Forum: **Special Commission of the African Union**
Topic: **Ensuring the Safety of Women and Children in Sudan During Conflicts**
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I. Description of the Issue

Since April of 2023, Sudan has been experiencing a severe humanitarian crisis due to the armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This conflict has resulted in widespread violence against women and children, displacement of women and children, food insecurity, and severe collapses of the infrastructure, including electricity networks and water systems. Millions of civilians have been forced to flee their homes, while many remain trapped in conflict zones. There is only very limited access to healthcare, food and protection to those in need. Children have only very limited access to education. More than 14 million people have been displaced due to the conflict – around 9 million internally within Sudan, and more than 4 million who have fled to neighbouring countries – with many killed or separated from their families. About 34 million people out of Sudan's 53 million inhabitants suffer from the humanitarian crisis. About 70% of hospitals have been destroyed, with rumours about some still-standing hospitals being used as places to smuggle weapons, drones and other things of military value. More than half of Sudan's population is in desperate need of medical care. Diseases spread fast across civilians, due to the lack of food, shelter and safety, that have already caused thousands of deaths.

Women and girls face sexual assault, rape, gender-based violence, forced marriage, and exploitation every day with barely any options to protect themselves or possibilities for international law-enforcement and justice seeking. Help for survivors is only very limited, due to limited access and a lack of protection for care-workers. While there are few free medical care centers, most women do not have the resources and liberty to reach them. Reports indicate that

sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war and also documented widespread violations of women's and children's rights.

Children are vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, manipulation, trafficking, and physical violence. According to both the UN and human rights organisations, both parties to the conflict have recruited child soldiers through detaining large groups of children during military takeovers. Some children are forced to join the military due to extreme poverty, making it their only chance of survival. Not all child soldiers carry weapons but are used as watchmen, cleaners, porters and cooks. About 12% of child soldiers are girls, who are largely subjected to sexual and gender-based violence. Those children have mostly no way out of the military group with no support to turn to. Their childhoods are being stolen and the children exploited for the force's use.

II. Definition of Key Terms

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF): Official military of the Republic of Sudan.

Rapid Support Forces (RSF): Sudanese paramilitary organisation established in 2013 and emerged from the Janjaweed.

Collapse of Infrastructure: The failure of essential physical structures or networks that sustain a society, for example the water or food supply chains, electricity networks or water systems.

Sexual Assault: Unwanted sexual contact, behavior or act that occurs without a person's explicit, freely given consent. This behaviour includes rape, unwanted touch, forced acts, and non-physical acts.

Gender-Based Violence: A harmful act against a person that is based on their gender.

Trafficking: The recruitment or receipt of people through force or fraud, with the goal mostly being exploitation.

Paramilitary: An unofficial force organised similarly to a military force.

Exploitation: Treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work or resources.

Forced Marriage: A marriage in which one or both individuals do not give their fully free consent. Victims are often forced into the marriage through pressure or abuse.

Recruitment of Children by Armed Groups: The incorporation of individuals under 18 into armed groups, often through force, which constitutes a war crime. Some join willingly in order to escape extreme poverty and generate income.

III. Background information

Before the war broke out in 2023, Sudan had experienced decades of political instability, armed conflict and military rule. This has made Sudan one of the most fragile countries in the region.

Previous conflicts, especially in the Darfur region, have left deep divisions between armed groups and contributed to their rise. In 2003 a government-backed group known as the Janjaweed fought against rebel groups in Sudan. During this conflict widespread human rights violations, including killings, sexual violence and mass displacement, were reported.

In 2013 the Janjaweed was reorganised into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a very powerful paramilitary force, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. Although the RSF officially operated under the Sudanese government, it remained largely independent from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Sudan's official military.

In 2019 the long-time president Omar al-Bashir was removed from power, following nationwide protests demanding democratic reforms. A transitional government composed of civilians and military leaders was established to bring Sudan towards democracy. However, tensions between the SAF and the RSF continued to grow. In October of 2021 the SAF and the RSF carried out a military coup that removed the civilian-led government and destabilized the country further.

Disagreements between the SAF and the RSF later emerged about the future structure of Sudan's security forces, particularly over the pace at which the RSF was to be integrated into the official military. This dispute escalated into a civil war in April of 2023, as both parties sought control over Sudan's territory and citizens.

