

Forum: Security Council

Issue: Addressing the ongoing war in Sudan

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Introduction

Since April 2023, Sudan has become one of the greatest threats to international peace and security within the North and East Africa region, with significant humanitarian, political, and economic consequences. The two major actors in the conflict are the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which have caused large devastations across the country, with the battle over political power turning into a prolonged civil war. In urban centers such as Khartoum, repeated fighting has severely disrupted daily life, while neglected regions such as Darfur have experienced intensified attacks against civilians. The absence of a functioning civilian government and the fragmentation of national authority have further deepened instability across the country.



Figure 1: The areas of control between parties within Sudan in October 2025

As of 2025, Sudan's population is estimated to be 47 million. Close to 11 million individuals have moved within the country's boundaries, driven from where they lived, yet unable to leave the state itself, with a lack of protection and support systems. Around 30 million depend on humanitarian aid to meet basic needs. Among them, 21 million lack reliable access to food due to disrupted supply chains, inflation, and the collapse of the agriculture sector. The female population of Sudan makes up 25 million people, with 12 million being at risk of gender-based violence. Access to medical services, safe drinking water, and education remains out of reach for the vast majority of the population.

Despite multiple international and regional efforts to broker ceasefires, fighting has continued within the nation due to the lack of an enforcement mechanism, mutual distrust between the warring parties, and competing political ambitions. This continuation of violence threatens Sudan's future but also regional stability across North and East Africa.

Key Terminology

Armed Non-State Actors (ANSAs)

ANSAs are organized groups that use force but are not part of a recognized national military, such as militias or paramilitary organizations. In Sudan, ANSAs typically aligned with either the SAF or RSF, contributing to ethnic violence, obstructing ceasefires, and worsening civilian insecurity.

Ceasefire Agreement

A ceasefire agreement is an agreement between conflicting parties to halt combat for a set period of time, often used to allow humanitarian access, protect civilians, or create space for negotiations. In Sudan, repeated ceasefire attempts between the SAF and RSF have frequently collapsed due to lack of compliance, contributing to ongoing civilian harm and limiting the effectiveness of humanitarian operations.

Humanitarian Corridor

Humanitarian corridors are designated routes that allow safe passage for humanitarian aid and civilians during armed conflict. In Sudan, repeated efforts to establish humanitarian corridors have collapsed due to ceasefire violations.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

IDPs are civilians who are forced to flee their homes due to conflict or violence, but who remain within their country's borders. Sudan currently hosts over 11 million IDPs, making it the largest internal displacement crisis in the world, overwhelming host communities and humanitarian systems.

Peacekeeping Mandate

A peacekeeping mandate is defined by the authority and responsibilities typically by the UN or regional forces deployed in a conflict zone, including protecting civilians, monitoring ceasefires, securing humanitarian corridors, and supporting disarmament or political processes. In Sudan, a peacekeeping mandate defined under Chapter VII of the UN Charter could provide a credible enforcement mechanism to reduce violence and stabilize affected regions, though its success depends on sufficient resources, international support, and cooperation from local actors.

Political Transition

The process of moving from military or authoritarian rule toward a civilian-led government. Sudan's attempted political transition, following the 2019 revolution, collapsed after the October 2021 coup, which overthrew the civilian-led government established in 2019 and reinstated a military-led administration. This failure directly contributed to the ongoing conflict between the SAF and the RSF.

Background

Since its independence from 1956, Sudan's path has been shaped by unsteady leadership, militarization of the government, and inequality for different groups within the nation. Previously, having over decades of authoritarian rule, military coups, and local conflicts between ethnic groups wore down public trust slowly. By 2019, Sudan had a revolution that removed the long ruling president Omar al-Bashir, this opened a brief optimism towards democratic

transition. However, with this fragile power sharing between civilian and military leaders failed to address core disputes over authority, security, and accountability.

The tensions eventually erupted following the October 2021 military coup with the SAF overthrowing the interim civilian government. The coup sparked nationwide protests, while competing visions for leadership between the SAF and the RSF transformed their political rivalry into a full-scale combat by mid-April 2023. Since then, fighting spread swiftly through multiple regions, severely impacting civilians, neighboring states, and undermining Sudan's economic, political, and social stability.

