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A year ago, Prime Minister Stephen Harper pleaded with the world to ease Darfur's tragedy. "We must act to save a desperate population," he said. "It's the **responsibility to protect.**"

He also rightly pumped up Canada's aid to Darfur, to \$440 million since 2004, to support a United Nations peacekeeping effort to suppress a genocidal conflict that has killed 200,000 people and driven millions from their homes.

But as the first 9,000 troops and police of a beefed-up UN/African Union force began deploying in Darfur this past week, awaiting 17,000 follow-on troops, they were being set up for failure.

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warns, "the entire mission is at risk" because fully five months after approving the new force, Security Council members such as the United States, Britain and France still haven't supplied a single one of the 24 transport and attack helicopters the peacekeepers need to provide firepower and mobility. It's outrageous.

() While 100 helicopters are needed to keep 24 airborne, given servicing, the major powers can supply them, or lease some for UN use.

That is, unless they are more disposed to promise help to a poor, African, Muslim region facing genocide, than to deliver.

This indifference has emboldened Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to set up other obstacles. He has barred non-African peacekeepers. Slapped curbs on UN night flights, and large cargo planes. Demanded the right to suppress UN radios and get advance notice of UN movements.

That leaves the UN force hemmed in by al-Bashir, outgunned by his forces, abandoned by the major powers, and unable to protect civilians and aid workers, much less suppress the fighting.

Meanwhile, Darfur's agony knows no end.

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