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Kentucky Bishops urge continued U. S. pressure to stop the genocide in Sudan

Nearly 3.5 million people from the Darfur region of Sudan, almost the number living in Kentucky, face starvation and death. President Bush and our Congress must do everything possible to prevent this tragic and unnecessary loss of innocent human life.

The Catholic Conference of KY recognizes the efforts taken by the Administration and by the Congress to address this international crisis. President Bush met with organizers of the Save Darfur Rally held on April 30. Former Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick helped broker the Darfur Peace Agreement. Secretary of State Condeleeza Rice was instrumental in urging the United Nations Security Council to adopt a U. S. sponsored resolution to place a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur. The Senate and House of Representatives have each passed a version of the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act. Senator McConnell and Senator Bunning, as well as all 6 of Kentucky's Representatives supported this Act.

Nonetheless, more needs to be done. The Catholic Conference of KY urges President Bush to appoint a special envoy to work on this crisis. The United States needs to maintain its pressure on the government of Sudan to admit UN peacekeepers to aid the African Union force already in Darfur. As the U.S. Bishops Conference has noted, "A strong UN mission can help aid the 2.5 million people driven from their homes and the 3.5 million at risk of starvation. With the proper security, previously hampered efforts may resume delivering vitally needed humanitarian assistance so that the people of Darfur can prepare to return home and rebuild their lives." (USCCB Action Alert May 17, 2006)

The Catholic Conference of KY urges Senate and House leadership to end the delay of passage of the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act by appointing their respective members to a conference committee to resolve the differences in the two versions of the Act and move it to the President's desk. This Act sets forth the sense of Congress that the "the atrocities unfolding in Darfur are genocide," and there is the "need for U.S. and international involvement in Darfur." (CRS summary, H.R. 3127) Eight months have passed since the Senate acted and three months since the House passed its version. With 3.5 million innocent people facing continued genocide and starvation, now is the time to act; further delay is morally unacceptable.

In November 2005, Pope Benedict XVI referred to the "need for a stronger international resolve to ensure security and basic human rights" in Darfur. "Today, I add my voice to the cry of the suffering and assure you that the Holy See...will continue to do everything possible to end the cycle of violence and misery." The Catholic Conference of KY asks all Kentuckians, especially Catholics, to raise their voices on behalf of those suffering in Sudan and urge our elected leaders in the White House and the Capitol to press the government of Sudan to honor the Darfur Peace Agreement, meet its deadlines, and allow UN peacekeepers into Darfur to implement its provisions and win the confidence of the people living there.

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The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.