

The situation in Sudan

The Security Council



Shattered Vows: Tracing the Devastation Caused by
Violating Human Rights

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The situation in Sudan

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Introduction

In April 2023, a conflict erupted in Sudan as the Paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) launched calculated offensives on government-controlled locations. Reports of airstrikes and gun battles quickly spread throughout the nation, resulting in a swift division of major cities such as Omdurman and Khartoum between the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), which is headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who is de facto Sudan's head of state. The build-up to this conflict dates all the way back to the

It has been reported that as of January 21st, 2024, there have been approximately 13,000 fatalities and over 33,000 injuries in the ongoing conflict. This devastating situation has resulted in more than 6 million individuals being displaced from their homes and seeking safer areas within Sudan. Additionally, over 1.5 million Sudanese citizens have been forced to flee the country in search of refuge elsewhere.

This report aims to summarize the build-up to the current conflict and provide delegates with sufficient information to pick up their research into the subject.

Definition of Key Terms

Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

A protracted conflict in the western region of Darfur, characterised by ethnic and tribal tensions, displacement, and violence.

Sudanese Armed Forces

A rebel group that has been active in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, seeking greater autonomy and representation.

General Overview

Prelude of the conflict

During a military coup in October 2021, the military had taken down the civilian Hamdok administration. The already weak Sudanese economy steeply declined, and mass protest arose demanding the reinstatement of the administration. Tensions arose in the Junta top after the reinstalment, as general Hemedti of the RSF saw the appointment as danger to the position of the RSF. Eventually, Hemedti expressed his regret over the October 2021 coup.

In February of 2023 tensions between the RSF and SAF rose again, when the RSF started recruiting new members all over Sudan. This led to a peek in tensions when a military build-

up took place in the Sudanese capital. Quickly, a deal was brokered, and the RSF withdrew their troops from Khartoum.

Part of the deal negotiations was the integration of the RSF into the Sudanese army: a major disagreement in the timing of this event happened, as the army demanded a 2-year integration period, where the RSF insisted on a 10-year transitional period. Other major bottlenecks were the future rankings of current RSF Officers, and whether RSF forces should be under the command of the army chief rather than Sudan's commander-in-chief, who is al-Burhan.

In April of 2023, RSF forces deployed again near the Sudanese Capital, and refused to leave when ordered so by government forces. This resulted in clashes, where the RSF took over the military base in Soba, south of Khartoum. Two days later the RSF initiated their mobilization, igniting the fears of a possible forceful rebellion against the junta. The SAF declared the mobilisation illegal, and the battle of Khartoum commenced.

Escalation

The battle for Khartoum centres around the capital's airport, and internet was shut down all over the country due to the closing of Sudan's airspace and the capturing of the nation's provider. Furthermore, electricity shortages were caused by damage to the electric grid and international trade came to a hold as a result of a pause of new shipments announced by Maersk, one of the largest shipping companies worldwide.

Hemedti sent his forces out to capture or kill al-Burhan. Assassination was evaded, but the SAF HQ were placed under RSF surveillance, making it impossible for Al-Burkhan to leave the capital. Following extensive threats on his life by Hemedti Al-Burkhan decided to record a video address to his supporters, vowing they would not stop fighting. As Al-Burhan was unable to perform his duty while trapped in Khartoum he transitioned his duties upon his deputy Malik Agar, making him *de facto* leader of Sudan.

International attention to the conflict rose in the following weeks and resulted in the UNHRC calling for a special session addressing the violence. This resulted in a resolution calling for the increase of monitoring of human rights abuse in the area. A temporary ceasefire was signed, but faced challenges as in Khartoum fighting continued, violating the agreement.

2024-present

After months of fighting the SAF's position weakened, making them increasingly eager to enter peace talks, and a date was agreed upon. However, the talks did not take place due to the Sudanese Foreign minister being informed of a "technical issue" by the IGAD.

The RSF leader instead went on a diplomatic tour, meeting with several African Leaders, to portray himself and his administration as the rightful leader of Sudan and improve his image.

Both Hemedti and Burhan were invited to a January summit of IGAD. Hemedti immediately confirmed his attendance on social media, showing he was committed to bringing peace.

But Burhan's administration declined, and on the 16th of January the Sudanese government suspended all their contacts with IGAD, accusing them of violating their sovereignty and legitimizing the RSF by inviting them. Burhan furthermore accused other African leaders of complicity of atrocities against the Sudanese people.

In 2024, the RSF launched violent strikes on South Kordofan, overpowering SAF forces in Habila, a town nestled in the Nuba Mountains. They then progressed towards Dalang. On January 7th, the RSF assaulted SAF positions in Dalang but was met with stiff resistance from the army and civilian militias. After withdrawing from Dalang, the RSF infiltrated the city of Muglad in West Kordofan, where they easily took control as there was no organized SAF presence. West Kordofan had undergone relatively little unrest for a few months due to a local truce established by leaders of the Messiria tribe. However, tensions escalated, and rumours circulated that the RSF was preparing to attack the encircled city of Babanusa and the SAF 22nd Infantry Division stationed there.

Major Parties Involved

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)

The Sudanese Armed Forces are the official military forces of the Republic of Sudan. Muhammad Othman al-Hussein leads the SAF. But in recent years, Sudan has undergone significant political changes, including the ousting of longtime President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 following months of protests against his regime. Subsequently, a transitional government comprising both civilian and military leaders was established to oversee the country's transition to civilian rule.

The SAF, as the country's primary military force, has been a key player in these dynamics. Its role in supporting or constraining the civilian-led transitional authorities can significantly impact Sudan's political trajectory and stability.

Additionally, their involvement in various conflicts, particularly in regions such as Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, has been a longstanding issue. Efforts to address these conflicts, including peace negotiations and ceasefire agreements, have been ongoing.

Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)

The Sudan Revolutionary Front is an alliance of rebel groups, formed in 2011. It consists of various armed movements, which represent different regions and ethnic groups in Sudan. Some prominent rebel groups in the SRF include the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudan Liberation Movement/ Army (SLM/A). They form the front to be involved in the armed conflicts with the Government and advocate for political and economic reforms.

Their main goals are to seek greater regional autonomy, to promote the rights of marginalized communities, and to address historical grievances. The government has responded in several ways, including military operations, negotiations, and peace agreements. One example of a peace agreement is the Juba Peace Agreement. It was signed

in October 2020 in Juba (South Sudan). The claim was to address the root causes of the conflict and establish a framework for political and economic reforms.

Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

The rapid support forces are paramilitary forces performed by the government. Paramilitary means that this group is a unity organised as a military organisation but does not contribute to a country's official forces.

RSF was officially established in August 2013, following a restructuring and reactivation of Janjaweed militias to fight rebel groups in the Darfur region, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states with cooperation of the SAF.

United States of America (USA)

The United States is the largest humanitarian donor to the Sudanese crisis response. This additional support brings total U.S. humanitarian assistance to the Sudanese people and their neighbours to support Sudanese refugees in the fiscal year 2023 to \$840 million.

Timeline of Events

April 15th, 2023 A heavy gunfire and explosions rock the capital Khartoum, sparking panic in the city of more than five million people on the Nile.

April 22nd, 2023 Countries rush to evacuate their nationals from Khartoum.

April 25th, 2023 The US and Saudi Arabia negotiate a 72-hour truce but it is quickly violated.

May 6th, 2023 US and Saudi-backed talks between army and RSF envoys begin in Jeddah.

May 22nd, 2023 A new one-week ceasefire comes into force on May 22 but is also repeatedly breached.

May 31st, 2023 The army says it has suspended its participation in the ceasefire accusing the RSF of failing to respect its truce commitments.

June 1st, 2023 The US imposes the first sanctions related to the conflict, targeting two firms associated with the army and two others linked to the RSF.

June 10th, 2023 Warring sides agree to a 24-hour ceasefire and agree to allow the unimpeded movement and delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout the country.

June 15th, 2023 West Darfur state Governor Khamis Abakar is abducted and killed after publicly blaming the deaths of civilians on the RSF.

July 13 th , 2023	The ICC launches an investigation into a surge of hostilities in the country's Darfur region.
Interim - 2024	Further escalation
January 16 th , 2024	The RSF gained control of the city centre and entered the headquarters of the 22nd infantry division.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Treaty of Jeddah

On May 6th, the delegates from the SAF and the RSF met directly for the first time in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for what was described by Saudi Arabia and the United States as pre-negotiation talks. After diplomatic lobbying from the Saudis and Americans the warring sides signed the Treaty of Jeddah on May 20th, 2023. This vowed to ensure the safe passage of civilians, protect relief workers, and prohibit the use of civilians as human shields. However, this agreement did not include a ceasefire, and clashes resumed in Geneina, which resulted in more casualties.

Possible solutions

Addressing the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region

To increase international presence, a robust peacekeeping force with a clear mandate to protect civilians and halt human rights abuses could be deployed. A diverse force, comprising troops from different regions, may enhance the effectiveness of this mission by ensuring ethnic sensitivity.

In addition, strengthening accountability mechanisms is crucial to address past human rights abuses and prevent future atrocities. This may require cooperation with international bodies such as the International Court of Justice (ICC) to investigate and prosecute individuals or groups responsible for such abuses.

Promoting peacekeeping efforts

Establishing an integrated civilian-military approach is essential for comprehensive peacekeeping. The peacekeeping approach requires coordination between the military, civilian, and humanitarian components to address both security and development aspects. Early warning systems could be established to help anticipate and prevent conflicts. These systems can be created using technology, local networks, and intelligence gathering to provide timely information on emerging threats.

Diplomatic and political engagement also plays a key role in peacekeeping efforts. Facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties, supporting mediation initiatives, and applying diplomatic pressure contribute to maintaining sustainable peace. By valuing these approaches, peacekeepers can prevent conflicts before they escalate.

In addition, clear and achievable mandates could be integrated with regular reviews and adjustments to ensure that peacekeeping efforts remain on track. By implementing these measures, peacekeepers can work towards sustainable peacekeeping solutions that benefit everyone involved.

Legally controlling the civilian displacements

To ensure that displaced populations can receive the necessary support and integration into host communities, it is important to invest in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. This investment could help to enhance the capacities of host communities to absorb and provide for displaced individuals.

A clear legal framework that outlines the rights and responsibilities of displaced persons is also crucial. Such a framework could provide a basis for harmonized policies that ensure access to basic services, legal protection, and opportunities for integration. By implementing both measures, we can help to create a more supportive and equitable environment for displaced populations.

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