Crisis in Darfur

IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR PEACE?

More than two years after government and rebel fighters signed a peace agreement in Sudan, violence is still rampant in Darfur. At least 2.4 million people have been displaced and up to 400,000 have died since 2003. And observers say the situation is getting worse. Rebel groups have splintered into more than a dozen warring factions, bandits are attacking relief workers, and drought threatens to make next year among the deadliest in Darfur’s history. Despite pressure from religious and human-rights groups, the international community seems unable — or unwilling — to find a lasting solution. A year after the U.N. authorized the world’s largest peacekeeping force in Darfur, only 37 percent of the authorized personnel have been deployed, and no military helicopters have been provided. The International Criminal Court is considering genocide charges against Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, but some fear an indictment would trigger more violence than justice. Some say China, Sudan’s largest trading partner and arms supplier, should pressure Sudan to end the violence.

Remains of 25 villagers were found recently in a mass grave in Darfur. An estimated 200,000-400,000 civilians and soldiers have been killed in the region since 2003 in what many have called genocide.
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Crisis in Darfur

THE ISSUES

It was mid-afternoon when helicopters suddenly appeared and opened fire on the terrified residents of Sirba, in Western Darfur. Then hundreds of armed men riding horses and camels stormed the village, followed by 30 military vehicles mounted with weapons.

“The cars . . . were shooting at everyone, whether a woman, man or child,” said Nada, one of the survivors. “They were shooting at us even when we were running away.”

Almost simultaneously, another attack was taking place a few miles away in the town of Abu Suruj. Witnesses say Sudanese soldiers and members of the notorious janjaweed militia shot people, set homes on fire and stole livestock. Many died in flames inside their huts. Three-quarters of the village was burned to the ground, as government planes bombed the town and surrounding hills where residents had fled for cover.

But that wasn’t all. In a third nearby village, Silea, women and girls were raped and two-thirds of the town was destroyed by fire. Among the victims was Mariam, 35, who was shot as she tried to stop looters.

“They told me to leave and not to take anything, and then one of the men on a Toyota shot me, and I fell down,” she said. Her father found her and took her by horse-drawn cart to a regional clinic. “I was pregnant with twins, and I lost them while we made the trip,” she said. “I lost so much blood.”

In all, nearly 100 people were killed and 40,000 civilians driven from their homes in a single day, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), a global advocacy group. The Sudanese military said the strikes were in retaliation against the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), an anti-government rebel group that had recently launched a military offensive in the region, attacking a police station, killing three civilians and detaining local officials.

While HRW criticized the rebels for operating around populated areas, it strongly condemned the Sudanese government for targeting civilians and using a “scorched earth” policy to clear the region and make it easier to go after JEM positions.

Indeed, civilians have been targeted and terrorized throughout the long and bloody fighting in Darfur between non-Arab rebel groups who want to overthrow the Sudanese government and government troops backed by Arabic janjaweed militias. During the peak fighting between 2003 and 2005, from 200,000 to 400,000 people — mostly civilians — died from armed attacks as well as famine and disease. More than 2.4 million Sudanese — about a third of the population — have been forced to flee their homes since 2003; tens of thousands now live in refugee camps across the region.

But the same-day attacks in the three villages did not occur during the period of peak fighting. They occurred on Feb. 8 of this year, nearly two years after rebels and the government signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in May 2006.

The continuing conflict has sparked the world’s largest humanitarian mission, with more than 17,000 aid workers now stationed in Darfur. And the situation is deteriorating. Observers predict next year will be one of the worst ever.

Growing banditry and lawlessness have made much of Darfur — a region in western Sudan as large as France — inaccessible to aid workers. Rising food prices, drought and a poor cereal harvest also are combining to form what Mike McDonagh, chief of the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, described as a “perfect storm.”

The word janjaweed, which means devil on a horse, is used to describe horsemen from the nomadic Arab tribes in Darfur that have been armed and supported by the Sudanese government.
Conflict Continues Despite Cease-Fire Accords

Darfur is an ethnically diverse area about the size of France in western Sudan—Africa’s largest country. It has been wracked by decades of tension—and more recently open warfare—over land and grazing rights between the nomadic Arabs from the arid north and predominantly non-Arab Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa farmers in the more fertile south. A third of the region’s 7 million people have been displaced by the conflict, which continues despite numerous cease-fire agreements. The United Nations has set up several camps inside Darfur and in neighboring Chad for those fleeing the violence.

Sources: USAID satellite imagery, Aug. 13, 2007; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, June 2, 2008

Already, conditions are dire:
- In the first five months of this year, 180,000 Darfuris were driven from their homes. 8
- More than 4.2 million people in Darfur now rely on humanitarian aid for food, water and medical care. 9
- Attacks against aid workers have doubled since last year. 10 (See chart, p. 253.)
- The U.N. World Food Program was forced to cut its food rations in Darfur by 40 percent this year because of repeated attacks by armed gangs. 11
- About 650,000 children—half of the region’s children—do not receive any education. 12

While attacks on civilians have decreased since the peace deal was signed, international watchdog groups say the drop has little to do with increased security. “A third of the population has been displaced, so the targets are fewer,” says Selena Brewer, a researcher with Human Rights Watch. “But there are far more perpetrators.”

The fighting between non-Arab rebels and the Arab-led government’s forces—backed by the janjaweed—has morphed into all-out lawlessness. The two main rebel groups—the JEM and the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M)—have splintered into more than a dozen factions that fight among themselves as much as against the government. Moreover, some disaffected janjaweed fighters have joined the rebels, and skirmishes between ethnic tribes are increasing. Bandits attack civilians, aid workers and international peacekeepers almost at will. 13

“We no longer know who is attacking,” says Denise Bell, a Darfur specialist with Amnesty International USA.

To make matters even more complicated, Darfur has become the staging ground for a proxy war between Sudan and its western neighbor Chad. The two governments support opposing groups in the region with the goal of launching coup attempts against one another. As arms pour into the area, civilians are the primary victims.

Many describe the conflict as Arabs vs. non-Arabs. “The janjaweed . . . would tell us that the black Africans were a lesser race and that they shouldn’t be there . . . and that they would drive them out or kill them,” said former U.S. Marine Capt. Brian Steidle, whose book about his six months as an unarmed military observer in Darfur was made into an award-winning documentary. 14
But most observers say the situation is more complicated than that. Nearly all Darfuris speak Arabic, and nearly all are Muslims. Generations of intermarriage have resulted in little physical difference between the groups, and not all Arab tribes have joined the janjaweed while some Arab groups have even been targeted themselves — although most of the victims are from the non-Arab Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups.

But poverty, drought and the ongoing conflict have led to increased tensions between Arab groups, who are mainly nomadic, and non-Arabs, who are mainly farmers, as they compete for dwindling land and water resources. The Sudanese government is widely accused of doing all it can to inflame these historical tensions and grow support among its Arab political base in Darfur by arming and recruiting the janjaweed to clear the region of non-Arabs.

But most agree race has little to do with government motives. “It’s all about divide to rule. It’s just the government using one lot of poor people against another lot of poor people,” says Gillian Lusk, associate editor of the London-based newsletter Africa Confidential. “It’s not about ethnic supremacy. If the so-called Arabs don’t help the government, it will kill them, too. It’s just renting them.”

Although Sudan says its attacks in Darfur comprise a “counterinsurgency” campaign, the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) refuted that claim in July when he sought an indictment against Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir for genocide and crimes against humanity. The most efficient method to commit genocide today in front of our eyes is gang rapes, rapes against girls and rapes against 70-year old women,” Chief ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said as he described the brutality of the war in Darfur. “Babies born as a result have been called janjaweed babies, and this has led to an explosion of infanticide.” In addition, he said, “Al-Bashir is executing this genocide without gas chambers, without bullets and without machetes. The desert will do it for them. . . . Hunger is the weapon of this genocide as well as rape.”

Many hope the prosecutor’s action will pressure Sudan to halt its attacks in Darfur. But others fear an indictment would prompt Bashir to prevent peacekeepers and Western aid organizations from working in Darfur.

“[An indictment] would have very serious consequences for peacekeeping operations, including the political process,” U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. “I’m very worried. But nobody can evade justice.”

While the ICC is considering charging Bashir with genocide, many aid groups, governments and the United Nations have avoided using the “G-
word” to describe the situation in Darfur. Some say the reluctance stems from the fact that international law requires countries to take action to “prevent and punish” genocide. But others, including Amnesty International, say that despite the obvious atrocities, there is insufficient evidence civilians were targeted because of their ethnicity. 19

The international community also disagrees on how to solve the crisis. While the United States and the United Nations have sanctioned the Bashir government, the move has largely been opposed by China, Russia, Arab nations and the African Union (AU) — a political and economic coalition of African countries.

Darfur is “a test case for international response — or the inability of the international community to respond — to this type of situation,” says Imani Countess, senior director for public affairs at TransAfrica Forum, which campaigns for human rights in Africa. “It’s a damning indictment against the government of Sudan, because it refuses to end the violence. But it’s also a pretty damning indictment of the international community.”

And while the international community stands by, the situation in Darfur threatens to destabilize the entire region. Millions of refugees from the area are creating economic and political chaos in Sudan and neighboring countries, and the region’s porous borders have turned Darfur into the headquarters for rebels from Chad and the Central African Republic.

The growing crisis also threatens to undo the precarious 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the bloody 20-year civil war between North and South Sudan — Africa’s longest civil war.

“A lot of attention has been diverted to Darfur,” causing backsliding and insufficient funding for implementing the peace agreement, says Bell of Amnesty International. “Darfur threatens to overshadow the CPA. If the CPA falls, the country falls. The international community needs to be much more aware of that.”

In June, Jan Eliasson — the U.N.’s special envoy to Darfur — resigned, blaming himself, the U.N. and the international community for not doing enough to bring peace to the region. He said attention has been too narrowly focused on Darfur alone and that a more comprehensive strategy — addressing the many tensions and conflicts across the region — must now be pursued.

“This simply cannot go on,” Eliasson said. “A new generation in Sudan may be doomed to a life in conflict, despair and poverty. The international community should have learned

“China is uniquely positioned to fix this,” says Alex Meixner, director of government relations for the Save Darfur Coalition. “They have a fair amount of leverage over Bashir.” China buys two-thirds of Sudan’s petroleum — much of which comes from the south — and is its largest supplier of weapons. But as a member of the U.N.’s Security Council, China repeatedly has used its veto threat to block action against Sudan. 20

Over the past year, however, as the Beijing Olympics brought international attention to China’s human-rights policies — its government has played a more active role in trying to solve the crisis. It appointed a special envoy to help negotiate a peace settlement and helped convince Sudan to allow a joint U.N.-African Union peacekeeping force — known as UNAMID — to enter Darfur. In July China sent 172 engineers to join the peacekeeping force, bringing China’s participation in the mission to more than 300 personnel. 21

Nearly a year into their mission, however, the force is severely undermanned, underequipped and under constant attack. Although authorized to have 26,000 military and police peacekeepers — the largest deployment in the world — fewer than half that number have been deployed and not a single military helicopter has been donated to the force. (See graph, p. 247.) 22

During a 2007 visit to Sudan, Chinese President Hu Jintao reviews Sudanese troops with President Omar Hassan al-Bashir. In the run-up to the Beijing Olympics this summer, China came under intense international pressure to use its economic clout as Sudan’s biggest oil buyer and weapons supplier to convince Bashir to stop the slaughter in Darfur. Hu convinced Bashir to allow joint U.N.-African Union peacekeeping forces to enter Darfur, but critics say China could do much more.
enough lessons from other conflicts where the populations were left to stagnate and radicalize in camps." 23

As the situation deteriorates in Darfur, these are some of the questions being asked:

**Has genocide occurred in Darfur?**

In July 2004, the U.S. Congress declared the violence in Darfur “genocide” and urged President George W. Bush to do the same. But for months afterward, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell studiously avoided using the word, on the advice of government lawyers.

Under the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, any signatory country — including the United States — which determines that genocide is occurring must act to “prevent and punish” the genocide. However, while some believe the 1948 treaty requires military intervention to stop the killing, others believe economic sanctions alone are permitted. 24

The Bush administration used the word to describe what is happening in Darfur only after religious groups launched a lobbying and media campaign condemning the Sudanese government for “genocide.” In May 2004, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a “genocide alert” for Darfur, and two months later the American Jewish World Service and the Holocaust Museum founded the Save Darfur Coalition — an alliance of secular and religious groups calling for international intervention to halt the violence. 25 That August, 35 evangelical Christian leaders said genocide was occurring in Darfur and asked the administration to consider sending troops. 26

A month later, Powell finally capitulated, telling the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “We concluded — I concluded — that genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the government of Sudan and the janjaweed bear responsibility — and genocide may still be occurring.” 27 Powell then called on the U.N. to take action for the “prevention and suppression of acts of genocide.” 28 A week later, the United States pushed a resolution through the General Assembly threatening Sudan with economic sanctions if it did not protect civilians in Darfur. 29

But most other governments and international humanitarian groups — including Amnesty International — say genocidal intent has not been proven. “There is a legal definition of genocide, and Darfur does not meet that...
Climate Change Blamed for Darfur Conflict

Nomads and farmers battle for scarce water and arable land.

For generations, Arab nomads in Darfur enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with their farming non-Arab neighbors. As the seasons changed, the nomads would bring their livestock from the arid north to the greener lands to the south during the dry season and then lead them back north during the rainy season. The non-Arabs, who came from different ethnic groups, would allow the nomads to graze camels, sheep and goats on their farmlands, and in exchange the livestock would provide fertilizer for the farmers’ crops.1

That relationship, however, began to change about 75 years ago. And today, what had once been a convenient alliance between nomads and farmers has exploded into a bloody war between Darfur’s Arabs and ethnic African tribes.

While many blame the bloodshed on political or ethnic divisions, others say climate change lies at the root of the devastation. “It is no accident that the violence in Darfur erupted during the drought,” U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. “Until then, Arab nomadic herders had lived amicably with settled farmers.”2

Most people use “a convenient military and political shorthand” to describe Darfur as an ethnic conflict between Arab militias fighting black rebels and farmers, Ban explained. And, while the conflict involves a complex set of social and political causes, it “began as an ecological crisis, arising at least in part from climate change,” he said.

According to the U. N., average precipitation in Sudan has declined 40 percent since the early 1980s.3 Signs of desertification began emerging as far back as the 1930s. A lake in El-Fashir in northern Darfur reached its lowest water level in 1938, after which wells had to be drilled to tap into underground water supplies. Villages in northern Darfur increasingly were evacuated because of disappearing water supplies.4

In the 1980s a severe drought and famine made the northern areas nearly impossible to cultivate, forcing nomadic tribes to migrate even further south and increasingly encroach upon their farming neighbors’ more fertile lands.5 To prevent damage from the nomad’s passing herds, the farmers began to fence off their shrinking fertile plots. Violent land disputes grew more and more common.

“Interestingly, most of the Arab tribes who have their own land rights did not join the government’s fight,” said David Mozersky, the International Crisis Group’s project director for the Horn of Africa.6

A new report by the European Commission predicts that increasing drought and land overuse in North Africa and the Sahel — the semi-arid swath of land stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Horn of Africa — could destroy 75 percent of the region’s arable land. As land and water resources disappear, the report said, such violent conflicts will increase around the world.7

“Already today, climate change is having a major impact on the conflict in and around Darfur,” the report said.8

Economist Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, said Darfur is an example of the conflicts that increasingly will erupt because of climate change.

“What some regard as the arc of Islamic instability, across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, Yemen, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan, is more accurately an arc of hunger, population pressures, water stress, growing food insecurity and a pervasive lack of jobs,” Sachs wrote earlier this year, using Darfur as an example of a conflict sparked by climate change.9

But others say climate change is just an excuse used by the Sudanese government to relieve itself of responsibility. Politics is the real cause of the bloodshed in Darfur, many say, with President Omar Hassan al-Bashir’s government bearing full blame for the ongoing violence.

“Jeffrey Sachs and Ban Ki-moon said it’s essentially environmental. How dare they?” says Gillian Lusk, associate editor of the London-based newsletter Africa Confidential. “The essential issue is the Sudan government went in there and killed people.” And any attempts “to turn it into a primary ethnic or environment issue are dangerous.”

Still, many international leaders say Darfur is a warning sign of growing environmental degradation. “Climate change is already having a considerable impact on security,” French President Nicolas Sarkozy told an international governmental conference in April. “If we keep going down this path, climate change will encourage the immigration of people with nothing towards areas where the population does have something, and the Darfur crisis will be only one crisis among dozens.”10

3 Ibid.
4 M. W. Daly, Darfur’s Sorrow (2007), pp. 141-142.
6 Faris, op. cit.
8 Ibid.
Not surprisingly, Sudan denies targeting ethnic groups in Darfur, instead blaming the massive deaths on tribal conflict, water disputes and collateral military damage. “We do not deny that atrocities have taken place,” says Khalid al-Mubarak, a media counselor at the Sudanese Embassy in London. “We do deny that they have been planned or systematic. They happened in an area out of reach of the central government. The government could not have planned or controlled it.”

A U.N. commission investigating the conflict also said genocidal intent has not been proven, but it did say Sudanese forces working with janjaweed militias had “conducted indiscriminate attacks, including killing of civilians, torture, enforced disappearances, destruction of villages, rape and other forms of sexual violence, pillaging and forced displacement.”

“I don’t think it matters [whether you call it genocide or not],” says Africa Confidential’s Lusk. “In terms of legitimizing intervention, it might be important. But no one wants to get involved anyway.”

In a joint statement in May, the three leading American presidential candidates at the time — Sens. Barack Obama, D-Ill., Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., and John McCain, R-Ariz., — called the situation in Darfur “genocide” and promised, if elected, to intervene. Some other U.S. politicians — including Democratic vice presidential nominee and Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Sen. Joseph R. Biden, of Delaware — have called for military intervention to halt the mass killings. Sudan, a foreign policy adviser to Obama, has called for legislation authorizing the use of force.

But experts say the international backlash against the Iraq War — including the abuse of Muslim prisoners at Abu Ghraiib prison by U.S. soldiers — makes intervention in another Muslim country unlikely anytime soon, whether the word genocide is used or not. “Sudan can say all this ‘genocide’ stuff is a conspiracy to steal [their] oil,” says Peter Moszynski, a writer and aid worker with 25 years of experience in Sudan. “With the Iraq backlash, Bashir became bulletproof.”

Sudan is Africa’s fifth-largest oil producer, with proven reserves of 5 billion barrels. Experts say in the next few years Sudan’s daily production could reach 700,000 barrels — enough for nearly 30 million gallons of gasoline a day — about 10 percent of U.S. daily needs.

The United States is also in the awkward position of balancing its national-security interests against calls to end the genocide. Since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, Sudanese officials have worked closely with the CIA and other intelligence agencies to provide information on suspected terrorists. Although Sudan is on the U.S. list of “state sponsors of terrorism,” a 2007 State Department report called Sudan “a strong partner in the War on Terror.”

“I am not happy at all about the U.S. working with Sudan,” says El-Tahir El-Faki, speaker of the JEM legislative assembly. “Definitely it is genocide in Darfur. They are targeting ethnic people with the aim of eliminating people. . . . It will be contrary to American interest supporting a government that is killing people.”

Regardless of what the violence is called, most agree the label is meaningless if nothing is done to stop the killing. “It’s like walking down the street and you see someone being beaten up. You don’t stop and think whether it’s bodily harm or not. You stop and help and let the lawyers figure out the legal side later,” says James Smith, head of the Aegis Trust, a British group that works to halt genocide. “Stopping genocide is more of a political and moral question than a legal one.”

“The legal framework exists to prevent or mitigate genocide if the political will is sufficient,” he continues. “However, politicians and diplomats create legal ambiguity to mask their disinterest in protecting lives in certain far-away countries.”

Would arresting Sudanese President Bashir do more harm than good?

In July, when he asked the International Criminal Court to charge Bashir with genocide and other war crimes, the ICC prosecutor cast aside all the debate over how to label the violence in Darfur. Bashir’s motives were “largely political,” ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said. “His pretext was a ‘counterinsurgency.’ His intent was genocide. . . . He is the mastermind behind the alleged crimes. He has absolute control.”

The court is expected to decide this fall whether to accept the charges and issue an arrest warrant. Many heralded the prosecutor’s unprecedented request — the first genocide indictment sought for a sitting head of state — as a critical first step to peace in Darfur.

“Darfur has had very little justice of any kind. They’ve been let down by the African Union, by the U.N. peacekeeping force, by other countries,” says Africa Confidential’s Lusk. “It’s about time a small sign of justice appeared on the horizon. Impunity has reigned for 19 years. This action says this is not a respectable government.”

But others fear an indictment could spark reprisal attacks against foreign peacekeepers and aid workers by the Sudanese government and could block a peace settlement. Sudan’s U.N. ambassador, Abdalmahmood Abdallah eem Mohamad, said the charges would “destroy” efforts towards a peace agreement in Darfur. “Ocampo is playing with fire,” he said. “If the United Nations is serious about its engagement with Sudan, it should tell this
man to suspend what he is doing with this so-called indictment. There will be grave repercussions.”

Sudanese officials said that while they would not retaliate with violence, they could not guarantee the safety of any individual. “The U.N. asks us to keep its people safe, but how can we guarantee their safety when they want to seize our head of state?” asked Deputy Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Hassan al-Ameen.

The Sudanese government, which refused to hand over two other officials indicted for war crimes last year by the ICC, said it would not cooperate with the ICC’s latest efforts either.

The United Nations evacuated staff from the region shortly after Ocampo made his announcement. Representatives from the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — met with U.N. officials to discuss the safety of the peacekeeping force in Darfur, which evacuated non-essential staff and cut back on operations that could endanger civilian staff.

Meanwhile, the African Union (AU), the Arab League and others asked the U.N. to delay the ICC legal action, which some say could be used as a bargaining chip to force Bashir to end the killing. “We are asking that the ICC indictment be deferred to give peace a chance,” Former U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan Andrew Natsios agrees an indictment could derail peace negotiations and make it impossible to hold free and fair elections, scheduled next year. “The regime will now avoid any compromise or anything that would weaken their already weakened position, because if they are forced from office they’ll face trials before the ICC,” Natsios wrote. “This indictment may well shut off the last remaining hope for a peaceful settlement for the country.”

The United States — which, like Sudan, has never ratified the treaty creating the ICC — nevertheless said Sudan must comply with the ICC. But the U.S. envoy to the United Nations has been vague on whether the United States would support a deferral. “We haven’t seen anything at this point that could have the support of the United States,” said U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad. “We certainly do not support impunity for crimes.”

But he added, “As you know also, we’re not a member of the ICC. So there are various factors in play here. And as I said, I don’t see any action on this in the council that would provide impunity anytime in the foreseeable future.”

Others point out that efforts to solve the crises diplomatically were faltering long before the ICC prosecutor’s recommendations. “The process hasn’t gotten anywhere,” says veteran aid worker Moszynski. “If we’re going to say ‘never again,’ we’ve got to do it. Someone must be held accountable.

In any case, he added, the pending ICC charges — and potential indictments — have turned Bashir into an international “pariah,” making it nearly impossible for him to play any leadership role on the international stage.

**Is China blocking peace in Darfur?**

In the year leading up to the Beijing Olympics, U.S. government leaders, human-rights activists and Hollywood’s elite used the international
sporting event as a platform to criticize China’s policy toward Darfur.

China is Sudan’s biggest trading partner, weapons supplier and oil-industry investor. It has built a 957-mile-long pipeline in Sudan — one of the largest foreign oil projects in China’s history. It also has constructed three arms factories in Sudan and provided small arms, anti-personnel mines, howitzers, tanks, helicopters and ammunition. China also has done more than any other country to protect Khartoum from U.N. sanctions. 46

China “potentially has the most influence with Sudan,” says Amnesty International’s Bell. “People who are the main economic players are able to dictate the rate of progress that is made.”

American actress Mia Farrow last year branded the Beijing Olympics the “Genocide Olympics,” and Hollywood producer Steven Spielberg stepped down as one of the event’s artistic advisers, citing the ongoing violence in Darfur. 47 Last May, a bipartisan group of 108 members of Congress warned the Chinese government that if China did not pressure Sudan to do more to help Darfur, protests and boycotts could destroy the Olympics.

“[W]e urge you to protect your country’s image from being irredeemably tarnished, through association with a genocidal regime, for the purpose of economic gains,” the group wrote. “[U]nless China does its part to ensure that the government of Sudan accepts the best and most reasonable path to peace, history will judge your government as having bankrolled a genocide.” 48

The day after the letter was sent, China appointed a special envoy for Darfur and since then has made several moves to mitigate the crisis. 49 In addition to sending 315 engineers to join the UNAMID peacekeeping force to build roads, bridges and wells, China last May donated more than $5 million in humanitarian aid and in February handed over a $2.8 million package of financial and development aid. 50 According to China’s official news agency, China has given a total of $11 million in humanitarian aid to Darfur, and Chinese companies have spent about $50 million on development projects in the region, including 53 miles of water pipelines. 51

“We have done as much as we can,” said China’s assistant foreign minister Zhai Jun. “China remains committed to resolving the Darfur issue and has made unremitting efforts.” 52

But many say China could do much more, and that its millions of dollars in arms sales to Sudan feed the continuing violence. “They’ve taken some action, but not nearly enough,” says Meixner of the Save Darfur Coalition. “They sent engineers to UNAMID, but they’re kind of milking that. I look at that as China’s having kept these engineers in their back pocket until right before the Olympics.”

More meaningful, he says, would be an immediate halt or reduction in China’s arms sales to Sudan. According to Amnesty International, China sold Sudan $24 million worth of arms and ammunition in 2005, plus $59 million worth of parts and aircraft equipment. 53

In March 2005, the U.N. banned the sale of weapons to any combatants for use in Darfur. 54 But earlier this year the BBC reported that China had been providing trucks being used by the Sudanese military in Darfur. China admitted that 212 trucks were exported to Sudan in 2005 but said all were for civilian use and were only later equipped with guns in a defensive move by the government to stave off rebel attacks. 55

“The Western media and in particular the activities of some nongovernmental organizations have caused China’s role to be distorted,” said China’s Special Envoy to Darfur, Liu Guijin. 56

China, which repeatedly has opposed or abstained from U.N. votes to sanction or condemn Sudan’s actions in Darfur, says diplomacy and humanitarian support are the best path to peace. It has expressed “great concern” over the ICC prosecutor’s request for an arrest warrant against Bashir and is consider-
BACKGROUND

Ostrich Feathers, Ivory and Slaves

The name Darfur comes from the Arabic word “dar,” meaning home, and the name of the principal ethnic group of the region, the non-Arab Fur. For centuries, however, Darfur has been home to a wide range of people — both Arab and non-Arab. Darfur is at the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East, and Islamic traders as well as pilgrims traveling to Mecca have long traversed the province — leaving their cultural and religious imprint. 60 Today, around 90 percent of all Darfuris are Muslim. 61 After generations of intermarriage between Arabs and non-Arabs, it is nearly impossible to discern the ethnic ancestry of the people of Darfur, other than through cultural traditions: “Arabs” tend to be nomadic and “non-Arabs” tend to be farmers. Blurring the lines even further, it is not uncommon for people to call themselves Arab one day and non-Arab another. 62

Around 1650, a Fur sultanate was established, and the region became a prosperous trading center for such goods as ostrich feathers, ivory and black slaves. 63 Over the next two centuries, the sultanate spread across 80 percent of the area known today as Darfur, encompassing 40 to 90 different ethnic groups or tribes. 64 The sultanate was considered one of the region’s most powerful kingdoms, wholly separate in culture and heritage from the rest of modern-day Sudan.

In 1899, Egypt and Britain — which had occupied Egypt since 1882 — assumed joint authority over Sudan with the British taking the South and Egyptians taking the North. Even before Sudan came under joint control, Egyptian rulers had for decades occupied northern Sudan, amassing great wealth, largely from kidnapping black Africans from the South and selling them into slavery. Southern resentment against the North for the brutal slave trade remains today. 65

Sudan’s division between Britain and Egypt set the stage for the clashing cultures and religions that would later lead to the Sudanese civil war that raged for more than 20 years. The Egyptian North — with a higher concentration of Arabic population — was predominantly Islamic, while those in the South were animists or Christians. British missionaries were dispatched to spread the Christian faith in the South.

In 1916, Darfur was annexed by Sudan, merging two states with vastly different cultures and political structures. 66 “There was the problem of differential integration: Darfur is not the Sudan,” says Gerard Prunier, author of the book Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide. “Darfur was the easternmost sultanate in Africa, not part of the Nile Valley” as is the rest of Sudan.

And the colonial authorities did nothing to help integrate Darfur into their new state, largely ignoring the former sultanate and giving various tribes semi-autonomous rule over their individual lands. But tribal leaders were often illiterate and corrupt and did little to help Darfur. By 1935, only four government primary schools existed in all of Darfur. 67 Health care and economic development also were nonexistent under the colonial rulers, who actually boasted of keeping Darfur poor and powerless.

“We have been able to limit education to the sons of chiefs and native administration personnel,” wrote Philip Ingleson, governor of Darfur from 1935 to 1944, “and we can confidently look forward to keeping the ruling classes at the top of the educational tree for many years to come.” 68

Independence and Instability

After World War II, Britain began withdrawing from Sudan and reconnecting the North and South. The British handed power over to northern Arab elites in Khartoum, which became the center of government. 69 Once again, Darfur was ignored.

“Darfur had no say whatsoever over the structure or features of an independent Sudan,” Prunier says. In fact, much of the conflict in Darfur has its roots in the post-independence history of eastern Sudan, which involved a long-running civil war between the
1899-1956
Colonization sows seeds of poverty and division.

1899
Britain takes control of mostly Christian southern Sudan; Egypt takes the predominantly Muslim north.

1916
Sudan annexes Darfur.

1956
Britain and Egypt turn control of Sudan over to northern Arab elites.

1957-Early ’70s
Multiple coups switch control of Sudan between military and civilian governments; Darfur remains neglected as civil war rages in the east.

1964
Civilians overthrow Sudan’s military government.

1965
Chadian fighters establish bases in Darfur after civil war breaks out in neighboring Chad.

1969

1972
Sudan’s civil war ends when peace agreement is signed in Addis Ababa.

1976
Libyan-backed Darfuri rebels attack Khartoum, are defeated. Government tracks down and kills alleged sympathizers in Darfur.

1983
Nimeiri imposes sharia law and nullifies peace agreement, triggering new civil war in eastern Sudan.

1984
Drought devastates Darfur; Arabs and non-Arabs fight over land, water.

1985
Civilian uprising overthrows Nimeiri.

1989-1999
Civil war intensifies; U.S.-Sudanese tensions increase.

1989
Gen. Omar Hassan al-Bashir seizes power, embraces militant Islam and hosts al Qaeda’s Osama bin Laden.

1993
U.S. lists Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism.

1996
Sudan expels bin Laden under U.S. pressure.

1997
China agrees to build oil refinery in Khartoum, becomes Sudan’s leading weapons supplier.

1998
U.S. bombs Khartoum pharmaceutical factory, claiming it produces chemical weapons, which is never proven.

2000-2005
War breaks out in Darfur. U.S. says genocide is occurring in Darfur. Civil war in eastern Sudan ends.

2001
President George W. Bush appoints former Sen. John C. Danforth, R-Mo., as special envoy to Sudan to try to settle the civil war.

2003
Darfur rebels attack North Darfur’s capital, marking start of war in Darfur. A cease-fire is reached in the civil war between northern and southern Sudan.

2004
U.S. House of Representatives labels the fighting in Darfur as “genocide.” ... U.N. imposes arms embargo on Darfur and endorses deployment of African Union (AU) peacekeepers.

2005
Sudan’s 20-year civil war in the east ends with signing of peace accord.

2006-Present
Darfuri peace deal dissolves; rebel groups splinter; peacekeepers fail to control chaos.

2006
Darfur Peace Agreement is signed by government and one rebel group.

2007

2008
During run-up to Beijing Olympics, human-rights activists accuse China of abetting genocide in Darfur. ... International Criminal Court considers indicting Bashir for genocide and war crimes.
Arab- and Muslim-dominated North and the oil-rich, Christian and animist South. Darfur also became a political pawn in strategic maneuverings by Sudan, Chad and Libya, with each country arming rebel groups in the region to further their parochial interests.

Within months of Sudan’s independence in January 1956, the consolidation of power in the Arab North sparked rebellion in the South. Over the next 10 years, a series of political coups alternated the government in Khartoum between military and civilian power, as civil war continued between the North and the South. Yet successive administrations continued to ignore growing poverty and dissent in Darfur. In 1972 the military government of Gen. Jaafar Nimeiri signed a peace agreement in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, providing substantial power- and wealth-sharing between the North and South but offering nothing to the Darfuris.

However, the North-South tensions remained, and growing conflict in neighboring Chad created even more instability in Sudan. Arab rebels from Chad who opposed their country’s Christian government used Darfur as a home base for their own civil war. Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi — hoping to create a powerful Arab belt stretching into central Africa — supported the Chadian rebels and proposed a unified Arab state between Libya and Sudan, but Nimeiri rejected the offer. Angered by Nimeiri’s rejection and Sudan’s agreement to end the civil war with the Christians in South Sudan, Qaddafi labeled Nimeiri a traitor to the Arab cause and began arming militant Arab organizations in Darfur who opposed the governments of both Chad and Sudan.

In 1976, Libyan-backed rebels attacked Nimeiri’s government in Khartoum but were defeated in three days. The Sudanese military then hunted down and killed Darfuri civilians accused of sympathizing with the insurgents.70

Suddenly, after years of neglect, the thin, white-haired man living in a U.N. refugee camp in Chad was soft-spoken but fervent as he thanked Americans “and the free world” for the food, medicine and other donations sent to the victims of the conflict in Darfur.

But, he asked a visiting filmmaker intently, tears trickling down his face, “Where are the Arab people? I am Muslim. We receive nothing from Islamic people.”1

While nations around the world have criticized the Arab-dominated Sudanese government for not halting the rapes and murders of Muslims in the beleaguered region, other Arab governments have been largely silent about the atrocities being committed against Muslims by other Muslims.

“The Islamic world’s response to the daily killings and suffering of millions of Muslims in Darfur has been largely silent — from both civil society as well as the institutions and majority of Islamic governments,” said the newly formed Arab Coalition for Darfur, representing human-rights groups from 12 Muslim countries. “The Islamic world must decide to end its wall of silence, before it is too late.” 2 The coalition made its statement in June before the Organization of the Islamic Conference, an intergovernmental organization of 57 Muslim nations.

