

# **Sudan 2024 Human Rights Report**

## **Executive Summary**

The April 2023 outbreak of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces resulted in a protracted conflict across the country and reports of serious and widespread abuses. Based on a careful analysis of the law and available facts, in December 2023, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken determined that members of the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces committed war crimes in the country. The Secretary also determined that members of the Rapid Support Forces and allied militias committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. In the conflict, members of the Rapid Support Forces and allied militias also committed genocide. The Rapid Support Forces and allied militias systematically murdered men and boys on an ethnic basis, and deliberately targeted women and girls from certain ethnic groups for rape and other forms of sexual violence. Those same militias targeted fleeing civilians, murdering innocent individuals escaping conflict, and prevented remaining civilians from accessing lifesaving supplies. As of November, the United Nations and international media reported more than 20,000 civilian deaths. Although the conflict originated in Khartoum, the fighting quickly spread into Darfur, and Blue Nile and South Kordofan States (the Two Areas), and the eastern part of the country. Rampant abuses were reported. As of

year's end, fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces continued to intensify and spread to new areas of the country, with reports of at times indiscriminate aerial bombardments by the Sudanese Armed Forces on densely populated areas and reports of widespread attacks on civilians by the Rapid Support Forces.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious abuses in a conflict; unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflict by both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom; trafficking in persons, including forced labor; prohibiting independent trade unions or significant or systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and significant presence of any of the worst forms of child labor.

The government did not take credible steps or action to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Militias affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces reportedly continued to commit killings, abductions, rape, sexual slavery, and other physical abuses and mistreatment of civilians in Darfur and across the country. Arab militias allied with the Rapid Support Forces conducted unlawful killings of Masalit civilians and other non-Arab groups as they fled violence in West and North Darfur and elsewhere. Local militias maintained substantial influence and

acted with widespread impunity. Intercommunal violence originating from land-tenure disputes and resource scarcity continued to result in civilian deaths, particularly in East, South, and North Darfur, as well as the Two Areas. There were also human rights abuses reported in Abyei, a disputed region that Sudan and South Sudan both claimed as their territory. These abuses generally stemmed from local clashes regarding cattle and land between ethnic Ngok Dinka and Misseriya. Weak rule of law persisted in Darfur, where fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, banditry, criminality, and intercommunal violence were the main causes of insecurity.

## **Section 1. Life**

### **a. Extrajudicial Killings**

According to the United Nations, international human rights organizations, national civil society organizations, and media, the government or its agents committed numerous arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the rival security force group the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and armed militias affiliated with the government and the RSF were responsible for widespread unlawful killings.

The SAF increasingly targeted individuals it suspected of having collaborated with the RSF. A resistance committee member from western Khartoum reported that while being detained by the SAF under suspicion of being an

RSF spy, he witnessed SAF officials kill seven men using electricity and beatings. On July 28, a video circulated on messaging apps that appeared to show SAF personnel dragging and executing suspected RSF informants through the streets in the Sigla neighborhood in eastern Omdurman.

According to victim testimonies, there were numerous credible reports of extrajudicial killings and executions of SAF and RSF prisoners of war from both sides.

After capturing Wad Medani, Gezira, in December 2023, RSF militants committed arbitrary or unlawful killings throughout the state, according to multiple reports. On June 5-6, RSF militants conducted multiple attacks on Wad al Noura, Gezira, resulting in more than 150 civilian deaths.

Al Jazeera reported that on August 11, RSF militants killed approximately 10 civilians in Galangi Village, Sennar State, while attempting to kidnap women and girl villagers. On August 15, multiple civil society organizations issued statements accusing the RSF of conducting a second attack on the village, firing indiscriminately on villagers and reportedly killing at least 87 civilians and injuring an additional 150.

SAF troops, SAF-affiliated militias, and RSF militants committed killings in Khartoum, Darfur, Kordofan, Gezira, Sennar, and White Nile States. Multiple civil society organizations and international media outlets reported extensively on targeted killings based on ethnicity by the RSF in Darfur.

There were widespread reports the SAF engaged in indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombardments in highly populated residential areas, including in Khartoum and Darfur regions. There were numerous examples similar to the following: SAF aerial bombardments of RSF militants in Kandahar Market, western Omdurman's second largest market, on May 25, June 9, and July 26, resulting in more than 60 civilian deaths. On November 2, SAF warplanes dropped more than 11 barrel bombs on residential areas in El Miriya, west of Omdurman, causing 51 civilian deaths and 230 injuries.

On October 25, the RSF attacked Al Seriha Village, approximately 60 miles northwest of Wad Medani, the capital of Gezira State, killing 124 persons and injuring more than 200.

The RSF repeatedly used artillery strikes on residential neighborhoods to weaken defenses around SAF bases and to facilitate movements for its militants. The RSF reportedly conducted more than a dozen indiscriminate artillery strikes on residential neighborhoods in Omdurman, which resulted in more than 60 civilian deaths. On August 26, the RSF reportedly conducted indiscriminate artillery fire on the Naivasha market in eastern El Fasher's Abu Shouk IDP camp, killing approximately 24 civilians and wounding an additional 36.

## **b. Coercion in Population Control**

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the

part of government authorities.

### **c. War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Evidence of Acts that May Constitute Genocide, or Conflict-Related Abuses**

The SAF and the RSF engaged in violent clashes across the country, especially in Khartoum, Darfur, Gezira, Sennar, Blue Nile, and Kordofan States. In addition to the fighting between the SAF and the RSF and their allied militias, armed movements such as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-N) clashed with both the SAF and RSF and rival armed groups.

In its September 6 report to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan found there were reasonable grounds to believe the SAF and its allied forces committed the war crimes of violence to life and person, in particular killings of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; and committing outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment.

The Fact-Finding Mission also found there were reasonable grounds to believe the RSF and its allied militias committed the war crimes of violence to life and person, in particular killings of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; committing outrages upon personal dignity; rape,

sexual slavery and any form of indecent assault; pillage; conscripting or enlisting children younger than age 15 or using them to participate actively in hostilities; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population; intentionally directing attacks against persons and objects involved in humanitarian assistance and other specially protected objects; and ordering the displacement of the civilian population for reasons related to the conflict. The Fact-Finding Mission further found there were reasonable grounds to believe the RSF had committed the crimes against humanity of killings; torture; enslavement; rape, sexual slavery, and acts of a sexual nature of comparable gravity; abuses on the basis of intersecting ethnic and gender grounds in connection with the foregoing acts; and forcible displacement of population.

The environment for humanitarian operations across the country was dangerous and increasingly difficult as the war continued. The SAF and the RSF and armed groups severely restricted the ability of the United Nations, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver humanitarian assistance to areas severely impacted by the conflict. Access was impeded by bureaucratic barriers, including denial of visas and travel permits and lengthy inspections of humanitarian assistance. Additionally, direct fighting in areas where humanitarian needs were most dire prevented humanitarian actors from delivering assistance.

The security environment remained dangerous for humanitarian aid

workers. In April 2023, three World Food Program staff members were killed in fighting between the RSF and the SAF in North Darfur. Both the RSF and the SAF were reported to have deliberately targeted civilian property, including schools and health-care facilities. The RSF attacked more than 40 hospitals during the year, looting valuable medicine, medical supplies, generators, and ambulances. According to UNICEF, as of late August, at least 77 hospitals throughout the country came under attack and more than 70 percent of health facilities were nonfunctional, with supplies running low and replenishing difficult due to limited access.

## **Section 2. Liberty**

### **a. Freedom of the Press**

The 2019 constitutional declaration provided for the unrestricted right of freedom of expression and freedom of the press as regulated by law, but the military government, SAF, and RSF violated these rights and committed abuses, including killings of journalists, arbitrary detention of activists, and censorship.

There were numerous reports of reprisals against individuals who criticized the government, primarily for criticism of the security services.

### **Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure**

Government security forces intimidated or detained journalists whose



reporting they perceived as unfavorable. They confiscated or damaged journalists' equipment and restricted their movements. During the year, security forces interrogated, harassed, detained, and imprisoned journalists, forcing some to go into hiding.

