

On Nov. 28, in Vatican City, Pope Benedict XVI said to the archbishop of Khartoum, "The horror of events unfolding in Darfur points to the need for stronger international resolve to ensure security and basic human rights" there. Reuters, reporting the pope's concern, noted, as much of the world knows, that hundreds of thousands of black Africans have died of violence or disease, and more than 2 million have been driven from their homes.

On Dec. 13, Luis Moreno Ocampo, the lead prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, told the U.N. Security Council -- which has evaded all direct responsibility for stopping the genocide -- that while he has been charged by the United Nations to document those responsible for these continuing crimes against humanity, he can't provide protection for witnesses, and so has to do what he can outside Darfur.

Britain's ambassador to the United States, Emyr Jones Parry, told National Public Radio that what the lead prosecutor has determined is that "the nature of the attacks in Darfur demonstrated a degree of coordination which implied that someone was in command and control of that operation."

But the head of the African Union's gravely insufficient peacekeeping force in Darfur, Baba Gana Kingibe of Nigeria, has been much more factually detailed. As reported in the Weekly Standard on Dec. 12, "He accused (Sudan's) government security forces of making four specific coordinated offensive attacks against civilians, using Arab Janjaweed militias" in September.

While the Arab Janjaweed killed and raped during their invasion of the Aro Sharow refugee camp, "Sudanese army helicopters flew overhead in what Kingibe called an 'apparent air and land assault' on the black African victims."

Although President Bush was the first world leader to condemn Sudan's government for the crime of genocide, he has since said and done little about the continuing horrors. But Human Rights Watch -- which has conducted more intensive and documented investigations on the ground in Darfur than any other human rights organization -- released an 82-page report on Dec. 12 titled, "Entrenching Impunity: Government Responsibility for International Crimes in Darfur."

This meticulously researched report will help those members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, who keep trying to get Republican leadership in the House to pass the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (already passed by the Senate unanimously), which would put sustained pressure on the Khartoum government.

What Human Rights Watch has done in this report is to begin to end the impunity of those primarily responsible for these atrocities so that the world cannot claim after millions have died that they did not know who -- specifically -- was responsible. And with that knowledge available right now, maybe countries with a conscience -- by contrast with Khartoum's protectors on the U.N. Security Council, primarily China -- will act to save those who have survived before they, too, disappear.

Human Rights Watch demonstrates that "Senior Sudanese officials played a direct role

coordinating the offensive -- and particularly the aerial bombing campaign -- from Khartoum. ... The report is based on hundreds of eyewitness accounts, more than 10 investigations by Human Rights Watch in Chad and Darfur, and Sudanese government documents."

The long list of potential defendants includes Sudan's national officials, current and former regional officials, military commanders, Janjaweed militia leaders and, at the very top, President Omar El Bashir.

Human Rights Watch points out -- and this should wake up what's left of a credible international community of leaders who said "never again" after Rwanda: "Despite the Sudanese government's involvement in ongoing crimes in Darfur, the African Union is allowing Sudan to host January's A.U. summit in the capital, Khartoum. A new African Union president is also due to be elected, and there are indications that President Bashir might obtain the post." How many will be killed on that celebratory day in Darfur?

Bush has a lot to deal with these days, but as New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, the one journalist who has most often tolled the death knell in Darfur, wrote on Nov. 26: "Bush should use the bully pulpit. He should talk about Darfur in his speeches and invite survivors to the Oval Office. ... He can call on China to stop underwriting this genocide."

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I disagree with the president on civil liberties, but I fully believe that in his inner being, he does care about the murders, gang rapes, destroyed families and the desperation of those barely surviving in Darfur. Let him say so to the Republican leadership in Congress -- and to all of us -- in a prime-time television address. He will feel better, and so will we.

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