

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 4, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to express my concern regarding recent events in Sudan, which have implications for the 'Phase II' framework of U.S.-Sudan engagement launched in November 2018. While I was supportive of developing a constructive and possibly transformative relationship with Sudan during the preceding Five Track Engagement Plan (5TEP), I was dismayed that human rights were not prioritized during that process. Since the 5TEP concluded with the lifting of sanctions on the Government of Sudan in October 2017, impediments to humanitarian access have reemerged, and religious persecution, media censorship, and serious human rights abuses persist. And though at reduced intensity, armed conflicts in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile have not ended, and government forces have attacked civilians in these regions on several occasions during the past year.

Since anti-government demonstrations erupted on December 19, the human rights situation has deteriorated. Reports of widespread arrests have accompanied the protests, and videos have circulated of security forces beating and firing live ammunition at unarmed civilians, reportedly causing over 40 deaths. Among those detained are an estimated 45 Darfuri university students who were accused on national television of links to armed rebel groups and now could face serious charges. In sum, despite the fact that enhancing human rights protections and practices is an element of Phase II, the Sudanese government has reverted to violently repressive behavior.

After the first protests began, the Troika (United States, United Kingdom, and Norway) quietly released a statement on December 24 expressing concern over the violence and supporting the right to peaceful protest. But, I have been surprised that the United States has not been more vocal about recent actions of Sudanese security forces which have been quite violent. In the context of Phase II, this lack of leadership by the United States may be perceived as a tacit acceptance of the government's response.

In light of these developments, I request that you provide the Committee with detailed, written responses to the following, in classified form if necessary:

- An assessment of the impact that mass arrests, press seizures, and the reported use of lethal force against civilians exercising their right to freedom of expression, association, and assembly will have on the Phase II process;

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- A detailed list of United States security cooperation with Sudan to include mil-to-mil contacts and senior leader engagements;
- An overview of the U.S. government's strategy with respect to advancing democracy and promoting credible elections in 2020, and an assessment of the impact of Omar al-Bashir's apparent campaign to extend his tenure past three decades on the stability of the country; and
- A detailed list of all U.S. assistance in support of democracy and human rights in Sudan, and a comparison of how funding for such programs in FY18 and planned for FY19 compares with the previous five years.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee