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Sudan

“Three days of terror with no safe refuge”: RSF offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, El Fasher (11-13 April 2025)

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I. Introduction

1. On 15 April 2023, hostilities broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum state and Merowe, and soon after in the Darfur region. By the end of November 2023, the RSF had taken control of four out of five Darfur states, leaving only parts of North Darfur, including the capital El Fasher, under the control of the SAF and aligned armed movements (signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement, commonly called the "Joint Forces").[1]

2. From May 2024 to October 2025, the RSF, supported by allied Arab militia, maintained an effective siege of El Fasher and engaged in relentless attacks on the city and the surrounding camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), in particular Abu Shouk and Zamzam IDP camps.[2] Between May and November 2024, the Joint Forces maintained control of the route connecting El Fasher and Zamzam IDP camp, enabling hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee the besieged city to Zamzam IDP camp. On 25 September 2024, the High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted concerns for residents of Abu Shouk and Zamzam IDP camps in the context of escalating hostilities in El Fasher, noting the risk of retaliatory attacks based on their tribal identity and perceived support for the Joint Forces and SAF.[3]

3. Zamzam IDP camp was the largest IDP camp in North Darfur, located 15 km south of El Fasher. It was established in 2004 to accommodate IDPs, survivors of the war in Darfur that began in 2003, most of them belonging to the African tribes of Zaghawa, Fur and Berti. Over time, the camp evolved into an agglomeration with neighbourhoods, schools, markets, police stations, water sources and health facilities, as well as satellite villages and rural areas. From July 2023, the number of IDPs in El Fasher city increased, with thousands of people, mostly belonging to African tribes, fleeing fighting in South and Central Darfur states. Later, in May 2024, when the hostilities erupted in El Fasher and the RSF besieged the city,[4] Zamzam IDP camp became a destination for IDPs fleeing the city, seeking shelter, food, water, sanitation and healthcare, or as a point of transfer to other locations. In July 2024, the Famine Review Committee of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) concluded that famine conditions were prevalent in parts of North Darfur, including Zamzam IDP camp.[5]

4. From 1 December 2024 into early 2025, Zamzam IDP camp – which at that time hosted an estimated half a million IDPs – and surrounding villages came under relentless and coordinated RSF attacks which resulted in extensive damage and destruction of civilian objects, including markets, houses and hospitals, as well as numerous civilian casualties. The RSF reportedly claimed that attacks were carried out due to the alleged presence and mobilization of Joint Forces fighters inside the camp and in surrounding villages.

5. From 11 to 13 April 2025, the RSF conducted a large-scale offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, involving heavy artillery shelling and ground incursions. This led to large numbers of civilian deaths and displacement. As of 27 April, at least 406,265 IDPs (81% of households) had been displaced to various localities across Darfur, mainly to Tawila (303,300) and El Fasher

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

[2] See OHCHR report on the human rights impact of the siege of El Fasher, December 2024: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/sudan/ohchr-sudan-country-office-fasher-north-darfur-siege-may-1-en.pdf.

[3] Sudan: Türk sounds alarm over hostilities in El Fasher, warns of serious human rights violations | OHCHR.

[4] See OHCHR Under siege: the situation of human rights in El Fasher, North Darfur since May 2024, paras 3, 13.

[5] IPC_Famine_Review_Committee_Report_Sudan_July2024.pdf.

(83,890), leaving behind the elderly, persons with disabilities, the injured, and people with chronic health conditions.[6]

6. This report highlights trends and patterns of serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and gross abuses of international human rights law (IHRL) perpetrated prior to, during and following the RSF offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, with a particular focus on persons in situations of vulnerability, including women and girls, and members of targeted ethnic groups. It presents recommendations to inform the engagement of the UN and international community in the context of the current situation in El Fasher, in light of serious concerns about the recurrence of patterns of grave violations and abuses documented during and after the offensive on Zamzam IDP camp in April 2025.

II. Methodology

7. On 26 September 2019, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (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.

8. The findings in this report are based on human rights monitoring undertaken by OHCHR, including a field mission to eastern Chad from 10 to 25 July 2025, and interviews conducted with 155 victims and witnesses (including 114 women, 3 girls and 6 boys) who had fled Zamzam IDP camp during and after the offensive.

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

10. 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.

11. 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.

III. Legal framework

12. A non-international armed conflict is ongoing in the Sudan between SAF and the RSF and supported by their respective allied armed movements and militia. Consequently, IHL and IHRL apply concurrently.[7]

13. 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

[6] DTM Sudan Focused Flash Alert: Al Fasher (Zamzam IDP Camp), North Darfur (Update 008) | Displacement Tracking Matrix.

[7] 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.

special protection. The parties to a conflict are obliged to respect and ensure respect of 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.[8] 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.[9] 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.[10]

14. 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.[11] 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[12]Violations of these rules may also amount to violations of the prohibition of the use of starvation as a method of warfare. Under IHRL, such conduct may further amount to violations of the rights to life, food and health.[13]

15. 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[14], referring the situation prevailing in Darfur since 1 July 2002 to the ICC. On 13 July 2024, the ICC Prosecutor stated that this mandate was ongoing regarding crimes committed in Darfur since 15 April 2023.[15]

IV. Key findings

16. Between 11 to 13 April, OHCHR documented the killing of at least 1,013 civilians in the context of the RSF offensive on Zamzam IDP camp. OHCHR confirmed that at least 319 individuals were summarily executed. Between 11 April to 20 May 2025, OHCHR documented 66 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, including gang rape, involving at least 104 victims (75 women, 26 girls and 3 boys).

