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## Sudan: Country of Terrorism, Religious Persecution, Slavery, Rape, Genocide, and Man-Made Starvation

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## ARTICLES

### THE POPE JOHN XXIII LECTURE

#### SUDAN: COUNTRY OF TERRORISM, RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION, SLAVERY, RAPE, GENOCIDE, AND MAN-MADE STARVATION

*His Excellency The Most Reverend Macram Max Gassis*

February 27, 2001  
Columbus School of Law  
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA  
Washington, D.C.

Dear friends, before I begin my talk on Sudan, I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Robert A. Destro, Interim Dean and Professor of Law, for having invited me to give this 32nd annual Pope John XXIII Lecture and to bring to your attention [to] one of the great, ongoing crimes of the modern world: the denial of the fundamental dignity of millions in Sudan, and the war waged there against a people's God-given rights. I also wish to thank Rev. David M. O'Connell, C.M., President of the Catholic University of America, professors, law students, and other guests, for their presence here today.

As a community devoted to law, I am counting on you to take up the case of this poor petitioner, the people of Sudan, and that you will commit yourselves today to be our voice, the voice of millions of voiceless Sudanese, before your government, among your colleagues, and in American society at large.

Brothers and sisters, your profession is a noble one because your call is to stand for the truth. Truth is the herald of justice, which is the foundation of lasting peace and harmony.

In order to place ourselves in the right frame of mind for the message I bring you today, let us listen to the words of Psalm 142:

To the LORD I cry out with my plea.

To the LORD I cry out with entreaty.

I pour out my worry in his presence,  
In his presence I unfold my troubles.  
However faint my spirit;  
You are watching over my path.  
On the road I have to travel  
They have hidden a trap for me.  
Look on my right and see-  
There is no one who recognizes me.  
All refuge is denied me,  
No one cares whether I live or die.  
I cry out to you, LORD,  
I affirm, You are my refuge,  
My share in the land of the living!  
Listen to my calling,  
For I am miserably weak.  
Rescue me from my persecutors,  
For they are too strong for me.  
Lead me out of prison  
That I may praise your name.  
The upright gather round me  
Because of your generosity to me.<sup>1</sup>

Often, when people introduce me before presentations like this, they call me “a legendary bishop.” Well, I have enough gray hair, perhaps, to qualify for the title, but, I assure you, I am not a legend.

I will tell you what I am: I am a shepherd who is in love with his flock. I am in love with my people. This love is the force that drives me, that impels me to take risks, that sustains me when I fear that I will not find resources, that gives me courage to stand up before governments and before the powerful on my people’s behalf, for the rights and dignity of my people. It is their greatness and courage that you honor today, not me.

I have been honored with a number of awards in the past several years: Prison Fellowship, under the leadership of Chuck Colson, presented me with The William Wilberforce Award in February 2000 - a recognition that strengthened me in my fight against slavery, against the enslavement of my people. I was similarly moved by the honor accorded me by the A

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1. *Psalms* 142:1-12.

Philip Randolph Institute, under the leadership of Norman Hill, who presented me with last year's Bayard-Rustin Award. Such honors humble me, but they lift up my people. I accept them in their name, and in honor of their sufferings.

Today, I have the pleasure and honor to address people who are dedicated to the work of justice. You work to ensure the equality of all, regardless of class, gender, race, creed, age, and physical ability. You see the creator in each and every person, you see God, because all life comes from God. In the Book of Genesis we read: "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."<sup>2</sup>

The act of creation is an act of love - God, who is perfection, who does not need creatures to praise Him, creates us for himself out of love, in His own image and likeness.

This fact, championed by the Church, has deep ramifications for human affairs.

How often do we hear world leaders declare themselves for "peace," all the while neglecting the very foundation of peace, which is JUSTICE? How many commissions, sub-commissions, working groups, and committees for peace were and are being formed today without reference to justice and the pursuit of just solutions? It should come as no surprise that all such efforts fail. Peace without justice is like building a house without foundations; it is a pseudo-peace doomed to collapse at the very first storm.

Justice is not a sweet word. For some, it sounds harsh, rigid, even merciless. Peace is reassuring, a word sure to win applause. And yet, the holy men and women of Scripture: were not many of them described by precisely this word; does not Scripture refer to them as "just"? St. Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mary, Matthew tells us, was a "just man."<sup>3</sup> God, too, as we know, is not only Mercy and Compassion, but Justice.

We have to bear in mind that natural law was not promulgated by any human power. No government or regime invented natural law. Therefore no political institution has the power to change or modify them. In fact, human laws are created to reflect natural law, and to protect and respect these norms, which are of divine, not human origin. These natural (and Divine) laws point to the dignity of the individual, expressed in his or her God-given human rights.

This we must underline: *Each and every human person bears in him or*

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2. *Genesis*: 1:27.

3. *Matthew*: 1:19.

*herself the image of God - source of all human dignity, source of all human rights.* Governments and politicians do not accord human rights. Human rights are not concessions. They are not the fruit of negotiation. They are given by God, and built into the order of creation itself.

This right to life (which includes the right to security, food, shelter, clothing, clean water), the right to worship according to one's conscience, the right to choose freely one's state of life, the rights pertaining to moral and cultural values, the rights to emigrate and immigrate, the right of association, the right of freedom of speech, the right to education. . . are rights for all human persons without distinction based on race, color, creed, tribe, or social status.

Pope John XXIII in his encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* puts it this way:

A civic society is to be considered well-ordered, beneficial and in keeping with human dignity if it is grounded on truth. As the Apostle Paul exhorts us: "Away with falsehood then; let everyone speak out the truth to his neighbor; membership of the body binds us to one another." This will be accomplished when each one duly recognizes both one's rights and one's obligations towards others.

Furthermore, human society will be such as we have just described it, if we citizens, guided by justice, apply themselves seriously to respecting the rights of others and discharging their own duties; if they are moved by such fervor of charity as to make their own the need of others and share with others their own goods: if finally, they work for a closer fellowship in the world of spiritual values. Yet this is not sufficient; for human society is bound together by freedom, that is to say, in ways and means in keeping with the dignity of its citizens, who accept the responsibility of their actions, precisely because they are by nature rational beings.<sup>4</sup>

In June 1989, an Islamic Fundamentalist military junta seized power in Sudan, disrupting a period of democratic experiment, the third such experiment in nearly forty-five years of independence. Since January 1, 1956, when the country gained its independence from condominium rule by Britain and Egypt, Sudan had had three different dictatorships, in 1958, 1969, and 1989, each interrupting a weak and largely ineffectual democratic process. But the current "religious dictatorship" in Khartoum - I do not call it a government, but a regime (the regime of Khartoum) - has opened a new and savage chapter in Sudan's long

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4. *PACEM IN TERRIS*, 13 (1963) (quoting number 35).

struggle to find and realize its identity as a multi-racial, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic society.

It is an unfortunate fact of life that many of the so-called experts on the history and politics of Sudan have joined hands with the Northern Sudanese politicians to distort the truth. These foreign “pseudo-experts” can typically boast of visiting Sudan once or twice. They then go off and write articles and even books on Sudan and the Sudanese. I will have more to say about this when I discuss specific issues.

Where is Sudan located on the map? What is the composition of the population of Sudan? What is the cause of the present conflict in Sudan? I will try to be brief.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa with a population of twenty-six million living within 2.5 million kilometers. Sudan borders with the following countries: Egypt and Libya in the North, the Red Sea, Eritrea, and Ethiopia in the East, Kenya, Uganda, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic in the South, and Chad in the West.

My diocese of El Obeid in central Sudan is two and a half times the size of Italy with a total of six million inhabitants. The diocese comprises North and South Korfodan, North and South Darfur. Besides bordering with Khartoum, Malakal, and Wau in Sudan we also border with Libya, Chad, and Central African Republic. The Christians in my diocese are mainly from the Nuba Mountains and the Dinka tribe of Abyei. There are other Christian communities from other tribes as well.

It is of paramount importance to bear in mind that Sudan is a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation. We could rightly call Sudan a United Nations in miniature. Such cultural diversity, such richness is normally a source of blessing and wealth. Not in Sudan; the Islamic Fundamentalist dictatorship views the diversity willed by the creator as something negative, as an obstacle to the abstract dreams of politicians and religious extremists. Therefore they are determined, as they themselves put it, to “assimilate” the country’s many African cultures, traditions and languages into a single culture, the dominant Arab culture of Khartoum and the north. Khartoum does so through two simple means: The imposition of Arabic language and the imposition of Islamic law and religion throughout the country, trampling the rights and dignity, and endangering the sheer survival of millions of Sudanese in the process.

Make no mistake about it: Religious persecution is one of the central practices of the Islamic regime of Khartoum. Just listen to their public declarations: “Sudan,” they say, “is an Arab, Muslim country.”

