

A DIRE CRISIS IN SUDAN: A GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION

HEARING OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

May 22, 2025

Serial No. 119-20

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available: <http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov>, <http://docs.house.gov>, or <http://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

61-183PDF

WASHINGTON : 2025

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Thursday, May 22, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:39 a.m., in room 2200 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The Subcommittee on Africa will come to order. And the purpose of this hearing is to examine the ongoing conflict in Sudan, its devastating humanitarian consequences, including widespread displacement, violence, and external involvement, and to review the conflict's root causes, developments, and the responses from the United States and the international community.

I do recognize myself at this point for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

Over the decades, as especially our distinguished panel knows, the people of Sudan have been subjected to unbearable pain, suffering, and loss of life, even slavery. Since the 1990's, I have been a vocal advocate for human rights, democracy, and stability in Sudan. Soon after Republicans took control of the House, I chaired a hearing in 1996 on slavery in Sudan and Mauritania.

Today, there's a dire crisis again in Sudan, necessitating a global call to action. I went to Khartoum, for example, in August 2005 to meet with President Omar al-Bashir and other government officials, a number of people from the faith community, to press for an end to the genocide in Darfur. The meeting was necessarily contentious. Bashir denied any wrongdoing or complicity in the killings of Darfur genocide.

In 2009, however, I point this out, Bashir was charged by the International Criminal Court with committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. And in 2010, he was the first person ever charged for the crime of genocide by the ICC.

After meetings with Bashir and other government officials, I visited two refugee camps—many of you have done that, many of my colleagues have done that. Those two camps I went to in Darfur were Kalma camp and I stayed overnight at another called Mukjar in western Darfur. An experience that profoundly motivated me to do more to end the mass violence. When our helicopter landed at the remote Mukjar camp, thousands, and I mean thousand, a line

was formed of these wonderful people: women and children dancing, clapping, singing beautiful African traditional songs. The people of Darfur have a remarkable generosity and spirit, and it was awe-inspiring.

Just about everybody I spoke with, however, especially the women, told me personal stories of rape, senseless beatings, and massacres by the Janjaweed and Sudanese militias. I was deeply impressed with the dedication of the African Union peacekeepers operating under extremely difficult circumstances and urged international partners, including the United States, to better equip them. I was shocked to learn they were getting a little of a dollar a day. It was absurd.

I went to Condoleezza Rice upon my return and said, "Please, we've got to augment that. We've got to increase it. These soldiers are putting their lives on the line. They should not be so grossly underpaid and not getting the kind of things that they need in terms of munitions."

In November 2005, I chaired another hearing in a series on Sudan and was absolutely clear that the situation in Darfur was a genocide. At that time, over 400,000 killed and over a million displaced. We did stress, all of us, at that hearing the need for a comprehensive plan that could best contribute to peace and hold those who have murdered, raped, enslaved, and plagued the people of Sudan accountable.

Meanwhile, Chairman Henry Hyde, Donald Payne, who was my ranking member from New Jersey, Frank Wolf, Tom Lantos, and a number of others, we pushed the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act that declared that the slaughter in Darfur was genocide, imposed sanctions on the malign actors, talked about helping the peacekeepers. And it was signed into law in October 2006. That law was built upon the Sudan Peace Act of 2001 and the Comprehensive Peace in Sudan Act of 2004.

I also, and I wasn't the only one, called on the Arab League to leverage its influence over the Sudanese government by encouraging the government to end its military offensive in Darfur and accept the United Nations peacekeeping which was there under the auspices of the AU. They didn't do it. It was like crickets. We got almost no response at all other than thank for raising it. So here we are again.

In January 2017, again on this committee, I objected to the Obama administration's decision to ease sanctions on Sudan. I know it had to have been a tough call. We're always trying to look when the sanctions become counterproductive, so there was an argument to be made. But I thought it was the wrong one because Khartoum's government continued pervasive human rights violations. And we pointed out, at the time the violent government actions against the Sudanese citizens in Darfur, Nubia, the Nuba Mountains, and Blue Nile, alongside the persecution of Christians nationwide.

I was also disappointed in 2024 by the decision to allow Sudanese warlord Abdel Fattah al-Burhan into the country for a meeting with the U.N. Secretary-General. Burhan, as we all know, has massive amounts of blood on his hands and should never have been allowed into the U.S.

Yet the Biden administration delayed and denied robust sanctions against both Burhan and Hemedti, delaying such actions until the administration's final hours. While we were glad when they did it, but we believe, I believe, and many of us believe it should've been done sooner. There will never be peace in Sudan until there's accountability for the atrocities committed by the twin butchers of Darfur.

Over 18,000 civilian deaths have been committed since 2023, with estimates as high as 150,000, and more than 10 million people displaced. These are not just numerical estimates. But it's the evidence of an appalling range of harrowing human rights violations and international crimes. Each murder or displaced civilian is a person with dreams and hopes, family—a person whose life has been taken or irrevocably changed by these atrocities.

Both the Sudanese Armed Forces, SAF, and the Rapid Support Forces, RSF, are guilty of arbitrary killings, detentions, abductions, rapes—including the rape of children—repression of fundamental human rights, illicit gold mining, and child soldier recruitment.

Illicit Sudanese gold, which the RSF struggles—smuggles, I should say, through the UAE is crucial to preventing the continued funding of Hemedti's atrocities and perpetuating this bloody conflict. The RSF's main international backer is widely reported to be the UAE, which has supplied weapons and financial support. Other external actors, such as Chad, have been accused credibly of enabling arms transfers and have been implicated in supporting the RSF.

Domestically, the RSF has allied with some of non-RSF Janjaweed militias. It is clear that RSF is grappling with command and control, however, allowing its fighters to rape and to pillage, to target vulnerable women and children, and to attack civilian infrastructure. This is the opposite of capable government, and such behavior only confirms this to the Sudanese people.

The SAF has received support from various domestic groups including the al-Bara Battalion—known as the Popular Resistance—which openly espouses a militant Islamist ideology, and former rebel groups including the Sudan Liberation Movement under Minni Minnawi and Mustafa Tambour. Externally, the SAF has received support from countries like Egypt, Iran, Qatar, and Turkey. Russia continues to pursue naval access to Port Sudan.

I'd like to now welcome my distinguished colleague, Ms. Jacobs, for any opening comments that you have.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER SARA JACOBS

Ms. JACOBS. Well, thank you, Chairman Smith, and thank you to all of our witnesses joining us today to testify and bring attention to the ongoing catastrophe in Sudan. Last month marked 2 years since the outbreak of war in Sudan. It is now the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. Nearly 25 million people—half of Sudan's population—are facing acute hunger, and more than half a million people are facing famine. More than 13 million Sudanese have been displaced from the homes since the conflict began, including nearly four million people forced to flee across Sudan's borders as refugees. And I have seen the suffering firsthand when I traveled to Chad and met with Sudanese refugees last year.

And let's be clear: this is a war of choice. The Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces and allied militias have waged this war, committing war crimes and holding the Sudanese people captive for their own selfish interests. And their external backers, particularly the United Arab Emirates with their support to the RSF, in addition to Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Russia, have turned this war into a regional proxy war by supporting and arming either side, risking further regional destabilization.

But despite this, the Trump administration is nowhere to be found. In fact, the administration's actions have only worsened the suffering of the Sudanese people. The Trump administration's sham foreign assistance review was really just a pretext to end most foreign assistance—like food aid, disaster relief, global health programs, development and economic aid, and more. In Sudan, it's meant canceling millions of dollars in U.S.-funded life-saving aid. For instance, before it was illegally dismantled, USAID was supporting the heroic efforts of the Sudanese Emergency Response Rooms to open community kitchens and provide basic meals to Sudanese civilians throughout the country. Following the massive cuts to U.S. foreign assistance, which included USAID support to the ERRs, more than 80 percent of the roughly 1,500 community kitchens across Sudan have been forced to close their doors—cutting off vulnerable Sudanese civilians from life-saving food assistance.

And the administration hasn't stopped there. Yesterday, they announced over \$87 million worth of canceled humanitarian programs, including \$30 million for emergency nutrition, water, and food aid in Darfur. The SAF and the RSF continue to commit atrocities against the Sudanese people, and the people of Darfur are facing a second genocide in 20 years at the hands of the RSF. Yet despite the clear need for the United States to play an active role in negotiations to end this brutal conflict, the Trump administration has failed to dedicate the resources necessary to do so.

More than 4 months into President Trump's term, the administration has still failed to nominate an Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs at the State Department, an NSC Senior Director for Africa, or a Special Envoy for Sudan—a position that the administration is required to fill by law. And just yesterday, during Secretary Rubio's testimony, he actually refused to say the word genocide and reaffirm his previous statements that the RSF is in fact committing a genocide.

These actions—or lack thereof—show that Sudan is just not a priority for the Trump administration. And while the administration ignores the conflict and its human consequences, it chooses instead to provide weapons to the UAE—a country that is arming the RSF, fueling the war, and facilitating a genocide in Darfur. There is widespread and credible reporting that the UAE continues to funnel arms to the RSF, even though the UAE continues to deny this publicly. But instead of pressuring the UAE to stop arming the RSF forces currently carrying out a genocide, the Trump administration has chosen to blow through a congressional hold by Ranking Member Meeks and proceed with arms sales worth more than \$1 billion.

Just as I did under the Biden administration, I believe that the United States needs to use its significant leverage with the UAE to pressure them to finally end their support to the RSF. That is why I, along with Ranking Member Meeks, introduced Joint Resolutions of Disapproval last week to block the administration's arms sales to the UAE. If the United States wanted to, we could take tangible actions and make sensible policy decisions that would help bring an end to the war in Sudan and a sustainable peace agreement that ends military rule, establish a civilian government, and provides a clear roadmap to democratic elections. Instead, this administration seems to be ignoring the problem and selling weapons that are fueling genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

The Sudanese people have suffered enough. It is time for the United States and the international community to step up and focus on bringing an end to this war so that the Sudanese people can finally rebuild their country. Thank you, Chairman Smith, and with that, I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. We are very pleased to welcome a distinguished panel of experts to provide insights on the ongoing crisis in Sudan and its far reaching consequences before us today. We look forward to your recommendations in terms of policy. I do believe the Secretary of State said both before the Senate and before our Committee in answer to questions that he would welcome a special envoy.

We have a sense of the Congress resolution because it is required by law to do just that. I know that special envoys and the key as you mentioned a moment ago, Ken Isaacs, he has to have—or she—direct access to the President. It has to be. It can't go through a bureaucracy and it ends up on somewhere over in Foggy Bottom.

We got to have that kind of access. And I'll never forget how well a person like Senator Danforth did who had the gravitas and the ability to promote peace. Of course, peace remains elusive, but he did an amazing job, I thought at the time, and as did some of the others at this job.

So I do think that's something that is evolving and will happen. It should've happened yesterday. But it will happen, I believe.

So let me introduce first of all Ken Isaacs who's vice president of Programs and Government Relations at Samaritan's Purse. Mr. Isaacs brings over three decades of experience responding some of the world's worst and most urgent humanitarian crises from war zones to natural disasters. He's also former director of USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance.

So he knows how it works on the inside of our government, and I deeply appreciate that kind of expertise. He led relief efforts in response, for example, to the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Darfur crisis before. And I remember a whole group of us responded to the tsunami.

If it wasn't for the work that was done by disaster relief, by our DART teams and everything else, so many more people who've died even though it was a quick—I mean, I never saw anything like it. And we had a bipartisan group who went to Sri Lanka and other places. So thank you for that leadership. It's extraordinary.

We're going to hear from Cameron Hudson, Senior Fellow of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Mr. Hudson has served at the highest levels of government, including as director for African affairs at the White House National Security Council and as Chief of Staff to multiple U.S. special envoys for Sudan. So what a perch you have in order to say what needs to be done. And thank you for that. He also led the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Center for Prevention of Genocide.

And then Ms. Kholood Khair, founder and director of Confluence Advisory. Ms. Khair is also the host and co-producer of Spotlight 249, Sudan's first English language political debate show created to engage a new generation in political discourse. I don't want to debate you, so thank you for being here.

And please take as much time as you—there's no clock. We really need to hear what you've got to say. So I'd like to now recognize Mr. Isaacs.

STATEMENT OF KEN ISAACS

Mr. ISAACS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Jacobs. This hearing has been long needed, and I'm grateful that even in spite of a late night that it was able to come together today. So I've been working in Sudan for 32 years.

I've had the privilege to know all of its leaders and seen the inner workings of much of as what has happened. When I look at Sudan today and I just want to ask the question, is Sudan in a crisis? Right now, it is near collapse on all levels: political, security, economic, social, humanitarian, health, food security, and infrastructure.

This war has been going on since 2023, and it is essentially between two armed groups: the Sudan Armed Forces and a heavily armed militia group, the Rapid Support Forces, which it's worth noting were previously the Janjaweed in Darfur. And they were reformed under security reforms that in the Khartoum process I think in 2015 was when they really started upping their game. And that came with EU funding, and a lot of people don't dial into that.

But nevertheless, it is an experiment that didn't work well. And today, they have come to the level where they have now challenged the Sudan Armed Forces. And there's a horrible civil war going on.

The level of human suffering is horrible. Over 13 million people are displaced. Four million have fled to other nations. The death rate, as you said, is somewhere between 28 and 150,000 people. I think those numbers are probably an understatement.

Six hundred thirty-eight thousand are in Phase 5 IPC. Technically, they're in famine. And we proved that through a detailed statistical analysis which was submitted and reviewed by the Famine Review Committee. There's an additional 8.1 million in Phase 4 food insecurity. That's near famine.

It has been—famine has been declared in both Darfur and South Kordofan states. And there's 17 additional locations at risk of falling into famine. And the total in all of that is 24.6 million people are highly food insecure.

I have seen the effects of famine on individuals, communities, and nations. And the one point that I would point out about Sudan, it is totally a manmade failure. It is a manmade famine.

And last year what we started seeing in March—well, actually it was, yes, last year—hundreds of thousands of people were pouring into Kordofan State. And they were coming into a State that had a 41 percent decrease in crop production. But why were they coming there? They were coming there to get away from the fighting that was going on in the RSF attacked areas.

I know this because we had staff there. We interviewed them. It was a very exhaustive process. It took about 4 months. And those people's lives were in immediate risk. I have some photographs here. I don't know if it's attached to the paper. But this is what the famine looks like. These are photographs that the staff at Samaritan's Purse took, and this is rampant. These are just two pages of photographs. I have hundreds of them.

The Janjaweed was formed around the early 2000's by President Bashir as a way to control insurgency in Darfur. What they are known for is chaos, brutality, and savagery, killing. They're a very brutal force.

And that DNA has been carried over to some extent in the Rapid Support Forces today. Their mandate has always remained the same, although their geographical assignments have been reassigned from time to time. The current civil war has seen the RSF position itself against this very State that created it.

I would concur with you on the command and control of the RSF. I think that it is so shaky that even if they entered into a peace agreement, it's not likely that they can enforce it, even with the best intentions. And as you know, tribesmen have come all the way across the Sahel and joined the fighting.

And I don't see any structure for pay other than whatever you can get is yours. So it's a very, very chaotic situation. What we have noticed also over the last 2 years is that when you look at maps of displaced people and refugees, they flow out of the RSF areas and they're going to SPLM north area and then they'll go into SAF areas when those areas are won back.

In September of last year, I had an idea. We identified this one area in western Kordofan. It's in the written testimony. But the malnutrition rate in households was upwards of 50 percent.

And kids were dying. People were dying. They were starving to death. We had people that had eaten grass to the point where the raw grass couldn't be digested and it had ripped through their organs and they were dying.

We came up with the idea of air dropping food. And it was that desperate of a situation. I had the opportunity to meet with President Salva Kiir, and I asked him if he would talk to General Burhan and ask for permission. He did 2 days later. Burhan agreed, and that led to a protracted negotiation.

It took us about three or 4 weeks. There were trips to Port Sudan, trips to Juba. In the end, we had a written agreement for 30 days to fly planes from Juba with food and air drop that food in what's called Julud and Kadugli.

It was challenging, but the program went well. At the end of 30 days, the parties came together and we extended it 60 more days. And in the end, we air dropped 2,502 tons of food.

I will have to say that humanitarian access was fully given by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North and by the Sudan

Armed Forces. Everybody abided by the agreement. The reason that I'm making this point is that agreements can be made.

They are open to humanitarian access and at the same time have legitimate security concerns. When I was in Port Sudan, the government of Sudan asked me if I would go look at El-Gadarif which is a city over in the eastern part of Sudan. Gadarif was an interesting situation in that the population is normally 1.5 million.

Displaced people fleeing the RSF fighting had come into the area and the population was three million. The obstetric hospital was full. We were seeing three to five patients in a bed.

So we set up an emergency field hospital there. This is Samaritan's Purse and it was done with private money, not with any government money. And we treated thousands of people, and we were delivering a lot of babies and most of them by caesarian section. I think we delivered about 506, and we had 9,149 patients and 562 babies.

That work went very well. And I will have to say that government of Sudan was very supportive. And it was difficult getting visas and travel permit. And we're landing in Addis and it's electronic.

And a lot of the frustrations that they had honestly were limited bandwidth. And I didn't realize that until I drove through Port Sudan 1 day by the Office of Immigration. There were over 2,000 people, I estimate, crammed into a little parking lot waiting to get into the building. And I realized they have stepped away from whatever their administrative infrastructure was in Khartoum when they fled that city.

So the security and the humanitarian situation in Sudan is truly a crisis. And yes, an enormous amount of humanitarian assistance is needed. But the key issue is we cannot dig ourselves out of this hole or change this situation with humanitarian assistance. The war must stop.

And that's going to require persistent, intentional, political involvement. And that is really what's needed is to do that. You mentioned a special envoy. I second that notion and I think it needs to be an envoy that has direct access to the President of the United States to carry any gravitas.

Why should America be involved in Sudan? An interesting question, right? What's our interest there. I think that if our foreign policy is built around governance of democracy, human rights, and humanitarian assistance, we have a weak foreign policy.

We need to have foreign policy that's more forward looking. And it needs to be transactional to the extent that we have some business relations. We have other relations besides wagging our finger and telling people what to do.

When I met with General Burhan, he was very clear. He was expressly clear. He wanted American businesses to come to Sudan. He wanted American businesses to help on the Red Sea. He wanted American businesses in his petroleum and his mineral extraction industries. And he didn't pull any bones about it. He just said it directly.

When I look at the Red Sea and I think of real eState, location, location, location, the Red Sea is not so wide. On the other side are people that we're attacking right now, Houthis, because they're de-

stabilized in that whole region. I think the argument could easily be made that anywhere on the Red Sea is of strategic value.

The Russians are setting up some kind of military base. The Iranians have been there. This is north of Port Sudan. I don't know what those details are. But if the United States isn't involved, then it's a vacuum.

I think that if we find a way to be involved and I think that we should find a way to be involved, I think it would be good. I have not seen sanctions work in North Korea, in Cuba, in Iran. They're just not working that good.

And I think that we need to find a new way to bring peace to Sudan. And that is not going to happen if we don't have serious diplomatic intervention. That's the end of my words.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Isaacs follows:]

Ken Isaacs

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

**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-115hrg24832/pdf/CHRG-115hrg24832.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.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Hudson.

STATEMENT OF CAMERON HUDSON

Mr. HUDSON. Thank you. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Jacobs, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Africa, thank you for having me participate in today's hearing. It's an honor to be here, and I commend the subcommittee for focusing on this urgent and evolving challenge. And in particular, I want to thank both the chairman and the ranking member for your long history on this issue and for doing what you have done in recent months to shine a light on the drivers of this conflict.

The views I express today are my own and should not be attributed to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, my employer. And I would like to request that the full text of my testimony be submitted for the record.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. HUDSON. Thank you. As the title of today's hearing lays bare the ongoing crisis in Sudan is indeed dire and is worsening by the day. Now into its third year, we see in full relief the consequences of a distracted, disjointed, and anemic international response.

We are faced with a conflict in which no corner of the country is safe for civilians where battle lines now shift by the hour, where every single neighboring country is playing a role by both bearing the costs and reaping the rewards from this conflict, where civilians are sacrificial pawns in a game between generals and ambitious regional states, and where horrific humanitarian conditions now threaten the lives of more people than the fighting itself.

Two months ago, Sudan's army retook the Presidential palace in central Khartoum, signaling what many of us hoped would be a turning point in this war by retaking control of the capital. But in a war marked by momentum shifts, these army gains have been no sooner eroded and the very nature of this conflict transformed by the introduction of more advanced weaponry. Sudan is today an international arms bazaar, and the war itself has fully transformed into a battle for influence among a host of local and regional actors who seek economic, geopolitical, and strategic gain in the context of this war.

This fight is existential for both sides, and we are seeing that both sides are prepared to do whatever it takes, ally themselves with whomever it takes, and purchase weapons from wherever they must in order to emerge victorious. To illustrate this point, in a matter of days this month, Sudan army drones purchased from Turkey bombed an RSF air base in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur State, reportedly killing as many as eight Emirati military officers along with mercenaries, local press reports, from Colombia, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. This is in addition to mercenaries that have been documented as fighting on the side of the RSF from Chad, Libya, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali.

The following day, the RSF countered this attack 1,200 kilometers—or sorry, miles away in Port Sudan using their own long distance and kamikaze drones, drones from China transferred via the UAE through a field hospital covering as a military base in eastern Chad. This was a sophisticated aerial operation requiring planning, coordination, and targeting between forces based hun-

dreds of miles apart on specific targets inside a crowded city. These are skills that we know the RSF does not alone possess and demonstrates that this war is no longer a conventional ground campaign with predictable battle lines.

As troubling as the conflict and its humanitarian consequences are inside the country, its suspension and ultimate resolution are unlikely to come from the belligerents themselves. The parties remain unwilling to engage each other directly. And for a host of reasons, there is currently no civilian leaders that have emerged with sufficient influence to govern a new transition.

Instead, we must directly engage the regional parties who are supporting the two sides to advance their own political, economic, and strategic ambitions. There is no single country better placed to do this than the United States. And it isn't too late to add Sudan to our agenda.

However, rather than appointing a Sudan envoy whose efforts are focused inside the country as some have suggested, we should also acknowledge where the power to end the fighting lies and realize that the Trump administration has already a fully staffed Middle East envoy team in place that is well positioned to take on this issue. As a first priority, the Trump administration must engage its allies in the United Arab Emirates about de-escalating and suspending their support to the RSF. It strains credulity for the UAE to continue to deny any role in this conflict.

But make no mistake. The UAE are not alone in fueling this fight. And while suspending their support is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition for ending the war. That's why the Trump team should initiate an honest conversation among all of our allies across the region about the risks and rewards they face in Sudan.

Such a discussion would reveal that the United States, the UAE, and other regional actors active in Sudan like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey harbor many of the same concerns and share similar interests in Sudan. Avoiding the country becoming a failed State, preventing Sudan from once again becoming a nexus for international terrorism, arresting a further degradation of Red Sea security, and avoiding a return of Islamist leaders to a position of authority in the country. I believe these are all shared concerns among regional allies.

The people of Sudan deserve to see their democratic aspirations supported and the promise of their popular revolution fulfilled. But that conversation is unlikely to succeed until the guns go silent and those fueling this war are made to understand that an absolute military victory is simply not possible. If Washington does not use its influence that it has and initiate a de-escalatory dialog with the region quickly, we will be left with little choice but to begin preparing a containment strategy for the forces that will surely lead to the breakup of Africa's third largest country. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hudson follows:]



**Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa**

***“A Dire Crisis in Sudan: A Global Call to
Action”***

A Testimony by:

Cameron Hudson

Senior Fellow, Africa Program

Center for Strategic and International Studies

May 22, 2025

2200 RHOB

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Jacobs, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on Africa, thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing. It's an honor to be here and I commend the Subcommittee for focusing on this urgent and evolving challenge. And in particular, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your decades of work for the cause of peace in Sudan, as well as you Ranking Member Jacobs for your tireless efforts to shine a light on this conflict and its enablers. You are both a part of a long history of bipartisan U.S. engagement on Sudan that is today in desperate need of reinvigoration.

The views I express today are my own and should not be attributed to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I would like to request that the full text of my testimony be submitted for the record.

As the title of today's hearing lays bare, the ongoing crisis in Sudan is indeed dire and is worsening by the day. Now into its third year, we see in full relief the consequences of a distracted, disjointed and anemic international response: we are faced with a conflict in which no corner of the country is safe for civilians; where battlelines now shift by the hour; where every single neighboring country is playing a role, by both bearing the costs and reaping the rewards of this conflict; where civilians are sacrificial pawns in a game between generals and ambitious regional states; and where horrific humanitarian conditions threaten the lives of more people than the fighting.

Two months ago, Sudan's Army retook the Presidential Palace in central Khartoum, signaling what many of us hoped would be a turning point in this war by retaking control of the capital and allowing some of the more than 13 million displaced civilians to return home and begin the arduous task of reclaiming their lives.

But in a war marked by vertiginous momentum shifts, these army gains have no sooner been eroded, and the very nature of this conflict transformed, by the introduction of more advanced weaponry. Sudan is today an international arms bazaar and the war itself has fully transformed into a battle for influence among a host of local and regional actors who seek economic, geopolitical and strategic gain in the context of this war. Of course, we must not forget that the ultimate responsibility for the conflict and its consequences lies with the principal belligerents, who before they were enemies, shared common cause in removing an internationally recognized civilian, transitional government that risked dismantling the very political and economic system they are fighting over today.

This fight is existential for both sides, and we see that both are prepared to do whatever it takes, ally themselves with whomever it takes, and purchase weapons from wherever they must in order to emerge victorious. To illustrate this point, in a matter of days this month, an array of Sudanese Army drones, purchased from Turkey, bombed a Rapid Support Forces (RSF) airbase in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur state, that the RSF uses to export smuggled gold and gum arabic and bring in Chinese and Russian weapons. According to local media, the Nyala attack reportedly killed as many as eight Emirati military officers, along with mercenaries from Colombia, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan. This is in addition to forces recruited from Libya, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and the Central African Republic that have been documented as fighting for the RSF.

The following day, the RSF countered some 1,200 miles away in Port Sudan using an array of long-distance and kamikaze drones piloted, it is believed, from both Nyala and Omdurman in a coordinated attack on the de facto capital. This was a sophisticated aerial operation requiring planning, coordination and targeting between forces, based hundreds of miles apart, on specific targets inside a crowded city. Skills we know the RSF alone does not possess and demonstrating that this war is no longer a conventional ground campaign with predictable battlelines and foreseeable tactics.

At this point, we might be anticipating a lull in fighting as the rainy season approaches this summer, making the movement of troops and heavy equipment around the country nearly impossible for the next three months. But a drone war negates this seasonal dynamic and forestalls what might have been a pause in fighting. Not only is every corner of Sudan now within reach, but it can be done with no notice, year-round.

More egregiously, this new aerial campaign follows no rule book and shows that despite territorial losses by both sides in recent months, each belligerent can project new threats and, in the process, make even those portions of the country securely under each other's control, entirely ungovernable and unlivable.

The RSF are currently using their drones in the conquest of the last remaining city in Darfur that remains outside of their control, the north Darfur capital of El Fasher. In its attacks, the RSF this month repeatedly struck the Zamzam internally displaced persons (IDP) camp, 10 miles south of the city, sending more than 400,000 camp residents on a perilous trek for survival, with some choosing to walk as much as 100 miles across the desert to find safety in neighboring Chad. More than 100,000 civilians remain trapped inside Zamzam camp, with no safe egress route out and no reliable way for necessary humanitarian aid to reach them. In addition to internationally recognized humanitarian zones, like Zamzam camp, the RSF has targeted other civilian infrastructure like dams, power stations, water pumps and fuel depots, plunging most of Khartoum and Port Sudan into darkness and making it impossible to sustain what meager services still exist, like health care. More concerning still are the RSF's strikes on the port itself, which remains the most critical entry point for humanitarian assistance in the country and which if sustained could imperil UN relief operations across Sudan.

As troubling and precarious as the conflict and its humanitarian consequences are inside the country, its suspension and ultimate resolution are unlikely to come from the belligerents themselves. They have shown through their words and actions that they will fight until there is nothing left to fight for: no civilian population, no wealth and no country.

Instead, if we hope to check this spiraling violence and prevent what is an increasingly plausible worst-case scenario from coming true then there are several steps the United States should take. We must first acknowledge that the previous approach taken by the Biden Administration that sought to engage the warring parties themselves in a traditional peace process while seeking to empower civilian alternatives to military rule was not ripe for success. The parties were and remain unwilling to engage each other directly and, for a host of reasons, there are no current civilian leaders that have emerged with sufficient influence to govern a new transition. Instead, we must first directly engage the regional parties who are

supporting the two sides to advance their own political, economic and strategic ambitions. There is no single country better placed to do this than the United States.

President Trump showed with his trip to the Middle East last week that he enjoys the trust of the region's leaders, many of whom are engaged on opposite sides of the war in Sudan. Unfortunately, he missed an opportunity to use his leverage to begin a dialogue and advance solutions that might end this war. Indeed, President Trump was right to acknowledge that "Gulf Nations have shown this entire region a path towards safe and orderly societies with improving quality of life, flourishing economic growth, expanding personal freedoms, and increasing responsibilities on the world stage", but he ignored the role of these countries in denying those same benefits in place like Sudan in their competition for regional supremacy.

But it isn't too late to add Sudan to our Middle East agenda. Rather than appointing another Sudan envoy whose efforts are focused inside the country, as some have suggested, we should acknowledge the determinative role regional actors are playing and realize that the Trump Administration already has a fully-staffed Middle East Envoy team in place that is well-positioned to take on this issue.

As a first priority, the Trump Administration must engage its allies in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt about de-escalating this conflict and suspending any support to the warring parties. In particular, whether through financial support to countries like Ethiopia and Kenya or via direct military engagement, often masquerading under the veil of humanitarian operations, in places like Libya, Chad, South Sudan and Central African Republic, the UAE bears a particular responsibility as it has encircled Sudan in a ring of fire from which it cannot escape.

It strains credulity for the UAE to continue to deny any role in this conflict; especially in the face of mounting and undeniable reporting from open-source intelligence, UN committees, Pulitzer Prize winning investigations, and this Congress' own assertions over the extent of UAE support and involvement. But make no mistake, the UAE are not alone in fueling this fight and while suspending their support is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition for ending the war.

That's why the Trump team should now initiate an honest conversation among our allies about the risks and rewards in Sudan. Such a discussion would likely reveal that the United States, the UAE and many other regional actors harbor the same concerns and share similar interests in Sudan: avoiding the country becoming a failed state; preventing Sudan from once again becoming a nexus for international terrorism, arresting a further degradation of Red Sea security, avoiding a return of Islamist leaders to a position of authority in the country and, perhaps most importantly, developing the economic resources and human potential of this strategic country.

The people of Sudan deserve to see their democratic aspirations supported and the promise of their popular revolution fulfilled. But that conversation is unlikely to succeed until the guns go silent and

those fueling this war are made to understand that an absolute military victory is not possible. If Washington does not use the influence it has and initiate a de-escalatory dialogue with the region quickly, we will be left with little choice but to begin preparing a containment strategy for the forces that will surely lead to the further splintering of Africa's third largest country.

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Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much. Without objection, your full statement as you asked, and same with Mr. Isaacs and Ms. Khair. The floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF KHOLOD KHAIR

Ms. KHAIR. Thank you very much. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Jacobs, honorable members of the African Subcommittee, good morning. I know you've all had a very long time, and your presence here this morning is a testament to your commitment to Sudan. And for that especially I thank you. I also like to thank your staff for their efforts in keeping Sudan on this committee's agenda.

Congress has been a vital champion for the people of Sudan. Throughout decades of Islamist rule under dictator Omar al Bashir through the revolution and the transitional period and was quick to condemn the 2001 coup that derailed the path to democracy and put Sudan on a trajectory toward this devastating war. In the interest of time, I'll be summarizing the points in my statement already submitted to the committee and will focus on humanitarian situation and atrocities.

This hearing comes at a crucial time. I think we all recognize that. Sudan is now the world's largest humanitarian, hunger, displacement, and protection crisis all at once.

This apocalyptic situation is caused by the counter revolutionary war led by factions of Bashir's security regime, now at war with each other. As the heirs of Bashir, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces are using every tool in the Bashir playbook, including ethnic mobilization, genocide, the use of chemical weapons, and the policy of starvation as a weapon of war to capture the leaders of Bashir's lucrative security State and position themselves to decide the political and economic future of Sudan. They're currently incentivized by their ambitions, their foreign backers, and the domestic political constituencies, in particular, the broad church of Sudan's Islamists to keep the war going for as long as possible in the hopes of eroding the calls for democracy, accountability, and civilian rule.

All the while, humanitarian needs continue to mount, and Sudan is potentially facing another failed agricultural season. Famine, announced months ago, has not had the required international or national response. This is in great part because the Sudanese Armed Forces denies there even is a famine and the Rapid Support Forces has systematically destroyed hard-won harvests and looted food stocks.

International community response has been criminally woeful with the UN's humanitarian response only 13 percent funded, 1-3. To make matters worse, the UN's inexplicable decision to treat the Sudanese Armed Forces as a de facto authority has made the entire international humanitarian system complicit in the starvation campaign that the SAF continues to wage. The deference has not paid off.

Access blocks, movement restraints, holding up of permits, all hallmarks of the Bashir playbook are all being used to devastating effect during this war with only few exceptions. The only bright spot has been the volunteered humanitarian response rooms—

emergency response rooms, excuse me, and other mutual aid groups who are not only providing the lion's share of the humanitarian response in terms of providing food, medicine, safe spaces, and evacuations. But they're doing so with far fewer resources and under immense repression from both warring parties.

The U.S. has been the largest humanitarian donor in Sudan, and the generosity of the American people has quite literally kept people and hope alive. With little clarity around what U.S. foreign assistance will look like after September in particular with the shuttering of USAID, there will be greater crisis and potential cliff edge in terms of funding. The lifesaving work of these responders could see clinics and community kitchens, a lifeline for so many, close if no new or alternative funding is secured.

This war has also seen many atrocities committed by both sides characterize much of the violence that we're seeing. The RSF, an entity created by Bashir's regime to violently clear people of land and to commit genocide has been doing exactly that. In West Darfur alone, the RSF have committed acts of genocide not once but twice against the Masalit ethnic group.

The RSF have also run campaigns of terror, rape, sexual slavery in Central Sudan. And recent testimony from the ground points to the systematic targeting of men and boys based on ethnic identity. Meanwhile, the Sudanese Armed Forces has been enacting systematic campaigns of indiscriminate bombings, often targeting civilians with reports the use barrel bombs of summary executions. And the U.S. Government has concluded the use of chemical weapons.

Neither party has ever faced justice for doing all of this before and that decades long impunity continues to directly drive atrocities today. All of this has been facilitated by the steady gold for weapons pipeline that has gone into hyper drive since April 2023 with ever more sophisticated weapons appearing in Sudan. Ground reporting from Darfur, especially Nyala, capital of South Darfur, points to flights likely delivering material to the RSF often going through Uganda, Kenya, and Chad.

Recent research and flight tracker information shows that northern Somalia and Somaliland have also become transit points. All flights appear to come from the United Arab Emirates. Both frequency and volume of these has increased.

The UAE's patronage of the RSF has drawn in Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in support of the SAF with deepening rifts between these middle powers manifesting in their support to conflict parties in the greater Horn of Africa with huge destabilizing potential. As Cameron mentioned, recently we saw an escalation in the drone attacks on both Nyala and Port Sudan. For me, the most important part of this is that we have seen foreign actors directly fire upon each other with Turkish Bayraktar drone operators firing on Nyala and the UAE firing directly back on these Turkish Bayraktar drone operators and injuring some of them.

This shows a severe and very marked escalation in Sudan following from last year's escalation between reportedly Egyptian military actors and the UAE as well. So we're seeing an escalation here with no signs of abating. Middle powers, in particular the UAE, need to be pressured to do business differently in Sudan as well as the border region.

Ending this war requires political agreements in place across all three levels of conflict: the local, the national, and the regional and international. This must take place within a framework that guides Sudan toward civilian governance, a system that could finally discourage competition for power through the gun. It is clear that this war represents something of an end of an arch of history.

Bashir's regime is consuming itself while trying to survive this war of succession. In the meantime, many more RSFs are being created. What comes next depends entirely on how this war is resolved with a view toward justice, reform, and civilian rule or more impunity and power sharing.

What Sudan's history shows that there is no military victory likely, and that given the right conditions, all wars, even ones on this scale, end in a political agreement. So what can be done? I'd like to highlight two recommendations.

The first is for Congress to continue to put pressure on the UAE as it continues to supply weapons to the RSF using their genocidal campaigns. Other U.S. allies in the region such as Turkey and Egypt are responsible for weapon sales to the Sudanese Armed Forces should also be pressured to stop flooding Sudan with weapons that are used in targeting civilians and that myriad militias can use to wage their violent campaigns. The U.S. must show diplomatic leadership instead of ceding ground to its predatory allies in the Gulf.

This will require, amongst other things, a high level White House envoy to take the lead on Sudan to speak directly on behalf of the President with Gulf leaders. That's the only kind of level of envoy that they will respect, deconflicting their interest and working with others to institute a holistic and inclusive political process that can pave the way for viable cease-fire talks.

Second and especially in light of the humanitarian and protection issues we've been discussing today, predictable and sustained funding for lifesaving work to mutual aid groups is imperative. Programming for youth groups in Sudan's war affected regions is also key, lest the war be the only industry. Supporting nonpartisan media is also critical, particularly in efforts to counter hate speech.

And finally, I'd like to ask this council to continue championing the wishes of the civilians in Sudan who wish to see a Sudan free from the scourge of war and with a political system that stops the continuous destructive cycle of war, death, disease, and conquest. Thank you for the opportunity to brief you today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Khair follows:]

Kholood Khair
 Founder and Director, Confluence Advisory
 House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Africa Sub-Committee

Thursday 22nd May 2025

A Dire Crisis in Sudan: A Global Call to Action

The war in Sudan is the largest war in the world today and, as such, has precipitated a humanitarian crisis of biblical proportions. The war is, in its essence, a counter-revolutionary war, waged by the Sudanese security state against the people of Sudan who dared to organise a revolution against them in 2018. That revolution, Sudan's third in 70 years, saw the ousting of Bashir's Islamo-military dictatorship, a dictatorship underpinned by a devil's bargain between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Muslim Brotherhood of Sudan that ruled Sudan for 29 years.

This is also a war of succession; the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), both of which were integral to Bashir's security apparatus first unseated him in 2019, then with intense international pressure relented to power-share with a civilian cabinet (2019-2021) and later, when their economic and political interests were threatened, staged a coup that led Sudan to this war (October 25, 2021). Unable to consolidate their differences¹, tensions between SAF and the RSF, their domestic constituents and their foreign backers, eventually came to a head on April 15, 2023.

As the heirs of Bashir, SAF and RSF are using every tool in the Bashir playbook including ethnic mobilisation, genocide, the use of chemical weapons and the policy of starvation as a weapon of war, in this war to capture the levers of Bashir's lucrative security state and position themselves to decide the political and economic future of Sudan.

Formerly brothers in arms, waging genocide against the people of Darfur in the first few years of the millennium, this Cane and Abel, SAF's General Burhan and the RSF's General Hemedti, have through decades of impunity, led Sudan through not just a genocide, but also a string of coups and now a devastating war. Sudan's civilians are sacrificed at the altar of their unquenchable thirst for power and wealth.

When I was in Khartoum at the start of the war, there was a sense amongst many that had witnessed the lead up to the war – the RSF tanks rolling into Khartoum, the bellicose language of Bashir's axe-grinding Islamist loyalists and the SAF's belligerent language around the return to civilian rule – that this war would be a battle between security and former regime forces and would otherwise not be the Sudanese public's business. So, the remains of Bashir's security state made it their business: mass mobilisation, hate speech, devastation to critical civilian infrastructure, the abrupt closure of escape routes, indiscriminate bombings, have all drawn the Sudanese public into the fray. Out of desperation many are now making impossible choices of favouring one belligerent party over another to stay alive. All the while, the four horsemen of the apocalypse: War, Death, Disease, and Conquest are visiting upon Sudan's people.

