

Testimony of

Daoud Hari

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Hearing on From Nuremburg to Darfur: Accountability for Genocide

Before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law

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Accountability for the Genocide in Darfur

## I. My Story

Good morning Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Coburn and Honorable Members of the Committee. Thank you very much for working to bring an end to the genocide in Darfur. I hope what I have to say to you today will assist you in that important work. My name is Daoud Hari. I am 35 years old. I grew up in a small village in Northern Darfur, Sudan. My family and other families in our village had lived together on this land for generations. I had four brothers and three sisters. Like most of the men in our tribe, the Zaghawa, my father was a camel herder. I even had a favorite camel, whom I called Kelgi, and who was as smart as any man I have ever met. It was my job as a child to take care of our little goats and sheep. And when the moon offered us enough light to see, the children of my village would play games together long into the night. While it may seem simple to you, ours was a happy life. I am sorry to say I have never found such happiness anywhere else in all my travels.

Today, only a burnt skeleton remains of that happy village. My family and I were forced to leave it behind, helping women and children to safety in the surrounding hills and valleys. Many of the oldest refused to go. As the sound of machine guns and explosions got closer, they told us they had lived their whole lives in that village, and they would die there. The rest of us fled so that we could escape the attacks of Sudan's helicopter gunships, and the rape, torture and murder that followed at the hands of Sudan's agents--the Janjaweed militia. Since the genocide began in 2003, many of my family members have been killed, including my older brother, Ahmed, whom I buried with my own hands. It is for Ahmed, for the rest of my family and for the hundreds of thousands of other faceless, voiceless Darfuris who have been killed or displaced by genocide that I testify before you today. I am here as their face. I

am here as their voice. I only pray that I can help you see their suffering, and respond to their cries for help.

The part of my story I have told you so far is not unique. I am one of two and a half million people who have been driven from our homes by the Sudanese government's ongoing genocide in Darfur. I chose to stay behind in hopes that I could use my language skills--I speak Arabic, English and Zaghawa--to help the people of Darfur. I first worked for the U.N. and U.S. State Department team that was sent to find out if a genocide was happening. I then began working as a translator for non-governmental organizations like the Red Cross and Africare. In addition, I worked for journalists from all over the world. I quickly became known to journalists and NGOs as a trustworthy guide to the genocide in Darfur. I worked with Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times, and Ann Curry of NBC News.

We did not need to look very far to see that what was going on in Darfur is genocide. There was fighting everywhere we went, and I saw many terrible things--things that no human being should ever have to see: bodies mutilated, unexploded missiles in water points, poisoned water, mass graves and very small children killed--burned to death. I buried many of these bodies myself. On one mission into Darfur with British Television we entered a thick forest. As we walked through the forest, human heads and limbs started falling down from the trees. They had once belonged to village defenders, who made their last stand there in those trees. When we got out of the forest, we found the bodies of 81 men and boys who had been hacked and stabbed to death by the Janjaweed. Some of the reporters became sick and had to go back to Chad to be hospitalized. The horrible things they saw and smelled were just too awful to bear.

The only thing as awful as what we saw were the experiences I translated for hundreds of Darfuris. Many of these stories still haunt me today. I hold in my heart the sad, empty eyes of a man who fled with his four-year old daughter, Amma, as the Janjaweed burned their village. When the Janjaweed caught this man, he shouted for Amma to run for the bushes, as fast and as far as she could go. But instead, she hid and watched as the Janjaweed tied the man to a nearby tree and tortured him with their swords. Amma ran toward her father, crying out his name: "Abba! Abba!"..."Daddy!" "Daddy!" Just before she reached him, one of the militiamen lowered his sword and ran it straight through her tiny body. Then he lifted Amma's body off the ground with his sword and held her up in front of her father, laughing. All Amma could do was look into her father's eyes as she bled to death on the Janjaweed sword.

I am sorry to say that experiences like these are not unique. Neither are the thousands of women and girls who have been raped while looking for firewood. Nor are the thousands of children who have been attacked and kidnapped from the camps--sold, or given away, the girls as sex slaves, and the boys as child soldiers or indentured laborers. Living through the genocide destroyed me inside. But I was determined to help tell the world about it, hoping that when people learned of these atrocities, all that is good and just in them would prompt them to act; to put this genocide to an end. I honestly believed--

and I still believe--that the people who run the world we live in today will not allow this outrage to continue, if only they know about it.