That declaration stands at the center of Sudan’s tragedy and is the

source of decades of untold suffering. Sudan is a country of more than 100 tribes, three religions, and 300 languages. To say that it is an Arab country, a Muslim country is both a deception and a dream - a virtual nightmare for millions of non-Arab, non-Muslim Sudanese who have perished in its grip.

Let me trace a little of that recent history.

Sudan became an independent nation on January 1, 1956. The North from that very day became the master of the South, the Nuba Mountains, and Southern Blue Nile. Right after independence celebrations, the following policies were imposed on the African ethnic groups and non-Muslim communities:

Arabic and Koranic studies were introduced into the general educational curriculums in Southern Sudan.

All Catholic and Protestant schools in the South were confiscated by the government (over 700 schools were taken by force).

The day of rest was changed from Sunday to Friday, the Islamic day of rest, in the mostly Christian and traditionalist South.

The infamous law known as the "MISSIONARY SOCIETIES ACT" was promulgated in 1964 - an act which was intrinsically evil, because it had intrinsically evil intentions.

All foreign missionaries and missionary congregations were expelled from southern Sudan.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowment was created. This ministry was set up with the express purpose of controlling the activities of the Churches and ensuring that the blatantly discriminatory provisions of the Missionary Society Act would be implemented in full.

Muslims, who had no knowledge of the Church, no sympathy with the Church, who had no familiarity with its structures, its mode of operation, its purposes and goals, staffed the Ministry from top to bottom - from the minister to the gatekeeper. The ministry of religious affairs, to this day, makes fundamental decisions for the Churches without, and in place of, the Churches - from decisions involving personnel, to permission for building new churches, to which churches may be repaired. You are all familiar with such arrangements from the days of Communism, from the situation of the Churches in Eastern Europe. We are still in the grip of such destructive governmental interference and persecution in Sudan. The Churches are at the mercy of ignorant extremists, whose whole *raison d'être* is the elimination of the influence of Christianity from public life.

Many Christians, particularly in the Nuba Mountains, were forced to become Muslim in order to secure promotions in the Army, or advance

in the police academies or civil service. Christians have also been systemically denied employment advances or access to government scholarships and other benefits.

Islamic Shariaa Law was promulgated as the law of the land, and imposed on all Sudanese, regardless of background. The government declared officially that the Koran, the Islamic Scripture, is the source of all legislation. This automatically rendered (and renders) the non-Muslim as a second-class citizen, a member of a “tolerated” religious minority.

Finally, emergency food relief and other humanitarian aid was (and is) used to forcibly Islamize and arabize the non-Muslim, non-Arab communities.

All these realities indicate that the tragedy of Sudan and the sufferings of millions in the South, the Nuba Mountains, and Southern Blue Nile regions, are based on ETHNICITY AND RELIGION. It was the policy of all successive Khartoum governments, from day one of independence, to create a Sudan, which, in spite of its real character as a land of religious and ethnic diversity, would be Arab and Muslim. This political and religious fantasy continues today in an even more terrible form.

The present National Islamic Front regime has turned this historic policy of discrimination into a campaign of total war against all who oppose the transformation of Sudan into an Islamic theocracy, against what they call “resistant minorities.” They even target moderate Muslim individuals and groups, particularly in the Nuba Mountains, who wish to live in peace with their Christian and African traditionalist neighbors.

But note that their primary target is the Church and the suffering Christians of the south and the Nuba Mountains - what I call a living Church of martyrs. More than two million people have perished in the past decade as a direct result of this campaign - a figure many times larger than that of the Bosnian war, or the ethnic cleansing campaigns against the Kosovars, or even the tragedy of Rwanda.

I wish to address today central aspects of Khartoum’s genocidal campaign against my people, its crimes against humanity. These are not rumors, or hearsay, although they happen in remote places, outside the reach of the media or much of the wider world. They are things I have witnessed with my own eyes, suffering which, with my limited resources, and that of my friends and associates in the US and Europe, I have tried to relieve.

I am going to speak about each of these in turn: JIHAD (holy war), RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION, SLAVERY, RAPE, GENOCIDE, AERIAL BOMBARDMENT, MAN-MADE FAMINE.



