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SUDAN

Conflict

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

On 15 April 2023, a violent power struggle broke out in Sudan's capital of Khartoum between the two main factions of the ruling military regime: the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), which acts as the official Sudanese army, and a rival paramilitary force, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). As at 18 April, at least 200 people were dead, and 1,800 were injured (UN 17/04/2023). The violence broke out as a result of rising tensions between Sudan's most powerful generals. These generals jointly staged a coup d'état in October 2021; in 2019, the RSF, which comprised former militias from the Darfur war (from 2003–2020), joined forces with the Sudanese army to overthrow Sudan's long-time leader, Omar al-Bashir, leading to a civilian-military power-sharing government. In 2021, the military and the RSF used the pretext of political wrangling between civilian camps to seize full power (ICG 23/01/2023; Reuters 14/04/2023). Subsequent negotiations on how to integrate the RSF into the SAF eventually led to clashes. The main reason behind the clashes was the lack of agreement on who would be exercising ultimate control over the combatants (Reuters 17/04/2023; The Guardian 16/04/2023; ICG 23/01/2023; ABC 17/04/2023).

On 13 April 2023, the SAF noted uncoordinated redeployments of RSF units towards critical infrastructure and buildings in Khartoum and other parts of the country. This was an illegal move that the military government considered risky, as it could produce confrontations between the army and the RSF (AA 16/04/2023; Reuters 14/04/2023). On 15 April, the RSF issued a statement claiming control of the presidential palace and Khartoum International Airport, among other key locations. Since then, there have been clashes between the RSF and the SAF in Kassala, Khartoum, North Darfur, North Kordofan, and South Darfur states (OCHA 17/04/2023). The Sudanese army has since reported regaining control of the presidential palace (OCHA 16/04/2023; Reuters 14/04/2023). As at 17 April, the RSF and the SAF continued fighting for control over Khartoum International Airport (BBC 17/04/2023; The Guardian 17/04/2023). The RSF reported that, after discussions with the US and other friendly nations, they had committed to a 24-hour ceasefire as at 18 April, to allow for safe passage of

civilians and humanitarian aid. This was hours later denied by the army on its twitter page, claiming no agreement had been reached (BBC 17/04/2023). Although earlier reports claimed Egyptian soldiers were fighting RSF along with the army, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi confirmed that the soldiers were in Sudan for training (BBC 17/04/2023).

The violence has led to the closure of hospitals and movement restrictions ordered by the army across Khartoum (NYT 16/04/2023). There are severe access restrictions, as hospitals have been under direct missile attacks from both sides (CNN 17/04/2023). An UNHAS aircraft has also been attacked (OCHA 17/04/2023). As at 18 April, the state-owned radio station was still off air, while the state-owned TV station has been playing reels of patriotic music and footage of the army's victories and broadcasted a statement of defection to the army by the RSF spokesperson. This continues in the middle of a propaganda war between the rival factions (BBC 17/04/2023).

Anticipated scope and scale

- Although a few areas of the country are experiencing the confrontations between the SAF and RSF, protracted fighting between the two groups, aggravated by an economic crisis and intercommunal violence in more than seven states, could lead to widespread fighting across Sudan (OCHA 05/04/2023; Reuters 14/04/2023).
- Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the de facto leader of Sudan in command of the SAF, has accused the RSF of carrying out a coup d'état, although he has also expressed the willingness to negotiate with the opposing group (CNN 17/04/2023). Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the leader of the RSF, has called for the international community to intervene and has accused the SAF of bombing civilians. Both forces have rejected a ceasefire, and mediation by neighbouring countries has not been possible, as airports remain closed (The Guardian 17/04/2023; BBC 17/04/2023). This means that fighting is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

KEY PRIORITIES

200
PEOPLE DEAD

1800
PEOPLE INJURED

Attacks
AGAINST HUMANITARIAN
WORKERS

High risk
OF WIDESPREAD
FIGHTING

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

UN agencies
(WHO, UNICEF, IOM)

Initial
response activities
of several INGOs

Initial
activities of the
Sudanese Red Crescent



- Available numbers of wounded and dead are unreliable. As a result of the fighting, many people are trapped in their homes, lacking food and water. Stores, markets, and banks are closed, meaning even those who dare go out may not have access to basic goods (Islamic Relief 17/04/2023; MSF 17/04/2023). If the violence continues and humanitarian access remains limited, humanitarian needs could escalate rapidly.

