

'Never Again,' Again

Florence Nasar

After the atrocities of the Holocaust were internationally revealed, the world vowed to never allow such horrific occurrences to happen again. "Never Again!" We cried out against injustice, intolerance and indifference to human suffering. But history since 1945 has shown that the international community has done just the opposite. The world has stood by, again and again, as genocide unfolded: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and now in Darfur.

Acclaimed author and Holocaust survivor Elie Weisel said, "As a Jew, and a survivor, I do not compare any events to the horrors of the Holocaust. Yet how can anyone, anywhere who sees the loss of life in Darfur, the systematic deportation, the killing of a people, not feel outraged? How can anyone remain silent? If we neglect the suffering victims of Darfur, their plight will be our fault—and, perhaps, our guilt."

As of now, 450,000 human beings have been murdered. Four hundred and fifty thousand men, women and children—uprooted, starved, tortured, humiliated and massacred—while the world stands silent.

Since 2003, the government of Sudan and its proxy militia, the Janjaweed, have been conducting a systematic attack on its own citizens. Disguised as an anti-insurgency regime, the government sends the Janjaweed into civilian areas: burning villages and murdering all in sight. Two million people have been displaced.

Upon conducting research on this humanitarian crisis, I felt natu-

rally impelled to do something. For the past two years, I have been circulating the Hillel Yeshiva high school building and speaking out to students on the issue. The response was enthusiastic and willing. I have collected donations and spread awareness to whomever would open their ears. The money and T-shirt sales went to two charities—The Save Darfur Coalition, which works to provoke political actions and American

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Jewish World Services, an organization that uses Jewish values as its basis for helping end this genocide. It promotes the idea that as Jews, we are morally obligated to aid any human life in need and to not stand idly by in the face of injustice.

This year, \$2,800 in total was collected. The donations were sent to Jewish World Watch Solar Cooker project. For the Darfuri citizens fighting for survival in refugee camps, collecting firewood to cook with is most often a life-threatening activity. Usually, the women and very young children are sent out of the camps to collect. By leaving the confines of the camp, they are put in extreme danger. Janjaweed will murder anyone caught and the

young ones rarely return. Every \$15 provides one solar oven to a family in Darfur. By eliminating the need to leave the camp for firewood, it is providing them with great safety, plus a sure way to cook food for their starving family. With all the money collected, we have successfully provided 66 families in Darfur with this life-saving device. Sixty six families can feed their children, and 66 families will be protected in the refugee camps for now. In more news, for the first time since WWII, all the presidential candidates have joined together in condemning the violence and promising to address the issue with "unstinting resolve."

Although this seems like a great accomplishment, and the victims are temporarily protected, danger and violence is still ubiquitous. Just recently, a Sudanese helicopter bombed a Darfur school, killing six children. I hope that this singular event makes it more real. I

hope that the large nameless number of 450,000 puts real faces in your minds, and solidifies into a cry for action. If we as Jews stand silent, how are we any different from those who stood silent during the Holocaust?

I want to thank the Hillel students who have participated and graciously donated to this campaign. I want to thank Rabbi and Mrs. Labaton for speaking out and challenging the members of the Magen David Shul to successfully match my collected donations.

We cannot say "never again" and then allow it to happen again. □

Florence Nasar is a 2008 graduate of Hillel Yeshiva. She will be attending Hunter College in the fall.