

justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

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Hello,

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

Hyperlinks are underlined.

Friday 10 Nov 2023

BIG STORIES FIRST

- The RSF may soon [control the entirety of Darfur](#) following its recent capture of [Nyala](#), [Zalingei](#), and [El-Geneina](#). After a series of devastating RSF attacks across large parts of Darfur (coinciding with the resumption of – currently faltering – talks in Jeddah), eyes are now on Al-Fashir – the only remaining city in Darfur with a significant SAF presence and which has, in recent days, already been [attacked](#) by the RSF. Amongst the atrocities, the RSF massacred hundreds ([possibly thousands](#)) of civilians in Ardamata – deploying many of the same scorched earth tactics that [decimated](#) nearby El-Geneina between April and June 2023. In particular, the RSF’s attacks (which have again targeted the Masalit) [include](#) mass extrajudicial killings as well as widespread detention, torture, and sexual violence. As in El-Geneina, perpetrators have particularly killed: (i) young men and boys, either in the streets or going house to house ([one witness estimated](#) that only 10% of young men survived the attacks); and (ii) prominent community leaders – including *farsha* [Mohamed Arbab](#), as well as his [son](#) and eight grandchildren (see also [here](#)). Yesterday, local monitors [reported](#) that the RSF attacked a SAF-run hospital where those wounded from previous attacks were receiving treatment. The recent violence in West Darfur has seemingly been [overseen by Abdelrahim Dagalo](#). Abdul Rahman Juma ([visa restricted](#) by the US in September) has also been [appointed](#) commander of the 15th Division in El-Geneina. In a ([quickly revised](#)) [statement](#), the US Embassy in Khartoum described the RSF’s recent attacks in Darfur as “sickening”, “once again [highlighting the] RSF’s history of brutality in areas under their control”, and “prov[ing] they are not serious about protecting civilians.” Relatedly, the ICC’s Office of the Prosecutor is [currently in Chad](#) with communities who have fled violence in Darfur – investigating ongoing crimes committed during the conflict.
- Despite some [initially optimistic sentiment](#), the [Jeddah talks](#) have so far [failed](#) to halt the fighting, even temporarily – with co-facilitators [expressing regret](#) that the parties were unable to agree on ceasefire arrangements during the first round of renewed negotiations.

Representatives of the SAF and RSF did ostensibly [commit](#) to: (i) participating in a joint humanitarian forum led by OCHA to resolve impediments to humanitarian access and deliveries of assistance (mostly caused by the forces themselves); (ii) identifying points of contact to assist with the same; and (iii) implementing “confidence-building measures” on certain thematic issues, namely communication between their respective leaders, the arrest of prison escapees and fugitives (the RSF are [reportedly pushing](#) for the arrest of some 30 former NCP officials, including Ali Karti), improvement of each side’s official media discourse, and actions concerning each side’s pro-war elements (for their part, Karti’s Sudanese Islamic Movement – the main pro-war element supporting the SAF – [accused](#) the Jeddah mediators of complicating and prolonging the crisis in Sudan). The [SAF](#) and [RSF](#) also made individual commitments on humanitarian access (the SAF’s commitments include addressing pending entry visas and expediting customs clearance of relief goods). Though talks will continue, the pathway to a permanent cessation of hostilities currently remains bleak. Meanwhile, a coalition of US officials has warned of the need to “stop a repeat of the genocide [...] 20 years ago” and [called](#) on the Biden administration to “consider new approaches and use all tools to escalate pressure on the parties to the conflict” (seemingly signalling increased national pressure for the US to deploy further targeted sanctions).

ACCOUNTABILITY CLASHES, DETENTION, CIVIC SPACE

Renewed clashes around Khartoum, Omdurman

Clashes have again escalated between the RSF and SAF around Khartoum and Omdurman. [Numerous casualties](#) have been [reported](#) following recent armed exchanges and shelling between the two sides in neighbourhoods controlled by the RSF – including [Um Badda, Al-Thawra, and Al-Waha](#). Fighting has also [continued](#) around the SAF’s [General Command](#) as well as the [Armoured Corps HQ in Al-Shajara](#). Several days ago, a [significant fire](#) erupted, destroying oil product storage tanks at the Khartoum Oil Refinery in Al-Jeili, north of Khartoum – a joint venture between Sudan and China (on which, see below) which has been [offline since July](#). Both sides have [accused](#) the other of causing the fire.

Further cases of mass detention

Both the RSF and SAF Military Intelligence continue to be implicated in cases of mass civilian detention. In one instance, an OHCHR spokesperson [noted](#) more than 20 cases in which “women and girls are being abducted and held in inhuman, degrading slave-like conditions in [RSF-controlled areas] in Darfur, where they are allegedly forcibly married and held for ransom”. In another case, the Petroleum Fields Youth Association in West Kordofan [accused](#) Military Intelligence of detaining and torturing two of its members to death.

Human rights defender killed as civic space shrinks

Civil society organisations continue to face targeting and harassment in Sudan by both local authorities and armed fighters. SIHA Network recently [noted](#) that they are “deeply disturbed by the limitations on civic space imposed by various Sudanese security apparatus bodies”. Relatedly, a human rights defender, Bahjaa Abdelaa

Abdelaa, was [fatally shot](#) while attending a relative's funeral in Kalma IDP camp, Nyala. She had previously reported receiving death threats due to her human rights work.

GOVERNMENT KSA, SOVEREIGN COUNCIL, OILFIELDS

Fears of parallel administrations loom

Al-Burhan has continued his campaign for legitimacy, meeting with [various envoys](#) before [travelling](#) to Saudi Arabia where, today, he [briefed](#) the Saudi-Africa summit and met with [Mohammed bin Salman](#). He also recently [briefed](#) SAF troops in a rare appearance in Khartoum and Omdurman. While al-Burhan continues to operate from Port Sudan, Hemedti's RSF has [reportedly considered](#) forming a parallel de facto government in El-Geneina, as opposed to Khartoum as had been [previously suggested](#). Noting the RSF's strong (and increasing) control over Darfur as well as nearby supply routes via Chad, this development would increase the likelihood of a [Libya scenario in Sudan](#). In this context, it is unclear what the tactical rationale was for the SAF's recent Darfur retreat (while it could be to [regroup and avoid heavy losses](#), some are fearful that the SAF may depart from Darfur in its entirety and focus on consolidating control in the east). Hemedti – who [apparently also recently briefed](#) troops in Khartoum – has called on residents of areas under the RSF's control to [elect civil administrations](#).

Burhan removes al-Hadi Idris from Sovereign Council

Al-Burhan has taken further steps to reshuffle the de facto administration, [replacing five ministers](#) as well as [purportedly \(by decree\) removing](#) al-Hadi Idris from his position in the Sovereign Council. Idris, leader of the Sudan Liberation Movement – Transitional Council (SLM-TC) and ally of the FFC-CC, left Khartoum following the outbreak of armed conflict in Sudan and was apparently removed after failing to rejoin al-Burhan in Port Sudan. Idris, who was one of two members [conspicuously not assigned](#) any administrative oversight responsibilities by al-Burhan back in September, has since referred to al-Burhan as the “[igniter of war](#)”, noting also that his removal was unconstitutional (amongst other things, Idris was appointed under the JPA and neither Article 11(2) nor Article 14 of the [2019 Constitutional Document](#) clearly envisage that such members can be removed by decree). The SLM-TC has called on guarantors of the JPA to urgently intervene “[to avoid the complete collapse of the agreement](#)”.

Agar's China visit amidst RSF oilfield attacks

Malik Agar recently met with the [Director of China's Foreign Affairs Commission](#) as well as officials from the [China National Petroleum Corporation](#) ('CNPC'), together with Gibril Ibrahim. The meetings are understood to have covered the safeguarding of Chinese investments in Sudan, as well as [remediating damaged](#) oil production facilities and (possibly) agreeing [new investment projects](#) to service some of Sudan's [~\\$5 billion debt owed to China](#). Coinciding with Agar's China visit, the RSF: (i) [briefly seized](#) the Balila oilfield in West Kordofan – which is managed by a joint venture between Sudan and the CNPC – as well as the Balila airport (clashes between the RSF and SAF in West Kordofan have [increased](#) lately); and (ii) [attacked oilfields](#) in [East Darfur](#), securing at least one (see also above on damage to the

Khartoum Oil Refinery). South Sudan has again [urged](#) the warring parties to preserve and protect oil infrastructure.

Imminent SAF reshuffle, Gosh return rumours
According to [recent reports](#), a significant reshuffle of the SAF's command structure may be imminent. Amongst the touted changes, Lt Gen Adam Haroun will become commander of the Wadi Sayyidna garrison and a new director of Sudan's Operations Authority will be appointed – possibly former NISS director Salah Gosh, though this has not been independently confirmed.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION KILLINGS, CEASEFIRE, AID DELIVERY

RSF sets sights on North Darfur

The situation in Darfur remains extremely perilous after the RSF extended its control over Nyala, Zalingei, and El-Geneina. Violence against civilians has been regularly reported in cities now under RSF control – including the RSF and allied militia [randomly killing residents in their homes](#). Relatedly, after taking control of the SAF's HQ in Zalingei, the RSF began [looting and burning the homes](#) of IDPs in Hassa-Hissa camp (which, as previously reported, had been [under siege for weeks](#)). According to [local organisations](#), the RSF has conducted “massive killings” and sexual violence in the camp and has prevented civilians from leaving. Having [recently seized](#) the Um Keddada garrison after SAF fighters withdrew (see also [here](#)), the RSF [now appears set](#) to launch a large-scale attack on Al-Fashir. With clashes already increasing in the area in the last couple of weeks, the *wali* of North Darfur [appealed](#) – seemingly without success – to the RSF and SAF to allow civilians to evacuate. Meanwhile: (i) a SLM-MM field commander was [killed](#) west of Al-Fashir, reportedly by a group associated with the RSF (Minnawi has [yet to side](#) with either the SAF or RSF, though this could change as the RSF's grip on Darfur tightens); and (ii) the RSF has [reportedly brokered a ceasefire](#) between the Beni Halba and Salamat – though it is unclear whether this will hold up as previous recent attempts (including by the [RSF](#) and [Musa Hilal](#)) have all failed.

Upcoming humanitarian crisis conference

A [humanitarian crisis conference](#) is [scheduled](#) to take place between 18 – 20 November in Cairo, addressing the need to revitalise the response to the crisis in Sudan. Participants will discuss and develop learnings/recommendations on social protection, food security, the impact of conflict on the health system, gender-based violence, and coordination, integration, and logistical obstacles to the work of relief organisations. In a recent [humanitarian access situation report](#), OCHA Sudan noted that “a number of operational obstacles remain that impede a rapid scale-up of aid from reaching those in need”, including that violence has continued against humanitarian personnel and assets, and more than 200 visas were pending for international staff as of August – September 2023. It now remains to be seen whether the SAF and RSF's commitments in Jeddah will lead to any material improvements on this front. Listen to [this podcast episode](#) on international support for mutual aid in Sudan.

weekend read

RSF seize Darfur cities in [major advance](#) (and Al-Fashir [on the brink](#)); [lack](#) of UNSC action on Sudan; Jeddah talks and the [UAE](#) (and Sudan's fate [between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi](#)); [illicit networks](#) funding Sudan conflict; SAF [losing the PR war](#) – and the [real one](#); [child victims](#) of Darfur arms markets; [pros/cons](#) of regional initiatives to end the conflict; and [Sudan Conflict Monitor #7](#).

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.

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