

House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing  
on  
Conflict and Hunger in Sudan

22/05/2024 - 10:00 a.m

Room 2247 of the Rayburn House Office Building

Statement of Hanin Ahmed  
Situation from the ground  
Old Omdurman Emergency Response Rooms

My name is Hanin Ahmed. On the second day of the war, April 16, 2023, I joined with other young people to address the most pressing needs of our community. We organized an Emergency Response Room for a central section of Omdurman, my home city on the west bank of the River Nile opposite the capital of Khartoum. and for the whole capital in a week later.

Who We Are: Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs)

First Responders - We are a growing number of volunteers including professionals, technicians, community members and activists.

Grassroots - We work in our neighborhoods among our communities.

Agile - We can immediately respond and stay creative by changing our tools according to our needs.

Recognition - The UN-OCHA, USAID and many international organizations have recognized us as humanitarian actors.

Neutrality - We are strictly humanitarian, and nonpolitical, and we do not favor any side.

We aim to provide mutual aid based on a localized solidarity economy through partnerships with local and international NGOs and organizations.

Our principles

We adopted the following fundamental principles of good governance:

Accountability - to our community & our partners

Participation - we provide the services for us

Transparency - open source sharing of our data

Equality - in providing services & sharing resources

We have a structured body from the legislative council and a working group

What we provide.\: food, health services, GBV, and other critical services we have 398 soup kitchens 40 health facilities and 75 women's corporations,

Why ERRs : ERRs are the only group that can reach citizens in these critical times.

Our challenges are many. Necessities are lacking,

Financial/ Resource - not having the resources to accomplish our critical mission thus the need for partnerships.

Social - losing the trust and participation of our community thus the need for transparency and communication.

Security - Our members are subjected to harassment, rape (GBV), and arbitrary arrests from both sides, with each side accusing us of working as intelligence for the other side. Therefore we have to maintain our neutrality when it comes to the warring parties.

We received almost daily reports of deaths at a rate of three to four cases per day due to hunger, so we can say that famine exists.

Our internet services come in and out, preventing us from reaching volunteers in our ERR's soup kitchens, evacuation centers, and makeshift schools.

The lack of internet connectivity prevents us from transferring money through electronic bank applications, meaning our volunteers cannot purchase food for the soup kitchens. Without internet access, citizens cannot receive remittances from relatives in the diaspora, which means they, too, become reliant on our (already depleted) soup kitchens. Further, we are experiencing a spike in inflation.

The US government can help by finding ways to provide significant, adaptable funding for ERRs, free of overly bureaucratic requirements unfit to the realities of working within a conflict environment. The ERRs have robust monitoring and accountability systems.

We desperately need more staff, supplies, and medicine. We need assistance in improving training and capacity building.

We also need enhanced ability to communicate and coordinate among ourselves and with allies and partners. Donors can facilitate a bottom-up process that gives ownership to the ERRs and allows Sudanese citizens to determine how to best allocate resources.

ERR workers and human rights defenders are being directly targeted and diplomatic efforts are needed to push the conflict parties to cease such actions.

The United States should work with other countries of influence to recognize ERRs as protected humanitarian workers and to condemn any attacks on ERRs as well as any shutdowns of electricity and internet that hinder our ability to do our jobs.

Robust humanitarian funding for Sudan in your Fiscal Year 2025 budget is vital. But it is important to recognize that aid delivery is not possible if people don't feel safe. Protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers and responders, has to be a priority.

As we gather today, civilians in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, are in immediate danger of mass atrocities. It is essential that the Administration and Congress act swiftly at the UN, in the region, and in Sudan to address this threat.

The US government must use its power to put pressure on the parties to prevent a catastrophe in El Fasher.

A ceasefire in Sudan is essential to feed our people. Planting and harvesting are prevented by ongoing violence. The Congress should ensure that the Administration has a clear, specific and unified strategy on Sudan that engages Sudanese civil society.

In conclusion, I wish to express my thanks to Chairman McGovern for his attendance at the United for Sudan Rally at the White House last month. I encourage all members of the Committee to use your platforms to elevate the concerns of the Sudanese people.

Thank you.