

We have been here before when hundreds of thousands of people perished in Darfur before the international community finally woke up and took action to try to protect innocent civilians from their own government's brutality. The humanitarian crisis continues in Darfur. There is no peace, and villagers, refugees, and humanitarian personnel still live and work under the constant peril of attack. President Bashir has expelled many humanitarian workers from Darfur—and even today, threatens to shut down their lifesaving operations.

Last May, we witnessed the ruthless ethnic cleansing of Abyei by the Sudanese people. More than 100,000 people of the Dinka indigenous population were forcibly displaced. They fled to South Sudan, seeking safe haven, where they remain today in very, very poor conditions. When Sudanese President Bashir saw that the world was indifferent to this brutal assault, he began military operations in June against insurgents in South Kordofan and, more generally, against the Nuba people.

And still the world stood silent.

So, in September, Khartoum launched attacks on another border region. This time, the state of Blue Nile was under siege with attacks by the Sudanese Army and the bombings of civilians. Thousands fled to the neighboring countries of Ethiopia and South Sudan for safety, joining the desperate refugees from South Kordofan.

So Sudan has undertaken a bloodbath against its own people in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile—house-to-house arrests and killings, rape, the merciless bombings of civilians.

For nearly 8 months, Khartoum has blocked all humanitarian aid to South Kordofan and Blue Nile. It has not only continued to bomb in those states, but it has crossed the border and has bombed refugee camps and towns inside South Sudan, where tens of thousands had hoped to find food and shelter.

Here are some photos of some people in refugee camps in South Sudan:

Saleh Kora is from the Angolo tribe in South Kordofan. The government dropped bombs on her fields when she was trying to plant. Then the government dropped six bombs on her village. This poor woman here grabbed her children and hid in a nearby ditch. After the bombings stopped, Sudanese soldiers moved into the village and burned several homes. When they began shooting people, Saleh ran and hid with her children. The soldiers didn't care if you were an unarmed civilian, a woman or a child. She fled with her children across the border in January to the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan.

This woman over here to my far right and her little girl are from the Nuba Mountains. She is married to a man who fled the nightmare of Darfur in 2005. Both were suffering from malnutrition when they arrived at the refugee camps.

The people of South Kordofan and Blue Nile are being subjected to bomb-

ings, murder, rape, scorched earth, and starvation. This should come as no surprise when Ahmed Haroun, the Sudanese official wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity in Darfur, is now the governor of South Kordofan.

Mr. Speaker, we are fast approaching the month of March, the point at which the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, or FEWS NET, has predicted that South Kordofan and Blue Nile will reach emergency levels of food insecurity. This is just one level short of all-out famine. Yet Khartoum still denies food and medical relief to the suffering people of these regions.

Last week, the United Nations Security Council called on the Sudanese Government and the armed rebels to allow unhindered access for humanitarian aid and for both sides to return to talks and to cease hostilities.

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President Bashir said “no.” The United States and the international community, including China, Russia, and others, must increase the pressure on Sudan to allow the delivery of aid to the suffering people of South Kordofan and the Blue Nile, and to reach agreement on a cease-fire. The safety and security of the Sudanese people, whether in Darfur, Abyei, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, or elsewhere, must be our first priority.

Mr. Speaker, we have been silent for too long.

[From the New York Times, Feb. 15, 2012]

IN SUDAN, SEEING ECHOES OF DARFUR

(By Nicholas D. Kristof)

YIDA, SOUTH SUDAN.—A great humanitarian catastrophe and vicious ethnic cleansing is unfolding here in the remote and impoverished region where Sudan and South Sudan come together.

For some in the Nuba Mountains, living in thatch huts far from electricity or paved roads, the sharpest acquaintance they are making with 21st-century technology is to be bombed by Sudanese aircraft.

Bombings, ground attacks and sexual violence—part of Sudan's scorched earth counterinsurgency strategy—have driven hundreds of thousands of people from their homes in South Kordofan, the Sudanese state where the Nuba Mountains are located. In some ways, the brutality here feels like an echo of what Sudan did in Darfur, only now it is Nubans who are targets.

“They said that they want to finish off the black people; they said they want to kill them all,” recalled Elizabeth Kafi, a 22-year-old Nuban who said she was kidnapped in December by Sudanese uniformed soldiers. She and others say that the mostly Arab Sudanese soldiers scorn Nubans partly for their darker skin, partly because some are Christian, but mostly because many Nubans back an armed uprising against decades of Sudanese misrule. In 23 days of captivity, she said she saw the soldiers use guns to execute several Nuban men, including her grandfather and brother-in-law. She described watching soldiers gang rape and then cut the throat of a young Nuban woman, and also stab to death the woman's 3-year-old son.

