

Geneva International Centre for Justice

62nd Session of the Human Rights Council

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SUDAN: A SYSTEMATIC WEAPON OF WAR



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I. Executive Summary

The Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the oral update of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) for Sudan provided information on the situation in Sudan and revealed that civilians face abhorrent conditions in the country.

The Deputy Head Commissioner of Human Rights reported that more than 1000 civilians have been killed by drone strikes in Sudan this year and that sexual violence was systematically used as a weapon of war, including gang rape, sexual torture and sexual enslavement. The Deputy Head Commissioner emphasised that the absence of accountability for these crimes have led to “rampant impunity”.

Mohamed Chande Othman, chair of the FFM, expressed concerns regarding the use of arbitrary detentions, torture and disappearances as “instruments of control over civilian populations”, particularly against civilians suspected of collaborating with the opposed military group. The representative of a civil society organisation drew attention to the need for accountability and affirmed that “those responsible for atrocities must be brought to account, not welcomed as heroes”.

The representative of Sudan underlined that militias perpetrated abuses, rape and displacements on the basis of geographical and racial belonging. She called for an end to foreign support to militias engaged in the conflict, most notably by the United Arab Emirates.

The positions taken by the groups of countries revealed different priorities. While the European Union’s representative pressed for full cooperation with the FFM, Kenya’s representative, speaking on behalf of the African states, underscored the need for respect of Sudanese sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

In their concluding remarks, the members of the FFM urged all conflict parties to immediately stop arbitrary detentions and torture, while affirming that both parties to the conflict have been using detentions and unfair trials to suppress the Sudanese people. Finally, the Deputy High Commissioner of Human Rights urged all conflict parties to uphold their international commitments and indicated the need for more political pressure on the parties and their regional and international allies to achieve a ceasefire.

II. Background

The current conflict in Sudan started in mid-April 2023. Prior to the outbreak of violence, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had jointly ousted the civilian leaders from the civilian-military coalition, meant to govern for a transitional period of 39 months, and asserted military rule. On 15 April 2023, the SAF and the RSF entered into an armed conflict in Khartoum and fighting quickly spread to other parts of Sudan. The crisis deepened because of the involvement of the Wagner Group and foreign states such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Numerous Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) reported mass atrocities in the conflict leading to concerns of ethnic cleansing and war crimes. In November 2023, the RSF killed more than 800 people in an ethnically driven killing in Adramata located in Darfur, Sudan.

Living conditions in Sudan and humanitarian access had been difficult already before the current conflict, but worsened further with the outbreak of violence. The United Nations Humanitarian and Emergency Relief Chief described the situation in Sudan as “one of the worst humanitarian nightmares in recent history”. From mid-2024, the SAF launched an offensive and retook control of significant territory previously lost to the RSF, around the capital, Bahri and Obeid. In October 2024, the RSF captured El-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, and atrocities, including mass killings and sexual violence, were reported.

The FFM for Sudan was established in October 2023 by a Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 54/2, and tasked with examining alleged human rights and international humanitarian law violations. The FFM’s report presented during the 57th session of the HRC documented large-scale violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by the SAF, the RSF, and their allied militias. The report furthermore observed that 10.7 million people had been displaced, and 19,000 killed since the outbreak of the conflict in 2023. The HRC decided to extend the Mission’s mandate in October 2024, by adopting the resolution 57/2.

In October 2025, the HRC adopted resolution 60/3 strongly condemning war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by government and opposition forces in Sudan and extending the mandate of the FFM. It also requested the Mission to provide an oral update on its work to the 62nd HRC session during an enhanced interactive dialogue - which is the topic of this report.

