

Action urged against slavery in Sudan_102003

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WASHINGTON (BP)-As a brutal civil war continues to rage in Sudan, the U.S. House of Representatives has passed a resolution condemning slavery in that country and urging the Bush administration to impose sanctions.

The resolution, which passed unanimously last month, says the United States should encourage the United Nations to require annual investigations of abuses in Sudan, according to an Associated Press report.

In April, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights voted to drop requirements for annual reports on human rights violations in Sudan and make the country eligible for financial funding. The House resolution asked that the requirements be reinstated.

During his five-day tour through Africa in July, President Bush participated in discussions on ending the bloodshed in Sudan.

A religion-driven civil war has plagued the largest country in Africa for nearly two decades. The ruling Islamic regime has waged what has been widely described as a genocidal campaign against Christians, animists and moderate Muslims in the southern and central regions of the country.

The effort supported by the Khartoum government has included slave raids and the bombardment of hospitals, churches, schools and relief stations. It also has involved rape of women and children as well as the forcible

conversion to Islam of children and starvation for Sudanese who refuse to convert.

Since 1983, about 2 million people have died in Sudan's civil war, according to the AP report.

Last October, President Bush signed the Sudan Peace Act intended to press the Islamic regime to end its military campaign against its own citizens. The legislation provided immediate aid to southern Sudan's beleaguered citizens and required the White House to monitor peace negotiations and to enforce sanctions on the Khartoum regime if it was not negotiating in good faith or was interfering with humanitarian aid.

The new law "demonstrates the clear resolve of the United States to promote a lasting, just peace; human rights, and freedom from persecution for the people of Sudan," Bush said.

In his agenda for U.S.-Africa relations, the president called for both sides in Sudan to make their final commitment to peace and human rights and end the suffering in the country.

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