

Outrage over Darfur

July 2, 2004

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(views presented are solely those of the author, and not the organizations with which the author is affiliated)

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Sometimes scholars need to tell politicians what to do. This week such a moment arrived, because the politicians of the world are failing in their responsibilities. United States Secretary of State Colin Powell and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan decided that a one-day visit to Darfur in Sudan, site of the world's most serious humanitarian catastrophe, was sufficient fulfillment of their duties. Two powerful men do not *promise* protection to hundreds of thousands of women who have lost their homes, they *protect* those women. Two powerful men do not *promise* that children will not die, they *stop* children from dying. Two powerful men do not *request* that murderers put aside their guns, they *take* the guns away.

I want politicians to act. It is too late to tell Powell and Annan to stay in Darfur; they have already left. They need to go back, and get the job done. Is there some other region of the world where thousands of people are dying daily that needs their attention? Congo? U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammerskold gave his life there, forty years ago. Ethiopia? U.S. Congressman Mickey Leland gave his life there. Bosnia? U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown gave his life there. Iraq? U.N. Representative Xx gave his life there. Southern Sudan? Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist risked his life there, performing surgery for wounded civilians. What politician is ready to make such a sacrifice for the millions of Darfur?

When they do go back, tomorrow we hope, they will ensure four simple things. (1) No airplanes and helicopters from the Khartoum government should fly over Darfur. (2) Access to Darfur by United Nations personnel and their NGO affiliates should be unrestricted by obscene requirements for 'travel permits'. (3) A 'no-gun' cease-fire order should be given immediately by the Security Council, and violators subject to war crimes tribunals. (4) A monitoring system like that successfully implemented in the Nuba Mountains should be implemented immediately.

I hope that these actions can be implemented with the agreement of the Sudanese government and the rebel groups. Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Ismail, who denies that there is any suffering in Darfur, might wish to accompany Mr. Powell and Mr. Annan to Darfur. They all might be invited to share a hut alongside the hundred thousand refugees who face death daily. Not for an afternoon, but for as long as it takes. Without their bodyguards, without their air-conditioning. As ordinary humans, in solidarity with the humans who are dying in Darfur.