Humanitarian

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan can now only be described in superlatives: the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the world's worst hunger crisis by scale and sometimes by magnitude, the world's worst displacement crisis (over 11 million internally displaced alone) and the world's

¹ <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/a-coup-cannot-serve-two-masters/>

worst protection crisis. Famine has also belatedly been confirmed (August 2024), and is spreading. Conflict related sexual violence is being perpetrated on the bodies of women, children and in some cases men, chiefly by the RSF.² 19 million children are out of school and over 80% of health centres, already struggling since the 2021 coup, are no longer functioning. These are dramatic figures and have continued to grow no matter the changes in battlefield lines. Behind every one of these statistic is a desperate story of survival and the indefatigability of the human spirit under the harshest conditions. With the RSF's attacks on power and water stations as well as other critical infrastructure, people in the central parts of Sudan will now face temperatures of 122F (50 Centigrade). Civilians in what remains of IDP camps in Darfur will continue to face extremely desperate conditions.³

This suffering is not incidental. The warring parties, committed to extinguishing any trace of the revolutionary zeal that seeks to end military rule and usher in accountability, have been using starvation as a weapon of war. The Sudanese Armed Forces, which the UN recognises as the *de facto* government, has been able to use this recognition to block aid into Darfur, a territory it largely does not control. The SAF also denies the famine that is primarily ripping its way through Darfur and the Kordofan region or the acute food insecurity that has entrenched itself in eastern Sudan, an area they do control. By holding up permissions for aid access, visas for international humanitarian staff, and working with the UNSC to block resolutions around aid, the SAF has made the entire international humanitarian system complicit in its policy to starve the people of Sudan. The UN and others are hoping that by giving SAF legitimacy they will be able to stop the starvation, but they have it backwards: SAF is starving people in order to position the international community to give them legitimacy through seeking permissions and aid access. In any case, the deference the UN, in particular, has paid to the authorities in Port Sudan has not paid off and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate.

For its part, the RSF has spent the last two years systematically looting aid warehouses across the country, intimidating drivers of aid trucks, blocking aid trucks from delivering food to children in El Fasher and other areas and instituting bureaucratic access constraints through its aid authority, the Sudan Agency for Relief and Humanitarian Operations (SARHO) modelled after the SAF-controlled Humanitarian Aid Commission. Once it sets up its parallel authorities, the RSF would be able to actualise a more fully-fledged starvation policy too.

Almost everyone with a stated or implied responsibility to respond to the world's largest humanitarian crisis in decades has failed to adequately respond, if at all. This includes the multilateral organisations, donor states and the *de facto* authorities in any one area in Sudan. The only thing standing between the people in Sudan and utter immiseration are the Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) and other mutual aid groups who have been providing community kitchens, free clinics, child-friendly spaces, post rape-care and evacuation support since the first few days of the war. The work of these groups, having been formally recognised by the Nobel Committee through a nomination, winning a prize from the EU and working with US government funding to deliver aid where it's needed, at a fraction of the cost of INGOs, is in grave danger with the cuts in aid instituted this year.

The US has been the largest humanitarian donor for Sudan and the generosity of the American people has quite literally kept people – and hope – alive in Sudan. With little clarity around what US foreign assistance will look like after September with the drawdown of USAID, there will be

² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/sudan-rapid-support-forces-horrific-and-widespread-use-of-sexual-violence-leaves-lives-in-tatters/>

³ <https://www.msf.org/desperate-situation-people-fleeing-zamzam-camp-sudan>

a crisis and potential cliff edge in funding. The lifesaving work of these responders could immediately cease, as it did in February, if no new or alternative funding is secured.

The abrupt shuttering of USAID does not only affect humanitarian funding to ERRs and other responders; it impacts vital instruments such as the famine tracking instrument FEWSNET which had been better able to detect the onset of famine than the UN instrument, which initially relied on authorities closely affiliated with the SAF to make the determination. The UN's Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) was much later than local groups and INGOs recognising famine and only after a referral to the Famine Review Committee, to bypass state authorities. The SAF still denies that famine has taken root, creating many obstacles to famine response. Another pillar of USAID programming whose loss will have an impact is the support to democratic transformation, for beneficiary groups across the country for whom the funding was a huge lifeline for those countering autocracy, polarisation and hate speech.

Currently the UN's humanitarian envelope for Sudan for this year of \$4.2bn is only 13% funded and since the war started, the response has been perpetually underfunded, all while the humanitarian needs have grown. This is a travesty for the world's largest humanitarian disaster in decades, taking place in the 21st century.

Atrocities and the Protection of Civilians (PoC)

A core feature of this war has been the manifold atrocity violence. This war is primarily a war against civilians and it is they who have paid the highest, and often the ultimate, price. The RSF, as an ethnic franchise more than it is a military entity, has used this war to settle scores with local groups. In West Darfur, particularly, the RSF-allied Arab pastoralist groups saw an opportunity to dispossess the Masalit ethnic group from their land not one but twice in 2023. Earlier this year the US government finally recognised these deliberate atrocities as genocide. The RSF have been running campaigns of systematic atrocity violence, rape and sexual slavery against many communities in central Sudan too⁴ and have perpetrated several atrocities on Zamzam and Abu Shouk IDP camps in North Darfur⁵. Testimonies from the ground often tell of the systematic targeting of men and boys for execution based on ethnic identity. In other words, the RSF, created to rape, pillage and destroy, are, under the cover of this war, doing just that.

Meanwhile, the SAF has been enacting a systematic campaign of indiscriminate bombing, often in market towns, during market days, where many civilians gather and in other populated areas. The US government has also declared that the SAF has used chemical weapons in this war. They have used them before, including in Darfur in 2016⁶. There are also reports of the SAF using incendiary weapons in the form of barrel bombs against civilian targets, including markets⁷.

Weapons proliferation has been a central feature of this war. What started as a reasonably low-tech conflict, has in only two years transformed into a war of the future: the latest drones, jamming technology and missiles have been used. The numbers of countries engaged in supplying one side of the other is growing and spans the globe.^{8,9}

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8rl0xv8gko>

⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/sudan-darfur-military-rsf-war-zamzam-b6c60fe0883327aa0d64cd39d3a8e260>

⁶ <https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/scorched-earth-poisoned-air-sudanese-government-forces-ravage-jebel-marra-darfur/>

⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/more-than-120-mostly-civilians-killed-two-days-sudan-bombardments-2024-12-10/>

⁸ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2024/07/new-weapons-fuelling-the-sudan-conflict/>

⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/09/sudan-abusive-warring-parties-acquire-new-weapons>

Regardless of the changes in the frontlines, the RSF and SAF, and their allied militias have been breaking the US-backed UN Darfur arms embargo, particularly the RSF by flying in weapons. Despite efforts by civil society within and outside of Sudan and outside it, to call for the protection of civilians through measures such as safe zones, agricultural zones, functioning infrastructure especially telecoms networks and early warning systems for communities, these measures have found little support from bilateral or multilateral actors and at the UNSC Russia, at the request of the SAF, vetoed the last PoC resolution put forth by penholder UK and Sierra Leone.

All the while, there are no accountability mechanisms for civilians to reach justice. Neither SAF nor the RSF have previously been subjected to meaningful accountability mechanisms. The SAF is shielding ICC indictee and former president Omar al-Bashir as well as other ICC indictees such as Ahmed Haroun, the current head of Bashir's former party, the National Congress Party (NCP).

For many people in Sudan the war did not start on April 15th but merely arrived in Khartoum on that day. Whole generations of people have been born and many have died in IDP camps in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. In a sustained political culture of impunity that also rewards the "gun class" Sudan is now seeing a proliferating of militias, with several Hemedtis in the making. This is because the SAF, as the national army, and the islamists that have animated it since 1977 fear internal power grabs and coups and so have trimmed down the officer and infantry class while bloating the top brass. This has meant that SAF has been increasingly reliant on militias to fight its war, the RSF being now the most famous, but seemingly by no means the last. During their time in power the Islamists effectively turned the army into a militia and a militia – the RSF – into an army. They continue to play that role today. The jihadist Baraa bin Malik Brigade and Popular Defence Forces (PDF) – as well as the ethnic-based Sudan Shield forces - are just a few examples of this mushrooming trend. These militias operate with the same impunity and have grown in size and wealth during this war. Atrocities committed by these groups, in particular summary executions by the Baraa bin Malik Brigade, now grown into a Corps, show gruesome and often ritualistic killings featuring beheadings and disembowelment.

Focusing on a military binary between SAF and the RSF often obfuscates the political role of the many-headed Islamist movement who want to make a comeback by any means necessary, and who are using the SAF, once again, as a primary vehicle.

External intervention

What started as a war steeped in personal animus between Burhan and his then deputy Hemedti, has now metastasised to a war with a broad geographic reach – no part of Sudan is safe. This has put the entire Horn of Africa, Sahel and Red Sea regions in danger of massive destabilisation and created a war that is taking place across three orders of magnitude: the local, the national and the regional/international.

Regional actors have exploited the war in order to meet their increasingly divergent policy objectives particularly in a context of US withdrawal from the region and likely driven by anxieties around a dedollarised international financial system. None have been so active as the Arab Gulf states, in particular the UAE, which despite its protestations to the contrary has been credibly reported to have supported the RSF in their genocidal campaigns across Darfur and for their violent actions across the rest of Sudan. The UAE has also been using the cover of the Emirati Red Crescent and the setting up of "field hospitals" in Chad and South Sudan as a

means of delivering ever more and ever more sophisticated weaponry to the RSF¹⁰. There is credible reporting including from the UN Panel of Experts report in Jan 2024 that the UAE broke the UN Arms embargo on Darfur. This is whilst they were on the UN Security Council.

Ground reporting from Darfur, especially Nyala (South Darfur) shows flights likely carrying materiel to the RSF, often going through Uganda, Kenya and Chad. Recent research and flight tracker information show that northern Somalia (Puntland) and Somaliland have also become transit points, with both frequent and volume. The UAE's patronage of the RSF has drawn in Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia to support the SAF with deepening rifts between these middle powers manifesting in their support to conflict parties in the Horn/eastern coast of the Red Sea, with huge destabilising potential. Early reports from the recent RSF attacks on Port Sudan indicate that the UAE and Turkey may have been involved in reprisal drone attacks on each other within Sudan. This represents a marked escalation in the external intervention of these US allies in Sudan.

This war has made Sudan easier to pillage as the warring parties sell gold, real estate, and port deals for weapons to keep the war going. Their presumptive buyers have become less and less palatable to the West over the past two years: Russia, Iran and even reportedly North Korea have reportedly been in discussions with the SAF for interests on the Red Sea. The gold trade in particular, has increased in volume and profit since the war started – almost all of it bound for the UAE – as has the smuggling of gum Arabic, cattle and other agricultural goods, some of which go to Egypt. These countries have little financial incentive to see an end to the war. All of the profits from these go not towards ameliorating conditions for civilians but to buy fighter jets, drones, and artillery to continue this war.

The UAE, as the principal backer of the RSF, says its foreign policy is to oppose Islamism in the region but that has not been the case in Sudan. The UAE was a close ally to Bashir's Islamo-military government and the military wing of the hybrid government post revolution (2019-21). Key Islamists, such as the Sudanese Islamist Movement (SIM) head Ali Karti, are believed to be major stakeholders in oil interests at the Abu Dhabi National Oil Corporation (ADNOC). The Saudis and Egyptian meanwhile, though they say they are opposed to political Islam taking further root in their region have developed a tolerance for a variety of Sudan's Islamists and have thrown their weight behind the SAF and some of its islamists supporters. This is particularly true for those based in Egypt and Sudan's neighbouring countries.

As middle powers vacillate between pragmatic and ideological foreign policies, the expressions of these shifting positions find themselves in increasingly adversarial stances in Sudan. Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar back the SAF, while the UAE backs the RSF. All back military rule in Sudan. The recent escalation in the Nyala-Port Sudan exchange of drone fire, which reportedly saw Emirati and Turkish military operators firing on each other shows the potential for ever more dangerous escalation.

Ending this war requires political agreements in place across all three levels of conflict: local, national and regional/international. This must take place within a framework of civilian government that could finally discourage competition for political power through the gun.

Progression of Conflict

It is clear that this war represents something of an end of an arc of history. Bashir's regime is consuming itself and trying to survive this war of succession. What comes next depends entirely

¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/21/world/africa/uae-sudan-civil-war.html>

on how this war is resolved: with a view towards justice, reform and civilian rule, or more impunity and power-sharing. Sudan's history shows that there is no military victory likely and that given the right conditions all wars, even at this scale, would end in a political agreement. But in the meantime, with the world choosing to entertain conflict management rather than conflict resolution – for example through the US/Saudi Jeddah talks or the Egypt-led Cairo talks – we have an entrenching of the violence. War is becoming not just the means to political ends but an end in itself; an organising principle for the two main camps and the constituencies they covet. There is increasingly a chasm between the two. Despite this, civilians overwhelmingly want the war to end but they want an end that guarantees some form of justice, a key element of peace processes that has always been deferred and, ultimately, denied.

The surest way of effectively tackling the manifold humanitarian crises is to end the war but there currently appears to be no partner for peace in Sudan. The SAF has refused to attend any talks after the initial rounds and this position rarely shifts whether they are winning or losing on the battlefield. The continuance of war justifies, in their mind, continued military rule and therefore there is no incentive for them to end the war. The RSF too, wish to continue the war in order to fight long enough, despite being reviled by many Sudanese, to eke out an opportunity to shape Sudan's future for itself and its Gulf patrons. As for the multiheaded Hydra that is the Islamist movement, they have used the war as a means of manufacturing consent for their return, using the atrocities committed by the RSF, an entity they created and emboldened, to foment an alternative common enemy. This they intend, will exonerate them – and decades of their violent misrule – in the process.

