

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing on
THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE OCTOBER 2021 MILITARY COUP D'ÉTAT IN SUDAN FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS

December 01, 2021 - 2:00 p.m.
Virtual via Cisco WebEx

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Chairman McGovern, Chairman Smith, and members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am pleased to speak with you today to talk about the situation in Sudan.

Since 2018, the Sudanese people have made their demands for a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Sudan clear. Sudan's fragile transitional process presents an opportunity to achieve their goals; we are steadfastly committed to supporting their democratic aspirations. This begins by calling on Sudanese authorities to respect the human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all in Sudan, including the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

The United States strongly condemned the Sudanese military's October 25 seizure of power and the violence that followed, which resulted in at least 41 deaths and hundreds of injuries. We marshalled the resources of the international community, including our Troika (United States, UK, and Norway) and Quad (United States, UK, Saudi Arabia, and UAE) partners, to underscore the human, geopolitical, and financial costs of the military's actions. We are unwavering in calling on Sudanese authorities to allow peaceful demonstrations as the country's democratic transition comes back on track, to investigate violence, and to hold accountable those responsible for excessive use of force.

While imperfect, the November 21 political agreement between Prime Minister Hamdok and Sovereign Council Chair General Burhan represents a first step on the path back to a civilian-led democratic transition. Significant work remains to reverse the democratic and human rights backsliding that occurred since October 25 - and the issues that underpinned it. We will continue to press for the implementation of the key elements of the November 21 agreement and the 2019 Constitutional Declaration. Despite the November 21 agreement's shortcomings, returning Prime Minister Hamdok to office is a better alternative than a continuation of full military rule, especially given security forces' violent repression of peaceful protests. And, the agreement was the result of a Sudanese-led process.

We believe the following are immediate priorities in restoring the credibility of Sudan's democratic transition: the release of all those detained in connection with the events of October

25; the lifting of the state of emergency; the appointment of a credible, civilian cabinet of ministers of Prime Minister Hamdok's choosing; and an end to violence against peaceful protesters. We are also pressing for the military and Sovereign Council to adhere to their pledge to not interfere in cabinet operations and for renewed dialogue to expand the inclusivity of the transitional process, including through a constitutional conference.

At the same time, we will continue to press all parties to move forward with critical transitional tasks, including formation of the constitutional court and other judicial bodies, formation of the transitional legislative assembly; transfer of the Sovereign Council chairmanship to a civilian no later than July 2022; preparations for elections in late 2023 or early 2024; accountability for the violence against peaceful protestors and other human rights violations and abuses; and the reconstitution of the Dismantling Committee with appropriate judicial safeguards.

We are deeply concerned about recurrent intercommunal violence, human rights violations and abuses, and risks of atrocities in Darfur and other conflict-affected regions. Local-level violence has increased since the October 25 military takeover especially in Darfur. Sudanese authorities will need to redouble efforts both to provide security to civilians and to address root causes of violence through implementation of the commitments made under the Juba Peace Agreement, including security sector reform.

The presence of armed militias linked to Juba Peace Agreement signatories in Khartoum is gravely concerning and a source of continued instability. These forces need to be withdrawn immediately and begin the demobilization and integration process spelled out in the peace agreement.

We warmly welcome strong public statements and proposed legislation from Congress in support of a civilian-led transition to democracy in Sudan. We look forward to continuing our close working relationship with Congress on assistance for Sudan, including through meeting any notification and consultation requirements. We would request that any legislation introduced allows the Department appropriate flexibility to provide expanded assistance at an appropriate time in this transition, if and when we determine conditions merit, working closely with relevant committees.

We thank the Commission for bringing attention to the situation in Sudan. The United States wants to see Sudan succeed, and we will continue to support the Sudanese people's desire for peace, freedom, and prosperity.