

A U.S. commission is recommending immediate steps by the international community to deal with the situation in Sudan's western Darfur region. Proposals were made by the special task force on United Nations reform

The task force recommended..."a series of immediate initiatives for the United States and the U.N., and others to assist the African Union in stopping the killing," said Mr. Mitchell. "Our recommendations include assembling a package of assistance for the African Union, authorization and establishment of a no-fly zone over Darfur, and a new Security Council resolution that provides a strong mandate backed up by the forces adequate to the mission."

The task force urges the United States and other U.N. members to affirm a responsibility of every sovereign government to protect citizens from genocide, and says failure to do so should impose a collective responsibility on nations to act.

Task force co-chairman Newt Gingrich says the panel wanted to make sure guilty regimes do not go unpunished. "There has been a lot of nit-picking over whether Darfur is genocide, or merely mass murder. And our conclusion as a task force was, let's lump them together," he said. "Mass murder should be bad enough. You should not have to have some quibble over whether you have technically met the standard of genocide. This may seem like a small thing, but in the world of international diplomacy it's a very big change. We also said criminal regimes should not be able to get away with being criminal, and that is a standard which is actually a change from where the U.N. has been."

Congressman Frank Wolf, who has led congressional investigations into genocide in Darfur, welcomes the spotlight the task force report put on Darfur.

Genocide in Darfur, he says, is an example of the failure of the U.N. to carry out its mission to secure the peace and basic human rights. "Genocide is occurring in Darfur and the U.N. has done little to stop it. And it is still going on in Darfur as we now speak. It is late in the day, women have gone out to get wood, and are fortunate maybe if they haven't been raped, there are feces all over the [refugee] camps, no hope, no opportunity, the fear to go back to the village and yet it is still going on in the year 2005," Mr. Wolf said.

Task force members visited a number of U.N. operations around the world in preparing their report. The task force says the government of Sudan denied one of its members and staff access to Darfur by withholding visas

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