

**POSITION PAPER ON THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN SUDAN**  
**Prepared by Hala Al-Karib, Regional Director, SIHA Network the Standing Committee on**  
**Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives**  
**Roundtable on Sudan | April 17, 2025**

### Context

Sudan is undergoing one of the most devastating humanitarian and human rights crises in the world today. Since the outbreak of armed conflict on April 15, 2023, between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), more than 8.6 million people have been displaced, including 6.3 million internally displaced and 2.3 million who have fled across borders. Basic infrastructure has collapsed, essential services are nearly non-existent in several regions, and civilians continue to face indiscriminate violence, hunger, and diseases. Women, girls, and children are bearing the brunt of this war, which has intensified pre-existing gender inequalities and systemic violence against women, exposing them to unprecedented levels of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and decimating already fragile protection systems.

### Humanitarian Realities on the Ground

1. **Systematic Use of Sexual Violence as a Tool of War:** Since the onset of the conflict on April 15, 2023, sexual violence has emerged as one of the most pervasive and brutal features of the war in Sudan, used deliberately and systematically to terrorize, punish, and displace civilians—particularly women and girls. Prior to April 15, 2023, Sudan has had a long history of sexual violence in Darfur and Khartoum during and post the Sudan uprising in 2019. Drawing from SIHA’s ongoing documentation, community outreach, and frontline service provision, clear patterns of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) have emerged, marking it not as incidental but as a strategic weapon of war. In our joint civil society submission to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) and our advocacy before the UN Human Rights Council, we have emphasized the following:
  - a. Widespread and repeated rape is being used during house raids, at checkpoints, by the side of roads against women in public spaces and during enforced disappearance. Sexual exploitation is used inside IDP camps and in locations where women have difficulty accessing food by military and other actors. The majority of sexual exploitation is happening inside IDP shelters and around SAF barracks.
  - b. Survivors report being gang-raped by multiple perpetrators, often in the presence of family members or children—intended to maximize humiliation and communal breakdown. More than 90% of rape cases are gang rape cases.
  - c. Victims include girls as young as 7 years to 75-year-old women, with numerous cases involving school-aged girls abducted and held in captivity for days or months, subjected to repeated assault. Many women are enforced disappeared and their locations are unknown. Women’s enforced disappearance is surrounded by social stigma and lack of reporting. There are also increasing reports of sexual slavery, especially in RSF-held areas of

Khartoum, Al Gezira, and North Darfur. 85% of SIHA documentation of women's enforced disappearance is happening in RRSF-controlled areas.

- d. Ethnicized sexual violence is particularly acute in Darfur, where non-Arab women—especially from the Masalit, Zagawa, Fur, and other non-Arab groups. Women from the Nuba Mountains are also being targeted in Khartoum and in South Kordofan areas. Survivors report that attackers use ethnic slurs during assaults. Many women reported that they were told during assaults that the violence is intended to degrade and drive their communities away.
- e. The violence is often accompanied by other crimes, such as looting, torture, detention, servitude, forced labour, and, in some cases, killings post-assault. Perpetrators act with impunity. 90% of documented cases by SIHA are committed by RSF and affiliated militia and inside RSF at the time-controlled territories. Other cases 10% of cases documented by SIHA are committed by SAF and allied militias in Khartoum, Al Gezira, Darfur, and SPLM North-Al Hilo. We have also documented cases within 10% of unknown preparators.

In collaboration with grassroots women-led initiatives, SIHA has been running confidential survivor support and response actions and documenting testimonies through trusted networks in Khartoum, Bahri, Omdurman, South and West Kordofan, and across Darfur. Our response includes in-kind support from victims, medical and mental health referral services and relocation to safer locations within Sudan. Despite these grave violations, survivors have nowhere to turn. Most health facilities have collapsed; post-rape kits are often unavailable and the funding allocations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence minimally exist in Sudan. Social stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of service and referral pathways mean that the majority of cases remain unreported.

The war has shattered the volatile infrastructure that existed for survivor support and exposed the deep fragility of Sudan's protection systems. Yet, grassroots women's groups and local volunteers remain active and indispensable, forming the backbone of response and documentation efforts. SIHA and partners are providing medical and mental health referral services, collaborating with health workers across the country, working towards facilitating emergency relocation, and amplifying survivor voices at national, regional, and international levels.

2. **Collapse of Health and Social Services:** More than 70% of hospitals in conflict-affected areas are nonfunctional. Survivors of violence often have no access to emergency medical care, post-rape kits, mental health support, or safe housing. SIHA often had to support survivors to travel hundreds of kilometers to access service. During the last week of March, SIHA supported two survivors to travel from Zalingei in central Darfur to access service in Gadaref in eastern Sudan, traveling for 2 weeks for 2000 kilometers, exposed to multiple risks to access service. During our support of survivors who are in critical condition because of gang rape, we have lost 2 victims before reaching service. One was a 13-year-old child who suffered extreme bleeding and died on the road; another victim passed away after reaching the hospital in River Nile State.
3. Community-based protection networks are overwhelmed and stretched thin, and community health and mental health workers are struggling to respond with limited resources, logistical challenges, and insecurity.

4. **Obstruction of Humanitarian Aid and starvation as a weapon of war:** Aid organizations are struggling to reach affected communities due to bureaucratic impediments, looting, and attacks on aid workers. In some instances, armed actors have weaponized aid access while targeting others with starvation or neglect. Insecurity on the roads and the siege of urban centers, mainly around El Fasher in North Darfur, further isolated civilians from life-saving supplies. International humanitarian agencies are increasingly reliant on local volunteers and women-led organizations, which remain the most connected to communities but are drastically underfunded and overstretched.
  
5. **Displacement and collapse of public service institutions:**  
Children's out-of-school in Sudan amount to 6.9 million<sup>1</sup>, according to UNICEF. Women and children account for over 70% of the displaced population. In displacement sites, they are highly vulnerable to exploitation, human trafficking, and denial of education and livelihood opportunities. Girls are being pulled out of school at alarming rates and married off at younger ages, reversing decades of progress on girls' rights and education.

#### Key Recommendations for the Netherlands and the EU

1. **Prioritize Humanitarian Aid Response to Sudan:** Increase funding to international and local civil society working on humanitarian aid response inside Sudan.
2. **Increase funding for Sudanese women-led and community-based organizations inside Sudan that deliver** frontline services, especially in hard-to-reach areas. Support should include community kitchens led by women, health services, and psychosocial support.
3. **Diplomatic Pressure and Safe Humanitarian Corridors:** Use diplomatic leverage to pressure all parties to the conflict to cease attacks on civilians and facilitate unconditional access to humanitarian aid. Encourage the establishment of protected humanitarian corridors and safe zones for civilians, including women and girls at risk, particularly in Darfur and Kordofan
4. **Long-term investment for Sudanese Civil Society: Beyond the emergency response, the EU and the Netherlands must invest in the long-term sustainability of Sudanese civil society and human rights defenders/groups** working on the ground and in refugee camps, recognizing their critical role in civilian protection, anti-militarism, justice and accountability, and societal recovery.
5. **Support Accountability and Justice Efforts:** In addition to supporting the ICC, we call for the establishment of a hybrid tribunal under the joint auspices of the UN and African Union to investigate and prosecute crimes against civilians, particularly conflict-related sexual violence. Promoting access to justice and survivor-centered accountability is not only vital for addressing past violations but also a long-term strategy to counter militarism, reinforce the rule of law, and prevent future atrocities.

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<sup>1</sup> [Joint Statement: Urgent action needed as 6.9 million children are out-of-school and 12 million face learning disruptions.](#)

### **About SIHA Network:**

The [Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa \(SIHA\) Network](#) is a regional feminist organization founded in the 1990s, working across Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda. SIHA represents a diverse membership of over 200 grassroots women's rights groups, activists, lawyers, and human rights defenders committed to dismantling structural violence and inequality faced by women and girls in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Our work bridges movement-building, legal and policy advocacy, direct survivor support, and research, with a strong focus on amplifying the voices and lived realities of women and girls. In Sudan, SIHA has been at the forefront of documenting and responding to conflict-related sexual violence, supporting women's access to justice, and advocating for feminist-informed peacebuilding rooted in local realities.

### **Further Reading**

1. [Blog Series: Sudan Women's Lived Experiences in War](#) (Personal narratives and feminist reflections from Sudanese women during the current conflict)
2. [SIHA Policy Brief: "A Feminist Lens on Peace and Justice in"](#) Recommendations for transitional justice mechanisms and peacebuilding
3. [SIHA Submission to the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan \(FFM\)—Confidential](#) but available upon request.
4. [Press Statement: Gezira State and the Forgotten Atrocities—A Report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#) - Published: July 22, 2024
5. [Central Sudan Genocide Shadows](#) - Published: October 29, 2024
6. [Report: Gezira under RSF Control—Overall Situation](#) - Published: February 13, 2024
7. [Press Statement: Caught in the Crossfire—The Hidden Toll of Sudan's Conflict on Children](#) - Published: March 2025
8. [Feminist Initiatives in Sudan—A Story of Resilience, Resistance, and Solidarity](#) Published: September 16, 2024
9. [What We Have Lost in the War: The Economic Impact of the Sudan Conflict on Women](#)
10. [SIHA Statement: "Sudan is Burning: A Call for Urgent Action Against Sexual Violence and Human Rights Violations"](#) - Published: July 2023