

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 11, 2016

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

Dear Mr. President:

We urge the United States to lead the United Nations Security Council in enacting an arms embargo on South Sudan to decrease the risk of violence and foster an environment for political progress. It is past time for threats.

You have been central in securing moments of hope for the people of South Sudan through the signing of the August 2015 peace agreement and the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity. The recent violence in Juba, where Sudan People's Liberation Army helicopters and heavy weaponry were used in civilian neighborhoods and hundreds were killed – including two UN peacekeepers – shows how precarious all that progress is. Even now, fighting in the Equatoria states and other parts of the country threatens to draw the country into full-scale war.

President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar are failing in their fundamental responsibilities to preserve the lives of their citizens and ensure the survival of their nation. Just in the last few days the government has threatened to bar the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee from returning to Juba, denied scores of UN staff entry into the country, and organized protests against the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).

The absence of an arms embargo is costing lives every day, with dubious progress on implementation of the peace agreement and ongoing government obstruction of ceasefire monitors' ability to verify reported violence since the signing of the agreement. Both sides have continued to procure arms, even after the agreement, with the government having acquired the bulk of arms and ammunition while at the same time being responsible for most of the human rights violations committed in 2015, including targeting civilians. An arms embargo would be an effective step to uphold the interests of the people of South Sudan, and should be conceived as a means by which to prevent further suffering on the part of the South Sudanese people.

An arms embargo would:

- **Reduce the flow of arms and enhance civilian protection:** An embargo would take the necessary measures to prevent, or at the very least reduce and deter, the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer into South Sudan of arms and related materiel of all types, including heavy weaponry and ammunition, military and paramilitary equipment, and spare parts or technical assistance or training related to any of this materiel. Doing so would inhibit the ability of armed actors to threaten civilians and tenuous progress toward peace.

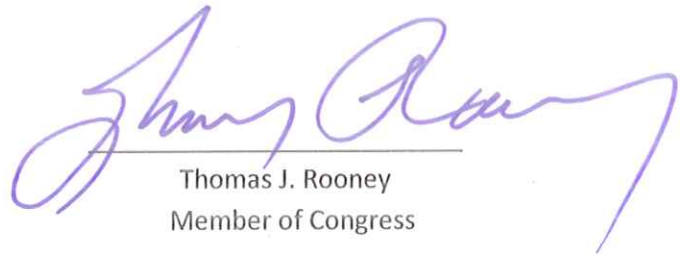
- **Demonstrate to South Sudan's leaders that there are consequences for continuing to wage a war in which civilians bear the brunt of the violence:** The threat of an embargo has been used to coerce President Kiir into signing last year's peace agreement. That threat is now an empty one.
- **Complement a strengthened UNMISS:** The US Government has rightly supported the strengthening of UNMISS in response to the recent violence in Juba. However, if the Security Council approves the mandate without an arms embargo in place, it would effectively allow warring groups to continue to use and replenish arms and ammunition, including heavy weaponry - that have in the past been used against civilians, peacekeepers, aid workers, and foreign diplomats. Additionally, this would present a direct threat to the Regional Protection Force and undermine its ability to carry out its tasks.
- **Encourage South Sudan's leaders to spend government funds on rebuilding their shattered country and addressing the catastrophic humanitarian situation, rather than building their arsenals:** The UN has estimated that 4.8 million people are food insecure, and the UN Panel of Experts has documented that the government of South Sudan has spent tens of millions of dollars procuring arms throughout the conflict. The country's economy is in crisis and the cost of the ongoing conflict is not one the South Sudanese people can afford.

We thank you for your leadership on South Sudan and understand a new Administration will inherit these challenges in January. We urge you to secure your legacy as a peacemaker by directing the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations to use the voice and the vote of the United States to seek an arms embargo on South Sudan. Now, more than ever, the people of South Sudan need determined action to secure peace for their country.

Sincerely,



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



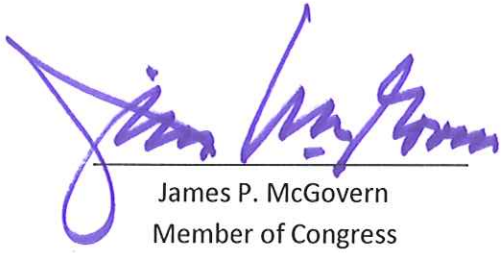
Eliot Engel
Member of Congress



Karen Bass
Member of Congress



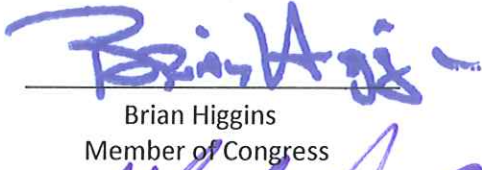
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



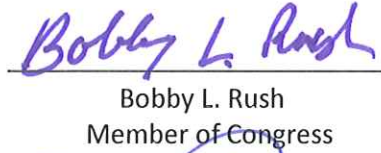
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



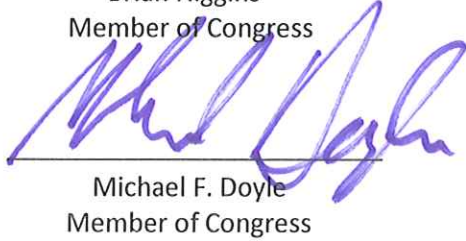
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Michael F. Doyle
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Lois Capps
Member of Congress

Cc: The Hon. John Kerry, Secretary of State
Samantha Power, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
Amb. Donald E. Booth, U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan
Susan E. Rice, U.S. National Security Advisor