

Over 500 Days of Siege:

Foreign Arms and the Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) Campaign of Sexual and Genocidal Violence in El Fasher, Sudan



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Acknowledgements

This report was produced by Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), including staff based in the region and Geneva, and documents events arising from the armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that erupted on 15 April 2023.

The report benefited from the partnership of the **Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)**, and cooperation of three Sudanese organisations: **The Civilian Network for Justice; Safe Space for Women and Girls**; and **Juzour for Human Rights**. In an environment marked by heightened insecurity and displacement, they contributed documentation, contextual expertise, corroboration, and review of the factual material. We appreciate deeply their engagement which strengthened the evidentiary foundation of this report.

We further recognise LAW's interpreters and military and munitions experts who approached their work with rigour and care.

Above all, we acknowledge and owe our deepest gratitude to the victims and survivors who chose to share their experiences, including the women who spoke about rape, sexual violence, and the shattering of family units, and the women and men who described killings, detention, humiliation, and hunger. Most shared their experiences while still displaced, still grieving, and still uncertain of what tomorrow would bring, and they did so with extraordinary courage. We recognise that recounting the events described in this report can mean reliving them and remain conscious of the responsibility that accompanies being entrusted with these accounts.

Most of all, this report reflects the insistence of victims and survivors that what happened in El Fasher must be named and confronted by the international community. We hope this work honours their strength and contributes to the accountability they deserve.

About Legal Action Worldwide (LAW)

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) is an independent, non-profit organisation comprised of human rights lawyers and jurists working in fragile and conflict-affected areas in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. LAW works to bring justice to individuals and communities that have experienced grave human rights violations and abuses, with a particular focus on gender equality and gender-based violence.

In order to address the urgent needs of victims and survivors of conflict-related violations and abuses, in particular the women and girls who experienced conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), LAW's Sudan Programme has three overlapping priorities:

- Support victims and survivors to regain control of their experiences through trauma-informed legal information and assistance;
- Empower Sudanese victims and survivors to act as first responders to GBV incidents in the refugee camps in Adre, Chad; and
- Provide access to justice and accountability for conflict-related violations and abuses including CRSV by filing strategic litigation cases.

Contents

2	Acknowledgements
2	About Legal Action Worldwide (LAW)
3	Contents
4	Key Terms
5	Foreword
6	Executive Summary
11	1. Introduction
13	2. Methodology
15	3. Root causes of the April 2023–Present conflict(s)
18	4. Anatomy of the RSF's Siege
21	5. Rape & Other Forms of Sexual and Gender–Based Violence
24	6. Applicable Law
24	6.1 Domestic and Regional Law
29	6.2 International law
30	6.2.1 War crimes
32	6.2.2 Crimes against humanity
34	6.2.3 Genocide
38	7. External Support Enabling RSF Atrocities
38	7.1 Sudan's arms landscape
39	7.2 Foreign arms imports
39	7.3 UAE Material Assistance to the RSF
42	7.4 Ground vehicles likely supplied by the UAE
44	7.5 Other States
45	7.6 Key Findings: The role of foreign arms
48	8. Applicable Law: State Responsibility
51	9. Seeking Accountability
53	10. Recommendations
55	Endnotes

Key Terms

- **Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV):** Refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilisation, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. That link may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator, who is often affiliated with a State or non-State armed group, which includes terrorist entities; the profile of the victim, who is frequently an actual or perceived member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious minority group or targeted on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; or through other existing circumstances, such as a climate of impunity; cross-border consequences such as displacement or trafficking, and/or violations of a ceasefire agreement. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence or exploitation, when committed in situations of conflict.¹
- **Sexual violence:** A perpetrator commits an act of a sexual nature against one or more persons or causes such person or persons to engage in an act of a sexual nature by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, against such person or persons or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or such person's or persons' incapacity to give genuine consent (Definition of sexual violence under article 7(1)(g)-6 of the Rome Statute).
- **Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV):** Violence that is directed at a person on the basis of their gender or sex. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, as well as threats or coercion related to these kinds of harm. SGBV can include, but is not limited to, rape and sexual violence. Non-sexual forms of gender-based violence can include, for example, an attack on a girl's school or an LGBTIQ+ community centre.
- **Survivor/Victim:** LAW uses the terms survivor and victim throughout this report to refer to individuals who have directly experienced or witnessed a violation or abuse. Both terms are used as LAW recognises that not all victims are survivors. Some do not survive the violation or abuse, while others survive but identify as a victim, not a survivor.

⁴ Over 500 Days of Siege: Foreign Arms and the Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) Campaign of Sexual and Genocidal Violence in El Fasher, Sudan

Foreword

I have spent over twenty years working alongside Sudanese women who refuse to be silenced. As the Regional Director of the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), and as a Sudanese woman who has lost family members and her home to this war, I have watched the promises of the international community collapse under the weight of its own inaction.

SIHA's partnership with Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) on this report reflects what Sudanese women have always known: that documentation is resistance, and that naming what is happening in Darfur is the first step toward ensuring it does not go unpunished.

The women and girls whose stories anchor this report did not share their experiences lightly. They spoke through grief, displacement, and the trauma of violations meant to destroy not only their bodies but also their families, communities, and futures. Many spoke while still in danger because they are seeking justice and accountability.

What happened in El Fasher was not sudden. It was the predictable result of decades of impunity, of arming those already known to commit atrocities, and of treating the women of Darfur as invisible. Since the beginning of this war, SIHA has documented over 1,294 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) against women and girls, perpetrated primarily by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and their allies. These numbers repre-

sent only what we could reach. The true scale remains hidden behind communications blackouts, restricted access, and the silencing of those who dare to speak.

The RSF and affiliated militias did not simply occupy El Fasher. They weaponised hunger, ethnicity, and the bodies of women to pursue the destruction of entire communities. This was the strategy. And it was enabled by foreign arms that flowed into Darfur while the world watched.

This report provides the evidence. It names the crimes – war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. It traces the weapons. It identifies those who supplied them. Now it falls to the international community to act on what is documented here, not with more statements of concern, but with the accountability that survivors have demanded from the beginning.

Sudanese women have always been at the frontlines, as first responders, documenters, and leaders of their communities' resistance. Their agency is the foundation of any just future for Sudan.

The future of Sudan must be written by its own people. But the international community must ensure that those who armed and enabled this catastrophe are held to account, and that the women and girls of Darfur are never again abandoned.

Hala Al Karib

*Regional Director, Strategic Initiative for Women
in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) Network*

Executive Summary

Between late April 2024 and October 2025, for over 500 days, women, men, and children in El Fasher were held in a harrowing siege that turned a city into a killing ground.² This report documents how the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and affiliated Arab militias³ used foreign supplied weapons to encircle, starve, terrorise, and ultimately pursue the destruction of the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur ethnic groups⁴ in El Fasher. It specifically lays bare how rape, multiple-perpetrator (“gang”) rape, and sexualised enslavement formed a defining feature of the RSF’s campaign, including its design and execution, which was enabled throughout by a steady flow of external arms and logistical support.

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW)⁵ documented a pattern of CRSV⁶ in El Fasher as deliberate as it was devastating. As the city fell in October 2025, survivors described RSF and affiliated fighters breaking into homes, pulling women and girls from hiding places, separating men and boys from their families, and perpetrating rape in front of children and spouses to destroy the bonds that held non-Arab communities together. All documented cases occurred as women and girls attempted to flee El Fasher through areas in and around the city, including to the Al-Amal Gate, Gerni, Tura, Shagra, and Hela Al-Sheg areas.⁷

Women and girls were stopped at RSF checkpoints while trying to reach markets, fetch water, or collect firewood, then taken aside and raped or sexually assaulted as punishment for moving without “permission,” or as an instrument of terror. Survivors fleeing El Fasher – primarily toward Tawila (the main refuge and destination for thousands), as well as along routes to Korma town east of El Fasher, along the El Fasher-Kutum axis; Shagra village to the southwest; and Mellit and Kutum towns to the north and northeast – described being assaulted, raped, gangraped, abducted, or witnessing killings on the very paths they hoped would lead to safety.⁸ This included incidents both near checkpoints and in the villages en

route. Women who were pregnant were disproportionately affected, including through assaults that resulted in miscarriages, exposing them to long-term reproductive harm.⁹

At the same time, the brutality of the siege meant that RSF units had progressively tightened and severed the routes into El Fasher, blocked humanitarian aid convoys, and attacked the few clinics and pharmacies that continued to serve the encircled population.¹⁰

Throughout the capture of El Fasher in late October 2025, RSF members and affiliated militia fighters used ethnic and racial slurs and other explicit language about ending non-Arab reproduction and “cleansing” neighbourhoods,¹¹ echoing patterns already seen in West Darfur in 2023 and 2024.¹² Survival turned on ethnicity, gender, and perceived allegiance – in a context shaped by the clear record of earlier atrocities in West Darfur – and in full view of the international community that had been repeatedly warned.

On the basis of the evidence, there are reasonable grounds to believe that RSF and allied militia members committed rape, gang rape, sexualised enslavement, and other forms of CRSV and SGBV during the fall of El Fasher, which formed part of a widespread and systematic attack directed against non-Arab civilian populations. These acts amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and in their ethnicised form, constituted a central component of a genocidal campaign directed at the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur ethnic groups in El Fasher (see Sec VI., below).

Arms identification and analysis carried out by LAW’s military and munitions experts demonstrate that the RSF’s capacity to encircle El Fasher, bombard civilian neighbourhoods, and tighten control over displacement routes was enabled in part by a continuous inflow of foreign origin arms, ammunition, vehicles, and drones.



These shipments aligned with key inflection points in the siege,¹³ including renewed offensives on non-Arab populated areas and repeated strikes on health facilities and water points (see Secs. IV-V., below).¹⁴

There are reasonable grounds to believe that arms and ammunition originating in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and China were routed into Darfur and likely used by RSF units involved in the siege, with the territory of the Republic of Chad and eastern Libya under Haftar-aligned control serving as a critical conduit for fighters and materiel.¹⁵ These transfers took place after years of credible public reporting on RSF atrocities in Darfur, and while United Nations (UN) bodies, humanitarian organisations, and independent experts were already documenting killings, widespread rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV, forced displacement, and attacks against objects indispensable to civilian survival (OIS), accompanied by the RSF's use of dehumanising and ethnicised rhetoric.¹⁶

States that continued to arm or facilitate the movement of materiel into the RSF's hands in this context did so with the knowledge that their support carried a substantial risk of contributing to atrocity crimes, in circumstances where RSF actors' rhetoric towards Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur ethnic groups amounted to externally visible indicators of genocidal violence.¹⁷

The extent and ferocity of the RSF attacks on civilians in El Fasher – many of which were captured and posted online by RSF members themselves¹⁸ – and the unmistakable ethnic pattern of the violence, are an indictment of a system that allowed a paramilitary force with a documented record of atrocities to continuously be rearmed. Meanwhile, survivors from Darfur and beyond have waited in vain for the promises of past peace agreements and accountability processes to be honoured.

This report is therefore an urgent call to action and accountability. States that supplied or facilitated arms and logistical support to the RSF, and knew or should have known that there was a substantial risk that such support would contribute to serious violations, must immediately halt all transfers, investigate how these decisions were made, and accept that they have legal and moral responsibilities toward the victims of the crimes that followed.

LAW will continue to collect, preserve, and share evidence for future accountability purposes, and to support survivors who courageously choose to pursue justice. We cannot undo what has been done in El Fasher. We can, however, ensure that the decisions which armed and enabled the RSF are finally named and brought within the reach of law, and that survivors of rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV are central to how this conflict must be understood and confronted.

Recommendations

To the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and affiliated Arab militias:

- Immediately permit full and unimpeded access to El Fasher and surrounding areas, including by enabling humanitarian actors to enter the city and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access;
- Suspend and remove from command all those credibly implicated in rape, sexualised enslavement, other forms of CRSV and SGBV, and starvation-related violations, and immediately facilitate independent investigations;
- Immediately cease attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including killings, rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV, starvation-related tactics, and attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel and facilities; and
- Release all civilians held in confinement, including those in conditions amounting to sexualised enslavement and other forms of sexualised captivity, and guarantee safe passage to locations where they can access medical, psychosocial, and protection services.

To the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and associated security actors:

- Facilitate, and do not obstruct, humanitarian, medical, and protection actors, including those providing specialised services to survivors of CRSV and SGBV; and
- Release all civilians held in confinement and guarantee safe passage to locations where they can access medical, psychosocial, and protection services.

To the Government of Sudan and any successor transitional authority:

- Ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) and take all necessary steps to incorporate its provisions into domestic law, including

those requiring that acts of sexual violence in armed conflict be treated as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide;

- Amend the Criminal Act of 1991 and the Armed Forces Act of 2007 to bring the definitions of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide into conformity with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and customary international law, including by expressly criminalising sexualised enslavement, starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, and other forms of unlawful conduct documented in this report;
- Repeal or substantially amend statutory immunity provisions in the Armed Forces Act of 2007, the Police Act of 2008, and the National Security Act of 2010 that shield officials from prosecution for serious international crimes, in conformity with the principle under customary international law that immunities shall not apply to war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide;
- Remove statutory limitation periods applicable to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide consistent with Sudan's obligations under customary international law and the principle that such crimes are imprescriptible; and
- Cooperate fully with the ICC, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (IFFM), and all other international and regional accountability mechanisms, including by facilitating access, preserving evidence, and refraining from any act that would obstruct or impede investigations into crimes committed in the Darfur region.

To States that supplied or facilitated arms, ammunition, or logistical support used by the RSF, in particular the United Arab Emirates (UAE):

- Immediately suspend all transfers of arms, ammunition, dual-use items, and related logistical support that risk being used by the RSF or affiliated militias to commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide;



- Conduct transparent, independent investigations into transfers to the RSF during the period 15 April 2023 to 29 October 2025, prevent further transit or facilitation of such material through national territory, and cooperate with all accountability mechanisms, including domestic, regional, and international; and
- Review and, where necessary, revise arms export control frameworks to ensure compliance with obligations under international law, including robust risk assessments related to CRSV, SGBV, and starvation-related violations.
- Expand safe pathways (including resettlement and temporary protection) for survivors of crimes in the Darfur region, including survivors of CRSV and SGBV.

To the UN Security Council:

To all other States:

- Strengthen, renew, or expand arms embargo measures applicable to Darfur and the RSF, with dedicated monitoring of arms flows linked to rape, CRSV and SGBV, and starvation-related violations and crimes;
- Impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities credibly implicated in planning, ordering, or enabling atrocities in El Fasher, including those responsible for supplying arms and logistical support;
- Establish, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, a civilian protection mission in Darfur with a mandate to protect civilians at risk of group-targeted violence, deter attacks against displaced populations and essential infrastructure, and monitor and publicly report on cross-border arms flows contributing to on-going hostilities; and
- Clarify and, where necessary, reinforce the ICC's jurisdiction over crimes committed in the current phase of the conflict, including CRSV and SGBV, and starvation-related crimes.
- Adopt and apply a presumption of denial for arms transfers and related support to parties in Sudan where there is a clear risk of serious violations and crimes, including rape, sexualised enslavement, other forms of CRSV and SGBV, and starvation-related violations and crimes;
- Strengthen monitoring and enforcement against illicit arms flows into the Darfur region;
- Exercise criminal jurisdiction, where available, over those suspected of responsibility for atrocity crimes including in El Fasher (North Darfur) and West Darfur;
- Provide political, financial, and technical support to international, regional, and domestic accountability mechanisms;



To the UN Human Rights Council:

- Ensure the renewal, resourcing, and independence of the the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (IFFM), with specific capacity on CRSV and SGBV; and
- Continue to fully integrate gender, CRSV and SGBV, and children's rights into all relevant investigations, monitoring, and reporting on Sudan.

To the International Criminal Court (ICC):

- Prioritise investigations into RSF and allied militia conduct in El Fasher and North and West Darfur, including rape, sexualised enslavement, other forms of CRSV and SGBV, starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, persecution, and genocide against the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations.

To humanitarian, medical, and protection actors, including donors:

- Scale up comprehensive services for survivors of rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV in and around El Fasher and along displacement routes, and fully integrate SGBV risk mitigation into all humanitarian programming;
- Direct sustained support to women human rights defenders and women-led organisations operating on the frontlines, who continue to provide protection, documentation, and survivor support at considerable personal and operational risk; and
- Prioritise funding for survivor-centred documentation and evidence preservation initiatives overall, adhering to international ethical standards, and support survivor-informed reparations.

*Antonia Mulvey, Founder & Executive Director,
Legal Action Worldwide (LAW)*

1. Introduction

For over a year and a half, from late April 2024 to late October 2025, foreign-supplied arms and ammunition to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) supported the systematic killing, rape, and attempted destruction of Darfuri African (non-Arab) civilians trapped inside El Fasher, North Darfur. This report examines the international crimes committed by the RSF and affiliated Arab militias during the more than 500 days of siege of El Fasher, supported in part by these foreign arms.¹⁹

Beginning in late April 2024, the encirclement and subsequent siege of El Fasher created conditions in which survival itself became contingent on ethnicity, gender, and perceived allegiance. Non-Arab civilians were deliberately cut off from food, markets, humanitarian assistance, and medical services, which health workers described having led to harrowing conditions, including using mosquito nets and bed sheets as gauze, medicine expired for years, and attempting to manage acute malnutrition among children without therapeutic supplies.²⁰ LAW documented deliberate attacks on the few remaining clinics and pharmacies.²¹ This deliberate deprivation formed part of a strategy to weaken, fragment, and ultimately destroy or permanently displace Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur communities from El Fasher and its surrounding localities.

El Fasher has long been a heterogeneous city, with sizeable Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur communities. After the RSF entered the city in mid-October 2025, their advance first displaced civilians in the eastern quarters, an area with mixed populations including Zaghawa and Berti communities. The fighting then pushed into the southern districts, where Zaghawa, Fur, and Berti communities were concentrated, before shifting north into predominantly Fur and Berti neighbourhoods, and ultimately west toward areas with significant Zaghawa presence.²² The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for

Human Rights (OHCHR) documented more than 6,000 killings in the first three days of the RSF offensive on El Fasher alone.²³ Additionally, between 200,000 to 300,000 civilians had been displaced by late October.²⁴

Rape and other forms of SGBV played a central role in the RSF's operations, particularly during the final phase of the siege. Survivors from El Fasher described rape, multiple perpetrator rape ("gang rape"), sexualised enslavement, and assaults on pregnant women, carried out in homes, at checkpoints, in detention sites,²⁵ and along displacement routes, leaving no reprieve even for those who attempted to flee.²⁶ These acts became instruments for shattering family units, uprooting communities from their land, and dismantling the social and communal networks that anchored non-Arab life.

Moreover, women and girl survivors consistently described sexual violence characterised by ethnic slurs and threats indicating the intent to eradicate Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur identity and lineage.²⁷ Perpetrators repeatedly made statements signalling a desire to end Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur reproduction and extinguish future generations. Such patterns mirror those previously documented by LAW in West Darfur in 2023 and early 2024 and correspond to recognised indicators of genocidal violence.²⁸

The RSF's siege of El Fasher followed a broader sequence of organised attacks across North and West Darfur in 2023 and early 2024, in which non-Arab civilians were similarly killed, forcibly displaced, subjected to extreme forms of rape and other forms of SGBV, and denied access to food, water, and essential medical care.²⁹ This includes the battle for El Geneina between April and November 2023. Though the RSF was able to capture El Geneina more rapidly than El Fasher,³⁰ the same structural elements of violence and brutality resur-

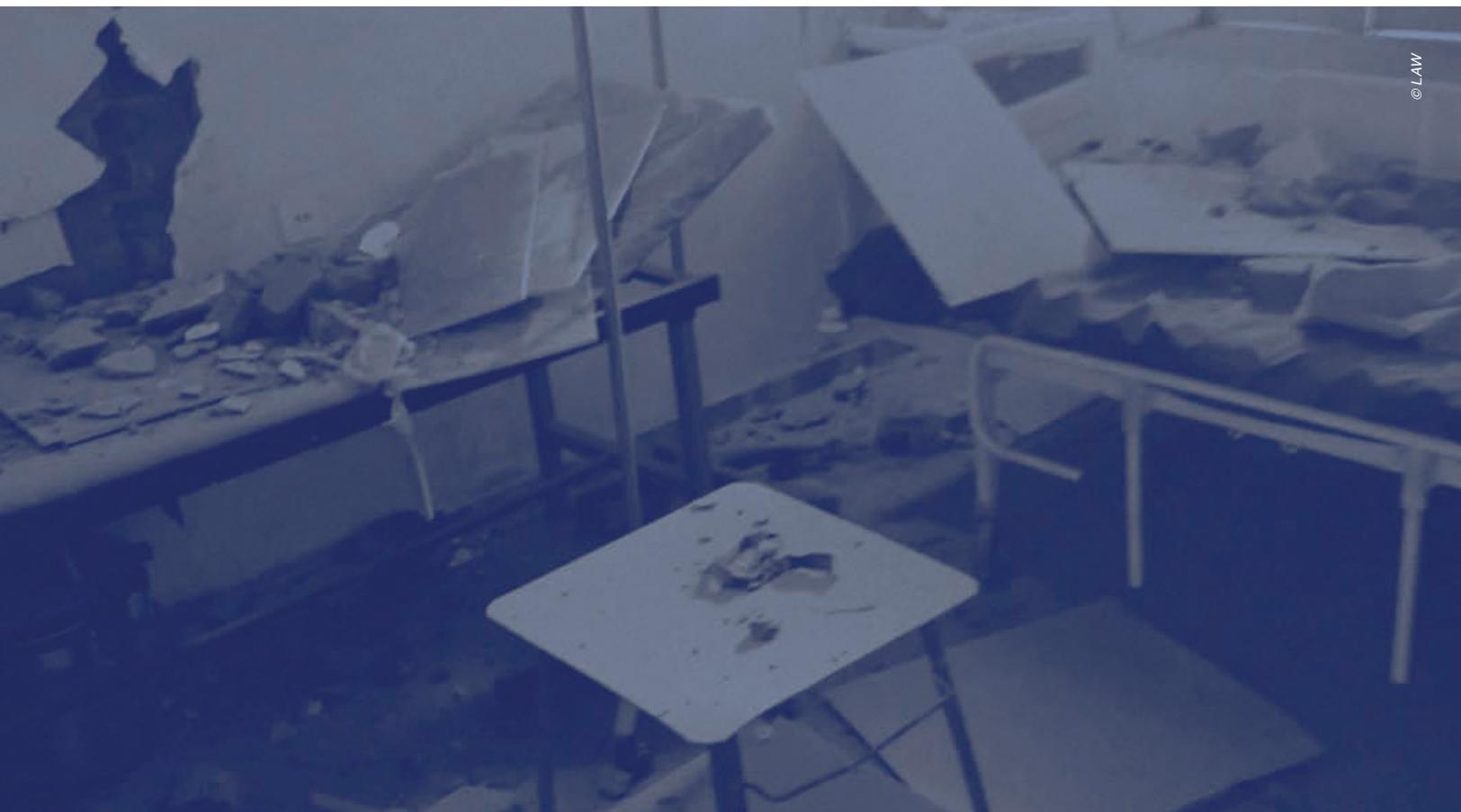
faced in El Fasher, including: the obstruction of civilian escape routes; the systematic targeting of neighbourhoods known for non-Arab presence; the destruction of health facilities and water points; and widespread and systematic rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV.³¹

Throughout the duration of the siege, the RSF was strengthened by a continuous inflow of foreign-supplied weapons and ammunition. Independent arms identification undertaken by LAW's military and munitions experts confirm that these supplies included small arms, drones, vehicles, and munitions that were neither locally manufactured nor available through domestic stockpiles. The availability of these materials directly influenced the RSF's ability to sustain the siege of El Fasher and escalate violence during key inflection points³² (see Sec. VII., below). External support enabled grave violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and, where the RSF exercised de facto control, potentially international human rights law.³³

Independent of any purported military justification, the findings contained in this report establish a consistent and credible account of how the siege of El Fasher func-

tioned as a coordinated campaign to destroy the social, physical, and reproductive integrity of the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations. There are reasonable grounds to believe that members of the RSF and allied Arab militias committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide against members of the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur ethnic groups during and in the aftermath of the siege (see Sec. VI., below).

These findings should be understood against the backdrop of years of impunity for ethnic-based attacks in Darfur and the broader collapse of national Sudanese institutions capable of protecting civilians or ensuring accountability. While multiple peace agreements have referenced the need for transitional justice, none were implemented in a way that prevented the recurrence of mass atrocities. The events in El Fasher demonstrate the extent to which entrenched impunity and ethnic animus, reinforced by external armament and third-State support, created the conditions in which RSF units and affiliated fighters could perpetrate such largescale atrocity crimes of extreme brutality with minimal resistance.



2. Methodology

The findings in this report are based on survivor testimony, weapons identification analysis, open-source verification, and corroborating documentation collected between October 2024 and February 2026. These findings were derived from an independent investigation, applying internationally recognised fact-finding methodology and evidentiary standards consistent with best practices in contemporary international investigations.

The **Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)** was essential to the documentation presented in this report. SIHA's established presence in Sudan and its trusted relationships with women's networks enabled safe, principled interviews with survivors of rape, sexualised enslavement, and other forms of CRSV and SGBV committed during and after the siege of El Fasher. SIHA documented over 280³⁴ attacks against women and girls throughout the prolonged siege and after the RSF takeover.

LAW further extends its sincere gratitude to **The Civilian Network for Justice, Safe Space for Women and Girls, and Juzour for Human Rights**—three Sudanese organisations who contributed underlying documentation to, and reviewed the factual sections of, the present report.

LAW and its partners were able to gather survivor-centred testimony, ensure appropriate referral pathways, and uphold protection standards in an environment marked by severe insecurity and the credible risks of retaliation. Through its partnerships, LAW strengthened both the depth and reliability of the evidence base and ensured that the voices of survivors, and in particular affected women and girls, were documented with dignity, accuracy, and care.

The investigations drew in part on first-hand accounts from victims and witnesses of CRSV and SGBV, mur-

der, unlawful detention, torture, cruel treatment, forced displacement, the systematic denial of objects indispensable to survival (OIS) including food, and the review of corroborating materials, including photographs, videos, satellite imagery, and verified open-source content.

Interviews were conducted remotely and in-person in neighbouring countries hosting displaced persons and refugees, undertaken in Arabic by gender-sensitive interviewers with the assistance of trained interpreters where required. Survivors were interviewed only after informed consent was obtained, following a detailed explanation of the purpose of the interview, its voluntary nature, and the potential risks involved. In cases of sexual violence against women, interviews were conducted exclusively by trained women investigators, in private settings ensuring safety and confidentiality. Where consent for follow-up contact was provided, investigators maintained secure and survivor-led communication channels.

At all times, the investigation team adhered to the Murad Code for ethical documentation of CRSV, and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring. The investigation was grounded in the principle of "do no harm," prioritising the safety, dignity, and agency of survivors. No interviews were conducted in the presence of family members, community leaders, or representatives of parties to the conflict.

Open-source information, including videos, images, and documents, was subject to verification and metadata analysis where possible.

Due to access restrictions, on-going hostilities, and the credible fear of reprisals, the findings presented do not reflect the full extent of violations that have been committed. Exact victim numbers reflect underreporting,³⁵ including of incidents of CRSV and SGBV that are vastly underreported and under documented due to social stigma and access constraints, including due to safety. The number of documented cases should therefore be understood as indicative rather than exhaustive.

Despite these limitations, the information collected met the evidentiary threshold of “reasonable grounds to believe,” where a reliable body of information, consistent with other available material, would satisfy an objective observer that the incidents occurred as described.

In November 2025, the UN Human Rights Council held a special session, where it unanimously called for the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (FFM) to conduct an urgent inquiry into the appalling violations in El Fasher, including CRSV and SGBV,³⁶ the results of which were published in a report by the FFM on 19 February 2026.³⁷ LAW welcomes the vital findings reached by the FFM, which largely mirror the findings presented in this report. LAW will continue to collect and preserve evidence for potential use in future accountability mechanisms, including to share with the FFM, and for future judicial proceedings.

3. Root causes of the April 2023–Present conflict(s)

“They kept insulting us, calling us ‘Falangaayat,’ and saying, ‘You should have run away. Why did you stay in El Fasher? We told you to leave El Fasher, you didn’t want to.’” —Man Survivor, aged 30-years-old, October 2025³⁸

The 547-day siege of El Fasher did not emerge in isolation. Rather, it reflects decades of militia empowerment, structural marginalisation, and impunity in Darfur. Understanding this background is necessary to understand how and why the RSF targeted and captured El Fasher.

Sudan’s current armed conflicts (see Sec. VI., below) stem from decades of systemic marginalisation and unresolved political, economic, and communal and tribal crises. Since 1989, successive governments have built a militarised and exclusionary state, relying on predatory economic networks and empowering Arab militias and paramilitary groups as instruments of rule.³⁹ This has produced a system in which armed force became

the primary means to settle disputes over power and resources. In Darfur, long-standing marginalisation, the collapse of local governance systems, as well as intensified pressures over land and water, led to the mobilisation of militia groups, which Khartoum opportunistically embraced and deepened by arming and empowering select Arab groups⁴⁰ and creating a security-first model of governance, while marginalising non-Arab ethnic identities.

Under the National Islamic Front (NIF) – the Islamist movement that helped engineer President Omar al-Bashir’s rise to power after the coup it instigated and coordinated in 1989 – and its successor, the National Congress Party (NCP) (1998-2019), the Sudanese state’s security-first model hardened significantly. President al-Bashir relied on Islamist networks, intelligence agencies, and tribal and Arab militias which were later formalised as the *Janjaweed*, a militia comprised of Arab nomadic tribes.⁴¹ The *Janjaweed* regularly carried out

Root Causes of Armed Conflict in Sudan

1989	1989–2019	Early 2000s	2005	2013	April 2023 – Present
Military Coup by Omar al-Bashir	National Islamic Front (NIF) / National Congress Party (NCP)	Janjaweed Militia Mobilization	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)	Rapid Support Forces (RSF)	SAF–RSF Armed Conflict
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Islamist-military coup overthrows civilian government. • Beginning of security-first, exclusionary state governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Islamist political dominance. • Militarization of governance. • Systematic marginalization of non-Arab communities. • Reliance on militias and intelligence services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab militias armed and supported by the state. • Used as counter-insurgency forces in Darfur. • Land seizure and attacks on civilian populations. • International condemnation and accountability efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power-sharing agreement between the government and SPLM/A. • Ends North-South civil war. • Does not resolve Darfur conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Janjaweed</i> reorganized into the RSF. • Formal paramilitary force with independent command structure. • Direct reporting line to presidency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open war between Sudanese Armed Forces and RSF. • Nationwide fighting. • Darfur becomes a central theatre of violence.

largescale attacks on non-Arab communities and were rewarded with land and protection.⁴²

The consequences became catastrophic and culminated in the Darfur genocide, which began in 2003 in western Sudan, when the Sudanese government turned to the *Janjaweed* to target members of ethnic groups including the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa, burning villages, killing, looting, raping, and otherwise terrorising civilians.⁴³ According to credible and conservative estimates, at least 200,000 civilians were killed during the Darfur genocide,⁴⁴ and nearly two million displaced from their homes.⁴⁵

The *Janjaweed's* conversion into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in 2013 transformed the militia into a national paramilitary structure with its own command, budget, and foreign backing.⁴⁶ By the mid-2010s, Sudan's security system saw the RSF operating autonomously and amassing economic and political power that rivalled the state's official army, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).⁴⁷

In April 2019, following months of mass popular protests, the SAF and RSF deposed then-President al-Bashir in a coup,⁴⁸ though the revolution did not dismantle the state's security-first architecture.⁴⁹ Rather, the SAF and the RSF both retained their respective capacities and alliances, while the RSF expanded its reach through the control of gold mines, cross-border networks, and deployments across Khartoum and Darfur.⁵⁰ Concerning the possibility of the RSF integrating into the SAF, and while the SAF had sought to assert unified command, RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo ("Hemedti") has positioned himself as a national figure with independent economic and political leverage,⁵¹ precluding the need for integration. For the SAF, this meant that the RSF's power began posing an existential threat.

In 2020, the Juba Peace Agreement served as a partial peace deal between Sudan's transitional govern-

ment and select armed movements, intended to end the conflicts in Darfur and other regions. In practice, however, it failed to disarm Arab militias, restore land to displaced communities, or deliver accountability, and was rather used to justify the withdrawal of peacekeepers from the UN–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), on the premise that Darfur's conflict had been resolved. Key armed factions, including the Fur-backed Sudan Liberation Army, refused to sign, the disarmament of Arab militias never occurred, and displaced non-Arab communities never recovered their land or saw any accountability for past atrocities. The 2020 Juba Peace Agreement therefore failed to address the foregoing underlying grievances or disrupt the militia patronage systems. As many non-Arab ethnic communities were left exposed without a peacekeeping presence, the RSF easily entrenched itself as the dominant force across large parts of the region.⁵²

In October 2021, the SAF and RSF jointly carried out a military coup, dismantling the civilian-led government and consolidating power under military control. Although they acted together to block democratic reform and protect their institutional and economic interests, tensions quickly resurfaced over command authority, security sector integration, and the control of resources.⁵³ These unresolved rivalries ultimately escalated into the armed conflict between the SAF and RSF on 15 April 2023, with Darfur immediately emerging as a central flashpoint of the fighting. The RSF's deep roots in the region and its ability to mobilise Arab militias enabled rapid territorial capture and consolidation.

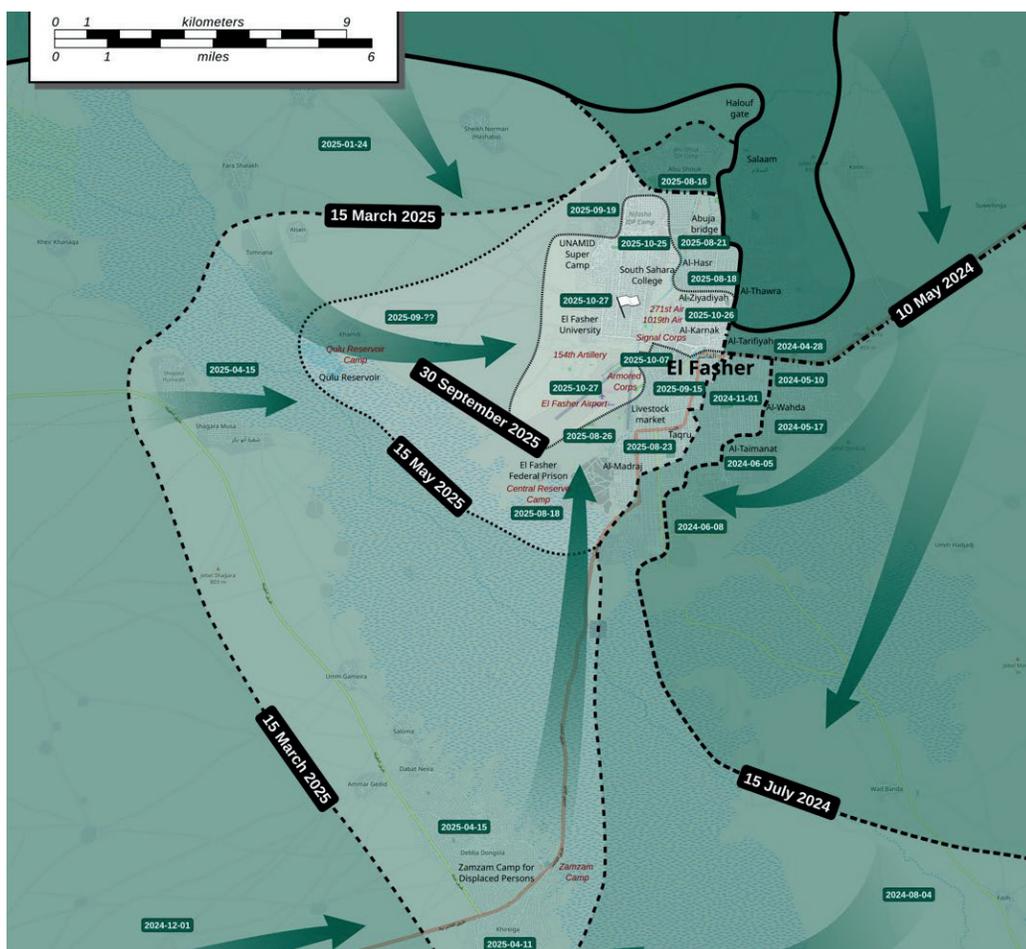


The subsequent identity-based attacks against civilians, including those largely based on ethnicity as documented in this report, coupled with the destruction of civilian areas and the systematic targeting of non-Arab communities, therefore reflect patterns shaped for over three decades.

The current armed conflicts⁵⁴ in Sudan are thus the culmination of layered structural conditions, including a political system built on coercive governance and regional neglect, and a paramilitary strategy that emerged from, and one that deliberately entrenches, identity-based violence. The paramilitary model (ie, the *Janjaweed*, later the RSF) was built by deliberately recruiting along ethnic and tribal lines, specifically mobilising Arab nomadic

groups against non-Arab communities, and making ethnicity the organisational logic from the start. By arming certain groups, granting them impunity, and allowing them to seize land and resources from targeted communities, the strategy went beyond using ethnic divisions by deepening and institutionalising them. LAW finds that the RSF's campaign in El Fasher was consistent with these trajectories in modern Sudan's history.

4. Anatomy of the RSF's Siege



Map of the siege of El Fasher, showing reported front lines and areas of control. Source: Mbz1, "Siege of El Fasher", Wikimedia Commons, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 (CC BY-SA 2.0).

tum-El Fasher and Kebkabiya-El Fasher axes, which gave RSF units control over civilian movement, market access, and the flow of goods into El Fasher.⁵⁶ By late 2023, the RSF had already made territorial gains, which enabled them to establish a de facto monopoly over the major supply routes, meaning only they determined which communities could access markets and at what cost.⁵⁷ These restrictions had catastrophic effects on the Darfuri African population, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other inhabitants of El Fasher, contributed to the early displacement waves, and created the economic, food, and medical vulnerabilities⁵⁸ that the RSF later exploited during the siege.

The siege of El Fasher unfolded amid the broader armed conflict that erupted in Sudan on 15 April 2023. After initial clashes in Mellit, Kutum, and along the Tawila-Kabkabiya axis escalated in mid-April 2024, the RSF were able to fully encircle the city in earnest by early May 2024,⁵⁵ marking the start of a ruthless 547-day siege that ended with the capture of El Fasher on or about 29 October 2025.

Throughout this period, the RSF and affiliated militia groups consolidated control over key transit corridors, commercial hubs, and rural areas west of El Fasher. LAW documented a pattern of expanding checkpoints and "taxation" points, and roadblocks along the Ku-

During the same period, and in preparation for the later encirclement in April 2024, the RSF increased its presence in areas surrounding El Fasher, including Tawila, Zamzam, and Abu Shouk.⁵⁹ Satellite imagery from this period shows the destruction of water points in villages to the west and northwest of El Fasher.⁶⁰ These attacks by the RSF and its allied militias significantly reduced the capacity of communities to sustain livelihoods by deeply eroding the physical environment required for their survival.

Additionally, over the first eight months of the conflict alone, the World Health Organization (WHO) recorded

60 attacks on health facilities across Sudan.⁶¹ The cumulative result was a gradual constriction of safe and inhabitable civilian space, and the steady displacement of families toward El Fasher’s periphery. Once the siege was laid, civilians were by and large unable to leave El Fasher.⁶²

Displacement patterns in early 2024 reflect these shifts. Thousands of Zaghawa families from South and Central Darfur and from rural areas surrounding El Fasher, sought safety within El Fasher City and the then rapidly expanding Zamzam and Abu Shouk displacement sites.⁶³ They faced brutal incidents of widespread rape, killings, and the destruction of homes in the areas they fled from, often involving the same RSF and militia units later observed participating in the siege.⁶⁴ These accounts offer early indicators of the ethnicised and genocidal violence that would later define and characterise the attacks inside El Fasher (see Sec. VI., below).

By June 2024, El Fasher had been serving as a humanitarian hub sheltering over 800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from across Sudan, primarily from non-Arab ethnic groups including the Fur and Zaghawa; it was also the SAF’s last major stronghold in Darfur.⁶⁵ Civilians were caught in what the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) then described as “a merciless onslaught of fighting.”⁶⁶ Critical infrastructure in El Fasher, including healthcare, had fully collapsed, while the prices of food, water, and fuel surged to levels that rendered essential items and basic necessities inaccessible for large segments of the population.⁶⁷

Collectively, these pre-siege dynamics building up to the encirclement in April 2024 demonstrate how the consolidation of RSF control over supply routes and the steady influx foreign-origin arms (see Sec. VII., below) together created a setting in which the encirclement of El Fasher was not only possible but predictable. The patterns documented in this period provide context for understanding the intensity and duration of the siege that followed.

Key Events⁶⁸

- **April-August 2024:** RSF advances, razing Zaghawa villages west of El Fasher (eg, 15 villages attacked, mass killings/disappearances).
- **Late 2024-April 2025:** Attacks on Abu Shouk and Zamzam IDP camps, killing hundreds of non-Arabs; indiscriminate shelling of these sites.
- **May-October 2025:** Siege-induced famine (declared August 2024 in IDP camps); RSF builds encircling wall; daily shelling of markets/IDP camps; hundreds of thousands of civilians are trapped in El Fasher.
- **26-31 October 2025:** El Fasher City is captured; initial massacre kills 6,000+ civilians (estimates up to tens of thousands total by December 2025). Some 62,000+ civilians flee; 250,000+ civilians remain unaccounted for (killed, detained, or hiding).

LAW finds reasonable grounds to believe that the RSF and affiliated militia members deliberately targeted objects indispensable to survival (OIS) in and around El Fasher, including civilian infrastructure associated with specific non-Arab ethnic groups, notably the Fur, Zaghawa, and Berti.⁶⁹ Attacks extended into residential neighbourhoods predominantly inhabited by these groups and were characterised by repeated and systematic bombardment, including in areas from which civilians had already fled, such as Al-Wahda and Al-Thawra neighbourhoods.⁷⁰

Similar patterns of destruction were carried out in villages and rural areas southwest of El Fasher. In multiple locations, property was first looted and subsequently set on fire, resulting in the complete destruction of civilian areas. LAW and SIHA documented this pattern in, inter alia, Abu Zariqa, Kushan, Shanqal Tobaya, and Qozbina.⁷¹ Collectively, these areas comprise at least 16 administrative districts encompassing more than 52 villages.

Between 2024 and 2025, an additional 121 villages were burned, of which 42 were completely destroyed, in the areas of Qaryoud, Baridak, Anbar, Ururi, Barmaza, Disa, Bashim, and Anka, located within Kutum and Ambro localities.⁷² In 2025, the Abu Qumra administrative unit and surrounding areas, including more than 17 villages in Karnoi locality, were subjected to widespread looting and arson. Satellite imagery and analysis by the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab found systematic arson attacks in El Fasher's Daraja Oula neighborhood between 4 and 8 October 2025, affecting 1,700 square metres.⁷³

Between 2025 and 2026, civilians were forcibly displaced from Jarjira, Mastoura, Qoz Daqi, and Tindabai villages, where more than 27 villages were systematically burned. LAW notes that these areas are predominantly inhabited by non-Arab ethnic groups, including the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Qamar.⁷⁴

Abductions and ransom

Based on credible information received by the **Civilian Network for Justice**, including direct accounts from displaced persons originating from Dar es Salaam locality, Zamzam camp, Abanchok, and areas along the Sudanese border region, a significant number of families also reported the abduction of relatives by RSF members and allied Arab militias.⁷⁵ Survivors consistently described a pattern whereby families of detainees were contacted by perpetrators through videos, audio recordings, and photographs of the abducted individuals. In these communications, families were demanded to pay ransoms reportedly ranging from an exorbitant 10 million to 300 million Sudanese pounds in exchange for the release of their relatives.⁷⁶

5. Rape & Other Forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

“We were planning to leave when we were suddenly attacked. The RSF entered our house and detained me and my older sister—they tried to rape us in front of my mother and father. When my father objected, they beat him and raped us in front of my mother and my beaten father. I became pregnant as a result and had an abortion in my second month.”—Woman Tunjur Survivor from El Fasher, aged 26-years-old, describing the events of 26 October 2025⁷⁷

Brutal acts of rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV were a defining feature of the siege of El Fasher, used deliberately and repeatedly as a tool of terror and ethnic targeting, and formed a core part of the broader campaign. Such acts intensified during the final battles to capture the city in October 2025 and during the mass displacement of 200,000 to 300,000 civilians that followed.⁷⁸ Since the RSF and affiliated militia members laid siege in late April 2024, over 470,000 people were displaced from El Fasher, with women and girls facing extremely heightened risks of sexual violence and exploitation amid mass trafficking concerns.⁷⁹

Incidents of widespread sexual violence including rape, gang rape, and abductions were already occurring by June 2024 – only a month or so into the siege – and intensified through mid- to late-2024 as RSF forces and allied militia members penetrated into residential areas, displacement routes, and IDP camps such as Zamzam and Abu Shouk, situated in the south and northern outskirts of El Fasher, respectively. These crimes escalated further as the siege tightened and continued throughout 2025, culminating in widespread and systematic sexual violence during and after the city’s fall in late October.

Evidence collected from survivors, witnesses, and protection actors demonstrates the extent to which rape, gang rape, sexualised enslavement, sexualised torture, forced nudity, and the targeting of pregnant women occurred across the entire timeline of the RSF’s siege and capture of the city.⁸⁰

“I saw over 400 people shot and killed. Near Shaqra [west of El Fasher], the RSF caught us on their vehicles, surrounded us, and opened fire on us with live ammunition. They were telling us to say ‘Tasis above’ and ‘Rapid Support Forces above.’”—Man Survivor, 42-years-old, recalling 25 October 2025⁸¹

Throughout the siege, RSF fighters and allied Arab militia members used sexual violence to enforce movement restrictions, extract information, and assert authority over neighbourhoods. Survivors described attacks occurring at checkpoints, during house searches, and in areas where civilians attempted to collect food, water, or firewood. Women and girls reported being raped after being stopped on the roads leading to Zamzam, Abu Shouk, and the eastern periphery of El Fasher City. Dozens of women and girls were subjected to rape, gang rape, and sexualised enslavement, with many incidents involving ethnic slurs against non-Arab groups. Several other survivors echoed how their assailants made statements referring to their ethnic identity and ancestry. These statements were often invoked to justify the violence or degrade the victim’s community.

From January through April 2025, health workers in El Fasher recorded a steady increase in patients with sexual violence-related injuries. By March 2025, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that more than 200 health facilities

were rendered non-operational, with critical shortages of medical staff and supplies.⁸² Many patients were treated in improvised facilities after RSF units attacked or occupied formal clinics. Medical personnel described treating women who had been assaulted while attempting to reach food markets or water points that had been cut off by fighting. The lack of antibiotics and emergency obstetric care contributed to severe complications, including miscarriages and infections. Disruption of the health system magnified the harms already produced by the violence itself.⁸³

Expanding on this, the UN detailed mounting evidence of deliberate rape, compounded by women enduring starvation and drone attacks while fleeing El Fasher to areas including Tawila.⁸⁴ Some survivors face life-threatening complications due to denied medical access, including untreated infections leading to long-term health consequences.

RSF members had a pronounced and predominant role in such assaults, with victims reporting denial of medical care exacerbating physical and psychological trauma.⁸⁵ The UNFPA's November 2025 flash update on the El Fasher crisis noted catastrophic humanitarian conditions, with health facilities overwhelmed by SGBV cases amid on-going violence and displacement. Further, UN experts in November 2025 expressed alarm over women being raped in front of relatives and detained in abusive conditions amounting to torture, often without access to post-rape care kits or psychological support.⁸⁶

Patterns of sexualised enslavement also emerged during the reporting period. Several survivors reported being detained for days or weeks inside makeshift RSF bases or in private homes commandeered by fighters. These accounts documented by SIHA describe repeated assaults, forced domestic labour, and, in some cases, the sale or transfer of women between fighters as chattel.

Ethnicised sexual violence was particularly prominent in

cases involving Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur survivors. Statements made by perpetrators referred to the destruction of their families and the removal of non-Arab presence from El Fasher. These statements were consistent with language documented in earlier RSF operations in West Darfur, including the capital El Geneina. LAW finds that the repetition and consistency of such statements across independent accounts provide a significant indicator of motivation that aligns with other evidence documented in this report. Corroborated accounts included ethnic slurs invoking the erasure of non-Arab communities through rape and statements about "cleansing" non-Arab areas through violence.

As RSF and affiliated units breached El Fasher City in October 2025, dozens of survivors detailed deliberate killings,⁸⁷ beatings, rape, and sexual assault by RSF members, emphasising that such acts were used to terrorise civilians and assert dominance over captured areas.⁸⁸ This too aligns with broader patterns LAW previously documented in West Darfur.⁸⁹

Sexual violence escalated during the final battles in October 2025, which preceded the collapse of remaining civilian safe zones. Survivors described largescale house raids in which RSF fighters separated men and boys from women and girls and assaulted them inside their homes,⁹⁰ or abducted them to nearby compounds. SIHA further documented incidents in which multiple women were raped in the same household. In the areas near Al-Thawra, Al-Jabal, and the western approach to the city, women fleeing the fighting reported being attacked along roads already rendered unsafe by earlier RSF operations.

Reports from El Fasher and Zalingei revealed harrowing patterns of assaults on children, with survivors resisting rapes amid widespread abductions.⁹¹ The RSF's capture of El Fasher ushered in a new phase of terror, including sexual violence in refugee camps and along escape routes.⁹²

The takeover of El Fasher escalated from siege to mass atrocity, with killings, rape, and gang rape targeting women and girls to instil fear and force displacement. Rapes by RSF and allied militias revealed similar patterns, where up to four fighters would assault a single victim, often in front of family members to maximise humiliation.⁹³ Additionally, the Sudan Doctors Network found that the RSF had raped 19 women fleeing El Fasher, including two pregnant women, while also underscoring the ethnic targeting in these attacks.⁹⁴

Survivors travelling toward Tawila, Shangil Tobaya, and the eastern corridor described RSF checkpoints where women and girls were taken aside under the pretext of searches, only to be assaulted. Protection actors assisting newly displaced families documented repeated cases of women and girls arriving with injuries consistent with sexual assault. Several reported that they were forced to witness attacks on other women as a method of intimidation. Witnesses on Korma Road described instances where RSF fighters assaulted women and then instructed them to continue walking toward displacement sites, making clear that leaving the city did not guarantee safety. In November 2025, a UN press release on trafficking in El Fasher warned of elevated SGBV risks for displaced women, with over 470,000 affected since the siege began.⁹⁵

Displacement sites themselves also remained dangerous in the immediate aftermath of the siege, with aid workers having reported that newly arrived women and girls faced harassment near water points and makeshift latrines.⁹⁶ Several women described being followed into bush areas where they had gone to gather firewood or attempt to secure privacy. The immediate absence of functioning protection services, combined with the loss of community networks and men relatives killed or missing, left women and girls exposed to heightened vulnerability and continued violence. This vulnerability was echoed in displacement camps such as Zamzam, which saw on-going harassment and assaults. The resolution stemming from the UN Human Rights Council's

November 2025 special session, further highlighted the loss of community safeguards in displacement zones.⁹⁷

Taken together, the evidence establishes reasonable grounds to believe that RSF members and affiliated Arab militias committed rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence as part of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population of El Fasher (see Sec. VI., below). Such violence occurred throughout the siege, intensified during the final battles, and continued along displacement routes. It formed part of a broader pattern aimed at asserting control over territory, punishing perceived affiliation, and inflicting severe harm on communities targeted on ethnic grounds. There are also reasonable grounds to believe that the foregoing acts of brutal violence reflected a persistent pattern shaped by ethnic targeting, the exercise of territorial control, and attempts to punish, fragment, destroy or permanently displace non-Arab communities.

The international community, including the UN Security Council, has repeatedly condemned these acts and urged accountability. Despite resolutions and inquiries, the RSF continues to block independent access to El Fasher.

6. Applicable Law

“After the fall of El Fasher, I was detained in Golo. There were more than 450 corpses. When [the commander] found us, he asked, ‘Are there any civilians here? What is your tribe? What is your name? Who is a civilian and who is a soldier?’ Seven people said they were civilians, and he immediately shot and killed them.” —Man Survivor, aged 25⁹⁸

6.1 Domestic and Regional Law

In addition to the international legal frameworks examined below, the conduct documented in El Fasher engages obligations arising under Sudanese domestic law and the regional human rights instruments to which Sudan is a party. This section examines the domestic and regional legal frameworks that bear on the accountability landscape and identifies structural gaps that have contributed to the prevailing impunity. These findings underscore the extent to which entrenched legal and institutional failures at the national and regional levels have enabled the conditions in which the RSF and affiliated Arab militias could perpetrate largescale atrocity crimes with minimal consequence.

Sudanese domestic criminal law

Sudan’s domestic legal framework nominally provides for the prosecution of serious international crimes. The Criminal Act of 1991, as amended in 2009, incorporated the core international crimes of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide into the national criminal code.⁹⁹ The Armed Forces Act of 2007 similarly introduced provisions addressing offences committed by armed forces personnel during military operations, including offences against civilians.¹⁰⁰ In principle, these instruments furnish Sudanese courts with subject-matter jurisdiction over the categories of criminal conduct documented in this report.

In practice, however, the domestic legal framework is inadequate in several critical respects. LAW finds that

the following structural deficiencies render Sudanese domestic law, as it stands, incapable of providing wholistic and meaningful accountability for the crimes documented in El Fasher:

First, the definitions of international crimes under Sudanese law do not fully conform to accepted international standards. The definition of genocide in the Criminal Act is more narrowly drawn than that contained in the 1948 Genocide Convention and Article 6 of the Rome Statute. War crimes provisions contain gaps and inconsistencies in relation to several categories of prohibited conduct, including the treatment of sexualised enslavement and other forms of sexual violence, and do not fully align with the Rome Statute framework governing starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and related offences. The absence of these offences from the domestic criminal code creates a normative gap that would impede the prosecution of core crimes documented in this report, including sexualised enslavement and the deliberate deprivation of objects indispensable to survival (OIS).

Second, Sudanese law does not adequately provide for command or superior responsibility. The legal principle that holds a superior criminally responsible for crimes committed by subordinates, where the superior knew or should have known of the commission of such crimes and failed to prevent or punish them, is absent from both the Criminal Act and the Armed Forces Act. This omission is of direct relevance to the findings in this report regarding the conduct of RSF commanders and sub-unit leaders who oversaw or tolerated the commission of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocidal acts by fighters under their effective control. Without a command responsibility doctrine, the domestic framework is structurally incapable of reaching those who bear the greatest responsibility for the patterns of violence documented in El Fasher.

Third, statutory immunity provisions shield key actors from prosecution. The Armed Forces Act of 2007, the Police Act of 2008,¹⁰¹ and the National Security Act of 2010¹⁰² all provide functional immunities to officials, requiring the prior authorisation of higher-level officials, including the commander-in-chief, before criminal proceedings may be initiated. These immunities constitute a direct legal obstacle to the prosecution of individuals within the RSF's command structure and within State security organs who may bear responsibility for the crimes documented in this report. International criminal law frameworks, including the Rome Statute, reject the use of official capacity as a defence for war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide.

Fourth, Article 38 of the Criminal Procedures Act of 1991¹⁰³ imposes a ten-year statute of limitations for serious crimes. The application of such a limitation period to war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide – in the absence of any exemption – is inconsistent with customary international law and widely recognised international standards, which preclude the application of statutory limitations to the most serious international crimes. Given that accountability processes in Sudan have historically been delayed or obstructed, the practical effect of this limitation is to incentivise impunity rather than ensure timely justice.

Fifth, the domestic legal framework does not provide a reparations regime tailored to victims of international crimes. While the Criminal Act contains general provisions for compensation (Article 46) and *dia* or “blood money” (Articles 42-45), these mechanisms were designed for ordinary criminal offences and are structurally inadequate for mass atrocity contexts. They are victim-initiated (requiring individual applications), dependent on conviction, limited to individual offences, and make no provision for the comprehensive forms of reparation recognised under international law – including restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition. This gap is particularly acute for survivors of CRSV and SGBV, whose needs extend well beyond

what the *dia* system or Article 46 compensation orders can deliver: *dia* can sometimes involve community/clan elements (potentially semi-collective), but this does not equate to comprehensive, international-standard reparations for mass crimes.

Sixth, the principle of legality (*nullum crimen sine lege*) presents a temporal obstacle to domestic prosecutions. The international crimes provisions in the Armed Forces Act and the Criminal Act were introduced in 2007 and 2009 respectively, well after the onset of the Darfur conflict in 2003. The non-retroactive application of these provisions means that criminal conduct predating their enactment cannot be prosecuted as international crimes under domestic law, limiting the scope of accountability for historical atrocities that are part of the same continuum of violence documented in this report.

Seventh, the collapse of judicial institutions in Sudan since April 2023 has effectively eliminated any residual domestic prosecutorial capacity. Several courts in Darfur and much of the country have ceased to function or been rendered non-operational. In areas under RSF control, there is no functioning justice system, and no independent mechanism exists to investigate or adjudicate allegations of serious crimes. This institutional collapse reinforces the necessity of international and regional accountability mechanisms.

On the basis of the foregoing, LAW finds that Sudan's domestic legal framework is both normatively deficient and institutionally non-functional for purposes of accountability for the crimes documented in this report. Domestic prosecution of those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in El Fasher is, at present, neither legally adequate nor practically feasible.

Regional human rights and accountability frameworks

Sudan is a State party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Banjul Charter),¹⁰⁴ having ratified it on 18 February 1986. The African Charter guarantees, inter alia, the right to life and the integrity of the person (Article 4), the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (Article 5), the right to liberty and security (Article 6), and the right of peoples to existence (Article 20). It further obliges States parties to guarantee the independence of the courts and to ensure respect for the rights and freedoms contained in the Charter (Article 26).

Because the RSF is a non-State armed group and not a party to the African Charter, the relevance of the Charter here lies in Sudan's obligations. The RSF cannot itself be held to have violated the Charter. Rather, the question is whether Sudan has failed to discharge its duty to protect individuals within its territory from violations committed by non-state actors – an obligation the African Commission has recognised as implicit in the Charter's protective framework, most notably in *Social and Economic Rights Action Center (SERAC) v. Nigeria*. That duty is subject to a due diligence standard: the State must take such measures as are reasonably available to it to prevent, investigate, and punish violations by third parties.

The near-total collapse of Sudanese state authority in Darfur since April 2023 – including the loss of territorial control, the disintegration of judicial and law enforcement institutions, and the displacement or destruction of civilian governance structures – significantly constrains the practical scope of this obligation. A State cannot be held responsible for failing to exercise authority it no longer possesses. At the same time, the due diligence inquiry cannot be divorced from the historical context in which the RSF was created, armed, and empowered by successive Sudanese governments as a formal instrument of state policy (see Sec. III., above). Sudan's prior role in establishing and sustaining the paramilitary structures now committing atrocities in El Fasher is relevant to any assessment of whether the State took all measures reasonably within its power to prevent the foreseeable recurrence of mass violence in Darfur.

The conduct documented in this report, including mass killings, systematic rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV, deliberate starvation, forced displacement, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure targeting specific ethnic communities, may engage Sudan's obligations under multiple provisions of the African Charter. In particular:

The killing of thousands of civilians belonging to the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur ethnic groups violates the right to life under Article 4. The widespread and syste-

matic use of rape, gang rape, sexualised enslavement, and other forms of sexual violence constitutes a violation of Articles 4 and 5, including the prohibition of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. The deliberate denial of food, water, medical care, and humanitarian access to besieged populations engages violations of the right to life and, read in conjunction with precedent established by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the implicit rights to food and health. The targeting of non-Arab ethnic communities for destruction, displacement, and persecution engages the rights of peoples to existence and to equality under Articles 19 and 20.

Sudan is also a signatory, though not a ratifying party, to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol). While the Maputo Protocol has not entered into force for Sudan, it reflects regional normative standards that are relevant to the assessment of the State's obligations concerning the protection of women from sexual violence in armed conflict. Article 11 of the Maputo Protocol obliges States parties to protect women's rights during armed conflict and to ensure that acts of sexual violence are treated as war crimes, genocide, or crimes against humanity. The failure of Sudan to ratify the Maputo Protocol is itself a significant gap in the regional protection framework, particularly given the centrality of CRSV and SGBV to the RSF's campaign in El Fasher.

At the continental institutional level, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights retains the authority to receive communications alleging violations of the African Charter by States parties. The Commission has previously found States in violation of the Charter for the conduct of security forces, including in situations of armed conflict and mass displacement. LAW notes that the Commission's mandate extends to examining whether Sudan has failed in its duty to protect civilians from the actions of non-State actors, including paramilitary forces, where such actors operate with the

tolerance, acquiescence, or support of State organs or where the State has failed to exercise due diligence in preventing violations.

The African Union's Constitutive Act further provides, under Article 4(h), for the right of the AU to intervene in a Member State in respect of grave circumstances, namely genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. This provision, adopted in response to the failures of the international community during the Rwandan genocide, was designed precisely for situations such as the one documented in this report. The AU's Peace and Security Council has the authority to recommend intervention or to impose measures in response to mass atrocity crimes. LAW observes that the AU has not, to date, exercised this authority in relation to the RSF's campaign in Darfur with sufficient urgency or consequence, despite mounting evidence of genocide and crimes against humanity.

The Malabo Protocol (2014), which would expand the jurisdiction of the African Court of Justice and Human and Peoples' Rights to include international criminal law, offers a prospective regional mechanism for the prosecution of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The Protocol's definition of genocide is notably more progressive than that in the Rome Statute, expressly including rape and other forms of sexual violence as acts of genocide. However, the Malabo Protocol has not yet entered into force, requiring 15 ratifications of which only one (Angola, in 2024) has been deposited. Accordingly, it does not currently provide a functioning accountability pathway for the crimes documented in El Fasher. Moreover, the Protocol's Article 46A bis, which grants immunity to sitting heads of State and senior government officials, has attracted substantial criticism for its potential to impede accountability for the very crimes the Protocol is designed to address.

Key findings: domestic and regional law

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, LAW makes the following findings:

1. Sudan's domestic criminal law, while nominally incorporating war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, contains definitions that fall short of international standards, omits the doctrine of command responsibility, imposes immunities and statutes of limitations incompatible with the prosecution of international crimes, and provides an uncomprehensive right to reparations for victims. These deficiencies are longstanding and pre-date the current conflict.
2. The partial collapse of judicial institutions in Sudan since April 2023, including courts, prosecutorial services, and law enforcement in Darfur, has rendered domestic accountability for the crimes documented in this report effectively impossible. There is no functioning justice system in RSF-controlled areas.
3. The conduct documented in El Fasher implicates multiple rights protected by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, to which Sudan is a State party, and supports the conclusion that Sudan may have failed to discharge its obligations to protect civilians from killings, sexual violence, starvation, forced displacement, and other serious abuses committed by non-State actors. The systematic killing, sexual violence, starvation, and forced displacement of non-Arab ethnic communities documented in this report constitute violations of the rights to life, physical integrity, liberty, and the prohibition of torture and cruel treatment under the Charter. The targeting of entire ethnic communities further engages the right of peoples to existence under Article 20.
4. Sudan's failure to ratify the Maputo Protocol represents a significant gap in the regional protection framework for women and girls subjected to CRSV. The events documented in this report, in which CRSV and SGBV formed a core component of the RSF's operations, underscore the urgency of extending these protections.
5. Regional accountability mechanisms, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the AU Peace and Security Council, have not been mobilised with sufficient urgency or effect in response to the RSF's campaign of atrocity crimes in Darfur. The African Union's intervention authority under Article 4(h) of its Constitutive Act, designed for precisely the circumstances documented in this report, remains unexercised.
6. The Malabo Protocol, though containing progressive provisions including the express characterisation of rape and sexual violence as potential acts of genocide and the introduction of corporate criminal liability, has not entered into force and does not currently provide a functioning regional judicial mechanism for the prosecution of crimes committed in El Fasher. Its immunity provisions for sitting officials remain a source of concern.
7. The combined failure of domestic and regional legal and institutional frameworks to prevent, investigate, or punish the atrocity crimes documented in El Fasher reinforces the indispensability of international mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (FFM), and the exercise of universal jurisdiction by third States. The events in El Fasher demonstrate that the current architecture of domestic and regional accountability in Sudan and across the African continent is insufficient to confront atrocities of this scale, and that legal reform, institutional strengthening, and sustained political engagement are required at all levels.

6.2 International law

The conduct carried out during and in the aftermath of the siege of El Fasher by RSF members and affiliated Arab militia members engages individual criminal responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide under international law.

This section sets out the applicable legal frameworks, applies them to the factual record documented in this report, and identifies the specific crimes for which there are reasonable grounds to believe that members of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and affiliated Arab militias bear criminal responsibility.

Classification of the armed conflict

The proper classification of the armed conflict is a threshold question for the application of international humanitarian law (IHL) and the war crimes provisions of the Rome Statute. LAW finds that the hostilities in Sudan since 15 April 2023 constitute at least one non-international armed conflict (NIAC) between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), meeting both the intensity and organisation thresholds required under customary international law and the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in *Prosecutor v. Tadić*.¹⁰⁵

LAW further finds that the hostilities in Darfur, including in El Fasher, cannot be analytically collapsed into a single SAF-versus-RSF confrontation. In North and West Darfur, hostilities have involved the RSF and affiliated Arab militias on one side, and organised non-State armed actors and civilian self-defence structures aligned with non-Arab communities on the other. Where these groups meet the organisation threshold and the violence reaches the requisite intensity, separate co-occurring NIACs may exist.

The NIAC in Darfur must also be understood in light of the conflict that began in February 2003, when the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and

Equality Movement (JEM) launched attacks against Government of Sudan positions. Although the formal command structures in Darfur today differ from those of 2003-2005, the operational continuity between the RSF and the *Janjaweed* militias previously found responsible for genocidal acts is unmistakable. The RSF emerged through the formalisation of *Janjaweed* units in 2013 and continues to draw its leadership and rank-and-file from the same Arab tribal militias that perpetrated the earlier campaign of mass atrocities (see Sec. III., above). While the RSF's institutional status has changed, the functional role its members play in North Darfur's violence remains essentially continuous with the *Janjaweed*'s. LAW finds this operational continuity reinforces the inference that the current atrocities reflect a renewed, ethnically targeted campaign against non-Arab communities rather than a distinct or unrelated conflict.

All parties to the foregoing NIACs are bound by Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions, customary IHL rules applicable in non-international armed conflicts, and, to the extent that the ICC exercises jurisdiction, the war crimes provisions of Article 8(2)(c)-(e) of the Rome Statute.

6.2.1 War crimes

“We left El Fasher on 26 October and were heading toward Wana Mountain when the RSF attacked us. A group of about 40 people next to us were captured, and all of them were executed. They were insulting us and saying ‘You Falangayat, you belong to the joint forces,’ even though we had no weapons and were not wearing military uniforms. We were unarmed civilians, but they said: ‘We do not consider anyone in El Fasher a civilian. Anyone staying in El Fasher—whether a child, a woman, or an old person—we consider an enemy.’ Then they started beating us and only left once they thought we were all dead.” — Man Survivor, Zaghawa, aged 43

War crimes are serious violations of IHL committed in the context of and associated with an armed conflict, entailing individual criminal responsibility. On the basis of testimony from survivors and witnesses, corroborated by satellite imagery, photographs, videos, and open-source verification, LAW finds reasonable grounds to believe that RSF members and affiliated Arab militias committed the following war crimes during the 547-day siege of El Fasher:

6.2.1.1 Violence to life and person: killing, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture

Residents of El Fasher consistently described RSF fighters entering homes, separating men and boys from their families, and shooting or beating individuals identified as belonging to non-Arab ethnic groups. Civilians attempting to reach food markets, water points, or makeshift medical facilities were fired upon, often in areas where the front line had stabilised and no active hostilities were underway. These acts constituted the deliberate targeting of civilians, in violation of Common Article 3(1)(a) to the Geneva Conventions and Article 8(2)(c)(i) of the Rome Statute.

LAW further reviewed credible accounts of torture and cruel treatment committed during house searches, at checkpoints, and in the course of detention. These acts

were frequently accompanied by ethnic slurs or degrading language intended to humiliate victims and reinforce RSF control, and occurred in circumstances where the victims were under the effective custody of RSF units. Such conduct violates the absolute prohibition on torture and cruel treatment under Common Article 3(1)(a) and constitutes a war crime under Article 8(2)(c)(i) of the Rome Statute.

6.2.1.2 Outrages upon personal dignity

Civilians reported being compelled to witness violence against family members, including brutal acts of rape and killing. The humiliation inflicted on women, girls, and men in these contexts, including forced nudity and public degradation, reflects a pattern of conduct aimed at asserting dominance over communities already rendered acutely vulnerable by starvation and the collapse of public health services. These acts constitute outrages upon personal dignity within the meaning of Common Article 3(1)(c) and Article 8(2)(c)(ii) of the Rome Statute. The desecration of bodies through mass burials conducted without respect for appropriate and known funerary rights would further constitute a violation of this prohibition.

6.2.1.3 Rape and other forms of sexual violence

LAW and SIHA documented rape, multiple-perpetrator (“gang”) rape, sexualised enslavement, and other forms of sexual violence inflicted on women and girls across all phases of the siege. Survivors described attacks taking place inside homes, in abandoned or partially destroyed buildings, at checkpoints, and along known displacement routes. Several women reported being held for days and subjected to repeated assaults amounting to sexualised enslavement. These acts consistently involved perpetrators making statements about non-Arab identity, reproduction, and lineage, indicating that sexual violence was instrumentalised as a tool of ethnic targeting and communal destruction.

While the full extent of sexual violence remains underreported due to stigma, trauma, and the credible risk of retaliation, the consistency of accounts across locations, the prolonged duration of the siege, and independent witnesses and survivors provides a credible evidentiary basis. LAW finds reasonable grounds to believe that these acts constitute the war crime of rape and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity under Article 8(2)(e)(vi) of the Rome Statute.

6.2.1.4 Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare

The RSF's imposition of a siege on El Fasher, resulting in the systematic denial of objects indispensable to civilian survival (OIS) including food, water, and medicine, and medical deprivation¹⁰⁶ constitutes the war crime of intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. While IHL recognises that parties to an armed conflict may lay siege,¹⁰⁷ including in densely populated civilian areas, they must at all times comply with the rules governing the protection of the civilian population. These include: respecting and protecting humanitarian relief personnel and objects; allowing and facilitating access to humanitarian assistance for civilians in need, and ensuring the freedom of movement of authorised humanitarian relief personnel essential to the exercise of their functions, subject only to temporary restriction in cases of imperative military necessity; and refraining from using the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.¹⁰⁸

For the purposes of this report, LAW adopts the definition of siege employed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which characterises a siege as an area surrounded by armed actors with the sustained effect that humanitarian assistance cannot regularly enter, and civilians, including the sick and wounded, cannot regularly exit.¹⁰⁹

The evidence establishes that RSF units imposed movement restrictions, controlled or closed access routes into the city, attacked medical facilities, and prevented

humanitarian convoys from reaching the civilian population. The use of drones for surveillance and adjustment of fire indicates that RSF units were likely aware of the civilian character of many locations struck (see Sec. VII., below). The resulting deprivation was an integral component of the RSF's campaign against the civilian population, constituting a war crime under Article 8(2)(e) (xix) of the Rome Statute (as amended in 2019), to the extent applicable to the Court's exercise of jurisdiction in the Darfur situation.¹¹⁰

6.2.1.5 Intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects, including medical facilities

Residents described sustained shelling of residential neighbourhoods, markets, and areas around water points, with no indication that military positions or objectives were present. The RSF's use of drone surveillance for reconnaissance and likely to identify and subsequently strike civilian shelters, hospitals, and water points, despite their protected status, constitutes intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects in violation of customary IHL and Article 8(2)(e)(iv) of the Rome Statute. Attacks against health facilities and the killing of health workers constitute additional violations under the same provision.

6.2.1.6 Pillage and destruction of civilian property

Acts of pillage and the destruction of civilian property were pervasive throughout the siege. Civilians reported systematic looting of homes by RSF fighters, particularly following offensives in non-Arab-majority neighbourhoods. Satellite imagery and witness testimony corroborate the burning and destruction of homes and civilian infrastructure in circumstances where there was no active fighting and no apparent military necessity. These acts deprived civilians of shelter, livelihoods, and access to essential goods, and constitute the war crime of pillage under Article 8(2)(e)(v) of the Rome Statute, as well as the destruction of property not justified by military necessity under Article 8(2)(e)(xii).

6.2.1.7 Ordering the displacement of the civilian population

The systematic targeting of non-Arab neighbourhoods, combined with the destruction of essential civilian infrastructure and the use of violence to compel flight, resulted in the mass forced displacement of civilians from El Fasher. LAW finds that this displacement was not justified by the security of the civilians involved or by imperative military necessity, and accordingly constitutes a war crime under Article 8(2)(e)(viii) of the Rome Statute.

Findings

Taken together, the conduct documented in El Fasher reflects a sustained pattern of serious violations of IHL, committed against a civilian population trapped within a siege environment that the RSF deliberately created and exploited. There are reasonable grounds to believe that RSF members and affiliated Arab militias committed the war crimes of: violence to life and person, including murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture (Article 8(2)(c)(i)); outrages upon personal dignity (Article 8(2)(c)(ii)); rape and other forms of sexual violence (Article 8(2)(e)(vi)); intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population (Article 8(2)(e)(i)) and against civilian objects, including medical facilities (Article 8(2)(e)(iv)); starvation of civilians as a method of warfare (Article 8(2)(e)(xix)); pillage (Article 8(2)(e)(v)); destruction of property (Article 8(2)(e)(xii)); and ordering the displacement of the civilian population (Article 8(2)(e)(viii)).

6.2.2 Crimes against humanity

Crimes against humanity are serious violations of international law committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.¹¹¹ Unlike war crimes, they do not require a nexus to an armed conflict and may be committed in times of peace. Under Article 7 of the Rome Statute, the term “attack directed against any civilian population” means a course of conduct involving the multiple commission of prohibited acts against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State

or organisational policy to commit such attack. The ICC Pre-Trial Chamber II has confirmed that non-State actors, including armed groups, may qualify as an “organisation” for the purpose of Article 7(2)(a).¹¹²

6.2.2.1 The attack against the civilian population

LAW finds that the violence documented in El Fasher satisfies the chapeau requirements of Article 7 of the Rome Statute. The attack was widespread, affecting hundreds of thousands of civilians across multiple neighbourhoods, displacement sites, and transit corridors over a period of more than 547 days. It was systematic, characterised by organised RSF operations repeated across time and geography, employing consistent tactics of encirclement, shelling, house raids, sexual violence, and the denial of food and medical care. It was directed against a civilian population, principally members of the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur ethnic groups, who were disproportionately and deliberately targeted by virtue of their ethnic identity rather than any military status.

The attack was carried out pursuant to an organisational policy. The RSF constitutes an organised armed group with an identifiable command structure, operational capacity, and the ability to adopt and implement policies, including through coordinated military operations, logistical planning, and the allocation of externally supplied weapons systems. The consistency of the violence across multiple locations and time periods, the repetition of ethnicised rhetoric by perpetrators in independent incidents, the coordination of siege logistics, and the absence of meaningful corrective action by RSF commanders collectively indicate that the attack was carried out in furtherance of an organisational policy rather than as a series of unconnected or spontaneous acts.

6.2.2.2 Murder and extermination (Articles 7(1)(a)–(b))

Survivor and witness accounts, corroborated by open-source material, indicate that the RSF carried out kil-

lings on a scale and with a frequency that far exceeds isolated or opportunistic violence. Civilians were shot during house raids, killed while attempting to move between neighbourhoods, and struck by shelling that repeatedly hit residential areas and known displacement sites. The OHCHR documented more than 6,000 killings in the first three days of the RSF's final offensive on El Fasher alone (from 25 to 27 October). The deliberate cutting off of food, water, and medical assistance also foreseeably caused mass death. LAW finds reasonable grounds to believe that these acts constitute murder and extermination within the meaning of Articles 7(1)(a)-(b) of the Rome Statute.

6.2.2.3 Rape, sexualised enslavement, and other forms of sexual violence (Article 7(1)(g))

Rape, gang rape, sexualised enslavement, and other forms of sexual violence formed a central component of the attack. Women and girls described assaults inside their homes, in abandoned buildings, at checkpoints, and along displacement routes, often after being separated from male family members. Several survivors were held for days or weeks and subjected to repeated assaults amounting to sexualised enslavement.¹¹³ The consistency of these accounts, the ethnicised language used by perpetrators, and the integration of sexual violence into broader RSF operational patterns support the finding that these acts were widespread, systematic, and constitutive of crimes against humanity under Article 7(1)(g).

Sexual violence served multiple functions within the broader attack: terrorising families and entire neighbourhoods; fracturing non-Arab community structures and social fabric; contributing to the destruction of the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur social and reproductive integrity; and enforcing movement restrictions and RSF authority over besieged populations. This instrumental character reinforces the finding that sexual violence was an integral rather than incidental element of the RSF's campaign.

6.2.2.4 Forcible transfer of population (Article 7(1)(d))

The sustained effects of the siege, including intensive shelling, house searches, sexual violence, and severe deprivation, generated largescale forced displacement. Residents were driven from their homes by direct threats, killings, and the destruction of critical infrastructure, and then facing further violence along displacement corridors. Those who attempted to flee frequently encountered RSF checkpoints where fighters demanded bribes, issued threats, or assaulted individuals before permitting or denying onward passage. These coerced movements constitute the crime against humanity of forcible transfer under Article 7(1)(d) of the Rome Statute.

6.2.2.5 Persecution on ethnic grounds (Article 7(1)(h))

The attack was pervasively characterised by persecution on ethnic grounds. Civilians repeatedly reported that RSF fighters used slurs, issued threats about ending the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and/or Tunjur presence in El Fasher, and targeted individuals, families, and neighbourhoods on the basis of perceived ethnic affiliation. These identity-based distinctions were visible across all categories of violence: in the patterns of killing and sexual violence; in the selection of neighbourhoods for shelling and razing; in the allocation of access to food, water, and medical care; and in the imposition of forced displacement. LAW finds that the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations in El Fasher were subjected to the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights by reason of their ethnic identity, constituting persecution under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute, read in connection with the other crimes documented in this section.

6.2.2.6 Torture and other inhumane acts (Articles 7(1)(f) and (k))

LAW documented torture and other inhumane acts carried out against civilians, including severe beatings, threats of execution, degrading treatment during house raids and at checkpoints, and prolonged detention in conditions amounting to cruel and inhuman treatment.¹¹⁴ The deliberate obstruction of access to food, water, medical care, and humanitarian assistance constituted an additional category of other inhumane acts under Article 7(1)(k). Health workers described operating in conditions that would have predictably led to preventable deaths.¹¹⁵ The deprivation imposed by the siege was an integral component of the attack against the civilian population, designed to weaken and displace communities subjected to concurrent acts of violence.

Findings

The cumulative effect of the foregoing acts establishes a coherent and reinforcing pattern that satisfies the requirements of Article 7 of the Rome Statute. There are reasonable grounds to believe that RSF members and affiliated Arab militias committed crimes against humanity in El Fasher, including: murder (Article 7(1)(a)); extermination (Article 7(1)(b)); forcible transfer of population (Article 7(1)(d)); torture (Article 7(1)(f)); rape, sexualised enslavement, and other forms of sexual violence (Article 7(1)(g)); persecution on ethnic grounds (Article 7(1)(h)); and other inhumane acts, including the deliberate deprivation of objects indispensable to survival (Article 7(1)(k)).

6.2.3 Genocide

Genocide is defined under Article II of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the Genocide Convention) and Article 6 of the Rome Statute as the commission of certain prohibited acts with the specific intent (*dolus specialis*) to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such.

The prohibited acts include:

- (a) killing members of the group;
- (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and
- (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The distinguishing element of genocide is the requirement of a specific intent to destroy the protected group, in whole or in part. This intent need not be proven by direct evidence of an express policy statement. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) established in *Prosecutor v. Akayesu* that genocidal intent may be inferred from a range of facts and circumstances, including the general context, the scale and nature of atrocities committed, the systematic targeting of victims on account of their membership in a particular group, the repetition of destructive and discriminatory acts, and statements by perpetrators.¹¹⁶ The International Court of Justice (ICJ) confirmed in *Bosnia v. Serbia* that a pattern of conduct may serve as evidence from which intent can be inferred, if the pattern is such that it could only point to the existence of genocidal intent.¹¹⁷

6.2.3.1 The protected groups

For the purposes of the Genocide Convention and Article 6 of the Rome Statute, the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur are distinct ethnic groups with longstanding ties to El Fasher and the wider Darfur region. Each group possesses its own historical identity and, in some cases, distinct linguistic traditions. The Fur are closely associated with the historical Fur Sultanate; the Zaghawa, Berti, and Tunjur have long occupied territories in and around El Fasher and have been recognised in anthropological documentation as distinct communities.

This characterisation is consistent with prior international criminal proceedings concerning Darfur, in which the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber treated the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa as protected ethnic groups for the purposes of genocide charges.¹¹⁸ The ICC Office of the Prosecutor’s summary of the situation in Darfur similarly proceeds on the basis of distinct ethnic communities as protected or targeted groups, describing how conditions of life were imposed on substantial parts of those groups. LAW finds that the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur constitute protected ethnic groups within the meaning of Article II of the Genocide Convention and Article 6 of the Rome Statute.

6.2.3.2 Genocidal acts (actus reus)

LAW finds that the evidence establishes reasonable grounds to believe that RSF members and affiliated Arab militias committed the following genocidal acts against the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations in El Fasher between April/May 2024 and October 2025:

- **Article II(a): Killing members of the group.** The systematic murder of Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur civilians, including the targeted killing of men and boys, mass executions, and deliberate shelling of non-Arab-majority neighbourhoods, constitutes the killing of members of the protected groups. The OHCHR’s documentation of more than 6,000 killings in the first three days of the RSF’s final offensive (from 25 to 27 October), with estimates reaching into the tens of thousands, reflects a scale of killing that is inherently destructive of the groups.
- **Article II(b): Causing serious bodily or mental harm.** Rape, gang rape, sexualised enslavement, torture, severe beatings, and the psychological trauma inflicted on survivors and witnesses constitute serious bodily and mental harm to members of the protected groups. The ICTR established in *Akayesu* that rape may constitute genocide where committed with the requisite intent.¹¹⁹ The ethnicised character of the sexual violence documented by LAW and SIHA, including perpetrator statements invoking the

prevention of non-Arab births and the “cleansing” of neighbourhoods, reinforces the finding that these acts were directed at the destruction of the group.

- **Article II(c): Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group’s physical destruction.** The 547-day siege systematically dismantled the infrastructure of survival for the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations. The RSF’s blockade of food, water, and medical supplies; the deliberate destruction of water points, health facilities, and markets; the targeting of women and girls for rape and other forms of sexual violence along displacement routes; and the systematic burning of homes and villages in non-Arab areas collectively created conditions of life incompatible with the physical survival of the protected groups. These practices dismantled the basic systems sustaining communal life, including access to food, water, shelter, medical care, and safe passage.

6.2.3.3 Specific intent to destroy (dolus specialis)

The central and most complex question in the genocide analysis is whether the evidence supports a finding of specific intent to destroy the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur groups, in whole or in part, as such. LAW approaches this question with the rigour the allegation demands, recognising both the gravity of the finding and the evidentiary standard it requires.

Direct evidence of intent

Multiple survivor testimonies, corroborated by pattern evidence across El Fasher and other theatres including El Gezira, demonstrate that RSF fighters and affiliated militia members regularly expressed explicit animus towards non-Arab communities, articulated a desire that they would die, and made statements specifically targeting non-Arab children and future generations. Perpetrators of sexual violence repeatedly invoked the destruction of non-Arab families and the removal of non-Arab presence from El Fasher.

The consistency of this language across independent accounts, locations, and time periods provides significant direct evidence of genocidal motivation at the level of individual perpetrators.

Circumstantial evidence of intent

The inference of genocidal intent is further supported by the following circumstantial factors, drawing on the *Akayesu* indicators as applied by international tribunals and UN atrocity inquiries:

The systematic selection of victims on ethnic grounds. Non-Arab civilians in El Fasher were regularly singled out at checkpoints, separated from mixed groups on the basis of perceived ethnic identity, and then subjected to lethal violence, sexual violence, and other serious violations. This selection process demonstrates that the violence was directed at the groups as such, not at individuals for their personal conduct.

The scale and pattern of the violence. The killing of thousands of members of the protected groups, the mass sexual violence targeting women and girls of those groups, the systematic destruction of non-Arab neighbourhoods and villages, and the imposition of the siege and siege conditions that disproportionately affected the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations collectively reflect a pattern whose destructive impact on the protected groups is overwhelming.

The destruction of the group's social and reproductive integrity. The separation of families, the rape of women in front of their relatives, the killing of men and boys, and the destruction of homes and communal spaces, including through arson attacks, were directed not merely at individual victims but at the bonds, structures, and reproductive capacity that sustain the groups as social units. International jurisprudence recognises that such conduct is probative of genocidal intent.

Operational continuity with the 2003-2005 Darfur genocide. The RSF emerged from the *Janjaweed* militias

found responsible for genocidal acts two decades earlier. The same ethnic groups are being targeted, using the same methods, by forces drawn from the same recruitment base, operating in the same region. This continuity provides important contextual support for the inference that the current campaign carries a genocidal character.

6.2.3.4 Attribution of intent: perpetrators, sub-units, and command level

LAW's analysis distinguishes between three levels at which genocidal intent may be assessed:

Direct perpetrators and sub-unit commanders

The evidence strongly supports a finding of genocidal intent at the level of direct perpetrators and local or sub-unit commanders in El Fasher. The repeated use of ethnicised rhetoric, the systematic selection of victims on ethnic grounds, the targeting of non-Arab neighbourhoods for destruction, and the instrumental use of sexual violence to fracture family structures collectively establish, at the "reasonable grounds to believe" standard, that these actors acted with the specific intent to destroy the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur groups, in part.

RSF central command

The available evidence does not yet permit a fully conclusive finding that the RSF's senior leadership adopted, ordered, or explicitly endorsed a policy to destroy the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur groups as such. The reported internal fragmentation of RSF command complicates attribution, though it would not negate individual or superior responsibility for crimes committed under their effective control. International jurisprudence recognises that genocidal intent may be established at the level of certain perpetrators or sub-units without a demonstrated policy at the apex of an organisation, provided that the requisite specific intent can be inferred from the pattern of conduct and its predictable consequences for the protected group.



LAW does find, however, that the repetition of genocidal acts against the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations across multiple locations and over the period of the conflict, coupled with what appears to be the complete absence of any meaningful corrective intervention by RSF command, at a minimum establishes the RSF leadership's tolerance and acquiescence of conduct that was manifestly genocidal in character. Insofar as these acts were committed by subordinates under the effective control of superior officers who knew or should have known of their commission and failed to prevent or punish them, command responsibility may also be engaged under Article 28 of the Rome Statute.

Findings

There are reasonable grounds to believe that members of the RSF and affiliated Arab militias committed genocidal acts falling within Article II(a)-(c) of the Genocide Convention and Article 6 of the Rome Statute against the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations in El Fasher, with the specific intent to destroy those groups in part. This finding is established at the level of direct perpetrators and sub-unit commanders. At the RSF

command level, LAW finds that the evidence establishes tolerance, acquiescence, and a failure to prevent or punish genocidal conduct, which engages potential criminal responsibility under the doctrine of command responsibility and warrants urgent further investigation. LAW's investigations into the precise scope of command knowledge, the chain of orders, and the existence of any formal or informal policy directive at the RSF leadership level are on-going.

The findings in this section should be read in conjunction with the evidence of operational continuity between the RSF and the *Janjaweed* (see Sec. III., above), the role of foreign arms in enabling the RSF's operational capacity (see Sec. VII., below), and the analysis of State responsibility for aiding, assisting, and failing to prevent genocide (see Sec. VIII, below).

7. External Support Enabling RSF Atrocities

The siege of El Fasher could not have been sustained without continued access to weapons, vehicles, and logistical support from outside Sudan, and the RSF's operations depended on this sustained capacity.

7.1 Sudan's arms landscape

Sudan's arms landscape is shaped by a long history of domestic production, foreign procurement, and conflict-driven proliferation, with various routes for bringing in arms. Sudan produces arms and munitions domestically, principally through the Military Industry Corporation (MIC) and affiliated entities. This domestic production has historically focused on small arms, light weapons, ammunition, and selected crew-served heavy weapons (large, powerful weapons that require more than one person to operate effectively), and includes several licensed or reverse-engineered variants of foreign design, which has allowed the SAF to sustain their baseline requirements despite UN and other arms embargoes in place since 2004.¹²⁰

Before its destruction in July 2023, the Yarmouk Military Factory in Khartoum was Sudan's main arms producer, partly owned by Iran, and manufactured rockets, artillery, small arms, and ammunition.¹²¹ During the on-going conflict that erupted on 15 April 2023, the MIC's output did not match the sophistication or volume of externally supplied materiel, though it nonetheless provided the SAF with a degree of resilience, particularly in relation to small-calibre ammunition, mortars, and legacy platforms (ie, older weapons), and these outputs reduced the SAF's reliance on sustained foreign resupply.

Belarus, China, Iran, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Despite an industrial base in Sudan, the country has long been an importer of foreign arms and ammuni-

tion. Open-source trade data¹²² and credible public reporting indicate that, in the two decades preceding the current conflict, the SAF acquired materiel from a diverse range of suppliers, including Belarus, China, Iran, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). LAW's military analysis indicates that both the SAF and RSF possessed a variety of externally sourced equipment at the outset of the hostilities that erupted in April 2023.¹²³ Civilian-market variants of small arms exported from countries such as the Republic of Türkiye and the Russian Federation have been documented in use by both parties, illustrating how non-military imports have been diverted into the conflict. Journalists, NGOs, and other independent investigators have similarly highlighted weaknesses in Sudan's import controls, where civilian or dual-use consignments – shipments that have legitimate civilian applications but can also be used for military or security purposes – have been identified on battlefields and in military seizures.¹²⁴

The influx of arms and munitions from foreign sources has persisted throughout the current conflict and has provided both the SAF and RSF with more advanced military capabilities than they would have otherwise had. For example, from 2023 to 2024, there was a reported year-on-year increase in Sudanese social media posts containing the Arabic term for "drone,"¹²⁵ very likely indicating their heightened presence on the battlefield. While a variety of arms and munitions from different countries are documented below, SAF-aligned groups have also published photos showing crates associated with carrying arms or munitions that have been deliberately painted, abraded, or otherwise modified to conceal key markings (see Figure 1.1).

7.2 Foreign arms imports



Figure 1.1 Arms or munitions crates with obscured markings captured by the SAF-aligned Popular Resistance (source: Sudanese social media).

Sudan's foreign arms imports are characterised by opaque procurement practices in which companies closely linked to the SAF and the state military-industrial sector operate alongside civilian importers whose products are routinely diverted to the belligerents. For example, there are strong indications that certain nominally commercial importers, including the Hong Kong-based Portex Trade Limited, function as proxy entities for SAF military procurement, sourcing weapons and components through civilian trade channels in ways that obscure military end-users and could facilitate sanctions evasion.¹²⁶ Various arms legally imported as civilian or dual-use goods have been identified in use with the SAF or RSF, including in Darfur, highlighting persistent weaknesses in oversight, end-use controls, and enforcement. These patterns underscore how Sudan's pre-war arms import architecture has directly contributed to sustaining the current conflict, as examined below.

As the SAF and RSF share some sources of arms and munitions (ie, Sudanese government stocks or those previously shared between SAF and Janjaweed militias), and because significant capture and re-capture of materiel from both sides takes place during the Sudan conflict, LAW notes that there is considerable overlap in the SAF and RSF inventories.

7.3 UAE Material Assistance to the RSF

The UAE's support for the RSF is grounded in a broader strategic relationship which encompasses political influence, economic interests – particularly in gold – and the UAE's hegemonic regional power projection across the Red Sea and East Africa.¹²⁷ RSF-linked commercial networks headquartered in the UAE, including companies associated with RSF-leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo ("Hemedti") and his family members, have provided both financial infrastructure and procurement channels that underpin this military assistance.¹²⁸ These same commercial and logistical networks plausibly intersect with UAE-linked aviation, shipping, and third-country transit points documented elsewhere in the region. (CAR) as logistical routes for the movement of military supplies and the illicit export of gold.¹²⁹

There are reasonable grounds to believe that the UAE has functioned as one of the RSF's principal external enablers through the provision and/or facilitation of military equipment, including arms, munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, or "drones"), and armoured vehicles, in contravention of applicable UN and other arms embargoes.¹³⁰ This support has been sustained through a combination of the UAE directly providing stocks to RSF in Sudan and indirect supply routes transiting third countries, including Chad¹³¹ and Libya,¹³² which complicates attribution. Nonetheless, LAW's military and munitions experts were able to identify several key items with strong links to the UAE, with the scale of support partially apparent through an assessment of serial number analysis, manufacturer markings, captured materiel, and verified imagery.

Visual evidence analysed by LAW suggests that the UAE's assistance prioritised major combat advances, particularly unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or "drones") and long-range fires. For example, the RSF has made use of Chinese-manufactured GB50A guided air-delivered bombs, which were first observed in combat globally in Omdurman (Khartoum State) in 2023, during the early

months of the conflict. These are compatible with the Chinese Wing Loong II and FeiHong-95 UAVs, both of which have been supplied to the RSF by the UAE.¹³³

The UAE has also supplied the RSF with a rotary wing UAV capable of delivering two 120 mm air-delivered bombs (see Figure 2.1). A crate of these “120mm TB” air-delivered bombs – thermobaric munitions modified from mortar projectiles – captured by the SAF is clearly marked for delivery to the UAE armed forces (see Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.1 A UAV capable of delivering the Serbian 120 mm munitions shown in the following figure (source: Sudanese social media).

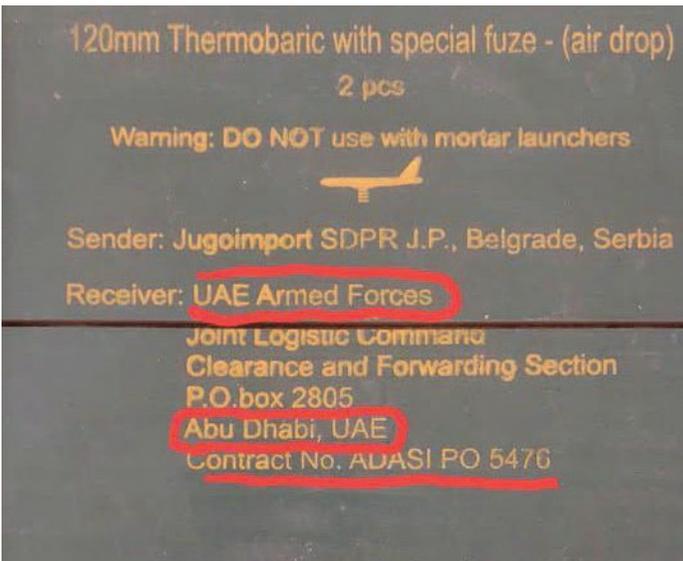


Figure 2.2 Markings on a crate of Serbian 120 mm air-delivered bombs which show it was intended to be delivered to the UAE. Mark-up in the original source (source: Sudanese social media).

Beginning in mid-April 2024 and across Sudan, the SAF repeatedly downed one-way attack drones (OWA UAVs), which appear to have been launched by the RSF (see Figure 3.1), with heavy usage reportedly observed in Khartoum, Al-Jazirah, El Fasher, and elsewhere.¹³⁴ Although LAW was unable to establish the manufacturer, an OWA UAV potentially resembling those found in Sudan has been documented being operated by the Emirati military during an exercise. It is probable that these UAVs were supplied by the UAE to the RSF, particularly as external assessments note that the UAE has been a principal provider of UAVs to the RSF since the early phases of the conflict,¹³⁵ enabling strike, reconnaissance, and coercive leverage against both SAF forces and civilian targets.



Figure 3.1 OWA UAV downed by the SAF, allegedly launched by the RSF (source: Sudanese social media).

In terms of heavy weaponry, Chinese Norinco-manufactured 155mm AH-4 towed howitzers – an artillery weapons system that must be moved by vehicle and which provides indirect fire support – have been documented in RSF possession, including in Khartoum. The UAE is the only confirmed foreign customer for the AH-4 system and no other lawful transfer pathways to Sudan have been publicly documented, strongly indicating re-export to the RSF from Emirati stocks.¹³⁶ LAW notes that the deployment of these artillery systems marks a significant escalation in the RSF’s indirect-fire capabilities.

Although the Sudanese MIC notes in its catalogue that it produces a copy of the HJ-8 ATGM – a Chinese-manufactured, wire-guided anti-tank guided missile system designed to destroy armoured vehicles, fortified positions, and other hardened targets – these were not commonly observed as being used by the RSF. This contrasts with other conflicts, where non-state armed groups frequently rely on captured stocks of higher-value systems such as ATGMs – and further suggests that the RSF’s anti-armour capabilities may derive from alternative supply channels rather than predominantly from domestically manufactured stocks.

Among other models, the RSF also uses 9M133 “Kornet” ATGMs, a Russian-produced system that has also been copied by Iran. Among the weapons, munitions, and equipment captured by the SAF from the RSF was a crate marked for delivery to the UAE Armed Forces Joint Logistics Command (Figure 4.1). While the crate did not list its contents, the physical characteristics, listed weight, manufacturer (“KBP Tula Russia”), and observed marking conventions strongly indicate that it contained a 9M133 Kornet-series missile. LAW’s military and munitions experts documented comparable markings on other Kornet-series missile crates, and this finding aligns with a broader pattern of diversion of higher-end anti-armour capabilities to the RSF via UAE-linked procurement and logistics pathways.

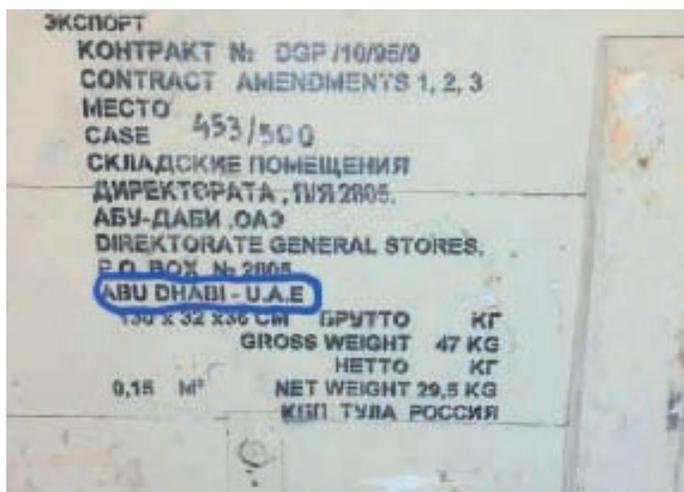


Figure 4.1 A crate which most likely contained a Russian 9M133 Kornet-series missiles, marked for delivery to the UAE armed forces (source: Sudanese social media).

Additionally, mortar projectiles have been critical to the RSF’s ability to shell civilian areas and defensive positions from a distance. LAW documented a crate captured by the SAF from the RSF which contained Chinese-produced Type 53 series 82 mm mortar projectiles (see Figure 5.1), likely from January 2025.¹³⁷ Unusually, the crate bore no stencilled markings, but a laminated paper notice affixed to the container indicated delivery to the UAE and referenced what is likely a contract number. Comparable diversion patterns have been documented for European-manufactured mortar ammunition originally exported to the UAE, including Bulgarian 81 mm mortar projectiles identified in RSF convoys in Darfur (Figure 5.2), which were exported to the Emirati company International Golden Group (IGG). The IGG has been associated with sanctions-busting activities.¹³⁸

Additionally, LAW identified crates labelled with a Kenyan contract number and containing 82 mm Chinese HE mortar projectiles (Type PP87) in RSF depots near Khartoum and Salha (see Figure 5.3), suggesting diversion of materiel originally intended for Kenya during 2024-2025.¹³⁹



Figure 5.1 Chinese Type 53 series 82 mm mortar projectiles marked for delivery to the UAE captured by the SAF from the RSF (source: Sudanese social media).



Figure 5.2 Bulgarian 81 mm mortar projectiles exported to Emirati company Golden Group and subsequently associated with an RSF convoy in Sudan (source: France24).



Figure 5.3 Crates containing Chinese Type PP87 82 mm HE mortar projectiles and marked with Kenyan contract numbers (source: Bellingcat).

7.4 Ground vehicles likely supplied by the UAE

In addition to the arms, munitions, and drones supplied by the UAE to the RSF, LAW documented several ground vehicles which the UAE also likely supplied. Among them are:

- Spartan 2 MAV models (see Figure 6.1) and a “Logistic Armoured Vehicle” (Figure 6.2), both of which are manufactured by the UAE-based STREIT Group.
- Additionally, the SAF captured an AJBAN 440A armoured vehicle from the RSF (Figure 6.3), which is produced by the UAE manufacturer NIMR Automotive.

The RSF has also made widespread use of UAE-manufactured armoured personnel carriers (APCs), including NIMR AJBAN variants, STREIT vehicles, and other Emirati or UAE-linked platforms, many of which entered production after the UN arms embargo in 2004.¹⁴⁰ While the most common vehicles in use with the RSF are still pickup trucks (many converted to “technicals” and carrying light or heavy weapons), UAE-supplied armoured vehicles provide the RSF with an important protected capability, as well as offering command-and-control platforms, reinforcing the group’s otherwise light and irregular force structure.



Figure 6.1 A Spartan 2 MAV, produced by the Emirati STREIT Group, in use with the RSF in El Fasher in August 2025¹⁴¹ (source: Sudanese social media).



Figure 6.2 A 'Logistic Armored Vehicle' light armoured vehicle, produced by the Emirati STREIT Group, in service with the RSF (source: Sudanese social media).



Figure 6.3 An AJBAN 440A light armoured vehicle, produced by NIMR Automotive, captured by the SAF from the RSF (source: Sudanese social media).

7.5 Other States

7.5.1 Arms and munitions of Chinese, Bulgarian, and Serbian (and former Yugoslav) origin

Patterns in the UAE's external security engagement indicate a consistent reliance on proxy actors to project influence while limiting formal attribution to the UAE itself. In Syria, Yemen, and Libya, Emirati support to armed groups has included financial backing, logistical facilitation, and the indirect transfer of military materiel, often routed through third states. This pattern is similarly reflected in Sudan, where evidence assessed by LAW's military and munitions experts suggests that Emirati support to the RSF includes the provision of arms and munitions of Chinese, Bulgarian, and Serbian (and former Yugoslav) origin of a similar type to that provided in those other conflicts. The appearance of several other arms and munitions in RSF inventory cannot be credibly explained by local capture or indigenous production, and further points towards support from external sources, including the UAE.

7.5.2 Canada



Figure 7.1 Canadian Sterling Cross XLCR precision rifle in use with the RSF (source: Sudanese social media).

LAW further documented the presence of firearms manufactured in Canada in the possession of RSF fighters in Sudan, thought to be seen in October 2024. Photographs circulated on Sudanese social media and subsequently verified by CBC News and corroborated by LAW's military experts show rifles bearing the logo of Sterling Cross Defense Systems (Figure 7.1), a commercial firearms manufacturer based in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada, being carried by RSF fighters in multiple locations in Sudan. These images contain identifiable markings consistent with Sterling Cross model XLCR rifles and have appeared in content attributed to RSF members since at least 2023.¹⁴²

Public reporting indicates that Sterling Cross did not provide detailed responses to questions about the identified photographs or its international sales practices, and Global Affairs Canada described its export control regime in general terms, noting that exports of controlled items require permits and are subject to risk assessment under Canadian law.¹⁴³

LAW's investigations did not demonstrate a direct transfer of weapons from the Government of Canada to the RSF, nor do they establish that Sterling Cross sold arms directly to the RSF. LAW could not confirm whether a Canadian export licence was issued specifically for delivery to the RSF or that the Canadian state knowingly authorised transfers to actors in Sudan. Rather, LAW expresses grave concern that Canadian-branded rifles were observed in the RSF's hands, raising questions about how such weapons reached the conflict environment. LAW's investigations into the precise export pathways, intermediary transfers, and compliance with Canadian export controls are on-going.

7.6 Key Findings: The role of foreign arms

“Something must be done to address the continuous inflow of weapons.” —UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, speaking on atrocity crimes by the RSF in El Fasher, 9 February 2026¹⁴⁴

The role of foreign arms in Sudan must be understood within the broader collapse of accountability mechanisms in the country. The transfers of military material including arms and munitions from foreign sources occur against the backdrop of publicly available evidence of mass atrocities committed by RSF units across the country, including killings, widespread rape and other forms of SGBV, forced displacement, and systematic attacks on objects indispensable to survival (OIS). Despite such information, including as documented by the UN, the continuation of these supplies heightened the risk to civilians and contributed to the severity of violations documented in El Fasher (see Sec. VI., above).

On the basis of serial number analysis, manufacturer markings, captured materiel, verified imagery, and the temporal alignment of arms inflows with major RSF offensives, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Emirati-origin or Emirati-destined weapons systems, including armed and reconnaissance drones, long-range artillery, mortars, anti-armour munitions, and armoured vehicles, were transferred to, or made available for, RSF use in Darfur after the outbreak of hostilities in April 2023.

These transfers were enabled through transit and diversion routes through Chad and eastern Libya under Haftar-aligned control, and included materiel originally marked for delivery to UAE armed forces or to third-State militaries subsequently diverted. The nature of the military systems supplied, their repeated appearance at key inflection points of the siege (see above), and their use against civilian neighbourhoods, displacement routes, health facilities, and civilian infrastructure in El Fasher¹⁴⁵ establish that external support functioned as a

critical advantage, directly enabling the RSF’s capacity to encircle El Fasher, sustain prolonged bombardment, and impose conditions of life incompatible with civilian survival. Due to the widespread reporting on the RSF’s crimes in El Fasher, these transfers were clearly made with knowledge of the RSF’s established pattern of mass atrocity crimes in Darfur.

LAW further finds that a significant portion of the arms and munitions used by the RSF originated from manufacturers in China, Bulgaria, and states of the former Yugoslavia.

On the basis of manufacturer markings, technical characteristics, and comparison with known export records, there are reasonable grounds to believe that these weapons were lawfully manufactured and initially exported from the states in which they were produced to third states but were subsequently diverted and re-exported to the RSF in Sudan likely without the consent of the original producing states.

LAW did not find evidence that China, Bulgaria, and states of the former Yugoslavia directly supplied the RSF. Rather, the evidence and analysis establish that their manufactured weapons entered RSF arsenals in significant part via secondary transfer pathways, most prominently via the UAE and associated regional transit hubs – illustrating how global arms production chains were repurposed to sustain a campaign of mass civilian harm, including in El Fasher.

As noted, there are reasonable grounds to believe that these transfers materially contributed to the commission of grave violations of international humanitarian law and potentially human rights law in El Fasher.¹⁴⁶ The arms detailed above enabled offensives that would likely have been unsustainable without external resupply, expanded RSF territorial control around El Fasher City, and increased the lethality of operations targeting non-Arab civilians. They also allowed RSF commanders to maintain pressure on humanitarian access routes, further exacerbating starvation and medical deprivation.

These findings underscore the need for further scrutiny of the entities and States involved in the provision, transit, and facilitation of arms destined for the RSF. They also highlight the importance of strengthening international monitoring of arms flows into Sudan and ensuring that States comply with their obligations under customary international law, the Arms Trade Treaty where applicable, and duties concerning the prevention of atrocity crimes, including genocide (see Sec. VI., above).

LAW finds that members of the RSF and affiliated militia groups were able to lay and hold siege to El Fasher (see Sec. IV., above) with sustained external military support – most prominently from the UAE, acting through complex but traceable procurement and transit networks – which also materially increased the RSF’s operational capacity and contributed directly to the scale and duration of the violence.

Evidence collected by LAW’s military and munitions experts and weapon-identification specialists, coupled with open-source verification, established that foreign-origin arms, ammunition, and logistical equipment played a central role in enabling RSF and allied units to encircle El Fasher City, conduct repeated attacks, and maintain pressure on civilian populations despite fluctuating battlefield conditions.

Between April 2023 and October 2025, the RSF pos-

sessed a broad range of materiel that was not produced or stored within Sudan. These items included small arms, anti-personnel and anti-vehicle munitions, armoured and technical vehicle platforms, and commercially available drone systems repurposed for reconnaissance and strike functions. Serial number analysis, manufacturing marks, and technical specifications allowed LAW to trace significant portions of this equipment foreign suppliers. Several shipments matched materiel types previously documented in RSF operations in West Darfur, indicating continued supply routes over multiple phases of the conflict.

The UN Panel of Experts further found that RSF supply convoys – often originating from air deliveries at border hubs – entered Darfur through western corridors (primarily from eastern Chad, eg, via Amdjarass airport to overland routes through areas like Bao and Kariari into North/West Darfur) and northwestern corridors (from southern/eastern Libya, eg, via Kufra).¹⁴⁷ These convoys replenished ammunition, fuel, and other military stockpiles for the RSF, particularly following battlefield losses or during prolonged operations, thereby sustaining or enabling renewed offensives against civilian neighbourhoods and infrastructure in North Darfur, including highly likely the extended siege and assaults on El Fasher.

Arms deliveries to the RSF, principally via Amdjarass in northern Chad and eastern Libya, were sustained throughout the reporting period, with credible evidence of transfers occurring several times per week. The influx of drones, anti-armour munitions, artillery, armoured vehicles, and small arms ammunition materially sustained RSF operational capacity across successive phases of the Darfur campaign, including the assault on Geneina and massacres of Masalit civilians from April to November 2023, the progressive encirclement of El Fasher from late 2023, and the imposition of the siege of El Fasher from May 2024 onward.¹⁴⁸

LAW's investigation also recorded repeated sightings of newly delivered drones and other equipment. These arrivals often came just before changes in RSF tactics, such as more precise attacks and wider surveillance of routes used by displaced persons.

Foreign arms significantly shaped the violations and harm suffered by Sudanese women, men, and children in and around El Fasher. The availability of large quantities of ammunition enabled the RSF and affiliated militia members to sustain prolonged shelling of densely populated civilian areas near Al-Thawra, Al-Jabal, and Abu Shouk. The introduction of new styles of drones would have also allowed the RSF to more easily identify civilian shelters, hospitals (though operating at reduced capacity), and water points, several of which were then struck repeatedly despite their protected status.¹⁴⁹ Survivors described patterns of attacks, including “new drones” and renewed assaults after civilians attempted to relocate to what they believed were safer zones.

8. Applicable Law: State Responsibility

LAW's investigation finds reasonable grounds to believe that the UAE supplied weapons, ammunition, and other military materiel to the RSF when El Fasher was under siege, and that these transfers occurred despite clear, publicly available information that RSF units were committing widespread and systematic violations of international humanitarian law, international criminal law, and international human rights law in Darfur. The transfers therefore give rise to State responsibility under international law, including the obligation not to aid or assist in the commission of internationally wrongful acts, the duty to prevent genocide, and, where applicable, treaty-based prohibitions on arms transfers in situations of overriding risk.

Based on weapons identification, serial number analysis, platform tracing, and open-source verification, LAW concludes that arms and ammunition of UAE origin were transferred through logistical routes including into Darfur and were subsequently used by RSF units engaged in the siege of El Fasher. The totality of evidence indicates a pattern of sustained, organised supply, including the provision of small arms, ammunition, drone systems, and vehicle platforms that the RSF could not have sourced domestically. The influx of materiel aligned with operational surges, enabling RSF offensives against civilian neighbourhoods, the encirclement of non-Arab-majority areas, and repeated attacks on humanitarian and medical facilities.

UN bodies, humanitarian organisations, and independent experts had, prior to and throughout the siege, issued a steady stream of warnings documenting mass atrocities by RSF members and allied Arab militias across Darfur, including killings, widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence, targeted attacks on non-Arab communities, forced displacement, and the

destruction of objects indispensable to survival (OIS). These warnings were sufficiently detailed and persistent to place any State supplying arms on clear notice that the RSF was highly likely to use such materiel to commit further internationally wrongful acts.

State responsibility under Articles 16 and 41 of the Articles on State Responsibility

There are reasonable grounds to believe that the continuation of arms transfers by the UAE, after the emergence of this information, constitutes aid or assistance in the commission of internationally wrongful acts, engaging State responsibility under Articles 16 and 41 of the ILC Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (ARSIWA). While the ARSIWA is not a treaty, the UAE's obligations under Article 16 arise to the extent that those provisions reflect customary international law, which binds all States regardless of treaty ratification.

It should be acknowledged, however, that the precise mental element required under Article 16 remains contested in scholarship and practice. The text of Article 16 requires that the assisting State act "with knowledge of the circumstances of the internationally wrongful act." The ILC Commentary, however, states that "the aid or assistance must be given with a view to facilitating the commission of that act, and must actually do so." This has produced a well-known tension between a knowledge standard and an intent standard, and whether oblique intent would suffice.

LAW submits that the volume, duration, and timing of UAE arms transfers which were sustained over many months and against a backdrop of unambiguous public documentation of mass atrocities, meets even the most demanding reading of Article 16's mental element. The

persistence of supply after the issuance of detailed public reports describing patterns of conduct amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and potentially genocide is sufficient to establish, at a minimum, near-certain knowledge that the materiel would facilitate the commission of further internationally wrongful acts.

With respect to Article 41 of ARSIWA, which imposes obligations on all States not to render aid or assistance in maintaining a situation created by a serious breach of a peremptory norm of international law, the prohibition of genocide and the prohibition of systematic racial discrimination constitute *jus cogens* norms. To the extent that RSF conduct in Darfur amounts to serious breaches of these norms, Article 41(2) independently prohibits the provision of aid or assistance in maintaining the resulting situation. This obligation applies irrespective of the knowledge or intent debate under Article 16.

Additionally, LAW notes that Sudan filed proceedings against the UAE before the ICJ in March 2025, alleging violations of the Genocide Convention through the provision of financial, political, and military support to the RSF. The ICJ dismissed the case in May 2025, holding that it “manifestly lacked” jurisdiction due to the UAE’s reservation to Article IX of the Convention. The Court emphasised that its dismissal did not represent a judgment on the substance of Sudan’s accusations, because it was purely procedural. The jurisdictional dismissal therefore does not bear on the merits of the underlying allegations of complicity, nor does it affect the independent obligations arising under customary international law, including those reflected in Articles 16 and possibly 41 of ARSIWA.

Third-State obligations: China, Bulgaria, Serbia

Regarding arms and munitions of Chinese, Bulgarian, and Serbian (and former Yugoslav) origin, LAW’s investigation did not identify evidence demonstrating direct State transfers of arms to the RSF from additional

States during the reporting period. Foreign-origin materiel played a pivotal role in enabling RSF operations, however, and these transfers occurred against a backdrop of widespread and publicly documented atrocities.

In the case of China, the identification of recently manufactured Chinese weapons systems in RSF hands raises particular concerns. China, as a State party to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), is required to take urgent measures to prevent the diversion of arms to Sudan. Under Article 6(3) of the ATT, a State Party shall not authorise any transfer of conventional arms if it has knowledge at the time of authorisation that the arms would be used in the commission of crimes against humanity, genocide, or grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. Under Article 7, where transfers are not prohibited under Article 6, the exporting State must assess the potential that the arms could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law, and where an overriding risk of such consequences is identified, the transfer shall not be authorised. The re-export of Chinese weapons by the UAE to the RSF, could engage China’s diversion prevention obligations under Article 11 of the ATT.

The patterns identified in this report therefore raise serious concerns regarding the compliance of those implicated States with their obligations under customary international law, the Arms Trade Treaty where applicable, and the duty to prevent the commission of genocide and other grave crimes.

Transit States: Chad and eastern Libya

Additionally, LAW's military and munitions experts found that both the Republic of Chad and eastern Libya under Haftar-aligned control have served as critical transit points through which weapons and logistical support moved into Darfur.¹⁵⁰ UN Panel of Experts investigations have centred on Am Djarass airport in neighbouring Chad, identifying land routes from the airport into Darfur Sudan Tribune, while the Panel also documented a logistics hub at Bir Mirgui in North Darfur that reportedly received supplies flowing from eastern Chad and southern Libya. Credible documentation of supply corridors shows that RSF units used Chadian territory to facilitate fighter rotations and ammunition flows during key phases of the siege.

While LAW's investigation did not establish the direct provision of arms by Chadian or Libyan authorities, it finds reasonable grounds to believe that Chad and Libya failed to take feasible measures to prevent the movement of RSF materiel across their respective territories, despite knowledge of the substantial likelihood that such transfers would contribute to grave violations in El Fasher. This omission engages potential responsibility under the duty to prevent genocide and under general principles prohibiting the facilitation of internationally wrongful acts.

It should be noted, however, that establishing State responsibility for a failure to prevent requires demonstrating that the State had the capacity to influence the situation and failed to exercise due diligence in doing so. The degree to which Chad and Libyan authorities could feasibly have interdicted cross-border transfers, given competing security pressures and limited border control capacity, is a factual question that would require further

investigation. LAW's finding of reasonable grounds to believe such a failure occurred does not constitute a definitive legal determination, but identifies a sufficiently serious basis for further inquiry.

9. Seeking Accountability

“It feels like no one can deliver justice for us.”

—Tunjur Woman Survivor from El Fasher¹⁵¹

The scale and gravity of violations committed in El Fasher require a comprehensive accountability response. The patterns documented in this report – including widespread killings, sexual and gender-based violence, starvation-related conduct, the targeting of protected facilities, and ethnic violence including persecution of and genocidal acts against the non-Arab communities – constitute multiple international crimes. Survivors expressed a consistent expectation that international mechanisms must act where domestic institutions have collapsed or where parties to the conflict remain unwilling or unable to ensure justice.

At the international criminal level, the International Criminal Court (ICC) remains the only standing judicial body with an open mandate over Darfur.¹⁵² The ICC Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) has repeatedly underscored the need for reliable, survivor-centred evidence relating to on-going crimes. LAW’s on-going investigations into El Fasher aim to provide findings and evidentiary material that may be relevant to the Court’s assessment of recent events.

In engaging with the Court, it will be important to recognise both the Prosecutor’s position that Resolution 1593 continues to ground ICC jurisdiction over current crimes in Darfur and the view, advanced by some, that a renewed Security Council referral or an Article 12(3) declaration by Sudan would be necessary to remove uncertainty about jurisdiction over the present phase of the conflict and over post-2005 amendment crimes. States Parties to the Rome Statute should consider issuing collective referrals under Article 14 in relation to the situation in Darfur since 2023, to reinforce the legitimacy of ICC engagement. The UN Human Rights Coun-

cil’s Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (IFFM) also constitutes a vital international quasi-accountability channel. As the only UN body specifically mandated to investigate patterns of violations in Sudan since the outbreak of the current conflict, the IFFM’s work remains central to establishing an authoritative factual record. This report intends to complement and support the IFFM’s mandate. Where appropriate, LAW will continue to share relevant information and documentation to strengthen the IFFM’s ability to identify attacks against civilian populations.

Beyond these two mechanisms, the international community retains a range of obligations and tools that are essential in contexts where domestic judicial capacity has collapsed. States with universal jurisdiction frameworks should examine whether the evidence emerging from El Fasher provides a basis to open criminal investigations into individuals responsible for atrocities in El Fasher. In doing so, domestic authorities can rely not only on treaty-based offences but also on the customary status of such violations.

Regional bodies, sanctions committees, and other monitoring entities should assess whether the conduct documented in El Fasher meets thresholds for targeted measures, including restrictions on individuals involved in directing operations, facilitating arms transfers, or obstructing humanitarian access. Regional organisations, including the African Union, could also explore complementary criminal justice avenues, drawing for example on the possibility of establishing ad hoc or hybrid mechanisms to prosecute atrocity crimes committed in Darfur.

Absent functioning national institutions in Sudan capable of providing justice (see Sec. VI., above), international actors should also invest in parallel modalities of ac-



countability. These include survivor-focused documentation initiatives, safe-evidence preservation, protection programming for witnesses and displaced persons, and sustained diplomatic engagement to prevent further atrocities. Effective accountability requires coordinated action, including judicial processes to address individual responsibility; political measures to constrain the likelihood that perpetrators will recommit atrocities; and support to communities whose social fabric has been cruelly ruptured by the violence.

The events in El Fasher moreover demonstrate the consequences of prolonged impunity in Darfur. Accountability can therefore serve as a preventive measure, in that, ensuring that the crimes documented in this report are investigated and prosecuted is essential to protecting civilians elsewhere in Sudan such as Kordofan¹⁵³—currently marked by intense fighting, civilian casualties, displacement, and dire humanitarian conditions — and to signalling that atrocity crimes committed with external support will not remain without consequence.

The foregoing findings warrant further investigation at both the national and international levels, including by States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, members of the UN Human Rights Council, and mechanisms responsible for monitoring sanctions, illicit arms flows, and the implementation of obligations concerning the prevention of atrocity crimes.

10. Recommendations

To the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and affiliated Arab militias:

- Immediately permit full and unimpeded access to El Fasher and surrounding areas, including by enabling humanitarian actors to enter the city and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access;
- Suspend and remove from command all those credibly implicated in rape, sexualised enslavement, other forms of CRSV and SGBV, and starvation-related violations, and immediately facilitate independent investigations;
- Immediately cease attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including killings, rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV, starvation-related tactics, and attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel and facilities; and
- Release all civilians held in confinement, including those in conditions amounting to sexualised enslavement and other forms of sexualised captivity, and guarantee safe passage to locations where they can access medical, psychosocial, and protection services.

To the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and associated security actors:

- Facilitate, and do not obstruct, humanitarian, medical, and protection actors, including those providing specialised services to survivors of CRSV and SGBV; and
- Release all civilians held in confinement and guarantee safe passage to locations where they can access medical, psychosocial, and protection services.

To the Government of Sudan and any successor transitional authority:

- Ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) and take all necessary steps to incorporate its provisions into domestic law, including those requiring that acts of sexual violence in armed conflict be treated as war crimes, crimes against hu-

manity, or genocide;

- Amend the Criminal Act of 1991 and the Armed Forces Act of 2007 to bring the definitions of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide into conformity with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and customary international law, including by expressly criminalising sexualised enslavement, starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, and other forms of unlawful conduct documented in this report;
- Repeal or substantially amend statutory immunity provisions in the Armed Forces Act of 2007, the Police Act of 2008, and the National Security Act of 2010 that shield officials from prosecution for serious international crimes, in conformity with the principle under customary international law that immunities shall not apply to war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide;
- Remove statutory limitation periods applicable to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide consistent with Sudan's obligations under customary international law and the principle that such crimes are imprescriptible; and
- Cooperate fully with the ICC, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (IFFM), and all other international and regional accountability mechanisms, including by facilitating access, preserving evidence, and refraining from any act that would obstruct or impede investigations into crimes committed in the Darfur region.

To States that supplied or facilitated arms, ammunition, or logistical support used by the RSF, in particular the United Arab Emirates (UAE):

- Immediately suspend all transfers of arms, ammunition, dual-use items, and related logistical support that risk being used by the RSF or affiliated militias to commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide;
- Conduct transparent, independent investigations into transfers to the RSF during the period 15 April 2023

to 29 October 2025, prevent further transit or facilitation of such materiel through national territory, and cooperate with all accountability mechanisms, including domestic, regional, and international; and

- Review and, where necessary, revise arms export control frameworks to ensure compliance with obligations under international law, including robust risk assessments related to CRSV, SGBV, and starvation-related violations.

To all other States:

- Adopt and apply a presumption of denial for arms transfers and related support to parties in Sudan where there is a clear risk of serious violations and crimes, including rape, sexualised enslavement, other forms of CRSV and SGBV, and starvation-related violations and crimes;
- Strengthen monitoring and enforcement against illicit arms flows into the Darfur region;
- Exercise criminal jurisdiction, where available, over those suspected of responsibility for atrocity crimes including in El Fasher (North Darfur) and West Darfur;
- Provide political, financial, and technical support to international, regional, and domestic accountability mechanisms;
- Expand safe pathways (including resettlement and temporary protection) for survivors of crimes in the Darfur region, including survivors of CRSV and SGBV.

To the UN Security Council:

- Strengthen, renew, or expand arms embargo measures applicable to Darfur and the RSF, with dedicated monitoring of arms flows linked to rape, CRSV and SGBV, and starvation-related violations and crimes;
- Impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities credibly implicated in planning, ordering, or enabling atrocities in El Fasher, including those responsible for supplying arms and logistical support;
- Establish, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, a civilian protection mission in Darfur with a mandate

to protect civilians at risk of group-targeted violence, deter attacks against displaced populations and essential infrastructure, and monitor and publicly report on cross-border arms flows contributing to on-going hostilities; and

- Clarify and, where necessary, reinforce the ICC's jurisdiction over crimes committed in the current phase of the conflict, including CRSV and SGBV, and starvation-related crimes.

To the UN Human Rights Council:

- Ensure the renewal, resourcing, and independence of the the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (IFFM), with specific capacity on CRSV and SGBV; and
- Continue to fully integrate gender, CRSV and SGBV, and children's rights into all relevant investigations, monitoring, and reporting on Sudan.

To the International Criminal Court (ICC):

- Prioritise investigations into RSF and allied militia conduct in El Fasher and North and West Darfur, including rape, sexualised enslavement, other forms of CRSV and SGBV, starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, persecution, and genocide against the Zaghawa, Fur, Berti, and Tunjur populations.

To humanitarian, medical, and protection actors, including donors:

- Scale up comprehensive services for survivors of rape and other forms of CRSV and SGBV in and around El Fasher and along displacement routes, and fully integrate SGBV risk mitigation into all humanitarian programming;
- Direct sustained support to women human rights defenders and women-led organisations operating on the frontlines, who continue to provide protection, documentation, and survivor support at considerable personal and operational risk; and
- Prioritise funding for survivor-centred documentation and evidence preservation initiatives overall, adhering to international ethical standards, and support survivor-informed reparations.

Endnotes

1. Conflict-related sexual violence: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 July 2025, U.N. Doc. S/2025/389, at para. 3.
2. This report considers the siege to have effectively begun on or about 30 April 2024 to 2 May 2024, when the RSF's initial, systematic encirclement of El Fasher intensified, with the end of the siege coinciding with the cessation of active fighting on 28 or 29 October 2025 after RSF was able to successfully capture the city. See LAW-016.
3. For purposes of this report, Arab militias included RSF-aligned tribal fighters historically associated with *Janjaweed* networks.
4. See subsection on Genocide, Sec. VI, *supra*. Smaller numbers of other non-Arab Darfuri communities were also attacked, including Birgid, Bergid, and Berti. See LAW-004.
5. LAW further extends its sincere gratitude to the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA). In addition, LAW equally thanks The Civilian Network for Justice, Safe Space for Women and Girls, and Juzour for Human Rights—three Sudanese organisations who contributed underlying material to, and reviewed the factual sections of, the present report. See Sec. II., Methodology.
6. *Supra* note 1.
7. Al-Amal Gate and Hela Al-Sheg are inside El Fasher. Gerni, Tura, and Shagra are rural villages in North Darfur, mainly to the south-west, outside the city. See LAW-004.
8. *Id.* See also LAW-092.
9. See also Documenting Reproductive Violence: Unveiling Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Pathways for UN Investigative Mechanisms, UN Women, 30 September 2024.
10. LAW-301; UNFPA Statement on Repeated Attacks Against El Fasher Maternity Hospital, Sudan, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 9 October 2025, available at <https://www.unfpa.org/press/unfpa-statement-repeated-attacks-against-el-fasher-maternity-hospital-sudan>; see also WHO Condemns Killings of Patients and Civilians Amid Escalating Violence in El Fasher, Sudan, World Health Organization (WHO), 29 October 2025, available at <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-10-2025-who-condemns-killings-of-patients-and-civilians-amid-escalating-violence-in-el-fasher--sudan>; El Fasher: A doctor's testimony from 'hell', United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 3 December 2025, available at <https://www.unocha.org/news/el-fasher-doctors-testimony-hell>.
11. LAW-041; LAW-056; LAW-057; LAW-075; LAW-058; LAW-059; LAW-076.
12. LAW-010; LAW-302.
13. LAW-025, Internal Military Analysis v.2.5.
14. See, e.g., LAW-095.
15. As early as 15 January 2024, and in its report to the UN Security Council, the Panel of Experts on the Sudan (PoE) had identified three main routes with a "heavy rotation of cargo planes" travelling from Abu Dhabi, UAE to the Am Djarass airport in eastern Chad¹⁵ and noted "credible" allegations that these planes were bringing weapons and munitions shipments "several times a week" for transfer to RSF. U.N. Doc. S/2024/65, para. 41. See also LAW-045; LAW-042; LAW-040.
16. See, e.g., LAW-007; LAW-095.
17. United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A tool for prevention (2014), at pp. 18-19, available at https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/about-us/Doc.3_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes_EN.pdf.
18. See, e.g., LAW-091.
19. See note 3, *supra*.
20. LAW-301.
21. *Id.*
22. LAW-004.
23. Sudan: RSF violations in capture of El Fasher amount to war crimes, OHCHR, 13 February 2026, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/sudan-rsf-violations-capture-el-fasher-amount-war-crimes>; see also LAW-055; WHO Condemns Killings of Patients and Civilians Amid Escalating Violence in El Fasher, Sudan, World Health Organization (WHO), 29 October 2025, available at <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-10-2025-who-condemns-killings-of-patients-and-civilians-amid-escalating-violence-in-el-fasher--sudan>. Current fatality estimates, however, are as high as tens of thousands of civilians dead or unaccounted for, amid on-going reports evidence destruction.
24. WHO Condemns Killings of Patients and Civilians Amid Escalating Violence in El Fasher, Sudan, World Health Organization (WHO), 29 October 2025, available at <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-10-2025-who-condemns-killings-of-patients-and-civilians-amid-escalating-violence-in-el-fasher--sudan>; see also Tens of Thousands Fleeing on Foot Amid Atrocities in Sudan's El Fasher, United Nations, 31 October 2025, available at <https://news.un.org/en/sto->

ry/2025/10/1166237.

25. LAW-001; LAW-077; LAW-094; See also Sudan: UN Experts Appalled by Reports of Mass Atrocities, Unlawful Killings and Sexual Violence in El Fasher, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 7 November 2025, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/sudan-un-experts-appalled-reports-mass-atrocities-unlawful-killings-and>.

26. LAW-032; LAW-033; LAW-011; LAW-034.

27. See, e.g., LAW-056; LAW-226.

28. See File on El Geneina, prepared by and on file with LAW.

29. *Id.*

30. Situated within the Dar Masalit region of Sudan, Geneina City in West Darfur saw explosive, mass-casualty massacres over condensed periods. See File on El Geneina, prepared by and on file with LAW. El Fasher, on the other hand, experienced attritional, cumulative violence, including siege warfare and intentional use of starvation as a method of warfare, the deliberate deprivation and collapse of medical care, and constant attacks, punctuated by acute escalations. In October 2025, LAW submitted a legal brief to the ICC on behalf of 22 Darfuri women survivors of CRSV, urging accountability for the RSF's campaign of murder, rape, and persecution in El Geneina since 2023.

31. See File on El Geneina, prepared by and on file with LAW.

32. See note 13, *supra*.

33. Armed groups, as non-state actors, cannot formally become parties to international human rights treaties. It is increasingly recognised and accepted, however, that these groups remain bound to respect fundamental human rights norms that constitute customary international law, including the right to life and the absolute prohibition of torture, in situations where they exercise *de facto* control over part of a state's territory. For an expansive view of the application of international human rights law to non-state actors, see, e.g., Andrew Clapham, *Human Rights Obligations of Non-State Actors* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006); see also, generally, Katharine Fortin, *The Accountability of Armed Groups under Human Rights Law* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017). To similar effect, see Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka, 31 March 2011, at para. 188, available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3961113>.

34. LAW-004.

35. See, e.g., Sudan: Top UN officials sound alarm at spike in violence against women and girls, UNICEF, 5 July 2023, available at

<https://www.unicef.org/sudan/press-releases/sudan-top-un-officials-sound-alarm-spike-violence-against-women-and-girls>.

36. CRSV and SGBV featured prominently in states' interventions, with multiple delegations condemning reports of rape, gang rape, and sexualised violence used as a tool of terror against civilians in and around El Fasher, often framing these abuses as part of wider patterns of ethnically targeted violence and other atrocity crimes. Several described rape as a "weapon of war," and emphasised that CRSV formed a central component of the RSF's conduct, contributing to mass displacement, communal destruction, and severe physical and psychological harm. See LAW Internal HRC Session Note.

37. U.N. Doc. A/HRC/61/77 (Advance unedited version).

38. LAW-008.

39. LAW-022; LAW-027.

40. LAW-082.

41. LAW-091; LAW-092.

42. LAW-103.

43. UN Economic and Social Council, Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons (E/CN.4/2005/8), para. 14.

44. Darfur Facing Even Greater Horror, UN Africa Renewal, Vol. 20(3), 31 October 2006, available at <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/journals/25179829/20/3/1>

45. United Nations International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General, S/2005/60, para. 220.

46. LAW-030; see also Letter dated 15 January 2024 from the Panel of Experts on the Sudan addressed to the President of the Security Council, 15 January 2024, U.N. Doc. S/2024/65.

47. LAW-026; LAW-031.

48. LAW-021.

49. LAW-020.

50. LAW-106; LAW-097.

51. See Reports of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1591 (2005) concerning Sudan, United Nations Security Council, available at <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1591/panel-of-experts/reports> (last visited 6 February 2026); see also LAW-019.

52. LAW-017; LAW-018.

53. LAW-107.

54. See *supra* Sec. VI.

55. LAW-016.

56. LAW-015; LAW-014.
57. LAW-108.
58. Sudan: Alarming El Fasher siege, hostilities must end - UN report, OHCHR, 20 December 2024, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/12/sudan-alarming-el-fasher-siege-hostilities-must-end-un-report>.
59. Tawila remains under the control of the SLA/Abdelwahid forces. The RSF has consolidated control over Zamzam displaced camp, roughly 15 kilometres south of El Fasher, while Abu Shouk sits on the City's northern edge within the wider urban perimeter. RSF units maintained an increased presence in Shagra, Golol, Om Jalbagh, Garni, and Karaso throughout the siege, and later took control of Zamzam in April 2025 and Abu Shouk following the capture of El Fasher in October 2025.
60. LAW-014.
61. Sudan Health Emergency Situation Report No. 4 15 December 2023, World Health Organization (WHO), available at https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/sudan/WHO-Sudan-conflict-situation-report-15-December_2023.pdf.
62. Under siege: the situation of human rights in El Fasher, North Darfur since May 2024, OHCHR, 20 December 2024, at para. 30, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/under-siege-situation-human-rights-el-fasher-north-darfur-may-2024>.
63. LAW-109.
64. LAW-105.
65. Sudan Internal Displacement Set to Top 10 Million as Famine Looms, International Organization for Migration (IOM), 6 June 2024, available at <https://mena.iom.int/news/sudan-internal-displacement-set-top-10-million-famine-looms-iom>.
66. Id.
67. Id.
68. LAW-077; LAW-078; LAW-092.
69. LAW-005; LAW-095.
70. LAW-007.
71. Id.
72. Id.
73. Systematic Arson Attacks Mark Next Phase of Mass Atrocities in El-Fasher, Yale School of Public Health, Humanitarian Research Lab, 8 October 2025, available at <https://files-profile.medicine.yale.edu/documents/319dd62a-d4d2-454b-8205-47214168dcf5>.
74. Id.
75. Id.
76. Id.
77. LAW-094.
78. WHO Condemns Killings of Patients and Civilians Amid Escalating Violence in El Fasher, Sudan, World Health Organization (WHO), 29 October 2025, available at <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-10-2025-who-condemns-killings-of-patients-and-civilians-amid-escalating-violence-in-el-fasher--sudan>; see also Tens of Thousands Fleeing on Foot Amid Atrocities in Sudan's El Fasher, United Nations, 31 October 2025, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/10/1166237>.
79. Sudan: UN experts call for urgent action to combat trafficking in El Fasher, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 27 November 2025, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/sudan-un-experts-call-urgent-action-combat-trafficking-el-fasher>.
80. LAW-079.
81. LAW-005.
82. LAW-301.
83. LAW-080; LAW-081; LAW-089.
84. Sudan war: Women endure starvation, rape and bombs fleeing El Fasher United Nations, 11 November 2025, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166327>.
85. LAW-002; LAW-094; LAW-095.
86. UN Experts Appalled by Reports of Mass Atrocities, Unlawful Killings and Sexual Violence in El Fasher, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 7 November 2025, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/sudan-un-experts-appalled-reports-mass-atrocities-unlawful-killings-and>.
87. LAW-092.
88. LAW-001; LAW-079; LAW-076.
89. Confidential Note on El Geneina, on file with LAW; see also LAW-010.
90. LAW-094.
91. LAW-003.
92. Sudan war: Women endure starvation, rape and bombs fleeing El Fasher United Nations, 11 November 2025, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166327>.
93. LAW-023; see also LAW-024.
94. LAW-011.
95. Sudan: UN experts call for urgent action to combat trafficking in El Fasher, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human

Rights (OHCHR), 27 November 2025, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/sudan-un-experts-call-urgent-action-combat-trafficking-el-fasher>.

96. LAW-228.

97. See LAW Internal HRC Session Note.

98. LAW-006.

99. <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2009/en/120353>.

100. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/national-practice/armed-forces-act-2007>.

101. <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/f5ce4tdw/pdf>.

102. <https://menarights.org/sites/default/files/2016-11/Sudan%20National%20Security%20Act%202010%20%28EN%29.pdf>.

103. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/national-practice/criminal-procedure-act-1991>.

104. https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-treaty-0011_-_african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_e.pdf.

105. Appeals Chamber Decision on the Defence Motion for Interlocutory Appeal on Jurisdiction, Case No. IT-94-1-AR72, 2 October 1995, at para. 70.

106. Yousuf Syed Khan, *Reframing Medical Deprivation Within the Starvation War Crime Paradigm*, World Peace Foundation (2026), available at <https://bit.ly/3ONTfn5>.

107. Geneva Conventions I, II, and IV, Arts. 15, 18, and 17, respectively.

108. ICRC Customary IHL Rules 31, 32, and 53–55.

109. *Sieges as a Weapon of War: Encircle, starve, surrender, evacuate*, United Nations Independent International Commission on the Syrian Arab Republic, 29 May 2018, available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/PolicyPaperSieges_29May2018.pdf.

110. This remains a genuine legal complexity. The 2019 Rome Statute amendment only applies to states that have ratified it, and the Darfur situation was referred by the UN Security Council, which creates questions about the amendment's applicability.

111. See Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 17 July 1998 (entered into force 1 July 2002), U.N. Doc. A/CONF.183/9, at Art. 7(2)(a). According to the ICC Elements of Crimes, the policy to commit an attack requires that the state or organisation actively promote or encourage such an attack against a civilian population. See ICC Elements of Crimes, at Art. 7(3).

112. See, e.g., *Situation in Kenya*, Decision Pursuant to Article 15

of the Rome Statute on the Authorization of an Investigation into the Situation in the Republic of Kenya, ICC-01/09-19, 31 March 2010, at para. 92; see also *Prosecutor v. Ruto et al.*, Decision on the Confirmation of Charges Pursuant to Article 61(7)(a) and (b) of the Rome Statute, ICC-01/09-01/11-373, 23 January 2012, at paras. 184-185.

113. *Sudan: UN experts call for urgent action to combat trafficking in El Fasher*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 27 November 2025, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/sudan-un-experts-call-urgent-action-combat-trafficking-el-fasher>.

114. LAW-094; LAW-095.

115. LAW-301; *El Fasher: A doctor's testimony from 'hell'*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 3 December 2025, available at <https://www.unocha.org/news/el-fasher-doctors-testimony-hell>.

116. Trial Chamber judgment, Case No. ICTR-96-4-T, 2 September 1998, at paras. 492-524.

117. Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (*Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro*), ICJ Judgment of 26 February 2007, para. 373.

118. Notably, the ICC proceedings focused on the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa ethnic groups, and not the Berti and Tunjur specifically. See, e.g., *The Prosecutor v. Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir*, Case Information Sheet, ICC-PIDS-CIS-SUD-02-006/18_Eng, International Criminal Court, updated July 2021, available at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CaseInformationSheets/AlBashirEng.pdf>.

119. *Akayesu*, supra note 116, at para. 731.

120. The UN maintains an arms embargo on actors in the Darfur region (initially imposed on non-governmental entities and individuals by Resolution 1556 in 2004, expanded to include the Sudanese government and all belligerents in Darfur by Resolution 1591 in 2005, and currently renewed until 12 September 2026, per recent resolution 2791 (2025) and prior extensions). The European Union (EU) enforces a long-standing arms embargo on Sudan (dating back to 1994, incorporating UN measures since 2005 via regulations like Council Regulation (EU) No 747/2014 and Council Decision 2014/450/CFSP, plus a separate autonomous framework since 2023 via Council Regulation (EU) 2023/2147 and Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/2135 addressing the RSF-SAF conflict). The United Kingdom (UK) implements UN sanctions alongside an autonomous arms embargo under the Sudan (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020. The United States implements the UN arms embargo through Executive Order 13400

(2006, focused on Darfur) and authorising additional targeted measures via Executive Order 14098 (2023, addressing destabilisation and the post-2023 conflict), though without a broad comprehensive embargo since revocations in 2017.

121. LAW-025, Internal Military Analysis v.2.5.

122. See SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Transfer Data, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), available at <https://armstransfers.sipri.org/ArmsTransfer/TransferData> (database of international transfers of major conventional arms maintained by SIPRI).

123. LAW-025, Internal Military Analysis v.2.5.

124. Id.

125. Id.

126. Id. See also U.S. Treasury/OFAC sanctions of 16 January 2025: The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) explicitly designated Portex Trade Limited (a Hong Kong-based company) and its controller, Ahmad Abdalla (a Sudanese-Ukrainian national and Chief Operating Officer of Portex), under Executive Order 14098. This was part of sanctions targeting SAF leadership and procurement networks.

127. See LAW-025, Internal Military Analysis v.2.5.

128. Id.

129. Id.

130. See note 120, supra

131. LAW-025, Internal Military Analysis v.2.5.

132. Id.

133. Id.

134. LAW-122.

135. Id.

136. Id.

137. LAW-192.

138. LAW-025, Internal Military Analysis v.2.5.

139. Id. The arms embargo was established through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1556, adopted on 30 July 2004, which covered non-governmental entities and individuals in Darfur, including militias; required all UN member states to prevent the sale or supply of arms and related materiel to those groups; and demanded that the Sudanese government disarm the *Janjaweed* militias.

140. Id.

141. LAW-224.

142. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/sudan-rsf-massacres-canadian-rifles-sterling-cross-9.6969856>.

143. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/sudan-canadian-made-rifles-allegedly-found-fueling-rsf-amid-global-arms-flow-incl-companys-comments>.

144. Sudan: UN Rights Chief Says Worse Is to Come Without International Action, U.N. News, 9 February 2026, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/02/1166925>.

145. LAW-090; LAW-095.

146. See note 33 supra.

147. See, e.g., S/2024/65, paras. 42 and 45.

148. LAW-025, Internal Military Analysis v.2.5; U.N. Doc. S/2024/65; LAW-225. Exact shipment manifests were unavailable due to clandestine operations.

149. Id.

150. As early as 15 January 2024, and in its report to the UN Security Council, the Panel of Experts on the Sudan (PoE) had identified three main routes with a “heavy rotation of cargo planes” travelling from Abu Dhabi, UAE to the Am Djarass airport in eastern Chad and noted “credible” allegations that these planes were bringing weapons and munitions shipments “several times a week” for transfer to RSF. U.N. Doc. S/2024/65, para 41. See also LAW-045; LAW-042; LAW-040.

151. LAW-094.

152. There is, however, an on-going legal debate as to the exact scope of that mandate in relation to crimes committed since April 2023, including whether the current hostilities between the SAF and the RSF are “sufficiently linked” to the situation that was before the Security Council in 2005, whether the territorial limitation to Darfur excludes some conduct in the wider Sudanese conflict, and how far the 2005 referral extends to amendment crimes such as the starvation war crime in a non-international armed conflict (in 2019).

153. Sudan: Warn about intensification in Kordofan, OHCHR, 20 January 2026, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2026/01/sudan-warn-about-intensification-kordofan>.



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