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Webcast on the International Criminal Court (ICC) Arrest Warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir – Is the ICC Helping or Hindering Darfur?

Janessa Goldbeck, Genocide Intervention Network, moderator

Alex Meixner, Save Darfur Coalition, panelist

Omer Ismail, Enough Project, panelist

Janessa: Thank you guys for taking time out of your busy days to sit down and chat and discuss what you know about the situation on the ground in Darfur and what has been recently developing with the International Criminal Court arrest warrant. I'm Janessa Goldbeck, Director of Membership at the Genocide Intervention Network, and I'm here with Alex Meixner of the Save Darfur Coalition and Omer Ismail from the Enough Project. Before we begin, would you mind briefly introducing yourselves – who you are and what you do?

Alex: Well sure. Briefly again I'm Alex Meixner, Senior Director of Policy and Government Relations with Save Darfur. In that role I work on our overall policy messaging as well as lead our direct efforts to lobby Congress, lobby the White House, the State Department, National Security Council and every now and again some UN staff.

Janessa: Great, thanks.

Omer: I'm Omer Ismail, policy advisor for the Enough Project, and we work on policy to end genocide and mass atrocities around the world.

Janessa: Great, thanks so much. Just to let the folks out there watching on the internet know, we'll be taking questions so if you have questions during the course of the presentation, feel free to submit via the chat room at the bottom of the screen.

Omer, this week a lot has happened. Can you give us a brief explanation of what's been happening over the last couple of days with the International Criminal Court and the humanitarian situation on the ground?

Omer: The International Criminal Court found that the application submitted by Luis Moreno Ocampo, the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, last July he presented to the court an application to indict President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan on counts that amount to genocide, mass atrocities and crimes against humanity. The Court found him to be, to charge him with crimes against humanity and war crimes. They couldn't find the genocide charge fitting to the application and the evidence presented by Mr. Ocampo. It was expected that this is the result that they would reach, and President Bashir would be indicted with these counts. However, of course, Sudan rejected that, and for the longest time, since the expectation of the indictment was happening, Sudan has been rejecting that, saying they are not a party to the Court and don't want to be seen as even answering to the call of the United Nations to cooperate with the court. So they rejected that, and President Bashir is showing the world that he is not going to submit to the Court and that he's not going to deliver it even a single Sudanese to the Court.

Some other things have transpired because of that. So far they have expelled about thirteen, and some reports today actually were saying sixteen, of the non governmental organizations (NGOs) that are working



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there providing food, health care, water and sanitation and protection for the civilians in Darfur. We understand that there are between 2.7 to 3 million internally displaced people in Darfur, scattered around 145 to 160 sites, we call these IDP camps, Internally Displaced Persons camps, in Darfur. That is definitely going to put in jeopardy over a million people, already, because these people that were expelled provide services to these people. So we have one-third of the population of the camps are not going to be receiving the services that these people provide besides the people who need help in Darfur, not only the people in the camps. There are gaps in every service you can think of in Darfur. The total number of people in Darfur is about six million to six and a half million, 4.7 million of them are in need of assistance. So when we pull out thirteen organizations and we leave over a million already exposed, can you imagine what will happen to the remaining people? And al-Bashir yesterday visited Al Fasher, the capital of Darfur, my hometown, where I was born and raised, and frankly they will expel more people.

Janessa: Well, there was intense debate leading up to the issuing of the arrest warrant about whether or not issuing the warrant would foster or hinder a lasting peace in Sudan. On one hand, there's an argument for justice and accountability for leaders who perpetrate crimes like this, and on the other hand there's concern that issuing the warrant will endanger existing peace agreements like the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and the South and will push Khartoum even further away from the negotiation table. My question to both of you is do you believe that issuing the arrest warrant helps more than it hurts to achieve lasting peace in Sudan?

Alex: Well I think ultimately it will be shown to help, although there is some short term pain that must be gone through. Look, the Sudanese government and President al-Bashir are ruthless thugs. There's no doubt that they have the capacity and the will to lash out, as they are by kicking out so many aid agencies that as Omer says, are helping so many people. The question though, is what the international community does now. Whether or not this warrant will be a catalyst for peace in Sudan and security throughout Darfur depends on what happens next. If Bashir is allowed to set the agenda by kicking out the aid workers and the international community response purely by going back to him and saying "Oh no please, please allow them back in," that is not going to be a catalyst for peace. That is not going to bring about the change that we all need to see.

If the international community, however, can stand up as one, not just the West, not just the US and Europeans but the Africans, the Arab League, China, can stand up and say kicking out aid agencies who provide much needed services to millions of victims, millions Muslim victims, by the way, is completely unacceptable. It is not a response that can be in any way a basis for negotiations on the ICC and it must be reversed immediately. If that can be a strong response from the international community then that will be the first step towards eventual peace in Darfur, but it's going to be a rocky ride, there's no doubt about it.

Omer: I would say to those who think that this step is going to jeopardize peace in Darfur, as a Darfuri, I would ask them, "What peace?" Can anybody show me that the government of Sudan is willing and able to have peace in Darfur today? If they are talking about the stillborn Darfur Peace Agreement of May of 2007 I say I'm sorry, but that is not peace for people in Darfur because in fact it became a catalyst for more divisions in between the Darfurians themselves and even the rebel movements. So that did not hold and it did not take us anywhere. If they're talking about what happened in Doha there is no peace agreement, Doha was a declaration of intent and it was a window into the minds of the two parties. Everyone wants to know if the other party was going to negotiate in good faith, should and when the negotiations start. So that is not to say that there are no attempts to have a peace agreement. We have the government of Sudan standing between



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us and that peace agreement. The indictment of Bashir, I think like Alex said, in the long run people will realize that this is for the benefit of the country because we've seen that the naysayers who say that this is going to jeopardize peace, they are the same people who came up with the same arguments when Milosevic of Yugoslavia was indicted and when Taylor of Sierra Leone and Liberia was indicted. And look at what happened. Taylor is now going to the Court and Milosevic died in captivity. The Balkans have never been safer and in Africa we not only have democracy in Liberia but we elected the first woman president in the whole continent of Africa in history.

Janessa: What about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, do you think the arrest warrant may jeopardize the implementation of that?

Alex: Well ultimately it shouldn't. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was not signed truly for one person, not President al-Bashir signed with the National Congress Party which he leads, so the entire Sudanese regime, the ruling regime, is on the hook for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and must work to implement it. That should not change because of the indictment of one man.

Another thing that must be kept in mind is peace in Darfur is not incompatible with peace in South Sudan. Much to the contrary, there needs to be peace in Darfur – you can't solve either without the other. And there is a way to move forward with an eventual peace that encapsulates both, that allows the South to go on with the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement while also allowing Darfur to rebuild. These aren't competing ideas, they're complementary ones and that must be the path taken forward and the path pushed by the international community. Whether President Bashir will be able to see that or whether others in his regime will take the steps necessary to make that peace is unclear, but a path towards eventual peace for all of Sudan is the one that everybody must push for right now.

Omer: If you remember John Garang who signed the peace agreement with the government of Sudan on behalf of his group, the SPLA, Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army, he died shortly after, almost one month or three weeks after he became the first Vice President of Sudan. The CPA is alive – he is the one who negotiated on behalf of the Southern Sudanese people and he died. So the fact that Bashir should go and still the CPA is alive is not something that is difficult. That is one.

The second thing is, like Alex said, peace in Darfur is compatible with peace in the South and everywhere in the country, that is why we need a holistic approach to the problems of Sudan. We cannot work an agreement for the people of the East and then come into Darfur in the West and have a different peace agreement then have a CPA in the South. We have to merge all these agreements together and we have a comprehensive peace agreement for the whole country that is going to address the problems of the Sudan as a whole.

Janessa: I know some folks, in San Francisco especially, will be happy to hear you say that. Omer your family is in Darfur, what has their reaction been to the arrest warrant?

