United States Institute of Peace
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Sudan Experience Project

Interview # 72 –Executive Summary

Interviewed by: Barbara Nielsen
Initial interview date: March 22, 2007

The interviewee, director of a U.S. NGO, has been working in the Sudan since 1998. Her mission is to connect the church there with resources in the U.S. Her organization seeks to create awareness of the needs of the Sudanese church and of the suffering of Sudanese Christians, and to provide concrete help in creating economic livelihoods for the poor. Since the signing of the CPA, this interviewee notes that persecution of Christians continues unchanged, with churches continuing to be destroyed. She notes that despite the nominal peace brought by the CPA, there are ongoing attacks by the Lords Resistance Army mixed with Sudanese Armed Forces. In her view, these attacks are part of a plan by the Khartoum government to destabilize the South and to keep divisions among Southerners alive. Because it controls the media, the government also sows seeds of dissention among southerners through disinformation. Despite intelligence cooperation with the U.S. after 9/11, and despite signing the CPA, the Government of Sudan has not, in her view, changed its fundamental attitudes.

While admiring the leadership of Salva Kiir, she is critical of many of the officials of the government of South Sudan in Juba, noting their high degree of conspicuous consumption and seeming preoccupation with their new positions. According to this interviewee, the biggest failure of the CPA is the international community's failure to pressure the Northern government to comply with its terms, given that strong pressure is the only way to get the Khartoum government to change its negative behavior.

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Q: Let me ask you when you became involved in Sudan and where you work?

A: I became involved in Sudan in late 1998. I'd been hearing of the Sudanese refugees and met some in the Washington area, became concerned about them. And then when I received an invitation to go as part of a team to minister in the South in the Episcopal Church I agreed to go. I went in January of 1999.

Q: Where were you working in Sudan?

A: On the first trip we went to Maridi and Lui. We went at the invitation of a bishop from the South who'd been rather isolated from the rest of the world during the war and had asked the church to send in a team to do teaching in the church. But I've continued to go back since and I've been to a number of other areas in the South. At the moment I'm working with an area of the northern Bahr el Ghazal, in western Aweil.

Q: Who was your sponsor at this time?

A: I was under the coverage of the Episcopal Church on the ground there, working with the bishop, and then there are churches here that support me in the ministry there. I formed a little ministry and I work to connect the church there with resources here and with advocacy and help to create awareness of the needs of the church there and the suffering of the church.

Q: The Episcopal Church is sanctioned in the South but what are the conditions under which it operates? Apparently, one important milestone along the way to the final CPA, called the Declaration of Principles, established that the church -- or rather the Sudanese-- should enjoy freedom of religion. How do you see that playing out in the areas where you've worked?

A: Well, I guess at the moment you could say there's a certain amount of freedom in the church It's just that they are still cut off from any help. They have not noticed any change in their life since the signing of the peace agreement two years ago. I guess the difference is there are not bombs falling at the moment, but day to day life has not really changed. I know those in the North still suffer the same discrimination they always did, but in the South the church is able to carry on, but in a very difficult situation, with very

little health care, mostly none, in most places and other development resources are just very scarce. The area I'm working in now, up in northern Bahr el Ghazal, experienced many of the Janjaweed raids that are taking place in Darfur, took place in their area over the years. You still see areas where there is scorched earth, where villages were burned and churches burned. I've talked to church members that say, "We've rebuilt and they would come right through and burn them again, determined to put out our church life, determined to do away with us, but they have not succeeded."

But life is very, very difficult. Many people also, women and children particularly, were captured and taken into slavery. Many are still in slavery. There are long lists of names of people still missing. And I've interviewed some that have come back and told of being beaten and forced to do things they didn't want to do, of their names being changed to a Muslim name and forced to bow to Allah every day. The ones I've met have managed to escape and received help from others getting back to the South. But the church leaders tell me that where there have been larger numbers released and brought back to the South, it's very difficult for them, too, because some of these women now have children by these northern masters and they're just brought back to the South and have no way to support themselves. So it's dire. Some of them even think maybe they should go back to the North, because at least in slavery they had food.