Moreover, among the world’s Arab governments — many of them awash in petrodollars — only the United Arab Emirates (UAE) earmarked any money ($100,000) specifically for aid to Darfur this year.* The rest of the international community donated more than $100 million, according to ReliefWeb, run by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, including $28 million from the European Commission and $12 million from the United States.3

Moreover, only 587 of the 12,000 U.N. peacekeepers in Darfur have come from nations belonging to the 22-member Arab League. Of those, 508 were from Egypt, and the rest came from Jordan, Mauritania, Yemen and Libya.4

Amjad Atallah, senior director for international policy and advocacy with the Save Darfur Coalition, charges that the Arab League is more worried about protecting Arab leaders than about representing ordinary Arabs. “They seem to have a more compelling need to come to the defense of Arab states than for the people suffering under the regimes,” says Atallah.

For its part, the Arab League did help convince Sudan to allow peacekeepers from the joint U.N.-AU peacekeeping mission into Darfur. And in 2004, an Arab League Commission of Inquiry into Darfur publicly condemned military attacks against civilians as “massive violations of human rights.” But after Sudan complained, the statement was removed from the Arab League Web site.5

And in July, when the International Criminal Court prosecutor sought to indict Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir for genocide and war crimes, the Arab League expressed “solidarity with the Republic of Sudan in confronting schemes that undermine its sovereignty, unity and stability.” The group said the charges would undermine ongoing negotiations to stop the violence in Darfur, and that Sudan’s legal system was the appropriate place to investigate abuses in Darfur.6

* The UAE and Saudi Arabia, however, did contribute a total of $44 million to Sudan as a whole — about 3 percent of the $1.3 billion contributed to Sudan by the international community.
Darfur was getting the attention of Sudan’s political leaders — but not the kind it had wanted. The ongoing violence also catapulted Darfur’s various local tribes into the broader polarized conflict between “Arabs” and “non-Arabs,” depending on which regime they supported. 71

Making matters worse, a drought and famine in the early 1980s plunged Darfur deeper into poverty and desperation. For the next two decades, the nomadic “Arabs” and the farming “non-Arabs” increasingly fought over disappearing land and water resources. (See sidebar, p. 250.) The Arab-led government in Khartoum frequently intervened, providing arms to its nomadic Arab political supporters in Darfur, who in turn killed their farming neighbors. 72

Another Civil War

After the failed coup by Libyan-backed Arab rebels in 1976, Nimeiri tried to appease radical Islamic groups who felt he was disloyal to the dream of a united Arab front. He named leading Islamist opposition leaders to important government posts, including extremist Hassan al-Turabi as attorney general. 73

The discovery of oil in Southern Sudan in the late 1970s added to the pressure from the increasingly Islamic government to back away from the Addis Ababa peace agreement, because the Arab authorities in the North did not want to share the profits with the Christian South, as the peace deal stipulated. In 1983, Nimeiri ordered the 11-year-old agreement null and void, began imposing strict Islamic law, or sharia, across the country and transformed Sudan into an Islamic state. 74 Southern opposition groups formed the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and civil war broke out again.

In 1985 civilians overthrew Nimeiri, and hopes began to emerge for a new peace settlement. But in yet another
Coup in 1989, Bashir seized power with the help of the National Islamic Front (NIF) and its leader, former Attorney General Turabi. 75

Then-Gen. Bashir and the NIF embraced militant Islam and welcomed foreign jihadists, including Osama bin Laden. In 1993, the United States added Sudan to its list of state sponsors of terrorism, and President Bill Clinton imposed economic sanctions against Sudan in 1996 and 1997. In 1998, after U.S. embassies were bombed in Kenya and Tanzania, the United States bombed a Khartoum pharmaceutical factory claiming it was producing chemical weapons. The allegation was never proven. 76

Darfur Erupts

Darfur, meanwhile, was suffering from economic neglect, and numerous non-Arab tribes faced repression from government-supported militias. In 2000, the non-Arabs began to fight back, especially after the so-called Black Book circulated across the region describing how a small group of ethnic northern tribes had dominated Sudan since independence, at the expense of the rest of the country — especially Darfur.

“When we were writing the book, we were not thinking of rebellion. We wanted to achieve our aims by democratic and peaceful means,” said Idris Mahmoud Logma, one of authors and a member of the rebel Justice and Equality Movement. “Later, we realized the regime would only listen to guns.” 80

But international attention remained focused on peace prospects between the North and South, overshadowing the book’s impact. The first peace talks began in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 2000. At about the same time, Bashir pushed his former ally, the radical Islamist Turabi, out of power — a move away from religious extremism in the view of the international community. 81

In 2001, President Bush dispatched former Sen. John C. Danforth, R-Mo., as a special envoy to Sudan to help bring the North and South toward a peace agreement. 82 Just days after the appointment, terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, prompting Sudan to cooperate with the United States to avoid retaliatory strikes. The two countries soon began sharing intelligence on terrorists, including information about al Qaeda, bin Laden’s terrorist organization. 83

For the next 18 months, as peace negotiators debated splitting wealth and power between the North and South, they never considered sharing any of the pie with Darfur. Moreover, an international community focused on ending the civil war ignored the increasing repression in Darfur and the rebel groups preparing to fight.

In April 2003, just months before a North-South ceasefire was signed in Naivasha, Kenya, Darfuri rebels attacked the airport in El-Fashir, the capital of North Darfur, killing 30 government soldiers and blowing up aircraft. Rebels killed more than 1,000 Sudanese soldiers in the following months. 84

“The Darfuris saw they had no shot at being part of the process,” says Prendergast of the ENOUGH Project. “Leaving these guys out helped reinforce their desire to go to war. Darfur was completely ignored during the

Human-rights advocates in London call on the international community to stop the violence in Darfur. The conflict erupted in 2003, when ethnic Africans in western Sudan took up arms against the central government in Khartoum, accusing it of marginalizing them and monopolizing resources.
first term of the Bush administration, allowing Khartoum to conclude it could do whatever it wanted to in Darfur.”

Indeed, Khartoum counterattacked, enlisting the brute force of the desperately poor Arab janjaweed militias the government had armed years earlier to settle internal land disputes. Over the next two years, up to 400,000 people died in the conflict by some estimates, and nearly 2.4 million people were displaced. Civilian populations primarily from the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit ethnic groups — the same ethnicities as most of the rebel SLA/M and JEM groups — were the main targets.

Through most of the early fighting, global attention remained focused on negotiations to stop the North-South civil war, which officially ended in January 2005 when the government and the SPLA signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

But by then Darfur had already spun out of control. The U.N. human rights coordinator for Sudan the previous April had described the situation in Darfur as “the world’s greatest humanitarian crisis,” adding “the only difference between Rwanda and Darfur is the numbers involved.” Human rights and religious groups had launched a media and lobbying campaign demanding that the international community act. In July 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives called the violence in Darfur “genocide.”

A few days later, the U.N. passed its first resolution on Darfur, imposing an arms embargo on militias in the region and threatening sanctions against the government if it did not end the janjaweed violence. It also endorsed the deployment of African Union peacekeeping troops. The resolution, the first of a dozen the U.N. would pass regarding Darfur over the next four years, was approved by the Security Council with 13 votes and two abstentions — from China and Pakistan.

“What they’ve done is produce a lot of pieces of paper,” says Brewer, of Human Rights Watch. “But they haven’t been reinforced. Khartoum has played a very clever game. They stop aggression just long enough for the international community to look away, and then they start all over again.”

Over the past four years rebel groups and Sudanese officials have agreed to a variety of ceasefires and settlements, which one or all sides eventually broke. The most recent — the Darfur Peace Agreement — was reached in May 2006, but only the government and one faction of the SLA/M signed the deal; JEM and another SLA/M faction refused to participate. The SLA/M soon splintered into more than a dozen smaller groups, and fighting grew even worse.

The African Union peacekeepers — under constant attack from rebels and bandits — proved ineffective. So in 2006, the U.N. voted to send international troops to bolster the AU mission. Bashir initially blocked the proposal as a “violation of Sudan’s sovereignty and a submission by Sudan to outside custodianship.”

But after extended negotiations with China, the AU and the U.N., Bashir finally agreed. In July 2007, the Security Council unanimously voted to send up to 26,000 military and police peacekeepers as part of the joint U.N.-AU force. U.N. Secretary-General Ban hailed the unanimous vote as “historic and unprecedented” and said the mission would “make a clear and positive difference.”

But just three months before the peacekeepers began arriving in January 2008, hundreds of rebels in 30 armed trucks attacked a peacekeeping base in the Darfur town of Haskanita, killing at least 10 soldiers, kidnapping dozens more and seizing supplies that included heavy weapons.

“It’s indicative of the complete insecurity,” said Alun McDonald, a spokesman for the Oxfam aid organization in Sudan. “These groups are attacking anybody and everybody with total impunity.”

