



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

# Peace platform for Sudan - has the pressure on the conflicting parties finally started to work?



The adoption of a basic plan to end the conflict in Sudan by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has **created** the most significant chance yet for the establishment of peace after 9 months of conflict and destruction of the country.

However, the door for a possible agreement is only partially open, so restraint about resolving the crisis is more widespread than optimism, given that no initiative has brought a solution or the 2 conflicting parties closer.

The hope for achieving peace arose last Tuesday by the leader of the paramilitary RSF, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, when he signed a declaration in Addis Ababa on the unconditional establishment of peace with the leader of the Civil Democratic Forces (Taqaddum) and former Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

At the same time, the leader of the RSF requested that the other party in the conflict - the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and their leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan - do the same.

However, it is uncertain if Al-Burhan will accept this, at least not in the short term. His absence from the meeting in Addis Ababa, to which the association of civil organisations invited both warring parties, has not been explained.

It is even possible that only protocol reasons are involved, even the injured vanity of the SAF commander, because the invitation was allegedly sent to him only in the capacity as military commander and not in the capacity of the head of the Transitional Military Council, that is, the transitional government that was established after the coup in 2019.

Whatever the reason, General al-Burhan has been under pressure since yesterday as the party that ignores the only peace initiative that currently has the potential to stop the tragedy in Sudan.

## Changed US approach

So far, the pressure has been shared by both conflicting parties, once allies, in overthrowing the autocrat Omar al-Bashir (2019). However, since last April, they have been actors in the bloody conflict which has devastated the country.

More than 10,000 victims and almost 7 million displaced, of which around 6 million have been starving, is the balance of the struggle of 2 military factions for supremacy in the country.

The **crisis in Sudan** undoubtedly has the most severe humanitarian consequences of all the current hotspots in the world, but the attention given to it is minor.

For the masters of war, it is an ideal situation because both sides count on the fact that they could achieve supremacy with the military option, regardless of the destruction, victims and displaced persons.

The decision of one of them, the paramilitary RSF, to now accept the framework for a peaceful solution is the result of a change in the approach of the US to this conflict and a more determined approach that they have been showing since last December.

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US diplomacy, together with Saudi Arabia, only 3 weeks after the outbreak of the conflict in the capital, Khartoum, brought the leaders of the warring factions to the negotiating table.

Even though the start promised a move towards peace, the negotiations in Saudi Arabia did not provide any result, and the suffering continued.

A significant shift in Washington happened at the beginning of last December when US Secretary of State Antony Blinken **announced** that members of both conflicting parties had committed war crimes.

At the same time, the US has been delegating the **mediation** effort to the regional, 8-member association of East African states (Intergovernmental Authority on Development - IGAD). It made an initial breakthrough in the rapprochement of the 2 sides, but not enough for them to meet and negotiate peace.

After more than half a year of fruitless attempts to reach a truce, the US accusations of war crimes are the most severe warning to the warring parties to start negotiations.

## Influence of Middle Eastern heavyweights

The readiness of one of them - the RSF and its leader Hamdan Dagalo - to accept the peace framework shows that he took the warning from Washington seriously and estimated that a change in the US approach would cause its more serious engagement.

The silence of the other side - the Sudanese army and its leader, General al-Burhan - will probably not last long, as his eventual refusal to join the Addis Ababa declaration will mark him as a saboteur of a significant peace initiative.

The sudden acceptance of the peace initiative by the paramilitary RSF raises the credibility of this faction and its leader, Hamdan Dagalo, despite the previous accusations of war crimes but also for those earlier crimes committed in the province of Darfur.



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His "Yes" to the peace platform led by Sudanese civil organisations cannot be observed outside of the context of the UAE's influence on this faction, and the Emirates' relationship with its strategic ally, the US.

For the UAE's reputation, every day of the conflict in Sudan is very damaging, given its long-standing support for the RSF. The pressure from the US Congress on the UAE to end its support for the RSF and to contribute to the peace settlement became so strong last December that the administration (State Department) supported the demands of the members of Congress addressed to the Emirates.

According to a similar recipe, the decisive pressure on the other side, the Sudanese army, to join the peace process could come from Egypt, given that this group is considered a proxy of Cairo.

Influential Middle Eastern actors (the UAE and Egypt are certainly among them) have the capacity, but also a great interest, to persuade their partners among the conflicting parties in Sudan to turn to negotiations.

Their resources have been engaged in resolving the conflict between Israel and Hamas, and the interests in its peaceful ending seem more significant than mediating the conflict in Sudan.

But the supreme interest of Egypt, the UAE, and even Saudi Arabia is that the existing conflicts do not spill over into the broader region. In this respect, the peaceful resolution of the crisis in Sudan could be a relief for everyone and one less threat of the spread of fires in the broader region.