

# THE WAR IN KHARTOUM AND ITS IMPACT ON DARFUR

Discussion Paper 2/2024



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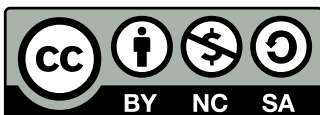
Discussion Paper 2/2024



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since fighting broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 15 April 2023, violence has ravaged the capital Khartoum and the adjoining cities of Omdurman and Bahri. The warring parties have bombed and shelled populated areas; destroyed buildings, archives, roads and bridges; targeted and occupied medical facilities; and blocked aid from reaching people in need. RSF fighters engaged in widespread looting, destruction, killing and sexual violence. Seven months into the war, over 6 million persons are displaced, whereof over 1 million persons are refugees in neighbouring countries (UNOCHA 2023). United Nations agencies have warned of worsening health conditions, with rises in cholera, malaria and acute malnutrition (UNHCR 2023).

Within days, violence surged in West Darfur, where RSF fighters joined with allied Arab militias to attack mostly ethnic Masalit communities in and around El-Geneina. The situation across the region remained tense for months, with the RSF laying siege to key towns. In late October, as ceasefire talks resumed in Jeddah, the RSF launched a major offensive, taking several bases in key capitals and killing hundreds of civilians including women and children (Neshad 2023). As of this writing, the RSF had consolidated control over most of the region and carried out fresh attacks and mass killings in West Darfur (Human Rights Watch 2023). Nearly half a million Darfuris have fled to camps in Chad (UNHCR n.d.).

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**The international response to Sudan's war and atrocities in Darfur has been slow and insufficient, and humanitarian needs are vastly underfunded.**

Despite the gravity of the violence and implications for the wider region, the international community has paid little attention to Sudan, in sharp contrast to what was done 20 years ago. In 2003, the international community was shocked at news of atrocities in Darfur, and responded with various interventions, including peace talks, humanitarian aid, sanctions, International Criminal Court (ICC) cases and peacekeeping missions. Today, the international response to Sudan's war and atrocities in Darfur has been slow and insufficient, and humanitarian needs are vastly underfunded (Michaels 2023).



The Sudanese Experts and Facilitators Group (SEFG), in collaboration with International IDEA, held a webinar on 31 October 2023 to explore the impact of the war in Khartoum on Darfur, especially in the light of its pre-existing interethnic conflicts. The speakers, chosen for their expertise on and experience in Darfur, addressed a range of topics, including the war's impact on conflict dynamics in Darfur; the importance of documenting the human rights and humanitarian impacts; and the prospects for ending the violence both in Darfur and in Sudan as a whole. Dr Adeb Yousif, former governor of Central Darfur and a longtime peace activist, provided the keynote address. Sudan scholar Dr Alex de Waal and Darfuri human rights activist Bedour Zakaria provided expert commentary.

## Chapter 1

# BACKGROUND ON DARFUR CONFLICT

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### DARFUR CONFLICT

The Darfur conflict started in early 2003 when armed rebels attacked an army garrison in El Fasher, North Darfur—an incident which became a lightning rod for international attention. The Sudanese Government described the conflict as a counterinsurgency, but it was clear the army and its allied Arab militias from Darfur—known as the *Janjaweed*—were targeting entire ethnic groups. The government and allied militia attacked and destroyed thousands of villages, drove millions into displaced persons' camps or across the Chad border to refugee camps, and committed mass atrocities against the people of Darfur (Human Rights Watch 2004). At the time, Darfur made world headlines and galvanized a grassroots advocacy movement to raise awareness and lobby for solutions.

Some of the main interventions included:

1. The African Union (AU) deployed a small force to monitor a ceasefire in 2004 (Al Jazeera 2004).
2. In 2005, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on armed actors who violate human rights and peace agreements in Darfur (UN 2005).
3. The ICC took up the Darfur situation in 2005, subsequently issuing warrants for the arrest of suspects (including then-President Omar al-Bashir) for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide (ICC 2005).
4. In 2006, the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed by the government and some rebel groups. Efforts then focused on the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, DDPD (UNAMID n.d.).

5. In 2007, the UN and AU authorized a peacekeeping mission, the Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which Sudan accepted.
6. The AU formed the High-Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD), led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, to analyse the region's conflict dynamics and root causes. The panel published its report in 2009 (AU 2009).

The fighting between government and rebels subsided, particularly after the government deployed the RSF in 2014 to fight remaining armed rebels, using scorched earth tactics just as the *Janjaweed* had in earlier years (Human Rights Watch 2015). However, intercommunal conflicts over resources such as gold, minerals, water and land continued, causing hundreds of casualties per year.

### Transitional period

Following the ouster of former President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 on the heels of months of popular protests, the Sudanese military and the RSF brokered a deal with civilian leaders to form a transitional government. Its ruling Sovereign Council would be led by the military component for 21 months, followed by leadership by the civilian component for 18 months, and then by elections. The civilian component, led by Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok, followed the same policy as al-Bashir's government with respect to the drawdown of the UN/AU peacekeeping mission, UNAMID. He oversaw the final exit of the mission in 2021, while ethnic tensions between Arab and Masalit groups in West Darfur erupted in cycles of new violence in which hundreds of people were killed (FIDH 2020).

### War in Khartoum and in Darfur

Unlike Sudan's past civil wars, the new war started in 2023 in Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman, with its second epicentre in Darfur. As of this writing, the war appears to have subsumed the whole country, including Darfur, and has created two general areas of control. The SAF and its allied government, based in Port Sudan, control most of the north and east of the country. The RSF controls most of greater Khartoum, Kordofan and Darfur. In early November, the RSF took over major towns, except for El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur. Former rebel groups who signed the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) announced that they would side with the SAF, while other armed groups deployed to El Fasher, ostensibly to protect civilians from possible RSF-SAF fighting (Sudan Tribune 2023a).

### Mediation efforts

Shortly after war began, the United States and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia started to mediate a cessation of hostilities agreement, but after numerous ceasefires were broken the talks were suspended. Meanwhile, the AU, the regional economic association, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and neighbouring states (especially Egypt and South Sudan) all held meetings aimed at bringing the parties together. These efforts were criticized as not being well-coordinated, and were undermined by external malign actors who are actively fuelling war by supplying one side (International IDEA 2023).

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The AU formed an Extended Mechanism to convene all relevant actors to better coordinate peace efforts. However, as of this writing, the mechanism has been convened only once. In late October, talks at Jeddah resumed (Al Jazeera 2023). The warring sides agreed to uphold previous promises to allow aid groups access and to coordinate with the UN. Around the same time, civilian leaders held meetings in Addis Ababa to form a unified front (Sudan Tribune 2023b). The meeting was considered a first step, but much more consensus-building will be required to form a truly inclusive and participatory group.

## Chapter 2

# PERSPECTIVES ON THE WAR IN SUDAN AND ITS IMPACT IN DARFUR

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### KEYNOTE SPEAKER, ADEEB YOUSIF

I would first like to point out that the conflict in Darfur did not start yesterday and will not end tomorrow. Darfur is a unique context with pre-existing conflict dynamics and root causes. We should acknowledge that the recent escalations will also change the narratives, circumstances and humanitarian situations across the region. I will organize my comments into four interrelated topics: the ethnopolitical dimensions, the role of identity and ethnicity, the humanitarian situation, and geopolitical concerns.

As we all know, Sudan is experiencing the most challenging period in its contemporary history. The current war between the SAF and the RSF is having a devastating impact on Sudanese society. This is true in Darfur especially because of its pre-existing conflict dynamics. This conflict has brought even more destruction than in the past, and has pushed people from towns into the rural villages, rather than the other way around.

