



## *USIPeace Briefing*

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# Engaging the Darfur Diaspora for Peace

By Susan Hayward

In partnership with Concordis International and the Preparatory Committee for the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC), USIP held a consultation with approximately 30 members of the North American Darfur diaspora community from February 12-14, 2008. Representative of Darfur's constituencies, this group of Darfurians traveled to Washington, DC from throughout the U.S. and Canada in order to address a broad range of issues related to the conflict in their homeland. Through small-group brainstorming and plenary session debates, the group developed a set of consensus recommendations aimed at creating the conditions necessary for a sustainable safe and secure environment to prevail in the troubled region.

These consultations are one piece of the larger mediation effort in Darfur, led by the United Nations and the African Union, which is seeking to renegotiate the Darfur Peace Agreement signed in 2006.

In general, diaspora communities have not been formally engaged as a constituency in official negotiations to resolve conflicts in their home country. However, there is increasing acknowledgement of the ways in which diaspora communities are directly affected by and impact conflict dynamics back home. Recognizing their stake in and influence on the political negotiations in Darfur, the Preparatory Committee of the DDDC is seeking to engage with Darfur's diaspora communities. The consultation held at USIP with the North American diaspora community is similar to those being held in Europe and the Middle East, all of which will feed into the future DDDC process and political negotiations in Darfur.

Several themes repeatedly emerged throughout the conference. First, participants reiterated the need for civil society and local Darfurians to be engaged to the fullest extent possible by those negotiating the parameters of Darfur's future. This request extended not only to the government of Sudan (GoS) and the armed actors in Darfur, but to the AU, U.N., and other international actors operating in the region, such as NGOs. This sort of engagement with the grassroots is necessary to: begin to address the historical marginalization of Sudan's local communities in governance; to begin to create the roots for a culture of democracy to emerge from the ground-up; to ensure appropriate policies and programs are created that address the real needs of those most affected by the violence; and to develop indigenous capacities to address present and future needs.



In order for civil society to become more actively engaged beyond mere consultations, however, a more secure environment must prevail. The limited measures taken in the past have failed to create meaningful security. Participants at the consultation insisted that the joint AU/U.N. peacekeeping mission must be deployed immediately as called for in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1769, complete with a robust mandate and the equipment necessary to carry out this mandate. In addition, an immediate ceasefire agreement should be negotiated between all armed actors, as well as military buffer zones to separate armed actors and U.N.-protected safe zones in which security can be guaranteed for civil society to convene and organize.

Participants lamented the destruction of traditional culture and customary practices in Darfur and called for projects to reinvigorate these institutions and traditions. Measures to protect and nurture the diverse manifestations of religion and ethnicity throughout Sudan must be pursued, including the elimination of structural discrimination in governance, legislation, the judiciary, and other formal institutions. In addition, participants urged that educational programs be developed and implemented to provide sensitivity training to civil society leaders, particularly those operating in realms that impact public opinion, such as media and education.

Finally, participants insisted that local structures for traditional dispute resolution, reconciliation, and administration, such as the Native Administrations, should be given the means to reconstitute themselves, and should be incorporated into formal governance mechanisms. With some reform to make them more democratic and representative, these Native Administrations have an important role to play in local dispute resolution and reconciliation that will be necessary throughout Darfur in order for a sustainable peace to prevail, as participants argued.

These themes are reflected in the consensus recommendations that the participants put forward. Examples include the following:

