

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

As you know, the Government of Sudan has a long and well-documented history of violence and repression against its population in order to maintain wealth and power for a small number of elites. We are gravely concerned about any U.S. policy that might result in further normalizing relations with a regime that routinely violates its citizens' basic human rights, continues to support extremists and extremist groups, represses religious minorities, and steals the nation's wealth while most of its people live in poverty.

We encourage you to develop and advance a U.S. policy that recognizes these realities, addresses the Sudanese regime's failures of good governance, and supports the opening of political space. We believe the Administration and Congress must work together to advance a policy that promotes a just society and human rights for all Sudanese.

We urge the State Department and other appropriate agencies to develop transformational human rights and social and political benchmarks. These should be tied to real incentives, such as consideration for the removal of Sudan from the State Sponsor of Terrorism List, combined with meaningful new financial pressures, such as network sanctions and anti-money laundering measures that target those most responsible for violence and corruption in Sudan. Further, we suggest that the provisions outlining corruption and human rights abuse in Executive Order 13818 related to the Global Magnitsky Act might serve as a useful model to develop concrete benchmarks with regard to targeting individuals and entities engaged in continuing corruption and human rights abuses in Sudan.

Corruption and mismanagement by the Sudanese regime has impoverished Sudan, with only a few wealthy and connected insiders amassing immense wealth. The regime relies on extractive industries and natural resource wealth, along with the weapons manufacturing sector, to facilitate personal enrichment. It has a history of blaming U.S. and international sanctions for its own failure to invest in its people and for serious macroeconomic problems. Yet recent demonstrations across Sudan tied to the rising cost of bread and other economic hardships expose the fallacy of these accusations. Corruption and the violent repression of the Sudanese people are the real culprits, as approximately 75% of Sudan's budget is estimated to be spent on security and defense.

For decades, Sudanese activists have risked their lives attempting to change their government from one that bulldozes churches, jails political prisoners and uses food as a weapon to one that respects religious minorities, treats all ethnic groups fairly and provides for the general well-being of its citizenry. The regime's oppression of church communities and other minorities continued even while the regime was under intense scrutiny during the U.S. review on

the removal of sanctions. In fact, the regime is implementing a policy of church demolitions and has had a formal policy in place since 2013 stipulating that no new churches can be built. U.S. policy should support the democratic aspirations of these courageous Sudanese and refuse to provide further relief from sanctions and a path to normalized relations unless core issues like religious freedom and ending the repression of its citizenry are addressed.

While it is our understanding that the Sudanese regime has provided some assistance related to U.S. counter-terrorism efforts, this should be evaluated in the context of the regime's historical support for extremist groups and terrorism, as well as its current tolerance of extremist groups and clerics that promote hate, both internationally and against religious minorities in Sudan. For example, *jihadi* groups are allowed to own and operate their own FM radio and satellite television channels and have been given prominent roles in higher education. Their speech and outreach efforts are protected. Meanwhile independent press and media are routinely shut down, and civil society and religious groups that promote peace and tolerance are violently dispersed and detained by security agents.

For over a decade, Congress and the American people have supported the democratic aspirations of the people of Sudan. Pursuing a vision of Sudan that respects its diversity and protects the human rights of all Sudanese has been a bipartisan objective of Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives alike.

Mr. Secretary, we respectfully urge you to pursue a policy that is informed by the history and context of Sudan, insists on foundational change, and is backed by strong financial pressure and real incentives. We firmly believe that such an agenda would have strong bipartisan support in Congress.

Sincerely,

James P. McGovern (MA)

***Randy Hultgren (IL)***

Mike Capuano (MA)

***Tom Rooney (FL)***

Barbara Lee (CA)

Additional Members of Congress