



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** November 4, 2010

**CONTACT:**

Melany Grout, 202.556.2105, [grout@genocideintervention.net](mailto:grout@genocideintervention.net)

**MAJOR U.S. INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS URGE  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND OIL COMPANIES IN SUDAN TO HELP  
ENSURE HUMAN RIGHTS DURING ANTICIPATED CONTENTIOUS  
REFERENDUM PROCESS**

*Corporations Face Greater Risks of Complicity and Opportunity to Minimize Rights Abuses*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – A group of U.S. and international institutional investors including the State of Connecticut Office of the Treasurer, GES Investment Services, Calvert Asset Management Company and Domini Social Investments, sent letters this week to top telecommunications and oil and gas companies operating in Sudan, calling on them to take steps to ensure they do not infringe on human rights as that country prepares for two contentious referenda including a vote for southern Sudan's independence.

"The potential for violence, instability and human rights violations around Sudan's referendum process challenges companies operating in the country not to become complicit in such violations," said Bennett Freeman, Senior Vice President for Sustainability Research and Policy at Calvert Asset Management Company.

The investors are members of the Conflict Risk Network (CRN), a network of institutional investors, financial service providers and related stakeholders calling on corporate actors to fulfill their responsibility to respect human rights and to take steps that support peace and stability in areas affected by genocide and mass atrocities.

"We've reached out to the major telecommunications firms Zain Group and MTN Group because we recognize that they are uniquely positioned to make positive contributions in support of peace and stability," stated Maureen O'Brien, Head of Engagement for Conflict Risk Network. "Their technology is vital for information sharing in Sudan given the country's weak infrastructure, and will be a leading means of communication and news distribution during the upcoming referendum process. But we also have concerns about their sector's potential for association with harm to civilians."

Several years ago, Sudan's state-run telecommunications company was accused of deactivating its cell towers before military attacks on villages in Darfur, thereby interrupting service that would allow villagers to warn each other of impending violence.

CRN also is calling on 17 oil and gas companies operating in Sudan, including China National Petroleum Corporation, India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, and Malaysia's Petronas to ensure the security measures they take to protect their employees and their operations do not impede human rights. During the war fought between the north and south from 1983 to 2005, serious abuses – including indiscriminate attacks and intentional targeting of civilians, burning of shelters, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands – were committed during what has been characterized as a military campaign by the Government of Sudan to secure and take control of oil fields. Some companies have been accused of complicity in war crimes and crimes against humanity, and are facing related criminal investigations.

“In the event that conflict does erupt between North and South Sudan around the upcoming referendum process, it is critical that companies prevent association with human rights abuses akin to those committed during Sudan's previous civil wars by security forces linked to oil consortia,” stated Melany Grout, Director of Conflict Risk Network. “Local communities must not be caught in the crosshairs of fighting over consortium territory or oil infrastructure.”

CRN also is calling on companies to report publicly on oil revenue. In oil-rich Sudan, revenue transparency will help the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to develop an oil revenue sharing agreement, a critical component in sustaining peace given both governments' dependence on oil resources. Global Witness, a UK-based NGO, published findings last year that showed a large discrepancy between oil revenue reported by one major operator and figures reported by the Government of Sudan.

It is widely predicted that southern Sudan, which holds most of Sudan's oil, will secede from the north following a referendum on independence that is scheduled for January 9, 2011. The vote is called for under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The 2005 accord brought an end to 22 years of civil war between Sudan's north and south, which had led to the deaths of two million Sudanese. Human rights advocates, political leaders and the international community are concerned that disruptions in the referendum process could reignite conflict between Sudan's north and south.

For more information, please see CRN's [Engagement Fact Sheet](#).

###

**About CRN:** Conflict Risk Network (CRN), <http://crn.genocideintervention.net/> is a network of institutional investors, financial service providers and related stakeholders calling on corporate actors to fulfill their responsibility to respect human rights and to take steps that support peace and stability in areas affected by genocide and mass atrocities. Its goal is to increase such behavior by corporate actors, and thereby reduce conflict risk.

CRN is a project of the [newly merged](#) Save Darfur Coalition / Genocide Intervention Network (SDC/GI-NET). The two organizations merged on November 1, 2010 to create a more powerful voice dedicated to preventing and stopping large-scale, deliberate atrocities against civilians. The organization remains committed to its work to end the crisis in Darfur and bring peace to all of Sudan as well as to end violence in other areas of mass atrocities such as Congo and Burma. The merger creates the world's largest anti-genocide organization, with a membership base of hundreds of thousands of committed activists globally, an unparalleled nationwide student movement, more than 190 faith-based, advocacy and human rights partner organizations, and a network of institutional investors collectively representing trillions in assets under management.