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1. Executive Summary

In light of the ongoing armed conflict in Sudan, the Human Rights Council called an urgent debate to address the rapidly worsening human rights situation in and around El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan. Growing levels of violence, concerns about impending mass atrocities, and deteriorating humanitarian situations impacting civilians stranded in the region formed part of the discussion. UN Human Rights High Commissioner, Volker Türk, published what he called a "red alert," urging people to the impending human rights tragedy in Sudan. The possibility of mass murders, indiscriminate attacks, sexual violence, forced relocation, and blockage of humanitarian aid has caused serious worry for delegations, international organisations, and civil society organisations. The discussion emphasised how urgently international action is needed to safeguard civilians, guarantee humanitarian access, prevent atrocity crimes, and support accountability systems, such as the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan.

2. Background

The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been fighting each other since April 2023. Since then, the conflict has resulted in extensive civilian suffering, mass displacement, infrastructure destruction, and claims of grave breaches of humanitarian law and international human rights law.

As a vital supply and transportation centre connecting Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan, El Obeid is a strategically significant city in central Sudan. The city was deemed more vulnerable by the middle of 2026 as RSF forces gathered nearby and conflict escalated.

The Human Rights Council decided to hold the urgent debate on June 30, 2026, and it took place on July 3, 2026, at the Council's 62nd session in Geneva. The debate was conducted against the backdrop of reports of siege conditions in El Obeid. Drone strikes and bombardments have occurred on multiple occasions, damaging civilian areas and essential infrastructure, and leading to severe shortages of clean water, food, energy, and medical care. The large-scale displacement in the Kordofan region concerns potential horrors similar to those seen in El Fasher.

Numerous states, including the European Union, Nordic-Baltic countries, Japan, Qatar, and a number of NGOs urged immediate preventive action.

The High Commissioner, Volker Turk, explained that Sudan is experiencing another serious human rights crisis, especially in El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan. He referred to the situation as a "red alert," urging swift international action to stop

additional atrocity crimes, safeguard civilians, and guarantee accountability for transgressions of international humanitarian and human rights law.

I. Humanitarian Situation in El Obeid

Due to the ongoing combat between the SAF and the RSF, El Obeid has been under siege-like conditions for around eighteen months. Drone assaults have been frequent, and access to basic services has been severely restricted for civilians. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights documented:

- Fifteen drone strikes on El Obeid and surrounding areas between 6 and 28 June, 2026.
- At least 45 civilians killed and 41 injured, with actual casualty figures believed to be significantly higher.
- Repeated attacks by both parties on civilian infrastructure, including markets, schools, fuel stations, water facilities, and civilian vehicles.
- Damage to at least 13 fuel stations in El Obeid and Al Rahad, contributing to shortages of fuel, clean water, food, transportation, healthcare, and communications.

II. Growing Humanitarian Crisis

The High Commissioner cautioned that clean water shortages have reached catastrophic levels, raising the risk of cholera and other waterborne infections during the rainy season. The presence of tens of thousands of displaced people from other districts of Kordofan has further strained the already limited resources. Many citizens cannot flee because transportation costs are prohibitively high and because of continuous attacks on highways and automobiles. Insecurity along the escape routes remains high. Those attempting to escape face major human rights violations, such as abductions, torture, and other forms of mistreatment, sexual violence, and looting. Individuals who remain in El Obeid face arbitrary arrest and incarceration, especially those who have fled RSF-controlled areas and are accused of collaborating with opposing forces. Rising hate speech has further exacerbated tensions in the conflict areas

III. Risk of Mass Atrocities

Mr. Volker Türk urged against the recurrence of atrocities in Sudan, particularly at Zamzam Camp for Displaced Persons and El Fasher in North Darfur. Based on his office's assessment, the RSF captured El Fasher, killing around 6,000 people in three days. The RSF and its affiliated militias perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity, including mass killings, sexual violence and torture. He emphasised that these

atrocities occurred despite repeated warnings from his office, highlighting the dangers of international inaction.

