

A Darfur "Crash-Course"
From The New Republic on-line, July 18-22, 2005,
Eric Reeves

WHY IT STARTED: The insurgency war in the Darfur region of western Sudan began virtually unnoticed in February 2003; it has over the past two years precipitated the first great episode of genocidal destruction in the twenty-first century. The victims are the non-Arab or African tribal groups of Darfur, primarily the Fur, the Massaleit, and the Zaghawa, but also the Tunjur, the Birgid, the Dajo, and others.

These people have long been politically and economically marginalized, and in recent years the National Islamic Front regime in Khartoum has refused to control increasingly violent Arab militia raiding of African villages in Darfur. Competition between Arab and African tribal groups over the scarce primary resources in Darfur--arable land and water--has been exacerbated by advancing desertification throughout the Sahel region.

But it was Khartoum's failure to respond to the desperate economic needs of this huge region (it is the size of France), the decayed judiciary, the lack of political representation, and in particular the growing impunity on the part of Arab raiders that finally precipitated full-scale armed conflict.

Not directly related to the 21-year conflict that recently formally ended in southern Sudan--a historic agreement was signed in Nairobi on January 9, 2005--Darfur's insurgency found early success against Khartoum's regular military forces. But this success had a terrible consequence: The regime in Khartoum switched from a military strategy of direct confrontation to a policy of systematically destroying the African tribal groups perceived as the civilian base of support for the insurgents. The primary instrument in this new policy has been the Janjaweed, a loosely organized Arab militia force of perhaps 20,000 men, primarily on horse and camel.

This force is dramatically different in character, military strength, and purpose from previous militia raiders. Khartoum ensured that the Janjaweed were extremely heavily armed, well-supplied, and actively coordinating with the regime's regular ground and air forces. Indeed, Human Rights Watch obtained in July 2004 confidential Sudanese government documents that directly implicate high-ranking government officials in a policy of support for the Janjaweed. "It's absurd to distinguish between the Sudanese government forces and the militias--they are one," says Peter Takirambudde, executive director of Human Rights Watch's Africa Division. "These documents show that militia activity has not just been condoned, it's been specifically supported by Sudan government officials."

EVIDENCE OF GENOCIDE: The nature of the attacks on African villages in Darfur--as reported by numerous human rights groups--makes clear Khartoum's genocidal intent. Janjaweed assaults, typically conducted in concert with Khartoum's regular military forces (including helicopter gunships and Antonov bombers), have been comprehensively destructive of both human life and livelihood: men and boys killed en masse, women and girls raped or abducted, and all means of agricultural production destroyed. Thriving villages have had buildings burned, water sources poisoned, irrigation systems torn up, food and seed stocks destroyed, and fruit trees cut down. Cattle have been looted on a massive scale, and most of those not looted have died from lack of water and food, as people flee into the inhospitable wastes of this arid region.

According to Article 2 of the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide--to which the U.S. and all current members of the U.N. Security Council are party--genocide encompasses not only the deliberate killing of members of a "national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such," but also "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." What we have seen in Darfur is precisely this latter offense.

As a result, agricultural production has largely come to a halt in Darfur, and the United Nations estimates that in the very near future 3.5 million people will be in urgent need of food assistance (the total population of Darfur is approximately 6.5 million). Moreover, there is no sign that the current planting season will yield a significant fall harvest. Huge civilian populations--well over 2 million people--will be dependent on food aid for the foreseeable future. Many of these people will die in what has become a genocide by attrition.

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: The current rainy season in Darfur is already creating immense logistical problems for humanitarian aid groups, as it did last summer (the rainy season typically runs from June through September, with August and September the months of heaviest rains). Darfur is one of the most remote places in Africa, and quite distant from navigable bodies of water. Both food and critical non-food items (medical supplies, shelter, equipment for clean water) must be transported over land by truck or (much more expensively) flown into the regional capitals of the three Darfur states.

Though humanitarian organizations are performing heroically under extremely difficult conditions, it is clear that there is a deadly mismatch between humanitarian capacity and human need. As the rains sever various transport corridors and insecurity closes others, many villages and communities are becoming inaccessible. This occurs against the backdrop of a traditional "hunger gap"--the period between spring planting and fall harvest.

