



human rights *first*

November 10, 2005

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to convey our urgent concerns about the need for greater action by the United States and other governments in response to the human rights emergency in Darfur. Specifically we urge you to work with the Secretary-General of the United Nations to identify a prominent envoy to reenergize the diplomatic process with an aim of ending the conflict there.

As you know, in the last two months the security situation in Darfur has deteriorated dramatically. United Nations personnel have withdrawn from parts of the region because of increased violence, the humanitarian relief work of international nongovernmental organizations has been greatly restricted, and the civilian toll is again climbing. An estimated two million people remain unable to return to their homes because of the ongoing violence. These and others are increasingly subject to attacks by Janjaweed militia, with support from the Sudanese Government. The upturn in violence has now severed approximately 500,000 people from access to international humanitarian aid. Just last week the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, citing the increased violence and killings of peacekeeping troops, termed this “a very serious deterioration” of the situation.

Over the last eighteen months, United States Government officials have helped focus the world’s attention on the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. But more clearly needs to be done now to avert an even more devastating crisis and further loss of life. In the present circumstances there is an urgent need for the United States to play a more robust leadership role in promoting security for civilians in Darfur, a just and sustainable peace in the region, and eventually a system of accountability for those who are responsible for the gross human rights violations that already have occurred there.

We urge the appointment of a new high-level envoy backed by the United States, the United Nations, and other major powers, whose work would focus on

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negotiating an end to the conflict in Western Sudan. We welcome the current engagement of senior Administration officials on Sudan, including this week's visit to the country by Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick. However, the deteriorating situation in Darfur demands more.

This request is consistent with and reinforces a similar request by several members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month. We are confident that the appointment of such a high-ranking envoy would enjoy strong bipartisan support in the Congress and the country.

The need for a more active approach to Darfur today is certainly as great as it was in Southern Sudan when you appointed former Senator John Danforth as your Special Envoy in September 2001. Continuing widespread violations of human rights and a worsening humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by spreading inter-factional fighting, demand sustained attention from the United Nations with strong public support from the United States Government.

A new envoy would need the stature and international support to enable him or her to engage in dialogue with all parties to the conflict in Darfur. This initiative would build on, not replace, the African Union mission, and should be carried out even as the International Criminal Court continues to advance efforts to hold accountable those responsible for crimes against humanity in Darfur.

Continuing instability and conflict in Darfur threaten to undermine fragile peace agreements elsewhere in Sudan, and to spread insecurity throughout the region. I urge you to act now, before the situation worsens further, to enhance and renew the United States' diplomatic commitment to resolve the Darfur conflict.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Michael Posner
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State
The Honorable Robert Zoellick, Deputy Secretary of State
Mr. Stephen Hadley, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs