

Title: Sudan's Civil War

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Full Text:

The current conflict in Sudan is only the latest chapter in the country's violent history. Apart from an 11-year peace from 1972 to 1983, Sudan has been entrenched in war since it became an independent nation in 1956. The Darfurian conflict erupted just as a long civil war between northern and southern Sudan was winding down. That war was fought between the mainly Muslim Arab north and the mostly non-Muslim, non-Arab south. It began in 1983 and was one of the longest-lasting and deadliest wars of the 20th century. About 2 million civilians were killed, and more than 4 million people were forced to flee their homes.

Some of those refugees are known as the Lost Boys of Sudan. Fleeing violence and the fear of being forced into war, thousands of boys fled by foot to Ethiopia. The 1,000-mile trek was grueling. They went days without food or water, eating leaves and berries and sucking liquid from mud to stay alive. Exhausted, some boys died of starvation or dehydration.

The boys who continued found shelter at a refugee camp in Ethiopia, but their safety was short-lived. Fighting erupted in Ethiopia in 1991, forcing them to flee again. As they ran, gunmen in tanks fired at them. To escape, the boys had to cross the crocodile-infested River Gilo. Thousands drowned, were eaten by crocodiles, or were shot.

By the time the boys arrived at a refugee camp in Kenya in 1992, only 10,000--fewer than half of the original 26,000--were still alive. After nine years at the camp, about 4,000 of the Lost Boys were brought by the U.S. government to cities in the United States to begin new lives.

Now some Lost Boys are returning home. A peace agreement signed on Jan. 9, 2005, officially ended Sudan's civil war. (See people celebrating at left.) Though aid agencies recently reported that many communities in the south still lack food and water, some 500,000 Sudanese are expected to return home this year in what is one of the largest movements of people in recent history.

#### Words in the News

An Arab is a person whose primary language is Arabic. Arabs make up most of the population of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the West Bank, and Yemen. The term does not usually include Arabic-speaking Jews. In classical times, the term referred to people who lived in the whole of the Arabian Peninsula and all desert areas of the Middle East.

The African Union is an organization of all the African nations except Morocco. Its goal is to promote democracy, human rights, and development for African nations. It was established in 1963 as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) by 37 independent African nations. The OAU

mediated several border and internal disputes and was instrumental in bringing about majority rule and the end of apartheid in South Africa. The African Union replaced the OAU in 2002. The group now has greater power to promote African economic, social, and political integration.

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