



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

New Strategies for Darfur

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On April 4, the U.S. Institute of Peace convened its Sudan Peace Forum to discuss new strategies for dealing with the ongoing crisis in Darfur. This USIPeace Briefing summarizes the discussion, which was conducted on a not-for-attribution basis. It was written by [David Smock](#), the vice president of USIP's [Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution](#). It does not represent the views of USIP, which does not advocate specific policies.

While the humanitarian and security crises continue in Darfur, there have been some improvements in recent weeks. After losing three battles to rebel forces, the Sudan military has been less aggressive in Darfur. There has been a slow, steady decrease in civilian casualties since January 2007. Nevertheless, in January and February, 80,000 people were forced from their homes and into camps because of violence. Both the government of Sudan (GOS) and various rebel factions commit atrocities. A recent agreement negotiated by Under Secretary General John Holmes on behalf of the United Nations with the GOS regarding humanitarian access may reduce harassment of humanitarian NGOs operating in Darfur, assuming the GOS adheres to its terms.

Humanitarian support from the United States government continues to be very substantial, totaling \$2.6 billion in fiscal years 2005 and 2006. Major support also continues to flow to support the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).



Jan 2004 - An internally displaced person cares for her son, sick with hepatitis E, at the city hospital in West Darfur. (AP Photo/James Nachtwey/VII)

Major international attention focuses on the needs for enhanced peacekeeping capability. The AMIS forces are clearly too few in number, too poorly equipped, overly restricted by their limited mandate, and too poorly trained to provide the protection that civilians in Darfur require. An agreement struck between the GOS, the AU, and the UN in Addis Ababa on November 16, 2006 provided for a three-stage process to turn peacekeeping over to an enlarged hybrid force combining AU and UN peacekeepers.

Although the SPLM, the southern partners in the Government of National Unity, support full implementation, the GOS has refused to approve phase two of the Addis agreement, so that progress toward the hybrid force is stymied. The principal reason that the GOS has refused to proceed with the Addis agreement is the unfounded fear that the UN peacekeepers will aid the International Criminal Court (ICC) in apprehending Sudanese officials being charged by the ICC. A recent proposal from the Arab League for an alternative peacekeeping plan has been disruptive rather than helpful. Unless the GOS agrees to implement the Addis agreement, international donors will be reluctant to continue underwriting the AU peacekeeping force and the AU will likely refuse to continue providing troops. Moreover, Congress will impose harsh new sanctions on the GOS.

The only way to achieve long-term progress in Darfur is a political settlement and this is the objective international actors should focus on. The various rebel factions that refuse to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) insist on substantial revisions to the DPA. The GOS has indicated a preparedness to increase significantly the DPA terms regarding compensation to Darfurians who have suffered losses, but it is unclear whether the GOS will agree to other amendments. It is also unclear what Abdul Wahid, the most influential rebel leader, and other rebel leaders will agree to.

Beyond uncertainty about the parties' preparedness to renegotiate the DPA, two principal obstacles exist to the resolution of the crisis. First, the 14 independent rebel groups are seriously fragmented and uncoordinated. The GOS manipulates the rebels, pitting them against each other. Some of the rebel leaders have become warlords whose principal motive is personal enrichment rather than promoting the welfare of Darfurians. The terms under which the Ceasefire Implementation Committee operates provide financial incentives for the rebels to remain divided. Incentives need to be adjusted to push for unification among the rebel groups. Some rebel leaders unnecessarily provoke the GOS by advocating the overthrow of the current regime. Even before they settle on the terms of a new peace pact, the parties need to agree to a cessation of hostilities.

The second major obstacle to reengaging the political process is the multitude of regional actors trying to gather rebel leaders to develop a common agenda. Five different governments in the region are putting themselves forward as conveners, and this is not helpful. Moreover, some of these governments give money and arms to one or more rebel factions. The United States recognizes only the combined UN/AU peacemaking effort led by Jan Eliasson and Salim Salim. This is the effort that should be supported by all those wanting peace in Darfur; efforts that compete with this one should be terminated. The current fragmented approach contrasts sharply with the unified approach to the North/South negotiations that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

The preferred way to accomplish agreement on a new peacekeeping force and a new peace agreement for Darfur is through diplomacy. However, diplomacy without other

leverage has not been sufficient. The Security Council is currently considering a new set of sanctions against the GOS. The Secretary General asked for this discussion to be postponed, but the international community and Darfurians have already waited too long for the GOS to live up to its commitments.

It is helpful to view the problems in Darfur within a wider context of the recently concluded conflict between the north and south and discontent in Sudan's other marginalized regions. The overarching problem in Sudan is that the center controls the resources and fails to respond adequately to the needs and desires of the rest of the country. All Sudanese need to be convinced they belong to the country. The CPA addressed this problem in relation to the south. A newly negotiated agreement needs to address the needs of Darfur. And the needs of other marginalized areas need to be satisfied as well.

If the Darfur situation is not significantly improved soon, further implementation of the CPA could be threatened. Without peace in Darfur, the nation-wide elections mandated in the CPA for 2009 could be postponed or cancelled. This would undermine the CPA and would be very destabilizing for the whole country. Consistent with the terms of the CPA, oil revenues have begun to flow to the government of South Sudan, but the CPA's requirements for oil revenues to be paid to other outlying regions have not been implemented.

All international actors need to collaborate in pressuring the GOS to adhere to its earlier agreement about peacekeeping and to renegotiate the DPA. Given the level of its investments in Sudan, China is a critical player. The Chinese have exerted some behind-the-scenes pressure on the GOS but they are unlikely to make strong public statements. Nor are they willing to be as forceful as the United States in pressing Sudan. Overall, the international community needs to increase the pressure on the GOS and the rebel groups, while also being realistic about the leverage it actually has to force them to make the needed concessions.