Many media organizations were forced to close or relocate. Civil society organizations reported extensively on SAF and RSF attacks on, detentions of, and killing of journalists covering the conflict. According to local journalist advocacy organizations, RSF militants detained journalists Aqeel Ahmed Naem and Haitham Dafallah on January 19 and 20, respectively, following their reporting on RSF atrocities in the greater capital region. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported women journalists faced the additional risk of violence or death based on sex.

### **Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups**

The government sought to maintain strict control of media, both print and electronic. Civil society organizations and the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate reported numerous incidents of abuses. In January, pro-SAF state governments enacted laws prohibiting the publishing or dissemination of information deemed prejudicial or critical of the SAF.

## **b. Worker Rights**

### **Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining**

In 2022, a court ruled to affirm labor protections in the constitution, labor laws, and the trade union act. This ruling lifted the ban on the Sudan Worker Trade Union Federation and its affiliated unions and professional associations that the civilian-led transitional government enacted in 2019 and military leaders placed into effect in 2021. The constitution, labor laws, and the trade union act provided for workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The trade union act prohibited antiunion discrimination.

Military leaders detained and assaulted union and association members during prodemocracy protests. These alleged violations affected the right to organize and bargain collectively by appointing unelected steering committees to take control of unions, syndicates, and professional associations. Employees could form their own independent unions in companies with a minimum number of employees or join pre-existing unions.

Labor codes and the trade union act established a single national trade union federation and excluded police, military personnel, prison employees, Ministry of Justice legal advisors, and judges from membership.

Reports indicated government and military officials discriminated against unions, using the state of transition and subsequent military takeover to delay and avoid enforcement of laws protecting the freedom of association and the right of collective bargaining. There were reports that military leaders continued to take illegal action against trade union freedoms including dissolutions, arrests, property confiscation, and intimidation.

## **Forced or Compulsory Labor**

See the Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons Report at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

## **Acceptable Work Conditions**

### **Wage and Hour Laws**

The law provided for minimum wage for some sectors. The government set a minimum wage, which was below the poverty line.

Employers generally respected the minimum wage law in the formal sector. Wages in the informal sector were often significantly less than the official minimum wage.

The law limited the workweek to 40 hours (five eight-hour days, not including a 30-minute to one-hour daily break), with days of rest on Friday and Saturday. Overtime could not exceed 12 hours per week or four hours per day.

## Occupational Safety and Health

The laws prescribed occupational safety and health (OSH) standards, but workers in the country's major industry, agriculture, were expressly excluded from OSH protections. Any industrial company with 30 to 150 employees was required to have an industrial safety officer. A larger company was required to have an industrial safety committee that included management and employees. Committees and officers were required to report safety incidents to the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. OSH experts did not actively identify unsafe conditions or respond to worker complaints.

The law required the owner of an industrial company to inform workers of occupational hazards and provide means for protection against such hazards. Management was also required to take necessary precautions to protect workers against industrial accidents and occupational diseases. The law did not recognize the workers' right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations without loss of employment. Some heavy industry and artisanal mining operations, notably gold extraction, reportedly lacked sufficient safety regulations.

Safety laws did not apply to domestic servants, casual workers, or agricultural workers other than those employed in the operation, repair, and maintenance of agricultural machinery.

Representatives of the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities in Khartoum stated undocumented migrants in the capital were subjected to abusive work conditions. They also reported many undocumented workers did not report abuse due to fear authorities might deport them to Eritrea because of their illegal status.

Little data were available on workplace accidents, but media reported significant injuries occurred in gold mines. Despite the prohibition on the use of mercury and cyanide in gold mining, artisanal gold mining using these hazardous methods continued to injure workers; enforcement was ineffective.

### **Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement**

The government did not effectively enforce wage, hour, and OSH laws, and penalties were not sufficient to deter violations. Penalties were less than those for similar crimes, such as fraud or negligence. Penalties were rarely applied against violators.

Almost 90 percent of citizens were employed in the informal sector, according to reports by economists. A World Bank report highlighted poor working conditions in the country's informal sector. IDPs also worked in the informal sector. They were a source of cheap, casual labor in areas ranging from the construction industry to selling tea or cooked food along the streets. Some informal-sector work was illegal, such as the production and

sale of alcohol and commercial sex. Another informal-sector activity was the exchange of hard currency into local currency, either in the country or in currency markets outside the country. The remitted income was redistributed through family networks and supported a substantial portion of the population. The government did not enforce labor laws in the informal sector.

## **c. Disappearance and Abduction**

### **Disappearance**

There were numerous reports of enforced disappearances by the RSF. According to multiple reports, in certain areas under RSF control, kidnapping replaced looting as the most significant income source for its militants as they ran increasingly low on villages to raid. RSF members reportedly demanded \$120-\$290 per kidnapped individual. On April 17, the RSF kidnapped a woman from her home and sexually assaulted her before returning her to her family five days later, barely able to walk or speak.

On May 4, the NGO Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa reported a significant increase in RSF abductions of civil society activists in areas over which it recently gained control.

There were numerous reports of SAF military intelligence units abducting human rights activists, protesters, and civilians accused of supporting the

RSF or allied forces. On May 9, Northern State officials detained a man on suspicion he was a spy while he fled with his family after RSF militants shot his brother. The SAF's security crackdown was not limited to new arrivals as security cells in Northern State, Gedaref, and Kassala published tip lines for citizens to report suspicious behavior.

According to NGOs and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), there were numerous reports of abductions by the RSF and tribal groups in Darfur, and Khartoum and Blue Nile States. There were also numerous criminal incidents involving RSF militants kidnapping children for ransom, demanding between \$120-\$290 per child. The Hasahisa Resistance Committee accused the RSF of attacking El Hammadab Village, northeast of Wad Medani on April 30, kidnapping young girls and demanding a \$250 ransom for their return.

## **Prolonged Detention without Charges**

The 2019 constitutional declaration prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The military government issued a decree in 2021 to expand the arrest, search, and seizure powers of the country's security forces, which upended the constitutional declaration's prohibition against arbitrary arrest and detention.

Arbitrary and unlawful detention were widely reported. Government

security forces, the RSF, and armed militias regularly arrested and detained individuals arbitrarily, including protesters, human rights activists, journalists, resistance committee members, and civilians accused of supporting the opposite warring side. The UN Fact-Finding Mission documented widespread arrests and detention conducted by both the SAF and RSF in areas under their control.

Lengthy pretrial detention was common, sometimes equaling or exceeding the maximum possible sentence for the alleged crime. The large number of detainees and judicial inefficiency resulted in trial delays.

Multiple local civil society groups reported the SAF-affiliated Military Intelligence increasingly detained human rights and peace activists critical of the SAF, with reports of mass arrests in Gedaref and Sennar in May and June, respectively.

According to local media, the RSF arrested an estimated one dozen activists in January in Kreinek, approximately 50 miles east of El Geneina, the West Darfur capital, on charges the activists had reported on atrocities within the region.

#### **d. Violations in Religious Freedom**

See the Department of State's annual International Religious Freedom Report at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.



## **e. Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons Report at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

## **Section 3. Security of the Person**

### **a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

The 2019 constitutional declaration prohibited torture or inhuman treatment or punishment. Nevertheless, there were numerous credible reports of government forces, the RSF, and armed militias associated with both warring sides committing abuses, including torture, beatings, and harassment.

Multiple videos circulated on messaging apps showing SAF soldiers committing inhuman or degrading acts, including parading decapitated heads belonging to RSF prisoners of war, flaying an RSF fighter's corpse, and picking up and biting the severed arm of an RSF militant.

The General Intelligence Service operated detention centers commonly referred to as "Ghost Centers" where detainees suspected of collaborating with the RSF, journalists, human rights activists, and other members of civil society were subjected to electric shocks, fingernail removal, beatings, and

threats of gang rape.

Numerous videos circulated on messaging apps that appeared to show RSF militants subjecting civilians suspected of being members of local militias to cruel and degrading treatment. On January 10, videos appeared to show RSF militants in Gezira forcing elderly men to dig trenches with their bare hands while shooting weapons above their heads and verbally harassing them. In early July, multiple media outlets and civil society organizations accused the RSF of attacking several villages in Sennar State and whipping civilians.

