

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 8, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In a world where regional crises can develop overnight and multiple violent conflicts occur on a daily basis, the United States must act as a strong proponent of peace and stability in the international community. Our responsibility to provide clear leadership can be no greater than on the rare and horrible occasions when genocide is committed.

Since February 2003, nearly 2,500,000 people have been displaced from their homes and more than 200,000 civilians have lost their lives in Darfur. Since the May 2006 signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, peace remains elusive. The two main rebel groups that refused to sign the agreement have splintered into a handful of factions and the ruling National Congress Party continues to pursue policies that restrict humanitarian access, prevent effective civilian protection, spread the crisis beyond Sudan's borders, and undermine the push for renewed peace talks. The current situation on the ground is worse than it was last year, with over 140,000 people newly displaced since the beginning of 2007. United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recently sought to get leaders of the African Great Lakes region to defuse tensions in the region, but she made no major breakthrough and the government of Sudan did not attend her meeting with African leaders.

While the United States has taken some action to encourage peace in Darfur, we believe that several steps need to be taken to strengthen American leadership in the region. First, we ask that you articulate a clear strategy for Sudan and designate a leader within the Administration to guide this policy. The Darfur conflict began in February of 2003, yet almost five years later the United States still does not have a clear strategy to end the conflict. Our policy toward Sudan has been obfuscated by the fact that there is no single authority in the State Department for Sudan policy. There has been a constant turnover of government advisors on Darfur. The Special Envoy for Sudan and the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs share responsibility for decision-making, which has resulted in a lack of coordination. We are hopeful about the appointment of Richard Williamson as the new Special Envoy for Sudan, but there is still a clear need for a single, dedicated person in the Administration who is a final authority for Sudan policy.

Second, we ask that you place an adequately staffed, full-time diplomatic team in the region. The National Congress Party in Sudan is adept at manipulating conflict in the region to its advantage. The complicated matter of coordinating sanctions, supporting peace talks and

working toward the deployment of a peacekeeping force is made even more problematic by the proliferation of other regional crises. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the conflicts in Darfur, Eastern Chad, Northern Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea are all interrelated. Such crises could sabotage the Darfur peace process and we need to have the capability in the region to provide a robust response to the underlying problem.

The need for additional resources and attention in Chad is especially pronounced. In Chad, weak government control of wide swaths of the country present conditions ripe for insecurity and dangerous international terrorist threats. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that, as of December 2006, eastern Chad contains approximately 270,000 registered refugees. Meanwhile, resource competition and cultural incompatibility between the residents of eastern Chad and incoming Darfuris has led to nearly 200,000 internally displaced persons among the Chadian population. Last fall, both Catherine Huck, the joint operations representative for UNHCR in Abéché, Chad and Loum Ndoadoumngue Neloumseï Elise, the Vice-President of the Chad National Assembly, analogized the current security environment of Chad to that of the Darfur region of Sudan about five years ago. This weekend the world saw these unstable conditions give rise to a rebel uprising that is further destabilizing the region. We note that before this happened the country team at the U.S. mission had no permanent commercial or economic officer, the USAID mission was closed, and despite reports of terrorist activity, there was no U.S. Treasury attaché on post.

With a strong leadership structure in place and a focused diplomatic team on the ground, the United States will be able to develop and implement a more coordinated and effective policy for Darfur. To inaugurate this new approach, we suggest initiating a strong diplomatic effort both to bring together much needed logistic support for the AU-UN hybrid peacekeeping force, and to enact strong multilateral sanctions to match current unilateral U.S. sanctions. Improved leadership in form and substance will send an urgently needed message abroad that the United States is a moral nation that will stand to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Hillary Rodham Clinton


Barbara Mikulski


Tom Harkin


Evan Bayh


Robert Menendez


Amy Klobuchar


Tim Johnson

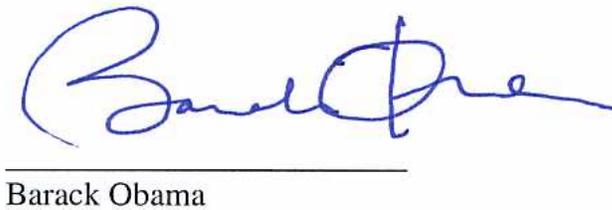

Maria Cantwell

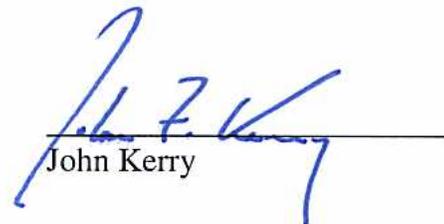

Chris Dodd

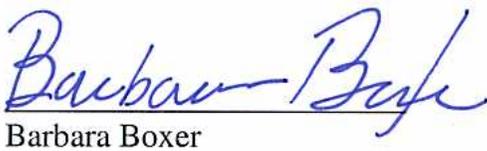

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