

justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Friday 7 July 2023

BIG STORIES FIRST

- Deadly RSF-SAF fighting [has continued](#) in Khartoum and Omdurman, [despite](#) both al-Burhan and Hemedti unilaterally declaring brief ceasefires for Eid al-Adha (one and two days long, respectively). Eyewitnesses have reported that the pace of fighting has [“escalated in an unprecedented manner”](#), with the SAF again [shelling neighbourhoods](#) that remain under RSF control. The RSF recently [took control](#) of the Central Reserve Police (‘CRP’) HQ, [seemingly capturing](#) large amounts of military equipment. Perhaps in response (the SAF has recently [relied](#) on the CRP for ground fighting in Khartoum), al-Burhan delivered a televised address [calling](#) for a general mobilisation of young people to join the SAF in the fight against the RSF. [Dozens](#) of civilians have been killed during the recent fighting. The few functioning emergency rooms that remain open are struggling to treat the wounded amid a severe shortage of medical personnel and supplies. While [reports](#) suggest that there has been significant forced displacement from Khartoum due to the recent intensification of fighting, there is still no humanitarian corridor or other arrangement allowing civilians to safely leave the area. Meanwhile, there are continuing suggestions that RSF officers are slowly leaving Khartoum, some [possibly](#) re-deploying in Darfur as part of a strategy to secure all five Darfur states and maximise their leverage ahead of negotiations with the SAF. This could have (further) disastrous consequences for Darfur – see below in ‘Humanitarian Situation’ for an update on the Darfur states.
- None of the various ongoing mediation initiatives appear to have made significant headway in brokering ceasefire/peace talks between the two Generals, with dialogue between the respective forces more scattered than ever since the US-KSA-led talks were [suspended](#). As of writing, the newly formed IGAD Quartet (Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and South Sudan) has [invited](#) al-Burhan and Hemedti to a meeting scheduled for 10 July 2023, as previously envisaged in its mediation roadmap – which was previously [rejected](#) by al-Burhan. Initial reporting suggests that al-Burhan will [not](#) attend. In a recent call with Somalia’s Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, al-Burhan [reiterated](#) the Sudanese authorities’ objection to Kenya as chair of the Quartet, again claiming that Kenya (and William Ruto) have a bias towards Hemedti and the RSF (for his part, Ruto recently referenced [“signs of genocide”](#) in Sudan – presumably referring to the renewed violent targeting by the RSF and allied militias of non-Arab groups in Darfur since 15 April). There is [some suggestion](#) that the US-KSA-led talks may also resume

next week, though, in recent talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (on which, see below in ‘Government’), al-Burhan’s deputy – Malik Agar – suggested that “[the chances of a ceasefire are very slim](#)”. Finally, neither side has publicly engaged with the African Union (‘AU’) on mediation efforts since Malik Agar [publicly criticised](#) its Sudan roadmap. The AU’s Peace and Security Council recently [called](#) for the unconditional cessation of hostilities and demilitarisation of Khartoum, as well as the establishment of humanitarian corridors.

ACCOUNTABILITY AL-BASHIR, FIELD COURTS, VIOLATIONS

Hospital treating al-Bashir besieged by RSF

According to local reports, the RSF recently [besieged](#) Alia Military Hospital in Omdurman, where it is understood that Omar al-Bashir is being treated, [as well as](#) Bakri Hassan Saleh (former Prime Minister of Sudan and al-Bashir deputy) and other Islamist Bashir allies. The current status of Alia Hospital is unclear. With the Prosecutor of the ICC [scheduled](#) to present his semi-annual briefing on Sudan to the UN Security Council on 13 July, many eyes will be on the whereabouts of al-Bashir, who remains under an ICC arrest warrant and is charged with five counts of crimes against humanity, two counts of war crimes, and three counts of genocide, for his role in Darfur at least between 2003 and 2008.

Hemedti establishes RSF field courts

Hemedti has [announced](#) the establishment of field courts led by Major General Essam Salih Fadil, supposedly to investigate violations committed by RSF members against civilians. Surprisingly, Hemedti acknowledged that his forces *had* committed such violations (though, in most cases, he still attempts to blame the SAF and Islamists). [Proceedings](#) have already taken place against several alleged perpetrators. No substantive details have been shared publicly regarding the operation of these courts, though it is highly unlikely that they will conduct proceedings transparently or in accordance with international standards.

Increasing sexual violence, though some false allegations

The Combating Violence Against Women Unit has [reported](#) a total of 88 cases of sexual violence, 42 in Khartoum, 25 in Nyala, and 21 in El-Geneina – with the vast majority of complaints attributed to the RSF. The actual number of cases is [likely](#) to be much higher, with underreporting likely being due to a range of factors, such as shame, social stigma, fear of repercussions, survivors being trapped in areas without functioning medical services, communications outages, or the inability of survivors to access first sexual violence response kits. Meanwhile, several of those involved in documenting sexual violence cases have, in discussions with REDRESS, reported significant challenges dealing with false allegations, some of which are seemingly exploited by bad actors to stoke communal tensions and incite renewed violence.

Hundreds missing as abductions continue

While the RSF [released](#) 125 SAF prisoners prior to Eid al-Adha, at least 305 people remain missing according to [recent data](#). Again, the true number is likely much higher. The Darfur Bar Association [suggests](#) that more than 23,000 people have been detained by the RSF (both civilians and combatants) and has specifically called for the release of a lawyer who was detained by the RSF at the start of the conflict. The RSF has continued arbitrarily detaining civilians, for instance having yesterday [reportedly](#) abducted a young woman from her home in

Bahri. Sudan's military intelligence has similarly continued to target activists, including recently [abducting](#) an activist from his home in Merowe.

Further attacks on journalists

The Sudanese Journalists Syndicate has [condemned](#) further targeted attacks on journalists. Photojournalist (and Syndicate member) Ali Shata was recently shot in the thigh in Khartoum while reporting for Sudan TV, reportedly by officers affiliated with the RSF. The Syndicate claims the shooting was a “violent act meant to muzzle and prevent them from expressing their opinions”. Similarly, another Syndicate member – Omar Kamal – was reportedly sent a [Facebook message](#) threatening to kill his entire family. The message included the names, ages, and addresses of specific family members.

GOVERNMENT AL-HILU, MEDIATION, US ENVOY

Kiir mediates to stop SPLM-N al-Hilu attacks

South Sudan’s Salva Kiir [claims](#) he has persuaded Abdel Aziz Adam al-Hilu (of the SPLM-N al-Hilu) to refrain from further attacks against the SAF. In recent weeks, the SPLM-N al-Hilu has launched a series of seemingly opportunistic attacks on SAF positions, including [in](#) and [around](#) South Kordofan, as well as – more recently – the [Blue Nile](#). The Blue Nile clashes have [forced](#) thousands into neighbouring Ethiopia and add to growing concerns of knock-on conflicts spreading throughout the south of Sudan.

Sudanese authorities engage with Russia and Turkey on ending the crisis

Malik Agar recently [met](#) with Russia’s Sergey Lavrov in Moscow, discussing ways to address the ongoing crisis in Sudan. This meeting should be considered in the context of Russia’s wider engagement with Sudan in recent years, including its [public desire](#) to host a naval base on the Red Sea, as well as the Wagner Group’s [recent mutiny](#) in Russia (the Wagner Group has [established ties](#) with the RSF, though its activities since 15 April suggest it may perhaps be ‘hedging its bets’ as the conflict develops). Relatedly, al-Burhan has [welcomed](#) any proposal from Turkey to mediate the conflict, after a call with Erdoğan. Around this time, Turkey and (seemingly SAF-aligned) Egypt [announced](#) the full normalisation of relations between the two countries. The RSF would presumably reject any Turkey or Egypt-led mediation efforts on the basis of apparent bias. Salva Kiir of South Sudan recently [warned](#) against ‘taking sides in the Sudan crisis, though it is not clear whether this was intended as a targeted remark against any specific mediation initiatives.

Godfrey to be appointed as US Special Envoy on Sudan

As the US scrambles to re-assert its credibility as a Sudan mediator, [reports](#) suggest it will appoint John Godfrey (US Ambassador to Sudan) as Sudan’s US Special Envoy, as opposed to appointing a new dedicated Special Envoy. The lack of a Sudan-specific US Special Envoy has long been criticised, including by the US Foreign Relations Committee (‘FRC’). In an FRC session back in May 2023, Victoria Nuland (Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs) stated – in response to such criticism – that “[we see Ambassador Godfrey as that \[Special\] Envoy](#)”, emphasising that he is now outside Sudan and therefore has additional capacity.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT, SHORTAGES

Situation worsens in Darfur as RSF gains further control

Atrocities continue to be reported at an alarming rate in Darfur as the RSF and its allied militias

fight for control over the different Darfur states, before then launching targeted attacks against locals, particularly non-Arab groups. In El-Geneina, having [killed](#) the wali (governor) of West Darfur, RSF General Abdulrahman Guma assumed [de facto authority](#) over the area. Some [70%](#) of locals have now been forcibly displaced to Chad after months of RSF-linked violence, though the journey to Chad itself remains perilous (at least [350](#) corpses line the road connecting El-Geneina to Adré). Hundreds of wounded have arrived in Chad ([348](#) in a single day) amid reports that the RSF is indiscriminately shooting at fleeing civilians en route. Those who arrive in Chad have described the [catastrophic conditions](#) of ethnically targeted violence in El-Geneina, including the RSF and allied militias deliberately killing children, as well as destroying water and medical supplies (see also, the [attack on Murnei](#), West Darfur). Similarly, the RSF has [reportedly](#) installed another of its commanders as de facto leader in Zalingei, Central Darfur – which has itself seen bouts of looting and violent attacks by the RSF. [Recent reporting](#) suggests that Zalingei is “relative[ly] calm”, though the RSF remains in control. Nyala, South Darfur has seen [renewed RSF-SAF clashes](#) (likewise [Manawashi](#), which is now reportedly calm). Relatedly, seven tribal leaders in South Darfur recently declared their [support](#) for the RSF. Elsewhere, nearly [20,000](#) have been displaced from Tawila, North Darfur, following clashes between the two sides. The RSF currently retains a strong presence in North Darfur, with devastating consequences for [local towns](#) and [IDP camps](#).

El-Obied remains under RSF siege

El-Obied, North Kordofan, still faces a [siege](#) by the RSF, which has continued for more than 45 days. The city is now running out of food, water, and fuel. While the SAF maintains control over its HQ and the eastern half of the city, the RSF has established checkpoints at every main entry point. The RSF apparently requires those passing through the city to pay a tax and is looting civilian vehicles. The [Darfur joint force](#) (which includes troops from Minni Minnawi’s SLM-MM and Gibril Ibrahim’s JEM) recently [clashed](#) with the RSF west of El-Obied, after the RSF reportedly demanded (unsuccessfully) to be included in the joint force to facilitate their troops into El-Obied. RSF sources recently claimed that it has captured [El-Obied Airport](#), though this has not been verified.

weekend read

Darfur: [Between two wars](#) (and [genocide all over again?](#)); death and displacement [return](#) to Darfur; ethnic divisions [destroy](#) West Darfur; [escape](#) from Sudan; [support](#) Sudan’s revolution; the Sudan [blame game](#); Sudan today follows decades of [justice denied](#) (and [history repeating itself](#) for victims of Darfur crimes); renewed call for [targeted sanctions](#); Islamist [hidden hand](#) in Sudan conflict; the [disinformation war](#); the Sudanese diaspora’s [humanitarian response](#); artisanal gold production

continues [unabated](#); and [cultural heritage report](#).

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.

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