

This joint submission by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and CSW-Nigeria (CSW-N) seeks to highlight violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and related human rights which have taken place in the Republic of the Sudan during the reporting period.

Introduction

1. During its third Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Sudan received 283 recommendations, of which 244 were accepted and 39 noted¹. Among the accepted recommendations were two recommendations relating to FoRB²; one recommendation to combat hate speech and racial discrimination³ and over 70 recommendations on gender equality and the rights of women.⁴
2. Before Sudan's third cycle review, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) jointly conducted a coup d'état, disrupting the agreement for a period of transition and reform culminating in democratic elections and a transfer to an elected administration.
3. Between October 2021 and April 2023 there were flagrant rights violations and an undermining of reforms and improvements that had been made during the transitional period. Violations of FoRB included the arrest, detention, torture of civilians accused of apostasy and incidents of interference with the affairs of Christian places of worship. Additionally, the space for civil society was increasingly restricted, with individuals working with the civilian-led transitional government being targeted.
4. On 15 April 2023 fighting broke out between the SAF and RSF in Khartoum and subsequently spread across Sudan. The ensuing conflict, described by the UN Fact-Finding Mission as

'a war of atrocities'⁵, has seen widespread and egregious human rights violations, including acts that may amount to genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed by parties to the conflict. The war has so far led to an estimated 100,000 deaths, displaced 14 million people, and left around 30 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

5. Reported violations include attacks on critical civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, places of worship, educational facilities and markets; targeting of civilians on the basis of identity; the introduction of discriminatory policies in SAF-controlled areas, including the 'Strange Faces' policy; widespread conflict-related sexual violence affecting women, girls, men and boys; torture; and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Legal Framework

6. Sudan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
7. The 2019 Transitional Constitutional Document remains the authoritative constitutional framework.
8. Relevant provisions of the 2019 Transitional Constitutional Document include protections relating to respecting diversity, non-discrimination, and freedom of religion or belief. These are enshrined in articles 4, 43, and 56 respectively.⁶

Violations of freedom of religion or belief

9. During the previous UPR cycle, transitional authorities took steps to strengthen the protection of FoRB, including decriminalising apostasy in the 1991 Criminal Code.
10. However, the protections afforded by these legislative reforms remain at a statutory level, and in practice the threat of apostasy charges and the

1 United Nations, Report of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review: Republic of the Sudan, 20 April 2022, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/16>; United Nations, Report of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review: Republic of the Sudan, Addendum, 'A/HRC/50/16/Add.1, 3 June 2022, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/16/Add.1>

2 Ibid, Recommendation from Afghanistan, 137.106 (supported): 'Adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination and equalities law, banning discrimination on such grounds as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, age or disability'; Recommendation from Indonesia, 137.149 (supported): 'Continue to enhance the promotion of interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance'

3 Ibid, Recommendation from Armenia, 137.89 (supported): 'Strengthen relevant legislative policies and take further administrative measures to combat hate speech, racism, xenophobia and related intolerance'

4 Ibid, Recommendations included calls for the ratification of the Convention on all forms of Elimination Against Women (CEDAW) and a recommendation from Malta, 137.246 (supported) to 'implement 'measures for the protection and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, in addition to mechanisms for accountability, in conflict affected and displacement settings.'

5 United Nations, 'A war of Atrocities': UN human rights investigators warn Sudanese civilians are paying the highest price., 5 September 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165784>

6 Article 4: 'Nature of the State: 4.1 The Republic of Sudan is an independent, sovereign, democratic, parliamentary, pluralistic, decentralized state, where rights and duties are based on citizenship without discrimination due to race, religion, culture, sex, color, gender, social or economic status, political opinion, disability, regional affiliation or any other cause. 4.2. The state is committed to the respect of human dignity and diversity; and is founded on justice, equality and on the guarantee of human rights and fundamental freedoms'; Article 43: 'The State's Obligations: The state undertakes to protect and strengthen the rights contained in this Charter and to guarantee them for all without discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, language, religion, political opinion, social status, or other reason.' Article 56. 'Freedom of Belief and Worship: Every person has the right to freedom of religious belief and worship. They shall have the right to profess or express their religion or belief through worship, education, practice, performance of rituals, or celebrations, in accordance with the requirements of the law and public order. No one shall be compelled to convert to a religion they do not believe in or to practice rites or rituals they do not voluntarily accept.'

death penalty have been used against vulnerable communities.

Apostasy charges

11. On 24 June 2022 Badar Haroun Abdul-Jabbar, Mohamed Haroun Abdul-Jabbar, Tariq Aref Abdallah and Mortada Ismael Yousef, who had reportedly converted to Christianity, were arrested in Zalingei, the capital of Central Darfur State. They were released after being questioned by the intelligence police about their religious identity and having their personal belongings confiscated. During this first detention the men were subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment.⁷ On 28 June the men were detained and taken to the main prison in Zalingei, where they were held for several days. On 3 July they were brought before the prosecutor, who asked them to renounce Christianity and agree not to pray or share their faith or participate in any activities that would show they were Christians, otherwise they would face the death penalty. The men refused and were informed that they had been charged with apostasy under Article 126 of the 1991 criminal code, which was amended in 2020 to remove the crime of apostasy. The main complainant in the case was a police officer named Abdel Hafiz Musa, and the Attorney General pursuing the case was named Abdalla Issa Musa.⁸ The General Prosecutor of Central Darfur State transferred the case to the Criminal Court in August 2022. A hearing was due to take place on 30 August; however, the judge informed the defendants that the case had been recalled by the prosecutor and charges were being dismissed due to the decriminalisation of apostasy.⁹
12. The case demonstrated that, despite the decriminalisation of apostasy, state agents continued to detain, interrogate, threaten and mistreat individuals suspected of changing their religion or belief. Although the death penalty is no longer applicable in law, the threat and stigma associated with apostasy remain powerful tools of intimidation. The church founded by the men remained closed, and members of the small congregation feared further harassment. Additionally, the use of torture in detention violated Article 2 of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) that Sudan ratified in August 2021.¹⁰

Targeted violence against minority communities

13. On 13 July 2022 three children died in an attack by extremists on the home of a deceased Catholic Deacon, Azrag Barnab, in the Al-Omda neighbourhood of Garsilla in Central Darfur. The house was set alight at midnight by extremists who called it the 'Kafir's house'. Mr Barnab's six-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter died in the fire. His older son, aged 11, managed to escape, but died from his injuries several days later in hospital. Mr Barnab had died in hospital in November 2021 in a suspected poisoning. The family filed a police report on his case, but authorities failed to investigate the circumstances surrounding his death sufficiently.¹¹

Closure of Churches due to intimidation

14. Hostility towards Christian communities in Central Darfur increased after the October 2021 military coup. Shortly after the coup church leaders living in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur reported receiving threats from officials who told them they would face apostasy charges if they continued to meet to pray. This increase in threats and violence led to the closure of three churches in Zalingei, Central Darfur in 2022: the Christ's Light Church in January 2022, the Episcopal Church in April 2022, and the Baptist Church in June 2022. In each case, the respective church leaders took the decision to close their places of worship for the safety of their communities.¹²

Refusal of permits for church reconstruction

15. The Coptic community in Wad Diab Al Gaba, Northern State, has been prevented by local authorities from worshipping in, and completing the reconstruction of, its church building. For 30 years, the community worshipped in a church built with basic materials on land belonging to Mr Zaki Wanees Abadeer, a member of the Coptic community.
16. In 2019 heavy rains severely damaged the structure, prompting the community, which comprises approximately 65 families and around 350 members, to demolish the existing building and raise funds to construct a more durable church using bricks and mortar. In December 2025, when the structure was almost complete, Muslim extremists in the area prevented work on the site from continuing. The extremists filed a complaint

7 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Four men charged with apostasy', 8 July 2022, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2022/07/08/press/5766/article.htm>

8 *Ibid*

9 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Apostasy case dismissed by Prosecutor', 9 September 2022, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2022/09/09/press/5812/article.htm>

10 United Nations Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, 10 October 1984, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>

11 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Three children killed in arson attack on deacon's home', 23 August 2022, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2022/08/23/press/5796/article.htm>

12 *Op Cit FN 4*

with the local authority against the owner of the land, Mr Abadeer, who was subsequently ordered to suspend all worship activities and construction work until a permit was issued for the church. Although the Coptic Church had attempted to obtain permission for the building to be officially recognised and registered, the local authority refused to issue the necessary permits. Issues surrounding the informal construction of places of worship are an abiding concern. Even after decades of use, local and national authorities have often applied discriminatory zoning rules, demolishing churches while supporting the construction of mosques.

17. This case raises serious concerns regarding the legal protections available to Christian communities seeking to renovate or rebuild places of worship that have been damaged during the conflict. It also highlights the impact of social pressure on vulnerable religious groups, including the Coptic community in Wad Diab Al Gaba.

Attempts to bring perpetrators of attacks to justice

18. Yasin Ahmed Haroun, a member of Sudan's army, was arrested and accused of burning down a church belonging to the Sudan Church of Christ (SCOC) denomination in Doka, Gedaref State, which had been a place of worship since 1991. The attack took place on 16 December 2022. He was scheduled to appear before the Al Galabat Criminal Court on 13 April 2023 charged under Articles 127 and 182 of the Criminal Act (Defiling and Disturbing Places of Worship and Criminal Mischief). Shortly after the attack, church leaders filed a criminal case with the local prosecutor naming an army officer who had been spotted fleeing following the attack. The prosecutor requested that the military surrender him for their investigations; however, military officials initially stated that they had no-one by that name in their ranks. They were eventually obliged to hand him over to the authorities after the case went viral on social media. However, the case was postponed due to the outbreak of war.

Assassination attempts on Christian advisor to Minister of Religious Affairs

19. During 2021 there were two assassination attempts on Boutros Badawi, advisor to the Minister of Religious affairs. In July 2021 Mr Badawi was attacked by five-armed men who assaulted and threatened to kill him if he continued to speak out about the government's failure to adequately respond to the issue of confiscated properties belonging to churches, and issues surrounding the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church committees.¹³ On 27 October, days after the Military coup, Mr Badawi was attacked at around 8pm as he was walking to his home in Khartoum. Mr Badawi reportedly realised that two people were following him when one of them shot at him but missed. He escaped his assailants by seeking refuge in a nearby home and leaving via a back route.¹⁴

Potential breaches of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), potential war crimes and attacks against protected objects

20. During the war both the RSF and SAF have targeted and attacked places of worship in attacks that may constitute violations of IHL, including the obligation to take due care to avoid damage to buildings dedicated to religion or education. Provisions under customary international law provide for the protection of cultural sites.¹⁵ The Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols also prohibit targeted attacks on places of worship and their use for military purposes.¹⁶ Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), intentionally directing attacks against protected objects, including buildings dedicated to religion, education, charitable purposes, hospitals and medical facilities, may constitute a war crime.¹⁷

Attacks on places of worship that may constitute violations of IHL and war crimes by SAF or SAF affiliated militias

21. The SAF shelled and destroyed the largest and oldest church in Omdurman on 1 November 2023. On 3 November, Mariam Home, a building

¹³ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Christian advisor to Minister of Guidance and Religious Endowments attacked by armed men', 5 July 2021, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2021/07/05/press/5338/article.htm>

¹⁴ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Individuals who worked for civilian government targeted in assassination attempt', 3 November 2021, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2021/11/03/press/5467/article.htm>

¹⁵ Customary International Law, Rule 38: Attacks Against Cultural Property Each party to the conflict must respect cultural property: A. Special care must be taken in military operations to avoid damage to buildings dedicated to religion, art, science, education or charitable purposes and historic monuments unless they are military objectives. B. Property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people must not be the object of attack unless imperatively required by military necessity. Source: International Humanitarian Law Database ICRC <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule38#title-3>

¹⁶ Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977. [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/pt/ihl-treaties/api-1977?activeTab=](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/pt/ihl-treaties/api-1977?activeTab=;); Article 53 - Protection of cultural objects and of places of worship. Without prejudice to the provisions of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 14 May 1954, and of other relevant international instruments, it is prohibited: (a) to commit any acts of hostility directed against the historic monuments, works of art or places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples; (b) to use such objects in support of the military effort; (c) to make such objects the object of reprisals.

¹⁷ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998), Article 8: War Crimes <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/rome-statute-international-criminal-court>

belonging to the Comboni Catholic missionary order in Khartoum El-Shajara was bombed. The attack on Mariam Home left five nuns and several children injured.¹⁸

22. An Islamist militia affiliated with the SAF vandalised and detonated explosives inside the Sheikh Qarib Allah mosque in Omdurman on 27 March 2024.¹⁹
23. The SAF dropped barrel bombs indiscriminately on the Sheikh El Jeili Mosque in Wad Madani, Gezira State, after evening prayers on 20 October 2024. Fifteen people were identified immediately after the attack, with local responders estimating the deaths to be as many as 31 as they worked to identify the victims.²⁰
24. At least seven people were killed in an SAF airstrike on the Sheikh Elsidig Mosque in Shambat, Khartoum North, after Friday prayers on 4 December 2024.²¹
25. At least 11 people, including eight children, were killed in an SAF airstrike on Al Ezba, Khartoum North, on 20 December 2024. The strike hit a church, the local nursery and residential buildings.²²

Attacks on places of worship that may constitute violations of IHL and/or war crimes by RSF or RSF affiliated militias

26. Six gunmen attacked the Al-Masalma Coptic Church in Omdurman, Sudan on 13 May 2023.²³
27. The RSF forcibly evacuated all priests, including His Grace Bishop Elia, the Bishop of Khartoum and South Sudan, from The Holy Virgin Mary Coptic Orthodox Church on Nile Street in Khartoum on 14 May 2023, in order to use the premises as a military base. The RSF had reportedly been intimidating and harassing those in the church for a week before they forced them to leave. A similar incident was reported on 3 May 2023, when the Coptic Church in Khartoum North (Bahri) was attacked.²⁴

28. Mosques have also been attacked as violence continues across the country. On 14 May 2023 the Al Zareeba mosque was bombed in El Geneina, West Darfur, where fighting was particularly intense. According to the Preliminary Committee of Sudan Doctor's Trade Union, 280 people were killed and more than 160 were injured in the region between 12-13 May 2023.²⁵ There were also reports of the bombings of mosques in the Alazhari and Burri Al Daraissa areas of Khartoum; one person was killed in the latter.²⁶
29. Members of the RSF attacked a Coptic monastery in Wad Madani, Gezira State, Sudan on 16 December 2023 and subsequently used it as a military base.²⁷
30. A church in Wad Madani, Gezira State, Sudan, was set on fire and partially destroyed by members of the RSF on 12 January 2024. Several members of the church were also held captive within the monastery but were later released.²⁸
31. The RSF attacked a church belonging to the Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC) in Al Hasaheisa, Gezira State, during a Christmas prayer service on 30 December 2024. They forced the 177 Christians who had gathered there to leave. At least 14 people, including women and children, were assaulted and injured during the attack, and the soldiers also threatened to kill all Christians in the area.²⁹
32. The RSF bombed the Sudanese Episcopal Church in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur State, on 9 June 2025, and the African Inland Church and Roman Catholic Church in the same city on 11 June 2025. A Catholic priest, Father Luca Jomo, died from injuries sustained in the attack on the Romal Catholic Church.³⁰
33. At least 70 people were killed, and an unknown number were injured in an attack by the RSF on a mosque near the Abu Souk Camp for IDPs in El

