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Darfur—After 3 Months Peace, Human Destruction Reaches Its Crescendo

Darfur, Three Months Hence: Extrapolating from Current Conditions; The “Perfect Storm” of Human Destruction Reaches Its Crescendo

By Eric Reeves

[“Darfur’s Agony,” November 7, 2006 (dateline: Nyala, South Darfur)]

“Plans for a transition from an African Union to a UN force in Darfur remain caught in a prolonged tug-of-war within the UN Security Council. Khartoum continues its refusal, now of many months, to allow the necessary peacekeeping force into Darfur under a Chapter VII mandate, a refusal backed by the threat of a Chinese veto. France has also consistently worked against commitment of the substantial peacemaking resources required in Darfur. Lack of US leadership and diplomatic commitment has ensured that no effective consensus can emerge from Security Council debate.”

“At the same time, Western funding for the African Union force in Darfur is no longer enough to sustain even the last days of what has always been a stop-gap measure. Facing acute resource and leadership limitations, the effectiveness of the AU mission has collapsed as it completes a chaotic and badly under-funded deployment out of Darfur. There will be no orderly transition from the AU mission to a possible UN operation (which in any event remains indeterminate in mandate and strength), despite nominal commitments from various international actors over the past nine months. A total absence of international guarantors of civilian protection on the ground in Darfur seems imminent.”

“Following popular rejection of the Darfur Peace Agreement (Abuja, May 5, 2006), there has been no AU security or civilian police presence in the vast majority of camps for half a year, and this has led to large-scale Janjaweed assaults on various concentrations of displaced persons in all three Darfur states. The lack of security in the camps has also created the opportunity for vigilante justice and local tyrannies. The flow of weapons into the camps in the wake of ongoing Janjaweed attacks and incursions has also accelerated. Khartoum’s failure to engage in more than token “disarmament” of the Janjaweed—despite the explicit stipulations of the Darfur Peace Agreement and the ‘demand’ of UN Security Council Resolution 1556 (July 2004)—has prevented any improvement in the overall security situation, or the possibility of displaced persons returning safely to their villages and lands.”

“At the same time, Khartoum has recently resumed a policy of forcibly returning displaced persons to the sites of their former villages. This has set the stage for a large-

scale resumption of ethnically-targeted violence in rural areas. Although Khartoum claims all returns are voluntary, reports from the ground clearly indicate otherwise. This comes as Khartoum has begun to introduce more of its regular forces into Darfur as a substitute for an international presence; these troops provide not protection but the military means for forced returns.”

“Some of the weapons introduced into the camps are being used for self-protection, to escort firewood collections, and to protect nearby agricultural production; but most are simply destabilizing and pose additional threats to remaining humanitarian workers. Women and girls continue to be raped in large numbers, as the distance required to find significant supplies of firewood steadily increases (in most camp environs, the round-trip distance to collect the firewood essential for cooking now exceeds 20 miles). The African Union long ago gave up conducting ‘firewood patrols.’”

“Following the killing of three international aid workers in early September, and the killing of more than 40 Sudanese national aid workers since early July, two major humanitarian organizations and five smaller organizations have withdrawn entirely from Darfur. West Darfur has been especially hard-hit by the withdrawals. Other organizations have drawn down their staffs and evacuated their workers from more remote operations to larger, centralized locations. This in turn has created a ‘food magnet,’ with ever-larger numbers of starving civilians following the movement of humanitarian organizations that distribute food and provide medical treatment. Overall aid access to more than 4 million conflict-affected persons in Darfur and eastern Chad has now dropped below 50%--the lowest by far since the Darfur crisis began. More than 2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance cannot be reached because of insecurity.”

“Cholera deaths in the camps outside Nyala and el-Fasher continue to claim the lives of hundreds of displaced persons every week. An acute lack of clean water and soaring malnutrition rates have left the populations of camps throughout Darfur highly vulnerable in the wake of continuing withdrawals and evacuations by humanitarian organizations. Most outlying camps are now too dangerous to receive even the most basic assistance, with resulting deterioration in water sanitation and latrine maintenance. The widespread drinking of ground water following the rainy season has rapidly accelerated the spread of cholera and other diarrheal diseases, even as medical supplies (including intravenous fluids) are reaching fewer and fewer victims outside a few main locations.”

