

Places of worship have been targeted, attacked and used for military purposes by both the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) over the course of the current conflict in violation of International Humanitarian Law. While both mosques and churches have been attacked, CSW sources report that at times towards the beginning of the war, there were efforts by both sides to avoid attacks on mosques even when operationally sensitive. However, churches have been deliberately attacked or used during military offensives. With recent offensives in El Fasher attacks on places of worship have increased.

The attacks on Christian places of worship are consistent with actions taken by leaders of both the SAF and RSF during the period following their joint coup in October 2021, which was marked by the clawing back of limited democratic gains, the return to prominence of Islamists from the Bashir era, an emboldening of extremist non-state actors amid growing impunity, and repression and violations of FoRB across the country, including harassment, arrests and prosecutions of converts despite apostasy no longer being a crime under the law, and seizures and demolitions of church owned properties.

El Fasher

Over the course of 18 months El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur State, became the main battle ground between the RSF and the SAF in Darfur as it was the only city that was not under RSF control. The city was under siege from April 2024, despite a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution calling on the RSF to lift it. In April 2025 the RSF seized the Abu Souk and Zamzam camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), located approximately 15km from the city. The two camps form the largest IDP settlement in Sudan, housing over 700,000 people between them. Both camps have been turned into military bases by the RSF.

Attacks on churches and use of churches for military purposes

Places of worship have been targeted during the siege. Between May and September 2025, the Sudan Episcopal Church was hit six times by RSF shelling, namely on 22 May, 9 June, 24 June, 5 July, 16 August and 5 September. In the most recent attack, two people were killed whilst sheltering in the church amid RSF shelling of SAF locations near the Abou Souk camp. Five others were injured and seven remain unaccounted for.

The RSF also bombed the African Inland Church and Roman Catholic Church on 11 June, two days after one of the attacks on the Episcopal Church. At least five people were killed across the three attacks, with dozens more injured. Among the casualties was Father Luka Jomo, the parish priest of the Roman Catholic Church, who was critically wounded and died on 12 June.

As fighting intensified in August and early September, a church leader in El Fasher began mobilising support to

facilitate the evacuation of those physically able to flee to other localities, including to Garni and Tawilla villages. While some families managed to escape, as of mid-September nine families, consisting of approximately 50 people, remained in El Fasher.

On 16 September the RSF advanced into the town from the northwest, including into the Abu Souk camp and the al-Nasir neighbourhood, where the Christian community had been sheltering in two remaining churches in the area. The Christian community evacuated the churches and moved to another location. Reports from CSW sources suggest that the RSF are currently occupying the Pentecostal and Episcopal churches and using them for military purposes, including setting up snipers, and for deploying military personnel.

Attack on mosque

On 19 September 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. The building was reduced to rubble by the attack, which occurred as worshipers gathered for Fajir prayers at approximately 6am.

Attacks on places of worship over the course of the conflict

Several other places of worship have been attacked across the country since the conflict broke out in April 2023.

Episcopal Church

On 17 April 2023 the Anglican Cathedral in central Khartoum was seized as a military base by suspected RSF fighters, who damaged six cars, and forced 42 people who were sheltering there, and who included the archbishop and his family, to leave the building after physically assaulting several of them. In Bahri, Khartoum North, the Evangelical Church was bombed and partially burned.¹ In March 2025, after the RSF lost control of Khartoum, the cathedral was visited for the first time in two years. While the buildings largely remained standing, the level of looting, destruction and damage was severe, and it will take significant resources to restore the building for use as a place of worship.

On 1 November 2023 the SAF shelled and destroyed the largest church in Omdurman, which was used by both the Episcopal and Evangelical denominations. The church was built in the early 1900s and was the second oldest church in Omdurman, after the Coptic Church. Most of the buildings registered to the Evangelical Church in the surrounding area had been confiscated during the rule of Bashir, and the shelling took place approximately three weeks after similar bombings of the Evangelical Commercial School and the Evangelical Secondary School, both in Omdurman.

