

Justice for Darfur



For immediate release

"Justice for Darfur" Campaign Launched Sudan Should Arrest War Crimes Suspects Now

(The Hague, April 27, 2008) One year after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for two war crimes suspects in Darfur, human rights organizations around the world are launching a "Justice for Darfur" campaign, calling for the two to be arrested.

The organizations behind the campaign, including Amnesty International, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Coalition for the International Criminal Court, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch and Sudan Organization Against Torture, have joined forces to call on the United Nations Security Council, regional organisations and individual governments to press Sudan to cooperate with the ICC.

The ICC has been investigating crimes in the region following a decision three years ago by the UN Security Council to refer to it the situation in Darfur. One year ago today – on April 27, 2007 – the ICC issued two arrest warrants against Sudan's former State Minister of the Interior Ahmad Harun and Janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb for 51 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Today the two men – who face charges of persecution, rape, and killing of civilians in four West Darfur villages – remain at large.

"The thousands of people who suffered murder, rape and persecution in Darfur deserve justice," said Dismas Nkunda, Co - Chair of the Darfur Consortium, a group of African and Middle Eastern NGOs. **"Instead, all they have had is disdain from their own government, and empty words from the international community. It is time for that to change."**

The Sudanese government has publicly and repeatedly refused to surrender either Ali Kushayb or Ahmad Harun to the Court. Instead, Ahmad Harun has been promoted to State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, responsible for the welfare of the very victims of his alleged crimes. As well as having considerable power over humanitarian operations, he is responsible for liaison with the international peacekeeping force (UNAMID) tasked with protecting civilians against such crimes. The other suspect, Ali Kushayb, was in custody in Sudan on other charges at the time the ICC warrants were issued, but in October the government announced he had been released, reportedly due to "lack of evidence."

"The Sudanese government has shown blatant disregard both for the authority of the Security Council and for the victims of their brutality," said Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch. **"So far, Sudan has faced no consequences for this brazen snubbing of the Court and the Council".**

The members of "Justice for Darfur" are urging the UN Security Council to pass a resolution calling on Sudan to cooperate fully with the ICC and immediately arrest Ahmad Harun and Ali Kushayb and surrender them to the Court.

"Now is the time for the Security Council to act to ensure that the men are arrested and surrendered to the ICC without further delay, as a first step towards ending impunity for the vast scale of horrific crimes committed in Darfur," said Christopher Hall, Senior Legal Adviser for Amnesty International's International Justice Project.

The group also called on the European Union, a strong supporter of the Court and key player in bringing the Darfur crimes to the ICC Prosecutor, to press Sudan to cooperate with the ICC and comply with the warrants. They called on other states and regional organizations to do so too.

“Through the ‘Justice for Darfur’ campaign, organizations will work together to generate as much pressure as possible on the international community to follow through on its commitment to justice for the victims of these crimes,” said Moataz El Fegiery, Executive Director at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

Editor’s Notes:

The following organizations are part of the “Justice for Darfur” campaign:

Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture - France
Aegis Trust
Amnesty International
Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession
Bahrain Centre for Human Rights
Bahrain Human Rights Society
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Center for Peace, Legal Advice and Psychosocial Assistance – Vukovar
Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre – Nigeria
Coalition for the International Criminal Court
Collectif Urgence Darfour
Darfur Consortium
Darfur Union UK
Fédération Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
International Criminal Court Student Network UK
Kalangala District NGO Forum
Land Center for Human Rights
League of Human Rights
Prepared society Kenya
Recherches et Documentation Juridiques Africaines
Save Darfur Canada
Society for Threatened Peoples International
Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project
Students Taking Action Now: Darfur - Canada
Sudan organization against Torture
UN Watch
Waging Peace

For more information on the “Justice for Darfur” campaign, see: www.justice4darfur.org

Interviewees include:

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