3. Executive Summary of the Urgent Debate

a. Opening Remarks



The President of the Human Rights Council opened the debate, explaining that the meeting was convened in accordance with the Council's duty to respond to circumstances that require immediate international attention. The President emphasised that the Council had a responsibility to investigate the conflict's serious human rights consequences and provide a forum for the international community to deliberate appropriate actions to protect civilians while upholding international human rights and humanitarian law. He cautioned that the indicators of another humanitarian and human rights disaster were clear, describing the situation as a "red alert" requiring rapid international action. Referring to earlier failures to avert mass crimes in Sudan, particularly in Darfur, he warned that the international community could not afford to overlook the unprecedented threats to civilians. The High Commissioner stated that his office had received credible information indicating that armed troops were converging toward El Obeid, posing an urgent threat to nearly half a million people who live in the city. He stated that months of siege-like conditions had already adversely impacted the populace, limiting access to food and potable water. Volker Türk raised multiple charges

of major violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by all parties involved in the conflict. These included indiscriminate strikes on civilian areas, summary killings, arbitrary incarceration, enforced disappearances, torture, conflict-related sexual violence, attacks on hospitals and schools, and obstructing humanitarian aid.

He also stated that the widespread damage of civilian infrastructure has aggravated the humanitarian catastrophe and put vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly, and those with disabilities, at much greater risk.

The High Commissioner reminded all conflict parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law, which included the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution.

The High Commissioner urged the international community to take immediate and coordinated action, including preventing future attacks on El Obeid and other susceptible districts of Kordofan. He appealed to all sides, particularly the RSF, to end attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. The debate noted that ensuring the safe and voluntary evacuation of civilians is extremely important. Establishing humanitarian corridors to allow for the supply of food, medical care, and other essential supplies must be prioritised. He underscored the need to ensure accountability for crimes committed by supporting the International Criminal Court's (ICC) investigations and, where appropriate, using universal jurisdiction to prosecute perpetrators. The international community was called on to strengthen the UN Security Council's response to atrocity crimes, as well as revise veto limitations in circumstances involving massacres. He also asked states with influence over the sides to utilise their power to de-escalate the crisis and prevent further violations.

b. Statement by Mr. George Katrougalos, Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures



The speaker welcomed the Human Rights Council's urgent debate, emphasising that Sudan's conflict, which has been ongoing for more than three years, has caused enormous human suffering and is progressively deteriorating in El Obeid, North Kordofan. They warn that the military buildup, shelling, drone strikes, and siege-like conditions are similar to what occurred in the El Fasher and Zamzam camps, heightening the possibility of massacres. The statement outlined numerous violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, such as civilian attacks, forced displacement, arbitrary detention, infrastructure destruction, humanitarian aid restrictions, and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. In particular, he emphasised the serious impact on women and girls through pervasive conflict-related sexual abuse, as well as the suffering of children, the elderly, people with disabilities, journalists, health care workers, humanitarian staff and human rights defenders.

The speaker asserted that these violations have become systematic as a result of ongoing impunity. They urged all parties to comply with international law, protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, enable unhindered humanitarian access, and ensure the safe evacuation of civilians. They emphasised that major transgressions may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity, and that those involved, including military commanders, must face consequences. Finally, the speaker called on the Human Rights Council, Member States, and the international community to take immediate preventive action, prioritise civilian protection, support humanitarian assistance and refugees, and maintain independent monitoring and accountability efforts to help Sudanese people achieve peace, justice, and dignity.

c. Statement of Mona Rishwai, Member of Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Sudan



The speaker expressed concern that the Human Rights Council must once again confront a deteriorating situation in Sudan, emphasising the Council's responsibility to prevent atrocities and respond to human rights emergencies. They warned that El Obeid is in danger of being attacked, citing UN Fact-Finding Mission findings. The oral statement underlined the widespread panic among citizens as a result of the RSF surrounding the city and publicly indicating plans to enter it. It was noted that the RSF practically controls all access routes, carrying out drone assaults, and targeting civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, marketplaces, water facilities, fuel depots, and residential areas, killing civilians, including women and children. The attacks have also resulted in serious shortages of food, gasoline, water, electricity, and healthcare.

The speaker cautioned that El Obeid is following the same pattern as El Fasher: encirclement, interruption of humanitarian aid, destruction of infrastructure, and increasing attacks on civilians. They also expressed concern about the SAF, claiming that their military presence in civilian areas puts residents in danger and accusing them of arbitrary arrests, protracted incarceration, and intimidation of those suspected of supporting the RSF or advocating for peace. The speaker urged all parties to follow international humanitarian and human rights obligations by safeguarding civilians and civilian infrastructure, ceasing hostilities, and avoiding military actions in populated areas.

d. Statement by the Representative of the Concerned Country, the Republic of the Sudan



The Sudanese Government's representative thanked the Human Rights Council and its allies for their attention to Sudan, but argued that the RSF, which the government labels as a terrorist militia, bears primary responsibility for the crisis.

