

Considering your interest in international relations issues, I wanted to provide you with an update on ongoing efforts to stop the genocide occurring in the Darfur region of the Sudan in Africa.

## DARFUR REGION



As you may know, an estimated 400,000 people have been killed in Darfur and thousands more forced into exile. This tragedy represents one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, and I strongly believe the international community must take effective and immediate steps to stop it. The situation is complex, but at its core the Arab Sudanese government is supporting an Arab militia (called "Janjaweed"), which is fighting African rebels in Darfur who oppose the government. The government, Janjaweed, and different ethnic groups in Darfur are all largely Muslim. I understand that an estimated ninety percent of the victims are innocent civilians, including many women and children.

An expert from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service observed recently, "The United States has done more than any other country in the world" to try to stop the tragedy in Darfur. With my strong support, our nation has:

- Characterized the tragedy as "genocide" (Under the 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention, our nation is committed to "preventing and punishing" such atrocities);
- Enacted the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act of 2006, which, among other important steps, calls for additional sanctions against the Sudanese government;
- Provided over \$2.7 billion to Sudan in humanitarian aid and assistance to the current African Union peacekeepers;

- Appointed a special envoy to the region;
- Expressed support for actions by the International Criminal Court to prosecute those responsible for the genocide;
- Supported a United Nations resolution calling for a 20,000-person peacekeeping force to supplement the inadequate force currently in Darfur;
- Helped broker the May 2006 cease fire between the Sudanese government and the largest rebel group.

Tragically, however, these actions have not brought an end to the terrible situation. The U.S. Treasury Department may soon implement a program that would place additional economic pressure on the Sudanese government. Some U.S. allies have discussed the possibility of enforcing a no-fly zone to prevent deadly air raids on civilians. Meanwhile, there are ongoing efforts to encourage the Arab League to help persuade the Sudanese government to allow a hybrid UN/African Union peacekeeping force to enter Darfur. I recently joined other U.S. representatives in contacting the Secretary General of the Arab League to urge him to take this critical action. Additionally, I understand that there may soon be a new push to persuade China and Russia to support UN sanctions against the Sudanese government.

In Congress, Representative Barbara Lee (CA-9) has introduced H.R. 180, the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007. Among other important actions, this measure would prohibit U.S. government contracts from going to certain foreign companies that conduct business in Sudan. I understand that the congresswoman is considering slight but important changes to the measure to ensure that well-intentioned U.S. companies are not inadvertently characterized as supporting the Sudanese government. This change could bring forth a broader base of supporters.

Americans should know that our nation has not stood idly on the sidelines during the genocide in Darfur. Still, it is heartbreaking to know that our efforts thus far have not stopped it. While there are no overnight solutions, we must continue to work with the international community to help bring peace to Darfur. Hundreds of thousands of lives in Darfur have already been lost. Thousands more are in grave danger unless the international community responds promptly and effectively.