

Hearing on “Investments Tied to Genocide: Sudan Divestment and Beyond”

Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy

Statement by Rep. Maxine Waters

November 30, 2010

I would like to thank Chairman Gregory Meeks for organizing this hearing on “Investments Tied to Genocide: Sudan Divestment and Beyond.”

The Government of Sudan has been carrying out a campaign of genocide against the people of Darfur since 2003. The Sudanese Government has supported militia groups that attack villages in Darfur, systematically raping women and girls, destroying food and water supplies, and massacring communities. The United Nations has estimated that at least 300,000 people have died as a result of the conflict. While massacres are not as commonplace as they were in 2003 and 2004, nearly 3 million people remain displaced, and a climate of lawlessness, rape, violence, and impunity for human rights abusers persists.

Earlier this year, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity. President Bashir is the first sitting head of state to be issued an arrest warrant by the ICC. The warrant is still outstanding.

The very same day that the ICC issued its warrant, the Government of Sudan expelled 13 non-governmental organizations (NGO's) from Darfur, accusing them of cooperating with the ICC investigation. These 13 NGO's include many of the most respected humanitarian organizations in the world. Among them are Oxfam, Doctors Without Borders, the International Rescue Committee, and Mercy Corps. Millions of displaced people depended upon these organizations for food, clean water, and medical care. This outrageous act was just another example of the cruelty of the Government of Sudan towards its own people. And it proves that the ICC's decision to issue an arrest warrant for Bashir was entirely justified.

Early in 2006, I visited the Darfur region on a congressional delegation with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and I visited the camps for the displaced. As far as the eyes could see, there were crowds of people who had been driven from their homes, living literally on the ground with nothing but little tarps to cover them. It is appalling that these people are still forced to live like this, unable to return to their homes.

The Government of Sudan has been equally unfair in its dealings with the people of South Sudan. In 2002, following years of civil war in the southern region, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) signed a peace agreement, which established a roadmap for peace in South Sudan. Central to this agreement is a referendum in

South Sudan on independence. The agreement requires the referendum to be held in January of 2011, only two months away, and there are already signs that the Government of Sudan will not allow a free and fair referendum to be held and will not respect the results of the referendum, should the people of South Sudan choose independence.

The international community must not tolerate genocide or other crimes against humanity. We must make it clear to the Government of Sudan that it must fulfill its responsibilities. We must insist that the people of South Sudan be able to hold a free and fair referendum on independence and that the results of this referendum be respected. We must insist that humanitarian organizations be allowed to serve people in need. And we must insist that the people of Darfur be allowed to return to their homes and their lives in peace.

Congress passed the Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act in 2007. This landmark law allows states and investment companies to divest from companies that maintain business ties to Sudan and prohibits these companies from receiving federal contracts. This law was a response to genocide and other crimes against humanity being committed by the Government of Sudan. I look forward to hearing the testimony of the witnesses on how the Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act has made a difference in the struggle against genocide and what additional steps Congress can take to end human rights violations in Sudan.

I yield back the balance of my time.