



Western leaders “must be held accountable” for Darfur

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A new report by the Foreign Policy Centre criticises the Government for failing to act sooner in Darfur and for using the “humanitarian alibi” as an excuse for not taking robust action against those committing the genocide in Darfur. It argues that political leaders, including Kofi Annan and Ministers in the British and US Governments, should be held responsible.

The report, Darfur *and Genocide: Mechanisms for Rapid Response, An End to Impunity*, argues that Diplomatic and military commitments in Iraq have overshadowed Darfur. The report criticises the fact that the issue was omitted from the May 2004 Security Council Agenda because minds were focused on Iraq, and claims that relations with Sudan, an ally in the war on terrorism” led to a fatal lack of political resolve. In 2003, less than half the \$2.2 billion appeal to help 13 African countries was funded, while donors fully met the \$1 billion sought for Iraq.

The author of the report, Dr Greg Austin, led a team last year commissioned by the Department for International Development, to examine conflict prevention policies.

The report claims that the US, in particular, has ignored its international undertakings. In 2002, the US President signed the Sudan Peace Act, which provided for the possibility of penalties should the Sudanese Government not be engaged in “good faith negotiations to achieve a permanent, just and equitable peace agreement”. In such a case, the President would be obligated to instruct directors of international financial institutions to oppose extending any loan or credit to the Sudanese government; consider down-grading or suspending diplomatic relations; take necessary steps to deny the government access to oil revenues, and even seek a UN Security Council Resolution to impose an arms embargo. None of these undertakings have been implemented.

The report argues that Governments failed to recognise that their primary duty was to stop the killing and hid behind their provision of humanitarian aid: “it was as if the possibility of genocide could only be thwarted once the external powers had an “elaborate and agreed plan for the political and economic future of the country that satisfied all their domestic neuralgias about intervention”, it claims. There was an over-reliance on “quiet diplomacy” as an effective tool for preventing conflict.

Neither are there signs that the major powers or international organisations are willing to assign the necessary resources when prima facie signs of genocide arise. When these signs emerge, the report argues: “the obligation to prevent can only be meaningful if states reassign significant assets to collective determination of the facts”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Dr Greg Austin is Director of Research at the Foreign Policy Centre in London. For six months in 2003, he led a team of twelve specialists reviewing UK conflict prevention policies supported by its innovative “pool funds”. From February 2000 to January 2002, he held senior posts, including Director of Research and Director of the Asia Programme, in the Brussels and Washington offices of the International Crisis Group, the leading multi-national NGO publishing field-based analysis in support of conflict prevention.
2. Ben Koppelman is a recent graduate from Cambridge University, who has since worked as a researcher on international debt relief with the UNDP in Central America before working at the Foreign Policy Centre.

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