

Don't forget Darfur

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The Guardian

November 28, 2007

http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/philip_honour/2007/11/act_for_darfur.html

Listening to the various statements at the UN last night concerning the forthcoming UN mission in Darfur, it is hard not to feel disheartened.

This - coupled with the refusal by various delegates to place Darfur on the agenda at the impending EU-African Union summit in Lisbon, and with the impending international criminal court ruling that is expected to confirm the widely shared opinion that the Sudanese government is still harbouring internationally condemned war criminals - means that the end of year report card looks very bleak the people in Darfur.

It is hard, with an ongoing situation like this, not to get war-weary as an observer. It is easy to forget about the humanitarian situation when talking about the political situation and it is easy to forget about it completely when 25 million people's personal details go missing in the post, but we mustn't forget.

As we come up to the start of December, it is important to renew pressure on the Sudanese government to stop closing camps for internally displaced people, to comply completely with existing UN resolutions and to unilaterally allow peacekeeping troops from all countries to join the hybrid force, with no exceptions.

It is easy to forget about the other side of the conflict as well. If we condemn the Sudanese government for backing acts of forced mass relocation, disrupting humanitarian aid efforts and oppressing a section of their people, it is also important to condemn the actions of the Justice and Equality Movement for kidnapping four oil workers - although they have now been freed - and for boycotting the peace talks in Libya, earlier this month. It is also important to condemn and raise attention to the car-jackings that are taking place more and more frequently, increasing the risk of death to aid workers in the area.

There is no easy way to end this conflict, but we have to keep trying. On Sunday, at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn, the first Act for Darfur event will take place. This is a chance to learn more about the complicated political landscape surrounding this situation, express your support for the Darfuri community and, most importantly, to look at different ways of putting pressure on all parties involved in this conflict.

The next year will be crucial for the people of Darfur. The situation there has become the most pressing humanitarian crisis in the world today and it is only going to get worse unless continued pressure is placed on the major players.

Darfur at this time does not need you to donate to a charity. It needs you to write letters to your MPs, to the Chinese ambassador, to protest outside the Sudanese embassy, to write letters to newspapers, to phone in to late night radio shows, to boycott businesses who continue to work with the Sudanese government, to do anything which will keep the crisis in the public eye.

People are sceptical that public pressure results in political change. It's time to prove that it does. You don't have to be Mia Farrow to make a difference.