



darfur australia network

About DAN

The Darfur Australia Network (DAN) is a not-for-profit community organization run by members of Australia's emerging Darfuri Sudanese communities and concerned volunteers.

DAN was founded in May 2006 in Melbourne and in March 2007 a Sydney office was opened. Today, DAN has become Australia's most prominent advocacy organization speaking out about the conflict in Darfur.

Working in partnership with the Darfuri Sudanese communities of Melbourne and Sydney, DAN's main objectives are to raise awareness about the conflict in Darfur and to advocate for appropriate public policy responses to this urgent humanitarian and political crisis.

DARFUR AUSTRALIA NETWORK NEWSLETTER (2)

JANUARY – JULY 2010

CONTENTS

- Vision and Mission
- Program Coordinator's Report
- Situation Update
- Hearing into Australian relations with Africa
 - Alpha Lisimba's Speech
- Justice and Darfur
- Poem by Yahya Abdelkarim



VISION

DAN's vision is for sustainable peace, justice and reconciliation in Darfur, and the protection of those affected by the conflict, regardless of circumstance, from human rights abuse.

MISSION

DAN is committed to working in partnership with various groups and individuals in Australia to advocate for the implementation of the "Responsibility to Protect" principle and a meaningful peace negotiation in the region. By raising awareness of the crisis in Darfur amongst the broader Australian community and media, DAN seeks to advocate to the Australian Government and other international actors for responsible and appropriate responses to the crisis in Darfur. DAN further aims to assist in the protection of Darfuri people from human rights abuse by helping to resettle refugees displaced by the conflict in Australia.





PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Over the past six months, the Darfur Australian Network has accomplished some wonderful initiatives, supported members as they take on exciting career opportunities, and strategised on the Network's future and ambitions.

DAN has been involved in an education and community engagement initiative, through funding from the Department for Planning and Community Development's "Victorian Communities Support Grant". The "Communities in Need - Educating Our Future" program has led to the production of a half-hour DVD, the hosting of several community engagement activities, and will still produce an Education Program and Kit. The DVD, "Peace is Possible in Darfur", documents the everyday lives of the Victorian Darfur community and the work of DAN. The DVD is available at the DAN Melbourne office. The Education Program is currently being developed, and includes the production of teaching materials for schools and universities. It aims to aid discussion and understanding of the experiences of the Darfuri community.

DAN and the Victorian Darfur Community were involved in several enjoyable activities through this government grant. "Celebration of Women" was an initiative of fortnightly cooking classes for the Darfuri women that had very positive feedback. Children's arts, crafts and dance workshops were held, with hip-hop lessons being a significant highlight and crowd favourite. The culmination of community activities took place on Sunday 14th March through the Community Arts & Dialogue event, held at the Fitzroy Town Hall. Community drumming, dance and cooking skills were showcased, the activities of DAN were celebrated, and discussion and dialogue between Sudanese communities in Victoria was promoted. A panel discussion was held, entitled "Sudan at the Cross Roads: Perspectives from the Victorian Diaspora". This featured representatives from a variety of Sudanese communities in Victoria.

On 5th May, DAN was called to give evidence in Melbourne to the Parliamentary inquiry into Australia's relationship with Africa. This was an unprecedented opportunity for DAN to raise the profile of the Darfur crisis at government level and to make recommendations about what the government should be doing with regards to peacekeeping support, development and humanitarian assistance, and international diplomacy. Well done to Mel and Alpha for putting DAN's submission for the inquiry together! Alpha's speech is included in this newsletter.

DAN recently held strategic planning sessions to take stock of DAN's progress to-date, to reflect on the direction and core goals of the Network, and to discuss the future direction of the organisation. The changing situation in Darfur and the Australian context have been taken into consideration during this planning. Exciting changes should take place over the next few months and we will be sure to keep you updated.

During the past several months, DAN has said farewell to five dedicated and cherished members. Tess Whittakers has taken up a placement in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in Canberra. Laura Spano has undertaken an internship with the United Nations in New York. Bronwyn Tilbury was posted to Fiji on an AYAD assignment. Heidi Ernst was posted to Cambodia on an AYAD assignment. Melissa McCullough has left the Sydney



office to also work in Cambodia. DAN would like to congratulate Tess, Laura, Bronwyn, Heidi and Melissa on their exciting appointments and to thank them for their outstanding contributions to DAN!

We would like to introduce “new” appointments within the DAN office. These include Ann Tran, the new Volunteer Coordinator; Brendan Hennessy, the new Communications Coordinator; and Joe Vecci, the new Research Coordinator. Nicolette Solomon has recently taken up the position of Program Coordinator.

As we enter the second half of 2010, we look forward to positive developments within Darfur and within DAN. We hope that justice will be attained, that the human rights of the Darfuri people are realised, and that this Network will keep working tirelessly to achieve its advocacy goals and support of the people of Darfur.

I look forward to meeting and working with you in the near future,
Nicky

Nicolette Solomon
Program Coordinator
Darfur Australian Network
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“Celebration of Women” Cooking Classes

Our fortnightly cooking classes for the Darfuri women





SITUATION UPDATE

ELECTION

In April, Sudan's first multiparty nationwide elections in 24 years were held. Omar al Bashir was re-elected as President. His re-election is a devastating blow to those who have fought for peace in Darfur.

This illegitimate result comes from an election that was marred by stories of intimidation and fraud. The election was extended to five days after the first day of voting saw missing ballot boxes, poorly trained staff and confusion over the location of voting centres. Activists from the youth opposition group, Girifna, also claimed they were arrested and beaten in Khartoum during the election period.

The Carter Centre, the only international monitors in the election, stated that "the continuing state of emergency, repression of civil liberties, and ongoing conflict in Darfur did not permit an environment conducive to acceptable elections. Given the limited participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur in the census and voter registration, much of the population was left out of the process". While the elections were playing out, conflict in Darfur continued.

Fighting has not abated in Darfur in the months following the election, and May 2010 was recognised by UN officials as the bloodiest month in Darfur in two years.

GENOCIDE ARREST WARRANT ISSUED FOR AL BASHIR

In July, the International Criminal Court issued a second arrest warrant for President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, for the crime of genocide.

Bashir also faces arrest warrants from March 2009 for war crimes and crimes against humanity. He has dismissed claims by the court that he is responsible for crimes in the Darfur region leading to the death of 300,000 people and a campaign of "rape, hunger and fear" against a further 2.5 million people in refugee camps. He says these claims are part of a Western conspiracy.

The ICC has no police force and depends on national authorities and states that have signed up to the court to make arrests. Bashir has visited several countries not bound by the court's rules since the warrant was issued.

However, in July, soon after the arrest warrant was issued, he visited Chad to attend the Sahel-Saharan states summit. Chad is a full member of the ICC and so is expected to be bound by the court's rules. Chad refused to arrest Bashir, claiming that it was under no obligation to do so. It also claimed that Bashir is a sitting president and there has never been a case of a sitting president arrested on his/her travels by the host country.

African countries remain divided about whether they should arrest the Sudanese president.

Source: Reuters



HEARING INTO AUSTRALIAN RELATION WITH AFRICA

The Darfur Australia Network attended an inquiry into Australia's relations with Africa.

The public hearing was chaired by The Joint Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee and was attended by Monash University, CSIRO, World Vision Australia and Oxfam Australia.

Alpha Lisimba's Speech:

"Thank you. I was assigned by my colleagues to speak on behalf of them. I have to say thank you to the committee and especially to Senator Forshaw for giving us this opportunity to share our experience of Africa-Australia relations. We commend the Australian government's commitment to broaden and deepen its engagement with Africa and hope that this commitment will be sustained over the long term. We also welcome the Australian government's commitment to increase its official development assistance to Africa from \$101 million in 2007-08 to \$163.9 million in 2009-10 and its focus on assisting African countries to achieve their millennium development goals.

Australian foreign policy, as well as trade, aid and defense policies have traditionally been centered on Australia's close geographical neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region, with the belief that focusing Australia's resources in the Asia-Pacific best serves Australia's strategic, security and national interests. This outlook has placed the African continent on the periphery of Australian policymakers' concerns. However, over the past decades the Australian government has shown promising signs, through consolidating diplomatic relations with most African states, in particular with the states in which Australian companies are doing business.

Increasing Australia's assistance to sustainable development and poverty reduction in Africa is of great benefit to Australia's business and national interests, as it will grant companies more confidence in seeking business contracts and investment opportunities in Africa. However, as Australia and other global powers such as China continue to increase their investments in Africa, Australia should continue to ensure that good governance practices such as accountability and transparency are promoted hand-in-hand with this influx of international business to Africa.

In early 2003 the Darfur conflict began. This conflict is characterised by the worst impacts of war. It includes armed conflict, extreme violence, rape attacks, looting and burning of villages and homes, and a major displacement of refugees.



A United Nations report estimates that over 400,000 people have been killed in Darfur and 4.7 million have been displaced. They are now living as internally displaced people inside Sudan or as refugees outside Sudan. In July 2007 the UN Security Council passed resolution 1769, authorising the deployment of the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur, or UNAMID. After specific requests from the United Nations, the government of Australia has contributed to UNAMID, a good signal that the Australian government is taking the situation in Darfur seriously. The Darfur communities of Australia acknowledge and thank the Australian government for contributing to UNAMID and for granting Darfuris protection and a new home in Australia through its humanitarian refugee programs.

Today we make the following recommendations to the committee. We encourage the Australian government to recognise the skills and insight of African expatriates in Australia and to harness their ability to contribute both to African studies in this country and to capacity building abroad. In particular, we recommend investing in a government funded work program enabling African expatriates, and particularly those from Darfur and southern Sudan, to return to their country of origin and participate in capacity building projects, insofar as the security situation allows.

We encourage the Australian government to commit to increasing its intake through the humanitarian resettlement program—currently 13,500 places—to 20,000 over five years, as per the recommendation of the Refugee Council of Australia in its February 2010 report. We urge the Australian government to continue prioritising applications for asylum from Darfur.

We ask that there be greater transparency for AusAID's spending in Africa to allow advocacy organisations such as the Darfur Australia Network to more effectively lobby government and agencies. We recommend that Australia continues to work in partnership with reputable humanitarian organisations that remain in Darfur, and streamline Australia's assistance to complement these existing projects. We recommend that the Australian government encourage and help African states to adopt good governance and anticorruption policies in cooperation with Australian businesses operating in Africa. We encourage the Australian government to continue to proactively investigate ways of contributing to the effectiveness of the UNAMID force in Darfur, and attempt to solve impediments imposed by the Sudanese Government.

Finally, I would like to introduce to you our organisation—the Darfur Australia Network. The Darfur Australia Network is a community organisation run by members of Australia's emerging Darfur community and concerned volunteers from the broader Australian public. DAN's vision is for sustainable peace, justice and reconciliation in Darfur, and the protection of those affected by the conflict, regardless of circumstance, from human rights abuse.

Thank you.



JUSTICE AND DARFUR:

Pascal Bourgeois

While the most recent world attention that has been focused on the Darfur region has surrounded the last decade or so of violence that has marred the recent history of Sudan, laying sole focus on this time period ignores the source of the problem in this region. The establishment of a sustainable peace in the Darfur region and Greater Sudan requires the world to focus on a broader understanding of the cycle of perpetuated violence that has marred this region.

Since Sudan was jointly administered as a condominium of the United Kingdom and Egypt, different identities and perceptions of justice and injustice were established in the region. Understanding the origins of these differences in the colonial experience is equally as important to understanding the situation in Darfur as it was in understanding the differences between Hutus and Tutsis during the conflict in Rwanda.

A lasting peace in Darfur can only be a positive peace. This means that peace which is simply defined as an absence of violence will not suffice, and what is instead needed is an atmosphere of reconciliation. Before a new atmosphere which fosters cooperation amongst the Arab population of the North and the Black African population of the south could ever be considered, it is key to end the violence in the region and give a sense of finality to the people.

For these reasons, the arrest warrant issued against Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court is critical; for it represents a fundamental opportunity at working towards an objective that could ultimately lead to a sustainable peace: a sense of justice for those in Darfur.

Recent studies in criminal law suggest that most victims would appreciate a sincere apology and sense of closure far more than some more hostile retributive, denunciatory or vengeful acts. In the face of crimes against humanity, a criminal prosecution and condemnation of a head of state for crimes against humanity would provide the people of



Sudan with a sense of relief while also sending a new message to the international community surrounding state and leadership responsibility. The crimes against humanity committed in Darfur were not only committed against the people of Sudan (though they tragically absorbed most of the losses), but against the international community as a whole, since they represent the most heinous of all crimes. At least, that is the way the modern regime under the ICC is meant to operate.

“The most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole must not go unpunished,” recalls the preamble of The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court reflecting the long espoused principle of obligations *erga omnes* in international law: obligations owed by states towards the community of states as a whole, including crimes against humanity such as genocide. This principle established in the *Barcelona Traction Case* of 1970 in essence held that certain violations of international law were so heinous that they represented crimes against the community of states as a whole, rather than which violate this principle, allowing any legal body in the world to hold a perpetrator responsible for their violations.

Since the trials at Nuremberg ushered in a new regime of international law that held individuals responsible for state crimes, notions of justice for crimes against humanity have been associated with holding the executors of these wrongs accountable. This form of supposedly retributive justice is often seen as a necessity for future reconciliation and was reflected in the establishment of tribunals such as the ICTY and ICTR. Under the regime of the ICC and its complementary jurisdiction, Sudan’s cooperation in the matter will be seriously hampered as Omar Al-Bashir continues as President. Likewise, a failure to effectuate its warrant will reflect poorly on the court, if it has not already. But key to the end of this conflict is action that gives satisfaction to its victims and their perceived senses of injustices that have perpetuated not only since the violence of the last ten years or so, but since the colonial period, *vis-à-vis* the Sudanese state.



POEM

Today I missed my train by 10 seconds.

I have to wait 20 minutes to catch the next one

That is why I got upset and grabbed a paper and held a pen

To write something in order to relieve my anxiety

If you want to know how time is expensive just miss a train

If you want to know how a friend is valuable just miss one

If you want to know how a partner is vital just ask a divorced one

If you want to know how a mother is precious just ask an orphan

If you want to know how freedom is essential just ask a prisoner

If you want to know how democracy is significant just ask a victim of war

If you want to know how family is crucial just ask a migrant

Written by Yahya Abdelkarim



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**DAN would like to thank
all the volunteers,
community members,
partners, supporters &
those who make the
work of this organisation
possible...we couldn't
do it without you!**