Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 24, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

We write to urge you to appoint a high-level Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan with the international stature to bring urgently needed diplomatic leadership to international efforts to achieve a sustainable peace in and between the two countries.

As you know, since the onset of South Sudan's civil war in 2013, at least 50,000 people have been killed and approximately 3 million have fled their homes. Former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have all warned of potential genocide. The African Union and the UN have documented numerous human rights abuses by parties to the conflict over the past several years, and these abuses continue. The assaults on civilians carried out during the course of the fighting in July 2016 between government and opposition forces shocked the conscience of the world, and served to demonstrate that the August 2015 peace agreement has failed. Hundreds were killed by military forces and over two hundred people were raped. Residents at the Terrain Compound were beaten and gang raped by government forces, among them Americans and other international aid workers; one was executed. To date, the government has not held anyone accountable for the violence, nor for attacking a U.S. diplomatic convoy.

UN peacekeepers are protecting over 200,000 people who might otherwise be dead at UN bases in South Sudan. The UN Security Council approved an additional 4,000 peacekeepers in the wake of the July violence to improve security in Juba. Unfortunately, the government continues to obstruct the deployment of these troops. Efforts on the part of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development and the African Union to find a political solution have so far been unsuccessful. Meanwhile, South Sudanese continue to suffer. Half of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance, and that number is likely to rise. Fighting has broken out near Malakal in the north, and increased conflict along South Sudan's southern border has resulted in the outflow of nearly 700,000 refugees to Uganda.

In Sudan, it is critical that we ensure that Khartoum lives up to its agreement to adhere to its ceasefires, allow free and unfettered humanitarian access to all parts of Sudan and stop supporting rebel movements in South Sudan. Already there are reports that Khartoum may have violated the ceasefire in Darfur. Khartoum has a well-documented track record of bombing civilians and using proxy militia in conflicts. As many as 300,000 people may have died in Darfur since 2003. Killings and rapes have been carried out with impunity. There are still two outstanding arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court for President Omar al-Bashir for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes of genocide associated with the conflict there.

United States leadership is critical to helping bring about a lasting peace in Sudan and South Sudan. Your swift action on this matter will make a difference in millions of lives. We look forward to working with you to address these and other issues.

Sincerely,

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

John Boozman
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senate

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress