

DARFUR FAST FOR LIFE

Standing in Solidarity with our Sudanese Brothers and Sisters and Children

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Congressman Donald M. Payne Joins Darfur Fast for Life He follows Mia Farrow and Sir Richard Branson in efforts to bring immediate relief to suffering in Darfur and find lasting peace in Sudan

Washington, D.C. — Today, Congressman Donald M. Payne, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, has begun a fast to raise awareness of the humanitarian crisis currently taking place in Darfur, as well as to encourage the U.S. Government to take actions that can help to bring lasting peace to the people of Sudan. He succeeds activist-actress Mia Farrow and Virgin Group Founder and Chairman Sir Richard Branson who fasted on a water-only diet in solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of Sudanese men, women and children who have been suffering at the hands of the Sudanese government.

Congressman Payne has, for many years, been outspoken about the Sudanese government's brutal campaign against the Darfuri people. From introducing and successfully passing the resolution declaring genocide in Darfur, to his visits to Darfuri refugee camps, Payne has been on the forefront of this issue and has called for the U.S. and the international community to take stronger actions to bring a lasting peace to the Darfur region.

By beginning his fast on May 11, 2009, Congressman Payne will follow in the footsteps of Farrow and Branson. "Over 400,000 people have died through the systematic murder and starvation of the people in the Darfur region," Payne asserted. "Despite outrage and countless calls for al-Bashir to end the suffering of the Darfuri people, the regime in Khartoum has continued its operation of terror and, last month, even went so far as to expel aid organizations. This is unacceptable. Today I have taken the mantle from Ms. Farrow and Sir Branson to fast as an act of solidarity with the Darfuri people and to call on the world to take a tougher stand against Khartoum's unrelenting atrocities.

On April 21, 2009, Farrow began a water-only fast, expressing outrage for the world's inaction after 16 aid organizations were expelled by Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. Bashir's expulsion left more than 1 million innocent civilians without basic access to food, water, and medicine, and placed them in grave danger of disease, starvation, and death. After 12 days of fasting, Farrow's doctor advised her to stop, since further participation would pose serious risks to her health, including the possibility of seizures.

Sir Richard Branson, founder and chairman the Virgin Group of companies, who has long advocated for a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Sudan and an end to the genocide in Darfur, has now taken over the fast for Farrow. Upon hearing of the danger to her health, Branson asked Farrow to stop and began a three-day fast on May 8.

Congressman Payne will follow Farrow, Branson and others in sharing his experience during the fast through video and blog posts at www.fastdarfur.org.

The Darfur Fast for Life | We are leaders, activists and citizens around the world who fast in solidarity with the people of Darfur because they do not have a choice. We fast as a personal expression of outrage at a world that has allowed the suffering of millions of innocent people. We fast because as we simply watched, Darfur's defenseless people were forced into wretched camps where today they are facing starvation and disease. We fast because those in positions of authority who know what is right and just, could and should do more to alleviate their suffering and bring peace, protection, and justice to the people of Sudan.

We fast for Darfur's courageous people —because we yearn for a world where human rights are respected and a life of dignity is the legacy for every man, woman and child.

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