

World's most murderous dictator thrives

by [Gretchen Barrett](#)

Except primarily for the ironhanded rulers in Russia and China, the most despised global dictator is President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, who is inflicting monstrous genocide on his own people. As usual, the United Nations is useless. But meanwhile, another monster is thriving, someone who has killed and starved to death hundreds of thousands more of his people than al-Assad.

President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan has had arrest warrants issued against him by the International Criminal Court on counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and, yes, genocide. Swashbucklingly unintimidated, al-Bashir is making initial martial moves against recently independent South Sudan that could bring back the years of horrors he unleashed in the country as a whole, including Darfur in the west.

In the past, the United Nations issued paper resolutions of concern and helped negotiate the now continually vulnerable independence of South Sudan. However, as al-Bashir's army continues to rape and murder, creating omens of a renewed civil war, the U.N. is silent, as are nations that have demonstrated concern about human rights, including Barack Obama's United States.

And just about everywhere, the rushing media are otherwise occupied. But as I expected, the most courageous American investigative reporter, the New York Times' Nicholas Kristof, has been writing from the remote, almost inaccessible Nuba Mountains of Sudan. As he reported on June 3 ("Starving Its Own Children"): "Sudan bars outsiders, but I sneaked in from South Sudan on a dirt track controlled by rebels. Since my last visit in February, the situation in these areas has deteriorated sharply: A large share of families have run completely out of food, with no prospect of more until the next harvest in November."

A 28-year-old mother, Katum Tutu, told Kristof that she "recently lost her 2-year-old daughter, Maris, to starvation and has nothing to feed her four remaining children."

Who's to blame? Gen. al-Bashir, festooned with ICC arrest warrants!

"Sudan," Kristof explained, "has expelled aid workers, blocked food shipments and humanitarian aid, and dropped bombs haphazardly — and almost daily — on its own citizens."

In a June 7 story (“If Only Our Leaders Had Mariam’s Guts”), Kristof introduced “a valiant woman here, Mariam Tia, to President Obama and other world leaders, so she could explain how they’re allowing Sudan’s leaders to get away with mass atrocities that echo Darfur. ...

“Mariam was pregnant when the Sudanese army invaded her village here in the rebel-held Nuba Mountains and shot her husband dead. ... She eventually relocated to a dank mountain cave, where — like countless other Nubians — she felt a bit safer from random bombings by government warplanes.

“When her due date came two months ago, Mariam delivered her baby by herself inside the cave. She named her baby girl Fakao, which is shorthand for ‘bombs are dropping.’ ... “I named her this so that I could remember the struggle we went through to give her life. If I ever see the enemy again, I will tie this baby to my back and pick up a gun and fight them.”

Indeed, with no outside help to wait for, why not show some self-respect? Even if the rest of the world isn’t listening and watching.

Another woman, Hasia al-Ahmar, told Kristof “that her mother had starved to death and then the government dropped a bomb that landed directly on the family’s grass-roof mud hut, with her sister inside.

“ ‘We could just pick up little pieces of her and put them in a plastic bag,’ she said. ‘And then we buried the bag.’ “

In his June 3 story, Kristof wrote: “World leaders are mostly turning a blind eye.”

Which leader isn’t?

“There isn’t even serious talk about damaging the military airstrips that Sudan’s warplanes take off from before dropping bombs on civilians, or about forcing a humanitarian corridor, or about arranging airdrops of food.”

He then brought Obama into a grass-roof mud hut: “President Obama, you harshly criticized President Bush for failing to stand up to Sudan’s slaughter in Darfur. So now what are you going to do as Sudan kills again — on your watch?”

I, too, have often asked George W. Bush and Obama that question during the years of columns I’ve written on Darfur. I have credited evangelical Christians who often urgently told President Bush that to end the killings and starvation, he must lead the campaign personally.

But where are the evangelicals now? What about the Jewish groups that have formerly petitioned Bush and Obama?

I kept pressuring Obama to remember what he said during his campaign for the presidency; that “the mass rapes and killings orchestrated by Gen. al-Bashir had left a ‘stain on our souls.’

“And with a heavy heart he promised ‘never again’ “ (my column, “The Forgotten People”).

What has Obama said lately, as president, about Gen. al-Bashir’s victims?

Hey, Mitt Romney! As president, what are you going to do about these forgotten people? You ought to meet Nicholas Kristof.

I never had the guts to report from Sudan, but Kristof never lets me forget about the genocide there.

At least I can try to sic Romney on Gen. al-Bashir. Obama is hopeless. He's too focused on the kill list of drone assassinations he can command, including American citizens.

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