

Franklin Graham Calls for New Government in Sudan

Saturday marks Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir's 23rd year in power and I'm standing with the millions of Sudanese who are demonstrating across Sudan and around the world, calling for an end to his wicked and murderous regime.

Since coming to power in 1989, Bashir has overseen a civil war that took the lives of some 2 million people, the conflict in Darfur that conservatively resulted in some 200,000 deaths and was indicted as a war criminal by the International Criminal Court. His brutality continues today as his regime continues to attack thousands in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State with aerial bombings, ground raids and orchestrated famine.

I have personally met with President Bashir on three occasions, each time encouraging him to be a man of peace and to give equal rights to minorities—especially to Christians. But my trip to the Nuba Mountains in April proved again, when I saw families hiding in caves from MIG bombers and children starving to death and eating insects and tree bark, that Bashir is unwilling to change. Something new must be done in order to save thousands of Sudan's civilians.

I applaud President Obama for stating after the G20 that the government of Syria has lost its legitimacy to rule because it is killing its own citizens and I think the same must be said about the government of Sudan. Last November, I called for a no-fly zone to be established over the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State. In April, I called for limited military air strikes on Khartoum's military airstrips.

Now it's time for stronger action to be taken. The United States government and our allies need to increase the pressure and force a regime change to allow an opportunity for peace.

Until then, I remain committed to meeting critical needs of those who are fleeing for their lives into South Sudan.

Right now, Samaritan's Purse is providing emergency relief to refugees who have crossed the border into South Sudan to flee the fighting in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States. Since August, more than 200,000 of these conflict-affected people have received food, clean water, medical care, temporary shelter and trauma counseling through Samaritan's Purse projects.

Samaritan's Purse and I have a long history in Sudan, having spent some \$100 million to help the Sudanese people. The organization has been working throughout Sudan since 1993, providing hundreds of thousands of people with food, medical aid and vocational training. Samaritan's Purse has also worked to rebuild churches in South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains that were destroyed during the country's civil war. Since the project began in 2005, Samaritan's Purse has rebuilt 496 churches, many in remote villages, and the project is ongoing.

Franklin Graham, *the eldest son of Ruth and Billy Graham, serves as president and CEO of Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.*