Kafi said that she also saw 20 to 25 soldiers hold down two Nuban girls, who she guessed to be about 14 or 15 years old, and gang rape them. The girls died from the rapes and beatings, she said.

It's impossible to confirm Kafi's full story, but others verified that she had been kidnapped. And many other Nubans recount similar attacks, or describe similar racial epithets. As in Darfur, the Sudanese soldiers often call their darker-skinned victims their “slaves.” Ahmed Haroun, a Sudanese official wanted by the International Criminal Court for committing crimes against humanity in Darfur, is now the governor of South Kordofan, and he seems to be employing similar tactics here.

While the Sudanese government is trying to suppress an armed rebellion in the Nuba Mountains, it is civilians who bear the brunt of the suffering. In an apparent effort to starve the rebels, Sudan is blocking aid groups and food assistance from reaching the area, and the United Nations Security Council a few days ago expressed “deep and growing alarm” at rising hunger levels there. Some 28,000 Nubans have sneaked out and settled in a new refugee camp here in Yida, South Sudan, just south of the border with Sudan. Scores more straggle in most days, many half-starved.

“I came because I was starving,” said Muhasin Kuwa, a 24-year-old woman who just arrived at the refugee camp. Both her parents had starved to death, along with seven small children in her small village, she said.

The Sudanese military has tried to block access routes, making escape perilous. I spoke to members from a group of 16 who had crowded into a car, paying \$45 each for what they hoped would be a flight to safety in the refugee camp. But then, the day before I interviewed them, they came to a checkpoint manned by Sudanese soldiers.

“They called us over,” said the vehicle's owner, Haroun Suleiman, 42. “Then they shot at us with guns.”

Two male passengers, ages 41 and 25, were shot dead, he said. Two women, one with a month-old baby, are still missing. The others ran frantically into the bush and escaped, eventually making their way to the refugee camp.

The Sudanese government bombed this refugee camp in November, and, just a week ago, it bombed the nearby town of Jau, in South Sudan. Fears are growing of a new all-out war between Sudan and South Sudan, in part because of an oil dispute. South Sudan separated from the rest of the country just in July, and the two sides can't agree on the oil pipeline fees that the South should pay. The South then shut off oil production, so both countries are now facing an economic crisis. Some experts warn that the North may try to seize oil wells from the South.

Nuban children are already growing up in war. When kids surrounded me in the refugee camp, I asked them how many had lost a brother or sister in the war. About one-third raised their hands.

When the food runs out in the Nuba Mountains, perhaps in two or three months, there will be a risk of mass starvation. I saw one 4-year-old girl at a feeding center run by Samaritan's Purse, the aid group, who weighed only 22 pounds. Unless outside countries enforce humanitarian access into the Nuba Mountains, we can expect more famished children like her.

The Sudanese armed forces try to keep aid workers and journalists out, so the story of suffering has not received much international attention. I'm going to try to slip into the Nuba Mountains and report back. Stay tuned.

BELL STREET MIDDLE SCHOOL
SCIENCE OLYMPIAD TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from

South Carolina (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an exceptional group of students, teachers, and parents of the Bell Street Middle School Science Olympiad Team, which just won its 10th consecutive Science Olympiad State Championship. Let me repeat that: 10th consecutive Science Olympiad Championship.

The Science Olympiad program is one of the premiere science competitions in the Nation, providing rigorous standards-based challenges to nearly 6,200 teams in 50 States. Science Olympiad's continuously changing event lineup exposes students to a variety of career choices and gives them an opportunity to meet participating and practicing scientists, as well as the opportunity to have life-changing mentors.

Science Olympiad was founded in 1982, and Bell Street Middle School, there in Clinton, South Carolina, began competing in that in 1986. The Science Olympiad Team at Bell Street was formed by three very inspirational teachers: Rosemary Wicker; Dr. David O'Shields, who is a close personal friend; and Michael Mack. Mr. MACK and Dr. O'Shields still work in the school district in Clinton today. Michael Mack is a member of the science faculty at Clinton High School, and Dr. David O'Shields is currently the superintendent of Lawrence County School District 56. Both continue to be active event coaches for the incredibly successful Bell Street Science Olympiad Team. Many of the Bell Street Middle School's Science Olympiad alumni have gone on to become extremely successful in the areas of science and technology.

One example is the gentleman Dedric Carter. Dedric was a former member of the Bell Street Middle School Science Olympiad Team who went on to enroll at MIT for college. He later became MIT's assistant dean for engineering and a lecturer in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. He is currently the senior adviser for strategic initiatives to the Director of the National Science Foundation.

