

# Indifference of Africa and the rest of the world is allowing the warring parties to push Sudan to total collapse

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One year ago today, a conflict broke out in Sudan, triggered by a rivalry between two former allies, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (widely known as Hemedti), the leader of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

In April 2019, Burhan and Hemedti used the widespread mass protest that brought Sudan to a standstill to overthrow al-Bashir and declare a three-year transitional military rule.

Despite the establishment of a power-sharing government in August 2019 after AU-backed mediation initiated following Sudan's suspension from the AU in June 2019, the two generals staged another coup ousting the civilian government in October 2021 just before handing over control of the sovereign council to the civilian arm of the power-sharing government.

In subsequent months, the resort of the two generals to

resolve their rivalry for prominence plunged Sudan into its latest civil war. After one year of near-total war, Sudan's collapse, which is imminent and inevitable, would unleash a disaster of catastrophic proportions for Sudan, Africa, and international peace and security.

The capital of Sudan, Khartoum, a sight of some of the most indiscriminate and brutal fighting is reduced to rubble. Many of its residents, who survived indiscriminate attacks and deprivation of access to basic needs, are forced to flee. Most hospitals, schools, houses, and business centers are shattered to the ground.

Darfur, a region severely affected by the war, endured atrocities and faces imminent risk of such atrocities that are reminiscent of the genocidal violence that the region experienced two decades earlier.

The fighting is engulfing the entire country as it also expanded to South Kordofan, Blue Nile, Gazirah, Gedaref and the White Nile regions.

Exacerbating an already dire situation and escalating the imminent risk of collapse, in the recent fighting, the circle of actors involved in the fight has expanded beyond the two main conflicting parties. Armed groups in South Kordofan and Blue Nile and those in Darfur have joined the fray.

Caught in the crossfire are the people of Sudan, who endure unspeakable horrors at the hands of the warring factions. Although not as brutal in Darfur, the RSF unleashed its violence on civilians in the other territories it seized as 2023 was coming to a close.

RSF is not alone in inflicting suffering on civilians. SAF's air force rains down terror from above, indiscriminately bombing civilian areas in a ruthless bid to regain control.

As a war without respect for any rules, the violence against

civilians also involved widespread killings, forced displacement, deprivation of access to basic needs and humanitarian assistance, and the use of sexual violence including rape.

The ongoing war has claimed a reported 14,000 lives'. The number of people forcibly displaced inside and outside the country is fast approaching the ten million mark. Sudan has the world's largest displacement crisis and the largest child displacement crisis.

24.8 million Sudanese are in need of humanitarian assistance, yet there is no humanitarian access.

Adding to this grim reality, the Famine Early Warning System Network raises a red flag, warning of an impending famine threatening parts of West Darfur, Khartoum, and the Greater Darfur region. According to the World Food Programme, nearly five million individuals are on the brink of experiencing famine.

The conduct of the warring parties along with the failure and indifference of Africa and the rest of the world, in complete disregard of AU's principle of non-indifference, is pushing Sudan to the brink.

It remains unclear how long Sudan can sustain the continuation and escalation of this war without complete collapse. Indeed, unless something dramatically changes in terms of the effort to arrest the escalating war, it is difficult to foresee how Sudan can avoid complete collapse.

Sudan's collapse will not be like anything we have seen before. Unlike Somalia which borders only three states, Sudan borders seven countries. Sudan is at the crossroads of various geopolitical regions of Africa.

It is in the middle between North Africa and Africa South of the Sahara. It borders countries in Central Africa, North

Africa and East Africa regions. It straddles the Horn of Africa, North Africa and Central Africa regions. It is the bridge between Gulf countries and East Africa. It is strategically located on the Red Sea. Considering the fraught situation on this strategic waterway for international maritime trade, any additional complications would carry huge global economic and geostrategic consequences.

Sudan's collapse would obviously mean protracted suffering for the people of Sudan first and foremost. It would mean more death, mayhem and suffering. More people would be displaced and flee outside of the country.

Given its history and location, a collapsed Sudan is appealing not just to terrorist groups in the region but to global jihadist terrorist organizations such as ISIS.

The establishment of a foothold by terrorist groups in Sudan could end up creating a belt of terrorist networks stretching from the Southwestern Sahel near the Atlantic coast across the Sahel to the Red Sea.

Sudan's collapse would reverberate across the conflict ridden Horn of Africa and Central Africa regions. It could make an already dire situation catastrophic. It would have a serious knock on the political and conflict situations in the fragile neighboring states of the Central African Republic, Chad, and South Sudan.

The stakes for Sudan, the region, and the international order could not be more grave. Beyond addressing the life and death humanitarian situation for people caught up in this total war through directing funding to local humanitarian actors and establishing internationally protected humanitarian corridors, there is nothing more urgent than preventing Sudan's collapse and its catastrophic ramifications.

As Sudan enters its second year of this devastating war, the question is whether the African Union, countries in the

region, and international actors appreciate the urgency and gravity of the imminent danger of state collapse in Sudan and whether they are able and willing to do all that it takes to avoid it.

Are they willing and able to halt the supply of weapons to the warring parties and cutting off their funding sources? How about establishing a rigorously monitored and enforced ceasefire? How about for setting up a technocratic transitional government with a time-bound and limited mandate to foster conditions for an inclusive transitional process?

If the AU, its member states and the wider international community care about Sudan, the region, and international peace and security enough, this is the moment to show it. If the AU and its partners are serious about AU's flagship program of Silencing the Guns, now is the time to muster the will and resolve necessary to demonstrate their seriousness by taking the necessary measures to avert the collapse of Sudan.

The time for making statements and expressing concern is long over. It is time to act and act decisively.

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