

**SUDAN'S IMPERILED TRANSITION: U.S. POLICY
IN THE WAKE OF THE OCTOBER 25TH COUP**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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SUDAN'S IMPERILED TRANSITION: U.S. POLICY IN THE WAKE OF THE OCTOBER 25TH COUP

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen, Coons, Booker, Van Hollen, Risch, Johnson, Romney, Young, Rounds, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Let me thank our witnesses for joining us today to discuss the crisis in Sudan.

East Africa stands at a precipice. Three years ago, fragile transitions in Ethiopia and Sudan were once cause for cautious optimism. Today, conflict in Ethiopia, including the deadly siege of Tigray and the October 25 coup d'etat in Sudan, are cause for alarm.

In April 2019, the Sudanese people peacefully and tenaciously ousted indicted war criminal Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's brutal dictator for 30 years. Despite a violent response from his security services through 5 months of sustained widespread protests, the people of Sudan succeeded in their demands for a transition to democracy.

Though the process was rocky, civilians were able to reach agreement with military actors on a transitional constitutional document, which provided timelines for full return to civilian rule.

Al-Bashir's fall and subsequent progress on the transition paved the way for me and other members of this body to take legal action leading to the removal of Sudan from the state sponsor of terrorism list and to support an overall thaw of relations between the United States and Sudan.

The military's brazen October coup has put that progress in jeopardy. The coup was the culmination of weeks of tensions between civilian and military members of Sudan's transitional government.

The military's arrests and detention of Prime Minister Hamdok and other civilian officials and the killing of dozens of protesters advocating for a return to civilian rule have made it clear that military actors have little interest in ceding power and no fear of consequences for their actions.

The United States, regional actors, and the international community must respond swiftly and decisively to help the Sudanese people put their country back on a democratic trajectory.

While the United Nations Integrated Transitional Assistance Mission in Sudan has indicated it will facilitate Sudanese-led talks among local stakeholders, it has no means to enforce participation or to hold participants accountable for following through on commitments.

Despite having publicly committed to dialogue to resolve the current crisis, the Sudanese military continues to kill, torture, abuse, and detain protesters and civil society actors.

Nearly 80 civilians have been killed by security forces since the coup, including a 27-year-old man just this past weekend. While a dialogue is necessary, there must also be consequences for those responsible for human rights abuses and for those at the highest levels who have engineered the coup.

In that vein, I support the Biden administration's decision to suspend \$700 million in aid immediately following the coup. I also welcome the decision by the World Bank to suspend its own planned assistance.

However, these actions alone have proven insufficient to end the violence and force the generals to the negotiating table.

I am pleased that the Administration has taken a number of steps to increase its engagement on the crisis in Sudan, including selecting David Satterfield to succeed Ambassador Feltman as Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and dispatching a seasoned ambassador to serve as chargé d'affaires at Embassy Khartoum until an ambassador is confirmed, and I am pleased that the White House has finally nominated an ambassador to Sudan.

Given the current situation, I hope that my colleagues will join me in working to ensure that we move the nomination as expeditiously as possible.

In the days to come, Congress will act as well. Ranking Member Risch and I are collaborating on legislation that establishes conditions that must be met prior to restarting assistance; that directs the Administration to rethink its assistance strategy; and, which sets up a regime of targeted sanctions for those who undertook the coup and continue to undermine the transition to democracy and abuse human rights, thus far a critical missing element in the Administration response.

I hope during the course of their testimony, witnesses will discuss the following: What are the prospects for a return to civilian rule? What role are the African Union, Arab Gulf states, and other regional actors playing with regard to supporting a return to dialogue and pressing military leaders to agree to yield power? What consequences were you referring to in your tweet from a week ago, Assistant Secretary Phee, and when does the Administration plan to impose them?

We have vital strategic interests in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea corridor that will be difficult, if not impossible, to meet should Sudan's transition fail. We simply cannot take that risk.

Let me turn to the ranking member for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a tough one.

The 2019 revolution in Sudan marked a pivotal moment for a country at the crossroads of the Sahel, East, Central, and the Horn regions of Africa. The end of the violent Bashir regime was driven by millions of Sudanese through nationwide mass demonstrations demanding change, and change did occur for a little while.

Even though the military-led Sovereign Council had ultimate authority over the Sudanese state, the establishment of a civilian-led transitional government under the leadership of Prime Minister Hamdok was a significant step toward achieving a new democratic Sudan.

This government was by no means perfect. The civilian groups that influenced the revolution made missteps along the way, while old and new anti-democratic forces worked furiously to infiltrate and undermine the work of the transitional government. The Hamdok Government also faced a severe economic crisis and deeply complicated political challenges.

In the weeks before the Sudan's October 25 coup, I, along with other members of this committee, warned Sudan's military not to intervene in the efforts by Prime Minister Hamdok and his cabinet.

However, the leaders of the Sovereign Council, Generals Burhan and Hemeti, did not resist and removed the civilian government by force.

While the Administration has not wanted to characterize what happened on October 25 as a coup, that is, indeed, what it was. Foreign policy leaders released a bipartisan bicameral statement calling what happened a coup, demanded that Sudan's junta restore its civilian leadership, and vowed to take action if they did not.

We followed that statement with a concurrent resolution in both chambers, further outlining our concerns. The well-documented violence against civilians before and following the October 25 coup proves that Sudan's military junta is brutal, cannot be trusted, and is incapable of leading Sudan's democratic transition.

While we may need to engage Generals Burhan and Hemeti to find a path toward restoring civilian control, we must put them on notice. The United States must take action to hold the junta and other spoilers of Sudan's transition accountable.

That is why my staff is working closely with the chairman's office on comprehensive legislation to address this issue of accountability, but, more importantly, to reshape our assistance and policy approach towards Sudan.

The United States must continue to support the Sudanese people and Sudan's pro-democracy forces. All totaled, the financial commitments made by Congress to support Sudan's civilian-led democratic transition exceed \$1 billion.

Congress also worked to help reshape the bilateral relationship by supporting debt relief, working with the State Department to meet conditions for removing Sudan's state sponsor of terrorism designation, and restoring its sovereign immunity.

I am concerned, however, about how the United States positioned itself before and following the October 25 coup.

Looking forward, the United States must have a clear vision for what we would like to see in Sudan. We must be prudent with our tax dollars and with clear-eyed determination, decide whether we should commit all this funding to Sudan while coup leaders remain in control of the government.

The Biden administration must also act urgently to help stem the tide of military coups occurring across Africa, not just in the Sudan. If democracy is, indeed, a priority for this Administration, it must view these coups as a trend that imperils the future of democracy in Africa and worldwide.

Finally, I have consistently called for the appointment of an experienced U.S. Ambassador to Sudan since Secretary Pompeo agreed to exchange ambassadors with Sudan in December of 2019.

I am pleased the Administration is moving an experienced diplomat, like Lucy Tamlyn, to Khartoum as charge d'affaires, but the 2 years we spent without a full time ambassador in Sudan reflects a broader problem we must address: the low priority the State Department faces in filling positions at all levels for posts in Africa. I say that with full understanding how difficult these posts are.

In the days leading up to this hearing, the Biden administration signaled to this committee its intent to put forward a nominee. Intent is good. Action is better. We are still waiting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch.

Let me turn to our witnesses.

With us this morning on behalf of the Administration is Ambassador Isobel Coleman, Deputy Administrator for policy and programming at the U.S. Agency for International Development, where she is responsible for program and policy oversight, including the agency's regional and pillar bureaus.

As Deputy Administrator, she guides USAID's crisis response liaison work in countering the influence of China and Russia and is responsible for overseeing agency efforts to prevent famine and future pandemics, strengthen education, health, democracy, and economic growth, and improve responses to climate change.

Ambassador Coleman is a foreign policy and global development expert with more than 25 years of experience working in government, the private sector, and nonprofits. From 2014 to 2017, she was the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations for management, reform, and special political affairs. During that time, she represented the United States in the U.N. Security Council on Africa and peacekeeping issues and on issues related to the budget.

Joining her on this panel is Ambassador Molly Phee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs at the Department of State. Ambassador Phee is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, but most recently served as the Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan reconciliation.

Ambassador Phee was U.S. Ambassador to South Sudan from 2015 to 2017. She also served as Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and as Chief of Staff in the Office of the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan. Additionally, Ambassador Phee has served as the Acting Secretary for International Organization Affairs as well as the Deputy Security Council Coordinator at the U.S. mission to the U.N., handling U.N. engagement in Africa and Middle East for both portfolios.

This is a very well-versed panel, particularly as it relates to this issue. This is also the first time each of our witnesses has testified before this committee in their current roles for which they have been confirmed to, so congratulations to both of you. Welcome to both of you. Thank you for your service.

With that, we ask you to summarize your statement in 5 minutes. Your full statement will be included in the record, without objection.

Let me turn to Ambassador Coleman first.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ISOBEL COLEMAN, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. COLEMAN. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today on USAID's assistance to the people of Sudan and our response to the devastating setback to Sudan's democratic transition since October 25 when the military detained civilian leaders, disrupted communication networks, and began killing protesters in the streets.

Congressional interest in Sudan and support for the people of Sudan have been essential over the years. USAID greatly appreciates the additional \$700 million in funding Congress appropriated last year for Sudan.

Despite our collective efforts to help Sudan solidify the democratic transition, recent events serve as a reminder that progress toward democracy can be fragile. I thank the committee for its attention to Sudan today.

For decades, we have witnessed the appalling violence and human rights abuses as well as violations of international humanitarian law committed by Sudanese security forces against civilians. This includes the massacre of at least 127 peaceful democracy activists in Khartoum on June 3, 2019.

Following Sudan's inspiring citizen-led revolution in 2019, USAID reimagined and expanded its support, becoming the largest donor supporting Sudan's democratic transition, including assistance to then Prime Minister Hamdok's office and key ministries to help them deliver on the goals of the revolution.

USAID partnered with the government to mitigate the sharp effects of difficult yet necessary economic reforms on Sudanese families to begin to right the ship after years of economic neglect and mismanagement.

Our assistance to the civilian side of the transitional government complemented our long-standing support for Sudanese civil society and peacebuilding efforts, particularly in marginalized and conflict-

affected communities. These programs operated alongside USAID's lifesaving humanitarian assistance.

After the military takeover on October 25, the United States announced a pause on new obligations from the \$700 million appropriation while we evaluated next steps in our assistance for Sudan.

Following a review of our programs, that pause remained in force for assistance to Sudan's government. Meanwhile, we have expanded activities that support the Sudanese people in their democratic aspirations.

Our current approach links the resumption of any assistance to the government to the restoration of the civilian-led transition. We have coordinated this effort with like-minded international partners.

In light of the dynamic political environment, we are revising the original plan for the \$700 million and we look forward to continued engagement with Congress to find the best way forward.

We are now focused on ramping up support for Sudan's democratic transition in three primary ways: first, strengthening civilian political leadership; second, promoting respect for human rights including freedom of expression and right of peaceful assembly; and third, supporting the Sudanese people's demand for an end to their military's long-standing domination of politics and the economy.

Our goal remains to help the people of Sudan in their pursuit of a civilian-led democratic government that is responsive to its people. Our programs support civil society to organize around, advocate for, and engage in transition discussions and peace negotiations.

We support our partners in building the capacity of youth, women, and marginalized citizens to lead whether in political parties, civil society organizations, or in their communities.

We support civil society in conducting peacebuilding activities, including ongoing national efforts to reach a political agreement to the current crisis and engagement with political consultations facilitated by UNITAMS.

USAID also supports journalists and independent media to accurately and professionally report on transition, peace, and political issues.

Amid the recent political turmoil, humanitarian needs continue to rise. The U.N. estimates that nearly one-third of Sudan's population will need humanitarian assistance in 2022. This includes approximately 10 million people facing life-threatening levels of acute food insecurity.

USAID has long been the largest humanitarian donor to the people of Sudan. In fiscal years 2021 and 2022 to date, we have contributed nearly \$430 million in funding to provide for the basic needs of refugees, internally-displaced persons, host community members, and others in need.

This year, we will work to mitigate the suffering of vulnerable populations and prioritize life-saving assistance in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. We will continue to meet the immense needs of the Sudanese people as we urge other donors to join us in these efforts as well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Coleman follows:]

Prepared Statement of Isobel Coleman

Good morning Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today on USAID's assistance to the people of Sudan, and our response to the devastating setback to Sudan's democratic transition since October 25, when the military detained civilian leaders, disrupted communications networks, and began killing protesters in the streets—returning to the contemptible practices of failed past Sudanese regimes. The military takeover also negatively affects Sudan's long-term development prospects as well as prospects for sustainable peace. Congressional interest in Sudan and support for the people of Sudan have been essential over the years. USAID greatly appreciates the additional \$700 million in funding Congress appropriated last year to further our goals in Sudan. Despite our collective efforts to help Sudan solidify the democratic transition, recent events serve as a reminder that progress toward democracy can be fragile. I thank the Committee for its attention to developments in Sudan today.

The people of Sudan have demanded, and continue to demand, an end to military rule. Thousands of brave citizens are risking their lives on an almost daily basis to end the corrupt military rule that has threatened and oppressed many of them for their entire lives.

For decades, we have witnessed the appalling violence and human rights violations and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law, committed by Sudanese security forces against Sudanese civilians. This includes genocide in Darfur, the indiscriminate bombing of civilian settlements, the targeted bombing of clearly marked hospitals, and security force attacks on medical facilities, staff, and patients. It also includes the massacre of at least 127 peaceful democracy activists in Khartoum on June 3, 2019.

We recognize and deeply appreciate the concern of your committee members—and Congress as a whole—regarding the brutality and terror the Sudanese people are facing, and how, in spite of these major setbacks, we can best continue to support the people of Sudan to fulfill their aspirations for freedom, peace, and justice.

Following Sudan's inspiring citizen-led revolution in 2019, USAID reimagined and expanded its support, becoming the largest donor supporting Sudan's democratic transition, including assistance to then-Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's office and key ministries to help them deliver on the goals of the revolution. USAID partnered with the government to mitigate the sharp effects of difficult, yet necessary, economic reforms on Sudanese families to begin to right the ship after years of economic neglect and mismanagement. Our assistance to the civilian side of the transitional government complemented our longstanding support for Sudanese civil society and peacebuilding efforts, particularly in long-marginalized and conflict-affected communities. These programs operated alongside USAID's life-saving humanitarian assistance.

After the military takeover on October 25, the United States announced a pause on new obligations from the \$700 million appropriation while we evaluated next steps in our assistance for Sudan. Following a review of our programs, that pause remains in place for assistance to Sudan's government. Meanwhile, we have continued and expanded activities that support the Sudanese people in their democratic aspirations. Our current approach links the resumption of any assistance to Sudan's government to the restoration of the civilian-led transition. We have coordinated this effort with like-minded international partners. In light of the dynamic political environment, we are revising the original plan for the \$700 million, and we look forward to continued engagement with Congress to find the best way forward.

We are now focused on ramping up support for Sudan's democratic transition in three primary areas:

1. Strengthening civilian political leadership;
2. Promoting respect for human rights, including freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly; and
3. Supporting the Sudanese people's demand for an end to their military's longstanding domination of politics and the economy, including with efforts to explore anti-corruption and transparency mechanisms, support for transitional justice and human rights, and exploring opportunities to support security sector reform.

Our goal remains to help the people of Sudan in their pursuit of a civilian-led, democratic government that is responsive to its people.

USAID has supported this type of work in Sudan for many years through programs that promote democracy, empower civil society, and protect human rights.

Our programs support civil society to organize around, advocate for, and engage in transition discussions and peace negotiations. We support our partners in building the capacity of youth, women, and marginalized citizens to lead, whether in political parties—including organizing new parties—civil society organizations, or in their communities. We support civil society in monitoring political processes, identifying conflict hotspots, and conducting peacebuilding activities—including ongoing national efforts to reach a political agreement to the current crisis, and engagement with political consultations facilitated by the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). USAID also supports journalists and independent media to accurately and professionally report on transition, peace, and political issues.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Amid the recent political turmoil, humanitarian needs in Sudan continue to rise. The United Nations estimates that approximately 14.3 million people in Sudan, or nearly one-third of the population, will need humanitarian assistance in 2022, a 7 percent increase from last year. This includes approximately 9.8 million people facing life-threatening levels of acute food insecurity.

In Sudan's greater Darfur region, escalating violence due to resource competition, unresolved political grievances, and the full withdrawal of United Nations—African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeepers contributed to the displacement of thousands of people, exacerbated risks to women and children, and impeded aid relief groups from reaching the communities in greatest need of assistance. This also shines a renewed spotlight on the need to protect civilians in Darfur and on the shortcomings of an imperfect peace agreement. Meanwhile, intercommunal clashes in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states continue to increase displacement and disrupt emergency programming, further exacerbating humanitarian needs. There are more than 3 million people displaced within the country as of August due to violence, protracted economic crisis, and severe flooding. An additional 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers sought shelter in Sudan as of November due to ongoing insecurity in Ethiopia, South Sudan, and other neighboring countries.

USAID has long been the largest humanitarian donor to the people of Sudan. In fiscal years 2021 and 2022 to date, we have contributed nearly \$429 million in funding to provide for the basic needs of refugees, internally displaced persons, host community members, and others in need. For example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID partner Save the Children Federation is providing infection prevention and control supplies to medical workers at the Khartoum Isolation Center, helping to meet heightened health needs during the pandemic and reducing the risk of health care workers contracting the disease while attending to COVID-19 patients.

USAID also supports humanitarian coordination and logistics activities, which help extend the reach and efficiency of emergency response programming. Following the 6-week blocking of Port Sudan and the Khartoum-Red Sea Port Sudan highway by the Beja Supreme Council, which contributed to a significant backlog in the delivery of relief commodities, USAID and our partners have actively engaged in contingency planning to minimize the humanitarian impact of any future disruptions in access to the port.

In 2022, we will continue to mitigate the suffering of vulnerable populations and prioritize life-saving assistance in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, particularly conflict-affected and newly accessible zones in Jebel Marra. We will continue to meet the immense needs of the Sudanese people, as we continue to urge other donors to join us in these efforts as well.

CONCLUSION

Finally, let me say that we appreciate our collaboration with Congress to jointly determine the best uses of our foreign assistance resources to help the people of Sudan fulfill their aspirations for freedom, peace, and justice.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.
Ambassador Phee.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MARY CATHERINE PHEE,
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. PHEE. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, let me also thank you for your long-standing interest in and support for a democratic Sudan. We share your alarm about the deteriorating situation and the risk of regression.

As you have noted, since the fall of the Bashir dictatorship in 2019, the United States and our international partners have robustly endeavored to support the Sudanese people and have worked closely with this committee and Congress on their behalf.

This was always an ambitious undertaking. After 30 years of an Islamist military dictatorship and recurring internal conflict, the Sudanese are coping with a burdensome legacy, including the generational damage to the country's historically marginalized areas such as Darfur. Even as we welcome the transitional government's progress in political and economic reform, we were acutely aware of the immense structural issues facing the transition.

Yet, on the other side of the ledger, we have all been inspired by the remarkable and resilient civilian resistance movement, which resulted, as you have noted, in the constitutional declaration and the Juba Peace Agreement. These two documents offer the promise of transition to democracy and peace for Sudan.

On October 25, as we all know, Sudan's Security Services upended the civilian-military partnership when they betrayed the transition and the Sudanese people by overthrowing the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The subsequent November 21 political agreement that restored Prime Minister Hamdok to office failed because it did not include key civilian stakeholders and did not end military violence against civilian protesters.

Hamdok's decision on January 2 to resign further shocked the Sudanese political system. Given the unacceptable actions of Sudan's Security Services, the Sudanese people are now intent on restoring civilian leadership of the country's democratic transition through a reform of the Constitutional Declaration and the Juba Peace Agreement.

They demand a new relationship between the military and civilians, one that redefines and right-sizes the role of the military from partner in a transitional government to participant in the transitional process.

The United States fully supports the civilians in realizing this ambition and is taking concrete action to reinforce their efforts. Sudanese stakeholders tell us they welcome international support to help them find common ground.

With the announcement on January 8 that UNITAMS would facilitate a Sudanese-led political process, the international community began actively working with Sudanese civilian stakeholders to build consensus around a common vision for reform of the Constitutional Declaration in order to refashion the path of the civilian transition and implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement.

With the Security Council mandate to use its good offices in support of the transition, UNITAMS will be in front, but not alone.

The United States, in concert with the Friends of Sudan, has pledged our full support, recognizing the uphill work ahead.

Successful and durable democratic transitions require broad-based agreement among multiple stakeholders in the capital and across this diverse country. It will require the contributions of many to meet this sizeable challenge.

We are prepared not only to provide programmatic and financial support, but also to work closely with UNITAMS leadership and key international partners, especially the African Union, the European Union, and Saudi Arabia to shape this process to ensure it delivers timely concrete results.

In my two visits to Sudan, including most recently with Ambassador Satterfield, I heard a strong desire to find a way forward. On behalf of the United States, I have made clear publicly and privately that violence against peaceful protesters perpetrated by Security Services since October 25 must end. So, too, must the detentions of civil society activists, the use of sexual violence, closure of media outlets, attacks on medical facilities, and communication blackouts.

We have already worked intensively with our partners in the international community to impose significant costs on Sudan's military regime for its actions on October 25. The pause of bilateral and multilateral assistance to the government, estimated to reach more than \$4 billion U.S. dollars, and of debt relief, estimated at \$19 billion U.S. dollars, has left the country's finances in a precarious state.

We have been clear that restoration of international financial assistance is predicated on ending the violence and restoring the democratic transition.

I have also made clear that we are prepared to apply additional costs should the violence continue and the transition remains stalled.

We are now reviewing the full range of traditional and nontraditional tools at our disposal to further reduce the funds available to Sudan's military regime, to isolate its military-controlled companies, and to increase the reputational risk for any who choose to continue to engage in business as usual with Sudanese Security Services and their economic enterprises.

Three decades of military rule under Bashir failed to bring stability or prosperity to Sudan. Sudanese history undeniably demonstrates that only a democratic state can produce a sustainable peace.

It is time for Sudan's military leaders to recognize this reality. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Phee follows:]

Prepared Statement of Mary Catherine Phee

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, allow me to begin by thanking the committee for your longstanding interest in and support for a successful transition from authoritarian to civilian rule in Sudan. We share your alarm about the increasingly volatile situation and the risk of regression. Since the fall of the Bashir dictatorship in 2019, the United States and our international partners have robustly endeavored to support the Sudanese people in their extraordinary efforts to build a democracy. We have worked closely with this Committee and Congress to advance this shared priority.

This was always an ambitious undertaking. After 30 years of an Islamist, military dictatorship and recurring internal conflicts, the Sudanese are coping with a legacy marked by a military-dominated economy now in danger of collapse, a denuded civil service as a result of repeated political purges, a fractured political system following calculated military intervention to break and divide, and the generational damage to the country's historically marginalized areas such as Darfur which left hundreds of thousands dead, millions displaced, and the nation divided in two. Even as we welcomed the transitional government's progress in repealing repressive legislation that restricted human rights, opening space for civil society and political activism, ending decades-long government support for terrorist organizations, and embarking on free-market economic reforms, we were acutely aware of the immense structural issues facing the transition, aggravated by internal power struggles and external spoilers.

We were also inspired by the remarkable and resilient civilian resistance movement, which achieved the historic overthrow of Bashir and drove the security forces to agree in 2019 to a civilian-military transitional partnership and path to elections known as the Constitutional Declaration. Sudanese stakeholders also reached a landmark transitional power-sharing arrangement for the historically marginalized regions known as the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement. These two documents offered the promise of finally achieving democracy and thus peace for Sudan. We were proud to work with Congress and our international partners to leverage our diplomacy and our assistance to support this transition, which holds so much promise for the people of Sudan, the region, and the continent.

On October 25, as we all know, Sudan's security services upended the civilian-military partnership when they betrayed the transition and the Sudanese people by seizing power directly—overthrowing the Prime Minister and cabinet and damaging the trust of the Sudanese people in the promise of the transition and the goodwill of the international community. The subsequent November 21 Political Agreement that restored Prime Minister Hamdok to office failed because it did not include key civilian stakeholders and did not definitively end military repression of and violence against civilian protests. Prime Minister Hamdok's decision on January 2 to resign shocked the Sudanese political system and led prompted civilian and military stakeholders to reach out to the international community for help in rescuing the transition.

Given the repeated troubling actions of Sudan's security services, the Sudanese people have concluded that it is no longer realistic to look at Sudan's transition as a partnership with the military. They are now intent on restoring civilian leadership of the country's democratic transition through reform of the Constitutional Declaration and the Juba Peace Agreement to ensure that these guiding documents reflect the needs of the present moment. To do so, Sudanese stakeholders demand a new relationship between the military and civilians, one that redefines and right sizes the role of the military from partner in a transitional government to participant in the transitional process. For our part, we have made clear we support the civilians in realizing this ambition and will act to facilitate that change.

Sudanese stakeholders across the military and political spectrum tell us they seek a way back to a transition but would welcome international support to help them find common ground. With the announcement on January 8 that the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) would facilitate a Sudanese-led political process, the international community began actively working with Sudanese civilian stakeholders to build consensus around a common vision for reform of the Constitutional Declaration to refashion the path of the civilian transition, carve-out an appropriate participatory role for the security services, stand up a Legislative Council, and establish the necessary groundwork to advance elections, economic reforms, accountability, and implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement.

With a Security Council mandate to use its good offices in support of the transition, UNITAMS will be in front but not alone. The United States—in concert with the Friends of Sudan (Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States, and the United Nations)—has pledged our full support to the UNITAMS-facilitated process. We have done so with full recognition of the uphill work facing the Sudanese and their regional and international partners. Successful democratic transitions require broad-based agreement among multiple stakeholders in the capital and across the country. It will require the contributions of many to meet this sizeable challenge. We are prepared not only to provide diplomatic and financial support to this effort but also to work closely with UNITAMS leadership and key international partners—especially the African Union,

the European Union, and Saudi Arabia—to shape this process to ensure that it is time-bound and delivers concrete results.

In my two visits to Sudan, civilian and military stakeholders expressed a strong desire to find a way out of the quagmire that has bedeviled the country since the October 25 military takeover. While they have pledged their support to the UNITAMS-facilitated political process, such pledges must be met by action, particularly on the part of the security services. On behalf of the United States, I have made clear that the ongoing reprehensible pattern of violence against peaceful protestors in which security services have engaged since October 25 must end. So too must the use of detentions of civil society activists, closure of media outlets, attacks on medical facilities, and communications blackouts. These actions perpetuate a cycle of violence that hardens positions and makes agreement on a political way forward all the more difficult.

We have already worked with our partners in the international community to impose significant costs on Sudan's military regime for its actions on October 25. The pause of bilateral and multilateral assistance to the government and of debt relief has left the country's finances in a precarious state, unable to meet its current financial obligations. We have been clear that the only path to restoration of international financial assistance is predicated on ending the violence and restoring the democratic transition.

At the same time, as I have made clear to military leaders, we in concert with our partners are prepared to apply additional costs should the current pattern of violence continue. We are now reviewing the full range of traditional and non-traditional tools at our disposal to further reduce the funds available to Sudan's military regime, to isolate its military-controlled companies, and to increase the reputational risk for any who choose to continue to engage in "business-as-usual" with Sudanese security services and their economic enterprises. Using such leverage smartly will enable us to press for behavior change on the part of security sector leaders, and could contribute to a reset of the military-civilian balance of power in Sudan, a prerequisite for the long-term success of its democracy.

We applaud Sudanese from all walks of life who continue to take to the streets at great personal risk to demand civilian rule and democracy. Since 2018, they have been the vanguard and the heroes of Sudan's revolution. As the UNITAMS-facilitated dialogue progresses, we will provide concrete support to enable the Sudanese people and civil society organizations to channel their determination to refashion a new civilian-led path to democracy that includes political and economic reforms essential to achieving the Revolution's goals of freedom, peace, and justice.

Three decades of military rule under Bashir failed to bring stability or prosperity to Sudan. The Sudanese people have made clear through 4 years of sustained activism and protest that they will not allow their demands for civilian rule and democracy to be ignored, set aside, or coopted. Sudanese history undeniably demonstrates that only a democratic state can produce a sustainable peace. It is past time for Sudan's military leaders to recognize this reality, cease the use of violence, and participate constructively in a civilian-led transition to democracy. The United States and the international community share the aspirations of the Sudanese people to restore and advance their transition and we will continue to work with our regional and international partners towards that goal. We will continue to seek your help and engagement to help the Sudanese people realize the full potential of their brave and historic revolution.

Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, and thank you both.

We will start a series of 5 minutes of questions, and the chair will recognize himself.

The October 25 coup, and it was a coup and should be treated as such by the Administration, was a blatant power grab by the military after months of mounting tensions between the military and civilian elements of the Sovereign Council.

The root cause of the tensions appears to be the reluctance of the military to cede power to civilian authorities. Even now the bloody crackdown on civilians continues and the fatality count is rising.

The Administration has taken some actions—suspending most assistance, dispatching high-level diplomatic missions to the region, meetings with local and regional stakeholders, and public state-

ments—but security forces continue to attack civilians, arrest civil society actors, and engage in sexual violence with impunity.

Ambassador Phee, why has the Administration failed to impose personal targeted sanctions on those responsible for impeding Sudan's democratic process and perpetrating human rights abuses?

Ms. PHEE. Mr. Chairman, as I outlined, we worked closely with our partners in the international community to impose extraordinary economic pressure on the government. The combined efforts have had a devastating fiscal impact and have made very clear that Sudan cannot move forward with international assistance if the security forces do not change their behavior.

I have also made those points clear in my engagement, as has Ambassador Feltman and Ambassador Satterfield in their roles as Special Envoy. We are also engaging, as you know, regional and international partners to pass the same messages. So—

The CHAIRMAN. My question is we have not, to my knowledge, imposed personal targeted sanctions on those responsible. For example, the Sudanese security forces reportedly have vast business interests, controlling an estimated 250-plus companies in various sectors from mining to agriculture.

Why has not the Administration considered sanctioning any of these companies or the security force members who own them? It would seem to me that this would be a priority since they are the ones who seem to be the intransigent entity here in terms of allowing Sudan to move forward.

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We agree exactly that those are sectors where we should explore imposing pressure and we are actively looking at how to do that. You know our traditional existing regimes were not specifically designed for this moment.

We are looking at how we might develop a new regime in which we would work with you and I was gratified to hear about the legislation you are considering, and we are looking also at nontraditional ways to get at these financial sources of power for the security forces.

The CHAIRMAN. I would think that you have authorities already under a variety of existing laws, but you have failed—not you personally, but, of course, the Administration—has failed to take use of any of them.

If that is the case and you feel that you do not have them then, please, by all means, let the committee know what is it that you are missing, because we would be very desirous of giving you the wherewithal.

You and Special Envoy Satterfield recently returned—you referred to it—from a trip to Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia. Is there progress on persuading the Sudanese military to end its practice of using lethal force, arbitrary arrests, and sexual violence against civil society activists and pro-democracy protesters?

Ms. PHEE. Mr. Chairman, I think it is too soon to tell. Certainly, the protests are going to continue. This is an immutable fact. We made that clear to the Sudanese Security Force leaders and to their partners in the Arab region that they need to change this behavior.

They need to cease using lethal force against protesters. They need to provide accountability for the conduct of security forces.

The Sovereign Council, which, as you know, is currently governing Sudan, has established a committee to look into the violence on January 17. These are nascent and inadequate steps, but we are mobilizing our pressure. We also stopped in Addis and spoke to the African Union about its engagement.

The IGAD envoy is currently in Khartoum. We are coordinating with other like-minded partners to try and pass that message. This meeting today is a helpful sign to all these leaders that they need to change their behavior if they want Sudan to succeed.

The CHAIRMAN. I hope it would not be necessary to have a hearing in order to move them on the issue.

Let me turn to Ambassador Coleman. First of all, we would like to be consulted on your plans before they are finalized.

As you referenced, the \$700 million package will be readjusted to meet the new realities of Sudan's political and economic crisis. I would like to have some insights as to what you are thinking there.

Finally, how is USAID working to address the needs in Darfur in the wake of the coup? We should not lose sight of the continued violence and displacement in Darfur as we are dealing with this larger problem. These voices have been marginalized for far too long.

Ms. COLEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Yes, we absolutely will consult with you before we finalize our plan's \$700 million appropriation.

As I noted in my opening statement, immediately after the events of October 25 we paused all of our funding and did a review and made a determination not to move forward with any funding that works directly with the government.

We have instead reprogrammed some of that money and directed it to activities that support civil society in a couple of different areas, in particular, on strengthening civil society and civilian political engagement as partners in the peace process, helping them advocate, providing civic education and training, even transporting local groups to Khartoum so that they can engage in dialogue with UNITAMS and with other groups connecting them for the ability to come up with a more unified vision of civilian demands, going forward, for this transition.

We are also spending money on human rights work to bolster collection of information around human rights abuses, independent media that are able to both bring in different voices into the media space and work on anti-corruption measures with transparency in their reporting.

With respect to Darfur, yes, sir, there is just remarkable needs still in Darfur across several of those states—Darfur, Blue Nile, South and West Kordofan. There is almost 3 million internally-displaced people and we are working with our partners there to provide basic needs and humanitarian assistance, also trying to help with some health needs there and livelihoods in the agricultural space as so many of the people do depend on subsistence farming with a specific focus on women and also addressing some of the

gender-based violence that has happened there, providing support for survivors of gender-based violence—that, too.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, bless you for what you do. I mean, this is a heavy lift.

When you listen to the list of problems with the human rights abuses and shootings and murders and everything else, it is easy—it is really easy to get discouraged, particularly, when we have done—we have done some pretty heavy lifting, particularly financially, to try to lift this thing, and it just goes unrewarded.

It is difficult and, look, there is all kinds of problems on the continent, and they seem like they keep getting worse and I—as I have looked at it, I do not think this one is the worst, but probably got to be pretty close to it.

In recent months, there has been a half a dozen coups, as you know, on the continent. One country had two coups. As I was sitting here, I was just handed a note that in Guinea-Bissau, they have—gunfire has just broken out near the presidential palace where a cabinet meeting is being held, so probably got another one going on there.

Give us some hope here. I heard the antiseptic recitation of what you have told them and how you insist on this and that, but give us some hope that we can look forward to seeing things improve because it just—to see the backward sliding as bad as it has been and particularly with everybody trying to help, it is really disheartening.

Ms. Phee, why do you not start and see—give me something to feel good about.

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Ranking Member, and, first, let me let me say I think everyone shares the disappointment and frustration in the current state of events, but I do have hope. I have had the opportunity in my brief time in this new assignment to travel to Khartoum twice and you know I have been in a lot of difficult places in the world.

The Sudanese people are amazing. They are committed, they are creative, they have a vision for what they want, and they are not going to let that vision go, and I have not seen that kind of strength and cohesion in other difficult environments in which I have worked.

Also, the security forces in Sudan are difficult, but they are not monolithic. Some of them, I think, truly would like to affect a transition. They do not know how to do it. They are falling back on their old playbook.

I think there is really an opportunity for diplomacy here. I am excited by so many players in the region, in the international community, who want to support the Sudanese, who have their own agency and their own vision for their country.

I believe that that is the strength that we have not seen in other environments, that this is not only in the capital, but it is in the many different diverse areas of Sudan.

I think we need to continue to support them. It is not, frankly, a surprise that this transition is difficult. I think we need to have

an approach that can absorb shocks that will be inevitable, continue to put the pressure on, and continue to provide the kind of technical assistance that the Deputy Administrator referred to. That is how I look at it right now, Senator.

Senator RISCH. Thanks so much for that. I hope that is a realistic appraisal of the conditions there on the ground. I can understand how a population has the commitments, enthusiasm, and optimism that you have described.

If they do not have the guns and the other side has got the guns, it is—that is difficult. Also, the issue of the armed forces, where they are not monolithic, that sword cuts both ways because if they are not monolithic, they do not have a strong leader that can actually talk everybody into laying down their guns and doing things peacefully.

That sort of cuts both ways. I hope you are right.

Ms. Coleman, do you want to take a shot at this?

Ms. COLEMAN. Yes. Thank you, Senator.

I think I would just underscore what Assistant Secretary Phee has noted, which is the incredible resiliency of the Sudanese people and the vibrancy of this movement.

Despite the Security Forces turning their guns on all of these people too often over the last 2 years, they continue to come out into the streets. They continue to mobilize and protest peacefully, and we have seen just a remarkable determination not to give up.

People taking such courageous acts, speaking out, and starting new media. There is a woman who was a spokesperson in the Prime Minister's office who USAID supported with communications while the civilian leader was in his role.

After Prime Minister Hamdok left, she left, too, and now she has started her own media company, continuing to put out messaging about peaceful transition, democracy, human rights.

These are people who were putting themselves and their families on the line to fight for something, and I think it is just a reflection of the resiliency of a people who lived for decades under an authoritarian government.

Most people in the country grew up knowing nothing else, and here they are with a chance at a better life for themselves, for their children, one based on rule of law and democracy and human rights, and they just will not give up. I think that is the message that the security forces are slowly coming to realize is the reality of this situation.

Senator RISCH. I guess time will tell. My time is up, but before I do that, could you give us an update on getting an ambassador to the country?

We are all anxious to see that. I know that has got to be a difficult post to take on, but we need to see an ambassador. I know they have said intent to appoint, but where are we?

Ms. PHEE. Senator, the process is being pushed as quickly as it can be by the State Department and we will work in partnership with the Senate to, hopefully, achieve a full nomination and confirmation as soon as possible, and I am very proud and I am glad you welcomed the role of Ambassador Lucy Tamlyn.

She is a terrific seasoned diplomat and she will be very important at this critical moment to support the Sudanese people as they put this transition back on track.

Senator RISCH. Have you got some experienced people over there you got on the list that are willing to do this? It seems to me that is going to be the toughest thing, once you get that. Making a choice should not be that hard, but it seems it could move faster than what it is.

Ms. PHEE. I agree with you, sir. People are our policy, and we are doing our very best to get our best out there.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I understand Senator Cardin is with us virtually.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank both of our witnesses for their extraordinary service. It is, certainly, a difficult circumstance in Sudan. I understand that. We are with the Sudanese people.

Clearly, we must make it clear that a military coup and the military that is now controlling the country, and we have to be with the Sudanese people, not just by our words, but by our deeds.

As I listened to your testimony about what we are doing in consultation with other partners in the region and trying to work out some type of a reconciliation here, it seems to me we need to do more than that.

I heard you, Secretary Phee, talk about human rights violations and holding those responsible for these human rights violations accountable. I have heard that before. Unfortunately, as you go to some form of a reconciliation or some form of a process forward, it seems like holding those who violated human rights is always the last thing and very seldom really accomplished.

What confidence can you give us that the Biden administration will insist as part of the process, that those who have violated the human rights of the Sudanese people, in fact, will be held accountable in this process?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Senator.

First of all, in addition to the programming that the Deputy Administrator referred to, I want you to just call to your attention that we have from the Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights a 3-year dedicated program to help the Sudanese document human rights violations. That program is underway to support them in what they demand.

Again, going back to the strength of the civilian stakeholder movement, they want accountability and this is a key topic of discussion among the stakeholders who are now reviewing and desirous of changing the Constitutional Declaration.

All the Sudanese that I have had a chance to meet have made very clear that they understand addressing accountability is important both to pull the military forward on the transition and to heal the country and allow it to remain a durable and stable democracy.

That is their commitment and we will back up their commitment, but I wanted you to be aware of the specific programmatic efforts we are undertaking.

We also have the authority that Congress has given us through GLOMAG. That is a possibility we can immediately use, in addi-

tion to exploration of the other options I discussed earlier. Thank you, sir.

Senator CARDIN. I hope you will use the tools that we provided and I hope you will take advantage of Chairman Menendez's offer. If you need additional tools in the toolkit to deal with these issues, please let us know.

I have another concern and that is you talk about working with our regional partners. At times, I find in regards to their policies in Sudan, we are not always aligned completely as to what we are trying to accomplish. I have confidence in the Biden administration in supporting the Sudanese people over the military control.

I am not certain about other regional partners in that region as to what they will do, ultimately, in regards to the power structure within Sudan as well as a holding those responsible for human rights violations accountable in the final resolutions here.

What can you tell me about how we are working with our traditional partners in the region to make sure we are all on the same path for an outcome in Sudan that is in the best interests of the Sudanese people?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Senator. You are quite right to highlight the importance of engaging with these partners who have extensive ties, including personal, political, and economic, with Sudan.

That is why it is so important for us to talk to them and discuss our view, which is that there is a false choice if they think supporting the security forces at the expense of the civilians will bring stability to Sudan, which is what they claim they seek.

That is really the basis of our dialogue that we just deeply contest that assumption that support to the security forces exclusively will result in stability in Sudan.

In the meeting that Special Envoy Satterfield and I attended in Riyadh as part of the Friends of Sudan, which included Gulf Arab states, we also had an opportunity to meet the Saudi foreign minister while we were there.

That final statement condemned the use of violence against protesters and committed all the members of the Friends of Sudan to not restoring or expanding financial assistance or economic assistance until the violence ended and the transition was back on track.

Those are some examples of how we are engaging and what we are saying.

Senator CARDIN. I appreciate those responses. I think we need to follow this carefully because I have seen this in the past. We see statements that are made, but they are not carried out by specific actions. I hope that you will continue to make a priority a resolution in the interests of the people of Sudan as well as holding accountable those responsible for these human rights violations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Rounds.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, let me just begin by saying thank you to both of you for your interest and your agreement to participate in this meeting, but also your interest overall in the situation at hand in Sudan.

I would like to read just what I believe is a fair analysis and I would like to get your thoughts about where we sit right now after looking at the last 3 years.

As I understand it, in April of 2019, nationwide protests spurred the ouster of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir after three decades in power. To defuse the crisis at that time, mediators brokered a deal in which the coup leaders and civilians would share power during a 3-year transition period, leading to elections and full civilian rule.

The transitional government that was subsequently formed was broadly welcomed by the international community and began reforms, pursued peace talks with rebel groups, and sought to end the country's international isolation.

The Government's reforms helped to secure funding from international donors, including the United States, and support for multilateral debt relief. U.S.-Sudan relations improved dramatically, and in late 2020 Sudan agreed to normalize ties with Israel.

In mid-September 2021, the transitional government announced that a coup attempt purportedly by loyalists of the former regime had been thwarted. General Burhan became increasingly critical of civilian leaders, including Prime Minister Hamdok, and that was after this had occurred.

In the aftermath, he accused politicians of alienating the armed forces and of neglecting their governing responsibilities while fighting over positions. As Burhan pressed for Hamdok to replace his cabinet, pro-democracy forces responded on October 21, organizing a mass protest against the prospect of a military takeover.

Overnight, on October 25, security forces detained Hamdok, several ministers and other officials and took control of state media. In November, Burhan reconstituted the Sovereign Council, replacing civilian members of the government with his own appointees.

On November 21, at which point at least 40 protesters had been killed, Hamdok signed a political agreement with Burhan in what he said was an effort to avert more bloodshed and protect economic gains.

The deal restored the Prime Minister to his position, but with the stipulation that a new cabinet of technocrats rather than politicians be formed. On January 3, the Prime Minister resigned, condemning the continued violence against protesters and acknowledging that his efforts to find consensus among Sudanese stakeholders had failed. Hamdok's resignation leaves the military in charge.

On October 25, the Biden administration announced that it was pausing almost all assistance under the 2021 Economic Support Fund appropriation of approximately \$700 million in security assistance and other forms of assistance to the Sudanese Government.

Humanitarian assistance, as I understand it, is not affected by the decision. U.S. officials say assistance to the government will not resume until there is an end to the violence and a restoration of civilian-led government that reflects the will of the people of Sudan.

Is my statement fairly accurate?
[Ms. Phee nods.]

Senator ROUNDS. Based upon that, it would appear that over the last 3 years, number one, we looked at a proposal that would have been a 3-year transition period. We are closing in on that now.

During that time period, it would appear that all parties there seem to have an interest in moving forward and, yet, internal strife appears to be the challenge.

Is that a fair statement within the political realm of Sudan?

[Ms. Phee nods.]

Senator ROUNDS. Based on that, are we choosing sides in this particular case? How do we work with both sides to try to find an end game?

Ms. PHEE. Senator, it seems to me that the way the Sudanese have characterized their current challenge is a model that we should follow.

As you described, there was an agreement that the civilians and the military would move forward as partners in this transition process. That broke down because of the military's conduct.

The military, obviously, cannot be wished out of the political and economic system they have dominated for 30 years.

The way the Sudanese are now formulating the approach is that they recognize the military must be a participant in the process in which all stakeholders need to redefine the role of the military.

Every country needs a military to defend the borders, to defend the nation, to defend the sovereignty. The problem in Sudan has been the military's overreach.

Senator ROUNDS. Do we have access and do we have ongoing communication with both sides in this particular case?

Ms. PHEE. Yes.

Senator ROUNDS. Would you consider the communications good communications, open communications?

Ms. PHEE. Yes, I would. In fact, I have traveled twice and spoken to leaders of the security forces and I have also spoken to them on the phone, and our embassy regularly engages. I would characterize our engagement across the board with all Sudanese as constructive.

Senator ROUNDS. Okay. One last very quick question. What is the Administration considering with respect to the \$700 million in paused assistance to Sudan?

We have come close to it, but we have not answered the question yet.

Ms. COLEMAN. Thank you. In consultation with Congress so far and with the interagency, we have already looked to program, roughly, \$100 million of that money with a focus on civil society.

Working not directly with the government, but with civil society groups outside the government, private organizations both in the center of the country in Khartoum, but also in regional and local areas, helping them with training and education on civics to better strengthen and prepare them for this eventual transition.

As we have noted, this has been three decades of authoritarian rule that has left civil society, really, not in any shape to be as active and a participant as it needs to be in this process.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. My time has expired. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here today.

As we talk about the 2019 revolution, it is known in many quarters as the women's revolution because about 90 percent of demonstrators were women who participated in that and had for many years played a prominent role in advocating against Bashir's brutal regime.

Unfortunately, as is often the case, women were sidelined from peace talks and they had to demand representation and inclusion in a transitional government.

Deputy Administrator Coleman, you talked about what we are doing to strengthen civilian leadership and capacity building among women.

Can you speak to some of the particulars and highlight what we are doing to address the women, peace, and security requirements that say that women should be included in peace processes in areas like Sudan, which are trying to resolve conflict?

Ms. COLEMAN. Yes. Thank you, Senator.

You are absolutely right. This is in no small part a women's revolution, and if you look at the television that carries coverage of street demonstrations still in Sudan today you see women out front and center, risking life and limb to continue carrying the flame for a better life for themselves and their children.

We are working with women's groups across much of the country as we have been for many, many years. We have relationships in many of the states where we have been working in a humanitarian context, where we have developed good relationships with civil society organizations on the ground that have been partners in our humanitarian efforts, and some of those groups are part of our women, peace, and security efforts, too.

They have strong views on what should be happening. Their voices have not been heard, have not been included. We are, as I noted, providing them with advocacy training, even with transportation money to help them get to Khartoum to engage in a broader discussion on peacebuilding, making sure that they are connected with the UNITAMS-facilitated efforts, providing them with both funding and training on media.

I mentioned the woman who has started her own media business. We are also funding a women's talk show in Sudan. You can think of it sort of Sudanese women meet "The View."

It is women from different ethnicities, different demographic groups, young, old, across the country, sharing ideas on what the future of the country might look like for them. It is bringing lots of different viewpoints together.

Senator SHAHEEN. How, specifically, are we going to continue to promote the inclusion of women in the next stage of negotiations?

I appreciate all of those civil society-building efforts, but if we are talking about the negotiating table, are we demanding that in terms of our participation that women be included in that?

Either one of you can respond to that. Assistant Secretary Phee?

Ms. COLEMAN. I will turn to Assistant Secretary Phee, but I will just say, absolutely, because they are such an important voice and

presence. They themselves demand a seat at the table and we will ensure that they are there.

Ms. PHEE. Good morning, Senator. Yes, absolutely. We have discussed this directly with the Special Representative of the Secretary General who leads the UNITAMS effort and he fully supports the goal of having women and has been meeting with women's groups and including them in the process that he is undertaking right now. Absolutely, that is a commitment on our side and on the side of the international community.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I am really pleased to hear that and hope that will continue.

Just to switch gears a little bit, and I only have a few seconds left, but Russia, obviously, has refused to condemn the coup leaders. They have stuck to their playbook of blaming the West for the instability. What does Russia want to get out of Sudan?

Ms. PHEE. Senator, some of the details of our assessment there might be better handled in a different setting, but it is known that the Russians are interested in the Port of Sudan, and I think, generally, we can see by Russian conduct globally that they are interested in exploiting insecurity for tactical gain and financial gain.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Hopefully, we will have the opportunity in a classified setting to address that question in further detail.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Assistant Secretary Phee, I would like to start with you, if I might, and talk a bit about the Abraham Accords and the relationship to the Sudan.

I think, as you know, the U.S. significantly advanced efforts to normalize relations between Arab nations and Israel with respect to the Abraham Accords. In fact, four Arab nations signed up including Sudan, who joined in January of 2021.

My sense is that the Abraham Accords present a great opportunity for these normalized relations and my understanding is that Israel has been reaching out to Sudan in the wake of the coup to a number of stakeholders there to try to assist.

My question to you is does the Biden administration support Israel's attempt to reach out to work with Sudanese stakeholders, particularly in light of the normalization with the Abraham Accords?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Senator, for that question. Special Envoy Satterfield will be in Israel tomorrow to discuss Israel's concerns and interests in the region, including in Sudan.

We agree with you. It was a great prospect to apply the Abraham Accords to Sudan, but the normalization efforts that were underway were part of a negotiation with the civilian-led government.

Now that that government is no longer in place, we do not feel it is appropriate to push for it at this time, but that is something we are keeping a close eye on for an opportunity to resume.

It would be helpful if Israel would use its influence to encourage the transition to go forward so then we can move forward on other important objectives like the Abraham Accords.

Senator HAGERTY. I would encourage you to look for those opportunities, despite the fact that the original negotiating counterparts may have changed. I think Israel has the desire to work there and I think we should be doing everything that we can to support it.

A question to both the Assistant Secretary Phee and Deputy Administrator Coleman. I would like to talk about the Economic Support Fund that was allocated.

Under the previous Administration, \$700 million in foreign assistance was made available to Sudan for fiscal year 2021. After the coup that took place in 2021, the Biden administration has to my understanding halted those funds.

What is the plan, moving forward, with respect to those funds? How much has been spent so far, how much remains, and what would the plan be, moving forward?

Ms. COLEMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Of the \$700 million, we have looked to program \$108 million of that over the course of the coming year, much of it towards promoting and enhancing and strengthening civil society, but also in standing up more agricultural livelihoods work outside of the government.

All of that money is being spent outside the government. None of it is being spent with the government. We paused all of our programming and took a look and decided that there were a certain set of activities that we could continue outside the government.

Going forward, we are now in a process of looking at the remainder of that money and determining what we can use efficiently, effectively, and productively in Sudan, both to help the people of Sudan to strengthen their prospects and to be a net positive in this transitional process, but not working with the government. That is off the table.

Senator HAGERTY. If I understand correctly then, \$108 million of the \$700 million has been programmed so you have a rather large balance left that you can continue to work with there. I appreciate your businesslike approach, as we have discussed in the past, and taking this in a stepwise fashion and making certain we get the most effective usage of those funds.

Assistant Secretary Phee, can I come back to you now again to talk about Russia's efforts to strengthen their geopolitical foothold in Sudan?

As you know, Sudan is a very strategically well-located place when you think about their access to the Red Sea and Russia's desire to continue to build their relationship.

They have got a strong economic relationship, diplomatic relationship, military relationship with Sudan. In November of this past year, 2021, General Burhan recommitted Sudan to the naval base deal that they struck with Russia to build a base there in Port Sudan right there on the Red Sea.

As the current crisis in Ukraine continues to unfold, I think it is very important for us to work with our friends and allies to push back on Russia's influence, and I know that the previous Administration had worked hard to discourage Sudan from engaging with Russia in this matter. Where do you see our posture unfolding here with respect to this?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Senator, for raising that important issue. The leaders of Sudan's security forces have a choice. They can be the leaders who help Sudan complete this historic transition or they can be the leaders that fail.

We want a Sudan that has a partnership with the United States and with our like-minded partners in the world, and not with Russia.

Russia is the old Sudan, and our efforts are designed to help Sudan, first, for its own sake, reach democracy and prosperity, and secondly, take up its rightful role on the continent and in the international community and that includes working with partners like us. That is undergirding our approach to this problem.

Senator HAGERTY. I appreciate a very keen eye toward this. We know China's presence in Djibouti. We understand Russia's presence here. I think the strategic value of Africa is very clear and a very concentrated focus on your part to do just as you say will be necessary, going forward.

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank both of you for your service and testimony.

Last May, Senator Coons and I visited Sudan to tell both government leaders as well as activists that the United States stood with them in the transition toward democracy.

We met with General Burhan, who looked us in the eye and said he supported that transition toward democracy. Clearly, he broke his word. More importantly, he broke his word to the people of Sudan.

Another person we met with was the Minister of Justice Abdelbari, who was a bright light in the transition, a strong supporter of democracy, rule of law.

As you know, he has resigned and what he said about what happened in October is, "What is happening now in Sudan is a military coup." Unequivocal.

I do think the United States has to say that out loud, too, and I agree with my colleagues who say that we need to do more to target individuals who have been responsible with sanctions and other tools at our disposal.

Much has been said about the \$700 million in AID funding. I understand your answers with that. Clearly, we had to put that on hold.

Of course, the big money is in the debt relief for Sudan, and after Bashir was ousted and we had the peaceful revolution, international financial institutions, right—the IMF, the World Bank—agreed to provide Sudan with debt relief.

There is \$76 billion indebtedness by Sudan, and the IMF and the World Bank have put some of the tranches of relief on hold, right now holding up \$650 million in anticipated funding and a \$2.5 billion 39-month IMF loan program that was approved in June of 2021 and a \$2 billion World Bank grant program are at risk.

The United States, obviously, plays a very important role in both those international financial institutions. Are we using our leadership there to make it clear that we will not support additional debt

relief to Sudan until Sudan moves forward again toward democracy and meets those conditions?

Assistant Secretary Phee, why do not we—

Ms. PHEE. Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

Absolutely. In fact, we were leaders in early reaching out to the World Bank and to the IMF to arrange this pause in assistance and, as you have noted, the figures you have provided. I have slightly different figures that were provided to me.

What matters is that they are big and they are having an enormous impact, and that is what we wanted to do. We wanted to make clear that the United States and the international community would not have a normal relationship with Sudan if the transition was abandoned. So, absolutely, that is our posture and policy in the international financial institutions.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Good. I mean, you would agree that is where our main leverage is at this point, right?

Ms. PHEE. Absolutely. The scope is very significant, and there is an argument that the military have their own sources of income and that they are not directly affected, but if the economy collapses because of this major shock due to the withholding of this large-scale amount of assistance, it will engulf their commercial interests as well.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Got it. Just another question, Assistant Secretary Phee.

With respect to the opposition, we have a very broad-based civilian opposition and many, of course, are still protesting in the streets. They have been subject to beatings and violence and killings.

As we support the UNITAMS process, which I understand we do, correct? Are you going to make sure that all the voices of the opposition are included in that process, including those who do not want to have any dialogue right now with the military government, which is understandable? How are you going to make sure that those voices—the opposition—are included in whatever process UNITAMS moves forward with?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Senator. We are in the happy position of dealing with Sudanese civilian stakeholders and voices that will demand to be part of defining the future of the country. My understanding from the Special Representative of the Secretary General is that all groups that are committed to this change have agreed to sit and consult with him and talk to him.

Some of them have not wanted to make it public, but everyone is looking for how to build a collective path, collective pressure, and identify a common vision and common ground.

I think unanimity is probably not feasible. Probably not feasible in any political system, but, certainly, not there, but, definitely, when I have had the chance to speak to Sudanese people, women, youth activists, and the resistance committees, families of those who have been martyred, they are all—they all share a lot of concerns and interests and plans for the future, and I think there is a real possibility to knit that all together.

That is why we are trying to play a supporting role to UNITAMS and to work with other critical regional actors such as the African

Union, which, as you will recall, played an important role in 2019 to help broker the Constitutional Declaration.

We are committed to making sure those voices, and we are using the programmatic resources that the Deputy Administrator has described, to help build the capacity so that they can engage effectively in that transition discussion.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch. Chairman Menendez, thank you for convening this hearing and for ensuring that Sudan remains high on this committee's agenda at this critical time.

To see a full committee hearing on the ongoing crisis in Sudan with robust participation from Democrats and Republicans is genuinely encouraging.

Assistant Secretary Phee, it is great to see you again. Thank you for your service and your focus on this critical issue, and Deputy Administrator Coleman, good to see you as well.

I have worked hard over recent years to support Sudan's peaceful revolution, the inspiring civilian-led nationwide uprising that, as one of the most successful grassroots pro-democracy movements in recent years, actually overthrew a brutal dictator who had repressed the people of Sudan for decades and committed genocide.

We have worked hard on the appropriation of over a billion dollars in both economic aid and, as my friend and colleague, Senator Van Hollen, was just referencing, important debt relief to help support a transition to civilian government.

We have made a significant down payment on a democratic future for Sudan, but I am gravely concerned that this transition is badly off track, and without active diplomatic engagement and some strong and decisive action by the United States this transition may, effectively, be dead.

To live up to the commitments that we have made to the Sudanese people to support their aspirations, we have to take a greater leadership role and I am grateful for the steps you have been taking, Madam Assistant Secretary.

As a number of my colleagues have asked, a lack of accountability for atrocities committed in Darfur and throughout Sudan, the killing of protesters in recent years and the recent coup, all of this has established a pattern of impunity for military leaders who kill and harm unarmed civilians and peaceful protesters.

We have seen that continued in recent weeks as the military has systematically arrested and even assassinated some of the most effective community organizers and obstructed injured protesters from getting needed medical care.

I have introduced the Sudan Democracy Act to sanction those involved in these activities and others who undermine democracy and human rights and the networks that sustain them, and the Administration has publicly stated it will hold military authorities responsible.

What does this mean in practice? How will the U.S. hold them accountable and what does your previous comment that the secu-

rity forces are not monolithic mean for a path forward where we could somehow secure a transition to a wholly civilian government?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Senator, first of all, for your engagement and involvement in this important issue and for your assessment of the challenges that we face.

I do believe, as I said to the chairman, that this hearing is a terrific way to reinforce the Administration's diplomacy and signal to all the parties of Sudan that we are with the civilians, we are with this transition, and it needs to move forward if they want to have any kind of partnership with us.

So that has been, basically, the bottom line. How we implement it? We have talked, Senator Coons, about using authorities that exist. We have talked about developing new authorities and we have talked—we are looking very hard right now at nontraditional methods of pressure, particularly in terms of, for example, the illicit gold mining that takes place and we are also looking at the many enterprises that are owned by security forces.

There is a lot of active effort underway to augment the already significant pressure that we have discussed, from the suspension of both debt relief and bilateral and multilateral assistance.

Senator COONS. As the chairman mentioned, if you need additional authorities, please do communicate that to this committee. I am concerned the military will simply organize elections that are sham elections in 2023 that they will use to legitimize their rule next year.

