

Ahem, Three Easy Steps to Resolving Darfur

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There has been much handwringing in the last few months over what to do about Darfur. The international community threatens, visits, donates, resolves and most of all discusses what to do. Neighbors stop me in the morning, “You’ve been to Sudan, something must be done.” Meanwhile, thousands die in camps. Solutions seem distant.

But there is already a clear roadmap to resolving the Darfur crisis. That is the Congo. Here are three of the major lessons learned, and their applicability to Darfur.

First, displace the refugees to French-speaking Chad. The experience of Congo shows quite clearly that meddlesome English journalists and outraged English do-gooders and their audiences, peers and families are not fascinated by former French colonies. British prying is magnified hundredsfold in Sudan; every schoolboy knows the stories of general “Chinese” Gordon, The Mahdi, and Lord Kitchener. Goodness, Winston Churchill was there, riding on the first train across the desert! Sudan should either move its border back to the western Kordofan border and cede Darfur to the French, *ahem* the Chadians, or move the refugees across the existing border. Once the English journalists lose interest (what a drag, after all, when all of the locals speak French better than you), the Americans will follow quickly. Remember when Ted Koppel delivered his “special report” on Congo? How many people listened? How many journalists followed his footsteps? Get thee to a French-speaking country, for quick resolution of crisis (*ahem*, the crisis in the public about what to do and how to salve the outrage).

Second, arm and encourage many more groups to start fighting and making pronouncements to the media and signing treaties with each other. The Congo experience clearly demonstrates that interest by the public in the suffering of Africans declines rapidly with the number of groups that have to be tracked. “It’s so complicated,” the American complain, “This group and that group and this treaty and that treaty. Let’s use the *caciocavallo* cheese on that, honey... hey, isn’t that funny, cheese on a horse, just like the *janjaweed*.”

Third, stop talking about Moussa Hilal. Crises with faces attached to them are so much harder to solve. Humans have a built-in instinct to punish cheaters who don’t play by the rules of polite society. It burns them up when someone scoffs at convention, whether its shooting someone point blank in the side of their skull or telling a group of militiamen to set fire to a village, after chaining the villagers to some of the huts. They want the cheater punished. So take the face away from the conflict. When was the last

time the papers posted in glossy pose the men responsible for the Congo war? Take away the face, and there is no longer an unquenchable instinct need to solve the crisis (*ahem*).

Incidentally, the best estimates are that about two million people died and are dying during the still-hot Congo war. But my neighbors are unaware that there is a problem there in need of solution.

*Michael Kevane is currently President of the Sudan Studies Association (though the opinions expressed here represent his individual views only) and author of Women and Development in Africa: How Gender Works.