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DARFURI-AMERICAN IMPLORES PRESIDENT TO ACT NOW TO PREVENT A “STAINED LEGACY”
Series of letters from Sudanese highlight need for new approach to Sudan

WASHINGTON, DC – August 1, 2013 – Mohamed Suleiman, an American from Darfur, today issued an open letter to President Obama, imploring him to change course on his approach to the genocide and humanitarian crises in Sudan or face a stained legacy and the condemnation of history. The letter, one of a series to be sent to the president in an advocacy campaign led by *Act for Sudan*, conveys a personal plea that expresses dramatically the years of frustration experienced by the Sudanese people with President Obama’s failed Sudan policies. (Full text of letter below.)

“When you were a senator and a candidate for president, you spoke often and strongly about America’s responsibility to end genocide in Darfur,” Suleiman wrote in his letter. “Upon your first election in 2008, as the President of the United States of America, many Darfuris named their newly born boys after you - Obama.”

“Now, in the second term and fifth year of your presidency,” he continued, “the elders, grandparents, and mothers, in the nights of Darfur, pass on the horrible stories of the genocide to the younger generations. ...They tell how an American president who pledged to end the Darfur genocide instead stood by when President al-Bashir effectively ended humanitarian aid in Darfur, when civilians were killed by government forces and militias, and when the government re-initiated ethnic cleansing in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile.”

He concludes, “Mr. President, I implore you to take the necessary actions to save the lives of Sudanese civilians not yet killed by their government. As you said in 2007, genocide is ‘a stain on our souls.’ Please don’t let the Sudan genocide become a lasting stain on your legacy.”

In 2007, Mr. Obama promised that “as a president of the United States I don’t intend to abandon people or turn a blind eye to slaughter.” Yet, according to *Act for Sudan*, six months into his second term, President Obama’s approach has failed to prevent the tragic loss of countless lives and the mass displacement and starvation of countless more innocent people in Sudan.

According to the national alliance, President Obama should immediately instruct the National Security Council to develop and implement a new pro-democracy and civilian protection-oriented policy on Sudan. The alliance maintains that unless President Obama acts now to

protect innocent civilians from their genocidal government, he will ultimately be remembered for his stained legacy on genocide.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that “since the beginning of 2013, more than 300,000 people have been forced to flee their homes” in Darfur, and over 1.2 million people are displaced in South Kordofan and Blue Nile with more than 220,000 seeking refuge in South Sudan and Ethiopia, in addition to 48,000 from Abyei who remain displaced in South Sudan.

Suleiman’s letter will be followed by a series of letters from Sudanese people in the weeks and months to come, and all letters will be amplified via social media by *Act for Sudan*. Details on the campaign are posted at <http://actforsudan.org/act/obamas-stained-legacy/>.

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Act for Sudan is an alliance of American citizen activists and Sudanese U.S. residents who advocate for an end to genocide and mass atrocities in Sudan. *Act for Sudan* is dedicated to advocacy that is directly informed by the situation on the ground and by Sudanese people who urgently seek protection, justice, and peace. For more information please visit www.actforsudan.org.

Letter to President Obama from Mohamed Suleiman:

Dear Mr. President:

I am an American citizen since 1992, a member of the Zaghawa tribe and a native of Darfur. Over the past several years, I have been in daily contact with my countrymen in Darfur and in other parts of Sudan. I have heard witnesses’ accounts of many acts of genocide and other atrocities committed by agents and proxies of the government of Sudan against members of my family, my friends, residents of my village and countless others.

When you were a senator and a candidate for president, you spoke often and strongly about America’s responsibility to end genocide in Darfur. Upon your first election in 2008, as the President of the United States of America, many Darfuris named their newly born boys after you - Obama. Darfur people, in their tradition, name their children after the dearest people in their lives or a person that made a significant change in their lives for the better. They were very optimistic that you were the one who would stop the first genocide in the new millennium, the genocide in Darfur.

Today, in the summer of 2013, millions of Darfuris live, or are more accurately simply existing, in wartime conditions you really cannot imagine. They feel abandoned by you and America. One expressed the desperation of the men, women and children there saying, “We have no choice other than to fight to the death.”

Now, in the second term and fifth year of your presidency, the elders, grandparents, and mothers, in the nights of Darfur, pass on the horrible stories of the genocide to the younger generations. They pass on the fact that the world chose to accept and tolerate those who have

committed the crime of genocide. They tell how an American president who pledged to end the Darfur genocide instead stood by when President al-Bashir effectively ended humanitarian aid in Darfur, when civilians were killed by government forces and militias, and when the government re-initiated ethnic cleansing in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. They cannot understand that you, a two-term president, may leave office with a legacy of failing to stop the Darfur genocide and failing to bring any of the responsible criminals to justice.

Genocide is a unique crime in that its effects live through the survivors for generations and centuries to come. Darfur's genocide is one of the most documented crimes. Just as the offspring of Holocaust survivors have learned the horrible details from their ancestors, Darfuri people also are passing details of the Darfur genocide to their offspring - who acted to stop the genocide, who did little, or who did nothing. As time passes, every excuse that may sound good and reasonable now for not doing enough to end the genocide will pale in the eyes of history and in the eyes of generations to come.

Mr. President, no matter what you accomplish in any other arena, domestically or internationally, if you do not adopt and promptly implement, together with U.S. allies, a revised comprehensive and coordinated policy toward Sudan, your legacy will forever be tied to failing to stop the genocide in Darfur. Twenty years from the day you leave office, any time new mass graves are uncovered in a remote village in Darfur, your legacy will turn, in the books of history, into a legacy of death.

Fifty years from now, it will be incomprehensible to those who will learn the history of genocides that you sat as an American president for two terms, and allowed al-Bashir, the mastermind and executioner of the Darfur genocide, the first sitting head of state indicted by the International Criminal Court for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, to continue to commit these terrible crimes. History will remember that you failed to stop the killing, displacement, rapes and other destructive consequences called genocide by the U.S. Congress and by you.

Mr. President, I implore you to take the necessary actions to save the lives of Sudanese civilians not yet killed by their government. As you said in 2007, genocide is "a stain on our souls." Please don't let the Sudan genocide become a lasting stain on your legacy.

Sincerely,

Mohamed Suleiman