



**ARROGANT,
MISLEADING
AND
PREJUDICED:
CHRISTIAN AID
ON SUDAN**

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WORKING FOR PEACE IN SUDAN

ARROGANT, MISLEADING AND PREJUDICED: CHRISTIAN AID ON SUDAN

On 15 March 2001 Christian Aid, a British non-governmental organisation, published a report entitled **The Scorched Earth: Oil and War in Sudan**. Civil war has raged in Sudan off and on since 1955, and has been fought between the Sudanese government and rebels in southern Sudan. Since 1983 the principal southern combatant has been the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).¹ In 1999 Sudan began to export oil from oil fields in south-central and southern Sudan. This Christian Aid report called for the "immediate suspension" of oil operations in Sudan. The publication alleged that:

Wide stretches of southern Sudan are being subjected to a ruthless 'scorched earth' policy to clear the way for oil exploration and to create a cordon sanitaire around the oilfields. As new areas of exploration open up, and oil companies facilitate troop movements by building roads across swampland and bridges across rivers, the war expands and the scorched earth advances.²

Christian Aid specifically mentioned forced oil development "displacement" in areas south-east of Bentiu, east of Bentiu and north of Bentiu.³ It also refers to "depopulation" and forced oil company "displacement" at the Heglig oil field.⁴

There are several concerns about Christian Aid's report. Firstly, Christian Aid's claims appear to have been based, at least in part, upon faulty or partisan material, with at least one of their central sources being a noted Islamophobe with a track record of gross exaggeration. Secondly, Christian Aid may have been unduly influenced by its partnership with pro-rebel groups. Thirdly, the image of a predominantly white, European Christian group dictating to the poverty-stricken largely Muslim Sudanese people what they may or may not do with their natural resources is unfortunate.⁵ Fourthly, it is evident that Christian Aid's position on Sudan is out of step with much of the international community and particularly the developing world. Fifthly, Christian Aid would appear to be guilty of double standards in attacking the Sudanese oil industry while remaining silent on the oil industries in other countries of concern. And lastly, it can be argued that in its projection of questionable and partisan claims about Sudan Christian Aid perpetuates the distorted imagery of Sudan which in turn merely serves to prolong the conflict itself.

Christian Aid Claims Assessed Against Independent Sources

A careful assessment of such serious allegations is vital. Allegations identical to those carried in the Christian Aid report were made by the American anti-Sudanese activist Dr Eric Reeves in February 2001.⁶ The World Food Programme was directly asked to comment on these allegations of displacement around Bentiu: it was unable to draw a conclusion:

At this point in time, however, there is unfortunately far too little information available.

The above official statement in February 2001 fundamentally undermines the entire gist of the Christian Aid report. What the World Food Programme has said, therefore, is that despite having been involved in the oil fields for some considerable time and in considerable force there is "far too little information available" to assess whether "oil interests in this area have exacerbated the uprooting of people from their homes". Indeed,

¹ The SPLA is sometimes also referred to as the SPLM/A, a reference to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

² **The Scorched Earth: Oil and War in Sudan**, Christian Aid, London, 2001, p.6.

³ **The Scorched Earth: Oil and War in Sudan**, Christian Aid, London, 2001, p.6.

⁴ **The Scorched Earth: Oil and War in Sudan**, Christian Aid, London, 2001, p.10

⁵ Seventy percent of the Sudanese population is Muslim, animist religions are followed by 25 percent and Christians account for five percent of the population - see the Dutch Foreign Ministry website on <http://www.minbuza.nl>. The 1994-95 Economist Intelligence Unit country profile of Sudan states that Christians made up 15 percent of the southern population. This figure is also cited in Human Rights Watch Africa's 1996 report on Sudan **Behind the Red Line: Political Repression in Sudan**, Human Rights Watch/Africa, New York, 1996, p.193.

