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# Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan

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**BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS**

MAY 11, 2023

## **Preamble**

Recognizing the necessity of uplifting the plight and misery from our people resulting from the ongoing fighting since April 15, 2023, in particular in the capital of Khartoum, responding to urgent humanitarian needs of our civilian citizens,

Responding to the various initiatives of the brotherly and friendly countries, led by the Saudi-American initiative,

We, the undersigned, representing the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), with this Declaration of Commitment, reaffirm our core obligations under International Humanitarian Law to facilitate humanitarian action to meet the needs of civilians.

We affirm our unwavering commitment to the sovereignty of Sudan and to maintaining its unity and territorial integrity.

We recognize that commitment to the Declaration of Commitment will not affect any legal, security, or political status of the parties signing it, nor will it be linked to participation in any political process.

We welcome the efforts exerted by Sudan's friends who can use their relationships and good offices to ensure respect for International Humanitarian Law and for international human rights law, including by committing to this Declaration and immediately implementing it.

None of the points listed below displace any obligations or principles under International Humanitarian Law and/or international human rights law that apply in this armed conflict, in particular the Protocol Additional (II) of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and that all parties must meet.

## **Commitments**

1. We agree that the interests and well-being of the Sudanese people are our top priority and affirm our commitment to ensure that civilians are protected at all times. This includes allowing safe passage for civilians to leave areas of active hostilities on a voluntary basis, in the direction they choose.
2. We affirm our responsibility to respect International Humanitarian Law and international human rights law, including obligations to:

Distinguish at all times between civilians and combatants and between civilian objects and military targets.

Refrain from any attack that may be expected to cause incidental civilian harm that would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

Take all feasible precautions to avoid and minimize civilian harm, with an aim to vacate urban centers, including civilian houses. Civilians should not be used as human shields, for example.

Ensure that checkpoints are not used to infringe upon the principle of the freedom of movement for civilians and humanitarian actors.

Allow all civilians to voluntarily and safely leave areas of hostilities and any besieged areas.

Commit to safeguard the needs and necessities indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, which can include foodstuffs, agricultural areas, crops, and livestock. Looting, ransacking, and ravaging are prohibited.

Commit to vacate and refrain from occupying, as well as to respect and protect all public and private facilities, such as hospitals and water and electricity installations, and refrain

from using them for military purposes.

Commit to respect and protect medical transports such as ambulances and refrain from using them for military purposes.

Commit to respect and protect medical personnel and public installations.

Uphold and not hamper the right of civilians to pass and travel via roads and bridges, inside and outside the State of Khartoum.

Take all possible measures to collect and evacuate the wounded and sick, including combatants, without discrimination, and allow humanitarian organizations to do so; do not impede medical evacuations, including during active hostilities.

Refrain from the recruitment of children and the use of children in hostilities.

Refrain from engaging in forced disappearances and arbitrary detention of civilians.

Refrain from any form of torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, including sexual violence of all kinds.

Treat all persons deprived of their liberty in a humane manner and provide principal humanitarian organizations with regular access to persons in detention.

3. We recognize that humanitarian activities solely aim to alleviate human suffering and protect the lives and dignity of persons who are not or are no longer fighting. We agree on the need to allow principal humanitarian operations to resume and to protect humanitarian personnel and assets, including to:

Respect the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and operational independence.

Allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, including medical and surgical equipment, and ensure relief personnel the freedom of movement required for their functions. This includes:

Facilitating the safe, rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian personnel through all available routes (and any established humanitarian corridors) as needs require, into and within the country, including the movement of humanitarian convoys.

Adopting simple and expedited procedures for all logistical and administrative arrangements necessary for humanitarian relief operations.

Observing the implementation of regular humanitarian pauses and days of tranquility as needed.

Refraining from interference with principal humanitarian operations and never accompany side by side humanitarian personnel carrying out humanitarian activities, in conformity with the Amended Directives and Procedures for Humanitarian Action in Sudan.

Protect and respect humanitarian workers, assets, supplies, offices, warehouses, and other facilities. Armed actors must not interfere in the actions of humanitarian operations. While respecting the principle of the neutrality of humanitarian actors, armed actors must guarantee the security of corridors for transport and areas for storage and distribution. It is prohibited to attack, harass, intimidate or arbitrarily detain personnel, or to attack, destroy, misappropriate or loot relief supplies, installations, material, units or vehicles.

4. We commit to exert all efforts to ensure that these commitments—and all obligations of International Humanitarian Law—are fully disseminated within our ranks and appoint focal points to engage with humanitarian actors to facilitate their activities.
5. We will enable responsible humanitarian actors, such as the Sudanese Red Crescent and/or the International Committee of the Red Cross to collect, register, and bury the deceased in coordination with competent authorities.
6. We will take all necessary measures to ensure that all persons acting on our instructions, direction or control abide by International Humanitarian Law, and in particular the commitments provided for in this Declaration of Commitment.
7. In furtherance of the principles and commitments contained herein, we commit to prioritizing discussions to achieve a short-term ceasefire to facilitate the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance and restoration of essential services, and we commit to scheduling subsequent expanded discussions to achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities.

Signed in Jeddah on 11 May 2023 with the facilitation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America.

Sudanese Armed Forces, Rear Admiral, Mahjoub Bushra Ahmed Rahma

Rapid Support Forces, Brigadier General, Omer Hamdan Ahmed Hammad

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