

Statement on Genocide in Darfur, Sudan

Senator Jon S. Corzine

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M. President, today the Senate has taken historic action – stating clearly that the atrocities occurring in Darfur are genocide, reminding the world of its obligations under the Genocide Convention, and calling on the Administration to lead an international effort to stop the genocide. This resolution, which I introduced with my colleague, Sam Brownback, has broad, bipartisan support, and its unanimous approval by the U.S. Senate sends a powerful message – that this body will not remain silent as genocide occurs.

M. President, the situation remains, as UN officials have called it, “the world’s worst humanitarian catastrophe.” At least 30,000 have been killed. 1.2 million have been violently displaced from their villages, of whom 200,000 have fled to Chad. The potential death toll is horrifying. Andrew Natsios, Administrator of the U.S.

Agency for International Development, has predicted that 300,000 will die this year, even in an “optimistic” scenario in which humanitarian assistance is provided, and that up to one million are at risk.

M. President, this disaster is the result of the deliberate policies of the government of Sudan and the “janjaweed” militias under its control. Earlier this week, Human Rights Watch reported how Sudanese government documents themselves prove Khartoum’s complicity. Those documents describe, in plain terms, the government’s military support for the militias – it’s, quote “loyalist tribes” – and its policy of tolerating the abuse of civilians by the militias.

What has been the result? “Janjaweed” militias, along with Sudanese forces, have engaged in systematic attacks against civilians in Darfur. As recently confirmed by U.S. government satellite photographs, villages have been burnt to the ground.

Livestock and food stock have been destroyed, and water sources

poisoned. Humanitarian assistance has been denied. Militias have murdered civilians and abducted children.

M. President, just this week, on Monday, Amnesty International issued a report describing how rape has been used as a weapon of war in Darfur. Amnesty described how women and girls as young as 8 have been raped and abducted, often with the involvement or acquiescence of Sudanese authorities. Janjaweed militia have raped women in public, in front of their families, with the intent of adding humiliation to the violence. Amnesty reports gang rapes, rapes of pregnant women, and torture and killings in the context of sexual violence. Darfurian women, who are often reluctant to talk about these experiences, nonetheless described how they were abducted and held captive during the day, when militia members were looting villages, so that they could be raped at night.

Amnesty reported how rapes have occurred during attacks on villages, during the flight of civilians, and in the camps, all with total impunity. Not a single member of the janjaweed or the

Sudanese armed forces have been charged with committing rape or abducting civilians.

M. President, in addition to stopping this violence, we must act now to prevent death from starvation and disease. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are currently crowded into camps, where conditions are simply stated, horrendous. Humanitarian organizations now estimate that nearly half of the internationally displaced civilians in Darfur have inadequate food and shelter, that 61% lack sufficient water, and that 87% lack adequate sanitation. Many of the camps are off limits to international relief workers, and much of the countryside is inaccessible as well.

The rains are adding to the obstacles presented to the humanitarian organizations. So, too, is the lack of security created by the militias and Sudanese forces. The result may be a complete break in the food pipeline, and the deaths of hundreds of thousands. As UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egelan

said last week, “We are now in this moment of truth, which will last for some weeks.”

M. President, along with my colleague, Senator Brownback, I have introduced a resolution declaring the situation in Darfur to be genocide. Why is this so? To begin with, it is undisputed that the murders, rapes, abductions of children, displacements and denial of humanitarian assistance have been directed at particular ethnic groups, specifically the ethnically African groups -- the Fur, Zaghawa, and Massalit. Both the U.S. and the UN have stated that “ethnic cleansing” is occurring. The U.S. Ambassador for War Crimes, Pierre-Richard Prosper, has said that there are “indicators of genocide.”

What does the Genocide Convention of 1948 state? It defines genocide as killing, causing serious bodily harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction – all of which have occurred in Darfur -- committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national ethnical, racial

or religious group. The Convention does not require that a certain number have died before it is genocide, only that the acts are occurring.

M. President, this declaration is important because of our obligation – and that of the world – to stop genocide before it is too late. After all, the full name of the Genocide Convention is the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.” Article I of the Convention states that the contracting parties “undertake to prevent and punish” genocide. The United States and every other permanent member of the UN Security Council is a party to the Genocide Convention.

M. President, the Genocide Convention arose out of the horror of the Holocaust, in a moment of history in which the world vowed never again to permit this evil. But the world has spoken much more recently. In late January 2004, 55 governments participated in the Stockholm International Forum, “Preventing Genocide;

Threats and Responsibilities.” Those governments, which included the U.S., the U.K., France and Russia, declared, quote:

The Holocaust... challenged the foundations of human civilization... We are committed to shouldering our responsibility to protect groups identified as potential victims of genocide, mass murder or ethnic cleansing, drawing upon the range of tools at our disposal to prevent such atrocities in accordance with international law and fully upholding the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

M. President, this was this January. What do these words mean without action? More words, mere condemnations are not sufficient. Nor is humanitarian assistance possible without real intervention. The lack of food, water and sanitation have reached critical levels. But the problem is caused, and compounded, by the lack of security. As Jan Egelan said last week, quote “The number

one problem now is lack of security. Our trucks are looted, our humanitarian workers are threatened and attacked.”

M. President, we must find ways to stop this catastrophe. This resolution calls on the President to lead an international effort to stop this genocide. In my view, to be effective, we must take whatever actions are necessary, including armed intervention, to save the hundreds of thousands of lives that are at stake. I have called for a UN-authorized multinational force, as well as the provision of assistance to the African Union’s critically important, but thus far, inadequate mission.

M. President, in the end, the only thing that will matter is whether we have saved these lives, whether we have done whatever it takes to stop this genocide. This resolution is a powerful statement. But it must also serve as an impetus to the Administration and to the rest of the world to act. Morally and legally, we have no other option.

Thank you, M. President. I yield the floor.