

# Day of prayer for Sudan

## Sudan

is roughly the size of Western Europe and is the largest country in Africa. The western border of Darfur is actually nearer the Atlantic Ocean than Sudan's own Red Sea coastline. The country has a wide variety of geographical features from deserts to mountains, and great differences in vegetation. The population of almost 40 million people is divided along several fault lines. There is a famous saying in Sudan "If you are not confused, you don't understand the situation". This reality comes out of the complexities of this huge country, with its many disparate population groups (over 200 tribal groups) and often violent political scene. In rural areas, there can be conflicts of interest between pastoralists with their herds and settled farmers with their crops. There is conflict between those who view themselves as Africans and those who look towards the Arab world. There is a clear division between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially the large Christian minority but also followers of Traditional African Beliefs. Even in Muslim political circles there are divisions between moderate groups and those who seek an even harder line Islamist policy.

Sudan was ruled by Britain for some 60 years until it gained its independence in 1956. Unfortunately much of the next 52 years has seen civil war and savage conflicts. These have wrecked large areas of the country as well as killing and displacing millions. There are still large areas of the country where infrastructure is non-existent, and large refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda and elsewhere.

*Sunday 21 June 2009*

## History

It is estimated that 21 years of conflict caused over two million deaths and displaced over four million people. The South was wrecked by the violence which included indiscriminate bombing of villages, massacres and raids. However neither side was able to force a victory and war weariness and international pressure eventually led to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) at the beginning of 2005. Under this the South has received some recognition of autonomy, under the Government of South Sudan (GoSS). After six years this will be followed by a referendum in 2011 on whether the South wants to remain part of Sudan or become an independent country. Khartoum government military were to withdraw from the South, and separate armed forces established for both North and South. Oil wealth was supposedly divided 50/50. Shari'a theoretically lost its jurisdiction over non-Muslims everywhere in the country.

## CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement)

Serious question marks remain about the CPA.

Certain issues such as boundaries remain unresolved and boundary commissions have made little progress.

There is little effective machinery to make the Khartoum government respect its responsibilities. There is concern over the performance of some international peacekeepers, especially those from countries such as Egypt which are very close to the Khartoum government. President Bashir has restricted UNAMID peacekeeping deployment into Darfur to the point of failure and threatened that any international sanctions would have an adverse effect on the CPA. The new GoSS has struggled to obtain the resources it needs and the management skills required to run an area larger than England and Wales. Many of the leaders are former SPLA commanders, guerrillas who have no experience in governance and administration. Schools are a good example; the GoSS is supposed to pay teachers' salaries yet in many places either does not have the resources or will not take on the responsibility.



**Referendum** Whatever the outcome of the referendum on independence, huge questions remain over boundaries and division of oil revenues etc. Christians in the North will be a smaller percentage minority living in a different country to their brethren in the South. Churches will need skill in maintaining a One Church/Two States structure, which is what the leadership prefer mainly. **Pray** for wisdom and calm, forgiveness and repentance for the past, and strength to take tough decisions as the Southerners have a major decision to take in the referendum. **Pray** for the needs to rebuild the South, shattered by 20+ years of oppression.

## Prayer

Sudan is sliding down the international attention scale as Zimbabwe, DRC and other places hold the headlines. Human rights violations continue along with violence in Darfur, Abeyei, Nuba Mountains, East and across the country generally. Elections scheduled for middle of 2009 and referendum in South in 2011. Elections in 2009 will be a test. Scope for a huge disaster, war in any of numerous areas, which would put Sudan back in the headlines. Pray that issues are addressed in advance and not allowed to reach disaster before international attention is paid.

**Pray** that national elections scheduled for 2009 should be free and fair and take place as planned. Some questions about the census and how free and fair they may be. Major issue for elections is the numbers of IDPs living in different parts of the country and where do they vote? Resources and practical competence required for elections. Preparation needed for possible outcomes, transition.

**Pray** particularly for those countries with a strong focus on Sudan; USA, UK, Norway. That governments may stay engaged with the peace and justice process, and also committed to development especially in the South.

**Pray** for a mobilisation of public awareness and education on issues related to all of Sudan.

**Pray** for advocacy initiatives with our own government, international bodies and Sudanese authorities.

**Pray** for the CPA and its very clear datelines and conditions. Pray against those who would seek to derail the process. Some factions in the North/Khartoum government are hostile to the CPA.

**Pray** for the Khartoum government and politicians of influence. There are rumours of a possible coup d'état. Pray for a change of heart and of policies towards minorities.

**Pray** for protection from violence.

**Pray** Pray for IDPs and refugees