



## UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

### Crisis in Darfur Update

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#### Introduction

Since 2003, the Darfur region of Sudan has been ravaged by a devastating conflict. The Civil War has killed approximately a half million people and has turned civilians into the victims of rape, murder, and displacement. As it watches these **catastrophic** circumstances unfold, the United Nations must decide whether to step in and try to resolve the crisis in Darfur. Unfortunately, there are many complications that make this task a particularly difficult one. Sudan has a particularly violent past, only recently emerging from over twenty years of civil war. As a result, the entire region is highly unstable, and any UN intervention must strive to maintain the balance in Sudan.

**Catastrophic**—*tragic, dramatic, violent, and sudden.*

#### Summary of the Problem

In 1899, Darfur became an independent **sultanate** after having been part of the British Empire. However, with the commencement of World War I, the British government grew uneasy about the extent of Turkish influence on the region, and consequently reabsorbed Darfur into the British Empire.

**Sultanate**—*a state governed by a sultan.*

During its period under British rule, Darfur was largely neglected and received few resources for development. This systematic lack of attention had long-lasting consequences. When the nation was given its independence in 1956, it was plagued with poor government and a lack of sufficient **infrastructure**. While under British control, Sudan was governed as two regions, one in the North and one in the South. The northern region's population was largely of Arab descent and received the majority of Britain's financial attention, while the South—which included Darfur—was neglected. After Sudan's independence, they granted control of the nation to the northern Arabs, which left the indigenous population in the south **marginalized**. In 1955, the people of southern Sudan started a rebellion that lasted until a peace agreement was signed in 1972. This first civil war claimed approximately 500,000 lives.

**Infrastructure**—*the fundamental facilities and systems serving a country or city, such as transportation and communication systems.*

**Marginalized**—*assigned to an unimportant and powerless position within society or a group.*

The peace lasted 11 years until 1983, when the Sudanese President announced that he would be implementing **Islamic law** in the penal code of Sudan. As a result of this policy, the South became further disenfranchised, and they once again rebelled to seek **autonomy**. After watching Sudan's civil unrest for 20 years, the US finally began applying pressure on Sudan after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks as part of the

**Islamic Law**—*the legal framework within which public and private lives are governed in an Islamic society.*

**Autonomy**—*self-government or the right of self-government; independence or freedom.*

American War on Terror. Negotiations for peace between the North and the South began again in Sudan, culminating in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. This agreement ended the Civil War that had ravaged the nation for so long, but by this time, two million lives had already been lost.

In 2003, the Darfur region of Sudan rose up in rebellion against the government. Two groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice for Equality Movement (JEM), united in order to fight against the government. The JEM saw a potential ally in SLA and the Sudanese of Darfur who had been neglected and left out of the peace talks. Together, these two **disenfranchised** groups started their rebellion. Fearing that the uprising in Darfur would hurt the emerging stability in the rest of the country, the Sudanese government cracked down harshly on the rebels, using both official forces and the **janjaweed** fighters. The government encouraged the janjaweed to fight against civilians backing the rebellion, and the **renegade** militias raped, murdered, and pillaged villages in their fight against the people of Darfur. In response to these acts of violence, many of the people of Darfur have fled the region; there are approximately 2.5 million refugees of the conflict.

## Recent Developments

### *Peace Talks*

On February 17, 2009, the Sudanese government and the most **formidable** rebel group, the JEM, in Darfur signed a declaration of intent paving the way for peace talks in the months ahead. The main objective of this declaration is to move toward a final peace agreement within three months. Further, the two sides agreed in principle to an exchange of prisoners. They also agreed to refrain from harassing the millions of civilians who have been displaced by the conflict in the Darfur region in western Sudan and to allow humanitarian relief to reach them without interfering.

While this is significant progress toward a finalized peace agreement, the terms of the agreement are extremely general, stating only that the rebels and the government are to remain in the peace process at some level for some indefinite period of time. The last formal contact between the rebel group and the Sudanese government took place in 2007. The group did not sign a peace deal for Darfur in 2006. These new talks might be a signal that the JEM is willing to negotiate, which is an **unprecedented** move for this organization. Still, other rebel groups say peace will remain **elusive** unless they are included in any of these types of negotiations.

