Forum: Security Council

Issue: Situation in Sudan

Student Officer: Matthew Kim

Position: President

Introduction

The Sudanese civil war started on April 15, 2023, when two military factions, Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), started exchanging military attacks in Sudan's capital, Khartoum¹. This power struggle originates from a military coup in October 2021; the current leaders of SAF and RSF, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (otherwise Hemedti) collaborated to demolish the transitional civilian government established after the ousting of long-time dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019². Thereafter, the rivalry between the SAF and RSF plunged the nation into chaos, resulting in widespread violence and civilian suffering³.

Sudan is in the grip of one of the world's most urgent humanitarian crises. Almost half the population—nearly 26 million people—are facing severe hunger, and the conflict has left more than 19 million children out of school. Over 125,000 civilians were lost to violence and starvation since the fighting erupted, and more than 15 million people have been forced to flee their homes⁴. The healthcare system has collapsed, unable to prevent outbreaks of diseases that are otherwise preventable, and the most vulnerable continue to suffer as the country's needs grow more desperate.

The conflict has devastated central cities like Khartoum and intensified ethnic tensions in regions like Darfur. Both the SAF and RSF have used explosive weapons in densely populated areas across Khartoum, killing thousands of civilians. Sexual violence against ethnic African communities escalated in Darfur, largely due to the RSF and the allied Arab militias. Despite various ceasefire attempts and international diplomatic efforts, often mediated by as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, peace remains elusive as both factions continue to vie for control⁵.

With the humanitarian crisis growing dire, international organizations are urgently calling for aid and support for Sudanese citizens. Many of them have taken it upon themselves to organize grassroots initiatives, delivering relief amidst the chaos. However, as violence continues, there are growing fears of broader regional

¹ UNHCR

² Stigant

³ Center for Preventive Action

⁴ Operation Broken Silence

⁵ Hassan

instability, with millions fleeing to neighboring countries like Chad and South Sudan. The global community faces increasing pressure to respond to one of the most severe contemporary humanitarian crises.

Definition of Key Terms

Sanctions Committee

A subsidiary organ on which all 15 Security Council members are represented, and which is established by the Council in order to carry out its directives in connection with sanctions regimes, which can include arms embargos, travel bans, freezing of accounts, and restrictions on the exploitation of natural resources⁶.

Peacekeeping missions

UN peacekeeping missions are mandated by the Security Council to provide security and political and peacebuilding support to countries in conflict or post-conflict situations. They are guided by the principles of consent of the host country, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defense, defense of the mandate, or protection of civilians if so authorized by the Council.⁷

Troop-contributing countries

Countries contributing troops to UN peacekeeping or assistance missions or offices8.

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)

Act of violence frequently and deliberately used to target civilians, inflicting long-term trauma and humiliation, fracturing families and the social fabric, triggering displacement and fueling armed actors' activities.⁹

IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons)

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border¹⁰.

SSRS (Security Sector Reforms)

⁶ United Nations Security Council

⁷ ibid

⁸ ibid

⁹ United Nations Peacekeeping

¹⁰UNHCR

SSR is the work undertaken by a government and its people to make the country's security institutions serve its citizens and provide people-centered security. Accountable institutions that contribute to the rule of law, improve lives and livelihoods for all.¹¹

DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration)

A process through which members of armed forces and groups are supported to lay down their weapons and return to civilian life.¹²

Background

Colonial legacy

The power struggles in Sudan trace back to its colonial past. From 1899 to 1956, Sudan was ruled under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, with British "divide-and-rule" policies splitting the Muslim-Arab north and the multi-ethnic, underdeveloped south. Educational and economic investments were concentrated in the north, fostering political dominance by riverine Arab groups like Shaigiyya, Jailiyyin, and Dongola groups. These policies sowed distrust and laid the groundwork for post-independence conflicts, including two civil wars and the eventual secession of South Sudan in 2011¹³.

The first civil war

The first significant eruption of violence lasted from 1955 to 1972. Just before Sudan officially gained independence, the southern troops, feeling marginalized by the central government in Khartoum, initiated a rebellion that marked the beginning of the First Sudanese Civil War. ¹⁴ The religious and cultural difference between the Northern and Southern parts of Sudan was a catalyst for the conflict. Southern Sudanese rebels divided into two factions: the Sudan African National Union (SANU), formed and led by William Deng from the Dinka ethnic group, and the Anya Nya, founded and led by Joseph Lagu and was composed mostly of the Madi group. The Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 granted autonomy to the south but failed to provide lasting peace ¹⁵.

The second civil war

The second Sudanese civil war was an intense conflict that lasted from 1983 to 2005. To rebel against President Gaafar Nimeiry's annulment of South Sudanese autonomy and nationwide imposition of the Islamic law (Sharia), the Southern People's Liberation Army (SPLA) was formed in 1983. The SPLA soon initiated a military coup in 1985, which resulted in significant human rights violations and mass displacement. On January 9, 2005, the Government of Sudan and the SPLA signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, ending the civil war. The

¹¹United Nations

¹² UNITAR

¹³ Searcy

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ Momodu

agreement called for the creation of South Sudan in 2011, six years after the war ended¹⁶. The war highlights deep-seated ethnic and religious divisions in Sudan.

Reign of Omar al-Basshir

1989 coup

In 1986, Sadiq Al-Mahdi was elected Prime Minister of Sudan, promising a civilian-led government with improved human rights. However, his administration soon faced criticism for perpetuating repressive policies in Sudan's south and west, targeting black and non-Arab ethnic groups. ¹⁷

By the late 1980s, Omar al-Bashir, a military brigadier who had gained prominence fighting for Sudan and Egypt, was emerging as a key rival. On June 30, 1989, Bashir led a successful military coup under the support of the National Islamic Front (NIF), a Muslim extremist group. He was confirmed as president by an election held in 1996 and soon became the leader of the National Congress Party (NCP), a successor party of the NIF¹⁸.

Conflict in Darfur

In 2003, rebel groups in Darfur accused Bashir's government of marginalization, launching attacks. Bashir responded by deploying the Janjaweed militia, notorious for brutal attacks on civilians. Their scorched-earth tactics caused mass displacement, famine, and death, with over two million people forced to flee. International aid was blocked, drawing widespread condemnation.

Efforts to address the crisis included an African Union (AU) peacekeeping force, later replaced by a joint UN-AU mission in 2008. The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Bashir in 2009 and 2010, accusing him of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Ousting

As time passed, the public increasingly voiced dissatisfaction with the NCP's policies, the lack of presidential and government transparency, and the worsening economic conditions¹⁹. Starting from December 2018, an unprecedented level of popular unrest toward the Bashir government began. The largest protest of the movement to date occurred on April 6, 2019, as demonstrators marched to the military headquarters in Khartoum, the capital, and remained there for days. Harsh attempts by security forces to break up the crowds were met with resistance from some segments of the military, which moved to protect the demonstrators; their actions indicated that Bashir could no longer assume that he had the unwavering support of the country's various security and military forces. On April 11, 2019, Bashir was overthrown in a military coup and placed under arrest.

¹⁶ Momodu

¹⁷ Hussein

¹⁸ Ingham

¹⁹ Al-Shashi et al.

Formation of SAF and RSF

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)

The SAF was established in 1925 as the Sudan Defence Force during the British colonial period. It became the national army upon Sudan's independence in 1956. Over the years, the SAF has played a central role in Sudan's political landscape, often intervening in governance through military coups. Notably, the SAF has overthrown several civilian governments since independence, including coups in 1958, 1969, and 1989. Each time, military leaders have sought to consolidate power while managing internal divisions within the armed forces and other security agencies²⁰.

Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

The RSF originated from the Janjaweed militias, recruited by Bashir to in during the conflict in Darfur. In 2013, as part of an effort to formalize these militias into a more structured force, the Janjaweed were officially rebranded as the RSF²¹. This transformation was intended to integrate them into Sudan's national security framework while maintaining their operational autonomy. The group was granted legal status as an independent security force in 2017 and has since been involved in various military operations both domestically and internationally.

Formation and dissolution of the translational government

On 5 July 2019, Transitional Military Council (TMC) and civilian representatives of The Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) reached a preliminary power-sharing agreement to guide the country toward democracy after Bashir's ousting. The deal established a joint sovereign council with alternating leadership: a military head for 21 months, followed by a civilian leader for 18 months, culminating in democratic elections. The council included five military officials, five civilians, and one mutually agreed civilian member²².

On October 25, 2021, however, the SAF dissolved the transitional government, detained Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok, and declared a state of emergency. This move followed warnings from the U.S. and international bodies, who now demand the reinstatement of civilian governance. The military, having shared power with civilians since 2019, effectively nullified the power-sharing agreement²³.

Humanitarian impact

So far, more than 11.5 million people have been displaced, scattering over neighboring countries such as Egypt, Chad, South Sudan, Libya, Uganda, and Ethiopia. The conflict has deprived more than 90% of Sudanese children of basic education, as the conflict has demolished the education system²⁴. The Famine Review Committee

²⁰ Hassan

²¹ Sakane

²² Kirby

²³ Sayigh

²⁴ UNHCR ("Sudan Crisis Explained")

reported in August 2024 that there is famine in Sudan's North Darfur region, leading to widespread malnutrition and disease among the displaced population²⁵.

Major Parties Involved

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE has emerged as a prominent supporter of the RSF. This involvement is driven by the UAE's strategic interests in expanding its influence in the Africa and securing access to Sudan's natural resources. Since 2018, the UAE has invested over \$6 billion in Sudan, including agricultural projects and infrastructure development. Additionally, the UAE has been accused of supplying arms to the RSF through regional networks, violating UN arms embargoes²⁶.

Russia

Currently, Russia is gradually distancing itself from the RSF and aligning with the SAF with advanced drones and military aid. This is a major shift from its behavior in previous years, where Russia provided arms to the RSF in exchange for gold, aiming to establish a port on Sudan's Red Sea coast. This alignment seems to reflect Moscow's interests in establishing stable SAF-led government that controls Port Sudan, in which Russia aims to establish a logistics hub²⁷.

The UN Security Council failed to pass a UK- and Sierra Leone-backed resolution aimed at protecting civilians and improving aid access in Sudan's ongoing conflict, due to a Russian veto. The draft condemned RSF attacks and urged a ceasefire per the Jeddah Declaration, but Russia argued it infringed on Sudan's sovereignty, asserting only Sudan's government should oversee foreign interventions. The UK and other Western members condemned Russia's veto as blocking critical aid, while nations like China and Algeria stressed respecting Sudan's independence²⁸.

Egypt

From the outset of the conflict, Egypt has appealed to both the RSF and SAF to lay down arms and return to the negotiating table. At the same time, it dispatched humanitarian relief caravans and hosted 400,000 Sudanese refugees from the war²⁹.

Egypt aims to address the crisis in Sudan to safeguard several essential interests. First, Egypt's water security could be at risk from a prolonged conflict, given that the Nile River flows through both Sudan and Egypt. Furthermore, Sudan's stability is crucial to Egypt's national security, particularly to prevent the spread of extremism and armed conflict along its southern border. Additionally, Egypt has significant economic interests in

²⁷ McGregor

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²⁵UNHCR ("UNHCR Urges Action as Famine Is Declared in Sudan")

²⁶ Darwhich

²⁸ https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15901.doc.htm

²⁹ Hafez

Sudan, with investments in various sectors, including agriculture and telecommunications. Ongoing instability in Sudan could jeopardize these economic interests, impacting trade routes and business opportunities.

The Egyptian army has historically played a major role in Sudanese politics, frequently exerting control over the government. However, the belief that Egypt may favor one side in the current conflict poses clear risks and complications for its ability to act as a neutral mediator³⁰.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

The IGAD, a regional bloc composed of eight East African states, has been involved in mediating peace talks between conflicting parties in Sudan. In July 2023, IGAD condemned violations by both warring factions and committed to working with international partners to establish a robust monitoring mechanism aimed at holding perpetrators accountable. IGAD has also considered deploying regional peacekeeping forces to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access³¹. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) mediated by the IGAD on January 9, 2005, contributed significantly to ending the second civil war³².

African Union (AU)

The African Union plays a crucial role as a regional organization attempting to mediate the conflict and promote peace in Sudan. The AU has called for an end to hostilities and sought to facilitate dialogue among conflicting parties. However, its efforts have faced significant challenges due to competing interests among member states and a lack of enforcement mechanisms³³.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
April 15, 2023	Military conflict arises between SAF and RSF in Khatorum. Each accuses the other of
	attacking first. Fighting also erupts in the western region of Darfur.
April 24, 2023	RSF sabotages telecom exchange in Khartoum, leading to a nationwide loss of
	internet service and reduced connectivity in Chad, whose internet infrastructure is
	interconnected with Sudan ³⁴ .
April 27, 2023	The SAF and the RSF agree to extend their ceasefire for "an additional 72 hours"
	amid continuing violence in Khartoum and the western Darfur region ³⁵ .
May 20, 2023	SAF and RSF sign the Treaty of Jeddah, which demands a permanent ceasefire for the
	conflict. This is quickly breached as warring parties continue to fight.
May 26, 2023	SAF leader sends letter to secretary general to remove UN special envoy in Sudan 34.

³⁰ El-Menawy

³¹ https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15409.doc.htm

³² Spaulding et al.

³³ https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15409.doc.htm

³⁴ Siddiqui and Mohamed

³⁵ Greenall

July 10, 2023	IGAD opens a summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to negotiate termination of war. SAF boycotts the meeting. The Sudanese Foreign Ministry rejects the proposals for foreign intervention and takes offense with Ethiopia and Kenya's claims that Sudan was suffering from a power vacuum ³⁶ .
November 2, 2023	The RSF attacks the Ardamanta refugee camp in Geneina, killing about 1,300 people including six tribal leaders and injuring 2,000 others ³⁷ .
December 1, 2023	The UN Security Council votes to end the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), which was established by the UN Security Council in June 2020 to support Sudan's political transition.
January 1, 2024	Hemedti meets Civil Democratic Forces Alliance in Addis Ababa, during which he agreed to release 451 captives held by the RSF, ensure humanitarian access and protection of civilians, and commit to a ceasefire through direct negotiations with the SAF ³⁸ .
May 29, 2024	Burhan has a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, requesting the resumption of negotiations with the RSF in Jeddah. The Sudanese government declines ³⁹ .

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

- S/RES/2724: Adopted by the SC on March 8, 2024, this resolution called for an immediate cessation of hostilities during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The resolution urged warring parties to seek a sustainable resolution through dialogue and to ensure unhindered humanitarian access for those affected by the conflict. It emphasized compliance with international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians, while encouraging regional peace efforts led by the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Sudan⁴⁰.
- S/RES/2750: This resolution renewed the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime—including targeted sanctions and an arms embargo.
- S/RES/2525: This resolution established United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and renewed African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), initiatives that focused on political transition and civilian protection. Both were terminated without any visible outcomes.
- A/HRC/RES/S-36/1: This resolution addressed the escalating conflict in Sudan between SAF and RSF urging an immediate ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian access, and protection of civilians. The resolution

37 Nashed

³⁶ Al Jazeera

³⁸ SudanTribune

³⁹ SudanTribune

⁴⁰ https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15615.doc.htm

requested coordinated international support from the UN, African Union, and other organizations to aid Sudan's humanitarian needs, protect refugees, and monitor human rights conditions. Furthermore, it emphasized safeguarding humanitarian workers and ensuring transparent reporting on rights abuses, with resource allocation for effective oversight and intervention. It was adopted with a vote of 18 to 15, with 14 abstentions.

- Jeddah Declaration: Signed by both RSF and SAF in May 2023, this agreement reiterated the commitment
 of both parties to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians amidst ongoing violence.
 However, subsequent ceasefire agreements have been repeatedly violated and showed challenges in the
 effective declaration of ceasefire.
- Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Sudan (ACHPR.Res.588): This resolution included strong condemnation against attacks on civilians, gender-based violence, and violations of rights. It urged both factions to end hostilities, facilitate humanitarian access, and uphold international law. It further proposed deploying a fact-finding mission to investigate human rights abuses, especially gender-related crimes, and to assess whether these constitute international crimes. Additionally, it recommended establishing a civilian protection network, including Sudanese organizations, to monitor and document violations and report back to the Commission⁴¹.

Possible Solutions

- SC, with powerful global actors such as United States and European Union, may apply diplomatic and
 economic pressures on SAF and RSF leaders, forcing them to engage in peaceful dialogue and
 negotiations. Sanctions or economic incentives could be jointly employed to enhance compliance. Such
 measures may also be used to discourage key external powers, such as Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE,
 from supporting military factions.
- SC may impose a more comprehensive arms embargo on Sudan through ways such as mandating real-time tracking mechanisms that monitors the inflow of weapons. SC may also employ clear sanctions, such as asset freezes and trade restrictions, against groups or countries violating the embargo. Collaborative efforts of UN and other regional organizations like the AU may establish an internationally monitored framework to support the embargo.
- SC may invigorate local movements aimed at founding a civilian government so that Sudan can reestablish a stable democratic system to prevent future military outbursts. SC may help Sudan hold
 transparent elections, providing credible supervision from election-monitoring bodies. Furthermore, aid
 organizations such as The UN Development Programme (UNDP) could provide support in enhancing the
 governance, judicial, and security sectors. This can decentralize power, decreasing Sudan's dependence on
 military factions.
- SC may initiate a fact-finding mission with organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to document war crimes and other human rights violations

⁴¹ ACHPR

- committed by SAF and RSF. Collected information would be crucial for raising global awareness and holding perpetrators accountable in international courts.
- UN could promote peace talks involving diverse stakeholders (faction leaders, civil society groups, international representatives, opposition parties, ethnic minorities, etc.), contributing to a shared understanding and fostering mutual consensus. A neutral, high-level mediator is desirable—preferably a joint mandate from organizations like the African Union (AU) or the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—that has binding authority to broker peace, oversee negotiations impartially, and address potentially dangerous disputes.
- UN may build stronger partnerships with intergovernmental organizations such as AU and IGAD, creating a more powerful united opposition against the conflict. UN may also coordinate with countries neighboring Sudan, including Chad, South Sudan, and Eritrea, to alleviate refugee crisis and prevent further expansion of violence. To do this, UN must clearly define responsibilities for each organization or country.
- UN may implement a comprehensive Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program, offering incentives such as job training, financial assistance, and psychosocial support. This may encourage former militias' spontaneous disarmament and transition into peaceful lives.
- In collaboration with Sudanese media organizations and civil society groups, UN could launch nationwide
 media campaigns that highlight the shared values and interdependence among Sudan's ethnic groups.
 Meanwhile, restrictions could be made against hate speech and misinformation, focusing on preventing
 ethnically targeted rhetoric that incites violence.
- UN may collaborate with humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to secure corridors within Sudan that facilitate the distribution of food, medicine, etc. Additionally, international organizations could establish neutral zones in which IDPs can receive humanitarian support.

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