



### **Sennar state: Deep concern about the increased cases of unlawful detention and the use of torture by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in Sinjah town**

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) is deeply concerned about the increased cases of detention operations and the use of torture by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and its allied forces in Sinjah town, violating numerous provisions of international human rights and humanitarian law. Firstly, the arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention of civilians contravenes protections against unlawful detention under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Secondly, the use of torture: beatings, electric shocks, and deprivation of food and medical care documented in detention centers violates prohibitions on torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment under the UN Convention Against Torture, the Geneva Conventions, and the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Since SAF recaptured and gained control of Sinjah town (the capital of Sennar State in Central Sudan) in November 2024, there has been an increase in cases of arbitrary arrests and the use of torture in detention centers by the Military Intelligence Unit allied to SAF. The military intelligence unit mostly targeted three categories of people: female human rights defenders working to support women, activists providing aid in the form of foodstuffs to the displaced, and IDPs originally from Darfur.

Residents in neighborhoods within Sinjah have been targeted for several reasons, as the town hosts different groups of people. The western, Southern, and Alglaa neighborhoods in Sinjah are primarily inhabited by Arab nomads from the Baron and Tama tribes, originally from Darfur, and the Kenana and Rufaa tribes, originally from Sennar State. The Eastern neighborhoods of Sinjah host groups from Northern Sudan, alongside the Fong group, which originates from the Blue Nile. Conversely, the Northern neighborhoods and Al-Damazien (across the Nile) are populated by residents from Northern Sudan, while Nuba groups reside in the Al-salam and Maiaa neighborhoods. Groups from various regions of Sudan occupy the neighborhoods of Almazad, Aldraja, and Soug. The Wad Aljazoli and Alshgog neighborhoods are predominantly inhabited by Christians from South Sudan, the Blue Nile, and Darfur (Bargo and Barno).

Although the victims endure physical torture, their family members also experience psychological and emotional anguish, either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, collective punishment and revenge attacks are often inflicted on communities based on allegations of supporting opposing parties, and these actions are frequently motivated by ethnic tensions.

The increased risk of arbitrary arrest and the use of torture on residents in Sinja threatens the future voluntary return of certain groups to the town for fear of being targeted.

### **Victims' Testimonies**

Mr. Ahmed (not real name), a 53-year-old victim of arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention originally from Sinjah. Mr. Ahmed was released in March 2025 after he had spent more than eight months in detention. He testified that *"I was arrested by military intelligence officers for no other reason but my ethnicity, shortly after SAF recaptured and took control of Sinjah. I was taken to the detention center located at Sinjah University, where I found at least 500 other detainees. I was detained there with 100 other detainees while the rest were transferred to other detention centers within Sinja, and others in Sennar town. The majority of the detainees had been arrested upon suspicion of being Rapid Support Forces (RSF) affiliates, while others belonged to Resistance committees. There were also a few detainees who were from the Kenana group under the command of RSF's Lieutenant General Albishi. While in detention, we were tortured, and at least several detainees succumbed to injuries inflicted. Several people have died at the hands of the military intelligence, a body responsible for investigation..."*

50-year-old Mohammed (pseudonym), originally from Sinjah town but currently living as an IDP in Atbra city in River Nile State, told ACJPS, *"When RSF attacked Sinjah, they raided several houses, including mine. My house was raided as I attempting to flee the town with my family, but unfortunately, they found me at the outside gate. The raiders took my cellphone and my vehicle, but we were not harmed. A few months later, when SAF recaptured the town, several family members of mine and I were arrested by the SAF military intelligence unit for our ethnicity, because we are originally from Western Sudan, despite being born in Sinja. I cannot return to Sinjah because I will be arrested..."*

### **Forms of torture used in detention centers**

Victims have testified to being beaten with water pipes and wooden sticks, tied to hang from the roof, Tyarah Gamat, verbally abused, deprived of water, hindered from praying, and sleeping, threatened with rape, deprived of food; the detainees survived on two small sandwiches once a day (one with beans and the another made with a delicacy locally known as Tamiah)

### **Access to medical care**

Torture victims in Sudan have limited to no access to medical care because of the collapse of health care following the eruption of the war in April 2023. Those who can access medical care have shied from going to hospitals for fear of being questioned and the bureaucracy involved, for

example, filling a medical form, which is obtained from a police station. A few who are financially capable have preferred private medical facilities, which are expensive.

The general hospital in Sinja resumed operations and thus provides medical attention to patients, including victims of torture referred from private facilities. The hospital is located on the same street as the SAF headquarters; therefore, accessible to detainees who have been released. For example, Mr. Ahmed, upon his release, sought medical attention from the general hospital, and it was discovered that he was suffering from several infections and dehydration.

### **The unlawful use of summary trials**

SAF has employed the use of summary trials in special courts headed by judges affiliated with the SAF to execute civilians by sentencing them to death. This penalty is selectively applied to those accused of collaborating with the RSF. These trials are unfair and illegal as the accused are never allowed to defend themselves, evidence is never produced, etc. for example, on 13 March 2025, a young man who was accused of collaborating with RSF was tried at the Sinjah General Criminal Court, headed by Judge Abdul Latif Adam Mohamed, and sentenced to death for crimes against the State and crimes against humanity under the Sudanese Penal Code, 1991.

### **Other developments**

The willingness by the warring parties to continue engaging in densely populated areas like cities and towns compromises the rights of civilians and their property. Additionally, the warring parties have employed a tactic of withdrawing troops from cities into villages to lure the opposing party into an ambush, which further jeopardizes the safety of civilians who fled to these areas as safe havens. The parties have also proceeded to destroy property and infrastructure following the capture of a territory as a show of power, showing total disregard for human rights. This was particularly evident in Al-Jazeera State and Sinja town, where the retreat of the SAF left civilians vulnerable to the wrath of the RSF without any protection from the national army. Since the eruption of the armed conflict, the RSF has faced accusations of employing forms of torture that are either direct or compounded by other violations, including sexual and economic abuses.

Marginalized groups living in the outskirts of Khartoum and agricultural camps within Al-Jazeera have experienced forced recruitment as they have been forced to fight in the war against the opposing party. Some civilians have offered to participate in the war for fear of being violated and to protect their families and property from being looted.

Refugee groups have been particularly targeted, especially those from South Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. When the war broke out in Khartoum, female refugees were sexually violated and assaulted for example, during the first hours of the war on day one, a female South Sudanese was raped and beaten in Khartoum Bahari by a group armed men dressed in RSF uniform. When the war advanced to Al-Jazeera, male South Sudanese refugees quickly became the targeted group by the army, who then controlled Wad Madani town.