A key question is whether the end of conflict in Khartoum means the end of conflict in Darfur. I believe the evidence will show otherwise. There is too little attention to Darfur, where the warring sides have violated 11 ceasefire agreements since April 2023, and where new fighting has caused untold damage. I'll talk about the humanitarian situation first.

#### **The humanitarian situation**

The humanitarian situation in Darfur has been deteriorating since the beginning of this war. The 2.7 million displaced people living in camps for the last two decades, their host communities, and refugee populations from Chad, South Sudan and the Central African Republic are all affected by the new war. One reason is that aid organizations that supported them have stopped working. In addition, violence or the threat of violence has prevented communities from accessing livelihoods, markets and farmlands, raising the spectre of famine.

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**Darfur is a unique context with pre-existing conflict dynamics and root causes. We should acknowledge that the recent escalations will also change the narratives, circumstances and humanitarian situations across the region.**

Also, since most government institutions are no longer functioning, staff and personnel have not been paid and basic services are lacking. The healthcare system in Darfur was already precarious before the war, and is now all but destroyed as warring sides targeted health facilities, drug stores, pharmacies, infrastructure and services. This comes at a time when doctors and specialists have warned of a growing amount of cases of malnutrition, pneumonia, cholera and dengue fever.

Moreover, there is a shortage of doctors, lawyers, teachers and experienced government officials. Educated individuals are often targeted during conflict. Some are killed, while others forced to leave the region. Young people who would otherwise fill these roles are often drawn away from school to serve as soldiers; many are killed or return much later with little desire to resume their studies. Training new professionals can also be challenging because schools and universities are often closed or damaged beyond repair.

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**In Darfur, the nation-state is not generally a driver of conflict. Rather, ethnic identities and competition for resources, not political ideology, fuel conflicts in Darfur.**

#### **Ethnopolitical conflict dynamics**

In Darfur, the nation-state is not generally a driver of conflict. Rather, ethnic identities and competition for resources, not political ideology, fuel conflicts in Darfur. I have observed this in the way the fighting has played out since the war in Khartoum started. Darfur also has many pre-existing intercommunal conflicts, such as between Salamat and Beni Halba or other Arab tribes. In addressing the violence in Darfur, we need to address these pre-existing conflicts as well.

I believe the scourge of ‘negative ethnicity’—the manipulation of ethnic identity for narrow personal or political interests with dire consequences—is a real threat to peace, justice, respect for human rights, the rule of law and development in Darfur. The war is playing on ethnic divisions and fuelling conflict. In El-Geneina, West Darfur state, for example, this war has increased the tensions between Masalit and Arab and led to ethnically based atrocities, in which thousands of innocent civilians were killed, including the Governor of West Darfur, Mr Khamis Abdullah Abakar, who belonged to the Masalit ethnic group.

The Arab tribes in Darfur have a major role in fuelling these tensions, as they have recruited their ethnic communities into the RSF and away from the army. In Darfur, the former rebel groups who signed the JPA may also be drawn into the fighting. Two of their leaders have just announced they will support the SAF, but others have tried to remain neutral. The war could metastasize if these various groups start to fight each other.

Regrettably, the JPA signed in October 2020 did not bring peace or security to Darfur. It created divisions between signatories and non-signatories, and between those who supported the military coup of October 2021 and those who did not. Some of the divisions were along ethnic lines. The JPA is a reminder that the sharing of power based on ethnicity doesn’t work—much like a bandage on a wound, it won’t heal a broken bone.

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### Geopolitical implications

There are serious geopolitical implications for the Darfur conflict, since all countries bordering the region have suffered armed conflict themselves. The bordering countries of Chad, Libya, South Sudan and the Central African Republic face their own legacies of war, political interest conflicts, economic difficulties and security challenges. This set the stage for proxy wars to emerge, as fighters from these countries could be drawn into conflict in Darfur, and jeopardizes broader international peace and security in the region. This is one of the reasons why neighbouring countries should be involved in the resolution of the war.

### Recommendations

- First, the most important is a permanent ceasefire agreement that is well monitored by a third party.
- Second, we need more attention to Darfur.
- Third, women must be included in all peace processes.
- Fourth, we need a mechanism for protection of civilians.
- Fifth, we need more humanitarian aid, either through Chad or by dropping food by air, as it is too far to bring aid in through Port Sudan.
- Sixth, we need an intercommunal consultation meeting that aims to strengthen social cohesion and dispute management between ethnic groups.
- Seventh, we need to focus on a civilian resolution that excludes the military fronts. We need to involve victims and civil society organizations and keep their voices front and centre.

I would like to conclude with the wisdom of Albert Einstein, as it applies to our efforts to address Sudan's many problems. 'No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We have to learn to see the world anew.' Meaning: we need to think bigger to find a lasting solution for Darfur and for all of Sudan.

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### EXPERT COMMENTARY BY ALEX DE WAAL

This is a most challenging time for Sudan and particularly for Darfur. One of the differences between now and 20 years ago is that Darfur was earlier in the spotlight, whereas today it has been forgotten, ignored or deliberately neglected. I had the privilege of working with the former South African President Thabo Mbeki when he went to Darfur in 2009 with the AU's High-Level Panel on Darfur. He said the first obligation of the mediator is to define the problem. The second obligation is to define the problem in consultation

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**The conflict was one of inequality, unequal access to resources, and the legacy of more than a 100 years of depriving Darfur of its correct place within a democratic Sudan that was respectful of diversity.**

with those affected. He insisted on going to Darfur and spending 40 days in meetings of the town hall type in camps for IDPs (internally displaced persons), and in villages, cities and areas controlled by the Sudanese Liberation Army/ Movement forces. The exchanges were frank and he listened. He began to define the problem as he saw it based on these interactions, and he defined it as a holistic problem. The people of Darfur wanted peace, justice and reconciliation, and wanted Darfur to have its correct place within Sudan.

There were two elements of his definition that jumped out. First, there was the need to define the problem of Darfur among the people of Darfur; this relates to the sixth recommendation by Dr Adeeb, on intercommunal conflicts, which can be settled by the people of Darfur as long as opportunity and space are given. The second aspect was that the crisis of Sudan had manifested itself in Darfur. The conflict was one of inequality, unequal access to resources, and the legacy of more than 100 years of depriving Darfur of its correct place within a democratic Sudan that was respectful of diversity. President Mbeki, in a speech at Friendship Hall on the eve of the referendum for Southern Sudanese independence, said: 'if Sudan divides, it will not divide into an Arab north and an African south; rather, it will divide into two African countries, each characterized by diversity. The challenge for the governments in Juba and Khartoum would be to incorporate this diversity in an equitable and fair manner'.

The reason I say this as background is that it relates to current mediation efforts and fits well with the details and analysis that Dr Adeeb has just given us. If you look at the mediation efforts today, there are three mediation efforts and three definitions of the war in Sudan as a whole. The first was the US–Saudi initiative, which defined the war as between two sides, the SAF and the RSF, requiring a political agreement between the two generals, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Hemedti. Under pressure, they recognized civilians and asked the AU to convene meetings of civilians. It is very clear from way these parties organized the negotiations that civilians are an add-on in order to endorse an agreement, and would become involved later.

A few weeks after that, some African heads of state were unhappy with the way in which the AU had been handling Darfur. And let us not forget that 20 years ago, the AU was very proactive in Darfur. The chairperson of the African Union Commission, Alpha Oumar Konaré, flew to Darfur and spent the night in an IDP camp near El Fasher speaking with the people. He warned President al-Bashir that one of the principles in the Constitutive Act of the AU is the principle of non-indifference, adopted after the genocide in Rwanda. This principle says African states have the duty to act to intervene when there are grave circumstances, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Konaré said: 'We will be compelled to intervene if you do not act in Darfur.' And it was on that basis that the AU was involved in peace talks and sending peacekeepers.