“Malnutrition rates are soaring, especially among children under five (U5). Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) are already far in excess of emergency thresholds. Fewer and fewer supplementary and therapeutic feeding centers for children are operating, and U5 mortality is enormous. As deepening malnutrition takes hold among mothers, they experience greater difficulty in lactating, compounding the nutritional crisis.”

“What little was planted last spring has not been harvested (North Darfur had almost no harvest in prospect). The Janjaweed are again this harvest season deliberately burning the crops that were planted, part of an effort to solidify their claims to lands previously

occupied by sedentary African agriculturalists. Darfur's traditional water storage facilities (hafirs) have not received necessary maintenance and are experiencing serious deterioration, compounding the shortage of clean water."

"Deaths from violence, disease, and malnutrition in rural and evacuated areas go unobserved—and uncounted. But anecdotal evidence from hit-and-run emergency assessments suggests immense mortality, with no end in sight. Food reserves were long ago exhausted, and insecurity from increasingly chaotic violence makes the deployment of traditional coping and foraging skills virtually impossible."

"In addition to cutbacks in humanitarian aid resulting from rapidly deteriorating security, funding shortfalls are now biting deeply into the operating ability of UN and nongovernmental humanitarian organizations. Despite more than half a year of desperate pleas for pledges to be met and for supplementary funding, less than two-thirds of the required resources for 2006 have been received or are in near-term prospect. Cuts in non-food items have been severe (including medical supplies, shelter, water purification supplies, soap, cooking stoves). The typical "food-basket" remains at only two-thirds of what is calorically required to sustain human life, and key non-grain elements of the food basket (pulses/leguminous food, oil, salt, sugar) have been cut entirely in many locations and severely reduced throughout Darfur. Funding prospects for 2007 seem even bleaker than for 2006, with a major decline in aid from the US Agency for International Development in prospect."

"Politically, the failure of Minni Minawi to expand his base of support in Darfur has made him a puppet advisor to President Omar el-Bashir, and rendered him completely ineffectual in leading the new 'Transitional Darfur Regional Authority' (TDRA) specified in the Darfur Peace Agreement; the viciously parochial Minawi has appointed only members of his own group to positions in the TDRA. At the same time, the National Redemption Front has gained substantially in military strength and political support on the ground in Darfur. This coalition of Darfuri forces that remain non-signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement now includes the potent Sudan Liberation Army/Group of 19 (also known as SLA/United), which has gained almost full control of North Darfur north and west of the capital, el-Fasher."

"Abdel Wahid el-Nur, the SLA leader who was the focus of so much pressure during the Abuja process, has been fully sidelined, with much diminished political support and stature even among his own Fur tribe. Tensions between Fur and Zaghawa (Minni Minawi's tribe) have escalated steadily since the May signing of the Abuja accord, and now regularly produce ethnic segregation, even violence, within the camps. Minawi's Zaghawa forces—those that he controls—continue to operate with substantial support from the Khartoum regime in attacking both combatants and civilians who do not support the Darfur Peace Agreement."

Eastern Chad

“Though the August rapprochement between Khartoum’s National Islamic Front regime and the Chadian government of Idriss Deby diminished violence along the Chad/Darfur border, the violence nonetheless continues, and humanitarian aid reaches only approximately half of the estimated 500,00 conflict-affected persons in eastern Chad (refugees from Darfur, displaced Chadians, affected rural populations). Emergency humanitarian operations in eastern Chad also remain severely under-funded and insecurity is rampant. Despite the August agreement between N’Djamena and Khartoum, Chad’s FUC rebels continue to operate out of areas in West Darfur as they attempt to topple the Deby government, and Janjaweed attacks in eastern Chad continue largely unchecked. From this diplomatic deal, Deby secured Khartoum’s promise not to provide major support for the FUC and Deby agreed not to support Zaghawa military elements in Darfur. Commitments on both sides of the agreement appear highly tenuous.”

“The UN High Commission for Refugees has for months been issuing urgent warnings about the safety of humanitarian workers in eastern Chad, warnings that became extremely urgent in early August with a series of incidents in the Guereda area. Humanitarians are able to work in many fewer areas, even as there are currently no serious plans for protection of civilians or humanitarian operations in this volatile and unstable region.”

Political Prospects

“In the wake of efforts by the US, France, and the UK to repair damaged relations within the Arab world following the crisis in Lebanon, Khartoum’s position in resisting an international peacekeeping force, and the threat of sanctions, has been significantly strengthened. The language from senior officials of the National Islamic Front has revealed no change or moderation over the past half year. Despite this obduracy, no additional sanctions measures are presently being considered by the UN, even as it remains the case that only one mid-ranking (and retired) member of the National Islamic Front military/security apparatus has been targeted for sanctions per UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (March 2005).”

“Although a few courageous voices continue to be heard within the UN, most notably that of Jan Egeland, there has been exceedingly little political or diplomatic follow-through on Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s July 29, 2006 plan for a robust UN peace support operation, including up to 24,000 soldiers, military police, and observers. Even at the time, France had insisted that the force be limited to 7,000 and partially deployed in Chad (a move opposed by the US and UK). Both China and Russia signaled unambiguously that they would not vote for any authorizing resolution unless Khartoum consented.”

“Human rights and advocacy groups have consistently refused to push for non-consensual deployment of a peacemaking operation in Darfur, ensuring that there is no meaningful constituency for such deployment, and that Khartoum continues to exercise what amounts to a veto over any force in Darfur. This is the context in which the highly

limited effectiveness of the African Union rapidly withered throughout the summer of 2006, and led to the current ignominious exit.”

[END, hypothetical November 7, 2006 dispatch from Nyala, South Darfur]

How Plausible a “Hypothetical” Account?

Could conditions in Darfur deteriorate so rapidly? Could the already appalling security crisis grow to such threatening proportions? Could human mortality already exceeding 500,000—accelerate? (See my global mortality assessment of April 2006 at <http://www.sudanreeves.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=102>) Could the residual destructiveness of violence that became genocidal over three years ago increase even further? Could the international community remain inert as these realities became relentlessly clearer?

The only answers available are those deriving from current assessments of conditions on the ground in Darfur and eastern Chad, as well as statements by major international actors; but these suggest there is neither exaggeration nor implausibility to any feature to this hypothetical account.

Danger to Humanitarians in Darfur And Eastern Chad

The warnings concerning violence against humanitarians and the continuing attenuation of humanitarian access could not be more blunt. Citing a “more than 100% increase in violent clashes [in Darfur] in the first half of 2006 compared to the first half of last year,” UN humanitarian aid chief Jan Egeland declared:

“The situation in Darfur was going from really bad to catastrophic.” (Jan Egeland interview, August 10, 2006, transcript from UN Department of Public Information [Geneva])

Mike McDonagh, senior humanitarian affairs officer at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Khartoum, declared:

“During the second half of July [2006], we lost more aid workers than over the previous two years.” (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks [IRIN] [dateline: Nairobi], August 3, 2006)

More recently IRIN reports:

“July was the most dangerous month of the three-year-old conflict in Darfur for aid workers, four major international humanitarian agencies working in the region said on Tuesday [August 8, 2006]. Violence has escalated since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement on 5 May [2006] between the government and the largest rebel group. Eight Sudanese humanitarian workers were killed in July alone. The increasing insecurity is also limiting the ability of aid agencies to reach people in need, with potentially

disastrous consequences, warned the four agencies—Care, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Oxfam International, and World Vision.” (IRIN [dateline: Nairobi], August 10, 2006)

This assessment was echoed by Manuel da Silva, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan:

“‘The level of violence being faced by humanitarian workers in Darfur is unprecedented,’ da Silva [said]. ‘The situation is made even more serious by the fact that the need for humanitarian assistance is increasing while our ability to respond is being ever more restricted,’ da Silva added.” (IRIN [dateline: Nairobi], August 10, 2006)

The view is the same from the African Union: Baba Gana Kingibe, Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson, declared bluntly in el-Fasher [capital of North Darfur], “Security in Darfur ‘is plummeting’” (Associated Press [dateline: el-Fasher], August 7, 2006).

What Kingibe did not discuss is the continuing failure of the AU to fashion a working cease-fire commission in Darfur per the terms of the May 5 Abuja agreement—or to publish even the most rudimentary reports about massive, ongoing military violence in North Darfur. This includes active collaboration between Khartoum’s regular military forces and those of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) faction of Minni Minawi, now Special Assistant to National Islamic Front President and Field Marshal Omar el-Bashir. Nor does Kingibe discuss the implications of the AU providing transport and accommodations to Minawi’s commanders in the field, even those implicated in recent atrocities.

To his credit, Kingibe has finally spoken out against the numerous and highly credible charges of torture used as a weapon of war by Minawi’s forces. But this came only a week after authoritative accounts of atrocities by Minawi’s forces had been published by Amnesty International and Refugees International. The latter reported:

“One woman in the Tawilla camp [North Darfur] described the nature of these [threatened] punishments [of non-signatories to the DPA]. She said that hundreds of Minawi’s soldiers entered her village and started shooting. They went inside the houses one by one shooting the men, including her husband, and beating or raping the women and girls. The soldiers took whatever they could find—clothing, shoes, money, livestock. Her story is remarkably consistent with thousands of others in the region that detail targeted executions of men and violent, forced displacement.” (Refugees International. “Town in North Darfur Reflects Changing Nature of Conflict,” July 24, 2006)

Amnesty International reports that:

“The African Union peacekeeping force in al-Fasher has not only been unable to protect civilians in Korma [North Darfur], but has yet to investigate the killings. Civilians reported the attacks to [the African Union] on 5 July [2006], but the SLA (Minni Minawi)

reportedly opposed [the AU's] going to Korma." (Amnesty International, "Korma: Yet more attacks on civilians" [AI Index AFR 54/026/2006]).

Moreover, the AU has lost all initiative in patrolling within camps or rural areas: there is no AU access in the vast majority of camps, many fewer patrols are being mounted, morale is abysmal, and few of the troops deployed are looking to more than a September exit. A senior UN aid official on the ground in North Darfur estimates privately that unchecked internecine fighting between SLA factions has left over 60% of North Darfur inaccessible to humanitarian operations for the past two months. IRIN reports Turid Laegreid, a senior UN humanitarian official in el-Fasher, as declaring that "access to the local population in North Darfur is at an all-time low" (IRIN [dateline: Nairobi] August 1, 2006).

And while North Darfur is currently the most threatened of the three Darfur states, the potential for explosions in both South and West Darfur is all too clear. Indeed, last week Doctors Without Borders/Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), the largest international humanitarian presence in Darfur, reported that in West Darfur,

"Security incidents have led to the evacuation of our teams in Serif Umra and two projects in the Jebel Marra, as well as the interruption of mobile clinics, and the limitation in the referral of emergency cases to surgical facilities in other areas. [] Many MSF activities are currently suspended, leaving thousands of patients untreated everyday. MSF has been attacked in the past weeks in several locations in all regions of Darfur." ("Increased insecurity hampers MSF medical assistance to the population of Darfur," MSF Press release, August 3, 2006)

Not only is medical care being denied to desperate civilians, but food aid as well:

"The UN World Food Program was unable to deliver supplies to 400,000 people in July, up from 290,000 in June." (Associated Press [dateline: el-Fasher, North Darfur], August 8, 2006)

The number of people in Darfur not receiving food aid in mid-August is over 500,000 and rising rapidly. And this represents those currently targeted for food delivery, not the global Darfuri population in need.

Conditions in eastern Chad in many ways mirror those in Darfur, as the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) declared in an August 8, 2006 press release in Geneva:

"UNHCR is very concerned about the safety of humanitarian workers in eastern Chad following a deterioration in the security situation there. We are particularly worried about the situation in and around the town of Guerreda, which is located about 65 kilometres from the border with Sudan."

“Last Friday, seven men brandishing assault rifles and wearing military uniforms broke into the compound of a non-governmental organisation in Guereda. Three aid workers were hit in the head with rifle butts and one of them was later evacuated to a French military hospital in Abeche, capital of eastern Chad. [] This is the seventh time humanitarian workers have been targeted in the Guereda area since May. Three weeks ago, two vehicles from another NGO were stolen. At the beginning of July, two UNHCR cars were stolen from our Guereda office after armed men overpowered the guards.” []

“We are extremely concerned about these incidents. The growing insecurity is making it more difficult and more dangerous for humanitarian agencies and their staff to provide assistance to Sudanese refugees from Darfur in the area. Some international and local humanitarian agencies are working with only essential staff and have reduced their activities in the camps.”

