



Security Council

Distr.: General
16 May 2023

Original: English

Letter dated 6 May 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a report from the Government of the Republic of the Sudan (see annex). The report states the latest developments in Sudan following the rebellion carried out by the Rapid Support Forces militia, on 15 April 2023, against the Sudanese Armed Forces in a failed attempt to capture power by force.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Al-Harith Idriss Al-Harith **Mohamed**
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 6 May 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Mutiny of the Rapid Support Forces militia against the armed forces and attempted seizure of power by force on 15 April 2023

Introduction

1. The Sudanese Armed Forces is one of the oldest and most respected armies in the region. Established around a century ago, it is the oldest national institution in the Sudan and the one that is most emblematic of Sudanese national identity. The Sudanese Armed Forces played a part in establishing the armies of several allied States. Its academies are sought out by other armies in need of additional training. It has taken part in international peace operations in Lebanon, the Congo and the Comoros. More than 60 of its members have given their lives in international peacekeeping operations. Its commanders and personnel are professional, disciplined and highly skilled in combat, and are among the most highly rated in the Arab world and Africa.

2. The Rapid Support Forces was established in 2013 as a regular support force. By virtue of a law approved by the Sudanese Parliament in 2017, it was then merged with the Sudanese Armed Forces and came under the authority of its Commander-in-Chief. As its name suggests, its previous function was to support the armed forces in confronting non-State armed movements and protecting the borders.

3. Following the victorious revolution of December 2018 and April 2019, when the Sudanese Armed Forces and its support forces component backed the people's choice, the Commander of the Rapid Support Forces became a member of the Transitional Military Council established in April 2019 and deputy chair of the Transitional Sovereignty Council established de facto in August 2019.

4. Despite the changes in the country and the drive for peace and transitional justice, tribal violence continued to flare up in several areas in Darfur. Members of the Rapid Support Forces played a key role in those incidents. The civilian death toll was high. Strife was ignited among tribal groups, and army commanders and civil society leaders in the Darfur States were targeted.

5. There were numerous cases of lawlessness and violations committed by rebellious forces in several cities, including the capital Khartoum: members of the Rapid Support Forces became involved, intimidated the judicial system and resisted the activities of the civilian police. Successive governments were unable to tackle those problems. The Rapid Support Forces has pushed back against any solution. Its leaders and command structure are centred on tribal affiliation and on a single family. It was therefore essential to begin the process of integrating them with the armed forces.

6. After the signature of the Juba Peace Agreement, which marked the end of the rebellion in Darfur and included a paragraph on security arrangements, the military forces no longer had a need to recruit and absorb new members. Nevertheless, the mutineer forces continued to recruit, with no regard for international standards. Their numbers grew fivefold, reaching a total of 120,000 fighters. They also engaged in forced recruitment and took in foreigners and mercenaries. The military power of the Rapid Support Forces grew both horizontally and vertically. It persistently used its

power to claim absolute political, social and economic responsibilities well beyond the scope of its duties.

7. In December 2022, a framework agreement was signed between the military component and a number of political forces to prepare for a civilian transitional government. Several workshops were held to discuss contentious issues among the parties to the political process. In particular, a workshop on military and security reform was held from 26 to 29 March 2023. The integration of the Rapid Support Forces into the national army emerged as a bone of contention. The commanders of the Rapid Support Forces persistently refused to be integrated into the armed forces. They insisted on continuing as a parallel army for a ten-year period. The armed forces stressed the need to complete the integration process within two years, in keeping with international best practices, because a single, professional national army that has a monopoly on the use of force and protects civilian rule is a precondition for a functional democratic system. For those reasons, the workshop failed to produce any agreed recommendations. The armed forces were therefore obliged to withdraw from the workshop and could not endorse its outcomes. They insisted that integration was purely a technical issue and could not be subject to any political dealmaking.

8. In a striking development, Rapid Support Forces command began rallying and deploying large numbers of fully armed force members in several parts of Khartoum, its surroundings and some other cities. It did so without coordinating with the armed forces or securing their agreement. There was no logical reason for that step; the political process was on track and the military component had undertaken to remove itself from the political process and support the democratic transition.

9. The country's leaders and the armed forces monitored and warned against the approach taken by the Rapid Support Forces Command, which posed a threat to the political process and peace and stability in the country. They endeavoured to address the situation through dialogue and good judgment, and to avoid any potential military clashes. Civil society representatives in Khartoum were warned about the threat posed by the Rapid Support Forces' deployment and its intended purpose.

10. The commander of the Rapid Support Forces and his deputy – who is also his brother – continued to ignore the instructions of the armed forces command and to engage in provocation. They continued to rally, mobilize and equip their forces. That process culminated in the deployment of a massive force to Merowe Airport, Northern State, without receiving permission from the Commander-in-Chief, as would be customary for a deployment of forces. Rapid Support Forces command did not respond to the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, or comply with the deadline for those forces to withdraw and return to their positions. As a result of that escalation, the armed forces released a public statement raising the alarm and calling on the Rapid Support Forces to withdraw from Merowe Airport and comply with military rules, which state that forces should not deploy without the prior permission of the Commander-in-Chief.

11. In view of those developments, the Sudanese political forces and the trilateral mechanism, comprising the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), worked intensively to defuse the tension. It was agreed that a joint meeting of the commanders of the armed forces and the Rapid Support Forces would be held on Saturday, 15 April 2023.

12. The General Command of the armed forces was ready for dialogue, and all watchers of Sudanese affairs were looking forward to the meeting as a way out of the crisis. However, the Rapid Support Forces personnel who were located at the General Command compound, where they formed part of the protection corps, treacherously attacked the headquarters and guest residence of the Chair of the Sovereignty Council and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, which is located in the same compound

in the airport district. The aim was clearly to kill or detain him in order to create a constitutional vacuum and take power by force. The presidential guard corps confronted them, and 35 of its number laid down their lives.

13. The militia took control of 22 positions and barracks in Khartoum State and 44 positions in other States. At the same time, Rapid Support Forces units that were on site took control of several strategic facilities, as follows:

(a) The presidential palace (the headquarters of the Head of State) and the Council of Ministers;

(b) Khartoum Airport – where they burned two civilian aircraft, one of which belonged to Saudia Airlines – and Merowe Airport;

(c) The radio and television building in Omdurman, on the west bank of the Nile;

(d) The residences of the commanders of the armed forces and senior civilian officials contiguous to the armed forces command compound and the headquarters of the commander of the Rapid Support Forces. The Rapid Support Forces detained several commanders and their families as hostages and human shields;

(e) Garrisons in such States as White Nile, Fasher, Nyala and Geneina;

(f) Rapid Support Forces formations mobilized to gain control of bridges, national roads, and the bridges connecting the towns of the capital Khartoum.

14. In view of that situation, the escalation and the military deployments, the Sudanese Armed Forces found itself facing a full mutiny against the authority of the State, a full-blown coup supported by and coordinated with certain domestic, regional and international actors, spreading across the capital and the entire country. The following is evidence of the intent and early preparedness of the Rapid Support Forces to take power:

- A formidable infrastructure was put in place, consisting of military camps and a structure parallel to that of the State. Military supply partnerships were concluded, and specialized communication networks and modern surveillance systems were acquired outside the control of the State.
- The Rapid Support Forces command built a network of suspicious economic, commercial and military relationships at the national and international levels, beyond the reach of the State and its oversight agencies. Its personnel numbers and military capacities burgeoned.
- The Rapid Support Forces conducted visits and entered into communications and bilateral regional undertakings in competition with the State, without documenting those activities or putting the interests of the Sudanese State first. For that purpose, it used its activities abroad to tout itself around the world as an alternative leadership.
- The commander of the Rapid Support Force engaged in intensive political and media activities, funding media platforms at home and abroad, not to mention making heavy use of social media.
- Suspicious economic and commercial deals were made to accumulate power and engage in tactical manoeuvres aimed at capturing the Sudanese State for the benefit of the Dagalo family backed by a tribal militia.
- The Rapid Support Forces hired effective public relations companies to market itself and improve its domestic and international public image, which was associated with killings, bloodshed and corruption. It bought influence, offered inducements and engaged in the political blackmail of national forces to highlight and strengthen its political and social clout. It adopted empty

watchwords, describing itself as a sponsor of democracy and the civilian State and an antagonist of extremist Islam, casting aside its own bloody history of human rights violations in a shameless endeavour to secure the goodwill of the international community.

- The Rapid Support Forces deployed a whole additional battalion to guard the headquarters of its commander, in the airport district. That battalion is the one that raided the headquarters of the Chair of the Transitional Sovereignty Council at dawn on 15 April 2023.
- The Rapid Support Forces strengthened the contingent stationed at the presidential palace, national radio and television, and several other vital strategic positions. It also mobilized columns of forces and military equipment from various States in the direction of Khartoum.
- The Rapid Support Forces occupied Merowe Airport and the Merowe military base and refused to leave. The commander of the Rapid Support Forces has persistently asked for the Forces to be given their own airport.

Violations committed by the mutineer forces, and their negative repercussions

15. Those forces were entrusted with missions that required rapid movement in deserts, plains and open conflict zones. They do not understand and are not prepared for the nature of urban conflict, the rules of engagement followed by professional national armies, and the principles of international humanitarian law concerning the protection of civilians and vital or strategic facilities. That state of affairs strengthens the view of the armed forces that they should be integrated and retrained. As a result, they have committed numerous serious violations affecting civilians, not to mention terrorist acts, as follows:

- Families of senior armed forces officers, senior State officials, and academics living in the airport district were detained. The detainees include women and children, who are being held hostage and used as human shields in a manner akin to the worst practices of terrorist groups. As a result, the decisive phase of the battle has been delayed out of concern for the lives of the detainees and to limit civilian casualties.
- Khartoum Airport and travellers were attacked; some were killed and others taken hostage. Aircraft for training and transport were destroyed in Merowe Airport.
- Hospitals and health centres were raided and commandeered. Medical staff were forced to treat wounded fighters and ignore ordinary patients. The damage has come at a horrific cost; the initial estimate is some \$700 million. The mutineers directly targeted 14 hospitals and health care centres; forcibly evacuated 20 hospitals; and occupied 8 large hospitals in Khartoum State. A total of 57 hospitals were disabled or put out of service. Thirteen medical staff were killed; 9 are missing; 4 doctors were abducted; 43 pharmacies were looted in Khartoum State; 5 ambulances were targeted; and 6 warehouses for factories and large medicinal companies were looted. The forces occupied the Central Medical Supply Agency, which is the main medical depository, and destroyed millions of doses of child vaccines, as has been documented in reports by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as other vaccines. They also occupied the National Medical Analysis Laboratory.
- Places of worship, civilian facilities and residences of ordinary citizens were raided. The occupants were detained as human shields or evicted so that the premises could be used for military activities. Roofs of homes were used as sniper nests, in clear violation of international humanitarian law.

- In some cases, raids of civilian homes were filmed and displayed as military victories. The homes were mendaciously described as belonging to members of the Sovereignty Council.
- Civilians were intimidated and extorted, and their vehicles and private property were stolen.
- Illegal, arbitrary checkpoints were established, specific categories of civilians were targeted, private and government vehicles were commandeered, and medical staff were killed.
- Commercial banks, shops and private and public companies were looted, and markets and warehouses were burned down.
- Hotels, clubs, event halls and youth camps in the Sawba area were occupied, as were sport centres.
- Police headquarters were occupied. Prisons were raided and criminals and pretrial detainees released in the prisons of Huda, Sawba and Kober.
- Centres providing fundamental services, including water, electrical and communication stations, hospitals and an oil refinery were targeted as part of a deliberate strategy of maximizing civilian suffering. Petrol stations were disabled or used as alternative positions.
- The cities of Nyala, Geneina, Garsila and Kabkabiyah were attacked, the inhabitants were intimidated, and their funds were stolen. There are reports of sexual and physical violence against women and children.
- The European Union ambassador was attacked in his residence on 17 April 2023.
- The French embassy evacuation convoy was attacked on 22 April 2023.
- The assistant administrative attaché at the Egyptian embassy was killed on 23 April 2023.
- A United States embassy vehicle came under fire.
- The Malaysian ambassador was attacked and his car was stolen.
- The embassy of the Sultanate of Oman was attacked and a car belonging to the mission was stolen.
- Numerous diplomatic premises have been attacked. The Indian embassy in the Africa Street area came under fire. There have been many such reports from the embassies of Korea, Switzerland, the Russian Federation, Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, Morocco, Spain, Chad, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye. The mutineer militias have taken up positions near those missions and smashed the external security cameras. The Korean ambassador requested an air evacuation for his family because the mutineers were raiding his residence. Protective trailers outside diplomatic premises have been demolished.
- Egyptian officers and soldiers were detained at the Merowe airfield, where they had been taking part in joint training sessions with the Sudanese Armed Forces under the protocol concluded between the two countries.
- The Turkish evacuation aircraft at Wadi Sayyidna Airport came under attack.

16. Taken together, those systematic attacks amount to an all-out war on the national capital, State capitals, national roads, airports, vital and strategic facilities and military bases. Their purpose is to prolong the chaos and intimidate civilians by stealing, looting and sowing fear.

Plan of the Government to confront the mutiny and its repercussions

17. The Government has a constitutional, patriotic and moral duty to protect national security and maintain the safety, sovereignty and stability of the national territory. The armed forces have accordingly completed arrangements to address and thwart the mutiny, contain the fallout and neutralize the mutineer forces. In so doing, the armed forces must be mindful of the need to protect civilians and minimize casualties and property damage; maintain public safety, security and internal stability; protect the social fabric; clear out all pockets of mutiny, without contravening international humanitarian law; and handle the conflict in accordance with the recognized and long-standing rules and principles of international humanitarian law, drawing on the experience gained in the lengthy conflicts in which they have participated in the past, which have prepared them for crises such as this one. The armed forces have made the following effort to contain the military repercussions:

(a) Mutineer military positions and camps are tackled in a highly professional manner. Military sites and targets are identified with technical precision and every effort is made to eliminate them with minimal losses.