1. The state of Sudan must be held accountable for the safety and security of all Sudanese people, in all regions, and from all tribes and religions.
2. Women must be incorporated into security forces and police in order to make them more representative. Additionally, there must be gender sensitivity training for present and future troops in order to reduce gender-based violence.
3. A new police force should be created and trained, and the Darfur state must have responsibility over its police force. At present there is little trust in the national police force established by the government, which has been responsible for violence against civilians. The central government should not be permitted to establish private police forces.
4. The role of the army should be to protect the territorial integrity of Sudan. The security forces should investigate issues that threaten security, but should take military action only in defense of external threat or foreign invasion.
5. Training and education programs, particularly in human rights and international humanitarian law standards, must be implemented for security forces and police.
6. A joint commission (U.N., AU, resistance forces, civil society) should be commissioned to monitor the security forces in order to ensure their abidance by human rights standards and international law.
7. Security forces and police should be inclusive and representative of all the various tribes and groups within Darfur and Sudan.
8. The government of Sudan must immediately abide by the indictments issued by the International Criminal Court.
9. Those who have committed violence must be held accountable. Proceedings could be through international courts and local processes. However, the national judicial and legal system as it currently stands is insufficient to prosecute a fair trial. Restructuring and reform would be necessary before any criminal process could proceed that would be trusted by Darfurians to provide a just outcome. In the absence of this reform, international judicial systems are necessary.
10. A Truth and Reconciliation process, drawing from the best practices of processes in other countries but tailored to meet Darfurian needs and culture, should be implemented in order to account for crimes committed during the conflict. Those who have committed crimes must be held accountable.
11. The Sudanese national government must be elected through free and fair elections that ensure equal representation of all Sudanese regions and communities, proportionate to their percentage of the national population. This representation must

exist in all sectors of governance including judiciary, civil service, and military. In addition, cabinet ministry positions must be representative, and influential ministry positions must be allocated in a fair manner.

12. Given the lack of security on the ground, free and fair elections in Darfur in 2009 are impossible. Before elections can occur, security must be restored to a degree that will allow IDPs and refugees to resettle, at which point an independent third party must conduct a census. Only after this has occurred can free and fair elections to produce a representative government proceed.
13. A comprehensive development program for Darfur must be included in any peace agreement.
14. In the short term, Darfur needs basic services, employment opportunities, and temporary schools. In the medium-term, with World Bank and GoS financial contributions managed and distributed through local community groups, infrastructure must be rebuilt. In the long-term, development programs should contribute to linking Darfur with other regions in Sudan to create a unified and secure nation.
15. Natural and man-made environmental degradation must be addressed and steps taken to restore a healthy environment in Darfur.
16. A national commission with fair regional representation must be created to establish just distribution of Sudan's natural resources and the wealth they generate.
17. Nomadic and farming communities are both central to the identity and well-being of Darfur. A commission with representatives from both communities is needed to create standards of engagement that can reduce conflict over land and water. Standards for the timing and pattern of migration, land use, access and use of wells, etc., can be established through this commission to create common practices throughout Darfur that will help ensure the peaceful coexistence of the two communities.
18. Survivors must be compensated for property and land confiscated or destroyed as a result of the conflict. A commission should be established to investigate and determine means and amount of reparation, to be conducted with the involvement of local community leaders. The GoS is the primary responsible party for providing funds for reparation.
19. Those involved in negotiations in Darfur (including the U.N., AU, and the wider international community, as well as the Darfurian movements and the GoS) must recognize that the diaspora community has a stake in the conflict and the peace process, and as such their interests should be included, their ideas taken into account, and their active engagement sought in peace negotiations.
20. The Darfurian diaspora community should organize itself into a representative body that can create a unified voice. This group might discover common goals between

various interest groups in Darfur, encourage parties in Darfur to negotiate for peace, bring the voice of Darfurian civilians to international communities and negotiations, and offer practical support by providing training, expertise, and resources to the peace process.

A final report emerged from this consultation that delineates the full set of consensus recommendations, and provides more detail on the points of agreement and disagreement throughout the two-and-a-half day discussion. The report also provides insight into the debates that led to the group's final consensus recommendations. This report can be accessed at [http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace\\_briefings/2008/darfur\\_diaspora.pdf](http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/darfur_diaspora.pdf).



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This USIPeace Briefing was written by Susan Hayward, program officer in the Religion and Peacemaking Center of Innovation, working in partnership with the Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution at the United States Institute of Peace. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of USIP, which does not advocate specific policies.

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