

Research Report
Model United Nations
Development Programme
XXV. Annual Session



LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
(LAS)

ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS
IN SUDAN

YASEMİN KOÇAŞ





Basic Overview of the Issue

On April 15th, 2023, a violent conflict erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemedti). The ensuing state of national unrest coupled with Sudan's preexisting hardships has led to thousands of deaths and a large portion of the country to be in a state of food insecurity and/or displacement from their homes.

Sudan had already been in a state of fragile peace, with a military coup two years prior to the start of the conflict dissolving the transitional civilian government that followed the removal of authoritarian leader Omar al-Bashir in 2019, leading to political and economic turmoil within the country.



Figure 1: Sudanese soldiers standing guard in capital Khartoum

The two factions, SAF and RSF, had been in a state of tentative alliance after they signed a power-sharing agreement with the civilian government on behalf of the military following the military coup d'état in an attempt to restore peace in Sudan and take steps towards a democratic system of governance. However, this alliance came crumbling down upon the escalation of the power struggle between the SAF and RSF, leading to the emergence of physical conflict between the two factions on April 15, following a series of explosions, of which both factions accused the other of instigating. While the brunt of the conflict was initially centered in the capital of Khartoum, it rapidly spread, leading to mass food insecurity and displacement for the citizens of Sudan -causing the humanitarian crisis to reach the state it is currently in.



Explanation of Important Terms

Civil war

A civil war is defined as a violent conflict between organized groups within a state's territory. A civil war is distinguished from other forms of inter- and intra- state conflict as some of these parties cannot be considered organized or cohesive groups operating within a common state, thus also discluding genocides, and similar violence by non-state actors, such as terrorism or violent crime. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Paramilitary

A paramilitary force refers to an unofficial force organized similarly to that of a military force. Paramilitary forces carry out their operations similarly to the army and perform civil or military functions within a state, however they do so in a manner that is not official and, in some cases, not legal. (Merriam-Webster)

Transitional government

A transitional government, also known as a provisional government or interim government, is a temporary government formed to manage a period of transition. These governments often follow some form of coup, civil war etc. and maintain power until a new government can be appointed via standard political processes, oftentimes in the form of an election. (Cambridge University Press)

Militia forces

A militia is defined as a military or paramilitary force that is raised from the civil population, as opposed to being full-time military personnel to supplement a regular army. (Oxford Dictionary)

Power-sharing agreement

Power-sharing agreements are a practice in conflict resolution wherein more than one group distributes political, military, and/or economic power amongst themselves in accordance with an agreed-upon set of rules, thus regulating the distribution of power between divided factions. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Coup d'état

A coup d'état is defined as the sudden and oftentimes violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group, through illegal force and means. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)



Humanitarian crisis

A humanitarian crisis is defined as “an event or series of events which represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area.” Some events that often include or lead to humanitarian crises are armed conflicts, epidemics, famines, and natural disasters. (Humanitarian Coalition)

Detailed Background of the Issue

Sudan has been embroiled in states of political and civilian unrest since it first established its independence from Egyptian and British rule in 1956, going from the condominium of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan to the Republic of Sudan. Sudan has been involved in no less than 19 attempts at coup d'états, 7 of which were successful. It was one of these coups that aided Omar al-Bashir in landing himself the position of Sudan's head of state, which served as the very initial catalyst for the humanitarian crisis the country faces today.

Sudan under Omar al-Bashir's rule

What allowed Omar al-Bashir to seize control of the nation in the first place was once more Sudan's history of conflict. In 1983, a civil war (known as the Second Sudanese Civil War) broke out between Sudan's central government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (now known as South Sudan People's Defence Forces). The First Sudanese Civil War saw individuals from the southern regions of the nation, being non-muslim and feeling marginalized, rebelling against the central government in Khartoum. After the Addis Ababa Agreement granted autonomy to the south, the conflict reached a state of hesitant stagnancy. However, this state disappeared when in 1983, the Sudanese government annulled the south's autonomy and imposed Islamic Sharia law nationwide. This was followed by a dramatic increase of hostilities, leading to the Second Sudanese Civil War that eventually ended in the independence of South Sudan. This state of nationwide unrest is what allowed

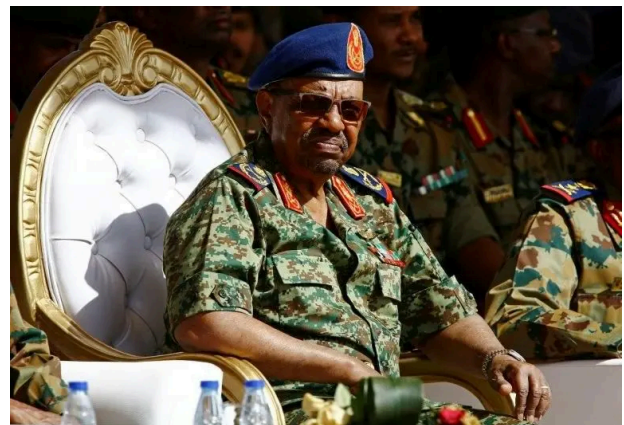


Figure 2: Ex-head of State Omar Al Bashir



Bashir to successfully carry out a coup and be appointed as head of state, Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Commander in Chief of the armed forces.

