

CANBERRA LOBBY TRIP
Wednesday 1st October 2014

Delegation:

Sandra Chestnutt	DAN President & Delegation Leader;
Mohamed Khalil Abaker	DCAA President;
Ayoub Abaker Khater	DAN Board Member;
Eltayib Ali	Darfur Community Member; and
Aisha Idris Mohamed	Darfur Community Member

REPORT

Five [5] Meetings were scheduled for the day with representation from all major parties and DFAT. It was an early start for the delegation and they met prior to the flight 7.30am and agreed discussion points and the overall process.

Little did the delegation know at that point what was on the agenda of Parliament that day, but it was in the first meeting that we became fully aware that Parliament had chosen the day of our visit to vote on changes to the National Security Laws. This impacted on some of our meetings as a number of the MPs the delegation was due to meet were not available as they were obligated to sit and vote in the House.

Meetings:

10:15 am: Australian Labour Party Leader Hon. Bill Shorten: Hon. Matt Thistlewaite M.P. & Michelle Rowland M.P., and the Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Tanya Plibersek: Chris Hayes MP & Melissa Parke MP.

Chris Hayes chaired this meeting; he immediately apologised for the absence of Matt Thistlewaite, Michelle Rowland and Melissa Parke as they were all in the house, and he introduced Lee Heaney representing Matt Thistlewaite & Michelle Rowland, and Kate Anderson representing Michelle Rowland. Mr Hayes welcomed the delegation, and confirmed Labour's support for Darfur. Each of the Darfur members discussed one point of the petition and added their own comments, and a general discussion ensued.

Kate Anderson was called out of the meeting, and a little later a bell was rung, and Mr Hayes asked his Advisor to check if he needed to leave for a vote; it was confirmed he had to go and vote so the meeting was brought to an early close.

11:00 am: Australian Labour Party Julie Owens MP and Member for Parramatta

Ms Owens had just left the House, and was very pleased that the delegation was early for her meeting as her time was very limited that day. Ms Owens supportive of the Darfur crisis and she was well informed. The Delegation completed their presentations, and Ms Owens asked questions and advised that she will approach Tanya Plibersek, Michelle Rowlands and other Labour MPs to support a 'Private Member's Motion'. It was a fruitful meeting.

Later research revealed that Private Member's Motions can be presented at 'Private Members Mondays'.

12 Noon: Australian Liberal Party Harry Guinness, Advisor to Hon. Julie Bishop MP Minister for Foreign Affairs

The delegation met with Ms Bishop's Advisor, and he was very interested in and supportive of the petition. The delegation delivered their presentations, and a general discussion on Darfur ensued. The DCAA President presented the petition and signatures [1240] to Mr Guinness for tabling at the UNSC Sitting in November 2014 when Australia holds the Presidency.

Mr Guinness requested the Delegation to provide feedback on our meeting with DFAT.

Feedback on the meeting held with DFAT has been sent to Mr Guinness, and on Monday 6th October Mr Guinness confirmed [by email] that they have already made arrangements to pass the petition on to DFAT's UNSC team in New York.

1:00 pm: Australian Greens Leader Christine Milne's representatives Emily English - Director of Policy & Felicity Gray - Policy Adviser

Ms English was unavailable for the meeting. The delegation met with Ms Gray and she confirmed the Greens support and she was enthusiastic in her wish to support this petition. Ms Gray suggested that DAN's seeks to have this petition be part of public record, and suggested the petition be tabled as a 'non-conforming petition', and she advised she will speak with Ms Julie Bishop in this regard.

3:00 pm: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT] Jeannie Henderson Director of the East Africa Section, Sally Dawkins and Kenneth Harri Australia UNSC Secretariat

The Delegation delivered their presentations, and this was followed by DFAT providing an excellent briefing:

- UNAMIT mandate has been a concern for a long time as they have not been an effective mission; they are looking to improve the Secretary General's mandate to streamline their focus to: protection of the citizens and humanitarian aid access. At the next review of the mission the UNSC will be looking at the series of reports to gauge progress made. The mandate has been extended until the middle of next year [2015], and at that time the UNSC will look again at how the mission is going.
- The Australian Government has provided \$15 million in humanitarian aid since February 2012, including \$2 million to WFP earlier this year.
- DFAT advised that due to efforts made by the UN the ban has been lifted from ICRC [Red Cross] in September 2014. This was welcome information to the Delegation as the loss of humanitarian aid provided by the ICRC to the citizens of Darfur has been of great concern.
- They are aware of the Government of Sudan's national dialogue, and they continue to urge the Government to peruse that dialogue to establish communications with Khartoum and the State. They welcome Mbeki's initiative for Militia groups supported by the Sudanese Government to be part of this process and to continue talks.

- Australia is a strong supporter of the ICC, and the ICC Prosecutor briefs the UNSC every six [6] months. The Australian Government has spoken out on issues relating to bringing the perpetrators to justice in the UNSC and by privately reminding countries of their obligations.
- They advised they are unable to guarantee our petition would be tabled at the UNSC sitting in November as there are many issues for consideration. But they confirmed they will continue to do a lot of work regarding Darfur, and all the issues raised in DAN's petition were critical issues including the participation by women in all processes, and they confirmed they will continue to push these issues at the UNSC.
- They confirmed they will not have the same access to information as they have enjoyed over the past 2 years but they will continue to receive information through Human Rights Watch.