

## Rally to End the Genocide in the Darfur Region of Sudan

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April 30, 2006

Listen carefully to these words:

The problem is immediate. The problem is essentially a humanitarian one. . . . It is. . . a problem for enlightened civilization. We have talked; we have sympathized; we have expressed our horror; the time to act is long past due.

That was a statement in the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, dated December 20, 1943, discussing the Nazi campaign to annihilate European Jewry.

Those words apply with full force to the genocide occurring today in the Darfur region of Sudan. The problem is immediate. The problem is essentially a humanitarian one. It is a problem for enlightened civilization. We have talked; we have sympathized we have expressed our horror. The time to act, after three years of genocide, is long past due.

Let us demand as individual moral actors, as members of our national community, as members of the world community, as brothers and sisters of those who are suffering untold tragedy every day in the Darfur region of Sudan, "Take action. Stop the Genocide. When we say 'Never again' about the genocidal rape, torture, dislocation and murder of hundreds of thousands of people, we mean 'Never again'!"

After three years of a horrendous, government-orchestrated campaign of murder, rape, and displacement of over a million people from their lands . . . the world still stands by, hypocritically parroting the words, "Never again," with reference to the genocide orchestrated by Hitler, while permitting genocide and other massive human rights abuses to occur over and over and over again.

After the Holocaust, the United States, the United Nations, and the international community – with the complicity of individuals all over the world who have failed and refused to raise their voices to demand effective intervention – allowed the genocidal slaughter, the displacement, the torture, and the rape of people all over the world.

We stood by and did nothing while Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge carried out a brutal genocide and enslaved the entire nation of Cambodia. Effective intervention was possible in Cambodia, but it was not even attempted. The calls for military intervention by Senator George McGovern and William F. Buckley, Jr., were compelling. Senator McGovern asked, "Do we sit on the sidelines and watch a population slaughtered or do we marshal military force and put an end to it?" Mr. Buckley urged that military units "go there and take power away from . . . sadistic madmen who have brought on their

country the worst suffering, the worst conditions brought on any country in this bloody century.” Instead of intervening, the US and the international community did nothing beyond a little hand-wringing, allowing Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge to kill approximately 2 million Cambodians, including all but a thousand of 60,000 Buddhist monks in the country. Even after the genocide and the defeat of the Khmer Rouge by the Vietnamese, the United States government insisted, shockingly, that the Khmer Rouge still be recognized as the representatives of Cambodia at the United Nations. Instead of meaning “Never again,” we looked the other way, becoming complicit in the Cambodian genocide.

During the administration of George W. Bush, the US invaded Iraq under the pretense of protecting the world against Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction. However, Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction at the time of the invasion. Ironically, when Iraq was utilizing chemical weapons – first against Iranians 195 times between 1983 and 1988, then against the Iraq Kurds commencing in 1987 – the US, in an effort led by President Reagan, condoned it by defeating a proposed sanctions bill. Reagan’s policy of overlooking Saddam Hussein’s use of chemical weapons was perpetuated by President George Bush, Sr. Secretary of State James Baker rationalized the cozy relationship with Hussein by arguing, unconscionably, that getting tough with Hussein would be bad for American business interests. These were his words: “Had we attempted to isolate Iraq, we would have also isolated American businesses, particularly agricultural interests, from significant commercial opportunities.” Hussein was rewarded with an additional \$1 billion in agricultural credits and found fans among Midwestern farm-state politicians. Instead of effective sanctions to stop Hussein’s genocidal terror, he was befriended, coddled, and rewarded by the US. Senator Bob Dole even assured Hussein that President Bush would veto sanctions legislation if it passed Congress. Instead of really meaning “Never again,” we gave aid and comfort to Hussein as he used chemical weapons against the Kurds.