⁶ Eric Reeves, 'Ferocious New Civilian Destruction and Displacement', Freedom Now World News, 12 February 2001 at 15:46:10 -0800 (PST)

as a subsequent Reuters article stated, the World Food Programme “stopped short of laying the blame at one party’s door”.⁷ It should be noted that the World Food Program has a total of 300 staff working in the Southern Sector operation. At any one time they have over 120 staff in the field in southern Sudan “assessing needs and organizing airdrops and food distributions”.⁸ Indeed, Christian Aid cited the World Food Programme in its report - albeit choosing not to use the above comment. On the basis of one quick visit to rebel-controlled areas of southern Sudan, and heavily influenced by questionable sources and its rebel-controlled local partners, Christian Aid would appear to believe that it is better placed than groups such as the World Food Programme to know what is happening on the ground. Given the above statement by the WFP, Christian Aid’s stance is somewhat arrogant.

There are additional independent sources against which to assess Christian Aid’s claims. Christian Aid stated that there had been large-scale oil development displacement at Heglig dating back to 1998. Western journalists who visited the Heglig oil field found no such displacement.⁹ Claudia Cattaneo, of **The Financial Post**, a Canadian newspaper, reported:

[A]t Heglig, the site of Talisman’s oil major oilfields and processing facilities, there is no evidence of population displacement. Military presence is low key. Children are playing and going to school near the oil wells. Western and Sudanese workers say thousands of nomads are coming here to look for work, for medical assistance...or for education.¹⁰

Additionally, at the heart of the claims made by Christian Aid is the assertion that Sudan’s military budget has more than doubled as a result of oil revenues.¹¹ This is simply untrue. In early March 2001 the British government replied to a question asking whether they had “any evidence that Sudanese oil revenues are being spent on arms procurement”. The government’s answer was: “There is evidence to suggest that military expenditure has remained stable.”¹² The most recent International Monetary Fund report confirms it. The IMF watches Sudan’s oil revenues closely, stating that: “All government agencies involved in the energy sector...are subject to monitoring by the independent Auditing Department.”¹³ Christian Aid’s inaccurate claims of massive, oil revenue-based, military spending are also contradicted by authoritative reports by groups such as the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). Perhaps the single most useful weapon in any insurgency, such as that in Sudan, is the helicopter gunship. The Institute’s 1997/98 **Military Balance** lists Sudan as having nine such helicopter gunships: the 1999/2000 **Military Balance** lists the same nine gunships. Christian Aid’s inaccurate assertions are all the more surprising given that it referred to both the abovementioned IMF report and the 1999/2000 **Military Balance**.

It would appear, therefore, that Christian Aid may have presented a questionable picture of events within the Sudanese oil fields. It is a picture which downplays the fact that there is an ongoing civil war in Sudan in which the SPLA is an active participant. That war has intensified in some parts of southern Sudan, including those that fall within the oil producing areas, because one side to the conflict, the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army has chosen to target these oil fields (as can be gathered from Associated Press articles such as ‘Sudanese Rebels Plan to Intensify War Around Oil Fields’¹⁴). Unsurprisingly, the Sudanese government has defended these areas as it would presumably have defended any areas of strategic importance. Intense fighting has ensued. There has been considerable displacement within the war zones: Sudanese civilians in these areas have done what civilians have done in every war - they have left areas in which fighting is taking place.

Christian Aid’s Sources: Questionable, Partisan or Anonymous

⁷ Letter from World Food Program, to Reuters, 23 February 2001; ‘Thousands More Flee Sudan’s Oil-Rich War Zone - WFP’, News Article by Reuters on 23 February 2001 at 12:57:32 EST.

⁸ World Food Program Website, http://www.wfp.org/newsroom/sudan/OLDSudan_news.htm.

⁹ It should be noted that the Canadian media has been forthright in their critical reporting on Canadian involvement within the Sudanese oil project. .

¹⁰ ‘Analysts Upbeat About Talisman’s Sudan Role’, **The Financial Post**, Toronto, 17 November 1999.

¹¹ **The Scorched Earth: Oil and War in Sudan**, Christian Aid, London, 2001, p.18.

¹² House of Lords **Hansard**, Written Parliamentary Answers, 5 March 2001, column WA10.

