

LARSON TO WORK WITH CONNECTICUT GROUP TO END DARFUR GENOCIDE

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HARTFORD, CT – Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) met Wednesday with 10 members of the Connecticut Coalition to Save Darfur, pledging his help to win Congressional support to intervene in the genocide that has killed more than 400,000 and displaced 2.5 million people in an area the size of Texas.

Larson, a co-sponsor of the Darfur Genocide Accountability Act in the House, committed to taking several steps to heighten public awareness of the rape and killing campaign being waged in the Darfur region of Sudan and spur U.S. intervention there. The act calls for both civil and military sanctions.

"The atrocities taking place in Darfur are a human tragedy - a world cause - that we cannot ignore," Larson said. "As the leader of the world, as the model of democracy and human rights, we must live up to our example. It will take only a small effort on our part to relieve the enormous suffering occurring there. The rest of the world will follow our lead. But leading means taking the first step."

Larson vowed to encourage other members of Congress, Democrat and Republican, to enact the legislation and encourage President George Bush to sign it.

He has also agreed to write a letter urging all members of the House to take part in the Million Voices for Darfur rally on April 30 in Washington, D.C.

The Connecticut Coalition to Save Darfur is a broadly represented group of 15 secular and non-secular organizations across the state. It includes the Archdiocese of Hartford's Office of Black Catholic Ministries, several Jewish Community Relations Councils and the Waterbury NAACP.

Laura Zimmerman, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council, said that U.S. involvement is critical if the brutality in Darfur is to end. "Congress is the voice of the people in America. Sixty years ago, the world said it would never happen again. Ten years ago, President Clinton apologized for doing nothing about the genocide in

Rwanda. During his first administration, President Bush said, not on my watch. Today, we come together so that these statements' meanings will not be empty.

David Morse, an author who returned from Sudan in December, said the genocide is worsening, further evidenced by reports released in January by the Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights.

The chief weapon of the genocide is now becoming starvation, Morse said. The government and its militia proxies are cutting supply lines to refugees.

As the meeting closed, Christopher Allen-Doucot of The Hartford Catholic Worker, said: In the hour we have been sitting here, 20 more people have died in Darfur. We believe Congressman Larson's leadership will help highlight this terrible issue and persuade colleagues on both sides of the aisle to condemn the genocide with their words and actions.

Coalition contacts include Allen-Doucot at (860) 724-7066; Zimmerman at 860 231-6392, Morse at (860) 429-6803 and Deacon Arthur L. Miller, from the Office of Black Catholic Ministries at (860) 243-0648.

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