

April 11, 2006

Dear Friend,

I am sorry that I cannot join you in person to acknowledge the wonderful work of the Society of Young Philanthropists – particularly their efforts this year to help alleviate some of the suffering of the people of Darfur, Sudan who are victims of the latest genocide.

As Elie Wiesel has said, speaking about Darfur, “What is at stake is our own humanity.”

The darkest place in the world today is Sudan – dark because what is happening is hard to understand and happens too far out of the interest span of our media, dark because the way out is not clear, dark because evil is being perpetrated by one group of people against another in precisely the way we swore we would not allow to happen ever again.

I went to Darfur in August, 2004 to bear witness, to assess humanitarian needs, and to ensure that funds provided by the American Jewish community would be used effectively. I went back in October, 2005, to the refugee camps in Chad, and I traveled with three prominent rabbis and the head of the Los Angeles Federation so that they could join me in bearing witness.

In six different camps with different translators, I met many of the displaced farmers and listened to their chilling stories that were chillingly similar. “First,” they said, “the planes came.” This means, friends, that their government bombed their villages, dropping anything from old refrigerators to scrap car chasses – whatever would smash houses and kill humans. They continued – “Then men on horses rode in, often yelling ethnic slurs and shooting wildly. They stole, they raped and branded women, they killed. They stuffed dead bodies and animal carcasses into the wells to poison the water supply, and they burned villages to the ground.”

So what can we do?

Confronted with the realities of this ongoing genocide, we cannot remain silent. We must provide additional humanitarian aid, pressure the US and the UN to increase food supplies, and demand protection for aid workers. We must demand new and additional actions by the governments and political leaders of the world. Financial support for efforts made by AJWS and other international humanitarian agencies is critical, but it is also important for us to expand our political advocacy and education efforts. We must increase pressure on the US Government and the international community to do whatever is necessary to end the violence and suffering.

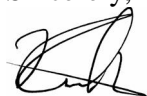
The epithet, “Never Again,” must not be reserved for Jews alone; rather, Jews must be the guardians of this call for action, highly sensitive and responsive to all attempts by any people to annihilate another people.

Finally, the question for our generation is: Have we learned the lessons of history or are we doomed to repeat them? The answer lies in how we respond in Sudan.

It is time to speak up, loudly, on behalf of the people in Darfur who need our help. Let us not be found wanting.

Thank you, again, to the Society of Young Philanthropists for taking leadership on this most critical issue and for your Donation of \$45,000.

Sincerely,



Ruth Messinger
Executive Director
American Jewish World Service