



July 6<sup>th</sup> 2016

Sudan

Question Asked by Baroness Cox

**Baroness Cox (CB)**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the current situation in Sudan in the light of continuing military offensives and aerial bombardments by the Government of Sudan on civilians in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con)**

My Lords, we are deeply concerned by fighting and aerial bombardments in Sudan. We made it clear in our statement of 27 May, with troika partners the US and Norway, that the Sudanese Government have a responsibility to protect all their citizens. We welcome the Government's decision to sign the AU road map and announce a cessation of hostilities in the two areas, which has held so far. It is important that this is extended to the Darfur region.

**Baroness Cox (CB)**

My Lords, in thanking the Minister for that very sympathetic reply, with some signs of hope, may I ask whether she is aware that I have recently visited the people of the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan and seen at first hand the destruction of schools, clinics, markets and places of worship caused by the continuing aerial bombardment of civilians by the Government of Sudan? I have actually entered the snake-infested caves where women and children are forced to hide from those bombs. One lady had recently been bitten by a cobra, and many people are now starving to death. May I therefore ask the Minister what evidence there is of any really significant positive results from the representations that Her Majesty's Government allegedly make to the Government in Khartoum regarding these continuing de facto genocidal policies in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

First—I hope this does not sound flippant, because it is not intended to be—may I wish the noble Baroness a very happy birthday? I wish that my present to her could be to say that all the problems had been resolved. What I can say is that there is a firm commitment by the United Kingdom to continue working with the troika to achieve the best result for all those in Sudan who have been suffering the

depredations that she has outlined. It is important that international co-operation achieves a political solution—because, of course, it would not be a military solution that would hold long term. We go into our negotiations and talks across the piece in all these matters, and our support of UNAMID, with our eyes wide open but with determination and understanding.

**Lord Chidgey (LD)**

My Lords, following Oxfam’s statement that the Khartoum process represents Europe sacrificing its values “on the altar of migration” will the Government consider their position as chair of that process? And, following the outcome of the EU referendum, what is the position of the UK within the Troika, given that there will no longer be European Union representation within that group?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

My Lords, with regard to the technicality of the membership of the Troika, we remain there very firmly, a strong partner of Norway and the United States; there is absolutely no doubt about that. As for the chairmanship of the Khartoum process, we will remain as chair until Ethiopia, I believe, takes over the role later this year in the normal way. We will continue to have a strong focus on the conflicts and human rights situation throughout Sudan.

**Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead (Lab)**

My Lords, the Minister will be well aware that Sudanese military forces and militias continue, as they have done for the last 12 years, to use rape as a weapon of war in Darfur, as well as in other Sudan conflict areas. The Minister will also, I think, agree that the perpetrators of the mass rape of women and girls must and should be held to account. Will the Minister therefore agree to press for the Security Council to urgently authorise a much-needed investigation into the terrible abuses that have been committed?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

My Lords, these matters are discussed at the United Nations and must continue to be so—they are part and parcel of the discussions in the Human Rights Council and the universal periodic review process. I cannot say that a resolution will be brought imminently within the United Nations, but I can give the noble Baroness an absolute assurance that these matters are always foremost in our discussions whenever human rights are raised. She is absolutely right to focus on the appalling violence that has been committed against women, girls, men and boys in this matter.

**The Lord Bishop of Salisbury**

My Lords, I should like to underline the points made by the noble Baroness in her opening question about the significance of deliberate and targeted terrorism by the Sudanese Government on their own people, particularly in the bombing in the Nuba Mountains, where Anglican schools have been repeatedly destroyed. My own diocese, the diocese of Salisbury, has a link with what is now Sudan and South Sudan that goes back more than 40 years, and there is a delegation from the Anglican communion in Sudan this week. Will the Minister inform the House how the Government intend to continue to provide leadership in relation to humanitarian aid in this continuing crisis?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

My Lords, our commitment to international humanitarian aid is undimmed; indeed, I know that we are looking to see how we can strengthen it further. The UK is the third-largest humanitarian donor in Sudan, having provided so far a total of £41.5 million to the humanitarian response. We will certainly continue to do so, such as, for example, through the £6.6 million water and sanitation programme in Port Sudan.

**Baroness Berridge (Con)**

My Lords, my noble friend has outlined the fact that there have been discussions relating to human rights abuses. UK parliamentarians including the noble Lord, Lord Alton, and I, as well as colleagues from abroad, have been involved in writing to the Sudanese authorities regarding particular cases in Sudan, and we have had some success. However, there seems to be a case of whack-a-mole going on whereby you make a representation about one person, who is then temporarily released, but somebody else is arrested. Will my noble friend please outline whether there have been discussions with the Sudanese authorities regarding how to bring about systemic change and, in particular, regarding the release of the human rights activists from the Centre for Training and Human Development and the two Christian pastors who are the latest to have been arrested?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

My Lords, human rights defenders face persecution and wrongful detention around the world and Sudan is a place where we have acted through our embassy work to try to ensure that human rights defenders are not subject to this wrongful action. With regard to specific citizens, if the road map itself is successful then the Government of Sudan will of course have to show that they have a better human rights record than they have had heretofore.

**Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB)**

My Lords, does the Minister recall that as long ago as 17 May 2012, my noble friend Lady Cox and I cited the view of Dr Mukesh Kapila, the former high representative of this country in Sudan, that the second genocide of the 21st century was unfolding in South Kordofan, Darfur being the first? In February of this year we raised the Human Rights Watch report detailing how civilians, including children, were, “burned alive or blown to pieces after bombs or shells landed on their homes”. One month ago, on 27 May, two days after the bombing of St Vincent’s school on 25 May, the noble Baroness told me that they had told Khartoum that they must “distinguish between combatants and non-combatants and uphold International Humanitarian Law”. What response have the Government had? When will President Omar al-Bashir, wanted for genocide, be brought to justice?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

My Lords, first, the noble Lord will understand that I was extremely disappointed—using House of Lords language—that President Bashir was able to travel to Djibouti on 8 May and Uganda on 12 May without being arrested by those countries, which are signatories to the ICC. I hope they will reconsider if he ever

travels to those countries again. We welcome the Government of Sudan's more recent announcement on 17 June of a unilateral cessation of hostilities in the two areas. As we say, we would like to see it extended to Darfur, and we are working to make that a reality.