



## **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**

**October to December 2011**

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## DAN DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Since taking up the position of DAN Director in the end of October I learnt a great deal more of this fascinating country of Sudan and the western region of Darfur from books and reports given to me by my predecessor. My greatest impressions though were formed when meeting with Darfur community members in Melbourne and Sydney. In their quiet demeanour they expressed their appreciation for their adopted country, Australia, but also their overwhelming desire to stop the ongoing crisis in Darfur and prevent further acts of genocide that have ravaged Darfuri people for nearly a decade. They have lost family, friends, villages and possessions in horrific attacks. Most of them escaping to live in Sudan's neighbouring countries before making the long journey to Australia with only the clothes on their back. The Poem we have referred to in this newsletter from Yahya Abdelkarim is like a loudspeaker amplifying the concerns and cries of the people of Darfur. Please take the time to read it. We congratulate Yahya Abdelkarim, a committed and active DAN board member, for being commended as a prize entrant in the Freedom to Create Artist Awards in South Africa in November.

DAN has recently approved its three year Strategic Plan (2011-2014). After much consultation this document will be our guide to steer the organisation into the next three years to work towards its vision *for sustainable peace, justification and reconciliation in Darfur and those affected by the conflict, regardless of the circumstances, from human rights abuse.*

Since our last newsletter, there have been a number of activities mentioned in our situation update below. We would like to thank all that attended our film screening of the **Last Survivor** in Melbourne in June. The evening was a great success and we would especially like to thank our wonderful volunteers who assisted on the evening! The Darfur crisis and DAN received a lot of publicity due to the event, with Yahya being invited on 4 radio programs to talk about his experience as a refugee.

In September and October we continued with presentations to schools ably presented by our Dafuri community representatives. Also in October DAN organised a peace building workshop which was led by Jill Jameson. We thank her for volunteering her time to conduct this workshop which received strong positive feedback from participants. In October we also engaged members of the Darfur community in the Ondru's Voiceless Journey's project. Please read more activities in the last quarter and other details below.

As I was ushered into this role, we bade farewell to the outgoing Director, Sherona Parkinson. Sherona ably led DAN since May 2011. She left with much sadness as she had grown to love the Dafuri people in Australia and worked with DAN to help get message out to government and Australian public on the Dafuri crisis. Sherona has accepted a position to work in Afghanistan and we wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

I look forward to this exciting new role and to work with the DAN members and Dafuri community to ensure the crisis in Dafuri which has not ceased in nearly a decade, gets the voice it deserves.

We also wish all our readers and supporters wonderful and peaceful New Year!

Regards  
Luse Kinivuwai  
Director, Darfur Australia Network



## SITUATION UPDATE

In a recent report *Darfur No Peace in Sight A comparison of conflict indicators in 2010 and 2011* by Crisis Action advises that Darfur remains in a state of conflict and humanitarian crisis. The report summary of indicators are as follows:

- Conflict-related deaths are ongoing, with 306 deaths recorded from January to June 2011
- New displacements continue to significantly outnumber returns
- Aerial bombing in Darfur still targets civilians: 40,000 civilians were displaced by bombing raids in North Darfur in February 2011 alone
- Humanitarian access by International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) and UN agencies is significantly restricted, and government authorities continue to regularly threaten to expel humanitarian agencies. INGO and UN agency staff also face serious security concerns, including kidnappings and carjackings
- UNAMID peacekeepers and civilian staff continue to be attacked and arrested – 30
- Human rights violations continue: 97 incidents were reported from April to June 2011
- UN reporting on the humanitarian and human rights conditions in Darfur continues to be inadequate.

Further reports from in November from Radio Dabanga has reported on the lack of food in Marshinq camp in South Darfur and have led them to move to surrounding cities due to lack of food rations. Apparently the situation has not improved and has been there for the last two months.

“The situation is catastrophic. In case the food doesn’t reach us in the next couple of weeks, many children, pregnant women and disabled people will risk death,” he said.

A resident of the camp told Radio Dabanga that lack of food rations from the World Food Program (WFP) has affected nearly 20,000 refugees from 11 camps around the area.

The events of the independence in the South have somewhat overshadowed much of the reported violence and abuse. In recent weeks there has been escalated violence in Northern Sudan and the newly independent South along the Blue Nile and South Kordofan. These are border states between the two countries.

The much contested area on the border between South Sudan and Sudan has resulted in much fighting with both parties accusing of supporting rebels on each side. The much disputed area of Jau has been claimed by the Sudan Army (SAF). South Sudan has however announced that it would use force to retake this area. Both parties continue to seek the favour of the international community which it itself is either unwilling or unable to comprehend the dire situation escalating in this border. There are fears that it may break into war between the two countries. However some commentators have advised that it has already begun.

While the North and South situation escalates the continuing humanitarian crisis continues unabated in Darfur.



In some attempt to address the situation and bring all parties together a workshop on "the State and Direction of the Darfur Peace Process" was organized by the US Institute of Peace on 15-16 November in Washington DC. Despite the Khartoum government reportedly boycotting the meet, it proceeded with members of rebel groups in Sudan, the US envoy for Sudan, Ambassador Dane F. Smith, U.S. Senior Advisor for Darfur, as well as international envoys to Sudan and regional and international organisation involved in the peace process. The rebel groups advised the meeting that they represented all the members of a new alliance of Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan and advised of their preference for a holistic approach saying it is important to negotiate the problems of the whole Sudan in terms of governance, power and wealth sharing. The United Nations said it would put out a new road map for peace in Darfur based on the conclusions of this meeting and what is discussed in El Geneina last October by international envoys as well as consultations with the African Union.

.In a continuing show of cooperation between the rebel groups, on December 4th the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese Liberation Movement for Justice (SLMJ) signed an agreement for an alliance between them. The document was signed by SLMJ leader Dr. Musa Taj Din Hassan and JEM Vice-President Ahmed Adam Bakhit.

On December 21st 2011, Khalil Ibrahim who led the Justice and Equality Movement, or JEM, the most organised and effective military force in Darfur died during a military offensive in North Kordofan state, which borders Darfur.

The group did not join a peace deal signed last year in Doha, Qatar, between other Darfur rebel groups and the Sudanese government.

The death of Kalil Ibrahim would be a serious blow to JEM.

How these events will translate into a definite action to bring an end to the crisis in Darfur and eventual peace is yet to be seen and requires close monitoring in the coming months.

## POEM FOR FREEDOM

We are pleased that Yahya Abdelkarim, a committed DAN Board member and former refugee who fled Sudan to Australia in 2007, was commended as a prize entrant in the Freedom to Create Artist Awards and his poem was displayed at an exhibition in Cape Town in November 2011.

Yahya's poem is a simple statement about aspects of life that many of us take for granted. He hopes to convey the importance of freedom and democracy, not just through idealistic rhetoric but rather in terms of the true cost of living without them.

He constantly strives to raise awareness about the conflict in Darfur. His work has helped to bring the Darfur conflict into the mainstream media in Australia, and he continues to lobby the government on key Sudanese issues.

For reference to this poem please refer to link <http://www.freedomtcreate.com/yahya-abdelkarim>



## DAN UPDATES

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### Photo shoot with Ondru

On Sunday the 23rd of October, members of the Darfur community participated in Ondru's Voiceless Journey's project. Ondru is a rising movement of arts and literature and approached DAN and the Darfur community to be involved in this project that seeks to celebrate the diversity and strength of the people of Melbourne.

The shoot was a great success and the photos taken on the day will be exhibited later in the year.

Please go to the website below <http://www.ondru.org/projects/voiceless-journeys> to find out more information about the exhibition and how you can support this worthwhile project.

### Speaking in Schools

Presentations were made in three schools in September and October this year. Two were in Melbourne and one in Sydney. The feedback from the schools has been excellent and we would like to say a very big thank you to Abdelhadi Matar Idris Tarrh and Meagan Rourke for taking the time to go and speak with the students at these schools.

By hearing an individual's experience of the situation in Darfur we hope to personalise the conflict and enable the wider community to realise that genocide and violence does not just happen to the other, it happens to people, just like us and we should all unite to end all forms of systemic violence.

For information on getting a speaker to your school or university please contact: [contact@darfuraustralia.org](mailto:contact@darfuraustralia.org)



**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!**



## Peace building workshop with Jill Jameson

Jill Jameson, who has been leading conflict transformation workshops for the past 15 years, was kind enough to volunteer her time to DAN to run an informal workshop on peace building for the Darfur community in Melbourne. The workshop was the first of many we hope to provide to the community, in helping to understand the dynamics of conflict and sharing ways to promote cooperation and understanding. The workshop focused on the empowerment of community members and we hope to continue this workshop series in 2012.



## Donation of computers to Darfur community

In December DAN was pleased to be able to donate four computers to the Darfur community which will be distributed by Jewish Aid.

Members of the Melbourne Darfur community collected the computers from the DAN office to transport to Jewish Aid for distribution.





## DAN Acknowledgements

DAN thanks you for your support to our work in advocacy on the crisis in Darfur and community engagement with the Australian Darfuri community. We would especially like to thank Christine Grant, as well as the kind people at Lily Loves Pearl, Victorian Drama League, Red Stitch Theatre, Fully Stoked Clothing, Essential Personal Training, Organic Trading and Alter Eco Pacific for their generous donations for our “Last Survivor” raffle.

We know many of you care about the people and situation in Darfur and the Darfuri community Australia, and you are not satisfied with just reading updates about Darfur in the news. If that’s you and you want to make a difference this year, you can make a money donation <http://darfuraustralia.org/action/appeal> or contact us at [contact@darfuraustralia.org](mailto:contact@darfuraustralia.org). Visit <http://darfuraustralia.org/action/merchandise> for our latest products.

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