Kajbar dam  Sudan

**Sectors:** Hydroelectric Power Generation

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[Project website]

### Sectors
| Hydroelectric Power Generation |

### Location

| Location |

About Kajbar dam

The Kajbar Dam on the Nile’s third cataract would have a height of about 20 meters, create a reservoir of 110 square kilometers, and generate 360 megawatts of electricity. The project would displace more than 10,000 people and submerge an estimated 500 archeological sites.

**What must happen**

The Kajbar Project is still at a very early stage. Sinohydro, other companies and financiers can still learn the lessons of earlier human rights disasters in Sudan. They should heed the warnings of the affected communities and stay out of the Kajbar Dam. International Rivers warned Sinohydro and potential funders about the human rights risks of the project in January 2011, and will strongly support the interests of the people affected by it.

**Impacts**

**Social and human rights impacts**

The projects are located in Nubia, the ancient bridge between Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa. Nubians have developed their own language and civilization over thousands of years, but now risk being annihilated as a nation. In the 1960s, 120,000 Nubian people were displaced from their ancestral lands in Egypt and Sudan for the construction of the Aswan Dam. Within Sudan, they were moved to an irrigation scheme 700 kilometers away, which turned into a complete development disaster. “By flooding the last of the remaining Nubian lands,” warns Arif Gamal, who was displaced by the Aswan Dam, “the Nubians are reduced to a group of people with no sense of memory, no past and no future to look for.”

The affected people are strongly opposed to the construction of the Kajbar and Dal dams. A statement of the committee of affected villages declares: “We will never allow any force on the earth to destroy our heritage and nation. Nubians will not sacrifice for the
second time to repeat the tragedy of the Aswan Dam.”

Chinese companies have expressed an interest in the Kajbar Project since 1997. When Sudanese and Chinese engineers carried out feasibility studies in 2007, thousands of people staged repeated protest demonstrations. The authorities cracked down harshly. In April 2007, security forces shot and wounded at least five protestors. On June 13, 2007, security officers killed four peaceful protestors in an ambush and wounded more than 15 others. (You can witness the massacre towards the end of this video.) The government arrested some 26 people, including journalists who tried to cover the massacre, and detained them for several weeks. The UN Special Rapporteur on Sudan deplored the “excessive force” and “arbitrary arrests and prosecutions to stifle community protest against the Kajbar dam” in a report.

Governance
Applicable norms and standards

| International Labour Organization Convention 169 |
| World Commission on Dams |

Brief history

Dams have impoverished tens of thousands of people and triggered serious human rights violations in Sudan. Now Chinese companies have won contracts to build three more hydropower projects in the country. Of particular concern are plans to dam the Nile near Kajbar, on the lands of ancient Nubia. This project has already caused massive human rights abuses. Affected people are strongly opposed to it, and have raised the specter of a second Darfur conflict.

The Sudanese government plans to transform the Nile, the only stretch of fertile land north of Khartoum, into a string of five reservoirs. Built by Chinese, German and French companies, the Merowe Dam was completed two years ago. The project doubled Sudan’s electricity generation, but displaced more than 50,000 people from the Nile Valley to arid desert locations. Thousands of people who refused to leave their homes were flushed out by the reservoir, and protests were violently suppressed. The UN Rapporteur on Housing Rights expressed "deep concern" about the human rights violations in the project, and asked the dam builders to halt construction in 2007 - to no avail.

Next in line are the Kajbar and Dal dams. While the Kajbar and Dal projects are smaller, the stakes are as high as in the case of the Merowe Dam. The projects are located in Nubia, the ancient bridge between Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa. Nubians have developed their own language and civilization over thousands of years, but now risk being annihilated as a nation. In the 1960s, 120,000 Nubian people were displaced from their ancestral lands in Egypt and Sudan for the construction of the Aswan Dam. Within Sudan, they were moved to an irrigation scheme 700 kilometers away, which turned into a complete development disaster. "By flooding the last of the remaining Nubian lands," warns Arif Gamal, who was displaced by the Aswan Dam, "the Nubians are reduced to a group of people with no sense of memory, no past and no future to look for."

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Since 2006, Chinese authorities have made increasing efforts to promote good community relations in overseas projects. The State Council and other government institutions have all called for the establishment of good community relations in Chinese investments. Sinohydro is currently preparing its own social and environmental guideline for overseas projects. Building the Kajbar Dam with a government that brutally represses the rights of the host population would fly in the face of such commitments.

In 2007, China (along with the majority of member states) voted in favor of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the UN. This document stipulates that indigenous peoples have the right of consent regarding “any project affecting their lands.” The
Kajbar Dam, which is strongly opposed by the indigenous Nubian population, violates the UN Declaration. Sooner or later, companies which engage in projects that violate human rights will be held accountable. PetroChina hoped to raise $10 billion when it listed at the New York Stock Exchange in 2000, but could raise less than $3 billion because of the operations of its parents company in Sudan. A German organization recently filed a criminal complaint against managers of Lahmeyer International, alleging their complicity in the human rights abuses of the Merowe Dam. Federal and state laws will prevent the French company Alstom from getting lucrative government contracts in the US because of its active role in the same project.

Lahmeyer International was contracted by the Dams Implementation Unit of Sudan to prepare the feasibility study and tender documents in 2007. The tender process was conducted in 2009.

Sinohydro, the world's largest hydropower company, announced in early November 2010 that it had won a $705 million contract to build the Kajbar Project over five years. Sinohydro argues that as a contractor, it cannot influence the human rights impacts of a project and is not responsible for them. At the end of December, 59 Sinohydro workers left from China for Sudan. At the same time, Sinohydro advertised jobs for work on the Kajbar Dam in Pakistan. In the case of the Bui Dam in Ghana, the company hired 60 of its 600 foreign workers in Pakistan, reportedly because they were cheaper than Chinese labor.

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**Updates**

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**Related companies**

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