

Forgotten Conflict , Forgotten Nation:

Will anyone listen to the victims' voices in Sudan?



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ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
CAT	Convention Against Torture
CED	Committee on Enforced Disappearances
CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
FFM	Fact-finding Mission on Sudan
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICPED	International Convention on the Protection Against Enforced Disappearances
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

The ongoing conflict that erupted in April 2023 in Khartoum between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) has brought Sudan to its knees. Millions of people have been displaced, lost homes businesses, suffered horrific violations, including torture, sexual violence and others and lost loved ones. The United Nations has declared Sudan to be the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, claiming tens of thousands of lives and displaced over 12.4 million people, including more than 3.3 million as refugees in neighboring countries.¹ Women and girls face unprecedented vulnerability, with a sharp increase in maternal deaths and over 80 per cent of hospitals in conflict zones non-operational, leaving many without critical medical care and cases of conflict-related sexual violence remain hugely underreported.²

The UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan titled its 2025 report as “War of Atrocities,” describing the seriousness of the atrocities endured by Sudanese since the war started. The report found that both parties detained individuals arbitrarily without charge or legal process, and subjected them to torture, inhumane and degrading treatment and inhumane conditions.³ The report again found large scale of rape and other forms of sexual and gender based violence, amounting to crimes against humanity, committed mainly by RSF but also by SAF and targeting women and girls based on their combined gender and ethnicity.⁴

This report presents voices of over 15 survivors of human rights violations, including torture or ill treatment, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and sexual and gender-based violence. The report covers a period from the start of the conflict until August 2025, and interviews were conducted all over Sudan, either in person, online or in refugee camps in neighboring countries. The violence expressed has shattered not only the victims but also their families and communities, leaving lasting impact for generations to overcome. The inability to seek justice leaves victims and their families struggling on their own without access to reparations, accountability or even medical assistance to address the wounds left by these violations.

This report calls on the regional and international entities to prioritize the suffering of Sudanese people that results in many violations of fundamental rights with people being killed, displaced, violated, facing starvation amid the world watching

1 UN news, *Sudan faces unprecedented hunger and displacement as war enters third year*. 10 April 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/04/1162096>

2 Ibid.

3 Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, *Sudan: A war of atrocities*, A/HRC/60/22.5 Sept.2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/ffm-sudan/a-hrc-60-22-auv.pdf>

4 Ibid.

on the sidelines. We urge the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to keep documenting human rights violations through the Fact-Finding Mission, and urge them to visit Sudan as well as other places where Sudanese refugees have sought safety in the neighboring countries. We call on the UN to impose embargo on Sudan to prevent influx of weapons from third parties fueling the war. Finally, we also urge the political bodies, including the UN Security Council, the African Union and IGAD to push SAF and RSF to end the atrocities and carry out effective investigations into violations committed and provide reparations for the victims.

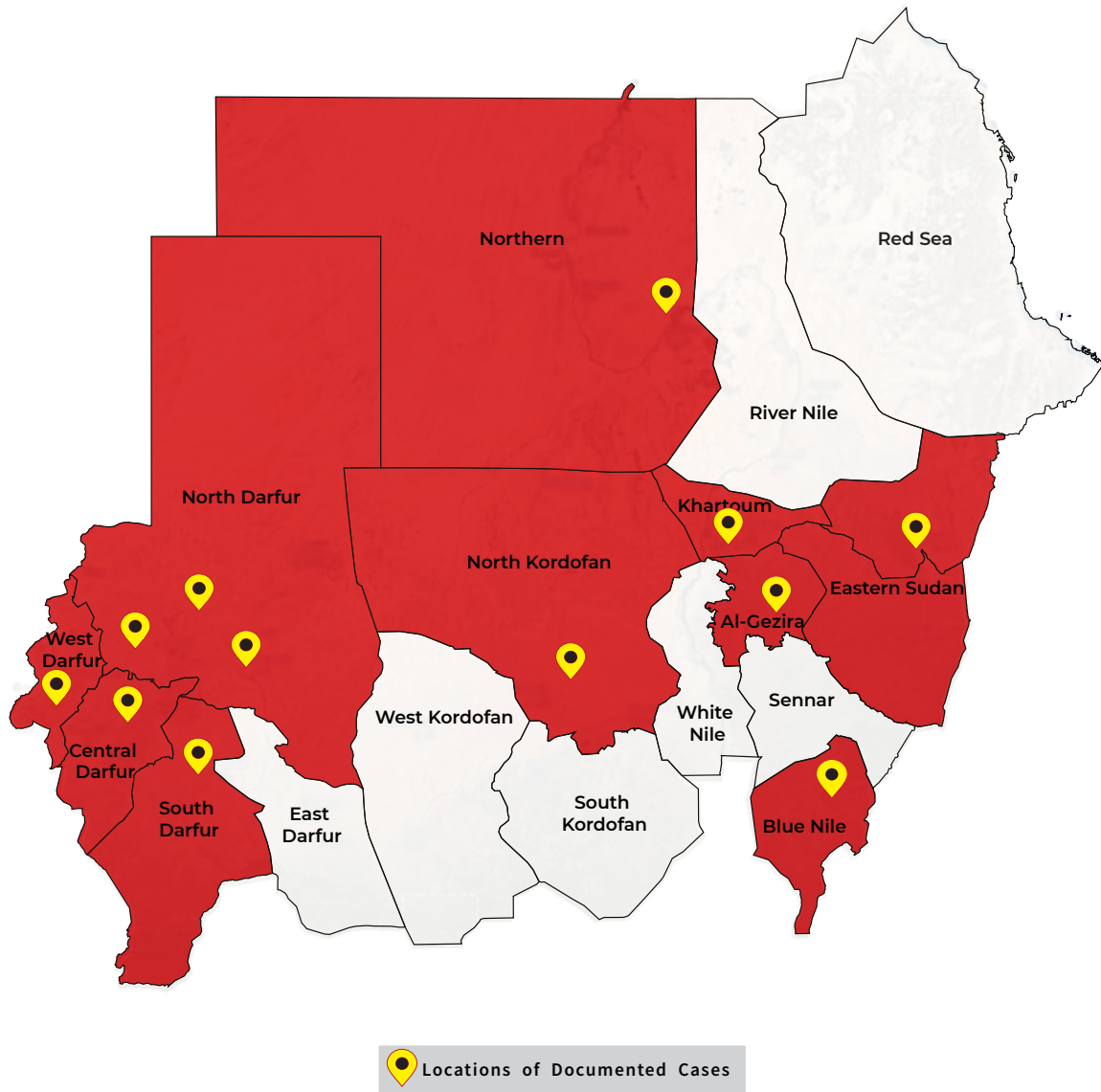
Methodology

This report documents instances of arbitrary detentions, torture, ill-treatment and enforced disappearances committed mainly by the SAF, and sexual violence including rape, gang rape, sex slavery against women and girls predominantly carried out by the RSF from April 2023 until August 2025. The cases mentioned in the report cover violations in the whole country, including Eastern, Central, Northern and Western Sudan.

Most interviews were conducted between November 2023 and September 2025 inside Sudan, in several locations such as Eastern and Central Sudan, Blue Nile, River Nile, North Kordofan, North Darfur and Central Darfur as well as in refugee camps in Chad where thousands of Sudanese have escaped the conflict.

This report is based on documentation efforts of 10 human rights defenders in exile who underwent two years of training in documentation and report writing with support of HURICAP of Amnesty International - The Netherlands. The human rights defenders, part of an initiative called Sudanese Human Rights Defenders in Exile, spoke with dozens of victims, their families, eyewitnesses, and survivors, in addition to collecting a wealth of evidence confirming the atrocities and supporting the information and allegations obtained through photos, videos, and medical reports. 17 interviewees included 8 survivors of abduction, torture, false legal charges and 2 families of enforced disappeared persons and those persons who were released; and lastly 7 victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Interviewees granted informed consent and were informed about the research's nature and purpose, the possible consequences of the interview, and how the information they shared would be used. All interviews were carried out in a set-up that ensured privacy and security.

Survivors of sexual violence had the chance to be interviewed by either male or female investigators. However, all survivors chose to speak with a trained human rights defender regardless of their genders. The survivors were interviewed online via secure applications, and some follow up interviews were conducted in person by assistant field monitors in Sudan or outside the country. Most of the interviews were conducted in Arabic and some carried out in other Sudanese languages. No financial incentives were provided to interviewees. For safety reasons, all names included in this report have been changed with explicit consent to use pseudonyms, employed to protect the identities of all survivors, eyewitnesses and family members.



Introduction

On 15 April 2023, a conflict erupted in Sudan between the para-military group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). The conflict is primarily between the leaders of SAF, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan, and RSF leader “Hemedti” Dagalo, respectively, battling one another for control of the state and its resources. Besides the struggle between the two leaders, there are also other deep-rooted and unresolved factors, including the lack of inclusive and democratic government, vast inequalities between the various groups, centralization of power and resources as well as rampant impunity.

The current conflict has had devastating consequences for Sudan. The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described Sudan as a “country in the grip of a crisis of staggering scale and brutality,” with more than 16 million people facing severe food insecurity; 7,7 million people are internally displaced while 4 million people sought refuge in neighboring countries.⁵

Sudan’s history has been marked by a long history of conflict and political instability. In 2003 the world witnessed massive violations carried out by the Janjaweed militia against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa communities, resulting in the UN Security Council referring the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court in March 2005 for crimes against humanity and war crimes.⁶ The same year, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed resulting in the separation of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011.⁷

In 2013, several public protests erupted in the centre of Sudan which were met with excessive violence against non-violent demonstrators by the security forces.⁸ In 2015, Sudan Parliament amended the Constitution to strengthen the powers of the President Omar al Bashir and the security apparatus.⁹ The accumulation of popular anger and repression gave rise to the Sudan peoples’ December 2018 revolution, which led to the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir’s regime in April 2019 after three decades in power.¹⁰ The revolution brought with it a hope for a transition to democratic governance. However, the transition was short-lived. SAF and RSF staged

5 Council on Foreign Relations, what is the extent of Sudan’s Humanitarian Crisis? 26 June 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/what-extent-sudans-humanitarian-crisis>

6 International Criminal Court, Darfur, Sudan, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/darfur>

7 The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, The Comprehensive Peace Agreement. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2011/01/the-comprehensive-peace-agreement?lang=en>

8 HRW, Dozen Killed During Protests: Rein in Forces, Investigate Killings, Charge or Release Detainees. 27 Sept. 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/09/27/sudan-dozens-killed-during-protests>

9 Sudan Tribune, *Sudanese Constitution to be amended to be granted more powers to security*. April 30, 2015, <https://sudantribune.com/article53387/>

10 The International Crisis Group, *Safeguarding Sudan’s Revolution*. 21 Oct 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sudan/281-safeguarding-sudans-revolution>

a coup on 25 October 2021, dissolving the civilian led government and suspended the key articles of the constitutional document governing the transition in Sudan.¹¹ Instead of a peaceful transition of power to the civilians and pathway to democracy, these developments engulfed the country into the current conflict.

This report outlines serious violations carried out by both sides of the conflict. The documented cases show that SAF, RSF, and their allied militias have engaged in brutal warfare resulting in extensive human rights abuses against civilians. Civilians have often been subjected to arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearances. Women and girls, especially, have paid a heavy price, many experiencing abuses by the RSF and its allied militias, including widespread sexual violence, rape, sexual slavery, and abduction.

While some of the testimonies of those affected by the conflict highlighted in this report are unique, others reaffirm the magnitude and seriousness of this conflict and have been already recognized and condemned by the international community. This report underscores the urgency for the international community at large to take all necessary measures toward the cessation of hostilities and take the necessary steps for justice and accountability. The civilians' suffering can no longer be ignored, denied nor allowed to continue.

¹¹ OHCHR, *Human Rights Council requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights to designate an Expert on the Human Rights Situation in Sudan*. 5 Nov. 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/11/human-rights-council-requests-high-commissioner-human-rights-designate>

Background: 2023 conflict that engulfed the whole nation

The conflict that erupted in April 2023 has severely paralyzed Sudan, most institutions have collapsed or are not available, with access to basic services being sparse or not reachable, weak rule of law, rampant impunity and grave human rights violations committed by both parties.

Unlike the previous conflicts, the latest war has engulfed the entire country. This is the first time that the war started in the capital Khartoum. In the first few months, RSF has taken over the most of Darfur territory, expanded to the Kordofan states and eventually took most of the capital, Khartoum from SAF. Early 2025, SAF with successful attacks re-captured the capital and other states while still holding on its only location in Darfur, El-Fasher until the end of October when El-Fasher fell into the hands of RSF.

While the momentum seems to be swinging toward the SAF, the level of violations by both sides is not easing, rather both have been accused of escalating the pattern of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law across Sudan. RSF has been accused of committing widespread conflict-related sexual violence in Darfur and other territories they control. SAF has been accused of retaliating against alleged RSF collaborators, resulting in them being tortured, extrajudicially killed or arbitrarily detained.

This report documents the above-mentioned violations, highlights the responsibilities of both parties and calls on them to respect international law and such violations. Cases highlighted here represent only a small fraction of victims whose cases have been similarly documented and confirmed by other entities, including the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR-Sudan), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI).

Applicable Legal Framework

Both parties to the conflict have been accused of committing serious violations of international humanitarian law, human rights law and some of the acts may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity under the International Criminal Court Statute.

Sudan is a party to various international and regional human rights instruments that protect rights often violated within the context of the current conflict. Sudan ratified the Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CAT), the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPED) and the International Covenant on the Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) protecting rights such as freedom from torture, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention. These rights are also protected by customary international law norms; as such no exceptional circumstances exist, whether be a state of war or public emergency that would justify their use. Further, Article 6 of ICCPR protects the right to life, specifically noting that “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.” Article 9 of the same Covenant specifies that “everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest or detention.” Similar rights are protected within the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights through Articles 4, 5, and 6, protecting the right to life, freedom from torture and the right to liberty and security of the person.

International humanitarian law (IHL) applies only to the situations of conflict. The obligations outlined in the Geneva Conventions and its Protocols are part of the customary international humanitarian law and thus apply to all parties of the conflict, including, SAF and non-state actors such as RSF. IHL lays out the rules for treatment and protection of non-civilians, including prohibition of enforced disappearances, torture and ill treatment, deprivation of liberty. IHL also outlines obligations of the states to prevent illegal conduct by state forces as well as non-state actors or militias. In non-international armed conflict, such as the one in Sudan, parties are required to take steps to prevent enforced disappearance by registering persons deprived of liberty.¹²

Freedom from torture, right to life, right to liberty and security of the person are also protected by the Sudan Constitution of 2019.¹³ Further, the Sudan Code of Criminal Procedure outlines procedures for the arrest, presentation of the arrested individual before a magistrate or the court and the registration of the arrest.¹⁴ These rights and procedures are put in place to ensure fair trial rights and prevent enforced

12 Rule 98: Prohibition of enforced disappearances. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule98>

13 Right 44 (right to life), Right 46 (life and security of person), Right 51 (freedom from torture)

14 Sudan: Code of Criminal Procedure: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2003/en/98164>

disappearances and arbitrary detention.