1. **JIHAD.** The religious persecution that has been part of historical Sudan from the beginning has been intensified under the present regime of Khartoum. This regime expelled my missionaries from Southern Kordofan. The Maryknoll Fathers were expelled from Babanusa; the Comboni Missionaries were expelled from Abyei, Kadugli, and Dilling in the Nuba Mountains, the Sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta were forbidden to travel to their destination in Abyei, and later expelled. The Missionary Sisters of Comboni were also expelled and the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles as well. More recently, a Canadian missionary based in Khartoum was expelled, the Catholic Action Club near the airport was confiscated, and, just last month, many vehicles of transportation were stolen in broad daylight from the secretariat of the Sudan Bishops' Conference in Khartoum. All missionaries in the Archdiocese of Juba were sent away. My catechist, Agostino El Nur, was crucified (literally); he managed to survive the ordeal, and another catechist had his ear cut off.

Last year, Father Hilary Boma Loswet, the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Khartoum was arrested at gunpoint together with Father Lino Sabit. Father Sabit was tortured and subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment in order to force a confession that he and the other priests were guilty of terrorist attacks against the regime. Father Hilary, too, was subjected to shameful torture and humiliation. Corrupt security forces constantly harass Sudanese priests, nuns and catechists. A layman who was working with Radio Juba was arrested and harassed by the security because of an announcement he made on the occasion of the canonization of Saint Josephine Bakhita, the first Sudanese saint, this past October. His crime? He mentioned to his radio audience in a brief profile of St. Bakhita that she had been enslaved and sold five times before her liberation.

Let it be noted that torture is an integral part of the policies of the regime. Thousands of Christians and opposition figures have died or become permanently disabled under torture. Just this past April, more than a thousand people from a mission I had established in the Nuba Mountains were abducted, including two of my catechists. We do not yet know what happened to them; but my catechists will have been singled out for special treatment. Please pray for them.

2. **SLAVERY.** I am an eyewitness of this shameful assault on the human dignity of peoples. Slavery is not a relic of the distant past: It is alive and well in 21st century Sudan.

(Please understand that no one who must speak out against injustice takes pleasure in having to speak this way about his country.) Nobody

can deny the fact that there is slavery in Sudan.

In 1989, I had a meeting with some relatives of abducted children. I had been asked by them to assist them financially in the redemption of their children. I did. There were fifty children. I cannot express the joy I felt seeing those children back with their parents.

Many, if not most international organizations admit there is slavery in Sudan.

Take this quote from the report of Dr. Gaspar Biro to the Commission on Human Rights at the 53rd Session of the United Nations, who testified on many occasions, and as a result of thorough, on-site investigations in the country, that chattel slavery on a mass scale was practiced in Sudan. His successor at the UN Human Rights Commission, Dr. Leonardo, has done the same. This was written nearly five years ago:

Detailed reports on slavery, the slave trade and similar practices continue to reach the Special Rapporteur. For instance, on the days when the vote on the extension of the mandate took place in Geneva at the Commission on Human Rights, the Islamic militias captured scores of villagers in different locations along the Babanusa-Wau railway, who had gathered in the hope that a United Nations train distributing food was approaching. The Special Rapporteur reported in previous years on similar events which had taken place in that area under the same circumstances.

Even Sadiq El Mahdi, former Prime Minister of Sudan, admitted to the existence of slavery when a direct question was put to him here in Washington. At the Missionaries of Africa Center in DC, El Mahdi replied that whenever Jihad, or "holy war," is declared, slavery is involved, because it is part and parcel of holy war.

We, the Sudanese Bishops have spoken openly about and condemned slavery in Sudan. Other organizations such as Christian Solidarity International, The American Anti-Slavery Group, as well as documentaries and television news reportage give first-hand testimony about the practice of slavery in Sudan.

Ambassador Jakob Esper Larsen, Permanent Representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Community, made the following declaration at the 49th Session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva:

The community and its members are deeply alarmed by the situation in Sudan, where there have been numerous instances of summary execution, detention without trial, torture, religious persecution, and cruel, inhuman and degrading forms of punishment as described in parts of the reports of the Special

Rapportuers on Torture, and on Religious Intolerance and on summary executions. We are equally alarmed that access by the civilian population to humanitarian assistance is being severely impeded. We have expressed to the government of Sudan our deep concern at the systematic abuses of human rights throughout the country, including persistent reports of atrocities by the government forces in Juba and the Nuba Hills. We call on the Sudanese Government to uphold the human rights instruments to which it is a party, and to allow its citizens, including members of all ethnic and religious groups, to enjoy all the rights recognized in those instruments.

The exact number of slaves cannot be determined, but reports indicate that their current number is more than 20,000 women and children, mainly from southern Sudan.

