Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

One Year After the Fall of El-Fasher: How Transnational Networks Finance Crimes in Sudan

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Virtual via Zoom

James P. McGovern, Co-Chair

As prepared for delivery

Welcome to our panelists, Members, staff and the public. Thank you for joining today's briefing on "One Year After the Fall of El-Fasher: How Transnational Networks Finance Crimes in Sudan."

This coming Monday, October 26, marks the one-year anniversary of the taking of El Fasher by the Rapid Support Forces.

The numbers are staggering. Some 60,000 civilians killed. Nearly 100,000 people have been displaced.

Behind every number is a human story.

Amnesty International tells us of a young man named Ahmed from El Fasher.

His wife was killed by shrapnel. He was separated from his children. Ahmed and his brother picked up two little girls whose parents had been killed.

They were captured by RSF fighters. Ahmed pleaded they were civilians. RSF said: "In El Fasher, there are no civilians, everybody is a soldier."

The militia ordered Ahmed's brother and the other men in the group to lie down and executed them. Ahmed and the two girls survived, miraculously.

Ahmed's story humanizes a tragedy whose scale is painful to grasp.

UN investigators found that the RSF committed ethnically targeted and gender-based violence and atrocities during the assault—actions marked by the "hallmarks of genocide."

Last year, President Trump said Sudan was "the single biggest humanitarian crisis" on Earth. He was right.

Sadly, one year later, he is still right. And it raises the obvious question of whether we – including the government of the United States that he leads – are doing enough to stop the killing and the suffering.

Today, nearly 20 million people, approximately 41 percent of Sudan's population, face acute food insecurity. Sudan also faces the largest displacement crisis in the world, with 11 million internationally displaced persons.

We asked experts and civil society: what can the U.S. government do?

Their answer: Stop the flow of arms fueling the conflict.

Many of those arms come from the United Arab Emirates.

The United States has leverage with the UAE. So do the U.S. companies that do business there.

That is why I joined Congressman Chris Smith, Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, in sending letters last spring to four U.S. corporations in the entertainment and sports industries, urging them to reconsider business relationships with entities tied to the UAE. We cited credible reports of the UAE's support for armed actors responsible for mass atrocities in Sudan.

We wrote to NBA, the NFL, Disney and Warner Brothers.

Two responded. Two did not. Their message: business as usual.

Secretary Rubio said external actors must cease the flow of arms. But he refuses to name the UAE. Why? Why give them a pass?

The Administration wants an arms embargo on the entire country. A good idea in principle. But is it false hope? The current arms embargo on Darfur suffers from lack of enforcement. Is there political will to make one effective for the whole country?

These are questions I hope our panelists will address. How do we hold accountable those who are fueling crimes against humanity?

No conflict is inevitable. No war is unsolvable. Peace demands political will.

The people of Sudan have shown resilience and courage. They don't want to live with war and starvation.

We must continue to use our voice to let the Sudanese people know that they have not been forgotten by the American people and the world.

I look forward to hearing recommendations from today's briefers.