

House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing  
on  
CONFLICT AND HUNGER IN SUDAN

May 22, 2024 - 10:00a.m.  
2247 Rayburn House Office Building

Rep. Gus Bilirakis  
Opening Remarks

Good afternoon and a sincere thank you to our co-chairs, James McGovern and my good friend Chris Smith, for hosting this hearing today. What's happening in Sudan today is an unmitigated humanitarian disaster. Hopefully this hearing will amplify the Sudanese plight and be a call to action for the American public, our colleagues on the Hill, and the international community.

I had the privilege of traveling to Sudan in the Spring of 2019 and absolutely fell in love with the Sudanese people. The timing of my trip could not have been more perfect. The government was reacting violently to peaceful protests in and around Khartoum, and I knew as one of the first elected officials from the U.S. to visit Sudan in a long time, I could have an impact. During this trip, I had the good fortune of meeting Dr. Affan, who now has become a dear friend and close adviser on all issues related to Sudan.

In addition to meeting with Bashir government officials for the purpose of demanding the release of a Sudanese American who was wrongfully jailed for his participation in a peaceful protest, with the help of Dr. Affan and the U.S. Charge D' Affaires, I was able to meet with numerous opposition leaders – all of whom were demanding comprehensive human rights reform in Sudan.

Not a month later President al-Bashir was removed from power and the TMC was created as a transitional power.

While the situation in Sudan was looking significantly more promising since my initial visit, I warned that there were still entrenched elements in the military created by the Bashir regime which would continue to be a destabilizing presence. We can see now that our worst nightmares came true, with the threat of widespread famine affecting tens of millions and a full-blown genocidal campaign on the horizon unless the United States and the international community act.

We need to end this war and protect the innocent.

Dr. Affan, what can the United States and international community do to pressure the two parties into a ceasefire and secure safe haven for the displaced people while the war continues?

2. Do you believe the United States can work with Sudanese Americans in the diaspora to coordinate humanitarian efforts, or even as part of a Sudan Crisis Task Force?

3. Do you believe both factions are using food as a weapon in the war? If so, how can we prevent that from happening without causing greater harm to the starving people?