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World Report 2023



Sudan

Events of 2022

Sudanese demonstrators march in Khartoum, Sudan, December 8, 2022, to protest a deal signed between the country's main pro-democracy group and its ruling generals, who seized power in an October 2021 coup. The framework deal, signed on December 5, 2022, is meant to guide the country's transition until elections, but key dissenters have stayed out of the agreement.

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Since the October 25, 2021 coup, protest groups that took to the streets faced repression from heavily deployed security forces.

As of September, at least [117](#) people had been killed and [nearly 6,000 injured](#) by state security forces since the October 25 coup in connection with repression of the protests. Security forces also [unlawfully detained](#), forcibly disappeared, and committed sexual and gender-based violence against individuals perceived to be active in the protest movement.

Though the state of emergency imposed following the coup was [lifted](#) on May 29, 2022, abuses justified under it have continued, including arbitrary arrests of protesters.

The international response to the coup, including by the previously established “Troika” (United States, United Kingdom, and Norway), has been muted. The United Nations Integrated Mission to Support Transition in Sudan (UNITAMS), the African Union (AU), and Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in May established a tripartite mechanism to facilitate a political dialogue between various actors, including the military. Protest groups rejected the mechanism, [saying it](#) sidelined their demands.

In September, the steering committee of the Sudan Bar Association concluded discussions around a draft transitional constitution.

The [International Criminal Court's \(ICC\) trial of Ali Kosheib](#), or Kushayb, former Janjaweed leader, began in April. He is [charged with](#) 31 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Darfur. The ICC prosecutor expects to complete presenting his case against Kushayb in early 2023.

Given the political instability created by the coup, ongoing protests, and suspended international funds, Sudan's economy continued to deteriorate. This impacted an array of social and economic rights, including [access to basic health care](#). Price hikes, particularly on food, linked in part to the conflict in Ukraine, has resulted in further economic hardships. The United Nations (UN) World Food Program (WFP) warned that [40 percent of the population may slip into food insecurity](#).

Conflict, Abuses in Darfur, and Blue Nile

In Darfur, the site of widespread abuses for almost two decades, attacks against civilians continued. In West Darfur, a renewed cycle of violence since December 2021 left hundreds dead, thousands displaced, hundreds of civilian homes scorched, and property looted.

Between December 5 and 7, 2021, armed groups from Arab tribes [attacked](#) the Kereneik locality in West Darfur, including a displaced persons' camp in the area, leaving 44 dead and at least 15,000 [displaced](#).

In April, there was another large-scale attack on Kereneik locality, which affected at least [16 nearby villages](#). Over 160 people were killed and 98,000 displaced according to [local authorities](#). Survivors of the attack said armed Arabs, joined by members of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), launched the attack which also resulted in significant property damage, including through arson.

In Blue Nile, that borders Ethiopia and is governed by Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement-North (SPLA/M-North), clashes which occurred between the Hausa and Birta ethnic groups left over 100 people dead, and caused a massive displacement in the [region](#).

Ongoing Crackdown on Protesters

[Protests against](#) the coup and for a new civilian transition continued throughout the year, primarily in Khartoum but also in other cities such as Atbara, in River Nile state in northern Sudan, and Wad Madani, in the central region.

The junta deployed a range of security forces, primarily from the Central Reserve Police (CRP) and anti-riot police, but on occasion military units, to suppress the protests.

In efforts to suppress protests since the coup, security forces have killed at least 117 people, including 23 children. They have regularly resorted to excessive use of force, including lethal force. On November 17, 2021, security forces [violently dispersed protests](#) in Khartoum's Bahri area, killing 16 people, the deadliest day since the beginning of the coup. On [January 17](#), security forces used live ammunition, killing seven protesters. The use of lethal force by security forces continued throughout the year, with [eight protesters killed on June 30 in Khartoum](#).

In addition to live ammunition, security forces also [unlawfully used](#) tear gas canisters, stun grenades, and rubber bullets, causing severe physical harm.

Security forces also targeted hospitals and medical care providers. Several hospitals in Khartoum were [raided](#) by security forces, arresting wounded [protesters](#), and disrupting provision of medical care.

Unlawful Detention, Arrest, and Ill-Treatment

Security forces, notably from the Criminal Investigative Directorate (CID), have unlawfully [detained hundreds](#), many of whom are active or perceived by the authorities to be active in the protest movement and forcibly disappeared scores. Security forces have ill-treated detained protesters and threatened women protesters with sexual violence. In December 2021, the UN reported receiving at least 13 reports of cases of rape and gang rape of female protesters by security forces.

