

Sudan evacuations gather pace in fighting lull At least 427 people killed since fighting started on April 15



Europe, China and Japan raced to extract their citizens from Khartoum on Monday and thousands more people took advantage of an apparent lull in fighting between the army and a paramilitary force over the past two days to escape Sudan.

The sudden eruption of violence between the military and the well-armed Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group on April 15 triggered a humanitarian crisis and has killed 427 people, U.N. agencies said. Others have expressed fear for their lives as clashes spread

through residential areas, Reuters reported. Nations including Persian Gulf states and Russia were trying to get citizens out on Monday, and there was a growing exodus to Sudan's neighbours, including 10,000 people who fled to South Sudan despite chronic instability there.

Along with millions of Sudanese without access to basic services, foreign diplomats, aid workers, students and their families found themselves in a war zone last week. Internet connectivity was cut on Monday, website Netblocks reported.

Fighter jets have bombed the capital, the main airport has been at the center of fighting and artillery barrages have made movement unsafe in and out of one of Africa's largest cities. Diplomats have been targeted in attacks, and at least five aid workers killed.

Despite sustained pressure from countries concerned by the conflict's wider repercussions as well as the safety of their nationals, the two sides have not abided by a temporary truce. However, fighting calmed enough over the weekend for the United States to get embassy staff out by military helicopter, triggering a rush of evacuations by other countries.

Families with children crowded into Spanish and French military transport planes, while a group of nuns were among the evacuees on an Italian aircraft, photographs showed. Some of the flights left from the Wadi Seyidna air base north of Khartoum, the army said.

France and Germany on Monday said they had evacuated around 700 people, without giving a breakdown of their nationalities. A German air force plane carrying evacuees landed in Berlin early on Monday. Up to 20,000 people have already fled to Chad, U.N. agencies said last week. Officials in South Sudan's Renk County said on Monday they had received about 10,000 people since the crisis started.

South Sudan won independence from Sudan in 2011, after a decades-long civil war. Since independence the new country has been beset by its own civil war, and refugees had previously spilled into its northern neighbour.

Palestinian killed, three others injured in Israeli raid in occupied West Bank



Israeli forces have killed a young Palestinian man and injured three others during a raid on a refugee camp in the eastern West Bank city of Ariha, amid simmering tensions across the occupied territories.

The governor of Ariha and the Jordan Valley, Jihad Abu al-Asal, told the official Palestinian Wafa news agency that the man, identified as 20-year-old Suleiman Ayesh, was fatally shot in the Aqabat Jaber refugee camp early on Monday, Press TV reported.

He added that Palestinian medical sources confirmed that three people were also injured as Israeli troops fired shots indiscriminately at residents of the camp.

The Israeli military claimed in a statement that it was operating in the area when two suspects were spotted fleeing. Soldiers opened fire and struck at least one of the suspects. Over the past months, Israel has ramped up attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories. As a result of these attacks, dozens of Palestinians have lost their lives and many others have been arrested. Most of the raids have focused on the West Bank cities of Nablus and Jenin, where Israeli forces have been trying to stifle a growing Palestinian resistance against occupation.

Local and international rights groups have condemned Israel's excessive use of force and "shoot-to-kill policy" against Palestinians. Since the start of the holy month of Ramadan, the Israeli regime has also imposed strict restrictions on the entry and exit of Palestinians to and from the gates of al-Aqsa Mosque.

On April 4, heavily armed Israeli forces stormed the al-Aqsa Mosque compound before firing tear gas and stun grenades into the Qibli prayer hall, where hundreds of men, women, elderly people, and children were staying overnight to pray. Some eyewitnesses said rubber-coated steel bullets were also fired.

Israeli forces have wounded and rounded up hundreds of Palestinians during the attacks that have seen a rise since the beginning of the fasting month of Ramadan. Illegal Israeli settlers have, meanwhile, been freely violating the compound under the Israeli military and police force's protection.



This photo provided by Palestinian media shows 20-year-old Suleiman Ayesh who was fatally shot by Israeli forces during a raid on the Aqabat Jaber refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on April 24, 2023.

palinfo.com



Italian citizens are boarded on an Italian Air Force C130 aircraft during their evacuation from Khartoum, Sudan, in this undated photo obtained by Reuters on April 24, 2023.

