

# justice + conflict

UPDATES FROM SUDAN

REDRESS

Hello,

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

Hyperlinks are underlined.

Friday 10 May 2024

---

## BIG STORIES FIRST

- Al-Fashir remains “[on the precipice of a large-scale massacre](#)” as the RSF continues its [offensive](#) to capture the North Darfur capital. So far, the SAF and allied armed groups have resisted the RSF’s attacks – with the SAF launching numerous airstrikes on RSF positions, including east of [Al-Fashir and in Mellit](#) resulting in [civilian and livestock casualties](#). Meanwhile, the UN Security Council held a [closed consultation](#) on Sudan, having expressed its “[deep concern](#)” over the RSF’s siege in Al-Fashir. The Sudanese de facto authorities had initially pushed for the Security Council to convene in response to its [formal complaint](#) over the [UAE’s role in supporting the RSF](#). The UAE reportedly heavily [lobbied States including the UK](#) (penholder on Sudan at the Council) resulting in the meeting being modified from a private meeting to a closed consultation – with the key consequence that non-Member States including Sudan could not attend. The Sudanese authorities responded by [accusing the UK of complicity](#) in the RSF’s violations before later – in the latest diplomatic incident with Chad – claiming that Sudan has [evidence of more than 400 flights](#) from the UAE to Chad delivering weapons, military equipment, and other supplies to the RSF. As of writing, there are renewed heavy clashes between the RSF and the SAF/allied armed groups – particularly [east](#) and [north](#) of Al-Fashir. The RSF’s siege has [exacerbated water, food, fuel, and medical supply shortages](#) in the area. Relatedly, see [documentation of 11 additional communities around Al-Fashir razed by the RSF](#) and below in ‘Accountability’ on Human Rights Watch’s latest report on the RSF’s prior attacks in West Darfur – a bleak reminder of the possible consequences should the RSF successfully capture the remaining Darfur capital.
- It remains very unlikely that formal ceasefire negotiations will resume [for the foreseeable future](#), with both the RSF and SAF launching renewed attacks to capture key strategic locations (Al-Fashir and [Wad Madani](#)/parts of [North Kordofan](#) respectively). According to [Arab sources close to the Jeddah talks](#), [al-Burhan](#) is refusing to return to the negotiations unless Hemedti commits to refraining from purchasing additional weapons. Meanwhile, a

Russian delegation led by its Deputy Foreign Minister travelled to Sudan and [met with al-Burhan](#). Both sides [expressed their desire](#) to bolster relations between the two States, with Russia expressing continued support for the SAF-led regime. Russia reportedly offered “[uncapped](#)” military assistance to Sudan, likely in [exchange for gold](#) (it is unclear whether the two also discussed Russia’s ‘[indefinitely postponed](#)’ plans to build a military base on the Red Sea in Sudan). See also [here](#) on how Russia – like numerous other States – continues to [hedge its bets in Sudan](#), offering weapons to the SAF while continuing to supply the RSF. Days later, al-Burhan travelled to Türkiye to attend the funeral of his son [who was recently killed after sustaining injuries in a motorcycle accident](#). While in Türkiye, al-Burhan met with Erdogan where the two reportedly discussed “[potential areas for joint cooperation](#)”. Erdogan [previously offered to mediate negotiations](#) between the warring parties, alongside Libya, though this has not materialised.

---

## ACCOUNTABILITY ETHNIC CLEANSING, CLASHES, ICC

### HRW report on RSF atrocities in West Darfur

Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a major report, “[The Massalit Will Not Come Home](#)”, documenting ethnically targeted attacks by the RSF and allied militias against Masalit communities in El-Geneina city/Ardamata. The report is the product of interviews with over 220 people (mostly witnesses and survivors) and analysis of photographs, videos, and satellite imagery. HRW found that the RSF and its allies are responsible for a campaign of ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The report recommendations include: (i) UN targeted sanctions on those responsible for international crimes in Darfur, including Hemedti, Abdelrahim Dagalo, and Abdul Rahman Juma (HRW found all three to have command responsibility for atrocities in West Darfur), as well as Musa Angir (a Tamazuj commander), *Amir* Massar Abdelrahman Assil (Native Administration leader responsible for mobilising fighters and perpetuating violence), and *Amir* Hafiz Hassan (Native Administration member coordinating with the RSF); (ii) expanding the existing UN arms embargo country-wide (and the need for action to enforce it); (iii) States to publicly condemn individual governments not respecting the existing Darfur arms embargo; and (iv) the deployment of a civilian protection mission for Sudan. The full report is available [here](#), summaries are available in [Arabic](#), [French](#), and [Swahili](#), and a Q&A on the report can be read [here](#).

### SAF offensives in Gezira and North Kordofan

Renewed clashes have taken place across parts of Sudan, including around Wad Madani and parts of North Kordofan; with imminent fighting also feared in South Kordofan. In Wad Madani, the SAF continued its [three-pronged offensive to recapture the Gezira capital](#), conducting airstrikes on key RSF positions. At present, the RSF continues to control the area and has [attacked additional villages](#) resulting in civilian casualties. In North Kordofan, the SAF launched its first offensive in months – reportedly retaking a [military base in El-Obeid](#) and clashing with the RSF around [Mount Kordofan](#). The area is strategically important to both sides – including as a hub for key supply routes [by road and via the \(currently closed\) El-Obeid Airport](#). In Kadugli, South Kordofan, concerns are mounting of imminent clashes [following the assassination of two tribal leaders](#). The circumstances of the killings are unclear,

though one prominent community leader [accused SAF Military Intelligence of orchestrating the attacks](#) to “[provoke their communities into seeking revenge, potentially leading to a total collapse of security.](#)” Meanwhile, the SAF and SPLM-N al-Hilu have [reached an agreement](#) to enable humanitarian aid deliveries into South Kordofan in areas controlled by the two forces (the SPLM-N al-Hilu controls significant areas in Dilling, Abbasiya, and parts of eastern Kadugli).

### **CSOs request US to clarify legality of ICC support**

A coalition of Sudanese and international CSOs [wrote](#) to the US Attorney General and Assistant AG requesting any unclassified written guidance that the Office of Legal Counsel has issued on the [conditions under which the US Government can lawfully support](#) the ICC’s investigation of atrocities such as those recently committed in Darfur. While a prior leaked opinion from the Office seems to suggest that the US could support the ICC’s new Darfur investigation provided that it amounts to “assistance to international efforts to bring to justice... foreign nationals accused of [Rome Statute crimes]” rather than “institutional support” to the ICC, other public commentary has suggested that it could not assist the ICC “in the early stages of the Prosecutor’s efforts in a country that would help identify which individuals should be ‘accused’” – as is currently the case in the Darfur context. The letter emphasises the importance of the US being able to assist the ICC prior to formal accusations emerging against specific individuals and without limiting assistance to cases against those accused. The Office is required to disclose the information requested under the US’ Freedom of Information Act, though this is [subject to certain exemptions](#).

---

## **GOVERNMENT IMMUNITIES, SANCTIONS, STARLINK**

### **Authorities reinstate GIS immunities**

The Sudanese de facto authorities have purportedly reversed reforms implemented by the previous transitional government; reinstating the immunities enjoyed by members of the General Intelligence Service (formerly, the NISS). In July 2020, Sudan’s transitional government made broad-reaching changes to the [National Security Act 2010](#) including repealing Article 52 on immunities. Now, the authorities have [further amended the Act](#) to, amongst other things: (i) re-grant immunity to the Director and members of the GIS (the GIS Director may waive immunity in individual cases, though [prior practice in Sudan](#) indicates this will effectively preclude prosecutions in at least the vast majority of cases); and (ii) expand GIS arrest and search powers. Relatedly, the Sudanese authorities also [approved a new Emergency Order](#) establishing a state of emergency in Khartoum and approving related emergency measures, including a new “security cell” empowered to monitor, investigate, and raid “sleeper cells” (RSF affiliates).

### **US Envoy warns of further sanctions**

The US Special Envoy for Sudan, Tom Perriello, gave [testimony](#) before the US Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on the US’ latest efforts to end the armed conflict in Sudan. Questioned on its targeted sanctions strategy, Perriello emphasised that the US has taken the lead in sanctioning high-profile individuals/companies facilitating the warring parties’ behaviour and is prepared to sanction additional senior officials and entities. He explained that the US is communicating with the warring parties on the consequences of escalation in Al-Fashir, including informing RSF leadership of the

“imminent” possibility of further sanctions. Perriello also called for more action by other States, including the US’ multilateral partners (the UK and EU are yet to sanction any senior RSF/SAF officials since 15 April 2023). In addition, Perriello: (i) recognised that existing death figures since the start of the armed conflict are likely undercounts – possibly by a factor of 10 to 15 (citing a figure as high as 150,000 and work by the US and others to determine a more credible count); and (ii) accepted that the US believes reports of external State support for the warring parties cited by the UN Panel of Experts are indeed “credible” and that the US continues to review such reports as part of developing their sanctions packages and communications with regional actors. The hearing can be viewed [here](#) and Perriello’s opening statement [here](#).

### **Starlink access still online in Sudan**

SpaceX has seemingly reversed its decision to [terminate](#) Starlink access in unauthorised countries including Sudan – at least for the time being – with Starlink terminals [still functioning](#) in Sudan as of writing. [Darfur24 reportedly obtained a statement](#) from a SpaceX representative confirming the decision, though no public statement has been issued and the representative did not rule out future review/reversal of the decision. Starlink remains a vital (if often inaccessible) lifeline for communication, receiving remittances from abroad, and coordinating grassroots/humanitarian aid networks.

---

## **HUMANITARIAN SITUATION** FAMINE, AID OBSTRUCTION

### **Food security crisis worsens**

FEWS Net has issued a [new alert](#) on Sudan’s food security crisis. In its most likely scenario, levels of hunger and malnutrition are expected to reach Emergency (IPC Phase 4) with some households in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) and humanitarian food assistance needs expected to rise sharply through the lean season. The [UN World Food Programme issued a statement](#) warning that time is running out to prevent starvation in Darfur; while [parts of Khartoum](#) also remain under RSF siege with no food supply. Meanwhile, MSF [suspended its work at Madani Teaching Hospital](#) in Sudan, the only functional hospital for those in dire need of medical assistance in Gezira State. MSF cited being unable to bring new staff and medical supplies into the area due to the denial of travel permits and repeated security incidents, including looting and harassment. The RSF has controlled the area since December 2023. Finally, the [International Committee of the Red Cross announced that two of its drivers were killed](#) by gunmen in South Darfur, with three other ICRC staff injured during the incident.

---

**weekend  
read**

Situation in Darfur ‘[catastrophic](#)’; Sudanese refugees face dire conditions in [Chad](#) and [Ethiopia](#); a [year in Khartoum](#); savage war and [toxic information battle](#); [shadow play of legitimacy](#); [closure of](#)

[civic space](#); [political charter](#) signed; and  
the [perilous journey](#) to Libya and beyond.

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

*If this was forwarded to you, please email [caitlan@redress.org](mailto:caitlan@redress.org) to sign up.*