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Introduction

This Country of Origin Information Report was drawn up on the basis of the questions asked and points for attention mentioned in the Terms of Reference (ToR) compiled by the Ministry of Justice and Security. The ToR for this Country of Origin Information Report were adopted on 30 October 2023. The ToR, together with the report, are available on the Dutch Government's website.

This General Country of Origin Information Report describes the situation in Sudan insofar as this affects the assessment of asylum applications from persons originating from this country, and for decision-making regarding the return of rejected Sudanese asylum seekers. This Country of Origin Information Report is an update of the General Country of Origin Information Report Sudan from August 2022. The reporting period covers the period from August 2022 up to and including 26 May 2024. At the time of writing, war was raging in Sudan. Many of the developments described have not yet crystallised.

This report does not claim to provide an exhaustive list of individual security incidents and human rights violations. The incidents specifically reported are cited for the purpose of substantiating and illustrating a more general view.

This report is a factual, neutral and objective representation of the findings that were made during the period under consideration. It is not a policy document, nor does it reflect the Dutch government's vision or policy in relation to any given country or region. The report does not contain any conclusions concerning immigration policy.

This Country of Origin Information Report has been compiled on the basis of public and confidential sources, using carefully selected, analysed and verified information. The preparation included the use of professional literature, media coverage and information from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and relevant government agencies. Except where the facts are generally undisputed or unless stated otherwise, the content in this report is based on multiple sources. The text represents a compilation of information from the various sources. Where qualifications are used, these can be traced back to the sources. The public sources that were consulted are listed in Chapter 11 of this Country of Origin Information Report.

A portion of the public sources consulted consisted of texts written in Arabic. These texts were translated into Dutch by the Translation Service of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The translations were published concurrently with this Country of Origin Information Report, but in a separate file. No rights may be derived from these translations, which were produced solely for informational purposes.

Some of the information used was obtained during a fact-finding mission to Kampala (Uganda) and Nairobi (Kenya) that took place in February 2024. In addition, some of the information used was sourced from the Netherlands' foreign diplomatic mission in Khartoum,¹ as well as from confidential discussions and correspondence beyond the immediate context of the fact-finding mission. The information gleaned in this way was used primarily to support and augment passages founded on

¹ Due to the deteriorating security situation in Sudan, staff at the Dutch embassy in Khartoum had become dispersed across Cairo (Egypt), The Hague and Nairobi.

publicly available information. Each of these sources is marked as a 'confidential source' in the footnotes and accompanied by a date.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the size and scope of Sudan's population, along with an interpretation of the country's historical and political context. The chapter further provides a discussion of the political developments that occurred during the reporting period, in particular the outbreak of war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), as well as the various peace initiatives that have been undertaken. Chapter 2 sets out the security situation, beginning with a discussion of the main conflicting parties and then addressing the scale and course of fighting in the various conflict and control areas. Chapter 3 considers the issuance of passports and stateless persons in Sudan. Chapter 4 addresses the overall human rights situation in the country, including mention of the actions of the SAF-affiliated security forces, the shrinking space for civil society, the situation of journalists, critical social-media users and certain minority groups, as well as the phenomenon of blood vengeance and honour killings. Chapter 5 examines compulsory military service, the phenomenon of forced recruitment and the use of child soldiers. Chapter 6 describes the humanitarian situation, as well as the situation of Sudanese refugees in surrounding countries and the situation of foreign refugees and asylum seekers in Sudan. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 describe the situation of women, LGBTIQ+ people and unaccompanied minors, respectively. Chapter 10 discusses the risks faced by Sudanese people upon return to Sudan. Chapter 11 contains a list of abbreviations, foreign terms and a bibliography. Finally, Chapter 12 consists of five maps.

Terms from Arabic have not been unambiguously transliterated in Latin script. The choice was made to use the most common variant in the literature consulted for each term. Alternative spellings are listed in the footnotes.

1 Country information and political developments

1.1 Introduction to the population of Sudan

Sudan is situated at the intersection of the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and North Africa. It is the third-largest country in Africa, following Algeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).² Sudan is 45 times larger than the Netherlands.³ According to one widely cited estimate, Arabs make up about seventy percent of Sudan's population.⁴ The remaining thirty percent are alternately described in literature and media reports as 'non-Arab', 'Black', 'Afro-Sudanese' or 'African'. This Country of Origin Information Report consistently uses 'African'.

The classifications 'Arab' and 'African' are relative, for various reasons. The dividing line between the two population groups is diffuse. For example, there is an age-old history of cohabitation, mutual influence and inter-ethnic marriage. As a result, there are Sudanese, for example, who identify as 'Arab' but have equally 'African' ancestry. Arab population groups have traditionally lived from nomadic cattle farming and African population groups from arable farming. Through cultural interaction, however, some Africans now farm cattle as well.⁵

When the Country of Origin Information Report refers to 'Arab' or 'African' population groups, it thus refers to groups that identify themselves as such or that are identified as such. This Country of Origin Information Report in no way pretends to provide any objective and verifiable determination of whether a population group or individual is 'Arab' or 'African'.

It should also be mentioned that not all Sudanese people interpret their identities in ethnic terms. Darfur, a region in the west of Sudan,⁶ constitutes a multi-ethnic patchwork of both African and Arabic population groups (Section 12.4 contains an overview map of Darfur).⁷ It is nevertheless known that some inhabitants of Darfur identify themselves only as Darfuri.⁸ In addition, some people living in Sudan identify themselves only as Sudanese.⁹

Although an Arab-African contrast existed in some contexts during the reporting period, as in West Darfur (see 2.2.4) and South Kordofan (see 2.2.5), several fault lines and divisions run through Sudan. For example, the Arab segment of the population does not form a monolithic whole, and there is a deep divide between Arabs from the Nile Valley in the north of the country and Darfuri Arabs.¹⁰ During the reporting period, violence also occurred between Arab population groups in Darfur (see 2.2.4).

² Before South Sudan gained independence on 9 July 2011, Sudan was Africa's largest country. Political Geography Now (PolGeoNow), *News bits*, October 2011, 24 October 2011.

³ Confidential source, 21 May 2024.

⁴ The World Factbook, *Sudan, People and society, Ethnic groups*, undated, accessed on 23 November 2023.

⁵ Koert Lindijer, *De vloek van de Nijl, Gestrand in de oorlog van Sudan*, published in 2014, pp. 29, 30, 122, 123 and 217. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Al Jazeera, 'They're going to kill us', *Sudan's army targets civilians on ethnic basis*, 16 January 2024. Confidential source, 24 January 2024.

⁶ The Darfur region consists of five states: North Darfur, East Darfur, South Darfur, West Darfur and Central Darfur. The entire region is also known as Greater Darfur.

⁷ Human Rights Watch (HRW), 'The Massalit will not come home', *Ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in El Geneina, West Darfur, Sudan*, May 2024, p. 14.

⁸ Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 22 November 2023. Confidential source, 18 December 2023.

⁹ Confidential source, 25 April 2024. Confidential source, 26 April 2024.

¹⁰ Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant (NRC), *Nooit eerder drongen Soedanese herdersjongens het machtscentrum binnen*, 16 May 2023. Confidential source, 20 October 2023. Confidential source, 18 December 2023.

The African population groups likewise do not form a monolithic whole. For example, some members of the Fur are known to consider themselves the 'original' inhabitants of Darfur. This toponym literally means 'Land of the Fur'. In the perception of these Fur people, the Zaghawa, another African population group, are not 'true' Sudanese, as their ancestors are said to have migrated from Chad and Libya to Darfur at a later point in history.¹¹

Within the political and military context of Sudan, various actors cast themselves as representatives of particular population groups. Additional information on this point is provided in 2.1.

At the time of writing, precise data were not available on the total size of the population in Sudan or on the number of inhabitants in each state.¹² The most current data were from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)¹³ and dated from June 2023. According to the IPC, 48,579,711 people were living in Sudan in June 2023.¹⁴

An overview of the number of inhabitants in each state is provided in the table below. The states are arranged in alphabetical order. Abyei is missing from this overview. The IPC did not list population figures for this border region, which is disputed by Sudan and South Sudan (see 2.2.7). The following figures are intended only to provide some indication of the Sudanese population size by state.

Number of inhabitants, by state (June 2023)

State	Number of inhabitants
Blue Nile	1,416,233
Central Darfur	1,901,819
East Darfur	1,176,114
El Gezira	5,938,705
Gedaref	2,788,911
Kassala	2,886,457
Khartoum	7,455,666
North Darfur	2,530,410
Northern	1,386,956
North Kordofan	2,223,993
Red Sea	1,632,391
River Nile	2,088,028
Sennar	2,403,581
West Darfur	1,891,564
West Kordofan	1,735,672
White Nile	3,108,018
South Darfur	3,937,539
South Kordofan	2,077,654
Total	48,579,711

Source: IPC.

¹¹ Confidential source, 24 January 2024. Confidential source, 19 March 2024. Confidential source, 19 March 2024.

¹² Confidential source, 26 April 2024. Confidential source, 7 May 2024. Confidential source, 15 May 2024.

¹³ The IPC is an authoritative source on food insecurity and hunger. Consult <https://www.ipcinfo.org> for additional information on the IPC.

¹⁴ IPC, *The IPC Population Tracking Tool, Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity*, June 2023, accessed on 13 May 2024.

1.2 Historical and political context

From 1899 to 1956, Sudan and South Sudan together formed a 'condominium', or state of shared sovereignty. During this period, the United Kingdom (UK) and Egypt shared nominal sovereignty over an area known as 'the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan'. Sudan gained independence on 1 January 1956. On 30 June 1989, Brigadier General Omar al-Bashir (hereinafter, Bashir) seized power.¹⁵ His ruling party was of Islamist persuasion and was first known as the National Islamic Front (NIF) and, later, as the National Congress Party (NCP).¹⁶

From 1955 to 1972 and from 1983 to 2005, civil war raged in Sudan.¹⁷ This civil war was commonly referred to as a conflict between the predominantly Muslim and Arab north and the largely Christian, animist and African south.¹⁸ In reality, the causes of both civil wars were considerably more complex in nature, but these are beyond the scope of this Country of Origin Information Report.

In 2003, war broke out in Darfur. There, rebel movements took up arms, purportedly to fight the marginalisation of African population groups in Darfur. The two main rebel armies in Darfur were the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).¹⁹ The SLA had a secular profile, and the JEM was of Islamist bent.²⁰

The Bashir government deployed mounted Arab militias, known as *Janjaweed*,²¹ to quash the insurrection in Darfur.²² On 22 April 2008, the United Nations (UN) estimated that 300,000 people had been killed by the Darfur conflict from 2003 to that time. At the time, President Bashir's government argued that this estimate was grossly exaggerated.²³ In late January 2005, a UN commission of inquiry concluded²⁴ that the crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur may have been no less serious and heinous than genocide.²⁵ The International Criminal Court (ICC)²⁶ in The Hague charged Bashir with war crimes in Darfur.²⁷

Just before South Sudan gained independence on 9 July 2011, violence broke out in the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan, a state in the south of Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N)²⁸ claimed to stand up for the

¹⁵ Willow Berridge, Justin Lynch, Raga Makawi and Alex de Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy, The promise and betrayal of a people's revolution*, published in 2022, pp. 29 and 30. Lindijer, *De vloek van de Nijl*, pp. 220, 221 and 224.

¹⁶ In Arabic, the NCP was known as *al-motamr al-watani*.

¹⁷ Lindijer, *De vloek van de Nijl*, pp. 220-223 and 228. Sidecar, *Gunshots in Khartoum*, 17 April 2023. Confidential source, 24 January 2024.

¹⁸ Keith B. Richburg, *Out of America, A black man confronts Africa*, published in 1997, p. 150. Greg Marinovich and João Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club, Snapshots from a hidden war*, published in 2000, pp. 110 and 111. Lindijer, *De vloek van de Nijl*, p. 138. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, p. 152.

¹⁹ Lindijer, *De vloek van de Nijl*, pp. 126, 129 and 130. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, p. 49. Confidential source, 24 January 2024. Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights (RWCHR), *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur, Sudan (April 2023 – April 2024)*, 14 April 2024, p. 17.

²⁰ Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, p. 49.

²¹ This term literally means 'devils on horseback'. The *Janjaweed* rode on horses and camels.

²² Lindijer, *De vloek van de Nijl*, pp. 126 and 233. Sidecar, *Gunshots in Khartoum*, 17 April 2023. Confidential source, 24 January 2024.

²³ Reuters, *UN says Darfur dead may be 300,000; Sudan denies*, 22 April 2008. Trouw, *VN schatten 300.000 doden in Darfur*, 22 April 2008. ST, *Sudan disputes UN figure of 300,000 dead in Darfur*, 24 April 2008.

²⁴ This commission was chaired by Antonio Cassese.

²⁵ International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, *Report to the Secretary-General*, 25 January 2005, pp. 4, 132 and 161.

²⁶ In French, the ICC is known as the *Cour Pénale Internationale* (CPI). Consult <https://www.icc-cpi.int> for additional information on the ICC.

²⁷ Lindijer, *De vloek van de Nijl*, p. 126.

²⁸ In Arabic, the SPLM-N is known as *Harakat al-Sha'abia li-Tahrir al-Sudan al-Shamal*.

interests of African population groups in the Nuba Mountains. It took up arms against the Sudanese government army.²⁹

On 11 April 2019, Bashir was ousted after a regime of thirty years.³⁰ Mass demonstrations by pro-democracy protesters had preceded this. A Transitional Military Council (TMC) assumed power. Lieutenant general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (hereinafter: Burhan) was placed in charge of the TMC. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as 'Hemedti',³¹ was appointed vice-president of the TMC. Burhan commanded the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and Hemedti was the commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF),³² which had emerged from the Janjaweed.³³

On 17 August 2019, the TMC and the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) signed a constitutional declaration. The FFC formed a broad coalition of trade unions, civil society organisations, opposition parties and rebel groups. This alliance was the driving force behind the pro-democracy demonstrations that had marked the end of the Bashir era. The TMC military and the FFC civilians agreed that a Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC)³⁴ would serve as the government for a transitional period of three years and three months. After this 39-month period, a civilian government would take over the country's administration. The TSC consisted of eleven members, six of whom were civilians and five of whom were military. Burhan, commander-in-chief of the SAF and President of the TMC, was appointed President of the TSC. The council delegated executive power largely to a cabinet of ministers led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok (hereinafter: Hamdok).³⁵

On 3 October 2020, the transitional civil-military government and three rebel groups signed a peace agreement in the South Sudanese capital of Juba. This agreement came to be known as the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA). The peace talks had been facilitated by the government of South Sudan. Not all rebel groups signed the Juba Peace Agreement. Both the SLA and the SPLM-N had broken up into two factions. The Minni Minawi-led SLA faction (SLA/MM) signed the peace agreement, and Minawi was appointed regional governor of Darfur. The SLA faction of Abdel Wahid Al-Nur (SLA/AW) did not sign the Juba Peace Agreement and continued to hold out in the Jebel Mara Mountains in Central Darfur. The Malik Agar-led faction of the SPLM-N (SPLM-N/Agar) signed the peace agreement, and Agar was given a seat on the TSC. The SPLM-N faction under Abdelaziz Al Hilu (SPLM-N/Al Hilu) did not join the Juba Peace Agreement and continued to operate independently in the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan. The JEM signed the Juba Peace Agreement, and its leader, Jibril³⁶ Ibrahim, became Minister of Finances.³⁷

²⁹ Lindijer, *De vloek van de Nijl*, p. 196. STPT and the Sudan Crisis Research Network (SCRN), *Blue Nile, its conflict dynamics, and the potential implications for the wider war in Sudan, 2017-2024*, 24 March 2024, p. 3.

³⁰ At the time of writing, military authorities are said to be holding Bashir in Omdurman. Asharq Al-Awsat, *Defense member: Al-Bashir did not escape... and is still detained in Omdurman*, 24 March 2024.

³¹ Also spelt 'Hemeti' or 'Hemetti'. 'Hemedti' is a nickname and translates as 'little Mohamed'.

³² The RSF are known in French as *Forces de soutien rapide* (FSR) and in Arabic as *al-Quwat al-Da'm al-Sari'*.

³³ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, pp. 7, 11 and 12. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 7. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 6. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, pp. 79 and 80.

³⁴ The TSC is known as the Sovereign Council for short.

³⁵ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, pp. 14 and 15. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 7. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 6. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, pp. 97, 98, 102, 103, 105, 108 and 109. Confidential source, 1 August 2023.

³⁶ Also spelt 'Gibril'.

³⁷ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report*, March 2021, pp. 14-17. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 6, 9 and 10, 12, 15, 48 and 114. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, pp. 116, 120 and 121. Confidential source, 25 October 2022. Confidential source, 1 August 2023. STPT and the SCRNL, *Blue Nile*, 24 March 2024, p. 6.

A key provision of the Juba Peace Agreement was the creation of a joint force that became responsible for protecting civilians in Darfur. This force, known as the Joint Force for short, would come to consist of troops from the Sudanese security apparatus and fighters from the SLA/MM and the JEM, two rebel groups that had signed the peace agreement in Juba.³⁸

The transition process in Sudan came to a halt when Burhan took power on 25 October 2021. He declared a state of emergency, jailed Prime Minister Hamdok, lifted the TSC and reintroduced the TMC. The European Commission (EC) qualified the aforementioned events as a 'military coup'. The African Union (AU) spoke of a 'military takeover'. Burhan himself claimed to have taken only 'corrective measures'.³⁹

Hamdok was subsequently released, but remained under house arrest until 21 November 2021. Under international and domestic pressure, the TSC was restored on 11 November 2021, albeit in a new composition. Whereas the members of the military stayed on, the FFC representatives were replaced by other civilian members. Burhan and Hemedti became the president and vice-president of the TSC, respectively. On 21 November 2021, Burhan and Hamdok signed an agreement, after which the latter took office again as prime minister. The agreement was condemned by important segments of the FFC and, above all, by large sections of the Sudanese population. Mass demonstrations took place for the return to a democratic transition. Hamdok resigned in early January 2022. His resignation followed a demonstration that had ended in particularly bloody fashion.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the FFC had also broken up into two factions: that of the Central Council (FFC-CC)⁴¹ and that of the National Accord (FFC-NA).⁴² The FFC-CC was dominated by the civilian components of the FFC and the FFC-NA by the rebel groups that had signed the Juba Peace Agreement. The FFC-NA continued to be represented in the Sudanese government after Burhan seized power in October 2021.⁴³

1.3 War between the SAF and the RSF

On 5 December 2022, the SAF, the RSF and a few civilian components of the pro-democracy movement signed a political framework agreement. Several matters were agreed upon in this document. For example, the SAF and RSF were to merge into a unified professional army. The establishment of paramilitary formations was no longer allowed. Military personnel were now allowed to do business only in the defence sector, and not in other sectors.⁴⁴

³⁸ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 34. Sudan Tribune (ST), *Sudan equips civilian protection force in Darfur*, 2 January 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023.

³⁹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 7. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, p. 197.

⁴⁰ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 8 and 9. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, p. 210. Confidential source, 25 October 2022. Confidential source, 1 August 2023. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), *War in Sudan, 15 April 2023, Background, analysis and scenarios*, August 2023, p. 15.

⁴¹ Also referred to as 'FFC 1'.

⁴² Also referred to as 'FFC 2' or the FFC Democratic Block (FFC-DB).

⁴³ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 11, 58 and 59. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, p. 199. Al Jazeera, *Can Sudan's civilian leaders save their country from collapse?*, 29 September 2023. Confidential source, 25 October 2022. Confidential source, 1 August 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 14 February 2024.

⁴⁴ Between the secession of South Sudan in 2011 and Bashir's fall in 2019, SAF commanders increasingly turned to commercial activities (e.g. meat processing, telecom and sesame-seed production). The Conversation, *Sudan Armed Forces are on a path to self-destruction – risking state collapse*, 19 February 2024. By 2020, more than two hundred companies were owned by the Sudanese Ministry of Defence. German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), *The war in Sudan, How weapons and networks shattered a power struggle*, February 2024, p. 3.

The agreement of December 2022 nevertheless had several drawbacks. Not all stakeholders joined, and the SAF and RSF disagreed on the pathway towards the integration of the two forces. The SAF purportedly wanted the integration process to take two years, while the RSF aimed for a ten-year time frame. Furthermore, the SAF wanted the RSF to be accountable to the SAF commander, but the RSF wanted to be under the authority of the civilian head of state.⁴⁵

Tensions and mistrust between the Burhan-led SAF and Hemedti's RSF were already existing during the preceding reporting period.⁴⁶ On 15 April 2023, antagonisms between the SAF and RSF degenerated into armed conflict. Fighting broke out in the capital, Khartoum, and then spread to other parts of Sudan, particularly Darfur. To date, it is unclear which party fired the first shot. Each camp accused the other of starting the war.⁴⁷

The power struggle between the SAF and RSF had far-reaching consequences for the political, humanitarian and human rights situation in the country. Additional information on this point is provided in the next chapters. The remainder of this chapter discusses the peace initiatives made and the relationship between Sudan and the UN.

1.4 Peace initiatives

1.4.1 Introduction

During the reporting period, there were several initiatives to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the SAF and the RSF.⁴⁸ An overview of the most important peace initiatives is provided below. This overview is not exhaustive. At the time of writing, a peaceful, sustainable and inclusive solution to the conflict in Sudan did not appear to be within reach.⁴⁹ This seemed to be confirmed by a statement made by Agar, the vice-president of the TSC. On 24 March 2024, he proclaimed that the SAF would be in a position to defeat the RSF on the battlefield and that seeking a peaceful solution was therefore inopportune.⁵⁰

1.4.2 Jeddah talks

Saudi Arabia and the United States (US) initiated a negotiation process between the SAF and the RSF in Jeddah, a Saudi port city on the Red Sea. Although the warring parties agreed on a ceasefire several times, each ceasefire was violated shortly after it went into effect.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Confidential source, 5 December 2022. Confidential source, 6 April 2023. Sidecar, *Gunshots in Khartoum*, 17 April 2023. International Crisis Group (ICG), *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, pp. 4 and 5. IDEA, *War in Sudan*, August 2023, pp. 19-23. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

⁴⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 7. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, pp. 137 and 167.

⁴⁷ Sidecar, *Gunshots in Khartoum*, 17 April 2023. United States Institute of Peace (USIP), *What's behind the fighting in Sudan?*, *The ongoing confrontation between the military and Rapid Support Forces undermines stability in Sudan and the Horn of Africa*, 20 April 2023. IDEA, *War in Sudan*, August 2023, p. 24. Confidential source, 20 October 2023. STPT, *Conflict dynamics in South Darfur*, 18 December 2023, p. 2. ICG, *Sudan, A year of war*, 11 April 2024.

⁴⁸ UN Security Council (UNSC), *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 35 and 36. GIGA, *The war in Sudan*, February 2024, p. 11. Confidential source, 10 April 2024. ICG, *Sudan*, 11 April 2024.

⁴⁹ Confidential source, 15 December 2023. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), *Sudan, Setting the stage for a long war*, 17 January 2024. Confidential source, 24 January 2024. Confidential source, 10 April 2024. Confidential source, 16 April 2024.

⁵⁰ ST, *Sudan's Agar foresees military solution to RSF standoff*, 24 March 2024.

⁵¹ Confidential source, 1 August 2023. Radio Dabanga (RD), *Sudan war: both El Burhan and Hemedti arrive in Saudi Arabia*, 28 September 2023.

On 26 October 2023, the SAF and the RSF resumed talks in Jeddah. This time, the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)⁵² fulfilled an observer role. The IGAD is an alliance of countries in the Horn of Africa and East Africa.⁵³

In the end, the resumed Jeddah talks did not lead to a ceasefire. The warring parties nevertheless did express their willingness to provide passage for humanitarian aid. They would purportedly also take confidence-building measures (CBM) to promote mutual trust. Examples in this context could include a communication channel between SAF and RSF leaders and the reduction of war-mongering rhetoric.⁵⁴ At the time of writing, the aforementioned agreements had not been implemented by either party.⁵⁵

The Jeddah peace talks finally stalled, as the SAF demanded that the RSF withdraw from Khartoum and other cities, which the RSF in turn refused to do. As a result, these consultations were suspended in December 2023.⁵⁶

Refer to 1.4.7 for information on the continued involvement of the AU in the quest for peace in Sudan.

1.4.3 *Simultaneous meetings in Addis Ababa and Juba*

Meanwhile, civilian forces in the diaspora attempted to join forces. For example, a preparatory workshop was held in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa,⁵⁷ from 21 to 24 October 2023. This meeting was intended as a prelude to a peaceful and inclusive solution to the conflict and the subsequent initiation of a process of democratisation. Numerous civilian politicians, resistance committees (RCs),⁵⁸ professional groups, trade unions and women's organisations came together and formed a coalition known as the Coordination Body of the Democratic Civil Forces⁵⁹ (in Arabic, *Taqqadum*, meaning 'progress').⁶⁰ Most of the aforementioned actors were associated with the FFC-CC (see 1.2).⁶¹

Taqqadum was blamed for a lack of inclusion. Many RCs, trade unions and youth and women's groups did not feel represented by this initiative. In addition, Taqqadum was at odds with the SLA/MM and the JEM, two signatories of the 2020

⁵² The IGAD has eight member states: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. Consult <https://igad.int> for additional information on the IGAD.

⁵³ Al Arabiya, *Saudi Arabia welcomes resumption of Sudan peace talks in Jeddah*, 26 October 2023. Al Jazeera, *Sudan warring sides resume peace talks in Saudi Arabia*, 26 October 2023. ST, *Sudanese army and RSF resume ceasefire talks in Jeddah*, 29 October 2023. Confidential source, 31 October 2023.

⁵⁴ ST, *Sudanese belligerents fail to reach ceasefire agreement*, 7 November 2023. United States Department of State, *Joint statement on commitments from Jeddah talks between Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces*, 7 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023. ICG, *Sudan's calamitous civil war, A chance to draw back from the abyss*, 9 January 2024, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Confidential source, 26 April 2024. The Guardian, *It's an open secret, The UAE is fuelling Sudan's war – and there'll be no peace until we call it out*, 24 May 2024.

⁵⁶ ICG, *Sudan's calamitous civil war*, 9 January 2024, p. 4. UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, p. 37.

⁵⁷ It is popularly called 'Addis' for short.

⁵⁸ Such local groups led pro-democracy protests against the Bashir government in 2018 and 2019. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, pp. 14 and 70. Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), *The role of local resistance committees in Sudan's transitional period*, published in 2021.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 8 and 13. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 7 and 59.

⁵⁹ Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, pp. 141 and 142.

⁶⁰ Also referred to as Coordination of Civil and Democratic Forces (CCDF).

⁶¹ Also spelt *Tagadom*, *Taggadom* and *Taqadam*.

⁶² ST, *Sudan: Anti-war civil forces hold preparatory meeting in Addis Ababa*, 21 October 2023. SWM, *Sudan anti-war front organizes in Addis Ababa*, 22 October 2023. ST, *Former MP Hamdok calls for Sudanese unity to end war*, 23 October 2023. Confidential source, 31 October 2023. Confidential source, 14 February 2024. CMI, *The Sudan war, The potential of civil and democratic forces*, April 2024. RD, *Tagadom: 'Sudan army and RSF to return to negotiation table without conditions'*, 10 May 2024.

Juba Peace Agreement (see 1.2).⁶² Furthermore, the Communist Party of Sudan (CPoS) remained aloof towards Taqqadam.⁶³ In addition, this civilian coalition indicated that it did not wish to cooperate with the NCP, Bashir's former ruling party.⁶⁴

Around the same period, a meeting of the FFC-NA, the counterpart of the FFC-CC, took place in Juba. The FFC-NA was dominated by the signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement. They had been invited by South Sudanese President Salva Kiir to meet in Juba. As in Addis Ababa, participants in Juba called for unity and peace.⁶⁵

Bilateral relationship between Sudan and South Sudan

The bilateral relationship between Sudan and South Sudan was relatively good.⁶⁶ As mentioned in Section 1.2, the South Sudanese government presented itself as the host of the Juba Peace Agreement in 2020. South Sudan thus hosted a meeting of the FFC-NA in October 2023. A month earlier, Burhan had paid an official visit to South Sudanese President Kiir in Juba.⁶⁷

On 12 March 2024, the SAF recaptured the main station of national television and radio in Omdurman (see 2.2.3). Amongst the RSF fighters taken as prisoners of war were fourteen South Sudanese mercenaries.⁶⁸ The government of South Sudan distanced itself from this group, stressing that the mercenaries had acted on their own initiative and not under orders from South Sudan.⁶⁹

1.4.4 Mediation efforts by the IGAD

On 9 December 2023, the IGAD, an alliance of countries in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, held a summit in Djibouti. Burhan was physically present at this summit, and Hemedti participated remotely through a telephone connection.⁷⁰ On 10 December 2023, the IGAD communicated that Burhan and Hemedti were ready to declare an unconditional ceasefire and enter into personal talks with each other.⁷¹ On the same day, however, the Burhan-affiliated Sudanese foreign ministry communicated that dialogue with Hemedti was possible only on the condition that the RSF withdraw from Khartoum. With that, the chances of a ceasefire were lost for the time being.⁷²

⁶² Confidential source, 13 February 2024. Confidential source, 26 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 March 2024. CMI, *The Sudan war*, April 2024. Confidential source, 16 April 2024. Confidential source, 24 April 2024.

⁶³ RD, *Sudan's Communist Party 'won't join Tagaddum talks'*, 14 January 2024.

⁶⁴ Taqqadam, *Addis Ababa Declaration between the Coordination Body of the Democratic Civil Forces (Taqqadam) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)*, 2 January 2024.

⁶⁵ ST, *President Kiir calls for unity among signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement*, 26 October 2023. Confidential source, 31 October 2023.

⁶⁶ Confidential source, 5 March 2024.

⁶⁷ ST, *Burhan embarks on official visit to South Sudan*, 4 September 2023.

⁶⁸ ST, *Sudanese army captures South Sudanese mercenaries in Omdurman*, 14 March 2024. Radio Tamazuj, *South Sudan government distances itself from citizens arrested fighting in Sudan*, 18 March 2024.

⁶⁹ Radio Tamazuj, *South Sudan government distances itself from citizens arrested fighting in Sudan*, 18 March 2024.

⁷⁰ Attendees at the IGAD summit further included Ismail Omar Guelleh (President of Djibouti), Abiy Ahmed (Prime Minister of Ethiopia), William Ruto (President of Kenya), Hassan Sheikh Mohamud (President of Somalia), James Pitya Morgan (South Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation) and Vincent Bamulangaki Ssempijja (Ugandan Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs).

⁷¹ ST, *IGAD secures commitment from Sudanese belligerents to sign ceasefire agreement*, 9 December 2023. IGAD, *Communiqué of the 41st extraordinary IGAD assembly of heads of state and government*, 10 December 2023. Al Jazeera, *African mediators claim progress in latest effort to end war in Sudan*, 11 December 2023. The Independent, *Sudan's general agree to meet in effort to end their devastating war, a regional bloc says*, 11 December 2023. SWM, *Growing regional support for Sudanese civilian front to end the war*, 11 December 2023. Confidential source, 15 December 2023.

⁷² SWM, *Growing regional support for Sudanese civilian front to end the war*, 11 December 2023. RD, *Sudan FA Ministry disavowal of IGAD communiqué 'raises eyebrows'*, 12 December 2023. Confidential source, 15 December 2023.

The IGAD planned to hold a regional summit in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, on 18 January 2024, to which both Burhan and Hemedti were invited. On 16 January 2024, the Sudanese foreign ministry announced that it had suspended its involvement in the IGAD's mediation efforts. In the view of that ministry, Hemedti should not have been invited, as it was a meeting of heads of state. In the opinion of the Sudanese foreign ministry, the IGAD had thus 'violated Sudan's sovereignty' and meddled in a 'domestic matter'.⁷³

On 20 January 2024, the same ministry went a step further by declaring that Sudan's membership in the IGAD had been suspended.⁷⁴ One source attributed the Sudanese foreign ministry's unwelcoming attitude to the growing influence of Islamists who had previously held a strong position of power under Bashir.⁷⁵ Former supporters of Bashir were known as *Kezan* ('mugs').⁷⁶

On 26 March 2024, the IGAD reported that it had appointed Lawrence Korbandy as special envoy to Sudan. This South Sudanese diplomat was tasked with initiating dialogue between the warring parties and seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict.⁷⁷

1.4.5 Addis Ababa Declaration

On 2 January 2024, RSF Commander Hemedti and former Prime Minister Hamdok, now leader of the Taqqadam civil coalition (see 1.4.3), signed a declaration in Addis Ababa. Several commitments were laid down in this document. For example, Hemedti expressed his willingness to conclude a ceasefire with the SAF. He also stated his intention to assist with the return of millions of internally displaced persons (refer to 6.2 and 6.3 for information on the situation of internally displaced persons). In addition, Hemedti pledged the release of 451 prisoners. The RSF also expressed willingness to create corridors in their control areas for the purpose of humanitarian assistance.⁷⁸

The Addis Ababa Declaration placed Taqqadam in an awkward situation. The fact that this coalition had signed a statement with only Hemedti purportedly created a perception that the RSF leader would be Taqqadam's patron. The declaration also bestowed some degree of legitimacy on Hemedti, even though his troops had taken and plundered the city of Wad Madani⁷⁹ shortly before the signing (see 2.2.6). The perception thus arose that Taqqadam would be under the influence of the RSF.⁸⁰

⁷³ Al Jazeera, *Sudan suspends contacts with IGAD mediating group: Foreign Ministry*, 16 January 2024. SWM, *Lull in fighting ahead of East African summit, Dagalo to attend IGAD meeting while Al-Burhan boycotts*, 17 January 2024. The Economist, *Why diplomacy over Sudan, Africa's enduring nightmare, is stuck*, 17 January 2024.

⁷⁴ Al Jazeera, *Sudan suspends membership in IGAD regional bloc*, 20 January 2024. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *Igad: Sudan leaves regional bloc over attempt to end war*, 21 January 2024. RD, *Sudan junta freezes IGAD membership after summit boycott*, 21 January 2024.

⁷⁵ Confidential source, 2 February 2024. Confidential source, 10 April 2024.

⁷⁶ Also spelt *Kizan* (singular: *Kuz*). This designation referred to a statement made by Hassan al-Banna, the Egyptian founder of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB): 'Religion is a sea, and we are the mugs that draw from it'. Islamists, and especially former supporters of Bashir, used the term as a badge of pride, while opponents used it as a term of derision. RD, *Sudan communications blackout widens amid accusations*, 5 February 2024. Confidential source, 14 March 2024.

⁷⁷ IGAD, *IGAD Executive Secretary announces the appointment of Hon. Lawrence Korbandy as Special Envoy for Sudan*, 26 March 2024. Radio Tamazuj, *Korbandy appointed IGAD's Special Envoy for Sudan*, 26 March 2024. RD, *IGAD appoints South Sudanese diplomat as Special Envoy for Sudan*, 27 March 2024.

⁷⁸ Alyurae, *RSF signs agreement with (Taqqadam) coalition for a negotiated ceasefire with the army*, 3 January 2024. ST, *Full text, Addis Ababa Declaration*, 2 January 2024. Reuters, *Sudan's RSF open to talks on immediate ceasefire with army*, published on 2 January 2024, updated on 3 January 2024. Trouw, *Winst RSF maakt van militieleider plots een staatsman*, 4 January 2024. Confidential source, 4 January 2024. CMI, *The Sudan war*, April 2024.

⁷⁹ In Sudanese vernacular, known as 'Madani' for short.

⁸⁰ Confidential source, 13 February 2024. Confidential source, 26 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 March 2024. CMI, *The Sudan war*, April 2024. Confidential source, 24 April 2024.

On 5 January 2024, Burhan (president of the TSC and commander-in-chief of the SAF) rejected the agreement between Hemedti and Hamdok. He stated that he was not interested in reconciliation, given the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the RSF. In the same statement, he described Hemedti as a 'clown', a 'traitor' and a 'coward'. He also promised to fight just as long as it would take to completely defeat the RSF.⁸¹ The TSC was not the only voice to criticise the Addis Ababa declaration.⁸² Other stakeholders did so as well, including the CPoS.⁸³

Taqqadum attempted to underscore his neutral position.⁸⁴ In an interview with Radio Dabanga (RD),⁸⁵ Hamdok stated that Taqqadum had approached both the RSF and the SAF, but that the SAF had thus far not agreed to meet.⁸⁶ In a press statement on 30 March 2024, Taqqadum condemned the RSF's ongoing violence against the civilian population in El Gezira, a state in central Sudan (see also 2.2.6).⁸⁷ The civilian coalition described the rapes and other acts of violence as a 'violation of the Addis Ababa Declaration'.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, on 3 April 2024, the public prosecutor in Port Sudan, the seat of the TSC, indicted seventeen Taqqadum leaders, including Hamdok. They were accused of incitement to war against the state, subversion of constitutional order and crimes against humanity. Under Sudanese criminal law, these crimes are punishable by death (refer to Section 4.3 for additional information on the death penalty).⁸⁹ Taqqadum responded by saying it would remain in talks with the SAF. Taqqadum also once again condemned the RSF's violence against the civilian population and stressed its impartiality.⁹⁰ At the time of writing, the extent to which this charge damaged Taqqadum's position as an interested party was not clear.⁹¹

1.4.6 Talks in Manama

In January 2024, secret talks took place between senior representatives of the SAF and the RSF in Manama,⁹² the capital of the Gulf state of Bahrain. The talks were said to have been facilitated by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the US. During these talks, the two sides had purportedly agreed on a number of basic arrangements,⁹³ including the recognition of a civilian government, the organisation of elections after a transition phase and the integration of the SAF and the RSF. As soon as the news about the Manama talks came out, Burhan withdrew his representative, and this trajectory stranded.⁹⁴

⁸¹ Al Jazeera, *Sudan's army chief al-Burhan says 'no reconciliation' with paramilitary RSF*, 5 January 2024. Asharq Al-Awsat, *Sudan's Army Chief: We will fight until the militia is gone*, 6 January 2024.

⁸² ST, *Sudan's deputy chairman brushes off Addis Ababa Declaration*, 3 January 2024.

⁸³ ST, *Sudanese communists denounces Addis Ababa Declaration for failing to address urgent priorities*, 6 January 2024.

⁸⁴ Confidential source, 3 April 2024.

⁸⁵ RD is an independent, Sudanese news and information platform. It was founded in 2008 with the aim of covering the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Meanwhile, RD reports from all regions of Sudan. Consult <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en> for additional information on RD.

⁸⁶ RD, *Hamdok to Dabanga: 'We are still waiting for a meeting with Sudan army leadership'*, 21 February 2024.

⁸⁷ Also spelt 'Al-Jazirah' and 'Jezira'. In Arabic, Gezira means 'island'.

⁸⁸ ST, *Sudan's civil forces coalition decries RSF abuses in Al-Jazirah*, 30 March 2024.

