

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 21, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

A number of Senators wrote to you on the eve of the January 9 referendum in Sudan, supporting a renewed focus on a number of post-referendum issues to ensure that both states – the north and new South Sudan – can succeed. We write again with concern about the new crisis unfolding in Sudan.

After a historic January referendum on the independence of southern Sudan, which was the culmination of the 2005 peace deal between north and south, south Sudan appeared poised to peacefully secede and become the world's newest country on July 9. But five months after that referendum, fighting in the border areas of Abyei and Southern Kordofan threatens to derail implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and bring both sides to the brink of renewed civil war. We are concerned about what this could mean for the Sudanese people as well as for U.S. interests in stability in the region.

The dispute over Abyei was supposed to be addressed through a referendum also scheduled for January, but with that vote postponed, tensions over the border area have increased, with multiple attacks on civilians and UN personnel by forces affiliated with both parties. In May, in response to an attack by southern Sudan forces on a UN convoy transporting northern soldiers, Khartoum forcibly took over Abyei in a strategic, aerial and ground offensive. The incursion has forced over a hundred thousand Abyei residents to flee their homes, clearing the region of most of its Ngok Dinka residents. The Sudanese army's occupation was also marked by widespread looting and destruction of civilian homes and humanitarian supplies. Your administration has rightly condemned both sides for taking up arms, highlighting the "disproportionate and irresponsible" response of the northern forces to the initial southern attack.

As you know, heavy fighting continues in Southern Kordofan between the Sudanese army and affiliated militias and elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), resulting in the displacement of over 50,000 people. Witnesses on the ground report that Sudanese government forces are targeting and killing civilians based on their political affiliation and looting and destroying homes. Crucial humanitarian access to vulnerable populations has been limited.

We welcome your work with the UN Security Council in drafting a statement calling on Sudan to immediately cease offensive operations and withdraw its forces from Abyei and calling on leaders from both sides to resume negotiations on a way forward. We are also encouraged by the Administration's statement that U.S. Special Envoy Princeton Lyman will remain in the region

to continue urging a peaceful resolution to the crisis. These are all important steps, but we also encourage the Administration to:

1. Urge both northern and southern leaders to resume negotiations on all issues, not just on Abyei. In particular, your continuing support is critical for African Union efforts to resolve the impasse over Abyei, cease hostilities and secure new security arrangements in the borderland territories of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and conclude post-referendum negotiations. While we welcome the recent announcement that an agreement has been reached to demilitarize Abyei, we urge your continued engagement and support for its full implementation.
2. Cease all consideration of normalizing relations with Sudan, offering debt relief, or removing Sudan from the state sponsors of terrorism list until the north reaches a negotiated settlement with the south and meets commitments under the CPA on the disputed area of Abyei and territories of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and demonstrates meaningful progress toward a peaceful resolution of the Darfur conflict.
3. Make clear to southern Sudan leaders that international assistance will be conditioned on conduct consistent with international human rights law. We are also concerned about UN reports of mass civilian casualties in the southern village of Kaldak caused by southern Sudan soldiers, which leads to questions about the ability of south Sudan's leaders to discipline its own forces.
4. Finally, we encourage you to urge Arab states and China – all of which have deep ties to Sudan – to use their leverage to persuade President Bashir to withdraw his troops and implement key CPA commitments so as to reduce tensions at this critical time.

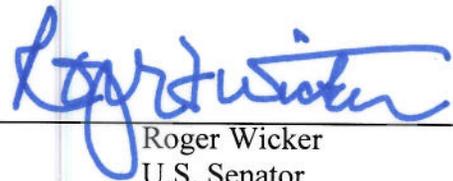
President Bashir may be using the presence of his troops to tip the scales in his favor in ongoing negotiations with south Sudan on border demarcations, oil revenues, and other post-independence issues. But any long-term resolution and peaceful outcome to these disputes must be based on CPA commitments, offering the Sudanese people a fair process through which to realize their aspirations.

We thank you for your continuing attention to these critical issues for the future of Sudan.

Sincerely,



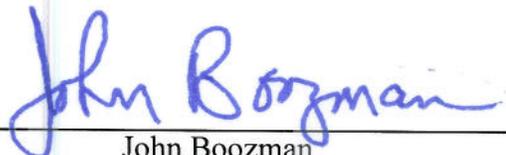
Mark Udall
U.S. Senator



Roger Wicker
U.S. Senator



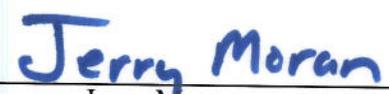
Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



John Boozman
U.S. Senator



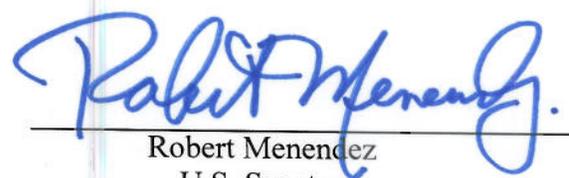
Tom Harkin
U.S. Senator



Jerry Moran
U.S. Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator



Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



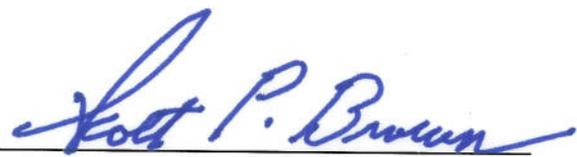
Frank Lautenberg
U.S. Senator



Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator



Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senator



Scott Brown
U.S. Senator