

Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan
Roundtable on combating conflict-related sexual violence
The Hague, 20 May 2026

I. Context

International law now recognizes sexual and gender-based violence as among the gravest violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, requiring accountability at both the national and international levels. Acts such as rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, and other forms of sexual violence are now explicitly criminalized under international criminal law and may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, or acts of genocide, depending on the context and scale in which they are committed. Current efforts to advance the draft crimes against humanity convention further reinforce this framework.

This paper focuses on the work of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (the Mission) in combatting conflict-related sexual violence. The Mission, established by a Human Rights Council [resolution](#) in October 2023, continues to document conflict-related sexual violence on a massive scale taking place in Sudan, with a level of brutality that constitutes one of the gravest protection crises in the world today. It has found reasonable grounds to believe that since the outbreak of armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in mid April 2023, sexual and gender-based violence amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including persecution on intersecting ethnic, political and gender grounds, has taken place. The Mission's findings also reflect patterns documented in other conflicts. Three patterns have been particularly present:

- Rape, gang rape and other sexual violence of comparable gravity committed systematically during raids on homes and villages, attacks on urban neighbourhoods, and at checkpoints;
- Sexual torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment perpetrated in contexts of detention, interrogation, intimidation, coercion, and punishment;
- Sexual slavery, abduction, and forced marriage.

These crimes have been committed with impunity against women and girls as well as men and boys, mainly by the RSF and allied militias. Evidence also suggests, however, that the SAF and its aligned forces have also committed sexualized torture. (See its October 2024 report [here](#), its November 2024 report [here](#), its September 2025 report [here](#), its October 2025 report [here](#), and its February 2026 report [here](#))

In its February 2026 report [Hallmarks of Genocide in El-Fasher](#), the Mission concluded that the scale, severity, and cumulative impact of the prohibited acts committed by the RSF during the takeover of the city in October 2024, including widespread rape and sexual violence, formed part of patterns of targeting, conduct, and intent, that presented indications pointing to genocide.

According to [Médecins Sans Frontières](#), between January 2024 and November 2025 at least 3,396 survivors were treated in MSF-supported facilities across North and South Darfur. Major obstacles to the reporting and documentation of these crimes include fear of reprisals, stigma, insecurity, sieges, communications blackouts, and restrictions imposed by parties to the conflict. Survivors also face severe barriers in accessing care due to the destruction and occupation of hospitals and medical facilities, attacks against healthcare personnel, disruption of humanitarian access, and the failure of protection and justice systems. As a result, many victims remain without access to emergency medical treatment, psychosocial support and safe reporting mechanisms, particularly in displacement settings and conflict-affected areas.

Sexual and gender-based violence does not happen in a vacuum. Women and girls also bear the compounded impact of killings, displacement, hunger, loss of livelihoods, and the collapse of essential services. They often become the primary providers and caregivers for their families and communities following the killing, disappearance, detention, or separation of male relatives. Any strategy to prevent these acts in Sudan must begin with the recognition that these criminal acts are pursued as part and parcel of a deliberate strategy and are not incidental to their methods of warfare. Their aim is to terrorise, displace, and destroy communities, and to assert ethnic and political domination.

II. Prevention

1. Protection of civilians on the ground:

Physical protection of civilians is the most effective preventive measure against conflict-related sexual violence in ongoing conflicts. In Sudan and elsewhere, community initiatives enable some protection, but they are hardly effective in the face of the massive scale of violence being encountered. Moreover, mass displacement significantly increases exposure to

sexual violence. Displaced women and girls are often isolated from their families and have limited access to services and protection mechanisms. They often face heightened risks of rape, abduction, forced marriage and sexual exploitation.

The Mission has urged the parties to the conflict in Sudan to immediately cease attacks against civilians and civilian objects and fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including their obligations relating to sexual and gender-based violence. Its recommendations include the following:

- Protection presence: The establishment of effective civilian protection mechanisms, including in displacement settings, the deployment of an impartial protection force, the establishment of demilitarized zones around IDP sites, and reinforcement of protection in host countries.
- Humanitarian access: The warring parties must agree on humanitarian corridors, facilitate a humanitarian scale-up, ensure the safe operation of medical-humanitarian agencies and providers of protection services, including the unimpeded movement of aid and personnel cross-border and across front lines and areas controlled by different parties.
- Interim reparatory measures: The international community must support interim measures to help survivors cope with the trauma, including survivor-centred access to medical care, psychosocial support, protection, and remedies.
- Support: Reinforcing local women-led organizations through funding and by ensuring the women's meaningful and effective participation in decision-making processes. Communities should be encouraged to listen to women and girls, address stigma, and support survivors.
- Documentation: Support the systematic documentation and analysis of risk factors, including by the Mission.

2. Stop the flow of weapons:

There is no military solution to the conflict in Sudan, which harms mainly civilians. The continued transfer of arms and military support to parties to the conflict has prolonged the conflict for more than three years. The flow of weapons directly contributes to the perpetration of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including sexual and gender-based violence. The Mission's investigation reveals that the perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence are often armed men in military uniforms, primarily those of the RSF, and in some cases acting under the presence of commanders or senior officers. Its recommendations include the following:

- Arms embargo: The full enforcement of the arms embargo established in Darfur under UN Security Council Resolution 1556 (2004) is needed as well as its expansion to cover all of Sudan.
- States with influence on the parties: Encouraging those States to halt all material military support to the parties, including via private actors and transit routes, including by refraining from contributing to violations through acts or omissions, such as providing assistance that facilitates violations and crimes.
- Other States: The use of all available diplomatic, political, and preventive tools to halt further atrocities.

3. Pursue accountability:

Sexual violence is frequently perpetrated by armed actors who operate with total impunity. Ensuring accountability may deter further crimes. The Mission has [analysed](#) the ability of the Sudanese domestic justice system to deal with the level of violations and crimes in Sudan. It concluded that the SAF and RSF remain unwilling or unable to conduct genuine, thorough, prompt, and impartial investigations and prosecutions. Noting that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has jurisdiction over the situation in Darfur through UN Security Council Resolution 1593 (2005), the Mission's recommendations include the following:

- The ICC: Supporting the ICC and encouraging full cooperation with its processes as well as taking measures towards expanding its jurisdiction.
- Separate judicial mechanism: Given the ICC's focus on senior perpetrators, there is a need for an independent, judicial mechanism working in tandem with the Court to advance accountability for perpetrators at all levels and ensure justice for victims.
- Universal jurisdiction: States should suspend cooperation with individuals suspected of international crimes and exercise universal jurisdiction to prosecute them in national courts.
- Sanctions: Impose targeted sanctions on commanders and enablers responsible for sexual violence.
