

# justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Friday 29 Sep 2023

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## BIG STORIES FIRST

- Concluding his [recent regional tour](#), al-Burhan [addressed](#) the UN General Assembly ('UNGA') at its 78<sup>th</sup> session in New York, where he re-iterated his: (i) call for States to designate the RSF as a terrorist group and obstruct any external support that it receives; (ii) supposed commitment to Sudan's democratic transition (referencing a 'short transitional period', though with no firm timeframe commitments); and (iii) support for the JPA, including continued dialogue with Abdelaziz al-Hilu (SPLM-N al-Hilu) and Abdel Wahid Mohammed al-Nur (SLM-AW) – on which, see below. Al-Burhan met with various actors during the trip, including the [Foreign Ministers](#) of Russia and Saudi Arabia, the Chair of the African Union, and – in an "[unscheduled meeting](#)" during a stopover in Ireland – Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. His engagement in New York comes as the Sudanese de facto authorities prepare to form a caretaker cabinet in Port Sudan. Prior to the trip, al-Burhan's deputy, [Malik Agar](#), claimed it would be formed by the end of September. According to [Africa Intelligence](#), the proposal (which would have been socialised further with heads of state in the margins of the UNGA) faced some negative reception, including from Egypt – reportedly due to concerns of replicating the [situation in Libya](#). Relatedly, in his latest move to address the [RSF's legitimacy crisis](#), Hemedti recorded a [video](#) purportedly addressing the UNGA on behalf of Sudan. His speech (which, comparatively, lacked the polish of al-Burhan's address) emphasised, amongst other things, the RSF's apparent willingness to agree to a long-term ceasefire (though it is unclear that the RSF is willing to withdraw from Khartoum, which has so far been a redline issue for the SAF). With al-Burhan also [re-iterating](#) his own apparent willingness to engage in negotiations with the RSF, [Al Arab](#) claimed that Hemedti and al-Burhan had both since travelled to Saudi Arabia for ceasefire discussions. This development (which would have been the first in-person meeting between Hemedti and al-Burhan since the start of the conflict) has so far been dubiously received and was [rejected](#) by representatives from the RSF. Al-Burhan had previously been [scheduled](#) to travel to Saudi Arabia shortly before attending the UNGA.
- Violent clashes have once more been reported between the RSF and the SAF in Khartoum State. Around 16 September, a major escalation occurred in central Khartoum, including renewed fighting around the vicinity of the SAF's General Command. [Various buildings](#) were set alight, including the Ministry of Justice building

and the Greater Nile Petroleum Oil Company tower. Clashes have since continued, with the RSF again [targeting](#) the General Command, as well as the El Shajara military complex and the Karari military base in north Omdurman. The SAF has also [shelled](#) various RSF sites in Omdurman and Bahri. Yesterday, at least 10 civilians were [killed](#) when the RSF shelled a transport station in the Aljarafa area, north of Omdurman. In another incident, at least seven civilians were killed following an explosion near Sports City – [likely](#) an aerial attack conducted by the SAF. Meanwhile, the Darfur Bar Association has [warned](#) that the RSF is reinforcing its combat capabilities in Darfur – a move that is likely to [further destabilise](#) the region.

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## ACCOUNTABILITY SANCTIONS, ICC, TARGETING

### US sanctions Karti and RSF-affiliated companies

The US has [announced](#) a new batch of sanctions, targeting: (i) Ali Karti, al-Bashir's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, who – alongside “other hardline Sudanese Islamists” – is accused of “actively obstructing efforts to reach a ceasefire [...] and opposing Sudanese civilians’ efforts to restore Sudan’s democratic transition”; (ii) [GSK Advance Company](#), an RSF company managed by Hemedti's brother, Algoney Hamdan Dagalo, which is used by the RSF as a procurement channel and was [previously sanctioned](#) by the UK on 12 July 2023; and (iii) Aviatrade LLC, a Russian-based company engaged by GSK for the purchase of military supplies. This latest (relatively modest) set of designations appears to be the US' latest effort to address the [role of Islamist groups](#) in fuelling the current conflict while still preserving the appearance of parity (though cooperation will be needed from other States, e.g., Turkey and Qatar, if Karti's designation – apparently “[akin to a badge of honour](#)” – is to have an impact beyond signalling). As of writing, Karti is accused of holding a lengthy meeting with al-Burhan where he and other members of the Sudanese Islamic Movement [reportedly](#) urged al-Burhan to continue fighting the RSF and pledged to provide the SAF with thousands of additional fighters (possibly with the support of Ahmed Harun). The US Department of State [announced concurrently](#) that it has imposed visa restrictions on [further](#) unnamed individuals, including other Islamists and former al-Bashir era officials. Since 15 April 2023, the US has deployed both targeted sanctions (under [Executive Order 14098](#)) as well as visa restrictions (under several legislative regimes) – likely because of the [different evidence thresholds required](#) for each. The EU has not yet sanctioned any Sudanese individuals or entities since the start of the conflict, though a package of designations is still expected (possibly within the next month).

### Al-Burhan meets ICC prosecutor

Al-Burhan recently [met](#) with ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan KC in the [margins](#) of the UN General Assembly. Khan spoke with al-Burhan about the court's ongoing investigations into crimes committed in Darfur (including since 15 April 2023) and [emphasised](#) that al-Burhan would himself fall within scope. There is speculation that al-Burhan – who [discussed](#) the Sudanese de facto authorities' supposed interest in delivering justice for victims – may have offered Khan assurances of increased cooperation with the ICC, including the possible handover of ICC indictees, al-Bashir and Ahmed Harun (though even if such an offer were made, it should be viewed [sceptically](#)). Khan has since [noted](#) that neither the SAF nor the RSF have provided any evidence to the ICC, despite [previous reports](#) that the SAF would submit a dossier of evidence on RSF crimes to the ICC by the end of August 2023. Domestically, the [investigative committee on RSF crimes](#) remains active, with the Public Prosecution having recently [charged](#) two RSF members with offences under Articles 50 (undermining the constitutional system) and 51 (waging war against the State) of the Criminal Law Act 1991 ([English/Arabic](#)).

