economic tensions. However there have been no popular consultations and

political tensions continued to fester after the North-South civil war ended in 2005.