In November 2025, during the special session of the HRC on the human rights situation in and around El Fasher (Sudan), the Council requested the FFM in resolution S-38/1 to examine alleged recent violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law in El Fasher, identify the perpetrators of these crimes, and present a report at the 61st session of

the HRC. When presenting this report, the FFM affirmed that the RSF perpetrated mass killings and related atrocities in and around El-Fasher on and around 26 and 27 October 2025 that could amount to genocide. The documented crimes included mass killings, serious bodily and mental harm, widespread rape and torture, and largely targeted non-Arab communities. It was noted that the RSF had previously laid siege to the city for 18 months, deliberately imposing conditions of life supposed to lead to the physical destruction of non-Arab communities.

In May 2026, the Joint Fact-Finding Mission of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights on the Human Rights Situation in Sudan and the United Nations FFM for Sudan adopted the Banjul Joint Declaration on Sudan. This document reported grave violations by both the SAF and the RSF in Sudan, and urged conflict parties to implement a ceasefire and to prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

The next section of this report covers in detail what has been discussed during the enhanced interactive dialogue of the FFM.

III. Interactive dialogue

The President of the HRC, Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro began the enhanced dialogue on the oral update by the FFM for Sudan pursuant to resolution HRC 60/3. He welcomed the Deputy Head Commissioner of Human Rights, Awa Dabo, the FFM chair, Mohamed Chande Othman, and FFM members, Joy Ngozi Ezeilo and Mona Rishmawi.

1. Opening statement: Deputy Head Commissioner of Human Rights Awa Dabo

Ms. Dabo delivered her opening statement, stressing that "Sudan cannot be forgotten". The Deputy Head Commissioner highlighted that between January and May 2026, more than 1000 civilians were killed by drone strikes carried out by the SAF and the RSF. Ms. Dabo stressed that patterns of repeated aerial strikes, including by drones, targeting markets, health facilities, and water and energy facilities raised serious concerns on their compatibility with international humanitarian law.

The Deputy Head Commissioner also reported that sexual violence in Sudan not only had reached unprecedented levels but was systemically used, and noted that gang rape, sexual torture and sexual enslavement were used as a weapon of war. According to Ms. Dabo, 34 million people in Sudan were in need of aid and 14 million people have been displaced since the start of the war. The Deputy Head Commissioner of Human Rights then stressed the vital



role of both solidarity within communities and local humanitarian responders in helping save lives. Ms. Dabo then reported that conflict parties had abducted journalists, media workers and members of civil societies, which - in combination with the fact that hundreds of journalists fled from the country - led to an information vacuum in Sudan and the weaponisation of information. Thus, she affirmed that the FFM's role was essential for providing information.

Ms. Dabo explained that the war was sustained by an economic rationale. Domestic and foreign players exploit Sudan's vast natural resources. These include gold, and more interestingly, gum. Conflict parties fight over control for these resources and enrich themselves at the expense of the Sudanese people. Furthermore, foreign powers and suppliers provide drones and other advanced weapons to Sudan which this country could not produce on its own, therefore further entrenching the war.

The Deputy Head Commissioner of Human Rights ended by calling on States to comply with the United Nations Security Council arms embargo imposed on Darfur and to push parties to a humanitarian truce. Finally, Ms. Dabo demanded states make full use of universal jurisdiction to hold perpetrators accountable.

2. Introductory remarks by the Fact-Finding Mission



In his introductory remarks, the chair of the FFM Mohamed Chande Othman reported the use of arbitrary detentions, torture and enforced disappearances as instruments of control over civilian populations, particularly against civilians suspected of working with the militant groups. Mr. Othman then stated that the RSF used extortion, including ransom demands to families whose relatives the RSF detained. Particularly, the FFM chair voiced concerns over the arrest of 17 individuals, including humanitarian workers, by RSF intelligence in May 2026. The fates and whereabouts of these 17 persons remain unknown. Mr. Othman also mentioned that the SAF arrested civilian leaders, political opponents, lawyers, journalists and human rights workers suspected of collaborating with the RSF. Individuals raising concerns against atrocities have been subject to proceedings without process guarantees and some were sentenced to death.

The FFM chair asserted that detention conditions under both parties gave rise to serious concerns as detainees face conditions of overcrowding, inadequate access to food, water, sanitation, and medical care. Mr. Othman urged all parties to cease arbitrary detentions, to release those held without legal basis, to ensure human treatment and to disclose the fate and whereabouts of detainees, and appealed for unimpeded access for humanitarian workers to all detention facilities.

3. Statement by Sudan, the concerned State

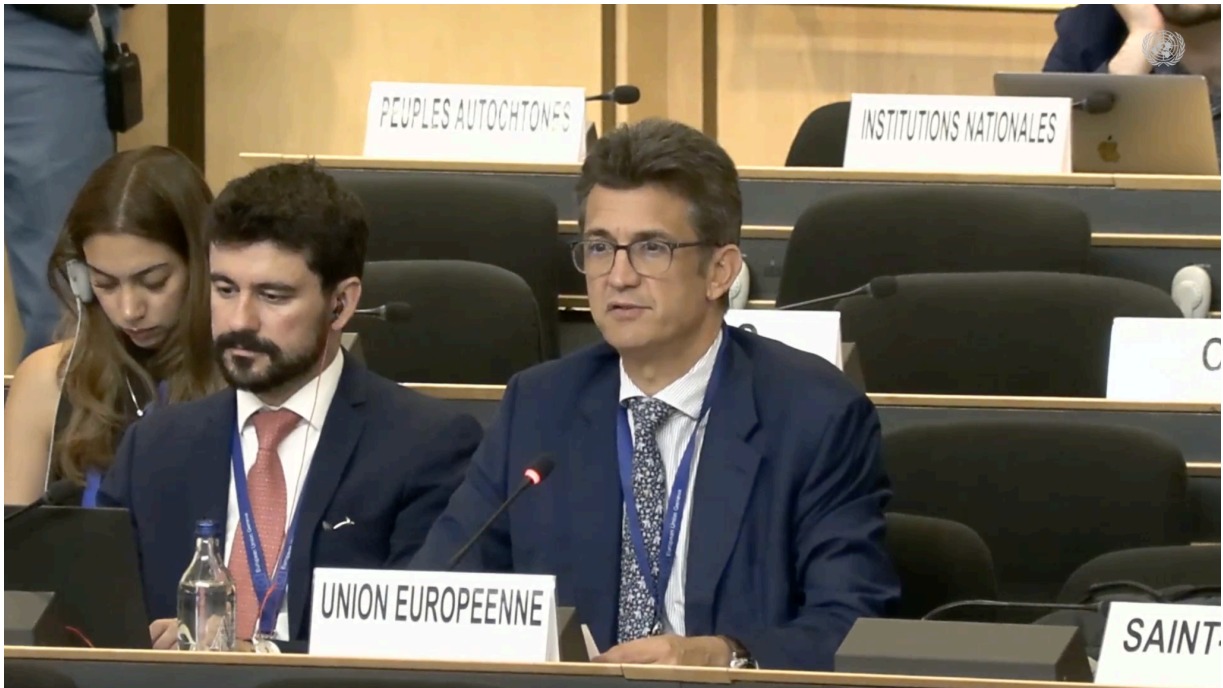
The representative of Sudan first of all affirmed being the person charged by the Sudanese government with investigating crimes under international humanitarian law and domestic



law. The representative maintained that a proxy war for resources was waged in Sudan. The delegation highlighted that the National Commission worked fully independently in cooperation with the national judiciary to deliver justice and fight against impunity. The representative asserted that serious violations of international law perpetrated by “terrorist” militias targeted civilians and national institutions. These militias, according to the representative, committed human rights abuses rapes, and kidnappings on the basis of geographical and racial belonging. In this context, forced displacements and arbitrary detentions were also reported. The representative then underscored that the Sudanese judiciary received several cases and worked on collecting evidence and protecting the witnesses. Finally, the delegation affirmed that Sudan, committed to accountability, was open to cooperation in order to deliver justice while respecting Sudanese sovereignty. The representative called for an end of foreign support to militias in Sudan, notably by the United Arab Emirates, and stressed the need to stop transfers of mercenaries to Sudan.

