

September 12, 2023

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Risch
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch,

We, the 26 undersigned organizations, urge you to exercise leadership in responding to the current conflict in Sudan by holding a committee hearing examining the ongoing atrocities and humanitarian crisis. Since the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on May 10th, the situation has deteriorated significantly, necessitating further efforts from legislators to amplify the policy response.

Since the escalation of violence on April 15th, violent conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has created extreme threats to civilians who were already facing severe security and livelihood challenges. Before April, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) declared that [over 15 million people](#) were in need of humanitarian assistance and [just \\$225.7 million](#) of the \$1.75 billion in assistance called for by OCHA had been provided. The recent fighting has drastically exacerbated humanitarian needs, with OCHA now estimating that [24.7 million people](#) require assistance. However, the current response remains woefully underfunded, with only [\\$1.52 billion of the new \\$3 billion](#) request made by the United Nations to address the crisis provided thus far.

Reported casualty numbers from this conflict are extreme and mounting, with the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) reporting more than [5,000 deaths](#) since the beginning of the conflict. However, the intensity of the conflict, high levels of insecurity, and sustained communication challenges mean this number is likely underestimated. There has been [widespread and indiscriminate](#) use of heavy weaponry including artillery, tanks, and missiles in populated areas, causing widespread civilian death, injury, and destruction of property. Civilian homes, businesses, and organizations have been targeted, with armed actors moving door-to-door and looting fuel and other resources. Exposure to unexploded ordinance is also common.

In addition to the conflict between RSF and SAF forces, a renewed campaign of ethnically motivated violence has emerged in Darfur. As highlighted in the [Sudan Conflict Observatory](#) and [recognized by the U.S. Department of State](#), there is widespread and credible evidence of ongoing atrocity crimes, including but not limited to extrajudicial killings, conflict-related sexual violence, and mass killings. This campaign has striking similarities to the genocide that began in Darfur in 2003. In that instance, rapid congressional action played a pivotal role in curbing the violence and saving lives. Current crimes necessitate a similar response.

The conflict has also had significant impacts throughout the region. [Data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) indicates that more than 950,000 civilians have fled the country as refugees, asylum seekers, and returnees, and over 3.6 million have been internally displaced due to the conflict. Many neighboring countries are themselves fragile and poorly equipped to respond to large numbers of refugees. As a result, conditions are deteriorating in border areas and neighboring states.

Pervasive levels of insecurity and the unwillingness of parties to allow humanitarian access make aid delivery challenging in many areas. International efforts to broker ceasefires have shown little impact on the ground so far. There has, however, been some local-level success at negotiating ceasefires. These civil society-led efforts should not be overlooked and, indeed, should be supported and strengthened.

In the face of atrocity crimes, extreme civilian need, and the potential for widespread regional destabilization, it is imperative that the U.S. government act urgently and deploy all tools at its disposal to protect civilians and push for a peacefully negotiated end to the conflict and, in the interim, adherence to the principles of International Humanitarian Law. Ongoing crimes must be highlighted at the highest levels, applying the pressure of international observation and catalyzing justice mechanisms, and every effort must be made to stop crimes before they are committed.

A congressional hearing is an important forum for legislators and policymakers to share information about realities on the ground, explore the U.S. government's response to the crisis to date, and chart potential paths forward including but not limited to a coordinated humanitarian funding package, resourcing atrocity prevention actors, securing humanitarian corridors for safe passage of civilians, documentation and investigation of war crimes, and effective diplomatic pressure on the Sudanese Government to facilitate safe humanitarian access into and within Sudan.

We ask that you respond to this pressing crisis by holding a congressional hearing with civil society witnesses, allowing ongoing crimes to be highlighted on the public record and promote a reexamination of the United States' response.

Sincerely,

- Act for Sudan
- Alliance for Peacebuilding
- American friends Service Committee
- Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (USA)
- DT Institute
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Group Against Torture in Sudan-GATS
- Helping Hand for Survivors, Inc.
- Humanity United Action
- International Medical Corps

- Investors Against Genocide
- Jewish World Watch (JWW)
- Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur
- Minnesota Peace Project
- Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies
- No Business With Genocide
- Nonviolent Peaceforce
- Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
- Refugees International
- Sudan Unlimited
- Sudanese Women Rights Action
- The Sentry
- Together for Girls
- Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC)
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries