

justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Friday 8 Dec 2023

BIG STORIES FIRST

- Tomorrow, IGAD will [convene an Extraordinary Summit](#) to consider, amongst other things, how its role regarding the armed conflict in Sudan could evolve in response to recent developments. Days prior, US/Saudi mediators [indefinitely suspended](#) Jeddah talks between the SAF and RSF after both sides failed to materially implement their [respective confidence-building obligations](#). As rounds of empty commitments blight (already dim) prospects of the Jeddah platform brokering a permanent cessation of hostilities, IGAD is now expected to take on a [more active mediation role](#). Al-Burhan met with [further](#) IGAD Heads of State, including [Djibouti \(IGAD Chair\) and Eritrea](#) – likely to steer any [revised “roadmap”](#) that IGAD may adopt, as well as the future [composition/role](#) of the IGAD Quartet. Representatives from the [US](#) and [EU](#) will also participate in the Summit. Meanwhile, [addressing a military assembly in Gedaref](#), al-Burhan remarked “to those who beg in the capitals of the world, seeking solutions, that the solution lies at home”, claiming “any peace negotiations that fail to meet the aspirations of the Sudanese people will not be accepted” and that “no solutions will be imposed on us from abroad”. Relatedly, al-Burhan’s deputy, Malik Agar, announced the de facto authorities’ latest [proposal](#) to end the conflict, including functionally integrating the RSF into the SAF in two phases and a political process culminating in the drafting of a new constitutional document and elections. While the exact details/timings are unclear, the announcement appears more intended to project the SAF’s strength than a credible offer to the RSF.
- The situation [remains tense around North Darfur](#), though the RSF has not yet launched a full attack on Al-Fashir. As reported previously, [various armed groups mobilised](#) around Al-Fashir in reaction to fears of an imminent RSF attack. The Joint Darfur Force also [deployed additional troops to safeguard civilians](#). The RSF seemingly repositioned its forces, signalling a possible retreat – though an [RSF advisor insists](#) this was agreed by Abdelrahim Dagalo and the Darfur armed groups. There are currently severe shortages of [water, medicines, fuel, and commodities](#) in North Darfur due to a [suspension](#) of [most](#) humanitarian and commercial convoys. Meanwhile, time will tell whether other armed groups retain their neutrality. For instance, SLM-AW has [rejected](#) JEM’s claims that an agreement had been reached to jointly protect civilians (see [here](#) for more on SLM-AW). Forces from the SLM-AW [subsequently captured an RSF camp in South Darfur](#) following the RSF’s retreat – an illustration of the opportunism dynamics between the various forces. For its part, JEM

has [denied speculation](#) that it had received military supplies that were confiscated by joint Sudanese-Chadian forces en route to the RSF. See our previous roundup which [addressed the fallout of the Sudan conflict in Chad](#), as well as [here](#) on what might come next.

ACCOUNTABILITY SANCTIONS, ATROCITIES, CONFLICT

Three further US targeted sanctions

The [US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control](#) has designated three further [individuals](#) for their role in undermining peace, security, and stability in Sudan, namely: (i) former NISS head [Salah Gosh](#), "a leader among elements of the defunct al-Bashir regime" responsible for "efforts to execute a coup against Sudan's [then] civilian government, with Salah Gosh working to attain regional and international support for their efforts" (Gosh and his wife/daughter were [previously designated by the US in August 2019](#) for his involvement in torture – though a travel ban only); (ii) Ali Osman Taha, former Bashir chief of staff, for "managing the relationship between the [...] RSF and regional actors" from the UAE "to advance [...] the RSF's warfighting efforts" (see [here](#) for further context on Taha); and (iii) another former NISS head, Mohamed Atta, leader of the Sudanese Islamist Movement's ('SIM') Turkey efforts (SIM leader [Ali Karti was also sanctioned by the US in September](#)). Meanwhile, the EU's High Representative issued a [statement](#) "deplor[ing] the dramatic escalation of violence", calling on third parties to refrain from fuelling the conflict, and alluding to its [Sudan sanctions framework](#) and "the possibility" of designations – though the EU is still yet to make a single Sudan designation since the conflict began in April 2023.

US atrocity determination on war crimes/crimes against humanity

Following calls by [NGOs](#) and [Members of Congress](#), Secretary Blinken has [announced his determination](#) that members of the SAF and RSF have committed war crimes and that members of the RSF and allied militias have committed crimes against humanity and "ethnic cleansing" – though Blinken did not make a determination of genocide in Darfur ([as Secretary Powell had done back in September 2004](#)). Both the [Sudan Ministry of Foreign Affairs \(SAF\)](#) and [RSF](#) rejected the accusations made against them. It remains to be seen what practical implications Blinken's determination may have for US policy beyond its drip-feed of Sudan sanctions, though it will certainly [increase pressure](#) on the US to publicly address the UAE's role in funding/arming the RSF in seemingly blatant violation of the [existing UN arms embargo](#) (see below in 'Government' for further analysis on the UAE).

Fighting continues in Khartoum

Fighting has continued between the RSF and SAF, particularly in Khartoum State as well as the Kordofan States (on which, see below). The SAF's airstrike activity has [increased significantly](#) as of late. In recent days, attacks from SAF warplanes in (RSF-controlled) Dar El Salam [reportedly killed almost 100 civilians](#). Meanwhile, the RSF launched [heavy artillery attacks](#) on the SAF General Command in Khartoum, and both sides ([again](#)) [exchanged blame for a large fire](#) that broke out in the Khartoum Oil Refinery in Al-Jeili.