**Disenfranchised**—*deprived of a legal right or of some privilege or immunity, or generally excluded from the political process.*

**Janjaweed**—*a term used to describe armed horsemen in Darfur.*

**Renegade**—*term used to refer to individuals or groups who reject traditional conventions of behavior.*

**Formidable**—*of discouraging or overpowering strength, size, or difficulty; causing fear, or apprehension.*

**Unprecedented**—*without previous instance; never before known or experienced.*

**Elusive**—*hard to pin down; vague.*

### *Criticism of US Policy*

Even as the government takes a step toward peace in Darfur with the signing of a preliminary peace process plan, Sudan's ambassador to the United Nations criticized the United States for supporting possible prosecution of the country's president. The ambassador pointed out that it was hypocritical for the US, which refused to join as a party to the International Criminal Court, to now support the possible prosecution of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir on genocide charges.

The Sudanese government is hoping that by showing seriousness about peace, it can avoid prosecution of al-Bashir by the Hague-based court on accusations that he coordinated violence against Darfur's ethnic people. The US has responded saying that there is no linkage between the possible prosecution of al-Bashir and the talks to launch peace negotiations.

## **Focus of the Debate**

Though the situation in Darfur is quite serious, an international response is difficult to formulate. An international solution would be extremely expensive, and the UN's past experiences with international missions, like that in Somalia, have had mixed results. Further complicating the debate is the fact that many countries have their own interests in the conflict.

### *USA*

The United States has been a leader in the UNSC in drafting policies to deal with the crisis in Darfur. Since 2004, the US has held the position that the situation in Darfur is **genocide**, a notion many in the international community reject. In the UNSC, the US has been in favor of an increased presence of UN troops in the region in addition to **sanctions** on the Sudanese government.

### *Egypt*

Egypt, a major leader among Arab nations, has been very reluctant to pressure Sudan to stop the violence in Darfur. Though it has committed some troops to the UN mission in Darfur, it has a strong interest in seeing the current Sudanese regime remain in power. Southern Sudan will be able to vote for independence in 2011 under the 2005 peace agreement, and both Egypt and **Khartoum** have expressed firm opposition to that independence.

### *China*

China has strong economic ties with Sudan and therefore has been very supportive of the Sudanese government. China is the largest purchaser of Sudan's oil and has even made an interest-free loan of mil-

**Genocide**—the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.

**Sanction**—an economic or military coercive action intended to force a nation violating international law to alter its behavior.

**Khartoum**—the capital of Sudan.

lions of dollars to build a new palace for Bashir. One particularly troubling aspect of China's relationship with Bashir's government is that China has been selling arms to Sudan, ignoring the UN **embargo**.

#### *Russia*

Like China, Russia is on good terms with the Sudanese government. The nation has almost always fallen on the side of Khartoum on UNSC issues and has, like China, been accused of violating the arms embargo and selling weapons to Sudan.

#### *Japan*

Japan has taken a view similar to that of the United States on the issue of Darfur, calling for international intervention to prevent further humanitarian violations. Japan has been highly critical of China and its close ties to Sudan, and has partially **divested** from the region. Japan has donated substantial funds for humanitarian aid and has also supported the UN mission in Darfur.

**Embargo**—*an order of a government prohibiting the movement of merchant ships into or out of its ports.*

**Divest**—*to remove funding and support from a region or entity.*

## Questions for Policymakers

Policymakers will have to answer a number of difficult questions when deciding how to address the crisis in Darfur. First and foremost, UNSC members will have to decide what type of action is appropriate. Does the crisis merit a full-blown military intervention, or is a more moderated approach in order, such as sanctions and diplomatic pressure? Should the UN even be involved? Policymakers may also want to consider encouraging or supporting other possible agents of action, like the African Union or NATO. Also, what should be done with the current deployment of troops? This issue has several important questions that need to be addressed with comprehensive legislation, and it is the task of this committee to come up with sound, compelling answers.

## Conclusion

After the heavily publicized failure of the international community to take action against the genocide in Rwanda, many view the crisis in Darfur as a second chance for the world to take a strong stance against war crimes. However, the situation is heavily complicated by the limited cooperation of the Sudanese government as well as the continual delays in getting equipment and personnel to the region. It is up to the United Nations Security Council to devise a strategy to alleviate the suffering in Darfur in the face of the complicated political situation of the region.

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