

More than 300,000 people have died as a result of the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, British lawmakers said in a report on Wednesday, a figure more than four times greater than an official UN estimate.

Compiled after interviews with non-governmental organizations, UN officials and British Development Secretary Hilary Benn, the estimated death count dwarfed the World Health Organization's (WHO) figure of 70,000

Baldry blamed the faulty WHO figures on the "statistical anarchy in the way the figures were collected", since they included violence which occurred in refugee camps but not violent deaths which took place in villages across Darfur.

Also, they noted, the WHO estimate covered only a period from March to mid-October 2004, while the alleged atrocities including rape, murder and forced displacement of villagers by the Arab militias had been under way for much longer.

The lawmakers, who visited Darfur in February, credited Benn and the British government for reacting more quickly than most international powers but still faulted the world for its slow response to what has become one of the world's greatest humanitarian crises.

"Our hope for this report is that it will jolt people's attention to the scale of the crisis in Darfur, the numbers of people who are continuously, silently suffering in Darfur, and will be yet another call to the UK government and the international community that we have a collective responsibility to protect," Baldry said

"Darfur is a real test for the international community and civilization as a whole at the start of the 21st century," Baldry added. "If we can't resolve the situation in Darfur it bodes pretty badly for the coming millenium."

<http://dailytelegraph.news.com.au/story.jsp?sectionid=1274&storyid=2887380>