

Darfur Women Action Group Observes International Women's Day

Every day we hear stories of resilience, tragedy and horror, and yet, international institutions continue to betray and ignore the women of Darfur. *Your voice can change this.*

Dear supporters,

On this International Women's Day, we would like to bring your attention to the daily suffering of the women of Darfur—and to honor their resilience. Despite the fact that Darfuri women are still under genocidal attack and continue to be victims and survivors of brutal and systematic mass rape, they continue to persevere and serve as the lifeblood of their communities. Today, on International Women's Day, we need to let them know that they are not alone, and that there is hope.

Darfur Women Action Group strives to change the way the world responds to crimes committed against women in Darfur and we need your help to do so.

Today, we will honor some of these brave women by sharing their story. On February 5th, two women, three girls and two boys from the Zamzam camp for displaced Sudanese set out on a 13-kilometer journey to collect straw to make bed mats, hats, baskets and other items essential to daily living. Being able to complete this task safely is something many of us would take for granted. But in Darfur, common activities like this are fraught with risk, and is all too common, this one ended in tragedy.

“A sheikh of Zamzam camp for the displaced, near to El Fasher, capital of North Darfur, told Radio Dabanga that on Monday, a group of herders attacked two women, three girls, and two boys while they were collecting straw at Um Hashaba area, 12 kilometres west of Zamzam camp.

The attackers beat the boys, took the women and girls at gunpoint, and raped them repeatedly from 4 pm until 10 pm.

The sheikh said the incident was reported to the police and the victims given medical treatment.

A patrol under the leadership of the Commissioner of El Fasher went after the culprits on Tuesday, but there are no reports of arrests.”

We were horrified by the news reports of this incident (<https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/women-girls-gang-raped-in-north-darfur-attack>). These women and children will be expected to pick themselves and find a way to continue to persevere in the face of the type of adversity that is unimaginable. *They need to know the world is watching. They need your support.*

What is happening in Darfur?

For more than 15 years, the Sudanese government's military forces and their allied militia, the Janjaweed, have carried out systematic attacks against the Darfuri people based on their ethnicity. They have bombed villages, abducted civilians, looted private property, and used rape against women and girls as a weapon of war.

Rapes in Darfur are well-planned and deliberately orchestrated attacks to tear apart families, break down leadership structures, and leave long-term social, emotional, and physical scars on entire communities. All of these tactics are used by the Sudanese government and its allied militia to perpetuate genocide. No research has been conducted to determine the exact number of women raped and the impact of sexual violence on women and girls. Regrettably, not a single perpetrator has been brought to justice.

As a result, more than 3 million Darfuris were forced to leave their villages for internally displacement camps or ones located in Chad. More than 80% of these people are women and children. The government of Omar al-Bashir has blocked much of their access to humanitarian assistance, and they have little access to education or protection.

You can help. The saddest part of all of this is that it can be stopped, but the world community refuses to act. World leaders are convinced by the Sudanese government's narrative that the crises in Darfur is over, even though news reports confirm that the violence in Darfur is progressively getting worse. In November alone, 50 villages in one region were burned, displacing 50,000 people. In February, the government declared a state of emergency allowing unfettered ability to arrest anyone who questions their authority.

If your elected leaders knew that you were aware of the situation in Darfur, they might change their policies. Currently, Western governments are removing sanctions, allowing al-Bashir to travel freely, reducing peacekeeping forces, establishing new diplomatic relations, and taking other steps to normalize relations, But we know that the more freedom al-Bashir attains, the more violent he becomes.

Please join us this month to speak up for the women in Darfur, empower survivors, and seek justice for victims.

How can you help?

Please take the following actions to help DWAG:

- Share the story of the women and girls of Zamzam and educate 5-10 of your friends and family. Please let us know their reactions. Report back to us via Facebook, Twitter, or via email at policy@darfurwomenaction.org.
- Support our Stand with Sudan campaign by contacting your member of Congress, the United Nations Security Council, or writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Follow this link for more information: <http://www.darfurwomenaction.org/stand-with-sudan/>
- Share our statement on social media and use the hashtag #StandWithSudan.
- Donate to our organization to support our "Women Empowering Women" project by following this link: <http://www.darfurwomenaction.org/donate/>

- Organize a screening of our “Violence Against Women” video to educate more people. Contact us and we will send you a link!
- Organize a fundraising event for DWAG. We will give you all the tools to help us reach our fundraising goals.
- Invite DWAG to speak at your school, congregation or community in order to educate more people about the situation in Darfur.

“Every day I hear stories of resilience, tragedy and horror. And yet, international institutions continue to betray and ignore the women of Darfur. Together we can change this.”

Niemat Ahmadi, DWAG President.