Moreover, the overcrowded camps for displaced persons--now the only place of refuge for more than 2 million people--face serious shortages of sanitary facilities. The threat of water-borne disease is becoming acute, as many of the camps are little more than open sewers. Outbreaks of cholera or dysentery could quickly claim tens of thousands of lives in addition to those already claimed by violence, disease, and malnutrition. Extant data suggest that between 350,000 and 400,000 have perished during the past 29 months.

A recent U.N. mortality assessment indicates that more than 6,000 continue to die every month, and Jan Egeland, U.N. Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, has warned that the toll may climb to 100,000 per month if insecurity forces humanitarian organizations to withdraw from Darfur. Banditry, hijacking of humanitarian convoys, and attacks on humanitarian workers have grown relentlessly in recent months, even as there has been a decline in major conflict between Khartoum's regular forces and the insurgency groups.

Peace negotiations in Abuja, Nigeria have done nothing to rein in the Janjaweed militia, and a small African Union monitoring force on the ground has had only marginal effect in addressing civilian and humanitarian security needs. The death total in Darfur's genocide may reach that of Rwanda's by year's end.

THE CURRENT KHARTOUM GOVERNMENT: The July 9 inauguration of a new Sudanese "government of national unity" (GNU) has appropriately received a good deal of news coverage. The GNU represents the culmination of an arduous peace process going back almost a decade and the formal end to war in southern Sudan, perhaps the most destructive civil conflict since World War II. As many as 2.5 million people have died since war in the south resumed in 1983--and likely over 4 million if we consider the earlier phase of the civil war (1955-1972). Over 5 million people were displaced by the war--Sudan has the world's largest population of internally displaced persons--and southern Sudan was utterly devastated.

John Garang, leader of the southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, has been inaugurated as "First Vice President" in the GNU, and the assumption in many quarters is that Garang--as someone long sympathetic to the cause of Sudan's marginalized peoples--will use his new position to help end genocide in Darfur. This assumption is not simply facile, but expediently ignores the genocidal past of the National Islamic Front, which retains key powers in the GNU: the presidency, a guaranteed majority in the national assembly and ministerial posts, and--critically--control of the army and security forces.

THE NIF'S UGLY HISTORY: The National Islamic Front (which has attempted to rename itself innocuously as the "National Congress Party") is essentially unchanged since it seized power from a democratically elected government in a 1989 military coup, deliberately aborting Sudan's most promising peace process since independence in 1956. With the exception of Islamist ideologue Hassan El-Turabi--the mastermind of the 1989 coup who split with his former allies and is no longer part of the government--the same brutal men still control the NIF 16 years after it seized power. Field Marshal Omer El-Beshir retains the presidency, and Ali Osman Taha--arguably the most powerful man in Sudan--serves as vice president and controls the terrifyingly efficient security services. Nafie Ali Nafie, Gutbi Al-Mahdi, and other longtime members of the NIF serve in various advisory capacities. And Major General Saleh Abdallah Gosh, recently flown to Washington by the CIA, retains control of the Mukhabarat (Sudan's intelligence and security service) even as he is among those members of the NIF indicted at the International Criminal Court in the Hague for crimes against humanity in Darfur.

These are the men who settled on a genocidal response to the insurgency movements that emerged in Darfur in early 2003. But the NIF'S history of genocide goes back much further than the current catastrophe in Darfur. Animated by a radical Islamism and sense of Arab racial superiority, the movement engaged in genocide almost from the time it seized power. A year ago, seasoned Sudan watcher Alex de Waal of the British group Justice Africa wrote for the London Review of Books [August 5, 2004] what remains one of the best overviews of the Darfur crisis. In the piece, he observed that genocide in Darfur:

"is not the genocidal campaign of a government at the height of its ideological hubris, as the 1992 jihad against the Nuba Mountains was, or coldly determined to secure natural resources, as when it sought to clear the oilfields of southern Sudan of their troublesome inhabitants. This is the routine cruelty of a security cabal, its humanity withered by years in power: it is genocide by force of habit."

As part of a ghastly jihad, the NIF brought suffering and destruction to the Nuba Mountains, a culturally distinct part of the southern Kordofan province in northern Sudan that was politically allied with southern Sudan. It conducted relentless military assaults on civilians and enforced a humanitarian aid embargo that lasted more than a decade.

