

The Gazette
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Irwin Cotler is a former Canadian Attorney General and Minister of Justice. He is currently a liberal MP, and the liberal critic for Human Rights. He is the founder of the Save Darfur Parliamentary Coalition.

() In the leaders' debate for the last federal election, none of the leaders of any of the four major parties even mentioned the word "Darfur." Nor did any member of the media put a question about Darfur to any of the leaders.

Most Canadians would join me in lamenting the tragedy unfolding, yet the government's throne speech made no mention of this on-going atrocity. This is especially disturbing given Canada's role as the principal architect of the "**responsibility to protect**" doctrine, which mandates international collective action to protect the Darfurian population from genocide.()

In this federal election campaign, important questions need to be put in the leaders' debate and beyond. How do we respond to the Sudanese government beginning its sixth year of genocidal warfare by launching ferocious ground and air assaults on its African civilian populations? How do we protect the Darfurian people as the Sudanese government attempts to destroy the relief effort set up to offer food and shelter to those in need? How do we reassure the aid workers whose own lives are threatened by a government-orchestrated campaign of terror?

The international community also needs a leader - and Canada can be that leader - to champion the role of international criminal law in bringing the genocidaires to account. While this summer saw the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court apply for an arrest warrant charging President Omar Al-Bashir with genocide, it also saw Khartoum reject and mock the legitimacy of this process itself. ()

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