



New survey highlights Britain's compassion fatigue

More than half of British people (53 per cent) polled in a new survey know that genocide is taking place in Darfur according to figures released today. Despite the encouraging level of awareness, only 17 per cent of people have taken any action relating to the crisis.

The YouGov survey, commissioned by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT), was designed to test the Britain's awareness of, and attitudes to, the ongoing situation in Darfur. The conflict has claimed an estimated 400,000* lives, many of whom have been slaughtered by the government sponsored Janjaweed militia.

The survey found that inaction was not limited to one particular age range with figures remaining consistently above 80 per cent for people in all age groups.

A lack of power to change anything was a reason cited by almost a quarter of people when asked why they had taken no action. A further 18 per cent said they did not know what action to take on the subject. Dr. Stephen Smith, chair of the HMDT said the results indicated a worrying level of compassion fatigue on the issue of Darfur:

"Despite the complexities of the situation in Darfur, over half of us know that genocide is taking place. The problem is that very few of us have done anything about it. During the Second World War, ordinary civilians stood by and did nothing while millions of Jews were taken to

the gas chambers. Through the modern day camera lens, the situation is brought to our living rooms. It is there we make the decision – do we take a stand or change the TV channel and ignore the plight of millions in Darfur?”

Smith said that HMDT would use Holocaust Memorial Day, which takes place each year on 27 January, to raise the profile of the conflict in Darfur and encourage people to act to help bring about an end to violence in the region.

The survey also found that:

- 66 per cent of people believe it is the media’s responsibility to speak out about genocide, while 41 per cent believed that general public also have a responsibility to speak out
- 54 per cent of people were interested in knowing more about the situation in Darfur, 71 per cent of whom felt the media should report more clearly on the issue
- Of those who were not interested in learning more, 35 per cent of people felt there was too much bad news already and 31 per cent of people felt it wasn’t relevant to their day to day life
- Of those people who have taken action on Darfur, almost two thirds of them had given money with roughly 40 per cent signing a petition

Dr Brian Brivati, Head of Human Rights at Kingston University, London, said:

“Just as the Nazis did, the Sudanese government is combining race politics and violence with the intention of changing the ethnic make-up of a society.

“The Holocaust was the precedent for all subsequent genocides. If we can understand and reflect on the Holocaust, then we stand some chance of making the United Nation’s Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, more than just an empty gesture. Holocaust Memorial Day is designed to help us do that.”

Ends

Notes to Editor:

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*This figure has been cited by the United Nations and is based on a report prepared by the International Coalition for Justice

Holocaust Memorial Day

- Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) takes place on the 27 January every year, to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The United Kingdom national commemoration will take place in Liverpool in 2008
- In November 2005, the United Nations established Holocaust Memorial Day as a day of remembrance across the World

- Further information can be found by visiting [**www.hmd.org.uk**](http://www.hmd.org.uk)
- The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2008 is 'Imagine...remember, reflect, react'. It asks us to remember the lives and experience of victims and survivors of the Holocaust; of Nazi persecution and of other genocides. It invites us to find new and creative ways to express this experience through art and media. Ultimately, it is a call for us to react to discrimination where we find it in today's society

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust is a registered charity, established in 2005. Its objectives can be summarised as:

- To commemorate and remember the victims of the Holocaust
- To commemorate and remember the victims of persecution and murder that resulted from the targeting of other groups of people by Nazi race policies. These include the Roma and Sinti, Black people, mentally and physically disabled people, lesbian and gay people and many of the Slavic peoples;
- To promote harmony between communities, including racial and religious harmony;
- To promote universal human rights;
- To promote equality and diversity and the elimination of discrimination by raising awareness of the causes and effects of racism and prejudice in society. This includes awareness of the impact of the Holocaust and other acts of systematic discrimination that leads to genocide.