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[8] ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I, Rule 23 (https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule23).

[9] Art. 13(2) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions.

[10] 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.

[11] ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I, Rules 53 – 56.

[12] ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I, Rules 54 – 56 (https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule54).

[13] ICCPR, art. 6; ICESCR, art. 11, 12.

[14] UN Security Council Resolution 1593 (2005).

[15] See: https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-khan-kc-united-nations-security-council-situation-darfur-0. Also see: https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-united-nations-security-council-situation-darfur (27 January 2025); https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-deputy-prosecutor-nazhat-shameem-khan-united-nations-security-council-situation (10 July 2025).

17. OHCHR's findings raise serious concerns about recurring patterns of violations and abuses of international law documented prior, during and after the RSF's military offensive on Zamzam IDP camp and its surrounding villages in April 2025. OHCHR documented widespread cases of summary executions, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, abductions and enforced disappearances perpetrated against civilians by the RSF with support from allied Arab militia. These incidents spread terror among the civilian population forcing them to flee the camp. The documented patterns of IHL violations and IHRL abuses suggest that many of these acts were ethnically motivated, targeting individuals based on their tribal identity or perceived affiliation.

18. OHCHR monitoring indicates a clear disregard by the RSF for the rules of IHL during these operations, as evidenced by attacks that were not directed at a specific military objective and which struck military objectives and civilian objects without distinction. Except for the attacks on the Joint Forces' military positions on 11 April, who later withdrew from the camp, there was no apparent presence of the Joint Forces in most parts of the camp or in the surrounding villages that came under attack from the RSF. RSF artillery shelling, drone strikes, and ground assaults reflected a failure to take necessary precautions in attack, including verifying that the targets were military objectives before conducting operations. The continued attacks against the Zamzam IDP camp even after the reported withdrawal of the Joint Forces strongly suggest that the RSF deliberately targeted the civilian population.

V. Overview of events before and during the military offensive on Zamzam IDP camp

Period prior to the attack

19. According to OHCHR monitoring, in the months prior to the three-day offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, the RSF launched a series of attacks on the surrounding villages, most of them inhabited by members of the Zaghawa community, forcibly displacing residents, including to Zamzam IDP camp.

20. OHCHR spoke to a 17-year-old Zaghawa girl who survived the RSF attack on Abuzeriga in January 2025. Her testimony corroborated reports that over 100 villagers were killed, livestock looted, and several men abducted. "*In my family alone, six of my cousins were killed during the attack.*" She and her large family sought refuge in Zamzam IDP camp. "*We thought it was safe but as soon as we arrived, a shell hit our hut killing my cousin and burning down our home*", she added.

21. The RSF reportedly imposed a blockade on the entry of food, fuel, water and other goods essential for the survival of the civilian population in Zamzam IDP camp. Several testimonies indicated that since early January 2025, the RSF controlled most exit and supply routes and blocked all roads to the camp, including routes to Dar es Salam (south), Tawila (northwest), El Fasher (north/northeast), and Khazan Jadid (west). Continuous RSF patrols along these routes prevented the entry of food, medical supplies and fuel, causing severe shortages. Many families resorted to feeding children animal food, such as peanut shells, or went days without adequate nutrition. A 30-year-old woman recounted the bleak situation, "*My family and I had no choice but to eat peanut shells, just like many other families in the camp, because all food items such as sugar, salt, and oil had run out. During Ramadan (March 2025), we abandoned our tradition of communal iftar outdoors, praying and sharing food and drinks, because there was simply no food to share.*"

22. To survive the blockade, residents and merchants transported food and essential goods at night using donkeys and camels to avoid RSF patrols. Testimonies revealed that convoys, local merchants and individuals attempting to bring supplies from El Fasher and nearby villages were systematically attacked. At least 26 individuals, including merchants and IDPs, were

apprehended and reportedly executed along the road connecting Zamzam IDP camp to Tawila. RSF fighters often filmed and shared these killings on social media as a warning against any attempt to deliver food to the camp. A 30-year-old man, owner of a shop in Zamzam IDP camp, reported: "*It was risky to smuggle these goods, as it could cost you your life. I know at least 10 young men who tried but they had been caught and killed by RSF in different incidents between 25 March and 10 April 2025*.''

23. Restrictions imposed by the RSF on humanitarian relief prevented humanitarian actors and local merchants from accessing Zamzam IDP camp. These included travel restrictions, detention of humanitarian workers, and various blockade tactics of delaying or denying access. Persistent security threats led to a number of key humanitarian organizations suspending operations in the camp in February 2025.[16] Such impediments to humanitarian assistance exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation.

The course of the attack on Zamzam IDP camp

24. On 10 April, the RSF reportedly launched an attack on Zamzam IDP camp from the northern side, firing artillery shells and attempting a ground incursion, but they were repelled by the Joint Forces. The Joint Forces then enhanced their presence on the northern side, expecting another RSF attack. On the morning of 11 April, the RSF launched its offensive on the Zamzam IDP camp, by firing at least 15 artillery shells into the eastern part of the camp, with the operation continuing until the morning of 13 April. When the RSF started shelling the camp, the inhabitants were advised by the Joint Forces and SAF – who had positions within the camp – to remain inside and avoid running during crossfire. Many sheltered in trenches or sought refuge in the big mosque, its "*khalwa*" (Quranic school) or in schools within the camp. Despite the advice issued, large numbers fled the camp, leaving behind their belongings.

25. Over 11 and 12 April, the RSF reportedly fired numerous artillery shells into the camp causing significant civilian deaths and damage to civilian homes. Heavy gunfire was exchanged between the RSF on one side and the Joint Forces, along with the "Zamzam Popular Resistance Forces" (PRF),[17] on the other. On 12 April, the RSF reportedly carried out a ground offensive on the camp from different directions, using more than 300 four-wheel drive vehicles. Later that day, the RSF reportedly carried out drone strikes on the camp.

26. By Saturday morning, 12 April, the SAF and Joint Forces had reportedly already withdrawn from the camp towards El Fasher. When residents realized this, a mass exodus of IDPs to Tawila through Saloma village but also other exit routes ensued. By the morning of 13 April, the RSF had reportedly taken full control of the camp. Almost all inhabitants had commenced their flight through various exit points and routes, with Tawila as the main destination.

27. Consistent testimonies, supported by verified video footage, indicated that within two weeks of taking control of Zamzam IDP camp, the RSF had transported the remaining few inhabitants, including older persons, persons with disabilities or those with chronic health conditions, to Shangil Tobaya, Khazan Jadid and Nyala. Reports also indicated that once the RSF had secured the vacant camp, they re-opened previously blocked roads including the trade routes to Zamzam IDP camp. A 32-year woman who managed to return to the camp on 17 April to search for her 15-year-old son who got lost during the offensive recounted, "*The camp was empty. I saw scattered dead bodies on the roads. Only chicken, donkeys and sheep were wandering around. The RSF was positioned in the main market*". The woman did not find her son.

[16] OCHA, Humanitarian Access Snapshot, February 2025: Sudan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot (February 2025) | OCHA.

[17] IDPs from Zamzam IDP camp mobilized as a local self-defence group supporting the Joint Forces.

28. By 22 July, approximately 56,000 refugees – all of them survivors of the offensive on Zamzam IDP camp – had arrived in eastern Chad. OHCHR spoke to a large number of former residents of Zamzam IDP camp who had sought refuge in Chad and observed the dramatic effects of trauma, particularly among young men and women. Victims and witnesses consistently expressed deep regret and sorrow over the "fall" [*sukut*] of the camp. A 27-year-old woman, a victim of rape, told OHCHR: "*I will never return to Zamzam even if the war will stop. I feel safer here* [in a refugee camp in eastern Chad]".

VI. Violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law during and after the military offensive on Zamzam IDP camp

A. Attacks affecting civilians and civilian objects

29. OHCHR documented incidents amounting to attacks against civilians and civilian objects as well as indiscriminate attacks throughout the RSF military operation. On 11 April, hundreds of RSF fighters reportedly entered the camp shooting in the air and directly at civilians, looted the market, medical supplies, and fuel, and burned homes and the main market. They conducted house-to-house searches, looking for members of SAF and Joint Forces, as well as their wives and female combatants, during which they summarily executed men, raped women, and told survivors to leave the camp without allowing them to take their belongings. A 27-year-old Zaghawa man, who was displaced from El Fasher to Zamzam IDP camp with his family a year before the offensive, reported that on 11 April, a shell fired by the RSF exploded at Zamzam main market around midday, where he had gathered with other five men. "*I was fortunate to survive serious injuries, after which I lost consciousness,"* he said*. "After my injury, I did not know what had happened; I only woke up in Al-Saudi Hospital, where I learned that four of the five people I was with were killed on the spot by the shell that hit us, while the fifth succumbed to his wounds at the hospital.*"

30. Over the three-day offensive, the RSF and allied armed men repeatedly attacked the camp, its market, and surrounding satellite villages, such as Abu Zeriga, pillaged large amounts of food and livestock, looted shops and homes, and burned numerous houses, in some cases reportedly with people inside. During this time, many people were forced to flee, leaving behind the bodies of relatives they could not bury or carry.

31. The RSF and allied armed men reportedly continued to systematically loot and burn the camp after it was emptied of almost all its residents. In the week following the offensive, large parts were reportedly completely destroyed or severely damaged, including the main market, stores, homes, and the hospital.

32. The brutality of the incursions, the killing of inhabitants, the burning of homes and civilian infrastructure after the withdrawal of the Joint Forces, and RSF's total control of the camp, appear intended to punish IDPs based on ethnic identity or for perceived affiliation or support to the Joint Forces, and to spread terror among the civilian population. IHL prohibits any act of violence whose main purpose is to spread terror among the civilian population. [18]

33. According to the survivors' testimonies, RSF-affiliated fighters involved in the attacks on the camp and on fleeing IDPs were drawn largely from Arab ethnicities. Nevertheless, eyewitnesses of the three-day attack on the camp told OHCHR they saw a number of well-known RSF commanders from the Zaghawa tribe also involved in the offensive.

[18] APII, art. 13 (2), CIHL Rule 2.

B. Killing of civilians including summary executions and mass killing

34. OHCHR has confirmed the killing of at least 1,013 civilians and injuries of hundreds more during the RSF offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, with many reportedly dying inside the camp due to RSF shelling, and drones strikes, crossfire and summary executions. Most of them were killed on 11 and 12 April in and around Zamzam's main market, Saloma village, Jafalo market, and other locations close to the camp, including a school and the mosque area. Among these 1,013 civilians killed, at least 319 persons, including men, women and children, were summarily executed by the RSF and affiliated Arab militia. Many were killed on the road from Zamzam to Tawila; many were also killed in Um Jalbakh village and on the road between Shagra and Tawila.

