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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by The Next Century Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Humanitarian Crisis in the Sudan

The Next Century Foundation wishes to express its concern regarding ongoing conflict in the Sudan.

Despite multiple attempted ceasefires, clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces have not only persisted but spread. Hope for a swift and peaceful resolution of this civil war within the Sudan is waning. Fighting between the two groups under the leadership of General Abdelfattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed "Hemedti" Hamdan Dagalo, respectively, has caused hundreds of deaths and thousands of casualties. Large numbers of civilians fleeing violence within the country have been displaced internally and equally large numbers have been externally displaced as refugees.

Huge damage has been done to homes, infrastructure, and most importantly individuals. Throughout this turbulent time, support and aid from the international community and relevant organisations has been sporadic at best. The Sudanese residents, the diaspora, and refugee communities within the country have been repeatedly let down. Numerous embassies' efforts to evacuate their nationals have left some individuals who are the responsibility of those respective nations without the necessary documentation for their own route to safety. Meanwhile human rights violations such as sexual abuse and abduction have been taking place. Inflation of prices for food, water, and transport has left remote communities vulnerable to starvation.

Consequences of this humanitarian crisis, should it not be resolved soon, will not cease at the Sudan's borders. A weakened Sudan leaves it vulnerable to the agendas of the various militant groups active within the region. Should they gain further influence in the Sudan, a new security threat for the Sudan's bordering countries will be introduced.

Within the country, extreme forces are also resurgent. The Juba agreements of 2020 and 2021 need revisiting and revision to properly deal with the DDR issue (disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration) and to encourage the removal of armed forces from town centres whether in Khartoum or Darfur province.

The Sudan's current conflict involves further displacement not only of nationals within the country, but also of the Sudanese refugee communities displaced in camps already established within surrounding nations such as Chad as a consequence of previous conflicts within the Sudan. Crucially, the refugees created by this conflict will:

1. Further destroy the social fabric of the nation of the Sudan as those most able to flee, often the most prosperous, leave.
2. Further exacerbate the refugee crisis in Europe. Italy has now stated that it cannot respond to the number of projected asylum seekers. Additional trans-Mediterranean displacement of refugees will place responsibility on both Italy and France, and in the longer term, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Suggestions

The Next Century Foundation is of the opinion that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland can, and should, undertake a considerably more proactive role in supporting ongoing mediation efforts. Considering the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's pivotal role in the signing of the recent Framework Agreement on the country's attempted transition away from authoritarian rule, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's seminal role as architect of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 that underpins modern Sudan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has a clear responsibility.

On 5 December 2022, the military concluded a framework agreement with a number of civilian leaders (though regrettably excluding the critically important Resistance Committees), in which the generals promised to relinquish much of their political power.

It is evident that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland bears a strong responsibility to promote and support the Sudan in achieving a long-lasting resolution of this

conflict. As the only non-regional actor with a strong history of engagement in the Sudan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland cannot limit itself to nominal support but rather should practice active engagement. Furthermore, France and Italy, the European nations who are likely to have the greatest responsibility for housing and helping an increased number of asylum seekers from the Sudan, should step up their support for peace negotiations.

Ideally all mediation efforts should be consolidated onto one platform. Though we appreciate this may be impossible. They should also include civilian representation.

We suggest that a consensus be reached between the Rapid Support Force and the Sudanese Armed Forces wherein these entities each respectively withdraw behind a line of control and maintain security (but not govern) using a separate, clear division of responsibility.

1. In particular, we suggest that the Rapid Support Force should confine their security role to the Northern region of the Sudan; their line of operation being confined to the area from Darfur to Omdurman and North Khartoum. Some members of the RSF may prefer to join the SAF or demobilise and this should be facilitated where appropriate.

2. That the Sudanese Armed Forces confine their security role to the remainder of the country including all Southern regions and all of Central Khartoum (including the Presidential Palace) and Port Sudan. In suggesting this, we urge the Rapid Support Force to withdraw completely from the centre of Khartoum.

3. We then urge both factions to respect an established line of control.

4. Regional and extra regional powers, as well as international bodies, could and should then encourage the absorption of the RSF into a refounded SAF; and in the process consider and strongly note the complexities of doing this, not least from the point of view of the leading figures within both of these bodies and their regional supporters.

We further urge the two groups (RSF and SAF) to commit to supporting a civilian led government and once again formally support presidential elections in which all residents of the Sudan can participate free from coercion and fear of repercussion, as agreed to in the Framework Agreement sponsored, amongst others, by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

These elections could and should be initiated within eighteen months of peaceful resolution of the current conflict so as to ensure progress. Mere technicalities should not be used as an excuse to delay these elections. The diaspora could be encouraged to vote at embassies where they have the appropriate documentation.

Current mediations efforts spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and the United States of America have been commendable; we note however that mediation talks in Jeddah have so far been void of civilian input. We encourage future mediations organised in Jeddah and those planned by the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to involve appropriate civilian representatives.

We additionally call for the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) mandate to be renewed in light of the current situation. In particular, we call for the strengthening of the civilian protection mandate of UNITAMS. UNITAMS could further help in the distribution of aid from the international community and monitor and report any infringements of the new line of control. The United Nations has a questionable history when it comes to the oversight of elections but UNITAMS could help and advise in this regard as could other concerned nations such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Lastly, we propose establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the Sudan similar to those previously set up in South Africa and Rwanda. This might help following the resolution of the conflict to ensure the Sudan's return to a cohesive society. We are aware of outstanding International Criminal Court indictments and other allegations of severe misconduct by some elements of the military (SAF) and militia (RSF), ranging from the use of rape as a weapon of war, to war crimes such as multiple murder. A truth and Reconciliation Commission would help the Sudan turn over a new page and have a fresh start.

Summary

We restate the importance of consolidating all mediation efforts into one platform if possible. The Next Century Foundation proposes a resolution in which the Sudan Armed Forces commit to supporting a civilian led government.

In anticipation of a resolution of the existing conflict, we highlight the importance of appropriate representation to avoid a fickle, undemocratic agreement that may lead the Sudan into a darker future. Involvement of community leaders, civilians, and regional stakeholders will be crucial to coming to a robust, equitable agreement. Nations such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, and Italy, hold an influence that should be strategically wielded to act as interlocutors and support these peace talks.
