

Millions of civilians deprived of aid by the Sudanese government.

On March 4, 2009, the government of Sudan expelled and suspended the operations of 13 international humanitarian aid organizations and at least 3 domestic aid organizations operating in Darfur and across Sudan. Organizations working in South Sudan were exempted for the government's order. The government's action followed a decision by the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Without the food, water, and medicine provided by these aid groups, millions of vulnerable men, women, and children in Darfur and throughout Sudan face starvation and disease.

Act now to get these agencies reinstated. Write to:

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H. E. Ambassador Lila Hanitra Ratsifandrihamanana
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H.E. Ambassador Yahya A. Mahmassani
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Sample Letter

Dear Ambassador:

I am writing today to urge you to press the government of Sudan to immediately reverse its decision to expel and suspend the operations of humanitarian aid agencies and allow the aid organizations to continue their life-saving work. The alternative is unthinkable. Millions of vulnerable men, women, and children in Darfur and throughout Sudan face starvation and disease if aid is halted.

The government of Sudan has expelled 13 international humanitarian organizations, including Oxfam, Care, Save the Children, and Medecins Sans Frontieres and suspended the operation of at least three domestic aid organizations, including the Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO).

Under international humanitarian law, Sudan has a responsibility to ensure access to international assistance for its people. I am concerned that this act may be in retaliation for the issuance of an arrest warrant for the country's president. The warrant is entirely unrelated to the issue of humanitarian access and must not in any way prevent access to basic food, water, and medicine.

Humanitarian aid agencies must be allowed to resume the life-saving work they perform every day and continue operating in all areas of Sudan where their presence is critical.

I urge you to call on Sudanese authorities to immediately reverse their decision.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

{Signature}

Background Information

On March 4, 2009, the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced it had issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on seven charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes. It is the first time the ICC has issued an arrest warrant for a sitting head of state. The arrest warrant for President Bashir follows arrest warrants issued by the ICC for former Sudanese Minister of State for the Interior Ahmad Harun and *Janjawid* militia leader Ali Kushayb. The government of Sudan has not surrendered either suspect to the ICC.

Subsequently, the government of Sudan expelled 13 humanitarian aid organizations, including Oxfam, Care, Save the Children, Medecins Sans Frontieres, and the International Rescue Committee. Sudanese officials also suspended the operation of at least three domestic humanitarian agencies, including the Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO). Several other aid agencies had their assets seized. Organizations working in South Sudan were exempted from the government's order.

Darfur is the largest humanitarian aid operation in the world. The 13 aid agencies expelled from Darfur account for half the aid that is distributed in the region, which 4.7 million men, women, and children depend on to varying degrees. According to the United Nations, without the assistance of these 13 organizations, 1.1 million people will be without food, 1.5 million without medical care, and more than one million without drinking water.

Amnesty International has urged the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to hold a special hearing to look at the question of humanitarian access, with a view to ensuring the return of humanitarian agencies to Darfur.

As with any country, Sudan has responsibilities under international humanitarian law to ensure access to international assistance by people who need it. Under the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, which Sudan has ratified, the Sudanese government is obliged to refrain from actions that violate the economic, social, and cultural rights of its citizens and seek international assistance if they are unable to carry out their obligations.