¹³ See, **Sudan: Staff Report for the 2000 Article IV Consultation and Fourth Review of the First Annual Program Under the Medium-Term Staff-Monitored Program**, IMF Staff Country Report No.00/70, International Monetary Fund, June 2000.

¹⁴ ‘Sudanese Rebels Plan to Intensify War Around Oil Fields’, News Article by Associated Press on 6 June 2000.

While in the course of its report Christian Aid pointedly asks about “sources of information” backing statements made by oil companies, Christian Aid’s report is itself based overwhelmingly on unnamed, anonymous “sources”. Where it does name its “sources”, they would appear to be questionable. Christian Aid repeatedly cites its local partner, the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), in this publication. It should be pointed out that the New Sudan Council of Churches was formed in February 1990 from several churches in southern Sudan and exists within areas of southern Sudan controlled by the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Army. The extent of the NSCC’s independence from the SPLA is very questionable. As the respected human rights organisation, African Rights, has pointed out: “The NSCC could not have been created without the support of John Garang”. African Rights further quoted “a leading churchman” as stating that: “The Movement was behind the formation of the NSCC.” Garang himself, in addressing the NSCC General Assembly in Torit in 1992, stated that he saw the NSCC as the “spiritual wing of the Movement”.¹⁵ Given its close ties to the SPLA, for international observers such as Christian Aid to unreservedly accept NSCC perspectives on Sudan shows a remarkable naivety. At best the NSCC serves as an apologist for the SPLA, and at worst a propagandist.

One of the other sources named by Christian Aid is Derek Hammond, said to be involved with the South African-based International Relief and Development Agency. Hammond has previously headed the ‘Faith-in-Action’ organisation, and can only be described as a Christian fundamentalist Islamophobe. His website has overtly championed the “Christian” fight against “the evil of Islam”. His website has also referred to the “anti-Christian religion of Islam.”¹⁶ Hammond’s previous exaggerations have been obvious. He has claimed, for example, that “Christians make up...over 80% of Southern Sudan.” (This figure should be compared with the figures of 10-15 percent carried in official American government studies, Economist Intelligence Unit briefings or Human Rights Watch material). It is disturbing that Christian Aid chooses to rely upon noted Islamophobes as “sources”. Another of the other named “sources” is the United States Committee for Refugees. This group is headed by Roger Winter, an active supporter of the SPLA. Winter, for example, has openly admitted that with regard to Sudan he was “not neutral in this situation”, and that he “promotes” the “demise” of the Sudanese government.¹⁷

It would appear that the question posed by Christian Aid about “sources of information” could also be asked of Christian Aid itself. The unreserved acceptance of claims made by Islamophobes, pro-rebel groups and other anti-Sudanese activists, plus the use of anonymous sources, seriously undermines the credibility of the report.

What Sustains the Sudanese Conflict?

Christian Aid distorts the reality of the Sudanese conflict by claiming that the war will continue merely because of the presence of oil, and therefore the government and those companies involved in the Sudanese oil industry are to blame for the continuing conflict. While conveniently propagandistic, this stance is utterly naïve. A much clearer picture of the dynamics of the conflict is provided by former American President Jimmy Carter. Carter has been very candid about who is perpetuating the war:

The people in Sudan want to resolve the conflict. The biggest obstacle is US government policy. The US is committed to overthrowing the government in Khartoum. Any sort of peace effort is aborted, basically by policies of the United States...Instead of working for peace in Sudan, the US government has basically promoted a continuation of the war.¹⁸

Former President Carter is an active Christian respected the world over for his work towards peace in various conflicts. He is also a man who knows Sudan, and the Sudanese situation well, having followed the issue for two decades or more. He was also speaking well after the inception of the Sudanese oil project. The pivotal

¹⁵ **Great Expectations: The Civil Roles of the Churches in Southern Sudan**, Discussion Paper No.6, African Rights, London, 1995, p.29.

¹⁶ ‘African Christian Faith in Action’, http://www.liaafrica.org/sudan_articles/persecuted_church_of_sudan.htm (This website may have been amended to remove overtly anti-Islamic material. ESPAC maintains copies of all of these material cited.

¹⁷ Winter also refers to SPLA rebel-controlled areas as “liberated areas”. He was speaking at the ‘Meeting on Religion, Nationalism and Peace in Sudan’, United States Institute of Peace, Washington-DC, 17 September 1997.

¹⁸ ‘Carter, Others Say US Has Faltered in Africa’, **The Boston Globe**, 8 December 1999.

role played by the United States' in the continuation of the Sudanese war is not mentioned anywhere in Christian Aid's material on Sudan. This is either the result of very poor research or a selective reading of events in Sudan. This omission further detracts from Christian Aid's credibility as a commentator on Sudan.

Rather than seeking to deny the poverty-stricken people of Sudan the right to exploit their own natural resources in any attempt to address their predicament, Christian Aid should be focusing on the bigger picture - the American military and political involvement which sustains the conflict and encourages one side, the SPLA, to continue the war.

Christian Aid: Out of Step with the International Community on Sudan

Christian Aid is clearly out of step with the international community, and especially the developing world, with regard to Sudan. This is at least in part because of the reactionary nature of its stance on the country and its natural resources. The Canadian government attempted to introduce a resolution containing precisely the sort of sanctions called for in Christian Aid's report while Canada was chairman of the United Nations Security Council in 2000. The Canadian government had to drop this idea in the face of considerable opposition from the international community. The Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, Robert Fowler, admitted that:

The representations we received suggested that the timing was not right, that there were important peace initiatives under way both from Libya and Egypt. The Arab League and the OAU (Organization of African Unity), as well as the nonaligned movement, suggested to us that council engagement on this issue at this time would not be productive.¹⁹

It should be noted that the Non-Aligned Movement is made up of 113 nations. The fact that the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organisation of African Unity and Arab League as well as the vital regional IGAD nations pointedly opposed the very sanctions called for by Christian Aid shows how out of step Christian Aid is on Sudan in much of the world, and particularly within the developing world. From having been mired in regional conflicts, Sudan has over the past three years emerged as a leader of its region, culminating in Sudan's current presidency of the seven nation eastern and central African IGAD body. Sudan has also been elected president of the sixteen-strong Community of Sahel-Saharan States. In seeking to deny Sudan its oil project, Christian Aid would also as a result deny the region the knock-on effects of the Sudanese oil boom.

Indeed far from seeking to impose any new sanctions on Sudan, the Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity, Salim Ahmed Salim, has called for the lifting of the vestigial limited diplomatic sanctions remaining on Sudan: "The lifting of sanctions imposed on Sudan is not only urgently called for, but would also positively contribute to efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in the region."²⁰ The European Union has been engaged in a political dialogue with Sudan for two years and has commented on the positive signs it has seen.

It is self-evident that the international community, with the exception of the United States, feels that there have been significant changes within Sudan. These changes have included a Constitution safeguarding civil liberties and human rights, legislation entrenching multi-party politics - and the return to Sudan of all major political opposition parties because of these changes - the offering of a referendum whereby the people of southern Sudan can choose their own political destiny and the holding of multi-party parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2000.

Christian Aid and Sudan: Keeping Sudan Poor?

Part of the reason why Christian Aid is out of step with the developing world with regard to Sudan is obvious. The image of well-fed, middle-class Christians in London telling a poverty-stricken Muslim African nation that it cannot exploit its natural resources does not go down well in the Third World. It is also a hypocritical position for Christian Aid to take in any instance given that it states it:

¹⁹ 'Canada Drops Bid to Discuss Sudan in U.N. Council', News Article by Reuters on 5 April 2000 at 00:36:08 EST.

²⁰ 'OAU Urges Security Council to Lift Sudan Sanctions', News Article by Reuters on 20 June 2000.

[B]elieves in strengthening people to find their own solutions to the problems they face. It strives for a new world transformed by an end to poverty and campaigns to change the rules that keep people poor.²¹

This does not appear to apply to the people of Sudan, amongst the world's most impoverished. Christian Aid apparently wishes to deny the Sudanese people, north and south, the means whereby to escape the crippling poverty they exist in. It is apparently Christian Aid that wishes to tighten the "rules that keep people poor" - at least as far as the largely Islamic country of Sudan is concerned.

Christian Aid, Oil Revenues and Selectivity

Yet more double standards are obvious. Christian Aid states that it is active in both Sudan and Angola. Both Sudan and Angola are stricken by long-running civil wars. Both have an oil industry. Angola's is a long-standing business, and Sudan's has only just begun. While Christian Aid has launched a ferocious campaign against the oil industry's involvement in Sudan, and the alleged effect that oil revenues have had in exacerbating the Sudanese civil war, it has shown no such concern about the Angolan oil revenues which do clearly fund the ongoing devastating Angolan civil war.

It is also a matter of record that while the international community has not seen any evidence that Sudanese oil revenues are being used to continue the Sudanese civil war, there is abundant evidence that Angolan oil revenues are directly funding the Angolan conflict. In March 2000, the British Government, for example, in reply to a Parliamentary question about whether the Sudanese Government had used oil revenues to purchase weapons, publicly stated that they did not "have any evidence of such expenditure at present".²² In the same month, in responding to a similar question about whether the Angolan Government was using oil revenues to acquire weapons, the British Government stated: "There is no doubt that oil revenues are used to fund the purchase of arms".²³ The Angolan Government receives at least \$10 million per day in oil revenues (Christian claims that Sudan receives \$1 million per day in oil revenues) The Bishop of Luanda, Damiao Franklin, has openly stated "Much of Angola's wealth goes on weapons."²⁴

Christian Aid appears to be deliberately selective as to which oil revenues fuel which conflict. While active in Angola Christian Aid has never so much as mentioned the fact that Angolan oil revenues demonstrably perpetuate that conflict - let alone take a stand on the issue: all Christian Aid states is "Huge oil revenues and valuable mineral deposits, especially diamonds, could contribute significantly to the economy."²⁵ It would appear to turn a blind eye to the Angolan oil industry and those American oil companies involved in it. Surely Christian Aid wishes to see an end to the misery and suffering within the Angolan conflict: surely by its own argument, as used with regard to Sudanese oil revenues, it should be campaigning to end international involvement in the Angolan oil industry. One of the conclusions that might be drawn is that Christian Aid's selective interest in the Sudanese oil industry may be because Sudan is a Muslim country, and Angola is not. Or, alternatively, perhaps Christian Aid is politically supportive of the Angolan government and thus turns a blind eye to oil revenues directly perpetuating war, deaths, misery and sickness. Why does Christian Aid believe that the Angolan government is entitled to spend its oil revenues defending itself against insurgents while denying the Sudanese government the right to defend itself against American-supported destabilisation? All in all, Christian Aid betrays its stated commitment to justice, peace and human rights for all.

Given that it is an overtly Christian organisation, Christian Aid would have been better advised not to position itself in ways which leave it open to the claim that it has deliberately targeted the oil industry in a Muslim country (without providing evidence that this revenue is being used for arms procurement) while ignoring an industry that produces ten times as much revenue in Angola which is not a Muslim country (and which revenue is clearly being used to wage war).

²¹ 'About Christian Aid', Christian Aid website at <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/aboutca/index/htm>.

²² House of Lords **Official Record**, Written Answer, 22 March 2000, column WA28.

²³ House of Lords **Official Record**, Written Answer, 16 March 2000, column WA230.

²⁴ 'Angola: War without End', News Article by BBC on 5 May 2000 at 01:49 GMT 02:49 UK.

²⁵ 'World', Country Information - Angola', on Christian Aid website at <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/world/where/safrica/angolaci.htm>

Christian Aid: Why Images of Smiling War Criminals?

