

What's to Be Done About Darfur? Plenty

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In 1915, Woodrow Wilson turned a blind eye to the Armenian genocide. In the 1940's, Franklin Roosevelt refused to bomb the rail lines leading to Auschwitz. In 1994, Bill Clinton turned away from the slaughter in Rwanda. And in 2005, President Bush is acquiescing in the first genocide of the 21st century, in Darfur.

Mr. Bush is paralyzed for the same reasons as his predecessors. There is no great public outcry, there are no neat solutions, we already have our hands full, and it all seems rather distant and hopeless.

But Darfur is not hopeless. Here's what we should do.

First, we must pony up for the African Union security force. The single most disgraceful action the U.S. has taken was Congress's decision, with the complicity of the Bush administration, to cut out all \$50 million in the current budget to help pay for the African peacekeepers in Darfur. Shame on Representative Jim Kolbe of Arizona - and the White House - for facilitating genocide.

Mr. Bush needs to find \$50 million fast and get it to the peacekeepers.

Second, the U.S. needs to push for an expanded security force in Darfur. The African Union force is a good start, but it lacks sufficient troops and weaponry. The most practical solution is to "blue hat" the force, making it a U.N. peacekeeping force built around the African Union core. It needs more resources and a more robust mandate, plus contributions from NATO or at least from major countries like Canada, Germany and Japan.

Third, we should impose a no-fly zone. The U.S. should warn Sudan that if it bombs civilians, then afterward we will destroy the airplanes involved.

Fourth, the House should pass the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act. This legislation, which would apply targeted sanctions and pressure Sudan to stop the killing, passed the Senate unanimously but now faces an uphill struggle in the House.

Fifth, Mr. Bush should use the bully pulpit. He should talk about Darfur in his speeches and invite survivors to the Oval Office. He should wear a green "Save Darfur" bracelet - or how about getting a Darfur lawn sign for the White House? (Both are available, along with ideas for action, from www.savedarfur.org.) He can call Hosni Mubarak and other

Arab and African leaders and ask them to visit Darfur. He can call on China to stop underwriting this genocide.

Sixth, President Bush and Kofi Annan should jointly appoint a special envoy to negotiate with tribal sheiks. Colin Powell or James Baker III would be ideal in working with the sheiks and other parties to hammer out a peace deal. The envoy would choose a Sudanese chief of staff like Dr. Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, a leading Sudanese human rights activist who has been pushing just such a plan with the help of Human Rights First.

So far, peace negotiations have failed because they center on two groups that are partly composed of recalcitrant thugs: the government and the increasingly splintered rebels. But Darfur has a traditional system of conflict resolution based on tribal sheiks, and it's crucial to bring those sheiks into the process.

Ordinary readers can push for all these moves. Before he died, Senator Paul Simon said that if only 100 people in each Congressional district had demanded a stop to the Rwandan genocide, that effort would have generated a determination to stop it. But Americans didn't write such letters to their members of Congress then, and they're not writing them now.

Finding the right policy tools to confront genocide is an excruciating challenge, but it's not the biggest problem. The hardest thing to find is the political will.

For all my criticisms of Mr. Bush, he has sent tons of humanitarian aid, and his deputy secretary of state, Robert Zoellick, has traveled to Darfur four times this year. But far more needs to be done.

As Simon Deng, a Sudanese activist living in the U.S., puts it: "Tell me why we have Milosevic and Saddam Hussein on trial for their crimes, but we do nothing in Sudan. Why not just let all the war criminals go. ... When it comes to black people being slaughtered, do we look the other way?"

Put aside for a moment the question of whether Mr. Bush misled the nation on W.M.D. in Iraq. It's just as important to ask whether he was truthful when he declared in his second inaugural address, "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors."

Mr. Bush, so far that has been a ringing falsehood - but, please, make it true.