

In Break With U.N., Bush Calls Sudan Killings Genocide

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President Bush said yesterday that the killings in Sudan's Darfur region constitute genocide, breaking with the United Nations and some administration officials who in recent months have carefully avoided using the term to describe the violence and death in Darfur.

Bush, under pressure from some lawmakers and human rights groups to speak out more forcefully against the rising death toll in Darfur, told reporters that he concurs with former secretary of state Colin L. Powell, who had previously "declared the situation a genocide." The United Nations, which conducted a legal analysis of the killings, has said the situation is tantamount to crimes against humanity but technically not genocide.

Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick, recently dispatched by Bush to survey the situation in Darfur, has said he was trying to avoid the debate over what to call the killing of tens of thousands of Africans over the past two years. The United States, under the 1948 U.N. convention on genocide, is committed to preventing such killings and punishing the killers if it deems a genocide is taking place.

Bush discussed the two-year conflict in Darfur with South African President Thabo Mbeki and NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at the White House, and he later told reporters that the United States will continue to provide financial and logistical assistance, but not U.S. troops, to help stop the genocide. "Our government has put a lot of money to help deal with the human suffering there," he said.

The United Nations and other groups have accused Sudan's government of arming Arab militiamen known as the Janjaweed to bomb villages and crush the rebels. But Mbeki said: "It's critically important that the African continent should deal with these conflict situations on the continent. And that includes Darfur. And therefore, indeed, you will notice that we have not asked for anybody outside of the African continent to deploy troops in Darfur. It's an African responsibility, and we can do it."

The African Union is taking the lead militarily, but critics say African nations are not providing enough troops to prevent the killing and rape of innocent civilians. "We are working with NATO to make sure that we are able to help the AU put combat troops there," Bush said. "And, as a part of that, I believe a transport plane of ours, for example, will be a part of this mission."

Bush rebuffed British Prime Minister Tony Blair's efforts to persuade the world's wealthiest nations to double aid to Africa. Blair, who is scheduled to meet with Bush in Washington next week, wants to raise an additional \$50 billion per year to help African nations.

"It doesn't fit our budgetary process," Bush said.