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HUFF POST IMPACT

'Never Again' Must Not Become 'Yet Again:' You Can Stop Genocide in Sudan

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This post was co-authored with Dr. Mukesh Kapila, former United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan.

Late last November, Sudan's defense minister, Abdel-Rahim Mohamed Hussein, stood before his nation's parliament and calmly laid out his government's plan to commit another genocide. Testifying about a massive military mobilization now underway, Hussein said, "[O]ur troops are moving to end the rebellion once and for good."

It's no secret what such a statement means from the regime in Sudan, which has already killed more than 2.5 million of its own people under the pretense of fighting rebels, employing a strategy of "getting the fish by draining the pond."

For decades, Sudan's small ruling elite -- headed by President Omar al-Bashir -- have stolen all of the country's resources and used the widespread massacre of civilians to quash any dissent about the regime's repressive policies. The International Criminal Court has already issued a warrant for Bashir's arrest on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide following Khartoum's actions in Darfur.

Genocide now looms over the country again, with the Sudanese regime threatening the ethnically different people of the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile state. Nearly 1 million civilians have been displaced or trapped in a government-orchestrated famine, intentionally cut off from their fields and prevented from receiving humanitarian relief by persistent bombing since June 2011. The government has demolished evacuation routes leading out of the region, creating a "kill-box" around the Nuba people. They are now left wondering not how they'll survive, but what is a less awful way to die -- by hunger or by fire?

What to do? In the face of such horror, many folks in the West feel powerless to prevent more senseless death in Sudan. In fact, there are two simple steps that each and every American can take right now to make a difference: one for the short-term, one for the long-term.

The immediate need is to get food and basic healthcare to the trapped Nuba people. Yet, most of the international community has been paralyzed by the Sudanese government's ban on humanitarian relief delivery into the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, for fear of losing access to vulnerable populations in the country's other regions. This is no empty concern. Following the ICC's issuance of arrest warrants against Bashir, he expelled 13 of the 16 international humanitarian organizations from Sudan.

Conventional diplomacy has obviously failed. Since governments, the United Nations, and the African Union are all largely unwilling or unable to accept the responsibility for ensuring aid provision, others must step in. This is why concerned individuals and groups around the world are banding together to form the People-to-People for Sudan Initiative, a privately-funded humanitarian program that will deliver life-saving help to those under attack from the Bashir regime.

These direct aid efforts seek to alleviate the immediate crisis. However, a long-term solution for Sudan must tackle the source of its many conflicts: the brutal regime in Khartoum. After two decades of genocidal violence, it's clear that the international community's piecemeal policies on Sudan have failed. It is high time to tackle the underlying cause of the conflict -- and not just its symptoms -- or else more atrocities will occur. And that means new governance for Sudan.

For two nearly years, the U.S. Congress has been debating legislation that would represent an important step in the right

direction. The Sudan Peace, Security and Accountability Act would compel the American administration to create a comprehensive strategy focused on all of Sudan, which seeks to end mass atrocities, promote democratic reform, and establish a broad-based peace. The legislation would also create the first set of sanctions targeting Khartoum's international supporters -- a significant measure that could seriously undermine the regime's legitimacy, and degrade its ability to wage war against its own people.

Without vocal support from the public, this bill is likely to remain stalled. Now is the time to act. If thousands of concerned citizens across America each took five minutes to call, write or email their member of Congress, it could turn the tide in U.S. policy.

Edmund Burke said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

For too long, too many have averted their eyes and shrugged their shoulders as the international community has allowed the Bashir regime to commit genocide with impunity. By acting together, we can make a decisive difference for the people of Sudan -- one letter, one aid package, one life at a time.

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