

justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Friday 26 May 2023

BIG STORIES FIRST

- Despite the two sides [signing](#) a week-long humanitarian ceasefire agreement in Jeddah ([English text](#)), fighting has again continued, including in Omdurman, Bahri, El-Geneina (West Darfur), Zalingei (Central Darfur), Nyala (South Darfur), Al-Fashir (North Darfur), and El-Obied (North Kordofan). Heavy clashes took place in the hours leading up to the ceasefire, despite the two sides agreeing not to seek military advantage during this period. While much of the fighting has continued since, some areas in Khartoum have reported a cautious calm – this may be related to [reports](#) that some RSF officers recently left their positions in Khartoum. This latest ceasefire is backed by a remote monitoring mechanism, the exact details of which are unclear. In a series of joint statements, the US and Saudi Arabia noted “[reports indicating that both sides violated the Agreement](#)” and that “[the ceasefire monitoring mechanism detected significant breaches](#)”; though their latest statement also emphasises the need to carry forward apparent “[positive progress](#)” made yesterday to deliver medical supplies and begin restoring telecoms services. In a recent [video message](#), US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, claimed that the US will hold violators of the ceasefire accountable through sanctions and other tools. No US designations have been made since President Biden’s recent [Executive Order](#) authorising targeted sanctions in Sudan, despite the US recognising the violations above and the US Department of the Treasury [acknowledging publicly](#) – just two days after Blinken’s message – that the Wagner Group has been supplying the RSF with surface-to-air missiles to fight against the SAF.
- Al-Burhan has [fired](#) Hemedti as Vice Chair of the Sovereign Council, replacing him with Malik Agar, Chairperson of SPLM-North. Agar, who [recently met](#) with Salva Kiir of South Sudan, released a [statement](#) emphasising the need to work with the international community, especially IGAD, the AU, and the UN – seemingly signalling continued support in al-Burhan’s camp for potential IGAD-brokered peace talks. The RSF’s special envoy also met with Kiir (who is IGAD’s Team Leader on the conflict) and [acknowledged](#) Juba as an “ideal place” for peace talks. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [condemned](#) the RSF envoy’s visit to Juba, representatives of South Sudan stressed the need for [equal participation](#) by both sides. Meanwhile, an emergency session of the Arab League Council took place in Jeddah, with Arab leaders [calling](#) for

“prioritising dialogue” and “curbing external interference that fuels the conflict”. During the session, SAF special envoy, Dafallah al-Haq, apparently claimed that if RSF officers stopped fighting, they would be pardoned and integrated into the SAF. The first meeting of the [newly formed](#) Arab Ministerial Contact Group on Sudan (comprised of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Arab League’s Secretary General) also [took place](#) on the sidelines of the wider emergency session, amidst [concerns](#) that the array of concurrent mediation initiatives could do more harm than good.

ACCOUNTABILITY CHURCH ATTACKS, AID DISRUPTED, TARGETED ARRESTS

Further serious violations reported, civilian infrastructure destroyed

Despite the commitments made in Jeddah, serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law violations by both sides continue to be reported, with [over 700](#) people (and likely many more) having now been killed, now including famous singer [Shaden Gardood](#). At [least](#) 229 people are missing. Having previously occupied civilian homes, hospitals, and other critical infrastructure, RSF officers are now occupying religious buildings – by violence, if necessary. At least five people were injured after an [RSF armed attack](#) on St George’s Church, Omdurman. Around this time, the RSF ousted clergy and occupied two churches in Khartoum – [St Mary’s Church](#) and the [Sudanese Episcopal Anglican Church](#). To date, the SAF have conducted numerous airstrikes to dislodge RSF officers from civilian buildings. For instance, recent SAF airstrikes [destroyed](#) parts of the RSF-occupied East Nile Hospital in Khartoum – [apparently](#) intended to destroy the building’s electricity generator and fuel tank.

Further targeting, including Tupac and others arrested

Consistent with the pattern emerging in recent weeks, both the RSF and SAF continue to violently target civilian actors. Mohamed Adam (Tupac) and two others were arrested by the [recently deployed](#) Central Reserve Police – seemingly with no lawful basis. At the time of their arrest, the three individuals were convening a [meeting](#) to discuss how to aid internally displaced people. They were later [released](#), though doctors, journalists, and activists are particularly vulnerable, as well as their [families](#), as this worrying trend continues. While the targeting initially appeared to focus on [lists](#) of those perceived as activists/supporting the other side, the SAF’s arrest of the three individuals is consistent with Sudanese authorities’ apparent desire to control the delivery of humanitarian aid. In a recent [statement](#), the SAF called for resistance committees to distribute aid ‘in coordination’ with the SAF. Meanwhile, much of the aid that has arrived in Port Sudan is [yet to be distributed](#) as relief agencies wait for clearance from the Humanitarian Aid Commission (a governmental body responsible for regulating the activities of NGOs and other groups in Sudan, and which has long been [accused](#) of corruption and impeding aid work without justification). Relatedly, some aid workers have yet to be [granted visas](#) and some UN flights have been denied clearance. The RSF has also been [regularly accused](#) of disrupting aid flows.

RSF arrests of prominent NCP loyalists

The RSF has launched a campaign of arrests targeting prominent Islamists and NCP loyalists. For instance, the RSF arrested Muhammad Ali al-Jizouli (who is known for extremist views and [support of extremist groups](#)) and published a (likely coerced) [video statement](#), in which al-Jizouli claimed that he, [recently re-emerged](#) Ali Karti, and others had orchestrated the current conflict in coordination with the SAF. The RSF also [arrested](#) Anas Omar, former NCP leader, and al-Haj Adam Youssef, former Vice President of al-Bashir. A similar video was [published](#) – again likely coerced – in respect of Omar.

Rise in sexual violence cases

There has been an increase in reports of sexual violence, [particularly](#) violence perpetrated by individuals in Khartoum wearing RSF uniforms. While dozens of cases have been reported across Sudan since the start of the conflict, the real numbers are [likely](#) much higher – with many survivors likely unable to report cases and receive support. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has [expressed](#) “grave concern”, noting there are “strong indications” that parties to the conflict have committed acts of sexual violence and calling for immediate measures to reinforce individual and command responsibility, as well as prompt investigations.

GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE, ACCOUNTS FROZEN, NATIONALS STRANDED

Burhan freezes RSF bank accounts, implements administrative reshuffle

Al-Burhan has issued his [first set of administrative decrees](#) since the outbreak of the conflict, to: (i) freeze the bank accounts of the RSF and its subsidiaries in all banks in Sudan and their branches abroad; (ii) change the governor of the Central Bank of Sudan (deputy governor Burai al-Siddiq Ahmed replacing the outgoing Hussein Yahya Jangoul); (iii) fire four generals, having previously ended their secondment to the RSF (the generals allegedly continued to serve in the RSF despite being ordered to return to the SAF); and (iv) fire Hemedti as Vice Chairman of the Sovereign Council (on which, see above). Al-Burhan appears to be removing those he perceives to be sympathetic to the RSF and asserting increased control over Sudan’s financial administrative apparatus, which is in dire straits. Civil service salaries [were not paid](#) in April, and a retired SAF officer recently estimated that the conflict costs an estimated \$1.5 million per day. Yassir al-Atta has also [accused](#) the RSF of attacking the buildings housing Sudan’s currency-printing press, as well as looting its foreign currency and gold reserves.

Al-Burhan public appearance, Hemedti audio published

Al-Burhan made his [first public appearance](#) since the outbreak of the fighting, having previously only appeared in [private locations](#) monitoring the conflict. Meanwhile, the RSF published an [audio recording](#) purportedly of Hemedti addressing the Sudanese people – likely in response to rumours that Hemedti had been killed or badly injured during the conflict. Hemedti has not been seen publicly for some time now, prompting some to speculate that the audio could be AI-generated. While some [researchers](#) consider the recording is unlikely to be AI-generated, the seemingly spliced nature of the recording suggests that it may not have been recorded in one take.

Sudanese stranded after passports destroyed

Many Sudanese nationals are still unable to leave Sudan, having deposited their passports with foreign embassies prior to the outset of the conflict. Some embassies, including [the US](#), destroyed Sudanese passports on security grounds as they evacuated, while others left passports on-site before their buildings were looted/occupied. In at least [one case](#), an embassy was broken into, and passports looted. Some individuals have recently managed to buy back their own passports. Noting the right to leave own’s own country and that neighbouring countries including Egypt currently require passports to enter, the embassies should – as a matter of urgency – issue alternative travel documentation to those affected.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION ARMED ATTACKS, JOINT TASK FORCE, DISPLACEMENT

Alarming violence continues in Darfur

Further violence has been reported across large parts of Darfur, including between the SAF and RSF, as well as the RSF/allied militias against civilians. Violence appears to mostly be concentrated around El-Geneina, Zalingei, Nyala, and Al-Fashir. Residents in El-Geneina have reported frequent bouts of heavy gunfire and artillery being fired by the RSF and militia groups at residential areas, with some reports estimating that [over 2,000 people](#) may have been killed in recent weeks – though it is extremely challenging to produce an accurate estimate in the current circumstances. An estimated [85,000 people](#) have fled El-Geneina. Similar attacks have now been [reported](#) in Zalingei – which had also witnessed violent RSF-SAF battles in the early stages of the conflict. Due to major communications [infrastructure issues](#), the current situation in El-Geneina and Zalingei is unclear. Elsewhere, [Nyala](#) and [Al-Fashir](#) have both experienced renewed clashes between the RSF and SAF – with the two sides exchanging heavy gunfire and shelling, ending the period of relative calm which resulted from locally-mediated truce agreements. On 15 May, Al-Fashir hosted an emergency meeting of the governors of Darfur states, following which the parties agreed [various actions](#), including forming a joint task force to restore law and order in Darfur. Four members of the joint force were [recently killed](#) after being ambushed by the RSF in West Darfur.

Humanitarian situation still dire

The humanitarian situation in Sudan is still dire, with nearly [1.1 million people](#) displaced, at least [68%](#) of clash zone hospitals out of service, aid often disrupted en route, and both sides flagrantly disregarding international humanitarian law. According to a recent [REACH report](#), forecasted heavy rains could lead to river flooding, further affecting humanitarian access to IDP populations in Sudan. The situation is also still very challenging for those seeking to leave Sudan. For instance, Wadi Halfa, Northern State is [struggling to cope](#) with the increasing number of people arriving daily to enter Egypt. Those who arrive at Wadi Halfa often need to wait for several weeks to obtain a visa, and there is a significant shortage of life-saving medicines and basic medical supplies. Eyes On Sudan recently published an [open letter](#) asking the Egyptian authorities to waive entry requirements and provide much-needed basic supplies to those at the Argeen and Wadi Halfa crossings, including food, water, shelter, and emergency healthcare.

weekend read

[Civilian leadership](#) of [ongoing negotiations](#) and [aid delivery](#); a power struggle [by design](#); [too many](#) (mediating) cooks; [AU absence](#) in Sudan; ending the [kleptocracy](#) (and why freezing the RSF's bank assets [won't stop it](#)); [gold for safe passage](#) (and the [curse](#) of Sudan's gold); Libyan warlord [exploits](#) Sudan

crisis; [rising reports](#) of SGBV;
US [ignored warnings](#) days
before conflict; and [Goodbye
Julia](#) at Cannes Film Festival.

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.

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