



# Amnesty International

Orange County

GROUP 141 ORANGE • GROUP 175 LONG BEACH  
GROUP 178 IRVINE • GROUP 596 HUNTINGTON BEACH

September 2004

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## Human Rights Crisis in Sudan

Since its independence from Britain in 1956, Sudan has been embroiled in a vicious civil war in which the central government in the North has been fighting rebels from the South over political autonomy and economic power. With the imposition of Sharia law in 1983, and the establishment of the military government in 1989, the conflict took on religious and ethnic dimensions, as the government set out to reshape social institutions in line with its interpretation of Islam. Since then, the war has claimed more than 2 million lives and has also displaced over 4 million people, 20% of the total worldwide.

The largest region in Sudan, Darfur is home to some 36 ethnic tribes, composed of two major blocks—Arabs and non-Arabs—the latter known as “blacks.” The Fur and the Masalit ethnic groups, who dominate the African population in Darfur, have a long history of clashes over land with Arab camel- and cattle-herding tribes. Initially, such hostilities were monitored through negotiation between community leaders. In the 1970s, however, competition over fertile land and dwindling resources intensified dramatically due to the desertification of the region and the lack of good governance. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms were soon replaced with bloody and politicized clashes and ethnicity soon became a major mobilizing factor.

In February 2003, a new armed opposition group called the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) emerged in Darfur and began attacking government troops. The SLM/A declared that attacks were in protest of the failure of the government to protect villagers from attacks by nomadic groups and the economic marginalization of the region. Another armed opposition group called the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) soon emerged with demands similar to the SLM/As. The government chose to resolve the conflict by using force in March 2003. Since then, the fighting has continued.

Comprising the majority of casualties, civilians are at the heart of the Darfur war. Human rights violations have been perpetuated by the Sudanese governments blatant policy of indiscriminate bombing and other aerial attacks against clearly civilian targets and its failure to hold its own soldiers and government-supported militias accountable. Members of the governments proxy militia, the Janjawid, have been responsible for killing, torture, arbitrary arrest, detention, the torching of homes and entire villages, and the theft and deliberate destruction of crops and cattle.

On April 8, 2004, the government of Sudan and the armed political groups, the SLM/A and the JEM, signed a ceasefire agreement, under which both sides agreed to refrain from mil-

itary action and to ensure access to humanitarian assistance. The agreement was due to run for 45 days and was subsequently extended on May 24. The ceasefire, however, has been largely disregarded. Within Darfur, observers suggest that almost every village in the conflict region has now been burnt and depopulated. In much of Darfur, the Janjawid are now occupying the rural areas; they have set up bases in some of the burnt-out villages, are harassing internally displaced people on the edges of towns, and have raped women who venture out to collect water outside the camps. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur is being compounded by the administrative delays imposed by the Sudanese authorities on international humanitarian organizations and the ensuing logistic difficulties caused by the rainy season.

### Civilians at Risk

Over 50,000 people are believed to have lost their lives since the Darfur conflict erupted in February 2003. Systematic human rights abuses have occurred, including killing, torture, rape, looting and destroying of property by all parties involved in the conflict, but primarily by the Sudanese government and government-backed Janjawid militia. The Sudanese

*Continued on page 3*

## Human Rights in Afghanistan Event

The Irvine and Huntington Beach groups are working together to put on an event to educate and raise awareness of the current issues in Afghanistan. The event is scheduled for Tuesday, September 14, 7:00–10:00 PM, at Cal State Fullerton, University Hall 252. The enclosed flyer has details, including a map. **The correct room for the event is University Hall 252.** It will include a panel of speakers who will discuss and take questions and answers on the following topics:

- Human rights in Afghanistan.
- The past and present history of the women’s movement in Afghanistan along with the struggles they have faced through the various governments that have held power.
- The current situation in Afghanistan, presented by a woman who is currently in Kabul with Relief International.
- Democratic elections and security.

In addition, the movie *Osama* will be shown. This is the first film produced in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, where the director, Barmak, explores the suffering of women under the Taliban regime. It was the winner of the 2004 Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film. Authentic Afghan food and refreshments will be provided.

## August Meeting Minutes

### Group #178 Irvine

#### Attendees

Former local activist and Area Coordinator Glen Nielsen returned to attend the meeting as well as Julie Ralls, Rhonda and Jillian Seiter, Liza Vick, Ting Huang, Al White, Stephanie Jones, and Kris Elali. Once again Jacques Kilchoer failed to attend and it was confirmed that he had left the country since being given oversight of the checking account.

#### Featured Speaker

Stephanie Jones was our featured speaker and gave an outline of the woman's campaign and presented information on the gentle martial art form AIKIDO a.k.a. the Path of Harmony and its connection to peaceful forms of conflict resolution and the efforts of activists to protect global human rights.

#### New Meeting Location

Upcoming events were announced. The group approved a change in meeting location to the Irvine Water District as this will actually put us in Irvine and give better freeway access to most members, except Julie.

