



## Africa Political Monitor No. 26

July 5, 2023 **Jordan Savage, Alex Miller**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Africa; East Africa; West Africa

### CHAD'S WIDENING REFUGEE CRISIS

Since the start of Sudan's military strife earlier this year, over 100,000 people have fled the country, with "new waves of arrivals still ongoing." Neighboring Chad is taking in the highest number of refugees, an influx that it is estimated will hit around 200,000 by the end of summer. The UNHCR continues to provide aid to the refugees and is building new camps to bolster badly-needed infrastructure to accommodate them in Chad, but funding is scarce. Sudan's conflict, meanwhile, has exacerbated Chad's own internal situation, as the country had already taken in refugees fleeing violence in the CAR, Niger, and Cameroon over the past year. That state of affairs, in turn, has worsened the country's state of food insecurity, as the number of mouths the Chadian government must feed continues to grow. (*UN News*, June 1, 2023)

### LONG-DELAYED MALI REFERENDUM PAVES THE WAY FOR ELECTIONS

After many delays, Mali's ruling *junta* finally allowed a constitutional referendum to take place last month to restore the country to civilian rule. The vote was initially scheduled to take place in July 2017, but the military government in Bamako has long refused to transfer power to civilians and pave the way for a peaceful transition. The referendum that has at long last been authorized centers on the *junta*'s revised version of the Constitution, which grants additional powers to the president, include sole authority "to appoint and dismiss the prime minister... and dissolve the National Assembly." These revisions have sparked concerns among pro-democracy groups, who worry that it provides too much power to the country's executive. However, the African Union sees Mali's just-concluded referendum as a positive move for the country – one that will help it to restore order and aid the fight against regional *jihadi*sm. In the wake of the poll, the next step is for Mali to hold national elections in February 2024. (Reuters, June 18, 2023)

### FOOD AID WITHHELD IN ETHIOPIA... AGAIN

Following the U.S. suspension of food aid to Ethiopia, the World Food Programme (WFP) announced it would do the same because of "diversion" concerns. Both the U.S. and UN plan to resume food aid once they have confidence that this assistance will be received by its intended recipients. The Ethiopian government, for its part, has pledged to investigate previous hijackings of food supplies and reform its process for food distribution as a way of quelling international worries. The issue is an urgent one, because according to the UN, about twenty million Ethiopians depend on international food aid in the war-torn nation. (*Africa News*, June 9, 2023)

### SUDAN SHUTS THE DOOR TO THE UN

Sudan has ousted UN envoy Volker Perthes, expelling him from the country in a move that complicates efforts to broker an end to the ongoing civil strife there. Perthes had been attempting to negotiate a peace deal between the army and civilian authorities since the 2021 coup. Recently, however, the military faction headed by Sudan's army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, demanded that the UN replace Perthes, because it perceived him to be taking sides in the discussions. Following Perthes' removal, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia negotiated a 24-hour cease-fire in the country to avoid further escalation. However, Perthes' departure effectively removes any international influence over the course of events in Khartoum – at least temporarily – and complicates humanitarian efforts to deliver aid to the nation. (*Bloomberg*, June 9, 2023)

### AN UPGRADED AMERICAN PRESENCE IN MAURITIUS

The U.S. State Department has announced plans for a \$300 million U.S. embassy campus in Mauritius. The new presence highlights the importance of the bilateral U.S.-Mauritius relationship, and amplifies the scope of ties between Washington and Port Louis. The U.S. has maintained longstanding cooperation with Mauritius on counterterrorism and piracy efforts, maritime security, the environment, and more. However, officials say, this new engagement opens "a new chapter" for other potential types of cooperation as well. (*LeMatinal*, May 31, 2023)

## **INCHING TOWARD ELECTORAL REFORM IN LIBYA**

Last month, the Libyan government sent a delegation to Morocco to work on reforming its electoral process, but has since announced a delay in signing the final agreement into law. According to the Head of the delegation, Omar Bulifa, the envisioned reform gives "all parties the opportunity to participate in the electoral process" and allows women to participate in government for the first time. Once signed, the new framework will represent an important milestone in Libya's journey toward election integrity – and toward internal stability after more than a decade of conflict. (*The Libya Observer*, June 7, 2023)