Bashir's rule brought with it a divorce from the newly established democratic system of government in Sudan, instead replacing it with a totalitarian regime. As previously mentioned, he imposed his own interpretation of sharia law, employed morality police -police forces employed with strictly upholding Islamic values, and Sharia Islamic law- to enforce his decrees, and persecuted minority religious activity - the very reason the first and second civil wars broke out in the first place. The oppression of his regime ran deep, but manifested itself most obviously in the events that took place in Darfur and cemented him as the brutal totalitarian ruler he is known as today.

Situation in Darfur

Darfur, located in western Sudan, is home to over 80 tribes and ethnic groups. While conflicts stemming from ethnic and tribal differences weren't exactly uncommon, the situation escalated in 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) -a Sudanese rebel group- and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)-another opposition movement-, moved to take action against the Sudanese government, protesting the unequal distribution of economic resources.

Specifically, in August 2003, the SLM/A launched attacks on police stations and government offices -looting weapons, ammunition, fuel depots and other resources in the area. To subdue this uprising, Omar al-Bashir provided monetary assets and weapons to militias known as Janjaweed. These Janjaweed forces, backed by Bashir, conducted what



Figure 3: UN Peacekeepers in a displaced people's camp

was described by international observers as an ethnic cleansing of many ethnic peoples. The conflict between these rebel groups and the Sudanese Armed Forces backed by the Janjaweed militia.

In the years following, upwards of 200,000 civilians died from violence, disease, and starvation as a result of the conflict. The crisis also led to the displacement of upwards of 2.7 million civilians, with refugees both



becoming internally displaced, and pouring into surrounding countries such as Chad and South Sudan. In 2004, US Secretary of State Colin Powell named this campaign of violence in Darfur a genocide, with the current death toll standing somewhere around 300,000 civilians.

After these events, Bashir was accused of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in Darfur by an International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor. The court issued an arrest warrant for Bashir on 4 March 2009, listing him for five counts of crimes against humanity: murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture, and rape; two counts of war crimes, and three counts of genocide.

In 2013, Bashir appointed Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo as the head of the Janjaweed, constitutionally recognising the militia as the “Rapid Support Forces”.

2019 Coup and SAF-RSF relations

In December of 2018, street protests around Sudan due to the nation’s economic hardships and criticisms of the government’s handling of the matter, with the government decision to raise bread prices from one Sudanese pound (\$0.02) to three Sudanese pounds (\$0.063). In January 2019, the protests shifted attention from economic matters to calls for the resignation of Omar al-Bashir from his position.

Three months later, on the 11th of April, after sustained civil disobedience and continuing protests, the Sudanese Armed Forces deposed Bashir, announcing a three-month state of national emergency, followed by a two-year transitional period, led by the newly-established Transitional Military Council (TMC) headed by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the aforementioned General of the Sudanese Armed Forces.

The public viewed both men as being complicit in the Darfur genocide and related violent conflicts, and pro-democracy protests continued to take place all throughout the nation -a continuation of the initial unrest following the December 2018 protests. To stymie these protests, Hemedti ordered the



Figure 4: Pro-democracy protesters in the streets of Kharotum



RSF to disperse civilians present at a sit-in in front of the military headquarters in Khartoum.

This culminated in the killings of 120 protestors and the disappearance of hundreds of others present at the sit-in on June 3, 2019, although the RSF denies involvement in the killings, which they say were carried out by rogues. This event, now known by the name of the 'Khartoum Massacre', is commonly viewed as a sign of the following unrest that was to befall the nation.

Following the end of Bashir's reign, a power struggle emerged between Burhan and Hemedti, aforementioned head of the RSF. After an intervention by the United States, United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates, and help from the African Union and the prime minister of Ethiopia. Hemedti and Burhan agreed to sign a power-sharing agreement as a result of this, the agreement stipulating that civilians and military members would share control of Sudan in the form of a transitional government until the 2022 elections, bringing many hope at the chance of Sudan under a democratic rule.