18 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Sudanese Armed Forces bomb church and properties in Omdurman and Khartoum El-Shajara', 6 November 2023, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/11/06/press/6116/article.htm>

19 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: SAF-affiliated Islamist militia detonates explosives inside mosque', 27 March 2024, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/03/27/press/6198/article.htm>

20 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: At least three dead in SAF airstrike on mosque in Sudan', 28 October 2024, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/10/28/press/6343/article.htm>

21 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Attacks on civilians and places of worship continue' 12 December 2024, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/12/12/press/6395/article.htm>

22 Ibid

23 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: More places of worship attacked amid continued violence', 16 May 2023, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/05/16/press/6001/article.htm>

24 Ibid

25 Facebook, 'Preliminary Committee of Sudan Doctor's Trade Union, May 2023, ... - قسدي مهتلا فن جلا بن ادو سلا اء ابطأ قباون -', Facebook

26 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: More places of worship attacked amid continued violence', 16 May 2023, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/05/16/press/6001/article.htm>

27 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Rapid Support Forces attack and occupy Coptic Monastery in Wad Madani, 19 December 2023, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/12/19/press/6134/article.htm>

28 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Evangelical Church set on fire by Rapid Support Forces in Wad Madani' 15 January 2024, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/01/15/press/6147/article.htm>

29 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: RSF attacks church during Christmas prayer service', 7 July 2025, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2025/01/07/press/6406/article.htm>

30 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Rapid Support Forces bomb three churches in El-Fasher', <https://www.csw.org.uk/2025/06/18/press/6546/article.htm>

Fasher, the capital of North Darfur State, on 19 September. The building was reduced to rubble by the attack, which occurred as worshipers gathered for Fajr prayers at approximately 6am.³¹

Discriminatory laws, or policies

Use of adultery laws to criminalise apostasy

34. Hamoda Teya Kaffi and Nada Hamad Koko, a married couple originally from South Kordofan but residing in Gezira State, were charged with adultery after the husband converted to Christianity. In 2018 Ms Koko's family discovered that Mr Kaffi had converted to Christianity. The family filed for a divorce, which was granted by the courts as the law prevented a Muslim woman from being married to a non-Muslim man. Once the divorce was finalised, Ms Koko returned to living with her family, together with the couple's young children. In August 2021, she decided to reunite with Mr Kaffi. Upon discovering this Ms Koko's family filed a criminal case.

35. The couple was arrested and the general prosecutor charged them with adultery. Since there is no penalty for changing one's faith following the decriminalisation of apostasy in July 2020, Ms Koko informed the prosecutor that she too had converted to Christianity, which rendered her a non-Muslim under the law and allowed her to marry a non-Muslim. Nevertheless, the prosecutor deemed her conversion unacceptable, and the criminal case proceeded to trial. However, had Ms Koko become a Christian while her husband remained a Muslim, their marriage would not have been annulled, and the family would not have been separated.

The 'Strange Faces' Policy

36. In SAF controlled areas of northern, central and eastern Sudan, the authorities have implemented the 'Strange Faces' policy targeting people from western Sudan. The policy primarily targets those from Arab Darfuri tribes who are subject to arbitrary detention, unfair trials, and death sentences through emergency laws for allegedly being affiliated with the RSF.

Forced displacement of Christian IDPs in Atbara

37. Christians in northern states experience multiple layers of discrimination, particularly those from the Nuba Mountains, where the majority of Sudan's Christians are originally from.³² In September 2025 armed police attacked a settlement in Atbara, River Nile State, destroying makeshift homes and

properties of civilians who had fled the war and had not received support from the authorities. The group was informed that they were to return to Khartoum State, despite evidence that the city is still not safe for civilians.³³ In some cases displaced civilians who have fled to northern and central states have been subjected to restrictions of their freedom of movement and when searching for jobs to provide for their families, they have been informed that they require work permits and permission to work. Internally displaced communities have reported receiving discriminatory treatment from authorities in SAF controlled areas.

Nuba community arrested by SAF in Shendi

38. A group of 26 men from the Nuba Mountains were arrested after they arrived at the Sudanese Church of Christ building in Shendi, River Nile State in October 2024.³⁴ The men had travelled with their families in a large group of approximately 100 people that include at least 25 women and 54 children, fleeing the conflict in Al Ezba, Khartoum North. They were detained and harassed by Military Intelligence, accused of supporting the RSF. At the time of the arrests, the officers separated the men, women and children, and all males over the age of 18 were detained. Their families subsequently faced a dire humanitarian situation. During their detention, they were not allowed visits from family members or lawyers, and were held by the Al Mudada Unit of Military Intelligence, a unit notorious for using torture and other forms of violence on detainees. The group was released within two weeks of the initial arrests. The entire group belongs to the Moro Nuban tribe in South Kordofan State. While the majority of those detained are Christian, at least one detainee is a Muslim.

Christian communities in areas under RSF control pressured to change religion

39. In October 2024, Christians living in Al Thora Mobe village, a suburb of Wad Madani, Gezira State, reported being forced to convert to Islam by the RSF, which controlled the area. A reliable source informed CSW that the village, which is in an area with little to no infrastructure, has been home to Christians who fled the war in Nuba Mountains in 2011 and has five churches and two Christian schools. The source said: 'We live under miserable conditions and lack all basic needs', explaining that it is also dangerous to flee, as the RSF has surrounded the village and accuses anyone who

31 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: At least 70 people killed in RSF attack on Darfur mosque' 23 September 2025, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2025/09/23/press/6611/article.htm>

32 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Two churches vandalised in Port Sudan', 28 November 2025, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2025/11/28/press/6684/article.htm>

33 Ibid

34 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: Christians arrested after fleeing conflict, others report being pressured to convert', 14 October 2024, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/10/14/press/6331/article.htm>

tries to leave the area of being affiliated with the SAF. However, those who do escape areas under RSF control risk being arrested and accused when they arrive in SAF controlled areas.³⁵

Ethnically motivated violence by SAF and SAF affiliated militias

40. There were ethnically motivated attacks on civilians after SAF took back Wad Madani, Gezira State from the RSF in January 2025. Civilians had hoped that the SAF takeover would bring some relief, as they had suffered over a year of severe human rights violations at the hands of the RSF, who captured the city in December 2023. However, the SAF and its affiliated extremist militias, in particular the Al Bra'a Ibn Malik Brigade, began committing similar violations, most notably ethnically motivated attacks against civilians. Attacks on the Kanabi community and South Sudanese nationals resulted in at least 21 deaths and the forced displacement of thousands. Videos emerged showing the extrajudicial killing of suspected RSF members and civilians who were allegedly affiliated with them, including one in which an individual was thrown into the Nile and then shot.³⁶ Other videos depicted torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, including of women. CSW sources reported that these attacks have been incited by Islamist extremist preachers who have encouraged the SAF to leave no captives alive.³⁷

Conflict Related Sexual Violence

41. The conflict between the RSF and SAF has been described as a war on civilians, including through widespread conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) against women and girls. Reports emerged within hours of the outbreak of fighting, alongside urgent calls for protection and assistance for survivors. In the near-total absence of effective protection, sexual violence has been reported across conflict-affected areas, with evidence indicating rape has been used systematically as a weapon of war.

Violations committed by the RSF and/or those affiliated with the RSF

42. In 2023 distressing reports emerged of rape, gang rape, and forced 'marriages', with many of these violations occurring in people's homes.³⁸ Human

Rights Watch (HRW) reported cases involving gang rape of girls as young as nine, and of older women, including a sixty-year-old in Khartoum North, who was raped alongside her daughter and granddaughter. Women and girls have also been raped in front of male family members.³⁹

43. CSW interviewed a South Sudanese Christian refugee who had settled in Khartoum with her family. She reported that in April or May 2023, individuals believed to be RSF fighters surrounded the family home, detained its occupants, and targeted them because they were perceived to be from the Nuba Mountains. Although the family attempted to show refugee permits confirming their South Sudanese nationality, their pleas were disregarded. The family was taken to a public location in Khartoum, where her three younger sisters were raped and killed in front of their parents. Her parents were also killed. She reported that she was spared only because she had young children. According to her account, between 60 and 80 people were gathered at the location, organised in family groups, and women and girls were raped and executed in front of relatives in a systematic manner.

44. The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) documented similar violations, with women and girls being abducted from their homes, held for several days in various locations, and raped repeatedly by multiple perpetrators.⁴⁰

45. Since November 2023, in El Geneina, Western State, women have reported being sexually assaulted due to their ethnicity. Many of the survivors are from the Masalit community, i.e., of African ethnic origin.⁴¹

46. In Darfur, actions by the RSF may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and hallmarks of genocide. There is evidence of ethnically targeted killings and use of sexual violence especially against the Fur and Zaghawa ethnic groups. One woman from the Zaghawa tribe told CSW that she was gang raped by RSF fighters in May 2024 in El Fasher. She reported that as fighting intensified in El Fasher, civilians were instructed to relocate from IDP camps. During the evacuation her brother was killed by shelling, and she and approximately 20

35 Ibid

36 The Washington Post, 'Sudan's military recaptured a city. Bodies soon filled the streets'. 18 January, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/01/18/sudan-war-rsf-burhan-wad-madani/>

37 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Sudan: CSW concerned at increase in ethnically motivated attacks following SAF takeover of Wad Madani', 20 January 2025, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2025/01/20/press/6414/article.htm>

38 Human Rights Watch report, 'Khartoum is not Safe for Women! Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Sudan's Capital', July 2024 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/07/28/khartoum-not-safe-women/sexual-violence-against-women-and-girls-sudans-capital>

39 Ibid

40 Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) Press Statement: 'Gezira State and the Forgotten Atrocities: A Report on Conflict-related Sexual Violence' 22 July 2024, <https://sihanet.org/press-statement-gezira-state-and-the-forgotten-atrocities-a-report-on-conflict-related-sexual-violence/>

41 The Guardian, 'Darfur rape survivors gather together after ethnically targeted campaign' 14 March 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/mar/14/darfur-survivors-gather-together-after-ethnically-targeted-campaign>

women gathered in a house to mourn while the men arranged his burial. At around 11am, six RSF vehicles arrived. Fighters accused the deceased of being affiliated with the SAF, and beat and assaulted the women, raping all those present except the host, reportedly because of her skin tone. The survivor was gang-raped by several RSF fighters and reported being beaten with a gun while being raped. Her assailants also shaved her hair and burned her body with cigarettes and lighters while using ethnic slurs.

47. Women and girls are also being abducted into sexual servitude. A 23-year-old woman from North Kordofan state was taken against her will to South Darfur. She eventually escaped but returned home pregnant. A woman from Omdurman, who was kidnapped along with her three young children, was subjected to sexual violence for six months. She was later informed her children would be killed unless she became a spy. She is currently in a protection centre, haunted by fears for her children, who are still being held.
48. In RSF-controlled areas, reports indicate that women are targeted with little or no effective accountability. One survivor from Eastern Darfur reported being raped in her home by an individual believed to be associated with the RSF. She was three months pregnant before the assault. After it, doctors confirmed that she lost her pregnancy. When the family raised the case with local RSF commanders, they stated that they did not know the perpetrator and could not accept responsibility for the actions of individuals unknown to them. However, with the RSF in total control of these areas, it seemed unreasonable to the survivor and her family that they would not be able to investigate and discover the identity of the perpetrator. Their lack of response illustrated an unwillingness to establish rule of law in areas under their control.

Violations in SAF controlled areas

49. There are reports of sexual exploitation of women in Omdurman, which at the time was under the control of the SAF, who were forced into transactional sex with soldiers to receive humanitarian aid, or to access abandoned properties where they could forage for items to sell to feed their families.⁷
50. CSW has also documented cases of CRSV targeting men in detention facilities. CSW interviewed a man in his early 30s who reported being held in SAF custody and subjected to systematic rape as part of the torture and interrogation along with others who were being held. He was accused of being an RSF supporter. He reported that hundreds of people were dying in detention due to the torture and conditions. A friend who was in detention with him died from injuries inflicted during the torture.

51. The targeting of hospitals, schools and medical staff has exacerbated the physical and mental anguish of survivors of CRSV.⁸ The consequent lack of access to specialist treatment and psychosocial assistance heightens the suffering of deeply traumatised individuals, causing some to commit suicide.
52. Persistent failure to address CRSV has entrenched impunity. The absence of accountability for leaders and members of armed forces and militias in Sudan and the wider region has emboldened perpetrators and increased risks to civilians. Accountability is essential to ending impunity, and concrete steps must be taken to support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and strengthen protection for women and girls.

Conclusion

53. The undemocratic seizure of, and concentration of power to the SAF and RSF following the October 2021 coup created a regressive environment in which the limited programmatic reforms initiated by the transitional government were reversed. These reforms have since been obliterated by the war between the SAF and RSF. The ongoing conflict has resulted in grave human rights violations that cannot be resolved by the parties to the conflict alone and require sustained support from regional and international actors. The parties to the conflict continue to receive support from other member states, which are involved to varying degrees. Although the actions of these states are not the subject of this UPR review, their role in the conflict has contributed to the egregious violations documented during the reporting period and must be addressed.

Recommendations

54. *Urge all parties to the conflict to comply fully with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to immediately cease hostilities, and to engage in a serious and comprehensive negotiation process leading to a just, lasting, and sustainable peace.*
55. *Call for the activation and enforcement of Security Council Resolution 1591 concerning the arms embargo on Darfur, and work towards expanding its scope to cover all parts of Sudan, thereby contributing to curbing the flow of weapons and reducing violations against civilians.*
56. *Call for the expansion of Security Council Resolution 1593, regarding the referral of the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC), to encompass international crimes committed throughout Sudan, ensuring accountability and ending impunity.*
57. *Ensure safe, rapid, and unhindered humanitarian*

access to all affected civilians, and refrain from using starvation, the denial of humanitarian assistance, or civilian siege as a method of warfare.

- 58. Urge all parties to the conflict to stop targeting of hospitals, clinics and medical centres and humanitarian workers who are providing lifesaving care, resources and services.*
- 59. Urge all parties to the conflict to cease arbitrary arrests and detentions, to immediately release all arbitrarily detained persons, and to ensure respect for fair trial guarantees and due process of law.*
- 60. Ensure the conduct of independent and transparent investigations into all gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and hold perpetrators accountable before independent judicial mechanisms, thereby ending impunity.*
- 61. Ensure the independence and effectiveness of the Constitutional Court by completing its composition and appointing judges of recognised competence, integrity, and independence, thereby enabling it to fulfil its role in protecting the Constitution and safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms.*
- 62. Enhance the protection of the most vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly, and take necessary measures to ensure their security, access to essential services, and effective protection.*
- 63. Ratify the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) and harmonise national legislation with it by enacting laws and policies that guarantee the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and safeguard their rights.*
- 64. Ensure that freedom of religion or belief is protected for all religious communities, in law and in practice and that vulnerable religious groups are supported with rebuilding or renovating places of worship that have been affected by the conflict.*
- 65. Take all necessary steps to ensure that federal and state laws and policies do not discriminate against vulnerable groups including, women, religious minorities and IDPs.*
- 66. Ensure that the state does not interfere in the administration of religious organisations and institutions.*
- 67. Ensure that accountability for violations of IHL*

include places of worship and cultural buildings that have been damaged in the conflict and that adequate resources are made available to assist in their rebuilding or reconstruction.

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