



Sudan in crisis: imperialism, class struggle, and the fight for popular sovereignty

“We will not allow the testimonies of the victims to be buried in statements that merely express sympathy without follow-up. Blood cries out for justice, demanding real protection and accountability.”

Sudanese Communist Party



Pius Vilakati

The above statement by the Sudanese Communist Party on the massacres by Rapid

Support Forces in Bara and El Fasher late last year concisely captures the feelings of the Sudanese people on the ongoing tragedies that have fallen on the Sudanese people over the years. The victims of the wars in Sudan have overwhelmingly been the working class and poor, with women being the most impacted.

We have a role to play as the Communist Party of Swaziland – and indeed the entire working-class revolutionaries in Swaziland and beyond – to stand in solidarity with the people of Sudan. It is not merely statements that are needed but also practical work to bring about justice and peace in Sudan.

Why focus on Sudan?

In general, we focus on Sudan for the following reasons:

- To win, the working-class struggle must in essence be international, though it may take the form of national struggles, as working classes of each country must face the oppressors in their respective countries.
- In the age of imperialism, it is virtually impossible to fight and win against an oppressive regime without international solidarity. This is because the oppressor is often supported by imperialist forces.



But specifically:

- The Sudanese people have for decades known nothing else but war.
- The Sudanese people’s yearning for justice spans decades.
- The entire African continent – and indeed other territories beyond the continent – has been impacted by the long-term instability in Sudan.
- Uncountable atrocities have been committed in Sudan over many decades. The people still call for justice.
- The most affected in the wars and all forms of atrocities have been the poor, who remain helpless against various armed forces.
- Genocide and crimes against humanity are not only for local concern: they are international crimes and must attract the urgent attention of progressive forces across the world.
- The imperialist forces who sponsor and benefit from the Sudan instability can only be defeated by practical international solidarity programmes in support of the most impacted people so as to usher in democracy in Sudan.

We must remember, as the Sudanese Communist Party stated, that the Sudanese war “is, at the same time, a regional/international/imperialist scheme



A Darfur child refugee cries for her mother near her tent in the Oure Cassoni camp, in north-eastern Chad in August 2004. Getty Images

aimed at weakening the Sudanese state and creating conditions for disintegration and division to deplete the capabilities of the people, the wealth of the country, and violate national sovereignty.”

There is therefore a duty upon the people of the world to be concerned by the war and do everything possible to stop the war and the massacres and thereafter get justice for the victims by placing practical legal accountability measures for alleged perpetrators.

Violence in that country is characterised by systematic violence against unarmed civilians involving field executions, arbitrary arrests, looting and destruction of property, mass displacement, and forcing residents to flee.

Historical Background

Darfur genocide, aka “Sudan genocide”

The Darfur genocide began around 2003 in the Darfur region of western Sudan, wherein rebel groups accused the Sudanese government of neglect and discrimination against non-Arab communities. In response, the Sudanese government and allied Janjaweed militias launched brutal attacks on civilians. Villages were destroyed, and there were widespread killings, rape, torture, and forced displacement. The groups most affected included the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa peoples.

The genocide led to hundreds of thousands of people killed and millions displaced, while many fled to refugee camps in Chad and other areas.

International response

The violence was widely condemned internationally, but with very little action, if any. The atrocities were categorised as genocide. Consequently, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for senior Sudanese officials, including former President Omar al-Bashir, on charges including genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Notwithstanding this important step, justice for the people remains elusive, however.

Earlier mass atrocities in Sudan

Before Darfur, Sudan experienced long periods of civil war, especially between the north and south. Some of the periods of violence include the First Sudanese Civil War which lasted from 1955 to 1972 and the Second Sudanese Civil War which lasted from 1983 to 2005.

These conflicts involved mass killings, famine, displacement, and slavery-like abuses, often described as crimes against humanity or ethnic and religious persecution.

Recent violence

Fall of Omar al-Bashir

In April 2019, President Omar al-Bashir was removed from power after months of mass protests, as the people protested against high food prices, fuel shortages, corruption, and dictatorship. He had ruled Sudan for about 30 years.

Military and civilian power struggle

While the people had done major ground work towards the removal of al-Bashir, his removal was followed by a military takeover. Protesters wanted a civilian-led democratic government, not continued military rule. A compromise was reached when a transitional government was later formed to share power between civilian leaders and the military. This compromise was an unstable one, however, as military leaders obviously preferred total control in their hands.

Consequently, in June 2019, security forces violently broke up a protest camp in Khartoum. Many civilians were killed, injured, or arrested. The military still held major power, with the unarmed civilians left powerless in a country which had known nothing but war for decades.

2021 military coup

The volatility in governance could only lead to another war. In October 2021, the military carried out a coup and removed the civilian leaders from the transitional government, thus ending much of Sudan's democratic transition. The coup was followed by more protests, instability, and international criticism.

War in 2023

In April 2023, fighting broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti). The conflict began because of tensions over:

- control of the state
- military reform
- how the RSF would be integrated into the national army

After Sudan's political instability and renewed war began in 2023, there have been new reports of ethnic massacres and atrocities, especially again in Darfur. Some observers and rights groups have warned of genocidal patterns, though the situation could be worse than official reports.

Effects of the crisis

Since 2019, Sudan has moved from popular protests and hope for democracy to military rule, political instability, and civil war. The crisis has caused major suffering and continues to affect millions of people. Thousands of people have been killed while millions have been displaced inside Sudan and into neighbouring countries. Sudan has also suffered extreme shortages of food, water, medicine, and electricity. Hospitals, schools, and homes have been destroyed, along with reports of ethnic killings, especially in Darfur. Sudan today faces one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Since the 2023 military destabilisation, estimates of deaths range up to well over 150,000. The numbers could be higher, as there are likely unrecorded and indirect deaths from hunger, disease, and collapse of health care.

Urgent need for solidarity with the people of Sudan

In light of the atrocities, the Communist Party of Swaziland supports the calls for:



A displaced woman rests in Tawila, in a country's war-torn western Darfur region, on October 28, 2025, after fleeing El-Fasher following the city's fall to the Rapid Support Forces. Getty Images

- Immediate ceasefire, the declaration of a humanitarian truce, and a complete opening of humanitarian corridors to El Fasher and other areas of Darfur, Bara, and all of North and South Kordofan, ensuring the protection of aid convoys.
- Urgent, independent, and transparent international investigation into war crimes and holding accountable all who committed, ordered, or contributed to these crimes.
- Urgent action from the peoples of the world, its democratic forces, and human rights organisations to pressure states and international bodies to halt any support or political or military complicity with the parties responsible for the violations.

The people of Sudan, including the vanguard party, the Sudanese Communist Party, the forces of mass mobilisation and democratic forces, continue to work towards uniting their ranks in order to escalate peaceful mass struggle and develop political initiatives aimed at stopping the war and seizing power from the oppressive forces.

Their collective objective is a return to the path of the revolution to build a civil democratic state that safeguards human rights and achieves social justice.

Cde Pius Vilakati is the CPS International Secretary. This article is a truncated presentation on Sudan delivered on 19 May.

Dedicated to our hero

Comrade Njabulo "Njefire" Dlamini



Akita Masami

On May 23, 2019, the heart of Comrade Njabulo "Njefire" Dlamini, then International Organiser of the Communist Party of Swaziland, stopped beating forever. He was only 33 years old.

The medical diagnosis was liver failure and fungal pneumonia. The doctors speculated that it might be due to "drug abuse." Everyone who knew him was aware that Njefire never used drugs.

The poison was forcibly injected into his body by the police inside the king's prison.

I. Before the Fire

"Njefire" was his nickname, meaning "Fire."

Before becoming "Fire," Njabulo Dlamini was born in Swaziland, a land ruled by a reactionary absolute monarchy. Growing up, he witnessed a king who used the tinkhundla system to oppress the people, who engaged in dealings with imperialists, white supremacists, and the Taiwan authorities, and who abandoned his own citizens to fend for themselves under the shadow of AIDS.

We also know the choice he made. He did not choose silence. Instead, he joined the Communist Party of Swaziland (CPS), becoming its International Organiser and a member of the General Council of his union, the Swaziland National Association of Teachers.

In Swaziland, either of these identities alone was

Comrade Njefire representing the Communist Party at the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Greece in 2018.

enough to warrant a death sentence. He possessed both.

II. The first and last contact

In 2018, Comrade Njefire was assigned by the Party to attend the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Greece.

At that meeting, speaking on behalf of the CPS, he allowed left-wing parties from around the world to hear, for the first time, the revolutionary voice from this small Southern African nation.

Returning from Greece, Comrade Njefire was filled with elation. He said, "The CPS has gained international attention."

For a party long suppressed, isolated, and struggling underground, being seen by the world meant an added glimmer of hope for survival.

However, Njefire did not know that this first international appearance would also be the last of his life.

III. An absurd charge, a fatal night

On January 11, 2019, Comrade Njefire and CPS Central Committee member Mxolisi Ngcamphalala were walking to a teachers' union meeting. The meeting was in preparation for the nationwide civil servants' strike scheduled for January 28.