Women and girls across Sudan have been subjected to horrific violations, including rape, gang rapes, sexual slavery, sexual violence and others. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are prohibited under the Geneva Conventions. Prohibition includes outrages upon personal dignity, torture, protection against rape, enforced prostitution and any other form of indecent assault.¹⁵ Over the years, various international criminal tribunals have recognized rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence as crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide. In addition to the international norms, the Sudanese law also prohibits rape and sexual violence. The 2015 amendment to the 1991 Criminal Act expanded Article 149 to include range of acts that constitute rape, making distinction between rape and adultery and providing some protections to the victims.¹⁶

The United Nations Security Council (UN SC) has over the years adopted several resolutions on women, peace and security, recognizing the unique protection accorded to women and children and the violations they endure. The groundbreaking Resolution 1325 adopted in 2000 calls on all parties to the armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict.¹⁷ Further, Resolution 1820 recognizes rape as a tactic of war and matter of international security and peace while Resolution 2106 adopted in 2016 emphasizes the importance of accountability for the perpetrators of these violations.¹⁸

Finally, in May 2023, SAF and RSF have signed the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect Civilians of Sudan. Both parties have agreed to affirm the core obligations under IHL to facilitate humanitarian needs of the civilians. Specifically, the parties agreed to treat persons deprived of liberty in a humane manner, refrain from engaging in enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention of civilians and refrain from any form of torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, including sexual violence of all kinds.¹⁹

15 Rule 93: Rape and other forms of sexual violence. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule93>

16 Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, Aristide Nononsi. A/HRC/30/60. 24 August 2015. https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/A_HRC_30_60_ENG-.pdf

17 Security Council, Resolution 1325 (2000). S/RES/1325 (2000), https://www.un.org/shestandsforspeace/sites/www.un.org/shestandsforspeace/files/wps_sres1325.pdf

18 UN Women: Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/WPS-resolutions-poster-2022-web-en.pdf>

19 Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan.

3.The Victims speak: Voices of unimaginable suffering

Since the war began, Sudan has experienced collapse of the rule of law and institutions, creating opportunities to carry out serious human rights violations with impunity and providing limited avenues for victims to seek justice. Some victims have been victimized more than once by both sides, especially in the areas where the control shifted between the RSF and SAF.

3.a Human rights violations in detention

The civil war that erupted in Sudan on 15 April 2023 has been characterized by serious violations on both sides, with the alarming rise of detentions, arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearances. This form of warfare is not an unfamiliar one to people of Sudan. During the Al-Bashir era, ghost houses where torture and enforced disappearances were used to silence any dissidents and other warring parties were common. As early as 2001, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution



on the situation in Sudan expressing concerns on “precarious conditions of detention, frequent use of torture, arbitrary detentions, interrogations, and violations of human rights by the security organs; and the occurrence, within the framework of the conflict in southern Sudan, of cases of enforced or involuntary disappearance, the use of children as soldiers and combatants, forced conscription, forced displacement of populations, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment of civilians.”²⁰ The 2004 Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur

highlighted similar concerns with regard to incommunicado detentions and enforced disappearances, especially following attacks on villages by Janjaweed: “[...] security and intelligence apparatus forcibly disappeared several individuals who either remain unaccounted for or those that have returned have provided credible testimonies of the presence of those missing in unofficial and secret places of detention.”²¹

Within the context of the latest conflict, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Sudan office, in its 2025 report documented human rights violations in detention. The report noted that SAF has used check points as holding areas and prolonged incommunicado detention. Testimonies provided showed those in SAF controlled facilities were subjected to torture, including beatings. In

20 UN General Assembly Resolution 55/116 Situation of Human Rights in Sudan, 12 March 2001. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/55/116>

21 Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General. <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/1480de/pdf/, para 396-399>

addition, conditions in detention denote lacking basic services, overcrowding and a lack of access to medical services.²²

Similarly, FFM Sudan documented widespread arrests and detentions by SAF and RSF. Civilians were arrested at various locations and held in harsh conditions, such as overcrowded prisons without access to adequate food, water and sanitation facilities. These arrests and subsequent detention were carried out pursuant no warrant or any other legal procedures. Many were subjected to torture and ill treatment and denied access to lawyers or family members.²³

The Emergency Lawyers groups, a Sudanese prominent human rights group, recently released a report documenting horrific abuses by the State security forces and army in Khartoum, after recapturing the city from RSF. Many people were arrested, tortured and likely killed. The conditions in the detention facilities were described as inhuman; trials lacking the basic standard of justice and even those in poor health were not released.²⁴

In this chapter, we shed a light on the patterns related to eight cases of arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention without being charged, torture and in some instances amounting to enforced disappearances in Eastern Sudan, Al-Gezira, Blue Nile, Shandi, and North Kordofan mostly carried out by SAF.

Arbitrary arrests amounting to enforced disappearance

Seven victims, all male, recalled being arbitrarily arrested by SAF, usually wearing SAF uniforms or civilian clothes. There seems to be no safe places especially for men who have been politically active or perceived by the SAF as alleged collaborators of RSF. Adam learned of reasons for his arrest while being tortured, they accused him of working for RSF and for being a member of the resistance committees.²⁵ Adam, continued, *“my arrest appears to be a direct consequence of my activism, rather than genuine legal ground.”*²⁶

Hamid spoke to us about his father’s disappearance. On 14 January 2025, three days after SAF took control of Wad Madani city, individuals linked to the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)²⁷ arrested Hamid’s father at home without a warrant or good reason. That was the last time family members saw the father. *“After 7 days of my father’s disappearance, there were rumors that my father was in a building*

22 OHCHR Sudan.” Don’t ask about him: Detention Facilities and practices in Khartoum state in the context of the conflict in the Sudan.” <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/sudan/report-ohchr-sudan-country-office-detention-facilities-khartoum.pdf>

23 Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, A/HRC/57/23, 5 September 2024.

