

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

A Resource for Nonpartisan Information and Analysis

[home](#) > [by publication type](#) > [backgrounder](#) > Darfur's Peace Process

[Email](#)

Backgrounder

Darfur's Peace Process

Author: [Stephanie Hanson](#), Copy Editor

June 18, 2007

[Introduction](#)

[What is the status of the Darfur peace process?](#)

[What factors are hindering the process?](#)

[What are the provisions of the Darfur Peace Agreement?](#)

[Who are the rebel groups that have not signed on and what do they want?](#)

[How does the situation in South Sudan relate to Darfur?](#)

Introduction

In May 2006, the Sudanese government signed a peace agreement with one of the rebel groups in Sudan's western Darfur region. Yet one year later, the agreement is seen as a failure. Security has deteriorated and rebel groups have proliferated. International efforts have focused on pressing Khartoum to accept the deployment of a hybrid UN/African Union peacekeeping force, as called for in an August 2006 [Security Council resolution](#). But in the long run, experts say peace will only come to Darfur through a negotiated settlement between Khartoum and the rebel groups. Widespread disagreement remains over how to revive peace negotiations.

What is the status of the Darfur peace process?

Several different actors are working to bring Darfur's rebel groups and the Sudanese government to the table. Experts agree the best opportunity for restarting the peace process lies with a joint effort led by UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim. Eliasson recently outlined a roadmap: align the different peace proposals, bring the rebel groups together, and begin [negotiations](#). He hopes talks can start by the end of the summer.

What factors are hindering the process?

Undefined framework for talks. [John Prendergast](#) of the International Crisis Group (ICG) argues that the UN/AU effort is an "upside-down process." The mediators, he says, have consulted with different parties—which all have their pet issues—but have failed to outline a clear agenda, without which the peace process has stalled. The various parties are "casting about without a rudder and without an anchor," he adds.

Lack of engagement by outside powers. To date, experts say there has been a dearth of international political will behind the peace process. Although President Bush appointed a special envoy, former USAID administrator Andrew S. Natsios, to work on advancing peace in Darfur, some experts say this commitment pales in comparison to U.S. efforts during the North-South

Related Materials

[Crisis Guide: Darfur](#)
By [Stephanie Hanson](#), Copy Editor
Interactive
April 25, 2007

[Beyond Words: Building Will and Capacity to Prevent More Darfurs](#)
By [Lee Feinstein](#), Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy and International Law
Op-Ed
February 7, 2007

[USIP: Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in Eastern Sudan](#)
By Dorina Bekoe and Nirina Kiplagat
Must Read
September 2006

[Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic](#)
By [Stephanie Hanson](#), Copy Editor
Backgrounder
January 2, 2007

[Cohen: Expanded AU Force in Darfur Not a Permanent Solution](#)
Podcast
October 10, 2006

See Also

[Sudan, International Peace and Security](#)

Latest from CFR.org

[Arming Iraq's](#)

peace process, when there was a permanent team on the ground from the United States as well as from Europe. But signs are emerging that global efforts might strengthen. Washington's imposition of [sanctions](#) has stepped up pressure on Khartoum. And though China has thus far obstructed the UN Security Council from taking stronger action against Khartoum, Beijing recently appointed a full-time envoy to Darfur.

War between Sudan and Chad. Sudan and Chad are embroiled in a proxy war in which each supports the other's rebel groups. When Chadian rebels (who receive support from Khartoum) attempted to overthrow the country's government in April 2006, the Darfur rebel group [Justice and Equality Movement](#) (JEM) fought with Chad's army against the rebels. In exchange, Chad arms JEM in its fight against the Sudanese government.

Competing agendas within the Sudanese government. According to an [ICG report](#), there is significant pressure within the ruling National Congress Party to stop restricting humanitarian access and arming the janjaweed in Darfur. Another complicating factor is the minority party, South Sudan's SPLM. The group had deferred to the ruling party out of concern that dissent would endanger the fragile North-South peace agreement, but since June 2006 it has grown vocal on Darfur and has tried to unite rebel groups.

Getting Eritrea on board. Eritrea, which borders Sudan to the east and has pushed its own peace effort to maintain its regional stature, could act as a spoiler by resisting integration with the UN/AU initiative. It has provided Darfur rebel groups with weapons and pressured them to take part in the new peace talks. The UN/AU effort is "all predicated on getting the Eritreans to play ball," says [Alex de Waal](#), program director at the New York-based Social Science Research Council.

