

**Testimony of Anthony Barsamian**  
**For the KNOW Genocide Coalition and the Armenian Assembly of America**  
**Before the**  
**Joint Committee on Public Service**

**March 29, 2007**

**Pension Divestment Act - S1474**

Chairman Kaufman and Chairman Downing, Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this important hearing on this compelling human rights issue. The Armenian Assembly of America and the KNOW Genocide Coalition is pleased to offer testimony in support of the Pension Divestment Act of 2007. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank and commend the sponsors of the legislation currently before this Committee.

The Pension Divestment Act prohibits public funds to be invested in companies operating and doing business in Sudan, with the purpose of exerting economic pressure against the government of the Republic of Sudan for its role in, and responsibility for, the continuing grave abuses of human rights on the territory of its Darfur province, including the crime of genocide, and with a goal to stop the atrocities.

This legislation sets forth a laudable precedent of taking practical action against the financial and economic interests of a regime engaged in the systematic killing of an entire people. The implementation of this measure will provide for important further steps toward identifying and undermining the financial nexus of the genocidal war in Darfur, and toward bringing long-sought stability, relief and rehabilitation to its people.

The United States and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a proud record of humanitarian intervention in various parts of the world, to save lives and bring relief to millions of people – victims of crimes against humanity. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, political, business and human rights leaders and citizens led the humanitarian effort to save the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. In fact, the Honorable Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, organized and led protests by officials of many countries, among them the allies of the Ottoman Empire, against the Armenian Genocide. Ambassador Morgenthau explicitly described to the Department of State the policy of the Government of the Ottoman Empire as “a campaign of race extermination,” and was instructed on July 16, 1915, by Secretary of State Robert Lansing that the “Department approves your procedure ... to stop Armenian persecution.” Ambassador Morgenthau’s namesake and grandson, Henry Morgenthau, III, who in near 90 years of age, lives not far from this site in Cambridge, Massachusetts and has been active in human rights work and prevention of Genocide.

Our interventions in Kosovo and Bosnia helped arrest the ethnic cleansing associated with these wars and helped bring stability and rehabilitation to the Balkans. International action in Kosovo and Bosnia, however, came largely as a result of the bitter lesson

learned in an earlier crisis in Rwanda, where the tragic inaction of the world community led to the commission of some of the most heinous crimes against innocent populations.

The Pension Divestment Act – S1474 answers in part the questions raised about Darfur by actor and activist Don Cheadle in his testimony in February of this year before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law: “I ask you what *will* be done – not what *can* be done, for *that* question has been asked ad nauseam and contains within it connotations of powerlessness and surrender. What *will* be done is a very different query.”

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts should take proactive steps to do everything it can to stem the loss of life and end the cycle of genocidal violence. Nicholas Kristof, of *The New York Times*, who has written extensively, passionately and with clear-sighted pragmatism on this matter enumerated in his November 29, 2005 editorial, “What’s To Be Done About Darfur?” six policy recommendations (a copy of this article is attached) and concluded that “Finding the right policy tools to confront genocide is an excruciating challenge, but it’s not the biggest problem. The hardest thing to find is the political will.”

As Armenian-Americans, and a descendant of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, our community cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of the people of Darfur. Inaction is not an acceptable course of action. Therefore, we support the current effort to bring legitimate pressure on the government of Sudan, to affect change in its domestic and international conduct, toward addressing the dire humanitarian situation in Darfur, and preventing future violence in that region.

The Armenian Assembly of America and the KNOW Genocide Coalition strongly endorses the Pension Divestment Act, and urges all parties of good will in the Commonwealth to follow its recommendations in full.

Thank you.

# The New York Times

## What's to Be Done About Darfur? Plenty

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

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In 1915, Woodrow Wilson turned a blind eye to the Armenian genocide. In the 1940's, Franklin Roosevelt refused to bomb the rail lines leading to Auschwitz. In 1994, Bill Clinton turned away from the slaughter in Rwanda. And in 2005, President Bush is acquiescing in the first genocide of the 21st century, in Darfur.

Mr. Bush is paralyzed for the same reasons as his predecessors. There is no great public outcry, there are no neat solutions, we already have our hands full, and it all seems rather distant and hopeless.

But Darfur is not hopeless. Here's what we should do.

First, we must pony up for the African Union security force. The single most disgraceful action the U.S. has taken was Congress's decision, with the complicity of the Bush administration, to cut out all \$50 million in the current budget to help pay for the African peacekeepers in Darfur. Shame on Representative Jim Kolbe of Arizona -- and the White House -- for facilitating genocide.

Mr. Bush needs to find \$50 million fast and get it to the peacekeepers.

Second, the U.S. needs to push for an expanded security force in Darfur. The African Union force is a good start, but it lacks sufficient troops and weaponry. The most practical solution is to "blue hat" the force, making it a U.N. peacekeeping force built around the African Union core. It needs more resources and a more robust mandate, plus contributions from NATO or at least from major countries like Canada, Germany and Japan.

Third, we should impose a no-fly zone. The U.S. should warn Sudan that if it bombs civilians, then afterward we will destroy the airplanes involved.

Fourth, the House should pass the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act. This legislation, which would apply targeted sanctions and pressure Sudan to stop the killing, passed the Senate unanimously but now faces an uphill struggle in the House.

Fifth, Mr. Bush should use the bully pulpit. He should talk about Darfur in his speeches and invite survivors to the Oval Office. He should wear a green "Save Darfur" bracelet -- or how about getting a Darfur lawn sign for the White House? (Both are available, along with ideas for action, from [www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org) .) He can call Hosni Mubarak and other Arab and African leaders and ask them to visit Darfur. He can call on China to stop underwriting this genocide.

Sixth, President Bush and Kofi Annan should jointly appoint a special envoy to negotiate with tribal sheiks. Colin Powell or James Baker III would be ideal in working with the sheiks and other parties to hammer out a peace deal. The envoy would choose a Sudanese chief of staff like Dr. Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, a leading Sudanese human rights activist who has been pushing just such a plan with the help of Human Rights First.

So far, peace negotiations have failed because they center on two groups that are partly composed of recalcitrant thugs: the government and the increasingly splintered rebels. But Darfur has a traditional system of conflict resolution based on tribal sheiks, and it's crucial to bring those sheiks into the process.

Ordinary readers can push for all these moves. Before he died, Senator Paul Simon said that if only 100 people in each Congressional district had demanded a stop to the Rwandan genocide, that effort would have generated a determination to stop it. But Americans didn't write such letters to their members of Congress then, and they're not writing them now.

Finding the right policy tools to confront genocide is an excruciating challenge, but it's not the biggest problem. The hardest thing to find is the political will.

For all my criticisms of Mr. Bush, he has sent tons of humanitarian aid, and his deputy secretary of state, Robert Zoellick, has traveled to Darfur four times this year. But far more needs to be done.

As Simon Deng, a Sudanese activist living in the U.S., puts it: "Tell me why we have Milosevic and Saddam Hussein on trial for their crimes, but we do nothing in Sudan. Why not just let all the war criminals go. When it comes to black people being slaughtered, do we look the other way?"

Put aside for a moment the question of whether Mr. Bush misled the nation on W.M.D. in Iraq. It's just as important to ask whether he was truthful when he declared in his second inaugural address, "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors."

Mr. Bush, so far that has been a ringing falsehood -- but, please, make it true.