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**House of Lords Hansard**

1. **Sudan**

**15 January 2019**

**Question Asked by**

[**Baroness Cox**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=3364)

**To ask Her Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made of the current situation in Sudan, with particular reference to the recent protests in that country.**

[**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con)**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=4210)

**My Lords, we are very concerned by the current situation in Sudan. Together with our troika partners, Norway and the United States, we continue to call for restraint in policing the protests, for the release of detainees and for accountability for those killed. We expect the Sudanese people to be allowed to exercise their right to freedom of peaceful expression. Sudan’s response to these protests will shape our approach to engagement with the Government of Sudan in the coming months and years.**

[**Baroness Cox (CB)**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=3364)

**My Lords, I thank the Minister for his reply. Is he aware that I visited war zones in Sudan virtually every year during the self-avowed jihad waged by its Government from 1989 to 2005 and, subsequently, saw people suffering from its genocidal policies in the Nuba mountains and Blue Nile? Every time that I have returned and raised these issues in your Lordships’ House, the Government’s reply has always been, “We are talking to the Government in Khartoum”. That Government there love talking to the British Government but continue to kill while they talk. So what specific requirements are the Government placing on the Sudan Government after their current atrocious perpetration of human rights abuses against peaceful protesters, including reportedly killing 40 and injuring and arresting hundreds more—or will Her Majesty’s Government allow the Government of Sudan to continue their violations of human rights with impunity?**

[**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=4210)

**My Lords, I am fully aware of the work done by the noble Baroness in Sudan and the support she extends to people there who are suffering oppression and the denial of their human rights. As Minister for Human Rights, I assure her that I am acutely aware of these challenges. During a visit to Sudan last year, I raised these directly with government officials as well as civil society leaders. On the issue of our engagement, our excellent ambassador there, His Excellency Irfan Siddiq, met directly with the acting Foreign Minister immediately after these protests. As I outlined in my original Answer, we will hold the Sudanese Government to account if they ​persist in the brutal suppression of the longest protests we have seen since the independent Sudan came into being.**

**There have been some positives, however. Through our direct engagement, we saw a humanitarian corridor open to South Sudan to address some of the issues beyond the borders of Sudan itself. So engagement does have some positive returns.**

[**Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab)**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=4222)

**My Lords, there is no doubt that engagement has a positive impact, but the Minister referred to the impact of the relationship. What range of impacts does it have? The strategic dialogue meeting will take place very shortly, at which surely we should make it clear to the Sudanese that we will not continue this dialogue if they continue to abuse human rights the way they are doing.**

[**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=4210)

**My Lords, the noble Lord is aware that, on these issues of direct engagement, the strategic dialogue allows for exactly those conversations to take place. For example, at the last strategic dialogue in November last year, issues of human rights, including human trafficking, modern slavery, freedom of religion or belief and gender equality, were all raised in a productive and structured way. I assure the noble Lord, and your Lordships’ House, that we will continue to do so and use those dialogues to ensure that we hold the Government to account.**

[**Lord Chidgey (LD)**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=50)

**My Lords, the Minister recognised that the largest demonstrations for some considerable time are taking place in Sudan right now, with the same measure of reaction from state security. It is rather disturbing that Qatar, Saudi Arabia, China and even the United States seem to continue to side with President Bashir. Now we have reports that Russia’s mercenary army—the Wagner—fresh from atrocities in Syria and Ukraine, is now seen on the streets of Khartoum, presaging an escalation of peaceful protest into bloody violence.**

**In the meantime, is the Minister aware that the Mo Ibrahim Foundation reports that Sudan has dropped towards the bottom of its index of African governance, because of its human rights abuses and lack of freedom? Will the Government now liaise with that foundation and work with African Governments, beyond the IGAD arrangements, to protect the well-being of the Sudanese people?**

**[Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=4210" \o "View member's contributions)**

**I will certainly follow up on what the noble Lord suggests. He mentioned IGAD at the end of his question. The returns that we have seen from the IGAD relationship demonstrate directly the benefits of Uganda and Sudan working for the betterment of near neighbours, including South Sudan.**

[**Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB)**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=738)

**My Lords, has the Minister had a chance to look at the information that I sent him in the past couple of days about the disproportionate use of force by the Bashir regime in firing bullets and tear-gas into a hospital? Is this not in line with precisely what this regime has done in Darfur, ​where 2 million people were displaced and 200,000 killed, and in Blue Nile and South Kordofan, to which my noble friend Lady Cox referred? Is this not also in line with a Government who are in debt to some $40 billion and are using that money on violence and internal repression rather than to lift up the standard of living of people who are often living in gross misery, fuelling the exodus from that country and therefore fuelling all of the deaths that we see in the Mediterranean?**

[**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**](https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/MemberContributions?house=Lords&memberId=4210)

**I have seen the detailed assessment that the noble Lord sent, and I thank him for it. We are acutely aware of, and of course deplore, the attack that took place on the hospital, firing into those people and actually targeting those who were assisting people who were already injured. It was appalling, and I assure the noble Lord that we are taking it up in the strongest terms. On the wider issue of Darfur, during my visit to Sudan I did visit the region. With the UN mission actually pulling away from Darfur, we remain deeply concerned that any gains that have been made in bringing peace will be lost.**