Humanitarian constraints

- There is no certainty about the numbers of those wounded and those dead from the fighting. As at 17 April, more than 180 people were reported dead and 1,800 wounded during the three days of fighting. These numbers are likely higher but cannot be confirmed given severe restrictions on data collection (ABC 17/04/2023; Al Jazeera 17/04/2023).
- Both sides of the conflict are targeting humanitarian workers, with at least four aid workers killed in the fighting (Islamic Relief 17/04/2023; UN 17/04/2023). Three of these workers worked for WFP, leading the organisation to halt its operations in the country (Reuters 16/04/2023). Save the Children has reported that armed groups looted its facilities in Darfur, resulting in the suspension of most of its operations in the country (STC 17/04/2023). The European Union has also reported that its ambassador to Sudan was assaulted, and his residency was looted (Sudan Tribune 17/04/2023). As at 19 April, NRC had reported of an inability to offer support to affected communities (BBC 19/04/2023).
- Reports reveal damage to the only operational UNHAS plane in Sudan (OCHA 16/04/2023; Reuters 14/04/2023). This will impede the access of humanitarian responders to remote parts of the country.
- Reports also show intermittent power and internet outages in the capital Khartoum (Reuters 14/04/2023).

CRISIS IMPACTS

Lack of food and water

Millions of residents are currently experiencing acute food shortages as the violence continues. In Khartoum, people reported a lack of food and water as the fighting entered its third day on 17 April 2023 (BBC 17/04/2023). Food prices in some areas have tripled given the lack of supplies. As people have stayed indoors for four days since the start of the confrontation, food has become scarce, and there are no places to purchase food, as markets and shops remain closed (Islamic Relief 17/04/2023).

The situation could aggravate the current food insecurity crisis in the country. About one third of the population (15 million people) is experiencing food insecurity. 95% of households spend more than 65% of their income on food, as prices have increased by more than 130%

since 2022. The prevalence of global acute malnutrition is 15%, and about three million children under five suffer from severe or moderate acute malnutrition (WFP 14/03/2023; France 24 22/12/2022). The confinement of the population and damage to infrastructure during fighting could increase resource scarcity and the prices of basic goods, such as food (Quartz 17/04/2023). The population of Khartoum, one of the main locations of the clashes, is among the most food-insecure urban populations in Sudan, with refugees and the urban poor especially affected (OCHA 07/11/2022).

Access to safe drinking water in Sudan is also limited. More than 17 million people do not have access to safe drinking water, and 24 million do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities (UNICEF accessed 17/04/2023 a). A lack of water for the population confined to their homes during the fighting means fewer tools for cooking and waste management, creating health risks. Many people receive clean water and food through humanitarian programmes. The suspension of WFP's operations given the death of three of its workers poses a risk to the access of some of the population to drinking water and food (UN 16/04/2023; Quartz 17/04/2023).

Health

The fighting has led to the closure of health facilities across the country. According to Emergency, a humanitarian organisation that runs several healthcare facilities in Sudan, the fighting closed a paediatric centre in Khartoum on 15 April. A cardiac surgery hospital in the city has also been forced to operate in emergency cases only (NYT 16/04/2023). The International Federation of the Red Crescent Societies has warned of a total collapse of the country's health system if fighting continues (BBC 18/04/2023). As at 19 April, 39 out of the 59 hospitals in Khartoum and nearby states had been shut down or evacuated across the country due to the conflict (BBC 19/04/2023).

Functional medical facilities report having shortages of medical supplies. WHO has reported a shortage of blood, transfusion equipment, intravenous fluids, and other vital supplies to treat the injured in health facilities in Khartoum (The Guardian 17/04/2023). The closure of airports and many land routes is one of the main reasons behind these shortages (MSF 17/04/2023).

Besides the lack of medical supplies, health workers have reported attacks on medical facilities. In Khartoum, some doctors reported strikes on a Khartoum hospital while it was still operational. Missiles also hit the al-Moallem Hospital before it was evacuated (CNN 17/04/2023). Armed groups looted medical supplies and other equipment during a raid of Save the Children's offices in Darfur (STC 17/04/2023).

