

**“Military Coup in Sudan: Implications for Human Rights”**  
**Opening Remarks Co-Chair Chris Smith**  
**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**  
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Today’s hearing on the human rights implications of the recent coup in Sudan is extremely important and timely.

There have been six coups since independence in 1956, and for decades, Sudan was dominated by two strongmen in particular: Jaafar Nimeiry for 15 years, from 1969 to 1985, and Omar al-Bashir, who ruled twice as long, from 1989 until being deposed in 2019.

Both ruled brutally and cultivated ties with radical Islamists – including, most infamously, Osama Bin Laden, who was given refuge by Bashir.

I myself met Bashir in 2005 and engaged him on his atrocious human rights record, in particular with regards to Darfur and the Nuba Mountains. I found him absolutely inflexible with regard to entertaining any reforms.

Thus I, like many others, greeted with cautious optimism the events of 2019 which led to the ouster of Bashir, while many Sudanese boldly took the streets of Khartoum and elsewhere throughout the country to demand democracy and reform.

A transitional Sovereignty Council was created pursuant to a draft Constitutional Declaration, which lasted from August 2019 until the sorry events of this past October, which led to its displacement and dissolution.

Yet a closer look revealed warning signs even back in 2019 – notably the role of General Abdul Fattah Al Burhan, who planned the Darfur genocide and trained its executioners, and Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as “Hemeti,” who was one of the executioners and was himself indicted for war crimes in Darfur.

They remained the power behind the Sovereignty Council – indeed, the two served as chairman and vice chairman – and served as a check to ensure that any of

the reforms proposed by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok would not threaten their power.

Thus their role in the October 2021 coup should not be a surprise to anyone, just as their cynical role in offering Bashir up as the scapegoat for crimes which they themselves also committed should not surprise anyone.

One lesson which can be drawn, however, is that sanctions can be effective in influencing behavior. The removal of Bashir was motivated in large part as an effort to seek the lifting of sanctions, and both Burhan and Hemeti were far more restrained in both 2019 – when they played along with efforts to bring reform, albeit cynically – and in 2021, where they appear to be cognizant of the need to minimize bloodshed.

Nonetheless, Burhan and Hemeti – as well as others who remain in their positions – have blood on their hands dating back to the Darfur genocide of 2004, and need to be held accountable.

Indeed, Darfur is very restive at the moment, which is understandable, given the ongoing role of Burhan and Hemeti.

I want to close by addressing the real hope of Sudan, which is represented by the thousands of Sudanese who have taken to the streets to demand better – to demand a truly democratic government that will protect their rights.

I want to thank them for their commitment to democracy, and like them I hope to one day see a Sudan where the Sudanese people live in freedom.

I look forward to your testimonies.