

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 3, 2026

Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Secretary Rubio,

We write with alarm regarding the Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) impending siege of the city of El Obeid in Sudan, which threatens a repeat of the mass atrocities and bloodshed that occurred in El Fasher this past October.¹ While we welcome the State Department's expression of concern about the escalating situation in El Obeid,² words are not enough. The United States must use the leverage and influence at our disposal to prevent further atrocities in El Obeid and help bring this brutal war in Sudan to an end. These actions should include ceasing certain U.S. arms sales to external actors that are fueling this war, including the United Arab Emirates, which continues to arm the RSF.

We have already witnessed what happens when the international community fails to heed warnings of RSF atrocities. The RSF's siege and devastation of El Fasher bore the "hallmarks of genocide" according to United Nations investigators.³ A United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission found that "the Rapid Support Forces steadily squeezed the life out of El-Fasher and surrounding displacement camps, cutting off food, water, medical supplies, and humanitarian assistance, while subjecting the city to recurring shelling and ground assaults. Civilians were increasingly trapped, as escape routes were restricted or closed, and forced to endure conditions of life progressively incompatible with human survival."⁴ This 18-month siege culminated in a 3-day rampage in October 2025, where survivors describe the slaughter of civilians, mass executions, and crimes against humanity.

El-Fasher University "became one of the bloodiest execution sites in the city." According to survivors, over a hundred civilians were gunned down or executed as they sought shelter or

¹ Mpoke Bigg, Matthew, and Brian O. Otieno. "U.S. Warns of 'Imminent' Atrocities in Sudanese City." *The New York Times*, 23 Jan. 2026, www.nytimes.com/2026/06/23/world/africa/sudan-war-rsf-atrocities.html.

² "Threats of Atrocities Around El Obeid by the Rapid Support Forces and Their Allied Forces." *The United States Department of State*, 22 June 2026, www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/06/threats-of-atrocities-around-el-obeid-by-the-rapid-support-forces-and-their-allied-forces/.

³ Mishra, Vibhu. "Sudan: 'Hallmarks of Genocide' Found in El Fasher, UN Investigators Detail Mass Killings and Ethnic Targeting." *United Nations*, 19 Feb. 2026, news.un.org/en/story/2026/02/1166997.

⁴ "Sudan: Hallmarks of Genocide in El Fasher Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan." *United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 10 Mar. 2026, www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/advance-version/a-hrc-61-77-advanceeditedversion.pdf.

attempted to flee. Survivors described notorious RSF commander Abu Lulu, known as the “Butcher of El-Fasher,” asking a pregnant woman how far she was in her pregnancy and then firing seven bullets into her abdomen when she replied that she was seven months along. He at one point said, “I was planning to kill 2000 people today, but I lost count, so I will start all over again.” In the case of El-Saudi Hospital, RSF forces stormed the hospital and “proceeded to search the wards and killing those they found, including patients, accompanying persons and medical personnel...it is estimated that over 460 patients and others present were killed.” Flight didn’t bring safety, according to survivors, as “The Rapid Support Forces pursued fleeing civilians along escape routes...where they had established ambushes and checkpoints...the perpetrators chasing people in open fields, firing at them with automatic rifles and mounted submachine guns, and running over fleeing persons with vehicles, causing mass casualties.”⁵ The horrors were visible from space, with satellite images analyzed by the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab showing bodies piled up in the streets, pools of blood on the ground, and mass burial sites.^{6 7}

The siege of El Fasher lasted for over 500 days, and the ensuing atrocities were widely foreseen and repeatedly forewarned by the United Nations, intelligence from the U.S. State Department and foreign governments, humanitarian monitors, and researchers.⁸ We remain greatly concerned by this administration’s grave failure to act despite the chorus of alarm bells. What occurred in El Fasher is a stark warning of what could unfold in El Obeid and across Sudan if this administration—and the international community—continues this current pattern of inaction.

And now those alarm bells are ringing once again – this time in El Obeid. Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said on July 3, “This is not a drill. It is a red alert that needs to land on the desks of heads of state and government around the world. Their phones should be running hot in the coming days and weeks, with ideas on how to prevent atrocity crimes in El Obeid and in other places in Kordofan.”⁹ Tom Fletcher, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said of El Obeid on June 30, “Too often in this brutal war, clear warnings have been ignored. Civilians have paid

⁵ “Sudan: Hallmarks of Genocide in El Fasher Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan.” *United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 10 Mar. 2026, www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/advance-version/a-hrc-61-77-advanceeditedversion.pdf.

⁶ Monetta, Sara. “Visible from Space, Bloody Sands Expose the Slaughter of Tens of Thousands in Sudan.” *NBC News*, 1 Nov. 2025, www.nbcnews.com/world/africa/sudan-africa-civil-war-rapid-support-forces-el-fasher-massacre-rcna240708.

⁷ Gambrell, Jon, and Fatma Khaled. “Satellite Images Suggest Evidence of Mass Burials Ongoing in Sudan’s El-Fasher.” *Associated Press News*, 5 Nov. 2025, apnews.com/article/sudan-kordofan-darfur-war-rsf-army-181c12ded100933c2ec9ce23a89f97b5.

⁸ Townsend, Mark, et al. “Heroism, Horror and the ‘Pits of Hell’: Inside the Last Days of El Fasher.” *The Guardian*, 25 Mar. 2026, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/mar/25/heroism-horror-and-the-pits-of-hell-inside-the-last-days-of-el-fasher.

⁹ Türk, Volker. “High Commissioner Türk Calls for Strong Action at the Highest Level to Prevent Atrocity Crimes in Sudan.” *United Nations Human Rights Council*, 3 July 2026, www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2026/07/high-commissioner-turk-calls-strong-action-highest-level-prevent.

the price. The international community must make itself heard. We cannot say we were not warned.”¹⁰

The State Department has also recognized that this is a critical moment. On June 22, the State Department spokesperson warned of “alarming indications that mass atrocities could be imminent” and said “the RSF and their allied forces must cease any actions that could endanger civilians, impede humanitarian assistance, or contribute to further atrocities and suffering.”¹¹ On June 23, State Department Senior Advisor for Africa Massad Boulos said that he spoke with RSF leadership and “strongly urged them to halt any actions that could endanger civilians in and around El Obeid.”¹² And this Administration has repeatedly affirmed, including in July 2025, that “The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied militias have committed genocide.”¹³ In November 2025, you yourself said that the RSF is “clearly receiving assistance from outside” and that “something needs to be done to cut off the weapons and the support the RSF is getting as they continue their advances.”¹⁴

The evidence is clear – the United Arab Emirates is the primary external backer of the RSF, providing unparalleled military, financial, and technical support to the group. In May 2026, a new report by Human Rights Watch found that the UAE trained hundreds of Colombian mercenaries who then “took part in combat in and around El Fasher and, according to media reports, provided training to RSF recruits—including child soldiers”.¹⁵ In February 2026, a Reuters investigation found that Ethiopia has built a secret camp to train thousands of RSF fighters, and that the UAE financed the construction of the camp and provided military trainers and logistical support.¹⁶ This follows U.S. intelligence from October 2025, including separate reports from the Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department’s intelligence bureau, that “show an increase in the flow of materiel from the U.A.E. to the rebel Rapid Support

¹⁰ Fletcher, Tom. “UN Relief Chief Sounds Alarm over Escalating Violence in Sudan’s North Kordofan.” *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*, 30 June 2026, english.news.cn/africa/20260701/f98452c37854436b97f1290143ada049/c.html.

¹¹ “Threats of Atrocities Around El Obeid by the Rapid Support Forces and Their Allied Forces.” *The United States Department of State*, 22 June 2026, www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/06/threats-of-atrocities-around-el-obeid-by-the-rapid-support-forces-and-their-allied-forces/.

