

# Negotiating Peace in Darfur: Failures and Prospects

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## Introduction

In 2003, a conflict broke out in Sudan's western province of Darfur between the mainly "African" rebels and the government forces and their proxy "Arab" militias. It is estimated that about 200,000 people have died in Darfur from fighting, disease, and starvation. The UN and aid agencies estimate that over two million Darfurians, out of the population of about six million, are living in refugee camps (BBC Online, 6 September 2007). Even though the majority of all deaths in Darfur occurred in 2003 and 2004 (Natsios 2008), the conflict is nowhere near the end.

This study will examine the historical roots of the Darfur conflict and the failed attempts and approaches to end it. Nathan (2007) argues that "sustainable peace requires a negotiated settlement that sufficiently meets the interests and needs of parties and citizens, addresses the causes of the conflict, and rests on the parties' willingness to implement agreements in a co-operative fashion." As this paper will show, the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) has failed to bring about these requirements due to the wrong strategies employed by the African Union's mediators who wrote the agreement for the parties, while the international community put pressure on the parties to accept the flawed agreement. At the same time, instead of honest negotiations to end the conflict and bring peace to the region, the Sudanese government and the Darfur rebels showed little interest in serious negotiations and used the talks only for tactical maneuvering.

After examining the aftermath of the DPA and the failed talks in Libya held in October 2007, the author will offer suggestions that could help prepare the parties for the next peace talks and bring an agreement acceptable to all sides in the Darfur conflict.

The first part of the paper will examine the historical roots of the Darfur conflict. The second part will look at the counter-insurgency by the government of Sudan. The third part will evaluate the international community's response to the conflict. The fourth part will discuss the negotiation process that led to the Darfur Peace Agreement. The fifth part will examine the aftermath of the DPA. The sixth part will discuss the failed talks in Libya. The seventh part will discuss the way forward for the Darfur peace process.

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## The Historical Roots of the Darfur Conflict

This part of the paper will examine the historical roots of the Darfur conflict. Darfur was an independent kingdom and a political entity since the fourteenth century (Prunier 2005: 2; Rankhumise 2006: 4). In the seventeenth century, with the arrival of the Arabs, Islam became the main religion in Darfur. By 1800, Darfur was the most powerful state in the region (Miller 2007: 113; Flint and de Waal 2008: 2).

Sudan became a country at the Congress of Berlin in 1886, where the European colonial powers decided the fate of Africa. As one of the most diverse countries in the world and the largest country on the African continent, Sudan is divided by religion (70% Muslim, 25% animist, 5% Christian), ethnicity (40% Arab and 60% African), and tribe and economic activity (between nomadic and sedentary cultures) (International Crisis Group 2006; Tar 2006: 409-410). The country is comprised of almost 600 tribes which for the most of their history never had a common language, identity, or culture (Thomas, 1993: 2).

Since 1899, Sudan was ruled by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. Darfur became a part of the British-Egyptian controlled Sudan only in 1917, when the Condominium annexed the independent kingdom of Darfur and incorporated it in Sudan's borders (El Mahdi 1965: 121; Albino 1970: 16; O'Fahey and Spaulding 1974: 186; Flint and de Waal 2008: 10). From its annexation, the Darfur region was "completely neglected" by the Condominium's authorities in the economic, social, and political terms (de Waal 2004; Prunier 2006: 195). Flint and de Waal (2008: 11) write that the primary goal of the British colonial administration was to keep order in Darfur, while at the same time the Condominium authorities promoted "racial hierarchy in which Arabs were considered superior to non-Arabs." De Waal (2004a) notes that the "incorporation of Darfur into Sudan led not only to the economic and political marginalization, but the near-total neglect of Darfur's unique history and identity."

When Sudan became independent in 1956, the new government continued to marginalize Darfur (O'Fahey 2004: 25; Miller 2007: 127). Alex de Waal (2004b) claims that successive central governments of Sudan have always ignored Darfur's people, both "Arabs" and "Africans." Since independence, Darfur has "received less education, healthcare, development assistance, and fewer government posts than any other region" in Sudan. Prunier (2005: 32) stresses that social and economic underdevelopment in Darfur "contained the seeds of future conflicts."

The population of the Darfur province consisted of many tribes – between forty and ninety depending on definitions – that distinguished themselves as ethnically and culturally "Arab" or "African" (Flint and de Waal 2008: 6). In many cases, the way of life determined people's belonging to one group or the other. Herders were considered to be "Arabs" while "Africans" were farmers (Prunier 2005: 5; Kajee 2007). de Waal (2004) writes that "discernible racial or religious differences between 'Africans' and 'Arabs'" in Darfur never existed. All people in Darfur are black, Muslim, followers of Sunni Islam, and they for centuries lived in relative peace (Baldo 2006; Kajee 2006). "Rather than by skin color or other physical traits," the people in Darfur have always identified themselves in "ethno-cultural or tribal terms" (El-Tigani Mahmoud 2004: 3).

The political situation in post-independence Sudan, where a long civil war had been fought between the "Arab" north and the "African" south began politicizing Darfur's tribes (Prunier 2005: 46). Successive governments of Sudan saw Darfurians, both "Arabs" and "Africans," as a "major constituency of devout Muslims that could be mobilized" to fight against the southerners (de Waal 2004a). During the north-south conflict, the Darfur province supplied the largest number of soldiers who fought on the "Arab" side against the Christian and animist "African" south (Prunier 2005: 78). At the same time, the Islamists who ruled Sudan completely neglected Darfur "in the series of

Islamist projects aimed at social transformation" (de Waal 2004a).

In the years after independence, apart from the civil war in the south, Sudan was also politically unstable. Since 1956, the country has experienced only 10 years of democracy and relative stability - "in the periods of 1956-1958, 1965-1969, and 1985-1989." For the remaining time, Sudan has been "ruled by military regimes which came to power through coups" (International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur 2005: 18). Furthermore, every post-independence government and military regime of Sudan was ruled by the members of the northern Arab tribes which represent only about five percent of the entire population and have spent the majority of development funds on the northern part of the country (Natsios 2008; Flint and de Waal 2008: 17).

