



Darfur Digest November 2008

I. Executive Summary

Canadian Politics and Darfur: The federal election dominated Canadian politics this month, but Liberal candidates Irwin Cotler and Bob Rae spoke out about the crisis in Darfur during their campaigns. John McNee, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, highlighted Canada's contributions to Darfur in addressing the General Assembly.

Security in Darfur: The security situation in Darfur has deteriorated dramatically over the past two months. In September, North Darfur saw heavy fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and three of the largest rebel groups following a series of offensives by the Government of Sudan (GoS). In early October, the SAF and government-sponsored "Janjaweed" militias attacked numerous villages throughout South Darfur killing civilians and causing large-scale destruction. Meanwhile, the number of people displaced by the fighting continues to rise even as the camps they inhabit grow more unstable and violent.

Negotiations and Engagement in Darfur: The first meeting of the AU, UN and GoS Tripartite Committee on the deployment of UNAMID met on October 7. The meeting emphasized the need for cooperation between the three bodies for the success of the mission. President al-Bashir announced that attempts by the ICC and the international community to indict him for charges of war crimes would derail Darfur peace negotiations and increase regional instability. Major General Emmanuel Karake Karenzi, the second-highest UN commander in Darfur, has been accused of overseeing Tutsi troops which committed war crimes in Rwanda.

The Humanitarian Situation in Darfur: Peace talks led by the Government of Sudan may signal a step forward, but the victims of Darfur are far from safe. Tribal infighting and attacks by government forces continue to claim lives. Recent violence has displaced thousands of Darfuris. A bleak UN report said that security in Darfur is so bad that the UN-African mission cannot be effective. The environment within internally displaced persons camps remains tense after a fatal attack in Kalma IDP camp in August left many civilians dead. According to UN officials, aid organizations are evaluating whether they can continue their work. This comes as the number of attacks against aid workers in 2008 surpassed the number of attacks in all of 2007.



Darfur Digest November 2008

II. Policy Recommendations

1. Build on Canada's recent commitments to Darfur by appointing a Special Envoy to the region. A Special Envoy could strengthen Canadian policymaking on Darfur in three key ways: 1) providing the world with a public face for Canada's efforts on Darfur, 2) providing a presence on the ground in Sudan, and 3) coordinating an integrated “all of Sudan” approach to Canadian peacebuilding. Specifically, a Special Envoy could play a key role in assisting efforts of the Darfuri rebel groups to form a unified and coherent bargaining position, a critical success factor for renewed negotiations.
2. The Canadian government should pursue targeted divestment from Sudan conditioned on the Sudanese government's cessation of atrocities in Darfur and active engagement in the peace process.
3. Canada's mission to the UN should engage on more actively in multilateral diplomacy at the UN to bring renewed prominence to the Darfur issue internationally and rally greater international support for conflict resolution efforts.

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III. Canadian Politics and Darfur

The federal election dominated Canadian politics in October. While foreign policy was not frequently discussed, Liberal candidates Irwin Cotler and Bob Rae spoke out about the crisis in Darfur during the election campaign. John McNee, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, highlighted Canada's contributions to Darfur in addressing the General Assembly.

During the election campaign, Liberal candidate Bob Rae criticized the Harper government for having “done nothing to help solve such crises as ethnic cleansing in Darfur or civil war in Sri Lanka.”¹ Speaking for the Liberal Party as a whole, Rae promised that a “Liberal government would take part in the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission to Darfur, beginning with a contribution of helicopter support.”²



Darfur Digest November 2008

Irwin Cotler, another Liberal candidate and critic for Human Rights, wrote articles for the *Gazette*³ and the *National Post*⁴ urging the leaders of Canada's four political parties to address the crisis in Darfur during their election campaigns.

Cotler accused Canadian political leaders of “ignoring the lesson of history that genocide occurs not only because of the machinery of death but also because of crimes of indifference, conspiracies of silence.”⁵ Cotler argued for Canada to be the leader “to champion the role of international criminal law in bringing the genocidaires to account” and for the election campaign to be the medium for Canadian voices to be heard on Darfur.⁶

At the international level, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations highlighted Canadian contributions to Darfur in his speech to the General Assembly on October 15. He cited Canada's allocation of \$10.3 million over three years for police in peacekeeping operations in Africa and that Canada was participating in the international action to end the suffering of the people in Darfur. McNee called on all parties to halt hostilities and human rights violations and to support the work of the United Nations-African Union Joint Chief Mediator. He added that the Canadian government is working for the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which called for elections in 2009 that should be free and fair.⁷

IV. Security in Darfur

The security situation in Darfur has deteriorated dramatically over the past two months. In September, North Darfur saw heavy fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and three of the largest rebel groups following a series of offensives by the Government of Sudan (GoS). In early October, the SAF and government-sponsored “Janjaweed” militias attacked numerous villages throughout South Darfur killing civilians and causing large-scale destruction. Meanwhile, the number of people displaced by the fighting continues to rise even as the camps they inhabit grow more unstable and violent.

In his report released on October 17, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UNSG) outlined a series of significant offensives by the GoS against rebels in North Darfur.⁸ Throughout the month of September, the Government carried out attacks on rebel strongholds in the region, employing both air strikes and ground forces. The UNSG and rebels reported heavy



Darfur Digest November 2008

military casualties on both sides.⁹ At least 12 civilians, including two children, were killed by the indiscriminant bombing campaigns of the Government, a strategy that they have relied on all too often.¹⁰

Human Rights Watch recently reported that 40 civilians were killed in violence in South Darfur between October 5 and 17.¹¹ Sources claim that government forces and government-supported “Janjaweed” militias attacked at least 15 villages and forced some 12,000 people to flee their homes.¹² Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir responded by saying that life is “very normal in Darfur,” despite the rising levels of violence.¹³ The joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping force (UNAMID) was unable to investigate the violence in South Darfur after being shot at by gunmen in the area on October 14.¹⁴

UNAMID remains unable to significantly alter the patterns of violence in Darfur and is increasingly becoming a target itself for hostile actions and banditry. On October 6, a UNAMID convoy was attacked in South Darfur leaving one Nigerian soldier dead.¹⁵ The UNSG issued a statement condemning the attacks and reminding the Government of Sudan of its responsibility for the security of civilians and peacekeepers, including by restraining government-armed militias.

UNAMID is hoping to make a difference in the many camps that provide fragile refuge for the 2.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur.¹⁶ The two largest camps, Kalma in South Darfur and Zamzam in North Darfur, are increasingly fragile and tense. The Government of Sudan attacked Kalma camp at the end of August killing some 30 people, while Sudanese police killed five people in Zamzam on September 10.¹⁷ The Government claims that the camps are hiding rebels and need to be shut down while rebels, humanitarian groups, and the United Nations claim that those killed were civilians.¹⁸

While the troubled Abyei region of Sudan separating the North and South of the country is calming down, the nearby Southern Kordofan region is experiencing increasing violence. On October 21 the International Crisis Group released a report warning that the Southern Kordofan region may become the next Darfur with its tumultuous blend of fragmented tribes armed and mobilized from the 20 year civil war and competing over resources.¹⁹ On October 18 nine Chinese oil workers in the region were abducted, five of whom were later killed.²⁰ The Government blamed a Darfur rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement, which denied

involvement in the incident. It is further evidence of the volatility of the region, the increasing lawlessness, and the possibility of violence spilling out from Darfur into the rest of the country.

V. Negotiations and Engagement in Darfur

The first meeting of the AU, UN and GoS Tripartite Committee on the deployment of UNAMID met on October 7. The meeting emphasized the need for cooperation between the three bodies for the success of the mission.²¹ A few days later a joint AU and Arab League meeting took place to discuss the efficacy of UNAMID and the current political, humanitarian and security situations in the Darfur region.²²

President al-Bashir announced that attempts by the ICC and the international community to indict him for charges of war crimes would derail Darfur peace negotiations and increase regional instability. ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo acknowledged the threats but committed to continuing to push for war crime charges on Sudan's President.²³

President al-Bashir also held a 3-day peace conference in October, without rebel groups present. Rebel groups, particularly the Justice and Equality Movement, reportedly did not participate and attributed al-Bashir's motives for the conference to impressing the ICC to avoid charges. The conference participants included Sudanese political parties and civic groups and ended with the promise of reaching a resolution to the Darfur crisis.²⁴

In October, there were several international contributions to UNAMID. The mission received 189 police advisors from 12 countries now stationed in IDP camps in the Darfur region.²⁵ Bangladesh contributed the Bangladeshi Multirole Logistics Unit (325 personnel) at the end of the month.²⁶ However, the mission is still in dire need of helicopters to increase presence and effectiveness.²⁷ The Ukraine committed to contributing 18 helicopters to UNAMID, but the unstable political situation in Ukraine may jeopardize the deployment of the helicopters.²⁸

Major General Emmanuel Karake Karenzi, the second-highest UN commander in Darfur, has been accused of overseeing Tutsi troops which committed war crimes in Rwanda. The Rwandan government threatened to withdraw 3000 troops from Darfur unless Karenzi's term was renewed for a year. Despite the allegations, Ban Ki-Moon announced that the commander



Darfur Digest November 2008

would remain in his position for at least six months after his one-year term ends this month. After this time, Rwanda will be allowed to nominate a Rwandan general not accused of war crimes to replace Karenzi.²⁹

VI. The Humanitarian Situation in Darfur

Peace talks led by the Government of Sudan may signal a step forward, but the victims of Darfur are far from safe. Tribal infighting and attacks by government forces continue to claim lives. Recent violence has displaced thousands of Darfuris. A bleak UN report said that security in Darfur is so bad that the UN-African mission cannot be effective. The environment within internally displaced persons camps remains tense after a fatal attack in Kalma IDP camp in August left many civilians dead. According to UN officials, aid organizations are evaluating whether they can continue their work. This comes as the number of attacks against aid workers in 2008 surpassed the number of attacks in all of 2007.

As the rainy season wraps up, October and November is a time of migration from northern Darfur to southern grazing areas. But as roads dry up, there is an increased worry that this will lead to more attacks. In North Darfur, clashes between government and rebel forces near the areas of Birmaza and Disa forced 24,000 people to flee for safety. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said a total of 40,000 people have been displaced through other violence, including tribal fighting.³⁰ The governor of North Darfur denied this saying the state “is violence free.” In South Darfur near Muhajariya, 40 civilians were killed in fighting, while thousands more have been displaced. However it is unclear who the attackers were. Human Rights Watch blamed the deaths on government militias, who they say attacked more than 13 villages between October 5 and 17.³¹ But according to *Reuters*, a spokesman for the Sudanese military denied that government forces were involved. Instead, the deaths were attributed to tribal infighting between the Maaliya and Zaghawa tribes over cattle and livestock. The two tribes are in a dispute over land ownership rights.³²

Aid organizations are now struggling to reach the newly-displaced populations, as the season becomes colder. In South Darfur, UNAMID forces have not entered the area since gunmen shot at a convoy on October 14.³³ However, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) successfully handed out relief items to the displaced, after obtaining the necessary



Darfur Digest November 2008

security guarantees from the parties involved in the armed conflict.³⁴ But in North Darfur, the unstable region makes it dangerous for aid workers. At the beginning of October the ICRC sent an assessment team to the Disa and Birmaza areas. The ICRC's assessment was cut short when two of its cars were hijacked, but they did find that the majority of the displaced had gone to other villages in the area. The UN-African Union mission has not been able to enter this area in North Darfur either. In two separate attempts, a UNAMID helicopter was shot at and forced to turn back. There's also no indication that the displaced are heading to displaced persons camps because the fighting is still fresh so many people are still hiding.³⁵

