

The illustration features a woman in a purple headscarf and a young child in a white shirt, both rendered in a stylized, low-poly art style. The woman is seated and holding the child. Behind them is a large, white, dashed-line silhouette of a person, suggesting a ghostly or absent presence. The background consists of solid blocks of color: a light blue area at the top left, a dark blue area at the top right, and a light green area on the right side. In the top left corner, there is a small icon of two hands shaking, with a branch of olive leaves extending from it.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE IN SUDAN
ETHNIC OR IDENTITY-BASED TARGETING
AND ITS IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES

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Executive Summary

This report examines patterns of enforced disappearance in Sudan through a lens that foregrounds the relationship between this phenomenon and identity factors, including ethnic and geographic belonging, across a range of political and security contexts. The report proceeds from the premise that enforced disappearance cannot be understood solely as a direct byproduct of armed conflict, but rather as a persistent phenomenon deeply embedded in the Sudanese context; one that has reproduced itself across successive phases, each marked by an intersection of violence patterns and identity classifications that produces unequal exposure to targeting.

The report draws on a multi-source methodology, combining quantitative data, qualitative testimonies, and interactive discussions. A total of (24,493) documented cases of enforced disappearance were recorded, alongside (7,767) reports filed between 2023 and December 17, 2025. While this data is concentrated within the current conflict, the analysis reaches beyond it to understand the continuity of the phenomenon, drawing on broader historical and contextual evidence. These figures point to the wide scale of enforced disappearance, and to a persistent gap between reporting and documentation, suggesting that the actual numbers are likely higher than what has been recorded.

The findings show that enforced disappearance in Sudan occurs within two interconnected primary contexts: a political context, in which disappearance is practiced selectively during periods that do not involve large-scale armed conflict, and a conflict-related context, characterized by a broader scope and higher caseloads. In the political context, enforced disappearance is used as a tool of indirect control, generating deliberate ambiguity and uncertainty that casts a shadow over public life, even in the absence of widespread violence. In conflict settings, the practice expands to encompass larger numbers and operates across environments marked by a multiplicity of armed actors. Yet what links both contexts is a shared reliance on rapid classification mechanisms during arrest and detention, mechanisms that function in the absence of verification, and that open the door to identity as a determining factor.

The report demonstrates that ethnicity, while not always employed as an explicit or declared criterion for targeting, plays a decisive role in shaping the risk of enforced disappearance, by converting identity markers into grounds for suspicion. These markers include physical appearance, geographic origin, dialect, and social networks, and are drawn upon in rapid decision-making at checkpoints, during military operations, or in displacement settings. Within this framework, targeting is not based on proven individual conduct, but on classifications built around assumed belonging, a dynamic that produces patterns of disproportionate targeting.

The data further indicates that this pattern of suspicion leads to a relative concentration of cases among specific population groups, particularly those associated with regions or identities linked, within the conflict context, to a particular party. This is most evident in cases of arrest at checkpoints, during movement, or in areas undergoing shifts in territorial control, where geographic factors intersect with ethnic perceptions in determining the level of risk.

The data shows that the vast majority of victims are civilians, (16,797) in total, reflecting that targeting is not tied to direct participation in the conflict, but to broader classification patterns shaped by identity factors.

A geographic disparity in case distribution is also notable, with cases concentrated in areas such as Khartoum, Gezira, and Darfur. These are regions that witnessed intense military activity, but they are also regions where multiple identities converge, a convergence that further complicates the patterns of suspicion.

The report further shows that enforced disappearance follows a recurring sequence: it begins with arrest carried out without legal guarantees, most commonly at checkpoints or during military operations, followed by unacknowledged detention in unofficial sites, with no registration and no means of communication. In later stages, detainees may be transferred between locations without notification, compounding the difficulty of tracing them, before cases ultimately reach, in many instances, a stage of outright denial of their existence.

The data shows that the outcomes of these cases vary considerably: (2,480) family reunifications have been recorded, alongside (1,985) releases, and (4,378) confirmed deaths, while a significant proportion of cases remains unresolved, reflecting the ongoing nature of this crime.

At the level of impact, the report makes clear that enforced disappearance produces effects that extend well beyond the immediate victim, reaching families and communities alike. The state of uncertainty generates profound psychological, social, and economic pressures. Enforced disappearance also produces a legal vacuum, the person is recognized neither as a detainee nor as deceased, which fundamentally undermines any prospect of access to justice.

In light of the legal analysis, it becomes apparent that a significant number of cases meet the definition of enforced disappearance as established under international law, with indicators suggesting that some of these practices may rise, in certain contexts, to the level of crimes against humanity, particularly given their widespread and systematic character, and the deliberate targeting of civilian populations. Furthermore, the identity-based targeting patterns raise additional questions regarding the possible existence of discriminatory practices or persecution on ethnic grounds.

Taken together, the report demonstrates that enforced disappearance in Sudan is produced not only through violence, but through a classification system that converts identity into a risk factor, operating in environments where verification is absent, decisions are made rapidly, and legal safeguards do not exist. On this basis, the study underscores the necessity of adopting a comprehensive approach to addressing this phenomenon, one that encompasses a deeper understanding of the role ethnicity plays as a mechanism in producing targeting, strengthened documentation systems, guaranteed accountability, and sustained support for affected families. This must be coupled with the integration of this issue into the broader efforts surrounding civilian protection and peacebuilding.

Research Methodology

This report adopts an analytical approach aimed at understanding the patterns of enforced disappearance in Sudan as a persistent phenomenon, one that has taken shape across successive political and security contexts. It focuses in particular on the relationship between the phenomenon and ethnic identity factors, and on how those factors interact with different contexts to shape targeting risks.

While the bulk of the data underpinning this report covers the period from 2023 to 2026, that focus reflects the availability of more detailed documentation during those years, not a claim that the phenomenon itself is recent. The report therefore draws on contemporary data to examine established patterns, within a broader framework that accounts for the continuity of enforced disappearance in the Sudanese context.

Data Sources

The study draws on a range of collected sources: reports filed on cases of enforced disappearance and subsequently verified, direct testimonies from victims and families of the disappeared, observations gathered from interactive discussion sessions with researchers and practitioners in the documentation field, as well as open sources, including human rights reports and content published through social media, used to situate individual cases within a broader context that aids in their interpretation.

This diversity of sources made it possible to build a knowledge base that brings together quantitative data, which illuminates the scale and trajectory of the phenomenon, and qualitative data, which reveals its details and complexities, including the circumstances surrounding individual cases and what affected families go through.

First: Quantitative Data:

The study draws on aggregated data from the Reports and Information Verification Office of the Center for Victims of Enforced Disappearance, Mafqood, covering (7,767) reports and (24,493) documented cases during the period under study. This data was used to analyze general trends, including the temporal and geographic distribution of cases, victim profiles, and case outcomes.

Given the nature of the conflict, the difficulty of accessing certain areas, and communications disruptions, these figures likely reflect a minimum threshold of actual cases and do not represent a complete count.

Second: Qualitative Testimonies:

The report draws on direct testimonies from victims' families, collected through interviews conducted by the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies. These testimonies were used to understand the actual pathways of enforced disappearance, including the circumstances of arrest, patterns of detention, search mechanisms, and the psychological, social, and economic impact on families.

These testimonies were analyzed as qualitative evidence, contributing to a deeper understanding of the human experience tied to enforced disappearance, and complementing the quantitative analysis.

Third: Interactive Discussions:

The African Center for Justice and Peace Studies convened an interactive discussion session bringing together practitioners, field experts, and field monitors. The session addressed the historical and political contexts of the phenomenon, its recurring sequences, and the role of identity-related factors in shaping it. These discussions contributed to developing the report's analytical framework, particularly with regard to drawing the distinction between the political context and the conflict-related context, and to understanding how ethnicity converges with alliances and affiliations.

Fourth: Secondary Sources:

The analysis also included a review of secondary sources, among them reports issued by national and international human rights organizations, as well as official and unofficial statements, with the aim of situating the findings within a broader context and comparing them against documented patterns in similar cases.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The data used in this report focused primarily on cases collected during the recent years tied to the current conflict, given the availability of more detailed information on those cases, without this implying that the phenomenon is confined to that particular timeframe. The study also faced challenges related to the difficulty of verifying certain information, against a backdrop of communications disruptions in some areas and conflicting accounts, challenges that were addressed through cross-referencing multiple sources and exercising caution in the interpretation of cases.

Throughout all stages, ethical considerations and privacy protection were observed, particularly with regard to the testimonies of victims and their families, by avoiding the use of any information that could lead to their identification or expose them to additional risks.

General Objectives

This report aims to provide an evidence-based, in-depth analysis of enforced disappearance in Sudan through a lens that foregrounds the role of identity factors, including ethnic and geographic belonging, in shaping targeting risks. It seeks to understand the phenomenon as a persistent practice in the Sudanese context, one that has emerged across multiple political and security settings and intensified during the current armed conflict. The report further aims to support documentation, accountability, and protection efforts through the analysis of recurring sequences, the contexts in which disappearance cases occur, and the consequences they carry for victims, families, and communities.

Specific Objectives

1. To provide an evidence-based analysis of how ethnic identity shapes the risks of enforced disappearance, particularly in the context of the current armed conflict, while clarifying the mechanisms through which identity markers are converted into grounds for suspicion and targeting.
2. To analyze the different contexts in which cases of enforced disappearance occur, including the political context and the conflict-related context, and to identify the points of overlap between them.
3. To identify the recurring sequences of enforced disappearance in terms of methods of arrest, forms of detention, case trajectories, and outcomes.
4. To clarify the long-term impact of enforced disappearance on families and communities, encompassing the psychological, social, and economic dimensions.
5. To explore the role of the different parties involved in producing cases of enforced disappearance, and to analyze the nature of the institutional environment that permits these practices to occur.
6. To support the development of a legal understanding of the phenomenon by linking documented sequences to relevant international standards, and assessing the extent to which the definition of enforced disappearance applies to them.

Introduction

This report addresses enforced disappearance in Sudan through an analytical lens that foregrounds the relationship between this phenomenon and identity factors, chief among them ethnic and geographic belonging, within a complex political and security context. It approaches enforced disappearance as a persistent practice in the Sudanese context, one that has manifested in different forms across multiple historical phases and under varying patterns of governance and conflict, a reality that calls for an approach reaching beyond situational explanations of the phenomenon.

Within this framework, enforced disappearance is not viewed solely as a direct consequence of the current armed conflict, but as part of broader practices related to the management of the political and security space, where disappearance is used as a tool of control and as a means of reshaping the relationship between the state and society, or between armed actors and local communities. The evidence shows that this phenomenon is not confined to periods of war, but also surfaces in relatively peaceful contexts, albeit in less widespread forms, a reality that reinforces the necessity of analyzing it within a dual framework that brings together the political context and the conflict-related context.

While the bulk of the data underpinning this report covers the period from 2023 to the present, that focus reflects the availability of documentation sources during this period and does not imply that the phenomenon is of recent origin. The escalation of events during this period, alongside the expansion of monitoring and documentation efforts, has made it possible to obtain more detailed data, through which established patterns can be analyzed that were in many cases less visible in earlier periods. The report therefore draws on this data to understand trends and mechanisms, without reducing the phenomenon to a specific timeframe.

The report proceeds from the premise that enforced disappearance in Sudan takes shape through the interaction of multiple factors, among them identity-based suspicion patterns, the institutional environment within which arrest and detention operations are carried out, and the political and military contexts that continuously reshape these factors. Within this framework, the ethnic factor is not understood as the sole determinant of targeting, but as one of the elements that enter into the process of classifying individuals, a process that may converge with other markers, such as geographic location, presumed belonging, or even the circumstances of a person's presence at a given moment.

The report pays particular attention to analyzing how these factors operate in practice, that is, how identity markers are converted into grounds for suspicion, and how that suspicion is translated into concrete actions that may begin with arrest and end with enforced disappearance. It also seeks to understand how these sequences recur across different contexts, and whether they reflect individual practices or broader patterns observable across a large number of cases.

Within this framework, the report seeks to answer a set of research questions relating to the contexts in which cases of enforced disappearance occur, the extent to which they are tied to identity factors, and the consequences they carry at the level of individuals, families, and communities, in addition to the shared characteristics of the parties involved and the sequences of perpetration. To that end, the report adopts an analytical approach that brings together quantitative data and qualitative testimonies, with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

The report also takes into account the challenges associated with documenting cases of enforced disappearance, including the difficulty of accessing certain areas, communications disruptions, and the fear that may prevent families from coming forward. These factors may affect the comprehensiveness of the data. That said, the diversity of sources and the recurrence of sequences across different cases make it possible to draw indicators that can be relied upon in the analysis.

Given the complex nature of enforced disappearance, this report does not aim to provide a comprehensive account of all cases, but rather to identify recurring sequences, analyze the mechanisms that produce this phenomenon, and situate them within a broader framework that aids in understanding and addressing it. Within this context, enforced disappearance is viewed not merely as a crime committed at a given moment, but as a process that extends over time and produces consequences that reach beyond the individual to encompass the family and the community.

Chapter One:

Recurring Contexts of Enforced Disappearance in Sudan



Enforced disappearance in Sudan does not occur within a single environment or under fixed circumstances; rather, it takes shape across multiple contexts that vary in their nature, in terms of the degree of violence, the character of the actors involved, and the scope of targeting. An analysis of documented cases, supported by testimonies, shows that understanding this phenomenon requires viewing it within a dual framework: one that distinguishes between the political contexts in which these practices occur during periods that do not witness large-scale armed conflict, and the conflict-related contexts, which are characterized by a higher number of cases and a wider scope.

Yet this distinction does not reflect a separation between the two contexts; rather, it points to a continuity in the use of enforced disappearance as a tool, with a shift in its scale and methods of perpetration. While the political context is characterized by selectivity and ambiguity, the conflict context is characterized by breadth and repetition. In both cases, however, the phenomenon retains its core function: exclusion from legal protection.

Section One: The Political Context of Enforced Disappearance in Sudan

The tracing of enforced disappearance cases in Sudan reveals that this phenomenon did not emerge with the recent armed conflicts but predates them, having surfaced across different political contexts marked by varying degrees of apparent stability. In this context, enforced disappearance is not widespread in numerical terms, but it carries profound significance in functional terms, serving as a selective tool targeting specific individuals within the management of the political and security space.

In periods that do not witness open military confrontations, enforced disappearance manifests in a less visible form, unaccompanied by widespread violence, not publicly announced, but occurring under circumstances that are difficult to document or interpret immediately. Interactive discussions indicate that this pattern encompassed different categories of people, not limited to political activists or public figures, but extending to individuals with no known political activity, reflecting a widening circle of suspicion even in the absence of open conflict.^[1]

Within this framework, enforced disappearance is not used solely as a means of dealing with specific threats, but as a tool for producing an environment of uncertainty, where the boundaries between what is permitted and what is prohibited are unclear. This ambiguity contributes to creating a state of indirect control, in which individuals reorganize their behavior based on what could happen, not only on what has actually happened. This context is also distinguished by an absence of information: in many cases, the arrest is not announced, not registered, and no clear channels exist through which information about the disappeared person can be obtained. This absence is not merely a documentation gap, it is part of the nature of the practice itself, contributing to the prolongation of cases and making it difficult to follow up on them or hold those responsible to account.

Testimonies indicate that some disappearance cases occurred under ordinary daily circumstances, such as moving within cities or being present in public spaces, with no prior indicators of danger.

^[1] Interactive discussion session conducted by the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies, April 2026.

In these cases, the disappearance is not the result of an exceptional event, but of a decision that cannot be traced back, which reflects the nature of this context: one in which the rules are not clear and risks cannot be anticipated.

In this context too, identity plays an implicit role: individuals are not explicitly targeted on ethnic grounds, but markers linked to belonging, such as region, name, or social networks, are used as factors shaping suspicion. This indirect use makes it difficult to prove ethnic intent, but does not negate its existence; rather, it points to its composite nature.

Testimonies also show that some disappearance cases were linked to local contexts, such as community disputes or tensions related to resources, where disappearance was used as a tool of pressure or elimination, broadening our understanding of this phenomenon and demonstrating that it is not confined to traditional political conflict.

It is also noted that weak documentation in this context contributes to reducing the visibility of cases, as they are often not reported, either out of fear, distrust of institutions, or the absence of clear mechanisms. This absence of data does not indicate an absence of the phenomenon; rather, it reflects the difficulty of accessing it, which is why its analysis relies more heavily on testimonies and qualitative discussions.

In light of this, it can be said that the political context represents one of the foundational frameworks for understanding enforced disappearance in Sudan, revealing the use of this practice as a tool of indirect control, not merely as a response to security conditions. This context also demonstrates that the phenomenon is not tied to a specific phase, but is persistent and capable of reproducing itself across different environments.

Section Two: The Context of Wars and Armed Conflicts

An analysis of documented cases during the period from 2023 to December 2025 shows that the context of wars and armed conflicts in Sudan represents the most intensive environment in terms of the number of enforced disappearance cases, and the most complex in terms of patterns of perpetration and parties involved. Yet the scale of the phenomenon in this context is not explained solely by the escalation of violence, but by the nature of these environments, characterized by multiple centers of control, the absence of unified procedural frameworks, and the adoption of rapid decisions under circumstances where verification is absent.

The data indicates the documentation of no fewer than (24,493) enforced disappearance cases during this period, a figure that reflects a sharp escalation compared to previous periods, but does not necessarily represent the full scale of the phenomenon, given the gap between the number of reports filed (7,767) and the number of documented cases, alongside the likelihood of unreported cases, particularly in areas that are difficult to access. This disparity between reporting and documentation is itself an indicator of the nature of the context, where the environment does not only produce disappearance cases, but also produces the difficulty of monitoring them.

In this context, geography plays a central role in shaping the patterns of enforced disappearance, as cases are concentrated in areas of military operations, areas of control, and contact points between the different parties.

The data shows a notable concentration in areas such as Omdurman, Gezira, and Khartoum, areas that witnessed intensive military movements and repeated shifts in control, which increases the likelihood of unacknowledged arrests and complicates the possibility of follow-up.

Yet the significance of geography is not limited to identifying where the disappearance occurs, it extends to how geography operates as a factor in producing suspicion, as certain areas become implicit markers of belonging, particularly in the context of widespread displacement and the movement of individuals between different regions. Within this framework, a person's presence in a particular location may be interpreted as evidence of their belonging, even in the absence of any other information, which increases the likelihood of their arrest.

Checkpoints are among the most prominent sub-contexts in which enforced disappearance recurs, as arrest decisions are made in brief moments, without registration or documentation. At these locations, assessment is reduced to rapid indicators, such as appearance, dialect, or presumed belonging, making them critical junctures through which individuals enter the trajectory of disappearance. Discussions indicate that these checkpoints do not operate according to uniform criteria, but differ depending on the controlling party, which leads to variation in patterns of perpetration, without changing the final outcome.

Displacement routes also represent a context of considerable significance, as individuals move under unstable conditions and lose many of the elements of protection, such as documents or social networks. Testimonies point to cases in which individuals were arrested during transit, without their families knowing what became of them, reflecting how displacement itself can become a risk factor, and not merely a consequence of risk.

In this context, enforced disappearance is not confined to direct combat zones, but extends into cities, particularly in areas witnessing shifts in control or an intensive military presence. One testimony refers to a case of arrest that took place inside a hospital in El Fasher, in the aftermath of an attack, where a number of individuals were taken away without any explanation of the reasons, or under the pretext of belonging to the other party to the conflict without verification, reflecting how the disappearance can occur within civilian space, at moments where chaos and authority converge.^[2]

It is also noted that the nature of the actors involved in this context contributes to the complexity of the phenomenon, as it is not limited to a single party but encompasses multiple formations operating in an environment that lacks coordination and is not subject to a unified system. This plurality does not only lead to differences in patterns of perpetration, but to difficulty in establishing responsibility, particularly in cases where detainees are transferred between more than one party or location.

Testimonies indicate that some detainees are transferred between different locations without notification, which results in the loss of any traceable trail and complicates the search process. This pattern is not used solely for logistical purposes, but contributes to prolonging the duration of the disappearance, as the family loses the ability to identify a fixed location from which to begin searching.^[3]

^[2] Interview conducted by the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of the victim (Youssef), January 2026.

^[3] Interview conducted by the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of the victim (Ahmed), January 2026.

In this context as well, it appears that factors related to identity play a role in determining who is targeted within these environments, as not all individuals are treated equally, but levels of suspicion differ according to presumed belonging, appearance, or the region the person is believed to originate from. This disparity is not always visible, but emerges through the recurrence of patterns and through the unequal distribution of cases.

