

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Raised Bill No. 5324, AN ACT CONCERNING DIVESTMENT OF STATE FUNDS INVESTED IN COMPANIES DOING BUSINESS IN IRAN AND SUDAN.

As you know, the Government of Sudan had been engaged in acts of genocide against the Fur, Massalit and Zaghawa peoples in the Darfur region of Sudan since 2003. The General Assembly of the State of Connecticut passed legislation enabling the State Treasurer to divest State funds from companies doing business in Sudan in 2004. This is commendable and certainly a step in the right direction. However, despite a reduction in the death rate in Darfur, the people there remain very vulnerable and mass killings may begin again at any time. More than 2.7 million people live in Internally Displaced Persons camps in Darfur and depend in international aid to survive. An additional 300,000 Darfuris live in refugee camps in Chad. Omar al-Bashir, who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against the people of Darfur, is still the President of Sudan, and the threat of violence is high. In addition, the conflict between the Government of Sudan in the North and the people of South Sudan threatens to return to a full scale war. If that happens, the people in IDP camps in Darfur will be cut off from aid, and hundreds of thousands of people will die from starvation and disease. Also, the Director of National Intelligence, Dennis C. Blair, noted on February that "a new mass killing or genocide is most likely to occur in Southern Sudan."

Clearly, we need to do all that we can to pressure to Government of Sudan so that North-South conflict does not resume. Updating the Sudan divestment legislation is one small but significant way that Connecticut can help prevent the next genocide of the twenty-first century.

Likewise, expanding the divestment legislation to include the Islamic Republic of Iran is a responsible way for Connecticut to pressure another government that not only had inflicted great harm on its own citizens but threatens other countries in the region. The President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has repeatedly threatened Israel and denied the Holocaust. Iran is also on the path to develop nuclear weapons and has threatened other neighboring countries. In addition the Iranian government has brutally suppressed its own citizens as they attempted to move the country to undertake democratic reforms. Like the Government of Sudan, the Government of Iran threatened to engage in mass killing, and we should do our part to prevent that.

In the past, for example in ending apartheid in South Africa, divestment has played a small but significant role. The by enacting this legislation, the State of Connecticut may help to prevent atrocities in the near future. It is the least we can do.

I am prepared to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for this opportunity.

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