Beginning in 1992, Serb nationalists, led by Slobodan Milosevic, carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against non-Serbs – Muslims and Croats – to run them off from their homeland in Bosnia. That campaign included mass murder, rape, incarceration in detention camps, torture, and destruction of most cultural and religious sites to eliminate any signs of a Muslim or Croat presence or history. Neither the US nor the international community did anything to stop the genocide. For three and one-half years, the United States, Europe, and the United Nations stood by while 200,000 Bosnians were killed and more than two million were displaced. Although the US was well informed of the atrocities, including the establishment of rape camps, nothing was done by the George H. W. Bush Administration to stop them. Things did not get any better under the Clinton Administration, until, in mid-1995, action was finally taken by the US to deter the Serbs from their ongoing genocide. Much of the tragedy could have been prevented had the US and the international community intervened. Instead of meaning “Never again,” we sat on our hands, being complicit bystanders in the Bosnian genocide.

In April 1994, a systematic campaign began in Rwanda to kill Tutsis and those who objected to the killing. Mostly by means of hacking people to death with machetes, Hutus slaughtered some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 100 days. The US and the UN could have prevented the genocide, could have really meant “Never again,” but did nothing. Romeo Dallaire, the UN military commander in Rwanda described “how the international community, through an inept UN mandate and what can only be described as indifference, self-interest and racism, aided and abetted these crimes against humanity,” summarizing the situation as follows:

[T]he root of it all . . . is the fundamental indifference of the world community to the plight of seven to eight million black Africans in a tiny country that had no strategic or resource value to any world power. An overpopulated little country that turned in on itself and destroyed its own people, as the world watched and yet could not manage to find the political will to intervene.

Had the US, the UN, and the international community truly meant “Never again,” the slaughter could have been stopped. Instead, 800,000 men, women, and children were brutally killed.

It is happening again. More than 450,000 African Muslims dead in Darfur during the three years of genocide, with 2.5 million people being run off their homes to a tragic existence in refugee camps. This is the worst human rights disaster on earth, yet the press and the public – as well as our elected officials – are once again complicit in this tragedy.

After the Rwandan slaughter of 800,000 in 1994, President Bush wrote in the margins of a study on Rwanda, “Not on my watch.” But the Darfur genocide is happening on his watch – and nothing has been done to effectively stop the slaughter, raping, and displacement.

Rape has become an instrument of war in this genocide, to humiliate, to terrorize, and to punish. Assaults are indiscriminate, against young girls and old women alike. Rape is being used against women and children to break the will of the population that remains. Women have reported being raped in front of their husbands, then their husbands are killed in front of them. Women have reported being raped in front of their children, then their children are killed in front of them. How much more has to occur before our nation takes action?

Let us ask the members of our congressional delegation: What have you done to stop the genocide in Darfur? And let us demand they take action – effective action, not just platitudes and excuses – to stop the genocide now.

Wouldn't we each do what we could to stop a rape in our front yards? Why do so few people even pick up a pen to demand that our President and our representatives in Congress take immediate action to stop the brutal rapes of the women in Darfur and the killings of so many men, women, and children? Is it because the news media has been so pathetic in its coverage? Is it because of a sense of powerlessness or an abdication of personal moral responsibility? Is it because we don't really mean "Never again" if it requires us to stand up, to speak out, to demand intervention?

I was proud, as Salt Lake City's mayor, to sponsor resolutions of the US Conference of Mayors the past two years, calling for immediate action by the US government to stop the genocide. I mailed those resolutions to every member of the US House of Representatives and to every member of the US Senate. I received only a handful of responses – and have seen no effective action.

We must each demand far more – far better – from those who are in positions to make a difference. In the absence of any real leadership by elected officials, we must assume that leadership ourselves and create the political pressure for them to act. As Samantha Power wrote about the dismal record of the United States when facing genocides, "the most realistic hope for combating [genocide] lies in the rest of us creating short-term political costs for those who do nothing."

President Clinton's National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, told the director of Human Rights Watch that the phones were not ringing, so no action was likely going to be taken to intervene in the Rwandan genocide. His advice, two weeks after the beginning of the Rwanda genocide was to "Make more noise!" That's our job, as moral actors: Make more noise! And make it now!

Let us each take up the torch of moral responsibility. Let us not be complicit any more in the genocide occurring in Darfur. Let us, from this day forward, say "Never again" and mean it.