¹² Boulos, Massad (@US_SrAdvisorAF). “In a recent call with RSF leadership, we strongly urged them to halt any actions that could endanger civilians in and around El Obeid. The United States is deeply concerned by reports of RSF and allied force mobilization that raises the risk of attacks on civilians and potential mass atrocities in El Obeid amid Sudan’s devastating humanitarian crisis.” 23 June 2026, 12:21 PM. X

¹³ Troy Fitrell, Senior Bureau Official, State Department Bureau of African Affairs, Responses to Questions for the Record – Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy. “China’s Malign Influence in Africa Hearing, 4 June 2025.” 29 July 2025.

¹⁴ “Rubio: ‘Something Needs to Be Done to Cut Off the Weapons and The Support That the RSF Is Getting’.” YouTube, uploaded by Forbes Breaking News, 13 November 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYeSzm0r2Y>

¹⁵ “From Bogotá to El Fasher The UAE’s Role in the Deployment of Colombian Fighters and Other Backing to the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan.” *Human Rights Watch*, 25 May 2026, www.hrw.org/report/2026/05/25/from-bogota-to-el-fasher/the-uaes-role-in-the-deployment-of-colombian-fighters.

¹⁶ Paravicini, Giulia, and Reade Levinson. “Ethiopia Builds Secret Camp to Train Sudan RSF Fighters, Sources Say.” *Reuters*, 10 Feb. 2026, www.reuters.com/investigations/ethiopia-builds-secret-camp-train-sudan-rsf-fighters-sources-say-2026-02-10/.

Forces since the spring.” These findings are part of a large and growing body of credible evidence that the UAE is both arming and providing military support to the RSF.¹⁷

Now, an estimated 500,000 civilians are at risk in El Obeid, including many who have sought shelter there after fleeing RSF attacks across the Kordofan region.¹⁸ The encirclement and systematic crippling of resources in El Obeid increasingly parallels El Fasher, and this administration must use its leverage and influence to prevent a repeat of El Fasher’s horrors in El Obeid before it is too late. We urge this administration to take concrete actions to prevent such mass atrocities in El Obeid, including by ceasing certain U.S. arms sales to the UAE and other external actors that are fueling this war. We also request an update on what other actions the administration is taking, beyond just words, to prevent mass atrocities in El Obeid and to help bring this war to an end.

We request a response to this letter by August 17, 2026.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

¹⁷ Malsin, Jared, et al. “How U.A.E. Arms Bolstered a Sudanese Militia Accused of Genocide.” *The Wall Street Journal*, 28 Oct. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudan.

¹⁸ Mureithi, Carlos. “‘The Situation Is Terrible’: Aid Workers on Life in Sudanese City Pummelled by Drone Strikes.” *The Guardian*, 4 July 2026, www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jul/04/el-obeid-aid-workers-sudan-war-drone-strikes.



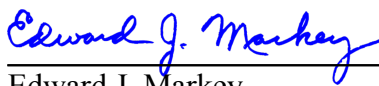
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



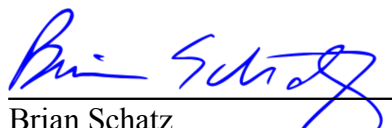
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



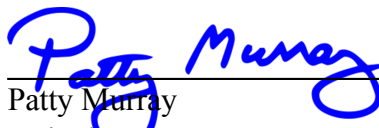
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



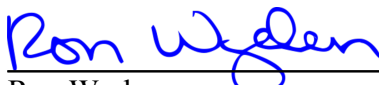
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



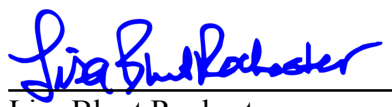
Patty Murray
United States Senator



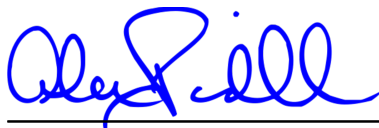
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



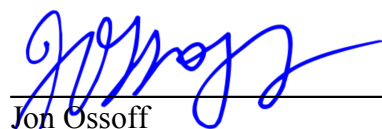
Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator