

**Unedited, Rush Transcript of Press Briefing
on the 2010 Sudan Election
By Human Rights Organizations**

**Moderator: Eric Cohen, Chairperson, Investors Against Genocide
April 14, 2010
10:00 a.m. Eastern**

Operator: Good morning, my name is (Lynn) and I will be your conference operator today. At this time I would like to welcome everyone to the [Commentary on Sudan elections](#). All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. After the speaker's remarks there will be a question-and-answer session.

If you would like to ask a question during this time simply press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. If you would like to withdraw your question, press the pound key. Thank you.

Mr. Eric Cohen, Chairperson of Investors Against Genocide, you may begin your conference.

Eric Cohen: Thank you, (Lynn) and good morning everyone and welcome to today's briefing. Today's call is the third in a week long series of calls to provide perspective and commentary in the latest developments on elections and other events in Sudan. Two more calls are scheduled on Thursday and Friday of this week at 10 a.m. Eastern time on each day.

On each call, we expect to have a variety of representatives from the human rights community and NGOs and the Sudanese (Diaspora) providing perspective with a line up of speakers varying depending each day.

I'm pleased to say that for today's call we have John Prendergast cofounder of the [Enough Project](#) at the Center for American Progress, Mia Farrow, actress and human rights advocate, Osman Hummida, executive director of the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies in London, and Sam Bell, executive director of the [Genocide Intervention Network](#) plus (Mark Lotwis), acting president of the [Save Darfur Coalition](#).

We'll start the call with brief statements from John, Mia, Osmond, and Sam and then open the floor for questions. Although he won't be making an opening statement, (Mark Lotwis) will also be available for the Q&A. A reminder for the attendees, please star one at any time so that we know that you have a question. And we'll address all questions once the opening statements conclude.

A reminder for speakers, please limit your opening statement to two minutes and limit answers to questions to one to two minutes. Now to begin the briefing our first speaker is John Prendergast [Co-founder of the Enough Project at Center for American Progress]. John?

John Prendergast: Thanks, Eric. I think as bad as they are the elections are a real diversion from the issues that are going to determine whether Sudan goes back to full scale national war or not.

And unfortunately, just at this critical moment its been amateur hour for the United States and its diplomatic efforts to address these multiple crisis that are laying the foundation for an escalating road to – an intensifying road towards a resumption of full scale war.

By not responding forcibly or robustly to the violations, the multiple violations of the electoral process and the other things that are happening in Sudan, the U.S. sends a very important signal that emboldens the National Congress Party, the ruling party in (inaudible) demoralizes the Sudanese people.

We're not responding to the resurrection of the Lord's Resistance Army. We're not responding to the major offensive in Darfur, in (Jebel Marra) over the last couple of months that lead to some many people being killed and

displace. We're not responding to the non implementation of key CPA provisions. Provisions of that north/south peace agreement like the border demarcation.

All these are laying the ground work a continuing or escalating conflict and you combine that with a seriously flawed, if not a stolen election, and it becomes bafflingly why the Obama Administration allows general (Gration) its special envoy to continue to make public statements that literally defy the facts on the ground in a very fundamental level.

To conclude you know the Administration, Hillary Clinton and Susan Rice rolled out Presidents Obama policy in October of 2009, promising benchmarks and deputy reviews and consequences. Half a year later we got no sign of benchmarks. We have had one inconclusive deputy's meeting and no consequences for all these violations.

President Obama's policy of benchmarks and consequences is not being implemented. Now I'll turn it over to Mia Farrow.

Mia Farrow: Good morning. The flaws in this widely boycotted election transcend mere irregularities or technical glitches. We have known there were many problems with the election process for a long time. This is apparent last June and there were reports in the press but these problems were not addressed and as predicted we say intimidation, voting rigging, manipulation of the senses, bribing of tribal leaders.

Most of the refugees and IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] in Darfur were unable or unwilling to be counted at all. But here's so called win in the election will not represent progress but will serve to consolidate the power of the Sudanese government. It will give them the ability to alter the Constitution and to change the conditions of the CPA, the North/South Agreement.

The incumbent Sudanese president is an indicted war criminal. He threatened to slice the fingers off election observers. The international community doesn't need a pile of bloody fingers to be able to point to the truth that this election is not free or fair.