⁸⁹ ST, *Sudan charges former PM, anti-war leaders with serious crimes*, 3 April 2024. RD, *Sudan Tagadom leaders 'continue despite criminal complaints against them'*, 5 April 2024.

⁹⁰ RD, *Sudan Tagadom leaders 'continue despite criminal complaints against them'*, 5 April 2024.

⁹¹ Confidential source, 9 April 2024.

⁹² General Shums Eddeen al-Kabashi, deputy commander of the SAF, represented the SAF. The RSF was represented by Abdel Rahim Dagalo, the brother of Hemedti and deputy commander of the RSF.

⁹³ SWM, *Secret talks between rival Sudanese generals*, 27 January 2024. Altaghyeer, *Secret talks between Sudanese army deputy chief and Dagalo achieve progress*, 28 January 2024. Reuters, *Sudanese warring parties hold first high-level talks in Bahrain*, 31 January 2024. ICG, *Sudan*, 11 April 2024.

⁹⁴ ICG, *Sudan*, 11 April 2024.

1.4.7 *Mediation efforts by the AU*

On 17 January 2024, the AU announced that it had appointed a panel consisting of three dignitaries.⁹⁵ This panel was tasked with finding a solution to the conflict in Sudan.⁹⁶ On 11 March 2024, the AU reported that this panel had completed its first round of consultations. During this round, the panel spoke to various stakeholders, including the TSC, signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement, the FFC-NA, women's groups, the RSF, Taqqadum and the IGAD. The panel further expressed support for the stalled peace talks in Jeddah (see 1.4.2).⁹⁷

1.4.8 *A new pro-SAF coalition*

On 8 May 2024, a new pro-SAF coalition presented itself in Cairo. Known as the Sudan Charter Forces (SCF), this alliance consisted of 48 civilian groups, political parties and armed groups. The FFC-NA, which also included the SLA/MM and the JEM, were an important component of the SCF. This coalition marked the SAF as the legitimate government army and called for resuming the stalled peace talks in Jeddah (see 1.4.2). In addition, the SCF argued that the RSF should first have to withdraw from urban areas before a ceasefire could be concluded. This pro-SAF coalition also proposed that there should be a transitional civil-military administration after the war.⁹⁸ Taqqadum took a critical stance towards the SCF, arguing that this coalition was under the influence of the SAF.⁹⁹ At the time of writing, it was too early to determine the extent to which the SCF enjoyed legitimacy amongst the Sudanese population.¹⁰⁰

1.5 **Sudan and the UN**

It was difficult for the UN to play a mediating role in the conflict. On 8 June 2023, the UN special envoy to Sudan, Volker Perthes, was declared *persona non grata* (PNG)¹⁰¹ by the TSC. According to the Sudanese foreign ministry, which was affiliated with the TSC, this German diplomat and scientist had allegedly instigated the conflict.¹⁰² With Perthes no longer welcome in Sudan, he was forced to resign on 13 September 2023.¹⁰³

In addition to being the UN special envoy to Sudan, Perthes was the head of the United Nations Integrated Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). This UN mission was created to oversee the democratic transition to a civilian government. UNITAMS

⁹⁵ They were Ghanaian diplomat Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Mozambican diplomat Francisco Madeira and Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, the former vice-president of Uganda.

⁹⁶ AU, *The Chairperson of the African Union Commission appoints High-Level Panel on the resolution of the conflict in Sudan*, 17 January 2024.

⁹⁷ AU, *AU High-Level Panel on Sudan concludes its first shuttle diplomacy mission in the region*, 11 March 2024.

⁹⁸ ST, *Sudanese political groups sign charter to end crisis and establish transitional period*, 8 May 2024. RD, *Sudan political blocs' charter shapes post-war transition*, 10 May 2024. SWM, *Pro-SAF political bloc launches in Cairo*, 11 May 2024. Confidential source, 21 May 2024.

⁹⁹ SWM, *Pro-SAF political bloc launches in Cairo*, 11 May 2024.

¹⁰⁰ Confidential source, 13 May 2024.

¹⁰¹ In a diplomatic context, this Latin term refers to a person who is no longer allowed to enter a particular country. This person has thus fallen 'out of favour' with the authorities of the country in question. It was not the first time that Sudanese authorities had labelled the UN special envoy to Sudan as PNG. For example, the Dutch diplomat and politician Jan Pronk was declared PNG in October 2006. De Volkskrant, *Pronk persona non grata in Sudan*, 20 October 2006. NRC, *Pronk nu 'persona non grata'*, 20 October 2006. ST, *Sudanese army declares UN's Pronk persona non grata*, 20 October 2006. The New York Times, *Sudanese army says U.N. envoy is declared persona non grata*, 21 October 2006. Trouw, *Sudan zet Jan Pronk het land uit*, 22 October 2006.

¹⁰² ST, *Volker Perthes is no longer welcome in Sudan*, 8 June 2023. Al Jazeera, *Sudan declares UN envoy Volker Perthes 'persona non grata'*, 9 June 2023. RD, *Sudan declares UNITAMS head persona non grata 'contrary to UN Charter'*, 11 June 2023. Confidential source, 21 September 2023.

¹⁰³ RD, *'Persona non grata' Volker Perthes quits as UN Special Representative for Sudan*, 14 September 2023. United Nations Integrated Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), *SRSG for Sudan and Head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes remarks to the Security Council on 13 September 2023*, 13 September 2023. Confidential source, 21 September 2023.

was a political and civilian mission, and it had no peacekeeping mandate.¹⁰⁴ On 16 November 2023, Sudan's foreign ministry asked the UN to end the political mission in the country. On 1 December 2023, the UN Security Council (UNSC)¹⁰⁵ decided to discontinue the UNITAMS. The decision entered into force on 3 December 2023.¹⁰⁶

On 21 November 2023, António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), appointed Ramtane Lamamra as his personal envoy to Sudan. Lamamra was an Algerian diplomat known for his good relations with the AU and his knowledge and expertise on the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁰⁷

In view of the escalating violence (see Section 2.2) and growing food insecurity (see Section 6.4), Guterres and the UNSC called on the warring parties in March 2024 for a ceasefire during Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting. SAF-affiliated authorities expressed their willingness to support his appeal, but questioned how a ceasefire could be achieved if the RSF continued the violence.¹⁰⁸ The Sudanese foreign ministry demanded that the RSF withdraw from the homes of civilians and from El Gezira and Sennar states (the RSF's capture of El Gezira is discussed in 2.2.6). The RSF refused to comply with these demands, and thus no ceasefire occurred during Ramadan.¹⁰⁹

In an April 2024 interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ),¹¹⁰ Hamdok, the leader of the Taqqadum civilian platform, requested the UN to send an observer mission to Sudan. According to Hamdok, this mission should ensure fair distribution of humanitarian aid in the country (refer to Section 6.5 on the obstruction of aid). Hamdok did not specify how large this UN mission should be and how it could be protected.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 16, 17 and 29. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 20. Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, pp. 122 and 123.

¹⁰⁵ Known in French as the *Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies*.

¹⁰⁶ Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Sudan News Agency (SUNA), *Security Council adopts a resolution terminates UNITAMS mandate*, 1 December 2023. Al Jazeera, *Security Council agrees to terminate UN mission in Sudan*, 2 December 2023. Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (NOS), *VN stopt de politieke missie in Sudan*, 2 December 2023. The Independent, *UN ends political mission in Sudan, where world hasn't been able to stop bloodshed*, 2 December 2023. Confidential source, 5 December 2023.

¹⁰⁷ ST, *UN appoints Algerian diplomat as personal envoy to Sudan*, 17 November 2023. UN, *Mr. Ramtane Lamamra of Algeria – personal envoy to Sudan*, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023.

¹⁰⁸ ST, *UN chief calls for Ramadan cessation of hostilities in Sudan*, 7 March 2024. The Independent, *UN chief urges Sudan's warring parties to halt hostilities during Muslim holy month of Ramadan*, 7 March 2024. UN, *UN chief appeals for Sudan ceasefire, now: 'Values of Ramadan must prevail'*, 7 March 2024. Confidential source, 8 March 2024. UN, *Adopting resolution 2724 (2024), Security Council calls for immediate cessation of hostilities by warring parties in Sudan during Ramadan*, 8 March 2024. Al Jazeera, *UN Security Council calls for ceasefire in Sudan during Ramadan*, 9 March 2024.

¹⁰⁹ Al Jazeera, *Sudan army general rules out Ramadan truce unless RSF leaves civilian sites*, 10 March 2024. SWM, *Sudan army noncommittal about Ramadan ceasefire*, 10 March 2024. De Standaard (DS), *Ramadan brengt geen soelaas, in Soedan dreigt grootste hongercrisis ter wereld*, 12 March 2024.

¹¹⁰ SZ is a high-quality newspaper from southern Germany. Consult <https://www.sueddeutsche.de> for additional information on this newspaper.

¹¹¹ SZ, *Sudans Ex-Premier fordert Soldaten im Kampf gegen die Hungersnot*, 22 April 2024.

2 The security situation

2.1 Conflicting parties

2.1.1 Introduction

During the reporting period, several parties participated in the violence in Sudan either directly or indirectly. This section provides an overview of the main parties to the conflict that were either directly or indirectly involved in the violence in Sudan. The following overview of the various armed actors is not exhaustive. It is followed by a brief outline of each party, focusing on its leaders, ethnic (or other) constituency and political and/or religious orientation. If known, the parties' battle tactics and national or international allies are covered as well.

2.1.2 SAF and allied militias

Profile

Burhan headed the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC). He cast himself as Sudan's *de facto* head of state and claimed to fight for the 'dignity'¹¹² and 'territorial integrity' of the Sudanese state. On 17 April 2023, Burhan and the SAF described Hemedti's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) as a 'rebel militia'. In early May 2023, the SAF called on the international community to designate the RSF as a 'terrorist organisation'.¹¹³ On 6 September 2023, Burhan issued a decree officially dissolving the RSF.¹¹⁴

Since Sudan gained its independence in 1956, the country's armed forces have played an important role in its politics and economy. The military leadership comprised primarily members of the Arab elite from the Nile Valley in northern Sudan. Burhan and the SAF officers viewed the growing power of Hemedti and his RSF as a threat to their privileged position.¹¹⁵

The ranks of the SAF included Islamists who had previously been part of the government of President Bashir and his National Congress Party (NCP).¹¹⁶ For example, the 'El Bara Bin Malik Brigade'¹¹⁷ entered the battlefield during the reporting period. This armed Islamist militant group had emerged from the paramilitary structures of the former NCP government.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Referred to in Arabic as *Karama*.

¹¹³ Al Jazeera, *Sudan army declares RSF as a rebel group, orders dissolution*, 17 April 2023. Middle East Monitor (MEMO), *Sudan urges world to designate paramilitary Rapid Support Forces as terror group*, 5 May 2023. ST, *Sudan calls for RSF to be declared terrorist organization*, 21 September 2023. The New Arab, *Inside Burhan's quest for international legitimacy in Sudan*, 2 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 March 2024.

¹¹⁴ ST, *Sudan dissolves paramilitary RSF, abolishes its controversial law*, 6 September 2023. Asharq Al-Awsat, *Sudan's Burhan issues decree to dissolve RSF*, 7 September 2023. RD, *RSF dissolved, Sudan legal expert questions constitutional decree*, 7 September 2023.

¹¹⁵ ICG, *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, p. 4. Confidential source, 1 August 2023. African Arguments, *'One army, One people?': The ethnic and regional politics of Sudan's military and militias and their role in coups and wars, Past and present*, 16 August 2023. SWM, *Q&A about Sudan's conflict for the uninformed, Who is fighting and why?*, 21 December 2023.

¹¹⁶ ICG, *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, p. 4. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

¹¹⁷ SWM, *Q&A about Sudan's conflict for the uninformed*, 21 December 2023.

¹¹⁸ This unit was named after El Bara bin Malik, also spelt 'Al-Barā bin Mālik'. El Bara was a *sahabi* ('companion') of the Prophet Muhammad and took part in several campaigns of conquest in the seventh century.

¹¹⁹ The Arab Weekly (AW), *Islamist 'shadow brigades' emerge as key factor in Sudan conflict as fighting resumes*, 21 June 2023. RD, *Unravelling Sudan's militia matrix, PRF and other emerging forces*, 26 September 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

During the reporting period, it was also reported that former members of resistance committees in Khartoum and Omdurman had joined the SAF. They considered the RSF a foreign danger because of the presence of fighters from neighbouring countries in the ranks of the RSF (see 2.1.3). They wanted to stop the RSF's looting and rape. This created a situation in which ideological opponents — former Bashir supporters and pro-democracy activists — were fighting under the same banner against a common enemy: the RSF.¹¹⁹

Refer to Section 4.4 for information on the actions of SAF-affiliated security forces.

International allies

Burhan and the SAF maintained close ties with Egypt.¹²⁰ Traditionally, Egypt has regarded Sudan as its own backyard.¹²¹ In recent years, joint exercises between Egyptian and Sudanese forces have taken place. In view of the above, Egypt supported the SAF during the reporting period.¹²² According to *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), Egypt's military support for the SAF included fighter jets, with pilots,¹²³ and Turkish-made drones.¹²⁴

During the reporting period, there were also reports that Iran had been supplying drones¹²⁵ to the SAF.¹²⁶ Some media reports suggested a link between Iran's delivery of drones and the SAF's ground gains in Omdurman in February and March 2023 (see 2.2.3).¹²⁷

Battle tactics

As far as could be ascertained, the SAF was the only conflict party in Sudan with an air force. The SAF had a reputation for frequently taking their opponents out of the air under fire, including in densely populated areas or neighbourhoods. These air strikes killed not only RSF fighters, but also civilians.¹²⁸

The following examples of the aerial bombing of civilian targets are not exhaustive, but they do give an indication of the nature and scale of this form of violence.

¹¹⁹ Middle East Eye (MEE), *Revolutionaries fighting alongside army against Rapid Support Forces*, 28 September 2023. Confidential source, 24 April 2024. Confidential source, 26 April 2024.

¹²⁰ ICG, *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, 4 and 5. Confidential source, 1 August 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

¹²¹ IDEA, *War in Sudan*, August 2023, p. 21. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

¹²² IDEA, *War in Sudan*, August 2023, p. 25.

¹²³ The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), *Libyan militia and Egypt's military back opposite sides in Sudan conflict*, 19 April 2023. WSJ, *Stakes in Sudan's war include Russian gold, Nile dam, key shipping lane*, 21 April 2023.

¹²⁴ The drones in question were Bayraktar TB2-type drones. WSJ, *Ignoring U.S. calls for peace, Egypt delivered drones to Sudan's military*, 14 October 2023.

¹²⁵ The drones in question were Iranian-made Mohajer-6 type drones.

¹²⁶ Iran International, *Sudan seeks Iranian drones amid growing regional tensions*, 3 December 2023. The Africa Report, *Iran's rising influence and Sudan's drone gambit*, 23 January 2024. Bloomberg, *Iranian drones become latest proxy tool in Sudan's civil war*, 24 January 2024. Die Welt, *Baerbock's delicate mission on the Red Sea, Foreign Minister wants to mediate in the East African crisis region, Delay at the start*, 25 January 2024. SWM, *Iranian cargo flights arrive in Sudan*, 30 January 2024. The Washington Institute (TWI), *Iran in Sudan, Fears of a Sudanese Popular Mobilization Forces*, 31 January 2024.

¹²⁷ The Guardian, *Sudan armed forces advance in Omdurman for first time since start of war*, 17 February 2024. Trouw, *Soedanese leger heeft weer macht over radio en tv*, 14 March 2024.

¹²⁸ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), *Stopping the war in Sudan*, 28 May 2023, p. 3. ICG, *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, pp. 5 and 13. Confidential source, 1 August 2023. UNSC, *Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan*, 31 August 2023, p. 7. REDRESS and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), *Ruining a country, devastating a people, Accountability for serious human rights violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Sudan since 15 April 2023*, September 2023, p. 18. Al Jazeera, *Sudan's armed forces fails to protect civilians during air raids: activists*, 13 September 2023. Chatham House, *How Sudan's forgotten war is being fought*, 29 September 2023. NOS, *Sudanese hoofdstad twee dagen gebombardeerd, 25 burgerdoden gemeld*, 3 September 2023. Darfur Network for Human Rights (DNHR), *In Nyala, South Darfur, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have renewed their aerial bombardment of innocent civilians*, 30 December 2023.

As calculated by the Qatari news channel *Al Jazeera*, at least 123 people died in Khartoum between 1 and 13 September 2023 as a result of aerial bombings. In Darfur as well, the SAF deployed air power against the civilian population. For example, on 3 September 2023, fourteen people were killed by airstrikes in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur.¹²⁹

One source nuanced the perception that the SAF relied mainly on aerial weapons. For example, the source noted that the paramilitaries of the El Bara Bin Malik Brigade mentioned above had purportedly emerged as fierce urban guerrillas who did not shy away from ground battles.¹³⁰

2.1.3 *The RSF and allied militias*

Profile

The RSF had emerged from the Janjaweed, an Arab militia notorious for its violent crackdown on African population groups in Darfur in the early 21st century (see 1.2). Hemedti commanded the RSF. His brother, Abdel Rahim Dagalo, was the deputy commander of the RSF. Most RSF leaders and fighters were of Arab origin and from Darfur, a region in western Sudan. The RSF opposed the Arab elite from the Nile Valley in northern Sudan and claimed to stand up for the marginalised Sudanese from the peripheral parts of the country.¹³¹

Although the RSF had supported Burhan's seizure of power in October 2021 (see 1.2), they now claimed to want to protect the democratic ideals of the 2018-2019 revolution. According to the RSF, the SAF allegedly had an Islamist agenda similar to that of the former government of President Bashir.¹³²

Irregular militias of Arab origin fought alongside the RSF.¹³³ These auxiliaries were popularly referred to as 'Janjaweed' in the Sudanese vernacular.¹³⁴ Foreign fighters from neighbouring countries (e.g. Chad and Niger) also joined the RSF.¹³⁵ According to Perthes, the UN special envoy to Sudan, the number of foreign fighters serving with the RSF was 'not small'.¹³⁶ The Arab militia and foreign fighters were apparently driven primarily by self-gain and engaged in looting, arson and sexual violence. The extent to which the RSF had an actual command structure and central control is therefore unclear.¹³⁷

¹²⁹ *Al Jazeera*, *Sudan's armed forces fails to protect civilians during air raids*, 13 September 2023.

¹³⁰ Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

¹³¹ Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, p. 66. NRC, *Nooit eerder drongen Soedanese herdersjongens het machtscentrum binnen*, 16 May 2023. SWM, *Who's who in Sudan's new civil war?*, 31 August 2023. Confidential source, 20 October 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. SWM, *Q&A about Sudan's conflict for the uninformed*, 21 December 2023.

¹³² RD, *Hemedti manoeuvres to brand war against Sudan army as fight against former regime Islamists*, 17 April 2023. *De Volkskrant*, *Oud-kamelenhandelaar 'Hemeti' knapte vuil werk op voor het Soedanese leger waar hij nu tegen vecht*, 28 April 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. SWM, *Q&A about Sudan's conflict for the uninformed*, 21 December 2023. Confidential source, 8 March 2024.

¹³³ BBC, *Sudan conflict, Ethnic cleansing committed in Darfur, UK says*, 18 October 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

¹³⁴ Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 December 2023. Confidential source, 18 December 2023.

¹³⁵ Deutsche Welle (DW), *UN warns of deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sudan*, 5 May 2023. *Le Monde*, *Le Soudan, eldorado des mercenaires étrangers*, 15 May 2023. SWP, *Stopping the war in Sudan*, 28 May 2023, p. 3. SWM, *Battle for Khartoum continues to draw fighters from across the Sahel*, 4 October 2024. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, p. 43.

¹³⁶ DW, *UN warns of deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sudan*, 5 May 2023.

¹³⁷ *De Volkskrant*, *'De situatie in het vluchtelingenkamp vlakbij de grens met Soedan is schrijnend en hartverscheurend'*, 19 September 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. GIGA, *The war in Sudan*, February 2024, p. 10. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

Battle tactics

The RSF and their allies deploy conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), especially against women and girls, as a weapon of war in Khartoum and Darfur.¹³⁸ In Sudanese society, women are regarded as the 'bearers' of culture. If a woman is raped, not only is her honour violated, but also that of her community. This brings the social structures of the relevant community under pressure.¹³⁹ Although SAF soldiers also committed sexual violence, in the case of the RSF, sexual violence seemed more widespread and emphatic,¹⁴⁰ as explained further in Section 7.3.

In Darfur, rape also took on a racial dimension. The perpetrators were said to have raped women and girls from African population groups so that they would have 'Arab babies'.¹⁴¹ Refer to 7.3 for additional information on the phenomenon of conflict-related sexual violence.

Like the SAF, the RSF strafed neighbourhoods where civilians lived. They fought with heavy weaponry¹⁴² near houses.¹⁴³ In this regard, one source pointed out that the RSF had fired anti-aircraft missiles at SAF fighter jets in densely populated areas. In the process, the missiles fired sometimes came down on civilian populations, the source said.¹⁴⁴ The source did not specify the densely populated areas in which this took place and how many civilian casualties it caused.

International allies

The RSF and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) maintained close ties and had a shared past. For example, RSF fighters served under the Emirati flag during the armed conflict in Yemen. The RSF controlled most of Sudan's gold mines and, according to multiple sources, the UAE regarded Hemedti as their access to the African country's gold reserves. The UAE also acted against Sudanese authorities in Port Sudan, who were seen as a pawn of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, this Gulf state wanted to secure its interests in the Sudanese economy and agricultural sector. The arms supplied by the UAE to the RSF were reportedly transported to Darfur through the Amdjarass¹⁴⁶ international airport in eastern Chad.¹⁴⁷ Emirati

¹³⁸ Confidential source, 1 August 2023. Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), *Silent weapons, loudest wounds, Addressing the crisis of sexual violence in Sudan*, October 2023, pp. 3 and 4. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. CMI, *Sexual violence in Sudan, From denial to recognition*, February 2024, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

¹⁴⁰ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. CMI, *Sexual violence in Sudan*, February 2024, pp. 2-4.

¹⁴¹ HRW, *Darfur, Rapid Support Forces, allied militias rape dozens*, 17 August 2023. The Economist, *Genocide returns to Darfur*, 5 October 2023. SWM, *Minority women 'abducted and held in degrading, slave-like conditions'*, 3 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, p. 20. Confidential source, 26 January 2024. RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, p. 27.

¹⁴² This includes mortars and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs).

¹⁴³ REDRESS and SOAS, *Ruining a country, Devastating its people*, September 2023, p. 17. HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, pp. 101 and 102.

¹⁴⁴ Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

¹⁴⁵ Hassan al-Banna founded the MB in Egypt in 1928. This group aspires to an Islamic state based on Sharia law. The MB was widely followed outside Egypt, including in Sudan. According to the group's doctrine, the use of violence is permissible to achieve its political goals. The MB is known in Arabic as *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimūn*.

¹⁴⁶ Also spelt 'Am Jars'.

¹⁴⁷ Foreign Policy (FP), *How Sudan became a Saudi-UAE proxy war*, 12 July 2023. WSJ, *U.A.E. arms shipments are fueling a war that has killed more than 3,900 people and run counter to Biden administration efforts to end the conflict*, 10 August 2023. FP, *U.S. Sudan sanctions won't work without the UAE's help*, 21 September 2023. The New York Times, *U.A.E. talks peace in Sudan war, but secretly backs one side*, 29 September 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 10 January 2024. UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 14 and 15. MEE, *How the UAE kept the Sudan war raging*, 25 January 2024. GIGA, *The war in Sudan*, February 2024, pp. 4 and 9. Le Monde, *Emirats arabes unis Cap sur la Corne de l'Afrique*, 13 April 2024. Het Financieel Dagblad (FD), *Vergeten oorlog in Soedan is 'draaikolk van transnationale conflicten'*, 15 April 2024. The Guardian, *It's an open secret, The UAE is fuelling Sudan's war*, 24 May 2024.

authorities denied having given military support to any conflict party in Sudan.¹⁴⁸ A group of UN experts deemed the UAE's alleged arms support to the RSF 'credible'.¹⁴⁹

The UAE's alleged military support to the RSF led to diplomatic tensions between the Gulf state and the TSC under Burhan. On 28 November 2023, Lieutenant General Yasir El Atta, deputy commander of the SAF, called the UAE a 'mafia state'.¹⁵⁰ On 10 December 2023, Sudan's foreign ministry declared fifteen Emirati diplomats persona non grata (PNG). They were required to leave Sudan within 48 hours.¹⁵¹ In late March 2024, Sudan's permanent representation to the UN wrote a letter to the UN Security Council (UNSC). In this letter, Sudan accused the UAE of providing military support to the RSF. In the same document, Sudan called on the UNSC to condemn Emirati arms support to the RSF.¹⁵²

Bilateral tensions also emerged between Chad and the TSC. In the view of the TSC, Chad's authorities allowed the UAE to transport arms and ammunition supplies to the RSF through Chad. Chad's government denied the allegation and summoned the Sudanese ambassador. Chad demanded an apology from Sudan within three days; otherwise, it would take unspecified 'measures'. Sudan's foreign minister, Ali al-Sadiq, nevertheless refused to apologise.¹⁵³ On 17 December 2023, Sudan's foreign ministry declared three diplomats from Chad as PNG. They were required to leave Sudan within 72 hours. On the same date, Jibril Ibrahim, Sudan's finance minister and leader of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), called on his country to sever diplomatic relations with Chad.¹⁵⁴

The RSF also maintained ties with the Libyan National Army (LNA) of the Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar. This militant force received support from Russia and controlled eastern Libya.¹⁵⁵ The LNA's control area in eastern Libya bordered that of the RSF in Sudan. From this part of Libya, the RSF received arms, ammunition, fuel and vehicles.¹⁵⁶

Furthermore, the RSF received arms support from the Wagner Group, a Russian mercenary army.¹⁵⁷ In return, the RSF smuggled gold to Russia.¹⁵⁸ The cooperation between the RSF and the Wagner Group seemed to elicit another backlash from Ukraine. This country was at war with Russia and purportedly sought to thwart

¹⁴⁸ Al Arabiya, *UAE denies allegations of supplying arms to rivaling forces in Sudan*, published on 13 August 2023, updated on 14 August 2023. The New York Times, *U.A.E. talks peace in Sudan war, but secretly backs one side*, 29 September 2023. The Economist, *The forgotten war*, 16 November 2023. MEE, *Sudan orders expulsion of 15 Emirati diplomats*, 11 December 2023. Financial Times (FT), *UAE denies sending weapons to paramilitary group in Sudan war*, 24 January 2024. UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 15, 51 and 52. GIGA, *The war in Sudan*, February 2024, p. 9. Le Monde, *Emirats arabes unis Cap sur la Corne de l'Afrique*, 13 April 2024.

¹⁴⁹ UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, p. 15.

¹⁵⁰ RD, *Sudan general accuses 'mafia state' Emirates of supplying RSF*, 29 November 2023.

¹⁵¹ ST, *Sudan orders expulsion of 15 Emirati diplomats in retaliation for UAE's move*, 10 December 2023. MEE, *Sudan orders expulsion of 15 Emirati diplomats*, 11 December 2023.

¹⁵² ST, *Sudan demands UN condemnation of UAE support for RSF*, 29 March 2024.

¹⁵³ ST, *Sudan's foreign minister rejects Chad's demand for apology*, 11 December 2023.

¹⁵⁴ ST, *Sudan's minister of finance calls for severing diplomatic ties with Chad*, 17 December 2023.

¹⁵⁵ The LNA is in conflict with the Government of National Unity (GNU) of Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Ddbeibah (also spelt 'Abdulhamid Al-Dabaiba'). The GNU controls the western part of Libya, and it is recognised by the international community and supported by Türkiye. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, February 2023, pp. 7, 16, 17, 18 and 22.

¹⁵⁶ Confidential source, 1 December 2023. UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2023, p. 16. GIGA, *The war in Sudan*, February 2024, p. 9. SWM, *Al-Burhan seeks Libyan help in Sudan war*, 26 February 2024.

¹⁵⁷ During the reporting period, the Wagner Group underwent a name change, and the mercenary army came to be known as the Africa Corps. The Wagner Group falls under the Russian defence ministry. The Conversation, *Wagner Group is now Africa Corps, What this means for Russia's operations on the continent*, 14 February 2024. NOS, *Russisch Africa Corps, de voormalige Wagner-groep, timmert aan de weg in West-Afrika*, 13 April 2024.

¹⁵⁸ ST, *Russia's bloody hands in Sudan*, 7 May 2023. SWM, *Ukraine's Sudan gambit*, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. STPT, *Conflict dynamics in South Darfur*, 18 December 2023, pp. 5 and 12. GIGA, *The war in Sudan*, February 2024, pp. 4 and 9. WSJ, *Ukraine is now fighting Russia in Sudan*, 6 March 2024. RTL Nieuws, *Waarom vecht Oekraïne ook in Soedan? 'Russen zijn daar flink actief'*, 12 March 2024.

Russian interests in Sudan. During the reporting period, reports appeared (difficult to verify) that Ukrainian commandos were fighting Russian mercenaries and RSF fighters in the Khartoum metropolitan area.¹⁵⁹ For its part, it was unknown what policy the Ukrainian government was pursuing regarding the war in Sudan.

2.1.4 *Rebel groups in Darfur*

Darfur had several rebel groups that claimed to stand up for the interests of the African population groups there, including the secular Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Islamist JEM. In 2004, the SLA had broken up into two factions: that of Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) and that of Abdel Wahid (SLA/AW). In 2020, the SLA/MM and the JEM concluded the Juba Peace Agreement with the Sudanese transitional government (see Section 1.2). Due to the war between the SAF and RSF, this peace agreement could not be further implemented.¹⁶⁰

The battle between the SAF and RSF ignited in Khartoum on 15 April 2023 (see Section 1.3). The violence then quickly spread to Darfur. Initially, the rebel groups mentioned above adopted a neutral stance.¹⁶¹

During the reporting period, the RSF undertook a lightning march through Darfur (see 2.2.4). As the RSF advanced towards North Darfur, the SLA/MM and the JEM renounced their neutrality at a press conference in Port Sudan on 16 November 2023. They claimed to want to save Darfur's civilian population from further suffering and took the side of the SAF. The SLA/MM and the JEM were based in North Darfur, with its capital in El Fasher.¹⁶² This state was the home territory of the Zaghawa, an African population group. The two rebel groups purportedly felt threatened by the RSF's advance and feared that the Zaghawa would also become victims of ethnically motivated violence. The constituency of the SLA/MM and the JEM consisted predominantly of Zaghawa.¹⁶³

During the reporting period, the SLA/AW attempted to maintain their neutrality. The SLA/AW continued to reside in the Jebel Mara mountains in central Darfur, the home territory of the Fur. The constituency of the SLA/AW consisted predominantly of Fur.¹⁶⁴

In late November 2023, a contingent from the SLA/AW visited El Fasher, where it met with delegates from the SAF, the SLA/MM and the JEM. This created the impression that the SLA/AW had sided with the SAF and the signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement. A spokesman for the SLA/AW nevertheless stressed that his group remained neutral and that the visit to El Fasher was a 'private matter'.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Kyiv Post (KP), *Videos show Ukrainian Special Forces 'cleaning up' Wagner fighters in Sudan*, 6 November 2023. SWM, *Ukraine's Sudan gambit*, 10 November 2023. WSJ, *Ukraine is now fighting Russia in Sudan*, 6 March 2024. RTL Nieuws, *Waarom vecht Oekraïne ook in Soedan?*, 12 March 2024.

¹⁶⁰ Confidential source, 26 February 2024. HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, p. 20.

¹⁶¹ ST, *Three Darfur groups uphold neutrality in Sudan conflict*, 17 November 2023.

¹⁶² Also spelt 'Al-Fashir'.

¹⁶³ ST, *Key Darfur groups join Sudanese army in its war against RSF paramilitary forces*, 16 November 2023. SWM, *Darfur movements: 'We renounce our neutrality'*, 16 November 2023. BBC, *Sudan civil war, Darfur's JEM rebels join army fight against RSF*, 17 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ SWM, *Where does SLM-AW stand in Sudan's new war?*, 29 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 24 January 2024.

¹⁶⁵ ST, *Darfur holdout groups arrive in El-Fasher to protect civilians from RSF attacks*, 24 November 2023. ST, *SLM-AW Abdel Wahid refutes claims of aligning Sudanese army to defend El-Fasher*, 26 November 2023. SWM, *Where does SLM-AW stand in Sudan's new war?*, 29 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

2.1.5 SPLM-N

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) had traditionally aspired to a Sudanese state on a secular, democratic and inclusive¹⁶⁶ basis. This rebel movement was active in two southern states: South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The aforementioned two states are collectively referred to as the 'Two Areas'.

In 2017, the group split into two factions: that of Al Hilu (SPLM-N/Al Hilu) and that of Agar (SPLM-N/Agar). The SPLM-N/Al Hilu and Sudanese authorities failed to reach a peace agreement. The SPLM-N/Al Hilu thus remained active in the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan, where this faction sought self-governance for the Nuba, a collection of African population groups. The SPLM-N/Agar was based in Blue Nile state and signed the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement (see Section 1.2).¹⁶⁷

In response to the clash between the SAF and the RSF, Burhan decided on 19 May 2023 to sack Hemedti as vice-president of the TSC, with immediate effect. Agar, who had joined this council after the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement, became the new vice-president.¹⁶⁸

2.2 Conflict and control areas

2.2.1 Introduction

At the time of writing, battles were raging in Sudan. The balance of power on the battlefield had not yet crystallised. Especially at the local level, the security situation remained fluid in nature, and the front line could shift at any time. Nevertheless, the following general image emerged.

The SAF controlled mostly the north and east of the country, with headquarters in Port Sudan, a port city on the Red Sea. In turn, the RSF controlled large parts of Khartoum and Darfur. The SLM/MM and the JEM were located in North Darfur, with El Fasher as the centre, while the SLM/AW maintained a base in the Jebel Marra mountains in Central Darfur. The SPLM-N/Al Hilu managed to expand its control area in South Kordofan.¹⁶⁹ An overview map of the areas controlled by the aforementioned parties is provided in Section 12.1.

On 13 May 2024, the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), a British human rights organisation,¹⁷⁰ reported that 201 villages and towns had been partially or completely burnt down since the outbreak of war in April 2023. April 2024 saw the highest incidence of arson: 72 villages and settlements were partially or completely

¹⁶⁶ Within this context, 'inclusion' refers to cooperation between different ethnic population groups.

¹⁶⁷ Berridge, Lynch, Makawi and De Waal, *Sudan's unfinished democracy*, p. 116. The Jamestown Foundation, *The third front, Sudan's armed rebel movements join the war between the generals*, 8 August 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. STPT and the SCR, *Blue Nile*, 24 March 2024, pp. 5 and 6.

¹⁶⁸ The East African, *Al-Burhan fires his deputy Daglo, a month after Sudan war*, 20 May 2023. RD, *El Burhan sacks Hemedti as Sudan TSC V-P, appoints Malik Agar*, 21 May 2023. The Jamestown Foundation, *The third front*, 8 August 2023. GIGA, *The war in Sudan*, February 2024, p. 4.

¹⁶⁹ ICG, *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, p. 6. UNSC, *Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan*, 31 August 2023, p. 1. Chatham House, *How Sudan's forgotten war is being fought*, 29 September 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. SWM, *Map of the areas of control in Sudan*, 2 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. SWM, *Q&A about Sudan's conflict for the uninformed*, 21 December 2023. Small Arms Survey, *Nuba hopes and fears, fuelling SPLA-North mobilization in South Kordofan*, March 2024, pp. 1, 3 and 4. SWM, *Map of the areas of control in Khartoum*, 5 April 2024. Confidential source, 10 April 2024. Small Arms Survey, *Port Sudan, The political economy of a potential administrative capital*, April 2024, 1 and 2.

¹⁷⁰ The CIR investigates human rights violations and war crimes in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ukraine and Sudan. Consult <https://www.info-res.org> for additional information on the CIR.

destroyed.¹⁷¹ Most of the affected villages were in Darfur and Kordofan.¹⁷² The CIR relied on social and other media reports, satellite images and data from the US space agency NASA¹⁷³ regarding temperature fluctuations. The villages had been torched by RSF fighters or had caught fire as a result of bombing by the Sudanese air force. The CIR concluded that the warring parties were using the fires as a weapon of war, leading to widespread displacement.¹⁷⁴ Refer to Sections 6.2 and 6.3 for information on the issue of displacement in Sudan.

The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)¹⁷⁵ counted more than 16,650 fatalities between 15 April 2023 and 10 May 2024 as a result of the war in Sudan.¹⁷⁶ The ACLED did not break down the death toll into civilian casualties and combatants killed. The number was a conservative estimate, as not all fatalities had been recorded. In addition, the estimate included only those victims who had died as a direct result of violence. The war has also been responsible for the development of diseases and malnutrition in Sudan. Fatalities due to these conditions are also not included in this estimate.¹⁷⁷ Refer to Chapter 6 for information on the consequences of the war for living conditions in the country.

The following section (2.2.2) elaborates on the ACLED conflict data and methodology.

2.2.2 Overview of conflict data

Conflict data were exported from the ACLED database on 10 May 2024 for the purpose of this Country of Origin Information Report.¹⁷⁸ To this end, three types of violence were selected over the period from 15 April 2023 to 30 April 2024. The data concern the following three types of violence:

1. Battles;¹⁷⁹
2. Explosions/remote violence;¹⁸⁰
3. Violence against civilians.¹⁸¹

The ACLED recorded 5,941 acts of violence across Sudan in the period from 15 April 2023 to 30 April 2024, killing 16,518 people. It did not break down the death toll into civilian casualties and combatants killed. The violence was divided into 3,060 battles, 1,627 cases of explosions/remote violence and 1,254 incidents of violence against civilians. The ACLED recorded that 11,746 people were killed in fighting, 2,198 as a result of explosions/remote violence and 2,574 in violence against civilians.¹⁸²

¹⁷¹ CIR, *More than 200 villages and towns damaged or destroyed by fire since the start of the war in Sudan, with April the worst month on record*, 13 May 2024.

¹⁷² The Kordofan region consists of three states: North Kordofan, South Kordofan and West Kordofan. The entire region is also known as Greater Kordofan.

¹⁷³ 'NASA' stands for National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

¹⁷⁴ CIR, *More than 100 villages devastated by fires since start of Sudan conflict last April*, 28 March 2024.

¹⁷⁵ ACLED is an NGO dedicated to collecting, analysing and mapping conflict data. Visit <https://acleddata.com> for additional information on ACLED.

¹⁷⁶ ACLED, *The RSF sets its eyes on North Darfur*, 17 May 2024, p. 1.

¹⁷⁷ SWM, *Q&A about Sudan's conflict for the uninformed*, 21 December 2023.

¹⁷⁸ This was done using an application named the Data Export Tool.

¹⁷⁹ The category 'Battles' refers to armed encounters between two warring parties. ACLED, *ACLED introduces new event types and sub-event types*, 14 March 2019.

¹⁸⁰ The category 'Explosions/remote violence' refers to the use of force against which the target cannot respond. This could include the use of artillery and grenade shelling, missile and drone attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). ACLED, *Explosions/remote violence in war*, 22 March 2019.

¹⁸¹ The category 'Violence against civilians' refers to the deliberate use of force by an armed group against unarmed civilians. ACLED, *ACLED introduces new event types and sub-event types*, 14 March 2019.

¹⁸² ACLED, *Generated by the Data Export Tool*, accessed on 10 May 2024.

The ACLED conflict data provide an incomplete image of the numbers of violent incidents and fatalities. The organisation states that it relies on the most conservative estimates and bases its figures primarily on public, secondary reporting. If the death toll in a reported incident of violence is unknown, the ACLED records no fatalities. Reports referring to 'dozens' or 'hundreds' of deaths are translated into records of ten and one hundred deaths, respectively. The ACLED database does not include information on the number of victims of non-fatal violence (e.g. injured individuals and survivors of rape). This can create a distorted image of the level of violence in a particular area.¹⁸³

The under-reporting of the ACLED data is also evidenced by the fact that this NGO recorded the deaths of 16,518 people across Sudan in the period from 15 April 2023 to 30 April 2024, while a group of UN experts calculated that 10,000 to 15,000 deaths had occurred in El Geneina (the capital of West Darfur) alone in the periods from 24 April to 19 June 2023 and early November 2023 (see 2.3). The ACLED conflict data thus provide at best an indication of developments in patterns of violence.

An overview of the numbers of violent incidents and fatalities recorded by ACLED by state is provided in the table below. These data were also exported from the ACLED database on 10 May 2024. The states are arranged in alphabetical order. The disclaimer provided above should be taken very seriously when considering the information presented below.

Overview of numbers of violent incidents and conservative estimates of fatalities by state (15 April 2023 – 30 April 2024)¹⁸⁴

Abyei		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
Battles		25	77
Explosions and remote violence		0	0
Violence against civilians		36	126
Total		61	203
Blue Nile		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
Battles		10	34
Explosions and remote violence		0	0
Violence against civilians		5	14
Total		15	48
Central Darfur		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
Battles		76	356
Explosions and remote violence		14	38
Violence against civilians		53	43
Total		143	437
East Darfur		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
Battles		15	36
Explosions and remote violence		5	9
Violence against civilians		11	26
Total		31	71

¹⁸³ ACLED, *Fatalities, Uses and limitations of ACLED data*, published on 27 February 2023, last updated on 7 May 2024.

¹⁸⁴ ACLED, *Generated by the Data Export Tool*, accessed on 10 May 2024.

El Gezira		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	91	202
	Explosions and remote violence	112	145
	Violence against civilians	317	577
	Total	520	924
Gedaref		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	13	28
	Explosions and remote violence	2	0
	Violence against civilians	8	2
	Total	23	30
Kassala		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	5	0
	Explosions and remote violence	0	0
	Violence against civilians	2	1
	Total	7	1
Khartoum		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	2,032	5,210
	Explosions and remote violence	1,312	1,672
	Violence against civilians	387	239
	Total	3,731	7,121
North Darfur		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	175	707
	Explosions and remote violence	39	56
	Violence against civilians	97	112
	Total	311	875
Northern		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	13	45
	Explosions and remote violence	2	0
	Violence against civilians	1	0
	Total	16	45
North Kordofan		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	123	806
	Explosions and remote violence	37	51
	Violence against civilians	71	213
	Total	231	1,070
Red Sea		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	5	1
	Explosions and remote violence	0	0
	Violence against civilians	5	0
	Total	10	1
River Nile		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	7	19
	Explosions and remote violence	6	31
	Violence against civilians	8	0
	Total	21	50

Sennar		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	20	68
	Explosions and remote violence	12	4
	Violence against civilians	13	57
	Total	45	129
South Darfur		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	176	1,465
	Explosions and remote violence	23	96
	Violence against civilians	70	77
	Total	269	1,638
South Kordofan		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	123	682
	Explosions and remote violence	29	42
	Violence against civilians	48	142
	Total	200	866
West Darfur		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	58	1,541
	Explosions and remote violence	2	0
	Violence against civilians	89	887
	Total	149	2,428
West Kordofan		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	78	427
	Explosions and remote violence	21	42
	Violence against civilians	22	50
	Total	121	519
White Nile		<i>Incidents</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
	Battles	15	42
	Explosions and remote violence	11	12
	Violence against civilians	11	8
	Total	37	62

The following sections detail the security situation for each conflict or control area, considering the conflict parties present, the nature and extent of violence and the numbers of victims in each area. If the description of illustrative incidents does not mention specific numbers of victims, it means that this information was not available at the time of writing.

2.2.3 Khartoum

Khartoum is the capital of Sudan and is located at the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile rivers. These two rivers and the main course of the Nile cut the city into three parts: Khartoum proper, Bahri (also known as North Khartoum) and Omdurman (also known as the 'twin city of Khartoum'). In this Country of Origin Information Report, 'Khartoum' refers to the entire city unless otherwise stated.¹⁸⁵ An overview map of Khartoum is provided in Section 12.3.

¹⁸⁵ The entire urban region is also known as Greater Khartoum.

In April 2023, war broke out in Khartoum between the SAF and the RSF. In late October 2023, one source estimated that about eighty percent of the city was controlled by the RSF.¹⁸⁶ In early December 2023, another source observed that some parts of the city were still under the control of the SAF.¹⁸⁷ In February 2024, the SAF made ground gains in Omdurman and had broken the siege of an SAF base in southern Omdurman.¹⁸⁸ On 12 March 2024, the SAF recorded another victory in Omdurman. This time, they captured the main national television and radio station in this city.¹⁸⁹ According to the *Sudan War Monitor* (SWM),¹⁹⁰ the RSF purportedly still controlled some parts of southern and western Omdurman after this setback.¹⁹¹ An overview map of the areas controlled by the SAF and the RSF in Khartoum is provided in Section 12.2.

During the reporting period, Khartoum was the scene of fierce fighting. Between 15 April 2023 and 5 April 2024, the ACLED recorded more than 3,660 political violence incidents¹⁹² and more than 7,050 deaths in Khartoum.¹⁹³ It did not break down the death toll into civilian casualties and combatants killed. During the reporting period, Khartoum suffered from air and drone attacks and artillery shelling, which led to the destruction of entire residential neighbourhoods, hospitals, schools and water treatment plants.¹⁹⁴ As a result of the violence, the city functioned poorly, if at all. Thousands of buildings, bridges and roads had been destroyed, and factories and businesses lay in ruins. Hospitals and schools were closed, and hardly any services and humanitarian aid were available. Safe drinking water, food and electricity were scarce.¹⁹⁵

It was clear from the news reports that both the RSF¹⁹⁶ and the SAF had looted the homes of civilians. On 13 December 2023, The Guardian reported that SAF soldiers had looted the homes of the Rizeigat in Ombada,¹⁹⁷ a neighbourhood in Omdurman.¹⁹⁸ The Rizeigat were an Arab population group from Darfur. Hemedti was part of this community. The Rizeigat were thus considered enemies by the SAF.¹⁹⁹ The same British newspaper reported on 17 February 2024 that SAF soldiers had looted the homes of the Gouran²⁰⁰ in the north and west of Omdurman.²⁰¹ The Gouran originally roamed Sudan and Chad as nomads. Given this profile, the SAF also associated this community with the RSF.²⁰²

¹⁸⁶ Confidential source, 27 October 2023.

¹⁸⁷ Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

¹⁸⁸ SWM, *Sudan army close to breaking Omdurman siege*, 4 February 2024. ACLED, *The SAF breaks the siege*, 16 February 2024, pp. 2-5. The Guardian, *Sudan armed forces advance in Omdurman for first time since start of war*, 17 February 2024. SWM, *Sudan army breaks Omdurman siege*, 19 February 2024. CIR, *SAF advance into RSF territory in Khartoum*, 29 February 2024.

¹⁸⁹ Al Jazeera, *Sudan army regains control of national TV and radio headquarters from RSF*, 12 March 2024. BBC, *Sudan conflict, Army retakes state broadcaster's headquarters from RSF*, 12 March 2024. ST, *Sudanese army captures radio, TV headquarters after fierce battles*, 12 March 2024. SWM, *Sudan paramilitary suffers crushing defeat in Omdurman, Collapse of RSF resistance in eastern part of Sudan's largest city*, 12 March 2024. Trouw, *Soedanese leger heeft weer macht over radio en tv*, 14 March 2024.

¹⁹⁰ The SWM is a collective of data researchers and Sudanese (and other) journalists trying to map the conflict situation in Sudan. Visit <https://sudanwarmonitor.com> for additional information on the SWM.

¹⁹¹ SWM, *Sudan paramilitary suffers crushing defeat in Omdurman*, 12 March 2024.

¹⁹² These figures thus concern politically motivated violence.

¹⁹³ ACLED, *One year of war in Sudan*, 14 April 2024, p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ ACLED, *Ethnic strife amid escalating power struggles*, 6 October 2023, pp. 2-5. NOS, *Overleven in belegerd Khartoem*, 12 November 2023. Al Jazeera, *The use of explosive weapons in cities must stop*, 16 December 2023.

¹⁹⁵ ICG, *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, pp. 2 and 5. NOS, *Overleven in belegerd Khartoem: 'We zitten klem tussen strijdende groepen'*, 12 November 2023.

¹⁹⁶ Confidential source, 1 August 2023. ICG, *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, pp. 2 and 5. Al Jazeera, *'Like a horror movie', The men defending their homes in Sudan's bloody war*, 11 November 2023. The Guardian, *Soldiers accused of widespread looting from homes near Sudanese capital*, 13 December 2023.

¹⁹⁷ Also spelt 'Umbeddah'.

¹⁹⁸ The Guardian, *Soldiers accused of widespread looting from homes near Sudanese capital*, 13 December 2023.

¹⁹⁹ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023.

The Guardian, *Soldiers accused of widespread looting from homes near Sudanese capital*, 13 December 2023.

²⁰⁰ Also spelt 'Gorane'.

²⁰¹ The Guardian, *Sudan armed forces advance in Omdurman for first time since start of war*, 17 February 2024.

²⁰² Confidential source, 28 February 2024.

The freedom of movement of civilians in Khartoum was restricted by the presence of checkpoints of both warring parties.²⁰³ Additional information on this point is provided in Section 4.9.

2.2.4 Darfur

Introduction

Located in western Sudan, Darfur is about the size of Spain.²⁰⁴ This region consists of five states: North Darfur, East Darfur, South Darfur, Central Darfur and West Darfur (an overview map of Darfur is provided in Section 12.4). Darfur is home to population groups that identify or are referred to as 'Arab' or 'African' (see Section 1.1).

Darfur has a violent past and present. The conflict that started at the beginning of the 21st century (see 1.2) has never completely ended. The violence continued, and many perpetrators of the time had never been punished and committed violence again during the reporting period. The power struggle between the SAF and RSF has intensified the conflict in Darfur.²⁰⁵ Two sources indicated that the current conflict has been more disruptive to the functioning of the state than the conflict in 2003 was, as the violence from twenty years ago took place mostly in rural areas, and not in the cities. This time, there has been fighting in both rural and urban areas, leading to the complete collapse of state institutions, according to both sources.²⁰⁶

During the reporting period, the RSF rapidly brought much of Darfur under their control. In the process, they managed to capture four of the five state capitals in Darfur.²⁰⁷ On 26 October 2023, the RSF took Nyala, the capital of South Darfur.²⁰⁸ Zalingei, the capital of Central Darfur, followed on 31 October 2023.²⁰⁹ On 4 November 2023, it was time for an army base near El Geneina,²¹⁰ the capital of West Darfur.²¹¹ El Daein, the capital of East Darfur, fell to the RSF on 21 November 2023.²¹² According to a group of UN experts, Abdel Rahim Dagalo, Hemedti's brother, led the advance of the RSF into Darfur.²¹³ Human Rights Watch (HRW) identified General Abdel Rahman Joma'a Barakallah as commander of the RSF in West Darfur.²¹⁴

El Fasher, North Darfur

At the time of writing, El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur,²¹⁵ was the only state capital in Darfur that was not yet fully in the hands of the RSF. Various conflict parties controlled parts of El Fasher and its surroundings.²¹⁶ The SAF and Darfurian

²⁰³ ICG, *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023, pp. 2 and 10. NOS, *Overleven in belegerd Khartoem*, 12 November 2023.

²⁰⁴ Frontline Club, *Darfur, Not the size of France or Texas*, undated, accessed on 20 December 2023.

²⁰⁵ NOS, *Littekens van etnisch geweld in Darfur opengereten: 'Ze komen de genocide afmaken'*, 16 September 2023. The Economist, *Genocide returns to Darfur*, 5 October 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 24 January 2024. RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, pp. 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 30, 39, 40 and 42. HRW, *The Massalit will not come home*, May 2024, p. 6.

²⁰⁶ Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

²⁰⁷ Al Jazeera, *Fears of all-out ethnic war rise in Sudan's Darfur*, 22 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. RD, *SAF/RSF fighting breaks out in North Darfur capital and Abu Shouk camp*, 17 December 2023. UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 2 and 5.

²⁰⁸ BBC, *Sudan conflict, RSF takes control of Nyala in Darfur*, 26 October 2023. ST, *RSF take control of South Darfur's Nyala, vow to protect civilians*, 26 October 2023. SWM, *Fall of the 16th Division headquarters in Nyala*, 26 October 2023. Confidential source, 31 October 2023. Trouw, *Tweede stad van Soedan valt, meer dan zes miljoen mensen op drift*, 1 November 2023.

²⁰⁹ ST, *Rapid Support Forces seize Sudanese army base in Central Darfur*, 31 October 2023.

²¹⁰ Also spelt 'Al-Junaynah'. In Arabic, El Geneina means 'the little garden'.

²¹¹ ST, *RSF seize Sudanese army headquarters in El-Geneina*, 4 November 2023.

²¹² ST, *RSF seize control of Sudanese army base in East Darfur*, 21 November 2023.

²¹³ UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 2 and 6.

²¹⁴ HRW, *The Massalit will not come home*, May 2024, pp. 168 and 174-176.

²¹⁵ El Fasher was the capital of the pre-colonial kingdom of Darfur.

²¹⁶ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. The Economist, *Ever deeper into hell*, 18 April 2024. FT, *'Death has become normal', War closes in on Darfur's besieged capital*, 29 April 2024.

rebel groups controlled the west and south of El Fasher, while the RSF controlled the north and east of the city.²¹⁷

During the reporting period, fighting took place in El Fasher and its surroundings between the SAF and the RSF.²¹⁸ After the SLA/MM and the JEM openly sided with the SAF in November 2023 (see 2.1.4), violence escalated in North Darfur, and displacement increased greatly.²¹⁹ The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimated that 40,615 people were displaced in the El Fasher area between 1 and 16 April 2024 as a result of the violence.²²⁰ Based on satellite imagery and open source intelligence (OSINT), the Yale School of Public Health determined that at least nine villages west of El Fasher had been burnt down by the RSF between 31 March and 15 April 2024. The villages in question were inhabited by African communities, (e.g. Masalit,²²¹ Fur and Zaghawa).²²² Between 6 April and 10 May 2024, the ACLED recorded more than one hundred acts of violence and 239 fatalities in North Darfur.²²³ On 26 May 2024, Doctors Without Borders (abbreviated internationally as MSF)²²⁴ reported that at least 134 people had been killed in El Fasher and more than 900 injured since 10 May 2024.²²⁵ Neither ACLED nor MSF broke down casualty figures into civilians and combatants.

In late April 2024, an RSF offensive against El Fasher seemed imminent. The UN was deeply concerned about increasing violence in El Fasher and its surroundings.²²⁶ The SAF employed airstrikes and heavy artillery shelling; the RSF fired shells. Both sides caused civilian casualties in the process. According to the UN, at least 43 people had died due to violence in El Fasher between 14 and 29 April 2024.²²⁷ The UN did not break down the death toll into civilian casualties and combatants killed.

The humanitarian situation in El Fasher deteriorated as a result of the escalation of violence. Media reports gave different population numbers for the capital of North Darfur, ranging from around 800,000²²⁸ to about 1.8 million.²²⁹ The residents of El Fasher were experiencing poor living conditions. The city was deprived of electricity and running water, medicine was in short supply and food shortages caused food prices to rise.²³⁰

In a joint statement on 14 May 2024, Josep Borrell (High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) and Janez Lenarčič (European Commissioner for Crisis Management) condemned the escalation of violence in El Fasher and its surroundings. They called on the warring parties to cease their indiscriminate

²¹⁷ FT, 'Death has become normal', 29 April 2024.

²¹⁸ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

²¹⁹ Confidential source, 25 April 2024.

²²⁰ IOM, *Focused flash alert, Conflict in Al Fasher, North Darfur State*, 17 April 2024, pp. 1 and 2.

²²¹ Also spelt 'Massalit' and 'Masaleet'.

²²² Yale School of Public Health, *Confirmation of nine arson attacks west of El-Fasher, Sudan*, 16 April 2024, pp. 3 and 4.

²²³ ACLED, *The RSF sets its eyes on North Darfur*, 17 May 2024, p. 1.

²²⁴ Known in French as *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Visit <https://www.msf.org/sudan> for additional information on the activities of MSF in Sudan.

²²⁵ Al Jazeera, *More than 100 killed in two weeks of fighting in Sudan's el-Fasher: MSF*, 26 May 2024.

²²⁶ Al Jazeera, *UN warns of possible imminent attack on city in Sudan's North Darfur*, 26 April 2024. The Independent, *UN warns Sudan paramilitary forces are encircling a capital in western Darfur, urges against attack*, 27 April 2024. Confidential source, 1 May 2024. BBC, *Fear and prayers in Sudan city under siege*, 4 May 2024.

²²⁷ FT, 'Death has become normal', 29 April 2024. The New York Times, *Surrounded by fighters and haunted by famine, Sudan city fears worst*, 29 April 2024. BBC, *Fear and prayers in Sudan city under siege*, 4 May 2024.

²²⁸ Al Jazeera, *UN warns of possible imminent attack on city in Sudan's North Darfur*, 26 April 2024. The Independent, *UN warns Sudan paramilitary forces are encircling a capital in western Darfur*, 27 April 2024.

²²⁹ The New York Times, *Surrounded by fighters and haunted by famine*, 29 April 2024.

²³⁰ Al Jazeera, *UN warns of possible imminent attack on city in Sudan's North Darfur*, 26 April 2024. FT, 'Death has become normal', 29 April 2024. The New York Times, *Surrounded by fighters and haunted by famine*, 29 April 2024. The Guardian, *Essential supplies running out as RSF paramilitary encircles Darfur's largest city*, 2 May 2024. Trouw, *Drie miljoen Soedanezen in de val door omsingeling Al-Fashir*, 2 May 2024. BBC, *Fear and prayers in Sudan city under siege*, 4 May 2024.

attacks on civilian targets and to allow the civilian population access to food, healthcare and humanitarian aid. They also urged the warring parties to de-escalate and seek a peaceful solution.²³¹

El Geneina, West Darfur

In Darfur, the conflict took on an ethnic dimension. Particularly in West Darfur, the RSF and affiliated Arab militias targeted the Masalit. It became clear from news reports and human rights reports that the attackers explicitly referred to their victims according to either their Masalit ethnicity or their black skin colour. For example, RSF fighters in El Geneina specifically asked the ethnicity of men they had captured. Those who indicated that they belonged to the Masalit were subsequently executed by the RSF. In their statements and graffiti texts, the RSF and their allies made it clear that El Geneina was no longer part of *Dar Masalit* ('Land of the Masalit'), but of *Dar Arab* ('Land of the Arabs').²³²

Within the Sudanese context, ethnicity is relative, and not every Sudanese cultivates an ethnic identity (see Section 1.1). This nevertheless does not alter the fact that perpetrators of ethnically motivated violence may well ascribe an ethnic identity to someone and then act accordingly.²³³ According to available information, RSF fighters and affiliated militia fighters in West Darfur targeted the following individuals:

- People who confirmed, when asked, that they were Masalit²³⁴
- People who spoke with a Masalit accent²³⁵
- People with black or dark skin colour²³⁶
- Persons residing in neighbourhoods inhabited predominantly by Masalit²³⁷
- People who had been identified as Masalit by others (e.g. neighbours or co-workers)²³⁸

It is impossible to chart all incidents of violence against the Masalit. The examples provided below are used solely for illustrative purposes. This should in no way be regarded as a comprehensive list. It nevertheless provides a clear depiction of the nature and scale of ethnically motivated violence against the Masalit. The following examples also clearly demonstrate that there were two waves of violence against the Masalit in West Darfur during the reporting period. The first wave of violence lasted from late April to mid-June 2023. The second wave took place in early November 2023.²³⁹

²³¹ European Commission (EC), *Sudan, Joint statement by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on the attacks in El Fasher*, 14 May 2024.

²³² SWM, 'All the dogs are gone', 'Dar Masalit is for the Arabs now', 15 June 2023. The Jamestown Foundation, 'There will be no Dar Masalit, Only Dar Arab', *Sudan's ethnic divisions destroy West Darfur*, 26 June 2023. Reuters, *How Arab fighters carried out a rolling ethnic massacre in Sudan*, 22 September 2023. The Economist, *Genocide returns to Darfur*, 5 October 2023. Al Jazeera, *Birth, death, escape, Three women's struggle through Sudan's war*, 15 April 2024. HRW, 'The Massalit will not come home', May 2024, pp. 3, 33, 50, 76, 77, 79, 84, 85, 89, 91, 99, 108, 123, 131, 133, 157, 168, 197 and 202.

²³³ Confidential source, 25 April 2024.

²³⁴ Reuters, *How Arab fighters carried out a rolling ethnic massacre in Sudan*, 22 September 2023.

²³⁵ The Economist, *Genocide returns to Darfur*, 5 October 2023. Confidential source, 25 April 2024.

²³⁶ Reuters, *Sudanese civilians killed and shot as they flee Darfur city by foot*, 20 June 2023. Reuters, *How Arab fighters carried out a rolling ethnic massacre in Sudan*, 22 September 2023. Confidential source, 25 April 2024.

²³⁷ Confidential source, 25 April 2024. Confidential source, 26 April 2024. Confidential source, 26 April 2024.

²³⁸ Confidential source, 25 April 2024. HRW, 'The Massalit will not come home', May 2024, p. 135.

²³⁹ RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, pp. 21-24. The Guardian, *Sudan's Hotel Rwanda, The man who saved scores of people during Darfur violence*, 20 April 2024. HRW, 'The Massalit will not come home', May 2024, pp. 30-35.

On 24 April 2023, the SAF withdrew from El Geneina and entrenched themselves in an army base just outside the city. This withdrawal exposed the Masalit population in El Geneina to attacks by the RSF and affiliated Arab militias.²⁴⁰ Using satellite images, the international news agency Reuters noted that, from late April to mid-June 2023, large parts of El Geneina had been destroyed and that the Al Ghabat cemetery in El Geneina had expanded rapidly during this period. In addition, the same news service spoke to more than 120 people who had fled from El Geneina to Chad. Based on satellite images and interviews, Reuters concluded that at least one thousand dead had been buried in the Al Ghabat cemetery.²⁴¹ Staff of the Sudanese Red Crescent (SRC) counted two thousand corpses in the streets of El Geneina on 13 June 2023, and they stopped counting because they could no longer cope with it.²⁴²

The UN reported having credible evidence to show that at least 87 slain Masalit had been buried in a mass grave outside El Geneina. The victims had been killed by the RSF and affiliated Arab militias during the period from 13 to 21 June 2023. At least 37 bodies were in the mass grave on 20 June 2023, and another 50 bodies were there on 21 June 2023. Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, called for an investigation.²⁴³

Reports revealed that the RSF and affiliated Arab militias were focused primarily on killing Masalit men and boys so that they could not take up arms in the future.²⁴⁴ The RSF are deliberately using sexual violence as a weapon of war in Darfur against women and girls of African population groups, like the Masalit (see also 2.1.3). For example, a women's rights activist was aware of a 27-year-old university student who was raped by five Arab militia fighters. Afterwards, the perpetrators said, 'The baby will be an Arab'.²⁴⁵ Section 7.3 elaborates on the phenomenon of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls.

Masalit who enjoyed prestige or Masalit in leadership positions were particularly likely to be targeted by the RSF and affiliated Arab militias. Examples within this context include academics, lawyers, physicians, teachers, aid workers, journalists, human rights defenders, judges and religious leaders.²⁴⁶ Mohamad Osman, a Sudan expert at HRW, argued that the RSF deliberately attacked the Masalit intelligentsia with the aim of preventing it from informing the outside world about the massacres in West Darfur.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁰ The Jamestown Foundation, 'There will be no Dar Masalit, Only Dar Arab', 26 June 2023. RD, *Mass grave found in West Darfur after thousands have been killed*, 14 July 2023. Reuters, *How Arab fighters carried out a rolling ethnic massacre in Sudan*, 22 September 2023. Trouw, 'De schaal van de massamoorden is werkelijk onvoorstelbaar', 25 November 2023.

²⁴¹ Reuters, *How Arab fighters carried out a rolling ethnic massacre in Sudan*, 22 September 2023.

²⁴² HRW, 'The Massalit will not come home', May 2024, pp. 1 and 142.

²⁴³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), *Sudan, At least 87 buried in mass grave in Darfur as Rapid Support Forces deny victims decent burials*, 13 July 2023.

²⁴⁴ NOS, *Littekens van etnisch geweld in Darfur opengereten*, 16 September 2023. Reuters, *How Arab fighters carried out a rolling ethnic massacre in Sudan*, 22 September 2023. De Volkskrant, *Opnieuw gevlucht uit Darfur*, 26 September 2023. The Economist, *Genocide returns to Darfur*, 5 October 2023. The Economist, *The man who escaped genocide, twice, Refugees from Darfur are furious with the world for ignoring their plight*, 23 November 2023. RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, pp. 22, 31 and 35. HRW, 'The Massalit will not come home', May 2024, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ The Economist, *Genocide returns to Darfur*, 5 October 2023.

²⁴⁶ ST, *Crisis deepens in West Darfur capital as civilians face targeting and displacement*, 13 June 2023. The Guardian, *Sudan, Paramilitary forces blamed for assassination of West Darfur governor*, 15 June 2023. Al Jazeera, *RSF atrocities pile up in Darfur after 100 days of Sudan fighting, The RSF and Arab militias are accused of killing lawyers, human rights monitors, doctors and non-Arab tribal leaders*, 24 July 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 21, 22 and 27. RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, p. 41. HRW, 'The Massalit will not come home', May 2024, pp. 2, 106-110 and 136.

²⁴⁷ Al Jazeera, *RSF atrocities pile up in Darfur after 100 days of Sudan fighting*, 24 July 2023.

The most infamous example of the dynamics described above was the killing of Khamis Abakar,²⁴⁸ the governor²⁴⁹ of West Darfur, in El Geneina. He belonged to the Masalit and, in a telephone interview with Saudi television broadcaster Al-Hadath TV on 14 June 2023, he described the violent crackdown by the RSF and affiliated Arab militias against the Masalit as a 'genocide'. In the same interview, he criticised the SAF, which he said had failed to adequately protect the population from the RSF and affiliated Arab militias. Abakar further called on the international community to intervene in West Darfur. A few hours after the interview, Abakar was arrested by the RSF and killed.²⁵⁰

In early November 2023, the RSF and affiliated Arab militias carried out a series of targeted attacks against the Masalit population in Ardamata,²⁵¹ a displacement camp northeast of El Geneina. After the SAF had been driven out of their army base near El Geneina, the RSF and affiliated Arab militias had free rein. For several days, they killed Masalit civilians, mainly men and teenage boys, and raped women (especially young women). The attackers also engaged in looting and arson.²⁵²

Estimates of the number of casualties in Ardamata varied. The UN estimated that more than eight hundred people had been killed.²⁵³ According to the Roots Organisation for Human Rights and Violation Monitoring, there had been about 1,300 fatalities and more than 2,000 injuries. Furthermore, this local NGO reported that more than three hundred people had gone missing and that the RSF and their allies had detained five hundred individuals. The Roots Organisation based its findings on a variety of sources, including seven hundred interviews.²⁵⁴ The Darfur Lawyers' Association, another local human rights group, reported that at least 1,500 people had been killed and around 750 had been detained by the RSF.²⁵⁵ Based on video and photo analysis, HRW found that the RSF had detained more than two hundred men and boys. It remained unclear what had happened to these detainees.²⁵⁶

HRW concluded that the RSF and affiliated militias not only committed violence against the Masalit and expelled them, but also took measures to prevent the possible return of fleeing Masalit to El Geneina. To this end, they burned down or bulldozed neighbourhoods inhabited predominantly by Masalit. HRW based this on an analysis of satellite imagery.²⁵⁷

The Masalit were not the only targets of the RSF and affiliated Arab militias. Members of other African population groups were attacked as well.²⁵⁸ For example, HRW reported that members of the Tama and Eringa had also been killed or injured

²⁴⁸ Also spelt 'Khamees'.

²⁴⁹ In Arabic, this administrative position is referred to as *wali*. Within the context of Islamic family law, *wali* means 'guardian'.

²⁵⁰ Al Jazeera, *West Darfur governor abducted, killed as war in Sudan spreads*, 15 June 2023. BBC, *Sudan conflict, West Darfur governor killed after genocide claim*, 15 June 2023. RD, *Wali of West Darfur assassinated*, 15 June 2023. The Guardian, *Sudan, Paramilitary forces blamed for assassination of West Darfur governor*, 15 June 2023. The New York Times, *Brutal killing of governor heralds new round of violence in Darfur*, 15 June 2023. HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, pp. 63 and 64.

²⁵¹ Also spelt 'Ardamta'.

²⁵² Al Jazeera, *'Corpses on streets', Sudan's RSF kills 1,300 in Darfur, monitors say*, 10 November 2023. ST, *RSF kills over 2,000 civilians in West Darfur's Ardamata*, 10 November 2023. MEE, *'At least 1,300' killed in new massacre in West Darfur's el-Geneina*, 12 November 2023. ST, *About 1500 people recently killed in West Darfur: rights group*, 21 November 2023. HRW, *New mass ethnic killings, pillage in Darfur*, 26 November 2023. NRC, *'Slaven, rot op', riepen de RSF-soldaten tegen de Masalit-stamleden*, 27 November 2023. The Guardian, *Rape, murder, looting, Massacre in Ardamata is the latest chapter in Darfur's horror story*, 15 December 2023.

²⁵³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR warns of increasing violence and human rights violations against civilians in Darfur*, 10 November 2023.

²⁵⁴ MEE, *'At least 1,300' killed in new massacre in West Darfur's el-Geneina*, 12 November 2023.

²⁵⁵ ST, *About 1500 people recently killed in West Darfur*, 21 November 2023.

²⁵⁶ HRW, *New mass ethnic killings*, 26 November 2023.

²⁵⁷ HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, pp. 4, 32, 34, 35, 51-56, 120, 121, 148 and 149.

²⁵⁸ Confidential source, 18 March 2024. Confidential source, 18 March 2024. Confidential source, 21 March 2024.

in the Ardamata massacre in November 2023.²⁵⁹ One source is aware of several incidents of violence against the Fur in Deleig²⁶⁰ and surrounding areas. Deleig is a town in Central Darfur. For example, Arab militia fighters killed a seventy-year-old Fur man on 17 January 2024. On 15 March 2024, Arab militia fighters attacked two Fur men. In the process, one man was killed and the other injured.²⁶¹

Research by HRW revealed that RSF fighters and Arab militia fighters in El Geneina interacted in varying ways with people belonging to African population groups other than the Masalit. In some cases, members of other African population groups were left untouched; in others, they were targeted as well. For example, a witness stated that a vehicle containing Fur, Zaghawa and Bargo passengers²⁶² was allowed to drive through at an RSF checkpoint. In contrast, a former government soldier of African origin was beaten with sticks and whips, kicked and electrocuted by the RSF, even though he did not belong to the Masalit. In the process, he was told: 'You are black, we do not care which tribe you belong to. You are all the same'.²⁶³ The HRW findings did not clearly indicate the cases in which individuals from African population groups other than the Masalit had been targeted.

Inter-communal violence in South Darfur

Not all the violence in Darfur was part of the advance of the RSF and the additional ethnically motivated violence of the RSF and affiliated Arab militias against African population groups (e.g. the Masalit). For example, in November 2023, inter-communal violence took place in South Darfur between the Salamat and Habbaniya, two Arab communities.²⁶⁴ According to a local activist, at least thirty people had been killed in the process. The activist did not clarify whether those killed had been civilians or combatants. The *Sudan War Monitor* (SWM) attributed the violence to the deteriorating economy, the disintegrated rule of law and the proliferation of heavy weaponry.²⁶⁵ At the time of writing, a peace process was under way between the Salamat and Habbaniya, facilitated by the RSF.²⁶⁶

2.2.5 South Kordofan and Blue Nile

Like Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, two states in southern Sudan, have a long history of armed conflict and instability.²⁶⁷ In 2011, the SPLM-N unleashed an armed rebellion against the Sudanese government. In 2017, this rebel movement split into two factions: that of Al Hilu (SPLM-N/Al Hilu) and that of Agar (SPLM-N/Agar). The SPLM-N/Agar was based at Blue Nile and signed the Juba Peace Agreement in 2020. At the time of writing, Agar held the position of vice-president of the TSC. The SPLM-N/Al Hilu operated from the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan and had not signed a peace agreement with the Sudanese authorities (see 1.2 and 2.1.5).

²⁵⁹ HRW, *New mass ethnic killings*, 26 November 2023.

²⁶⁰ Also spelt 'Delig'.

²⁶¹ Confidential source, 23 and 31 March 2024.

²⁶² Like the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit, the Bargo are an African population group. HRW, *The Massalit will not come home*, May 2024, p. ii.

²⁶³ HRW, *The Massalit will not come home*, May 2024, pp. 131, 136, 137 and 202.

²⁶⁴ Sudan War Monitor (SWM), *South Darfur militias clash, killing dozens*, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker (STPT), *Conflict dynamics in South Darfur*, 18 December 2023, p. 1.

²⁶⁵ SWM, *South Darfur militias clash, killing dozens*, 15 November 2023.

²⁶⁶ Confidential source, 15 November 2023. RD, *South Darfur tribes plan for reconciliation*, 16 January 2024.

²⁶⁷ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Small Arms Survey, *Nuba hopes and fears*, March 2024, pp. 1 and 3. STPT and the SCRNL, *Blue Nile*, 24 March 2024, pp. 2, 3, 6 and 7.

As mentioned before, the SPLM-N/AI Hilu managed to expand its control area in South Kordofan. In the process, the SPLM-N/AI Hilu had initially been fighting the SAF.²⁶⁸ For example, on 3 July 2023, *Radio Dabanga* (RD) reported that the SPLM-N/AI Hilu had captured several SAF bases in South Kordofan, in the vicinity of Servaya, El Tagola and Um Heitan.²⁶⁹ In addition, the SPLM-N/AI Hilu and the SAF clashed in the vicinity of Kadugli,²⁷⁰ the capital of South Kordofan.²⁷¹ Media coverage of the aforementioned hostilities made no explicit mention of civilian casualties. *Darfur24* nevertheless did report that 'large groups of civilians' had been displaced in the fighting around Kadugli.²⁷² This Sudanese news platform did not specify the number of internally displaced persons in more detail.²⁷³ Kadugli and Dilling,²⁷⁴ two large cities in South Kordofan, remained in the hands of the SAF.²⁷⁵

The SPLM-N/AI Hilu and the SAF were not the only groups to make their presence felt in South Kordofan during the reporting period. The RSF had also developed into a factor of significance in this southern state.²⁷⁶ On 16 July 2023, a convoy of the SAF was ambushed by the RSF. The ambush took place twenty kilometres northwest of Dilling, one of the largest cities in South Kordofan. This resulted in an unknown number of fatalities and injuries on the SAF side. Furthermore, the RSF captured an army vehicle from the SAF.²⁷⁷ Coverage of this incident made no explicit mention of civilian casualties.

The RSF clashed in South Kordofan, not only with the SAF, but also with the SPLM-N/AI Hilu. On 5 December 2023, the RSF attacked Tukma,²⁷⁸ a village twelve kilometres south-east of Dilling. In the process, they killed four civilians and set fire to buildings. A response force of the SPLM-N/AI Hilu then launched a counterattack, whereupon the RSF retreated. The battle at Tukma was one of the first times the RSF and SPLM-N/AI Hilu had fought each other.²⁷⁹

Whereas the SAF and the SPLM-N/AI Hilu had initially fought against each other in South Kordofan, the two conflicting parties moved jointly against the RSF in January 2024. As far as could be ascertained, this was the first time the SAF and SPLM-N/AI Hilu had fought together and not against each other. The SAF and SPLM-N/AI Hilu jointly defended Dilling. In the process, they repelled several RSF attacks. The number of people who died in the battle for Dilling was not known. At the time of writing, the city was under the joint control of the SAF and SPLM-N/AI Hilu. The two defending sides were reinforced by armed civilians who had responded to a mobilisation call by the SAF to go to war against the RSF (see 5.2).²⁸⁰

In Dilling and the surrounding areas, violence took on an ethnic dimension. This area was home to both Nuba and Arabs. The SPLM-N/AI Hilu and Dilling's SAF garrison consisted mainly of Nuba. In contrast, the RSF could rely on support mainly

²⁶⁸ Confidential source, 15 March 2024.

²⁶⁹ RD, *SPLM-N El Hilu wins terrain in South Kordofan*, 3 July 2023.

²⁷⁰ Also spelt 'Kaduqli'.

²⁷¹ *Darfur24, Clashes continue in Kadugli between the army and SPLM's Al-Hilu*, 28 September 2023. *Darfur24, Clashes renewed in South Kordofan between SPLM-N and the Army*, 9 October 2023.

²⁷² *Darfur24* is an independent news platform with a strong focus on Darfur and issues of human rights. Consult <https://www.darfur24.com/en/> for additional information on *Darfur24*.

²⁷³ *Darfur24, Clashes renewed in South Kordofan between SPLM-N and the Army*, 9 October 2023.

²⁷⁴ Also spelt 'Delling' and 'Dalang'.

²⁷⁵ Small Arms Survey, *Nuba hopes and fears*, March 2024, pp. 1 and 4.

²⁷⁶ Confidential source, 27 October 2023.

²⁷⁷ RD, *Sudan army clashes with RSF and SPLM-N El Hilu in South Kordofan*, 18 July 2023.

²⁷⁸ Also known as 'al-Tukma'.

²⁷⁹ RD, *Four killed and village destroyed as RSF attacks SPLM-N base in South Kordofan*, 6 December 2023. SWM, *Villages burned in emerging South Kordofan conflict*, 6 December 2023.