4. Statements made on behalf of a group of States

The representative presenting the European Union’s position emphasised the crucial role of the FFM in achieving accountability and urged all parties to fully cooperate with the FFM by granting unhindered access to the mission. Furthermore, the representative condemned atrocities committed by the SAF, the RSF and their militias. The representative urged the international community to expand the Darfur region arms embargo to the whole of Sudan and appealed for unhindered humanitarian access across Sudan. Finally, the delegation put forward that the European Union was committed to supporting the humanitarian response, as shown by the fact that the European Union had pledged, together with its member states, over €800 million to Sudan at the Sudan Conference in Berlin.

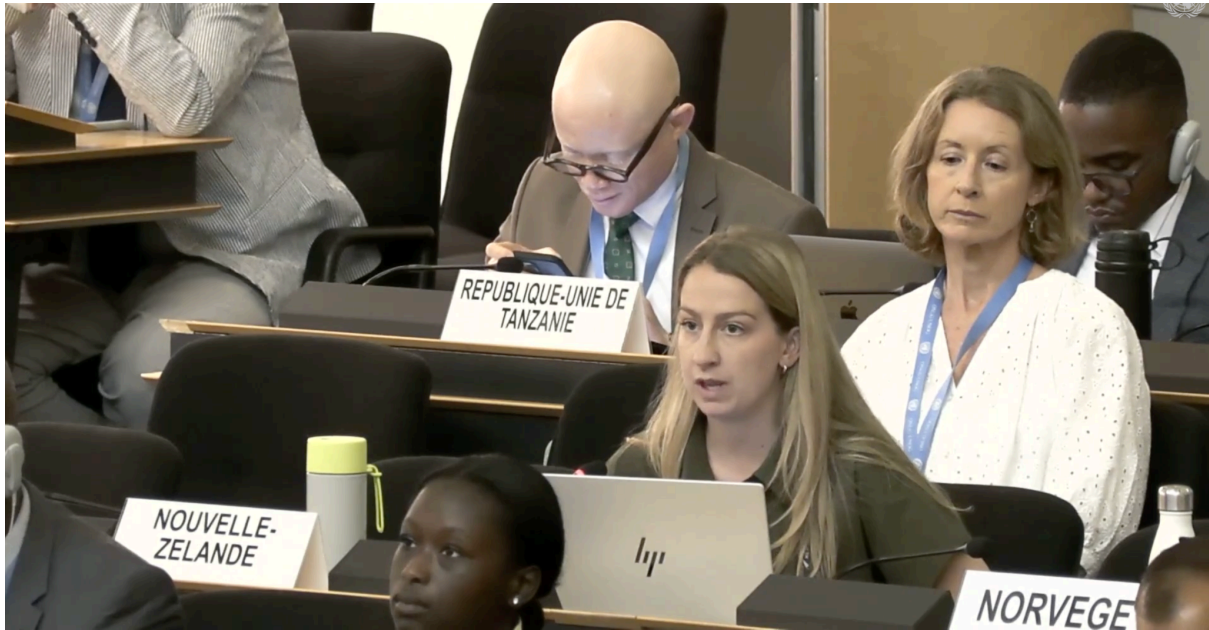


The representative of Iceland, speaking on behalf of the group of Nordic Baltic States, acknowledged reports of war crimes by both the SAF and the RSF. Particularly, the representative raised alarm over accounts of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, ethnic targeting and starvation as a method of warfare, calling it a “systematic pattern of abuse that must end immediately”. Finally, he stressed that accountability was essential and that States should continue to support the FFM.



The representative of New Zealand spoke on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and expressed deep concerns about the commission of international crimes, including war

crimes, crimes against humanity, and persistent disregard of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The representative appealed for protection of humanitarian personnel and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance throughout Sudan, and stated that accountability must be integrated in peace processes.



