

AFRECS E-Blast: February 21, 2012

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

**In the church:**

**A WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE: A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins**

In my early encounter with the church in Sudan, I was immediately struck by the frequency of such Biblical names as Rebecca, Ezekiel, Enoch or Abraham – all drawn from Old Testament accounts. When introduced to the hymns and prayers of Sudanese Christians, God's hand in guiding and protecting them in the midst of their desolation and displacement emerged as a recurrent theme. I could not but help recognize in these expressions of Sudanese worship an identity with the Israelites of old. Sudanese friends seemed to resonate with the message of deliverance as they too wandered in the wilderness looking for their way to a promised land. In a way, the achievement of an independent South Sudan was for many a way out of the wilderness to a promised land.

Tragically thousands of our Sudanese friends remain in that wilderness seeking a way forward to a "promised land." As war rages in many parts of Sudan and as thousands are targeted for death either through starvation or relentless bombing, thousands more under Khartoum's rule are in danger of expulsion by early April unless they conform to Khartoum's directive to regularize their status in a country that intends to treat them harshly. This untenable situation is compounded by the embargo that has been imposed which blocks their ability to leave either by land or water. The Red Sea has not yet been parted. No escape to safety is readily available. Our friends are trapped in a hostile and dangerous situation. We have also learned that several thousand Sudanese refugees in Israel are expecting deportation by the end of March.

When movement to South Sudan finally becomes possible, thousands of desperate South Sudanese will move to places ill prepared to receive them - the consequence of which will be more misery and suffering for all concerned – both those arriving home and those obliged to receive them. Their journey in a wilderness of despair may continue unless a massive effort is launched to facilitate their accommodation into what is at present a fragile situation.

As we prepared to enter the season of Lent, let us take time to pray for and reflect upon those whose wilderness experience seems to be endless and pray that those who have not yet tasted the peace that has come to their friends and families in the South will soon renew their journey to peace and find a welcome that is truly restorative. Let our prayers during this Lent be that our Sudanese sisters and brothers find the Easter that we know to be the fulfillment of God's promise to God's people.

## In politics -- Sudan:

### The Plight of Ethnic Southerners in Sudan

Following up on Richard's message above, we note that April 8th is the date set by Khartoum for ethnic South Sudanese -- who fled to the North or were born to Southerners displaced there during the long civil war -- to lose their Sudan citizenship. The ongoing crisis in the region is rapidly expanding as hundreds of thousands wait to return without any documents to a country they may never have seen, as Eric Reeves [explains](#) for the Enough Project. Already they have lost their jobs and security and are facing religious persecution and forced conscription. *The New York Times* tells the [story](#) from one Nuer family's perspective.

### Darfur

The UN Security Council extended the [mandate](#) of a panel of experts on Darfur-related sanctions against Sudan for another year. The Darfur rebel group said and Equality Movement (JEM) said Monday that it had taken some 50 UN peacekeepers [prisoner](#), but the UN/AU Mission in Darfur said that, while JEM blocked 50-some peacekeepers' transit for a time, they were holding only [three](#) peacekeepers along with two Sudanese translators, and Radio Dabanga reported that even those have now been [released](#).

### South Kordofan and Blue Nile

The [United Nations](#) and [Amnesty International](#) have this week urged Sudan to accept humanitarian aid for those suffering in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and President Al-Bashir has reiterated his [refusal](#) to allow "biased" aid in the country. Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* paints a vivid picture of the [suffering](#) of the Nuban people, and the *Washington Post* reports that Sudan Armed Forces have intensified their [bombing](#) of the main road refugees use to get out of South Kordofan.

### Abyei

The US has formally asked Sudan to hold the long-overdue Abyei [referendum](#) in August, when the Misseriya will be in the area. The request comes along with a proposal for debt relief. The resident Dinka Malual and nomadic Misseriya held a [peace conference](#) on the topic of borders this week in Aweil and have proposed a set of guidelines for a soft border that would allow seasonal migration of Sudanese cattle herders through South Sudan.

### Demonstrators

The Sudanese government beat and arrested hundreds of students in a dormitory [raid](#) at Khartoum University in an effort to end demonstrations aimed at bringing down the regime.

## In politics -- South Sudan

### Oil

More [talks](#) between Sudan and South Sudan ended in Addis Ababa last week without any real progress on oil, and South Sudan began the legal [investigation](#) into the oil it says Sudan stole. South Sudan's Vice President Riek Machar said that his country could [sustain](#) itself for 30 months without oil income, and the country has announced that it will cut nonsalary spending by 50 percent as an [austerity](#) measure. Meanwhile, 600,000 barrels of the disputed crude have been sitting in a Japanese harbor since February 14, despite the [ruling](#) of a British commercial court that the oil can be unloaded.

### Borders

Sudan and South Sudan have agreed to start [demarcating](#) their shared border immediately and to complete the work within three months, except for five disputed areas.

**PRAY:** Almighty God, whose heart is always for the poor and the suffering: Watch over your children in Sudan and South Sudan; bring them comfort, sustenance, and hope; guide their leaders in the ways of justice and peace; and open the eyes, hearts, and hands of the world to the tragedies in these countries. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, now and forever. Amen.

This weekly Sudan update is from the [American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan](#). You are receiving it because you are currently on an AFRECS listserv. Feel free to forward this newsflash to others who may find it helpful. To join the list if you received this email as a forward, please send an email to [AFRECS\\_E-Blasts@afrecs.org](mailto:AFRECS_E-Blasts@afrecs.org) with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. If you wish to unsubscribe, please send an email to [AFRECS\\_E-Blasts@afrecs.org](mailto:AFRECS_E-Blasts@afrecs.org) with "UNSUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. For more information about AFRECS, visit our website [www.afrecs.org](http://www.afrecs.org) or our Facebook page.