

## The Crisis in Darfur:

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# This Wolf is Real & Nobody's Listening

by Salih Booker | September 21, 2004

Once upon a time the U.S. secretary of state went to the UN Security Council and cried, "Wolf!" He said that the evil Saddam Hussein had been building weapons of mass destruction and posed an immediate threat to the United States and the world. Over 1,000 American deaths later, there are no WMDs to be found.

There was also a president who made a State of the Union address in 2003 and cried, "Wolf!" He said that the evil Saddam Hussein was getting uranium from Africa to build weapons of mass destruction. He called on the American people to be prepared to fight a war against terrorism by invading Iraq.

The claims about yellow cake in Niger destined for Baghdad were exposed as phony early on. But still the United States invaded Iraq. More than 12,000 Iraqis have been killed.

The United States cried wolf, and the world shuddered and watched as the most powerful country threw its weight around and took over Iraq and all of its resources, including its future.

There were no weapons of mass destruction, but there was oil and the possibility of redrawing the map of the Middle East to suit the narrow interests of the few. The few who cried wolf in the name of the American republic. The world wondered if it could ever believe the United States again.

Enter Darfur, western Sudan, site of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, born of a government-sponsored campaign of genocide.

The secretary of state dithered for more than a year. The violence in Darfur went on for 16 months as Sudanese and international human rights groups and African advocacy groups shouted about this crime against humanity.

But they needed states to act. Any of the 135 states that are signatories to the 1948 Convention on Genocide could demand international intervention.

But the Security Council procrastinated, preoccupied as it was with Iraq. And the secretary of state stayed silent, even visiting the scene of the crime without saying the word "genocide."

Then the U.S. Congress, in a rare and historic bipartisan and unanimous action, declared that genocide is taking place in Sudan. Finally, the State Department, under pressure from activists across the country and across a broad spectrum of communities, undertook a tabulation of the deaths, rapes and other atrocities by interviewing over 1,000 of the Darfurians fleeing the government's scorched earth campaign.

Now, the secretary of state had no choice but to acknowledge the genocide publicly and head back to the UN with a new resolution, calling for sanctions if Khartoum refuses to disarm militias in Darfur and allow a few more African Union soldiers in to monitor.

But before the passage even of that modest measure on Saturday, there was opposition in the Security Council, in part because of the economic and political interests of its 15 member states, especially the five permanent members.

China is the single largest investor in Sudan's oil industry; Russia has significant arms deals with Khartoum, and both countries want to avoid scrutiny of their own internal wars against various ethnic communities.



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Pakistan and Algeria have either ideological or political interests in helping the government in Sudan. All four abstained.

Once upon a time, Washington could have exercised its clout as the most powerful nation in the world and handily won over the support of these recalcitrant members. But now, the country that cried wolf has lost the moral authority it needs to rally its global neighbors to real action against genocide in Darfur.

Sudanese ministers are quick to argue that Secretary of State Colin Powell was the one to present a false dossier on WMDs in Iraq to the UN Security Council, and now he is presenting a dossier against Sudan, another Arab state with oil. Instead of WMD, the United States is now declaring “genocide.” Sadly, such cynical skepticism resonates in large parts of the world.

It will be the cruelest irony and the greatest tragedy if the people of Darfur cannot count on the international community to save them from genocide because the country that’s the most outspoken against Khartoum is a country that lost its credibility because it cried wolf.

Thus the war in Iraq has now claimed another 50,000 victims—this time in Sudan. And the toll is projected to rise exponentially in the weeks ahead.

In the tale of the boy who cried wolf, it was the boy himself who suffered the consequences of his actions. This time, it’s two million people in Darfur.

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