

BOSTON GLOBE EDITORIAL

## Unprotected Darfur

September 7, 2007

THIS IS the fifth year of the Darfur genocide. The protracted failure of the international community to rescue the victims has made a mockery of the United Nations' 2005 resolution declaring a responsibility to protect civilians who are not protected, or who are being killed, by their governments. Given the UN's sad record of allowing Sudan's National Islamic Front regime to thwart efforts to halt the ethnic cleansing, murdering, and raping of villagers in Darfur, it is hard not to be skeptical about the outcome of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's visit this week to Sudan.

Ban went there to prepare the way for deployment of a "hybrid" force of 26,000 African Union and UN peacekeepers, as mandated in a Security Council resolution that was approved in July (after being watered down at China's insistence). During his visit, Ban justifiably stressed that "it is crucially important that a political negotiation process start now."

If there is no peace to keep, the UN and AU soldiers and police will be hard-pressed to carry out their mission: to protect more than 2 million uprooted refugees so that they can eventually return to their villages; to protect humanitarian workers along with the food and medical supplies they deliver to the at-risk population; and to defend themselves.

Ban and Security Council members must be prepared to resist fresh attempts by Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir to constrain or obstruct the work of the peacekeepers. The regime in Khartoum can be expected to sabotage their mission. And there is also a growing danger that the peacekeepers will be further deflected by Arab militias called Janjaweed, who have served as proxies for the central government, and also by rebel African factions. All these groups are now fighting among one another.

The task of the hybrid peacekeeping force is much more daunting today than it would have been if the UN had acted in 2003, when the raids on Darfur's African villagers began. So there must be no more hesitation, no more yielding to the Bashir's stalling tactics and broken promises. As the record of the past years has shown, the longer his regime is permitted to rebuff any serious UN effort to enforce a cessation of the killing, the harder it becomes to establish a peace in Darfur that peacekeepers can preserve.

A striking lesson of the current push for a humanitarian intervention in Darfur is that it came more from human rights groups and popular movements than from governments. Those wishing to lend support to that grassroots campaign can join with like-minded people today at the new Institute of Contemporary Art, where 170 large-scale photos of Darfur will be projected. And from 7 to 8:30 this evening, human rights defenders will speak about the world's responsibility to rescue the people of Darfur. Ban and the leaders of Security Council members need to listen.