

Testimony of Rt. Rev. Andudu Adam Elnail
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House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights
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Thank you, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Payne, for calling this emergency hearing on threats to human rights and human security in my home region of South Kordofan, Sudan. I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your efforts on behalf of sustainable peace and stability in Sudan. And I want to publicly thank the Ranking Member for his leadership and support for the endangered Nuba people as well.

I have been hearing nonstop from members of my flock in Kadugli, capitol of Sudan's conflict-torn region of South Kordofan. I'd like to begin by offering a quick update on the grave situation in South Kordofan, so that the United States and other members of the international community can begin to translate moral outrage into effective action.

Our Anglican cathedral in Kadugli has been ransacked and looted. Our church offices and our cyber-café, which provided Internet services for the community, have been looted, along with my house. I am told that armed men went house to house, searching for me, calling my name.

Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and northern-aligned militia shot at my house in Kadugli. My chaplain, who resides with my family there, was able to escape through the window, but he was later apprehended and beaten.

If I were not here today to testify before you, I do not know whether I would be in a mass grave in Kadugli now.

A member of my congregation told me that on June 8, less than one kilometer south of the Tilo School in Kadugli, he saw an earth mover digging two pits. That evening, he said, he saw trucks driving to the freshly excavated pits. In the trucks were soldiers from the SAF, along with northern militia members, men dressed like Sudan Red Crescent Society workers, wearing white aprons with red crescents, and other men dressed like prisoners from a local prison. He saw 100 or more dead bodies buried in the pits on the evening of June 8. Some of the bodies, he said, appeared to be wrapped in white body bags or white, plastic tarps. I believe him. And satellite imagery shows what appears to be excavated pits, consistent with mass graves, in the area that he described to me.

The United States should deploy its own satellites to ensure that the reported mass grave sites are not tampered with. This evidence, from eyewitness reports and satellites, should be preserved and investigated, and the perpetrators must be held accountable.

I hear almost every day new reports from the Nuba Mountains of the Sudan Armed Forces indiscriminately bombing civilians, including children and women and old people, in places not known to be near military installations. I see photos of the people maimed and killed in these bombing raids. Some of these bombs are falling on names and faces and places I know well.

To me, these people are not numbers and statistics. They are my neighbors, my friends, local business leaders, and members of my congregation. They cannot be here today. So I will do my best to voice their fears and hopes.

The Nuba people fear a state-sponsored ethnic cleansing campaign is already taking place in the Nuba Mountains. We fear that the United States sees the mounting evidence of another genocide, but will not act, even in the face of evidence of mass graves, house-to-house killings, shellings of civilians, and near-daily bombardments of at least ten towns and villages in South Kordofan.

The Nuba people fear that we will be forgotten, that the world will stand idly by while mass killings continue without redress. Our hope is that the United States will lead the international community in taking prompt, effective action to protect tens of thousands of displaced people, including an untold number of civilians being killed house-to-house and bombed by their own government.

We all belong to one human family, whatever our national, ethnic or political differences. The state-sponsored ethnic cleansing campaign is targeting Nuba people, including not only Christians – such as the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Sudanese Church of Christ in Kadugli -- but also Muslims, including those who worship at the mosque in Kauda, which a SAF fighter plane recently targeted with ten rockets.

We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor requires promoting peace and justice in a world marred by genocidal violence. So as a Nuban leader, I plead that you intervene in the mass atrocities to spare the Nuba people. Stop the direct attacks on innocent persons, and the shedding of the blood of civilians, including women and children. Protect the lives of all human beings as children of God. Do not allow a government to continue to bombard its own people. Stand up for the vulnerable and the oppressed, and take care of the widows and orphans of the Nuba Mountains.

Given the increasing evidence of mass atrocities, the United States cannot begin to consider normalizing ties with Sudan, and should not delist Sudan as a sponsor of terrorism or approve this outlaw nation's access to international financing and debt relief. In fact, those individuals and groups most responsible for the mass atrocities should be designated and sanctioned. Key members of the ruling NCP party who are responsible for these alleged human rights crimes, and the businesses they control, should be targeted with financial sanctions.

The United States and the international community, including the African Union, must act. The U.S. and others committed to the “responsibility to protect” must stop the indiscriminate bombing of civilians.

And the U.S. must support an international effort to lift Sudan’s restrictions on humanitarian organizations’ access to deliver much-needed food and medical aid to civilians in the region. Because of the bombing campaign, people have not been able to plant or tend their crops. This means that by October, when the crops should have been ready to harvest, there will not be enough food to feed tens of thousands of displaced people. There will be mass starvation, a slow-motion genocide by design, and parents will watch their children and the old people die first. These will be slow, painful, and avoidable deaths. Therefore, the United States and other donor nations should quickly establish an international, cross-border emergency relief operation to prevent famine conditions from killing large numbers of the Nuba people.

There is also a need for effective peacekeeping forces with a real mandate to actually keep the peace, and not just stand by while mass murder occurs house-to-house, around the clock.

I would also like to note that it is not just the Sudanese who are calling for the international community, including the United States and the African Union, to uphold the responsibility to protect the people of the Nuba Mountains. In fact, our friends at Avaaz are currently circulating a petition calling for bold action by the United Nations Security Council members. This petition already has some half a million signatures and is still growing. I hope the people in this room will do everything in their power to listen the cries of people all over the world calling for action on this issue.

I look forward to working with you to do what is necessary with American leadership and the support of the international community to fulfill the responsibility to protect civilians who are being systematically exterminated by their own government. Together, we must stop Sudan’s efforts to eradicate the Nuba people from the Nuba Mountains and create a durable peace and an opportunity for reconciliation for the whole of Sudan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.