

2009

A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

**SOUTHERN SUDANESE VOICE FOR FREEDOM
REPORT ON SUDANESE REFUGEES IN ISRAEL**



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	3
Aknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	4
Emigration to Israel	6-9
Exodus to Egypt	6
From Egypt to Israel	7
Border Crossing	8
Detentions	9
Deportations	9
Conditions in Israel	10-15
Refugee Status	10
Health Care	13
Education	14
Social Service Programs	14
Return to Sudan	15
Recommendations	16
Conclusion	19
APPENDICES	
1. Voices in Israel	20
2. Congressional letter to Egyptian Embassy	
3. About the Southern Sudan Voice for Freedom	28

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SOUTHERN SUDANESE VOICE FOR FREEDOM REPORT ON SUDANESE REFUGEES IN ISRAEL

INTRODUCTION

Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom (SSVF) president Jimmy Mulla, SSVF vice president White Walla, Sudanese activist Simon Deng, and New York-based freelance journalist Heather Robinson traveled to Israel May 17-25, 2008 to learn about the challenges facing Sudanese refugees there, and to seek ways to help through collaboration with the Israeli government, the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), individuals working with the refugees, and community representatives. The trip was also a follow-up to Simon Deng's appeal to the Israeli government to grant Sudanese refugees a temporary status and not return them to Egypt, out of fear for their safety.

In preparation for and during the trip, we established relationships with the Israeli Embassy and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the U.S., the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Israel, Israeli refugee advocacy NGOs, the Hebrew Immigration and Aid Society in Tel Aviv, ADL in Jerusalem, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), and the Mesila Foundation in Tel Aviv. We also toured Yad Vashem's Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem.

This report presents our findings and impressions concerning the plight of Sudanese refugees in Israel, and our recommendations for addressing their needs.

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Report research, video recording/transcriptions and writing: Jimmy Mulla

Report design, writing and editing, Danielle Goldberg

Report writing and editing: Paulette Lee

Photography: George H. Knerr

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Starting in 2005, Sudanese survivors of genocide from the Darfur region and of a brutal civil war in South Sudan have come from Egypt to Israel seeking security and a better future. The majority spent from two to seven years in Egypt prior to coming to Israel, having crossed the dangerous Egyptian border where many Sudanese have been killed. Their subsequent entry to Israel raises a new set of challenges for the Sudanese refugees, for Israel, as well as for the international community.

Largely due to the fact that Sudan and Israel do not have diplomatic relations and consider each other “enemy states,” Sudanese refugees have been arrested upon arrival into Israel, labeled a security threat, charged with illegal entry, and put under detention for three months to two years.

More recently, following an appeal by NGOs such as the Israeli Hotline for Migrant Workers and the Clinic for Refugees’ Rights at Tel Aviv University, who argued against imprisoning refugees alongside criminal offenders, the Israeli Supreme Court banned the policy of detention and arrest of refugees. However, while recent arrivals are no longer arrested and sent to prison, according to Majier Anyuat, president of Sudanese Refugees in Israel, at the time of our visit there were approximately 3,000 Sudanese refugees in Israel. Some have been granted temporary protection status, which allows them to work; about 500 refugees from Darfur have been given permanent residency with full citizenship rights; and approximately 950 were behind bars for entering the country illegally.



Most Sudanese refugees have settled in the Israeli cities of Tel Aviv, Eilat, Arad, and Jerusalem. Many of them have found employment and some are now beginning to feel at home. Challenges facing those who are employed have now shifted to their status as refugees, medical care, education -- especially for their children -- and improvement of working conditions.

Daily new arrivals, mainly from Darfur, are housed in shelters run by the Tel Aviv-based Mesila Foundation, an aid organization that relies heavily on volunteer assistance to provide refugees with bedding and food. Emergency medical care, however, remains a big challenge.

New legislation that would allow authorities to detain illegal entrants into Israel for up to seven years is currently before the Knesset (Israeli Parliament), amid fears of the “pull effect” (the attraction of more refugees). This, coupled with the current instability in Sudan, where the conflict in Darfur rages on and the tenuous 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the 22-year old North-South conflict is still not fully implemented, contribute to the uncertain future faced by all Sudanese refugees in Israel.

As the future of Sudan still hangs in a delicate balance, we recommend that Sudanese refugees in Israel be issued temporary status and given opportunities for employment, training, education and medical assistance until such time as they are able to safely return to Sudan and contribute to their home land's development.

We consider our accomplishments on this trip to include meeting with refugees in Tel Aviv, Eilat, Arad and Jerusalem, and having the opportunity to learn about their current situation, urging them to organize to ensure better working relationship with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and connecting them with appropriate Israeli NGOs. We participated in interviews with both U.S. and Israeli media, including having three stories about our visit published by *The Jerusalem Post*, the world's largest English-language daily newspaper covering Israel, the Middle East and the international Jewish community.¹

It is our hope that our visit gave the refugees with whom we met a sense of hope and helped lift their spirits, and that the rapport we built with our now established contacts will allow us to continue to work on their behalf. Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom sees its continuing role vis à vis Sudanese refugees in Israel as a partner in facilitating communication among the Sudanese refugee population, NGOs and local and international governments to ensure understanding and greater cooperation; and to assist with refugee organization in such areas as tracking needs, providing legal assistance and participating in conflict resolution.



EMIGRATION

TO ISRAEL

¹ Stoil, Rebecca Anna. "Sudanese refugees fear Holocaust lessons haven't been learned," *Jerusalem Post*, 22, May, 2008, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1211434084285> [accessed 18 December 2008].

Exodus to Egypt

Sudanese refugees started arriving in large numbers in Egypt in the 1990s because of the North-South civil war. They continue to come in response to Sudan's overall instability and violence raging in the western region of Darfur, which since 2003 has produced a genocide killing 300,000 people and displacing up to 2.5 million.

UNHCR reports having registered some 25,000 Sudanese refugees in Egypt, but independent observers say that number could be closer to hundreds of thousands. Their official status as refugees is greatly disputed. Reports indicate that between 1996 and 2005, out of approximately 60,000 Sudanese refugees who formally applied for refugee status in Egypt, 13,400 were actually recognized as such. While Egypt is subject to international refugee conventions, the country lacks a domestic asylum law. The under-resourced UNHCR office in Cairo therefore has all responsibility for determining refugee status. According to Barbara Harrell- Bond, professor of forced migration studies at the American University in Caro, "The process of identifying who is a genuine refugee and who is not by the UNHCR is all very subjective. It is the luck of the draw." There are no legal safeguards to protect the asylum seeker and refugee, nor is there a legal explanation for why individual refugees have been rejected.²

In the mid 1990s, the International Office of Migration (IOM) began the process of resettling Sudanese refugees from Egypt to the United States. Canada, Australia and many European countries have also resettled refugees. Although the situation in Darfur is still forcing many people to flee the country, most of the resettlement programs were stopped following the signing of the CPA in January 2005.

In January 2004, Egypt and Sudan signed the bilateral "Four Freedoms Agreement," granting citizens from both countries the freedom of movement, residence, ownership and work in the other country. According to this agreement, Sudanese nationals should be entitled to own property in Egypt, rightfully work and reside there. Refugees report, however, that this agreement has not been implemented.³ Sudanese in Egypt have frequently been subject to discrimination, arbitrary detention and police violence.

In December 2005, 33 people, including women and children, were killed when Egyptian police cleared a Sudanese refugee camp in Cairo, using water canons and heavy batons. Some 650 others were arrested, tortured and threatened with deportation, despite the fact that some of the victims were under the protection of the UNHCR. At a March 6-9, 2007 meeting of the UNHCR's Standing Committee in Geneva, NGOs made consensus statements, but more than a year later there was no real improvement in the situation. The American University in Cairo reported that the refugees' restricted living conditions contributed greatly to the tragic incident, though the Egyptian government has done little to

² [Nkrumah](#), Gamal, "Insecure but Incisive," Al-Ahram Weekly On-line. 24 - 30 November 2005 Issue No. 770, Available at: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/770/eg14.htm>, [accessed 20 December 2008].

³ [Nkrumah](#), Gamal, November 2005. Issue No. 770, Available at: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/770/eg14.htm>, [accessed 20 December 2008].

simplify the current almost impossible process for Sudanese refugees to obtain work permits.⁴

While the UNHCR has a voluntary repatriation program to assist the return of Sudanese refugees to South Sudan, many of the refugees who fled southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains and other areas have rejected the idea that repatriation to Sudan is safe or viable. This view has been reinforced by reports of violence perpetrated by government-supported armed groups, and the inability of the new governments established by the CPA to provide basic services for the internally displaced repatriated from the North and other neighboring countries.

The inability to return safely and securely to Sudan, and the harshness of life and constant harassment in Egypt have prompted the current drive among Sudanese refugees to flee from Egypt to Israel – considered the only country in the region that would be welcoming.

From Egypt to Israel

To cross the Sinai Desert between Egypt and Israel, refugees pay Bedouin smugglers hundreds of dollars and risk being caught by the Egyptian border patrol. If they make it to Israel safely, they are sheltered in the temporary caravan park at Ketziot, where a more permanent camp is being constructed, or they are taken in by Israeli families or kibbutzim. Due to the initial lack of sufficient official aid or clear government policy on the issue, the task of refugee care has largely fallen to Israeli organizations and individual volunteers. Israeli families and businesses have donated food and clothing, doctors have volunteered their medical services, students have set up educational programs for children, and volunteers have provided general care for traumatized refugees.

Nevertheless, despite these efforts on behalf of the refugees, the Israeli government has yet to settle upon a clear and comprehensive official policy. On August 18 Israel deported 48 Africans—many reportedly from Darfur—back across the Egyptian border.⁵ At the same time, David Baker, a government spokesman, announced that Israel would absorb the approximately 500 Darfurian refugees already in Israel. Two weeks later, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert granted citizenship to several hundred refugees.

It is almost certain that refugees who are forced to return to Egypt will be met with harsh, even brutal, treatment. With this likelihood in mind, the spokesman for the Israeli Hotline for Migrant Workers, Romm Lewkowicz, charged Israel with violating the provision of the Geneva Conventions concerning a government's obligation toward refugees from an enemy state. Moreover, Lewkowicz pointed out that it was Israel that promoted the provision after WWII, mindful of the shelter German Jewish refugees had received in Britain. Echoes of the historical experience of many Israelis make the plight of the Sudanese refugees that much more poignant for them. As Liat Collins declared in the Jerusalem Post, "Look at

⁴ UNHCR.

<http://www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=1694&rid=1179&subm=33&ssm=87&area=Investigate&#NGOs>

⁵ IBID

them and see us...Even many of those opposed to granting them permanent asylum in Israel can easily imagine them as Jewish refugees struggling to cross borders or board boats to take them away from the Nazi hell.”⁶

Sudanese refugees began coming into Israel in 2005, and in 2006 the number increased considerably because of the conflict in Darfur. The *Jerusalem Post* reports that according to the UNHCR, nearly 7,000 refugees have entered Israel over the past several years. Most are from Africa, though they also include refugees from Asia and South America. Majier Anyat, president of Sudanese Refugees in Israel, estimates that some 3,000 refugees from Sudan are living in Israel, with about one-third of them in Tel Aviv, another 800 and 500 in Eilat and Arad respectively, and 200 in Jerusalem and other areas. He estimates another 950 are in prison, serving one-to-two year, or three-to-six month terms.

Border Crossing

The beginning of the journey from Egypt to Israel is perilous, particularly at the border crossing where Darfurians and migrants from elsewhere in Sudan and other African countries have been killed. As recently as August 2007, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported its intention to “combat trespassing across the international borders with Israel.” According to Amnesty International, Egypt has a government-sanctioned, live-fire policy on the Sinai border, and the use of lethal force has resulted in 25 deaths, including women and children, and 587 arrests of irregular migrants.⁷ Though Israel has tried to get assurance from Egypt not to punish refugees, there has been no guarantee.

“I took the bus from Cairo to Arish (Egyptian/Israel border town), and walked on foot in the desert for three days to get to the border. When I got here, I went to UNHCR to discuss my case, but was told by the UNHCR official, ‘Sharon’, that Sudanese come to Israel because they need money. I told her we are refugees. Sharon says Southern Sudanese are not refugees, but Darfurians are refugees. She won’t accept that Southern Sudanese are refugees.”

~ Samuel Pringe, Dinka tribe, Yirof Arad, Israel, May 2008



The boy on the left lost his leg from bullets shot by Egyptian border guards.

In 2007, Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom and the Institute on Religion and Democracy persuaded Members of Congress to call on the Egyptian government to stop its attacks on Sudanese refugees. In their September 26 letter delivered to Nabil Fahmy, Egyptian Ambassador to the U.S., Congressman Frank Wolf (R-VA) and 33 other Representatives expressed their “deep concern over recent reports that several Sudanese refugees have been shot by Egyptian border crossing guards....We are aware of the great pressure on the region to absorb large refugee populations, and hope that Egypt will lead other countries with an example of humane, respectful practices...”

⁶ <http://newsocietyjournal.com/2008/01/30/sudanese-refugees-in-israel-and-egypt/>

⁷ Amnesty International. “Egypt must end use of lethal force against refugees,” 9 September 2008. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.org.au/centre/action/17224/>, [accessed 29 December 2008].

Detentions

Surviving the Egypt-Israeli border was no guarantee of safety, either. In 2006, hundreds of Sudanese asylum seekers were detained for indefinite period of time – in many cases in army facilities or in detention facilities for convicted criminals – and the whereabouts of many are still not known. Arrests took place immediately upon arrival into Israel, and Sudanese were officially considered a “security threat”, given that Israel has designated Sudan an “enemy state”.

Anat Ben Dor, Buchmann Faculty of Law at Tel Aviv University’s Public Interest Law Resource Center, explains: “The Israel government understands and acknowledges that the people who have come do not pose any security risks (but)...the last thing the government wants to do is grant them any rights. It’s a common understanding within the government that when you give refugees more rights, more people would be attracted to come.”⁸

Israel has subsequently detained many Sudanese refugees under the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law, as opposed to the Entrance to Israel Law. While refugees and illegal immigrants have the right to judicial oversight under the Entrance to Israel Law, there is no similar provision in the Prevention of Infiltration Law⁹

The situation improved only when the Israeli Supreme Court ruled in favor of a petition brought by the Hotline for Migrant Workers and the Refugee Rights Clinic at Tel Aviv University. The changes brought about by the petition were:

- a) Establishment of an ad-hoc internal review mechanism to review the individual cases of the detainees; and
- b) Every Sudanese asylum seeker whose case was heard by the internal reviewer received a recommendation for release and eventually was released (over 300 persons).

Deportations

In August 2007, some 50 Darfurians were immediately returned to Egypt from Israel, which in turn deported them back to Sudan. States Kim Bullimore in the *Green Left Weekly*: “The deportation went ahead despite 63 of the 120 members of the Knesset (Israel’s parliament) signing a petition calling on the Olmert government to allow them [the Sudanese] to remain in Israel until an alternative country could be found to take them in.”¹⁰

According to UNHCR, these refugees were denied a hearing and access to their agency and 20 were reportably returned to Sudan from Egypt, though Egyptian President Mubarak had reportedly promised Israeli President Olmert he would not do so. Sudanese law currently

⁸ Ben Dor, Anat, Personal Interview, May 2008.

⁹ Bullimore, 2007.

¹⁰ Bullimore, Kim. “Israel: Sudanese Refugees Deported.” *Green Left Weekly*. August 29, 2007, Issue #722, available at: <http://www.greenleft.org.au/2007/722/37497>. [accessed 18 December 2008]

bans travel to Israel and Sudan has reportedly punished citizens guilty of such travel with torture, life imprisonment, or death.¹¹

CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL

Refugee Status

Though peace in Sudan is fragile, the fact that the war is over weakens the Sudanese case as legitimate refugees by the Israeli government. Sudanese refugees in Israel have no clearly defined status. Their status is determined by a complex government system that has given full asylum to some 600 refugees from Darfur, and has granted work permits to other groups, including Eritrean refugees who entered Israel no later than December 25, 2007.¹²



Elizabeth was visiting Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, one of the few cities where there was work for Southern Sudanese. However, all Southern Sudanese were ordered to leave Tel Aviv, and Elizabeth's oldest son was jailed for staying there.

While a small number of Darfurians have received full asylum following intense public pressure, Southern Sudanese refugees are viewed by the Israeli government as illegal economic immigrants, as opposed to asylum seekers who are actually fleeing religious and/or ethnic persecution both in Sudan and Egypt. By considering the South Sudanese thusly, the Israeli government has more flexibility in how it deals with them.

The UNHCR provides temporary ID cards that allow refugees to move freely and work, but that is all. In a meeting with Steven Wolfson from the UNHCR in Tel Aviv, he attributed an understaffed and small UNHCR office to the fact that they are only able to screen refugees and grant them a temporary ID that allows them to get employment.¹³ Without status, however, refugees cannot travel out of Israel, and generally their movements are restricted. This is compounded by the fact that Sudan has no diplomatic relations with Israel, so Sudanese nationals who travel to Israel are automatically charged with treason upon return to Sudan. Wolfson says he meets regularly with the refugees, but their lack of organization under one “umbrella” group complicates relations between them.

According to Wolfson, Darfur refugees are organized and have a good partnership with the UNHCR. Southern Sudanese refugees, on the other hand, have several groups who come to the UNHCR office and claim to represent the concerns of their community. Subsequently,

¹¹United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, *World Refugee Survey 2008 - Egypt*, 19 June 2008. Online. UNHCR Refworld, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/485f50d06c.html> [accessed 18 December 2008].

¹² Frenkel, Sheera Claire, “200 African migrants detained in TA”, *Jerusalem Post*, 25, February, 2008. available at: <http://www.sudaneseonline.com/en2/publish/Latest News 1/200 African migrants detained in TA raids.html>. [accessed 18 December 2008]

¹³ Wolfson, Steven, Personal Interview, May 2008.

the UNHCR office has stopped working with some groups, in the hope they will organize and form a body with which the office can work. According to reports from IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks, a part of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with independent editorial services), the UNHCR has some 686,000 Sudanese under its care, making them one of the largest refugee groups in the world.

As the number of Sudanese refugees continues to increase, their future is potentially threatened by proposed new legislation that would expand the Entrance to Israel Law to include and potentially criminalize their quest to seek protection from persecution. As of July 2009, in a 59-to-1 vote the Knesset voted that the Infiltration Prevention Law could pass in a special "straight vote", meaning that the next time the bill is presented in the Knesset Plenum, it can pass the second and third reading at one time.

The bill states that any "infiltrator" (illegal entrant), including from Darfur, will be sentenced to seven years in prison, and 20 years if s/he crosses with a Bedouin who is carrying a knife. S/he would be deported upon the completion of his/her prison time.

As proposed, the new law would also:

- Impose higher penalties for a person entering Israel illegally if s/he is a citizen or a resident of one of nine countries enumerated in the annex to the proposal (Iran, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Iraq, Pakistan or Yemen). The same will apply to a resident of Gaza (seven years imprisonment);
- Empower an Israeli Defense Force officer to order the immediate or "hot" return, of a person to the country or the territory from which s/he arrived, provided that such return would be performed within 72 hours from the time of suspected infiltration;
- Allow a person *suspected* of infiltration to be detained. An administrative Detention Review Tribunal would review the detention and be empowered to order the release from detention; however, a person would not be released if the Israeli security authorities believe that in his/her country of residence or in the area where s/he lives, there is activity that might endanger the security of the State of Israel or its citizens.
- Of particular concerns to volunteers, ***volunteers who help refugees would go to prison: anyone who assists an infiltrator could get the same sentence that the infiltrator gets.*** If you give a glass of water to a Darfur refugee, you could get seven to twenty years in prison.