The policy is to take the young boys and sell them to cattle or goat herders to tend livestock. These children, taken from close and loving families, are treated like animals. Many of them are branded on their wrists, arms, cheeks or temples, in order to mark them as slaves and to indicate whom their masters are, should they manage to escape. Presently the diocese is looking after 660 children, many of who have been slaves or war orphans. These children desperately need healing from the trauma of abduction, and, often, the grief of witnessing the death of a parent or relative who tried to save them.

Abducted adolescents are usually given military training and forced to join Islamic militias. There, deprived of culture and family, they are indoctrinated into the worldview of radical Islam. At the end of the day these young men, now brainwashed, are sent back with militias to kill their own people.

Girls face a different humiliation. They are usually raped, circumcised (genitally mutilated) and sold as concubines or instruments of sexual pleasure to soldiers and militiamen. I myself have witnessed young girls at the age of thirteen and fourteen years old with babies in their arms.

The issue of slavery, and what is to be done about it in the here-and-now, has, to my mind, generated a great deal of unnecessary controversy. Heat rather than light. I want to speak about the issue for just a moment.

Some people, some NGOs (Non-Government Organizations), even some people in the Church have declared that it is unethical to redeem abducted women and children in Sudan because of the possibility that doing so - that paying money to abductors to free children from servitude—would create more trafficking in slaves, or promote a corrupt “redemption” industry.

I would like to respond to those concerns in the following way:

The critics of those of us who try to rescue women and children from what can only be called a living hell usually live in comfortable homes with plenty to eat and drink. It's easy to criticize from such a comfortable distance, when nothing is at stake.

Have the critics of "redemption" tried living in the areas where Islamic militias routinely raid the villages? Have they ever seen a branded boy or a young girl traumatized by rape? Have they ever seen the effects on children who've been treated like livestock, who've been beaten regularly by their "masters"? Let them tell these children that their freedom was bought at too great a price.

Those of us who have attempted to relieve the terrors of slavery are only too aware that our efforts are not a perfect solution to the problems of slavery; that rescuing women and children sold into slavery is not without its risks. But those who condemn the practice, the redemption of slaves, have no alternative solutions. **I SAY TO THOSE WHO CRITICIZE THE PRACTICE OF REDEEMING WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM SLAVERY: GIVE US AN ALTERNATIVE!** Show us **ANOTHER PATH** that will lead us to the same result: the freedom of our people from bondage, and we will be happy to take it. But, unfortunately, the critics of redemption have only caveats and cautions, not solutions.

They say that the root cause of slavery is the war and, therefore, efforts should be focused on ending the war, not on ending slavery. It sounds nice in theory. In the meantime, Islamic militias keep raiding villages, burning huts, killing the elderly, raping women and rounding up children. These children are the future of the Church, the future of Sudan. Our job, the job of the Church, is to stand with the defenseless, and to defend their rights as best we can. Anything we can do to save women from rape, to save children from abuse is worth it.

The alternative is too terrible to contemplate: If abducted children, if adolescent boys and girls are not saved from captivity, they will bear more than mere physical scars, they will lose the love and care of their families, of their clan and of their tribe. They will lose their traditions, their languages and their faith - their very identity.

People against the redemption of enslaved children say that there is a risk. Paying the abductors through middlemen may create a kind of "redemption" industry, a kind of business. By the way, we have been redeeming women and children for years, and there is no evidence on the ground that slave-taking has increased because of such efforts. And who is more competent to judge whether it a risk worth taking: People

working in the offices of NGOs, or the abducted children and their parents? How much is a child worth to his or her parents? The wealth of the whole world cannot be compared to the worth of a single human being—a child of God created in His image and likeness.

Critics of redemption say that it is “RISKY.” Isn’t marriage a risk? How many marriages end in divorce, and yet young people continue to risk it. It’s a risk to devote one’s life in the priesthood. How many priests have abandoned their calling. Does this justify telling our youth not to seek seminary training? Is it not risky to drive a car, or book a flight? There’s even an element of risk in going to bed, is not there? How many people go to bed and never wake up? Are these reasons to not to drive, fly or go to bed? No. In the same way, excuses should not, and will not stop us working to save our children here and now from slavery and returning them to the love and care of their families.

You have to understand that government-sponsored slavery in Sudan is part of Khartoum’s war against women and children. It targets the most vulnerable part of the community for a reason: women and children are the most precious part of the community, the virtual life, the heart of the community. They are the future. They are the source of hope. We cannot allow Khartoum to win this war against our women and our children.

