

requirements. In all these cases the regulations would be unnecessary and wasteful.

However, a number of the concerns they raised have not been addressed, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in both Chambers to ensure that those matters are addressed as the bill moves through the process. Most importantly, it will be critical to assure that none of the new safety standards weaken the standards under the National Organic Program. In addition, it will be important that we facilitate and enhance the role of conservation and sustainability practices to address food safety issues. And we must ensure that the fee structure in the bill does not disproportionately impact small agricultural producers.

I thank my colleagues again for their leadership and prompt action on this matter, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and to work to fine-tune it as it moves through the legislative process.

CRITICAL ISSUES FACING SUDAN

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2009

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, Sudan has been ravaged by intermittent civil war for four decades. Over the last 20 years, more than two million people have died in Southern Sudan due to war-related causes and famine, and millions more have been displaced from their homes. In January 2005, after two and a half years of negotiations, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) of the South and the Government of Sudan signed a final peace agreement known as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). According to the United Nations, U.S. officials and Sudan observers, the implementation of the CPA has been selective and at times deliberately slow. With national elections scheduled for April 2010, the implementation of the CPA is critical.

Yesterday, on Thursday, July 30, 2009, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a hearing on "Ensuring the Human Rights of the People of Sudan: Implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement." The distinguished witnesses testifying before the Commission were Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth, Head of Mission, Government of South Sudan Mission in the United States; Roger Winter, former Special Representative on Sudan, Department of State; John Norris, Executive Director, the ENOUGH Project; and Amir Osman, Senior Director of Policy and Government Relations, Save Darfur Coalition.

Mr. Osman, a native of Sudan, fled his home country in 2003 because his work on human rights had put his life at risk. He was resettled in the United States in 2006 through the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, moved to Washington, D.C., and joined the Save Darfur Coalition. It is my privilege to share his testimony with my colleagues.

SAVE DARFUR COALITION—TESTIMONY OF AMIR OSMAN

Good afternoon. Chairman McGovern, Chairman Wolf, thank you very much for inviting me to testify today on this very important issue before this very important commission. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the critical issues currently facing my home country of Sudan.

It was a difficult decision for me to flee Sudan in 2003. I left because my work on human rights had put my life at risk. As a refugee living in Egypt, I continued to advocate for peace, justice, and democracy in Sudan at the American University in Cairo and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. I specifically focused on the genocide in Darfur during those years.

After being resettled to the United States in 2006 through the UNHCR, I moved here to Washington and joined the Save Darfur Coalition to aid its international advocacy efforts. As co-senior director of policy and government relations, I help design and implement the coalition's international policy, advocacy and outreach to foreign governments, and international partner organizations in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. I also focus on the human rights situation in Sudan and the peace processes in Darfur and South Sudan.

During the past decade, President Omar al-Bashir and his inner circle have transitioned from an ideologically driven regime to one whose primary aim is self-preservation. The regime now makes human rights compromises when it feels compelled to do so. The regime's continued abuses have been well-documented by human rights organizations. Regular warnings have been issued about illegal detentions, unfair trials, press censorship, and the routine harassment of journalists. In addition, current laws do little to protect victims of gender-based crimes.

The most urgent human rights challenge in Sudan today, however, continues to be the crisis in Darfur. Three million displaced civilians continue to suffer as a result of the genocide that began in 2003. While the systematic destruction of villages has largely ended, the people of Darfur continue to live in a lawless, dangerous environment, where rape continues to be a daily terror.

On March 4th, the Sudanese government demonstrated its ability to cut off humanitarian aid at any moment from the 4.7 million Darfuris who depend on it.

The mass violence committed by the Sudanese government several years ago has been replaced with the harassment, detention, torture, and murder of Sudanese civil society leaders. This violence led a significant number of the Sudanese human rights defenders to flee the country shortly after March 4th. Such abuses must be stopped.

The suffering in Darfur resembles in many ways the war in Southern Sudan. Both Darfuris and Southern Sudanese have experienced the bombing of villages and mass civilian displacement. The Sudanese government's use of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war and its divide and rule tactics amongst Southern rebels have also been repeated in Darfur.

At the same time the Sudanese government was launching its genocidal campaign in Darfur, it was negotiating with the SPLM an end to the conflict in the south. Bashir made the calculation that the international community would turn a blind eye to Darfur in the effort to get the CPA signed. His calculation turned out to be largely correct.

Bashir's favorite tactic is to delay true reforms by creating crises that distract the international community, allowing Bashir to never actually fulfill any of his promises. The international community enables Bashir by focusing on the crisis of the moment rather than a comprehensive solution. The NCP is using cooperation on the implementation of the CPA as leverage to resist international pressure on Darfur. And it is working.

The United States and the international community have failed to develop policies suited for dealing with a regime which lacks

a fundamental willingness to transform into the democratic state envisioned by the CPA. Sudan issues will not be resolved satisfactorily between just the NCP and SPLM or the NCP and the Darfuri rebels. All of Sudanese civil society must be empowered to participate in these processes.

The United States must understand that Sudan's crises cannot be managed forever or resolved individually. Only when the international community demands serious judicial and democratic reforms will there ever be a chance to resolve South Sudan and Darfur and move towards lasting peace. Policymakers have too often focused on the South to the detriment of Darfur, or Darfur to the detriment of the South. But Darfur and South Sudan are not separate problems; they are the result of a single problem: the undemocratic, centralized, and abusive nature of the ruling regime. Only when this problem is addressed will peace be forthcoming.

There is an urgent need for a coherent and comprehensive strategy to guide Sudan to a more democratic and peaceful future. Such a strategy requires that important and difficult choices be presented to the NCP. The Sudanese government must be forced to choose between cooperation and confrontation.

If they cooperate by ending the violence in Darfur, ensuring accountability through cooperation with the ICC, and fully implement the CPA, they may be allowed to reap the benefits of becoming a responsible member of the international community. If they continue to delay implementation of the CPA and continue to attempt to divert and distract the international community by using one conflict as leverage against the other, they must face real consequences.

While we here in Washington sit and debate policy, the people of Sudan continue to suffer. This policy debate should not be complicated. The United States and its allies must force Sudan's hand and then commit to seeing this through. We have played Bashir's game too long to be fooled any longer.

MINNESOTA HEALTH CARE

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2009

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, on July 20th, I held a health care hearing in the Minnesota State Capitol to discuss the challenges and opportunities for health care reform presents for Minnesota. Representatives from patient advocate groups, health plans, hospitals, health plans, County Commissioners, and State House Representatives were in attendance. The speakers discussed the need to expand preventative care, to end the practice of denying coverage for pre-existing conditions, and to improve access to quality, affordable care.

In the hearing, I heard over and over again that the current flawed Medicare reimbursement formula is harming Minnesota. The people of Minnesota want health care reform that addresses the three major challenges in health care reform—cost, quality, and access—none of which can be addressed without fixing the Medicare reimbursement formula. I support moving towards a system that ensures that all patients will receive evidence-based, quality care as the standard.

I would like to enter the testimony from the hearing witnesses from this event into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.