

Urgent investor statement on the situation in Sudan

8 December 2021

We, the investor signatories to this statement, are deeply concerned by the evolving situation in Sudan. On Monday, October 25, 2021 the Sudanese military disbanded the transitional government and placed the prime minister under house arrest. Following those events, civil society in Sudan has organized mass demonstrations which have been met with excessive force by the military and resulted in at least 40 people killed and hundreds injured.

The international community has responded by condemning the actions of the military:

- The African Union¹ called for the release of all arrested political leaders, respect for human rights and the resumption of consultations between civilian and military leaders within the framework of the Political Declaration and the Constitutional Decree.

-The international Friends of Sudan² group stated that the aspirations of the Sudanese people for democracy, human rights, peace, and prosperity have been demonstrated through protests across the country and must be respected.

-The joint statement by the QUAD for Sudan (Saudi Arabia, UAE, USA & UK)³ endorsed the international community's serious concern with the situation in Sudan, and calls for the full and immediate restoration of its civilian-led transitional government and institutions.

-The U.N. Special Rapporteur on the right to peaceful assembly and association⁴ warned against the use of militarized forces for crowd control in Sudan and called for an end to the internet shutdown that has been imposed.

The global civil society organization CIVICUS and the Sudanese Development Initiative (SUDIA)⁵, together called for the release of detained human rights defenders, journalists, protestors and politicians as a matter of urgency, and for the immediate cessation of violence against protestors.

On 21st November Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok signed a political agreement with the military by which he resumed his role as Prime Minister, political prisoners would be

¹ www.peaceau.org/uploads/eng-final-communique-of-the-1041st-psc-meeting-in-sudan-26-october-2021.pdf

² www.norway.no/en/sudan/norway-sudan/news-events/friends-of-sudan-statement-on-the-ongoing-military-takeover-in-sudan/

³ www.state.gov/joint-statement-by-the-quad-for-sudan-the-kingdom-of-saudi-arabia-the-united-arab-emirates-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-united-kingdom-on-the-developments-in-sudan/

⁴ www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27752&LangID=E

⁵ <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/united-nations/geneva/5429-oral-statement-the-human-rights-council-must-take-robust-action>

released, and a technocratic civilian government formed. However, the agreement has been rejected by a number of civil society actors and political parties because the civil society partners who signed the constitutional declaration in 2019 that forms the basis of Sudan's democratic transition have not agreed to it. The African Union has commended this announcement⁶ as an important step towards the return of constitutional order but also called upon all actors to go further: encouraged inclusive and effective implementation in a climate of peace and called for regular and free elections as the only pathway to sustainable development. The US State Department⁷ has recognised the importance of this step but called for further rapid action to put the transition back on track by releasing all political detainees; lifting the state of emergency; respecting peaceful protests and avoiding violence against demonstrators; creating the legislative, judicial and electoral bodies previously agreed and holding a constitutional convention.

Following the ousting of President Bashir two years ago, the international community has supported the transition to democracy and economic growth in Sudan and in turn many governments have lifted sanctions on companies operating there. We are concerned that the events of the last month jeopardize Sudan's hard-won political and economic gains made over the past two years and put Sudan's security, stability and reintegration into the international community at risk.

We stand with the people of Sudan and its civil society at this time of crisis in support of the "shared space" of the rule of law, accountable governance, and civic freedoms. We believe those elements – and a full restoration of the democratic transition - are essential to a stable, profitable and sustainable business and investment environment, and a democratic, peaceful and prosperous future for Sudan. We urge a swift resolution of the current situation based on dialogue and reconciliation in accordance with the will, the rights, and the interests of the people of Sudan.

We share a responsibility to support the people of Sudan in this time of crisis and beyond. We recognize the contribution businesses can make by providing vital services, supporting jobs and contributing to the sustainable and equitable development of the Sudanese economy. We also recognize that companies may be facing substantial safety risks to employees and their families, business partners and customers, operations and assets in the current situation. We affirm the continuing importance of companies, their supply chains and other business partners adhering to the ILO core labor standards, the UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights and to global standards on bribery and corrupt practices.

Moreover, we believe it is important and urgent for companies operating directly or indirectly through business partners including suppliers or distributors in Sudan to:

-Protect their workers from violence wherever possible

⁶ <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20211121/statement-chairperson-political-agreement-sudan>

⁷ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-sudanese-prime-minister-hamdok-and-sovereign-council-chair-general-burhan/>

- Provide assurances that employees or contractors will not face retaliatory action from companies if they choose to join demonstrations or otherwise exercise their freedom of expression
- Map the impact of the military's actions and the conflict across their operations and business partners, and avoid inadvertent funding of Sudan's military or security services
- Conduct effective human rights due diligence, and ensure that companies do not cause or contribute to human rights violations or conflict
- Identify what action they can take if they are linked through their activities with other parties violating human rights; adopt conflict and gender-sensitive grievance mechanisms as necessary; and remediate adverse impacts that may have occurred
- Consult local and international stakeholders as the situation evolves, with safeguards in place to protect local consulted stakeholders, and consider statements and actions in support of the restoration of the democratic transition and respect for human rights
- Support humanitarian efforts and initiatives with appropriate local and international partners to improve conditions for marginalized communities and those affected by the violence, including those in Darfur
- Invest in long-term sustainable, regionally equitable wealth creation in Sudan in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in conjunction with a restored transition to democracy and a stable institution framework for accountable governance.

Time to Demonstrate Business Leadership in this Crisis

As responsible investors operating directly or indirectly in Sudan, we support these objectives in the interests of the people of Sudan. We believe this is an opportunity for the private sector to demonstrate its leadership in navigating and assisting Sudan's transition to peace, justice, and democracy.

Investor signatories:

Boston Common Asset Management
CalSTRS
Calvert Research and Management
Church of Sweden
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Dana Investment Advisors
Domini Impact Investments
Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids

Everence and the Praxis Mutual Funds
Folksam
Lady Lawyer Foundation
London CIV
Maryknoll Sisters
Miller/Howard Investments, Inc.
Natural Investments
Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment
SharePower Responsible Investing
Sisters of Mary Reparatrix
Sisters of St Dominic Racine, WI
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
Sisters of St. Dominic of Caldwell
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Sisters of the Precious Blood
SOC Investment Group
Social Justice Committee of the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock
Storebrand Asset Management
Trinity Health
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church Funds
Zevin Asset Management

Supported by:

Adam Sterling, Founding Director, Sudan Divestment Taskforce
Bennett Freeman, former SVP, Calvert Investments
CSR Strategy Group
Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)
CREA
Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights

Organised by:

[Business and Human Rights Resource Centre](#)

[EIRIS Conflict Risk Network](#)

[Investor Alliance for Human Rights](#)