How are we working with our regional partners, our allies, and relevant Sudanese stakeholders to prevent that outcome, which thousands and thousands of civilians have taken to the streets to prevent and that they have consistently spoken out against and rejected?

Ms. PHEE. That is a valid concern. However, the military leaders have claimed that they want international support for those elections. We want to be in a position to provide that support and, of course, that would be geared towards credible and transparent elections.

Also the Sudanese people, as we have seen, I am confident would not participate in any sort of Potemkin type election.

We talked earlier, Senator Coons, and I think it is worth emphasizing about the importance of making clear, particularly to our Arab partners and Israel, who engage in Sudan, that the prospect of security from a military-led government is not a true reality. That cannot work. Sudan's history shows that.

The fact that the security forces are split is not necessarily a positive situation, but it does mean that they, like the civilians, because there are fractures and fissures, may be unwilling collectively to do a severe repression and a severe crackdown.

That is what we have been trying to say to them. Do not go that path. Do not be the leaders that lost Sudan. Be the leaders that effected this transition. It is a tricky balance, frankly.

Senator COONS. There is a number of us who look forward to working with you on that. I have just submitted a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize for Sudan's resistance committees and the Central Committee of Sudan Doctors. I hope you will work to make sure that they are part of the center of any political process.

I look forward, Deputy Administrator Coleman, to hearing an update about how the Administration is planning to leverage the \$700 million in frozen funds and I hope that we will consult in advance as you craft the broader framework for the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit later this year.

With that, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, and thank you, Senator Coons, for your work on the Sudan.

I recall when we were in the midst of trying to decide on the pathway forward on recognition and the question of those who had been hurt—Americans and others who had been hurt in the past, and we were in quite an engagement in that process and we thought there were better days ahead.

So we remain desirous of that, but really cautious here as we move forward. Thank you for your leadership in this regard.

Senator Booker is with us virtually.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you, Chairman Menendez.

I have really appreciated the conversation and the range of urgent issues that my colleagues have brought up, from the critical necessity to have women leaders at the table all the way to concerns about the Abraham Accords and how we can continue to see some stability and progress.

I want to focus my concerns and questions, really, on just one area. There is a real crisis in the Horn on everything from the violence as well as just the severe lack of medical care that is going on there.

One thing I do have even a more particular concern with is just the severe state of food insecurity within not just Sudan, but a number of the countries in the region—South Sudan, Ethiopia. They are all facing what is this terrific, imminent prospect of extreme famine-like conditions.

Famine is not just for the sort of moral urgency of human life, but it also has a multiplier effect in the destabilizing effects it can have when it comes to the security situation of these nations and how it could spill over and be destabilizing to other nations, especially if more refugee crises are triggered.

This is a region of great importance, obviously, to the United States, the whole Horn. It is critical to our security interests, our dealing with counterterrorism, with Al-Shabaab, its proximity to crucial international shipping lanes through the Red Sea and, obviously, key military facilities there.

I just want to ask, and anyone on the panel could take this for me, what is the Administration doing specifically to help the millions of people who are facing starvation in Sudan and, frankly, facing it throughout the Horn of Africa?

Ms. COLEMAN. Thank you, Senator Booker. That is such a critical and important issue and one that we are dealing with every single day.

As you note, the Horn of Africa is experiencing tremendous instability and food security, and this is a consequence not only of conflict, but also of drought and other natural disasters, including locusts. I mean, it is under enormous stress across the whole region.

Right now there are more than a million people in need of food security—food assistance, because they face very significant food insecurity in that—in Sudan.

There are also, of course, refugees who have left South Sudan for Sudan and are now heading back to South Sudan. You have got the compounding effect of people moving from one insecure environment to another and the challenges that puts on the whole system.

We are working with our partners on the ground, namely, the World Food Programme, to meet the food needs of the people. We are working on some basic health and livelihoods work and addressing the most severe needs of malnutrition.

As you have noted, these are integrated problems that humanitarian assistance only addresses at the surface, and underneath we need to really get at the root causes and that, I think, has been the basis of this conversation, trying to put the country on a better path and play its important stabilizing role in the region that it should be playing. Thank you.

Senator BOOKER. If I could just drill a little bit deeper down because I have been in touch with the U.N. World Food Programme. They have issued an emergency funding request.

They were short to meet the global need from Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa, billions of dollars, and they are saying quite plainly in order to prevent tens of millions of people, including millions of children in countries around the globe and, particularly, in the Horn from starving to death in just the coming months, we need this emergency supplemental funding, and something that is—it seems to be you are alluding to is, that this kind of mass starvation would make all of the situations regarding the politics far more complex as well as we are seeing, again, in that region of Africa the continued destabilization being caused by these challenges that are faced, as you said, from climate change issues to COVID-related issues to the military destabilization.

I guess just my point and question is do you agree that providing this funding, filling this funding gap with the World Food Programme, should be a top priority if we really are serious about meeting the political instability of Sudan as well as other areas in the Horn?

Ms. COLEMAN. Yes. Yes, thank you, Senator Booker.

I mean, I spend my day looking across the world and I see crisis in Afghanistan. I see food crisis in the Horn of Africa and in West Africa, the Sahel.

I see enormous needs in South America with migrants and refugees flowing across the region, and the World Food Programme is providing—and UNHCR—resources across the board and they are stretched. They are stretched very, very thin.

I would, of course, be an advocate for more humanitarian assistance, given all of these simultaneous crises that we are facing and the integrated nature of many of these crises, particularly in the Horn.

Thank you.

Senator BOOKER. I am grateful to hear you saying that. You could look at Burkina Faso. It is one of our globe's poorest nations, its political instability right now and the extreme poverty there.

These issues are very much interrelated. I am grateful for Senator Menendez's and Senator Coons' leadership in trying to help us to meet this massive gap. It is, clearly, proven that dollars invested in the World Food Programme, helping people where they are—to feed them where they are—actually save multiples of the resources necessary if those famines end up triggering a crisis in migration and more.

This is a wise investment of money for political stability, for national security, not to mention the humanitarian—the real human crisis of millions of children that will die if the U.S. fails to act.

I appreciate your testimony, and I thank you, Chairman, for the time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Just briefly, Mr. Chairman, and either one of you can address this.

While this meeting was going on, we were served with a congressional notification by the State Department regarding an expenditure of \$10.5 million dollars for something I do not understand.

It talks about Economic Support Funds, and the bureau that is going to do it is Democracy Rights and Labor, and it refers to expenditures supporting the civilian-led transitional government, which I understand does not exist anymore.

I assume one of you know something about this. I thought we suspended—I think all of us agreed that we ought to be suspending, and now we get served with this notice that there is going to be an expenditure. What can you tell us about that?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Senator. I do not have the notice in front of me, and we all agree that we do not want to be providing any financial support to the government, but we are providing support to civil society and others, and I am aware of a very important grant undertaken by the Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights to support accountability—justice and accountability—and to provide assistance to Sudanese human rights activists who are trying to document atrocities.

That is the immediate program that I am aware of, but I would assume if it is a different program it would similarly be designed to complement the programs that the Deputy Administrator has discussed to help strengthen the capacity of Sudanese civilians to tackle the problems in their country and the money would not be going to the government.

Senator RISCH. You had made reference to this woman who had started the—a media company over there. Would it be going in that direction, perhaps?

Ms. COLEMAN. That was a USAID-funded program. The DRL-CN you are referring to is a State Department program, so I think it would be different, but along the same types of lines with a focus on human rights is my guess.

Senator RISCH. We are going to need some more clarification on this, Mr. Chairman. This is pretty vague, and with everything we have heard today I am really, really reluctant to talk about spending more money there until we have a really clear direction where we are going.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Understood. Madam Secretary, if you would go back to the Department and tell them that we both need—I have not seen the CN so we both need clarification because there is a hesitancy on spending here unless we know, clearly, purpose and recipient, at the end of the day, and, obviously, a pathway forward.

To the extent the Department has a good argument to make for whatever this is, we will look forward to hearing it.

Senator Risch, are you okay?

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I understand that Senator Romney is now with us, virtually.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope you can hear me.

The CHAIRMAN. We can.

Senator ROMNEY. Good. Thank you.

Excuse me if I am going to ask a question here which has been asked already, but I was at another hearing and just was able to join this more recently.

I am interested in getting a sense of why it is we are seeing so many coups, if you will. This is not the—obviously, the one and only.

There seems to be a crescendo in the number of places where military action is replacing democratically-elected leaders. That is, obviously, something which is very much not in the interests of the people of those nations nor is it in the interest of global peace.

One question is, to either of the panelists, are Russia or China playing a role either in encouraging these actions or are they playing a role in sustaining the military juntas or leaders after a coup occurs?

What role are they playing with regards to these increasing number of coups that we are seeing, if any?

Ms. PHEE. Senator, thank you for flagging this troubling issue, which concerns us all. It is clear that Russia is playing a negative role, particularly in the Sahel, but also in Sudan. They are exploiting fissures and tensions and insecurities for their own political and economic advantage.

I think this issue could be helpfully discussed in another setting, but I do want to flag that they are a player of concern for us.

I also wanted to, more broadly, address your question. I think we are seeing, in some cases, the economic impact of the COVID pandemic, which has really disrupted economic growth in countries that are already struggling and some of the poorest countries in the world, and we are also seeing fatigue by publics from poor governance, including corruption as well as insecurity.

Those are some of the factors that we are looking at as we try and assess the changing landscape in Africa and make sure we respond appropriately.

Senator ROMNEY. I am wondering as well whether in Africa, but also in other parts of the world where we are seeing actions of this nature, whether we are able to provide to the newly-formed democratic governments, in some cases governments that have been there for a long period of time, some assessment of the risk of a coup occurring and some actions to take to make it less likely that something of that nature will occur.

Because, of course, we always have sanctions when bad things happen, clearly, everybody would tell us that writing checks to these governments would help them out, but that is not something we can do indefinitely.

So I wonder, do we have an effective strategy to make it less likely that Russia or others that are playing a malevolent role would be less effective?

Do we have a strategy to encourage and strengthen nations such that they can withstand the inevitable draw of authoritarianism when a newly-elected government is put in place?

Again, for you, Assistant Secretary, or your colleague.

Ms. PHEE. Senator, you all helped us out by giving us the Global Fragility Act, and the Administration is working carefully and quickly to try and mobilize those resources and to try and adopt that new format and new approach precisely to get at what you are discussing.

I am hopeful that you will see real action on the ground to implement the goals and ambitions laid out in the Global Fragility Act, which were designed precisely to address the concerns you have outlined.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I return the time to you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Romney. One last set of questions here.

The Sudan Tribune reported today that the Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development was in Khartoum, "to discuss with the Sudanese stakeholders the mediation they plan to launch to end the crisis."

Up until now, UNITAMS has the mandate from the U.N. to provide support to Sudan during its political transition to democratic rule. It was the only forum for dialogue to end the current crisis.

Madam Secretary, is the report on IGAD's involvement accurate and how might the efforts by IGAD complicate UNITAMS' facilitated process?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think that is sloppy drafting. My understanding that the Secretary General with whom we have a good and constructive working relationship was there to see how IGAD could support the UNITAMS effort and that IGAD, as you know, is nested under the AU, nested under the U.N., so how all three bodies could help with this transition process. I think that is a mischaracterization in the press reports—

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Then this is IGAD actually helping UNITAMS. All right.

Let me ask you this. What leverage do we and other actors have in the region to press the Sudanese military to participate in good faith, from the Administration's perspective?

Ms. PHEE. I think, as we have discussed, we have mobilized enormous economic pressure and made clear our position and the position of like-minded friends in the international community, and I know that these—that the sort of phenomenal impact, which the World Bank discussed when we were in Riyadh at the Friends of Sudan meeting, where they compared the economic shock to the system as analogous to the political shock by the events on October

25 that that economic pressure is getting the attention of security leaders.

The discussion we have had here today, the public statements made by members of Congress, are also getting the attention of security leaders.

Thirdly, I believe our diplomacy, particularly our engagement of traditional partners of the Sudanese security forces, is also getting their attention.

The CHAIRMAN. I often find that when we talk about economic shock those who are empowered—in this case by force—often do not end up feeling that part of the shock.

The people do, but they do not, and the question is how do we make them feel that reality as well? Because I find that coups, military juntas, dictators, do not really care about how much their people are hurt.

Finally, if Sudan's transition to democracy fails—and we are all here to try to ensure it does not fail—but if it does, what are the implications for the U.S. strategic interests in the Horn of Africa? Which countries stand to win if the transition fails?

Ms. PHEE. My own view is that nobody wins, neither the Sudanese, nor their neighbors, nor the region, nor the continent, and there may be some governments—we have discussed Russia here today—who get tactical gains or wins if there is a collapse of the Sudanese state, but the humanitarian consequences would be overwhelming and it would contribute mightily to destabilization in Northern Africa, in Eastern Africa, and probably spreading south.

All of our efforts are focused on preventing that outcome because of the negative consequences.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. I think there may have been some countries who were happy to see the coup take place, and the question is if they were happy to see the coup take place then what are the consequences if, in fact, the nation fails, at the end of the day.

To those who were happy to see the coup take place, they must have made calculations as to what they think is the benefit of that, and it would seem to me that we should be focusing on some of those countries to give them a clear message that, in fact, their calculation is wrong.

With that, the committee thanks this panel. This panel is excused. We appreciate your insights, and we will call up our second panel. Thank you very much.

[Pause.]

The CHAIRMAN. I am going to introduce our second panel. My understanding is that there is a vote going on and so we will avail ourselves of what would be a natural break to try to vote and come back.

Before introducing our witnesses for the second panel, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record written testimony from Amnesty International.

Without objection, so ordered.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this hearing.]

The CHAIRMAN. Let me welcome the members of our next panel.

Joining us via teleconference from Brussels is Dr. Comfort Ero, president and CEO of the International Crisis Group. She joined the organization as West Africa project director in 2001 and rose to become the Africa program director and then in January of 2021, interim vice president.

Dr. Ero was appointed Crisis Group's president in December of 2021. She has spent her career working in conflict-affected countries and related policy.

In between her two tenures at the Crisis Group, she served as deputy director of the Africa program for the International Center for Transitional Justice and prior to that political affairs officer and policy adviser to the Special Representative of the Secretary General as part of the U.N. Mission in Liberia.

She has a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics, the University of London, is also the chair of the board of the Rift Valley Institute, sits on the editorial board of various journals, including International Peacekeeping, and we welcome her remotely.

Also with us on the second panel is Joseph Tucker, senior expert for the Greater Horn of Africa, the United States Institute of Peace. Mr. Tucker is a senior expert from the Greater Horn of Africa at the U.S. Institute of Peace where he focuses primarily on Sudan and South Sudan.

Prior to joining the institute, he worked at USAID for 4 and a half years, most recently a senior advisor for Democracy, Conflict, and Governance in the Office of South Sudan and South Sudan programs.

In 2013, Mr. Tucker worked in Juba, South Sudan, for Deloitte Consulting as a policy and research advisor to the Minister of Cabinet Affairs in the government of South Sudan.

From 2009 to 2013, he served in the Office of the U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan at the Department of State, including as negotiations team leader. He was a member of the U.S. Government's observation team for Sudan's 2010 national elections and 2011 South Sudan Referendum. He has traveled widely in both countries in the region.

Thank you both to our witnesses, and Dr. Ero, congratulations on your recent promotion.

We are going to take a brief recess. There is a vote going on. We will return immediately after that vote and we will begin the testimony.

With that, the hearing is in recess.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order with the thanks to our witnesses for their forbearance as we had a vote.

Let me start with Dr. Ero and then we will move to Mr. Tucker.
Dr. Ero.

**STATEMENT OF DR. COMFORT ERO, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, NAIROBI, KENYA**

Dr. ERO. Good morning, Chair Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Comfort Ero and I am the president and CEO of the International Crisis Group.

Previously, I served as the organization's Africa program director and I have spent my professional and academic life focusing on peace and security issues in Africa.

The International Crisis Group is a global organization committed to the prevention, mitigation, and resolution of deadly violent conflict. We cover over 50 conflict countries around the world and our presence in Sudan dates back more than 20 years.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about the deteriorating situation in Sudan today and how the United States and others can help support the country.

Sudan is at a dangerous crossroads. Once again, the military has turned its back on the demands of the Sudanese people and violently seized power. The coup on October 25 brought a sudden halt to a civilian-military coalition that, since 2019, has been charged with steering Sudan towards elections and for civilian rule.

It was a major reversal in a transition that brought hope to so many in the Horn of Africa and beyond. The transition that was interrupted in October followed 30 years of rule by the notorious strongman, Omar al-Bashir.

Following Bashir's ouster and under heavy pressure, the military agreed to an August 17 Constitutional Declaration under which the country would be governed by a hybrid civilian-military coalition for 39 months leading up to elections.

In defiance of the United States and others who warned them against doing so, the generals seized power and ousted the civilians. In the meantime, the Sudanese across the country have taken to the streets to signal their revulsion at the military's power grab.

In response, the security forces have repeatedly fired into the crowds, killing dozens. However, there is evidence to suggest that the generals have gravely miscalculated their position.

Since the coup, Sudan's mobilized youthful population have again shown its strength and courage by mobilizing millions of Sudanese to take to the streets and to send a clear signal to the generals.

Getting the transition back on track would serve both the people of Sudan's democratic aspirations and the interests of the United States and other regional and international actors in the strategically important Horn of Africa.

As one of Sudan's most important external partners, the United States is well positioned to support efforts to reverse the military's power grab and set Sudan back on its transitional path.

The United States should press the generals to immediately halt their repeated use of violence against protesters and coordinate targeted sanctions to hold them to account.

With its partners, the United States should make clear that the generals will face consequences, including assets freeze and travel ban if they continue to kill unarmed demonstrators or obstruct progress towards elections, more broadly.

The United States has already signaled its backing for efforts to stimulate negotiations among the generals and civilian groups. The United States should warn the generals against taking precipitous measures that could derail these potential talks, including refraining from unilaterally appointing a new prime minister.

It should further insist that these talks are maximally inclusive. The 2019 power-sharing agreement should be the blueprint for a

compromise that could restore civilian-military governance and lead to elections.

In the immediate aftermath of the military takeover, the United States suspended \$700 million in assistance to Sudan. This was the right step. The United States should make clear that this support will not resume unless the generals accept a return towards elections.

The United States should also advance efforts to repurpose some of its support to civil society and also work with partners, including the United Nations, to offer direct assistance to Sudan's long-suffering people.

Many on the Sudanese streets perceive some external actors, namely, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia as tacitly backing military rule.

Special Envoy Satterfield should be well positioned to engage these actors and urge them to constructively use their privileged relationships with Sudan's generals to push for a return to civilian-led transitional process.

With the welcome appointment of a new ambassador to Khartoum, the United States could play a key role in marshaling a coalition of actors within and outside Sudan that can steer the country back to a path to elections.

The military's power grab has derailed a transition that was an inspiration well beyond Sudan and could still be an inspiration. The world and the United States should stand with the people of Sudan to ensure a more accountable government.

I thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to testify before the Senate. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ero follows:]

Prepared Statement of Dr. Comfort Ero

Good morning/afternoon, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Comfort Ero, and I am the President and CEO of the International Crisis Group. Previously I served as the organization's Africa program director and I have spent my professional and academic career focusing on peace and security issues in Africa. International Crisis Group is a global organisation committed to the prevention, mitigation, and resolution of deadly conflict. We cover over 50 conflict situations around the world and our presence in Sudan dates back more than two decades.¹

I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about the deteriorating situation in Sudan today. The country is at a dangerous crossroads. Not for the first time in its history, the military has turned its back on the demands of the Sudanese people for more just and representative rule by violently seizing power. The coup on October 25 brought a sudden halt to a civilian-military coalition that since 2019 has been charged with steering Sudan toward elections and full civilian rule.² It was a major reversal in a transition that had brought hope to so many in the Horn of Africa and beyond. I will share with you my analysis of the current situation in Sudan and recommendations for steps the United States might take to help guide it back on the path towards greater democracy and stability.

