

# "SUDAN AND ITS GUESTS"

## Host of Problems

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[on the impending African Union summit in Khartoum]  
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by Eric Reeves  
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Why does genocide in Darfur continue? One reason is that there is no real international pressure on the architects of the genocide--the National Islamic Front security cabal in Khartoum--to bring the killing to a halt. On the contrary, as the genocide enters its fourth year, the international community continues to defer to Khartoum, or even to suggest disingenuously that the regime has somehow reformed itself. Either way, the clear implication is that the lives of Darfur's civilians are not worth the diplomatic price of confronting Sudan's brutal leaders.

There is no more appalling illustration of this phenomenon than recent announcements by the African Union and the Arab League that both groups will hold their upcoming summits in Khartoum. These summits will represent symbolic triumphs for Sudan's genocidaires. And they will reinforce in very public fashion what Khartoum already knows: that none of its neighbors really cares what it does in Darfur.

Of the two, the African Union summit is certainly the more disturbing, if only because it is the organization's own troops that are, in theory, supposed to be establishing security in Darfur. To be sure, this mission has been woefully ineffective from the start. And the A.U. force has been deliberately undercut by Khartoum since it was first deployed in summer 2004, with Sudan denying fuel to the African Union for its essential helicopters, blocking A.U. deployments within Darfur, and refusing to allow critical equipment and personnel into the region. For its part, the African Union hasn't committed enough resources or manpower; and key African countries have either reneged on military commitments (South Africa) or deliberately obscured Darfur's terrible realities and Khartoum's responsibility (Nigeria).

But the African Union's decision to hold its January 2006 summit in Sudan provides the strongest evidence yet that the organization has no intention of actually standing up to Khartoum and halting the genocide. Because tradition dictates that the next chair of the African Union be the head of the most recent summit's host country, Sudanese president Omar el-Bashir is now poised to lead the very organization that claims to be seeking an end to the genocide he is orchestrating. (This calls to mind the decision once made by the African Union's much-derided predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, to give its leadership position to the monstrous Idi Amin of Uganda.) It is difficult to imagine a more appalling demonstration of moral corruption on the part of the African Union--or a clearer indication that the group's claims to be working to end the Darfur genocide (in the popular phrase, to be providing "African solutions to African problems") are deeply disingenuous.

To date, only one African leader, President Deby of Chad, has objected to holding the A.U. summit in Khartoum. (And his objection was self-interested, not principled: he recently declared that a "state of belligerency" exists between Sudan and his country because of Khartoum's support for Chadian military mutineers trying to topple his weak government.) And so, in less than a month, Khartoum can expect to enjoy a diplomatic triumph amidst only scattered criticism.

The Arab League summit, slated to be held in Khartoum in March, may seem a minor victory for Sudan by comparison. But the summit's location is meaningful nonetheless: It reassures the National Islamic Front that, whatever its actions in Darfur, it will continue to receive friendship and diplomatic support from its traditional Arab allies.

It is no accident, after all, that Arab League member Algeria, which currently holds a seat on the U.N. Security Council, has been instrumental in sabotaging efforts to impose sanctions on Khartoum's genocidaires. Although the Security Council voted to create a sanctions committee to inflict penalties on Khartoum in March 2005, no sanctions have been imposed since, in large part because Algeria, along with Russia and China, has blocked all efforts to craft effective sanctions. Then there is Egypt, the powerhouse of the Arab League, which continues to urge the United Nations to stop meddling in Sudanese affairs. The Mubarak government (which at one point nearly scuttled north-south peace negotiations in Sudan) has relentlessly opposed any internationalization of either the diplomatic or military response to the Darfur genocide.

There are only two ways the vast human catastrophe in Darfur will end: international humanitarian intervention or intense diplomatic pressure on Sudan's regime. The former is nowhere on the horizon, and the latter will be profoundly undercut by the upcoming African Union and Arab League summits. We are often told that a new generation of leaders has arisen in African and Arab countries, a generation with reformist instincts. But by choosing to hold these summits in Khartoum, African and Arab leaders are showing that, like their predecessors, they are still more inclined to protect one another than act on principle. Idi Amin would be pleased.

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