



## **Briefing on the Human Rights Situation in Sudan to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR)**

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS), writes to the Commission to express our concerns and urge you to address the ongoing violations of human rights in Sudan marked by continued impunity. ACJPS is a non-profit, non-governmental organization working to monitor and promote respect for human rights and legal reform in Sudan.

There is overwhelming evidence that Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (ACJPS) and the armed militias are violating human rights and international humanitarian law in Sudan. Since the war erupted on 15 April 2023, the humanitarian crisis and human rights violations in Sudan have reached an unprecedented scale. There has been indiscriminate targeting of civilians and infrastructure by the warring parties. As the conflict enters its seventh month, the death toll continues to rise, with the remains of many victims yet to be located, collected, identified, or buried. While estimates suggest that over 9,000 lives have been lost by October 2023, the true extent of the tragedy is likely much higher due to the intensity of the fighting and the challenges in documenting and confirming casualties. In Darfur, the violence has taken on an ethnic turn, leading to a new round of ethnic cleansing and demanding urgent action. Unfortunately, this is just the latest cycle of a pattern of violence that stretches back more than 20 years. It is a vivid symbol of the failure of the commitment to end genocide and ethnic cleansing. In mid-June 2023, the brutal massacre of more than 1,100 civilians in West Darfur capital of El Geneina, was determined by both the US Department of State and the Sudan Conflict Observatory and local sources to be a deliberate act of ethnic violence targeting non-Arab communities,<sup>1</sup> in particular members of the Massalit community. Actual numbers of the thousands killed in El Geneina, West Darfur, could be higher.<sup>2</sup> Over the past six months, the RSF have systematically burned and looted villages, raped untold numbers of women, and killed those who have resisted their attacks specifically in Darfur region.

Several efforts made by different international actors to facilitate peace is yet to yield a positive result. The most notable has been the signing of a [Commitment Declaration](#) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia by the warring parties facilitated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America on 11 May 2023. The Declaration was to ensure the protection of civilians, including allowing safe passage for civilians. Additionally, on 20 May 2023, representatives of RSF and SAF signed a [seven-day short-term humanitarian ceasefire agreement](#) in Jeddah, which took effect forty-eight (48) hours after its entry into force. Mediated by the United States and Saudi Arabian authorities, the agreement reaffirmed the principles and commitments established in the Jeddah Commitment Declaration to Protect the Civilians of Sudan. However, on 31 May 2023, the ceasefire facilitators suspended the Jeddah process, citing serious

---

<sup>1</sup> Project Hope, "2023 Sudan Conflict: Situation Report #7", August 24, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/2023-sudan-conflict-situation-report-7-august-24-2023>

<sup>2</sup> The conflict in West Darfur that has heightened since 24 April, is reported to have already claimed over 5,000 lives and injured over 8,000. See, Sudan: More than 5,000 Reportedly Killed in El Geneina 'Genocide' at <https://allafrica.com/stories/202306210012.html>

violations committed by the warring parties. The conflict has continued in different states in Sudan with concentration in Khartoum and Darfur region.

Impunity has become structural and generalized in Sudan, and this has only encouraged the continuation of the commission of serious crimes. It's legacy in Sudan has gone hand-in-hand with continued instability and conflict. Lasting peace cannot be achieved without accountability for all perpetrators of human rights violations, and justice and reparations for victims. Findings from the investigation committee established by Sudanese authorities after the outbreak of the war have not been published and it is unclear when they will be made public. Additionally, institutions such as the judiciary that would play a vital role in ensuring accountability has had its infrastructures destroyed by bombings and shelling.

We appreciate the ACHPR for the two resolutions it has adopted on the human rights situation in Sudan since the war erupted and for condemning the war. However, it is time for the Commission to take stronger action in response to widespread and grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Sudan. We therefore urge the commission to:

1. Condemn in the strongest terms the ongoing grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Sudan, including the continued indiscriminate aerial bombing and shelling of civilian populated areas. Similarly condemn the ethnic- based attacks targeting the civilians of African descent in West Darfur.
2. Utilize its influence and resources to support efforts to end the conflict.
3. Fulfill its mandate on civil wars and armed conflicts by monitoring and reporting on human rights violations in Sudan, providing recommendations to the African Union and its member states, and engaging with civil society organizations.
4. Urgently dispatch investigation teams, with expertise in sexual and gender-based violence, to investigate crimes under international law and other widespread and serious violations and abuses of human rights in Sudan, identify those responsible, and provide recommendations for accountability.
5. Urge the Sudanese authorities to address the continued impunity of security forces and RSF for human rights violations in Sudan and further urge the authorities to ensure that the report of the investigation committee instituted to investigate violations committed since 15<sup>th</sup> April is made public and perpetrators held to account.