Following droughts and famines in the 1980s, a conflict erupted between various groups in Darfur over the scarce natural resources (de Waal 2004; O'Fahey 2004: 26; Miller 2007: 120; Piiparinen 2007: 366; Kagwanja and Mutahi 2007: 3). After their livestock was destroyed in the famines, Darfur herders (Arabs) had to choose whether to maintain their way of life or take up farming. Either route led to clashes with farmers (Africans) and both sides soon began arming themselves to defend their interests (Mamdani 2007). O'Fahey (2004: 26) notes that conflicts that used to be "settled with spears or mediation by elders and religious figures became much more intractable when the area started to become awash with guns." The UN Environmental Program report notes that Darfur is a "tragic example of the social breakdown that can result from ecological collapse" (Seattle Times, 22 July 2007).

In addition, in the mid-1980s Khartoum began introducing "policies that manipulated ethnicity [in Darfur] in the interests of central politicians and their provincial allies" (International Crisis Group, 2004: 4). Prunier (2005: 47) writes that a "rapidly degrading ecological situation helped polarize politically manipulated ethnic identities." Tanner and Tubiana (2007: 16) note that "drought, discriminatory politics, and the lack of investments in marginalized rural areas all contributed to the instability by triggering violent responses from people who felt neglected and oppressed." Miller (2007: 121) believes that the "Arab-African" classifications that for decades had "served primarily administrative purposes became more rigid during the period of famines and eventually served as the locus for a broader war."

To make the situation in Darfur even worse, in the late 1980s Libya's leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, began working on the establishment of a large Arab state across the Sahelian Africa (Miller 2007: 125; Flint and de Waal 2008: 22). One of Gaddafi's first steps was to gain control of Chad. Between 1987 and 1989, Chadian rebels backed by Libya used Darfur as a base from where they attacked Chad (de Waal 2004b; International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur 2005: 22). Libyans, "with their notions of Arab supremacy," organized the "Arab" tribes in the region, including Darfur, into an "Islamic Legion" and gave its members military training and weapons. This increased tensions in Darfur between the local "African" and "Arab" tribes and triggered "an Arab-Fur war between 1987 and 1989 in which thousands were killed and hundreds of villages burned" (Flint and de Waal 2008: 24). The legacy of the "Islamic Legion" would remain in Darfur long after the Arab-Fur war. Many current Janjaweed leaders have been trained in Libya in the 1980s (de Waal 2004b; Kajee 2006; Hanson 2007; Miller 2007: 124).

In 1994, Sudan's central government decided to split the Darfur province into three states, thus dividing the Fur, the largest ethnic group and the largest "African" tribe in Darfur, and making them a minority in each state. This move was intended to reduce the influence of the Fur and help the Darfur "Arabs" take control of the province (Jooma 2006: 5; Flint and de Waal 2008: 20). A report by the International Crisis Group (2004: 5) notes that "manipulation of the ethnic fabric gradually produced an alarming shift in the nature of conflict, with ethnicity becoming a major mobilizing factor." de Waal (2004a) writes that "Darfur's complex identities have been radically and traumatically simplified

[in the second part of the twentieth century], creating a polarized 'Arab versus African' dichotomy that is historically bogus, but disturbingly powerful."

Omar al Bashir, the current president of Sudan, came into power in 1989 following a military coup organized in cooperation with the Sudanese Islamists. For years, Bashir has been heavily influenced by Hassan al Turabi, the main ideologue of the ruling National Islamic Front who "promoted a radical vision of political Islam" (International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur 2005: 18-19; Flint and de Waal 2008: 274). Alex de Waal (2004b) writes that the overwhelming differences over "ideology, foreign policy, the constitution, and ultimately power itself" led to a conflict between Turabi and Bashir. While Turabi promoted equality of all Muslims in Sudan, Bashir "held to the traditional view of Sudan as the possession of an Arabised elite." In 1999, Bashir's faction prevailed and dismissed Turabi from the post of the speaker of the National Assembly. Many Darfurians who were brought into the Islamist movement by Turabi decided to leave their government posts. Some of them later formed the Justice and Equality Movement and began the Darfur rebellion.

In May 2000, the Darfur Islamists published the "Black Book" in which they explained the economic marginalization of Darfur and the "region's systematic under-representation in national governments" of post-independence Sudan. The book "condemned the Islamist promise to Darfur as a sham" and created the ground for the rebellion against the government (de Waal 2004). In 2003, two loosely connected rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), began attacking government forces in Darfur. They listed the political, economic and social marginalization of the region as the main causes of the rebellion (International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur 2005: 23; Baldo 2006; Kindiki 2007: 4).

The rebels came from predominantly "African" sedentary ethnic groups Fur, Zaghawa and Massaleit (International Crisis Group 2006). The SLM, seen as a secularist group, was backed by the Fur, the largest ethnic group in Darfur, and some members of the Zaghawa and Masalit groups. The JEM, seen as an Islamic movement and backed by the Zaghawa, was founded by the Darfur Islamists, many of whom held government posts in the past but broke their relations with the Sudanese government when they realized that the government was not going to invest in Darfur's development and care about the wellbeing of its inhabitants (de Waal 2004; Prunier 2005: 121-122; Wadlow 2006: 87-88; International Crisis Group 2007; Mamdani 2007).

The rebel claims about marginalization of Darfur came as the southern and northern Sudanese politicians began negotiations to end the latest south-north civil war that started in 1983 and claimed over two million lives (Prunier 2005: 89; Schafer 2007: 1). After three years of negotiations, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the Sudanese government and the southerners in January 2005. The agreement gave autonomy to the southern region and promised a referendum on self-determination in 2011. The CPA included "power and wealth sharing arrangements aimed at ending decades of political and economic marginalization of the south" (International Crisis Group 2006a: ii), with half of the revenues from oil produced in southern Sudan going to the southern regional government (Human Rights Watch 2006; Flint and de Waal 2008: 31).

Many analysts believe that the Darfur rebellion was "indirectly provoked" by the negotiations between the government and the south (O'Fahey 2004: 27; Woodward 2004: 478; Prunier 2005: 163; Tar 2006: 408). The Darfurians felt excluded from the power and revenue-sharing talks. They wanted to pressure the government to negotiate a similar agreement in Darfur and share the wealth with the region (El-Tigani Mahmoud 2004: 6; Clough 2005: 3; Prunier 2006). Natsios (2008) claims that John Garang, the late leader of the southern Sudan's rebel movement, encouraged the rebels in Darfur to "pressure the government by demanding a power-sharing agreement like the one he

was negotiating for the south." The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur (2005: 23) established that the peace negotiations between the government and the south "did in some way represent an example to be followed by other groups, since an armed struggle would apparently lead to fruitful negotiations with the government."

This part of the paper has examined the historical roots of the Darfur conflict. The next part will discuss the reaction to the rebellion in Darfur by the government of Sudan.

## **The Counter-Insurgency in Darfur**

This part of the paper will discuss the reaction to the rebellion in Darfur by the government of Sudan. The rebels began their attacks on the government and army posts in early 2003. Some of the major attacks were on military bases and airports in Darfur, where rebels killed hundreds of soldiers and destroyed a number of aircrafts, helicopters, and other military equipment (Prunier 2005: 95-96; Tar 2006: 417).

In response to the rebellion, the Sudanese government mobilized and armed local militias from Darfur's "Arab" ethnic groups, particularly those without traditional land rights, to fight against the "African" rebels. The Sudanese army supplied the militias with weapons and equipment and supported their attacks on the rebels and civilians with military intelligence and air bombings (Prunier 2005: 98; International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur 2005: 32; International Crisis Group 2007; Kindiki 2007: 4). These militias came to be known as the Janjaweed. The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur (2005: 24) notes that the term Janjaweed is "a traditional Darfurian term denoting an armed bandit or outlaw on a horse or camel."

The Sudanese government decided to use the local militias in Darfur since a large part of the regular army was deployed in southern Sudan at the time the rebellion broke out. Another reason to rely on the "Arab" militias was the fact that a significant part of the Sudanese army was made up of recruits from Darfur's "African" tribes whom the government did not "consider trustworthy" to be used in the Darfur conflict (Prunier 2005: 97; International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur 2005: 23-24). Also, using the "Arab" militias to fight the rebels was intended to portray the conflict as a centuries-old "tribal warfare" (Flint and de Waal 2008: 56) and not a conflict over basic human needs.

Prunier (2006a) argues that the Khartoum government saw the armed rebellion in Darfur as "the ultimate threat" - "a revolt of its Muslim margins. It had to be dealt with once and for all with the utmost violence." Slim (2004: 822) believes that the government decided to respond to the rebellion in full force because many members of the government "feared that Darfur insurgency had the potential to become the vanguard for a widespread northern movement for regime change that could easily unravel" the government. From the government's point of view, the counter-insurgency in Darfur was "rational," since the rebellion threatened its existence and had a potential of spreading to the rest of the country (Prunier 2005: 105). Alex de Waal (2004b) describes what he calls the "counter-insurgency on the cheap" used in Darfur by the government of Sudan:

Faced with a revolt that outran the capacity of the country's tired and overstretched army, [the government] knew exactly what to do. Several times during the war in the south they had mounted counter-insurgency on the cheap - famine and scorched earth their weapons of choice... Each time, they sought out a local militia, provided it with supplies and armaments, and declared the area of operations an ethics-free zone.

The counter-insurgency in Darfur was often carried out "with completely inadequate means" (Prunier 2005: 154), causing an estimated 200,000 deaths, millions of displaced, and nearly total destruction of local communities. The response by the

government forces and "Arab" militias frequently went "beyond the separation and interdiction doctrines of measured counter-insurgency" (Slim 2004: 814). Kajee (2006) writes that the army and its proxies launched many attacks against civilians with an intention to "cut the rebels off from their civilian supporters." Consequently, the cruelty and bloodshed have helped the rebels recruit scores of people among the Darfur population (Baldo 2006; Flint and de Waal 2008: 150).

The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur (2005: 3) established that the government of Sudan and the "Arab" militias have been responsible for most of the death and destruction in Darfur:

The government of Sudan and the Janjaweed are responsible for serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law amounting to crimes under international law. The government forces and militias conducted indiscriminate attacks, including killing of civilians, torture, enforced disappearances, destruction of villages, rape and other forms of sexual violence, pillaging and forced displacement, throughout Darfur.

The Commission (2005: 4) also found evidence that the rebel forces have been "responsible for serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law which may amount to war crimes."

This part of the paper has discussed the counter-insurgency in Darfur by the government of Sudan. The next part will examine the international community's response to the conflict.

## **The International Community's Response to the Conflict**

This part of the paper will examine the international community's response to the conflict in Darfur. Understanding that the international community's involvement and pressures on Sudan's regime are crucial for their success, the Darfur rebels have used "the Western public's revulsion at the atrocities in Darfur to portray the conflict as genocide," thus hoping to delegitimize the government in the eyes of the international community and foster regime change (Flint and de Waal 2008: 101). The rebels have largely succeeded in labeling the conflict as genocide in the eyes of the Western world. In September 2004, then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, used the term "genocide" to describe the conflict in Darfur (Prunier 2005: 140). Since then, many politicians, humanitarians, journalists, and celebrities have used the same label.

The Western media, governments, and activist groups often present the conflict in Darfur as a war between "Arabs" and "Africans," with the "Arab" militias carrying out genocide, massacres, rape and pillage of innocent "Africans" with the support of the government of Sudan. This "simplifies and misrepresents" a very complex conflict and it has "led to demonization of all Arabs" (O'Fahey 2004: 24). Flint and de Waal (2008: 187) write that the media and activists have completely ignored the suffering of the Darfur "Arabs" in the hands of the rebels, noting that "the first coverage of the "Arab" victims of the war by a major newspaper [in the West] was in 2006, fully three years after the war began."

Even though the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur (2005: 3) established that the government of Sudan and the "Arab" militias have not committed genocide in Darfur but were responsible for "serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law amounting to crimes under international law," the majority of the Western media, activists, and some governments claim that the Sudanese government has committed and is still committing genocide. Straus (2005) argues that the debate in the West, instead of being focused on how to stop the crisis and human suffering in Darfur, is only

about "whether or not it should be called 'genocide.'"

Flint and de Waal (2008: 182) write that, apart from the humanitarian assistance to the refugees and displaced people and readiness "to condemn human rights violations in very strong terms," the international community is not willing to do anything else in Darfur. Heinze (2007: 383) argues that the "emotive and condemnatory" statements about Darfur from the US administration were meant to be "a substitute for more-decisive action." Many argue that labeling the conflict as "genocide" has only made things worse on the ground. It convinced the rebels that they "don't need to negotiate with the government," hoping the international community would eventually intervene. The government of Sudan has also used the label to "market itself in the Middle East as another victim of America's anti-Arab and anti-Islamic policies" (Washington Post, 23 April 2006).

Self-interests of powerful countries, such as the American cooperation with the Sudanese government in its "war on terror" and the Chinese investments in Sudan's oil industry, "have added to the difficulty in resolving the conflict" (International Crisis Group 2007: i). As in many other instances, the UN Security Council has often been unable to "take strong action" regarding Darfur (Feinstein 2007: 46). Protecting their own interests in Sudan, China, Russia, and Pakistan claimed in the UN Security Council that "the human suffering in Darfur was insufficient to provoke serious reflection on whether Sudan was fulfilling its responsibilities to its citizens" (Bellamy and Williams 2006: 150). Despite continued fighting and atrocities in Darfur in 2005, the Security Council was "prevented from enacting stiffer sanctions [on Sudan] due to resistance from China and Russia" (Human Rights Watch 2006).

While the UN Charter states that the purpose of the organization is the "avoidance of war and maintenance of peace" (Simoni 1995: 157), the Charter has not provided the means to achieve such a grand goal. Bennett (1991: 5) argues that, since founding, the UN had "lacked effective or independent means for intervention to preserve peace or dictate a solution." The UN can do only what its member states decide to do (Riggs and Plano 1988: 348; Polman 2004: 5).

With all its shortcomings and the lack of funds, the African Union played perhaps the most constructive role in Darfur. Since 2004, the AU has brokered several talks between the government and the rebels aimed at reaching a peaceful solution to the conflict (Udombana 2005: 1186). On the other hand, the Arab countries and organizations such as the Arab League or the Organization of Islamic Countries have shamefully ignored the conflict in Darfur and even supported the deadly actions of the Sudanese government (Slim 2004: 812). Even though the victims in Darfur are Muslims, the fact that they are the victims of an "Arab" regime prevents the Muslim countries from speaking against the horrendous crimes committed in Darfur.

This part of the paper has examined the international community's response to the conflict in Darfur. The next part will discuss the negotiation process that led to the Darfur Peace Agreement.

## **Negotiating the Darfur Peace Agreement**

This part of the paper will discuss the negotiation process in Abuja, Nigeria, that led to the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement. With the help of the African Union (AU) and the support from the international community, talks aimed at ending the Darfur conflict between the government and the rebels began in Abuja in August 2004. In November 2004, the parties signed protocols on security and the humanitarian situation. This was followed by a Declaration of Principles that was signed in May 2005, which led to negotiations of the peace agreement (Hottinger 2006).

In Abuja, the Darfur rebels were represented by the Justice and Equality Movement and two ethnically divided factions of the Sudan Liberation Movement that formally split in 2005 due to the internal divisions among the leadership (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars 2007: 559). One faction of the SLM was led by Abdel Wahid Mohamed Nur, who had support of the Fur ethnic group. The rival SLM faction, led by Minni Minawi, had support from the Zaghawa (Baldo 2006).

The Janjaweed militia leaders were not present at the Abuja negotiations (Nathan 2006a). Pruitt and Kim (2004: 217) believe that the success of any peace agreement often depends on the ability to control potential "spoilers" – people or groups who may seek to overturn an agreement." As one of the key players in the conflict and potential "spoilers" of a peace agreement, the Janjaweed leaders needed to be involved in negotiations since their disarmament and cooperation are crucial for lasting peace and security in Darfur.

From the start, the parties in Abuja were unevenly matched in diplomatic and negotiation experience (International Crisis Group 2006: 2). Brickhill (2007: 8) notes that the rebels lacked knowledge and skills to effectively negotiate a peace agreement. On the other hand, the government of Sudan sent a strong and experienced team that knew how to negotiate (Hottinger 2006; Nathan 2006).

For a negotiation process to be successful, all parties must have an intention to achieve a settlement and believe that resolving conflict through negotiations is the best option available (Anstey 2006: 138). Bradshaw (2007: 4) notes that the only way the parties can come to an acceptable agreement is through understanding each others' points of view. Kriesberg (1998: 272) writes that parties sometimes enter a negotiation process only to be seen as working for peace but without any serious devotion to end conflict. In Abuja, instead of negotiating and trying to understand each others perspectives and views, the parties kept "reiterating their demands, rejecting the positions of their opponents, trading accusations and recriminations, grandstanding for the benefit of the international observers, and attempting to win support for their positions from the mediators" (Nathan 2006a).

In the view of Laurie Nathan (2006), an advisor during the negotiations in Abuja, one of the main reasons for the lack of serious negotiations was the fact that the government of Sudan did not take the Darfur rebels seriously. The government claimed that the rebels "were not representative of the people of Darfur, posed little military threat, and were too divided to achieve a unified negotiating posture." On the other hand, leaders of the rebel factions "viewed the government as an 'evil' regime that had repeatedly broken its promises."

The main factors that prevented the rebels from making progress against the government's negotiation team were "divisions and shifting alliances" of the rebel factions (International Crisis Group 2006: 2). Nathan (2006) notes that the rebels were not able to unify their positions during the talks and often even refused to meet each other. Wadlow (2006: 87) stresses that the Darfur rebels lacked strong and influential leadership, "such as that provided by the late John Garang for the southern Sudan in the north-south conflict."

Alex de Waal (2006c), an advisor to the African Union during the talks, believes that the Abuja negotiations "served mostly as a forum in which each side could rehearse its condemnations of the other." Nathan (2006) explains how none of the parties engaged in serious negotiations:

The parties made no effort to accommodate each other's positions and forge common ground. There was no bargaining, let alone collaborative problem-



solving. For months on end the parties simply reiterated their demands, rejected their opponents' positions, traded accusations and attempted to gain a military advantage in the field.

Instead of honest negotiations to end the conflict and bring peace to the region, the Sudanese government and the Darfur rebels viewed "the battlefield as the strategic arena of the conflict" and the negotiations in Abuja only as a tactical arena (Nathan 2006; Brickhill 2007: 5).

When after months of talks there was no progress in Abuja, the African Union and its international partners – particularly the United States – lost their patience. Pressured by the international community in April 2006, the parties were compelled to come to an agreement (de Waal 2006c). The AU mediators and international community's special envoys, without serious strategy for ending the Darfur conflict, decided to use the "deadline diplomacy" as their main negotiation tool (Nathan 2006). Laurie Nathan (2007) explains how the "deadline diplomacy" prevented effective mediation:

A mediator's job is to help adversaries overcome their enmity, build their confidence in negotiations and facilitate dialogue, bargaining and collaborative problem-solving. The deadline diplomacy caused the AU mediators to neglect these tasks in favor of writing an accord that sought to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable positions of the parties. The result was that the DPA was owned by the mediators and not the parties.

The final draft of the Darfur Peace Agreement was prepared by the mediators and presented to the parties on a "take-it-or-leave-it basis five days before the final deadline of 30 April 2006," set by the African Union and the international community (Nathan 2006a; International Crisis Group 2006: 3).

The Darfur Peace Agreement consisted of three main protocols that covered power sharing, wealth sharing, security arrangements, and a chapter laying out the framework for a Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (International Crisis Group 2006: 2). Below are the main provisions of the DPA (summarized from Hottinger 2006; de Waal 2006c; Human Rights First):

**Major wealth-sharing provisions:**

- Establishment of a Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund to manage rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development to which Sudan's government would contribute US\$300 million for 2006 and US\$200 million for 2007 and 2008.
- Establishment of a Compensation Commission with guidelines for determination and payment of compensation and other remedies to the victims of the conflict. The government would make an initial \$30 million contribution to the Compensation Fund.
- Granting refugees and internally displaced persons the right to restitution or adequate compensation for property loss.
- Establishment of commissions to arbitrate title disputes and develop policies for land use management and natural resource development.

**Power-sharing provisions:**

- Nationally, the rebels would get the fourth highest position within the government, the Senior Assistant to the President, who would also be the chairperson of a new Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA).
- Eight of the ten TDRA members would be nominated by the rebels.
- Twelve seats in the National Assembly would go to the representatives of the Darfur rebel groups.

- Rebel groups would get regional government positions, including one governorship, two deputy governorships, and 30 percent of the seats in the regional legislatures, until national and regional elections. Elections at every level of government in Darfur would take place no later than July 2009.
- No later than 2010 a referendum would be held in Darfur to determine whether the three regional states should be consolidated into one region (seen as likely to increase Darfur's influence in the national government) or remain separate states.

#### **Security-related provisions:**

- A specific timeline for disarming the pro-government Janjaweed militia within five months, incorporating members of the rebel groups into the Sudanese military forces or assisting their integration into civilian life, and returning principal responsibility for law enforcement in Darfur to a reformed civilian police force.
- Disarming the Janjaweed would remain the responsibility of the government of Sudan with verification by the African Union Mission in Sudan and the Ceasefire Commission. The Janjaweed would be confined to their camps and would have to relinquish all heavy weapons before any rebel forces are asked to withdraw and demobilize.
- Armed forces would be prohibited from entering displaced persons camps and other civilian areas, including humanitarian supply routes.
- Security arrangements would be monitored by the African Union peacekeeping forces, which would be strengthened by the United Nations peacekeepers.

#### **Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC):**

- In recognition that many stakeholders from Darfur were not represented by the negotiating parties in Abuja, 60 days after the peace agreement comes into force a community-based reconciliation process in Darfur would begin.
- Peace and Reconciliation Council would work on finding ways and means of ensuring that all armed groups become part of region-wide peace agreement.
- DDDC process would be chaired by an "African of independence and integrity," assisted by a team of elders from Darfur, and have between 800 and 1000 delegates, including sheiks and tribal leaders, refugees, internally displaced persons, women, rebel groups, militias, civil society, and other local parties.

The Sudanese government and the SLM rebel group led by Minni Minawi signed the agreement "under pressure from sections of the international community" (Nathan 2006a). The JEM and the faction of the SLM led by Abdel Wahid refused to sign the DPA. One of the rebel leaders who did not sign the peace agreement described the agreement's text as a "product of intimidation, bullying, and diplomatic terrorism." Another rebel leader claimed that the agreement did not "address the root causes of the conflict and was not the result of negotiations between the parties (Brickhill 2007: 9).

Kriesberg (1998: 244) believes that a peace agreement needs to be "regarded as a good one by the disputants and stakeholders" in order to be respected and implemented on the ground. As noted above, even the parties that signed the agreement did so only under immense pressure from the international community and not because they considered it a good deal.

Alex de Waal (2006a), one of the leading experts on Sudan and Darfur, thinks that the non-signatories should have signed the DPA since the agreement offered mechanisms for realization of rebels' central demands. He believes that the rebels would have substantial representation at all levels of Darfur's state and local governments. If they won the elections scheduled for 2009 "Darfur would be theirs to rule," argues de Waal. The permanent status of Darfur would also go to a referendum no later than 2010, when the

rebel movements could win and have an autonomous region.

The non-signatories emphasized that they wanted a "greater financial commitment to compensate the victims and clearer engagement by Khartoum to transfer wealth to Darfur." They strongly opposed preserving the status quo of the three Darfur states, wanting a single Darfur region and a national vice-president. In terms of security arrangements, the rebel groups that rejected the agreement demanded a "greater role in security institutions in Darfur and nationally and participation in supervising the disarmament of the Janjaweed militias" (Hottinger 2006). The non-signatories claimed that the core issues that triggered the conflict in Darfur, such as the "land tenure and use, grazing rights, and the role and reform of local government and administrative structures," were not solved by the DPA but left to the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation process (International Crisis Group 2007).

This part of the paper has discussed the negotiation process that led to the Darfur Peace Agreement. The next part will examine the aftermath of the DPA.

## **The Aftermath of the Darfur Peace Agreement**

This part of the paper will examine the aftermath of the Darfur Peace Agreement. Signing of the DPA, instead of bringing peace, only intensified the fighting and deteriorated the humanitarian situation in the region (Nathan 2007; Human Rights Watch 2007; International Crisis Group 2007a).

Anstey (2006: 137) believes that the success of any peace agreement depends on factors such as meeting legitimate interests of all sides, being "owned" by the parties, and being accepted by all parties. As noted above, the DPA was rejected by some parties because it did not meet their interests and they did not feel they owned the agreement. Nathan (2007) argues that the "deadline diplomacy" forced the mediators to write the agreement with little input from the parties. The International Crisis Group (2007a) maintains that the DPA has failed because "it did not adequately deal with key issues, too few of the insurgents signed it, and there has been little buy-in from Darfur society, which was not sufficiently represented in the negotiations."

One of the major weaknesses of the DPA was the expectation of disarmament of the Janjaweed militias, "the main perpetrators of massive atrocities against civilians," by the government of Sudan "despite the government's dismal record of ignoring five previous commitments to do this" (International Crisis Group 2006: 17). Since it has signed the DPA, the government was required to disarm the Janjaweed (de Waal 2006). To this day, the government has not implemented this major security-related provision of the peace agreement. In addition, Alex de Waal (2007) claims that the SLM faction that has signed the agreement has not been given any real power by the government.

In the aftermath of the DPA, the JEM and the two factions of the SLM began fragmenting along the ethnic and tribal lines, "between military leaders in the field and political figures spending most of their time in exile abroad, and between those seeking compromise and hardliners" (Economist, 20 September 2007). It is estimated that currently there are over 20 rebel groups in Darfur (International Crisis Group 2007).

Some of the new rebel groups that broke away from the SLM are: SLM-Unity (also known as G19), Free Will, the Greater Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, and the National Movement for the Elimination of Marginalization. Some of the JEM breakaway groups are: The National Movement for Reform and Development, JEM Peace Wing, Field Revolutionary Command and Popular Forces Troops (BBC, 10 May 2008). BBC report adds that "very little, other than the names, is known about the composition, leadership and numbers of the breakaway groups."

Hanson (2007) notes that the political stance of many new rebel groups is unclear. Nathan (2007) writes that many new rebel groups "claim to represent the same constituencies and only a few of them have proven support in Darfur." Jalloh and Tekeu (2007) believe that the new rebel groups "feel that by taking up arms they can gain a seat at the table" during the future peace talks. Observers say that some of the new rebel groups are not more than "warring gangs, compounding the violence and insecurity for civilians, peacekeepers and aid workers" in Darfur (iAfrica News, 17 March 2008).

As the conflict intensified, the rebels began fighting each other "spurred by ethnic tensions and what appears to be a relentless grab for more territory" (International Herald Tribune, 31 May 2006). The rebels are increasingly dividing along tribal lines and "their messages are becoming more fragmented and less representative of constituencies they claim to speak for" (International Crisis Group 2007). Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars (2007: 559) add that the Darfur conflict is described by many analysts as a "political crisis that has become increasingly tribal at the local level." Kajee (2006) paints a grim picture of Darfur and the fighting among the rebels:

The fragmented rebel groups are now pitted against each other in a deadly race to gain ground before any new peace talks, and each one is targeting communities perceived to be sympathetic to rival groups. The chaos has led to no-go zones which humanitarian agencies cannot penetrate and a growing incidence of disease and starvation.

Many analysts blame the Sudanese government and its divide-and-rule strategy in Darfur for some of the rebels' fragmentation. The International Crisis Group (2007) notes that "divide-and-rule tactics complicate efforts to achieve long-term stability in Darfur, deliberately increase the conflict's tribalization, and contribute directly to the general chaos and lawlessness." According to Hanson (2007), since 2005, the Sudanese government has signed "bilateral deals with lower-level commanders of rebel factions, thus complicating the political process and sowing divisions within the rebel groups." Alex de Waal (2008) writes that the "situation in Darfur is one of turbulence. It is constant movement and shifting of alliances, but at the end of the day very little in the way of actual forward motion or real strategic change."

Hanson (2007) argues that the initial conflict between the rebels and the Sudanese government has over time "metastasized into chaotic violence that includes sparring among Arab tribal groups, between rebel groups and AU peacekeepers, and between Arab militias and the Sudanese government." de Waal (2006b) writes that, even though the Janjaweed were and still are armed, funded, and supported by the Sudanese government, "most Janjaweed leaders distrust Khartoum and many [still] keep lines of communication open with the rebel leaders."

Under the DPA, the AU/UN troops were expected to "create buffer zones around internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps, establish presence in the camps, assist in the creation of humanitarian corridors, help create a secure environment in areas of return, and accompany IDP's and refugees to areas of return or resettlement" (Cohen 2007: 2). The UN Security Council Resolution 1769 calls for an increase of the 7,000 African Union troops to 26,000-strong AU/United Nations force, but due to the slow deployment of the troops, the majority of IDP camps in Darfur are still not protected (BBC, 26 February 2008).

The AU/UN mission in Darfur is facing numerous problems. The main reason for the slow deployment of troops is the insistence by the Sudanese government on African-only troops. In addition, for over a year, the UN and the AU have numerous times asked the international community to provide the Darfur mission with 6 attack helicopters and 18 transport helicopters so they can start protecting civilians in Darfur's large and remote

area (BBC, 15 November 2007). As of May 2008, no country has given a helicopter for the Darfur mission.

This part of the paper has examined the aftermath of the Darfur Peace Agreement. The next part will discuss the Darfur peace talks hosted by Libya in October 2007.

## **The Libyan Talks**

This part of the paper will discuss the peace talks held in Libya in October 2007. After the DPA failed to bring peace to Darfur, the UN and the AU choose Libya over five other countries as a host of the new Darfur peace talks. The aim of the talks was to reach an agreement on a "cease-fire and security, power-sharing and governance, natural-resource use and allocation, and return to land and compensation for those affected by the conflict" (International Herald Tribune, 25 October 2007).

Announcing the talks, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, said that "Tripoli could provide a good venue and could work as a good place to facilitate peace negotiations" to end the Darfur conflict (Voice of America, 06 September 2007). In response to the Libyan talks, the Darfur Association in the USA (Sudan Tribune, 23 October 2007) issued a press statement claiming that "by all objective standards, Tripoli is not and will not be a suitable and neutral venue to resolve this ever-increasing and worsening conflict in Darfur" due to Libya's history of supporting radical "Arabs" in Darfur and Chad. As noted above, in the 1980s, Libya trained and armed many leaders of the current Janjaweed militia that are terrorizing Darfur since 2003.

The majority of the Darfur rebel movements boycotted the talks in Libya. The Washington Post (27 October 2007) writes that the rebel leaders gave different reasons for not attending. Some said that they "needed more time to unify their negotiating platform, that they did not trust Libya, that they did not trust the Sudanese government, or that they did not trust one another." Some rebels said that they viewed Libya as "politically too close to their opponents in the Sudanese government" (Reuters, 14 November 2007).

The leaders of the largest rebel groups said they boycotted the talks because the UN and AU mediators "invited many smaller groups which they claimed were government collaborators geared at weakening the rebels' position" (USA Today, 27 October 2007). Abdel Wahid, the leader of one of the Sudan Liberation Movement factions, said that he would not attend the Libyan talks because he "did not recognize most of the other rebel leaders as legitimate and that any peace agreement would be meaningless unless security was established in Darfur first" (Washington Post, 27 October 2007). Without the majority of the rebel movements present, the Libyan talks failed before they even began.

This part of the paper has discussed the failed peace talks held in Libya in October 2007. The next part will discuss the way forward for the Darfur peace process and offer suggestions for the preparation of the next peace talks.

## **The Way Forward for the Darfur Peace Process**

This part of the paper will discuss the way forward for the Darfur peace process and offer suggestions for the preparation of the next peace talks.

David Mozersky (2007) stresses that the Darfur Peace Agreement has failed to end the conflict and create power-sharing structures. He believes that the DPA should be dismissed and the parties, with the help of the international community, should work on

a new agreement. The largest rebel movements also demand to negotiate a completely new agreement, while the government of Sudan still insists on using the DPA as the basis of any new talks (International Crisis Group 2007a).

Many rebel groups that boycotted the talks in Libya listed the lack of security in Darfur as one of the main reasons for their absence. It will be of outmost importance to have an effective ceasefire agreement respected by all parties before new peace talks take place. As Brickhill (2007: 4) argues, "security arrangements are fundamental to the prospects of peace processes."

Prior to the new talks, workshops need to be organized to educate rebel leaders and negotiators about the negotiation process. This is very important since the experts believe that one of the major shortcomings in Abuja was the fact that the rebels lacked knowledge and skills to effectively negotiate a peace agreement (Brickhill 2007: 8).

Before any new talks, the Darfur rebels need to agree on a "joint set of grievances and a common negotiating position" (Mail and Guardian, 15 October 2007). Analysts say that the rebel groups are "still far from unity in any real sense of choosing leaders, common goals, or in designing a common path forward" (Christian Science Monitor, 13 July 2007). The Sudanese government uses this fragmentation, often instigating rebel groups to fight each other. The United Nations and the African Union envoys emphasize that the rebel fragmentation "remains the principle obstacle to hold peace talks with the government" (Sudan Tribune, 19 March 2008).

Reaching a common negotiation position among the rebels should be a goal of pre-negotiation talks and workshops. "If the [rebel] movements cannot unify, they need at least to consolidate into several recognizable blocs, with coherent leadership and political positions" (International Crisis Group 2007a: 22). Failure by the rebels to form a united block and attend negotiations is "playing into the hands of the Sudanese government which is happy for the talks to fail as long as it escapes the blame of the international community" (Economist, 20 September 2007).

Currently, there is no consensus among the parties involved in the Darfur conflict about who should participate in the future talks (Nathan 2007). As discussed above, one of the reasons the Libyan talks have failed was the refusal by the largest rebel movements to attend the talks together with the smaller rebel factions that formed in the aftermath of the DPA.

Anstey (2006: 138) stresses the importance of parties having clear mandates from their consistencies in order to achieve a long-term solution accepted by the stakeholders. Hanson (2007) notes that "no effort has been made to make a real assessment of how effective the rebel groups in Darfur are or what kind of acceptance they have from their own population." Bradshaw (2007: 89) believes that it is "vitaly important to have access to [credible and up to date] information about the conflict" and the parties, since one of the major "frustrations disputants regularly experience is the feeling that no one really understands" their problems. To be able to plan future talks between the warring parties in Darfur, it is very important to explore who the rebels are, what are they trying to achieve, and how large is their following. This could help in selection of the true representatives of the Darfur population. Furthermore, comparing and contrasting rebels' aims, goals, and objectives could help find common positions and help them unite, or at least cooperate, to end the conflict through negotiations.

The International Crisis Group (2007a) emphasizes the need to broaden participation in the future peace talks and involve the civil society, IDP communities, women, and Arab tribes. The next negotiation process needs to be transparent and open to the Darfur society in order to be accepted. The UN and AU special envoys for Darfur believe that "negotiations need to be as inclusive as possible to ensure that any agreement secures

maximum ownership from those directly affected by it, and not just those who have taken up arms" (International Herald Tribune, 25 October 2007).

As one of the key players in the conflict and potential "spoilers" of a peace agreement, the Janjaweed leaders need to be involved in negotiations since their disarmament and cooperation are crucial for lasting peace and security in Darfur. It cannot be expected that the Janjaweed militias are represented by the government of Sudan at the future talks. Even though the Janjaweed are armed, funded, and supported by the government, many Janjaweed leaders distrust the Sudanese government and the government does not have full control over them (de Waal 2006b).

Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars (2007: 575) stress the need for the "local-level peace-building and reconciliation work" in Darfur through "livelihood support projects that meet common needs and can start to build bridges between divided communities." Mamdani (2007a) believes that the conflict in Darfur can only be ended if a "power-sharing agreement can be made between the parties at the state level and resource-sharing at the community level, with land as a key resource."

Wadlow (2006: 87) writes that oil was one of the main incentives that helped bring peace between the north and south Sudan. She adds that "there is no similar economic incentive to reach an agreement in Darfur." Nathan (2006a) believes that the government of Sudan, as by far the strongest party in the conflict, needs to make concessions and offer financial provisions that would help economic development of the Darfur province. As the main trade partner and importer of Sudan's oil, China could play a major role in influencing the government of Sudan to stop pursuing a military victory in Darfur and offer substantial wealth-sharing provisions to Darfur (Cohen 2007: 3).

One of the major failures of the DPA was the attempt by the African Union mediators and the international community to get a peace agreement through the "deadline diplomacy." According to Mozersky (2007), "too much haste to do a deal was a key reason the Darfur Peace Agreement failed to deliver." As Nathan (2007) writes, it is impossible to bring about a quick fix to a civil war or a protracted conflict since,

These conflicts have multiple, complex and intractable causes, and the difficulty of resolution is heightened immeasurably by the protagonists' mutual hatred and suspicion. There is no point in rushing negotiations and forcing the parties to sign an agreement to which they are not committed. As happened in Abuja, they will simply leave the signing ceremony and continue fighting.

