

Divestment Policy to End Genocide in Darfur - 2007

You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor (Leviticus, 19:16).

The genocidal violence is continuing unabated in Darfur despite many years of pressure on the Sudanese government by the United Nations, sanctions by the United States and countless other countries, and global grass roots censure. More than 400,000 Darfurian villagers have been killed and over 250,000 have been displaced. Even those seeking shelter in refugee camps in Chad are not safe. The Sudanese-backed Janjaweed make forays in Darfur and over the Chad border to attack the refugees, also placing the humanitarian aid workers in great danger, forcing many to leave the area.

Since 2004, WRJ has been actively involved in calling for an end to the genocide; we have worked with advocacy coalitions in seeking United States government legislation and funding for peacekeeping operations, disaster and famine assistance, and pressure on the government in Sudan. WRJ women around North America have participated in advocacy campaigns and rallies to raise public awareness and contributed funds for work on humanitarian aid for those fleeing the violence. We have called on the leaders of the United Nations, our federal legislators, and the president to use diplomatic and political means to end the genocide.

For over twenty years the United States has continued economic sanctions on the Sudanese government and in 1997 it prohibited U.S. companies from doing business there. Increasingly there have been calls for targeted divestment from mutual funds and businesses that invest in firms that do business in Sudan to force the Khartoum government to cease funding the military violence. The Save Darfur Coalition, of which WRJ is a member, advocates ending investment in any companies that help finance genocide in Darfur; and many states, cities, and universities have done so. The Union for Reform Judaism Executive Committee adopted a resolution calling for divestment from Sudan on March 12, 2007.

In considering a divestment strategy, WRJ would seek to protect civilians and keep humanitarian programs intact. Any divestment recommendations would be narrowly focused on reducing government funds that can be used for genocide. The primary divestment strategy used by divesting agencies is the Sudan Divestment Task Force's Targeted Divestment Model. This strategy recommends divesting only from companies that "provide revenue (or arms) to the government, impart minimal benefit to the country's underprivileged, and have expressed no significant corporate governing policy regarding the current situation in Darfur."^[1] The Sudan Divestment Task Force also provides resources to aid in making decisions about divestment.

With our tradition of valuing the sanctity of life, and our people's experience of genocide, we cannot stand by; we need to take action for the people of Darfur. WRJ resolves to:

1. Examine WRJ investment funds to assess if any involve companies that currently provide revenue or arms to the government of Sudan. If so, call on the WRJ Investment Committee to consider divestment from those companies.
2. Urge sisterhood members to consider divestment, within their own portfolios, from these same companies.
3. Urge sisterhood members to support targeted divestment policies by the federal government, states, cities, universities, and other agencies.
4. Call on Canadian sisterhoods to assess the position of their federal government and provinces on divestment and take appropriate action.
5. Continue to advocate diplomatic and political efforts to end the genocide.

[1] Sudan Divestment Task Force Proposal to the Save Darfur Coalition, Sudan Divestment Task Force.

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home