The longer the war continues, the more the war economy will represent the only livelihood options and draw more civilians into its web. Today in Sudan, armed groups are the most prolific employers, smuggling, particularly of gold and gum Arabic in RSF areas, the most profitable industry and guns are cheaper than groceries. Industrial capability has reached minimal levels and costs have risen markedly with inflation at 118%.¹¹ Farming, once one of the biggest industries in the country and critical for lowering the curve on famine deaths, is now in ruins, with many farmers displaced from their land, with little investment and an absence of agricultural inputs, or exorbitant prices of seeds and fuel that have made farming economically unviable for many. In RSF areas particularly, mass violence against farmers and burning of harvests and stocks have further discouraged farming.

History tells us that the armed groups in Sudan, and in Africa in general, rarely disappear, especially once they begin to invest economically and act autonomously of the state structures as the RSF has done for years under the watch of both the SAF and its Islamist backers. In the final analysis, the SAF and RSF today represent a distinction without much difference: two arms of the security state that want to concentrate power in the military's hands and eliminate their enemies, civilian or armed. Both now seem intent to drive Sudan towards a forever war that could well fragment Sudan into unstable fiefdoms of violent warlords.

International responses to the war

The task of the day is therefore to very quickly arrest Sudan's descent into a failed and fragmented state. International efforts so far have been misguided or ill-thought out. At the outset of the war, the US jettisoned all commitments to a multilateral approach towards Sudan and bilaterally set up the Jeddah talks with Saudi Arabia. This created an opening for other international stakeholders to set up their own talks and led to "forum shopping" by the belligerent parties. Though the May 2023 Jeddah Declaration was signed by the SAF and the

¹¹ <https://african.business/2025/04/long-reads/sudans-economy-shattered-by-two-years-of-war>

RSF, it's clear that while there is no political agreement about how this war ends, a ceasefire will be difficult to achieve. A focus on the political talks is therefore important to the success of any broad peace process. Since the initial Jeddah talks concluded in November 2023, the SAF has refused to attend any more talks and the RSF, though it attends, has done so mostly to provide cover for their atrocities as in the case of Al-Geneina and Ardamata in West Darfur in 2023¹². Current mediation set-ups reward the belligerents by giving them the ability to dictate whether talks are successful or not, thereby perpetually guaranteeing their failure in line with their political objectives.

The multilateral space has not had any great alacrity when it comes to Sudan's war. The UNSG's Personal Envoy Ramtane Lamamra is based in Algiers, rarely consults with civilian Sudanese stakeholders, makes visits only to Port Sudan and then only a few times a year. Despite being asked by multiple entities to take a lead role in coordinating the political talks (with the AU and others in particular) humanitarian response in Sudan, he has not done so, despite having the largest team of any envoy (16 staff). The AU and IGAD as the regional bloc, have either competed over the Sudan file or, after they later agreed to deconflict, have done very little to advance peace talks.

The US' appointment of an envoy was welcome but ultimately disempowered by the Biden administration, in deference to US allies, chief of which is the UAE. With all the international conflicting interests embroiled in Sudan's very globalised war, the appointment of a high-level White House envoy who can speak to Arab leaders with the president's authority is needed.

After the inauguration, there were initial signs that Secretary Rubio would prioritise responding to Sudan's catastrophe but this has not materialised. Moreover, in President Trump's recent trips to the Gulf, Sudan did not seem to be mentioned even amongst countries that are either directly participating in conflict or directly contributing to keeping the war going and whose competitions are playing out to devastating effect not just in Sudan, but across the entire Horn of Africa.

Recommendations

Humanitarian: funding is critical for Sudan's humanitarian response. But funding to mutual aid groups such as the ERRS and farming cooperatives is not only a better guarantee of delivery but also a more sound investment of humanitarian funding. Young people, who constitute the majority of Sudan's population, are vulnerable to joining armed or extremist groups, engaging in mutual aid programmes directly keeps these young people away from nefarious and far more lucrative enterprises.

Programming for youth groups in Sudan's periphery and war affected regions is also key, lest the war be the only industry there. Support to non-partisan media is also critical, especially to efforts to counter hate speech.

POC: discussions around viable PoC options must once again be prioritised. There are many options put forward that require political support first, then financial. Often these will require negotiation rather than money, for example reinstituting telecoms networks in parts of the country that have gone dark since February 2024.

Peace and stability: It is clear that without reform to the military structure of the Sudanese state and economy that Sudan will continue in cycles of endless war, brought about by conditions that only allow for political competition through the barrel of the gun not the ballot box. Therefore,

¹² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/11/sudan-killings-ardamata>

support for civilian rule, no matter how difficult a prospect it is right now, is not isosteric or blue-sky thinking; it is the most practical way to usher in an end to war in Sudan. The transitional period after Bashir's fall (2019-2021) left the militarised system of rule and economy intact and expected a civilian cabinet to administer it. SAF is an army that has only ever fought its own people. It is in need of urgent and extensive reforms. Simultaneously, Sudan cannot have more than one army. Therefore, and in line with calls from revolutionary groups, it is imperative to disarm the RSF, chiefly, as well as other militias. Merely subsuming them into a super military structure will not bring peace. Equitable economic opportunities in industry must accompany demobilisation efforts, if the peace is to hold.

The arc of a successful peace agreement must have the instituting of a civic and just peace at its heart, rather than repeat the failed peace agreement formulas of old. For this to be successful, research shows that women must be central to formulating the peace agreement.

Talks: so long as the ceasefire talks remain the central and most consequential forum, violence and its perpetrators will continue to be rewarded and prospects for a long-term peace will be hampered, not least by the ability of the warring parties to scupper the talks. Instead, international mediators should prioritise *political* talks amongst civilians and focus on how to broach civilian, not military agendas, that must include a wide variety of civilian stakeholder, especially women and young people and not rely on civilian elites, as before. The inclusion of Islamist groups must be done carefully with many guardrails and guarantees in place as they have the money, the propaganda machines and a 30-year head start on other civilian groups, in particular, the revolutionary movements. It is only once a civilian consensus around a minimum common agenda is reached by civic groups, with women leading the way, that the ceasefire track amongst armed actors should be joined with the political one. The warring parties must be given as few opportunities to derail talks and the right incentive structures for each of them - beyond just SAF and the RSF - must be structured. Humanitarian negotiations must be delinked from ceasefire and political talks entirely.

External intervention: Overwhelmingly Sudan's Arab neighbours have resisted, and continue to resist, democratisation in Sudan, encouraging the violent repression of the revolution in 2019. The people of Sudan remained resolute in their commitment to freedom. They helped collapse the economy during the transitional period and still people overwhelmingly stayed committed to democratic transformation. So, they and their clients eventually resorted to war, to push commitment to democracy civilian rule to one side, while people concentrate on survival. But what the mutual aid groups show us is that people can and do stay committed to the values of democratic transformation - service, community, and seeking genuine peace - even in the most desperate of times. Sudan's Arab neighbours and other middle powers including Turkey continue to side against a civilian Sudan in a counter-revolutionary war that can have few domestic winners, if any.

Sudan is surrounded by chaos entrepreneurs, chief of which is the UAE, whose predatory and imperialist overtures in the Horn of Africa has driven wars and secessionist movements across the region from Yemen, to Libya, to Sudan to Somalia. But it doesn't have to be this way, there must be opportunities to get the region, and the UAE in particular, to do things differently, trade more equitably. The US which has for years relied on the UAE and others to outspend China in Africa, must come up with ways to engage with and deconflict its allies' increasingly confrontational stance in the Sahel/ Horn/ Red Sea arenas.

The people of Sudan have endured enough. The US has a role to play, not least amongst its allies in the region who are increasingly driving the dynamics of this conflict.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your testimony and for your leadership. I have a few questions, I'll yield to my colleague, then might have some additional questions as well.

Mr. Cameron—Hudson I should say, Cameron Hudson—your point that we're now into the third year and we see the full relief consequences of a distracted, disjointed, and anemic international response. We're faced with a conflict where no corner of the country is safe for civilians, where battle lines now shift by the hour, where every single neighboring country is playing a role. What can be done to put a tourniquet on?

I mean, it's been 3 years. I mean, my distinguished colleague, John James, who was our chairman of the committee in the last Congress got a very important resolution passed, H. Res. 1328. It was totally bipartisan.

It condemned the RSF and SAF atrocities, called for an end to the war which is obvious. It urged the U.S. to take immediate steps at the U.N. Security Council to document the atrocities, support community-based organizations, and support tribunals to hold the RSF accountable. I'm not sure how much of that was done by this Biden—or now Trump is there. But he's only been there a few short months.

We're hoping this hearing and the fact that our Secretary of State who is tasked with so many jobs and is building out his own bureaucracy as we meet here. He has a lot of people he needs to get in place. But time is of the essence.

So it's been 3 years since you pointed out where maybe more could've been done. So I like when you said we need—there's a desperate need of reinvigoration of a policy. And I think this is the perfect time for all of us to do that.

I know that when the Secretary of State testified before the Senate and before the house, he was very clear that they are talking to UAE. As a matter of fact, my senator, Senior Senator from New Jersey, Senator Booker pointed out that UAE is a vital ally to the U.S. And then he asked questions about what we're doing.

And Senator Rubio said, we have expressed to UAE and other countries that they are turning it, Sudan, into a proxy war and destabilizing the region that threatens to spill over and make it worse. We obviously have to do more. And your very specific recommendations on what more we need to be doing will be very helpful.

I think you've done some of it, maybe a lot of it in your testimonies which we'll study very carefully, all of us. But I think this has to be the pivot point. If not, as you pointed out, by the hour more people will die. More people will be maimed and abused.

And at some point, it becomes even harder to put it all back together again because of the trauma and the PTSD and all the rest that follows such atrocities. So Mr. Hudson, if you want to start, and then I'll go to our two distinguished colleagues.

Mr. HUDSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's obviously a tall order what more can be done. I think where I have focused my attention right now is as this war has evolved over the course of 3 years and as I reflect back on some of the initiatives of the Biden administration, right, I think we had a very traditional approach

with respect to a special envoy for Sudan under the Biden administration.

We've had over a dozen special envoys in the past 25 years for Sudan. So this is not a new exercise for the United States. But I think we have to think differently about how we approach this diplomatically at this stage of the war.

We saw a special envoy last year, last summer, initiate what looked like a kind of traditional peace process or the beginnings of a peace process, trying to bring the parties around the table, trying to support civilian voices in the diaspora as an alternative to military rule. And I think that's a formula that we have used before in Sudan. But I don't think that this conflict is right now ripe for that kind of traditional resolution.

I think we have to focus on the drivers of this conflict outside of the country. There are a host of problems and a host of drivers inside the country that go back decades. They go back generations that need to be resolved around the role of the State, governance, ethnicity, militarism, corruption, you name it, right? And Kholood talked a little bit about that this is the last gasp of the Bashir regime that are playing out in this country right now.

But I think we have to focus at least from a U.S. perspective because we're talking to the U.S. Congress and we're talking about recommendations to the U.S. Government. I think the U.S. Government has a unique position to influence the regional actors in a way that no one else does right now, right? And I think that focusing on all of the states in the region that are playing a role, they are benefiting from this.

It is also costing them because when you look at the refugee situation in places like Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan, it is a burden—Chad, it is a burden on those countries. But elites in those countries are also benefiting from smuggling from this war. And so I think we can use our influence to focus on these regional actors in ways that we haven't done before. And I think that having worked on Sudan since the days of John Danforth and all the way through more recent envoys.

I can say that 10 years ago, 20 years ago, we would not have been discussing the role of Egypt, of Saudi Arabia, of UAE. They were not a part of the conversation a decade ago, right? A decade ago, I traveled with President Bush to New York.

He convened an international summit around the CPA and about the secession of South Sudan. He convened an international summit as did President Obama about the genocide in Darfur. There was a moment when the United States used its position on the world stage to convene the international community around the challenges that the world faced in Sudan.

I think there is the opportunity for that kind of leadership from the United States. I don't know that it needs to be at the United Nations. I think that it could be within a group of Arab states and regional states within Africa and the Arab world that convene around this conversation.

And as I said in my testimony, I think we have to acknowledge that all of these countries actually have legitimate concerns with the outcome of this war in Sudan. This is their region. This is their backyard.

I think that they are, in many ways, undertaking the wrong set of policies to ensure that their interests are met. But I think that rather than, as Ken said, scolding countries for having these interests, I think we have to acknowledge that they do have these interests and acknowledge that we actually have shared interests in avoiding a worst case scenario in Sudan. Yes, there will be things about the future governance of the country that we don't agree on.

But I don't think that we can allow that to presuppose how we end this war, right? And I think we have to think about ending this war in stages. And I think we can all agree that we want a civilian democratic government to emerge from the ashes of this conflict. But until we can get to the ashes of this conflict, until we can end the fighting and silence the guns, I think it is premature to put out a resolution for some kind of civilian governance that is, I think, at least in the medium term, if not in the short term.

Mr. SMITH. Ken.

Mr. ISAACS. I agree with Cameron. I think that you're looking at a society that has been ruled by militants. It's rule by militants right now. And anybody that comes to power is not going to have success if they don't have the respect and the ability to contain the military to some extent. So what this may mean is that there will have to be a transition from the type of governance that it has now to the type of governance that can be seen in the future. But the No. 1 thing I believe everyone should keep their eye on, end the war, find a way to stop the war.

