

# Activists upset over Sudan's upgraded status

By Hazel Trice Edney  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The Bush Administration has upgraded the status of a slavery-watch in Sudan, enraging activists enough to demand that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reverse the status until enslavement and abuses against women and children comes to an end.

"We're now going to have to put the pressure on Madam Secretary of State. Everyone, everyone on both the left and the right are outraged about this. We're going to have to put the pressure on the State Department," said radio talk show host Joe "The Black

Eagle" Madison. "Human rights violations are still happening. Slavery is still happening. We all know that abuses against women and children are still going on."

Madison, president of the Sudan Campaign coalition, said he will use his talk show on WOL-AM 1450 and XM Radio, "The Power" Black talk radio, to help start a campaign this week to encourage people to call the State Department, 202-647-4000, and ask that Sudan be reinstated to Tier 3, the lowest slavery watch ranking.

The State Department, headed by Rice, has upgraded Sudan's slavery

watch status from Tier 3 to Tier 2, meaning the problems with enslavement in the country will be monitored on the same scale as Switzerland, Israel, Chile, Hungary and Greece. The upgrading came as a result of the nation's promise to end aspects of slavery, according to a Sept. 21 State Department memorandum explaining the president's determination.

"On the basis of positive actions undertaken by the Government of Sudan since the end of the 2005 reporting period, the Secretary of State has determined that the Government of Sudan does not yet fully comply with the

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance," states the memo, posted on the State Department website. "This is the standard for placement on Tier 2 of the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report. The secretary of state has placed Sudan on the Special Watch List because the determination that the Government of Sudan is making significant efforts is based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year. Sudan will re-

main on Tier 2 only as long as it continues to act on these commitments."

The memorandum further explains that in June 2005, the State Department presented the Sudanese government with an action plan that outlined steps to combat trafficking. It gives a list of commitments and mandates that the Sudanese government has stated, including eradicating sexual violence against women, removing the legal requirement for rape victims to file a criminal report before receiving medical treatment and requiring that victims of sexual violence receive priority over other patients. But the memo also admits, "Violence against women remains a serious problem in the Darfur region."

The continued atrocities is part of the reason that Madison, a long-time activist against the genocide and tortures in Sudan, said the Sudan status change is an outrage — especially when it is supported by a high government official who is an African-American.

"What good is it to be one

of the most powerful Black women in the United States and then put Sudan on equal par with Switzerland when Black women are being raped every time they leave a refugee camp in Sudan, when genocide is being committed against Black people?" he asks. "Don't throw up in my face that you've integrated your administration just because you've got a Black person in a certain position. The question is: What is that Black person doing with that power? ... The secretary of state should be ashamed of herself."

The Sudan Campaign has also sent a memo to Rice calling the status change "fundamentally flawed" and asking her to reverse it and establish a task force to monitor the abolition of Sudanese slavery.

"The government of Sudan is directly linked to an unprecedented revival of slavery in modern times, as confirmed by the U.S. government-sponsored 'International Eminent Persons Group on Slavery, Abduction

(See Sudan, Page 15)

## African rules rile diamond industry

Special to Sentinel-Voice

South Africa's proposed Diamond Amendment Bill has caused grumbling among White diamond traders there who say it could lead to their demise.

"The Diamond Bill will have the effect of compromising our trading company's future viability," said Anglo American PLC, which owns 45 percent of De Beers, the world's biggest diamond producer.

The draft bill proposes a restructuring of South Africa's diamond mining sector, creating a state diamond trader and imposing a 15 percent export levy.

Black-owned companies, however, support the bill which they say will open the cutting and polishing industry to their

small companies that have been excluded for decades.

"We wish to have this bill implemented urgently, as our members have been experiencing extreme difficulties over the past few years in obtaining sufficient quantities of rough diamonds," the United Diamond Association of South Africa said. The association, which represents 170 Black diamond dealers, cutters and polishers, said the bill would help level the playing field in a sector still dominated by Whites more than a decade after the end of apartheid.

The government wants to open up the distribution of diamonds to stimulate more jewelry manufacturing and gem cutting in South Africa, the world's fourth-largest diamond producer by value.

## African migrants use cell phones to stage rescue

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Using their cell phones, a group of African immigrants kept in touch with human rights workers who were alarmed to learn last week that Spain had dumped up to 70 of the migrating Africans in a Moroccan desert where they were left for dead.

Cell phones helped aid organizations and the media find the abandoned men, women and children.

"From the start, cell phones have been vital for our actions in Morocco," said Amanda Sanz of Doctors without Borders in a published interview. "Cell phones have been a revolution," allowing the immigrants to be found some 600 kilometers south of the border town of Oujda, she said.

The Africans had been making their way to Europe via Morocco which has a border with an African enclave belonging to Spain.

Hundreds of African immigrants have tried to cross the borders into Spain's North African enclaves Ceuta and Melilla on the Mediterranean coast.

Morocco has recently stepped up efforts to stop them.

A human rights group, the Moroccan Human Rights Association said that about 1,500 people had been left in the desert a week ago but that most had made their way back to the refugee camp by the next day.

A pregnant woman died

from exhaustion during the journey, said Kabouri Seddik of the rights group, who said he had talked to groups of migrants in the camp.

The Moroccan communications minister, Nabil Benabdallah, responded to criticism of treatment of immigrants saying Morocco was committed to safeguarding human rights.

## Hairy crisis in Togo

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Schoolmasters in Togo are getting tough with schoolgirls who, they say, spend too much time on their hair.

In a step up of disciplinary action, Togolese schoolgirls were sent home last week to have their heads shaved. Teachers had complained that young ladies waste too much time playing with their hair.

"They must know how to organize themselves and use their time in order to succeed in their studies instead of wasting their time — three hours, sometimes days — with their hair," said Madame Olympio, a teacher at Lycee Nyekonakpoe in the capital, Lome. She blamed the distraction of fashion for girls' low academic scores. "Girls' success rates are lower than boys," she said.

Three weeks ago, the education minister urged more moderation in girls' dress and hairstyles in the classroom.

"I'm angry. I don't want to shave my hair, but I have to if I want to resume class," 17-year-old Tina Djobe said.

Only state schools are insisting on the head shaving which some are calling "unfair."

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