

AFRICA DIGEST

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Sudan Conflict Intensifies: Army Retakes Khartoum Airport, Files Case Against UAE

The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) achieved a major breakthrough in their ongoing conflict with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) by [reclaiming](#) the strategic Khartoum International Airport. The SAF also regained control of the Presidential Palace and several key installations across the capital, signalling a rapid and coordinated campaign to dismantle the RSF's presence in Khartoum.

According to army officials, RSF fighters have been pushed out of major strongholds, including a key military camp in the southern part of the city. Commanders have confirmed that clearing operations are ongoing and that full control over the capital is within reach. The military's recent momentum has been accompanied by celebratory scenes across Khartoum, where residents have emerged from months of fear and hardship under RSF occupation. Many civilians, previously subject to looting, intimidation, and violence, have expressed relief and a renewed sense of safety.

Despite the advances in Khartoum, the RSF continues to maintain control over most of Darfur region. In particular, the city of Al-Fashir in North Darfur remains a flashpoint. Reports from civil society groups and local witness accounts indicate that a recent airstrike targeted a crowded market near the city, resulting in significant civilian casualties. While some accounts place the death toll in the hundreds, the SAF has denied targeting civilians, claiming instead that it struck legitimate military positions.

The Sudanese conflict has taken on an increasingly international dimension. The SAF has [filed a case](#) at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against the United Arab Emirates, accusing it of violating the Genocide Convention. The filing alleges that the UAE has been supplying the RSF with arms and funding, enabling it to commit atrocities, including ethnic cleansing in parts of Darfur. The UAE has rejected the allegations as baseless and described the move as a political stunt.

As the conflict evolves, Sudan's humanitarian crisis continues to worsen. The United Nations has labelled it the world's worst displacement and hunger emergency, with over [12 million people](#) uprooted and famine conditions reported in several areas. In RSF-controlled regions, humanitarian access remains limited, exacerbating the suffering of already vulnerable populations.

While the SAF's advances in Khartoum have shifted the balance on the ground, the broader conflict remains unresolved. A long-term solution will depend on inclusive dialogue, accountability for atrocities, and a renewed push for civilian-led governance to prevent further fragmentation in Sudan.

South African Diplomat's Expulsion from the U.S. Sparks Diplomatic Repercussions

Former South African Ambassador to the United States, Ebrahim Rasool, received a hero's welcome upon his return to Cape Town following his expulsion from Washington. Crowds of supporters greeted him and his wife Rosieda at the Cape Town International Airport, singing and

celebrating his defiance. Rasool, expelled by the Trump administration and declared [persona non grata](#), described the gesture as an attempt to humiliate him. However, buoyed by public solidarity, he declared that he would wear the label as a symbol of dignity.

Rasool's expulsion stemmed from a webinar in which he critiqued the ideological roots of the "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement. He described it as partly rooted in a "supremacist instinct" and linked it to demographic shifts in the U.S. where the white population is projected to become a minority. The Trump administration swiftly responded by stripping Rasool of diplomatic immunity and ordering him to leave the country.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio publicly accused Rasool of being a "race-baiting politician" and associated his comments with an anti-American stance. The administration's reaction was further compounded by existing tensions over South Africa's support for a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza an action the Trump administration viewed as hostile to U.S. interests and its allies.

Upon his return, Rasool defended his comments, asserting that they were academic in nature and intended to help South Africans understand global political patterns through their own historical lens. He clarified that his remarks were not aimed at individuals but were a broader analysis of political phenomena. Rasool also criticized what he viewed as a coordinated effort by pro-Israel lobby

groups to remove him due to South Africa's independent foreign policy stance, its criticism of Israeli actions in Gaza, and alignment with BRICS nations.

He argued that his ousting was not an isolated response to one speech but indicative of broader discomfort in Washington with Pretoria's increasingly autonomous geopolitical orientation. He highlighted previous U.S. decisions such as halting aid and trade incentives as evidence of mounting friction. Despite this, Rasool affirmed that South Africa is not anti-American, but insists it must act in line with its own values and interests.

