



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Sudan: Human Rights and Sanctions

April 4, 2017

1:30 – 3:00 PM

2255 Rayburn House Office Building

Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery

Good afternoon. I join my esteemed colleague and Commission Co-Chair Randy Hultgren in welcoming you and our distinguished witnesses to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing on “Sudan: Human rights and Sanctions.”

Today marks our sixth hearing on the human rights situation in Sudan over the past nine years. In spite of the best efforts of bipartisan majorities in Congress undertaken for more than a decade, internal conflict continues in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and observers continue to report that human rights abuses are rampant throughout the country. Millions of Sudanese, mainly from Darfur, survive in refugee

camps in neighboring countries, while millions of others live in camps for the displaced inside Sudan, or are constantly displaced and vulnerable due to attacks against their villages from Sudanese ground forces, militias and aerial bombardments.

What looked like an important victory a few years back, the successful separation of South Sudan from Sudan after decades of war, did not resolve conflicts in other outlying areas of Sudan. Although the unilateral ceasefire that President Bashir's government announced last year does seem to coincide with a reduction in armed confrontation, the UN continues to implicate government forces in violent attacks on internally displaced persons, and attacks by non-state militias against civilians over resources have also continued. In those areas of Darfur under effective military control by the central government, I wonder whether there is an actual cessation of hostilities or whether we are witnessing the peace of the dead.

I remain deeply committed to the Sudanese people, and to making sure that we in Congress are doing as much as we can to protect the fundamental rights of the Sudanese people and to make sure that their basic needs are provided for. There has been strong bipartisan support and pressure for the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid throughout Sudan, including areas of conflict. Members of Congress, including myself, have even

engaged in civil disobedience and been arrested in front of the Sudanese Embassy to shine a light on the continuing humanitarian crises in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

In the past, I have authored bipartisan legislation to expand sanctions against the Bashir regime and to close loopholes in existing sanctions. I have also authored legislation that levied very targeted sanctions against government officials, such as those in Russia or China, who engage in human rights abuses or corruption. So, I do believe that sanctions have a place in U.S. foreign policy, in particular when they arise out of a universal consensus and condemnation of egregious human rights abuses and crimes.

Sanctions against the Government of Sudan arose out of just such a global condemnation of its human rights abuses, crimes against humanity and genocidal acts. In addition, the International Criminal Court has indicted President Bashir and members of his government and military for these same crimes. The United States was not alone in imposing strong sanctions against President Bashir and his government, sanctions that were authored and approved by Congress and written into law. I am deeply concerned about whether the international consensus to condemn and sanction Sudan for its criminal and genocidal acts is breaking down and what the consequences of that might be

for those Sudanese who have suffered so terribly at the hands of President Bashir and for those who have bravely organized and called for greater democratic freedoms and basic human rights.

Today's hearing has a very specific focus. On January 13, 2017, after years of both legislative and executive branch sanctions imposed against Sudan, President Obama signed Executive Order 13761, in effect lifting the U.S. trade embargo and unblocking frozen assets. This easing of sanctions could become permanent in a few months' time. The Obama Administration decided to ease the sanctions after determining that Sudan had made progress over a six-month period in several areas, including cooperation with counterterrorism efforts and tracking the LRA; halting its interference in South Sudan; ceasing hostilities in conflict zones; and improving humanitarian access. For the record, I opposed the decision.

Today, we're going to examine the decision to ease sanctions from the perspective of its impact on human rights and humanitarian access. This is not so much about re-litigating the Obama Administration's decision, as it is about whether the easing of sanctions should be made permanent this summer. What criteria should we be looking at to make this next decision? What changes must we see on the ground, in the conflict, in terms of the well-being of the long-suffering

Sudanese people, to even consider taking the pressure off Sudan? What are the prospects that we will see the needed progress?

So I very much look forward to hearing the testimonies of our distinguished witnesses, and to the discussion that will follow.

I yield back my time.