Christian Aid has chosen to prominently feature pictures of smiling SPLA gunmen on both its home page and in the report itself. The picture is entitled “An officer of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army with his troops”.²⁶ Quite why Christian Aid should choose to do so is surprising given the SPLA’s image. The **New York Times**, a vigorous critic of the Sudanese government, states that the SPLA: “[H]ave behaved like an occupying army, killing, raping and pillaging.” It also described the SPLA leader John Garang as one of Sudan’s “pre-eminent war criminals”.²⁷ The United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Sudan has documented one particular incident in which SPLA forces attacked two villages in the Ganyiel region in southern Sudan. SPLA personnel killed 210 villagers, of whom 30 were men, 53 were women and 127 were children. The Special Rapporteur stated that:

Eyewitnesses reported that some of the victims, mostly women, children and the elderly, were caught while trying to escape and killed with spears and pangas. M.N., a member of the World Food Programme relief committee at Panyajor, lost four of her five children (aged 8-15 years). The youngest child was thrown into the fire after being shot. D.K. witnessed three women with their babies being caught. Two of the women were shot and one was killed with a panga. Their babies were all killed with pangas. A total of 1, 987 households were reported destroyed and looted and 3, 500 cattle were taken.²⁸

Amnesty International has also documented instances in which SPLA forces lined up 32 women from the village of Pagau, 12 kilometres from Ayod in southern Sudan, and then shot each once in the head. Eighteen children were reported to have been locked in a hut which was then set on fire. Three children who attempted to escape were then shot. The rest burnt to death. In Paiyoi, an area north-east of Ayod, Amnesty International reported that 36 women were burnt to death in a cattle byre. Nine others were clubbed to death by the SPLA.²⁹ Amnesty also reported that in another incident SPLA forces “massacred about 200 Nuer villagers, many of them children, in villages around the town of Ayod. Some of the victims were shut in huts and burnt to death. Others were shot.”³⁰ The SPLA has also murdered dozens of humanitarian aid workers. In one attack alone, for example, SPLA gunmen killed 23 relief workers, drivers and assistants.³¹ In 1998, the SPLA murdered relief workers in the Nuba mountains, and in 1999 the SPLA murdered four aid workers assisting with a Red Cross project in southern Sudan.³²

Would Christian Aid have been comfortable with a picture of smiling Khmer Rouge gunmen, Serbian paramilitaries or any other war criminals adorning their website? To have done so with the SPLA given their record merely serves to confirm a belief that Christian Aid is in some way supportive of that organisation.

Within days of the report’s launch the real nature of Christian Aid’s smiling gunmen was once again evident. The Vatican’s news agency reported that on 22 February: “Rebels of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) attacked and razed to the ground the town of Nyal, in the Western Upper Nile region”. The Vatican stated that 15,000 civilians had been displaced. The SPLA also destroyed a Catholic mission and church.³³

“Relief as a weapon of war”

An entire section of the Christian Aid report was devoted to problems with the provision of food aid in southern Sudan. To say that it presented only half a picture would be an understatement. While alleging that the Sudanese government has from time to time denied flight access to parts of the region, Christian Aid

²⁶ ‘This Week’, Christian Aid homepage at <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/>

²⁷ ‘Misguided Relief to Sudan’, Editorial, **New York Times**, 6 December, 1999.

²⁸ **Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan**, UN Special Rapporteur Gaspar Biro, E/CN.4/1996/62, 20 February 1996.

²⁹ **Sudan: The Ravages of War: Political Killings and Humanitarian Disaster**, Amnesty International, London, AI Index: AFR 54/29/93, 29 September 1993, p.25.

³⁰ **Amnesty International Report 1994**, Amnesty International, London, 1994, p.275.

³¹ **Denying “The Honor of Living”:** Sudan A Human Rights Disaster, Africa Watch, London, 1989, p.116.

³² See, ‘Sudan Aid Workers Executed’, News Article by BBC World on 3 April, 1999 at 03:25 GMT.

