

## **Sudan: RSF violations during capture of El Fasher amount to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity – UN report**

GENEVA (13 February 2026) – The Rapid Support Forces unleashed “a wave of intense violence ... shocking in its scale and brutality” during its final offensive to capture the besieged city of El Fasher last October, committing widespread atrocities that amount to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity, says a report published today by the UN Human Rights Office.

Based on interviews with over 140 victims and witnesses conducted in Sudan’s Northern state and in eastern Chad in late 2025, the UN Human Rights Office documented more than 6,000 killings in the first three days of the RSF offensive on the city, the capital of North Darfur State, following 18 months of sustained siege. The report assesses that at least 4,400 people were killed within El Fasher in those few days and over 1,600 others along exit routes as they fled. The actual scale of the death toll during the week-long offensive is undoubtedly significantly higher.

The report found that the RSF and allied Arab militia carried out widespread attacks, including mass killings and summary executions, sexual violence, abductions for ransom, torture and ill-treatment, detention, disappearances, pillage and the use of children in hostilities. In many cases, attacks were directed against civilians and persons *hors de combat* based on their ethnicity or perceived affiliation.

“The wanton violations that were perpetrated by the RSF and allied Arab militia in the final offensive on El Fasher underscore that persistent impunity fuels continued cycles of violence,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk. “There must be credible and impartial investigations to establish criminal responsibility, including of commanders and other superiors, leading to meaningful accountability for perpetrators of exceptionally serious crimes, through all available means – whether fair and independent Sudanese courts, use of universal and extraterritorial jurisdiction in third states, before the International Criminal Court and other mechanisms.”

“There are reasonable grounds to believe that the RSF and affiliated Arab militia committed acts amounting to the war crimes of murder; intentionally directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects; launching indiscriminate attacks; use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare; attacks directed against medical and humanitarian personnel; infliction of sexual violence, including rape; torture and other cruel treatment; acts of pillage; and the conscription, enlistment, and use of children in hostilities,” says the report.

These patterns of grave violations and abuses in El Fasher mirrors those previously documented in RSF offensives on Zamzam camp in April 2025 and in El Geneina and Ardamata in 2023. Taken together, they demonstrates an organized and sustained course of conduct, suggesting a systematic attack against the civilian population in the Darfur region. Acts of violence knowingly committed as part of such an attack would amount to crimes against humanity.

“The unprecedented scale and brutality of the violence meted out during the offensive deeply compounded the horrific violations the residents of El Fasher had already been subjected to during the long months of siege, constant hostilities and bombardment,” said Türk.

The UN Human Rights Office documented multiple incidents of mass killing targeting locations where many civilians had gathered, with the apparent aim of inflicting maximum harm. Witnesses gave independent and consistent accounts of one incident in which around 500 people were killed when RSF fighters opened fire using heavy weapons on a crowd of 1,000 sheltering at Al-Rashid dormitory in El Fasher University on 26 October. One of the witnesses reported seeing bodies thrown into the air, *“like a scene out of a horror movie”*.

RSF fighters also carried out summary executions within El Fasher of civilians accused of ‘collaboration’ with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Joint Forces, often determined on the basis of their non-Arab ethnicity, such as the Zaghawa community. Adolescent boys and men aged under 50 were specifically targeted.

“During my recent visit to Sudan, I heard direct testimony from survivors that illustrates how sexual violence was systematically used as a weapon of war,” said Türk. Survivors and witnesses recounted patterns of rape and gang rape, abductions for ransom using sexual violence, and sexual assault during invasive body searches, with women and girls from the Zaghawa and other non-Arab communities at particular risk.

The report also documents widespread abductions for ransom as civilians fled, with consistent accounts of a pattern of abductions and detention of civilians for financial gain. It documents 10 detention facilities used by the RSF in El Fasher, with severely inadequate conditions leading to outbreaks of disease and deaths in custody. This included the Children’s Hospital, which was converted into a detention facility. In addition, several thousands of people remain missing and unaccounted for.

The UN Human Rights Chief renewed his call on parties to the conflict to take effective steps to bring to an end the grave violations by forces under their command, and to States with influence to act urgently to prevent the repetition of violations documented in El Fasher. “This includes respecting the arms embargo already in place, and ending the supply, sale or transfer of arms or military material to the parties.”

He also reiterated his call on States to do everything possible to support local, regional, and international mediation efforts, to achieve a cessation of hostilities and a pathway towards inclusive civilian governance. “In a protection crisis of this scale, human rights must remain central to efforts to achieve a durable resolution of the conflict,” said Türk.

ENDS



**“They were shooting us like animals”:  
RSF final offensive and capture of besieged El Fasher  
(24-30 October 2025)**

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction.....	3
II. Methodology.....	4
III. Legal framework.....	5
IV. Key findings .....	6
V. Overview of events and patterns prior to, during and in the immediate aftermath of the final offensive .....	7
VI. Violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law abuses.....	10
A. Attacks striking civilians and civilian objects.....	10
B. Killing of protected persons.....	11
C. Sexual violence.....	15
D. Recruitment and use of children.....	16
E. Attacks on journalists, medical and humanitarian personnel.....	17
F. Detention.....	18
G. Torture and other forms of ill treatment.....	19
H. Abductions for ransom.....	20
I. Missing persons and disappearances.....	21
J. Attacks on and ill-treatment of civilians during their flight from El Fasher.....	22
VII. Conclusion and recommendations.....	23
Annex I: Map of El Fasher city	
Annex II: Map of El Fasher locality	

## I. Introduction

1. On 15 April 2023, armed hostilities broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum state and Merowe, and swiftly engulfed the Darfur region. After the RSF largely consolidated control over four of the five Darfur states in late November 2023, the focus of the conflict turned to North Darfur and its capital, El Fasher, a city of strategic as well as historical importance. Until late October 2025, the city remained under the control of the SAF and aligned armed movements (signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement, referred to as the “Joint Forces”).<sup>1</sup>

2. Prior to the conflict, the city of El Fasher had a population of over one million people and was hosting hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) – many of them survivors of prior ethnic conflict in Darfur between 2002 and 2005 – predominantly in Abu Shouk, Al Salam and Zamzam IDP camps. From July 2023, there was a further influx of IDPs as thousands of people, mostly belonging to non-Arab tribes, fled fighting in South and Central Darfur.

3. By October 2025, the city’s residents had already endured over 18 months of gruelling siege and starvation tactics imposed by the RSF. From May 2024, the RSF, supported by allied Arab militia, imposed and maintained an effective siege of El Fasher and engaged in sustained attacks on the city and surrounding areas using heavy artillery shelling, drones and repeated ground incursions.<sup>2</sup> The intense hostilities transformed El Fasher into a battleground, resulting in significant civilian deaths and injuries, as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure, forced displacement of its inhabitants and a deteriorating humanitarian situation.<sup>3</sup> The strict control of exit and entry points meant that the flow of food, medical supplies and other essential items into the city dwindled, creating famine conditions and depriving residents of access to adequate health care. Repeated bombardments of markets and health facilities, and insecure access to water sources, further deepened human suffering. Many civilians in El Fasher had already been subjected to repeated displacement, including from Zamzam IDP camp following the RSF offensive in April 2025, and from Abu Shouk IDP camp, adjacent to El Fasher, which had been emptied of almost all its residents by September 2025 due to continuous RSF shelling and repeated armed incursions. On 31 July and 1 August, leaders within the RSF-affiliated Ta’asis coalition issued statements<sup>4</sup> calling on civilians to leave El Fasher, saying the city had become a military operations zone, and promising safe passage towards Garni for civilians and combatants who would lay down arms. However, as documented in this report, there was no safe passage out of El Fasher, either before, during or following the capture of the city.

4. On the night of 24 October 2025, the RSF launched a final offensive on the besieged city of El Fasher, unleashing a wave of intense violence that claimed the lives of thousands of individuals and displaced tens of thousands more in the span of a mere seven days. This violence – shocking in its scale and brutality – was the culmination of the brutal siege and systematic chokehold imposed on El Fasher by the RSF for one and a half years. Since late 2024 and throughout 2025, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had issued early warnings about the potential for large-scale, ethnically motivated attacks against civilians if the RSF took control of El Fasher; in late October, these warnings were realized in horrific forms. The patterns of serious violations of international humanitarian law

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<sup>1</sup> Primarily composed of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Minni Minawi and the Justice and Equality Movement, along with elements of smaller groups.

<sup>2</sup> See OHCHR Sudan report, *Under siege: the situation of human rights in El Fasher, North Darfur since May 2024* (December 2024): <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/sudan/ohchr-sudan-country-office-fasher-north-darfur-siege-may-1-en.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See statements by [Al-Hadi Idris](#) (31 July 2025) and [El-Tahir Hajar](#) (1 August 2025).

(IHL) and gross human rights abuses mirrored those documented by OHCHR during the RSF's earlier offensive on the Zamzam IDP camp in April 2025, when RSF fighters killed over 1,000 civilians, including those attempting to flee, and terrorized the residents through the widespread use of sexual violence, attacks directed against civilians and other grave violations and abuses.<sup>5</sup>

5. This report presents OHCHR findings of trends and patterns of serious violations of IHL and grave abuses of international human rights law (IHRL) perpetrated prior to, during and following the October 2025 RSF offensive on El Fasher. It offers recommendations to inform the engagement of the international community, with a particular focus on accountability for serious violations of international law. These recommendations are informed by serious concerns about the likely recurrence of similar patterns in the context of further RSF attempts to seize control of additional cities and regions.

## II. Methodology

6. On 26 September 2019, OHCHR and the Government of the Republic of Sudan signed an Agreement to establish an OHCHR Country Office in Sudan. Pursuant to this Agreement and the High Commissioner's global mandate under UN General Assembly resolution 48/141, the OHCHR Sudan Country Office monitors and reports on the human rights situation in Sudan.

7. The findings in this report are based on human rights monitoring undertaken by OHCHR, including two field missions conducted to interview people who fled El Fasher during the final offensive. A mission was undertaken to eastern Chad from 17 November to 3 December 2025, and interviews were conducted with 93 victims and witnesses (40 women, 51 men, 2 assisted children) who fled El Fasher between 25 October and early November 2025. Another mission was undertaken to Al Afad in Northern state, Sudan, from 25 November to 3 December, and interviews were conducted with 53 victims, witnesses and sources (18 women, 35 men) who had fled El Fasher shortly before or during the final offensive, in addition to three focus group discussions with 43 participants (15 female, 28 male). This report is further informed by the visit of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to Sudan from 14 to 18 January 2026, and engagement with victims, survivors and witnesses in Al Afad in Northern state.

8. Through first-hand testimonies and corroboration with primary and secondary sources and the analysis of satellite imagery and videos, OHCHR documented patterns and emblematic cases of violations of IHL and abuses of IHRL occurring in the context of the RSF final offensive on El Fasher, including those perpetrated against IDPs fleeing along exit routes.

9. In gathering, assessing and analyzing information collected, OHCHR's standard methodology on human rights monitoring, including the principle of "do no harm", was applied. Survivors and witnesses were informed of the purpose of the interview, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the measures in place to protect their confidentiality. Consent was obtained prior to each interview, and personal identifiers have been omitted from this report to ensure the safety and privacy of sources.

10. Information gathered was corroborated using multiple independent sources, to establish facts and analyze violations of IHL and abuses of IHRL in the context of the ongoing hostilities. The standard of proof of "reasonable grounds to believe" was applied.

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<sup>5</sup> See OHCHR Sudan report, "*Three days of terror with no safe refuge*": RSF offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, El Fasher (11-13 April 2025) (December 2025): [ohchr-sudan-rapid-support-forces-zamzam-idp-camp-north-darfur-3-days-safe-refuge-offensive-april-terror-1-en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/12/ohchr-sudan-rapid-support-forces-zamzam-idp-camp-north-darfur-3-days-safe-refuge-offensive-april-terror-1-en.pdf).

### III. Legal framework

11. A non-international armed conflict is ongoing in the Sudan between SAF and the RSF, supported by their respective allied armed movements and militia. Consequently, IHL and IHRL apply concurrently.<sup>6</sup>

12. IHL limits the means and methods used in the conduct of hostilities, and protects people who do not, or no longer, participate in such hostilities. Medical and religious personnel and objects, as well as humanitarian relief personnel and objects, in addition to children, are granted special protection. The parties to a conflict are obliged to respect and ensure respect for IHL, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in the conduct of hostilities. They must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants, as well as between civilian objects and military objectives. Parties to the conflict are also under a duty to avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas.<sup>7</sup> IHL prohibits any act or threat of violence whose primary purpose is to spread terror among the civilian population, such as through attacks designed to induce fear, not to achieve a specific military objective.<sup>8</sup> The forced displacement of the civilian population is prohibited unless required for the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons; in such situations, all possible measures need to be taken to address the basic needs of the civilian population.<sup>9</sup>

13. Under IHL, sieges as a method of warfare are not prohibited when directed against the opposing party to the conflict, aiming to achieve a military objective. However, civilians who remain in a besieged area continue to be protected and must be allowed to leave the area. The imposition of sieges that endanger the lives of civilians by depriving them of goods essential for their survival is prohibited.<sup>10</sup> IHL also prohibits attacking, destroying, removing, or rendering useless objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. Further, parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to civilians in need.<sup>11</sup> Violations of these rules may also amount to violations of the prohibition of the use of starvation as a method of warfare.<sup>12</sup>

14. The Sudan has signed, but not yet ratified, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, the ICC has jurisdiction over crimes listed in the Rome Statute committed in Darfur by virtue of Security Council Resolution 1593 of 31 March 2005, referring to the Court the situation prevailing in Darfur since 1 July 2002. On 13 July 2024, the ICC Prosecutor stated that this mandate was ongoing regarding crimes committed in Darfur since 15 April 2023, and the Office of the Prosecutor has recently confirmed continuing work in that regard.<sup>13</sup>

### IV. Key Findings

15. In the first three days of the offensive, from 25 to 27 October, OHCHR documented the killing of over 6,000 individuals, including civilians and persons *hors*

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<sup>6</sup> The applicable legal framework is set out in reports of the High Commissioner to the Human Rights Council: see [A/HRC/55/29](#) and [A/HRC/50/22](#).

<sup>7</sup> ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I, Rule 23 (<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule23>).

<sup>8</sup> Art. 13(2) of [Additional Protocol II](#) to the Geneva Conventions.

<sup>9</sup> Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), Art. 17.

<sup>10</sup> ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I, Rules 53 – 56.

<sup>11</sup> ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I, Rules 54 – 56 (<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule54>).

<sup>12</sup> ICCPR, Art. 6; ICESCR, Arts. 11-12.

<sup>13</sup> See: [Statement of Deputy Prosecutor Nazhat Shameen Khan to the United Nations Security Council on the Situation in Darfur, pursuant to Resolution 1593 \(2005\), 20 January 2026](#).

*de combat*. In the two days preceding the launch of the ground offensive, from 23 to 24 October, OHCHR documented the killing of some 300 civilians in the Abu Shouk neighbourhood by artillery shelling and drone strikes.

16. OHCHR's findings raise serious concerns regarding the recurring patterns of violations of IHL and IHRL abuses documented prior to, during and after the RSF's military offensive on El Fasher in October 2025. Consistent patterns and key incidents were recounted by interviewees in Chad and in Northern state, and which correspond to prior OHCHR monitoring. The sheer scale and brutality of the violations and abuses was unprecedented, and compounded the cumulative impact of violations the civilian population had already endured over 18 months of siege, deprivation and constant bombardment. OHCHR documented cases of summary executions, including mass killings, rape and other sexual and gender-based violence, detention, abductions for ransom, disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, pillage and the use of children in hostilities by the RSF and allied Arab militia. The documented patterns of IHL violations and IHRL abuses suggest that many of these acts were directed at persons *hors de combat*, male youth and men, and often ethnically motivated, targeting individuals based on their tribal identity or perceived affiliation.

17. OHCHR monitoring indicates a clear disregard by the RSF and allied Arab militia for the rules of IHL during the military operations that led to the capture of El Fasher. During the offensive, the RSF and its allied Arab militia launched attacks that had indiscriminate effects, as well as attacks directed at civilians, including against groups gathered trying to escape the hostilities. The RSF deliberately killed protected persons, including civilians who tried to bring food to the besieged city of El Fasher as well as surrendered SAF and Joint Forces members. The RSF failed to take all feasible precautions to avoid or minimize incidental civilian harm and protect the civilian population from the effects of the hostilities, including guaranteeing safe exit routes, issuing warnings about attacks that might affect the civilian population or verifying that targets were military objectives.

18. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the RSF and affiliated Arab militia committed acts amounting to the war crimes of murder; intentionally directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects; launching indiscriminate attacks; use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare; attacks directed against medical and humanitarian personnel; infliction of sexual violence, including rape; torture and other cruel treatment; acts of pillage; and the conscription, enlistment, and use of children in hostilities.<sup>14</sup> If committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, these acts may also amount to a crime against humanity.

## **V. Overview of events and patterns prior to, during and in the immediate aftermath of the final offensive**

19. The final offensive and capture of El Fasher in late October 2025 was the culmination of the prolonged siege and progressive deterioration in the security, human rights and humanitarian situation. Since May 2024, the city had been encircled and exposed to sustained artillery shelling, drone strikes, ground incursions, and an increasingly restrictive siege that severely disrupted access to food, medical supplies and humanitarian assistance. This extended isolation, combined with escalating hostilities in and around El Fasher, had already created dire conditions preceding the final offensive leading to the capture of the city.

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<sup>14</sup> CIHL Rule 156; Rome Statute, Art. 8 (2)(c)(i), Art. 8 (2)(e)(i), (ii), (v) – (vii).

***Prior to the offensive: tightening enforcement of the siege, increasing attacks and forced displacement***

20. Throughout the 18-month-long siege, the city of El Fasher and its residents were subjected to relentless artillery shelling, aerial strikes and ground incursions. From mid-2024, following heavy losses of fighters, equipment and logistics due to SAF airstrikes, the RSF strengthened its air defence capabilities, including through the deployment of a surface-to-air missile systems and the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones. This was key to the RSF's ability to maintain the siege, contest control of airspace and to ultimately capture the city. For civilians trapped inside the city, the RSF's enhanced drone warfare and air defence operations had severe human rights and humanitarian implications. The air defence system effectively cut off SAF airdrops of food, medicine, and other vital supplies, worsening famine and health crises. "Our children were dying from malnutrition and malaria because we stopped receiving airdrops from the Army," one resident lamented. At the same time, the increased use of drones and long-range artillery facilitated an increase in attacks on civilian objects and infrastructure, including health facilities, markets, water sources, mosques, shelters, IDP camps and residential neighbourhoods, contributing to a high civilian death toll in the city and in surrounding areas and affecting the enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to life, food and health.

21. Soon after the RSF capture of Zamzam IDP camp in April 2025, many civilians as well as members of the Joint Forces fled to El Fasher. The RSF intensified its siege, restricting all movement into and out of the city. At the same time, satellite imagery and eyewitness testimonies confirmed that the RSF started the construction of a network of earthen berms or barriers encircling and isolating the city. By August 2025, the network reached over 30 kilometres,<sup>15</sup> with all major roads blocked. No trucks, cars or civilians were allowed to enter or leave, making it nearly impossible for residents to flee or for assistance and supplies to reach the city.

22. These berms disrupted the supply of food and essential goods by cutting trade and aid routes, leading to sharp increases in prices in local markets, and the closure of community kitchens. "Malnutrition, hunger and sickness spreads among children ... even elders were dying due to lack of food. Community kitchens stopped operating", a survivor of the October offensive recounted. According to witnesses, residents were reduced to eating animal fodder and food waste to survive. Many survivors reiterated that children were crying because of hunger, and many children were only able to eat once a day, or once in two days. A wife of a SAF soldier recounted, "I am diabetic and couldn't leave the city as my husband was soldier, and we ran out of food. As a result, I stopped taking my medicine because there was nothing to eat. Taking the medicine triggers the hunger feelings".

23. Following the construction of these berms, the RSF installed checkpoints at the few remaining exits, enabling systematic screening, searches, confiscation of goods, and intimidation of anyone attempting to pass. OHCHR documented numerous cases of detention and summary execution of those trying to bring food and other essential goods into the city. As the RSF tightened the siege, women increasingly found themselves forced to bring in food from nearby markets. Consistent testimonies indicate that these women were systematically intercepted, subjected to ill-treatment and sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, by RSF fighters, and their goods confiscated.

24. In parallel, the RSF continued sustained attacks on the besieged areas of the city, using artillery shelling, drone strikes and ground incursions, mainly from three directions, the north, the north-west and the west, with the apparent aim to advance toward the SAF 6th Infantry Division headquarters. These operations resulted in

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<sup>15</sup> See Yale Humanitarian Lab, *RSF Wall-In El-Fasher's Population to Prevent Escape*, 28 August 2025: <https://files-profile.medicine.yale.edu/documents/d2a99234-5694-405a-92bf-0c006d29614e>.

significant civilian casualties and the forced displacement of large numbers of civilians, including IDPs and persons in situations of vulnerability, including children, persons with disabilities and older persons. OHCHR monitoring also indicates that, since early September 2025, the RSF repeatedly undertook ground incursions in different neighbourhoods in the north and north-west of El Fasher.<sup>16</sup>

25. In this context, the Abu Shouk IDP camp came under increasing attack since early August. Between 4 and 6 September, the RSF advanced into Abu Shouk IDP camp, prompting the closure of the camp's main market (Nivasha market) and forcing the displacement of residents to El Fasher city and the adjacent neighbourhoods of Abu Shouk and Daraja Oula. After receiving IDPs fleeing attacks on Abu Shouk camp, these neighbourhoods subsequently came under attack through drone strikes and artillery shelling. OHCHR received credible reports of serious violations during these incursions, including killings, abductions and sexual violence against IDPs.

26. Based on the incidents documented by OHCHR, there are strong indications that the siege imposed by the RSF on El Fasher, characterized by the encirclement of the city, obstruction of humanitarian access, restrictions on the movement of residents, attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the population, such as markets, and the deprivation of food and other essential goods leading to malnutrition, hunger and death, particularly among younger children and infants who are disproportionately vulnerable, may have amounted to starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare, prohibited under IHL and a war crime.

#### ***The final offensive: 24 to 30 October 2025***

27. The final RSF offensive on El Fasher began on the night of 24 October, when the RSF launched multiple attacks from four directions. On the morning of 25 October, a disruption of all wireless communication was reported, cutting communication between SAF and Joint Forces soldiers and their commanders resulting in a breakdown of coordination among SAF and allied forces. According to frontline sources, the loss of radio, telephone and satellite systems hindered command-and-control functions and contributed to disorderly movements and uncoordinated withdrawals from defensive positions. As SAF units and allied forces retreated toward the Daraja Oula area, RSF reportedly took control of key access routes.<sup>17</sup> On the same day, hundreds of armed Arab militia fighters, operating with the support of the RSF, reportedly entered El Fasher and were involved in the pillage of properties, including private properties and government premises. Armed men riding camels and motorbikes were reportedly moving through areas of Daraja Oula following the RSF's capture of the city. According to eyewitnesses, these Arab militia were also involved in mass executions of civilians, including women and children.

28. On 26 October, the RSF announced its capture of El Fasher, including the SAF 6th Infantry Division headquarters. On the evening of 27 October, SAF asserted in a public statement that its own forces had withdrawn from El Fasher. On the same day, the SAF reportedly conducted airstrikes around the city, targeting RSF troops and causing heavy losses among them. Fighters from the Popular Resistance Movement (mustanfreen), associated with SAF, continued to engage in hostilities for three additional days, instead of withdrawing following the complete communication breakdown. The failure to transmit withdrawal instructions resulted in prolonged exposure to RSF attacks and the deaths of hundreds of mustanfreen fighters.

29. By 28 October, the RSF reportedly gained full control of the city, including western El Fasher and the airport. The RSF reportedly continued their assault on the city and against the population trapped inside after the capture, carrying out summary

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<sup>16</sup> Including Al-Quba, Al Nasr, Al Sharafa, Al Zayadia, and Daim Sileck.

<sup>17</sup> The road between the south (Awlad Arif and Daraja-Oula) and the west, at the area around Al Saudi Hospital.

executions, detentions, abductions, sexual violence and widespread looting. According to sources, RSF operations in the city continued until 30 October 2025.

***Post-offensive period: ongoing risks for civilians***

30. While the RSF capture of El Fasher ended more than 18 months of relentless bombardment of civilians and civilian infrastructure in the besieged city, it unleashed a new wave of intense suffering. Even after the peak of large-scale atrocities during the offensive, civilians remained at critical risk. Those fleeing from El Fasher had already been subjected to extremely harsh conditions for a year and half – including famine-like conditions, ever-decreasing access to clean water, and inadequate health care – and were already in a precarious state. The abrupt nature of their departure also meant that many were carrying little, if any, food or water. As a result, many civilians perished along exit routes in their weakened states.

31. Multiple witnesses recounted harrowing journeys from El Fasher to Chad and to Northern state, including the deaths of individuals from hunger and thirst. Nearly all those interviewed attested to the severe suffering they had endured due to a lack of water, often having to travel long distances to fetch or beg for water to survive. In one instance, a 30-year-old mother reported that, after a child died of thirst in the group she was traveling with, she was forced to make several other children drink urine mixed with powdered juice in order to survive. This included an infant that the witness had rescued, after both of the child’s parents had been killed in El Fasher. Other witnesses described the horror of having to leave the sick, weak and injured behind, recalling that they had to walk by people lying along the road “pleading for help”. Witnesses interviewed both in Chad and Northern state described encountering the bodies of those who had succumbed before completing their lengthy journeys.

32. Families were also often separated during their journeys, as they came under attack by the RSF and allied Arab militia. Camp leaders in both Chad and Northern state indicated that numerous unaccompanied children had arrived in these locations. There were also numerous children who had lost one or both parents during the violence within El Fasher, and who had been brought to relative safety by relatives, neighbours, and other individuals.

33. Witnesses further indicated that thousands of civilians were stranded at waypoints along exit routes, when they were unable to pay extortionary fees for onward transportation, and were therefore left living in difficult conditions and vulnerable to further violations and abuses. In some cases, individuals managed to pay the exorbitant fees to secure transportation, only to be forcibly returned by the RSF to El Fasher. One witness reported, for example, that on 1 November, he was part of a group of about 60 people who had paid 350,000 Sudanese pounds (some USD 100) each to RSF fighters in Mellit in exchange for transportation to Al Dabba. However, after boarding three trucks, all were returned to El Fasher instead.

34. Another witness reported that on 29 October, as he was traveling in a convoy of more than 40 trucks carrying at least 800 IDPs to Mellit en route to Al Dabba, the convoy was intercepted by RSF fighters, who seized 27 of the trucks with their drivers, along with more than 500 passengers, and returned them to El Fasher. He added that one of the drivers later informed him that the drivers and passengers were forcibly returned to El Fasher, and that the drivers were forced to load large numbers of bodies from within the city onto their trucks and transport them outside the city to an unidentified location.

35. Those fleeing also continued to face the risk of abduction for ransom. On the El Fasher-Garni-Tawila road, witnesses reported that the RSF targeted women and girls, and men and boys, based on their perceived “non-Arab” ethnicity. Victims interviewed before and during the OHCHR field missions reported being detained with large groups and given telephones to call relatives to demand exorbitant ransom payments ranging from 5 to 19 million Sudanese pounds (USD 1,500 to 5,500).

According to one witness, the operation appeared highly organized and coordinated, with RSF fighters identifying wealthier families and demanding higher payments, while others were asked for less. Women and girls faced double victimization: in addition to paying exorbitant ransoms, many were subjected to rape, including instances of gang rape, by RSF fighters during their arbitrary detention.

## **VI. Violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law abuses**

### **A. Attacks striking civilians and civilian objects**

36. In the weeks leading up to the final offensive on El Fasher, as the RSF tightened the enforcement of their siege of the city, artillery shelling, drone strikes and ground incursions intensified. These attacks frequently targeted civilian infrastructure, in contravention of IHL, resulting in civilian casualties. In particular, attacks appeared to target the Abu Shouk and Daraja Oula neighbourhoods in northern El Fasher, where many IDPs fled after being forcibly displaced by persistent RSF attacks on the Abu Shouk IDP camp in August and September. These neighbourhoods were also perceived to be strongholds of the families of SAF and Joint Forces fighters. The RSF launched multiple attacks on civilian objects in these locations, including markets, IDP shelters and mosques, claiming dozens of lives and further constraining the lives of the besieged population. For example, on 19 September, a RSF drone strike on Al Safiya mosque in Daraja Oula resulted in the deaths of 67 civilians, including 20 IDPs from Abu Shouk IDP camp. Further, on 23 and 28 September, the RSF carried out drone strikes on the temporary market set up in Abu Shouk neighbourhood to replace the closed Nivasha market, killing at least 22 civilians and injuring 20 others.

37. During the final RSF offensive on El Fasher, OHCHR documented incidents amounting to attacks against civilians and civilian objects, as well as indiscriminate attacks, throughout the operation. As the RSF offensive made territorial gains, drone strikes and artillery shelling intensified, resulting in significant civilian casualties. In several incidents, multiple members of the same family were killed as they sought shelter from attacks. In one case, a 57-year-old man reported that seven members of the same family were killed during RSF shelling on the morning of 27 October in western El Fasher. Another source, who had previously survived the April 2025 offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, indicated that three of her family members were killed in RSF drone strikes on the Daraja Oula neighbourhood on 26 October. She and another witness reported that many other civilians were killed in drone strikes on that day. Sources also noted the intensity of attacks during the final offensive. A 32-year-old survivor from the Daraja Oula neighbourhood recalled that 26 October was “like the Day of Judgement,” describing intense fire and heavy shelling from all directions. He said that people fled in groups, running on foot, while dozens fell dead or injured due to shelling during their attempts to escape.

38. The weapons and tactics employed by the RSF raise important concerns regarding respect for IHL rules on the conduct of hostilities. The use of long-range artillery for sustained shelling, reportedly fired from multiple directions, into a densely populated urban environment like El Fasher is almost certain to have indiscriminate effects. OHCHR monitoring also indicates that the RSF failed to take all feasible precautions to minimize or avoid incidental civilian harm and protect civilians from the effects of hostilities, including by failing to verify that the targets were military objectives before carrying out the attack, not facilitating safe routes for those attempting to flee the fighting, and striking locations where civilians had gathered. Launching indiscriminate attacks resulting in death or injury to civilians, or attacks carried out with the knowledge they would cause excessive incidental harm

are serious violations of IHL and amount to war crimes.<sup>18</sup> If committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, these acts may also amount to a crime against humanity.

## **B. Killing of protected persons**

39. In the period leading up to the final offensive on El Fasher and as the RSF tightened enforcement of the siege, OHCHR documented numerous killings, including summary executions, particularly of civilians attempting to enter or exit the city.

40. During the course of the final offensive on El Fasher, the scale of killings increased dramatically. Based on interviews with survivors and witnesses conducted by OHCHR, over 6,000 people were killed between 25 and 27 October – a period of just 3 days – with a peak in killings on 26 and 27 October. Of this total, at least 4,400 people were killed within El Fasher and at least 1,600 while attempting to flee along exit routes. These figures are drawn from the testimonies of survivors and witnesses documented by OHCHR, and are consistent with independent analysis of contemporaneous satellite imagery and video footage. The actual scale of the death toll during the period of the final offensive is undoubtedly significantly higher.

41. OHCHR documented several incidents of mass killings, within the city and as civilians attempted to flee through the limited available exit points and routes. Summary executions were widespread, particularly targeting those accused of being “collaborators” with the SAF and Joint Forces – a designation that the RSF applied to virtually anyone remaining in El Fasher and who had not followed the “evacuation call” issued in late July. Multiple survivors and witnesses interviewed by OHCHR stated that the RSF and allied Arab militia specifically targeted men aged under 50 years and adolescent boys, who were suspected of being affiliated with the SAF, Joint Forces or mustanfrein. Killings often had an ethnic dimension, targeting members of perceived “non-Arab” communities such as the Zaghawa. The pattern of killings echoed violations and abuses perpetrated by the RSF earlier in the year during the April offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, but on a much more expansive scale.

### ***Mass killings***

42. Witnesses interviewed in Chad and Northern state consistently reported multiple incidents of mass killings both within El Fasher and along exit routes, in attacks that targeted locations where many civilians had gathered. This included shelters and temporary medical facilities, as well as points on evacuation routes where large concentrations of people were attempting to flee — which appeared to have been motivated by a desire to inflict maximum harm in places where civilians were concentrated in substantial numbers and at their most vulnerable. Sources reported targeted attacks using mortars, shelling and other heavy weaponry, both within El Fasher and along exit routes, resulting in massive civilian casualties.

43. In one emblematic case, witnesses interviewed in eastern Chad and in Northern state – thousands of kilometres apart – gave independent and consistent accounts of the mass killing of around 500 people at the Al-Rashid dormitory at El Fasher University. Multiple interviewees reported that on 26 October, the RSF targeted the university dormitory where approximately 1,000 civilians, as well as *hors de combat* members of the Joint Forces, were sheltering. Survivors reported that the RSF besieged the building from all sides and opened fire using heavy weapons, killing approximately 500 people, and injuring scores more. One witness described how bodies were thrown into the air by the force of the assault, “like a scene out of a horror movie”. In a separate incident on 26 October, several witnesses recounted the summary execution of around 600 people, including 50 children, who were also

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<sup>18</sup> CIHL Rules 11, 14, 156.

taking shelter within El Fasher University facilities, allegedly led by a prominent RSF commander.

44. Several improvised health facilities, located in buildings throughout the city, were also attacked, causing the death of hundreds of people. Witnesses recounted that on 26 October, RSF fighters entered an improvised health facility in former NGO and UN compounds in El Fasher, shooting randomly and killing at least 150 people, including the wounded, women, children and older persons. Survivors hid in trenches for over 18 hours.

45. Civilians were also targeted as they attempted to leave the city. One witness recounted that on 26 October, RSF launched artillery fire at a group of approximately 500 civilians fleeing El Fasher, between Hillat al-Sheikh and Garni, killing scores. On the afternoon of 27 October, while a large crowd had gathered at the south-western gate of the Artillery Corps base<sup>19</sup> to exit El Fasher, RSF combat vehicles arrived and fired a barrage of bullets into the crowds, killing an estimated 300 civilians. Earlier the same day, an estimated 300 individuals were killed while attempting to flee along the Hillat al-Sheikh road. Witnesses who fled on or after 27 October also reported seeing several hundreds of dead bodies in trenches surrounding the city, near the western gate of El Fasher city, and along the Hillat al-Sheikh route, where thousands of civilians were fleeing. One witness estimated seeing around 800 bodies thrown in trenches.

