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ORAL STATEMENT

Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
Agenda Item 3: Human Rights Situation in Africa
Seventy-fifth ordinary session
3-23 May 2023

Honourable Chairperson,

Amnesty International welcomes this opportunity to address the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) on the occasion of its 75th ordinary session.

On April 15, 2023, fighting erupted in Sudan's capital, Khartoum between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as "Hemedti" respectively. The fighting came after weeks of tensions between the RSF and the SAF over security force reform during negotiations for a new transitional government. The two military leaders had jointly carried out a coup against the country's transitional government in October 2021. Fighting has since spread throughout the country.

Parties to the conflict are blatantly violating international humanitarian law. They are using heavy weaponry including artillery, tanks and jet aircraft in densely populated areas in Khartoum. Civilians in the capital and in other locations including Darfur are bearing the brunt of the clashes, with millions trapped in their homes and humanitarian workers unable to deliver supplies to civilians affected by the conflict. Amnesty International continues to receive credible claims of indiscriminate attacks and unlawful killings of civilians across Sudan. We are also receiving reports of attacks on medical and humanitarian facilities and sexual violence against women.

As of 2 May, the UN reported over 400 hundred people dead, including at least five aid workers – three from the World Food Programme (WFP), one from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and one from Relief International. Humanitarian agencies warn that the health system in Sudan is on the brink of collapse, and there is an unfolding displacement crisis. According to UNHCR, as of 1 May, almost 115,000 people had fled to neighbouring countries, including more than 79,000 refugees.¹ The majority of them have fled to Egypt and Chad. IOM estimates that, at least 75,000 people have been internally displaced between 15 and 22 April.² Sudan also hosts 1.13 million refugees. More violations could take place as the conflict intensifies.

Both the SAF and the RSF have a history of committing serious international human rights and humanitarian law violations in Sudan and particularly in Darfur. Following the ousting of Omar al-Bashir in 2019, and the

¹ UNHCR, *Population Movement from Sudan as 1 May*, 1 May 2023. The figure includes refugees, returnees and third country nationals; <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100372>

² IOM, *Sudan: escalating conflict. Situation update*, 25 April 2023; [iom_sudan_situation-update_25_april_2023.pdf](https://iom.sudan.situation-update.25.april.2023.pdf)

October 2021 coup, Sudanese security forces including the RSF and the SAF have continued to commit crimes under international law and human rights violations, including unlawfully killing over a hundred protestors and injuring thousands of others since the 2021 coup. They also continued to unlawfully arrest and detain protestors.

This new conflict coincides with the 20-year anniversary of the Darfur conflict. Sudanese authorities have continually failed to protect civilians or roll out any form of accountability and justice for past and recent violations.

Amnesty International therefore calls on the African Commission to:

- i) Urge the parties to the conflict to protect civilians by ending all indiscriminate attacks and call on them to immediately stop using explosive weapons with wide area effects in the vicinity of concentrations of civilians.
- ii) Urge the parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian actors to ensure aid reaches those in need, as well as to protect humanitarian relief personnel and facilities.
- iii) Urge the parties to the conflict to ensure safe passage for those wanting to leave areas affected by violence.
- iv) Urge Sudan's neighbours to keep their borders open and ensure that those fleeing the conflict are not rejected at the border, are protected against refoulement, and have prompt access to asylum.
- v) Urge others to open safe and legal pathways and ensure protection and support for people fleeing Sudan.