

"[Steidle's] work in Darfur lends this absolutely necessary book its compelling immediacy and irrefutable authenticity, as a testament now and for years to come."—Los Angeles Times

THE DEVIL CAME ON HORSEBACK

BEARING WITNESS TO THE
GENOCIDE IN DARFUR



BRIAN STEIDLE
AND GRETCHEN STEIDLE WALLACE

Brian Steidle was just 27 years old when he went to Sudan to monitor the ceasefire for the African Union. After working in the Nuba Mountains for seven months, he was transferred to Darfur. Brian, a former Marine, was unprepared for the violence and chaos he was about to witness. His on-the-ground account of his time in Darfur is detailed in the book *The Devil Came on Horseback*.

Q&A with Brian Steidle

When you signed up to work for the African Union, what was your understanding of the situation in Sudan?

I was working for the Joint Military Commission in the Nuba Mountains in Central Sudan and I knew very little. I had heard rumors of horrific things happening in Darfur but most of the information was kept secret by the African Union.

What was your stated mission in Darfur? What sorts of things did you report to the authorities, and how did that differ from what you actually witnessed?

My mission was to act as a US representative to the African Union. I was to advise them on Operational and logistical issues. I was also one of the members of our 8 man monitoring teams. We were supposed to conduct interviews with both side of the conflict. Then we were to file reports with the African Union.

What sorts of things did you report to the authorities, and how did that differ from what you actually witnessed?

Some of the reports were modified, as all of the members of the monitoring teams had to sign the reports. Members could make addendums, but they were still required to sign the original. In addition to this the AU didn't want to offend the Government of Sudan as they were operating in the country by the invitation of the Government.

During your investigations in Darfur, you came across a memo from a government official authorizing militias to “change the demography of Darfur and make it void of any African tribes.” How did this change your understanding of the conflict? Did it affect your sense of purpose?

I understood pretty well by that point that the Government was in charge and that they were directing these attacks on civilians. It didn't affect my purpose, as it was to monitor and report as I saw with out injecting my personal beliefs.

In the Epilogue of *The Devil Came on Horseback*, you talk about how the situation in Sudan has deteriorated since you left in 2005. What do you think needs to happen in order for peace to be restored in Darfur?

The US Government needs to lead the way in implementing a long lasting peace treaty that all sides to the conflict agree upon. Additionally, the US Government and the UN need to convince the UN Security Council to deploy a peacekeeping force that has the capability to enforce a peace treaty and protect civilians in Darfur. The UN and the involved governments need to cooperate in investigations of War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity in Darfur initiated by the International Criminal Court. We need to divest from companies that are supporting the Government of Sudan in committing genocide in Darfur.

The African Union mandate was set to expire at the end of 2006. What has happened to the African Union mission in Darfur?

They have been continuously extended while the situation is constantly deteriorating. What is needed is a peace keeping force, namely, the UN, or as a last resort NATO. The AU is a monitoring force only.

Have you been back to Africa? Tell us about your experiences on your return trip.

I have returned to Chad and Rwanda. In Chad I spent a month in the refugee camps in the eastern part of the country. I was learning more about the situation by interviewing refugees for our documentary film as well as identifying projects that Global Grassroots would support after the violence subsides. In Rwanda we were taking part in the commemoration of the Genocide 12 years before. We were also filing for our documentary and identifying projects but also learning for these genocide survivors what it takes to stop genocide and to rebuild lives after it stops.

You write about the frustration you experience when you encounter Americans ignorant of the situation in Darfur. What do you think it will take to educate the public? How can the average person become involved?

Support advocacy efforts that raise awareness about this issue and empower individuals to make a difference.

Call your elected officials: 1-800- GENOCIDE (436-6243)

Find out how your officials are doing on this issue. Check www.darfurscores.org and write hand-written letters to your officials.

Check your investments and encourage your employer, state and city to divest from Sudan. Check www.sudandivestment.org

Support organizations that conduct sustainable projects to help rebuild the lives of people affected by conflicts when the violence has stopped (for example, [Global Grassroots](http://GlobalGrassroots.org)).