

11 May 2005

NSW JBD STATEMENT ON DARFUR

The NSW Jewish community stands in solidarity with the victims of genocide in Darfur province, Sudan, perpetrated by the Arab Janjaweed militia which, according to all humanitarian agencies working in the area, is armed, trained, financed and directed, by the government of Sudan.

Two million people out of Darfur's total population of six million have been forced from their homes into internment camps and other squalid places of refuge. Another 200,000 have fled to neighbouring Chad. Vast numbers of Darfur's women and girls have been terrorized and brutalized. By even the most conservative estimates, at least 100,000 people have died from violence, disease and other conditions related to forced displacement and insufficient access to humanitarian assistance.

The atrocities in Darfur have been found by a UN Commission of Inquiry to constitute crimes against humanity. But this finding does not adequately address the full enormity of what is being done to the civilian population. The Janjaweed militia, at the instigation, and with the support, of the government of Sudan, have made little attempt to disguise their intention in committing these atrocities. Their intention is to decimate the black African, non-Arab populations of Darfur, specifically the Fur, Masaalit, and Zaghawa ethnic communities, as such. This is genocide, the crime of crimes, a flagrant violation of the terms of the International Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which is a part of the customary law of nations.

It is the moral duty of all people of good will to band together in a coalition of conscience to denounce and vigorously act against this heinous, systematic campaign. We must let Sudan's leaders know that they will be held fully accountable for the grave crimes that they and their agents are committing.

11 May 2005

This year, the Jewish community commemorates with the rest of the world the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Europe from the horrors of Nazi tyranny. We recall that six million Jews, including over one million children, were systematically murdered for no reason other than that they were Jewish. The survivors and their descendants have rebuilt their lives in Israel, Australia and elsewhere in the free world. We are determined that Hitler shall not have a posthumous victory and are resolved to help rid the world of the scourge of racist violence. Where ever we see racially-motivated vilification, discrimination, persecution or violence or acts of genocide, Jewish communities will speak up in opposition.

We note that the eminent international jurist Thomas Buergenthal, a child survivor of Auschwitz, who spent the war years living in the Ghetto of Kielce in Poland as well as the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen, has said that despite the lessons learned since 1945, the massacres in Rwanda, Cambodia and today in the Sudanese region of Darfur demonstrate humanity's continuing capacity for barbarism.

We applaud the contribution of the Australian Government to the UN peace keeping operations in Sudan. The world must not wait for the United Nations to act to bring relief to the victims in Darfur. If the UN lacks the moral courage to condemn the crimes in Darfur as genocide, what prospect can there be that it will take decisive action to stop the slaughter? Humanitarian intervention, including if necessary the use of force against the perpetrators, is needed on a significant scale by a coalition of the willing, that is, by groups of civilised nations willing to defend the human rights of defenceless civilians.

Specifically, we urge the ECAJ to call upon Australian Government to:

1. take measures in concert with other governments to create forthwith a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid and for the care and rehabilitation of the survivors including, if necessary, the deployment

11 May 2005

of a multi-national armed force to protect the civilian population from further atrocities; and

2. insist upon the entire question being brought before the UN Security Council as a matter of urgency for the purpose of referring the matter to the International Criminal Court for investigation and, if appropriate, for the prosecution of those accused of carrying out grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.