24 BBC, *Sudan army torturing people to death, says the rights group*. 17 August 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy4d-qp8eeedo>

25 Victim interviewed on 13 September and 3 October 2024.

26 Victim interviewed on 13 September and 3 October 2024.

27 NISS was the former intelligence service of Sudan, which has been reorganized into the General Intelligence Service.

27 Throughout al Bashir’s 30-year rule, NISS emerged as the most powerful arm of the regime, eclipsing the military’s own intelligence wing in domestic matters. They have been fighting along with SAF since 2023.

called Al-Saraya, that belongs to the NISS... It has an infamous detention under the ground known as Ghost House. We went to the NISS who claimed that my father was not there with them.” SAF denied any information on his father’s whereabouts.²⁸

Adam is an activist who was arrested on the evening of 03 March 2024. His wife described the arrest, *“In the evening of 03 March 2024, at 9:00 p.m. my husband, my children and I were shocked to see about 30 SAF soldiers in front of our house courtyard. They ordered my husband to stand up and go with them [...]”* Since her husband disappeared, she has been struggling to find what happened to him, noting *“ever since there were rumors about my husband’s fate, especially from the town women. Some claimed he was killed, while others said he was taken to SAF headquarters.”²⁹*

Musa, a Sudanese merchant of Darfuri origin, was arbitrarily detained on 04 May 2024 by SAF. His wife narrated, *“I talked to my husband two days before he traveled to River Nile state for business. My cousin who had received a call from my husband during his arrest, informed me that SAF arrested my husband at a checkpoint....”* She further added: *“The phones were turned off, and for over twenty days, I had no idea where my husband was, despite making efforts to find out...”³⁰*

Torture and ill-treatment in detention

Adam recalled: *“I was taken to the SAF intelligence headquarters, part of the SAF command. The place has concrete buildings. Inside, there is a small cell, about 5×4 meters room size. When I was pushed to a cell, some soldiers came with a notebook that had our names listed.”³¹* *“They blindfolded me, tied my legs with ropes, and hung me upside down and pulled them up while my head and upper body were lowered. This position was very painful”³²* His treatment was like many others who endured severe physical torture including beating, flogging, electric devices, were hanged upside down and forced to live in extremely harsh and unsanitary conditions.

Musa, another victim of SAF violations, recalled being subjected to physical beating, both during the initial transfer and in detention. He said, *“As we were put in a car, SAF soldiers were telling us to keep our heads down while hitting us on the head until we arrived at the Detention Center.”³³* In addition to being detained in harsh conditions and facing regular beating, he was also forced to labor under harsh conditions.

Musa told: *“We were forced to unload cement, wires, vehicles, and supplies whenever a truck arrived, regardless of our exhaustion. If another truck would arrive, we were requested to work again.”³⁴*

²⁸ The family was interviewed on 16 June and 3 July 2025.

²⁹ The victim was interviewed on 13 September and 3 October 2024.

³⁰ The victim was interviewed on 20 January and 16 March 2025.

³¹ The victim was interviewed on 13 September and 3 October 2024.

³² The victim was interviewed on 13 September and 3 October 2024.

³³ The victim was interviewed on 20 January and 16 March 2025.

³⁴ The victim was interviewed on 20 January and 16 March 2025.

Various detention facilities lack basic standards and services. Most victims who spoke with us described the facilities as being overcrowded, filthy, lacking access to food, sanitary conditions, water and basic medical services.

Musa's story reiterates the desperate conditions many encounter in the SAF run detentions, *"they put us in a small cell about 8x3 meters, made of cement bricks and covered with iron sheets. We were both genders, but the females were kept separate from the males. During those 25 days, I did not bathe and had to urinate in a corner of the cell."*³⁵

Khalid also described the conditions in SAF's detention facilities as overcrowded, with inadequate food and sanitation, *"I was transferred to a detention where we barely had space to sleep. You had to wait for your cellmate to wake up before you could take a quick nap on the floor. The place was filthy, and there were fleas everywhere. Some of us got skin infections..."* He further added: *"The daily food was very small: a small piece of bread for each person."*³⁶

Adding to this pattern of abuse, Ali, who was arbitrarily arrested by SAF the morning of 13 May 2024, described the detention facilities as *"large containers without fans and air conditioning. I used to hear crying voices from my small detention. Hearing others being tortured created a very stressful environment for me, even though I wasn't physically tortured."*³⁷

Violations of Fair Trial Rights

As previously mentioned, Sudan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which ensures basic rights guarantees to a fair trial. Article 9 (1) and (3) specifies that no one shall be subjected to an arbitrary arrest or detention. Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought before a judge or other officers authorized by the law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or release. Article 14 expands that "all persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals. Everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by the law."

However, testimonies documented in this report establish that SAF has failed to uphold these basic obligations. Hamid, whose father was disappeared by SAF seven months ago, expressed his frustration: *"It is very unfair that we as the family and the people of our neighborhood have been denied access to him or a lawyer. He has not been charged."* Hamid further added: *"My father should stand before the court. If he is not found guilty, we request his immediate release."*³⁸

Ali's case further underscores the systematic denial of pre-trial rights. SAF denied him access to a lawyer or informed him of any charges against him. "I spent 68 days in the detention without release or any charges." Ali was arrested, allegedly

³⁵ The victim was interviewed on 20 January and 16 March 2025.

³⁶ The victim was interviewed on 13 September and 3 October 2024.

³⁷ The victim was interviewed on 16 June 2025.