So it's a terrible problem. I've spoken with pastors and I'm working with one pastor, for instance, who is an archdeacon over the 46 little congregations up in that area. He had evangelized that area himself, after returning from Ethiopia, where he had fled and was considered one of the lost boys. He had come back to share with his people and lead his people. He spoke of these raids that came into their church and literally dragged women and children right out of the church, and sometimes even burning the church with people left in them.

Q: They were really targeting Christians, not only the ethnic peoples who lived in the area?

A: Right, they were targeting the Christians and trying to make an example by burning them in the church and killing anyone who tried to run. In one case this pastor that I work with said one of his associate pastors was drug out of the church, tied to the back of a horse and drug all through the village, until he was in pieces, until they literally went all over the village picking up the pieces. These are the sorts of things they've lived through up there.

Q: And this has been pretty irrespective of the time period, in other words, since the time you became involved in 1998, 1999, up to the present, this has been a fairly steady stream of occurrences?

A: It has. That's not occurring so much right now. There's more of that going on in Darfur right now. But, as I said, these people that were taken are still in slavery, you know. There was this government group that agreed to collaborate and return some

slaves. They have returned some, but they claim they have run out of money and nothing's being done on that right now. They ran out of money in 2005

Q: Funded by the government?

A: They're funded by the government and they released about three thousand people. But someone who worked with that group, has been working for twenty years in Sudan to see the release of slaves, has a list of names of eight thousand people that he said could be returned today if there were political will and if there were funds to make that happen. He's certain there are thousands more still in slavery, but that eight thousand names that he has are people from that area.

Q: And that's just this area where you're targeting?

A: I spoke with a man who said that not only was he captured himself, but all of his cattle were taken and his name was changed and he was forced to bow to Allah every day. He eventually escaped and made it back to his area there, but one of his children was taken that he's never heard from again.

Q: It's almost too hard to imagine.

A: It is. There's not a family up there that has not been affected in some way. It's hard to believe what these people have endured up there. It's beyond what the mind can comprehend.

Q: They're actually transported quite some distance, not just to the neighboring valley?

A: Well, first of all, they carry the master's load all the way back to the North

Q: And the master is a herder, or a farmer?

A: Can be. Some of them are Arab cattlemen. Some of these people wind up back in the North and have been sold all over the North and really all over the Middle East. But they trekked back like cattle. Some have told of how they literally strung a rope through their wrists and tied them all together and forced them all to walk together. Then the women talk of how they were forced to be sex slaves and the like. And now some of them have been in slavery so long that even winning their release and bringing them back, they really don't know who they are any more. Some of these children don't know their real names or real family names. Some of them still have the markings of the Dinka tribe and that helps to identify a region they belong to. But it's very difficult to figure out where they go and find homes for them. So we can't just release slaves. We have to have a plan for what we're going to do for them on the ground.

Q: Now you work with an organization that is trying to help reintegrate them?

A: We're trying to help. We're small. We're just trying to help the church a little bit, raise funds for grain mills, for instance, to support these children that were bought back. And those are on the ground up there and running now. We're trying to put a clinic on the ground there right now. And there's a meningitis outbreak at the moment that has created a real crisis right now.

Q: Your local counterparts, you mentioned 46 congregations, would be numbering how many?

A: Oh, probably 50,000 people, in this one particular area here, at least. Now they have Darfurians walking down into the area, walking for days to get to this area, to try to find refuge. And of course they're taxing an already struggling community and now, most recently, I hear they're bringing some of their cattle with them, so that's going to create another crisis.

Q: It's hard to imagine how areas that were marginal economically to begin with now are adding refugees, it's pretty much impossible.

Shifting gears a little, I think you mentioned you had sent some time in Juba and of course they have established the Southern government there. How effectively are they able to cope with helping their people or making the transition from being guerilla fighters to government officials?

A: I don't know. I'm no expert on this and I'm not an authority to ask that question. I can only give you my impressions. I was concerned as I went to Juba. It just seems like they're so absorbed right now in setting up their government, which they should be. There's some building going on and everybody had a new Land Cruiser; every minister there was running around in those new Land Cruisers. It looked like money was coming in from somewhere. So they're setting up their offices and buying this fancy furniture and they seemed to be so caught up in their new positions, I just wonder how concerned they're really going to be about the people out there in the villages. Of course, there's so much to overcome, with their tribal differences and just the divisions among themselves, before they can really look out for the people and you can really see anything concrete happening on the ground. I see something happening in Juba but I just don't see anything happening out beyond Juba.

Q: Some NGO leaders have said that that was one of the difficulties inherent in the CPA, that it was signed by only two parties, the SPLM and the Khartoum government, and that therefore many marginalized voices were unheard. Is that an analysis that would fit with some of what you're saying, that the people in the area of Bahr el Ghazal were really not represented at the peace talks and the negotiations?

A: Well, I don't know. I think they were probably more represented than some other areas, because I think that's a very strong SPLA/SPLM area up there and they are Dinka. There's a lot of Dinka in the government. I didn't get the impression that that area was marginalized. They do say that there's this group from Western Equatoria that's trying to

destabilize things and they must have felt that they were not included, but I don't know the reasons for them being part of this destabilizing thing.

My reason for going to Juba was to try to find the whereabouts of a young Sudanese, originally from Yambio, so he's Banda tribe and he has been working with me for about seven years, helping with logistics in my ministry. He had recently graduated from Uganda Christian University and went back to Juba, where he had a job and he also wanted to work on setting up a Christian school in Juba. But he had been caught in an ambush outside of Juba at the end of October and has not been seen since. There were 38 people killed in that ambush. The cars were burned and bodies burned. They never found the body of my friend. They think he may have fled the scene, but he has not been heard from.

But those that were arrested in connection with this were LRA, which has been supported by Khartoum for a long time and from all indications they still are. Even though the government is saying publicly that they really don't have anything to do with them anymore, they do, and Sudan Armed Forces, Khartoum forces, were arrested as well, as part of this. So 15 people, LRA and SAF forces, were arrested and put in prison in Juba.

The Government of Southern Sudan approached Bashir about this, who said, "Well, we don't have control over LRA any more." Well, all indications are they do. And then when someone mentioned that some were his forces, he said, "Well, why don't you just shoot them?" This is what I was told by the, I believe it was our U.S. consulate that gave me that information. Bashir came down to Juba and evidently managed to get a few of them released. So I don't know a whole lot more about that. It's just been very vague about who's still in prison and if they've gotten any information out of them, but there's always some group outside of Juba, on the road, trying to attack and destabilize things. And that's also part of Khartoum's plan, to keep the division going between the Southerners and keep everybody confused about who's doing what to whom.

Q: So the CPA has brought a certain nominal peace. You mentioned the bombs were not falling as much, but in this instance clearly the LRA forces and their allies were cooperating…

A: It's just a different tactic.

Q: And with government encouragement or support, apparently. So obviously that's a failing of the peace accord and those who are supposed to be monitoring those aspects. Why do you think the SPLM government in Juba, with their own fighting background, is not able to deal with some of this? In other words, these are folks who have spent many years fighting. Wouldn't they be able to bring some force to bear in their area, to get rid of these marauders and militias, that aren't very far outside of town and are able to ambush convoys?

A: You would think so. I don't know how active the SPLA is right now. There are some that are concerned that the SPLA is not as active and we advised that it would be smart to

help support the SPLM and the SPLA and keep them strong because that's the only thing Khartoum understands. Because Khartoum has definitely been continuing to build up their forces. There are all kinds of indications that they're moving right on ahead. They just keep pouring this oil money into building up their own forces. As a matter of fact, I just received word today that approximately 800,000 troops from Khartoum have shown up in Wau in the last week.

Q: Which is bizarre, because they're supposed to have moved all their troops to the north of the line established by the CPA.

A: They think this is over Abyei. They think they're poised there for the problem over the boundary of Abyei. I don't know, but that is a big concern. And they pretty much just do whatever they want to do and they haven't been penalized. This regime has never been penalized for anything. Where else in the world do, we've gone in and straightened out other radical leaders in the world who are raising havoc and look what they have done. They've been responsible for the deaths of millions of people and yet they still carry on with impunity.

It's hard to imagine that this continues to go on. But they will put up a front to the rest of the world; they will put up a political face and they'll say anything you want to hear and they'll turn right around and do whatever they want to do. It's just bizarre. It's like telling us, "We don't need you in Darfur. We will take care of our own problems. We can protect our people in Darfur." What kind of statement is that? That's like the wolf saying, "Well, I can protect the henhouse. Just leave me alone with them." It's just bizarre, but that's the kind of mentality you're dealing with.

Q: Apparently, they've been very successful in convincing much of the world that they're trustworthy in this case and thus the sanctions that have been proposed at the UN haven't been approved at this point. It sounds like you would characterize the attitude, at least of Khartoum, as not having changed at all from the past.

A: No, heavens no. They signed this agreement, even the Northerners tell us this, the Northern leader that we spoke with today, said we have to realize that they signed this agreement because this was right after 9/11 and they thought the U.S. might kick them out next because of the terrorism situation, which we really could have, because they covered bin Laden for so many years. And so they were kind of backed into a corner and signed this because it suited them and would cover them. They felt it would keep them out of hot water. But once they signed it and got us off their back, they just continued to go on doing what they've always done.

Q: I've heard, too, that there may be some internal dissention among the leaders in Khartoum, that there are those who were in favor of the CPA and they negotiated it. Then there are others who were more hard line and probably tried to undermine it. You could have a variety of currents. You mentioned the person who was speaking today from the North, or as a Northern leader. This would be Mr. Yassir Arman from the SPLM?

A: Yes.

Q: His views obviously are interesting. When you look at the leadership of the SPLM, which of course lost its most visionary leader, to what degree would you say this is emboldening, perhaps?

A: He said that also had emboldened them. He said the death of Garang really gave them a breather, because they were so afraid of Garang, because he had a tremendous amount of popularity in the North. We have heard on many occasions, this man, Arman, says that he actually was chair of the committee for the reception of Garang when he first visited the North and we've heard on many occasions that there were as many as six million to welcome Garang. Now that's an astronomical number, but I've heard that too many times and it's always from northerners who know and here's a man who actually organized some of the receptions for him.

And so imagine what a threat that was to Khartoum. So once Garang died they could breathe again and just take up this tactic of destabilizing all these areas and trying to bring division among all the groups in the South. And they're using their newspapers to spread lies and to sow dissention between the different groups. They put all these fictitious headlines and it causes all kinds of problems and disunity among the SPLM and other groups that stand against them. The government has complete control over the media, so there's nothing they can do.

Q: How does that help them in their long term plan? I would calculate that they would not want to see the South secede, but what they're doing would seem to be encouraging the South to vote for independence.

A: Well, no, if they can turn them against their own leaders, they will feel that they can't trust their own leaders, so it might not be safe for them to secede. This is what they're hoping. Many of the Southerners who were living in the North were being forced out, their homes bulldozed; they were forced out into the desert. They were treated terribly by the government, which is trying to wipe the Southerners out and get them out of areas of the North. And now we're approaching this time of the referendum; now, they're actually trying to entice them to stay in the North and hope to get them to think that they'd be better off staying in the North and keeping the country together and not voting to secede.

Q: Clearly, that kind of machination could backfire. They may be successful in smearing the Southern leaders to some degree but that's not going to create positive good will towards the Northern regime, and, therefore, not really create a groundswell in favor of unity.

A: But another thing at play here, Arman said, was that Khartoum is also emboldened by the fact that while we were very strong after 9/11, now we're bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan. They see that as a weakness. They don't think we're going to be much of a threat to them and they're also aligning with Iran, which also emboldens them.

Q: I can see where they might follow that train of thought. What have you concluded about the successor leadership to John Garang, about Salva Kiir and others who have ministerial appointments, in terms of how effective they are?

A: Well, the ones I've met I'm impressed with. They've got some good leaders in the South. Salva Kiir I'm impressed with. He's a wonderful man. The thing I'm concerned about is, people who've spent time in Juba were telling me about the vice president of the South and I haven't heard anyone speak about this and you can't always bring it up at these meetings, but this vice president evidently has some real ties to this government in the North. They have managed to have real influence on him. He not only is a very egotistical man that likes to put on more of a show than Salva Kiir does, you'd think he was president and I saw this for myself when I was in Juba. He travels around with all these vehicles, with all these soldiers, lights flashing, horns blaring, all this attention-getting pomp. Salva Kiir's much more low key than that. Evidently, he is a thorn in the side of Salva Kiir. He even writes these articles that are just contradictory to the truth. He's saying, "Oh, LRA, is not the problem. The Northern government does not support LRA. They're not the ones committing these crimes outside of Juba anyway. It's those people from Western Equatoria that are doing it."

