



**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **ITC ISSUES CALL TO ACTION TO FAITH COMMUNITY- BREAK THE SILENCE; STOP THE GENOCIDE IN DARFUR**

(Atlanta, GA, February 7, 2007) The president of The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), Dr. Michael A. Battle, recently announced one of three primary issues that will claim the focus of the institution for the next two years is breaking the silence and calling others to join in addressing the genocide in Darfur, Sudan.

President Battle recently sent out a letter, which prophetically calls upon all Black Church leadership of America to break the curse of silence and act systematically and in solidarity, challenging the genocide against the people of Darfur, Sudan. Battle says the call is being made in the name of the biblically-based prophetic Christian legacy to which the Black Church and seminary are heirs. This biblical tradition affords such prophetic voices as those of Amos, Jeremiah, and Jesus The Christ. The Black Church tradition also gives us the prophetic voices of such leaders as Sojourner Truth, Reverdy Ransom, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

For almost 50 years, ITC has sought to honor its founders' commitment to a Christian prophetic heritage by professionally training leaders from America and abroad for global leadership and ministry. Informed by that heritage, ITC believes it would be a sin against God and humanity to remain silent on this issue of genocide against the people of Darfur. Thus, this call has gone out in the name of ITC's ecumenical Black Church heritage and all of the voices of those faith communities who seek peace and justice in the world.

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In light of ITC's Christian prophetic heritage, the institution finds it imperative to call upon people of faith to join ITC in denouncing genocide. People of faith must no longer remain slaves to the sins of silence regarding genocide in Darfur or elsewhere. Organizations such as the World Council of Churches and the international news media continue to report the ongoing horrors of Darfur. In early 2003, the government for Sudan and its Janjaweed proxy militias unleashed a scorched earth campaign of murder, rape and looting against Darfur's Black African civilians. An estimate of the number of people killed recently in Darfur put the toll at about 250,000. More than 2 million people displaced by the conflict in the Sudan and the neighboring states like Chad, have created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has rightly noted that, "The world can't keep saying 'never again,'" because "we have a horrendous tragedy unfolding in Darfur." Desmond Tutu is the former president of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), a Pan-African Christian body supporting peace and justice in the Sudan.

In a collective effort to stop the genocide against the people of Darfur, President Battle and the ITC community are asking others to join in this effort by doing the following:

1. Place the genocide of Darfur high on the agenda of your local and national church activities regarding the implication of the Black Church and its sacred mandate to promote and defend human rights in the world;
2. Make Palm Sunday or Sunday, April 15, 2007, a day for national action on behalf of the people of Darfur;
3. Support and join an ecumenical delegation of prominent ministers in petitioning the United Nations to call on Arab governments that support and have diplomatic relations with the Sudanese government to bring pressure to bear, as well as governments, such as China, that have substantial economic ties to the Sudanese government, to bring pressure to bear to stop the genocide taking place; and
4. Support a collective petition of the U.S. government to be helpful in giving the African Union resources it needs to marshal and sustain a viable peacekeeping operation.

Battle says, "If we will commit to these actions, under girded by a concert of prayer and petitions to our God, we can make our collective voices heard in both the physical and spiritual realms, resulting in change for our people in Darfur."

Dr. Charles Stith, an alumnus of The ITC and former U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania (East Africa), who currently services as director of the African Presidential Archives and Research Center at Boston will speak on "Conversations on Darfur: Breaking the Silence, Stopping the Genocide" at ITC, April 10, 2007 at 7 p.m. in the Franklin Auditorium on the ITC campus. For more information, call 404-527-7718 or 404-527-7761.

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