

**Statement of
Special Envoy for Sudan Tom Perriello
U.S. Department of State
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
“Conflict and Humanitarian Emergency in Sudan: An Urgent Call to Action”
May 1, 2024**

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Risch, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the horrific crisis in Sudan. I also want to thank this Committee for your untiring and vital advocacy for the people of Sudan over many years, and particularly since this tragic war began last April.

As this Committee well knows, the war and humanitarian crisis in Sudan are already catastrophic. Worse yet, the most likely trajectory forward is towards famine, fighting that takes on increasingly ethnic and regional aspects, and the possibility of a failed state of 50 million people on the strategic eastern gateway to the Sahel. For the past year, the people of Sudan have suffered death, crimes against humanity, sexual violence and starvation as a weapon of war, and ethnic cleansing. More than 8 million Sudanese people have been displaced— more than if every resident of Maryland and Idaho combined was forced from their homes, 3 million children – approximately one in eight children – have fled violence since mid-April, making it the world’s largest child displacement crisis. 25 million people are in need of basic food and medicine with 4.9 million of those people on the verge of famine. This brutal war is having a disproportionate impact on women and girls, who both parties have subjected to ongoing atrocities, including rape and conflict-related sexual violence.

The scale of the suffering is shocking. Beyond each of those statistics are human beings, like the woman I met who had recently escaped Darfur. She described the horrors committed against her by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and then being re-traumatized when she got to a neighboring country. Sadly this is all too common. Yet the world has treated Sudan as an invisible crisis, rarely covered in the world press. While much of the world turns a blind eye to this crisis, the Sudanese that I’ve met – including women and youth - have let me know how much they notice the statements and speeches Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Risch have made. I appreciate that Senator Booker led a recent delegation to witness first-hand the scale and stark conditions of refugees flooding into Chad from Darfur. When these women and children – too many with bone-thin arms and thousand-yard stares – were asked at the border why they had fled, the answer repeatedly was simple – “food.”

Food insecurity and malnutrition have reached alarming levels across Sudan, driven by conflict and blockage of humanitarian aid. Nearly 18 million people in Sudan faced acute food insecurity, with nearly 5 million people on the brink of famine. According to the latest data from February, nearly 3 million children in Sudan are acutely malnourished. A woman carrying her baby of 7 months said to me, “this Ramadan, we’ve had more iftars with no food than with food.”. Absent a change in humanitarian access and flow of aid, conditions are expected to worsen with the imminent arrival of the ‘lean season’ which lasts through the summer. Sudan is on the verge of famine, due to blatant and systematic violations by both SAF and RSF of international humanitarian law. Amidst this fragility, the SAF made the unconscionable decision earlier this year to block, disrupt, and limit humanitarian aid in a way that has made it impossible to meet the scale and urgency of hunger facing the Sudanese people.

But even in areas without major limits on humanitarian access, like the refugee camps in Chad, resources have fallen painfully short. The World Food Program (WFP) had cut daily rations to 30 percent below recommended levels in case no new funding arrived. For this reason, the decision of this Congress to pass supplemental humanitarian funding earlier this month was truly a lifesaving decision for many Sudanese. The United States has now committed over \$1 billion in food, medicine, and other humanitarian aid since the war began, and I hope that the media will let more Americans see how their generosity is helping some of the world's most vulnerable people. However, much work remains to mitigate famine, including pressure to translate donor pledges into results on the ground and escalating pressure on both the SAF and RSF to allow unconditional, safe and sustained cross border and crossline delivery of aid in accordance with international humanitarian law.

While humanitarian aid is vital, the hundreds of Sudanese with whom I have met have spoken with one voice on this fact – the only true solution to the humanitarian crisis and human suffering is to end this war, and that is my top priority as the U.S. Special Envoy. While two armed factions launched this conflict, this is less a civil war between two sides than a war which two generals and their affiliates are waging against the Sudanese people and their aspirations to a free and democratic future. Let's be clear: the RSF and its leadership are rooted in the Janjaweed militias who committed genocide and widespread crimes against humanity. They have conducted this war with unspeakable brutality, including through ethnic cleansing of the Masalit, sexual violence as a weapon of war, and torching whole villages. Any external actor providing support to the RSF cannot claim ignorance of its past or on-going atrocities.

In December, Secretary Blinken determined that the SAF and the RSF have committed war crimes, and that the RSF and allied militia have also committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. The SAF bombed civilian areas, and now proactively interferes with humanitarian operations, repeatedly refusing the flow of lifesaving food and medicine in direct violation of international humanitarian law. The Biden Administration has also issued OFAC sanctions against SAF and RSF targets, as well as entities responsible for supporting these violations.

