



*mtvU & STAND present:*  
**A Campus Guide to  
Organizing STAND FAST**



## **Background**

Since February 2003, over 70,000 people have died in the Darfur region of Sudan. As you read this, around 2 million people stand on the brink of death due to threats of starvation, disease, and ongoing violence. Even today, the humanitarian crisis is growing exponentially as ethnic cleansing continues to claim lives. Despite the immediate and drastic increases in aid, hundreds of thousands are still expected to die in the next few months.

## **STAND FAST: Our Goal for April 7, 2005**

mtvU and STAND are asking students from across the nation to join together on **April 7, 2005** – the anniversary of the beginning of the genocide in Rwanda – to take action to help the people suffering from ethnic cleansing in Darfur. We are asking students to fast by giving something up – caffeine, cigarettes, or chocolate – in order to reflect on both their own opportunities and the moral tragedy that plagues Darfur. This fast encourages students to imagine the people – the mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers – who are subjected to these atrocities and donate the money they would have spent on their daily luxury to relief organizations who can help.

## **Take Action**

You can make a difference. Help lead the international community to change its behavior, take the action necessary to solve the situation in Darfur, and restore peace and justice. Take action for a people who cannot take action for themselves. Tell the world that life means something regardless of where you live. Join students across the nation to imagine a future where these atrocities will have justice – not silence – as an answer.

## **What is STAND?**

Students Taking Action Now: Darfur is a coalition of concerned students committed to:

- Increasing awareness about the crisis in Darfur;
- Raising relief for the victims and refugees; and
- Political action for a swift and sustainable solution to the crisis.

Contact [standfast@gmail.com](mailto:standfast@gmail.com) for more information on STAND, including how to start a chapter on your campus.

## **How to Use this Guide**

Each participating school can customize its own STAND FAST. Use this guide to learn how to organize, promote, and lead a successful fast on your campus.



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## Choosing a Model for STAND FAST

This fast is designed to be customized by each university. It is important for each university to decide how they want to model their fast to best serve their community.

### *Community vs. Individual Fast*

Fast organizers on each campus should make a decision of what to ask of the students. The decision should be based upon what you believe would be the best way for your fellow students to be involved.

- **Universities that are new to Darfur activism and want a large turnout to boost awareness and interest should suggest a wide variety of things to abstain from – deserts, caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes, chocolate – and allow individuals to decide for themselves.**

If you choose this approach, have a list of suggested comforts to give up and a sign-up sheet for students to pledge their monetary donation. Make sure you follow up so that every donation counts.

- **Schools whose students are already active on the issue and/or those that want to make a more specific statement might select a single item and ask the student body to give it up as a community.**

For instance, on November 20, 2004, Georgetown STAND asked their school to give up alcohol as their item. On a Saturday night they had over 1,000 out of 6,000 undergraduates give up alcohol. The Georgetown chapter recommended asking students to donate when they sign up, or to have a separate list of pledges in order to follow up on those who have not turned in their donation. The magnitude of giving up something like alcohol is in the statement that it makes; at Georgetown, it gave STAND added weight in talking with diplomats and members of Congress.

- **Some universities may also want to combine the approaches** and ask students to give something up as a community and as individuals. In addition to asking students to give up alcohol, Georgetown STAND encouraged individual students to choose something to fast from for an entire week.

### *Important Tips*

- Follow up with students by sending them an email—reminding them of their pledge can make a difference in a place where resources are scarce.
- Do not over-promise results. It is better to under-promise and over deliver than over-promise and under-deliver.
- Once you have decided on your particular approach, look for allies at other universities, and don't be afraid to adjust the approach if it brings in more support. Check out [mtvU.com](http://mtvU.com) for a list of schools already signed up for STAND FAST.



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## **Leading up to STAND FAST: Set-up & Recruitment**

Leading up to April 7th, it is important for your group to raise a general awareness about the situation in Darfur and get people interested in taking action to bring about a solution. The more knowledge you can share about the tragedy, the more students will be interested in getting involved. The following are suggestions of activities you can do to help build interest in the event. For more information on what is happening in Darfur, visit [www.mtvU.com](http://www.mtvU.com).

### *Tabling*

Once a week, Georgetown STAND put up a table in the highest-traffic area of campus and offered information about the human rights violations in Darfur. In addition to information, it was a place where students could sign up to receive more information about upcoming activities. If your campus does not have a central area like this, contact your administration about putting up a table where it might raise the highest profile. As it gets closer to the fast it is usually helpful to have a table out every day.

### *Ribbons/Bracelets*

Another effective way to raise awareness about the situation is by handing out green ribbons (you can purchase the ribbons and safety pins for relatively little cost at nearby craft stores) and asking people to wear them to show their support for the people of Sudan. There are also organizations that are selling green bracelets for student groups, like the Save Darfur Coalition. You can contact them at [www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org).

### *Speeches/Documentaries*

Holding speeches about Sudan – whether it is on their history, the current conflict, the international laws surrounding the issue, or the continuous lack of international response to genocides – raises awareness and can help to get more students dedicated to taking action. Likewise, if a speaker is not readily available there are documentaries on the situation, as well as audio recordings of actual testimony, that can be used. These are especially effective if you screen them at events co-hosted with other groups on campus.

### *Photo Displays*

Having a photo display up on campus with pictures from inside of Darfur encourages people to think about the suffering by confronting them with the idea that these are real people, not abstract numbers, places, or ideas. This is easy to use in conjunction with tabling to enhance your awareness strategy. Contact Catholic Relief Services at <http://www.catholicrelief.org/> - they may be able to provide photos for your exhibit.

### *Die-In*

A die-in has been found by numerous universities and awareness organizations to be extremely effective. This is where students will lie down in a public place on campus to represent the civilians who have died in Darfur. This can be a great way to get people to notice that might not otherwise pay attention.



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## **Events for the Night of STAND FAST**

We recommend that on the night of April 7th, each university look to hold activities bringing together the students who are participating in the fast. When talking with people from Sudan about this project, they asked that students use the opportunity to look at the people and culture of Sudan, rather than focusing entirely on the problems facing the nation. The following are some suggestions:

### *Candlelight Vigil*

Holding a candlelight vigil the night of April 7th can be a great opportunity to bring together the students who have committed to be involved in STAND FAST, as well as to increase support for the movement as a whole. Several universities are already planning a candlelight vigil for that night, and joining in lends feeling to the movement: you and students across the nation will be holding candles for the people of Darfur.

### *Charity Dinner*

Georgetown STAND found it extremely beneficial not only to raise funds but to celebrate the culture of the Sudanese by holding a charity dinner with Sudanese food. Contacting specific groups and having them reserve seats at the dinner is a good way to ensure a large turnout.

Georgetown also encouraged other groups on campus to host their own charity dinners for Sudan, to increase the number of students participating in the activities of the night. Then they brought everyone together for the candlelight vigil, utilizing the strengths of personal connections to get greater numbers of people involved.

### *Cultural Performances*

Despite the hardships that have plagued Sudan, the Sudanese people still look for ways to celebrate their culture. In that spirit, your university might want to invite various performing arts groups, especially those with an international focus, to put on a performance during the night. This can be used together with the charity dinner for a larger, more colorful event.

### *Discussion Groups*

Get people talking – hosting a discussion group, a speaker, or watching a documentary can be an effective way to allow people to feel involved in the fast beyond giving up a comfort. Georgetown concluded its night with discussion groups to talk about what could be done in the future to keep the momentum going and awareness rising.



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## How to Advertise STAND FAST

To advertise STAND FAST, a two-fold approach is one of the best ways to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to participate. If you think a different method will work more effectively for your campus, go for it – the more awareness we raise, the better.

### *Top-down Approach*

- Ask various student organizations on campus to encourage their members to get on board. Event co-sponsorship brings with it the opportunity for more funding and better organization at events.
- If they can't co-sponsor but still want to help out, offer groups a table at a central benefit dinner, or encourage the group to put together their own benefit dinner.
- This is a good time to begin approaching on-campus media to help get the word out.
- Connect with academic departments on campus to let them know about the events you are planning. Many departments and administrators would like to be involved in events like this and it can help increase your resources by giving them that opportunity. Departments to contact include: African American Studies, Black Studies, Faith, Peace & Justice, Gender Studies, Holocaust Studies, International Relations, Peace & Conflict Studies, and Political Science/Public Policy.
- We recommend starting the top-down approach as soon as you put together a working idea of what you would like to do on April 7th.

### *Bottom-up Approach/Heart Pledge*

Every club knows that the best way to get students involved is still by approaching them individually. The most effective way we've ever seen the fast advertised was conceived by Duke University, called The Heart Pledge.

- At Duke, when people signed up to support the fast they'd ask people to put a heart up on their door saying that they support the people of Sudan by forgoing a luxury on April 7th. By having everyone put up signs on their doors, they noticed far more students got involved than they would normally have been able to reach. This approach gives donors something that they can show to their friends, classmates, and fellow residents that they are involved.
- Georgetown set up a table in the center of their campus to allow people to sign up for the fast. For several days they also went door-to-door through the dorms, informing students about the fast and giving them the opportunity to sign up. The door-to-door drive was their most effective way of getting the word out while also allowing students to ask more thorough questions. Have a simple message when you go door-to-door, but be prepared to answer questions. A little more attention means a lot more students will get involved.
- Start the bottom-up approach at least three weeks before April 7th (around March 17th). Take down the email addresses of people who sign up as interested in helping, this makes them easier to contact and round up for the grassroots movement.



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*Register your STAND FAST with mtvU*

Remember to register your university [www.mtvU.com](http://www.mtvU.com) so that we can turn the voices of university students across America into one voice that is so loud it cannot be ignored.

*Tips to Remember*

- It is always better to try something than to do nothing. Your actions will inspire others to get involved.
- Make a timeline of how you will approach the fast and give yourself enough time along the way for things to go wrong.
- Meet with your STAND chapter or student group regularly and make sure you have strong lines of communication.
- Be ready to adjust your plans to allow other groups to be involved – this will lead to a stronger program overall.
- Do not be afraid to celebrate your results; you should be happy about every victory, however small.
- Be particular about the item you choose to give up for the fast, and look for groups on campus that might have an interest or connection to what you are doing. Other groups could potentially be offended by the way you frame your approach to things like alcohol.
- Don't be discouraged if an event does not go as well as you planned; you can never know how many people were interested and just couldn't make it.
- Never underestimate the impact that a few people can have on their campus.
- Build upon the knowledge and resources of universities that have already been active on this subject and who have developed a strong sense of the terrain involved.

You can contact the students below with questions about coordinating STAND FAST on your campus:

**Georgetown:**

Nate Wright – [NateSWright@gmail.com](mailto:NateSWright@gmail.com)  
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