

Ken Isaacs
Vice President of Programs and Government Relations,
Samaritan's Purse

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa

Stopping the Bloodshed: U.S. Response to Crimes Against Humanity in Sudan

December 11, 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.

A stable and functioning Sudan is in the national interest of the United States. A number of foreign states are already deeply involved in this conflict. Their involvement underscores that Sudan is not a contained internal war, but a geopolitical arena. These actors include the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Iran, Russia, China, Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, and Libya. This involvement is noted not to assign blame, but to demonstrate the scale of geopolitical investment in Sudan's outcome.

Regional actors are coalescing in Sudan, each with a vested interest. Sudan lies at the intersection of the Red Sea corridor, the Nile basin, the Sahel, and the Horn of Africa. Instability here is not contained. It moves - through arms flows, migration routes, extremist recruitment, gold and resource extraction, and maritime positioning. Ending this war will not be achieved by isolating one actor but by coordinated restraint among many.

Since 1989, Sudanese politics have been dominated by ideological positioning, with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood. The National Congress Party (NCP), led by Omar al-Bashir, took control of the government and allowed the Brotherhood-linked NCP to grow from being a

political party into the ideological spine of a militarized Islamist state, with a violent footprint across the country. As a perpetrator of this violence, Bashir created the Janjaweed militia in the early 2000's as a tool to control insurgency in Darfur. In 2013, the NCP formalized the Janjaweed by presidential decree into the paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)¹.

In 2019, after months of mass civilian protests demanding an end to Islamist authoritarian rule, Sudan's military removed President Omar al-Bashir and formed a transitional government with civilian leaders. This transitional body collapsed in October 2021 when military leaders staged a coup, briefly detaining Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and dissolving the civilian government².

In April 2023, this alliance fractured and Khartoum dissolved into open conflict. The current civil war has seen the RSF position itself against the State that created it. It is crucial to keep these historical and ideological roots in mind; both the SAF and the RSF were created out of the same ideological fabric that is woven deeply into Sudanese power structures. It is not just a fight between two generals; it is a legacy of entrenched Islamist political networks that now stand at odds.

As a result of the conflict, an estimated 30.4 million people, roughly two-thirds of the Sudanese population, need humanitarian assistance³. Twenty-one million people face acute food insecurity, 6.5 million are in, or near, famine conditions⁴. Famine has been declared in different locations across Sudan three separate times over the past two years, with the latest declaration occurring in November; this time in El Fasher, in Darfur and Kadugli, in South Kordofan - with

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rapid-Support-Forces>

² <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12816>

³ <https://www.globalissues.org/news/2025/02/14/39092>

⁴ <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1159787/?iso3=SDN>

twenty additional locations considered at risk of famine⁵. Samaritan's Purse has now twice been involved in the data collection that contributed to the famine determinations in the Kordofans.

I spoke before this same committee in May of this year about the humanitarian situation in Sudan. Then, we discussed the severity of the crisis, the desperation of the people, and what the United States could do to reduce the human suffering. Today, the humanitarian situation in Sudan has deteriorated further. I showed this committee photos of children suffering from severe malnutrition – many of them likely no longer alive. I have countless more photos. The tragedy these children have been forced to endure should challenge our collective conscious.

In July, Samaritan's Purse began collecting data on the nutrition and food security status of families fleeing Kadugli into areas of South Kordofan under SPLM-N control. Malnutrition rates were severe, with approximately 30% of children under 5 suffering from either moderate or severe malnutrition, and over 60% of households stating they had no food. There is no question that the famine in Sudan is real and widespread.

Sudan has vast natural resources, with incredible untapped agricultural potential. With access to the Red Sea, the Nile River, gold and oil reserves, Sudan is more than capable of supporting its population if governance is established. Sudan is not a state in need of perpetual outside support. What is happening 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.

Over the past six months, waves of displacement have continued. Darfur and the Kordofan's represent the frontlines of the conflict today, each hosting millions of displaced

⁵https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Sudan_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Sep2025_May2026_Special_Snapshot.pdf

people. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) controlled areas of Darfur, and Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) controlled areas of South Kordofan have emerged as safe havens for people fleeing violence and hunger in El Fasher and Kadugli⁶. Given the historical marginalization of these areas, the question of why people are choosing to flee there should be asked. I can tell you with certainty that it is not because there is more humanitarian assistance available. These pockets of stability, which have been sustained under immense pressure, are of critical national importance.