MINISTERO DELLA DIFESA/
HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

China respects ex-Soviet states as sovereign nations: Foreign Ministry

REUTERS - China respects the status of the independent sovereign nations that emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Monday, after Beijing's envoy to Paris sparked a diplomatic storm by questioning their sovereignty.

Ambassador Lu Shaye said on Friday that former Soviet countries like Ukraine lacked "actual status in international law", prompting foreign ministers from several EU member states to label his comments as totally unacceptable.

Bangladesh swears in new president ahead of election



AFP - Mohammed Shahabuddin, a former judge and a ruling party official, was sworn in as the president of Bangladesh on Monday, just months before a general election. Shahabuddin, 73, was an anti-corruption commissioner and fought in the country's 1971 war of independence against Pakistan, the presidential palace said.

Former Iranian ambassador to Türkiye:

Erdogan is a better option for Iran, region



Ebrahim Beheshti

Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Türkiye's presidential election will be held on May 14. It seems that election competitions are raging between the two main candidates, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the leader of the Republican People's Party Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. The Republican People's Party is a secular party. Iran Daily had a discussion with Firooz Dolatabadi, an Iranian diplomat and former ambassador to Türkiye, on the country's political competition.

What are the most important issues of public opinion in Türkiye that could affect the outcome of the election?

I believe that Türkiye's foreign policy and regional relations, and the

inability of the current government to manage the earthquake crisis are the top issues of the Turkish society, although the economy is also important, but it is not the main issue. After several years, the country has not been able to solve its problems with Syria and Iraq, especially the Kurdistan Region. On his re-election campaign, Erdogan has focused on the economy and is trying to attract votes by promising economic benefits to the people. In contrast, his rival, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, has focused more on criticizing the inefficiency of the government and does not have a clear plan even in the economic field.

Does this mean that Erdogan's rivals do not have constructive plans and are hoping for criticism against the current government's record?

Yes, therefore, neither rival plays to the people's

main concern, which is regional issues and Türkiye's foreign policy. Because Türkiye's foreign policy is still confused. It is difficult to predict the outcome of the election. People may vote for Erdogan again because the change of the presidency will upset the current order of Türkiye despite the criticisms the government has received, and the government of Kılıçdaroğlu will not be able to establish an efficient order. Kılıçdaroğlu does not have a specific foreign policy plan, and the Republican People's Party has been oriented towards the West in the last 40-50 years, and this approach is far from the main issues of Türkiye, which are regional and neighborhood issues. In addition to these behaviors and some positions of Kılıçdaroğlu as a secular politician, it may also be associated with insulting the religious community,

which will have negative effects on his votes.

Which side does Iran prefer to win?

In my opinion, Erdogan's victory is a better option for Iran. Because Tehran has a 20-year experience of cooperation with Erdogan's government, and with the Turkish government approaching reforms, this cooperation can be strengthened. Regional countries, especially the Arab states, are more inclined towards Erdogan. Although Erdogan's ambitious policies have led to problems and disagreements between Arab countries and Türkiye, these countries prefer Erdogan because, like Arab countries, Erdogan is a Sunni Muslim, and it will be more difficult for these countries to work with the secular government of Kılıçdaroğlu. Despite economic cooperation with Türkiye, Iraq and the Kurdistan Region are



Firooz Dolatabadi

worried that Erdogan's policies will cause them problems and, therefore, they may not be happy with Erdogan's victory.

Will Erdogan's defeat be a better option for Western countries?

The West would be pleased with Erdogan's defeat, but the West's current problem in the region is more Iran than Türkiye. The West seeks to solve its problems with Iran, and the West welcomes any of the presidential op-

tions that can help in this direction. Westerners, especially Europeans, do not like Erdogan, but they are worried that Kılıçdaroğlu would not be a significant weight in regional issues. Erdogan has tried to solve problems with his neighbors with a military approach, which is costly. On the other hand, his rival does not have significant experience in politics, in addition to the fact that he has not presented a specific plan for regional issues.

Death toll in Kenyan starvation cult rises to 58



REUTERS - Kenyan police have recovered 58 bodies, mostly from mass graves in a forest in eastern Kenya, thought to be followers of a Christian cult who believed they would go to heaven if they starved themselves, the country's police chief said on Monday.

The death toll, which has repeatedly risen as exhumations have been carried out, could rise further. The Kenyan Red Cross said 112 people have been reported missing to a tracing and counselling desk it has set up at a local hospital.