I think bringing a regional confluence of people together to share their views, see what their interests are, and use our political clout, this is one of the things that I think is actually good about the development portfolio of USAID being moved into the State Department. These kind of things are uniquely political. And the State Department is going to be better prepared to handle those than outside negotiators. So end the war. End the war.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Khair, before you go to that, if you could also speak to you obviously pointed out, as did our other witnesses, this is the world's worst humanitarian crisis, world's worst hunger crisis. And you did point out and testify that the suffering is not incidental and that the starvation is being used as a weapon of war. And this isn't the first time.

Mengistu used it in Ethiopia with unbelievably telling effect. Even Aliyev with Nagorno-Karabakh used it in his genocide against the Armenians just recently. I convened a hearing right in this room where we had a prosecutor from the ICC say this is genocide.

They're using food as a weapon and wiping these people off the map either by moving out of Nagorno-Karabakh or killing them. And then now we're seeing it happen again, so your thoughts. And again, when Mr. Isaacs, you point out that there are 24.6 million people that are food insecure, 8.1 million in IPC Phase 5, technically famine, and 638,000, they went to 5, 8.1 million in Phase 4.

I mean, these numbers are just atrocious, and it didn't happen overnight. It's been growing over the last 3 years or maybe longer, but at least 3 years. But if you could speak to food as a weapon.

Ms. KHAIR. Yes, I'm happy to do that. I think one thing to note is that it's not the first time this has happened in Sudan either. Both Cameron and Mr. Isaacs will remember that this happened—the Sudanese Armed Forces and the government in Khartoum uses it very effectively in what is now South Sudan, in Darfur, and Blue Nile, the Nuba Mountains and other parts of Kordofan.

So this is a very tried and tested policy by the authorities in Sudan to effectively kill as many people for as little amount of money as possible. But it's cost money. Starvation does not.

There's another part of this which is the Sudanese Armed Forces in particular with their authorities in Port Sudan are using the limiting of aid as a way to assert a level of sovereignty, as a way to assert a level sort of governmentality in the eyes of the international community. It is by limiting access to different parts of the country. It is by limiting aid. It is by limiting visas. It is by limiting permission.

They're able to assert the sovereignty. They're not able to share the sovereignty in any other way, certainly not in terms of responsibility. The RSF, of course, have been doing what they've always done which is rape, pillage, and steal.

And so we have here in Sudan currently no entity that is actually wanting to keep people alive. Unfortunately, other than the groups I mentioned earlier, mutual aid groups and emergency response rooms. Now I think what is clear is that within the U.S. Government, actually, USAID understood this very well.

USAID has had decades of engagement in Sudan where it has come to the position where it's able to identify who the main actors are, particularly in terms of not just aid provision but also democratic transformation and other key areas that we're speaking of today. My fear is that with USAID being shuttered that knowledge throughout the decades will be lost. And any new team particularly in the State Department may not have that level of knowledge that is frankly needed to be able to read the scene properly.

I want to very quickly comment on what you said about the UAE and also a comment to what Cameron said. The idea that civilian rule is central to resolving the manifold issues in Sudan is not blue sky thinking. This is not about a kumbaya moment where we instill a civilian government for the sake of civilian government.

Having a civilian government in Sudan is the most practical way of changing the structure of the government such that it is not through the gun that you compete for power but maybe through the ballot box. It is not by picking up guns that you get invited to the mediation table but by having a political agenda. Unless that formula is shifted very sharply, we're going to continue to see the proliferation of armed groups.

Twenty, thirty years ago, Mr. Isaacs in particular will remember, there was only rebel movement in Sudan. But because of the way the peacemaking has been done, effectively rewarding those with the guns by asking them to come to the mediation table at the exclusion of civilian groups, it has created a negative incentive structure that allows only for the people to really be represented through carrying a gun and through having an armed movement rather than a civilian agenda. So I think we need to flip this on its head.

And actually, now that this war has taken so much scope because it has reached every part of the country, this is the time to try to right that formula when it comes to—and correct that formula when it comes to how peacemaking is done in Sudan. So sequencing is going to be very important. I don't believe we're going to get a cease-fire that lasts in any way unless we figure out what the political issues are going to be, unless we get a political solution.

And when it comes to the UAE but also Turkey, Saudi, Qatar, the UAE, these are all U.S. allies in the region. The U.S. is, as Cameron said earlier, uniquely positioned to engage. And I think unless that engagement happens, we're not going to get very far.

They do agree on many things. Unfortunately, one of the many things they agree on is they don't want to see civilian government in Sudan. But I agree with Cameron. They're going about this the wrong way. The civilian is the sine qua non of peace in Sudan. Without civilian rule, you're not going to get any kind of lasting peace in Sudan.

Mr. SMITH. Just for the record, was the Biden administration as engaged in this as it should've been?

Ms. KHAIR. I think the short answer is no. But at least what we did see was some level of engagement on the subject. Unfortunately, we haven't seen that under this administration. But I am confident that we will be able to see at least some movement, and this hearing is a really good indication of that.

Mr. SMITH. That's why we're having it. Thank you so very much. Ms. Jacobs.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you all so much. First of all, many of you know we had a very late night or early morning or whatever you want to call it of voting here in the House. And a couple of my colleagues were unable to make it here but wanted to make sure their statements and questions were entered in the record. So Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record the statements of Representative Jayapal and Representative Olszewski.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. So thank you all for testifying on this incredibly important topic. And I commend the chairman for shining a light on the horrific war in Sudan that is not getting enough attention.

I want to first turn to the dire humanitarian situation and highlight the heroic work Sudanese civilians have been doing in the absence of a functional government. Ms. Khair, you highlighted in your testimony the important work of the emergency response rooms. You just talked a little bit about them now along with other mutual aid groups who have been providing emergency assistance and other essential services at a fraction of the cost of international NGO's.

Following Trump's draconian cuts to our foreign assistance, 80 percent of the 1,460 emergency food kitchens have been forced to close. Ms. Khair, can you please explain to the committee why these kitchens were forced to close and the practical impacts of these closures?

Ms. KHAIR. Thank you very much for the question. I think it's difficult to overstate just how devastating the cuts were to these

kitchens. And in part, it's because there hasn't been, unfortunately, enough of a shift internationally to understanding the value of these mutual aid groups.

They're still very much sort of orthodoxy when it comes to delivering humanitarian aid through large INGO's or the United Nations, which for reasons I mentioned earlier particularly when they chose to make or chose to consider one of the main belligerent group, the de facto authorities, they are effectively self-limiting and unable to deliver in the ways that they are. The emergency response rooms and other groups that arose out of the pro-democracy movement are uniquely places because they are in communities to make these deliveries. But they have for three things.

They've asked for recognition as humanitarian actors. They've asked for protection because they are being targeted by both warring parties. And they've asked for partnership when it comes to delivering aid.

Now under the previous administration, there was a recognition of the unique role that they played. And there was a lot of engagement with trying to make sure that they're funded. But since the aid have come in sort of since February, we have seen an immediate closure of many kitchens in Khartoum, particular in other parties of the country.

Because the way that these groups work is that they need little and often rather than huge sums of money as, for example, the U.N. might. And so when that sort of train of funding stops, of course it has an immediate effect. The difficulty now is though some of that has been switched back on and we have seen some aid be able to be delivered through these kitchens, the issue now is what happens after September.

The issue now is when it comes to these supply lines that are very urgently needed, especially in relation to healthcare and medicine, how do you maintain that when you don't know what's going to happen in the next few months. We're also seeing the supporting structure around these emergency response rooms, particularly in the INGO world and the U.N. also being impacted. Effectively, it's an industry-wide sort of sea change that is happening.

And that ecosystem is going to be massively impacted. And it is people on the ground who are going to feel that first and foremost. I'd also like to make very briefly another comment which is that a lot of young people in Sudan, young people make up the majority of Sudan.

So a lot of the majority of Sudan are invested in these groups, in these structures, as a way to basically sew back the fabric of this war. The social fabric of this war is being ripped apart by this war. If you take away that work, if you take away these structures, not only are you going to be impacting the ability for people to stay alive, but these groups, these young people may also find alternative ways to engage in this war.

And those may be, in fact, quite severe. They might be quite violent. They may be drawn toward other ways in which to engage in this war. So I think it's really imperative that these structures are maintained.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. I agree with you, and we'll keep fighting to get that funding. Mr. Hudson, as you laid out in your testimony,

there's overwhelming evidence that the UAE is supplying the RSF with weapons that they are using to carry genocide in the Darfur region. Would you agree that there is evidence to suggest the UAE has provided weapons to the RSF without the consent of the original supplier?

Mr. HUDSON. I can't comment on the relationship that the UAE has China or what the end user agreement is. What I can say is that there is a U.N. arms embargo that exists that is nearly 20 years old on weapons transfers into Darfur. And I think it's safe to say that the UAE is in violation of that U.N. arms embargo.

The only other country whose weapons have reportedly been found in the possession of the RSF are weapons from the United States. These are reports from the ground. They have not been verified because we don't have access to those weapons.

But there are local reports and anecdotal reports of U.S. weapons having been found. I would encourage this Congress to do what it can to investigate the provenance of those weapons, to work with Sudanese authorities or other authorities on the ground to get the serial numbers so that we can trace how those weapons came to be in Darfur and in the possession of the RSF.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. Very concerning that there might be U.S. weapons involved in this. Given the role that the UAE is actively playing in supplying weapons to an armed group carrying out a genocide in violation of a U.N. arms embargo on Darfur with the potential that U.S. weapons are themselves implicated, do you think it is appropriate for the U.S. to be selling weapons to the UAE while they continue to support the RSF?

Mr. HUDSON. Again, I don't—I can't speak to our overall policy toward the UAE. What I would say is I'd frankly acknowledge what Secretary Rubio said yesterday and the day before which is we have a very full and complicated relationship with the UAE. We have a very full agenda with the UAE.

And I think we have seen from the Biden administration over the past few years a rather pugnacious approach to the UAE. It did not move the needle with the UAE. I don't know a threatening approach to the UAE frankly is even reasonable from this administration.

I think Secretary Rubio made it very clear. And we saw from the President's trip to the UAE just 10 days ago that there is a robust bilateral agenda. Will this administration decide to hold that bilateral agenda hostage to the UAE's support to Sudan or to the RSF? I doubt it.

And so that's why in my testimony I suggest, I think, a more realist approach. It might not be the preferred approach or the more optimistic approach. But it is, I think, a realist approach to acknowledge that all of these countries in the region, whatever role they are playing, they have an interest in what happens in Sudan.

They have an interest in the outcome. And to lay bare the facts of that and to not pretend that these countries are not playing a role and to not pretend that their interests in Sudan matter less than our interests. I think we need to acknowledge very openly and freely what these interests are and look for a way forward that is not necessarily punitive, that is not necessarily congratulatory, but that is honest and realistic.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. And I think you're being a little diplomatic about the robust bilateral relationship when I think it's clear what President Trump is worried about is the 2 billion dollar Emirati investment in his crypto company and the Trump Tower that will be built in Dubai. But Ms. Khair, same question to you. Do you think it's appropriate for the U.S. to be selling weapons to the UAE while they continue to support the RSF?

Ms. KHAIR. I think Sudanese people should not be held hostage to any U.S. allies in the region, and that includes the United Arab Emirates. I think Cameron is right. I think that we are very aware. We have been very aware under the Biden administration but certainly now that this is bigger than Sudan.

For the United States, it is about Israel. It's about the Red Sea. It is about other corridors. And Sudan in many ways is a very small part of that calculation. What I would urge is that the United States as a government system, including Congress but also the administration, really look at the price of its current engagement with its allies in the region.

This is not just the United Arab Emirates, although that is the most acute case. But it's also the case with Egypt and Turkey as a NATO ally who are invested in this war. War is big business.

Egypt is making a lot of money from Sudan, both through the gold and through the gum arabic that is smuggled there. The United Arab Emirates, of course, is making a lot of money from the gold but also keeping options around Red Sea influence open. There are a lot of countries involved in Sudan.

I think of it much more as a globalized war rather than a civil war. And unless the United States as the key ally to all of these countries really sort of grapples with—and I agree with Cameron, honestly has an honest conversation with these countries about what their interests are, not just in Sudan. But we're seeing this play out in Somalia, in South Sudan, in Ethiopia. Unless there's an honest conversation about what this looks like, I don't think we're going to get very far in terms of actually making life easier and better for people in Sudan and elsewhere.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. I think one of the important first steps is for the U.S. to actually use the leverage that we have. And as the biggest weapons seller to the UAE, I think that is very considerable leverage.

And so Chairman Smith and any of my colleagues who are watching, I'd encourage you all to join my bill, the Stand Up for Sudan Act. That would block arms to UAE until they stop arming RSF as well as the joint resolutions of disapproval that Ranking Member Meeks and I just introduced that would block over a billion dollars in arm sales to the UAE. And I have them here, Chairman Smith, if you'd like to take a look. Thank you, I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. And Mr. Isaacs, you spoke about the emergency field hospital that at the request of the Sudan Ministry of Health you set up for 87 days, staffed by 93 people, over 9,000 patients, delivered 562 babies. And you pointed out that's a neglected and vulnerable demographic, pregnant women and newborn children.

Have there been other requests made? I mean, I think that's amazing that they would—not surprising, though, because they

know that you go in—Samaritan's Purse goes in and just gets the job done and helps people who are most at risk, sick, disabled. Or in this case, the obstetric hospital you said had three to five women in each bed. I mean, that is overcrowding on—like, few of us can imagine. Yes, go ahead.

Mr. ISAACS. So that particular hospital, the community population returned to normal as people started returning to safe areas. But I was with the president of our organization, Franklin Graham. We met with General Burhan.

It was very interesting. General Burhan asked us, would we go to Khartoum and build a hospital? He's talking about a brick and mortar real hospital. And Franklin said, we would if you'd let it be a Christian hospital. And Burhan said, yes, that would be fine.

And so internally, that is something that we're planning on doing. We're waiting for the security circumstance to allow it. But they have indicated to us that they will give us humanitarian access, where we need to go, where we want to go. And we look forward to doing more in the Sudan area.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask you. You said in March, you met personally with the delegation in Sudan hosted by General Burhan. He made it expressly clear that he desired American involvement in his country.

And I'm wondering for American business, diplomats, it's one thing. They eat, sleep, and breathe conflict and trying to mitigate conflict and problems. But businesses want to go in and sell the product or whatever. Was he talking about those kinds of opportunities too and others not realize that so long as there's this terrible conflict, it's almost impossible to have any kind of foreign investment?

Mr. ISAACS. My perception and interpretation of what he was saying at that time was expressing a deeply rooted desire to see the American country get involved in his country, whether that involved business, whether that involved politics, whether that involved military, not from the perspective of fighting but military from the perspective of utilizing the port up north. But my sense was that he sees great advantage in American involvement. And he would like to see that kind of influence.

In fact, we talked about when Chevron Oil left the country. I think it was probably around 1994, 1992. And there was some reflection on what would Sudan have been like today had that not happen.

So I think he's very open. And specifically he said I don't want to buy things from the Russians and I don't want to buy things from Iran. I'd like to do business with America, but America won't do business with me.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. How would you assess that as an opportunity?

Mr. ISAACS. Say it again.

Mr. SMITH. That is an opportunity.

Mr. ISAACS. Oh, I think it's a clear opportunity. And I have to tell you having worked in Sudan for so long, I entered in South Sudan. Many times, I have been in caves, under rocks, and running from bombs coming from Sudan Armed Forces.

I told General Burhan this. I have not been a fan of Sudan Armed Forces. I have been a responder to the carnage that has come about as an act of the war. When I look at the situation today and what's going on, I think the country needs stability. It needs security.

And I only see one entity there right now until there's a transitional period where there can be a civilian led government. And that's what I would ultimately advocate for. And I just don't see the command and control in the RSF for that to happen. I see the command and control for SAF to happen.

And another interesting point that I will share with you is that the animosity coming from individual Sudanese citizens toward the RSF is enormous. The people that have been killed, the way that they were killed, the things that were stolen, the damage that has been done, I've never quite seen that kind of hardness of heart. And I just find it very hard to imagine the RSF would be able to add a lot of value at this point after what's happened.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask you how would you assess the World Food Programs and other U.N. major organizations on the ground in Sudan today?

Mr. ISAACS. Well, that's an interesting subject. I think all of the humanitarian actors on the ground could do more. There could be improvements in anybody's organizational structure.

What I do know is that when we had the situation in Kordofan State in South Kordofan and West Kordofan, we engaged directly with the parties, negotiated the air bridge. And then we had other agencies coming to us saying, how did you get that air bridge? Can we use your air bridge? How did you do that?

And we kept it as a muffled—we didn't talk about it publicly. But it was highly successful. So I think in the future when I need access into an area, I'll probably attempt to negotiate it on my own.

Mr. SMITH. Did any of you assess the risks that the humanitarian aid workers take by operating in theater? I remember a couple visits with Salva Kiir in Juba when his own forces made life miserable for humanitarian aid workers. Not only did some of his private military go—and these are the people that guard him—go and raid humanitarian stockpiles. But they also put people at grave risk. How big of a problem is that right now, especially with all the bloodletting that is going on?

Mr. ISAACS. I would say, everybody will have their opinions. But I would say generally speaking errant and unacceptable behavior frequently happens in war zones. That's just part of the deal.

You hope that doesn't happen. But the days of you have a white flag and you're protected because you're a humanitarian group, those days are gone. And I think practical down to earth negotiations with armed actors is required to gain access.

And then you have to have trust in there. And that trust, I can tell you in Sudanese society, comes from building relationships. So you would think as a Christian you're not going to make any progress in Sudan, it's the Islamic Republic of Sudan.

But that's not at all what I have found. What I have found is that by demonstrating integrity, doing what I say I'll do, not surprising them, having private conversations behind doors, and

speaking your mind has built trust. And we enjoy good relationships there today with people on all sides of the conflict.

Mr. SMITH. Any of you want to respond to this? And the Sudanese authorities, why haven't they handed Bashir and other former officials wanted by the ICC over to the court? And we all recall that even when Bashir was planning on going to Turkey, Erdogan made it very clear that he would not honor the request which the EU was saying get him to the Hague for prosecution and then he didn't go.

China does the exact same thing in terms of inability to in any way enforce the indictment by bringing him to the Hague. But why has no one else? I mean, why? Do we know?

Mr. HUDSON. I asked this very question of General Burhan in December. And I can tell you what he told me which was—I didn't accept the answer. But his response was that they wanted to try General Bashir in Sudan, that they wanted local justice.

I made the point to him, and this was in the context of a conversation about the return of Islamist in the country, his reliance to some degree on Islamist militias to aid the SAF against the RSF and the concerning trend that I saw at the time and continue to see today that Islamists associated with the former regime would like to see their own return to power eventually and see it as a way back to power, kind of piggybacking on the army and becoming a useful instrument of the army. And so my demonstration—my request to him was to say, if you truly want to distance yourself from the former regime, if you truly want to demonstrate to the international community as you have said privately and publicly that you don't want to see the former regime return to power and that you want to put distance between the Army and those elements that the best way to do that to demonstrate to the world would be to turn President Bashir over to the ICC.

And that would send a very clear signal. And his response was, well, we would prefer to try him at home. And I think reading between the lines, my interpretation of that was that General Burhan is in a very, very difficult position trying to consolidate his own power in the country, the power of the army in the country.

And to a degree, he is responsive to and in need of support from those former regime elements. They are a distinct group, minority group but a distinct and powerful group in the country. And if he alienates them right now, then he risks seeing the fracturing of his own army. And so he is in a very difficult position, I think, with respect to Islamists. And that's why he has chosen not to kind of poke the bear and turn President Bashir over to the ICC.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, please. Of course.

Ms. KHAIR. Thank you. I think the obvious answer is precedent. Burhan does not want to set a precedent as a head of State which is he says that's what he is, would be sent to the ICC less that same thing happen to him in due course.

The other thing is that there was an opportunity for Burhan under the transitional period of 2019 to 2021 to try President Bashir. There was a sort of kangaroo court. I think they sort of had him indicted on financial charges rather than genocide and all the other serious charges which is basically the same as getting Al Capone on tax evasion.

And what we're seeing here is there's no serious commitment to justice and accountability in Sudan in all levels, including from Burhan. The reliance on jihad groups, the reliance on the Islamist groups means that the decisions are not always resting solely with Burhan. And so I would push back a bit against what Mr. Isaacs is saying which is that Burhan will tell any interlocutor he faces what they want to hear to a great deal of extent.

It's good to see that he's giving access to Samaritan's Purse. It's good to see that he's making these rhetorical commitments to supporting the work of Samaritan's Purse. And he says that he wants to get American businesses into the country, et cetera.

I am sure that he's probably saying the same thing to the Russians. I am sure he's probably saying the same thing to the Iranians. This is how he keeps himself alive.

President Bashir at the time did exactly the same thing. This is the same playbook playing out. I wouldn't put that much stock in it. But also the binary is not helpful, this binary between SAF and the RSF.

We have to remember where these came from, Burhan and Hemeti. Twenty years ago, we're fighting hand in fist glove against the people of Darfur. They were committing genocide together.

This is not a case of two entirely distinct groups. There is a difference here without much distinction. And I think it would be very remiss of us not to bear that in mind. The RSF is today's enemy for the Sudanese Armed Forces.

In the meantime, they are creating many RSFs through, for example, the Al-Bara' ibn Malik Brigade, the Jihadist Brigade, through, for example, the Sudan Shield group which is becoming stronger. They recently announced that they've grown in number. They have access to sophisticated weaponry.

We're seeing the same thing that happened with the RSF play out there, in essence an ethnic militia as well. So there is an incentive here for Sudan Armed Forces to keep this playbook going because it allows them to justify military rule which is in the end their main objective. They want to stay in power.

If there is peace in Sudan, why would you need a military government. So of course, you keep a war going. You couldn't justify your presence in government. WFP very quickly because I do want to make sure I speak about this.

WFP has been very slow to evolve to the conditions on the ground. I'm very glad that Samaritan's Purse has been able to negotiate this access. I would love to see that sort of engagement being made available to other international actors.

It would be great to see Samaritan's Purse, for example, work with WFP which is one of the few organizations despite their many failures to be able to buildup the scale that is required to respond to the humanitarian situation. So I think here we need to see less competition between different humanitarian deliverers and actually a lot more cooperation. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Throw out a few other questions and then any other questions that Ms. Jacobs might have. When you talk, Mr. Hudson, about the issue of doing a local court, ICC does not have a stellar track record of getting its man, even thought

Bashir was in the crosshairs and probably will never go to the Hague.

But we know from hybrid court in Rwanda, especially the court for Sierra Leone and Yugoslavia, Charles Taylor never thought that he's get 50 years for—and we've had David Crane testify several times and Alan White as well who are so instrumental in that and for others who committed these horrific crimes. Is that something that we should be talking about, a tribunal for—I mean, if you leave it to the local, just let their own justice system handle it. Good luck with that.

I wouldn't want to be a juror on that frankly because it would be very dangerous to your health. So that's one question. Then if any of you would like to speak as to the relationship to Iran and China. What is China doing?

Russia probably is more preoccupied with Ukraine sadly. But Russia, I'm sure, does have some interest, like, getting access to the port more. But China we know is ubiquitous in the exploitation throughout Africa.

They're everywhere, and they're exploiting Africa everywhere. So how are they moving in on this? And finally, on gold, we had a hearing. And as a matter of fact, a former staffer for our subcommittee, I hired him, Thierry Dongala, has done amazing work on proving the relationship and fighting against the precious metal of gold and how it funds the procurement of weapons and all the other things that kill people.

And so it's an area where we need to step up. We also focused on at that hearing how all of the—frankly, all of the—what do you call it—cobalt for EVs is coming out of the DR Congo through child labor and slave labor, 200,000 adults, upwards of 40,000, some say 25 to 40,000 children, all goes to Xinjiang in China. Then it ends up into EVs.

And 25 percent of all the vehicles in the EU now that are EVs are coming from China on the backs of these little children. So I mean, it's so lucrative for China to be here. But when you throw in the gold part, maybe you can speak to that.

And I do have one other one, and that's on the refugee flows. Chad has nearly a million refugees. I mean, it's a refugee—it's just horrible what has happened. There's so many people are either IDPs or refugees.

And that does not help the countries that are trying to help these people. It has a negative impact there. If you want to just speak to—I mean, all the more reasons why there needs to be an absolute concerted effort, as you said, Mr. Isaacs, end this war, end the war, but also step up the humanitarian side of it as well.

Mr. ISAACS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So I'll come back to what I said. The war needs to be ended. War—excuse me. The gold mining is very lucrative. And I think the RSF after they were sort of officially enshrined, they had a gold mine.

They sold it to the government. I believe that they got that back. But the smuggling of gold that is going out of the country I believe is enormous. I think that the Russians are deeply involved in it.

I think that the RSF is deeply involved in it. And I understand that's the basis of the business empire that Hemeti has built is

really around the gold. And my contacts tell me that gold is going through Dubai.

The issue of China and what they're exploiting, they're very ubiquitous everywhere. And I had the opportunity in 2006 to go to Shanghai and Beijing with CSIS for a 2-week—and we just wanted to know what is China's African development policy. What we found is they don't have one.

What they have are Chinese national interest. But there was one comment that was made at the last day in Shanghai by a very senior diplomat. He said, we have 800 million people with your equivalent of a high school education and they make less than one dollar a day. We're going to send them out all over the world.

So when you go into a place, it doesn't matter where you go in China. You go up to Port Sudan—or not China but anywhere. There's Chinese people doing trade on the sidewalk. There's Chinese people going into the petroleum offices.

So China has a way to assert soft power through transactional processes that gives them enormous diplomatic influence. And I don't think that the U.S. has a way—that's not a level playing field for us. We can't do that for whatever reasons.

And I think that that needs to be explored. I'm not a proponent for exploitative transactional diplomacy. But transactions and diplomacies I think have to go hand in hand with us. And I think that we would be better positioned to effect change and bring the war about to an end. And so that's probably enough that I'll say about that right now.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Hudson or Ms. Khair.

Mr. HUDSON. So there are a lot of questions there. So let me just sort of hopscotch over a few of them. With respect to courts, I mean, I think we're in the situation we are in Sudan right now to some degree because justice has never been delivered for any of the crimes that have been visited upon the people of Sudan.

We've been talking about justice in Sudan for decades. I fear that the air that you refer back to of international tribunals to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. and U.N. assessed dues, I fear that day is behind us in the United States. I fear it also because we have lost our Office of Global Criminal Justice at the State Department that was spearheading these kinds of initiatives and shining a light on these kinds of institutions.

And I think that the State institutions of Sudan have broken down. There are no courts in Sudan right now. So it's not realistic to think that anytime some there will be any kind of justice delivered either internationally or locally.

With respect to Iran, I want to underscore we don't, I think, understand the full extent of the relationship with Iran and Sudan right now. And I think that both the army and the Iranians take advantage of this idea that—or seek advantage from this idea that neither of them are isolated diplomatically. So there is value in having that relationship just to say that we have this relationship.