BACKGROUND

By way of background, the transition that was interrupted on October 25 followed 30 years of rule by the notorious strongman Omar al-Bashir.

- After coming to office in a coup in June 1989, Bashir maintained his hold on power by repressing political opposition, fighting costly counter-insurgencies in the country's peripheries and underwriting his factious security sector with patronage-driven expenditure that ate up, by some estimates, 70 per cent of the national budget.³

- The patronage system that Bashir built eventually bankrupted the country and contributed to the strongman's ouster. A small cabal of favoured cronies including Bashir's Islamist allies from the National Congress Party, senior military officers (many of them drawn from the tiny riverine elite that has dominated Sudan's military and politics for decades) and newly minted allies such as the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which was blamed for some of the worst violence in the western region of Darfur, benefited substantially from Sudan's rigged, lopsided economy.⁴ These same actors continue to try to preserve their privileges atop Sudan's political, economic and security establishment.
- Popular frustration over political repression, rising prices and a sclerotic economy that could not absorb Sudan's ranks of unemployed youths helped trigger the protests that eventually drove Bashir from power. The uprising began in the south-eastern towns of Damazin and Sennar, where crowds took to the streets on 13 December 2018 in response to a tripling of bread prices. By the time the protests reached Atbara, the historic bastion of unionism in Sudan, demonstrators were demanding regime change. Against long odds and despite heavy repression, the protesters eventually overwhelmed the security forces, who staged a palace coup against Bashir on 11 April 2019.
- The military tried to maintain the upper hand but was forced under pressure both from the protest movement and external actors to compromise and accept to share power with civilians. International revulsion over a 3 June 2019 massacre of protesters encamped outside the military headquarters was particularly important in forcing the generals to cede to the will of the Sudanese people.⁵ Under the terms of a 17 August Constitutional Declaration, the country would be governed by a hybrid civilian-military coalition for 39 months leading up to elections.
- The task before that coalition was enormous. The new cabinet headed by the technocrat and diplomat Abdalla Hamdok was charged with breathing new life into Sudan's anaemic economy, reforming political institutions to lay the ground for elections and delivering justice to the many Sudanese victims of atrocities during Bashir's rule—and in the weeks following his fall. Despite the formidable obstacles the authorities faced, that coalition represented the country's best hope for emerging into a stable, prosperous, and democratic future and was a source of hope for those supporting democratic renewal in other countries in the region.
- Always reluctant participants in the alliance, the generals barely disguised their opposition to the Hamdok administration's reforms and were particularly opposed to efforts to deliver justice and to reshape the country's economy. In defiance of the United States Government and others who warned them against doing so, they seized power and ousted the civilians.

THE OCTOBER 25 COUP AND ITS AFTERMATH

Today, unfortunately, the picture looks grim. The military violently applied the brakes on the transition in the early hours of October 25 when they placed Hamdok under house arrest, rounded up numerous other civilian officials in the administration, declared a state of emergency and dissolved key institutions including the cabinet. Since then, Sudan's military chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has taken a series of steps to reverse the reforms the civilian-led administration had rolled out including by disbanding a committee charged with reclaiming public assets, by packing the Sovereign Council, which serves as the country's executive, with his allies and by appointing Bashir-era figures into key posts including in the judiciary and security forces.⁶ The military attempted some window dressing when it reinstated Hamdok on 21 November, a move Sudanese protesters rightly dismissed as an effort to legitimise their power grab. Some efforts to stimulate talks among Sudanese actors to find a way out of the crisis continue although the prospects of a resolution appear dim.

Overall, the country has been on a downhill trajectory since the coup. On 2 January, Hamdok resigned in frustration after failing to persuade the generals to stick by their commitments under the August 2019 constitutional charter, and in particular to give him a free hand to appoint a new cabinet. In the meantime, the public's frustration has been growing. For the past few weeks, Sudanese people across the country have taken to the streets to signal their revulsion at the military's power grab. The general's response to the protests has come right out of the Bashir playbook. The security forces have repeatedly fired into crowds, killing dozens, according to human rights groups and the UN.⁷ A late December decree by military chief Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan gave the police effective immunity for their

actions. Still, the Sudanese people continue to risk their lives by staging protests, work boycotts and other strike actions.

While it is not yet clear who will come out on top in this contest between the security forces and the street, there is evidence to suggest that the generals have gravely miscalculated the strength of their hand. This is a different Sudan from the one in which the army captured control of the state at least five times in the past, including in 1989 when Bashir took office.⁸ Sudan has one of the youngest populations in the world.⁹ Six in ten Sudanese are aged between 15 and 30—and the current generation rejects the notion that the country should go back to being governed by an unaccountable, out of touch elite.¹⁰ This mobilised, youthful population showed its power at the end of 2018 when it rose up in protest at Bashir’s repressive, kleptocratic rule. The protest movement captured the imagination of pro-democracy campaigners well beyond Sudan with its diversity, with the prominent role that women played—sometimes outnumbering men in demonstrations—with its tenacity, and ultimately with its success. Against what many viewed as tall odds, it brought a halt to Bashir’s rule. Since the coup, this movement has again shown its strength by mobilising millions of Sudanese to take to the streets and send a clear signal to the generals that they will not, as past generations of officers did, get away with imposing their will on the Sudanese people.¹¹

Getting the transition back on track would serve both the people of Sudan’s democratic aspirations and the interests of the United States and other regional and international actors in the strategically important Horn of Africa—where Sudan sits between major regional powers Ethiopia and Egypt and shares a border with seven countries, several in the throes of conflict themselves. Support for Sudan’s transition would comport with the U.S. Government’s stated commitment to champion democratic values and to “demonstrate that democracies can deliver by improving the lives of their own people.”¹² It would also be the surest pathway to medium and long term stability in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States is one of Sudan’s most important external partners. It provides about half a billion dollars in assistance annually and was a champion of efforts to reconnect Sudan’s economy with international financial institutions. Given these ties and the United States Government’s relations with all the main regional actors, the U.S. is well positioned to support efforts to reverse the military’s power grab and set Sudan back on a path toward elections and representative government. Specifically, it could:

- *Press the generals to immediately halt violence against protesters and coordinate targeted sanctions to hold them to account:* As outlined, Sudan’s security forces have responded to peaceful protests by indiscriminately shooting into crowds and sometimes reportedly even pursuing fleeing and wounded demonstrators into hospitals.¹³ This pattern of behaviour, on top of its grave human cost, threatens to poison relations between the parties and render a resolution even further beyond reach. In coordination with partners including the African Union (AU) and the European Union, the United States should make clear that the generals will face consequences including asset freezes and travel bans if they continue to kill unarmed demonstrators. The White House should simultaneously convene an interagency process to design a targeted sanctions program aimed at key figures in the military and outline that it is willing to deploy these against individuals that continue to sanction the killing of protesters or obstruct progress toward elections more broadly.
- *Support Sudanese-led efforts to derail the transition:* The United States has already signalled its backing for efforts to stimulate negotiations among the generals and civilian groups including the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), the coalition that spearheaded the protest movement and neighbourhood resistance committees, which play an integral role in the day-to-day organisation of protests and have proved a particularly effective channel of resistance to the military coup. The United States should warn the generals against taking precipitous measures that could derail these potential talks, including refraining from unilaterally appointing a new prime minister. It should further insist that these talks are maximally inclusive and in particular that they should take on board the views of the resistance committees. The 2019 power-sharing agreement should be the blueprint for a compromise that could restore civilian-military governance and lead to elections.
- *Withhold financial assistance until the military reverses its coup:* In the immediate aftermath of the military takeover, the United States suspended \$700 mil-

lion in assistance to Sudan. This was the right step given the generals' brazen decision to terminate the power-sharing agreement. The United States should make clear to the generals that this support will not resume unless they accept to return to the path toward elections laid out in the 2019 power-sharing agreement. In the meantime, the United States should advance with efforts to repurpose some of its support to civil society groups and also to work with partners including the UN to offer direct assistance to Sudan's long-suffering people.

- *Urge all regional actors to back a return to a civilian-led dispensation:* Many on the Sudanese street perceive some external actors, namely Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, as tacitly backing military rule.¹⁴ Such perceptions will ultimately be damaging to those countries' standing in Sudan if it is able to reinvigorate its transitional process. But it is still possible for these key regional actors to play an important role in helping Sudan return to a civilian-led transitional process, thereby protecting their relations with the Sudanese people. Given his strong background in regional diplomacy, Special Envoy Satterfield should be well-positioned to engage these actors and urge them to use their privileged relations with Sudan's generals to convey to them that the power-sharing agreement they torpedoed remains Sudan's best and perhaps only chance for stability, a goal they all profess to share. With the welcome appointment of a new ambassador to Khartoum, the United States could play a key role in marshalling a coalition of actors within and outside Sudan that can help steer the country back toward the path to elections.

Sudan is at a historic hinge-point. The military's power grab has derailed a transition that was an inspiration well beyond Sudan, and still could be, if the generals step back and allow Sudan's civilians to steer the country to elections. With a piling set of challenges—not least an economy in deep distress, resurging violence in Darfur and elsewhere, and a tottering peace deal with armed groups—the generals can hardly afford to stonewall the Sudanese people's demands for change. The world—and the United States—should stand with Sudan's people in their quest for a more democratic and accountable government, an outcome that represents the country's best hope for achieving long-run political, social and economic stability.

Notes

¹ Crisis Group Africa Report N°281, *Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution*, 21 October 2019; Jonas Horner, *After the Coup, Restoring Sudan's Transition*, Crisis Group Q&A, 5 November 2021; Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°168, *The Rebels Come to Khartoum: How to Implement Sudan's New Peace Agreement*, 23 February 2021.

² Crisis Group Africa Report N°281, *Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution*, op.cit.; Jonas Horner, *After the Coup, Restoring Sudan's Transition*, op.cit.

³ Shortly after taking office, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who was mandated to lead the civilian-military transition in August 2019, listed as an ambition driving down military expenditure to 20 per cent of the national budget. He said in some years, that budget line had stood at 80 per cent. "Sudan PM seeks to end the country's pariah status," ap, August 25 2019.

⁴ "Who are Sudan's RSF and their Commander Hemeti?" Al Jazeera, 6 June 2019.

⁵ "Sudan commemorates the June 3 Massacre," Dabanga Sudan, 3 June 2021.

⁶ Crisis Group EU Watch List, 27 January 2022

⁷ "Bachelet condemns killings of peaceful protesters in Sudan," UN, 18 November 2021.

⁸ "A history of Sudan coups," Statista, 25 October 2021

⁹ "After the Uprising: Including Sudanese Youth", Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2020

¹⁰ Crisis Group Horn Podcast, *Sudan's Political Impasse*, 26 January 2022.

¹¹ "Deaths Reported in Sudan as 'March of Millions' Demands Restoration of Civilian Rule," Voice of America, 30 October 2021

¹² "President Biden to Convene Leaders' Summit for Democracy," White House, 11 August 2021

¹³ "Sudanese security forces 'hunt down' injured protesters in hospital," France 24, 25 January 2022

¹⁴ Crisis Group Horn Podcast, *Sudan's Political Impasse*, 26 January 2022.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.
Mr. Tucker.

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH TUCKER, SENIOR EXPERT FOR THE GREATER HORN OF AFRICA, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. TUCKER. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the situation in Sudan.

I am a senior expert at the U.S. Institute of Peace, although the views expressed here are my own. Sudan is complex, but this should not mask simple truths.

There was a coup in October 2021. The political transition, hard won through nonviolent struggle, was fundamentally disrupted. Its political settlement based on a civilian-military partnership was broken.

As Sudanese and the international community plot a way forward, it is critical to examine lessons from the transitional period.

My written testimony outlines lessons based on analysis of stakeholders and key thematic areas of the transition. Given the importance of political pathways to address the current situation, I will focus, first, on lessons to inform them and any potential U.S. or U.N. assistance to them.

Many political processes lack clarity on a preferred end state. This is not the case in Sudan. Civilian groups appear to agree that a fully democratic state is needed with security forces absent from non-security arenas. The U.S. should embrace this end state.

However, it is the process to get there that needs a clear strategy, bolstered by coordinated international engagement.

Many agree that political processes should be Sudanese-led. There are Sudanese processes that are well constructed and are likely to result in a sustainable agreement and there are Sudanese processes that are not. Sudanese recognize this and are wary of blanket international acceptance of any Sudanese-led process.

Any process can be made more inclusive, especially by involving women, youth, and other civic actors, but if inclusivity is symbolic and a process is not grounded in the views of civilians, the bitterness it creates can cripple support for outcomes.

Lastly, it is imperative that violence against civilians stops, for it will prevent a political solution. The international community must take measures beyond words to halt it.

However, the international reactions to violence must not put undue pressure on civilians who overly compromise for the sake of a quick, perhaps, false peace. Creating safe spaces for citizens to refine positions and engage political parties and leadership on their views is urgently needed and the U.S. can help with this.

I will now offer some thoughts on the suspension of assistance, aligning diplomacy and assistance, the security sector, and sanctions.

As others noted, much U.S. assistance to Sudan's government was halted after the coup. A scenario for resumption is when violence against civilians is stopped and there is an enforceable decision and progress on a fully civilian government with benchmarks set by civilians themselves.

It may be tempting to restart assistance at the first sign of improvement, but care should be taken to ensure that this is not premature. Having to suspend assistance again or withstand a period where assistance remains, but the situation worsens can dent the credibility of the U.S. approach.

The suspension provides the U.S. a rare opportunity to interrogate the aims of assistance and refine a strategy. This strategy should be organized around facilitating, supporting, and consolidating a genuine transition.

Key to this is better aligning U.S. political efforts with development assistance. There are times when diplomacy can smartly reinforce assistance, particularly for democracy, human rights, conflict mitigation efforts, and vice versa.

Lastly, a U.S. all-of-government-integrated Sudan democracy strategy is needed. I offer concrete suggestions for this in my written testimony and how it can be tied to existing legislation and this Administration's democracy agenda.

It is right for the U.S. to engage citizen security sector actors, but this should be grounded in a view of a civilian government and state. The U.S. can also analyze lessons from its engagement with the previous National Congress Party regime, particularly on how it did or did not utilize incentives and disincentives.

It is understandable that some call for sanctions because they are a powerful tool to translate condemnation into action. They must be applied smartly and be part of a clear strategy.

The argument that sanctions negatively impact dialogue through hardening positions or stoke violence needs to be groundtruthed. The argument is often made based on assumptions instead of objective analysis.

In conclusion, the U.S. and international community can and should avoid a neutral stance on Sudan. There was a coup, and it is not possible to return to the pre-coup dispensation.

A new constitutional order is needed, and Sudan will not be stable until there is a civilian government and the proper role of the security sector is firmly decided and implemented.

The onus is on Sudanese to achieve their goals, but the U.S. has a duty to nurture civilian-led nonviolent democratic change at a time when it is, surely, in short global supply.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tucker follows:]

Prepared Statement of Joseph Tucker

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the situation in Sudan after the October 2021 coup. Events on the ground in Sudan continue to evolve and provide challenges to U.S. and international engagement, yet there are opportunities to improve the situation.

I am a senior expert at the U.S. Institute of Peace, although the views expressed here are my own. The U.S. Institute of Peace was established by Congress over 35 years ago as an independent, nonpartisan national institute to prevent and resolve violent conflicts abroad, in accordance with U.S. national interests and values.

INTRODUCTION

Sudan's citizens affirmed and secured their right to define the nature of the state and their relationship to it through the 2019 revolution. Given the complexities of Sudan's politics, economy, and society, this is difficult. But the transitional period provided for this, subject to the willingness of leaders within the civilian-military partnership to uphold commitments to a different vision for Sudan. There will be many debates about if that partnership was possible from the start. What is clear is that the contested nature of the transition and certain individuals within it overpowered those working toward the revolution's aims of freedom, peace, and justice.

The coup broke the already fragile transition and its constitutional foundation. Sudan is now witnessing an unprecedented political and economic crisis and may be reverting to its pre-revolution state. Violence against citizens continues to increase, including in areas outside of Khartoum, especially in Darfur. As Sudanese, the region, and international community try to plot a way forward, it is critical to examine lessons from the transitional period so they can inform policymaking and assistance.

This testimony outlines some lessons learned from the start of the transition to the present. The lessons cover topics on various stakeholders and key thematic areas of the transition. This is followed by views on the current political situation, and possible U.S. and international diplomatic and assistance tools to support democratic stakeholders and pursue a true civilian transition.

Resistance Committees & Protest Groups

As happened in the lead-up to and during the 2019 revolution, the post-coup situation has again thrust Resistance Committees (RCs) and protest groups into the limelight as they face violence during protests. Some of them note that this is a continuation of the revolution after an aborted attempt at transition. It frames their current “no negotiation, no partnership, no compromise” posture. Diplomats have recently met with RC and protest representatives in Sudan and learned more about how they are adapting structures to the current situation. They are also hearing about positions being developed organically on local consensus-building, social justice, community representation, and resource mobilization.

This attention is a welcome shift from 2019 when it seemed that the diffuse nature of protests, coupled with the horizontal organization of RCs, led international actors to face difficulty with—or indifference to—engaging with them. Attention moved to the operation of government and challenges, such as economic reform and international relations. A key lesson is that the motivations and strategies of all elements of the revolution matter, not just organized political and civic forces. The RCs can be studied and engaged more closely. There is much to learn about their evolution during the previous National Congress Party (NCP) regime through to their role in 2018–19 protests, their engagement with the Sudan Professionals Association and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), and how they undertook advocacy during the attempted transition. Charting this evolution will provide clarity to their current positions and analyzing the nonviolent nature of the protests can provide lessons for situations elsewhere.

There is a narrative that some RCs oppose political parties or wish to replace them. However, there is another one that suggests they realize political party participation in elections and governance is needed. Within that, there is a desire for politicians to carry forward their positions, outlined in section seven below, that are informed by the previous 2 years and to be held accountable through fair elections. Lastly, while protests in urban centers are important, so too are those citizens who share similar aspirations, but who are further removed among nomadic, internally displaced, rural, and agrarian communities.

Security Sector

International actors should reassess their understanding of Sudan’s security sector, including the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Since the security sector is not one bloc and there are differences within SAF circles, their internal opinions on transitions and coups are important. At the beginning of the transition, an international fear was that the paramilitary RSF would seek to dominate security and economic power. While this fear may have been warranted, it detracted from attempts to understand dynamics within the SAF and between the SAF and RSF.

The removal of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) leadership and supposed reduction of its operational capacity after the revolution led many to assume it was rightsized. This should have been groundtruthed, as it now appears that after the coup the NISS heir, the General Intelligence Service, reverted to its predecessor’s pre-revolution state. There were also accusations that former regime elements remained prominent in the security sector, but this never seemed adequately explored by international actors and could have shed light on security sector commitments, power dynamics, and the resurgence of certain elements after the coup.

Given the security sector’s prominent role in the economy and politics, a key need of the transition was to undertake security sector reform (SSR). Along with what SSR traditionally entails—such as integration of paramilitary forces into the regular army—thought was given by some international actors and Sudanese stakeholders on how to develop a national security vision that prioritized citizen security over regime security. This was grounded in the reality that security actors have a role to play in the country and have insights that are relevant to discussions about security priorities, risks, and threats. However, the distinction between these two was not sufficiently stressed by some international actors that focused primarily on the tactical aspects of SSR. SSR was rightly seen as necessary, but without also prioritizing dialogue about security sector priorities and civilian-led security sector governance.

While protestors and RCs are diametrically opposed to the SAF and some other security sector actors, attempts to learn how the wider Sudanese public views them is important since it is possible that there are divergent views in more rural areas beyond Khartoum. Lastly, observing international engagement with the security sector, especially by Russia, Egypt, and the Gulf states, can also help extrapolate how such countries view the transition. Key questions should have been asked, such as did the security sector assume that its regional allies would provide them with more overt support than they did, especially after the coup.

Political Parties & Civilian Groups

Political parties and organized civilian groups are a necessary part of any resumed transition, and their ability to work with each other and effectively represent citizen stances on a new, more sustainable, and truly civilian transition will build a healthier political environment. Understanding the motives, strategies, and personalities among them can help comprehend how they, and the wider public, perceive their role.

Far from being one unified bloc, the civilians that composed half of the transition are diverse in political ideology and approaches. Assumptions about their unity on issues beyond the desire for a civilian-led government should be groundtruthed. Political and civic leaders as individuals are important, but more significant is the environment in which they operate and, if provided the opportunity, govern. Focusing on the former without attention to the latter can create a distorted, underdeveloped political system.

The umbrella created by the FFC, a loose grouping of political parties, unions, civic bodies, and rebel movements, arose during the revolution and negotiated the Constitutional Declaration that ushered in the hybrid government. Tensions within and between FFC groups widened during the transition, whether the result of genuine differences, personal animosity, or interference by security sector or other actors in Sudan. This chipped away at trust, splitting some groups, causing some withdrawals from the FFC, and limiting the ability to present actionable views on a way forward. By the time of the coup, continued disagreements and interference from some armed movements and security actors created discernible factions. However divided they may have been, this was no excuse for a coup and saying that it needed to happen to get the transition back on track is disingenuous.

In the post-coup environment, the role of the FFC, its factions, and other civilian groups in proposing a political roadmap and engaging with actors such as the United Nations Interim Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) is contested. The gulf between political groups and the protest movement is wide and there is mistrust—or misunderstanding—on both sides. International engagement with such political groups can help advocate for and possibly facilitate understanding through diplomacy and assistance.

The Juba Peace Agreement

A key goal of the transition was to reach peace agreements with armed movements in Sudan's peripheries. Given the historic U.S. and international role in peace processes in Sudan—and what is now in South Sudan—this theme is particularly relevant. The Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) was brokered by South Sudan and signed by the transitional government with some armed groups and political movements in October 2020. Two main groups from Southern Kordofan and Darfur remained outside the agreement. The negotiations process was convoluted and expanded to include separate deals with areas such as Eastern Sudan. While civilians were initially involved in discussions, security elites took the lead. This created a bond between some JPA signatories and security components of the transition that was solidified by their entry into government in February 2021. The continued presence of some JPA representatives in the post-coup government is testament to this relationship and its complicated power dynamics.

Many observers criticize international involvement in Sudanese and South Sudanese peace processes going back to the 1990s since they produced power-sharing deals that seemed to reward rebellion. Positions were doled out, resources divided, and ineffectual committees formed. Citizens barely benefited. The JPA replicated a similar process that bred similar implementation problems that plagued previous peace deals. Taking a fresh look at peace processes and agreements can find ways to avoid reinforcing zero-sum, militarized politics. While peace agreements and deals between elites are needed, their shape and impact need to account for citizen needs and long-term socio-economic benefits, not just short-term elite gains.

Assumptions about the nature of rebel movements and their relative legitimacy and representativeness also need to be interrogated, with evaluation of the credibility of such groups accounting for their commitments to democracy, especially

when in government. Agreements can provide for detailed, enforceable political deals that do not simply provide a screen for signatories to make untransparent decisions and trade power. Lastly, a comprehensive peace arrangement may be more beneficial than the JPA's peace by pieces approach. That process may be more effective if run by civilians, with security sector involvement on security arrangements.

Economic Issues

The transition inherited an economic crisis based on crushing international debt, decreasing revenues, chronic budget deficits, corruption, and decreased oil revenue after South Sudan's 2011 secession. Citizens coped with rising urban and rural food insecurity amidst government attempts to undertake sweeping economic reforms. Such efforts were also impacted by the rise of COVID-19. At the beginning of the transition Sudan's economy was effectively blocked from the international financial system. The process to reverse this was well underway before the coup due to international engagement, particularly the U.S. Government's removal of Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism after Sudan paid compensation to victims of terrorism. Subsequent arrears clearance with international financial institutions and reaching the Highly Indebted Poor Countries decision point in June 2021 continued forward movement. The coup stalled progress since it halted international financial institution support and other key assistance, and jeopardized debt relief.

A more technical discussion of economic issues is beyond the scope of this testimony. A main lesson is that while economic reforms are critical to a transition, equally important are their political implications. For example, the scope and timing of subsidy removals that can drive popular discontent if mishandled. The international community may have realized the need for a social safety net and economic dividends, but plans were too often divorced from inescapable political linkages. Tied to this is the importance of efforts to address Sudan's gray economy, corruption, and undue influence of the security actors and previous regime on many sectors. Looking at challenges faced by the Empowerment Elimination, Anti-corruption, and Funds Recovery Committee tasked with seizing assets of the previous regime is critical, as is its treatment after the coup, including reversal of some of its decisions.

Sudan may have moved toward reintegration into the international financial and development community, but it was unable to sufficiently bring local political actors into this orbit or show more tangible dividends to citizens. The precarious post-coup economic situation provides impetus for international stakeholders to observe how it impacts protests, political discussions and power dynamics, and responses from the post-coup government. This could create a more nuanced political economy analysis—for example on the controversial gold sector—to help inform U.S. and international policies on Sudan.

Transitional Justice

The need for transitional justice and accountability, and an overhauled judicial sector to advance this, is critical to any transition in Sudan. For those who suffered abuses under the previous regime—and from the 2019 revolution until now—justice is often the most salient issue. They must be involved and support outcomes. The previous transitional government was unable to advance the issue.

International theory varies on issues such as the extent and timing of justice, as well as strategies such as amnesty. Like many things, it is foremost up to the people of Sudan to determine these issues. There are relevant comparative examples from the region, though they often cripple efforts at justice mechanisms during negotiations and implementation of agreements. Though it may sometimes be appropriate to delink negotiations on transitional justice from wider talks, this often results in implementation being watered down or postponed, or formation of toothless committees. Sudanese can discuss concrete options for sequencing and leveraging justice issues and determining the level(s) of accountability.

Political Pathways Forward

There are over 10 civilian groups at both national and local levels advocating positions on the way forward. They range from political parties to community organizations and the families of those killed during protests. They seem to agree on the need for: a fully civilian democratic government; removal of the security sector from politics and the economy; accountability related to the June 2019 Khartoum massacre and those killed since the coup; JPA and peace process reviews; creation of the transitional legislative council; and a unified national army and reformed civilian-led security sector. They disagree on whether to reject all dialogue with security actors. Some are suggesting that security sector involvement in government be limited to a civilian-led security and defense council to advise on security matters.

Some are in favor of engaging with the UNITAMS consultations while others are opposed.

It is remarkable that these groups can prepare positions through consensus-building and dialogue while many are peacefully confronting state-sponsored violence. This violence is unacceptable, and the international community must take measures beyond words to halt it. Continued violence will likely prevent a viable, inclusive political process and solution. However, continued violence and international reactions to this should not put undue pressure on civilians to overly compromise for the sake of a quick, halfhearted peace. Focusing on simultaneously creating a safe space for them to refine positions and encourage political actors to embrace them is needed. Similarly, premature calls for national dialogue that is not inclusive and/or ignores the need for a level playing field are unhelpful. If not carefully planned and executed, a contested dialogue process could reinforce power inequalities and harden positions.

Many political processes begin with a defined process, topics for negotiation, and identifiable stances. But they often lack clarity on what an end state may be. The current case of Sudan appears to be the opposite; civilian groups seem to agree that a fully democratic end state is needed with security forces taking up their proper role and devoid of involvement in non-security arenas. A comprehensive peace is also critical. The U.S. and international community should embrace this end state. However, it is the process to that end state that needs a clear strategy, bolstered by coordinated international engagement. The inclusion of women in such a process is paramount. They have often borne the brunt of repressive regimes. For example, surviving the use of rape as a weapon of war from the beginning of the Darfur conflict until now. Their inclusion in political and peace discussions, and security sector reform and accountability, is critical.

It is important for political processes to be Sudanese-led. However, there are ones that are well-constructed, align with the revolution's vision, and likely to result in a sustainable agreement. And those that are not. Sudanese recognize this and are wary of blanket acceptance sometimes employed by the international community. Additionally, intervention by regional states, some of which may be seen by Sudanese as unhelpful, needs to be accounted for in political solutions. It is tempting to use previous models for political discussions and negotiations. This post-coup situation is a rare opportunity to test new ways and avoid overlaying Sudan's evolving dynamics onto stale frameworks. Many Sudanese see beyond the end of a transition to future events that can strengthen a democratic outcome. This requires medium- and long-term international strategies that extend beyond the horizon of any renewed transition.

The UNITAMS initiative has received much attention because it is the first structured political consultation process. In its public statements UNITAMS was careful to note that it has not embarked on a formal mediation effort but is beginning with consultations to feed into a possible process that could be facilitated by the UN and/or other partners. Any process can be made more inclusive, especially by including women, youth, and other civic actors. But if inclusivity is symbolic or disingenuous, the bitterness it creates among those groups can cripple support for outcomes.

International discussions underway to identify eminent international personalities that can assist with UNITAMS' work are important. Something akin to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Partners Forum may also be helpful. There is precedent, for example during the 2010–12 African Union High-level Implementation Panel talks between Sudan and South Sudan, for broad collaboration between the UN, AU, and international champions. If this is replicated in Sudan, its impact can be magnified if it stretches from UN headquarters in New York where the Security Council's P5 and A3 can be invoked, to regional capitals and AU headquarters. Technical experts in fields such as constitutional design and security issues can be on standby, and secretariat services organized. Genuine partnerships among those with the mandate and stake in the future of the country are required for success. Absent such collaboration, energy and political coherence will be wasted and parties are likely to "forum shop" at the expense of forging a timely, equitable deal.

United States Assistance & Diplomacy

The U.S. Government, in particular the Department of State and USAID, has decades of experience amidst the complexities of Sudan's politics, economy, and humanitarian situation. Never has the U.S. Government had access to so much information to help understand the current situation. This is key to advancing policy objectives and assisting in Sudan's democratic transformation.

After the coup, the U.S. suspended portions of a \$700 million assistance appropriation related to direct government support, along with similar support provided by other U.S.-funded programs. Fortunately, civil society support, democracy,

human rights, and governance (DRG) programs, and conflict mitigation assistance was expanded. It may be tempting to restart assistance at first sign of improvement or if it appears it can fix an emergency, but care should be taken to ensure that a restart is not premature. Having to suspend assistance again, or weather a period where it is clear that the situation has not effectively changed, can dent credibility of the U.S. approach. A scenario for the suspension's lifting is when violence against civilians has ceased and there is tangible, irreversible progress toward a civilian government.

While it may seem counterintuitive, the suspension provides a rare opportunity to return to first principles and assess the aims of assistance. The collapse of the transition and upending of the constitutional order is a shift that requires serious reconsideration. During this time, however, close attention on the nationwide economic, livelihoods, and food security situation is needed to ensure that appropriate help is applied. In most cases, humanitarian crises are best solved through negotiated solutions to political and conflict issues. This can unlock assistance for community resilience and economic growth programs, such as small and medium agricultural enterprises, and supporting Sudanese organizations working on environmental issues.

The U.S. could better align its diplomatic and political efforts with development assistance. There are times when diplomacy can provide tangible support for assistance objectives, particularly for DRG and conflict mitigation ones. However, they can be inadvertently undermined through the course of diplomacy, especially during key political milestones, negotiations, or conflict. An example is the April 2010 Sudan national elections. While the U.S. supported electoral management bodies and citizen-led monitoring to advance elections, some diplomatic messages did not address contested processes and outcomes amidst the focus on moving the Comprehensive Peace Agreement closer to other milestones. An overriding consideration for bridging the gap between diplomacy and assistance is that the latter is unlikely to completely resolve complex problems, but it can help support outcomes and consolidate gains.

All assistance, especially to the DRG sector, is most effective when grounded in a "do no harm" principle and adaptable to situations on the ground. Sudan's citizens can best express ways to achieve this, more so now due to closing space. Proposed assistance should undertake the necessary groundwork with possible beneficiaries to build trust and overcome any misunderstandings. For example, if assistance to RCs is requested, it should be based on careful, transparent discussions to ensure buy-in and that resources are going where RCs think they are most needed. Assistance to RCs could include continued development of strategies for nonviolent action, ensuring that mobilization is sustained while aiming to stop civilian deaths, and support for new political mechanisms arising from RCs and other civic groups. It is possible that some groups will not want U.S. and international assistance for valid reasons. Lastly, it is possible that some groups may benefit more from political and non-monetary support or feel that financial support will not be effective without political support. Coordination between assistance and diplomacy is critical in such cases.

A U.S. all-of-government DRG strategy for Sudan to help restore, support, and consolidate a genuine transition is needed. It could be conceptualized, implemented, and monitored by a joint USAID/Department of State/National Security Council task force with senior-level leadership. It could also link diplomatic and political efforts with assistance programs and be informed by rolling assessments of political economy and conflict situations. Areas for mutually reinforcing international partnerships could be explored. A task force could be staffed with experts in digital communications, independent media, civil society protection, women's political engagement, and political party and legislative development, among others. Many relevant program areas can be found in the 2020 Sudan Democratic Transition, Accountability, and Fiscal Transparency Act. A Sudan DRG strategy could be viewed in the context of the Biden administration's democracy agenda and be a case study for turning democracy promotion ideals into actionable policy placed at the heart of bilateral relations.

Diplomatic and assistance strategies are important, but individuals do the hard work of implementation. Some embassies and assistance missions in Khartoum were not backfilled after some billets were transferred to South Sudan in 2011. While assistance opportunities may have been limited in post-secession Sudan, there has not been adequate staffing up since the 2019 revolution. Additionally, there are good examples of Washington, DC-based U.S. Government surge support for Sudan. For example, the Office of the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan in 2010 had over 20 staff, including some detailed from the Departments of Defense and Treasury, and Schedule B and contractor hires for negotiations support, programming assistance, security

sector advising, public affairs outreach, and other specialties. Retired ambassadors were brought back to focus on political issues and the Darfur conflict.

More personnel could be devoted to messaging and public affairs outreach, both in person in Sudan and on social media. For many protestors and RCs, the idea that the U.S. can on the one hand publicly say they support the people of Sudan in their struggle for democracy, and on the other hand support dialogue with security actors, is not valid. The U.S. can help publicly bridge this gap and explain why it believes these things can happen simultaneously.

It is right for the U.S. and others to diplomatically engage security actors in Sudan, but it should be grounded in a firm view of a truly civilian government end state grounded in comprehensive peace. As the U.S. engages with security actors that are using some tactics reminiscent of the pre-revolution era, it can analyze lessons from its engagement with the NCP regime, particularly on how it did or did not utilize concrete incentives and disincentives.

It is understandable that some call for targeted sanctions because they are a powerful tool to translate statements condemning violence against citizens into action. They must be applied smartly and be part of a clear, detailed strategy grounded in political realities. Sanctions are not a substitute for a strategy. The argument that sanctions may in theory negatively impact prospects for dialogue through hardening positions or stoking violence needs to be groundtruthed. The argument is often made based on assumptions instead of objective analysis. Assumptions that sanctions on lower-level officials will provide necessary warning to senior leaders and change their behavior should also be checked.

CONCLUSION

The 2019 revolution was informed by decades of repression and struggle, and what came after did not arise from a clean slate. Many Sudanese rightly have a long view of history and link their generation's struggles to prior ones. In the British colonial era library at the University of Khartoum there is a small shrine to Ahmed al Qurashi, a 20-year-old student whose killing galvanized popular protests that brought down a military government in October 1964. Today, the photos of many 2019 revolution victims are alongside his. More have probably been added since October 2021.

Complex social and demographic changes got underway due to the relative opening of civic space after the revolution. It will be difficult to definitively close that space without resistance from citizens, as is currently happening on the streets of Sudan. The complexity of Sudan's politics has also increased during this historic time. While contrasting views abound, a plurality of views is normal in deeply divided societies like Sudan, and it is possible to encourage civil debate and consensus. This can lay a strong foundation for a vibrant democracy that Sudanese have struggled to achieve and that the U.S. values in its own society.

The U.S. and international community can, and should, avoid a neutral stance on what has happened in Sudan. There was a military coup and the government's constitutional bond with its citizens was severed. It is not possible to return to the pre-coup dispensation. A new constitutional order is needed. There will be no stability in Sudan until there is a genuine civilian government and the role of the security sector is firmly decided and implemented. That stability must extend to Sudan's peripheries such as Darfur, Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, Eastern Sudan, and the Far North. For now, instability there is tied to national-level politics, exacerbating local issues during a time of economic and humanitarian crisis. The onus is on Sudanese to achieve their democratic goals, but the U.S. and international community have an explicit role to play in the interest of regional and international stability. More importantly, there is a duty to nurture citizen-led, non-violent democratic change at a time when this is in short global supply.

The views expressed in this testimony are those of the author and not the United States Institute of Peace.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both for your testimony. Let me start off.

Dr. Ero, can Sudan's transition be salvaged? What do we need, from your perspective, to put things back on track?

Dr. ERO. Thank you very much, Senator Menendez.

Yes, it can be salvaged, and the people of Sudan themselves have articulated clearly the steps that need to be taken to ensure that.

I think key will be keeping your consistent line that you started to articulate here today about supporting the efforts to getting

Sudan back on track, including supporting the transition, making sure that the military do pull back from their—from their entrenched position of derailing the process, making sure that they step back from the current course that they are taking.

The Sudanese military power has held power in the past, as you know, for 52 of Sudan's 65 years of independence. It is not surprising that they have taken a very hard-line entrenched position as well.

Working with the Sudanese people, making sure you have a very firm line also on dealing with the consequences and making it clear to the military that there are consequences for their own intervention into the civil political life has to be a very firm line.

Getting coordinated a response from your international allies, the African Union, particularly, the region, making sure there is a clear understanding of what stability means for the country, making it very clear to everybody that there is no place in Sudan for military rule in the country, and making sure also that the region is aligned in understanding that, I think, is going to be key to getting Sudan back on track and getting the transition back towards the path that was started in 2019 and then getting it towards a transition.

We do need coordinated and concerted action both within the United States, between the United States and its international actors, and particularly in the region to get the country back on track.

The CHAIRMAN. In that coordination that you refer to, what steps would you like the U.S. and like-minded countries to take to increase pressure on the Sudanese military leader to yield power to a civilian government?

Dr. ERO. I think some of your opening statements, Senator Menendez, started to articulate that. I think you also began to articulate that there will be clear consequences for the security forces as well.

I think that is an important message. The military seeks legitimacy. It seeks engagement with international actors. It also recognizes that it cannot govern without the support of civilians as well.

That already gives you an entry point as well, and I think then being consistent in terms of the pressure that is to be applied to the country. There is a very narrow window now to begin to ensure that the military understands the nature of the pressure that can be applied.

For example, the step that you have taken already at the level of the United States has triggered already an understanding that the military has heavily miscalculated in its own actions as well.

I think the weak link right now is between the international actors and the wider regional community, and you have already pointed out in your previous session that a lot of work has been taken to work with the Gulf countries and Egypt, and making sure that they stay in the room and be coordinated in their steps, I think, is going to be the key to getting Sudan stabilized.

The CHAIRMAN. There will be no legitimacy for the military unless they move towards—back towards a transition to a civilian government and there will be no assistance, from my perspective,

at least not in any way that would be helpful to them unless we have a change.

Mr. Tucker, what type of programmatic activities would be the most impactful when it comes to supporting the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people at this time?

Mr. TUCKER. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman.

I think we need to take a quick look that assistance to civil society, to political parties, legislative development—the suite of things that we all know well that is encompassed by democracy, human rights, and governance support—is desperately needed.

I want to underline here that I have seen in my career, both at the State Department and USAID, that sometimes support to civil society and other critical governance actors is not necessarily supported in real time substantively by our diplomacy and international diplomacy.

What I mean by that is at times when diplomatic and political solutions might not be evident or are very difficult, it is easy to say we should do assistance to civil society, to civilian actors.

I, certainly, do not want to downplay support to those critical actors. They are critical to the way forward.

I think we need the development of a detailed strategy on how diplomacy and assistance can better work together on these things.

