

TAMA, Sudan

So who killed 2-year-old Zahra Abdullah for belonging to the Fur tribe?

At one level, the answer is simple: The murderers were members of the janjaweed militia that stormed into this mud-brick village in the South Darfur region at dawn four weeks ago on horses, camels and trucks. Zahra's mother, Fatima Omar Adam, woke to gunfire and smoke and knew at once what was happening.

She jumped up from her sleeping mat and put Zahra on her back, then grabbed the hands of her two older children and raced out of her thatch-roof hut with her husband.

Some of the marauders were right outside. They yanked Zahra from Ms. Fatima's back and began bludgeoning her on the ground in front of her shrieking mother and sister. Then the men began beating Ms. Fatima and the other two children, so she grabbed them and fled - and the men returned to beating the life out of Zahra.

At another level, responsibility belongs to the Sudanese government, which armed the janjaweed and gave them license to slaughter and rape members of several African tribes, including the Fur.

Then some responsibility attaches to the rebels in Darfur. They claim to be representing the tribes being ethnically cleansed, but they have been fighting each other instead of negotiating a peace with the government that would end the bloodbath.

And finally, responsibility belongs to the international community - to you and me - for acquiescing in yet another genocide.

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Darfur is just the latest chapter in a sorry history of repeated inaction in the face of genocide, from that of Armenians, through the Holocaust, to the slaughter of Cambodians, Bosnians and Rwandans. If we had acted more resolutely last year, then Zahra would probably still be alive. Attacks on villages like Tama occur regularly. Over the last week, one tribe called the Falata, backed and armed by the Sudanese government, has burned villages belonging to the Masalit tribe south of here. Dozens of bodies are said to be lying unclaimed on the ground.

President Bush, where are you? You emphasize your willingness to speak bluntly about evil, but you barely let the word Darfur pass your lips. The central lesson of the history of genocide is that the essential starting point of any response is to bellow moral outrage - but instead, Mr. President, you're whispering.

http://savedarfur.org/go.php?q=/misc/NY_Times_Kristof_column_Nov._20.html