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July 21, 2004

The Rt. Hon. Paul Martin
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON. K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

As president of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), I write to urge your government to continue and, indeed, expand its work in moving forward the ideas and thrust of the Responsibility to Protect report (produced by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS)). I would also urge you, bearing in mind the spirit and principles in this report, to press for international intervention to give protection and relief to the uprooted people in the current crisis in western Sudan.

The catastrophic situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan presents the world with a potential repeat of the horrific Rwanda genocide a decade ago. The world community must act promptly to end the large scale crimes against humanity currently being committed there, which include widespread displacement of people, rape and murder.

We urge you to press for appropriate international intervention, and, in keeping with the spirit and principles of the ICISS report, to stress that such action

- (a) be within the framework of the United Nations,
- (b) have as its primary considerations the protection and humanitarian relief of the uprooted people, as well as the development of an enduring peace for the region, and
- (c) involve armed military intervention only after all other avenues of assistance to the people have been exhausted.

We also urge that Canada be prepared to commit Canadian resources to any UN peace-keeping role proposed for this situation, ensuring that the peace-keepers are adequately mandated, supported and outfitted.

The crisis in Darfur underlines the importance of the work being done to develop an international consensus on how to implement the recommendations of The Responsibility to Protect report.

At the recent annual meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council, members from across Canada approved the appended resolution supporting the basic principles in the report. For further reference, please see the second attachment to this letter: CUC resolutions regarding Canadian Defence Policy.

We realize that the criteria for intervention, especially military intervention, are a cause of concern for many countries and will require much more discussion and diplomacy. We further understand that the Government of Canada, with the assistance of civil society organizations here and abroad, has been providing leadership for a process of ongoing dialogue. We recognize that the legal and political challenges are complex and may require reform of some of the basic precepts of global governance. Nevertheless, we in the CUC support this approach and urge that your government continue the work outlined above.

So long as this work remains incomplete, situations such as that currently in the Sudan will continue to be handled, if at all, in ad hoc ways. As a consequence, killing and maiming and rape continue while diplomats prolong debate, and many countries are reluctant to join an intervention because of the uncertainties of leadership, goals, interests, implications and the like. The world needs an effective, approved operational procedure for responding to these situations. We are counting on your government's continuing commitment to actively pursue this goal.

Yours truly,

Brian Kiely
President
Canadian Unitarian Council

cc.
Hon. Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hon. Bill Graham, Minister of Defence
Stephen Harper, MP
Gilles Duceppe, MP
Jack Layton, MP