The summer’s Olympic Games in Beijing thrust Darfur back into international headlines. Movie stars, activists and athletes have criticized China’s continued cozy relationship with the Bashir government and called on the world to stop the violence. Olympic torch-carrying ceremonies in cities around the world were interrupted by protesters complaining about China’s support for Sudan and its recent crackdown on dissenters in Tibet.

But even bigger news in the weeks leading up to the Games was the ICC prosecutor’s effort to charge Bashir with genocide and war crimes. While, the ICC is not expected to decide until later this year whether to indict and arrest Bashir, the decision could be delayed even further if the Security Council agrees with the AU and others that the indictment should be deferred. The council can defer for 12 months — and indefinitely renew the deferral — any ICC investigation or prosecution.

The ICC’s move was not its first against Sudanese officials. On March 31, 2005, the United Nations passed a resolution asking the ICC prosecutor to investigate allegations of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur. After a 20-month investigation, the prosecutor presented his evidence to the court in February 2007 and the court agreed two months later to issue arrest warrants for Sudan’s former Interior
Minister Ahmad Harun and janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb. Bashir has refused to hand over either man, and Harun has since been named head the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and oversees the government’s activities to aid the victims of the atrocities.

This July, just days after the court’s announcement about Bashir, the Sudanese president traveled to Darfur and met with 600 refugees from various tribes, including those he is accused of inflicting war crimes against. He promised to send them farming equipment and to free more than 80 rebels imprisoned last May after an attack on Khartoum’s twin city Omdurman. Bashir called the prisoners “boys” and said they would be freed and pardoned — although he did not say when.

Sudan also appointed its own prosecutor to investigate war crimes in Darfur and said it was sending legal teams to the region to monitor the situation. Sudan, which is not a signatory of the treaty that created the ICC, said its legal system was adequate to look into alleged abuses in Darfur and that it would pass legislation making genocide a punishable crime in Sudan.

Despite Secretary-General Ban’s confidence in the new UNAMID peacekeeping force, deadly assaults against the mission have occurred almost non-stop. The first UNAMID peacekeeper — a civilian police inspector from Uganda — was killed in May, just four months after the new force began arriving.

On July 9, seven peacekeepers were killed and dozens more injured when their convoy was ambushed by hundreds of horsemen and 40 trucks mounted with machine guns and antiaircraft weapons. The two-hour firefight marked the first time UNAMID had to use force to protect itself, and some observers described it as being near the point of “meltdown.”

“The effort being achieved so far is not enough,” said, Fadallah Ahmed Abdallah, a Sudanese city official in Darfur working with the peacekeepers. “Sometimes we feel UNAMID itself needs some protection, because UNAMID is not at full strength.”

More than a year after the UNAMID force was authorized, only a third of the 26,000 troops are on the ground, and not a single military transport or tactical helicopter among the 28 requested has been deployed to patrol the area — which is the size of France.

On July 31, the day UNAMID’s mandate was to expire, the Security Council extended it for a year. Meanwhile, 36 human rights groups — along with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu and former President Carter — issued a report revealing that countries were not donating helicopters that are desperately needed by UNAMID to restore order.

The report said a handful of NATO countries and others that typically contribute aircraft to peacekeeping missions — specifically India, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Italy, Romania and...
Spain — could easily provide up to 70 helicopters for the mission. (See graphic, p. 247.)

“Many of these helicopters are gathering dust in hangars or flying in air shows when they could be saving lives in Darfur,” said the report, entitled “Grounded: the International Community’s Betrayal of UNAMID.”

“It’s really shameful,” says Brewer of Human Rights Watch. “But it’s not just helicopters. They need water, trucks, everything. I don’t know whether it’s because countries don’t have faith in UNAMID, or they don’t want to put their troops at risk or if it’s fear of being involved in something that will fail.”

Brewer also blames the Sudanese government for delaying delivery of peacekeepers’ equipment and refusing to accept troops from Western countries. Aside from peacekeepers, aid workers also are being targeted by rebel factions and bandits searching for food and supplies. Eight aid workers were killed in the first five months of 2008, and four times as many aid vehicles were hijacked during the first quarter of this year compared to the same period last year. Armed gangs also attacked 35 humanitarian compounds during the first quarter — more than double the number during the same period last year.

“We are now in the worst situation ever” — even worse than when the government-rebel conflict was at its peak, says Hafiz Mohamed, Sudan program coordinator with Justice Africa, a London-based research and human rights organization. “At least in 2004 we only had two rebel movements. Now we have more than 12 SLA factions and more than four JEM factions. Security-wise, Darfur is worse than in 2004.”

In May, SLA Unity rebels arrested a dozen Sudanese government employees in Darfur gathering census information for next year’s national elections. The rebels, who believe the census will be inaccurate — depriving Darfur of political representation — vowed to try the census takers in military courts as “enemies,” which carries the death penalty.

Rebel attacks also are increasing outside Darfur. Last year JEM — which wants to overthrow the Sudanese government — attacked government positions and kidnapped two foreign workers at a Chinese-run oil
field in neighboring Kordofan province. “This is a message to China and Chinese oil companies to stop helping the government with their war in Darfur,” said JEM commander Abdel Aziz el-Nur Ashr. JEM has said oil revenues are being used to continue the fighting in Darfur.

JEM rebels made their most audacious push against the government in May, when they reached suburban Khartoum before being repelled by Sudanese forces. Sudan immediately cut off diplomatic ties with Chad, which it accused of sponsoring the attack. Chadian officials denied any involvement but accused Sudan of launching a similar attack against their capital three months earlier.

“The entire region is affected by what is happening in Darfur,” says Mohamed of Justice Africa. “It’s a proxy war. Unless we resolve the relationship between Chad and Sudan, we will not have an agreement for peace in Darfur.”

Meanwhile, relations between North and South Sudan are worsening. Both sides remain deadlocked over some of the most contentious issues of the 2005 peace treaty, including how to draw the North-South border and how to split oil profits. The South has a large portion of the country’s oil reserves while the North has most of the infrastructure. The South has repeatedly accused the North of not sharing oil revenue fairly, while the North has charged the South with mishandling their portion of the funds.

Under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), a referendum is scheduled for 2011 on whether the South will secede from the North. Some wonder if tensions between the two sides will hold until then.

“There are real prospects of another North-South war,” says Sudan expert Moszynski. “South Sudan is spending 40 percent of their budget on military. They’re preparing for the next war with the North. There are a lot of problems in Sudan. In between all of that, they’re not going to sort out Darfur.”

While the U.N. has been slow to send in troops and materiel, individual governments and private organizations have provided billions of dollars’ worth of food, water, housing, medicine and other humanitarian aid to Darfur and the nearby refugee camps in Chad.

In 2004, when the war between rebels and government forces was at its peak, only 230 relief workers were stationed in the region. Today, there are more than 17,000 national and international aid workers from some 80 NGOs, 14 U.N. agencies and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

“The humanitarian response has been incredible,” providing “a staggering amount of money, a staggering number of people,” says Brewer. However, she says she sometimes wonders if people are substituting aid for serious “political engagement to find a solution.”

And most agree that only political engagement — coming from a unified global community — can solve the ongoing conflict.

“We need more coordinated diplomacy. We can’t have different messages coming from France, China, the U.N., the U.S. and African nations,” says Meixner of the Save Darfur Coalition. “Bashir can thwart one or two, but if there’s a united front, including China and African nations, it’s not so easy.”

Specifically, he says, multilateral sanctions should be adopted. “Sudan is the test case for multilateralism,” he says.

But others say “regime change” is the only viable solution. “I don’t think we’ll find a political solution for the Darfur crisis if the current government stays in power,” says Mohamed of Justice Africa. “Since 1997 we’ve had six agreements, the CPA, the DPA. This regime will never honor any agreement . . . . If [the international

Continued on p. 264
Would military intervention solve the crisis in Darfur?

**Hafiz Mohamed**

**SUDAN PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

**JUSTICE AFRICA**

**Written for CQ Global Researcher, August 2008**

The current crisis in Darfur has claimed more than 200,000 lives and displaced millions — due primarily to the Sudanese government's counterinsurgency policy, which uses the janjaweed as proxy fighters and bombs villages with government aircraft.

Despite more than 16 U.N. Security Council resolutions and authorization of a joint U.N.-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID), the mass killing and displacement of civilians continues. The parties to the conflict have signed many cease-fire agreements since 2004, but all of them have been violated, and even the mechanisms for monitoring the cease-fires have failed. Early last month, peacekeepers were attacked in Darfur, primarily because they were outmanned and outgunned. No country has provided them even with helicopters.

