

Sunday Herald
By Steve Bloomfield
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(...) Over three days last weekend, a series of villages in northwest Darfur were bombarded by Sudanese forces. (...)

It was one of the most violent military offensives in Darfur since 2004. Around 200 people were killed and some 200,000 were displaced. As the week progressed and the threat of further attacks grew, entire villages across West Darfur began to empty.

It was the sort of attack that would have once brought condemnation from world leaders. A Blair or a Rice would express outrage, criticise the Sudanese government, and urge the international community to do something.

(...) It is now almost five years since the conflict in Darfur began. And it doesn't look like ending any time soon. The rebel groups are split more than a dozen ways. Khartoum continues to divide and rule, arming this group one week, that group the next. The international community, meanwhile, has run out of ideas.

(...) Darfur has been the first major test of a new international doctrine: the **Responsibility to Protect**. Signed by more than 140 countries at a special UN conference in 2005, the **Responsibility to Protect**, for the first time, put the issue of human rights above national sovereignty. In short, if a government is failing to protect its own civilians the international community has a **responsibility to ensure their protection**.

Signing a document, of course, is not the same as implementing it. Sudan, for example, signed it. The doctrine has been trumpeted by leaders in the US, UK and across the EU as an example of their compassion, but no major power has shown much interest in making it work.

(...) As the attacks in Darfur continue - and aid workers are predicting many more in the coming weeks - the international community has little idea what to do next. Criticism of China, though valid, has let others off the hook. The US, Britain and France are all culpable.

Shortly after Nicolas Sarkozy was elected president of France last year he called for a conference in Paris on Darfur. It was, like so many initiatives by Western powers, designed to give the impression that "something" was being done. The African Union wasn't even invited.

(...) As George Bush tours Africa this week he will talk about Darfur. Gordon Brown will probably soon come out with a statement condemning the new attacks. They will both agree something must be done. But as the three million Darfuris displaced across Sudan and Chad know all too

well, there is a big difference between words and action. For now, the only action they are seeing is from Khartoum.

To view the full article, please go to:

<http://www.sundayherald.com/international/shinternational/display.var.2050621.0.0.php>

Statement by UNAMID Joint Special Representative and UN Humanitarian Coordinator on renewed violence and the need to protect Civilians in Jebel Muun, Darfur:

<http://appablog.wordpress.com/2008/02/24/darfur-statement-by-unamid-joint-special-representative-rodolphe-adada-and-un-humanitarian-coordinator-ameerah-haq-on-the-need-to-protect-civilians-in-jebel-muun-darfur/>