

Engagement Beyond the Centre:

An Inquiry Report on the Future
of UK-Sudan Relations



February 2017

All Party Parliamentary Group for Sudan and South Sudan

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Foreword

UK policy in Sudan should be guided by the Sudanese people's pursuit of lasting peace, inclusive democracy, and shared economic prosperity.

To this end, this report seeks to influence and inform the UK Government's engagement with its Sudanese counterpart, bringing together Sudanese civil society activists, international NGOs, UK Government officials and independent experts to discuss not only our necessary political relationship, but also how we renew our connection with Sudanese culture and society. Above all, we urge the UK Government to engage more broadly and deeply in Sudan, building on a long history of close people-to-people links.

This report collects over 40 pieces of written evidence and 10 hours of oral hearings to make constructive recommendations for the UK Government. In a dynamic diplomatic landscape, these recommendations will guide our efforts to enhance policymaking and improve political engagement.

We express sincere appreciation and thanks to all those who have lent their time and expertise to this inquiry. Quite simply, without the extensive participation of our witnesses, expert advisors and UK Government officials, this report would not have been possible.

This inquiry process reinforced the utmost respect we have for all those individuals and organisations that work tirelessly for peace, justice and human rights for the people of Sudan. We look forward to continuing our work with you all in the coming years.

Signed:

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About the All Party Parliamentary Group for Sudan and South Sudan

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Sudan and South Sudan is a political campaigning group promoting the cause of peace, human rights, justice and development for the people of Sudan and South Sudan across Westminster and Whitehall.

The Group was formed in 1998 in response to concerns raised by Sudanese Diaspora Groups about the political, economic and social situation in their country and as a result of the desire of UK Parliamentarians to highlight this situation. Based in Westminster, the group has established a growing membership of over 100 British MPs and Peers across political parties. Since its inception the Group has acted as the key forum in Parliament for actively debating and highlighting key issues on Sudan and South Sudan.

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This report is also informed by a confidential oral evidence session with Her Majesty's Government, as well as a number of submissions from individuals who wish to remain anonymous.

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Acronyms

			Minni Minnawi
		SPLM-N	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North
AUHIP	African Union High Level Implementation Panel	SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement	TRACKS	The Khartoum Centre for Training and Development
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention	UNAMID	African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur
DFID	UK Department for International Development	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
DG-HOME	EU Directorate for Migration and Home Affairs	UNISFA	United Nations Interim Force for Abyei
ESPA	Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement	USD	United States Dollar
EU	European Union		
FCO	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office		
FoI	Freedom of Information Act		
GIZ	German Home Office		
GoS	Government of Sudan		
HMG	Her Majesty's Government		
ICC	International Criminal Court		
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development		
IS	Islamic State (Daesh)		
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement		
NCP	National Congress Party		
NIF	National Islamic Front		
NISS	National Intelligence Security Services		
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs		
RSF	Rapid Support Forces		
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces		
SDG	Sudanese Pound		
SLM-AW	Sudan Liberation Movement- Abdul Wahid		
SLM-MM	Sudan Liberation Movement-		

Executive Summary

The initiation of the 'UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue' in March last year, as well as active participation in European Union engagement with the Government of Sudan, marks an unmistakable strategic shift in UK policy towards Sudan. The UK Government is moving from the 'stick' to the 'carrot', altering the balance between criticism and cooperation to bring about behavioural change from the Government of Sudan and to secure its own interests in the region.

This change in approach warrants scrutiny; President Omar al-Bashir remains the subject of an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court, conflict and instability continue in Darfur and the Two Areas, and the rights of opposition activists across Sudan are routinely violated.

Simultaneously, a determined and vibrant civil society is signalling a strong popular demand for change. In the waves of 'Civil Disobedience' that erupted in Sudan in November and December last year, new faces joined established activists to breathe fresh life into peaceful civil resistance against the Government.

At this moment of flux in Sudan, political priorities in the UK are changing. The ongoing refugee crisis and dominance of migration as a political priority has sharpened policymakers' focus on bringing migrant numbers down in the near-term. The UK Government was warned by witnesses that this determination is likely to push the UK towards institutions and individuals with whom we differ on principle.

Drawing on a broad range of evidence, this report seeks to shed light on the question of how critical engagement with the Government of Sudan can support democratic forces in Sudan while achieving domestic policy goals.

On the Sudan peace process, the APPG heard that although the UK's steadfast support for the African Union High Implementation Panel peace process is to be commended, lasting peace in Sudan will require far more active support from the UK and other international partners.

Any peace deal must be a comprehensive and inclusive one, which leads to sustainable progress towards democratisation and respect for human rights. The UK can support this process in the short term by engaging more closely with opposition and civil society figures, and by closely linking any concessions made in the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue to clearly defined progress on a lasting cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access, and the opening of political space and respect for human rights. In the longer term, peace will be sustained by national, subnational

and community-level dialogue processes that enable all Sudanese to express their views on how their country should be governed.

On extremism, submissions urged caution upon international partners in cooperating with the Government of Sudan. Shorn of ideological legitimacy, the National Congress Party is forced to draw credibility from their tolerance of extremist groups internally, while also self-portraying as an 'island of stability' in a chaotic region. Recent reports of intelligence sharing and the Government of Sudan's proactive steps to tackle Islamic State internally are welcome, however international partners should remain conscious of the political contingency of this cooperation.

Meanwhile the consistent repression of students, academics and universities, crackdowns on independent civil society organisations, and restrictions on the media prevent the open debate which will be the long-term remedy to extremism in Sudan.

Migration has become a dominant issue in shaping European Union relations with the Government of Sudan. The Khartoum Process, the European Union's response to migration from and through Sudan, drew extensive criticism from witnesses who were concerned that the European Union's long-held reputation as a human rights standard-bearer was in danger of being sacrificed at the altar of migration.

The UK must ensure that human rights are fully respected in the Khartoum Process initiative by pushing for rigorous end-user accountability provisions, and by ensuring that the implementation process is transparent and open to scrutiny.

The evidence received by the APPG in these policy areas also leads us to draw the following conclusions regarding the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue more broadly:

The UK Government must not deprioritise human rights and democratic values in its future relationship with the Government of Sudan. Both as a member of the Troika group and bilaterally, publically and privately, the UK has always been at the forefront of the international community's critical engagement with the Government of Sudan. This position must not be diminished by competing policy priorities, and the UK must not shrink from making public statements when faced with grave human rights violations.

The UK Government must recognise the transformative potential of Sudanese civil society

groups by engaging with them in a structured dialogue. Despite Government repression, civil society groups in Sudan are defining the future of their country and adding depth to the political discourse in Sudan. The UK Government's policy in the country should reflect that by including these voices in a forward-looking forum.

Engagement on issues of mutual concern must be strengthened by rigorous, transparent benchmarks that allow for public scrutiny and debate. Witnesses repeatedly warned that the Government of Sudan is an unreliable partner primarily concerned by its own political survival. The involvement of external actors in reviewing and evaluating this renewed engagement will be central to its success, and the UK must also retain the option of suspending the Dialogue if these benchmarks are not met.

Recommendations

Recommendations on the Peace Processes

HMG should press the Government of Sudan to abide by its commitments under the Roadmap Agreement and to create a conducive environment for a genuine, inclusive and transparent National Dialogue, in line with the Troika statement of September 2014.

HMG should ensure that any consideration given to debt relief should be linked to a sustained and monitored cessation of hostilities in the Two Areas and Darfur, unfettered humanitarian access to vulnerable populations across the country and irreversible progress towards democratisation.

Following the signature of the Roadmap Agreement in August 2016, HMG should invite a Sudan Call delegation to visit the UK for structured discussions as a demonstration of serious engagement with both sides.

HMG should request that the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons obtain clarification from the Government of Sudan about its alleged use of chemical weapons in Jebel Marra in accordance with Article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention. If this is not granted, then HMG should request an on-site challenge inspection in accordance with Article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Recommendations on Extremism

HMG should draw regularly on information available from Sudanese civil society and other experts in assessing the role of the Government of Sudan in relation to extremism both internally and externally.

HMG should explore the scope for enlarging scholarship programmes and educational, research and cultural exchange programmes for young Sudanese. HMG should expand the Chevening Scholarship programme to offer more places for Sudanese students, especially those from Darfur, the Two Areas and Eastern Sudan.

HMG should support independent media institutions in Sudan by offering technical assistance and diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sudan to provide improved safeguards for journalists from government interference.

HMG should take further steps to prevent the radicalisation of young British-Sudanese, including by supporting inter-generational

dialogue amongst the Sudanese diaspora in the UK.

Recommendations on Migration

HMG should ensure that specific and concrete benchmarks are set against which progress can be measured. For example, agreement by the Government of Sudan to give work permits to Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees living in camps in Eastern Sudan.

The number of asylum seekers who have reached Europe from Sudan and of asylum seekers from neighbouring countries who have used Sudan as a transit route since the start of the Khartoum Process should be published and regularly updated.

HMG should ensure that, if any training and equipment were to be provided to Sudanese security officials, it should be subject to strict safeguards to ensure that it is not used for repressive purposes.

HMG should use its influence to ensure that safe, legal migration pathways are prioritised within those projects financed by the Better Migration Management fund in alignment with the joint Action Plan agreed at the Valetta summit.

HMG should ensure that strong monitoring mechanisms are in place to guarantee compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, particularly to guard against the refoulement of refugees recognised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Recommendations on the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue

HMG should ensure that the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue is backed up by rigorous, transparent benchmarks, which allow for scrutiny and regular progress reviews by external actors.