46. Beginning on 27 October, the RSF targeted individuals along the route from Hillat al-Sheikh to Garni, gunning them down, launching drone attacks, and deliberately striking them with their vehicles. Witnesses spoke of several hundreds, or even thousands, of bodies strewn along this stretch of road for several kilometres. One man estimated seeing around 1,000 bodies along the route to Garni, some who had died of hunger or thirst and others bearing gunshot wounds. One woman witnessed dead bodies and injured people pleading for help, saying, "People were killed randomly - men, women and children". Interviewees consistently recounted seeing thousands of dead bodies, including men, women and children, along the various exit routes, with the largest concentration near the berms and along Jebel Wanna road on the western side of El Fasher.

47. These incidents documented by OHCHR, where the RSF apparently made civilians the object of attack, and deliberately targeted civilian objects, would constitute serious violations of IHL. Directing attacks against civilians or civilian objects is prohibited under IHL and amounts to a war crime. If committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, these acts may amount to a crime against humanity.

### *Summary executions of civilians*

48. In the period leading up to the final offensive, OHCHR documented numerous incidents of the summary execution of civilians by the RSF during incursions into the city, as well as on the outskirts of El Fasher. These killings generally targeted individuals of non-Arab communities, those suspected of "collaboration" with the SAF and Joint Forces, and those suspected of attempting to bring food items and supplies into the city in contravention of RSF orders to enforce the siege. On 6 October, for instance, the RSF launched a ground incursion in the Abu Shouk neighbourhood, during which they summarily executed at least seven civilians, including three women. The RSF fighters targeted locations where IDPs had sought shelter and conducted door-to-door searches, killing civilians they came upon in these locations. One eyewitness reported that the assailants used degrading and dehumanizing language as they killed two of the victims, and called for the killing of others, referring to them as "sheep", "dogs" and "slaves" (falangai), a term that RSF

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<sup>19</sup> Within the SAF 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division base.

fighters are known to use in reference to members of non-Arab ethnic communities suspected of supporting SAF and the Joint Forces. In a separate incident just prior to the start of the final offensive, video footage circulated online depicting the summary execution by the RSF of five men in civilian clothing at a berm on the outskirts of El Fasher. According to statements by the perpetrators seen in the video, the victims had allegedly attempted to bring food into the then-besieged city, which was deemed a “crime”. The RSF fighters then shot and killed the men. Other similar incidents were repeatedly documented in the months leading up to the final offensive.

49. As the RSF launched the final offensive on El Fasher and after the capture of the SAF 6th Infantry Division headquarters, witnesses reported that they carried out hundreds, if not thousands, of summary executions targeting perceived “enemies”. These included men and adolescent boys, whom they suspected of affiliation with the SAF, Joint Forces or mustanfreen; civilians suspected of “collaboration” with these forces, often determined on the basis of their ethnicity, such as the Zaghawa community; and women and children, who were targeted for reprisals in the absence of male relatives. Many of these incidents occurred in the Abu Shouk and Daraja Oula neighbourhoods of the city, where family members of SAF and Joint Forces combatants, as well as IDPs from the Abu Shouk camp, were concentrated. Survivors and eyewitnesses described the events as “butchery”, referring to the widespread summary executions in these neighbourhoods, and estimated that between 1,000 to 2,000 people were killed, including many women and children.

50. One witness reported that on the morning of 26 October, RSF fighters entered the Daraja Oula neighbourhood, where they randomly detained an estimated 300 male youths, before dividing them into groups of 30. The RSF fighters then opened fire on each group until there was no longer any movement, lobbed grenades at some groups, and deployed a gas burner against others, systematically executing all of those that had been detained. On the same day, another witness reported having seen the summary execution of approximately 50 men, all of whom appeared to be under the age of 50, and most of whom were likely civilians, as well as a number of unarmed and detained SAF and Joint Forces soldiers in civilian clothing among them. The witness believed that the victims were targeted because they were all men of fighting age. Another source reported that, while hostilities were still ongoing, he observed RSF fighters summarily execute several young men and women near the El Fasher University area. An additional source reported that late in the day on 27 October, as he was attempting to leave the city, he witnessed RSF forces gun down a group of approximately 70 to 80 men in Daraja Oula, not far from the Al Saudi Hospital. In the same area, he also encountered numerous bodies of other civilians, including women and children, who appeared to have been summarily executed.

51. The RSF also conducted cordon-and-search operations, systematically combing neighbourhoods through house-to-house searches. One eyewitness recounted that more than 100 men were killed in a cordon-and-search operation in the Abu Shouk neighbourhood on 26 and 27 October. She also said that two female neighbours were summarily executed after opening their doors when RSF fighters knocked. She had hidden in a trench inside her home when fighters had knocked at her door. The witness heard the RSF fighters accuse Abu Shouk residents of being families of the Joint Forces and Zaghawa fighters. Another source indicated that on 26 October, a local humanitarian volunteer was shot and killed in his home, along with other family members, during an RSF cordon-and-search operation in the Daraja Oula neighbourhood.

52. Civilians were also summarily executed along exit routes from El Fasher. A 51-year-old man reported that he was amongst a group of approximately 100 fleeing civilians who were intercepted by a prominent RSF commander, on the road between Garni and Tura. The commander summarily executed 17 civilians, whom he determined to be combatants disguised in civilian clothing. The commander accused the man of being a SAF soldier; when the man replied that he was old and had nothing

to do with the army, he was allowed to leave with the rest of the group to continue their journey.

53. In some cases, women were singled out for reprisal killings in the apparent absence of male relatives thought to be associated with the SAF or Joint Forces. One witness reported that five women and a young girl were tied with ropes to the back of RSF vehicles and dragged to their deaths, while RSF fighters taunted them, saying “Falangayat (slave), we are dealing with your women”. The same source also reported that a woman was hanged, along with her infant child, from a tree in front of her house. Similar reprisal killings of women were reported during the April 2025 offensive on Zamzam IDP camp.

54. Violence to life and in particular the murder of civilians or persons *hors de combat* is a serious violation of IHL and amounts to a war crime. Shooting at civilians whether fleeing hostilities or otherwise amounts to a direct attack against civilians, which is a war crime. If committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, these acts may amount to a crime against humanity. These acts also constitute violations or abuses of the right to life.

#### ***Killing of surrendered combatants and persons hors de combat***

55. OHCHR documented multiple reports and testimonies indicating that RSF and allied Arab militia deliberately killed persons taking no active part in hostilities, including combatants who had surrendered or were otherwise *hors de combat*,<sup>20</sup> during the final stages of the offensive in El Fasher. Testimonies, including from former SAF and Joint Forces combatants, suggest that such incidents occurred primarily between 25 and 27 October in the neighbourhoods of Daraja Oula, Abu Shouk, and Awlad Arif, during the disorderly withdrawal of SAF and Joint Forces.

56. On 25 October, in Daraja Oula and surrounding areas, witnesses reported that a group of 70 to 80 unarmed soldiers who had laid down their weapons were summarily executed after raising their hands, with some having changed into civilian clothes.

57. In separate incidents on the same day, a 48-year-old SAF soldier witnessed two groups of combatants from his unit attempting to surrender by raising their hands, before being killed by RSF and allied Arab militia. A total of 103 out of 130 soldiers were killed. The witness stated that, later in the day, an RSF commander intervened to order his fighters to cease killing those surrendering. The witness and others who surrendered at that point were instead detained and transferred to Shala Prison in El Fasher. En route, he described seeing hundreds, possibly thousands, of dead bodies of women, children and men scattered through the city.

58. OHCHR received other accounts of the summary execution of unarmed men and male youth, reportedly on the presumption that they were affiliated with the SAF, Joint Forces and mustanfreen. Several witnesses stated that the RSF perceived all men and youth remaining in El Fasher as combatants.

59. Under IHL, members of armed forces, whether State or non-State, who lay down their arms or are otherwise *hors de combat* must be treated humanely.<sup>21</sup> Once an individual clearly signals an intention to surrender, and thus ceases to engage in hostilities, they are protected under common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.<sup>22</sup> The killing of persons who have surrendered or who are otherwise *hors de combat* is

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<sup>20</sup> See Commentary of 2025, Common Art. 3 of the Geneva Conventions, para. 611; CIHL Rule 47. A person *hors de combat* is anyone who is in the power of an adverse party; anyone who clearly expresses an intention to surrender; or anyone who is defenseless because of unconsciousness, shipwreck, wounds or sickness.

<sup>21</sup> Commentary of 2025, Common Art. 3 of the Geneva Conventions, para. 604.

<sup>22</sup> Commentary of 2025, Common Art. 3 of the Geneva Conventions, para. 609.

strictly prohibited and constitutes a serious violation of common Article 3 and the war crime of murder.<sup>23</sup>

### C. Sexual violence

60. The use of sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, as a weapon of war appears to have been widespread during the final offensive on El Fasher. Women and girls from the Zaghawa and other non-Arab communities accused of family links, affiliation with or supporting the SAF and Joint Forces were particularly targeted. In some cases, perpetrators invoked retaliation for the past killing of RSF commanders or troops during incidents of sexual violence. Attacks occurred both within the city and along exit routes as tens of thousands of civilians fled. The accounts of survivors and witnesses who fled El Fasher indicated systematic patterns of rape and gang rape, abductions for ransom using sexual violence, and sexual assault during searches. Video footage circulating on social media and survivor testimonies depicted RSF fighters pursuing women as “war loot”. Invasive body searches by RSF and allied Arab militia fighters, which amounted to sexual violence, was also frequently reported by those who had fled from El Fasher. The numbers of cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) that OHCHR was able to document immediately following the offensive represents a small fraction of the actual number of incidents. However, the consistency of accounts from survivors, witnesses and service providers indicates that there was a major incidence of sexual violence during the course of the RSF final offensive on El Fasher.