35. According to credible eyewitness testimonies, the RSF carried out summary executions of IDPs, particularly young men and women, during the attack and during their attempts to flee the camp. Many civilians, most of them men, were reportedly executed in front of their family or other civilians. Testimonies indicated that RSF fighters killed several men when they resisted attempts to rape their wives, sisters, and daughters in front of them. OHCHR received multiple reports, confirmed by witnesses, about the mass killing of IDP men from the Zaghawa tribe perceived to be affiliated with the Joint Forces, including in houses, health facilities, mosques and while hiding in trenches. A surviving community leader stated that he and ten other men were hiding in a room in his house in the camp when two RSF fighters inserted their rifles through small holes in the window and opened fire, killing eight people. Multiple testimonies confirmed that RSF fighters summarily executed civilians who had sought refuge in mosques, including seven elderly men killed in Jafalo mosque. Another 16 people were killed at the Sheikh Farah Quranic school.

36. On 13 April, eyewitnesses reported that RSF fighters, led by a Zaghawa commander from Zamzam IDP camp,[19] intercepted young IDP men from the Zaghawa tribe at a gathering point in Saloma village as they attempted to flee toward Tawila or El Fasher. The RSF reportedly separated the men from women and selected between 10 and 15 young men perceived to be supporters of the Joint Forces, hand cuffed them and ordered them to sit down. According to eyewitnesses, the Zaghawa RSF commander blamed and mocked them for supporting the Joint Forces, and beat them before executing them, with victims buried in a trench previously dug by the Joint Forces. One of the witnesses stated, "*He did that in front of us to mock us and weaken our morale, showing that he stood with the stronger side in this war* [meaning RSF]".

37. Others reported that during their flight from the camp to Saloma on 13 April, they saw a group of RSF fighters chasing a group of 10 unarmed young men fleeing towards Saloma and opened fire on them, killing all on the spot.

38. According to several consistent testimonies, RSF fighters entered the homes of IDPs searching for men. They reportedly invoked the individuals' tribal affiliation or perceived collaboration with the SAF before killing them. The RSF reportedly accused the victims of being "*Falangai*"[20] or "*Jayashi*" [pro-Army]. Several individuals were reportedly killed in the trenches they had dug inside their homes. Many of those killed were Zaghawa men perceived to be relatives of members of the Joint Forces, including leaders who remained in the camp after the Joint Forces and the SAF had withdrawn towards El Fasher.

39. A 32-year-old woman from the Zaghawa tribe reported that on 13 April, RSF fighters entered the house of her 70-year-old uncle and accused him of hiding members of an armed

[19] OHCHR has the individual's name on file.

[20] Derogatory term meaning 'slave'. See OHCHR Report, Human Rights Situation in the Sudan, 1 January – 30 June 2025, para. 67.

movement. They shot and killed him along with his 37-year-old son. Six other men were found dead inside the house.

40. A 38-year-old man from the Zaghawa tribe, who had been displaced to Zamzam when the RSF intensified artillery shelling on El Fasher, witnessed exchange of fire between the RSF and members of the "Zamzam Popular Resistance Forces" on 11 April. Subsequently, the RSF reportedly started entering the houses one by one. They entered his house and shot and killed his 40-year-old cousin. He was hiding, covered by dried grass and RSF fighters did not see him. "*I was hiding in a trench dug inside the house, and I saw the whole scene. They looted all our property,*" he said. He spent the whole day hiding, and as he went out around 8:00 p.m. saw more than 10 dead bodies on the roads around his house, many of whom he recognized.

41. Shooting at civilians whether fleeing hostilities or otherwise amounts to a direct attack against civilians, which is a war crime. The deliberate killing of civilians or persons *hors de combat* constitutes the war crime of murder. These acts also constitute violations of the right to life under IHRL.

C. Sexual and gender-based violence

42. According to OHCHR monitoring, including interviews with victims of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), many women and girls, most of them from the Zaghawa tribe, were subjected to sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, sexual slavery and sexual assault, both during the attack on the camp and along the exit routes. Sexual violence appears to have been deliberately used to inflict terror among the community. The acts were often accompanied by further forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, such as flogging, to further humiliate the victims. Most incidents occurred along routes between Zamzam IDP camp and Tawila as victims fled the RSF offensive. Areas controlled by the RSF or allied Arab militia were reported to be particularly dangerous and increased the risk of sexual violence against women and girls. The majority of these incidents were attributed to men in RSF uniform and armed men affiliated with the RSF.

43. Between 11 April to 20 May, OHCHR documented 66 incidents of CRSV, including gang rape, involving at least 104 victims (75 women, 26 girls and 3 boys). OHCHR believes that these figures do not represent the true magnitude of sexual violence and incidents remain vastly underreported due to stigma of victims and family, security situation, disruptions to internet and telecommunications networks, fear of retaliation, lack of services, and mistrust and non-functioning of justice system, among others. Infliction of sexual violence, including rape, is prohibited under IHL, may amount to torture, and constitutes a war crime. [21]

44. In a case referred to OHCHR, a 27-year-old Zaghawa woman displaced from El Fasher to Zamzam IDP camp a few months before the offensive on the camp, told OHCHR that RSF fighters had shot dead her husband in front of her, three female siblings and her underage daughter. An RSF fighter then kicked out the family and raped her inside her house while the body of her husband was still on the floor. "*They selected me because I was the youngest women*" she said. "*Before committing his act, he started touching me and told me: "You are a wife of a "Jayashi" [meaning SAF affiliated man], lay down*!" She added: "*When I resisted, he flogged me with his whip and said, "Lay down or I'll shoot you dead." Then he didn't say any further words. He raped me and then left with another fighter who was meanwhile waiting for him outside the raquba (hut).*"

45. A 21-year-old survivor of gang rape reported to OHCHR that on 12 April, women in the camp learned that a large number of RSF fighters had entered on 11 and 12 April intending to abduct girls, and several women were abducted. Fearing abduction, she fled with two friends to

[21] CIHL Rules 93, 156; Rome Statute, art. 8 2(e)(vi).

