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PRESS RELEASE

AJWS President Asks Jewish Community to Fast with Her for Darfur

Ruth Messinger to Jewish Community: Let our hunger instruct us to listen and act!

New York, NY; June 11, 2009— To express solidarity with the people of Darfur, Ruth Messinger, president of American Jewish World Service (AJWS), will fast on the 15th and 16th of June and has invited the American Jewish community to fast with her for at least one of the two days.

Messinger's fast is part of the Darfur Fast for Life "fasting chain," involving numerous congressmen and women, activists and entertainers who have agreed to fast in successive two-day blocks. The AJWS president says she is fasting so she can try to appreciate how it feels to be hungry and how difficult it is to function under those circumstances. AJWS has circulated a petition, along with a videotaped statement, to more than 70,000 supporters encouraging them to sign a pledge to join her.

"Each day, in Darfur, mothers and fathers look into the suffering eyes of their children knowing, like all parents, that they would sacrifice anything for their children not to suffer, but also knowing that there is nothing they can do as long as they remain in limbo," Messinger said in her videotaped statement. "A person can suffer no greater indignity than not being able to feed his or her children or prevent dehydration that is often deadly.

"As difficult as it may be for us to function at a high level, during our fasts, this type of hunger is an everyday reality for hundreds of millions of people worldwide; it prevents children from learning and adults from working productively to sustain economies; but just as importantly, it undermines the very kind of belief in a better future that is the lifeline for the world's most vulnerable.

"For those of us fasting for Darfur, our hunger is a choice and a temporary state... But there are hundreds of millions worldwide – in Darfur and elsewhere – who feel powerless. They are crying, and we must hear them. Fast with me and let our hunger instruct us to listen. Fast with me and let our hunger instruct us to act."

To view Messinger's entire statement and sign the petition, please visit ajws.org/darfurfast.

About American Jewish World Service

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is an international development organization motivated by Judaism's imperative to pursue justice. AJWS is dedicated to alleviating poverty, hunger and disease among the people of the developing world regardless of race, religion or nationality. Through grants to grassroots organizations, volunteer service, advocacy and education, AJWS fosters civil society, sustainable development and human rights for all people, while promoting the values and responsibilities of global citizenship within the Jewish community.