According to Amnesty International, "The criminalization of irregular entry, without taking into account the reasons for entry or the risk of removal, effectively bars individuals coming

Because of the pressure in Egypt, we were forced to flee to Israel. On our way, my wife was seven months pregnant and tumbled from the mountain top. Nobody believed that she and the baby would be fine. When we got here, she was taken to the clinic, the doctors checked on her, and found out that both the baby and the mother were fine. We feel fortunate to have made it through the desert into Israel.

~ Martin , Sudanese community church leader Arad, Israel, May 2008

into Israel from seeking asylum.”¹⁴ By considering Sudanese refugees “infiltrators,” they would be vulnerable to immediate deportation back to Egypt, regardless of the risk of persecution they may face there. Such legislation would fail to live up to Israel’s international legal obligations as a state party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.¹⁵

In 2007, 48 Sudanese were returned to Egypt. Egyptian police released some people, but four were sent to Aswan on their way to be deported. Anat Ben Dor of Tel Aviv University’s Public Interest Law Resource Center reports that there currently are no deportations to Egypt, though he is not sure if this will change any time soon. Ms. Ben Dor believes this will depend on the cooperation of the Egyptian government.¹⁶

In an effort to prevent the ominous results of such a law, Sudan activist Simon Deng has met with a number of rabbis in New York, who have agreed to write a letter to the Israeli government opposing legislation that would deny the right to asylum for the Sudanese.

Other NGOs, including the Hotline for Migrant Workers, Physicians for Human Rights, and the Clinic at Tel Aviv University, have also lent their voices to this cause. Tel Aviv University’s Public Interest Law Resource Center petitioned the high court against the policy of “hot return”. The Israeli government admitted in court that Egypt does not provide guarantee or assurance of safety of those who may be returned. The government contended that while they would not implement hot returns at this time, they sought this legislation to maintain the power, authority and discretion to do so in the future, once Egypt assures the safety of Sudanese refugees returning to their country.¹⁷

Ms. Ben Dor identifies the legal challenges of petitioning the Israeli court system:

First of all, judges here are not learned in refugee law, and we do not have a law. Every issue you bring to court, you have to take into consideration that this is probably the first time the judge has seen such an issue; there is not body of precedence. Government comes to the high court with non-legal ... policy arguments, such as sovereignty of a nation, where every country needs to protect its borders. Asylum seekers pose security risks because they come through smuggling routes used by terror organizations; the pull factor; and refugees are portrayed as migrant workers who want to improve their lives. The prime minister has done this since July 2007, when he said all the asylum seekers are migrant workers. Also, the government argues that Egypt is a country of first asylum, and also signatory to the Geneva Convention.

Health Care

¹⁴ Amnesty International. 23, June, 2008. “Israel: Knesset should reject draft law which would put asylum-seekers at grave risk,” available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/israel-knesset-should-reject-draft-law-which-would-put-asylum-seekers-gr>.

¹⁵ Amnesty International. June 23, 2008.

¹⁶ Ben Dor, Anat, May 2008.

¹⁷ IBID

Refugees who get sick and have no means of getting medical attention face serious challenges. Those who are working have some medical insurance, but not major medical coverage in case of surgery. Physicians for Human Rights, an NGO group of volunteer doctors in Israel, provides limited medical care to refugees but they have scarce resources.

Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-Israel) was founded in 1988 with the goal of aiding the struggle for human rights, in particular the right to health, in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Human dignity, wellness of mind and body, and the right to health, are the comprise the organization's world view and direct and instruct its activities. PHR-Israel integrates advocacy and action toward changing harmful policies, and health care delivery.

Today PHR-Israel has more than 1150 members, over half of whom are health care providers, and it operates the Occupied Territories Project, the Prisoners and Detainees Project, the Migrant Workers and Refugees Project, the Project for the Unrecognized Villages of the Negev, and the Residents of Israel Project. In addition, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel runs a mobile clinic in the Occupied Territories, and an open clinic in Tel Aviv that provides services for all within Israel who have no legal status and therefore no health insurance.¹⁸

The refugees appear to rely on PHR for medical emergencies. For example, we met David, a Sudanese refugee, who had a broken leg. He used to work, but his medical insurance from work could not cover the costs. He contacted PHR and worked with them in order to get the surgery he needed. At the time of the interview, PHR was in the process of identifying a hospital availability.

Education

Refugees who are employed can afford rent and meet basic living expenses, although they have worries about status and want better working conditions, education for their children, and adult learning. Because refugees have no residence status, it is difficult to enroll their children in school. An international school in Tel Aviv has enrolled some Sudanese refugee students in their special programs, with the support of the municipality and the prime minister's wife. In Eilat, a special school program has been developed for refugee children, but many parents claim their children's education is inadequate, and that the only subject they're taught is Arabic. Most parents would prefer to send their children to government schools. Teenage boys and young men who went to Israel without parents also expressed concerns about further education.



Social Service Programs

¹⁸ <http://www.wzo.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1991>

1. Refugee Organizations



Volunteers in Arad, Southern Sudanese (and other) helping children through

There are 30-to-40 members of the South Sudan Refugee's Union in Israel. George Knerr, a volunteer from Charlotte, N.C. (*see below*) has set up a website, www.ESLIsrael.org, that has been receiving some attention. There are classes every day in the Dead Sea area where Hebrew University students volunteer teach ESL. Some refugees are looking at starting their own business and projects to cater for the needs of the community.

At 25, Southern Sudanese refugee Gabriel Kuol Makes, has had a certain amount of success in the hotel trade, and now he advocates for others like him. Gabriel is helping to solve cultural and linguistic difficulties in the hotel trade, educating both hotel managers and their Sudanese employees as well as campaigning for Sudanese rights via his website: <www.http://Gabriel4Sudan.org>

2. Mesila Aid and Information Center for the Foreign Community

Mesila Aid and Information Center for the Foreign Community offers migrant workers in Tel Aviv several social and legal services, including aid and instruction on the education of children of migrant workers. Mesila's activities include assisting individuals with dealing with employers and government, enforcing their rights, dealing with short-term problems, and helping out in times of crisis. They provide babysitting services, locate and treat children at risk, and make referrals to community services and family counseling.



Gabriel Kuol Makes (right), pictured with American volunteer George Knerr.

Other activities include the development and reinforcing of social networks for mutual support, personal and group counseling, and the development of systems for the community at large. National and systemic activities include raising awareness about the place of foreign workers in Israeli society among municipal policymakers, in Knesset committees, and in government ministries, with the intention of promoting policies of supplying basic services to the foreign community." The Mesila team consists of skilled social workers and about 150 volunteers with backgrounds in such fields as education, psychology, and law.

3. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Christian Embassy, and Hotline for Migrant Workers are also involved in assisting Sudanese refugees in Israel.

