

U.S. Must Increase Efforts to End Genocide in Sudan

By Jan Schakowsky and Jesse Jackson Jr.

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On Monday, thousands of Chicagoans participated in a rally to bring urgent attention to the escalating crisis in Sudan. Peace negotiations between the Sudan government and rebel forces broke down this week. As thousands of refugees pour over the border into Chad, the conflict has spread across international borders. The 3-year old Darfur genocide is now posing a threat to an entire region.

Silence can help perpetuate travesties. In April, here in Chicago, the Newspaper Association of America undertook a critical look at the failure of the press to report on the horrors of the Holocaust as they unfolded. As a result, many Americans did not know the extent of the calamity.

Six decades and a new century later, technology and mass media make ignorance of such momentous events a matter of personal choice. Once we know, we are duty-bound to act. Instead of standing by, we stand with the Chicago Coalition to Save Darfur, a diverse group of religious, ethnic, racial, student and human rights organizations that are organizing to end the genocide.

The numbers are both chilling and numbing: 400,000 are dead, 2.5 million have been displaced from their homes and 3.5 million are hungry. Compounding what is known, it is assumed that thousands of rapes remain unreported: Victims are too scared or ashamed to seek help in a culture where rape brings social disgrace, ostracism and even expulsion from one's own family.

The international community has failed to protect civilians or to provide the African Union with sufficient resources to do so. The Khartoum regime has been enabled to continue assisting the Janjaweed militia because no international body has stepped up to stop it.

We are proud that the United States was the first and remains one of the few countries to have declared this crisis what it indeed is: a genocide. Since 2003, Congress has committed over \$2 billion in humanitarian and development aid to Sudan. We continue to push for an increase of U.S. support by hundreds of millions of dollars. This April, the House of Representatives passed the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which lays out a path to peace by strengthening the African Union, pressuring Khartoum at the United Nations and appointing a U.S. special envoy to Sudan.

While the United States has negotiated a "statement" in the U.N. Security Council authorizing a contingency plan for possible deployment of an international peacekeeping force in Darfur, a statement is not a resolution and does not formally commit troops to a U.N. mission in Darfur. For now, there is no timetable, no mandate for civilian protection and no assurance that the violence in Darfur will end.

We must keep attention focused on this crisis. Despite the lessons that could have been learned from underreporting of the Holocaust, much of the news media have so far failed to contribute significantly to public awareness. In 2004, a year after genocide was declared, the ABC, CBS and NBC network nightly newscasts aired a total of only 26 minutes about Darfur. In 2005, they provided even less coverage.

Upon assuming office, President Bush poignantly wrote in the margins of a briefing memo on the Rwandan genocide, "Not on my watch."

Unfortunately, it is happening in Darfur now, on his and all of our "watches." What will our response be? What will we do before the history books are written? What will the victims' and

our children's judgment of us be?

Now is the time to act.

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