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Technical assistance and capacity-building

### **Joint written statement\* submitted by African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Centre du Commerce International pour le Développement., Rencontre Africaine pour la defense des droits de l'homme, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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## Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan

The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies and the Pan-African Forum on Rights and Development commend the Transitional Authority (TA) in the Sudan for the progress made in preparation of the political transformation of the country towards multi-party democracy and civilian rule. Particularly commendable are the TA's efforts for legal and administrative reforms as well as accountability and measures to combat the corrupt practices of the past. The TA's efforts shall be enhanced manifold with the recent appointment of civilian governors of the Sudan's 18 States, which is a key demand of the pro-democracy forces in the country. Immediate conclusion of a comprehensive peace accord with the insurgent groups and the establishment, without delay, of the Transitional Legislative Assembly and the Independent Commissions provided for in the Constitutional Document of 17 August 2019 are important steps towards political stability.

We highly appreciate the cooperation between the TA and the Human Rights Council and note the Sudan's keen efforts to implement the provisions of the Council's resolution A/HRC/RES/42/35 of 3 October 2019.<sup>1</sup> Noteworthy is the progress made in fulfilment of the "commitment of the Government of the Sudan to establish a fully mandated country office of the Office of the High Commissioner, with a field presence."<sup>2</sup> Also noteworthy is the agreement of 4 June 2020 between the Sudan and the United Nations (UN) Security Council on the establishment of the Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), which targets supporting implementation of the Constitutional Document and the peace process, mobilizing international economic assistance, coordinating humanitarian work, and offering technical support to the constitutional-drafting process.<sup>3</sup>

We fully support timely deployment of UNITAMS and call on all concerned parties to enable this political mission to fulfill its mandate in facilitating Sudan's transition towards democratic governance, support the peace process, uphold the rule of law and face the challenges during the transitional period.<sup>4</sup> One of the major tasks of UNITAMS is to support the peace-building process that follows the signing of a peace accord and to rebuild the destroyed conflict-affected parts of the country, particularly Darfur, the Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains.<sup>5</sup>

However, we note worrisome regression in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as massive violations of international humanitarian law in the Sudan. We are particularly concerned about the ongoing wave of violence that hit both rural and urban areas since the beginning of 2020. The latest incidents of inter-communal violence had been reported in Port Sudan (Red Sea State) between 9th and 13th August 2020. According to Sudan's Doctors Central Committee (Red Sea Branch), 34 people were killed, and 123 others were injured while hundreds of homes, shops, private vehicles, and properties were looted and burned down during these attacks. The killings and destruction in Port Sudan continued for 4 days and the city regained its calm only after the arrival of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 13 August 2020.

In Kadougli (South Kordofan State), frequent clashes between rival armed groups between May and July 2020 have displaced about 7 thousand local people while hundreds of others, including RSF soldiers, were either killed or injured. These violent incidents involved militia groups with occasional participation of Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army

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<sup>1</sup> Technical assistance and capacity-building to further improve human rights in the Sudan, Resolution adopted by the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council on 27 September 2019, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/294/61/PDF/G1929461.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidm.*

<sup>3</sup> Resolution S/RES/2524 (2020) adopted by the UN Security Council on 3 June 2020, [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2524\(2020\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2524(2020)).

<sup>4</sup> Sudan: UN Security Council Approves Establishment of Mission to Help Sudan Handle Transitional Period Challenges, SudaNow, 5 June 2020, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202006080458.html>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidm.*

insurgents and the regular security forces.<sup>6</sup> In Darfur, several deadly attacks, destruction of human habitat and forced displacement of civilians were reported since January 2020. These attacks left behind hundreds of victims in terms of fatalities and those maimed for life. In protest of the poor security conditions across Darfur, the locals organised more than 10 peaceful sit-ins in different parts of the region since 28 June 2020. Because of the weak response of the authorities, armed militia groups stormed the sit-in in Fata Borno (North Darfur State) on 13 July 2020 and brutally dispersed the gathering thus killing at least 12 people and injuring 14 others. On 28 July 2020, the United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) expressed its deep concern about the increase in violent attacks on peaceful protestors, civilians, rural communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in various localities in North, South and West Darfur. UNAMID condemned the loss of life, injuries and displacement resulting from such attacks whose main victims are women and children.<sup>7</sup>