Economic

This conflict has deepened economic strain in Sudan, a nation whose economy had long faced pressures from global sanctions, debt, and inflation. Because of armed conflicts, vital industries such as farming have been affected by displacement, insecurity, and destruction of agriculture infrastructure. Supply chains between cities have collapsed as the routes have become unsafe, limiting the movement of goods between rural and urban areas. With inflation rising fast, it reduces the purchasing power of the national currency and pushes millions below the poverty line. The breakdown of banking services and public financial institutions has restricted access to wages and humanitarian cash assistance. Additionally, the conflict has deterred foreign investments and international economic cooperation, further isolating Sudan from global markets. These economic pressures have intensified food insecurity and increased dependence on humanitarian aid.

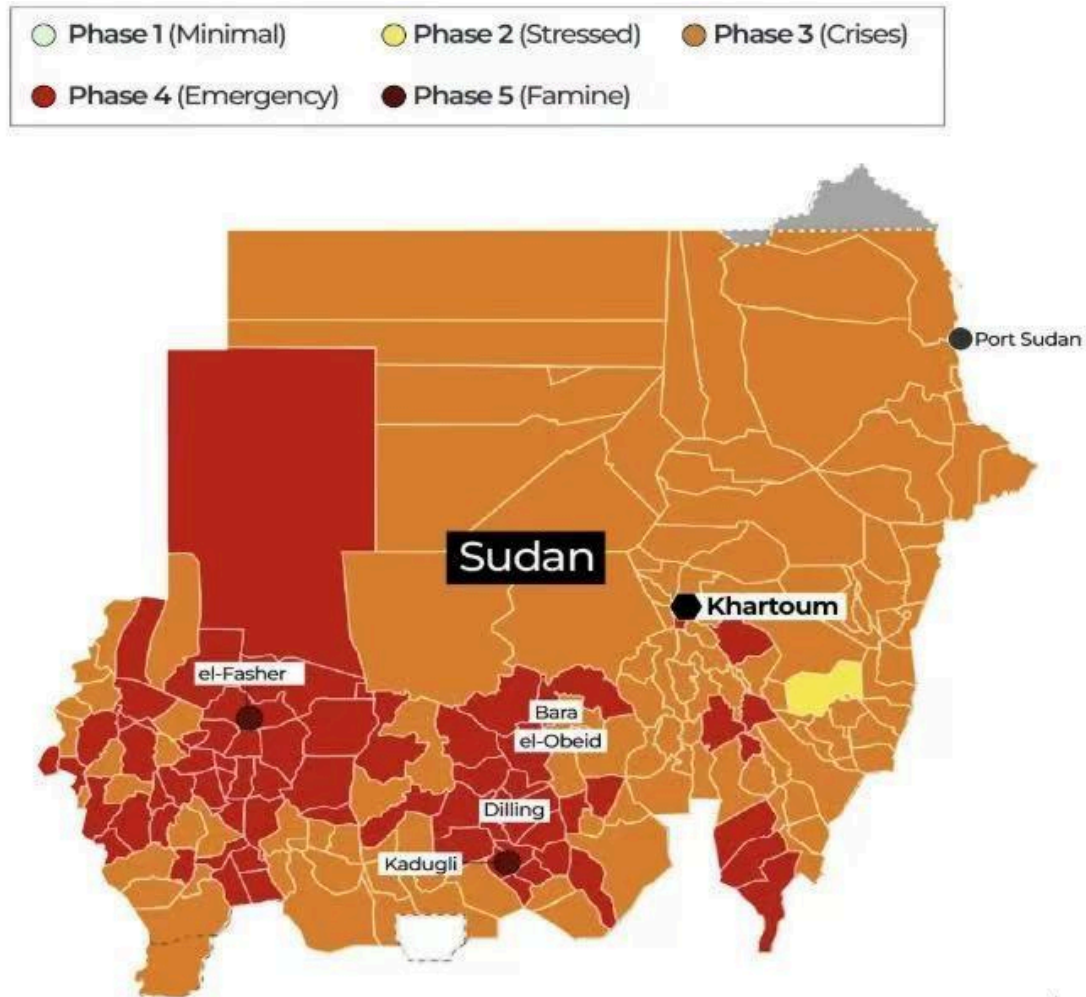


Figure 3: Food Insecurity within Sudan (3 or higher is food insecurity) as of September 2025

Political

With the fragmentation of state institutions, the conflict highlights the dismantlement of Sudan's pathway towards democratic governance. Power is divided sharply between regions of control by the SAF and RSF. Without central leadership, negotiating peace deals or enforcing consistent laws across the nation has become nearly impossible. Currently, civilian leaders have been sidelined, with reduced public trust in political processes and the increasing influence of ANSAs.

Despite repeated attempts, ceasefires have collapsed due to monitoring gaps, vague conditions, and violations by both parties. With the absence of accountability, it creates an environment where human rights violations occur with limited punishment. This political

vacuum within Sudan risks permanent military rule and delays for the return to civilian governance.

Social

The conflict has significantly altered the nation's social landscape. With over 11 million IDPs, it is causing a strain on supplies for host communities. Access to healthcare has deteriorated as many hospitals lack medical supplies, have been damaged, or occupied by armed groups. Education systems have collapsed in many regions, with schools closed or repurposed, causing lower literacy rates for the new generation.

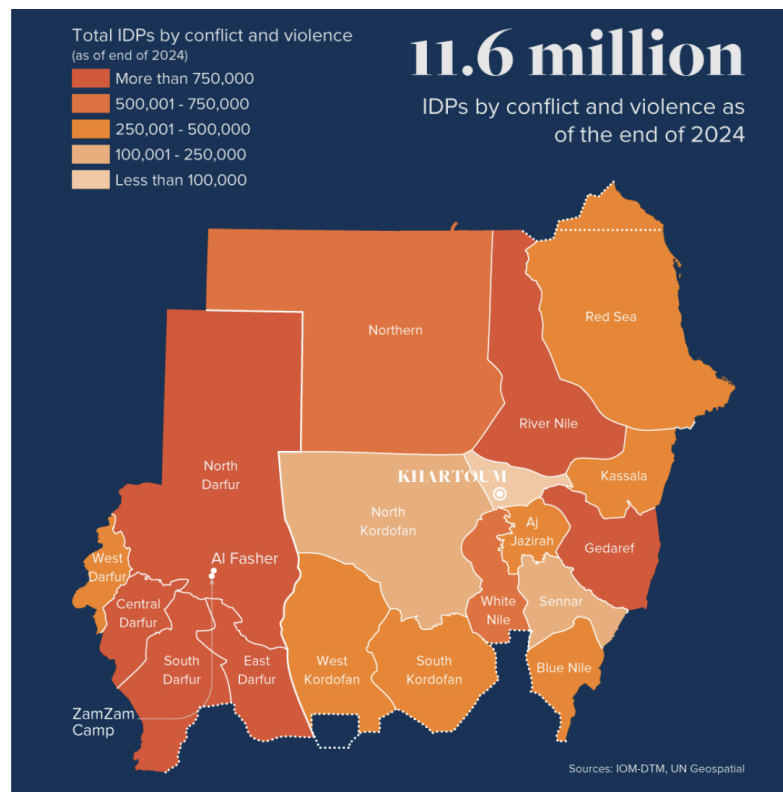


Figure 3: IDPs within Sudan, as the end of 2024

There has also been growing ethnic and communal tensions, particularly in Darfur, with many ANSAs aligned with specific ethnic communities. There have been numerous reports of ANSAs committing gender-based violence and the use of child soldiers. This conflict has also caused widespread psychological trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), making the reintegration of affected individuals into society particularly challenging.

Regional Effects

The conflict has also had significant effects on neighboring countries, destabilizing the region, and fueling previous challenges. The most immediate effect is the refugee crisis with over millions of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing into neighboring countries. South Sudan and Chad are already managing internal security challenges, and the influx of refugees has placed additional strain on their resources and infrastructure. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and other humanitarian organizations are struggling to provide enough humanitarian aid in overcrowded camps within neighboring states.

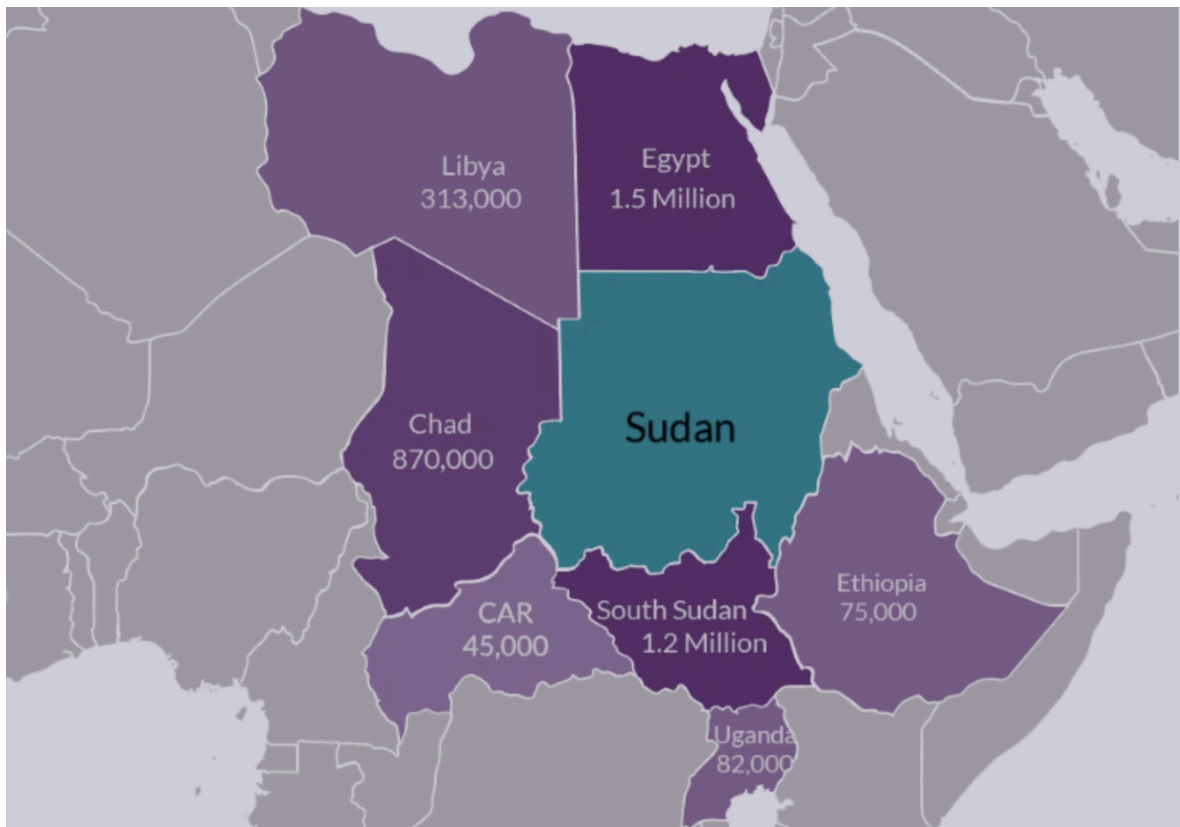


Figure 4: Refugees from Sudan in neighbor countries, July 2025

There have been increasing security risks within the region due to the ANSAs in Sudan that have crossed borders into neighboring states. These groups bring instability, engage in cross-border violence, and contribute to the rising insecurity of primarily Chad and South Sudan.

Politically, the conflict has strained regional relationships, particularly in South Sudan and Chad, where instability and armed groups could reignite tensions. The African Union (AU) and other regional organizations have struggled to mediate, and the continued violence threatens to destabilize the wider region further.

Major Parties Involved

African Union (AU)

The AU, established in 2002 as the successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), comprises 55 member states and promotes peace, security, and political cooperation across Africa. It prioritizes ending conflicts through dialogue, ceasefire implementation, and regional stability, with mediation led by the Peace and Security Council alongside neighboring actors. The AU wields regional legitimacy but is constrained by limited resources and ongoing fighting, while also addressing pressures from refugee movements.

Armed Non-State Actors (ANSAs)

ANSAs are militias and local armed groups, which operate across Sudan based on regional, ethnic, or political goals. These groups may be temporarily aligned with the SAF or the RSF, or act independently, especially in regions like Darfur. Control over land remains in their central focus, along with securing a role in any eventual political resolution. As multiple factions emerge, warfare becomes more scattered, civilians face greater risk, and efforts to observe truces or rebuild after violence grow far more complex. Some notable ANSAs in Sudan include:

- Janjaweed militias
 - Traditional Arab militias from Darfur, largely aligned with the RSF. They remain influential in western Sudan due to local networks and historical control over territory, playing a major role in ongoing violence.
- Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N, al-Hilu faction)
 - The SPLM-N controls areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Largely independent, with ethnic and regional backing, sometimes cooperating with the SAF or other local forces depending on the situation.
- Popular Resistance

- o The Popular Resistance are grassroots militias and local defense groups largely aligned with the SAF, operating in Khartoum, Kordofan, and other contested areas. They mobilize local communities to resist RSF advances and protect civilians.

Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

The RSF, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), is Sudan's largest paramilitary group, originally formed from militia factions and now estimated to include 100,000–150,000 militants. Challenging the authority of the SAF the RSF seeks recognition within Sudan's political system while maintaining autonomy and expanding its political and economic influence. Its decentralized structure allows control over large territories, particularly in Khartoum and Darfur, where it has conducted large-scale offensives, seized urban centers, and imposed prolonged sieges, such as in El Fasher, since April 2023. The RSF's military strength and territorial reach complicate peace negotiations and ceasefire enforcement, and the group has been accused of targeting civilian neighborhoods, committing ethnically motivated violence in Darfur, and obstructing humanitarian access, while remaining concerned about international sanctions and accountability for human rights abuses.

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)

The SAF, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, is the official national military and de facto governing authority of Sudan following the October 2021 military coup that overthrew the civilian-led transitional government. The SAF maintains control over key state institutions, national infrastructure, and air power, asserting international legitimacy as the country's governing body. Since April 2023, it has engaged in sustained combat operations against the RSF, including airstrikes and defending strategic cities such as Khartoum. Its limited engagement in inclusive political dialogue has hindered ceasefire efforts and prolonged the conflict, despite its central role in preserving national sovereignty and stability.

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations plays a vital role in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. Through its various specialized agencies and bodies, the UN can address major issues impacting individuals, groups, and countries involved in the conflict, including humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, human rights, and health services. Here is a list of major UN committees involved with the conflict:

- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)
- United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
January 2019	Mass protests erupt across Sudan against President Omar al-Bashir's government due to economic hardship and political repression.
April 11, 2019	President Omar al-Bashir is removed from power by the military following sustained nationwide protests.
August 17, 2019	A civilian–military transitional government is established through a power-sharing agreement.
October 25, 2021	The Sudanese military carries out a coup, dissolving the civilian-led transitional government and arresting political leaders.
April 15, 2023	Armed conflict breaks out between the SAF and the RSF in Khartoum.
May-June 2023	Multiple short-term ceasefires are brokered by international and regional actors but repeatedly collapse.
October 2023	Fighting intensifies in Darfur, particularly in West Darfur, with reports of large-scale civilian casualties and ethnically targeted violence, prompting renewed international concern.
November 4, 2023	The United Nations reports a sharp increase in displacement and humanitarian needs as clashes spread beyond Khartoum into central and western Sudan.

December 2023	The conflict reaches a critical humanitarian threshold, with millions displaced internally and across borders, leading the UN and humanitarian agencies to classify Sudan as one of the world’s worst displacement crises.
May 2024 – October 2025	The siege of El Fasher by the RSF began in May 2024, when RSF forces encircled and restricted access to food, aid, and supplies. This was the last major SAF held in urban center in North Darfur.
25 June 2024 - 5 March 2025	The Sennar Offensive unfolds, with the RSF launching incursions into Sennar and Blue Nile states before the SAF reconquers most areas by March 2025, marking a significant operational shift.
July 2025	The RSF announces a parallel government named the “Government of Peace and Unity” in Darfur, signaling attempts by the paramilitary side to establish political legitimacy parallel to military gains.
26 December 2025	The UN renews its push for an immediate ceasefire and compromise, emphasizing the need for a shared vision toward a civilian-led transition as the conflict enters its third year.

Previous Attempts/Solutions

- UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) (2021–Present)
 - The UNITAMS was established to support Sudan’s transition to a civilian-led government, facilitate political dialogue, and coordinate international assistance. While UNITAMS has engaged with stakeholders and provided technical support, it has not secured a nationwide ceasefire or a comprehensive political settlement, and its impact remains limited.
- AU Calls for Ceasefire (2023)
 - In May 2023, the AU called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to protect civilians, open humanitarian corridors, and resume political dialogue. Despite these efforts and high-level diplomatic statements, fighting has continued without a sustained ceasefire, limiting the AU’s influence on the ground.
- UNSC Resolution 2736 (2024)
 - Resolution 2736 demanded the RSF to end their siege of El Fasher, de-escalate, protect civilians, and allow humanitarian access. While the resolution provided a

legal framework, it has not been fully enforced, and the conflict and humanitarian suffering continue, leaving the resolution only partially effective.

- Formation of a High-Level Mediation Panel (2024)

In 2024, the AU formed a High-Level Mediation Panel to facilitate political dialogue and ceasefire agreements. Despite consultations and diplomatic engagement, the panel has not yet brokered a peace agreement, and its efforts to end hostilities remain ongoing.

- UNSC Rejection of RSF's Parallel Government (2025)

In August 2025, the UNSC rejected the RSF's declaration of a parallel government, affirming Sudan's territorial integrity and urging a return to negotiations. While this reinforced diplomatic support for Sudan's sovereignty, it has not led to a reduction in conflict or a ceasefire, leaving the action largely symbolic.

Potential Solutions

- Establishment of a Monitored Humanitarian Ceasefire:

A possible approach involves a short-term, renewable truce centered on humanitarian needs, overseen by an impartial joint UN-AU monitoring presence. Protection of non-combatants, medical facilities, educational buildings, and vital services forms its core objective. Though difficulties around compliance and mutual confidence remain present, the arrangement might halt violence temporarily. From here, wider talks for lasting peace become slightly more feasible.

- o Pros:

- Immediate reduction in civilian casualties
- Facilitates delivery of humanitarian aid
- Builds confidence between warring parties

- o Cons:

- Risk of violations by armed factions
- Requires strong and impartial monitoring
- May only provide temporary relief

- o Effectiveness:

- Moderately effective in the short term; success depends on enforcement capacity and commitment from both parties.
- Support for an AU-Led Inclusive Political Dialogue Framework
 - A path toward calmer conditions may come through backing an AU-driven conversation linking the SAF, the RSF, civil society voices, female advocates, and those displaced by violence. With UN help in logistics and diplomacy, such a process might unfold without overriding regional authority. Tensions could ease in decades to come if successful.
 - Pros:
 - African-led legitimacy
 - Encourages inclusive, long-term political solutions
 - Includes civil society and displaced populations
 - Cons:
 - Slow process
 - Requires cooperation from SAF and RSF
 - Risk of exclusion of key armed factions
 - Effectiveness:
 - High long-term potential if paired with enforcement mechanisms and sustained international support.
- Strengthened Civilian Protection and Accountability Measures:
 - Enhancing civilian protection through better access for humanitarian agencies, early-warning systems, and cooperation with UN and regional human rights bodies could prevent further violence and abuse. Documenting violations would signal accountability, deterring future abuses. While slow, monitoring and accountability processes are vital for protecting civilians and creating conditions for political negotiations and post-conflict reconciliation.
 - Pros:
 - Deters future human rights abuses
 - Strengthens monitoring and accountability mechanisms

- Supports reconciliation and post-conflict stability
- o Cons:
 - Slow legal and monitoring processes
 - Limited enforcement during active conflict
 - Requires sustained international support and coordination
- o Effectiveness:
 - While gradual, these measures are crucial for long-term civilian protection, promoting accountability, and creating a foundation for political negotiations and lasting peace.
- Deployment of an UN-Mandated Peacekeeping Mission

The UNSC could authorize a multidimensional Chapter VII peacekeeping operation to monitor ceasefires, protect civilians, secure humanitarian corridors, safeguard critical infrastructure, and support disarmament. Civilian components could focus on human rights, early-warning for ethnic violence, and coordination with regional actors like the AU, potentially in a hybrid UN–AU framework.
- o Pros:
 - Credible enforcement under Chapter VII
 - Enhanced civilian and humanitarian protection
 - Improved ceasefire monitoring
 - Signals strong international commitment
 - Stabilizes regions to enable political negotiations
- o Cons:
 - Requires Sudanese consent or major-power consensus
 - Risk of confrontation with armed groups
 - High financial and logistical cost
 - Limited effectiveness if mandates or equipment are inadequate
- o Effectiveness:
 - With clear mandates, sufficient resources, and major-power support, the mission could reduce civilian casualties and improve humanitarian access.

However, lasting peace depends on concurrent diplomatic efforts and genuine political negotiations.

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