



January 24, 2022

Sen. Robert Menendez
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Sen. James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Re: Amnesty International USA statement for the record for Feb. 1 Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing on “Sudan’s Imperiled Transition”

Dear Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee

On behalf of Amnesty International USA and our members and supporters in the United States, we hereby submit this statement for the record to address the worsening human right violations following the Oct. 25 military coup in Sudan.

In this statement, Amnesty International USA details our research on human rights violations following the crisis in Sudan, especially pertaining to the use of lethal force by security forces during peaceful demonstrations, unlawful detentions, and the interruptions of telecommunications.

The United States and the international community must increase pressure on the Sudanese military and its external allies who are providing critical support to the security forces to respect and protect human rights. This means action here in Washington and at the UN Security Council and Human Rights Council and ensuring that efforts to protect the people of Sudan are coordinated with the African Union as well. A full list of our recommendations are at the end of this statement.

Sudan’s transition towards democracy began in 2019 when former President Omar al-Bashir was ousted from office amidst pro-democracy protests. In response, relevant political parties reached a power sharing agreement between civil society and the Sudanese military which resulted in a transitional civilian administration. Led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, this government would usher in a new constitution and lead the country to elections in 2023.

However, these efforts were cut short when Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burham staged the October 2021 coup. [This led to the detention of Prime Minister Hamdok, and the arrest of numerous members of the transitional administration,](#) along with the suspension of the [civilian transitional](#) government.

Leading up to Oct. 25, 2021, protests had broken out across Sudan suggesting growing concerns about Sudan's stability of the country. Lt. Gen. al-Burhan claimed that he was "[dissolving the transitional government because the divisions within it were so intense that it risked a possible civil war](#)". This justification was used to also justify the interruption of telecommunication networks throughout the country.

Use of lethal force by security forces:

Shortly following the initial coup in 2021, with the immediate shut down of the internet, the military was able to limit the public's knowledge of the scope of the resistance and the security forces response to the coup. However, this did not inhibit the Sudanese people from peacefully demonstrating for democracy with a civilian-led government. Demonstrations were not limited to the capital city, as civil society groups organized protests in Port Sudan in the east, Atbara in the north, Wad Madani in the south and the twin city of Omdurman where they "[adhered to peacefulness, \[their\] strongest weapon](#)".

The protesters' peaceful approach was met with lethal force by the Sudanese security forces. Reports from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Sudanese civil society groups reveal the use of "[teargas and live ammunition from machine guns to disperse numerous demonstrations](#)". Immediately following the October 2021 protests, the response from the security forces resulted in the death of six protestors and 140 civilians being wounded, as [reported by Amnesty International](#).

This use of lethal force continued a month after the coup and Amnesty International reports documented the killing of civilians by gun fire and the use of sniper fire. Depose Muchena, Amnesty International's Director for East and Southern Africa, condemned these actions, noting that "[killings demonstrate that there is a deliberate and targeted plan for the authorities to suppress the protests at all costs](#)".

From witness statements in Sudan, [Reuters](#) reported "in the last few demonstrations there has been a lot of violence: tear gas, stun grenades, gunfire, people being run over, and women being targeted". The violence against women was echoed by a UN report on the rise of

“serious sexual violence and the use of live ammunition against protesters”. UN spokesperson Liz Throssell was quoted saying “[security forces are alleged to have raped or gang raped 13 women and girls,](#)” and there are growing allegations of sexual violence against women fleeing the area surrounding the presidential palace.

Unlawful detentions:

The most prominent example of political detainees was former Prime Minister Hamdok immediately following the October coup. While PM Hamdok was released, and eventually resigned from office, there are a number of civilians who are still detained.

Following the coup, security agents detained at least 30 civilian political leaders, including six cabinet members, [as stated by an Amnesty International report.](#) These details align with research done by the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (“ACJPS”), a Sudanese human rights group. ACJPS reports that these civilians were taken to undisclosed locations without access to family or legal counsel, conditions that are synonymous with enforced disappearance.

Due to the internet and telecommunications [being repeatedly disrupted,](#) families are unable to gain contact with individuals who were detained or the wider Sudanese community. This disruption also infringes on civilians' ability to express their political views, restricts reporting on human rights violations, such as these unlawful detentions. [Security forces are also reported](#) to have censored broadcasters from reporting as media offices were raided, staff were assaulted, and recording equipment was confiscated.

[Reports from the Committee to Protect Journalists \(“CPJ”\) have documented the rise in threats](#) to Sudanese people’s freedom of expression. CPJ has documented the arrest of journalists, and pro-military protests assaulting local reporters.

Recommendations:

It is important to note that this statement is not an exhaustive report on the human rights violations currently being committed in Sudan, and we fear that the situation is worse than what we have been able to document and confirm. Amnesty International USA calls on Congress and the Biden administration to:

- Call on the Sudanese government to end the continued use of lethal force by the security forces during peaceful demonstrations

- Urge the Human Rights Council to establish an independent and impartial investigation into human abuses since the coup took place so as to ensure accountability for the unlawful killings of civilians and other serious human rights violations
- Pass legislation calling for an end to the Sudanese government's crackdown on protesters, free speech, and the press; along with independent Sudanese investigation into the myriad violations by security forces.

As always, for any questions, concerns or clarification please feel free to reach out to us at mfikremariam@aiusa.org at your convenience.

Sincerely,

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