Return to Sudan

The conditions and needs of Sudanese refugees in Sudan are dire. Overall insecurity throughout Sudan and the lack of well-established institutions to meet humanitarian needs make the return of refugees unwise. Virtually all reports on the return of refugees to Southern Sudan from neighboring countries recognize the inability of the fledgling regional government and international institutions to provide the resources and security necessary for refugees to rebuild their lives.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported as recently as October 2008 that life is far from easy for the approximately 1.7 million displaced Sudanese refugees who have returned home. Returnees often lack basic services like health care, water, and proper schools, and complain of insecurity due to the stockpiling of weapons and militia remnants.¹⁹ A British think tank, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), also warned of "growing concern" about the need to support the returnees. There is not enough food for the population and most of those returning are the poorest members of the displaced community. According to ODI, "Reintegration has as a result put additional pressure on an already under-served and economically poor resident population."²⁰

"We have come to Israel because we faced many difficulties in Sudan. We were not able to move from one place to another. We could not find employment and our houses were burned. I first went to Libya, and then I came to Israel. The people in Israel have welcomed us. I hope I will have the chance for education, so I can go back and develop the people."

~ Isa Abdubakar Adam,
Refugee from Southern Darfur

The political and environmental situation in Sudan remains very unstable. The current crisis in the Western Sudanese region of Darfur is understandably at the forefront of international attention. U.N. officials have reported that fighting between government-backed Arab militias and African rebels in Darfur has led to as many as 450,000 deaths, mostly civilians, and has driven an additional 2.5 million from their homes.²¹

At the same time, the 2005 peace agreement that ended 21 years of civil war between the north and the south, is in danger of collapse due to lack of political will by the principle actors responsible for the full implementation of the agreement. Numerous core issues remain unresolved pending elections scheduled for April 2010, which precede a referendum on southern independence set for 2011. According to report early this year by the US aid group, Refugee International,, "Sudan is entering a volatile period in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The risk of violent outbreaks is acute."²²

¹⁹ In an article by AFP "Tough homecoming to war-ravaged South Sudan," <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g3Sr5FAYIUTKO4xK6BBqJ5laodAg>

²⁰ IBID

²¹ Ellen Knickmeyer, "Egyptian Policy Imperils Refugees, Migrants at Israel's Door," Washington Post Foreign Service, Friday, Sept. 12, 2008, A08. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2008/09/11/ST2008091103227.html>

²² <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L882543.htm>

As such, insecurity is major concern in many areas of Southern Sudan. The aftermath of the civil war continues to this day-- a war that resulted in the deaths of 2.5 million people, or one out of every five southern Sudanese, and caused the largest displaced population of any country in the world.²³ While the United Nations has focused significant attention on repatriating people in the south, long-term solutions have yet been found to address such problems as the ongoing presence of government troops and associated militias against the accord, child slavery, extreme poverty, and religious persecution.

High levels of insecurity in most parts of Southern Sudan are not only hampering the return of refugees, but also threatening the delivery of humanitarian aid. According to UNHCR, the deteriorating security situation in several parts of Southern Sudan is a serious obstacle for the repatriation of Southern Sudanese refugees from Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia.²⁴ Such insecurity further validates the need to prevent the forced return of Sudanese refugees in Israel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the preceding, the Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom makes the following recommendations:

1. Humanitarian approach to border control at the Egypt-Israel border

As a signatory of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Egypt has a responsibility to cooperate with the UNHCR to adhere to internationally recognized standards for the economic and social rights of refugees. Egyptian President Mohammad Hosni Mubarak should therefore order his security forces to use restraint in responding to refugees at the border crossing. He should put a stop to the practice of shoot to kill and authorize the use of lethal force only when absolutely necessary in the defense of their lives or the lives of others.

Congress should appeal directly to Egypt through diplomatic mean to ensure humane practices toward immigrant and refugee populations. The potential impact of this measure can be demonstrated by the Congressional letter signed by 34 Congressmen on September 26, 2007 to President Mubarak through Egyptian Ambassador to U.S., Nabil Fahmy (*see Appendix 2*). This letter resulted in a temporary decline in fatal incidents at the Egyptian-Israeli border between the Months of October and November. Such congressional outreach be affective in reasserting international pressure for a sustained humanitarian approach to border control by the Egyptian government.

²³ <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~sail/insudan.htm>

²⁴Insecurity in Southern Sudan affecting refugee returns, 24 Mar 2009 11:40:27 GMT<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/UNHCR/229dd4a99eb92a40edd2a500e6c440b3.htm>

The United Nations should fulfill its obligation to uphold the UN Convention by investigating and monitoring incidents on the Egypt-Israel border and hold Egypt accountable for its border control practices. The United States should also exhibit leadership from within the UN Security Council to make Egypt accountable for complying with the Convention.

2. Objective approach to refugee status assessment at the UNHCR office in Cairo

The United Nations should urge Egypt to allow the UNHCR in Cairo greater freedom to use UN standards on which to objectively assess the refugee status of immigrants, rather than use political claims based on nationality. Immigrants should be interviewed in recognition of their social and political reality as immigrants and refugees, rather than in terms of national policy for the Sudanese in Egypt. Such measures would include the ability to more objectively grant full refugee status to Sudanese refugees who qualify.

In recognition of the continued instability not only in Darfur, but also Southern Sudan, the U.S. resettlement program of recognized Sudanese refugees in Egypt should be reassessed and continued.

3. Temporary political asylum for Sudanese refugees through 2011 Sudan referendum

In adhering to Israel's responsibility under the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, ample evidence collected by various international bodies confirms the political and social reality of all parts of Sudan, and should be taken into account in the refugee assessment process under the Geneva Convention. Those who are rejected should have an opportunity to appeal, undergo due process of application (including rejection and appeal, if applicable), before receiving final order to return to Sudan.

For those who qualify under Article 1 of the UN Convention, we recommend they receive temporary political asylum through the 2011 Sudan Referendum. This is with the hope that the outcome of Referendum will facilitate a smooth transition towards lasting peace, stability, and democracy in Sudan. This guaranteed security of two years in Israel not only ensures safety during continued turmoil in their home country, but also can serve as an investment in Sudan's future sustainable peace and development, if adequate resources are given to job skills training and education during this time.

4. Workforce development and education in preparation for repatriation to Sudan

In order to be self-reliant when they return to their homeland, Sudanese refugees should have the opportunity for training and education while in Israel so they can be

productive and constructive contributors to development, once there is peace and security in Sudan.

5. Services for refugees

Individuals, foundations, government agencies and NGOs engaged in the provision of services to Sudanese refugees should be encouraged to continue to provide support through partnerships with community organizations and universities, for efficient use of resources. The groups should tap into the already existing international interest in supporting Sudan by recognizing and supporting the needs of a sizable diaspora in both Israel and Egypt, who are waiting for the promise of a safe return. The Government of Sudan (Government of National Unity and Government of Southern Sudan) should work hard to provide better basic services and security to the local populations.

6. Accountability for and investment in a democratic Sudan

In order to dissuade emigration to neighboring countries and encourage the return of refugees, the parties signatory to the CPA (Government of Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army) must take serious responsibility to ensure that the peace agreement holds and find a solution to ending the conflict in Darfur.

Through USAID and other aid organizations, the United States and international community should devote more resources to rehabilitation and resettlement of returning refugees. Many repatriated refugees find themselves with no shelter, limited food, and no basic services; thus, word gets out that the situation in Sudan is not secure or safe, and refugees are reluctant to return.

7. Role of the Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom

The SSVF sees its continuing role to serve as a partner to help facilitate communications, unity, and dialogue among the Sudanese refugee population, the NGO community, and governments both locally and abroad to ensure understanding and greater cooperation.

With respect to Sudanese refugees in Israel, SSVF plans a second trip to Israel to report back on progress to the refugees, and embark on a project to provide services to the communities. SSVF has indentified a coordinator and a social worker with more than 10 years of experience working with refugees in the United States to work on the project.

CONCLUSION

With the Knesset expected to pass new legislation that would allow authorities to detain illegal entrants into Israel for up to seven years, coupled with insecurity and an unstable peace process in Sudan, the refugees face an uncertain future.

In his article in the Egyptian weekly newspaper *Al Abram*, Gamal Nkrumah notes that with the continued violence in Darfur, the number of Sudanese fleeing the country will continue to increase.²⁵ As Israel is one the richest countries in the region, it will continue to attract Sudanese refugees, with Egypt remaining the gateway.

Most of the refugees have expressed a willingness to return to Sudan once the situation there stabilizes, but in the meantime their situation in Israel is critical because they do not have status, and many lack employment, emergency medical care, and education for their children. Thus, a collaborative effort by governments, the Israeli NGO community, individual groups and refugee community leaders is needed to meet basic needs, while other better, long-term solutions are sought.

As the future of Sudan still hangs in a delicate balance, we recommend that Sudanese refugees in Israel be issued temporary status and be given opportunities for employment, training, education and medical assistance until such time as they are able to safely return to Sudan and contribute to their home land's development.

Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Voices in Israel

As part of our efforts to learn more about how some refugees are able to cope with life in a new country and under very difficult circumstances, we were introduced to individuals in international development agencies and educational institutions, and other experts who have come to the aid of the refugees. Majier Anyut, president of the Sudanese Refugees in Israel, arranged for our travels to the cities of Eilat, Arad, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as for our meetings with refugees in those cities. Ariel O' Sullivan, spokesperson for ADL in Jerusalem, coordinated meetings for us with the Hebrew Aid Society (HIAS), UNHCR, and *The Jerusalem Post* in Tel Aviv. In Arad and Eilat, the Sudanese community organized a large, general meeting; in Eilat we met in a large hall, and in Arad in a participant's apartment. Interviews were conducted in English and Arabic with the Sudanese, and in English with the Israelis. SSVF president Jimmy Mulla videotaped and transcribed the interviews.

1.1 Anat Ben Dor

Public Interest Law Resource Center, Buchmann Faculty of Law, Tel Aviv University

One of the most in-depth conversations we had was with this attorney, whose comments detail the legal situation of Sudanese refugees in Israel. An edited transcription follows:

The first Sudanese I met was in August 2004, when 11 people were returned to Egypt, which resulted in tragedy. At the beginning of 2005, every Sudanese who entered Israel was put in prison. This was a very serious challenge that we faced for a long time. The government argued that every Sudanese who entered Israel was a potential security risk. Afterwards they were released under limited conditions because they need to be supervised.

In 2005, 1000 refugees came to Israel. Now there are 5,000 refugees and what the government is looking at is the rate of acceleration of entry – the pull effect. Israel is the only western democracy that has an open land border with Africa. Because more and more people are coming per year, Israel is becoming less hospitable. In the past, people spent one year in prison and in the future they may spend more. Forty-eight people were returned in 2007; Egyptian police released some people, but four were sent to Aswan on their way to be deported. What the government is doing now is trying to deter more people from coming. We have had good achievement in bringing people out of prison, but their future is totally in the dark.

New legislation was passed that enables “hot return” (return of asylum-seekers shortly after they cross the border into Israel). The government will keep people in detention simply because they cross the border illegally, and if they come from a hostile country, the penalty is imprisonment up to seven years. Also, if a person is from where some hostile activity is taking place against Israel, the government can keep the person in detention indefinitely. Sudan is an example.

The Israel government understands and acknowledges that the people who have come do not pose any security risks (but)...the last thing the government wants to do is grant them any rights. It's a

common understanding within the government that when you give refugees more rights, more people would be attracted to come.

Legal issues are quite complicated. For Southern Sudanese, the main problem is that although the peace in Sudan is fragile, the war is over. Israel does not accept the Southern Sudanese argument that just by coming to Israel to seek of asylum, they have endangered their lives. The government claims it would then follow that any Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, or Iranian who crosses the border into Israel becomes a refugee and Israel could not return them.

The Darfurians have gotten status. I think this was mainly because of public pressure. I am not sure the government is going to do it anymore, for the simple reason of the pull-effect.

Currently there are no deportations to Egypt. I am not sure that will change any time soon; it will depend on the cooperation of the Egyptian government. We petitioned the high court, challenging the policy of hot return. When we went to court, the government admitted that Egypt does not provide guarantee or assurance of safety of those who may be returned. The government argued that for now, they would not do hot returns, but they want to maintain the power, authority and discretion to do so. Once Israel receives assurances from Egypt, everyone will be returned.

There are a few NGOs that have been persistent about this cause, such as Hotline for Migrant Workers, Physicians for Human Rights, and the Clinic at Tel Aviv University, but they face legal challenges. First of all, judges here are not learned in refugee law, and we do not have a law. Every issue you bring to court, you have to take into consideration that this is probably the first time the judge has seen such an issue; there is not body of precedence. Government comes to the high court with non-legal but policy arguments, such as sovereignty of a nation, where every country needs to protect its borders; asylum seekers pose security risks because they come through smuggling routes used by terror organizations; the pull factor; and refugees are portrayed as migrant workers who want to improve their lives. The prime minister has done this since July 2007, when he said all the asylum seekers are migrant workers. Also, the government argues that Egypt is a country of first asylum, and also signatory to the Geneva Convention.

Legally what we probably could do is demand that everyone has his/her day in the system, everyone would be allowed to apply for asylum, and asylum applications would be examined fairly. People who are rejected could appeal, under the Geneva Convention, and therefore buy some time as due process of application, rejection and appeal, has to take place before refugees can be returned to Sudan.

