

Press Release

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Boston - The American Anti-Slavery Group (AASG) today congratulated the people of Southern Sudan on becoming a free and independent country. The Republic of South Sudan declared independence on July 9 and became the 193rd member of the United Nations a few days later. But as the celebrations subside and the process of nation building begins, there is a stark reminder that this "national liberation" remains incomplete: tens of thousands Southern slaves remain in captivity in the North.

"It is a sad irony," said Dr. Charles Jacobs, AASG President. "It was, after all, the enslavement of African villagers that animated and bolstered much of the rebellion in South Sudan. "And it was reports of modern day human bondage in Africa's largest country that awoke Americans to the tragedy in Sudan."

"For over five decades the region's black Africans were oppressed, slaughtered and enslaved by the Northern rulers who aimed to destroy their cultural and ethnic identity," Jacobs said.

The Southern rebellion against the Northern domination lasted half a century -- from 1955 until 2005, with only an eleven year break between 1972 and 1983. In the brutal campaign to Arabize and Islamize the African Christian/traditionalist South, the leaders of the Arab Muslim

North killed almost 3 million and ethnically cleansed 4 million more (nearly 80% of the population.)

"Slave raids were the terror weapon of choice of the Islamist regime in Khartoum," Jacobs said.

"The classification of the conflict as a "holy war" -- a jihad against the Christian South and its allies in the Nuba Mountains - legitimized in the eyes of many Northern Muslims the revival of the centuries-old practice of taking slaves as war booty."

In slave raids on Southern villages, conducted by government-backed Arab militias known as murahaleen, estimated hundreds of thousands of blacks, mostly women and children, were captured, transported to the North and enslaved.

Since 1995, AASG's partner, Christian Solidarity International (CSI), has been working to free Sudan's slaves. The organization provides funds to the indigenous network of Africans and Arabs who cooperate on returning the captives. CSI's efforts resulted in the liberation of over 80,000 slaves.

In 2005, under guidance of the US Government, the North and the South signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the war and provided for Southern self-determination. The CPA ended the slave raids, but left the fate of those already in bondage unresolved. According to the recent Congressional testimony of CSI's CEO Dr. John Eibner, approximately 35,000 are still serving their masters in parts of Southern Darfur and Kordofan.

In the week prior to the independence, CSI liberated 404 slaves.

"AASG is committed to continuing our partnership with CSI until the last slave in Sudan is returned home," said Jacobs.

*American Anti-Slavery Group is a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating modern-day*

*human bondage and to promoting a non-politicized, bias-free human rights community.*