

Save Darfur, Knowledge is Power

Contributed by Nick Kosin
Friday, 11 April 2008

On Thursday, April 4, the Student Organization for Diversity in association with the Michigan Darfur Coalition presented a documentary film regarding the death and overall devastation going on in Darfur right now. The film, titled "Facing Sudan," takes an in-depth look at what horrors the people of Darfur are facing. The crowd in attendance stared at the projection screen, eyes wide and jaws dropped, almost as if wondering "How can something like this be going on today."

For those who are not aware of what is happening in Darfur right now, the best word to describe the current situation is genocide. Yes, genocide, the same type of genocide that can be related to the Holocaust and the events that unfolded in Rwanda. The ongoing crisis began in 2003 when two rebel groups, both fighting for an end to the neglect and oppression their people have been facing for years, began lashing out at the Sudanese government. The people forming these rebel groups are known as "blue skins," and are the ones targeted by the government. The two rebel groups are known as the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The Sudanese government did not tolerate the resistance and actually supplied weapons and supplies to Arab militias to put an end to the movement. This government funded militia has come to be known as the Janjaweed.

The government lapdogs known as the Janjaweed have wiped out entire villages, destroying food and water supplies along the way. They have tortured murdered, raped and ravaged tens of thousands of Darfuris, all with direct support from the Sudanese government. Furthermore, the government has systematically relocated thousands of these refugees, who make their living as farmers, to salt plateaus, making farming impossible which results in thousands of deaths due to starvation. While the actual number of deaths is unknown, it is recognized that 400,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million have been removed from their homes and live in refugee camps. More than half of all the innocent people killed have been children.

The Student Organization for Diversity, headed by Dr. R. Kirk Mauldin, offered petitions for willing volunteers to sign urging our state to divest funds from the Sudanese Oil market. Twenty-two states have already withdrawn all funds from Sudan and Michigan is on the verge of being number twenty-three.

Anyone can help the cause in Darfur, as long as you are willing to take the time to do something. It is easy for us as a nation to forget there is a world outside of our borders. We can all do something to help; we just need to be willing. Lance Boehmer, a member of the Student Organization for Diversity, had this to say, "The atrocities in Darfur are just that... atrocities. People need to take the time to know what is happening there (Darfur), because each and every person can help." Know what is happening in the world and make a difference in it. Help stop the genocide in Darfur.

For further information, please go to savedarfur.org and help a nation in need.