IV. Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Sudan: Country in which the SAF and the RSF fight for power. Both parties to the conflict currently control and govern part of the country. The Republic of Sudan has no current single, official government.

SAF: The official Sudanese military, which controls much of eastern and central Sudan, including Khartoum. It is viewed as the official state authority by the UN.

RSF: A powerful paramilitary group, which controls the majority of Darfur in western Sudan.

African Union: The African Union has initiated various interventions guided by the African Union Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns in Africa for the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of Sudan. The African Union called on all key actors and neighbouring states of Sudan to call for a cessation of hostilities, which later developed into an Expanded Mechanism intended to coordinate all efforts in Sudan.

United Arab Emirates (UAE): Widely reported to support the RSF, allegedly due to concerns about the threat of Islamist groups that underpin the SAF. The UAE is accused of providing military and financial support, and it is difficult to overlook the UAE's economic and geopolitical interests in Sudan, as the UAE has been the major buyer of Sudan's gold. The UAE has also built a hospital in Amdjarass, Chad, near the Sudanese border, where Sudanese refugees can receive free

medical care; this facility has been the subject of reports alleging it is also used as a transit point for smuggling military supplies to the RSF. The UAE denies all such allegations.

Saudi Arabia: Has been involved in diplomatic mediation efforts, including hosting the Jeddah talks, and has provided economic support connected to the SAF-aligned government.

Egypt: Egypt provides the SAF with military support and weapons in order to maintain an official, internationally recognised government. Egypt has been accused of intervening in the war by the RSF.

Iran: Iran has allegedly provided the SAF with drones, which have helped to shift the balance of power against the RSF.

UN Fact-Finding Mission: The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, established by the UN Human Rights Council, investigates and establishes the facts of alleged human rights violations, sexual assaults, and violations of international humanitarian law. In February 2026, it reported that RSF violence in and around El-Fasher showed "hallmarks of genocide"; in July 2026 it concluded that this campaign amounted to genocide.

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: Investigates, alongside the UN Fact-Finding Mission, human rights violations and promotes accountability.

Neighbouring Countries: Countries such as Chad, Egypt, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic are hosting people who had to flee their homes and the war in refugee camps.

V. Timeline of Events

2003–2005:

- Darfur Conflict: the Sudanese government relied on Arab militias called the Janjaweed to fight rebel groups in Darfur.
- These militias were accused of mass killings and other serious human rights abuses.

2013:

- The Janjaweed were reorganised into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).
- They became the country's strongest armed group while remaining separate from the country's military.

2019:

- The long-time ruler of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, was overthrown after long, nationwide protests.
- A transitional government was planned to lead Sudan towards democracy.

2021:

- The SAF and the RSF worked together to overthrow the civilian-led transitional government.

2022–2023:

- Disagreement between the SAF and the RSF about how fast the RSF should be merged into the national army.
- Both forces moved their troops strategically around the capital, increasing tensions between them.

15 April 2023:

- Fighting broke out in Khartoum and quickly spread across Sudan.
- Battles of all kinds erupted almost immediately.
- Thousands of civilians became trapped between fighting areas.

Late 2023:

- The RSF captured the majority of Khartoum and gained much control over Darfur.
- Millions of civilians fled their homes.
- Reports of massacres and ethnic violence increased, especially against the Masalit community in West Darfur.

2024:

- No decisive victory for the SAF or the RSF.
- Fighting spread into more regions of the country.
- The humanitarian crisis, with widespread hunger, displacement and need for medical care, increased heavily.

2025:

- The SAF regained control over much of Khartoum by March.
- The RSF remained strong in most of Darfur, capturing El-Fasher in October.
- Territorial division in Sudan increased heavily between the SAF and the RSF.

2026:

- Ongoing war with no nationwide ceasefire.
- The SAF controls mostly central and eastern Sudan while the RSF controls most of Darfur, with fighting intensifying in Kordofan.
- Death toll estimates vary widely, ranging from tens of thousands to as many as 150,000; more than 9 million people remain internally displaced and a further 4 million have fled abroad, while about 33.7 million people need humanitarian aid.

- In February 2026, a UN fact-finding mission identified “hallmarks of genocide” in RSF-controlled territory around El-Fasher; in July 2026 it concluded that the RSF's campaign there amounted to genocide.

VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The Human Rights Council, on 11 October 2023, decided to establish an independent international fact-finding mission for Sudan to investigate and establish the facts, circumstances and root causes of all alleged human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. The Council extended the Fact-Finding Mission's mandate for one year in October 2024 and for an additional year in October 2025.

On 11 May 2023, the SAF and the RSF signed the Jeddah Declaration, an agreement on a short-term ceasefire and humanitarian arrangements. This agreement was broken only a day later.

On 20 May 2023, another ceasefire agreement was signed. It was supposed to last for seven days with a possible extension if both parties agreed. A further agreement was reached later, but it was violated completely, with reports of killings and mistreatment of civilians. The SAF eventually suspended their participation in the agreement.

On 8 March 2024, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2724, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Sudan, particularly during the month of Ramadan. A few days later, the SAF agreed to indirect negotiations with the RSF, facilitated by international mediators. However, the talks broke down on 11 March after a top SAF general rejected the proposal for a ceasefire unless RSF forces withdrew from civilian sites.

The Security Council has repeatedly called for an immediate ceasefire and peace negotiations over the past several years.

In early March 2025, the Sudanese government filed a case at the International Court of Justice, accusing the UAE of complicity in genocide due to its alleged support for the RSF. In May 2025, the ICJ dismissed the case, finding that it manifestly lacked jurisdiction because the UAE had entered a reservation excluding the Court's jurisdiction under the Genocide Convention.

VII. Possible Solutions

There are many possible solutions that could help solve the issue at hand; here are a few to consider:

Strengthening humanitarian access throughout Sudan. The African Union could work alongside the United Nations and humanitarian organisations to negotiate humanitarian corridors that allow aid workers to safely deliver food, water and medical supplies to civilians. All parties to the conflict should protect those workers by guaranteeing safe passage.

Improving the protection of women and girls from sexual assault, sexual violence and gender-based violence. The African Union could establish safe shelters, psychological support and medical care for victims. Governments and international organisations could strengthen reporting mechanisms and ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence face justice.

Armed groups should immediately end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and establish a ceasefire around facilities housing children.

The African Union and the United Nations should continue to encourage dialogue between all parties to the conflict and should act as supervisors of negotiations. Neighbouring states, the African Union and the UN should push for political negotiations and agreements on sustainable peace.

Promoting accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Independent investigations should document crimes against women and children, including sexual assault, gender-based violence and attacks on civilians. Supporting national and international justice mechanisms would help to discourage future violations and give victims an opportunity for justice.

VIII. Questions Delegates Should Consider during Research

- How can the African Union improve civilian protection in active conflict zones?
- What measures could prevent women and girls from experiencing sexual violence?
- How can humanitarian organisations safely reach vulnerable populations?
- What role could neighbouring countries play in protecting refugees, providing life-saving resources for civilians and encouraging political dialogue between the SAF and the RSF?
- How can child recruitment by armed groups be prevented?
- What peace support mechanisms and organisations could be established, including by the African Union, to supervise peace negotiations and humanitarian conditions?
- How can perpetrators of crimes against women and children be held accountable?
- Who can monitor, encourage and help in peace negotiations between the SAF and the RSF?
- What resources will be necessary for Sudan's post-conflict recovery?

IX. Relevant UN Treaties and Events

https://digitallibrary.un.org/nanna/record/4090565/files/A_HRC_RES_60_3-EN.pdf?withWatermark=0&withMetadata=0&registerDownload=1&version=1

https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-sudan/index

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X. Useful Links

https://www.amnesty.org/en/projects/sudan-conflict/

https://www.unrefugees.org/news/sudan-crisis-explained/

https://ejournals.bib.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/sws/article/view/260/430

https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-sudan-what-happening-and-how-help

XI. Sources

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https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20250211/sudan-war-calls-our-relentless-collective-action-high-level-dialogue-sudan

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https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/how-women-and-girls-are-being-targeted-in-the-war-in-sudan

https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/the-recruitment-and-use-of-child-soldiers-in-sudan

https://ss.usembassy.gov/agreement-on-a-short-term-ceasefire-and-humanitarian-arrangements-in-sudan/

https://www.unhcr.org/where-we-work/countries/sudan (for verified displacement figures)

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/9/un-probe-finds-mass-killings-gang-rapes-by-sudans-rsf-amount-to-genocide (for updated genocide finding)