

RELEASE IN PART B6

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**From:** Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 31, 2012 7:32 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** FW: NYT Op Ed - America's Friend in Need

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**From:** Nuland, Victoria J  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 31, 2012 8:11 PM  
**To:** Sullivan, Jacob J; Mills, Cheryl D; Carson, Johnnie  
**Subject:** Fw: NYT Op Ed - America's Friend in Need

Poignant

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**From:** PA Clips [mailto:paclips@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 31, 2012 03:09 PM  
**To:** PA-Monitoring-Group-DL  
**Subject:** NYT Op Ed - America's Friend in Need

America's Friend in Need  
New York Times Opinion  
Tuesday, July 31, 2012, 1:47 pm  
By ELIAS TABAN

I have spent over 40 years of my life at war. I was born minutes before Sudanese soldiers gunned down the leaders of my village in South Sudan and I spent the first week of my life hiding in the jungle with my mother. I became a child soldier thirteen years later and survived only by the grace of God. In the years since, I have worked to seek peace as a chaplain for the Southern rebels and now as the head of the Sudan Evangelical Alliance and the Sudan and Uganda Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

Too many people have died in my country, but millions more would have died if the American people and churches had not sent aid and put pressure on Khartoum to negotiate peace with the Southern rebels. The U.S. helped South Sudan gain independence about a year ago. But we need continued involvement from our American brothers and sisters to ensure our nation survives its infancy.

My life's prayer is that we turn our swords into ploughs and instead of digging graves we dig wells and build foundations for hospitals. But over the last year, the leaders of Sudan and South Sudan have remained locked in political disputes that have resulted in violence along our shared border and a growing economic crisis. South Sudan has the majority of the region's oil, but the pipelines to ship it pass through Sudan. This mutual dependence on oil revenue could help build cooperation between north and south after independence. Instead oil has become a weapon both sides use to harm the other.

After Khartoum unilaterally seized southern oil in lieu of transport fees that the two countries had failed to agree on, South Sudan decided to halt oil production in January. It was a bold move, but it was justified: Khartoum benefited from southern oil for years even as it marginalized the south.

But even when one is in the right, justice and revenge can become easily confused. There must always come a point where we look forward and recognize the need to stop fighting over past wrongs so we can build toward a new future. That time has come for South Sudan. We must restart oil production and work out an agreement to transport it through north Sudan. But we will need international support and pressure on Khartoum if that plan is to succeed. This month, the two parties met in Addis Ababa to negotiate a new oil deal, but yet again could not reach an agreement. Without outside intervention or pressure from the U.S., it seems unlikely that the two sides will reach a settlement ahead of the August 2 deadline set by the United Nations.

The cessation of southern oil production and export has hurt both countries and weakened our fragile peace. The region has lost its primary funding stream. South Sudan has seen nearly 80 percent inflation. Families are struggling to get by, and half of the South Sudanese population faces food shortages. All the progress the country has made over the last year on education and health is grinding to a halt as funding runs dry.

This is not how it should be. Both Sudan and South Sudan are blessed with fertile lands created by two rivers that join to form the Nile. We should be the breadbasket of Africa and a model for cooperation between the Middle East and Africa.

The U.S. should use its leverage in Sudan and South Sudan to help the two countries come to an agreement on transparent oil transportation fees. We also need international help in finalizing the boundary between Sudan and South Sudan. And we need help from the government, NGOs, and church friends in the U.S. to ensure that the vast humanitarian needs in South Sudan are met as the world's newest nation continues to develop its enormous agricultural potential. America has been an ally throughout our struggles, and I don't think there is a country in the world that loves Americans more than South Sudan.

My faith teaches that suffering and strife may last the night, but joy and peace come with the dawn. I still believe we will build schools, homes, and communities, and that my children can grow up without experiencing the violence and strife that have defined my life. I am asking that America continue to walk this road with us as we seek a new dawn for our region.

Bishop Elias Taban holds a Diploma in Civil Engineering and an advanced Diploma in Theology. He works as a mentor to many in the South Sudanese government and was one of the few senior religious leaders to have stayed in South Sudan during the long north-south conflict.

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