Hardliners within Sudan's National Congress Party still believe in a military solution to the crisis and use any means to defeat the Darfuri armed movements. All their rhetoric about being committed to a peaceful solution is just for public opinion and not a genuine endeavor to achieve a peaceful settlement to the conflict. They will only accept peace if they are pressured to do so or feel the war is unwinnable.

The regime is in its weakest position since taking power in 1989 and will only cave when it feels threatened. For example, after the International Criminal Court prosecutor initiated proceedings recently to indict the Sudanese president, the government began mobilizing the public to support the president and seek a peaceful resolution.

There is strong evidence that military intervention is needed to stop the killing of civilians and force the Sudanese government to seriously seek a peaceful solution for the crisis. This could start by imposing a no-fly zone on Darfur, which would prevent the government from using its air force to bomb villages and give air support to the janjaweed's attacks; the normal sequences for the attacks on the villages is to start an attack from the air by using the government bombers or helicopter machine guns, followed by attacks by militia riding horses or camels.

A no-fly zone will stop this, and many lives will be saved. The no-fly zone can start by using the European forces based in neighbouring Chad. The UNAMID forces then can be used to monitor movement on the ground and intervene when necessary to stop the ground attacks on villages.

**Imani Countess**

**SENIOR DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**TRANSAFRICA FORUM**

**Written for CQ Global Researcher, August 2008**

For the sake of the 2 million displaced peoples and 200,000 killed, the international community should mount a military force that would protect and restore the dignity and livelihoods to those raped, tortured and maimed by the Sudanese government. But whatever peace comes to Sudan will be the result of those who brought the issue to the world stage: Darfurians supported by billions around the globe who are standing in the breach created by the failures and inaction of the nations of the world.

Truth be told, not one major military or economic power is willing to expend the political capital required to solve the crisis in Darfur.

For the United States, Darfur has become “collateral damage” in the global war on terror. The administration states that genocide is occurring, yet it continues to share intelligence with key Sudanese officials implicated in the tragedy in Darfur — sacrificing thousands of Darfuri lives in exchange for intelligence and extraditions of suspected terrorists.

Other Western nations provide plenty of rhetoric and limited sanctions. But they have failed miserably where it counts: providing adequate support for the joint African Union-U.N. peacekeeping force in Darfur. According to AfricaFocus, UNAMID is “understaffed, underequipped, underfunded and vulnerable to attacks.” The U.N. authorized up to 19,555 military personnel for the mission, plus 6,432 police and more than 5,000 civilians. But so far fewer than 8,000 troops and 2,000 police have been deployed, along with just over 1,000 civilians. Critical equipment is lacking, and more than half of the $1.3 billion budget was unpaid as of the end of April.

For the international community as a whole — particularly China and India — continued access to Sudan’s oil is the major interest.

If military intervention is not the answer, then what will work? Continued pressure from below. In the United States, the Bush administration was compelled to name the crisis “genocide” because of pressure from faith-based, human-rights and social-justice groups. Across the country, divestment activity — modeled after the anti-apartheid campaigns of the 1970s and ’80s — has forced U.S. monies out of Sudan. The transnational human-rights movement will continue to pressure governments, businesses and multilateral institutions to move beyond rhetoric to effective human-centered engagement.
community] managed to overthrow the
regime, there is the possibility of a
permanent solution.”

But Alex de Waal, a program di-
rector at the Social Science Research
Council in New York and author of
Darfur: A Short History of a Long War,
says global and Arab anger sparked
by the Iraq War leaves “zero chance”
that the international community will
launch any military action against an-
other Muslim country.

However, Obama foreign affairs ad-
viser Rice — a former Clinton-era State
Department official — said the U.N.
should not let the experience in Iraq
deter military action. “Some will reject
any future U.S. military action, especially
against an Islamic regime, even if pure-
ly to halt genocide against Muslim civil-
ians,” Rice told a Senate committee in
April 2007. “Sudan has also threatened
that al Qaeda will attack non-African
forces in Darfur — a possibility, since
Sudan long hosted bin Laden and his
businesses. Yet, to allow another state
to deter the U.S. by threatening terror-
ism would set a terrible precedent. It
would also be cowardly and, in the face
of genocide, immoral.”

Meanwhile, the U.N. has unsuc-
sessfully tried to resurrect peace talks
between the Bashir government and
rebel groups. Talks in Libya were called
off last October after rebel factions re-
fused to participate.

“The last six months have seen some
very negative developments,” former
U.N. Special Envoy Eliasson said upon
his resignation in June. If the interna-
tional community’s energy is not mobi-
lized to halt the fighting, he continued,
“we risk a major humanitarian disaster
again. The margins of survival are so
slim for the people of Darfur.” The
U.N. could start showing its commit-
ment, he said, by stationing his re-
placement full time in Sudan. Eliasson
had been headquartered in Stockholm.

The new U.N. special envoy, Burki-
no Faso’s foreign minister Djibril Bas-
sole, is hopeful. “This will be a diffi-
cult mission,” he said after his first visit
to Sudan in July. “But it’s not mission
impossible.”

OUTLOOK

Bleak Future

As unstable and violent as the past
four years have been for Darfur,
the next three could be even more
tumultuous — for the entire country.

Under Comprehensive Peace Agree-
ment provisions, elections must be held
next year — the first in 23 years. In
preparation Sudan conducted its first cen-
sus since 1993 earlier this year, but many
doubt that either the census results — or
the vote count — will be accurate.

Displaced Darfuris in refugee camps
don’t trust the government to take an
accurate headcount. Indeed, the huge
numbers of displaced persons seem to
make both an accurate census and de-
ocratic elections nearly impossible.

“It’s hard to see how elections can
take place in a fair and free way in Dar-
fur,” says Lusk of Africa Confidential.
“Half the people are dead, and the other
half are in camps.”

“The [displaced] people are con-
cerned that if they register to vote
while living in the camps, . . . they
will lose their land,” says Brewer. “There
is great lack of clarity in land law.”

Some wonder if the Bashir gov-
ernment will back out of the elections
altogether, but Sudanese officials in-
sist the polling will be held. “Rebels
said the census should not take place,
but it did take place,” says Mubarak
of the Sudanese Embassy in London.

“The elections will go ahead.”

But elections will at best do little to
help the people of Darfur and at worst
prompt further violence from those who
oppose the results, say some observers.

“The elections will have no impact on
Darfur — if they happen,” says former
directs Africa programs at the Woodrow
Wilson Center. “At the end of the day,
elections have no impact . . . if you
haven’t built a sense of cohesion or a
way of moving forward.”

After the elections, the Sudanese
people must brace themselves for an-
other potential upheaval — caused by
a planned 2011 referendum on Su-
danese unity. While the South appears
ready to vote for secession, many say
Khartoum will never let that happen.

Others say secession could spell
dark times for Darfur. “If the South
secedes, [Bashir’s National Congress
Party] will have greater power in the
North, and that is worse for Darfur,”
says Brewer. “If they vote for power
sharing, it could be good for Darfur.”

Meanwhile, all eyes are waiting to
see whether the ICC will give in to
pressure to defer action on Bashir’s
indictment and how Bashir and the
rebel groups will respond to either an
indictment or a delay.

The November U.S. presidential elec-
tion could also bring about some changes.
Both McCain and Obama have said they
will pursue peace and security for Dar-
fur with “unstinting resolve.” And Obama’s
running mate, Foreign Relations Com-
mittee Chairman Biden, was unequivoc-
ally last year when he advocated U.S.
military intervention. “I would use Amer-
ican force now,” Biden said during hear-
ings before his panel in April 2007. “It’s
time to put force on the table and use
it.” Biden, who had also pushed for
NATO intervention to halt anti-Muslim
genocide in Bosnia in the 1990s, said
2,500 U.S. troops could “radically change”
the situation on the ground in Darfur.

“Let’s stop the bleeding. I think it’s a
moral imperative.”

Given the uncertainties of the Su-
danese elections, the growing North-
South acrimony, the continued fighting
between Chad and Sudan and the up-
coming ICC decision, most experts say
it is nearly impossible to predict what will happen in Darfur in the future.

“Even five years is too far to predict what will happen,” says author Prunier.

“You have to take it in steps. First look at what happens in 2009, then what happens leading up to the referendum, then what happens after that.”

Most agree, however, that whatever future lies ahead for Darfur, it will likely be bleak.

“Sudanese politics is like the British weather: unpredictable from day to day but with a drearily consistent medium-term outlook,” de Waal of the Social Science Research Council wrote recently.

“There are few happy endings in Sudan. It’s a country of constant turbulence, in which I have come to expect only slow and modest improvement. Sometimes I dream of being wrong.”

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Notes


2 Ibid., p. 19.

3 Ibid., p. 2.


6 Ibid.


10 El Deeb, op. cit.

11 “Darfur faces potential food crisis,” op. cit.


14 Quoted from ‘The Devil Came on Horseback’ documentary, Break Thru Films, 2007.


17 Quoted in Hussein Solomon, “ICC pressure shows some result: An arrest warrant for Sudan’s President Al-Bashir has resulted in a flurry of activity for change in Darfur,” The Star (South Africa), Aug. 21, 2008, p. 14.

18 “Court Seeks Arrest of Sudan’s Beshir for ‘genocide,’” Agence France-Presse, July 14, 2008.


Political Handbook of the World

Science Monitor

‘Genocide Olympics’ Label,”


Ibid.


Ibid.


6 Saiget, op. cit.


8 Harman, op. cit.


11 Crisis Shaped by Darfur’s Tumultuous Past,” op. cit.

12 Daly, op. cit., p. 19.

13 Prunier, op. cit., p. 10. Also see Flint and de Waal, op. cit., p. 8.

14 Prunier, op. cit, p. 16.

15 Ibid., pp. 18-19.

16 Ibid., p. 30.

17 Ibid.


19 Prunier, op. cit, pp. 45-46.

20 Ibid.

21 Cheadle and Prendergast, op. cit., p. 73.

22 Ibid., p. 55.

23 Ibid., p. 56.

24 Ibid., p. 57.

25 Polgreen, op. cit.

26 “Sudan: Nearly 2 million dead as a result of the world’s longest running civil war,” The U.S. Committee for Refugees, April 2001.


29 “Crisis Shaped by Darfur’s Tumultuous Past,” op. cit.

30 Prunier, op. cit., p. 88.


32 Polgreen, op. cit.

33 Prunier, op. cit., pp. 95-96.


CRISIS IN DARFUR

Karen Foerstel is a freelance writer who has worked for the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report and Daily Monitor, The New York Post and Roll Call, a Capitol Hill newspaper. She has published two books on women in Congress, Climbing the Hill: Gender Conflict in Congress and The Biographical Dictionary of Women in Congress. She has worked in Africa with ChildsLife International, a nonprofit that helps needy children around the world, and with Blue Ventures, a marine conservation organization that protects coral reefs in Madagascar.

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Books


An historian and long-time observer of Sudan traces the complex environmental, cultural and geopolitical factors that have contributed to today’s ongoing conflict. Includes a timeline of events in Darfur since 1650.


Two longtime observers of Sudan and Darfur explore the genesis of today’s bloodshed and describe the various actors in the conflict, including the region’s many ethnic tribes, the Janjaweed militia, Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi and the current Sudanese government.


A French historian who has authored several books on African genocide provides a comprehensive account of the complex environmental, social and political roots of the ongoing fighting in Darfur.

Articles


This brief narrative outlines the fighting in Darfur and various efforts to find peace over the past five years.


Climate change and shrinking water supplies have motivated much of the fighting between Darfur’s nomadic Arabs and ethnic African farmers.


A veteran foreign correspondent discusses the many factors fueling the fighting in Darfur and how international leaders now recommend a comprehensive solution.


The rebellion in Darfur has devolved into chaos and lawlessness that threatens civilians, aid workers and peacekeepers.


The former U.S. special envoy to Sudan says that while attention is focused on Darfur another bloody civil war could soon erupt between Sudan’s north and south.


The French historian discusses why the international community has been unable to solve the crisis in Darfur.

Reports and Studies


Through photographs, maps, first-hand accounts and statistics, the human-rights group summarizes the events that led to the conflict and describes Darfuris’ daily struggles.


The report analyzes the widely varying estimates on the number of deaths caused by the Darfur conflict and reviews the different methodologies used to track the casualties.


Using interviews and first-hand accounts, the human-rights group vividly describes the death and destruction in Darfur and recommends ways to end the fighting.


This frequently updated U.N. Web site provides maps and charts illustrating areas hit worst by the crisis, the number of attacks on humanitarian workers and the number of people affected by the fighting.


Using first-hand accounts from victims, the report describes how attacks against Darfuri villages in February 2008 violated international humanitarian law.
Arab League


A Darfur rebel group has criticized the Arab League for supporting Sudan in its dispute with the International Criminal Court (ICC) over charges of genocide filed against Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

“Muslim Groups Urge Arab League to Play Active Role in Solving Sudan’s Crisis,” Sudan Tribune (France), March 28, 2008.

A coalition of Muslim groups complains that the Darfur crisis, which has claimed the lives of at least 200,000 Muslims, has not captured the attention of the Muslim world.


The Sudanese Justice and Equality Movement has accused the Arab League of isolating itself from the Sudanese people and the situation in Darfur, where Arab militias have been attacking residents of the mostly black farming communities.

Chinese Involvement

“China Appeals for More Cooperation Between Sudan, UN on Darfur,” Suna (Sudan), Nov. 10, 2007.

China’s ambassador to Sudan says working together the two countries can help bring peace to Darfur.


China has helped the Sudanese government, United Nations and African Union establish a joint force to address the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.


China has appointed a special envoy to Darfur to help head off criticisms over its policy positions on the troubled region.


Nongovernmental organizations and other advocacy groups have linked the killings in Darfur to the Beijing Olympics.

Environment


A suspected lake under the Darfur region could help alleviate the civil war if drinking water could be pumped to the surface.


War has left land in Darfur increasingly uninhabitable and has helped intensify tensions amid a drought with no end in sight.


It is no coincidence that violence erupted in Darfur during a period of extended drought in the region.

Genocide


President Bush has called the crisis in Darfur genocide and has imposed economic sanctions against Sudan.


The African Union has asked the International Criminal Court to suspend its genocide charges against President Bashir until the problems in Darfur are sorted out.


Referring to the Darfur situation as “genocide” is flawed in legal terms and is unhelpful in resolving the crisis.


An ICC prosecutor did not charge a Sudanese interior minister and a janjaweed leader with genocide because their actions did not fit the definition under the 1948 Geneva Convention.
Voices From Abroad:

LOUISE ARBOUR
U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights

History will judge
“...The desperate plight of the people of Darfur has for too long been neglected or addressed with what the victims should rightly regard — and history will judge — as meek offerings, broken promises and disregard.”

Voice of America News, December 2006

LIU JIANCHAO
Foreign Ministry Spokesman, China

Constructive dialogue is necessary
“...On this issue, putting up banners and chanting slogans alone can not help resolve the humanitarian issue in Darfur. What is most important is to promote the peace process in Darfur with realistic, constructive and practical action. ... We also hope relevant people will objectively view China’s position on the Darfur issue, and do some concrete things for the people of Darfur in a down-to-earth manner.”

Xinhua news agency (China), February 2008

OMAR HASSAN AL-BASHIR
President, Sudan

ICC will not hold us back
“...Every time we take a step forward, make progress and signs of peace emerge, those people [International Criminal Court] try to mess it up, return us to square one and distract us from our work.”

The Associated Press, July 2008

PAUL RUSESABAGINA
Celebrated former hotel manager, Rwanda

Too much concern over sovereignty
“...When modern genocide has loomed, the United Nations has shown more concern for not offending the sovereignty of one of its member nations, even as monstrosities take place within its borders. Yet ‘national sovereignty’ is often a euphemism for the pride of dictators. Darfur is just such a case. The world cannot afford this kind of appeasement any longer.”

The Wall Street Journal, April 2006

DAVID MOZERSKY
Horn of Africa Project Director, International Crisis Group

Broader talks needed on Darfur
“The only way to make progress is to give enough time for ongoing rebel unification efforts to succeed and to broaden talks to involve the full range of actors in the conflict. They must seek to identify individuals to represent the interests of these groups at the peace talks, giving specific attention to the representation of women, civil society, the internally displaced and Arabs.”

allAfrica.com, December 2007

KOFI ANNAN
Then Secretary-General, United Nations

‘Never again’ rings hollow
“To judge by what is happening in Darfur, our performance has not improved much since the disasters of Bosnia and Rwanda. Sixty years after the liberation of the Nazi death camps and 30 years after the Cambodian killing fields, the promise of ‘never again’ is ringing hollow.”

Speech before Human Rights Watch in New York, December 2006

MUSTAFA UTHMAN ISMA’IL
Presidential adviser, Sudan

Death tolls in Darfur are exaggerated
“The United Nations reports indicate that some 200,000 people have been killed in Darfur. However, we, in Sudan, believe that these reports are question-able. They have been prepared by Western organizations that want no good for Darfur. Anyone who follows up on the Western media finds that the situation in Darfur has been clearly exaggerated, as if the developments in Darfur were more serious than what happens in Iraq. More than one million people have been killed in Iraq.”

Elaph (England), May 2008

JAMES SMITH
Chief Executive Officer, Aegis Trust

More than a civil war
“...Painting the crisis in Darfur as merely a civil war encourages further delays — which could cause the loss of thousands of lives. The motives of the perpetrators in Darfur go well beyond territorial conflict. As put by one Janjawaal: ‘We have a dream. We want to kill the Africans.’ ”

The Guardian (England), September 2006