Omar al-Bashir is a thug who seized power by coup in 1989 and from the time he came to power he and his officials had been at war with the Sudanese people North and South, East and West. He is responsible for the mass murder of 3 million civilians in South Sudan.

And the regime enjoys the protection of the leadership of the African union and the Arab League and China. We watch and have watched a series of American diplomats and envoys blow in and out of (Khartoum) believing they can end (Khartoum's) campaign of destruction.

But it's delusionary to suppose any policy of "cookies, gold stars, and smiley faces" could be in any way effective or have any positive outcome for the people of Darfur of South Sudan. The Sudanese government never keeps the agreements it signs. When all their acts of death and destruction have cost them nothing, why would anyone suppose that their policies will change now?

So not only has the leadership of the current regime not held been accountable for their crimes, they now control Sudan's economy. So when President Obama offers his comments on this sham election, he does have an opportunity to send a clear message that the elections were neither free nor fair, and that every vote deserves to be counted, and that basic freedoms must be respected. President Obama has an opportunity to stand for democracy and human rights and to create the necessary environment for a free and fair vote in January 2011, the upcoming referendum on political independence for South Sudan.

South Sudan is a country moving towards its birth. Two years ago, Rebecca Garang, the widow of the late [Dr.] John Garang, told me that the CPA, her quote was, "The CPA had many midwives; they should come and see how the baby is doing." The foreboding the clouds are gathering, so the United States should be now working to pursue a policy that helps to prepare the South for independence and to make that split as peaceful and (practical) as possible.

It would certainly not be in America's interest for a newly independent state to fail. We could mean more chaos and more death in the region. And the failure of the international community in my view to confront genocide in

Darfur has only served to reinforce (Khartoum's) intentions to abandon their commitment to the CPA.

So it – on a personal note I would say obviously, there is a much bigger game going on here concurrently. As the U. S. calibrates and recalibrates our relationship with China, I can't help but wonder what role that might play on our current policies of accommodation and our reluctance to take a stronger position with Omar al-Bashir and his officials. Thank you.

Eric Cohen: Thank you, Mia. We're going to have to adjust the order because we have telephone problems from London. We're hoping Osman Hummaida will be able to rejoin us shortly and we'll get him back into the briefing when he arrives. Can we go next to Sam Bell?

Sam Bell: On Monday state department spokesperson said, "I think we're satisfied with the start of the process." Closing your eyes and pretending that massive fraud and irregularities didn't happen in the run up to this election only encourages President Bashir's intransigence. Already Bashir is claiming that only 30 percent of Southern Sudanese favor independence. Without being held accountable for free and fair elections now maybe, he thinks he can also manipulate the ...

Osman Hummaida: Are they on the call now I can listen to them but they can't hear me (inaudible).

Eric Cohen: Osman, we can hear you just stand by for just a minute and then you will have the floor.

Osman Hummaida: (Inaudible) sorry.

Sam Bell: That was it. I'm ready to hand it off.

Eric Cohen: OK, thank you. Sam and Osman, welcome back. I'm glad the phone problem has been resolved you're on.

Osman Hummaida: OK, thank you, and I guess I have very few remarks but first I will start with what we have committed over the last three days and I hope to see a

number of (reports) coming out talking about what is going on during the last three days. Some have described it as an isolated kind of technical incident (by the neck). But I think it is very obvious by the general (elevation) so that they are very wide spread and they are systematic and they have patterns.

So there is a (dial) that is what is going on is a very systematic practice of rigging the elections in Sudan. And we have committed several incidents, which have specific kind of prints or specific kind of impact in the world result of the election.

We didn't go to document of course everyday, single incident, but of this main incident it's just to show the parent what is going on and I think the student based on different – this is to (inaudible) also talk about what would be the American Administration position and from the election in Sudan and also based in theory, I've heard the press conference yesterday from the Sudanese (inaudible) political party and other civil society groups making similar kind of talk and the question is, on what direction would be the American Administration position from the election and from the future of the CPA and the peace in Sudan?

I think the theory that we have to compromise democracy by (inaudible) peace is built on a very – built on the wrong foundation and based in the wrong hypothesis that if someone is expecting that allowing the NCP to (inaudible) their power now and actually they are looking for landslide now control over Sudan from the (inaudible) because they are not looking just for the Presidency. Actually, looking from an absolute majority of all (inaudible) power in Sudan from the parliament to the local governments and that's how they are working on it and how they are doing it.

Allowing them to have that and I mean that in either way what will stop them from manipulating the freedom and the future of the CPA and we have – this is not just like guessing. That is the practice of the current national congress party in power for the last 20 years. So by saying that if they are capable when now during this interim period, having a marginal power of the CPA and other political forces and they've done what they have done in their north and equally in the south. What will this problem of continuing (inaudible) and

I think the wrong cycle of giving the NCP and the hardliners an opportunity again will endanger the national and regional security in (inaudible) region.

And, and, and, and, and I think the only maybe there is some question what could be done now, in terms of looking at the revolt of this election and what will be the prospect for the (inaudible) of Sudan and even for Darfur? I think there would be definitely some concerns among the major Sudanese political power that they are – the election should be postponed and not to be legitimized and also the political party has to agree in a (concrete) matter to be out of this current crisis.

I think ignoring the main political party is true that we are agreed we like it or not but the NCP and their feeling are the SPLM at the, sorry, at the comprehensive peace agreement created and found as – and this agreement was between these two parties but the question is I think ignoring the other political forces in the south and the north will not grant any I'm sure sustainable peace and will not grant implementation of – and the position of the south in a peaceful manner. That will open the door for violence and maybe chaos across the country and thank you.

Eric Cohen: Okay, thank you, Osman, and to all the speakers just before we go to open it up for question and answer I want to remind the press that an audio recording of the briefing will be available online at 1 p.m. and now the floor is open for questions. (Lynn), could you poll for questions, please.

Operator: At this time I would like to remind everyone if you would like to ask a question please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. We'll pause for a moment to compile the Q&A roster.

Your first question comes from (Elizabeth Blackney).

(Elizabeth Blackney): Hi, this question is for Mia or John. Do you – do either one of you have – given that the President remarked on unstinting resolve and that he would be absolutely personally involved is there any sense that when Scott Gration returns to Washington, D.C. that there – we're going to see the kind of leadership that you are talking about that is necessary as we've seen thus far and I don't think that Secretary Clinton nor Ambassador Rice seem terrible

concerned with the situation on the ground in Darfur which any cursory study would reveal there is a problem with legitimacy of this election.

Is there concern that our president will be seen as sanctioning or legitimizing the ongoing Genocide?

Mia Farrow: My – I'll comment briefly and then I will give it to John. I mean this is a moment of hope that our – that President Obama will take a strong position. It is a great opportunity to cast these elections in the doubt in which they were – in the mire in which they were born and played out. I disagree about – Susan Rice I think has been quite clear all along, as clear as she is able to be given her position.

I wish to hear more from Hillary Clinton. Secretary Clinton has been a very forceful voice throughout – for a number of years as has Vice President Biden, we've not heard anything and we've not heard a clear voice from President Obama in a long time. So John, what do you think?

John Prendergast: Yes, I – this is very good points there, Mia, I think that, you know, I – when – the pattern has been that President Obama and the White House has deferred to the special envoy and he has had a fairly free reign as evidenced by these incredible statements he makes publicly that are often at variance with the – any statement of policy that has been made by anyone else but him and is left unchecked, largely.

So I think the White House is on autopilot on this in just allowing the special envoy to do his job that the possible counter balance to that is precisely what your question implies which is that Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Rice, two people who have worked very hard over the years on issues related to Sudan and broader human rights issues in Africa, you know, this is where the – if any kind of poll of internal opposition or contrary view is going to come from and so I think as activist and as civil society organizations and working with members of Congress we're going to work very hard to ensure, to press, the White House to allow the United Nations, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN and the Secretary of State to play a larger role in Sudan policy.

Because right now the pattern and the approach that they have taken I think has been very damaging to U.S. interests and much more importantly very damaging to prospects for peace over the coming year.

(Elizabeth Blackney): Can I just follow up and ask, who in the U.S. Senate and in the U.S. House do you see as someone who is, for lack of a better term, an honest player who may be able to help along this policy being implemented as President Obama campaigned on and stated earlier instead of allowing Scott Gration to kind of drive the train for now? Who do you see as those leaders in Congress that can help?

John Prendergast: Do you want to say anything, Mia?

Mia Farrow: No, John, I – you know them all.

John Prendergast: Okay, well, you know, I think that I would answer it this way. That the Congress has remained very united in terms of a bipartisan approach to this crisis, have done so for the last 15 years and I think there are a lot of honest brokers up there in – on Capitol Hill who are willing to speak out. I think there's been, as there always is, deference during the first year of an administration.