A new prime minister, Abdalla Hamdok, was installed, but this was short-lived as another coup was staged by the SAF and RSF on the 25th of October in 2021, making Burhan the de facto leader of Sudan, with Hemedti as his second-in-command. However, after pressure from both the international community and continued protests within Sudan, involved parties agreed to sign a framework deal that would pave the way for a continued transition to democratic governance.

However, an issue arose in the form of a disagreement regarding the RSF position in this transition. In accordance with the deal, the RSF was to be integrated into the SAF, thus vastly limiting Hemedti's power within the Sudanese. While Burhan proposed a 2-year timeline for this process, Hemedti defended a 10-year timeline. The rift created by this disagreement is eventually what led to the RSF launching a surprise attack on multiple Sudanese Army bases across the country on the 15th of April, 2023, marking the beginning of the civil war the nation is now engulfed in.

Humanitarian Consequences

The conflict didn't only have an effect on the civilian population due to the violent atmosphere it created, but also led to a host of humanitarian issues. Sources reported that upwards of 80% of hospitals in conflict areas were out of service, or forcibly evacuated



(World Health Organization). Other healthcare facilities also reported running low on essential supplies due to the influx of wounded streaming in. This also led to outbreaks of diseases such as measles, cholera and diarrhea across the country -so much so that in September 2024, cholera was declared an epidemic in the country with upwards of 5,000 cases currently (Reuters).

The conflict also manifested in civilians being hesitant or simply unable to leave their homes due to fear of getting caught in the crossfire. The conflict also disrupted webs of transportation and caused various facilities to be looted, leading to shortages in basic necessities such as food and water.



Figure 5: Sudanese people lining up for water

There was also a dramatic decrease in agricultural activities, leading to a stark increase in food products making access to food an even harder feat for citizens that were already struggling. All of these factors have culminated in an estimated 97% of citizens facing 'extreme levels of hunger', according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)- and it is also estimated that upwards of 5 million individuals are facing famine conditions (UN World Food Programme). This, also coupled with the aforementioned looting -with around 13 million dollars' worth of food means for humanitarian aid being looted according to the World Food Programme (WFP)- makes the food aspect of the humanitarian crisis in Sudan such a multifaceted and difficult issue.

Currently, over 10 million people have been displaced from their homes due to the conflict, and thus situations in the refugee camps many are fleeing to are also of note (AP News) . Many refugee camps often do not have adequate access to food, water, medicine, or hygiene products -all along with oftentimes being overcrowded. It is factors like this that have led to an estimated 1,200 children losing their lives due to disease outbreaks in refugee camps (World Health Organization).

In the midst of all this, cases of sexual assault attributed to RSF forces have also occurred, with the Human Rights Watch reporting sexual violence in Khartoum to be



“widespread”. It has also been reported that Sudanese women were forced to exchange sex for food or become affiliated with RSF fighters to ensure their families’ safety and access to food.

It is due to a combination of all the aforementioned issues that the already poor state of Sudan’s economy also suffered greatly -with a stark decrease in trade, and output of both agricultural and raw materials.

Major Parties Involved

Sudanese Armed Forces

The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) are the military forces of the Republic of Sudan, currently headed by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan locked in civil war with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). It was the SAF that helped perpetrate the 2019 coup that overthrew Omar al-Bashir, and also the 2021 coup that led to the resignation of Abdalla Hamdok.

Rapid Support Forces

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of Sudan are the paramilitary force currently engaged in war with the Sudanese Armed Forces. The RSF has its roots in its previous state as Janjaweed militia, up until 2013 when they were granted official status. They, alongside the SAF, also aided in both the 2019 and 2021 Sudanese coups.

African Union

The African Union (AU) is the continental union of 55 member states located in Africa. Their hand in the conflict of Sudan’s civil war is proactive, as they have acted as mediators between the two involved parties and have also aided in peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts.

United States of America

The United States has been involved in both the mediation processes for the two warring factions, and also plays a crucial role in the delivery of humanitarian role to citizens, with the Secretary of State announcing 200 million dollars were to be put towards humanitarian aid for Sudan. The US also authorized future sanctions against individuals “undermining Sudan’s democratic transition,” as well as committing violence against civilians



or perpetuating other human rights abuses, later imposing said sanctions on two companies believed to be supporting the RSF in its fight against the military.

United Arab Emirates

It has been reported that the UAE has supplied weapons to forces within Sudan, such as drones or armored vehicles. This was brought to light when Amnesty International reported that armored vehicles manufactured by the UAE have been captured by the Sudanese army during the conflict, suggesting a likely violation of the U.N. arms embargo also imposed on Sudan.

