

justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Friday 13 Oct 2023

BIG STORIES FIRST

- The UN Human Rights Council has [adopted](#) a [resolution](#) establishing an independent international fact-finding mission for Sudan, which will investigate alleged human rights violations and abuses committed in the context of the ongoing armed conflict. The resolution, which was proposed by the Core Group on Sudan (the UK, US, Germany, and Norway), passed with 19 yes votes, 16 no votes, and 12 abstentions. The Sudanese de facto authorities [rejected](#) the resolution from the outset, supposedly due to its lack of [objectivity](#) as they consider that it equates the SAF with the RSF (though the mechanism will be empowered to investigate abuses by all warring parties). During the [interactive dialogue on Sudan](#), the Attorney-General previously emphasised that the de facto authorities have already established a committee to investigate crimes committed by the RSF – seemingly a pre-emptive rebuttal to any proposed international investigation mechanism, though – for [various reasons](#) – the de facto authorities cannot credibly investigate serious human rights violations committed in this context. Many States were [again](#) accused of voting based on wider political considerations, alliances, and lobbying. No African or Arab States voted in favour, though 6 African States abstained (a show of possible indirect support). Before the vote, the RSF's Youssef Ezzat [claimed](#) that the RSF would support the mechanism – a dubious (and likely empty) gesture, perhaps to gain political capital. As things stand, while the mechanism has been endorsed by some national bodies (including the [FFC-CC](#) and the [new JEM splinter group](#) led by [Suleiman Sandal](#)), a lack of cooperation from the de facto authorities would almost certainly preclude it from conducting in-person investigations in Sudan.
- Conflict and violence continue to escalate in Khartoum, as well as elsewhere – particularly [Al-Aylafoun](#) (Wad Madani), [Al Jazira State](#), and Darfur/the Kordofan States (on which, see below). The SAF and RSF have exchanged airstrikes and shelling around Khartoum, killing at least [10 people](#) in Mayo and Omdurman and at least [20 people](#) after the shelling of a health clinic north of Bahri. In another incident, [five RSF shells hit](#) the emergency department of Al Nao Hospital, one of the only functioning hospitals in Omdurman. At least four people were killed. According to one report, more than [190 people](#) have been killed in aerial bombardments in Jebel Awliya, south of Khartoum. The RSF have also continued shelling the area around the [SAF General Command](#).

Elsewhere, the RSF violently seized [Al-Aylafoun](#), including its oil pumping station (a strategic asset – one of four that pumps oil for export from Sudan and South Sudan). The RSF’s attacks – which local resistance committees [report](#) included extrajudicial executions, torture, sexual violence, and mass arbitrary detention – [displaced thousands](#) of civilians. After seizing the station, the RSF took steps to expand their presence eastward within [Al-Jazira State](#). According to the latest figures, more than [9,000](#) people have been killed since the conflict began, though the true figure is likely much higher.

ACCOUNTABILITY SANCTIONS, SIT-IN, TARGETING

EU Sudan sanctions framework adopted

The EU has established a [new Sudan sanctions framework](#) – further signalling that a first batch of EU Sudan targeted sanctions is likely now imminent. The new framework expands the legal basis on which the EU may make sanctions designations, adopting the ‘threatening peace, stability, or security’ basis used by the UK and US, as well as some language on obstructing humanitarian assistance/responsibility for IHL violations – similar to what appears in the May US [Executive Order on Sudan sanctions](#). Precedent in other country situations suggests that, while the EU has taken almost six months to mobilise on Sudan, it may soon go on to match (or possibly surpass) the designations made by the US and UK. It remains to be seen whether the EU will readily deploy individual sanctions against RSF/SAF leaders, a step which the US – and even more so the UK – have been reluctant to take to date.

Al-Burhan acknowledges RSF sit-in responsibility

Having returned from the UN General Assembly in New York, al-Burhan travelled to [Atbara](#) (River Nile State) and [Dongola](#) (Northern Sudan). In Atbara, al-Burhan: (i) predictably, [denied](#) meeting with a delegation of Islamic leaders led by ([recently US-sanctioned](#)) Ali Karti; and (ii) less predictably, [expressly acknowledged](#) the [RSF’s responsibility for the Khartoum massacre in June 2019](#) (though al-Burhan did not go as far as to recognise [his own role](#) or that of other military and security actors in the violent crackdown). He will reportedly soon travel to Beijing to participate in China’s Belt and Road Initiative, [possibly alongside Russia’s Putin](#).

Journalists killed, detained

The news outlet *Sudan Bukra* and the Committee to Protect Journalists have both [urged](#) the de facto authorities to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for the killing of journalist Halima Idris, who was run over and killed by RSF members in a vehicle while she was reporting in Omdurman. In a separate incident, journalist Mustafa El Sheikh (an editor at *El Midan*, who was previously assaulted by the RSF in his home along with his family) was arbitrarily detained by security police, interrogated, and had his phone confiscated – after which, police deleted material on his phone. The Sudanese Journalist Network notes that security actors are attempting to institute a “media blackout” and called for an end to targeted violations against journalists.

GOVERNMENT JEDDAH, EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT, IRAN

Changing US approach to Jeddah talks

In an attempt to revive momentum in the Jeddah talks between the RSF and the SAF, the US is [reportedly](#) implementing changes within its mediation team and will broaden its mediation efforts to secure a ceasefire. So far, the US and KSA-led Jeddah talks have produced two

tangible outcomes: (i) the [Jeddah Declaration](#) on 11 May 2023 – which effectively restated the two forces’ existing IHL obligations; and (ii) a handful of short-term ceasefires – which were not complied with by either side. Following several high-profile breaches of the ceasefires, the US facilitated the establishment of the [Sudan Conflict Observatory](#) to monitor violations. The US has since deployed targeted sanctions on several instances and supported the establishment of an independent international fact-finding mission (see above) – perhaps a recognition that transparency and accountability are prerequisites for sustainable peace in Sudan. Meanwhile, the director of Sudan’s General Intelligence Service [reportedly](#) met with the legal adviser to the RSF in Addis Ababa to discuss initiatives to end the conflict, though the status and outcome of this meeting are unclear.

Al-Burhan favours emergency government

[Reports](#) continue to emerge that al-Burhan is in favour of forming an emergency government (possibly for an interim period of 6-12 months) to address the current crisis in Sudan. Informal consultations are reportedly ongoing with interim ministers expected to be appointed from different parts of Sudan. Sudan’s administrative apparatus has effectively been gridlocked since the conflict started, with ([now reduced](#)) resources mostly being devoted to fighting the RSF, civil servant salaries/pensions not being paid, and the Sudanese Pound [heading toward possible collapse](#). See [here](#) for a recent report by the World Bank on Sudan’s economic health. Meanwhile, the African Union’s Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council have issued a [joint call](#) for an inclusive dialogue to revive Sudan’s democratic transition. While there are [serious concerns](#) that al-Burhan and Hemedti will soon form opposing de facto governments, the initiative is unlikely to gain traction given the de facto authorities’ [rejection](#) of AU activities on Sudan, as well as [concerns](#) by others that an AU-led process would facilitate the re-emergence of ex-NCP figures.

Sudan restores diplomatic ties with Iran

The Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has [announced](#) that it has resumed diplomatic relations with Iran. Sudan severed diplomatic ties with Iran in January 2016 – an action in solidarity with Saudi Arabia after Iranian demonstrators [stormed](#) the Saudi Embassy in Tehran. Saudi Arabia and Iran [restored](#) their own diplomatic ties in March 2023, [mediated](#) by China (on which, see above). This paved the way for Sudan to do the same – though [many](#) have noted that the timing and context of the move suggest it may be part of al-Burhan’s pursuit of weapons and resources to sustain the SAF’s fight against the RSF. See [here](#) for further perspectives on possible regional/global implications.

Group of tribal leaders agree to resolve disputes

A group of Beja *nazirs* and tribal, religious, and political leaders in eastern Sudan have [agreed to resolve disputes](#) over mining areas/revenues in Kassala. The ‘*El Galed*’ agreement also sets out that the parties will organise an inclusive conference to discuss issues related to former political agreements, local governance, and rehabilitation of former combatants in eastern Sudan. While the agreement emphasised the importance of unity, some leaders and groups did not sign. Leaders of the Gemilab tribe (non-signatory) claim that some of the terms used in the document “are signs of an imminent conflict between the various components of the Beja tribe”.

Authorities freeze RSF bank accounts

The Central Bank has [frozen](#) the bank accounts of some 37 companies affiliated with the RSF, as well as [various individuals’ accounts](#). While al-Burhan [reportedly](#) issued a decree ordering the freezing of RSF bank accounts back in May 2023, these recent actions (which the Central Bank

[frames](#) as a response to the findings of the committee to investigate RSF crimes) are likely yet another move to substantiate al-Burhan’s appeal for States to recognise the RSF as a terrorist organisation.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION KILLINGS, DISPLACEMENT, JOINT DARFUR FORCE

Zalingei and Nyala face further attacks

Parts of Darfur continue to report atrocities perpetrated by the RSF, as well as casualties caused by the crossfire of armed exchanges between the RSF and the SAF. In [Zalingei](#) (which has received limited coverage due to blackouts), the RSF is reportedly carrying out [another campaign](#) of extrajudicial executions, forced displacement, sexual violence, and abductions. The RSF has also [shelled an IDP camp](#) in Zalingei for more than two weeks, resulting in numerous deaths. In Nyala (where the RSF’s Abdelrahim Dagalo was [recently present](#)), clashes have continued between the RSF and the SAF. Again, the RSF has relied heavily on artillery shelling, resulting in [at least two people being killed](#). Aid is slowly arriving in Darfur, though not without complications. On 30 September 2023, a large convoy [arrived](#) in Al-Fashir (North Darfur). The convoy – which included 25 lorries for humanitarian aid, as well as medicines, fuel tankers, and agricultural equipment – was protected by the joint Darfur force. The convoy was [attacked](#) by gunmen in Kuma, killing three people. Minni Minnawi, who [previously warned](#) of possible RSF attacks on Darfur-bound convoys, announced that a committee has been formed to investigate the attack. Around [450 reinforcements](#) will now join the joint Darfur force having recently finished their training. Finally, clashes have [resumed](#) between the Beni Halba and Salamat tribes, despite mediation efforts by [Musa Hilal](#) and the [RSF](#).

SAF clash with RSF and SPLM-N al-Hilu in Kordofan States

New clashes have occurred between the SAF and the RSF, as well as SPLM-N al-Hilu, in the Kordofan States. [Heavy clashes](#) have taken place between the RSF and the SAF in El-Obeid (North Kordofan). In the “most violent yet”, RSF artillery reportedly [primarily targeted](#) the city’s market area, especially buildings housing SAF snipers. At least [16 people](#) were killed. Elsewhere: (i) at least one person was killed and others injured during [clashes](#) in Dilling (South Kordofan) between the SPLM-N al-Hilu and the SAF – apparently following an SPLM-N al-Hilu assault on the town from two directions; and (ii) at least [four people](#) were killed in Muglad (West Kordofan) following a confrontation between the SAF and armed civilians.

weekend read

[Marketing war](#) (with Magdi el Gizouli); genocide [returns](#) to Darfur; Sudan conflict ‘[like planning for the apocalypse](#)’ (and [is anyone listening?](#)); snapshots of [Nyala](#) (also [here](#)), [Kadugli](#), [North Kordofan](#), and [Adré](#); al-Burhan’s ([dulled](#)) [charm offensive](#); what roles can [Sudan’s civilian leaders](#), the [US](#), and the [UAE](#) play in addressing the current crisis; Ali Kushayb ICC coverage – episodes [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), and [6](#); AI [voice cloning](#) technology; and Sudan at risk of losing a [generation of scientific talents](#).

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.

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