³³ ‘Sudan Rebels Raze Town, Comboni Mission’, CWNews.com/Fides, 15 March 2001.

ignores the rebel's systemic interference with food aid. In March 2000, for example, the SPLA rebel movement started to expel international non-governmental organisations which had refused to sign an aid Memorandum drawn up by the SPLA. The SPLA Memorandum made unacceptable demands of aid agencies including SPLA control over the distribution of humanitarian assistance; a requirement to work "in accordance with SPLA objectives" rather than solely humanitarian aims. Eleven international humanitarian aid agencies felt themselves unable to remain active in southern Sudan under the conditions demanded of them by the SPLA. These NGOs handled 75 percent of the humanitarian aid entering southern Sudan.³⁴ The withdrawal of these NGOs directly affected US\$ 40 million worth of aid programs.³⁵ The expelled aid agencies stated that one million southern Sudanese were at risk as a result of the SPLA's decision to expel the NGOs.³⁶ The United Nations explained that the SPLA's expulsion of the NGOs:

This has created a void in the OLS consortium's ability to provide adequate humanitarian assistance to the people of southern Sudan, already made vulnerable by decades of war and deprivation. Emergency response, health, nutrition, household food security, and water and sanitation programmes will be hardest hit.³⁷

This has not been an isolated case. The Catholic Church in southern Sudan has accused the SPLA rebel movement of stealing 65 percent of the food aid going into those parts of southern Sudan controlled by the SPLA.³⁸ Agence France Press also reported that: "Much of the relief food going to more than a million famine victims in rebel-held areas of southern Sudan is ending up in the hands of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), relief workers said Tuesday." This food aid was often quite literally taken out of the mouths of starving southern Sudanese men, women and children at the height of famine.

While presenting examples of alleged government interference in food aid supply in parts of western Upper Nile, the Christian Aid report was deafeningly silent about the fact that the SPLA has been found guilty of diverting two-thirds of emergency food aid in southern Sudan and that its subsequent intransigence caused three-quarters of all humanitarian assistance to be suspended throughout the entirety of southern Sudan.

Conclusion

Christian Aid's report and the recommendations contained within it are clearly deeply questionable. The report has made inaccurate claims, and has relied on questionable sources. Christian Aid appears not to have realised that the image of white Christians in London thinking they know what is in the best interests of black and brown Sudanese, and how they should exploit their own resources, is one of arrogance. Christian Aid believes in poverty eradication except in the case of Sudan. Its interest in "oil-fuelled" civil wars does not extend to that of Angola, possibly because that country is not Muslim. Christian Aid has further shown itself to be out of step with the international community and particularly the developing world regarding Sudan.

Christian Aid's position with regard to conflict in Sudan's oil fields has been one, in effect of blaming the victim. It is similar to blaming a rape victim for the rape while additionally ignoring the fact that the rapist has also been encouraged by a third party. In its publication of half-truths Christian Aid has presented precisely the sort of distorted image of Sudan that only serves to prolong the conflict. It is strangely silent in the face of clear evidence of the American destabilisation of Sudan.

There is a simple, unanswered question which comes to mind when reading **The Scorched Earth: Oil and War in Sudan**. Three million southern Sudanese refugees have deliberately trekked hundreds of miles to seek refuge in northern Sudan.³⁹ Perhaps as many as two million of these southern Sudanese refugees live in and around Khartoum. Many of those displaced by rebel attacks in the oil fields have fled to government towns. Few refugees flee toward oppressors - not many displaced Kosovars headed towards Belgrade. It is against this background that one should assess the picture presented of Sudan in this report.

³⁴ 'Rights Group Urges More Talks on Sudan Relief', News Article by Associated Press on 8 March, 2000 at 05:30:49 EST.

³⁵ 'Seven Aid Agencies Urge Renewed Negotiations for Relief to Southern Sudan', Associated Press, 1 March, 2000.

³⁶ 'Expelled Aid Agencies Say Million at Risk in Sudan', Reuters, 1 March, 2000.

³⁷ 'OLS Evacuates NGO Staff from Southern Sudan', U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva, 1 March, 2000.

³⁸ 'Aid for Sudan ending up with SPLA: Relief Workers', Article by Agence France Press on 21 July, 1998 at 08:23:48.

³⁹ 'Three Million Refugees Flee War-Torn South', News Article by Agence France Presse on 29 November 1999.

