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House Committee on Foreign Affairs
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa

A Dire Crisis in Sudan: A Global Call to Action

May 22, 2025

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Jacobs, Committee members, and fellow guests.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and thoughts on the crisis in Sudan.

Is Sudan in a crisis? Sudan is near collapse on all levels: political, security, economic, social, humanitarian, health, food security and infrastructure. With a raging civil war since 2023 between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and a heavily armed militia group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), many nation states see Sudan as a failed state. The population is in extreme distress.

The level of human suffering is horrible. Over 13 million people have been displaced and nearly 4 million have fled to other nations¹. Over 28,000 are dead (some sources report over 150,000²) as a result of fighting, 638,000 are in IPC Phase 5 (technically famine) and 8.1 million are in Phase 4 food insecurity (near famine). Famine has been declared in both Darfur and South Kordofan States, with 17 additional locations at risk of falling into famine³. 24.6 million people face acute food insecurity⁴. The situation in Sudan reflects its history in many ways, as violence

¹ <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/sudan-crisis-explained/#:~:text=The%20lack%20of%20basic%20necessities,million%20refugees%20and%20refugee%20returnees.>

² <https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025/sudan/>

³ https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Sudan_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Oct2024_May2025_Snapshot.pdf

⁴ [ibid](#)

continues to be perpetrated against innocent civilians. I believe that these numbers underrepresent the lives that this conflict has claimed; whether through violence, sickness or hunger.

I have been involved in humanitarian work for over 35 years. Over the course of my career, I have seen the effects of famine on individuals, communities, and nations. I have responded to humanitarian famines in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Sudan. I have testified before similar committees, including this committee in 2017, on what was coined, the “quiet famine” affecting the Horn of Africa⁵. What we are seeing today in Sudan is a manmade famine. Humanitarian assistance alone cannot solve this crisis, it will require political will from nations and people; including those sitting in this room.

There have been very few years of peace in Sudan since its independence in 1956. Sudan has been plagued by conflict, and while there are distinct points that led to this latest civil war, there also remain underlying factors and parties that have contributed to Sudan’s perpetual destabilization.

The Sudan Government, under President Omar al-Bashir created the Janjaweed militia in the early 2000’s as a tool to control insurgency in Darfur. In 2013, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) formalized the Janjaweed by presidential decree into the paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces. Their mandate remained the same, but expanded to also fight insurgency in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states. Remember that in this era, the civil war in Sudan had resulted in an independent South Sudan, but both countries have remained in conflict and turbulence⁶.

⁵ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115hhrg24832/pdf/CHRG-115hhrg24832.pdf>

⁶ <https://history.state.gov/countries/south-sudan>

Throughout the existence of the RSF, they have conducted themselves with brutality and violence, with little regard for human life. Whether under the name Janjaweed or RSF, whether working at the direction of the Sudanese Government, or dispatching mercenaries to Yemen, they have been known for violence, chaos and terror. As the RSF evolved, their national mandate of domestic suppression did not change, although their assignment locations did.

This current civil war has seen the RSF position itself against the State that created it. The RSF and their inability to exercise command and control over their troops makes one question if they would ever be able to comply with any peace agreement.

In March of 2024, large influxes of displaced people were observed arriving into the States of West Kordofan and South Kordofan. We witnessed children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), which is when the body begins to waste and a child is frail, thin, and has saggy skin. In August, Samaritan's Purse began collecting data that proved famine conditions existed in the region. Malnutrition rates in some locations exceeded 50%. People died from consuming wild grass that tore their internal organs. The famine occurring in the Kordofan region is real. Few reporters have gone to see it.

After consultation and consideration, all the parties involved including SAF, SPLM-N, and South Sudan agreed to allow a humanitarian air bridge for food to be flown from Juba, South Sudan to the affected areas in the Kordofan region. The program ran for a length of 90 days with food going to both sides of the conflict, that is SAF and SPLM-N. The distribution was closely monitored.

The Sudan Ministry of Health (MOH) requested Samaritan's Purse to provide medical support to the city of Gedaref in Eastern Sudan. We undertook the challenge and established an

emergency field hospital (EFH) in the city, normally 1.5 million population, now swollen to nearly 3 million as a result of people fleeing the fighting. The local obstetric hospital was completely overwhelmed, with 3 to 5 women in each bed. The medical staff were exhausted and supplies were sparse. The EFH opened on Christmas Day, 2024. The EFH was operational for 87 days, and staffed by 93 people, mostly Americans. We treated 9,149 patients, had 1,405 in-patients, delivered 562 babies and performed 304 surgeries (mostly C-sections). The entire effort in Gedaref was funded by Samaritan's Purse. The response was lifesaving, serving two of the most vulnerable demographics in any crisis; pregnant women and newborn children. The authorities were very supportive in allowing access, facilitating visas and travel permissions. The program came to a close as the population returned to its pre-war level.

We cannot overlook the important role that Sudanese citizens serve. One example, Samaritan's Purse has three female Sudanese staff who made the personal decision not to evacuate Khartoum in 2023. They chose to stay, and through that choice, over 200,000 people have been fed. These women activated a network of churches across the city who are selflessly feeding people on all sides of the war, from every racial, tribal and religious background. All at great risk to themselves. We continue to furnish food to them in Khartoum, because they chose to remain present and their bravery is commended.

The security and humanitarian situation in Sudan is truly a crisis. It is accurate to recognize that an enormous amount of humanitarian assistance is needed, but more importantly, the war must stop. The recently conducted London Sudan Conference at Lancaster House is an example of the type of diplomatic action required to affect change. The conference aimed to coordinate international efforts to address the ongoing conflict in Sudan which began in April 2023. The points addressed were ending the conflict, alleviating humanitarian suffering and

supporting a peaceful, united, democratic, and just future for Sudan. A number of donor countries, including the United States, committed to over 813 million pounds sterling in funding for Sudan and its neighboring countries.

Why should America be involved in Sudan? Sudan is strategically located on the Red Sea. The United States has national interest in that part of the world and in open passage of the Red Sea. Sudan is an extremely mineral rich nation with large petroleum and gold reserves, not to mention fertile ground, plenty of water, and abundant sunshine. There will be stiff global competition for access to Sudan's resources and location.

In March, I had the opportunity to meet personally with a delegation in Sudan hosted by General Burhan. He made it expressly clear that he desired American involvement in his country. The United States needs the necessary diplomatic staff for a broader and sustained effort in Sudan.

Ending the war will quickly bring about a substantial improvement in the humanitarian condition of the people. I believe American presence, be it in business, diplomacy, or military will have a positive influence in a region of the world where we have substantial allies.

Decisions must be made about who will be negotiated with to end the fighting, which practically means, who presently represents Sudan? Is it the SAF or the RSF?

Helping strategically located nations end their wars breeds regional stability and makes America stronger. America's ongoing and concerted efforts to end the war in conjunction with other allied nations serves in the American national interest.