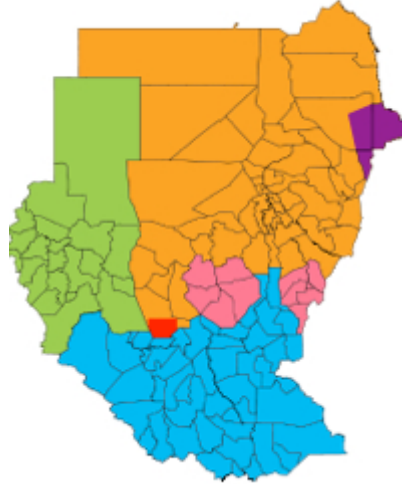




Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on January 14, 2011

## Communists Criticize Southern Sudan Referendum, Despite Its Success

The referendum taking place this week in the Southern Sudan on whether the region should remain part of Sudan or become its own independent state has enjoyed a high voter turnout, according to official reports, despite criticism from international communist groups and the Russian and Chinese governments. The region includes Darfur, known to be a hotbed of genocidal activity against the native African population, much of which is Christian, by the majority Sudanese Arab Janjaweed militias. The region has for decades been the scene of policies akin to religious and racially-motivated "ethnic cleansing."



The referendum, which will continue across the region until tomorrow, has not been without problems. A census which was held last year as the basis of a voter registration process was delayed three times due to a lack of funds, conflicts between the Sudanese government, and the presence of thousands of refugees from Darfur living in refugee camps in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, and in Kenya and Uganda. The plebiscite has also been shaken by threats of violence on the border between Darfur and the North, as well as in oil rich areas of the region.

According to [Voice of America](#), rebels in the South who refused to sign an amnesty offer from the southern administration have been seeking to disrupt the referendum. Approximately four million people have been registered to vote, and in order for the independence referendum to pass, more than 50 percent of the voters must cast yes ballots and the turnout must surpass 60 percent of the voters previously registered to participate in the election.

To date, it is highly likely that the referendum will meet these prerequisites. According to the [New York Times](#), the voting itself has been orderly, and five days into the referendum, turnout has been astronomical, with observers saying the total numbers will clear the 60-percent mark necessary for the results to be valid.

One of the largest and most controversially-handled problems associated with the referendum has been illiteracy. Varying symbol ideas have been proposed for the purpose of advertising the referendum, such as using an Islamic star to represent the anti-independence vote, although this has raised the ire of Islamists, who claim that this is a propaganda ploy and "Jewish symbol" being used to promote independence, which the historically communist-backed Northern Islamists oppose, due to Israel's support of independence, along with the United States.

The initiative comes about as a condition of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, also known as the Naivasha Agreement, a set of agreements signed between the Sudanese government (particularly the National Congress Party [NCP], which controls over 55% of Parliamentary seats) and the Darfurian



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Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the anti-Islamist, pro-democracy, predominately Christian and animist African army which has fought two civil wars against the largely Arab, Islamic, northern-dominated Sudanese government.

The agreement was the de facto resolution to the Second Sudanese Civil War, fought from 1983 to 2005, which was largely the result of actions against human rights taken by the Sudanese government, including the imposition of Sharia law on non-Muslims and the disbanding of institutions deemed "un-Islamic," as well as systematic murders and the organized rape of non-Muslim women.

The referendum effort has been the subject of controversy, including much criticism from Islamist-affiliated governments and Sudan's allies. In an ironic twist of fate, many on the left have complained about the self-determination efforts of the Southern Sudanese, who have long suffered under the oppressive thumb of Sudanese Islamist rule.

The NCP has not committed to fully honoring the results of the referendum. Haj Majid Suwar, Sudan's Sports and Youth Minister, has said that if the Southern Sudanese do not remove their troops and do not allow government campaigning efforts against independence, the NCP-led government (identified by the US. State Department as a "state sponsor of terrorism") [would not honor the results of the election](#), and even threatened to make (false) claims to the United States, United Nations, and African Union that the Southern Sudanese "did not hold [fulfill] the terms of the conditions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement" in order to nullify the results of the election.

The Sudanese government has also previously violated the terms of its peace agreement with the South, and according to Sudanese Liberation Army leader Minni Minnawi, the only Darfur leader to sign a ceasefire agreement with the Sudanese government, the government has failed to uphold the terms of the 2006 declaration, while the government claims that Minnawi is leading "rebels" in armed conflict against strategically-planted NCP troops in the South.

Sudan is an archetypical example of a state which has been both the subject of failed border-drawing in the post-colonial 1950s and 1960s, and an ideal example of communist infiltration into Africa in the wake of post-colonialism in the most tumultuous periods of the Cold War.

Shortly after Sudan declared independence in 1956, the beleaguered state earned the trust and support of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. As early as November 20, 1961, when then-Supreme Soviet Chairman Leonid Brezhnev visited Khartoum, the USSR and Sudan have enjoyed good bilateral relations, with the issuing of a Joint Declaration on that date, which provided Soviet aid for the sake of "technical and economic cooperation," including the use of Soviet funds for the creation of numerous enterprises, including four canning factories, an asbestos plant, a scientific laboratory, as well as the granting of a 20 million ruble credit at 2.5% interest.

In the period 1968-1972, the Soviet Union and member nations of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) also provided Sudan with critical military support, including selling large numbers of weapons and providing technical assistance and training to Sudan, much of which has been used against the South. At the time, the USSR and China also began supplying Sudan with its military aircraft, and presently, the Sudanese Air Force is comprised of 24 varieties of aircraft, 200 in total, with the Russian Federation providing 23 planes of one variety, China providing 66 planes of five varieties, and the Soviet Union having providing 57 planes of seven different kinds.

Accompanying the influx of Soviet and Chinese weapons into Sudan was the rise of the regime of Jaafar Muhammad an-Nimeiry in 1969, a member of the Islamo-Leninist Muslim Brotherhood (formed by



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Sayyid Qutb, who envisioned a social justice-oriented Islamic state guided by Sharia law and Quranic principles), and leader of the Sudanese Socialist Union, who pushed through numerous socialist reforms including land reforms and the nationalization of banks and industries.

Nimeiry outlawed any political parties other than the Sudanese Socialist Union, and was pro-communist, as he yearned for Soviet and Libyan support. According to Robbin Laird's book *Soviet Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, he was "gratified by counter-insurgency efforts by the USSR," and he was amenable to Moscow's efforts to step up arms flow to communist rebels in Eritrea, to whom he granted Sudanese territory. Not much has changed in Sudan, which is still one of Russia's most reliable allies in Africa, as well as a crucial source of resources for Red China.

His socialist ideology later spiraled into all-out Islamism, and he was totalitarian, "not averse to violent crackdowns and even mass executions of opponents," according to the [New York Times](#), as well as an adherent to the Soviet-backed socialist Arab nationalism of Egyptian ruler Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Nimeiry's ideology also set into motion the standard Sudanese policy of repression of Christians in the South, which was prompted by the adaptation of Sharia, to the liking of the Muslim Brotherhood.

This Islamism, later perpetuated through terrorist organizer and Al Qaeda sponsor Hassan al-Turabi, also a socialist, has earned the seal of approval of the global left, which stealthily opposes the referendum effort and the Christian, pro-Western South.

China, through its influence on the UN Security Council, has shielded the Islamic state from any sanctions due to its persecution of Christians. Red China offers consistent political and military backing to the regime and welcomes the absence of real peace in Sudan as enhancing its business opportunities, whatever the cost to southern Sudanese civilians, as China itself violates the human rights of its citizens. Oil, which is abundant in Southern Sudan, has been the nexus for China's continued support of Sudan, and it opposes any independence efforts as a threat to its own economic interests.

The Sudanese government has even invited as official "poll watchers" members of the Chinese government, as well as [Duma](#) members Aslambek Aslakhonov, an adviser to Vladimir Putin who was a former chief inspector for the Soviet Union's Ministry of Interior Affairs, and Vladimir Zhidkikh, a ranking member of Putin's "United Russia" coalition.

Like China, Russia supports Sudan's "territorial integrity," a position also taken by the Communist Party of Sudan (SCP), which opposes the referendum efforts, and has also supplied arms and blocked sanctions and peacekeeping efforts. This is also facilitated by al Bashir's pledges of friendship to Putin, as well as promises of gold and oil supplies to Russia.

The SCP laments the referendum as an "imperialist ploy." In an interview with the Australian [Green Left Weekly](#), Sudanese Communist leader Soubhi Iskander said, "We don't see any benefits in the referendum. We know that to split the country will lead to more trouble than during the civil war."

He also opposes independence for the persecuted Southern Sudanese out of fear that multinational corporations and Israel will wrest control of the Nile and natural resources. Likewise, the 2005 peace settlement brokered by the United States and opposed by Russia and China is also opposed by the SCP, which allegedly "verified its refusal and condemnation of the attempts to threaten" the Sudanese government by the United States.

An article published in *People's World* by Communist Party USA writer Dennis Laumann [also demonstrates communist opportunism](#); the article enunciates an anti-referendum stance while claiming that the "communist" principle of self-determination is inapplicable when a regime allied to



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international communist interests and hostile to American and Western interests is involved. Laumann states that independence for a persecuted group is trumped by the need for “African unity” against a common perceived threat of Western, anti-African Union activity.

International communist opposition to the Sudanese referendum and its high voter turnout thus highlights once more the fundamental correlation between anti-Western attitudes, opposition to human rights violations, and economic and military support for dictatorial regimes characteristic of communism.

Key for above map:

- North Sudan: orange
- Darfur: green
- Eastern Front: purple
- South Sudan: blue
- Abyei: red
- South Kurdufan and Blue Nile: pink



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