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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

July 11, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

While we recognize U.S. efforts to date in addressing the crisis in Sudan, we are writing to express our grave concern about the escalating violence and targeting of civilians in Darfur and the Two Areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. In light of the upcoming mandate renewal for UNAMID and the continuing failure to make progress toward political resolution or sustainable peace and security in Darfur and beyond, we implore you to elevate United States efforts to strengthen that mandate and further its effect. We believe more can and should be done by the United States, working in close coordination with the international community, to urgently address the re-emergence of the worst aspects of this conflict. We all know the stakes are high; with conditions similar to those that led to genocide just a decade ago, we are deeply concerned about the ongoing targeting of civilians and prospects for further escalation in the future.

With the world's attention focused on the sharp escalation of violence in South Sudan, the Sudanese government and its proxies have launched a renewed campaign of violence, perpetrating human rights abuses, targeting civilians, and prompting mass displacements while carrying out operations in Darfur and the Two Areas. These attacks are largely perpetrated by the Sudanese Rapid Support Force – comprised of many of the same *janjaweed* leaders who formed the backbone of the government's genocidal campaign in 2003-2005.

Khartoum's offensive policies have routed over 300,000 more Darfuris this year while the government pursues a hollow peace process, exacerbating a crisis that has displaced over two million people to date. In Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, more than a million people have been displaced by Sudanese military operations as countless casualties mount unobserved. This year alone, over 116,000 people have been displaced in the Two Areas as a result of a brutal campaign of aerial bombings of civilian targets such as villages and hospitals and artillery shelling of markets. The Bashir regime has compounded the likelihood of impunity by severely restricting humanitarian access to all areas.

While we strongly support Special Envoy Donald Booth's attention to peace negotiations aimed at mitigating the conflict in South Sudan, increased U.S. attention to Khartoum's recurrent policy of opportunistic violence across Sudan is urgent and necessary. The international community should ensure unrelenting scrutiny on the government of Sudan to stem the loss of innocent lives and prevent its policies, set in motion a decade ago, from becoming permanent. The mandate must ensure the protection of civilians, improve humanitarian access, and seek sustainable political resolutions.

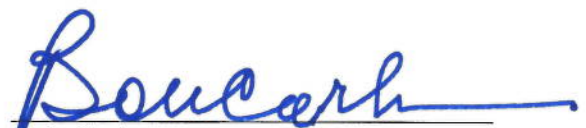
We are gravely concerned by recent allegations that the United Nations/African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) did not properly report or investigate systemic atrocities against civilians and peacekeepers by Sudan and its proxies. We urge you to press the UN to immediately launch an independent investigation into these reports. These allegations and ongoing critiques of UNAMID's performance are particularly concerning given its robust footprint and the length of its deployment in this crisis. We urge you to work within the UN to ensure that UNAMID's utility, personnel, and mandate are comprehensively reviewed and that any renewal reform the mission to focus on legitimate protection of civilians and human rights with troops that are prepared to carry out a targeted Chapter VII mandate. As recent events demonstrate Khartoum's willingness to perpetrate crimes against humanity across the country, we also call for enhanced coordination between the peacekeeping missions and the African Union High Level Implementation Panel to advance a single process to address Sudan's conflicts.

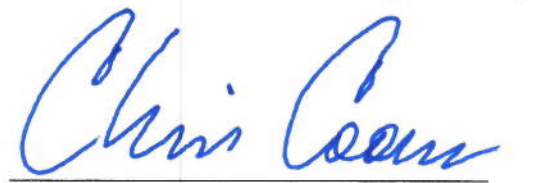
We further recommend renewed and robust diplomatic engagement with the international community to strengthen enforcement of existing multilateral sanctions and designate new individuals implicated in atrocities in Sudan. The persistent provision of unconditional aid by Russia, Iran, the Gulf states, and others is detrimental to peace and stability across Sudan. While any consideration of normalization remains a long way off, the United States should ensure any consideration of Paris Club and International Monetary Fund (IMF) debt relief and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) support is predicated on an end to government-sponsored violence and repressive policies across Sudan.

In your recent West Point speech, you spoke of the willingness to act on behalf of human dignity as an essential element of American leadership and characterized support for democracy and human rights as a "matter of national security." We look forward to hearing from you about the actions your Administration will take to enhance American leadership in curtailing Khartoum's all too familiar policies and the disturbing escalation of violence in Sudan.

Sincerely,


Robert Menendez
Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations


Bob Corker
Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations


Christopher A. Coons
Chairman, African Affairs Subcommittee