



# High School Action Guide

# Organizing In Your School

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## Get involved. Get Active. Make 2008 the Year we End the Genocide.

This year we need to start as we mean to go on – by getting active in our schools and in our communities, and by making sure that peace and protection for Darfur is a priority for us **and** our government.

The genocide in Darfur has been going on in since March 2003, and the situation keeps getting worse because there hasn't been enough action from the international community. Whilst the governments of countries like the US have been working on this issue, through bodies such as the United Nations, this work has not been consistent enough and has failed to be effective as a result.

Bringing an end to the violence in Darfur is like mending a hole in a roof – it is not enough to have all the materials and expertise, you need to work quickly and constantly until the hole is mended, otherwise it will never be fixed properly and will continue to let the rain in. What the US government has done for Darfur is like using the right tools to mend a hole, but then stopping work before it is properly fixed. We need to make sure that we do what we can to fix things immediately: by making sure that the peacekeepers who are meant to be in Darfur are sent there immediately.

We need a new resolve from our government to ensure that the United Nations/African Union peacekeeping mission (UNAMID) arrives in Darfur as soon as possible. It was supposed to be there on December 31<sup>st</sup>, but because of further obstacles thrown out by the Sudanese government, the peacekeepers haven't been deployed yet. The way we can make this happen is to show how important this issue is: by organizing as many people as possible to send a message to President Bush and call on the presidential candidates to tell us what they would do to end the Darfur crisis as President of the United States.

**We have to stop the genocide, and we need everyone's help.  
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genocide.**

## **What is going on in the Darfur region of Sudan?**

Since 2003 the government of Sudan and armed Arab militias known as the *Janjaweed* have conducted a scorched-earth campaign against the African civilian population of Darfur, terrorizing men, women and children and forcibly displacing the Darfurians from their land. More than 400,000 people have been killed with nearly 3 million displaced from their homes and forced to live in squalid and unsafe refugee camps, with thousands more dying each month of deprivation and disease.

## **What are we doing to stop the Genocide?**

In its response to the genocide, the US government has condemned the violence, which includes torture and mass rape against children as young as 7. The UN has described the situation as “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis”. But there is still no viable peacekeeping force on the ground to protect the Darfurian people. This summer, the UN passed a resolution that would send much needed peacekeepers from the UN to support the 7,000 African Union troops (a ratio of 1:1000) that have struggled to help the Darfurian people for the past 3 years.

## **What is the current situation in Darfur?**

The President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, announced in November that he would not allow UN peacekeepers into the country. As a result, the peacekeepers were not to be deployed by the deadline of December 31<sup>st</sup>. The operating environment for humanitarian agencies to reach those in need is currently at its lowest point in 3 years, and child mortality rates have been reported by the Red Cross as the highest since the conflict began in 2003.

## **What needs to happen now?**

An emergency meeting of the UN Security Council must be scheduled to discuss deployment of the UNAMID peacekeepers. If President al-Bashir continues to delay the mission by renegeing on his agreement to UNAMID, the humanitarian needs of the Darfurian people must take priority over diplomatic horse trading. The international community have an obligation to act and must send the peacekeepers now.

## **What can you do to help?**

The Darfurian people need the help of everyone who can write a letter, make a phone call, or even tell a friend about the horrific genocide taking place in the Darfur region. A small action taken by many people can influence local representatives, national governments, world leaders, and international bodies to use their critical influence to bring about the much needed peace and protection in Darfur.

By organizing in your school you can have a huge impact - because many people don't know that the horrific violence in Darfur still continues and are often unsure if there is any way that they can really help. We need to **energize, educate** and **engage** our schools in order to stop the genocide. If people hear about what's happening in Darfur and how important it is that they contact their representatives about the UNAMID peacekeeping mission, we know that they will help. That's why we need to make sure that every school gets active and every person gets the opportunity to find out how they can make a difference.

This guide sets out a plan of action that can be used in every school, and provides a list of resources that you can use either by accessing our website [www.dagsc.org](http://www.dagsc.org) or by contacting Field Organizer Jo Read ([darfuractions@aol.com](mailto:darfuractions@aol.com)).

The South Carolina Darfur Action Group are here to support you with your work and to provide whatever help we can, but we also want to hear from you about your schools ideas for how you want to get involved. We look forward to hearing from you.

## 3 Steps to Getting Active

1. **Get involved:** your school may already have been involved with the Rally for Darfur held at the Statehouse in Columbia last October, and may have had a speaker from the Darfur Action Group at an meeting or informational event. Many high schools have also formed STAND (Students Taking Action Now: Darfur) groups, or mission committees working to raise awareness of the Darfur crisis.