Even hospitals far from the fighting have had to close because of the inability of their medical staff to reach the facilities (MSF 17/04/2023). This also likely implies that the population has limited access to hospitals, as 30% live more than 30 minutes from the nearest hospital, and



20% live more than one hour away. In Sudan, under-five mortality in 2021 was 56 per 1,000 live births. Although this was lower compared to recent years, many of the children still died later on from preventable or treatable conditions (UNICEF accessed 17/04/2023 b).

Impact on critical infrastructure

Several reports show damage to the country's main airport, Khartoum International Airport, from heavy artillery fire between the army and the RFS. Satellite images show damage to a railway facility in Khartoum, government buildings, and military and civilian planes (BBC 17/04/2023). An undetermined number of facilities providing water and electricity has been destroyed by the fighting leading to power outages and water cuts in Khartoum (Al Jazeera 17/04/2023). There are also limitations to communication, as the Sudanese telecommunications operator MTN announced that it suspended local networks services on 16 April (CGTN 17/04/2023). Given that the confrontation has involved aerial bombing, it is very likely that several land routes and other buildings have been damaged. However, as at 18 April, there are no assessments regarding this.

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

Political instability

Sudan has been without a functioning government since October 2021, after the military dismissed Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's transitional government and declared a state of emergency. The UN has brokered a consultation process involving a wide range of Sudanese stakeholders to overcome the political crisis. In December 2022, Sudan's military and other political and civilian stakeholders signed a framework agreement to resolve the crisis. The signing of the final agreement was scheduled to take place on 6 April 2023 but was delayed (ACLEL 14/04/2023; ICG 23/01/2023). This political instability and lack of agreement between the ruling coalitions escalated in April, precisely because this was the month in which they were due to reach an agreement on how the RSF would be integrated into the military and how the military would be commanded by civilian forces (Reuters 17/04/2023; The Conversation 17/04/2023).

COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Economic crisis

65% of Sudan's population currently lives below the poverty line. The country's economic crisis stems from decades of war, economic sanctions, and political instability since the

coup in 2021 (Reuters 02/03/2022). As at December 2022, inflation in Sudan reached more than 100%, although that was already a reduction compared to 2021, when it rocketed to 300% (France 24 22/12/2022). The country is currently going through a recession, with purchasing power drastically declined (Daily Sabah 29/01/2023). The ongoing war threatens to exacerbate these economic conditions, as markets remain closed, and food prices are increasing (S&P 17/04/2023). As a result, the number of people in need of humanitarian aid may increase and those already suffering from the economic crisis may be further constrained in their access to food and livelihoods.

Localised conflict and displacement

On 10 April 2023, intercommunal violence between members of Masalit and Arab tribes erupted in West Darfur's Foro Baranga town, leading to the displacement of 20,000 people, the burning of 50 homes, and the killing of at least ten people (OCHA 12/04/2023). Although security forces have been deployed, the situation remains volatile. In North Darfur, protracted conflict between two groups of the Bani Hussein tribe has led to the death of 22 people (Sudan Tribune 25/03/2023). Earlier, on 23 March, violence between Arab Rezeigat and Masalit members in West Darfur's Ag Geneina locality resulted in the death of six people and the displacement of at least 30,000 – mostly children, older people, and women – across the border into Chad (USAID 14/04/2023).

Violence resulting from fighting between the SAF and the RSF may limit aid workers' access to areas already affected, but at the same time the victims of this violence may be at greater risk of being affected by the fighting. Drought and intercommunal localised conflict have led to displacements across the country. Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan states, where some clashes are going on, are some of the areas with more displaced people in Sudan. Of the more than 3.7 million people displaced, more than 3 million are in Darfur alone. Around 27% of all refugees and asylum seekers in the country are being hosted in Khartoum (UNHCR accessed 18/04/2023). People in refugee camps are particularly at risk of being displaced or hit by confrontation. In fact, some people in displacement camps in Darfur have been already displaced because of the fighting and some camps have been hit, killing some IDPs (The New York Times 17/04/2023; Al Jazeera 18/04/2023; InfoMigrants 18/04/2023).

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

In 2022, the Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan received USD 837 million, 43% of the USD 1.94 billion required to address humanitarian needs in the country. Humanitarian responders reached 88% of the people in need with a partial package or a certain type or amount of needed assistance, while other needs were not met because of funding constraints or other access challenges resulting from conflict (OCHA accessed 17/04/2023).



AREAS THAT HAD REPORTED FIGHTING AS AT 16 APRIL

Khartoum, the capital



Across the country



Source: NYT (16/04/2023)