



Rep. Henry A. Waxman
H.R. 3127, Darfur Peace and Accountability Act
April 5, 2006

Mr. Speaker, our consideration today of the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act is long overdue, but it is more timely and urgent than ever.

It has been nearly two years since this House recognized the atrocities in Darfur as genocide. In that time we have offered aid to refugees and support for peacekeeping activities. However, this is the first real legislative effort to enhance the U.S. response to this crisis. While I am pleased that we are acting, we should and could have done more sooner.

H.R. 3127, authorizes tough sanctions against individuals responsible for the war crimes committed in Darfur. It imposes an embargo on Sudanese cargo ships and oil tankers, and strengthens the military arms embargo against the Sudanese government.

The legislation will substantially improve our ability to provide protection for the more than 2 million vulnerable civilians displaced by the conflict. Specifically, it calls on NATO to expand and reinforce the African Union Mission in Sudan. It also advocates an initiative now underway at the Security Council to transition the African Union force into a UN sponsored peacekeeping operation.

Sadly, as a recent Security Council assessment shows, the dire situation in Darfur is only deteriorating further. Relief organizations are being denied entry, supplies are being cut off and humanitarian missions are being attacked. Civilian populations and refugee camps remain unprotected and the murderous rampages of Jangaweed militias continue unchecked. There is little progress in peace negotiations.

The transition to a UN led peacekeeping mission with greater resources and an expanded mandate is the only hope for improving the situation on the ground. Passage today of H.R. 3127 will add momentum to this effort.

An end to the conflict in Darfur cannot be achieved without strong US leadership. We have a moral responsibility to intervene.

I want to give credit to the activists across the country who have been the leading voices commanding our attention to this crisis. In classrooms, campuses, synagogues, churches, and communities across America there are so many who are deeply committed to making sure that those suffering in Darfur are not forgotten. At the end of the month, thousands will rally in Washington to call greater attention to the cause.

I am especially proud that the University of California recently joined more than a dozen colleges around the country in divesting from companies that do business in Sudan. Similar efforts are being considered by a number of state legislatures and private pension plans. Congress and the Department of Treasury should lend their support to these efforts.

Let us pledge that today is a new beginning in our fight for justice for the people of Darfur.