Process is not inclusive. The rebel factions in Darfur do not represent many significant groups, including some Arab tribes, civil society organizations, and [women \(PDF\)](#). [Carla Koppell](#), director of the Washington-based Initiative for Inclusive Security, says these unarmed groups have had no stake in the peace process. She says there is a "rhetorical commitment" to a more participatory process than last year's negotiations, but sees a lack of broad-based consultations or a structure that encourages such consultations.

What are the provisions of the Darfur Peace Agreement?

The [Darfur Peace Agreement](#) (DPA) was signed in May 2006 by the Sudanese government and Minni Minawi, who heads a breakaway faction of the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA). The rest of the SLA, along with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), refused to sign the agreement. Its terms provided for:

Power-sharing. The fourth-ranking post in the presidency is awarded to a rebel leader, who also chairs a regional authority that has power over security, land disputes, and reconstruction. The current ruling party is allotted two of the three governorships in Darfur until the 2009 elections, and a small majority in each legislature. The agreement also sets up a regional authority. As of February 2007, only 4 percent of the positions allotted for the rebels had been filled (including Minawi as the special assistant to the president); currently, some 80 percent are filled but there is controversy over how the posts have been allocated.

Referendum on autonomy. A referendum is to be held by July 2010—after national elections—to determine whether Darfur should be an autonomous region.

Rights of the displaced. Displaced Darfurians have the right to return to their homes and reclaim land. It specifies compensation for war victims as well as financing for Darfur's three state governments. The government has not yet made its initial \$300 million contribution to the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund, which was due by the end of 2006.

Cease-fire. Government troops are to withdraw and the janjaweed militias are to disarm within five months. Neither has been accomplished and the security situation remains unstable, according to a March 2007 [UN report \(PDF\)](#).

Dispute-resolution mechanism. The Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation was set up to allow Darfurian community leaders to resolve local disputes, but critics say it lacks authority in the community due to the number of DPA nonsignatories.

[Sunni Insurgents](#)

['Hamastan' Takes Shape on the Gaza Strip](#)

[Considering China's Currency](#)

[Sorting Fact from Violence in Iraq](#)

[Vying for Peace in Sudan](#)

[A Three State Solution?](#)

Who are the rebel groups that have not signed on and what do they want?

By some estimates, there are twelve groups, most of them offshoots of the original two rebel movements, the SLA and JEM. The SLA has splintered into several factions led by different commanders. Each has similar demands; namely, more compensation for displaced Darfurians (one group proposed \$2 billion). The ICG reports, however, that some SLA leaders are calling for Darfur to become an [autonomous region](#).

The JEM takes a more radical stance. It demands changes in the national power-sharing structure to give all regions rights equal to those of the South and to reestablish a rotational presidential conference of local representatives. Like the SLA factions, it seeks compensation for Darfurians and wants political rights to be allocated based on population. In June 2006, after the signature of the DPA, the JEM spearheaded the formation of an umbrella rebel group called the [National Redemption Front](#) (NRF). This move to unite rebel nonsignatories has strengthened JEM, as have the group's links to Chad's government.

How does the situation in South Sudan relate to Darfur?

Peace negotiations in Darfur could have repercussions for South Sudan, which enjoys tentative peace under the [Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#) (CPA). The CPA ended the region's decades-long civil war in January 2005, established a power-sharing formula for the entire country until national elections in 2009, and called for a referendum on the South's self-determination. Some experts argue that the world's attention on Darfur has jeopardized South Sudan's peace agreement.

The two peace processes are increasingly linked, others say, and should be acknowledged as such. The CPA's power-sharing formula applies to the entire country, and thus the South's former rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), is concerned that talks in Darfur might lead to a reopening of the CPA. Sudan's U.S. ambassador, John Ukec Lueth Ukec, a former SPLM member, said in an interview with CFR.org: "If we go back and open the door again on the CPA, that is going to be a [disaster](#)." He argues that the agreement provides the framework for solving the situation in Sudan, because it calls for national elections that will allow the people of Darfur to choose their leaders. De Waal agrees that free and fair elections are the key to resolving both of Sudan's crises and are "the best chance for the marginalized provinces to achieve political equality." Yet others believe the ruling National Congress Party will not relinquish its grip on power. "I wouldn't bet on elections as one of the ingredients for success," says Prendergast.

Weigh in on this issue by emailing [CFR.org](#).