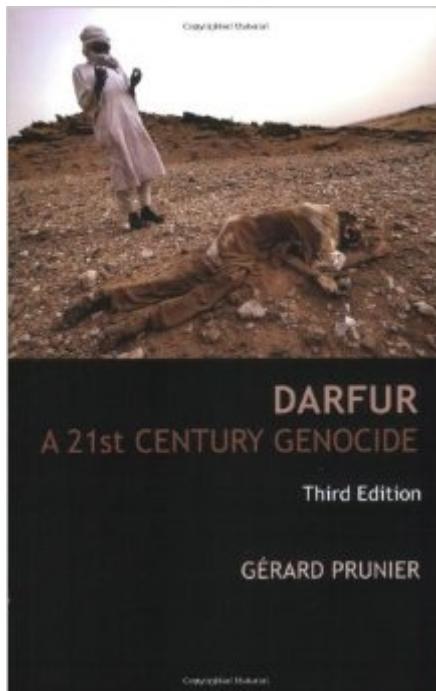


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Darfur: A 21st Century Genocide, Third Edition (Crises In World Politics)



Synopsis

Praise for the 2005 Edition: "A passionate and highly readable account of the current tragedy that combines intimate knowledge of the region's history, politics, and sociology with a telling cynicism about the polite but ineffectual diplomatic efforts to end it. It is the best account available of the Darfur crisis."¹ •Foreign Affairs "Does the conflict in Darfur, however bloody, qualify as genocide? Or does the application of the word 'genocide' to Darfur make it harder to understand this conflict in its awful peculiarity? Is it possible that applying a generic label to Darfurian violence makes the task of stopping it harder? Or is questioning the label simply insensitive, implying that whatever has happened in Darfur isn't horrible enough to justify a claim on the world's conscience, and thus invite inaction or even the dismissal of Darfur altogether? These questions lie at the heart of a much-needed new book by Gerard Prunier. In this book, Prunier casts aside labels and lays bare the anatomy of the Darfur crisis, drawing on a mixture of history and journalism to produce the most important book of the year on any African subject."² •Salon.com "The emergency in Darfur in western Sudan is far from over, as Gérard Prunier points out in this comprehensive and authoritative book. . . . He concisely covers the history, the conflicts, and the players. . . . This book is essential for anyone wanting to learn about this complex conflict."³ •Library Journal "If Darfuris are Muslim, what is their quarrel with the Islamic government in Khartoum? If they and the janjaweed—evil horsemen—driving them from their homes are both black, how can it be Arab versus African? If the Sudanese government is making peace with the south, why would it be risking that by waging war in the west? Above all, is it genocide? Gérard Prunier has the answers. An ethnographer and renowned Africa analyst, he turns on the evasions of Khartoum the uncompromising eye that dissected Hutu power excuses for the Rwanda genocide a decade ago."⁴ •The Guardian Darfur: A 21st Century Genocide explains what lies behind the conflict in Western Sudan, how it came about, why it should not be oversimplified, and why it is so relevant to the future of Africa. As the world watches, governments decide if, when, and how to intervene, and international organizations struggle to distribute aid, Gérard Prunier's book provide crucial assistance. The third edition features a new chapter covering events through mid-2008.

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Customer Reviews

As Yehudit Ronen stated, Prunier rightly labels the response of the international community to the atrocities in Darfur, a "regression of civilization," a description he convincingly argues for in this comprehensive and eye-opening work. In it, he analyzes the historical roots of the conflict in Sudan's western region and discusses why international efforts to halt the tragedy in Darfur have been so impotent. Prunier takes the reader to the early history of Darfur as an independent sultanate and relates the human movement into the region of people who now constitute Darfur's diverse ethnic makeup. He details the subsequent annexation of Darfur to Sudan and shows how British benign neglect toward the region began an important trend that endured in the era of independence. Prunier surveys the frustration of democratic politics in Darfur and the devastating famine of the mid-1980s in which about 100,000 people died. He addresses the Libyan interference in Darfur to promote Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi's war in Chad. This, he explains, was a critical cause in pitting the Darfurian "Arab" ethnic groups ("tribes" in Prunier's parlance) against their "African," Muslim co-religionists. It was during the chaotic circumstances in the region between 1985 and 1988, Prunier explains, that the pattern of Arab militia attacks on African villages was first established, and atrocities similar in manner, although not in scale, were perpetrated by the dreaded Janjaweed, the "evil horsemen." Prunier describes how the cynical opportunism of Hasan Abdallah al-Turabi, the Arab Islamist who had led Sudan jointly with Omar al-Bashir after 1989, further fuelled the combustible components of the Darfurian reality.

For those familiar with Darfur only through George Clooney's media-savvy pleading to raise awareness of the genocide occurring there, Gérard Prunier's incisive, often scathing examination of the volatile political situation in this western Sudanese province provides quite a bracing, fascinating education. A French ethnographer and respected expert on East Africa, he brings together surprising facts about the war-torn area and the evasive actions taken by the National

Islamic Front (NIF) government in Sudan's capital, Khartoum. The scope of the conflict is shocking - an estimated 400,000 deaths and 2.5 million displaced since it started in February 2003. But Prunier gets beyond the figures to paint a community so burdened by its own intertribal complexities that it maintains an unfortunate separateness from the rest of the country. He points out not only the passive actions emanating from Khartoum, but also how Darfur has fed into its own sovereignty by looking west toward the Sahel for its resources rather than the rest of Sudan. The author does not hold back on his harsh criticisms of the NIF government which he sees as intentionally encouraging Darfur's ethnic polarization between the Janjaweed and the non-Baggara people in order to maintain control over the area. Intriguingly, he sees the burgeoning racial politics as the result of increasing Arab influences in Khartoum since the official administrative perspective is blatantly insensitive to the traditional tribal cleavages in Darfur. These divisions are what lie at the heart of the atrocities in Darfur since they have ramifications on the economic and military situation, which began when the Sudan Liberation Army took up arms in 2002.

I'm not an expert on Darfur nor do I spend much time reading about African politics. I came to this book in the hopes of understanding the Darfur crisis better. Parts of this book are excellent, but the poor editing and confused chronology for the updated section at the end nearly make the book useless for the uninformed reader. The first section on historical background is fascinating and for the most part clearly written, although it would have been useful to offer a clearer chronology of events in Chad, which have an important impact on Darfur. Unfortunately, the editors did not take the time to correct numerous spelling, syntax and grammatical errors that existed in the 2005 version. I'm not a good copy editor with my own work, but these errors were so numerous and obvious as to be a bit disheartening. But this is a mere annoyance compared to the confusing additional text added in this "revised" edition. (1) The glossary of Arabic terms is useful, but incomplete. (2) The list of abbreviations is incomplete, and quite often the abbreviations are not even spelled out with their first use. Try to figure out what AMIS stands for. (3) There are numerous mistakes and inconsistencies in the use of abbreviations. On page 161 the Common Peace Agreement (CPA), which one does not find in the list of abbreviations, is misspelled as DPA! Or does the author mean the DPA, another unlisted acronym?! Try sorting this out as a non-specialist. The author switches randomly between the use of the abbreviation SLA and SLM for a key rebel group - it's the same group, but again very confusing. I was only able to understand this based upon other outside reading. No explanation is given in the text.

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