None of these trends will be reversed in the foreseeable future; on the contrary, all evidence suggests a further deterioration of security. The UN’s “Darfur Peace Agreement Monitor” (July 2006) gives a grim assessment of the fundamentally changed dynamic of violence on the ground:

“The increasing fragmentation of armed groups has made humanitarian action more difficult and dangerous. Previously, humanitarian actors used an established notification system to inform armed groups of their movements. During the past month, the number of military actors increased, combat zones multiplied, and chains of command disintegrated. In some cases, established notification systems have failed completely, dramatically increasing the humanitarian actors’ operational risks.” (UN “DPA Monitor,” July 2006, page 11)

Continuing Attacks on Civilians, Ongoing Displacement

The fragmentation of armed groups has led to increasing attacks on civilians, particularly those perceived as allied with competing armed groups. But Janjaweed attacks continue as well, and it is clear that these brutal militia forces continue to enjoy the support of Khartoum’s regular military. Many of these attacks are detailed in a new report from the UN High Commission for Human Rights (“Deepening Crisis in Darfur: Two Months After the Darfur Peace Agreement,” August 2006, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EGUA-6SHM7U?OpenDocument>). The most basic conclusion of the report is that despite the nominal cease-fire of the Darfur Peace Agreement, "civilian populations continued to be targeted by [Janjaweed] militia and the government and rebel movements.”

These attacks have been enormously destructive. An August 8, 2006 press release by four major humanitarian organizations in Darfur reports:

“In the last month, more than 25,000 people have fled their homes in North Darfur in the face of fighting and attacks on their villages. Three and a half million people throughout Darfur are dependent on humanitarian aid, yet vast areas such as the Jebel Marra

mountains and large chunks of the northwestern region, are almost completely inaccessible to aid agencies due to the violence and insecurity.”

“Eight humanitarian workers were violently killed in Darfur during July. The four agencies—CARE, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam International, and World Vision—joined forces to express alarm at rising violence and deteriorating humanitarian access since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement on May 5 [2006].” (Joint press release, August 8, 2006)

The particular destructiveness of attacks by the SLA forces of Minni Minawi is highlighted in a recent IRIN dispatch:

“Other sources in the region said some of the displaced were being prevented from reaching the relative safety of the Internally Displaced Persons camps. ‘Previously, the Janjawid wouldn’t really care what happened after they had pillaged a village—the fleeing population would cause more displacement and facilitate their scorched-earth campaign,’ [the regional source told IRIN]. ‘Minnawi wants to hide his crimes, however, and is trying to prevent people from reaching the towns—leaving them enormously vulnerable.’” (UN IRIN [dateline: Nairobi], August 3, 2006)

This deeply disturbing new development holds the potential for enormous human destruction: if already severely weakened populations are deliberately prevented from reaching humanitarian assistance, they will inevitably die in large numbers. That Minawi’s predominantly Zaghawa forces have enjoyed the support of Khartoum’s regular forces gives an indication of how dangerous this new fighting may become. The report of the UN High Commission for Human Rights finds that,

“In many cases, people belonging to certain ethnic groups were specifically targeted by fighters in what appeared to be an attempt to retaliate against groups perceived as opposing the Darfur Peace Agreement.” (page 6)

This comports all too well with the observations of Refugees International (RI) during a recent extensive assessment mission to Darfur. In a July 21, 2006 letter to President Bush, Kenneth Bacon (President of RI and a member of the assessment mission) notes that displacement in North Darfur has increased dramatically “mainly because Minawi’s forces are attacking Fur villages in North Darfur. According to the United Nations, some of these attacks show the same signs of genocidal intent demonstrated by the government-backed Janjaweed militia---the targeted killing of young men.”

The authoritative Africa Confidential notes in its most recent issue that:

“Minnawi’s fighters targeted Fur villages throughout the [Korma, North Darfur] area in ‘an attempt to cut off the supply line of the Wahed faction [of the SLA],’ according to a confidential African Union report. ‘The SLA Minni [Minnawi] therefore initiated a campaign to disrupt the cohesion of the SLA Wahed by attacking Fur villages, north, northeast, south and southwest of Tawila,’ [the confidential African Union report] added.

Minnawi justifies the violence as self-defense.” (Africa Confidential [Volume 47, No, 16] August 4, 2006)

This increasingly inter-ethnic violence serves Khartoum’s larger purposes perfectly, as those combatants formerly united against the regime’s genocidal tyranny now fight one another.

The prospect of forced returns of displaced persons also looms large as Khartoum has submitted a “security” plan for Darfur that entails mainly the deployment of larger numbers of the regime’s regular troops in place of an international force. This comes even as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently warned:

“Alternatively, there may be an attempt [by Khartoum and the SLA forces of Minni Minawi] to implement the [Darfur Peace] agreement through force, including the forced return of internally displaced persons,’ Annan warned. ‘If this should be allowed to happen, Darfur could descend into an even bloodier round of conflict that would be catastrophic for the people of the region.’” (Associated Press [dateline: United Nations, New York], August 1, 2006)

Conditions in the Camps

Conditions in many of the camps have steadily deteriorated in recent months after significant gains last year (2005). Moreover, despite the improved infrastructure, the psychological destructiveness of prolonged camp existence is cumulatively devastating:

“We are now in the third—and for some the fourth—rainy season and Internally Displaced Persons are still living in camps,’ said [Mike McDonagh, senior humanitarian affairs officer for UN OCHA in Khartoum]. ‘There is enormous frustration and a lack of hope among many of them, especially the Fur [ethnic community].’” (UN IRIN [dateline: Nairobi], August 3, 2006)

Malnutrition is also increasing, as reported by UNICEF and others:

“According to the UN’s Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Darfur Nutrition Update, indicators revealed a deteriorating nutrition situation across Darfur in May and June, as expected during the hunger season. [] UNICEF also noted that 4 of 5 nutrition surveys conducted in distinct Darfur locations in May and June found global acute malnutrition rates higher than the emergency threshold of 15 percent.” (US Agency for International Development, “Darfur fact sheet,” July 28, 2006)

These trends have continued to worsen throughout July and into the first half of August.

As the press release by four major humanitarian organizations cited above notes, “In the last month, more than 25,000 people have fled their homes in North Darfur in the face of fighting and attacks on their villages.” These civilians are forced to flee to camps that are already desperately overcrowded; more violence in other parts of Darfur has displaced an

equivalent number of people, stretching more thinly the humanitarian resources available. This occurs as the effects of funding shortfalls have begun to bite even more deeply into aid operations, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future without substantial new donor commitments. Many donors have already given up on Darfur as an apparently lost cause, despite the unsurpassably critical needs of the present moment.

But no amount of funding will make a difference if security does not improved rapidly; and yet as the reports and assessments cited above suggest, insecurity is actually increasing dramatically. To reverse this highly dangerous trend, a robust international peacemaking force—with “first world” military assets—is required in place of the AU mission presently in the last stages of collapse and withdrawal. It cannot be stressed sufficiently that the AU mission is still scheduled to expire September 30, 2006 (seven weeks hence)—and is without either the political will or available funds to extend its increasingly ineffective presence.

Khartoum on an International Force in Darfur

Despite, or rather because of, international insistence that a deployment to Darfur must be consensual, Khartoum continues to refuse, in adamant terms, any UN force. Instead, Khartoum has very recently offered UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan its own plan, which promises only that it will increase its own troops as the African Union mission in Darfur winds down. These are the very forces implicated in massive genocidal destruction throughout Darfur over the past three years. These are the same forces that have actively coordinated with the Janjaweed in wholesale destruction of villages and civilian livelihood. Such a “security” proposal is finally a measure of how brazen, and contemptuous of world opinion, Khartoum’s National Islamic Front has become in the face of ongoing international timidity. Moreover, it is difficult to believe, given geopolitical equities, that the war in southern Lebanon will not further embolden Khartoum.

Certainly the language from the regime is as adamant as ever. Presidential Advisor Majzoub al-Khalifa, who led Khartoum’s delegation in Abuja, recently declared:

“According to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) there is no room for the UN forces to come”; ‘we are not going to accept any UN force.’ ‘The parties accepted...only to stick to an AU force...and anything else (other) than that is a violation to the DPA,’ Khalifa said in an interview.” (Reuters [dateline: Khartoum], August 3, 2006)

Reuters also reports that “Khalifa’s dominant National Congress Party [National Islamic Front] says UN troops are a front for Western colonialism.”

Even the UN’s expedient and disingenuous Jan Pronk, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Sudan, was obliged to speak out, if futilely:

“I call on members of the government [of Sudan] to be honest and not to tell fairy tales to their people that the UN wants to invade,’ Pronk told reporters in Khartoum on Wednesday.” (Reuters [dateline: Khartoum], August 9, 2006)

As to the central element of the Darfur Peace Agreement, Khartoum’s commitment to disarm the Janjaweed, Khalifa said the plan for disarmament “was confidential and would not be made public” (Reuters [dateline: Khartoum], August 3, 2006). Regarding Khartoum’s obligation to disarm the Janjaweed Reuters also reports:

“[The plan for disarming the Janjaweed] was sent weeks late to the African Union, which has still not announced anything on disarmament almost a month after receiving it. The SLA said they had not even seen the plan.” (Reuters [dateline: Khartoum], August 7, 2006)

Of course there is no reason to believe that a credible plan to disarm the Janjaweed exists; it can hardly be surprising that Khartoum insists that whatever document has been factitiously produced is “confidential and would not be made public.” Certainly there is not a shred of evidence that the National Islamic Front leadership has done anything of significance in complying with the key demand of the Darfur Peace Agreement. Rather, as the UN’s “Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) Monitor” (July 2006) makes abundantly clear, all major deadlines specified in the DPA have slipped. This reflects incompetence on the part of the African Union (which is tasked far beyond its capabilities by the agreement), unanticipated difficulties created by the deepening splits within the SLA, and massive bad faith on the part of Khartoum. Specific finding of the “DPA Monitor”:

“The Ceasefire Commission has not yet published the results of any of these [widely reported] ceasefire violations.”

“Over the past month, the physical demarcation of the Demilitarized Zones and Buffer Zones has been initiated in only two out of eight Sectors. The production of the final map showing the parties’ respective Areas of Control, Demilitarized Zones, and Redeployment Zones is yet to be produced. These activities were due for completion by 22 June [2006].”

“The Government of Sudan is required to contribute to a Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund (DRDF) an amount equivalent to US\$300 million in 2006, and not less than US\$200 million in each of the next two years to be used for reconstruction and development of Darfur. More than 30 days after coming into force of the DPA, the DRDF has not commenced its work. As of late June, the Oversight Committee tasked with appointing the executive body of the DRDF had not been established.”

None of a range of commissions to address issues “related to traditional and historical rights to land and review land use management and natural development processes” had been formed by the end of July.

“As of 31 July [2006] the parties [to the DPA] and the AU have missed a number of other security-related deadlines.”

In short, whatever merits the Darfur Peace Agreement may have had are completely compromised by a massive failure of implementation—a failure easily foreseen by the many Darfuris who have objected to the DPA, both on the ground and in the diaspora. Khartoum’s refusal to accept any international force that might serve as a guarantor for the provisions of the DPA ensures that the agreement will remain worthless.

When?

There is quite simply no remotely adequate pressure on Khartoum to implement the terms of the DPA, either from the European Union, the US, or other important governments. Nor is there currently any meaningful pressure on Khartoum to accept a robust UN force. It is thus deeply disingenuous for US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack to declare that,

“a United Nations peacekeeping force must deploy without delay. Only a large, robust, mobile, and fast-reacting UN force is capable of stopping the violence and protecting innocent lives and bringing general peace and security under the peace agreement. [] Such a transition should take place by October 1 [2006].” (Associated Press [dateline: Washington], August 10, 2006)

No deployment resolution has yet been introduced, and is impossible for any UN force to be assembled and deployed effectively in less than several months from the time of authorization. Moreover, unless there is commitment of the substantial US diplomatic and political resources necessary to move European governments to aid in pressuring Khartoum, the regime will continue to bank on the support of a Chinese veto in stiff-arming any UN deployment resolution. Darfur will move inexorably toward the catastrophe described in the hypothetical “November 7, 2006” dispatch above.

US leadership, as well as that throughout the international community, has recognized only with terrible belatedness the need for a large, robust, well-armed and -equipped force to protect civilians and humanitarians in Darfur. This has taken over two and a half years.

If the world community waits another two and a half years to deploy an adequate force to Darfur, there will be little to protect other than ashes and bones.