Omer: I was speaking to them this morning and in fact one sister of mine, the youngest, called me this morning around six o'clock our time, of course the daytime savings has not reached them yet so she woke me up early. I talked to her and I talked to my brother and everybody is OK and I asked them what they told when al-Bashir visited Darfur yesterday and they were laughing and telling me, "If we told you what we really think we fear that the threat by the Chief of Security will be applicable to us," and that is declaring to what General



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Salah Abdullah Gosh, the Chief of Sudanese Security said that people who support or give information or show sentiments toward the ICC we will cut, and I'm quoting here, "We will behead them and cut off their limbs and go after their families," so with that kind of threat they were laughing they say, "If we want to tell you exactly how we feel, then we fear that some people are listening to our conversation on this phone and we will be subject to this." We laughed about it because I know what they mean.

Since this arrest warrant was issued we had the chance to talk to people in many networks and many people see this and they act by calling back and the hundreds of emails and calls that I receive because of showing up in different networks and talking about this is amazing and showing that the Sudanese people cannot wait to see the day that the symbol of the injustice in the country is gone. And we start on the road to bring accountability in the country.

Janessa: Thanks. Let's turn to the immediate humanitarian emergency. Revoking the licenses of aid organizations when things get sticky is an old tactic of al-Bashir's. And for months the international community has suspected that the ICC would issue an arrest warrant. But Obama's team and the international community at large seem to be caught off guard. The UN now estimates, like you said, that more than a million people are without access to food, clean water, medical supplies. Do you believe the United States was prepared for this?

Alex: Well, certainly not as prepared as they could have been. I could tell you, I just came from a meeting about an hour ago with officials at the White House – Samantha Power, Michelle Gavin and others that are working on this issue day and night – and I can tell you and tell everybody that they are purely working on this day and night. The problem is that they are still in what they call a "policy review" where they're looking at the U.S. approach to Sudan and trying to figure out what to do next, which is exactly the intention of President Bashir. By taking an action such as this he just ties up the international community and the United States in knots as they try and figure out his next move. What the Obama administration needs to do is take the initiative. They can't spend all day responding to President Bashir. What they need to do is figure out what is going to make the situation on the ground better. They have, right now, for the first time in years, a lot of political capital internationally. The Obama administration has a lot of credibility within the African Union, within the Arab League, within the key actors that can influence Khartoum. What the Obama administration doesn't have right now is a lot of diplomatic capacity. They just don't have the ambassadors out in the countries yet. There is no assistant Secretary of State for Africa yet, there's no special envoy for Sudan yet. These are all serious lacks of the current administration but they can't become excuses. If there is no special envoy, the President himself or Secretary of State Clinton needs to step in or the British, they need to be making these calls to African heads of state, to Arab heads of state, making it clear that standing by Bashir at this point, as a wanted war criminal, as he's taking action like kicking out 13 aid agencies, is simply unacceptable and will not bode well for their future relations with the United States. That's the step that needs to be taken now, whether or not they saw this coming is now irrelevant. It's now about what they're going to do today, tomorrow.

Janessa: You mentioned wanting a special envoy and making those calls themselves if they don't have the diplomatic capacity. To your knowledge is the US doing any of those things?

Alex: Well, you know, it's tough to say. Certainly there is a full-time team over at the State Department lead by a very capable individual that are working on Sudan issues. Certainly we've seen statements come out from Susan Rice up in New York, from Secretary Clinton as she was traveling through Europe, there's a level of



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engagement. But is it a sufficient level of engagement? Right now I would argue no. Now we are all of us on the outside. Nobody here works for the administration so we can't say exactly what's going on day-to-day but when we see the UN itself coming out with stronger statements than we're seeing from the Obama administration, that's not very promising. I'd love to give them the benefit of the doubt but frankly the people of Darfur and all of us that are concerned with Darfur just don't have the luxury of being able to benefit from that right now.

Janessa: What are some things that people can do in the United States to push the US government to push President Obama to do more to do these things?