The same men ordered the scorched-earth clearances of the oil regions in southern Sudan to provide security for the operations of international oil companies. The systematic civilian destruction in the oil regions (primarily in the Upper Nile province) has been chronicled by many human rights groups, most fully by Human Rights Watch. The actions of oil companies from Canada, Sweden, Austria, China, Malaysia, and India--directly supporting the NIF regime--constitute one of the most shameful episodes in the long and terrible history of resource extraction in Africa.

The result of these policies was that between 1989 and 2002 many hundreds of thousands of Sudanese were either killed or displaced. In the Nuba Mountains and the oil regions of southern Sudan, as in Darfur, the NIF regime settled upon a deliberate policy of human destruction, targeting ethnically African populations that had rebelled against, or were victims of, decades of political and economic marginalization.

IS DARFUR REALLY A GENOCIDE? Despite the overwhelming evidence of NIF genocidal ambitions, there has been considerable hesitancy in some quarters to speak frankly about Darfur's realities and a shameful willingness to ignore the critical demand of Article 1 of the 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention: "to

prevent genocide"--a contractual obligation of all signatories to the Convention.

To be sure, there have been many unambiguous voices: The U.S. Congress--in a unanimous, bipartisan, bicameral resolution--declared a year ago that ethnically targeted human destruction in Darfur constitutes genocide; so did former Secretary of State Colin Powell in September 2004 Senate testimony (though subsequent reiterations of Powell's finding have come from the Bush administration only with considerable prodding). Senior officials of the German and British governments have declared that genocide is occurring in Darfur, as did the European parliament (by a vote of 566 to 6 last September). And a number of important organizations and institutions have also declared that genocide is taking place: the Committee on Conscience of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (an unprecedented action), Physicians for Human Rights, the U.S. Committee for Refugees, Africa Action, Justice Africa, Africa Confidential (U.K.), Yad Vashem (Israel), Genocide Watch, and numerous genocide scholars.

Human Rights Watch has not used the g-word but has found massive evidence of "ethnic cleansing" in Darfur (no clear articulation of the difference between these two crimes has been forthcoming from HRW). Amnesty International has also not declared genocide in Darfur, though the director of Amnesty in the United States, William Schultz, has been explicit about his own view that what is occurring in Darfur is genocide.

Most consequentially, a U.N. Commission of Inquiry (COI) report on Darfur concluded in January 2005 that there was "insufficient evidence of genocidal intent" on the part of the NIF, though the commissioners' reasoning was embarrassingly flawed and the failure to conduct forensic investigations at all sites of reported mass ethnic murders was inexcusable. In addition, the COI badly confused the issues of motive and intent, deployed evidence in conspicuously contradictory fashion, and misrepresented the consequences of genocidal violence and displacement in Darfur. (See my detailed critique at <http://www.sudanreeves.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=Sections&file=index&req=viewarticle&artid=489&page=1.>)

The COI report called for a referral of all violations of international law in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which occurred in a U.N. Security Council resolution on March 31. But this focuses far too much on the future punishment of the crime of genocide rather than its current prevention, the primary purpose of the Genocide Convention. Despite expedient arguments made by some human rights groups that the threat of an ICC referral would serve as a deterrent to violence in Darfur, this hope has proved thoroughly specious--violence against civilians and humanitarian operations has, in many respects, increased since late March.

WHY LABELING MATTERS: None of this would be more than a debate about nomenclature if a finding of genocide did not hold the potential to dictate the need for humanitarian intervention in Darfur--the only response that can provide security for many hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians at acutest risk and for humanitarian operations that are operating at the very limit of tolerable insecurity (at least one major aid organization has withdrawn because of the deaths of several of its workers). Genocide should not, of course, be the threshold for humanitarian intervention; but in the world as we find it, in the wake of genocides in the Balkans and Rwanda, the g-word has come increasingly to constitute a ghastly gold standard for international action.

Even with consensus on genocide, however, the simple political truth is that intervention, especially in the shadow of Iraq, will require extraordinary efforts to achieve legitimacy, and there are few signs that the United Nations will step forward. Absent U.N. action or direct intervention by Western democracies (ideally in the form of NATO troops), the currently deployed and deeply inadequate African Union force is all that stands as an international response. This ensures that the genocide will continue.

