

Portsmouth, RI 02871

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people could change the world.  
Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

March 12, 2009

Dear President Obama,

As you know, the Darfuri people have been in crisis since 2003. You were one of the U.S. Senators who gave voice to the genocide and the need for leadership and action to save people from genocidal actions. And now as President, I hope you will act in a leadership role, especially now since President Bashir is expelling the very agencies that have been at the front of helping the helpless.

Those citizens of us who have been taking a stand against genocide are extremely concerned that the non-governmental organizations that have provided water, food and medical services to the victims of a genocidal government are being forced out by Bashir. We know what can happen if we have no backup plan in case the expulsions are not reversed, as you have called for. And it is a big "IF" that can very well become present and then past. Those of us who are engaged as citizen activists, to say the least, are impatient. Many of us are angry. Angry that we are still having to ask our elected representatives to do the right things regarding such tragic inhumanity.

Personally, I got involved in 2004 as an activist against genocide. And it was in direct response to making myself educated about the Rwandan genocide of 1994. I do not want to be part of complicity. I know we are all the keepers of justice. And I know where there is a will there is a way. Let us use our will to make a way about this defining issue.

In Sudan, we have an emergency. As you said, President Obama, "We can't say 'never again' and then allow it to happen again." (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEd583-fA8M> November 2007) And yet, that is what we have done repeatedly, year after year - murder after murder, rape after rape, starved to death after starved to death, torched village after torched village, lost childhood after lost childhood. We have said "never" and never meant it.

I took time off my Darfur activism to work as a volunteer in New Hampshire for a week, my home state of Rhode Island and phone banking for New Jersey for the "Obama for America" campaign. And the reason was that I believed you would make the difference we needed to stop what is going on with the Darfuri families.

Today, I was on a national conference call that was prompted by average people who are so frayed by the situation in Sudan and what looks like lack of forward-looking action needed to stave off what will inevitably come without the needed leadership. The game-playing by the

Sudanese government has only been in competition with the game-maneuvering of the international leaders who have allowed the genocide to go on and on.

As activists we have been lobbying, rallying, emailing, calling our elected politicians, organizing, divesting, sending letters to the editors, blogging about Darfur. Activists have kept Darfur in the news when the media has chosen to primarily marginalize the story at best. We have tugged and tugged. And people are dying of thirst for water, tonight. I have a warm bed at night, but there are Darfuri children who have never known a night with a comfortable bed because they were born in a refugee camp. And perhaps born from a rape that came from one of the Janjaweed. This is "our defining moment" as you so correctly said repeatedly. Please, don't let us be defined by lack of leadership, our inaction and toothless rhetoric regarding Darfuri people.

We are outraged. We are worried. As an activist, I am crying out to you because I believe you mean what you say. We, the people of the keepers of justice, want you to take the measured, dramatic, bold steps needed to get water, food and protection to the Darfuri people of Sudan. If the leadership doesn't come from you, Mr. President, then who? If not, now, it may be too late for those on the brink of becoming not only voiceless, but breathless.

With much respect,

Sandra Hammel  
Portsmouth, RI 02871

**GENOCIDE STOPS WITH US - LET'S MAKE IT PAST HISTORY**