Security forces have also ill-treated children, including allegedly stripping them naked and partially shaving their heads.

Authorities have detained hundreds in prisons in Khartoum under vague emergency orders without judicial or prosecutorial oversight. Following the [lifting](#) of the state of emergency on May 29, the UN [said a total](#) of 171 detainees in connection to the protests were released. Detaining authorities have also violated due process, including denying lawyers and families' access to detainees.

In May, several Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) leaders were [released](#) from prison after being charged with financial related offenses.

On January 14, seven people were arrested in connection with the killing of a CRP commander at a protest the day before. Four have since been released. However, Mohamed Adam, then 17; Ahmed al-Fatih ("al-Nannah"); and Mohamed el-Fatih remained in detention at time of writing. Lawyers said the three have been tortured and been forced to deliver false confessions. The three appeared in court on May 28 but the trial was [postponed](#) after the court ordered a medical examination into the allegation of torture.

Accountability

There have been no meaningful domestic steps toward accountability for abuses committed against protesters since the coup, or for prior abuses including the June 3, 2019 massacre, or decades of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against civilians in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan. Days after seven protesters were killed on January 17, al-Burhan [ordered an investigation](#) into the killings and for findings to be submitted within [72 hours](#). To date, no findings have been made public.

On April 5, the ICC held its first Darfur trial of Ali Kosheib, or Kushayb. Proceedings are ongoing. In August, the ICC prosecutor visited three internally displaced people's (IDP) camps in Central and South Darfur, and, for the first time, briefed the UN Security Council from the site of a situation country, warning against "a false dawn" after "[a backwards step on cooperation](#)" from the Sudanese authorities in the previous months.

Right to Education

Sudan's penal code criminalizes sex outside of marriage. As a result, unmarried pregnant girls and adolescent mothers [may face criminal punishments](#), and often do not manage to stay in school.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Individuals accused of "homosexual sex" face between five years and life imprisonment, depending on the number of prior convictions.

Refugees and Migrants

Sudan hosted more than [1.1 million refugees](#) and asylum seekers during 2021, most of whom were South Sudanese. While the government maintains an open border policy for refugees, protection gaps undermine their liberty, safety, and dignity. Some lack access to registration, documentation, and public services. Sudan's encampment policy imposes movement restrictions by requiring asylum seekers and refugees to stay in designated camps. Outside camps, some refugees and asylum seekers were subjected to arrest, detention, harassment, or extortion.

Key International Actors

In November 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [designated](#) Adama Dieng as Sudan's independent expert, mandated to report on human rights abuses following the coup. Dieng traveled to Sudan in February 2022 and again in June 2022.

As international funding remained suspended following the coup, the deputy head of the Sovereign Council, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo ("Hemedti"), headed to [Moscow](#) for meetings with Russian officials to discuss economic relationships among other issues. The visit aimed at deepening ties with Russia which faced western sanctions as result of its invasion of Ukraine.

On March 21, the United States (US) Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) [designated](#) the Sudan Central Reserve Police (CRP) for serious human rights abuses. In July, the US House of Representatives [passed](#) a Congress approved [resolution](#) that condemned the coup and called on the administration to identify leaders of the coup for potential targeted sanctions. No steps have so far been taken by the US government against individuals for their role in repression in Sudan. In August, the first US ambassador in 25 years, John Godfrey, arrived in Khartoum to assume duties.

Sudan's regional and international partners supported a tripartite mechanism, composed of UNITAMS, AU, and IGAD. The mechanism has facilitated a series of talks with various actors, but resistance committees and other protest groups [boycotted the process](#). Meanwhile, the US, UK, Saudi [Arabia](#), and United Arab Emirates (UAE) (known as the "Quad") have also sought to facilitate talks between different stakeholders.

International actors, including the [World Bank](#) and United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)), suspended assistance to Sudan shortly after the coup. Sudan [lost](#) access to around [US\\$4 billion](#) pledged by international actors that was dedicated to support multiple projects, including agriculture, energy, as well as direct budget support.

In June, Paris Club countries suspended [Sudan's](#) debt removal process. The decision, triggered by the coup and failure to fulfil agreed conditions, was a setback to efforts by the ousted government to write off over [\\$23 billion](#) of debt.

The World Food Program [announced](#) in July that they received \$100 million from the World Bank for food and cash transfers to over two million people, including internally displaced people. The WFP already [warned](#) that almost 40 percent of the population could slide into hunger by September.

Border clashes between Sudan and Ethiopia continued to be [reported](#). In June, Sudan [accused](#) Ethiopia of capturing and killing seven soldiers and a civilian.