HMG should place international human rights and democratic values at the heart of the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue, insisting on clear evidence of progress before any further engagement.

In parallel with the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue, HMG should broaden its engagement with a wide range of Sudanese civil society groups, both within Sudan and in the UK, including from the conflict zones.

Part One: Context Analysis

Chapter One: The Changing Context in Sudan

Internal Conflicts and the Sudanese Peace Process

Over six decades of independence, the Sudanese people have experienced near-constant conflict and instability.

In 2003 the Government of Sudan (GoS), paired with local militias, crushed rebel movements in Darfur in a war that is estimated to have claimed at least 300,000 lives and displaced as many as four million people in the years since¹. In January 2016, the GoS initiated a counter-insurgency in the Jebel Marra region of Darfur which reportedly destroyed over 100 villages, displaced 130,000 people and sparked allegations of chemical weapons use². A precarious ceasefire has been in place since June 2016 and levels of violence have significantly decreased, but reports of an attack by Government forces on the Nertiti IDP camp on New Year's Day were a reminder that the insecurity experienced by Darfuri civilians continues. The African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) remains unable to verify many of the reported incidents owing to the continued denial of unfettered access to certain areas by the Government.

After years of civil war, South Sudan became an independent nation in 2011 following a peace process which was brokered by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and guaranteed by the UK, Norway and the US (the Troika), as well as the Netherlands and Italy. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) provided for South Kordofan and Blue Nile provinces, also known as the Two Areas, to be given special status and the power to determine its own governance relationship with the separate nations through popular consultations. However, the issue was never resolved and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement - North (SPLM-N) and the Sudanese Government have been locked in conflict since, characterised by the use of both indiscriminate bombing and targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure.

Efforts to achieve peace in Darfur and the Two Areas continues in the form of an African Union High Implementation Panel (AUHIP) process, chaired by former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki. Established in 2009 by the AU Peace and Security Council to support the implementation of the CPA and facilitate negotiations on post-referendum issues, the panel has broadened its scope to a holistic, two-track peace process between the Darfuri groups, the SPLM-N and the GoS³.

There was brief optimism when the umbrella

organisation of opposition groups, the Sudan Call, joined the GoS in signing the Roadmap Agreement in August 2016⁴. This agreement set out a synchronised process for achieving a cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access in both Darfur and the Two Areas, and committed both sides to resolving any differences through the National Dialogue process. However, failure to reach a deal on humanitarian access to the Two Areas, and the Government's refusal to hold inclusive preparatory meetings abroad before the initiation of the Dialogue, led to talks collapsing shortly afterwards. At the time of publication of this report, short-term ceasefires in both conflict areas has been announced, but no lasting peace deal has been agreed.

While international attention has been focused on securing a peace deal in Darfur and the Two Areas, the situation in Eastern Sudan and Abyei remains fragile. Lack of access to basic services, political disenfranchisement and mass unemployment has brought Eastern Sudan to the brink of conflict, with long-term insecurity creating fertile ground for human trafficking in the region⁵. The region was promised \$600 million by the GoS for reconstruction and development under the 2006 Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) but only \$125 million had been allocated to the Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund by May 2015 and the population has seen few tangible benefits⁶.

The disputed oil-rich territory of Abyei remains a flashpoint, without a legitimate government, legal system or police force. The area has been monitored by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNIFSA) since 2011, but there has been little progress towards a power-sharing arrangement. As recently as 5 January 2017 the Sudanese and South Sudanese Governments traded statements declaring their ownership of the region.

The Evolving Political Landscape: Civil Disobedience

Although long-running negotiations continue between the Government and the armed movements, new forces for change are emerging in Sudan. Discontent with all sides of the political establishment, as well as brutal reprisals for earlier public protests, particularly the killing of 200 unarmed democracy protesters in September 2013, prompted a new wave of brief but large-scale Civil Disobedience. This manifested in citizens staying at home and refusing to attend universities, go to work, or participate in public life.

Triggered initially by the Government's decision to end fuel, electricity and drug subsidies, coupled with a 20% rise in the salaries of public sector workers, waves of protests spread from Khartoum to Wad Madani, Port Sudan, and Kassala throughout November and December 2016. Independent professional groups organised effectively, in particular doctors called a nationwide strike in late 2016 calling for better working conditions and an improved health service, joining similar actions by pharmacists, lawyers and teachers.

The Government's response has been an intensified crackdown by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) on the activities of student, civil society, trade union and professional activist groups, including detaining dozens of doctors, closing independent TV outlets, confiscating newspaper print runs, and fining businesses that refused to open.

"We have managed to break the barrier of fear in a free space that cannot be reached by bullets or tear gas" - Sudanese youth activist⁷

The rise of social media as an organisational tool, and as a platform for women's groups, student groups and others, has left the GoS unable to suppress these demonstrations through traditional means. Throughout the inquiry, the APPG was told that, while the Government was prepared for street protests initiated by familiar groups and individuals, the diffuse nature and modern tactics used by these nascent social movements was an important development.

Sharara — Sharara: Youth for Change is a non-violent, pro-democracy movement established in 2010. Sharara, meaning "spark", is a youth-led movement calling for peace and justice across Sudan. The group has been responsible for organising protests, largely through its Facebook page, which currently has over 75,000 followers⁸. A number of the group's members have been targeted by the NISS. In 2012 Magadi Aqasha, Sharara's leader, was arrested by security forces, leading to Amnesty International issuing an appeal calling for his release.

The lasting impact of this latest round of discontent will become clear beyond the publication of this report, but the mobilisation of non-affiliated groups using unconventional and disruptive means allows new civil society voices to be heard

in Sudan, and raises important questions for any broad-based democratic transition.

State of the Economy

Economic mismanagement, the secession of South Sudan, enormous sums spent to fund internal conflicts, corruption on a grand scale, and international sanctions have left Sudan's economy structurally weak.

The lack of transparency in Sudanese budgets makes exact allocations impossible to obtain but it is estimated that direct and indirect tax exemptions cancelled up to 60% of all V.A.T. revenue, and Sudan currently ranks 170th out of 176 countries on the Transparency International Corruption Index⁹. Internationally, the African Union and the UN Economic Commission on Africa ranked Sudan in the top ten African countries for cumulative illicit financial flows between 1970 and 2008¹⁰. Former State Minister for Finance and World Bank Country Director Dr Tiyani Altayeb has shown that 76% of the 2016 budget was dedicated to the defence, police and security sectors, while only 8% was earmarked for agriculture, manufacturing, health, and education combined¹¹.

Last year's tightening of US sanctions on Iran, as well as a record fine given to French bank BNP Paribas for violating sanctions against Sudan, shut down many of the loopholes employed by the GoS. The clampdown prompted many financial institutions to 'de-risk' their investments and withdraw from the country, hampering the ability of the Government to raise revenue from abroad and keep correspondent banking viable, as well as spooking businesses that needed to repatriate profits. However, the decision by the Obama administration to ease sanctions last month, conditional on the GoS improving humanitarian access, ending support for rebels in South Sudan, ceasing the bombing of insurgent territory and cooperation on intelligence sharing, opens the door to restored confidence in the Sudanese economy and increased Foreign Direct Investment¹².

Nonetheless, these factors, along with the lower global oil price, have placed the Sudanese economy in crisis. Although official figures show GDP growth as steady and unemployment decreasing consistently year-on-year, the Sudanese economy suffers from widening inequality and severe structural weaknesses. Inflation rose 10% between October and November 2016 as a result of subsidy cuts and import tariff increases, and continued to rise to

30.47% in December¹³. The cost of the Sudanese Government's international debt obligations has increased quickly in recent years, reflecting international concern about Sudan's long-term economic health and stagnating exports¹⁴. Whilst the Sudanese pound (SDG) has remained officially fixed at 6.4 SDG to 1 US dollar (USD) since August 2015, traders on the parallel market suggest the price of dollars has increased steadily year on year, reaching 19.75 SDG to 1 USD in December last year¹⁵.

This deteriorating long-term economic outlook has been a driving force behind a shifting diplomatic landscape as the GoS seeks to find new revenue sources.

The International Landscape

Driven by globalised issues of terrorism, energy, trade and migration, patterns of international engagement with Sudan are changing. Across Europe and the US, the international hostility of the last decade is diminishing in favour of normalised relations and reliable cooperation on issues of mutual interest. Previously the outstanding International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrants for President Omar Al-Bashir, as well as the Governor of Khartoum and others, for charges including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, rendered the GoS's senior officials international pariahs. However, shifting policy priorities are now altering the international community's approach toward Sudan.

Relations between Sudan and its neighbours are showing tentative signs of improvement. President Bashir has directed his security services to expel all remaining South Sudanese rebels from the country, prompting a reciprocal call from South Sudan's President Salva Kiir. The two nations have reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the 2012 Agreement on Security Arrangements. A mutual interest in the stability of South Sudan has also built bridges between Sudan and Uganda, shown most clearly in the high-level talks in the lead-up to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan in August 2015. The President of Uganda has invested in the Sudanese peace processes and continues to do so, meeting with the Darfuri armed groups in October 2016 in an effort to kick-start talks with the Government¹⁶.

Recent years have also marked Sudan's pivot toward the Gulf states, Russia, and China, and away from traditional strategic ally Iran. Sudan received \$500 million from the UAE in December

along with a 6-month fuel guarantee, and another \$400 million deposit in January this year¹⁷.