What we see today is completely different. There is no attention from the AU. They are not observing their own principles. In fact, they are repudiating them.



The AU Heads of state met and said ‘we need to act’. But then the African Union Commission, reporting on that meeting, issued a communique which took a different tone. As a result, the IGAD convened and appointed Kenya’s President William Ruto to chair the meeting. He was outspoken, and described the problem as ‘two illegitimate generals fighting for power and ignoring the express wishes of the people of Sudan for a democratic state’.

General al-Burhan strongly objected to Ruto. I think it’s unfortunate that Sudanese civilian parties did not rush to Kenya at that point to show that they agreed with Ruto’s definition of the problem. Egypt adopted a third definition of the problem. The Egyptians do not want the IGAD or Kenya to lead in the resolution of this war. Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi convened a summit of neighbouring states and called the problem ‘state failure and fragmentation’.

In the last week, several things have happened that point towards what we might expect. First, on the military side, we see the RSF taking more cities in Darfur and essentially taking Khartoum—it now controls almost all of Khartoum, and Hemedti is in a position to form a government if he wants to. I believe the reason he has not done so is because the RSF’s backer, Mohamed bin Zaid of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has told him to hold off. The other development is the resumption of talks in Jeddah, which are based on a different view. The organizers lean more towards al-Burhan, but are not happy that he started to look to Iran for support and has links with Islamists.

The implication is that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi will come to an agreement, and that that will be the agreement reached in Jeddah. It is in these capital cities that are not Sudanese, and not even African, that the future of Sudan will be decided. And what about the civilians? They have not gone to Kenya, but rather to Addis Ababa, where the AU is following Jeddah. I suspect we are going to see the fate of Sudan being determined by generals or their paymasters in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, and then the organized civilians will follow along, and then the USA and UN will applaud this, and so on.

Where is Darfur? It is not anywhere in this. Where is the consultation with the people? It is not there. So how then should the people of Sudan, and especially the people of Darfur, respond to this challenge? Of course, everyone would welcome a ceasefire and greater humanitarian access, and if that comes out of Jeddah, we can applaud that. But if something more comes out of Jeddah, we have to make the case that the mediation results must be taken back to the people for consultations. What is it that the people want? The future of Sudan and Darfur should not be set in foreign capitals without full and fair consultation with the people affected.

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## EXPERT COMMENTARY BY MS BEDOUR ZAKARIA

The types of conflict in Darfur are different from what is going on in Khartoum. In these wars, women are the most affected. I would like to talk about the role of women, and how despite being victims, they can contribute to achieving peace, and how we need to engage them from bottom to top.

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**The conflict that started in Khartoum on 15 April 2023 and spread to Darfur is causing very serious and sensitive violations—bodily mutilations, burning, and rapes.**

The second point is that actors in civil society would like us to raise our voices. The conflict that started in Khartoum on 15 April 2023 and spread to Darfur is causing very serious and sensitive violations—bodily mutilations, burning, and rapes. All these things are happening, but we do not have full information about how they are happening. We need to raise our voices in social media and other channels so as to contribute to the peace process and to reflect on what is happening in Darfur.

We also need to consider humanitarian needs. Right now, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not able to access El-Geneina or Darfur in general. Bringing aid into Darfur via Chad is challenging. Bringing non-food items is also difficult. We need to pressure international NGOs and UN agencies to open peaceful humanitarian corridors and safe areas so as to bring aid to all people safely.

And then we can think about social peace and reconciliation. Women have a pivotal role in this, through media, communication, drama and social activities. We recognize that there are some moves by civilians to do something in this area because the generals are not likely to make peace. But first we need some guarantees that the war will not escalate.

We also need to touch on the issue of transitional justice, since this can help enhance peace; unless we stop the impunity that fuels the violence against civilians, we will not find a solution. These are not political conflicts; they have a different dimension in Darfur and we need to look at root causes.

The war broke out in Khartoum on 15 April 2023, but when it reached Darfur, it became more ferocious and more dangerous for defenceless citizens. Because the war in Darfur has a long history, the new war was an extension of the old 2003–2020 war in Darfur and bore the same features and behaviours of the old war. After 15 April 2023, the new war in Darfur was to continue the preceding tribal and ethnic wars, and included burning villages, raping and kidnapping of women and children, forced displacement of the population, and the destruction of public and private institutions.

## Chapter 3

# PLENARY DISCUSSION

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### FIRST ROUND OF PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

1. The conflict in Darfur is linked to the failure of political processes in Khartoum; they are two faces of the same problem, and separating them would not do justice to either. The other issue is the proxies. We should focus on who is sponsoring whom and call out the sponsors. Much of the narrative is about the two generals and the RSF and SAF, which blurs the picture; we are not addressing the major driving forces that will prolong the war. Regarding the position of Saudi Arabia, I think at best they are neutral because they are worried about the war in their own backyard, as they don't have capacity to defend themselves from Yemenis. They rely heavily on Sudanese forces from whichever side, the RSF or the SAF. The UAE are clearly sponsors of the RSF, but the proxy issue also extends beyond this—for example, the USA is a patron of the UAE.
2. How can civilians possibly have any power, and why would we applaud the outcome of Jeddah? I would like to see a stronger civil society movement from the diaspora in Europe. Also, what are the updates from El-Geneina and Zalingei?
3. How do we analyse the differences in the different parts of the Darfur region, for example El Daein compared to the other four states? Can you also comment on the role of the local leaders' initiatives, which delayed fighting in many places at the beginning of the war? I would also like to know the role of the Islamists and their stakes in Jeddah. And how do you see armed groups reacting to the changes in different parts of Darfur?

The initials used below for responses indicate the commentators' names:

**AY:** Dr Adeeb Yousif

**AdW:** Dr Alex de Waal

**BZ:** Bedour Zakaria Mohamed Yahaya

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**Regarding the position of Saudi Arabia, I think at best they are neutral because they are worried about the war in their own backyard, as they don't have capacity to defend themselves from Yemenis.**

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**The USA under Trump delegated its policy on the region to Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. President Biden did not reverse this, and currently, with the war of Israel against the Palestinians, it will again depend on those four countries to take a lead on policy in the Horn of Africa.**

### Commentators' responses

1. **AY:** It may be difficult and risky at this time to call out malign actors, but we are aware of the countries that are jeopardizing the peace through proxies. Regarding ethnicity, ethnic identities are stronger than ideologies in Darfur. This raises the question of how the signatories and non-signatories of the JPA (with different ethnic compositions) will align themselves. On the differences across Darfur, it's true that East Darfur is less affected than other states, though it is receiving a large number of IDPs. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that ethnic identity is stronger than other drivers. In other states, there has been intense destruction of facilities, including banks, UN agencies and universities.
2. **AdW:** I would add that the USA under Trump delegated its policy on the region to Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. President Biden did not reverse this, and currently, with the war of Israel against the Palestinians, it will again depend on those four countries to take a lead on policy in the Horn of Africa. I also wanted to add that one of the things we missed when we studied the Darfur conflict with President Mbeki in 2009 is what we might call the 'Saharan' conflict in Darfur. The *Janjaweed* are not only a local phenomenon, but also represent historically dispossessed Saharans. We cannot solve Darfur without addressing all of the related conflicts. I completely agree that international civil society must support Sudanese civil society. Regarding the Islamists, in my view they should be part of the solution, but not the armed branches with links to the deep state. I also think that the armed resistance groups in Darfur need to be part of the solution. The longer the fighting goes on, the more groups will take up arms, and then the problems will become more difficult to solve. All these groups have to be brought into the solution as soon as possible.

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## SECOND ROUND OF PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

1. The Jeddah negotiations are not easy or straightforward. If Hemedti accepts any kind of peace, it could mean going back to pre-war arrangements or it might mean some kind of independent state in Darfur, or there might be a kind of a confederation. There is a complexity in sustained peace. A ceasefire may hold for some months, but a sustained peace requires us to look at how we are going to deal with them. This is where different civil society groups should come up with solutions—not just a civilian government, which might not help the people of Darfur, but solutions that address all these dimensions.
2. We have seen very high levels of brutality in Darfur, especially in West and South Darfur states. What we have seen can be described as a genocide and crimes against humanity. The RSF was created along ethnic lines, and that is why their fighters fight along ethnic lines in this way. I have also observed that the JPA signatories have divided into four groups. One is

allied with the Forces of Freedom and Change's (FFC's) Central Committee, another with the FFC's Democratic Bloc; a third is aligned with the SAF, and a fourth is aligned with the RSF. What are the consequences of these divisions?

3. What more can we say about transitional justice and the role of human rights activists in Darfur? What should transitional justice should look like, and what are the perspectives of Sudanese women in Darfur?

### Commentators' responses

1. **AY:** On the issue of JPA signatories' division: these are not recent divisions. These groups were divided earlier for many different reasons. But we should instead focus more on how to bring them together, as this will make it possible to work on humanitarian access and take other steps to end the misery of the people in Darfur.
2. **AdW:** I don't want to give the impression there is a foregone conclusion out of Jeddah. The process is not well designed or run. The key protagonists, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, want to make a deal on the assumption that they will be able to solve the problem with the AU as a client. What comes out will be a fact, a political reality we will have to live with, and we will have to find a way to turn it into a peace. Regarding the role of the European Union, I have two points. One is that the EU will back anything that stops migration. That is its priority and the EU shares this with Egypt. The second is that the EU likes to back the AU. The AU has a very elaborate peace and security architecture based on principles and institutions, but it is not respecting principles or using institutions. The AU is completely dysfunctional at the moment, so the EU has no entry point into the Sudanese peace process.
3. **BZ:** Regarding transitional justice, this is very important for durable peace. Those responsible are known and they should be brought to court. Unless there is accountability, there will be a cycle of violence and war.

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## Chapter 4

# CONCLUSIONS

In their concluding remarks, the commentators re-emphasized the following points:

1. The root causes of the conflicts must be addressed to avoid recurrence.
2. Women must be engaged in any peace process from the grassroots up.
3. Accountability and rule of law are imperative to break the cycle of violence and impunity.
4. A lasting peace will require local reconciliation as well as external support needed for the state to become viable, such as economic support.
5. The international community must keep an eye on Darfur and local actors should keep monitoring, documenting and reporting on developments, including human rights violations.

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# About the contributors

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# About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 34 Member States founded in 1995, with a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

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We develop policy-friendly research related to elections, parliaments, constitutions, digitalization, climate change, inclusion and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and Democracy Tracker.

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This is a most challenging time for Sudan and particularly for Darfur. One of the differences between now and 20 years ago is that Darfur was earlier in the spotlight, whereas today it has been forgotten, ignored or deliberately neglected.

The Sudanese Experts and Facilitators Group (SEFG), in collaboration with International IDEA, held a webinar on 31 October 2023 to explore the impact of the war in Khartoum on Darfur, especially in the light of its pre-existing interethnic conflicts.

The speakers, chosen for their expertise on and experience in Darfur, addressed a range of topics, including the war's impact on conflict dynamics in Darfur; the importance of documenting the human rights and humanitarian impacts; and the prospects for ending the violence both in Darfur and in Sudan as a whole.

This Discussion Paper briefly analyses the armed conflict in Sudan and aims to guide the mediators, stakeholders and other protagonists towards ending war and beginning peacebuilding in Sudan.