

“Inside Perspective with Cindy Castano”

Sunday, December 9, 2007

SUDAN’S GENOCIDE LANDS AT THE DOOR OF ISRAEL

Special Guest: Simon Deng



Simon Deng, Human Rights Advocate, Founder of the Sudan Freedom Walk and Former Slave who has just returned from Israel in efforts to help settle the Sudanese refugees and protect them from imprisonment, or worse – return to Egypt or Sudan. Hear Simon tell the compelling stories of the refugees as they fled over the border dodging the bullets of the Egyptian patrols. After World War II, Jews sneaked into pre-state Israel illegally, defying a ban by the British authorities. They came without anything - without underwear, in shorts, with torn shoes. **TODAY**, a new group of refugees is slipping into the country illegally - a mix of Muslims and Christians from a country that's officially at war with Israel. But the 230 Sudanese refugees that have arrived are landing in an Israeli jail. As Israel decides what to do with those who have fled what the US has described as a "genocide," the government of Israel should be mindful of Jewish history.

The flow of refugees to Israel has picked up over the past six months since 27 Sudanese asylum seekers were killed late December in clashes with Egyptian police at a sit-in demonstration at a UN refugee agency office in Cairo. "I wasn't protected by the UN in Egypt. I was afraid that my visa had expired and they would take me back to Sudan," says Deng, a Sudanese refugee who paid \$600 to a Bedouin guide to sneak him into Israel from the Egyptian Sinai desert. He received the money from friends living in Australia. "I was expecting to be protected. I am a refugee."

Bio: Simon Deng is a native of the Shiluk Kingdom in Southern Sudan. He describes his village of Tonga as a "peaceful farming community," though it was the victim of frequent raids by the Sudanese Army. Mr. Deng recalls: "One of the first things I was told as a child: if the Arab men come, just run for your life." When he was only nine, the Sudanese army swept through his village. As he was tending to his family's goats, German-made transport trucks suddenly appeared carrying troops. He watched them burn huts to the ground, slaughter the men of the village, and steal their livestock.

Though he narrowly escaped death, only one year later he was abducted by an Arab northerner. He would spend the next few years of his life as a child slave in northern Sudan. He was shown a picture of a man with his feet and hands cut off and warned: "If you complain, this is what will happen to you." Mr. Deng was forced to sleep on straw, allowed to eat only leftover scraps, and beaten regularly. He made his daring escape three years later.

Mr. Deng went on to work as a messenger in the Sudanese parliament and later to become a national swimming champion. Today he is an American citizen, leading the struggle to stop genocide in Sudan. He has addressed audiences across the nation and spoken at rallies alongside prominent women's rights activist Gloria Steinem. Last May he was invited to speak before the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Switzerland. In March 2006, Mr. Deng met launched the **Sudan Freedom Walk** to call for an end to slavery and genocide to Sudan, trekking 300 miles from United Nations headquarters in New York to the Capital Building in Washington, D.C., culminating in a meeting with President Bush at the White House (picture above, left). In May 2006, Mr. Deng embarked on a fact-finding and humanitarian aid mission with **Christian Solidarity International** in Southern Sudan and Darfur, where he met with leading Southern Sudanese officials, including the President of Southern Sudan, Salva Kiir.

"I thought I could forgive and forget," Deng says. "But villages are still being burnt, women are still being raped, and people are being sold into slavery. [...] We Americans must act and act now."