Russia

It's been reported that Russia has backed both the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces in exchange for a military base on the Red Sea. Notably, Russia has recently vetoed a resolution calling for immediate cease-fire in Sudan, with Russia's deputy U.N. Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky citing the reason for the veto being that, "it should be solely the government of Sudan" responsible for what happens in the nation.

Chronology of Important Events

Date	Description of Event
January 1, 1956	The Republic of Sudan declares independence
1955	The First Sudanese Civil war begins
1983	The First Sudanese Civil war begins
June 30, 1989	Omar al-Bashir is appointed head of Sudan
February 2003	The conflict in Darfur breaks out



2013	Janjaweed militias are officially declared the Rapid Support forces
December 2018	Protests against Sudan's economic situation begin
April 11, 2019	The 2019 Sudanese coup occurs and Bashir is overthrown
April 13, 2019	A transitional government is put into place
June 3, 2019	The Khartoum Massacre occurs
October 25, 2021	The 2021 Sudanese coup occurs and Hamdok resigns
April 15, 2023	The civil war between the SAF and RSF breaks out

Relevant International Documents

- Adopted by the Security Council at its 5158th meeting, 31 March 2005 (**S/RES/1593**)
- Adopted by the Security Council at its 5015th meeting, 30 July 2004 (**S/RES/1556**)
- Warrant of Arrest for Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir, (**ICC-02/05-01/09-1**)
- Human Rights Watch World report 2024: Sudan
- Adopted by the Security Council at its 9655th meeting, 13 June 2024 (**S/RES/2736**)



Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Many attempts have been made in the past to resolve both the matter of the civil war and the ensuing humanitarian crisis. Some that are of especial prominence are the various peace talks brokered by the AU and US, and also the establishment of the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). However, these attempts fell short due to a variety of factors such as a limited mandate for the peacekeeping troops (an issue that has been discussed widely and extensively in regards to UN Peacekeepers), inadequate resources and subsequent unideal execution, the Sudanese government's relative hostility towards the mission (as it was still under Bashir's rule) and, simply, a lack of adequate coordination. However, it should be noted that these failures are mostly not specific to the context of Sudan and have been observed in relation to UN Peacekeepers in other operations with dissimilar mandates, as well.

Many peace agreements to quell violence have also been signed, such as the Darfur Peace Agreement and the Comprehensive Peace agreement. The main reasons for these agreement's subpar reception have been due to a limited scope in implementation -with how they failed to consider the extremely multifaceted nature of the matter- and their relatively poor implementation. They were also both signed under Bashir's rule, which once more hindered attempts at true peace being brokered. Regarding Bashir, as previously mentioned, the ICC has also issued a warrant for Omar al-Bashir's arrest. However, even after Sudanese government officials confirmed that Bashir would be handed over to the ICC, he remained at large.

Many failed agreements like the aforementioned ones were also due to an inherent lack of trust between the factions involved. As it was with the latest bid for democratic rule in Sudan, these agreements' credibilities were undermined, leading to lackluster implementation.

For specifically the humanitarian aspect of the issue, many attempts at humanitarian aid have been made and have succeeded. However, as previously mentioned, the already unstable state of the country has been making it increasingly difficult for proper implementations of humanitarian aid, with incidents such as looting hindering these operations.



Solution Alternatives

To quell humanitarian unrest in the area, a large focus should be placed towards humanitarian aid missions. Protective measures should be taken against matters such as looting and the situations Sudan's civilians are going through must be internationally recognised with the gravity that it holds. International human rights monitors could also be employed to both ensure the delivery of aid, and to ensure reports on the active situation in and around Sudan.

Refugee camps should also be taken into consideration, with a good amount of resources being redirected towards basic necessities for displaced persons. UN-monitored refugee camps could be established with better implementation and comprehensive monitoring, and medical aid facilities could also be employed to decrease occurrences of diseases.

However, the root cause of the issue -the conflict between the SAF and RSF- must also be addressed to ensure long lasting and steady peace within the region. This could be done via monitored peace talks with mediators such as the African Union or United Nations, however the parties' abiding by the brokered agreements must also be monitored to ensure effective change and improvement to the situation. Accountability should also take focus so that war crimes and crimes against humanity -such as the ones committed by the RSF- can be properly prosecuted and not simply be left hanging -such as with what happened regarding Bashir and the ICC.

Overall, solving this conflict would require a multifaceted approach that takes into consideration the many aspects, root causes, and consequences of the conflict, with steady and proper enforcement to ensure a suitable execution.

