



from the June 21, 2007 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0621/p09s01-coop.html>

Working together to save Darfur

The European Union and international community must coordinate their efforts to stop the carnage.

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Earlier this month, we participated in a discussion on Darfur in the European Parliament, having been invited to offer suggestions of concrete actions that the European Council and European Union could take to alleviate the misery endured by the people of Darfur. We very much appreciated the passionate concern expressed in the room and believe that that passion can and must result in stronger action to end the conflict. We hope the discussion and thoughtful suggestions by many there will influence the EU to take decisive action to protect Darfurians and bring the government in Khartoum back to the negotiating table.

Along with many parliamentarians, we are dismayed that despite much rhetorical concern in many world capitals, little has been done to end the conflict, now in its fifth year. Hundreds of thousands are dead, hundreds of thousands are in refugee camps in Chad, and millions are displaced inside Darfur. Rape, endured by countless thousands of women, continues to be used as a weapon of war. Thousands of villages have been razed, crops and livestock have been stolen or destroyed, and water has been polluted in a scorched-earth policy of ethnic cleansing carried out by Khartoum and its allied *janjaweed* militia. Splintered and splintering rebel groups are no saints either when it comes to human rights, but the overwhelming responsibility for the war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur rests with the government.

While our suggestions were made to the EU, other governments and international bodies must come together in coordinated action to stop the carnage. Sudan should be treated like apartheid South Africa and be isolated politically and economically. Those clinging to power in Khartoum must feel real consequences for what they are doing to Darfur. Every time Khartoum hears hollow threats, its belief in its impunity is bolstered. It is time to stop accepting Sudan's promises and excuses and hold that government accountable for its actions and its inaction.

Khartoum's counterinsurgency war rages on, and the entire region is increasingly drawn into the conflict. No one believes that a military solution is possible; renewed negotiations that meet the needs and aspirations of all Darfurians are the only answer. It is time for the international community to try a carrot-and-stick approach to resolve the crisis. Some of us believe that there has been too much carrot and not nearly enough stick.

It is time to make demands of Khartoum with deadlines for action; officials must suffer meaningful consequences if they do not respond. Cease-fire and humanitarian-access agreements made in 2004 must be honored. United Nations forces must be allowed unimpeded access to the region. Khartoum must fulfill its obligation to disarm its *janjaweed* militia, including those who have merely changed uniform to become part of its "border intelligence," "defense forces," or "police."

Khartoum's window of opportunity to respond must be weeks, not months. Any further stonewalling must result in targeted sanctions, politically and economically isolating those in power. Governments, corporations, and others investing in businesses in the Sudan should also divest their holdings.

Until the UN "hybrid force" is fully deployed, it is imperative that African Union forces be given the equipment and other resources they need to carry out their mission. And their mandate should clearly include the ability to defend Darfurian civilians. They accepted a thankless mission with insufficient support, and it is the people of Darfur who are suffering for it.

The international community, including civil society, must increase pressure on China to take forceful action to bring Khartoum back to the negotiating table – or risk the further tarnishing of the upcoming Beijing Olympics.

China has demonstrated that it can be sensible on climate change; it must show real leadership when it comes to Khartoum and Darfur.

There will be no peace in Darfur until Khartoum opens the Darfur Peace Agreement to new negotiations. There will be no peace until fractured rebels unite around a common position. Negotiations must include representatives of the people of Darfur – especially women, who suffer the most in war and gain the least in "peace." There will be no peace in Darfur until the historic marginalization of its people ends and they receive their share of political representation and economic resources. There will be no peace until victims of the counterinsurgency are compensated – particularly the women of Darfur.

We heard European parliamentarians express their frustration that dozens of statements of concern expressed in the EU and European Council have not been followed by meaningful action. The EU can and must play a leadership role in bringing this war to an end. Despite our collective outrage, frustration, and sometimes despair, we cannot give up on Darfur. Its people are counting on all of us.

• *Desmond Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his work against apartheid South Africa and Jody Williams received the prize in 1997 for her work to ban antipersonnel landmines. Ms. Williams headed a UN high-level mission to Darfur in February and March of 2007.*

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