He claims that the RSF has declared war on the Sudanese state, its people, and civilian infrastructure after failing to seize control militarily. The speaker argues that international declarations alone are ineffectual against the RSF, citing the events in El Fasher as evidence. He asks the international community to put pressure on states that reportedly give advanced weapons and drones to the RSF, as well as to legally identify the RSF as a terrorist group.

Sudan remains open to genuine peace proposals, according to the representative, as long as they follow the Government's roadmap, which includes disarming and dismantling the RSF, followed by a truce and a Sudanese-led political process with international support. He emphasised that the Sudanese Government is working with the United Nations, including the UN Human Rights Office and the appointed expert, and that protecting human rights, delivering justice to victims, and avoiding impunity are top priorities. Finally, he expressed gratitude to countries that have hosted Sudanese refugees and emphasised the Government's efforts to promote humanitarian assistance

and voluntary returns despite limited resources. They concluded with a personal proclamation as an El Obeid native expressing confidence that the city "will never fall."

e. Statements on behalf of Groups of States

Representative of the European Union, on behalf of a group of countries



During the urgent debate, Member States and regional groupings expressed widespread concern over the rapidly deteriorating human rights and humanitarian conditions in and around El Obeid.

The representative, on behalf of the European Union (EU) and numerous associated nations, warned that El Obeid is at risk of experiencing the same mass tragedies as El Fasher and emphasised the importance of immediate preventive action. The EU urged the RSF to immediately halt their attack on El Obeid and all parties to cease hostilities and follow international humanitarian law. According to the statement, the leadership of the SAF, the RSF, their linked militias, and those who supply them with weapons, funding, or other support bear responsibility for both maintaining and ending the violence. As a result, it urges all external parties to refrain from providing armaments and aid that could fuel violence.

The representative emphasised the EU's efforts to promote peace, which include support for an immediate ceasefire, a pledge of more than €800 million in humanitarian aid announced at the Berlin Conference on Sudan, and steps to preserve essential infrastructure. The EU further reiterated its support for the UN Fact-Finding Mission and the ICC in their efforts to achieve accountability and end impunity, encouraging

governments with influence over the parties to use them to prevent the commission of crimes.

Statement by the Representative of the Republic of Finland, on behalf of a group of countries



The Nordic-Baltic countries are gravely concerned about the possibility of widespread atrocities in El-Obeid. Intensified RSF drone attacks and SAF counter-operations are murdering civilians and endangering up to 500,000 people in and around El-Obeid.

The RSF encirclement limits movement and disrupts critical services, humanitarian activities, and life-saving aid. Humanitarian access must be safe, fast, and unfettered. Civilians must be able to exit dangerous locations voluntarily and unhindered.

Previous patterns of action by RSF, as reported by the UN, raise major concerns, including ethnically targeted violence, executions, and other atrocities against civilians, including children, with rape utilised as a means of warfare. The leadership of the SAF and the RSF, their allied militias, and external parties supplying them with arms have responsibility for this conflict. This war must end, external backing that exacerbates and prolongs the fight must cease, and all players with power must take action to prevent further tragedies. The only possible road ahead is a long-term peace and an inclusive Sudanese-led and owned political process.

Statement by the Representative of the Republic of Kenya, on behalf of the African Group



Kenya expressed its support with the Sudanese people, particularly those affected by the conflict in and around El Obeid, North Kordofan. The group emphasised that the immediate goal should be to silence the guns with a ceasefire, paving the way for humanitarian aid, peace talks, and an inclusive political discussion. The African Group strongly criticised external participation in the conflict, citing it as a breach of African Union Peace and Security Council communiqués and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The statement underlined the Group's support for Sudan's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and political unity, emphasising the notion of “African solutions to African problems.” It applauded the African Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and other regional players' mediation efforts, urged for a single coordinated international strategy led by Africa, and expressed support for the Sudanese Government's peace offer. The Group urged all parties to implement the Jeddah Declaration to ensure the protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and called on the international community to provide greater support to Sudan.

Statement by the Representative of Ireland, on behalf of group of countries



The Representative of Ireland, on behalf of a coalition of countries, voiced deep concern over Sudan's rapidly deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation, notably in and around El Obeid, North Kordofan. The delegate, through the statement, warned that growing violence, indiscriminate drone strikes, and attacks on civilian infrastructure have put hundreds of thousands of civilians at risk of atrocities.

The coalition urged all sides to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities, follow international humanitarian and human rights law, protect civilians, and ensure safe, quick, and unrestricted humanitarian access. It also urged all states to avoid measures that could exacerbate the conflict and instead use their influence to promote civilian protection and de-escalation.

The representative reiterated its strong support for the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan and emphasised the significance of accountability for human rights violations and atrocities. The coalition appreciated the urgent debate and proposed a Human Rights Council resolution as a critical measure to prevent new crimes and strengthen international efforts towards justice, accountability, and a Sudanese-led road to long-term peace.

f. Statements by Civil Society

During the urgent debate, actors from different non-governmental organisations and civil society issued their statements. Civil society representatives expressed alarm over the fast-deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in and around El Obeid, stating that the city was at risk of large-scale atrocities if the international community did not act quickly. They emphasised that civilians bore the conflict's burden, and that the warning indicators were strikingly similar to those that preceded prior massacres in Sudan. The organisations documented widespread and systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, such as indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas, unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, conflict-related sexual violence, and the destruction of homes and critical civilian infrastructure. They emphasised that the conflict had a particularly negative impact on women, children, the elderly, and those with disabilities. Civil society leaders also emphasised the conflict's devastating humanitarian implications. They detailed long-term shortages of food, clean water, energy, fuel, and medical supplies, as hospitals and other critical public services struggled to function. Many populations remained trapped in combat zones or were forced to flee their homes, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. The public sphere called for immediate, safe, and unfettered humanitarian access to all affected communities, as well as for all parties to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and medical staff.

Civil society also asked the international community to step up diplomatic efforts to negotiate an immediate ceasefire, protect civilians, and promote a peaceful settlement to the crisis. It emphasised the importance of early preventive action, warning that failing to respond decisively could lead to another massive humanitarian and human rights disaster. Overall, the Human Rights Council and Member States were urged to prioritise civilian protection, reinforce accountability procedures, increase humanitarian aid, and keep continuous international focus on the unfolding situation in El Obeid.

4. Conclusion

The urgent discussion of the human rights situation in and around El Obeid highlighted the Human Rights Council's concern about the deepening conflict and its devastating impact on people in North Kordofan. Throughout the debate, the High Commissioner, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission, Member States, and civil society all agreed that the situation had reached a critical point and needed immediate international attention to prevent further loss of life and widespread human rights violations. The discussions centred on consistent reports of indiscriminate attacks on people, the destruction of critical infrastructure, forced displacement, conflict-related

sexual violence, and significant restrictions on humanitarian access. Speakers emphasised that ongoing conflicts and deteriorating humanitarian situations put hundreds of thousands of people at immediate risk, and that all parties to the conflict must fully comply with international human rights and humanitarian law.

The debate concluded with a strong request for an immediate suspension of hostilities, open humanitarian access, and greater civilian protection. Delegations also emphasised the necessity of conducting independent investigations, maintaining evidentiary records of violations, and holding those responsible for major crimes accountable. Many delegates reaffirmed their support for the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan, which serves as an important mechanism for recording abuses and battling impunity.

Overall, the urgent debate served as an early warning to the international community that the El Obeid issue might quickly escalate into another large-scale humanitarian and human rights disaster if decisive action was not taken. The Council decided that ongoing international engagement, increased humanitarian assistance, effective civilian protection, and accountability for perpetrators are critical to preventing further escalation and advancing peace, justice, and human rights in Sudan.

5. Position of Geneva International Centre for Justice

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) expresses deep alarm over the rising violence in and around El Obeid, warning that civilians, especially a huge number of internally displaced people, face a severe risk of mass crimes as hostilities escalate.

GICJ emphasises that the issue requires immediate international attention and that preventive measures must be implemented before another humanitarian disaster happens. GICJ is particularly concerned that all conflict parties protect civilians promptly, cease attacks on civilian populations, and fully comply with their international humanitarian and human rights commitments. GICJ stresses that the international community must intervene immediately to prevent more violence and secure the safety of those affected by the conflict. We call for immediate action to prevent further atrocities in and around El Obeid, urging all parties to protect civilians, stop attacks on civilian populations, and fully comply with international humanitarian and human rights laws. The Centre also emphasises the importance of immediate preventive international action to address the increasing violence and avoid a large-scale humanitarian disaster.



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