

# Sudan's War and the Quad Roadmap: Can Trump's Intervention Make a Difference?



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President Trump's announcement on November 19, 2025 delivered in the presence of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, a key member of the Quad, that he was committing to work for a resolution to the conflict in Sudan, was a welcome surprise to most Sudanese.<sup>1</sup> Exhausted by the horrors of the war, the Sudanese heard from the president of the world's most powerful nation that their plight will be at the forefront of his concerns. He credited the Saudi Crown Prince with alerting him to the critical, three-year-long Sudanese tragedy. The United States (US) president's statement also breathed new life into the Quad initiative, bringing together the US, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which issued a statement laying out a roadmap for resolving the crisis on September 12.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn Watson, "Trump vows U.S. help in settling Sudan war, at request of Saudi crown prince," November 19, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-sudan-saudi-arabia-mohammed-bin-salman-kennedy-center/>

<sup>2</sup> US Department of State, "Joint Statement on Restoring Peace and Security in Sudan," September 12, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/releases/2025/09/joint-statement-on-restoring-peace-and-security-in-sudan>

Although the two parties involved in the war for the past two and half years were not part of the Quad's deliberations, they immediately started discussions with its members, particularly the US. Although both sides refuse direct talks, even with a mediator present, the US offered the delegations of both parties a proposal for a three-month ceasefire to deliver aid to those in need.<sup>3</sup> While the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) quickly accepted the ceasefire proposal, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) rejected it.<sup>4</sup> The US Secretary of State made it clear that neither side was serious about adhering to the ceasefire and that the RSF only accepted it because they knew the government would reject it.<sup>5</sup>

The RSF's dramatic seizure of El Fasher in late October was the first test of the first item on the Quad's roadmap, the three-month ceasefire. The RSF entered the city after a more than two-year siege during which its population endured immense suffering, including hunger, disease, displacement, obstruction of aid delivery, and killing of hundreds of civilians, humanitarian workers, and medical personnel. The RSF's takeover of the city was accompanied by horrific events and massacres reminiscent of the tragedy in El Geneina two years prior. The attacks provided further evidence of war crimes and genocide committed by the RSF. Far from a ceasefire, the war escalated, suffering intensified, and mobilization heightened on each side.

The Quad initiative faced difficulties from the beginning. The Sudanese government objected to the inclusion of the UAE in the Quad. They accuse the UAE of supporting the RSF with advanced weaponry and drones which have significantly altered the course of the war and complicated its resolution, an accusation of which there is ample independent corroboration. The US president's personal attention and involvement in the attempts at ending Sudan's war, although late, could relieve the Sudanese government of the awkwardness of communicating with the Quad as a whole, and in particular the UAE, and facilitates a more comfortable engagement with its roadmap.

While President Trump's statements boosting the Quad's roadmap and the strong involvement of his senior advisor, Massad Boulos, are helpful, implementing the other crucial elements of the roadmap requires multiple regional and international actions. Foremost among these is bridging the chasm of mistrust between the Sudanese warring parties and the divergent positions of political forces. These forces differ sharply in their definition of the war and their visions for ending it. Public opinion is also divided between those who want to continue the war until the final defeat of the enemy and those who call for an immediate ceasefire to end the war and alleviate the suffering of citizens. President Trump's statements have, for the first time, created a consensus in Sudan on the necessity of pursuing peace according to the Quad's plan. Indeed, the Saudi Crown Prince's visit to Washington gave this plan a significant boost and rekindled hope for peace among the Sudanese people.

In addition, President Trump's statements do not overcome the fundamental challenges of the Sudanese crisis, such as the roadmap's call for the resumption of the civilian track culminating in the formation of a civilian-led government to complete transitional tasks. Political forces remain deeply divided, refusing to sit at a round table with all stakeholders around to arrange for an inclusive democratic transition. A dramatic illustration of these divisions occurred when the Egyptian government convened a conference in Cairo in July 2024 to encourage Taqaddum--the precursor of today's Somoud coalition of prodemocracy forces--, and its breakaway faction the Democratic Block, which ironically aligned itself with the SAF, to reach consensus on ending the war. Democratic Block representatives refused to stay in the same hotel as Taqaddum's delegates and to sit in the same conference hall with

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<sup>3</sup> Al Jazeera, "US calls on Sudan's warring parties to accept ceasefire plan unaltered," November 25, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/11/25/us-calls-on-sudans-warring-parties-to-accept-ceasefire-plan-unaltered>

<sup>4</sup> AP, "Sudan's top general rejects US-led ceasefire proposal, calling it 'the worst yet,'" November 24, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/sudan-war-military-rsf-ceasefire-11969e025902252540333cd24c4a407b>

<sup>5</sup> Forbes Breaking News, "'It Needs To End': Marco Rubio Decries RSF 'Atrocities' In Sudanese Civil War," November 12, 2025, available at: <https://youtu.be/W6Qq1-lfJlw?si=ldn6IUllurQ7C4US>

them. To salvage the meeting, a group of independent personalities inserted themselves as facilitators to get the two groups to develop a minimum agreement for ending the war and resuming the political process. The discord frustrated the Egyptian hosts to the point of uninviting the Democratic Bloc from a meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in the following day.

Despite repeated statements by Egyptian officials expressing a desire to convene a second Cairo Conference<sup>6</sup> (), the surprises that occurred during the first conference continue to cast a shadow over any call to resume political dialogue. While Cairo remains the most suitable venue for all parties, intervention by the Port Sudan government to encourage the Democratic Bloc to engage with others in a new political track remains a necessary and decisive factor in reassuring Egyptian decision-makers that what happened a year and a half ago will not be repeated.

Another hurdle to overcome is the absence of any vision from the SAF and its hardline backers, chief among them the hardline elements of the Islamist Movement and stalwarts of the Bashir regime and the Darfur armed movements, on how to end the war and achieve peace other than the unrealistic courses of continued fighting until the annihilation of the RSF or the latter's unilateral and complete surrender prior to any peace negotiations. Port Sudan has announced on several occasions, including through General al-Burhan, the formation of a political committee chaired by General al-Kabbashi, with Yasser al-Atta and Abdallah Yahya as members.<sup>7</sup> However, the committee has not presented any political vision regarding dialogue or a pathway out of the war. Despite meetings and discussions described as productive with various political forces, no concrete outcomes have emerged. Instead, there appears to be competition between the committee's work and Prime Minister Dr. Kamil Idris's call to adopt an inclusive Sudanese-Sudanese dialogue that excludes no one—a position emphasized by the Council in its first meeting and framed as part of national recovery. Yet neither the committee nor the council has taken practical steps to implement these statements, underscoring that restoring a political role for the Port Sudan government and activating this committee are essential to reviving the political track toward ending the war and preparing for the post-war period.<sup>8</sup>

In the absence of political initiative from General Burhan's government, the Egyptian government cannot risk convening a second round of the inclusive conference, referenced in media coverage as Cairo 2 Meeting, out of concern of the failure of the initiative and the diplomatic embarrassment that would follow. In fact, a meeting hosted by Cairo tv would be the most direct path to resuming the political process, which was derailed by the October 25, 2021 coup and the subsequent April 2023 war. Certainly, Cairo is the most suitable venue, which aligns with the Quad statement's recognition of the Egyptian role in mediating civilian voices in July 2024. There have been sporadic statements and leaks confirming the desire of various parties to hold a second round of the Cairo conference.

The Quad roadmap may need the impetus provided by President Trump's engagement, but they will also need others. As the precedents of solving Sudanese conflicts have shown, more than one lever was needed. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine the roadmap succeeding without another such boost. The Sudanese parties have never met without external support or influential mediation, such as they had in Naivasha, through which the Comprehensive Peace Agreement emerged in 2005 after two years of negotiations, ending Africa's longest war. That agreement was brokered by a Troika, comprised the United States, UK, and Norway, all of which were critically engaged. Another crucial factor that cannot be overlooked is the need for a team of international experts familiar with the complexities of the Sudanese crisis to support the mediation, as also was the case in Naivasha process. The expert team then, led by the Norwegian Minister of International Development Hilde Johnson, repeatedly prevented

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<sup>6</sup> Egyptian Foreign Minister, *Al-Asharq Al-Awsat*, April 30.

<sup>7</sup> Radio Dabanga, "Sudan govt asks intl partners to support roadmap for dialogue," February 9, 2025, available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-govt-asks-intl-partners-to-support-roadmap-for-sudan-dialogue>

<sup>8</sup> The Media Line, "Kamil Idris Vows 'Inclusive' Talks as Sudan Government Returns to Capital," August 27, 2025, available at: <https://themedialine.org/mideast-daily-news/kamil-idris-vows-inclusive-talks-as-sudan-government-returns-to-capital/>

the collapse of the talks. This team provided the international mediation with solutions at every impasse in the negotiations, offering compromise proposals and sometimes even mobilizing the help of major powers to exert pressure and soften the positions of both sides.<sup>9</sup>

The war has inflicted significant damage on the social and political fabric of Sudan, making it difficult to adopt moderate stances that would preserve Sudan's cohesion and unity, especially after the establishment of a transitional authority in Darfur and the renewed and widespread fighting in Kordofan. While the vision and processes of transitional justice can be postponed to the next phase of resolving the crisis, the need for a people's initiative and the establishment of a "panel of the wise" represent an essential pillar for the next step in the Quad's plan. Resuming the political process requires internal action that relieves the political conflict parties of the pressure to develop political initiatives and even relieves the Port Sudan government from the public and social media campaigns that continue to polarize positions towards extremes. It is expected that the 'panel of the wise' could include figures with significant civil, community, and political weight that will be crucial in guiding the nation trustfully towards recovery and peace.

Finally, it should be emphasized that an automatically renewed and internationally monitored ceasefire, regardless of its duration, is a vital guarantee for the advancement of the Quad roadmap towards the achievement of a civilian-led democratic transition in Sudan.

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<sup>9</sup> Hilde F. Johnson, "Waging Peace in Sudan: the Inside Story of the Negotiations That Ended Africa's Longest Civil War," Sussex Academic Press, 2011.