Now to the part of my story that is unique. I am the third of reportedly only five Darfuri refugees the United States has resettled since the genocide began in 2003. How I came to land at JFK International Airport as a refugee on the night of March 15, 2007, is one of the greatest miracles of my life. On my sixth trip into Darfur--this one with Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist Paul Salopek, of the Chicago Tribune, and on assignment for National Geographic--I was captured by rebels who turned us over to the Government of Sudan. I was imprisoned for more than 30 days, along with Paul and our driver. During this time, I was tortured, beaten and nearly executed. Once word of our imprisonment got out, appeals from world leaders such as the Pope and former President Jimmy Carter put pressure on the Sudanese government to let us go. Eventually, with the help of many good Americans like Senator Chris Dodd, Congressman Christopher Shays and Governor Bill Richardson, we were released. While Paul returned to America, I was flown to Chad, where I faced further persecution. With the help my lawyer, Christopher Nugent with Holland & Knight, and my friend, Megan McKenna, I was able to flee to Ghana and apply for refugee status in the United States. As I have said, I believe my life was spared by God so that I could share with the world my story of the genocide in Darfur, and call everyone to action that will finally put an end to this tragedy.

## II. "We're Sorry" Will Not Be Enough This Time: Full Accountability for the Genocide in Darfur

Today's hearing reminds us that someday, somewhere, someone will have to account for the genocide in Darfur. Making people pay for their actions in court is important for society. But these trials cannot do everything that is needed to fight genocide, because they will only happen after war criminals and despots who commit crimes against humanity are removed from power and arrested. The courts have provided too little, too late for too many victims.

One day we must have a big trial for the leaders of Sudan like the ones at Nuremburg. But a trial some time in the future will not help the millions of people who suffer now. Elie Wiesel, a man who survived the Holocaust and who knows as much as anyone about the evil that led to the Nuremburg trials, thinks accountability in Darfur must be about more than finding people guilty. He said, "Who is guilty? Those who commit these crimes. But to the question, 'Who is responsible?,' we are compelled to say: 'Aren't we all?'" Accountability means the world must accept responsibility for actually stopping the genocide. And until it can do that, the world should protect the millions of people who hide in the shadows of the genocide.

During the rest of my time, which I know is short, I would like to share three things I think you should all know about the genocide in Darfur. Then I will offer three recommendations for actions you as lawmakers can take that will make things better for the people of Darfur.

### III. Three Things Everyone Should Know About the Genocide In Darfur

#### 1. First, this genocide is about resources, not religion.

The majority of North, East and West Sudan is Muslim, and my tribe has lived together in relative peace with Sudanese Arab nomads for a long time. When the rains stopped coming in the 1980s and resources became more scarce, the Government of Sudan exploited tensions to turn the Arab nomads against us. The government started to pay the traditional Arab tribesmen, many of whom are otherwise our friends, to form deadly horseback militias called the Janjaweed to brutally kill the non-Arab Africans and burn our villages.

When I was in Darfur with Nicholas Kristof in 2006, we came across a Janjaweed attacker who had been captured by village defenders. He was about fourteen years old. As the villagers questioned this boy, I translated into Arabic. They asked, "Why did you attack this village?" The boy said, "We were told by the government soldiers that these people were going to attack our village and kill our families if we did not attack them first. They would give us money if we did this. Our families needed this money, and we had to protect them." The Government of Sudan is using the Janjaweed as part of a program to crush political dissent, remove challenges to power, make way for unobstructed resource development and turn an Arab minority into an Arab majority.

The land of Darfur is rich in natural resources. If the government can get these resources from our land without having to pay us or ask us to leave, they can make more money. But if the government of Sudan is using a genocide to make finding oil cheaper, who is giving them the money for that genocide, and why? Data collected by the United Nations from Sudan shows that China sold President Bashir over 24 million U.S. dollars worth of arms and ammunition, nearly 57 million U.S. dollars of parts and aircraft equipment and 2 million U.S. dollars of helicopter and airplane parts, all in the year 2005 alone.

Where did Sudan get the money to buy all of these deadly things? The government of China buys as much as 70% of Sudan's oil. They have at least three billion U.S. dollars invested in the Sudanese oil business, and they have spent ten billion U.S. dollars on oil there since the 1990s. With all this money at stake, it is not hard to see why China regularly shields Sudan from tough resolutions and sanctions in the UN Security Council. The military and economic interests of Sudan and China are aligned against bringing an end to the genocide, and until the world acknowledges this little-known fact, a solution will be unlikely. There are also reports that the Chinese are providing guns to rebel groups that are fighting the Sudanese government. Ongoing violence scares away foreign investment and competition, and less competition makes things much easier for the world's largest corporate sponsor of Sudan's genocide: the People's Republic of China.

2. Second, America's focus on the Middle East has made things easier for Sudan and its sponsors.

While America has been focused on protecting its natural resources in the Middle East, China has been doing the same in Africa. Because America is busy in Iraq, there are no consequences for China's sponsorship of the genocide in Sudan. Many in Darfur believe that after September 11, America thinks the only evil that can be done in the world must be done by terrorists. We were horrified by the attacks on your country, and we believe that America must protect herself from terrorism. But we also think that America's war on terror has come at the cost of ignoring the evils of the genocide being perpetrated by the government in Khartoum--a regime that gave shelter to the terrorist leaders you're pursuing. Now Khartoum believes that no matter how many schools and markets and camps and villages it bombs, American power cannot and will not extend to stopping the government of Sudan from continuing its genocide.

3. Third, 2.6 million men, women and children face a humanitarian crisis, and action is needed now to help them.

Millions of Darfuris who have been driven from their land need greater security, more food, organized schools and economic development. The splintering among armed groups is contributing to a security situation that is spiraling out of control. There are now 28 different rebel factions and 3 different Janjaweed militias. Rebel groups are attacking refugee and IDP (internally displaced person) camps very often, and the Janjaweed continue to target women and girls for rape and sexual torture. Humanitarian convoys are being hijacked, with vehicles stolen, drivers kidnapped and aid workers murdered. The health and safety of people in the camps is at great risk because there aren't enough peacekeepers, and funding, from the international community. To prevent humanitarian groups from reaching people displaced inside Sudan, the Government of Sudan has reportedly begun painting its Antonov bombers white--the universal color of aid planes. They want to cut off the lifeline to those people. And they're not stopping with Darfuris. Khartoum is supporting rebel groups that are responsible for recent attacks on three towns in Eastern Chad, and are preparing to advance to the Chadian capital. The security threat is so serious that the U.S. Embassy there recently evacuated all non-essential personnel. Yet millions are left behind--innocent victims of what is looking more and more like a proxy war between Sudan and Chad, fought through the rebel groups. The United States must start accepting refugees from Darfur, especially those who are most helpless: widows, rape victims and orphaned children.

#### IV. Three Things You Can Do

Finally, I will leave you with three brief recommendations for ways you can help the people of Darfur.

1. Fully support the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force (UNAMID) and fund the UN World Food Programme's Efforts in and around Eastern Chad.

It is vital that the entire contingent of 26,000 peacekeepers be on the ground as soon as possible. The U.N. World Food Programme recently reported a 48 million dollar budget shortfall for its Darfur crisis operations. For the cost it takes to run the Iraq war for less than four hours, that shortfall could be paid for, saving the lives of hundreds of women and children who depend on World Food Programme deliveries for their only meals.

2. Continue to press Sudan and China for a political solution.

For me, the genocide is personal. For you, it is political. You must continue to put political pressure for a ceasefire on the government of Sudan and on the rebel groups. Smart and effective pressure must involve China, too. Ultimately, the only end to the genocide will be a political one.

3. In the meantime, pressure the Department of State, and particularly, the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, to create a refugee resettlement program for Darfuris, starting with the most vulnerable populations.

As I have told you, I am just the third of reportedly five Darfuri refugees resettled in the United States. I do not believe that this is because Americans do not want to welcome refugees of the genocide into your country. I have personally experienced your generosity, after all, and I have seen the goodwill of the American people toward others--including the Lost Boys of Sudan, who are from the southern part of my country.

There are no Darfuri refugees in America because the agencies responsible for resettlement have not made it a priority to get the most vulnerable victims of genocide--widows, rape victims and orphaned children--out of harm's way. It is no answer to say the refugees are in areas that are too dangerous for the agencies to go. Those who are in grave danger are the ones who need refuge the most. The State Department committed last year to initiate a program that would start resettling refugees of the genocide. But this has not happened. Please pressure your State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to live up to its commitments and create a framework for finding and rescuing these deserving people.

If you remember nothing else about the genocide in Darfur, remember this: No one person has the power to stop it; but doing nothing guarantees it will continue.

Thank you for listening, and I look forward to your questions.