



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE - RESEARCH REPORT I

Ensuring civilian protection and addressing the political drivers of the conflict in Sudan

Introduction to the Topic:

Sudan is a large North-East African state with a population of over 50 million. It borders Egypt to the north, Chad and the Central African Republic to the west, South Sudan to the South and Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, with a Red Sea coastline facing Saudi Arabia across the sea. Sudan itself is no stranger to conflict, having suffered through decades of civil wars, authoritarian rule and regional violence which have had a great tole on its institutions, government, population and infrastructure. Still, the current conflict plaguing this nation, remains one of the country's most complex, devastating and costly, driving mass displacement, severe humanitarian need and widespread human-right violations.

Since the 15th of April 2023, Sudan has been engulfed in a major armed conflict between two local organizations, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) or the national army under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan's army chief and de facto head of state, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo or "Hemedti". The conflict itself is widely described as a civil war which has broken out in the capital, Khartoum, but has recently spread throughout nearly the entirety of the nation. At the current state, the nation remains almost equally split between both sides with the RSF maintaining control over the West, including the Darfur region, while the SAF controls most of the North and East, including the capital Khartoum. The fighting is widespread over almost the entirety of Sudan but has concentrated in a few hotspots such as the capital Khartoum, Darfur (especially Northern Darfur), El Fasher and perhaps, most notably, in the Kordofan areas.



The Sudanese conflict has had a profound humanitarian impact with effects reaching far and wide. The conflict is often addressed as the largest humanitarian crisis since records began, with the UN claiming a total of over 30.4 million people in desperate need of humanitarian aid, over half of the country's population. The nation is also facing a growing displacement crisis with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reporting 11.6 million internally displaced persons,



described as the largest internal displacement situation of our time, and over 3 million people being externally displaced. On top of this, Sudan is facing a severe food insecurity crisis with famine confirmed (Integrated Food Security - IPC Phase 5) by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in El Fasher (North Darfur) and Kadugli (South Kordofan) as of September 2025, with these conditions expected to persist through January 2026.

However, this conflict remains widely overlooked by the international community and has been critically underfunded for years. Recently, the UN set an appeal for Sudan's 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) at 4.2 billion dollars, seeking to assist over 20.9 million individuals, yet the plan remains deeply underfunded only receiving roughly 25% of the total funding needed. Additionally, due to funding shortages, rations have been cut by 70% for famine-affected communities and 50% for communities at risk of famine as declared by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in December of 2025.

Meanwhile, many of these humanitarian issues remain not as indirect consequences of conflict, but as a direct result of deliberately harmful actions by both sides, with each of them accused of a multitude of war crimes, including genocide. Throughout the course of the fighting, both the SAF and the RSF have been accused by the UN of committing grave violations of International Human Rights and humanitarian law, with the UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (IFFM) claiming that atrocities are being carried out on a large and concerning scale, and that many acts amounting to war crimes have been carried out, including the targeted killing of civilians and on objects essential for civilian survival such as food, water, support, and so forth. For instance, the Abu Shawk Camp, in North Al-Fasher has been consistently targeted by the RSF as of mid-July 2024, having suffered numerous shelling attacks, which intensified during 2025. Additionally, this has been coupled with multiple artillery strikes, which have killed over 80 people and severely injured many, whilst leading to mass destruction of infrastructure and property, escalating the displacement crisis. Since April 10, 2025, these attacks have significantly increased, and the camp now suffers daily bombardments, which have resulted in the deaths of more than 300 civilians, even though most belonged to non-Arab communities. Furthermore, the UN has reported documented patterns of torture and ill-treatment by both parties, strengthening concerns that human rights abuses are not incidental but systematic. Apart from this, the UN has also reported counts of sexual violence, forced displacement, pillaging, and the deprivation of basic needs, such as medical assistance, which constitutes not just war crimes, but crimes against humanity. As a key example of these actions, in April of 2025, the RSF stormed

the Zamzam camp in El Fasher and allegedly executed over 1000 citizens in door-to-door assaults with many reports of sexual violence occurring. These issues have generated international attention, yet, to this date, these parties have not been issued their proper punishments for most of their actions and continue to operate with almost a complete lack of impunity.

Foreign intervention is another concerning element that constitutes and impediment to end the Sudanese conflict. Even though the conflict is widely regarded as a civil war and as such legally non-international, many states play key roles in funding the conflict and favouring once side or another. A report from Amnesty International found that the conflict is being supported by an almost unimpeded supply of weapons from foreign states, finding evidence of weapons from Turkey, Russia, Serbia, China, Yemen and the UAE, despite an international ban on sending weapons into the Darfur region due to a UN arms embargo imposed in 2004. Sources state that the SAF relies on weapons from Egypt, Turkey and Iran, while the RSF relies on the UAE, despite it denying involvement.



