



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

January to April 2012

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DAN DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The last few months has not seen much change in Darfur's conflict situation. Violence continues to ravage parts of Darfur and unfortunately all too often within in the IDP camps holding hundreds of thousands of Darfur's displaced people. The recent decision by the UN to reduce the peacekeeping forces in Darfur due to "improvements in security along the Chad-Darfur border and far northern Darfur following rapprochements between Sudan and Chad and between Sudan and Libya" has received mixed reactions within the Darfur community. Many fearing that violence may worsen and some agreeing that they should leave after being very sceptical of their presence in the war torn country. This decision is however not surprising with the escalating violence with the North and South Sudan, much of the media attention and international community focus has been redirected to this war.

Many hundreds of miles away here in Australia, we capture these reports and updates as much as we can, in the best way possible we attempt to inform the public and government of these findings. The Darfur community are always keen to accept any opportunity to get their message across to key stakeholders of this crisis and this was seen in February when Ms Fatou Bensouda the Deputy Prosecutor and President elect of the ICC was a guest speaker at the School of Law at the Melbourne University on Friday 17th February where she presented "Rome Statute 10 years on: Where to from here for the ICC?". The community presented her with an Action for Darfur petition which she graciously accepted. It was a moment for the Darfur community to share and speak to the President elect of an international justice system that could see those responsible for the bloody conflict in their country face the brunt of the law. Two months later we hear of the Charles Taylor case and conviction, it was a moment of hope for the Darfur community. You will find the responses of the Darfur community in Page 8 of the newsletter.

In the first four months of the year we were pleased to be able to make two visits to Sydney. One visit was to hold a DAN Strategic Plan briefing with the community leaders in January and then a Peace building workshop in April. Each meeting provided an opportunity to discuss our future plans in general and later in the workshop really discuss peace building individually, as a community and then desire for Peace in Darfur. The workshop was attended by both men and women of the community. We hope to make another follow up training in July and one in Melbourne.

In the last month we have welcomed two new Board members David Selby Smith and Kristy Hornby. The two come with years of experience in finance, administration and executive management. DAN is excited about the value that they bring to the organisation. We have also been fortunate to recruit several volunteers to help with the administrative and advocacy work within the DAN office. Volunteers are the lifeline of this organisation and the organisation cannot work without them. You will find on page 5 our request for more volunteers.

Within the next few months DAN has plans to revamp and renew our website, and build up some momentum for the organisation through a public event. Details of this and more exciting plans will be released later. We hope you enjoy reading our newsletter this quarter.

Luse Kinivuwai
Director, Darfur Australia Network



SITUATION UPDATE

In the weekly HAND Darfur Monitor April reports that there are continuing signs of a humanitarian disaster and potential famine in the IDP camps in Darfur. Much of the problems have arisen from the problems of the registration of the World Food Program (WFP) system that has left many without regular monthly rations.

The IDP camps have also continued to face issues Meningitis outbreak (Zalingei camp). Kalma Camp is facing malnutrition related diseases and water shortages and in the recent heavy rains 1750 homes were destroyed in the Milih Camp for Sudanese refugees in Chad.

Ongoing violence and attacks by armed forces in Darfur are continuing. A Sudanese fighter jet reportedly dropped five bombs in Mukjar locality, Central Darfur. According to villagers, there were no fatalities or injuries. Apparently the strikes caused severe panic in Artala village, 400 meters from the place the bombs hit.

They said an Antonov plane circled the area first before striking just outside the village.

Ongoing reports of rape of have also angered by the displaced women in camps across Darfur who blame the carried out by militias loyal to the Sudanese government. Girls and women are repeatedly attacked when they venture out of the camps to collect firewood or water needed for daily life. Young girls are particularly targeted whether alone or traveling in groups.

The Sudan Liberation Movement led by Minni Minawi (SLM-MM) said it took control of an army base in Um Dafouh in South Darfur and took control of other surrounding areas in the region. The attack with allegedly counter attacks by the government urged UNAMID to call on the parties to discard the logic of war and to join the peace process for the sake of the long-suffering of the people of Darfur.

The Khartoum-based Darfur civil society mechanism and UNAMID in coordination with the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) and the Khartoum State Government held a second workshop on dissemination of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). The workshop was attended by 116 Darfuris, including parliamentarians, representatives of political parties, native administration, youth and women unions and Darfuri bar association. Speakers at the workshop focused on power and wealth-sharing, basic human rights, land, reconciliation, security arrangements and implementation modalities. Many responded positively to the workshop.

UNAMID continued with its community engagement with the population implementing its education project. They advised that they also had a role to play in helping the populations recover from the consequences of war and to ensure their growth and development, not only to protect civilians.



In April the UN announced after a review of peacekeepers in Darfur, that it has recommended that there be a cut of more than 3,200 troops and nearly 800 police because security has improved in some parts of Darfur. Reactions in Darfur and Sudan have been mixed.

Around 700 South Sudanese police officers will begin withdrawing from the disputed border area of Abyei on Monday following last week's UN Security Council resolution and the African Union's road map.

Meanwhile in an unprecedented move president Bashir's declared a state of emergency along the border with South Sudan and his vice president ordered to shoot anyone delivering humanitarian to the area. The Sudanese opposition parties have rejected the call as it goes against international conventions on human rights ratified by Sudan, as well as being destructive to the relationship between the two countries.

The parties have called on the international community to intervene to protect civilians subject to arbitrary killing and arrest outside of the law.

DAN Volunteer Positions Available

Volunteer with DAN in 2012-2013

DAN has a range of exciting volunteering opportunities available from administration and events to fundraising activities, communications and advocacy. You can visit our website or email volunteer@darfuraustralia.org for more information. We look forward to hearing from you!

Thank you for your continued interest and support!





DAN UPDATES

Community Meeting and Strategic Plan, Sydney

On Sunday the 23rd of January members of the Darfur community leaders in Sydney attended a Strategic Planning briefing in Seven Hills. The meeting was attended by Board members and a community members from Melbourne. The meeting was a great success in discussing the way forward and hearing the views of the Sydney community on their plans for the future.

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 in Sydney

In April we conducted a Peace Building workshop with the Sydney community. Thirty men and women attended the workshop which provided an opportunity to discuss peace building in particular communication skills needed to be a peace builder.

We hope to follow up with another Sydney workshop in July and one on Melbourne. The follow up workshop will be focus on the dynamics of conflict and sharing ways to promote cooperation and understanding.





Action for Darfur Petition to the ICC

DAN together with the members and supporters of the Darfur community in Australia presented an Action for Darfur petition to the Ms Fatou Bensouda the Deputy Prosecutor and President elect of the ICC at the School of Law at the Melbourne University on Friday 17th February. The Petition requested the ICC to look into the case of Darfur. Investigations from 2005 by the ICC have led to the charges and warrants of arrest against four individuals who continue to serve with the government in North Sudan. They have been charged for their crimes against humanity, murder and other war crimes in Darfur. The four however continue to serve in the government and travel in and out of countries which have ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. More details about the petition can be found on our website <http://www.darfuraustralia.org/>



Members of the Darfur Community in Melbourne with Ms Bensouda.

News in brief

- DAN has two new Board members David Selby Smith and Kristy Hornby. The two come with years of experience and experience in finance, administration and executive management. A new Board member in Sydney will be introduced soon.
- DAN recruited three new volunteers this year, Anamaria Krunes (Communications), Rosie Akauola (Volunteer Coordinator), and Nuha Ismail (Community Coordinator). We welcome the three new volunteers to DAN.
- DAN developed a Child Protection Policy. This was approved in the April Board meeting.
- DAN is looking for new volunteers for website design and other positions. Details in the advertisement on page 5.
- Do you need a speaker to speak about the conflict in Darfur? Information on getting a speaker to your school or university please contact: contact@darfuraustralia.org.
- Want to be updated in the Darfur conflict and read interesting news and reports?

Like our Facebook page
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Darfur-Australia-Network-DAN/206700009341067>



Darfur community in Australia react to the Charles Taylor conviction

The conviction in The Hague of Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia in April has not gone unnoticed with the Darfur community in Australia. Many expressed satisfaction that justice has been served.

"This is justice for the people of Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor rightly deserves this for his crimes against humanity" said the Darfur community leader in Melbourne, Idris Tarrh. Idris who fled the violence from Darfur 10 years ago now lives with his family in Melbourne.

"It's a great step forward for international law, and a real warning to other dictators who think it's okay to kill their own people.....Omar Al Bashir could be next" Musa Mohammed a community leader in Sydney said. "While I'm concerned the main counts did not stick, it's still a very good result'

About 3,000 Darfuris live in Australia, having fled here under the refugee and humanitarian resettlement program, many fleeing the violence to border countries before being accepted in Australia.

From 2007 to 2011 four top officials in Sudan's current government including the President, Omar Hassan Al Bashir have been indicted and warrants out for their arrest by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Some Darfuris expressed frustration at the length of time it has taken for arrests. "I believe Al Bashir crimes are just as bad as or worse than Taylors", said Abdelhadi Matar of Melbourne 'I believe he could have been convicted by now if there weren't any political influence by some countries to keep him there."

"I'd like to see Al Bashir been convicted as a sitting President, this will force all military regimes to reduce the use of impunity and abuse of human rights" said Alpha Lisimba, A PHD student in Melbourne who also escaped the conflict in Darfur in 2003.

The recent visit to Australia by the ICC Deputy Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, gave the Darfur community an opportunity to present to her an Action for Darfur Petition. The petition urged the ICC to act swiftly to bring the men to justice amongst other action. The four continue to serve in the government in Khartoum, continue to commit crimes against the people of Darfur and are responsible for the ongoing escalating violence in other parts of Sudan.

"We were starting to lose hope with the international community but this news of the conviction gives us hope for Sudan and makes me very happy" said Ahmed Mohammed, the President of Sydney Darfur Community Association. "One day Al Bashir will be convicted too, I think it's only a matter of time"

"The judgment has been hailed as a victory for the international criminal justice and against impunity for leaders who bear the most responsibility in inflicting undue harm and destruction amongst populations" a university student Yahya Abdelkarim in Melbourne expressed after the verdict was announced.

In her recent address in Melbourne, ICC Deputy Prosecutor and Prosecutor elect, Fatou Bensouda said with grim determination " I believe Bashir's destiny is the ICC" With the Charles Taylors conviction last Thursday the Darfur community can indeed believe and continue to hope.



Acknowledgements

DAN would like to thank all the supporters and volunteers for our work in advocacy on the crisis in Darfur and community engagement with the Australian Darfuri community.

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. Visit <http://darfuraustralia.org/action/merchandise> for our products.

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