Comrade Njefire's sister, Vuyisile Dlamini, speaking about the life of his late brother, including the loss they have suffered as a family, during his memorial service in Johannesburg, Cosatu House, 30 May 2019.



SNAT President Comrade Mbongwa Dlamini presenting a message at the Annual Njabulo "Njefire" Dlamini Memorial Lecture, held at the SNAT Centre in Manzini on 23 May 2023.

They were simply walking, unarmed.

Suddenly, two traffic police officers stopped them, accusing them of "jaywalking." As they tried to reason, approximately 15 plainclothes police officers rushed in, assaulted them, and dragged them into a police van.

Comrade Mxolisi later recalled: "We were singled out from a group of workers. In truth, there was no 'jaywalking.' The real reason for the arrest was that we were CPS members, union leaders, on our way to organise the nationwide strike on 28 January."

Njefire was locked in a cell with another inmate accused of robbery. The police, under the pretext of "interrogating that inmate," constantly entered and exited the cell.

What transpired throughout that entire night remains without any official account.

But after his release, Njefire's health began to collapse. He started experiencing chest pains and breathing difficulties. Medical examinations revealed severe liver damage and fungal pneumonia.

He never used drugs. The cause of death stated by the doctors: poisoning.

Union activists later publicly testified: the king's

police forcibly injected drugs into Njefire in prison, destroying his liver and lungs.

This was murder.

IV. May 23rd

At 5:15 PM on 23 May 1991, in Mbabane, Comrade Njefire Dlamini stopped breathing in the hospital.

From his arrest on 11 January to his death on 23 May, during those 134 days, he was beaten in prison, injected with drugs, and then released to die.

His official charge was "jaywalking." His true "crime" was daring to establish a communist party in a country that forbids political parties, daring to organise unions and strikes under the king's rule, daring to let the world know at the 2018 international meeting that in Swaziland, there are people fighting to overthrow the monarchy.

The royal regime believed that by killing one Njefire, they could silence the CPS and deter those wishing to join the struggle.

They were wrong.

V. The Fire does not die

After Njefire's sacrifice, his position was assumed



And then, there is reverence. I revere him for knowing the path ahead led to death yet still allowing the world to hear Swaziland's voice from the international podium in 2018. I revere his comrades who, after his fall, took up his unfinished cause and marched onward.

Today, as we commemorate Comrade Njefire Dlamini, we are not commemorating a distant, abstract name. He was injected with drugs by the king's police. His liver and lungs were deliberately destroyed. He struggled for three weeks on a hospital bed, finally departing at age 33 the motherland and people he fought for.

Times of Swaziland, 30 August 2019. CPS Deputy General Secretary Mxolisi Ngcamphalala attended their jaywalking case in court, but now alone.

by Comrade Pius Vilakati.

In 2021, a nationwide uprising erupted in Swaziland. The king dispatched police and mercenaries to brutally suppress it. Pius Vilakati, in his capacity as CPS International Organiser, gave an exclusive interview to Chinese media, clearly expressing the CPS's support for the One-China Principle.

In 2026, millions of Chinese readers learned for the first time that in Africa's last absolute monarchy, a communist party is fighting and sacrificing.

Comrade Njefire's profile picture on Facebook during his lifetime was a photograph of blazing fire.

Our South African comrade stated in a 2022 memorial speech:

"Whenever I feel we are losing the battle, I go and look at that picture. After seeing it, the fire in my heart is rekindled. The best way to remember Comrade Njefire is to act immediately. Democracy, now! Not someday in the future, but now."

I am awed that a 33-year-old could face such a protracted struggle with such composure. I am even more appalled that the king's regime could stoop so low as to murder a communist with a poisoned needle in prison.

Reactionaries can slaughter communists, but they can never extinguish the fire ignited by communists.

Njefire fell. Countless comrades rose.

His banner still flies.

One day, the people of Swaziland will win the final victory in this struggle. On that day, all 1.2 million Swazi people will remember Njefire – that young man who was poisoned in the king's prison but never betrayed the people.

He was a blaze of fire. He ignited us all.

Comrade Fire, you are among us!

Comrade Fire, until final victory!

Even though he's no more, his revolutionary work will continue to speak for itself! Hated bitterly by the Mswati regime, adored by the throngs of workers in Swaziland!

A great inspiration! He served the working class diligently, with merit!

Comrade Njefire!

The people shall be free!

Cde Akita Masami is communist born in Japan, living in Shanghai, China.