



Active Genocide Alert

Sudan

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is issuing an Active Genocide Alert for Sudan, where accounts from the UN Office the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and major NGOs reveal that mass graves for civilian victims are widespread, ethnic massacres are ravaging the country, and immeasurable suffering is being imposed on local populations by the two warring parties. Six months into the war, civilians have been enduring unrelenting violence, massacres, and terrorization, especially in Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan. Horrific testimonies of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including mass rape, persist, while the conflict, notably in Darfur, is intensifying along ethnic lines.

In April 2023, clashes erupted between opposing armed factions in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, sparking concerns about the resurgence of a widespread civil conflict. The ongoing discord primarily stems from a struggle for power between two dominant armed entities: the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the formidable paramilitary force called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan heads the SAF, while Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo leads the RSF. Both are vying for supremacy over the government and the resources of the state. The RSF was created from the Janjaweed militia during the Darfur genocide, which former President Omar Al-Bashir funded.

In 2019, the SAF and the RSF together led a coup that ousted President Al-Bashir, who had been in power since 1989. Al-Bashir ruled during the Second civil war (1983-2005) and the genocide in Darfur, which started in 2003. The latter was condemned as genocide by the United States and the International Criminal Court (ICC), which issued an arrest warrant for Al-Bashir in 2009 and 2010.

After the coup in 2019, a Transitional Sovereignty Council was established with Burhan as the lead and Hemedti as the deputy. Discussions about Sudan's future government took place throughout 2022 and concluded in December of that year with an agreement that set the stage for a two-year transition towards civilian leadership and democratic elections. However, the proposed time frame faced opposition from many citizens, who disapproved of the plan's

provision that allowed the security sector to retain certain state powers after the transition. Additionally, the exclusion of demands from protest leaders and other opposition groups to hold figures like Burhan, Hemedti, and other security sector authorities accountable, led to widespread discontent. This discontent triggered renewed unrest starting in December 2022, which continued into the spring of 2023 and resulted in escalated violent crackdowns on demonstrators. The power struggles between the two leaders of the Transnational Sovereignty Council stalled the country's political transition efforts.

On April 15th, 2023, the capital city of Khartoum was subjected to severe fighting. The SAF and the RSF traded accusations, each blaming the other for the attack. Since then, the power struggle has increasingly been playing itself out in Sudan's Darfur region, reigniting genocidal violence reminiscent of the intensive phase of genocide in 2003-2004.

Sudan's internal conflict has had ripple effects beyond its borders, impacting neighboring countries and contributing to regional instability. The UN Special Representative for Sudan has warned that cross-border mobilization, namely of Arab tribes in the Western part of the country, is fueling regional instability. Moreover, rebel groups also joined the war, namely in the South Kordofan state where a long-standing ceasefire agreement was broken by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) rebel armed group.

In addition, the dispute between Burhan and Hemedti extends beyond a mere domestic disagreement, as Sudan plays a pivotal role bridging the Middle East and Africa. Moreover, the conflict has regional significance due to Sudan's abundant natural resources and geographic importance. Major players in the Gulf, namely Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), see the ongoing war as an opportunity to solidify their hegemonic influence in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, hence prompting them to provide logistical and financial support to the warring parties. Saudi Arabia aligns with Burhan, while the UAE supports Hemedti, amplifying the regional dimensions of the conflict.

After six months of intense fighting between the two warring parties, the conflict shows no signs of abating. Appalling reports continue to surface, highlighting the extent of atrocities amid the ongoing turmoil. In the capital city of West Darfur named El Geneina, Reuters described a "rolling ethnic killing campaign that lasted for weeks". During attacks, Arab militia fighter reportedly referred to the Masalit population as "anbai," which is a derogatory term meaning slaves. Men and boys were systematically killed and women and girls raped. Furthermore, sexual violence, ethnically-driven killings, terrorization, massacre, forcible recruitment of child soldiers, looting, and the deliberate destruction of villages are rampant.

In July 2023, the ICC prosecutor Karim Khan informed the U.N. Security Council that his office had started investigating atrocities in West Darfur. He told the Council that “we are, by any analysis, not on the precipice of a human catastrophe but in the very midst of one.”

The severity and breadth of the atrocities paint a grim picture of the current situation, demanding urgent attention and humanitarian intervention. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Action, since April 2023 more than 9,000 people have lost their lives, close to 6 million individuals were forced to flee their homes, and as many as 25 million are in need of humanitarian aid. In addition, a cholera outbreak has crippled Sudan’s health system, whose facilities have been systematically attacked and have suffered shortages of medical supplies and equipment for weeks.

After more than six months of conflict and repeated attempts to put a stop to the fighting, it is time for the international community to insist on concerted efforts toward a political resolution. The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention reminds both parties to the conflict that civilians are protected under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

As aspiring regional powers in the Middle East, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi find themselves in conflict, each vying for control over Sudan's valuable resources, energy reserves, and strategic logistical routes by aligning and supporting Burhan and Hemeti respectively. We remind both countries that it is imperative that they cease offering financial and logistical backing to different armed factions, especially given that these factions are committing mass atrocity crimes, including genocide in Darfur, and instead focus on collaborative efforts to promote peace in the region lest they risk being held accountable for complicity in genocide.

We further call for strong accountability measures that put an end to ongoing impunity in the country. Achieving long-lasting peace in Sudan necessitates holding accountable all perpetrators of crimes committed against local communities, irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. This can be achieved through conducting independent investigations into the atrocities committed against civilians as well as ensuring an all-encompassing and trustworthy civilian dialogue process. The bloodshed needs to end; it is time to silence the guns and support peace.