We welcome the TA's decision to establish the Sudanese National Committee for the Protection of Civilians as well as Premier Hamdok's announcement on 26 July 2020 to deploy a joint force to protect civilians in Darfur in response to the latest series of deadly attacks by tribal militiamen against civilians which threaten the farming season.<sup>8</sup> In this respect, it is our belief that the government of Sudan can de-escalate tensions and reduce violence and the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by undertaking concrete measures to limit free movement of militiamen, deprive them of access to weapons, and, above all, disarm and hold accountable individuals and groups responsible for violence and criminal activities. Local people in South Darfur State confirmed that upon instructions of General Hemeti ordering the RSF to protect IDPs and farmers and to secure their return to till the lands during the ongoing agricultural season, an RSF contingent is currently transporting and facilitating the return of thousands of IDPs to their villages in Kass and Shataya localities.<sup>9</sup>

The ongoing violence is complicating the humanitarian situation in the Sudan and consolidating the forced displacement of civilians and deepening economic decline and inflation. Across the Sudan, about 10 million people are reportedly facing food shortages either because of violence, rising prices of consumer goods or restrictions on work and movement due to COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, in many parts of the country, thousands of vulnerable communities are left without any kind of humanitarian assistance. According to the June-September 2020 projection of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), about 21% of the Sudan's population are experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity and they need urgent intervention.<sup>10</sup> This is the highest figure ever recorded in the history of IPC's work on the Sudan and it covers almost all localities in the Sudan's 18 States that have been classified.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, there are reports about intimidation and arrests and detention as well as ill-treatment of protesters, including members of the Resistance Committees, mainly in Darfur and other peripheries. On 17 August 2020, thousands of demonstrators went onto the streets of Khartoum to mark the first anniversary of the signing of the Constitutional Document and to remind the TA about the deteriorating living conditions and the unfulfilled promises of the

<sup>6</sup> UN and partners provide over 5,000 people affected by violence in Kadugli with assistance, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Emergency Response, 4 June 2020 <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/card/3LJcnEk0F4/>.

<sup>7</sup> UNAMID Condemns violent attacks on peaceful protestors, civilians and IDPs in North, South and West Darfur, 28 July 2020, <https://unamid.unmissions.org/unamid-condemns-violent-attacks-peaceful-protestors-civilians-and-idps-north-south-and-west-darfur>.

<sup>8</sup> Sudan to deploy troops to Darfur after killings, Aljazeera, News/Darfur, 26 July 2020 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/sudan-deploy-troops-darfur-killings-pm-hamdok-200726193537294.html>.

<sup>9</sup> RSF troops facilitate return of South Darfur displaced, Dabanga News, 15 August 2020, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/rsf-troops-facilitate-return-of-south-darfur-displaced>.

<sup>10</sup> High Food Insecurity Levels in Sudan Persist, Driven by High Inflation, a Deteriorating Economy and High Food Prices, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, June 2020, <http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1152718/>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidm.

December 2019 Revolution. Authentic reports indicated that during confrontation between the demonstrators and the police, several individuals were injured or asphyxiated by teargas used by police, while a number of others were violently arrested by plainclothes security agents. The Resistance Committees, which are composed of thousands of pro-democracy activists and youngsters, played an instrumental role in overthrowing the former authorities and unwarranted targeting of their members could lead to further political unrest and instability.

Conclusion and recommendations:

1. The human rights situation in the Sudan is precarious. The TA continues to face mounting challenges in its efforts to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. This fragile situation requires close follow-up and assistance from the UN Human Rights Council. We, therefore, strongly recommend extension of the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan throughout the transitional period. The Expert shall lead the Council's efforts on the Sudan and mobilize the international community to provide the TA with technical and diplomatic support as well as advocacy and guidance necessary to the promotion and protection of human rights during the transition.
2. Resurgent violence in the Sudan is a matter of grave concern. It has been reported while the TA and the insurgent movements are negotiating an end to armed conflicts and endeavouring to achieve political stability. The ongoing violence is deepening inter-communal animosities, widening national divide and may eventually undo any achievements reached by the TA. We call upon all stakeholders, including the UN Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council to intensify their efforts and prevent further deterioration of the situation in the Sudan.

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Pan-African Forum on Rights and Development, an NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.