

Rothman Applauds Passage of the Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act

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Rothman: No U.S. Tax Dollars Should Support Genocide in Darfur

Applauds final passage of legislation to prohibit the federal government from contracting with companies that conduct business operation in Sudan; support states' rights to divest

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(Washington, DC)—Today, the House unanimously passed the Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007 (S. 2271), legislation similar to a House bill originally introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) and co-sponsored by Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ). This bill prevents U.S. tax dollars from supporting the Sudanese government and in turn the ongoing genocide in Darfur. Specifically, it prohibits the federal government from contracting with companies that conduct business operations in Sudan. The measure also protects the right of states to divest their own public pension funds from these companies.

With today's action and the Senate passage of S. 2271 last week, the legislation will soon go to the President's desk for his signature.

"Atrocities against the people of Darfur continue and we must increase economic pressure on Sudan's rulers to stop the violence. Therefore, under these circumstances, any support for the government of Sudan should be prevented. I strongly believe in universal divestment from the Sudanese government, which is supporting the genocide against innocent Darfurians," said Rothman.

U.S. administration officials and non-governmental organizations report that the government of Sudan uses revenue from economic operations there to fund the Janjaweed militia's ongoing violence against the people of Darfur. In particular, the Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act targets four major economic sectors in Sudan: oil, power production, mineral extraction, and military equipment.

Two years ago, New Jersey became the second state in the nation to pass Sudan divestment legislation, after Illinois. To date, 20 states have initiated some form of divestment from Sudan and campaigns are underway in an additional 20 states to adopt similar measures. However, an Illinois court recently issued a ruling to overturn that state's divestment laws, claiming the federal government has sole authority to require divestment. In response, the Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act affirms the right of state governments to divest and declares that federal law is not intended to preempt state and local divestment decisions.

The crisis in Darfur is a humanitarian disaster, with an estimated 2 million people displaced; more than 234,000 people forced into neighboring Chad; and an estimated 450,000 people killed. In July 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives

and the Senate unanimously passed resolutions (H. Con. Res 467 and S. Con. Res. 133, respectively) declaring the crisis in Darfur to be genocide, based on the five criteria for genocide in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. On September 9, 2004, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell acknowledged that the violence occurring in Darfur constituted genocide.

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