1.2 Neil Grungras, Hebrew Immigration and Aid Society (HIAS), Tel Aviv

Grungras has worked on developing an Israeli refugee law, and one of the clinics organized by his students participated in raising the issue of detention of refugees upon entry to Israel before the Supreme Court. The Court subsequently ruled against arresting refugees upon entry from “enemy” countries. The ruling has allowed many Sudanese to be released from prison, and those entering the country are no longer detained for long periods of time.

1.3 **Steven Wolfon**, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),
Tel Aviv

Wolfon told us that because their office is small and understaffed, they're only able to screen refugees and grant them a temporary ID that allows them to get employment. Wolfon says he meets regularly with the refugees, but their lack of organization under one "umbrella" group complicates relations between

According to Wolfon, unlike other groups, Darfur refugees are more organized and have a good partnership with the UNHCR. Southern Sudanese refugees, on the other hand, have several groups who come to the UNHCR office and claim to represent the concerns of their community. Subsequently, the UNHCR office has stopped working with some groups, and hopes they will organize and present a body with which the office can work with. According to reports from IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks, a part of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with independent editorial services), the UNHCR has some 686,000 Sudanese under its care, making them one of the largest refugee groups in the world.

1.4 **Yo Yakin**, church pastor (Arad)

I am the pastor of a Messianic church, an international church. Many people from Sudan come to my church. My first goal is to help people in their spiritual life; if people know where they stand before God, they then can cope with the rest of the problems in life more easily. I see the people from Sudan with much strength because they are people who took initiative. They crossed deserts with wives and children under very difficult circumstances, and they must remember that God is with them. God was with them all along the way and he gave them strength. Sudanese now have jobs and it shows they have initiative. It's a blessing that the Sudanese community want to work. Our life belongs to God.

I have heard many stories of kidnapping and other terrible things that break my heart, but I want to remind the people that God is with them. God helped them to come to Israel and He wants to be with them, and they should acknowledge that because they do not know what the future holds for them. Your future is secure in Gods hands. As Christians we want to help and if we cannot help, we will still pray for you.

1.5 **Gama**, Israel national (Arad)

I am from Nasir in north Israel. I go to the Church of Yakin and work with the Church. I pray for the Sudanese and read Scripture to them in their houses. God has called me to share the Scriptures with the refugees and I am happy to see Sudanese in Israel. We have learned to work with Sudanese, because not everyone in Israel can deal with the refugees, but God has chosen me to carry on this work.

1.6 **Ames**, Israeli national aid worker, Mesila Foundation (Tel Aviv)

I work with MESILLA Foundation. We help refugees from Sudan, Eritrea, and Ivory Coast as much as we can. We find jobs, take care of individual problems, like health problems. I am responsible for two major shelters, one for people mostly from Darfur, and the other for people from

Eritrea and Ivory Coast. We have rented apartments for minors and families, and we take care of refugees whenever way we can.

1.7 **Gabriel Kuol Makes**, Member of the South Sudan Refugee's Union in Israel,
Operations Director of ESL Israel

My name is Gabriel Kuol, I was a Sudanese refugee in Egypt-I came almost two and half years in Egypt, and we were there as refugees, but the situation was getting bad for us. We have been killed by Egyptians and our women have been killed by Egyptians and no one has raised their hands to question Egyptians or investigate.

We took a decision to go wherever we find, so we came to Israel, which is a country we have no experience about it and we never learned about Israel in school. The way I came is no easy way, because it's not something that I dream about it. If I were to dream about it before, I would say it's not true, but I did manage.

I came to Israel on July 22, 2007, and I spent 15 days in Eilat. I said to myself, now I am in Israel, I do not want to stay anywhere else except Jerusalem. So I came to Jerusalem where I do not have friends, and I had no connection to the people in Jerusalem. I came to Jerusalem through the church. I told them that I am a Sudanese refugee and I need help, and the help I need is a place to stay. When they realize that the help I need is not financial, but it's something that I really need, they gave me a temporary place to stay for two months, and in two months I made connections with people.

When I came to Jerusalem I had no UN documents, if police find me anywhere they would put me in Jail. So I made a trip first of all to Tel Aviv to get UN papers. At the time it was not allowed in Israel to come to Jerusalem. It was difficult to come to Jerusalem, if you come to Jerusalem without permission, you would be arrested. I just survived that I did not meet with any police. What I was using when I met with people, I know Arabic, but I knew that I had to speak a different language, which is English.

A lot of media came to visit me and they were interested to know how I managed to come to Israel. When Journalist came to me, I present the problems personally, the problems that I had in the country. Telling them we are the victims of the war, we are people who have been fighting for our rights to have freedom. Also I have been telling them we are not the first and we are not the last. People are still suffering in Southern Sudan until now. There is no medical health, the northern Sudan government is taking control everywhere, so no medical supply will come. People die by sickness, disease, which has no treatment. The killing has been going on for almost 21 years during the civil war and we are expecting more deaths, not just two million. We do not know how many people drowned in the river Nile, we do not know how many people die of thirst, and the number of two million deaths is not true.

When I go out to talk to people, I use my experience to educate the people here in Israel, so that they can become part of the solution. The first people that I met are people who have been trying to listen to me, and after they listen to me, they call the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, saying we know someone who has come from a bad place, and he wants to speak to you, because I was requesting a chance to speak to members of the Knesset. So they have been asking for permission

and the members of the Knesset were interested, because when Sudanese came to Israel, they did not want to deal with the situation. So when I came to Jerusalem, I was the one that was close to them, so they called me and we would like you to come over, to tell us how you came, and why you came to Israel, and why people from South Sudan come to Israel.

When I spoke to members of the Knesset almost 85 members were present the first time, and after words some people came to me and shake my hands and said, we love you for being part of the solution and we want you to stay here.

Since I have been talking to members of the parliament, I have not seen any changes. I have also spoken to schools, and I am good friends with the president of students union in Jerusalem University. I spoke to students at Hebrew University for the first time there were 300 students. When I talk to people and give them my time, they became concerned and they say we have to help the Sudanese refugees no matter what the government says. So a lot of pressure has been put on the Israeli government, not to send Sudanese back home.

On Darfur, something is going on which is genocide. The same thing happened in South Sudan, people have to know that even worse things happened in the South. If there are human rights organizations, they should have to know that the same situation in Darfur is the same situation in South Sudan. I have been raising my hand that I have to talk about South Sudan. If the Israel government will send me back to Sudan and if Sudan will kill me, I have to take it that its not me, its something that has been going on for years, so I don't have to worry. Some people have been asking me, why do you allow media to take your pictures, why do you have to build a website?—People will know you and you will be a target, but I say to them I have no worry about it, because it's not only me.