WHO IS DYING: Darfur's pre-war population of approximately 6.5 million was perhaps 60 to 65 percent non-Arab--some 4 million "Africans." In fact, all Darfuris are African, and skin color is a wholly inadequate measure of ethnicity. But ethnic differences of various sorts do exist--the use of Arabic as a first language, agricultural practices, and a variety of more subtle cultural differences--and identification by ethnicity comes easily to Darfuris, even in matters such as gait and attire. But of this population of roughly 4 million "Africans," U.N. figures for displacement, or even for those defined as "conflict-affected," cannot account for over 1 million people. Some are in urban areas, but hundreds of thousands have died (more on exactly how many below), and hundreds of thousands more are at risk in inaccessible rural areas of Darfur.

HOW THEY ARE DYING: Sometime in summer 2004--we'll probably never know just when--human mortality in the Darfur genocide became more a function of malnutrition and disease than violent destruction. What we must not lose sight of is that deaths from malnutrition and disease are no less the product of genocidal ambitions than violent killings: Having so comprehensively and deliberately destroyed the villages and livelihoods of the African tribal populations of Darfur, Khartoum and its Janjaweed allies bear full responsibility for the ongoing deadly consequences of these assaults on civilian targets.

The consensus among Darfuris in exile, at least those who have access to sources on the ground in Darfur, is that approximately 90 percent of all African villages have now been destroyed. This more than anything else accounts for the decline in large-scale military activity in Darfur, at least between the major combatants, the two insurgency movements on the one side and Khartoum and the Janjaweed on the other. (Recently there has been much infighting between the insurgents themselves.) There are simply not enough remaining targets of opportunity to sustain the levels of violence that were recorded between spring 2003 and fall 2004.

But as villagers have fled to camps for displaced persons and into eastern Chad, they have created extremely vulnerable populations in highly concentrated locations. The United Nations reports approximately 2 million people in camps for displaced persons to which it has access in Darfur and another 200,000 refugees inside Chad along the Darfur border. Many hundreds of thousands of people remain unaccounted for--dead, hiding, staying with host families in other locations, or simply unregistered by the United Nations.

Among these are the hundreds of thousands of Darfuris in inaccessible rural areas. These populations are most vulnerable to malnutrition, as food reserves have been depleted amidst a collapsed agricultural economy. Humanitarian organizations report that those arriving more recently in the camps for displaced persons are showing increasing levels of malnutrition. Children, as always, are most vulnerable.

Those inside the camps must contend not only with relentless insecurity but with overcrowding, inadequate sanitary facilities, shortcomings in shelter, and severe water shortages--in some locations people have been forced to survive on what humanitarian groups consider less than half the daily human requirement of water. Though the rainy season may alleviate this problem, the torrential rains also create severe risks for outbreaks of water-borne diseases such as cholera and dysentery. There were no major outbreaks of either disease in summer 2004; displaced Darfuris are very unlikely to escape again diseases that can claim tens of thousands of lives in a matter of weeks.

Other diseases are also present: a stubborn outbreak of Hepatitis E (not normally found in Darfur and particularly threatening to pregnant women), various forms of diarrhea (which remain the leading killer of children in the camps), and malaria (which becomes a serious threat with the first hatch of mosquitoes).

Food shortages, however, remain the greatest threat to human life in Darfur. Darfuris normally rely on foraging in times of desperation; but the insecurity that continues to be created by the Janjaweed makes this impossible. Many of the hundreds of thousands in inaccessible rural areas are slowly starving.

The U.N.'s World Food Program (WFP) estimates that 3.5 million people will very soon be in need of food assistance. Humanitarian logisticians estimate that 17,000 metric tons of food are required every month to feed 1 million people. The WFP estimate suggests that as much as 60,000 metric tons of food will be required every month during the period in which so many people are dependent on assistance. This food must be transported into one of the most remote areas of Africa, at the height of the rainy season, and distributed within a province the size of France. This is a task far beyond current humanitarian capacity, especially amidst what the United Nations frankly admitted last rainy season was a "logistical nightmare." Much food is already being transported by air, which is on average about five times as expensive as overland transport. Roads are increasingly being severed by the rains, as wadis (normally dry river beds) become torrential streams, some as wide as half a mile.

And because insecurity prevented a significant planting this spring and early summer (normally the major planting season in the agricultural calendar) there will be no fall harvest--this after last fall's severely attenuated harvest. Significant domestic food production in Darfur will not be in evidence until fall 2006--at the earliest. People already weakened by malnutrition have become increasingly vulnerable to disease and will only become weaker and more vulnerable in the months ahead. Genocidal mortality will continue for years.

HOW MANY HAVE DIED: Calculating this statistic is important chiefly because it allows us to understand the implications of continuing to respond inadequately--past mortality tells us all too much about the grim future. Unfortunately, news media have almost all failed to take account of the mortality data available, particularly data suggesting a total for violent mortality. There is an occasional spurt of interest but no sustained effort to establish a reasonable benchmark figure.

Available data, including a recently concluded mortality survey conducted chiefly by the U.N.'s World Health Organization (WHO), strongly suggest that current excess mortality (the number dying in addition to those who would, statistically, have died in any event) is over 6,000 human beings per month. Terrible as this rate is, it is well below the mortality rate of a year ago; it is also well below what is likely in the near future. Last December, Jan Egeland, the U.N.'s Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, estimated that if insecurity forces the withdrawal of humanitarian operations, as many as 100,000 may die every month. And as Kofi Annan recently noted in his report to the Security Council, threats against humanitarian workers are on the rise.

By far the most telling data concerning violent mortality in Darfur comes from the Coalition for International Justice (CIJ), the organization appointed by the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development to research human destruction in Darfur and provide the basis for what would be Colin Powell's determination of genocide in September 2004. Even with significant biases toward undercounting, the data assembled by the CIJ strongly suggests that over 200,000 people have died violently in Darfur. Though not technically an epidemiological study, the CIJ report cannot be ignored, since there is no alternative source of data. To compile the report, 1,136 interviews were conducted on a randomized basis along the Chad-Darfur border by genocide scholars, forensic specialists, law enforcement officials, and others with relevant experience. The key finding was that 61 percent of those interviewed had witnessed the killing of a family member during an assault by Janjaweed or regular military forces.

This data, along with previous mortality data from the WHO and other humanitarian organizations, and several key epidemiological studies, suggest that between 350,000 and 400,000 people have died from all causes--violence, malnutrition, and disease--in Darfur's genocide. (For a detailed analysis of the data, see my June 30, 2005 assessment at

<http://www.sudanreeves.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=58&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>.) The impending spike upwards in monthly mortality rates, and the great likelihood that genocide by attrition will continue for months and years, suggest that total mortality may eventually exceed that of Rwanda in 1994.

DARFUR'S FUTURE: There is no sign that normal agricultural production will resume any time in the near future. There is no sign that the insecurity confining people to camps for the displaced or villages under siege will be alleviated, even with the currently planned deployment of additional African Union personnel. There is no sign that the international community intends to fund humanitarian efforts in Darfur at an appropriate level. There is no sign that Khartoum's National Islamic Front, and the new government it dominates, has changed its genocidal ambitions, now best served by preserving the deadly status quo. There is no sign that peace negotiations in Abuja, Nigeria will yield more than the vaguely worded "declaration of principles" signed two weeks ago. And there is no sign of the international humanitarian intervention that might stop the genocide.

There are only signs that the dying will continue indefinitely.

U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE DARFUR GENOCIDE: The U.S. response to Darfur must be understood in the context of Bush-administration efforts to end Sudan's north-south war--as well as the administration's attempt to secure intelligence from Khartoum on international terrorism. (The National Islamic Front hosted Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda from 1991 to 1996, and retained strong connections even when bin Laden moved to Afghanistan.) These have been policy priorities despite the administration's explicit conclusion, first announced by former Secretary of State Colin Powell last September, that genocide was taking place in Darfur and that the Khartoum government was playing a role.

The Bush administration invested heavily in negotiating an end to the north-south war; and the signing earlier this year of a formal peace agreement--however limited and flawed--must be recognized as a major foreign policy achievement. But precisely because of the administration's investment in a north-south agreement, including the appointment of former Senator John Danforth as special envoy to Sudan, there was widespread reluctance within the State Department to hold Khartoum accountable for the genocide that was clearly unfolding in early 2004, when north-south peace negotiations had entered their final phase.

The thinking by U.S. officials involved in the negotiations, and their British and Norwegian counterparts, was that pressing the National Islamic Front regime too hard on Darfur would undermine the chances of consummating the north-south agreement. But this diplomatic strategy was of course transparent to Khartoum and thus perversely provided an incentive for the regime to extend negotiations as long as possible--always promising a light at the end of the diplomatic tunnel.

The last issue of substance between Khartoum and the southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement was resolved in a protocol signed by all parties in late May 2004; two weeks later, following months of terrifying reports from human rights groups, the State Department announced that it would begin an investigation to determine whether Khartoum was guilty of genocide in Darfur. The close sequence of dates was not a coincidence.

But a tremendous amount of the violent destruction in Darfur had already been accomplished by June 2004; indeed, this marks the approximate point in the conflict at which deaths from malnutrition and disease began to exceed those from violence. Moreover, Khartoum continued to use the north-south peace agreement as a threat, declaring with brazen confidence that if it were pushed too hard on Darfur, the negotiated agreement might be endangered. The agreement's final signing ceremony occurred in

Nairobi on January 9, 2005; the inauguration of a new government took place six months later, on July 9, 2005; the killing in Darfur, of course, continues.

OTHER INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO DARFUR: U.S. belatedness in responding with appropriate determination to genocide was mirrored in the flaccid responses of European countries, individually and through the European Union; Canada, Japan, the Arab League, and the African Union were no better. America has been the most generous nation in providing humanitarian assistance to Darfur, reflecting chiefly the determination of officials at the U.S. Agency for International Development. Meanwhile, the commitments of other countries to relief efforts have been less than stellar; indeed, the financial responses of Germany, France, Italy, Japan, and the oil-rich Arab countries have been scandalously laggard.

As further context in assessing international response to Darfur, we should bear in mind that U.N. officials determined in early December 2003 that Khartoum was systematically denying humanitarian access to areas where African tribal populations were concentrated. Around the same time Jan Egeland, U.N. Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, declared that Darfur was probably the world's "greatest humanitarian crisis." In March 2004, U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, Mukesh Kapila, went much further in characterizing the deliberate nature of human destruction he was witnessing in Darfur: "The only difference between Rwanda and Darfur now is the numbers involved. [The slaughter in Darfur] is more than just a conflict, it is an organized attempt to do away with a group of people." All too presciently, Kapila went on to say: "The pattern of organized attacks on civilians and villages, abductions, killings, and organized rapes by militias is getting worse by the day and could deteriorate even further. One can see how the situation might develop without prompt [action] ... all the warning signs are there." Shortly after Kapila made these statements, Khartoum forced his resignation.

The above declarations prompted no meaningful discussion of international humanitarian intervention--a task that was left to the African Union.

THE AFRICAN UNION IN DARFUR: The A.U. began to deploy a small number of monitors to Darfur following a ceasefire signed in April 2004 in N'Djamena, Chad. A commitment in late summer 2004 to increase the monitoring force to approximately 3,500 went unfulfilled for over half a year, and during this time the A.U. was unable to secure from Khartoum a mandate for civilian protection--only a mandate to monitor the largely non-existent ceasefire. Recently, the A.U. has said it will increase its force to 7,700 by September, and possibly 12,000 by spring 2006.

As many have recognized, the A.U. is quite unable to deploy to this force-level with its own resources; and NATO as a consequence has very recently agreed to provide logistics and transport capacity. The bigger problem, however, is that even with NATO helping in this way, the nascent A.U. Peace and Security Commission is simply not up to this mission if the goal for Darfur is adequate protection for civilians and humanitarian operations. The A.U. does not have the troops, the equipment, or the essential interoperability of forces that are necessary given the scale of the crisis. Those paying the price for disingenuous suggestions to the contrary are vulnerable civilian populations and humanitarian aid workers.

Wednesday, Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio of Senegal refused to accept any longer what has become the mantra of "African solutions for African problems." Gadio declared, on the occasion of a visit by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, that his government was "totally dissatisfied" with the hollowness of A.U. claims to be able to stop genocide in Darfur. Calling the situation "totally unacceptable," he continued: "We don't like the fact that the African Union has asked the international community to allow us to bring an African solution to an African problem and unfortunately the logistics from our own governments do not follow."

This is remarkable honesty, the more so since Nigeria--current chair of the African Union--has declared at

various points that the situation is fully in hand and actually improving. Comments to this effect have come from both President Obasanjo and General Festus Okonkwo, the Nigerian commander of A.U. forces in Darfur. Nigeria has strong-armed into silence many African nations. The country, which wants to maintain good relations with the Muslim world even as it confronts militant Islam in northern Nigerian states, has yielded to pressure from the Arab League--especially Libya and Egypt--to define the Darfur genocide as an African problem rather than an international one.