Useful Links

- <https://apnews.com/>
- <https://www.aljazeera.com/>
- <https://www.reuters.com/>
- <https://edition.cnn.com/>



Bibliography

Abdelaziz, K., Eltahir, N., & Eltahir, N. (2022, December 5). Sudan generals and parties sign outline deal, protesters cry foul. Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudanese-civilian-parties-sign-framework-deal-new-political-transition-2022-12-05/>

AfricaNews. (2023, September 19). UN raises alarm over child deaths in Sudan as health crisis deepens. Africanews.

<https://www.africanews.com/2023/09/19/un-raises-alarm-over-child-deaths-in-sudan-as-health-crisis-deepens/>

Al Jazeera. (2019, April 11). Profile: Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's longtime ruler.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/4/11/profile-omar-al-bashir-sudans-longtime-ruler>

Arvanitidis, N. E. M. Q. (2023, April 20). Exclusive: Evidence emerges of Russia's Wagner arming militia leader battling Sudan's army. CNN.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/04/20/africa/wagner-sudan-russia-libya-intl/index.html>

BBC. (2019, April 11). Bashir ousted: How Sudan got here. BBC News.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47892742>

Board, T. (2024, December 19). Sudan's unfolding humanitarian crisis. FinancialTimes; Financial Times.

<https://www.ft.com/content/dedeedba-9a56-463d-a998-b853f928abfd>

Civil, S. (2024, March 31). Princeton Political Review. Princeton Political Review.

<https://www.princetonpoliticalreview.org/international-news/sudans-civil-war-explained>



Crisis Focus: Sudan and the Region, 23 September 2024. (2024, September 23).

Unocha.org.

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/crisis-focus-sudan-and-region-23-september-2024>

Ferragamo, M., & Roy, D. (2024, January 31). What Is the Extent of Sudan's Humanitarian Crisis? Council on Foreign Relations.

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/what-extent-sudans-humanitarian-crisis>

Human Rights Watch. (2004). Darfur Destroyed | Ethnic Cleansing by Government and Militia Forces in Western Sudan. Human Rights Watch.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/05/06/darfur-destroyed/ethnic-cleansing-government-and-militia-forces-western-sudan>

Kirby, J. (2019, August 19). Sudan signs power-sharing deal as its former dictator goes to trial. Vox.

<https://www.vox.com/2019/8/19/20812054/sudan-power-sharing-deal-al-bashir-trial>

LEADERER, E. M. (2024, November 18). Russia vetoes UN resolution calling for immediate cease-fire in the war between Sudan's rival forces. AP News.

<https://apnews.com/article/un-sudan-russia-ceasefire-resolution-85e2b7bb49edc8ca104cf3b9a887c859>

Reuters Staff. (2024, April 15). Sudan's humanitarian crisis: The facts and figures. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudans-humanitarian-crisis-2024-04-15/>

Ray, M. (2019). Janjaweed | Sudanese militia | Britannica. In Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Janjaweed>

Staggering scale of Sudan crisis "demands sustained and urgent attention." (2024, December 19). UN News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/12/1158396>



Sudan conflict: Army and civilians seal power-sharing deal - BBC News. (n.d.). BBC News.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-49379489.amp#sa-link_location=story-body&intlink_from_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.com%2Fnews%2Fworld-africa-49394908&intlink_ts=1566226369721-sa

Sudan crisis one of the “worst humanitarian disasters in recent memory”: UN. (2024, March 20). Al Jazeera.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/20/sudan-is-one-of-the-worst-humanitarian-disasters-in-recent-memory-un>

Targeting the Fur: Mass Killings in Darfur : Events in 2003-2004. (n.d.). Wwww.hrw.org.

<https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/africa/darfur0105/3.htm>

Timeline: Sudan’s political situation since al-Bashir’s removal. (2022, January 3).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/25/timeline-sudan-since-the-fall-of-omar-al-bashir>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2023, December 21). Darfur.

Ushmm.org; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/darfur>

UNHCR. (2024, February 16). Sudan Crisis Explained. UNHCR.

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/sudan-crisis-explained/>

US imposes sanctions on former Sudanese minister and 2 companies backing the paramilitary force. (2023, September 28). AP News.

<https://apnews.com/article/sudan-war-conflict-sanctions-3712c01b80709b60703abc87db4392fa>



Sky news, P.-C. (2019, April 11). Sudan's "tyrant" president Omar al Bashir toppled in military coup. Sky News; Sky.

<https://news.sky.com/story/sudans-president-omar-al-bashir-steps-down-after-uprising-11690316>

Several killed in Sudan as protests over rising prices continue. (n.d.).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/21/several-killed-in-sudan-as-protests-over-rising-prices-continue>