The Iranians take value in having a relationship in the Red Sea and the potential on the horizon for potentially having a base there. I've heard in candid moments from senior leadership in Sudan that they don't get anything for free from the Iranians. And they don't get a friends and family discount on weapons from the

Iranians, that the Iranians play up their role in Sudan to be greater than it is for their own domestic political purposes and international geostrategic interests.

So I think to some degree both sides are overstating the degree that Iran is a factor. I'm not saying it is not a factor. But I don't know that it is playing a determinative role in this conflict.

It's certainly a factor. I think China we have seen much more of a factor in terms of the weapons that are being used on both sides of the conflict are largely Chinese weapons. The Chinese have a diplomatic presence in Port Sudan.

There are only a handful of countries that have a permanent diplomatic presence in Port Sudan. China is one. So they have been able to play a diplomatic role. They have protected Sudanese interests at the United Nations. And they are benefiting—they're profiting from the arm sales that they have engaged in.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Hudson, do you know what kinds of weapons, AK-47s?

Mr. HUDSON. There have been a whole host of light arms, more heavy material, and now more recently Chinese drones that have been active in the conflict primarily on the side of the RSF, the Chinese drones. With respect to the gold trade, I think there's been a lot of reporting on this, public reporting on the extent of the gold trade. I think the only fact that I think is needed is to say that Sudan produced more gold last year in 2024 than it did before the war started, right?

So we have seen almost a doubling of Sudan's official gold exports since the war began, right? This is what is being reported officially, right? Those numbers are in the range of 3 billion dollars a year.

We know that the RSF controls its own gold mines in South Darfur, in North Darfur. We know that in the eastern part of the country, the army is controlling gold mines there. They are doing business in those gold mines with Russia and with the UAE.

The UAE is profiting on both sides of this conflict because all gold in the country is funneling, as Ken said, back to Dubai which is, again, I think, why I'm also skeptical of simply turning off the spigot from the UAE. The RSF is gaining and earning enough money that if it did not have privileged access to Emirati largesse, it could go onto the black market. With 2 billion dollars, it can go and buy any weapons that it needs to sustain this war.

So we have to think, I think, really holistically about not just the kind of the drivers and the political support that the RSF is getting from outside. But we also have to think about turning off the funding that is coming from not just gold but from gum arabic, from smuggling, from all of the rest, all in there.

Ms. KHAIR. Thank you. I think a lot has been covered. So let me briefly just underscore a few points. In terms of local costs, there's currently not sort of government functionality at any level in Sudan. That's become very clear.

And so expecting there to be any kind of fully fledged justice mechanism, especially because that's always been deferred, particularly at a moment like this without infrastructure as I think it's impossible really. It's not just Bashir. There are other ICC indictees like Ahamd Harun who has recently been made the head

of one faction of Bashir's former party, the National Congress Party.

So these characters are very much alive. They're very much engaged in the politics in Sudan. They're being protected by the Sudanese Armed Forces. And wherever they are in the country, we hear reports of them being moved around, et cetera.

But there is no desire. There's no sort of will here, I think, on the Sudanese Armed Forces to see any of these characters face justice. They are too valuable currently for them in terms of, one, the constituency with the Islamists, and two, the connections that some of them have, two international actors, for example, the Iranians and Chinese and Malaysians and Turks and others.

Just very briefly on the gold. A lot of the gold, it's exactly as you describe, Chairman Smith, what is happening in DRC. Most of the gold in Sudan is mined artisanally. That is on the ground mostly by very vulnerable people.

It is mined and then taken to the United Arab Emirates, chiefly where the world's gold markets are and sold for large amounts of money. And so there are sort of many injustices that are happening here, not just because this gold is used then to buy weapons, to bomb these very people, these very vulnerable people that are mining it in the first place because the working conditions for these people are horrendous. And the fact that the gold has gone up only indicates that the working conditions have become worse for these people.

And longer the war continues, the more the economy will be entrenched and the more the conditions for these people will become more desperate. So absolutely something that requires attention. There have been calls, for example, to set up sort of a fund very much like what the Europeans have Ukraine where a lot of the money that is being made out of gold enters into a trust fund that is then used to potentially rehabilitate and reconstruct Sudan later on.

A lot more thinking needs to be done about how to do that. If some of these flows of money can be arrested and put into this fund for later use, that would be very, very useful. In terms of the refugee flows, I want to make sure we discuss this.

The displacement has been—the world's largest displacement crisis is in Sudan, not just internally where there are 11 million internally displaced but also, of course, externally in Egypt, in Chad, in South Sudan. Effectively, countries around Sudan that are themselves quite vulnerable and facing a lot of economic shocks. We're not seeing any kind of sort of humanitarian support to these groups that is very sufficient.

So for example, in Ethiopia, we're not seeing UNHCR, the UN's humanitarian—sorry, refugee organization really respond to the refugees there. We're not seeing the same by UNHCR in Egypt. And the reason for that is the governments of Ethiopia and Egypt.

They're not granting the United Nations and UNHCR the ability to adequately respond to the refugee crisis. Egypt is making a lot of money from Sudanese people who are in Egypt, spending, of course, a lot of money on rent, on food, et cetera. And you've seen Egypt sort of send them back to Sudan particularly as Sudanese

armed forces has been making gains very much against international recognized refugee norms of non-reform.

So we need to see a lot more protections for refugees in the region. In Chad in particular, we're seeing that the U.N. has not been able to fully support people there. And those people in particular are fleeing genocide. They're not just fleeing the war as people in other countries are. So I think an extra focus on this from the United States is absolutely required. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Ms. Jacobs.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. And I actually want to build on the line of questioning Chairman Smith was asking. I am very focused on the UAE's role here because I think that it is large.

But of course, the UAE is not the only outside actor that is supporting belligerence in this conflict in order to advance their own objectives. You all have talked about some already, right? We've got Chad serving as a staging area for weapons and shipments from the UAE.

We've got Kenya hosting meetings of RSF leaders during which they've declared the establishment of a parallel government in Sudan. Obviously, we have Russia siding with SAF. We've got Egypt continuing to provide military assistance to SAF.

Reports suggest that RSF smuggles gold from Darfur through South Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya to help finance its operations. We've talked about the role of Iran, the role of China, just a small sample. Ms. Khair, can you describe how the influence of outside actors has prolonged the conflict in Sudan and exacerbated its consequences for the Sudanese people?

Ms. KHAIR. Thank you for the question. I think it's impossible to believe that this war would've gotten to the State that it has, the level of destruction and devastation, if not for the role of outside actors. Sudan has been extremely vulnerable to the predations of not just its neighbors but also Gulf countries because it has never been able to set up a political system internally that is able to protect Sudan against this vulnerability.

And so we're going to see unfortunately these countries pick at the carcass that is Sudan at the moment. And even as things get worse, they're not motivated by the humanitarian situation. They're not motivated by the risks of atrocities, genocide, et cetera.

And so there's actually no sort of potential end. There's no turning point potentially at which these countries pull back from the support that they're giving. And they're giving very high tech weapons, what started off as very sort of reasonably low tech war has suddenly become with the use of drone warfare from many of these countries, Turkey, China, Iran, and of course the transit countries that facilitate this.

This is becoming very quickly a very technologically advanced war which means that we're going to see sort of the impact on civilians go through the roof. For example, previously a lot of civilians were fleeing war at the front lines of the battlefield. Today, RSF drones hitting key infrastructure, civilian infrastructure, for example, water stations, power plants, ports, et cetera, means that actually just any sort of normalcy and sort of human normalcy and normal life that is able to exist is going to be impacted which means, A, no place is geographically safe, and B, that actually it's going

to be very difficult to eke out any kind of normalcy, any kind of normal existence for a lot of people.

So the scale of this war would not be what it was or what it is without, I think, the engagement of these countries. But what we have to understand is that war is—we all know this very well. War is big business. And so all of these countries that you have mentioned are very much economically invested in this war. And so unless the formula has changed, unless this war becomes actually more of a liability than it is a source of revenue, we're not, I think, going to see any of these countries, as I say, motivated by the humanitarian situations enough to pull back.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. Thank you all again for testifying and for everything you're doing for the people of Sudan. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Ms. Jacobs. We're just about finished, but I do want thank you so very much for your just expert testimony. It gives us all the guidance on both sides of the aisle as to what we need to be doing.

We want to play a role, hopefully a very constructive one. So thank you. I can't thank you enough. Just let me ask you if I could, Ms. Khair, is Ethiopia penalizing Sudanese refugees because of the territorial dispute over Al-Fashaga?

Ms. KHAIR. So I think it is broader than that. The Ethiopian authorities or the Ethiopian government has been, as you say, in dispute over the Al-Fashaga territory. This has been going on for decades.

There was something of a gentleman's agreement between Meles Zenawi and Omar al-Bashir in the past that meant that Al-Fashaga was sort of left unaddressed for the most part. That came to a head when there were changes in government in both Sudan and Ethiopia. Those tensions seem to have eased somewhat.

But I think the issue is still on the table. But Sudan doesn't have these territorial disputes just with Ethiopia. It has them with South Sudan and the Abyei region. It has them, of course, with Egypt as well and Halayeb-Shalateen.

There needs to be a formula for how to address these issues, particularly for countries around Sudan who get militarily involved in Sudan's conflict, including, of course, South Sudan to a great degree and also Egypt. So we need to—the resolution to Sudan's war is not just going to be about engaging internal actors but also Sudan's neighbors. I think fortunately we have seen a de-escalation in tensions between particularly the Sudanese Armed Forces and the government in Ethiopia.

But depending on how things go between Ethiopia and Eritrea and tensions there and the likelihood as we're seeing of a ratcheting up of tensions in potentially armed conflict, Ethiopia and Eritrea may be the first countries to be sort of pulled into the war in Sudan and vice versa, that Sudanese communities, particularly those on the border regions, will be pulled into the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In fact, we're already seeing this during the Tigray conflict. We already saw lots of assistance, shall we say, from the Sudanese authorities in that war.

Likewise, we're seeing a lot of Eritrean and Ethiopian engagement in the war in Sudan currently, particularly by the Eritreans.

Recently, we saw their trained navy dock in Port Sudan. So what we're seeing here is the overspill that many of us, including Cameron and I, have been warning about since the beginning of the war is already happening. It's already unfolding. And unless these issues around contested territory but also regional interest of neighboring countries are dealt with, I don't think we're going to be able to sort of have a comprehensive resolution to this war.

Mr. SMITH. Just a little bit of understanding about why the refugees in Egypt, why Egypt would not want the UNHCR. Is it because they're welcoming them? I mean, Karen Bass who used to be my ranking member, when she chair, I was her ranking member, we made a trip and we met with President Museveni.

And we went to a refugee camp that it was extraordinary how the local Ugandan people were welcoming the South Sudanese people with such concern and love. And he had it too. It was just amazing.

And both of us were like our eyes were wide open about this is a good neighborly policy. Is that what Egypt is doing? Or is it something else?

Ms. KHAIR. That's not my understanding, no. Egypt and Sudan have a very contentious relationship, mostly because Egypt sees Sudan—

Mr. SMITH. The people too? I mean, not just—

Ms. KHAIR. Yes, so Egypt sees Sudan as an extension of its southern border, believes that it should be very much involved in deciding what the government in Sudan looks like. This is why they continue to support the Sudanese Armed Forces. They have done, let's say, for almost 70 years.

There are issues with racism. The Sudanese people, a face in Egypt particularly previously that the South Sudanese when they were Cairo, particularly in large numbers during the north-south conflict 20 years ago. Darfur is as well who have been displaced to Egypt have faced severe racism, but so have Sudanese of all types.

There's also rhetoric within Egypt similar to what we saw with the Syrians that the economic issues that Egypt is facing is in large part due to the hosting of refugee communities, including the Sudanese communities. That said, a lot of Sudanese people, particularly from the center and north of the country, have a lot of familial ties with Egypt. There's, of course, a shared language and in many ways a shared history and culture that has meant a lot of people who believe that Egypt is still the place to go without the kind of refugee protections that you saw firsthand in Uganda which I think are sort of an aberration.

They're an exception. Without those protections, people in Sudan—Sudanese people in Egypt will be very vulnerable. Recently, the Egyptians came up with some legislation that has made it actually more difficult for people in Sudan to be able to register with UNHCR and therefore get the requisite support there.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much. Anything else? Deeply appreciate it. And we will followup.

Ms. KHAIR. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. And if we have some additional questions, we will get them to you, particularly for some of the members who are not

here but wanted to be. And without any further ado, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



Chairman Brian Mast

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on Africa
Chris Smith (R-NJ), Chairman**

May 19, 2025

Revised

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa at 10:30 a.m. in Room 2200 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Thursday, May 22, 2025

TIME: ~~9:00 a.m.~~
10:30 a.m.

LOCATION: 2200 RHOB

SUBJECT: A Dire Crisis in Sudan: A Global Call to Action

WITNESSES: Mr. Ken Isaacs
Vice President, Programs & Government Relations
Samaritan's Purse

Mr. Cameron Hudson
Senior Fellow, Africa Program
Center for Strategic and International Studies

* Ms. Kholood Khair
Founder and Director
Confluence Advisory

*NOTE: Witnesses added/changed.

**NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202 -226-8467 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Thursday Date May 22, 2025 Room 2200 RHOB

Starting Time 10:39 Ending Time 12:25

Recesses ☐ (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Smith

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

A Dire Crisis in Sudan: A Global Call to Action

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

None

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 12:25

Meg Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

ATTENDANCE

Date: May 22, 2025

[illegible]