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Sudan Conflict Monitor

Sudan Conflict Monitor # 19
April 28, 2025

The Sudan Conflict Monitor is a rapid response to the war in Sudan written through a peacebuilding, human rights, and justice lens, reflecting on the most important stories in the country. Please share it widely.

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Overview:

- The army has near-total control of the capital and key southern transport corridors, while the RSF uses more sophisticated weaponry in its attacks and has seized Zamzam Camp, North Darfur State.
- The RSF establishes a parallel government while the army makes sweeping amendments to the 2019 constitutional document.
- The crisis in El Fasher deepens while international funding remains scant, forcing the closure of many community kitchens.
- Both warring parties are accused of arbitrary detention, torture, and the killing of civilians.
- Army leader Burhan sets up a “roadmap to peace” and seeks UN endorsement.

SAF re-takes Khartoum, fighting continues in North Darfur

Sudan’s warring parties continue to pursue a military solution to the April 2023 conflict, with the past two months featuring remarkable changes in territorial control on both sides.

Khartoum

The most significant development is SAF's near-complete recapture of the Khartoum-Bahri-Omdurman tri-city area, the long-awaited result of an offensive starting in September 2024, with ground forces and upgraded weaponry prepared several months in advance. SAF's March 21st landmark capture of the heavily defended Presidential Palace in Downtown Khartoum – a position that RSF Commander-in-Chief Hemedti had vowed not to abandon – was achieved through the confluence of three major forces, one from the western Mohandiseen-al Mogran sector, one from the southern al-Shajara sector, and one from the eastern General Command HQ sector. The remainder of Khartoum, particularly heavily defended neighborhoods in eastern Khartoum, fell shortly thereafter. SAF and aligned ground forces, consisting of various special forces units, Popular Resistance Battalions, the Joint Forces, the Butana Shield Forces, and a set of other militias including those hailing from the Islamist's former Popular Defence Forces, have also progressed rapidly through different parts of the capital, including East Nile, southern Khartoum, and adjacent areas of Gezira State. SAF faced greater resistance in Omdurman but was able to capture RSF's logistics hub in Souk Libya, western Omdurman, responsible for food and cash supply for RSF soldiers stationed in surrounding areas, by April. RSF's control of southward positions in Salha, Omdurman, similarly dwindled in the face of heavy pressure throughout the month.

SAF and RSF sources report that RSF field commanders had indeed issued orders to withdraw from Khartoum, beginning with the Presidential Palace, in which some of RSF's most experienced fighters escaped encirclement by road and riverboat. A similar decision was subsequently made for the remainder of Khartoum, especially the concentrated eastern neighborhoods, with a mass exodus of fighters, vehicles, material, and civilians fleeing an anticipated crossfire via RSF's sole bridge over the Nile River – the single-lane Jebel Awliya dam passageway. Although senior RSF commanders attempted to regain control of the situation on the western banks of the Nile by regrouping units in the Fatasha military camp, they were plagued with challenges in communication and coordination, logistics, internal conflict, and continued SAF pressure. RSF rallied some units and paired them with fresh reinforcements travelling along Bara Road, originating in North Kordofan, to vigorously defend footholds in Omdurman. However, the majority of RSF forces are believed to have returned westward in only a semi-coordinated fashion.

As of late April 2025, pockets of RSF remain in the capital tri-city area, with SAF and aligned forces still undertaking combing operations to clear peripheral neighborhoods building by building in Khartoum and engaging in small-scale clashes in Omdurman. SAF's territorial control of the capital, however, has been plagued by persistent RSF

heavy artillery, drone, and air-to-ground missile threats, successfully targeting critical military and civilian infrastructure.

North Darfur

News headlines have centred around RSF's devastating siege and offensive against North Darfur's capital city, El Fashir, beginning in mid-April. This move, however, was predicated by RSF's offensive on the northward city of Al Malha, one of the main transit points between North Darfur, Northern Sudan, and neighboring countries. While the SAF-aligned Joint Forces had prepared a robust defense in anticipation of the RSF assault, the RSF's deployment of the strategic drone with precise air-to-ground missile strikes drastically tipped the scales of the fight. RSF has since continued onwards between March and April 2025, capturing locations such as Al Atrun, North Darfur, and Al Raheb, on the border of Northern State, believed to be part of RSF's longer-term strategy to expand across the borderlands with Libya and northeastern Chad.

Although RSF command appears to have laid out concrete plans to attack El Fashir only several weeks in advance of the April 10 zero hour, it drastically expanded its force size and capabilities throughout late 2024 and early 2025. Recruitment efforts continue across western Sudan and the borderlands of several neighboring countries, with new enlistees regularly observed moving to expanded staging areas around South, Central, West, and North Darfur for onwards deployment to El Fashir. Since January 2025, if not earlier, batches of recruits have been flown from Nyala airport to a series of camps in eastern Libya for advanced infantry and weapons trainings. In addition, at least two batches of seasoned RSF soldiers serving along the Saudi-Yemen border, combating threats posed by Houthi forces, also returned to North Darfur in early 2025.

RSF has also accrued a technological advantage over SAF, with new weaponry becoming increasingly prominent on the North Darfur frontline this year. At least a half-dozen radar-guided surface-to-air missile systems have now appeared in South and North Darfur, responsible for shooting down SAF planes in March and April 2025 and temporarily neutralizing the SAF Air Force threat over Darfur. Other force multipliers include the RSF strategic drones, which take off from Nyala and possibly other locations and frequently strike with guided missiles; an ample stock of long-range suicide drones (which are capable of loitering and detonating when their target is sighted) equipped with GPS and new heat-seeking capabilities; multi-band electronic jammers either mounted on vehicles or installed in military areas, and several models of long-range heavy artillery and mortar systems. While overland supply routes continue to flow robustly to the RSF through neighboring countries, an increasing amount of weaponry and equipment – alongside personnel equipment and commercial activity – is transported multiple times per day via cargo flight to and from Nyala Airport as of early

2025, with an uptick in frequency one week before the RSF launched its assault on El Fashir.

RSF ground forces initially attacked Zamzam IDP camp, southwest of al-Fashir city, on April 10th, followed by a larger attack on the camp from two directions—south and east— on April 11, paired with constant bombardment throughout. While a combination of SAF, Joint Forces, and Popularly Mobilized (*Muqawama za'atia*) defenders – including a series of Zaghawa community militias colloquially known as "Arid Arid", "Jaesh Khishn", or "Takushat" – were able to hold defensive positions for a few days; their leaders ordered a general withdrawal to El Fashir city on April 13, marking RSF's full control over the camp.

In the week following, RSF reined in the ground offensive and reverted to its original siege posture, continuing to obstruct supply lines into the city, shell and launch drones, and initiate skirmishes, especially from the northern and eastern sectors. SAF, Joint Forces, and Popular Mobilized defenders have, in turn, fortified defensive lines along a northwestern triangle consisting of the SAF 6th Division HQ, al-Fashir airport, and the UNAMID supercamp. While SAF and Joint Forces defenders are confident that their supply situation and defensive capabilities will enable them—under ordinary circumstances, barring any major defections—to fight for at least several weeks, ground reports suggest increased frustration at the lack of any SAF Air Force cover and the dwindling possibility of a relief force in the near future.

The dire situation in El Fasher exacerbates existing tensions between SAF and Joint Forces leaders in Port Sudan. Sources among the latter express that SAF is not providing enough logistics or military support, especially by air, additionally accusing SAF of deliberately withholding resources and failing to either block or pursue RSF forces withdrawing from Khartoum, which now constitute a critical troop mass outside al-Fashir. Sources among the former, in turn, accuse the Joint Forces of ingratitude and shameless opportunism, capitalizing upon the crisis to demand additional resources and political concessions, while additionally maintaining hidden channels of communication with RSF. Both SAF and Joint Forces leaders grow increasingly concerned that RSF may successfully induce widescale defection among Joint Forces field commanders, rank-and-file, and the Popular Mobilized. On the ground, however, the vast majority of defenders inside al-Fashir remain apparently unified against the common threat of RSF attack.

Southern Corridor

Over the past two months, SAF has also taken steps to consolidate its control of key roads and cities spanning throughout the southern states in Sudan, including linking forces from Kosti, White Nile to al-Obeid, North Kordofan, and similarly reinforcing

Kadugli, South Kordofan, by land. The al-Sayyad Mobile Force, which is a combined unit between SAF and the Joint Forces, and the 5th Infantry Division in al-Obeid have made progress clearing RSF in its immediate vicinity of North Kordofan and along stretches of the Bara road to Omdurman. Beleaguered garrisons in Babanusa and Al Nahud, West Kordofan State, continue to face ongoing threats of RSF attack, respectively.

RSF may be preparing for a post-rainy season counteroffensive throughout Kordofan depending on the status of its military alliance with SPLM-N-Al Hilu, which has started to show signs of local-level cooperation in Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and eastern parts of West Kordofan. Some RSF units withdrawing from Khartoum, for instance, have regrouped near SPLM-N-Al Hilu areas in the former two states, while there have been announcements of locally coordinated joint military operations and training camps. RSF has also positioned some forces toward En Nahud and other areas of West Kordofan, especially following its capture of Um Kadadah, North Darfur.

The future trajectory of RSF's counteroffensive, however, depends on a number of variables such as the unpredictable negotiations with SPLM-N-Al Hilu, the internal cohesion of RSF forces in the southern corridor, and the timeline of the El Fashir offensive. South Kordofan and Blue Nile conflict dynamics are particularly tied to the military outcomes of the outbreak of fighting in the neighboring Upper Nile state, South Sudan, where tactical alliances can be made or broken with an array of cross-border security actors.

RSF moves to set up a parallel government

The RSF and allies signed a parallel constitution on March 4, paving the way for the setup of a parallel government. The document leaves open the question of where the capital would be located and there is speculation that Abdelaziz Al Hilu is seeking to move the capital to Kauda.

The "Peace and Unity Government" purports to aim to provide essential services to residents and forge a "New Sudan" – invoking the vision of late southern rebel leader Dr John Garang – based on the rule of law, a just peace, and stability. The rhetoric might not convince many Sudanese, who see the move as a ploy to burnish the reputation of the RSF and acquire warplanes.

Al-Burhan countered the move by announcing far-reaching amendments to the 2019 Constitutional Document, giving the military absolute control and abolishing a committee to investigate the killing of protesters by security forces on June 3, 2019. He announced plans to form a civilian technocrat government to boost SAF's legitimacy as a government, which some say could help ease conditions in SAF areas.

Corruption challenges aid delivery

There are several challenges to delivering aid in Sudan, from ongoing fighting to global funding cutbacks. UN relief is only 10% funded. However, new research by Ground Truth Solutions, and reported by Ayin, illuminates the role of corruption in obstructing aid. Interviews with aid recipients on the ground revealed that only one third of survey respondents were able to access humanitarian aid in Gedaref and under half (45%) in South Darfur. Respondents said that aid coverage was uneven and that relatives of those organizing aid received more. Fifteen percent of respondents identified corruption as their main obstacle to accessing aid.

The parties are digging into aid efforts by imposing fees, demanding payment at roadblocks, and at times promoting use of their transportation systems. SAF has obstructed humanitarian efforts by denying or delaying visas and travel permits. RSF has insisted on registration with its humanitarian body SAHRO. This requirement puts aid agencies in an impossible situation; they risk being shut down by SAHRO if they refuse but if they comply, they may be shut down in government-controlled areas.

Already dire humanitarian situation in El Fashir worsening

Over 400 people have been confirmed dead, including children, the elderly and at least twelve humanitarian personnel. Some of the humanitarian personnel were killed while

operating one of the few remaining health posts in the camp. 123 children are reportedly missing.

The attacks on Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps have intensified and already significant humanitarian crisis in El Fasher. Prior to the latest attacks, an estimated 78% of El Fasher's population was displaced. Following the attacks, IOM reported that about 80% of the population of Zamzam, 400,000 of 500,000 residents, were displaced. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator has reported that 450,000 are displaced in the region as a whole. Fleeing has been difficult, and international organizations with staff still in the camp, which as of April 15 was inaccessible, have no way of evacuating them. It was reported that the Tassis group of actors aligned with the RSF had been facilitating evacuations prior to the April 11 attack. On April 19, the Sudan Liberation Movement - Transitional Council (SLM-TC), a member of Tassis, announced that they had evacuated 50,000 and had plans to evacuate 100,000 more over the coming days. The SLM-TC argue that the evacuation is the only option, although others raise concerns about the voluntariness of these movements. Accessing the displaced is also problematic due to a communications blackout, fuel shortages and ongoing hostilities.

Furthermore, the attacks have exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation in the camp, despite the scarcity of information. Already prior to the attacks, famine had been declared in the camp; food deliveries had been suspended for months and food was selling for more than double what it had been at the start of the war. With additional violence and disruptions, conditions will have only become more dire.

Humanitarian access improving in Khartoum

As shelling in Khartoum has subsided, humanitarian access is reportedly gradually increasing after having been mostly inaccessible for the last two years. The World Food Programme has reportedly been able to reach 100,000 people in Bahri and Omdurman. Unexploded ordnance poses a continuing threat. But most markets remain either closed or only able to sell produce at prohibitively expensive prices for the populace.

70% of community kitchens in Sudan have shut down due to funding cuts, reports OCHA. An estimated $12 million per month is required to run the kitchens and other frontline services at the community level, but only a fraction of this funding is forthcoming.

Some are reportedly already returning to areas retaken by the army, but it is also reported that some (presumably those whose profiles associate them with the RSF) have been fleeing to Nyala, where SARHO reports that 4,000 have arrived in the past three months.

SAF passes a new cabinet framework on humanitarian aid

A recent cabinet decision on March 17 approved a new draft law on humanitarian aid. The law allows the Commission General to appoint state-level commissioners. This move centralises control over humanitarian aid by removing the power to appoint these commissioners from governors to a central authority. While governors have also played problematic roles at times, this move limits opportunities for collaboration and dialogue. Further, there is concern about the legality of the amendment, as it was adopted only by the cabinet, rather than through a full legislative process. It is not clear, but it appears likely that the changes will push for ever tighter control of humanitarian aid, including Emergency Response Rooms.

Detention and torture committed by both parties

The UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a comprehensive report on unlawful detention practices by SAF and RSF in Khartoum State from the start of the conflict through June 2024. The report documents harrowing torture and ill treatment, including severe and frequent beatings in detention facilities; acute overcrowding; minimal ventilation; limited access to sanitation; and inadequate food and water. Witnesses reported seeing prisoners die in custody in both RSF and SAF facilities.

The report also documents the use of children as young as 14 to serve as guards by RSF, notably in Soba prison, and the detention of children as young as 13 alongside adults. Sexual violence and exploitation against women detainees were reported in two RSF-controlled places of detention.

In both RSF- and SAF-controlled places of detention, detainees reported discriminatory treatment based on ethnicity and perceived affiliation to opponents. Those from Darfur and Kordofan were particularly targeted. Recently, as the SAF has advanced in Central Sudan, the UN has received reports of the RSF transferring detainees from places of detention listed in the report to other locations, including South Darfur.

In early March, international media reported the discovery of mass graves in the north of Khartoum, next to an RSF torture center. Reporters interviewed witnesses who described horrific torture. Sudanese activists say tens of thousands are missing.

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Retaliatory arrests and executions

SAF has arrested and executed individuals considered sympathetic to the RSF; reports of mass arrests of citizens alleged to be supporters or members of the RSF have circulated on social media. Ayin has reported that at least 20 have been executed. Some have been publicly executed and others have been taken to unknown locations. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said that he was "appalled" at the reports, pointing out that extrajudicial executions are a serious violation of international law. Ayin reports that the authorities in Port Sudan have dismissed these as isolated incidents and not part of an overall plan.

Reports indicate a similar pattern in North Darfur, where the SAF has detained dozens of people due to the army's setbacks. IDPs report that the arrests target those who are encouraging the displaced to move away from Zamzam and other camps that have recently come under RSF attack. When IDPs leave SAF-controlled areas, their departure is seen by the army as undermining its claims of popular support. Adam Rajal, spokesperson for the General Coordination of Displaced Persons and Refugees

in North Darfur, has accused SAF and joint forces of trying to prevent the displaced from leaving.

On the RSF side, dozens (the RSF says 31) were executed in the Al Salha, west of Omdurman. The killings were recorded, and the RSF admits that the killings occurred but claims that the targets were members of SAF who had escaped.

Unfair trial and judicial harassment

In addition to the abuses mentioned above, there is an increasingly visible pattern of using judicial mechanisms against opponents. Perhaps the most visible of these has been the trial in absentia of Hemedti and his brother for the alleged killing of West Darfur governor Khamis Abkar in 2023.

