**Maat for Peace’ Submission on Human Rights Council Resolution 52/8 on Promoting Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals –**

**a Case Study of Sudan**

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| **Submitted by** | Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights |
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**Introduction:**

On April 3, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 52/8, a significant UN resolution that promotes human rights and sustainable development through transparent, accountable, and efficient public services. This resolution is guided by the principles outlined in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other relevant international human rights instruments.

The importance of this resolution lies in not only urging governments worldwide to fulfill their obligations in providing public services, but also emphasizing the principles of transparency, accountability, and efficiency through the process of providing these services in order to enhance monitoring and evaluation of service performance and achieve desired benefits from these services.

The African continent, with its various crises, faces significant challenges in delivering public services to its citizens. Political and security instability in several countries impedes governments' ability to provide even the most basic services necessary for people's lives. These challenges not only hinder sustainable development but also contribute to human rights violations, preventing citizens from fully enjoying their universal rights.

Among the countries affected by these challenges, Sudan stands out as a prominent example. The outbreak of conflict in Sudan has greatly disrupted the provision of public services, leading to a state of chaos in the local community. As a result, the government's ability to provide essential services has been severely compromised, negatively impacting both human rights and sustainable development in Sudanese society.

**Paralysis of Public Services during Sudanese Crisis:**

After almost five months since the outbreak of the Sudanese War, it has become evident that many public services in Sudan have collapsed. This raises questions regarding the causes behind the weakness or interruption of the service network and its connection to the government's diminishing capacity to fulfill its obligations in promoting human rights and achieving development goals. For instance, the first goal, which focuses on providing clean water and sanitation, the seventh goal, which emphasizes access to affordable and clean energy, and the ninth goal, which aims to build sustainable cities and communities, including robust communication and internet networks that meet public needs.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The conflict in Sudan has had severe repercussions, leaving over 24 million Sudanese, which is more than half of the country's population, in desperate need of aid, including food and various services. Unfortunately, due to the intense fighting and lack of funding, only 2.5 million Sudanese have been able to access assistance. The conflict has not only led to economic collapse but has also caused significant damage to the state's strategic assets and properties. This destruction, coupled with the weakened infrastructure, has particularly affected the health and services sector within the country. As a result, approximately 700,000 public sector employees and workers in Sudan have not received their salaries for the past four months, coinciding with the outbreak of the conflict.[[2]](#footnote-2)

One of the sectors hit hardest by the conflict is the healthcare system in which violations are outlined as below:

1. **Collapse of Health Facilities**

**Numerous health facilities have been forced out of service as the fighting between the conflicting parties persists. This has resulted in a dire situation for residents of Khartoum and other states, with individuals suffering from chronic conditions such as kidney failure and cancer, losing their lives due to the unavailability of essential treatment.[[3]](#footnote-3)**

**Since the conflict began, the World Health Organization has documented more than 55 attacks targeting health facilities in Sudan**. Tragically, these attacks have resulted in the deaths of at least 11 Sudanese healthcare workers.[[4]](#footnote-4) By July 2023, the Sudan Doctors Syndicate reported that 80% of hospitals located near conflict zones were completely non-functional.[[5]](#footnote-5) Additionally, vital vaccination activities for vulnerable groups within Sudanese society have come to a halt. The deterioration of the health system has led to a significant rise in cases of measles, acute watery diarrhea, malaria, and malnutrition.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Furthermore, in October, the Sudanese military authorities prevented the transfer of surgical resources, including those needed for caesarean sections, from Wad Madani to southern Khartoum for over a month. This obstruction has had a profound impact on the health sector, forcing organizations such as Doctors Without Borders to suspend life-saving operations at hospitals like Al-Bashaer Teaching Hospital in South Khartoum.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Reports confirm that several hospitals in Khartoum, including Jaafar Ibn Auf, Ibn Sina Specialist, Bashayer, and Mawada hospitals, have been damaged. The police hospital was also evacuated following its seizure by the Rapid Support Forces. By the end of the first month of the conflict, the Sudanese Minister of Health revealed that 125 hospitals had been affected by the clashes. The water and electricity systems have suffered damage as well, making it impossible to provide medical services in Khartoum and its surrounding areas, as noted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The conflict in Sudan has resulted in a profound collapse of the country's health system, constituting a serious violation of human rights, particularly the right to social insurance and healthcare. The Sudanese government's ability to provide healthcare resources to all citizens has significantly diminished, leading to near-complete paralysis in achieving Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aims to ensure good health and well-being for society. This reveals the detrimental impact of the Sudanese conflict on Sudan's progress towards the 2030 Agenda for development goals.

1. **Poor Infrastructure:**

Another critical aspect affected by the conflict is the infrastructure in Sudan, which has suffered extensive destruction throughout the ongoing fighting. The start of the rainy season has further exacerbated the situation, as rainwater and winds have swept away waste and the remains of bodies, contaminating drinking water networks. This has resulted in the widespread prevalence of dangerous diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis. Since the outbreak of war in mid-April, road networks and sewage systems have been extensively damaged, while maintenance and repair operations for essential services have ceased. As a consequence, 70% of activities and services within the country have been suspended or obstructed, leading to the displacement of thousands of citizens from the capital, Khartoum, to other areas.[[9]](#footnote-9)

For over 100 days, waste transportation services within and outside residential neighborhoods have come to a halt. Additionally, decomposing bodies have been left on public roads in central Khartoum for an extended period before some were finally buried, posing a high risk of epidemic spread.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The contamination of drinking water, the absence of proper sewage drainage, and the presence of decomposing bodies in the streets of Khartoum have become significant factors contributing to epidemic outbreaks.

