


## **"Leadership Vacuum Leaves Darfur in Peril," The Boston Globe, October 3, 2004**

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Leadership vacuum leaves Darfur in peril

By Eric Reeves | October 3, 2004

THE WORLD has finally awakened to the horrors of genocidal destruction in the Darfur region of western Sudan, but an effective response is nowhere in sight. The United Nations Security Council is paralyzed by the narrow self-interest of China, Russia, and others. Secretary General Kofi Annan refuses to declare the basic truth of the conflict: Khartoum's National Islamic Front regime is directly responsible for attacks on tribal populations perceived as supporting two insurgency groups. The United States, having expended its diplomatic capital on Iraq, has been unable to lead effectively.

By default, international response has taken the form of increasing humanitarian assistance and supporting the deployment of an expanded African Union force with a robust mandate of civilian protection. Both efforts are failing. Despite heroic efforts by some humanitarian organizations, there is far too little aid on the ground, and it has arrived not simply too late, but in the midst of the region's paralyzing rainy season.

The capacity to move and distribute more than 40,000 metric tons of food and essential medicine, shelter, water purification equipment -- needed every month for the foreseeable future -- is nowhere in sight. Mortality rates are climbing and may still explode with outbreaks of water-borne diseases (cholera and dysentery); camps for the displaced are lacking in sanitary facilities and clean water, and heavy rains turn them into open sewers. Untreatable Hepatitis E is spreading, and malaria is claiming many lives. Malnutrition is dangerously high. More than 200,000 have died.

An African Union force tasked with monitoring a nonexistent cease-fire has been badly hindered by a lack of adequate transport and communications equipment. Khartoum also constrains the force by refusing to provide fuel when it wants to keep the observers grounded. The regime has declared its willingness to accept more observers, but refuses to accept any force with a peacekeeping mandate. UN urgings have been ineffectual, and African Union plans to strengthen the present mandate have been unsuccessful.

In Nigeria talks between Khartoum and the insurgency groups have collapsed. The two movements refuse to give up their arms before a political settlement is reached. Khartoum insists on precisely such disarmament and the "cantonment" of the insurgents. Such concentrations of defenseless former combatants would make them easy targets for Khartoum and its deadly Janjaweed allies.

There are few political responses that address this gridlock of issues and obstacles. The genocidaires in Khartoum, unless confronted with serious international pressure, will conclude that there are no real consequences to their destruction of the African peoples of Darfur. Here they are encouraged by the impunity enjoyed during previous, less well-reported genocides of the last 12 years -- in the Nuba Mountains and the southern oil regions. Ominously, the arduously negotiated peace agreement reached in Kenya between Khartoum and the southern military opposition seems on the verge of unraveling: the regime refuses to complete final elements of a formal peace settlement while seeking a final solution in Darfur. Military tensions are increasing, and resumption of all-out war in the south is possible.

The most urgent task is humanitarian intervention in Darfur, with or without UN authorization. An expanded African Union force, with robust rules of engagement, should initiate such intervention even if

Khartoum objects. In addition to protecting the highly vulnerable populations in the camps for displaced persons, this force should be the means for initiating a massive increase in humanitarian transport and logistical capacity, provided by US and European allies.

The longer term goal must be to dismantle the National Islamic Front: No true peace will come to Sudan so long as this ruthless regime of Arab supremacists rules Africa's largest country. In the interim, the United States and others should work to impose sanctions directed against Khartoum's leaders and isolate the regime. A widely representative government-in-waiting should be assembled.

Finally, ordinary Americans and Europeans should support a fledgling divestment campaign targeting the large European and Asian multinational corporations whose investments prop up Khartoum's genocidal tyranny. Many have stocks that trade on American exchanges, and are represented in numerous mutual funds and pension funds. These corporations must be forced to suspend commercial relations with Khartoum until genocide in Darfur has ended and a comprehensive peace agreement is reached with southern Sudan. Stripped of this immoral economic support, the regime will become far more vulnerable to international pressure, and susceptible to the dismantling desired by the overwhelming majority of Sudanese desperate for new leadership.

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