Saudi Arabia has some \$15 million of investments in Sudan with almost 200 Saudi firms operating in the country¹⁸. Almost 1,000 Sudanese troops are currently participating in the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen and the Saudi authorities arrested two Sudanese men for expressing their support for the recent Civil Disobedience campaign. Witnesses also pointed to a warming of social and religious relations between Gulf Governments and the Sudanese regime, particularly fostered by the Director of President Bashir's office, Taha Osman al-Hussain. These close relations would prove pivotal in persuading the US to ease sanctions on Sudan in January 2017.

Energy has driven cooperation with both China and Russia, with the former agreeing to finance East Africa's first nuclear power plant in Sudan. President Bashir travelled to Russia in October following a Memorandum of Understanding on energy cooperation, and recently announced another trip to take place in the summer to strengthen bilateral ties and economic and political cooperation between the two countries. As members of the P5 group at the UN Security Council, improved relations with China and Russia are a key diplomatic asset, notably shown when the pair intervened to block the publication of the UN Panel of Experts report on gold smuggling in Sudan.

The US remains a principal player in Sudanese foreign relations, with the economic impact of two decades of sanctions and the reputational damage of being on the US's list of state sponsors of terrorism serving as key areas of concern for the Sudanese Government¹⁹. Sudan's well-established links with Al-Qaeda, hosting Osama bin Laden from 1991 to 1996, its associations with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, as well as Hamas and the Lord's Resistance Army, made for an atmosphere of intense mistrust between the two nations.

However, the Obama Administration's decision on 13 January 2017 to lift sanctions on Sudan, following a period of intensive bilateral engagement since mid-2016, brought an end to the 20-year US-Sudan trade embargo. The policy reflected a warming of relations over the last six months based on close intelligence sharing, perceived improvements in humanitarian access in Darfur, and the increasingly constructive role Sudan has played in the South Sudan crisis. The US made clear that sanctions would be permanently revoked in 180 days if the US Secretary of State, following consideration of relevant information from credible sources, including NGOs, deems

that these positive actions have been "sustained"²⁰. Dynamics between the Sudanese regime and the new Trump administration are far from clear, however President Bashir has expressed he is "looking forward to working with President Trump"²¹.

Significantly for this report, the European Union (EU) has shifted its approach towards Sudan, driven in particular by Italy, Germany, the UK, and France. The EU as an institution had always been divided in its approach to Sudan, with most member states refusing to engage at all. The UK has historically acted more closely with the US and Norway as the Troika group, whilst France has previously engaged more heavily with the opposition, with Paris a popular destination for opposition talks and conferences. Germany, Italy and others have focused their attention on the Khartoum Government.

The refugee crisis in Europe has altered the domestic calculi of many individual member states, as Sudan has expanded from a foreign policy issue to a cross-departmental priority country. Previously, EU members viewed high-level engagement with the GoS as unlikely to bring about constructive change in the country or the region, and as damaging to their own international standing, but interior ministries are now dictating that action must be taken to bring migrant numbers down. There remains a spectrum of opinion among member states between those engaging bilaterally on wider issues (Germany, the UK, Italy) and those engaging at an institutional level solely on migration, but European migration policy, being driven primarily by the EU Directorate for Migration and Home Affairs (DG-HOME), is moving towards closer cooperation with the Sudanese Government. The UK's developing relationship with Sudan, both individually and as part of the EU's changing strategy, is the subject of this report.

Chapter Two: The Human Rights and Humanitarian Landscape

Humanitarian Indicators

Decades of political and economic marginalisation, aggravated by internal conflicts, have created wide inequalities between the centre and the periphery. In Khartoum, just over a quarter of the population live below the poverty line, but the figure in North Darfur is over two-thirds²².

National humanitarian indicators continue to make for difficult reading. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) puts the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Sudan at 5.8 million²³. Around 4.6 million people are food insecure, and 2 million Sudanese children under the age of 5 are malnourished, with 550,000 of these children suffering from acute malnourishment²⁴. Malnutrition is not limited to conflict-affected areas of Sudan; the majority (52 per cent) of acutely malnourished people live in nine non-conflict-affected states.

Conflict, harsh environmental conditions, such as increased desertification, and political repression are driving displacement, mostly to surrounding countries. In Darfur it is estimated that 129,000 people were displaced during the Government's aerial offensive in Jebel Marra in March last year, bringing the total to 2.6 million²⁵. Similarly in the Two Areas, OCHA estimates that 800,000 people have been displaced by conflict²⁶. In both cases, the continued conflicts are the primary drivers of displacement.

Civil Society

Throughout the inquiry, shrinking civil society space was raised as a key barrier to democratic transformation in Sudan. Freedom of assembly, movement and speech are routinely violated, despite these rights being guaranteed in Sudan's 2005 Interim National Constitution, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sudan is a signatory.

For human rights defenders work in Sudan is precarious and uncertain. The Sudanese Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act 2006, which regulates the role of civil society organisations in Sudan, requires ministerial approval for all foreign funding and forces organisations to register each year with the Humanitarian Aid Commission, the Government regulatory body²⁷. Arbitrary arrest and detention, persecution, and torture were all consistent themes in inquiry submissions, particularly affecting female human rights

defenders. Human Rights Watch reported that the NISS have “raped and sexually abused female activists with impunity” and witnesses confirmed that women were repeatedly verbally abused and questioned about their sexual history²⁸.

Most recently, award-winning human rights activist Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam was arrested on 7 December 2016 and continues to be tortured while on hunger strike against his detention without charge, in a move described by Amnesty International as “further proof of the Government’s intolerance of independent voices²⁹.”

The Khartoum Centre for Training and Development (TRACKS) — TRACKS provides training on a range of areas, including human rights and information technology. Their offices were first raided by the the NISS in March 2015 and again just under a year later, in both instances without search warrants. Six TRACKS employees were charged in August 2016 with, among other things, “waging war against the state,” which carries the death penalty. While three of these employees have now been released, they suffered verbal abuse, their passports were confiscated, and they were denied food whilst in custody of the NISS.

Universities are a highly contested space in Sudan, with students and academic staff routinely subject to arbitrary searches and arrests. In 2015 the APPG heard from Nabil Adib, a human rights defender whose arrest sparked peaceful protest by students at the University of Khartoum in April last year. In May 2016, NISS raided Adib’s office again during a meeting with student activists, resulting in the arrest and incommunicado detention of ten students.

The APPG also heard from Sudanese university alumni groups based in the UK that tighter controls over staff appointments, tougher regulations on curriculums and selective cuts to the Student Support Fund are all damaging the ability of academics and students to study freely, and politicising universities’ output. A recent Amnesty International report claimed that police and security services in Darfur have arrested and detained over 10,000 students since the war began in 2003, and that protests organised by the Darfuri Students Organisation are routinely disrupted with the organisers arrested and tortured³⁰.

At the root of many civil society concerns contained in submissions to the inquiry was the constraints placed on media outlets in Sudan.

Sudan currently ranks 174th out of 180 countries on the Reporters Press Freedom Index, behind all of its regional neighbours aside from Eritrea³¹. The APPG heard that 86 editions of newspapers had been confiscated by security services over the last two years, and countless others had been subject to pre-publication censorship, and the suspension or detention of journalists. The Sudanese Government’s Freedom of Information Law, passed in January 2015, is a step in the right direction toward protecting journalists and their content but the most recent round of Civil Disobedience showed the fragility with which Sudan’s free press is maintained.

The NISS confiscated print-runs from *Al-Tayyar*, *Al-Youm Al-Tali*, and *Al-Watan* for successive days following the November protests, attracting criticism from international partners and prompting a strike called by the Sudanese Journalists Network. This represented the continuation of a concerning trend of intolerance within the GoS, following similar crackdowns in advance of the elections in 2015.

Use of Torture

The threat and use of torture as a means of controlling and suppressing protest continues in Sudan³². Sudan’s Bill of Rights, contained within the 2005 Interim National Constitution, prohibits torture and other cruel and inhumane treatment, but uses a far narrower definition than that accepted in the UN Convention Against Torture, to which Sudan is not a signatory, and gives a maximum punishment of just 3 months’ imprisonment³³. Punishments such as lashings, beatings and even amputations are prescribed as Shari’a punishments, and stoning is used regularly for public order offences³⁴.

Importantly, civil society has no route to challenge this use of torture. Despite documentation of numerous cases, there have been no known prosecutions, in part because state officials are exempt from prosecution under Sudanese law unless the head of his or her respective forces gives prior authorisation³⁵. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has been active in expressing their deep concern about the “mandate and powers that the National Security Act of 2010 gives the NISS” and regularly attends trials of detainees³⁶.

Conduct in Conflict

The conduct of the conflicts in Darfur and the Two Areas stands out as one of the clearest examples

of human rights abuses taking place in Sudan. While both rebels and the Government have been responsible for violations against civilians, independent human rights monitors in Darfur and the Two Areas report the GoS as primarily culpable³⁷.

The Government was accused of clamping down on humanitarian NGOs in advance of the offensive in Jebel Marra last year, expelling the UK-based NGO Tearfund and restricting the movements and operations of others. UNAMID is still unable to monitor and deliver services in all of Darfur, and the annual disagreements with the GoS over mandate renewal and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) have left the mission fatigued and depleted. On the ground, UNAMID can offer little more than crucial physical protection around bases and team sites. The head of OCHA in Sudan, Ivo Freijsen, was refused a visa in June last year, prompting international partners to criticise his “de-facto expulsion³⁸.”

In Blue Nile and South Kordofan, there has been no access for humanitarian assistance for the estimated 540,000 inhabitants since the war began in 2011. Humanitarian access has been subsumed into political negotiations around the future of the Two Areas, with both sides of the conflict seeking to apportion blame to the other for the blockade.

