Hello,
Welcome to this fortnightly roundup of news on justice and conflict in Sudan. Hyperlinks are underlined.
Friday 30 April 2021

BIG STORIES FIRST

- Sudanese civil society organisations have widely condemned a new draft internal security bill. The bill would create a new security apparatus with broad powers of arrest, detention, searches and surveillance, while granting members immunity from prosecution. Sound familiar? PLACE, a Sudanese legal organisation, has outlined the primary concerns with the bill; the Minister of Justice has stated publicly that the document is merely a draft, and that his office is fully committed to the protection of human rights. Find the draft bill here in English (translation by REDRESS) and Arabic.

- The Council of Ministers approved the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as the Maputo Protocol. Prime Minister Hamdok announced that the Council of Ministers had approved the ratification of CEDAW with reservations on articles 2, 16 and 29(1) (details unknown); it is important that any reservations entered do not defeat the object and purpose of the treaty. The Sovereign Council must now consider the ratification of both instruments.

- Idriss Déby, the leader of Chad since 1990, died on 19 April, reportedly as a result of wounds inflicted during a visit to troops fighting rebels in northern Chad. Déby had a close relationship with Hemedti, and was seen by many analysts as a stabilising force in Darfur. The implications of Déby’s death remain to be seen, both for Sudan and the greater region.

ACCOUNTABILITY ICC, NCP, PUBLIC PROSECUTION

**Empowerment removal committee orders arrest of NCP members**
A political event for members of the dissolved National Congress Party was reportedly held under cover of a Ramadan iftar in Khartoum’s Freedom Square. Attendees allegedly include individuals from the General Intelligence Service, police and armed forces. In response, the empowerment removal committee has initiated legal proceedings against known participants for violations of the Act on Dismantling the Regime of 30th June 1989.

**Public Prosecution forms committee to investigate al-Gedaref killings**
Sudan’s attorney general ordered the creation of another specialised committee, this one tasked with
investigating the killing of protestors in December 2018 (at the start of Sudan’s revolution) in the eastern town of al-Gedaref. Separately, the commission investigating the killing of protestors in Omdurman has requested testimonial or photographic evidence from members of the public with relevant information.

Martyrs’ families organisation request involvement of ICC
The head of the Organisation of the December Revolution Martyrs’ Families announced that the organisation has been in contact with international lawyers, seeking to transfer the case of the 3 June 2019 massacre to the ICC. The ICC currently only has jurisdiction to investigate crimes committed in Darfur, on the basis of a 2005 UN Security Council referral.

Speaking of the ICC ... al-Burhan discusses the prosecution of al-Bashir
Lt. Gen. al-Burhan, the Chairman of the Sovereign Council, sparked rumours that al-Bashir’s transfer to The Hague was imminent after giving a lengthy televised interview two weeks ago. In fact, al-Burhan merely reiterated the transitional government’s position that al-Bashir should be prosecuted for serious international crimes, without providing details as to “where” and “by whom.” Subsequently, the Darfur Bar Association reportedly asked the ICC for clarification on al-Burhan’s statement that the ICC had not requested al-Bashir’s extradition.

Hearings in 1989 coup case continue
Proceedings against al-Bashir and 27 other defendants accused of orchestrating the 1989 coup continue. Prosecutors outlined the statements of Faisal Madani Mukhtar, including testimony about the killing of Majdi Mahjoub, who was accused of being a currency dealer by the “Salvation Government.” In particular, Mukhtar reportedly stated that Ali Osman Mohammed Taha (former First Vice President of Sudan, among other prominent positions) ordered Mahjoub’s execution with the approval of al-Bashir.

Bashir-era Islamist leader sentenced to prison
Abdul Basit Hamza, a prominent Islamist businessman, was sentenced by a Sudanese court to 10 years in prison for money laundering, terrorist financing, trading in foreign currency, and suspicious enrichment. The empowerment enrichment committee had previously seized significant assets from Hamza.

GOVERNMENT KAJBAR, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, DARFUR
West Darfur wali speaks about recent violence
In a recent interview, the governor of West Darfur accused political parties of using militias to advance their political objectives, and cited preliminary estimates suggesting that 1,000 armed forces attacked al-Geneina in a coordinated fashion. The latest reports from UN OCHA indicate that the security situation in al-Geneina is stable but tense; 2,000 troops from the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Central Reserve Police have arrived in the city and surrounding area in recent days. Meanwhile, sporadic violence has been reported in South Darfur and South Kordofan.

Transitional justice commission bill approved
Sudan’s Minister of Justice announced that the transitional justice commission bill, as well as the anti-corruption commission and peace commission bills, were approved in a joint meeting of the Sovereign Council and Council of Ministers. The next step will be selection of commissioners, which has been a point of significant discussion amongst Sudanese civil society in relation to the transitional justice commission in particular. See here for translations of the TJ and peace bills.
More decomposing bodies found in second Khartoum morgue
Nearly 200 unidentified bodies were recently found in various stages of decomposition in the morgue of a government hospital. It is believed that some of the bodies may be those of victims still missing after the events of 3 June 2019; the Public Prosecution has ordered autopsies of the bodies. Protestors have staged a sit-in outside of the hospital, demanding a thorough inspection of all morgues in Khartoum.

Controversial Kajbar and Dal dam projects cancelled
In a visit to Kadentkar, Prime Minister Hamdok announced the cancellation of two dam projects in northern Sudan, both of which have been at the centre of protests for over a decade, including a protest on 13 June 2007 in which four people were killed by security forces. In a second visit, to Atbara, Hamdok received a chillier reception, as protestors from the local resistance committee lined the streets.

NEIGHBORS ETHIOPIA, EGYPT, DAM
Still no progress made on GERD negotiations
No news can be good news, but perhaps not in this case: Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia remain at a stalemate in GERD negotiations. Sudan has emphasised its adherence to its original negotiating position—namely, that Sudan has a right to protect its water security interests. A new US special envoy for the Horn of Africa has just been appointed. Top of his list will be managing the GERD dispute.

weekend read

Analysis of the Juba Peace Agreement; an interview with rebels in Darfur’s Jebel Marra; gold mining on Sudan’s border; and a project on Sudanese food and drink.

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.
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