Hello,
Welcome to this fortnightly roundup of news on justice and conflict in Sudan. Hyperlinks are underlined.
Friday 1 Oct 2021

BIG STORIES FIRST

- Absolutely no big stories in the past two weeks . . . other than a failed coup attempt, and escalating rhetoric between the civilian and military components of the transitional government. On the morning of 21 September, Sudanese authorities announced that they had thwarted a coup attempt by “factions inside and outside the armed forces.” Prime Minister Hamdok said on Twitter that the “coup attempt was preceded by extensive preparations represented by the lawlessness in cities, exploitation of the situation in the east of the country . . . and continuous incitement against the civilian government.” Among other things, Hamdok was referring to protests in Port Sudan over the Eastern Sudan Track of the Juba Peace Agreement (and economic marginalisation more generally). The High Council of Beja Nazirs led the closure of several Red Sea ports and the oil terminal (now reopened).

- In the days after the coup attempt, relations between the civilian and military components of the transitional government publicly deteriorated. In separate comments, al-Burhan and Hemedti blamed civilian politicians for the coup; Hemedti, for example, said that the military is “met with humiliation and insults day and night, so how can there not be coups?” Hamdok said he was “astonished” by these comments, and Khalid Omer Yousif, the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, said the civilian component was “ready for confrontation” if necessary. Representatives from foreign governments, the UN Security Council, and the head of UNITAMS have attempted to mediate between the two sides of the transitional government, and expressed support for Sudan’s democratic transition.

- On 26 September, the Empowerment Removal Committee announced that the security forces tasked with protecting recovered assets had been ordered to withdraw from their posts immediately, and called on activists to gather at the Committee’s Khartoum office to secure the premises. Police reportedly returned after Prime Minister Hamdok’s intervention. Sources also said that the military component of the Sovereign Council had suspended all meetings with its civilian counterpart, and pulled security details assigned to civilian members.

- On 30 September, an estimated 20,000 people gathered in Khartoum in support of a civilian-led democratic transition. Despite some reports of attempted sabotage of train lines, many protestors traveled by train from Atbara and Madani, in an echo of the 2019 protests which led
to al-Bashir’s removal from office. Civilian officials welcomed the protestors, while security forces fired tear gas on crowds later in the day.

GOVERNMENT ISIS, UNITED NATIONS, ELECTIONS
Sudan stands resolutely against HRC resolution
In the third week of the UN Human Rights Council’s 48th session, it appeared that Sudan would indeed leave the HRC’s agenda, after Sudan’s permanent mission in Geneva (on the basis of instructions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) refused to discuss a Sudan-specific resolution. The Council has had a resolution on Sudan every year since its creation in 2006; without a resolution, all formal reporting and plenary debates on Sudan will end. Despite public calls from Sudanese civil society organisations and international NGOs for a continued resolution, foreign governments have not been willing to present a resolution without Sudan’s consent. See also PM Hamdok’s statement during the UN General Assembly’s 76th session.

ISIS militants kill intelligence officers in Khartoum
Five intelligence officers were killed in a shootout with suspected ISIS militants, after a raid gone awry in the Gabra neighbourhood of Khartoum. 15 individuals were subsequently arrested in total. Some analysts have speculated that the raid was intended to demonstrate the need for a strong military role in Sudan’s democratic transition.

Sudan takes control of Hamas assets
Sudanese authorities have taken over at least a dozen companies that officials say were linked to Hamas, and have seized assets ranging from real estate to a Khartoum hotel and more than a million acres of farmland. Former president Omar al-Bashir was publicly supportive of Hamas. Egyptian sources have reported that a high-level figure within Hamas’ political bureau has reached out to Egypt’s General Intelligence Service, in hopes of holding talks with Khartoum about the seized assets.

Ministry of Justice holds consultations on Electoral Commission draft law
Consultations have begun on the Electoral Commission draft bill, ahead of the planned 2024 elections. Find the draft here (Arabic version only). The consultations were attended by civil society organisations and representatives from the media.

ACCOUNTABILITY JOURNALISTS, SENTENCING, DETENTIONS
Court of Appeals upholds death sentence
The Court of Appeals has upheld the death sentence for a senior officer with the Rapid Support Forces. Yousif Mohi al-Din al-Faki was sentenced for killing a protestor, Hanafi Abdel Shakour, during the dispersal of protestors outside of the military headquarters in Khartoum on 3 June 2019. Al-Faki was accused of ramming Shakour with his car. The trial court judgment was the second of its kind in Sudan against members of the security forces.

Human rights defender faces defamation charges
Aisha al-Majidi was arrested on 15 September 2021 after the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Empowerment Removal Committee filed two separate cases against her under Article 159 of the Criminal Code 1991 (defamation), concerning two Facebook posts in which al-Majidi criticised both bodies. Al-Majidi wrote that the “RSF must be dissolved because they are not useful and there is no need for them in the first place [...].”
Newspapers temporarily suspended for protest announcements
The Press and Publications Council suspended two newspapers, Al-Intibaha and Al-Sayha, for three days after the papers published announcements about planned protests in eastern Sudan. The Press Council said in a statement that the announcements were a violation of the 2019 Constitutional Declaration, which prohibits the media from inciting religious, ethnic, racial or cultural hatred, or calling for violence or war (article 56(4)).

Several journalists arrested, detained
Journalists across Sudan have been arrested in the past two weeks, including journalist Muzammil Sidiq in Wad Medani; the Sudanese Journalists Network criticised the irregularity of Sidiq’s arrest, noting that only the Press and Publications Prosecutor, and not the police, has the authority to bring charges against journalists in relation to their work. Separately, Attaf Abdelwahab, a journalist and the director of Al-Naba Centre for Press Services, was arrested and detained incommunicado for several days. Abdelwahab has been charged with “undermining the constitutional system” and “waging war against the state,” crimes which carry the death penalty or life imprisonment. After his arrest, the Public Prosecution issued a clarification, stating that Abdelwahab was properly arrested on the basis of an Empowerment Removal Committee complaint.

Women detained, beaten by Community Police
Two women were beaten and detained for “indecent dressing” by members of the Khartoum Community Police, formerly known as the Public Order Police. A lawyer passing by, Al-Fateh Hussein, was also beaten after attempting to intervene on behalf of the women. In statements to the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, the three individuals attested to being beaten with sticks, water hoses, and to being whipped and kicked. Despite the repeal of the Public Order laws, the 1991 Criminal Code still retains “public morality” offences; for this reason, the National Human Rights Commission called in a statement for reforms to the Criminal Code 1991.

NEIGHBOURS ETHIOPIA, SOUTH SUDAN, LIBYA
Sudan, South Sudan border scheduled for reopening today
The border between Sudan and South Sudan is set to reopen today, 1 October, after being closed for 11 years. A South Sudanese official said that 7 border crossing points are to be opened for regular trade and travel.

Sudan seizes weapons smuggled from Libya
The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) announced that its forces “deployed on the border strip between Sudan, Egypt and Libya managed to seize a shipment of weapons, ammunition, and explosives coming from the State of Libya.” Four people, including two Libyans, have reportedly been arrested.

Army “repelled” Ethiopian troops
In his capacity as head of the Sudanese Armed Forces, al-Burhan announced that the army had repelled an incursion of Ethiopian troops in the district of Umm Barakit (in the disputed al-Fashaga border region). On the heels of the failed coup attempt, al-Burhan said this showed how the army was protecting the country (he did not mention that the thwarted coup was orchestrated from within the army). Ethiopia denied to Al-Jazeera that its troops had taken any action on the border.
Arabic in Africa; a podcast on Sudanese foods; women’s perspectives on peace in East Sudan; and a Sudanese airline’s resumption of flights.

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.
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