



The Power Struggle in Sudan - Another Death Sentence for Genocide Survivors in Darfur

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Darfur Women Action Group (DWAG) and the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention strongly condemn and express grave concern about the recent and ongoing conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary force. We are quite alarmed and appalled by the speed and the scope of indiscriminate attacks launched by the two warring parties, the senseless devastation and deaths of innocent civilians, the complete collapse of a much hoped-for transition to civilian governance, and what seems to be a bleak future regarding peace and security in Sudan.

On April 15, 2023, what was an internal power struggle between the military and the RSF – and their leaders, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo “Hemeti”, respectively – erupted into an armed conflict, culminating in ongoing and fierce gunfire, explosions, and black smoke engulfing not only the capital of Khartoum but also Marawi, North Kordofan, Darfur, and other areas. At least 413 people reportedly perished, and another 3,551 - civilians and personnel alike – were wounded. Some injuries and deaths currently remain unaccounted for due to mobility challenges and fears of violence preventing people from venturing outside their homes. Additionally, power cuts, as well as the closures of the airport and medical facilities, have further limited Sudanese people’s access to vital medical supplies and food, as have road closures even for ambulances.

In spite of the declaration of a ceasefire on Tuesday, April 18, to allow for the evacuation of the wounded, shootings and violence persisted afterward, and thousands were forced to leave Khartoum. Humanitarian organizations have also suffered vicious attacks; three workers with the World Food Program (WFP) lost their lives to violence in Kabkabiya, and armed personnel – allegedly from the RSF – have raided the homes of United Nations staff and staff for other international NGOs, assaulting diplomats and sexually assaulting women.

The conflict has already spilled over to other areas, such as South Darfur and North Kordofan. Violence in El-Obeid, North Kordofan, killed at least 3 people and wounded dozens. Meanwhile, in El Fasher, North Darfur, indiscriminate gunfire killed 2 people and left at least 30 hospitalized, and one person lost their life to similar violence in South Darfur while at least a dozen were injured; clashes in Zalingei and El Geneina specifically are continuing. We are extremely concerned about the vulnerable civilians in Darfur, most of whom have already endured over 20 years of genocidal attacks, with millions still languishing in camps even before the current conflict. As violence

recently intensifies across Darfur, people there are left to starve without the bare minimum level of lifesaving assistance, and we fear that the current conflict has doubled their suffering - essentially subjecting them to mass death in silence.

It was about four years ago that the peaceful protest deposed the 30 years dictatorship of then-president Omar al-Bashir. Despite hopes that the country would successfully transition to civilian leadership, the Sudanese military violently seized power in 2021 and has since continued to repress and commit genocidal violence against ethnic Africans in Darfur and other areas of Sudan - with the support of the RSF, whom al-Bashir had deliberately empowered and included in his security committee. Both Generals al-Burhan and Dagalo “Hemeti” were involved in the coup, as well as several crimes committed against the people of Darfur, in spite of Darfuris routinely warning the international community about the dangers of letting these Generals lead Sudan. The RSF evolved from the Janjaweed “Arab” militia that committed genocidal violence in Darfur in tandem with the national military and launched a scorched earth campaign of killing, pillaging, burning villages, raping women, and forcing people out of their homes. Despite their shared complicity in genocide and mutual desire to avoid civilian governance and accountability, pre-existing tensions between the two ultimately ended in conflict.

Over the years, the international community has been using traditional conflict resolution mechanisms that have not yielded any progress but prolonged the suffering and enabled those committing crimes the impunity to continue undermining international laws. We believe in resolving the crises sustainably: *Sudan needs a genocide and atrocity prevention approach that prioritizes accountability by taking the junta to trial to pave the way for peace with justice.*

The international community needs to act quickly to end the conflict, save the lives of all those caught in the crossfire, and ensure stable civilian governance that is truly accountable to the will of the Sudanese people. This will require, among other things, adopting strong accountability measures and pressuring both the RSF and the national army to stop the ongoing violence. Accordingly, DWAG and the Lemkin Institute call on the international community, the Biden administration in the United States, and the UN Security Council to take the following measures:

- Convene a United Nations Security Council meeting immediately to address the situation in Sudan and the need to protect vulnerable civilians in Darfur, to rally multilateral action to prevent attacks against civilians and civil administrative leaders, as well as to ensure accountability in Sudan.
- Pressure the military junta in Sudan to immediately cease attacks against civilian and humanitarian workers across Sudan.
- Impose targeted sanctions against the military General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo “Hemeti”, and all other officials involved in the 2021 coup, such as travel bans and asset freezing, to limit their ability to acquire military support and kill more people.
- Impose criminal accountability for the unnecessary deaths of civilians by supporting the International Criminal Court (ICC) in issuing arrest warrants under seal against the military generals who conducted the coup and the current fighting to bring those indicted to justice.
- Pressure both sides to stop the war and open unhindered humanitarian access to all those in need across Sudan, particularly in Darfur and other crisis-affected areas.

- Authorize a United Nations force to protect civilians throughout the remainder of the interim period, particularly in Darfur, South Kordofan, Khartoum, and the Blue Nile.
- Urge the neighboring and regional countries to stop all support to the military leaders.
- Cease all collaboration with Sudanese military officials until they surrender power to a civilian government.

Since the start of the 21st century, carnage, repression, and injustice have been part and parcel of daily life for people in Sudan, not least of all for people living in Darfur. It is paramount that the world does not continue to turn a blind eye to the plight of innocent civilians in danger during the current conflict. The world must demonstrate a seriousness of purpose in its efforts to bring peace to the country. To that end, we implore world leaders to take seriously the need for a strong, serious, and coordinated approach to accountability and transitional justice in Sudan. We must speak up loudly with one voice and demand sufficient humanitarian assistance and protection for everyone in need, as well as call for an end to this senseless fighting and the impunity that perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity in Sudan have enjoyed for far too long. It is by acting together that we can make a difference and help the Sudanese people achieve peace, protection, and justice.