



CIVILIAN PARTICIPATION IN A SUDAN CEASEFIRE: SUSTAINING AN INCLUSIVE TRUCE

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Executive Summary

The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support forces (RSF) that erupted in April 2023 has led to the death and injury of thousands of Sudanese civilians in the months since. Civilians are harmed by the conflict in fundamental aspects of their lives, including loss of life, home, property and dignity; yet, to date, civilians have been sidelined in ceasefire talks while the talks have focused on armed actors. In May 2023, the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) released a Rapid Response Analysis that outlined principles to follow to help ensure effective civilian participation in a ceasefire in Sudan. As one such principle, the Rapid Response Analysis called for civilian participation in ceasefire mechanisms to be widely inclusive of various civilian stakeholders. This new Rapid Response Analysis goes into further depth on the topic of civilian inclusivity, a key to lasting peace in Sudan, by examining how civilian participation may be promoted for an inclusive ceasefire.

After an introduction to the benefits and scope of civilian involvement in ceasefires, this Rapid Response Analysis first lays out five key principles for promoting civilian inclusivity in ceasefires. Based on international best practices, these principles are: (1) sensitize ceasefire parties early to the concept of and need for inclusion of civilians; (2) promote transparency; (3) actively liaise with civil society organizations as a medium for civilian involvement; (4) tailor modes of civilian involvement to align with different stages in the ceasefire process; and (5) take into account the needs and capabilities of different types of stakeholders.

Second, this Rapid Response Analysis reviews several past ceasefires outside Sudan that demonstrated varying levels of success in promoting inclusivity. The 2014 ceasefire in South Sudan, despite some language in the agreement intended to protect civilians and pay heed to civilian interests, remained largely unsuccessful regarding civilian inclusion. The 2015 ceasefire in Myanmar showed the potential for active civilian engagement in monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire. The 2002 ceasefire in the Philippines involved civilian participation more broadly throughout the peacebuilding process.

Third, this Analysis addresses how the recent Agreement on a Short-Term Ceasefire and Humanitarian Arrangements, reached between SAF and RSF, lends itself to opportunities for Sudanese civilian involvement in a ceasefire. While it was negotiated without civilian involvement, the agreement implicates a number of implementation concerns that call for civilian involvement, including protection of

civilian needs, upkeep of civilian facilities, and third-party monitoring of ceasefire violations.

Lastly, drawing on the five key principles mentioned above, this Analysis addresses potential options for promoting inclusivity in the context of a Sudanese ceasefire, including those most historically vulnerable and marginalized like women and youths. This Rapid Response Analysis concludes that following the tragically large number of failed ceasefires in the current conflict, one of those options for promoting inclusivity stands out as particularly urgent to help breakthrough to an inclusive and transformative peace process: sensitize conflict parties early to the concept of inclusivity and persuade them to hear diverse civilian voices in the ceasefire process.

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Statement of Purpose

This Rapid Response Analysis examines how civilian participation may be promoted for an inclusive ceasefire in Sudan.

Introduction

After providing background on the benefit and scope of civilian involvement in ceasefires, this Rapid Response Analysis addresses:

- five key principles for promoting civilian inclusivity in ceasefires,
- several past ceasefires outside Sudan, which demonstrated varying levels of success in promoting inclusivity,
- opportunities for Sudanese civilian involvement in a recent ceasefire agreement between SAF and RSF, and
- options to promote inclusivity in order to seize those opportunities.

This Rapid Response Analysis concludes by addressing the current context of failed ceasefires and prioritizing the sensitization of conflict parties early to the concept of inclusivity and persuading them to hear diverse civilian voices in the ceasefire process.

Background: Benefits & Scope of Civilian Involvement in Ceasefires

Based on past practices in various countries, the traditional view on ceasefires is that they are controlled by military forces and armed groups, with limited space reserved for unarmed civilians to participate.¹ But ceasefires are often the first step in a peace process, and sidelining civilian stakeholders from ceasefires increases the risk of undermining civilian interests and excluding valuable civilian input from subsequent peace processes.² The lack of civilian involvement may result in one-sided institutions that further impede civilian participation in the long term, and cause instability in the implementation of

¹ *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (Sept. 2022).

² Michelle Barsa, Olivia Hold-Ivry, Allison Muehlenbeck, *Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender, and a Sustainable End to Violence*, *Inclusive Security*, 3 (Mar. 2017), available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Inclusive-Ceasefires-ISA-paper-Final-3.10.2016.pdf>.

ceasefires due to a weak support basis in the broader population. It is imperative that ceasefires, throughout their various stages of negotiation and monitoring, are shaped on the basis of civilian involvement.

Civilian inclusion also strengthens the durability of peace agreements and prevents the recurrence of violence.³ Instead of an exclusionary, elite-driven process, stakeholders may partake in the benefits of a long-lasting, holistic peace that produces gender- and age-sensitive outcomes.⁴ Integrating diverse perspectives helps address the root cause of the conflict, generates a sense of ownership in the local population, and strengthens the legitimacy of the process, contributing to the stability of the peace process in the long run.⁵

Promoting inclusivity in a ceasefire can take many forms, depending on the different stages of the peace process and the different types of stakeholders that are involved. In general, ceasefire processes revolve around the three stages of (1) ceasefire negotiation, (2) establishment of a ceasefire architecture, and (3) ceasefire implementation.⁶ Each stage entails distinct needs that give rise to corresponding civilian roles. For example, at the implementation stage, civilians may take an active role in monitoring and reporting on whether ceasefire terms are being implemented.⁷ The scope of civilian involvement can also vary according to the type of the stakeholders involved, such as for women and youth stakeholders, whose experience and capabilities give rise to specific and valuable forms of engagement.

An inclusive ceasefire may not involve all stakeholders directly in the ceasefire process, and may provide alternative opportunities for structured interactions between conflict parties and other stakeholders.⁸ In facilitating such interactions, actors may employ both formal and informal channels for engagement.⁹ Formal measures that enhance civilian engagement include monitoring bodies that are required to consult with civil society, third party independent monitoring, inclusive commissions that include civil society representatives, and national or international monitoring missions that allow

³ *Operationalizing a Five-Year Strategic Action Plan for Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes*, UN Youth, Peace & Security 4 (Jan. 2022).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (Sept. 2022).

⁶ *Inclusive Ceasefires and Peace Processes*, Nonviolent Peaceforce 3 (2021).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (Sept. 2022).

⁹ *Inclusive Ceasefires and Peace Processes*, Nonviolent Peaceforce 4 (2021).

civilian participation.¹⁰ Informal measures include outreach and campaigning efforts, trainings and information sessions for marginalized groups, and local-level committees.¹¹

Key Principles of Inclusivity in Ceasefire Agreements and Monitoring Mechanisms

Sensitize parties early to the concept of and need for inclusion

Despite inclusion being an increasingly relevant topic in peace processes, ceasefires across the globe have been slow in opening up to the interests of diverse stakeholders.¹² It has proven difficult to convince conflict parties of the need for civilian inclusion, which is especially concerning because ceasefires are often the first step in a peace process and set the parameters for subsequent processes.¹³ If civilian voices are not included from the outset in a ceasefire, the foundations of the peace process may already be in place and difficult to alter by the time civilian voices are included, even if these foundations do not align with the needs of civilian stakeholders.¹⁴ Conversely, inclusion in the context of preliminary ceasefire negotiations can set the stage for civilian involvement in the peacemaking efforts that follow.

Sensitizing parties to inclusion early also secures the time required to design sophisticated mechanisms for participation. Incorporating the principle of inclusion in a ceasefire negotiation takes time and requires political sensitivity.¹⁵ Ideally, parties should be sensitized to inclusion before any formal ceasefire mediation efforts begin in order to allow sufficient time for parties to accept and promote civilian inclusion in formal ceasefire discussions.¹⁶

Promote transparency

In negotiating and implementing ceasefires, parties can foster local support and enable civilian groups to monitor ceasefire violations by promoting

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Michelle Barsa, Olivia Hold-Ivry, Allison Muehlenbeck, *Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender, and a Sustainable End to Violence*, Inclusive Security 3 (Mar. 2017); *Inclusive Ceasefires and Peace Processes*, Nonviolent Peaceforce 3 (2021).

¹³ *Inclusive Ceasefires and Peace Processes*, Nonviolent Peaceforce 3 (2021).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs 31 (Sept. 2022).

¹⁶ *Id.*

transparency in the ceasefire process.¹⁷ Transparency establishes trust, and opening up information on complaints, investigations, and monitoring to civilians can help enforce ceasefire compliance through public reporting and reputational pressure.¹⁸ Conflict parties may engage with a credible third party as well to serve as an additional guarantee for transparency and as a deterrent against ceasefire violations.¹⁹ In helping civilians access and understand the ceasefire text and related information, clarity is crucial. A ceasefire imposes multiple obligations and responsibilities for the parties involved, so the text describing them should be readily accessible and clearly drafted to prevent misunderstandings and hostilities.²⁰

Civilian stakeholders also benefit from promoting transparency and clarity in their interactions with others. Civil society organizations interact with both the conflict parties and the broader civilian audience that forms the support basis of their campaigns. Such organizations can benefit from presenting a clear message that is short, realistic, and believable. Laying out the evidence and real-life narratives that build up to their message bolsters the legitimacy of their mission in the eye of their audience.²¹

Actively liaise with civil society organizations as a medium for civilian involvement

Civil society organizations act as an effective medium between civilian interests and the ceasefire process. CSOs can serve a variety of functions across advocacy, civilian protection, education, and monitoring and implementation of ceasefire terms. Throughout the transition to peace, civil society organizations can collect and provide documentation on harmful activities, building the basis for civilian voices, and protect civilians through sheltering individuals, patrolling neighborhoods, and engaging in other activities that empower civilians to participate in the peace process.²² civil society organizations may engage in negotiations to represent underrepresented groups' interests and educate the public on the ceasefire process.²³

¹⁷ *Rapid Response Analysis: Civilian Participation in Sudan Ceasefire Negotiations*, PILPG 9 (2023).

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs 56 (Sept. 2022).

²⁰ *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs 62, 63 (Sept. 2022).

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.* at 1, 2.

²³ *Id.* at 2.

Once a ceasefire agreement is in place, civil society organizations play a salient role in monitoring and implementing the ceasefire terms.²⁴ Tapping into local civilian pools, civil society organizations can help report violations of the ceasefire terms and protect civilians from the continuing influence of the conflict.²⁵ In addition, civil society organizations may partake in transitional justice mechanisms such as prosecutions, reparations, and reconciliation. They may play a complementary role to the government where the government lacks functioning institutions.²⁶

Tailor modes of civilian involvement to align with different stages in the ceasefire process

As previously described, a ceasefire process generally involves three stages: ceasefire negotiations, establishment of a ceasefire architecture, and ceasefire implementation.²⁷ Each stage comes with distinct characteristics that open it up to certain modes of civilian engagement. While the ceasefire is being negotiated and core provisions are being established, inclusion in the form of advocacy for civilian interests is critically important. If civilian stakeholders succeed in incorporating their voices into the ceasefire agreement, their influence may carry over to subsequent peace processes that come after the ceasefire.

Once the ceasefire terms are in place, monitoring and reporting rises to the forefront as a platform for inclusion. Civilian stakeholders hold many advantages in their role as monitors. Conflict-affected communities often offer a wealth of willing actors with local expertise, and can draw upon prior experience and existing networks. In some cases they are able to approach ceasefire implementation from a neutral, third-party perspective.²⁸ Based on the specific context, civil society actors are flexible in offering a diverse set of monitoring functions, including investigations, incident prevention, civilian protection, and de-escalation.²⁹

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs 56 (Sept. 2022).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Inclusive Ceasefires and Peace Processes*, Nonviolent Peaceforce 3 (2021).

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs 56 (Sept. 2022).

Take into account the needs and capabilities of different types of civilian stakeholders

Civil society is composed of a multifaceted group of stakeholders, each with distinct needs and abilities. A ceasefire process should be mindful of the specific needs and capabilities of each stakeholder group in promoting inclusion.