Alex: Well there are a few things. People are very good at messaging to Congress, to their two Senators and to their Representative. Those officials are in turn then very good at talking to the administration and lighting fires under them, they kind of serve as a board of directors for the administration. Additionally, many in Congress have personal relationships with key countries, whether they be China or African or Arab League nations. So one of the things we've done earlier today is reach out and have conversations with key folks on the Hill and try to get them moving. I think within the next 48 hours or so we should have "Dear Colleague" letters circulating at the House and the Senate aimed at the African Union, aimed at the Arab League and aimed at China trying to push those countries to get more involved, to kind of get off the bench here, for lack of a better term. Everybody watching now can go to their representatives and say, "Sign that letter, sign those letters. Why aren't you calling the White House? Why aren't you calling the State Department? Why aren't you calling the embassies of all the relevant nations?" These are all steps that Americans can take to spur their government into action and frankly that might be the only steps that can actually make a difference in the near term.

Janessa: Thanks. You mentioned the UN coming out with strong statements. What is the UN doing to address the situation currently?

Alex: Well, one of the things that we can actually be thankful for is that while President Bashir has kicked out 13 or perhaps 16 aid agencies, the UN remains. The UN has great capacity to help distribute the humanitarian aid that is still making it in from the remaining agencies and to help transition some of those programs from the agencies that are leaving to the agencies that remain; so first and foremost that's what we're concerned with. Secondly it still has its peacekeeping force, UNAMID. They are now at about 65% deployment, the schedule was to be at about 80% deployment by this point in the month, we'd love to see that happen, I don't know if they're going to make that figure. The UN is a laudable institution but it is often stuck within its own bureaucracy and that needs to be sliced through. We hope that Secretary General Ban is in town tomorrow and he meets with Secretary Clinton and with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and with President Obama and that they give him the message that he needs to cut through the bureaucracy within the United Nations while at the same time he gives them the message of the urgent situation on the ground.

Omer: One of the things that the UN is doing on the ground as well is monitoring and protecting civilians. People sometimes think of protection is just through the troops, but no, there is another type of protection when people are there, present. And they have the threat of reporting this to the rest of the world. Normally the perpetrators stay away, however their capacity to do that is limited because they are not in every camp, they are not in every place where these vulnerable groups are. So wherever they are, they are in the vicinity



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where some of these human rights abuses happen, they report on it. And they talk about it. So that is an element of civilian protection that is very important. And that is the UN with (inaudible) and we hope that they will step up to fill that gap created by these people. Definitely they are not going to fill every gap but there are a few places where they can do this. Carriers are very important because they don't move from Point A to Point B without escort, and heavy escort and a lot of papers go back and forth and it's important that they coordinate themselves to be able to provide this service however sometimes they do that in a small space and you know we hope that they cut the red tape and that the flow of their movement and their monitoring will be much better.

Janessa: Building off of that point about bureaucracy and the UNAMID 60% deployment rate, this crisis has been going on for years now, and just when we thought it couldn't get any worse it has. Is it time to revisit the option of putting NATO boots on the ground?

Omer: I think that should have never been taken off the table to begin with, even if we are bluffing. Because this is the difference from democracies like where we live here and somebody like Khartoum. Because here the transparency and the discussion like this in this setting, will allow them to hear that there is no NATO threat. And the people who are leading the discussion lead it out in the open and everybody hears about it. So somebody in Khartoum said, "Hmm, NATO is not coming, the African Union, we know how to deal with these guys." So that has given them... It shouldn't have been taken off the table, to begin with. Now it should come back, and we have to really mean it because also empty threats and when they call your bluff, the damage is as equal as not having anybody, so I think that option should be on the table again and will become a credible option where we can move and apply whatever threat that there is. Not only NATO, I think all the countries, now that we have a fugitive from international law that is a sitting president, everybody who is a member of the United Nations should step up and try to prevent this guy from exercising whatever authority that he might have in Khartoum.