I think now you're going to see some increased willingness to speak out as – you know, the only thing that matters to people is what's the results on the ground? And if there is no peace deal in Darfur and we're seeing the kind of things that we saw in (inaudible) where they are actually going back to some of the tactics they used in 2003 to 2005 which Congress unanimously viewed as genocidal and then in the south if we see deterioration on – in advance of the referendum that's a signal that the policy is in distress.

And I think that's when you will get the effort by the administration to play a larger role in – its appropriate role in the checks and balances that we're expect of them. So I think there are a lot of people that step up on a regular basis and I very, very great confidence that if necessary, if Obama does choose not to play a role in ensuring that his policy gets implemented then I think Congress will play it's oversight role and press the administration and press the President himself to do that.

(Elizabeth Blackney): Great, thank you.

Eric Cohen: Thank you, (Elizabeth), next question (Lynn).

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of (Elizabeth Brotherton) with Roll Call.

(Elizabeth Brotherton): Hi, thank you so much, I sort of just have a follow up. I'm wondering if anyone is going to be doing any action specifically on Capitol Hill in the coming weeks. Mia, do you plan to go lobby members at all in the upcoming weeks or months?

Mia Farrow: I don't know of such a plan. Does anyone else? John?

John Prendergast: Sam, you jump in too but I know – I mean we've been going up, the human rights groups on this call and others have been going up and meeting with different members of Congress, briefing them, just keeping them apprised of what's happening. So, again, their ready to play their appropriate role as an oversight role.,

We are planning a series of ads that will be targeted towards members of Congress and pressing and pushing them to play that oversight role more robustly and aggressively, because the clock is ticking – more loudly everyday towards the resumption of war in advance of the referendum.

This is what we all fear, and if it doesn't happen, it will be partly because the United States played its appropriate role in preventing the conflict. If it does happen, we will all look back and go, “Ah, why didn't we raise an alarm about U.S. acquiescence to all these different variables on the ground?”

So, Congress played a major role in that. So, therefore, there is the usual visits, but then, we're going to start a series of ads that – that are focused on the leadership in the House and the Senate of the Foreign Affairs – in the (inaudible) Committee, and focus on their role as – of oversight of checks and balances. Sam, what about that 1-800-genocide and things like that? Anything planned?

Sam Bell: Yeah, well, the only other thing I would say is, during the recent Congressional Recess at the end of March, beginning of April, we had constituents all over the country meeting with their members while they were back home in The District. We had over 50 meetings and we're generating hundreds of calls to key members of Congress to get them to hold hearings to weigh in with the Administration, et cetera.

Eric Cohen: Mark, - can you add some thoughts on this subject?

(Mark Lotwis): Sure, you know one thing I would point out is (Save Darfur [Coalition]) just started as you know series of ads this week, including, in Roll Call and Politico and targeting The Hill and the President online as well. You know, with this basic message of don't reward this war criminal, al-Bashir, for stealing this election, and I can say that I just came back from Sudan.

I was there for three weeks, and I met with a variety of (civil) society leaders and opposition party candidates, and leaders, tribal leaders in camps in Darfur, and I really heard a uniform message, was that, the United States was not leading in the peace process that we were not making a difference.

And I think we are going to have as a community that the movement that is particularly working on Darfur in Sudan, is going to be asking President Obama for him to hold his special envoy more accountable, for him to pull together his foreign policy team on this including Secretary Clinton, UN Ambassador Rice, and (Gration) and others, and to give them some new direction.

You know what – the message that has to get across to the President is that you know the people in Darfur and in Sudan really want the United States to take the lead, and we can't sit back and let the NCP and the Bashir Government control the dialogue. You know we have to define that agenda, and we need to hold that Government more accountable.

Eric Cohen: Thank you, Mark. (Lynn) can we have the next question, please?

Operator: Yes, your next question comes from (Andrew Meldrum) with Global Post.

(Andrew Meldrum): Good morning. I'm asking about South Sudan and whether there is the worry that these election results and will allow Bashir to try and prevent the referendum from happening in 2011 over whether or not South Sudan can become independent?

Eric Cohen: John, you want to start us on that?

John Prendergast: Yeah, (Andy), how are you doing? Thanks for your question. I think that it is really a crucial one, because it's precisely in the way the International Community, in particular, United States responds to this election that will give a signal to President Bashir in the National Congress Party to what degree they need to worry about a response from the international community that, if they start to undermine the process leading up to the referendum.

Remember, this election that's taking place now, was largely stolen a rig a year ago when the census terms were and the census was undertaken and the gerrymandering of the districts, all the kinds of methods that dictatorships regularly use. I mean, it was obvious what was happening, and Sudanese groups all over the country,

I am talking about inside Sudan, where howling in protest seeing how these things were going forward, and the United States (General Gration) again as the Representative of the U.S. on the Sudan issue, largely whitewashed it, just ignored these massive blinking lights. Similarly, as they develop now in the immediate aftermath of the elections, we are going to see the process of building the terms of the referendum.

We are going to see a great deal of attempts at manipulation in the technical aspects of the process, and, I believe, we're going to see a resumption or an increase in intensification of what Ambassador Rice talked about at the UN's Security Council a few weeks ago, a month ago, about the idea that there is going to be increased support for Southern-based Militias in order to undermine stability in the South.

So, I think that the government, the National Congress Party will use both the disruptions undermining this sort of integrity of the process of the referendum itself and more thuggishly will provide support to militias that, traditionally,

have been opposed to the (SPLM) that the leading party in the South, and those militias will help undermine stability in the process leading up to the referendum.

And that's where you are going to see the arguments being made by the –by the Sudanese Government, by China, by Russia, by others, by many of the Arab leagues, to say well, the South is just too unstable to have its referendum. Now let's delay it. I mean, that's what we are going to see.

It's obvious, we are going to see it, and again, if we don't say anything in response to a deeply flawed election, that's going to embolden the National Congress Party to go forward and do what they did in the election for the referendum.

Eric Cohen: So, in other words, it would be kind of like what is going in Darfur may be unleashed in South Sudan to undermine the stability.

John Prendergast: Remember, what going in Darfur – what was unleashed in Darfur – was what had already been done in the South during the '90s. The government of Sudan backed certain militias, particularly in Upper (Nile and Eastern Equatoria), in order to attack the (SPLA), but more importantly, to divide groups ethnically.

So, pitting (Nuer) and (Dinka) groups against each other. Pitting (Dinka) and (Equatorian) groups against each other as a means of dividing and destroying Southern unity, they then, saw how effective that was, replicated it with the (janjaweed) militias and the targeted attacks in Darfur.

I have no doubt they're going to resume that tried-and-true strategy in Southern Sudan. We have seen it tested in a few areas. There are many militias that remain in place from the South, from the 90s, that the destruction that was (wrought) in the 90s, they're still there.

They are still in close contact with the NCP suppliers. So, my fear is that, my greatest fear is that if we don't check that early on, if we are not really focused on that variable, we are going to see, and we – don't forget the Lords Of Resistance Army been kept alive all this time.

We are going to see a resumption or an increase in their attacks in the South. I have no doubt about that as the summer comes on. So, those are – it is the way they have been able to keep power very effectively. Why would they move away from that strategy?

Why would they try something new when the stakes are so high? The country could disintegrate. The country could – they could lose their access to the oil. That is not going happen without a fight. There's no – what Bashir says about it, is acceptance of referendum result.

Watch his action, not his words. We are going to see a resumption and an increase of this kind of targeted divide and destroy ethnic-based militia strategy unfold over the summer in advance of the – real kind of intense preparations for the referendum in the fall, and then going into the new year.

Mia Farrow: I hope you'll forgive me? I have to go. I have a child in the hospital. So, thank you all and I must leave the call now. Bye.

Eric Cohen: Thank you, Mia. (Andrew), was your question complete?

(Andrew Meldrum): Very complete, thank you.

Eric Cohen: OK, thank you (Andrew). If there are more questions? If people could press star one, we'll pick them up just before closing, but if questions occur to you afterwards, or if you want to arrange a follow up interview with any of the speakers, contact (Susan Morgan) at susan@paxcommunications.org. That's P-A-X Communications with an X. All one word dot org. (Lynn), could we poll for questions one last time?

(Lynn): At this time, I would like to remind everyone if you would like to ask a question, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. At this time there are no questions.

Eric Cohen: OK, well, thank you all for joining us on today's call, and if you can, please join us on the [upcoming calls tomorrow at 10 a.m. Eastern](#) and again on Friday at 10 a.m., and with that, thank you and good day.