
What Happens in Darfur Doesn't Stay in Darfur

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The wave of recent violence in West Darfur State has left many shocked observers asking: who was involved in the mass atrocities that occurred, and what are the drivers of the violence and its root causes? In what ways does the violence relate to the October 2020 Juba Peace Agreement that should have brought peace to Darfur and other conflict areas in Sudan but is obviously failing to do so? Finally, what does the violence mean for the junta and the relationships between the different components?

In its inaugural policy brief, the recently established Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker (STPT) attempts to provide elements of answers to these questions, with the aim of encouraging informed policy decisions both at home and internationally on approaches to bring about stability and sustainable peace to Darfur and to Sudan.

1 The Actors and Drivers of the Violence

Yet another week of bloodletting has left West Darfur and the rest of Sudan in deep shock. Attacks on the town of Kreinik and some sixteen villages surrounding it on Friday 22 and Sunday 24 April by militiamen left nearly 200 civilians dead and scores seriously injured and led to the displacement of an estimated 85,000 to 115,000 people.^{1,2,3} The attackers looted valuables, burned homes and markets to the ground, and destroyed infrastructure essential to civilians such as the local hospital and its

¹ See advancing columns of the attackers in a Twitter video verified by the BBC, here: <https://twitter.com/TaqwaAhmed83/status/1518462266357788675?s=20&t=vrC44hdLkJBVJFy-tw0ZaA>.

² See also: BBC, "Darfur: Why are Sudan's Janjaweed on the attack again?," 27 April, 2022, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-61217999>

³ Reliefweb, "Sudan: Inter-communal conflict - Kereneik & Ag Geneina, West Darfur Flash Update No. 01 (25 Apr 2022) [EN/AR]," 25 April, 2022, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-inter-communal-conflict-kereneik-ag-geneina-west-darfur-flash-update-no-01-25-apr>

pharmacy.⁴ Scores of women, children, teachers, and health workers were among those killed. On Sunday 24 and the following days, the violence spread to El-Geneina, the capital of the state, forcing thousands of residents to flee their homes. Beyond what the pogrom in Kreinik and its area revealed about how fraught ethnic relationships remain in greater Darfur, it exposed the complicity or incompetence of local security agencies as some in their ranks joined their ethnic kin during the attack and others failed to intervene due mainly to their lack of military capacity to confront the number of attackers. It is arguable that the formal state security forces can longer be viewed as professionals with a sense of responsibility and neutrality, but rather a part of the ethnic fabric of the conflict. Worse, they are using their formal status as a façade to legitimize their actions.

Beyond Darfur, ripples of the deadly events have shed a harsh light on the national scene. The incident added to existing evidence of the fragility of the opportunistic alliance behind the October 2021 coup among the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), the rival parallel army that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have become, and armed movements signatory to the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement (JPA). With no credible political base supporting their claim to power, the coup leaders revived a cohort of loyalists of the former regime of deposed president Omar al-Bashir who remained hopeful of returning to power. The generals, who claimed they had a national duty to prevent Sudan's breakdown and improve its security when they overthrew the civilian-led transitional government, were exposed as incapable of assuming their responsibilities to protect their citizens' right to life. Worse, the Darfur movements who tied their political fate to the coup were shown to be incapable of influencing events in the region beyond condemnations of the regular forces' inability or reluctance to protect civilians and secure the peace.

Most of the 200 killed in the attacks on Kreinik belonged to the Masalit ethnic group and others settled with them from the Tama, Bargo and Arab minority groups, many of them displaced from earlier phases of the conflict in West Darfur since 2003. The media and eyewitnesses interviewed by STPT described the attackers as herders of Arab descent backed up by RSF soldiers.

In an all too familiar scenario, this conflict was triggered by an individual incident of an alleged killing of two herders near the town and a deadly ambush of the search party that traced the suspected perpetrators of that killing to the outskirts of Kreinik.⁵ The series of massive and indiscriminate revengeful attacks that followed represented collective punishment of an entire group based on its ethnicity. If this image sounds familiar, it is because it conjures the image of Janjaweed attackers unleashed on thousands of villages and settlements inhabited by the Fur, Massalit, and Zaghawa peoples during the different phases of the conflict between the Bashir government and Darfur armed movements that began in 2003-2004. Nearly two decades later, defenseless civilians continue to die, blamed collectively for the actions of their brethren.

The security response from the local joint forces of the SAF, RSF, police, and Central Reserve Police was totally inadequate, even when a small reinforcement convoy of joint forces arrived from El-Geniena after the first wave of attacks on Friday. According to an eyewitness interviewed for this brief, the deployment and an overflight of the area by a SAF Air Force helicopter on Saturday managed to deter the attackers for a day and gave the locals a false sense of security. However, the attackers returned in overwhelming numbers on Sunday in an estimated 150 technicals, motorcycles, and on horseback, overwhelming the town's defenses. The latter consisted of a joint force of the SAF, RSF, police, and Central Reserve Police, with 20 militarized vehicles. According to a statement by the

⁴ Darfur 24, "MSF: Two health workers killed in Kreinik hospital and the looting of the pharmacy," 26 April 2022, in Arabic, available at: <https://www.darfur24.com/2022/04/26/اطباء-بلا-حدود-مقتل-عاملين-في-مستشفى-كر>

⁵ France 24, "Hundreds killed in tribal clashes in Sudan's West Darfur," 27 April 2022, available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220427-hundreds-killed-in-tribal-clashes-in-sudan-s-west-darfur>

governor of West Darfur Khamis Abdullah Abakar, government regular forces withdrew to the local garrison and did nothing as the attackers massacred scores of civilians and laid the town to waste.^{6,7} The governor denied that the Coalition of Sudanese Forces, the JPA signatory group which he chairs, participated in the events in Kreinik.⁸

The events of the week of 22 April 2022 were a replay of similar interethnic strife a year ago. Beginning on 3 April 2021, six months to the day after the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA), local violence took hold in El-Geneina. At least 145 had been killed and 230 wounded by the time calm returned about a week later.⁹ Then as now, the fighting pitted militia of herders of Arab origin and RSF fighters spearheading them against self-defense groups that the local Masalit people have set up following repeated attacks on the war-displaced from their community in December 2019-January 2020 and January 2021.¹⁰

2 What the Events Tell Us About the Future of the Juba Peace Agreement

There is a misconception that delays in the implementation of the JPA's security arrangements since the days of the toppled civilian-led government of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and particularly after the October 2021 military takeover represent a major factor in the deteriorating security in Sudan's conflict areas. In particular, the continued failure of the parties to establish the joint Darfur Security Force after appropriate training of the movements' integrated fighters "within 90 days of the signing of the agreement" is seen as a lapse in the protection of civilians.^{11,12} However, it is unclear how effective the JPA security arrangements would be in addressing the security threats and civilian protection needs in Darfur if implemented. The ceasefire, integration, demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration processes, and other related provisions only cover the JPA signatory groups, but do not address the plethora of ethnically based militias that are roaming Darfur's countryside and terrorizing its cities. Since signatory groups were not involved in the 2019-2022 violence in West Darfur, the JPA provisions may have limited or no value in addressing this violence. Furthermore, although the joint Darfur Security Force was intended to provide security more broadly, it was envisaged to have only 6,000 troops to deploy across Darfur, with questionable capacity, human

⁶ STPT telephone interview, 28 April, 2022.

⁷ See also: Radio Dabanga, "West Darfur violence leaves 200+ dead – 'cautious calm' as hospitals, markets stay closed," 27 April, 2022, available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/west-darfur-violence-leaves-200-dead-cautious-calm-as-hospitals-markets-stay-closed>

⁸ El-Geneina News, "Statement of General Khamis Abdulla Abakar Governor of West Darfur on Events in Kreinik and al-Geneina Localities," 26 April, 2022, in Arabic, available at: <https://fb.watch/cPOwdOlwf9/>

⁹ Associated Press, "Sudan's leader visits Darfur after tribal clashes killed 144," April 12, available at: <https://apnews.com/article/sudan-a2ee9a4e3e51e4e5776a070b3c5f542f>

¹⁰ Interviews with local sources, 2021, and 2022.

¹¹ As mandated under in the JPA, Darfur Track, Chapter 8: "Permanent Ceasefire and Final Security Arrangements Protocol, Art. 29.1.1.

¹² IDEA, "The Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan, Summary and Analysis," 2021, available at: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/the-juba-agreement-for-peace-in-sudan-en.pdf>

rights standards, trust from communities and command and control. Why would this force be any more effective than the RSF and Central Reserve Police forces already present in Darfur?

Like many previous peace agreements in Sudan, the JPA was more of an elite deal than a comprehensive program. The JPA promised to realize power and wealth sharing by appointing leaders of the armed opposition groups to key ministerial and public service positions. This was implemented in a cabinet reshuffle that took place after the JPA, awarding the ministries of Finance, Mining, Energy, Social Development, and Livestock in addition to federal state governorships to leaders of the Darfur signatory movements. However, the provisions addressing the root causes of the conflicts and extending peace dividends to the millions whose lives and livelihoods were uprooted by the two-decade conflicts remain locked in written texts. By joining the political campaign that paved the way for the coup, the armed movements sought to consolidate their narrow gains in senior government positions but risked distancing themselves both from local communities and the pro-democracy movement at the national level.

The JPA ministers from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement faction led by Malik Agar and from the signatory Darfur movements remained in their positions following the October 2021 coup despite the coup leaders' decision to dissolve the civilian-led cabinet in which they sat. The events in Kreinik underscored how removed from the constituencies they claim to represent, these leaders are in Khartoum or at federal state capitals as their inability to influence events became clear.

The JPA appears to have exacerbated ethnic polarizations across Darfur and not only in its Western state. This is in part because the agreement includes strong provisions on the return of the displaced to their home areas which is seen to require the removal of secondary occupants, who understandably are resistant to moving. On 26 April 2021, militiamen hailing from the Tarjam community attacked several villages inhabited by Fur community members in the Wadi Bulbul area, near Nyala in South Darfur.¹³ Confidential information received from the area tended to indicate links to the forthcoming implementation of the JPA with rising tensions leading to the attacks, like what happened in El-Geneina earlier in that month. In a fiery speech in March, Nazir Mohamed Yagoub of the Tarjam was heard telling his followers that he welcomed peace but would resist any claims by the JPA signatories to consider his people as "new settlers".¹⁴ The rally coincided with the visit of some JPA signatories to the area to promote and explain the JPA to local communities.¹⁵

The JPA may not be adequate to respond effectively to the recurrent episodes of collective violence in its current form. The question remains on the political conditions that ensure that the implementation of the JPA provisions will contribute to peace and stability rather than fueling tensions among communities on the ground.

¹³ Radio Dabanga, "Protests over violence in South Darfur," 30 April 2021, available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/protests-over-violence-in-south-darfur>

¹⁴ See: <https://www.facebook.com/ibrahim.bakar.3139/videos/2813179475677525/>

¹⁵ STPT interviews.

3 What the Violence Means for the Junta and the Relationships among its Components

The condemnations of the attack on Kreinik from members of the ruling junta offer evidence of the fragility of the opportunistic alliance among its constituents and the dereliction of their collective responsibility to provide security to Sudanese citizens. Minni Arko Minawi, governor general of the yet to be legally established Darfur region, denounced the inadequacy and incompetence of the security response both at the local and national levels in a statement on Sunday 24. The governor, who is head of the JPA signatory movement Sudan Liberation Movement/Minni Minawi faction, charged that in the face of interethnic fighting, security agencies present in Darfur were “either slow to intervene, or complicit and participants in the events.”¹⁶ Worse, Minawi stated that security forces often asked to be paid to secure the movement of commercial convoys among Darfur cities.¹⁷ For his part, El-Hadi Idris, head of the JPA signatory Sudan Revolutionary Forces and member of the Sovereignty Council under the coup leadership, stated that the events demonstrated how Sudan was a “failed state.”¹⁸

Minnawi’s denunciation of the inaction of the SAF, the RSF, national police, and the Central Reserve Police, albeit without naming them, echoes that of the governor of West Darfur State at the time of the April 2021 violence. He and local community leaders publicly decried the failure of regular security forces stationed in West Darfur to intervene to protect civilians and said it was a major contributing factor in the devastating toll of the violence. In response, the National Security Council ordered an investigation of the reported inaction of security forces stationed in El-Geneina and promised to hold accountable those found responsible for failing to assume their duties.¹⁹ The results of that investigation were not made public.

In a repeat of what it did in the wake of April 2021 violence in El-Geneina, the National Security Council convened in Khartoum on 25 April 2022. After expressing its condolences to families of the victims, it ordered the deployment of additional forces to West Darfur to deter violence. Noticeably absent from the meeting were the RSF top commander Lt.-Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo ‘Hemeti’,

¹⁶ See a video of Minnawi speech posted to his personal page on FaceBook at: <https://fb.watch/cDHojgsDTp/>

¹⁷ Radio Dabanga, “Sudan: Darfur Governor Lambasts Poor Security Measures in Wake of Tribal Massacre,” 26 April, 2022, available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/darfur-governor-lambasts-poor-security-measures-in-wake-of-tribal-massacre>

¹⁸ Al-Rakoba, “A Member of the Sovereignty Council: Sudan is a failed state – we are investigating the involvement of the RSF in the events,” 27 April 2022, in Arabic, available at: <https://www.alrakoba.net/31711745/عضو-بمجلس-السيادة-السودان-دولة-فاشل/>

¹⁹ Tag Press, “Decisions and procedures from the security and defense council chaired by Burhan – and directives to hold to account the inaction of security agencies,” 16 April 2021, in Arabic, available at: <https://www.tagpress.net/61159/>

who was abroad at the time, and his brother Abdel-Rahim, the RSF second in command.²⁰ Hemeti declared days later that “all those implicated in the events in Kreinik and West Darfur are victims,” in an apparent reference to the rhetoric of grievance of pastoralist groups, and acknowledged that “the state came short in containing the events of West Darfur.”²¹

The RSF commander Hemeti is engaged in systematic efforts to leverage the military and political clout of the RSF and the considerable wealth its commanders are amassing through their private businesses to acquire the loyalty of local traditional chiefs and to entice local youth to join the force.²² However, the latter respond primarily to local challenges, obeying overriding ethnic motivations. While it is known that RSF fighters have joined successive attacks on civilians in West Darfur since 2019, the RSF has been proven time and again unwilling and unable to discipline its members that commit atrocity crimes against unarmed civilians. The senior command of the SAF and the national police have shown even less inclination to discipline troops that took part in localized clashes on the side of their ethnic groups, using the government’s weapons, ordnance, and logistics to that end.

By taking a lead role in the negotiations that led to the JPA, Hemeti sought to build bridges with the armed movements his forces had defeated on the battlefield and chased out of Darfur during the period 2014-2017. A new alliance emerged from the JPA process between the RSF and the Darfuri rebel movements both of whom saw an opportunity to assert the entitlement of Sudan’s historically marginalized groups and regions for more representation in the national and state-level institutions and a larger share in the national wealth and the management of Sudan’s national resources.

Darfur is also the central piece in Hemeti’s family trading business which grew over time to cover other sectors, including the gold industry. The region serves as a springboard for the RSF commander’s political ambitions in neighboring Libya, Chad, and the Sahel region.²³

A breakdown of law and order involving RSF fighters on the scale witnessed in Kreinik and El-Geneina could only have a negative impact on Hemeti’s image by demonstrating the weak command and control within the RSF and the tolerance of widespread violations by its members. Contributing to weak discipline of the RSF is the fact that many local commanders were integrated from the predecessor paramilitary force, the Border Guards, and remained loyal to Musa Hilal, former Border Guard commander and tribal chief of the Mahameed clan of the camel herding Rezeigat Arabs.²⁴ Against a backdrop of increasing scrutiny of the weaknesses of his control of RSF forces in Darfur, Hemeti insinuated in public comments in early May that de facto Head of State Burhan’s national leadership was weak and that security forces have been complicit in the emergence of violent criminal gangs that have terrorized the population in recent months.²⁵

²⁰ Darfur 24, “Absence of Hemeti and Abdel-Rahim form an urgent meeting about Kreinik,” 25 April, 2022, in Arabic, available at: <https://www.darfur24.com/2022/04/26/اتغيب-حميدتي-و-عبد-الرحيم-عن-اجتماع-طار>

²¹ Al-Sudani al-Youm, “Hemeti: the state failed to contain the West Darfur events,” 28 April 2022, in Arabic.

²² BBC, “Sudan crisis: The ruthless mercenaries who run the country for gold,” 20 July 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48987901>

²³ Jerome Tubiana, “Darfur after Bashir: Implications for Sudan’s Transition and for the Region,” a Special Report of the US Institute of Peace, April 2022, available at: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR508-Darfur-after-Bashir.pdf>

²⁴ Mohamed Badawi, “The events of West Darfur; Triggers and Motivation,” unpublished paper shared by the author, in Arabic, received on 29 April 2022.

²⁵ El-Sudani, “Were there ‘Tisa’a Taweela’ (violent criminal gangs) during Bashir’s time,” 3 May 2022, in Arabic, available at: <https://www.alsudaninews.com/ar/?p=150240>

Lacking both in constitutional legitimacy and a political or ideological project, the junta also lacks a coherent social base. It is cemented only by its members' desires to capture Sudan's resources, and protect privileges acquired from the Bashir era. In lieu of a genuine political incubator, the junta hastily reappointed scores of loyalists of the former regime to public service positions from which they had been purged by an anti-graft panel during the period of Prime Minister Hamdok of the transition and returned to leading former regime oligarchs' assets and accounts seized or frozen by the panel.

Now in its seventh month, the political stalemate triggered by the October 2021 coup is anchored in a deep leadership crisis. The Sudanese political opposition, while opposed to the junta, has failed to agree on a joint platform and program that would strengthen the movement resisting the coup which is spearheaded by youth. At the same time, the events in West Darfur bring to light the bankruptcy of the junta and its lack of legitimacy. Contrary to claims by some of its international and regional backers that the junta is a better guarantor of Sudan's stability and more unified than civilians and represents a bulwark against the collapse of the state, it has been exposed as incapable of managing the economy, unwilling and unable to act in ways that would encourage a political resolution to the crisis their coup has created, and failing in its primary responsibility of maintaining law and order and protecting civilians.

The perpetuation of the political stalemate in Khartoum, and the serious tensions weakening both the coup leaders and their civilian opposition, also represent main factors in the depletion of state authority and institutions in the peripheries. A return to constitutional order, with a clear path to civilian leadership of the transition to democracy, are essential to the restoration of peace and the upholding of rights protections across Sudan.

4 Policies That Kill

At the root of recent violence in West Darfur is the longstanding competition among local communities over access to resources. Previously such conflict revolved around water and pasture but more recently, competing traditional ownership claims on areas believed or known to have gold or oil reserves have emerged as an added driver of violence.²⁶ The greater Darfur region had centuries-old solid mechanisms of conflict prevention, resolution and compensation for victims which contained such conflicts. These mechanisms had proven effective in maintaining social peace and stability in the region for generations. It wasn't until the 1990s when the Bashir regime engaged in the systematic manipulation of these mechanisms for its political and security interests that the traditional conflict mitigation became less effective in assuming their historic roles.

The latest violence in West Darfur played out against a background of conflicting claims of land ownership and entitlements in the region, just as the previous violence in and around El-Geneina in December 2019, January 2020, January 2021 and April 2021 did. The demise of the Bashir regime in 2019, followed by the ascendancy of civilian leadership both at the national and state levels encouraged victims of the prior massive, forced displacements, primarily the Masalit, to renew claims of the right to return. Groups of Arab origin deployed as proxies by the military, some of whose

²⁶ The 2013 conflict between Beni Husein and Arab Aba'ala clans was triggered by dispute on the ownership of the gold rich jebel Amer, see Suliman Baldo, "Musa Hilal's "Awakening": Khartoum's worst nightmare?," a report for Sudan Democracy First Group, 22 April 2015, available at: Sudan Tribune, <https://sudantribune.com/article53303/>

members settled in these lands after being encouraged to lay claim to these lands and clear them of their inhabitants, felt they risked losing the political and security clout they gained in reward for their services. The JPA entry in force in late 2020 was seen as a zero-sum game, with winners taking all the benefits. However, none of the JPA provisions aiming to deliver peace dividends to those victimized by the conflict have been implemented, including the land commission and provisions for the resettlement and compensation of the internally displaced and the refugees. Likewise, the land commission envisaged to address land claims nationwide under the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the civil war with South Sudan was also never implemented.

Neither the coup leaders nor the previous civilian-led executive have done much to address the concerns of pastoralist groups, leaving them to their own devices to assert claims to power through the barrel of the gun. All along, the military establishment maintained and sought to expand the policy of arming allied ethnic groups (often pastoralists) across Sudan that was applied during the three decades of Bashir's regime. Under their watch and at their hands, Sudan presents all the trappings of a "militia state": one in which a process of deinstitutionalization occurs that suppresses military standards, regulations, hierarchy, and discipline as militias take greater roles in operations against rebel groups and their community leaders acquire greater political and administrative influence at the state and national levels. Groups rival to the government's allies, including the Masalit in recent years, also sought to arm themselves for self-protection, leading to an escalation in the frequency and levels of violence. As the instrumentalization of ethnicity was the main basis for their recruitment, militias owe their loyalty not to the state, but primarily to their narrow interests and to their communities. Following the peak of the violence in Darfur during the years 2003-2006, characterized by the wholesale targeting of entire communities suspected of loyalty to the rebels on the sole basis of their ethnicity, the conflict gradually metamorphosed into a low intensity protracted state of insecurity with repetitive spikes of extreme violence, with state and security officials refusing to assume responsibility for the outcomes of their policies in the peripheral regions of Sudan.

In many instances militias became "entrepreneurs of violence," levying their pay from the public by the collection of tolls at toll gates in Darfur and smuggling to Sudan thousands of undocumented vehicles from Libya, the Central African Republic, and the Sahel region. Worryingly, fighters of the joint forces deployed to Darfur to protect the "super camps" of the hybrid African Union-United Nations peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) were prominently seen among the looters of the sites after UNAMID's withdrawal. The peacekeeping force provided a measure of limited protection to civilians in areas of its presence by deterring blatant attacks of the type that occurred in Kreinik on 22 April. Its withdrawal before the establishment of a credible national civilian protection force left civilians exposed.

5. International Response

The international community swiftly condemned the killings and pressed the government of Sudan and the armed movements to assume their responsibility to protect citizens from mass atrocities. Calls to the government to launch independent investigations to identify perpetrators and hold them accountable, and to grant humanitarian access to victims and secure their rights to remedies were also made.²⁷ U.N. Secretary General Guterres underscored that the primary responsibility for civilian

²⁷ The UN Special Representative Volker Perthes called for "an in-depth and transparent investigation, the results of which should be made public and help to identify the perpetrators of violence and bring them to justice."UNITAMS, "SRSG @volkerperthes deplores heinous killings of civilians in Kereneik, West Darfur, and

protections rests with the government of Sudan and the High Commissioner for Human Rights also deplored the killings and called for investigations.^{28,29} Members of the Security Council joined his call on 29 April for an expedited implementation of the JPA and pledged to support that process, in particular the deployment of the Joint Security Keeping Force, and of the National Action Plan for Civilian Protection.³⁰ For inexplicable reasons, the African Union was absent from the chorus of condemnations of mass killings targeting civilians.

Calls by some advocacy groups in the wake of the Kreinik tragedy for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in Darfur appear unrealistic in view of the rejection of the national government of such a measure and its slim chances of adoption in the current extremely polarized international environment. In view of the JPA's weaknesses in addressing localized violence in Darfur explained above, the international community must insist that government forces deployed in Darfur to curb the current escalation in violence should have the appropriate training on civilian protection and the highest standards of training on human rights protections. Elements of government forces in the area should be ethnically neutral and placed under tight command and control safeguards. Those security elements who violate the law should be subjected to the full force of the legal consequences of their actions.

6. Concluding Remarks & Recommendations

Attempts to brush aside the wave of killings in Kreinik this last week as another episode of “communal violence,” as did the Minister of Defense Lt.-Gen. Yassin Ibrahim Yassin in comments following the meeting of the National Security Council, can barely disguise the failure of leadership that is behind Sudan's protracted crises.³¹ Ethnic strife is a man-made disaster in Darfur, and the government needs to assume its share of responsibility in creating its root causes.

Recommendations:

The government:

- Immediately direct all regular state security agencies to stop the practice of recruiting and arming militias and other forces based on ethnicity, or on ideological and political grounds.
- Carefully prepare and incrementally implement a program of voluntary disarmament of existing tribal militias in Darfur and across Sudan after wide consultation and public outreach in areas of militia presence.

calls for immediate end to violence and in-depth investigation,” 24 April, 2022, available at: <https://twitter.com/UNITAMS/status/1518340659853377542?s=20&t=GA-wZB3AhSqeU0aLWDDbiQ>

²⁸ The UN “Secretary-General Deplores Killings of Civilians in West Darfur,” 25 April, SG/SM/21249, available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sgsm21249.doc.htm>

²⁹ The UN, “Sudan: Bachelet appalled by Darfur killings, warns against escalation,” 27 April, 2022, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/04/sudan-bachelet-appalled-darfur-killings-warns-against-escalation>

³⁰ The UN, “Security Council Press Statement on Darfur, Sudan,” SC/14878, 29 April, 2022, available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14878.doc.htm>

³¹ Baj News, “Defense and Security Council decision to send forces to separate fighting parties in West Darfur,” 25 April, 2022, in Arabic, available at: <https://sahafahn.com/show13552049.html>

- Urgently respond to the acute humanitarian and health crisis in Kreinik and West Darfur by providing relief and medical supplies.
- Grant national and international humanitarian organizations unfettered access to the internally displaced and other war affected populations.
- Assume responsibility for the rehabilitation of the public infrastructure destroyed during the 2020, 2021, and 2022 violence in El-Geneina, Kreinik, and elsewhere in Darfur including hospitals, schools, and markets.
- Investigate the alleged participation of elements of the RSF in the attacks against Kreinik, the killing of civilians, and destruction of their property and hold accountable those found to have participated.
- Investigate the reported failure of security forces present Kreinik and El-Geneina to intervene to protect civilians during recurrent incidents of violence since December 2019 and hold to account members of regular forces found to have failed in assuming their responsibilities.
- Prioritize the implementation of the JPA provisions addressing the root causes of conflicts there through transitional justice mechanisms, genuine devolution of power to local governments, and land reforms.
- Address the concerns of communities feeling threatened by the implementation of the JPA by explaining the provisions addressing their concerns and begin the serious implementation of these provisions.

The Political Opposition:

- Develop a comprehensive vision about the country's path towards democracy, including practical instruments for resisting the coup.
- Coordinate efforts to build a mechanism to manage diversity among the pro-democracy groups to maintain cooperation rather than trying to unify them into a coalition
- Avoid the infighting and accusations and focus on building a vision for a new social contract that brings Sudanese people together.
- Articulate an alternative process for Darfur that allows for resolution of the root causes of violence.

The Signatories of the JPA:

- Investigate the alleged participation of fighters from your movements in recent clashes in Darfur and hold accountable perpetrators of violence and rights violations in the ranks of your movements.
- Work together in disseminating information at the community level about the JPA and its provisions to address their problems and their priorities.

The International Community:

- Demand that the government of Sudan take full responsibility for civilian protection throughout the country and in particular in regions such as Darfur affected by civic strife.
- Insist that the government improve its command and control of its security forces and hold to account elements that violate the law and attack civilians.
- Press the government to establish an independent and transparent investigative commission of the recent killings in Darfur and to commit to make findings of the commission public.
- Provide technical assistance to such a commission if established in accordance with the requisite technical standards and demonstrable independence.
- Press regional backers of Sudan's coup to change course and align their interests with the pro-democracy groups as the only strategic way for Sudan to be stable and unified.