

justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Hyperlinks are underlined.

Friday 2 Feb 2024

BIG STORIES FIRST

- Delegates from the SAF (Shamseddin al-Kabbashi) and the RSF ([US-sanctioned](#) Abdelrahim Dagalo) met – unannounced – three times this month in Manama, Bahrain, for a [new round of negotiations](#). Encouragingly, and in contrast to the [prior Jeddah talks](#): (i) officials from the UAE and Egypt (key third States influencing the conflict) are directly involved in the discussions, alongside Saudi Arabia and the US; and (ii) the warring parties are both represented by high-ranking decision makers. So far, no concrete outcomes have been made public, though one participant claims the sides “[tentatively agreed on a declaration of principles](#)”. According to [one source](#), the SAF’s demands during the negotiations include that the RSF should: (i) make a \$30 billion “compensation” payment (the report does not specify whether any of these funds would be earmarked as reparation for survivors); (ii) move its fighters out of Khartoum; (iii) release individuals it has detained; and (iv) return looted property to civilians. The RSF’s position reportedly includes: (i) restoring Hemedti as vice chair of the Sovereign Council; and (ii) returning RSF funds/assets seized by the de-facto authorities since April 2023. The negotiations are expected to continue, possibly culminating in an [inter-Sudanese conference for national reconciliation](#) (relatedly, al-Burhan recently [met with Algeria’s Abdelmadjid Tebboune](#)). Meanwhile, the Sudanese de-facto authorities have [purportedly suspended Sudan’s IGAD membership](#) – their latest retaliation after [IGAD invited Hemedti](#) to participate in its Extraordinary Session earlier this month. In response to the de-facto authorities, [Hemedti wrote publicly to the IGAD chair](#) that Burhan “lacks a requisite legitimacy and mandate to speak and act on [Sudan’s] behalf” and that the purported withdrawal should be “treated with [...] contempt”.
- The latest [Report of the UN Panel of Experts on Sudan](#) has been (unofficially) released, detailing its findings and investigations since 12 March 2023. The Panel made numerous important findings, including: (i) IHL violations committed by the warring parties that constitute war crimes, as well as conduct that “may have amounted” to crimes against humanity (see

our [September 2023 report](#) for detailed legal analysis on this issue); (ii) 10,000 – 15,000 people were killed in El-Geneina alone following prior [waves of targeted violence perpetrated by the RSF and allied militia](#) (in stark contrast to the [conservative death toll figures](#) usually reported); (iii) details of each side’s key supply lines and funding structures ([reports](#) that the [UAE](#) supplies arms and ammunition to RSF via eastern Chad were acknowledged as “credible”); and (iv) analysis of “extensive ethnic-based recruitments in Darfur” by both sides in the build-up to and during the armed conflict, which has ultimately fuelled violence amongst communities. The Panel recommends that the Sanctions Committee on Sudan: (i) reminds parties to the conflict in Darfur to adhere to their IHL obligations, noting that perpetrators may be subject to targeted UN sanctions measures (though this is likely not feasible for now given the political climate within the Council); and (ii) reminds the warring parties and those who facilitate supply lines to Darfur to comply with the UN arms embargo. Relatedly, see [here](#) on the UAE’s war on UN Sanctions busters.

ACCOUNTABILITY ICC, KHARTOUM, WEST KORDOFAN

ICC Prosecutor addresses ongoing international crimes in Sudan

The [Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has briefed the UN Security Council](#), urging its members to take immediate action to halt the escalating violence and impunity in Sudan. He updated the Council on his office’s ongoing investigations, concluding that [“there are grounds to believe”](#) that the SAF, the RSF, and affiliated groups are committing Rome Statute crimes. The Prosecutor also noted that his office has not received any information or evidence from either warring party, despite the [SAF’s previous claims](#) that it would submit a dossier of evidence to the Office of the Prosecutor on RSF crimes. See the [Prosecutor’s Report](#) for additional information, including on the status of the Ali Kushayb trial (the defence case is ongoing and the trial is expected to conclude in the first half of 2024) as well as the whereabouts of the other ICC indictees. Relatedly, the US (itself not a State Party to the Rome Statute) has [designated ICC indictee Ahmed Harun under its War Crimes Rewards Program](#), offering rewards of up to \$5 million for information leading to his arrest, transfer, or conviction. Harun, who is [accused](#) of 20 counts of crimes against and 22 counts of war crimes, [fled Kober Prison](#) during the early stages of the conflict and – though a [warrant was initially made for his arrest](#) – [reports](#) suggest he is at large in Sudan, possibly [mobilising new SAF recruits](#). The Sudanese Islamic Movement rejected the US decision to designate Harun as [“flawed and shameful”](#).

Major clashes in Khartoum and West Kordofan

As was the case during previous rounds of negotiations, both sides continue to clash regularly – with devastating consequences for civilians. Having lost significant ground to the RSF in recent weeks, [al-Burhan announced](#) that the SAF would launch a full-scale offensive against the RSF, targeting positions “from all directions”, later adding that [no political process can begin](#) until the RSF is defeated. Fierce fighting has taken place between the two forces in Khartoum State, particularly in [Bahri](#) (where the most intense fighting in months saw the SAF seize control of various RSF positions), [Omdurman](#), and around the [SAF’s General Command](#). Meanwhile, [as expected](#), the RSF has launched [attacks on SAF positions in Babanousa, West](#)

[Kordofan](#). At least [23 civilians were killed](#) during the initial clashes. Many of the casualties have been [attributed](#) to SAF airstrikes on densely populated areas, ostensibly to displace embedded RSF fighters. The SAF also [reportedly employed over a dozen explosive ‘barrel bombs’](#) (see the same [here in Wad Madani](#) and [here in El-Dein](#)). The vast majority of Babanousa’s residents have now been [forcibly displaced](#). Local tribal leaders have [brokered a temporary ceasefire](#) with the SAF and the RSF to enable civilians still in Babanousa to evacuate.

Both forces continue targeting civilians

The acting Minister of Federal Governance in Port Sudan has [issued a decree](#) purportedly dissolving all grassroots service committees in Sudan, following similar decrees issued by acting governors in River Nile, Northern, El Gedaref, Sennar, White Nile, and North Kordofan States. Service committees/emergency response rooms have been a vital lifeline for civilians since the start of the conflict; one of very few actors delivering aid to local communities. Meanwhile, both sides continue to target civilians amidst the fighting. For instance, the editor-in-chief of *El Midan* and his brother both remain in RSF detention in [Khartoum](#) (the Sudanese Journalists Network has condemned the “[systematic targeting of journalists](#)” by both sides). See also [here](#) and [here](#) for recent reports by the Darfur Network for Human Rights describing cases of torture inflicted by the RSF.

GOVERNMENT SANCTIONS, IRAN, ERITREA

EU and US targeted sanctions on conflict-linked entities

The EU has [sanctioned six entities](#) for undermining the stability and political transition of Sudan – its first such use of targeted sanctions since the armed conflict began. The designated entities (RSF-linked – Al-Junaid, Tradive, GSK Advance; SAF-linked – Defense Industries System, SMT, Zadna International) are all also sanctioned by both the [US](#) and [UK](#). The EU’s designations were [criticised by Sudan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) – as usual for ‘falsely equating’ the RSF with the SAF. Zadna International – a former subsidiary of fellow designee Defense Industries System and reportedly a vehicle for military money laundering – issued a [statement](#) denying its involvement in the conflict, claiming that the designation would obstruct its activities ensuring food security in Sudan. Shortly afterward, the US announced [another batch of sanctions](#) – also designating Zadna, as well as Alkhaleej Bank (an entity controlled by the RSF and which reportedly received \$50 million from the Central Bank of Sudan immediately before the start of the current conflict) and Al-Fakher (a holding company for the RSF’s gold exports). It remains to be seen whether States will continue to sanction entities but not individuals, particularly with negotiating lines currently open between the two warring parties (see above in Big Stories).

De-facto authorities securing weapons via Iran

Sudan’s acting Foreign Minister [met](#) with Iran’s First Vice President. Having [restored diplomatic ties](#) in October 2023, the de-facto authorities have now agreed to “expedite” the process of strengthening ties with Iran. The two will reportedly reopen embassies in their respective countries. Iran has been [supplying the SAF with combat drones](#) (several of which have [reportedly been downed](#) by the RSF) and this meeting comes amidst [reports](#) that Iran will supply additional weaponry (see [here](#) on Iranian aircraft reportedly delivering weapons to the SAF). Relatedly: (i) Yasir al-Atta

announced that the de-facto authorities will file complaints with the relevant regional and international bodies against the UAE for its role supporting the RSF (see e.g., [here](#) at the Security Council); (ii) South Sudan has [rejected](#) the [UN Panel of Experts on Sudan's finding](#) that the RSF transports fuel into Sudan via South Sudan; and (iii) [the Kyiv Post claims that the Ukrainian Special Forces have conducted drone attacks](#) in Sudan targeting “Russian mercenaries” in recent weeks (presumably referring to remnants of the Wagner Group).

Eritrea training camps raise tribal clash fears

At least [six training camps have been established in Eritrea](#), reportedly by armed groups from eastern Sudan as well as the SLM-MM ([other reports suggest the camps may be tied to Islamists](#)). The move comes shortly following the RSF's push into Gezira State, which enables access onwards to the Eritrean and Ethiopian borders, as well as towards Port Sudan – where the de-facto authorities are currently based. The increasing mobilisation of armed groups and armament of civilians have raised fears of increased tribal conflict. [Minor clashes have already been reported in El Gedaref](#) between the SLM-MM and SLM-Tambour. According to [one source](#), Malik Agar expressed the de-facto authorities' concern over the training camps [during a recent meeting with Eritrea's Afwerki](#).

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AL-FASHIR, CAIRO WORKSHOP, ABYEI

Precarious situation in North Darfur amidst SAF/RSF clashes

Recent [clashes](#) have been [reported](#) between the SAF and the RSF in Al-Fashir, North Darfur, between the SAF and the RSF, killing at least six people. The situation remains extremely fragile, with various Darfur armed groups still mobilised in the area in anticipation of a full-scale RSF attack on the capital. The SAF also launched attacks in [South Darfur](#) (targeting RSF-operated gold mines) and [East Darfur](#). Meanwhile, several armed groups participated in a [workshop in Cairo on security and humanitarian concerns in Darfur](#), organised by the conflict resolution group Promediation. Amongst other things, participants called for the establishment of humanitarian corridors from Egypt, Chad, and South Sudan, and airlift operations utilising airports in North, West, and South Darfur, to facilitate the delivery of relief. Various groups participated, including the RSF, though the [SAF](#), [SLM-MM](#), [JEM-Ibrahim](#), and [SLM-Tambour](#) all boycotted the workshop. Elsewhere, at least 52 people were killed (including an UNISFA peacekeeper) following [clashes in the Abyei border region](#) between Sudan and South Sudan. At the time of writing, [further attacks were reported](#) in Marial-Achaak village, east of Abyei.

Record humanitarian needs across Sudan

The humanitarian situation in Sudan has deteriorated further since our last update. Nearly [eight million people](#) have been forcibly displaced. Humanitarian needs in Sudan are at record highs (it is estimated that [every second person](#) in Sudan currently requires humanitarian assistance). Nearly 18 million people face [acute food insecurity](#), of which almost 5 million are at emergency levels of food security. In this context, Fikra for Studies and Development has [called on the UN](#) to declare a [Phase 5 Famine](#) at a national scale.

weekend read

[Frontline civilian response](#) in Sudan; [how to stop](#) Sudan's collapse; can the SAF [save themselves?](#); the RSF's [pervasiveness](#); Sudan conflict [fuels world's largest internal displacement](#); Hemedti [embraced abroad](#) as he terrorises civilians at home; briefing on [Abyei](#); Hamdok [interviewed](#); and Sudan [seed bank](#) in jeopardy.

Thanks for reading, and see you in two weeks.

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