Saloma village but was later abducted near Shagra by two uniformed RSF fighters, who raped her.

46. OHCHR interviewed a 37-year-old woman from the Zaghawa tribe, a victim of gang rape, who reported that in the early morning of 13 April, she left the camp with her children, but one of her children went missing before leaving the camp. After she took her family members to Al Wadi, a safe area outside Zamzam IDP camp, she returned to the camp to look for her missing child who she did not find. On the way, she met with four women also returning to Zamzam IDP camp to look for missing relatives. Before entering the camp, they encountered ten RSF fighters riding in a four-wheel drive vehicle. She was taken by three fighters. When she resisted them, they beat her with a gun butt, lashed and tied her hands with a rope and gang raped her on the spot. After the incident, the victims were not able to move from the area and spent the night there. On the following day, they were helped by their relatives, who had come to look for them and carried the woman on a donkey cart heading to Tawila. On the route, before reaching Shagra, armed men they believed to be RSF fighters stole the donkey. The woman recounted, "*I was unable to walk, and the convoy left me behind. I stood alone for hours in fear that the RSF would appear and take me again, until another convoy of IDPs fleeing to Tawila took me with them*."

47. A 24-year-old Zaghawa woman recounted that in the early morning of 13 April, she was raped by an RSF fighter at gunpoint near Um Jalbakh village, adding that she witnessed the raped of a 17-year-old girl by the RSF in the same area.

48. A 33-year-old Zaghawa woman reported that RSF fighters abducted and three other women on a road near Garni village, located west of El Fasher, while they were fleeing from Zamzam IDP camp to Tawila on 12 April. The RSF took them back to Zamzam IDP camp, where she was held for three days during which she was gang raped. "*I believe that all women in the house were gang raped, like me. I'm not the only one*," she said. She informed OHCHR that, upon her arrival at a camp in Chad, she met 17 other women who were also subjected to the same practice. "*They were brought back to Zamzam by the RSF while they were on their road to Tawila; based on the description of the house where they were detained, they must have been kept and raped in the same house I was kept in*". Upon her arrival in Chad, she discovered that she was pregnant. "*I don't want this baby, I don't know the father of this baby, and this pregnancy will destroy my career*," she told OHCHR.

49. Along exit routes, RSF fighters also reportedly beat women and conducted unjustified invasive body searches, including removing their clothes and touching their intimate parts. OHCHR spoke to three women who were victims of such forcible and degrading body searches. The RSF approached them while on their way from Zamzam IDP camp to Tawila, stole all their belongings, conducted body searches, and cut off their clothes during the search. The women had to continue walking with the rest of the people with clothes in shreds that hardly covered their bodies. "*We were humiliated. Our men were silent. If anyone of them dared to say a word, they would kill him*". Another 27-year-old women narrated her experiences and expressed her frustration with the practice of humiliating body searches of women by the RSF on the exit routes out of Zamzam IDP camp, stating that dying in El Fasher would be better than being subjected to such humiliating RSF body searches.

50. OHCHR also gathered credible information and testimonies about RSF efforts to target alleged wives of a Joint Forces leaders or well-known fighters, who they referred to as "*Nissaa Al Quiadat*" (women of the commanders), for sexual violence. According to several testimonies, RSF fighters explicitly asked women if they were wives of specific leaders or combatants. Almost all of the wives of Joint Forces commanders were reportedly evacuated to El Fasher prior to the RSF offensive. Those remaining were in hiding and fled the camp with other civilians after the offensive.

D. Detention and disappearances

51. OHCHR interviewed several eyewitnesses and family members of disappeared persons. Their accounts are consistent with various reports received from sources on the ground. Most of the cases of disappearance reportedly occurred along the road from Zamzam IDP camp to Tawila. Consistent testimonies revealed a pattern of the systematic practice of detention at RSF checkpoints, raising serious concerns of the arbitrary nature of such deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearances, and transfer to unknown places of young Zaghawa men by RSF fighters. According to eyewitnesses, those detained were often accused of being affiliated with or collaborating with the Joint Forces based on their ethnicity. OHCHR monitoring also revealed a pattern of abductions and interceptions of young Zaghawa IDP women and girls by RSF fighters or allied armed men in vehicles or on camels. The fate and whereabouts of several dozens of young Zaghawa men and women remain unknown.

52. OHCHR spoke to a 25-year-old woman from the Zaghawa tribe who was abducted on the road to Tawila. She was held for one month by a RSF commander during which she was raped by the commander at night and by another RSF man who was guarding her during the day. "*I was not the only one there, there was another woman. We were two*," she said. The other woman reportedly died in the tent of another RSF commander. "*I heard her scream one night and a few days later the man detaining me told me that the other woman had died*".

53. OHCHR spoke to a 24-year-old woman from Zaghawa tribe who was abducted and raped by RSF fighters while fleeing from Zamzam to Tawila. "*After the fall of Zamzam IDP camp on 12 April, I heard that a large number of RSF fighters had entered the camp, abducted girls and raped them. My family advised me to flee the camp to avoid rape*". She left the camp for Tawila with two friends. "*I realised that RSF fighters were everywhere on the road to Tawila and that I wouldn't be exempted from rape*". When they reached Um Jalbakh village a group of RSF fighters took the woman and her two friends to a "*raquba*" (a hut), stole their mobile phones and money, beat them with gun butts and raped them. The three victims were able to reach the road to Tawila and joined a convoy of civilians on the move.

E. Attacks on hospitals and health facilities, medical personnel and humanitarian relief personnel

54. Multiple witnesses recounted that on 13 April, the RSF attacked the Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) in Zamzam IDP camp, which was the last medical service provider remaining in the camp, and shot and killed nine medical staff of an international humanitarian NGO, and an ambulance driver. RSF fighters reportedly entered the PHCC, searched for the health workers, including the doctor, and accused them of providing medical assistance to wounded SAF and Joint Forces members before shooting them.

55. The RSF and its affiliated militias have frequently attacked relief workers and attacked, destroyed and looted relief supplies, including medical supplies, during their incursion into the camp.

56. Medical personnel, hospitals and health facilities enjoy specific protection under IHL. Medical facilities can lose their protection in extremely limited circumstances: (1) if they are used to commit, outside their humanitarian function, acts harmful to the enemy and (2) a warning has been issued with a reasonable time limit, for the harmful act to cease. If the warning remains unheeded, sufficient time must be given to ensure the safe evacuation of civilians and medical personnel. Even when a hospital has lost its specific protection, the parties to the conflict must respect the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Intentionally directing

attacks against hospitals and places treating the sick and wounded, provided they have not become lawful military objectives, is a war crime.[22]

F. Attacks on civilian objects and infrastructure, including water sources and markets

57. Since early December 2024, recurrent attacks by the RSF on the Zamzam IDP camp involving heavy artillery and drone strikes had severely affected the camp's main market. The market had been shelled at least seven times before the three-day offensive in April 2025. These attacks, alongside the blockade imposed by the RSF, had further deprived the civilian population of access to food and other essential goods.

58. According to eyewitnesses, during the offensive on Zamzam IDP camp, the RSF appeared to be deliberately destroying a number of water sources inside the camp, either through shelling the main reservoir in the camp or through stealing the available fuel to operate wells, rendering them useless. Most of the water sources in the camp were wells that operated with fuel and because of lack of thereof due to the siege, many of them were already out of service.

59. During the offensive, the market again came under attack, and grain grinding machines were destroyed. Analysis of satellite imagery from 16 April revealed the extent of damage to civilian infrastructure, showing that up to 1.7km2 of Zamzam IDP camp, including its main market, had been destroyed.[23]

G. Attacks on and ill-treatment of civilians during their flight from Zamzam IDP camp

60. From 7 April, many of the inhabitants of Zamzam IDP camp had heeded calls made by groups allied with the Ta'sis Coalition[24] to evacuate the camp towards Tawila, which was promised to be a humanitarian hub to receive and accommodate IDPs as well as to serve as transit point to other safe locations. However, the call for evacuation did not provide clear indications of suggested "safe routes" to Tawila, nor information about the responsibility to protect civilians along these exit routes. According to information received by OHCHR, IDPs were confused about the roads to take to Tawila or were forced to take the closest road, despite risks of being attacked. "*The terror that we witnessed during 11 and 12 April pushed us to just run and flee the camp by the closest exit route. Family members were separated as everyone ran to flee death*," said an 18-year-old woman who was separated from her family on the road to Saloma village.

61. The main exit routes taken by those interviewed by OHCHR included:

Zamzam IDP camp→ Shagra →Tawila →Tina-Sudan→ Tina, Chad

Zamzam IDP camp →El Fasher →Shagra → Tawila →Tina-Sudan→ Tina, Chad

Zamzam IDP camp → Tawila → Nertiti → Saraf Omra → Khor Ramla → Zalingei → El Geneina→ Adre, Chad

When the inhabitants of Zamzam IDP camp realized that the camp would fall under the control of the RSF, they scattered towards different destinations. The choice of exit route depended on the timing of the move, the proximity of the exit point, and the safety of the route based on the

[22] CIHL Rule 156; Rome Statute, Art. 8 e (iv).

[23] Protected Civilian Infrastructure in El-Fasher Shelled as Zamzam Burns, 15 May 2025, Yale, School of Public Health.

[24] Coalition formed by RSF, SPLM-North (Al Hilu) and allied groups on 23 February 2025. See also OHCHR Report, Human Rights Situation in the Sudan, 1 January – 30 June 2025, para. 16.

IDPs' own assessment. Those who fled also reported that ethnic identity also influenced their route and destination. IDPs fled to locations and areas generally inhabited by members of their own ethnic group; for instance, the Zaghawa passed through Tawila, reached Tina and entered Chad where they stayed in the homeland of the Chadian Zaghawa tribe, while the Fur went and stayed in Jebel Marra, the Tunjur fled to Kafot area and the Berti went to Mellit.

62. Testimonies indicated that by 17 April, inhabitants had mostly left the camp leaving behind between 300 to 400 people among them women, persons with disabilities, older persons and sick. IDPs recounted to OHCHR that when the Joint Forces withdrew from the camp on the night of 11 April, many young men affiliated with the "Zamzam Popular Resistance Forces", laid down their arms and fled the camp alongside other IDPs. According to consistent testimonies, by end of April, the camp had been mostly emptied, with displaced people arriving to four main destinations in Sudan: El Fasher, Tawila, Tina and Mellit. As of 22 July, at least 56,000 former Zamzam IDP camp inhabitants had crossed the border at Tina to eastern Chad.

63. According to testimonies of survivors, the road between Shagra and Tawila was dangerous, particularly when crossing Um Jalbakh village. It was under RSF control, with eyewitnesses reporting at least twenty checkpoints and the presence of armed Arab men in civilian clothes riding on camels or motorbikes, reportedly affiliated with the RSF. IDPs were subjected to widespread looting, including of domestic animals used to carry personal belongings and assist children, the sick and older persons. As a result, many could not afford onward transportation from Tawila to Tina. Testimonies also indicated that on some occasions, RSF fighters provided water and transportation to older persons and sick people along routes between El Fasher, Zamzam and Tawila.

