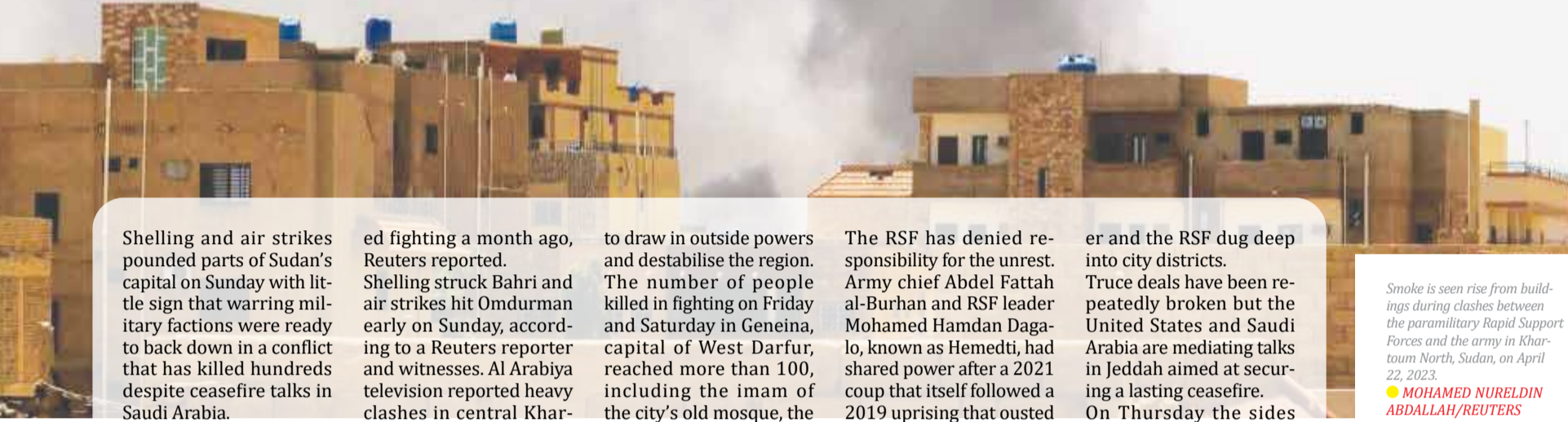


# Khartoum region under bombardment as Sudan's rivals talk



Shelling and air strikes pounded parts of Sudan's capital on Sunday with little sign that warring military factions were ready to back down in a conflict that has killed hundreds despite ceasefire talks in Saudi Arabia.

Khartoum and the adjoining cities of Bahri and Omdurman across the Nile's two branches have been the main theatre of conflict along with western Darfur province since the army and Rapid Support Forces paramilitary start-

ed fighting a month ago, Reuters reported. Shelling struck Bahri and air strikes hit Omdurman early on Sunday, according to a Reuters reporter and witnesses. Al Arabiya television reported heavy clashes in central Khartoum.

The fighting has killed hundreds of people, sent 200,000 into neighbouring countries as refugees, displaced another 700,000 inside Sudan triggering a humanitarian catastrophe and threatens

to draw in outside powers and destabilise the region. The number of people killed in fighting on Friday and Saturday in Geneina, capital of West Darfur, reached more than 100, including the imam of the city's old mosque, the Darfur Bar Association said in a statement.

The local rights group blamed the killings, looting and arson in Geneina, where hundreds died in violence last month, on attacks by armed groups on motorbikes and the RSF.

The RSF has denied responsibility for the unrest. Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Daga, known as Hemedti, had shared power after a 2021 coup that itself followed a 2019 uprising that ousted veteran Islamist autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

But they fell out over the terms and timing of a planned transition to civilian rule and neither man has shown he is ready for concessions, with the army controlling air power

and the RSF dug deep into city districts.

Truce deals have been repeatedly broken but the United States and Saudi Arabia are mediating talks in Jeddah aimed at securing a lasting ceasefire. On Thursday the sides agreed a "declaration of principles" to protect civilians and secure humanitarian access, but with Sunday's discussions due to address monitoring and enforcement mechanisms for that deal, the fighting has not let up.

Smoke is seen rise from buildings during clashes between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the army in Khartoum North, Sudan, on April 22, 2023.  
● MOHAMED NURELDIN ABDALLAH/REUTERS

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Russia says two of its commanders killed



REUTERS - Russia's Defence Ministry said on Sunday that two of its military commanders were killed in eastern Ukraine, as Kyiv's forces renewed efforts to break through Russian defences in the embattled city of Bakhmut.

In a daily briefing, the ministry said that Commander Vyacheslav Makarov of the 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade and Deputy Commander Yevgeny Brovko from a separate unit were killed trying to repel Ukrainian attacks.

### 33 civilians killed in Burkina Faso



AFP - At least 33 people were killed when gunmen opened fire on vegetable farmers in a terrorist-hit region of Burkina Faso, the governor said Saturday, as the country struggles to stem an insurgency. A state of emergency has been in force in eight of Burkina Faso's 13 regions since March, including in western Boucle du Mouhoun.

## Serbia: 13,500 weapons collected in amnesty



Serbian authorities on Sunday displayed many of around 13,500 weapons they say people have been handed over since this month's mass shootings, including hand grenades, automatic weapons, and anti-tank rocket launchers.

The authorities have declared a one-month amnesty period for citizens to hand over unregistered weapons or face prison sentences as part of a crackdown on guns following the two mass shootings that left 17 people dead, many of them children, AP reported. President Aleksandar Vucic accompanied top police officials on Sunday for the weapons' display near the town of Smederevo, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of the capital, Belgrade.

Vucic said the approximately half of the weapons collected were illegal while the other half were registered weapons that citizens nonetheless handed over. He added the weapons will go to Serbia's arms and ammu-

nications factories for potential use by the armed forces.

"After June 8, the state will respond with repressive measures and punishments will be very strict," he said of the post-amnesty period. "What does anyone need an automatic weapon for? Or all these guns?" Serbia is estimated to be among the top countries in Europe in guns per capita. Many are left over from the wars of the 1990s and held illegally. Other anti-gun measures are to include stricter controls of gun owners and shooting ranges. Authorities launched the gun crackdown after a 13-year-old boy on May 3 took his father's gun and opened fire on his fellow-students in an elementary school in central Belgrade. A day later, a 20-year-old used an automatic weapon to shoot randomly in a rural area south of Belgrade. The two-mass shooting left 17 people dead and 21 wounded, stunning the nation and triggering calls



In this photo provided by the Serbian Presidential Press Service, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, left, inspects weapons collected as part of an amnesty near the city of Smederevo, Serbia, Sunday, May 14, 2023.  
● Serbian Presidential Press Service via AP

for changes in the country that has been through decades of turmoil and crises.

Tens of thousands of people have rallied in two protest marches in Belgrade since the shootings, demanding resignations of government ministers and a ban on television stations that promote violent content and host war criminals and crime figures.

Vucic on Sunday rejected opposition calls for the resignation of Interior Minister Bratislav Gasic, who was also present at Sunday's weapons display. But the president suggested that the government might resign and that he will announce an early election at a rally he has planned for May 26 in Belgrade.

## Mali denounces UN report on army killings

Mali's military junta on Saturday denounced as fictitious and biased a United Nations report that said the army and foreign fighters executed at least 500 people during a 2022 anti-terrorist operation. Denouncing revelations that the U.N. had used satellites to gather information for its report, the authorities also announced an investigation into what it called espionage, AP reported.

The statement came a day after the U.N. released its long-awaited report into

the events that unfolded in the central town of Moura between March 27-31, 2022.

"No civilian from Moura lost their life during the military operation," said a statement read out on state television by government spokesperson colonel Abdoulaye Maiga. "Among the dead, there were only terrorist fighters."

Condemning what it called a "biased report based on a fictitious narrative," the government also expressed surprise that the U.N. investigators had used

satellites above Moura to gather information, without government clearance. It was launching an investigation into espionage, attack on the external security of the state and "military conspiracy," it added. The figures cited by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights amount to the worst atrocity the Sahel country has experienced since a jihadi insurgency flared in 2012.

It is also the most damning document yet against Mali's armed forces and their foreign allies.

## Gaza cease-fire takes ...

While the calm appeared to bring a sense of relief to Gaza's 2 million people and hundreds of thousands of Israelis who had been largely confined to bomb shelters in recent days, the agreement did nothing to address the underlying issues that have fueled numerous rounds of fighting between Israel and Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip over the years.

In Gaza, residents surveyed the latest damage caused to their surroundings. Gaza's main cargo crossing with the occupied territories reopened Sunday after warnings that keeping it closed would force Gaza's sole power plant to shut down, deepening a power crisis. A spokesman for the interior ministry in Gaza said

on the final day of its campaign the Israeli military had concentrated on "targeting civilians, residential and civilian buildings". The latest round of Gaza fighting was sparked Tuesday when Israeli jets killed three top commanders from the Islamic Jihad group. Those killings set off a barrage of fire and the conflagration.

It was the latest in a long series of battles between Israel and Palestinian fighters in Gaza since Hamas seized control of the seaside territory in 2007. Israel and Hamas have fought four wars, and there have been numerous smaller flareups as well. The Gaza violence came after more than a year of fighting in the occupied West Bank, where the Israeli military has been staging near-nightly ar-

rest raids and Palestinians have carried out repeated attacks.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Secretary General Ziad Nakhleh has thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for standing by the Palestinians in their recent victory over the regime, according to IRNA.

He hailed the special role played by Iran, as well as the support provided by Egypt, Qatar, and Lebanon's Hezbollah in the victory of the Palestinians over the Israeli regime. The Islamic Jihad chief said the resistance in Gaza is ready to counter any aggression. He added that Israelis were trying to silence the voice of the Palestinians, then they tried to make the Palestinians feel humiliated, but they failed to defeat the people.

## German rail union cancels strike



AP - A labor union representing more than 200,000 railway workers in Germany said Saturday that it was cancelling plans for a two-day strike after employers met one of its key demands. The EVG union had said earlier this week that its members would walk out for 50 hours from late Sunday until late Tuesday. Rail company Deutsche Bahn said this would have affected all long-distance travel during that period and warned that most regional trains also wouldn't run.