

Testimony by Nancy Lindborg, Assistant Administrator for Democracy,
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Commission on Human Rights

Human Rights in Sudan

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Thank you Co-Chairmen McGovern and Wolf, and Members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, for the opportunity to speak with you this morning about the continuing and serious human rights abuses and humanitarian needs facing the people of Sudan. Thank you also for the important work you carry forward in the name of the late Congressman Tom Lantos to defend fundamental human rights around the world.

Introduction

Last year, less than one year after the separation of South Sudan had brought hope for a better way forward, I testified before the House and Senate on a worrisome set of trends emerging across Sudan and South Sudan. Unfortunately, the news remains grim. Millions of people in both countries continue to suffer from the effects of ongoing violence and extreme poverty, and we are seeing some of the worst humanitarian conditions in several years in Darfur, the Two Areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and Jonglei state in South Sudan. Conflict is escalating and affecting communities on both sides of the north-south border.

As my colleague Larry Andre has noted, the U.S. government continues to prioritize resolution of this crisis as a principal foreign policy goal, with focused diplomatic initiatives and humanitarian assistance. In the face of continued challenges to reaching the most vulnerable, USAID maintains an unwavering commitment to help the people of Sudan and South Sudan. We remain firmly committed to doing all we can to meet growing needs and, at the same time, help promote a lasting peace.

Sudan's Escalating Humanitarian Crisis

Two years after the separation of South Sudan and Sudan, several critical factors continue to drive conflict and humanitarian need. First, we cannot overestimate the impact of the loss of the majority of Sudan's oil reserves following the separation of South Sudan in July 2011. Following unresolved disputes, South Sudan ceased oil production in January 2012. Since then, we have seen agreements to resume the flow of oil stalled or derailed repeatedly, at enormous cost to the economies and human development of these two nations.

Secondly, both countries accuse the other of supporting rebel movements on their territory and remain locked in a battle of recrimination and suspicion, continuing to risk their people's

economic security and sparking conflict that encompasses communities on both sides of the border.

Finally, Sudan continues to have escalating internal crises in the absence of an inclusive political process. Instead, Sudanese forces have repeatedly bombed their own people in Darfur and the Two Areas, putting hundreds of thousands of women and children at risk.

Nearly five million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Sudan, an astounding figure that represents nearly 15 percent of Sudan's total population. This includes 3.5 million people in Darfur and 1.1 million people are displaced or severely affected by the conflict in the Two Areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, the majority of whom are located in areas controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N). We continue to see flagrant human rights abuses against the citizens of Sudan, with humanitarian crises on the rise and rampant malnutrition in eastern Sudan.

Darfur

Since January of this year, an upsurge in fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and armed opposition groups as well as inter-communal clashes has resulted in large-scale population displacement in Darfur. Khartoum's continued policies of bombing civilians, brutal human rights abuses and restricting access for humanitarian assistance are abhorrent and unacceptable—and are further exacerbating an already deteriorating humanitarian situation.

We are seeing both the continued sponsorship of proxy violence by the central government and an increasingly loss of control after decades of arming militias that have now proliferated. A spreading lawlessness is resulting in heightened violence among heavily armed Arab groups. Fighting among these groups, Darfur rebel groups and the Sudanese Armed Forces has triggered massive displacement throughout Darfur. These factors, combined with the dramatic increase in insecurity caused by general banditry and restrictions imposed by the GoS on humanitarian organizations further reduces critical access to populations in need.

According to the UN, more than 300,000 people have been displaced by conflict across four of Darfur's five states—both internally and as refugees—this year alone. This number exceeds displacement totals over the last two years combined. As Ambassador Susan Rice noted, five times as many people were displaced in Darfur during the first few months of this 2013 than during the entirety of 2012.

On May 31, the U.S. Government declared a disaster in Darfur, underscoring the increased emergency needs. Through a Rapid Response Fund, our Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance is responding by providing 3,000 emergency shelters for 21,000 new internally displaced persons (IDPs) in El Neem camp in El Daein Locality, East Darfur. Spikes in displacement mean the populations of many IDP camps have swelled, some by reportedly as

much as 50 percent. Our partners need to be able to freely replenish emergency supplies to keep up with those who arrive at the camps with nothing, who were forced to suddenly flee the fighting. Access is critical to reach these people and to help alleviate the appalling conditions in IDP camps.

