



**A message from H.E. Kofi Annan,
former Secretary-General of the United Nations,
and patron of "Darfur: Crimes against Humanity"
at the Jewish Museum Berlin**

I salute the Jewish Museum of Berlin and Human Rights Watch for bringing together dedicated individuals and dynamic human rights defenders to focus on Darfur.

The tragedy of Darfur has raged for over three years, and still reports pour in of villages being destroyed by the hundred, and of the brutal treatment of civilians spreading into neighbouring countries. How can an international community which claims to uphold human rights allow this horror to continue?

There is more than enough blame to go around. It can be shared among those who value abstract notions of sovereignty more than the lives of real families, those whose reflex of solidarity puts them on the side of governments and not of peoples, and those who fear that action to stop the slaughter would jeopardize their commercial interests.

The truth is, none of these arguments amount even to excuses, let alone justifications, for the shameful passivity of most governments. We have still not summoned up the collective sense of urgency that this issue requires.

That is why your voices and your actions are so critical. Through your efforts, you are helping to raise awareness of the principle of "Responsibility to Protect". A doctrine adopted by world leaders in 2005, it means, in essence, that respect for national sovereignty can no longer be used as an excuse for inaction in the face of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Yet, more than a year after its adoption, this principle - to judge by what is happening in Darfur - demonstrates that our performance has not improved much since the disasters of Bosnia and Rwanda. Sixty years after the liberation of the Nazi death camps, and 30 years after the Cambodian killing fields, the promise of "never again" is ringing hollow.

With your help, the responsibility to protect can be developed into a powerful international norm that is not only quoted but put into practice, whenever and wherever it is needed to hold governments to account. States' performance must be judged against their commitments, and they must be accountable both to their own people and to their peers in the international community.

The international community needs your moral courage and determination to fill the leadership vacuum and hold world leaders and inter-governmental organizations to account. Your work is vital in helping to make human rights a reality in Darfur, and in communities everywhere.

I wish you the very best in your deliberations and future activities.

Kofi Annan
Former Secretary General of the United Nations