Well, that's just the sort of thing that divides Southerners. They can understand the LRA, they've dealt with that for years and they know without question that it was supported by Khartoum. To put out information like that, I even read an article like that that he'd written, and these Southerners were telling me, I was just so shocked at the information they were giving me, the sort of things this man had done. This is something I'm saying because I can say it now without feeling there will be any repercussions. But as I said, I have never heard this come up in any of these meetings and I'm just shocked. It's almost like they have an enemy within. It sounds like Khartoum has gotten to this man.

Q: There are many explanations, I suppose, that could be either political or personal. For instance, rivalries could cause an individual to be so unethical. When presented with this kind of scenario, do you think that the U.S. needs to be involved in holding Khartoum's feet to the fire?

A: Absolutely. As this man Arman said today, "You can't go and solve a little problem in Juba and then run over to Darfur and solve a problem over there; it's got to come from Khartoum. Unless you put pressure on Khartoum, nothing is going to happen. They'll throw you out some bait, to make you think that they're in agreement with you on something, but they're not going to change, unless they've got real pressure put on them and the only thing they understand is strength. They can negotiate with you all day. They'll talk and lie and say anything you want them to say," but he said, "Absolutely, we've got to put pressure on Khartoum." He said, "This is a radical regime. You've got to understand, they don't represent us. We didn't vote them in."

This is a Northerner talking. "We didn't vote them in and they're in total control. Control of the press, they're in control of everything, absolutely everything. They can

still harass you on anything. It's still very difficult for anyone in opposition to live in the North."

I have spoken with Northerners, Muslims, who disagreed with this government. Their family was attacked in the middle of the night, father beaten, mother's legs broken. This regime, we've got to see them for what they are and we've got to put pressure on them until it hurts.

Q: Of course it would be best if it were not just the U.S. but …

A: Absolutely, that's the way it usually winds up being, unfortunately, but it'd be better if it were the international community, absolutely.

Q: Now the Europeans were very much involved in efforts to bring peace and to see it to a good conclusion. Do you find that for some reason they're shying away from being as supportive as they need to be at this time?

A: I don't know how involved they are. China's got a big piece in this now.

Q: China's the next country I wanted to mention, because of course you can't spend any time in the country without being aware of what China's doing, in terms of building, and exploiting the oil wealth, and so on.

A: There are areas up there where all the local people have been totally wiped out, wide areas. The only thing that's there now is a pipeline and Chinese workers. You see a lot of trucks in Juba with Chinese writing and cargo going up the river, up the Nile with Chinese writing.

Q: I guess the Chinese see their interests as different from what we do; so far, anyway, they haven't been our allies, particularly. Have you been able to work with other NGO's, other church groups, to make an impact?

A: Oh, yes, we all have to work together. That's the only way it can work.

Q: How does it work in practice?

A: I work through CMS, Chuch Mission Societies, which is based in the UK. It's a 200-year-old missions agency. William Wilberforce, I think, was one of the founders of CMS. I work with Safe Harbor and they have people on the ground up in northern Bahr el Ghazal and also in Tanj and further down south in Bahr el Ghazal. They help check on projects that we're working on, give me feedback.

Q: Now how does the government react to people like you coming? Is it hard to get a visa?

A: No. I've always gone through the SPLM to get my visa. I've never gotten a visa through Khartoum. Khartoum has tried to demand that anyone going in the South has to go through Khartoum. Of course, they want to control who goes in and out. We've never paid any attention to that.

Q: Okay, so you just get permission from the government in Juba and show up. How do you enter? You come through Nairobi and overland?

A: There is actually a commercial flight from Nairobi to Juba now. To go to the area we have to go by little charter planes. We get our visa in Nairobi, with the SPLM office in Nairobi.

Q: When you show up at the airport, the Kenyan authorities accept that as valid for travel to Juba?

A: The government in the South is able to do this now. They're able to operate in an autonomous way. Khartoum over the years has tried to implement something different but this is legitimate. The Government of Southern Sudan is set up now, a valid government and they've opened their mission to the U.S. in Washington now. So they are legitimate.

Q: Regarding Darfur, you mentioned earlier that refugees are coming into your area from Darfur and of course it impacts quite a bit on peoples' lives. In terms of the CPA, do you think there was any way that that agreement could have been constructed differently, that would have prevented the Darfur rebellion. Did people in Darfur feel left out of the CPA and therefore they reacted militarily, rather than peacefully?

A: I don't know. I just can't even speak to that. I don't know if the two could have been combined or not. I think Khartoum is really afraid of them being united. And this is what the Southerners are saying now, "We really need to all come together on this as a united front." And if they can and all take a stand against Khartoum, that will make a huge difference.

Q: Historically that's been difficult. It makes sense that they should be united, but …

A: I don't know. Listening to a man like Arman today, it was encouraging because he's been up to talk to the Darfurians and it sounds as though he made some progress up there. He talked to people that had been dismissed by Khartoum. Leaders, fine leaders, that were willing to talk with him and willing to work with him. As I say, he represents the SPLM in the North. Maybe something can be done. It would be monumental, of course. And so much damage has been done in just sowing division. Divide and conquer has been a big part of the plan.

Q: Another part of the plan according to the CPA is actually to have Northerners in the Southern government as well; a certain percentage of the ministries are left for the NCP

and I guess filled by their representatives. Do you have any indications how that cooperative aspect is working?

A: I really don't have any idea.

Q: I wanted to ask you whether you see any evidence of social healing, which of course is another big need?

A: No, that's a real big need and a real big concern. The people really need reconciliation forums and conferences and they need psychological counseling. Not only to get over the wounds of the persecution and things that have been done to them, but something like South Africa had, the Peace and Reconciliation Commission. But also they need just mental health counseling. The bishops tell me that it's difficult even to go hold meetings in their areas. They said that people are disturbed. They said they've had so much trauma that frankly it's just hard to come to understandings and agreements with them. They've been damaged emotionally to the point where there really is such a need for a lot of mental know-how.

Q: Now you would probably observe that emotional damage when you are trying to do your projects, when you need to be able to get some agreement. How does this lack of mental health manifest itself? Is it that people are lethargic, or they're not willing to plan for the next day, or they can't take everything in?

A: And anger and just inability to work together. There's just been a tremendous amount of suffering. My area of ministry, frankly, is I love to do prayer ministry and healing ministry. I minister to the women and you just hear their stories and you know how God wants to heal them and can. But, for instance, I prayed with a group of women in Juba. One lady said to me, "I'm not able to forgive, and you see the pain in her eyes. How do you address that? How does society address that? It's just that on so many levels they have suffered. How do you address those things?

You would need forgiveness, to forgive those who oppressed you during those years. I've had people that managed to escape from places like Khartoum and Juba tell me they were willing to suffer in the bush rather than be under Khartoum's control, because they said, "If we went for medicine they would ask us our name and we'd tell them our name." They'd say, "Not with your Christian name. If you want to change your name to Abdullah or Mohammed, okay, but otherwise, no."

So those are things that are going to require a lot of forgiveness. Maybe someone's child died or many children died because they were denied the medical care that someone else got. And we're sending in aid all that time and even aid we sent in was handled this way. That grieves me. That grieves me tremendously. We let the government in Khartoum tell us where we could drop food. Sometimes we dropped it to Khartoum's military.

And even now, we're waiting on Khartoum's permission to go in and save lives in Darfur. This makes no sense. If it's a legitimate government, okay. But it's not. It's this

radical regime that took over by force. They're just as evil and radical as they can be, every bit as radical as the Taliban in Afghanistan, but we ask their permission to go in and save lives and they tell us "no, we can't," they'll take care of it themselves. So how long can the world sit around and just let that happen?

Q: It's reminiscent of Rwanda, actually. Eventually people saw that something had to be done. We have indeed called it a genocide, but now that was some years ago. Lately, we have our own distractions.

A: In the meantime, they say Khartoum's starting to look like New York City. With the oil money, they're just building like crazy, modern buildings, five star hotels, and they're just carrying on without any penalty. We tell the world that they're collaborating with us on terrorism and then I hear we're building this big CIA center there; we've gotten their permission to do that. That will be our East Africa headquarters for the CIA.