In a speech to the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called the situation "desperate," with peacekeepers and aid workers finding themselves increasingly at risk from attack. Ban said that within the first eight months of 2008, aid workers had been attacked at a higher rate than in all of 2007. As of the October report, this included 208 vehicle hijackings, 155 abductions of aid workers and 123 premises broken into. Ban said at least two major NGOs tasked with assisting more than 500,000 civilians in northern Darfur, suspended their activities within August to October.³⁶ "At some point, there may need to be a line drawn, saying we've had enough," said Alex Gregory, head of OCHA in North Darfur state. According to several UN sources, the humanitarian community in Darfur is discussing how long it can sustain operations and when to walk away. Another UNAMID peacekeeper was killed this month after a peacekeeping patrol was ambushed.³⁷ As of October 10, UNAMID forces are up to 10,527 troops, but it's a lack of security that is causing delays in troop deployments and equipment shipments.³⁸ However an Indonesian peacekeeping unit arrived in Darfur this month. It is only the second police unit to be deployed in Darfur. Formed police units (FPU) are specially trained police forces able to operate in high-risk security environments. UNAMID hopes to have 19 formed police units on the ground eventually.³⁹

Darfuris understand better than most the need for security. On a coordinated day of action, protesters from various IDP camps staged a demonstration on October 20. It was a signal to the international community to improve security. An immediate request was to disarm Khartoum backed militias before holding peace negotiations. That very same night, unidentified men entered the Humedia camp and beat up the protesters, killing one man.⁴⁰ And in an IDP camp in Tawila in North Darfur, a sheikh said, "weekly, there is a problem here. Weekly, janjaweed [government-sponsored militias], weapons, rape, looting."⁴¹ But the greatest resentment felt by locals towards the government, is over what happened in Kalma IDP camp.



Darfur Digest November 2008

On August 25, Sudanese forces tried to raid the Kalma displaced persons camp for weapons. The situation turned ugly and government forces opened fire on camp residents, killing 33 people and injuring 108. Of those injured, at least 38 were children and 25 were women.⁴² UNAMID is now providing a 24 hour patrol of and around Kalma camp, in part to assure the residents of their safety.⁴³

UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy made a tour stop at Kalma camp in October, during his week-long trip that was his first tour of Darfur.⁴⁴ Le Roy visited the graves of the victims of the August 25 attack and spoke with sheiks of the camp.⁴⁵ They said UNAMID had failed to protect the civilians inside the camp, although they were now grateful for the around the clock presence. The sheiks requested an increased deployment of UNAMID troops in the area to protect camps.⁴⁶ And it appears Le Roy listened. In a speech to the UN Security Council upon his return, Le Roy said deployment will increase the capability of UNAMID, but at the moment troops remain under-equipped and poorly resourced. However, Le Roy said he saw “good progress” at Kalma camp because of the recent permanent patrols, and the UN mission and humanitarian community were collaborating in West Darfur. At that same meeting, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support announced 60 per cent deployment is expected by the end of this year, with UNAMID reaching 80 per cent deployment by next March.⁴⁷

Since the attack at Kalma in August, IDP camps remain tense. Camp residents fear that Khartoum is trying to force people out of the camps.⁴⁸ This belief became more than a suspicion, when the Minister of Interior announced that the UN and Government of Sudan had agreed that Kalma and another IDP camp were a threat to security. The Minister called for the “evacuation” of Kalma IDP camp. UNAMID immediately issued a statement to remind the government that it agreed “not to make any unilateral decision regarding Kalma IDP camp.”⁴⁹ But government denial is not a new thing. In a rare interview this month, Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir told the British Channel 4 News that rape claims are made up by Darfuri women. The leader vehemently denied a large scale rape campaign. Al-Bashir said, “these [rape claims] are all false allegations. It is not in the culture of Darfuris.”⁵⁰

According to the Sudanese Representative to the UN, the Government of Sudan will strive to deliver health and education services to all children. Speaking at the General Assembly on the issue of children’s rights, he stated that the country is working to bring the Convention on



Darfur Digest November 2008

the Rights of the Child into national law. There are also plans to create a monitoring and reporting mechanism in Sudan on child soldiers to aid UN staff in negotiations for the release of child soldiers.⁵¹ But regional instability could make this harder.

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