RSF militants reportedly took civilians in Gezira it suspected of collaborating with the SAF to Fadassi, north of Wad Medani, where they were subjected to harsh interrogation techniques.

There were numerous reports government security forces, pro- and antigovernment militias, and other armed persons raped women and children.

Civil society organizations reported rape cases significantly increased in RSF-controlled areas since January 1. According to an August 19 Mashhad Human Rights Observatory report, RSF militants raped more than 21 women and girls in Sennar State since the RSF began attacking the state on June 25.

In its September report to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Fact-Finding Mission found that sexual violence, in particular rape and gang rape,

was widespread in the context of the conflict and that it continued to occur on a large scale across the country. The Fact-Finding Mission documented several cases of sexual violence attributed to the SAF and its Military Intelligence. Rape and other forms of sexual violence documented by the Fact-Finding Mission were largely attributed to men wearing RSF uniforms and, in the context of Darfur, armed men allied to the RSF. The Fact-Finding Mission found sexual violence was perpetrated on a large scale by the RSF in the context of attacks on cities in the Darfur region and the Greater Khartoum area. In some conflict areas, perpetrators of sexual violence used racist slurs, in particular referring to non-Arab ethnicity.

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) was a problem, and the procedure was used on women and girls throughout the country. According to 2014 data reported by UNICEF and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) (the most recent available), the prevalence rate of FGM/C experienced by girls and women between ages 15 and 49 was 87 percent. Its prevalence varied geographically and depended on the local ethnic group.

## **b. Protection of Children**

### **Child Labor**

The International Labor Organization (ILO) reported the country had not taken sufficient measures to eliminate forced labor. UNICEF estimated that 46 percent of children ages five to 14 were engaged in child labor.

The constitution and the law prohibited forced labor and set the minimum age for work at 14 in most sectors, with some light work permissible at age 12. The law specified that no child younger than 18 be recruited into the army and imposed penalties in cases of recruitment. Despite these prohibitions, the government did not enforce the law. International organizations and civil society groups reported armed forces and groups persisted in recruiting and using children younger than 18, with instances of forced labor. Penalties were not applied against violators. The law provided occupational safety and health restrictions for children, but the government did not enforce them; penalties were not applied.

## **Child Soldiers**

The SAF and the RSF recruited and used child soldiers, including children who took direct part in hostilities, children who were coercively recruited, and children younger than age 15. The RSF and the SAF recruited these children at times forcibly, including through harassment and intimidation, into their respective armed forces. The government did not report investigating or prosecuting any officials for the recruitment or use of child soldiers. Although the government previously inspected SAF units and Juba Peace Agreement signatories to assess there were no cases of child soldier recruitment and use, there were no reports of such efforts during the year.

## **Child Marriage**

The legal age of marriage was 10 for girls and 14 or puberty for boys.

According to UNICEF and the UNFPA, 12 percent of women were married before age 15, and 34 percent were married before age 18. In some cases, men married girls to exploit their labor.

## **c. Protection to Refugees**

The government did not cooperate with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, or other persons of concern. Humanitarian organizations reported the government increased bureaucratic processes following the conflict's outbreak, inhibiting efforts to provide protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, or other persons of concern.

## **Provision of First Asylum**

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had a system for protecting refugees. The law nominally required asylum applications to be submitted within 30 days of arrival in the country. This time stipulation was not strictly enforced. The law also required asylum seekers to register both as refugees with the Commission of Refugees and as foreigners with the Civil Registry (to obtain a “foreigner”

number).

On July 13, local media reported the government was increasing its arrests and detentions of South Sudanese refugees, often accusing them of supporting the RSF. The report noted that while the campaign against South Sudanese refugees began in White Nile State, it quickly spread to Northern State, Kassala, Gedaref, and River Nile State. One source in the article speculated the SAF or SAF-affiliated Military Intelligence detained approximately 2,000 South Sudanese refugees during the first two weeks of July. There were also reports of deportations of South Sudanese to South Sudan during the period of increased arrests.

#### **d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement**

There was no known Jewish community in the country. Societal attitudes were generally not tolerant of Jewish persons, although antisemitic incidents were rare.