

Petition

From Sudanese Civil Society Organizations to the
Prime Minister of Sudan, His Excellency Abdalla Hamdok
May 4, 2020

Dear Prime Minister Hamdok,

We, the undersigned Sudanese civil society organizations and individuals concerned about pressing issues facing our country, petitioning you on a matter of life or death, a situation with serious implication for the future of Sudan.

In a letter addressed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres dated 27 January 2020 signed by you Mr. Prime Minister, you requested the United Nations Security Council to establish a Chapter VI Special Political Mission/Peace Support Operation to assist in the peace process and help Sudan to mobilize international financial assistance.

Further, on 27 February 2020 a second letter transmitted from you to the Secretary-General, in which you conveyed "the conclusions reached by the Government of the Sudan concerning the support that is required from the United Nations" in certain areas. In both letters the issue of civilian protection was not clearly addressed, the latter made no reference to civilian protection.

As you're well aware that Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter aims to support the maintenance, monitoring, and building of peace, usually in the context of peace agreements, but not a peace enforcement mechanism to prevent violent conflict as it is the case in Chapter VII. On 12 March 2020, in reaction to your letters, the UN Security Council discussed a joint report by the African Union and the United Nations on the UNAMID and a follow-on joint mission, the report drew your attention that the "protection of civilians is the responsibility of Sudan.", the report further pointed out that "if a follow-on mission includes a mandate indicating the physical protection of civilians, such a mandate, which has not been requested to date by the transitional Government of the Sudan, would require a very significant deployment, commensurate with the size of the area of operations." Unfortunately, both of your letters missed requesting the need for the "physical protection of civilians."

Mr. Prime Minister, almost one year has passed since your government assumed responsibility to address and resolve issues of internal conflicts and security, thus far no clear proposals have been introduced, at the minimum, to address the core issues that drive violence in Darfur. Nine (9) months ago you were sworn in as Prime Minister of Sudan, shortly after you announced at a press conference that "your government's number one top priority is to stop the war, and build sustainable peace.", yet, since then, clashes between nomadic herders and farmers in Darfur have escalated, aggravated by sense of victory and emboldenment on the part of certain ethnic groups against others. Peace efforts taking place in Juba are mostly marked by deadlines come and go, in the meantime security conditions in Darfur and elsewhere are clearly deteriorating.

In a cone of silence, violent conflict persisted in Darfur with entire camps being burned again. In El-Geneina, in Jebel Marra, communal clashes became the norm. Certain groups in Darfur continue to be displaced; several million of them are already trapped in camps that are becoming less secure and more vulnerable to attacks, women living in camps still have to walk far to obtain firewood for cooking, in the process are being raped and humiliated. Tribal tensions and hate speeches filling the social media instigating unhealed wounds throughout Darfur. Given such realities on the ground not a single civilian protection mechanism has been put in place to prevent occurring attacks on civilians and on the IDP camps.

Just this past 24 April, 2020, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations reported to the United Nations Security Council that "inter-communal clashes in Darfur at the beginning of 2020 left 65 people dead and more than 46,000 internally displaced. Another 11,000 people fled to Chad." Sadly, as mentioned in the report, "Sudanese security elements had participated in the violence." It has never been disputed fact that security forces remained part of the problem and done little to prevent clashes, despite the ouster of Al-Bashir regime. We wonder to what extent your government is aware of such threats that may lead to renewed atrocities and perhaps full fledged civil war in Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan.

Most recently, on 30 April 2020, we observed that your government clearly announced that the requested political mission will not include any military forces, even against the concern raised by a number of Security Council members that the mission should include, at least, police units to protect civilians. It's very worrying that your government neglects such a critical matter of civilian protection, particularly in the absence of a clear and well-defined policy by your government on civilian protection in Darfur and other conflict zones.

Mr. Prime Minister, the arrival of COVID-19 to Sudan and the rising number of infected population, poses another impediment in monitoring conflict zones. If the virus finds its way into the displaced crowded camps, only God knows the consequences. It's not the time to replace missions; rather you must ask the international community to empower the existing UNAMID with stronger mandate and additional means and logistics to carry on its duties.

We support your vision to achieve democratic transition and capacity building as well as peace implementation through the United Nations system. However, we strongly oppose the departure of the UNAMID from Darfur with a mandate under Chapter VII to be replaced with a Chapter VI mission. In the face of grave vulnerabilities facing civilians in displaced camps, it is inconceivable that your government would not put civilian protection at the top of the list.

Mr. Prime Minister, the developments on the ground in Darfur provide good reasons to stick to civilian protection and the maintenance of peace and security under chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. It is essential that you shift course and confront these challenges with Chapter VII protection.

In view of the above, and the urgency of the matter, we call upon you to do the following:

1. Shift course on your demands to the Security Council from Chapter VI to Chapter VII mandate with emphasis on civilian protection;
2. Demand that the UNAMID mission be extended beyond October 2020, equipped with a more robust force for civilian protection;
3. Call for additional support for the UNAMID to continue its mission under its current mandate or replace it with a broader mission under Chapter VII with additional tasks contained in your letters.

Finally, Mr. Prime Minister, we fully understand the difficult challenges facing your government and our nation at this critical time of transition and the test of history, we want to remind you of the commitment to do the right thing. When the history of the Darfur tragedy and other Sudanese tragedies are written, the mark of those who stood firm to save lives will be remembered with pride and honor. Act now and save lives before it's too late.

Yours sincerely,
Sudanese Civil Society Organizations
List Attached

Cc:

President of Sudan's Sovereign Council
African Union
UN Security Council

Troika countries, Canada, and France:

- The United States Embassy in Sudan
- The UK Embassy in Sudan
- The Royal Norwegian Embassy
- Embassy of Canada in Sudan
- Embassy of France in Sudan

Signatories to the Petition:

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~ This not an exhaustive list, only sample of the Sudanese people voice ~
