

## *Sudan: Desperate for Regime Change Over Many Years*

Eric Reeves

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**The *Washington Post* op/ed that appears below ("Regime Change in Sudan")** was first published almost eight years ago---**August 23, 2004**. All the significant claims made in this piece, I remain convinced, were fully justified by the political, military, and humanitarian realities in Sudan at the time. The present massive effort at "regime change" on the part of the Sudanese people is even more grimly justified; and in responding to this popular uprising, the international community must not fail to **consider the human destruction and suffering that have occurred throughout greater Sudan during these past terrible years**. Further, the world must also take seriously what is almost certain to occur if a badly wounded National Islamic Front/National Congress Party (NIF/NCP) regime somehow survives the current crisis. International agnosticism and expedient dithering are intolerable given this terrifying prospect.

For if we look seriously at all the various data sources, we must conclude that over the past eight years human mortality---from all war-related causes in both Sudan and South Sudan---is measured in the **hundreds of thousands of lives lost**. At the same time, **many hundreds of thousands of civilians in South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and along the North/South border** continue to face a life-threatening lack of food, water, and medicine. This **vast humanitarian crisis has been deliberately engineered by the Khartoum regime** as an unspeakably cruel counter-insurgency strategy.

A similar refusal to grant full humanitarian or UN peacekeeping access in Darfur has also been immensely destructive. Although there are no important studies or data sets for mortality after July 2010, [as many as 300,000 civilians in Darfur and Eastern Chad have died](#) from war-related causes **since August 2004**.

During the same time, **millions of human beings have been uprooted**. There are already more than 200,000 refugees from Blue Nile and South Kordofan in South Sudan. Another 50,000 have fled to Ethiopia. In Darfur, [despite manipulation of displacement figures by senior UN officials](#), it is clear from data collected by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre that **more than 2 million people have been newly displaced** in this period of almost eight years, a great many for the second or third time. UNHCR estimates that approximately [280,000 Darfuris remain refugees](#) in Eastern Chad.

**Millions of children throughout Sudan** suffer for lack of food, water, medicine (including vaccinations), and education. Some of the areas in the eastern states (Red Sea, Kassala, and Gedaref) suffer from the worst rates of malnutrition in all of Sudan. A **great many children die or live physically stunted lives**.

And yet regime officials have run the economy into the ground, all the while grossly enriching themselves and their political cronies. The NIF/NCP engaged in wild overspending during the oil-revenue boom years, but now finds itself incapable of closing a massive budget gap. The gap was created in large part by regime's diplomatic intransigence in refusing to negotiate a reasonable transit fee for Southern Sudan's crude oil moving north to Port Sudan.

**Inflation, already likely running over 40 percent (and higher for food and fuel), is poised to become hyper-inflation** as the budget gap compels the printing of money. The value of the Sudanese pound is in freefall, making most imported goods far too expensive for all but the richest Sudanese and collapsing import businesses. Removing the subsidy for fuel may address much of the budget shortfall, but far from all. More broadly, the IMF estimates that the Sudanese economy will *contract* this year by 7 percent. The loss of the fuel subsidy along with severe inflation in food prices has been the catalyst of the current uprising---and [this inflation is rising rapidly and inexorably.](#)

**If hyper-inflation strikes the economy, it will crumble within a matter of weeks.** The Sudanese pound will become virtually worthless, and the anticipation of this reality will cause a run on the banks, which will then collapse. There will be no currency of international exchange, and even domestic economic transactions will move rapidly toward barter.

*But the human costs*, the terribly predictable and staggering *human costs*, do by far the most to have justified arguing for regime change eight years ago. And if the current cabal of *génocidaires* and thugs should somehow prevail over the civilian uprising now underway, the all too predictable cruelty of the coming years will cause massive additional mortality and suffering.

*This is the essential fact that the international community must bear in mind as it moves with dismaying tardiness to address the enormous implications of the uprising in Sudan.*

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## "Regime Change in Sudan"

*The Washington Post*, August 23, 2004; Page A15 [unedited; emphases added]

By Eric Reeves

The horrors in Darfur mark this century's first great venture in genocide, but they are not the first such action perpetrated by the National Islamic Front (NIF) regime ruling Sudan. That distinction goes to the *jihād directed against the various African peoples of the Nuba Mountains* beginning in 1992. *Genocide began again in the vast oil concessions of southern Sudan in 1998*, when the African peoples of the region became targets of a

systematic policy of scorched-earth clearances. ***Many hundreds of thousands were killed or displaced.***

Khartoum's genocide in Darfur is both familiar and different. It is, as seasoned Sudan analyst Alex de Waal has argued, "the routine cruelty of a security cabal, its humanity withered by years in power: it is genocide by force of habit." Confronted with a surprisingly robust military insurgency in Darfur---growing out of decades of economic marginalization and a near-total breakdown in civilian security---the government in Khartoum instinctively responded by organizing and deploying the ***Janjaweed Arab militia, which has brutally and systematically destroyed the means of agricultural production throughout Darfur***, focusing almost exclusively on African tribal groups. These people now confront "conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction": They face genocide.

***No reasonable world order can tolerate a serially genocidal regime that rules only by virtue of ruthless survivalism.*** Yet this is what the United Nations appears prepared to do. A July 30 U.N. Security Council resolution on Darfur was an exercise in temporizing. Veto-wielding China and Russia, as well as Pakistan and Algeria, resisted all meaningful action; both China and Pakistan abstained in the final vote, signaling that nothing further will be done when the Security Council takes up Darfur again on Sunday.

In the distorting shadow of the Iraq war, this is an exceedingly difficult moment to argue for "regime change" in Khartoum. ***But regime change alone can end genocide as the domestic security policy of choice in Sudan. And it is the only thing that can avert the deaths of hundreds of thousands in Darfur.*** The mismatch between humanitarian need and capacity grows more deadly each day. And Khartoum is strenuously resisting deployment of any peacekeeping force, even from the African Union.

The moral logic of regime change could not be clearer. The ***NIF came to power by military coup in 1989, deposing an elected government and aborting the most promising peace process*** since Sudan's independence in 1956. The only arguments against regime change are those of realpolitik (the regime is Sudan's de facto government) and practicability (how can Sudan's governance be taken into international receivership?).

***But years in power cannot legitimize genocide:*** This will only encourage regimes like Khartoum's to believe they are invulnerable and act accordingly. Even from the realpolitik perspective, acceptance of rule by those who commit genocide is counterproductive to regional and world order; it also offers encouragement to other regimes tempted to use genocide as a political weapon.

To the second objection---how will it be done?---there are certainly no easy answers. But one consequence of the Iraq war (though of course not a justification in itself) is that public discussion of regime change by the United States will resonate much more deeply

in Khartoum's despotic thinking. If it is coupled with serious efforts to work with our European allies to squeeze Khartoum by means of comprehensive economic sanctions, as well as sanctions targeted against NIF leaders, we may first be able to secure a permissive environment for humanitarian intervention in Darfur, saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

If regime change is not to be chaotic, it must be organized by a consortium of international actors, including regional governments; efforts must be made to reach out to all opposition parties throughout the country and in exile. A proportionately representative interim governing council must be created externally but be ready to move quickly to take control when the NIF is removed by whatever means are necessary. The great risk is an implosion of the military that sustains NIF power, but this risk is as great without any effort of regime change.

The challenges adumbrated here are daunting and politically risky. ***The consequences of failing to accept these challenges are continuation of genocidal rule and additional hundreds of thousands of deaths.***

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