The representative of Kenya spoke on behalf of the African group, strongly condemning external interference in Sudan fueling the conflict. The group affirmed the African States' commitment to respecting Sudan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and political unity. Finally, the delegation pointed out the need for international cooperation to resolve the crisis, under the auspices of the African Union together with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development with the support of the United Nations, the League of Arab States and key international actors.



The representative of the United Kingdom spoke on behalf of the Coalition for Atrocity Prevention and Justice for Sudan, expressing grave concern at the human rights crisis across Sudan. The group pointed out that attacks on aid workers, siege tactics and the use of starvation as a method of warfare accelerated famine conditions, while also recalling the importance of accountability to break the “cycle of impunity”. The representative noted that those who hold the perpetrators of crimes responsible, notably Sudanese human rights defenders and justice actors, should be protected, and then called on external actors to the conflict to refrain from providing financial or military support to the warring parties.



5. Relevant statements by other delegations

There seemed to be two broad lines of argumentation emerging from the statements by representatives of countries. On the one hand, the representative of Egypt emphasised the need for supporting national mechanisms for accountability and urged states not to extend HRC mandates without the consent of the country concerned. The delegation of Eritrea aligned itself with this position by affirming that the Sudanese conflict was an internal matter that required an indigenous solution, owned and led by the Sudanese people. The representative of South Sudan also seemed to argue in this sense when affirming “unwavering support to Sudanese sovereignty”, and the delegation of Somalia underlined the importance of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. The delegation of Indonesia argued that any political process must be Sudanese-led and it must respect Sudanese sovereignty. The representative of Libya invoked the importance of taking into account the consent of the country concerned when establishing a new HRC mandate or expanding an existing one.

The delegation of Ireland, on the other hand, urged all parties to facilitate safe and unhindered access for the FFM to carry out its work. The representative of Germany recalled that the Berlin conference, held in April 2026, had raised €1.5 billion in support of the people of Sudan, and also implored all relevant stakeholders to cooperate with the FFM. The delegation of France later clarified that out of the €1.5 billion raised at the Berlin conference, €800 million was mobilised by the European Union and its member states.

Not all statements fit neatly into these two camps, however. The representative of the United Arab Emirates rejected what they described as all “false declarations” made against their country during this session and stated that there could be no military solution to the conflict in Sudan.

Other delegations addressed the conflict from a different angle. The representative of South Africa aligned itself with the African group and recalled that the conflict had recently been characterised as an “atrocities laboratory”, notably because of the “human tragedy” in El-Fasher. The delegation of Ghana pushed for a peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict and asserted that “atrocities crimes and impunity have no place in Sudan”.

The sovereignty-based argument was further reinforced by other Council members. The representative of China stated that imposing a country-specific mechanism against the will of the concerned government would only further complicate the crisis and that the Sudanese government was opposed to the establishment of the FFM. The delegation of the Russian Federation, while hoping for a rapid end to the conflict, affirmed that the Sudanese people could and had to resolve their internal problems.

The representative of Colombia raised a related but distinct concern. The delegation advocated for an end to the conflict and noted that Colombia rejected mercenarism, as shown by the creation of the interinstitutional group on mercenarism in 2025 and the fact that the United Nations working group on mercenaries visited Colombia in 2026. The delegation maintained its resolve to work with Sudan to eradicate the practice of mercenarism.

Finally, the representative of Sudan offered its government’s perspective on the causes of the violations. The delegation argued that violations of international law would only cease once the funding for the “terrorist” militia ends, while affirming that arbitrary arrests solely happen in militia-controlled regions.

6. Statements delivered on behalf of UN bodies

The representative of UNICEF stressed that the situation in Sudan for children was “devastating”, emphasising widespread violations of their rights, including recruitment of

children and sexual violence committed against them, and calling on all parties to end violations of international law against children.



