

Statement of Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards
Darfur Event
Monday, April 27, 2009

Last week we commemorated Holocaust Remembrance week. During the somber years of the Holocaust, 6 million Jews and 6 million others were killed.

These events left one of the darkest blemishes on our world history and shed light on the importance of acting swiftly and globally to stop mass atrocities and violence. We, in America, vowed to never let the Holocaust happen again; we vowed that we would not remain silent and complacent next time.

And, yet, here we are today- The Darfur genocide has killed more than 400,000 civilians and displaced 2.5 million people from their homes. The people in this region of Sudan continue to live in abhorrent and unsustainable conditions—facing the threat of rape, starvation, and violence on a daily basis.

These conditions have persisted for years and despite aid by relief organizations, the conditions have yet to improve. The crisis took a dramatic turn for the worse in March 2009. 13 international NGOs were expelled from the region, and 3 Sudanese NGOs by the Sudanese government closed. According to an April 21 statement by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the expulsion of these groups “puts well over 1 million people at life-threatening risk” in Darfur. While the government of Sudan introduced measures on Friday “to revitalize and strengthen the delivery of humanitarian services in Darfur”, the international community must hold them accountable to enforce these measures, with more than just our words, because words are no longer enough.

We must act to stop this genocide. We planned this day as a day of action because it comes near the end of the first 100 days of the Obama Administration. I applaud President Obama’s appointment of Scott Gration as the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan. Mr. Gration traveled recently to Khartoum and secured commitments from the Sudanese government to reverse the effects of the expulsions by acting immediately to increase UN capacity, expand the operations of remaining NGOs, expedite the entrance of new NGOs, and reduce bureaucratic restrictions on NGO operations.

We need to hold Khartoum to their word. President Obama and his Administration must use their political capital to lead a truly international effort, using all available sticks and carrots as appropriate and necessary to make progress towards the shared goal of achieving peace for Darfur and all of Sudan. We can no longer be silent and complacent, in the face of death, starvation and inhumanity.

In the words of Mahtma Gandhi:

"All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, and each one of us is responsible for the misdeeds of all the others. I cannot detach myself from the wickedest soul."

We must Act now!
We must act as one indivisible family!
Save Darfur!