

# The Darfur Crisis: African and American Public Opinion

June 29, 2005

## African Public Says UN Has Right to Intervene to Stop Genocide; US Public Favors UN Intervention in Darfur

[Full Report](#)  
[Questionnaire](#)

While the leaders of African countries have shown strong resistance to non-African forces intervening in the crisis in Darfur, a GlobeScan poll finds that in eight African countries surveyed a majority (7 countries) or a plurality (1 country) believe the UN should have the right to intervene to stop human rights abuses such as genocide, and that the UN is the most popular force to intervene in situations like Darfur. Likewise, a PIPA-Knowledge Networks poll finds 61% favor the UN intervening in the crisis in Darfur, with 54% willing to contribute US troops. Seven in ten favor NATO, including the US, providing support to the African Union peacekeeping operation in Darfur.

### Africa Poll



The eight-nation GlobeScan poll of 10,809 Africans (margin of error +/-2-3%) found that overall, 65% of Africans interviewed believe the UN Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of military force to prevent severe human rights violations such as genocide, while just 19% are opposed. Support was strongest among those in Ghana (80%), Kenya (75%), Nigeria (66%), Tanzania (66%), Zimbabwe (65%), and Cameroon (64%), while milder support was found among Angolans (55%) and South Africans (47%). Opposition to UN intervention was the highest among Angolans (37%), but in most other countries less than one in five were opposed.

Africans show widespread openness to the idea of multilateral military intervention in their own country in the event of a conflict "like Darfur." When asked who they would prefer to intervene in the event of such a conflict, UN military troops received the widest endorsement (30%), followed by the African Union (22%). The idea of intervention by rich countries acting alone was endorsed by just 5%.

Countries endorsing the UN for this role most strongly were Ghana (48%), Kenya and Zimbabwe (both 35%). The lowest level of support for the UN was in South Africa (21%), but this was still more than the number of South Africans who preferred the African Union (12%). In three countries, the proportion of people preferring the AU and the UN were about the same—Tanzania (28% and 25% respectively), Angola and Nigeria (22% and 25% in both cases). The greatest number of people rejecting any foreign military intervention was in Cameroon (20%); the smallest number was in Ghana (6%).

Awareness of the situation in Darfur is fairly low. Just over one-third of Africans interviewed (36%) say they have heard or read a great deal or a fair amount about “the conflict in the Sudan region called Darfur.” Attitudes about whether the UN should have the right to intervene are not significantly different between those with higher or lower levels of awareness.

While African support for intervention is much higher with UN authorization when it comes to severe human rights abuses such as genocide, Africans do not reject the idea of a country being able to intervene even when it does not have UN approval. In such cases, half (51%) say a country should have the right to intervene even without UN authorization, while three in ten (28%) disagree.

Lloyd Hetherington comments, “Clearly Africans are looking outside their own countries and especially to the United Nations to help deal with some of their problems. Contrary to their leaders, it appears that they would like to see the UN intervene in dealing with problems such as the crisis in Darfur, with a growing confidence in the African Union to also take on this role.”

These findings are from a larger annual survey of African public opinion called “Africa in the New Century,” tracking attitudes of Africans on key issues, with the support of the Commission for Africa and syndicated subscribers. The survey of 10,809 Africans from eight countries (Angola, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe) was conducted between October and December 2004.

## **US Poll**

A PIPA-Knowledge Networks poll of 812 Americans finds majority support for several forms of intervention in the crisis in Darfur. The poll was conducted June 22-26 and has a margin of error of 3.5%.

### Americans on UN Intervention in Darfur

*As you may know there has been large-scale violence in Darfur, Sudan, that some, including the Bush administration, have called genocide. Do you think the members of the UN should or should not step in with military force to stop the violence in Darfur?*

Should



Should not



PIPA/KN 6/2005 Asked whether UN members should “step in with military force to stop the violence in Darfur,” 61% said that it should, while 32% said that it should not. This support was bipartisan: 67% of Republicans and 62% of Democrats favored it. Independents were a bit lower at 52%.

A majority, albeit a slightly smaller one, also favored contributing US troops to a multilateral operation in Darfur. Asked “If other members of the UN are willing to contribute troops to a military operation in Darfur, do you think the US should or should not be willing to contribute some troops as well?” 54% said that it should, while 39% were opposed. Here again support was quite bipartisan. Fifty-seven percent of Republicans and 56% of Democrats favored contributing US troops.

Support is even higher for providing equipment and logistical support to the African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur. Respondents were told, “At present there is a peacekeeping force in Darfur made up of soldiers from African countries. But this force is quite weak and its presence has not stopped the violence. The African Union has asked NATO for equipment and logistical support.” They were then asked, “Do you think that NATO, including the US, should or should not provide such help?” Seventy-one percent said the US should, while 21% said it should not. Here again support was highly bipartisan, with 73% of Republicans and 74% of Democrats favoring providing such assistance.

Steven Kull, director of PIPA, comments, “What is quite striking here is that even as the US is tied down in Iraq and suffering daily casualties, a majority of Americans would support contributing troops to a multilateral operation in Darfur. This suggests that what is occurring there goes against strongly held values in the American public. Indeed, multiple polls have found that many Americans believe that if severe human rights abuses are occurring, especially genocide, the UN should have the right to intervene and the US should be willing to contribute troops.”

When the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in 2004 asked whether the UN should have the right to intervene in the event of human right abuses such as genocide—the same question asked in the eight-nation African poll—85% of Americans and 94% of American leaders agreed that the UN should have the right to intervene. Also, in the same CCFR poll, 75% favored using US troops “To stop a government from committing genocide and killing large numbers of its own people.”

US public support for intervention in Darfur may vary, depending on whether Americans assume that what is occurring in Darfur falls in the category of genocide. In December 2004, when the Bush administration was stating that genocide was occurring in Darfur, PIPA/KN asked whether the UN should intervene with military force “to stop the genocide in Darfur.” Seventy-four percent said it should and 60% said that the US should contribute troops. In light of the UN report that determined that war crimes and genocidal intent were occurring in Darfur, but refrained from labeling it genocide, the present poll presented the situation more equivocally, referring to “large-scale violence in Darfur, Sudan, that some, including the Bush administration, have called genocide.” In this case support for UN intervention was 13 points lower and support for the US contributing troops was 6 points lower.

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided Internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to [www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp). Funding for this research was provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Ford Foundation.