

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 15, 2024

Dear Special Envoy Perriello,

I sincerely and warmly congratulate you on your appointment as the United States Special Envoy for Sudan, and thank you for your time in meeting with us last week. As the current armed conflict approaches its one-year anniversary, and with your leadership, I am writing to raise the critical importance of engagement with Sudanese feminist and women-led organizations as we work toward a just and lasting resolution of the conflict. I was heartened to see that you met with many of these extraordinary women during your first trip abroad as Special Envoy.

I fully agree with the points the Administration reiterated in the 2023 National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security: “promoting women’s meaningful participation, leadership and engagement in decision-making at all levels is both a moral and a strategic imperative for U.S. foreign policy and national security.” A 2015 UN global study on women, peace, and security found that peace agreements are 64 percent less likely to fail when civil society representatives participate. In particular, the study found that women’s participation in peace processes increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20 percent, and by 35 percent the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years.

I urge you, as you work to chart a new course for US diplomatic engagement in Sudan, to hold corrupt military officials accountable and support the most effective partners for democratic state-building: local feminist and women-led civil society movements.

Sudanese women and women-led civil society organizations were at the forefront of the mass movement to depose Omar al-Bashir, fight back against violent repression, and defend democracy. In 2018 and 2019, Sudanese women political organizers organized communities across the country into a sustained and ultimately successful bid to oust their long-time dictator.

The power of feminist movements is vital to nurture democracy and the broad-based inclusion that prevents and defuses conflict. When women participate in mass movements, those movements are more likely to succeed and more likely to lead to more egalitarian democracy.

Today, the same leaders of one of the most successful democratic movements in the last decade are facing the gendered consequences of a civil war that may have been preventable and was certainly predictable. Since the conflict began last April, more than 8 million people have been displaced from their homes and more than 13,000 people have been killed. Amid conflict and displacement, women and girls face multiple gendered barriers to their survival: from increased vulnerability to sexual violence and exploitation, to human trafficking, to shouldering the burden of care obligations, which limits their mobility to access and prioritize their own medical care and hunger.

Despite these barriers to their survival, Sudanese women continue to risk their lives to rebuild Sudan as a peaceful, free, and democratic society. Last year, more than 400 women across 14 Sudanese states, including Sudanese women refugee and exiles, prepared clear proposals for the

international community via UN Women to support their immediate humanitarian and peacebuilding needs and to build a stronger foundation for peace and strong democratic governance in Sudan. These proposals are a strong roadmap for U.S. engagement with Sudanese women-led civil society, and an opportunity to support them as they build their political power to shape the future of Sudan, as well as reaffirm the US commitment to women, peace, and security as a critical building block for effective diplomacy and democratic state building.

I urge you to recognize that many of the strongest stewards of democracy in Sudan are Sudanese women human rights defenders and women-led civil society organizations. Their partnership must be sought, their trust must be earned, and their priorities must be centered as you begin the task of rebuilding US diplomatic leadership for peace, security, and inclusive democracy for the people of Sudan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ilhan Omar', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress