H.E. Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl

Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Swiss Mission to the United Nations

633 3rd Ave 29th Floor

New York, NY 10017

Cc: All Member States of the United Nations Security Council

**Stand with the People of Sudan**

**For Civilian Protection and Accountability**

Dear H.E. Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl,

Darfur Women Action Group (DWAG) is writing to bring to your attention the alarming conflict in Sudan between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) that continues to devastate the lives and livelihoods of the people of Sudan. We are gravely concerned about the complete lack of respect for ceasefires and the continued bombing and killing of civilians in Khartoum and across the Darfur region.

We are alarmed by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) launching deliberate attacks targeting specific groups of people in Darfur, as seen in El Geneina and Zalingei, whereby the RSF looted and burned specific neighborhoods and abducted the residents based on their tribal affiliation. The situation has become increasingly dangerous and catastrophic for the already vulnerable people who have been through 20+ years of attacks in Darfur.

Aerial attacks, heavy artillery shelling, and bombings of civilian-inhabited areas are occurring across Sudan, mainly in Khartoum and Darfur. The death toll is rising, but most civilian casualties go underreported because of isolation and communication blockades in most cities, further endangering families and volunteers attempting to retrieve the wounded and deceased relatives. Despite repeated rhetorical agreements for ceasefires, the warring parties never stopped fighting, and the civilian death toll continues to rise daily.

As of today, 866 civilians have lost their lives, and 3,721 wounded (predominantly in Khartoum alone); additionally, nearly 1.4 million had to flee their homes. While numbers from remote areas have yet to be fully documented, at least 2,000 have reportedly died in the recent violence in El Geneina, West Darfur, making the actual number of casualties in Sudan far higher than commonly reported. As civil society groups expressed, another "Darfur genocide scenario" is now occurring in El Geneina.

The offices of humanitarian organizations and other businesses increasingly face targeted bombing, looting, and even burning in some areas. Millions of civilians remain trapped in their homes and have nowhere to go, with no international presence, creating an enabling environment to commit crimes against them without fear of accountability. Multiple cases of rape and sexual violence incidents have been reported both in Darfur and Khartoum, with no access to medical care or counseling, leaving women and girls exposed to suffering and dehumanization. Ongoing and intensive attacks continue to occur in various cities across Darfur; El Geneina has been completely destroyed and deprived of water sources and any tools that can assist those in dire need. While thousands fled to Chad, many more remain trapped and still continue to face attacks even as they escape to Chad.

To make matters worse, the government has cut power, internet, and phone services in almost 90% of cities in Darfur, endangering civilians by effectively shutting off access to emergency services, food, and shelter. Hospitals are facing lootings and attacks to the point they have shut down – in the case of El Geneina, there are no functioning healthcare facilities at all, while 12 pharmacies have been burned and looted. Hospitals have closed their doors in Zalingei and Kabkabiya, where RSF personnel have raided government institutions; only two ambulances which were serving over 160,000 internally displaced and host communities are taken by SRF. Similarly, most El Fasher and Nyala hospitals ceased operations due to insecurity and attacks.

The RSF has forcibly occupied civilians' homes and stolen their vehicles and other property, depriving them of their livelihoods. In addition, millions of Darfuris were languishing in internal displacement camps even before the current conflict; today, they starve and suffer in silence without even the bare minimum level of lifesaving assistance. As the rainy season approaches and the warring parties continue to violate ceasefire after ceasefire, we fear that without urgent humanitarian intervention, people in Darfur will be completely isolated and consequently suffer the worst humanitarian crisis in our lifetime.

We know very well the history of both Generals Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo "Hemeti" as part of the former regime and their role in the crimes committed against the people of Darfur, who have constantly warned the international community about the danger of enabling these Generals to control the government in Sudan. We believe the inter-military fighting in Sudan today is continuing because those who perpetrated war crimes, crimes against humanity, the genocide in Darfur, and took part in the 2021 coup that overthrew the civilian-led transitional government have not been apprehended or held accountable.

DWAG notes that the warring parties have time and time again violated the Geddah ceasefire they both agreed upon, precisely due to lack of enforcement. We wish to remind the Security Council of the history of both generals and their role in the atrocities in Darfur. This conflict should be a reminder that genocidaires will never make peace unless the world holds them accountable, as already seen in the cases of Rwanda, Liberia, and the former Yugoslavia (to name a few examples). This current fighting amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity that will require urgent regional and international accountability measures to come to an end.

The lack of serious accountability and civilian protection measures has sent a wrong signal to the generals, effectively making them assume that if they can manipulate the economy and carry enough weapons, they can continue to kill civilians and commit other gross violations to remain in power. The withdrawal of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation from Darfur (UNAMID) is the biggest mistake and miscalculation on the part of the Security Council, one which has left millions of genocide victims unprotected and also rendered the humanitarian agencies vulnerable to attacks, severely limiting humanitarian access to those in dire need.

We wish to draw your attention to the fact that the current situation in Sudan not only impacts the people of Sudan but will also create spillovers across the region. Reports confirmed that many of the RSF members come from ethnic Arab tribes recruited from as far as Mali, Niger, the Central African Republic, and Chad; if left unaddressed, they will promote the same policy of destruction across West and Central Africa. Underscoring that Sudan has been and continues to be a hub for terrorist groups, this current crisis - if left unaddressed - will provide fertile ground for other terrorist activities to spread not only in Sudan but also across the broader region.

Now that the government **issued multiple appeals to civilians to carry up arms and join the fight**, the situation in Sudan has become more dangerous than ever, and immediate international and regional intervention must take place to contain the conflict before it escalates into a full-blown and prolonged civil war. International and regional actors must act now to enable humanitarian actors to operate and save lives in Sudan before the rainy season that is vital to the livelihoods and lives of many Sudanese. While a long-term solution is required, swift financial and criminal accountability measures will be critical to preventing escalation of violence.

Consequently, it will be necessary to apply pressure to neutralize the regional spoilers backing both sides and making durable solutions nearly unattainable. If the warring generals cannot acquire military support or funding from regional and international supporters, they cannot continue fighting or destabilizing Sudan. Immediate action, again, will be of paramount necessity to prevent even greater suffering and loss of life.

The current crisis in Sudan is of a global magnitude and requires global actions. Sudan as a country has completely collapsed, and today its people are looking to this Council as their only hope for their survival, peace, and justice. We, therefore, appeal to the United Nations Security Council to take the following measures to hold the warring factions in Sudan accountable, end the fighting, and swiftly create an enabling environment for urgent lifesaving humanitarian aid.

* Pressure both sides to stop the war and open unhindered humanitarian access to all those in need across Sudan, particularly in Darfur, Khartoum, and other crisis-affected areas.
* Enforce immediate and verifiable ceasefire agreements, with accountability measures imposed on any party violating the ceasefires.
* Authorize an investigative mission to probe crimes committed against civilians across Sudan.
* Impose targeted bilateral and multilateral sanctions against the warring military generals and all other officials involved in the current war and the 2021 coup to include travel bans and asset freezing on individual military leaders to limit their ability to acquire military support, escalate violence, and kill more people.
* Impose criminal accountability for the killing of civilians and other past and present crimes by supporting the International Criminal Court (ICC) in implementing the existing arrest warrants; expanding referrals to the ICC and supporting it in its investigations; and explore the possibility for issuing arrest warrants under seal against the generals for perpetrating death, destruction, and serious international crimes in Sudan and Darfur.
* 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.
* Obligate all mediations and negotiations to include civilians and women’s civil society organizations (CSOs), including during ceasefire negotiation.
* Urge neighboring and regional countries to stop all support for the military leaders.
* Cease all collaboration with Sudanese military officials until they surrender power to a civilian government.

The people of Sudan have suffered for far too long, and they look to you in their time of need; we hope you do not look the other way at this critical time.

We appreciate the role of the UN Security Council and its efforts to mediate peace and promote stability in Sudan. We appreciate your kind consideration and circulation of this letter to the other Council members. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The undersigned:



1. Niemat Ahmadi,

Founder and President, Darfur Women Action Group

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1. **Darfuri Women Voices and Sudanese Women Against War**: Two worldwide coalitions of women from across Darfur and Sudan, including women currently living in Sudan and those living elsewhere, who have united to make their voices heard against the war in Sudan.