The problem with the DPA was not that it asked the parties to compromise. The main problem was that "the compromises were crafted by the mediators and were not a product of agreements negotiated by the parties" (Nathan 2006a). Brickhill (2007: 10) believes that the mediators should not "negotiate on behalf of the parties, but rather facilitate negotiations between the parties themselves." Mediators who work on the next Darfur peace talks need to let the parties negotiate a settlement and not allow the international community to impose an agreement in order to come up with a quick fix for the Darfur conflict.

Burton (quoted in Anstey 2006: 17) argues that deep-rooted conflicts are "founded in fundamental human needs for security, identity, recognition, and development. They cannot be compromised, but require accommodation through problem-solving rather than power-driven bargaining." The Darfur conflict is a typical example of a deep-rooted conflict where the rebels began fighting over the issues of poor economic conditions, lack of development and security, and political and social exclusion of their province. Pruitt and Kim (2004: 190) maintain that using problem solving to negotiate the end of a deep-rooted conflict calls for a "joint effort to find mutually acceptable solutions." In order to come up with an agreement acceptable to all sides in Darfur, the mediators

need to use the integrative bargaining style of negotiation. Integrative bargaining “concentrates on satisfying the interests of all parties, finding solutions to common problems,” and preserving the relationships among the parties (Bradshaw 2007: 3).

Alex de Waal (2007) thinks that the future negotiations to end the conflict in Darfur must be properly structured and the steps taken in the right order. There needs to be a “cessation of hostilities, a rebel conference to choose new representatives, proper monitoring of a cease-fire and confidence-building steps, and then negotiations with credible mediators and sufficient time to hammer out the issues.” Additionally, mediators will have to balance power at the negotiation table since one of the shortcomings in Abuja has been the fact that the Sudanese government sent a very experienced negotiation team while the rebels lacked even the basic negotiation skills. Pruitt and Kim (2004: 243) note that the relative equality in power at the negotiation table can be achieved through mediators’ “siding with the less powerful parties.”

It will be very important to choose a neutral venue for the future talks and not make the same mistake made in 2007 by the UN and AU when Libya was chosen to host the Darfur peace talks even though that country has been involved in training and arming of the radical “Arab” militias that have been involved in the worst atrocities in Darfur since the conflict broke out in 2003.

Some experts believe that the south-north Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in January 2005 may be in jeopardy due to the protracted conflict in Darfur. A report by the International Crisis Group (2007b: 16) presents mistakes made by the international community relating to the CPA and the Darfur conflict:

International efforts have become so concentrated on Darfur, albeit without much success, that the CPA implementation – the bedrock for peaceful transformation in the country – is being ignored, in effect a reversal of the situation in 2003-2004, when the focus on ending the north-south war led to diplomatic reluctance to address the unfolding catastrophe in Darfur.

Jan Eliasson, the special envoy of the UN Secretary General for Darfur, and Salim Ahmed Salim, the special envoy of the African Union for Darfur, believe that a peace agreement for Darfur “will need to be implemented in parallel with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. They think there cannot be peace in Darfur without a comprehensive peace throughout Sudan” (International Herald Tribune, 25 October 2007).

This part of the paper has discussed the way forward for the Darfur peace process and offered suggestions for the preparation of the next peace talks.

## **Conclusion**

In 2003, a conflict broke out in Sudan’s western province of Darfur between the mainly “African” rebels and the government forces and their proxy “Arab” militias. It is estimated that about 200,000 people have died in the conflict from fighting, disease, and starvation. The UN and aid agencies estimate that over two million Darfurians, out of the population of about six million, are living in refugee camps. Even though the majority of all deaths in Darfur occurred in 2003 and 2004, the conflict is nowhere near the end.

This study has examined the historical roots of the Darfur conflict and the failed attempts and approaches to end it. As this paper has shown, the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement has failed to bring peace to Darfur due to the wrong strategies employed by the AU’s mediators who wrote the agreement for the parties, while the international community put pressure on the parties to accept the flawed agreement. In addition, instead of honest negotiations to end the conflict and bring peace to the region, the government of



Sudan and the Darfur rebels showed little interest in serious negotiations and viewed the talks in Abuja only as an arena for tactical maneuvering.

The paper has discussed the aftermath of the DPA, the fragmentation of the rebel movements, and the failed talks in Libya in October 2007. The author has offered suggestions that could help prepare the parties for the next peace talks.

Alex de Waal (2006c) believes that "the crisis in Darfur is political. It's a civil war, and like all wars it needs a political settlement." According to the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, the main obstacle to a peaceful solution to the Darfur conflict is the "lack of political will among all the parties to pursue a peaceful solution" (Sudan Tribune, 17 April 2008). Jean-Marie Guehenno, UN's peacekeeping chief, claims that the situation in Darfur "has grown infinitely more complex and prospects for peace now seem more remote." Guehenno thinks that there is no political will on any side "to abandon the military option, engage in negotiations or fully cooperate with UNAMID and the humanitarian community" (Reuters, 15 May 2008).

The conflict in Darfur needs to be resolved before it spreads to other parts of Sudan and the region. It is believed that the fighting in Darfur could undermine the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the decades-long north-south civil war. The collapse of the CPA could lead the country and the region to even more fighting and suffering (International Crisis Group 2007a; Jalloh and Tekeu 2007). Andrew Natsios (2008), the former US special envoy to Sudan, thinks that the Darfur conflict needs to be resolved before 2009, "the most important year in Sudan's postcolonial history," when the country will hold general elections. Peace in Darfur could be crucial for holding elections; failure could "plunge this volatile region into its most severe crisis yet."

The next peace talks to end the crisis and human suffering in Darfur should be planned and carried out by proven experts from the conflict management field who are not obsessed with quick fix solutions. The negotiators need to broaden participation to all parties and the civil society from Darfur and address the root causes of the conflict if they want a long-term solution. Their goal must be an agreement that is accepted by all and can be implemented on the ground without angering any of the sides.

A peace agreement will last only if it accommodates and is signed by all parties. Everything else will be a further protraction of conflict and violence in Darfur.

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