

WINNERS IN ST KITTS



Kitt catch: lucky winners Linda (below) and with sister Diane (above right right)

This week lucky Voice reader Linda Small was back in Reading still smiling after scooping a 5 star holiday to St Kitts. She won two tickets to the St Kitts Music Festival earlier this month after entering the competition.



"I was just killing time with the Voice newspaper and came across the competition," said Linda. "I entered two days before the closing date and to my surprise I won!"

Linda and her sister were then whisked off to the Marriott Hotel in Bassere, the capital of St Kitts. There they enjoyed a

relaxing spa and the hotel beach and visited local landmarks like Brimstone Hill and Rosemary Manor.

The 9th Annual St Kitts Music Festival, sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, showcased some of music's brightest talents - Boys II Men, Kenny Rogers, Lonnie Liston Smith and Wyclef Jean to name just a few.

"I loved all the acts," said Linda. "Some of the artists were staying at the Hilton too, so we were able to meet Atlantic Star, which was really nice."

INCREDIBLE

She added: "The food in St Kitts was incredible, and the locals were friendly and hospitable."

"I'd like to thank the St Kitts tourist authority and its staff for the competition. I'd also like to thank The Voice for choosing me - it was a wonderful experience that I will never forget."

THE BUTCHERS OF KHARTOUM

A campaigner for human rights in Darfur, Tess Finch-Lees, says the thousands of killings that take place there amount to genocide

After just months of futile campaigning, converting my vitriol into verbal missiles aimed at those who turn their backs on the genocide in Darfur, my anger gave way to the grinding pain of grief.

Sitting in parliament, listening to the erudite and courageous Dr Kapila - the previous UN humanitarian co-ordinator in Darfur - the tears flowed defiantly, reducing my killer stare to a sodden smudge. Despite his position of power, his absolute impotence resonated with my own. He spoke the truth in a world that does not want to hear it: "To me, the greatest regret, to my dying day, will be that we failed in Darfur. However much we may express outrage now, and having come from Rwanda myself and having witnessed all those things, and the smell of those dead bodies still comes to me ten years after the event, I consider myself to have failed. I failed in Darfur because ethnic cleansing - a form of genocide - is taking place".

Dr Kapila, who was giving evidence to a

fields. These people are indeed irrefutably poor. They have been robbed of their homes and their livelihoods. Their villages have been burnt out and all means of survival destroyed. They have been refused access to their land to plant their crops, so are now dependent on aid for their survival. Hitherto prosperous farmers, carpenters, teachers and doctors are now living in absolute poverty. Poverty that was deliberately inflicted on them by their own Arabian Government in Khartoum as part of their well-documented campaign to ethnically cleanse the region of black Africans. The people of Darfur need immediate protection, not pious platitudes and pop stars' pity.

In 2001, Tony Blair asserted that, were a situation similar to the Rwanda genocide to happen again, "we would have a moral duty to act". Yet in March of this year, the International Development Committee (IDC) published their report which revealed how the international community, including the UK government, "conspired not to see" - again. This time in Darfur. In the wake of Iraq, the government's mantra is to let

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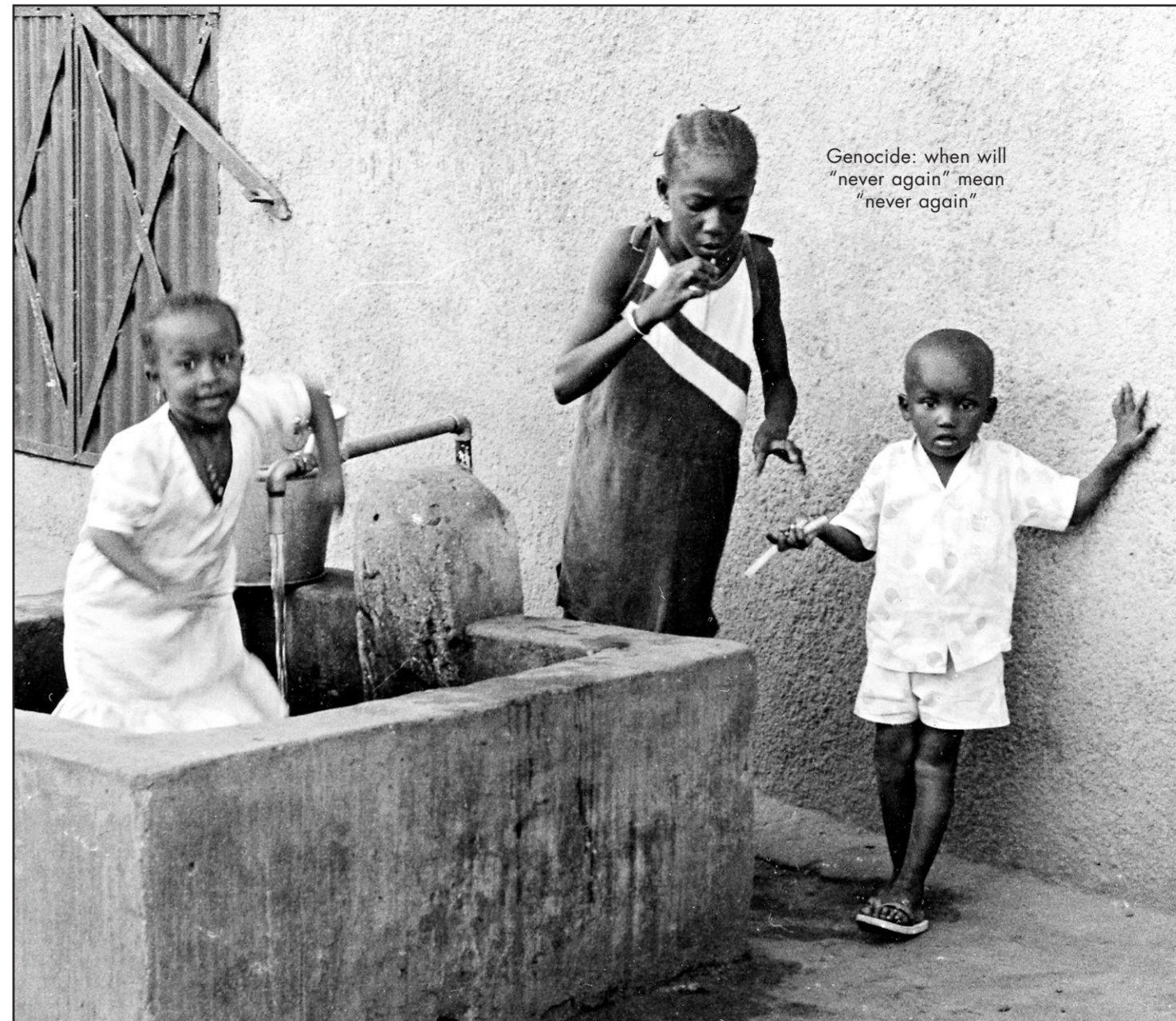
cross party International Development Committee (IDC) investigation into the crisis in Darfur, went on to describe how UN member states exerted pressure to downplay the severity of the crisis in Darfur. When he refused to be silent, he was forced out of his job. Canada, Germany, the US and members of UK opposition parties (but lamentably not the British Government) have all acknowledged that genocide is taking place in Darfur.

ROBBED

A few weeks ago the Make Poverty History campaign did something quite remarkable by any standards, that is, while talking about Africa, managed to obviate any mention of the greatest humanitarian and human rights crisis in the world today, namely, the genocide in Darfur, Western Sudan. The numbers of displaced Darfurians living in camps is set to rise from 3m to 4m and the estimated mortality rate stands at 400,000 - although the extent of the killings won't be known until the world can access the killing

African people resolve African problems. To that, the people of Darfur ask how one expects them to feel empowered when their own government drops bombs on them, driving them into makeshift camps where their lives continue to be in danger. When they are starving, grieving in the wake of witnessing the brutal rape and murder of loved ones - reports of children being tossed alive on fires are commonplace - when they have no rights, no freedom of speech, nothing. To stand by and leave the victims of genocide to solve their own problems is to be complicit in the greatest crime against humanity.

In April 2004, Kofi Annan said our greatest failing in Rwanda was beforehand, we did not face up to the fact that genocide was a real possibility, and, once it started, for too long we could not bring ourselves to recognise it, or call it by its name. Despite this, and the copious evidence of genocide in their own reports, even the three main international human rights organisations (Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and the Interna-



tional Crisis Group) have steadfastly gone along with the UN's indefensible decision not to call the genocide in Darfur by its name. The IDC report indicated that the UN's motivation for downplaying the genocide in Darfur was to appease the Sudanese government into abiding by the tenuous peace deal recently secured in the south, where there is oil. It seems we, the international community, are content to trade our souls and the lives of black Africans in exchange for oil, arms deals and the promise of a Nobel peace prize for the ageing diplomats who so treacherously sealed the fate of Darfur.

FORGOTTEN

The IDC report described the misleading, conflated mortality figures issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and adopted by the International Development Secretary Hilary Benn, as a scandalous form of "statistical anarchy" brought about by "either extreme naivety or gross incompetence". The highly inaccurate number of 70,000 had been widely used until the release of the IDC report. It is noteworthy that the BBC, on the rare occasions that it fulfills its public duty to report on Darfur, continues to use deflated numbers.

The decision about the mortality rate, like the language used, is political. By fumbling the language and describing it as not being quite genocide but every bit as bad, it has served only to confuse the public and the press, causing already fragmented messages to be sidelined and ignored. Sadly, the attention span of the "hideously white" mainstream media has proven short and easy to divert. Fox hunting, the Tsunami, Live 8, even Big Brother, garner more coverage than a genocide in Darfur. If it isn't

made visible by the media, it is forgotten. For example, in April 2004, the UN asked its member states for six helicopters to distribute humanitarian aid in Darfur. By July, none had been provided. For the Tsunami, on day two of the emergency, a request was made for helicopters; within days five helicopter-carrier ships with hundreds of helicopters were made available. The frenzied, sustained and impassioned media coverage rendered the crisis impossible to ignore. Something Darfur, it seems, does not merit.

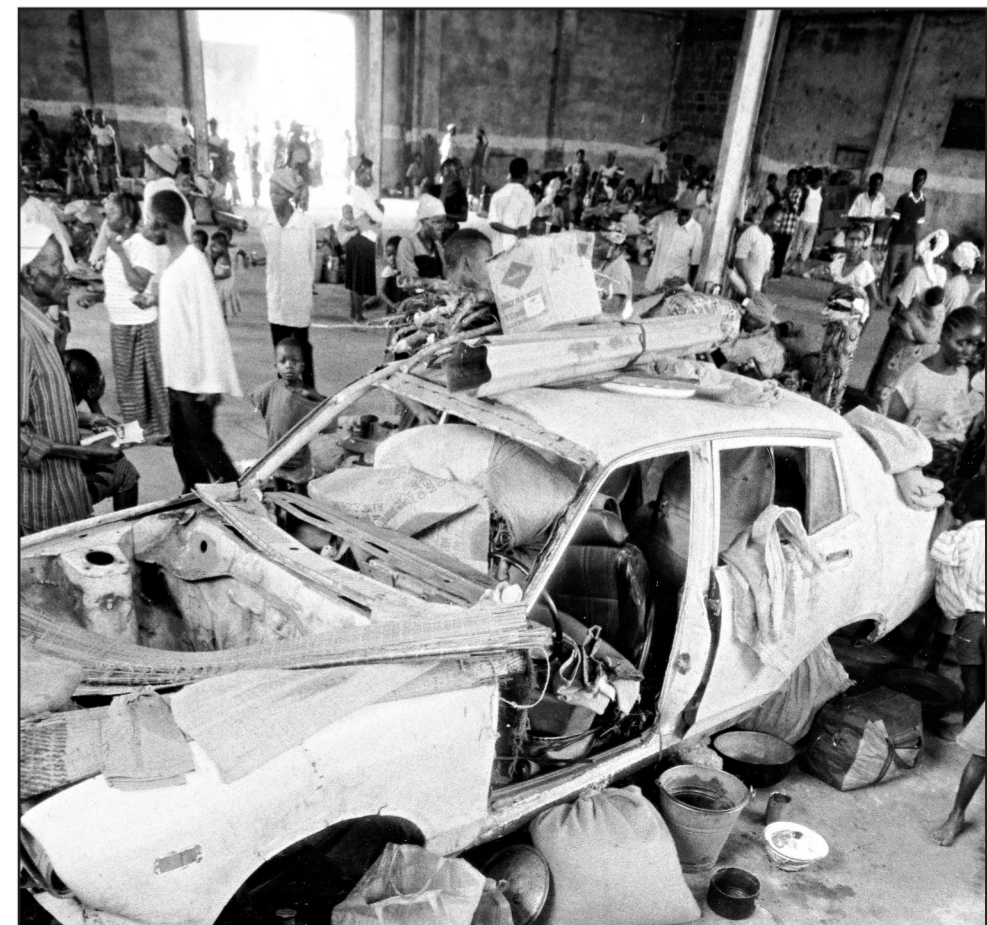
In the same way that the media can take credit for inciting such huge international support which indubitably benefited the victims of the tsunami disaster, it must also accept responsibility for failing the black African victims of genocide - again. Indeed, by actively diverting the world's attention from Darfur, the media has been complicit in allowing the Arab militias to accelerate their genocidal campaign of rape, slaughter, torture and starvation.

Time and again, history shows us that black African lives, in their own right, hold no currency in the Western world. When Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935 the Western journalists decided the war was too boring to report - evidently the slaughter of black Africans was not interesting enough. The media got bored with Rwanda too and fled instead to report the elections in South Africa. Now, I'm told by media editors that Darfur is not on the news regularly because "there's not much happening"; besides, "we did Darfur a few months ago". Would we tolerate this response if the victims of the genocide were white?

Up until now the international community's response to the "butchers of Khartoum"

(the Government of Sudan) has been risible. Inaction, punctuated by half-hearted threats that are as futile as they are lethal. Eight

Tess Finch-Lees is a director of Waging Peace



Travesty: children in Darfur continue to suffer away from the glare of the world's media

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