(b) In repelling attacks on civilian sites, the armed forces show strong judgment, high proficiency and patience in order to avoid loss of life and damage to public or private civilian property, particularly in Khartoum, which is well known for its population density. Those considerations explain the delay in military operations.

(c) In response to damage to infrastructure and civilian facilities, the armed forces have endeavoured to rehabilitate health facilities, electrical and water stations and pipelines; open roads and bridges; address issues related to weapons, ammunition and explosives left behind by mutineers in streets and residential areas; and disarm unexploded ordnances.

(d) A plan has been put in place to tackle lawless behaviour by fugitive and criminal groups that have taken advantage of the events to loot and steal. The police carries out sweeps for that purpose.

(e) The General Command of the armed forces has declared a general amnesty for any mutineers who hand over their weapons and turn themselves in at appointed locations. Large numbers of mutineers have done so. As a result, several States, including the humanitarian operations centre in Port Sudan, have not had to enter the fray, because Rapid Support Forces in those areas have handed over their weapons to the armed forces.

(f) State institutions have responded to calls for humanitarian truces, which have been extended seven times to date. During those hours and days, they have kept the truces, whereas the rapid support militia has violated them and carried out acts of provocation around the clock. The armed forces have complied with the rules of war and rules of engagement with a view to ensuring the safety of civilians used by the mutineer militias as hostages and human shields.

(g) The armed forces have agreed to appoint representatives under the initiative put forward by the United States and Saudi Arabia to discuss measures for a humanitarian truce.

(h) The State has responded to requests for the evacuation of diplomats, foreign nationals, diplomatic mission staff and United Nations humanitarian and health workers. Those categories have been evacuated via seaports and inland airports in a highly professional manner, without loss of life. The United Nations and several States have sent letters thanking and commanding the Sudanese leadership.

(i) In accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic and Consular Relations and the country agreement regulating the protection of international organization staff in the Sudan, the Sudanese authorities have strengthened the protection and guarding of diplomatic missions and the residences of mission heads and their staff. For that purpose, they have deployed additional specialized teams and police units.

(j) Under the plan put in place by the Command of the armed forces, the latter have been able to secure the positions and bases from which the mutiny was launched, except for some pockets in the States of Khartoum and West Darfur. They are endeavouring to restore security and stability in those States. Police have been deployed in large numbers to protect civilians and their property, regulate travel and enforce the law.

(k) In order to contain the negative repercussions for humanitarian activity in the country, the Sudanese authorities have established a high-level national committee to coordinate humanitarian action and relevant mechanisms and to facilitate the work of international organizations in accordance with international principles regulating humanitarian action and with the applicable guidelines.

Conclusion

18. The Sudanese Armed Forces, as the national army, has the indisputable right to quell the mutiny and lawlessness. Such action is consistent with the spirit and letter of its mandate. It is a fundamental part of the rules governing the activities of armies in general, as well as a means to safeguard security, stability and national sovereignty.

19. The paramount goal continues to be ending the war and bringing peace. However, in order to build a sustainable peace and lay a solid foundation for the political process, the mutiny needs to be quelled. It needs to be made clear that there is a single national army fulfilling a constitutional duty to uphold national sovereignty and stability and protect civilian democratic rule.

20. The Sudan rejects any form of international intervention. It calls on the United Nations and its agencies to denounce the mutiny led by the Rapid Support Forces, and to urge the mutineers to heed the appeal of the armed forces; revert to the control and chain of command of the regular forces; and refrain from any course of action that would prolong the fighting and undermine security and stability. No equivalence should be drawn between the mutineers and the Sudanese Armed Forces.

21. The Sudan calls on the international community and on all peace-loving actors to continue supporting its leaders as they fulfil their national and regional role of strengthening security, peace and stability in the country while combating all forms of terrorism and criminality unleashed by the mutiny.

22. The Sudan is open to all genuine, even-handed and constructive initiatives to restore the normal humanitarian situation and daily life. Notwithstanding their momentous repercussions for the country and its people, the events currently under way are purely an internal and technical military matter, which the Sudanese Armed Forces will be able to contain and address promptly. While the Sudan respects and is grateful for regional and international initiatives, it must stress that any attempt at foreign intervention would hamper the country's own response, complicate the situation, and exacerbate and prolong the conflict.
