

# Sudan: Human Rights Policy

The U.S. remains concerned over the extremely poor human rights situation in Sudan. Severe limitations by the Government of Sudan (GOS) on the political and religious freedoms of the Sudanese people continue despite promises of improvement and pledges to end the 20-year civil war between GOS and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army. The U.S. is committed to improving human rights in Sudan by helping to end the war and conclude a just and comprehensive peace agreement that leads to the full implementation of its human rights provisions.

## Annual Human Rights Report

The Department of State's Human Rights report released on March 31, 2003 catalogued a large number of human rights abuses perpetrated primarily by the Government, including:

- Severe restrictions on the freedoms of assembly, association, movement, and speech, and active censorship of the press;
- Arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention, extra-judicial killings, torture, forced conscription, and rape;
- Regular violations of the rules of war, including deliberate attacks on civilians.

## Slavery

Perhaps the most sobering violation of human rights in Sudan is the existence of slavery or slavery-like indenture. Observers believe that abductees, captured during GOS-supported counter-insurgency raids, are indentured, used as forced labor, and/or sold into slavery. In May 2002, the US-led International Eminent Persons Group that investigated slavery, abductions, and forced servitude concluded that pro-government militia continued to engage in abduction and slavery with impunity.

## International Religious Freedom Report

The Department of State's Religious Freedom report released on October 7, 2002, found that the GOS severely restricted religious freedom in Sudan:

- Apostasy from Islam is punishable by death, and proselytizing by non-Muslims is forbidden;
- Security forces reportedly harass and use violence against people for religious reasons (although such allegations had decreased during the reporting period).

## United Nations Commission on Human Rights

The U.S. deplores the defeat on April 16, 2003 of a resolution to maintain Sudan's classification as an "Item 9" country of concern, particularly as this eliminated the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights. The U.S. urges the UNCHR to remain engaged in Sudan.

## Machakos Protocol

On July 20, 2002, both sides signed the Machakos Protocol, recognizing that "Sudan is a multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual country," and that there "shall be freedom of belief, worship and conscience for followers of all religions or beliefs or customs and no one shall be discriminated against on such grounds." This language represents the commitment of both sides to improve human rights once a peace agreement is concluded, but careful monitoring will be required in order to ensure that the parties honor these provisions.

## Links

Human Rights Report - <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/>  
International Religious Freedom Report - <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/>