³⁸ The family was interviewed on 16 June and 3 July 2025.

because of an article published by someone else and his own Facebook post, for which he was never formally charged. He recalled: *“I remember once an officer came to my detention room and said to me: ‘your file has come to our office. You don’t have problems with us. You must have been released. Administratively you don’t have any charges.’”*³⁹

Ahmed spent 3 long months in detention without being informed of charges against him, recalling, *“SAF put me in a detention for 3 months without any charges against me. Then later, SAF accused me with serious charges punishable by death, and charges under Article 65 for insulting state symbols, forming hostile organizations, and collaborating with the enemy. The charges against me were false and are politically motivated.”*⁴⁰

Violations of IHL, international criminal law and human rights law

These violations represent breaches of Sudan’s obligation under the IHL and human rights law. Some of these violations, such as freedom from torture have been domesticated and criminalized within the Sudanese law. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions is applicable to both international and conflict of non-international character, provides basic protections, including that civilians being treated humanely. Arbitrary detention and torture are contrary to the spirit of common Article 3.

The Sudanese Constitution of 2019 also codifies fair trial rights. Article 52 notes that “any person who has civil or criminal proceedings against him has the right to fair and open hearing before a competent ordinary court in accordance with the procedures defined by the law.

Sudan, as a party to ICCPR and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, has agreed to implement and uphold fair trial rights, including a right to a speedy trial, be informed of charges against the accused. Further, both instruments prohibit torture and ill treatment. The testimonies described above violate the rights codified in international human rights and IHL law. Some of these crimes may amount to war crimes under the ICC statute.

³⁹ The victim was interviewed on 16 June 2025.

⁴⁰ The victim was interviewed on 21 December 2024 and 22 January 2025.

Impact of violations and abuses in detention facilities

Interviewees have spoken at length about the impact that the violations endured in detention have had on the victims and their families. Victims who were tortured have suffered physical injuries, deterioration of their health as well as psychological impact. Hamid's father while in detention was denied access to medical facilities and as a result his father's health deteriorated.⁴¹

Mariam, whose husband disappeared, spoke of an anguish not knowing what happened to her husband: *"I was very scared and anxious, and I did not know what would happen to him. I feared that he might have been killed."*⁴²

Musa talked about the impact: *"the detention has impacted my trading activities. I ceased working because of my detention and out of fear of being arrested once more."*⁴³

3.b Conflict related sexual violence

*"Leave her for now; we will come back for the girls tomorrow."*⁴⁴

Evidence collected for this report shows the prevalence of sexual violence as a weapon of war, targeting women and girls in towns, villages and internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps. The testimonies of victims presented here represent only a small number of survivors, but their voices and stories resonate with many, and aligns with findings of other human rights organizations, confirming the widespread use of sexual violence by both parties, especially RSF. Victims were targeted primarily because of their activism or ethnicity perpetrated by RSF along with their allied Arab militias targeting women and girls in Western Sudan.



In its 2024 report "Khartoum is not safe for women", Human Rights Watch (HRW) finds that warring parties have subjected women and girls, from ages 9 through to at least 60, to widespread sexual violence, including rape and gang rape. Women and girls have been subjected to forced and child marriages. Men and boys have also been victims of sexual violence.⁴⁵ The 2024 FFM report documented the widespread use of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, gang rape, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence primarily perpetrated by RSF and its allies. The FFM documented that victims were targeted based on their ethnicity and

41 The family was interviewed on 16 June and 3 July 2025.

42 The victim was interviewed on 20 January and 16 March 2025.

43 The victim was interviewed on 20 January and 16 March 2025.

44 The victim was interviewed on 26 June 2024.

45 HRW, "Khartoum is not Safe for Women: Sexual Violence against Women and Girls", 28 July 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/29/sudan-widespread-sexual-violence-capital>

belonging to certain tribes or retaliated against for their activities, such as human rights defenders, journalists or medical professionals.⁴⁶

Conflict-related sexual violence is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and can amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population.

In this chapter, we shed a light on the patterns related to cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed by RSF members including RSF commanders, and its affiliated armed Arab militias. We interviewed 7 victims of conflict-related sexual violence, who were subjected to rape, gang rape and other sexual violations. Many victims have experienced torture and beating, have been threatened with killings if not fail to comply, endured displacement, looting and some were also forcibly disappeared. Further, victims have confirmed that sexual violence was either ethnically motivated or used as reprisals against individuals providing essential help or documenting violations.

Conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in El-Geneina

In June 2023, RSF and their Arab affiliated militias repeatedly attacked El-Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, causing massive civilian displacement, with civilians escaping to Chad and IDP camps in the region. Women and girls escaping were often subjected to rape and other violence, targeted based on their ethnicity while at the same time RSF has singled out female human rights defenders (HRDs) solely for their work.

Maria, a 29-year-old student and human rights defender recalled her ordeal from 13 June 2023, as she was trying to flee to Chad when ten soldiers from RSF forces and their allied Arab militias captured her. *“They were five soldiers, three outside and two inside the room. I was screaming. One of them grabbed my shoulder from behind, and the second was trying to remove my clothes until I fell on the ground. Then they took off my underwear and the Ibaya, a common Muslim female full body cloth. I was screaming and they told me: ‘stop resisting.’ One said: ‘Oh, poor girl, take off your clothes and lie down.’ One soldier pinned me to the ground, and the other one began to crush all the parts of the body very hard. After a period, the same person opened my legs and began to penetrate. Then, I became tired and could not move, and they began to take turns. I was gang raped by the two soldiers.”*⁴⁷

