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Before the
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
June 25, 2019

Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. We greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's support for the people of Sudan and for drawing attention to this important issue.

USAID is outraged about the brutal crackdown by Sudan's security forces on unarmed civilians who for months bravely gathered peacefully in the streets of Khartoum and other Sudanese cities and towns, seeking to establish a representative and inclusive government after 30 years of oppression, division, and corruption under Omar al-Bashir. After decades of unwavering partnership between USAID and the people of Sudan, we are also gravely concerned that this non-violent, well-organized, and massive effort by the Sudanese people to demand a democratic and representative government has been met with violence. We appreciate the decisive action of the African Union to suspend Sudan's membership, and its strong message on the need to transition quickly to a civilian-led government.

The umbrella opposition coalition Forces for Freedom and Change was negotiating in good faith with the Transitional Military Council (TMC) on a transition to civilian-led government following Bashir's ouster in April 2019. However, attacks by TMC forces had the effect of 'clearing the streets' on June 3rd, the last day of Ramadan and, for most Sudanese, the holiest month of the year. In this brutal attack, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and other security elements shot and beat unarmed civilians, reportedly killing more than 100, including children, and injuring hundreds, including an American citizen. According to credible reports, they burned tents where peaceful protesters were sleeping; attacked medical staff in hospitals assisting the wounded; raped women and men, including health workers; and blocked the Internet and phone services across Sudan, silencing the Sudanese public and cutting their connection to the world.

United Nations human rights experts warn of Sudan sliding into a "human rights abyss" and have joined other voices calling for an independent outside investigation into human rights violations and abuses against peaceful protesters, which the TMC has rejected. I remain deeply concerned about the violence since the start of this year. I would note that one of the key factors exacerbating this risk, in addition to existing instability, human rights violations, abuses, and oppression, is the presence and activity of the RSF, which evolved from the very forces that *already* committed mass atrocities in Darfur, who are now in the capital Khartoum. It is this force, with its reprehensible track record, that the TMC chose to deploy in their 'street clean-up'

efforts on June 3. We have seen this story before in Sudan—the devastating aftermath of mass violence, including dire humanitarian needs. Darfur has still not recovered from the mass killing, mass displacement, and atrocities that began in 2003, the aftermath of which USAID responds to with humanitarian assistance on a daily basis. Nearly 1.8 million remain displaced by conflict in Darfur.

As a show of good faith that it can operate in the interests of the Sudanese people, the TMC should allow for an independent and credible investigation of the human rights violations and abuses committed in Khartoum and hold accountable those responsible. We call on the TMC to protect the human rights of those in Sudan, allow peaceful protests and respect freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly. In addition, the TMC should negotiate with the Forces for Freedom and Change to expeditiously form a civilian-led transitional government.

On June 3, the TMC unilaterally announced that elections would be held in nine months. We agree with our State colleagues that such a timeline is not realistic for credible elections. We also agree that the Forces for Freedom and Change are their negotiating partner and a civilian-led transitional government should be formed with them.

Humanitarian Needs

Upheaval in Khartoum is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Darfur at a very precarious time, as the United Nations-African Union joint peacekeeping operation in Darfur, UNAMID, is in the process of drawing down toward a planned exit a year from now. We are fully against the May 13 decree from the TMC demanding that UNAMID bases are turned over to the RSF. UNAMID continues to play an important role in the protection of civilians in Darfur, a role that cannot be filled by the RSF.

Again this month, violence erupted, leaving a reported 17 people dead, 15 injured, and 100 homes burned in Central Darfur. Witnesses said the attackers were the Rapid Support Forces—formerly the Janjaweed responsible for genocide in Darfur—the same brutal forces who killed, beat, and raped people in Khartoum.

The international community assesses that more than eight million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including one million refugees and asylum seekers in Sudan who need assistance, most of them from South Sudan. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the TMC's decision to cut off the Internet and telephone networks has significantly hampered humanitarian operations.

We will continue to call on the TMC to ensure unfettered access for humanitarian actors to effectively and efficiently help Sudanese people in need of life-saving assistance—regardless of who and where they are—in keeping with international standards of independence and impartiality. The current restrictive operating environment for humanitarian assistance must be changed now to ensure timely delivery.

USAID Response

The United States is the largest donor to the people of Sudan. We continue to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to Sudanese people in need, including in areas where people have long suffered the impacts of conflict—Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. In FY 2018 and 2019, the U.S. Government has provided nearly \$340 million in humanitarian assistance as of March 2019, reaching more than 2.5 million people in Sudan. Current programming focuses on emergency food distributions, meeting critical gaps in health and nutrition, and improving access to safe drinking water for vulnerable populations. To a lesser extent, and where appropriate, our teams are working to expand upon integrated food security, livelihoods, and protection programming.

Food security needs this year are higher than normal, exacerbated by poor macroeconomic conditions that are driving extremely high food prices. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) estimates that in 2019, nearly 5.8 million Sudanese people will experience Crisis (IPC 3) level of acute food insecurity, including more than one million people facing Emergency—IPC 4—levels of food insecurity. Inflation and high cereal prices have significantly reduced household purchasing power, while economic conditions have also led to decreased income-generating opportunities and the availability of goods and services. In addition to the spikes in need, cash shortages across the country continue to hamper humanitarian operations as relief actors struggle to access sufficient cash to pay staff and contractors, causing significant delays in programming.

USAID is also providing approximately \$5 million in development assistance, which supports conflict mitigation at the community level and support for civil society, including women, youth, and people with disabilities.

As we consider how best the United States can positively influence events in Sudan at this crucial and volatile time, and make a positive impact on the lives of Sudan's 40 million people, USAID is well placed to expand and adjust our assistance.

For decades, we have supported Sudan's civil society, despite limited space in an authoritarian environment. Brave Sudanese people, including thousands of young women, who repeatedly defied the state of emergency and took to the streets demanding freedom from authoritarian rule, are some of the beneficiaries of the civil society support we have provided for years. This is why it continues to be essential that the United States provide support for civil society as a cornerstone of our foreign assistance.

We continue to help mitigate conflict at the local level by working with communities to address grievances and alleviate competition for scarce resources.

USAID is already expanding support to Sudanese civil society through existing mechanisms and new funding, including funds from USAID's Elections and Political Processes Fund and

\$170,000 from the Human Rights Grants Program. We are also exploring other means to mobilize funding and programs to augment these efforts. While we have concerns about a rapid move to elections, we stand ready to support civil society to engage in a free and fair electoral process, should there be an agreement on an appropriate timeline. USAID has supported many elections in Africa and we know that genuinely free and fair electoral processes needs adequate time. We continually assess how best to use our existing conflict mitigation assistance to help support civil society and resolve community-level conflict.

Conclusion

The people of Sudan have been united by a vibrant, inspirational, and massive public demonstration for democracy and civilian rule—a government of the people that has eluded the country since 1989. A military government will not resolve Sudan’s divisions, end decades of conflict, repair its broken economy, and transform Sudan into an inclusive, prosperous, and productive country. On the contrary, we have seen military rule in Sudan produce decades of war, violence, a genocide, and regional instability. A transition to civilian rule with an empowered civil society inclusive of all Sudanese is essential in order to stop the cycle of conflict and oppression and chart a new course for the people of Sudan and their neighbors.

We will do all we can to help the Sudanese people achieve their dreams of an open and democratic society and we thank the committee for working with us in this effort.