



One Voice

Testimonies of Darfurian Mothers

Mother's Day Action

The ongoing genocide in Darfur is getting worse every day. On this **Mother's Day** we encourage mothers everywhere to remember the true meaning of the holiday and to raise their voices on behalf of the mothers of Darfur.

We are asking people to **gather in their living rooms, places of worship, community centers, local theaters and street corners to participate in a reading of One Voice**, a collection of real life testimonies from Darfurian mothers.

We encourage you to video this experience and send to ktj@stopgenocidenow.org so we can bring a compiled video of this to the refugees on our next visit. This event would be a **strong gesture of support** for the brave men and women participating in an ongoing fast in solidarity with the victims of genocide in Darfur.

Mother's Day will be **day 13 for Activist-Actress Mia Farrow on her water only fast**. You can direct people to learn more about the ongoing genocide at <http://fastdarfur.org>.

Anna Jarvis, at the beginning of the 20th century lobbied for the observance of Mother's Day with fitting services memorializing mothers in churches and homes in Philadelphia. She wrote thousands of letters to prominent ministers, teachers, business and professional men about the plan. **It is our turn to gather, memorialize and write thousands of letters on behalf of mothers who still have no voice.**

With 2.6 billion spent every Mother's Day and another 6.8 million on greeting cards, a simple reading for the women of Darfur is an easy way to give back.

Farha
Daughter and Sister
Caretaker for 3 siblings, age 14

It was early in the morning, when bombs started to fall on my village from helicopters and airplanes.

The Janjaweed, the Arab militia, had our village surrounded. They were shooting at us. Whichever way we ran, they were there killing men and boys, and brutalizing women and girls.

My father was shot and killed. I saw it.

In the chaos my family was separated. I had to run. The government soldiers were there too, shooting at us as we fled the village.

Outside of the village, I found my three sisters and my mother. But we couldn't find our brother. We walked twenty-five days across the desert to make it to a refugee camp in Chad.

We were given a tent and received some food and water.

After a while, my mother went back to Darfur to look for my brother, but we haven't seen her in 41 days.



Now, I am taking care of my three younger sisters. I collect firewood and cook, wash clothes and fetch water. But these things don't stop me from wanting to study.

I want to be a teacher. But in a year there will be no more school, since there is no secondary school.

Sometimes when there are no classes because it's too windy, I get together with friends to tell stories about our villages in Darfur, about the way life used to be.

We keep telling the stories, until, sometimes, we weep.



Fatna **Widowed, Mother of 7**

I was walking with my husband in the market very early in the morning.

First came the airplanes that dropped bombs. Then Arab tribesmen, riding horses and in the backs of pick-up trucks, rode into town shooting.

They killed my husband in front me.

Gunfire was coming from planes in the sky, and the Janjaweed chased my through the burning homes.

There was not time to bury my husband. There were 60 others killed. No time to bury anyone.

I walked 20 days with my seven children with no food, no water, nothing. We walked at night, stopping only to make a small fire to warm up from the harsh chill.

We hid from the militia during the day. Attacks from above and bullets from the surrounding area chased us across the border this camp, in Chad.

I am suffering. I am suffering here in this camp.

We only have one tent for us to share with two small beds. When it rains, the water comes in. When it is windy, no one can sleep. I had to cut part of the tent off to use for a blanket.



Without peace, I will not return to Darfur. I want to, desperately.

My children are my only hope. With education, they can return to Darfur and make a difference. We wait for peace so we can all go back.



Dajhima
Mother and Darfur refugee
Attacked Ramadan 2004

When we were living in Sudan, we had so many things, like vegetables, fruit trees, and things we could prepare. We could cultivate our land.

Here is like a desert; nothing grows. Food that we are given is not enough, but there is nothing we can do but wait for monthly distribution.



Early in the morning, around four AM, they started bombing us, and we had to leave all.

During the attack, if you were strong you can carry two of your children; but if not, they were left behind.

The helicopters were bombing from the sky. The Janjaweed were riding their horses, and they would surround you and kill you.

During the running, so many people were down. They were dead and injured. If you were holding your son's hand and he escaped from you, there is no way to get him again because of the masses of people running. So many were injured, and so many were killed.

My son Ibrahim escaped from me, and it was eight days before I saw him again.

If they saw that you were wearing nice clothing, they would point the gun at you and tell you to remove it all. They would take everything. If they saw a girl that was about to be mature, they would take her away.

They killed my father, and the son of another family member. From my family in-law, they killed six of their men.

No time to bury them. We had to run.

When we crossed to the border, some people from Chad helped us and gave us food. After more than a month, the humanitarians came and brought us to this camp.

I thank God for everything. It is part of life. We are still alive.

Achta **Wife and Mother**

After the attack on our village, we were forced to flee to Chad.

I was carrying my four year-old baby on my back. But he was sick with diarrhea. We didn't have anything to help him. No medicine, and no water.

He died on my back one day from dehydration, and we had to leave his body in the desert.

We made it to a refugee camp, and are grateful for the tent and the camp that was here for us. We have been living here for almost six years now. It is hard. We are struggling.

Last year, my youngest daughter, Marymouda fell ill. She was just an infant. She was sick for two weeks. We took her to the clinic but they could not help her. She died. It must have been her time.

I thank god that I still have my twins, Bashar and Beshir, and their sister, Guisma and, now my youngest, Abdelmouni. By God's good grace sometimes they are all healthy.



Picture taken before the death of Marymouda (baby in Achta's arms)

We don't receive enough food or water for our family. Our ration card is for a family of four, but we are six. Even that is not enough. Fifty kilograms of sorghum, that I must grind by hand, and 50 kilograms of wheat cereal, 12 cups of yellow split peas, 4 cups of sugar, and a few tablespoons of salt. We don't get everything every month. Sometimes my husband risks his life to leave the camp to find more food for our children.

I do not know when I will be able to return home, today or tomorrow, or in the future. I am hoping that there will be peace in Sudan. Then we can return home and start over.

Thank you for listening to my story. Please always put us in front of you, don't let us fall behind.

Makka Grandmother

I don't have a good roof for my home. It's layers of sheeting, and blankets. It does not hold the rain.

When I first arrived four years ago, they gave me a tent, but it has long worn out. The blankets they gave us are harsh, brittle, and itchy, so I used them as another layer of protection for the roof under the white sheeting.

I want to provide a home for my grandchildren. I have four. Two from my daughter, and two others I grabbed during the attack on our village. They are my responsibility now.

They killed my husband, in the village, during the attack. My daughter, too, was killed.



They striped me of my family. That is why I am taking care of my grandchildren. So many children lost their mothers and fathers.

We don't get enough food for everyone for the month. There are no vegetables or meat. If we want these things, we must trade some of our rations.

This month will be the first in several that we will receive salt.



It is difficult to survive in this camp. The desert sand has already destroyed so many of the tents. Many who once lived in this zone have had to move to the other side of the camp.



Raouda
Survivor, age 12
Caretaker for her Grandmother

I don't remember my village, only the place where my village once stood. There is nothing left. It was all burned.

To escape the Janjaweed, we walked across the desert. We walked two or three days, and then took a break, then walked again.

We walked for two weeks until we came to a bigger village called Tine, and from there the aid groups brought us to this camp.

When I was young, my mother gave me to my grandmother, Hassanya. Now it is just her and I. I make sure she is taken care of.

I have been living here for five years. Back in Darfur, we played Jax with rocks, and I had a stuffed animal, that I miss very much. Now I have almost nothing.

We don't even have a mat to sit on, instead we use a tarp.

We sleep in one little room, where we also cook, and store everything we own.

I fetch the water, and food rations. When we need firewood, I go with a group and collect all that I can carry.

Sometimes it takes me the whole day. In Darfur we grew tomatoes, millet, maize, okra and had fruit like papaya. We don't have these things now.

But I still find time to attend school. I really like studying. I go to the Obama School here in the refugee camp.

I hope to be a teacher one day. The other girls want to be President and Minister of the Interior. I hope that we can return home one day, and become all the things we dream of.



Miriam
Mother of Mansur

Adapted from 2008 interview

I want for Mansur the same thing he wants for himself. He wants to be a doctor, so I want my son to keep studying and become a doctor. Right now he is a refugee, like everyone in this camp.



He likes school, and he likes to draw. A wall in his room is filled with drawings. He drew what are his last memories of Darfur. He wants others to know what happened.

Mansur is only ten years old right now, but he was six when we were forced out of our village.

His drawings show images of war: men dressed in soldier's uniforms, riding in trucks with machine guns, shooting at the village.



There is a small body in a corner of one drawing. Mansur saw that dead baby. The attackers killed the baby.

Life in this camp is not easy, but it is even worse inside of Darfur. We are grateful for what we get here. It is never enough, and we sometimes don't get basics, like soap.

Mansur went in to Darfur, to a village close to the border, to find soap. It is too expensive here in Chad.

Children get sick and die easily. One of my children died here, one of the twins.

Why do I keep hope? I see our future in Mansur. We cannot give up hope—for our children.



Amira
Survivor
Mother, Community Leader



Cornoye, our village, remains only in name.

After fleeing from the attack, children were lost in the chaos, and adults began to protect who ever they could. When most of the women and children finally were able to gather, we were in such shock—we were unable to move very far from our destroyed village. As the days past, we needed water. There was two water sources we could pull from: a nearby village that was Janjaweed controlled or walking to Chad and back, about a week's time. The group made a decision that they would attempt to pull from the well in the village at night, when perhaps the Janjaweed and government troops were no longer there.

We could not send any boys because here boys are considered men, and they are all targets, no matter the age. We believed that the men, the militia, would not harm young girls. That they would be safe from evil, so we sent a group of six to bring back water for the large group in the darkness of the desert night. The Janjaweed did not leave the well at night, instead they captured the girls and locked them away for two days, with no food, and no water – the very resource they risked their lives for. They did horrible things to them.

Back at the makeshift encampment by the wadi, the group began to worry about the girls who had not returned. We decided to send a group of men to the village in search of them. Once these men reached the well, they did not notice any government soldiers or militias. Instead the scene seemed calm, and they decided to drink from the well.

But it was not safe. From the bushes and behind the huts, rapid gunfire began. They shot all the men dead.

After much abuse, the girls were let go. Two of them had to eventually be evacuated to a clinic in Cameroon for medical attention. One of them died, and the other is permanently deaf and mute.

Darsalam Mother of Four

I have been living here for five years, since I was forced to leave my village because of the attacks.

I was close to the village herding my goats when I saw the Janjaweed and the military. I ran from them.

I tried to bring my goats, but it was too windy and they were running in all directions.

It took me five days to reach the village of Tine on foot. I was pregnant then, and I delivered my son, Jamal, in the desert before I reached safety. He is here with me in the camp now.

I have four children all together. My oldest daughter helps me fetch water when the pumps are available.

The biggest problem I face in the camp is the firewood. Because many of us have been raped or beaten by the native tribes when we try to collect it. It takes up to six hours a day to collect the firewood. To have enough wood to cook with, I go about four times a week.

I want to return home to Darfur. Even today, if there was peace, I would return home.



Hamara **Oldest Sister of Four**

Four of us live in this tent. It is hot, and we do not have mats, so we sleep on the sand. Breathing the sand makes us sick.

I do not understand what is happening in my land, Darfur. The government and the militias make trouble with us; they have taken everything. We brought nothing with us.

This little boy here, Aljafis, his father was killed by the Janjaweed.

We were farmers, growing vegetables. Now we do nothing. We do not have jobs.

I am tired here. I want to go back.

My mother and father and other family members are still in Darfur. I never hear anything from Darfur. I do not know how my parents are.

When will you send us to our country? When will you help bring peace to my country, so that we can go home?

