



# NEVER AGAIN COALITION

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February 19, 2013

Chair Burdick and members of the committee, for the record we are Lauren Fortgang and Diane Koosed. We are both from Portland and represent the Never Again Coalition. We are in support of SB 17.

The Never Again Coalition is Oregon's response to genocide and other crimes against humanity. Joining together from different organizations and backgrounds, we stand together and work towards revitalizing the phrase "Never Again."

We have about 50 active members in our advocacy campaign from Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties and we represent them here today. In addition to advocacy, the Never Again Coalition works on fund-raising, awareness and education pertaining to genocide and crimes against humanity.

Much of our anti-genocide work has focused on Sudan, and that is the reason we are speaking out today. The Sudanese regime has been practicing systematic genocide on its own people since President Omar al Bashir took power over two decades ago. The war that was waged between the northern and southern regions of the country resulted in over 2 million deaths. In 2003, the government of Sudan began their reign of terror over the people of Darfur. Now, 10 years later, there are still 2.4 million displaced persons, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, and an estimate of over 300,000 dead. The violence has slowed down some but never stopped.

In early 2011, the country of South Sudan was established and Bashir immediately began a campaign of violence on the people in his own country that lived along the disputed border of Sudan and its new neighbor to the south. There are satellite images documenting mass grave sites in this region. The refugee camps across the border in South Sudan and Ethiopia are overflowing with an estimated 200,000 people while the UN estimates that 500,000 people are internally displaced along the border. Close to a million people are on the brink of starvation due to the constant air bombardments and inability to farm the land.

Omar Al-Bashir, the President of Sudan, is the first sitting head of state indicted by the International Criminal Court. In 2009 the ICC issued an arrest warrant on counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, and in 2010 an additional warrant was issued for charges of genocide.

We urge you to enact SB 17 to direct the Oregon Investment Council, and the State Treasurer to try to ensure that moneys in Public Employees Retirement Fund are not invested in companies with interest in Sudan.

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How can we allow ourselves, as Oregonians, to condone what is going on in Sudan? That is what we do when we continue to support investments in companies working in Sudan, where the government is run by a war criminal wanted by the International Criminal Court.

While ethical investing may mean different things to different people, don't you agree that financial firms should draw the line at helping to support genocide? Investing in Sudan will only help fund the perpetrators of genocide and mass atrocities and give the message that our profound concern about human rights is in fact, empty platitudes. Instead, we hope Oregon will give the message to the Government of Sudan that we won't do business with genocidaires.

Thank you.

Lauren Fortgang and Diane Koosed

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