



THE UN'S ROLE IN DARFUR

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THE CONFLICT IN DARFUR AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

The conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan began in 2003, when rebel groups began attacking government targets and the government retaliated with military force against the rebels and the civilian population. There is strong evidence that the government is also supporting a militia - called the *Janjaweed* - which has carried out brutal attacks on civilians. More than 200,000 have died as a result of the violence and more than two million people have been displaced; the conflict is also undermining regional stability as refugees spill over into neighbouring countries. In recent months the human security situation has worsened, and it is becoming more and more difficult for humanitarian workers to help the people of Darfur as they too are increasingly subject to violence.

The situation in Darfur represents the first serious test of the 'responsibility to protect', the principle agreed by world leaders at the 2005 World Summit which imposes a duty upon the international community to intervene to stop large-scale atrocities when host governments have shown themselves unable or unwilling to do so. It is clear that the Sudanese government is unable or - what is more likely - unwilling to protect its own citizens, and the international community, through the UN Security Council, needs now to implement the responsibility to protect in Darfur.

ACTION BY THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

There is currently an African Union (AU) force deployed in the region but it is not large enough or sufficiently equipped or mandated to stop the killing of civilians. Following a May 2006 peace agreement between Khartoum and a faction of one of the major rebel groups, fighting has intensified, pushing Darfur further into turmoil. On 31 August, the Security Council adopted resolution 1706, which proposed that the UN peacekeeping force currently stationed in the south of Sudan (UNMIS) should be enlarged and deployed to Darfur. The UN force would take over from the besieged AU troops and would be mandated to protect civilians by all necessary means.

However, Khartoum has so far refused to consent to the deployment of the UN peacekeepers, claiming that this would infringe upon Sudanese sovereignty. As a compromise, the government has agreed to allow the strengthening of the AU force and the extension of its mandate until the end of 2006. But it is far from clear that this solution is a viable one, and the international community must do more to ensure that the government of Sudan does not continue to be complicit in atrocities against its own people.

WHAT SHOULD THE UK GOVERNMENT DO?

- Press for the adoption of a further Security Council resolution stating, in an operative paragraph, that there exists an urgent international responsibility to protect the people of Darfur
- Work to develop a common united position in the Security Council to secure the consent of Sudan to the deployment of UN peacekeepers
- In particular, urge China and AU and Arab League states to pressure the government of Sudan to accept resolution 1706 and allow UN peacekeepers into Darfur
- Until a UN mission can take over, work to ensure that the AU force is adequately equipped and mandated to protect civilians
- Propose further Security Council action on Sudan in the form of sanctions or the establishment of a no-fly zone if it continues to target its own civilians
- Demand that the government of Sudan halt all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in the current military offensive against rebel groups
- Urge the rebel groups to re-engage with the peace process and avoid further civilian deaths by not locating themselves among the local population

ASK YOUR MP

- **In light of the mounting evidence of Khartoum's involvement in the violence being waged against its own citizens, do you agree that it is now the international community's 'responsibility to protect' the people of Darfur?**
- **What steps is the government taking to secure further Security Council action to pressure the government of Sudan to accept UN peacekeepers in Darfur?**
- **What support is the government providing to the overstretched AU force to assist it in protecting civilians in Darfur?**
- **What steps is the government taking to get the rebel groups that have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement to re-engage in negotiations?**
- **What is the UK government doing to ensure that humanitarian workers are protected from attacks?**
- **What action is the government taking to ensure that evidence implicating Sudanese government officials in atrocities in Darfur is submitted to the International Criminal Court?**
- **Have you signed EDM 2658 calling for the government to place pressure on China and Russia at the UN Security Council to ensure that the Sudanese government adheres to the Darfur Peace Agreement and allows UN forces to take over from the AU force in the region once its current mandate has expired?**
- **Have you signed EDM 2739 calling for the government to investigate and, if necessary, press for action against the offshore and international network of businesses owned by and linked to the government of Sudan?**

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