

**Senator Richard J. Durbin
OCTOBER 3, 2007**

**BRINGING PEACE TO SUDAN:
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS**

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, I thank the Banking Committee for holding this hearing today on a crisis that has gone on far too long, on a crisis that simply must not go on any longer. The people of Sudan have suffered drought, famine, genocide, and now utter chaos. The United States has talked for years about putting a stop to it. Yet the crisis continues. We must act, and we must act now.

It was over two years ago when President Bush rightly called what was happening in Sudan by its proper name: genocide. Yet the United States and our allies have not done enough to help stop it, and Sudan continues to disintegrate.

The Origins of the October Peace Conference

At the end of this month, however, there is another chance. We have another chance to bring all of the warring factions together to agree on a framework for peace in Sudan, a peace that the United Nations peacekeeping force can then help secure. The United States should do everything we can to see that this peace is agreed to, and then work with the global community to ensure that this peace is preserved.

The latest push for peace gained momentum in late July, when the UN Security Council voted to implement a significantly increased United Nations / African Union peacekeeping force.

This peacekeeping force is desperately needed. The United States should work with the UN and the global community to make sure it is implemented as soon as possible. We in the Senate should do our part by ensuring that adequate funds are available to help pay for this critical mission.

But the peacekeepers are only one important step. Sudan first must have a peace to keep, and that requires a long term political agreement among its many factions. That is why peace negotiations are so critical.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told me in July what he has often said, that ending the violence in Darfur is one of his top priorities. In early September his efforts resulted in the announcement of formal peace talks to begin later this month between the various factions and the Sudanese government.

These negotiations will be a critical step and deserve our strongest support.

Keeping Up the Pressure by Threatening Legislation

What else can we in the Senate do to help? What can we do to reinforce to the Sudanese that we are watching very closely and we expect all parties to work towards peace? We can prepare legislation that would increase economic pressure on the Sudanese, and be prepared to pass that legislation at any time that the Sudanese might falter on the path to peace.

That is why today's hearing is so critical. Our colleagues in the House have done their part: they passed the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act 418-1 in July. Today the Senate considers its role. Today this panel will explore legislative options that promise economic penalties against those that do not in good faith pursue peace through dialogue. In the next couple of weeks we hope to

create the best legislation we can and move that bill through committee and onto the Senate calendar. The Senate will make it very clear to the Sudanese that we are serious and that a bill is ready to pass if they fail.

What should this bill contain? Concerned members of the House and the Senate, as well as the activists who've kept this crisis at the forefront of our minds, have suggested several means by which economic pressure could be applied, including the following:

- Require the Administration to create a list of companies supporting the Sudanese regime.
- Require companies supporting the regime to report to the SEC so that the SEC can publish a list of these organizations.
- Require the Administration to report on the impact thus far of current economic sanctions.
- Prohibit federal government contracts from being awarded to companies supporting the regime.
- Authorize state and local contract prohibitions for companies supporting the regime.
- Authorize state and local governments to divest from companies supporting the regime.
- Provide investor safe harbors for divestment.
- Authorize additional funding for the Office of Foreign Assets Control within the Treasury Department, so that it can do more to find and punish sanctions violators.

- Study how the federal employee Thrift Savings Plan could create a Terror-Free Investment Fund which would bar Sudan-supporting companies.
- And finally, increase civil and criminal penalties for sanctions violators, which was a proposal that I included in my Sudan Disclosure and Divestment Act and which passed the House yesterday as a standalone measure. I'm happy to say that this method of increasing economic pressure is already on its way to the President for his signature.

My objective in testifying today is not to advocate for a specific set of pressure points, even though I have introduced two bills with Senator Brownback and many others that would increase the economic pressure on the Sudanese regime. I think we should explore all of these suggestions. My objective here is to provide my full support for the Committee's plan to create the best legislation we can to put maximum pressure on all the factions in Sudan to agree on peace. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate – as well as with the House, the advocacy groups, and the Administration – to create the best bill that we can and one that we can all support.

Conclusion

Whatever economic pressure we apply, the purpose needs to be clear: the U.S. wants to help bring peace to the region. And we need to apply this pressure with one voice. This chamber, this Congress, and this country will not stand by and watch as chaos and destruction destroy the people of the Sudan. There is a very real opportunity for the peace talks to progress. We urge the Sudanese Government and all other parties to bring a halt to the human suffering and participate fully in the upcoming peace talks. And we will be ready to enact tough new laws, if necessary, to

further isolate the country economically if this opportunity comes and goes, with no real change.

Thank you again for holding this hearing, and I look forward to working with the Committee to do our part in bringing peace to the people of Sudan.