



By: TA | AP Insight

At the UN, African leaders did not draw attention to home conflicts



African leaders missed the opportunity, or simply did not want to speak to world leaders at the UN about the **conflicts** on their continent. This speaks of their lack of interest in solving crises, but also of the deficit of continental mechanisms for conflict resolution.

They had a lot to say about global affairs. But complicated things happening closer to home? Not so much.

Like their counterparts from other continents, African leaders took to the United Nations podium over the past week to address the U.N. General Assembly on pressing global issues, including climate change, inequality and the spread of conflict.

African leaders — including Nigerian Vice President Kassim Shettima, Senegalese President Bassirou Faye and Namibian President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah — spoke vehemently about global conflicts and called for an end to Israel's attacks on Gaza.

“The people of Palestine are not collateral damage in a civilization that is searching for order. They are human beings, equal in worth, entitled to the same freedoms and dignities that the rest of us take for granted,” Shettima said last week.

However, analysts say two of Africa's most complicated **conflicts** in Sudan and Congo, which have killed thousands of people and both reached an impasse, were given barely any significant airtime by African leaders.

“African countries have sort of stepped back to some extent in terms of wanting to place African issues at the forefront of the U.N. agenda,” said Chris Ogunmodede, an Africa affairs analyst with experience working in African diplomatic circles. “On the most important dates on the U.N. calendar, there is nothing to say about African issues in any substantive way.”

Conflicts in Sudan and Congo

War in Sudan, the world's biggest humanitarian crisis, broke out in mid-2023 when a paramilitary outfit launched an assault on the central African country's armed forces, both of which had ruled together for years.

The conflict rapidly descended into a full-blown civil war, which has now effectively partitioned the country into two and has killed at least 40,000 people.

The army regained control of the capital in a watershed moment in the war and pushed the rebel group Rapid Support Forces mainly to Darfur, the western region of the country.

The U.N. has accused both sides of mass atrocities and warned of famine in parts of Sudan, as both groups have imposed restrictions on food and aid distribution as the fight continues. A drone strike earlier this month **killed** at least 70 people in besieged El-Fasher.

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In January, the M23 rebel group, backed by Rwanda, launched a blitz of attacks in the eastern region of Congo and rapidly took key cities.

The conflict has since killed roughly 7,000 people, with millions of others displaced or trapped in rebel-held cities.

According to the U.N., over 100 rebel groups are fighting in the mineral-rich eastern region of the Congo. A Doha peace initiative reached a deal between Congo and the M23 group, but fighting has continued.

“The cursory mentions of DR Congo and Sudan were a missed opportunity by African leaders to really highlight how pronounced the humanitarian crises have become,” said Beverly Ochieng, a senior security analyst at

Control Risks.

Outside interests

The General Assembly speeches, analysts say, demonstrate the lack of interest from African leaders in solving these conflicts.

They also reflect institutional problems with the continent's own multilateral organizations, where African leaders are absent at the negotiating tables.



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“We are seeing the reality of the limitations of African institutions and states, the limitations of their own ability to pursue their own international affairs,” Ogunmodede said.

Leading negotiations for conflicts are external powers, some of whom have been accused of being a party to the conflicts.

Last week on the U.N. sidelines, a group of diplomatic leaders from the U.S., the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt ramp up **efforts** to end the war in Sudan.

A Washington-led peace deal between Congo and Rwanda is expected to be signed in the coming weeks.

Since both wars broke out, they have quickly taken on complex geopolitical dynamics with various competing powers. The U.N. said Rwanda backs the M23 rebel group in Congo,

and the conflict has also pulled in neighboring countries like Burundi and Uganda.

In March, Sudanese armed forces filed a case to the U.N. top court against the UAE, accusing it of arming its major adversary and breaching the genocide convention. The UAE denies the allegations.

“The outside interests have leverage, and that compels armed actors to deal with peace mechanism coming from outside,” Ochieng said. “With African institutions, they do not have as much leverage institutionally or being able to provide additional incentives for peace and security initiatives.”