Alex: You know if I could echo something that Omer mentioned there, the situation really is changing with the expulsion of the humanitarian aid groups and most people on this webcast have heard talk of a no-fly zone from time to time. And one of the principle arguments against the no-fly zone as we well know is that it might give the Sudanese government an excuse to hinder the humanitarian aid operations, which are so vital to so many.

Omer: And now they did it without a no-fly zone.

Alex: Exactly. They are taking away the very arguments against it that will put more pressure on them. Something else to bear in mind here, as Omer was talking about, the possibility of other troops augmenting the UNAMID troops that are not yet there and of other countries playing a more significant role, the European Union has had a peacekeeping force in eastern Chad for about a year now. That force is getting ready to go away. Some elements of it will remain but the UN is going to come in and take over that mission. So there is that excess capacity. European countries have already deployed to the region and have shown a willingness to be involved with this that is about to be freed up in the coming days. I don't say that by way of endorsing or going against a greater involvement from NATO nations, but it is worth noting that there is an excess capacity of exactly the right type of folks and exactly the right place that might be opening up fairly soon. Certainly, regardless of what the options are, that are being discussed, I'm sure, and that will eventually be decided



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upon to help protect civilians in Darfur and create pressure on the Sudanese government, everything, as you say, must be on the table.

Omer: Absolutely and I think we have more questions coming from the (inaudible) however if we are having the United Nations in Chad and now we are having the United Nations in Darfur in the haggard mission of UNAMID and we have UNAMIS, the United Nations troops in southern Sudan, after the peace agreement there were 10,000 people there. I don't know whether it is important that we coordinate between all these different missions to provide security and protection for the people of Darfur and for Sudan at large. Those 10,000 already in southern Sudan and 13,000-16,000 in Darfur and we want to keep that to 16,000. We have MINRUCAT coming into Chad and we know how the spillover between the two areas in Darfur and Chad and the war by proxy between the two countries as well. So I hope to see some coordination happening there between the UN missions.

Alex: One thing to note as you so noted that there are so many UN troops already within Sudan and more on their way – these missions have strict mandates. They do not include going after and trying to arrest President Bashir.

Omer: Absolutely, of course.

Alex: One of the things that is always a scare as well is that the Sudanese government could kick the peacekeepers out just as they are now kicking some of the humanitarian aid workers out, which would have a similarly devastating effect for the people of Darfur. Even the modest protection they now enjoy would be gone. So unfortunately with the Sudanese government still in power, you have to play to a certain extent by their rules, so we do want to make clear that the UN troops that are there, they are there purely to protect civilians.

Omer: Oh yeah, they have nothing to do in their mandates to harass Bashir or to ask that question, they will leave that to other people I'm sure. There are people who are more professional and they know how to do that better than the UN. However, I think the coordination in terms of protection of civilians should be there and since we have different missions we can find a way in their mandates that we can merge some of their activities together.

Janessa: I have a question from the chat room. If Bashir is removed from power, what would happen? Who would take over?

Omer: We don't know. There are lots of people within our country of 40 million people, I don't think there will be a problem of who is going to take over besides the fact that – well, just to go back a little bit. Bashir came to power by the barrel of his gun. If you remember, there was a coup d'état that brought Bashir to power. He wasn't elected by the people of Sudan, he was imposing himself on them on June 30, 1989 and that coup d'état removed a democratically elected government at the time. So, if Bashir is gone nobody is going to shed any tears. In fact, it is for the good of the people of Sudan that they find a new democratic system and fill out a ballot box and elect a new president who hasn't killed half a million people in Darfur alone.



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Alex: You really have to ask yourself just how willing are you to dance with the devil you know. It's been now decades and we have not seen any substantive move from Bashir towards solving the mess that he has created in Darfur. Something we must bear in mind as this all moves forward is that the NCP (National Congress Party) is a regime that is bigger than Bashir. He does not have total control and he hopefully will not retain total control. But it is not the goal of the Darfur advocacy movement just to oust Bashir, that's not the point here. The point is to protect the people of Darfur as well as the civilians throughout Sudan. If that is incompatible with Bashir remaining in power, then those two interests start to coincide. But they are not necessarily the same. If Bashir were able to and were willing to change all the policies let's say two, three years ago we might not be at this point now where the International Criminal Court is issuing an indictment against him. Unfortunately, though, he has proven unwilling in every turn, to take substantive action to reverse his policies of divide and slaughter in Darfur and that's why he's ended up a wanted war criminal.