Southern Sudanese are not called Southern Sudanese, but African immigrant workers. The very important thing that we speak to the Israeli government, is something that we are sure of, and is something that we are witness to. When we came here to Israel, we tell them we are refugees, no matter from Darfur or from South Sudan, we face same difficulties, and we faced the same destruction being made by the Sudan government. For us even if Israeli government will not recognize us as refugees, we love to be here, because we feel safe here. When we tell people our story they cry, they crush our hands and they say their grand parents have been through similar difficulties in Arab countries. So now we love you and we will care for you, and when we hear that we know we have friends.

1.8 **Asunta Gogrial, Awiel (Eilat)**

The situation in Egypt was getting very difficult for us. We did not have enough money so I traveled alone leaving my husband behind. I came here with my four months old baby because we did not have enough money. My husband followed me after we arrived. Everything is good here, but what is missing is education. We need education for our children and ourselves. We thank God for what He has done in our lives. We are not sick and we do not face difficulties like we face in Egypt and Sudan.

1.9 **Isa Abdubakr Adam**, Southern Darfur (Tel Aviv)

The problem of Sudan is well known. We have come to Israel because we faced many difficulties in Sudan. We were not able to move from one place to another. We could not find employment and our houses were burned. I first went to Libya, and then I came to Israel. The people in Israel have welcomed us. I hope I will have the chance for education, so I can go back and develop the people.

1.10 **Martin** , Sudanese community church leader (Arad)

Thank God that you were able to visit us from very far place. I lived in Egypt for seven years and have seen many things.

It's written in the Bible that people from Kush (Biblical name for Sudan) would come to Israel, and now we have come. When we decide to come to Israel through the desert, it's like signing a death sentence. I thought my wife was dead, we cannot believe that we have come to the Holy Land. Jewish people faced a similar situation in Egypt. They were mistreated by the Egyptians, and they crossed the same desert that we have crossed. We have walked the same path.

1.11 **Samuel Pringe**, Dinka tribe, Yirol (Arad)

I took the bus from Cairo to Arish (Egyptian/Israel border town), and walked on foot in the desert for three days to get to the border. When I got here, I went to UNHCR to discuss my case, but was told by the UNHCR official ("Sharon"), that Sudanese come to Israel because they need money. I told her we are refugees. Sharon says Southern Sudanese are not refugees, but Darfurians are refugees. She won't accept that Southern Sudanese are refugees.

1.12 **Yach Chagor**, Sudanese refugee (Eilat)

I came from Egypt to Israel in 2006. We crossed the border at night. It was hard crossing the border at night, but I thought if I die, it's the same as being killed in Egypt at Mostafa Mahomud. Four of us crossed the border and after crossing we started running and when the Egyptian police saw us they shot at us. The same night after crossing the border, I was put in jail and I spent 13 months in jail in Israel.

After being released from prison, now I work in a hotel in Eilat. My life here is not like I am a human being, and I see myself as the lost boy with no future. Nobody cares after us in Israel; they want us to work and work, but I am still young and I want to go to school. I left Egypt because life was not getting better, my life was not improving in Egypt, and life was dead.

1.13 **A father**, Bahr El Gazal (Arad)

The life in Israel is more or less the same as in Egypt, but difference is that we are treated like human beings here. The only problem is we do not have for tomorrow; there is no future for us or for our kids. We want to build a future for Southern Sudan or the whole of Sudan because we do not want them to suffer the way we suffered. The way we crossed from border of Egypt to border Israel is a matter of life and death. Like my wife came first; I came after my wife, because I didn't

manage to cross. As we were crossing the border, my wife crossed and I ran on the other side. The Egyptian police put me in jail for almost one week and then I managed to pay them some money to let me go.

Then I came to Israel and met my wife and nobody believed. Some people do not meet with their people and families. My wife came on the 8th and I came on the 19th, and arrived in Arad on the 22nd. I met with my wife in the mall and nobody believed it. When my son saw me, he gave me a hug that I will never forget; he was crying because he thought that I was not there anymore.



Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2007

President Hosni Mubarak
c/o Ambassador Nabil Fahmy
Embassy
The Arab Republic of Egypt
3521 International Court, NW
Washington DC 20008

Dear President Mubarak:

We are writing out of deep concern over recent reports that several Sudanese refugees have been shot by Egyptian border crossing guards.

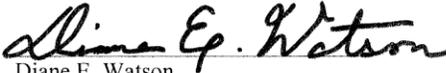
While we understand Egypt's desire to control its borders, we find it unacceptable to open fire against refugees as a means of controlling immigrant and refugee population flows. General sentiment in Egypt against the Sudanese refugee community was dramatically illustrated in December 2005 when Egyptian police cleared a Sudanese refugee camp in Cairo with water cannons and heavy batons, resulting in the deaths of over 20 people, including women and children. These new reports we have received about violence against Sudanese refugees at Egypt's borders compound our concerns about the treatment of refugees in Egypt more generally.

We respectfully request that you look into this matter and share with us how you plan to address these grievances. We are aware of the great pressure on the region to absorb large refugee populations, and hope that Egypt will lead other countries with an example of humane, respectful practices toward immigrant and refugee populations.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Frank Wolf
Member of Congress


Diane E. Watson
Member of Congress

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Appendix 3:
About the Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom

Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom (SSVF) was established and incorporated in Washington, D.C. as a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing a stronger U.S. policy of engagement to achieve sustainable peace and democratic transformation in Sudan. SSVF has continued to play a key role in heightening awareness in the U.S. and internationally about Sudan's problems, including war, displacement, rape, religious persecution, human rights abuses, slavery, starvation, and political ostracism.

SSVF was instrumental in the passage of the U.S. Sudan Peace Act and in the appointment of a U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, which re-energized the civil war peace talks leading to the North-South Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2005. We were at the forefront of heightening awareness about Genocide in Darfur, and launched an aggressive and successful divestment campaign.

SSVF participates in a wide range of educational, public information and advocacy activities, such as U.S. Congressional and State Department meetings, regional seminars, and international peace forums on diverse issues, including the rights of Middle Eastern Americans and North Korean refugees.

We consider our accomplishments on this trip to include meeting with refugees in Tel Aviv, Eilat, Arad and Jerusalem, and having the opportunity to learn about their current situation, urging them to organize to ensure better working relationship with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and connecting them with appropriate Israeli NGOs. We participated in interviews with both U.S. and Israeli media, including three stories about our visit published by *The Jerusalem Post*, the world's top English-language daily newspaper covering Israel, the Middle East and the Jewish World.²⁶

It is our hope that our visit gave the refugees we met with a sense of hope and helped lift their spirits, and that the rapport we built with our now established contacts will allow us to continue to work on their behalf. Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom sees its continuing role as one of serving as consultants to help facilitate communications, unity, and dialogue among the Sudanese refugee population, the NGO community, and governments both locally and abroad to ensure understanding and greater cooperation; and with respect to