



## War Time Sexual Violence, a Tactic in the Sudan Armed Conflict

The warring parties in the conflict in Sudan have engaged in widespread sexual and gender-based violence since the outbreak of the armed conflict on 15 April 2023. Different forms of sexual violence against civilians, including rape, gang rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, and abduction for sexual purposes as well as allegations of forced marriages and human trafficking for sexual purposes across borders, have been committed by forces commanded by both the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Army (SAF). The perpetrators use firearms, knives, and whips to intimidate or coerce the victims.

According to the UN Human Rights Council's Sudan's Fact-Finding Mission's report, girls as young as nine through to women aged 75 have been subjected to widespread sexual violence, including rape and gang rape by the conflicting parties. Additionally, the report states that women and girls have been subjected to forced and child marriages. Men and boys have not been spared either but unfortunately, they have shied from reporting because of the stigma associated with it according to the mission's report.

Although it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics on the number of sexual violence cases due to worsening security conditions, disrupted communications in several areas of Sudan, and survivors' preference for silence, as of 30th July 2024, the number of reported sexual assault cases in Sudan had reached 505 since the start of the conflict and the majority of the cases are from the Darfur region according to the [open source information](#).

In the Darfur region, most of the sexual violence cases have been attributed to the RSF and its allied militia, which has embedded itself in the biggest part of the region. Many survivors have testified that they were gang raped by several RSF fighters. For example, ACJPS [documented](#) a group rape of a victim by RSF members who raided the house where she and several others were staying, gathered all the females in one room, and took them (including herself) to another room one at a time and took turns raping them. The victims are often seized from their homes, streets, and places of work and, in some instances, detained or confined in their homes and other facilities occupied by the perpetrators in conditions that amount to sexual slavery. On 19 August 2024, ACJPS [reported](#) an incident where a 23-year-old woman was abducted from the street by an RSF member in Alkhwai town in North Kordofan State and taken to the perpetrator's home.

Many survivors have sought to terminate their pregnancy when they become pregnant from rape but have unfortunately failed to do so due to the broken healthcare system in Darfur. ACJPS [documented](#) incidents where **six** out of **fourteen** women and girls who were sexually violated from Kalma and Utash IDP Camps in South Darfur State got pregnant due to failure to get medical attention.

There have also been several reports of targeted ethnic violence in Darfur, where RSF militias have been committing violence against people of non-Arab ethnicities such as Masalit, fur, etc. Gender intersected with ethnicity were reported during the attacks in El Geneina and Ardamata in West Darfur as Masalit women were highly targeted. Victims reported the use of derogatory, racist, or sexist slurs and death threats by the perpetrators.

Female victims of enforced disappearance and human trafficking in the context of the war, especially in the Darfur region, have been revictimized with sexual violence, too. These women and girls are subjected to various forms of sexual assault, including individual and gang rape, forced prostitution, and sexual slavery, among others. Open-source reports have indicated that these violations are practiced systematically, with victims being exploited in detention centers or other locations. ACJPS has documented reports of girls being abducted from one state in the region and taken to houses in remote areas in another state used by the RSF, where they are gang-raped in the courtyard houses. This type of violence is not limited to only women, underage boys are subjected to sexual violence in similar detention sites, according to the report of the international fact-finding mission on Sudan.

In South Darfur, the famous Al-Daman Hotel in Nyala, the New Covenant building of the Coptic Church, and the stock market are used as detention centers by the RSF for abducted victims, including street vendors. ACJPS monitoring indicates that the victims are forcibly detained and imprisoned in a house or room for a period ranging from several days to several months, during which they are deprived of their freedom and subjected to several violations, including sexual violence, physical assault, and forced labor. The victims often free themselves only during a cross-fire with the SAF after the perpetrators flee. Still, in Nyala, perpetrators include criminals from the Al-Wadi neighborhood who have joined the RSF and taken advantage of the war to commit crimes.

Survivors of sexual violence in Sudan have been left with immense physical, emotional, social, and psychological scars. In some cases, the physical injuries suffered by victims have led to death.

## **CONCLUSION**

International humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols, prohibits rape and all forms of sexual violence during war. Additionally, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (adopted on 17 July 1998) criminalizes rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, and forced pregnancy, designating them as offenses subject to international prosecution. International law further provides for freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment, outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, and any form of indecent assault. Therefore, sexual violence committed by the RSF, SAF, and its allied militias in Darfur and across Sudan amounts to a violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 to which Sudan is a party. It is, therefore, imperative that Sudanese authorities strongly and openly condemn these acts and bring perpetrators to book because non-prosecution has only encouraged impunity.

**By: Ms. Sharon Aacha**  
**Monitoring and Documentation Program Assistant**  
**ACJPS**