There are, however, efforts to stop the fighting and bring aid into Sudan, mostly through a group of countries known as the Quad, including the US, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but so far, attempts to reach a diplomatic solution have failed. The Quad has introduced a comprehensive initiative with the objective of terminating the Sudanese conflict. This initiative proposes a three-month truce to the conflict in Sudan, allowing for the rapid provision of urgently needed humanitarian aid to vulnerable populations, with the aim of then establishing a permanent ceasefire and encouraging internal political negotiation to promote civilian rule. Despite there having been several objections from multiple international parties siding with General Burhan, the project has received considerable domestic and regional support, as well as the full-approval and endorsement by the United Nations, coupled with other organizations, like the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Background information

This conflict is not simply a result of a split nation, but the consequence of deeply entrenched ethnical tensions, socioeconomic issues, and a long history of dictatorship, political militarization, and civil war, cumulating to form an ideal environment for the heavy militarization of political affairs and the emergence of powerful armed actors allowed to act with a near complete lack of impunity.

However, before moving into a modern view of the topic, it is imperative to understand the deeper social and historical foundations of the conflict and Sudan as a whole. Throughout most of its existence, the land that is now known as Sudan was located in the intersection of many of the most important and culturally diverse areas and trade routes including the Sahara region, the Sahel, the European peninsula and the Nile valley all cumulating to uniquely influence Sudan's demographics, religion and culture and shaping the nation into the melting pot it is today. Over time, many parts of the north and west of the region became inhabited by nomadic and semi-nomadic groups of Arabic-speaking and predominantly Muslim communities whose livelihoods depended on seasonal migration. In Darfur and other Sahelian areas, these communities often intersected with the already settled groups of mainly Sub-Saharan African farmers, creating disputes over fertile land, water and control, resulting to deeply entrench tensions between these groups. Furthermore, decades of colonial expansion and rule exacerbated these preexisting tensions mainly through exploitation, segregation of the Christian Africans in the south from the Muslim Arabs in the north to facilitate control and systems of indirect rule, appointing specific tribal chiefs and solidifying ethnic and tribal labels into official titles. British rule was also heavily divided and almost completely separate in its policies concerning the north and south of Sudan while also unevenly developing and modernizing certain areas over others, such as Khartoum and the Nile valley areas over other areas such as the Kordofan and Darfur, further serving to entrench differences and tensions between different groups. During the British rule many national consciousness would emerge but essentially the most import of these were mainly constitutes of the sectarian elite which would serve to further develop tensions and feeling of suspicious between different groups.

Sudan itself became independent in early 1956, turning into a democracy with a parliamentary government, however, due to many internal disputes and organizational flaws, the parliament failed to become an effective democratic body. Disillusioned with the idea of western democracy, Sudan turned to authoritarianism following a coup in 1958 by General Ibrahim Abboud which led to a short period of dictatorship that would last 1964, when mass protests forced the dictator out of power by a coalition of many civil forces representing most of the population. During this time, the first civil war with South Sudan started, in 1955, and would last until 1972, this conflict was a result of many key drivers including the poor integration of the South under colonial rule, southern political exclusion and underrepresentation, failed attempts at centralization, growing policies pursuing stronger Arabization/



Islamization in the South under Abboud, and the sheer differences in culture, ethnicity and religion between both sides. This civil war ended in the unification of the south and more autonomy given to it with the creation of the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region with its own regional legislature and degree of self-governing although not fully solving the dispute. After this there remained a short period of peace before another coup by Jaafar Nimeiri, who would rule the nation from 1969 until 1985, when he was removed from office by a military coup, partly due to his strong policies enforcing Islamizes after 1983. These policies along with the dictatorships responsibility in reducing the South's autonomy resulted in a second civil war between the South and North from 1983 to 2005 finally resulting in South Sudan's split in 2011. Following this and up until 1989 there was another brief period of democracy until Omar al-Bashir seized power with Islamist support in 1989 which lasted around 30 years until 2021. It is important to note that many of the causes behind the tensions between South and North Sudan, especially those of political exclusion, unequal development and demographic differences, are also present in many areas such as Darfur and Kordofan and serve to add depth and reason behind the modern conflict

Knowledge of Bashir's dictatorship probably the most key to understanding the modern conflict due to its main involvement worsening tensions and the creation of the RSF and the SAF. Under Bashir, Sudan increasingly turned to managing political threats and issues, such as protests rebellions and separate political movements, through coercion and militarized control rather than inclusive state building. During al-Bashir's tenure, the Sudanese Armed Forces were heavily politicized and expanded, resulting in the creation of separate militias that were sponsored by and were loyal to the regime. One of the most relevant examples occurred in Darfur area, where the government funded mostly Arab-led allied militias, the Janjaweed, and relied on them to crush rebellions and intimidate civilians. At times, the paramilitary organisations were accused of severe genocide. Overtime, the tension escalated, and the state's response to the rebellion was to formalize the militias, turning them into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). While initially justified as a rapid counter-insurgency force for Darfur and other conflict areas, under the command of Hemedti, the RSF grew beyond this role into a national power broker with its own recruitment, financing, and chain of command. Consequently, Sudan suddenly developed two rival armed power forces which polarised the country into two different forces after al-Bashir fell from power.

The transition following al-Bashir's removal from power, following a coup d'état, revealed the state's inability to resolve the conflict of interest between the RSF and the SAF. After months of mass protests, Bashir was removed in April 2019, and Sudan entered a civilian-military transition intended to lead to elections and civilian governance. Yet further tensions grew the RSF and SAF's leaders sought to preserve their control and autonomy while the civilians wanted a full reform towards democracy. In October of 2021 the military, including the RSF and SAF took control and weakened democratic institutions further. Having collaborated in ousting al-Bashir and concentrating power in their organisations, the divergences between the SAF and the RSF plunged the country into another conflict. Most notably the SAF sought to merge the RSF into itself, but the RSF, demanding autonomy, disagreed. These disputes led to increasing tensions between both sides until, in April of 2023, starting in the capital Khartoum, they escalated into the conflict we witness today with widespread humanitarian crisis, severe hunger, mass displacement and heavy accusations of war crimes.

Overall, throughout almost the entirety of its history, the area of Sudan has experienced a multitude events leading up to the current conflict. Sudan, from the onset, was an area of unique ethnical, religious and cultural diversity, causing competition over land and resources that were only sharpened by centuries of colonial rule into deep tensions. Post independence instability and a series of authoritarian dictatorships, mostly Muslim, prevent a full national identity and opportunities to overcome the legacy of division and marginalization but instead only lead to worsen the deeply rooted inequalities and communal tensions in Sudan leading to decades of Civil war and conflict.



Furthermore, al-Bashir's later dictatorship only worsened divides while also heavily relying on armed non-state actors and coercion which prioritized force and control over legitimacy and fairness. All these factors help to explain the modern conflict Sudan is now facing and show how any real solution must take Sudan's rich history, culture and demographics into mind before reaching lasting peace.

Past UN Actions

UN-Secretary General- In February 2025, Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, urged countries to take immediate diplomatic action and increase funding, to alleviate the suffering of millions of Sudanese which have been undergoing mass-displacement and starvation, due to ongoing power-driven conflict between military parties in Sudan. Moreover, the Secretary-General emphasized the need for immediate and prolonged action, making sure that both the rights of civilians and humanitarians are being assisted to, ensuring that no resources are being detained from reaching those in need. Guterres also reinforced the dire necessity to stop the flow of arms and ammunition into Sudan as "This flow is enabling the continuation of tremendous civilian destruction and bloodshed". The UN chief believes that a full implementation of the Jeddah Declaration could propel the achievement of a ceasefire, ensuring civilian protection.

Supporting the development and enforcement of the Jeddah Declaration (2023)- This 'Declaration of Commitment', propelled by the United States and Saudi Arabia, and signed by both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), highlights the legislative obligation of both military parties to respect and ensure the protection of Sudanese civilians by facilitating humanitarian assistance. The policy should guide the conduct of both parties to propagate safe delivery of humanitarian aid, reestablish critical services, remove either side's forces from clinical and/or hospital environments and enable a dignified burial of the dead. Furthermore, the declaration should also serve as a potentiator for discussion and mediation between the opposing parties, with the aim to reach a consensus and announce a ceasefire. A U.S-Saudi and internationally backed ceasefire monitoring mechanism will be employed as a security measure to enable this. Later on, a permanent cessation of hostilities between the two forces, following talks, will be set, where both Sudanese civilians, local and international partners will be present, allowing for a more deeply rooted, comprehensive overview of the steps required for peace-making.

WHO (World Health Organization)- WHO has declared that they condemn killings of patients and civilians amid escalating violence in El Fasher, Sudan. As conflict escalates in El Fasher, North Darfur, the WHO teams are continuously working to deliver essential humanitarian aid in this region, despite rising insecurity. For instance, over twenty tons of supplies, particularly medicines and emergency kits, with an emphasis on resources to manage severe malnutrition as well as disease outbreaks, like cholera, are being moved from Nyala to Tawila to respond to the rapidly growing needs of the massively displaced population. Moreover, the WHO and its partners are strategically coordinating with one another at reception sites situated in Korma, to stabilise severely injured and ill people and safely transport them to Tawila.

Significant Parties

United Arab Emirates (UAE): The UAE remains a party frequently accused of backing the RSF through financing and supply channels, which it denies. However, it is also part of a group known as the Quad, responsible for diplomatic efforts striving for a pause to war.

Egypt: Egypt is pivotal due to its shared border, refugee flows, and diplomatic weight. It is often seen as leaning toward Sudan's army-aligned authorities while also managing major humanitarian pressures from people fleeing the war. It is often accused of supplying arms to the SAF.



Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia has been a key convenor of negotiations throughout the conflict, helping host major ceasefire and humanitarian talks. Despite not reaching a solution yet, Saudi influence remains important for maintaining diplomatic talks, striving for humanitarian access, and coordinating with other powers

United States: The US has also been a significant high-profile diplomatic actor helping to shape ceasefire proposals, coordinate talks and support humanitarian efforts it also plays a key role in mediating backing and influencing policies implemented through its large sphere of influence.

Chad: Chad is critical as a frontline host state receiving large refugee inflows from Darfur and surrounding regions. Its capacity to register refugees, protect vulnerable groups, and sustain host communities is essential to preventing exploitation and stabilizing border areas.

Southern Sudan: South Sudan is important, as it is fragile itself while taking in a great number of refugees fleeing Sudan. Its proximity to Sudan and ability for burden sharing make it near essential in easing pressure.

Ethiopia: Ethiopia also remains a major state taking the burden of displaced individuals from Sudan and its policies concerning this play a great impact on the conflict and humanitarian crisis.

United Kingdom: The UK remains significant as it often advocates for strong accountability measures and supports targeted measures such as sanctions, diplomatic pressure and investigations making it a key driver in accountability. It is worth noting that Sudan used to be a British colony, and that certain policies implemented by the British at the time, such as the Southern Policy, have led to significant ethnic and development divisions between the country, which have in turn, contributed to the political and economic dominance of the North, fuelling much of the conflict and post-independency civil wars faced years later by the country.

Glossary and Key Terms:

Paramilitary- A group or organization that operates outside a country's formal military structure. Paramilitaries are typically modelled after military organizations and may have similar training and equipment. These groups often have political or ideological aims and may be involved in activities such as counterinsurgency, anti-terrorism, or internal security. They are often associated with governments but can also be used by non-state actors such as extremist groups or criminal organizations.

Forced Displacement- An involuntary or coerced movement of a person or people away from their home or home region. The UNHCR defines "forced displacement" as follows: displaced "as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations"

Civil War- A violent conflict between a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state's territory.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)- A United Nations agency mandated to aid and protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people, and to assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country.

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)- An agency of the United Nations responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide.



Food Insecurity- The condition of not having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality, to meet one's basic needs.

WFP (World Food Programme)- One of the world's largest humanitarian organizations, saving lives in emergencies and combatting food insecurity and malnutrition in conflict characterised zones, through food assistance, to meet the demands of vulnerable populations.

UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (FFM)- A United Nations Agency whose purpose is to investigate and establish the facts, circumstances and root causes of alleged human rights violations and international crimes.

Quad- A diplomatic organization composed of the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with the objective of delineating a framework for peace and a potential ceasefire to the ongoing Sudanese conflict. This project aims to provide humanitarian aid to vulnerable groups in need and design a political strategy plan to alleviate tensions between the opposing parties, although some of its political suggestions have already been rejected by the SAF, accusing the UAE of partiality to the counter party.

Dictatorship- A government or a social situation where one person makes all the rules and decisions without input from anyone else.

Political Militarization- The process where military values, methods, and influence expand into civilian life and governance, making military solutions seem normal or preferable to political ones.

Democracy- A system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives. **Authoritarianism-** The enforcement or advocacy of strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom. **Coup/Coup d'état -** A sudden, violent, and unlawful seizure of power of a government.

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