Women and youth are examples of stakeholder groups that are vulnerable to, and can contribute to, ceasefires in specific ways. Women have often been excluded from ceasefire processes because ceasefires were viewed as controlled by armed factions who possess military knowledge.³⁰ But women are able to raise different priorities during peace negotiations due to their societal roles in local communities, and their involvement helps introduce gendered language in the text of ceasefire agreements and improve attention to gender-based violence and civilian protection.³¹

Youths are also rarely able to participate as key actors in ceasefires, but play an inherently important role in the establishment and maintenance of peace.³² Despite their exclusion from key roles, young people make up the majority of soldiers in military groups and are disproportionately affected by violence.³³ Elevating them as co-leaders of ceasefires helps address their specific challenges and expand the peace efforts to an intergenerational scope.³⁴

Inclusivity in Past Peace Processes: South Sudan, Myanmar, and the Philippines

South Sudan – 2014 Cessation of Hostilities

The 2014 Cessation of Hostilities in South Sudan was one of the more recent peace efforts in the region that incorporated devices for inclusion in the ceasefire terms and monitoring mechanisms. Following the civil war that broke out in late 2013, the government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) reached an agreement for cessation

³⁰ *Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender, and a Sustainable End to Violence*, Inclusive Security 3 (Mar. 2017), available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Inclusive-Ceasefires-ISA-paper-Final-3.10.2016.pdf>.

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Operationalizing a Five-Year Strategic Action Plan for Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes*, UN Youth, Peace & Security 7 (Jan. 2022).

³³ *Id.* at 8.

³⁴ *Id.*

of hostilities in early 2014. They also set up a Monitoring and Verifying Mechanism (MVM) with the help of international stakeholders including the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organization encompassing South Sudan and surrounding countries, and MVM later became the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism after a 2018 accord superseded the earlier agreement.³⁵

The peacebuilding attempts following the 2014 conflict have been largely unsuccessful in protecting civilian interests and making their voices heard. The parties drafted some language on the protection of civilians, such as where the 2014 agreement provides that the parties “shall not engage in any acts of violence ... [and] they shall support the reunion of families.”³⁶ The agreement also provides an opportunity for civilian engagement in ceasefire monitoring by providing that the monitoring and verifications teams at local levels shall “identify the local committees from traditional and religious leaders, women and youth representatives.”³⁷

But the textual provisions had a limited effect on the reality of civilian protection and involvement. The vague language of the agreement meant that, while the parties were required to form the MVM team, for more than half a year it was staffed entirely by military men.³⁸ The composition of the MVM team meant that they focused on monitoring the military actions described in the earlier parts of the agreement, and paid less attention to the provisions on civilian protection and humanitarian access.³⁹ There was also an inherent limitation to how well the military-heavy monitoring team could engage with civilians; in some instances rape victims would refuse to respond to male observers interviewing them.⁴⁰ As conflict re-erupted across the region, IGAD, the driver behind the ceasefire agreement, failed to respond to flagrant violations of the agreement and took no substantial action in support of its monitors.⁴¹ The lack of enforcement

³⁵ *Ceasefire Monitoring in South Sudan 2014-2019: A Very Ugly Mission*, United States Institute of Peace 3 (2019).

³⁶ *Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (In Opposition) (SPLM/A in Opposition)*, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Section 3.3 (2014).

³⁷ *Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (In Opposition) (SPLM/A in Opposition)*, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Section 6.3(c) (2014).

³⁸ Michelle Barsa, Olivia Hold-Ivry, Allison Muehlenbeck, *Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender, and a Sustainable End to Violence*, Inclusive Security 18 (Mar. 2017), available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Inclusive-Ceasefires-ISA-paper-Final-3.10.2016.pdf>.

³⁹ *Id.* at 20.

⁴⁰ *Ceasefire Monitoring in South Sudan 2014-2019: A Very Ugly Mission*, United States Institute of Peace 18 (2019).

⁴¹ *Id.* at 10.

exacerbated the situation and further weakened civilian involvement in the ceasefire.

Myanmar – 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

Myanmar has withstood one of the most longstanding and intricate ethnic conflicts in the modern world. The country has not succeeded in forging a national identity, which includes 135 different ethnic minorities (representing approximately a third of the country's population) that have often been marginalized and clashed in ethno-nationalist armed conflicts.⁴² In 2015, in an effort to achieve a negotiated settlement, the government of Myanmar and several non-state ethnic armed organizations signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).⁴³

Although after a military coup in February 2021 the conflict in Myanmar has intensified, civilian groups played a significant role in the NCA. The NCA included several provisions designed for the protection of civilians. Further, civilian groups had been invited by the parties to the NCA to co-monitor the agreement.⁴⁴

As part of these civilian ceasefire monitoring initiatives, civilian groups in Myanmar participated actively on matters that are better suited for civilian (rather than military) groups, such as engaging with communities about their security needs and concerns. The civilian ceasefire monitoring initiatives in Myanmar have proved successful in several key aspects, such as facilitating humanitarian assistance to communities, being a link between civilian groups and ceasefire parties, and improving the overall reporting and quality of the information on the implementation of the ceasefire and addressing security threads, factors which helped mitigate violence against civilians.⁴⁵

⁴² *The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in Myanmar: Promoting Ethnic Peace or Strengthening State Control*, Transnational Institute (April 20, 2023); *Identity Crisis: Ethnicity and Conflict in Myanmar*, Reliefweb (Aug. 27, 2020).

⁴³ Michelle Barsa, Olivia Hold-Ivry, Allison Muehlenbeck, *Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender, and a Sustainable End to Violence*, Inclusive Security 5 (Mar. 2017), available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Inclusive-Ceasefires-ISA-paper-Final-3.10.2016.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Michelle Barsa, Olivia Hold-Ivry, Allison Muehlenbeck, *Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender, and a Sustainable End to Violence*, Inclusive Security (Mar. 2017), available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Inclusive-Ceasefires-ISA-paper-Final-3.10.2016.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Michelle Barsa, Olivia Hold-Ivry, Allison Muehlenbeck, *Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender, and a Sustainable End to Violence*, Inclusive Security 16 (Mar. 2017) available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Inclusive-Ceasefires-ISA-paper-Final-3.10.2016.pdf>.

Philippines – 2002 The Bantay Ceasefire

The conflict in Mindanao was one of the largest running conflicts in the world, having started with resistance by local populations against American and Spanish colonization.⁴⁶ After bouts of conflict in 2000, in which the Philippine government began engaging in all-out war against Muslim rebels (MNLF and MILF), local peace groups in Mindanao began intervening with conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives.⁴⁷ Groups in the area formed the Mindanao Peoples Caucus (MPC), eventually forming an independent civilian-led community-based ceasefire monitoring mechanism called Bantay Ceasefire in 2002.⁴⁸ The group's reports were shared with the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the government, MILF, the Ceasefire Committee, and the Office of the President, becoming an alternative source of information for communities, civil society and media about incidents of ceasefire violation and their impact on civilian populations.⁴⁹

The Bantay Ceasefire's effectiveness led to stakeholders being invited to be part of an interim ceasefire structure comprised of members of the government, Muslim rebels from MNLF/MILF, and Bantay Ceasefire volunteers.⁵⁰ When war erupted again in 2008, the warring parties agreed to add a Civilian Protection Component that would monitor compliance by both parties, composed of international and local organizations including the MPC.⁵¹ The success can be attributed to a number of mechanisms. First, volunteers worked to establish connections with armed actors, allowing soldiers to better humanize the threats that conflict poses and allow volunteers a better understanding of the military structure and how to interact with and even challenge military decisions if necessary.⁵² Second, by constantly being present on the ground, volunteers are able to learn about and react to a situation quickly, as well as communicate that information to relevant parties when necessary.⁵³ Lastly, the establishment of Community Early Warning Early Response allows local people to get in touch with volunteers to warn them of planned attacks.⁵⁴ Based on strong personal relationships volunteers

⁴⁶ Rachel Julian, Ronnie Delsy, and Rexall Kaalim, *USIP Special Report: Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring*, Leeds Beckett University 3 (2022), available at <https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/8905/1/UsipSpecialReportCivilianCeasefireMonitoringPV-JULIAN.pdf>.

⁴⁷ *Id.* at 2.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 5.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.* at 6.

⁵² *Id.* at 8.

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 9.

develop with soldiers, this allows volunteers to support soldiers in complying with the ceasefire agreement and prevent attacks from happening.⁵⁵

Potential for Inclusivity in Sudan Ceasefire Agreement

An Agreement on a Short-Term Ceasefire and Humanitarian Arrangements (the “Ceasefire Agreement”) was signed on May 20, 2023, by SAF and RSF without the participation of Sudanese civilians in its negotiation. However, the Ceasefire Agreement implicates a number of concerns that can only reasonably be achieved if there is civilian involvement in the establishment of the architecture for its implementation as well as the implementation itself. Broadly speaking, there are three categories for which inclusivity can be read in the Ceasefire Agreement: protection of civilian needs, upkeep of civilian facilities, and third-party monitoring of ceasefire violations.

On the protection of civilian needs, the Ceasefire Agreement makes clear that a core purpose of the agreement is to facilitate the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance. Civilian groups focused on humanitarian assistance are best capable of providing information on what is needed. This may include for instance, the most effective paths and routes needed to access civilian populations. Considering that this likely will include paths through military strongholds rife with tension, the early involvement of credible third (non-conflict) parties could ensure that civilians get the assistance they need without potential miscommunication endangering the ceasefire or civilian access to humanitarian assistance.

The Ceasefire Agreement also makes reference to the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, dated May 11, 2023. Like the Ceasefire Agreement, the Jeddah Declaration was signed by SAF and RSF without the participation of Sudanese civilians in its negotiation; however, the consideration of civilians is nonetheless a general principle of the Jeddah Declaration. Satisfying the Jeddah Declaration will require heavy co-involvement by both the military and civilian populations. For instance, under the Jeddah Declaration, a top priority is the safe passage for civilians to leave areas of active hostilities on a voluntary basis. Such safe passage requires credible third (non-conflict) parties to inform the civilians that it is safe to leave, and ideally civilian volunteers as monitors in order to deter violations by military forces. Strong relationships between civilian organizations and military personnel will make it much easier to ensure safe access. The Ceasefire Agreement is explicit

⁵⁵ *Id.*

about this need for safe access for civilians, further establishing the need for inclusivity. Relatedly, ensuring that civilians are made aware of the ceasefire, another prong of the Ceasefire Agreement, is more reasonably achieved through civil society with established networks in local populations.

As it relates to the upkeep of civilian facilities, this requires a massive effort by civilian organizations. For instance, under the Ceasefire Agreement, the parties are to facilitate repairs on essential services and infrastructure, supply non-combat materials, and meet related administrative needs within their areas of control. These activities require immense involvement from civilians and cannot be expected to be successfully executed without civilians already built into the ceasefire architecture. Civilians are best suited to understanding precisely what upkeep is needed, and including them early on the ceasefire negotiations will allow for more concrete understandings of what to expect.

Lastly, the Ceasefire Agreement mentions a number of ceasefire violations and corresponding obligations of conflict parties. Responsibilities range from respecting public facilities to ensuring civilian and humanitarian aircrafts are protected. Considering that many of the violations implicate civilians and essential facilities, civilians are generally very well suited to monitor for ceasefire violations. Civil society organizations often have established networks that provide them with on the ground information quickly, allowing for any potential violation to be addressed quickly. More importantly, civilians have very strong incentive to ensure that the ceasefire is followed through, ensuring that monitoring will be accurate and reliable. The Ceasefire Agreement already sets up a Monitoring and Coordination Committee, which could be modified to explicitly include civilians as part of that committee. Given that a central role of the committee is to maintain regular direct contact with SAF and RSF leadership, inclusivity can be partly understood as requiring civilian participation in the committee to ensure on-the-ground neutral third party elements facilitating that communication – including through the provision of reliable situational updates to all conflict-affected parties.

Inclusivity Options and Considerations for the Sudan Context

This section refers to the five key principles laid out earlier in this Rapid Response Analysis, to address potential options for improving civilian engagement in a ceasefire for the current Sudanese conflict.

Sensitize parties early to the concept of and need for inclusion

To sensitize conflict parties early to the concept of inclusivity and persuade them to hear diverse voices, it is important to come prepared with an understanding of, and the ways to access and approach, those diverse voices in Sudan. Sudan has long had a rich civil society willing to engage in peace efforts, whether it be the Steering Committee of the Sudanese Bar association drafting a proposal for a transitional constitutional document; the Sudanese Doctors' Committees bringing to light victims killed and injured in protests⁵⁶; or, during the current conflict, a local ceasefire in Nyala, Darfur, whose mediation included several prominent individuals from civil society.

