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1.1.1. Political developments

In mid-April 2023, hostilities erupted in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), as well as their respective allied militia groups, and soon spread to other parts of the country.4 The conflict broke out amid a standoff between the army leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the RSF head Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo 'Hemedti', who had governed together since taking power in 2019 on the back of a protest movement against the country's long-term ruler Omar al-Bashir.5 For further information on political developments prior to February 2024, see section 1.1.1. of the EUAA report Sudan - Country Focus (April 2024).

Since its inception in April 2023, the conflict has spread to 136 or 14 of Sudan's 18 states.7 The conflict has been fuelled by an inflow of large quantities of weapons and military equipment into the country, and weaponry was further transferred into Darfur despite an existing UN arms embargo prohibiting weapons supplies to Darfur.8 The conflict has been described as the world's largest current humanitarian crisis9 and the most severe humanitarian crisis overall since the beginning of records.10 It has resulted in the most significant11 and fastest-growing levels of displacement in the world,12 widespread13 and deteriorating food insecurity14 (including famine15 and malnutrition), lack of access to safe water,16 and a collapse of the healthcare system17 with much of the population lacking access to essential medical care18 and reports of disease outbreaks.19

As of December 2024, some 8.8 million people have been internally displaced as a result of the current conflict, while an additional 3.2 million have fled to neighbouring countries.20 The destruction of homes and key infrastructure such as schools and hospitals has exacerbated an existing humanitarian crisis. According to the UN's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, as of August 2024, more than half of the population (26.5 million people) were facing acute hunger, of which some 8.5 million people were affected by emergency levels of hunger, while another 755 000 were affected by catastrophic levels of hunger.21

Multiple initiatives have been launched to end the conflict, including by the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Negotiations between the SAF and RSF that were co-facilitated by the USA and Saudi Arabia in Jeddah in May 2023, led to the signing of the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan. Under this deal, the parties committed to safeguard civilians and respect

human rights and international humanitarian law. However, these commitments remained mostly unimplemented.22 While the SAF and RSF agreed to resume negotiations in late October 2023, neither party was willing to stop fighting.23

In February 2024, SAF leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan declared that there would be no political process until the military conflict ended with the SAF regaining control of all territories held by the RSF, including Darfur and Al Jazirah.24Al-Burhan later reiterated his conditions for peace negotiations.25 In early March 2024, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution calling for an immediate end of hostilities.26

Ensuing talks facilitated by Libya and Türkiye in March 2024 broke down after the SAF, which had made substantial military advances in the Khartoum area, refused to accept a proposal for a ceasefire for the duration of the month of Ramadan unless the RSF vacated the civilian sites it controlled.27 Further ceasefire talks – co-hosted by Switzerland, the USA and Saudi Arabia – were held in Switzerland in August 2024. These were attended by the RSF but not the SAF, which cited concerns about the inclusion of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as an observer to the negotiations.28These talks resulted in an agreement to temporarily29 reopen the border at Adré (Chad) to allow the entry of humanitarian aid.30As of late October 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) noted that there was no tangible progress in ceasefire negotiations31as both the SAF and RSF were still pursuing their own military victory.32

Meanwhile, fighting continued across the country.33 On 31 July 2024, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan's military leader, survived a drone attack blamed on the RSF, which did not claim responsibility for the incident.34 An October 2024 report of the UN's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan found that the SAF and RSF, along with their allied militias, had committed 'large-scale human rights and international humanitarian law violations, many of which may amount to war crimes and/or crimes against humanity'.35 The parties to the conflict, especially the RSF, were reported to have committed widespread acts of sexual violence.36 The chair of the UN fact finding mission recommended the deployment of an international force mandated to protect civilians.37 However, this recommendation was entirely rejected by the country's military-led government, while the RSF did not respond to the proposal.38 In January 2025, the United States determined that the RSF has committed genocide.39

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