



GATORMUN XXIII

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023 Background Guide

Aidan Kerwin

Table of Contents

Letter from the Director.....	2
Rules of Procedure.....	3
Introduction to Committee.....	7
Committee Background.....	8
Topic A: The “Coups Belt” of West Africa.....	9
Case Study: Mali.....	9
Case Study: Niger.....	10
Questions to Consider.....	11
Topic B: The Civil War in Sudan & Darfur.....	12
Background.....	12
Case Study: Darfur.....	12
Questions to Consider.....	14
Positions.....	14
Works Cited.....	15

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Letter from the Director:

Dear Delegates

Welcome to the African Union: Crisis of Democracy, 2023. My name is Aidan Kerwin, and I am so excited to be your director. A little about me: I grew up in I am a senior History major in my second year on the UF MUN team. I have traveled to several conferences and am a member of the secretariat for our college conference, SunMUN.

This committee, the African Union, will be a dynamic and unique experience that combines General Assembly and Crisis mechanics. In recent years, one of the AU's most pressing challenges has been the resurgence of military coups in what is increasingly referred to as the "coup belt" of Africa. Topic A will task delegates with coming up to solutions to restore democracy and the rule of law in these countries. One of the countries that makes up this "coup" belt, Sudan, has been devastated by one of the worst civil wars in world history. Topic B will ask delegates. As someone who tries to keep on top of current events, I became interested in these topics due to their complexities and relative lack of coverage in American news. These situations are ongoing and have no "right answer". As delegates, you will have the chance to make decisions that mirror the real decisions diplomats make. Both crises demand innovative policy solutions, and you will take the role of AU leaders in confronting them.

As you prepare, remember that as an international body, the AU must balance many key considerations. While the AU does have the power to intervene militarily, this may be opposed by members due to the violation of state sovereignty it poses. I encourage delegates to blend creative solutions with pragmatic ones, and to not forget the specific policies your nation may want to pursue.

This committee combines GA and crisis elements. Delegates will first draft and debate resolutions, ending with an author's panel and a vote. After voting, the committee will shift to crisis-style directive cycles. Crisis updates will reflect both passed resolutions and directives, so delegates should aim for realistic, impactful solutions. There are no position papers required. Delegates will be judged based on their ability to work together to create creative and workable solutions. Delegates will also be judged based on their leadership, strength of speeches, and constructive debate.

I am so excited for this committee to begin, and I can't wait to see the solutions you come up with. If you have any questions at all, feel free to reach out to the Gatormun secretariat with this committee name as the subject, and I will respond as soon as possible!

See you soon,
Aidan Kerwin

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Rules of Procedure

Quorum

A majority of voting members answering to the roll at each session shall constitute a quorum for that session. This means that half plus one of all voting members are present. Quorum will be assumed consistent unless questioned through a Point of Order. Delegates may request to be noted as "Present" or "Present and Voting."

Motion to Suspend the Rules for the Purpose of a Moderated Caucus

This motion must include three specifications

- Length of the Caucus
- Speaking Time
- Reason for the Caucus

During a moderated caucus, delegates will be called on to speak by the Committee Director. Delegates will raise their placards to be recognized. Delegates must maintain the same degree of decorum throughout a Moderated Caucus as in formal debate. This motion requires a simple majority to pass.

Motion to Suspend the Rules for the Purpose of an Unmoderated Caucus

This motion must include the length of the Caucus. During an unmoderated caucus, delegates may get up from their seats and talk amongst themselves. This motion requires a simple majority to pass. The length of an unmoderated caucus in a Crisis committee should not exceed fifteen minutes.

Motion to Suspend the Meeting

This motion is in order if there is a scheduled break in debate to be observed. (ie. Lunch!) This motion requires a simple majority vote. The Committee Director may refuse to entertain this motion at their discretion.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

This motion is in order at the end of the last committee session. It signifies the closing of the committee until next year's conference.

