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For Immediate Release

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WISCONSIN STATE SENATE TAKES STAND AGAINST GENOCIDE

Milwaukee – *Below is the statement of the Darfur Action Coalition of Wisconsin on S.R. 28, passed today on a voice vote in the Wisconsin State Senate.*

The Darfur Action Coalition of Wisconsin commends the Wisconsin State Senate for finally taking action to address the genocide in Darfur. We commend Senator Spencer Coggs for his tremendous leadership on this issue, as well as Senator Sheila Harsdorf for her hard work over the past two years to draw attention to what has been referred to as the “world’s worst current humanitarian crisis.” And we commend Rep. Fred Kessler for his leadership and efforts in the State Assembly.

At least 24 states have passed some form of divestment, and 16 states have passed a targeted divestment bill based on the Sudan Divestment Task Force model. Although the Coalition regrets that Wisconsin taxpayers and public employee retirees continue to invest in companies that fund genocide through the programs managed by the State of Wisconsin Investment Board, this resolution is a positive step forward, and we encourage SWIB to take action soon.

Investing in genocide is not just morally wrong, it is bad business practice. The taxpayers and retirees who participate in the Wisconsin Retirement System are best served by an investment strategy that takes into account the risk placed on holdings in companies doing business with unstable regimes such as the Government of Sudan. As the Government of Sudan has been the primary perpetrators of a genocide that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and dislocated millions of its own people, it would seem to be common sense that continuing to invest in the few, isolated foreign companies that continue to do business there would be a bad idea. This is especially true since recent information published about the few companies still doing business in Sudan’s oil, mineral and infrastructure sectors shows that their stock is underperforming their peers in their markets.

Of course, the Coalition believes the best solution is to require SWIB to take immediate action to pressure companies they invest in to stop funding genocide, and in the absence of timely action, to divest Wisconsin holdings from these companies. Encouraging SWIB to do so voluntarily is a good first step.

ABOUT THE DARFUR ACTION COALITION: The coalition is a broad grassroots collective of religious, human rights, campus and civic organizations in Wisconsin, educating the public about the genocide in the Darfur region of the Sudan and moving people to action on behalf of the people of Darfur.