**a) Violation of the right to life**

As of 12 October 2023, over 9,000 people have been killed since the armed conflict broke out in April 2023<sup>3</sup> while as of 12 September 2023, over 5.3 million people have fled their homes and sought refuge in relatively safe areas in Sudan or neighbouring countries. More than 4.1 million have been internally displaced to the areas of Senar, River Nile, North, South and East Darfur states whereas more than 1.1 million others had fled the country as refugees.<sup>4</sup>

**b) Arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention**

Both RSF and SAF have targeted human rights defenders, activists, medical professionals and volunteers with arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention. SAF soldiers in Khartoum have reportedly been targeting young Misseriya tribesmen as they consider them supporters of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) while RSF soldiers are abducting human rights defenders and grassroots activists.<sup>5</sup> ACJPS documented several incidents where human rights defenders and activists have been arbitrarily arrested and detained by SAF and RSF including 17 resistance committee members for their advocacy work against the ongoing armed conflict in Sudan, for advocating for the release of detainees and engaging with the local ceasefire committees in North Darfur, Khartoum, Aljazeera, and Northern State.<sup>6</sup> Human rights defenders were also arrested while providing legal aid services to detained resistance committee members.<sup>7</sup> At least eleven civilians were also arrested and detained by both SAF and RSF for their ethnic affiliations or suspected affiliation with the opposite party.<sup>8</sup>

Some detainees held by SAF have been charged with trumped up charges including Espionage, an offence that carry a punishment of death penalty under article 53 of the Sudanese Criminal Law of 1991, allowing and assisting prisoners of war to escape and abetment of mutiny under articles 54 and 58 of Sudanese Penal Code 1991 respectively. Others have been charged with disturbance of Public Peace and Public Nuisance under articles 69 and 77 of the Sudanese Penal Code, 1991. Some detainees have since been released on bail while others remain in incommunicado custody.

Detainees in both SAF and RSF custody are being held without access to family or lawyers in ungazetted detention centres in areas under their control. For example, in Khartoum, the SAF are holding detainees in the strategic unit building, military intelligence base, Karari base in Omdurman and Engineering Unit in Omdurman. The RSF on the other hand is holding detainees in RSF military intelligence headquarters in Alryad neighborhood in Khartoum, residential houses in different neighborhoods in Khartoum, a police station in 18 neighborhood also known as Almurbate in Abu Sead locality in Omdurman, Ali Abdul Fatah University student's hostel, Eltijani Almahi hospital of Omdurman, the National Television and Radio

---

<sup>3</sup>Sudan Tribune <https://sudantribune.com/article278099/>

<sup>4</sup> "100 days of conflict in Sudan: A timeline". *Al Jazeera*. 24 July 2023. Retrieved 28 September 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Radio Dabanga, Military Intelligence continues to detain activists in Sudan, 16 June 2023

<https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/military-intelligence-continues-to-detain-activists-in-sudan>

<sup>6</sup> ACJPS, Human rights defenders and activists arrested, detained and falsely charged for their work in Sudan (31 July, 2023) <https://www.acjps.org/human-rights-defenders-and-activists-arrested-detained-and-falsely-charged-for-their-work-in-sudan/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

building located in Almulazmeen neighborhood, Omdurman and the weapons and ammunition unit located in Shambate neighborhood in Khartoum Bahari. Both SAF and RSF use their military bases across the country as detention centers. The lack of access for family members to the detainees, together with the well-documented use by RSF and SAF of torture and other forms of ill-treatment against detainees, particularly whilst held in unknown locations, gives rise to serious concerns for their safety.

### **c) Cases of alleged torture**

Detainees held by both SAF and RSF have allegedly been subjected to torture and ill-treatment. On 25 September 2023 ACJPS documented testimonies of victims who had been allegedly tortured while in detention in South Darfur by SAF and RSF. Some of the torturous treatment include but not limited to; deprivation of food, beating with gun butts and electric wires and small detention rooms without ventilation.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, In May 2023, a former leading member of the Sudanese Communist Party, was allegedly held by the RSF in Khartoum for 30 hours, in the cellar of a building where between 200 and 300 other people were being held with no electricity or lighting, and no ventilation.<sup>10</sup> In West Darfur, one detainee who was arrested by RSF was found dead.<sup>11</sup>

