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International failure in responding to genocide in Darfur should be occasion for the deepest shame. Inaction has already cost hundreds of thousands of lives and caused untold human suffering - but the catastrophe is far from over. The example of Darfur should prompt considerable reflection on whether the world community feels any "**responsibility to protect**" civilians endangered because of inaction, or indeed deliberate actions, on the part of their own governments and regimes. Have we reached the point in confronting atrocity crimes at which we put civilian lives ahead of expedient claims of national sovereignty? An answer in the abstract was provided by all UN member states in September 2005. At that time, countries declared themselves "prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council" when national authorities fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity."

We know - from a staggering number of human rights reports and assessments, and myriad accounts from journalists and humanitarians in the region - the relevance of this clause to events in Darfur. ()

(...) Resolution 1706 was the real moment of decision for accepting a "**responsibility to protect**" in the face of Khartoum's defiant claims of "national sovereignty" - and the international community blinked. Inevitably, this encouraged Khartoum to cleave all the more insistently to the DPA, in which no international guarantors are stipulated as part of security provisions. Further peace talks can accomplish little if the international community is not willing to press Khartoum for meaningful compliance with previous commitments.

(...) Khartoum will be persuaded that the international community is serious only if deployment of the force recently authorized by resolution 1769 is clearly under UN command, and if it is made plain that obstructionism by the regime will be met with harsh sanctions. It must be understood that military force will be used against any armed elements that impede deployment or operations of the authorized force. Selection of the components of the deploying force must rest squarely with the UN department of Peacekeeping operations (DPKO); Jean-Marie Guehenno, head of UN DPKO, should insist that the African Union have only an advisory role in the selection of troops and civilian police. Critically, the militarily capable western nations that have been scandalously laggard in providing key transport, logistical, and tactical air resources must be urgently forthcoming. Civilian police and military observers should be deployed on a highly expedited basis to the most insecure and volatile areas, with adequate military protection.

On the political front, China must be convinced to cease protecting its client state from real diplomatic pressure. Here advocacy efforts focusing on Beijing's hosting of the 2008 Summer Olympics have been much more effective than those of western governments. European nations must be prepared to suspend diplomatic relations in the event that Khartoum cleaves to its obstructionist ways, and they should be prepared to impose economic sanctions as robust as those of the United States. (...)

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Source:

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