



Mathurin Hybrid Initiative

Global Advisory Report

Humanitarian Crisis: War in Sudan

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Background:

On April 15, 2023, hostilities erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), both factions vying for control within Sudan's military government. The conflict primarily unfolded in and around the capital city of Khartoum and the Darfur region. By October 2023, the toll had risen to an estimated 9,000 to 10,000 fatalities, with 6,000 to 12,000 individuals sustaining injuries. Internal displacement affected over 4.8 million people, while more than 1.3 million sought refuge beyond Sudan's borders. Disturbingly, reports indicated many civilian casualties in Darfur as part of the 2023 Darfur genocide, where survivors told of mass slaughter, murdered babies and kill lists.

The RSF initiated the conflict with attacks on government installations, prompting a response involving airstrikes, artillery, and gunfire across Sudan. Ongoing power struggles between RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo and Sudan's de facto leader, army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, centred on key sites in Khartoum. These sites included the general military headquarters, the Presidential Palace, Khartoum International Airport, Burhan's official residence, and the SNBC headquarters. Additionally, various states and towns in Darfur and Kordofan became contested territories.

As the conflict unfolded, rebel groups, once adversaries of both the SAF and RSF, joined the fray. In June, the SPLM-N (al-Hilu) launched attacks on army positions in the southern regions. July saw a faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Mustafa Tambour (SLMT), officially aligning with the SAF. Subsequently, in August, the Tamazuj movement, based in Darfur and Kordofan, allied itself with the RSF. The involvement of these rebel factions added complexity and intensity to an already dire situation.

Sudan has a lengthy history of violence and costly conflict consisting of foreign intervention, ethnic division, religious disputes, and resource competition. Since its independence in 1965, Sudan has experienced more than 15 military coups and has been predominately ruled via the military.

Humanitarian impact:

The conflict has intensified an ongoing humanitarian crisis, compounded by the brutality unfolding amidst elevated temperatures, drought, and the commencement of the fasting month of Ramadan. Civilians found themselves trapped indoors, fearful of venturing out to secure essential food and supplies amid the ongoing violence. Hospitals faced severe challenges, grappling with understaffing and dwindling supplies as an influx of wounded individuals strained their capacities. The World Health Organization documented approximately 26 attacks on healthcare facilities, resulting in casualties among both medical workers and civilians. The Sudanese Doctors' Union reported that over two-thirds of hospitals in conflict zones were non-operational, with 32 forcibly evacuated or caught in crossfire, including half of Khartoum's 130 medical facilities and all hospitals in West Darfur.

Outbreaks of diseases such as measles, cholera, and diarrhoea swept across the country, further exacerbating the already dire situation. The United Nations highlighted critical shortages of basic necessities like food, water, medicines, and fuel, characterizing the situation as "extremely acute." The suspension of remittances from overseas migrant workers by Western Union further exacerbated the crisis, contributing to the dire circumstances.

The World Food Programme reported that more than \$13 million worth of food aid destined for Sudan had been looted since the conflict erupted. An estimated 25 million people, representing over half of Sudan's population, were deemed in need of assistance. The looting of WFP's warehouses in El-Obeid on June 1 resulted in the loss of food aid intended for 4.4 million people. By July 25, Humanitarian Coordinator Clementine Nkweta-Salami disclosed that attacks on humanitarian facilities had led to the looting of over 50 warehouses, ransacking of 82 offices, and theft of over 200 vehicles.

Economically, the United Nations estimated that Sudan's economic activity plummeted by more than a third in the initial three weeks of the conflict. In July, Sudanese economists approximated the overall damage at \$9 billion, averaging \$100 million per day, with an additional \$40 billion estimated for property and goods looted, primarily impacting Khartoum and South Darfur. The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Sudanese pound in the black market rose to SDG730 in September, while the official rate reached SDG625, indicating a near standstill in the

formal economy. Gold production also plummeted to a mere two tons from the previous year's output of 18 tons.

Refugees:

As of the 3rd of October 2023, an estimated 5.4 million civilians in Sudan have been displaced by the conflict, making Sudan the largest host of IDP's in the world. More than 400,000 people have fled to Chad, making it the largest single destination for refugees from the conflict, with many others fleeing to the Central African Republic, Egypt, and South Sudan.

Warnings from the UN:

As recently as the 10th of November, a senior UN official has warned that violence against civilians in Sudan is verging on pure evil. This comes as fighting escalates in the seventh month of the war. There have unrelenting and heinous reports of sexual and gender-based violence, enforced disappearance, unfounded detentions, and serious violations of human and children's rights.

The UN humanitarian coordinator for Sudan, Clementine Nkweta-Salami has cited reports of young girls being raped in front of their mothers as the risk of a repeat genocide, like that of the early 2000s, escalates in western Sudan. UNHCR head, Filippo Grandi, echoed Nkweta-Salami's caution about the potential recurrence of atrocities reminiscent of those witnessed two decades ago when the government of Omar al-Bashir unleashed the Janjaweed militia in response to a rebel uprising.

"Twenty years ago, the world was shocked by the terrible atrocities and human rights violations in Darfur," Grandi stated. "We fear a similar dynamic might be developing."

UNHCR is actively preparing for an anticipated surge of refugees from the region into Chad, which is already hosting hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project conservatively estimates that over 10,000 people have lost their lives in the Sudan conflict thus far. However, aid groups and medical professionals consistently caution that the actual toll surpasses recorded figures, as many of the wounded and deceased never make it to hospitals or morgues. The war has internally displaced over 4.8 million people within

Sudan, compelling an additional 1.2 million to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, according to UN figures. The situation is dire, with the spectre of past atrocities haunting the current crisis.

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