



KAIROS UPDATE

a quarterly snapshot of KAIROS work for justice and peace

ISSUE 3 (DECEMBER 2005): DARFUR

The Hollow Echo of “Never Again”

“Security is our number one priority,” according to workers with the Sudan Council of Churches, a KAIROS partner. “It is the first time in our history that we hear about collective rapes.”

By mid-2004 the mounting toll of death and displacement forced the crisis in Darfur onto the stage of world affairs. A formerly unreported conflict over natural resources in this part of East Africa has escalated into what many have referred to as “the first genocide of the twenty-first century”.

Today, over 200,000 people have been killed during the conflict and at least two million more displaced. While food and water delivered by aid agencies to the remaining population of Darfur are attempting to address survival needs, humanitarian assistance continues to be endangered by the insecurity of the region. Both sides in the conflict, the rebels and the government-allied forces, the Janjaweed militia, continue to violate ceasefire agreements, including attacks on the displacement camps and humanitarian workers. Planting crops is almost impossible for people living under the threat of attack and rape is widespread throughout the region.

At the same time, malaria and a wide range of other diseases will continue to take large numbers of lives from a civilian population seriously weakened by malnutrition. A recent ACT/Caritas* survey found that almost 20 percent of children in Darfur suffer chronic undernourishment. The UN's World Food Program estimates that 3.5 million people will need food assistance in the coming months.

By 2003, warning signs of an alarming tragedy were evident. In the fall of that year, KAIROS and its Canadian partners began urging the Canadian government to lead the international community in halting “systematic human



Achol Dor, a South Sudanese woman and co-founder of Canadians Against Slavery and Torture in Sudan, speaking at a rally, organized by KAIROS, to raise awareness of the crisis in Darfur.

rights abuses against unarmed civilians” in Darfur. Canada, we believe, is uniquely positioned in East Africa to lead on resolving the crisis given the geopolitics of the region and the obstruction by other members of the international community, particularly members of the UN Security Council. China, Russia, and the United States each have national interests at stake in Sudan in the form of oil, weapons sales, and the ‘war on terrorism’, respectively, impeding them from prioritizing human rights and protecting civilian lives. Since our first letters to the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2003, the Canadian churches, through KAIROS, have been urging Canada to work with its United Nations’ partners and the African Union (AU) in halting the violence and reversing the ethnic cleansing. We have continually asked that the abuses committed in

KAIROS unites eleven churches and church agencies in faithful action for justice and peace. KAIROS members are: The Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Canadian Religious Conference, Christian Reformed Church in North America (Canada Corporation), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee of Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), The United Church of Canada

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Darfur be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for investigation, for example, and that the industrialized nations support the intervention of more protection forces throughout Darfur, a region the size of Manitoba.

For the past two years, KAIROS has addressed the situation in Darfur at annual meetings of the UN's Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in an attempt to have the UN intervene. While the UN Security Council has taken the historic step of recommending that individuals accused of committing massive human rights violations in Darfur be investigated by the new ICC in The Hague, the UN Security Council has been reluctant to authorize a more robust intervention of peacekeepers under the provision of Chapter VII (UN forces) or Chapter VIII (regional forces of the AU) of the UN Charter.

To date, the AU has fewer than 5,000 soldiers available to monitor the entire region of Darfur. The Canadian government has been a leading proponent of the "Responsibility to Protect", a framework which obligates the international community to protect vulnerable populations from attack, such as those in Darfur. Accordingly, it has urged the UN and AU to do more and has committed 105 armoured personnel carriers (APCs) along with \$170 million in increased diplomatic, humanitarian and other support to the AU Mission in Sudan.

What has become clear, however, is that these resources are insufficient to halt the ethnically targeted violence and secure the region. Most experts agree that the AU needs troop strength of at least 20,000 to do an adequate job to protect civilians and bring sufficient pressure on the warring parties to halt their attacks and disarm.

The international community has once again become culpable in large scale loss of life in Africa through inaction. With ample warning of the crisis, coupled with the twenty year history of abuses committed against southern Sudanese, the UN Security Council has refused to authorize the resources necessary to halt the Janjaweed and force the government of Sudan to make concessions at the negotiating table, as deaths continue to mount. The cries of "never again" heard since the genocide in Rwanda have rung regrettably hollow.

Like Rwanda, the consequences of international inaction will be evident for years in Darfur as villages are burned to the ground, water sources poisoned, and populations traumatized through large scale loss of life. The region will need sustained costly support for decades to come as the result of a crisis that, sadly, could have been avoided.

KAIROS continues to lobby for protection of people in Darfur, bringing those responsible for human rights abuses and war crimes to justice, and finding a lasting peace for the region of Darfur.

For more information, please see:

ACT/Caritas *Darfur Emergency Response* at www.act-intl.org/sudan
Human Rights Watch *Crisis in Darfur* at

DARFUR: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1956 — Sudan becomes independent.

1970s — Relationship between Arabs and African groups strained with heightened competition for land following drought. Desertification forces Arab nomadic groups farther south.

1980s — Conflicts in nearby Chad and Libya bring arms across the border.

1989 — Omar al-Beshir seizes power in a coup.

1990s — Power struggle in Khartoum spills over into Darfur.

2002 May — Justice and Equality movement warns of taking up arms if attacks on Africans in Darfur do not stop.

2003 April/May — Armed Darfur groups, now organized as the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) attack the town of El Fasher. Government retaliates, unleashing the Janjaweed, supported by aerial bombardment.

2003 June — Attacks on villages lead to widespread displacement, refugees flee to Chad and other parts of Sudan. UN says Sudanese government is hampering humanitarian intervention.

2003 December — Sudanese President vows to annihilate the Darfur rebels. Peace talks between government and SLM/A break down. Security situation in Darfur deteriorates.

2004 January — Daily bombing raids on villages in Darfur kill hundreds of civilians and cause thousands more to flee.

2004 February — UN declares Sudan "the world's worst humanitarian disaster," claiming one million lives hang in the balance.

2004 August — African Union deploys first protection force.

2005 March — UN Security Council passes three resolutions on Sudan, including a referral to the International Criminal Court for investigation.

Today — Attacks continue. Over 2 million people have been displaced and at least 200,000 have been killed since the start of the conflict.

www.hrw.org/doc?t=africa&c=darfur

United Nations News Service *Sudan: A Future Without War*

at www.irinnews.org/webspecials/SudanDarfur

KAIROS *Focus on Sudan* at

www.kairoscanada.org/e/programme/sudan/index.asp

* ACT (Action by Churches Together) is a global alliance of churches and related agencies working in emergencies worldwide. Caritas is a confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations.