

# STPT Monitor

No 1, August 31, 2022

This Monitor is intended as an overview of key developments in Sudan over the last two months along with our analysis of why it matters to inform and engage public opinion and Sudan watchers.

## 1 Humanitarian and Environmental Disasters



Flood victims at Al Managil

**Floods in Sudan:** Heavy rains in Sudan caused massive flooding, affecting River Nile, Al Jazeera, and South Darfur states. A rapid assessment team deployed by Sadaqat, a leading charity organization, reported that torrential rains in Berber and five other localities in River Nile resulted in the total collapse of 2,297 homes and the partial collapse of 92, affecting more than 50,000 people during the

week of August 8. Most of Al Jazeera witnessed heavy rains the week of August 12. The greatest damage was in Al Managil locality, which was affected by sudden flooding of the main canals of its agricultural project. This caused the total collapse of nearly 1,500 houses and damage to hundreds more. The UN's OCHA [reported](#) the destruction of 16,000 homes in South Darfur. The floods displaced many farming communities and destroyed their livelihoods, adding to the concerns about serious shortfalls in food production across Sudan in the coming months.

By August 23, [more than](#) 156,000 were displaced by the floods, and scores more lost their lives. The US, UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have promised aid and resistance committees have pledged to act in support of the victims.

### Why it is important:

- *In River Nile State, the floods washed thousands of tons of mineral waste laced with heavy*

**Compiled by:** Suliman Baldo and Olivia Bueno

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Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker

**Photo credits:** Ayin, local activists in Ibeideya



**mercury content from artisanal gold mining into farms and villages as they rushed to the Nile, causing massive environmental disaster.** STPT will be issuing a brief highlighting this hidden disaster to which there has been no government response.

A statement by the Minister of Irrigation that was rapidly [removed](#) by Sudan News Agency from its website attributed the flooding in Al Managil town and dozens of surrounding villages to an erroneous opening of gates at Sennar Dam feeding the main canal. The quick removal led to widespread speculation on social media that the flooding was man made. **The government should authorize an independent technical investigation to assess the role of human action in the massive flooding.**

- **The floods exposed fatal flaws in the coup government's disaster preparedness and response capacities.** Three weeks after the breach of its main canal, Al Managil remained under water, with thousands of its population with no shelter or sanitary services and cut from food and other relief supplies. A unit of the army's Engineers Corps helped open the road to the isolated area in the third week, however, there was no noticeable deployment of army or RSF heavy machinery to drain the flood waters or transport supplies collected by the public to Al Managil. This lack of deployment of the army's considerable means speaks volumes about their priorities.

- **The government also appears dependent on the traditional charity of Sudan's Arab neighbors** such as revealed in a [statement](#) by Governor of Al Jazeera State Ismaeil A. Al Agib, "Wali of Al-Jazeera: More than 5,400 homes have collapsed in 313 villages. Saudi Arabia is working to identify the actual needs and work to provide them." Of note is the fact that **the Saudi relief airlift was accompanied by officials who directly oversaw its distribution to the affected communities in Al Jazeera,** suggesting Saudi distrust in the government's capacities to manage the distribution.



Flood victim stands in destroyed home

**Sit-ins in a gold mining area:** People living around El Ibeidiya, Sudan's oldest and largest "gold market" in Berber locality, River Nile State held a sit-in for three weeks in August, calling for an end to harmful mining practices and greater investment of mining revenues in the region. The protesters were able to shut down government collection of revenue by the Ministry of Mining's Sudan Mineral Resources Company (SMRC). They also disrupted corporate gold production by blocking the supplies of mineral waste and water that are essential for these operations. Among the companies affected by the blockade was a Russian company known as Merowe



Sit in at Ibeidiya

Egypt to protest the uncontrolled use of cyanide by companies processing the residues of artisanal gold mining.

Gold. Russian activities in the area were recently highlighted in a CNN exposé accusing Russia of plundering Sudan's gold for its Ukraine war effort. [Bloomberg](#) news service and the [New York Times](#) have also covered the story from El Ibeidiya in April and June respectively.

Not far from El Ibeidiya, the mining community of Suleimaniya also shut down mining operations and blocked the highway to

### Why it is important:

- The **protests show a possibility for the overlap of outrage over foreign action in the mining sector and domestic corruption to mobilize local and national level political action.** It also shows a shift in local populations who have a greater understanding of, and willingness to act for, their rights. This could be a game changer for combating corruption in Sudan.
- Organizers succeeded in extracting significant concessions from the government. These included:
  - the elevation of El Ibeidiya in local government divisions from an Administrative Unit (the lowest echelon of local government divisions) to a Locality (that consists of several administrative units);
  - the allocation of social responsibility funds levied from mining operations to the new locality's "development committee" rather be centrally managed by SMRC as was the case until the sit-in;
  - government funding for the establishment of a water station and construction of internal roads linking the villages of the new locality, as well as a permanent police station in El Ibeidiya to improve security;

In addition, the organizers established an environmental watchdog group to assess the damage already done to the local environment by artisanal and industrial mining and to monitor and oversee the compliance of mining companies with the prescribed industrial safeguards in dealing with toxic and harmful materials.

- **Such actions are led in most instances by "demand groups", community-based organizations set up by local youth associations (Resistance Committees, lawyers and environmentalist groups, and farmers, business, and professional associations, etc.) acting in a loose alliance to protect the community's livelihood and rights.** Threats that demand groups are confronting throughout Sudan include encroachments

from large scale government projects such as dams, mechanized agriculture projects and mining concessions. Successive governments in post-independence Sudan often implemented such projects without prior notice to the affected local communities or consideration of their land tenure systems or the sustainability of their livelihoods, prompting community action to defend their entitlements and rights.



Banner denouncing environmental contamination as a crime against humanity – an expression of solidarity from a delegation which traveled from Northern State for the event

## 2 Political Developments

**Protests:** Pro-democracy protests against the military coup continued unabated during the reporting period. On August 18, 2022, protestors marched on the airport, being met by tear gas and a heavy military response.

The coup leaders' violent repression of the peaceful protesters has also continued. According to the Sudanese Doctors Committee. 105 injuries were sustained in the July 31 marches, including:

- A scattered gunshot wound,
- Two rubber bullet injuries,
- Nine head injuries from gas canisters,
- 44 bodily injuries from gas canisters, and
- 11 injuries from being run over by a vehicle.

And 22 were injured on August 18, 2022. At least 113 people have been killed since the coup.

### Why it is important:

The fact that protests are continuing to go strong despite the repression and the passage of time shows that the pro-democracy protest movement is strong. Both the military authorities and traditional political parties will need to take them seriously.

**Grand maneuvers:** On July 22, 2022, Deputy Chair of the Transitional Sovereignty Council and Rapid Support Forces commander Hemeti signaled in a public statement that the military would not cling to power if this required spilling Sudanese blood or sacrificing the stability of the country. On August 1, Hemeti announced in a televised interview with the BBC's Arabic service that the coup had not succeeded in achieving its objectives. He asserted that military groups were serious about leaving power if there was an agreement with civilian forces.

In response, the FFC announced plans in early August to introduce a new constitutional declaration.

A new opposition coalition has also been formed: the Alliance of Forces for Radical Change. The alliance is led by the veteran Communist Party of Sudan (CPoS) and includes 12 political and activist groups, most of which are affiliated with or controlled by the CPoS. Such is the case of the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), and the Sudanese Women's Union. The new alliance rejects any communication with the military and insists on their removal from political life.

In the meantime, the National Consensus Forces, a broad coalition of political activists and armed movements leaders politically aligned with the coup leaders and remnants of the Islamist and Bashir-era cadres signed political and constitutional documents, which have since been rejected by the FFC.

**Why it is important:** While the statements by the military appear to recognize some of the clear demands of the people, there is still no clarity as to how a new transitional arrangement might be agreed and the creation of new opposition movements only further obscures this pathway.

**Split in the SPLM-N:** The two key leaders in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement - North, Malik Agar and Yassir Arman, announced a split in the movement on August 18. The parties had taken different approaches to responding to the coup. Arman was arrested after the coup and later rejoined the mainstream Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC-Central Committee) leading the political opposition against the coup where he assumed influential roles in the coalition's reach out to the Resistance Committees and the public at large. Agar, on the other hand, tried to preserve the Juba Peace Agreement and its concessions to his home area of Blue Nile. Tensions within the party increased as Agar criticized other leaders, such as Arman for participating in meetings of the FFC-Central Committee. Agar will now head the SPLM-Revolutionary Front whereas Arman will lead the SPLM-Revolutionary Democratic Current. Several chapter leaders of the faction aligned themselves with Arman, further depleting the support base of Agar.

**Why it is important:**

- The latest in the leadership divisions in the SPLM-N, coming against the backdrop of the core schism between the Agar-led faction and the one led by Abdel Aziz Alhilu, further undermines Agar's legitimacy. This development raises serious questions about the long-term viability of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) which has empowered armed movement leaders with a poor track record of representation, and political leaders of the ill-advised Eastern, Northern, and Central tracks who appear to represent their own individual power-seeking selves and nothing beyond. The coup leaders have empowered and instrumentalized these groups, first to pave the way for the October 2021 coup, and later to serve as a constituency justifying their power grab and giving it a second lease on life.
- However, sustained pro-democracy protests led by the Resistance Committees are acting as a check on the overreach of the pro-coup forces, and pressuring the political opposition not to compromise on the principles of democratic change and justice demands of the revolution.

**Repression in Darfur:** The Darfur Bar Association (DBA) reported in early August that 197 people had been arrested by the RSF in Darfur, in particular members of the Native Administration who were resisting the tribal reconciliation agreements

promoted by the RSF. According to an exchange with the DBA, the dignitaries were released following the statement, however, several people detained have been transferred to Omdurman's al-Huda prison.

### **Why it is important:**

- Traditional leaders and elites in communities that came repeatedly under attack in successive waves of violence that shook West Darfur state since 2019 are resisting RSF mediation because they don't see the RSF as neutral. In many instances, attacks were spearheaded by rogue RSF elements as reported by STPT and other organizations. These leaders are also concerned that Hemeti has instrumentalized the conferences to enhance his political credentials and to build a local constituency to serve his national ambitions, while seeking at the same time to turn the outcomes of the violence to permanent realities that favor his supporters in the region.
- The RSF's repression of those opposed to its top-down tribal reconciliation conferences works to confirm the worst fears and concerns of those who do not recognize the legitimacy of the initiative.

**Violence in Blue Nile:** Violence in Blue Nile in July claimed an estimated 70 lives and displaced an estimated 31,000. In August, the Governor of Blue Nile, Gen Ahmed El Omda Badi received a UN delegation working on reducing hate speech. STPT is finalizing an in-depth briefing on the violence which will be published shortly.

**Journalists form a new union:** Sudanese journalists formed a new union in defiance of military authorities in late August. It is the first journalists' union to be created in 30 years. The new union has more than 1,000 members and aims to fight for both freedom of expression and better working conditions for journalists.

**Why it is important:** The formation of the union despite the environment of repression is a signal of the resilience of Sudanese civil society. It also has great potential to positively impact the overall state of the press.

## **3 Foreign Relations**

**Sudanese-Chadian relations:** Chadian armed groups reportedly killed 27 and injured 36 in an attack in the Bir Saliba area of West Darfur. Chadians say that the attack was prompted by accusations that Sudanese had raided Chadian cattle, but Hemeti dismissed these claims. In early August, both Darfur Governor Minni Minawi and Hemeti met with Chadian President Gen. Mahamat Idris Deby to discuss bilateral policy. Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali El Sadig called on Chad to bring the perpetrators of the violence to justice. In a visit to affected families in early August, Hemeti claimed that the Chadian government had taken action to locate and return looted cattle and arrest the perpetrators. Ndjamena is reportedly concerned about Hemeti's close relationship with the Russian Wagner Group, which it suspects of wooing Chadian rebel groups.

### **Why it is important:**

- Transnational trafficking of all categories (in weapons, gold, vehicles, drugs, humans, etc.) and cross border violence and livestock wrestling are nothing new in the ungoverned border lands between Darfur, Chad, Southern Libya, the CAR, and South Sudan. This adds to the plight of local populations and contributes to the high level of killings and forced displacements this year.
- The incident underscores the competing diplomatic activities in the uneasy cohabitation between Burhan and Hemeti. The latter travels frequently to Chad and Ethiopia, while Burhan appears more focused on relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Relations with the US and Europe were the preserve of former prime minister Abdalla Hamdok. Since his government was toppled by the October 2021 coup, these relationships appear orphaned.