



Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development  
Office of International Justice and Peace

**Background on Sudan**  
**February 2011**

*The outcome of the referenda should not be seen as a threat to either side, but an opportunity. If the outcome is secession, this does not mean the end of the relationship between north and south. Secession is a division of land, not a division of peoples. It need not be a breaking of relationships. Cooperation and collaboration must continue in a spirit of good neighbourliness.*

--A Message of Hope and Healing, Catholic Bishops of Sudan, November 2010

## **BACKGROUND**

Southern Sudan held its long-awaited referendum on self-determination last month. Many expected disputes, possible postponement, disruptions, fraud, or violence because preparations were delayed. Many of the key provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), such as the new border, sharing of the oil wealth and the national debt, and citizenship rights for minorities, had not been resolved which could have led to tension. The Church feared that the referendum could be disrupted, its outcome disputed, and violence reignited.

Despite a past history of more violence than voting, from January 9-15, 2011 Southern Sudanese went to the polls and ended the week with ink on their fingers, not blood on their hands. Many observer missions from across the world monitored the referendum. Despite the delays and enormous logistical hurdles, there were no significant claims of voter fraud, ballot stuffing, or gross administrative mismanagement. All monitoring missions gave preliminary validation that the vote had been conducted to international standards. The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission has announced that preliminary results indicate more than 98% of the voters favored secession.

That this was possible, let alone as successful and peaceful as it was, is a testament to the integrity and hard work of the Sudanese people, the Church in Sudan with its many partners like CRS, the international community, the UN, and the U.S. Government. In a letter to the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sudan, Bishop Howard Hubbard, Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace wrote: "The timely and mainly peaceful completion of the referendum is due in large part to the tireless work and faithful leadership of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference." The USCCB, led by Bishop John Ricard, has actively and persistently worked for peace and justice in Sudan for more than a decade.

Twice in the last year in the build-up to the referendum, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops accompanied a delegation from the Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference to the United Nations, the State Department, the National Security Council, and the Congress to encourage the U.S. Government and the UN to ensure that the CPA is brought to a successful conclusion. Bishop Hubbard conducted a pastoral visit to Sudan in August of last year. Throughout last year CRS supported local Church in Sudan efforts to build peace among Southern Sudanese communities in conflict and efforts to help the fledgling government of Southern Sudan improve services in the south.

These successes represent hopeful steps towards a new future of peace for Sudan, but the road to peace and prosperity is still long, with many challenges remaining. The most crucial outstanding issues are: the North-South border must be delineated; citizenship rights defined; the status of the Abyei territory resolved; oil wealth and debt sharing arranged; the popular consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states held to the satisfaction of the people there; and border crossing rights for nomadic peoples determined. Even if these

issues are resolved, Southern Sudan will become the world's newest country while being among its poorest. Sudan faces enormous development challenges if it is to educate its people, ensure health care, build a vibrant economy, and develop a government that is accountable and responsive to the needs of its people.

As the South moves towards independence, the fate of Darfur must not be ignored. Even as the peaceful results from the referendum came to light, reports emerged of new military confrontations between the Sudanese army and rebel groups in Darfur. Both armed forces are reportedly attacking civilian populations in violation of international norms. Currently 40,000 people have been displaced and UN troops have been prohibited from monitoring and reporting on the fighting and the condition of civilians. If the violence continues or escalates, it could spread to Southern Sudan and destabilize relations between the two new states.

Since May 2007 the U.S. has maintained targeted sanctions against 160 Sudanese companies that prevent them from conducting business in the U.S. The sanctions also targeted seven Sudanese individuals for fomenting violence and human rights abuses. In addition, President Al Bashir and others in Sudan have been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide.

### **USCCB POSITION**

With six months remaining to the CPA transition phase, Sudan remains an urgent priority for USCCB. Our Bishops' Conference continues to work closely with the Catholic Church in Sudan. USCCB leaders will continue to visit Sudan and play an active role in the U.S. policy debate. The Church in Sudan has been vocal in its calls for a halt to the violence, full implementation of the CPA, adequate humanitarian and development relief to those in need, and the respect of human rights.

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Urge the U.S. Government to take the following actions:

- At an appropriate time, officially recognize the new state and Government of Southern Sudan. The U.S. should work with the Government in Khartoum, the Africa Union, the European Union, and other members of the international community to do the same.
- Continue intensive pressure on the North and the South to resolve post-referendum disputes, including resolving citizenship, sharing oil revenue, demarcating the border, and identifying the solutions needed to ensure a peaceful establishment of the two new countries.
- Push for a mutually acceptable resolution to the status of Abyei that reflects the will of its citizens.
- Consolidate the results of a peaceful referendum by increasing long-term development assistance to Sudan.
- Continue to call for the Government in Khartoum to hold credible popular consultations in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states and to respect the will of the people.
- Ensure that humanitarian assistance is sufficient and humanitarian access to vulnerable populations across Sudan is secured.
- Continue pressure on all parties to stop the violence in Darfur and negotiate a credible and sustainable peace.
- Ask the U.S. to work with its international partners to provide the equipment and transport that the AU/UN forces require to fulfill their UN Chapter VII Mandate to protect civilians, stop the fighting, monitor an eventual ceasefire, and assist international humanitarian relief organizations.
- Continue honoring the U.S. commitment to provide substantial financial and political support for reconstruction.
- Act in the UN Security Council to continue support for the peacekeeping mission. Provide adequate funding and logistical support so that peace and security might be achieved.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** visit <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/callafrica/sudan.shtml> or contact *Stephen Hilbert*, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3149 (phone), 541-3339 (fax), [shilbert@usccb.org](mailto:shilbert@usccb.org).