HRW report on attacks in Ardamata

In its [latest report](#), Human Rights Watch addressed the recent spree of ethnically targeted attacks by the RSF and allied militia in Ardamata, West Darfur, which have "the hallmarks of an organized campaign of atrocities against Masalit civilians". Human Rights Watch interviewed 20 Masalit people who fled Ardamata between 1-10 November, who described a spree of killings, shelling, unlawful detentions, sexual violence, ill-treatment, and looting. The report (launched shortly prior to UNITAMS' termination, on which see below in 'Government') urges the UN Security Council to urgently

strengthen the UN's presence in Sudan to prevent further atrocities and better protect civilians in Darfur. Read the [full report](#) here.

GOVERNMENT UNITAMS, UAE, PSC

UNITAMS mandate terminated

The UN Security Council has [adopted a resolution](#) terminating the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan ('UNITAMS') as of 3 December (14 votes in favour, one abstention (Russia)). While it had been [expected](#) that UNITAMS would receive a short technical extension pending completion of the [recently launched strategic review](#), the Council [seemingly concluded](#) that it was no longer viable in any form following [Perthes' resignation](#) and the Sudanese de facto authorities' [request to terminate the Mission](#). UNITAMS must now transfer its tasks to UN agencies, funds, and programmes by 29 February 2024, with liquidation to commence on 1 March. The Council has not proposed an alternative mechanism at this stage, calling only on the UN Secretary-General to provide periodic briefings. Relatedly, while Dalla-Alla Osman [claimed](#) that the de facto authorities would cooperate with the Secretary-General's new Personal Envoy on Sudan (whose appointment was 'welcomed' by the Council), al-Burhan has already issued a [pointed warning](#) that "[w]e do not want an envoy who sides with a faction or group, otherwise, his fate will be like Volker Perthes" (implying that any cooperation will be conditional on the Envoy drawing limited attention to the SAF's own culpability for serious human rights violations/international crimes).

Tensions rising with the UAE

[Diplomatic tensions are rising](#) between the UAE and Sudan over the former's role in supporting the RSF. It is [well reported](#) that the UAE has, since April, [supplied weapons to the RSF via airports in Chad and Uganda](#). Having recently [escaped RSF siege in Omdurman](#), Gen Yasir al-Atta gave a remarkable statement at the Wadi Seidna military base, labelling the UAE a "mafia state" that "loves ruin and follows evil", and condemning support provided by the UAE, as well as Chad, the CAR, Libya, and the Wagner Group. This messaging (which was subsequently repeated on [Sudan TV](#)) sparked public protests in Port Sudan demanding the expulsion of the UAE Ambassador to Sudan. A senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [claims that the Ministry is investigating possible escalatory measures](#) against the UAE, though the ~200k Sudanese living and working in the UAE will [no doubt be fearful of any retaliation](#). Relatedly, the Biden administration was urged to take a stronger stance against the UAE's involvement in Sudan during a recent [hearing of the US House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa](#). In response, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs: (i) noted Vice President Kamala Harris' recent meeting with Mohamed bin Zayed in the margins of COP28 ([Sudan was discussed](#), though no specifics are known); and (ii) remarked that "the publicity of this hearing and your statement and request to the UAE to consider the detrimental impact of their support to the RSF would be helpful".

PSC establishes High-Level Panel on Sudan

The African Union ('AU') Peace and Security Council has [requested](#) that the Chairperson of the Commission set up a High-Level Ad-hoc Panel on Sudan. The announcement comes during a crisis of legitimacy for the AU on Sudan after its roadmaps/mechanisms to address the current conflict in Sudan have so far largely failed to gain regional traction. Since April, the AU has lacked a dedicated high-level mechanism to work on Sudan on a full-time basis. Instead, [AU officials would handle the file as one of numerous responsibilities](#). Analysts have identified this as a "[major gap in the AU's engagement, which also accounts for its lacklustre performance](#)" on Sudan. See also [here](#) for the recent statement issued by members of the Expanded Mechanism for the Resolution of the Sudan Crisis (a wide coalition including neighbouring countries, IGAD, the UN, League of Arab States, UK, US,

EU, and many others), convened by the AU Commission.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION TRUCE BROKEN, AIR STRIKES, HERDING GROUPS

Clashes resume in Kordofan States

Clashes have resumed across the Kordofan States, particularly between the SAF, RSF, and SPLM-N al-Hilu. In West Kordofan, local forces of the SAF/RSF and the Native Administration signed a [tripartite commitment](#) to halt escalation, which was violated in less than a day following [SAF air strikes in Babanousa](#). In South Kordofan: (i) [four civilians were killed](#) and others injured following an RSF attack resulting in [renewed clashes with the SPLM-N al-Hilu](#); and (ii) [nine people were killed](#) following a clash between herding groups. In North Kordofan, an air strike conducted by the SAF in Jabra al-Sheikh [killed five civilians](#) and injured 15 others.

weekend read

Dangerous descent into [Warlordism](#) (and war [crushing](#) the promise of democracy); imminent risk of [genocide](#) (and crucial steps needed to [restore Sudan stability](#)); [survivor accounts](#) of sexual violence (and [Jawahir's story](#)); RSF [targeting atrocity witnesses](#); [what it's like](#) to be a paediatric nurse in Sudan; [flies](#) engulf Port Sudan; [fractures](#) in the PCP; and [kleptocracy versus democracy](#).

*Thanks for reading, and see you in the new year (where we will return to biweekly updates).
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