



Amnesty International Eltham Group

Protecting and Defending Human Rights

August 2007

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ethamai>

Vol. 1 Issue 1.



Next Meeting: Thursday 16th August 2007 International Campaign to Ban Landmines Australian Network Inc

Welcome

Welcome to Newsletter Volume 1 Issue 1 for the Eltham Amnesty International group. The purpose of this newsletter is disseminate news of the group's activities, both inside and outside the group. I would very much hope members can contribute articles and notices of up coming events to this newsletter .

This Month's Meeting

This month we hope to have Mark Zirnsak, the National Coordinator of the Australian Network to Ban Landmines speak to us.

The Australian Network to Ban Landmines has branches throughout the country and works towards:

- Universalisation of the Mine Ban Treaty (Ottawa Treaty) to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of antipersonnel landmines,
- Funding and resources for landmine clearance and landmine awareness programs.
- Funding and resources for landmine survivors

Branch Activities include:

Fund raising, holding exhibitions of campaign material, holding information meetings with visiting speakers, organising landmine awareness programs, writing letters and other lobbying activities.

For further information, check out the ICBL Australia web site. They have a number of newsletters on Cluster Bombs, and other forms of land mines.

<http://australia.icbl.org/>

Deadly Legacy – Cluster Bombs

Extract from ICBL Australia
Memorandum 77 December 2006

Cluster bombs release a quantity of bomblets which disperse over a wide area. Cluster munitions can be dropped from aircraft, but can also be delivered by rocket or artillery projectile. The resulting ground area spread with bomblets (designed injury zone) is up to 200 metres X 400 metres, though may be up to 1 square km in extent. The size of the injury zone is influenced by the height of the release from the aircraft, the setting of the mechanical timer which releases the bomblets, the spinning rate of the bomb, and other factors such as wind, speed, angle and terrain.

Cluster bomblets pose a particular danger to civilians compared to other weapon systems because of the broad area of effect they have, lack of accuracy and the number of explosive 'duds' left behind. Many of the bomblets do not explode on impact and then can lie around until they explode when touched, killing and maiming for years after a conflict ends. They are just as dangerous, insidious and lethal as anti-personnel landmines. The volatility of armed cluster bomblet 'duds' makes them more dangerous than many other types of unexploded ordnance (UXO). The quality of cluster bomblet fuses are usually inferior to those used for other bombs, as the high number of cluster bomblets encourages manufacturers to keep costs down. This increases the number of duds. The UN Mine Action Coordination Centre office in Kosovo reported that the dud rate for all types of cluster bombs was 8%-11%, though deminers quote up to 30%.

Bushes, trees, and soft soil can minimise the initial impact and result in more duds. The height of the release from the aircraft, combined with the setting on the mechanical timer which releases the bomblets from the bomb, may also influence the dud rate as can the age of the submunitions.

Darfur Australia Network

<http://www.darfuraustralia.org/>



Kass town with IDP camps¹

The town of Kass, camp for internally displaced peoples from the Darfur crisis.



World Refugee Day 2007

Last month our special guest speaker was Abdelhadi Matar, President of the Darfur Community Association of Australia, who talked about the Darfur conflict in Sudan.

He talked about how the conflict was ethnically one and not religious or environmentally based.

The Darfur Australia Network have a petition to urge the Australian Government to add weight to international calls to deploy a robust peacekeeping force to Darfur

They are hoping to collect 10,000 signatures by August.

DAN has been operating in Melbourne since May 2006. DAN meets regularly in either Carlton or Dandenong.

DAN Uni Group

DAN has recently formed a student group at Melbourne Uni. To find out more or get involved please email Anastasia at chung2@ugrad.unimelb.edu.au

A university group is also being opened at Monash University in Semester 2, 2007. For details on how to get involved please email volunteer@darfuraustralia.org.

DAN Volunteers

DAN are currently looking for volunteers to assist their work. While they welcome volunteers with any skills and abilities, they are specifically looking for the following;

- Divestment Campaign Assistant
- Migration Agents (Refugee Working Group)
- Bookkeeper

For further information about any of these positions, or to find out more about volunteering with DAN, please email : volunteer@darfuraustralia.org.

The Situation in Darfur

Since 2003 the citizens in the western region of Sudan have been ravaged by a cruel war that refuses to distinguish civilians from soldiers. Human rights violations in Darfur have continued unabated, leading to the mass displacement of an estimated 3.5 million people. The violence against civilians in Darfur has continued into 2007 and left the area at severe risk of famine. Reports suggest that 400,000 people have been killed and a further 4 million are dependent on humanitarian aid and currently face food shortages. The Darfur crisis has been compared in media and academia to the Rwandan genocide of 1994 after former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan highlighted the similarities.

The Sudanese government has failed to protect the people of Darfur and is implicated in, if not responsible for, many of the attacks on civilians in Darfur. The government has admitted mobilising the militias but denies having any authority over them. Reports since the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed on 5 May 2006 show that violence has increased. The DPA has led to increased warring between factions of the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and significantly undermined the neutrality of the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) as a party to the DPA. This has resulted in increased attacks upon the African Union soldiers and cemented mistrust in their capacity to protect civilians in Darfur.

The key issue in this crisis is enabling the protection of civilians in Darfur. Despite the 14,000 aid workers in Darfur there remains no stability or safety for millions of people at risk. It is crucial that the citizens of Australia, along with citizens around the world, act to show solidarity with and support for the people of Darfur, and pressure our respective governments, as well as the United Nations to act to create security and safety in this crisis ridden corner of the world.



Remember the Forgotten People...

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives and Senators of the Parliament of Australia

For the past four years, war has raged in Darfur, western Sudan. According to the United Nations, approximately 400,000 people have been killed and 3 million displaced. 4 million people remain dependent on humanitarian aid, representing approximately two thirds of the population of Darfur. This has led to the situation being repeatedly referred to as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. The people of Darfur have been forgotten by the international community – we have failed to stop the bloodshed.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the primary international agency mandated with the protection of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In 2003 the Government of Australia halved funding to this agency. Further funding of the UNHCR could, in part, enable the agency to more effectively protect those displaced by crises such as the conflict in Darfur.

The majority of Darfuri refugees are situated in Chad and Cairo, where the UNHCR provides humanitarian assistance. At present, however, there is no functioning system of Refugee Status Determination (RSD). Consequently Darfuri refugees are precluded from possible recommendation for resettlement to a third country such as Australia.

We the undersigned, call on the Members of the House and Senators to remember the forgotten people of Darfur by:

- 1.) Providing adequate support of the international agencies mandated with the protection of Refugees and IDPs by restoring funding to the UNHCR to pre – 2003 levels.
- 2.) Acknowledging the limited operational capacity of the UNHCR by;
 - a.) Investigating why the majority of the Refugees displaced by the conflict in Darfur have no access to the UNHCR’s RSD mechanism and the subsequent possibility of resettlement recommendation, and
 - b.) Adequately reflecting the severity of the crisis in Darfur in Australia’s Offshore Humanitarian Program’s annual intake.
- 3.) Providing material and political support to the;
 - a.) Proposed United Nations-African Union (UN-AU) hybrid peacekeeping mission to Darfur,
 - b.) And diplomatic efforts towards sustainable peace in the region.

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE

Please send signed and completed copies (before August 1 2007) to P.O Box 1249. Collingwood. VIC. 3066.

What Are Human Rights

What are human rights ?

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that people are entitled to simply because they are human beings.

Human Rights are Universal

They belong to everyone, regardless of their race, sexuality, citizenship, gender, nationality, ethnicity, or abilities.

Human Rights are Inherent

We are all born with human rights. They belong to people simply because they are human beings.

Human Rights are Inalienable

They cannot be taken away – period. No person, corporation, organization, or even government can deprive another person of his or her rights.

Human Rights can be Violated

Although they are inalienable, they are not invulnerable. Violations can stop people from enjoying their rights, but they do not stop the rights from existing.

Human Rights are Essential

They are essential for freedom, justice, and peace.



Amnesty International Eltham Group
Protecting and Defending Human Rights
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About The Eltham Amnesty International

Amnesty International Eltham Group has been fighting for human rights for just on 25 years. We are active in letter writing to highlight violations of human rights. The particular campaigns we are currently interested in are Iran and Woman's rights.

Eltham Amnesty Meet on the third Thursday of each month
at 8 pm, in the Eltham Uniting Church meeting room,
corner of Main Road and John Street Eltham
(enter via John Street).

For further information on the Eltham Amnesty International Group,
contact our membership coordinator Brad on
(Mobile) 0438 361 955

or Email John at jekent@optushome.com.au