The data shows that the vast majority of victims are civilians (16,797), indicating that the targeting is not limited to individuals engaged in the conflict, but encompasses broad categories of the population. This reflects the nature of suspicion in this context, where it does not rest on specific acts, but on broader classifications.

The data also shows that the outcomes of cases in this context are characterized by variation: 2,480 cases of family reunification were recorded, alongside (1,985) cases of release, and (4,378) confirmed deaths, while a significant proportion of cases remain unresolved. This variation does not reflect the existence of a clear trajectory, but rather the absence of a system through which what will happen can be anticipated, which deepens the state of uncertainty.^[4]

In the face of this ambiguity, some families resort to informal networks to obtain information or arrange release, which gives rise to patterns of exploitation, where sums of money are demanded in exchange for promises that are often unfulfilled. This pattern does not emerge in isolation from the context, but depends upon it, fed by the absence of official information and the lack of channels that can be relied upon.^[5]

In light of this, it can be said that the context of wars and conflicts in Sudan does not only produce an increase in the number of enforced disappearance cases, but reshapes the mechanisms through which they occur, by creating environments in which decisions are made rapidly, carried out without documentation, and in which the capacity for follow-up is lost. This context does not operate in isolation from factors related to identity either, but amplifies their effect, as suspicion markers become more consequential in the absence of verification.

An analysis of this context shows that enforced disappearance cannot be understood solely as a consequence of violence, but as a consequence of the nature of the environments in which that violence is exercised, environments that allow arrest to transform into unacknowledged detention, then into severance, then into denial. This is what makes this phenomenon more complex and more difficult to address.

^[4] Report issued by the Reports Center on the Missing (Mafqoud), December 2025.

^[5] Interview conducted by the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of the victim (Daoud), February 2026.

Chapter Two:

Ethnic or Identity-Based Targeting in Sudan



Section One: Ethnicity as a Criterion for Targeting in Cases of Enforced Disappearance in Sudan

An analysis of documented cases, alongside direct family testimonies and interactive discussions, shows that ethnicity in the context of enforced disappearance in Sudan does not operate as a direct, openly declared factor in targeting, but rather as part of a broader process through which suspicion is produced, a process shaped by environments where verification is absent, decisions are made rapidly, and identity markers are used as substitutes for information. In this framework, victims are not selected, in the majority of cases, on the basis of their ethnic affiliation in any explicit sense, but through the manner in which that identity is read within a given context, and how it becomes associated with pre-existing security perceptions.

In practice, this process begins with what may be described as the moment of "initial classification", a brief moment in which an individual is assessed within a field setting, most commonly at checkpoints, during military operations, or along displacement routes. In that moment, the question posed is not what the person has done, but rather who they are, and that question is answered through rapid indicators such as facial features, skin colour, manner of speech, or in some cases even a name. These indicators are not used as information; they are used as circumstantial evidence upon which immediate conclusions are drawn, most often without any verification.

Interactive discussions indicate that al-sahna (physical appearance) plays a central role in this process, as certain features become associated with specific regions or groups, and in turn with presumed political or military positions. This association is not always precise, yet it is used as a practical tool in environments where verification is not possible, making it procedurally effective, however dangerous it may be.^[6]

One testimony illustrates this pattern directly, as the family of a disappeared person indicated that the arrest was not accompanied by any explanation, yet through what was subsequently gathered, the family linked the reason to a combination of physical appearance and presumed belonging, particularly given that the arrest occurred at a location that was later classified as associated with a specific party.^[7] This type of testimony does not constitute conclusive proof of motive, but it reveals how the event is read by those affected by it, and reflects a pattern that recurs across multiple cases.

Alongside physical traits, geographical belonging plays an equally significant role, as the place to which an individual belongs is understood not merely as a geographical fact, but as an indicator of that person's position within the conflict. The data suggest that individuals perceived as belonging to regions such as Darfur or Kordofan face higher levels of suspicion in certain contexts, particularly in areas far from those regions, where such belonging is treated as a signal of possible association with a specific party.

In this context, geographical belonging transforms into what may be described as a ready-made presumption, used to interpret a person's presence in a given location, even in the absence of any behaviour that would justify such an interpretation.

^[6] Interactive discussion session convened by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, April 2026.

^[7] Interview conducted by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of the victim (Youssef), January 2026.

A person from a particular region found in an area of active military operations may, for example, be regarded as implicitly involved, despite the fact that their presence may be the result of displacement, work, or any number of other reasons. This type of reasoning does not rest on evidence, yet it becomes sufficient to justify a decision to arrest.

The role of ethnicity, however, is not confined to individual traits or geographical belonging, it extends to what may be described as the reclassification of groups within context. In conflict environments, ethnic groups are not understood as fixed entities; rather, they are redefined according to their position within the conflict and the prevailing alliances. A particular group may be classified as "close" to one party, while another is classified as neutral or of lesser risk. This classification is not always accurate, but it directly affects the level of exposure to suspicion.

Researcher testimonies indicate that this pattern is evident in certain areas, as seen in what occurred in the Kanabi in Gezira State, where not all Kanabi were targeted equally; rather, the focus was placed on specific groups, such as the Bargu, the Tama, and the Iringa, on the basis of alliances declared by the leaderships of these groups in West Darfur with the Rapid Support Forces. This disparity in targeting reflects the existence of implicit classifications built upon a particular perception of belonging.^[8]

It is also observed that this process does not stop at the individual, but extends to their social networks, as individuals are in some cases arrested on the basis of their relationship to others who are suspected of belonging to a particular group. One testimony indicates that the arrest encompassed members of the same family, despite differences in their individual circumstances, reflecting an extension of the scope of suspicion to cover relationships, not only individuals.^[9]

In such cases, ethnicity does not operate merely as a tool for classifying individuals, but as a tool for classifying networks, as the family or community is viewed as an extension of the individual. This leads to a multiplication of those affected, even in the absence of any direct role on their part.

On the other hand, the data show that this pattern of suspicion is not directly linked to actual participation in the conflict, as civilians constitute the largest proportion of victims (16,797) out of (24,493), indicating that the selection process does not rest on specific acts, but on broader classifications. This quantitative distribution reinforces the hypothesis suggesting that identity is used as a substitute for information, in a context where verification is absent.

Nevertheless, ethnicity cannot be considered the sole factor in explaining these cases, as the data show variation in targeting patterns, even within the same groups, pointing to the existence of other factors such as timing, location, the perpetrating party, and the circumstances of arrest. This variation does not diminish the role of ethnicity; rather, it confirms that it operates within a complex system, where it intersects with these factors to determine the outcome.

In light of this, it can be said that ethnicity in the context of enforced disappearance in Sudan operates as part of a mechanism for producing suspicion, by transforming identity markers into risk indicators, used in making rapid decisions in unstable environments.

^[8] Interactive discussion session convened by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, April 2026.

^[9] Interview conducted by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of the victim (Hasan), February 2026.

This mechanism does not operate in an explicit or declared manner, but manifests through the recurrence of patterns and their intersection with context, which is what makes it an essential element in understanding how victims are selected.

Understanding this mechanism is not limited to explaining who is targeted, it extends to understanding the nature of enforced disappearance itself. In this crime, disappearance is not predicated on conduct, but on classification. This is what distinguishes it from other crimes, and makes it more complex in terms of both documentation and accountability.

Section Two: The Reason Behind Ethnic-Based Targeting in the Context of Enforced Disappearance

The role of identity in cases of enforced disappearance in Sudan is not confined to shaping arrest patterns or suspicion mechanisms, it extends to directly influencing the determination of who is considered most exposed to targeting within certain contexts. An analysis of documented cases shows that these practices do not arise solely from individual security assessments, but from a broader logic built on associating specific groups with presumed threats, and thereafter treating them as a collective target.

Within this framework, ethnic identity becomes intertwined with political and military perceptions, as certain groups, particularly those associated with conflict zones, become linked to presumed belonging to one of the parties to the conflict. This association is not necessarily grounded in direct evidence, but in general perceptions shaped in the context of war, which are used to determine who is regarded as a legitimate risk. In this sense, ethnic or geographical belonging shifts from being a defining characteristic to a factor that contributes to producing suspicion and directing targeting.

This logic is not confined to discourse, it is reflected in field practices indicating the existence of a pattern of disproportionate targeting, whereby the probability of individuals from certain groups being arrested increases relative to others. This is particularly evident in environments characterised by weak verification, multiple perpetrating parties, and rapid decision-making under unstable conditions. In such cases, targeting is not based on individual assessment, but on pre-made classification, which renders certain individuals more exposed to detention or disappearance.

This pattern emerged more clearly during the current conflict, through the application of the “Law of Strange Faces” in certain states under the control of the Sudanese Armed Forces, whereby segments of the population were treated as strangers within specific areas, on the basis of their physical appearance, dialect, or presumed belonging, under a legal framework used to justify the arrest and detention of individuals on the basis of their identity, particularly those originating from regions associated in the context of the conflict with a specific party.^[10]

In this context, identity is not used solely to determine who can be arrested, but to determine who can be treated outside the usual guarantees. This leads certain cases to transition from mere arrest or detention to more serious patterns, including enforced disappearance, whereby individuals are denied legal recognition of their status, or the possibility of accessing information about their fate.

^[10] Interactive discussion session convened by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, April 2026.

An analysis of testimonies also indicates that this pattern of targeting may, in certain cases, be linked to broader dynamics, including the desire to control the social space within particular areas, or to redefine who is considered as belonging to them. In such environments, identity is used as a means of distinguishing between those regarded as part of the community and those treated as outside it, which may lead to exclusionary practices taking different forms, among them arbitrary arrest or enforced disappearance.

The recurrence of these patterns across different contexts and regions indicates that identity-based targeting cannot be explained as isolated individual cases, but points to the existence of a shared logic that contributes to determining who is targeted and why. This logic does not always operate in an explicit manner; rather, it may manifest through disparity in the probability of arrest, the duration of detention, or the difficulty of release, which is what makes its identification dependent on an analysis of recurrence and patterns, rather than on individual incidents alone.

In light of this, it can be said that identity in the context of enforced disappearance in Sudan does not operate solely as a tool of classification, but as a factor that contributes to directing targeting, by associating specific groups with presumed threats, and thereby subjecting them to higher levels of risk. This analysis shows that understanding the phenomenon is not complete without examining how these dynamics operate, dynamics that render certain individuals more exposed to disappearance, not because of what they have done, but because of what they are presumed to represent.

