



American Islamic Congress, Inc.
1718 M Street NW, #243, Washington DC 20036
Phone: +1.202.595.3160 Fax: +1.202.315.5838

**American Islamic Congress
Capital Hill Distinguished Speaker Series**

**Topic:
Muslim & Arab Responses to Violence in Sudan**

Panelists:
Deng Deng Nhial, Mission of the Government of Southern Sudan to the US
Suliman Giddo, President of the Darfur Peace and Development
Dr. Dorina Bekoe, Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention, United States Institute for Peace

Moderator:
Marietje Schaake: Non-resident Fellow with the Atlantic Association-The Hague

This AIC Capital Hill panel occurs in the midst of the on-going conflict in Sudan, widely publicized by the 'Save Darfur' movement as well as celebrity outreach efforts. Yet response in the Arab and Muslim world to the on-going atrocities has largely been muted.

On June 10, 2008, **Deng Deng Nhial** of the Mission of the Government of Southern Sudan to the US, President of the Darfur Peace and Development **Suliman Giddo**, and **Dr. Dorina Bekoe** of the Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention at United States Institute for Peace were brought together by the American Islamic Congress to discuss the latest violence in Darfur, factors behind the general silence of political leaders, the Arab League's position on Sudan, what Arab and Muslim countries should do to ensure the sustainability of the 2005 North-South agreement, and prospects for reconciliation.

Tension between the North and South Sudanese people has existed in the culture many years before the war. **Suliman Giddo** explained that people of the south, mainly Africans and Christians, have traditionally been seen as inferior to the Arab Muslims of the North. These lines of race and religion have been used to separate the country for many years now. **Deng Deng Nhial** explains that "In 1989, the National Islamic Front, now the National Commerce Party, began to use Islamization as a political tool to divide the country and antagonize the people of southern Sudan, as infidels and bad Muslims." He added: "Next, they used Arabization and created a separation between Arabs in the north and Africans in the south." The government of Sudan has exploited these differences to distort the Sudanese identity and to turn their people against each other, resulting in a civil war and genocide in Darfur.

The conflict in Darfur is a conflict not between Muslims and non-Muslims, but Arabs and Africans in the region who are all mainly Muslim. Despite this, **Giddo** stated, “the Islamic community kept silent while the rest of the international community worked hard to get out the word.” For example, Saudi Arabia gave 3 million dollars to the conflict in Darfur and the UAE contributed one million. On the other hand, the United States and the European Union have both donated over 500 million dollars to the conflict. This violence between Muslims and lack of aid from the Islamic community has caused many Muslims in Darfur to lose their faith.

A bigger problem, however, is the recent inconsistencies in US policy that have caused the policies to be unproductive. **Dr. Dorina Bekoe** explained, “U.S. policy was focused on the CPA [Comprehensive Peace Act] which caused Darfur to largely be ignored. Then, as the focuses switched to Darfur, the implementation of the CPA was ineffective.” Even more recently, talks of normalizing relations between the government of Sudan and Southern Sudan could not be resolved because of disagreement about the conflict at Abyie.

In order to stop the violence and implement the CPA, a multilateral approach is needed. As **Nhial** described, the Government of Southern Sudan wants to implement the CPA in order to enhance trade, investment development, develop recreation, and help subsidize the government, but outside help is needed. European countries must become involved as the United States cannot change the situation alone. **Giddo** adds, “It is crucial to work together with the international community to hold the Sudanese government responsible for its crime and rebuild the state in order to restore peace and forgiveness for a better coexistence between Arabs and non-Arabs of Sudan.”

Lastly, Muslim-Americans need to launch a rigorous lobby to Congress in order to get Congress to pressure and persuade Muslim countries to get involved in the conflict. The international community, including Muslim countries, must work together in order to help Sudan overcome its conflict and achieve peace.