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United Nations backs Sudan envoy as army seeks to expel him

Sources in Sudan's foreign ministry told Al Jazeera that Volker Perthes will not be allowed back into the war-torn country.



Hundreds reportedly killed in violence in Sudan's West Darfur

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United Nations chief Antonio Guterres said he was "shocked" by a letter from Sudanese army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan reportedly requesting the replacement of special envoy Volker Perthes.

Perthes and the UN mission in Sudan have been the target of several protests by thousands of military and other supporters who repeatedly accused him of "foreign intervention" and demanded his dismissal.

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"[Guterres] is proud of the work done by Volker Perthes and reaffirms his full confidence in his special representative," a statement from UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said late on Friday. "The secretary-general is shocked by the letter he received from General al-Burhan."

Sources within Sudan's foreign ministry told Al Jazeera that Perthes will not be allowed back into the war-torn country.

Perthes is currently in New York City where he briefed the UN Security Council on the situation in Sudan earlier this week. No information is available on when he was due back in Sudan, where authorities have not given out visas to foreign nationals since the war started.

Al-Burhan accused Perthes of widening divisions in the country by excluding voices who should have been involved in the transition to a civilian government.



Al-Burhan's army is currently at war with his former deputy <u>Mohamed</u>
<u>Hamdan "Hemedti" Daglo</u> who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

The rival factions are currently in the fifth day of a one-week ceasefire brokered by the United States and Saudi Arabia, during which they have repeatedly accused each other of truce violations.



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'Not really a surprise'

Neither the army nor the UN has released official copies of al-Burhan's letter, which reportedly requested the dismissal of Perthes as Guterres' envoy to Sudan.

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It was the latest in a series of moves by al-Burhan, who last week officially sacked Hemedti as his deputy in the ruling sovereign council, pooled hardline military supporters into his inner circle, and is now seeking to reinforce army ranks.

Observers say the UN mission's presence in Sudan has been problematic for the military since the conflict in Darfur during the 2000s and the 2021 coup.

"The Sudanese regime for a long time has never really accepted the role of the UN. Mr Volker Perthes' departure is not really a surprise. He knew the future in Sudan was rather bleak for himself," said Aicha Elbasri, a former spokeswoman for the African Union-UN mission in Darfur.

Sudan's defence ministry on Friday called on "army pensioners ... as well as all those capable of bearing arms" to head to their nearest military command unit and "arm themselves in order to protect themselves," their families and their neighbours.

A statement later in the day walked back the call to just army "reservists" and "pensioners".

The recent fighting across Sudan has <u>killed more than 1,800 people</u>, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

More than one million people have been displaced within Sudan in addition to 300,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries, the UN says.