Points of Order

Points of Order will only be recognized for the following items:

- To recognize errors in voting, tabulation, or procedure
- To question relevance of debate to the current Topic
- To question a quorum.

A Point of Order may interrupt a speaker if necessary and it is to be used sparingly.

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Points of Inquiry

When there is no discussion on the floor, a delegate may direct a question to the Committee Director. Any question directed to another delegate may only be asked immediately after the delegate has finished speaking on a substantive matter. A delegate that declines to respond to a question after a formal speech forfeits any further questioning time.

Points of Personal Privilege

Points of personal privilege are used to request information or clarification and conduct all other business of the body except Motions or Points specifically mentioned in the Rules of Procedure. Please note: The Director may refuse to recognize Points of Order, Points of Inquiry or Points of Personal Privilege if the Committee Director believes the decorum and restraint inherent in the exercise has been violated, or if the point is deemed dilatory in nature.

Rights of Reply

At the Committee Director's discretion, any member nation or observer may be granted a Right of Reply to answer serious insults directed at the dignity of the delegate present. The Director has the ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY to accept or reject Rights of Reply, and the decision IS NOT SUBJECT TO APPEAL. Delegates who feel they are being treated unfairly may take their complaint to any member of the Secretariat.

Directives

Directives act as a replacement for Draft Resolutions when in Crisis committees, and are the actions that the body decides to take as a whole. Directives are not required to contain operative or preambulatory clauses. A directive should contain:

- The name(s) of the author(s)
- A title
- A number of signatories/sponsors signatures' necessary to
- introduce, determined by the Director

A simple majority vote is required to introduce a directive, and multiple directives may be introduced at once. Press releases produced on behalf of the body must also be voted on as Directives.

Friendly Amendments

Friendly Amendments are any changes to a formally introduced Directive that all Sponsors agree to in writing. The Committee Director must approve the Friendly Amendment and confirm each Sponsor's agreement both verbally and in writing.

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Unfriendly Amendments

Unfriendly Amendments are any substantive changes to a formally introduced Directive that are not agreed to by all of the Sponsors of the Directive. In order to introduce an Unfriendly Amendment, the Unfriendly Amendment must be the number equivalent to 1/3 of Quorum confirmed signatories. The Committee Director has the authority to discern between substantive and non-substantive Unfriendly amendment proposals.

Plagiarism

GatorMUN maintains a zero-tolerance policy in regards to plagiarism. Delegates found to have used the ideas of others without properly citing those individuals, organizations, or documents will have their credentials revoked for the duration of the GatorMUN conference. This is a very serious offense.

Crisis Notes

A crisis note is an action taken by an individual in a Crisis committee. Crisis notes do not need to be introduced or voted on, and should be given to the Crisis Staff by sending the notes to a designated pickup point in each room. A crisis note should both be addressed to crisis and have the delegate's position on both the inside and outside of the note.

Motion to Enter Voting Procedure

Once this motion passes, and the committee enters Voting Procedure, no occupants of the committee room may exit the Committee Room, and no individual may enter the Committee Room from the outside. A member of the Dias will secure all doors.

- No talking, passing notes, or communicating of any kind will be tolerated during voting procedures.
- Each Directive will be read to the body and voted upon in the order which they were introduced. Any Proposed Unfriendly Amendments to each Directive will be read to the body and voted upon before the main body of the Directive as a whole is put to a vote.
- Delegates who requested to be noted as "Present and Voting" are unable to abstain during voting procedure. Abstentions will not be counted in the tallying of a majority. For example, 5 yes votes, 4 no votes, and 7 abstentions means that the Directive passes.
- The Committee will adopt Directives and Unfriendly Amendments to Directives if these documents pass with a simple majority. Specialized committees should refer to their background-guides or Committee Directors for information concerning specific voting procedures.

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Roll Call Voting

A counted placard vote will be considered sufficient unless any delegate to the committee motions for a Roll Call Vote. If a Roll Call Vote is requested, the committee must comply. All delegates must vote: "For," "Against," "Abstain," or "Pass." During a Roll Call vote, any delegate who answers, "Pass," reserves his/her vote until the Committee Director has exhausted the Roll. However, once the Committee Director returns to "Passing" Delegates, they must vote: "For" or "Against."

Accepting by Acclamation

This motion may be stated when the Committee Director asks for points or motions. If a Roll Call Vote is requested, the motion to Accept by Acclamation is voided. If a delegate believes a Directive will pass without opposition, he or she may move to accept the Directive by acclamation. The motion passes unless a single delegate shows opposition. An abstention is not considered opposition. Should the motion fail, the committee will move directly into a Roll Call Vote.

Tech Policy

Technology will not be allowed throughout the course of the committee. Delegates are prohibited from using their technology inside the committee room. However, they are encouraged to do research before and during assigned breaks.

Introduction to Committee

The African Union (AU) is the primary intergovernmental organization on the African continent, established to promote unity, development, peace, and security among its 55 member states. The AU is governed by several key organs that collectively oversee its operations and policymaking. This committee will take place as an emergency session of the AU, designed to react to the political crisis caused by the string of coups in west Africa and the unfolding civil war in Sudan. Delegates are tasked with resolving these crises as best they can, prioritizing saving lives, establishing the rule of law, and protecting democracy across the continent.

This is a specialized committee that incorporates both GA and crisis mechanics. Delegates will begin by working together to create draft resolutions. There will be moderated and unmoderated debate, culminating in an author's panel and a vote on the presented resolutions. There will be no mergers. Once all draft resolutions are presented and voted on, the committee will then transition to crisis-style directive cycles. It is important to note that the crisis updates will be based on both the resolutions passed in the GA portion of committee and the directive portion, and therefore delegates are highly encouraged to create realistic and impactful solutions.

Delegates are highly encouraged to conduct their own research on the institutions and powers of the African Union, as well as the origins and actions of the relevant nations. Please also keep in mind that this committee takes place in 2023, and so delegates should only be taking actions based on events that have happened in or before 2023.

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Committee Background

The African Union (AU), was founded in 2002 to replace its predecessor institution, the Organization of African Unity. It is made up of 55 member states, consisting of all nations on the African continent and the surrounding island nations. As of 2023, the nations of Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Sudan have all been suspended due to the lack of civilian rule in these countries, one of the requirements for AU membership.

The Organization of African Unity was founded in 1963, in the midst of the wider decolonization movement sweeping the continent. It was considered weak in addressing key internal crises in a region often racked by war and human rights abuses, and the creation of the AU was designed to address these shortcomings.

The key objectives of the AU are maintaining peace, security, and stability, advancing democratic governance, and ensuring development. The AU has many internal organs that carry out these tasks. Much of the power of the AU is derived from the Constitutive Act of 2000, which allows for intervention in circumstances such as genocide and war crimes. These frameworks remain controversial, as the AU must balance the sovereignty of its member states with its desire for peaceful democratic regimes in Africa.

Despite its lofty ambitions, the AU faces some significant challenges. Member states often disagree on priorities and actions that the Union should take, with many African nations having rivalries and divisions that go back centuries. Furthermore, the peacekeeping missions and other external actions of the AU are often hampered by logistical and political obstacles. These structural weaknesses will be important to consider when creating a response to the instability caused by the wave of coups and war in Sudan.



Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Topic A: The “Coup Belt” of West Africa

From 2020 to 2023, Africa witnessed a sharp resurgence of military coups, especially in the Sahel region and West Africa. Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger all experienced unconstitutional changes of government in quick succession, leading observers to refer to the region as the “Coup Belt.” Africa is no stranger to coups, particularly in the post-independence period. Between 1960 and 2000, the continent saw over 80 successful coups. However, the end of the Cold War and the creation of institutions like the AU brought hope of democratic consolidation, with fewer coups and more peaceful transfers of power. The recent wave has been seen by many as one of the gravest threats to African democracy in recent history and calls into question the AU’s ability to enforce its anti-coup norms.

There are many underlying causes, with jihadist insurgencies in the desert region of the Sahel undermining the legitimacy of the governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. These insurgencies have killed thousands and led to massive waves of refugees, creating tension between military figures and politicians.

Economic crises, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, have deepened frustration with the governing class.

Additionally, corruption and democratic malpractices, such as the unconstitutional

campaign for the Guinean president to seek a third term, have eroded the democratic principles of many states. Paradoxically, many of the military governments in the “coup belt” have enjoyed popular support, with the people viewing the coup leaders as populist heroes rooting out the corrupt political class. These leaders have portrayed themselves as proud nationalists and anti-imperialists, a message that seems to resonate with the people.

There is also the influence of foreign countries to consider. France, the former colonial power of West Africa, has retained close relations with its former colonies, and especially with the political elite. These ties are often seen as enriching already corrupt politicians. Additionally, countries like China and especially Russia have been increasing their influence in the region, with Russian mercenary soldiers being enlisted to fight in many of the region’s frequent conflicts.



Case Study: Mali

Mali exemplifies the complex dynamics of military intervention, international pressure, and internal instability. In August 2020, Colonel Assimi Goïta and other military officers deposed President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, citing governmental corruption, electoral irregularities, and inability to suppress jihadist violence in northern Mali. The regional bloc Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) immediately suspended Mali’s membership, imposed border closures, and financial and travel sanctions to push the junta towards restoring civilian rule.

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

After negotiations and pressure, a transitional civilian government was put in place. However, in May 2021, Goïta led another coup – removing the interim leadership and consolidating his hold over power. This second coup prompted renewed sanctions and condemnation from both ECOWAS and the AU. The planned elections were delayed multiple times, and Mali's relationship with former colonial power France deteriorated, especially as the junta expelled French troops and increased engagement with private military contractors such as the Wagner Group, and later the Russia-linked "Africa Corps."



Case Study: Niger

In July 2023, Niger's constitutional order was upended when President Mohamed Bazoum was detained by the presidential guard led by General Abdourahamane Tchiani. Known for being one of the more stable democracies in the Sahel and a counter-terrorism partner to Western nations, Niger's coup was a major shock. ECOWAS responded forcefully, suspending Niger, closing its borders, cutting off electricity supply (over 70 % of Niger's electricity import depended on Nigeria), freezing assets, and threatening military intervention should the junta refuse to restore Bazoum.

However, the threat of force was never carried out, in part because of internal divisions within ECOWAS about intervention, logistical concerns, and fears of wider destabilization. As sanctions dragged on, Niger's economy weakened significantly, supply chains broke down, and public services were hit hard. The junta consolidated its power, and pro-junta rallies became more visible, with some waving Russian flags and expressing anti-French sentiment. The foreign alignment and popular elements made reversing the coup difficult without risking military escalation or humanitarian catastrophe. ECOWAS's credibility for enforcing democratic norms was called into question.

This case underscores how once a popular or security-justified narrative of a coup is accepted domestically, restoring constitutional order becomes extremely difficult. The failure to act militarily calls into question the credibility of regional norms enforcement. The case also illustrates how external alignments (e.g., acceptance of military rule by foreign powers) can further embed a coup regime.

This case shows how the actions that this committee takes could play out in the real world. For example, it shows how sanctions and suspensions can backfire by reinforcing nationalist or anti-foreign narratives, The challenge of enforcing democratic norms when popular domestic legitimacy is split (some citizens view the coup leaders as reformers), and the limitation of regional bodies (AU, ECOWAS) when internal cohesion, resources, or member consensus are weak.

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Questions to Consider:

1. What institutional and governance weaknesses (e.g., corruption, lack of legitimacy, weak rule of law) make certain Sahel states more susceptible to coups?
2. How can the AU and ECOWAS design sanctions, suspensions, or diplomatic pressure that avoid hurting civilians while still applying enough pressure to make a difference?
3. Under what conditions, if any, should regional bodies consider military intervention in response to a coup — and what risks does this pose to sovereignty, regional stability, and legal precedent?
4. How do popular support and nationalist narratives (anti-imperialist, anti-foreign interference) challenge external efforts to restore civilian rule?
5. What role should foreign powers (e.g., France, Russia, China) play or be limited from playing in coup-affected states, and how should the AU navigate those influences?



Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Topic B: The Civil War in Sudan & Darfur

The civil war in Sudan began on 15 April 2023, with the opposing forces consisting of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as “Hemeti”). The conflict came in the midst of a long period of political and military instability, and represents one of the world’s most serious humanitarian disasters. By late 2023, over 4 million people were displaced, with over 1 million refugees fleeing to neighboring countries. Thousands have been killed and the risk of famine conditions in the country is growing.

Background

Sudan is a country with a long history of instability and civil conflict. The First and Second Sudanese Wars (1955–1972 and 1983–2005, respectively) cost millions of lives and led to the eventual independence of South Sudan. The Darfur region in the southwest of the country erupted into conflict in 2003, with many international observers accusing the Sudanese state of genocide during its campaign to put down the rebellions. In 2019, popular demonstrations and military coups toppled the dictatorship of Omar al-Bashir, who had ruled the country for 30 years. The government consisted of joint civilian and military rule, but was plagued by chronic tension and instability. In October 2021, al-Burhan and Hemeti staged a coup that established military supremacy, but the two rival generals would prove to be unable to share power. The AU has attempted mediations, but rivalries between member states have proved to be a large hindrance to the peace process. For example, Egypt strongly supports the SAF, viewing al-Burhan as an ally in regional politics. The UAE maintains ties to the RSF, giving Hemeti an ally with access to large amounts of money and resources. Peace talks facilitated by the US and Saudi Arabia collapsed within days of their opening. The fragility of any of Sudan’s neighbors also complicated diplomacy in the region, particularly in regard to refugees.

Case Study: Darfur

Darfur has again become one of the worst theatres in the 2023–present Sudanese conflict. The region has a long history of conflict, going back to the early 2000s, with mass violence and ethnic targeting (especially of Masalit and non-Arab communities) under al-Bashir’s regime. After the April 2023 outbreak between the SAF and the RSF, fighting escalated in Darfur. In West Darfur’s El Geneina, a UN report found that between 10,000–15,000 people were killed in one city in ethnic violence by the RSF and allied Arab militias.

The RSF and allied militias have been accused of large-scale killing, forced displacement, looting, and execution of civilians in rural areas.