The GoS continues to impede access for humanitarian assistance. In March 2013, the GoS issued a new Directive on Humanitarian Assistance that contains new limitations and rules on the issuance of travel permits, which restrict the ability of international humanitarian staff to access many conflict-affected areas. Moreover, organizations continue to experience hurdles on the ground where one branch of the government may disallow prior approval from another office. This translates into sustained difficulties and challenges to reach all those who desperately need help.

Nevertheless, the U.S. government continues robust efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to all areas we can access, including displaced populations, individuals living in IDP camps, local communities hosting IDPs, and formerly displaced “returnees” in Darfur. In 2012, U.S. Government reached 1.6 million people in every state in Darfur with more than \$193 million in humanitarian assistance. This year, with needs on the rise, the United States has provided more than \$65 million in life-saving humanitarian support and emergency food assistance to conflict-affected, displaced, and food-insecure populations in Darfur.

This assistance goes to support programs within and outside of IDP camps that prevent, detect, and treat malnutrition; improve overall nutrition conditions; expand access to primary health care facilities and emergency medical services; and increase access to safe drinking water. In addition, U.S. government partners are providing water, sanitation, and hygiene support to reduce the spread of communicable diseases.

Our ability—and that of other donors—to monitor humanitarian assistance efforts in Darfur is highly restricted. Marking the first high-level USG delegation to West Darfur since September 2012, USAID/Sudan Mission Director Barry Primm earlier this month led a USAID delegation to West Darfur, an area at this time experiencing less conflict and displacement than neighboring states. This type of access is essential for USAID teams to visit programs firsthand and help ensure that our life-saving assistance reaches those who need it most as well as monitor and run programs that support peace and stability in Darfur.

Our visit to Darfur followed the high-level visit by UN Undersecretary General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos, who traveled to Khartoum and Darfur last month, where she witnessed unacceptable conditions in IDP camps. We will continue to advocate for improved travel for our own personnel in Khartoum to pursue the highest integrity of our programs.

A fully effective humanitarian response to meet Darfur’s growing needs will require unfettered humanitarian access to all affected areas. With Darfur’s recent increase in displacement and

emergency needs, the U.S. government calls on all parties to the ongoing conflict to allow unrestricted access for humanitarian aid.

Two Areas

Two years after the conflict in the Two Areas began, the civilian population continues to bear the brunt of continued fighting and blocked humanitarian access. In SPLM-N held areas, indiscriminate aerial bombardments and shelling by the GoS regularly kills civilians and prevents survivors from planting any crops or harvesting whatever meager yields they might have, thus depriving them of sustenance and livelihood. SPLM-N attacks against GoS forces in areas still occupied by civilians have also contributed to further displacement and disruption. In both Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, the needs are vast and increasing. The simple lack of food is increasing the vulnerability of local populations and forcing them into refugee camps to obtain basic life-supporting assistance. Both sides must refrain from indiscriminate shelling in civilian areas.

International humanitarian agencies lack access to SPLM-N controlled areas due to restrictions on cross-line access established by the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the failure of warring parties to agree to a humanitarian access arrangement. The combination of continued restrictions on humanitarian access, reduced access to food, health care and income, loss of family assets, reduced access to cultivation, and continued market disruptions is devastating. Under current circumstances, the USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) expects food security conditions to deteriorate in SPLM-N-controlled areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states to emergency levels, which means at least one in five households during the June-to-September lean season will experience large food consumption gaps resulting in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality.

While UN agencies have been granted some access to GoS-controlled areas, access to SPLM-N-controlled areas in the Two Areas remains officially closed for international aid agencies and NGOs. This harsh policy violates the rights of more than one million people to receive urgently needed humanitarian assistance. Limited lifesaving humanitarian assistance provided through indirect support to Sudanese actors continues to delay the most extreme effects of these tactics by both parties but is no replacement for the full unfettered access by the UN.

Both Khartoum and SPLM-N have recently voiced support for a one-week ceasefire between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the SPLM-N, as proposed by UNICEF and the United Nations to allow the World Health Organization to implement a polio vaccination campaign targeting more than 160,000 vulnerable children in SPLM-N-controlled parts of the Two Areas. We must continue to press the SPLM-N to seize this opportunity and test Khartoum's commitment to support a cross-line vaccination campaign. With the rainy season approaching, it is vital that both sides--the Government of Sudan and the SPLM-N—approve these vaccinations for children who desperately need them.

Northern Kordofan and Abyei

Fighting in Darfur and ongoing conflict in the Two Areas recently spread into Northern Kordofan. According to the UN, clashes since late April between the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have displaced approximately 63,000 people in the areas of Um Ruwaba town in Northern Kordofan State and Abu Kershola town in Southern Kordofan State.