However, in other cases, the Port Sudan authorities appear to be weaponizing justice in a bid to silence critics. In one such case, Montaser Abdullah Suleiman was arrested on September 5, 2024, by an unidentified entity, in apparent retaliation for his work defending a number of respected Sudanese politicians in court. He was eventually faced with 18 charges, some of them capital charges.

The case was referred to court over a month ago, but the judge refused to schedule a hearing, claiming he was on vacation, even though Montaser had been detained for over seven months. The trial was scheduled to begin on April 21 but has again been postponed.

In another case, the terrorism court sentenced Walid Jamal Abdel Nasser to death by hanging, Hassan Ibrahim Mohammed Adam to temporary prison, and the Governor of the Religion Younis Abdullah Ragheb and Motasem Abdullah Al-Moumin Abdullah to 15 years in prison for cooperating with the Rapid Support Forces.

Risk of atrocities in and around El Fasher

The latest assault on El Fashir has been marked by brutality and the risk of mass atrocities. On April 11, the RSF breached the perimeter of Zamzam camp, destroyed the central market and hundreds of homes. Over 112 people, including nine staff of Relief International, the last providers of health care and other humanitarian services in the camp, were killed in just a few hours. Community kitchens were burnt with at least two female volunteers inside. The Sudan Liberation Army reports that more than 450 were killed in the Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps. The International Organization for Migration reported that more than 3,000 families have been displaced, although there are also reports that the RSF are preventing some from moving and many more may be trapped. In addition, a massacre was reportedly undertaken by the RSF against the

Berti in Broush village in North Darfur, heightening fears that additional massacres could occur.

Both parties continue to carry out attacks on civilians. An explosion in Omdurman market reportedly killed 54 people and was attributed to the RSF. A week earlier, the RSF were accused of killing at least 70 at the Saudi Maternity Hospital in El Fashir.

Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Office in Geneva said it has verified that at least 18 people, many Darfuri or Kordofani, including one woman, were killed by SAF in the Jaili oil refinery area and Khartoum North after they took control of the area.

In addition, a spate of retaliatory violence has been recorded in Al Gezira state since the SAF has advanced. A report by Human Rights Watch on February 25, 2025 details how militia forces affiliated with the Sudan Armed Forces killed 26 in Tayba village near Wad Medani in January. Ayin has also reported on these attacks, additionally reporting on the looting of more than 2,000 cattle. The attacks were reportedly perpetrated by the Sudan Shield militia and concerns were raised about the rise of the militia as an attempt to get yet another group to do the regime's dirty work, this case by targeting ethnic Kanadi.

Ayin also reported that in areas retaken by the SAF, there has been strong retaliation against those who were seen as RSF collaborators. There have been credible reports that humanitarian volunteers who have no connection to the RSF have been put on lists of collaborators. There are reports that the Islamic Movement is planning retribution against those who it sees as sympathizing with the RSF, claiming that they have a list of 6,000 targets for retribution.

In this context, there are significant concerns that a new round of retaliatory attacks could occur if the army manages to fully retake Khartoum.

Gen. Burhan Seeks UN Endorsement for a Flawed Peace Roadmap

A leaked letter from the de facto government in Port Sudan, controlled by the army, reveals a distorted “Roadmap to Peace” sent to the UN. Riding on the wave of SAF’s recapture of Khartoum and the chaotic retreat of nearly all RSF fighters from the tripartite capital, with their weapons and technicals intact, the government’s plan implies that the war has effectively ended with the total collapse of the RSF. The UN Special Envoy Ramtane Lamamra is believed to have accepted this distorted reasoning wholesale and is preparing to adopt Al-Burhan’s roadmap as a framework for post-war stabilization.

Burhan’s roadmap opens with an uncharacteristically warm endorsement of UN peace efforts—an unexpected stance from a military authority that, just two months after the war erupted, demanded the removal of the UN Secretary-General’s Representative to Sudan and later called for the immediate termination of the UN’s political mission in the country.

Despite this recent history, the letter pledges Sudan’s willingness to cooperate with the UN’s humanitarian and peace efforts, expressing hope that “the United Nations will continue its support for the path of peace, stability, democratic transition, and Sudan’s adoption of the governmental roadmap. We will work together to achieve this noble goal.”

Key Points of the Roadmap

The roadmap outlines a conditional ceasefire, contingent on the following steps:

1. Within 10 days, the complete withdrawal of RSF forces from Khartoum and Kordofan, the lifting of the siege on Al-Fasher, and the regrouping of RSF forces in Darfur.

2. Within three months, the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the commencement of humanitarian aid deliveries.

3. Within six months, the resumption of government functions and the restoration of essential infrastructure, including water, electricity, public health, and education systems damaged by the war.

4. UN oversight – The UN must secure guarantees and commitments to implement these steps, with oversight from an agreed-upon third party.

5. After nine months, negotiations begin on:

- The future of rebel militias.
- The formation of an independent transitional government to manage the state until stability is fully restored.
- A Sudanese-led national dialogue, facilitated by the UN, ensuring inclusivity of all Sudanese citizens.

This Roadmap, for which Gen. Burhan is seeking the UN endorsement, is flawed for multiple reasons:

1. It assumes that the RSF is wholly defeated and would agree to withdraw from the Khartoum and Kordofan states and regroup in the Darfur region. As noted above, the military situation on the ground points, on the contrary, to an aggravation and expansion of the conflict.

2. It introduces a nine-month pre-transition period before forming an “independent transitional government”. This timeline must be read with the “constitutional amendments” that the Port Sudan military-dominated authority carried over from the October 2021 coup until today. As noted in Sudan Conflict Monitor Issue No. 18, these amendments bestowed the SAF with unchecked powers during a 39-month transition during which an SAF-dominated Sovereignty Council would be empowered to appoint and fire a prime minister and his ministers, the chief justice, justices of the Supreme Court, and the auditor general, among the heads of other regularity and oversight agencies of the state.

Simply put, this roadmap seeks the UN's endorsement for a four-year transition during which the military wields full, unchecked powers.

Sudan Takes the UAE to ICJ

The government of Sudan has launched a case at the International Court of Justice against the United Arab Emirates for violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention by supplying weapons and other resources to the Rapid Support Forces. Sudan's complaint focuses on attacks carried out by the RSF against the Massalit community in West Darfur. Sudan seeks provisional measures aimed at stopping the UAE from supporting the RSF.

The UAE has denounced the case as a "political stunt." The Court may not hear the case if it determines that it lacks jurisdiction, but a hearing on provisional measures was held on April 10 and the court is expected to rule in the coming weeks. The UAE, when it ratified the Genocide Convention, made a reservation to the clause that grants the ICJ jurisdiction to hear any disputes over the terms of the Convention.

US Congress Takes Action

Representatives Gregory W. Meeks, a New York Democrat and Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Sara Jacobs, a California Democrat and Ranking Member of the Africa Subcommittee, reintroduced comprehensive legislation to address the crisis in Sudan in the House of Representatives, inter alia, requiring a new US strategy for humanitarian assistance and civilian protection and authorizing US support for UN or AU civilian protection efforts. In addition, Jacobs and McCaul, a Texas Republican, have reintroduced the Global Fragility Reauthorization Act, which is intended to "prevent violence, stabilize conflict-affected areas, and prevent or respond to new or unexpected conflicts." Although not specifically related to Sudan, this legislation could be leveraged to push for action on the Sudan conflict.

UK convenes high-level conference on the second anniversary of the outbreak of the war

The UK convened a high-level conference on the second anniversary of the outbreak of the war. The conference is designed to discuss the humanitarian situation in Sudan but was criticized by the de facto government in Port Sudan, which complained of not being invited, while states who they accuse of supporting the war have been. Simultaneously, the conference failed to include representation for Sudanese civilians.

At the session, states made significant new aid pledges but took little further action. The UK government announced 120 million pounds of new funding for vital humanitarian aid

for an additional 650,000 people, including both food aid and cash distributions. The EU also announced a new aid package in the context of the conference, but it was not designed, like last year's conference, to solicit pledges.

