

# justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Friday 4 Aug 2023

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## BIG STORIES FIRST

- Negotiations continue regarding a possible long-term ceasefire agreement, though both the SAF and the RSF have [denied rumours](#) that a two-month ceasefire is imminent. The current status of the talks (mediated by the KSA/US-led Jeddah platform) is now unclear. While the substance of the discussions had been shrouded in relative mystery, the SAF recently [reported](#) that “many points were agreed upon” but that its delegates had [returned from Jeddah](#) for “further consultations”, ostensibly because the RSF had failed to withdraw from civilian homes and infrastructure. For his part, Hemedti has appeared in a [video](#) publicly addressing RSF fighters, including [alluding](#) to the possibility of a swift ceasefire agreement if the SAF’s “corrupt leadership” is replaced. Hemedti has otherwise rarely been seen in public since 15 April 2023, fuelling speculation that he had been seriously harmed or killed during the fighting. Amidst the range of other regional and international mediation efforts, the SAF has remained steadfast in its objection to Kenya’s Ruto as chair of the IGAD Quartet. In the latest exchange, Lt. Gen Yasser al-Atta responded to the Quartet’s [request](#) to consider the deployment of the East Africa Standby Force (“EASF”) in Sudan by launching a [scathing verbal attack](#), challenging Ruto to “leave the [EASF] alone, and instead [...] come along with the Kenyan army to face us”. Al-Burhan has since [reportedly spoken again](#) with Ruto on the phone, though it does not appear to have resolved the current IGAD impasse. According to [one source](#), fellow Quartet member South Sudan also objects to Kenya’s leadership (perhaps preferring to lead the Quartet itself), though officials in South Sudan deny this claim.
- Atrocities continue to be reported at an alarming rate in Darfur, with an [estimated](#) 460 people killed in Sirba, West Darfur, after days of [attacks](#) by the RSF and allied militia. According to [eyewitness reports](#), bodies are scattered around the town, many houses and shops have been plundered and set on fire, and several women and girls have been raped. While civilians were generally prevented from leaving, some of those who managed to flee Sirba [accuse](#) the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. Sirba is at least the [seventh](#) village or town that has been [nearly destroyed](#) or burned completely to the ground in West Darfur since the start of the armed conflict. UNITAMS Head Volker Perthes [acknowledged](#) “serious violations of human rights” in Sirba that “may constitute war crimes”. Meanwhile, clashes continue to be reported in [Zalingei](#) (Central

Darfur) and [Nyala](#) (South Darfur). As of writing, the RSF [claim](#) to have taken control of Zalingei and the surrounding area.

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#### ACCOUNTABILITY NCP, ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE, ICC

##### Arrest warrants issued for Haroun and others

Sudan's public prosecution has issued [arrest warrants](#) against five leading members of the former Al-Bashir regime, including ICC indictee Ahmed Haroun and Ali Osman Taha. Haroun (previously detained along with Taha for their role in the killing of protestors during the December 2019 revolution) was recently seen [addressing](#) SAF members in Kassala, seemingly as part of an ongoing mobilisation by remnants of the National Congress Party ("NCP") and the Sudanese Islamic Movement to raise support for (and perhaps join) the SAF in battle. Haroun's current whereabouts are [unclear](#).

##### Investigation into enforced disappearance and sexual violence

Sudan's public prosecution is [actively investigating](#) over 500 cases of enforced disappearance and sexual violence allegedly perpetrated by the RSF. The details of the cases are unclear, though some of the violations appear to have taken place in Gezira State. In Darfur, SIHA Network has received new [reports](#) of RSF members kidnapping women and holding them hostage in Darfur. Meanwhile, the RSF has [reiterated](#) its apparent pledge to ensure that all individuals found guilty of committing crimes during the current armed conflict will be held accountable before the law. In late June 2023, Hemedti [announced](#) that the RSF had established field courts to investigate violations committed by RSF members against civilians.

##### DBA deputy head severely beaten

A coalition of more than 30 Sudanese human rights and professional entities have [written](#) to the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, calling for an immediate investigation into all human rights violations committed by the RSF and the SAF against civilians in Darfur and elsewhere, and for the UN Security Council to extend the ICC's jurisdiction in Sudan. Speaking to [VOA](#), Nafisa Hajar, deputy head of the Darfur Bar Association ("DBA"), noted that the DBA had documented various violations amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including mass killings, ethnic cleansing, and forced displacement. Two days later, Nafisa and her nephew were [severely beaten](#), apparently by members of the RSF who accused Nafisa's nephew of working for military intelligence.

##### Progress towards EU targeted sanctions

The EU is reportedly [setting up](#) a new sanctions framework for Sudan, with a view to imposing targeted sanctions on actors implicated in the ongoing armed conflict. According to [Africa Intelligence](#), the EU's draft sanctions package includes designations for "some in the encourage" of Hemedti and al-Burhan. The sanctions imposed since 15 April 2023 (a [batch](#) by the US, and [two batches](#) by the UK) have, with the exception of two Wagner Group-related individuals, all been imposed on entities rather than individuals.

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#### GOVERNMENT FFC-CC, TOGO MEETING, KHARTOUM-BARA ROAD

##### FFC-CC meetings in Cairo

The FFC-CC recently held a [conference](#) in Cairo – the first face-to-face meeting of FFC-CC leaders since the start of the conflict (and one of [several](#) Sudanese political dialogues held at the time in the Egyptian capital). In a [statement](#) concluding the conference, the FFC-CC

called for the integration of all existing mediation initiatives into a single platform as well as to classify the NCP as a terrorist organisation. While in Cairo, representatives of the FFC-CC also [met separately](#) with the Arab League's Assistant Secretary as well as John Godfrey, US Ambassador to Sudan – reportedly discussing mobilising and coordinating initiatives to end the war, and efforts to form a civilian coalition focused on restoring Sudan's democratic transition. Separately, Yasir Arman of the FFC-CC has [criticised](#) apparent plans to include former NCP members and other “anti-democratic forces” in an inter-Sudanese meeting held by IGAD and the African Union, which is reportedly scheduled to take place at the African Union's headquarters on 25 August 2023.

#### **Togo meeting ‘an attempt to whitewash RSF crimes’**

A meeting of Darfur leaders held in Togo has faced [extensive criticism](#) by Darfuri unions as “a clear attempt to whitewash the crimes of the RSF”. The meeting – dubiously framed as an effort to end the “civil war” and “tribal conflict” in Darfur – was attended by 25 people, including Yousef Ezzat (advisor to the RSF). Former Justice Minister Nasredeem Abdulbari and former Sovereign Council member Mohamed El Taayshi have faced particular criticism for attending, particularly as the meeting agenda did not suggest the event was likely to be credible or impartial, and Ezzat's attendance was [publicised](#) beforehand.

#### **Closure of Khartoum-Bara road**

Hours after acting PM Osman Hussein announced the closure of the Khartoum-Bara road, the SAF issued a [warning](#) stating that it will consider any vehicles travelling on the road as military targets. Seemingly, this is the SAF's latest effort to cut-off the RSF's supply routes from Darfur and the Kordofans into Khartoum. In the meantime, vehicles are being redirected to the El-Obied-Kosti-Khartoum road.

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## **HUMANITARIAN SITUATION** DISPLACEMENT, FOOD INSECURITY, AID ATTACKS

### **Humanitarian crisis deepens**

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is worsening at an alarming rate. According to [IOM's latest data](#), over 4 million people have now been displaced since the conflict began, including over 3 million who are internally displaced. [20.3 million people](#) face acute food insecurity, a figure which exceeds the UN's prior forecasts by over 1 million and is double the estimate for 2022. Of these 20.3 million, ~6.3 million people are “[one step away from famine](#)”. Relatedly, the Professional Pharmacists Association (“PFA”) [reports](#) that Sudan's pharmaceutical supply is in serious danger, with hundreds of pharmacies and distribution centres having been plundered, some 50% of pharmaceutical factories in Khartoum damaged, and the situation in Darfur even worse. According to the PFA, a number of people have committed suicide since the start of the conflict due to a lack of access to medication for psychiatric and neurological diseases.

### **Major challenges to humanitarian access**

More than 40 international NGOs have [urged](#) the Sudanese authorities to facilitate additional humanitarian access to Sudan, noting that over 110 humanitarian NGO visa applications remain indefinitely pending. Those organisations currently in Sudan face major challenges to conduct their work safely. In one incident, armed men “[aggressively assaulted](#)” staff from Médecins Sans Frontières (“MSF”) in Khartoum, “physically beating and whipping them”, threatening to kill the driver of one of MSF's vehicles, and stealing the vehicle. MSF has warned that its activities in the Turkish Hospital (one of only two hospitals open in southern Khartoum) are in “serious jeopardy” and cannot continue if minimum safety guarantees are not met. The

Norwegian Refugee Council has also [suspended](#) its operations in Khartoum and Darfur “due to the absence of necessary security assurances and managerial oversight”. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan has [appealed](#) for an end to attacks on civilian aid workers and humanitarian facilities.

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# weekend read

[War crimes and civilian suffering](#) in Sudan; [new attacks](#) in Darfur; time to [try again](#) to end Sudan’s war; ‘[I fled the horrors of Darfur, this is what I saw](#)’; the [Sudan Conflict Observatory](#); the UK [must act](#) on Darfur; RSF atrocities [pile up](#) in Darfur after 100 days of fighting; [civilian participation](#) in a Sudan ceasefire; and [Sudan Conflict Monitor #5](#).

*Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.*

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