The humanitarian situation in Sudan is beyond comprehension - aptly named the world's largest humanitarian crisis⁷. Most recently in El Fasher, reports state that as many as 60,000 people were brutally murdered⁸. The country has descended into an intractable war that has no military solution - except for the continued loss of civilian life. The SAF and the RSF must be compelled to accept a cease-fire.

The first and overriding priority should be to stop the war. The fastest way to accomplish this is to pressure both sides to accept a cease-fire. In order for it to be successful, the cease-fire requires monitoring by a credible international body. This body needs the broad political support and authorities necessary to require both sides to abide by the terms of the cease-fire utilizing political and economic leverage.

The second requirement is humanitarian access. Sudan's civilians are not simply caught in the crossfire; they are being starved by the collapse of all of the economic and social mechanisms they normally rely on. Aid corridors must open and confidently provide safe passage into all of Sudan, including Darfur, Kordofan, Khartoum, and Jazirah without taxation,

⁶ <https://dtm.iom.int/sudan>

⁷ <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12816>

⁸ <https://uk-crime.co.uk/sarah-champion-2025-speech-on-gaza-and-sudan/>

diversion, or interference. Humanitarian access cannot be optional. It must be negotiated and guaranteed at the beginning of the cease-fire.

Attacks on aid convoys and humanitarian workers must stop. Humanitarian pathways from Chad have recently been targeted by drone strikes, with the Adre crossing being targeted as recently as Friday⁹. It is accurate and necessary to recognize that an enormous amount of humanitarian assistance is needed, but more importantly, the war must stop. Ending the war is the only thing that will quickly bring about improvement in the humanitarian condition of the people. As diplomatic conversations continue, a humanitarian ceasefire would allow life-saving interventions to reach desperate Sudanese. These interventions will require funding and political support. Helping the people of Sudan is not only a moral decision, it is in America's best interest.

Thirdly, a civilian transitional authority must be reconstituted. It cannot be symbolic, and it should be drawn from across Sudan. As Sudanese society is multi-ethnic, a wider representative civilian body is required for nationhood. Both primary forces in this war emerged from the same security architecture. That system fused governance from ideological patronage and armed structures. The people of Sudan want this legacy corrected. Sudan will not move forward if its political identity and security apparatus remain defined by structures born of ideological brutality.

Sudan requires a civilian constitutional structure that protects freedom of worship while ending the conflation of armed power with religious identity. The state should not use religion to dominate and exclude. A state in which Sudanese may freely worship is only possible if the political authority is accountable to civilians, not to military command and theological claim.

⁹ <https://3ayin.com/en/adre-2/>

The United States is served well by a clear policy that prevents flirting with the ideological and organizational network of the Muslim Brotherhood. There has historically been a pragmatic tolerance of extremism in Sudan. For some, the continued presence of extremist entities has been exploited as a means to reduce the influence of Sudan; to keep the country in a perpetual state of chaos, easing outside access to Sudan's vast natural resources. The tragic events of 9/11 were planned and executed by Osama Bin Laden, who lived in Khartoum until 1996¹⁰. The bombing of U.S. embassies in Dar Es Salaam, and Nairobi were reportedly planned and executed from Khartoum. In 1987, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a Palestinian cleric of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded a local political branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza called, Hamas¹¹. The Muslim Brotherhood is an entity with well documented connection to the death of Americans from which emerged Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and other armed movements whose destabilizing consequences now reach from Gaza to the Red Sea. President Trump and Secretary of State Rubio are to be applauded for recognizing the dangers of the Muslim Brotherhood and moving to declare many of their chapters as foreign terrorist organizations¹².

Sudan can be stable and functioning with a civilian constitutional framework where faith is protected and politics are not defined by military force. A stable, functioning Sudan is not a favor to the world, it is an American interest. A stable Sudan will make America safer, stronger and more prosperous. I want to thank President Trump and Secretary of State Rubio for their attention to this matter. I also want to thank the members of the Quad for their efforts; The United States, The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This war will not produce a victor. The war must end.

¹⁰ <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/osama-bin-laden>

¹¹ <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>

¹² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/11/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-begins-process-to-designate-certain-muslim-brotherhood-chapters-as-foreign-terrorist-organizations-and-specially-designated-global-terrorists/>