Section Three: The Actors Involved and Patterns of Perpetration in Cases of Enforced Disappearance in Sudan

An analysis of victim testimonies, alongside those of researchers and field monitors, shows that enforced disappearance in Sudan does not emanate from a single actor, nor does it follow a single institutional pattern, rather, it results from a multiplicity of power centres and an overlap of authorities governing detention, search, and field control. This multiplicity became more pronounced during the April 2023 war, as the practice of arrest and detention outside the law was no longer confined to traditional regular forces, such as the army, the police, and the security services, but extended to military and paramilitary formations, armed groups, and local forces operating outside clear procedural frameworks. Reports indicate that the actors exercising enforced disappearance in the current war include, alongside the army, the police, and security services, the Rapid Support Forces, the Joint Force, Sudan Shield, Awlad Qamari, and other groups of a military or local character.^[11]

The significance of this multiplicity lies not only in widening the circle of actors capable of carrying out arrest or detention, but also in complicating the ability to determine responsibility. In many cases, the family does not know which party carried out the arrest, or is unable to determine whether the person was subsequently transferred to another party. This creates a chain of severance, beginning with an unacknowledged arrest, followed by detention in an unknown location, then denial or absence of information. In this way, enforced disappearance is not solely the result of a single decision, but the result of an environment in which weak registration intersects with a multiplicity of actors and an absence of oversight.

^[11] Interactive discussion session convened by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, April 2026.

In areas under the control of regular forces or those associated with them, cases of arrest and detention appear at checkpoints, through local security cells, or during sweep operations. Reports indicate that certain states witnessed arrests carried out outside legal frameworks, in which individuals were not placed in police stations or formally registered, making it extremely difficult to trace them or determine their status. This pattern is particularly serious, as it transforms arrest from a procedure that can be challenged into a closed situation in which the family has no clear avenue for inquiry or verification.^[12]

The Rapid Support Forces represent one of the principal parties in the context of the armed conflict, particularly in areas they have controlled or in which they have conducted military operations. The pattern attributed to them is not limited to the arrest of men or the targeting of civilians on suspicion, it also encompasses the abduction of women, girls, and children in displacement and camp contexts. Field monitors reported that in August 2025, during the storming of Abu Shouk camp by the Rapid Support Forces, six displaced women were abducted along with their children, and their fate remains unknown, in addition to the abduction of a number of girls under the age of eighteen.^[13] This pattern makes clear that disappearance in the context of war does not target only those suspected of military connection, but may also affect women and children as part of communities or groups that fall within the circle of control, reprisal, or suspicion.

The Joint Force emerges as another party in certain areas of Darfur, particularly in the context of checkpoints and garrison positions. Field monitors reported that observations in El Fasher, notably during the ceasefire period, revealed the disappearance of a significant number of young men following their arrest by garrisons affiliated with the Joint Force. This pattern reveals the danger of garrison positions as sites where suspicion transitions into actual detention, particularly when arrest is not accompanied by any registration or notification of families. In such cases, the controlling actor is not merely a military actor, it becomes a *de facto* authority exercising control over movement, passage, and fate.

Researcher testimonies also point to the role of other local or armed formations, such as Sudan Shield, the Bara'oun group, and other military formations, within the map of parties to the current war. The significance of identifying these parties lies in clarifying that the war environment has created multiple levels of authority, some regular, some irregular, and some operating according to local, military, or regional loyalties. This multiplicity of parties leads to variation in arrest patterns from one area to another, yet ultimately produces a similar effect: the absence of registration, severance of communication, and the difficulty of knowing the location of the detainee or the party responsible for them.^[14]

This information is of particular significance, as it reveals that the fear of identity does not end at the moment of arrest, it continues inside the place of detention itself. The detainee may conceal their name or true identity out of fear that their ethnic or regional belonging will expose them to harsher treatment or greater risk. In this way, the place of detention itself becomes a space for the reproduction of identity-based suspicion.

In Darfur specifically, large detention centres emerge as part of the institutional or semi-institutional patterns of perpetration of enforced disappearance. Reports indicate that Dakris Prison in South Darfur holds between (13,000) and (14,000) detainees,^[15] of whom only approximately 4,000 are known by their real names, while others use assumed names out of fear of ethnic targeting.^[16]

^[12] Interactive discussion session convened by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, April 2026.

^[13] *Ibid.* (12)

^[14] *Ibid.* (12)

^[15] Report issued by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, March 2026.

^[16] *Ibid.* (12)

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Reports, alongside testimonies from field monitors, also indicate that security cells in certain states under army control carry out arrests outside legal frameworks, without placing detainees in police stations, making it difficult to trace them or classify their status. This pattern must be treated as one of the most dangerous forms of perpetration, as it creates an invisible layer of detention subject to not even a minimum level of institutional oversight. In such cases, disappearance is not solely the result of chaos, it is the result of a partially organised practice, yet one that operates outside the law and outside the record.

The danger of this environment is further illustrated by the fact that those working in documentation may themselves become exposed to disappearance. Researcher testimonies indicate that documentation workers are at risk of disappearance, reflecting that the perpetrating party does not target only those under suspicion, but may also target those who attempt to uncover the fate of the disappeared or document the violation. This dimension is important as it makes clear that enforced disappearance does not operate solely as a tool against victims, but as a means of silencing knowledge itself, and of undermining the very possibility of accessing the truth.

In terms of patterns of perpetration, several common characteristics can be identified across these parties, despite their differing natures. First, arrest most commonly occurs in a rapid field moment, a checkpoint, a garrison position, a security sweep, the storming of a camp, or transit from one area to another. Second, arrest is in many cases not followed by formal registration or notification of families. Third, the detainee may be transferred between different locations or held in an unofficial or undisclosed site. Fourth, families face difficulty in identifying the responsible party, which opens the door to intermediaries, conflicting information, and extortion. In addition, identity, whether through physical appearance, geographical, tribal, or presumed association with an armed party, may influence the decision to arrest or the continuation of detention.

These characteristics reveal that enforced disappearance in Sudan does not occur solely because of the existence of multiple armed parties, but because of the absence of a system that obligates these parties to register, disclose, and enable families to access information. When parties multiply and no unified registry of detainees exists, every unacknowledged arrest becomes capable of transforming into a disappearance. And when arrest decisions are linked to identity or collective suspicion, certain categories of people become more exposed to entering this path.

The multiplicity of parties also creates what may be described as a fragmentation of responsibility, whereby each party is able to deny its connection to a case or refer the family to another party. This fragmentation not only undermines the ability of families to access the truth, but also undermines any subsequent legal process, as determining responsibility becomes increasingly complex with every additional point of arrest, transfer, and detention. It is for this reason that understanding the perpetrating parties should not stop at naming them, but must address how these parties operate within an environment that allows them to evade oversight.

In light of this, it can be said that the common characteristics of the perpetrating actors in Sudan consist of: the exercise of actual authority on the ground; the capacity to carry out arrest or detention; operation at varying degrees outside legal constraints; and the absence of any commitment to a unified system of registration and notification.

The patterns of perpetration, in turn, consist of: arrest based on suspicion; unacknowledged detention; transfer between parties or locations; denial of existence or withholding of information; and the exploitation of families through informal networks. These patterns do not only produce individual cases of disappearance, they create an entire structure within which tracing persons or holding those responsible for their fate accountable becomes extremely difficult.

Chapter Three:

The Impacts of Enforced Disappearance on Families and Communities



Section One: The Direct Impact on Victims

Enforced disappearance ranks among the most serious violations for the compound psychological and legal harm it inflicts on the disappeared person, not solely because of the deprivation of liberty, but because of the nature of that deprivation itself, which takes place outside any clear legal framework, accompanied by a complete severance from the outside world, an absence of information, and a denial of legal recognition. In the Sudanese context, testimonies received from victims' families and survivors show that the experience of disappearance does not just produce suffering associated with detention, it produces an experience of gradual dismantlement of the person: psychologically, socially, and legally.

In many cases, the experience begins with a sudden moment of arrest, at checkpoints, during raids, on public roads, or inside homes, without any reasons being stated or legal orders produced. Testimonies indicate that victims are, in most cases, transferred directly to undisclosed detention sites, without being permitted to contact their families or to know which party has taken them. At that moment, the person loses not only their liberty, but also their legal and social standing, becoming invisible to any system capable of recognising their existence or determining their status.

Some testimonies show that victims lived for extended periods without knowing whether their families were aware they were still alive, a condition that produced a deep sense of isolation and severance. In a number of cases, survivors noted that what compounded their suffering most was not only the fear of torture or ill-treatment, but the feeling that they had completely vanished from the world, that no one knew where they were or what was happening to them. This form of isolation does not produce only immediate fear; it inflicts a lasting psychological harm rooted in a sense of total defencelessness and the complete loss of any control over one's own fate.

Testimonies further show that many detainees were subjected to transfers between different detention sites, without notification or explanation, a situation that produced a persistent state of disorientation and uncertainty. In some cases, the detainee was moved from one location to another without knowing where they were or which party was holding them, effectively dismantling any sense of time or stability. This pattern is among the most severe aspects of enforced disappearance experience, as it prevents the victim from forming any clear picture of what is happening and keeps them in a permanent state of apprehension and fear.^[17]

Family testimonies also indicate that victims who returned after periods of disappearance appeared in states of severe psychological fragility, suffering from difficulty sleeping, sudden episodes of fear, social withdrawal, and impaired concentration and engagement. In some cases, survivors refused to speak about what they had been subjected to, or declined to return to the places from which they had been arrested, or displayed a persistent fear of re-arrest. This shows that the psychological impact of disappearance does not end with release, it endures as a long-term traumatic experience.

Testimonies also reveal that some victims lost the ability to return to their previous lives in any normal sense, particularly those who endured prolonged periods of detention or witnessed violations inside places of detention.

^[17] Interview conducted by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of victim Youssef, January 2026.

In other cases, disappearance led to the loss of employment, schooling, or social relationships, as a result of stigma, fear, or the profound psychological changes that followed the experience. It is notable that many survivors live in a state of persistent vigilance, avoiding movement, conversation, or any public appearance, out of fear that the experience might recur.

In some cases reported in testimonies from field monitors, it was noted that victims deliberately concealed their names or affiliations inside places of detention out of fear of being subjected to additional targeting on the basis of identity. These testimonies show that the fear within the disappearance experience is not tied only to detention itself, but also to identity, where the person is compelled to conceal themselves or deny their affiliation as a means of survival or risk reduction.

The indeterminate nature of the duration of disappearance produces a psychological impact distinct from that of conventional detention. In ordinary imprisonment, even under conditions of abuse, the detainee generally knows where they are and which party is holding them, and may have an approximate sense of how long their detention will last or what legal process their case will follow. In cases of enforced disappearance, by contrast, the victim is placed in an open condition of total uncertainty, not knowing whether they will be released, or when, or whether they will be killed, transferred, or left without trace. This sustained ambiguity produces heightened levels of anxiety and psychological collapse.

The absence of any mechanism for communicating with the outside world further compounds the victim's vulnerability. In a number of testimonies, family members noted that disappeared persons who returned spoke of a persistent feeling that they had vanished from life, that they were no longer certain whether anyone was searching for them or remembering them. This dimension shows that enforced disappearance does not operate merely as a deprivation of liberty, but as a complete process of severance of the person from their human and social surroundings.

In other cases, the disappearance experience was accompanied by physical injuries or health deterioration resulting from conditions inside places of detention, particularly in informal sites lacking medical care, adequate food, or suitable accommodation. Some testimonies indicate that detainees who were released were in states of severe exhaustion, had lost significant weight, or showed signs of illness or injuries for which they had received no treatment. In the absence of documentation, it is in many cases impossible to verify the nature of what they were subjected to inside places of detention.

The impact on victims must also be considered in light of the long temporal dimension of enforced disappearance. Even after return, many victims remain caught in the aftermath of the experience, through chronic fear, the loss of any sense of security, or the difficulty of reintegrating within the family and the community. In some cases, the experience becomes a turning point in the person's life, affecting their relationships, their capacity to work, to engage with others, and to trust.

In light of the foregoing, enforced disappearance in Sudan inflicts on its victims an impact that extends far beyond the bounds of detention itself, becoming a comprehensive experience of isolation, uncertainty, loss of protection, and psychological and social dismantlement. This impact is not tied solely to what occurs inside places of detention, but also to the person's complete severance from any system capable of recognising their existence or providing them with even the minimum of legal safeguards. This is what makes the experience of disappearance fundamentally different from other forms of deprivation of liberty.

Section Two: The Impact on Families and Communities

The impact of enforced disappearance does not stop at the disappeared person, it extends deeply into the family and the social surroundings, where the family itself becomes a continuing victim of the violation. Testimonies received from victims' families show that enforced disappearance does not produce a clear-cut loss that can be processed, but rather a prolonged condition of ambiguity and uncertainty that leaves the family suspended between hope and fear, without any means of reaching a definitive answer.

Many testimonies indicate that the first moment of disappearance is typically followed by intensive search efforts, visiting police stations, security service premises, hospitals, detention centres, and making enquiries through acquaintances and intermediaries. In many cases, families received contradictory answers, were told the person did not exist, or were referred from one body to another, producing a growing sense of helplessness and disorientation.

Some families described the search experience as having become a life in itself, daily existence reorganised entirely around the attempt to obtain any piece of information. One testimony recounted that a family spent years moving between cities and centres in search of any trace of the disappeared person, until the disappeared person's father died without ever learning his son's fate.^[18] This illustrates how enforced disappearance becomes a suffering that extends across time, not stopping at the moment of arrest, but continuing to shape the family's life for years.

Testimonies also show that the absence of information is among the most painful aspects for families. In cases of death, however devastating, the family ultimately possesses a certainty that allows them to grieve or to reorganise their lives. In enforced disappearance, by contrast, the family remains suspended between contradictory possibilities, is the person alive? Are they being subjected to torture? Have they been killed? Will they return?, and this sustained suspension produces severe psychological pressure, manifesting as chronic anxiety, sleep disturbances, psychological breakdown, and persistent tension.

In a number of testimonies, families spoke of the particular impact of disappearance on mothers, many of whom live in a persistent state of waiting and anticipation. Some families noted that mothers refused to change the disappeared person's belongings, room, or clothing, as though preserving these details represented a form of resistance against the idea of loss. This shows how absence becomes a permanent presence within the family's daily life.

Children are also profoundly affected in these cases, particularly when the disappeared person is one of the parents. Family testimonies point to clear behavioural and psychological changes in children, including fear, withdrawal, bedwetting, sleep difficulties, and a decline in academic performance. In some cases, children repeatedly asked when the disappeared person would return, without the family having any clear answer to give, a situation that further compounds the psychological impact within the family itself.

^[18] Interview conducted by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of victim Ahmed, 2026.

The impact is not confined to the psychological dimension, it extends to social relationships within the community. In some cases, families avoid speaking about the disappearance out of fear of stigma, suspicion, or re-targeting, particularly when the disappearance is linked to political or ethnic accusations. This enforced silence produces an additional layer of social isolation, where families feel cut off from their surroundings or compelled to conceal part of their suffering.

Testimonies also show that the recurrence of enforced disappearance cases within a community produces a general climate of fear. As news of arrests and disappearances spreads, individuals begin to modify their daily behaviour, avoiding certain areas, reducing movement, conversation, and interaction, out of fear of meeting the same fate. In this context, enforced disappearance does not operate only as individual targeting, but as a means of spreading fear throughout the community as a whole.

Ground monitor testimonies also indicate that families are frequently compelled to deal with intermediaries or informal networks in order to obtain information, an opening that creates conditions for financial and psychological exploitation. Some families spoke of paying sums of money in exchange for promises of information or arrangements for release, without this necessarily producing any real outcomes. This pattern does not only add an economic burden, it also deepens the families' sense of fragility and helplessness.

The impact of enforced disappearance also extends to long-term family relationships, particularly in cases where the ambiguity persists for years without any knowledge of the disappeared person's fate. In some cases, families find themselves compelled to make life-defining decisions in the absence of any confirmed information, including reorganising family life or remarrying after prolonged periods of waiting. Some testimonies refer to cases of wives who made sustained efforts to search for their disappeared husbands before eventually deciding to remarry after losing hope of obtaining any information about their fate, only for the disappeared person to reappear years later. These cases reveal the complex nature of enforced disappearance: its impact is not confined to the physical absence of the person, but extends to disrupting family relationships and placing families before profoundly sensitive decisions taken in the absence of certainty.^[19]

Section Three: The Legal Impacts of Enforced Disappearance in Sudan

Enforced disappearance in Sudan produces a legal situation of acute complexity, one that is not confined to the violation of individual rights, but extends to undermining the legal framework that is supposed to regulate the relationship between individuals and authority, and to guarantee access to justice. In this context, the problem does not lie only in the occurrence of the violation itself, but in the particular nature of this crime, which is founded on the denial of existence, the absence of registration, and the severance of information, elements that strip legal instruments of their effectiveness.

In practice, the disappeared person is placed outside any clear legal classification, recognised neither as a detainee whose situation can be traced, nor as a deceased person whose legal status can be addressed. This creates a condition of legal vacuum that cannot be managed within conventional frameworks. This situation affects not only the victim, but extends to the family, which finds itself unable to take basic legal such as managing property, accessing rights, or even representing the person before different bodies.

^[19] Interactive discussion session convened by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, April 2026.

The absence of documentation at the moment of arrest represents the starting point of this impact, as the failure to record the person's details or the identity of the party that detained them results in the loss of any traceable record that could later be built upon. In such cases, the family is unable to establish the fact of detention or to identify responsibility, making it extremely difficult to activate any legal mechanism, whether at the national or international level.

The available data shows that this situation is compounded by the multiplicity of parties involved and the absence of a unified system for registering detainees, as there is no central database that can be consulted, and no mechanism that guarantees the exchange of information between the different parties. This fragmentation does not only produce difficulty in tracing persons, but also complicates the question of identifying responsibility, as it becomes unclear which party can be held accountable.

In this context, judicial bodies play a limited role as a result of the absence of information upon which proceedings can be built. In the absence of an official record, or a recognised body holding the person, procedures such as filing complaints or bringing legal actions become ineffective, as there is no identifiable party against whom proceedings can be directed. This situation reflects a structural dysfunction, where the basic conditions for the operation of the legal system are simply absent.

The nature of enforced disappearance as a continuing crime adds a further dimension of complexity, as the moment of its commission cannot be clearly defined, nor can it be considered concluded unless the fate of the person is established. This temporal extension makes it difficult to address the case within conventional legal frameworks, which rely on identifying a specific time and place for the violation.

In addition, families face difficulties in dealing with the legal consequences arising from the person's absence, particularly with regard to civil rights, such as inheritance, disposal of property, or taking decisions on the person's behalf. In the absence of proof of death, these rights cannot be activated, and in the absence of recognition of detention, they cannot be claimed, a situation that places the family in a state of legal suspension. It is also notable that this situation may drive some families to seek informal solutions, such as relying on intermediaries or attempting to access information through unlawful channels, a pattern that reflects the absence of viable alternatives within the formal system. In some cases, this may lead to the exploitation of families, whether through demands for money or the provision of inaccurate information, adding a further dimension to their suffering.

At a broader level, the prevalence of enforced disappearance cases contributes to eroding trust in the legal system, which comes to be seen as incapable of protecting individuals or guaranteeing their rights. This erosion of trust does not affect only the direct cases, but extends to the community as a whole, weakening confidence in the possibility of recourse to law as a means of redress.

The absence of accountability in these cases also contributes to the continuity of the phenomenon, as there are no clear consequences for the acts committed, and no effective mechanisms to deter them. In this context, enforced disappearance is not merely a product of dysfunction within the system, it becomes a factor that reproduces that dysfunction, by undermining the very foundations upon which the system rests.

In light of the foregoing, the legal impact of enforced disappearance in Sudan is not confined to the absence of protection, it also encompasses the paralysis of the very mechanisms that are supposed to provide that protection. Nor does this impact end with the return of the person or the establishment of their fate; it persists through the complexities associated with proving the violation, pursuing it, and obtaining justice.

Section Four: The Economic Impact of Enforced Disappearance in Sudan

Enforced disappearance in Sudan produces not only psychological, social, and legal consequences, it also inflicts deep and lasting economic harm, beginning from the moment of disappearance and extending across all aspects of the material lives of families and communities. Testimonies received from victims' families, alongside what was raised in specialist discussions, show that enforced disappearance does not only lead to the loss of a person, it leads to the loss of an economic resource, the disruption of an entire support system, and a prolonged depletion of resources and capacities, within an economic context already suffering from the effects of war, collapse, rising poverty rates, and displacement.

In many cases, the disappeared person is the primary breadwinner of the family, or one of its principal economic pillars. The disappearance therefore leads directly to the severance of the source of income, without any clear alternative or protection system upon which the family can rely. Testimonies from a number of families indicate that they found themselves suddenly unable to cover basic needs, including food, rent, medical care, and school fees, following the disappearance of the person who had provided the greater part of the family's financial resources.^[20]

In some testimonies, families spoke of being compelled to sell household possessions, work tools, or modest savings that represented their last means of protection. Other families indicated that they had resorted to borrowing from relatives, neighbours, or local traders to cover living costs in the absence of any stable income. In this context, enforced disappearance becomes not only the loss of a person, but a turning point of gradual economic collapse for the family, particularly when the uncertainty persists for extended periods.

Testimonies also show that the search process itself becomes an additional source of financial drain. In the absence of clear information or effective formal channels, families are compelled to travel continuously between cities, detention centres, hospitals, security service premises, and various checkpoints in search of any information relating to the disappeared person. These movements entail costs of transportation, communications, and sometimes accommodation, in addition to the interruption of work or economic activity during search periods.

In many cases, the search is not a short or temporary effort, it is a prolonged course that extends over months or years. Some families indicated that they had exhausted most of their resources along this course, particularly as promises of information or indications that the person might be found at a specific location recurred repeatedly. This transforms the search for the disappeared person into a permanent economic burden, intertwined with the demands of daily life and compounding the family's vulnerability.^[21]

Testimonies also brought to light what can be described as a parallel economy of enforced disappearance, where informal networks of intermediaries, brokers, and individuals emerge, offering to provide information, arrange release, or facilitate access to detainees in exchange for money.

^[20] Interview conducted by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of victim Hasan, February 2026.

^[21] Interview conducted by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of victim Youssef, January 2026.

Some testimonies indicate that families paid significant sums to individuals who promised to provide information about places of detention or to assist in securing release, without ultimately obtaining any real results. In some cases, these financial demands recurred continuously, exploiting the state of desperation in which families found themselves and their desire to obtain any piece of information.^[22]

These practices reveal that enforced disappearance does not produce only human suffering, it also creates an economic environment built on the exploitation of ambiguity and fear. The longer the disappearance endures, the greater the likelihood that families will resort to informal solutions, including paying money in exchange for unconfirmed information, relying on unreliable intermediaries, or attempting to reach detainees through local networks operating outside any legal framework.

The nature of enforced disappearance also leads to the disruption of the rights and economic decisions associated with the disappeared person. In many cases, the disappeared person bears responsibility for managing the family's property, commercial activity, or financial resources, but the absence of any clear legal status for them, recognised neither as a detainee nor as a deceased person, leaves the family incapable of disposing of certain assets or taking basic financial decisions. This situation places families in a condition of economic suspension, where some resources or rights remain paralysed due to the absence of any legal determination of the person's fate.

In many cases, women bear the greatest burden of this economic crisis. Testimonies indicate that wives and mothers of disappeared persons found themselves suddenly responsible for sustaining the family and providing for its basic needs, in the absence of income and amid rising living costs. In some cases, women were compelled to take on temporary or unstable work, or to rely on humanitarian assistance or family support. Some testimonies also indicate that many women entered the labour market for the first time following the disappearance of their husbands or sons, a compulsion imposed by the circumstances of disappearance.

In this context, the economic impact cannot be separated from the social structure, as the loss of the breadwinner leads to a redistribution of roles within the family, and imposes new patterns of expenditure, work, and adaptation. In some cases, families were compelled to reduce spending on food, medical care, or schooling in order to cover the costs of the search or to maintain the minimum level of subsistence.

Testimonies also show that some children were compelled to leave school or enter the labour market at an early age to contribute to the family's livelihood following the disappearance of one of the parents or the primary breadwinner. In other cases, the decline in family income led to an inability to pay school fees, transportation costs, or the expenses of educational materials, resulting in children being out of school for prolonged periods. This reveals that the economic impact of enforced disappearance is not confined to the immediate generation, but extends to affect the future of children and their educational and livelihood prospects.

The economic impact is not confined to families alone, it extends to local communities, particularly in areas that have witnessed large numbers of disappearance, arrest, or displacement cases.

^[22] Interview conducted by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies with the family of victim Hasan, February 2026.

In these contexts, the disappearance of large numbers of men and young people of working age leads to a weakening of local economic activity, a reduction in productivity, and the disruption of small businesses, agriculture, trade, and services. The loss of the labour force also leads to greater dependence on humanitarian assistance, remittances, and external support, which weakens the capacity of communities for economic recovery.

Monitors testimonies also indicate that fear of arrest or disappearance has indirectly affected economic activity, movement, and work. In some areas, individuals began avoiding travel along certain routes or entering specific areas out of fear of suspicion or arrest at checkpoints. This led to the disruption of the movement of trade, transit, and labour, particularly for those whose livelihoods depend on movement between cities or states. In some cases, families chose to relocate their members or change their places of residence to reduce risks, creating additional costs associated with displacement, relocation, or loss of employment.

The sustained persistence of ambiguity over prolonged periods also prevents families from reorganising their economic situation in any stable manner. The absence of information about the fate of the disappeared person leaves many families hesitant to make long-term decisions relating to property, work, relocation, or investment. This results in families remaining in a condition of economic instability, where resources are gradually consumed without any clear horizon for resolution or recovery.

In some cases where disappeared persons returned after prolonged periods, the economic impact did not end with their return, as some survivors found themselves having lost their employment, sources of income, or capacity to resume their previous economic activity, whether as a result of health or psychological consequences or the length of the period of absence. Some families also faced difficulty in rebuilding their economic stability after years of depletion, debt, and loss of resources.

In light of the foregoing, it can be said that enforced disappearance in Sudan does not produce only the absence of a person, it produces a prolonged condition of economic vulnerability, in which the loss of income becomes intertwined with the costs of the search, the disruption of resources, the depletion of savings, and the transformation of patterns of sustenance and work within the family and the community. Nor is this impact tied solely to the duration of the disappearance, it is tied to its very nature, founded on ambiguity and the absence of certainty, factors that keep families and communities living within a prolonged cycle of depletion and economic instability.

Chapter Four:

The Legal Classification of Enforced Disappearance in Sudan



Section One: The National and International Legal Framework Governing Enforced Disappearance

An analysis of enforced disappearance cases in Sudan raises complex legal questions, linked to the nature of this crime, the plurality of actors responsible for its commission, and the contexts in which it occurs, in addition to the absence of a comprehensive national framework that regulates responses to it as a crime in its own right. In this context, the study of the legal framework governing enforced disappearance takes on particular importance: not only for the purpose of defining the obligations incumbent upon the State and upon other actors, but also to understand the gap between international legal standards and the practical reality revealed by the patterns documented in Sudan.^[23]

Enforced disappearance ranks among those violations that combine several interrelated acts: beginning with deprivation of liberty, followed by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the person, and then by a refusal to acknowledge the detention or to provide any information, thereby placing the person outside the protection of the law. For this reason, enforced disappearance is not regarded in international law merely as a form of unlawful detention, but as a crime of a distinct and compound nature, entailing the simultaneous violation of a broad range of fundamental rights.^[24]

The most comprehensive definition of enforced disappearance is that contained in the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance of 2006, which defines enforced disappearance as "the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law."^[25] This definition makes clear that the crime is not complete by the mere act of arrest or detention, it also requires the element of denial or concealment, and it is this element that gives enforced disappearance its distinct legal character.

International human rights law treats enforced disappearance as a multi-dimensional violation, because it simultaneously entails the violation of the right to liberty and personal security, the right to recognition as a person before the law, and the right not to be subjected to torture or cruel or inhuman treatment, and may in some cases extend to a violation of the right to life.⁴ For this reason, international bodies have held that enforced disappearance does not represent merely an isolated act against a specific individual, but an assault on the legal order itself, because it is founded on removing the person from the scope of legal protection and concealing them from any judicial or institutional oversight.^[26]

In the Sudanese context, this issue takes on added importance in light of the patterns revealed by documented cases, which include arrest without clear legal orders, detention in undisclosed locations, the absence of official registration, and the denial of families' access to information.

^[23] Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Guiding Principles on Enforced Disappearance.

^[24] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fact Sheet No. 6: Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

^[25] International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2, 2006.

^[26] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 6, 7, 9 and 16.

These characteristics point to the existence of practices that directly correspond to the core elements of the definition of enforced disappearance under international law, in particular the element of concealment of fate or whereabouts, and the denial of detention or refusal to acknowledge it.^[27]

At the national level, Sudanese law does not, to date, contain an independent provision criminalising enforced disappearance as a crime in its own right, notwithstanding the existence of scattered provisions relating to unlawful detention, abuse of authority, or unlawful deprivation of liberty.^[28] The absence of a clear legal definition of enforced disappearance within national legislation gives rise to considerable difficulties with respect to the legal characterisation of cases, the determination of responsibility, and the development of specialised mechanisms for documentation and accountability. This absence also limits the capacity of victims and families to pursue clear legal avenues through which to seek justice or obtain information.

The Constitutional Document of 2019 enshrines a set of relevant fundamental rights, including the right to liberty and personal security, the prohibition of arbitrary arrest, the right to a fair trial, and the right to human dignity.^[29] However, the data presented in this report reveals a clear gap between these constitutional guarantees and actual practice, particularly in contexts of armed conflict, or in environments characterised by a plurality of armed actors and competing centres of control.

The Sudanese Code of Criminal Procedure likewise regulates certain guarantees relating to arrest and detention, including the obligation to notify the arrested person of the grounds for their arrest, and to ensure access to the public prosecutor or the judiciary within prescribed periods.^[30] However, cases of enforced disappearance, by their very nature, are founded on the circumvention or suspension of these guarantees, through detention outside official records, in unacknowledged locations, or by actors not effectively subject to judicial oversight. As a result, the activation of traditional legal mechanisms becomes extremely difficult, because families generally do not know which actor is holding the person, where they are being held, or even whether they are still alive.

The documented patterns further reveal that the absence of unified registration systems for detainees is one of the most significant factors enabling the continuation of enforced disappearance cases. In the absence of a central database or an effective mechanism for the exchange of information between different actors, unacknowledged detention easily transforms into actual disappearance, the person losing any legal trace that can be followed. In this context, the failure does not lie solely in the absence of legal provisions, but extends to the weakness of the institutional and oversight structure that is supposed to guarantee respect for those provisions.^[31]

At the international level, States bear an obligation not only to refrain from practising enforced disappearance, but also to prevent it, to investigate it, to hold those responsible accountable, and to guarantee the right of victims and families to truth, remedy, and reparation.^[32] This obligation encompasses ensuring that all detainees are registered, that families and lawyers are permitted access to information, and that effective oversight mechanisms over places of detention are established.

