

# Write a letter to help build peace in Sudan

by Elizabeth Keaveny

After the Holocaust the world said, “Never Again”. However the world has failed not only to prevent but in many cases has failed to even acknowledge genocidal violence in Cambodia, Rwanda and Darfur. It is impossible to change the violent events of the past and very difficult to change the violent events of the present. But what if we could tilt the scales of the future toward peace? What if we could act now to prevent another human tragedy? We have that opportunity right now in Sudan.

Sudan will soon arrive at a critical juncture. In January 2011, the people of Sudan will vote on a referendum that will determine whether Southern Sudan will secede from the north and form an independent nation. In an ideal world, this vote would lead Southern Sudan down a path of either peaceful unification with the north or a path of peaceful reconstruction, repatriation and self-determination. However, Sudan is a nation broken down by 19 years of civil war and recent genocidal violence in Darfur. According to Amnesty International, these two conflicts combined have displaced an estimated 6.5 million people and killed approximately 2.3 million people.

The International Criminal Court has charged Sudan’s president, Omar al-Bashir with five counts of crimes against humanity and two counts of war crimes. These charges allege that al-Bashir is “criminally responsible, as an indirect (co)-perpetrator, for intentionally directing attacks against an important part of the civilian population of Darfur...during a five year counter insurgency campaign” (International Criminal Court). The reality is that political and military power lies in the north of Sudan whereas natural resources including oil lie in the south. Under these conditions, a fair vote and a peaceful outcome appear highly unlikely.

The International community is preparing for renewed violence to break six years of unstable peace in Sudan. International Aid Organization have traditionally been reactive agencies but now these organizations have the opportunity to be proactive. Catholic Relief Services has taken the step forward to be proactive by embarking on a Peace Building Campaign within Sudan. This campaign is not only a response to the destruction, displacement and starvation of Sudan’s violent past, but also in anticipation for the violence that the January vote could incite.

Catholic Relief Services asks how the violence in the past could have been different if the world had known about the Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda and Darfur in advance. The world has the opportunity to build peace in Sudan before renewed violence occurs. Although Sudan may seem to be a world away, we each take action shape future peace now. We have the chance to be proactive through prayer, education, advocacy and generosity.

We can Learn about the situation in Sudan. Visit [www.peaceinsudan.org](http://www.peaceinsudan.org) for more information. We can Advocate for Sudan. Write a letter Representative Blumenauer asking him to co-sponsor Resolution 1588 that supports full implementation of the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We can Give to Peace Building Efforts in Sudan. Finally, if nothing else, we all can Pray for the people of Sudan as the January referendum approaches.

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