

# justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Hyperlinks are underlined.

Friday 26 Apr 2024

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## BIG STORIES FIRST

- The RSF is [encircling](#) Al-Fashir from multiple directions and is [expected](#) to launch an imminent large-scale attack on the city. Since last writing, the RSF has [attacked](#) at least 31 villages [west of Al-Fashir](#), displacing over 50,000 people and [razing at least nine communities](#) – reportedly targeting [Zaghawa communities](#). The RSF [captured](#) the main Darfur Joint Force HQ in Mellit (North of Al-Fashir) leading to [renewed clashes](#) with the SAF in the area; also spilling over into the Abu Shouk camp. The expected attack on Al-Fashir poses an “[extreme and immediate danger to the 800,000 civilians who reside in \[Al-Fashir\]](#)”, including to those in [Zamzam camp](#) which is [completely unprotected](#) and is already in the midst of a [severe hunger and healthcare crisis](#). Al-Fashir is densely populated both by settled communities as well as many of those forcibly displaced within Darfur since April 2023. While a truce was previously negotiated with the RSF following its capture of El-Geneina, Nyala, Zalingei, and El-Daein, this has seemingly enabled it to regroup and resupply with a [view to capturing the entirety of Darfur](#). Unless the RSF’s advance is halted, further civilian casualties are inevitable – particularly if it successfully captures the city (as precedent in [El-Geneina](#), [Gezira State](#), and elsewhere show). The development will also embroil other armed actors, including forces led by [Musa Hilal](#) (who recently declared that he will “[stand with](#)” the SAF), a [new breakaway faction](#) of the SLM-TC, the Darfur Joint Force (which also has a [growing presence in Khartoum](#)), and other Zaghawa groups – possibly including those presently outside of Sudan (e.g., in Chad). While key actors (including the [U.S.](#)) have issued statements calling on the RSF to cease attacks in Al-Fashir, a more robust and coordinated international response is required to halt its advance – including by the [UN Security Council](#) and States that can [influence](#) the RSF and its backers. See also below in ‘Government’ on the push by US officials for targeted sanctions against the RSF and Hemedti.
- The International Humanitarian Conference for Sudan and its Neighbours took place on 15 April 2024, co-hosted by France, Germany, and the EU. 33 financial announcements were made by States around the event – a total of

\$2.2 billion (breakdown [here](#)), though this is a blend of new and existing commitments in varying forms and is [less than half](#) of the \$4.1 billion required ([\\$2.7 billion](#) under the 2024 Plan for Sudan, [\\$1.4 billion](#) for neighbouring countries hosting those displaced outside of Sudan). See [here](#) for the Declaration of Principles issued at the conclusion of the conference. Meanwhile, SpaceX has [started to crackdown on Starlink access](#) from countries where its use has not been authorised by the relevant national authorities, including Sudan. Amidst [communications blackouts](#), Starlink has been a vital lifeline for those in Sudan to contact family and receive remittances abroad (via e-money services e.g., Bankak) as well as for [coordination by grassroots mutual aid initiatives](#). An [opportunistic middleman network](#) has thrived selling Starlink kits purchased in authorised countries. At present, these devices are functional in Sudan using a regional roaming package. The Ministry of Communications [previously requested](#) that SpaceX suspend Starlink access in areas controlled by the RSF. Now, it appears users located in Sudan (as well as Zimbabwe and South Africa) may no longer be able to use Starlink starting 30 April 2024. Some experts [claim](#) that access will still be possible via the global roaming package – though this is over double the monthly cost.

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## ACCOUNTABILITY CLASHES, CRSV, BNP PARIBAS

### Clashes and violations continue across Sudan

Both warring parties have continued attacks across large parts of Sudan. The RSF and SAF clashed in [El-Obeid](#) (North Kordofan) resulting in heavy casualties. The SAF also launched a number of air strikes in [Gezira and Sennar States](#), killing several civilians. In South Kordofan, the SPLM-N al-Hilu [accused](#) SAF Military Intelligence of arresting eleven young people, some of whom it later tortured and killed – part of a wider pattern of ethnically targeted violence against the Nuba people. Meanwhile, the SAF thwarted drone strikes launched (seemingly by the RSF) in [Shendi, River Nile](#). Figures associated with the RSF have long threatened to attack Shendi. The drone strikes occurred shortly after al-Burhan had left the area and are the latest demonstration of the RSF's newfound long-range drone strike capacity (following recent attacks reported in [Atbara](#) and [Gedaref](#)). The SAF also claims to have [repelled a drone reconnaissance mission](#) conducted by the RSF near Merowe (Northern State).

### Calls for further action to address gender-based violence

Civil society organisations and other key actors continue to document the “[heavy price](#)” paid by women and girls in Sudan since April 2023. More than 6.7 million people are at risk of gender-based violence. Reports of such violence are [widespread](#) and increasing (see e.g., [here](#) recently in Gezira). Survivors are [rarely able](#) to access medical rehabilitation services or report the offences to authorities. In his [4 April 2024 report on conflict-related sexual violence](#), the UN Secretary-General reported receiving “credible information about the abduction of more than 160 girls and women in detention, including reports of women and girls being raped and detained in slavery-like conditions”. In [her address](#) at UN Security Council's Open Debate on sexual violence, the Darfur Women Action Group's Niemat Ahmadi emphasised rape and other SGBV as a “defining feature” of the armed conflict in Sudan, including ethnically targeted sexual violence; noting as an example that some

women have been told by their attackers that they should be happy that now “they will have an Arab child”. Niemat also noted the Security Council’s failure to take action on Sudan in contrast to the situation two decades ago, including the lack of a UN mission in Sudan following [termination of UNITAMS’ mandate](#) as well as the limited scope of the UN arms embargo – which is “being flouted with impunity” (see also below in ‘Government’). Relatedly, see also our [recent submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture](#) on the challenges faced by survivors of CRSV in obtaining reparation, including in Sudan.

### **U.S. class action to proceed against French bank**

A U.S. District Judge has allowed a class action claim to proceed against the French bank BNP Paribas for providing banking services to the Government of Sudan between 1997 and 2011 in violation of (then) U.S. sanctions. The claim has been brought by US residents who fled non-Arab communities in South Sudan, Darfur, and the Nuba Mountains, and alleges that BNP Paribas aided the Government of Sudan’s human rights abuses in Sudan including its counter-insurgency campaign in Darfur (widely considered as amounting to [genocide](#)). The judge allowed the case to proceed on the basis that there were “too many facts” showing a relationship between the bank’s financing and abuses perpetrated by the Government of Sudan, though it is too soon in the process to conclude whether the bank should be held responsible for causing some of the violations or whether it could have foreseen them. BNP Paribas previously pleaded guilty and paid a [record \\$8.97 billion penalty](#) to settle U.S. charges of sanctions violations against Sudan, Cuba, and Iran. Meanwhile, French prosecutors are still [conducting a related inquiry](#) into BNP’s Sudan activities between 2002 and 2008.

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## **GOVERNMENT SANCTIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, REFUGEES**

### **UK and Canada make new sanctions designations**

The UK has sanctioned a further three entities for their role in the [ongoing armed conflict](#) – two RSF-linked entities (Alkhaleej Bank and Al-Fakher Advanced Works, both also sanctioned by the [U.S.](#)) as well as Red Rock Mining, a SAF-linked subsidiary of Sudan Master Technology and an affiliate of Defence Industries System (both sanctioned by the [U.S.](#) and [UK](#)). While welcomed by REDRESS and others, the UK’s continued reluctance to sanction individuals will come under increased scrutiny – particularly following [recent confirmation](#) that senior FCDO officials have held unannounced talks with RSF representatives. Canada also announced its [first Sudan sanctions](#) since the start of the conflict, replicating four entity and two individual sanctions made by the U.S. Relatedly, the coalition of US officials led by Senator Risch has [requested a determination](#) under the [Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act](#) of whether the RSF and Hemedti have engaged in sanctionable activity, including gross human rights violations. Under the US regime, President Biden has 120 days to determine whether the RSF and Hemedti have engaged in such activity and must submit a report (which may be classified) that includes a statement of whether Biden intends to impose sanctions on them.

