

## Crisis in Darfur: Options for U.S. Policy

### Introduction

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The situation in Darfur extends beyond a simple “ethnic Arab versus ethnic African” dynamic. The people of Darfur – both Arab and African – have been marginalized by Sudanese government policies related to resources, land and increasing desertification in recent decades. In response to attacks in early 2003 on government targets by rebel forces in Sudan’s western province of Darfur, the Sudanese government mounted a campaign that has killed approximately 400,000 Darfurians, caused 2.5 million to flee their homes and wrought untold devastation. In addition to sponsoring horseback attacks by nomadic Arab militias known as the *Janjaweed*, the government of Sudan has launched aerial bombardment campaigns and helicopter gunship attacks against the people of Darfur.

Using weapons supplied by the Sudanese government, the *Janjaweed* routinely raid villages, burn houses and attack innocent civilians. In turn, the major Darfur rebel groups – the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) – have attacked government military targets and *Janjaweed* tribesmen. These horrendous acts have helped destabilize and depopulate a region as large as Texas, with survivors fleeing to other parts of Sudan or neighboring Chad.

The international community has attempted to broker peace in Darfur, but has thus far failed to negotiate a sustainable peace or provide a robust protection force for the people of Darfur. The United States has taken several public steps to express its commitment to action – such as publicly stating that genocide is occurring in Darfur in September 2004 – but has also failed to stop the killing in Darfur. Due to efforts on behalf of the international community, the government of Sudan and a rebel faction led by Minni Minnawi signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) on May 5, 2006. Though a significant step forward, the DPA does not address many grievances of Darfuri civilians, is not inclusive of all rebel factions and has thus far failed to bring peace to the troubled region. Both the government of Sudan and the rebel groups have failed to fulfill their respective commitments to disarm the *Janjaweed* and uphold a ceasefire. Various rebel groups have mobilized under the umbrella of the National Redemption Front and continue to fight the *Janjaweed*. In order to address the crisis in Darfur, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1706 in August 2006 calling for the deployment of U.N. peacekeepers in Darfur. To date, the Sudanese government remains opposed to allowing U.N. peacekeepers in Darfur.

### The Current Situation

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The crisis in Darfur continues to deteriorate. Conflict is spreading rapidly to neighboring Chad and the Central African Republic, threatening regional stability and a larger conflict. The Chadian government has declared a state of emergency and called for U.N. peacekeepers in eastern Chad as thousands of civilians flee their homes in fear of *Janjaweed* attacks. The government of Sudan accuses the Chadian government of backing Darfur rebels, while the Chadian government accuses Khartoum of spreading genocide into Chad and arming Chadian rebels. This widening war has devastated efforts to provide aid to refugees fleeing the violence. In December 2006, hundreds of international aid workers were evacuated from areas in Darfur and Chad, while Darfuri refugees rioted outside of an African Union (AU) outpost to demand better protection and aid delivery. In January 2006, 13 U.N. agencies responsible for aid operations in Darfur issued a joint statement, declaring

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that the humanitarian situation in Darfur was the worst it had been since April 2004. The joint statement stressed the danger of jeopardized aid operations if violence, air raids, and instability continue at their current rate. The U.S. must act soon and forcibly to avoid greater loss of life and prevent a larger war that will destabilize the region and affect U.S. security interests (see Policy Options below).

In recent months, the Darfur debate has centered on the need to protect the people of Darfur from continued attack, sexual assault and violence. Currently, the African Union has a weak and under-funded monitoring mission on the ground in Darfur, the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS). At a meeting in Addis Ababa brokered by former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on November 16, 2006, Sudanese officials agreed “in principle” to strengthening AMIS’ mandate. The three-part agreement includes a “light support package” with technical support and minimal personnel increase, a “heavy support package” with several hundred U.N. military, police and civilian personnel, and a hybrid AU-U.N. force with a joint command and control structure, increased troop levels and stronger logistical support. Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir initially rejected the hybrid force, but allowed for a six-month extension of AMIS’ mandate. On December 19, 2006, the U.N. Security Council unanimously endorsed all of the conclusions from Addis Ababa, including the hybrid AU-U.N. force. After rigorous diplomatic efforts by Annan and the U.N. envoy to the Sudan, President al-Bashir accepted the three-phase approach to a stronger peacekeeping force on December 27, 2006. The ongoing first phase of the agreement with the “light support package” has provided \$21 million in staff and equipment.

## Policy Options

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- **The U.S. must secure increased funding for a stronger AMIS force to protect the people of Darfur until a U.N. force can deploy.** The international community must act on its recognized “responsibility to protect” the people of Darfur. Despite the six-month extension of the AMIS mandate, that mandate is weak and its force remains under-funded. The U.S. must act in two ways: secure funding for a stronger AMIS force until a U.N. force can deploy, and repay its peacekeeping arrears to the U.N. – currently \$391 million but expected to top \$1 billion by 2008 – to ensure the success of a future hybrid AU-U.N. force.
- **The U.S. must engage Sudan’s closest allies to end the violence in Darfur.** The U.S. should work with China, Russia and Arab states to pressure the Sudanese government. With its economic relationship with the Sudan and its oil interests in the region, China is especially well positioned to play a crucial role in ending genocide. The U.S. must make it clear that China needs to play a positive role in Darfur.
- **The U.S. should support the International Criminal Court’s investigation in Darfur.** In March 2005, the U.N. Security Council referred the case of Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for investigation. Luis Moreno-Ocampo, chief prosecutor for the ICC, recently stated that the ICC has enough information to indict individuals by February. In order to bring justice for the people of Darfur, the U.S. should support the ICC’s case and supply any relevant information on the Darfur case in order to hold accountable those responsible for genocide and crimes against humanity.
- **The U.S. should take more forceful measures to stop genocide.** U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, Andrew Natsios, has alluded to a “Plan B” for U.S. policy if the Sudanese government does not comply with the international community’s demands for a stronger peacekeeping force backed by the U.N. Stronger measures should include a no-fly zone, targeted individual sanctions, targeted divestment (specifically from the petroleum sector) and a freeze of off-shore accounts of Sudanese officials.

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