



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

Edition One, December 2009

## Contents

<b><i>The year that has been and the one to come</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Situation Update</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Political Issues and the Peace Process</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Humanitarian Crisis</b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Editorial: "Making Good on the Promise to Care": Darfur and the Responsibility to Protect</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>A Community Perspective on Darfur</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><i>What's on at DAN?</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DAN Sydney</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DAN Melbourne</b>	<b>7</b>
<b><i>Getting Involved with DAN</i></b>	<b>8</b>
<b>DONATE to DAN</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Volunteering at DAN</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CONTACT DETAILS</b>	<b>8</b>



## THE YEAR THAT HAS BEEN AND THE ONE TO COME

The Darfur Australia Network is proud to be launching a new national newsletter on December 10 2009, to coincide with the United Nations' *Human Rights Day* - a landmark date on which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed back in 1948. In 2009, over sixty years on from the original signing of the declaration, the urgency of recognising and upholding everyone's inalienable right to live a life of dignity, free from want and free of persecution has been no less diminished. To the contrary, with regions in the world like Darfur continuing to be defined by flagrant persecution and neglect of human rights, there is still much progress to be made.

The Darfur Australia Network's quarterly newsletter will give its readership the opportunity to take stock of what's been happening in Darfur. Each edition will feature a general situation update and an in-depth analysis on a major theme or development in the conflict. The newsletter will also share personal reflections from Australia's Darfuri communities based in Melbourne and Sydney, providing a way to bridge the distance between Darfur and Australia. Lastly, the newsletter will promote what DAN has been up to and give details about how to get involved.

The end of 2009 is a good opportunity for DAN to reflect on the year that has been, and look forward to 2010. In Melbourne DAN started its "Communities in Need: Educating Our Future" project, kindly funded by the Victorian Government through the provision of a Community Support Grant from the Community Support Fund. This project includes many activities, keep your eye out for information regarding the 'Celebration of Women' dinner being held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2010, and the Arts Alive festival being organized for April 2010.

In Sydney, DAN was the proud recipient of two grants, one from the Holroyd City Council and one from the Australian Government's Diverse Australia Program. With this fresh injection of funds, DAN Sydney has been able to run community workshops with the Darfuri youth and will be taking on board a high school education program in early 2010. DAN Sydney has also been busy preparing an in-depth research paper on the current situation in Darfur, which is due to be released in March 2010.

As an organization DAN is going through some big changes. DAN is moving to a national structure, electing a national Committee of Management and taking a more collaborative approach to our state-based activities, examples of this

being the DAN newsletter and our upcoming Darfur based education program.

DAN's causes for celebration however, have been underscored by an acute awareness that in Darfur the dire humanitarian and political crises continue without respite. In March 2009, the conflict in Darfur took a catastrophic turn when 13 key foreign aid agencies operating in the region were expelled. In the absence of these relief organisations, members of Australia's Darfur community have spoken repeatedly of their relatives and friends back home being subjected to worsening conditions in Darfur. Worryingly, the fronts of the conflict have now multiplied as rebel movements have fractured and ethnic tensions within Darfur have intensified. Displaced civilians increasingly have to compete for access to scarce natural resources and pastoral lands. And as the fragile peace in South Sudan shows warning signs of a return to widespread violence, a more generalized crisis of governance across Sudan is becoming evident.

The Darfur Australia Network takes seriously its mission to act on the deteriorating crisis in Darfur. Yet, so far removed from the scenes of conflict, knowing how to effect change all the way from Australia has been, and continues to be, a challenge for our organisation. DAN continues to be inspired by this challenge and has committed itself to proactively seeking creative ways to make a positive impact on policy and to remain visible in the Australian community. Furthermore, DAN continues to be inspired by the strong relationship we have built with the Darfur community of Australia, working hand-in-hand in the hope that the word Darfur will no longer be synonymous with 'war'.

DAN is looking forward to the year ahead with a sense of optimism, but acknowledges that with the elections taking place in April 2010, and with the conflict in Darfur entering its seventh deadly year, that there remains much to be done.

We look forward to your support and participation in the activities of DAN in 2010,

**Tess Whittakers and Melissa McCullough**  
**Program Coordinators**  
**Darfur Australia Network**



## SITUATION UPDATE

By Tanya Muscat, DAN Sydney volunteer

As events have unfolded in Darfur this year, the situation faced by the people in the region continues to be dire. Commentary at the international level has centred on the notion that the war in Darfur is over, however this does not indicate that there should be a reduction in attention given to Darfur's situation.

### POLITICAL ISSUES AND THE PEACE

#### PROCESS

The government of Sudan has not improved the internal domestic accountability for crimes against humanity or for war crimes. The government has continued to refuse cooperation with the ICC, and has internally investigated only a handful of low-ranking individuals. Indeed Sudanese courts are yet to prosecute any high-level officials in relation to past or ongoing attacks against civilians.

Progress in the peace talks between the government of Sudan and between rebel groups continues to be stalled, with the Justice and Equality Movement still refusing to resume participation in talks unless the Goodwill Agreement is implemented.<sup>1</sup> Although the Doha Peace Talks have not been resumed, certain rebel factions have stressed the need for the Unity Peace Talks to first occur so a comprehensive strategy is agreed upon prior to participation in the Doha talks. Unity talks in Libya saw the arrival of 55 generals from the various rebel factions under the Sudan Liberation Movement Revolutionary Forces to discuss issues such as the ICC, the political crisis, the elections, and the rights of the people in Darfur.<sup>2</sup>

### HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

2.7 million people remain displaced in Darfur with an additional 200,000 in Chadian refugee camps. Citizens in these camps face violence and sexual harassment from both officials and those within the camps. Obstacles to

reporting rape cases mean that those featured in reports represent a small percentage of the total number.

Indeed the UN Secretary-General reports indicate that UNAMID documented 21 incidents of rape and sexual violence against 54 victims with the majority of perpetrators described as wearing military uniforms.<sup>3</sup> Since the expulsion of some foreign aid agencies in March 2009 little information has been available on the humanitarian needs of those impacted upon by the ongoing conflict. While there have been joint Sudanese-UN assessments throughout the year indicating that there are 'critical gaps in core sectors, including water, sanitation and health' there has been no independent assessment of protection and human rights gaps in Darfur. Human Rights Watch indicates the need for UNAMID to publicly report on the protection of civilians and of human rights abuses.<sup>4</sup>

Of further concern is the recent disclosure that the Sudanese government plans to close down IDP camps in Darfur, providing displaced persons with the option of relocating back to their villages or into one of the 20,000 new housing complexes being built to deal with the situation.<sup>5</sup> Lastly the continued suspension of newspapers has muted the reporting on the conflict in Darfur along with political expression and human rights violations, impacting upon the future prospect for 'free and fair' elections.

3 UNSC, "Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the Africa Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur," 13 July 2009, S/2009/352, <[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2009/352](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2009/352)> (accessed 4/12/2009) and 9 June 2009, S/2009/297, <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/363/65/PDF/N0936365.pdf?OpenElement>> (accessed 4/12/2009).

4 Human Rights Watch, "The Way Forward", 6 October 2009, <[http://www.hrw.org/en/node/85923/section/6#\\_ftn20](http://www.hrw.org/en/node/85923/section/6#_ftn20)> (accessed 4/12/2009).

<sup>5</sup> Sudan Tribune, "Sudan to close down Darfur IDP camps in early 2009: official", 11 November 2009, <<http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article33084>> (accessed 4/12/2009).

<sup>1</sup> Sudan Tribune, "Darfur mediation delays talks between government and rebels", 19 November 2009, <<http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article33169>>, (accessed 4/12/2009).

<sup>2</sup> Sudan Tribune, "Darfur rebels begin to arrive in Libya for Unity meeting", 2 December 2009, <<http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article33305>>, (accessed 4/12/2009).



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## EDITORIAL: “MAKING GOOD ON THE PROMISE TO CARE”: DARFUR AND THE *RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT*

**By Melissa McCullough, DAN Program Coordinator (Sydney), with Musa Haroun, an active member of DAN Sydney since it opened in 2007**

Darfur has become synonymous with two defining phrases: the first being mass atrocity crimes and the second, the concept of the *Responsibility to Protect*. Reports flooding out of Darfur document a ruthless campaign of state-sponsored ethnic cleansing, heinous acts of rape and torture as weapons of war, epidemics of disease, starvation and willful neglect by the Sudanese Government. This tide of reports from the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group and most astonishingly, now from the African Union itself isn't a new phenomenon: the reality is that the world knows about what's been happening, and what is continuing to happen in Darfur.