#### New Group Coordinators

Through peaceful, nonviolent action Kris Elali was able to persuade the group to remove Jacques from his leadership position. Kris and Maung Nyeu will serve as the new coordinators beginning in January. This news was met with great relief. Liza Vick has volunteered to be the New Members Coordinator. At last we are on the right track.

#### Next Month's Meeting

At our September Meeting, we will be screening the award-winning documentary *Lost Boys of Sudan*, directed by Megan Myland and Jon Shenk. The documentary follows two Sudanese refugees, orphaned as young boys in the civil war, who survive lion attacks and militia gunfire to reach a refugee camp in Kenya. Some of those children were chosen to come to America. Speaking at our meeting will be actual Sudanese youths who survived this experience. See more information at our website <http://www.aiusaoc.org>.

## August Meeting Minutes

### Group #175 Long Beach

#### Attendees

Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Mike Farris, Kevin Gaffney, Deidre Jackson, Jim Roberts. Our group leader Bobbi wasn't able to attend because her husband was in the hospital (we all wish both of them well).

#### Hosting Play

We decided to further investigate the possibilities of hosting/cohosting a presentation of the one-act play *A Prison of the Mind*, written and performed by Marion Scherer. There is a press release about the play at [http://detention.la-archdiocese.org/Ericks%20Stuff/press\\_release\\_for%20Marion%20Scherer.htm](http://detention.la-archdiocese.org/Ericks%20Stuff/press_release_for%20Marion%20Scherer.htm). Mary Kay, our death penalty coordinator, will contact Ms. Scherer about her availability, logistical needs, and possible costs; Kevin will contact other groups (please e-mail him at [xhuskr@aol.com](mailto:xhuskr@aol.com) if you're interested); and Deidre will contact the People of Faith group.

#### Tabling

We talked about our successful tabling at the downtown Long Beach farmers' market, noting that we need clipboards or some other devices for the windy location. There seemed to be consensus for setting this up as a regular event (monthly?). Mike suggested finding out when the Unitarian church holds their conventions and tabling there as well.

#### Upcoming Presentations

Deidre will attend the refugee training and promises a report back. Jamie wasn't present at the meeting but Kevin reminded us that she has promised a presentation on the international campaign focusing on violence against women. All expressed interest in scheduling this.

#### Prisoner Update

Jim told us there was a ray of hope for our Vietnamese POC. The International Secretariat of Amnesty International listed our prisoner, Nguyen Dinh Huy, specifically in a letter to Vietnam asking for amnesty for all political prisoners on a promised amnesty day (September 2).

#### Origin of Myanmar

Jim also gave us a history of the Burma/Myanmar name. Burma was a name given by the British to an amalgamation of put-together kingdoms. (Hmm, shades of Iraq.) It came from the "Bama" people, which the British in their way pronounced and spelled differently. In 1988 military rulers decided to do away with vestiges of colonialism and Western influence and bolster the country's fortune by consulting numerologists on a name change. They came up with "Myanmar," which references one of the old, most powerful kingdoms: Myanma. Those in the know actually pronounce the country's name myanma, rather than adding the r at the end.

#### Letter-Writing

The group sent eleven letters on behalf of our POC, five letters to Mexico, two letters to Guatemala, and eight to Turkey and sent eight postcards as part of the Summer Postcard Action.

## Crisis in Sudan Continued from page 1

government continues to conduct indiscriminate bombings and other aerial attacks against clearly civilian targets and has failed to make its forces and pro-government militias accountable. Alarmingly, the Janjawid attacks are reportedly taking on an ethnic dimension, as the civilians who are attacked are mostly black Africans, while the Janjawid attackers are mostly Arab.

#### Refugees and Internally Displaced Peoples

Over one million civilians have been internally displaced by the conflict and 170,000 have sought refuge in neighboring Chad. Food is reportedly scarce and sanitary conditions poor. Refugees are continued targets of Janjawid attacks and reportedly the conflict is spilling over into Chad as the Janjawid make cross border raids.

#### Impunity

The Sudanese government appears unwilling to address the human rights crisis in the region and is reportedly still encouraging the actions of the Janjawid. All of the human rights abuses committed by the Janjawid and Sudanese government forces have been done so with impunity thus far. This attitude has inflamed the violence and lawlessness in Darfur.

## Act Now! Prevent Mass Death in Sudan

Call upon the President of Sudan to disarm and disband the Janjawid militia and to prevent members or former members of the Janjawid from operating inside and on the periphery of camps for internally displaced people (IDP). Urge President al-Bashir to take all necessary measures to allow full and unimpeded access to humanitarian agencies and human rights monitors. Call upon him to ensure that IDPs are not forcibly returned to any place where their lives, safety, and health would be at risk.

Please send appeals to:

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir  
 c/o Permanent Representative of the Republic of  
 the Sudan to the United Nations  
 655 Third Avenue, Suite 500-510,  
 New York, NY 10017  
 Fax: (212) 573-6160

You can base your e-mails, faxes and letters on the sample text below.

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 illustrate 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 shaikh told the UN that 16 women a day may be raped as they went to gather water

in the riverbed (wadi). 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 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 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, as President of Sudan, to act 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:

- Disarm and disband the Janjawid militia;
- Suspend any member of the Sudanese armed forces suspected of having committed or ordered human rights violations, pending investigation;
- Prevent any member or former member of the Janjawid militia from joining police, military, or security forces and prevent any member or former member of the Janjawid militia from operating inside or on the peripheries of displaced persons camps;
- Provide 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. I appeal to you to take all steps necessary to allow full and free access to Darfur for humanitarian agencies and human rights monitors to ensure that the civilian population is provided with humanitarian relief. Thank you for your attention, I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

For further actions, visit AI's Sudan Campaign website <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/sudan>.

If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter and supporting the work of the Orange County and Long Beach Amnesty International groups, please return this coupon to the address below with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues are used to cover the costs of this newsletter and of letters on behalf of prisoners. Your address label contains your membership expiration date.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to:**  
 Amnesty International  
 P.O. Box 14485  
 Irvine, CA 92623-4485

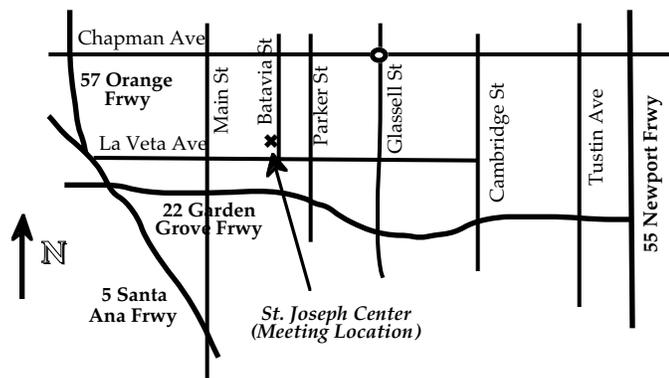
**For (check one):**  
 Orange Group  
 Irvine Group  
 Huntington Beach  
 Long Beach

*Please make your check payable to Amnesty International. Contributions to AI are tax-deductible. Thank you for your interest and support!*

# Calendar

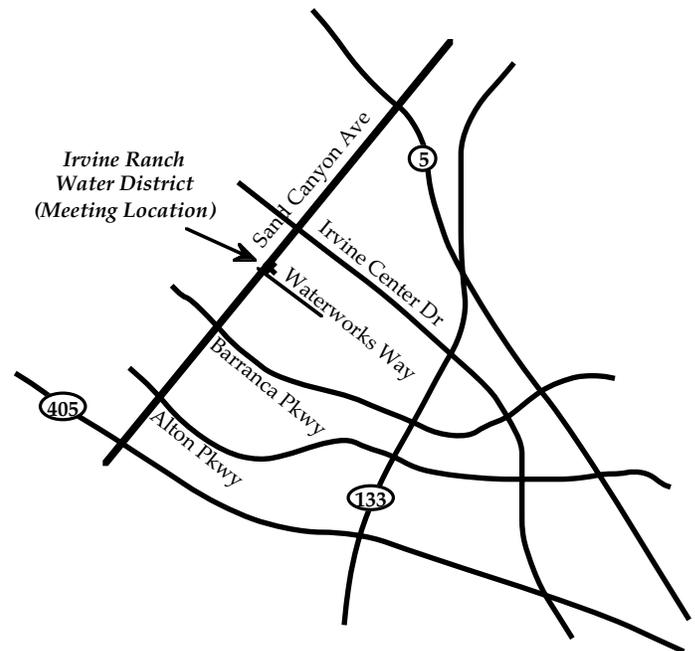
## September

- 14 Tuesday 7:00–10:00 PM  
**Human Rights in Afghanistan Special Event** at Cal State Fullerton, University Hall 252. See the enclosed flyer for details.
- 21 Tuesday 7:00 PM  
**Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting** in Classroom 3 at the Sisters of St. Joseph Special Events Center, 480 S. Batavia Street, in Orange. **Note the new location!** Look for the signs. Group #141 meets the third Tuesday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Deidre Jackson at (562) 430-7381.
- 27 Monday 7:00 PM  
**Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting** at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Room 7A, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. Group #596 meets the last Monday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Darcie Olson at (949) 650-5375.



Group #141 Orange Meeting Location

- 28 Tuesday 7:00 PM  
**Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting** at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, between the 5 and 405 freeways. **Note the new location!** See details on the web page <http://www.aiusaoc.org>. For more information about the group, contact Jacques Kilchoer at (714) 557-8427.
- 29 Wednesday 7:00 PM  
**Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting** at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. For further information about the group, contact Bobbi Kendig at (562) 420-1155.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

Amnesty International Group 178  
Post Office Box 14485  
Irvine, California 92623-4485