Coptic Orthodox Church

On 13 May 2023, six gunmen attacked the Al-Masalma Coptic Church in Omdurman. The gunmen drove a car to the church and shot four men, including a priest named Arsenius,

¹ CSW, 'CSW calls for continued international scrutiny once foreign nationals are evacuated', 27 April 2023 <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/04/27/press/5992/article.htm>

and his son. They also stabbed the church guard before looting the building for two hours. All five victims received treatment at a private hospital and have since recovered; however, they were unable to access the largest hospital in the area as it was under RSF control, and its electricity had been cut off by the SAF.

The following day, on 14 May the RSF forcibly removed all priests, including His Grace Bishop Elia, the Bishop of Khartoum and South Sudan, from St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church on Nile Street in Khartoum, in order to use the premises as a military base. The militia had reportedly been intimidating and harassing those in the church for a week before forcing them to leave. A similar incident was reported on 3 May, when the Coptic Church in Khartoum North (Bahri) was attacked.

On 16 December 2023 members of the RSF attacked a Coptic monastery in Wad Madani, Gezira State, and began using it as a military base.²

Catholic Church

On 3 November 2023 Mariam Home, a building belonging to the Comboni Catholic missionary order in Khartoum El-Shajara, was bombed, leaving five nuns and several children injured.³ On 10 December 2023 the International Committee of the Red Cross attempted to evacuate more than a hundred civilians who had sheltered in the house, but their humanitarian convoy was attacked by the SAF despite receiving assurances from parties to the conflict to proceed with the evacuation.⁴ Two Red Cross staff were killed and several others were injured.

Evangelical Church

On 12 January 2024 the Evangelical Church in Wad Madani was set on fire by RSF members. The church is the biggest in Gezira State, and one of the oldest, having been built in 1939. It is considered a high value target and is next door to an evangelical school that the previous regime attempted to seize.⁵ Seven days later, the Greek Church in the same area was also set on fire.

Baptist Church

At least 11 people, including eight children, were killed in an SAF airstrike on Al Ezba, Khartoum North, on 20 December 2024. The airstrike damaged the Al Ezba Baptist Church,

the church's nursery, and residential buildings. The nursery was open at the time, which resulted in the high number of children killed in the attack.

Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC)

The RSF attacked a church belonging to the SCOC in Al Hasaheisa, Gezira State, during a Christmas prayer service on 30 December 2024. CSW sources reported that RSF soldiers looted the building, then 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 threatened to kill all Christians in the area. Christians have not returned to the church since the attack and are unsure of when they will be able to do so safely.

Mosques

Mosques have also been attacked as violence continues across the country. CSW has received reports of the bombings of mosques in the Alazhari and Burri Al Daraia areas of Khartoum. One person was killed in the latter.

On 14 May 2023 the Al Zareeba Mosque was bombed in El Geneina, West Darfur, a region where fighting is particularly intense and entire villages have been burnt down. 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.

In March 2024 an Islamist militia affiliated with the SAF vandalised and detonated explosives inside the Sheikh Qarib Allah Mosque in Omdurman. The mosque is in an area that has been under SAF control since early March, and a reliable source confirmed that prior to this date it had not been damaged in any exchanges of fire between the SAF and the RSF. Islamist militias affiliated with the SAF, particularly the Al-Bara bin Malik Brigade, are being empowered by the war, posing a rising risk to the country, and potentially the region, as extremist groups are able to access weapons.

On 20 October 2024 the SAF dropped barrel bombs indiscriminately on the Sheikh El Jeili Mosque in Wad Madani, Gezira State after evening prayers. Fifteen people were initially reported to have been killed in the attack, but local sources suggested the death toll could be as high as 31.

2 CSW, '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>

3 CSW, '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>

4 ICRC, 'ICRC Deplores Deliberate and Deadly Attack on its Humanitarian Convoy', 10 December 2023 <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/sudan-icrc-deplores-deliberate-and-deadly-attack-its-humanitarian-convoy-khartoum>

5 CSW, '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>

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