However, the session was unable to meaningfully engage the war's foreign backers. This was emphasized in the reality that the states gathered there were unable to adopt a joint statement due to differences over language about backing the Sudanese government (understood as backing for the Sudanese military and de facto government in Port Sudan) and other wording calling for civilian government supported by the United Arab Emirates, the key backers of the RSF. A co-chair's statement was issued instead, but the negotiations reveal the importance of regional actors and the impotence of key European and American actors to bridge this. Crisis Group has argued that in this context, an end will not come until the UAE and the SAF reach some kind of understanding. The question is, will that happen without an understanding between the UAE and the SAF's international allies?

Increasing tensions with Chad

Lt. Gen. Yasir al-Atta, the deputy commander of SAF, declared Chad's airports in Amjadrass and Ndjamena legitimate targets and threatened to attack Chad, claiming that the United Arab Emirates was using them to smuggle weapons to the RSF. The Chadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced the statement, saying "these irresponsible statements, which can be interpreted as a declaration of war if followed by action," and insisted on their right to defend their sovereignty. South Sudan also reacted, denouncing the threats and insisting on their willingness to protect itself. Increasing tensions in South Sudan alongside these deteriorating relations raise the specter that the two conflicts could become intertwined and drive further regionalization.

SAF seeks secure support for reconstruction

In the eyes of many, SAF's recapture of Khartoum cements its narrative of legitimacy as the government of Sudan. Stepping into this role, however, requires SAF to handle an ever-increasing responsibility to expand governance institutions and satisfactorily extend service delivery to meet the demands of the Sudanese public. While gaps were apparent before the April 2023 conflict, civilian needs have only increased through two years of fighting.

Priority areas of concern include, but are not limited to, repairs for critical infrastructure, access to health facilities and sanitation, reduction of criminality, recovery of lost or damaged assets, and resumption of economic and livelihood activity. Following the expulsion of RSF from their respective states, governments in Khartoum, Gezira, and Sennar have assumed full duties of their ministers and sought to reintroduce tax collection systems due to limited financial support from the overstretched national budget. These states, especially Khartoum, are also struggling to respond to the recent influx of civilian returnees seeking to reclaim their newly liberated homes.

SAF has consequently adopted a line of "reconstruction," dispatching its own resources and seeking international support to rebuild the country, especially in territories newly free of the RSF. SAF's regional allies have readily stepped in to cover budget shortages and provide in-kind support through bilateral foreign assistance and investment deals,

the size of which appears to have increased following the March 2025 capture of Khartoum. Bilateral assistance, which is state-to-state in nature, also confers a level of international recognition of SAF as the government. Many in the West, however, are reluctant to adopt this position since the October 2021 coup and April 2023 outbreak of war, preferring to use dwindling foreign assistance budgets in support of a civilian transition. SAF has nevertheless expanded its ambitions over the past few months, targeting multilateral institutions such as the UN, World Bank, and individual Western governments in search of greater international political legitimacy and support.

Western donors have publicly announced assistance to the Sudanese state and people in numerous visits to Port Sudan since the end of 2024. However, many also cite the risks emerging from unconstrained pledges of international support to SAF reconstruction. Specifically, regarding the degree to which SAF may be able to dictate geographic areas of implementation for international development projects and aid delivery. Western donor budgets are allocated to service the entire country, not just SAF-controlled territories, yet there are numerous allegations of SAF deliberately obstructing cross-line humanitarian aid or denial of permission for permanent UN presence in Darfur, or past closures of key border crossings along humanitarian routes. SAF's rebuttal, in turn, is that it is RSF who should be held responsible for denial of services and aid, having caused insurrection in the country and rendered certain regions inaccessible.

RSF appears to understand that requesting international foreign assistance toward its own governance structures, in a similar fashion to SAF, is a non-starter for most countries, save for a few vital regional allies. Therefore, RSF's strategy is increasingly geared toward directly undermining SAF's attempts at reconstruction, exemplified by its long-range drone strikes targeting critical infrastructure such as power stations, dams, and oil pumping stations. Each of these acts has devastating consequences for the Sudanese population – e.g., extended power outages affecting civilian homes, hospitals, and water pumping and sanitation systems – as well as for the economic security of neighboring countries – e.g., affecting Nile river flow or denying oil revenue. Yet, as RSF decision-makers may have correctly identified, international donors and private investors ultimately act under the practical consideration that assistance and investment will be unlikely to yield much impact should SAF be unable to stabilize the areas undergoing reconstruction – a security guarantee which SAF cannot fully provide.