Further, Rasool rejected portrayals of South Africa's 'Afrikaner minority' as victims of systemic oppression, calling such narratives misleading. Rasool urged President Cyril Ramaphosa to remain firm in appointing a successor who embodies national dignity and is not beholden to foreign pressure. His return was marked not by defeat, but by a strong show of public support underscoring his stance that South Africa will not be intimidated on the global stage.

General Abdourahmane Tchiani Sworn in as Niger's Transitional President

General Abdourahmane Tchiani, the military leader who seized power in Niger following the [July 2023 coup](#), has officially been sworn in as the transitional President of the Republic of Niger for a period of five years. The ceremony, held in Niamey, marked a significant consolidation of power by the junta leader, who also assumed the country's highest military rank and was bestowed the title of Grandmaster of the National Order of Niger.

This swearing-in comes under a newly promulgated charter that replaces the constitution, [outlining a roadmap](#) for the country's future under military rule. The charter includes provisions for popular referendums on foreign military presence, mechanisms to protect natural resources for the benefit of Nigeriens, and a strong emphasis on national sovereignty. It also calls for the dissolution of all political parties and proposes an agenda of reform focused on security, economic recovery, and anti-corruption.

General Tchiani declared his intention to place national interest above all, pledging reconciliation, justice, and good governance. "Under the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland, there will be no witch hunts or impunity," he stated. The new transitional government seeks to address long-standing grievances among the populace, including the perception that past constitutions favoured foreign influence, particularly by France, the country's former colonial ruler.

However, critics argue that Tchiani's ascension reflects a deepening authoritarian trend within the Sahel region. The promised transition to democracy appears increasingly uncertain. Though the new charter sets a five-year timeline, it describes this period as "flexible," leaving room for further extensions based on security conditions. This ambiguity mirrors similar patterns in Mali and Burkina Faso, where military rulers also seized power with promises of swift democratic transitions that are yet to materialize.

Tchiani's government has prosecuted deposed President Mohamed Bazoum on

charges of high treason and compromising national security. Bazoum remains in detention at the presidential palace, while his son was granted provisional release earlier this year. This legal action, coupled with the dissolution of political parties, raises concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions and the suppression of dissent.

Niger's relations with the regional bloc ECOWAS have deteriorated significantly since the coup. A proposed three-year transition plan was initially rejected by ECOWAS, which [threatened military intervention](#) but eventually relented. Niger, alongside Mali and Burkina Faso, has withdrawn from ECOWAS and joined the Confederation of Sahel States, signalling a strategic shift away from West African integration and toward closer ties with Russia.

Though General Tchiani's rhetoric invokes themes of sovereignty and reform, Niger continues to face mounting insecurity. Terrorist attacks have intensified, especially after the withdrawal of French and Western counter-terror forces. The junta's rejection of foreign military presence may serve nationalist narratives, but it has arguably left Niger more vulnerable. As Tchiani embarks on his unelected presidency, the question remains whether his promises of national renewal will translate into tangible progress or whether Niger will follow the familiar trajectory of entrenched military rule cloaked in transitional rhetoric.

Somalia's Strategic Offer to the U.S. Sparks Rift with Somaliland

In a move with significant geopolitical implications, Somalia has reportedly

[extended an offer](#) to the United States, granting exclusive operational control over several strategic airbases and ports along the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. This offer includes access to the airbase in Balidogle and the ports of Berbera and Bosaso. The aim is to deepen U.S. engagement in the Horn of Africa amid increasing regional tensions and global competition.

The proposed arrangement is viewed as an attempt by Somalia to cement Mogadishu's importance to Washington's Red Sea strategy, particularly in light of U.S. efforts to counter Iranian influence and Houthi activity in Yemen. It also serves to pre-empt growing international interest in Somaliland - a breakaway region of Somalia - that claims Berbera as part of its territory and seeks formal international recognition as an independent state.

However, the inclusion of Berbera, a vital port located in Somaliland, has triggered a political standoff. Somaliland's government swiftly rejected Mogadishu's overture, accusing Somalia of acting out of desperation. Abdirahman Dahir Aden, Somaliland's foreign minister, [criticized](#) the Somali federal government as "corrupt" and asserted that the United States knows it must deal directly with Somaliland, which he described as peaceful, democratic, and stable.