You can find out if your school currently has a Darfur group by asking at your school office, or speaking to a teacher if there is a faculty member who has been involved with Darfur work. If there isn't then set up your own group by getting some friends involved and ask a faculty member if they will act as your advisor.

If a group already exists, contact the organizers to see if they currently have any plans and to let them know that you want to get involved with organizing in school. They may be busy this semester, or even have graduated, and would be very interested to hear from someone who can continue the Darfur action.

It may take some time for the school office or faculty staff to get back to you, so remember to follow up with them if you don't get a reply straightaway.

2. **Get organized:** The best way to get people involved is to let them know about what you are doing! You can write an article for your school newspaper – or even better, talk to the Editor and ask if they will write an Editorial. (Sample articles are available from Jo Read by emailing [darfuractions@aol.com](mailto:darfuractions@aol.com)).

It is also helpful to contact other groups working on similar issues, such as Africa-focused groups, mission committees, or human rights groups such as Amnesty International. By meeting with organizers from other groups you can gain access to people who are already interested in similar issues, and they may also be able to help with spreading the word about your group.

One of the best ways that you can publicize is by Facebook: you can join the 'SC Votes for Darfur' group to find up-to-date information about events happening in SC, and you can use it as a template to set up your own high school Facebook group. Invite your friends to join the group, and then ask administrators for similar groups to message their members about your group.

It is also useful if you can direct people to a website about your group – this may be available to student groups through the school's website, but we can also give your group a page on the DAGSC website (email [darfuractions@aol.com](mailto:darfuractions@aol.com)). You will also need an email address, which you can get by signing up for a free account (e.g. Google, AOL) or creating a campus listserve (email group) if available.

3. **Get active:** Now that you have a way to contact people, you need to organize an event. A good start-off is to have an action-meet or rally (an outdoor rally will help draw in other people who pass by and see what you're doing) to tell people why urgent action is needed and to pass out information. A great way to get extra publicity is to turn this into a photo-op for your school newspaper – let them know what time you are meeting and then ask everyone to stand together for a photograph before you distribute information.

It helps to keep people involved if you can give them something to take away with them – you can distribute factsheets and sign people up to a petition, and we also have T-shirts, bumper stickers, buttons and lapel stickers for you to give out (a group picture from your event with everyone wearing the shirts makes a great photo-op!).

The most important thing to do at your event is to get people energized about the issue. Do this by showing how urgent the situation is and telling people how important it is that they take action – then sign them up to join your group, **making sure that you have everyone's email addresses**. You'll probably also find that some people will volunteer to help out further by joining your group's organizing committee, so it may be useful to plan a committee meeting for the next day that you can invite them to.

After your event, you need to make sure that you collect in all the sign-up sheets and input all the addresses into an email list as soon as you can. Send a 'thank you' email to your list the next day to repeat the information given at the event. It also helps if you encourage people to forward the email on to friends who may be interested to get involved. Finally, you can use Facebook to invite your email contacts to join your campus Facebook group (simply save your group list in your email address book and Facebook can do all the rest).

Now that you have your group involved, organized, and active, the real work can begin. There are many different activities and events that you can hold in school (see the organizer's cheat sheet on the next page for ideas), but you need to make sure that you don't overwhelm people with emails or place too many demands on their time at once. Try not to email your list more than once a week – by getting people signed up to Facebook you have additional ways of getting information across to people.

It's also important to make sure that action isn't restricted to school activities – there are lots of events and opportunities to get involved happening across the state. Let people know about candidate events and other activities in the area that they can attend by signing up for the DAGSC Action Alerts (email [darfuractions@aol.com](mailto:darfuractions@aol.com) to be added to the list).

Don't forget to let us know how things are going and when your events are happening – we'd love to come along!

# Organizer's Cheat Sheet

This cheat sheet is a listing of resources available for your group to use and different ideas for events to hold on campus. If you have other ideas or resources that you'd like to see listed please let us know.

## Informational materials:

- Darfur Factsheet
- Peace & Protection Petition
- Faith Action Packet
- Everyday Actions Kit
- SC Asks The Candidates: Where the Next President Stands on Darfur

## Action materials:

- T-shirts
- Bumper stickers
- Buttons
- Lapel stickers
- Banners

## Publicity materials:

- Community announcement
- News article
- Editorial
- Press release

## Ideas for events:

- Letter-writing session
- Talk/speaker event
- Presidential candidate forum
- Film/documentary screening
- Meeting with School board members/elected officials
- Raise awareness at a school sporting event
- Petition-signing

