

justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Friday 9 June 2023

BIG STORIES FIRST

- US-Saudi Arabia facilitators today [announced](#) a new 24-hour ceasefire beginning tomorrow at 6AM Khartoum time – the first public outcome reached in the Jeddah talks since SAF representatives suspended their participation ([ostensibly because](#) of the RSF’s failure to comply with prior ceasefire arrangements). While (seemingly in reaction to the SAF’s apparent pull-out) facilitators [announced](#) the talks had been suspended due to “serious ceasefire violations”, it is [understood](#) that indirect talks between the two sides continued in the peripheries. So far, neither side appears to have engaged sincerely in negotiations towards a sustainable ceasefire. Both sides continue to commit serious and widespread [breaches](#) of the commitments made in Jeddah. Yesterday, a representative from the RSF [described](#) a proposal being considered with “more rigorous” monitoring by the US/KSA through surveillance drones, and “sanctions” imposed for non-compliance. It is currently unclear whether these proposals have been incorporated into the latest deal. According to the [facilitators](#), they will be “compelled to consider adjourning the Jeddah talks” should the parties fail to observe the upcoming ceasefire. Malik Agar (newly appointed Deputy Chair of the Transitional Council) recently [suggested](#) that ceasefires cannot hold until forces are withdrawn from Khartoum. Humanitarian aid – which is desperately needed, included in Khartoum and Darfur – has been [severely impeded](#) by the lack of proper ceasefires (as well as obstruction by both forces and the Humanitarian Aid Commission).
- Relatedly, fighting has again escalated, including around Khartoum, El-Obied (North Kordofan), and Al-Fashir (North Darfur) – with both sides launching renewed offensives that seemingly coincided with the SAF’s withdrawal from the Jeddah talks. By most accounts, an imminent SAF offensive was expected. The SAF had recently [called](#) for reservists and retired soldiers to re-enlist and al-Burhan – in a now rare [public appearance](#) – [warned](#) that the SAF may be compelled to employ its “full lethal force” should the RSF fail to comply with his orders. Recently, [fierce clashes](#) have taken place as the two sides battle for control of the Yarmouk ammunition factory, south of Khartoum – which was operated by ([recently sanctioned](#)) Defense Industries System. A [massive fire](#) later erupted in the area covering the surrounding area with a blanket of thick smoke, [possibly](#) after the industrial complex’s fuel and gas storage was hit.

Meanwhile, the RSF has [besieged](#) Tuti Island, blocking the Tuti-Khartoum Bridge and [threatening to shoot](#) those who attempt to leave. Humanitarian disaster appears imminent, with food and medical supplies running dangerously low, supply lines occupied by RSF officers, and [urgent deliveries](#) being actively confiscated. Elsewhere, at least 27 people were killed and 106 injured after six tank shells were fired – [reportedly](#) from the SAF’s al-Shajara base – towards the neighbourhood of Mayo. Finally, South Kordofan residents have [reported](#) mobilisation by the SPLM-N (led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu), prompting concerns that the fighting will spread further into Sudan. It is currently unclear what position the SPLM-N will take, though there has been some [suggestion](#) that their forces captured SAF camps in and around Kadugli.

ACCOUNTABILITY ICC, CRSV, ABDUCTIONS

Victims’ Legal Representatives begin submissions in Kushayb trial

The common Legal Representatives of Victims (LRV) have [begun](#) making their submissions in the ongoing ICC trial against a former *Janjaweed* commander – Ali Kushayb – who is [accused](#) of 31 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Darfur between August 2003 and at least April 2004. In their opening statement, the LRV (who represent 600 victims in the case) drew poignant parallels between the dire situation in Darfur in the early-mid 2000s and the violations being alleged in the current conflict. Relatedly, a group of Sudanese lawyers has filed a [complaint](#) with the ICC urging it to intervene in relation to ongoing alleged international crimes in Sudan. The ICC – whose jurisdiction in Sudan is principally derived from a [UN Security Council referral](#) regarding “the situation in Darfur since 1 July 2002” – has, in other contexts, [previously considered](#) that it may only investigate crimes committed “in so far as they are sufficiently linked to the situation of crisis which was ongoing at the time of the referral”.

Stark increase in sexual violence

Healthcare professionals and human rights monitoring organisations have reported a [significant increase](#) in cases of sexual violence, particularly in Darfur (e.g., El-Geneina, Nyala) and Khartoum. The Combating Violence Against Women and Children Unit [claims](#) that it has received 25 cases of rape of women and girls in Darfur, and 24 cases in Khartoum – most of which were allegedly perpetrated by men in RSF uniforms. Dozens of additional cases have been reported via informal networks, with local organisations suggesting that those cases that have been documented are likely “[the tip of the iceberg](#)”. See this [article](#) describing accounts from survivors of sexual violence during the current conflict.

Further raids and abductions

There are further increasing reports of doctors, journalists, activists, and others being abducted by security forces during seemingly targeted raids, as both sides accuse civilians of being spies or otherwise supporting the other side. Most prominently, Dr. Alaaeldin Nogod (a doctor, activist, and spokesperson for the Sudanese Professionals Association, which played a vital role in the ouster of al-Bashir) was [abducted](#) by a group of armed men who claimed to belong to Sudan’s military intelligence. Nogod – who was the subject of a recent online smear campaign accusing him of supposedly treating RSF fighters – had given public interviews in the days prior, [explaining](#) that, amongst other things, the SAF wanted doctors to expressly attribute hospital attacks to the RSF. He has since reportedly been [returned](#).

Violence against lawyers and journalists

The Darfur Bar Association has [reported](#) that Abdelkhalig Ibrahim Arbab (a lawyer prosecuting violations committed against internally displaced persons) has been killed, together with eight members of his family. This follows a [rise](#) in attacks and death threats being made against lawyers and human rights defenders, particularly those supporting proceedings regarding attacks against IDPs. Similarly, the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate has [documented](#) more than 40 violations against journalists and press organisations between 15 and 31 May 2023 alone, including enforced disappearances, abductions, and raids. See this [Twitter thread](#) for Arabic (and [English translated](#)) testimony from a journalist who was abducted and tortured in El-Geneina.

GOVERNMENT AU, SANCTIONS, UNITAMS

AU roadmap criticised by Agar

The African Union's Peace and Security Council has adopted a roadmap for the resolution of the conflict in Sudan, the implementation of which was recently considered at a [meeting](#) of the new Expanded Mechanism on the Sudan crisis. Malik Agar has [denied](#) that Sudan is part of the AU's initiative, noting that the AU "talks about solving the problem of Sudan at a time when it suspends Sudan's membership in the organization", and that "the problem is war and [...] there is an attempt to skip steps". Agar [purportedly](#) favours an IGAD-led peace process. The IGAD is [scheduled](#) to convene a meeting on 12 June 2023 regarding Sudan, with South Sudan's Salva Kiir (IGAD's Team Leader) [working closely](#) with President William Ruto of Kenya to address the current situation.

US targeted sanctions on four entities

Following the suspension of the Jeddah talks, the US imposed targeted sanctions under the recently issued [Executive Order](#) against four entities – two affiliated with the RSF and SAF respectively – accused of actions or policies that threaten the peace, security or stability of Sudan. Visa restrictions have also been imposed on certain unnamed individuals. The four companies – Al-Junaid Company for Multi Activities, Tradive General Trading LCC, Defense Industries System, and Sudan Master Technology – have long been accused of assisting the respective forces, including through the supply of arms, vehicles, and funds. REDRESS had, in late 2021, recommended to the US that three of these entities be designated for sanctions. Actors (including [REDRESS](#) and [US Senator Jim Risch](#)) continue to call for further targeted sanctions on the Sudanese military leaders responsible for the current conflict and the companies who facilitate them.

Calls for replacement of UN envoy for Sudan

The UN Security has [extended](#) the mandate of UNITAMS for six months (as opposed to the usual one year), amidst [formal calls](#) by al-Burhan to replace Volker Perthes as the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan/Head of UNITAMS. Al-Burhan [accuses](#) Perthes of not respecting "national sovereignty" and of presenting a misleading picture of consensus, which he considered "signs of encouragement" linked to Hemedti launching his military operations. At the time, the UN Secretary-General [expressed](#) "his full confidence" in Volker Perthes. Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has since purportedly declared Perthes [persona non grata](#).

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IDPs, MINNAWI, BORDER CRISIS

Dire situation in Darfur

The situation in Darfur remains dire, with concurrent RSF-SAF fighting and RSF-affiliated militia violence devastating parts of the region. El-Geneina has reportedly been “[completely obliterated](#)” by recent attacks, [which have seen](#) hundreds killed, mass displacement, and the city’s economy, infrastructure, and healthcare in ruins. Meanwhile, at least 40 civilians were killed and many more wounded in a [deadly attack](#) (apparently by the RSF) on the town of Kutum (North Darfur) and the nearby Kassab IDP camp. Armed men reportedly looted the market, homes, and civilian vehicles. More than 18 women were [reportedly](#) sexually assaulted. There has been [some suggestion](#) that the RSF acted in tandem with some of Musa Hilal’s Border Guard Forces during this attack, though this has not been verified (shortly prior to the conflict, [Al-Rakoba](#) reported that al-Burhan had issued “secret decisions” to absorb some of the Border Guard Forces into the SAF, and [some have speculated](#) that Hilal may seek to undercut Hemedti and the RSF). Finally, Minni Minnawi, who recently [declared](#) Darfur a “disaster area”, [called](#) on civilians to arm themselves in self-defence; later [clarifying](#) that civilians should only use weapons if they are under attack, if a civilian market is under attack and not guarded, or if someone attempts to rape a woman or girl.

Changing border requirements

People looking to leave Sudan are facing increasing difficulties, with numerous strict entry requirements being imposed as of late, seemingly with little or no notice. Egypt now [reportedly](#) requires visas for [all people](#), including women, children, and those aged 50 and over; and has [suspended](#) the use of emergency travel documents for those without valid passports. The Argeen Egypt-Sudan border crossing has been described as “[painfully chaotic](#)”, with the recent changes adding to the [already exorbitant](#) delays. Others who travelled to Jeddah Airport as part of a journey to Egypt were subsequently [told](#) they had to return to Port Sudan due to the newly introduced requirements above. The UAE also apparently [cancelled](#) all visas previously issued to Sudanese citizens, with some only being notified after landing at Dubai Airport. The UNHRC has [reiterated](#) its call for countries to keep their borders open to receive Sudanese refugees. See this [article](#) on how the Sudan conflict is an existential crisis for refugee protection in Africa.

weekend read

[Call](#) for civilian interim government; the [curse of war](#) (and Sudan’s [forever war](#)); [Sudan Conflict Monitor](#); the [creation and destruction](#) of Khartoum; [looting](#) in Khartoum; possible [implications](#) of Minnawi’s call to arms; and [reflections](#) on Hemedti and the Republic of Kadamol.

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.

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