



## Darfur: Genocide in Our Time

Millions of innocent civilians have been forced to flee their homes as a result of the Sudanese government-sponsored campaign of violence.

**I**n Darfur, Sudan, villages are smoking ruins, wells are filled with sand, and farms are deserted. Over 300,000 Darfurians have been killed. Some 2.5 million more have been forced to flee their homes and more people are internally displaced with every passing day, some crossing into neighboring Chad. All depend on humanitarian aid to survive.

### **Behind the war and the genocide**

The Darfur region has always received few resources for education, health, and development. Generally, Arab people were nomadic herders and African people were farmers and shepherds. Together, they found ways to share resources and resolve disagreements around land and water. As the desert swallowed more land, conflicts became more frequent and violent.

Over the last several years, the Sudanese government armed certain local militia groups and disarmed others, fracturing Darfur's delicate balance of power. The imbalance left many African groups felt increasingly vulnerable.

In January 2003, two armed African rebel groups attacked government posts, demanding equality, protection, and rights. The government immediately responded by arming and mobilizing nomadic groups, including the Janjaweed militia that was set loose upon civilians of the same ethnicity as the African rebel groups.

The Janjaweed commit unspeakable brutalities. Survivors' testimonies are strikingly similar: Janjaweed appear in a village, burn houses and fields, slaughter livestock, brutally murder men and boys, rape women, kill children, and capture youth as slaves. The Sudanese military is often present when the Janjaweed attack, and the air force bombs and shells villages to provide cover.

### **The crisis**

African Union forces deployed in 2004 are too few to be effective and have no clear mandate to protect civilians. The international community, with the exception of the United States, fails to provide sufficient funding for survivors now in camps.

There is not enough food, water, shelter, or health care. Education for the displaced is desperately needed; there is no education at all for high school children.

No place is safe. Camps are raided and many Darfurians fear the very forces that are supposed to provide protection. Movement is risky and often whole areas are inaccessible. Fighting and insecurity obstruct the work of humanitarian agencies, leaving thousands of people without aid. Between May and September 2006, thirteen humanitarian aid workers were killed.



Sudan is Africa's largest country and has suffered almost constant civil war since its independence in 1956. The 38 million people that live in Sudan represent several ethnic groups and speak more than 100 languages. Sudan's central government is dominated by General Bashir's Arab elite party, which seeks to uphold Islamic law. Darfur, in western Sudan bordering Chad, is roughly the size of Texas and is home to many different ethnic groups that are both Africans and Arabs, farmers and nomads.

The war has made people dependent on aid. And yet, in the camps, Darfurians show resiliency and skill. Children make mud bricks to build sturdy homes, women flock to training sessions, teachers set up schools under plastic tarps, and women work for nearby farmers in exchange for food. Many people fled their homes with nothing, but they dream of a decent future when they return.

### **Violence against women**

Those guilty of the violence in Darfur specifically target women and girls. The Janjaweed use rape as a weapon of war. Once in camps, women and girls are still vulnerable because they must seek firewood outside camp boundaries.

The physical and mental health costs to women and girls are incalculable. Humanitarian agencies, alone, are unable to protect civilians from violence on this scale. Improved protection for women is crucial.

### **What's next?**

Ultimately, all sides must agree to end the war. Only then will people be able to return home. But as long as the violence continues, civilians, particularly women and girls, must be protected, and refugees and the displaced need assistance.

UUSC is working with women in camps and humanitarian agencies to improve protection and find practical solutions to women's problems.

### **What UUSC is doing**

UUSC's Drumbeat for Darfur campaign is responding to the crisis in Darfur by:

- Pressuring the White House, Congress, and the United Nations to make Darfur a higher priority.
- Advocating that all sides respect the human rights of the civilians in the conflict.
- Demanding an end to the rape of women and girls in Darfur.
- Calling for a U.N. force to provide protection in Darfur.

UUSC's on-the-ground programming is working to protect civilians by:

- Supporting work for protection of displaced women in camps.

- Working with women in camps who have experienced rape to improve their access to health care and counseling.
- Coordinating efforts among different agencies to improve protection for women leaving the camps in search of firewood and other resources.
- Working with women and agencies to identify and implement ways to reduce the need for firewood.

### **What you can do**

Join UUSC's Drumbeat for Darfur campaign to keep the issue alive and move people to action. Take the simple steps listed below and you will raise the decibel level so the media and policymakers can't ignore what is happening.

- Donate to UUSC's Darfur Relief Fund — support our work with displaced women in Darfur.
- Keep the message in the public mind by writing letters to the editor and speaking to your congregation.
- Participate in public demonstrations to stop the genocide in Darfur.

**For information about these and other ways you can help, visit [www.uusc.org/drumbeatfordarfur](http://www.uusc.org/drumbeatfordarfur).**

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