

Rush is Right: How Can We Sit Idle as Darfur is Raped?

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In late July, Rep. Bobby Rush (D-Ill.) was arrested in front of the Sudanese Embassy, protesting the brutal murders and forced relocation of black Africans in the Darfur region of west Sudan. On the eve of the Democratic National Convention, Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) went to the United Nations to talk with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan about the humanitarian disaster in Sudan.

Both our local lawmakers should be lauded for their efforts to bring international attention to the horrific devastation in Darfur -- the homelessness and hunger, the rapes and torture, the plundering and ethnic cleansing. Their work also helped to push congressional resolutions that labeled the crisis in Sudan a genocide. "It's hard to comprehend," Rush noted in a letter to the Sun-Times, that "such callous disregard for the black Africans in Sudan can rise to critical levels of . . . predatory violence without outrage from world governments." His argument was indisputable, considering the extent of the horror: more than 30,000 dead, 2 million in need of food or medical care, 1 million homeless.

Finally, last week, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution saying unspecified sanctions may be imposed in 30 days unless the Sudanese government in Khartoum intervened to stop the Arab militias, the Janjaweed, from rampaging through black African villages and killing or maiming the people there. The resolution wasn't nearly as strong as we wished -- it didn't actually use the word sanctions, and the strong language pushed by the United States was watered down -- but it, and the vocal efforts of our politicians, may be starting to have an effect on Khartoum.

Despite protests in the streets that it seemed to have orchestrated earlier this week, the Sudan

government now indicates it will comply with the U.N. resolution and, happily, the African Union has promised to send in troops as peacekeepers. Rwanda, which saw its own holocaust a decade ago -- the slaughter of more than 800,000 Tutsis by marauding Hutus -- has offered to send in troops to protect villagers and keep the Janjaweed at bay. Perhaps more than any other country in Africa today, it recognizes how important it is to take immediate action in Sudan. The Dutch have also promised aid, funding a mission to fly 360 African Union troops to Darfur. But the rest of the world appears to be sitting on its hands. Barely a third of the money needed to fly relief missions into Darfur has been raised by the U.N. The United States, Britain and the Netherlands are the biggest donors, but more than \$100 million more is needed.

"Darfur needs a savior," Rush wrote. "It needs a force that will reveal itself in the form of humanitarian aid." Annan believes diplomatic pressure can push Khartoum into action, but the U.N. -- and its members -- must use more than words to promote the peace. It needs to use muscle.