



Targeted Government Divestment from Sudan

Since 2003, at least 400,000 people from the Darfur region of Sudan have been killed by Sudanese armed forces and the Sudanese government-backed militia known as the “Janjaweed.” More than 2 million innocent civilians have been forced to flee their homes for displaced-persons camps in Sudan or refugee camps in neighboring Chad, and more than 3.5 million men, women, and children have come to rely entirely on international aid for survival.

Not since the Rwandan genocide of 1994 has the world seen such a calculated campaign of displacement, starvation, rape, and mass slaughter.

Both the Clinton and Bush administrations have recognized these atrocities – carried out against civilians primarily by the government of Sudan and its allied Janjaweed militias – as genocide.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington recognizes that while Presidents Clinton and Bush, the United States Congress, the State Department and other world leaders have called for the cessation of violence in Sudan,

the genocide continues still.

The Jewish Community Relations Council also recognizes that while we have been at the forefront of demands by communities nationwide that the world act to stop the murder of innocents in Sudan,

the genocide continues still.

Recently, six states including California, Illinois, Oregon, New Jersey, Maine and Connecticut have passed legislation calling for divestment of state funds from companies doing business with Sudan. Fifteen others, including Maryland and Virginia, will consider such legislation in the coming months. Virginia’s bill, if passed, would require the state’s pension plan to divest from specifically targeted companies operating in Sudan.

Though the Jewish community, as a rule, seeks to avoid the use of politically motivated boycotts and other economic measures, targeted divestment is a useful advocacy tool that can be used in those extreme cases when discourse has failed to bring an end to such

egregious practices. In 2005, a plenum of Jewish Community Relations Councils throughout the United States, recognized the genocide in Darfur as one of these extreme cases.

Targeted divestment will likely deprive the Sudanese government of the resources it needs to continue on its path of destruction, exerting enough pressure to save the lives of thousands of innocent men, women and children. In its 2005 plenum, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs called on the international community to “impose targeted sanctions on the Sudanese government and its business interests as a means of pressuring the government to end the genocide.”

The Interfaith Sudan Divestment Task Force has defined criteria for appropriately targeting companies for divestment. To meet these criteria, a company:

- 1) Should have a business relationship with the government of Sudan or a government-created project,
- 2) Provide little benefit to Sudan’s underprivileged population and
- 3) Lack a business a policy acknowledging and addressing (in practice) that is does business with a government involved in the perpetration of genocide whose resources come primarily from foreign, direct investments.

Thus, the Jewish Community Relations Council resolves that the governments in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia must adopt requirements for targeted divestment by their agencies of any investments held in companies that fit the aforementioned criteria, as defined by the Sudan Divestment Task Force.

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