

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 31, 2018

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As the United States embarks on a new policy of engagement with Sudan, we write to urge you to ensure that the administration's strategy addresses key fundamental issues at the root of the conflict, violence, instability and humanitarian needs that have plagued that country for decades.


On October 12, 2017, the administration announced an end to certain sanctions against Sudan after determining that the government had taken adequate steps in what has become known as the Five Track Plan. It is true that there was progress in each of those areas, however the core issues that have spurred conflict, unrest and systematic violations of human rights in Sudan—including genocide—were not part of the Plan, and remain unresolved. The north-south civil war cost the lives of more than 2 million people. Continuing violence and instability in the western region of Darfur is preventing more than two million people from returning to their homes after being displaced by a conflict that killed more than 300,000 civilians. The Sudanese Government's recent decision to extend the unilateral cessation of hostilities in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states for three months is a positive development. However, sustainable progress can only be achieved once the core issues that led to such displacement and loss of life are adequately addressed.

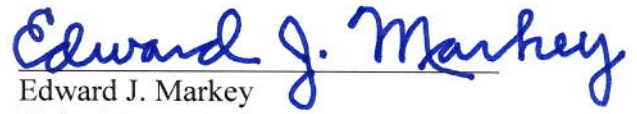
We welcome the administration's assurances that it will consult with Congress to develop a follow on to the Five Track Plan, and look forward to regular briefings as development of the plan progresses. At a minimum, we expect the plan will relay clear expectations and contain measureable benchmarks in the following areas: opening democratic space; improving respect for human rights and religious freedoms; cooperating with the United Nations in the areas of peacekeeping and provision of humanitarian assistance; ensuring truly unfettered humanitarian access for all aid organizations throughout the country-- including throughout South Kordofan and Blue Nile; improving efforts to combat corruption; and ending the conflict in Darfur and the Two Areas. If Khartoum fails to make progress in all of the areas contained in the new strategy, Sudan should not be removed from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, or be afforded any form of debt relief.


In addition, the administration should closely review the impact of the United Nations Security Council's June 2017 decision to reduce the troop ceiling and police numbers of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur, particularly in light on the government's unfolding disarmament campaign. A second phase of reductions is due for implementation this month. Such a reduction should be carefully considered. There is no question that UN peacekeeping operations should be subject to rigorous evaluation to improve efficiency and effectiveness. However, it is imperative that any further reductions take into consideration the protection needs of the most vulnerable, rather than basing reductions solely on achieving cost savings.

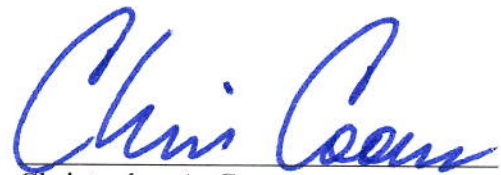
Sudan has a consistently poor human rights record, and President Omar al- Bashir is still wanted by the International Criminal Court for genocide in Darfur. Therefore we hope that Congress and the administration can work together to ensure that prior to any efforts to remove Sudan from the State Sponsor of Terrorism List and/or full normalization of relations, the Government of Sudan commits to and implements meaningful reforms, and makes progress on negotiations to end conflict. Given the lives at stake, and U.S. strategic interests in Sudan and the wider region, it is critical that we, along with likeminded countries, use our diplomatic influence to address the root causes of conflict. Khartoum must understand that cooperation on counterterrorism does not mean that the U.S. will turn a blind eye as the government willfully disregards democracy and human rights, or ignores the dire humanitarian situation faced by its most vulnerable.


Sincerely,


Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Jeffrey A. Merkley
Member of Congress


Christopher A. Coons
Member of Congress


Cory A. Booker
Member of Congress