

## TENTH COLLEGIUM RAMAZZINI STATEMENT

### CALL FOR ACTION ON THE GENOCIDE IN DARFUR

#### RICHIESTA DI INTERVENTO PER IL GENOCIDIO NEL DARFUR

The Collegium Ramazzini has followed with alarm the progressively worsening catastrophe in Darfur in western Sudan, where, according to the US Secretary of State Colin Powell<sup>1</sup>, genocide has been perpetrated. A reported 70,000 Darfurians have died in refugee camps, and one million refugees have been displaced in Darfur since early 2003<sup>2,3</sup>. Many more may have been killed before reaching the camps<sup>4</sup>.

Reports from Physicians for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum all indicate that mass executions, rapes, expulsions, and destruction of entire villages have taken place in Darfur. Entire populations appear to have been targeted principally on the basis of their racial or ethnic identity. For some time there has been abundant evidence to indicate that these actions have been condoned, tolerated and even organized by the Government of Sudan.

Genocide, as defined by the UN 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, is the killing or destroying of populations on the basis of their racial or ethnic identity. Genocide is the most extreme assault on human rights, and governments carrying out, permitting or condoning genocide forfeit their sovereign rights. When genocide is declared by reputable authorities to be occurring, international action to halt it is mandated.

In all genocides, there are formidable barriers to early detection and stopping of mass killing, because the evidence is buried and concealed in mass graves<sup>5</sup>. Suppression of evidence and repression of those who could give evidence is inherent to genocidal scenarios. Therefore, where genocide is suspected, the case for intervention is imperative, and the burden of proof is on those held responsible to show otherwise<sup>6</sup>. To date, there is no convincing evidence to indicate that the mass killing, expulsions and rape in Darfur have stopped and that its population is no longer the target of organized mass violence.

As an international professional society committed to the protection of the right to human health of all human beings, the Collegium Ramazzini calls for immediate action to stop the mass killing, expulsions, rape and destruction in Darfur and protect the health and safety of refugees from this region. The Collegium Ramazzini declares that there is an international responsibility to act immediately, forcefully and effectively to stop genocide. Furthermore, the Collegium condemns the use of the term “ethnic cleansing” to describe the situation in Darfur or elsewhere where genocide is taking place. This term has become a pretext for avoiding the decisions mandated by the term genocide and sanitizes evil.

There are now reportedly some 3,000 members of an international peace keeping force assigned to protecting the people of Darfur. There is urgent need for additional peacekeepers to prevent more killing, rapes and mass expulsions and also for more international aid – water, food, shelter and health services – for refugees. Relief, even if effective, will by itself not stop the extermination of populations targeted by their ethnic status. There can be no effective work on the long-term ecological, environmental, social and political macrodeterminants of the Darfur catastrophe until there is effective protection of the population of Darfur.

The Collegium Ramazzini calls upon all the governments in the world, the European Union, the Organization of African States, the United Nations and the international community not only to provide emergency relief to the victims of the Darfur crisis, but to take whatever actions are necessary to stop what all credible authorities have characterized as genocide.

#### References

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5. Power S. A problem from hell. *America and the age of genocide*. Basic Book, 2002, 610.
6. Richter ED, Berman T. Terror, democide, mass violence: epidemiologic approaches to causation, early warning systems and prevention. *Epidemiology* 2004; 15 (4): S124 (abstract).

