



One Hundred and Fourteenth Congress
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing
“Human Rights Violations in Sudan”
Rayburn 2255 - Wed, Mar 4, 2015 - 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Good afternoon and welcome to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission’s hearing on Human Rights Violations in Sudan.

I would like to welcome all of our witnesses today – thank you for your tireless efforts to keep the focus upon what continues to be a human rights disaster in Sudan. I would also like to thank the staff of the Commission for organizing this important and timely hearing. Finally, I would like to formally welcome my colleague and new co-chairman of the Commission, Congressman Joe Pitts. Congressman Pitts has been an active member of the Commission for many years. I look forward to working with him and thank him for his leadership.

Unfortunately, the problem of human rights violations in Sudan is not a new one. Today marks our fifth hearing on this topic since the Commission was founded in 2008. I am profoundly troubled that we continue to need to bring to light many of these same issues, but I remain deeply committed 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.

Sudan has suffered from internal conflict for decades, as outlying regions have taken up arms against a central government they see as failing to protect them and willfully neglecting their needs. In 2003 the Sudanese government responded to rebels in the Darfur region with a counter-insurgency campaign that had disastrous consequences for civilians. Sudanese forces and the infamous Janjaweed militia attacked and destroyed hundreds of villages, killed tens of thousands and displaced more than 2 million people. The impact was so severe that the international community and the U.S. government recognized that acts of genocide had been committed against the population of Darfur. Here in the U.S., in October of 2006, President Bush signed into law the Darfur Peace

and Accountability Act which gave the U.S. Administration additional tools to sanction Sudanese officials considered to be complicit. In 2009 the International Criminal Court indicted Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and in 2010 it added genocide to the list of charges.

Yet here we are again. Darfur has continued to be plagued by violence and in 2011 conflict re-ignited in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Nearly half a million people were displaced just in the first half of 2014. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled to neighboring countries, unable to return home because of lack of security. The UN estimates that 6.6 million people are in need of aid, but relief agencies like Doctors Without Borders (or MSF) face increasingly difficult operating conditions and restrictions imposed by the government. On January 20th of this year, Sudanese forces bombed a hospital in Southern Kordofan operated by MSF for the second time in less than a year, forcing it to suspend operations to protect its personnel. Hospitals and villages have also been targeted by air strikes in Darfur. In December 2014, Sudan expelled two top UN officials from the country. New reports document the use of sexual violence as a weapon, which we will hear more about today. And Mr. al-Bashir is still in power.

Everyone opposes genocide. But the question is: what are we really doing to redress the Darfur genocide and to stop a new genocide in other border regions?

I look forward to learning from our distinguished panelists today about what is happening on the ground in Sudan, what we are doing to try to end human rights violations in that country, and what further actions we can take to make sure that the people of Sudan finally get the basic protections that they deserve.