

# **Darfur Sunday Information**

(Adapted from Darfur Sunday Coordinator Packet from  
the Unitarian Universalist-United Nations Office)

The situation in Darfur is arguably the largest humanitarian failing in the world right now, and with estimates of one thousand people dying each day, we, as a community of moral and concerned individuals, feel impelled to take action. Now that the United States Senate has introduced the Darfur Accountability Act of 2005, a piece of legislation that will force action, we have a concrete rallying point around which to focus our energy and actions. On Sunday, April 10, UU Congregations from around the country will make their voices heard all together through this concerted action. Darfur Sunday will occur on April 10, 2005:

## **Situation In Darfur**

(From SaveDarfur.org)

### **History**

Open warfare erupted in Darfur in early 2003 when the two loosely allied rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), attacked military installations. This followed closely with peace agreements brokered by the United States to end the twenty-year-old civil war in the south of Sudan which allocated government positions and oil revenue to the rebels in the south. At that time, rebels in Darfur, seeking an end to the region's chronic economic and political marginalization, also took up arms to protect their communities against a

twenty-year campaign by government-backed militias recruited among groups of Arab extraction in Darfur and Chad. These "Janjaweed" militias have over the past year received greatly increased government support to clear civilians from area considered disloyal. Militia attacks and a scorched-earth government offensive has led to massive displacement, indiscriminate killings, looting and mass rape, all in contravention of the 1949 Geneva Conventions that prohibits attacks on civilians.

The war, which risks inflicting irreparable damage on a delicate ethnic balance of seven million people who are uniformly Muslim, is actually multiple intertwined conflicts. One is between government aligned forces and rebels; a second entails indiscriminate attacks of the government-sponsored Janjaweed militia on civilians; and a third involves a struggle among Darfur communities themselves. Its implications go far beyond Darfur's borders. The war indirectly threatens the regimes in both Sudan and Chad and has the potential to inspire insurgencies in other parts of the country.

### **Current Situation**

Two years into the crisis, the western Sudanese region of Darfur is acknowledged to be a humanitarian and human rights tragedy of the first order. The humanitarian, security and political situation continue to deteriorate: atrocity crimes are continuing, people are still dying in large numbers of malnutrition and disease, and a new famine is feared. The international community is failing to protect civilians itself or influence the Sudanese government to do so. The international community is deeply divided -- perhaps paralyzed -- over what to do next in Darfur. The UN Commission of Inquiry on Darfur described the massive scope of atrocities carried out in the territory, primarily by the government and its allied Janjaweed militias. And the situation on the ground shows a number of negative trends, which have been developing since the last quarter of 2004: deteriorating security; a credible threat of famine; mounting civilian casualties; the ceasefire in

shambles; the negotiation process at a standstill; the rebel movements beginning to splinter, and new armed movements appearing in Darfur and neighboring states. Chaos and a culture of impunity are taking root in the region.

The humanitarian situation remains catastrophic, due to ongoing state-sponsored violence, layers of aid obstruction, the lack of an overall humanitarian strategic plan, and the weakened state of displaced Sudanese. Refugees and internally displaced civilians (IDPs) have been displaced for long periods, they are in terribly weakened states, they are subject to sexual abuse and attack, they do not have adequate shelter, and a new famine is feared. Infectious diseases and dysentery will drive up the body counts rapidly. Conventional responses are simply inadequate to prevent increasing mortality rates, and the current response will fail unless buttressed by a number of bold and urgent actions.

As need far outstrips the ability of agencies to deliver aid, it is not too soon to sound a famine alert. Relief workers on the ground are convinced that few if any of the nearly 2 million IDPs will return to their homes in time for the next planting season, thus ensuring at least longer term food insecurity. The onset of the rainy season in late May will further restrict access. Compounding the problem is that the numbers of at-risk civilians continue to increase. The Janjaweed continue to undertake attacks against villages, prey on IDPs, and obstruct aid activities. Many Janjaweed have been integrated into the army and police; no one has been charged with any crime, and their actions are not being challenged. There remains a state of total impunity.

Not since the Rwanda genocide of 1994 has the world seen such a calculated campaign of slaughter, rape, starvation and displacement. It is estimated that at least 250,000 people have died. More than 2 million people have been displaced from their homes and over 200,000 have fled across the border to Chad. The Sudanese government continues to flout international law with impunity.

### **North-South Conflict in Darfur**

On January 9, 2005, a peace deal was signed to end the long war between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLM). This war, which has raged for the past 20 years, is commonly referred to as the North-South conflict and is often confused with the violence in Darfur. This peace deal signed earlier this year did not address the issues in Darfur, where the genocide continues.

### **Statement from Bill Sinkford, President of the UUA**

"It's been just over 7 months since 'Sudan: Day of Conscience,' when I and other people of faith and good will were arrested as we called on the government of Sudan to stop the genocide in Darfur (See story from August 26, 2004, at <http://www.uua.org/news/2004/040826.html>). I am dismayed that so little progress has been made since then. Thankfully, momentum is once again building around legislation in the US Senate and proposals in the UN Security Council. I applaud the efforts of the UU United Nations Office to rally Unitarian Universalists to action, and hope that many congregations will answer the call to help stop the violence in Darfur."

