

Conflict Overviews: Sudan and South Sudan

Since independence, Sudan has been at war for longer than it has been at peace due to the lack of democratic governance, the consolidation of power and wealth by the regime, and the marginalization of communities based on racial and religious discrimination. Sudan's first civil war, between the government and southern rebels demanding greater autonomy, lasted from 1955 to 1972. In 1983, a second civil war erupted due to political, economic and social inequality, leaving two and a half million people dead and four million displaced. It ended with the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the promise of democratic transformation. Unfortunately, the guarantors of the CPA, the US, Britain, Norway, and Africa's IGAD, neglected the CPA's full implementation and mismanaged or ignored unresolved issues across the country.

In the west, government-sponsored militias brutally repressed a growing Darfuri rebellion and indiscriminately targeted civilian populations leading to what most people agree was the world's first genocide since Rwanda. The contested region of Abyei was destroyed repeatedly by the government with impunity; and rigged elections in South Kordofan raised tensions along the border. The government's orders for former rebels in South Kordofan and Blue Nile to disarm or leave the country sparked conflict in those states shortly before South Sudanese secured their independence in 2011. Peaceful protests in Khartoum and throughout Sudan were violently repressed by the government, which has also successfully blocked international humanitarian aid from reaching marginalized and endangered populations throughout the country, including Eastern Sudan.

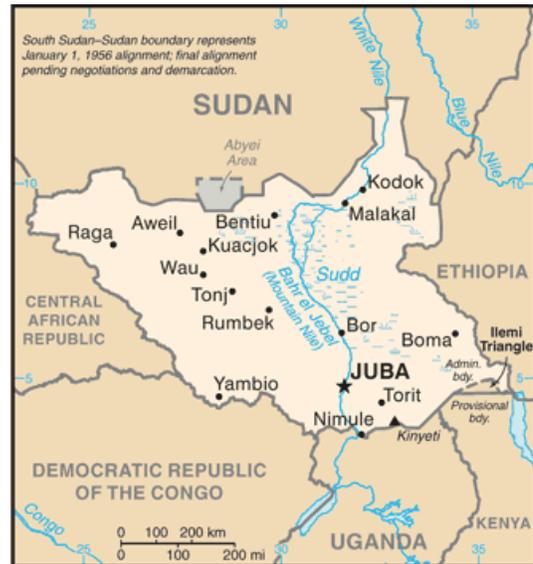


Current Status

SUDAN: It has now been ten years since the U.S. Congress declared the conflict in Darfur to be genocide. The Sudanese military and government-backed militias continue to commit atrocities, including aerial bombardments, exacting a punishing toll on hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. The Janjaweed militias of Darfur have been reconstituted as part of the Sudanese government, into “Rapid Support Forces,” carrying out the same violence throughout Sudan and are directly accountable to the government. At least 400,000 Darfuris were forced to flee their homes due to violence in 2013, more than the previous two years combined; and 2014 has started no differently, with nearly as many newly displaced in just the first 7 months of the year in Darfur.

In South Kordofan and Blue Nile, where rebel forces are engaged in an uprising against the government, over one million people have been either internally displaced or forced to flee Sudan and seek refuge in neighboring countries. Those who remain in their homes are cut off from desperately needed food and medical care because of the Sudanese government's refusal to permit international aid organizations access to conflict-affected areas. Even the Red Cross has even been banned from operating within Sudan, and IDPs are facing grave food insecurity.

SOUTH SUDAN: What was largely a political crisis within the ruling party in South Sudan mutated into a violent conflict on December 15, 2013, when leaders utilized existing ethnic fissures to mobilize supporters throughout South Sudan. Fighting spread beyond the capital, and violence erupted between the two armed groups. There are close to four million people in need of humanitarian assistance, and 1.5 million have been displaced. Widespread famine is a growing concern. Organized targeted mass killings and sexual violence against women and girls based on their ethnicity, as well as the deliberate obstruction of humanitarian assistance, have deepened the dividing lines between communities, many of which are recovering from nearly half a century of civil war. On January 23,



2014, a Cessation of Hostilities agreement was signed between the Government of South Sudan and opposition forces; and in May, President Salva Kiir and former Vice President-turned-rebel leader, Dr. Riek Machar signed a yet-to-be fully implemented peace agreement. Now eight months into the civil war in South Sudan, the crisis continues to intensify despite peace overtures made far away from the front lines in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. Most recently, in June, a 60-day deadline was agreed upon by both parties to complete dialogue that would lead to the formation of a transitional government – that deadline has now expired, and little progress has been made on substantive issues. These steps between Kiir and Machar are a precarious way forward, but the fate of the agreements remains to be seen. An inclusive national dialogue process, security sector reform, and real accountability measures are needed to sustainably address the root causes of South Sudan's violence.

In a troubled region, a crisis response to the urgent security and political needs of South Sudan should not eclipse those of Sudan, a country which needs a continued focus. Increased air strikes in Sudan, worsening humanitarian conditions in camps, and conflicts forcing either many South Sudanese to flee into Sudan or Sudanese to flee into South Sudan demand renewed engagement on multiple fronts. There must be a more robust effort aimed at building comprehensive peace processes in both countries, which includes all stakeholders and considers the impact each country has on the other's stability. In Sudan, stovepiped peace strategies, pursued by local or international leaders that address the interests of some groups but not others, will not bring peace. In South Sudan, if core drivers of violence are not addressed, the wars will continue. Continued violence raises the specter of further atrocity crimes, and dangerous destabilizing consequences for the region. In both countries, the U.S. and international community must focus on creating leverage over the affected actors, through a more robust use of targeted sanctions and a recognition of the role other financial drivers, such as gold, play in fueling the conflicts.