

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 27, 2006

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you about the continuing genocidal violence in Darfur, Sudan. Over two million people have been driven away from their homes and remain displaced, many in camps that offer little refuge from routine and targeted violence. Systematic gender-based violence against women and girls continues unabated, and basic safety and security continue to be denied to Darfurians. Humanitarian organizations trying to work in the region face increasing difficulties in fulfilling their mission. The situation, in short, remains disastrous and the lives and well-being of millions hang in the balance. We write to strongly urge that you take immediate steps to develop options for deploying additional international peacekeepers, sustain pressure on the Government of Sudan, and ensure adequate funding of the peacekeeping mission in Darfur.

While it has made some progress on the ground, the African Union has struggled to field the personnel, equipment, and command and control functions needed to fulfill its mission. The AU's effectiveness remains handicapped by a range of problems which were highlighted by the Joint Assessment Team of the European Union, the United Nations, the United States, and the AU. In addition, equipment shortages hamper its mobility and limit communications and thus undermine the effectiveness of the mission. A projected budget shortfall for the AU at the end of March of this year also poses a significant risk to the effectiveness of the mission, and could potentially hamper any further progress in establishing peace.

The AU has made a strong effort, but needs immediate and sustained assistance and support from the international community, including the U.S., European Union, and NATO countries. We urge you to work with these countries to develop a plan for deploying a transitional support force for the AU. We also urge you to take advantage of the chairmanship of the United Nations Security Council to develop plans for transitioning the AU force to a UN peacekeeping mission, as well as work toward complete implementation of current Security Council Resolutions, including the ban of all offensive military flights over Darfur. Current discussions are already taking place in New York and Brussels, and in light of the drastic nature of events on the ground, urgent and concerted action is required.

Stopping violence in Darfur is critical to advancing a comprehensive peace in Sudan. Peace and stability in Sudan is very much in our own strategic interest, and ending the genocide in that country represents a humanitarian and moral imperative. We can no longer wait for existing efforts to improve. We urge you to develop a comprehensive strategy for introducing new peacekeeping forces in to Darfur and to develop options for dealing with deteriorating security conditions in light of continued AU shortcomings.

We commend you for your Administration's commitment to the North-South peace process and recognize that its success is highly precarious. The multiple crises of Sudan, especially the ongoing violence in Darfur, demand a sustained commitment from the United States government. Unfortunately, the Government of Sudan continues to engage in and support violence against its own people. It is clear that no progress can be made in Darfur, and elsewhere in Sudan, unless the Government of Sudan cooperates fully in ending its support of violence. We strongly urge you, therefore, both to maintain sanctions on the government and to extend individual sanctions to those members of the Sudanese government, Janjaweed, and rebel groups who are responsible for the atrocities. It must be clear that the U.S. and the international community will accept nothing less than a complete cessation of support for violence.

We also strongly urge you in both the budget for fiscal year 2007 and the upcoming supplemental appropriations request to seek specifically designated and robust funding to meet the emergency needs in Darfur. The African Union will continue to need assistance after it depletes its operational funds in March, 2006, even as additional peacekeeping options are being explored: they are the only forces on the ground now and will serve an essential bridging role if additional international forces join the mission.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to make our mutual hopes for peace a reality.

Sincerely,

Dei Durbin

Sam Brownback

Mike DeWine

Novell B. Fitzgerald

Phil Hartwig

Paul Krug

Frank R. Lautenberg

Norm Coleman

Dianne Feinstein

Ed Johnson