In Northern Kordofan, as in Darfur and the Two Areas, the Government of Sudan has prevented international NGOs from deploying international staff to project sites in affected areas. International agencies are required to operate through national NGOs or government ministries. While some local groups, including the Sudanese Red Crescent Society, are able to conduct assessments, Government of Sudan-imposed restrictions in SRF-controlled areas have prevented international relief organizations from conducting assessments, suggesting that trends and needs could be even worse than we know.

USAID partners have nevertheless identified creative ways to reach recently displaced people by working with local organizations to help improve water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Thanks to the efforts of Sudanese national staff, 30 emergency latrines were constructed in four IDP sites in El Rahad, Northern Kordofan, where nearly 30,000 IDPs have gathered. In addition, our partners are providing approved health care services, medicine, and medical equipment.

In May, Abyei saw the tragic killing of the Ngok Dinka paramount chief by members of the Misseriya community, raising tensions considerably in both countries over the future of that disputed area. USAID is closely engaged in assistance efforts to people displaced from Abyei and to those who have returned, after being forced to flee attacks and the utter destruction of Abyei just over two years ago. To mitigate conflict in Abyei, USAID launched a program last year to rehabilitate 11 water yards along key migration routes and support infrastructure for returns to ensure access to water for livestock and human consumption. Though Abyei remains a contested area, USAID supports voluntary returns and provides needs-based assistance in all accessible and safe areas. Going forward, humanitarian access from both the north and the south will be essential to meet needs in this area.

Regional Ramifications

The recent proliferation of violence in Sudan is having ricochet effects in neighboring countries. This year's increase in fighting in Darfur has led to new refugee flows into neighboring Chad and Central African Republic, while the continuing conflict in the Two Areas has resulted in massive refugee flows to South Sudan as well as Ethiopia and Kenya, straining limited resources in the new country. Nearly 200,000 refugees have fled to South Sudan to date, most to the refugee camps in Upper Nile and Unity states. As some of the refugees will soon enter their third year in South Sudan, the insecurity and competition for resources in these remote areas is placing

increased stress on host communities, the refugees themselves, aid agencies, and on the new country's fragile government.

Fighting stemming from the SPLA's counterinsurgency campaign against non-state armed actors, ongoing inter-communal violence, and credible reports of gross human rights violations remain significant concerns in Jonglei State in South Sudan. I cannot overstate the devastating impact of these ongoing clashes on the physical security and well-being of thousands of affected South Sudanese, many of whom are surviving in appalling conditions in isolated rural areas with no access to medical care, markets, or humanitarian assistance. An estimated 100,000 people are unable to return to their homes and towns due to the ongoing threat of violence, while the ongoing rainy season prevents movement and severely limits livelihood options. If access remains restricted, these conditions could have dire humanitarian consequences.

USAID is addressing immediate humanitarian needs by increasing surgical capacity in local hospitals and providing protection services for conflict-affected communities in Jonglei as security allows, as well as protection services for displaced people from Pibor County currently residing in Juba. In southeastern Jonglei, however, in response to insecurity and obstruction, humanitarian agencies—including U.S. government partners—have had to relocate activities and personnel from affected areas. The State Department, National Security Staff, and Department of Defense have engaged closely with the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) at the highest levels and with the SPLA to urge an immediate end to the human rights violations, and to ensure that the UN Mission in South Sudan has full, unfettered access to all areas of its operation and is able to fulfill its mandate to protect civilians. The U.S. government emphatically calls on the RSS to permit humanitarian agencies to operate in all accessible areas of Jonglei to ensure life-saving assistance reaches those who need it most.

Conclusion

The United States remains the largest donor of humanitarian assistance in Sudan, and USAID is firmly committed to helping the people of both Sudan and South Sudan through this turbulent time. This violence will not be resolved overnight, which means unfettered access for the international humanitarian community is absolutely vital to preventing innocent lives from being lost. The people of both countries are remarkably resilient, but they cannot survive the latest onslaught of violence without outside help.

Ultimately, the end of Sudan's humanitarian crisis requires the resolution of the country's protracted conflicts and a strengthened ability and commitment of the central government to address the legitimate grievances of the people throughout Sudan. We call on all parties to the conflict—the Government of Sudan, the RSS, and the mix of armed groups across these two countries—to uphold the commitments they have made to hard-won peace agreements—and to respect the most basic human rights. The people of Sudan have suffered too long. Thank you.