

Diocese of Salisbury Sudan Link

Public Affairs and Advocacy Report June 2010

The past sixth months or so have seen even more activity than usual in our Sudan Link. The Committee will be aware that year began with an intensive advocacy campaign when Archbishop Daniel came over to London and Salisbury. Working closely with Christian Aid, and a consortium of NGO's with special interests in Sudan the fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was marked with a campaign of 'drumming around the world', and continued with a comprehensive programme of media briefings including BBC Today programme, BBC World TV, and many interviews with BBC World Service Africa, Al Jazeera and CNN. A press conference was held with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, followed by a session with the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. Joint presentations were held with the Sudan Ambassador in London at Chatham House. All this intensive activity was reminder that Sudan had just a year before the peace agreement was set to expire. Following all this, we are in discussion with our colleagues in the United States, AFRECS (American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan) with a view to mounting a similar campaign to our January activities in London, this time in Washington DC, in Congress and the White House and the United Nations in New York, when there will be just 100 days to run.

In Sudan, the first national elections in more than a generation were held throughout Sudan with many Sudanese, including some bishops voting for the first time. The elections were to elect national and state leaders and followed a three year preparation period starting back in 2007 starting with a disputed census, a variably supported voter registration process and then a recognisably flawed election in April this year. All these events were key elements in the CPA signed in 2005 that theoretically ended the fighting between North and South Sudan and is due to expire in January with a grace period of six months in July 2011. International observers, including the European Union and the Carter Centre in the United States together with the Sudan Troika – the USA, UK and Norway – recognised that the elections were not conducted to satisfactory standards. The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) whilst recognising the many failings in the election process has decided to move on with it's focus very much on the referendum in January next year which is likely to see the independence of southern Sudan, by July 2011. An independent South presents great risks to the fragile peace that the CPA has sustained. Worries centre around the likelihood of mass migration from the North with all the human misery and insecurity that this could cause. There is concern for the protection and freedom of worship of non Muslims with the risk of imposition of Sharia law universally in the North; Christians and other faiths' currently enjoy freedom to worship guaranteed by the CPA. Then there is the likelihood of continued South to South tribal conflict. This could increase as the lack of development in the South in roads and hospitals

and schools and employment opportunities and housing etc is not reversed. Before all this, all the outstanding

agreements in the CPA must be settled before January 2011. These include implementing border agreements in the area of Abbyei where there has been much fighting; Southern Kordofan, including the Nuba Mountains, where there are supposed to be separate consultations on how the State is to be administered, with a disputed border that would determine the ownership of disputed oil reserves. Meanwhile, although not so high profile as before Darfur remains an ongoing sore. Though separately supported by a specialist UN force known as UNAMID, Darfur could still be a tinderbox in the wider context of an enduring peace and effective development programme for the whole country. So, the next 12 months will see greater and more urgent activity from the Churches, International Governments, NGO's and the United Nations and its agencies.

At home we continue to work closely with our own Government through the Sudan Unit – a joint facility based in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and staffed by both diplomats and development experts in the Department for International Development (DfID). We also have close links and are members of the Associate Parliamentary Group on Sudan (APGS) made up of MPs from the Commons and Peers and Prelates from the House of Lords. Following our general election we have a new Minister for Africa in the Foreign Office – Henry Bellingham MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary responsible for Africa and we hope to be working with him as we did with his predecessor Baroness Glynnis Kinnock. We also have a new Ambassador to Khartoum – Nicholas Kay CMG, he was previously our envoy in Kinshasa and before that in Afghanistan. He took up his post at the end of May and in discussions with him, he is very supportive of the role the Churches can play in a peacefully developing Sudan. There is also a new UK Special Representative to Sudan and a new Head of the Sudan Unit based in the Foreign Office. So, lots of new faces and many new challenges.

Bishop David On behalf of the Sudan Link, and all our supporters in our Diocese and our partners in Sudan, we pay tribute to Bishop David and Sarah for their unfailing support for Sudan and our Link, arguably the most vibrant and comprehensive in the Church of England. He has memorably and inspirationally reminded us that *'the best thing about the Diocese of Salisbury is Sudan'*. Sudan takes us out of our comfort zones, refocuses our priorities and values and helps us see Jesus Christ in one another.

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