

justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

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Hello,

Welcome to this fortnightly roundup of news on justice and conflict in Sudan. Hyperlinks are underlined.

Friday 14 May 2021

BIG STORIES FIRST

- On the evening of Tuesday 11 May, [protestors](#) in Khartoum commemorating the 3 June 2019 massacre (29 Ramadan) were met with [live fire](#) and [tear gas](#); at least two young men were killed and dozens of others were injured.
 - In response to the above, Prime Minister Hamdok called an emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers. Among other outcomes, Hamdok [announced](#) that the formation of the transitional justice commission would be expedited, and that the 3 June investigative committee will be asked to give a firm deadline for presenting its findings. In addition, the Minister of Justice has been directed to finalise a draft of an internal security law for public debate, and the army has [said](#) that it will turn over any perpetrators for [prosecution](#).
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ACCOUNTABILITY TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, ICC, CEDAW

Attorney general offers resignation

Sudan's attorney general reportedly offered his [resignation](#) to the Sovereign Council in response to the Empowerment Removal Committee's [decision](#) to dismiss 56 judges and 26 prosecutors, as well as employees of the Council of Ministers and other government bodies. It is believed that al-Burhan rejected the attorney general's resignation. The Committee also announced that it had recovered land belonging to Omar al-Bashir's family and Mohamed Atta, former head of NISS.

Controversy concerning ratification of CEDAW

As previously announced, Sudan's Council of Ministers has approved the [ratification](#) of CEDAW with several key reservations. While some women's groups have [announced](#) their support for ratification of the treaty, the *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) Academy – which falls under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments – has issued a *fatwa* prohibiting the ratification of CEDAW unless reservations are entered ensuring the treaty is compatible with Islam. Relatedly, Gibril Ibrahim, head of JEM and current Minister of Finance, has called on leaders to [resist changes](#) to the personal status law and other Islamic laws in Sudan.

Ahmed Haroun wants to spend time in The Hague

Ahmed Haroun, one of the five men wanted by the ICC for crimes committed in Darfur, has publicly stated his [preference](#) for a trial in The Hague. Specifically, in a statement (available in Arabic [here](#)), Haroun argued that his continued detention in Sudan is unlawful and that, given the “miserable” state of the legal system in Sudan, he would prefer to face trial at the ICC. ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda is slated to visit Darfur in [June](#), before the end of her term. Finally, the confirmation of charges hearing in the [Kushayb](#) case is still provisionally scheduled to begin on 24 May.

Hemedti and al-Burhan interviewed by 3 June committee

The week before Prime Minister Hamdok said that the 3 June investigative committee would be asked to set a firm deadline for its initial report (see above), the committee reportedly [interviewed](#) both Hemedti and al-Burhan. The Organisation of the December Revolution Martyrs’ Families has in a statement [announced](#) that the committee has until the 3rd of June to share the outcome of its investigation, or a “revolutionary escalation” across the country could be expected.

Activist detained, mistreated by members of the Military Intelligence

Retired police officer and activist Adel Dahab said that he was [detained and beaten](#) until he lost consciousness by members of the Military Intelligence in el-Obeid, allegedly for insulting the Sudanese Armed Forces. Dahab has filed an official complaint against the officers, including for his illegal detention. Separately, activist Ahmed al-Dhay was reportedly released after spending more than 7 months in prison for vague charges concerning “undermining the constitutional order.”

Sudanese journalists mark World Press Freedom Day

In a statement released on 3 May, World Press Freedom Day, the Sudanese Journalists Union highlighted [remaining obstacles](#) to media freedom, including the continued existence of the National Press and Publications Council. The Council is empowered to grant (or deny) licences for newspapers and can impose fees on publishing houses. The repressive 2009 Press and Publications Act also remains in force (available in English [here](#)). According to Reporters without Borders, Sudan ranks [159th of 180 countries](#) for press freedom.

GOVERNMENT UNISFA, DARFUR, ARREARS

Mandate of peacekeeping force in Abyei extended

The UN Security Council voted unanimously to [extend the mandate](#) of the nearly 3,700-strong peacekeeping force in the disputed Abyei region (on the Sudan – South Sudan border) until 15 November. The UNSC has also asked Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to provide detailed recommendations by 30 September on reconfiguring the peacekeeping mission and finding a “viable exit strategy.”

Situation in Darfur stabilises and new governor is appointed

In the past two weeks, there have been no major changes to the [overall security situation](#) in Darfur, which remains tense but stable – though there have been numerous [reports](#) of criminal [hijackings](#) and robberies, and parts of Al Geneina have been described as a “[ghost town](#).” Separately, Darfuri rebel leader Mini Arko Minawi was appointed [governor](#) of Darfur; Prime Minister Hamdok described the decision as furthering the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement.

Security forces violently suppress protests in West Kordofan

At least one woman was killed, and seven others injured, after security forces used tear gas and heavy weaponry to [disperse a peaceful sit-in](#) in the al-Udayyah neighbourhood in West Kordofan. Protestors

have been demanding an improvement in living conditions since 20 December 2020. The West Kordofan State Office said that it would open an investigation.

Peace negotiations to resume by end of month

The next round of negotiations between the transitional government and the SPLM-N (al Hilu) are scheduled to begin on 25 May in Juba. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan has [travelled](#) to Juba in advance of the peace talks. On the other hand, the official spokesperson for the SLM-AW has reiterated that the group is [not interested](#) in negotiating with the current government.

Sudan clears more arrears ahead of Paris Conference

With the support of the UK, Sweden and Ireland, Sudan has [cleared its arrears](#) to the African Development Bank, opening Sudan up to new funding (including an immediate grant of \$207 million). Sudan must still clear its arrears to the IMF in order to qualify for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries ([HIPC](#)) Initiative. France will host a high-level [conference](#) on 17 May to support Sudan in generating additional [investments](#) in the country, including in Sudan's energy, infrastructure, agriculture and telecommunications sectors. The size of Sudan's delegation – a [reported](#) 105 people – has raised some eyebrows on social media.

NEIGHBOURS ETHIOPIA, EGYPT, REFUGEES

Ethiopian peacekeepers seek asylum in Sudan

In an unusual turn of events, around 120 Ethiopian peacekeepers set to be repatriated as part of UNAMID's phased withdrawal from Darfur have [sought asylum](#) in Sudan. They have reportedly been [transported](#) to a refugee camp along the Ethiopian border for assessment of their claims.

Prime Minister Hamdok discusses the GERD in televised interview

In a relatively rare interview, PM Hamdok [spoke with CNN](#) about ongoing GERD negotiations, highlighting the seriousness of the issue, and that the dam's construction is "linked to the safety and security of millions of people in both Sudan and Egypt." Additionally, Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki [visited Khartoum](#) in the first week of May for talks with al-Burhan and Hamdok on security cooperation and "bilateral ties within the regional framework," as Sudanese Foreign Minister Maryam al-Sadiq al-Mahdi [visited](#) Kenya and Rwanda to discuss the GERD.

A yellow rectangular graphic with the words "weekend read" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The word "weekend" is on the top line and "read" is on the bottom line.

An analysis of the [potential political ramifications](#) of the 3 June 2019 report; a briefing on Sudan's [electoral system](#); and the latest "civic space situation" [report](#).

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.

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