Similarly, the weapons, tactics and personnel employed by the GoS in the conflicts in Darfur and the Two Areas have come under intense criticism. Bombing of civilian locations using indiscriminate weapons such as Antonov barrel bombs and cluster bombs is a consistent theme; an attack on Heiban market in the Nuba Mountains killed six children in May 2016 and prompted widespread international outrage³⁹. In the Two Areas, submissions noted that civilians have been pushed out of urban centres to seek shelter from bombardments, often in caves or riverbeds. The Government has been accused of deliberately targeting civilian sites, such as the bombing of a Médecin Sans Frontières hospital in January 2015⁴⁰.

In Darfur, the allegations of Government-sponsored atrocities are even worse. In September 2016, Amnesty International used interviews, satellite imagery and photographic evidence to report that the GoS “repeatedly used chemical weapons during attacks in Jebel Marra⁴¹.” This amounts to a clear violation of the critical norm of distinction under International Humanitarian Law, along with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to which Sudan is a State Party. To trigger an investigation from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, another

State Party to the CWC must come forward with additional credible, in particular physical, evidence. Witnesses noted that the limits placed upon UNAMID in the area make such evidence impossible to find.

Numerous submissions raised the GoS’s employment of brutal militias to carry out counter-insurgency programmes in Darfur. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a re-established group of former Janjaweed militants, have been employed in recent offensives in Jebel Marra, purportedly under direct orders from Sudanese Vice-President Hassabo Mohammed Abdel Rahman⁴². In January 2016, the Sudanese Parliament passed a draft of the Rapid Support Forces Act, which will enable the President to appoint the commander of the RSF and merge the militia with the national army as and when required. There remained strong concerns among witnesses that the role of the RSF will only grow as the GoS seeks to outsource its security apparatus in Darfur.

Chapter Three: UK Policy in Sudan

UK-Sudan Relations: A Brief Historical Overview

Entwined histories and cultures dictate that the relationship between the UK and Sudanese Governments makes up only a tiny proportion of that between the two peoples.

The UK is thought to be the home of the oldest Sudanese diaspora in the Western world, in part due to the UK's history as the de-facto ruler of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium from 1899 until Sudanese independence in 1956. Some 50,000 Sudanese currently live in the UK, and many middle- and upper-class Sudanese send their children to British universities and visit the UK frequently to see their family members or to have specialist medical treatment not available to them in Sudan. As the 2011 House of Lords Select Committee Report into EU-Sudan Relations noted, these people-to-people links, paired with domestic political factors, have driven UK-Sudan relations in the past and continue to do so today⁴³.

The British Government played an active diplomatic role in the Naivasha process that led to the 2005 CPA. Like other Western powers involved in Naivasha, the UK Government was perceived as having been slow to react to the 2003/4 crisis in Darfur but from 2005 onwards it played a leading role in the Darfur peace process, in the establishment of UNAMID, and in the referral of the Darfur situation to the ICC.

More broadly, while relations between the two Governments have soured in periods, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has consistently channelled humanitarian aid through international NGOs and UN agencies⁴⁴. Together with the US and Norway, as the Troika group, the UK delivered almost 50% of the Overseas Development Aid received by Sudan between 2000 and 2009, and was the leading donor to two Multi Donor Trust Funds agreed at the Oslo Donor Conference in 2005.

In Sudan, people-people links are fostered by, among others, the British Council, whose wide-ranging work includes education, entrepreneurship, leadership and media capacity-building⁴⁵. The British Council organises the Great Britain week in Sudan, bringing together academics, artists and others to celebrate the two countries' relationship. Sudan is also a long-standing partner in the Chevening Scholarship and Fellowship programmes, which offer financial support for prospective Master's students and mid-career professionals respectively⁴⁶.

UK Policy in Sudan: 2015-Present

The role played by successive UK Special Representatives for Sudan and South Sudan, the presence of a large British Embassy in Khartoum, and the existence of a dedicated joint FCO/DFID Sudan Unit reflect the Government's continuing commitment to Sudan.

Through the UK Government's substantial contribution to the APPG's inquiry, publicly available statements, and parliamentary questions, it is possible to build a picture of the UK Government's policy priorities on Sudan.

Conflict areas — The UK Government is supporting – diplomatically, financially, and through the provision of expertise – the AUHIP process and has urged all parties to abide by their commitment to engage on the AUHIP Roadmap Agreement. As the penholder on Darfur in the UN Security Council, the UK continues to call for freedom of movement for UNAMID and unfettered access for humanitarian agencies, lobbying hard for the annual renewal of the mission's mandate until the benchmarks set by the UN Security Council have been met.

The UK is the third-largest humanitarian donor to Sudan, with a projected spend of over £44 million in 2016-17. Dr Chris Pycroft, head of the Sudan Unit in DFID, confirmed that the department is looking to move from early humanitarian recovery to resilience work in Sudan. In practical terms, this shift will place a greater emphasis on inclusive growth, empowering women and girls, and seeking lasting solutions for those in long-term displacement.

Reduction in regional threats and migration — The UK Government's work here is focused mainly around extremism, migration, and outstanding border issues with South Sudan. On extremism, the UK Government is working with the University of Medical Sciences and Technology in Khartoum and the University of Manchester to run anti-radicalisation workshops, alongside existing British Council programmes. The UK has praised the Sudanese Government for its efforts in sharing intelligence with international partners, and for distancing itself from international terror groups that have blighted its reputation in previous decades. The UK Government's continued work with IGAD, and more recently the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee in Juba, and chairmanship of the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative (The Khartoum Process) until January 2017 demonstrate its commitments to regional security and migration respectively.

Economic Development — The UK Government highlighted in evidence that the Sudanese economy lost 75% of oil revenues following South Sudanese independence and that economic mismanagement prevents sufficient funds from reaching basic services. The adverse impacts of climate change and corruption were raised as key challenges for the Sudanese economy in the coming years. DFID's work focuses on limited and targeted interventions in water and sanitation, gender equality training and climate change projects.

Improved Governance and Human Rights — Sudan is one of the UK's 'Human Rights Priority Countries', with the FCO confirming in their 2016 report that "the overall human rights situation has not improved"⁴⁷.

Numerous submissions praised the UK Government's commitment to human rights in Sudan in recent years. Attending trials, expressing concern about the excessive use of force by security services, and raising cases of the detention of students, lawyers and civil society members were all highlighted by witnesses. The UK Government also called for the extension of the tenure of the UN Human Rights Independent Expert.

The Ministry of Defence implements a Defence Engagement Programme to raise awareness of international legal and human rights standards in the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). This programme was subject to a judicial review case in 2015 brought by a Sudanese refugee and lawyer, Ali Agab Nour. The UK Government scaled back the programme in light of ongoing serious human rights abuses by the SAF.

Trade — Promoting trade with Sudan has become a new priority in the UK Government's policy agenda. Whereas for many years active trade promotion was deemed to be inappropriate because of Sudan's human rights record, it is clear from Government evidence, private correspondence between the FCO and NGOs, and public statements, that the promotion of economic ties is now seen to be of increasing importance. Soon after the vote to leave the EU, British Ambassador Michael Aron discussed bilateral trade and economic cooperation with the GoS in a bid to reassure them that "Brexit won't impact on UK-Sudan Relations"⁴⁸. Aron also invited Osama Faisal, the Sudanese State Minister of Investment, to write a guest piece on his own FCO-hosted blog, to encourage British business to invest in Sudan.⁴⁹ This departure from previous UK policy was noted by submissions as part of a broader warming of relations, framed by the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue.

The UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue

While the UK Government's stated priorities across departments on Sudan have not changed since 2015, there has been an important shift in approach since March 2016, through a new policy of phased engagement.

At the request of the GoS, the UK Government has initiated the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue⁵⁰. The Dialogue was launched with a two-day visit to Sudan by FCO Africa Director Neil Wigan in March 2016, followed by a visit to the UK by the Sudanese Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in October, and the Permanent Secretary to the FCO Sir Simon McDonald visiting Sudan on January 10 2017. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour also met on the sidelines of a meeting in Rome to discuss bilateral relations, including trade.

The Dialogue was described as a means to "progress cooperation in areas of mutual interest while increasing dialogue in those areas where we do not always see eye to eye"⁵¹.

The UK Government said in evidence that they had lost the ability to discuss issues of concern due to its overtly critical, and public, stance on human rights issues. This policy of engagement, it is argued, will enable the UK Government to better challenge the GoS on issues of human rights and the peace processes, while simultaneously fostering closer cooperation on issues of perceived mutual concern, such as migration. While the UK Government has always had a working-level relationship and an Ambassador in Khartoum, elevating the relationship to ministerial level through the Dialogue was seen as an important step.

The Dialogue represents a change in approach from public criticism to private discussions, from the 'stick' to the 'carrot'. However, the UK Government insists that this new level of engagement does not affect their position on the ICC arrest warrant for President Bashir, or DFID's policy of not giving any funding directly to the GoS.

The Khartoum Process

Across Europe, migration is dominating policy agendas as Governments seek to tackle the refugee crisis at its source. Domestic political pressures are forcing European Governments

to reconsider their foreign policy priorities and revise established diplomatic relationships.

Sudan is recognised as a source, transit and destination country for refugees in a complex migratory picture. Long-term Eritrean and Ethiopian migrants in Eastern Sudan are emigrating alongside new generations seeking to take the Central Mediterranean route to Europe. Civil wars and insecurity in Darfur and the Two Areas, paired with political repression internally, are pushing many Sudanese to join them.

The UK is a natural destination for many Sudanese refugees because of the existing Sudanese diaspora community, the English language and the cultural familiarity associated with being the former colonial power. Sudan was the fourth-largest source of asylum claims in the UK in 2015, and it was estimated that 47% of the Calais 'jungle' camp hailed from Sudan⁵².

Europe's answer to these migratory pressures is the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, also known as the Khartoum Process⁵³. It was launched in November 2014 as a forum for political dialogue and cooperation on migration between EU Member States and several countries from the Horn and Eastern Africa, including Sudan. The Khartoum Process is an initiative of DG-HOME and Italy, with the UK chairing the Process until December 2016. The UK Government has confirmed in answers to parliamentary questions that its membership of the steering committee of the Khartoum Process will not change as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The main objectives are to develop cooperation at bilateral and regional levels between countries of origin, transit and destination, both to tackle irregular migration and criminal smuggling networks, and to better organise legal migration. Policy options raised in the document include providing training and capacity-building around border management, cooperation on return and readmission, and preventing and combatting human trafficking, through, for example, enhancing national law enforcement agencies.

The Khartoum Process is situated within a broader Action Plan for the Horn of Africa which frames the EU's engagement with the region in 2015-20⁵⁴. The Action Plan will be implemented through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing Root Causes of Irregular Migration in Africa, a delivery mechanism to pool large resources from multiple donors to deliver "immediate and concrete results"⁵⁵. The Khartoum Process itself also draws funding from a bespoke €40 million Better Migration Management Fund dedicated to migration management, and €6

million directly from the German Government. Further rounds of funding are expected in the coming months as Horn of Africa nations come forward with project proposals.

Implementation of the Khartoum Process has been slow⁵⁶. The publication of specific projects to be awarded grants under the scheme is yet to be announced, or a timeline of implementation, but the German Home Office (GIZ) published an extensive overview of the plans for the programme in November 2016⁵⁷.

Some EU Member States have used the process as a springboard for further bilateral migration arrangements. In recent months, Italy has signed a Memorandum of Understanding allowing for deportations back to Sudan, and a new country information note from the UK Home Office states that non-Arab Darfuris, who were previously seen as a particular risk category, can be relocated safely to Khartoum⁵⁸.

Part Two: Findings and Recommendations

Chapter One: Conflicts and the Peace Process

The UK's unwavering support for the AUHIP process is to be commended. The UK's Special Representative to Sudan and South Sudan, Chris Trott, along with FCO and Embassy staff, has been a committed advocate for a peace deal that delivers for the Sudanese people.

However, witnesses repeatedly argued that UK policy focused too heavily on elite-level discussions with the Sudanese Government, at the expense of serious engagement with the opposition and civil society actors.

Diminishing Leverage

The UK Government rightly acknowledges that lasting peace in Sudan is central to solving the nation's internal problems, whether that means achieving a stable economy with falling inequality or an inclusive democratic transformation. The UK Government also confirmed that sustainable peace in Sudan is the most effective means of securing Britain's interests, recognising that Sudan's wars are the primary driver of migration and that extremist groups prosper in times of conflict and political instability.

Any lasting peace will require a comprehensive peace settlement that adds up to more than the sum of its parts. It must be rooted in genuine compromises on both sides, and a promise of an inclusive future. A peace agreement won through attrition, without a long-term vision, is unlikely to stand up to the inevitable domestic pressures, as numerous deals in Sudan's history have shown.

The APPG was frequently told that the Sudanese Government had little incentive to enter into genuine negotiations that would lead to real political reform. Domestically, the GoS faces a weak opposition with persistent divisions, and has declared a state of emergency that covers for layers of corruption within military procurement and spending on auxiliary militias.

Although more united than in previous years, the armed opposition groups are weak. The Sudan Liberation Movement-Abdul Wahid (SLM-AW) was almost wiped out in the assault on Jebel Marra in 2016, and now controls relatively little territory and commands far less legitimacy than in previous years. The UN Panel of Experts on Sudan confirmed in January 2017 that both the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) "no longer have a significant presence in Darfur," with their forces mostly operating in South Sudan and Libya respectively⁵⁹. The SPLM-N have come under considerable pressure from the international community to accept an American

proposal on humanitarian access and do not have the capacity to make significant military gains beyond its existing territories. Politically, President Bashir has secured his position following the internationally disputed elections of May 2015 by replacing elections for Governor roles with presidential appointments, and strengthening his grip over the National Congress Party through successive cabinet reshuffles.

Internationally, the GoS recognises its changing position from global pariah to critical strategic ally. Traditionally vocal critics like the UK and the EU are quietening in the face of their domestic political priorities. New alliances with Russia, China and the Gulf states are unlikely to result in pressure on human rights, and with the US announcing sanctions relief last month, the GoS knows that the international community has fewer points of leverage.

National Dialogue — The APPG heard that the Government's National Dialogue process, dubbed the "National Monologue" by opposition figures, reflected a Government that was committed to the letter of the Roadmap Agreement, but not the spirit. A truly inclusive dialogue must elevate issues of power sharing, constitutional design and reconciliation to a national level, and not treat them as peripheral. The Government ignored the Roadmap Agreement by closing the Friendship Hall Dialogue on 10 October and announcing that it planned to go ahead with a constitutional drafting process based on its recommendations. As the International Crisis Group's Magnus Taylor noted at the time, the Government is "unlikely to make significant concessions while the current status quo remains favourable"⁶⁰.

Progress on key aspects of the peace processes demands an active and at times publicly critical UK Government that uses its international legitimacy as part of the Troika group in constructive ways. The UK must show that, following five months of intense pressure on the Sudan Call to sign the Roadmap agreement last August, they are prepared to apply the same pressure on the Government to make concessions.

A Track Record of Non-Compliance

Witnesses repeatedly stressed the need for more critical engagement, faced with a Sudanese Government which has shown a historical disregard for both international treaties and domestic peace deals.

The GoS has so far ignored the CPA clauses

requiring the accommodation of diversity, an inclusive democratic transition and special administrative status for Abyei, Blue Nile and South Kordofan⁶². Similarly, the Doha Document for Peace demands full and unfettered access for UNAMID, but the GoS routinely ignores the SOFA. The GoS is also in violation of the UN Arms Embargo on Darfur, importing weapons from China and Russia that are later used against civilians⁶³.

Sudan routinely contravenes the UN Convention Against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Geneva Conventions. The weapons used by the Sudanese Government are in violation of international standards, laid out in the Cluster Munitions treaties, and more recently the CWC. The ICC's arrest warrants against five prominent Sudanese politicians remain outstanding, but President Bashir continues to flout this and travel to numerous countries, including Rome Statute signatories. Witnesses stressed that without significant international pressure, there is no reason to believe that President Bashir will view this peace process any differently.

The Government of Sudan's conduct in the conflict in Darfur "betrays a regime and military structure that does not fear international retribution"- Amnesty International⁶¹

Where progress has been made in bringing about behavioural change, it has been thanks to concerted international effort. It was a combined international effort, led by President Obama, that enabled the 2011 referendum on self-determination for the South Sudanese, and it was international consensus that forced both nations back to the table following the Heglig crisis in 2012. We should expect no different in this case.

UK Policy Options

As a response, the UK must use the leverage it has to pressure the Sudanese Government into good faith negotiations.

Economic pressure as political pressure — The recent bout of Civil Disobedience, prompted by the lifting of fuel and medicine subsidies, is a reminder that Khartoum's greatest weakness is its ailing economy.

Sanctions and debt relief have become key targets for the GoS in discussions with international partners. Cracking down on illicit international financial flows can be both a critical means of ensuring those revenues stay within the Sudanese economy, and a key bargaining tool to bring the GoS to the table. The GoS may redress the fuel and drug subsidy structure, but the problems of economic mismanagement, a bloated security structure, and extensive patronage networks will persist.

Unfortunately, both the US and the EU are moving in the opposite direction. In January, then US President Obama issued an Executive Order to revoke most of the sanctions on Sudan in six months' time dependent on the GoS's continued cooperation, and a license that eases existing sanctions immediately. The EU has highlighted debt relief as a key incentive to offer in exchange for Sudanese cooperation on migration⁶⁴. Therefore, instead of using debt relief as a point of leverage to promote behavioural change from the GoS, the EU is considering it as a means of building closer cooperation on the readmission and return of migrants to Sudan. The APPG is clear that any negotiations around debt relief should be rigorously linked to signs of compromise from the GoS.

US campaigning group the Enough Project noted in their submission that the time was right to modernise and enhance economic measures by "ratcheting up targeted pressure on Sudan's ruling elite and key government officials." These economic measures should be carefully calibrated to minimise the unintended negative consequences on the Sudanese people, especially within the medical, humanitarian, people-to-people, and academic sectors. In practical terms, this means exerting economic pressure on those responsible for atrocities in Sudan, namely the NISS and the SAF, and on those sectors which finance repressive behaviour. Specifically, witnesses highlighted the potential of economic measures aimed at the gold trade in Darfur, which is controlled by militia leader Musa Hilal.

Together with active diplomatic pressure on both sides to negotiate in good faith, precise economic measures can provide the international community with valuable leverage to encourage behavioural change from the GoS. This pressure must be sustained beyond the six-month window in which the US maintains leverage in some form via the existing sanctions regime.

Engagement with the opposition — Ministerial visits to the UK, high-level exchanges, and positive public statements send vital signals to the Sudanese Government, its opponents, and

the wider international community.

The APPG is concerned that the initiation of the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue continues a trend of conferring legitimacy on the GoS, at the exclusion of other actors. Although the UK Government is providing discreet capacity-building support to the Sudan Call, Sudanese civil society groups expressed disappointment that the UK has not played a more active diplomatic role with the opposition. Without significant and public recognition of opposition groups, this imbalance threatens the UK's impartiality.

The inquiry heard that the UK Government has been perceived as close to the regime in Khartoum for some years. Evidence presented to the APPG outlined that cooperation between the Sudanese and UK militaries had created conflicts of interest with the UK's collaboration with the UN Panel of Experts on Sudan, and that the relationship between UK defence officials and Sudanese military officers had constrained diplomatic pressure in the past. It was submitted that the UK had privately urged officials on the UN Panel of Experts and key think-tanks to take a softer line on the GoS, for example on the Doha Document for Peace.

Simultaneously, submissions noted a consistent bias against Sudanese opposition groups. The UK consistently pushed for opposition leaders to be placed on UN sanction lists and refused them entry to the UK⁶⁵. The UK Government has refused to host the Sudan Call, despite its signature of the Roadmap Agreement and attempts to unify as an opposition group. In contrast, both France and Germany, which do not have the same close historic ties with Sudan, have hosted meetings of the Sudan Call to promote the peace process in Sudan.

The APPG recognises the continuing divisions within the opposition and acknowledges that disenfranchisement with all sides of the political establishment drives discontent in Sudan. The legitimacy of armed opposition groups as representatives of the people of Darfur and Two Areas remains rightly in question and there is no guarantee that their promises of a pluralist, democratic Sudan are any more credible.

However, as long as the UK Government stands squarely behind the AUHIP process as a vehicle for achieving peace in the conflict areas, it must show itself to be an independent peace broker.

Engagement with civil society — Sudan's future lies in the hands of an active and diverse civil society that represent an optimistic, inclusive vision of the nation.

Supporting this democratic transition is the only route to a lasting peace in Sudan. A fundamental root cause of Sudan's internal instability is the neglect of the periphery by the centre. Whether manifested in the long-term displacement of Darfurians or students who find constant obstacles to their academic pursuits, political and economic disenfranchisement is central.

That is why, following any agreed ceasefire, the UK Government must use its influence to ensure that the GoS's National Dialogue process, which concluded last year, is just the opening phase of national, and sub-national, reconciliation processes. These processes must allow all Sudanese to make their voices heard, including internally displaced persons and refugees, and should be representative of all social sectors including women, youth, academics, journalists, professionals, trade union members, farmers and pastoralists.

Attention should be paid to those newer, generally younger and non-affiliated, groups, for instance the individuals behind the Civil Disobedience campaign, as well as the significant diaspora in the UK, which remains a relatively untapped well of information, opinion and legitimacy for the FCO. Their perspectives are critical to assessing both the Government's and opposition's narratives and looking beyond the immediate peace process to understanding the underlying social, economic and political dynamics.

Girifna — Girifna, which translates as “we are fed up”, was established in October 2009 by a group of university students to encourage people to vote in the 2010 national elections. The youth-led movement is opposed to “war, corruption, dictatorship, injustice, and discrimination against minorities,” and seeks to overthrow the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) through non-violent forms of resistance⁶⁶. Girifna, which currently has over 90,000 followers on Facebook, describes itself as politically non-aligned and disillusioned with a political establishment dominated by older, male, professional politicians⁶⁷. Women have consistently played an important part as leaders of the movement, and the group has campaigned against rape and sexual violence against Sudanese women by security forces.

The latest round of Civil Disobedience must serve as a reminder that the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue, as an elite-driven project, cannot speak to the grassroots discontent in Sudan and must be balanced with affirmative support for the

Sudanese people's democratic aspirations.

Recommendations on the Peace Processes

HMG should press the Government of Sudan to abide by its commitments under the Roadmap Agreement and to create a conducive environment for a genuine, inclusive and transparent National Dialogue, in line with the Troika statement of September 2014.

HMG should ensure that any consideration given to debt relief should be linked to a sustained and monitored cessation of hostilities in the Two Areas and Darfur, unfettered humanitarian access to vulnerable populations across the country and irreversible progress towards democratisation.

Following the signature of the Roadmap Agreement in August 2016, HMG should invite a Sudan Call delegation to visit the UK for structured discussions as a demonstration of serious engagement with both sides.

HMG should request that the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons obtain clarification from the Government of Sudan about its alleged use of chemical weapons in Jebel Marra in accordance with Article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention. If this is not granted, then HMG should request an on-site challenge inspection in accordance with Article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Chapter Two: Extremism

Given the serious threat posed by extremism to UK national security, cooperation on counter-terrorism with the GoS is important and inevitable. It is also nothing new; witnesses highlighted that intelligence sharing between the UK and Sudan peaked in the mid-2000s.

GoS action to prevent Islamic State (IS) members travelling through Sudan, along with intelligence sharing, has been a central factor in the warming of relations with the US and the UK in recent years. Indeed, alongside the perception that Sudan has played a benign role in the crisis in South Sudan, this cooperation ushered in an easing of US sanctions last month and was important in building confidence in the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue in advance of tackling more contentious issues.

Domestic Extremism

The GoS has come a long way from the early days of the Al-Ingaz (Salvation) regime which took power in 1989. A decade of rule by the National Islamic Front (NIF) had left Sudan isolated internationally, with a stagnating economy and dogged by a persistent war with the South. Hassan al-Turabi, the ideological spearhead of the Islamist political movement in Sudan, left the NIF in 1999 to form the Popular Congress Party, confirming the transformation of the NCP from an Islamist regime seeking to transform Sudan to a pragmatic government willing to build bridges with international foes.

Hassan al-Turabi's death in March last year symbolised the end of the political project of Islamic revolution, with the Sudanese Government now trading the religious rhetoric typical at the turn of the millennium with the language of security. Seeking normalised relations with Western states that previously viewed the Bashir regime with distrust, the GoS has publicly distanced itself from religious groups.

The Government of Sudan seeks to portray itself as an "island of stability" within a chaotic region⁶⁸.

The NCP has worked hard internally to distance itself from its religious roots, purging prominent Islamists such as Nafie Ali Nafie and Ali Osman Taha to free the party from ideological constraints, and allow for a more versatile form of government. Instead, the Government promoted its Arab nationalist history, forging strategic alliances with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This brought significant

investment and gave Bashir's regime the religious credibility it needed to keep hard-liners at bay.

The GoS has shown signs of real progress, drawing praise for a new de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programme for detained extremists. The programme has reportedly included 78 people in the last 2 years, using debates and counselling sessions between detainees and religious scholars to promote new understandings of religious texts. The Islamic Jurisprudence Council has acknowledged that a security-focused approach to tackling extremism must be paired with an intellectual dialogue to be successful.

However, submissions repeatedly raised the Janus-like nature of the GoS's efforts on the issue. Academic Suliman Baldo noted that the Sudanese Government has become adept at engaging in intelligence sharing with important international partners while tolerating Salafist groups internally and retaining Islamists within the Sudanese civil service. Similarly, the International Crisis Group highlighted that the NCP tolerates radical Islamists, and most recently supporters of IS, when it is politically advantageous to do so. Sceptics of the de-radicalisation programme, for example, point to a system that has inherently intolerant ideals, and whose security depends on the legitimacy conferred by Islamist ideology⁶⁹.

Powerful new allies are able to assert their influence within this flexible approach to extremism. For example, in October 2014 the Sudanese authorities arrested the coordinator of the Salafist organisation "Unit Ummah," Muhammad al-Jazuli, for encouraging young Sudanese to join IS, in a perceived crackdown on extremist groups. Al-Jazuli was released 240 days later after a Saudi Prince intervened at the request of Dr Esam Ahmed Al-Bashir, Chairman of Sudan's Islamic Fiqh Council and a member of the Global Anti-Aggression Campaign, an anti-Western global alliance of Islamist groups.

Academic Ahmed Hussein Adam told the APPG that, in reality, the GoS enables the spread of extremism through the provision of infrastructure and financial assistance. Extremist groups operate with the approval of Sudan's Religious Scholars Committee and are often provided with mosques and access to finance. Journalist Gill Lusk remarked that the regime "uses the Salafists and other splinter groups both as deniable policy instruments and as bargaining chips⁷⁰." These Salafist groups complain when exposed by the GoS to Washington or London, but ultimately depend on the regime's approval to survive.

Salafist influence is growing in Sudan thanks

to Saudi financial support and the influence of the large Sudanese diaspora in the Gulf. Documents seen by the APPG highlight how the NISS promotes divisions between Sunni and Sufi Islamic communities online. The NISS publishes both positive and negative posts about sermons by clerics such as Muhammad Mustafa Abd al-Qadir and Amin Asr al-Amin. In doing so, the GoS seeks to control the balance between traditional Sufi Islam previously dominant in Sudan, and the increasingly important role played by imported Wahabi Islam, to meet the political challenges the NCP faces.

In this balance lies a dangerous double-game to which the international community should be wary of falling victim. The regime has the capacity to rid the country of extremist groups, and has shown promising signs of engaging with the ideological divisions that foster extremism in Sudan. However, in the absence of an ideological core to the modern NCP, these groups remain key to the regime's religious credibility, both domestically and with its allies in the Gulf. The international community must therefore be vigilant in its approach to intelligence cooperation, bearing in mind that it is politically contingent.

Extremism and Democratic Transformation

Tackling extremism in Sudan in the long-term requires more than simply punitive measures against convicted extremists. A peaceful, democratic transformation in Sudan will be critical.

