

Briefing to the House of Representatives of the Netherlands **9 December 2025**

1. Overview

On 15 April 2025, the Sudan marked a sombre anniversary, entering a third year of conflict—characterized by blatant disregard for international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL)—which showed no signs of abating. To the contrary, the conflict continued to expand and intensify, taking on increasingly ethnic and divisive dimensions, with a devastating impact on the civilian population.¹

Several trends remained consistent throughout 2025: a continued pervasiveness of sexual violence, indiscriminate attacks, and the widespread use of retaliatory violence against civilians, particularly on an ethnic basis, targeting individuals accused of “collaboration” with opposing parties. In addition, new trends began to emerge this year, with an increasing deployment of drones and use of advanced drone technologies.

2. Patterns of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law

Killing of civilians during the conduct of hostilities: Parties to the conflict continued to launch attacks in densely populated areas, including against protected objects, without prior warning, and frequently using explosive weapons with wide-area effects that had disproportionate impacts on civilians, in violation of the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution under IHL. This included the use in such manner of artillery shelling, air strikes, some of which have reportedly involved the use of barrel bombs, and unmanned aerial vehicles (drones).

Summary executions: OHCHR has documented numerous incidents of summary executions of civilians and unarmed individuals alleged to be “collaborators” with the opposing party. Sharp increases in summary executions have been documented in apparent reprisals after territory has changed hands, for example in Khartoum in March, after the Sudanese Armed Forces and allied fighters recaptured territory previously controlled by the RSF;² and in El Fasher in late October, when the RSF seized control of the besieged city.³ Other summary killings have occurred in the context of attacks on villages in which members of particular ethnic groups appear to have been targeted.

Attacks on civilian objects—including markets, schools, medical facilities, religious sites, IDP camps and shelters—have been a consistent feature of the conflict. These incidents, which frequently resulted in significant civilian casualties, also had implications for the economic, social and cultural rights of the population, including the rights to food, health and clean water and sanitation. In some cases, civilian infrastructure appeared to be deliberately targeted in violation of the principles of IHL; even though parties alleged the presence of enemy fighters, this alone does not transform the entire area into a

¹ The contents of this briefing note are extracted from material published by OHCHR, including [Human Rights Situation in the Sudan, 1 January to 30 June 2025](#) (19 September 2025) and other material available on the [OHCHR Sudan home page](#).

² See [Sudan: UN Human Rights Chief appalled by widespread extrajudicial killings in Khartoum | OHCHR](#).

³ See [Sudan: Appalling reports of summary executions and other serious violations, as RSF makes major territorial gains in El Fasher and North Kordofan | OHCHR](#) and High Commissioner’s [statement](#) to the Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Sudan (focused on El Fasher) of 14 November 2025.

military objective. Markets, in particular, have been a frequent target. Both parties to the conflict also continued to launch attacks against hospitals and health facilities. OHCHR also documented increasing long-range drone attacks targeting civilian infrastructure, including electricity generation and water supply systems and airports.

Attacks against humanitarian and health workers continued with alarming frequency; health workers, in particular, appeared to be deliberately targeted in numerous incidents of killings and abductions. The resulting deprivation of the population's access to essential services, particularly medical services, has been cited as a factor influencing displacement. Humanitarian convoys have also come under attack, violating the prohibition on attacks against humanitarian personnel and objects.

Sexual violence: Incidents documented by OHCHR, including through testimonies from survivors, reflect recurring patterns of conflict-related sexual violence, used as a weapon of war as part of wider attacks involving other violations against civilians. Such violence has frequently been ethnically motivated, or based on the victims' real or perceived affiliation with the opposing party to the conflict. In West Darfur, survivors spoke to OHCHR about the systematic use of sexual violence by RSF since the beginning of the conflict, in particular targeting members of the African Masalit and Eringa communities, and women and girls related to members of SAF and the allied Joint Forces. In North Darfur, OHCHR documented the rape or gang rape of women, girls and boys – most of them from the African Zaghawa community – in the context of the RSF offensive on Zamzam IDP camp in April 2025.

Overall, sexual violence is vastly under-reported in the Sudan, due to numerous barriers, including insecurity, telecommunications blackouts, stigma, mistrust in justice mechanisms, and fears of retaliation. The actual magnitude of conflict-related sexual violence is likely to be far greater than what has been reported. Survivors are denied their right to timely and appropriate medical and psychosocial care. The targeted attacks on health service providers further impeded access, leaving survivors without access to emergency contraception, post-exposure prophylaxis and mental health care.

OHCHR has documented widespread **arbitrary detention** by parties to the conflict, often targeting individuals accused of—or even simply perceived as—collaborating with the opposing side. Many cases involved ethnic profiling, particularly of civilians from Darfur and Kordofan, as well as civil society figures, including local humanitarian volunteers. Conditions in both formal and informal detention facilities remained consistently harsh regardless of the detaining party. In March 2025, OHCHR issued a report on detention facilities and practices in Khartoum state, which documented patterns of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, incommunicado detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and denial of basic needs—including food, water and medical care—in facilities controlled by both RSF and SAF.⁴ Throughout 2025, OHCHR received numerous accounts of **torture and other forms of ill-treatment**, including severe beatings, electric shocks, burning with hot metal rods, sexual violence, and prolonged suspension. There were persistent reports of disappearances and missing persons, including through detention and abduction by parties to the conflict, raising concerns of **enforced disappearances**.

Civic space: The rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and participation in public affairs were increasingly constrained by the parties to the conflict. The year was marked by violations and abuses, threats and intimidation against civil society actors, including journalists, human rights defenders, activists, and local humanitarian volunteers. OHCHR monitored a pattern of arbitrary detentions of civic actors by the parties and allied groups, often based on spurious accusations of “collaboration” with the opposing side. Journalists continued to face attacks and restrictions on their work.

The conflict has continued to severely impact the enjoyment of **economic and social rights** by the civilian population. Attacks by the parties on food production and critical civilian infrastructure—including markets, electrical grids, dams and supply routes—have drastically undermined the availability and accessibility of food, clean water and sanitation, and health care, with the most vulnerable groups and individuals, such as IDPs, being disproportionately affected.

⁴ See full report at: [report-ohchr-sudan-country-office-detention-facilities-khartoum.pdf](#).

3. Conclusion and recommendations

The parties to the conflict have repeatedly failed to respect the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, and international human rights law, with devastating impacts on the civilian population. OHCHR documented serious violations of international humanitarian law which may amount to war crimes, and other crimes under international law.

Impunity for violations continues to drive cycles of violence, despite efforts to advance investigations. Accountability, regardless of the affiliation of the perpetrators, is critical to breaking these cycles of violence and preventing further violations and abuses.

In this context, it is critical to redouble efforts to bring the conflict to an end, to uphold international humanitarian law and international human rights law, protect civilians, and ensure that sufficient humanitarian assistance reaches all those in need without distinction.

OHCHR calls upon the parties to the conflict to:

- a. Comply fully with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and take immediate and concrete steps to implement their stated commitments on the protection of civilians, including through issuing and enforcing strict command orders to end sexual violence in conflict, cease all attacks against civilian infrastructure, ensuring safe passage for civilians wishing to leave high risk areas, and facilitating unimpeded humanitarian assistance to all in need;**
- b. Refrain from using explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, and immediately stop all forms of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks;**
- c. Cease all attacks against civilians and other protected persons, including medical personnel, and end practices of unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings.**
- d. Ensure that all persons acting under their instructions, direction or control abide by obligations and commitments under international law;**
- e. Prevent, investigate and punish, including at command levels, perpetrators of serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations and abuses of international human rights law;**
- f. Immediately end arbitrary detention, including based on ethnic affiliations, and facilitate access to legal representation and family notification for all detainees;**
- g. Protect the work of civil society representatives, human rights defenders and media workers, and refrain from unduly restricting their work, including on the basis of emergency orders or other security-related measures;**
- h. Engage in mediation efforts in good faith to reach agreement on a cessation of hostilities.**

OHCHR calls upon the international community to:

- a. Intensify engagement with the parties to the conflict to renew dialogue towards a cessation of hostilities, and to address immediate priorities in relation to the protection of civilians and unimpeded humanitarian access;**
- b. Support local civil society actors and advocate for the protection of their role and engagement in responding to the crisis;**
- c. Take necessary action to ensure compliance with the arms embargo measures in Darfur as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1556 (2004), and to refrain from providing any type of military support directly or indirectly to the parties to the conflict where there is risk of its use in breach of international law.**