

NUBA MOUNTAINS, THE NEXT DARFUR?

Notes (revised) for Hon. David Kilgour
Solidarity Day for Nuba Mountains
Vincent Massey Park,
Ottawa
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Thank you for coming from as far away as Kitchener-Waterloo and Alberta.



Permit me to refer to some points made by Hassan Sharif, chair of the Nuba Mountains International Association Canada:

- The air bombings by North Sudan's government based in Khartoum and the resulting devastation among residents of the Nuba Mountains are race-based. These civilians are seen as Africans by the Bashir regime, which respects only those it considers Arabs. The residents of the Nuba Mountains- whether Muslim, Christian or animist in religion - normally live in harmony.
- Humanitarian aid is not reaching Nuba Mountain residents because of continuing bombing and violence. This is why an immediate no-fly zone is needed and why UN peacemakers with a strong mandate (chapter 7) are needed now. If the international community does not act quickly, the Nuba Mountains could become the next Darfur.
- The Bashir government has declared Jihad against the Nuba people. Bashir only yesterday said that there will be no negotiations and that the war will continue. Between 1983 and the late '90s, Khartoum targeted the Nuba people, killing many civilians.
- The Harper government should apply much more pressure on Bashir to stop targeting civilians in the Nuba Mountains. It should push for a no-fly zone at the UN and in other international bodies.

Eric Reeves

In mid-August, Professor Eric Reeves of Smith College, who has long followed events in Sudan as closely as anyone in North America, provided his analysis of Khartoum's aerial assaults on civilians, 1999 – 2011, which can be accessed at www.sudanbombing.org, and he continues to update this information. His latest update brought the total confirmed aerial attacks on civilian and humanitarian targets in Sudan to over 1,500.

The attacks by Antonov bombers, helicopter gunships, and jet aircraft from Khartoum have inflicted terrible suffering on the people of South Sudan, Darfur, and now again in the Nuba Mountains. Reeves judges them atrocity crimes without historical precedent, and in aggregate crimes against humanity as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (7.1). He notes that the bombing also continues relentlessly in both Darfur and the Nuba Mountains.

Nuba Mountains Coalition

Shams Alsanosi, co-coordinator of the Nuba Mountains International Association of Canada, Dr. Norman L Epstein, co-chair Canadians Against Slavery and Torture in Sudan, and Ismail Adam, president of Darfur Association of Canada, wrote a few days ago in the Epoch Times about what brings us all here today. To help provide them with the attention their article deserves, and agreeing fully with what they say, permit me to quote their piece:

Smoke billowing out of charred huts, corpses with slit throats strewn on the ground and satellite photos clearly illustrating mass graves. Is this a re-enactment of the heinous crimes in Darfur? Notwithstanding the continued violence in Darfur, this disturbing vignette is the recent vicious onslaught by the government of Sudan against the Nubian people, an African tribe in South Kordofan (also known as the Nuba Mountains), a region bordering North Sudan and the new sovereign state of South Sudan.

This is not the first time the Nubian people have had to withstand the malicious wrath of the Khartoum regime. In the early 1990s, the government of Sudan systematically ... killed close to 200,000 Nubians, arguably called a genocide by many. In the current episode, no one knows the actual numbers murdered... However, numerous witnesses have consistently verified that mass atrocities are taking place. As well, a leaked UN report also corroborates these accounts.

President Al Bashir of northern Sudan has called for South Kordofan to be 'ethnically cleansed' of African people. (H)is regime has perpetrated repeatedly crimes against marginalized Africans—the Dinka and Nuer in the south, the Nubians and the Fur, Masseleit and Zaghawa in Darfur. He has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity for orchestrating the well-documented genocide in Darfur. Yet when the South officially seceded and became a sovereign country on July 9, he stood among dignitaries in Juba as though he is a credible man of peace and reconciliation. However, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between the North and South tenuously hangs by a thread.

The disputed region of Abeyei, which contains significant oil resources, was supposed to have had a referendum to determine whether (it) would be incorporated in North or South Sudan. The area is populated mostly by Dinka African tribes, loyal to the South and the North has postponed the referendum over the dubious contention that a nomadic Arab tribe, the Misseriya, loyal to the regime, should be permitted to vote. The government of Sudan has violently secured the area despite the promise of Ethiopian peacekeepers moving in. Hair-trigger tensions have precipitated episodic violence between the North and South that could explode into a full-scale conflagration once more.

There is a pretense that Bashir and his regime are part of the solution but in fact (they) are the source of the problem. The regime's duplicity is well-known... It has signed peace treaties, demonstrating little desire to implement them completely and participates in peace talks that it has tried to sabotage. The Doha peace process in Qatar to end the conflict in Darfur has been an abysmal failure. Regardless, the international community sends a constant parade of envoys carrying 'carrots' to engage the Khartoum regime. When will enough be enough? When will the world finally stand up to this cabal of serial genocidaires? When will the world wield the proverbial stick to rein in this regime's egregious behaviour?

There is much that can be done. Certainly a limited no fly zone should be considered in South Kordofan if mass atrocities continue. Are not African lives just as worthy as Libyan lives? The UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), peacekeeping force, should have its mandate strengthened to Chapter VII to intervene proactively to save lives--- instead of mere observers and reacting *post hoc*.

(E)conomic measures should be tried first. The government of Sudan has a foreign debt reportedly in excess of 30 billion dollars with a promise by the IMF to forgive it. The IMF could threaten to rescind this if there is not a cessation of hostilities. A blockade of the Port of Sudan could prevent the shipping of Sudan's oil exports, a major source of revenue. Intense pressure must be exerted on China, who has been the main benefactor of Sudan's oil and a commercial lifeline to the regime.

Prime Minister Harper has said that Canada "will not lead from the bleachers" and has not been reticent in taking principled stands. Canada could coalesce the international community of other like-minded countries and co-ordinate such a bold initiative. Thousands of African lives hang in the balance. Is it not the time to act with resolve to end the interminable suffering of the people of Sudan? Or in the words of Canadian icon, General Dallaire, 'Are some humans more human than others?'

Conclusion

The Harper government should take action. A good first step would be to encourage a sense of urgency in international bodies, including the UN, about the catastrophe now affecting large numbers of innocent people in the Nuba Mountains and South Kordofan.

Thank you.