

An Urgent Plea for Immediate Food Relief to Starving People in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan

August 20, 2012

To: Dr. Princeton Lyman, U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan; and Ms. Samantha Power, National Security Adviser and Chair of the Atrocities Prevention Board; Ms. Susan Rice, U.S. U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations; and Congressman Frank Wolf, R-VA

From: Dr. John Weiss, Professor of History, Cornell University, and Dr. Samuel Totten, Genocide Scholar, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Seeking sanctuary from the ongoing bombings of their villages and farms by the Government of Sudan, at least 200,000 to 300,000 Nuba Mountains people are huddled in the cracks, crevasses and caves high up in the mountains without food. As early as January 2012, rumors were afloat that some were suffering from malnutrition. As refugees began to flow across the border into refugee camps in South Sudan, it was quickly ascertained that not only were some suffering from malnutrition but also severe malnutrition. It's now been established that an unknown number of people have perished, both in the mountains and on their way to the refugee camps, from starvation, and that such starvation continues unabated.

The rainy season, which has rendered the Nuba Mountains increasingly difficult to access since May, will continue until early October. Overland vehicles cannot make it through the mud and airstrips are unusable. The only possible way to deliver that food is by airdrop, which is why the 71-member coalition asked on August 8th that such flights be undertaken immediately. Meanwhile, the Sudanese government plays its usual game of delay salted with prevarication and rooted in bad faith, demanding impossible conditions before it will promise to allow access by an air or land humanitarian corridor.

Back channel diplomacy is underway and some food has purportedly reached the people in the mountains but it's far from enough. And if ample food is not soon delivered, thousands, and possibly tens of thousands, face starvation. We believe that a way around the tangle of politics and suspicions is for the United Nations and/or the U.S. Government to offer to fly plumpynut into the mountains. To ensure the Government of Sudan that plumpynut and only plumpynut, a food especially created for those suffering severe malnutrition, is being transported into the Nuba Mountains, representatives from the Government of Sudan (GoS) should be invited to South Sudan to inspect the cargo. If the GoS fears that the food is going to the rebels its representatives should be invited to remain aboard and watch as those facing starvation (civilians, men, women and children) carry the food off to their places of sanctuary.

We suggest that either the World Food Program or USAID fly the food into the Nuba Mountains.

Such flights should be arranged immediately in order to attempt to stave off other innocents from starving to death.

Thank you very much for your serious consideration of these suggestions.

Dr. John Weiss
Dr. Samuel Totten
with complete agreement from
Dr. Gregory Stanton, President of Genocide Watch