3. **BOMBARDMENT.** Aerial bombardment is another arrow in the quiver of Khartoum to destroy the people. Last December alone, in one month alone, nearly 200 bombs were dropped by government bombers on civilian targets in southern and central Sudan.

Let me make this clear: These are not military targets, or the results of so-called collateral damage - accidental “hits.” The regime of Khartoum, flying Russian-made Antonovs at high altitudes, deliberately bombs civilian targets: Primary schools, churches, aid compounds, medical clinics, open-air markets.

Late last November, my primary school, founded by the diocese, in Panlit in northern Bahral-Ghazal, for war orphans and women and children redeemed from slavery, was attacked. Fourteen bombs were dropped on the village. Fortunately, this time, there were no casualties.

Another of my primary schools was not so fortunate. On February 8, 2000, on the feast of St. Bakhita, the first Sudanese saint, and herself a former slave, an Antonov bomber, without warning, dropped five bombs on a schoolyard in Kauda in the Nuba Mountains, Holy Cross Catholic School, where more than fifty students were studying under the trees. Nineteen students and a teacher were either killed on the spot, or died later of their wounds. Many were maimed by the shrapnel.

When one of Khartoum's officials was confronted with evidence about the bombing, he said, "The bombs landed where they were supposed to land."

Recently, this past Christmas, I knelt there in the courtyard in Kauda where my children died. They are martyrs. There were Muslim children as well as Catholic children among the victims. They died because they wished to have an education. They died because they wished to live in peace with their neighbors. They died because they wished to prepare themselves for life in a new Sudan where every person is valued for him or herself, no matter what his background. And they died because they believed in Christ.

I wish I could say that this tragic attack was the last that my people of Kauda have had to suffer. Kauda was bombed again two days before this last Christmas, and, again, on December 31, forcing delays in my relief flights into the area, and my pastoral visit to my people.

The purpose of the aerial bombardment? To destroy villages and fields, to bomb harvests, to destroy the ability of people to provide for themselves, to wreck the institutions like schools and churches they have built against all odds, so that they will be flee their areas and eventually be herded into government-controlled areas when they are forcibly converted to Islam and divided up like spoils.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Let me conclude by saying something to you as lawyers.

My people are voiceless, you are not. My people have few resources, while you have many. My people are powerless; while you are citizens of the most powerful nation on earth.

By all means, pray for us. But prayer, genuine prayer, leads to action. You are lawyers: Be our advocates.

1. Help us inspire the new administration in Washington to take a leading role in Sudan as they did in Iraq, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, and in the Middle East negotiations. We call on the international community, led by the United States, to impose no fly zones over southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile. Think of the example of the Kurds.

2. We urge you to join us in insisting that humanitarian aid be given not only through secular NGOs and other organizations but also through the Church, through local churches on the scene, who, after all, live and suffer with the people and who know what the real needs are.

3. We urge you to urge the US and its allies to pressure the regime of Khartoum to allow the World Food Program and Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), UN relief programs, to take relief aid to any war-affected

area in Sudan, particularly the Nuba Mountains, northern Bahral Ghazal, and Southern Blue Nile.

Don't be fooled by what Susan Rice, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, has rightly called Khartoum's "cheerful declarations of change," to which I add: don't be fooled by the charm campaign. There is an Arabic saying that says: If you see the teeth of the lion, don't think that he is smiling. There are recent reports in US newspapers that Khartoum is prepared in the next few months to allow the UN to bring relief to the Nuba Mountains. Don't hold your breath. If they allow it, it is part of their war strategy to divide the Nuba and entice the suffering people into the government-controlled zones.

4. Please urge the Bush Administration to play its part to send UN observers to the area, to bring the influence of the international community to bear on these remote isolated war zones, to assess the situation and to understand what is happening; to prevent Khartoum from continuing to disperse and exterminate the people.

5. Urge the UN and the western nations in particular to uphold the resolutions on peace in Sudan proposed by the IGAAD declarations of principles, whose main pillars are: self-determination and the separation of religion and politics. Only IGAAD can solve the problem. Other initiatives only confuse and weaken the process.

6. Pressure the Europeans, French, Germans, Italians, Belgians, and Canadians from aiding Khartoum by investing in oil that only fuels the war and provides the regime with more sophisticated arms with which to kill, maim and destroy.

You are lawyers, spokesmen, advocates. I am asking only that you be what you are: people who labor in the field of justice, who by profession and vocation, stand with those who are subject to injustice, and, thus, are heralds both of truth and mercy.

Thank you.