



The Darfur Consortium

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African and EU parliamentarians accuse Africa/EU Summit of “turning their backs” on Darfur

Over forty members of African and European Parliaments have today (Friday) expressed ‘surprise and disappointment’ that the crisis in Darfur is not on the agenda for the EU-Africa Summit that begins in Lisbon this weekend.

As European and African leaders – including President Bashir of Sudan - arrive in Lisbon, the legislators released a copy of a letter they sent to the Heads of State attending.

The strongly worded letter said that they were, **‘surprised and disappointed to note that at a two-day summit of the leaders of our two continents, there will be no time allotted to discuss the continuing crisis in Darfur that has claimed over 200,000 lives.’**

In a parallel move, a coalition of over 50 African and European human rights groups including Amnesty International, the International Federation of Human Rights and the Darfur Consortium have written to Heads of State warning that; ‘to ignore it [Darfur] now would be to turn our backs on the people of Darfur.’

Glenys Kinnock, MEP and Co-President of the African, Caribbean and Pacific / EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly said,

“MP’s, campaigners and human rights activists are all asking the same question: how can our leaders ignore one of the world’s worst crises? Especially when President Bashir, the man primarily responsible for so much of the suffering is in their midst. Rather than answer that question our leaders would apparently prefer to sweep difficult issues under the carpet. Today,` we are saying we won’t let you ignore this suffering.”

The calls for the Summit to discuss Darfur come following the news last month from UN peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Guehenno that the Government of Sudan is blocking the deployment of the hybrid peacekeeping force. It also follows a similar demand for a focus on Darfur from European and Africa writers last Tuesday.

The letters from legislators and campaigners argue that the EU and Africa have a shared responsibility to solve the Darfur conflict, which has already claimed over 200,000 lives and displaced millions.

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Africa Security Dialogue & Research
African Society of International and
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Alliances for Africa
Anti-Slavery International
Arab Program for Human Rights
Activists (APHRA)
Cairo Institute for Human Rights
Studies (CIHRS)
Centre for Research Education and
Development of Freedom of Expression
and Associated Rights
Darfur Relief and Documentation
Centre
Egyptian Organization for Human
Rights (EOHR)
Femmes Africa Solidarité
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Human Rights Institute of South Africa
(HURISA)
Institute for Human Rights and
Development in Africa,
Inter-African Union for Human Rights
(UIDH)
Interights
International Commission of Jurists
International Refugee Rights Initiative
Justice Africa
Justice Initiative
Justice and Peace Commission
Lawyers for Human Rights
Legal Resources Consortium-Nigeria
Ligue Tunisienne pour la Défense des
Droits de l’Homme
Makumira University College, Tumaini
University
Media Foundation for West Africa
Minority Rights Group
Mining Mirror
Never Again International
Open Society Justice Initiative
Pan-African Movement
Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des
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Sudan Organization Against Torture
Sudanese Refugee Association in South
Africa
WARIPNET
Women Initiative Nigeria
World Organization Against Torture*

“The welfare of our citizens must be the first order of business whenever our leaders meet, and the devastating impact this ongoing conflict has on the lives of so many people should clearly place it near the top of the agenda for the EU-Africa Summit.” **says the letter.**

“Despite the ever growing levels of violence on the ground and the fact that peace and justice continues to be elusive, no room has been give to the summit to discuss this crisis”, said Dismas Nkunda, Spokesperson for the Darfur Consortium. “It is indeed a shame for the Lisbon summit,” he added.

“World leaders have to ask themselves what they are in politics for if they ignore the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people. If world leaders are willing to meet and shake hands with those accused of sponsoring mass violence they have a duty to look them in the eye and bring them to task,” said Onyango Kakoba, Member of the Ugandan Parliament.

Editors notes:

Full text of the MPs’ letter:

To: Heads of State and Government of the European Union and Africa

Your Excellencies,

On 7th and 8th December you will meet in Lisbon for the first EU-Africa Summit since 2000. Closer cooperation between our two continents is a highly desirable goal, which we as elected representatives strive to support.

However, we firmly believe that any discussion on such cooperation cannot move forward without also addressing the largest and one of the most pressing humanitarian disasters in the region: the ongoing conflict in Darfur and its destabilizing effect on Sudan and its neighbours.

We are therefore surprised and disappointed to note that at a two-day summit of the leaders of our two continents, there will be no time allotted to discuss the continuing crisis in Darfur that has claimed over 200,000 lives and displaced more than two and a half million people, many of whom continue to rely on an enormous humanitarian aid effort. The welfare of our citizens must be the first order of business whenever our leaders meet, and the devastating impact this ongoing conflict has on the lives of so many people should clearly place it near the top of the agenda for the EU-Africa Summit.

The international community has a collective responsibility to protect civilians from armed conflict. In turn, when parliamentarians from across Africa met in May of this year to consider the role of national parliaments in responding to the Darfur crisis, they determined that "Parliaments have a direct responsibility to engage the executive [...] in the field of foreign policy, to protect the lives of the most vulnerable”

We therefore urge you to ensure that in Lisbon there is a specific agenda item on the urgent need to bring a sustainable end to the violence currently threatening the lives of civilians in Darfur. We also urge you to confirm that protecting civilians from conflict, including in Darfur, will be a clear priority of African-EU cooperation.

List of signatories to the letter:

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