

3rd February 2018

Dear Leaders of Congress,

You will be aware from media reports that there has been a growing wave of protests across Sudan over the past month, reflecting the escalating economic and political crisis. Pro-democracy opposition parties in Khartoum announced on 17 January that they would continue peaceful civic resistance until the Bashir regime is removed.

President Bashir, who has been in power for 29 years and is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, wants to amend the Constitution so that he can stand for another 5 year-term and run in the 2020 elections in order to protect himself from the ICC. For Sudanese people, this would mean another seven years of dictatorship, poverty and despair.

Sudanese opposition forces, activists and ordinary citizens are fighting for their rights and are struggling to achieve a just, peaceful and democratic Sudan. There is currently a growing wave of protests across the country as a result of the doubling or tripling of the price of bread and other basic commodities which has placed an intolerable burden on the poor and growing anger at the regime's corruption, mismanagement and restrictions on basic freedoms.

Despite the permanent easing of US sanctions in October 2017, the Sudanese economy has continued to deteriorate leading to the rapid and accelerating depreciation of the Sudanese currency, which has fallen to a historic low. The root causes of the economic crisis are bad governance, economic mismanagement, grand corruption and heavy expenditure on the military and security sector at the expense of education, health and basic services for the people. The Bashir regime has no way of responding to the economic crisis other than continuing to print money because it neglected the agricultural and industrial sectors during the years of oil production in the 1990s and 2000s, preferring to deposit billions of dollars of oil revenue in private offshore accounts rather than investing in productive sectors.

Although protests against the huge price hikes have been entirely peaceful, the Government has responded in its usual repressive style, including the use of batons and tear gas against demonstrators, the opposition leaders, human rights activists and ordinary citizens and further harassment of the press for reporting on the protests, including the repeated seizure of national newspapers and the arrest of Sudanese and international journalists. The regime's security forces have also used live ammunition against demonstrators in Darfur, resulting in the death of a high-school student in El Geneina, West Darfur, on 7 January and the death of five internally displaced people in the Hassahisa IDP camp in Central Darfur on 20 January. Further large-scale demonstrations took place in Khartoum and some other Sudanese cities on 31 January. These protests are expected to continue as the economic situation deteriorates further.

Over three hundred people have been detained by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) without charge or trial, including prominent opposition leaders including:

Omar Degair, Chairman of the Sudanese Congress Party

Mohamed Mukhtar Al-Khatib, Secretary-General of The Sudanese Communist Party

Sidiq Yousif, a senior member of the Sudanese Communist Party

Mohamed al Douma, Vice Chairman of the National Umma Party

General Fadlullah Burma, Vice Chairman of the National Umma Party

Sara Nugdallah, Secretary-General of the National Umma Party

Ibrahim Al Amin, a senior member of the National Umma Party

Mohamed Farouq Salman, Sudanese Alliance Party and Spokesman of the Sudan Call Forces Inside Sudan

Many other politicians, journalists, activists and students are also being held by NISS. There are credible reports that many of the detainees have been ill-treated and tortured. The latest list of detainees is appended to this letter.

The ongoing peace talks in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel are helping the regime to distract attention from the mounting popular demonstrations and the heavy crackdown.

We call on the United States Congress to

- Condemn the Government of Sudan for the excessive and unjustified use of force against peaceful demonstrators, for the mass arrest of activists, opposition politicians and ordinary citizens, for the ill-treatment and torture of detainees and for the harassment and intimidation of the media;
- Demand the immediate release of all those detained in connection with the current protests
- Support the right of the Sudanese people to exercise their right to freedom of expression and association, including freedom of the media.

Yours sincerely,

Yasir Arman
Deputy Chairman
Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement- North

Enclosure

This material is distributed by Esther Sprague on behalf of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement North. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.