Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 21, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are proud of the role the United States played in facilitating a relatively peaceful transition to independence for South Sudan earlier this year. However, this alone will not solve the issues plaguing Sudan. In fact, recent events in Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Darfur provide clear evidence that the Administration's policy toward Sudan must be reinvigorated to address the urgent humanitarian and civilian crises facing millions of Sudanese. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was intended to lay the foundation for a new reality in Sudan. It was built around three core principles: fairer distribution of power and wealth between the center and the peripheries, democratic transformation, and the right of southern Sudanese to determine their own future. The United States must now adopt a Sudan policy that addresses and confronts the root of the problem: marginalization of the peripheries by Khartoum.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), since the beginning of September, a steady stream of refugees from Southern Kordofan fleeing the fighting has surged from about 100 a day in August to about 500 people a day currently, while 25,000 people are reported to have recently fled from Blue Nile into Ethiopia. There are credible reports of ongoing aerial bombardments in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, as well as verified bombing attacks across the border in South Sudan. In civilian areas controlled by the SPLM-North, there are reports of extrajudicial killings, illegal detention, disappearances, and attacks against civilians. Evidence gathered through satellite imagery by the Satellite Sentinel Project shows at least eight mass graves found in and around Kadugli, the capital of Southern Kordofan. The situation is made worse by the fact that the people of Southern Kordofan are enduring this violence at the height of harvest season. By preventing proper harvest of crops and precluding any opportunity to plant for next season, in addition to denying access to vital humanitarian aid, the Government of Sudan is essentially using food as a weapon. If left unaddressed, this region will soon face severe famine, as well as unceasing violence and displacement.

In Darfur, the Government of Sudan has increased aerial bombing since December 2010, displacing more than 115,000 people. Relief agencies remain unable to access significant areas of Darfur. Reporting and verification of violence has become virtually impossible, as humanitarians and even peacekeepers are cut off from vulnerable populations.

In order to address the source – rather than just the symptoms – of the problems in Sudan, the Administration should refocus its current policy on mediation, democracy promotion, accountability, and civilian protection. If we, as a key stakeholder, fail to take

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swift action, the ongoing violence will only increase and the peace that so many Sudanese hoped for will fade into the abyss of instability and war.

The current model of addressing Sudan's conflicts through individual mediation processes – effectively stove-piping each conflict – is not working. The Government of Sudan has successfully pitted conflict areas against each other. This cynical tactic has allowed it to avoid making any broader, more comprehensive changes. Constitutional reform and inclusive governance are central to the prospect of real and lasting change. Longtime Sudan watchers assert that U.S. policy should immediately press for a central, comprehensive process that pulls in all parties in conflict across Sudan to seek peace and structural democratic reform. The Administration must marshal the international community to: provide democracy promotion assistance to civil society organizations, independent media, and anticorruption initiatives; invest in accountability in both Sudans, including targeted financial sanctions against those primarily responsible for abuses and the businesses they control; investigate evidence of ethnic cleansing in the Nuba Mountains and Abyei; and bring all parties together in one process that will replace stove-piped peace negotiations. Our relations with other countries will be critical in mustering the international leverage necessary to effect these changes in Sudan.

Furthermore, the people of Sudan are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, including food, water, shelter and medical treatment. The Government of Sudan has shown an unwillingness to allow humanitarian organizations access in order for them to provide these critical supplies and services. Therefore, we urge the Administration to mobilize international support for an immediate cross-border humanitarian aid operation to get the people of Sudan the help they so desperately need.

Instability in Sudan and the surrounding regions benefits no one. The Government of Sudan has proven time and time again that it is willing and able to carry out extermination campaigns against its own people. We strongly urge the Administration to reinvigorate our policy along the lines of the new process discussed above and remain vigilant. We look forward to your response on how the Administration will approach its engagement with Khartoum – and international partners – to address the crisis on the ground and bring peace, democracy, and rule of law to both Sudans.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

Steny Hoyer
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
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Aaron Schock
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Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

John R. Carter
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
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Jesse Jackson, Jr.
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Gwen Moore
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Pete Stark
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Maxine Waters
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Brad Miller
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

David Schweikert
Member of Congress

Bob Goodlatte
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State
The Honorable Princeton N. Lyman, U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan