

*The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, Winter 2010*



The CCVT Connection, which is published monthly, is intended to inform and engage the Centre's volunteers in important events, news, and meetings, and in doing so, to acknowledge the vital role they play in fulfilling the CCVT's mandate.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The information provided in this publication is not controlled by the CCVT, and therefore may not reflect the Centre's views.

## **DARFUR: A Film by Uwe Boll**

Film Review by Nailah Qadeer

STAND Canada<sup>1</sup> launched its "Stand for the Dead" campaign ([www.standforthehead.com](http://www.standforthehead.com)) at the beginning of February across the country with their first National film tour. This unreleased Hollywood film, *Darfur*, is directed by Uwe Boll and stars Billy Zane, Edward Furlong and Kristanna Loken.

The screening of *Darfur* took place at the Scotiabank Theatre in Toronto on February 1st. There was a Q&A session after the film with panelists Ismail Adam (Darfur Association of Canada), Olivia Chow (MP for Trinity Spadina), Benjamin Shinewald (Canadian Jewish Congress National Executive Director) and Anne Wagner (Director of STAND Canada).

I was personally excited upon hearing about the film because the Darfur genocide has been the focus of my academic studies for the past four years. I purchased my ticket right away and counted down the days in anticipation! When I walked into the theatre, I was pleasantly surprised by the amazing turnout.

*Darfur* tells the story of American journalists in Sudan who are confronted with the dilemma of whether to return home to report on the atrocities they have seen, or to stay behind and help defend a village against a brutal attack by the Janjaweed.<sup>2</sup>

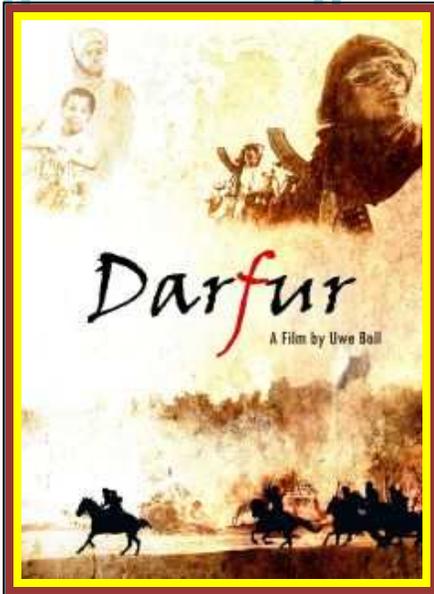
At the Fantastic Fest Q&A, Boll explained that he felt the world was turning a blind eye to the crimes against humanity that are committed daily in Darfur, and that as an artist, the only way he felt he could make a difference was if he made a film about it.<sup>3</sup> Boll used actual Darfurian refugees in the film. He further explained that he had actual sexual assault victims in his cast, victims who were asked to re-enact their assault on camera – because that kind of "honesty" was the only way he could capture how dire the situation is.<sup>4</sup> It is not like Boll forced anyone to do anything they did not want to, but that is certainly an impudent tactic. One can only wonder the negative impact(s) this had on the assault victims who in essence, re-lived their traumatic experiences.

Other points worth mentioning: The directing was a little nauseating. When re-enacting the countless sexual assault scenes, the camera jerked back and forth. Like others, I had to turn away from the screen because these scenes were just too explicit. Even the acting was a bit over-the-top. There was a close-up of a big macho man crying a single tear while observing the interaction of two women (the American journalist and the assault victim she was interviewing). Moreover, that Boll chose to have a white hero save the only Darfurian survivor – a baby – echoes deep colonialist sentiments.

All in all, I was disappointed with the depiction of the conflict at hand. I understand that the message that is trying to be conveyed by the movie is important and genuine but the movie itself did not do it justice. To downsize the conflict to merely racial connotations ("Arab" versus "African") is oversimplification and simply a lack of research on the part of those involved in this endeavour. Boll should have further alluded on the political, economic and social parameters surrounding the conflict, not to mention the feminization and gendered utilization of women's bodies in militarized war zones. By failing to provide a proper context, Boll gives way to a discourse that will only continue to perpetuate overarching generalizing paradigms – particularly for those who are walking into this movie with no background information on the conflict.

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Darfur film review continued...



STAND Canada is a great organization and their efforts to better human conditions are definitely noteworthy. However, I feel that this movie hindered the organization's message. A proper context needs to be provided and the media is a powerful medium to educate individuals. Unfortunately, *Darfur* does not pass the test and rather feeds into the stereotypes and grave simplifications of a conflict that direly needs a closer examination.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since its founding in 2005, STAND has become the leading organization in Canada for youth-led anti-genocide advocacy and activism. STAND is dedicated to making it easy to act against genocide. Through tools like 1-800-Genocide and their monthly Darfur Digest, STAND makes it easy for Canadians to stay updated on the current situation in Darfur and provide them with actions they can do on a daily basis to make a difference (standcanada.org).

<sup>2</sup> Armed militias who are popularly depicted on horseback.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cinematical.com/2009/11/02/uwe-bolls-darfur-movie-trailer/>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> The roots of the Darfur genocide will be addressed in the next newsletter... Stay tuned!

### News from around the world...

By: Marzia Nazarova

**Nablus, West Bank, 3 January 2010** - Palestinian security forces in the West Bank have stopped torturing prisoners, ending two years of systematic abuse. The change in practice, said to have taken effect in October, was confirmed by a West Bank Hamas leader, human rights activists and the Palestinian prime minister. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said the decision to halt any abuse was part of an effort to make sure a future state is built on the right foundations.

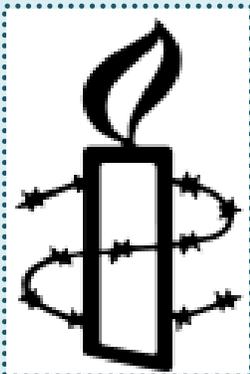
**Hague, 6 February 2010** - Professor Francis A. Boyle of the University of Illinois College of Law in Champaign, USA, has filed a complaint with the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague against US citizens George W. Bush, Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, George Tenet, Condoleezza Rice and Alberto Gonzales for their criminal policy and practice of "extraordinary rendition" perpetrated upon about 100 human beings.

*Did you know ...*

The emblem of Amnesty International - candle encircled in barbed wire - is said to be one of the most widely recognized, non-commercial symbols in the world. Amnesty's founder Peter Benenson thought of the image when recalling a favorite proverb: "Better to light a candle than curse the darkness."

Today, the Amnesty International candle has come to be associated with everything uniquely powerful about the work of the movement and its supporters. The candle is the light of public attention that Amnesty members shine on the hidden abuses (the barbed wire) of human rights violators.

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The candle is the spark for dramatic, positive change - as evident in the lives of many individuals and communities, in new institutions to protect human rights, and through work to strengthen the public's awareness of our rights. The candle is a beacon of hope and solidarity for people who defend human rights at great personal risk, for people on death row, for the jailed and tortured and "disappeared," for people suffering the loss of "disappeared" loved ones, and for people who are forced to leave their homes in search of safe refuge in other lands.

### *Who is Doing What and Where...*

The story of Parveena Ahanger, the Founder and the Chair of the **Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP)** in **Kashmir** is the story of a personal battle that metamorphosed into a public war for justice. Parveena, who got married when she was 12, was an ordinary Kashmiri woman till an August day in 1990. It was the day her son was arrested. It was the day she saw him last. In her frantic efforts to trace the whereabouts of her son, Parveena came across other people like her, whose near ones had 'disappeared' in custody. She began arranging meetings of such families. In 1994, she founded the APDP to fight the cases together.

Technically, the APDP is not a human right group but the association of the sufferers wronged by the functioning of the state, who are campaigning for knowing the whereabouts of their missing relatives. Any person victim of the disappearances could be the member of the association. Now there are more than 3,000 families who are members of APDP.

(Sources: <http://www.apdpkashmir.blogspot.com/>; <http://www.thefreelibrary.com>; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amnesty\\_International](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amnesty_International); <http://www.amnesty.ca/about/>; <http://www.nytimes.com>; <http://www.unhchr.ch>; [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) [www.irct.org](http://www.irct.org); [www.unog.ch](http://www.unog.ch), [www.kirkuk-center.org](http://www.kirkuk-center.org), [www.redress.cc](http://www.redress.cc); Associated press)

### **Karides Sote**

Karides Sote (Shrimp Scampi) is a Turkish delicacy. Turkey is the homeland of several CCVT clients.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 lb shrimp, cooked and deveined
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 3-4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1/3 cup fresh parsley, chopped finely
- ½ tsp salt to taste
- Black pepper



Take cooked and deveined shrimp over a pan and add olive oil and garlic. Cook stirring occasionally over medium heat till shrimp get pink and tender (for about 2-3 minutes). Then, add lemon juice, salt and pepper to taste. Finally stir in parsley, give a stir and turn the heat off.

Serve Shrimp Scampi warm – Enjoy!



Helping Survivors of Torture Since 1977

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The **Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture** aids survivors in overcoming the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror.

## WELCOME, NEW VOLUNTEERS!!

Shadi Ershad  
Amina Muse  
Mehreen Bengali  
Rejenthan Rajantran  
Danielle Rodrigue-Todd  
Holly Huizenga  
Lou Natale  
Peter Dobrinov  
Viviana Filazzola  
Nishani Umasuthan  
Vickie McGregor  
Patrick Muldoon  
Cindy Law  
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Kate Radu  
Saima Shaheed  
Rahel Gebregiorgis  
Nailah Qadeer  
Farheen Sher  
Andres Monsalve  
Prateek Sehgal  
Marshall White  
Isabelle Dussalut  
Ulo Evott  
Kelly Masterson  
M. Christine Rickards  
Tatjana Vangjeli

Sarah Al Naser  
Anna Murray  
Alejandro Terrones  
Maria Claiya  
Amirabas Jamshidi  
Grace Tavares  
Alizah Benchetrit  
Adele Meleca  
Khurshid Press  
Anne Pringle  
Shkelqim Braho  
Virginia Wilson  
Diana Gallego  
Shirin Shabzandehdar-Nakhjiri  
Thi Van Hoang  
Robert Dayton  
Shaween Khayait  
Ayesha Small  
Pratheepan Kugathas  
Crystal Emmanuel  
Thiva Urithirakodeeswaran  
Vaithilingam Srikanthan  
Manveen Bedi  
Aarpita Berma  
Ishwori Dotel  
Harleen Bedi  
Praveena Sriskandarajah  
Fathima Feroze

## UPCOMING EVENTS for BEFRIENDERS

The free concert series at The Four Seasons Centre for Performing Arts (12-1pm):

- March 2:** Piano Virtuoso Series-Homage à Chopin
- March 3:** Vocal Series- Lachen und Weinen
- March 4:** Chamber Music Series-Winter Winds
- March 9:** Piano Virtuoso Series-Chopin and Friends
- March 11:** Vocal Series-The Composer and His Muse
- March 16:** Chamber Music Series-Homage à Chopin
- March 17:** Piano Virtuoso Series-Homage à Chopin
- March 23:** Piano Virtuoso Series- Big Keys, Little Keys
- March 25:** Piano Virtuoso Series-Iberia III
- March 30:** Chamber Music Series-Miniatures

**DO YOU HAVE** a story, a poem, a recipe, a book review, a picture, or anything else you'd like to contribute? We'd love to **PUBLISH** it in the newsletter! Drop us a line at [connectCCVT@gmail.com](mailto:connectCCVT@gmail.com)

Are you no longer a volunteer at CCVT and/or no longer want to receive the newsletter? If so, please contact Chizuru Nobe at (416) 363-1066 ext. 222 or [cnobe@ccvt.org](mailto:cnobe@ccvt.org).