Somaliland, though lacking formal international recognition, has functioned as a de facto state for over three decades. It has maintained relative stability compared to the rest of Somalia and has actively lobbied for diplomatic recognition, with recent

support from actors like the United Arab Emirates. The UAE has already invested in Berbera Port, and there have been reports of separate negotiations between Somaliland and the U.S. regarding access and potential recognition in exchange for strategic cooperation.

This dynamic sets the stage for a complex diplomatic impasse. Legally, Somalia remains the only internationally recognized authority, meaning that any binding agreement with a foreign government must pass through Mogadishu. Yet, politically and practically, Somaliland exercises full control over Berbera and other critical infrastructure within its borders. Any U.S. decision to accept Somalia's offer risk undermining Somaliland's aspirations, while recognising Somaliland could further destabilise Somalia and alter the balance of power in the Horn of Africa.

This development reflects a broader geopolitical rivalry playing out in the Red Sea, with the U.S., China, Russia, and regional actors like the UAE and Türkiye vying for influence. The U.S. might see advantage in securing logistical hubs along vital maritime routes to counter Chinese and Russian ambitions, especially with Russia potentially establishing a naval base in Port Sudan. As U.S. policymakers weigh Somalia's offer, the decision could determine not just the future of U.S. presence in the region but also impact ongoing debates about the recognition of unrecognized or semi-autonomous entities. The coming weeks will be critical in shaping how this strategic competition unfolds in one of the world's most contested maritime corridors.

Disorder in Tigray: Ethiopia's Elusive Peace

Two years after the [Pretoria Agreement](#) was signed to end Ethiopia's devastating civil war, the Tigray region remains mired in crisis. What was once perceived as a turning point toward peace has instead become a fragile and uncertain interlude. Renewed tensions, internal fragmentation, and a deteriorating humanitarian situation threaten to undo the modest gains achieved since the end of formal hostilities in 2022.

The root of the crisis lie in the unresolved dynamics of the earlier conflict between the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Although the Pretoria Agreement paused large-scale fighting, it did not address the deeper political fractures within Tigray itself. In recent weeks, these divisions have escalated into open confrontation between rival factions of the TPLF. Forces loyal to Debretsion Gebremichael have seized key towns from the federally backed interim administration led by Getachew Reda, raising fears of another civil war in the region.

The political standoff has exposed the limitations of the interim governance arrangement, which was intended to steer Tigray toward elections and stability. With the administration's mandate now expired and its authority challenged, the region faces a political vacuum. While negotiations between federal authorities and Tigrayan leaders are reportedly underway, the [situation remains volatile](#). The prospect of a compromise exist but remains uncertain, particularly given the complex web of regional loyalties, historical grievances, and competing

interests within Tigray's political landscape.

Compounding this political instability is a worsening humanitarian crisis. Large parts of Tigray remain devastated from the previous war. Food insecurity has deepened, with pockets of famine already reported. Infrastructure remains broken, with critical services such as healthcare still unable to meet basic needs. Humanitarian aid, once a lifeline, has diminished due to shifting international priorities and funding cuts. The withdrawal of foreign assistance, especially from major donors, has left millions without adequate food, water, or medical support.

The international response has been limited. As global attention focuses on other crises from Ukraine to Gaza, Ethiopia's internal turmoil seems to have faded from the global diplomatic agenda. The withdrawal or suspension of aid reflects not only donor fatigue but also the challenge of navigating a complex conflict where no actor offers easy alignment. Yet the consequences of continued neglect are far-reaching. Ethiopia, home to over 120 million people, occupies a strategic position in the Horn of Africa. Instability in Tigray could reverberate across the region, undermining fragile borders, exacerbating refugee flows, and inviting external interference.

As Tigray once again teeters on the edge, the stakes are not only national but regional and international. Without decisive political compromise and renewed international engagement, Ethiopia risks entering another cycle of violence one with even greater costs for its people and for the regional stability of the Horn of Africa.