

Statement of

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator

Vermont

June 24, 2008

Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),

Chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary,

On "From Nuremburg to Darfur: Accountability for Crimes Against Humanity"

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I am very pleased that the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law is convening today's hearing on the crucial issue of holding people accountable for crimes against humanity. I thank Senator Durbin for chairing it, and the witnesses for being here today.

I was proud to work with Senator Durbin in creating the Human Rights and the Law Subcommittee, which is working on important and difficult legal issues that have increasingly been a focus of the Judiciary Committee. I congratulate Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Coburn for the significant work they have already done. The Subcommittee's work has helped take steps to correct the damaging policies established by this administration over the last six years. The United States must reclaim its historic role as a beacon to the world on issues of human rights.

More than five years have passed since the government of Sudan launched its campaign of destruction upon the civilian population of Darfur. The scale of atrocities occurring in Darfur is appalling, and for too long the international community has been doing too little, hoping that somehow the situation would improve. I have no illusions about the difficulties of ending this conflict, but the efforts that have been made so far have been woefully inadequate. The situation in Darfur calls for far more intensive, sustained, and high-level attention than the Bush administration and other countries have provided thus far. Urgent and immediate action is essential to save the people of Darfur from further catastrophe.

I was pleased to join with Chairman Durbin, Senator Coburn, and Senator Cornyn to introduce the bipartisan Genocide Accountability Act that was signed into law by the President last December. This law closed a loophole that had allowed those who commit or incite genocide to seek refuge in our

country without fear of prosecution for their actions. It was a critical first step to showing the international community that the United States will not tolerate genocide and that those who commit these atrocities must be held accountable for their actions. It is important for the United States to make clear that there is no safe haven for those who commit brutal crimes against humanity.

Unfortunately, genocide is only one of the horrific crimes against humanity that the people of Darfur have endured. Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese have faced rape, enslavement, forced relocation, and systematic brutality. We need to determine what more can be done in the United States to protect victims of crimes against humanity and hold those responsible accountable.

I welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses including Olympic Gold and Silver medalist Joey Cheek. I had the pleasure of meeting him last year here on Capitol Hill. I recall his great dedication to the athlete-driven international humanitarian organization, Right to Play. Since then, he has become the president of Team Darfur, a partnership of international athletes raising awareness about the conflict in Darfur, and working towards its resolution.

I also welcome Daoud Hari, an author and resource to journalists worldwide who is one of only five - only five - Darfuris who has been granted refuge in the U.S. since the genocide began, and the rest of this impressive panel. I look forward to hearing your testimony and learning what more we can do in our efforts against crimes against humanity.

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