

Crisis in Darfur: Members Urge China to Change Approach to Sudanese Government

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Strongly-Worded Letter Signed by Rothman and Others Leads to China's Appointment of Special Envoy for Darfur

(Washington, DC)—Over 100 U.S. House members, including Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ), urged the President of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Hu Jintao, to use his country's influence with Sudan's government to stop the ongoing genocide in Darfur. In a strongly-worded letter, the lawmakers highlighted disturbing evidence that China has turned a blind eye to the atrocities perpetrated by its trading partner. Within a day, China responded by appointing a special envoy dedicated to the Darfur crisis.

"The PRC remains the largest foreign investor in Sudan and recently provided the government of Sudan an interest-free loan, worth \$17 million, to build a presidential palace. Unfortunately, the PRC has reportedly been engaged in arms sales with the government of Sudan, arms which are used by government forces and the Janjaweed militia to maim and kill innocent Sudanese civilians. These actions send the wrong message to Khartoum," wrote 108 lawmakers to President Jintao.

The Members of Congress also noted that China's failure to do more to stop the genocide in Darfur would hang a dark cloud over the upcoming 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, which could devastate the international image of the People's Republic of China.

"Already there are calls to boycott what is increasingly being described as the 2008 'Genocide Olympics.' As Sudan's single largest trading partner and the main beneficiary of their significant crude oil exports and construction contracts, we urge you to protect your country's image from being irredeemably tarnished, through association with a genocidal regime, for the purposes of economic gains."

As a final warning, the lawmakers added "unless China does its part to ensure that the government of Sudan accepts the best and most reasonable path to peace, history will judge your government as having bank-rolled a genocide."

In commenting on China's response, Rothman said: "A special envoy is clearly not enough, but it is a welcome start. The People's Republic of China must do a lot more. Likewise, I believe the U.S. government must take stronger action, which is why I have co-sponsored legislation to stop millions in federal contracts from going to companies whose business in Sudan directly or indirectly supports the genocide in Darfur."

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, which oversees U.S. foreign aid, Rothman also advocates for robust federal funding for peacekeeping and humanitarian aid efforts in Darfur.

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