^[27] Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36 on the Right to Life.

^[28] Sudanese Criminal Act of 1991 and the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1991

^[29] Constitutional Document for the Transitional Period of 2019, Chapter on Rights and Freedoms.

^[30] Sudanese Code of Criminal Procedure of 1991, provisions relating to arrest and detention.

^[31] Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, United Nations, 1988.

^[32] International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Articles 1, 3, 12 and 24.

Enforced disappearance is also regarded, under international law, as a continuing crime, meaning that it does not end with the act of arrest or detention, but continues for as long as the fate or whereabouts of the person remains unknown.^[33] This nature carries significant legal consequences, because it means that the violation remains in existence as time passes, and that the obligations of investigation and disclosure of truth do not lapse with the passage of a specified period or with a change in political circumstances.

In cases occurring during armed conflicts, enforced disappearance also intersects with serious violations of international humanitarian law, in particular the rules relating to the protection of civilians, the prohibition of arbitrary detention, the obligation to register detainees, and the duty to inform their families of their fate.^[34] The prevalence of informal detention or secret locations likewise constitutes a direct violation of the fundamental protection principles enshrined in the Geneva Conventions.

The identity-related dimension takes on additional legal significance in light of the patterns revealed by this report, where certain cases point to a correlation between the risk of enforced disappearance and ethnic affiliation, geographical belonging, or perceptions associated with identity. In this context, the legal analysis does not confine itself to characterising the act as enforced disappearance alone, but extends to examining whether certain of these patterns may also involve discriminatory practices or persecution founded on identity, particularly where targeting appears recurrently directed against specific groups.^[35]

In light of the foregoing, it can be said that the legal framework governing enforced disappearance in Sudan is characterised by a clear gap between international standards on the one hand, and the national legislative and institutional structure on the other. The documented patterns further reveal that the absence of explicit criminalisation, the weakness of registration and oversight mechanisms, and the plurality of actors are all factors that contribute to producing an environment permissive of the continuation of these practices, while at the same time complicating the prospects of access to truth, accountability, or redress.

Section Two: The Legal Classification of Patterns of Enforced Disappearance in Sudan

The patterns documented in this report reveal that enforced disappearance in Sudan is not confined to individual or isolated incidents, but takes on, in many cases, a recurrent and relatively organised character, linked to contexts of armed conflict, security operations, identity-based targeting, and the plurality of armed and semi-armed actors. In this context, legal analysis requires moving beyond the mere definition of the crime to examining the extent to which its constituent elements apply to the documented facts, and assessing whether certain patterns may rise to the level of broader international crimes, including crimes against humanity or persecution founded on identity.^[36]

The data presented in this report points to the documentation of (24,493) cases of enforced disappearance during the period covered by the data, in addition to (7,767) reports, alongside recurrent patterns relating to the manner of arrest, the absence of registration, detention in unofficial locations, and the denial of families' access to information.

^[33] Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Velásquez Rodríguez v. Honduras*, Judgment of 29 July 1988.

^[34] Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocol II of 1977.

^[35] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7 on persecution and crimes against humanity.

^[36] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7.

When analysed collectively, these elements reveal a clear correspondence with the core constituent elements of the crime of enforced disappearance as set out in international law.^[37]

In the first stage, the person is deprived of their liberty through arrest, detention, or abduction, most commonly at checkpoints, during military operations, raids, or while moving between different areas of control. Testimonies indicate that arrest operations are carried out in some instances on the basis of presumed identity, physical appearance, or geographical affiliation, particularly in areas characterised by acute polarisation between the parties to the conflict.^[38]

The second stage consists of concealing the whereabouts of the person or refusing to acknowledge their detention. The documented patterns reveal that a significant number of detainees are transferred to undisclosed detention locations, or are held without official registration, or their families are prevented from learning of their whereabouts. In some cases, testimonies indicated that detainees were transferred between several locations or actors without notification to the families or the existence of any traceable record, effectively placing the person outside the protection of the law.

In the third stage, a state of ambiguity and denial is observed to persist for varying periods, with families receiving conflicting information, the existence of the person being denied, or families being referred between multiple actors without reaching any clear outcome. In this context, the violation is not linked solely to the moment of arrest, but continues for as long as the fate or whereabouts of the person remains unknown, which corresponds to the continuing nature of the crime of enforced disappearance under international law.^[39]

The facts presented in the report further reveal that certain disappearance cases were linked to recurrent patterns of identity-based targeting, whether through suspicion of affiliation with particular groups, or the targeting of individuals belonging to regions or tribes associated with one of the parties to the conflict. Testimonies indicate that certain persons were arrested on account of their names, their dialects, their physical features, or their regional affiliation. A number of detention cases were also associated with practices such as "Law of Strange Faces", a practice used in certain areas to justify the arrest of persons perceived as belonging to unwanted groups or as affiliated with the opposing party.

In this context, the legal analysis takes on an additional dimension relating to the question of persecution and identity-based discrimination. Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, persecution constitutes a crime against humanity when it involves the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights of an identifiable group on political, racial, national, ethnic, or religious grounds, within the context of a widespread or systematic attack against the civilian population.^[40] In light of the patterns revealed by the report, the existence of recurrent identity-based targeting raises legal indicators that call for examination of whether certain practices may fall within this framework.

The data presented in the report further reveals the existence of elements that may support the characterisation of certain patterns as forming part of a widespread or systematic attack against the civilian population. With regard to the widespread character, the figures point to the prevalence of cases across several states and regions, with thousands of cases recorded within a relatively limited period of time, and the majority of victims documented as civilians.

^[37] International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2, 2006.

^[38] Interactive discussion session convened by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, April 2026.

^[39] Ibid.

^[40] Rome Statute, Article 7(1).

With regard to the systematic character, recurrent patterns are evident relating to the mechanisms of perpetration, including arrest without legal process, unacknowledged detention, denial of access to information, the existence of unofficial detention facilities, and the repetition of these practices across multiple regions and by different actors.

This does not necessarily imply the existence of a declared or centrally unified policy, as international law does not require the existence of a formal document to establish the systematic or widespread character of a practice. Rather, this may be inferred from the repetition of acts, their organisation, the nature of the context in which they occur, and the extent of their prevalence and continuity. In the Sudanese case, the multiplicity of cases and the recurrence of patterns reveal the existence of an environment that permits these practices to continue without effective oversight or genuine accountability.

The documented patterns likewise raise the question of the legal responsibility of the actors involved, particularly in light of the plurality of military, paramilitary, and armed groups exercising effective control on the ground in certain areas. Under international law, responsibility for enforced disappearance is not confined to acts directly perpetrated by State institutions, but may extend also to actors operating with the authorisation, support, or acquiescence of the State, or exercising effective authority in the absence of oversight and accountability.^[41]

Testimonies point to the involvement of multiple actors in patterns of unlawful arrest and detention, including regular forces, paramilitary forces, and armed groups, in addition to the existence of unofficial detention facilities and the transfer of detainees between different actors. This plurality complicates the process of determining responsibility, but it does not negate the unlawful character of the practices or diminish their legal characterisation.

The continuation of enforced disappearance for prolonged periods without effective investigation or disclosure of truth likewise raises the question of a failure to fulfil the obligations incumbent upon the State with regard to investigation, accountability, and guaranteeing the right to truth. International standards affirm that the obligation of the State is not confined to refraining from practising enforced disappearance, but encompasses also the taking of necessary measures to prevent it, to investigate cases, to hold those responsible accountable, and to guarantee reparation for victims and their families.^[42]

In the context of armed conflict, these practices likewise intersect with serious violations of international humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians, the prohibition of arbitrary detention, the duty to treat detainees humanely, and the obligation to ensure their registration and to inform their families of their fate. Detention in secret or unofficial locations is also among the practices that directly conflict with the fundamental protection rules enshrined in the Geneva Conventions.

In light of the foregoing, it can be said that the patterns documented in this report do not point solely to the occurrence of individual cases of enforced disappearance, but reveal recurrent and relatively organised practices in which the elements of deprivation of liberty, concealment of fate, absence of legal protection, and identity-based targeting are intertwined. These patterns further reveal legal indicators that may support the characterisation of certain cases within the framework of broader international crimes, particularly where they are carried out on a widespread or systematic basis against the civilian population, or where they are linked to patterns of targeting founded on ethnicity, identity, or presumed affiliation.

^[41] International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2.

^[42] *Ibid.*

Conclusion



The analysis presented in this report demonstrates that enforced disappearance in Sudan cannot be understood as isolated individual cases, nor merely as a direct consequence of the circumstances of the ongoing armed conflict, but as a compound phenomenon shaped through a continuous interaction between political and security contexts, identity factors, and an institutional structure that permits these practices to occur and persist without effective accountability. This interplay reflects the nature of the phenomenon as an extended practice that has reproduced itself across different periods, with shifts in its scope and methods of perpetration.

In the political context, enforced disappearance emerges as a selective instrument used to manage the public sphere, by generating a state of ambiguity and uncertainty that bears on both individuals and communities, even in the absence of large-scale violence. In the context of armed conflict, this practice expands to encompass larger numbers and becomes part of an environment characterised by a plurality of actors, an absence of documentation, and rapid decision-making, factors that heighten the probability of unacknowledged arrest and complicate the pathways of tracing.

The report further demonstrates that ethnicity, even when not invoked directly, plays a significant role in shaping patterns of suspicion, by converting identity markers such as physical appearance, geographical affiliation, and social networks into indicators of presumed guilt in environments where verification is absent. Within this framework, targeting is not founded on specific acts but on classifications, which accounts for the widening of the circle of victims, particularly among civilians.

The data and testimonies demonstrate that enforced disappearance follows a recurrent sequence, beginning with arrest without safeguards, continuing through unacknowledged detention and transfer between different locations, and ending in many cases with a denial of existence or an absence of information regarding fate. This sequence does not just produce a material severance, it produces a condition of complete exclusion from legal protection, which distinguishes this crime from other forms of detention.

