Hello,
Welcome to this fortnightly roundup of news on justice and conflict in Sudan. Hyperlinks are underlined.
Friday 10 June 2022

BIG STORIES FIRST

▪ The AU-UNITAMS-IGAD “intra-Sudanese talks” have officially launched, albeit without the participation of key civilian groups, including the FFC (which had rejected meeting invitations, saying that a solution to the crisis cannot be found by “inundating the political process with parties representing the coup camp or linked to the former regime”). Up to this point, the “confidence-building” measures taken by the military have not inspired much confidence; see reporting on this point here (and the bullet below). In a public speech, al-Burhan said that the talks represented an “opportunity to complete the transitional period.” In a research paper published yesterday, REDRESS and the SOAS Centre for Human Rights Law disagree, arguing that the serious human rights violations which have occurred since the coup have disqualified the military from being viewed as equal partners in any future transitional period in Sudan, and that legitimacy cannot be re-conferred through a flawed mediation process.

▪ Despite the lifting of the state of emergency on 29 May, serious human rights violations continue in Sudan. At least three people have been killed since 29 May, including a child who was run over by a CRP vehicle, bringing the total deaths since the coup to 101 people. Separately, an estimated 130 people remain in detention, according to reports from the emergency lawyers, and others continue to be arrested on an ongoing basis. The state of emergency was reportedly lifted after a decision from the Security and Defence Council, and was meant to “facilitate dialogue” between the military and civilian groups.

ACCOUNTABILITY GIS, TORTURE, UN

“Tupac” and other defendants stand trial in police killing case
The trial against 17-year-old Mohamed Adam (better known as “Tupac”) and 3 other defendants – Ahmed al-Fatih (“al-Nanna”), Mohamed al-Fatih, and Musaab al-Sherif – began on 29 May. All are accused of the killing of police brigadier general Ali Hamad. The trial
was adjourned until 12 June, after the judge – who has been described by lawyers as being reasonably impartial – granted the defence team’s request for a forensic medical examination of all defendants, who have reportedly been subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment while in detention. Another trial has also commenced, in relation to the killing of a SAF MI sergeant. The defendants in the case were also reportedly subjected to torture; in a press conference, lawyers in the case said that they had filed at least 3 requests for medical treatment, all of which were denied. Separately, trial sessions against the 11 GIS agents accused of killing Mahjoub al-Taj Mahjoub (a medical student allegedly tortured before his death) continue.

UN independent expert travels again to Sudan
Adama Dieng, the UN independent expert on human rights in Sudan, traveled for a second time to Khartoum in the first week of June, just before publishing his June report to the UN HRC. Recounting his meetings with authorities, Dieng said in a statement that he “welcomed the lifting of the state of emergency . . . [but] stressed that more bold and concrete actions are needed to improve the human rights situation,” including that authorities needed “to provide clear and public confirmation that the emergency decree of 24 December . . . is no longer valid; to ensure a definitive end to the use of excessive force against protestors and arbitrary arrests and detention; and ensure that there is visible progress in ongoing investigations into human rights violations.” Dieng’s visit coincided with the third anniversary of the 3 June 2019 sit-in massacre. As REDRESS and Sudanese Archives noted in a letter of allegation to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, no perpetrators have been held to account in relation to the events of 3 June.

UN Security Council renews UNITAMS mandate for another year
The UN Security Council has renewed the UNITAMS mandate for another year, until June 2023. See here for an overview of the debates leading up to the resolution’s adoption, which saw Sudan pushing back on efforts to adopt a substantive resolution that (in the UK’s words) “would have allowed for the updating of UNITAMS priorities to reflect Sudan’s own request for traditional support on issues such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; transitional justice, and civilian protection.” See also here for an interesting study on the effectiveness of the UNITAMS mandate, which notes that the “Mission must continue to be allowed the flexibility to adapt its focus to the fast-changing dynamics on the ground,” and that “the Mission should continue its work in support of its other objectives and priorities, including the protection of civilians, the implementation of the peace agreement, and advisory and capacity building, particularly related to the rule-of-law sector.”

Sudanese central bank unfreezes additional bank accounts
The Central Bank ordered the unfreezing of several bank accounts, including the accounts of former police chief Mohamed Najib al-Tayeb and his wife, Hind Mustafa (a friend of al-Bashir’s second wife). Al-Tayeb was police chief under al-Bashir in the late 2000s. The Central Bank also ordered the unfreezing of Abdel Halim al-Mutafi’s accounts; al-Mutafi was a minister of agriculture under al-Bashir and remains charged with corruption crimes in the ongoing “Mashkour Sugar Company” case. Members of the Islamic Dawa Organisation met
for the first time since the reversal of an Empowerment Removal Committee decision concerning its dissolution, and after the group’s assets were unfrozen.

**Sudan says it will privatize military-owned firms**
Sudan’s finance minister, Gibril Ibrahim, has said that Sudan will move forward with plans to privatize companies owned by the military. Ibrahim said in an interview that the government is still on track to shut down many of the 650 state-owned companies and privatize others, saying that “[a]ll commercial companies will be put up for public subscription, except for companies that produce weapons, and that will be soon.” Relatedly, the NYT published an in-depth report detailing the extensive operations of the Wagner Group, a network of Russian mercenaries. The report found that Wagner has obtained lucrative Sudanese gold mining concessions, and that Wagner has given direct military aid to Hemedti and the RSF.

**Sudan ratifies charter of the Council of Arabic and African Coastal States**
Sudan has ratified the charter establishing the Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which was signed in Riyadh on 6 January 2022. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that “Sudan joined this Charter in recognition of the importance of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to international navigation, and the impact on the stability and growth of the countries that ratify [it].” The other signatories are Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Jordan, Somalia, and Yemen. Also, a senior Saudi delegation reportedly traveled to Khartoum in early June to meet with al-Burhan.

**Protestors call for dismissal of UNITAMS head**
Protestors gathered outside of the UNITAMS headquarters calling for the dismissal of Volker Perthes, reportedly chanting slogans like “Volker, you German, the crisis will be solved by the Sudanese.” Most of the attendees are understood to be supporters of various Islamist groups. Notably, the protest was carried out without any interference or response from the security forces.

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**HUMANITARIAN SITUATION HUNGER, CONFLICT, ASSISTANCE**
**Ongoing conflict in Darfur and South Kordofan**
Sporadic violence continues in Darfur and in South Kordofan, with at least 27 people killed and dozens injured across both regions. Other clashes also broke out in West Kordofan. In a recent interview, the spokesperson for the General Coordination of IDPs and Refugees said that “there is no alternative to an “international force under [UN Charter] Chapter 7 to protect the citizens and displaced people in the Darfur region.” He also said that the violence in recent months was “carried out in a very orderly and systematic manner, using weapons and vehicles from the state’s warehouses . . . [t]his is not a tribal war. It is the state which kills, rapes and displaces its citizens and cloaks it as a tribal conflict.” This week, some news circulated that the son of Ali Kushayb (currently on trial at the ICC) was killed by joint forces after attacking a group of people with a grenade.

**UN announces large grant for Sudanese farmers**
The UN Central Emergency Response Fund has announced a $20 million grant for Sudan, to “allow the procurement and distribution of seeds, provide critical nutrition and WASH services
and support crop protection committees to farmers in Darfur.” The news comes as recent reporting highlights the impact of fuel price increases in Sudan, and the challenges faced by Sudanese farmers – see excellent reporting here and here, including an interview with a farmer who said that “the summer season is threatened with collapse. Fifty percent, seventy percent of us might not plant. And that puts the food supply in question.”

**US suspends assistance to Sudan**
The US State Department said in a statement that the US has suspended foreign assistance to Sudan under the Abraham Accords as well as unrelated assistance, but that it will continue with “limited, new obligations of previously paused funds to promote democracy and human rights through civil society organizations, as well as for programs that support independent media, and the marginalized populations of Sudan.”

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.
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