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DARFURI-AMERICAN IMPLORES PRESIDENT TO MAKE SUDAN A PRIORITY IN 2016

Highlights need for U.S. action to end humanitarian crises in Sudan

WASHINGTON, DC – January 29, 2016 – Mohamed Suleiman, an American from Darfur and Co-Founder of Act for Sudan, today issued an open letter to President Obama, imploring him to make Sudan one of his priorities in 2016 and to "renew his pledge and redouble his efforts to help the oppressed and endangered people of Sudan." The letter conveys a personal plea that dramatically expresses the need for President Obama to act to end the 13 year-long humanitarian crises in Darfur and Sudan and the years of frustration experienced by the Sudanese people with the president's failed Sudan policies. (Full text of letter below.)

Following President Obama's State of the Union speech, Suleiman wrote that he was struck by the president's determination to use his "executive power, the bully pulpit, and the influence of your office to achieve goals" important to the president in his final year in office. In this context, Suleiman asked the president to "make Sudan one of your priorities in 2016."

"In [2006](#), as Senator Barack Obama, you sat down under a tree in a refugee camp in Chad with a Darfuri who kept your picture and calls you a friend," wrote Suleiman. "Mahmoud Anoor Hamed, a leader in Milé camp in Eastern Chad, said you were a very good listener. All he was hoping for was to return home and see justice. You said you wanted to 'play some small part to remind people that the situation here is not resolved' and said it 'is important that these folks here are not forgotten.'" Suleiman requested, "Mr. President, please remember Darfur now and help the survivors."

Yet the grim facts, as outlined in Suleiman's letter point to a Darfur that has in fact been forgotten by Obama and the world at large. In addition to large scale bombing and ground attacks by the Government of Sudan against its own people in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, President al-Bashir has unleashed the Sudan Armed Forces and Rapid Support Force militias for large scale attacks in Darfur. Just this month, these forces applied their genocidal tactic of systematically attacking and destroying multiple villages at once in West Darfur, then perpetrated a massacre of civilians who fled for safety to El Geneina. Al-Bashir has appointed his deputy, a vicious Janjaweed leader named Hassabo Mohamed Abdel Rahman, to spearhead the project of erasing Darfur as it had been known and shared by all ethnicities. While violence against the people rages in Darfur, Sudan [seeks](#) to end the UNAMID force that was supposed to protect Darfuris.

In his letter Suleiman wrote, "There is certainly a great deal that you can do to help. At the

stroke of your pen, you can sanction each member of al-Bashir's leadership regime. With a single directive, you can instruct leaders in your Administration to speak out publicly and powerfully against every depredation by the Government of Sudan against its people, as they did early in your presidency. I am dismayed that you do not express regret for the continued suffering of the Darfuri people and ongoing genocide in Sudan, despite your statements as Senator and your lofty exhortations at genocide commemorations. I respectfully request that you use your powers and your voice in 2016 to prevent Abdel Rahman and the Government of Sudan from achieving their stated goals, and to bring the security and justice required for long term peace to Darfur and Sudan."

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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:

January 29, 2016

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I am a Darfuri American, living in California but born and raised in Darfur.

In August 2013, I wrote you a [letter](#) (included below) appealing to you, as the President of the world's most powerful nation, to save my people from genocide-by-attrition in Darfur and help bring to justice the perpetrators of the ongoing atrocities.

Today, Mr. President, I am writing to you about the dire situation that Darfuris are facing as a people.

The regime in Khartoum has embarked now on the last stage of the "final solution of the Darfur problem."

In addition to large scale bombing and ground attacks by the Government of Sudan against its own people in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, President al-Bashir has unleashed the Sudan Armed Forces and Rapid Support Force militias for large scale attacks in Darfur. Just this month, these forces applied their genocidal tactic of systematically attacking and destroying multiple villages at once in West Darfur, then perpetrated a massacre of civilians who fled for safety to El Geneina. They deployed more than a thousand vehicles including tanks and armored cars

coupled with an aerial assault in a massive attack on Darfuris in Jebel Marra, and continued their terrible policies of using rape as a weapon of war, blocking humanitarian assistance, and committing other crimes against humanity, war crimes and acts of genocide.

While the world has stood by and watched during the last 13 years of genocide in Darfur, al-Bashir has been working to change the demography of Darfur by bringing in other Sudanese and Arab nomads from African countries to settle lands from which Darfuris had to flee. More than 500,000 Darfuris have been killed, 400,000 have fled to Chad, more than 2 million have sought refuge in Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps, and untold others have dispersed somewhere in Sudan.

Al-Bashir has appointed his deputy, a vicious Janjaweed leader named Hassabo Mohamed Abdel Rahman, to spearhead the project of erasing Darfur as it had been known and shared by all ethnicities. While violence against the people rages in Darfur, Sudan [seeks](#) to end the UNAMID force that was supposed to protect Darfuris. Abdel Rahman [declared](#) in December 2015 that Darfur has "completely recovered from the war" and pledged to completely dismantle the IDP camps saying that "the year 2016 will see the end of displacement in Darfur." The choices the regime is offering to the IDPs are grim: Either accept resettlement to government-designated areas (the poorest lands rather than the original fertile lands they had farmed) or return to their original locales (but not their original lands since they are occupied by new settlers) and serve as cheap labor to the new owners.

The Government of Sudan has [declared](#) a referendum to be held in Darfur in April. However, this referendum is not a chance for Darfuris to determine their future, but rather another cynical scheme. The Government seeks confirmation that Darfur will be broken into five states, thereby reducing the possibility of effective political opposition from Darfur. Abdel Rahman is publicly promoting that the names of the mini-states should be changed from Darfur (the historic name which means Land of Fur – the indigenous African tribe) to Dar al-Salam (an Arabic name meaning Land of Peace), so there will not even be a reference to Darfur as a region.

As a result of these coordinated actions, the Government of Sudan may prove successful in completing its program of genocide in Darfur, with power and wealth concentrated in the hands of Janjaweed-led rulers in all new states of what was once known as Darfur, while inducing poverty and harsh living conditions and deprivation of education on the indigenous communities in Darfur to further break them down as a people.

Mr. President, throughout history, the perpetrators of genocide were never satisfied with just wiping out their victims en masse from the face of the earth. These perpetrators, in cold, calculated, methodical ways, devised plans and schemes to erase the identity, culture, language, and way of life of their victims.

This criminal method is exactly what is going on in Darfur now.

In [2006](#), as Senator Barack Obama, you sat down under a tree in a refugee camp in Chad with a Darfuri who kept your picture and calls you a friend. Mahmoud Anoor Hamed, a leader in Milé camp in Eastern Chad, said you were a very good listener. All he was hoping for was to return home and see justice. You said you wanted to "play some small part to remind people that the situation here is not resolved" and said it "is important that these folks here are not forgotten."

Darfuris are sure of one thing. Had it not been for America (including both your administration and that of President Bush, Congress, Activists and millions of ordinary Americans), there would be no survivors in Darfur's genocide.

Mr. President, please remember Darfur now and help the survivors.

I listened to your State of the Union speech and was struck by your determination to use your executive power, the "bully pulpit," and the influence of your office to achieve goals important to you and your Presidency in your final year. Please make Sudan one of your priorities in 2016 and renew your pledge and redouble your efforts to help the oppressed and endangered people of Sudan.

There is certainly a great deal that you can do to help. At the stroke of your pen, you can sanction each member of al-Bashir's leadership regime. With a single directive, you can instruct leaders in your Administration to speak out publicly and powerfully against every depredation by the Government of Sudan against its people, as they did early in your presidency. I am dismayed that you do not express regret for the continued suffering of the Darfuri people and ongoing genocide in Sudan, despite your statements as Senator and your lofty exhortations at genocide commemorations. I respectfully request that you use your powers and your voice in 2016 to prevent Abdel Rahman and the Government of Sudan from achieving their stated goals, and to bring the security and justice required for long term peace to Darfur and Sudan.

Your friend Hamed, I, and millions of Darfuris, do not expect you to spill American blood or treasure to bring the displaced Darfuris safely home. But we hope that the next Darfuri generation will read in history books that you, Barack Obama, the President of the most powerful nation on earth, who happened to be the first African-American elected President, came, saw, and strove mightily to bring peace and justice to Darfur.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Suleiman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mohamed E. Suleiman
Darfuri American living in California, U.S.A.

August 1, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

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, more accurately, are 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Suleiman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mohamed Suleiman
San Francisco, California