

Statement of Senator Barack Obama on negotiations with the Government of Sudan

Monday, 21 April 2008

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"I am deeply concerned by reports that the Bush Administration is negotiating a normalization of relations with the Government of Sudan that would include removing it from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. This would reportedly be in exchange for Khartoum's agreement to allow Thai and Nepalese troops to participate in the joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping force in Darfur. Senator Barack Obama

This reckless and cynical initiative would reward a regime in Khartoum that has a record of failing to live up to its commitments. First, no country should be removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism for any reason other than the existence of verifiable proof that the government in question does not support terrorist organizations. Second, the Bush Administration should be holding the Government of Sudan accountable for its past promises to let UN peacekeepers operate within its borders – Khartoum's record of inaction and obstruction when it comes to the deployment of the AU-UN force must not be rewarded. Third, the Bush Administration should be holding Sudan accountable for failing to implement significant aspects of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), imperiling the prospects for scheduled multiparty elections in 2009. Finally, Khartoum has yet to fully account for the murder of John Granville, the American citizen and USAID official gunned down on New Year's Eve.

A grassroots movement of Americans has joined with Congress to push for implementation of the CPA, and to push the Bush Administration to acknowledge that the Government of Sudan has pursued a policy of genocide in Darfur. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children have been killed in Darfur, and the killing continues to this very day. Meanwhile, lasting peace will not come without implementation of the CPA. The Bush Administration and Congress have imposed sanctions in an effort to change Khartoum's behavior; to suddenly offer to normalize relations before that change takes place, particularly without close consultation with Congress, makes no sense. Washington must respond to the ongoing genocide and the ongoing failure to implement the CPA with consistency and strong consequences. For years, the Government of Sudan has thwarted the will of the United States and the international community, and offended the standards of our common humanity. Before we improve our relationship with the Government of Sudan, conditions must improve for the Sudanese people. We cannot stand down – we must continue to stand up for peace and human rights.”