



Briefing Paper: What next in Darfur?

September 2007

Background

The situation in Darfur has gone from bad to worse since the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed in May 2006. For example:

- Murder, rape, bombings, forced displacement, and ethnic cleansing continue to occur throughout Darfur, and across Sudan's borders in Chad and the Central African Republic.
- Despite promises to the contrary, the Sudanese government of President Omar al-Bashir has continued to obstruct international efforts to end the conflict and provide security and protection for the Darfuri people. Sudan's National Congress Party continues to pursue a military solution in Darfur.
- Displacement is on the rise. More than 2 million Darfuris have been dislocated because of the violence, including an estimated 500,000 in the last 15 months, and are living in crowded refugee camps in Darfur and eastern Chad. Humanitarian and relief workers who are providing housing, food, water and medical treatment have been targeted by both government-sponsored militias and rebel groups.
- The two major rebel factions that did not sign the Darfur Peace Agreement have fractured into many, smaller groups.
- There are reports that as many as 30,000 non-Sudanese (including citizens from Chad, Niger, and the Central African Republic) have been resettled into Darfur villages by the Sudanese government.

Recent diplomatic efforts

In response to growing activism around the world, the United Nations and many countries have increased their public diplomacy on Darfur. Recent actions include:

- The UN Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 1769 on July 31, which authorizes the unconditional recruitment and deployment of a 26,000 unit hybrid United Nations – African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur.
- There is a growing effort to pursue a single, unified international policy on Darfur, currently being led by the United States and the new leaders of France, President Nicolas Sarkozy, and the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Gordon Brown.
- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's trip to Sudan this month has produced an initial agreement to hold new peace talks between the Sudanese government and rebel forces to begin on October 27 and to be jointly led by the UN and AU.
- China, which has considerable diplomatic and economic relations with Sudan, has been

more engaged on Darfur diplomacy in recent weeks – although there is still much China must do to bring pressure on the Sudanese government to act responsibly if the goals of peace and protection for Darfur are to be met successfully.

- World leaders have an opportunity to heighten international diplomacy on Darfur during the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly (September to December 2007).

The challenges ahead

The crisis in Darfur remains dire, and requires a multi-dimensional approach. The international community must address four simultaneous challenges in Darfur:

- **Peacekeeping:** The UN must recruit and deploy the hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping force authorized by Resolution 1769. Several nations have already committed troops, police units, logistics support, civilian personnel, and financing. However, the UN has already missed its initial August 31 deadline for finalization of the recruitment process, and once recruited the force is unlikely to be fully deployed until well into 2008. Conditions are likely to worsen on the ground in Darfur in the interim.
- **Civilian Protection:** The international community must work to improve conditions in Darfur until the UN peacekeeping force is fully deployed and able to undertake its mandate. This means providing increased interim protection for more than 2 million uprooted Darfuris, along with thousands of humanitarian workers and the food and medical supplies needed to support this displaced population. There must be continued pressure on the Sudanese government to stop obstructing relief efforts.
- **Peacemaking:** The UN, AU and their member nations must work with the Sudanese government and with rebel leaders to establish a cease-fire and begin a just and inclusive peace process that will provide an ultimate political framework for peace in Darfur. A workable peace agreement will also help enable the peacekeeping force to successfully carry out its mission. There must be improved coordination among these actors in all stages of the peace process. The international community must work to ensure full participation of rebel leaders in preliminary talks aimed at consolidating a united rebel negotiating position in advance of the eventual UN-AU led talks with the Sudanese government. Anything less than a fully coordinated peace process runs the risk of exacerbating the conflict rather than ending it.
- **Consequences:** The UN, European Union, and individual countries must commit to creating direct, multilateral punitive consequences for any party which undermines the deployment of the peacekeeping force, advancement of peace talks, or which hinders civilian humanitarian efforts. The U.S. has enacted sanctions on Sudan, but unilateral sanctions alone will likely not be enough to compel Sudan's cooperation. Other countries and multilateral institutions must agree to impose them as well if the Sudanese government, or rebel leaders, obstruct efforts to end the genocide in Darfur.

The UN, AU, and international community must give equal diplomatic priority to both the peacekeeping track – deployment of the UNAMID force – and advancement of a just and inclusive peace process.

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