

**Testimony of
Deputy Administrator for Policy and Programming Isobel Coleman
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Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
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Good morning Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today on USAID's assistance to the people of Sudan, and our response to the devastating setback to Sudan's democratic transition since October 25, when the military detained civilian leaders, disrupted communications networks, and began killing protesters in the streets—returning to the contemptible practices of failed past Sudanese regimes. The military takeover also negatively affects Sudan's long-term development prospects as well as prospects for sustainable peace. Congressional interest in Sudan and support for the people of Sudan have been essential over the years. USAID greatly appreciates the additional \$700 million in funding Congress appropriated last year to further our goals in Sudan. Despite our collective efforts to help Sudan solidify the democratic transition, recent events serve as a reminder that progress toward democracy can be fragile. I thank the Committee for its attention to developments in Sudan today.

The people of Sudan have demanded, and continue to demand, an end to military rule. Thousands of brave citizens are risking their lives on an almost daily basis to end the corrupt military rule that has threatened and oppressed many of them for their entire lives.

For decades, we have witnessed the appalling violence and human rights violations and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law, committed by Sudanese security forces against Sudanese civilians. This includes genocide in Darfur, the indiscriminate bombing of civilian settlements, the targeted bombing of clearly marked hospitals, and security force attacks on medical facilities, staff, and patients. It also includes the massacre of at least 127 peaceful democracy activists in Khartoum on June 3, 2019.

We recognize and deeply appreciate the concern of your committee members—and Congress as a whole—regarding the brutality and terror the Sudanese people are facing, and how, in spite of these major setbacks, we can best continue to support the people of Sudan to fulfill their aspirations for freedom, peace, and justice.

Following Sudan's inspiring citizen-led revolution in 2019, USAID reimagined and expanded its support, becoming the largest donor supporting Sudan's democratic transition, including assistance to then-Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's office and key ministries to help them deliver on the goals of the revolution. USAID partnered with the government to mitigate

the sharp effects of difficult, yet necessary, economic reforms on Sudanese families to begin to right the ship after years of economic neglect and mismanagement. Our assistance to the civilian side of the transitional government complemented our longstanding support for Sudanese civil society and peacebuilding efforts, particularly in long-marginalized and conflict-affected communities. These programs operated alongside USAID's life-saving humanitarian assistance.

After the military takeover on October 25, the United States announced a pause on new obligations from the \$700 million appropriation while we evaluated next steps in our assistance for Sudan. Following a review of our programs, that pause remains in place for assistance to Sudan's government. Meanwhile, we have continued and expanded activities that support the Sudanese people in their democratic aspirations. Our current approach links the resumption of any assistance to Sudan's government to the restoration of the civilian-led transition. We have coordinated this effort with like-minded international partners. In light of the dynamic political environment, we are revising the original plan for the \$700 million, and we look forward to continued engagement with Congress to find the best way forward.

We are now focused on ramping up support for Sudan's democratic transition in three primary areas:

1. Strengthening civilian political leadership;
2. Promoting respect for human rights, including freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly; and
3. Supporting the Sudanese people's demand for an end to their military's longstanding domination of politics and the economy, including with efforts to explore anti-corruption and transparency mechanisms, support for transitional justice and human rights, and exploring opportunities to support security sector reform.

Our goal remains to help the people of Sudan in their pursuit of a civilian-led, democratic government that is responsive to its people.

USAID has supported this type of work in Sudan for many years through programs that promote democracy, empower civil society, and protect human rights.

Our programs support civil society to organize around, advocate for, and engage in transition discussions and peace negotiations. We support our partners in building the capacity of youth, women, and marginalized citizens to lead, whether in political parties—including organizing new parties—civil society organizations, or in their communities. We support civil society in monitoring political processes, identifying conflict hotspots, and conducting

peacebuilding activities—including ongoing national efforts to reach a political agreement to the current crisis, and engagement with political consultations facilitated by the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). USAID also supports journalists and independent media to accurately and professionally report on transition, peace, and political issues.

Humanitarian Response

Amid the recent political turmoil, humanitarian needs in Sudan continue to rise. The United Nations estimates that approximately 14.3 million people in Sudan, or nearly one-third of the population, will need humanitarian assistance in 2022, a seven percent increase from last year. This includes approximately 9.8 million people facing life-threatening levels of acute food insecurity.

In Sudan's greater Darfur region, escalating violence due to resource competition, unresolved political grievances, and the full withdrawal of United Nations – African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeepers contributed to the displacement of thousands of people, exacerbated risks to women and children, and impeded aid relief groups from reaching the communities in greatest need of assistance. This also shines a renewed spotlight on the need to protect civilians in Darfur and on the shortcomings of an imperfect peace agreement. Meanwhile, intercommunal clashes in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states continue to increase displacement and disrupt emergency programming, further exacerbating humanitarian needs. There are more than three million people displaced within the country as of August due to violence, protracted economic crisis, and severe flooding. An additional 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers sought shelter in Sudan as of November due to ongoing insecurity in Ethiopia, South Sudan, and other neighboring countries.

USAID has long been the largest humanitarian donor to the people of Sudan. In fiscal years 2021 and 2022 to date, we have contributed nearly \$429 million in funding to provide for the basic needs of refugees, internally displaced persons, host community members, and others in need. For example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID partner Save the Children Federation is providing infection prevention and control supplies to medical workers at the Khartoum Isolation Center, helping to meet heightened health needs during the pandemic and reducing the risk of health care workers contracting the disease while attending to COVID-19 patients.

USAID also supports humanitarian coordination and logistics activities, which help extend the reach and efficiency of emergency response programming. Following the six-week blocking of Port Sudan and the Khartoum-Red Sea Port Sudan highway by the Beja Supreme Council, which contributed to a significant backlog in the delivery of relief commodities, USAID

and our partners have actively engaged in contingency planning to minimize the humanitarian impact of any future disruptions in access to the port.

In 2022, we will continue to mitigate the suffering of vulnerable populations and prioritize life-saving assistance in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, particularly conflict-affected and newly accessible zones in Jebel Marra. We will continue to meet the immense needs of the Sudanese people, as we continue to urge other donors to join us in these efforts as well.

Conclusion

Finally, let me say that we appreciate our collaboration with Congress to jointly determine the best uses of our foreign assistance resources to help the people of Sudan fulfill their aspirations for freedom, peace, and justice.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.