At the level of consequences, the report shows that enforced disappearance produces deep and far-reaching effects, beginning with the victim, who is deprived of his fundamental rights and whose life and physical integrity are placed at risk, and extending to the family, which lives in a continuous state of uncertainty that cannot be classified as either loss or detention. These cases further lead to a deterioration of economic conditions, as a result of the loss of the breadwinner and the costs of the search, and contribute to the erosion of the social fabric by generating a climate of fear and distrust. At the legal level, enforced disappearance produces a condition of legal vacuum, in which the person cannot be engaged within traditional frameworks, undermining the possibility of access to justice.

The analysis of actors further demonstrates that enforced disappearance cannot be attributed to a single party, but rather emerges from an interaction between multiple actors operating within an environment that lacks institutional control and in which unified registration systems are absent. This complicates the determination of responsibility and contributes to the continuity of the phenomenon.

In light of the legal analysis, it becomes clear that these practices may rise to the level of crimes against humanity, particularly given the widespread or systematic character of these patterns.

More broadly, the report demonstrates that enforced disappearance in Sudan is not produced solely through specific acts, but through an environment that allows arrest to transform into unacknowledged detention, then into severance, then into denial, in the absence of effective mechanisms for documentation or accountability.

Nor are the effects of this phenomenon limited to individuals, they extend to affect society as a whole, through the undermining of trust, the weakening of institutions, and the production of a continuous state of uncertainty.

Within this framework, enforced disappearance must be treated as an issue that demands a comprehensive response, one encompassing documentation, accountability, support, and the rebuilding of trust in institutions. Addressing this phenomenon further requires recognition of its extended nature, and of the factors that contribute to its production, including the role of identity and the nature of the contexts in which it occurs.

Recommendations

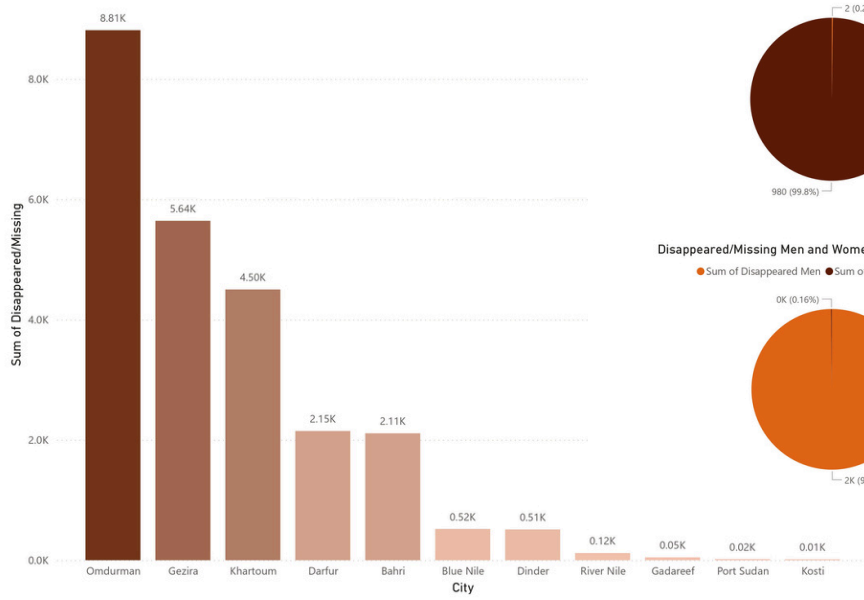


Based on the findings of this report, the following recommendations are presented to reduce the phenomenon of enforced disappearance and strengthen accountability and protection:

1. The immediate cessation of arrest and detention outside the law must be ensured, to guarantee that no person is deprived of his liberty without clear legal process.
2. All detainees must be registered in unified official records, enabling the tracing of cases and preventing their transformation into enforced disappearance.
3. Families must be enabled to access information through official channels that guarantee knowledge of the place of detention and the fate of the detainee without delay.
4. Independent and effective investigations must be conducted to ensure the establishment of the truth and the accountability of those responsible for violations.
5. Accountability and the prevention of impunity must be guaranteed through legal mechanisms that reach all those implicated, without exception.
6. The use of identity as a criterion for suspicion must be prohibited, to reduce disproportionate targeting linked to ethnicity or geographical origin.
7. Judicial authorities must be enabled to access places of detention, to strengthen legal oversight and verify the conditions of detainees.
8. Independent mechanisms for documentation and monitoring must be supported, to improve data collection and identify patterns with greater precision.
9. Coordination among civil society organisations engaged in documentation must be strengthened, to reduce duplication and close information gaps.
10. Psychosocial support must be provided to families, to address the long-term consequences arising from enforced disappearance.
11. Legal support must be provided to families, to assist them in pursuing cases and accessing justice.
12. Enforced disappearance must be integrated into transitional justice frameworks, to ensure truth-telling, reparation, and non-recurrence.
13. The right to know the truth must be guaranteed as a fundamental element in addressing these cases.
14. The structural causes of the phenomenon must be addressed, including inadequate documentation, the plurality of actors, and the absence of oversight.

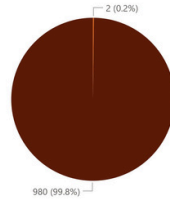
Sum of Disappeared/Missing by City

Sum of Disappeared/Missing 0.01K 8.81K



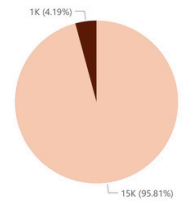
Disappeared/Missing Men and Women 2023

Sum of Disappeared Women Sum of Disappeared Men



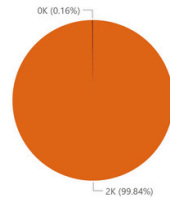
Disappeared/Missing Men and Women 2025

Sum of Disappeared Men Sum of Disappeared Women



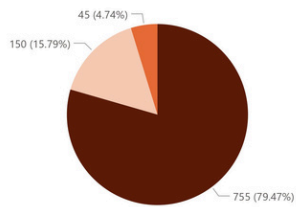
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Sum of Disappeared Men Sum of Disappeared Women



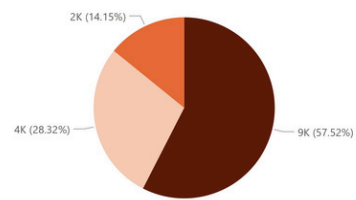
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Sum of Civilians Sum of Mobilized Soldiers Sum of Soldiers



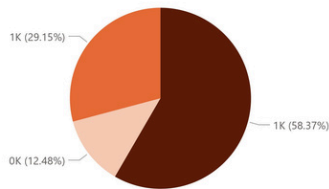
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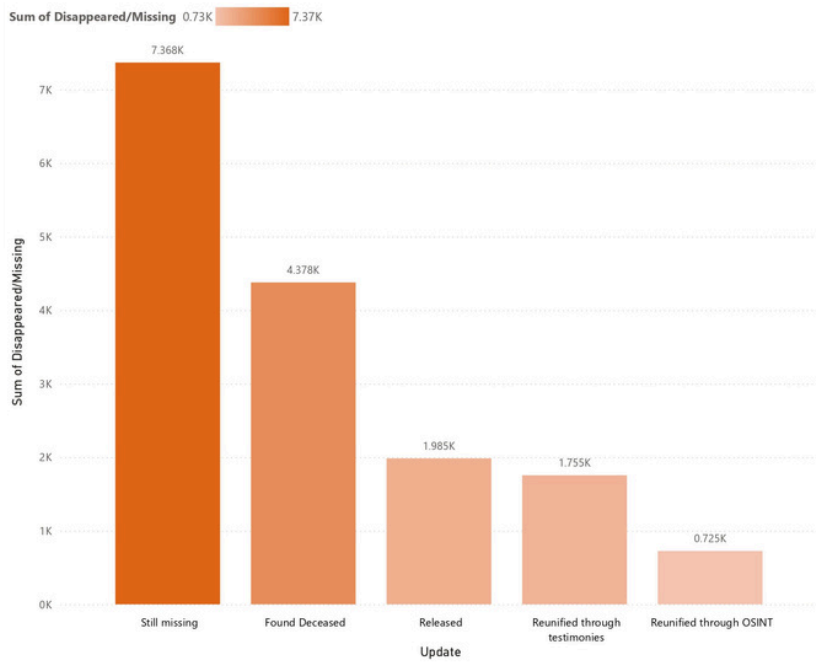
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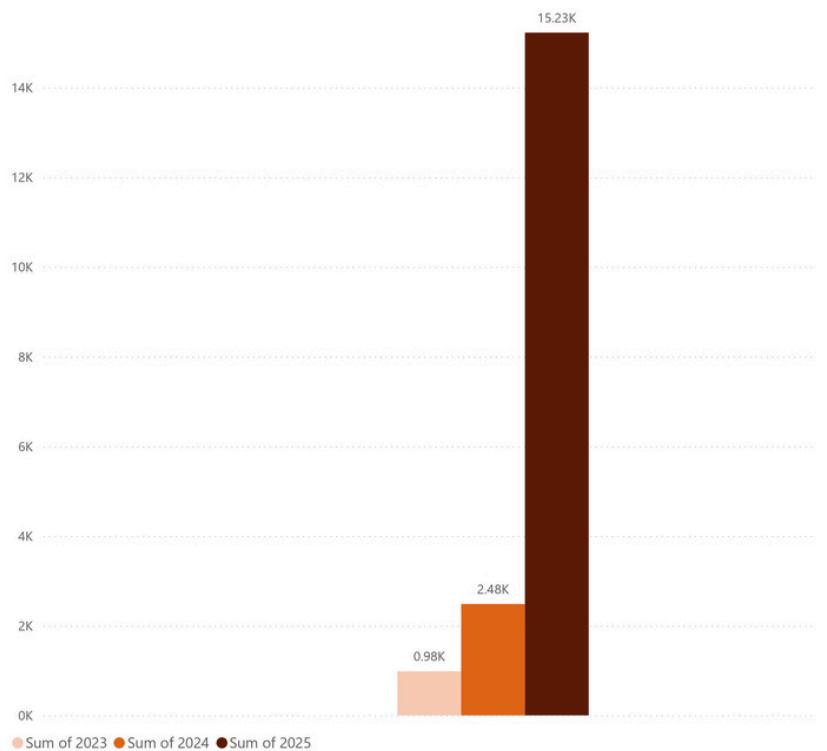
2024

Sum of Civilians Sum of Mobilized Soldiers Sum of Soldiers





Disappeared/Missing 2023-2025





The African Center for justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) is a non-profit non-governmental organization working to monitor and promote respect for Human Rights and legal reform in Sudan. The center has a vision of a Sudan where all people can live and prosper free from fear and want in a country committed to justice, equality and peace.

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