

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

## Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa

Excerpts of remarks by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), Chairman  
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Over the decades, the people of Sudan have been subjected to unbearable pain and suffering and loss of life—[even slavery](#)

Since the 1990s, I have been a vocal advocate for human rights, democracy and stability in Sudan and soon after Republicans took control of the House, I [chaired a hearing in 1996 on slavery in Sudan and Mauritania](#).

Today, there is a dire crisis again in Sudan necessitating a global call to action.

I went to [Khartoum in August of 2005, met with President Omar al Bashir](#) and other government officials to press for an end to the genocide in Darfur.

The meeting was necessarily contentious. Bashir denied any wrongdoing or complicity in the Darfur genocide.

In 2009 however, [Bashir was charged by the International Criminal Court \(ICC\)](#) with committing war crimes and crimes against humanity and in 2010, he was the first person ever charged for the crime of genocide.

After meetings with Bashir and other government officials, I visited two refugee camps in Darfur—[Kalma camp](#) and stayed overnight at another, [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 of women and children danced, clapped, and sang beautiful traditional African songs. The people of Darfur have a remarkable generosity and spirit, and it was awe-inspiring. Just about everyone 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 African Union peacekeepers operating under extremely difficult circumstances and urged international partners including the United States to supply them with critical support and resources.

In November of 2005, I chaired another [hearing](#) in a series on Sudan as it was absolutely clear that the situation in Darfur was genocide—with over 400,000 killed and over a million displaced. I stressed the urgent need for a "comprehensive plan that can best contribute to peace and hold those that have murdered, raped, enslaved and plagued the people of Sudan accountable."

Meanwhile, Chairman Henry Hyde, Donald Payne, Frank Wolf, Tom Lantos and I pushed the [Darfur Peace and Accountability Act](#) that declared the slaughter in Darfur a genocide, imposed sanctions on malign actors and it was [signed into law in October 2006](#).

That law built upon the [Sudan Peace Act](#) (of 2001) and the [Comprehensive Peace in Sudan Act of 2004](#).

In October 2006, I 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 a United Nations peacekeeping force. I asserted that the Arab League could not "continue to turn a blind eye to the genocide that is taking place in Darfur," underscoring the vital role of strong diplomatic engagement in achieving peace and stability. Little was done.

Yet here we are again.

In January 2017, I objected to the Obama Administration's decision to ease sanctions on Sudan. As Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Africa, I said the move was "unjustified," given the Khartoum government's continued pervasive human rights violations. Again, I pointed to ongoing violent government actions against Sudanese citizens in Darfur, Nubia, the Nuba Mountains, Bejaland, and Blue Nile, alongside the persecution of Christians nationwide.

Most recently, in October 2024, I was deeply disappointed by the U.S. decision to allow Sudanese warlord Abdel Fattah al-Burhan into the country for a meeting with the UN Secretary-General. Burhan has massive amounts of blood on his hands and should never have been let into the United States. Yet, the Biden Administration delayed and denied robust sanctions against both Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemeti), delaying such sanctions until the Administration's final hours.

There will never be peace in Sudan until there is accountability for the atrocities committed by these 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 are evidence of "an appalling range of harrowing human rights violations and international crimes." Each murdered or displaced civilian is a person, a person whose life has been taken or irrevocably changed by these atrocities.

Both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and 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 smuggles through the UAE, is crucial to preventing the continued funding of Hemeti's atrocities and perpetuating the bloody conflict.

The RSF's main international backer is widely reported to be the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has supplied weapons and financial support. Other external actors, such as Chad, have been accused of enabling arms transfers and have been implicated in supporting the RSF.

Domestically, the RSF has allied with some non-RSF Janjaweed militias and groups, like the Tamazuj movement. It is clear that the RSF is grappling with command and control, 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 elements of the Al-Bara Battalion known as the Popular Resistance, which openly espouses a militant Islamist and even Salafi-jihadist ideology, and former rebel groups, including factions of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) under Minni

Minnawi and Mustafa Tambour. There is a viable threat of a resurgent Islamist movement presenting in the absence of Burhan. Externally, the SAF has received support from countries like Egypt, Iran, Qatar, and Turkey. Russia continues to pursue naval access to Port Sudan.

Today, I have the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Ken Isaacs of Samaritan's Purse, whose organization truly serves those most in need. Thank you, Ken, and thank you to your staff. I also have the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Cameron Hudson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who previously served as executive director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Center for the Prevention of Genocide, among many other Africa-focused roles. And Ms. Kholood Khair, who is the founder and director of Confluence Advisory, a think tank formerly based in Khartoum. Thank you for being here today.