I have to say here that that requires an enormous amount of technical expertise and staff across the board at State and USAID, and that is possible, but it is difficult, both in Khartoum and here in Washington, DC.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you, in this regard what benchmarks then should we expect to be met before the U.S. resumes assistance? Why are those benchmarks important?

Mr. TUCKER. They are important, frankly, because they are very difficult to determine. It is easy to say we need progress toward a civilian-led government.

I think that some people in the international community got hung up on the idea of a civilian-led government. I think that the government that happened during the transition was actually led by the military.

I think what people on the streets and resistance committees are looking for is genuine, full, unimpeded executive power held by the prime minister and the cabinet by civilians. So, perhaps, that assistance should start before you get that fully civilian government.

I think there needs to be really enforceable directives and progress toward that fully civilian government end state that are enforceable and benchmarks set by civilians themselves and that are agreed to by what now is a very broad group of civilian actors.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Ero, when it comes to returning Sudan to a path that would lead to democracy, who are the potential spoilers, including foreign countries?

Dr. ERO. Senator, every spoiler is also part of the solution is the way I would like to characterize it that way and, of course, at the top of the podium is the military.

Whether we like it or not, we have to find a way in which to engage with the military, but it should not be engagement that sets aside—as you rightly pointed out, that sets aside the demands that

the civilians have articulated for a number of years as well. The military and the civilian leadership as well, is crucial to that.

I do not want to use the terminology spoiler. As I said, every spoiler is crucial to getting us to where we need to be. The other—there are other important players, armed groups as well, that are crucial to knitting back a very complex and complicated country as well.

There are a number of regional countries that have tacitly sort of given a nod to the coup who articulate or claim to express their desire to see stability in Sudan, and we have got to make sure that we all have a clear understanding of what stability for Sudan means today and there is only one stability for Sudan, which is to get it back on that transitional roadmap, to get it back to that inspirational revolution that we started to see back in 2019 and to make sure that that path towards democratization that was embedded in the peace agreement in 2019 is articulated as well.

Again, Senator, I understand the way in which you want to characterize it, but there are—those who we consider spoilers are also crucial to getting us back or to getting Sudan back on the right track as well.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate your diplomatic response to that. The reality is, is that we would hope spoilers would be empowerers and not spoilers, and they would be part of the solution.

Some of them have played the role of spoiler already to this point. We have to think about—at some point, I am into naming and shaming in the hopes that we will get people to recategorize and rethink their positions as to what is in their best interests, but I understand your view that a spoiler can be actually a facilitator. It all depends which road they decide to take.

Finally, let me ask you both: what can we, the United States and the international community, do to ensure that the U.N.-mediated talks are inclusive, especially of historically marginalized communities, and not limited primarily to elites?

Mr. Tucker.

Mr. TUCKER. Yes, thank you. That is an excellent question.

I think, first, I would say in speaking to many people on the ground in Khartoum in the past week that are involved in some of the discussions among resistance committees, civilian groups and political groups on political consensus and political positions, everyone has said that the nature of these groups are important.

Sometimes they are horizontal and diffuse, and there needs to be time for them to develop their positions and, perhaps, equally importantly, to engage with political parties on how they can support these positions and how they can bring them forward in inevitable negotiations in which, perhaps, political individuals will take the lead.

As I mentioned in my testimony, there is urgency. There definitely is, but they cannot be rushed to submit positions that, perhaps, fracture them and their loose coalitions. I have, frankly, seen that happen before in South Sudan and in Sudan, and that is unfortunate.

I think there is precedent for strong, robust international engagement on these issues. In my experience with the African Union and the U.N. in Sudan and South Sudan, it is best when there are links

between U.N. operations and the Security Council, the P5 and the A3 in New York, connected directly to the region, to AU headquarters and IGAD, so you can invoke that high-level senior diplomatic engagement that has to be connected to what the SRSG is doing on the ground in Khartoum.

So what I am getting at here is it cannot just be one individual with technical support in the capital. They need to be able to invoke that higher authority. When and as needed discussions underway on international eminent personalities are important, but we desperately need more direct engagement and signaling from the U.N. in New York and African Union headquarters that, first and foremost, is coordinated and not at cross purposes with what civilians are looking at right now.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Ero, any thoughts on this?

Dr. ERO. Yes. I completely agree with what my colleague at USIP has said and I think it is worth acknowledging in front of your committee that the initiative by the United Nations has not been without problems as well.

It has come under fairly substantial criticisms from some in the protest movements who feel, at one level, that that process has been rushed. They also feel that there was not a sufficiently consultative approach taken towards talks as well.

Some do feel that the international—Sudan's international partners and including the U.S., I have to add, rushed to embrace the U.N.-led talks without strongly demanding that they should be better coordinated with all of Sudan's actors to give it the best chance of success.

I think it is worth adding here that the resistance committees—Sudanese resistance committees are currently coordinating their own efforts to come up with an agreed position on a way forward for the country. It is a laudable effort and it will ultimately form a key part of any future talks that we want to see in the country.

I would say that in the meantime the U.N. should continue its attempt to bring various parties to the table, but it should pay special attention to two conditions that we believe, at the International Crisis Group, are important.

First, that those talks should be Sudanese led and that they should be, as I said in my oral statement, maximally inclusive, and that especially they must include prominent voices from Sudanese neighborhood resistance committees. This is what we see as vital if those talks are going to succeed.

The CHAIRMAN. Very well. Thank you both for your insights. It has been very instructive and helpful, and we look forward to continuing to engage with both of you as we move forward.

Seeing no other member before the committee seeking recognition, this record will stay open until the close of business tomorrow.

With the thanks of the committee, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:24 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA STATEMENT, DATED JANUARY 24, 2022

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



January 24, 2022

Sen. Robert Menendez
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Sen. James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Re: Amnesty International USA statement for the record for Feb. 1 Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing on "Sudan's Imperiled Transition"

Dear Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee;

On behalf of Amnesty International USA, we hereby submit this statement for the record to address the worsening human right violations following the Oct. 25 military coup in Sudan.

In this statement, Amnesty International USA details our research on human rights violations following the crisis in Sudan, especially pertaining to the use of lethal force by security forces during peaceful demonstrations, unlawful detentions, and the interruptions of telecommunications.

The United States and the international community must increase pressure on the Sudanese military and its external allies who are providing critical support to the security forces to respect and protect human rights. This means action here in Washington and at the UN Security Council and Human Rights Council and ensuring that efforts to protect the people of Sudan are coordinated with the African Union as well. A full list of our recommendations are at the end of this statement.

Sudan's transition towards democracy began in 2019 when former President Omar al-Bashir was ousted from office amidst pro-democracy protests. In response, relevant political parties reached a power sharing agreement between civil society and the Sudanese military which resulted in a transitional civilian administration. Led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, this government would usher in a new constitution and lead the country to elections in 2023. However, these efforts were cut short when Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burham staged

the October 2021 coup. This led to the detention of Prime Minister Hamdok, and the arrest of numerous members of the transitional administration, along with the suspension of the civilian transitional government.

Leading up to Oct. 25, 2021, protests had broken out across Sudan suggesting growing concerns about Sudan's stability of the country. Lt. Gen. al-Burhan claimed that he was "dissolving the transitional government because the divisions within it were so intense that it risked a possible civil war". This justification was used to also justify the interruption of telecommunication networks throughout the country.

Use of lethal force by security forces:

Shortly following the initial coup in 2021, with the immediate shut down of the internet, the military was able to limit the public's knowledge of the scope of the resistance and the security forces response to the coup. However, this did not inhibit the Sudanese people from peacefully demonstrating for democracy with a civilian-led government. Demonstrations were not limited to the capital city, as civil society groups organized protests in Port Sudan in the east, Atbara in the north, Wad Madani in the south and the twin city of Omdurman where they "adhered to peacefulness, [their] strongest weapon".

The protesters' peaceful approach was met with lethal force by the Sudanese security forces. Reports from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Sudanese civil society groups reveal the use of "teargas and live ammunition from machine guns to disperse numerous demonstrations". Immediately following the October 2021 protests, the response from the security forces resulted in the death of six protestors and 140 civilians being wounded, as reported by Amnesty International.

This use of lethal force continued a month after the coup and Amnesty International reports documented the killing of civilians by gun fire and the use of sniper fire. Depose Muchena, Amnesty International's Director for East and Southern Africa, condemned these actions, noting that "killings demonstrate that there is a deliberate and targeted plan for the authorities to suppress the protests at all costs".

From witness statements in Sudan, Reuters reported "in the last few demonstrations there has been a lot of violence: tear gas, stun grenades, gunfire, people being run over, and women being targeted". The violence against women was echoed by a UN report on the rise of "serious sexual violence and the use of live ammunition against protesters". UN spokesperson

Liz Throssell was quoted saying "[security forces are alleged to have raped or gang raped 13 women and girls](#)," and there are growing allegations of sexual violence against women fleeing the area surrounding the presidential palace.

Unlawful detentions:

The most prominent example of political detainees was former Prime Minister Hamdok immediately following the October coup. While PM Hamdok was released, and eventually resigned from office, there are a number of civilians who are still detained.

Following the coup, security agents detained at least 30 civilian political leaders, including six cabinet members, [as stated by an Amnesty International report](#). These details align with research done by the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies ("ACJPS"), a Sudanese human rights group. ACJPS reports that these civilians were taken to undisclosed locations without access to family or legal counsel, conditions that are synonymous with enforced disappearance.

Due to the internet and telecommunications [being repeatedly disrupted](#), families are unable to gain contact with individuals who were detained or the wider Sudanese community. This disruption also infringes on civilians' ability to express their political views, restricts reporting on human rights violations, such as these unlawful detentions. [Security forces are also reported to have censored broadcasters from reporting as media offices were raided, staff were assaulted, and recording equipment was confiscated.](#)

[Reports from the Committee to Protect Journalists \("CPJ"\) have documented the rise in threats to Sudanese people's freedom of expression.](#) CPJ has documented the arrest of journalists, and pro-military protests assaulting local reporters.

Policy Recommendations for the US Government:

It is important to note that this statement is not an exhaustive report on the human rights violations currently being committed in Sudan, and we fear that the situation is worse than what we have been able to document and confirm. Amnesty International USA calls on Congress and the US Government to:

- Call on the Sudanese government to end the continued use of lethal force by the security forces during peaceful demonstrations

- Urge the Human Rights Council to establish an independent and impartial investigation into human abuses since the coup took place so as to ensure accountability for the unlawful killings of civilians and other serious human rights violations
- Pass legislation calling for an end to the Sudanese government's crackdown on protesters, free speech, and the press; along with independent Sudanese investigation into the myriad violations by security forces.

As always, for any questions, concerns or clarification please feel free to reach out to Makeda Fikremariam at mfikremariam@aiusa.org or (703)624-9306 at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Joanne Lin
National Director
Advocacy and Government Relations
Amnesty International USA

Almami Cyllah Fellow
Sub-Saharan Africa
Amnesty International USA

Makeda Fikremariam

RESPONSES OF ISOBEL COLEMAN TO QUESTIONS
 SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. It is critically important that we not lose sight of the continued violence and displacement in Darfur, where people's voices have been marginalized for far too long. It is not clear to me that those who purport to represent the people of Darfur in Khartoum have any interest in accurately reflecting the interests of those who are still suffering violence and displacement on the ground. How is USAID working to address needs in Darfur in the wake of the coup? How can the USG ensure that grassroots voices in Darfur are represented in political negotiations?

Answer. USAID's humanitarian assistance has continued since October 25 for people in need in Sudan, including in Darfur. The United States is the single largest humanitarian donor in Sudan, and USAID provided more than \$382 million in Fiscal Year 2021 alone and nearly \$45 million to date in Fiscal Year 2022. The United States is committed to supporting the Sudanese people as they confront ongoing challenges related to insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic, and natural disasters.

In Darfur, USAID works with partners to provide multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance, including agriculture, food, health, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. For example, in December, a USAID non-governmental organization (NGO) partner provided health consultations to more than 35,000 people, including approximately 10,000 children aged 5 years and younger. The NGO also supported the vaccination of nearly 3,300 children against diseases such as measles, meningitis, polio, and tuberculosis. North Darfur, West Darfur and other areas of Sudan are facing acute food insecurity due to above-average food prices and reduced purchasing power—driven by conflict, displacement, and economic disruptions related to political instability. In response, USAID is providing life-saving food assistance to people in need through NGO and United Nations (UN) partners, primarily through cash transfers for food and cereals, pulses including split peas and lentils, and vegetable oil sourced locally, regionally, and from the United States.

USAID humanitarian assistance in Sudan also supports activities that seek to address gender-based violence (GBV) and address the negative consequences of conflict on women and children. This includes GBV response services in Darfur, child protection networks, and psychosocial services for survivors of domestic violence, child marriage, and female genital mutilation.

USAID, in coordination with the Department of State, is providing complementary support to the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) in order to incorporate grassroots voices in political discussions—for those in Darfur and other regions outside Khartoum as well. Bringing together voices from across the country is essential not only to find a way out of the current political impasse, but also to enhance participation and accountability more broadly. USAID is supporting grassroots organizations to engage in consultations with UNITAMS and other platforms that focus on consensus building.

RESPONSES OF MARY CATHERINE PHEE TO QUESTIONS
 SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. What specific legal authorities are currently in place that could be used to impose sanctions, including personal targeted sanctions on Sudan in the wake of the coup?

Answer. UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005) established a sanctions regime that includes a territorial arms embargo on Darfur and prescribes an asset freeze and travel ban for those who are designated for impeding the peace process or otherwise constituting a threat to stability in Darfur and the region. President Bush in 2006 authorized domestic sanctions in connection with the conflict in Darfur, including for those undermining peace and security in Darfur. E.O. 13818 (Global Magnitsky) authorizes sanctions in connection with serious human rights abuse or corruption. While not specific to Sudan, it could be used on Sudanese actors.

Question. On January 24, you tweeted that military actors responsible for violence against protestors would face consequences. What "consequences" were you referring to in your tweet and what will trigger them?

Answer. The consequences I referred to in my tweet match those I detailed in my official testimony for this hearing. After the military overthrew the government on October 25, we moved swiftly to pause much of our \$700m in assistance and rallied our international partners to pause billions in debt relief and assistance. Losing access to that assistance and debt relief has dealt a major blow to the military govern-

ment's budget and demonstrated that they cannot receive international aid while simultaneously undermining Sudan's stability. While we are redirecting our assistance to best support the Sudanese people, we will not allow it to directly or indirectly benefit the military government until they restore civilian rule and cease violations of human rights. We are now considering the full range of traditional and non-traditional tools at our disposal to impose costs on military actors who commit acts of violence against demonstrators and undermine the democratic transition. This includes exploring new authorities specific to Sudan's democratic transition. We will assess how and when to apply those consequences based on available evidence and the evolving situation on the ground in Sudan.

Question. How is the State Department working to address needs in Darfur in the wake of the coup? How can the USG ensure that grassroots voices in Darfur are represented in political negotiations?

Answer. It's clear that instability in Khartoum is benefiting armed opportunists in Darfur, resulting in increased intercommunal violence in the region over the last year. We are exploring how to expand our ongoing support, including from the \$700 million emergency appropriation designated for Sudan, to further support peace in Darfur. We are supporting the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan's (UNITAMS) consultations with Sudanese actors, which include many Darfuri groups, including internally displaced persons and other Darfuri stakeholders, and Juba Peace Agreement signatories, by using our offices to urge our Darfuri contacts to engage meaningfully with UNITAMS and other Sudanese political and civil society actors. The U.S. Government is also supporting and trying to expand UN and NGO efforts to deploy more observers to Darfur to deter violence and human rights abuses.

Question. What are we doing with regards to putting in place mechanisms that protect civilians in Darfur?

Answer. Because delays in implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement have had a negative effect on the security situation in Darfur, I have urged General Burhan, General Hemedti, armed opposition leaders, and others not to neglect this process. We are encouraged by UNITAMS' work with the permanent ceasefire committee and urge the JPA signatories to expedite implementation of other security arrangement provisions, in particular the establishment of the Darfur Security Forces mandated to protect civilians. Ultimately, the best protection for civilians in Darfur is a democratic Sudanese Government that is inclusive, responsive to the needs of its people, and protective of their human rights. To that end, our support of the UNITAMS facilitation of a Sudanese led political agreement will be most impactful in ensuring long term protection for civilians in Darfur.

RESPONSES OF ISOBEL COLEMAN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JIM RISCH

Question. Following the October 25 coup, what action did USAID take to pause and/or redirect U.S. assistance to Sudan?

Answer. Following the October 25, 2021, military takeover, USAID immediately paused all non-humanitarian assistance to the Government of Sudan and all activities funded by the FY 2021 Title IX Economic Support Fund (ESF) appropriation, which included USAID's Office of Transition Initiative (OTI) work with the transitional government. While assistance to the Government of Sudan remains paused, programs that help the people of Sudan and their democratic aspirations, including ongoing activities with civil society and independent media, monitoring and documenting human rights abuses, peacebuilding activities in conflict-affected areas, and health programs, resumed following a short review. OTI has refocused its efforts on working with civil society and on activities that bolster independent media. USAID will look for clear progress towards resuming a transition to a more democratic, civilian-led government before re-engaging with the Government of Sudan.

Question. What, if any, action should Congress take to augment or terminate assistance previously appropriated for Sudan, including the \$700 million in Economic Support Funds appropriated in the FY21 omnibus spending bill?

Answer. USAID is currently engaging in an interagency process to revise the spend plan for the \$700 million in FY 2021 Title IX Economic Support Funds in light of the military takeover on October 25, 2021. We are working with our colleagues at the Department of State and National Security Council to put together a proposed spend plan that is responsive to the needs of the Sudanese people, in

line with absorptive capacity and does not reward the military regime. We look forward to consulting with the Committee on the proposed plan shortly.

Question. Does the USAID Mission in Khartoum have sufficient capacity, levels of staffing, and variety of implementers to be able to obligate fully the levels of assistance appropriated by Congress to support Sudan's transition?

Answer. The USAID Mission constantly reviews its staffing pattern with the Bureau for Africa to provide adequate coverage and United States Direct Hire (USDH) oversight. These reviews have led USAID to identify the need for additional staff, and three USDH positions were added in Sudan in FY 2021. Two USDH positions are currently in recruitment, and three additional USDH positions will be requested in a forthcoming Congressional Notification. The Mission is able to use contractors and temporary duty support for immediate needs while longer term staffing needs are fulfilled.

USAID is currently consulting with interagency partners on a revised plan for the funding appropriated by Congress to support Sudan's transition. We look forward to engaging this committee on future planning.

USAID works closely with the interagency in Sudan to ensure any work conducted by different U.S. Government agencies with the same implementing partner is complementary and not duplicative.

Question. Does USAID have a strategy for democracy, rights, and governance (DRG) programming for Sudan to help restore, support and consolidate the country's transition?

Answer. Yes. USAID has several programs that focus on developing a rights-based, participatory approach and an enabling environment where democracy, human rights, and governance can flourish and meet the aspirations of Sudanese citizens. As the transition has evolved, our programs have adapted to meet new realities on the ground. Our strategy includes expansion of existing democracy, rights, and governance (DRG) programming as well as the development of new, timely programs that will work holistically toward the restoration, consolidation, and—most importantly—success of Sudan's transition.

Core to our strategy is bolstering the pro-democracy movement, with a special focus on supporting youth and women as active participants and leaders in their country's future, promoting access to information, and engaging leaders who embody and actively promote democratic values. Additionally, we aim to build the capacity and resilience of institutions that are critical for democracy to be successful, such as a diverse civil society, independent media, and inclusive political parties. Equally as important to our strategy and as part of a broader effort to advance peace and reconciliation, we are working to strengthen accountability for human rights abuses through monitoring, documentation, and advocacy. We are engaging with diverse local organizations, which are often nascent and located outside of Khartoum, to build a strong local oversight capacity. This includes monitoring and observing the transition process and relevant political processes so that local, trusted organizations can contribute to, report on, and analyze the transition's progress and alert the Sudanese public to areas that need additional oversight or advocacy for reform. As part of these programs, civil society will monitor conflict in their communities and work on local solutions to mitigate violence. A diversity of citizen voices will continue to be essential to the success of the transition and will need to be incorporated into every aspect of our DRG strategy.