Mona Ahmed, a 29-year-old female human rights defender from Masalit tribe described her experience: *“On 14 June 2023, RSF soldiers and their allied Arab militias abducted me in Mansoura neighborhood of El Geneina at night. Two soldiers forced me into a room amid piles of clothes on the floor, took off my underwear and raped me. Upon entering the house, they asked: ‘are you the one working in the court?’ and continued: ‘Today, there is no court or organization. There is no one better than me, sit there for me.’ During the assault, Mona*

⁴⁶ Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, A/HRC/57/23, 05 September. 2024

⁴⁷ The victim was interviewed on 29 June and early July 2024.

said: *“the perpetrator repeatedly said: ‘tonight, there is no one better than me if you cry or do anything. Are you married or not? The rape was inside that room and on amid piles of clothes thrown on the floor. The two of them left the room after I was assaulted, and I could not get up on my own.’”*⁴⁸

In May 2023, RSF forcibly took Souad Zakaria, a 30-year-old journalist and human rights advocate. They blindfolded her and took her to an unknown location in the city. She was then sexually assaulted by two RSF men, a commander and one of his soldiers and threatened with weapons and killing if she did not comply. *“One of them shot in the air and said to me: ‘If you move again, you will get one bullet in your head.’ He took my top off, and another soldier came near my face, and he smelled unpleasant, but he got up and started touching me. I told him: ‘Don’t touch me.’ And he said to me: ‘If you open your mouth again, I will cut you off by breaking all your teeth.’ On the ground and he started to rape me.”*⁴⁹

Gang rapes in Khartoum and Omdurman.

In the RSF-controlled neighborhoods of Khartoum, RSF attacked civilians’ houses and perpetrated sexual violence, including gang rape against women and in some instances in front of family members.

In early May 2023, eight RSF soldiers forcibly entered the house in Omdurman where Han, an activist and a humanitarian volunteer was living. Multiple soldiers took turns raping Han in front of her children, *“[...] they ordered all family members to gather in the living room and demanded we surrender all money and valuable items. They raped us in front of our children.”* The perpetrators also seized Han’s belongings and mobile phones.⁵⁰

In another interview, Lyla, a 46-year-old female in Khartoum recalled three RSF soldiers invaded her house at night in September 2023. They found her with her children. They demanded money and gold. They accused Lyla of being a remnant and supporter of the Islamist regime. *“They pushed me on a stone floor. My head hit a barrier. They then pulled my hair. They took my cloth off and raped me. Later one soldier said: ‘Leave her for now; we will come back for the girls tomorrow.’”*⁵¹

Hanan, a prominent activist, was victimized twice. During the 2019 revolution, she was arrested by the National Intelligence & Security Service (NISS) and imprisoned for seven days. During her imprisonment, she was subjected to rape and torture by the officers. Upon her release, her husband divorced her, compounding her trauma. In 2023, amidst the war in Khartoum she endured the following: *“Few RSF vehicles arrived outside the house in Dar Alsalam Area, Omdurman, and eight soldiers of RSF, clad in uniforms and armed with guns, some with their faces covered entered the home. They ordered all our family members to gather in the living room (me, my 2 children, my sister with her son, and our aunt). One of the soldiers inquired about our origins, then the violence started as one*

48 The victim was interviewed on 24 June and early July 2024.

49 The victim was interviewed on 29 June 2024.

50 The victim was interviewed on 29 June 2024.

51 The victim was interviewed on 26 June 2024.

*soldier proceeded to beat my sister. I intervened, questioning the soldier's actions. The soldiers began beating me and my aunt, the children were left crying, bewildered by the unfolding events.*⁵²

*She continued: "Then one soldier singled out at my son, inquiring if he is my child. Confirming, I faced another ordeal as the soldier ordered his comrade to seize the boy. Desperately attempting to protect my son, the soldier hit me with the butt of a gun, then I collapsed. The soldiers started to rape me, my sister and my aunt, all while the children were watching helplessly."*⁵³

*"They raped us in front of our children", Hanan said in a weak tone of voice.*⁵⁴

Another survivor, Lyla recalled the violence and the fear that she has been living with since the attack, *"Oh God, you take these people away from me." I told him that he wouldn't want this to happen to his sisters. He kept calling me names like remnants of the Islamist regime and Kizan. Then he pulled my hair and slammed my head into the ground while assaulting me. I had many bruises. After he was done, he got off me. Another soldier appeared and wanted to do the same. I raised my voice, repeatedly saying, "God is enough, and He is my savior." The soldier who assaulted me told the other one, 'Leave her for now; we will come back for the girls tomorrow.'*⁵⁵

Abduction, rape, forced labor and sexual Slavery in Al-Gezira and Darfur

Aisha and her family moved to Al-Gezira after the conflict started in 2023. She was helping her uncle to take care of animals, often leaving the house around 7 am and walking for 10km to reach the grazing area. She started her story, *"At approximately 1 pm, we came across five Land Cruisers packed with soldiers from the Rapid Support Forces in their military uniforms. They threatened us and demanded that we enter their vehicles. Despite our continued refusal to get in, they moved closer and forcibly lifted us into the vehicle, taking us to an unknown destination."*

