

# U.S. State Department targets Sudan

by Joseph Brewda

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen gave an address before a conference sponsored by the Sudanese embassy in Washington on June 6, where he outlined Bush administration policy toward that nation. Cohen, who handles African affairs, condemned the Sudanese government for "bureaucratically" interfering with international relief efforts to aid victims of famine and refugees in Sudan, by demanding that planes flying into the country providing aid submit to Customs inspection in the capital of Khartoum. The planes should be free to go where they want, without interference, he demanded.

Following the collapse of the Mengistu regime in neighboring Ethiopia in May, over 150,000 refugees have fled to Sudan. On June 4, the Sudanese government issued an urgent appeal for immediate international relief for these refugees, whose presence compounds the problems the country faces as a result of a drought and increasing famine conditions.

The idea of using the mass migration of refugees and food shortages as a weapon against national sovereignty in the former colonial sector is an old one. It was an important theme of the "1980s Project" papers of the New York Council of Foreign Relations written in the 1970s, and a more recent conference of the powerful Ditchley Foundation of Britain. Last spring, the U.N. Security Council adopted a French resolution mandating armed trespass onto Iraqi territory under the pretext of aiding the Iraqi Kurds. From a legal standpoint, such actions are an act of war. Sudan is a top U.S. target because its government opposed the U.S. military intervention against Iraq.

## Sudan calls for action

On June 4, Sudanese Deputy Prime Minister Gen. Zubeir Mohed Salih issued an emergency appeal on the condition of Ethiopian refugees then entering Sudan at the rate of 20,000 a day following the collapse of the Ethiopian regime. "The flow of refugees started on May 26 with a few thousands," Salih stated. "On May 27, the number reached 13,000. The rate has continued to grow until it has reached 20,000 daily. On May 30, the total number of refugees present exceeded 100,000 with their families.

"Those refugees are in a grave state of suffering. At the moment, they lack proper shelter, and therefore live in open space. Cases of acute malnutrition number 13-15,000. A similar number suffer from acute dehydration. Patients re-

quiring surgical treatment number 11,000, of whom 1,000 are in need of emergency surgery. . . . The mortality rate now stands at 24 deaths per day, and it is on the increase every day."

The appeal reported that the current situation has surpassed Sudan's capability to provide adequate assistance; Khartoum is already hosting over 1 million refugees from neighboring states. "Due responsibility is, therefore, squarely placed on the international community to participate in the efforts of the Sudanese government to resolve this human tragedy," the appeal concluded, and called for international action to provide food, shelter, medicine, and the like.

## The U.S. responds

Former Carter administration official Larry Minear elaborated on Cohen's demands that Sudan surrender its right to maintain Customs inspection in order to receive aid, in remarks that he made before the Sudanese embassy conference. "These days," he said, "humanitarian issues are taking a higher position than sovereignty." Minear praised the recent relief operations, so-called, in northern Iraq, as an example of what had to be done to Sudan. A bill dubbed the "Horn of Africa bill," now being discussed in the U.S. Congress, would cut all aid to Sudan and other states in the region, and provide aid "directly to the people" without the permission or even the knowledge of the governments of the states concerned.

On June 11, Scott Spangler, assistant administrator for Africa of the U.S. Agency for International Development, told a special press briefing on the refugee situation in the region that the U.S. would provide no aid to the new refugee influx into Sudan unless asked by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva, who has yet to make any such request. Directly attacking the Sudanese government, he claimed, "There never has been a famine where there is a democratically elected government, democratic press, and a free market system."

Spangler added that if aid is delivered, it will be air-dropped into the Sudanese city of Nasir, which is not even in the Kassala border region where the refugees now live. Nasir is a town held by John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army. The SPLA, like the Kurdish rebels of northern Iraq, is covertly directed by the U.S. State Department and CIA.

Naturally, such an air-drop would also provide weapons, just as U.S. relief efforts among the Iraqi Kurds do. One of the major concerns of the Bush administration is that the collapse of the Mengistu regime of Ethiopia, which had been Garang's base of operations, has driven the group into Kenya. "Humanitarian assistance" by the United States is intended to provide food and weapons to these rebel forces, who are now cut off from their former supply lines. Otherwise, U.S. policy is to let the refugees and stricken people of Sudan starve, and blame the result on the Sudanese government.