For those however, who are a little rough on the details of the conflict, here's the gist of it. Darfur is the western region of Sudan, Africa, and has since 2003, been the site of intense violent conflict between indigenous African rebel groups and Arab militia backed by the Sudanese government. Although the roots of the conflict date back many decades, the violence which erupted in 2003 has been unprecedented in scale, intensity and calculation. What began as a largely unorganized rebel

uprising by marginalised African Darfuris demanding more proportionate political representation and fairer access to economic resources for their people, has been transformed by the Sudanese Government's heavy-handed suppression, into an all-out civil war. Furthermore, it has become a war in which the Sudanese government has notoriously trained and armed Arab militias, known collectively as Janjaweed, to attack their African brothers and sisters by horseback while the government carries out aerial raids by helicopter. In forging these hostile ethnic fault lines across Darfur, a region where inter-ethnic marriage and peaceful coexistence had been commonplace since Arab migration, the government has ensured that the conflict will self-perpetuate for generations to come, unless of course, we make good on the promise to care.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the promise to care has taken shape in a doctrine referred to as the *Responsibility To Protect* (R2P). Championed by the former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, adopted by *all* member states at the United Nations World Summit in 2005 and then reaffirmed by UN *Security Council Resolution 1674* in 2006, this doctrine gives the international community a framework for responding to mass atrocity crimes, so that pledges to never again bear

witness to another Rwanda carry with them bite and obligation. While R2P charges the state, first and foremost, with the responsibility of protecting their citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, it underscores this with a warning that in cases where the state is unwilling or unable to carry out this responsibility, the burden fall will on the international community to respond with haste and with benevolence. In the case of Darfur, R2P has taken on an added significance in that it is the first test case of the newly affirmed principle of protection from mass atrocity crimes.

To argue that Darfur has been the recipient of little or no international efforts to end, or at least stem, the violence would be a gross misjudgment. Since 2003, Darfur has been awash with UN Security Council Resolutions and UN high panel investigations. It has been the subject of review and now prosecution by the International Criminal Court and most recently, the United States has vowed to increase its commitment not only to Darfur, but to seeing peace with justice throughout the Sudan. However, the momentum and pressure generated by these interventions has taken a massive blow of late, with the former UN/AU special representative to UNAMID, Rodolphe Adada, pronouncing upon



his departure the conflict in Darfur “over”. Adada’s comments did indeed lose much of their punch with the October 2009 release the UN’s final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan, which was particularly scathing in its criticism of the Government of Sudan.

The report indicates that instances of politically-motivated violence remain high in Darfur, with individuals opposed to Government policies continuing to be targets of harassment, persecution and torture, all of which constitute severe violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and question the prudence of Adada’s assessment that the conflict in Darfur is in fact, “over”.

The simple truth is that conflict is far from over. Questions over fluctuating levels of violence aside, there remains so much unmet need in Darfur that to reduce the endpoint of the conflict to a decrease in the number of deaths per month would be to whitewash the issues at heart. When there are factors at play such as state intent to commit ethnic cleansing, coupled with international allies such as China and the Arab League who are prepared to look the other way and continue business as usual, calls for restraint and threats of intervention lose much of their salience, a case in point being the U.S. administration’s October 2009 policy announcement on engaging the Sudan which once again reaffirmed a responsibility to protect in Darfur.

The policy in itself was encouraging, receiving cautious praise from the Australia’s Sudanese Darfuri community. Cautious, in that the community was skeptical the Sudanese Government would take any notice of President Obama’s words. Musa Haroun, from Sydney’s Darfur community, has found nothing surprising with this show of

bravado. In fact, Haroun insists that “the GoS is getting angry that the US, the International Criminal Court and the United Nations are all getting involved in Darfur. It sees these states and institutions as pushing a Western-agenda and this is putting the GoS offside”.

As an alternative, Haroun says that “African countries should unite under one voice and one policy to put pressure on the Sudanese Government.” However, he laments, “some African and Arab states still want to support al-Bashir and the Sudanese Government because they don’t want to be next”.

Looking pragmatically at the dynamics at play in international interventions in Darfur should not be taken as a cue to throw Darfur into the “too-hard” basket. Instead, interventions now need to get creative, they need to identify the Achilles heel of the Sudanese Government and push on these pressure points until the violence ends, the grievances are addressed and a new foundation for Darfur is built on a respect for the law, a respect for human rights and with a place for healing.

Yet, saying that interventions need to get creative and need to be spear-headed by leaders who hold clout in the Sudan is one thing, finding a way to do so is another. On an initial assessment, two possibilities come to mind. Firstly, there is the role China is playing in bolstering the Government of Sudan through lucrative trade deals, grotesquely turning the mineral wealth of Darfur into arms that are killing its people. The UN has issued several sanctions and embargos banning the sales of weapons to the Sudan. However, as long as this intervention continues to be contravened, messages that the international community is determined to protect the people of Darfur will remain mixed at best. Australia has a role to play here. For

too long accepting the age-old adage that trade and human rights are mutually exclusive has been used. But we signed up to the United Nations and its Charter back in 1945, and we were there in 2005 when the world said ‘never again’ to mass atrocity crimes. These noble gestures must amount to something more than paying lip service.

Secondly, there is the pressure which a united African Union can and should be exerting over Sudanese President al-Bashir. If US or UN-led interventions are to be received as neo-imperialism, then the African Union must be there, holding its neighbour to account. But why has this concerted intervention failed to happen, seven years and counting into Africa’s worst contemporary humanitarian crisis? Why has the African Union effectively exonerated the Sudanese President from his charges of orchestrating war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur? Why, in a continent all too familiar with the scourge of war, is Darfur being permitted to happen when its people are calling out for help? Musa Haroun thought on this are “There is a big concern amongst African and Arab states of the threat of the International Criminal Court, and that if they support President al-Bashir’s prosecution, that they will be the next targets... But the Darfur people need to know where the African countries stand on this issue? There is much bullying in African politics: President al-Bashir is using Sudanese resources to bully leaders in pursuit of his interests. Will African countries let this continue or will they make their leaders accountable for their actions and their crimes?”

Those who have the potential to be peace-brokers and exert the influence needed to end the conflict, have their hands seemingly “tied” so as to avoid being the next target of



international justice. But while the situation stalls at an impasse, there are signs of hope emerging from within Africa through the leadership shown by the Governments of Botswana, South Africa and Uganda. The world adopted a standard and a

framework with which to respond to epic conflicts like Darfur and so the challenge continues in its urgency and its conviction to make good our promise to care.

**“President Obama has nice words, but he needs to get serious with Sudan. It can’t just be another talkfest. Africa needs to take the lead on this one...”**

## A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE ON DARFUR

**By Adam Musa**

**President of the Darfur Community Association of Australia - Sydney**

I have read Mbeki’s African Union Panel report on Darfur, all 148 pages. I have read from A – Z, but it’s come too late and come after the International Criminal court has already issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese war criminal dictator, Omer al Bashir. However, there are some good points in the report which we encourage the African Union to take action on - namely finding an end to the conflict and giving justice to our people.

We have lost already more than 400,000 and the numbers are climbing, worse than Rwanda. And others, more than 3 million, are being held as hostages by the Government of Sudan in the refugee camps. It is unacceptable.

The conflict in Darfur is the result of a total rejection, of Darfuris, by a Sudanese government dominated by North Sudan elites who refuse to share wealth and power with others. It has been this way since independence of the country in 1956. But this system from the north has not only marginalized African groups in Sudan but also African countries.

**“The marginalized and neglected groups in Sudan are those of African origins, who for decades have had their political, cultural and economic rights denied without a slight ounce of shame”.**

It looks very strange to see the current dictatorship regime of Sudan who is doing its uttermost efforts to deny the rich African tradition and culture to take roots in Sudan, looking for African help after being cornered for its misdeeds and tyranny. Nevertheless it has started soliciting and working to exploit the African leaders, looking for their support as President al-Bashir has now been indicted for committing mass atrocity crimes against on his own country men, women and children, the people he has the very responsibility to protect.

The Council of African Elders, led by former President of the Republic of South Africa Mbeki and his committee, are talking about truth and reconciliation process in Darfur. But how can we talk about truth and reconciliation process before the conflict has been brought to a just end? Reconciliation is possible when the criminals accept the responsibility of their crimes committed by them or their proxies. The African Union should push for justice to go hand in hand with the peace, rather than backing the mischievous Sudanese regime.

In this regard, we highly appreciate and hail the strong courage of the President of the Republic of South Africa Jacob Zuma, the Government of Botswana and President Youri Musiveni of Uganda who have bravely chosen to stand on the side of the victims, rather than pardoning the perpetrators. Yes, the violence in

Darfur is a real problem to Africa, as President Museveni has said.

**“Peace is not just signing a piece of paper or laying off corrupt officials in Khartoum. Peace is a feeling of human security and a change of things on the ground. It will come in implementing what a peace deal agrees to do”.**

The Darfur crisis is complex. It is embedded in deep rooted causes and larger issues, which perhaps require a profound level of attention before scuttling toward any political negotiations. But to make it simple, the crux of the Darfur catastrophe can be divided into two interconnected and overlapping parts. First, and most alarmingly, is the current state of human security. There is immense human destruction occurring and massive displacement of the Darfuri people from their traditional lands. Second, is the problem of citizenship rights, which in principle is the core source of the human turmoil in Darfur and elsewhere in the Sudan.

Any peaceful political process should start with the following:

**1-Conflict suspension:** which is to stop the ongoing killing of our people and protect them, disarm the Janjaweed and other government militias and remove the new settlers from our people’s land (Hawkeors). In our view, this will create an environment conducive to a peaceful political settlement.  
**2-Conflict resolution (negotiations):** with the hope to discuss the root



causes of the problem and obtain a total settlement and from there we can move into the third step;  
**3-Conflict transformation:** to build positive relationships among our people in Darfur as well as to build durable projects for sustainable development.

**“Peace will grow with immense attention given to the human security needs of the people of Darfur and with the resolution of the root causes of the current genocide, with the punishment of the perpetrators and in readdressing the injustice of the past.”**

## WHAT'S ON AT DAN?

### DAN MELBOURNE

#### **“Communities in Need: Educating our Future”**

**Community Internship Program:** We are very happy to welcome two members of the community as interns in the DAN Melbourne office! Aisha Mohamed is taking part in an internship during her school holidays, and Yahya Abdelkarim has been coming to do research and write for DAN since August 2009.

**Celebration of Women – Benefit Dinner, January 16<sup>th</sup> 2010, 6.30pm:** Don't forget to buy your tickets for the benefit dinner being held in January...they will make excellent Christmas presents! Adult \$60, Concession \$40, hurry so you don't miss out, go to [www.darfuraustralia.org/events/upcomingevents](http://www.darfuraustralia.org/events/upcomingevents)

**Our Refugee Experiences – children's holiday art program:** In the upcoming January school holidays DAN will be holiday two full day art workshops including painting, hip-hop classes, jewellery making and more.

**Peace is Possible in Darfur – DVD:** DAN Melbourne will be launching its new DVD in February 2010. Keep your eye on the website for further details of the launch!

**“Communities in Need: Educating our Future”** has been made possible by the kind support of the Victorian Government through the provision of a Community Support Grant from the Community Support Fund.

### DAN SYDNEY

#### **Darfur High School Education Program**

As a proud recipient of the Australian Government's Diverse Australia Small Grants Program, DAN Sydney will developing set of high school education resources on the Darfur conflict for years 10-12. DAN's objectives will be to teach about international human rights norms, international institutions for peace such as the United Nations and to encourage students to be good international citizens through upholding Australia's Responsibility to Protect against the perpetuation of mass atrocity crimes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

DAN Sydney will make these resources available online in early 2010 and will start high school visits across metropolitan Sydney from April 2010. For more information or to express an interest in the school visits program, please write to [melissa@darfuraustralia.org](mailto:melissa@darfuraustralia.org)

**DAN would like to thank all the volunteers, community members, partners, supporters and those who make the work of the organization possible...we couldn't do it without you! We wish everyone the best for the holiday season and the New Year!**



## GETTING INVOLVED WITH DAN

### **VOLUNTEERING AT DAN**

If you are interested in the issue of Darfur, refugees and/or advocacy then volunteering with DAN might be the opportunity you have been waiting for.

If you would like to get involved in any capacity email [volunteer@darfuraustralia.org](mailto:volunteer@darfuraustralia.org) (for Melbourne) or [sydney@darfuraustralia.org](mailto:sydney@darfuraustralia.org) (for Sydney).

#### **Current volunteer positions**

##### **Victoria**

##### **DAN Education Coordinator**

We are seeking an education coordinator to support the awareness raising activities of the Darfur Australia Network (DAN).

##### **DAN Communications Coordinator**

We are seeking someone with experience in Media & Communications to coordinate DAN's media engagement.

##### **NSW**

##### **Darfur Community Working Group Officer**

We are seeking a volunteer to support and coordinate community engagement in DAN activities.

##### **DAN Sydney Education Coordinator**

We are seeking a volunteer to coordinate DAN education programs in Sydney.

##### **DAN Sydney Events Assistant**

We are seeking a volunteer to assist in the organising of DAN events.

### **DONATE TO DAN**

The Darfur Australia Network greatly appreciates any contribution you can make to ensure the ongoing activities of the organisation. If you are able please contribute to the DAN Appeal by going to the following link:

[www.ourcommunity.com.au/dan](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/dan)

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

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