

Sudan visit, January 5-16, 2011

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Background

The primary purpose of our trip was to lead the monitoring team for the referendum among South Sudanese to determine whether to remain part of a united Sudan or to form a new independent nation. In addition, we wished to learn as much as possible about ongoing efforts to establish permanent accord in the region, based on the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) of 2005, to enhance progress on our Center's health programs in Sudan, and to make plans for future projects. In addition to Rosalynn, I was accompanied by Dr. John Hardman, and in Sudan we were joined in Khartoum by David Carroll and other Center staff, by Justice Joseph Warioba from Tanzania, and later in Juba by Kofi Annan.

I first met Dr. John Garang in 1986, and for 25 years The Carter Center has been actively promoting peace, democracy, health care, and agriculture in Sudan. A long-lasting conflict (costing more than 2 million lives) was interrupted in 1995 by a ceasefire we negotiated and again six years ago by the CPA. The referendum voting would begin on January 9 and continue for seven days, after which votes would be counted and results announced. This is the 82nd troubled or doubtful election that has been monitored by The Carter Center, and is among the most important. We have monitored the registration of about 3.9 million South Sudanese, including 116,000 in N. Sudan and 60,000 in eight other countries.

Activities

In Khartoum, we had briefings by former president Thabo Mbeki (who represents the African Union and is the chief mediator to implement the CPA), members of the commission in charge of the referendum, special representatives of the U.N. and the European Union, domestic observers, opposition party leaders, ambassadors from Europe and Canada, Senator John Kerry, and General Scott Gration.

We absorbed as much information as possible before meeting with Sudanese President Al Bashir, with whom U.N. and many foreign leaders will not meet because of International Criminal Court (ICC) charges against him. During our long discussion, he informed us that:

a) Despite strong opposition within his own party and among political opponents, he will fully support any decision made by South Sudanese, including forming an independent nation.

b) Southerners living in N. Sudan will continue to have freedom of worship as during present Sharia law, and all other rights except voting and holding military and civil service jobs.

c) He is eager to have peace in Darfur but wants to ensure that peace talks involve local Darfuri populations, and not just rebel leaders who continue their effort to overthrow the government by force. He would also like to include public officials who were elected in April 2010, plus nomad groups who miss most election opportunities.

d) He opposes dual citizenship but will support "soft borders" between North and South to facilitate easy movement between the two nations.

e) The debt of about \$39 billion is the entire nation's and should not be divided, as this will complicate efforts to realize debt relief that is badly needed.

f) He is eager for the U.S. to disavow the "false" claim that the Sudan government supports terrorism, and believes that sanctions should be lifted. This will strengthen his efforts for peace with S. Sudan.

g) He is cooperating fully with President Mbeki in implementing all aspects of the CPA. Borders should follow those of 1956, and Abyei should be divided.

h) After a successful transition period, a permanent mechanism will be needed to insure amicable relations with S. Sudan.

i) He accepted my proposal for new Carter Center projects to train health workers (\$12.3 million for 5 years), trachoma (\$3.8 million for 5 years), and onchocerciasis (\$600,000 for two years). He offered training for S. Sudanese health workers in northern universities.

We flew to Juba on 1/9, were joined by Kofi Annan, and visited a number of polling sites. There were long and separate lines of men and women waiting patiently to cast their simple ballots: one hand for independence and two clasped hands for unity. Voters assured us that the separate lines were not because of Sharia law. In one site, the women were permitted to vote first, because "they had work to do."

We monitored voting sites each day and had various briefings from our staff and others on the referendum process, the future of S. Sudan, and health programs plus a number of media interviews. We also met with actor George Clooney and John Prendergast and then had a long discussion with President Salva Kiir. He informed us that:

a) S. Sudan is determined to avoid conflict, even if taunted and challenged by the North.

b) He is ready to resume talks on CPA issues as soon as referendum results are announced (about 1/29/11).

c) Mini Minawi and other Darfur rebels have left S. Sudan to avoid any allegation that the South is supporting rebellion.

d) Shortly after the referendum, an inclusive interim government will be formed. Task forces are preparing for a constituent assembly that will prepare a new constitution, decide on future elections, choose a name for the new nation, and prescribe standards for establishment of political parties (probably a minimum of 500 proven members and pledge to honor S. Sudan principles).

e) Human rights of northerners living in the South will be honored.

f) There will be no censorship of citizens or the news media.

g) Three universities will be moved from the North to the South, which will take at least a year providing funds are available.

h) Almost \$1 billion in oil revenue is being withheld by N. Sudan banks, and S. Sudan is strapped for cash.

i) Although President Mbeki is considered more favorable toward the North (as indicated by Abyei proposals), he is the only mediator and is acceptable to the South.

j) Carter Center's health training is desired in the South, but not until it can be done locally. Guinea worm eradication has removed a terrible blight, and complete success is a high priority. Successful Sudanese leaders will not be changed.

k) Southerners who wish to move from N. to S. will be welcome, because many of them are skilled and well educated. 160,000 have already arrived, most of them going to the vicinity of their former homes and not into Juba.

We visited port facilities alongside the Nile River, where several thousand southerners were encamped after returning from Khartoum, most of them waiting for transportation by land to the three Equatoria states. Leaders said the upstream voyage by barge had taken from eight to twelve days, and expenses had been paid by the UN's International Organization for Migration. There were enormous supplies of soft drinks and dried fish, woven together in long plaited bands. All the people

seemed calm, patient, and determined to return to their former villages, from which many had departed more than 20 years ago.

We continued to monitor progress of the referendum each day in different areas near Juba and to receive reports from throughout the nation. At the end of the third day it was obvious that the requisite 60% of total registered voters was reached, although turnout in N. Sudan was about 50%. Everything was orderly and peaceful, except in the Abyei area where a separate planned referendum on the future of the region could not be held and fighting occurred between Misseriya nomads (loyal to the north) and Ngok Dinka tribesmen who were southerners.

We had extensive discussions with S. Sudan government officials plus leaders of the World Bank, UNICEF, USAID, and others involved in shaping the future of the new nation. They were all eager to assist The Carter Center in completing the eradication of Guinea worm. It is important that boreholes be drilled in the 85 most endemic G. worm villages, each one of which has 5 or more cases, and the organizations mentioned above all agreed to help. They will also assist in planning and implementing a training program for health workers similar to ours in Ethiopia and now agreed to begin in N. Sudan. The big problem in the South will be establishing adequate educational facilities, perhaps at Juba, Malakal, and Wao. Twenty registered nurses and 20 midwives are now being trained.

Back in Khartoum, we had a session with Salah Gosh, chief negotiator re CPA issues, and a long private meeting with Dr. Salahdien Ghazi, in charge of Darfur peace efforts. These are two key players in N. Sudan diplomacy.

Future political plans for South Sudan:

Between visits to various polling sites, we had extensive discussions with President Salva Kiir, opposition party leaders, and Pagan Amum, Secretary General of the SPLM and chief negotiator on CPA issues. Educated in Cuba, Amum is very knowledgeable and obviously holds key portfolios.

Some opposition party leaders were concerned about SPLM dominance in the future. They acknowledged that the major party had received more than 90% of the votes in the April election, and doubted that commitments made in October would be honored concerning their involvement in multi-party decisions about a permanent constitution and other issues.

Amum assured us that the October commitments would be honored, even including all of the 24 parties including tiny ones with just a few members. Multi-party consultations will begin in March 2011. The SPLM will vacate some cabinet posts during an interim period (probably of three years), decisions to be made by Salva Kiir. During this time consultations will be held involving all political groups to determine the shape of the government, other constitutional issues, and the definition or standards for political parties.

A census and voters lists will be completed during the interim period, in time for elections to be held probably in (July) 2014. This may include all offices, including that of the president. The Carter Center will be expected to assist as requested in this long process, including monitoring the drafting of a constitution, the census, and future elections.

Amum described the status of the CPA talks, which will recommence after results of the referendum are finalized. He outlined the six options presented by Mbeki re Abyei. Two options are acceptable to the South that he claims are compatible with previous agreements and a ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. (A different one is OK with

the North) He insists that the Misseriya will be guaranteed historic access to their southern grazing lands, which may have to be ensured by a written agreement and perhaps UN monitors within Abyei.

Regarding oil, Amum said that China produces about 70% of the oil, Japan 15%, N. Sudan 10%, and India a small amount. 2% of the total goes to Unity and Upper Nile states and the other 98% retained in Sudan is divided 50:50 between N. and S. Sudan. This agreement ends with the CPA on July 9, after which the South will be generous in allocating a certain amount of oil revenue (not a percentage) to the north to compensate for services rendered in pipelines and refineries.

Concerns regarding Darfur

Kofi Annan and I had extensive talks with Presidents Bashir and Kiir, ambassadors stationed in Khartoum, heads of U.N. agencies, Scott Gration, Dane Smith, and other leaders. There is a general acceptance of Thabo Mbeki as the chosen negotiator to address issues involved in the CPA. Bashir trusts him, and Kiir is willing to have him continue, but with some skepticism re Mbeki's objectivity. He and his limited support team are already heavily overloaded with CPA issues and Separate Darfur topics are extremely complex. Mbeki is the choice of the Government of Sudan for both assignments.

Presuming that there is general awareness of impediments to further progress in Doha regarding Darfur, the next steps will involve major decisions regarding venue, participation of rebels, nomads, and elected officials in Darfur, further involvement of Qatar, and designation of a mediator who is clearly in charge and singularly devoted to the task. Djibril Bassole' (Burkina Faso) was named by the U.N. and A.U. as chief negotiator in August 2008 but he has not become deeply engaged and has an uncertain relationship with Mbeki. UNAMID director Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria) and Haile Menkerios (Eritrea) also have notable diplomatic skills and knowledge of the key issues. The designee should have full international backing and reasonable trust of key parties. A special favorite of mine for some role is Kenyan general Sumbeiywo, who did a superb job in formulating the CPA in 2005.

Final observations

Before leaving Sudan early on January 16, voter turnout had exceeded 90% in the South and 40% in the North among the 618 sites visited by our observers. A few sites in S. Sudan had 100% turnout and were practically unanimous for independence. The entire exercise was orderly, pleasant, and productive, and it is expected that the official returns will lead to a new nation, and that The Carter Center will remain involved in both countries in promoting peace, democracy, and better health and education.