By October, 70% of healthcare facilities in conflict areas of Sudan had been closed, coinciding with a significant increase in cholera and dengue infections. Approximately 700 cases of cholera and 3,000 to 5,000 cases of dengue fever, mostly affecting children, were recorded in the Red Sea State, with an additional 1,000 infections reported in Port Sudan. The same fever has also spread in North Kordofan State.[[11]](#footnote-11) Furthermore, in displacement camps in the White Nile State, approximately 1,200 children have tragically died due to potential infections such as measles and malnutrition.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The Ministry of Health has attributed the spread of diseases in the local community to the disruption of sanitation facilities and the inability to provide clean water, which raises the rates of infection transmission.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The profound weakness of Sudan's infrastructure, which has been a catalyst for conflict within the country, has significantly impeded Sudan's development trajectory. The state's inability to effectively manage infrastructure facilities and make them accessible to the general public has hindered the achievement of the 6th development goal, which focuses on providing clean water and sanitation to communities. The deteriorating state of infrastructure facilities in Sudan has resulted in widespread violations of economic, social, and cultural human rights.

1. **Disruption of Communications and Internet Services:**

The communications sector and internet networks in Sudan experienced a rapid deterioration less than two days after the onset of the Sudanese conflict on April 14. The electricity crisis and the disruption of the power distribution system triggered a crisis in communications and internet networks within the country. In May, the Sudanese company "MTN" announced that the electricity crisis and logistical challenges caused by the conflict in Sudan had led to the complete cessation of all communications services provided to the Sudanese public. Additionally, the organization "NetBlocks," which monitors global internet traffic, reported that the company's services were also affected due to the energy supply shortage in the country.[[14]](#footnote-14)

A similar crisis unfolded with the Sudanese Canar Telecommunications Company. A power outage resulted in service fluctuations at one of the company's main data centers, which is considered one of the largest and most important centers and the second major telecommunications service provider in Sudan. The electricity crisis led to the suspension of fourth-generation internet services and restricted access to the network data center.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Sudanese citizens also faced challenges in activating internet services available through the "USSD" channel, a communication protocol. This crisis coincided with interference in telephone lines, raising concerns about potential privacy violations. Furthermore, allegations were circulating that the Rapid Support Forces possessed the "Predator" spyware.[[16]](#footnote-16)

By April 2023, the Rapid Support Forces had occupied the Telephone House, the oldest building dedicated to communication operations in Sudan. The building also housed a data center belonging to the government company "Sudatel." This occupation disrupted communication and internet services provided by the company throughout Sudan.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The crisis of disrupted communications and internet access for Sudanese citizens at home represents one of the most significant and dangerous challenges faced by the population. The efforts of both conflict parties to control communications networks and the internet to suppress the release and circulation of information, both locally and globally, constitute a clear violation of freedom of opinion and expression. These violations, along with the long-term consequences, hinder countries' progress in achieving Goal 9, which focuses on building sustainable cities and communities with adequate infrastructure, including robust communications and internet networks, to meet the needs of the public.

1. **Power Outage:**

Since the outbreak of the war in Sudan, numerous areas have experienced complete power outages, while others have suffered from intermittent outages lasting for days. This has significantly exacerbated the suffering of Sudanese citizens, particularly those who are sick. Despite Sudan facing a 1,000-megawatt deficit for years, this deficit has escalated to 3,000 megawatts per hour since the war broke out.[[18]](#footnote-18)

With the onset of the conflict, three water stations in the capital city of Khartoum ceased operation: Bahri stations in northern Khartoum, Bayt al-Mal in Omdurman, and Al-Muqrin and Burri in Khartoum. This was due to the occupation of these stations by the Rapid Support Forces, who prevented the engineers and technicians from supporting their restart process. Currently, only two stations are operational, providing limited backup generator power for a few hours during the day before experiencing power outages.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The outbreak of war in Sudan coincided with a severe crisis in the energy sector, leading to a significant increase in the electricity deficit gap and frequent power outages in homes and hospitals. This has forced many citizens to flee conflict-affected cities, representing a major violation of the economic and social rights of the Sudanese people. Moreover, it hampers Sudan's ability to achieve one of the crucial Millennium Development Goals, namely Goal 7, which focuses on providing clean energy at affordable prices.

**Recommendations:**

In light of the widespread human rights violations resulting from the conflict and its negative impact on sustainable development goals, Maat recommends that the Sudanese government recommit to Human Rights Council Resolution 52/8, which promotes human rights and sustainable development goals through the provision of public services.

* To address the clear violations of UN resolutions witnessed in Sudan and the resulting human rights abuses, Maat suggests that the Sudanese government adhere to the principles of transparency, accountability, and efficiency in providing public services to its citizens.
* Given the obstruction of sustainable development caused by the internal conflict in Sudan, Maat urges both parties to swiftly collaborate and reach a common ground to halt the conflict.
* To address the service sector crises affecting efficiency in Sudan, Maat recommends launching a national project that establishes monitoring and accountability committees within Sudanese service ministries. These committees would be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the efficiency of service provision throughout the country.
* In response to the service crisis in Sudan, Maat suggests that the Human Rights Council collaborate with the Sudanese government to provide logistical and organizational support. This support aims to enhance the government's capacity to restore the efficiency of the public services system.
* To address the departure of various services from the scope of provision, Maat recommends that the Sudanese government implement responsive plans for citizen complaints. These plans should enable citizens to report service shortages, interruptions, or temporary unavailability. This would facilitate the prompt delivery of technical or logistical support to citizens who file reports.

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3. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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15. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
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19. Severe water and power supply problems in Sudan due to fighting, Dabanga, <https://bitly.ws/Y2M6> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)