

August 29, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
US Secretary of State
Department of State

The Right Honorable James Cleverly MP
UK Secretary of State
Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Cleverly,

On behalf of the [United States Prevention and Protection Working Group](#) and the [United Kingdom Civil Society Atrocity Prevention Working Group](#), which collectively represents over 275 civil society organizations and experts on genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, we write in the spirit of transatlantic partnership and shared alarm over the war crimes, crimes against humanity, and potentially genocide currently being perpetrated in Sudan to urge the US and UK governments to take urgent, coordinated action to address the escalating atrocities in Sudan.

Since 15 April 2023, two trajectories of violence have spread across Sudan requiring different, but immediate responses. The violence between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in a battle for territorial and political control is causing mass death, destruction, and displacement. Under the cover of this armed conflict, a distinct and deliberate campaign to displace and destroy populations because of their ethnicity and race is being systematically carried out in Darfur in an effort to complete the genocide that began in 2003.

As our members and partners in Sudan have repeatedly warned, the RSF and its aligned forces continue to progress through West and Central Darfur, implementing a pattern of violence that thus far destroyed [at least 27 towns and villages](#) and is increasingly utilizing sexual and gender-based violence as a strategic weapon to terrorize non-Arab women. The RSF first encircle a town, then weaken it by cutting off access to food, medicine, power supplies, and the Internet before overwhelming the population with such tactics as arson, sexual violence, destroying vital infrastructure, and killing. Those forces have now entered Nyala, the capital of South Darfur, [where this pattern is being repeated](#). If immediate action is not taken, El Fasher, home to over 600,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) that have already been subject to mass atrocities, [will be next](#).

To date, the international community has focused on the humanitarian response and a flawed peace process. The pursuit of peace that relies upon the good faith of proven bad actors will assuredly fail to end the violence in Darfur or the overall conflict. In fact, prioritizing negotiations to create a durable ceasefire between the SAF and RSF while sidelining efforts to address widespread and systematic identity-based mass violence in Darfur risks creating an enabling environment for catastrophe. While humanitarian assistance and preparations for an inclusive peace process are vital, the prevention of atrocities must be a key component of the US and UK policy towards Sudan. Addressing and preventing atrocities cannot remain a second-priority issue; rather, it must be a first-order priority and addressed concurrently with the ongoing humanitarian and political crises.

As experts in identity-based mass violence and mass atrocity crimes, the US Prevention and Protection Working Group, the UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group, and the undersigned organizations recognize there are no simple solutions. However, even at this most grave stage, the US and the UK can help slow the momentum of violence, force the foreign proxies currently backing the warring factions to pause, and ultimately lay a path toward much needed lifesaving protection measures.

We urge the US and UK to take a multi-pronged and multi-sectoral approach to the crisis in Sudan that centers vulnerable civilians and protection needs to immediately address and prevent atrocities. To effectively do so, the US and UK must—without delay or equivocation—name the violence, including through public condemnations by officials at the highest levels of government, and note the extreme sexual and gender-based character of this conflict. We welcome the [22 August statement](#) by UK Minister for Africa Andrew Mitchell expressing concern about the war crimes and atrocities underway in Darfur. The US should build on this initiative and issue a formal atrocity determination. The US and UK governments must immediately deploy all available protection mechanisms for both civilians and workers providing vital humanitarian relief, documentation, and other services on-the-ground, and support efforts to protect, report, and respond to child and sexual and gender-based violence. The US and UK should rapidly dedicate funding, particularly flexible funding, to provide robust civilian protection in Sudan and increase support at the borders, local communities, and host countries to address the critical needs of refugees and IDPs. By identifying entry points for sustainably supporting partners, local groups, resistance committees, and international non-governmental organizations who are already on the ground working on protection, the US and UK can leverage their existing relationships, community trust, and programming to scale protection efforts more widely.

Beyond naming and shaming those ordering and perpetrating atrocities, the US and UK should censure and sanction those providing the weapons and resources and protecting the supply routes to facilitate them. Together, the US and UK should learn from mistakes of the past and utilize evidence-based best practices by pursuing an inclusive peace process that elevates the voices, needs, and participation of those most impacted by the violence in Sudan, especially women, youth, and persecuted ethnic communities.

The US and UK should also utilize their roles in international and regional institutions to garner widespread condemnation of the atrocities in Sudan and to invest in urgent protection and prevention efforts, as well as further monitoring, documentation, and accountability. The US, in particular, should leverage its role as the President of the UN Security Council to elevate the discussion and condemnation of the atrocities and call Member States to action to address the compounding political, humanitarian, and human rights crises. They should also work with partners to exert coordinated diplomatic pressure on relevant interlocutors in Sudan to facilitate safe humanitarian access into and within Sudan. Collective leadership by the US and UK to shine a spotlight on the brutal violence in Sudan and condemning its perpetrators can help galvanize the rest of the international community to create a protective wedge between the guns and innocent civilians through the use of all available protection mechanisms.

The US and UK have demonstrated a commitment to the atrocities prevention agenda, progress in institutionalizing atrocities concerns internally, and coordination internationally through such entities as the International Atrocities Prevention Working Group. The US and UK showed laudable leadership in the face of Russian aggression in Ukraine and, specifically, the unbending clarity in naming, condemning, and

confronting the war crimes and crimes against humanity that form a central tenet of Russian strategy. However, standing against mass atrocities requires consistency across continents and contexts. Failure to act anywhere enables impunity everywhere and undermines the collective obligation to ensure civilian protection and prevent such crimes from occurring.

The situation in Sudan today is a glaring indictment of the international community's failure to adequately address the genocide in Darfur 20 years ago. Mass atrocity crimes are ongoing processes, not merely events. Therefore, atrocity prevention must be a first-order priority addressed on a continuum before, during, and after to address the cause and effects of violence and violent conflict. Atrocities prevention requires constant and consistent efforts by key global leaders such as the US and UK, as well as the entire international community, to center the decision-making and needs of those most at risk. By failing to follow through on accountability processes and marginalizing the communities most impacted by violence in the last two decades, the promises of "never again" have once again fallen short in Darfur. Failure to take immediate action will result in further suffering and mass atrocities. However, the US and UK have a time-sensitive opportunity to impact the conflict and save lives through their long-standing transatlantic partnership. Through a coordinated and multi-sectoral approach that addresses drivers of violence, the humanitarian impacts of the conflict and atrocities, and prevention, protection, and accountability, the US and UK can—together—slow, halt, and ultimately prevent further violence and promote peace in the long-suffering region.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

- Act for Sudan
- Alliance for Peacebuilding
- American Friends Service Committee
- The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities
- Beyond Conflict
- Centers for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
- Charity & Security Network
- Educators' Institute for Human Rights (EIHR)
- European Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (ECR2P)
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Fund for Peace
- Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security
- Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
- International Civil Society Action Network
- Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention
- Investors Against Genocide
- Invisible Children
- Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
- The Jo Cox Foundation
- Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur

- Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies
- Minnesota Peace Project
- Minority Rights Group
- The New Lines Institute
- Never Again Coalition
- No Business With Genocide
- Nonviolent Peaceforce
- One Earth Future
- Peace Direct
- Protection Approaches
- Rights for Peace
- Sudan Unlimited
- United Against Inhumanity (UAI)
- United Nations Association U.K.
- Videre est Credere
- Waging Peace
- Women's Peace Network