THE A.U. AS A DEFAULT RESPONSE: Any honest assessment of security needs on the ground in Darfur must accept that even the optimistically proposed A.U. force of 7,700 personnel requires very significant assistance from the Western democracies, ideally NATO troops, as the International Crisis Group (ICG) has recently argued. Protecting the camps and their environs so that girls and women no longer face rape when they collect firewood and water; protecting humanitarian corridors that are increasingly vulnerable; providing safe passage for vulnerable and inaccessible rural populations; assisting with the overwhelming logistical and transport needs of aid groups; disarming the Janjaweed (the only long-term solution to the security crisis); and providing security for the first intrepid civilians returning to their villages (or their burned out remains) in an attempt to resume agriculturally productive lives--these are tasks requiring at the very least the 12,000 to 15,000 troops the ICG argues are needed in the next 45 days.

The larger point here is that A.U. troops alone are both insufficient and merely a default policy--one that frees the Bush administration and its feckless European allies from the need to contemplate humanitarian intervention on an appropriate scale. Our response to the crisis has been defined not by security needs in Darfur but by the capacity of the African Union. Human rights groups have, in the main, refused to articulate this difficult truth, and an under-manned, under-equipped A.U. deployment to Darfur remains the unchallenged policy of the international community.

THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE: Genocidal destruction in Darfur will continue for the foreseeable future. The resources to halt massive, ethnically targeted destruction--of lives and livelihoods--are nowhere in sight. The consequences of this destruction, now extending over almost two and a half years, will be evident for years--in villages that have been burned to the ground, in poisoned water sources, in the cruel impoverishment of people who have lost everything, in deaths that will continue to mount relentlessly.

There is currently no evidence that the international community is prepared to deploy adequate protection for either Darfur's vulnerable civilian populations or endangered humanitarian operations. August, traditionally the month of heaviest rains, will see a further attenuation of relief efforts as transport of food and other critical supplies becomes mired in flooded river beds and blocked by severed road arteries. At the same time, water-borne diseases, along with malaria and a wide range of communicable diseases, will take huge numbers of lives. These diseases will be particularly potent killers because so much of the civilian population of Darfur has been seriously weakened by malnutrition. Famine conditions have already been identified in parts of Darfur, and the U.N.'s World Food Program estimates that 3.5 million people will need food assistance in the near future.

We have failed in Darfur. The only question now is the ultimate moral scale of our failure.

THE CASE FOR NATO INTERVENTION: To mitigate this failure, NATO should plan to deploy at least 15,000 troops to supplement the current African Union force now deployed under a weak mandate that extends only to ceasefire monitoring. This force should deploy in close consultation with the A.U. and in particular with neighboring countries, especially Egypt and Chad. There must be a clear civilian protection mandate. NATO political leadership should indicate unambiguously that it is prepared to expand the force if Khartoum's National Islamic Front seeks to create a non-permissive environment for deployment.

Vigorous economic sanctions against northern Sudan should also be prepared by all NATO countries in the event of obstruction by Khartoum.

Those who would object to such a NATO deployment must answer, clearly and honestly, a fundamental question: Who besides NATO has the requisite size of forces, the logistical and transport capacity, the essential interoperability, and the experience to mount such a protection operation? The answer is certainly not the A.U., as recent months and any unbiased survey of potential A.U. capacity will indicate. The A.U. must be commended for its efforts to date; it must be encouraged to take upon itself as much of the military obligation as possible; NATO countries must accelerate the training of African military personnel and provide necessary logistics and transport on a highly expedited basis. But the A.U. cannot, in the end, be the organization to answer the desperate call of Darfur.

As I suggested yesterday, a successful intervention would need to undertake a number of tasks. A full list of these makes clear the need for NATO intervention and the inadequacy of the A.U.

The more than 150 camps for displaced persons, with at least 2 million registered and unregistered people, must be fully secured. That means replacing the Sudanese police and security forces with A.U. and NATO military police, including a substantial complement of female officers experienced in responding to sexual violence. The camp surroundings must also be secured, as women and girls are forced to venture further and further to find firewood for cooking, water, and animal fodder. Humanitarian corridors must be fully secured so that drivers for the U.N.'s World Food Program and other agencies no longer face deadly assault. Civilians in inaccessible rural areas must be provided safe passage, or large numbers will slowly starve. Those civilians attempting to return to their villages--especially the early contingents--must be afforded security: If they return and are again attacked by Janjaweed or other lawless forces, it will become impossible to persuade others to risk returning.

Perhaps the largest challenge will be to disarm and neutralize the Janjaweed, an increasingly diffuse force. Many Janjaweed members have been removed to other parts of Sudan; many others have been incorporated into the police, security forces, or paramilitary organizations such as the notorious Popular Defense Force. Disarming the Janjaweed must be done in a head-on manner by NATO troops, for the militias are not a true military force and would be overwhelmed quickly if they resisted in the face of well-trained, well-armed NATO forces operating with robust rules of engagement.

The two major insurgency movements--the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement--must be put on forceful notice that to the extent they interfere with the establishment of secure conditions or humanitarian operations, they will also be militarily targeted.

Given what happened in Iraq, where a long-oppressed people did not receive Western troops as warmly as the Bush administration had predicted, it may seem presumptuous to say NATO forces would be welcomed by the African populations of Darfur. Nonetheless, countless conversations with Darfuris have convinced me that Western intervention would in fact be welcomed with enthusiasm, especially given growing disaffection with the performance of A.U. forces.

QUESTIONS OF JUSTICE: Beyond the provision of security, any truly adequate response to genocide in Darfur requires that we attend to various issues of justice. Certainly if Darfuri society is to be reconstructed out of the ashes of ethnic hatred and violence, compensation must be provided to those who have lost all amidst the burning, looting, and dispossession. The government in Khartoum, which has orchestrated the violence and destruction, must be made to provide direct compensation as well as adequate financial support for local mechanisms that will adjudicate the hundreds of thousands of claims that will be made.

The deep loss of trust between African and Arab tribal groups is one of the conflict's most tragic consequences; restoration of this trust will be a painfully arduous and lengthy process. It cannot proceed

if one part of the population perceives itself as dispossessed, even as it perceives the other part of the population as victimizers and the beneficiaries of the spoils of war.

More broadly, the international community cannot allow the present "climate of impunity" (as many have described it) to prevail indefinitely. Genocide must be punished or the force of international law will be seriously compromised. Future genocidaires will be guided by the vigor and timeliness with which justice is meted out.

It should deeply trouble all who value international law that the proceedings of the International Criminal Court have been greeted with such contempt by the most senior members of the National Islamic Front. These officials have repeatedly and insistently declared that no Sudanese citizen will be extradited to The Hague or allowed to participate in the ICC proceedings. Reliable reports from sources on the ground in Sudan strongly suggest that the ICC is also being stymied by the NIF in its efforts to collect evidence and interview witnesses and victims.

This is hardly surprising, since it has been so well established that senior members of the NIF are the inevitable targets of ICC prosecutions. As the outspoken former U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator Mukesh Kapila said in March 2004 before being forced from his position by NIF officials: "There are no secrets. The individuals who are doing this are known. We have their names. The individuals who are involved occupy senior positions in the government of Sudan."

Justice, however, can only follow the establishment of secure conditions in Darfur; it cannot precede it. In the absence of security, we will see no meaningful compensation to those who have suffered the most grievous losses; and there will be no satisfactory gathering of evidence that might allow for the full prosecution of those guilty of violating international law. For now, then, human security is the only issue we should be discussing--and only NATO can provide it.

OUR MORAL CHOICE: The plan I have laid out above for NATO intervention is unlikely to be implemented. Even so, it is important that the stark moral choice confronting the international community be absolutely clear. History must not record this moment as one in which our decision was uninformed by either the scale of the human catastrophe or an understanding of what is required to stop genocidal destruction.

And so, despite the long odds against an intervention actually taking place, it is our obligation to say with conviction and understanding the most urgent truth: In the absence of humanitarian intervention Darfur's civilian population, as well as humanitarian workers, will be consigned to pervasive, deadly insecurity; displaced persons will remain trapped in camps that are hotbeds of disease; agricultural production will remain at a standstill, leaving millions of people dependent on international food assistance for the foreseeable future; aid workers will continue to fall prey to targeted and opportunistic violence.

In other words, the genocide in Darfur will continue. We could stop it. We have simply chosen not to.

--Eric Reeves

For more information and continuing updates on the Darfur genocide, see Reeves's website at www.sudanreeves.org.