



SAVING DARFUR: A PLAN FOR THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

As important as the next few months are likely to be for the people of Darfur, many issues are likely to remain on the table when President-elect Obama assumes office in January. During the campaign, the president-elect pledged to “make ending the genocide in Darfur a priority from Day One,” of his new administration.

Here we outline the steps the Obama administration should take to fulfill that commitment. Most generally, it is time for the United States and the international community to stop attempting to “manage” this conflict through half-measures and instead undertake bold initiatives to push for peace for Darfur. Genocide in slow motion remains genocide. Bold steps will require a “peace surge” by the new administration; strong American leadership and full-scale use of diplomatic resources can create a peace process that would finally achieve a breakthrough which ends the conflict. Any successful effort will also require a comprehensive approach to address the multitude of other challenges which face Darfuri civilians and act as impediments to peace.

We therefore call on President Obama to fulfill his pledges by acting swiftly and decisively on Darfur upon assuming office. The president-elect and his administration should use the full powers and influence of the United States government to:

- Energize efforts, through a peace surge, to create an inclusive peace process to resolve the conflict in Darfur and create a sustainable peace for all Sudan;
- Ensure the full and effective deployment of a military force that actively protects Darfuri civilians;
- Provide necessary humanitarian aid and push for unfettered humanitarian access to ensure the survival of Darfuri civilians;
- Support long-term economic development of, and political capacity building for, Darfur;
- Push for the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; and
- Actively seek justice for the people of Darfur and hold the perpetrators of the genocide to account.

The Darfur crisis has also made clear some general deficiencies in our country’s response to genocide and mass atrocities. Both to improve the response to the crisis in Darfur and the prevention of and response to genocide and mass atrocities elsewhere the Obama administration should also:

- Increase funding for foreign assistance programs focused on humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, peace-building, development, and diplomacy;
- Increase the institutional capacity of the United States government to respond to the crisis in Darfur as well as other instances of genocide and mass atrocities; and
- Increase the capacity of multilateral organizations to respond to Darfur as well as other instances of genocide and mass atrocities.

The remainder of this paper provides more detail about the need for, and the nature of, each of the above steps.

Assisting the people of Darfur and Sudan

The majority of the steps relate specifically to the situation in Sudan. We call on the Obama administration to do the following:

Energize efforts, through a peace surge, to create an inclusive peace process to resolve the conflict in Darfur and create a sustainable peace for all Sudan.

Since the outbreak of the Darfur conflict in 2003, there have been several efforts to negotiate peace between the Government of Sudan and Darfuri rebel groups. All have failed. The most significant of these efforts, which resulted in the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), failed because the agreement of all Darfuri rebel groups was not secured, the Darfuri victims themselves were not brought into the negotiations as stakeholders, and the Government of Sudan did not abide by its obligations. Since the DPA was signed, the Darfuri rebel groups have fragmented into numerous competing factions, thereby complicating efforts to secure a lasting peace. Meanwhile, though the Government of Sudan has stated its willingness to pursue peace negotiations, it has failed to back up its words with confidence-building measures or to participate in negotiations on anything other than its own terms. It has continued to attack civilians. It also has a long history of not keeping agreements it negotiates.

In light of these developments, the peace process for ending the Darfur conflict is moribund. The recent appointment of Djibril Bassole as the Joint U.N. – AU lead peace negotiator may help catalyze renewed talks, but Bassole cannot succeed on his own. Further, other initiatives, such as that of Qatar, have thus far failed to secure the necessary buy-in from the international community writ large, or convince the rebels that the negotiations may actually result in verifiable improvements on the ground in Darfur.

The Obama administration must implement a “peace surge” which brings to bear all the influence, power, and tools of the United States and its international partners on the Government of Sudan and the other combatants in Darfur, thereby encouraging them to engage in meaningful negotiations and hold them to account for not following through with previously made obligations. U.S. leadership can catalyze regional and international actors, rebel groups, and other stakeholders. As part of this “surge,” the U.S. must seek to coordinate its diplomacy and

leverage with that of other powers, especially France, the United Kingdom, and China. In addition, peace negotiations must include the participation of, and reflect the views of, Darfuri civilians, including Darfuri women – as most Darfuri civilians are represented by neither the Sudanese government nor the Darfur rebel groups.

One final point bears noting here. The effectiveness of U.S. leadership in any peace negotiations, as well as in taking many of the steps described throughout, depends on whether the president invests appropriate authority in – and provides sufficient high-level support to – the right individual to take the day-to-day lead on Sudan issues within the U.S. government. Ideally, this individual will have an extensive background in conflict resolution, will command the respect of all sides to the conflict, and would be seen, to the greatest extent possible, as a neutral arbiter between the people of Darfur, the Darfuri rebel groups, and the Government of Sudan. Moreover, it will be critical that this individual has the ear of the president and the appropriate members of the National Security Council, and that he or she be in frequent communication with a principal member of the National Security Council as designated by the president.

