

Stop the Genocide in Darfur

The two-year conflict in Sudan's western region of Darfur can be described as nothing less than genocide, defined as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group." The murderous Janjawid are intentionally creating conditions that, if left unchecked, will result in the extermination of an entire people. We must remember the lessons from the past: in the presence of genocide, our silence is in effect our consent. Get involved in the growing student movement to heighten awareness and pressure the United States and the global community to stop the genocide in Darfur.

Partnering Organizations and Contacts:

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The Save Darfur Coalition: info@savedarfur.org

Background Information:

To understand the genocide in Darfur, it is important to consider the conflict within the context of Sudan's Civil War. Waged since Sudan's independence from Britain in 1956, the North-South conflict has both economic and ethno-religious origins. During British colonial rule, most economic development was concentrated in the North, creating animosity between the two regions. Further, the largely Muslim, Arab north, seat of the government, clashed with rebels in the Christian and animistic, non-Arab south. Although there was a ten-year hiatus in the fighting, then-President Nimeiri's imposition of Shari'a as the law of the land in 1983 reignited the conflict. Since then, widespread violence has claimed more than two million lives and displaced over four million people. Some fled into neighboring countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Egypt. Hunger and malnutrition spread quickly as people lacked resources to feed themselves.

Darfur, a region located in western Sudan, is a microcosm of the situation occurring on a national scale, but has recently become more severe than in other areas of the country. Darfur is the largest region in Sudan and home to two major ethnic groups, Arabs and non-Arabs. The non-Arabs, or "blacks" constitute a number of African ethnic tribes, such as the Fur and Masalit. They have historically clashed with Arab camel and cattle-herding tribes over scarce land and resources in this arid region with periodic flare-ups over the years. As resources dwindled and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms broke down in the 1970s, ethnicity became a major catalyst and the situation worsened. Many of the non-Arab ethnic groups accused the government of backing the Arabs, thereby challenging the traditional authority of non-Arabs in Darfur.

In February 2003, an armed opposition group, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), mobilized and began attacking government troops. They called for the government to protect villagers from attacks and blamed them for the country's perilous economic situation. Another rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), soon emerged with similar demands. The government responded to the rise of SLM/A and JEM with force, waging aerial raids and arming a proxy militia, the Janjawid. The Janjawid, translating roughly to "armed men on horseback," are mostly of Arab background. Although both sides are accused of major human rights violations, the Janjawid gained the upper-hand due to government resources and increased mobility. Although the Sudanese government denies any association with the Janjawid, there have been numerous reports of coordinated air and ground attacks between the two groups.

The Janjawid has been accused of ethnic cleansing because of their systematic targeting of non-Arab blacks. There have been accounts of horrendous atrocities, such as the torching of homes and entire villages, theft and deliberate destruction of crops and cattle, indiscriminate killing of civilians, widespread raping of women and girls, and harassment of displaced Sudanese people living in neighboring Chad. There are estimates that 80% of internally displaced persons are women, old men, and young children, as most young men have been killed during the conflict. The Janjawid use rape as a weapon, often perpetrating gang rape or committing this atrocious act in the midst of public gatherings. Because they must leave the home to gather resources such as water and firewood, women and girls are easily targeted for sexual violence. Not only are the women themselves humiliated, but the rapes serve to demoralize entire communities and villages. Rape is also a tool of ethnic cleansing, because if these women become pregnant from the rape the children will be considered Arab, essentially wiping out the next generation of ethnic blacks.

Since February 2003, over 400,000 people are estimated dead, in large part from starvation, and more than 2.5 million have been driven from their homes. Although the government of Sudan and SLM/A and JEM brokered a tenuous ceasefire agreement in April 2004, the cessation of conflict has not extended to the west, and the violence in Darfur has continued seemingly unabated.

While the international community has acknowledged the crisis in Darfur, most people believe that little has been done to stop it. The United Nations allocated \$100 million to finance African Union troops to keep peace in the region; however, it stopped short of calling the conflict 'genocide' and has subsequently failed to take pro-active steps to stop the atrocities. In July 2004, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed a joint resolution declaring the armed conflict in Darfur to be genocide and called on the Bush administration to lead international efforts to stop it, unilaterally if necessary. Although President Bush has been given the go-ahead, and he himself called the situation genocide on the 2004 campaign trail, the United States has failed to act definitively on Darfur.

Take Action to End Genocide in Darfur

Join the Efforts of Student-led Campaigns to Urge Global Action on Darfur

A number of groups nationwide have committed to confronting the tragedy of Darfur and the travesty of the international community's silence on the issue. Check out the following organizations and see what opportunities for activism each of them offers your group!

The Genocide Intervention Fund or GIF (www.genocideinterventionfund.org) aims to provide critically needed supplies to African Union peacekeepers on the ground in Darfur, to increase public awareness about genocide, and to pressure the international community to fulfill the "Responsibility to Protect" civilians targeted by genocide. This group started as a campus group at Swarthmore College and will become a full-fledged non-profit organization this fall.

Students Taking Action Now: Darfur or STAND (www.standnow.org) is a student initiative in the United States and Canada that works to create awareness about, to take political action on, and to raise funds to relieve the genocide in Darfur. STAND has affiliate groups on college campuses nationwide, organizing to educate students and the greater community about the crisis.

The Save Darfur Coalition (www.savedarfur.org) is an alliance of over 100 faith-based, humanitarian, and human rights organizations dedicated to ending the violence in Darfur. The Coalition's mission is to raise public awareness and mobilize an effective, unified response to the atrocities that threaten the lives of those in Darfur. Their website offers a variety of resources for your group to use when organizing on campus around the genocide in Darfur, including instructions

for circulating a petition, hosting a speaker series, contacting your U.S. representatives, holding a fundraiser or benefit, screening a film, and passing a Student Government resolution.

Organize your campus to participate in the International Solidarity Fast for Darfur

On October 6, 2005, join Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of Cape Town, South Africa and millions of others worldwide to fast, educate, hold vigils and rallies, and raise money for Darfur. **Visit www.darfurfast.org to explore activism ideas surrounding this day of awareness and solidarity with the people of Darfur.** News of the events will be broadcast into Eastern Chad and Darfur via Voice of America and BBC World Service.

Demand that the U.S. Media Cover the Darfur Crisis

During June 2005, CNN, FOXNews, NBC/MSNBC, ABC, and CBS ran 50 times as many stories about Michael Jackson and 12 times as many stories about Tom Cruise as they did about the genocide in Darfur. Increased television coverage of the crisis has the power to spur the action required to stop a devastating crime against humanity. **Visit www.beawitness.org to learn more about out how you can organize your campus community to demand coverage of the gross human rights violations occurring in Darfur.**

Encourage Your University to Divest from Sudan

During the 1980s, students across the country successfully organized to compel their universities to divest from apartheid South Africa. Today, colleges like Harvard, Williams, and Stanford have pushed their colleges to divest from the stocks of companies that do business in Sudan. **For more information about how to pursue a university divestment campaign and to locate your regional coordinator, visit www.sudandivestment.com.**