7. Statements made by Civil Society Organisations

During the opening remarks, civil society reiterated the concerns raised by the two previous speakers and pointed out that liberty of speech was restricted in Sudan. Civil society furthermore stated that in areas controlled by the SAF, authorities dissolve legitimate trade unions and do not recognise the elected journalist syndicate. Furthermore, civil sector reported having documented incidences of conflict-related sexual violence against civilians which left survivors with physical and emotional trauma. The public sphere then urged for accountability of the perpetrators of crimes, and denounced the custom of “welcoming” the perpetrators “as heroes”. Finally, the civil society affirmed that repeated and credible allegations concerning the interference of states in the conflict, most notably the United Arab Emirates, should be investigated and those responsible held accountable.

During the session, civil society took up two opposed positions, one aligned with the African group, affirming support to initiatives undertaken by the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the other noting the importance of accountability and pushing for a renewal of the mandate of the FFM, while thanking the FFM for its work and offering congratulations to the FFM for what the mission has achieved so far. The public sphere also warned of the weaponisation of famine by all military groups involved in the conflict, and called on states to scale up funding for local humanitarian initiatives in Sudan.

IV. Conclusion

The Enhanced Interactive Dialogue made clear that the conflict in Sudan has caused one of the worst humanitarian crises, with 34 million people in need of aid. The alarming number of drone strikes and the systematic use of sexual violence have dramatically worsened the situation for the civilian population in Sudan.

The statements made by representatives revealed a fundamental tension between delegations prioritising accountability and cooperation with the FFM on one side, and representatives emphasising Sudanese sovereignty and the principle of non-interference on the other. Some representatives speaking on behalf of the latter argued against extending the FFM's mandate without the consent of the Sudanese government.

A recurring topic throughout the debate was impunity. Perpetrators of sexual violence were reportedly "welcomed as heroes" and states tend to obstruct the FFM's work, although the latter is crucial for identifying those responsible for crimes. The absence of accountability was identified as a key driver of the conflict.

The debate also showed that the conflict was driven by economic motives. Foreign actors fuel the conflict in order to get access to Sudan's vast natural resources. Without addressing these economic incentives, any ceasefire risks remaining fragile and temporary.

The dialogue also showed the remarkable resilience of Sudanese Civil Society, humanitarian workers and human rights defenders, who decide to and manage to carry out the crucial tasks of humanitarian assistance documentation and accountability under extreme conditions.

Concluding remarks during the session

In their concluding remarks, the members of the FFM invoked the importance of the Banjul declaration made on 12 May 2026 in Gambia, which showcased the principle of complementarity. The FFM urged all conflict parties to immediately stop arbitrary detentions and torture, while affirming that both parties to the conflict have been using detentions and unfair trials to suppress the Sudanese people.

The Deputy High Commissioner of Human Rights called on all conflict parties to uphold their international commitments, while urging the international community to scale up funding for health and legal service providers in support of survivors. The Deputy High Commissioner also underlined the need for more political pressure on the parties and their regional and international allies to achieve a ceasefire.

V. GICJ Position

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) stresses the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire in Sudan to stop this brutal conflict. GICJ is particularly worried by the growing number of civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure caused by drone strikes.

GICJ is alarmed by the systematic use of sexual and gender-based violence against civilians, causing lifelong traumas and disabilities. GICJ is also deeply worried by enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions in Sudan.

Therefore, GICJ calls on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law and the international community to hold them accountable for these violations.

Furthermore, GICJ recommends States to:

1. Expand the existing Darfur arms embargo to all of Sudan and comply fully with the United Nations Security Council arms embargo obligations.
2. Exercise universal jurisdiction on individuals suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sudan.
3. Ratify and implement the Rome Statute, as well as to support the International Criminal Court, notably when it examines cases regarding crimes against humanity and war crimes on sexual violence, and war crimes on the enforced disappearance of persons in Sudan.
4. Ratify the International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries (1989).
5. Renew and fund the Fact-Finding Mission's mandate and cooperate fully with it.

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