

FAITH GROUPS' LETTER ON DARFUR

June 29, 2006

The Right Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario
Email: Harper.S@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister,

On January 16, 2006 representatives of various faith groups in Canada addressed a letter to your predecessor and leaders of the opposition parties on the continuing tragedy in Darfur, Sudan. This letter comes to you in the same spirit. We want to commend the Government of Canada for recently increasing its contributions toward ending suffering in Darfur and we strongly urge that more be done.

Canadians welcome the recent Darfur Peace Agreement but remain deeply concerned about the continuing crisis and the challenges faced by humanitarian organisations in their efforts to address the increasing need for food, medical attention, and shelter in the region. Sustained security will be required to stabilize displaced populations and enable aid organizations to attend to their needs.

Though not ideal, the Peace Agreement signed by the Government of Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) led by Mr. Minni Minnawi, one of the rebel groups, represents a welcome first step toward ending the crisis, and bringing peace and security to the people there.

Canada's positive contribution to the peace process and its recent pledges to the humanitarian agencies operating in Darfur and to the African Union's mission in Sudan (AMIS) are important and praiseworthy initiatives. The international community, including Canada, however, needs to pay much greater attention to the security of civilians in Darfur. Both parties to the Peace Agreement continue to violate the cease-fire while the security provisions in the agreement offer no credible guarantees or guarantors, placing much of the responsibility for security with the AMIS, a task for which it has insufficient resources.

As well, the Government of Sudan has a long history of signing agreements only to renege on its obligations. This fragile agreement therefore requires substantial additional support from the international community, including sustained pressure on the Sudanese government, if it is to succeed.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, recognizing the need for much greater security, cautions that the situation is still extremely precarious and has called for the international community to re-engage in Darfur, stating "it is a challenge we cannot refuse. And, having accepted it, we cannot delay."

With those words in mind, we urge the Government of Canada to:

- increase Canada's diplomatic presence in Khartoum;
- press on with its international leadership role on Darfur, paying particular attention to ensuring that the signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement abide by the conditions and timetable to which they have agreed and that all cease-fire agreements are observed;
- be a fair share contributor to the necessary financial, material, human and logistical resources to fully support a guarantee of security in the region through a United Nations peacekeeping presence to enhance the African Union's efforts;
- work with others in engaging all diplomatic means available to address the legitimate concerns of groups which either do not yet form part of the Darfur Peace Agreement or that have a direct stake in a resolution of the conflict including rebel groups, civil society organizations, and victims; and
- immediately increase contributions to humanitarian relief efforts such as those of the United Nations' World Food Programme beyond the recently announced commitments.

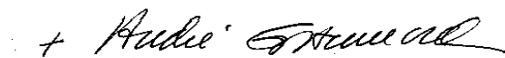
Mr Harper, thank you for your attention to this letter. We would appreciate the opportunity, as a follow-up, to meet with you and your officials to discuss the above points as well as other ways that Canada can help bring real and lasting peace to Darfur.

We look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,



The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison
Primate
Anglican Church of Canada



+ André Gaumond
Archbishop of Sherbrooke
President
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops



His Grace Bishop Bagrat Galstianian
Primate
Armenian Holy Apostolic Church
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