

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 21, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20451

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write regarding the ongoing hostilities in Sudan and the urgent need to ensure the women of Sudan are included in all peace negotiations and conflict resolution efforts. As the United States continues to support an end to the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Force (RSF), it is critical to the long-term stability of Sudan that women have a meaningful role in shaping their country's future.

On April 15, 2023, war broke out between the SAF and RSF that has now forced more than seven million Sudanese to be displaced<sup>1</sup> from their homes, the majority of them women and children. In areas of the country impacted by conflict, approximately 80 percent of hospitals are non-operational. Across Sudan, women have lost access to food, water and medical care while facing threats of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and slavery. The World Health Organization estimates that there are now more than four million women in the country at risk of experiencing gender-based violence as a tactic of war<sup>2</sup>. Over the course of the conflict more than 100 cases of rape have been verified, and we fear these numbers may be much higher given that sexual violence is frequently underreported in conflicts<sup>3</sup>. Survivors of sexual violence in Sudan have also reported being targeted for their ethnicity<sup>4</sup>, drawing concerning parallels to the genocide campaigns conducted in Sudan almost 20 years ago.

Since the bipartisan Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017 was signed into law, it is U.S. policy to ensure women's meaningful participation in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution. In Sudan, women have long played a significant role in advancing democracy. They have mobilized in support of new political structures that advanced economic, social and political freedoms for women and an end to state-sanctioned gender-based violence. In response to the current hostilities, women-led, civil society peace initiatives are proactively engaging in efforts to return Sudan to a path towards democracy. The U.S. must demonstrate its commitment

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<sup>1</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). *Sudan Situation*. UNHCR Data Portal. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Sudan: Top UN officials sound alarm at Spike in violence against women and girls*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news/item/05-07-2023-sudan-top-un-officials-sound-alarm-at-spike-in-violence-against-women-and-girls>

<sup>3</sup> Harter, F. (2023, August 29). *Women in Sudan facing a "tragedy" of sexual violence as rape cases rise*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/29/women-in-sudan-facing-a-tragedy-of-sexual-violence-as-cases-rise>

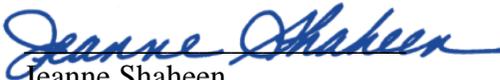
<sup>4</sup> Save the Children International. (2023, July 7). *Sudan: Children as young as 12 raped and assaulted, as sexual violence rips through the country*. <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/sudan-children-young-12-raped-and-assaulted-sexual-violence-rips-through-country>

to a stable future for Sudan by ensuring the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security framework through the meaningful inclusion of women in formal government negotiations. History has shown that when women participate in conflict resolution and peace negotiations, those plans are 35 percent more likely to endure<sup>5</sup>.

As the women of Sudan face immediate threats to their health, safety and security, the U.S. must prioritize an end to the conflict that holds perpetrators to account and reinforces the vital role women play in shaping a more stable and prosperous society. By fully implementing the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, the Department of State and agencies across the U.S. Government will ensure the women of Sudan play an active role in building a brighter future for their country.

We look forward to your continued efforts to ensure the Women, Peace and Security Act is appropriately implemented in Sudan.

Sincerely,

  
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

  
Shelley Moore Capito  
United States Senator

  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

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<sup>5</sup> UN Women. (n.d.) *Women's participation and a better understanding of the political.*  
<https://wps.unwomen.org/participation/>