



National Association of Women Lawyers®

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May 24, 2006

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Association of Women Lawyers ("NAWL"), a leading voluntary association of women lawyers and jurists in the United States. In cooperation with women's coalitions around the world, NAWL works toward the social, political and professional empowerment of women, seeks to end discrimination and violence against women and to support and safeguard human rights.

NAWL wishes to express its concern for the humanitarian tragedy occurring in Darfur, Sudan, and asks for your continued support on behalf of the United States for a lasting peace agreement. Specifically, NAWL seeks the establishment of a Special Envoy to Darfur as a vital step toward ending this crisis and finding a long-term resolution.

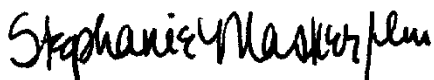
As you may know, the United States has officially recognized that a genocide exists in Darfur, and aid organizations worldwide have proclaimed this conflict one of the worst humanitarian crises in history. As many as 400,000 lives are estimated to have been lost, and as many as 2.5 million people have been displaced and remain threatened by famine, disease and violence. Women and children have been most cruelly victimized- plagued by rape, exploitation, sexual slavery, and various forms of torture as they struggle to survive. Alarmingly, many reports indicate that mass rapes are occurring, with many victims between the ages of 11 and 14. In one instance, in the town of Tawila, militias raped more than 100 women and abducted more than 150. Because of aid-obstruction, many victims are deprived of medical attention, exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and are consequently shunned by their communities. Even if they survive initial attacks, women and children constitute the majority of the camp populations. Recently, the World Food Program reported that daily food rations will be half the minimum amount required, and the scarcity will only add to the violence perpetrated on women. As they attempt to gather provisions such as firewood and water for themselves and their families outside of their camps, they become vulnerable to violence. In violation of international law, the mass

rapes constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, and Darfuri women have been the victims of severe human rights abuses. As long as these women and children continue to be deprived of basic aid, food and protection, the situation will continue to deteriorate.

As public pressure continues to mount, action must be taken immediately. NAWL supports the Senate's recommendation for a Special Envoy to Darfur, Sudan. The establishment of a Special Envoy is essential to effectively brokering a lasting peace agreement for Darfur. It is imperative that this Administration name a full-time, dedicated Envoy committed to ending the genocide in Darfur, and whose position has the ability to coordinate both U.S. and international policy that addresses the instability of the region, and surrounding areas across Sudan, northern Uganda, and border disputes with Chad. Creating a Special Envoy to Darfur will undoubtedly bring essential support to this volatile process, and ensure that public pressure and scrutiny will act as a watchdog during delicate negotiations.

Unless the United States takes immediate action to appoint a Special Envoy, the current peace plan will be temporary and the crisis will continue to unfold. As history has proven, the United States will deeply regret any hesitation to save so many people from unimaginable, inhumane acts. NAWL respectfully asks you to appoint a Special Envoy to Darfur at the Department of State as soon as possible and to continue striving toward peace in the region.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Masker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Stephanie Masker
Co-Chair, NAWL International Committee