

Stop the Fires. Darfur.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2004

DARFUR DAY OF ACTION: JOIN US NOW!

What is September 21?

Sept. 21 is the UN International Day of Peace. On this day, citizens of the world will observe “a day of global ceasefire and non-violence, an invitation to all nations and peoples to honor a cessation of hostilities for the duration of the day.” This year, we challenge YOU to organize an event on that day or during that week, and highlight the situation in Sudan and call upon your community to act. Darfur deserves to live in peace, free from human rights violations, free from the fear of having to flee. You can help make that world a reality!

What’s going on in Darfur?

The Darfur conflict began in February 2003 when two new armed opposition groups – the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) – emerged and attacked government troops. These groups cited the reasons for the attacks as the government’s failure to protect settled villagers from attacks by pro-government nomadic groups and economic marginalization of the region. Since then, fighting and human rights abuses have seriously escalated.

The Sudanese government, pro-government militias and armed opposition groups are all committing grievous human rights abuses in Darfur, western Sudan. There are reports that the *Janjawid* militia group has killed, tortured, raped, arbitrarily arrested or detained civilians, burnt down houses and villages, stolen and destroyed crops and looted cattle. The Sudanese government has also obstructed access for non-governmental organizations to the Darfur region, including impeding humanitarian and food aid. Over 2.2 million people have been affected by the conflict and 1.2 million people have been displaced. In addition, there have been over 30,000 deaths with over a million more lives at risk.

For more information please see the Sudan Country page:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/sudan/index.do>

How can my group help?

Your group will be joining hundreds of groups around the country taking action to create change in Sudan during this week. There are two goals for activities: **education** and **action**. You can organize whatever type of event you feel would be most effective and appropriate for your community.

What kinds of activities can my group do?

The list of ideas below is not exhaustive and we encourage you to be creative and come up with your own ideas and events!

If you have questions or need help, please contact your regional office (to find contact information call 1.800.AREGION or visit www.amnestyusa.org).

1. *Host a photo exhibit in your community.* Download the photo exhibit at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/sudan/activism.html>
2. *Organize a "Stop the Fires. Darfur." Vigil.* Find a high traffic spot in your town. Invite local Sudan experts (college professors, refugees, community organizations...) or local elected leaders (city council, school board) to speak to the group. Having trouble finding an expert? Use the testimonies at the end of this guide and have members of your group read them out loud to the group. Ask participants to share a poem, spoken word, or song during part of your vigil. Take the petition in this guide on a clipboard and try to get 75 signatures from passers by. Don't forget to download posters to promote your vigil and stickers to give out and promote your event: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/sudan/activism.html>

* Be sure to check with your local police department about laws regarding public gatherings.

3. *Coordinate a "Stop the fires. Darfur." Demonstration.* Do you have a Sudanese embassy, cultural center or mission in your town? This is a good spot for a demonstration. Use the materials listed for the vigil above, and remember to invite some local musicians to join your ruckus. Make yourselves as visible as possible, and to catch peoples' attention, try writing some original chants. See below for some ideas of possible chants.

* Be sure to check with your local police department about laws regarding public gatherings and get all relevant permits.

Sample chants for a demonstration

- a. [Call and response] Caller: Stop the fires, where? Group: Darfur (repeat).
- b. [Call and response] Caller: the rains, the rains, the rains are coming down.
Group: We don't need no hunger, feed the refugees, feed.
- c. Janjawid, Janjawid bring me your gun, Janjawid, Janjawid turn in your arms.

4. *Discuss the Darfur situation with your group at its September meeting.* Use the activism page to gather fact sheets and current actions for your group to take during its meeting. Use the discussion questions and activity included in this guide.
5. *Work with a teacher or professor to use class time for a discussion on Darfur, Sudan.*
6. *Organize a community forum.* Bring together a panel of experts on the crisis or Sudan and have a panel discussion, and a question and answer session. Educate others and see what your community has to say about this crisis. You may want to display some photos at the forum, download the photo exhibit to include at your forum.
7. *Introduce the Darfur Hope Resolution in your City Council, County Council or County Commission:* Use the letter and sample resolution included below to initiate contact

with your local city or county representatives and ask him or her to take a stand for Darfur and introduce a resolution to the **City Council, County Council or County Commission** condemning the Government of Sudan's slaughter of innocent civilians, blocking of humanitarian assistance and support for militia groups.

**Whatever you do, make sure to have plenty of information available as well as actions for people to take. Remember there are TWO goals for this day:
Education AND Action!**

Remember: Keep us informed about your activities. Email Mona Cadena at mcadena@aiusa.org with updates or questions about your work.

SEPTEMBER 21 ORGANIZING TOOLS

1. [Sudan Discussion Questions](#)
2. [Sudan Refugee Activity](#)
3. ["Yesterday My Village was Burned," testimonies from the people of Darfur](#)
4. [Darfur Hope Resolution initiation letter and sample resolution](#)
5. [Petition For Distribution](#)

1. SUDAN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions can be used in conjunction with any of your organizing around the situation in Sudan. Think about how you want to use the questions: you may want to use them during a presentation, for small group discussions during a photo exhibit, or to jumpstart a discussion in a class or group meeting. There are lots of ways to use them, so be creative. You may also want to accompany them with fact sheets, actions and other resources found at the Sudan activism page:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/sudan/activism.html>

1. Many refugees leave their countries of origin because of natural disasters or for political, economic, or religious reasons. How would you characterize the reasons for leaving for the people of Darfur?
2. In what ways do institutions, nations and individuals respond similarly or differently to refugee problems in the world today? What challenges do you think institutions, nations and individuals face in trying to respond to refugee concerns?
3. What challenges do you think children in Darfur, Sudan face every day? What do you think you can do to support children in Darfur, Sudan?
4. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of having to flee from your home at a moment's notice? Why do you think people choose to flee rather than join in a conflict?
5. If the *Janjawid* are reined in by the Sudanese government and the people of Darfur are safe to return home, what challenges do you think they would face when they return home?

2. SUDAN REFUGEE ACTIVITY:

This activity can be used at school or with your Amnesty International group in conjunction with any of the Sudan actions, September 21 plans or with participants attending the photo exhibit. This activity is adapted from the multidisciplinary teaching guide by David Donahoe and Nancy Flowers with the Amnesty International Human Rights Education Steering Committee, *"The Uprooted Refugees and the United States."*

Packing Your Suitcase A Simulation Activity

Overview: This exercise simulates the kind of practical and emotional choices a refugee must make when leaving home, as well as the unforeseen consequence these choices can have.

Age level: early childhood – adult

Time: _ hour

Materials: Pencils and scratch paper

Objectives:

- To foster empathy for the emotions and problems refugees face in leaving their homes.
- To further understand the anxiety of the asylum-seeking process and the potential for arbitrariness in the asylum determination process.

NOTE: This exercise is adaptable to a variety of ability levels, from adults who make and discuss a written list, to young children who can be asked to pack a real bag and bring it to class.

PART 1

Read or explain the following scenario:

"You are a teacher in Darfur, Sudan. Your spouse (or family member) disappears and is later found murdered. Your name appears in a newspaper article listing suspected subversives. Later you receive a letter threatening your life because of your alleged political activity. You decide to flee. Pack your bag: you can only take 5 categories of things (e.g. toiletries, clothing, books, photographs...) and only take what you can carry in one bag by yourself. You have five minutes to make the list."

While the group is deciding, you might knock on a desk or table and say something like, "Hurry, they are coming."

PART 2

Tell the group you will be role-playing a government official in charge of determining asylum for refugees. Ask some of the participants to read their lists. After each list (usually 95%) that does not include evidence of “reasonable fear of persecution” (i.e. newspaper article or letter), say, “Asylum denied,” explaining that there is insufficient evidence to prove a threat existed.

Read aloud the definition of “refugee” used by the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951: *a person who is outside his or her country, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.* Explain that when a government acknowledges the existence of this “well-founded fear,” it grants political asylum or refugee status and allows the person to remain in the country. Those who enter the country but cannot prove “well founded fear of persecution” are expelled and usually returned to their country of origin.

