

AMNESTY NEWS

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October 2004



SUDAN/DARFUR

The Rev Ian Woodward, a member of Sudan Committee of the Salisbury Diocese, gave a moving and thoughtful talk on the current situation in Sudan.

The Salisbury Diocese has had a link with Sudan for around 40 years which has proved highly demanding and challenging. Sudan is one of the largest countries in Africa with 8 neighbours and a population of between 25 and 30 million people. It could be one of the wealthiest nations of Africa. It has an arid north and a lush south. It is a country of two halves, the Arabic North and an African South. The capital Khartoum is in many ways a typical Arab City whereas the south has a typically African culture. Since independence in 1956 there has been almost 40 years of war with short periods of quiescence, over 2 million people have died with millions of internally displaced people.

Rev Woodward was of the opinion that the major issue was one of ethnicity/racism. Oil was discovered in the Numa mountains in the centre of the country. The Sudan Peoples Liberation Army or Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement has become increasingly organised. The Sudan Government, which is much better armed has bombed villages in the south, although this is denied. There have been many attempts at peace. The current plan is to establish a 6 month period of settling down (not yet

**Group Meeting
Monday 11th 2004**

LETTERWRITING

(There will be sample letters available on a range of issues covered by the Southampton Group)

**Avenue St Andrew's
United Reformed Church
The Avenue, Southampton
(Use main Church entrance)**

7.30pm

ALL WELCOME

triggered) to be followed by 6 year interim period leading to full democracy, human rights, freedom to travel and a referendum on whether the South should break away. It should be noted that there are failures on both sides. The agreement is coming closer with the support of US money, Sudan is beginning to see that if it wants to play a part as a world country it can't remain a pariah state.

Just over a year ago reports started to come out about Darfur, three provinces on the western border. Most of Darfur is desert the South is quite fertile. The problem is between the nomadic tribes of the North and the more stable groups of the South. This has caused issues about animal grazing and the conflict grew up. (continued on page 3)

AI's VISION

is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards.

AI's MISSION

is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

AI's CORE VALUES

remain those of : international solidarity, effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

Write to President of Sudan: to protect 1.2 million forcibly displaced people in Darfur (letter taken from AI web site)

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir
 c/o His Excellency Dr Hasan Abdin
 The Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan
 3 Cleveland Row
 St James
 London, SW1A 1DD

Dear Mr President,

I am writing to express my sincere concern about the fate of an estimated 1.2 million forcibly displaced people in Darfur and the continuing threats to their lives and safety.

Satellite images of the area between al-Jeneina and Zalingei, commissioned by Amnesty International, indicate that 44 percent of the villages and settlements have been burnt. Most of the other villages have been abandoned. These satellite images of destroyed villages vividly illustrated the pattern of attacks, including burning, killing, looting and raping that extends throughout Darfur and has caused the crisis of forced displacement in the region. Amnesty International has also interviewed refugees in camps in Chad and found that many of the human rights violations in Darfur have been targeted specifically against women and girls. These violations have included abductions, sexual slavery, torture and forced displacement.

Displaced people continue to live under the control of the very people who have caused their predicament. Janjawid militiamen continue to attack people outside the IDP camps and harass people inside. One displaced person who reached Khartoum after three months in Mukjar camp said, "It is not a camp but a prison." There have been numerous reports of men venturing outside the camps being killed and women and girls raped. In Mornay camp in March 2004, a sheikh told the UN that 16 women a day may be raped as they went to gather water in the river bed. Despite this, women continued to go out to fetch water even though they were likely to be raped because if the men went they would be more likely to be killed. Rapes and other forms of violence also occur within the IDP camps.

Within the camps the humanitarian conditions are precarious. There is still not enough food in Darfur to last throughout the rainy season, which will cut off much of the region, especially Western Darfur. Displaced persons camps in remote areas cannot be reached, except by plane or camel. A resident of West Darfur told Amnesty International "The food is reaching hundreds but there are thousands who need food and receive nothing."

I urge you to ensure that your government acts now to enforce Sudanese constitutional protections for your own citizens. Article 20 of your Constitution states, "Every human being shall have the right to life, freedom, safety of person and dignity of honor save by right in accordance with the law; and is free of subjection to slavery, forced labor, humiliation or torture."

In this regard, I urge you to work to ensure the:

- Disarming and disbanding of the Janjawid militia;
- Suspension of any member of the Sudanese armed forces suspected of having committed or ordered human rights violations, pending investigations;
- Prevention of any member or former member of the Janjawid militia from joining police, military or security forces and prevention of any member or former member of the Janjawid militia from operating inside or on the peripheries of displaced persons camps;
- Provision of full and unimpeded access to humanitarian agencies and human rights monitors to all areas and groups in Darfur, and
- Guarantee that displaced persons will not be forced back to any place where their lives, health or safety would be at risk.

I urge you to do everything in your power to stop the horrific attacks on civilians in the Darfur conflict and to address immediately the consequences of this violence. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

(and sign your name)

Group News: September 2004

1. Jenny McConnell (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Jenny explained that at the AGM there had been a discussion about increasing the annual subscription from £7.50 to £10. It had been agreed that the final decision would be left to this meeting and that in a letter sent out to all members she had asked for the views of people who could not attend. Following discussion the increase to £10 was agreed.

2. Becky John reported that the Marlands Shopping Centre had been booked for the Greetings Card Event on 11th December. There is also a possibility that we would have a facility for children to make cards at the event. We would need to provide a back drop.

3. Jenny circulated post cards for the "Stop Violence Against Women Campaign".

4. Frank Capocci reminded the Group about the Tin Rattle to be held in the main Southampton Precinct on 16th October from 10.00am to 3.00pm. A rota was circulated.

5. Frank (on behalf of Giampaolo) reported our current balance as £393. He also noted that in this financial year our income has been £94 and our expenditure £630.

Clearly we need ideas to significantly increase our income.

6. John Williams said that he was in discussions to arrange a Human Rights Day Service in St Mary's church.

7. Information from Sub-Groups:

- ◆ CHIRAN: nothing new to report.
- ◆ CASA: between campaigns at the moment.
- ◆ Death Penalty: Reference to article in Amnesty, highlighting release from Death Row.
- ◆ Outreach: 2003 report in Central Library, 2004 report to put in Portswood Library, information in October Books.
- ◆ North Korea: Government Minister currently visiting, good briefing from Amnesty.

8. John apologised for the quality of last months "Amnesty News", a free repeat print run has been produced and will be circulated in the next mailing.

SUDAN/DARFUR (cont from page 1).

The Government has tried to quell the fighting through intense bombing. Colin Powell recently referred to it as genocide, a very important statement.

Amnesty has summarised the situation in DARFUR as follows: "In 2003 two groups claiming to represent the settled farming population of Darfur took up arms against the Sudanese government, demanding greater recognition and political representation.

The Sudan Liberation Movement/Army and the Justice and Equality Movement argued that the exclusive character of peace negotiations between the government and the armed opposition in South Sudan showed that "Khartoum only talks to those who have arms". The government responded with massive military force directed at the civilian population, including use of Janjawid, a militia composed of members of nomadic groups.

Of the 6.5 million people living in Darfur, at least 2.2 million have been directly affected by the violence. An estimated 30,000 people have been killed, thousands of women raped, and an estimated 170,000 people are living as refugees on the Chad border or in camps in Chad. More than one million people have been internally displaced within Darfur, living in camps around towns or hiding in the countryside. They receive less aid and have less protection from the international community than the refugees in Chad. And they remain vulnerable to further attacks by government and the Janjawid.

AI is urging the Security Council and UN member states to: *Increase the number of human rights observers. *Strengthen the African Union ceasefire monitoring and protection force in Darfur to monitor and report on all abuses against civilians. (At present the mandate of the protection force is to protect the ceasefire monitors, rather than Darfur civilians.) *Suspend arms transfers to the Sudanese government. The Security Council resolution orders the suspension of arms transfers to non-government forces only. However, government forces have also killed civilians in Darfur. *Create an international Commission of Inquiry to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity and allegations of genocide. *Demand unconditional release of prisoners of conscience. *Demand and end to impunity, while insisting on fair judicial process. At present the Darfur Special Courts deny the right to defence of the accused, use confessions extracted under torture as evidence and hands down cruel, inhumane and degrading treatments such as amputations and the death penalty.