64. While they were fleeing, IDPs were also subjected to summary executions, torture and other forms of ill treatment, sexual and gender-based violence including rape, arbitrary detention, abduction and disappearance, amounting to serious violations of IHL and gross abuses of IHRL. Most of these incidents occurred on the route from Zamzam to Tawila or El Fasher to Tawila, particularly at RSF checkpoints, or in the context of attacks by Arab militia allied with RSF, particularly in Um Jalbakh village. These attacks on IDPs were reportedly carried out by RSF fighters in uniform and allied armed men riding on camels, horses, or motorbikes.

65. According to consistent testimonies, dozens of dead bodies, including of women and children under five years of age were seen scattered along exit routes from 11 to 13 April. Some of them did not show any signs of gun wounds, suggesting that they likely died due to lack of water, food or adequate health care.

66. A 24-year-old Zaghawa woman who survived the offensive recounted her terrifying journey to exit Zamzam IDP camp to Tawila: "*On the night of 11 April, we* [she, her mother, her 25-year-old brother and her sister] *decided to head to Um Jamina village. On the way, a group of armed people in a military car intercepted us, beat my sister and asked us to return to Zamzam. But we continued to Um Jamina village. On 12 April morning, we decided to head to Tawila via Shagra village. On the road from Shagra to Tawila, we ran out of water, my mother was very thirsty, and she couldn't walk. I looked around and saw a camel herder, he was from an Arab tribe and armed. I went to him and begged for water, but he jumped on me and tried to rape me. I screamed and my brother ran to my rescue, but the man shot him dead. The man then beat me, ripped off my clothes and tried to rape me, but I resisted him. We then continued walking. We saw a dead body of a pregnant woman and young girl in the route. Between Shagra and Tawila, my mother collapsed and couldn't walk further; upon her request, we left her and continued to Tawila. We later managed to rescue my mother."* She also mentioned that on the way, RSF fighters told them: *"Go to Tawila, but we will come and attack it as we did in Zamzam."*

67. On 12 April, a 45-year-old Zaghawa woman who had earlier been displaced from El Fasher to Zamzam IDP camp fled to Tawila during the RSF offensive. She later returned to Zamzam to pick up her son whom she had left with his grandmother in the camp. As she recounted to OHCHR, on the road near Hilat Kenein, she observed dozens of bodies lying along

the route. She obtained permission from the RSF to enter the camp, where she saw dozens of decomposing bodies near Masanee Al Tmbak, the local tobacco factory, and observed RSF fighters storing weapons inside the camp. On the way back to Tawila, RSF fighters stopped and interrogated them, and stole their money and mobile phones.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

68. The RSF's offensive in and around Zamzam IDP camp had a devastating impact on the human rights of its residents, causing widespread loss of life and injuries, including long-term psychological harm amongst survivors, and broad destruction of essential civilian infrastructure. The documented patterns of IHL violations and IHRL abuses suggest that many of these acts were ethnically motivated, targeting individuals based on their tribal identity or perceived affiliation.

69. Prior to, during, and after the military offensive on the Zamzam IDP camp, the RSF committed numerous serious violations of IHL and gross abuses of IHRL, both inside the camp and along exit routes.

70. The RSF directed attacks against civilians, including those fleeing hostilities, and targeted civilian objects, including health facilities. OHCHR documented the deliberate killings of civilians and other protected persons, including doctors and other health workers. Such acts amount to war crimes and, if committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population pursuant to an organizational policy, may constitute crimes against humanity. Further investigations are required to establish the extent of crimes committed under international law, and individual criminal responsibility.

71. The incidents and testimonies documented by OHCHR highlight and confirm a consistent pattern of serious violations of IHL and gross abuses of IHRL, including attacks on civilians and summary executions, use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as a weapon of war, abductions and likely enforced disappearances, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, looting and theft, forced displacement and denial of safe passage, and deprivation of access to essential supplies, including food, water and medical assistance. Attacks were frequently directed based on the ethnicity or perceived affiliation of victims. Such patterns of violations have been monitored by OHCHR since the start of the conflict in the Sudan and were documented during the capture of El Geneina and Ardamata in West Darfur in 2023.[25] Similar patterns of violations were again documented during and following the capture by the RSF of El Fasher in late October 2025.

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

73. In this context, it is critical to redouble efforts to bring the conflict to an end, to uphold IHL and IHRL, protect civilians, and ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches all those in need without distinction. To this end, OHCHR urges authorities to continue cooperation on the protection and promotion of human rights, and to pursue effective investigations with a view to ensuring accountability.

[25] See OHCHR Under siege: the situation of human rights in El Fasher, North Darfur since May 2024; OHCHR Findings of the monitoring mission by OHCHR Sudan to the Chadian border with Sudan from 18 February - 3 March 2024, in the context of the hostilities between SAF and RSF in West Darfur; OHCHR Findings of the monitoring mission by OHCHR Sudan to the Chadian border with Sudan from 17 June until 1 July 2023, in the context of the armed hostilities between SAF and RSF.

OHCHR calls upon the parties to the conflict to:

(a) Respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law during the conduct of hostilities, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian objects and comply with international human rights law.

(b) Ensure that all persons acting under their instructions, direction or control abide by obligations and commitments under international humanitarian and human rights law.

(c) Avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas and take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects under their control from the effects of attacks, including evacuating civilians to safer areas.