Q: It goes a little beyond our mandate to analyze the CPA, but some parts of our government are working on the humanitarian front and then others are working on the antiterrorism front and they may not be coordinating very well.

But, to bring our conversation to a conclusion, we're looking to see if we can draw any lessons learned, so that the next time we're involved in a comprehensive peace accord or trying to settle one of these very intractable disputes we take advantage of what we've learned. Do you have any additional thoughts that could be helpful to our government or to any negotiators in the future?

A: It's complicated and again I'm certainly no expert in this area, but it just seems like a peace agreement requires more than just signing a piece of paper at people's convenience. There has to be enough leverage behind it, where people have no choice but comply with it. It's as if we needed more attached to it than just their word and their signature on paper; there had to be other things in place that would bring leverage and bring pressure and motivation and enforcement. But there's been no enforcement.

This radical regime has to reform in some way and we need to be more engaged with those moderate ones in the government there. I believe there are moderate Muslims in this government that would really like to see change. I believe there's a handful of radicals running this. If we could help empower the moderate ones to bring about change and if we could have had sanctions ready to go or just put a crunch on them. In the meantime, they're just flourishing financially. They're raking in all this oil money and they're not even reporting to the South how much oil money's coming. They'll just say occasionally, "Here's a piece for you." But they don't even know, a piece of what? They don't even know! So Khartoum is just getting away with it, just flat getting away with it.

One more point. They said that if the Darfur agreement collapses, that this could cause war to break out all over Sudan again. It's just crucial that we do something in Darfur. It's crucial that we do something to squeeze Khartoum to where they feel it.

We were bombed. A church we were working with had a big cross on the top. They were rolling off of these old Antonovs, these old bombs off the back of these Antonovs, trying to hit us. They were not very accurate. They struck all around us.

Q: And you said this occurred when you were in Sudan in 199, that your Christian group was targeted?

A: We were a group of about a hundred, with pastors who had walked for days, some for weeks, to get to us.

Q: Was this a seminar or a meeting?

A: Yes, it was teaching, teaching encouragement and discerning the spirit of God in the midst of chaos.

Q: Oh, well, very appropriate! And you still do talks like that? Obviously you have so much development work and humanitarian firefighting, but can you also do some spiritual teaching?

A: Oh, sure. That's all part of it. But you can't go in and do spiritual teaching without meeting some of their physical needs. So it all goes together. As I said, my heart is for ministry, is for prayer ministry, but on that first trip in, the first day, as we were just beginning our meeting, we heard something go over. I didn't pay much attention to it. We're accustomed to a lot of noise here. They're not there. They knew what that was. We were watching the peoples' faces and they were watching something. It went over and they looked relieved and in a minute they looked worried again. It was coming back.

And they had shown us where the foxholes were, so they said, "Time to run for the hole!" So we ran for the foxholes and endured what seemed like an eternity of these bombs dropping around us. You could hear them swooshing through the air and then they hit and crashed. It's deafening. And they told us to stay down for a significant time, even after you think the last one has fallen, because the shrapnel travels a greater distance.

Q: And a significant time would be what, an hour after you think the last one has fallen?

A: No, probably half an hour we stayed there.

Q: And they had these foxholes prepared?

A: Oh, yes, this had been occurring all the time. In fact, the church told us Khartoum seemed to know when they were having meetings; they had their informants and they knew when there would be a big church meeting taking place, like the ordination of a pastor or something. They'd come in with the gunships and as the crowd gathered outside the church they would just mow them down. They learned to change dates at the last minute of such things because they were constantly attacked, when they were having these kinds of meetings.

So that was the first day and we were shaken and there were people killed. We went to visit those injured and families whose members had been killed and it was awful, it was totally awful, and knowing that they didn't have medicine to take care of the injuries, that was awful. It shook us up but we continued. That was on a Monday and when we began on Wednesday they came back all over again, the same thing all over again. That time shrapnel went right through -- the women were staying in the home of the bishop and that time shrapnel went through the room and through the wall, lodged right in the wall above the bed I was staying in. It was clear that we were the target.

