



Darfur Crisis

The conflict in Darfur began in July 2003 and has resulted in the deaths of more than 450,000 people and the displacement of nearly 2.5 million people.¹ There are currently 3.5 million people dependent upon limited international humanitarian assistance. The violence in Darfur has been labelled genocide by the US government and the United Nations states that Darfur is on the brink of disaster with plans for a new offensive by the government of Sudan and the recent escalation of violence. In the past two months 12 humanitarian aid workers have been killed in Darfur and aid organisations have been forced to pull out of IDP camps and areas where fresh violence is now occurring.²

The conflict is between the *Janjaweed*, a militia group recruited from Arab tribes backed by the Sudanese Government and the Indigenous African tribes of Darfur; mainly from the Fur, Zaghawa and Massaleit ethnic groups. While the causes of the crisis in Darfur are complex and multifaceted, ultimately the conflict has been ignited and sustained by the Sudan Government's abuse of power and wealth and its determination to divide and rule the various ethnic groups in Darfur. The Government of Sudan armed the Arab *Janjaweed* in 2003 and continues to provide them support and aerial firepower, with the intent of displacing the Darfuri people from their land. This is despite the Government of Sudan paying lip-service to the international communities' demands they act to protect the citizens of Darfur.

The most vital issue in addressing this crisis is ensuring the immediate protection of the Darfuri people from violence and man-made humanitarian disaster. To achieve lasting peace, immediate protection must be backed by the more equitable distribution of power and wealth in Sudan, so that the marginalisation of Darfur from Sudanese wealth and power does not continue to lay seedbed to resistance movements and brutal retaliation.

Darfur Australia Network

The Darfur Australia Network (DAN) is a recently formed organisation aiming to raise awareness about the continuing tragedy in the Darfur region of Sudan and build solidarity between the Australian people and the people of Darfur. DAN is an incorporated not-for-profit community association with thirty members and is a cooperative organisation between the newly arrived Darfur community in Australia and concerned volunteers.

DAN is committed to advocating the 'responsibility to protect' principle. The right to protection from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity has been formally enshrined in international law since the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1674 on the 28th of April, 2006. Darfur is the first test case of the international community's commitment to this principle and we aim to add weight to escalating global pressure to ensure the international community (including Australia) does not fail to discharge its responsibilities.

¹ Eric Reeves notes aggregate data suggests the death toll significantly exceeds 450,000 people. See Eric Reeves, *Quantifying Genocide*, 28 April 2006. Available from <http://www.sudanreeves.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=102&theme=Printer>

² United Nations, *Sudan Humanitarian Overview*. Volume 2, Issue 8, September 2006, p. 3.

Objectives of DAN

DAN's main objectives are to raise awareness about the current crisis in Darfur and to advocate for appropriate public policy responses in Australia to protect the people of Darfur from ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Awareness Raising

1. To raise awareness in Australia about the complex crisis in Darfur;
2. To bring together a broad cross-section of concerned people in Australia in a show of solidarity and support for the 3 million plus people affected by the crisis in Darfur;
3. To promote the Darfur crisis onto the media agenda.

Advocacy

4. To provide concerned people in Australia with a range of actions to be taken to pressure governments and the international community to take immediate and effective action;
5. To demand governmental action to protect the people of Darfur from ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity through diplomacy and technical/financial assistance to the United Nations, as well as continued provision of humanitarian assistance;
6. To promote the Darfur crisis onto the political agenda.

Advocacy messages

DAN advocates that in conjunction with humanitarian aid support the Australian government should address the Darfur crisis immediately and in the long-term through;

Immediate Action

1. Assist the African Union in immediately strengthening AMIS by providing resources, logistical support and technical expertise so it can better carry out its current mandate;
2. Demonstrate public support for UN plans initiated under Security Council Resolution 1679 and 1706 for the deployment of a robust UN force with a clear Chapter VII mandate through pledging funding support for the transition as well as technical assistance and/or troop contributions;
3. Use ties with allies of the government of Sudan, primarily China, to increase high level diplomacy to pressure and persuade the Sudanese government to accept a UN peacekeeping mission;
4. Support 'third-way' approaches to pressuring the Government of Sudan to accept a UN peacekeeping mission including sanctions and the enforcement of a no-fly zone over Darfur;
5. Undertake a commitment to accept and resettle a greater number of Darfuri refugees in Australia through the offshore resettlement program

Transitional phase

6. Use diplomatic ties with allies of the government of Sudan, particularly China, to push for the re-negotiation of the Darfur Peace Agreement to involve all rebel groups and the Government of Sudan and include provisions for a mandatory UN peacekeeping mission, pluralist governance arrangements in Darfur and greater clarity over wealth-sharing and power-sharing arrangements;
7. Provide direct funding and technical assistance to the UN peacekeeping mission upon transition from the African Union.

These advocacy messages will evolve as new developments in Darfur come to light and in response to any changes in Australian government policy.

Darfur Australia Network

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