

For Immediate Release

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Mandate Darfur forced to cancel civil society conference

Sudanese government prevents delegates from leaving Sudan

On behalf of Mandate Darfur, the Board of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation issued the following statement:

"After many months of working with Darfurian civil society to build a mandate for peace, we regret to acknowledge that the Sudanese government is obstructing the safe passage of Darfurian delegates from Sudan , forcing us to cancel the conference.

"The Mandate Darfur conference was to be a coming together of genuine representatives of Darfur from across all geographic, ethnic, religious and political backgrounds, including traditional and young leaders and a strong contingent of Darfurian women.

"From the beginning of this process when we were approached by a group of Darfurian civil society leaders, we have endeavoured to engage with the Sudanese government, the armed movements, a broad cross-section of civil society and the international community to build an unprecedented coalition of support for this initiative. This support includes the African Union, the Arab League, the United Nations, the European Union and a wide spectrum of former African leaders.

"We believe that their coming together will help to find a way forward in the peace process. There is no element of this conference that could or should have been perceived as acting against the interests of the Sudanese government.

"Despite numerous attempts at engagement with the Sudanese government, including sending a delegation to Khartoum and inviting senior figures to address the conference, we were greatly disappointed that Sudanese security services harassed our delegates, confiscated passports and threatened the conference coordinators in Sudan. Ultimately, the government has refused to grant exit visas to the delegates making it impossible for the conference to proceed.

"We are saddened and disappointed that the government of Sudan did not take advantage of this opportunity to forward the cause for peace and allow civil society to engage constructively. Such engagement is vital for sustainable peace in the region and is specifically called for by the UN Security Council resolution (1828) 2008.

"We will continue to stand with Darfurian civil society as they attempt to forge a peaceful future for their country and trust that the international community will remain committed to ensuring that the voices of the Darfurian people are heard."

Ends

1. The Members of the Board of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation are:

- Dr Mo Ibrahim
- Lalla Ben Barka
- Lord Cairns
- Dr Mamphela Ramphele
- Mary Robinson

- Salim Ahmed Salim
- Nicholas Ulanov

2. Mandate Darfur is being facilitated by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation after it was approached by Darfurians seeking support to amplify the role of civil society in the peace process.
3. For more information about Mandate Darfur, please contact Jon Steinberg: (Steinberg.J@MolbrahimFoundation.org or +44 (0)20 7535 5060 / +44 (0)7534 993 279)