Mr. President, we will be

closing in a few moments. But before

doing that, I want to comment on

events carried out in Washington yesterday,

indeed around the country yesterday,

in response to a crisis that is

going on, a crisis that is more than a

crisis. It is genocide going on in the

Darfur region. It is the western region

of the Sudan.

Yesterday, roughly 10,000 people

gathered in front of the Capitol, on the

Mall, to bring attention to what is happening:

that crisis, that genocidal campaign

that is underway and being perpetrated

against the people of Darfur.

I applaud all of the participants’

compassion and commitment to the

cause which has been discussed again

and again on the floor of the Senate

but, indeed, is a devastating crisis that

is destroying a population and, indeed,

is genocide.

This is an issue that is very close to

my own heart, in part because I travel

just about every year to do medical

mission work in that part of the world,

in the Sudan. Indeed, I was in the

Darfur area and in Chad a little over a

year ago on the ground.

I mention it because this afternoon,

several hours ago, I had the wonderful

opportunity of meeting with a small

group of refugees from the Darfur region.

The meeting was organized by

SaveDarfur.org. It gave me the opportunity

to visit firsthand with individuals

from several of the tribes that occupy

the Darfur region.

It is interesting, there are 10, 11, 12

tribes throughout Sudan. In the south,

two or three tribes dominate. In different

parts of the Sudan, tribes dominate.

But it is interesting, over in the

Darfur region, the number of tribes

that intersect together. It is sort of

midway—north-south—in Sudan, so

you have a lot of the tribes that are

more endemic to the northern part of

Sudan, as well as the southern and

eastern part of Sudan. All of them

commingle in that region.

We met, oh, about 50 yards from here

on a balcony overlooking the Mall. And

as you stood on the balcony there, on a

beautiful day in Washington, looking

out, you could not help but think of

the contrast between what is going on

in the homeland of those refugees to

the United States from Darfur and that

beautiful day looking out upon our

monuments and the freedom and liberty

for which they stand. That contrast

between the turmoil that is going

on, as we speak, in Sudan and America’s

homeland peace and prosperity

were really felt.

I have had the opportunity to go to

Sudan a number of times. I have talked

to the refugees in the border camps.

They are along the western border of

Sudan and in the country of Chad,

which is to the west of the Sudan.

There are 12 refugee camps. The refugee

camps have anywhere from 8,000

to 20,000 people who are living on a sustenance

level, with the aid of NGOs and

peoples around the world, in little

tents, makeshift tents, but living

there, in essence, permanently.

There are about 2 million people who

have been displaced in the Darfur region

and about 200,000 people who have

died as a result of brutality which

leads back to government sponsorship.

We have heard again and again the

stories and seen pictures of the villages

that are set afire, of the women who

are raped, the children who are abducted,

recruited to armies, and even

many executed.

The Government of Sudan has failed

to take credible steps to date, and we

need to use everything within our

power and our standing in the international

community to convince other

people to act and to act now. We cannot—

cannot—tolerate this genocide.

On this floor we have called it for

what it is: genocide. President Bush

has called it genocide. Former Secretary

of State Colin Powell has called

it genocide.

Last month, before we left for the

Easter/Passover recess, I met with a

number of friends from Sudan, many of

whom I had gotten to know when I was

last in Sudan, in the southern part of

the Sudan. They had been sponsored by

a charity out of Knoxville, TN.

We talked about the clinics and the

hospitals in southern Sudan. And we

discussed the pressure the American

Government has been able to bring to

date on behalf of the Darfur people.

But there is a lot more we can do. And

there is a lot more we should do.

Because these individuals were from

the southern part of Sudan—that is a

thousand miles away, a long way away

from the Darfur region—they reflected

how our Government getting involved

in the southern part of Sudan had

brought more peace, and it stopped the

civil war that had gone on there for the

last 20 years.

One of those visitors, Reverend

Kayanga, is a friend, actually, somebody

whom I have gotten to know. He

said it best when he said, ‘‘The only

people that visited us were your people.’’

He was saying that to me, again,

reaching out: Thank you for the past.

But you need to get even more involved

as we address this devastating crisis in

the Darfur part of Sudan.

The conflict in the region is huge.

First of all, Sudan itself, the country,

is about a third of the size of the continental

United States. The Darfur region

is vast. The area of conflict is

probably a third bigger than all of Iraq.

So it is a huge area, which is one of the

challenges. Things are getting worse,

not better, which is the message they

were giving me. Indeed, as I talked to

people on the ground, in terms of

NGOs, the NGOs are having a harder

time. The rainy season comes in 4

weeks. Once that comes in, there is no

way to get aid and have it distributed

throughout the Darfur region.

As yesterday’s rally demonstrated,

the American people have vast stores

of compassion and caring for these people

and for the suffering of others. We

have a passionate commitment to

human rights. Now is the time for us to

reflect it. At our Government’s request,

the African Union has agreed to

extend the ongoing peace talks until

midnight on Tuesday. Indeed, Deputy

Secretary of State Robert Zoellick will

leave today for Abuja, Nigeria, to help

both parties resolve the crisis. Negotiations

have gone on for 2 years, and a

settlement is long past due. Those who

are responsible for this genocide, for

the war crimes against humanity and

criminal acts, need to be brought to

justice. No longer can we wait this

tragedy out. We must act, and the

international community must be encouraged

to step up as well. Hundreds

of thousands of lives are at stake.

I am happy to.

In the Darfur region I

have not. But it is very similar to

southern Sudan. It is fascinating,

southern Sudan, where 2 million people

have been displaced, and 5 million people

have been killed in a civil war

there, and it started there. That is why

I have great hope. A lot of people just

give up on these regions, because when

we went there initially, it was almost

exactly the same. There was a lot of

fighting within 10 or 15 kilometers.

I started operating in a little schoolhouse

that had been diverted for about

8 years. That was 1997–1998. Now in

2006, there is a village there and commerce

and a hospital, no fighting;

50,000 people go through what was a

schoolhouse and is now a big hospital.

When people give up in Africa or say

we have been through this before and

talk about corruption in government,

we can’t give up. We should not give

up.

I very much appreciate my distinguished

colleague asking because there

is a lot we can do. And it starts with

the compassion and caring that the

American people exemplify. Now is the

time for us to act.