

Following a violent clash with Egyptian police in Cairo on December 30th, numerous Sudanese refugees were killed or injured. In signing the letter below, IRC joined with other agencies to register their protest at the excessive use of force.

REFUGEE COUNCIL USA

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Condoleezza Rice, Ph.D
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC

January 9, 2006

Dear Madame Secretary:

We are shocked and saddened by the death and injuries of Sudanese protesters in their encounter with Egyptian police in Cairo on Friday, December 30, 2005. Many Sudanese refugees resettled in the United States have deep ongoing concern for friends and relatives who were part of this group or who are otherwise seeking refugee protection in Cairo. We share these concerns.

Media accounts of the tragedy have been alarming. We have been left with an understanding that on early Friday morning, a team of some 3,000 Egyptian riot police forcibly dispersed over 2,000 Sudanese refugees, asylum seekers and other at risk Sudanese. These individuals had taken up residence in a plaza near the UNHCR office in central Cairo at the end of September seeking better treatment from both the Egyptian authorities and UNHCR.

It is a tragedy that after months of negotiation, the protest came to a bloody end. While the final death and casualty toll is as yet undetermined, the forcible removal of this group resulted in the death of at least 26 and perhaps as many as 50 protesters and the injury of hundreds more. Many were women and children. Those who survived were forced onto buses and taken into detention. From 1,000-2,000 persons are still reportedly detained. These reportedly include individuals in various stages of refugee and resettlement processing. Access to the detainees by local lawyers has not been granted, and reports allege that not all who are in need of medical assistance have been treated. The status of those who evaded detention is also of concern.

The Egyptian government has reportedly stayed the deportation of detained Sudanese for three days to allow UNHCR time to visit them. We would commend this as a positive first step. Additionally, given the urgent protection concerns arising from this incident, we ask your help in calling upon the Egyptian government to:

- Carry out an independent investigation of the events, the injuries and deaths, and hold accountable any responsible for wrongdoing;

- Release bodies to the families of the deceased so that proper burial can occur;
- Inform the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies about the names, locations and condition of those detained and injured and permit them to have immediate access to those detained;
- Provide medical attention to the wounded;
- Give special attention and services for the children caught in this conflict, particularly those who are now separated from their parents or guardians; and
- Suspend any threat of deportation or forced return pending individualized review of refugee status, detention, deportation and appropriate durable solution, with appropriate involvement by UNHCR; proceed in accordance with Egypt's domestic and international legal obligations, including *non-refoulement* as required by the Geneva Convention.

We also urge ongoing, strict compliance with refugee and humanitarian protection by the Government of Egypt and UNHCR for all members of the Sudanese community in Cairo. Finally, we wish to observe that this unfortunate incident is a prime example of how protracted, unresolved refugee situations can explode. We urge all partners to recommit themselves to finding humane, creative durable solutions for this group.

Thank you very much for your consideration. We look forward to your response and your intervention in this volatile situation.

Yours truly,



C. Richard Parkins
Chair, *Refugee Council USA*

Director, *Episcopal Migration Ministries*

On behalf of the following organizations:

Joseph Roberson, Director
Church World Service/Immigration and Refugee Program

Dr. Tsehaye Teffera, Executive Director
Ethiopian Community Development Council

Neil Greenbaum, President & CEO
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

Johan Ketelers, Secretary-General
International Catholic Migration Commission

George Rupp, President
International Rescue Committee

Fr. Kenneth Gavin, S.J., National Director
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Dr. Pary Karadaghi, Executive Director
Kurdish Human Rights Watch, Inc.

Ralston H. Deffenbaugh, Jr., President
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Mark Franken, Executive Director
Migration and Refugee Services/United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Lavinia Limón, Executive Director
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Carolyn Makinson, Executive Director
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

R. Timothy Ziemer, Rear Admiral, USN (ret.), Executive Director of Programs
World Relief