



May 17, 2010

H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations in New York
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Via Facsimile: +1 212 838 2819

Your Excellency Dr. Salam:

We are writing to you on behalf of more than 190 faith-based, advocacy and human rights organizations that make up the Save Darfur Coalition on the occasion of your term as president of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to urge that you make the increasing security concerns in Darfur a top priority during the month of May.

We appreciate your recent reflection that this month presents Lebanon with the opportunity to enhance its global image, in part through assuming a key role on issues relating to Sudan. We also believe that the leadership of Lebanon can deliver renewed international attention and political momentum toward addressing the crucial challenges that face Sudan and its tumultuous region of Darfur, where hostilities have recently escalated. The Save Darfur Coalition is gravely concerned about current insecurity in Darfur, particularly with regard to the situation in the central region of Jebel Marra and a faltering ceasefire between a leading rebel movement and the Sudanese government. Just this past weekend, fierce clashes are reported to have taken place in Jebel Moon, with potentially serious implications for the plight of local civilians, border security with neighboring Chad, and prospects for peace talks scheduled to resume this week. These developments – in addition to small arms proliferation and an increase in tribal conflict – pose a significant threat to the lives and livelihoods of thousands of civilians.

While we commend recent efforts by the United Nations and the African Union to reach full deployment of the joint peacekeeping operation in Darfur, we are disappointed that the mission has been unable to prevent, monitor, or intervene in most of the recent fighting. Likewise, we would like to express our significant dismay that UNAMID has been unable or unwilling to protect humanitarian operations in Jebel Marra, forcing the withdrawal of aid groups and resulting in a severe lack of information regarding the humanitarian and human rights consequences of the clashes.

The Save Darfur Coalition welcomes that the UNSC Programme of Work for this month – which concludes with the International Day of UN Peacekeepers – includes several sessions dedicated to UNAMID. We hope that as President of the Security Council, you will ensure these briefings and consultations conclude with a concrete plan of action to improve UNAMID's effectiveness in responding to ongoing violence in Darfur, and to secure its access to recent sites of fighting, which has left thousands of civilians without humanitarian assistance or military protection.



Specifically in relation to this insecurity, we recommend the following UNSC actions:

- Demand accountability and transparency in all investigations of attacks against humanitarian and peacekeeping operations and their assets, and actively participate in bringing perpetrators to justice in accordance with the rule of law;
- Demand that all parties live up to their commitments as outlined by the framework agreements signed in Doha and encourage their return to the negotiation table;
- Ensure the Sudanese government's full cooperation in permitting UNAMID forces to broadly interpret their mandate to protect civilians and humanitarian operations through the robust and proactive implementation of the applicable rules of engagement;
- Demand repercussions for any obstruction to operations of UNAMID forces by the Sudanese government and Darfur's armed movements;
- Urge UNAMID commanders to expand the range of security zones patrolled by peacekeeping forces;
- Demand adherence of the Sudanese government, all armed parties, and states to the UNSC arms embargo, per UNSC Resolution 1591; and
- Continue to fully resource and finance all operational needs of the force.

Finally, it is important to note that as instability and insecurity continue to put lives of civilians at risk in Darfur, there are growing concerns about the lack of protection for civilians in South Sudan. In the first four months of 2010, inter-communal fighting resulted in the deaths of at least 450 civilians and the displacement of an estimated 40,000 others. Furthermore, over the past few weeks the post-election clashes between soldiers loyal to Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) General George Athor Deng and other units of the SPLA have sharpened fears that violence in the South may only increase in the months leading up to the critical referenda scheduled for January 2011. Given these concerns, the Save Darfur Coalition calls upon the UNSC under Lebanon's leadership to monitor this precarious situation closely and provide the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) with the political support needed to respond rapidly and effectively to this evolving crisis.

Many in the human rights advocacy community are looking to the Council to act vigorously and strategically in addressing the challenges facing Sudan and Darfur, in particular by robustly confronting the current shortcomings in civilian protection throughout the country during this critical period.

Sincerely,

Amir Osman
Senior Director, Policy and Government Relations