

Plattsburgh State to host week of Global Days for Darfur

Written by STEPHEN BARTLETT, Staff Writer
Saturday, April 21, 2007

PLATTSBURGH — As many as 400,000 people have died in Darfur, as government-backed militias attack the local population. More than 2 million men, women and children have been displaced from that region of Sudan, and countless people, especially children, are starving to death.

Many people feel the international community is dragging its feet and could do more to put a stop to the genocide.

Plattsburgh State students are joining forces with concerned individuals and groups around the world this month, calling for an end to the violence.

Between April 23 and 28, the community is invited to gather at Plattsburgh State for Global Days for Darfur, which will feature events such as a peace march, film presentations, African dinner fundraiser, carnival and sleepout.

"It is important to be aware of what is going on in our world," said Dean DeLano, coordinator for Plattsburgh State Student Services Corps.

'TIME RUNNING OUT'

Last month, Plattsburgh State participated in a Month of Action, an awareness campaign sponsored by the Student Service Corps that focused on service learning among students. Through that, students became interested in the Save Darfur Coalition and began discussing doing something on campus. "Time is running out for the people of Darfur," said Laura Pasternak, a Plattsburgh State student helping to organize the rally.

In February 2003, rebels attacked government targets, resulting in a military and police campaign where the government is accused of encouraging janjaweed militias of Arab nomads to rape and murder African farmers.

To date, the fighting in Darfur has claimed the lives of as many as 400,000 men, women and children, while around 2.5 million have been displaced due to attacks by the janjaweed. Many refugees have crossed the border into neighboring Chad.

PEACEKEEPERS

Until this week, President Omar al-Bashir had refused to allow United Nations forces to enter Sudan and help restore order to the region, despite pressure from the international community. On Monday, Sudan accepted the deployment of U.N. attack helicopters and 3,000 peacekeepers, but U.S. officials said the latest development was only a "partial step forward," according to a report by the Associated Press. Officials further said the Sudanese government must stop supporting the janjaweed.

"The government of Sudan is playing games with the world community, denying the atrocities and mass death and skirting its own agreements as it wages a scorched-earth policy against its own people," said Melissa Holmes of the Plattsburgh State Student Service Corps.

"The people of Plattsburgh will participate in the Global Days for Darfur to tell world leaders that they must not stand by and allow a criminal regime to get away with murder."

Global Days for Darfur has registered nearly 200 events in 136 cities around the country, as well as at least 20 other countries that have events planned during that week.

SPECIAL EVENTS

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Global Days at Plattsburgh State begins April 23 with the Service Corps collecting money at a Darfur awareness table in the Angell College Center from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and then at the Clinton Dining Hall from 4:30 to 6 p.m. Events continue at 6 p.m. April 23 at Kent Hall on Rugar Street, where bracelets will be made to raise money for Darfur aid. Donations will also be collected at a screening of the movie "Invisible Children" at 8 p.m. in room 200 in Yokum Hall. A forum is planned after the film at which audience members can share their thoughts and professors may be speaking.

On April 25, the Service Corps and other campus groups will host an African dinner at 7 p.m. at the Newman Center on Broad Street. Tickets for the event, which will also feature entertainment, are on sale at the Angell College Center.

At 4:30 p.m. on April 26, students living in deFredenburg and Moffit residence halls will host a carnival with games and amusements outside deFredenburg Hall.

For the final events on April 28, students will participate in Club Caribbean and Capoeira's second-annual Street Jam, which will include a multicultural music festival and peace march.

SLEEPOUT

The Street Jam will be followed by Invisible Children's Displace Me, which entails students spending the night sleeping under the stars to raise awareness of displaced people in Darfur. Some local students from Clinton Community College and Plattsburgh State will be traveling to New York City to participate in sleepout there.

"Everything (at Plattsburgh State) except for the dinner is free, and community members are more than welcome to attend and contribute to the cause," DeLano said.

"We are part of a global community, and this is one way to get educated on it and take advantage of chances to learn."