

Military Intervention and Peacekeeping in Darfur

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The humanitarian and human rights crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan raises two important questions: should the United Nations or a group of its members intervene aggressively to stop the massive killing and displacement there and, if so, what form should the intervention take? While the United Nations and its members have been debating these questions, some 50,000 have died in Darfur and 1.4 million have been driven from their homes and farms.

What began as the Sudanese government's response to a rebellion in Darfur turned into sustained and brutal attacks against the civilian population. Hundreds of villages have been destroyed by bombs from Sudanese air force planes and attacks from government-supported Janjaweed militia. The attackers tend to be Arabs, while the victims are largely Africans. There are economic reasons for the attacks, but many of the atrocities—particularly the widespread use of rape—have racial dimensions. Most of Darfur's African villagers are now living in squalid camps, either as internally displaced persons within Sudan, or as refugees in Chad.

Three years ago, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty expounded what it called "the right to humanitarian intervention." Their report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, argues that states have a responsibility to protect their citizens, and that when they fail to do so other states have an obligation to step in. The U.S. Congress said in July that "the atrocities in Darfur, Sudan, are genocide" and called on the members of the United Nations "to undertake measures to prevent the genocide." But Darfur shows that the tougher issue is not whether to intervene, but how. That is the question the world is clumsily and slowly trying to address now.

So far, a massive humanitarian intervention is protecting the large displaced population from starvation. Diplomatic intervention has opened corridors for humanitarian relief but failed to stop the fighting.

An acute lack of security, particularly in the areas around the camps, is the biggest problem in Darfur today. In an effort to monitor and improve security conditions, the African Union has deployed a small group of observers. However, the unarmed military observer force is ridiculously small and poorly equipped. A paltry 133 observers have been deployed to monitor a cease fire agreement in an area as large as Texas. They lack adequate communications and transportation equipment, particularly considering that roads and infrastructure are in poor shape.

A UN peacekeeping operation is currently not a realistic solution. The UN could hardly pull together a peacekeeping mission quickly, sorely stretched as it is with its other missions around the world, and the UN cannot in any event conduct robust interventions. Consequently, AU members have been urging the government of Sudan to allow the deployment of up to 3,000 soldiers from the AU, with a mandate to protect civilians as

well as humanitarian workers, but so far Sudan's leaders in Khartoum have opposed such a force. Nevertheless, Nigeria and Rwanda have each deployed small detachments to protect the monitors and, supposedly, civilians.

Even if the AU could deploy a larger force, it's not clear that it would succeed. The UN's experience in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) shows that even an armed military observer mission can be inadequate when it comes to protecting civilians. When armed groups attack civilians, peace monitors must be able to shoot to kill to fend off the attack. But an armed response can make the observer mission a target for retribution. Many nations that contribute peacekeepers to various places have consequently proved unwilling to allow their troops to engage in such 'hot combat' situations.

Peacekeeping operations succeed when they are led or complemented by well-equipped, well trained forces of sufficient size and with a mandate that allows for robust defense as well as counterattack. A British force deployed to Sierra Leone in 2000 to assist the UN peacekeeping mission is a perfect example, as is a French force deployed to the DRC in 2003.

Britain did offer to send a combat force of up to 5,000 to Darfur, and Australia has also offered a significant force. But Sudan opposes this proposed intervention as well. The U.S. government also dismissed such moves, saying they were premature. Nobody is forcing the issue at the moment, as the UN tries to determine how much progress Khartoum has made toward compliance with a July 30 Security Council resolution demanding disarmament of the Janjaweed.

Right now, the best possible option to improve security for Darfuris displaced by the violence is to enhance the AU monitoring force that Sudan has already accepted. The force needs more troops, more equipment, better intelligence support and reliable air transportation. The U.S. and the EU have gone some way towards providing some of this support, but more needs to be done. The greater use of private military firms, some of which are already supporting the AU monitoring mission, could also be considered.

However, if Sudan refuses to comply with the UN Security Council resolution, Security Council members will have to decide whether to supplement the AU monitors with combat troops that have a mandate to protect civilians. This would mean authorizing an intervention against a sovereign state, hardly an easy decision. Another significant way to improve security would be to establish a no-fly zone over Darfur, to prevent bombing runs by the Sudanese air force. But this would be intrusive, costly and time consuming, almost certainly requiring substantial U.S. participation. Despite the difficulty and the costs, however, the world has to face this fact: death and displacement is continuing in Darfur precisely because nobody has moved to stop it.

In the end, there are two problems: action to stop the violence now, and protection to enable people to go home under secure conditions. Both problems need African-led solutions, backed by U.S. and EU support. The idea that Africa should solve Africa's

problems is not new, and African countries themselves want this. But if Africa is to take on more of the peacekeeping job in Africa, the U.S., the EU, and other industrialized powers need to greatly expand programs that provide logistical support, professional military and police training, and most of all money.

As part of the effort to better equip the AU to handle its own problems, Congress needs to, but recently did not, provide money for President Bush's Global Peace Operations Initiative, a plan to train up to 75,000 mostly African troops to better perform peacekeeping missions. Congress also must provide more money for UN peacekeeping. The UN has not been able to pay African states that have contributed troops for peacekeeping missions, partly because the U.S. does not pay its own bill to the UN. This leaves African countries less able to conduct peacekeeping missions, because they cannot afford to pay soldiers, buy equipment, or pay for training programs themselves.

To begin to address the Darfur Crisis, *Refugees International* recommends that:

- President Bush deliver a public address condemning the actions of the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed militia in Darfur as crimes against humanity to rally public support for action in Darfur and place further pressure on the Sudanese government.
- The UN and the African Union work together to expand and strengthen the AU monitoring force in Darfur.
- The Bush administration publicly commit the U.S. to providing all necessary logistical and air support to the current AU observer force in Darfur, as well as to a possible AU military intervention force next year, and call for the U.K. and other nations to support all Darfur missions with specialized troops, police and air support.
- The U.S., working through the UN, begin planning more aggressive, effective military intervention in Sudan, if the violence continues.
- Congressional leadership in the House and the Senate commit to fully supporting funding for the Global Peace Operations Initiative and UN peacekeeping.

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