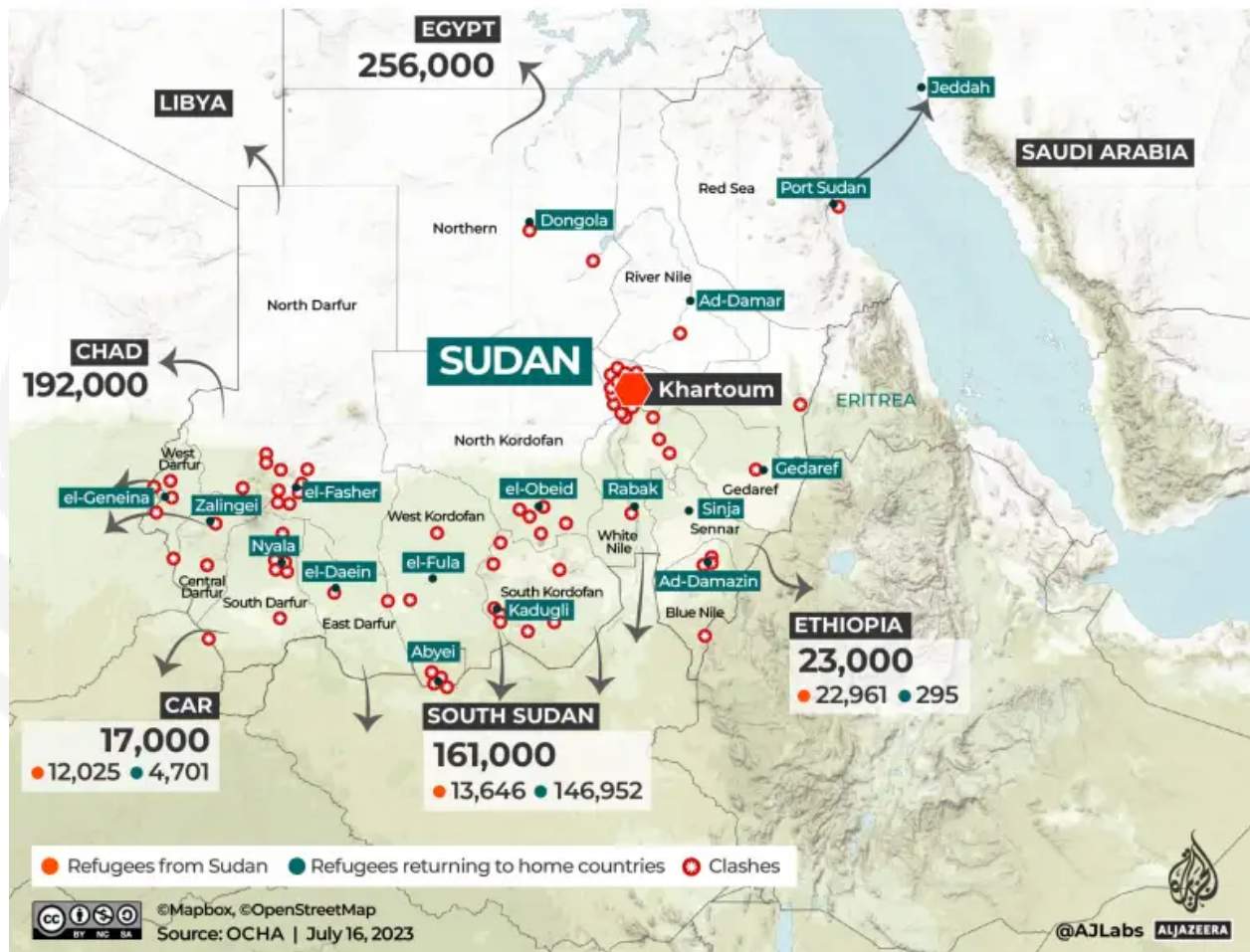
Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

One such episode was the destruction of the town of Misterei in May 2023, where RSF units attacked Massalit residents, looted homes, burned infrastructure, and executed or chased down civilians (including men, women, children near schools and mosques). Thousands were displaced across the border to Chad. Humanitarian access has repeatedly been blocked by active conflict, siege warfare (e.g., around El Fasher), and infrastructure destruction. The UN documented at least 481 civilians killed in North Darfur during a two-week period in April 2025, including reports of ethnically motivated attacks and mass sexual violence.

SUDAN

Where has fighting broken out?

Since fighting began on April 15, more than three million people have been displaced within Sudan and across its borders. According to the United Nations, more than 732,823 refugees have fled to neighbouring countries. Half of the refugees are women and children.



The AU's ability to respond is heavily constrained by lack of consensus among states, limited logistical capacity, and the risk of being drawn into protracted stabilization efforts. For Darfur, meaningful intervention would require not just military presence but political reconstruction, justice for past atrocities, and protection of vulnerable communities.

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Questions to Consider:

1. What specific mechanisms (e.g., cease-fires, peace agreements, third-party monitoring) could the AU lead or facilitate to de-escalate the SAF-RSF conflict in Darfur and protect civilians?
2. How should the AU manage involvement of external states (e.g., Egypt, UAE, Chad) and non-state actors whose interests might be aligned with one side of the conflict?
3. Given previous peace-keeping or hybrid missions (such as UNAMID), what lessons should shape any future peace-keeping or protection deployment in Darfur? What mandate, command-structure, and resources would be necessary for effectiveness?
4. How can humanitarian aid be delivered impartially under conditions of active conflict and frequent obstruction? What role might corridors, negotiated safe zones, or neutral peace-keepers play?
5. After hostilities wane, what type of political transition, constitutional guarantees, or power-sharing arrangements might help prevent a relapse into conflict in Sudan (especially in the Darfur region)?

Positions

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Algeria | 25. Liberia |
| 2. Angola | 26. Libya |
| 3. Benin | 27. Madagascar |
| 4. Botswana | 28. Malawi |
| 5. Burundi | 29. Mauritania |
| 6. Cabo Verde | 30. Mauritius |
| 7. Cameroon | 31. Morocco |
| 8. Central African Republic | 32. Mozambique |
| 9. Chad | 33. Namibia |
| 10. Comoros | 34. Niger |
| 11. Côte d'Ivoire | 35. Nigeria |
| 12. Democratic Republic of the Congo | 36. Rwanda |
| 13. Djibouti | 37. São Tomé and Príncipe |
| 14. Egypt | 38. Senegal |
| 15. Equatorial Guinea | 39. Seychelles |
| 16. Eritrea | 40. Sierra Leone |
| 17. Eswatini | 41. Somalia |
| 18. Ethiopia | 42. South Africa |
| 19. Gabon | 43. South Sudan |
| 20. The Gambia | 44. Tanzania |
| 21. Ghana | 45. Togo |
| 22. Guinea-Bissau | 46. Tunisia |
| 23. Kenya | 47. Uganda |
| 24. Lesotho | 48. Zambia |
| | 49. Zimbabwe |

Crisis of Democracy: The African Union, 2023

Works Cited

"West Africa's 'coup belt': Did Mali's 2020 army takeover change the region?" *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/27/west-africas-coup-belt-did-malis-2020-army-takeover-change-the-region>

"African Union suspends Mali following coup." *DW*. <https://www.dw.com/en/african-union-suspends-mali-following-coup/a-54626415>

"West Africa bloc ECOWAS imposes sanctions on Mali leaders." *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/7/west-africa-bloc-ecowas-imposes-sanctions-on-mali-leaders>

"Russia's growing footprint in Africa's Sahel region." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/02/russia-s-growing-footprint-in-africas-sahel-region>

"Horrific violations and abuses as fighting spreads - report." *United Nations in Sudan*. <https://www.sudan.un.org/en/261791-horrific-violations-and-abuses-fighting-spreads-report>

"More than 480 civilians killed in Sudan's North Darfur over two weeks: UN." *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/25/more-than-480-civilians-killed-in-north-darfur-attacks-over-two-weeks-un>

"Russia vows military backing for Sahel juntas' joint force." *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/russia-vows-military-backing-sahel-juntas-joint-force-2025-04-04/>

"Russia expands military footprint in Sahel with shift from Wagner to state-controlled Africa Corps." *Africanews*. <https://www.africanews.com/2025/07/24/russia-expands-military-footprint-in-sahel-with-shift-from-wagner-to-state-controlled-afri/>

"Sudan: War crimes rampant as civilians killed in both deliberate and indiscriminate attacks - new report." *Amnesty International*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/sudan-war-crimes-rampant-as-civilians-killed-in-both-deliberate-and-indiscriminate-attacks-new-report/>

"Sudan crisis deepens amid rising civilian casualties, growing ethnic violence and grim humanitarian situation - UN report." *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2025/09/mil-250919-ohchr01.htm>