

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on Darfur
April 23, 2008

I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing on the continuing humanitarian and security challenges in Sudan. I welcome our distinguished witnesses and appreciate the willingness of the United Nations to brief members of the Committee on the status of international peacekeeping deployments to Darfur.

The Darfur crisis is now in its fifth year and the prospects for peace in the region appear to be little better than they were three or four years ago when the international community first responded with a massive humanitarian intervention. In the face of direct obstruction and willful delays by Khartoum, these humanitarian efforts probably saved hundreds of thousands of lives. But those lives continue to be under extreme threat.

Regional and global conditions have worked against a solution to the human suffering in Darfur. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement between north and south Sudan, which many consider essential for peace in Darfur, is faltering. To the west, Chad and Sudan continue to sustain rebel forces intent upon destabilizing or overthrowing each other's government. These rebels are preying on the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons in eastern Chad, the Central African Republic, and in Darfur, as well as targeting the humanitarian workers in the region. As the wet season descends on Darfur and the roads are increasingly impassable, the World Food Program is facing a global food crisis that has forced the subsistence rations for millions in Sudan to be reduced.

During the last several years, the U.S. government and private American citizens have responded to the crisis by providing billions in humanitarian assistance. This national response continues today, and it has been the predominant portion of the international effort for Darfur. The United Nations also has played an important role in response to this catastrophe through the U.N. Security Council and individual agencies such as the World Food Program, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, and UNICEF. In addition, the African Union, the European Union, NATO, and numerous countries have made bilateral contributions. Despite such efforts, the crisis remains and security is deteriorating.

Last July, hopes were raised by the U.N. Security Council's approval of an enlargement of the peacekeeping force in Darfur to 26,000 troops. Unfortunately, that hope has been fading due to Khartoum's continued obstruction and delay, rebel factionalism, and international ambivalence expressed through limited contributions to the peacekeeping force. Thus far, only 2,000 additional peacekeepers have been deployed, and the force continues to lack helicopters and other types of equipment that are essential to achieve mobility and to deliver humanitarian supplies. We are faced with the sobering reality that after almost nine months, only a small fraction of the troops approved in the Security Council Resolution have been deployed to mitigate what many consider to be the world's most dire and visible humanitarian crisis.

Improving security will not automatically resolve the underlying causes of the conflict, but it will provide physical and psychological relief that would create opportunities for leaders in these communities to assert themselves and explore the compromises necessary to make peace sustainable.

The United States must lead in finding ways to address these political and logistical shortcomings. We must also understand that even the successful deployment of a full peacekeeping contingent will not guarantee a political resolution to this crisis. Consequently, we must simultaneously work with like-minded nations to reinvigorate a viable and coherent peace process.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses how these efforts are progressing and what more we can do.

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