

Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF)

Origins/composition

On 13 November 2011, following lengthy negotiations, four Darfurian rebel groups—the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudan Liberation Army factions of Minni Minawi (SLA-MM) and Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW)—joined together in an alliance with the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) to form the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF).

The SRF has the potential to put an end to the fragmentation of rebel groups by uniting them under Abdul Aziz al Hilu. It also challenges the GoS’s strategy of isolation by introducing a national agenda, including regime change. It provides the Darfur groups with access to the Nuba Mountains for rear bases for possible attacks on Khartoum. The alliance also improves Darfurian groups’ links with Juba through the SPLM-N.¹ But for the alliance to be successful, it must overcome the persistent power struggles and philosophical differences between the Darfur factions, as well as the challenges of increased military cooperation.

Leadership

The Leadership Council of the SRF was announced on 20 February 2012. The alliance is dominated at the top tier by the SPLM-N:

- Malik Agar, chairman
- Abdel Aziz al Hilu, commander in chief of the joint military forces
- Yasser Arman, secretary for external affairs

The three Darfur rebel groups share vice-chairman positions with separate portfolios:

- Abdel Wahid al Nur, vice-chairmen of political affairs
- Minni Minnawi, vice-chairman of finance
- Jibril Ibrahim, vice-chairman of external affairs

In addition:

- Buthaina Ibrahim Dinar (SPLM-N), Elryaih Mahmoud (SLM-MM), Ahmed Adam Bakheit (JEM), and Mustafa Sharif Mohamed (SLM-AW) serve in the political affairs office under Abdel Wahid.
- Three members from JEM, SLM-AW, and SLM-MM serve in the finance office under Minni Minawi.
- Yasir Arman (SPLM-N) is secretary for foreign affairs under Jibril Ibrahim.
- Trayo Ahmed Ali (SLA-MM) is secretary for humanitarian affairs.
- Tahir Faki (JEM) is secretary without portfolio.
- Abdul Gassim Imam al Haj, a senior SLA-AW figure, serves as SRF spokesman.

JEM’s general secretary for presidential affairs, Suleiman Sendel, is deputy in charge of operations. The SLA-MM and SLA-AW fill the less important deputy positions of administration and logistics, respectively.



Areas of control/activity

Corresponding to the SPLM-N's dominant role, the SRF's locus of control resides in its bastion in Kaoda and the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan. Military activity is most prevalent in South Kordofan but extends to Blue Nile, and into South Sudan's border states.

The SRF's Darfurian members remain militarily active in Darfur but, reflecting their proximity to Kaoda and the South Sudan border, attacks now occur more often near the South Darfur/South Sudan border.

Darfurian members also participate in SRF attacks outside of Darfur, most notably in the high profile hostilities around the Heglig oil fields from March to April 2012. But in these instances the Darfurians have tried to keep a low profile. Further, SLA-MM and SLA-AW have decided not to participate in military operations outside Darfur.

Status

The SRF has called for regime change by any means, political or military, but has also publicly stated its readiness for peaceful political transformation and dialogue. The GoS is publicly hostile towards negotiations with the SRF, condemning it a proxy of the SPLA/GoSS and thus a matter best dealt with by reaching accord with the GoSS over the outstanding Sudan-South Sudan secession issues.

Negotiations over the formation of the SRF were extended; the greatest and final barrier being JEM's concerns about the SRF's insistence on a secular state. While the alliance is holding, full integration of the constituent members has not yet been achieved. Likely as a result of differences between its members, the SRF's political platform has not yet materialized.

Alliances

The SRF is actively seeking to expand. Some new members come from other Darfur armed movements, others from within the (Northern) Sudan political opposition. On the Darfur front, JEM has incorporated SLA-Justice (now known as the Democratic Sudan Liberation Movement), led by Ali Kerubino, and SLA-Unity, led by Abdallah Yaya, has participated in some of SRF's military operations. Ahmed Abdul Shafie (recently defected from LJM), and Mohamed Bahr Hamedein (a JEM splinter group) have both signaled their interest in joining the alliance. Hamedein's decision will rest on the prospects for a Darfur peace agreement for his movement in Doha. Should progress continue to be elusive, the SRF will grow more appealing, though Hamedein's quarrel with JEM remains an obstacle to his joining.

Alliances with the Sudanese political opposition are occurring piecemeal and with fluid loyalties. On 7 May 2012 in a London meeting with SRF Chairman Malik Agar, Ali al Haj of the PCP, Al Tom Haju of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and Nasr al Din al Hadi, a member of the National Umma Party, joined SRF (the latter two split from their parties, who are currently cooperating with the GoS).

The other major opposition umbrella, the National Consensus Forces, including the National Umma Party (NUP) led by former Prime Minister Al Sadiq al Mahdi, the

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PCP of Hassan al Turabi, and the Sudanese Communist Party, as well as other smaller parties, has not called for military regime change but keeps channels to the SRF open.

On 6 August in Kampala the SLA-MM and Mariam Mahdi, representing a division of the NUP, signed an agreement that outlined shared principles for inclusion in a future constitutional process. The NCP strongly criticized the move and both the SRF and other Umma party groups distanced themselves from the action.

While the SRF has achieved the unification of the Darfur non-signatory groups, putative negotiations on the Two Areas (Blue Nile and South Kordofan) under the auspices of the African Union's High Level Implementation Panel in Addis Ababa only recognize the SPLM-N as interlocutor. Concerns that the SPLM-N will conclude a bilateral agreement excluding the Darfurian groups threaten the SRF's cohesion. The SPLM-N is attempting to strike a balance between calling for a national process for all of Sudan (Darfur included) and adhering to immediate negotiations on humanitarian access, ceasefire, and political resolution of the Two Areas conflict.

8 October 2012

¹ Grammizi, Claudio and Jérôme Tubiana. 2012. *Forgotten Darfur: Old Tactics and New Players*. HSBA Working Paper 28, Geneva: Small Arms Survey. July.