Testimony of Brad Phillips, President of Persecution Project Foundation, and Sudan Country Director for The Voice of the Martyrs

To the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights

August 4th, 2011

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Payne and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify at this emergency hearing on the current crisis in the Nuba Mountains of the Southern Kordofan region of the Republic of Sudan.

By way of introduction, my name is Brad Phillips, and I am here on behalf of two organizations that have a relatively long history of working in Sudan. The first is Persecution Project Foundation, of which I serve as the president and founder. PPF's mission is to engage in active compassion for the persecuted Christian Church in Africa, and much of our emphasis has been on Sudan during the last 14 years. Our organization has been working in the region since 1998. In fact, my first visit to Sudan brought me to the Nuba Mountains.

The second organization I represent is the Voice of the Martyrs (VOM). VOM was founded in 1967 by Richard Wurmbrand, a pastor in Romania during the years under Communism. Pastor Wurmbrand suffered horrific torture, imprisonment, and persecution for his faith. He started VOM to assist and comfort persecuted Christians throughout the world. VOM currently works in more than 50 restricted countries and has been active in Sudan since 1997. I currently serve VOM as the Country Director for the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan.

Mr. Chairman, I realize that you and your colleagues are only now concluding a very busy time concerning the recent debate on raising the debt ceiling, so I am very grateful you have taken time to hear about a very important issue that is non-partisan.

This issue is genocide--genocide currently being attempted in the Nuba Mountains of Southern Kordofan State in the Republic of Sudan.

I know you have had the opportunity several times to receive testimony on this issue from my learned friend Roger Winter, former Special Representative on Sudan. During his last testimony on June 16th, he reported to you on the war of genocide now waging in the Nuba by the government in Khartoum. I am here to simply say that everything Mr. Winter told you is true. I have seen it with my own eyes. Less than three weeks after Mr. Winter's testimony, I visited the Nuba Mountains.

To fully understand what is happening right now in the Nuba Mountains requires some background and context. In 1989, through a coup d'etat, a new regime came to power in Sudan. This regime was called the National Islamic Front (NIF), and its leadership consisted of Islamic extremists, many of whom were identified by our government as terrorists or supporters of international terrorism. As soon as the NIF came to power, it began an intensive military campaign to "Arabize" and "Islamize" the indigenous African populations in Southern Sudan, the Blue Nile, and the Nuba Mountains regions. Later, Darfur was added to the list.

During the 1990s up until the peace agreement in 2005, more than two million Southern Sudanese people, most of whom were Christian or animist, were slaughtered. The Nuba Mountains lost 500,000 people, roughly half its population, both Christian and Muslim. And we are all aware of the genocide in Darfur that since 2003 has claimed an estimated 400,000 lives.

The primary resistance to the NIF during the last war came from the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) led by charismatic leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabior. Garang was a Christian from South Sudan, but he desired freedom and self-determination for all Sudanese people. His vision was called the "New Sudan."

After more than 20 years of fighting, the SPLM fought the NIF to a standstill, and international pressure forced the NIF to the negotiating table. In January 2005, the SPLM and the NIF signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This agreement provided South Sudan with semi-autonomy and eventually a referendum vote on self-determination, which we all know resulted in the welcoming of the Republic of South Sudan as the world's newest nation on July 9th.

But while we celebrate with South Sudan on its independence from the murderous regime in Khartoum, we must not forget that many marginalized groups in the north were not given the same guarantees as the south. Specifically, the Abyei region in Southern Kordofan State, the Nuba Mountains, also in Southern Kordofan, and the Blue Nile State received some concessions from the NIF. But as subsequent actions showed during the interim period of the CPA, the NIF, now renamed the National Congress Party (NCP), had no intention of granting self-determination to these marginalized areas.

Under the CPA, the Nuba people were guaranteed a free election, followed by a popular consultation, whereby elected leaders would interview their constituents and determine what the people wanted with regard to their political future. This consultation process would hopefully pave the way for a regime change or power-sharing arrangement in Khartoum that recognized and respected the rights of all of Sudan's diverse communities.

As of today, the popular consultation has not taken place. Moreover, Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir publicly stated in April this year that if the NCP cannot get its way with the ballot box, it will use "the ammo box." This was a declaration of war and violation of the CPA. Also in April, as an intimidation tactic, NCP-backed forces attacked el Fayit, home to the Nuba SPLM commander and gubernatorial candidate, Abdel Aziz Adam al-Hilu. Twenty-seven members of al-Hilu's family were murdered in this attack.

All of this was done before the scheduled elections in May as an

attempted provocation to draw the SPLM into war. But they did not take the bait. When the elections finally took place, evidence of large-scale vote rigging was reported. Yet, even with the evidence of voting fraud, Bashir sent down Nafie ali Nafie, special advisor to the president, to declare NCP candidate and indicted war criminal Ahmed Haroun the winner before the end of the mandated verification period.

The newly "elected" Governor Haroun then ordered all SPLM/A forces out of Southern Kordofan by June 1. This order was in direct violation of the CPA, which allows the SPLA to operate in Southern Kordofan up to 90 days after the close of the interim period on July 9th, 2011.

This attempt by the NCP to cleanse the north of the SPLM/A before the July 9th independence of South Sudan was also carried out in the disputed Abyei region. After massing troops around Abyei, NCP forces invaded on May 20th, forcing most of the indigenous African population out. Some estimates of the number of refugees from this area are as high as 100,000.

It became obvious to all watching these events unfold what was happening. It's no wonder that the SPLM refused to disband or leave Southern Kordofan. When the order was not obeyed by the June 1st deadline, the NCP tried to disarm the SPLM by force. This was the beginning of the war on June 5th.

On June 6th, the NCP attacked and sacked the capital of Kadugli, murdering potentially thousands of civilians in the subsequent days. The NCP also pulled out an old card from their deck: daily, indiscriminate aerial bombardment of civilian targets. Using Antonov bombers, MiG fighters, and helicopter gunships, the NCP launched a campaign of terror from the skies. I have included several pictures of bombed locations and civilian casualties for the committee's review.

I personally arrived in the Nuba Mountains on July 4th on one of the few private charters flying to the Nuba since fighting ended all

UN humanitarian flights.

During my visit, I interviewed more than a dozen individuals who escaped from Kadugli, all of who m shared the same basic story:

"Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) troops went from house to house searching for A. Any Nuba citizen, B. Christians, or C. Members of the SPLM. Anyone fitting this description was either killed on the spot or arrested and never seen again."

Fortunately, a few thousand residents obtained shelter at the UNMIS compound. But the compound soon filled, and I heard many stories and accounts of people being killed at the gates of the UNIMIS compound while UN soldiers stood by.

I spoke with Reverend Luka Bolis, an Episcopal Priest and Western Regional Chairman of the Sudan Council of Churches, who escaped from Kadugli and told me that "The NCP is targeting the church in this war." Rev. Luka received a call from some friends in Kadugli warning him not to return. They told him the SAF had a list of all church leaders and suspected SPLM sympathizers.

Rev. Luka's testimony corresponded with others I received from Nuba Christians who were persecuted in the last war by the same regime. Luka said the NCP does not distinguish between a Christian and a member of the SPLM political party. If one is a Christian, he is assumed to be a supporter of the SPLM. Consequently, pastors are specifically targeted as leaders and recruiters of the SPLM.

Another pastor I interviewed, whom I will call "Kumi" for security reasons, was arrested by the NIF during the last war and tortured in the most horrific manner to try to force him divulge the names of his church members. His captors pulled out his fingernails and toenails. They hung him by the neck until he passed out. They crushed his testicles. They dragged him behind a tank. They poured gasoline on his hands and set them aflame, and many other cruel acts. Pastor Kumi was then imprisoned for a total of eight years. Although he lived several hours drive away from Rev. Luka and spoke concerning the previous war, his testimony was the same: the

NCP troops assumed all Christians were SPLM members and all pastors SPLM leaders and recruiters.

Yet another church leader I met in a completely different area had a similar story and perspective. "Musa" was stabbed repeatedly and left for dead after NCP troops attacked his church in 1997. Thinking Musa was dead, one NCP soldier cut off his left ear as a trophy. Musa told me that if the SPLM is defeated in the present war, the same persecution will return to the Nuba Mountains because the same regime is still in power in Khartoum.

And this is what I heard over and over again during my trip: the same people who committed war crimes in the Nuba Mountains before are doing it again today.

The only difference in what I saw in 1998 and what I saw last month is that the SPLM has clearly taken the initiative and taken the fight, as it were, to their enemies. Led by Commander Al-Hilu, the people of the Nuba Mountains are fighting back and have won some impressive victories on the ground. And this has occurred without any significant help from the international community. This determined resistance by the SPLM in the Nuba Mountains is a genuine "Popular Uprising" and the only thing that has prevented another Rwandan-style genocide from happening. But time is running out.

The UN ended humanitarian relief efforts in June, and most NGOs operating under the UN umbrella pulled out. All roads to the north have been closed, and the rainy season in South Sudan has affectively closed supply routes to the south until the fall. The daily bombings have terrorized the local population to the degree that normal cultivation is not taking place during this crucial planting season. The Nuba Mountains are isolated, cut off, and facing a humanitarian crisis within 60 days unless relief flights are allowed to recommence. And this will not happen while SAF MiGs and Antonov bombers and gunships patrol the skies. The NCP refuses to allow UN observers into the Nuba Mountains to document what is happening, which should not surprise anyone.

It is absolutely essential that the international community bring pressure to bear on the United Nations to immediately declare a Humanitarian Emergency in the Nuba Mountains and impose a "no-fly" zone to stop the bombing campaign and allow humanitarian access so that relief flights back into the region may resume.

I will conclude by stating that there is more than enough evidence to justify speedy action by the US and the international community to address the dire situation in the Nuba Mountains. The president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, is an indicted war criminal. The current governor of the Nuba Mountains is Ahmed Haroun, also an indicted war criminal for his role in the Darfur genocide. These men make Libya's Gaddafi look like a choir boy.

There is no justification in my mind for bombing Libya, while doing nothing in the Nuba Mountains. Seasoned reporters from the New York Times, Time Magazine, Aljazeera English, The Independent in Great Britain, and others have visited the Nuba Mountains and brought back testimonies, pictures, and video proving that war crimes are being committed against the Nuba people by the NCP regime. I have included copies of several of these articles with my testimony.

How is it, then, that the US government still claims there is not enough evidence to charge the NCP with war crimes? Why does the US government treat with the NCP and the victims of their crimes with moral equivalency? Based on the history of the NCP, and what we know about what they are doing today in Darfur, in Abyei, and in the Nuba Mountains, it amazes me how the US and the international community could tolerate these killers for so long, yet aggressively pursue other villains who have not killed 1/100th of the people for which Omar al-Bashir and his regime are responsible.

Three million lives--and counting. When will we say, "Enough"?

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs

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Clause 2(g) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and the Rules of the Committee require the disclosure of the following information. A copy of this form should be attached to your written testimony and will be made publicly available in electronic format, per House Rules.

1. Name:	2. Organization or organizations you are representing:
BRADFORD PHILLIPS	Persecution Project Foundation

3. Date of Committee hearing:

4 August 2011

4. Have you received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?	5. Have any of the organizations you are representing received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?
☐ Yes ☑ No	☐ Yes ☑ No

6. If you answered yes to either item 4 or 5, please list the source and amount of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant was you or the organization(s) you are representing. You may list additional grants or contracts on additional sheets.

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