

# Why is Sudan-Israel Normalization on Hold?



Marches of Millions, 60th Avenue, Khartoum, October 30, 2021

Source: Ghanad Balanad ("Sudan is out Country") , a Khartoum, Sudan TV Channel

**Was there a staged coup** that deposed the civilian partnership on October 25, 2021, orchestrated by the junta of Sudan's Generals Abdelfattah Abderhaman al- Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Dogolo (Hemeti), Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Transitional Military Council (TMC)? Or was it simply a tactic in the Sudanese game of breaching agreements and vows

to maintain power, as well as control of the government? The junta was aware the transition was supported by Sudanese revolutionary groups backed by the international community seeking a transition of Sudan to a full democratic state led by an elected civilian-authority. Al-Burhan and his collaborators thought that by signing the Abraham Accord with the former Netanyahu Israeli government on January 6, 2021, it would give them impunity. They might have thought the Agreement, urged on by the UAE, Trump and Biden Administrations would give them cover to avoid ICC prosecution for crimes they committed against the people of Sudan in Darfur and other conflict regions. To avoid that possibility, they staged a coup to remain in power.

Further, they thought that cutting a deal to settle a 2017 US Court award of \$7.3 billion for \$335 million to compensate the victims of the Al Qaeda 1998 US Embassies attacks in Kenya, Tanzania and the 2000 USS Cole; had given them protection and a free hand to do whatever they wanted. The Generals also thought that the settlement enabled the US to remove Sudan from the list of countries designated as State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSOT) regaining sovereign immunity against such claims. That was crucial to negotiating a \$50 Billion World Bank debt relief package, closing a \$2.4 billion interim debt facility with the UAE and US funding of \$700 million for transition to a democratic civilian government. They thought that got them the equivalent of a free 'get out of jail' pass" as in the game of Monopoly to continue in power as usual. Instead, in the wake of their staged coup, Sudan is in what the Israelis would call in slangy Hebrew, "balagan" – chaos.

There are daily massive protests calling for release of detained PM Hamdok and more than sixty ministers and state officials with mounting casualties from lethal live fire clashes in Marches of Millions. According to Khartoum-based Ilghad TV reports from Sudanese Medical Association 3 persons

died and over hundred were injured in Omdurman clashes between protesters and security forces on October 30, 2021.

Then came the holdback of World Bank debt relief, US transition funding and Beja blockade of Port Sudan supply of food , fuel and necessities further spiking hyperinflation impoverishing ordinary Sudanese.

Notwithstanding, this tragic spectacle splashed across the international media some officials and commentators in Israel [hold](#) on to a thin reed of hope that somehow normalization might be achieved in the long run.

**Here is why those views may be myopic.**

Generals al-Burhan and Hemeti dissolved the failed Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC) civilian partnership hoping to replace it with Islamist affiliated groups and parties that previously had links with the Bashir NCP regime. They arrested PM Hamdok and selected cabinet members that opposed the military takeover, sparing those of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) who supported the military coup. A protest and blockade of the Port-Sudan and shutdown of the national distribution system by the Beja people in Eastern Sudan demanded the dissolution of the government tying their grievances to the morally reprehensible return of the Bashir-era National Congress Party (NCP). The current foreign exchange rate is 450 Sudanese Pounds to the dollar; 10 times higher compared to 45.34 Pounds in 2019. One loaf of bread cost one Pound in 2019; today is ten times that price at 50 Sudanese Pounds. Coup leaders are, callously indifferent to the suffering of the Sudanese people.

The shock is that the staged coup spiked 400% hyperinflation producing chaotic economic conditions. That sparked continued unrest in the country calling for more Marches of the Millions demanding establishment of a civilian government via free and fair elections in two years. The TSC accomplished nothing to

provide the basis for that possibility: no Constitutional Court, no election commission, no Census to establish election districts or ridings, no international monitoring to ensure free and fair elections , no training of electoral officials and staffs and no acquisition of voting systems.

### **The Faltering Sudan – Israeli Normalization.**

Sudan's military coup leaders maintained contact with Israel in furtherance of normalization under the Abraham Accords signed off on January 6, 2021. On September 23, 2021, the former TSC government announced [seizure](#) of Hamas assets in Sudan, which the Palestinian Authority objected to. Ironic given previous Bashir regime supplies of material and weapons to the terrorist organization in Gaza under the previous [direction](#) of TMC Deputy Chairman Mohamed Hamdan Dogolo (Hemeti). On October 9, 2011, the *Sudan Tribune* [reported](#) a delegation led by Deputy Commander of the RSF/Janjaweed militia Lt-Gen Abdel Rahim Hamdan that included Lt-Gen Mirghani Idris Suleiman, Military Industry Corporation of Sudan held two days of discussions with Israeli National Security Adviser, Eyal Hulata. It further noted that in April 2021, the former TSC government had abrogated the 1958 Boycott Law against trade and diplomatic contact with Israel.

