

AFRICAN FREEDOM COALITION

Dear Senator,

13 November, 2017

The Khartoum regime in Sudan has been perpetrating a racist genocide for 62 years during which time it has killed more than four million African blacks. In 1993, Sudan was placed on the U.S. List of State sponsors of Terrorism, for its hosting of Osama bin Laden and other terrorist groups. In 1997, the U.S. imposed sanctions on Sudan. While negotiating the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for the independence of southern Sudan, Khartoum turned the focus of its genocide to Darfur in 2003, which elicited a short-lived grass roots response by Americans. The U.N. referred the actions of Sudan's president Al Bashir to the International Criminal Court, which imposed arrest warrants against him for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity (2009, 2010).

The U.S. never provided the Sudanese people with aid to resist the aggression of Khartoum. On the contrary, over the past few years, statements from the State Department, suggested that it was open to lifting sanctions against Sudan. In early September, 2017, a select group of congressional staffers— from Foreign Affairs and Foreign Relations committees— were chosen to visit Khartoum for a few days, accompanied by members of the State Department, under the tight control of Sudanese authorities. By the end of the trip, virtually all of the observers concurred that they “would have no objection to the lifting of sanctions”.

One week later, (9/15/17), the same small group of congressional staffers participated in a meeting hosted by the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington D.C., The guest of honor was Sudanese Foreign Minister Ghandour, who was accompanied six members of his Embassy staff. Sudan's paid lobbying firm, Squire, Patton, Bogggs had three representatives, as did the US Special Envoy. A number of NGO's were represented, including the Enough Project, and Humanity United. The subject of the meeting was the lifting of sanctions. (Later, In a victory speech to his parliament, Ghandour would express his gratitude to the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the Enough Project for their help in the lifting of sanctions.)

Three weeks later (10/9/17), despite Khartoum's continued humanitarian blockade and documented evidence of increased ongoing violence, including chemical warfare, the Trump Administration, by Executive Order, announced the permanent lifting of the US sanctions against Sudan. This action was taken shortly after the fatal attack by the Sudan militia on the innocent, helpless residents of the Kalma Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Darfur. Although staffers from Foreign Affairs and Foreign Relations Committees were represented in the meetings described above, most of the Congress was uninformed about the issue. Those Congresspersons who were familiar with the issue expressed their vigorous opposition to the decision to lift sanctions.

Clearly, the decades of suffering by the people of Sudan carried little weight in the decision to lift sanctions. The main rationale offered by the State Department seemed to be Sudan's cooperation in sharing counterterrorism information with the U.S.. Even if this were credible, it would still be insufficient reason for us to overlook Khartoum's murderous treatment of its own black people.

Meanwhile, today in Darfur, Sudan, 2.7 million people still live in squalor in IDP camps, suffering from starvation, malnutrition and disease, enduring a cruel blockade of humanitarian aid by Khartoum. Another 300,000 are refugees in Chad, suffering similarly. They are all under the rule of Khartoum militias that threaten them constantly with racist genocide.

Our country loses its humanitarian way when it skirts providing information to Congress and allows international expedience to cause us to acquiesce to genocide.

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African Freedom Coalition: