

NO. 0520
(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)
PROMOTING PEACE FOR ALL IN THE SUDAN
ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Background

In the summer of 2004, the world began to notice the atrocities that continue to take place in the western region of the Sudan called Darfur, a place-name that literally means “home of the Fur people.” The name of the region offers a hint of the complexity of the problem, as the sovereign nation of the Sudan is made up of a collection of tribes, a diversity of religious faiths, and a range of ethnicities. As of November 2004 the number of civilian deaths in Darfur is in excess of 70,000, the number of villages destroyed is in the hundreds, and the number of displaced persons exceeds 1.5 million, including 200,000 who have fled to Chad. Those called the janjawid (a term meaning “armed horsemen”) are primarily a migrant population who compete with the agrarian tribes in the western Sudan for basic natural resources. In order to quash possible uprising among the Fur, the central Sudanese government has given the janjawid arms and logistical support. This has both enabled the government to exert control over the remote region from the capital, Khartoum, and has given the janjawid a significant advantage in their local struggle, and they have used their strength to murder, execute, rape, and loot, to name some of the reported violations of human rights the janjawid have committed.

The atrocity perpetrated in Darfur—labeled genocide by many including the US—cannot be considered in isolation from the context of the current civil strife in the Sudan that has raged since 1983 between the government in the north and the tribes of the south. It is mistaken, however, to characterize this conflict as a religious war, pitting Muslim authorities against Black African Christians. Both perpetrators and victims of the violence in Darfur are Muslims, and Muslims throughout the Sudan are both Arab and Black African. A deeper look reveals a more nuanced and complex reality, in Darfur as throughout the Sudan. The conflict involves ethnic, linguistic, and religious aspects to be sure, set against an historical backdrop of advancing Arabization, but it has at its core an attempt to control resources such as oil, water, and arable land.

The United States has played a central role in brokering a truce in the north-south civil war, which has commonly been implemented among contending communities by various trusted tribal and civil parties, including religious organizations like the New Sudan Council of Churches. The U.S. is very interested in encouraging the Sudanese government to carry out its commitments in the treaty. While the U.S. has been critical of the Sudanese government’s support for the janjawid and the resultant tragedy, it has been careful not to apply excessive pressure that would destroy the accomplishment of important breakthroughs on the north-south peace track.

Even as the international community debates how to move forward, the death and wanton destruction continues. International humanitarian relief efforts, including those associated with the churches, have been hampered due to denied access and desperately needed supplies being stolen. Security is lacking, and without the possibility for improvements in health and infrastructure, disease, hunger, and displacement will only continue.

WHEREAS, the crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan continues unabated; and

WHEREAS, violence and threats against the lives, health, homes, and security of the people of the region persist; and

WHEREAS, women in particular have been victims of brutal rape, have been captured and kept as sexual slaves, and have been denied their physical, emotional, economic, and human rights; and

WHEREAS, official policies of exploitation, racial discrimination, and marginalization have been used to incite social divisions and cultural animosities for political control and ideological ends; and

WHEREAS, the Sudan Council of Churches and the New Sudan Council of Churches have condemned the role of the Sudanese government in perpetuating the atrocities; and

WHEREAS, the international community including the United States has condemned the assault on the people of Darfur as genocide, but has not taken effective action to pressure the government of the Sudan to end the assault; and

WHEREAS, the lack of security and restrictions on access in western Sudan have hindered the provision of humanitarian aid by international agencies; and

WHEREAS, the conflict in Darfur should not be separated from the continuing conflict between the northern and southern regions of the Sudan;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the boards of directors of the Justice and Witness Ministries and Common Global Ministries (acting on behalf of the boards of Wider Church Ministries and the Division of Overseas Ministries) deplore the suffering of the Sudanese people over the course of decades of conflict, and particularly in the current crisis in the Darfur region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the boards call upon the Sudanese government to cease hostile actions against civilians, to end support for militant groups committing violence, and to engage immediately in efforts to end the crisis in Darfur; to continue to work diligently to seek a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict against factions in the southern regions; and to institute national policies and encourage civil institutions that respect the language, culture, and religious rights and practices of all Sudanese, regardless of race, gender, or color; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the boards support efforts of the international community to intervene in bringing security to the region to ensure that the basic rights of the people are guaranteed, including the commitment of the African Union to provide peacekeepers to the region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, given the continued systematic violence and widespread murder of civilians, the boards call upon the U.S. government to intensify efforts with the United Nations and the international community to seek a comprehensive peace in the Sudan that would end the conflict throughout the nation and ensure access to security and natural resources for all Sudanese; and authorize Justice and Witness Ministries and Common Global Ministries to advocate with the U.S. and the U.N. authorities to be so committed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the boards call upon the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to engage in prayer, study and public witness regarding the Sudan through resources available through Justice and Witness Ministries, the Common Global Ministries, and Church World Service; and encourage and coordinate worship, educational and public witness efforts among our ecumenical partners and non-governmental organizations that emerged from the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (WCAR); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the boards call upon the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to contribute generously to the One Great Hour of Sharing and Week of Compassion special appeals to support efforts to deliver humanitarian relief and supplies to the region and efforts to aid the refugees and internally displaced of the Sudan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the boards submit this resolution, respectively, to the General Synod and to the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting July 23-27, 2005 in Portland, Oregon.