Ensure the full and effective deployment of a military force that actively protects Darfuri civilians.

UNAMID, the U.N. peacekeeping force for Darfur, was authorized on July 31, 2007. Well over a year after its inception, the peacekeeping force suffers from the lack of equipment, personnel, and political support. Only roughly 13,000 of its authorized strength of 31,000 personnel have been deployed – most of whom are holdovers from the previous African Union mission. The force lacks the helicopters, trucks, and engineering units that are necessary for it to effectively patrol a largely roadless area the size of Texas. UNAMID also faces severe logistical challenges in setting up its operating bases, including the unacceptable reality that thousands of cargo containers holding critical equipment are sitting in stockpiles elsewhere in Sudan. The Government of Sudan has consistently raised impediments to the effective deployment of the force, including blocking troop contributions and limiting UNAMID's mobility.

The Obama administration must ensure that all necessary resources are provided for UNAMID and use its political leverage to push both the United Nations and the Government of Sudan to deploy more robustly and more quickly. The U.S. has been a leader in providing the necessary financial support to UNAMID and training to troop-contributing-countries; such leadership must continue. The U.S. should also work with the U.N. to resolve the logistical challenges it faces from being over-reliant on Port Sudan, push other nations to contribute necessary resources and equipment to the mission, particularly the much-needed tactical and utility helicopters, and insist that the Government of Sudan not hold a veto over the composition and deployment of UNAMID forces into its territory. The current state of affairs, where UNAMID is unable to protect its own soldiers, let alone project force to defend civilians, is unacceptable.

If, however, it becomes apparent that UNAMID cannot succeed, then the Obama administration should explore other options for protecting Darfuri civilians.

Provide necessary humanitarian aid, and push for unfettered humanitarian access, to ensure the survival of Darfur civilians.

Millions of Darfuris are dependent on food aid from the United States and other major donors. The immense amount of aid being distributed throughout Darfur requires a network of roughly 13,000 aid workers (90 percent of whom are Sudanese) to distribute it. The past year has witnessed increased attacks on humanitarian aid workers and their convoys, and as a result, food available for distribution has been reduced in many areas and eliminated altogether in others. Security is therefore of the utmost concern to ensure the stability of the aid network.

First and foremost, the Obama administration must continue to support the provision of humanitarian aid for Darfuri civilians. Support for aid delivery mechanisms, such as the World Food Program and the U.N. Humanitarian Air Service, should be maintained at needed levels. Further, the United States should work with non-governmental partners and multilateral institutions, including the U.N., to better ensure the safety and security of both food aid and the workers who distribute it. UNAMID cannot even begin to accomplish its mandate if it does not have the ability to provide protection to humanitarian aid workers both reactively and proactively. The United States must take a leadership role in ensuring UNAMID has all necessary support to face down challenges to its operations.

Support long-term economic development of and political capacity building for Darfur.

One of the root causes of the conflict in Darfur has been the lack of economic and political power held by Darfuris. The Darfur region has largely been ignored while parts of Khartoum and the political elite are reaping large economic gains fueled by newfound oil wealth. The political and economic marginalization of the Darfur region cannot continue if lasting peace is to be secured. Currently, there is a political vacuum in Darfur, filled by a number of rebel leaders, some of whose dedication to improving the welfare of the Darfuri people is questionable. Likewise, Darfur is currently not economically self-sufficient and is heavily dependent on food aid.

While most economic development and political capacity building assistance will likely have to wait until a sustainable peace is in place, the Obama administration should commit to this support as an incentive to any peace deal. The U.S. Agency for International Development and Department of State should fund these programs, which can help develop the ability of Darfuris to govern themselves and represent Darfur at the federal level in Sudan, and better defend their rights. Additionally, after years of destruction and displacement in Darfur, a large amount of economic development assistance will be necessary to re-establish Darfur's infrastructure and better integrate it into the national economy. Failure to follow-through on a peace surge with an equivalently robust development surge will ensure future conflict.

Push for the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The future of Sudan, including Darfur, will largely be determined by the success or failure of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended the North-South civil war in 2005. Full implementation of the CPA would greatly increase the chances of establishing a more

democratic Sudan following free and fair national elections in 2009. It is an open question, however, as to whether the CPA will be fully implemented and whether free and fair elections will take place on schedule, or at all. Significant challenges to the CPA remain, including a lasting resolution of the Abyei boundary demarcation. It is widely agreed that if the CPA fails, the situation in Darfur will only worsen.

The Obama administration must continue U.S. support for full implementation of the CPA, including free and fair elections throughout Sudan in 2009 and a referendum in South Sudan in 2011, by working to ensure that the Government of Sudan does not backslide on promises it has already made. Absent such steps, North-South tension will increase and make it more difficult to resolve Darfur's crisis. Further steps towards resolution of the North-South schism through the successful implementation of the CPA could pave the way for a final solution to the Darfur conflict. By reducing the number of competing political tensions within Sudan, it may be possible to negotiate greater autonomy for the people of Darfur if the specter of a renewed North-South conflict no longer looms large.

Actively seek justice for the people of Darfur and hold the perpetrators of the genocide to account.

Since 2003, hundreds of thousands of Darfuris have died due to the conflict, and more than 2.5 million have been displaced from their homes in what President Bush and Congress have declared a genocide. The recent announcement by the International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor that he is seeking an indictment of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on genocide and other charges, and his previous indictments of two other individuals, has placed the issue of accountability front and center in international discussions about the future of Darfur.

The Obama administration must make certain that justice is served and that the perpetrators of genocidal acts and crimes against humanity are held accountable in a way that is acceptable to the people of Darfur. Additionally, the next administration should explore how the leverage created by the ICC investigation could compel the Sudanese regime to end its destructive policies and to achieve peace in Darfur.

Improving the Capacity to Respond to Genocide and Mass Atrocities

In order to better address the situation in Darfur and similar crises, the incoming Administration must also take several steps.

Increase funding for foreign assistance programs focused on humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, peace-building, development, and diplomacy.

While increased in recent years, funding for foreign assistance programs and U.S. contributions to international operations remain significantly underfunded, resulting in a seemingly never-ending series of last-minute supplemental funding requests and the U.S. going into arrears on its international obligations. Achieving the Darfur policy goals listed above will in many cases require additional U.S. resources, which must be provided within the overall U.S. foreign aid budget. Additional U.S. funding for foreign aid would also help the U.S.

Government's ability to respond to mass atrocities worldwide. While the current financial challenges facing the United States will no doubt impact the timeline of increases in U.S. foreign assistance funding, President-elect Obama's commitment to double foreign aid must remain steadfast. Furthermore, the U.S. government will need to marshal the resources of its allies to complement U.S. funding.

While levels funding for humanitarian assistance and peace operations in Darfur have been generally provided, the limited size of the overall foreign assistance budget means that the funding of these programs for Darfur can squeeze the funding of assistance programs for the victims of other conflicts. In order to ensure that funding for programs that ease humanitarian crises and prevent conflicts elsewhere do not suffer as a result of the significant attention placed on Darfur, the overall size of the foreign assistance budget must grow. Additionally, new programs in development, peace-building, and diplomacy are likely to be required to address new phases of the conflict.

The Obama administration should remain steadfast in its commitment to work towards doubling funding for foreign assistance supporting humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, peace-building, development, and diplomacy programs, and include such an increase in its Fiscal Year 2010 budget request and within an expected Fiscal Year 2009 supplemental funding bill. Moreover, the president-elect and his administration need to devote the necessary political capital to build support for an area of the budget that has not always received widespread political support.

Expand the institutional capacity of the United States Government to respond to the crisis in Darfur as well as to other instances of genocides and mass atrocities.

The United States still lacks a central, integrated point for identifying and immediately responding to mass atrocities and other conflicts that do not rise to the level of an immediate U.S. military response, as was the case in Darfur. The Bush administration's creation of an Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization at the Department of State and the adjunct Active Response Corps is a first attempt. Further, a comprehensive response will require greater interagency coordination and direction than is commonly found in the early days of a crisis.

Whatever form it may take, the enhanced coordination of diplomatic, military, and development efforts to respond to emerging atrocity situations must be a priority of the Obama administration. The ability of the U.S. Government to stabilize situations through the use of non-military mechanisms, such as the utilization of economic and political levers, is critical.

Strengthen the capacity of multilateral organizations to respond to genocide and mass atrocities.

As in many other conflicts, the situation in Darfur is being addressed largely by multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations and African Union. These institutions are taking the lead in coordinating humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, and peace process efforts. They have taken on these responsibilities despite their inherently limited infrastructure and capacity to

fulfill these missions. As an example, the entire U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, responsible for 17 peacekeeping missions worldwide, has fewer staff than U.S. military bands.

The Obama administration must encourage and support (financially and otherwise) the development of stronger mechanisms for global and regional multilateral organizations to respond to conflicts the U.S. government is unable or unwilling to take on unilaterally, such as Darfur. Both because multilateral actions involve cost-sharing and can be more politically tenable, there is a natural incentive for the U.S. to support the development of these capacities.

The Importance of these Steps

It is imperative that the President-elect Obama pursue the policies and devote the resources necessary to finally end the conflict in Darfur and effectively promote peace throughout Sudan. The lessons from the U.S. response to the genocide in Darfur to date must be well learned, not only to end the suffering there, but to apply elsewhere in the future. Millions of lives hang in the balance in Sudan, and countless individuals in other countries are likely to be threatened by abhorrent acts over the next four years. Taken together, the steps outlined above will do much to bring peace and security to Sudan, and to preventing genocide and mass atrocities elsewhere.