Janessa: Another question from the chat room: What can advocates do about the expulsion of the aid agencies? Are there any aid agencies they can still contribute towards? Is there a way they can impact the humanitarian crisis?

Omer: Yes, there are many aid agencies still working in Darfur. However, every agency that is working there they have a certain niche, or a place for the work that others might not. There are certainly people who are working on health care, people or agencies who are working on sanitation and water and agencies working on this and that. So I think InterAction is the amount of all the agencies that are there and doing this around the world and certainly if you go to their website, if you Google "InterAction" you will find that there are lists of these people who are still working in Darfur. The people that were expelled, like Save the Children U.S. or CARE, these are all U.S. organizations, and Doctors Without Borders, the Belgian and the Dutch chapters, and many others, so you will find a list of those who were expelled and a list of those who stayed if you go to their website and see how you can support them by donations or by lending your support.

Alex: And I would add additionally to direct support through the aid agencies that are still there, who were already working under difficult circumstances who are now trying to do even more with less, in addition to that much needed support, is the political pressure that they can bring upon their own government who can in turn pressure the Arab League, African Union, and China. These are the pressure points that we really need to push right now. These are the folks that can get on the phone with Bashir, with other elements of the NCP regime, and hopefully turn this around before the expulsion becomes final. So give to the aid agencies but at the same time pick up the phone, send an email, talk to your members of Congress, talk to the President.

Janessa: Great. And just building off of that, I just want to mention that members of the Genocide Intervention Network and STAND tomorrow will be sending faxes to President Obama. It's the 50th day of his administration and so we are sending a progress report via fax. So if you're interested in participating in that, building that political pressure on Obama you can check out standnow.org or genocideintervention.net

Are there any new updates that may be underreported that people should know about who are listening or watching this?

Omer: I think every day there is a development in Sudan and every day there is some news. I think that the trip yesterday to El Fasher was important because in that trip he threatened to expel more people. And in that trip he said I'm not going to watch and I don't respect the ICC and I don't respect the UN that brought the ICC



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and that kind of rhetoric. The most important thing is the threats that are on the Sudanese themselves, because they started publishing names of people that they think work with the ICC. They went there and they expelled these organizations and they did not just send a letter. In fact, they sent security people into the compounds of these civilians who are working in these agencies. They confiscated their personal items like iPods and everything that works with a Duracell basically, they took away. And they will not allow them to drive their vehicles to the UNAMID compound where the United Nations Mission in Darfur which is becoming now like a clearing house. They have to come to UNAMID to check them and to make sure they are safe and under the hospice of the UN they will be sent home safely. So if these guys drove their cars to UNAMID, and these cars came into the compound of UNAMID they become under the protection of the United Nations, the government of Sudan cannot touch them. So they ordered these people to get into vehicles of the security so they leave the vehicles and now they are basically under the mercy of the government of Sudan. Their personal items, their vehicles, their homes that they left behind, they have obligations to the people that they rented these properties from, the government of Sudan doesn't care. Over 7,000 Darfurians and other Sudanese who are working with these agencies, they lost their jobs overnight. The services that those people provide are not there. There are, like I said, financial obligations that the amount of whatever money that they use for their daily operations that they keep there because their banking system is not like here. In Darfur there are not ATM machines, so they keep cash there and nobody is accountable for that. So, the damage is already done. Even if these people were ordered back into Darfur tomorrow, to rebuild their lives to the level where they are providing the same service as today is going to be difficult. And who is going to be accountable for these things that are lost and are they going to keep indefinitely paying rent for their offices and hoping that they will go back tomorrow? It's a big mess. So these are the things that were lost in the reporting, if you will.

Janessa: If we, President Obama, the US does get around to appointing a special envoy, hopefully soon, what do you think the first steps he or she take will be?

Alex: Well, the way that things are changing every day in Sudan, events may overtake our advice for the moment, but the immediate first steps are going to be talking to the relevant players overseas. So, a special envoy needs not only to direct the US policy processes among the interagency where you've got representatives from the Department of Defense, the State, the Treasury, the intelligence community, they need to herd all of those cats and make sure the US is functioning at its highest efficiency level on this. They also need to be the principal diplomat dealing overseas. So that first day I hope the special envoy is on the phone to relevant foreign ministers, to relevant heads of state, pushing them and letting them know that we have a plan, we are not going to bluff, as Omer said earlier, we are going to move forward with a menu of both sticks and carrots, all of which we are prepared to enact. One of the things we saw with the Bush administration, there too often was talk of sticks and carrots that wasn't followed through. Threats of sanctions that didn't show up for another eight months, promises of removal sanctions in the Sudanese government that never actually took place for various reasons, if you conduct impotent diplomacy you're not going to have much of a response, and that's unfortunately what we saw. What we would like to see now is diplomacy backed by certain action. So when the special envoy comes into office, meets with the President, meets with the Secretary of State, goes about their job implementing US policy on Sudan, they know everything they threaten they can back up and every promise that they make they can keep. That will be incredibly important to them being an effective (inaudible) for the US.



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Omer: Threats and promises should also be tied to landmarks and certain either rewards or consequences. In six months, for example, we would like to see the grounding of the planes in Darfur. If you don't do that, then in six months we are going to do this to stop you from doing that, because that is the language that is the language that the government of Sudan understands. You go in there and you tell them, "We would like you to do this," and then you get in the plane and come back, it's not going to get the job done. You have to tell them, "and by this time we would like to see this done, and if it is not done, this is what we're going to do." If you don't have that kind of leverage, don't even start to talk to them, because you are just creating a bigger mess than what is there. And we also advocated that we would like to have senior people who are working with the envoy concentrating on the issues of Darfur and the South. However, we will never advocate, and this is what we never meant, is that we have an isolated issue in the South and an isolated issue in Darfur. No, these are interrelated issues, we just want senior people to work with them, and in addition to senior people from intelligence, from defense, from treasury, from everybody that is working, we want a diplomatic team run by one person, and that one person has the ear of the President and the Secretary of State and they are going to be in daily or whatever kind of contact with them. However this team is going to be there running the day-to-day business with the government of Sudan and never give them the chance to re-negotiate anything, because once you open that door you have opened the gates of Hell.

Janessa: Is that different from previous envoys that we have had in the past?

Alex: Yes, there have been now three special envoys to Sudan. It started with Senator Danforth back in the early part of this decade and he actually was in power to a larger degree than his successors, Andrew Natsios and Rich Williamson. When Danforth came on he was in charge of the Sudan Program Group which is now about a 25 person staff at the State Department. So he could not only go and negotiate with the Sudanese government, he had a staff back in DC that would influence the policy that he would negotiate. So when he said something he could back it up. When we got to Andrew Natsios and Rich Williamson, unfortunately, they did not have that backing. The Sudan Program Group still existed but it answered through the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. So that whole office was on one floor of the State Department while the Special Envoy and his four person staff was on a different floor of the State Department. You can't have a split policy shop working on the same issue. It can work, it's been shown to work, but again, the envoy must have, as Omer says, a full-time staff that is consistently doing this, monitoring this day-to-day-to-day and must have the ear of the Secretary of State and the President to ensure that the policy options they discuss are going to be backed and are going to be implemented.

Janessa: We have time for one more or two more questions so if you are out there and you have something that you would like to ask still please make sure to submit that. You talked about putting political pressure on our government; The Arab League and members of the African Union have said that, have voiced support for al-Bashir and said that the ICC indictment is a Western plot, neo-colonialism. What are your thoughts on this? How can the US and its international partners message what we're trying to do in Sudan differently in a way that better engages Muslim countries or countries that are inherently already suspicious of the United States?

Omer: I will take the part of your question that deals with the Africans complaining about this and talking about neocolonialism. This is unfounded and this is a plot by the government of Sudan to use that in such a manner. Because let us remember, who is indicted in Africa by the ICC, so far? Charles Taylor, was a different ad-hoc tribunal so it doesn't count, but let us say that is also international justice. But in the Democratic



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Republic of the Congo (DRC), in the Central African Republic (CAR) and in Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army, these three cases that are referred to this existing court, referred to them by the governments of these countries. So the ICC is not coming from somewhere and jumping into Africa. Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote a very wonderful Op-Ed about this, and he says this is not a colonial court. This is a court that is respected, the case of Sudan was referred to the ICC by Resolution 1593 from the United Nations Security Council. The ICC did not come by itself. However, dictators like Bashir and Mugabe and these guys would not like the ICC. They are going to use that to tell their people that this is a plot to re-colonize Africa and why Africans are the only people indicted here. The whole Islamic countries and the Arab countries and all the Muslims around the world have applauded the ICC when they indicted the butcher of Srebrenica, Milosevic. How come when they indict someone who was the butcher of (inaudible) in Darfur, they come and they say, "No no no, this is a colonist court. This is a court of the white man that is going to re-colonize Africa,"? This is nonsense. I don't think it adds up. You cannot be that schizophrenic. When it is for you, you applaud the same court and when it is against you, you go and you tell people that this is the court of the white man. Africa needs to get rid of its (inaudible) and its dictators. The Arab world needs to be more open, more democratic. However today our issue is accountability and justice. Darfur should have its day in court, that court said Omar al-Bashir is an international fugitive, he should go to the Hague.

Alex: Well, first I would agree very much with what Omer was saying there. I would add that Africa is not monolithic. Just because the chairperson of the African Union Commission, John Ping, says that Africa is against the ICC indictment of Omer al-Bashir, it does not mean that every single person and every single government in Africa is against the indictment. What we've seen is a lot of tongue twisting from President Bashir and from his closest allies. Other African heads of state and Arab heads of state tried to get them to issue some support for him and we expect to see that in the form of a high-level delegation from the Arab League that's going to go to the UN Security Council and ask for a deferral for this case. First and foremost it's imperative that the Security Council turns them away and says, "Interesting point but we are not deferring justice," that is the first step. The second step is to have further conversations with all of these member states. Once they see that they are not going to be able to get the deferral that Bashir is pushing them to get, we're hoping that this monolithic façade that we're seeing from the African Union and from the Arab League in support for President Bashir will crumble. We think support for him throughout Africa and throughout the Arab world is very wide but not very deep. Ultimately, everybody knows that what he's doing in Sudan and everybody knows the crimes he is committing and other heads of states are frankly embarrassed to have to be associated with him.

Omer: Or afraid that it is going to be their turn after Bashir.

Alex: Exactly, they need to be shown a path towards breaking with Bashir that provides them some support, that provides them with enough cover to do so openly. This is again incumbent on the Obama administration to help them do that. This is a time where they have to be convinced, and the President is the one who has to do the convincing.

Janessa: Right. Well, I want to thank you both so much for being here today. I just want to mention to people who are watching or listening that this will be recorded and posted on this same site, so if you didn't catch the whole thing or you want to share this with friends, feel free to come back here and watch the video. I mentioned earlier a fax to Obama to mark Day 50 tomorrow; again if you are interested in participating you



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can go to standnow.org or genocideintervention.net. Also I want to encourage people to check out that the month of April is Genocide Prevention Month and the Save Darfur Coalition is coordinating events across the country and here in DC, if you're interested in participating in that you can go to www.savedarfur.org/actnow and find out how you can participate in those things. I think we heard loud and clear today that now more than ever it is important to be taking action and to engage our elected officials. I want to thank both of you again for being here.

Omer: Thanks for having us.

Alex: Thank you.