RESPONSES OF MARY CATHERINE PHEE TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JIM RISCH

Question. Considering lessons learned from the start of Sudan's transition to the October 25 coup, how will the United States deal with issues of accountability and justice, particularly for prominent members of the military junta currently running Sudan?

Answer. Justice and accountability for human rights abuses and related crimes, past and ongoing, are key to a stable and lasting peace in Sudan and will be an important component of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) process. We intend to provide assistance to support and promote accountability and transitional justice efforts as determined by the Sudanese people and consistent with Sudan's international and domestic legal obligations and commitments, including with respect to the International Criminal Court.

Question. Should individuals responsible for genocide in Darfur, killing protesters, and the overthrow of a civilian-led transitional government continue to be treated as legitimate partners moving forward?

Answer. As I noted in my testimony, Sudan's military leaders broke their commitment to "partnership" when they overthrew the civilian-led transitional government and violated the Constitutional Declaration last October. Sudan's security forces now hold the political and economic levers of power, but it is clear the Sudanese people consider the current arrangement to be unacceptable and are committed to establishing a democracy. While no longer a partner in the transition to democracy, the military is a participant in the process, but they must not dictate its terms or its outcome.

Question. If yes to question 2, what considerations must be taken as to the appropriate balance between the need for justice and accountability, and the interest of returning Sudan to peaceful civilian leadership?

Answer. There cannot be a stable and lasting peace in Sudan if the root causes of violence are not addressed, including longstanding impunity for serious abuses. The UNITAMS process offers an opportunity for the Sudanese to discuss how to seek accountability for the crimes of the past and lay the groundwork for a future where the rights of all persons in Sudan are respected. We are prepared to support future civilian leadership in efforts aimed at accountability and transitional justice.

Question. If no to question 2, how will the U.S. manage to elevate legitimate representatives of the Sudanese people?

Answer. It is not up to us to elevate or choose representatives for Sudan. We have made clear to all of our interlocutors that the United States supports the desire of the Sudanese people for a civilian-led government and democratic elections in Sudan. Through our current programs, efforts to support UNITAMS, and in planning future assistance, we have focused on providing funding, training, and support to civil society organizations and other stakeholders to lift the voices of the Sudanese people in order to rebalance power in their favor.

Question. How will the United States participate in future conversations about debt relief for Sudan?

Answer. We, and our partners in the Paris Club and Friends of Sudan, have made clear to the military that their actions have imperiled debt relief in Sudan, which is currently paused due to the overthrow of the government by the military on October 25. We will continue to reassess the situation as it develops to determine if and when we might be in a position to proceed with concluding a bilateral debt agreement.

Question. In the case that a civilian-led transition and discussions with the international financial institutions get back on track, what minimum benchmarks will need to be met for the United States to rejoin discussion about bilateral and multilateral debt relief for Sudan?

Answer. The resumption of broader assistance depends on Sudan meeting democratic transition benchmarks, including establishing a civilian cabinet that is credible in the eyes of the Sudanese people; lifting the state of emergency; ending security force violence against protestors; making progress toward establishing legislative and judicial institutions, electoral infrastructure, and transitional justice mechanisms; and implementing security sector reforms.

Question. Will a complete hand over of power to civilian authorities be a requirement for the U.S. to rejoin discussion about bilateral and multilateral debt relief for Sudan?

Answer. Civilian leadership is the most basic prerequisite for renewed U.S. support for debt relief. Sudan made commitments to economic reform prior to the military takeover. Every day that passes with military control further damages Sudan's economy. We will look to civilian leadership meeting the aforementioned benchmarks before we will consider U.S. support for proceeding with debt relief.

Question. For the United States, what does the meaningful participation of women in political dialogue and transition processes look like?

Answer. Women have risked their lives to realize the dream of a democratic Sudan. Without the leadership and bravery of Sudanese women, the Sudanese revolution would likely not have enjoyed success. Women have been at the forefront of democratization efforts in Sudan and have provided a significant portion of the movement's leadership. We are committed to supporting UNITAMS in ensuring the meaningful participation of women in the political process and transition. To date,

UNITAMS has met with an estimated 75 different women's groups, as well as female delegates representing civil society groups and political parties. Women's participation in these consultations means that women can voice their concerns, participate as equals, and maintain their important role in leading the transition to democracy. Gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence and sexual violence used as a means of repressing protestors, is unacceptable, and perpetrators must be held accountable.

Question. How will the United States work with the international community and Sudanese partners to ensure that women are not simply at the table, but are critical voices leading discussions on a way forward for Sudan that reflects the will of the Sudanese people?

Answer. We have ongoing programming that focuses on empowering and enabling women to take a leading and meaningful role in the political process in Sudan. We will continue to mainstream women's leadership in future programming, and we prioritize the engagement of women leaders and groups in our diplomatic engagement. We have also encouraged engagement and outreach by UNITAMS with women leaders and groups.

Question. Looking forward, and considering lessons learned from the last 10 years, how will the United States engage on the Abyei issue?

Answer. We will continue to support the important mission of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei and use our offices to encourage the governments of South Sudan and Sudan to engage in good faith to resolve the status of Abyei. While Sudan faces many challenges, we will continue to work with relevant parties to ensure Abyei remains an area of focus for both governments. Abyei's disputed status has had a negative effect on the people residing and transiting the area. We will also endeavor to ensure that the United Nations has the appropriate support, financing, and staffing to be able to effectively conduct its mission in Abyei.

Question. How will various potential outcomes of the situation in Khartoum affect future efforts related to Abyei?

Answer. For progress to be made regarding Abyei, Sudan needs an involved civilian government, willing to meaningfully engage with those residing in—or who regularly transit—Abyei. Other critical stakeholders include the government of South Sudan and the UN Interim Security Force, who must participate in negotiations to resolve pressing issues related to security as well as the ultimate status of Abyei.

Question. How is the U.S. Government's public affairs and media outreach strategy adapting to the current situation in Sudan?

Answer. Our public diplomacy and media outreach strategy seeks to speak to the people on their terms—and to listen. That includes press releases, tweets, Facebook posts, public engagements, and interviews with domestic and international media.

Question. How does the State Department plan to balance its public and private messaging and the diversity of audiences both inside and outside of Sudan?

Answer. We strive to have a consistent message both publicly and privately. That message has been for our unwavering support for the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people; civilian-led government and democratic elections in Sudan; an end to the violence against, and detentions of, protesters; and lifting the state of emergency. We are working to ensure the diverse audiences paying attention to Sudan have an accurate view of U.S. policy and engagements.

Question. Does the State Department have a strategy for democracy, rights, and governance (DRG) programming for Sudan to help restore, support and consolidate the country's transition?

Answer. Our current strategy for DRG programming consists of providing financial support and training for civil society groups in Sudan with a focus on empowerment for women and youth groups. Looking ahead, we are exploring how to best target assistance that both complements UNITAMS' facilitation efforts and lays the groundwork for a more inclusive social contract in a democratic Sudan.

Question. Can you provide us with the Department's plans regarding the Paul Rusesabagina case and engagement with the Rwandan Government given that efforts toward quiet diplomacy do not seem to be working?

Answer. The Department is engaging the Government of Rwanda with senior officials in Kigali, and senior officials of the Department raise Mr. Rusesabagina's case at every appropriate opportunity. We are constantly re-assessing our strategy and evaluating all possible options to seek Mr. Rusesabagina's release.

Question. Will, and if so when, the United States shift its approach to a more public and confrontational approach toward the President Kagame and his government on the Paul Rusesabagina case?

Answer. We have not yet determined whether or when we will shift away from the current strategy. We are constantly re-assessing our strategy and evaluating all possible options to seek Mr. Rusesabagina's release.

Question. Please provide an update on staffing at Embassy Khartoum.

Answer. CDA, a.i. Brian Shukan departed post on January 24. John Godfrey was nominated as the next Ambassador to Sudan on January 26. Ambassador Lucy Tamlyn arrived on February 3 from her previous posting in Bangui, to serve as CDA, a.i. until another CDA, a.i. is appointed or an ambassador arrives. The 03-Public Diplomacy Officer and the 02-Medical Provider positions are vacant, and no offers for those positions were accepted. Several positions have been assigned, but will be vacant until the officers arrive later in 2022 and in the first half of 2023, including a Consular position, a Public Diplomacy position, a Political/Economic position, and an Assistant Regional Security Officer Investigator position. All other positions are encumbered.

Question. Does the State Department have plans to add staff to Embassy Khartoum over the next year?

Answer. Embassy Khartoum, in partnership with AF/EX and the Desk, were reviewing staffing needs in anticipation of increased host nation engagement after Sudan's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism was rescinded and continued its transition to democracy. The October 25 actions have delayed that planning while Post and Washington assess what future engagement may be and the resources required to support that engagement. The Department is exploring sending additional staff to embassy Khartoum to support UNITAMS' facilitation effort.

Question. What particular challenges does the State Department face regarding staffing at Embassy Khartoum?

Answer. Embassy Khartoum remains a partially-accompanied post with only those family members 18 and over allowed. With most staff serving tours separated from their families and with few international flight options, limited paved roads outside the capital, and the inability to travel outside Khartoum State without host government permission, assignments to Khartoum are very isolating. Despite offering incentives such as 20 percent hardship, 25 percent danger pay, and four R&Rs in a 2-year tour, it is difficult to fully staff the Embassy. Post is actively looking for ways to improve the quality of life of staff and bidding prospects. For instance, changes to Post's security posture since November 2020 have allowed employees to ship or purchase personally owned vehicles.

Question. Would you characterize the staffing challenges at Embassy Khartoum as similar to those experienced across the Africa Bureau?

Answer. Many staffing challenges are similar to those experienced across the Africa Bureau. Embassy Khartoum has the added challenge of being a partially-accompanied post for those 18 and older due to security considerations.

RESPONSES OF DR. COMFORT ERO TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JIM RISCH

Question. In your view, is the United States adequately engaging foreign partners who are both helpful and unhelpful to Sudan's transition to civilian rule?

Answer. The United States enjoys ties with key actors in the Horn of Africa and among the Gulf states that have a stake in Sudan's stability. Once in office, the new U.S. ambassador to Sudan should work in concert with the U.S. Horn envoy to continue to press Gulf powers and Egypt to offer their support for a transition to democratic rule, which represents the best chance for long-run stability in Sudan.

Question. What could the United States do differently to improve our engagement with foreign partners regarding Sudan's transition to civilian rule?

Answer. The United States should press for greater coordination among the multiple actors that have a stake in what happens next in Sudan. The U.S. Horn envoy is well positioned to marshal key players—including the UN SRSG, the African Union envoy, the EU Horn envoy, Gulf powers and others—to come up with a shared position on the best way to stimulate dialogue—and support Sudanese-led efforts to re-rail the transition.

Question. Are there relevant lessons for the current situation from U.S. engagement with the previous regime of Omar al-Bashir, given that the current military government appears to be emulating some of its tactics?

Answer. It's worth noting that elements of the security forces and associated elites benefited from Sudan's rigged economy even in the face of the broad sanctions that were applied for decades. Any new sanctions regime should therefore ideally be targeted at individuals that are standing in the way of a successful transition. These restrictions should be coordinated among the AU, the U.S., the EU and, critically, Gulf countries where many Sudanese elites store their funds. These individually targeted sanctions including travel bans and asset freezes are more likely to be effective than broader sanctions that exert pain on ordinary civilians.

RESPONSES OF JOSEPH TUCKER TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JIM RISCH

Question. In your opinion, what would be the most constructive use of the substantial levels of available U.S. assistance to Sudan under current conditions?

Answer. Increased support to civil society organizations and civilian and political stakeholders and processes as noted by both witnesses on the U.S. Government panel is an important use of funding under current conditions. Support to such citizen actors in Sudan could include programs both in Khartoum and locations outside that focus on increasing political participation and citizen monitoring of and involvement in political processes. These processes include events such as creation of the transitional legislative council, monitoring of key events before and during any renewed transition, and, when appropriate, participation in electoral events. Additionally, during the pre-October 2021 period, training, and capacity building to bolster effective civilian participation in government was underway. While it is unlikely that such assistance can be provided to civilians in the current iteration of government, thoughts can be given to how to train civilians during this volatile period that could be part of a renewed transition if and when direct assistance is resumed. Civilians working in economic, service delivery, banking, financial, taxation, agricultural, legislative, and justice sectors of government will be especially critical to a renewed transition and beyond.

Past assistance efforts in Sudan (and South Sudan) suggest that program flexibility and responsiveness is key in scenarios where there is a positive political trajectory and progress toward key goals, but also one where the opposite happens, and space continues to close as is currently happening. The 2005–11 Comprehensive Peace Agreement period saw much U.S. assistance going to this type of work, but the lack of a pivot within Sudan after South Sudan's secession and increasingly closed space meant that most gains were lost. Increased programming in this sector should ensure that there are adequate expert technical staff at both headquarters and in the field to ensure appropriate and impactful decisions. Local Sudanese staff at the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum and USAID/Sudan mission should be central to such efforts given their long-term work on such issues that extends well beyond the average tour length of foreign service officers. Staff to focus on increased international donor coordination across this sector should also be available. Equally important is that support to civil society and frontline citizen stakeholders be adequately bolstered by coordinated U.S. diplomacy and political engagement as noted in my written testimony.

The continued deterioration of Sudan's economy is a major threat to the country's stability and is unlikely to reverse in the short-term. Planning across assistance sectors—and collaboration between humanitarian and development strategies—to bolster programs that may directly or indirectly increase the economic stability of citizens without direct support to the government is urgently needed. The participation of many security sector actors in Sudan's economy makes this tricky since assistance should not benefit such actors, and many are involved in Sudan's commodity sector, including wheat, fuel, and other trades. To offset this, Sudanese and expatriate experts in small-scale agriculture, livelihoods assistance in conflict settings, and access to local and national markets can work to prepare comprehensive plans for agriculture and emergency livelihoods sectors, if this has not happened already.

The U.S. should not shy away from using assistance to prepare comprehensive, multisector plans for areas outside of the capital, such as Darfur, Eastern Sudan, the Far North, and the Two Areas. Such plans can be flexible and responsive, allowing for programming in scenarios where situations are improved, stagnant, or volatile. Commissioning analyses, research, and technical recommendation reports using internal U.S. Government experts or external ones to assist in such efforts is key. Resources spent on such products should not be dismissed because they may be seen

as spending funds on internal matters rather than direct support to beneficiaries. On the contrary, these products are key to creating informed, responsible, and proactive programs to accurately assist such beneficiaries. As the economic and humanitarian situation continues to degenerate, authorities in Khartoum are neither equipped nor willing to focus on areas beyond the capital. Part of assistance currently under discussion can look at programming on food security and livelihoods issues that may be beyond the reach of current humanitarian assistance. In some settings, livelihoods work can incorporate programming on intra and intercommunity engagement, conflict management, and resilience strengthening. This has been done to good effect in South Sudan at local levels and such cross-sectoral collaboration in Sudan should be explored.

Question. Is there any scenario in which the types and levels of U.S. assistance to Sudan provided prior to the October 25 coup should be reinstated?

Answer. For the purposes of answering this question I will de-link the type/level of U.S. assistance from a possible scenario for reinstatement of assistance. Some thoughts on the former are provided above.

In my oral testimony I commented on the complex issue of reinstatement of assistance to the government in Sudan, noting that “a scenario for resumption is when violence against civilians has stopped, and there is enforceable decision and progress on a fully civilian government, with benchmarks set by civilians”. For the first part, I mean a scenario where civilians are allowed to gather peacefully without use of violence by security forces in the capital and other areas, particularly in Darfur. This is a hard benchmark to meet because in most peace processes in Sudan (and South Sudan) there is a certain level of violence during most stages of negotiations and agreement implementation. Determining what a sufficient end to violence looks like will be key to this. It is not possible to do this in the current context of increasing violence against civilians across Sudan, and patterns of security sector violence and possible restraint must be monitored closely.

For the second part, a primary issue is the difference between what one defines as a “civilian-led” government versus a “fully civilian” government. The former could imply that civilians head some major institutions, but the security sector is involved in government beyond the security arena. This looks more like the pre-coup hybrid military-civilian transitional government. The latter implies that civilians are in full control of executive authority and the security sector is limited to the security arena, which is governed by civilian oversight.

The scenario I referred to is possibly one where negotiations have reached a stage where parties agree that a wholly civilian-led executive authority is an end state and international guarantors of that process are committed to ensuring this based on benchmarks and metrics that civilian negotiators agree to. This is complex because the timing for such a civilian-led executive authority is complicated and could mean it happens before the end of a transition period, in the middle, or at the end. Given how fluid the situation is, it is impossible to forecast this at present, but U.S. policy makers and assistance officials need to observe this closely going forward. Providing direct or indirect assistance—and diplomatic support to—a Sudanese-led monitoring body that can track the situation could be central to helping U.S. and international policy makers determine benchmarks and conditions that can lead to informed, timely decisions on if and when assistance can be resumed.

Question. In your written testimony, you noted that premature reinstatement of assistance to Sudan may harm U.S. credibility. You highlighted the ending of violence against civilians and “tangible, irreversible progress” toward a civilian government as the primary metrics for restarting aid. It seems to me that neither condition has been met, and won’t be in the near-term. Is it possible for Sudan to achieve even these basic metrics?

Answer. As noted above, arriving at such benchmarks in the current situation will be difficult, and determining how situations are shifting will require close U.S. observation and analysis. The ability of the U.S. and likeminded international stakeholders to conceptualize, agree on, and drive toward an end state based on such conditions and beyond a merely civilian-led government is a first step. Nuanced and increased engagement with the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and international stakeholders working on political processes will be instrumental in reaching such an end state as well. This reinforces the idea that as assistance decision-makers look at scenarios where assistance to the government can be resumed or phased in, they will need to closely engage with their diplomatic and political counterparts to ensure that they are aware of such thinking, and that plans for resumed assistance can help support political outcomes, and vice versa.

Question. How should the U.S. Government be engaging security sector actors given the current situation?

The U.S. Government should be directly engaging security sector actors to obtain further information about their stances on the current situation and possible political ways forward. However, the U.S. should improve public messaging about why such engagement is needed and how it can help lead to a restored transition and fully civilian outcome. Without this, many Sudanese protestors, Resistance Committees, and political leaders may think that such engagement is indicative of a U.S. bias favoring a return to the pre-coup hybrid government that many are expressly against. Part of this engagement should be geared toward helping the U.S. better understand internal dynamics within the security sector for the reasons noted in my written testimony. This engagement should also be used to help inform Troika and other like-minded international stakeholders such as UNITAMS that may have a different set of relationships than the U.S. does.

A worrisome post-coup development is the return of the General Intelligence Service (GIS) to tactics used by its predecessor, the National Intelligence & Security Service (NISS), before the 2019 revolution. After the coup the GIS was given increased authorities that had originally been taken away after the revolution. It is openly utilizing them to arbitrarily arrest, detain, and harass protestors and activists throughout the country.¹ The U.S. was well versed in engaging the pre-revolution Sudan Government on NISS issues, and it should return to this posture with the GIS if it has not done so already.

An equal priority for engagement with the security sector is to affirm the need for the development of a national security vision grounded in the original aims of the transition—including civilian oversight of the security sector—and in recognition of the fact that the security sector has a legitimate role to play in Sudan and can help prioritize genuine risks and threats to the country. This should happen in order for future security sector reform initiatives to fully take root. Given the current situation, U.S. engagement should reiterate this need and a desire to assist if appropriate, but note that with the current trajectory, the security sector is squandering an opportunity to unlock positive U.S. and international involvement on this issue.

Note

¹See <https://sudantribune.com/article253483/> & <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60245133>