²⁸⁰ ST, *Dilling town falls to SPLM-N in South Kordofan*, 7 January 2024. ST, *Sudanese army, SPLA-N clash with RSF in South Kordofan*, 8 January 2024. ST, *Sudanese joint forces repel fresh RSF attack on South Kordofan's town*, 10 January 2024. SWM, *Fighting rages in Dilling after RSF attack*, 10 January 2024. SWM, *Kordofan conflict spirals in dangerous direction*, 12 January 2024. Confidential source, 15 March 2024.

from the Hawazma, an Arab population group.²⁸¹ Two sources explained that the cooperation between the SAF and SPLM-N/Al Hilu in Dilling and surroundings was not the result of an order from higher up, but was an informal and spontaneous casual coalition of Nuba relatives serving in both forces.²⁸²

On 24 February 2024, the RSF attacked Habila, another town in South Kordofan. According to local civil society organisations, dozens of people were killed in the process, and the RSF kidnapped fifteen young women. The attack triggered a flow of 40,326 internally displaced persons.²⁸³

At the beginning of the reporting period, inter-communal violence took place in Blue Nile between several communities,²⁸⁴ including between the Hamaj/Funj and the Hausa. The battle was about land, and it took on an ethnic dimension.²⁸⁵ In October 2022, more than 150 people were killed in the process.²⁸⁶ As far as could be ascertained, no inter-communal violence had taken place in Blue Nile since October 2022.²⁸⁷

As far as could be ascertained, no large-scale fighting was taking place in Blue Nile at the time of writing, as was the case in other states and regions (e.g. Khartoum, Darfur and South Kordofan). This south-eastern state was largely under the control of the SAF and affiliated security forces and militias.²⁸⁸ One source noted that the RSF were poised on the border between Sennar and Blue Nile and that they could invade Blue Nile at any time.²⁸⁹ Another source warned that increased ethnic tensions in Blue Nile could erupt again at any time.²⁹⁰

2.2.6 North and east of Sudan

As indicated before, the SAF controlled large parts of the north and east of the country. These areas were initially known to be relatively safe and stable.²⁹¹ Security incidents nevertheless also took place in the control area of the SAF. For example, on 18 September 2023 in Port Sudan, a gun battle raged between the SAF and a local militia. It involved a militia from the Beja, a community that had historically maintained a problematic relationship with the central government in Khartoum.²⁹² The battle group was commanded by Shibah Dirar.²⁹³ As far as could be ascertained, several people were injured in the fight. The incident embarrassed

²⁸¹ ST, *Dilling town falls to SPLM-N in South Kordofan*, 7 January 2024. SWM, *Fighting rages in Dilling after RSF attack*, 10 January 2024. SWM, *Kordofan conflict spirals in dangerous direction*, 12 January 2024. Al Jazeera, *'They're going to kill us', Sudan's army targets civilians on ethnic basis*, 16 January 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

²⁸² Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

²⁸³ RD, *RSF violence in Sudan's Nuba Mountains and El Gezira continues*, 1 March 2024.

²⁸⁴ Confidential source, 27 October 2023.

²⁸⁵ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. STPT and the SCRNL, *Blue Nile*, 24 March 2024, p. 7.

²⁸⁶ Reuters, *At least 151 people killed in renewed violence in Sudan's Blue Nile state*, 21 October 2022. ST, *Blue Nile area, Triggers of the tribal conflict*, 26 October 2022.

²⁸⁷ Confidential source, 2 May 2024.

²⁸⁸ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

²⁸⁹ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

²⁹⁰ Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

²⁹¹ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

²⁹² The Beja speak a Cushitic language and have united in the Alliance of Eastern Sudan Parties and Movements, formerly known as the Beja Congress.

²⁹³ Also spelt 'Shaybah'. During the first decade of the 21st century, Dirar waged an armed struggle against the Sudanese government. In doing so, he claimed to stand up for the interests of the Beja people in eastern Sudan. In 2006, the two sides concluded a peace agreement in the Eritrean capital, Asmara. MEE, *The Sudanese armed leader gaining power in the vital Red Sea region*, 2 February 2023. Confidential source, 14 March 2024.

the SAF, as the conflict party had set up its headquarters in Port Sudan.²⁹⁴ A few days later, Dirar reconciled with the SAF.²⁹⁵

As stated before, conflict parties were operating in each other's control areas. For example, on 7 December 2023, an RSF patrol, consisting of seventeen vehicles, was observed in Gedaref,²⁹⁶ an eastern state held by the SAF. It was the first time that the RSF had entered Gedaref. The report on the RSF patrol in Gedaref made no mention of any violence and casualties.²⁹⁷

Wad Madani, El Gezira

That security and stability in the control area of the SAF were relative became clear on 18 December 2023. On this date, the RSF took Wad Madani, the capital of El Gezira. This was preceded by several days of fierce fighting. The capture of the supposedly safe Wad Madani by the RSF came as a surprise to many civilians.²⁹⁸

The capture of Wad Madani was of major importance. With about 700,000 inhabitants, it was one of the largest cities in Sudan. In addition, the city was located along a strategic junction of several highways and was known as the bread basket of Sudan. With Wad Madani in the hands of the RSF, the way seemed open to other SAF control areas, including Port Sudan in the north and the eastern states of Gedaref, Kassala and Sennar.²⁹⁹ The capture of Wad Madani by the RSF also had a major impact on the humanitarian situation, which is returned to in Chapter 6.

The state of El Gezira became the scene of fierce fighting. Between 25 November 2023 and 5 January 2024, the ACLED recorded more than 70 acts of violence and more than 110 deaths in El Gezira. This NGO did not break down the death toll into civilian casualties and combatants killed. During the capture of Wad Madani, RSF fighters engaged in looting and the killing and raping of civilians. At the time of writing, El Gezira was largely under the control of the RSF.³⁰⁰

In mid-March 2024, the Emergency Lawyers' Initiative (ELI), a Sudanese lawyers' group, reported that it had documented 248 civilian deaths in El Gezira since April 2023. According to the ELI, these civilians had been killed by the RSF through targeted extrajudicial killings and indiscriminate shootings.³⁰¹ In April 2024, Wad Madani resistance committees reported that, since December 2023, more than eight hundred people had been killed and thousands injured as a result of the RSF's violent crackdown in El Gezira.³⁰²

That Wad Madani could act as a springboard to other places for the RSF became clear a few days after the capture. On 21 December 2023, the RSF took El Geteina,³⁰³ a town in the neighbouring state of White Nile. This was the first place in

²⁹⁴ ST, *Clashes erupt in Port Sudan as Sudanese army dismantles militia checkpoint*, 18 September 2023. MEE, *Port Sudan, Army and Beja fighters face off in Burhan stronghold*, 19 September 2023. SWM, *Gunfire in Port Sudan amid tensions between army and Beja armed group*, 19 September 2023. Al Jazeera, *Port Sudan fighting reflects tribal-army tensions*, 21 September 2023.

²⁹⁵ SWM, *Reconciliation between Beja militia and army commanders in Port Sudan*, 24 September 2023.

²⁹⁶ Also spelt 'Al-Qadarif' and 'Gedarif'.

²⁹⁷ SWM, *RSF enter Gedaref State for the first time*, 8 December 2023.

²⁹⁸ ST, *Wad Madani's fall to RSF without fight raises questions*, 18 December 2023. SWM, *RSF seize bridge and storm into Wad Madani*, 18 December 2023. The Guardian, *RSF paramilitary seizes control of Wad Madani, Sudan's second city*, 18 December 2023. RD, *RSF takes control of Sudan army and police bases in Wad Madani*, 19 December 2023. ACLED, *The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) gains ground in Sudan*, 12 January 2024, pp. 2-4.

²⁹⁹ Asharq Al-Awsat, *Wad Madani, Who seizes it rules Sudan*, 16 December 2023. NRC, *Regering verliest controle in Soedan*, 20 December 2023. Trouw, *Meer and meer verslindt de strijd heel Soedan*, 20 December 2023.

³⁰⁰ ACLED, *The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) gains ground in Sudan*, 12 January 2024, pp. 1, 2 and 4.

³⁰¹ ST, *Sudanese lawyers release fresh report about atrocities in Al Jazirah State*, 17 March 2024.

³⁰² ST, *Rapid Support Forces blamed for killing hundreds in central Sudan*, 18 April 2024.

³⁰³ Also spelt 'Al Qutaynah'.

White Nile to fall into the hands of the RSF.³⁰⁴ At the time of writing, the front in this part of the country seemed somewhat stable, and the RSF had not pushed further to the south and east.³⁰⁵

2.2.7 Abyei

Abyei is an oil-rich area on the border between Sudan and South Sudan. At the time of South Sudan's independence, the two countries could not agree on this border region. Under international pressure, Abyei was placed under joint administration. This administration consisted of members appointed by both countries. In the future, the status of Abyei is to be decided through a referendum amongst the local population. Until then, a UN peacekeeping force is trying to maintain peace and security in Abyei. This UN mission is known as the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).³⁰⁶ On 6 November 2023, the UN determined that the status of Abyei could not be finalised for the time being, given the war between the SAF and the RSF in Sudan.³⁰⁷

South of South Darfur is another disputed border region known as Kafia Kingi, to which Sudan and South Sudan both lay claim. At the time of writing, this enclave was in the hands of the RSF. As far as could be ascertained, no security incidents took place in Kafia Kingi during the reporting period.³⁰⁸

During the preceding reporting periods, the security situation in Abyei proved fragile, and inter-communal violence took place, especially between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya. The Ngok Dinka, an African population group, practice sedentary farming and reside permanently in Abyei. The Misseriya, an Arab population group, live as nomadic cattle herders. They reside north of Abyei during most of the year, but migrate south to Abyei during the dry season.³⁰⁹

In March 2023, representatives of the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya signed an agreement calling for peaceful co-existence. This was preceded by a peace conference.³¹⁰ As far as could be ascertained, there have been no reports of inter-communal violence between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya in Abyei since April 2023.³¹¹

Inter-communal violence nevertheless took place in Abyei during the current reporting period, but this time mainly between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka, two subgroups of the Dinka. While the Misseriya come to Abyei from the north, the Twic Dinka approach this border region from the south.³¹²

³⁰⁴ RD, *Sudan war, RSF enters White Nile state and Sennar*, 22 December 2023.

³⁰⁵ ICG, *Sudan's calamitous civil war*, 9 January 2024, p. 5. SWM, *Fighting escalates on the Jazira front*, 4 March 2024.

³⁰⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, pp. 17 and 24. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Türkiye*, March 2021, pp. 41 and 42. Small Arms Survey, *Attacked from both sides, Abyei's existential dilemma*, July 2023, p. 2. The Conversation, *Crisis in Abyei, South Sudan must act and stop violence between Dinka groups*, 5 March 2024. Consult <https://unisfa.unmissions.org> for additional information on UNISFA.

³⁰⁷ UN, *Sudan crisis has 'effectively put on hold' political dispute over Abyei*, 6 November 2023.

³⁰⁸ Confidential source, 25 April 2024. Confidential source, 26 April 2024.

³⁰⁹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, pp. 24-26. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 42 and 43. Small Arms Survey, *Attacked from both sides*, July 2023, pp. 2 and 5.

³¹⁰ International Organisation for Migration (IOM), *The Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities re-affirm their commitment to seize hostilities and strengthen peaceful co-existence*, 24 March 2023. Small Arms Survey, *Attacked from both sides*, July 2023, p. 5.

³¹¹ Confidential source, 18 March 2024. Confidential source, 21 March 2024.

³¹² ACLED, *Deadly violence in the disputed Abyei area*, published on 17 March 2023, updated on 24 March 2023. Small Arms Survey, *Attacked from both sides*, July 2023, pp. 1-3. The Conversation, *Crisis in Abyei*, 5 March 2024. Confidential source, 18 March 2024.

Abyei was the scene of violent incidents during the reporting period. According to ACLED, there were nearly thirty fatalities in Abyei due to inter-communal violence between 1 January and 10 March 2023. The fatalities included at least thirteen civilians.³¹³ At least 32 people were killed during a weekend in November 2023. News reports did not break down the death toll into civilians and combatants, but they made it clear that villages had been attacked.³¹⁴ On 1 January 2024, six people were killed in an ambush: a local administrator, a driver, two bodyguards and two security personnel. The ambush was purportedly carried out by armed youths of the Twic Dinka.³¹⁵

Another wave of violence took place in Abyei on 27 January 2024. At least 52 civilians were killed, and 64 were wounded. Those killed included a Ghanaian peacekeeper from the UNISFA mission. At the time of writing, the circumstances of the violence were not yet entirely clear. The violence reportedly stemmed from a conflict over land, and the attackers consisted of armed youths from the Dinka Twic and the Nuer.³¹⁶ It was the deadliest incident in Abyei since 2021.³¹⁷

2.3 Reactions of international actors to the violence

During the reporting period, the UN expressed concern about the violence in Sudan, and particularly the violence against the Masalit population in West Darfur. On 5 September 2023, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, noted that innocent civilians in Darfur had been targeted because of their race. In this light, she concluded that there was an increased risk of genocide and related crimes.³¹⁸

Following the killings in Ardamata (see 2.2.4), Nderitu reiterated her concern on 14 November 2023. She further pointed out that the RSF and their allies were using sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war, burning down entire villages, using dehumanising language against their victims,³¹⁹ destroying medical institutions and transport infrastructure and cutting off access to water and electricity.³²⁰

Following the escalation of violence in El Fasher (see 2.2.4), Nderitu warned in late May 2024 that the risk of genocide in Darfur had increased and that people were being targeted because of their ethnicity. In this statement, she drew a comparison with the Rwandan genocide (1994).³²¹

A group of UN experts concluded that the RSF and affiliated Arab militias had 'systematically' violated international humanitarian law in Darfur. According to this panel, some of these violations had possibly constituted crimes against humanity and war crimes. This was evidenced by a report dated 15 January 2024. The experts

³¹³ ACLED, *Deadly violence in the disputed Abyei area*, published on 17 March 2023, updated on 24 March 2023.

³¹⁴ Reuters, *Ethnic fighting kills 32 in disputed region straddling Sudan, South Sudan*, 20 November 2023.

³¹⁵ Reuters, *Six killed in disputed region bordering Sudan, South Sudan*, 1 January 2024.

³¹⁶ Both the Dinka and Nuer are African population groups and speak Nilotic languages.

³¹⁷ UNISFA, *UNISFA condemns attacks on civilians and killing of a peacekeeper*, 27 January 2024. Associated Press, *52 killed in clashes in the disputed oil-rich African region of Abyei, an official says*, 28 January 2024. Reuters, *UN says Ghanaian peacekeeper killed in violence in South Sudan*, 28 January 2024. Al Jazeera, *Dozens killed as violence flares in region disputed by Sudan, South Sudan*, 29 January 2024. BBC, *Sudan-South Sudan border, Clashes kill dozens in disputed Abyei region*, 29 January 2024.

³¹⁸ UN, *Urgent action needed to address Sudan crisis amid increasing risk of genocide and related atrocity crimes, warns UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide*, 5 September 2023.

³¹⁹ In this regard, Nderitu observed that the RSF and their allies had described the Masalit as 'slaves'.

³²⁰ UN, *Statement by Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on the renewed escalation of violence in Darfur, Sudan*, 14 November 2023.

³²¹ BBC, *World ignoring risk of Sudan genocide – UN expert*, 24 May 2024.

had based this on a variety of sources, including more than 120 interviews with victims and eyewitnesses.³²² The report mentioned that the level of violence in Darfur had not been this bad since 2005 and that, in El Geneina alone, 10,000 to 15,000 people had been killed during the waves of violence that occurred from 24 April to 19 June 2023 and early November 2023.³²³

On 15 April 2024, UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Guterres declared that 'possible war crimes and crimes against humanity' had been committed in Sudan.³²⁴

On 30 January 2024, Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC), stated that there was reason to believe that both the SAF and the RSF had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. He based this on reports by the UN and other organisations, as well as on conversations he had held in Chad with refugees from Darfur. In this regard, he referred to persecution, murder, rape, discrimination and racism.³²⁵

The European Union (EU) also expressed concern about the escalation of violence in Darfur. On 12 November 2023, the EU released a statement in response to the killings in Ardamata (see 2.2.4). In this statement, the EU warned that the violence appeared to be an attempt at ethnic cleansing in West Darfur of the Masalit community.³²⁶ On 15 April 2024, Borrell (High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) and Lenarčič (European Commissioner for Crisis Management) described the acts of violence in Darfur as 'genocidal atrocities'.³²⁷

Jan Egeland, the secretary-general of the aid organisation Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC),³²⁸ described the violence of the RSF and affiliated Arab militias in Darfur as 'textbook ethnic cleansing'. Egeland based this on conversations he had held with Sudanese refugees in Chad.³²⁹ As Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs at the UN, Egeland had coordinated aid in Darfur at the beginning of this century.³³⁰

The Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights (RWCHR)³³¹ investigated the violence in Darfur, and specifically the violence in El Geneina, West Darfur. This human rights centre concluded that the RSF and affiliated Arab militias had committed genocide against the Masalit. This was the first time that an international organisation had drawn this conclusion. The RWCHR also had reason to believe that the RSF and affiliated militias had committed genocide against other African population groups in Darfur (e.g. the Fur and the Zaghawa).³³² The RWCHR consulted more than ten experts during the investigation, including former UN staff, human rights observers and international lawyers. The centre further analysed open source intelligence (OSINT) from the period from 15 April 2023 to April 2024.³³³ In its conclusion, the RWCHR took into account that the statements of the perpetrators of violence clearly demonstrated that they had sought the destruction of the Masalit population and had acted accordingly. For example, they had carried out attacks

³²² UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 2 and 23.

³²³ UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 2, 3 and 17.

³²⁴ Al Jazeera, 'Crimes against humanity' may have been committed in Sudan, says UN chief, 15 April 2024.

³²⁵ ICC, *Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Karim A. A. Khan KC, to the United Nations Security Council on the situation in Darfur, pursuant to Resolution 1593 (2005)*, 30 January 2024.

³²⁶ EU, *Sudan, Statement by the High Representative on the atrocities in Ardamta Darfur*, 12 November 2023.

³²⁷ Trouw, *Oorlog in Soedan vraagt net zo goed om staakt-het-vuren*, 15 April 2024.

³²⁸ Visit <https://www.nrc.no> for additional information on the NRC.

³²⁹ FT, *Scale of crisis created by Sudan's 'hidden' war alarms refugee chief*, 20 February 2024.

³³⁰ DS, *Wie is Jan Egeland?*, 4 March 2014.

³³¹ The RWCHR is a Canadian human rights organisation, known in French as the *Centre Raoul Wallenberg pour les droits de la personne*. Visit <https://raoulwallenbergcentre.org/en/> for additional information on the RWCHR.

³³² RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, pp. 11, 12 and 49.

³³³ RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, p. 15.

against the Masalit in a 'systematic and coordinated' manner and explicitly searched for people of Masalit ethnicity at house searches and checkpoints. According to the RWCHR, the conflict-related sexual violence against Masalit women also had 'genocidal intent'. In this vein, the centre pointed to statements made by the perpetrators, including the following: '[W]e will kill all men and rape the women. We want to change the colour'; '[W]e want to make a light baby'.³³⁴ Refer to Section 7.3 for additional information on conflict-related sexual violence against women in general, and Masalit women in particular.

HRW also conducted extensive investigations into the violence in El Geneina, West Darfur. In May 2024, this international human rights organisation presented its research findings in a report. HRW concluded that the RSF and affiliated militias had committed ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, war crimes and possible genocide against the Masalit and other African population groups.³³⁵ HRW based this on interviews with 221 people, including 174 former residents of El Geneina and 27 international aid workers. The most frequently accessed sources belonged to the Masalit. In addition, HRW had analysed more than 120 videos and photos and studied satellite imagery.³³⁶

³³⁴ RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, pp. 21, 22, 30, 32-34, 36, 39 and 40.

³³⁵ HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, pp. 5 and 197-202.

³³⁶ HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, pp. 2, 11 and 12.

3 Passports and statelessness

3.1 Passports

The General Administration of Passports and Migration is responsible for issuing passports and determining an individual's nationality. This directorate-general falls under the Sudanese Ministry of Interior.³³⁷

The war situation has had a negative impact on the issuance of documents during the reporting period. Due to the intense violence, people in the capital Khartoum could no longer apply for documents. Government agencies in charge of issuing documents, including the aforementioned General Administration of Passports and Migration, had relocated to Port Sudan.³³⁸ According to one source, identity cards were not available anywhere,³³⁹ and birth certificates could be obtained only in states controlled by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).³⁴⁰

The sources mentioned several states in which it was still possible to apply for a passport. They were states under the control of the SAF. One source referred to the following states: Sennar, Northern,³⁴¹ River Nile, White Nile, El Gezira, Gedaref, Red Sea, Kassala and Blue Nile.³⁴² Another source indicated that it was possible to apply for passports in Sennar, Northern, Nile, White Nile, El Gezira, Gedaref, Red Sea and North Kordofan. This source noted that the RSF had captured El Gezira in December 2023 (see 2.2.6) and that it was unclear whether it was still possible to apply for passports in this state.³⁴³

It was also possible to apply for a Sudanese passport abroad.³⁴⁴ In this regard, one source mentioned only the Sudanese embassy in Cairo (Egypt).³⁴⁵ Another source mentioned Sudan's diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Doha (Qatar), Dubai (United Arab Emirates, UAE), Juba (South Sudan) and Jeddah and Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), in addition to the Sudanese embassy in Cairo.³⁴⁶

As a result of the war, passport fees in Sudan had increased.³⁴⁷ In early January 2023, a Sudanese passport cost 51,000 Sudanese pounds. At the time, that amount was equivalent to ninety US dollars.³⁴⁸ According to one source, a Sudanese passport cost 240 euros for an adult and around 125 euros for a minor at the end of November 2023.³⁴⁹

³³⁷ Landinfo, *Sudan, Civil registration, identity documents and passports*, 3 March 2023, p. 19. Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³³⁸ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³³⁹ Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁴⁰ Confidential source, 15 March 2024.

³⁴¹ Known in Arabic as *Ash-Shamaliyah*.

³⁴² Confidential source, 21 November 2023.

³⁴³ Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁴⁴ Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁴⁵ Confidential source, 21 November 2023.

³⁴⁶ Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁴⁷ Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁴⁸ Landinfo, *Sudan, Civil registration, identity documents and passports*, 3 March 2023, p. 20.

³⁴⁹ Confidential source, 21 November 2023.

The war lengthened the processing time for a passport application.³⁵⁰ Before the outbreak of war in April 2023, a passport application took three weeks. At the time of writing, the processing time for an application took two months, according to one source.³⁵¹

In the past, Sudanese passports were sometimes obtained fraudulently or unlawfully. For example, during President Bashir's regime, Sudanese passports had been 'sold' to Syrians.³⁵² One source had heard rumours that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had purportedly issued Sudanese passports to foreign fighters serving in the ranks of this force (refer to 2.1.3 for additional information on the presence of foreigners serving in the RSF).³⁵³ This could not be further verified.

The extent to which fraud could be used to obtain documents from government agencies was unclear. Shortly before the outbreak of war, Landinfo³⁵⁴ observed that it was 'relatively common' for civilians to pay bribes to officials on duty. Landinfo added that these bribes were not so much intended to get an individual's personal data changed, but to get the official to actually issue the desired document.³⁵⁵

One source indicated that it was common for citizens to pay extra in order for the document application to be processed faster.³⁵⁶ Another source suspected that opportunities for document fraud had increased within the context of the current war, but was unable to substantiate or specify this further.³⁵⁷ Yet another source claimed to be unaware of any cases of fraud in the issuance of documents in SAF-controlled areas where the relevant government agencies were located at the time of writing.³⁵⁸

The sources accessed agreed that women could apply independently to the Sudanese authorities for identity documents from the age of eighteen years. This would not require the consent and/or accompaniment of a male relative or spouse.³⁵⁹ Women eighteen years of age and older also did not need exit permission from their family or legal representatives/guardians.³⁶⁰

The same sources independently indicated that minors could not apply independently for travel and/or identity documents. In this case, the consent and/or guidance of an adult was required.³⁶¹ One source added that adults could also provide written consent through a notarised power of attorney.³⁶² Another source stated that the majority age requirement was largely a paper reality. This source reported knowing of many cases in which documents had been issued to minors

³⁵⁰ RD, 'Severe overcrowding and delays' across Sudan's passport offices, 28 September 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023.

³⁵¹ Confidential source, 11 January 2024.

³⁵² Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 45 and 46. Landinfo, *Sudan, Civil registration, identity documents and passports*, 3 March 2023, pp. 22 and 23.

³⁵³ Confidential source, 10 November 2023.

³⁵⁴ Landinfo can be seen as the Norwegian equivalent of the Country of Origin Information Unit of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Consult <https://landinfo.nl/en/> for additional information on Landinfo.

³⁵⁵ Landinfo, *Sudan, Civil registration, identity documents and passports*, 3 March 2023, p. 22.

³⁵⁶ Confidential source, 21 November 2023.

³⁵⁷ Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁵⁸ Confidential source, 10 November 2023.

³⁵⁹ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁶⁰ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023. Confidential source, 16 January 2024.

³⁶¹ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁶² Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

(sixteen or seventeen years of age) without the consent or accompaniment of an adult.³⁶³

3.2 Statelessness

As far as could be ascertained, no changes were made in the laws and regulations regarding the acquisition of Sudanese nationality during the reporting period.³⁶⁴

Information on the situation of stateless persons in Sudan was scarce, as the Sudanese government did not keep statistics regarding stateless persons.³⁶⁵ In addition, Sudanese authorities did not recognise stateless persons as such.³⁶⁶ People who could not obtain a nationality in Sudan simply led an undocumented existence and faced numerous restrictions as a result. For example, they could not register goods in their names or obtain birth certificates for their children. They also had no access to education.³⁶⁷

Based on the responses of the sources accessed, two groups of stateless/undocumented people could be distinguished within the Sudanese context. One group consisted of people who had come to Sudan as migrants or refugees (e.g. from Chad or Ethiopia). They had been residing in Sudan for some time and were not enjoying lawful residence.³⁶⁸

The other group consisted of South Sudanese who had lost their Sudanese citizenship at the independence of South Sudan in July 2011 (refer to 1.2 for additional information on the secession of South Sudan). People belonging to population groups that had traditionally resided in South Sudan lost their Sudanese nationality at the time — even if they had been living in the north of Sudan for a long time or had links to the northern part of the country in other ways (e.g. through marriage).³⁶⁹

There are ways to regain Sudanese nationality. Under Article 16 of the Sudanese Nationality Act, an individual may regain Sudanese nationality based on a presidential decree. In 2018, the Sudanese Nationality Act was amended in favour of South Sudanese who had lost their Sudanese nationality against their will in 2011. Under Article 10 (2), South Sudanese people can regain Sudanese nationality in two ways:

1. If they have a Sudanese mother
2. If they can prove that their ancestors have resided in Sudan since 1924³⁷⁰

No further information was available on the situation of stateless people in Sudan.

³⁶³ Confidential source, 10 November 2023.

³⁶⁴ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023. Confidential source, 31 January 2024.

³⁶⁵ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁶⁶ Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁶⁷ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁶⁸ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁶⁹ Confidential source, 21 November 2023.

³⁷⁰ Confidential source, 21 November 2023.

4 Human rights

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the general human rights situation. Section 4.2 concerns the legal and administrative context within which human rights were respected or violated. Section 4.3 highlights the application of the death penalty in Sudan. Section 4.4 discusses the actions of security forces affiliated with the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). Section 4.5 charts the extent to which demonstrations could take place during the reporting period. Section 4.6 describes how civil society has come under increasing pressure. The discussion focuses on the repression of pro-democracy activists and aid workers. The situations of journalists and critical social media users are described in Sections 4.7 and 4.8, respectively. Section 4.9 sets out the human rights situation at checkpoints. Section 4.10 discusses enforced disappearances. Section 4.11 examines the situation of minorities — African Darfurians and Nuba from South Kordofan — residing outside their area of origin, as well as that of individuals of mixed descent and religious minorities (especially Christians). Section 4.12 addresses the phenomenon of blood vengeance and honour killings.

The situations of women, sexual minorities (LGBTIQ+ people) and unaccompanied minors are described in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, respectively.

4.2 Legal and administrative context

The former transitional government under Prime Minister Hamdok (see Section 1.2) introduced several reforms. For example, it brought about a separation between religion and state, abolished the death penalty for apostasy and repealed the infamous Public Order Law.³⁷¹ The latter law applied to the state of Khartoum and criminalised 'indecent and immoral behaviour and dress'. The 'Public Order Police' enforced this law.³⁷²

As far as could be ascertained, the aforementioned reforms were not reversed during the reporting period.³⁷³ One source noted that, because of the war, the police, courts and the Public Prosecution Service were no longer functioning properly. According to the source, this was particularly the case for Khartoum and Darfur. It was therefore not possible to establish the extent to which the reforms have actually been implemented and enforced.³⁷⁴ The source in question did not specify the extent to which citizens had access to legal protection by state or territory.

³⁷¹ The 1991 Sudan Penal Code contains prohibitions that were also included in the Public Order Law. Examples include the prohibition of 'indecent' clothing, sex in public, adultery and prostitution. As far as could be ascertained, these bans are still in place in Khartoum, as well as in the other states of the country. Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 25 February 2024.

³⁷² Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, pp. 56 and 91. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 50, 60, 68 and 69.

³⁷³ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

³⁷⁴ Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

As noted before, during the reporting period, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and their allies took large parts of Sudan, particularly in Darfur. The sources accessed agreed that there was no judicial and administrative machinery in the RSF-controlled areas. The RSF fighters and related militia fighters were primarily interested in looting conquered areas, the sources said.³⁷⁵

During the reporting period, the RSF undertook efforts intended to demonstrate their intention to govern their control areas.³⁷⁶ For example, hundreds of police officers resumed operations in the parts of Darfur that had been under the control of the RSF.³⁷⁷ In early December 2023, 217 police officers were operational in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. It was purportedly planned that the police force in Nyala would eventually number five hundred officers.³⁷⁸ Around the same period, the RSF announced the creation of a national police force.³⁷⁹ In late March 2023, the RSF appointed a civilian administration in El Gezira.³⁸⁰

When asked, sources expressed criticism of the developments in the RSF-held areas, as described above.³⁸¹ One source indicated that it was too early to determine the current stage of the RSF's efforts to achieve any form of governance.³⁸² Two other sources questioned how the police in the RSF area could function properly, as there was no judiciary in this control area to which suspects could be handed over.³⁸³ In this regard, one of these two sources described the reintroduction of police in RSF territory as 'window dressing'.³⁸⁴

4.3 The death penalty

In Sudan, people can be sentenced to death for various crimes.³⁸⁵ At the end of 2020, Amnesty International (hereinafter: 'Amnesty') was aware of at least 88 people awaiting execution of the death penalty. At the end of 2021, this number had risen to at least 95 condemned people. At both 'measuring points', there were no reports that Sudanese authorities had carried out the death penalty.³⁸⁶ In 2022, Amnesty recorded one new death sentence in Sudan. This increased the number of condemned people in Sudan to 96 at the end of 2022. There were no reports that Sudan had carried out the death penalty during this period.³⁸⁷ At the time of writing, there was no Amnesty annual report on the death penalty for the year 2023.

³⁷⁵ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

³⁷⁶ Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

³⁷⁷ RD, *Rapid Support Forces 'to set up federal police in Sudan'*, 13 December 2023.

³⁷⁸ Darfur 24, *South Darfur police force resumes duties in the city of Nyala*, 3 December 2023. RD, *Police services resume in South Darfur capital after seven-month hiatus*, 3 December 2023.

³⁷⁹ Confidential source, 1 December 2023. RD, *Rapid Support Forces 'to set up federal police in Sudan'*, 13 December 2023.

³⁸⁰ Asharq Al-Awsat, *Sudan's RSF establish civilian administration in Gezira State*, 26 March 2024. RD, *RSF establish civilian authority in El Gezira*, 26 March 2024. Radio Tamazuj, *RSF establish civilian administration in Al-Gazira state*, 27 March 2024.

³⁸¹ Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

³⁸² Confidential source, 15 November 2023.

³⁸³ Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

³⁸⁴ Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

³⁸⁵ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 78.

³⁸⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 88.

³⁸⁷ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 88 and 89.

³⁸⁷ Amnesty, *Death sentences and executions, 2022*, 16 May 2023, pp. 12, 34 and 39.

One source pointed out that Sudanese authorities did not share information on the situation in prisons in general and on condemned people in particular. The only way to obtain this information was therefore through word of mouth (e.g. through the lawyers of condemned people). According to the same source, hundreds more condemned people were still in federal prisons³⁸⁸ in states controlled by the SAF: White Nile, Northern, River Nile and Blue Nile. As of August 2022, this source had not received any information that the death sentence had been carried out. According to the source, the execution of the death penalty had been 'temporarily frozen'.³⁸⁹

On 18 March 2024, a criminal court in the eastern Sudanese state of Gedaref sentenced a man to death for 'incitement to war against the state' (Article 51 of the Penal Code). This case purportedly involved a member of the RSF. The Sudan News Agency (SUNA), Sudan's state-run news agency, reported that the convict had been detained on 14 December 2023 in Gedaref. The contents of his mobile phone allegedly indicated that he was a member of the RSF.³⁹⁰ No further information on this case was available at the time of writing.

4.4 SAF-affiliated security services

During the regime of President Bashir (1989-2019), the country's security service, the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), was notorious. Dissidents and activists at the time were subjected to extrajudicial detentions in 'ghost houses'.³⁹¹ According to one source, the NISS was the best organised security force on the African continent at the time.³⁹²

At the start of the transition period in July 2019, the NISS was replaced by the General Intelligence Service (GIS). The mandate of the GIS was limited to collecting and analysing information. The GIS was not allowed to arrest, question or detain persons. After Burhan's coup in October 2021, however, this reform was reversed. Since then, the GIS was once again allowed to summon, arrest, interrogate and detain persons.³⁹³ In May 2024, these expanded powers were made legal. The amended law also granted intelligence officers a large degree of immunity.³⁹⁴

In addition to the GIS, the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) was also active in SAF territory. Both security services targeted human rights defenders, opposition politicians and independent and critical journalists. The sources accessed indicated that the MIS seemed more visible and active than the GIS. When asked, the sources attributed this apparent difference to the fact that the MIS was the intelligence arm of the SAF and the GIS fell under the Ministry of the Interior. Given that the country was at war, it was obvious that the MIS would prevail, according to the sources.³⁹⁵

³⁸⁸ The source pointed out that Sudan has two types of prisons: federal and local.

³⁸⁹ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

³⁹⁰ ST, *Hukm qaDâ'i bi-i3dâm 3unSur yatba3 li-dda3m assarî3 fî al-qaDârîf* ('Death penalty imposed on member of the Rapid Support Forces in Gedaref'), 18 March 2024.

³⁹¹ Richburg, *Out of America*, published in 1997, pp. 150 and 151. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 77. Confidential source, 24 January 2024.

³⁹² Confidential source, 24 January 2024.

³⁹³ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 51.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 39. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

³⁹⁴ ST, *Sudan strengthens intelligence service powers*, 10 May 2024. SWM, *Sudan reinstates sweeping powers for intelligence services*, 15 May 2024.

³⁹⁵ Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 8 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

Incidentally, it was not always clear to victims of the security forces which force they were dealing with, as security officials dressed in plain clothes.³⁹⁶

4.5 Demonstrations

In the period from 2018 to 2022, numerous pro-democracy demonstrations took place in Sudan. These demonstrations were first directed against the price increases and President Bashir's regime and, later, against Burhan's seizure of power in October 2021 (see Section 1.2).³⁹⁷ Since the outbreak of war in April 2023, there have been few, if any, demonstrations.³⁹⁸

During the reporting period, several small-scale protests against the war took place. It was nevertheless quite risky for individuals to speak out publicly against the war. The warring parties interpreted protests against the war as expressions of criticism directed towards themselves. Both the RSF and SAF-affiliated intelligence agencies rounded up peace demonstrators.³⁹⁹

For example, on 30 August 2023, a women's group protested in Ad-Damazin, the capital of the south-eastern state of Blue Nile. At the time of writing, Ad-Damazin was under the control of the SAF and associated security forces and militias (see 2.2.5). The protest group, known as Mothers of Sudan, protested against the war and demanded more participation for women. The security apparatus intervened and detained nine people: eight female protesters and one male journalist covering the protest.⁴⁰⁰

It was not clear which branch of the security apparatus had made the group arrest, as the security officials were dressed in plain clothes. Numerous women, youths and members of resistance committees pressured the authorities to release the protesters. The authorities complied and released the nine detainees late in the evening on the same day. During their detention, the women had been verbally abused and the man beaten. The detainees were required to sign a book before their release, but were not given proof of release. Afterwards, the journalist was briefly detained several times because his reporting focused on the situation of women and young people, and not on a recruitment campaign by the SAF.⁴⁰¹ Additional information on this point is provided in Section 5.2. Refer to Section 4.7 for additional information on the situation of journalists in Sudan.

The extent to which the group arrest and detention in Ad-Damazin was representative of detention practices in Sudan could not be established.

³⁹⁶ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

³⁹⁷ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 10.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 13.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 82-85.

³⁹⁸ Confidential source, 20 October 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023.

³⁹⁹ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023.

⁴⁰⁰ ST, *Sudanese activists detained following women-led anti-war protest*, 30 August 2023. RD, *Seven women activists detained at Sudan 'enforced disappearances' vigil*, 31 August 2023. Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁰¹ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

4.6 Civil society under pressure

During the reporting period, civil society in Sudan came under further pressure.⁴⁰² The repression of civil society took a variety of forms, as clarified below.

Resistance Committees

During the reporting period, members of local action groups known as resistance committees (RCs) were targeted by both the SAF and the RSF. As previously explained, in 2018 and 2019, resistance committees played a leading role in the pro-democracy protests against President Bashir. The warring parties were disliked by the resistance committees, as these committees sought a civilian government. The SAF and the RSF accused the resistance committees of collaboration with the RSF and the SAF, respectively, thereby legitimising the repression of committee members.⁴⁰³ In January 2024, the governor of River Nile banned resistance committees in his state.⁴⁰⁴ The total number of members of resistance committees arrested was unknown. The examples provided below are used solely for illustrative purposes. This should in no way be regarded as a comprehensive list.

Al Jazeera recorded the story of one committee member who had been arrested by the MIS in SAF territory. This person had been held in a detention centre for five days in December 2023. During his detention, he had been electrocuted and forced to look at seven corpses lying on the floor and in a state of decomposition. A friend in the army managed to get him released, with the help of bribes.⁴⁰⁵

One source was aware of the fate of someone who was a member of the resistance committee in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. This activist had also agitated against the war. The person had been arrested by the security apparatus affiliated with the SAF. The activist was released when the RSF captured Nyala in October 2023. Soon after, however, the RSF jailed the person for a second time, as they also did not tolerate his criticism.⁴⁰⁶

On 13 May 2024, *Sudan War Monitor* (SWM) reported that SAF-affiliated security forces had arrested more than fifty people in an-Nahud, a town in West Kordofan, since April 2024. Most of those arrested were political activists from resistance committees that had called for peace. They were suspected by the security apparatus of collaborating with the RSF. Some had since been released, whilst others were still in detention. SWM based this on statements by a political activist who wished to remain anonymous.⁴⁰⁷

Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs)

After the war broke out in April 2023, many international aid organisations left Sudan (refer to Section 6.5 for additional information on the presence and work of international aid organisations in Sudan). So-called Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) stepped into the emerging gap. These community-based initiatives were referred to as Emergency Rooms and Aid Committees for short. The ERRs operated at the local level and focused on providing humanitarian aid. Many former

⁴⁰² Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023. *Al Jazeera*, 'They're targeting us', *Sudan's army cracks down on democracy activists*, 9 January 2024.

⁴⁰³ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. *Al Jazeera*, 'They're targeting us', 9 January 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁴⁰⁴ *Al Jazeera*, 'They're targeting us', 9 January 2024. ST, *River Nile Governor bans FFC, Resistance Committees*, 8 January 2024.

⁴⁰⁵ *Al Jazeera*, 'They're targeting us', 9 January 2024.

⁴⁰⁶ Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 22 January 2024.

⁴⁰⁷ SWM, *Sudanese military intelligence murder lawyer affiliated with anti-war party*, 13 May 2024.

resistance-committee activists joined the ERRs.⁴⁰⁸ At the time of writing, the state of Khartoum had nearly fifty ERRs.⁴⁰⁹ Around three hundred ERRs are said to be active in the whole of Sudan.⁴¹⁰

The aid workers of ERRs were also harassed, arrested or killed by the warring parties.⁴¹¹ For example, one source was aware of the abduction of an ERR from northern Omdurman. This area was under the control of the SAF. The relief committee in question received a report that southern Omdurman was in need of medicines and bandages, amongst other things. The southern part of Omdurman was under the control of the RSF. According to the source, the ERR was kidnapped by the RSF on the way to their destination.⁴¹² Another source was aware of a group of pro-democracy activists who wished to set up an ERR in Gedaref, an eastern state controlled by the SAF. The group was detained by the security apparatus, according to the source.⁴¹³ At the beginning of the war, ERRs were banned by Sudanese authorities in the state of Red Sea.⁴¹⁴ The total number of ERR members arrested was unknown.

In January 2024, the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS)⁴¹⁵ reported that the MIS had arrested seven activists on 14 January 2024 in Ad-Damazin, the capital of the south-eastern state of Blue Nile. These activists were members of the local resistance committee who provided assistance to internally displaced persons from other states like El Gezira. The committee members were detained in the morning and released in the evening. They had apparently been tortured during their detention.⁴¹⁶

On 7 April 2024, Sudan Tribune (ST) reported that the GIS and the MIS (see 4.4) had undertaken a wave of arrests in Sennar, a south-eastern state controlled by the SAF. Those arrested included members of political parties, resistance committees and ERRs.⁴¹⁷

In short, individuals with an activist past, individuals who had openly spoken out against the war and had been critical of the warring parties, and individuals seeking to provide assistance to war victims and internally displaced persons could count on negative attention from both the SAF and the RSF in particular.⁴¹⁸

⁴⁰⁸ The New Humanitarian, *How mutual aid networks are powering Sudan's humanitarian response*, 2 August 2023. Confidential source, 20 October 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 27 November 2023. ACAPS, *Sudan, Humanitarian response by local, national actors and the diaspora*, 23 January 2024, pp. 7 and 8. Clingendael Institute, *From catastrophe to famine, Immediate action needed in Sudan to contain mass starvation*, February 2024, pp. 7 and 8. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Al Jazeera, *Are Sudan's civil society activists being targeted by both warring sides?*, 1 April 2024.

⁴⁰⁹ Confidential source, 27 November 2023.

⁴¹⁰ Clingendael Institute, *From catastrophe to famine*, February 2024, p. 7.

⁴¹¹ The New Humanitarian, *How mutual aid networks are powering Sudan's humanitarian response*, 2 August 2023. Confidential source, 20 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Clingendael Institute, *From catastrophe to famine*, February 2024, p. 8. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Al Jazeera, *Are Sudan's civil society activists being targeted by both warring sides?*, 1 April 2024.

⁴¹² Confidential source, 20 October 2023.

⁴¹³ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁴¹⁴ Small Arms Survey, *Port Sudan*, April 2024, p. 6.

⁴¹⁵ The ACJPS is a New York-based NGO focused on monitoring and promoting human rights in Sudan. Consult <https://www.acjps.org> for additional information on this NGO.

⁴¹⁶ ACJPS, *Sudan, Seven human rights defenders and activists arrested, detained, and allegedly tortured by the SAF Military Intelligence Unit in the Blue Nile region*, 20 January 2024.

⁴¹⁷ ST, *Sudanese security forces launch new arrest campaign in Sinja*, 7 April 2024.

⁴¹⁸ Confidential source, 20 October 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. ACJPS, *Sudan War, Arbitrary arrests, torture, and ill-treatment behind closed doors*, 14 March 2024, p. 4. Al Jazeera, *Are Sudan's civil society activists being targeted by both warring sides?*, 1 April 2024.

4.7 Journalists

Peace protesters, pro-democracy activists and aid workers were not the only ones for whom space was reduced. Critical and independent journalists were also increasingly driven into dire straits during the reporting period. They found themselves in a crossfire and were accused by the SAF and the RSF of collaborating with the RSF and the SAF, respectively. Independent journalists who reported critically on the warring parties were threatened or intimidated, arrested, detained and, in the worst case, killed by conflicting parties.⁴¹⁹ One source mentioned that football reporters were able to do their jobs with relatively few problems, as the warring parties regarded football as an apolitical matter.⁴²⁰

The following incidents concerning the repression of journalists are for illustrative purposes only and can by no means be considered exhaustive. Haitham Dafallah,⁴²¹ the editor-in-chief of *al-Maidan* ('The Square'),⁴²² was detained by the RSF in Khartoum on 19 January 2024. *Al-Maidan* was the party newsletter of the Communist Party of Sudan (CPoS).⁴²³ At the time of writing, it was unclear where Dafallah was staying and how he was doing.⁴²⁴ In addition, the story became known of a journalist who was forced to flee from Nyala, the capital of South Darfur, due to threats and intimidation by both sides.⁴²⁵ On 1 March 2024, the journalist Khalid Balal⁴²⁶ was killed by an armed group in his own home in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur.⁴²⁷

On 15 August 2023, seventeen Sudanese media organisations released a joint statement expressing their concerns about the increasing press repression in Sudan. The signatories included *Radio Dabanga* (RD), the *Sudan Tribune* (ST) and the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate (SJS). Amongst other things, the signatories reminded the public that journalists had been victims of arrests, detentions, enforced disappearances and murder. Female journalists were at particular risk of becoming victims of gender-based violence.⁴²⁸ The press statement gave no examples of female journalists who had been victims of gender-based violence.

A report by Media in Cooperation and Transition (MiCT)⁴²⁹ from October 2023 also revealed that journalists in Sudan were doing their work under difficult and dangerous conditions. For example, this NGO conducted research on the experiences and needs of 213 journalists who were in Sudan.⁴³⁰ Since the start of the war in April 2023, 140 journalists, or 66%, were found to have been threatened at least once.⁴³¹ The threats were of a physical, psychological or digital character. For example, journalists had been accused of defamation, arrested, physically

⁴¹⁹ Al Jazeera, *Silencing dissent, Journalists in Sudan face threats, raids*, 16 May 2023. RD, *Sudanese media decry 'four months of violations'*, 15 August 2023. Confidential source, 1 December 2023. RD, *Sudanese Journalists Network condemns violence against reporters*, 24 January 2024. Confidential source, 30 January 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024. RD, *Sudan Media Forum: 'One year of devastation: Sudan in the grip of war'*, 15 April 2024.

⁴²⁰ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁴²¹ Also spelt 'Haisam'.

⁴²² Also spelt 'El Midan'.

⁴²³ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), *CPJ calls for immediate release of Sudanese journalist Haitham Dafallah and his brother*, 22 January 2024. RD, *Sudan activists denounce RSF's 'arbitrary detention' of El Midan editor-in-chief*, 22 January 2024. ACJPS, *Sudan War*, 14 March 2024, p. 11.

⁴²⁴ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁴²⁵ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁴²⁶ Also spelt 'Khaled Bilal'.

⁴²⁷ Sudan Akhbar, *ightiyâl aS-SaHafî khâlid bilal fî madînat al-fâshîr* ('Journalist Khaled Bilal killed in the city of El Fasher'), 3 March 2024. CPJ, *CPJ condemns killing of Sudanese journalist Khalid Balal in Darfur*, 6 March 2024.

⁴²⁸ RD, *Sudanese media decry 'four months of violations'*, 15 August 2023.

⁴²⁹ This Germany-based NGO promotes journalism under difficult circumstances. Consult <https://mict-international.org> for additional information.

⁴³⁰ MiCT, *In the shadow of violence, The pressing needs of Sudanese journalists*, October 2023, pp. 8 and 27.

⁴³¹ MiCT, *In the shadow of violence*, October 2023, pp. 9 and 30.

attacked, held at gunpoint or fallen victim to cyber-attacks, hacking and threats through WhatsApp or Messenger.⁴³²

One source further specified the issues that were the most sensitive amongst the warring parties. In SAF territory, it was very risky to write about the SAF's airstrikes on civilian targets (see 2.1.2), the links between the SAF and Islamists of former President Bashir's government (see 1.4.4) and the supply of Iranian drones to the SAF (see 2.1.2). In RSF territory, it was very dangerous to write about RSF gold and diamond smuggling, alleged Emirati arms support to the RSF (see 2.1.3), the massacres against the Masalit population in West Darfur (see 2.2.4) and the widespread sexual violence in RSF territory (see Section 7.3).⁴³³

During the reporting period, internet connections were repeatedly lost in Sudan, sometimes in parts of the country, and sometimes throughout the country. Both warring sides were accused of cutting off the internet connection. As a result, journalists and news platforms were impeded even further in their jobs.⁴³⁴ This also hampered aid delivery, passport issuance and online banking.⁴³⁵

4.8 Social media

As far as could be ascertained, no public information was available on whether the conflict parties monitored social media and, if so, in what way. This section is therefore based on confidential information that is somewhat anecdotal and fragmented in nature.

Statements from two sources indicate that both the SAF and the RSF were active on social media and spread propaganda, disinformation and hate speech⁴³⁶ through their own channels on social media.⁴³⁷ One source reported that the conflicting parties had infiltrated online discussion groups of human rights defenders and journalists. The infiltrators gained the trust of the participants and served as the eyes and ears of the conflict parties, the source said. In addition, according to the same source, both conflict parties had hundreds of accounts on social media, through which they monitored unwelcome opinions and expressions.⁴³⁸

Statements from sources also reveal that the conflict parties at checkpoints inspected the⁴³⁹ mobile phones of those seeking to pass, asking for the passwords associated with them.⁴⁴⁰ For example, one source cited the example of a middle-aged man in Darfur. He was detained at an RSF base for three days. During this period, the man was continuously interrogated and beaten. The RSF had found a video of the RSF on his mobile phone. The RSF fighters were convinced that the man wanted to use this video against the RSF. The man maintained that he was not affiliated with the SAF. After a ransom in the amount of five thousand Sudanese

⁴³² MiCT, *In the shadow of violence*, October 2023, pp. 30-32.

⁴³³ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁴³⁴ RD, *Sudan total communications blackout continues*, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Clingendael Institute, *Internet lifeline Sudan, Ensuring unhindered internet access is key to helping the Sudanese people survive the war*, April 2024, pp. 3 and 5. RD, *Sudan Media Forum*, 15 April 2024.

⁴³⁵ RD, *Sudan total communications blackout continues*, 9 February 2024. RD, *Hadhreen: Sudan comms shutdown 'ordered by army command'*, 25 February 2024. Clingendael Institute, *Internet lifeline Sudan*, April 2024, pp. 2, 3 and 5.

⁴³⁶ Within the context of Sudan, hate speech was particularly directed against certain ethnic population groups.

⁴³⁷ Confidential source, 30 January 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁴³⁸ Confidential source, 4 March 2024.

⁴⁴⁰ Confidential source, 30 January 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

pounds⁴⁴¹ was paid, he was released.⁴⁴² It is not known how often the mobile phones of civilians were inspected at checkpoints.

No further information was available on social media monitoring by conflict parties. Refer to the next section (4.9) for additional information on the use of checkpoints by the warring parties.

4.9 Checkpoints

During the reporting period, Sudan had internal travel restrictions due to the many checkpoints set up and staffed by the SAF and the RSF.⁴⁴³ The Sudanese human rights organisation Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker (STPT)⁴⁴⁴ reported that there were more than seventy RSF checkpoints between Nyala and El Fasher. These checkpoints were also referred to as 'toll gates'. People seeking to pass had to pay thousands of Sudanese pounds at each checkpoint in order to pass through.⁴⁴⁵ Another source counted 45 RSF checkpoints between Central and South Darfur.⁴⁴⁶ In some cases, people were harassed, robbed, threatened, arrested or subjected to enforced disappearance when passing through checkpoints.⁴⁴⁷

In some cases, the unfair treatment at a checkpoint seemed arbitrary in nature. For example, one source was aware of a group of people travelling from Kadugli, the capital of South Kordofan, to Port Sudan in the north of the country. This group passed many checkpoints held alternately by the SAF and the RSF. The travelling group was threatened by both sides.⁴⁴⁸

In other cases, negative treatment at a checkpoint targeted individuals. For example, a source was aware of human rights defenders who were blacklisted and detained at SAF checkpoints in eastern Sudan. According to the source, some were released, but many remained in detention.⁴⁴⁹

Yet another source was aware of an activist who had been critical of the RSF before the war. Nonetheless, he was detained at an SAF checkpoint in Bahri (northern Khartoum). This was because his national identity card⁴⁵⁰ clearly showed that he was originally from South Darfur. This part of Darfur was known as an RSF stronghold. The SAF soldiers therefore regarded him as a potential adversary.⁴⁵¹

Yet another source told of a human rights defender from Darfur who was removed from the bus at an SAF checkpoint in northern Sudan. He was beaten and robbed by SAF soldiers. The soldiers had not recognised him as a human rights defender, but suspected him of collaborating with the RSF because he was a Darfuri of Arab origin.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴¹ On 27 February 2024, an amount of 5,000.00 Sudanese pounds had the same value as 7.68 euros, according to CoinMill.com, an online exchange rate converter.

⁴⁴² Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁴³ Amnesty, *Sudan, Neighbouring countries must provide safe passage to those fleeing conflict*, 5 July 2023. Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁴⁴ Consult <https://sudantransparency.org> for additional information on STPT.

⁴⁴⁵ STPT, *Conflict dynamics in South Darfur*, 18 December 2023, p. 3.

⁴⁴⁶ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁴⁷ Confidential source, 27 October 2023. Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁴⁸ Confidential source, 27 October 2023.

⁴⁴⁹ Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 21 March 2024.

⁴⁵⁰ The formal designation for this document is *Bitaqat Esbat a-shakhsiya*. In Sudanese Arabic, the identity card is referred to as *botaka gomya*.

⁴⁵¹ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁴⁵² Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

The following source recounted the story of a Darfurian of Arab origin who was detained at an SAF checkpoint in Nyala in South Darfur because his name matched that of a prominent member of the RSF. The SAF soldiers thought they had the wanted RSF member in their hands. They pushed his face against the ground and, as intimidation, shot three bullets into the ground next to his face. When it became clear that they had the wrong person, they let him go. This incident took place before the RSF took the city in October 2023.⁴⁵³

4.10 Enforced disappearances

Sudan has a long history of enforced disappearances.⁴⁵⁴ During the reporting period, the number of enforced disappearances due to the war between the SAF and the RSF increased sharply.⁴⁵⁵

On 12 September 2023, Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, announced that at least five hundred enforced disappearances had taken place in Khartoum since the outbreak of war in April 2023.⁴⁵⁶

In late January 2024, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)⁴⁵⁷ reported that it had recorded more than 104 enforced disappearances of women and girls since April 2023. According to the SIHA, most forced enforced disappearances of women and girls had taken place in RSF area.⁴⁵⁸

In mid-February 2024, the Sudanese Group for Victims of Enforced Disappearance (SGVED), a Sudanese human rights group, reported that it had documented 993 enforced disappearances since April 2023. In all, 897 men and 96 women had gone missing. The enforced disappearances had occurred in Khartoum, Darfur, El Gezira and North Kordofan.⁴⁵⁹

On 16 April 2024, the Missing Initiative, another Sudanese human rights group, reported that it had recorded at least 990 enforced disappearances, including 95 women and at least 50 children since April 2023.⁴⁶⁰ The group did not clarify where these enforced disappearances had taken place.

Both the SAF and the RSF had subjected people to enforced disappearance.⁴⁶¹ In the case of the SAF, it was primarily the military intelligence service (MIS) that had subjected individuals to enforced disappearance (see Section 4.4).⁴⁶² Several groups became victims of enforced disappearances, including political activists, human rights defenders, members of resistance committees and aid workers.⁴⁶³ Masalit men and boys (see 2.2.4), independent and critical journalists (see Section 4.7) and

⁴⁵³ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁴⁵⁴ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, pp. 76 and 77. OHCHR, *In war-torn Sudan, a sister's search for a disappeared brother*, 8 November 2023.

⁴⁵⁵ OHCHR, *In war-torn Sudan, a sister's search for a disappeared brother*, 8 November 2023. ST, *Enforced disappearances reach alarming levels in Sudan*, 5 December 2023. ST, *Sudan sees surge in enforced disappearances as clashes expand*, 16 February 2024.

⁴⁵⁶ OHCHR, *Türk says conflict must stop before it is too late to pull the country back from disaster*, 12 September 2023.

⁴⁵⁷ The SIHA is a network of women's rights activists that is active in the Horn of Africa. Visit <https://sihanet.org> for additional information on SIHA.

⁴⁵⁸ ST, *Regional group sounds alarm over surge in women-enforced disappearances in Sudan*, 28 January 2024.

⁴⁵⁹ ST, *Sudan sees surge in enforced disappearances as clashes expand*, 16 February 2024.

⁴⁶⁰ RD, *'At least 990 cases of enforced disappearance in Sudan conflict'*, 17 April 2024.

⁴⁶¹ OHCHR, *Türk says conflict must stop before it is too late to pull the country back from disaster*, 12 September 2023. RD, *Sudan groups launch 'Where did you take them?' campaign against forces disappearances*, 30 October 2023. OHCHR, *In war-torn Sudan, a sister's search for a disappeared brother*, 8 November 2023.

⁴⁶² RD, *Sudan groups launch 'Where did you take them?' campaign against forces disappearances*, 30 October 2023.

⁴⁶³ OHCHR, *Türk says conflict must stop before it is too late to pull the country back from disaster*, 12 September 2023.

people seeking to pass through checkpoints (see Section 4.9) were also victims of this practice.

4.11 Minority groups

4.11.1 Introduction

This section elaborates on the situation of certain minority groups in Sudanese society: ethnic minorities and people of mixed descent (4.11.2) and religious minorities (4.11.3). For information on the situations of women, LGBTIQ+ people and (unaccompanied) minors, see Chapters 7, 8 and 9, respectively.

4.11.2 Ethnic minorities and people of mixed descent

Within the context of Sudan, the classifications 'African' and 'Arab' are relative (see Section 1.1). During the reporting period, violence in some parts of Sudan took on an ethnic dimension. For example, the RSF and affiliated Arab militias committed human rights violations against the Masalit people in West Darfur (see 2.2.4). In South Kordofan, the Nuba and Hawazma Arabs clashed with each other (see 2.2.5).

As is clear from previous Country of Origin Information Reports, members of African population groups from Darfur and the Nuba Mountains faced marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion outside their own regions.⁴⁶⁴ As far as could be ascertained, no public information was available that specifically addressed the situation of Africans from Darfur and the Nuba Mountains residing outside their areas of origin. The following information on the situation of Africans from Darfur and the Nuba Mountains outside their own areas of origin comes from confidential sources and is anecdotal in nature.

One source noted that Africans in the RSF control areas in Khartoum felt compelled to openly express their support for the RSF, lest they be killed. According to the same source, the RSF allegedly retaliated against Nuba in Khartoum after members of their population group teamed up with the SAF against the RSF in Dilling, South Kordofan (see 2.2.5). The source observed that, in the process, Nuba in Khartoum have purportedly been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance.⁴⁶⁵

Another source reported that Darfurians were generally distrusted by the SAF and the civilian population in northern Sudan. According to this source, in this part of the country, which is controlled by the SAF, no distinction was made between African and Arab Darfurians. In the perceptions of many SAF soldiers and civilians in the north of the country, Darfurians were said to be pro-RSF, simply because the RSF had originated in Darfur. The source stated that this had led to Darfurians being interrogated and/or treated unfairly at SAF checkpoints in northern Sudan, as well as to their being questioned by the northern Sudanese about their political orientation.⁴⁶⁶ Refer to Section 4.9 for additional information on checkpoints.

Sudan also has people of mixed descent, meaning they have both an 'African' and 'Arab' parent. As far as could be ascertained, no public information was available on Sudanese of mixed descent. For this reason, only confidential information could be obtained on this subtopic.

⁴⁶⁴ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 93.

⁴⁶⁵ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 49-51.

⁴⁶⁶ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁶⁶ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

When questioned, two sources indicated that people of mixed descent were in a difficult position, as they were distrusted by both parties to the conflict — the RSF and affiliated militias (consisting mainly of Darfurian Arabs) and the SAF and affiliated armed groups, which enjoyed support mainly among Arabs from northern and eastern Sudan and African population groups.⁴⁶⁷

It was not clear from the statements of these sources how such distrust of people of mixed descent manifested itself. One source was aware of some men who had divorced their wives because their wives belonged to a population group associated with the 'opposing party'.⁴⁶⁸

The preferences of individuals for a specific party to the conflict did not always correspond to ethnicity or regional background. For example, members of the same families fought on the side of both the SAF and the RSF.⁴⁶⁹

4.11.3 *Religious minorities*

The US State Department estimates that 91% of all Sudanese people adhere to Islam. Most Muslims in Sudan are Sunni. In addition, 5.4% of the population is Christian, and 2.8% practice some form of traditional folk religion. The remaining 0.8% profess another religion or are not religious. According to the Sudan Council of Churches, Sudan has 36 denominations, 24 of which are officially registered.⁴⁷⁰

During the reporting period, no clear evidence emerged that apostate Muslims, non-practising Muslims, atheists and people of other faiths (including Christians) were actively persecuted because of their religious or philosophical beliefs.

During the reporting period, there were reports of churches and monasteries being attacked, damaged, destroyed or confiscated. The following incidents are used solely for illustrative purposes. This should in no way be regarded as a comprehensive list.

On Sunday 14 May 2023, unknown armed men attacked a Coptic church in Omdurman. Five people were injured in this attack, including the priest and a guard. The attackers then plundered the church.⁴⁷¹

On 16 December 2023, the RSF took possession of a Coptic monastery at Wad Madani and turned this building into a military base. Since then, five priests, five seminarians and four staff members had gone missing.⁴⁷²

On 12 January 2024 the RSF set fire to an evangelical church in Wad Madani and partially destroyed this building.⁴⁷³

It was not clear from the news coverage whether the attacks on churches and monasteries described above stemmed from anti-Christian sentiments or whether these security incidents were part of the overall situation of war and chaos. It

⁴⁶⁷ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁶⁸ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁶⁹ STPT, *Conflict dynamics in South Darfur*, 18 December 2023, p. 9. Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁷⁰ United States Department of State (USDoS), *2022 Report on international religious freedom, Sudan*, undated, p. 3.

⁴⁷¹ RD, *Sudan war, Church attacked, mosques bombed, and more hospitals raided*, 15 May 2023. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW):), *More places of worship attacked amid continuing violence*, 16 May 2023.

⁴⁷² CSW, *Rapid Support Forces attack and occupy Coptic monastery in Wad Madani*, 19 December 2023. Christian Today, *Sudan military occupy Coptic monastery*, 20 December 2023.

⁴⁷³ CSW, *Evangelical Church set on fire by Rapid Support Forces in Wad Madani*, 15 January 2024.

should be mentioned that mosques were also not out of harm's way and were affected by the violence of war.⁴⁷⁴

When asked, one source, who was a Christian Sudanese, confirmed that both Christians and other Sudanese had been victims of violence, looting and rape and that the destruction of places of worship (both churches and mosques) was part of the overall war situation.⁴⁷⁵

4.12 Blood vengeance and honour killings

Blood vengeance (in Arabic, *tha'r*) consists of avenging the violent death of a family member on the killer or the relatives of the killer. Blood money (in Arabic, *diya*) is a form of compensation paid by an offender or the offender's family to the victim's family. Payment of blood money serves to prevent blood vengeance.⁴⁷⁶

Honour killings are killings in which family members kill a person — usually a woman — for allegedly violating family honour. For example, if a woman has had sex outside marriage or is suspected of having done so, this could be grounds for an honour killing.⁴⁷⁷

During the reporting period, little public information was available on blood vengeance and honour killings in Sudan. In early October 2022, *The Guardian* reported that there had been an increase in honour-related violence in Sudan. At the time, there were eleven known cases of women and girls killed in honour killings in 2022. The number of known deaths from honour killings had thus doubled relative to 2021. Most honour killings occurred in Darfur. One of the victims was Aisha Abakar, an unmarried eighteen-year-old woman from Darfur. She was killed by her relatives in September 2022 for allegedly having had premarital sex. According to a women's rights activist, the actual number of victims of honour killings was higher, but many cases took place in remote areas and simply did not reach the media.⁴⁷⁸

In mid-May 2024, *Sudan War Monitor* (SWM) reported on an incident of violence in Ghubaysh, a town in West Kordofan. On 7 May 2024, the RSF attacked a gathering at the home of a former National Congress Party (NCP) member. This left eight dead and ten injured. Delegations from the RSF and the local community then met to restore calm. Decisions taken included that the RSF would pay blood money to the bereaved families in compensation. The RSF would also pay the medical bills of the injured parties.⁴⁷⁹

One source considered it conceivable that the war between the SAF and RSF gave rise to new cases of blood vengeance and honour killings. In this regard, the source pointed out that communities and families came into direct conflict, and sexual violence was used as a weapon of war. The source was nevertheless unable to

⁴⁷⁴ RD, *Sudan war, Church attacked, mosques bombed, and more hospitals raided*, 15 May 2023. CSW, *More places of worship attacked amid continuing violence*, 16 May 2023. RD, *New attack on Omdurman mosque – sheikh denies desecration of shrines*, 21 March 2024.

⁴⁷⁵ Confidential source, 3 March 2024.

⁴⁷⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 77.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 74.

⁴⁷⁷ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 77.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 73. Confidential source, 11 March 2024.

⁴⁷⁸ The Guardian, *Sudan campaigners demand action after alarming rise in 'honour killings'*, 3 October 2022.

⁴⁷⁹ SWM, *8 civilians, including three brothers, killed in West Kordofan town, RSF agree to pay blood money and vacate town*, 17 May 2024.

provide further substantiation or specification, as no statistics were available on the extent of blood vengeance and honour killings in Sudan at the time of writing.⁴⁸⁰

Another source stressed that women and girls were beaten or killed, not so much because of family honour, but to maintain the man's position of power. The source provided examples of women in some communities being killed by their husbands or a male relative because they had a mobile phone. The perpetrators of violence perceived the phone as a threat, as it allowed the woman to communicate independently and unlock knowledge. For this reason, the source preferred to speak of 'gender-based violence'.⁴⁸¹

Given that honour killings have a gender dimension, further reference is made to Section 7.3. This section elaborates on gender-related and conflict-related sexual violence.

⁴⁸⁰ Confidential source, 11 March 2024.

⁴⁸¹ Confidential source, 18 March 2024.

5 Compulsory military service and forced recruitment

5.1 Compulsory military service

In formal terms, the Sudan National Service Act 1992 still applies. During the reporting period, however, this law was not actively applied and enforced by the Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC) and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) under Burhan.⁴⁸² One source pointed out that the aforementioned actors did not actively apply and enforce the compulsory national service, as the forced recruitment of conscripts would further damage the standing of the SAF.⁴⁸³

During the transition period under Prime Minister Hamdok, the aforementioned law was relaxed. Before the fall of President Bashir, men of fighting age had to be able to prove that they had completed the compulsory military service before they could have a college degree authenticated, get a job in the public or private sector or travel abroad. This condition lapsed during the transition period.⁴⁸⁴

5.2 Mobilisation campaign in SAF areas

During the reporting period, the SAF and associated actors began a mobilisation campaign known as the Armed Popular Resistance (*in Arabic, Al Moqawwma Al Sha'abya Al Mosallaha*). This campaign gained momentum after the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) took Wad Madani in December 2023 (see 2.2.6). Thousands of men in the SAF-controlled states⁴⁸⁵ answered the call to halt the RSF advance as part of 'armed popular resistance'. They were referred to as *mustanfareen* ('the mobilised').⁴⁸⁶ The abuses committed by the RSF in Wad Madani prompted them to want to defend themselves, their property and communities. Commentators feared the proliferation of weapons amongst civilians would lead to further escalation of violence in Sudan.⁴⁸⁷

According to two sources, the aforementioned mobilisation campaign took on an involuntary dimension for officials. For example, officials in Kassala and Sennar had to sign up as recruits; otherwise, they would lose their jobs and additional social benefits.⁴⁸⁸ Another source claimed to be unaware of such practices.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸² Confidential source, 8 February 2024. Confidential source, 13 February 2024.

⁴⁸³ Confidential source, 13 February 2024.

⁴⁸⁴ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 63 and 64. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2022, pp. 56 and 57. Confidential source, 8 February 2024. Confidential source, 13 February 2024.

⁴⁸⁵ These included the states of White Nile, River Nile, Gedaref, Northern, Kassala, Sennar and Red Sea.

⁴⁸⁶ Also spelt *mustanfireen*.

⁴⁸⁷ Al Jazeera, *Sudan's civilians pick up arms, as RSF gains and army stumbles*, 24 December 2023. France 24, *Sudan civilians rush for arms as paramilitaries advance*, 28 December 2023. SWM, *White Nile State braces for attack*, 2 January 2024. ICG, *Sudan's calamitous civil war*, 9 January 2024, pp. 3 and 6. ACLED, *The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) gains ground in Sudan*, 12 January 2024, pp. 2 and 3. RD, *Sudanese in El Gedaref are arming themselves 'despite hate of Islamists'*, 12 January 2024. Carnegie Endowment, *Armed Popular Resistance and widening civil unrest*, 15 February 2024. STPT and the SCRNL, *Blue Nile*, 24 March 2024, p. 10. Al Jazeera, *Birth, death, escape*, 15 April 2024.

⁴⁸⁸ Confidential source, 8 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁴⁸⁹ Confidential source, 13 February 2024.

5.3 Forced recruitment of soldiers (including child soldiers)

As far as could be ascertained, little public information existed on forced recruitment by the conflict parties.⁴⁹⁰

In late November 2023, *The Washington Post* reported that both the SAF and RSF had conscripted civilians against their will. For example, this US newspaper reported the story of a father in Khartoum. RSF militants had threatened to rape his daughter. In response, he offered to join the RSF so that his daughter would be left alone. *The Washington Post* further reported that the RSF had detained six young men at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Khartoum. They were handcuffed and given nothing to eat for a week. This broke their resistance, after which they joined the RSF.⁴⁹¹

On 21 March 2024, the Cable News Network (CNN) reported that, in the preceding three months, the RSF had forcibly recruited nearly 700 men and 65 children in the state of El Gezira. The coercion applied had taken various forms, including intimidation, torture and denial of food and medical assistance. CNN based this report on interviews with more than 36 eyewitnesses.⁴⁹²

Multiple sources pointed out that both the SAF and the RSF had abused circumstances in recruitment. For example, both sides primarily approached poor young men who could be easily influenced. They presented these young men with the prospect of a soldier's pay. Many young men were forced to respond to this, as there seemed to be no other options for earning a living.⁴⁹³ In recruitment, the SAF appealed to the notion of 'dignity' (see 2.1.2), while the RSF contended that they were fighting for 'democracy' (see 2.1.3).

Statements from multiple sources indicate that recruitment took place under physical duress. For example, one source noted that the RSF had approached veterans from the SAF. These SAF veterans were required to join the RSF; otherwise, they would be arrested.⁴⁹⁴ Another source was aware of the forced recruitment of more than forty mineworkers in the states of Northern and River Nile. These two northern states were under the control of the SAF. The mineworkers in question came from Darfur and were suspected by those around them of collaborating with the RSF. According to the source, they had responded to the mobilisation call described in Section 5.2 in order to prove their loyalty to the SAF.⁴⁹⁵

In Sudan, child soldiers have long been used in armed conflicts.⁴⁹⁶ A male child soldier is known in Sudan as *jana jaish*.⁴⁹⁷ A group of UN experts received information showing that both the SAF and RSF had recruited minors in Darfur.⁴⁹⁸ Confidential sources have confirmed such information.⁴⁹⁹ For example, one source

⁴⁹⁰ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁴⁹¹ The Washington Post, *Sudan's warring sides forcibly recruit civilians, even refugees who return*, 30 November 2023.

⁴⁹² CNN, *'Enlist or die', Fear, looming famine and a deadly ultimatum swell the ranks of Sudan's paramilitary forces*, 21 March 2024.

⁴⁹³ STPT, *Conflict dynamics in South Darfur*, 18 December 2023, pp. 5 and 6. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁴⁹⁴ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁴⁹⁵ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁴⁹⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 20 and 21. Confidential source, 8 February 2024. HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, p. 160.

⁴⁹⁷ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁴⁹⁸ UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, p. 20.

⁴⁹⁹ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

had personally observed that the checkpoints between Khartoum and Port Sudan were staffed primarily by young men between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years. According to the source, this applied to checkpoints of both the RSF and the SAF.⁵⁰⁰ Another source had also personally seen that, in Khartoum, many minors were serving on both sides. In some cases, the weapon was bigger than the combatant, the source said.⁵⁰¹ It was not known how many child soldiers were serving in the ranks of the warring parties.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) spoke to witnesses who had seen underage boys in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, employed by both the RSF and self-defence groups of the Masalit.⁵⁰² These witnesses did not mention specific numbers of minors employed by the two warring parties.

⁵⁰⁰ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁵⁰¹ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁵⁰² HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, pp. 160 and 161.

6 Humanitarian situation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the humanitarian situation in Sudan. Section 6.2 discusses the extent of displacement in Sudan. Section 6.3 examines living conditions in displacement camps. Section 6.4 addresses the increased food insecurity in the country. Section 6.5 explains how the warring parties impeded the humanitarian relief effort. Section 6.6 examines the collapsing healthcare sector. Section 6.7 explores the situation of Sudanese who had fled to neighbouring countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Chad, Uganda and South Sudan. Section 6.8 describes the situation of foreign refugees and asylum seekers in Sudan.

In this Country of Origin Information Report, the term ‘internally displaced persons’ refers to Sudanese who have been displaced in Sudan. In contrast, ‘refugees’ can refer either to Sudanese who have fled abroad (see 6.7) or to non-Sudanese who are registered as refugees in Sudan (see 6.8).

Each year, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), an international aid organisation, publishes the Emergency Watchlist report.⁵⁰³ In this report, the IRC assesses which twenty countries are most at risk of a humanitarian emergency. Given the escalating violence (see Section 2.2), large-scale displacement (see Section 6.2), growing food insecurity (see Section 6.4) and collapsing healthcare services (see Section 6.6), the IRC placed Sudan at the top of the Emergency Watch List for 2024.⁵⁰⁴

6.2 Internally displaced persons

Even before the outbreak of war in April 2023, Sudan had about three million internally displaced persons. Around six million internally displaced persons were added as a result of the war. At the time of writing, therefore, Sudan was housing about nine million internally displaced persons.⁵⁰⁵ The country was thus experiencing the largest displacement crisis in the world.⁵⁰⁶

By 31 December 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN refugee agency, had registered more than nine million internally displaced persons in Sudan.⁵⁰⁷ Some displaced persons had already been re-displaced several times during the reporting period.⁵⁰⁸ For example, residents of Khartoum had first fled to Wad Madani as a result of fierce urban fighting. After that, however, when the city was taken by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in December 2023, they fled for a second time to other places (e.g. Sennar).⁵⁰⁹ In

⁵⁰³ Consult <https://www.rescue.org/country/sudan> for information on the IRC’s work and activities in Sudan.

⁵⁰⁴ IRC, *Crisis in Sudan, What is happening and how to help*, published on 17 April 2023, updated on 4 January 2024. IRC, *2024 Emergency Watchlist*, 13 December 2023, pp. 30-32.

⁵⁰⁵ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵⁰⁶ IOM, *Sudan faces world’s largest internal displacement crisis*, 16 October 2023. International Rescue Committee (IRC), *2024 Emergency Watchlist*, 14 December 2023, pp. 30 and 32. Clingendael Institute, *From catastrophe to famine*, February 2024, p. 6. Confidential source, 9 February 2024. GIGA, *The war in Sudan*, February 2024, p. 2. NRC, *Survivors of Sudan’s brutal war have been forgotten*, 14 February 2024. Confidential source, 19 April 2024.

⁵⁰⁷ UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal (ODP), Sudan*, last updated on 31 December 2023, accessed on 1 March 2024.

⁵⁰⁸ NRC, *Survivors of Sudan’s brutal war have been forgotten*, 14 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵⁰⁹ Ayin Network, *The impact of RSF’s capture of Wad Madani*, 23 December 2023. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

professional parlance, second and third displacements are referred to as secondary and tertiary displacement.⁵¹⁰ The following is an overview of the number of internally displaced persons residing in each state, as recorded by the UNHCR on 31 December 2023.

Number of internally displaced persons, by state (31 December 2023)

State	Number of internally displaced persons
South Darfur	1,606,195
North Darfur	1,145,022
Central Darfur	794,031
East Darfur	766,845
River Nile	682,755
White Nile	538,280
El Gezira	518,711
Sennar	477,197
Blue Nile	419,451
Gedaref	396,527
Northern	389,600
South Kordofan	347,283
West Darfur	261,791
West Kordofan	251,450
Red Sea	234,000
North Kordofan	178,638
Kassala	159,832
Khartoum	37,870

Source: UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP). Note that the number of internally displaced persons in Khartoum state is dated 29 January 2024.

At the time of writing, there were areas in Sudan where there was no large-scale fighting, such as the north and east of the country and Blue Nile (see 2.2). Many internally displaced persons sought refuge in these areas. One source stressed that these areas were not so much 'safe' as they were 'less dangerous'.⁵¹¹ The RSF's unexpected capture of Wad Madani (see 2.2.6) illustrated how suddenly the front lines in Sudan could shift. For example, at the time of writing, the RSF were poised on the borders of White Nile and Blue Nile, and both states could be invaded at any time.⁵¹²

6.3 Living conditions in the displacement camps

The sources accessed observed that living conditions in the displacement camps were poor in both western and eastern Sudan. In the camps in both parts of the country, there was a severe lack of food, hygiene, healthcare and education. In the western part of the country, which was controlled by the RSF, internally displaced persons additionally faced greater security risks, particularly those belonging to an ethnic minority. For example, there were instances in which displacement camps were attacked at night and internally displaced persons could not venture outside

⁵¹⁰ Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵¹¹ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵¹² Confidential source, 5 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

the camps to cultivate land. In the east of the country, which was under the control of the SAF, there was still some semblance of a state structure in place, and the security risks seemed somewhat less pressing.⁵¹³ Two sources emphasised that not only internally displaced persons but the host communities as well faced a severe lack of food, water and healthcare.⁵¹⁴

Although security risks in eastern Sudan seemed less pressing than in the western part of the country, internally displaced persons in eastern Sudan were uncertain of their position. In SAF-controlled states, many internally displaced persons found shelter in school buildings. Such buildings were not equipped to accommodate large groups of internally displaced persons. In some cases, fifty people would be staying in a single classroom. Living conditions for the internally displaced persons in the schools took on unsanitary forms. Sudanese authorities announced plans to reopen schools for the schoolchildren and to relocate the internally displaced persons elsewhere.⁵¹⁵ When internally displaced persons in the eastern town of Gedaref refused to leave school buildings because it was unclear where to go, Sudanese police intervened violently on 8 November 2023, using tear gas.⁵¹⁶ As a result, one child suffocated from the tear gas. In addition to this fatality, dozens of people were injured, according to the *Sudan Tribune* (ST).⁵¹⁷

Around the same period, the country was plagued by an outbreak of cholera.⁵¹⁸ On 26 September 2023, Sudanese health authorities declared a cholera outbreak in the eastern state of Gedaref. The disease, which is transmitted by drinking contaminated water or eating contaminated food, was also detected in eight other states. As of 23 December 2023, a total of 8,267 cholera infections had been recorded, according to the Sudanese health authorities and the World Health Organization (WHO).⁵¹⁹ In 224 cases, individuals had died either directly or indirectly of cholera.⁵²⁰ An overview of the number of cholera infections in each state as of 23 December 2023 is provided in the table below.

Number of cholera infections and related fatalities as of 23 December 2023

State	Total number of cholera infections	Total number of cholera-related fatalities
Red Sea	2,240	77
Gedaref	2,005	49
El Gezira	1,859	26
White Nile	1,090	31
Khartoum	525	26
South Kordofan	346	8
Sennar	113	4
Kassala	86	3
Blue Nile	3	0

⁵¹³ Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵¹⁴ Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵¹⁵ Confidential source, 15 November 2023. Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵¹⁶ ST, *maSra3 Tifl wa-jarH al-3asharât fî ikhlâ' qasri li-markaz îwâ' nâziHîn fil-gaDârîf* ('Child killed and dozens injured in forced evacuation of IDP reception centre in Gedaref'), 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 15 November 2023.

⁵¹⁷ ST, *maSra3 Tifl wa-jarH al-3asharât fî ikhlâ' qasri li-markaz îwâ' nâziHîn fil-gaDârîf*, 8 November 2023.

⁵¹⁸ ST, *Sudan: Cholera cases approach a thousand*, 8 October 2023. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Sudan, Cholera outbreak*, 24 December 2023, p. 1.

⁵¹⁹ In French, the WHO is known as the *Organisation mondiale de la Santé*. Consult <https://who.int/countries/sdn> for additional information on the work of the WHO in Sudan.

⁵²⁰ OCHA, *Sudan, Cholera outbreak*, 24 December 2023, pp. 1-3.

Total	8,267	224
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Source: Sudanese health authorities and the WHO.

6.4 Food insecurity

Even when internally displaced persons enjoyed relative security and were not directly threatened by armed actors, they led an insecure existence.⁵²¹ This was because the war in Sudan had created not only a displacement crisis, but also a food crisis.⁵²² At the time of writing, a famine was unfolding in Sudan. In February 2024, the World Food Programme (WFP)⁵²³ reported that eighteen million people in Sudan, or forty percent of the population, were facing acute food insecurity.⁵²⁴ Five million people, or ten percent of the population, could not afford a single meal a day.⁵²⁵ The areas where acute food insecurity⁵²⁶ prevailed were in Khartoum, Darfur and Kordofan. The fierce fighting in these conflict regions contributed greatly to the acute food insecurity there.⁵²⁷ Some people in the aforementioned regions were forced to eat leaves, bark, soil, cats or seeds that were intended for the sowing season.⁵²⁸

Section 12.5 contains an overview map showing the stage of food insecurity that each area in Sudan is experiencing.

The food crisis in Sudan took on harrowing forms.⁵²⁹ For example, a woman from Hasahisa, a displacement camp in Central Darfur, told *Solidarités Internationale*⁵³⁰ that she had not eaten for two days. She added, 'You see people lying on the ground a lot. You know why? They are lying down from hunger'.⁵³¹ In early February 2024, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) reported that, in Zamzam, a displacement camp in North Darfur, an average of one child died every two hours due to malnutrition. In addition to the food shortage, Zamzam suffered from a severe lack of healthcare and water. Internally displaced persons were therefore forced to drink water from rivers and swamps. This could cause diarrhoea, however, which could be fatal for malnourished children.⁵³²

In late March 2024, the Sudanese health authorities reported that the number of cases of acute malnutrition in North Darfur was increasing. For example, 561 children in this state were suffering from acute malnutrition. In addition, 268 cases were counted in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur. There were 160 and 133

⁵²¹ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵²² Clingendael Institute, *From catastrophe to famine*, February 2024, p. 2. Reuters, *As famine looms in Sudan, the hungry eat soil and leaves*, 30 April 2024.

⁵²³ The WFP is the food agency of the UN and is known in French as the *Programme alimentaire mondial* (PAM). Visit <https://www.wfp.org/countries/sudan> for additional information on the work of the WFP in Sudan.

⁵²⁴ WFP, *Sudan crisis sends shockwaves around the region as displacement, hunger and malnutrition soar*, 19 February 2024.

⁵²⁵ RD, WFP: 'Five million Sudanese can't afford one meal a day', 22 February 2024.

⁵²⁶ Also referred to as severe food insecurity.

⁵²⁷ WFP, *Sudan, IPC acute food insecurity, Snapshot, October 2023 – February 2024*, 12 December 2023. Reuters, *As famine looms in Sudan, the hungry eat soil and leaves*, 30 April 2024.

⁵²⁸ Le Monde, *Au Darfour, 'les gens ont tellement faim'*, 18 April 2024. The Economist, *Ever deeper into hell*, 18 April 2024. Reuters, *As famine looms in Sudan, the hungry eat soil and leaves*, 30 April 2024.

⁵²⁹ Al Jazeera, *People 'dying of starvation' in Sudan, UN food agency says*, 2 February 2024. Al Jazeera, *UNICEF says 700,000 children in Sudan face life-threatening malnutrition*, 9 February 2024. Al Jazeera, *Sudan slips into famine as warring sides starve civilians*, 29 March 2024. BBC, *Sudan civil war, The children living between starvation and death in Darfur*, 13 April 2024. Reuters, *As famine looms in Sudan, the hungry eat soil and leaves*, 30 April 2024.

⁵³⁰ *Solidarités Internationale* is an aid organisation that operates from France. Consult <https://www.solidarites.org/en/missions/sudan/> for additional information on the work of *Solidarités Internationale* in Sudan.

⁵³¹ *Solidarités Internationale*, *Zalingei town, Rapid assessment report*, 24-25 January 2024, p. 7.

⁵³² MSF, *Sudan, Urgent response needed amid high death rates and malnutrition crisis in North Darfur*, 5 February 2024.

acutely malnourished children in the camps at Zamzam and Abu Shouk, respectively.⁵³³ According to an aid worker, in Kalma, a displacement camp in South Darfur,⁵³⁴ an average of almost three children died every twelve hours from diseases related to malnutrition.⁵³⁵ In May 2024, a doctor reported from Abu Shouk, a displacement camp north of El Fasher, that hundreds of people in the camp had died of acute malnutrition in the previous months.⁵³⁶

A study by the Clingendael Institute⁵³⁷ clearly indicated that the food crisis in Sudan was the result of several factors. First, the violence of war prevented farmers from safely working their land. For example, the state of El Gezira was known as the bread basket of Sudan. Before the war, this state accounted for 42% of the country's grain production. After El Gezira fell into the hands of the RSF in December 2023 (see 2.2.6), the cultivation of grain in this state declined. Grain production in Darfur and Kordofan was also compromised by the war. Second, the processing agricultural industry was located primarily in Khartoum. As a result of the destructive violence of war in the capital (see 2.2.3), most factories ceased operations. Third, food aid was obstructed or confiscated by the warring parties.⁵³⁸

6.5 Obstruction of humanitarian aid

The warring parties obstructed not only food aid, but emergency aid in general.⁵³⁹ For example, both sides looted medical supplies.⁵⁴⁰ In early February 2024, the WFP called on the conflict parties to cooperate with relief organisations (e.g. WFP). In this regard, the WFP highlighted the practice of aid convoys being stopped at checkpoints of the conflict parties to hand over money (refer to 4.9 for additional information on checkpoints). The WFP further cited an example of seventy food aid trucks that were detained in Port Sudan for more than two weeks in January 2024 before they could bring food to Kassala, Gedaref and Blue Nile. In El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan,⁵⁴¹ 31 empty WFP trucks were detained for over three months. The WFP warned that such obstructions were exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the country. At the time of writing, Port Sudan and El Obeid were both under the control of the SAF.⁵⁴²

In addition to temporarily stopping aid convoys, the SAF-affiliated authorities in Port Sudan placed bureaucratic obstacles in the way of foreign aid workers. International aid organisations obtained hardly any visas for their employees. The processing of visa applications seemed to proceed in a random manner.⁵⁴³ Some foreign aid workers were granted visas after six months.⁵⁴⁴ On 24 July 2023, the Sudan INGO

⁵³³ ST, *mas'ûl: ziyâdat mu3addalât sû' at-taghdhiya al-Hâdd fî shamâl dêrfûr* ('Official: Increasing number of cases of acute malnutrition in North Darfur'), 25 March 2024.

⁵³⁴ Also spelt 'Kelma'.

⁵³⁵ The Independent, *World paid little attention to Sudan's war for a year, Now aid groups warn of mass death from hunger*, 15 April 2024.

⁵³⁶ The Guardian, *Death, disease and despair as fighting closes in on besieged Sudanese city*, 12 May 2024.

⁵³⁷ Clingendael is a think tank and academy in the field of international relations. Visit <https://www.clingendael.org> for additional information.

⁵³⁸ Clingendael Institute, *From catastrophe to famine*, February 2024, pp. 3-6.

⁵³⁹ Confidential source, 10 April 2024.

⁵⁴⁰ Al Jazeera, *As Sudan war rages, rival sides accused of looting, diverting aid*, 16 June 2023.

⁵⁴¹ Also spelt 'Al-Ubayyid'.

⁵⁴² WFP, *WFP calls for urgent, safe access to feed millions in Sudan as fighting rages across the country*, 2 February 2024.

⁵⁴³ The New Humanitarian, *Obstacles to aid pile up as Sudan's conflict rages on*, 29 June 2023. Sudan INGO Forum, *Health facilities struggle with depleted stocks and aid blocked by bureaucratic impediments as Sudan enters its 100th day of war*, 24 July 2023. Confidential source, 6 October 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 10 April 2024. Reuters, *As famine looms in Sudan, the hungry eat soil and leaves*, 30 April 2024.

⁵⁴⁴ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

Forum⁵⁴⁵ reported that more than 110 employees of international aid organisations were awaiting visas.⁵⁴⁶ On 31 August 2023, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)⁵⁴⁷ reported that 205 visa applications were pending.⁵⁴⁸ In early October 2023, at least a hundred NGO workers were waiting in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, for Sudanese visas.⁵⁴⁹ One source was aware of a foreign aid worker who had been banned from entering Port Sudan by Sudanese authorities. The aid worker had contacted an RSF commander concerning the admission of aid to an RSF-controlled area in Darfur. This led the Sudanese authorities to regard the person as a threat to the state.⁵⁵⁰

The sources accessed indicated that the SAF seemed to be antagonising international aid agencies more than the RSF. When asked, the sources said that this was not so much for strategic reasons. The sources attributed the unwillingness of the SAF to several factors. The SAF simply showed no interest in the welfare of the Sudanese people and tried to extort money from international aid organisations. The SAF purportedly also did not want emergency assistance to be provided in RSF-controlled areas. In the eyes of the SAF, this could enhance the legitimacy of the RSF and strengthen civilian RSF supporters.⁵⁵¹ At the time of writing, no more information was available on the motives that the warring parties had for obstructing emergency aid.

The RSF was apparently more cooperative with humanitarian actors. According to two sources, this attitude presumably stemmed from a desire to achieve a better international standing. Although the RSF granted more access to humanitarian actors, aid workers did not necessarily feel safe in RSF-controlled areas. For example, the RSF regularly looted relief supplies, and aid workers were extorted at RSF checkpoints.⁵⁵² Another source noted that, at RSF checkpoints in East Darfur, relief supplies from an Emergency Response Room (ERR), or local relief committee, had been seized (refer to Section 4.6 for additional information on ERRs).⁵⁵³

In the worst case, aid workers themselves became a target. The examples provided below are used solely for illustrative purposes. This should in no way be regarded as a comprehensive list. On 13 April 2023, three WFP staff members were killed in North Darfur while providing life-saving aid.⁵⁵⁴ On 7 June 2023, armed men killed an employee of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur. The case involved 34-year-old Abubaker Jeddo, who worked for the NRC in displacement camps in West Darfur.⁵⁵⁵ On 24 July 2023, the Sudan INGO Forum reported that at least seventeen aid workers had been killed in the previous three months.⁵⁵⁶ On 19 October 2023, OCHA reported that at least 45 aid workers had been killed or detained since 15 April 2023.⁵⁵⁷ On 10 December 2023, an aid convoy of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)⁵⁵⁸ was attacked in

⁵⁴⁵ The Sudan INGO Forum is a grouping of seventy international NGOs working in Sudan. It consists of NGOs that are involved with development cooperation, humanitarian aid and peace-building.

⁵⁴⁶ Sudan INGO Forum, *Health facilities struggle with depleted stocks and aid blocked by bureaucratic impediments as Sudan enters its 100th day of war*, 24 July 2023.

⁵⁴⁷ Consult <https://www.unocha.org/sudan> for additional information on the work of OCHA in Sudan.

⁵⁴⁸ OCHA, *Sudan, Humanitarian update*, 31 August 2023, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁹ Confidential source, 6 October 2023.

⁵⁵⁰ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵⁵¹ Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 March 2024. Confidential source, 21 May 2024.

⁵⁵² Confidential source, 9 February 2024. Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁵⁵³ Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁵⁵⁴ UN, *WFP chief puts hold on Sudan aid operations, following death of 3 staff in unrest*, 16 April 2023.

⁵⁵⁵ NRC, *Sudan, NRC colleague killed in Darfur*, 5 July 2023.

⁵⁵⁶ Sudan INGO Forum, *Health facilities struggle with depleted stocks and aid blocked by bureaucratic impediments as Sudan enters its 100th day of war*, 24 July 2023.

⁵⁵⁷ OCHA, *Sudan, Humanitarian update*, 19 October 2023, p. 1.

⁵⁵⁸ The ICRC is known in French as the *Comité international de la Croix-Rouge*. Consult <https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/africa/sudan> for additional information on the work of the ICRC in Sudan.

Khartoum. This left two dead and seven injured. The wounded included three ICRC staff members.⁵⁵⁹ On 2 May 2024, armed men opened fire on an ICRC aid team in South Darfur. Two drivers were killed, and three other employees were injured.⁵⁶⁰

On 1 March 2024, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Türk concluded that the warring parties were obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid and that this obstruction may have constituted a war crime. He therefore called on both sides to open humanitarian corridors so that the civilian population could be reached and so that no more lives would be lost.⁵⁶¹

The WFP delivered humanitarian aid from Chad to the needy population in the RSF-controlled part of Darfur. In late February 2024, SAF-affiliated authorities decided that aid could no longer be delivered from Chad and closed the border to humanitarian convoys. As the reason, the authorities stated that arms could be supplied to the RSF under the pretext of emergency aid.⁵⁶² Although the authorities did not exercise control over the border region between eastern Chad and Darfur, aid organisations not complying with the ban risked being barred from SAF-controlled areas.⁵⁶³

On 1 March 2024, Borrell (High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) and Lenarčič (European Commissioner for Crisis Management) described this decision as a 'flagrant violation of international humanitarian law'.⁵⁶⁴ In early March 2024, it became clear that parts of the Sudanese-Chadian border would be re-opened for humanitarian aid.⁵⁶⁵ In late March 2024, two WFP aid convoys managed to reach Darfur from Chad. These convoys brought food aid for a month for about 250,000 people. This delivery had been preceded by lengthy discussions with SAF-affiliated authorities.⁵⁶⁶

It is impossible to provide a complete overview of the international aid organisations that were operating in Sudan at the time of writing. This was due to the constantly changing situation. The authorities in Port Sudan, which were affiliated with the SAF, have typically granted international aid organisations short-term licences to carry out operations. Some international aid organisations involved an office in Port Sudan; other international aid organisations chose to provide assistance from abroad through a partner organisation in Sudan. As far as could be ascertained, several international aid organisations remained active in Sudan in one way or another, including MSF, the ICRC, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Solidarités International and several branches of the UN (e.g. the WFP).⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁵⁹ Al Jazeera, *Attack on Red Cross convoy in Sudan kills at least two, injures seven*, 10 December 2023. BBC, *Sudan war, Two people killed in attack on aid convoy in Sudan, says Red Cross*, 10 December 2023. ST, *Sudanese army attack on Red Cross convoy kills two people in Khartoum*, 10 December 2023. Darfur 24, *UN condemns attack on ICRC convoy in Khartoum*, 11 December 2023.

⁵⁶⁰ ICRC, *Sudan, Two ICRC drivers killed by gunmen*, 2 May 2024.

⁵⁶¹ Al Jazeera, *UN official warns of possible war crimes, rape as a weapon in Sudan*, 1 March 2024.

⁵⁶² USDoS, *Condemning the obstruction of humanitarian assistance and closing of civic space in Sudan*, 23 February 2024. Voice of America (VOA), *Sudan authorities block cross-border aid to stricken Darfur*, 25 February 2024.

⁵⁶³ Confidential source, 1 March 2024. EC, *Sudan, Joint statement by High Representative Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on the ban on cross-border assistance from Chad*, 1 March 2024. RD, *Chad-Sudan aid supply ban leaves Darfur families 'teetering on the edge'*, 4 March 2024. Confidential source, 8 March 2024.

⁵⁶⁴ Confidential source, 26 April 2024.

⁵⁶⁵ EC, *Sudan, Joint statement by High Representative Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on the ban on cross-border assistance from Chad*, 1 March 2024.

⁵⁶⁶ RD, *Sudan govt to open borders and airports to humanitarian aid*, 6 March 2024. Confidential source, 8 March 2024.

⁵⁶⁷ Al Jazeera, *First UN food aid in months arrives in Sudan's Darfur as famine looms*, 5 April 2024. The Independent, *First UN food supplies arrive in Sudan's Darfur after months but millions face acute hunger*, 5 April 2024. WFP, *First food aid in months reaches Darfur, yet limited humanitarian access is worsening Sudan's hunger catastrophe*, 5 April 2024. ST, *WFP food assistance reaches Darfur after several months*, 7 April 2024.

⁵⁶⁸ Confidential source, 26 April 2024.

It is also difficult to identify which international aid organisation was operating in which state and which states were structurally being deprived of humanitarian aid.⁵⁶⁸ In January 2024, ACAPS published a study,⁵⁶⁹ indicating that parts of Khartoum, Darfur and Kordofan, in particular, were only partially accessible, if at all, to humanitarian aid.⁵⁷⁰ For humanitarian actors, access to states was subject to change. For example, it was known that WFP had managed to reach thirteen of the eighteen states by 2024. This UN food agency had as yet failed to reach North Kordofan, West Kordofan, El Gezira, South Darfur and East Darfur. This in no way suggests that the WFP enjoyed continuous access to the remaining states. For example, it succeeded in reaching Khartoum only once in 2024, with 50,000 people having received food aid.⁵⁷¹

In May 2024, MSF decided to withdraw from the only hospital that was still operational in Wad Madani. At that time, hundreds of thousands of people were still living in the city. After the RSF took Wad Madani in late December 2023, MSF had left the city temporarily. Although it returned to Wad Madani in mid-January 2024, insecurity persisted. Staff members of MSF were detained, and the hospital was targeted for looting. The organisation reported that the aforementioned security incidents were committed or condoned by the RSF. Between mid-January and late April 2024, MSF had provided nearly 10,000 outpatient treatments, conducted 2,142 antenatal consultations and cared for 16 victims of sexual violence in Wad Madani. With the withdrawal of MSF, there was no longer an international aid organisation operating in Wad Madani.⁵⁷² Refer to the next section (6.6) for additional information on the state of the healthcare sector in Sudan.

6.6 Collapsing healthcare sector

In addition to violence and food insecurity, there was also a shortage of medical care and facilities. People died because of this as well, because they were not able to receive treatment for their health problems.⁵⁷³ Medical institutions were bombed from the air by the SAF or shelled and looted by the RSF.⁵⁷⁴ According to the research organisation Insecurity Insight,⁵⁷⁵ 58 medical institutions were damaged or destroyed between 15 April 2023 and 6 February 2024.⁵⁷⁶ On 8 February 2024, the WHO reported that seventy to eighty percent of the health facilities in conflict zones were either inaccessible or out of use.⁵⁷⁷

Not only health facilities, but also members of the medical staff have been targeted. Both warring parties have used violence against healthcare workers. It also occurred that healthcare workers were threatened or arrested.⁵⁷⁸ According to Insecurity Insight, 54 healthcare workers were killed, 28 kidnapped and 63 injured between 15 April 2023 and 6 February 2024.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁶⁸ Confidential source, 26 April 2024.

⁵⁶⁹ ACAPS, formerly known as the Assessment Capacities Project, analyses crises and seeks to assist aid workers, policymakers and donors by collecting crisis data. Consult <https://www.acaps.org> for additional information on this NGO.

⁵⁷⁰ ACAPS, *Sudan*, 23 January 2024, pp. 1 and 10.

⁵⁷¹ Confidential source, 26 April 2024.

⁵⁷² MSF, *MSF forced to suspend essential support in Wad Madani due to obstructions and harassment*, 9 May 2024.

⁵⁷³ Sudan Human Rights Hub (SHRH), *Sudan, Attacks on healthcare since April 15, 2023*, 28 March 2024, p. 36.

⁵⁷⁴ SHRH, *Sudan*, 28 March 2024, pp. 5 and 11.

⁵⁷⁵ Consult <https://insecurityinsight.org/country-pages/sudan> for additional information on the findings of Insecurity Insight in relation to Sudan.

⁵⁷⁶ SHRH, *Sudan*, 28 March 2024, p. 7.

⁵⁷⁷ WHO, *Sudan, Urgent action needed to reach the most vulnerable in Sudan with life-saving health services*, 8 February 2024.

⁵⁷⁸ SHRH, *Sudan*, 28 March 2024, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁹ SHRH, *Sudan*, 28 March 2024, pp. 2 and 7.

There was also a severe shortage of medicines and medical supplies. According to one doctor, about ninety percent of the companies importing medicines had been looted. The same doctor reported that 27 pharmaceutical factories had been destroyed in Khartoum. Around 2,500 pharmacies in the same city had been looted or fallen out of use. The lack of drugs and medical supplies was exacerbated when the RSF captured Wad Madani in December 2023 (see 2.2.6), as most of Sudan's health supplies were located there.⁵⁸⁰

In light of the developments detailed above, MSF repeatedly concluded that the healthcare sector in Sudan, which was already deficient before the outbreak of war, was 'on the edge of collapse'.⁵⁸¹

On 11 May 2024, a children's hospital in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, was hit by an attack by the Sudanese air force. Two minor patients and one care provider were killed in the incident. The hospital received support from MSF and, at the time, it was one of the few children's hospitals in the whole of Darfur. Children here were treated for malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea and malnutrition. As a result of the air raid, the hospital became inoperable.⁵⁸²

On 12 May 2024, *The Guardian* reported that only one doctor was working in all of Abu Shouk, a displacement camp on the northern edge of El Fasher. This doctor shared that, due to lack of medicine, people were dying of diseases that would normally be curable.⁵⁸³ According to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 105,000 people were staying in Abu Shouk in October 2022.⁵⁸⁴ A more recent population figure for Abu Shouk was not available at the time of writing.

Confidential information also revealed that Sudan's healthcare sector was in poor shape. One source was aware of a diabetic patient in Singa, a city in the state of Sennar, who was having trouble preserving insulin in the refrigerator, due to repeated power cuts. In addition, access to insulin was limited, and this drug had to be imported from abroad through Port Sudan.⁵⁸⁵

Another source had access to information on health situations in El Obeid, the capital of northern Kordofan. At the time of writing, El Obeid was in the hands of the SAF. About ninety percent of North Kordofan was under the control of the RSF, with the result that El Obeid was virtually encircled. At the time of writing, one public hospital, one private hospital and one dental centre were partially operational in El Obeid. According to the source, this meant that some hospital wards (e.g. emergency departments) were still open.⁵⁸⁶ At the time of writing, the population of El Obeid was estimated at 542,584 inhabitants.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁰ SHRH, Sudan, 28 March 2024, pp. 3, 22, 23 and 29.

⁵⁸¹ MSF, *Six months of war and neglect in Sudan is a 'catastrophic failure of humanity'*, 12 October 2023. MSF, *Sudan, Health system on the verge of collapse in Khartoum*, 18 January 2024.

⁵⁸² MSF, *Bomb kills two children and puts El Fasher hospital out of action amid fighting*, 12 May 2024.

⁵⁸³ The Guardian, *Death, disease and despair as fighting closes in on besieged Sudanese city*, 12 May 2024.

⁵⁸⁴ NRC, *Abu Shouk Camp Profile – Al Fasher, North Darfur State*, October 2022, p. 1.

⁵⁸⁵ Confidential source, 18 April 2024.

⁵⁸⁶ Confidential source, 24 April 2024.

⁵⁸⁷ World Population Review, *El Obeid Population 2024*, undated, accessed on 13 May 2024.

6.7 Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries

6.7.1 Introduction

On 23 February 2024, the humanitarian arm of the UN (OCHA), reported that 1.8 million people had fled from Sudan abroad as a result of the conflict, in particular to Egypt, Ethiopia, Chad and South Sudan.⁵⁸⁸ Chad hosted the most Sudanese refugees, followed by Egypt.⁵⁸⁹ This section elaborates on the reception of Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries.

6.7.2 Egypt

According to the Egyptian government, 508,827 people had come to Egypt from Sudan between April 2023 and March 2024. This group consisted of half a million Sudanese and 8,827 people of other nationalities. As of 29 February 2024, there were 267,227 Sudanese registered with the UNHCR as refugees in Egypt. This number included Sudanese who had fled to Egypt before April 2023.⁵⁹⁰

During the reporting period, Egyptian authorities tightened entry conditions for Sudanese. In the first weeks of the war, Sudanese women, minors under the age of sixteen and men over the age of fifty could enter Egypt without a visa. Thereafter, any Sudanese person was required to hold a passport that was valid for at least six months at the time of entry. With effect from June 2023, Sudanese were required to obtain a visa to enter Egypt.⁵⁹¹ Due to corruption practices, visa fees were reportedly as high as one thousand to two thousand US dollars.⁵⁹²

Due to tightened entry conditions, Sudanese were increasingly crossing the Sudanese-Egyptian border illegally. Such ventures proved extremely risky.⁵⁹³ In mid-January 2024, *Radio Dabanga* (RD) reported that 'several' Sudanese had died during illegal entry into Egypt due to dehydration, overheating or contaminated water.⁵⁹⁴

In principle, Sudanese in Egypt could register with the UNHCR as refugees. In practice, however, they encountered several obstacles in the process. Sudanese could register with the UNHCR only in Cairo and Alexandria. Obtaining an appointment could take four to six months.⁵⁹⁵ According to the UNHCR, more than 475,000 people had fled from Sudan to Egypt between April 2023 and 8 April 2024. More than 227,000 of these people were registered as refugees; the rest had been assigned appointments.⁵⁹⁶ In addition, Sudanese refugees were at risk of being detained by Egyptian authorities while travelling from the Sudanese-Egyptian border

⁵⁸⁸ OCHA, *Sudan, Situation report*, last updated on 23 February 2024, accessed on 3 March 2024.

⁵⁸⁹ UNHCR, *UN Secretary-General meets with Sudanese refugees in Cairo*, 24 March 2024.

⁵⁹⁰ UNHCR, *Sudan Emergency Response update*, 19 March 2024, pp. 1 and 2.

⁵⁹¹ The New Arab, *Egypt toughens visa requirements for Sudanese*, 10 June 2023. UNHCR, *Sudan emergency response update*, 15 June 2023, p. 2. HRW, *Egypt, Civilians fleeing Sudan conflict turned away, New entry restrictions leave asylum seekers in peril*, 13 July 2023. VOA, *Activists want Egypt to ease entry for refugees from Sudan conflict*, 24 July 2023. EUobserver, *Sudanese fleeing violence find no haven in Egypt or EU*, 8 December 2023. Refugees Platform in Egypt (RPE), *From Sudan to Egypt, Egyptian decisions spark high-risk irregular migration movement*, 14 March 2024. Le Monde, *L'Égypte, une voie sans issue pour les exilés soudanais*, 15 April 2024.

⁵⁹² The New Humanitarian, *For Sudanese fleeing to Egypt, a hard border and an uncertain future*, 10 July 2023. Confidential source, 5 April 2024.

⁵⁹³ RD, *'Several' Sudanese die crossing border into Egypt*, 16 January 2024. MEE, *Sudanese turn to smugglers to cross border into Egypt*, 15 February 2024. RPE, *From Sudan to Egypt*, 14 March 2024. Confidential source, 5 April 2024. Le Monde, *L'Égypte, une voie sans issue pour les exilés soudanais*, 15 April 2024. The New Humanitarian, *Inside Egypt's secret scheme to detain and deport thousands of Sudanese refugees*, 25 April 2024.

⁵⁹⁴ RD, *'Several' Sudanese die crossing border into Egypt*, 16 January 2024.

⁵⁹⁵ BBC, *Escaping Sudan, 'My mother's body was left by smugglers in the desert'*, 28 February 2024. RPE, *From Sudan to Egypt*, 14 March 2024. UNHCR, *Fact sheet – Egypt*, April 2024, p. 3. Le Monde, *L'Égypte, une voie sans issue pour les exilés soudanais*, 15 April 2024.

⁵⁹⁶ UNHCR, *Fact sheet – Egypt*, April 2024, p. 3.

to Cairo or Alexandria, as they were not lawfully residing in Egypt at the time. Once in detention, Sudanese who had been detained were also unable to apply for international protection.⁵⁹⁷ Registered refugees did not receive financial support.⁵⁹⁸

During the reporting period, there were reports that the Egyptian authorities had detained and/or deported Sudanese to Sudan. In late March 2024, a joint statement was released by 27 Sudanese and international human rights organisations. In this release, they stated that Egyptian authorities had arrested, detained and deported Sudanese to Sudan. According to human rights organisations, the deportation procedures had been conducted unlawfully. Both asylum seekers and registered refugees are said to have fallen victim to the aforementioned practices. Human rights organisations called on the Egyptian government to comply with international conventions, as well as with its own laws and regulations.⁵⁹⁹ On 1 April 2024, two international human rights groups⁶⁰⁰ also expressed concern over the arrest, detention and deportation of Sudanese. They called on Egyptian authorities not to send Sudanese back to Sudan and to ensure that all Sudanese were given access to the asylum procedure in Egypt.⁶⁰¹

According to media reports, Egyptian authorities deported thousands of Sudanese to Sudan during the reporting period. In mid-April 2024, the French daily *Le Monde* estimated that thousands of Sudanese had been detained and/or deported to Sudan since January 2024.⁶⁰² In an in-depth article in late April 2024, the Refugees Platform in Egypt (RPE)⁶⁰³ and The New Humanitarian⁶⁰⁴ claimed that Egyptian authorities were deporting thousands of Sudanese to Sudan. They based the article on interviews with dozens of Sudanese refugees, lawyers and human rights groups, Egyptian government documents and open source intelligence (OSINT). Their investigation revealed that several branches of the Egyptian security apparatus, including border guards and police, were involved in detaining and deporting Sudanese. Before being deported, Sudanese were first detained at military bases. During their detention, they had no access to the outside world and could not apply for asylum. Detention conditions were poor, and Sudanese detainees suffered from rodents, lice, ticks and overflowing sewage water. As a result, some developed health problems, including skin infections and respiratory problems. Without any type of registration, the Sudanese were then deported, according to the RPE and The New Humanitarian.⁶⁰⁵

6.7.3 Ethiopia

According to UNHCR figures, 46,575 people had fled from Sudan to Ethiopia between 15 April 2023 and 28 January 2024. Most people in this group (30,866; ≈66%) were of Sudanese nationality. In addition, the UNHCR counted 6,282 Ethiopians (≈13%) who had fled to Sudan in the past and were now returning to Ethiopia. They were referred to by the technical term 'refugee returnees'.

⁵⁹⁷ RPE, *From Sudan to Egypt*, 14 March 2024. *Le Monde, L'Égypte, une voie sans issue pour les exilés soudanais*, 15 April 2024.

⁵⁹⁸ BBC, *Escaping Sudan*, 28 February 2024.

⁵⁹⁹ RPE, *Joint statement, Egyptian authorities must end arbitrary detentions and forced deportations of Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers*, 27 March 2024.

⁶⁰⁰ The two organisations were the Global Detention Project (GDP) and the Committee for Justice (CJ).

⁶⁰¹ ST, *Rights groups decry detention of Sudanese refugees in Egypt*, 1 April 2024.

⁶⁰² *Le Monde, L'Égypte, une voie sans issue pour les exilés soudanais*, 15 April 2024.

⁶⁰³ The RPE is an Egyptian human rights group that advocates for the interests of refugees. Consult <https://rpegy.org/en/> for additional information on the RPE.

⁶⁰⁴ *The New Humanitarian* is an independent non-profit news platform. It focuses primarily on conflicts, disasters and other types of crises. Consult <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org> for additional information on *The New Humanitarian*.

⁶⁰⁵ The New Humanitarian, *Inside Egypt's secret scheme to detain and deport thousands of Sudanese refugees*, 25 April 2024.

Furthermore, 9,413 refugees ($\approx 20\%$) with other nationalities had travelled into the country from Sudan.⁶⁰⁶ It was not known whether Ethiopian returnees experienced personal problems upon returning to Ethiopia.

According to a report by *Radio Dabanga* (RD), there was a lack of food, water, shelter and healthcare in the refugee camps in Ethiopia. Cholera had also broken out in the camps. Furthermore, there were concerns about the safety of the refugees. The camps were minimally guarded, if at all, and armed men made the area unsafe. For example, reports emerged of Sudanese refugees who had been killed, raped, robbed or abducted. This security issue should be seen within the context of an armed conflict between the Ethiopian government and local militias.⁶⁰⁷

Consult the General Country of Origin Information Report on Ethiopia of January 2024 for additional information on the situation of Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia.⁶⁰⁸

6.7.4 Kenya

Kenya hosted a sizeable refugee community. As of 30 October 2023, this community comprised 676,332 registered refugees and asylum seekers, according to Kenyan authorities and UNHCR. Most refugees and asylum seekers were from Somalia and South Sudan.⁶⁰⁹

There were two official refugee camps in Kenya: Kakuma⁶¹⁰ in the north-west and Daadab in the east.⁶¹¹ Most of the people staying in the Kakuma camp were South Sudanese, with the majority in Daab being Somali. By the end of October 2023, 302,805 refugees and asylum seekers were residing in Daadab (44.77%), with 275,412 refugees and asylum seekers in Kakuma (40.72%) and 98,115 refugees and asylum seekers (14.51%) in urban areas.⁶¹²

The Department of Refugee Services (DRS) is the Kenyan government agency that registers asylum seekers, provides refugee status determination (RSD) and issues documents to asylum seekers and recognised refugees. The DRS falls under the State Department of Immigration and Citizen Services, which is part of Kenya's Ministry of the Interior and National Administration. The DRS is headquartered in Nairobi.⁶¹³

Sudanese asylum seekers must make a plausible case for protection on individual grounds. The duration of individual status treatment depends on the complexity of the case. If granted, the asylum status holder will receive a refugee identity card valid for five years. After five years, this document can be renewed.⁶¹⁴

In late October 2023, Kenya had 10,762 Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers.⁶¹⁵ Most people from Sudan reached Kenya overland through the porous borders with South Sudan and Ethiopia. Upon arrival in Kenya, an asylum seeker may approach

⁶⁰⁶ UNHCR, *Overview of refugees and asylum seekers movements within and out of Sudan*, 28 January 2024, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁷ RD, *Sudanese killed and raped in Ethiopian refugee camps*, 20 February 2024.

⁶⁰⁸ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Ethiopia*, January 2024, p. 19.

⁶⁰⁹ Kenyan government and UNHCR, *Kenya, Registered refugees and asylum-seekers*, 30 October 2023.

⁶¹⁰ The Kalobeyei settlement, which is located north-west of Kakuma, also houses refugees. Confidential source, 29 May 2024. UNHCR, *Kalobeyei Settlement*, undated, accessed on 30 May 2024.

⁶¹¹ Kenyan government and UNHCR, *Kenya, Registered refugees and asylum-seekers*, 30 October 2023. Confidential source, 13 February 2024.

⁶¹² Kenyan government and UNHCR, *Kenya, Registered refugees and asylum-seekers*, 30 October 2023.

⁶¹³ Visit <https://refugee.go.ke> for additional information on the DRS.

⁶¹⁴ Confidential source, 13 February 2024.

⁶¹⁵ Kenyan government and UNHCR, *Kenya, Registered refugees and asylum-seekers*, 30 October 2023.

an authority figure (e.g. a police officer, an immigration officer or a chief).⁶¹⁶ This authority can then refer the asylum seeker to an office of the DRS.⁶¹⁷

Recognised refugees residing in the aforementioned camps had free access to a variety of services, including healthcare, education, sanitation, water and hot meals. Those choosing to settle in urban areas were required to earn their own living.⁶¹⁸

One source noted that Kenya received a large number of Eritreans, Ethiopians and South Sudanese who had previously been registered as refugees with UNHCR in Sudan. This group was referred to by the technical term 'secondary refugees'. Although these secondary refugees enjoyed access to the aforementioned services in the refugee camps, their status in Kenya had yet to be formalised. According to the same source, given that they had already been registered as refugees with UNHCR in Sudan, at the time of writing the Kenyan government and UNHCR were in discussions regarding how their refugee registration could be 'transferred' from Sudan to Kenya.⁶¹⁹

The exact number of secondary refugees from Sudan in Kenya was not known. Refer to Section 6.8 for additional information on Eritrean, Ethiopian and South Sudanese refugees in Sudan.

6.7.5 *Chad (particularly eastern Chad)*

Even before the outbreak of war in April 2023, eastern Chad was already hosting 400,000 Sudanese refugees, according to the UNHCR.⁶²⁰ As a result of the escalation of violence in Darfur, and especially in West Darfur (see 2.2.4), many Sudanese fled to eastern Chad in the reporting period, especially women and children of the Masalit community. According to the UNHCR, 564,686 Sudanese had fled to Chad between 15 April 2023 and 25 February 2024.⁶²¹ Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that 65% of all Sudanese coming into Chad were Masalit.⁶²² This was the largest influx of refugees in the country's history.⁶²³

There were two types of refugee camps in the east of Chad. Close to the border with Sudan were informal camps that had emerged spontaneously. In addition, official camps managed by the UNHCR were located more inland.⁶²⁴

Plans called for Sudanese to have temporary accommodations in informal camps near the towns on the border of Chad. The intention was for them to be registered there before being transferred to one of the official camps further from the border with Sudan. In practice, however, flow stalled in border towns like Adré.⁶²⁵ In early January 2024, the 'transit camp' in Adré had more than 120,000 residents, according to *Foreign Policy* (FP).⁶²⁶ In late February 2024, approximately 150,000

⁶¹⁶ In contemporary Kenya, a chief is in charge of maintaining law and order and crime prevention within a particular area. The powers of a chief are set out in the Chiefs' Act of 1998, which was amended in 2012. National Crime Research Centre (NCRC), *The role of chiefs in localized crime and security management in Kenya*, published in 2021, pp. xii, 5 and 6. Confidential source, 14 March 2024.

⁶¹⁷ Confidential source, 13 February 2024.

⁶¹⁸ Confidential source, 13 February 2024.

⁶¹⁹ Confidential source, 13 February 2024. Confidential source, 27 February 2024.

⁶²⁰ UNHCR, *Sudanese refugees fleeing violence flock to Chad*, 24 May 2023.

⁶²¹ UNHCR, *ODP, Sudan situation*, last updated on 17 March 2024, accessed on 25 March 2024.

⁶²² HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, p. 194.

⁶²³ Al Jazeera, *A year of violence, of displacement, of violations in Sudan's war*, 14 April 2024.

⁶²⁴ Confidential source, 29 March 2024.

⁶²⁵ Trouw, *Leven onder 'vier stokken and een stuk plastic' in de woestijn*, 1 December 2023. FP, *Europe is making Sudan's refugee crisis worse*, 8 January 2024. Confidential source, 1 March 2024.

⁶²⁶ FP, *Europe is making Sudan's refugee crisis worse*, 8 January 2024.

people were staying in the camp at Adré.⁶²⁷ About a month later, there were 160,000, according to *The Guardian*.⁶²⁸

Living conditions in the informal camp at Adré were harrowing. There was a lack of shelter, water, food, healthcare and education. Refugees slept under homemade tents consisting of sticks, leaves, plastic bags, tarpaulin and clothes.⁶²⁹ In Adré, 1 latrine was available for every 677 people.⁶³⁰

Shortages of shelter, water, food, healthcare and education also existed in other camps in eastern Chad.⁶³¹ In the official camp at Farchana, one school served thousands of children.⁶³² For the 40,000 inhabitants in Farchana, there was one basic clinic.⁶³³ This group of destitute people included refugees who had been residing there for some time, as well as Sudanese and Chadian returnees who had recently fled Sudan.⁶³⁴

Food insecurity stalked Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad.⁶³⁵ For example, on 19 January 2024, *Radio Dabanga* (RD) reported that at least five children had starved to death in the Irdimi camp.⁶³⁶ The WHO recorded the deaths of 157 children who had succumbed to malnutrition in eastern Chad between 1 and 28 January 2024.⁶³⁷

Not only were living conditions in the refugee camps in eastern Chad poor, there were also concerns about the safety of refugees. In particular, the informal camps were located close to RSF control areas in Darfur, with little, if any, security.⁶³⁸ For example, security at the Adré camp, which was less than five kilometres from the Sudanese border, consisted of three Chadian government soldiers, according to one source.⁶³⁹ Hitlists were purportedly circulating amongst the RSF and affiliated militias. These lists included Masalit leaders, journalists and human rights activists. Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad feared that RSF fighters and members of the militia would infiltrate the camps to kill the targets.⁶⁴⁰

During the reporting period, there were reports of security threats and incidents in eastern Chad. *Radio Dabanga* (RD) reported that a Sudanese refugee was shot to death on 26 September 2023 while working the land to the north-west of Irdimi.⁶⁴¹ The Darfur Women's Forum, a Darfuri women's group, indicated that it was

⁶²⁷ Confidential source, 1 March 2024.

⁶²⁸ The Guardian, 'Here, there is no future', *Ethnic cleansing and fresh atrocities drive exodus of thousands from Darfur*, 22 March 2024.

⁶²⁹ De Volkskrant, 'De situatie in het vluchtelingenkamp vlakbij de grens met Soedan is schrijnend en hartverscheurend', 19 September 2023. RD, *Sudanese refugees face dire conditions in Chad*, 11 October 2023. Trouw, *Leven onder 'vier stokken and een stuk plastic' in de woestijn*, 1 December 2023. Al Jazeera, *In a refugee camp in Chad, Sudanese women are running out of hope*, 15 December 2023. FP, *Europe is making Sudan's refugee crisis worse*, 8 January 2024.

⁶³⁰ SWM, *Ceasefire needed to prevent famine, U.S. says, Humanitarian funding inadequate to meet the scale of the crisis*, 27 March 2024.

⁶³¹ Confidential source, 1 November 2023. ST, *Sudanese refugees in Chad face security, humanitarian challenges: report*, 11 December 2023. Confidential source, 26 February 2024. SWM, *Chad instability threatens Darfur refugees, 29 February 2024*. Confidential source, 1 March 2024. The Independent, *Refugee camps in Chad are overcrowded and running out of aid, and Sudanese refugees keep coming*, 22 March 2024.

⁶³² Confidential source, 26 February 2024.

⁶³³ Confidential source, 1 March 2024.

⁶³⁴ Confidential source, 4 April 2024.

⁶³⁵ Le Monde, *Au Darfour, 'les gens ont tellement faim'*, 18 April 2024. The Economist, *Ever deeper into hell*, 18 April 2024.

⁶³⁶ RD, *Sudanese children face starvation in Chad camp*, 19 January 2024.

⁶³⁷ The WHO and the government of Chad, *Weekly report on the humanitarian and health crisis in Eastern Chad linked to the influx of refugees and returnees following the Sudanese conflict, Period from 01 to 28/01/2024*, 22 February 2024.

⁶³⁸ RD, *Darfur Women's Forum: Risk of rape confines refugees in Chad to camps*, 23 October 2023. Confidential source, 1 November 2023. ST, *Sudanese refugees in Chad face security, humanitarian challenges: report*, 11 December 2023. Confidential source, 1 March 2024.

⁶³⁹ Confidential source, 1 November 2023.

⁶⁴⁰ Confidential source, 24 and 25 March 2024. HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, p. 112.

⁶⁴¹ RD, *Sudanese farmer gunned-down in eastern Chad*, 28 September 2023.

dangerous for women to go outside the camps, as they were at high risk of rape there. This made it considerably more difficult to collect firewood.⁶⁴² RD reported that a gun battle took place in the Ibtienki refugee camp on 11 March 2024. In this incident, a Sudanese refugee child was fatally struck by a stray bullet. The Chadian army eventually managed to restore order.⁶⁴³

6.7.6 Uganda

Uganda's asylum policy was known as generous and progressive.⁶⁴⁴ As of 31 January 2024, Uganda was hosting nearly 1.6 million refugees.⁶⁴⁵ Although most of the refugees were from neighbouring countries,⁶⁴⁶ they also included individuals from Asian countries (e.g. Afghanistan and Pakistan).⁶⁴⁷ This made Uganda the host country in Africa with the largest number of refugees.⁶⁴⁸

Even before the outbreak of war in April 2023, Uganda was harbouring a Sudanese diaspora. This community consisted primarily of Darfurians who had previously fled the violence of the Janjaweed, the forerunners of the RSF (see 1.2).⁶⁴⁹ The influx of Sudanese asylum seekers into Uganda increased steadily during the reporting period. According to Ugandan authorities, Uganda had 8,289 Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers as of 30 September 2023.⁶⁵⁰ By 31 January 2024, this number had increased to more than 16,000 people.⁶⁵¹

The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is the Ugandan government body that registers asylum seekers, provides refugee status determination (RSD) and issues documents to asylum seekers and recognised refugees.⁶⁵² The OPM is headquartered in Old Kampala.⁶⁵³

In November 2023, Uganda announced a *prima facie* policy⁶⁵⁴ for Sudanese asylum seekers. This policy applied retroactively from April 2023.⁶⁵⁵ Upon arrival, Sudanese refugees must prove their nationality, identity and origin based on identity documents, oral statements and/or third-party testimonies. If there are no indications that they have been involved in war crimes and/or pose a danger to public order and security, they will be granted asylum status. As far as could be ascertained, no Sudanese asylum claims had been rejected up to the time of writing.⁶⁵⁶ One source added that, in the past, 'a few' Sudanese asylum seekers had

⁶⁴² RD, *Darfur Women's Forum: Risk of rape confines refugees in Chad to camps*, 23 October 2023.

⁶⁴³ RD, *Sudanese child killed in Chad refugee camp attack*, 14 March 2024.

⁶⁴⁴ Ayin Network, *Sudanese refugees, Trying to make ends meet in Uganda*, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁴⁵ UNHCR, *Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal*, updated on 31 January 2024, accessed on 26 February 2024.

⁶⁴⁶ Examples could include South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Sudan.

⁶⁴⁷ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁴⁸ Africa Renewal, *Uganda stands out in refugees hospitality, The country hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa – more than a million*, December 2018 – March 2019. EC, *Uganda*, 31 October 2023.

⁶⁴⁹ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁵⁰ Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), *Uganda refugees & asylum seekers, Population summary by country of origin/gender and age group*, 30 September 2023.

⁶⁵¹ UNHCR, *Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal*, updated on 31 January 2024, accessed on 26 February 2024.

⁶⁵² Visit <https://opm.go.ug> for additional information on the OPM.

⁶⁵³ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁵⁴ *Prima facie* is Latin and literally means 'at first sight'. Within the context of asylum law and regulations, *prima facie* means that individuals are deemed to be refugees simply because they belong to a certain group of people and because of the circumstances in the country of origin.

⁶⁵⁵ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. UNHCR, *Sudan situation*, 7-13 March 2024, p. 14.

⁶⁵⁶ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

been rejected because the Ugandan authorities deemed it plausible that they had been involved in the Janjaweed massacres in Darfur at the time.⁶⁵⁷

Most Sudanese had reached Uganda overland through South Sudan.⁶⁵⁸ In the process, they crossed the border between South Sudan and Uganda at the South Sudanese border city of Nimule and the Ugandan border town of Nyumanzi.⁶⁵⁹ Registration and initial screening of Sudanese asylum seekers took place at the OPM office in Nyumanzi. The UNHCR then transported the Sudanese to a settlement⁶⁶⁰ near Kiryandongo.⁶⁶¹ This settlement was specifically designated as a location where Sudanese asylum seekers were to be registered. Here, they could await the further course of their asylum applications.⁶⁶² If granted, they were issued a 'Refugee Identity Card', which was valid for five years.⁶⁶³ If the situation in the country of origin has not improved, the document can be renewed after five years.⁶⁶⁴

Recognised refugees, including Sudanese, enjoyed freedom of movement in Uganda. They could choose to stay in Kiryandongo or settle in an urban area (e.g. Kampala). If they stayed in Kiryandongo, they were entitled to a variety of free services, including healthcare, education and water.⁶⁶⁵ They were also given a plot of land on loan, on which they could grow crops. Those who chose to settle in urban areas had to earn their own living.⁶⁶⁶ In this light, one source observed that Sudanese in urban areas tended to belong to the wealthy section of Sudanese society and had already established a local trade (or other) network prior to arriving in Uganda.⁶⁶⁷

During the reporting period, there were reports that access to drinking water, healthcare, education and shelter in Kiryandongo was poor.⁶⁶⁸ These reports could not be verified at the time of writing.⁶⁶⁹

Recognised refugees, including Sudanese, were allowed to do paid work. This allowed them to start a business or enter paid employment.⁶⁷⁰ One source added that refugees could not join the civil service.⁶⁷¹ Another source indicated that, although refugees were allowed to work, employment was already scarce for Ugandans, let alone for refugees who struggled with a language barrier and/or had to have their education papers validated first. Other refugees had fled from Sudan in haste, leaving their documents behind. As a result, they could not prove their educational and work background. The same source noted that Ugandan banks were also reluctant to lend to refugees.⁶⁷²

⁶⁵⁷ Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁵⁸ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁵⁹ Nyumanzi is in Adjumani, a district in West Nile, a region in north-western Uganda.

⁶⁶⁰ Ugandan authorities deliberately avoided the term 'camps'. The refugee settlements in Uganda were not fenced and had at most a barrier or guardhouse at the entrance. Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁶⁶¹ Kiryandongo is located in Bunyoro, a region in western Uganda.

⁶⁶² Confidential source, 7 February 2024. UNHCR, *Sudan situation*, 7-13 March 2024, p. 14.

⁶⁶³ This document was in the form of a debit card with various details on the front, including the name, date of birth, nationality and gender of the holder, the date of issue and expiry.

⁶⁶⁴ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁶⁵ One source added that refugees had to pay only a small fee to maintain the wells in the settlement near Kiryandongo. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁶⁶ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁶⁷ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁶⁶⁸ Ayin, *A new life in Kiryandongo – Sudanese refugee stories*, 22 February 2024. RD, *Sudan displaced 'left to fend for themselves' as aid falters in Darfur*, 29 February 2024. IRC, *Funding cuts could increase health and protection risks in Ugandan refugee settlements as more Sudanese refugees arrive, warns IRC*, 6 March 2024.

⁶⁶⁹ Confidential source, 19 April 2024.

⁶⁷⁰ Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁷¹ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁶⁷² Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

In addition to the efforts of the OPM and the UNHCR, the WFP provided food assistance to refugees in Uganda, including Sudanese refugees.⁶⁷³ Because of the war in Ukraine and a funding shortfall, the WFP was forced to ration food aid during the reporting period, referred to technically as 'prioritising'.⁶⁷⁴ In doing so, the WFP divided the refugees into three categories. The first category was known as 'highly vulnerable' and received sixty percent food assistance (often illustrated as two meals a day). The second category was described as 'moderately vulnerable' and received thirty percent food assistance (often illustrated as one meal a day). The third category was considered 'self-sufficient/self-reliant' and received no food assistance from the WFP. Of all refugees, 14% fell into the first category ('highly vulnerable'), with 82% in the second category ('moderately vulnerable') and 4% in the third category ('self-sufficient/self-reliant'). The rationing of food assistance led to negative consequences within the refugee community, including increased interpersonal tensions, child marriages, child labour, prostitution and theft.⁶⁷⁵

Anecdotal information revealed that Sudanese could also enjoy lawful residence in Uganda on other grounds. For example, one source told of a Sudanese who had flown from Port Sudan to Entebbe International Airport in Uganda. Upon arrival, the Sudanese was given a tourist visa that was valid for three months (ninety days). Thereafter, the person enrolled for studies and was granted a student visa that was valid for one year.⁶⁷⁶

6.7.7 South Sudan

According to the UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the South Sudanese government, 634,254 people had fled from Sudan to South Sudan between 15 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. Most people from this group — 496,192 (78.23%) — had South Sudanese nationality and were thus 'refugee returnees' (see also 6.7.3). In addition, the UNHCR, the IOM and the South Sudanese government counted 133,706 Sudanese refugees (21.08%) and 4,356 refugees of other nationalities (0.69%).⁶⁷⁷

According to UN estimates, South Sudan was receiving fifteen hundred people a day from Sudan.⁶⁷⁸ The humanitarian situation in South Sudan was already strained before war broke out in Sudan. As the country faced a large influx from its northern neighbour, the capacity of the South Sudanese government and aid agencies became overburdened. As a result, for Sudanese refugees, South Sudanese returnees, internally displaced persons and host communities, there was a lack of food, shelter, water, healthcare and education.⁶⁷⁹

Returnees included South Sudanese who had fled to Sudan during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) or during the civil war that followed South Sudanese independence in 2013. Others returnees had previously migrated to

⁶⁷³ Consult <https://www.wfp.org/countries/uganda> for additional information on the activities and work of the WFP in Uganda.

⁶⁷⁴ The New Humanitarian, *How a WFP food aid revamp has gone wrong for refugees in Uganda*, 15 December 2023. Confidential source, 7 February 2024. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁷⁵ WFP, *Support to UNHCR and WFP country operations in Uganda*, June 2023, p. 3. The New Humanitarian, *How a WFP food aid revamp has gone wrong for refugees in Uganda*, 15 December 2023. Confidential source, 9 February 2024.

⁶⁷⁶ Confidential source, 7 February 2024.

⁶⁷⁷ UNHCR, *ODP, Sudan situation*, last updated on 31 March 2024, accessed on 5 April 2024.

⁶⁷⁸ Al Jazeera, *Sudanese refugees face gruelling wait in overcrowded South Sudan camps*, 21 February 2024.

⁶⁷⁹ ST, *Sudan conflict displaces over 500,000 to South Sudan: NRC*, 28 January 2024. UNHCR, *South Sudan, Protection analysis update*, February 2024, pp. 2, 4, 6 and 7. RD, *Sudanese refugees face dire hardship in South Sudan camps*, 18 February 2024. Al Jazeera, *The world cannot turn its back on Sudan and its neighbours any longer*, 18 April 2024.

Sudan as labour migrants or had South Sudanese roots but had been born and raised in Sudan. The latter had never been to South Sudan before.⁶⁸⁰

As far as could be ascertained, returning South Sudanese experienced no problems with South Sudanese authorities upon returning to South Sudan.⁶⁸¹ A report by the UNHCR revealed that South Sudanese returnees experienced other types of problems upon return. For example, in some cases, their houses had apparently been damaged, destroyed or confiscated by others. In addition, some South Sudanese returnees experienced difficulties in obtaining their South Sudanese nationality. As a result, they did not have access to the formal economy and public services. They were also not able to demonstrate property rights.⁶⁸² The Rift Valley Institute (RVI)⁶⁸³ noted that some returnees arrived in South Sudan with nothing and could not rely on the support of family members. They were forced to sleep in schools, churches or under trees.⁶⁸⁴

6.8 Refugees and asylum seekers in Sudan.

Sudan has long harboured a sizeable refugee community. Most refugees came from neighbouring countries, particularly from South Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia.⁶⁸⁵ According to the UNHCR, Sudan had more than one million refugees and asylum seekers as of 31 December 2023. By far the largest group of refugees and asylum seekers were South Sudanese: 696,246 people (72.38%). Eritreans were in second place, with 149,209 (15.51%). Ethiopians ranked third, with 69,573 (7.23%).⁶⁸⁶ As far as could be ascertained, little public information was available on the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Sudan. For this reason, most of the information in this section comes from a confidential source.

According to one source, more than 300,000 refugees were residing in Khartoum before the outbreak of war in April 2023. As a result of the violence, many refugees and asylum seekers fled to other regions that they considered 'safer'.⁶⁸⁷ According to the UNHCR, by far the most refugees and asylum seekers were in White Nile. Kassala and Gedaref were ranked second and third, respectively.⁶⁸⁸

Number of non-Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers, by state (31 December 2023)

State	Number of non-Sudanese refugees
White Nile	587,157
Kassala	138,287
Gedaref	72,400
East Darfur	64,601
West Kordofan	43,306
Red Sea	38,836

⁶⁸⁰ Rift Valley Institute (RVI), *War and the borderland, Northern Bahr el-Gazal during the Sudan conflict*, March 2024, pp. 6, 7, 8, and 10.

⁶⁸¹ Confidential source, 4 April 2024.

⁶⁸² UNHCR, *South Sudan, Protection analysis update*, February 2024, pp. 9 and 10.

⁶⁸³ The RVI is a Kenya-based knowledge institute focusing on East and Central Africa. Consult <https://riftvalley.net> for additional information on the RVI.

⁶⁸⁴ RVI, *War and the borderland*, March 2024, pp. 1, 7, 9 and 10.

⁶⁸⁵ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 102.

⁶⁸⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 99. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 95.

⁶⁸⁷ UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal (ODP), Sudan*, last updated on 31 December 2023, accessed on 22 February 2024.

⁶⁸⁸ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁶⁸⁹ UNHCR, *ODP, Sudan*, last updated on 31 December 2023, accessed on 22 February 2024.

Khartoum	38,581
South Darfur	33,810
South Kordofan	29,633
North Darfur	29,594
El Gezira	20,710
Blue Nile	18,704
North Kordofan	13,834
Northern	13,106
Sennar	9,967
Central Darfur	4,327
River Nile	3,810
West Darfur	420
Total	1,161,083

Source: UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP).

The Commissioner of Refugees (COR) is the Sudanese government agency that, amongst other tasks, registers asylum seekers, determines the status of asylum seekers and issues documents to asylum seekers and recognised refugees.⁶⁸⁹ As a result of the war, the COR was not functioning optimally, and it was operational only in SAF-controlled areas (Eastern Sudan, White Nile and Blue Nile) and, to a limited extent, in Kordofan. In the aforementioned areas, the COR was still processing asylum applications. One source noted that asylum seekers could be suspected of cooperating with the RSF if they came from RSF territory and turned to Sudanese authorities in SAF territory. They thus ran the risk of being arrested by the SAF if they requested international protection.⁶⁹⁰

South Sudanese asylum seekers are subject to a *prima facie* policy. The COR handles Eritrean asylum applications on an individual basis. According to one source, the approval rate for Eritreans was 99%. Ethiopians who have fled the armed conflict in Tigray are also subject to a *prima facie* policy. Ethiopians from the rest of Ethiopia are required to make a plausible case for protection on individual grounds.⁶⁹¹

Due to technical defects, the COR was not able to issue identity cards to recognised refugees during the reporting period. Instead, it issued 'photo slips'. Such a document listed the holder's personal details⁶⁹² and family composition. Unlike the identity card, the photo slip did not have a limited period of validity. The identity card and the photo slip could both be used by refugees as proof of lawful residence in Sudan.⁶⁹³

For refugees in Sudan, freedom of movement was limited. Holders of an identity card or photo slip enjoyed lawful residence in the area of registration. Refugees wishing to travel outside the area of registration were required to obtain a travel permit from the COR. In principle, this restriction on freedom of movement applied to all nationalities. In the past, however, it was primarily Eritreans and Ethiopians who were detained for entering Khartoum without a travel permit. The Sudanese

⁶⁸⁹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, pp. 103, 104 and 108. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 102, 105 and 106. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 45.

⁶⁹⁰ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁶⁹¹ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁶⁹² These details could include name, age and gender.

⁶⁹³ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

authorities appeared to be more accommodating towards people from South Sudan. One source attributed this difference to the historical circumstance that Sudan and South Sudan had previously constituted a single country (see 1.2). As a result of the war, the same source added, the Sudanese authorities were no longer bothering with Eritreans and Ethiopians unlawfully residing in Khartoum.⁶⁹⁴

Sudan operates an 'encampment policy'.⁶⁹⁵ In principle, recognised refugees living in refugee camps have access to healthcare, food and education. Refugee services were already strained before the outbreak of war in April 2023, however, and the reception of refugees came under increasing pressure during the reporting period. Government personnel were understaffed, and there was a shortage of food, healthcare, water, sanitation and shelters. As clearly stated in Section 6.3, the deteriorating humanitarian situation applied not only to refugees and asylum seekers, but also to internally displaced persons and host communities.⁶⁹⁶

Refugees are not automatically allowed to do paid work in Sudan. To this end, they must first obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labour. Refugees are not allowed to get a job unless no qualified Sudanese candidates are available for that position. Refugees are not allowed to work in the security and defence sectors.⁶⁹⁷

When asked, one source reported not being aware of any Eritreans who had been deported to Eritrea by the Sudanese authorities during the reporting period.⁶⁹⁸ Another source was aware of an Eritrean who was residing in Kassala. This person was not registered with the Sudanese authorities. Sudanese government officials tried to extort the Eritrean in question, but the latter was unable to raise the amount of money demanded. The Eritrean was therefore forced to return to Eritrea. The wording of the source indicated that it was not a formal deportation procedure, but that the forced return was the result of the individual actions of corrupt government officials.⁶⁹⁹ It was not known how many unregistered Eritreans had fallen victim to such practices.

On 21 May 2024, the *Sudan War Monitor* (SWM) reported that the Sudanese security apparatus had detained at least sixteen Ethiopians in the eastern state of Gedaref. Most of those arrested reportedly had no legal residence in Sudan and were suspected of collaborating with the RSF.⁷⁰⁰ It was not clear from SWM's news report what had happened to them afterwards.

⁶⁹⁴ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁶⁹⁵ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 103. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 101. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 96.

⁶⁹⁶ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁶⁹⁷ Confidential source, 29 February 2024.

⁶⁹⁸ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁶⁹⁹ Confidential source, 12 February 2024.

⁷⁰⁰ SWM, *Crackdown in Gedaref targets foreigners*, 21 May 2024.

7 Women

7.1 Legal context

In principle, women in Sudan are legally competent, and there is no distinction between married and unmarried women in this regard.⁷⁰¹

According to Islamic family law, women are allowed to divorce their husbands for several reasons. The following are several examples:

- The husband is incapable of supporting the wife.
- The husband has been absent for at least one year.
- The husband has not had sexual intercourse with the wife for at least four months (this constitutes a violation of her sexual rights).
- The husband has harmed the wife (e.g. by hitting or verbally abusing her).⁷⁰²

According to one source, a woman can also file for divorce in court without invoking any of the above reasons. In that case, she is required to compensate the husband financially, because the husband incurred various expenses (e.g. dowry) upon concluding the marriage. This type of divorce is known as 'divorce for a monetary settlement'.⁷⁰³ According to the same source, this does not require the consent of the spouse.⁷⁰⁴

According to one source, the legal grounds for divorce listed above also apply in cases of forced marriage (including child marriage). The same source added that, if a woman was married off as a minor and wishes to divorce, she must be at least eighteen years of age to file for divorce.⁷⁰⁵

7.2 Societal situation

As far as could be ascertained, no public information was available on the societal situation of women. As reported in a previous Country of Origin Information Report, women were under-represented in the transitional government of Prime Minister Hamdok.⁷⁰⁶ According to two sources, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions in the civil service, civil society and the political system.⁷⁰⁷ One source added that career opportunities for women were limited to areas of work that have traditionally been associated with a woman's traditional 'caring responsibilities' (e.g. social welfare and childcare).⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰¹ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023.

⁷⁰² Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023. Confidential source, 17 January 2024. Confidential source, 17 January 2024.

⁷⁰³ The source pointed out that this type of divorce should not be confused with what is known as a *Kuul* (or *Kuhl*) divorce. A *Kuul* divorce takes place by mutual consent of the husband and wife, with the wife paying compensation to the husband. A *Kuul* divorce is concluded outside the courtroom.

⁷⁰⁴ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 17 January 2024.

⁷⁰⁵ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 14 November 2023.

⁷⁰⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 70 and 71.

⁷⁰⁷ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷⁰⁸ Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

In the past, the Public Order Law in Khartoum prohibited the wearing of 'indecent' clothing in this state. Examples could include clothing that accentuates the shape of the body (e.g. men's shorts reaching above the knee).⁷⁰⁹ During President Bashir's regime, the aforementioned law was frequently used to impose restrictions on women, including with regard to clothing style.⁷¹⁰ The Public Order Law was repealed during the transitional period under Prime Minister Hamdok, and women in Khartoum experienced more space for dressing as they saw fit.⁷¹¹ For example, one source indicated that women were allowed to wear long trousers during this transitional period.⁷¹²

The extent to which women were allowed to dress and express themselves as they saw fit during the reporting period was unclear. One source indicated that freedom of choice was lost under Prime Minister Hamdok when Burhan staged a coup in October 2021. According to that source, since that time, women have once again had to conform to the historically conservative and patriarchal norms and values.⁷¹³ In contrast, another source indicated that women in Khartoum continued to claim space for dressing and expressing themselves as they saw fit. This source was of the opinion that there was a generation gap, with older people clinging to the norms and values enshrined in the former Public Order Law and younger people aspiring to a 'free' lifestyle and style of dress. The same source also mentioned that, in Sudan, the extent to which a woman could dress and express herself as she wished was highly dependent on context and situation. For instance, this source provided the example that, whereas a woman in a big city like Khartoum could greet a man on the street, it would be inappropriate or unusual in a village.⁷¹⁴

According to one source, the following behaviours and acts could contribute to a woman being considered 'Westernised':

- Working in civil society or a women's rights organisation
- Promoting women's empowerment and rights
- Having a 'deviant' clothing and/or hair style and lifestyle (e.g. visiting a café, talking loudly in public and smoking cigarettes)⁷¹⁵

The same source indicated that 'Westernised' women were regarded as 'drug traffickers' or 'prostitutes'.⁷¹⁶

Another source indicated that empowered women were not necessarily considered 'Westernised', but that the conservative and patriarchal part of Sudanese society associated such life attitudes with 'metropolitan issues'. In this regard, the source noted that emancipated women were called 'girls of Khartoum'.⁷¹⁷

Little information was available that specifically addressed the situation of displaced and single women. As clearly demonstrated in the following section (7.3), displaced women were particularly at risk of becoming victims of sexual violence, especially when moving outside a displacement camp. One source noted that it was very

⁷⁰⁹ Confidential source, 10 November 2023.

⁷¹⁰ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 72. Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷¹¹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 75.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 71. Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷¹² Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷¹³ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷¹⁴ Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷¹⁵ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 16 November 2023.

⁷¹⁶ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷¹⁷ Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

difficult for single and displaced women to earn a living and find safe shelter. The source added that the crowded displacement camps and shelters could not be considered safe for displaced and single women.⁷¹⁸

7.3 Gender-related violence and sexual warfare violence

As noted in the previous three Country of Origin Information Reports, sexual violence has been a serious problem in Sudan.⁷¹⁹ One source confirmed that gender-based violence and sexual violence have been and continue to be deep-rooted and widespread phenomena. The source attributed this to the country's masculine culture. According to the source, the associated gender inequality at the expense of women and girls manifests itself in various ways, including in the form of child marriages, female genital mutilation (see 7.4) and domestic violence.⁷²⁰

Conflict-related sexual violence rose sharply after the outbreak of war in April 2023.⁷²¹ Women have been found to be particularly vulnerable to conflict-related sexual violence when they were fleeing or searching for water and/or food, or when their homes were raided.⁷²² This is consistent with information from previous Country of Origin Information Reports, which revealed that displaced women in Darfur, in particular, were subjected to sexual violence when they were cultivating land, fetching water and/or gathering wood outside the displacement camps.⁷²³ A news report from early October 2023 revealed that female aid workers at the front were also victims of rape.⁷²⁴

As explained in 2.1.3 and 2.2.4, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in particular are using sexual violence as a weapon of war in Khartoum and Darfur. In West Darfur, this conflict-related sexual violence took on a racial, Afro-phobic dimension. It should also be reiterated that SAF soldiers committed sexual violence as well. The phenomenon of sexual violence as a war strategy was not new within the Sudanese context. The Sudanese security apparatus and pro-government militias were already using sexual violence as a weapon of war when conflict broke out in Darfur in 2003.⁷²⁵

At the time of writing, no precise data were available that provided insight into the full extent of sexual violence in Sudan. This was partly because many victims did not report the sexual violence out of shame and fear.⁷²⁶ This issue is addressed again later in this section. The only data available were thus collected by national or international organisations at their own initiative. These data provide some indication of the severity and scale of the problem. These data do not provide insight into how many cases of sexual violence occurred in each state.

⁷¹⁸ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷¹⁹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 85. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 71. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 66.

⁷²⁰ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁷²¹ UN Women, *Initial gender assessment Sudan, Geographical coverage: White Nile, Blue Nile, Darfur, Red Sea, Khartoum States*, September 2023, p. 2. ST, *Sudan reports rise in sexual violence cases*, 7 April 2024.

⁷²² UN Women, *Initial gender assessment Sudan*, September 2023, pp. 7 and 8.

⁷²³ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 87. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 71. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 66.

⁷²⁴ ST, *Female volunteers in Sudan face murder, rape, and harassment*, 4 October 2023.

⁷²⁵ HRW, *Darfur, Rapid Support Forces, allied militias rape dozens*, 17 August 2023. CMI, *Sexual violence in Sudan*, February 2024, p. 2. Confidential source, 8 February 2024. RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, p. 27.

⁷²⁶ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 8 February 2024. RWCHR, *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur*, 14 April 2024, p. 27. HRW, *'The Massalit will not come home'*, May 2024, p. 113.

From April to June 2023, El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, underwent a series of attacks by the RSF and affiliated militias (see 2.2.4). Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented 78 victims of rape (including gang rape) between 24 April and 26 June 2023. The perpetrators were RSF fighters or Arab militia fighters. In most cases, they explicitly addressed their victims according to their ethnicity. The victims belonged to the Masalit or other African population groups.⁷²⁷

In early August 2023, the Women's Future Organisation, a Darfur-based women's group, reported that it had recorded 103 rapes in South and West Darfur since the outbreak of war in April 2023. In 24 cases, the victim had received medical treatment after the rape. Many victims apparently did not turn to medical professionals for fear of being stigmatised. In most cases, the perpetrators were RSF fighters or Arab militia fighters.⁷²⁸

In October 2023, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), a women's rights group from the Horn of Africa, reported that it had documented 96 rapes (including gang rapes) since the outbreak of war in April 2023. In 73% of cases, the perpetrators were affiliated with the RSF. As emphasised by SIHA, the actual number of rapes (and gang rapes) was probably many times higher, but most victims did not report it out of shame.⁷²⁹ The SIHA report did not specify the states in which these cases of rape (and gang rapes) had occurred.

In early November 2023, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)⁷³⁰ reported that it had documented 52 cases of conflict-related sexual violence since the outbreak of war: 23 rapes, 26 gang rapes and 3 attempted rapes. These incidents involved 105 victims: 86 women, 1 man and 18 children. In at least seventy percent of the cases, the perpetrators had been wearing RSF uniforms.⁷³¹ The OHCHR press statement did not specify the states in which these cases of sexual warfare violence had occurred.

A group of UN experts documented 262 rapes that had occurred from April to August 2023 in Darfur. Most of these rapes had been committed by the RSF and affiliated militias.⁷³²

In early February 2024, one source reported having documented 72 rapes since the outbreak of war in April 2023. The victims of these rapes consisted of 65 women and 7 men. It was not clear from the source's statements where these rapes had occurred. The same source was aware of three girls in Khartoum who had been married off in advance by their families to RSF fighters. In this way, rape was 'prevented' and the family's honour remained intact, the source noted.⁷³³

A Sudanese women's rights group known as 'Together Against Rape and Sexual Violence' documented 81 rapes in the period from mid-December 2023 to the end of February 2024. Nearly a third of the victims were minors. The rapes had occurred in five different states. Of these rapes, 43% occurred in El Gezira and 27% occurred in North Darfur, with the remaining rapes having taken place in Khartoum, Central Darfur and White Nile.⁷³⁴

⁷²⁷ HRW, *Darfur, Rapid Support Forces, allied militias rape dozens*, 17 August 2023.

⁷²⁸ RD, *Calls to address sexual violence in Darfur, El Burhan orders investigation into 'war crimes'*, 7 August 2023.

⁷²⁹ SIHA, *Silent weapons, loudest wounds*, October 2023, p. 7.

⁷³⁰ Consult <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/sudan> for additional information on the work of the OHCHR in Sudan.

⁷³¹ OHCHR, *Sudan, Alarming reports of women and girls abducted and forced to marry held for ransom*, 3 November 2023.

⁷³² UNSC, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024, pp. 19 and 20.

⁷³³ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁷³⁴ ST, *Escalating cases of child rape reported across Sudan*, 14 March 2024.

As indicated in the previous three Country of Origin Information Reports, victims of sexual violence in Sudan often do not report it, even though there was a legal option to do so. Many victims of sexual violence do not turn to Sudanese authorities out of shame, fear of retaliation and/or lack of trust in the flawed rule of law. This created a prevalent culture of impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence.⁷³⁵

During the reporting period, it remained taboo for victims of sexual violence to report and/or seek help.⁷³⁶ For example, society largely blamed sexual violence on the victim, and not on the perpetrator.⁷³⁷ In this regard, female victims were often confronted with reproachful questions from doctors, such as 'Why were you out late at night?', 'Why were you wearing provocative clothes?' or 'Why didn't you resist [the rapist]?'⁷³⁸

According to some sources, the war situation had made it even more difficult for victims of sexual violence to report and/or seek professional help. One source pointed out that the police and the public prosecutor's office (OM) in conflict zones were no longer functioning. State bodies continued to operate in the eastern states, which were under the control of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). In the highly conservative eastern Sudan, however, there was even less room for women to discuss sexual violence, according to the source.⁷³⁹ One source also reported that some aid workers had emerged as perpetrators. This source was aware of two cases in which internally displaced persons had been harassed by aid workers at a displacement camp in Wad Madani.⁷⁴⁰

There could be risks associated with reporting, especially if the perpetrator was part of one of the conflict parties.⁷⁴¹ For example, one source was aware of a girl who had been raped in Khartoum by an SAF soldier. When she turned to the police in the SAF area to file a report and told them that the perpetrator had been an SAF soldier, the police threatened her with death.⁷⁴²

When asked, one source reported not being aware of any perpetrators of sexual violence who had been criminally prosecuted and tried since the outbreak of war in April 2023.⁷⁴³ Another source noted that, in Khartoum, it was at most feasible for female victims to obtain a police report of a rape, which did not have to address the possible affiliation of the perpetrator. Such a document could be used only for the purpose of legal abortion, and not for criminal prosecution. Article 135 of the Penal Code stipulates that abortion can be performed only for pregnancies resulting from rape. In such cases, the abortion must be performed within ninety days of the crime. The official report then serves as underlying evidence.⁷⁴⁴

Before the outbreak of war in April 2023, some women's organisations were able to provide shelter for female victims of sexual violence in Khartoum. As a result of the war, this form of assistance came to an end.⁷⁴⁵ According to one source, the only

⁷³⁵ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019, p. 86. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, pp. 72 and 73. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 67 and 68.

