



**BARONESS COX
AND SUDAN:**

**HOW RELIABLE
A WITNESS?**

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WORKING FOR PEACE IN SUDAN

BARONESS COX AND SUDAN: HOW RELIABLE A WITNESS?

Baroness Cox has presented herself over the past several years as an expert witness on Sudan and Sudanese issues. She has testified as such before various committees of the United States Congress and has also spoken on Sudan at various other conferences and gatherings. What is abundantly clear, however, is that her reliability and judgement in some of the very serious claims she has made about Sudan and the Sudanese Government have been questioned and contradicted by several informed sources - sources which are themselves unsympathetic to the Government of Sudan.

Baroness Cox's claims about "slavery" in Sudan: *Contradicted by Anti-Slavery International and African Rights*

Baroness Cox has made repeated allegations about "slavery" in Sudan, and that the Government of Sudan was involved in such "slavery". Her claims, and those of Christian Solidarity International, with which she has been closely associated, have been clearly questioned by professional human rights groups such as Anti-Slavery International and African Rights. The internationally-respected human rights activist Alex de Waal, an acknowledged expert on Sudan and a former director of African Rights, stated with reference to Christian Solidarity International, and the claims made by Baroness Cox, that despite the fact that there are no "slave markets in the 19th century image":

Nonetheless, overeager or misinformed human rights advocates in Europe and the US have played upon lazy assumptions to raise public outrage. Christian Solidarity International, for instance, claims that "Government troops and Government-backed Arab militias regularly raid black African communities for slaves and other forms of booty."... This despite the fact that there is no evidence for centrally organized, government-directed slave raiding or slave trade.¹

A 1997 Anti-Slavery International report on allegations of Sudanese slavery, also contradicted Baroness Cox's claims of government involvement in slavery:

the charge that government troops engage in raids for the purpose of seizing slaves is not backed by the evidence.²

Baroness Cox's claims of Iraqi Scud Missiles in Sudan: *Contradicted by the British Government, the White House and UNSCOM*

Baroness Cox has made serious claims about Sudanese access to and use of weapons of mass destruction technology which adversely reflect on her reliability as a source of information on Sudan. On 17 February 1998, in the British Parliament, Baroness Cox claimed that four hundred Scud missiles (including support vehicles well over one thousand vehicles) had been secretly transferred to Sudan from Iraq since the Gulf War in the face of unprecedented satellite, electronic and physical surveillance of that country by the United States, the United Nations and other concerned members of the international community. It is a matter of record that Reuters reported that on the same day that Baroness Cox made this claim, the White House clearly stated:

¹ Alex de Waal, 'Sudan: Social Engineering, Slavery and War', *Covert Action Quarterly*, Spring 1997.

² Peter Verney, *Slavery in Sudan*, Anti-Slavery International and Sudan Update, London, May 1997, p.20.

We have no credible evidence that Iraq has exported weapons of mass destruction technology to other countries since the (1991) Gulf War.

On 19 March 1998, Baroness Symons, a junior British foreign minister, supported by all the information available to the British Defence Intelligence Staff, stated in relation to the claims of weapons of mass destruction technology transfers from Iraq to Sudan cited by Baroness Cox, that:

We are monitoring the evidence closely, but to date we have no evidence to substantiate these claims.... Moreover, we know that some of the claims are untrue...The defence intelligence staff in the MoD (Ministry of Defence) have similarly written a critique which does not support the report's findings.³

The British Government Minister also stated that:

Nor has the United Nations Special Commission reported any evidence of such transfers since the Gulf War conflict and the imposition of sanctions in 1991.⁴

Baroness Cox's claim that chemical weapons were used in southern Sudan in July 1999:

Contradicted by the United Nations.

In a debate in the British Parliament on 13 October 1999, Baroness Cox stated that Sudanese Government forces had used chemical weapons in locations in southern Sudan in July 1999. On 17 October the United Nations revealed that tests conducted by the laboratories of the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta on medical samples taken by Operation Lifeline Sudan members in the areas cited by Cox "indicated no evidence of exposure to chemicals".⁵

Baroness Cox's claims about genocide in Sudan:

Contradicted by the British Government.

On 26 May 1998, the London **Daily Telegraph** carried an interview with Baroness Cox in which she alleged that genocide was taking place in the Bahr al-Ghazal region of southern Sudan. She was commenting on fighting between Dinka and Rizaiquat tribesmen, during which Rizaiquat tribesmen had raided Dinka and SPLA-controlled areas. She ignored that fact that, as reported by *Agence France Presse* on the 7 and 12 May of that year, Dinka and SPLA members had repeatedly raided northwards into Rizaiquat villages. Baroness Cox's claim of genocide appears to be based on raids by Arab civilians on people, camps and villages associated with raids earlier in late April and May by the SPLA. It is clear that to Cox SPLA/Dinka attacks on Arab civilians in late April and early May 1998, attacks which resulted in considerable deaths and destruction of property, were not deemed "genocide", while what appear to have been similar attacks in retaliation were classified as "genocide" by her. This studied selectivity can at best be said to reflect naiveté on the part of Baroness Cox and only but diminish Baroness Cox's credibility as a commentator on Sudan.

Cox's claims were contradicted by the British Government. When directly asked in Parliament if they had any evidence to verify Baroness Cox's claims of genocide in Bahr al-Ghazal as reported in the **Daily Telegraph** in May 1998, the government, no friend of the Sudanese regime, replied:

³ House of Lords **Official Report**, 19th March 1998, cols. 818-820.

⁴ House of Lords **Official Report**, 19th March 1998, cols. 818-820.

⁵ Note by the Spokesman of the United Nations Secretary-General handed to the Sudanese Ministry of External Relations by the UN Resident Coordinator in Sudan, Philippe Borel.

The situation was very complicated and the picture unclear, making it difficult to verify facts... these killings should be seen in the context of a long history of tribal conflicts. It would appear from the information available to us that no one side was entirely to blame. ⁶

Baroness Cox's claims that the Sudanese Government was involved in the 1992 World Trade Center bombing *Contradicted by the United States Government*

In October 1999, Baroness Cox claimed that the Sudanese Government had been involved in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York.⁷ In March 1993, the United States government stated that the World Trade Center bombing was carried out by a poorly trained local group of individuals who were not under the auspices of a foreign government or international network.⁸ In June 1993, the American authorities again stated there was no evidence of foreign involvement in the New York bombing or conspiracies.⁹ Any Sudanese involvement was again unambiguously denied in 1996 by Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox Jr., the Department of State's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, on the occasion of the release of the 1995 **Patterns of Global Terrorism**. Ambassador Wilcox stated:

We have looked very, very carefully and pursued all possible clues that there might be some state sponsorship behind the World Trade Center bombing. We have found no such evidence, in spite of an exhaustive search, that any state was responsible for that crime. Our information indicates that Ramzi Ahmed Yousef and his gang were a group of freelance terrorists, many of whom were trained in Afghanistan, who came from various nations but who did not rely on support from any state.¹⁰

Baroness Cox and Sudan: *"not well-enough informed" - international humanitarian aid workers*

It is worth noting that in Andrew Boyd's sympathetic biography of Baroness Cox, **Baroness Cox: A Voice for the Voiceless**, Christopher Besse of Medical Emergency Relief International, an aid group with which Cox is closely associated, is quoted as saying:

She's not the most popular person in Sudan among the humanitarian aid people. She has her enemies, and some of them feel she is not well-enough informed. She recognizes a bit of the picture, but not all that's going on. ¹¹

That Baroness Cox only "recognizes a bit of the picture" is clearly borne out by her claims on "genocide" outlined above. That Cox is not popular amongst the humanitarian aid workers and organisations is very significant. These workers and groups are people involved in Sudanese issues and relief on a day-to-day basis. They are in a far better position to judge Baroness Cox's reliability as a commentator on Sudan than Congressmen several thousand miles away for whom her partisan and often inaccurate claims may merely reinforce political and religious prejudice about Sudan and the Sudanese situation. The sooner this is realised the sooner a clearer picture of Sudan will emerge, especially within the United States.

⁶ House of Lords, **Official Report**, 10 December 1998, written answers, column 103.

⁷ In correspondence with Lord McNair, 14 October 1999.

⁸ **The New York Times**, 26 March 1993.

⁹ **The New York Times**, *Washington Post*, 25 June 1993.

¹⁰ **Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1996 Briefing**, Press briefing by Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox Jr, Washington-DC, 30 April 1996 on US Government Home Page, at <http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/960430.html>

¹¹ Andrew Boyd, **Baroness Cox: A Voice for the Voiceless**, Lion Publishing, Oxford, 1998, p.324.