

Barack Obama - U.S. Senator for Illinois - obama.senate.gov

Statement of Senator Barack Obama on the Continuing Crisis in Darfur

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WASHINGTON D.C. - U.S. Senator Barack Obama today released the following statement on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the continuing crisis in Darfur:

"All the proclamations, the "Never Again" speeches, and the efforts of many around the world have as yet failed to stop the five-year-long genocide in Darfur. The indiscriminate killing, raping and displacement continue and are escalating. Only decisive and concerted action can end this genocide.

"To start, the US must lead in supporting the full and effective deployment of the United Nations (UN)/African Union (AU) protection force and ensure that the Government of Sudan faces meaningful penalties for obstructing and delaying the deployment of this force. Ambassador Williamson should be commended for his efforts to support the rapid deployment of the African Union/United Nations operations in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeepers. But the Administration, led by President Bush and Secretary Rice, must do more to ensure the UN has the necessary equipment -- especially helicopter support -- to ensure the full mobility and effectiveness of UNAMID troops. The US should also press for the unrestricted deployment of United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) forces in South Sudan to Abyei to help prevent the resumption of fighting in that fragile region where tensions are rising.

"I am deeply concerned by recent reports that the Bush Administration is negotiating the normalization of relations and lifting of sanctions against the Government of Sudan in exchange for piecemeal and modest action on a narrow set of issues. The approach contradicts the resolute and clear policy required to improve conditions on the ground for those at risk. Khartoum has a long history of breaking its commitments to its own people and to the international community. There should be no reward for bad faith. The US relationship with the Government of Sudan can only improve once conditions for the Sudanese people improve. I hope that this hearing will provide a clear explanation of how the Administration's current strategy adheres to this common sense principle.

"Those that continue to commit war crimes and obstruct peace and protection efforts must face significant penalties. The US should lead in the UN Security Council to impose effective targeted sanctions and to curtail violations of the arms embargo through the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee and the US Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. At the same time, the Administration should urge the AU to rebuke Khartoum for its role in the attempted coup in Chad. The US also needs to work with the International Criminal Court to ramp up the pace of indictments of those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity, while Khartoum must feel increased pressure to hand over those individuals already indicted by the Court.

"Lasting peace in Darfur and South Sudan can only be achieved through the unflagging commitment and cooperation of our government, other interested governments around the world, the UN, the AU, the Arab League, and the EU, among others, and advocacy groups. A more comprehensive, consistent, and robust diplomatic effort is an important part of the way forward. US leadership is urgently needed both to help construct a credible peace process for Darfur and to ensure the full and fair implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The US must work to ensure that a single mediator, actively supported by countries with significant leverage, emerges from the confusion that has characterized the Darfur peace process to date. Prime Minister Gordon Brown's offer to kick-start the process is helpful and should be explored. At the same time, Special Envoy Williamson should have sufficient staff and support to devote sustained attention to both the genocide in Darfur and the fraying North-South peace process.

"I am heartened that citizen pressure and activism all over the US is having an impact. Divestment campaigns focused on schools, states, and mutual funds are gathering momentum. Well-targeted advocacy related to China's role in Sudan can help promote a more constructive attitude in Beijing. Activists -- particularly religious groups -- are helping to put the issue of the North-South peace deal back on the radar screen. And the anti-genocide movement is growing by the day.

"It is long past time for the US to exert effective leadership to end the first genocide of the 21st century and work to ensure that it is the last."

Source: http://obama.senate.gov/press/080423-statement_of_se_22/