



*The National Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order - USA*

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**Secular Franciscans Urge Refugee Status for Darfur Victims,
Support U.S.-Mexican Bishops' Call for Immigrant Help**

The National Council of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, representing more than 15,000 Secular Franciscans across the nation, is calling on the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to grant immediate refugee status to people who have fled the genocide in the Darfur region of the Sudan.

In a statement adopted at its annual national gathering, held Oct. 24-29 in Marathon, WI, the Secular Franciscans said: "We urge that the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service grant prompt and just refugee status to the people of Darfur now languishing in refugee camps in Kenya and throughout Africa." Reiterating a statement adopted two years ago condemning the genocide, they also urged the U.S. to "firmly support the United Nations peacekeeping efforts in Darfur."

The Secular Franciscan leaders also addressed the issue of immigration, declaring their support for the joint U.S. and Mexican bishops' call for expanded economic opportunities in the home nations and for facilitating the reunion of close family members separated by national borders as part of comprehensive immigration reform.

The call came in a recent pastoral letter issued jointly by the Catholic bishops of Mexico and the U.S., entitled "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope."

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