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Sudanese Lawyers Receive Guidance for Possible Trials Over Darfur

By [ERIC PFANNER](#)

LONDON, June 6 — As international pressure increases over the situation in [Darfur](#), Sudanese lawyers are looking ahead to the day when victims of mass rape and torture seek justice in tribunals like the [International Criminal Court](#) in The Hague.

The court issued arrest warrants in April for two Sudanese men charged with planning and taking part in war crimes in Darfur, where more than 200,000 people have died and 2.5 million have lost their homes in fighting between government-backed forces and rebels. [Sudan](#) has refused to turn over the suspects, including a government minister.

But an unusual training program in London this week is bringing together Sudanese lawyers and American and European legal experts to discuss ways to be heard at the court.

“The situation in Darfur is absolutely appalling,” said Hyat Musa Suliman, a lawyer and human rights advocate who counsels rape victims and others in refugee camps in northern Darfur, speaking through an interpreter. “I hope the procedures and trials of the I.C.C. will bring back the confidence of the people in the justice system.”

Ms. Suliman is one of nine Sudanese lawyers who have traveled to London to take part in the weeklong program, organized by the litigation section of the [American Bar Association](#). Experts from the association, nongovernmental organizations and the International Criminal Court explain the complexities of the court, and a mock trial is set for Friday.

Brad D. Brian, a lawyer from Los Angeles who organized the course, said it was meant to teach skills to the Sudanese, who have little experience with international legal affairs, let alone lengthy war crimes trials. Mr. Brian said the program was the first of its kind for the bar association, showing the degree of concern about Darfur in American society even though the United States, like Sudan, has not joined the International Criminal Court.

“In war crimes cases, it’s important to give victims a voice,” said Mr. Brian, a partner at the firm of Munger, Tolles & Olson in Los Angeles. Mr. Brian’s involvement began in 2005, when he met Salih Mahmoud Osman, a Sudanese lawyer and human rights advocate.

The training program, financed largely by a \$183,000 grant from the [MacArthur Foundation](#), has a “faculty” of 13 legal professionals, including Terree A. Bowers, a former United States Attorney in Los Angeles. Ms. Bowers worked with the prosecution in the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which tried [Slobodan Milosevic](#), the former leader of Serbia. Mr. Milosevic died last year before the

four-year trial reached a verdict.

The group has also brought in outside speakers like Paolina Massidda, the principal counsel in the Office of Public Counsel for Victims at The Hague. Ms. Massidda explained some of the nuances of that tribunal, noting that victims of crimes were typically allowed greater participation than they were in other courts. In many courts people who say they are victims are often permitted to appear only as witnesses. At the International Criminal Court, victims can call for experts, witnesses or evidence and can question the accused.

That means the Sudanese lawyers may play a significant role if cases related to Darfur make their way to The Hague, Mr. Brian said. While the lawyers at this session are unlikely to serve as prosecutors at the court, they might represent the victims.

The Sudanese lawyers might also be called on to make the case for the International Criminal Court to hear any cases in the first place, because the court cannot accept a case until national courts have been ruled out as a suitable venue.

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