Another one, Jarrett Campbell, is also an alum of Bell Street Middle School's Science Olympiad Team. After competing in the Science Olympiad teams in middle and high school, Jarrett went on to complete a doctorate degree in chemical engineering at the University of Texas at Austin. Jarrett worked for Advanced Micro Devices, where he was awarded over 25 patents in the area of semiconductor technology. Today, Jarrett works as a global energy management specialist for a U.S. company in Paris, France. When he was asked about his experience with the Science Olympiad, Dr. Campbell said this:

Not only did the teacher, coaches, and parent volunteers pique my interest in science and math, they continually challenged me to

expand my knowledge by competing in new disciplines. Looking back, I see how important the camaraderie, teamwork, and constant desire to excel, along with the examples set by these role models leading the team, was exceptional in setting the stage for my career in engineering and energy management.

I believe this statement sums up how valuable this program is to our Nation's youth.

Finally, I would like to take time to congratulate all of the coaches and the members of this year's State championship Science Olympiad Team from District 56's Bell Street Middle School. This year's team included: Mike Beasley, Stephanie Braswell, Jalen Carter, Lawrence Coleman, Terry Craig, Andrew Gann, Karl Gustafson, Dalton Langston, Beth Meadors, Zack Ray, Jonathan Shiflet, Kyle Smith, Bowen Tiller, Nathan Vondergeest, Clay Wright, Triston Moon, Daniel Moore, Luke Ragin, Jacob Wesson, Audrey Atkinson, Chris Cannon, Justin Easter, Dawson Green, Jack Harkins, Tara Hiller, Ami Meadors, Jill Meadors, Olivia Moore, Brianna Motte, Jakob Pountain, Michael Richey, Justin Shockley, Dillon Snead, and Bailey Stephens. Those are the students, but the teachers and the parents that volunteer need to be singled out as well. I don't have them by name, but let them know that we certainly appreciate their efforts.

These are the future scientists. These are the new innovators coming along. I'm excited that at middle school they're challenging these students to be the best they can.

May God continue to bless those students, teachers, and parents. May God continue to bless Bell Street Middle School, and may God continue to bless America.

ENGAGING AFGHANISTAN PEACEFULLY, NOT FORCIBLY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it is February 29, a date that exists only once every 4 years, and yet this is the third February 29, the third leap day, that we've been at war in Afghanistan.

I have my granddaughter here with me. She's 8 years old. She's not lived in the United States when we were not at war.

Last week in particular, we were exposed to the grave dangers and the fundamental flaws of our Afghanistan strategy. The week started with the burning, accidentally, of several copies of the Koran by U.S. troops. That sparked days of violence and protests throughout the country. Angry Afghans tried to storm U.N. compounds and other Western installations.

At our largest military base, thousands, including many who worked at the base, gathered to throw rocks and

shout "Death to America." Days later came the killing of two NATO soldiers, shot in the back of the head while working at their desks inside the Afghan interior ministry. The killer was apparently a Taliban insurgent who had infiltrated the government security forces and penetrated what is supposed to be one of the most secure buildings in Kabul.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that police officers, the ones we are supporting and training to keep militants at bay, are losing patience with our continued military occupation of their country. One of them told The Washington Post:

Afghans and the world's Muslims should rise against the foreigners. We have no patience left. We will attack the military foreign people.

In response to all of this, General John Allen has ordered the removal of all NATO personnel from Afghan government ministries in and around Kabul. Out in the field, some U.S. soldiers have been instructed not to engage too directly with Afghan security forces, even though the training of these forces is at the heart of our very mission in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, can there be any doubt, given what has happened over the last week or so and the last 10 years, that our 10-year military occupation is losing and not winning over there? The hearts and the minds of the Afghans have been lost to the United States.

The amazing thing is there is talk that the recent unrest might delay the withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan. If anything, we need to accelerate that withdrawal. It's this war that has sewn the seeds of resentment and mistrust. It's this war that has increased instability and strengthened the insurgency. It's this war that is fraying the partnership and heightening the tension.

Mr. Speaker, what if we engaged Afghanistan in a different way—peacefully, rather than forcibly, not in war? What if we sent—at a fraction of the cost and pennies on the dollar, I might add—what if we sent civilian experts to help rebuild Afghanistan and invest in its people?

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What if we focused on humanitarian aid instead of military aggression? That's the SMART Security philosophy that I've been advocating for many years now.

I'm convinced that such an approach would show the way to greater peace, greater security and prosperity in Afghanistan. We can't begin to do this soon enough. Despite everything that's happened—not just this past week but over the last decade—the Pentagon continues to tell us the Afghanistan strategy is sound and it is succeeding. Do they think we're not paying attention?

It couldn't be clearer that what we're doing isn't working. It's time for SMART Security, Mr. Speaker. It's time to bring our troops home, and the time is now.