Military coup leader General Abdelfattah Aberhaman al-Burhan holds the portfolio for relations with Israel since the meeting with former Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in Entebbe, Uganda on February 3, 2020. On October 14, 2021, *Al-Monitor* [reported](#) the meeting in Abu Dhabi of Sudan Justice Minister Nasredeen Abdulbari with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Idan Roll and Regional Cooperation Minister Esawi Frej. Abduldari extolled the virtues of extended cooperation between the two countries, emphasizing educational and high-tech exchanges leading to the conclusion of agreements. Israel Regional Minister Frej noted in a press interview “that a marginal nationalist minority in Sudan is trying to [sabotage the rapprochement efforts](#), but there are still on the right

track. He said he believes bilateral agreements between Israel and Sudan will be signed soon.” In the wake of the October 25, 2021, military coup that prospect may have dimmed.

What is puzzling is that Israeli commentators and analysts [contend](#) the military-led normalization effort was blocked by the TSC civilian partners. The reality is the issue of relations with Israel is extremely sensitive among Islamist elements in the Sudan. As a result, both the junta leaders and their civilian partners feared public backlash. Furthermore, the TMC joined with the FFC, a cabal of Islamist and Nile Valley Elite parties that have dominated Sudan since Independence in 1956, to form the unelected Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC). They spent much of their time fighting internal battles on allotment and empowering their parties stalling transition and normalization with Israel under the Abraham Accord.

The meeting between General al-Burhan with former Israel PM Netanyahu in Entebbe in February 2020 and the Juba Peace Agreements led by General Dogolo (Hemeti) with some Sudan Revolutionary Forces in Juba, South Sudan on October 3, 2020, was the continuation of the pattern established by jailed despot Bashir and his National Congress Party (NCP) regime that held sway in Khartoum from 1989 until his overthrow in April 2019. They created false peace agreements so that they could ethnically cleanse indigenous African peoples in the conflict zones of Darfur, South Kordofan, and the Blue Nile State, replacing them with foreign Arab tribes in the Sahel recruits for settlement of the brutal Rapid support/Janjaweed militias and families.

In international politics, there is no permanent enemy but only permanent interests. However, Israelis should know that in Islamic terrorism there is only one objective: to vanquish permanent enemies through jihad. That is what is meant by the Sudanese expression “two Faces.”

## **Who are Generals al-Burhan and Dogolo (Hemeti)?**

Gen. Burhan created the Rapid Support Force/Janjaweed militias, commanded by General Dogolo (Hemeti) active as security forces in Darfur and later deployed in Khartoum to protect Bashir and his regime. They continue to direct and support them to this day. Burhan began operating in Darfur in 1999 when he was a lieutenant working as assistant to Lt.-Gen. Mohamed Ahmed Mustafa al-Dabi. Dabi was a Sudanese military intelligence officer who also served as head of the Arab League Observer Mission in Syria from December 2011 to February 2012. He was sent by Bashir to el-Geneina in west Darfur region to organize and arm Arab tribal groups that later became the core of the Rapid Support Force/Janjaweed militias. The reality is that the jihad campaigns waged against Sudan's indigenous peoples following the jailing of long-term dictatorship of former president Omar Bashir in April 2019 have not ended. Nor has Bashir been remanded over for prosecution given outstanding International Criminal Court indictments issued in both 2009 and 2010.

In 2016, military operations were conducted in Jebel Marra in Darfur. The Bashir regime was accused of using chemical weapons against indigenous peoples. The overall commander in charge was Gen. al-Burhan assisted by Gen. Hemeti. This was the time Burhan wrote that he is the "God of Fur." (Fur is a name of one of the largest ethnic groups in Darfur inhabiting Jebel Marra. Darfur is named after "Fur"). Burhan was directly engaged in committing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. Both Generals al-Burhan and Hemeti committed genocide in Darfur along with jailed former President Bashir and others as co-conspirators in 2003 and onward. Darfur genocide by the Bashir regime has murdered 600,000 , forcing five million to Internal displaced persons (IDP) with hundreds of thousands fleeing to UN High Commissioner Refugee camps in neighboring Chad and other Sahel countries. With the withdrawal of UNAMID forces from Sudan IDP

camps after the Juba Peace Agreements were signed in October 2020, the RSF/Janjaweed razzias of villages and farms continue unabated in Darfur with murders, rapes of women, recruitment of children, extra judicial expropriation of properties and seizing livestock. All while Sudan security forces look on. A signatory of the Juba Peace Agreements, Minni Minawi, a leader of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA-MM), who was appointed Governor of Darfur stood by the TSC while fellow Darfurians were attacked and killed by the RS/Janjaweed commanded by General Hemeti.

### **US Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman Emergency Visits to Khartoum and Warnings**

The Biden Administration was vitally concerned that Sudan makes the transition to a democracy from the joint military-civilian Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC) after lifting economic sanctions and providing more than \$4 million to assist in the process. Those concerns sent Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman US Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa on two emergency trips in October 2021 to Khartoum to confer with the TSC leaders. During his three-day trip from September 29 to October 1, 2021, Feltman met with TSC Chairman General Abdel Fatah Abdelrahman al-Burhan, Cabinet members, and Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok. Ambassador Feltman's State Department communique issued following those meetings [warned](#) that US support might be withdrawn:

He ...underscored that such support depends on Sudan's adherence to the agreed transitional order as established in the 2019 Constitutional Declaration and the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement. Deviation from this path and failure to meet key benchmarks will place at risk Sudan's bilateral relationship with the United States, including significant U.S. assistance, as well as the prospect of security cooperation to modernize the Sudanese armed forces and U.S. support in the International Financial Institutions and for debt relief.

Prior to his second trip on October 21, 2021 *The National* [reported](#) Feltman's interview comments concerning the "Marches of Millions" across Sudan, internal TSC turmoil, and the broader regional geopolitical, diplomatic, and economic development relations with the Gulf "partners" and Israel, Feltman said:

We have been in discussion with our Gulf partners ... they understand that the success of the transition in Sudan depends on maintaining this military-civilian leadership up until the election. Gulf countries understood the links between debt relief and making progress on the transition, and the priority of backing existing transitional authorities and "not one person or one side." We were encouraged that Sudan signed the Abraham Accords and that shows the recognition of the benefits of expanded collaboration with Israel. However, the pace of that development is up to the two partners, Sudan, and Israel.

Alarmed by what had transpired on October 25, 2021 while Feltman was departing Khartoum, he was [interviewed](#) by the *PBS News Hour* on October 28, 2021 about civil disobedience in Sudan in the wake of the staged coup:

"I think the General Burhan is going to discover that it's not quite it's so easy as he and his forces may think to return Sudan to its dark past."

He mentioned the ongoing protests the military and the regional and international pressures on the junta to restore the transitional government and free the detained officials and political leaders. Feltman added that al-Burhan would realize the need to forge a "genuine partnership" with the international community and the Sudanese people.

Asked about the silence of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, Feltman discussed the situation in Sudan with the three countries and other countries.

"There is a shared concern about stability in Sudan, a shared

concern about the potential for violence,” he said pointing to the planned mass protests on Saturday, October 30, 2021.

“You’re right that there are a number of countries that are more comfortable than they should be with the idea of a strongman military rule.”

All the warnings by US Senators Coons, Risch, Menendez, US Special Envoy Feltman and World Bank President Malpass went unheeded with the announcement of the coup by General al-Burhan ending the transition to a long-sought civilian government. In response to ‘these anti-democratic actions’, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price [announced](#) pausing of more than \$700 million in funding slated to assist the transition to a civilian government. Then on October 27, 2021, World Bank President David Malpass [announced](#) they were suspending the \$50 Billion debt deal and activities in Sudan.

## **Conclusion**

Sudan is on the verge of a chaotic bloody sectarian civil war given the actions of junta leaders, Generals al-Burhan and Hemeti. They believe the opposite; that their staged coup may have averted a civil war. Marches of the Millions were held across Sudan on Saturday, October 30, 2021, demanding creation of a democratic civilian government, freeing detained ministers and officials, and the end of the junta military dictatorship. Police and security forces have used tear gas and lethal live fire on tens of thousands of protesters causing deaths and injuries. The Sudan economy is in severe economic distress with 400% hyperinflation of food, fuel, and necessities. The “balagan” – chaos in Hebrew – that Sudan strongmen Generals al-Buran and Hemeti triggered with this staged coup to retain control could effectively end normalization with Israel.

For more information on the Crisis in Sudan by the authors: See: [\*The Reality behind the Coup in Sudan\*](#), *New English Review*,

November 2021.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Lt. Gen. Abakar M. Abdallah is chairman of the Sudan United Movement. He is a native of Kutum, North Darfur, who served as a senior intelligence officer, and a Pan Sahel Counterterrorism unit commander in the Republic of Chad Army. He is a graduate of the US Army Intelligence and Security School and the US Army War College, and co-author of [\*Genocide in Sudan: Caliphate Threatens Africa and the World.\*](#)

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