We had a couple of vehicles that we had driven in with and one of the vehicles was on the road at the time; one of the members of our team was going up the road to pick up something, and the Antonov followed them for a while on the road, dropping bombs, trying to hit their car. They jumped out of the car, went out into the bush and were terribly shaken up, scratched up in the bush and all. So we were the target and it was a strange thing to find yourself a target and learn what the people have been dealing with for so long. I can't explain it to you. We had post-traumatic stress syndrome, I learned later. It took a while to learn what it was but I was just driven, just driven to go around and tell what the people were dealing with.

Q: I would think the impact would be tremendous.

A: I had to have counseling, but that's why I've been unable to let go of Sudan. I had been ministering in other places in Africa. I'd been going out with the ministry organization: South Africa, Mozambique and Malawi. But when I was invited to go on this team to Sudan, this is what happened on our first trip there. And the people asked, "Do the people back in the U.S. know what's happening to us? Do Christians know and do you think they care?" And I said, "Not too many really know but I promise you I'll do all I can to do my part to tell them and we won't forget you." So I just, it hooked me. I would like to quit and go on somewhere else, but I'll tell you the truth, I haven't been able to let go.

And so I was asked to testify at a special hearing before the International Relations Committee of Congress and I did. And I could tell them truthfully that civilians were being targeted, because there was no military installation around near us and the church had a cross on the top, quite visible from the air. They knew exactly what they were targeting. So I could testify truly to that.

And that started the advocacy work. So I've just continued with that. I feel like I'm an unlikely person to do this, but, hey, I'm the one that just happened to be here at this time and I'm willing, okay. So I just keep going, I keep going back and I keep working with the groups in Washington to bring back information and just make sure that the people do have a voice.

Q: Yes, that's really important. I know it encourages them, because they think if they're isolated and no one hears their story, it really is demoralizing. Were you the only American on the team at that time?

A: No, it was about half and half, UK and U.S. There were about seven Americans and eight Brits and one or two Kenyans.

Q: And are you able to dedicate yourself fulltime to Sudan work?

A: No, I'm supporting myself here. Funds I raise for the ministry all go to Sudan. So I'm stretched. I am really stretched.

Q: Well, you've been called to do this.

A: God provides. So as long as He keeps providing, I keep going.

Again, as far as the religious persecution, for instance in Tanj, which is also located in Bahr el Ghazal, we had a pastor helping us in our time there. Once he was serving us tea – he was part of the little delegation that was serving us and meeting us. And he was holding his ribs and we asked him, "Is there something wrong?" He said, well yes, he'd had some broken ribs. We asked him what had happened and he went on to tell us that he had gone into the town of Wau and he had proceeded to share his faith, preach in the marketplace and Khartoum government troops came along and beat him, stripped him naked and beat him quite badly and left him to die, called him an infidel, told him they were leaving him as an example to the other Christians. And there were other Christians in Wau but they had to be quiet about their faith. But they slipped in at night and ministered to this pastor and clothed him and managed to get him out of Wau and he had come down to where we were in Tanj and was being nursed back to health.

Q: And that happened on your first trip?

A: No, this was about three years ago.

Q: So it was during the run-up to the signing of the peace accords. Christians in Wau, at least, would feel very intimidated by this event.

A: Yes, I imagine they're still quite careful. So when I hear that 800,000 troops are building up in Wau, I wonder what's going on there.

Q: This man had been openly sharing his faith on the street, apparently. If he were just meeting in his home, probably the soldiers wouldn't have come in?

A: Maybe, but I've talked to Northerners that try to have meetings in their homes and they're watched and they have to be careful. People that meet in homes have to vary their routes and their times, because they're threatened for doing this.

Q: One of the things that is part of the CPA is an education program for the police in Khartoum, whereby they would learn to be sensitive to other religions. When I read about it, that sounded very good; I guess it would mean to stop doing this kind of persecution?

A: Again, it means pressure on this regime. Khartoum has to change. We can teach the police all we want but unless this government has some kind of pressure to perform otherwise, they're not going to ask their people to change, their police or secret police or others.

Q: Enforcement is the key because out what is supposed to be done is spelled out. Now whether it happens is something else again.

A: I just wished years ago we'd helped the moderates in the North overthrow this regime. It's gone on too many years and too many people have died because of this regime.

Q: It comes back to making the right policy decision.