

A Note from Brad Brian, Past Chair (2005-06), ABA Section of Litigation and co-chair of the Task Force on Darfur

The first session of the Darfur Legal Training Project was held in London June 3-9, 2007 and brought together nine Sudanese lawyers working toward justice in Darfur and American lawyers with critical skills to share with them. The Sudanese lawyers are first-hand witnesses to the genocide in Darfur. They have seen torture, family members raped and murdered, homes burned. Yet, in this nation disemboweled by the most monstrous crimes, they continue to struggle courageously.

The only thing more impressive than the dangerous and difficult work these Sudanese lawyers do on behalf of the Darfur victims is their willingness to return, after the training in London, to continue to fight the up-hill battle for justice. These noble individuals are among the heroes of our time.

American lawyers (including a federal judge, private and government lawyers, and a law professor) with expertise in the area of prosecuting war crimes have contributed their knowledge and expertise to this project. Many are also donating a week of their time to conduct teach the Sudanese lawyers essential skills in this area.

Building a legal case against perpetrators of genocide is not done casually or easily. But we believe that the Sudanese lawyers can benefit greatly by learning, in advance, what is needed in the way of preparing and presenting evidence and testimony to make a charge of genocide stick.

This year, we return to London, and hope to train 30 Sudanese lawyers. Our goal is to help them tell their stories, preserve and document evidence to bring the perpetrators of these crimes against humanity to justice.

On a personal note, I must add that it was my high school-age daughter, Leslie, who prodded me to action on Darfur. Having learned about the genocide, she set up a chapter of STAND—Students Taking Action Now: Darfur—at her school. She raised money, designing and selling a holiday card, selling bracelets and pieces of pumpkin pie. She organized a dance-a-thon and silent auction.

Then, she introduced me to the Sudanese lawyer, legislator and human rights advocate Salih Mahmoud Osman after meeting him in 2005 during his visit to All Saints Church in Pasadena.

During my 2005-06 term as Chair of the ABA Section of Litigation, I decided to make Darfur a priority. We honored Mr. Osman with our prestigious International Human Rights Award. This training project evolved directly from our discussions with Mr. Osman at the meeting where he received that award.

I believe that the Darfur Legal Training Program is unprecedented and will be very productive. Our curriculum can become a model for future training programs to help lawyers around the world assure that the Rule of Law is a reality for all.

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