### Further civilian targeting

Both the SAF and the RSF have continued to target civilians, again for their apparent support for the other side. In the past two weeks: (i) members of the SAF and allied tribesmen have [reportedly](#) killed and stolen from numerous people in the southern part of Blue Nile, particularly targeting members of tribes suspected of supporting the SPLM-N al-Hilu; (ii) three people were [shot and killed](#) in Bahri (apparently by a group of RSF members) shortly after being released from questioning by the RSF; and (iii) members of the RSF [abducted](#) a group of civilians including a journalist from El Omda in old Omdurman.

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## GOVERNMENT PORT SUDAN, JPA, ARMED GROUPS

### Conflict in Port Sudan

Fighting recently [broke out](#) in Port Sudan between the SAF and a local militia group from the Beja National Congress. The militia erected a checkpoint on a main street in Port Sudan and began [inspecting](#) vehicles carrying goods (ostensibly to stop the smuggling of goods to the RSF). The SAF then reportedly took action to remove the checkpoint, culminating in a brief exchange of gunfire between the two sides (though no casualties were reported). The militia leader has since [reportedly reconciled](#) with local SAF leadership, though there are concerns that the SAF's activities in east Sudan could ignite historic tensions with, and between, eastern tribes. The SAF has increasingly militarised the east since the start of the conflict, establishing Port Sudan as a de facto alternative capital (in response to the RSF's [control over large parts of Khartoum](#)) and opening "[dozens of recruitment centres in eastern Sudan](#)" to mobilise young people to fight against the RSF.

### Al-Burhan enacts administrative reshuffle

Al-Burhan has issued a new [directive](#) allocating administrative oversight responsibilities between Malik Agar, Shamseddin Kabbashi, al-Atta, and Ibrahim Jaber. Conspicuously, no roles were assigned to Al-Hadi Idris and [Tahir Hajer](#) – both of whom assumed their positions in the Sovereign Council under the JPA and have adopted a neutral anti-war stance (rather than anti-RSF) since the start of the conflict.

### Emergence of new armed groups supporting the SAF

A new group, the Sudanese Popular Resistance Factions, has [emerged](#) in recent weeks. The group, whose origin, affiliation, and membership are currently unclear, claims that they are "preparing for battle" and will "liberate Khartoum" of the RSF. The Sudan War Monitor has published a helpful [analysis](#) of the group, including whether it may be an attempt to re-establish the al-Bashir era Popular Defense Forces (previously overseen by Ali Karti) as well as suggestions that it shares members with, or may even be a front for, the GIS. Another group, El Bara Bin Malik Brigade, has recently supported the SAF in its battles against the RSF and [may](#) have ties to the SAF's Reserve Department, as well as remnants of the al-Bashir regime.

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## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION CONFLICT, DISEASE, MEDIATION

### Renewed clashes in Darfur and Kordofan States

Violent clashes have continued elsewhere in Sudan, particularly between the RSF and the SAF in [Zalingei](#) (Central Darfur), [Nyala](#) (South Darfur), [Al-Fashir](#) (North Darfur), and [El-Objed](#) (North Kordofan), as well as between the SAF and the SPLM-N al-Hilu and the SAF in [Kadugli](#) (South

Kordofan). In Darfur, the SLM-AW announced that its members had expanded their territorial control to multiple areas outside Jebel Marra, including to Tawila (North Darfur) – [apparently](#) to ensure the safety of civilians after the SAF withdrew from the area. The RSF previously [clashed](#) with the SAF in Tawila, before then [attacking and killing](#) numerous civilians, razing infrastructure, and displacing hundreds. Amidst the fighting, medical facilities in Darfur and elsewhere (including Gedaref) are overwhelmed by cases of [malaria](#), [dengue fever](#), and [cholera](#), and continue to face [shortages](#) of vital medical supplies.

### Hilal attempts to mediate Darfur clashes

Musa Hilal has announced that he will seek to [mediate disputes](#) between the Beni Halba and Salamat tribes. The two groups have been engaged in regular fighting since early/mid-August, apparently after the Salamat attacked Kubum in South Darfur. The RSF (which has reportedly also been [implicated](#) in attacks in Kubum) previously attempted to mediate the dispute, though the resulting peace talks [failed](#). As of late, Hilal has embarked on a [tour](#) around areas in Darfur, supposedly to prevent the escalation of the current conflict into local villages. Meanwhile, the Shura Council of the Zaghawa tribe has [accused](#) the RSF of killing three prominent Zaghawa tribe members in Nyala, adding to concerns of a possible armed confrontation between the RSF and armed movements representing the Zaghawa.

## weekend read

RSF sanctions and (lack of) [UAE cooperation](#) (and the UAE [secretly fuelling](#) the fight); illegal detention sites [surge](#); some activists fighting [alongside](#) the SAF; States' [responsibility](#) to protect civilians (and the need for UN Security Council [intervention](#)); [humanitarian impact](#) of fighting across Khartoum State; the refugee groups [supporting](#) Sudanese displaced in Egypt (and [continued support](#) from Sudanese diaspora); [conflict impact](#) on previously displaced Darfuris; [rapid gender assessment](#) on Sudan; and, ending on a lighter note, the Sudanese keyboardist making [wild party music](#).

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

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