⁷³⁶ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 5 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁷³⁷ Confidential source, 5 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁷³⁸ Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷³⁹ Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷⁴⁰ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁷⁴¹ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁷⁴² Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁷⁴³ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷⁴⁴ Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

⁷⁴⁵ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

potential assistance on which victims of sexual violence could rely came from their social circles, and not from organisations or professionals.⁷⁴⁶

Another source clearly indicated that the victim's social environment did not always demonstrate any awareness of the potential mental and physical harm effects of rape. For example, this source was aware of a female victim who had travelled with her family from Wad Madani to Kassala for medical treatment. Along the way, the victim menstruated, thus indicating that she had not become pregnant as a result of the rape. The family then returned with the victim to Wad Madani. From the family's perspective, it was no longer necessary to continue the trip to Kassala to have the woman examined for possible infection with hepatitis B and/or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The woman had not become pregnant, and that was the end of the matter for her family, according to the source.⁷⁴⁷

7.4 FGM

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a common occurrence in Sudan. In November 2022, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)⁷⁴⁸ published that 86.6% of all women in Sudan had undergone some form of FGM.⁷⁴⁹

The World Health Organization (WHO) distinguishes four forms of FGM:

- Type 1: partial or total removal of the clitoris (clitoridectomy)
- Type 2: partial or total removal of the clitoris and labia minora (excision)
- Type 3: narrowing of the vaginal opening (infibulation)
- Type 4: other harmful acts on the female genital organs without medical necessity (e.g. pricking, piercing, carving, scraping and cauterising)⁷⁵⁰

Type 1 is also referred to as *Sunna*. This term has an Islamic connotation and erroneously suggests that Islam explicitly prescribes that women should be circumcised.⁷⁵¹ Type 3 is also known as 'pharaonic circumcision' and is considered the most extensive form of FGM.⁷⁵² According to one source, many girls and women did not know what form of FGM they had undergone. The same source added that individuals who perform FGM procedures tend to report having performed a *Sunna* procedure (Type 1), when it had actually been a more extensive form of FGM.⁷⁵³

On 9 July 2020, the transitional government under Prime Minister Hamdok made FGM legally prohibited. Under Section 141 of the Penal Code, offenders can be punished with incarceration of up to three years, a fine and/or closure of the medical (or other) institution where the FGM was performed. Before this nationwide ban, FGM had already been legally banned in six states: South Kordofan, Gedaref, South Darfur, Northern, Blue Nile and North Kordofan.⁷⁵⁴ One source pointed out that, in drafting the national ban on FGM, the Sudanese authorities had not given

⁷⁴⁶ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷⁴⁷ Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷⁴⁸ Visit <https://www.unicef.org/sudan/> for additional information on the work of UNICEF in Sudan.

⁷⁴⁹ UNICEF, *Female Genital Mutilation in Sudan, Factsheet*, 9 November 2022, pp. 1 and 2.

⁷⁵⁰ WHO, *Care of girls & women living with Female Genital Mutilation, A clinical handbook*, published in 2018, pp. 26-33.

⁷⁵¹ The term *Sunna* refers to the behaviours and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, as they have been handed down, that serve as an example to Muslims. The *Sunna* thus encompasses the normative behaviour of the Prophet (what he did, failed to do, allowed and disapproved of). It is the second most important source of Islamic law.

⁷⁵² WHO, *Care of girls & women living with Female Genital Mutilation*, published in 2018, p. 19.

⁷⁵³ Confidential source, 20 November 2023.

⁷⁵⁴ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 76.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 72.

UNICEF, *Female Genital Mutilation in Sudan*, 9 November 2022, p. 2.

proper consideration to its implementation. For example, it is unclear who should be held responsible as the perpetrator — the person performing the procedure or the parents who subject their daughters to the procedure.⁷⁵⁵

It was impossible to obtain a clear image of whether the number of FGM procedures had increased, decreased or remained the same during the reporting period. Because of the war, such records were no longer kept.⁷⁵⁶ Two sources pointed out that FGM was firmly rooted in Sudanese culture, which made combating it difficult. Both of these sources observed that FGM occurred more in rural than it did in urban areas and that younger generations were less open to the practice than older generations were.⁷⁵⁷

One source was under the impression that the practice of FGM was declining, particularly in urban areas, although the source could not substantiate this further with statistical data. The source attributed the alleged decline to the influence of social media that showed users that cultures also existed in which women were not circumcised. According to this source, in Khartoum and in other urban areas, there was no longer a stigma against women who have not undergone FGM. In contrast, rural communities tended to stigmatise women who had not undergone the procedure. They were considered a disgrace to the family and referred to by the derogatory term *Ghulafa* (literally, 'clitoral foreskin'). The source noted that this stigma prevented such women from fully participating in social life.⁷⁵⁸

Although FGM is prohibited by law, no examples of the criminal prosecution and trial of individuals for performing FGM procedures could be found during the reporting period.⁷⁵⁹ As far as could be ascertained, there were no institutions and/or organisations that girls and women could turn to for protection against forced FGM.⁷⁶⁰ According to one source, only trauma centres were providing psychological support and healthcare to women who had undergone FGM. The source added that such services were thus reactive and did not help to prevent FGM.⁷⁶¹

According to two sources, if a girl or woman wished to escape FGM, it was crucial to obtain the support of a relative or friend. Such a relative or friend could then provide shelter to the girl or woman.⁷⁶² In the absence of such support, one source noted that it was 'very difficult' to escape FGM.⁷⁶³

When asked, two sources said they were not aware of any cases in which a Sudanese woman who had not previously undergone FGM but who, upon returning to Sudan, proved to have been subjected to the procedure. As pointed out by both sources, however, adult women were at risk of being subjected to FGM again.⁷⁶⁴ One source claimed to be aware of a married woman who had already undergone *Sunna* (Type 1). Her husband did not consider this form of FGM sufficient, however, and forced her to undergo pharaonic circumcision (Type 3).⁷⁶⁵ Another source indicated that it was common for women to undergo FGM again after childbirth.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁵⁵ Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷⁵⁶ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023.

⁷⁵⁷ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷⁵⁸ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 16 November 2023 and 15 March 2024.

⁷⁵⁹ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷⁶⁰ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷⁶¹ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷⁶² Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 5 February 2024.

⁷⁶³ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷⁶⁴ Confidential source, 8 November 2023. Confidential source, 20 November 2023.

⁷⁶⁵ Confidential source, 8 November 2023.

⁷⁶⁶ Confidential source, 20 November 2023.

Furthermore, two sources reported being aware of girls who had initially not undergone FGM. After they had been raped, however, the parents decided to have the procedure performed in order to 'disguise' the loss of their virginity. The sources explained that the girls would otherwise not be able to marry in the future.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁷ Confidential source, 5 February 2024. Confidential source, 8 February 2024.

8 LGBTIQ+

8.1 Legal and societal context

Due to the war situation, little recent information was available on the situation of the LGBTIQ+ community in Sudan.⁷⁶⁸ For further information, therefore, please refer to the Country of Origin Information Report dated August 2022.⁷⁶⁹

Having a homosexual orientation is not a criminal offence in Sudan.⁷⁷⁰ 'Sodomy' (in Arabic, *liwat*) is nevertheless punishable under Article 148 of the Penal Code.⁷⁷¹ In a legal sense, 'sodomy' refers to anal sex, where it does not matter whether the anal sex is performed by two men or by a man and a woman. In colloquial language, however, 'sodomy' can be used as a synonym for homosexuality.⁷⁷²

On 9 July 2020, the laws regarding 'sodomy' were changed. At that time, the transitional government under Prime Minister Hamdok lifted the death penalty and corporal punishment for 'sodomy'. 'Sodomy' nevertheless remained a punishable offence, punishable by incarceration of up to five years for a first conviction, and up to seven years for a second conviction.⁷⁷³ Another change in the law regarding 'sodomy' had to do with the burden of proof. The prohibited sexual act no longer needed to be proved by the statements of four witnesses.⁷⁷⁴ According to one source, this change was intended to allow LGBTIQ+ people to be criminally prosecuted with less evidence. The same source reported not having any information indicating that the number of criminal prosecutions of LGBTIQ+ people had increased as a result.⁷⁷⁵

As clearly demonstrated in the preceding Country of Origin Information Report, LGBTIQ+ people could face discrimination, stigmatisation, dismissal, social exclusion and mistreatment if their sexual orientation and/or gender identity were to become known.⁷⁷⁶ This situation remained the same during the reporting period. In Sudanese society, the LGBTIQ+ community was associated with mental illness and paedophilia. As a result, LGBTIQ+ people have experienced discrimination in employment and housing markets, healthcare and education.⁷⁷⁷ Many LGBTIQ+ people kept their sexual orientation and/or gender identity hidden from their family and friends, given the aforementioned risks of social exclusion and mistreatment.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁶⁸ Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 19 January 2024.

⁷⁶⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, pp. 61-64.

⁷⁷⁰ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 61.

⁷⁷¹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 61. Adrian Jjuuko, Siri Gloppen, Alan Msosa and Frans Viljoen (eds.), *Queer lawfare in Africa, Legal strategies in contexts of LGBTIQ+ criminalisation and politicisation*, published in 2022, pp. 405 and 412. Confidential source, 6 January 2024. Confidential source, 17 January 2024.

⁷⁷² Confidential source, 6 January 2024. Confidential source, 17 January 2024.

⁷⁷³ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021, p. 67.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 61.

Jjuuko, Gloppen, Msosa and Viljoen (red.), *Queer lawfare in Africa*, published in 2022, pp. 406, 416 and 417.

⁷⁷⁴ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 61.

⁷⁷⁵ Confidential source, 20 November 2023.

⁷⁷⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 61.

⁷⁷⁷ Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 19 January 2024.

⁷⁷⁸ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022, p. 61. Confidential source, 20 November 2023.

One source reported that it was almost impossible for transgender people to obtain identity documents stating their gender identity. The same source pointed out that transgender people in particular experienced problems crossing national borders, as the gender listed in their passports did not match their gender identity and the manner in which they expressed and dressed themselves.⁷⁷⁹

8.2 Intolerance and violence towards LGBTIQ+ people

As far as could be ascertained, no criminal cases against LGBTIQ+ persons took place during the reporting period.⁷⁸⁰ There were nevertheless reports of intolerance and violence towards LGBTIQ+ people during the reporting period. Several illustrative examples are discussed below. All of these examples are from the same source, and they should in no way be considered exhaustive.

One young homosexual man, together with his family, was forced to take shelter from the violence of war in their home in Al-Manshiyya, a district close to the Khartoum international airport. The father noted that his son displayed 'feminine traits'. For this reason, the son was said to have been physically assaulted by his father for allegedly disgracing the family honour. At the time of writing, the situation of the young man in question was unclear.⁷⁸¹

In early October 2023, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) took Al-Ailafoon,⁷⁸² a suburb southeast of Khartoum.⁷⁸³ After taking the city, they kidnapped a young homosexual man. From the contents of his phone, the RSF ascertained that he was homosexual. The kidnappers then asked his friends for ten thousand dollars in ransom. At the time of writing, his friends were in the process of raising this amount, and the man was still in captivity.⁷⁸⁴

During the reporting period, the lifeless body of a trans woman was found in Port Sudan. The trans woman had fled to this port city on the Red Sea, but was found dead a few days after her arrival. It was unknown, however, whether the trans woman had been the fatal victim of a transphobic hate crime, or whether she had lost her life due to some other cause.⁷⁸⁵

More recent information on the LGBTIQ+ community in Sudan was not available.

⁷⁷⁹ Confidential source, 20 November 2023.

⁷⁸⁰ Confidential source, 20 November 2023. Confidential source, 19 January 2024.

⁷⁸¹ Confidential source, 19 January 2024.

⁷⁸² Also spelt 'Al-Aylafun'.

⁷⁸³ ST, *RSF takes control of Khartoum state area, displaces residents*, 6 October 2023.

⁷⁸⁴ Confidential source, 19 January 2024.

⁷⁸⁵ Confidential source, 19 January 2024.

9 Minors (including unaccompanied minors)

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the situation of minors (including unaccompanied minors) in Sudan. Section 9.2 considers the legal context, and Section 9.3 discusses the reception of minors (including unaccompanied minors). Given that little public information was available on minors (including unaccompanied minors) in Sudan, most of the information in this chapter is from confidential sources.

9.2 Legal context

From the age of eighteen years, people are of legal majority in Sudan.⁷⁸⁶ A minor is criminally responsible from the age of twelve years.⁷⁸⁷

According to the 2010 Child Act, primary education is compulsory and free. This covers Grade 1 to Grade 8. Children in Sudan attend primary school from the age of six to thirteen years.⁷⁸⁸

One source stressed that practice proved more intractable. Some families were poor and needed additional income that could be generated from their children's labour. Within this context, girls were usually put to work in the fields and/or had to gather firewood and fetch water. Boys were usually charged with herding and rearing cattle and doing manual labour, or they also had to help out in the fields. In the conservative eastern Sudan, there was a perception that schooling for girls was unnecessary. Conservative families therefore kept their girls at home, even though there was no financial need to do so. Girls were also kept at home because it was unsafe for them to go to school or to protect them from corporal punishment administered at school.⁷⁸⁹

Minors must have permission to travel out of the country. This consent can take various forms (e.g. court order or notarised power of attorney). Airport authorities may also require one or both parents to come to the airport to give oral consent.⁷⁹⁰

According to one source, there is no clear pattern of when which form of consent had to be given. For complex cases, as deemed by the Sudanese authorities, a court order or the physical presence of one or both parents at the airport could be requested. For example, a complex case could involve minors wishing to travel to a non-Arab country where they had no family, according to the source.⁷⁹¹

The legal custody of minors is governed by a law known as the Personal Law or the Muslims Family Law. This law dates from 1991 and is based on Islamic family law. The aforementioned law distinguishes between guardianship and custody.⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁶ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023. Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

⁷⁸⁷ Sudanese Ministry of Justice, *The Child Act*, 2010, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁸ Confidential source, 24 December 2023. Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

⁷⁸⁹ Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

⁷⁹⁰ Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023. Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

⁷⁹¹ Confidential source, 10 November 2023.

⁷⁹² Confidential source, 10 November 2023. Confidential source, 24 December 2023. Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

The mother has custody of the child during the first years of life. For boys, this period lasts until the seventh year of life; for girls until the ninth year of life.⁷⁹³ If the mother dies, custody is transferred to the maternal grandmother, then to the paternal grandmother and, finally, to another female relative (e.g. an aunt).⁷⁹⁴

The father has guardianship. If the father dies as guardian, the guardianship will be transferred first to the paternal grandfather and then to another male relative.⁷⁹⁵

In addition to the Islamic family law described above, authority over minors was also regulated by tribal traditions. For example, a tribal leader could assume care for an unaccompanied minor. According to one source, this practice was particularly common in Kordofan. The same source added that family law also exists for non-Muslims.⁷⁹⁶

9.3 Accommodations for unaccompanied minors

Before the outbreak of war in April 2023, there were several orphanages for minors deprived of parental care. Examples could include babies abandoned because they had resulted from an extramarital contact. In Sudan there is a major taboo on children born out of wedlock. Sudan's Ministry of Social Development was responsible for managing orphanages, but with support from UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). To operate in the field of child welfare, NGOs were first required to enter into an agreement with the aforementioned ministry. In principle, children in state orphanages had access to education, healthcare, psychosocial support and food.⁷⁹⁷

As a result of the war, this system came under even more pressure. Since the outbreak of war in April 2023, social workers had not received salaries and, as a result, had become demotivated. In addition, social workers had also been displaced by the violence.⁷⁹⁸

Khartoum was home to a large orphanage known as Maygoma.⁷⁹⁹ On 7 June 2023, the children of this orphanage were evacuated to Wad Madani.⁸⁰⁰ The orphans were once again displaced when the RSF captured Wad Madani in December 2023 (see 2.2.6). This time they diverted to Kassala. At the time of writing, the orphans were being accommodated in makeshift housing in school buildings. Under these circumstances, they could no longer be educated in the conventional way. They were offered only play-based learning tasks.⁸⁰¹

In principle, Sudanese authorities adopt the approach of placing an orphan child with a foster or adoptive family. The Islamic version of adoption is known as *Kafala*. If an unaccompanied minor returned to Sudan, the form of care the child would receive was heavily dependent on the situation. In principle, if a family was still present, the child was placed with the family. A social worker from the Ministry of Social Development would first look at any criminal antecedents of the family and examine the family's attitude towards the returning child. Children who had been

⁷⁹³ Personal Law or the Muslims Family Law, Art. 115, 1.

⁷⁹⁴ Personal Law or the Muslims Family Law, Art. 110.

⁷⁹⁵ Personal Law or the Muslims Family Law, Art. 235.

⁷⁹⁶ Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

⁷⁹⁷ Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

⁷⁹⁸ Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

⁷⁹⁹ Also spelt 'Mygoma'.

⁸⁰⁰ ICRC, *Sudan, 280 children and 70 caretakers from Khartoum orphanage reach safety*, 8 June 2023. UNICEF, *Finally safe – vulnerable children are rescued from Mygoma orphanage*, 12 June 2023.

⁸⁰¹ Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

completely cut off from their families were placed in a state orphanage, foster or adoptive family upon their return. Potential adoptive parents generally preferred to adopt children of younger ages. For this reason, returning older children often ended up in an orphanage for older children. They left this institution upon reaching the age of eighteen years. One source added that returning minors could face stigma. If they were taken in by their families, the latter could consider the child a 'failure' who had not 'made it' abroad. As explained by the source, if no family was present, the returning minor carried the stigma of an abandoned child.⁸⁰²

As far as could be ascertained, the Ministry of Social Development did not distinguish between unaccompanied minors of Arab origin and unaccompanied minors of African origin.⁸⁰³

⁸⁰² Confidential source, 20 February 2024.

⁸⁰³ Confidential source, 4 March 2024.

10 Return

As far as could be ascertained, no public information on return to Sudan was available during the reporting period. This chapter is therefore based on information from confidential sources. This information is somewhat anecdotal and fragmented in nature.

When asked, two sources indicated that they were not aware of any Sudanese who had returned to Sudan from the EU during the reporting period. It is therefore unclear whether Sudanese experienced problems with Sudanese authorities upon return from the EU.⁸⁰⁴

Due to heavy fighting in Khartoum (see 2.2.3), the international airport in the Sudanese capital was no longer in use. According to one source, Sudanese could nevertheless fly to Port Sudan from Arab countries (e.g. Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates/UAE). This city was under the control of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). Upon arrival, Sudanese returnees suspected of cooperating with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were at risk of interrogation and detention.⁸⁰⁵

According to the same source, Sudanese returning by land through SAF territory could be subjected to ethnic profiling. In particular, Arabs from Darfur and Kordofan were at risk of being suspected by the authorities of supporting the RSF, and being treated as such. The source indicated that these dynamics played less of a role at Port Sudan airport, but did not substantiate or specify this further.⁸⁰⁶ Individuals seeking to pass through checkpoints in the interior were also subject to ethnic profiling (see Section 4.9).

A source was aware of a Sudanese activist who had lawful residence in an East African country. The authorities of the relevant host country had ordered the activist to cease his activism. In this regard, the authorities said they had been informed by Sudan's diplomatic mission about the activism of the Sudanese in question. This diplomatic mission was affiliated with the SAF.⁸⁰⁷ The scale and manner in which the Sudanese authorities monitored Sudanese people in the diaspora has remained unknown.

No further information was available on return to Sudan and the monitoring of Sudanese abroad by Sudanese authorities.

⁸⁰⁴ Confidential source, 20 October 2023. Confidential source, 12 March 2024.

⁸⁰⁵ Confidential source, 12 March 2024.

⁸⁰⁶ Confidential source, 12 March 2024.

⁸⁰⁷ Confidential source, 4 March 2024.

11 Appendices

11.1 Abbreviations and foreign terms

ACJPS	African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AU	African Union
COR	Commissioner of Refugees
CPoS	Communist Party of Sudan
CRSV	conflict-related sexual violence
Dar Masalit	Land of the Masalit
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRS	Department of Refugee Services
EC	European Commission
ELI	Emergency Lawyers' Initiative
ERR	Emergency Response Room
EU	European Union
FFC	Forces for Freedom and Change
FFC-CC	Forces for Freedom and Change–Central Council
FFC-NA	Forces for Freedom and Change–National Accord
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GIS	General Intelligence Service
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
Janjaweed	irregular Arab militias from Darfur
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JPA	Juba Peace Agreement
Kezan	nickname for former Bashir supporters (literally, 'mugs')
LNA	Libyan National Army
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MiCT	Media in Cooperation and Transition
MIS	Military Intelligence Service
MSF	Doctors Without Borders
NCP	National Congress Party
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIF	National Islamic Front
NISS	National Intelligence Security Service
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PNG	persona non grata
RC	Resistance Committee
RPE	Refugees Platform in Egypt
RSF	Rapid Support Forces (successor to the Janjaweed)
RVI	Rift Valley Institute
RWCHR	Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SCF	Sudan Charter Forces

SGVED	Sudanese Group for Victims of Enforced Disappearance
SIHA	Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa
SJS	Sudanese Journalists Syndicate
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SLA/AW	SLA faction of Abdel Wahid Al-Nur
SLA/MM	SLA faction van Minni Minawi
Sodomy	anal sex (legal)/homosexuality (colloquial)
SPLM-N	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North
SPLM-N/Agar	SPLM-N/faction of Malik Agar
SPLM-N/Al Hilu	SPLM-N/faction of Abdelaziz Al Hilu
ST	Sudan Tribune
STD	sexually transmitted disease
STPT	Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker
SUNA	Sudan News Agency
SWM	Sudan War Monitor
SZ	Süddeutsche Zeitung
Taqqadam	civil coalition working for a peaceful resolution to the conflict (literally 'progress')
TMC	Transitional Military Council
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSC	Transitional Sovereignty Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSG	Secretary-General of the United Nations
US	United States
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

11.2 Newspapers and platforms for news and knowledge

Africa Renewal
 African Arguments
 African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS)
 African Union (AU)
 Al Arabiya
 Al Jazeera
 Alyuræ
 Amnesty International
 Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)
 Asharq Al-Awsat ('the Middle East')
 Associated Press (AP)
 Ayin Network
 Bloomberg
 Cable News Network (CNN)
 Centre for Information Resilience (CIR)
 Chatham House
 Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI)

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)
Christian Today
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
Darfur Network for Human Rights (DNHR)
Darfur24
De Correspondent
De Standaard (DS)
De Volkskrant
Deutsche Welle (DW)
Die Welt
Doctors Without Borders (MSF)
EUobserver
European Commission (EC)
European Union (EU)
Financial Times (FT)
Foreign Policy (FP)
Frontline Club
Het Financieele Dagblad (FD)
Human Rights Watch (HRW)
Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
International Criminal Court (ICC)
International Crisis Group (ICG)
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
Iran International
Kenyan government
Kyiv Post (KP)
Le Monde
Middle East Eye (MEE)
Middle East Monitor (MEMO)
Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (NOS)
Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant (NRC)
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)
Political Geography Now (PolGeoNow)
Radio Dabanga (RD)
Radio Tamazuj
Refugees Platform in Egypt (RPE)
Reuters
RTL Nieuws
Sidecar
Sudan Akhbar
Sudan INGO Forum
Sudan News Agency (SUNA)
Sudan Tribune (ST)
Sudan War Monitor (SWM)
Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)
Taqqadum
The Africa Report
The Arab Weekly AW
The Conversation

The East African
The Economist
The Guardian
The Independent
The Jamestown Foundation
The New Arab
The New Humanitarian
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)
The Washington Institute (TWI)
The Washington Post
The World Factbook
United Nations (UN)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR)
United Nations Integrated Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)
United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)
United States Department of State (USDoS)
United States Institute of Peace (USIP)
Vlaamse Radio- and Televisieomroeporganisatie (VRT)
Voice of America (VOA)
World Food Programme (WFP)
World Health Organization (WHO)
World Population Review

11.3 Books

- Berridge, Willow, Justin Lynch, Raga Makawi and Alex de Waal
- *Sudan's unfinished democracy, The promise and betrayal of a people's revolution*, published in 2022.
- Jjuuko, Adrian, Siri Gloppen, Alan Msosa and Frans Viljoen (eds.)
- *Queer lawfare in Africa, Legal strategies in contexts of LGBTIQ+ criminalisation and politicisation*, published in 2022.
- Lindijer, Koert
- *De vloek van de Nijl, Gestrand in de oorlog van Sudan*, published in 2014.
- Marinovich, Greg and João Silva
- *The Bang-Bang Club, Snapshots from a hidden war*, published in 2000.
- Richburg, Keith B.
- *Out of America, A black man confronts Africa*, published in 1997.

11.4 Reports and other publications

- ACAPS
- *Sudan, Humanitarian response by local, national actors and the diaspora*, 23 January 2024.

African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS)

- *Sudan War, Arbitrary arrests, torture, and ill-treatment behind closed doors*, 14 March 2024.

Amnesty International

- *Death sentences and executions 2022*, 16 May 2023.

Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)

- *Ethnic strife amid escalating power struggles*, 6 October 2023.
- *The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) gains ground in Sudan*, 12 January 2024.
- *The SAF breaks the siege*, 16 February 2024.
- *One year of war in Sudan*, 14 April 2024.
- *The RSF sets its eyes on North Darfur*, 17 May 2024.

Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI)

- *Sexual violence in Sudan, From denial to recognition*, February 2024.

Clingendael Institute

- *From catastrophe to famine, Immediate action needed in Sudan to contain mass starvation*, February 2024.
- *Internet lifeline Sudan, Ensuring unhindered internet access is key to helping the Sudanese people survive the war*, April 2024.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- *General Country of Origin Information Report on Libya*, February 2023
- *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, October 2019.
- *General Country of Origin Information Report on Sudan*, March 2021.
- *General Country of Information Report on Sudan*, August 2022

German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA)

- *The war in Sudan, How weapons and networks shattered a power struggle*, February 2024.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

- *'The Massalit will not come home', Ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in El Geneina, West Darfur, Sudan*, May 2024.

International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur

- *Report to the Secretary-General*, 25 January 2005.

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

- *2024 Emergency Watchlist*, 14 December 2023.

LandInfo

- *Sudan, Civil registration, identity documents and passports*, 3 March 2023.

Media in Cooperation and Transition (MiCT)

- *In the shadow of violence, The pressing needs of Sudanese journalists*, October 2023.

Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

- *War in Sudan, 15 April 2023, Background, analysis and scenarios*, August 2023.

International Crisis Group (ICG)

- *A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse*, 22 June 2023.
- *Sudan's calamitous civil war, A chance to draw back from the abyss*, 9 January 2024.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

- *Focused flash alert, Conflict in Al Fasher, North Darfur State*, 17 April 2024.

National Crime Research Centre (NCRC)

- *The role of chiefs in localized crime and security management in Kenya*, published in 2021.

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

- *Abu Shouk Camp Profile – Al Fasher, North Darfur State*, October 2022.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

- *Sudan, Humanitarian update*, 31 August 2023.
- *Sudan, Humanitarian update*, 19 October 2023.
- *Sudan, Cholera outbreak*, 24 December 2023.

Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights (RWCHR)

- *Breaches of the Genocide Convention in Darfur, Sudan (April 2023 – April 2024)*, 14 April 2024.

REDRESS and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

- *Ruining a country, devastating a people, Accountability for serious human rights violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Sudan since 15 April 2023*, September 2023.

Rift Valley Institute (RVI)

- *War and the borderland, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal during the Sudan conflict*, March 2024.

Small Arms Survey

- *Attacked from both sides, Abyei's existential dilemma*, July 2023.
- *Nuba hopes and fears, Fuelling SPLA-North mobilization in South Kordofan*, March 2024.
- *Port Sudan, The political economy of a potential administrative capital*, April 2024.

Solidarités International

- *Zalingei town, Rapid assessment report*, 24-25 January 2024.

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)

- *Stopping the war in Sudan*, 28 May 2023.

Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)

- *Silent weapons, loudest wounds, Addressing the crisis of sexual violence in Sudan*, October 2023.

Sudanese Ministry of Justice

- *The Child Act*, 2010.

Sudan Human Rights Hub (SHRH)

- *Sudan, Attacks on healthcare since April 15, 2023*, 28 March 2024.

Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker (STPT)

- *Conflict dynamics in South Darfur*, 18 December 2023.
- *Blue Nile, its conflict dynamics, and the potential implications for the wider war in Sudan, 2017-2024*, 24 March 2024.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

- *Female Genital Mutilation in Sudan, Factsheet*, 9 November 2022.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- *Sudan emergency response update*, 15 June 2023.
- *Overview of refugees and asylum seekers movements within and out of Sudan*, 28 January 2024.
- *South Sudan, Protection analysis update*, February 2024.
- *Sudan situation*, 7-13 March 2024.
- *Fact sheet – Egypt*, April 2024.

United States Department of State (USDoS)

- *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom, Sudan*, undated.

UN Security Council (UNSC)

- *Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan*, 31 August 2023.
- *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan*, 15 January 2024.

UN Women

- *Initial gender assessment Sudan, Geographical coverage: White Nile, Blue Nile, Darfur, Red Sea, Khartoum States*, September 2023.

World Food Programme (WFP)

- *Support to UNHCR and WFP country operations in Uganda*, June 2023.

World Health Organization (WHO)

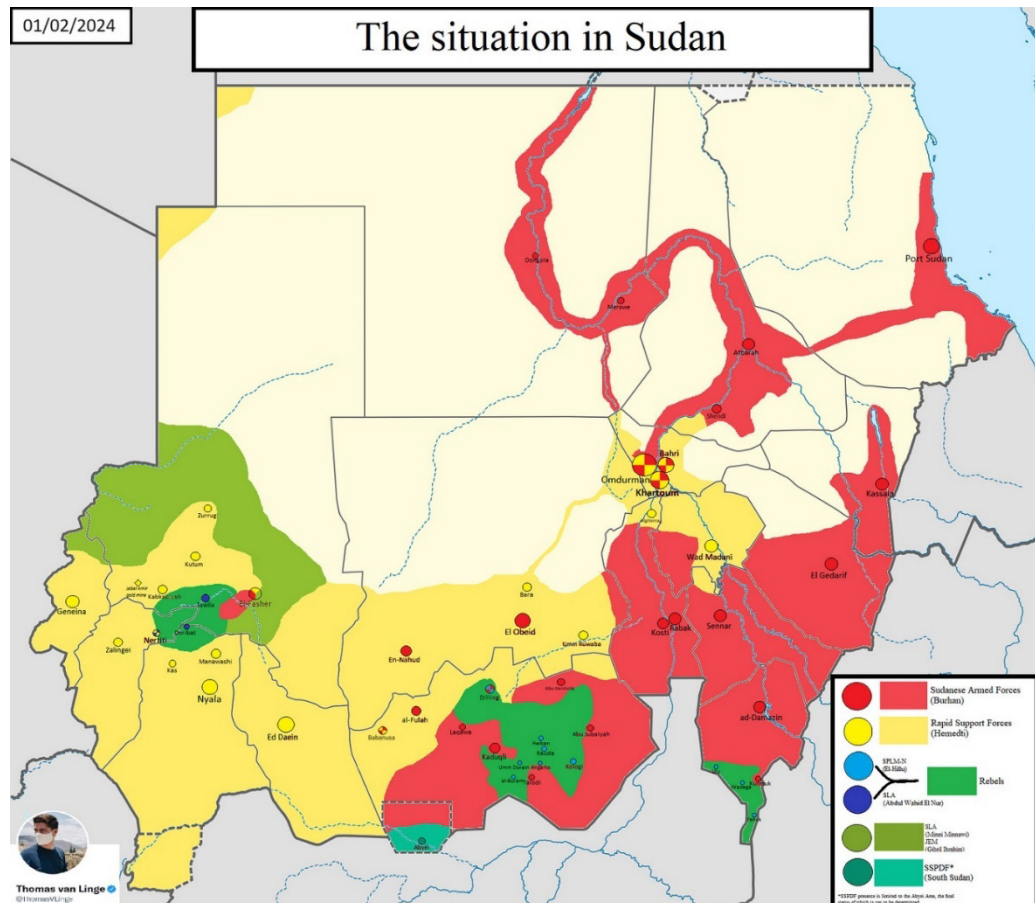
- *Care of girls & women living with Female Genital Mutilation, A clinical handbook*, published in 2018.
- *Weekly report on the humanitarian and health crisis in Eastern Chad linked to the influx of refugees and returnees following the Sudanese conflict, Period from 01 to 28/01/2024*, 22 February 2024.

Yale School of Public Health

- *Confirmation of nine arson attacks west of El-Fasher, Sudan*, 16 April 2024.

12 Maps

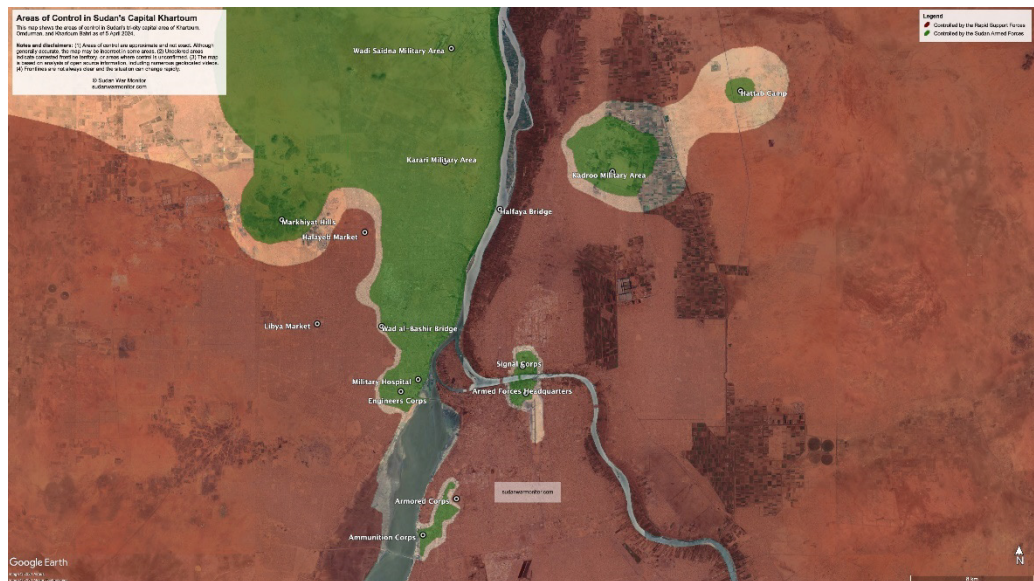
12.1 Overview map of control areas in Sudan (1 February 2024)



This map has been included in this Country of Origin Information Report with the permission of its creator (Thomas van Linge⁸⁰⁸ & Sudan War Monitor, SWM). The map shows that the SAF (shown in red) was largely in control of northern and eastern Sudan on 1 February 2024 and that the RSF (shown in yellow) controlled large parts of Khartoum and Darfur. The pale-yellow part consists largely of rugged desert terrain and is uninhabited. In this area, the warring parties had not taken positions. The boundaries, names and signs on the map in no way imply formal acceptance or recognition thereof by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

⁸⁰⁸ Thomas van Linge is a conflict reporter and conflict researcher. De Correspondent, *Thomas van Linge*, *Conflictonderzoeker*, *biografie*, undated, accessed on 15 December 2023.

12.2 Overview map of control areas in Khartoum (5 April 2024)



This map has been included in this Country of Origin Information Report with the permission of its creator (Sudan War Monitor, SWM). The map shows that the SAF (shown in green) largely controlled northern Omdurman and some pockets in Khartoum and Bahri (also known as 'North Khartoum') on 5 April 2024. The RSF (shown in dark brown) controlled most of Khartoum. The light brown sections represent the no-man's-land between the two sides. The boundaries, names and signs on the map in no way imply formal acceptance or recognition thereof by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

12.3 Map of Khartoum



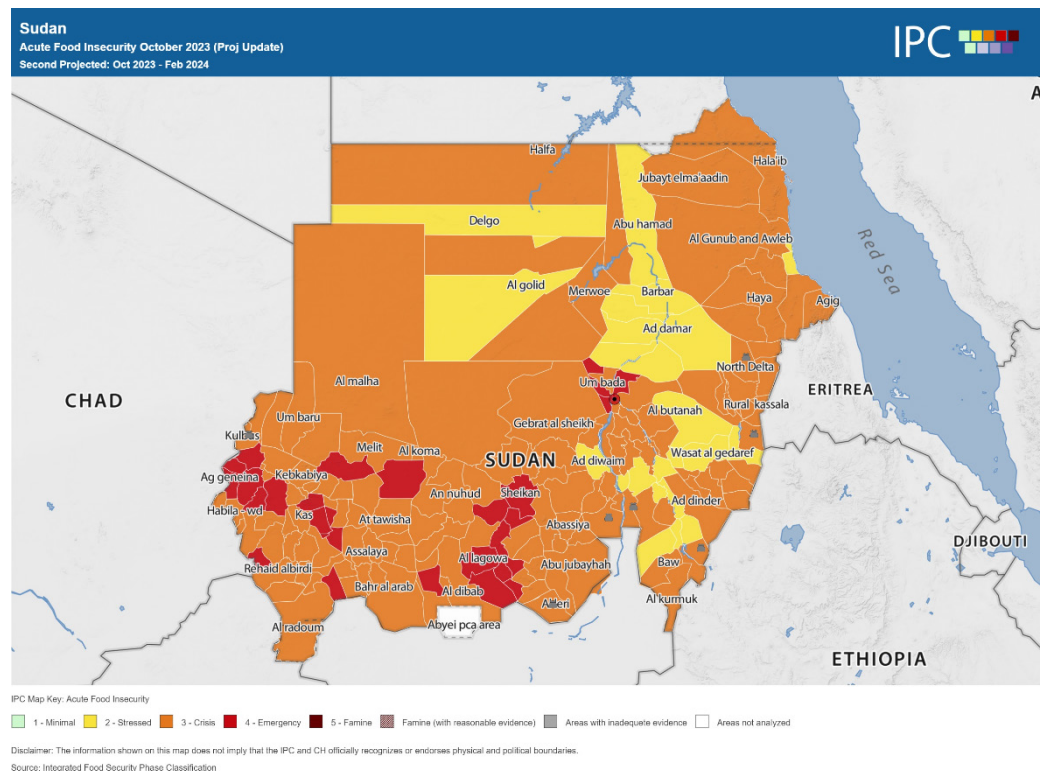
The White Nile and Blue Nile rivers merge at the Island of Tuti. Khartoum thus consists of three parts: Khartoum proper, Bahri (North Khartoum) and Omdurman. The boundaries, names and signs on the map in no way imply formal acceptance or recognition thereof by the Kingdom of the Netherlands (this map was created by Cartodesign).

12.4 Map of Darfur



Located in western Sudan, Darfur is composed of five states. At the time of writing, four of the five state capitals were in the hands of the RSF: Nyala (South Darfur), Zalingei (Central Darfur), El Geneina (West Darfur) and El Daein (East Darfur). The SAF, the SLA/MM, the JEM and the RSF each controlled part of El Fasher and surrounding areas (North Darfur). The SLA/AW continued to hold out in the Jebel Marra mountains. The boundaries, names and signs on the map in no way imply formal acceptance or recognition thereof by the Kingdom of the Netherlands (this map was created by Cartodesign).

12.5 Overview map of food insecurity in Sudan (October 2023 – February 2024)



The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) classifies food crises into five categories: 1) 'minimal' (green), 2) 'stressed' (yellow), 3) 'crisis' (orange), 4) 'emergency' (red) and 5) 'famine' (dark red).⁸⁰⁹ At the time of writing, most of Sudan was in a food crisis (Phase 3), and some parts of Khartoum, Darfur and Kordofan were in a state of emergency (Phase 4). This map has been included in this Country of Origin Information Report with the permission of its creator (IPC). The boundaries, names and signs on the map in no way imply formal acceptance or recognition thereof by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

⁸⁰⁹ Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie (VRT), *Waarom er (na maanden van waarschuwingen) officieel nog geen hongersnood is in Somalië*, 28 October 2022.