### **d) Increased cases of enforced disappearance**

Reports about enforced disappearances continues to rise, amid fears that the victims are being subjected to SGBV and other life-threatening rights violations including torture and death. On 16 June 2023, the Missing Initiative, a local online initiative dedicated to helping find people who are unaccounted documented over 229 cases of missing persons, 15 of which were women and girls.<sup>12</sup> The number also includes foreigners.<sup>13</sup> In the same month, ACJPS documented 91 people who had gone missing in Khartoum since 15 April 2023. On 26 July 2023, ACJPS published additional names of 131 people who went “missing” in the month of May in Khartoum.<sup>14</sup> In July 2023, 14 “missing” people were released, three of whom had been arbitrarily detained by RSF in their detention centers in Alryad neighborhood of Khartoum and Alsabeel neighborhood, Alamir locality in Omdurman.<sup>15</sup> On 12 September 2023, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has corroborated this distressing trend, revealing that at least 500 people have been reported as disappeared since the start of the war.<sup>16</sup> In Khartoum alone, the reported count of missing persons, encompassing 500 individuals including 24 women, underscores the severity of the crisis.<sup>17</sup>

Enforced disappearances have happened in incidents where victims are detained by warring parties and their whereabouts are unknown to their families. For example, ACJPS documented

---

<sup>9</sup>ACJPS, Shelling and A rain of bullets in Nyala, South Darfur (25 September 2023) <https://www.acjps.org/shelling-and-a-rain-of-bullets-in-nyala-south-darfur/>

<sup>10</sup> Radio Dabanga, **Political activist tortured in Sudan military detention, 19 July 2023**, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/disappearances/allegations/general-allegation-sudan-128.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> SIHA, Enforced disappearance against any civilian population is a crime against humanity, 16 June 2023, <https://twitter.com/Sihanet/status/1669726230541750272>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> UN, Sudan: Türk says conflict must stop before it is too late to pull the country back from disaster, 12 September 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/09/sudan-turk-says-conflict-must-stop-it-too-late-pull-country-back>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

the case of Mr. Alnoor, a male Sudanese citizen aged 34-years-old and a resident of Almamura neighborhood in Khartoum. He fled the area together with his family and moved to Wad Madani in Aljazeera State to live with his relatives because of the armed conflict in Khartoum. On 9 May 2023, Mr. Alnoor together with his friend returned to Amamura to check on their house. However, when they reached the building, they noticed that the entire flat was occupied by RSF. Unfortunately, they were arrested before they could access their homes and questioned about why they were there and asked to present their identification documents to which they complied. However, things took a turn for the worst when the group attempted to cut off Mr. Alnoor's dreadlocks and he resisted. The group started beating the duo with lashes while another soldier was shooting in the air. They then tied him up, put him in one of their land cruiser vehicles and forced him to take them to his home. When they reached the premises, they shot at the locks, forcefully entered and searched the house before asking Mr. Alnoor whether he had a vehicle. Mr. Alnoor answered in the negative and the group took him to a house in Almamura (RSF temporary detention center) where he was beaten with leather lashes, verbally abused and his hair cut off. Mr. Alnoor spent the day in detention and the following day he was transferred to another detention centre in Sport Town, Khartoum where he found other detainees. It is alleged that the detainees were beaten on a daily basis. Mr. Alnoor told ACJPS that one of the detainees started passing blood while urinating as a result of the torture. On 16 May 2023, Mr. Alnoor was released after he turned down RSF's request to join the forces. On 17 June, 2023 SAF aircraft attacked Sports Town and the surrounding areas but there is no information about what happened to the other detainees or their whereabouts.

On 23 April 2023, SAF soldiers arrested Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Madebo, aged 28 together with a group of people at Abu Zaid market next to Libya market in Almir locality, Um Badah neighborhood of Omdurman as they were waiting for transportation to East Darfur. The group was detained in the SAF base in Omdurman. Although some detainees were released, there isn't any information about the whereabouts of Mr. Mohamed Ahmed.

#### **e) The attack against human rights defenders**

In June 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders reported that six HRDs had been killed in in El-Geneina, West Darfur and those targeted have included lawyers and human rights monitors.<sup>18</sup> All six reportedly received threats from militia members prior to the killings, indicating they may have been specifically targeted for their human rights work.<sup>19</sup> Of those killed, many were attacked at their homes alongside their family members.<sup>20</sup> On 22 June 2023, ACJPS documented the killing of at least eight human rights defenders in Elgenina.<sup>21</sup> Several have escaped to Chad where they live in dire conditions. The "Emergency lawyers" group has also called upon the regional and international organizations to protect civilians particularly human rights defenders as they work had to monitor violations under difficult and risky security situation<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> UN, Sudan- Killing of HRDs in West Darfur, 28 June 2023 <https://srdefenders.org/information/sudan-killings-of-hrds-in-west-darfur/>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> ACJPS, Sudan: At least 1000 people have been killed, several others injured and thousands displaced in Darfur region as the armed conflict between RSF and SAF continues, 22 June 2023, <https://www.acjps.org/sudan-at-least-1000-people-have-been-killed-several-others-injured-and-thousands-displaced-in-darfur-region-as-the-armed-conflict-between-rsf-and-saf-continues/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.darfur24.com/en/2023/08/05/sudan-lawyers-call-for-international-protection-of-human-rights-defenders/>

#### **f) Gender-based violence against Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in Sudan**

On 2 August 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders reported receiving extremely worrying reports of gender-based attacks against WHRDs in Darfur, Sudan, in the context of the ongoing atrocities in the region.<sup>23</sup> These attacks reportedly come in the context of the killing of multiple human rights defenders in West Darfur since the beginning of June and form part of the broader pattern beginning to emerge of the use of sexual violence against women in the spiraling conflict. It's reported that at least one WHRD is known to have been killed in West Darfur, with RSF members reportedly attacking her home in el-Geneina in July, while several WHRDs working in the region are reported as missing.<sup>24</sup> Another WHRD was allegedly twice threatened with rape and assassination if she continued to report on human rights violations.<sup>25</sup> The first threat allegedly came after a large number of her family members were killed close to the outbreak of the conflict, in what was allegedly a targeted attack. It is alleged that the message was communicated by phone and that the person making the threat, who claimed to belong to the RSF, was aware of her location, even though she had gone into hiding. The day prior to receiving the message, she had allegedly been chased and shot at by a group of men in el-Geneina, but managed to escape. She was subsequently allegedly kidnapped and held for three days, during which time she was allegedly tortured, subjected to attempted sexual assault and threats of rape, and interrogated as to her work documenting atrocities. She was reportedly released before fleeing the country, but has again allegedly been threatened by phone, with the perpetrator claiming to be affiliated with the RSF.<sup>26</sup> In a separate incident, another WHRD alleged that she was forced to flee Sudan after also being threatened with rape. This reportedly happened after her family home in el-Geneina was twice raided by the RSF and Arab militia members, once in June and once in July, and her father was assassinated.<sup>27</sup>

#### **g) Restriction of the right to information and Violation of freedom of expression**

To date, some areas in Darfur such as Nyala, El-genina and Zalingi are still cut off from the rest of the world following an internet shutdown. Since evening of 21 April 2023, RSF took over Omdurman National Radio and interfered with the broadcast with coverage only within Khartoum State.<sup>28</sup> The Sudan National Television building is presently under the control of RSF and its broadcast is out of service.<sup>29</sup> In May 2023, journalists were beaten, detained, and interrogated for covering the conflict or alleged spying for either side of the conflicting parties according to a report by Sudan Journalists Syndicate.<sup>30</sup> For example, on 1 May 2023, a photographer journalist was filming clashes in Khartoum when he was shot in the back by the RSF. On 16 May, RSF soldiers detained two journalists working for Al-Jazeera at a check point

---

<sup>23</sup> UN, Gender-based violence against women human rights defenders in Sudan, 2 August 2023 <https://srdefenders.org/information/gender-based-attacks-on-whrds-in-sudan/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Sudan Journalists Syndicate twitter account, 14 May 2023 [https://twitter.com/sdjs\\_official/status/1657839908398964736](https://twitter.com/sdjs_official/status/1657839908398964736)



in Khartoum and held them overnight. The next day, the soldiers raided their homes and confiscated their money, cell phones, clothes and a car.<sup>31</sup>

#### **h) Obstruction of health care**

Several health facilities are not functional and those that are functional and operational are hard to reach due to the restrictions of movements, lack of water and power, and the continuing gunfights has made it difficult for health facilities to operate. According to the Khartoum State Ministry of Health, out of 34 hospitals in Khartoum city, 16 have become non-functional while others have compromised functionality.<sup>32</sup> The World Health Organization has also confirmed 15 attacks on healthcare facilities since the start of the conflict.<sup>33</sup> On 25 April 2023, a medical centre in Omdurman was bombed, fortunately there were no casualties.<sup>34</sup> On 27 April 2023, Sudanese Doctors Association Executive Committee announced that RSF had taken control of Khartoum Hospital and chased away. Approximately, 11 medical personnel have been killed and several others are missing since the outbreak of the armed conflict.<sup>35</sup>

### **New Trends of Violations**

#### **a) Recruitment of child soldiers**

The scale of recruitment of child soldiers is alarming and witnesses accuse the native administration of aiding the process for both parties. The severe poverty and lack of access to basic needs has driven many children into the arms of the militia as a means of survival. RSF has used the tactic of money and false promises to lure children into the conflict. In September 2023, ACJPS reported at least 20 child soldiers who had been recruited into the war.<sup>36</sup>

#### **b) Abduction and extortion**

This is a trend mostly used by RSF. The rate of abductions increased shortly after Gen. Al-Burhan, the SAF high command passed a resolution to halt RSF salaries in May, 2023. Those targeted are businessmen and professionals who are believed to be “rich”. On 25 September 2023, ACJPS documented the testimonies of victims of such abductions. For example, Mr. Ahmed Khalid a school teacher who was kidnapped from his home in Nyala by an unknown group of men. Using the victim’s phone, the perpetrators called his wife and demanded for 2,000,000 Sudanese pounds (approximately 3,400) as ransom.

#### **c) Conflict related sexual violence**

The escalation of sexual violence within the context of the Sudan conflict is deeply alarming and demands urgent international attention. The conflict has tragically transformed into a war targeting women's bodies, with a discernible pattern of SGBV. As of 7 August 2023, at least 103 cases of rape had been documented, with 73 committed in West Darfur alone. Many remain unreported.<sup>37</sup> Victims alleged that they were forcibly taken from their homes by soldiers and

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> UNICEF Sudan, Humanitarian External Situation Report No. 1, 25 April 2023, [https://www.unicef.org/sudan/media/11621/file/UNICEF%20Sudan%20EXTERNAL%20Situation%20Report%20No.%201%20\(SAF\\_RSFS%20Clashes\)%2025%20April%202023.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/sudan/media/11621/file/UNICEF%20Sudan%20EXTERNAL%20Situation%20Report%20No.%201%20(SAF_RSFS%20Clashes)%2025%20April%202023.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> *supra*

<sup>37</sup> Radio Dabanga, calls to address sexual violence in Darfur, El Burhan orders investigation into ‘war crimes’, 7 August 2023, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/calls-to-address-sexual-violence-in-darfur-el-burhan-orders-investigation-into-war-crimes>

subjected to sexual assault.<sup>38</sup> Others were allegedly raped in their homes.<sup>39</sup> Others have been raped while fleeing the conflict. Public freedoms such as freedom of expression and information have been severely violated by both parties. Since May 2023, Internet and local phone calls have been disrupted in Darfur region. In May 2023, journalists were beaten, detained, and interrogated for covering the conflict or alleged spying for either side of the conflicting parties according to a report by Sudan Journalists Syndicate.<sup>40</sup>

#### **d) Kidnapping and slavery**

On 1 August 2023, Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) reported that they had detected alarming information that members of the RSF have been kidnapping female civilians and holding them hostage in Darfur to be ransomed back to their families or possibly be later sold in markets. According to SIHA, an eyewitness in Al-Fashir, North Darfur, confirmed that three women and/or girls (who may be underage; their ages were not identified) were brought by the RSF to the Dar Al Salam locality. Civilians reportedly tried to appeal to the RSF to release the hostages. However, the RSF soldiers allegedly requested a ransom of 30 million Sudanese Pounds. The hostages were reportedly given mobiles to call their families in Khartoum to pay the requested amount. After further negotiations, SIHA reported that 21 million Sudanese Pounds were paid, and the three hostages were freed. The freed hostages took buses from Al-Fashir back to Khartoum. The same source confirmed to SIHA another incident in which another female hostage was freed after the RSF were paid 650,000 Sudanese Pounds. Another source confirmed to SIHA that he saw many other women and/or girls bound and held in cars in Wadaah area, North Darfur, Southeast of Al-Fashir. He alleged that the incidents are public and ‘no one can deny that it is happening...everyone in Wadaah saw this, we all saw this.’ He also allegedly commented that the women and/or girls looked like they were from Northern Sudan. Another source confirmed to SIHA that he saw armed Arab men transporting bound women and/or girls on the pickup trucks, and no one approached or spoke to them. The source also allegedly commented that the women and/or girls did not look like they were not from Darfur.

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Sudan Journalists Syndicate twitter account, 14 May 2023 [https://twitter.com/sdjs\\_official/status/1657839908398964736](https://twitter.com/sdjs_official/status/1657839908398964736)