



## External Intervention from Destructive Actors Like the UAE Has Exacerbated the Dire Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan

Almost exactly one year ago, a violent civil war in Sudan broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), resulting in a massive humanitarian disaster that has displaced nearly 8.5 million civilians. The conflict erupted due to a power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo, following the ousting of former despot Omar al-Bashir by a popular uprising back in 2019. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) has documented that the violence has led to the deaths of nearly 16,000 people, although analysts have said that the number may be much higher due to the lack of records being kept. International humanitarian and human rights laws are being violated by the RSF in the form of attacks on civilians and conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. These actions – according to experts – have undermined the RSF’s legitimacy among the Sudanese people, making the prospect of their governance much more unlikely. Several efforts are underway to try and help bring the war to an end. Still, regional rifts between mediating countries including Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have served to perpetuate and exacerbate the massive humanitarian crisis.

One of the reasons that the war in Sudan continues to rage on is the international meddling in the conflict, particularly from the United Arab Emirates. It was originally speculated that SAF would win a swift victory against the RSF due to their superior manpower, airpower, and control of both Sudan’s national army and institutions. Cameron Hudson, a former CIA analyst and senior associate at the CSIS Africa Program, believes that the RSF has been able to hold on due to external support coming from the UAE. These arms are smuggled into the country by plane through neighboring countries, though supply routes have shifted due to international monitoring under the UN Security Council’s arms embargo. It has also been reported that the Russian military group Wagner has been supplying surface-to-air missiles and aiding in the weapons supplies to the RSF – further prolonging the conflict. According to Middle East Eye, Hemedti has headquartered his commercial empire in Dubai and reportedly has ties with some of the UAE’s highest-ranking officials. The UAE also has a vested interest in Sudan for economic reasons, as it searches for more resources and a foothold on the African continent.

Sudan has long been afflicted by humanitarian challenges, but the ongoing conflict has exacerbated many of these issues including disease, climate emergencies, and instability. Sudan is rife with both economic and political turmoil, which has perpetuated poor living conditions in the country, including the collapse of vital infrastructure systems. The UN refugee agency UNHCR has outlined how over half of Sudan’s population – some 25 million people – are in dire need of aid and protection, due to the country’s extreme shortages of food, water, medicine, and fuel. The agency has also reported that nearly 18 million people are facing acute food insecurity. These unlivable conditions have forced many residents to flee their homes in search of safety, with around 6.9 million being internally displaced and 1.6 million seeking refuge in neighboring countries such as Chad, Egypt, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic. Today, South Sudan is absorbing the most refugees from Sudan, with the country having received an average of 1,800 people a day and over 640,000 people in total. Despite these nearby countries’ efforts, only an estimated 7% of the requirements outlined in the 2024 Regional Refugee Response Plan for Sudan have been fulfilled. Similarly, the Humanitarian Response Plan for Sudan is just 6% funded. Aid groups are struggling to get their humanitarian assistance into Sudan due to blocked access, security

risks, and other logistical challenges. With these restrictions in funding and attention, many displaced Sudanese civilians are unable to obtain even the bare minimum necessary to survive. Due to other pressing contemporary global events, both coverage and attention on the conflict in Sudan has unfortunately been reduced, but the humanitarian situation there is very serious as well and is continuing to deteriorate.