

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact -Susan Morgan, 617-797-0451
susan@paxcommunications.org

**ALARMING REMARKS BY SPECIAL ENVOY GRATION TO DARFURI EXPATS IS LAST STRAW
FOR AMERICAN AND SUDANESE ACTIVISTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY**
Broad-based call to replace Gration with experienced diplomats from State Department

CITIES NATIONWIDE – February 17, 2010 – Today over 35 organizations representing Sudan advocates and Sudanese expatriates from across the country sent an open letter to President Obama calling on him to relieve Special Envoy to Sudan, Major General Scott Gration, of his duties and assign the Sudan portfolio to experienced diplomats in the State Department with the active oversight of Secretary Clinton.

This call for Gration's replacement follows an "off-the-record" meeting that General Gration held with expatriate Darfuris on January 26, 2010. During the meeting, Gration articulated his positions on key aspects of the US Sudan policy. His comments upset many attendees because his statements were at odds with official U.S. policy statements. Some meeting attendees have been reluctant to come forward because General Gration's comments at the meeting led them to believe that opposing him is like "picking a fight with the United States."

However, other attendees have stated that during the meeting General Gration told Darfuris that: 1) the Government of Sudan (GoS) did not intend to kill the civilians in Darfur but rather the GoS was trying to kill the rebels and civilians were killed as collateral damage because the government planes were not armed with sophisticated, accurate weapons; 2) it is not advisable for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return to their original homes and villages because there will be psychological and emotional effects since the IDPs will have horrible memories of the circumstances under which they left their homes; 3) elections in April will be a good exercise for the Sudanese on democracy, even if Darfuris do not participate; and 4) the United States will focus on South Sudan and the new state there, and the \$2 billion a year that the U.S. government spends on Darfur will now be going to the new Southern State instead.

According to the letter, since his appointment in March 2009, General Gration has taken a conciliatory approach toward the ruling National Congress Party (NCP). "Both Darfuris and Southern Sudanese have lost faith in General Gration as they find this tactic has impeded progress on key issues and has emboldened the NCP to continue to break agreements and violate the basic human rights of millions of Sudanese citizens. Consequently, General Gration has become ineffective in his role since the NCP knows he cannot successfully facilitate and mediate negotiations between and among the parties," the letter states. The letter cites a number of examples of the NCP's impunity and continuing human rights violations over the last year.

The signatories stated that, "We believe this action is essential for the United States to assume the leadership of the multilateral approach necessary to 1) protect Darfuri civilians and their rights as set forth under international law, 2) ensure unrestricted humanitarian assistance for Sudanese in need while facilitating negotiations for a lasting peace, 3) ensure that Sudan's national elections are free and fair, even if that means delaying the timetable, 4) ensure that South Sudan's referendum in January 2011 is free and fair and takes place with no delays, 5) support preparations for the critical period following both votes, and 6) address and reverse the systemic marginalization of the majority of the Sudanese people by the ruling National Congress Party (NCP).

FULL TEXT OF LETTER

February 17, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to respectfully request that you relieve Special Envoy to Sudan, Major General Scott Gration, of his duties and assign the Sudan portfolio to experienced diplomats in the State Department with the active oversight of Secretary Clinton. We believe this action is essential for the United States to assume the leadership of the multilateral approach necessary to 1) protect Darfuri civilians and their rights as set forth under international law, 2) ensure unrestricted humanitarian assistance for Sudanese in need while facilitating negotiations for a lasting peace, 3) ensure that Sudan's national elections are free and fair, even if that means delaying the timetable, 4) ensure that South Sudan's referendum in January 2011 is free and fair and takes place with no delays, 5) support preparations for the critical period following both votes, and 6) address and reverse the systemic marginalization of the majority of the Sudanese people by the ruling National Congress Party (NCP).

Since his appointment in March 2009, General Gration has taken a conciliatory approach toward the ruling National Congress Party (NCP). Both Darfuris and Southern Sudanese have lost faith in General Gration as they find this tactic has impeded progress on key issues and has emboldened the NCP to continue to break agreements and violate the basic human rights of millions of Sudanese citizens. Consequently, General Gration has become ineffective in his role since the NCP knows he cannot successfully facilitate and mediate negotiations between and among the parties. The International Crisis Group (ICG) found Sudan heading toward "implosion" according to its December 2009 report. ^[1] ICG noted, "In light of the failure of the three rounds of trilateral talks and concern among the SPLM that (General Gration) has pursued a "softer" approach toward the NCP, U.S. envoy Gration cannot take on the role of lead international mediator to help fill the CPA's implementation gaps, organize negotiations on post-referendum arrangements and serve as the main supervisor of the subsequent international engagement that will be necessary to ensure implementation."

Examples of the NCP's continuing impunity in the last year include:

- On December 14, 2009, Sudanese security forces fired tear gas to disperse about 200 opposition protesters following the arrest on December 7, 2009, of hundreds of people – including SPLM and northern opposition leaders – participating in a peaceful rally calling for electoral reforms. Amnesty International received reports that some of those arrested were tortured in detention. The NCP's arrest of opposition leaders and protesters is a blatant violation of commitments it made in the CPA, as are the continued problems and delays in demarcating borders.
- In Darfur, the NCP continues to restrict and disrupt UNAMID operations and humanitarian access. General Gration's first task following his appointment was to ensure reinstatement of humanitarian aid in Darfur after the NCP's expulsion of 13 NGOs on March 4, 2009. Darfuris, the United Nations, and Physicians for Human Rights have reported that humanitarian organizations are working with severely limited access in Darfur. Since March 2009, the fragile network of medical and psycho-social services for victims of gender-based violence has collapsed. In another exacerbation of the crisis, the withdrawal of the International Red Cross after the kidnapping of two of its workers has left

parts of Jebel Marra and Jebel Si (not served by the UN) without aid.

- There are disturbing signs that the NCP has a hand in the increased militia violence that has claimed more than 2,000 lives in Southern Sudan in 2009 alone.
- On February 11, Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan, Mohamed Chande Othman, expressed concern about numerous human rights violations by the Government of Sudan (GoS) observed by and reported to him during his first visit to Sudan.
- On February 12, a Darfuri student at Khartoum University was found dead after missing for a week. Security forces have recently arrested scores of Darfur students who are protesting exclusion from exams. Demonstrators have been detained without charges.
- On February 12, the former special representative of the State Department for Sudan, Roger Winter, expressed concerns about behind-the-scenes meetings between the NCP and the US to negotiate lifting sanctions. Mr. Winter warns the US tactics might "increase chances for renewed war".

Our concerns regarding General Gration's implementation of the U.S. Sudan policy is exacerbated by the Administration's failure to identify clear, public benchmarks for measuring progress in Sudan.

According to a January 19th paper^[2] by the Enough Project which was co-signed by eight other human rights organizations, the Obama Administration has not publicly disclosed the precise benchmarks it is applying to assess progress in Sudan, even as tensions rise with the April national elections and the January 2011 referendum rapidly approaching. The findings and recommendations of the National Security Council Deputies Committee first quarterly review of the U.S. Sudan policy on January 22nd have still not been made public.

Ours is not the first call for General Gration's resignation. A November 9, 2009 op-ed^[3] in The New Republic makes many of the same points stating, "Since taking the job in March, Gration has gone about ingratiating himself to the Sudanese government--an odd choice given that the government is a genocidal one. He seems interested only in offering Khartoum incentives, even though it has provided him basically nothing in return. ... Most observers of Sudan agree that Khartoum has historically responded to sticks, while viewing carrots as an invitation to continue orchestrating violence."

The points of view expressed by the ICG and in The New Republic are perhaps most strikingly reinforced by the fact that the most vulnerable people in Sudan, the 3 million displaced Darfuris along with Darfuris in the US, have called for General Gration's resignation.^[4] For many of them the last straw came at a January 26 meeting of General Gration and Darfuri diaspora representatives at the United States Institute for Peace. Although held as an "off the record" meeting, General Gration later publicized it in his widely distributed blog. Since then, some attendees have indicated that General Gration made comments at the meeting that led them to believe that opposing him is like "picking a fight with the United States." As a result, some attendees have been concerned about speaking out for fear of negative consequences. However, other attendees have stated that during the meeting General Gration told Darfuris that:

- 1) The GoS did not intend to kill the civilians in Darfur. The GoS was trying to kill the rebels and civilians were killed as collateral damage because the government planes were not armed with sophisticated, accurate weapons.
- 2) It is not advisable for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return to their original homes and villages. There will be psychological and emotional effects since the IDPs will have horrible memories of the circumstances under which they left their homes.
- 3) Elections in April will be a good exercise for the Sudanese on democracy, even if Darfuris do not participate.
- 4) The United States will focus on South Sudan and the new state there, and the \$2 billion a year

that the U.S. government spends on Darfur will now be going to the new Southern State instead.

Mr. President, as you know, it is well documented that Janjaweed militia were paid by the Government of Sudan to kill civilians, burn villages and rape women. The Government of Sudan intended to wipe out Darfuris which is why you have rightly called the ongoing crisis genocide. Furthermore, Darfuris state they want nothing more than to return to their villages in safety and begin to rebuild their lives after so many traumatic years in the camps. Their land has been stolen from them and re-occupied. They also believe President Omar-al Bashir, indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Darfuris, is seeking to use the elections--which have no chance of being free or fair--to legitimize his and the NCP's rule.

Some may say that General Gration is better than no envoy. We disagree based on the lack of trust in General Gration, and therefore, the United States, by the Sudanese; the lack of progress in several items on his agenda; and the severe deterioration of conditions on the ground in both Darfur and Southern Sudan. We respectfully ask that you immediately relieve General Gration as Special Envoy to Sudan and ask Secretary Clinton and her team at the State department to make Sudan a top priority. We also ask that you speak publicly and specifically about the current U.S. policy towards the Government of Sudan. These steps would demonstrate to all parties that the United States is committed to helping forge the lasting peace that is so desperately needed by millions of Sudanese men, women and children.

Very truly yours,

Americans Against the Darfur Genocide

Nikki Serapio, Director
Washington, DC

Brooklyn Coalition for Darfur

Laura J. Limuli, Coordinator
Brooklyn, New York

Champion Darfur

Corey Dragge, Founder
Las Vegas, Nevada

Change the world. It just takes cents

Sara Caine Kornfeld, founder/educator
Denver, Colorado

Damanga Coalition Freedom and Democracy

Mohamed Adam Yahya, President and founder
Washington D.C.

Darfur and Beyond

Cory Williams, Co-Founder
Phoenix, Arizona

Darfur Renaissance

Ismail Omer Ibrahim, Founder
Dallas, Texas

Darfur Human Rights Organization

Dr. Abduljabbar Adam, President
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Darfur Reconciliation and Development Organization

Adeeb Yousif, Chairperson
San Francisco California

Dear Sudan, Love, Marin

Geri Miller, Founder
Tiburon, California

Essex County Coalition for Darfur

Gloria Crist, Cofounder
Montclair, New Jersey

Fur Cultural Revival

Mansour Ahmed, President
Portland, Maine

Genocide No More--Save Darfur

Marv Steinberg, Coordinator
Redding, California

i-ACT

Katie-Jay Scott, Director
Los Angeles, California

Idaho Darfur Coalition

A.J. Fay, Co-Founder
Boise, Idaho

Investors Against Genocide

Susan Morgan, Co-founder
Boston, Massachusetts

Keokuk for Darfur

Julia A. Hays, Founder/Director
Keokuk, Iowa

Kentuckiana Interfaith Taskforce On Darfur

Robert Brousseau, founder and chair
Louisville, Kentucky

Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan

Julie Mabus, President
Washington, DC

Maryim Dar Association

Munirah Mohamed, Director
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur

Eric Cohen, Chairperson
Boston, Massachusetts

Dr. Mohmed Ahmed

RFK laureate 2007
Boston, Massachusetts

Never Again Coalition

Diane Koosed, co-founder
Portland, Oregon

New York Darfur Vigil Group

Helga Moor, Founder
New York, New York

Rahama Deffallah

Darfuri
Brooklyn, New York

San Francisco Bay Area Darfur Coalition

Mohamed Suleiman, President
San Francisco, California

Save Darfur at Miami University

Brooke Hathaway, President and Founder
Oxford Ohio

Shine a Ray of Hope

Carmen Paolercio, Coordinator
New Rochelle, New York

Stop Genocide Now

Gabriel Stauring, Director
Los Angeles, California

Stanford STAND

Angie McPhaul, President
Stanford, California

New Trier High School STAND

Lauren Bergelson, President
Winnetka, IL

Texans Against Genocide

Susan Smylie, Co-Founder
San Antonio, Texas

Sudan for All

Emad Bukhari, Founder
Phoenix, Arizona

Use Your Voice to Stop Genocide RI

Sandra Hammel, Director
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

WAF Sudan

John Nassar, President
Khartoum, Sudan

World Relief Organization

Elgasim Salih, President
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

cc: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

^[1] International Crisis Group (December 19, 2009). *Sudan: Preventing Implosion*. Retrieved February 15, 2010 from

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6438&CFID=27996985&CFTOKEN=15631973>

^[2] The Enough Project (January 19, 2010). *Clear Benchmarks for Sudan*. Retrieved on February 15, 2009 from <http://www.enoughproject.org/files/publications/SudanBenchmarks.pdf>

^[3] The New Republic (November 5, 2009). *The Ingratiator*. Retrieved on February 15, 2010 from <http://www.tnr.com/article/the-ingratiator>

^[4] SudaneseOnline.com (December 20, 2009). Letter from U.S. Darfuris to President Obama. Retrieved on February 15, 2009 from

http://www.sudaneseonline.com/en216/publish/Latest_News_1/Letter_from_U_S_Darfuris_to_President_Obama.shtml