The UN Panel of Experts in 2015 warned that the ongoing conflict in Darfur could be "fertile ground" for infiltration by radical Islamists⁷¹. Porous borders and established cross-border links between Sudanese tribal groups and those in the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali and Niger give Islamist groups ready access to resources and personnel.

The increasingly complex nature of the war in Darfur reinforces the importance of a multi-layered National Dialogue process. Years of brutal counter-insurgency against communities in the conflict zones as well as continuing discrimination towards non-Arab communities in Darfur by an Arab-led government in Khartoum demand a carefully calibrated, inclusive process to tackle divisions. This must be a long-term plan, founded on a durable peace agreement and sustained by the liberty of the multitude of groups in Darfur to raise their specific concerns.

More broadly, Sudan's democracy must be nurtured by a free and active civil society, rooted in a strong and independent education system.

Schools and universities have always been key battlegrounds in the fight against extremism. When the Sudanese authorities attacked a fundamentalist training camp in al-Dindir national park in 2012, all of those arrested were university students and teachers. In 2013, al-Qaeda targeted the University of Khartoum as the focal point for their student wing. More recently, the University of Medical Sciences and Technology was in the spotlight after as many as 22 British-Sudanese students travelled from the University to Syria to join up with IS in February this year.

During the Second Civil War, the GoS used schools as a means of framing the North-South divide along religious lines, with children being taught that those in the South were "kufar" (infidels) and those who fought them were "mujahedeen" (religious fighters). Mandatory conscription to the Popular Defence Forces reinforced this trend as young people hoping to enter university were forced to attend a military camp for three months, which often formed loci for radical jihadi discourse where the conflict with the South was designated as a "holy war."

Witnesses argued that today, the increased Arabisation of the Sudanese curriculum pushes young students towards radicalisation and prevents open and challenging debate. Journalist Al Haj Warrag noted a bias against non-Muslims in the state curriculum, along with virulent anti-Western themes. Independent civil society is also under attack. Constant crackdowns on anti-government news outlets, human rights defenders, church communities, and youth activists restrict the plurality of views presented to ordinary Sudanese.

The most sustainable way to tackle extremist ideologies is to open them up to challenge and public debate through a free press and liberal education system. Instead, witnesses were concerned that the GoS prioritises short-term political stability by acquiescing to hard-line groups.

The UK's Role in Tackling Extremism

The UK Government can play a far more active role in promoting an atmosphere of open and critical debate. Clearly, pressing the GoS to reform the narrow National Dialogue process so that it forms the basis for a real, inclusive democratic transition will be vital.

The UK should also use its influence, through the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue, to prioritise issues of press freedom and a vibrant civil society, and call out the GoS where progress is not being made. Witnesses repeatedly told the APPG that they feared these issues were being pushed down the agenda in the face of more pressing goals of tackling irregular migration and intelligence sharing.

More directly, the UK should utilise and broaden existing people-to-people links to foster a free and open exchange of ideas. The Chevening Scholarship, for example, should be expanded. At the moment, only 14 Sudanese students come to the UK each year, primarily from middle-class backgrounds and often from Khartoum. More proactive efforts should be made to include students from the marginalised areas of Sudan. The British Council should play an important role, developing its existing educational and cultural work in Sudan, expanding its English-language teacher training programmes and broadening its work on improving national media practices⁷².

Recommendations on Extremism

HMG should draw regularly on information available from Sudanese civil society and other experts in assessing the role of the Government of Sudan in relation to extremism both internally and externally.

HMG should explore the scope for enlarging scholarship programmes and educational, research and cultural exchange programmes for young Sudanese. HMG should expand the Chevening Scholarship programme to offer more places for Sudanese students, especially those from Darfur, the Two Areas and Eastern Sudan.

HMG should support independent media institutions in Sudan by offering technical assistance and diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sudan to provide improved safeguards for journalists from government interference.

HMG should take further steps to prevent the radicalisation of young British-Sudanese, including by supporting inter-generational dialogue amongst the Sudanese diaspora in the UK.

Chapter 3: Migration

As a domestic priority for the UK, controlling migration has assumed greater importance in UK policy towards Sudan. As a source, transit, and destination country for refugees and migrants, the EU must enlist the support of the Sudanese Government, opposition and civil society to tackle the root causes of displacement.

However, submissions were uniformly critical of the Khartoum Process as a policy response to migration flows from and through Sudan. Deemed likely to be ineffective in tackling migration and highly damaging to the EU's reputation as a human rights standard-bearer, witnesses argued that the Khartoum Process requires significant reform if it is to be fit for purpose.

The Government of Sudan as a Driver of Migration

The GoS is heavily implicated in the drivers of migration from Sudan. Years of violent conflict targeting civilians in the peripheries, internal political repression, economic mismanagement, widening inequality, and corruption have forced many Sudanese to seek refuge abroad and have fostered networks of smugglers and traffickers. Regional migrants travelling through Sudan are subject to work restrictions, forcing many to work illegally in Khartoum to fund their onward journey. The UK Government acknowledged this in evidence, and the EU has done so publicly. The Khartoum Process therefore aims to “address the root causes of irregular migration” through building the capacity of the state that has itself created many of these problems⁷³.

Witnesses stressed that the quickest way to prevent migratory flows from Sudan would be a synchronised cessation of hostilities, macroeconomic reform to reduce inequality and work incentives for transitive migrants from the region. Instead, the Khartoum Process is the latest example of an emerging narrative in which the Sudanese Government is portrayed an island of stability within a complex and turbulent region, a narrative that was reinforced by the recent US decision to ease sanctions.

It follows, therefore, that the Khartoum Process focuses on the criminality of non-state actors, including human trafficking and smuggling networks, while ignoring both the role of the GoS's restrictive policies in forcing migrants into the hands of traffickers and smugglers, and the collusion of the Sudanese security services, police and military with these same actors. Sudanese civil society groups recognised this

in a statement in June 2016, highlighting that the EU is attempting to tackle the refugee crisis while employing the primary 'push' factor as an implementing partner⁷⁴.

Drugs Trade — The GoS has proven itself capable and willing to tackle issues of a similar nature. The routes taken by smugglers and human traffickers are mostly the same as those used for arms and the drugs trade. The GoS arrests and charges drug smugglers, but fails to do so with human traffickers. This is for a variety of reasons including the risks of heightening tensions between communities in Eastern Sudan, removing a key source of income in an already impoverished region, and the political costs of enacting tough anti-corruption laws. This experience tells us that the EU's focus on building capacity misdiagnoses the complex nature of people smuggling in Sudan; the issue is entrenched corruption and not capacity.

In Eastern Sudan, for example, Human Rights Watch have conclusively shown that military officials have handed migrants over to traffickers, turned a blind eye at checkpoints and routinely failed to identify and prosecute traffickers, even when they violate the 2014 Combating Human Trafficking Act⁷⁵. First-hand testimonies have shown the complicity of state officials, regional human traffickers, and the Rashaida and Hidarib tribes, who work together to facilitate people smuggling⁷⁶. Given that the 2014 Act exists, the Better Migration Management programme's focus on legal reform is misguided and neglects the role the Sudanese state plays by failing to enforce the legislation.

In June 2016 the US downgraded Sudan to Tier 3 of its Trafficking in Persons Index, defined as governments that "do not fully comply and are not making significant efforts to do so"⁷⁷.

Such proven complicity poses operational problems for the strategy outlined in the Khartoum Process. In the knowledge that the money to be made from the Khartoum Process is far less than that derived from the smuggling and human trafficking industry, and that the Sudanese Government's record on corruption is among the worst in the world, the EU's reliance on the Sudanese state as a primary implementing partner is misguided.

These challenges underline the need for rigorous benchmarks against which external actors can evaluate the Process' progress. In real terms, this means the publication of migration figures from Sudan to the EU where Sudan is either an origin or a transit country, and regular consultations with NGOs and civil society groups where they are able to present evidence to the steering committee.

Human Rights Risks

This inquiry was dominated by the human rights concerns associated with the Khartoum Process. Beyond debates about its effectiveness, witnesses were seriously concerned that the Khartoum Process deprioritises human rights in favour of meeting migration targets.

This was recognised internally by UK Government officials who, as revealed in the recent Freedom of Information (FoI) request on the Khartoum Process, acknowledge that the human rights concerns raised by NGOs "mirror the risks we have internally highlighted in engaging with the GoS⁷⁸." Indeed, they went further to say that the risks of human rights abuses will be a "huge and enduring challenge" facing the process⁷⁹.

As it stands, the Khartoum Process is an ill-defined framework that is open to abuse. Without clear human rights benchmarks, the EU will remain open to the accusation that they are providing financial and technical assistance without robust safeguards in place. In particular, witnesses raised the need for human rights standards in the areas of transparency, end-user accountability, access to monitor implementation, safe passage and refoulement.

Transparency — At the root of human rights concerns with the Khartoum Process is the lack of transparency and monitoring provisions.

A common criticism of the advocacy community from both the UK Government and the EU is the consistent misreporting of the real impacts of the Khartoum Process. It has been argued that journalists, NGOs, and others are scaremongering about the creation of "camps" in Sudan and about financing the RSF⁸⁰. Regardless of the merits of these claims, and though the evidence so far shows the truth to be somewhere in between, the lack of transparency is creating an atmosphere of distrust around the Process as a whole. UK officials noted privately that many of the concerns raised by NGOs were related to the "opacity and confusion of the various migration initiatives⁸¹."

This is an issue that the EU has been responsive to in recent months. There is now a Khartoum Process website with information on key meetings held, and GIZ's published overview of the Better Migration Management programme is comprehensive⁸². However, as a recent Institute for Security Studies briefing pointed out, little from the steering group meetings in either London in November 2015 or Khartoum in June 2016 has been put on the record⁸³. In the absence of details, the Sudanese Government's track record is likely to cause continuing concern, and so making meeting minutes, policy documents and implementation plans publicly available will be critical to the programme's success.

The Sudanese security sector — A bloated security sector is at the heart of Sudan's corruption problem, with \$9.6bn allocated for the Ministry of Interior in the 2017 budget⁸⁴. By focusing on building the capacity of border agencies, the Khartoum Process is likely to inflate the sector even further.

The Rapid Support Forces, comprising members of the Janjaweed, the brutal militia guilty of serious human rights violations during the 2003 counter-insurgency war in Darfur, were formed in 2013 to combat rebels in Darfur and the Two Areas. Since then, they have looted villages, burned homes and tortured, raped and killed civilians, all under the auspices of the Government⁸⁵. The precise orders under which the RSF have been acting are unclear, but submissions repeatedly warned that they have been undertaking border security missions.

RSF and the Khartoum Process — The RSF has been quick to seize upon the turning political tide toward migration control:

- **August 2016** — RSF Commander, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo a.k.a Hametti, tells the media: "What we are doing is part of the plan set for 2016. We were ordered/requested to close the borders with South Sudan and [with] the northern and north-western borders⁸⁶."
- **August 2016** — In a press conference at the Sudanese Ministry of Defence, Hametti declared following the arrest of migrants on the Sudan/Libya border: "Although the RSF lost many of its members and vehicles... the EU has not expressed its gratitude⁸⁷."
- **September 2016** — Hametti is quoted on Facebook as saying his forces had "combed and cleansed the north-western borders of the remnants of rebel movements and of human traffickers and smugglers⁸⁸."
- **January 2017** — Hametti tells the media that the RSF have rescued 115 hostages from human traffickers along Sudan's border with Egypt and Libya⁸⁹.

The APPG acknowledges that the EU later rejected the RSF's claim that they were involved in the Khartoum Process and accepts that the RSF have vested interests, including their own dire economic situation, for claiming involvement. However, these press statements are a highly concerning reminder of the close relationship between the GoS and the RSF, and the need for strict human rights standards regarding end-user accountability for training and equipment⁹⁰.

The UK Government has precedent in providing funds to Sudanese state actors. DFID spent £850,000 on a programme of police reform in Sudan, which was terminated ahead of schedule due to the violent suppression of demonstrations in which hundreds of unarmed protesters were killed⁹¹. The project ran counter to the FCO's own assessment of Sudan's highly repressive human rights environment and previous public documents outlining the militaristic style of the police force in Sudan⁹².

Highlighting the case, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact concluded "political support for transforming their [police forces abroad] culture and ways of operating often proves short-lived or illusory⁹³." The Commission also said that the UK should learn from its experience in Sudan that "it is problematic when DFID helps to build capacity that might be misused, without a strong focus on safeguards and accountability⁹⁴."

Safe passage — Safe and voluntary passage was raised in the Valletta Summit Action Plan, but this emphasis was not operationalised in the Khartoum Process. In contrast with the Rabat Process, in which "organising mobility and legal migration" was the first pillar of the Rome Programme, the Khartoum Process focuses far more on livelihood development and border capacity⁹⁵. Instead, the EU could do far more within the Process to make available legal pathways for migrants and refugees through, by way of example, smoother family reunification, expanded educational exchange programmes or the liberalisation of visa regulations.

"Ultimately, walls are more effective when there are gates through them, otherwise too many people resort to illegal means" — European Council on Foreign Relations⁹⁶

Waging Peace, Dr Lutz Oette, the International Refugee Rights Initiative and others all highlighted the bias within the Khartoum Process towards keeping would-be migrants in Sudan,

through development funding, enhancing border security and closer cooperation on returning migrants. This is contrary to a growing body of academic literature that suggests development funding actually increases migration if it is not paired with solutions to political discontent⁹⁷. The Khartoum Process therefore not only represents the politicisation and instrumentalisation of development funding, but it is also based on the false premise that development money will diminish rather than fuel migratory flows.

GIZ's explanatory document recognises the limited legal ways to migrate and includes plans to work with the International Organisation for Migration to promote bilateral arrangements between source and destination countries. However, this is only raised as an objective to increase awareness of alternative livelihood options to irregular migration⁹⁸.

Refoulement and return — Refoulement, the forcible return of refugees to a country where they are likely to face persecution, is the emerging issue for NGOs. Dr Oette and others noted that the long-term aim of the Khartoum Process was to enable the UK and other EU Governments to more easily return failed asylum-seekers to Sudan, and from Sudan to their countries of origin, despite non-refoulement being a key principle in international law.

Witnesses pointed to the vulnerability of Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan in particular to round-ups by security services, detention, deportation and refoulement⁹⁹. Already we have seen the removal of 313 Eritreans in Dongola, Northern Sudan, prompting criticism from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), and numerous other cases of collective expulsions¹⁰⁰. The EU must ensure that the human rights of Eritrean and Ethiopian migrants are respected, and that these deportations cease.

The inquiry also heard concerns that the UK is relaxing its rules on returns to Sudan despite few sign of improvements in the human rights situation there. The UK Government confirmed in evidence that non-Arab Darfuris are no longer automatically granted asylum and may be returned, and in particular relocated to Khartoum according to a Home Office Country Policy and Information Note. In a recent Country Guidance case, the Home Office also noted that the possible "rough handling" of migrants by Sudanese state officials did not meet the UK Government's criteria for protection against deportation under UK law, setting a concerning precedent¹⁰¹.

The Memorandum of Understanding, established under the auspices of the Khartoum Process

between the Italian and Sudanese governments, has important ramifications for Italy's European partners. Last year saw 48 migrants forcibly deported back to Sudan in August, without guarantees for their safety in Sudan. Importantly for the UK Government, it is expected that deportations to Italy under the Dublin regulations may now be subject to legal challenge as there can be no guarantee that those migrants will not then be removed to Sudan. Given the percentage of Sudanese applicants that are Italian third-country cases, this has the potential to significantly increase the number of claims that will need to be processed in the UK.

Tackling displacement upstream and cooperating with regional partners is to be encouraged but the UK Government's steadfast support for the Khartoum Process as it stands is highly concerning. Ultimately, turning a blind eye to gross human rights violations is not an option; the UK Government must avoid a blinkered focus on migration that leads it to bargain with regimes that have been justifiably held at arm's-length.

Recommendations on Migration

HMG should ensure that specific and concrete benchmarks are set against which progress can be measured. For example, agreement by the Government of Sudan to give work permits to Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees living in camps in Eastern Sudan.

The number of asylum seekers who have reached Europe from Sudan and of asylum seekers from neighbouring countries who have used Sudan as a transit route since the start of the Khartoum Process should be published and regularly updated.

HMG should ensure that, if any training and equipment were to be provided to Sudanese security officials, it should be subject to strict safeguards to ensure that it is not used for repressive purposes.

HMG should use its influence to ensure that safe, legal migration pathways are prioritised within those projects financed by the Better Migration Management fund in alignment with the joint Action Plan agreed at the Valetta summit.

HMG should ensure that strong monitoring mechanisms are in place to guarantee compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, particularly to guard against the refoulement of refugees recognised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Conclusion: Ways Forward for the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue

Ultimately, discussions around specific policy areas cannot be disentangled from the broader question of whether the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue is an effective vehicle to achieve the UK's stated goal of "a Sudan at peace with itself and its neighbours, meeting the needs and aspirations of its people"¹⁰².

The success or failure of the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue remains to be seen, but in its initiation the UK Government gave up two critical forms of leverage with few conditions attached. No longer would they issue as many critical human rights statements condemning the GoS, and from now on the GoS would be invited to exchange high-level ministerial exchanges, including trade delegations¹⁰³.

As a result, the pace of progress through the Dialogue is likely to be slow and piecemeal. The GoS, sensing that the political tide in Europe and the US has turned in their favour, has little incentive to make concessions quickly. The UK Government can and should aim higher than raising cases of abuse or sharing best practice¹⁰⁴. Particularly following the departure of the influential US Special Envoy Donald Booth, the international community requires an active UK presence that mainstreams progress on human rights into wider political and economic strategy.

The announcement of closer bilateral ties without progress on significant issues, such as humanitarian access, strengthens the GoS's hand, both against domestic opponents and in future discussions with international partners. While the people of Sudan are protesting for a broad-based transition to democracy, the pursuit of a closer bilateral relationship with the Government misjudges the political mood in the country.

So while more effective engagement with the GoS is to be welcomed when aligned with human rights principles, the inquiry heard that it is taking place at the expense of relationships with civil society figures. The promotion of closer people-to-people links, capacity building within and between Sudanese civil society organisations, and pressure on the GoS to roll back recent repressive policies on independent organisations should be at the forefront of any engagement.

The UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue must be a single part of a far broader and deeper engagement which supports all those who are fighting for peace, justice and human rights in Sudan.

Recommendations on the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue

HMG should ensure that the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue is backed up by rigorous, transparent benchmarks, which allow for scrutiny and regular progress reviews by external actors.

HMG should place international human rights and democratic values at the heart of the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue, insisting on clear evidence of progress before any further engagement.

In parallel with the UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue, HMG should broaden its engagement with a wide range of Sudanese civil society groups, both within Sudan and in the UK, including from the conflict zones.

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All Party Parliamentary Group for Sudan and South Sudan