### **Uncertain status of ceasefire negotiations**

The status of the expanded Jeddah negotiations is currently unclear in light of recent

developments – particularly in Al-Fashir (see above in ‘Big Stories First’). The U.S. and Saudi Arabia [previously committed](#) to renewing the talks in early May alongside the UAE, Egypt, the AU, and IGAD. As has previously been the case, the RSF has launched attacks coinciding with the proposed renewal of ceasefire talks – seemingly to strengthen the RSF’s leverage. While Hemedti continues to claim his [supposed readiness](#) to engage in ceasefire and peace negotiations, al-Burhan is balancing competing power dynamics, including influential Islamist figures such as Ali Karti who are [pushing al-Burhan not to negotiate](#) and may prove integral to his job security. Meanwhile, discussions continue in the margins regarding the UAE’s role financing and arming the RSF. The UAE has opened another [‘field hospital’ in Abéché](#), Chad, having been regularly accused of using its [field hospital in Amdjarass as a cover to supply the RSF](#) (described as “[credible](#)” by the UN Panel of Experts; see relatedly [here](#)). Despite this, no designations have been made for violations of the Darfur arms embargo since April 2023 (relatedly, the UK’s Africa Minister recently noted that [discussions have taken place](#) to expand the embargo across Sudan but that this is being [blocked by China and Russia](#)). Finally, the European Parliament [voted not to delist the UAE](#) from its anti-money laundering high-risk third country list, which safeguards Europe from risks of illicit financial flows and sanctions evasion. The EU previously [sanctioned six entities in Sudan](#), including three entities involved in funding and supplying military equipment to the RSF.

### **Egyptian authorities arrested, tortured Sudanese refugees**

An [investigation by the Refugees Platform in Egypt and the New Humanitarian](#) has found that thousands of Sudanese refugees have been detained by Egyptian authorities in a network of secret military bases and then deported back to Sudan, often without the chance to claim asylum. Since the early stages of the conflict, refugees seeking to enter Egypt have often had no choice but to use [expensive and extremely dangerous people smuggling operations](#). This latest investigation found a “systematic, nationwide effort to deny Sudanese refugees the right to claim asylum” involving “multiple components of the Egyptian security apparatus as well as other agencies of the government”. Some refugees told reporters that Egyptian border guard forces had shot at, arrested, and deported them without any legal process, while others reported being tortured by border guard officers.

### **De facto authorities dismiss Foreign Minister al-Sadiq**

The Sudanese de facto authorities have taken further steps as part of their administrative reshuffle, including [dismissing Foreign Minister Ali al-Sadiq and the \*walis\* of Gedaref and Kassala States](#). No reasons were given for al-Sadiq’s removal which was unexpected (it may be linked to his handling of communications with States, including on the authorities’ relationship with the UAE or the failure to convincingly present the armed conflict to the international community as ‘the SAF defending Sudan against a terrorist organisation’). He has been replaced by Hussein Awad, previously his undersecretary. The *walis* of Gedaref and Kassala were both replaced by retired SAF Generals. Meanwhile, [reports suggest](#) the authorities plan to reduce the size of the cabinet by merging ministries, including consolidating the Ministry of Communications into the Ministry of Defence.

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## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

See above in 'Big Stories First'.

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# weekend read

Forgetting war a [privilege Sudanese don't have](#); [Yousra Elbagir](#) and [Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#) on covering [Sudan conflict](#); [mutual aid volunteer](#) reflects; [breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur](#); the [struggle](#) for Sudan; Sudan's [labyrinth of torture centres](#); and ['tell me how to make it stop'](#).

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

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