

The New York Times

Letter AUG. 11, 2008

Protecting Darfur

To the Editor:

Re "U.N. to Keep Darfur Force, but U.S. Withholds Its Vote" (news article, Aug. 1):

The debate on extending the mandate for United Nations peacekeeping forces in Darfur, Sudan, made it all too clear that political maneuvering continues to threaten the lives and physical safety of innocent Darfuris.

One thing has become certain: Darfur civilians, women and girls in particular, can ill afford a second year of a still understaffed peacekeeping force that is handicapped by political delays. Despite the politics, we must figure out the best ways to protect the civilian population, especially women and girls, struggling to survive at camps for internally displaced people.

Two distinct things that can be done right now are training Unamid's police units to protect Darfur's women, and providing them with the proper equipment so they can accompany women when they leave their camps to seek firewood, fodder or work.

Our own government must insist that protecting vulnerable Darfuris is the top priority in the seemingly endless path to peace.

Charlie Clements
President and Chief Executive, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Cambridge, Mass., Aug. 1, 2008 ■