(d) Immediately end all practices that amount to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

(e) Prevent commission of, and 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.

OHCHR calls additionally upon the RSF to:

(a) Refrain from directing attacks against civilians and persons *hors de combat* and take concrete steps to end and prevent ethnically motivated violence and reprisal attacks against civilians.

(b) Put an immediate end to practices of directing attacks against and deliberate killing of civilians, arbitrary detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment against civilians.

(c) Cease immediately any form of sexual and gender-based violence and put in place effective preventive measures covering all individuals and groups acting under their forces' instructions, direction or control.

(d) Immediately stop any practices that may amount to the starvation of civilians, including attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and the imposition of a blockade, denying civilians in need access to essential goods, including food and medical supplies.

(e) Allow and facilitate unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need.

(f) Ensure the respect and protection of health facilities, medical and humanitarian personnel and immediately end directing attacks against them.

OHCHR calls upon all States to:

(a) To act urgently to prevent the commission of serious violations of international law, including crimes under international law, by the parties to the conflict and to intensify pressure over the parties to the conflict to end the violence.

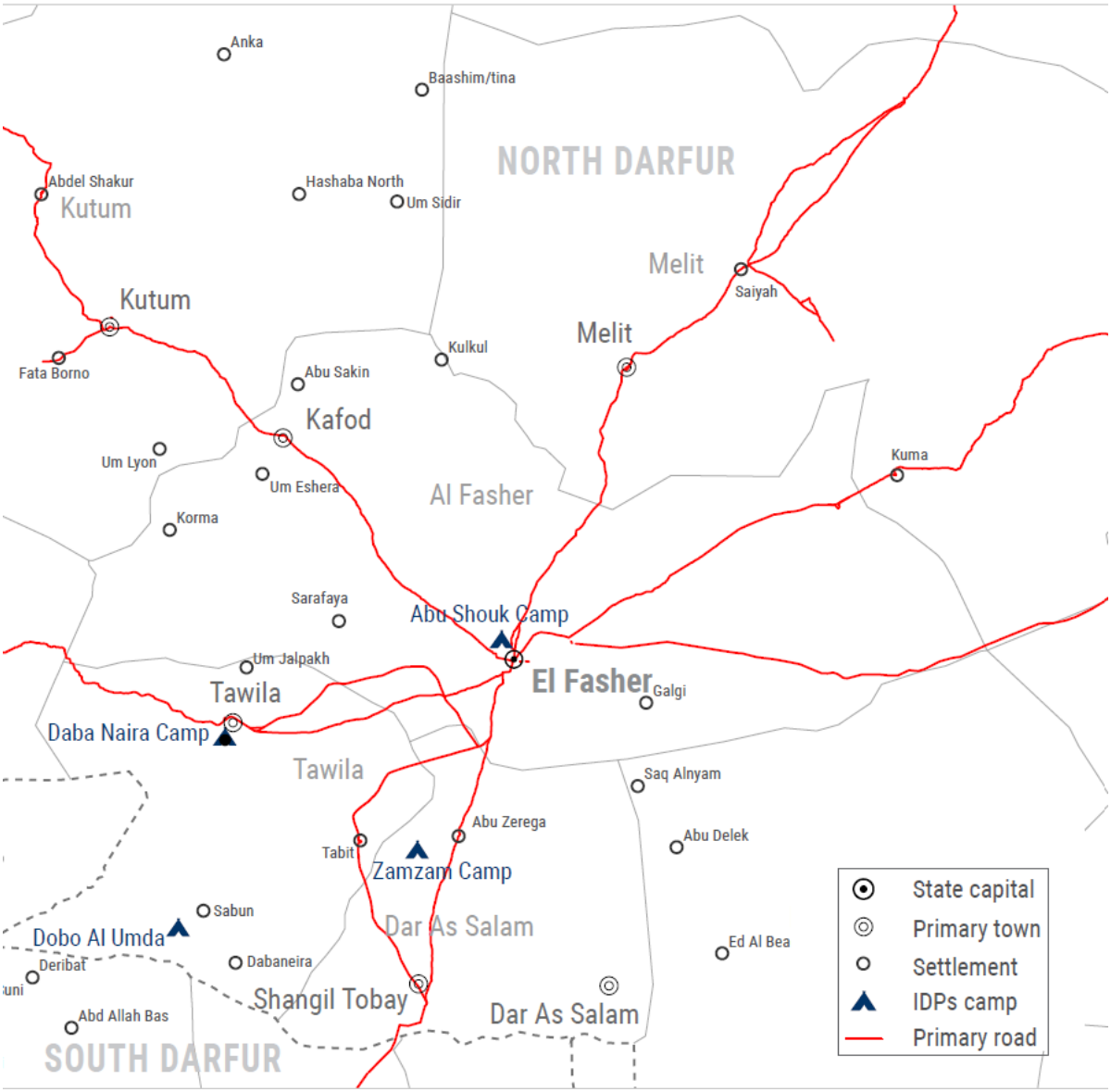
(b) Support and encourage measures, including through sustained diplomatic efforts, to achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities and support a just and durable resolution of the conflict, with processes of due accountability for the violations and abuses committed.

(c) Take all necessary action to comply fully and ensure compliance with the arms embargo measures in Darfur as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1556 (2004), and, more generally, act to end the supply, sale, or transfer of arms or military

material to the parties to the conflict in view of the extent of violations and abuses that are continuing.

(d) Intensify coordinated efforts to guarantee unimpeded humanitarian access in order to provide immediate and life-saving services for all, in particular victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Annex I: Location of Zamzam IDP Camp



Source: OCHA