

**Testimony by United States Agency for International Development
Assistant Administrator for Africa Katherine J. Almquist
“The Continuing Crisis in Darfur”
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Chairman Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
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Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Sudan and in particular the ongoing crisis in Darfur and Eastern Chad. My testimony will provide an update on the humanitarian situation and what the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is doing to respond.

Three years into the six-year roadmap known as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), “comprehensive peace” in Sudan remains elusive. While there has been significant, albeit fragile, progress in the south, Sudan remains a sum of its troubled parts. Regionalized politics, and regional approaches to resolving political differences, are at the very core of these troubles despite the CPA’s careful intent to guide the peaceful and democratic transformation for all of Sudan. While its integrity and durability have been tested, the CPA still provides Sudan the most viable approach to addressing the many grave historic political, economic, and social inequities in Sudan. The success of the CPA is of critical importance to maintaining stability throughout the country, including in Darfur, and therefore support for its implementation will continue to be the keystone of our assistance in Sudan. Darfur, however, is not yet positioned to contribute to, nor benefit from the CPA, and recognition of this fact will be vital to any successful resolution of the issues driving conflict in Darfur.

Sudan is USAID’s largest program in Africa and among the largest in the world. It is the United States’ top foreign policy priority in Africa and Darfur is the focus of the largest international humanitarian operation in the world, which provides life-saving assistance to more than 3 million people a year. This devastating conflict has left 2.45 million people internally displaced and another 250,000 refugees in Chad. Since 2004, USAID has spent an average of \$750 million annually in assistance to Sudan, including a total of \$1.5 billion in humanitarian assistance in Darfur and eastern Chad.

Today in Darfur we face one of the most formidable challenges in our long-term commitment to helping the Sudanese in their transition toward peace and stability. Insecurity affecting humanitarian operations is at its highest point and our ability to access people in need is at its lowest point since 2005, when the international humanitarian community first succeeded in reversing Darfur’s dire humanitarian situation. Fighting among the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), tribal militias, and rebel groups continues to kill, injure, displace and otherwise terrorize the civilian population. Since January 1 of this year, SAF bombardment of villages and clashes between armed groups has displaced approximately 100,000 Darfuris. In addition, banditry and lawlessness severely impede humanitarian aid deliveries on a daily basis.

With most camps in their fourth or fifth year of existence, the “infrastructure of assistance” is largely in place, and people in camps are, for the most part, receiving food, water, health services, and other life-saving interventions. However, with insecurity worsening and access decreasing, humanitarian conditions are precarious. Darfuris are tired of living in the camps, and the communities are becoming increasingly politicized and violent. In addition, many camps have reached capacity, but the newly displaced continue to arrive. The situation in South Darfur is particularly dire: Al Salaam camp does not have enough water for its current residents, much less the many more displaced people in the area who are not even yet registered.

The people affected by this conflict desperately need life-saving assistance, but it is becoming increasingly dangerous and difficult for humanitarian agencies to provide it. The fact that morbidity and mortality rates are currently holding below emergency levels is a tribute to the hard work, ingenuity, and forbearance of humanitarian agencies in Darfur and the more than 14,000 humanitarian workers who daily risk their lives to assist those by the conflict. However, if security and access continue their downward spiral, our ability to provide life-saving assistance will further degenerate—as will the lives of millions of Darfur’s people.

BUREAUCRATIC IMPEDIMENTS

At the most basic level aid delivery in Darfur has been impeded by bureaucratic obstacles imposed by the Sudanese government since the beginning of the crisis. In an important step to address these bureaucratic impediments, the Sudanese government and the United Nations signed the Joint Communiqué on the Facilitation of Humanitarian Activities in Darfur in March 2007. The Joint Communiqué did result in some improvements for humanitarian actors initially: for example, the government and the humanitarian community jointly developed a General Directory of Procedures listing the process requirements that all NGOs must complete.

Unfortunately, despite this initial cooperation, the Sudanese government continues to disregard articles of the Joint Communiqué and has created new impediments that further hamper humanitarian programs in Sudan. Between December and February, the Sudanese government imposed blockades in some parts of West Darfur that prevented humanitarian agencies from providing lifesaving assistance to those in need. USAID partners report excessive delays in visa processing, inaction when approving technical agreements and lack of adherence to previously agreed upon procedures. Delays in processing humanitarian goods through Sudanese customs threaten vital relief supplies such as medicines and food commodities.

In addition to disregarding some articles of the Joint Communiqué, the Sudanese government has also begun to create new bureaucratic obstacles for humanitarian actors. Since the beginning of 2008, the Sudanese Humanitarian Aid Commission has required NGOs to obtain travel permits for transport in commercial or rented vehicles—and then denied those permits; required that NGOs write technical agreements in Arabic;

repeatedly cancelled high-level committee meetings on implementing the Joint Communiqué; and requested additional information regarding the transport, purpose, and recipients of NGO cash. For the past year, Sudan has blocked the use of processed food aid containing genetically modified organism (GMOs). This has restricted the U.S. government from providing WFP with corn-soya blend, which is used mainly to treat malnourished children. The loss of this significant commodity contribution has stretched the already tight resources of WFP, which now has to spend precious cash to procure the commodity from other sources.

Humanitarian operations are significantly hobbled by the Sudanese government's lack of cooperation and its non-compliance with the signed Joint Communiqué. Their acts violate the Sudanese government's commitment to respect the independence of humanitarian actors and undermine the principles and spirit of the Joint Communiqué. They defy the government's promise to respect the provision of assistance and freedom of access to all people in need.

INSECURITY

In addition to the increasing bureaucratic obstacles impeding humanitarian assistance, each day brings more danger and more challenges for humanitarian staff who risk their own lives as they work to save others'. According to the United Nations, assailants have killed six aid workers and abducted 90 staff members in Darfur this year, including 36 U.N. World Food Program (WFP)-contracted drivers, 26 of whom remain missing. So far in 2008, bandits have hijacked 106 vehicles from humanitarian organizations and the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur—twice as many as the same period in 2007 and three times as many as the same period in 2006.

As a result of attacks on WFP-contracted commercial transport perpetrated by tribal militias and rogue rebel elements, trucking companies are now refusing to deliver commodities to Darfur from logistical hubs without Government of Sudan police escorts. The escorts, however, have been slow to materialize and too inadequate to protect 150-vehicle convoys. At this time of year, WFP-contracted trucks should be delivering 1,800 metric tons of food daily to supply warehouses in Darfur ahead of the rainy season; deliveries have dropped to less than 900 tons a day.

On April 17, WFP announced that the current environment will force it to reduce the general food ration in Darfur. Starting in May, WFP will cut by half the amount of cereals, pulses, and sugar provided to 2.45 million Darfuris in their general ration. The United States is greatly concerned about the reduction of critical food assistance to the people of Darfur, and we are working with WFP to assure that full rations resume as soon as practicable. WFP is planning to resume full rations and expand the number of Darfuris receiving food assistance in time for the June "hunger gap"—the time between the end of one year's food stocks and the next harvest. However, if attacks on convoys continue and the GOS is unable to bolster security for convoys, WFP may be forced to make additional significant reductions in assistance.

Delivery of food assistance is not the only worry for the humanitarian operation, however. Security for all types of aid operations on the ground has steadily declined over 2007 and 2008. Access is now at an all-time low. In West Darfur, 90 percent of roads are closed to humanitarian agencies due to the presence of Arab militia and Chadian and Sudanese rebel groups. Here, many NGOs are only able to access project areas by helicopter, allowing them only one or two hours on the ground—enough time to take a whirlwind tour of a clinic, check the books and supplies, talk to the staff and maybe a few beneficiaries, and hop back in the helicopter. This type of visit is not unlike those many of you have experienced on a tightly scheduled Congressional visit. And it is no way to manage programs or maintain effective operations. Some aid agencies have to rely on remote staff or volunteers who elect to travel insecure roads in order to reach the main office—literally risking life and limb—to provide guidance and oversight to operations.

Cessation of all attacks on humanitarian operations is essential to ensuring that life-saving aid can continue to be delivered to the millions of Darfuris who rely on international assistance for survival. At a minimum, the government of Sudan should urgently increase the number and frequency of police escorts for commercial transports carrying humanitarian supplies and ensure security for humanitarian and commercial traffic along the roads most affected by military and rebel operations, banditry and lawlessness.

Even if the bureaucratic and security challenges to the delivery of aid are rectified, humanitarian assistance cannot ultimately resolve the conflict in Darfur. It is merely a band-aid attempting to mitigate the worst effects of the conflict. Lasting resolution requires recognition of the conflict's changing dynamics since the outbreak of violent rebellion in 2003, the signing of the N'Djamena Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement in 2004, and the conclusion of the Darfur Peace Agreement in 2006. Yet even while alliances and patterns of conflict have shifted significantly during the past five years, fundamentally the conflict continues because the people of Darfur do not believe that their grievances have been addressed. Darfuris want to know that their families, their land, and their livestock will be protected from predatory attack; that basic social services will be provided by their government; that the lost assets essential to sustain their families and communities will be restored; that critical issues important to the long-term sustainability of the Darfuri economy and social order, such as access to land and water, will be addressed fairly and transparently; and that they will have meaningful participation first and foremost in the governance of their own regional affairs, and secondarily in the national affairs of the country.

Even though the United States and the international community have invested considerable resources and effort in political and security arrangements to help address these grievances, many, if not most, Darfuris remain unconvinced and therefore popular support for continued political and violent resistance persists. This furthers an environment for opportunistic banditry to thrive and results in a downward spiral of lawlessness and violence. The transition from the African Union Mission in Sudan to the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) since the beginning of the

year has yet to improve the security situation for the civilian population. Each additional day that UNAMID cannot provide civilian protection, its credibility among Darfuris diminishes and the difficulty of its task increases exponentially. The efforts of the United Nations and the Friends of UNAMID to speed effective deployment of the peacekeeping force is therefore of paramount importance to creating an enabling environment for a durable political settlement to be found and ultimately for displaced people to return home.

Redoubling efforts to find a durable political framework to address the grievances of the Darfuri people, African and Arab alike, is equally vital to finding a resolution that will move Darfur beyond its dependence on humanitarian assistance. Key spoilers to this process must somehow be managed—including rebel leaders who variously wield significant political power over displaced communities, or impressive military capability that allows them to prosecute war against the Sudanese government and its proxy forces. The Darfur Peace Agreement did not fully address these issues, and therefore cannot be considered the final resolution to this conflict. Still, it represents a significant step forward on the path to peace and provides a framework to build upon. Essential next steps include implementation of the DPA's key provisions to support mediators' efforts to win over protagonists who remain on the outside. As well, a successful mediation will require an iterative process that accounts for the differing characteristics of the principal rebel movements. This kind of nuanced approach will require much more focused international support from countries with leverage over key parties in the process.

EASTERN CHAD

The situation in eastern Chad is inextricably linked to what is happening in Darfur, and the security threats facing humanitarian operations in eastern Chad are similar to those in Darfur. USAID continues to provide humanitarian assistance for 250,000 Sudanese refugees, 180,000 displaced people, and many of the 700,000 affected permanent residents of eastern Chad, but conflict and banditry continually disrupt operations, including the fighting that occurred recently in N'Djamena and Ade. As in Darfur, aid operations are heavily reliant on air transportation to access people in need. The WFP food pipeline has been particularly challenged, as the logistics required to transport food into the land-locked country are enormous and must rely on the same limited routes as those used to supply the UN- and EU-supported peacekeeping operations for Chad and the Central African Republic. The fighting in February particularly disrupted the transport of food into eastern Chad. However, despite these obstacles, USAID partners continue to deliver humanitarian assistance. In FY 2007, the U.S. Government provided more than \$89 million in aid to eastern Chad, and so far in FY 2008, we have provided nearly \$74 million.

Just as any viable political settlement to the Darfur conflict must account for the principal Darfuri rebel spoilers, it must also account for the reciprocal effect that the Chadian domestic political crisis and the Darfur conflict have on each other. The Chad-Darfur border amounts to an international boundary on paper only. It will not be possible to

ameliorate the humanitarian situation on one side without commensurately improving it on the other as both combatants and civilians move freely back and forth. As long as the governments of Sudan and Chad continue to manipulate pre-existing domestic political animosities by fueling each other's armed opposition, peace and stability on both sides of the border will remain elusive. The United States is working to put in place a political process that concurrently addresses Chadian political grievances with President Deby at the same time as Darfuri grievances with the Sudanese government.

COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AGREEMENT

While we struggle to overcome the challenges facing Darfur and Eastern Chad, it is an equally critical time in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended two decades of civil war between northern and southern Sudan in 2005 and is intended to provide the overall framework for the democratic transformation of governance in Sudan. This week marks the realization of the CPA's first major milestone since standing up the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS)—the first nationwide post-war census. In addition to giving the government and donors crucial demographic information to inform recovery and development plans, the results of the Sudanese census will be used to recalculate equitable representation in the central government as well as the distribution of national resources. This is both the census' promise and its downfall.

Only three days before enumeration was scheduled to start on April 15, the South surprised us all by announcing a postponement, citing a lack of funding, insecurity, the unresolved issue of border demarcation, the inability of displaced people to return to the South, and the absence of ethnicity and religion questions on census forms. A strong, unified donor community reaction helped to put the nationwide census back on track. Enumeration began yesterday, April 22, and will continue until May 6.

However, the census has also become a flashpoint in Darfur where neither the DPA nor the CPA is widely understood, much less well-received. Darfuris view the CPA as a deal for southern Sudan only. Consequently, they do not see the DPA, which is predicated on the CPA, as truly responsive to their grievances. Specifically, going forward with the census in Darfur at this time is not supported by any of the main rebel leaders, whether a signatory to the DPA or not. IDPs in particular fear that outsiders have entered Darfur and settled on their vacated land, and thus will be counted to the detriment of the millions of displaced who currently reside in camps. As well, late census preparations seemed to many Darfuris to clearly highlight how the region does not fit into Sudan's power-sharing mechanisms. (The final results must be endorsed by the Northern and Southern census agencies, as well as the Presidents of the Governments of National Unity and of Southern Sudan.)

A valid nationwide census result nevertheless requires enumeration in Darfur, despite the formidable challenges. It will likely not be perfect anywhere, but its shortcomings can be managed and addressed. Delaying or canceling the census in one part of the country,

whether in the South or Darfur, will call into question the integrity and therefore validity of the nationwide results. It would also be a dangerous precedent to compromise this first major milestone of the fragile CPA. If the lead-up to the census provides an indicator for the next critical power-sharing benchmark—the elections before July 2009—then much more work needs to be done to help keep the CPA on track and to reach an inclusive political settlement in Darfur in time for Darfuris to participate meaningfully in the democratic processes laid out in the CPA.

The extensive negotiation of both the CPA and the DPA required persistent international effort. Stewarding their implementation requires no less. The difficulties of the last three years for the CPA are clear testimony that without committed, vigorous proactive and reactive international engagement, this fragile peace remains very much at risk. While imperfect in its implementation, it is the true “whole” solution that will strengthen Sudan’s viability and integrity as a nation-state accountable to its people in the South, North, East, and West. Without it, the international community will be faced with the task of sustaining millions of Sudanese through the provision of humanitarian assistance for many more years to come.

USAID remains committed to carrying out the full range of humanitarian, recovery, reconstruction and development activities that are vital to supporting Sudanese efforts to consolidate peace in southern Sudan and to achieve it in Darfur. We look forward to the day when the people of Darfur are not substantially reliant on humanitarian aid for their very survival and we can work together with them, as we do with the people of southern Sudan and the Three Areas, to realize their aspirations for development and democracy.

Before concluding, I would like to take a moment to remember our two USAID colleagues who were murdered in Khartoum on January 1. John Granville, a USAID Foreign Service Officer, was dedicated to making democracy a reality for people at all levels of society, and his years of work in Sudan and in other parts of Africa made him an invaluable member of our team. Abdelrahman Abbas Rahama, a Sudanese Foreign Service National and an original member of USAID’s disaster assistance response team in Darfur in 2004, was a critical team member who, by virtue of where he sat, had the unique ability to get to know the USAID team one by one. They were our colleagues and our friends. The work and character of both of these men epitomized the goodness of the human spirit, and what we can accomplish when we are focused on bettering the lives of those in need. I can think of no better way to honor them than to rededicate our efforts to bring peace to those who endure violence, health to those who struggle with sickness, and prosperity to those who live in poverty. We hope that their commitment and dedication will guide our efforts toward achieving a just, stable, and peaceful Sudan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee for your continued interest, and for all the work and support that you have dedicated to Sudan and the region.

I welcome any questions you might have for me at this time.