Then her ordeal commenced, *"That first night, they raped us violently. I remember one officer named Abdullah who raped me, and my cousin was raped by another officer named Ibrahim, though I don't recall their full names and ranks. I felt lost and hopeless, thinking of my mother, father, brother, and uncle. Every night, they continued to assault us for six months, and as I remembered, they made us cook and wash their clothes."* She further explained, *"After six months, we found ourselves in Darfur. One of the vehicles broke down. That night, when the vehicle broke down, I thought about escaping. I remember it was around 5 am, and everyone was asleep. I managed to flee with a bottle of drinking water in my hand. I set off without knowing the direction, and for two days, I encountered no one on the road. I didn't eat anything except for drinking water and walked for three days."*⁵⁶

52 The victim was interviewed on 26 March 2024.

53 The victim was interviewed on 26 March 2024.

54 The victim was interviewed on 26 March 2024.

55 The victim was interviewed on 26 June 2024.

56 The victim was interviewed on 17 June 2025.

Impact of conflict-related sexual violence

Conflict-related sexual violence is not only a violation of international criminal law and IHL, but the impact has long lasting consequences in every aspect of victims' lives.

Maria spoke about the ongoing suffering, she noted that *“Due to the rape, I still suffer from psychological and physical conditions, including severe infections, pain in the bladder during and after menstruation, and frequent headaches.”* She further discussed the stigma that comes with these violations, *“Our society sees girls who are sexually violated as shameful, and the girl should not talk about it. They are seen as unfit for marriage. When people gather, they talk about her, this makes us live in isolation from society.”*⁵⁷

Mona Ahmed, a victim of a gang rape, recalled the aftermath, *“an older woman came to me while I was lying on the floor. She hugged me and told me to be patient. I was bleeding. After the incident, I could not go out and stayed there until the evening.”* She further noted, *“My mental health is still not good. I feel scared and unstable. I need therapy and justice.”*⁵⁸

Hanan explained the psychological impact on her children as their behavior has undergone significant changes. *“Once my daughter was fighting her brother, she held down his head when I told her to stop, she said: ‘when you refused to lay down, those people also did like this to you.’”* She indicated that *“they have become emotionally rigid, possibly struggling to process and cope with the trauma they witnessed.”*⁵⁹ This rift in a relationship highlights the deep-seated impact of the violence they all experienced.

In addition to changes in her children's behavior, she spoke about her own suffering. *“I am unable to find respite from the haunting memories that plague me during the night.”*⁶⁰ This chronic insomnia serves as a constant reminder of the trauma she endured, further exacerbating her emotional distress and mental anguish.

Violations under IHL, international criminal law and IHRL

Protection from rape and other forms of sexual violence are recognized as jus cogens norm, a non-derogable norm under international law and cannot be overridden by any treaty or custom. Rape and other forms of sexual violence experienced by women, girls and men in Sudan may rise to the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity if committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population. These violations are also recognized as grave violations of international humanitarian law that prohibit rape and other forms of violence.

57 The victim was interviewed on 29 June 2024

58 The victim was interviewed on 24 June and early July 2024.

59 The victim was interviewed on 29 June and early July 2024.

60 Victim was interviewed on 26 March 2024

The UN Security Council has adopted several resolutions that highlight the gravity of this crime, the importance of the protection of women and girls, prosecution of perpetrators in the conflict and post-conflict states and outlining responsibilities of states to end and prevent CSRV.⁶¹ Finally, even Sudanese domestic law was amended to make rape a crime.⁶²

61 UN Women. Women, peace, and security in the work of the UN Security Council. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/un-security-council>

62 ACJPS, Sudan's *new law on rape and sexual harassment: one step forward, two steps back?* 8 March 2016. <https://web.acjps.org/sudans-new-law-on-rape-and-sexual-harassment-one-step-forward-two-steps-back/>

Recommendations

A. THE UN MECHANISMS

1. To UN Security Council

- Call on the warring parties to end sexual violence, investigate the violations and provide reparations to the victims.
- Request an immediate briefing by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict given the widespread nature of CSRV in Sudan.
- Extend the sanctions on Sudan, including asset freezes, travel bans and arms embargo.

2. To Human Rights Council

- Urge the Sudanese government to implement recommendations accepted in the 3rd UPR cycle in 2021 and prepare for the 2027 4th UPR review, including the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and take measures to prevent and address all forms of torture and to prevent enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial executions and ensure accountability for all violations and abuses.⁶³
- Adopt the recommendations of the FFM Sudan to stop the violence and protect civilians, end impunity and ensure accountability, stop sexual violence, sexual slavery and forced marriage.

⁶³ Report of the Working Group on Universal Periodic Review: Sudan. 20 April 2022. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g22/323/30/pdf/g2232330.pdf?OpenElement>

3.UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Committee Against Torture and relevant special procedures

- Issue a statement of condemnation against both parties regarding arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and torture in detention.
- Train relevant staff including human rights defenders, lawyers and front-line medical workers on documentation of enforced disappearances and torture.

4.The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict

- Demand the Sudanese government to investigate violations of violence against women during the war, and bring those accused to justice, and protect victims.

B. AFRICAN UNION mechanisms

5.African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

- Expand more resources for the Fact-Finding Mission to visit Sudan, Chad, Uganda and other neighboring countries hosting the refugees.

6. The AU Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women in Africa

- Urge African Union member states to apply pressure on both sides of the conflict to stop violence against women, especially the use of rape as a weapon of war.

7. AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

- Publicly call on the warring parties to end widespread sexual violence and conduct investigations into these violations
- Hold parties to account for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and actively support ongoing international investigations into events in Sudan through supporting a collaborative and complementary working relationship between the African Commission and the United Nations Sudan focused bodies.