In a moment, I'll share why I believe that a peace deal could be on the horizon, but first, let me be crystal clear that there is undeniable momentum now for this crisis to get much worse. A two-sided war is in danger of factionalizing, with more ethnic militias moving from neutrality to combatants. Many of these groups have populations that overlap with neighboring countries, increasing the chances of this becoming a regional war. We see credible reports about the growing number of negative actors, including Islamists and former regime officials, and a rise in hate speech and polarization. The current battle over El Fasher in North Darfur could eliminate one of the last semi-safe civilian havens in western Sudan and produce a flood of new refugees. The possibility of famine and a fractured state is real, and we are communicating that with urgency from the highest levels of our government to those who have leverage to end this war. As Secretary Blinken said in his April 13 video message to the Sudanese people, "more fighting cannot, and will not, end this conflict."

Let me summarize three of our lines of effort focused on ending the war.

We have elevated and focused U.S. leadership on Sudan across the inter-agency. This has included repeated engagement by Secretary Blinken, and tremendous support from the Department's

African and Near Eastern affairs bureaus, and tireless support from our Embassies for a ten-week sprint of shuttle diplomacy. We have also seen Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield publicly and consistently pursue Sudan as one of her top three priorities and push the United Nations Security Council to call for a Ramadan ceasefire. The U.S. Department of Treasury is playing a crucial role on expanding sanctions and ensuring consequences for those committing atrocities and spoiling the peace, including through the imposition of sanctions against perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, implementing the Presidential Memorandum to Promote Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. USAID, along with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), has been a key partner in tenaciously advocating for humanitarian access, aiding Sudanese pro-democracy and civil society groups to continue organizing in their communities, and supporting courageous youth who continue to find innovative ways to deliver food and medicine at great risk.

Second, we have focused our strategy on building and aligning sufficient political will in the region to compel a peace deal consistent with the aspirations of the Sudanese people. Over recent months, we have made clear to regional and European counterparts that Sudan now represents not only a humanitarian and human rights crisis but also a threat to regional and Europe's stability. We expect all actors, even those previously playing a negative role, to now be partners in a peace deal to prioritize stability over a failed state that would have consequences for the broader region for a decade or more. This is reflected by – but not limited to – a commitment to new peace talks in the coming weeks. These talks will be (1) inclusive of key African and Arab regional leaders, (2) focused on aligning external political will, and (3) designed to produce a comprehensive cessation of hostilities. We expect all partners, even those who have previously fueled the conflict, to understand that the United States government now expects them to be partners in peace.

While this revised formulation of the Jeddah platform represents our best opportunity for formal talks, I have been clear publicly and privately that we are not waiting for Jeddah talks to resume to negotiate an end to this war. We are actively engaged in it every day, with every meeting and every signal sent. In this effort, I want to thank so many of our African partners, the United Nations, and the African Union who are leading efforts to create greater global consensus and urgency for compelling a deal.

Third, we are continuing to raise the costs of those conducting and fueling this war. We are engaged directly with both fighting factions, including their top generals, to deter escalation and atrocities. We have led the world on sanctioning bad actors – both individuals and entities like banks that are enabling the atrocities – and have made clear our readiness to expand those sanctioned.

Finally, the greatest source of hope is the resilience and unity of the Sudanese people, and we continue to center and amplify their call not just for peace but for the restoration of their shared aspirations for a democratic future. They are united in wanting the war to end, full access to humanitarian aid, and a unified professional army under the authority of a civilian government. They do not want to see former corrupt regime officials or extremists use this war as a backdoor to power. In short, they want their future back – the future they so courageously began with the

overthrow of the authoritarian Bashir regime. That is the North Star of our policy - standing with the Sudanese people.

As we speak, Sudan faces two distinct but accelerating trajectories— one towards famine and possibly a failed state, and the second towards peace and a democratic future. The only two barriers to ending this war are, first, the political will of two Generals and those fueling this horrific war, and second the absence of enough political will by those of us who could compel a peace. Our North Star is the aspirations of the Sudanese people. Our path is building and aligning enough will in the region to silence the guns and restore the Constitutional transition. That path can be paved, but time is very much not on our side.

In closing, let me express my appreciation to this Committee for your support for the people of Sudan, for the mandate of the Special Envoy, and the light you shine on the crisis in Sudan.