Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate on this national day of

prayer that we recognize the great

gifts that we have been given and the

great land in which we live and we give

thanks for it. It is also, I think, important for us to think about some places

in the world that desperately need our

prayers and our help, in a variety of

ways, but certainly our prayers. It is

appropriate that today we think about

a place far away, quite remote, someplace that does not come to mind very

often but should because of the horrendous conditions in which people are

forced to live. The place I refer to today is Sudan.

We have often seen pictures like

these. They are often presented on television as the basis of appeals for aid or

for charity for people who are certainly

less well off than we and who are in

dire straits. The horrendous thing here

in the Sudan is that these people, people of southern Sudan specifically, are

suffering not just because of the vagaries of the weather and the difficulty

with the terrain in that area of the

country, the arid part of the nation in

which many live. They are not really,

in fact, dealing with that as their major problem. They are, in fact,

starving to death, it is true. They are

dying of diseases by the thousands. To

date, 2 million have died over the

course of the last 10 years as a result of

a civil war that has been going on

there. That war is really what has

caused the great damage to the people

and to the land and to the lives of literally millions upon millions of southern Sudanese.

So today I want to refocus the attention of this House on the plight of

these people. We have in the past acted

in this body and passed something

called The Sudan Peace Act. It languishes in the Senate, as do other

pieces of legislation. This one no one

seems to care about. It does not have

the high visibility, of course, of so

many of the other things we do around

here, and so no one seems to care. I

hope today to bring to the attention of

this body and to the people in this

country the plight of these people in

south Sudan and to once again help us

focus on what we can do to help and why we should help.

To aid in that endeavor, I will turn

to my colleague, a member of the Committee on the Judiciary, the distinguished gentleman from

Indiana (Mr. PENCE), who has graciously agreed to

come down here and discuss this issue.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that listening to the gentleman

helps recharge my batteries on the

issue. I think that the gentleman has

been, certainly flattering, but more

than that, he has in a way that I could

never have done, focused the attention

of this body on an issue of, I think,

monumental importance, and I thank

the gentleman for his kind words. I had the great privilege of going to

the Sudan. Actually, it was the very

first trip I ever took as a congressman.

It was in 1999. Senator BROWNBACK

And the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), we were privileged to go to the

Sudan. I did not know what I was going

to see there. I was concerned about the

conditions there, and our own safety,

as a matter of fact. I have to admit

that was of some concern to me. We

were told that we should not go. The

State Department sent cables to my

home stating do not go there. We have

no people that we will give you as support. You should not go. Some of these

places are in an area that is actively

involved with the war effort in the

south. There are towns that are being

bombed, so we cannot really say anything about your safety except that

you will have very little security.

Under those conditions, I wondered

how sage I was about actually making

a decision to go on such a trip. But it

was important to do. I felt moved to do

it, and I was going with someone who

had been there before. The gentleman

from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), has been

there several times and is another stalwart in support of our efforts on behalf

of the Sudanese people, especially the

people of the south. The gentleman

from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) had been there several times.

What we saw was devastating in many ways because we could see the

incredible obstacles that confront

these people. There was a severe

drought, but it was only exacerbated

by the activities of the government of

the north. People were being massacred

and hospitals were being bombed and

schools were being invaded, and teachers and children shot and people were

being rounded up, taken away, forced

into slavery in the north. We think to

ourselves and certainly we did on that

trip, what can we possibly do about

this? How can we possibly change the

policies of our Nation, change the situation in a country so far away. Yet certainly I felt, and so did Senator

BROWNBACK and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), felt compelled

to do something. I will never forget being in a town

called Yei in the southern tip of Sudan,

and there was a great confrontation

just a few days before we got there.

Armed confrontation. The place had

been bombed many times. As we

walked through that small town of

maybe 1,000, maybe 2,000 people, we

were immediately surrounded by hundreds of children. They kept pressing

closer and closer to us, so close we could hardly move.

They kept saying something that I

could not understand. Our guide interpreted. He said they said they are trying to get

close to you because they assume if they get close to you, an American congressman, whoever is dropping

bombs will not drop a bomb at that

point in time. Of course I was hoping

the same thing, that that would be the

case, but I was hoping that there was

something that I could do to stop that

fear forever for them because the fear

in their eyes and the hunger in their

eyes, it is just a vision that no one can

experience without coming away with

a sincere desire to do something to help.

I also remember the last day I was

there, it was spent in a small mudsided facility with a grass and palm

roof, and it was the local church which

had been constructed in a place where

there were over 30,000 refugees. This

was actually just one of many small

churches in this refugee center, and all

of these people had been driven out of

their homes in the north, the northern

part of Sudan. Almost everyone had

lost someone. Somewhere near 6,000

people died from the trek from the

Nuba Mountains down to this particular village, almost all of them children, and yet they came together in

this makeshift church and they began

to sing the praises of Jesus Christ.

They were spirit-filled in a way I can

tell Members I hardly see in the United

States, and I am an evangelical Christian. It was almost miraculous to see

these people with that expression of

emotion and that much joy that they

were expressing in that kind of a setting. As I say, almost everyone had

lost someone. They were living in a foreign land, land that they could not

farm. It was a life that any of us would

probably find fruitless and perhaps

hopeless, and they had hope, and that

hope was in the Lord. I remember thinking to myself and

telling them, as a matter of fact, that

I had been moved to come there because of something that had happened

in my church in Colorado about 4 or 5

years prior where I was witnessing a

program that was done, it was called

the Persecuted Church Around the

World, and it focused on the Sudan. I

was not in Congress at the time. I was

not even thinking of running for Congress. A gentleman was in this position, and we assumed that he was going

to be in that position for quite a long

time. But I felt a need to do something.

After many twists and turns, I ended

up in the Congress, and I asked for the

Committee on International Relations,

and then I asked for the Subcommittee

on Africa, and I ended up in Sudan in this church.

I said I want to tell you a story. It is

only right that my trip to the Sudan

ends in a church because it started in a

church. I told them the story about

hearing about their plight, and wanting to do something about it.

What was interesting to me, and what I told them in that church, was

that I thought of course that I was

doing something for them, to help the

people in Sudan. In reality, of course,

what had happened was God had done

something to help me. He had done far

more for me, and the trip did more

than I could do for the people of Sudan.

That is the way of God. It is intriguing, and certainly it inspires us.

I came back and we did introduce the

Sudan Peace Act. It calls for a number

of things, including an end to any sort

of corporate participation in Sudan. We

already banned corporate involvement

in the United States, but our bill says

any foreign corporation that goes in

there would be delisted from the American stock exchanges, the New York

and American Stock Exchange. This is

a very significant step to take, and it

is probably why the bill is languishing

in the Senate because that is a major,

major step. A lot of concerns have been

expressed about the kind of precedent

that it would set. Let me tell Members why we have to do that.

The war in the south, and I should

back up and explain, it is in our interest, it is in the interests of the United

States of America to bring this conflict

to an end in Sudan. As the gentleman

from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) mentioned,

the northern part of Sudan is an area

where we have found in the past people like Osama bin Laden who have been

given safe havens there. It is still a place where al Qaeda finds a respite.

One was just found there not too long ago.

It is not in our interest to have this conflict ongoing in the south. It is in

our interest to bring it to an end, and

if that means the separation of the

country into two parts, so be it. I used

to think that perhaps we could do

something to just simply stop the

fighting and keep the country united,

maybe under some sort of federalist

system where there is some sort of autonomy for the south. But because of

the many times that the government

in Sudan, and I will refer to it as Khar-toum, the northern government,

Khar-toum has simply promised something

but almost before the ink is dry on the

promise, they have broken it. They are

in the process now of pursuing the war in the south in a vigorous way, even

though they promised that they would not.

They promised a cease-fire. They are

funding this war through the revenues

derived from an oil pipeline recently

opened, and that is why we have to ask

the corporate world to be aware of

what they are doing in the Sudan, be aware of the fact that the revenues

that are derived from the sale of the oil

in Sudan, those revenues are going to

the prosecution of the war. Without

those revenues, this war may very well

have come to an end, but now that money is used and can be used and is

being used to purchase arms, to pay for

troops, and to continue the persecution of the south.

Now, it is a complex situation. It is

not just the fact that the south is

Christian and the north is Muslim. It is

the fact also, of course, that there is a

different culture, different languages

and different interests entirely for the two peoples of this nation. It may very

well be that we are at that point where

that nation has to split asunder and

that the people of the south will be allowed to actually construct their own

government and determine their own faith.

At any rate, the only step we can

take, the only step open to us right

now in this body, is to encourage Members of the other body to advance the

bill, the Sudan Peace Act. Let us bring it to a vote. It has passed in both

Houses. We are awaiting the appointment of a conference committee. That

is all that is stopping us from actually

taking the next step and doing something significant to bring peace to this

troubled land. Let us appoint a conference committee.

I thank the Speaker for his admonition.

This conference needs to be voted on

by this House and by the whole body,

and we need to do it as quickly as possible in order for us to bring some relief to the people who have suffered for

so long. As I say, it is in our interests, it is in

this Nation’s interests, to bring peace

to this land and to deal directly with

the issue of the kind of horror and devastation that has besieged it for so

long and that has plagued it for so

long. So I hope that we will do that soon.

As I say, on this National Day of

Prayer, as we think about our own wonderful gifts that we have in this.