



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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August 10, 2005

The Honorable Henry J. Hyde
Chairman
House International Relations Committee
US House of Representatives
2110 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Six months ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) applauded the peace agreement for Southern Sudan between the government in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). At that same time, we expressed the hope for an early end to the violence and atrocities being committed against the people of Darfur in western Sudan.

As the crisis continues in Darfur, I write today on behalf of the USCCB to support the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (H.R. 3127). We believe this legislation will give added momentum to the search for a genuine peace in Darfur and relief for its suffering people. The Act asserts the sense of Congress that:

1. the African Union peacekeeping force be expanded and given a stronger mandate and more generous logistical support; and
2. the International Criminal Court be assisted in bringing to justice those accused of war crimes and genocide in Darfur.

We note with satisfaction that the President has appointed a special envoy to support efforts to promote peace in Sudan.

Some progress is being made in the implementation of the peace agreement covering Southern Sudan, but the tragic suffering of the people of Darfur continues. Despite the agreement reached at Abuja on July 5, 2005 between the government in Khartoum and rebel forces in Darfur, and the efforts of the international community and the African Union peacekeeping force, the innocent people of Darfur are still suffering from the effects of violent clashes between the Sudanese army and the rebel forces, as well as from the continuing attacks against innocent civilians by the Janjaweed militia.

We urge continuing pressure by the international community, including the African Union, on the government in Khartoum and the rebel forces to cease military operations. The restoration of public order is essential so that relief and reconstruction efforts can reach all of the people of Darfur. The World Food Program's prediction that 3.5 million people may require food assistance in Darfur illustrates the urgency and magnitude of the crisis.

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During my own travels to Sudan and Darfur, I have seen the untold human suffering and other assaults upon the human dignity of our innocent brothers and sisters. We cannot stand idly by while human life is threatened. The United States and the international community can and must do more to end this moral and humanitarian crisis. We hope that passage of the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act will reinforce the urgency of a peaceful solution to the situation in Darfur that has so tragically impacted innocent people. We offer our prayers that their suffering may end soon.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Ricard S.S.J.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Most Reverend John H. Ricard, S.S.J.
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee
Chairman, Committee on International
Policy