When seeking an understanding of the civilian stakeholders to be involved in the peacemaking process including ceasefires, it is important to consider, in addition to more traditional civilian political actors, at least three distinct segments of Sudanese civil society. The first consists of the revolutionary civil society movements and groups such as the neighborhood resistance committees, who were active in producing their own version(s) of an interim constitution.⁵⁷ The second segment includes the formal state-regulated civil society organizations which have a license to operate (assuming such licenses indeed remain relevant during the current conflict, when various central governmental functions have eroded). The final segment includes informal or traditional forms of civil society including traditional administrative systems, tribal leaders and faith-based groups.⁵⁸ An inclusive ceasefire process begins with an understanding of at least these three different segments of civil society and the roles they may best fill, sensitizing the warring parties to the reality that all three segments ought to be part of the process.

Promote transparency and clarity

Civil society groups and organizations within Sudan may be well suited to promoting transparency and information regarding a ceasefire, having both the expertise and local networks needed to do so. Youth movements in Sudan, for instance, have already played a role in organizing online campaigns urging a

⁵⁶ Yousef Bashir, *Has Sudanese Civil Society Achieved Victory?*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Jan. 5, 2023), available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/88731>.

⁵⁷ *SUDAN: The government and the international community must engage more with civil society*, Civicus (Jan. 11, 2022), available at

<https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/5543-sudan-the-government-and-the-international-community-must-engage-more-with-civil-society>.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

ceasefire, capable of using these same networks to provide necessary information on what the ceasefire agreement is providing and being made aware of potential violations.⁵⁹ Civil society actors, with their history of providing humanitarian aid and other necessary resources to civilian populations in the current conflict, may be well positioned to serve as credible third parties, providing legitimacy to the ceasefire and ensuring parties on the ground understand their responsibilities per the ceasefire agreement.

Actively liaise with civil society organizations, groups and individuals as a medium for civilian involvement

Within Sudan, even prior to the current conflict, Sudanese stakeholders showed growing awareness of the need for civilian involvement in ceasefire and related peace processes. In 2006, efforts to bring peace to Darfur culminated in the Darfur Peace Agreement, for which there was a complete absence of civil society in the process.⁶⁰ Armed groups actively rejected civil society due to a belief that “those without guns do not have power.”⁶¹ Yet as the Darfur Peace Agreement failed, commentators pointed to the lack of civil society with many understanding the alternatives civil society could offer to fragmented rebels.⁶²

Steps were taken in the right direction in November 2009 in Doha, Qatar, where 170 civil society delegates took part and acknowledged that the failure of previous peace was the result of negotiations confined between different warring parties.⁶³ While this process had limited success in incorporating civilians into the peace process, the engagement of Darfuri civil society was perceived as “the inclusion of the silent majority of the population in Darfur,” with members representing various political, ethnic, and tribal lines.⁶⁴ However, the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement process, which included the negotiation of a ceasefire, was a step backwards in terms of civilian inclusivity, since the Juba process had no participation from civil society organizations or groups besides the civilian political representatives of the agreement’s signatory parties.

⁵⁹ *Amid Sudan’s Chaos, Youth Groups Work for Peace*, United States Institute of Peace (May 2, 2023), available at <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/05/amid-sudans-chaos-youth-groups-work-peace>.

⁶⁰ Munzoul A. M. Assal, *Sudan Working Paper, Civil Society and Peace Building in Sudan: A critical look*, Chr. Michelsen Institute 11 (2016), available at <https://www.cmi.no/publications/5807-civil-society-and-peace-building-in-sudan>

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Id.* at 12.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 13.

Similar to what was envisioned yet not achieved in Doha, ensuring that inclusive civilian representation – but from all of Sudan – now plays a concrete and substantial role in a peace process including ceasefire will allow more civilian interests to be taken into account. In addition to civilian political actors, various civil society organizations, groups and individuals can bring their expertise to a ceasefire and prevent repeated errors of the past that have watched various negotiations collapse. Prior to the current conflict, civilian actors such as the Sudan Organization for Research and Development already had expertise in the peace-building process, with mechanisms built in place to function as a watchdog.⁶⁵ Since the outbreak of the current conflict, other civilian actors have exhibited such capacity. For instance, religious leaders from Nyala, South Darfur tapped into their wealth of experience in dealing with crises to help mediate a successful local ceasefire. Tapping into pre-existing networks of civilian organizations and prominent civilian leaders may help ensure that a nation-wide or even more localized ceasefire does not need to reinvent the wheel to engage in monitoring, reporting incidents of ceasefire agreement violations, or other aspects of the ceasefire.

Tailor modes of civilian involvement to align with different stages in the ceasefire process

Civilian stakeholders vary in how best they can contribute to the three stages of a ceasefire. Resistance committees, for example, have proven themselves capable of drafting charters that govern their activities, including citizen expectations for the military and security. This capacity of resistance committees showcases a wealth of knowledge when it comes to negotiations and what civilians may be looking for in terms of protection.⁶⁶ Ensuring that such groups are part of early ceasefire negotiations may provide the momentum to ensure they are included in both the implementation of the ceasefire and potentially the peace process moving forward.

Local and regional groups already have the expertise to monitor various violations, a useful tool when establishing the ceasefire architecture and implementing it. For instance, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan has worked with Sudanese human rights and civil society

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 18.

⁶⁶ Susan Stigant, *USIP, Sudan: Engage Civilians Now, Not Later*, United States Institute of Peace (May 18, 2023), available at <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/05/sudan-engage-civilians-now-not-later#:~:text=By%20the%20latest%20estimates%2C%20700%2C000,spilling%20over%20into%20the%20region.>

organizations to document violations and abuses by parties to the conflict.⁶⁷ The groups have worked together on various capacity building activities that could pose useful for a ceasefire, including remote monitoring.⁶⁸

Take into account the needs and capabilities of different types of civilian stakeholders

As previously discussed, women and youth are examples of stakeholders uniquely vulnerable to conflict but have historically been excluded from ceasefire processes. In the Sudanese conflict in particular, the exclusion of such groups has been a point of concern by officials at the U.N.⁶⁹ Groups like the Sudanese Women Rights Action can provide unique guidance in the early stages of ceasefire negotiations on the specific challenges and threats women face during hostilities.⁷⁰ Youth groups have proven themselves capable of developing various websites and applications to satisfy urgent needs during the conflict, skills that could prove instrumental to ensuring the success of a ceasefire.⁷¹

Context for Negotiations

As of the beginning of August 2023, SAF and RSF were consistently violating their own declaration to protect civilians and further violated multiple ceasefires that reaffirmed that declaration.⁷² Humanitarian consequences to civilians have been horrific. The declaration and ceasefires were negotiated in the Jeddah talks without civilian participation. This Rapid Response Analysis covers several options to promote inclusivity in a ceasefire to breakthrough to a civilian-inclusive and meaningful peace process. Negotiating parties (and other stakeholders in ceasefire negotiations) could liaise with civil society actors, tailor

⁶⁷ *UNITAMS Continues its Engagement with Sudanese Civil Society and Human Rights Organization*, UNITAMS (Jun. 8, 2023), available at <https://unitams.unmissions.org/en/unitams-continues-its-engagement-sudanese-civil-society-and-human-rights-organizations>.

⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ *As Desperate Sudanese Flee Their Embattled Nation, Security Council Urges Warring Parties to Respect Ceasefire, Reboot Negotiations, Immediately End Fighting*, United Nations (Apr. 25, 2023), available at <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15265.doc.htm>.

⁷⁰ International Service for Human Rights, Sudan: Calls at the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council (Jun. 19 - Jul. 14, 2023) for immediate ceasefire, access for humanitarian aid and accountability.

⁷¹ *Amid Sudan's Chaos, Youth Groups Work for Peace*, United States Institute of Peace (May 2, 2023), available at <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/05/amid-sudans-chaos-youth-groups-work-peace>.

⁷² *Impact of 100 days of Fighting across Civilian Areas in Khartoum State - 15 april - 26 july, 2023: report 007*, Sudan Conflict Observatory (Jul. 28, 2023).

modes of civilian involvement to align with different stages in the ceasefire process, and take into account the needs and capabilities of different types of civilian stakeholders. However, in this urgent context of successive failed ceasefires, one means for promoting inclusivity stands out and precedes all others: sensitize conflict parties early to the concept of inclusivity and persuade them to hear diverse civilian voices in the ceasefire process.