PART 3

Encourage participants to discuss the experience. Ask:

1. How did you feel making choices under pressure of time?
2. What practical considerations entered into your choices, such as packing personal identification and professional certificates or diplomas?
3. What were your emotional reasons for your choices?

Ask participants next to evaluate the United Nations definition of refugee. Ask:

1. Why does the world community need a shared definition? What would happen if no common definition of refugee existed?
2. What considerations do you think went into making this shared definition? Political? Economic? Religious? Other?

Conclude by explaining the purpose of this exercise: to help participants experience the panic and loss of a sudden forced departure, the vulnerability of those who flee to accident, and the potential for arbitrary application of rules and definitions. Invite participants to discuss what they learned by participating in such a scenario.

3. “YESTERDAY, MY VILLAGE WAS BURNED: ”*Testimonies from the people of Darfur*

Use these testimonies from the people of Darfur to accompany the downloadable photo exhibit, Yesterday My Village Was Burned or use them during class discussions and activities. Arrange them any way you feel is most effective:

- *Place certain testimonies with relevant pictures*
- *Divide the testimonies into sections (i.e. the conflict, fleeing, violence against women and children, camps, the ethnic dimension of the conflict, etc.)*
- *Create a “story” of the Darfur conflict*

- *Or, organize them however else you think will compellingly tell the story of the people of Darfur.*

These testimonies were collected from interviews with survivors of the conflict in Darfur by Amnesty International delegates who recently participated in a research mission to the region. While numbers and statistics are appalling in themselves, these accounts offer a personal portrait of the horrors that these people have endured. Below, these refugees describe the brutality of the attacks, the terror of fleeing, and the poor living situation that characterize camps for displaced persons.

**“Yesterday my village was burned...”:
*Destruction in Darfur***

“It was early in the morning, people were sleeping. About 400 armed people cordoned the village, with military uniforms, the same ones worn by the army... Some were shot and others, such as children and the elderly, were burned alive in their houses.”

-A villager of Murli

“Now I don’t know where my mother and father are... I don’t know if the military killed them or what happened to them... Our entire village is burned.”

-Osman Haron, 19 years old

“I have lost everything now; I have nothing by the fingers of my two hands.”

-A refugee in Chad

You blacks, you have spoiled the country! We are here to burn you...”

-Janjawid militia, as reported by Masalit women in Goz Amer refugee camp

**“We’ve traveled so far, I’ve lost track of the days...”:
*Fleeing the Conflict***

“After the attacks we ran for four hours to our neighbors who are Tama as well. On our way from Azerny two women were raped by three Janjawid.”

- A., a 40-year-old Tama woman from Azerny

“We ran, I had the little one on the back and two on my hands and two with my older brother... We were hiding in the forest and I had only one little bag of clothes and nothing else. For three days I could only feed my children with water.”

-S. a 38-year-old mother of six children from Abu Sin

“Many of our children died on the way. There was no food, there was malaria and they were weak.”

-M., a Fur woman from Um Bada

"They were on horseback and camels. They hit us... We were injured... We found ourselves here."

-Injured man in refugee camp, Tine, Chad

**"Even here, we are still hungry and afraid...":
*Life in the Camps***

"It is not a camp but a prison."

-A displaced person who reached Khartoum after three months in Mukjar camp

"I did not feel safe in the camp. I was very scared of the soldiers. They take the children for training and we did not see them back anymore. They kidnap the young girls for the night."

-Anonymous

"They are happy when they rape. They sing when they rape and they tell that we are just slaves and they can do with us how they wish."

-A., age 37, from Mukjar camp

"The food is reaching hundreds but there are thousands who need food and receive nothing."

-A resident of West Dafur

"On the way [here] there were many *Janjawid* and they were beating people and we saw them raping women and young girls."

-K., a 40-year-old woman from Jaroko

"The six men raped my daughter, who is 25 years old, in front of me, my wife, and the young children."

-H., a man from Magarsa

"We don't have anything to eat... I have no money... my child is sick."

-Woman in an IDP camp

4. DARFUR HOPE RESOLUTION: TIPS, INITIATION LETTER AND SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Don't know who your City or County representatives are? Search for your state information here: <http://www.statelocalgov.net>.

Some tips for working on this action: Follow up with a phone call to your council member or commissioner after you send the letter, find out when the City Council, County Council or County Commission meets and request a time on the agenda to present information on the situation in Darfur. Please contact mcadena@aiusa.org with any information you receive from your council member or commissioner and/or for additional information, materials, and assistance.

Sample Letter

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing to express my alarm over the appalling situation in Darfur, western Sudan, and to appeal to you to help protect the people of Darfur by introducing a resolution condemning the Government of Sudan's slaughter of innocent civilians, blocking of humanitarian assistance, and support for militia groups.

Over the last year Amnesty International has reported on gross human rights abuses committed by the Sudanese government forces and by the government supported *Janjawid* militia as part of an effort to crush two armed opposition groups. Since then, tens of thousands of men, women and children have been killed and wounded, villages burnt and livestock and goods plundered, mostly by the armed militias supported by the Sudanese government. In addition to the forced displacement of civilians, members of the *Janjawid* have systematically raped women and girls and abducted children and adults. Over 1.2 million civilians from Darfur have been forced to leave their homes. Most have taken shelter within the region, swelling towns or forming vast camps outside the towns. Some 170,000 people have taken refuge in Chad. An unknown number - the UN puts the figure at 30,000 - have died at the hands of the *Janjawid* and Sudanese soldiers, including by indiscriminate or deliberate bombing by military planes, or by diseases which are spreading in overcrowded camps with limited water, food and medicine. Hundreds of people from the Darfur region, including human rights defenders and lawyers, have been detained and some tortured by the Sudanese security services.

I urge you to help end this crisis and pressure the Sudanese Government to protect the lives of the people of Darfur and ensure that their human rights are respected, to facilitate the immediate and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to bring to justice to those responsible for committing human rights abuses. Please introduce the Darfur Hope Resolution and help bring peace and justice to the people of Darfur. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

THE DARFUR HOPE RESOLUTION

Condemning the Government of the Republic of the Sudan for its attacks against innocent civilians in the Darfur region of western Sudan, expressing solidarity for the people of Darfur and urging the international community to protect the human rights of the citizens of Darfur.

Whereas since early 2003 a conflict between forces of the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and rebel forces in the impoverished Darfur region of western Sudan has resulted in attacks by Sudanese Government ground and air forces and allied militia, in particular the *Janjawid* militia against innocent civilians and undefended villages in the region;

Whereas Sudanese Government forces have also engaged in the destruction of food and water sources, and the deliberate and systematic manipulation and denial of humanitarian assistance for the people of the Darfur region, including the creation of obstructions to slow down and complicate the deployment of staff of humanitarian organizations;

Whereas at least 30,000 people have died as a result of the conflict and the ensuing destruction and displacement it has caused;

Whereas rape is systematically used as a weapon of war and many of the grave human rights abuses committed by the *Janjawid* are against women and girls, some as young as 8 years old; other reported abuses include abduction, torture, forced sexual slavery, and the breaking of limbs to prevent escape;

Whereas nongovernmental organizations report that over 44 percent of villages in Darfur have been looted, burnt and abandoned;

Whereas United Nations officials and nongovernmental organizations have indicated that the humanitarian situation in the Darfur region is dire and that at least 350,000 civilians may die even under optimal conditions, that is, even if humanitarian aid and its distribution are immediately and significantly enhanced and expedited;

Whereas if humanitarian aid is not immediately delivered to the people of Darfur, humanitarian agencies estimate that over a million more lives are at risk;

Whereas on December 18, 2003, United Nations Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, declared that the Darfur region was probably 'the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe';

Whereas on February 17, 2004, Amnesty International, one of the few groups that has conducted a fact-finding mission inside Darfur reported that it 'continues to receive details of horrifying attacks against civilians in villages by government warplanes, soldiers and pro-government militia';

Whereas on February 18, 2004, United Nations Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan, Tom Eric Vraalsen, declared following a trip to the Darfur region that 'aid workers are unable to reach the vast majority [of the displaced]';

Whereas Doctors Without Borders, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning medical humanitarian relief organization and one of the few aid groups on the ground in the Darfur region, reported that the region is the scene of 'catastrophic mortality rates';

Whereas the nearly 3,000,000 people affected by the conflict in the Darfur region have remained beyond the reach of aid agencies trying to provide essential humanitarian assistance and United Nations aid agencies estimate that they have been able to reach only 15 percent of people in need and that more than 1.2 million people have been internally displaced in the past year;

Whereas the government of Sudan and the armed opposition groups the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army signed a peace agreement on April 8, 2004 where all parties to the conflict committed themselves to allowing humanitarian assistance to flow freely and without restriction and to cease all acts of aggression;

Whereas there are continued reports of attacks on unarmed civilians by members of the *Janjawid* militia and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are still pouring into IDP camps in Darfur and refugee camps in Chad;

Whereas humanitarian assistance continues to face obstructions and impediments created by the Sudanese government and reports have confirmed that the *Janjawid* continue to commit human rights abuses with impunity;

Whereas human rights and humanitarian missions sent by the United Nations and the World Food Program confirmed that the *Janjawid* militia operate in concert with and with the support of the Sudanese government and strongly condemned the crisis as being Sudanese ethnic cleansing;

Whereas based on the ceasefire agreement, the African Union (AU) is to supply 270 ceasefire monitors, financed by the European Union (EU) with logistical support from the United States. Yet, several weeks after the Agreement, only a small number of the AU ceasefire monitors have been deployed and human rights organizations estimate that at least 15,000 ceasefire monitors are needed to monitor a region the size of France;

Therefore let it be resolved by XXXX

That XXXXX--

(1) expresses solidarity and support for the people of Darfur

(2) strongly condemns the Government of the Republic of the Sudan for its attacks against innocent civilians in the impoverished Darfur region of western Sudan and demands that the Government of Sudan immediately cease these attacks;

(3) calls upon the Government of Sudan to ensure that its internal commission of inquiry have the right to talk to anybody; to compel witnesses to testify, including members of the government, the army and the militias; and to go anywhere, including to internally displaced camps and all prisons and detention centers, and that its scope and mandate include all human rights violations, including those committed by government authorities.

(4) urges the Government of Sudan to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance for the people in the Darfur region; including facilitating the operations of international humanitarian organizations and their staff;

(5) calls on the international community to strongly condemn the Government of Sudan for these attacks and to demand that they cease and calls for the immediate imposition of an arms embargo on both the *Janjawid* and the Government of Sudan;

(6) call upon the African Union, the US Congress, the Bush Administration and the European Union to ensure that a credible ceasefire monitoring initiative with the capacity and resources to monitor the Darfur region is established as quickly as possible to end the ethnic cleansing.

Background

The Sudanese government, pro-government militias and armed opposition groups are all committing grievous human rights abuses in Darfur, Western Sudan. There are reports that the *Janjawid* militia group has killed, tortured, raped, arbitrarily arrested or detained civilians, burnt down houses and villages, stolen and destroyed crops and looted cattle. The Sudanese government has also obstructed access for non-governmental organizations to the Darfur region, including impeding humanitarian and food aid. Over 2.2 million people have been affected by the conflict and 1.2 million people have been displaced. In addition, there have been over 30,000 deaths with over a million more lives at risk.

The Darfur conflict began in February 2003 when two new armed opposition groups – the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) – emerged and attacked government troops. These groups cited the reasons for the attacks as the government's failure to protect settled villagers from attacks by pro-government nomadic groups and economic marginalization of the region. Since then, fighting and human rights abuses have seriously escalated.

The Sudanese government is currently participating in peace talks aimed at ending the 20-year civil war between the government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M). This peace process has attracted a great deal of attention to Sudan; however, a growing crisis in the Darfur region has been ignored.