Rev. William G. Sinkford

President, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

## **What can we do?**

### **A letter writing table after the service**

This file contains materials to assist you with both of these components. For the service, we have attached readings for the chalice lighting and the reflection/prayer. Feel free to use these or find your own. We have also included a quote that could be used for the front of your bulletin or program. The letter writing will be directed to your state's two Senators asking them to support the Darfur Accountability Act of 2005. We are asking that people handwrite letters to one or both Senators and that you collect them and then fax them to the Senator's Washington DC office. (Faxing is faster than mailing and more effective than e-mailing.) Your congregation's office administrator is a good resource for help with sending faxes and obtaining writing materials. To find the fax number for your Senators, go to the following website and click on your state: <http://www.visi.com/juan/congress/> Set up your table in a visible location and have paper and pens ready. We have included a page of writing points, a sample letter, and background information, which you should display. If you would like to include your Senator's postal address on your letter, it can be found by going to the following website and selecting your state from the pull down menu. <http://www.senate.gov/>

Once you have sent your faxes, please take a moment to contact us and let us know how many faxes you have sent. We also welcome any additional feedback you have. This will help us coordinate similar actions in the future. Once again, we thank you for your time and your consideration for the people suffering in Darfur. Should you need additional help or information, do not hesitate to call us. Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office

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The text of the Darfur Accountability Act of 2005  
<http://corzine.senate.gov/priorities/darfuraccountabilityact.pdf>  
An archive of news articles about Darfur  
<http://www.savedarfur.org/go.php?q=latestNews.html>

### **Primary Points for Letters to Senators**

- We applaud the introduction of the Darfur Accountability Act of 2005 (S. 495) to the United States Senate, and its call for immediate action. - If you have not already done so, we urge you to become a co-sponsor of this Act and to insist upon its swift ratification.
- An estimated 1,000 people are dying daily from violence and the effects of mass displacement
- Despite the fact that the United States Congress has condemned these actions as genocide, we have taken no action to prevent them.

### **Secondary Points**

- Government supported militias of Arab Muslims have displaced nearly 2,000,000 and killed almost 300,000 Black Sudanese Muslims in Darfur in just over two years.
- In particular, we applaud the Act's insistence on a United Nations Security Council Resolution that would require the following:
- Support for an expanded African Union peacekeeping mission (Currently only

1800 peacekeeping troops are deployed in an area as large as France.)

- Sanctions and legal action against those individuals behind the killings
- Forcing the Sudanese Government to allow unimpeded access by peacekeeping forces, humanitarian groups, and monitors into Darfur

### **Sample Letter to Your Senator**

[Your contact information here]

[date]

[Your Senator's contact information here]

Dear Senator [Your Senator's last name here],

A human tragedy is unfolding in the Darfur region of Sudan. If you have not done so yet, I urge you to co-sponsor the Darfur Accountability Act of 2005 (S. 495). Last summer, for the first time in its history, Congress called an ongoing conflict genocide and acted during the crisis, rather than after violence ceased. However, the U.S. and the international community are now procrastinating while crimes against humanity continue. The failure to sustain pressure on the government of Sudan is a death sentence for thousands of people in Darfur. Strong action by the Senate as prescribed by S. 495 will put the U.S. back on the right track.

S. 495 calls on the U.S. to support the expansion of the African peacekeeping force, to take legal actions against the government of Sudan and perpetrators of the crimes, and to insist that the Sudanese Government allow humanitarian workers and monitors in Darfur. Such actions are necessary in order to stop the violence and displacement.

The genocide in Rwanda ten years ago and the failure of the United States and the international community to prevent it must animate your conscientious action today. The U.S. promises of "never again" will be empty words on worthless paper if the nightmares of Rwanda, Srebrenica, Kampuchea, and the Holocaust are repeated in this century.

We commend Congress for its past work to prevent further killing in Sudan, but more must be done NOW to succeed. Genocides can be prevented. Failing to act effectively is unthinkable.

Sincerely,

[Sign your name here]

[Print your name here]

## **Liturgical Materials**

### **Quotes**

“Thou shalt not be a victim.  
Thou shalt not be a perpetrator.  
Above all,  
thou shalt not be a bystander.”  
~From the Holocaust Museum  
Washington, D.C.

### **Chalice Lighting**

We light this chalice  
As a beacon of hope....  
Hope for those who suffer in Darfur  
Hope for their deliverance from famine and peril.  
Hope for swift healing peace. Amen

### **Prayer for Darfur**

Merciful and compassionate Spirit  
Be present to the suffering people of Sudan  
Shelter the widows and the children  
Comfort all who are weary and afraid  
Bring relief to those who hunger and thirst  
Center our thoughts with those who suffer in silence  
Move us to recall our shared humanity  
Unite us in our determination to respond to injustice  
May we never forget! May we never forget!  
Hear our prayer. Make our action swift.