

al-Bashir's genocide horrors began and continue in Darfur

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October 19, 2013

(Editors: This is the second in a series on Sudan's genocidal dictator, who remains unpunished for his crimes against humanity and also at home.)

The headline of the Sept. 30 Guardian said it all: "Sudan protestors call for President Omar al-Bashir to step down." The story, which originally ran in the Associated Press, explained how this horrifying dictator had been facing angry demonstrations at home in Khartoum that were among "the most widespread in Sudan since Omar al-Bashir seized power 24 years ago."

But these protests demanding he leave office, which have caused "dozens" of killings by his forces, have no connection with the International Criminal Court's arrest warrants for al-Bashir on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, for which he has yet to spend a single day on trial.

These citizens chanting "freedom, peace and justice" have been suffering from a rapidly deteriorating economy "where nearly half the population lives in poverty."

A nephew of a protestor shot to death, speaking for thousands more, pledged: "We will keep uncovering the regime's brutal tactics in suppressing the protests by killings and atrocities."

Of course, Isma'il Kushkush reported in The New York Times, "the government has not claimed responsibility for any of the deaths" ("A Killing by Sudanese Security Forces Stokes the Anger of a Protest Movement," Oct. 5).

But with disappearing media coverage of the raw justice facing al-Bashir, there has also been very scarce attention to his continued savagery in the Darfur region of Sudan, which has made him one of world history's most murderous tyrants.

A powerful exception to this media languor is Nicholas Kristof. His dispatch from earlier this year, "Darfur in 2013 Sounds Awfully Familiar" (The New York Times, July 20), reminded me of past reports I wrote while al-Bashir was perfecting his mastery of genocide, such as this: "Genocide Is Just Business as Usual in Darfur" (October 2006).

Citing the Sudan Tribune, I wrote that because of the genocide in Darfur, "80 children under age 5 die each day, estimates the United Nations Children's Fund."

And as Kristof reported from a refugee camp, Abgadam, in southeastern Chad last July, the horrors continue:

"The resumption of mass atrocities in Darfur after a bit of a lull has led villagers to flee to this refugee camp ... It is full of Darfuris who have arrived in recent months after Sudanese government-sponsored militias began a new spasm of murder, rape and pillage against two minority ethnic groups.

"Survivors tell the same stories. Armed men, often in army uniforms, burned their villages, killed men, raped women and took everything they had, while calling them slaves or saying that their tribe would be wiped out in Darfur."

How many of you knew about al-Bashir's current crimes against humanity?

There is no actual move at the U.N. -- or anywhere else -- to arrest al-Bashir and bring him to the International Criminal Court in The Hague for trial under the previous arrest warrants against him, let alone these terrors.

Kristof -- who should be a most disturbing model to American journalists and their editors -- made this indictment of the media, which includes nearly all U.S.-based sources of news:

"It is now 10 years since the Darfur genocide began, and we in the news media have mostly tired of the issue. It's no longer news that the Sudanese government is slaughtering its people."

Is this disgrace ever mentioned in any of the graduate schools of journalism in the United States? I would like these schools and members of the media to explain their silence.

"Yet our silence," Kristof wrote, "empowers Sudan's leaders to pick up where they left off in Darfur."

Now dig this: "The United Nations has estimated that more than 300,000 Darfuris were displaced in the first five months of this year -- roughly as many as in the last two years combined" (my emphasis).

It should be added that the U.N. is saving lives in these refugee camps.

As for the some of the survivors whom Kristof met:

"Halima Ahmed, 28, told how a convoy of pickups with mounted machine guns arrived at her village, and soldiers in Sudanese military uniforms then started shooting."

She told Kristof: "They shot my husband, and he fell down. And then they cut his throat."

Kristof continued: "Hawa Mansal, 35, said that all five of her brothers were shot, four fatally. Soldiers debated whether to shoot her as well, but then decided that they shouldn't kill a woman."

This has not been a unanimous decision among al-Bashir's murderers.

Also worth noting and mourning in the Abgadam camp: Five of the sons of Sheik Abdullah al-Nazir were shot dead in the family house.

"The youngest was 3 years old."

You will not be surprised to learn this from Nicholas Kristof: "In the mid-2000s, an ambitious senator from Illinois complained eloquently that the White House was too silent in the face of evil in Darfur. Is it too much to ask that President Obama recall his own words -- and speak out again?"

I suggest to Nicholas Kristof that if he can catch the president on the golf course, relaxing from his strenuous efforts to rescue Obamacare, he might say a few words about the evils in Darfur.

But to what end when he returns to work in the Oval Office? Furthermore, have you heard anything about expanding murders and rapes in Darfur from any of the possible candidates for the presidency in 2016?

Here is Kristof again: "Sheltering under one tree here in the Abgadam camp were three small children, all orphans from bloodletting in Darfur. The oldest is a 9-year-old girl named Asiya who is now effectively mother to her brothers, Muhammad, 7, and Yasin, 2. The mother and father were shot dead in their home by a Sudanese government-backed militia, villagers say."

Anything you want to say to -- or do for -- these three kids?