61. Civilians who fled between 20 and 27 October reported consistent patterns of sexual violence, which echoed earlier violations and abuses following the RSF’s capture of Zamzam IDP camp in April 2025. One witness reported that she knew of at least four girls and eight women who were raped in the city between 22 and 26 October. This included a woman who was raped inside her home in front of her children. The victim’s sons were both shot when they attempted to intervene, one of them fatally. Credible sources reported the gang rape of at least 25 women on 25 October, including in an IDP shelter near El Fasher University. There were also reported cases of women and girls being abducted for the purpose of rape and/or sexual slavery. One source reported that the RSF entered her family home in Daraja Oula (on an unspecified date during the offensive on El Fasher) and abducted two young female relatives. The perpetrators informed the victims’ mother that “either we take your daughters, or we rape them in front of you”. At the time of reporting, the whereabouts of the victims remained unknown. Another source reported that on 24 October, the RSF abducted a 14-year-old girl from the Abu Shouk neighbourhood while she was on her way to a shop, gang-raped her, and left her in the street in the Daraja Oula neighbourhood.

62. Witness testimonies indicated systematic patterns of sexual violence along exit routes, by both RSF fighters and Arab militia believed to be associated with the RSF. One witness reported that on 27 October, after leaving El Fasher and arriving in the area between Garni and Tura, he and other civilians he was travelling with were stopped by armed men riding camels and motorcycles. After looting their belongings, the armed men raped four girls between the ages of 15 and 17 in full view of the group. Multiple survivors recounted to OHCHR that they were raped in front of family members, including their children; others stated that male relatives were killed while trying to protect them. Based on testimonies, sexual violence was used as part of apparent tactics to terrorize or traumatize the population.

63. Another source reported that her 32-year-old aunt and 20-year-old cousin were raped on the route between El Fasher and Garni on 26 October, after they were separated from the family group due to heavy shelling. When the source managed to

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<sup>23</sup> CIHL Rules 47, 156.

locate the two survivors in Mellit, they informed her that they had both been gang-raped by armed men in RSF uniforms; they also told her about the rape of other women. In another case, five girls between the ages of 15 and 17 were raped by RSF fighters between 25 and 26 October while fleeing El Fasher towards Tawila locality; they arrived in Sortoni, Jebel Marra, shortly afterwards. Survivors recounted that RSF fighters and allied Arab militia targeted women and girls of all ages for sexual violence. One survivor pleaded with a fighter to not rape her as she was old and sick, to which he reportedly replied, “Women are women, it does not matter whether you are old or young.” The survivor indicated, “It happened to a lot of women, including young girls”.

64. OHCHR has also received credible reports that women and girls were abducted for ransom between Tura and Garni in late October, and were raped if their families were not able to pay the ransom demanded, in some cases reaching up to 35 million Sudanese pounds (over USD 10,000). For instance, one source reported that her 17-year-old daughter was abducted and gang-raped by the RSF on 28 October, when she was unable to make the ransom payment. Numerous survivors recounted that sexual violence was used to exert pressure during abductions for ransom.

65. Witnesses also consistently reported invasive body searches by RSF fighters at checkpoints, which sometimes included digital penetration, including during menstruation – a particularly degrading experience. One witness, a 40-year-old mother, reported to OHCHR inappropriate body searches by RSF fighters, including the deliberate touching of the breasts and genitals of women and girls. She recalled one incident in particular when she witnessed “a courageous old woman of about 60 years of age who protested the way the RSF fighters were searching her, which included touching her breasts” adding that “for this resistance, they beat the old lady violently”. Witnesses also reported being subjected to verbal abuse by RSF fighters during these invasive searches. One source indicated that RSF fighters referred to her and a group of women as “Falangaiyat” (“slave women”) and “Awen shenat” (“ugly black women”), while an RSF fighter also told them that “We don’t want any black people”.

66. The devastating impact of sexual violence on survivors was clearly observed by OHCHR and illustrated in testimonies. Survivors spoke about the stigma they face, and the trauma of not being able to tell family and others about what happened to them. Women, including teenagers and young women, who fell pregnant as a result of rape faced additional obstacles in accessing medical and other services. Children born of conflict-related sexual violence, along with their mothers, commonly experience stigma, discrimination and exclusion.

67. The commission of sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery, is a gross violation or abuse of IHRL and serious violation of IHL and constitutes a war crime, including as an outrage upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating or degrading treatment.<sup>24</sup> If committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, these acts may amount to a crime against humanity.<sup>25</sup>

#### **D. Recruitment and use of children**

68. OHCHR documented reports of recruitment and use of children by the RSF, occurring either through community-level cooperation in exchange for assistance or through coercive practices. Testimonies further indicate that boys were viewed as potential fighters and, in some areas, were prevented from leaving unless they agreed to join RSF forces.

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<sup>24</sup> CIHL Rules 93, 156; Rome Statute, Art. 8 2 (c)(ii) and (e)(vi).

<sup>25</sup> Rome Statute, Art. 7 1(g).

69. OHCHR also documented instances in which community members cooperated with the RSF to secure assistance, including by enabling the recruitment of children. In one instance, a local leader in Shangil Tobaya reportedly allowed his 15-year-old son to join the RSF, and the boy was later seen on social media wearing an RSF uniform.

70. A woman who fled Daraja Oula neighbourhood on 27 October reported that RSF fighters treated all males in the Abu Shouk area, including boys, as potential fighters. According to her account, males aged over 10 years were not permitted to leave unless they agreed to join the RSF.

71. Witnesses reported the presence of armed children along exit routes, including at checkpoints. One source reported witnessing an armed boy, approximately eight years old, riding a donkey, taking water jugs from women fleeing, while threatening them with his weapon.

72. Children affected by armed conflict are entitled to special protection.<sup>26</sup> The recruitment or use of children by armed forces or armed groups is prohibited under IHL.<sup>27</sup> Under IHRL, the compulsory recruitment of children by State armed forces and by non-State armed groups, as well as their direct participation in hostilities, is prohibited.<sup>28</sup> Conscripting or enlisting children, or using them to participate actively in hostilities, constitutes a serious violation of IHL and, for children under the age of 15, amounts to a war crime.<sup>29</sup>

## **E. Attacks on journalists, medical and humanitarian personnel**

73. The prolonged siege of El Fasher and hostilities inside and around the city had a negative impact on the security of journalists and their ability to conduct their work. During the siege, OHCHR observed a pattern of deliberate communication shutdowns inside and surrounding the besieged city, primarily internet and mobile telecommunications blackouts frequently imposed by both parties to the conflict, making access to information a significant challenge. OHCHR documented cases of threats, arrests, and assaults against journalists operating from inside El Fasher based on their journalistic work.

74. Before the final offensive on the city, at least 14 male journalists were reporting from within El Fasher. Most of them attempted to flee the city between 23 and 27 October, along with many other civilians, towards Tawila or other areas of relative safety. Reportedly, all of them resorted to hiding their professional identity due to fears of retaliation by the RSF, including by leaving behind press passes, cameras and telephones to avoid harassment and violence. Nevertheless, five journalists were intercepted and then detained by the RSF and allied Arab militia along exit routes upon their identification as journalists. While three were released upon payment of ransoms, one male journalist was transferred to Nyala and remains under RSF detention at the time of writing. The fate and the whereabouts of the fifth journalist, who was captured and taken by the RSF to an unknown place before the capture of El Fasher, remains unknown.

75. During the final offensive on El Fasher, medical and humanitarian personnel were killed, detained, disappeared and subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Medical staff were shot inside health facilities, attacked while fleeing, or struck during indiscriminate shelling. One witness reported the killing of seven local medical staff (five men, two women) at the Al Saudi Hospital on 26 October immediately after the

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<sup>26</sup> CIHL Rule 135; APII, Art. 4; Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Art. 38 (4).

<sup>27</sup> CIHL Rule 136; CRC, Art. 38.

<sup>28</sup> Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC), Arts. 1 – 4.

<sup>29</sup> CIHL Rules 137, 156; Rome Statute, Art. 8 (2)(c)(vii).

RSF seized control of the building. Another witness reported the death of her brother, a medical professional, in an earlier drone strike on the Al Safiya mosque in Daraja Oula on 19 September. OHCHR also verified reports of RSF fighters abducting medical workers and demanding ransom for their release; in one case, a doctor and another individual were held for three days, tortured, and released only after payment of a substantial sum by their families.

76. OHCHR also documented the killing of at least two local humanitarian responders on 27 October, and recorded several incidents in which community volunteers distributing food were attacked. Members of the El Fasher Emergency Response Rooms (ERR) were detained, disappeared, or killed while attempting to flee toward Tawila. The fate and whereabouts of four ERR members remain unknown.

77. Civilian journalists performing their professional functions in situations of armed conflict must be respected and protected.<sup>30</sup> IHL also requires that medical and humanitarian personnel be respected and protected. Medical personnel benefit from special protection under IHL, while humanitarian relief personnel are protected as civilians engaged in humanitarian functions. Intentionally directing attacks against either medical units or humanitarian relief personnel is prohibited and amounts to a war crime.

## **F. Detention**

78. OHCHR documented the use of ten separate detention facilities by the RSF in El Fasher during and immediately following the final offensive. These included facilities operated by the RSF in areas they controlled prior to the offensive, including Shala prison (south-west of the city) and the Al Mena Al Bary site (east of the city). During and after the offensive, RSF converted hospitals, schools, and other buildings into informal places of detention, including the Children's Hospital and former UN warehouses in the Al-Masani neighbourhood (east El Fasher), Al-Zahra Health Centre in the Al-Jeeil neighborhood (east El Fasher), Al-Manhal School in the Al-Mahad neighbourhood (central El Fasher), former SAF "Counter Intelligence" buildings north of the 6th Infantry Division headquarters (Al-Qubba neighbourhood), and the fuel station building in the El Masanee neighbourhood.

79. During the offensive on the city and following its capture, RSF and allied Arab militia detained persons perceived to be affiliated with SAF and the Joint Forces, government officials, medical professionals, journalists, teachers, and local humanitarian responders, inside the city and along the exit routes. Men, women, boys and girls were detained based on their perceived tribal or family links and political affiliations, raising serious concerns about the arbitrary nature of such deprivation of liberty. As the RSF carried out house-to-house searches, they detained men and adolescent boys in houses in various locations, but particularly within the Daraja Oula neighbourhood, before transferring them to centres where people perceived to be affiliated with SAF and the Joint forces, or officials of the North Darfur government, were interrogated by RSF commanders and fighters.

80. As of early January 2026, over 2,000 people, including SAF and Joint Forces combatants, were estimated to be detained in Shala prison in El Fasher and at least 6,000 had been transferred to Tagris prison in Nyala, South Darfur, overseen by the RSF, while thousands more were held in different detention facilities inside El Fasher directly managed by the RSF. Many of these individuals have reportedly been abducted for ransom, a widespread practice following the RSF capture of El Fasher. OHCHR monitoring indicates patterns of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and infliction of severely inadequate conditions of detention, including

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<sup>30</sup> CIHL Rule 34.

lack of food, water and denial of medical care, often leading to outbreak of diseases and rising cases of death in custody.

81. Detention conditions, in all these locations, fell far short of international minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners. For instance, at the Al Mena Al Bary site, detainees were crowded into 70 shipping containers lacking windows, ventilation, and light, as well as access to sanitation facilities. Such conditions led to the spread of infections and disease, particularly cholera, reportedly causing the deaths of hundreds of detainees. In some cases documented by OHCHR, the severity and nature of these conditions amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and may constitute torture.

82. OHCHR has collected distressing accounts from former detainees about deaths in custody at Al Mena Al Bary, due to torture, ill-treatment and lack of food and medical care. A former detainee released in May 2025 described the situation prior to RSF capture of El Fasher, noting that “There were 70 containers full of detainees. Between 5 to 7 detainees die per day and per cell [container].” Considering the massive numbers of detained and abducted individuals reported since late October, these conditions are likely to have further deteriorated since.

83. El Fasher Children’s Hospital, located not far from the Al Mena Al Bary, was converted to what is likely the largest detention facility in the city. By 27 October, former detainees indicated that more than 2,000 men were held in the hospital without access to water and food. “When we woke up on the morning of the 28th, we found tea-colored water in a basin which had been stagnant, and the thirsty detainees ran and unfortunately, drank it. On 29 October, they developed severe diarrhoea.” recounted a former detainee. On 31 October, six detainees died, and the number of fatalities immediately surged to between 30 and 40 per day. “It was a cholera outbreak,” added the same detainee. Eyewitnesses reported the death of 260 detainees inside the hospital within one week (from 31 October to 6 November), while new detainees continued to arrive daily. Bodies were reportedly buried in an area near the hospital. OHCHR also received credible reports of the arbitrary killing of detainees by RSF fighters inside the El Fasher Children’s hospital. For instance, on 3 November, an RSF fighter shot randomly at a crowd of detainees during water collection, killing two and injuring two others.

84. Children were often detained together with adults in detention facilities, in violation of IHRL and contrary to IHL, which requires that children be held in separate quarters from those of adults.<sup>31</sup> Female detainees were held in particularly inhumane and unsafe conditions, and were exposed to higher risks of gender-based violence. One former detainee from Al Mena Al Bary recounted, “We were guarded by RSF fighters, in an open area, encircled by one metre of thorns”. She added, “There was no safe place to hide to go to the toilet”.

85. Credible reports received by OHCHR indicate that RSF established detention facilities in Garni village and Korma to hold some of those detained along exit routes, primarily by RSF-allied Arab militia.

86. Persons deprived of their liberty must be treated humanely at all times, including through the provision of adequate food, water, and medical care, and appropriate health and hygiene conditions.<sup>32</sup> Torture, cruel treatment, and the killing of detainees are serious violations of IHL and amount to war crimes.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> CIHL Rule 120; CRC, Art. 37(c).

<sup>32</sup> Common Art. 3 of the Geneva Conventions; APII, Arts. 4 and 5; CIHL Rules 87, 118.

<sup>33</sup> CIHL Rules 89, 90, 156.

## **G. Torture and other forms of ill treatment**

87. Victims and witnesses' testimonies, medical reports, as well as video footage and photos verified by OHCHR indicate that torture and ill-treatment were systematic since the first moment of arrest or interception, during interrogations and during detention. Those placed *hors de combat* and those suspected of being affiliated or collaborators with SAF and Joint Forces were and continue to be most vulnerable to torture, to extract confessions or other information, or to punish them and to degrade or humiliate them. In some cases, "confessions" of military affiliation or collaboration or "testimonies" about the responsibility of the SAF in the starvation of the inhabitants were extracted at gun point and filmed by the interrogators, then published on social media platforms.

88. The methods of torture documented by OHCHR include beatings with various objects, such as wooden bars, flogging, including on the soles of the feet, and suspension in painful positions, including from trees. Other cruel, inhuman and degrading practices included humiliation, forced nudity, head shaving and exhaustion by direct exposure to the sun for long hours.

89. Detainees were also subjected to fear-inducing methods such as mock execution. A survivor who was detained by RSF at Hillat al-Sheikh checkpoint, along with other civilians fleeing El Fasher, told OHCHR that he was interrogated by an RSF officer about the whereabouts of a SAF commander and a famous religious leader in El Fasher. "They beat me, insulted me and said I would not survive to the next day," he said. Later, they took him with other five men to a pit about 20 metres west of the checkpoint and told them to stay there, while the others in his group were allowed to continued westward. "I was frightened, and thought I would be executed and buried there," he recalled.

90. "Trophy" videos filmed by RSF fighters depicting torture and ill-treatment flooded social media. These included scenes of interrogation at gunpoint, flogging, humiliation of those captured (such as forced dancing, chanting and the mimicking of animals), and the suspension of individuals from a tree in an extreme and painful position. In some cases, children from Arab communities were used by the RSF to inflict torture and abuse on adult men from non-Arab communities. OHCHR documented cases of the torture and ill-treatment of women, including beatings, and sexualized or ethnically motivated degradation and humiliation, along exit routes. In some cases, women were detained at checkpoints, separated from men and children and forced to strip or were subjected to humiliating and invasive body searches by RSF fighters in front of their community members and RSF fighters, often amounting to sexual violence.

91. Most victims or witnesses of torture and ill-treatment interviewed by OHCHR, particularly female victims of sexual violence, carried lasting physical and psychological trauma affecting their self-esteem, social life within the community, and mental health. However, they have limited access to specialized health care, including mental health services and psychosocial support.

## **H. Abductions for ransom**

92. OHCHR documented a widespread pattern of abductions for ransom as civilians fled El Fasher along exit routes. Consistent accounts and multiple sources indicated that the RSF established a systematic ransom scheme after capturing El Fasher. Civilians and captured combatants were held both in El Fasher and in locations outside of the city, and were released only after their families paid ransom sums ranging from 5 to 19 million Sudanese pounds per person (USD 1,500 to 5,500). These abductions often targeted men and adolescent boys, and most often occurred along exit routes, in particular between Garmi and Tawila. RSF fighters interrogated victims before their abduction for ransom, and many victims were threatened with

summary execution if their families could not send a ransom payment within a set timeframe.

93. OHCHR interviewed a family member of three detainees who were intercepted and detained in Garni village by the RSF on 26 October, while they were on their way to Tawila. While one of them was released upon payment of a ransom of 700,000 Sudanese pounds (USD 200), the fate of the other two remains unknown as of the time of writing.

94. One former combatant recounted that he was abducted by the RSF on 26 October alongside 26 other former fighters, and detained in Shala prison for three days before being transferred to Nyala in South Darfur. The RSF demanded that each abductee pay 19 million Sudanese pounds (USD 5,500). Four of them managed to make this payment and were released; the source indicated that, at the time of his release, the remaining 23 abductees could not pay the ransom, and their fate remains unknown.

95. Another source reported that, after leaving El Fasher, she received a phone call from her husband, a SAF soldier who had stayed behind in the city. He informed her, under clear duress, that he had been abducted by the RSF, who demanded a ransom payment of 10 million Sudanese pounds (USD 2,900) and that they had threatened to kill him if the payment was not received by 1 December. He was ultimately released on 4 December, bearing clear physical signs of torture. Two other sources reported that eight men who went missing while fetching water on 27 October on the route from Hillat al-Sheikh to Garni had been abducted by the RSF, who demanded ransom payments. Only three of the men were released, after a ransom of 10 million Sudanese pounds was paid.

96. OHCHR documented a pattern of detention of civilians for financial gain. In almost all places of detention, the RSF fighters overseeing operations would often identify people perceived to be wealthier, reach out to their family members and demand exorbitant ransoms for their release, effectively turning the lives of those trapped inside El Fasher into “commodities traded at varying prices” according to a family member of a detainee.

## I. Missing persons and disappearances

97. At the time of the RSF capture of El Fasher, the city counted approximately 260,000 inhabitants. Between 26 October and 8 December 2025, however, the violence decimated the local population, leading at least 107,294 residents to flee from the city and surrounding villages. An estimated 76,744 individuals (72 per cent) remained in El Fasher locality. Serious concerns remain over the fate and whereabouts of thousands of missing people inside El Fasher and during the flight from the city.<sup>34</sup>

98. As of early January 2026, the fate and whereabouts of thousands of people, including civilians and those placed *hors de combat*, who were reported missing either inside El Fasher or along the exit routes, remained unknown. Others were subsequently determined to be dead or held in RSF custody; others had fled to IDP sites within Sudan, refugee camps in Chad, or had self-relocated to various locations within North and Central Darfur, Northern and Khartoum states. However, the vast majority of missing persons remain unaccounted for. This pattern of disappearances appears to have been one of several tactics employed to spread terror amongst non-Arab communities, in addition to the mass killings, summary executions and sexual violence carried out on a large scale by the RSF.

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<sup>34</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, [DTM Sudan Focused Flash Alert: Al Fasher, North Darfur \(Update 012\) | Displacement Tracking Matrix](#).

99. Victims and witnesses interviewed by OHCHR in refugee and IDP camps reported that thousands of civilians, mostly young men and adolescent boys from Zaghawa and other non-Arab communities, had disappeared after being detained during cordon-and-search operations, at checkpoints, or while attempting to flee the city. Testimonies described RSF fighters and allied Arab militia separating males aged roughly 12 and above from women and younger children along the exit routes, loading them onto vehicles and taking them to unknown locations. Several survivors expressed the conviction, based on the scale of the executions they witnessed and the absence of any subsequent contact, that the majority of these missing persons had likely been summarily executed.

100. Many detainees were denied any contact with their families and the outside world, particularly during the early period of their detention. Thus, the fate of numerous residents of El Fasher detained by the RSF on 26 October and reportedly taken to Al Mena Al Bary remains unknown. Despite efforts made by their families to access them, the RSF has not provided any information about their status. Prior to the final offensive on El Fasher, OHCHR had documented cases in which detainees were held incommunicado in Al Mena Al Bary for up to one year. “Once there, you could not believe that you will get out again,” a former detainee told OHCHR, after managing to escape the facility in May 2025 after more than a month in detention, by paying a bribe to an RSF fighter who added him to a list of dead inmates to facilitate his escape.

101. More than three months after the capture of El Fasher, serious risks remain for those forcibly disappeared by the RSF and allied Arab militia. Further, the bodies of hundreds of detainees who have died or been killed in these circumstances are believed to be in extended burial sites located near detention facilities in the east of the city.

102. Distressed families of the missing have attempted to search for their relatives, seeking assistance from “mediators” with connections to the RSF, as well as community and tribal leaders. In the IDP sites, local humanitarian responders have supported information exchanges between families of detainees or missing persons. Lists of hundreds of missing people and information from released detainees have been shared in dedicated social media groups. Occasionally, families have obtained information in exchange for money or due to family connections. In multiple cases, family members have made contact with missing individuals when they have received telephone calls directly from the missing person, informing them of their abduction for ransom.

## **J. Attacks on and ill-treatment of civilians during their flight from El Fasher**

### ***Theft and looting***

103. Witnesses consistently reported being subjected to looting along exit routes by both RSF fighters and allied Arab militias. These incidents frequently occurred at RSF checkpoints, in combination with invasive body searches, and in the context of attacks along the exit routes by RSF-allied Arab militias, who appeared to be opportunistically targeting those fleeing from El Fasher. Other violations, described earlier, often occurred during such attacks, including summary killings, sexual violence, ill-treatment and abductions.

104. One witness reported that on 27 October, while travelling with a group of other civilians between Hillat al-Sheikh and Garni, she came under attack by armed men riding on camels and motorcycles, who she believed to be members of an RSF-allied Arab militia. The men beat the civilians and looted all of their belongings, including the clothes that they were wearing.

105. In some cases, victims were subjected to humiliating or degrading treatment while being looted. One witness reported that she encountered RSF fighters on an exit route, after fleeing from El Fasher on 26 October. She and other civilians, both men and women, were subjected to humiliating treatment. For the women, this included invasive body searches, including of their genitals area, while the men were stripped naked. Witnesses also reported that they were often subjected to multiple looting attempts during their journeys; in subsequent looting incidents, after their belongings had already been taken, perpetrators often conducted invasive body searches to determine whether they were carrying any further valuable items. One witness reported that, after she and the group she was travelling with had already been subjected to looting by RSF fighters, they later encountered two additional RSF fighters who demanded their belongings. After explaining that their possessions had already been looted, they were subjected to body searches at gunpoint.

#### ***Forced return of IDPs and restrictions on freedom of movement***

106. Tawila was the primary destination for fleeing civilians. Numbers of IDPs also arrived at Garmi, Kafout, Kurma (Sileik IDP Camp), Kutum, Shangil Tobay and Tura. Sources further noted that a significant number of individuals who reached Tawila continued their journeys onwards towards regions in the eastern Jebel Marra, including Nertiti. Additionally, reliable sources in Kutum reported an influx of IDPs to Kassab Camp and nearby villages.

107. OHCHR has corroborated information that the RSF significantly restricted freedom of movement of those fleeing El Fasher, preventing them from reaching their destinations. Reports indicate that as of 29 October, the RSF held over 5,000 civilians, including women, men, and children, in Garmi village. Initially, upon their arrival at Garmi village, the RSF instructed them to stay there while they arranged proper transportation to Tawila, where they would receive food aid. On 31 October, they were forcibly returned to El Fasher.

108. OHCHR interviewed one of IDPs returned from Garmi to El Fasher, who recounted, “We reached Garmi on 27 October, on our way to Tawila, when the RSF intercepted us at the checkpoint and loaded women and children into three trucks and men, including the injured, in five trucks and started driving. We thought we were heading to Tawila, but the trucks drove us toward El Fasher.”

109. During the offensive and following the capture of the city, the RSF restricted the movement of hundreds of families, preventing them from leaving, and forcibly kept them under RSF control in IDP shelters and gathering points within the city, including the Zain al-Abidin School and Dar al-Arqam, located in the Daraja Oula neighbourhood, and the Health Insurance Centre near Abu Shouk IDP camp. Some civilians were intercepted in Hillat al-Sheikh or in Garmi while fleeing towards Tawila, and were forced to return to El Fasher in trucks provided by the RSF.

110. As of 7 January 2026, credible sources indicated that 2,769 civilians, including women, children and the elderly, are held in 17 “shelters” inside El Fasher. These “shelters”, where civilians have limited freedom of movement outside and which lack minimum basic living conditions, are under the surveillance of the RSF. Many of the civilians held there had previously fled El Fasher to Garmi, but were forcibly returned by the RSF without guarantees on access to humanitarian assistance, rights to return to their homes, or protection.

## **VII. Conclusions and recommendations**

**111. The brutal 18-month siege and final offensive on El Fasher had a devastating impact on the human rights of the civilian population and the humanitarian situation, resulting in high numbers of civilian casualties, injuries, including long-term psychological harm, missing persons, and lack of access to**