



AU Peace and Security (PSC) should Reiterate its Calls for the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of civilians, and Provision of Humanitarian Services in Sudan

7 February 2023

Your Excellencies, the Chair and members of the AU Peace and Security Council

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) writes ahead of your first session on the Sudan situation in 2024 to urge you to reiterate your calls to the warring parties of the Sudan armed conflict to cease hostilities, protect civilians, and allow safe access for displaced people inside Sudan to humanitarian Services.

Since the war erupted on 15 April 2023, the humanitarian crisis and human rights violations in Sudan have reached an unprecedented scale. The indiscriminate targeting of civilians and infrastructure by the warring parties is alarming. As the conflict enters its tenth month, the death toll continues to rise, with the remains of many victims yet to be located, collected, identified, or buried. While estimates suggest that over 13,000 lives have been lost since April 2023, the true extent of the tragedy is likely much higher due to the intensity of the fighting and the challenges in documenting and confirming casualties. In Darfur, following the capture of many states by the Rapid Support Forces towards the end of 2023, the violence has taken on an ethnic turn, leading to a new round of ethnic cleansing and demanding urgent action. In November 2023 alone, at least, 1,300 people were killed in ethnically-motivated attacks in West Darfur.¹

Impunity for past human rights violations has further fueled gross violations in the current armed conflict. The alarming reports of sexual violence and slavery have been registered², and increased cases of enforced disappearance have been documented with more than 715 people reportedly disappeared by October 2023.³ The cases of alleged torture are voluminous, and the violation of the freedom of expression and the attack of human rights defenders amid many other atrocities have been documented.⁴ New trends such as recruitment of child soldiers, abduction, extortion, looting, and/or obstruction of humanitarian aid among other human rights and humanitarian violations have all taken place in a climate of complete impunity by all the parties involved in the conflict. Healthcare services have been crippled with a major target on hospitals and emergency rooms. The humanitarian agencies have little or no access. Media

¹ ACJPS, Ethnically Motivated Attacks In Ardamata Locality In West Darfur, <https://www.acjps.org/publications/ethnically-motivated-attacks-in-ardamata-locality-in-west-darfur>

² UN Human Rights: Sudan: Alarming reports of women and girls abducted and forced to marry, held for ransom, 3 November 2023 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/11/sudan-alarming-reports-women-and-girls-abducted-and-forced-marry-held>

³ Xinhua News, 715 people forcibly disappeared during conflict in Sudan: rights group (22 October 2023) <https://english.news.cn/africa/20231022/038b57061bde47aebcef493c2375e901/c.html#:~:text=The%20Sudanese%20Group%20for%20Victims,between%20the%20SAF%20and%20RSF.%22>

⁴ UN, Sudan- Killing of HRDs in West Darfur, 28 June 2023 <https://srdefenders.org/information/sudan-killings-of-hrds-in-west-darfur/>

outlets have been silenced or manipulated in a propaganda war between rival factions, and civilians have been subjected to arbitrary arrests and incommunicado detention. Internet and local calls have been disrupted for months thus affecting the smooth provision of humanitarian services.

“The armed conflict has had a disastrous impact on human rights, infrastructure, and the possibility of transition of power to civilians in Sudan. The AU PSC should utilize its influence and resources to support efforts to end the conflict including reviewing all tools available to ensure the two warring parties agree to a cease-fire”, **Mr. Salih Mahmoud Osman, ACJPS Board Member.**

As this conflict continues to escalate, Sudan’s instability threatens the entire region, making it a global concern. The involvement of militia groups and other forces, both within and outside Sudan has exacerbated the situation, leading to widespread displacement and suffering.

“Sudanese authorities bear full responsibility to stop its forces, paramilitary and militia groups from committing human rights violations and holding perpetrators to account but where there is no political will, we request regional actors like the AU PSC to step in”, **Mr. Mossaad Mohamed Ali, Executive Director of ACJPS.** *“The upcoming AU PSC’s meeting on the Sudan situation this week must reaffirm their strong position to condemn the armed conflict and call both parties to a cease-fire”*.

We applaud the PSC for adopting a resolution at its 1185th meeting, held at the ministerial level on the situation of Sudan establishing a high-level panel to deal with the ongoing armed conflict in Sudan. The resolution demonstrated the Council’s commitment to ensuring that the armed conflict in Sudan is ended peacefully with the participation of all Sudanese stakeholders beyond the mere expression of grave concern and condemnation of the war. However, the Council should support the High-level Panel with the resources and all that is necessary for them to perform their mandate effectively.

ACJPS welcomes the upcoming session on the Sudan situation on 9 February 2024 and wishes to encourage the Council to use the session to reiterate its calls to the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Rapid Support Forces, Allied militias, and all other parties involved in the conflict to:

- **End** hostilities and immediately and unconditionally ceasefire to end the senseless conflict;
- **Respect** international human rights and humanitarian laws;
- **Return** to political dialogue and negotiation towards the establishment of an inclusive civilian-led government;
- **Open** humanitarian corridors and allow safe access to humanitarian aid.

We further urge the PSC to:

- **Address** the humanitarian needs of the Sudanese people while collaborating with the international community and neighboring states specifically to ensure that there is safe access to adequate humanitarian aid;
- **Continue** to call on the neighboring countries to remain neutral about any military and or financial support to the combatants;
- **Prioritize** the protection of civilians and support efforts to promote peace, stability, and reconciliation in affected communities;

- **Play** an active role in supporting accountability efforts for the Sudan war including establishing a dedicated mechanism to investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity;
- **Support and facilitate** the work of national human rights institutions and other bodies promoting and protecting human rights in Sudan;
- **Request** the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to conduct a fact-finding mission to establish the facts and circumstances of the alleged recent human rights violations committed in Sudan and present its findings to the AU Peace and Security Council as soon as possible.