

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 56th SESSION

### Interactive dialogue on the oral update by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) for the Sudan

18-19 June 2024

**Mr. Mohamed Chande Othman, Chair of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) for the Sudan**, provided an oral update on the situation of human rights in the country. Sudan was engulfed in a devastating conflict for over a year characterized by its urban, widespread nature and its civilian population placed at the centre of extreme violence. Blatant disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law had led to killings, lootings, mass displacement, rape, and other forms of sexual violence, thus resulting in a grave humanitarian crisis, with around 18 million people acutely food insecure and five million facing starvation. Since the appointment of the FFM in December 2023, its members have been doing their utmost to fulfill the HRC mandate, despite delays due to the liquidity crisis faced by the OHCHR Secretariat and the resulting hiring freeze. Thanks to the special efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the support of the Government of Kenya, the Secretariat finally started its mandate in May 2024 in Nairobi. From the outset of its work, the FFM issued a call for information and documentation relevant to the mandate; and initiated contacts with the Governments of Sudan, the CAR, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda, requesting their cooperation to gather information from victims of the conflict. Kenya and Chad had already positively replied, which allowed the FFM to meet with victims, witnesses, and experts in Nairobi. The FFM expressed its openness to visit Sudan and hear the Government's views while noting that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) expressed their will to cooperate with the mandate.

Since the outbreak of the hostilities between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF on 5 April 2023, the armed conflict has continued unabated on a massive scale. The conflict had spread from Khartoum to Darfur and across most of the country, as well as to multiple actors within and outside Sudan. The conflict continued to cause mass displacement of the civilian population at unprecedented levels, with almost 9 million individuals displaced from their homes, and more than 1.8 million have fled to neighboring countries. Nearly 18 million individuals are facing **acute hunger amidst civilians** up to starvation, with the manifest of this immense suffering. The humanitarian response, which remained largely underfunded with only 16 percent of the necessary funds to be received, was of utmost urgency.

The FFM voiced deep concern at the persistent fighting and profound suffering of the civilian population, corroborated by credible accounts of **indiscriminate attacks against civilians** and civilian objects, including through air strikes and shelling in densely populated residential areas and ground attacks against civilians in their homes and villages. Attacks on civilians based on their **ethnicity** in Darfur and other regions were also under investigation. Serious concerns were further raised over **health facilities being attacked, pillaged, and destroyed**, thereby depriving civilians of healthcare. Medical supplies had also been blocked from reaching critical areas, leading to the death of many civilians from injuries sustained in the conflict due to the inaccessibility of such supplies. The conflict had caused damage to vital infrastructure, including electricity and water supply lines, as well as communication networks. **Attacks on medical personnel**, including those providing support to victims of sexual violence, were highly disturbing.

The FFM had received many reports on cases of sexual violence being committed by warring factions across various parts of the country since the outbreak of the conflict. **Women and girls** had been and continued to be subjected to rape and gang rape, abduction, and forced marriage. Victims themselves

explained how they had endured violent rape, including gang rape, and denial of medical care. Trapped in a brutal spiral of suffering, they were stigmatized and completely abandoned by their families. Furthermore, the FFM evoked accounts of sexual slavery and sexualized torture in detention facilities, including against men and boys, which were under investigation by the FFM. The majority of survivors did not have access to adequate support due to the lack of access to or unavailability of health services and the destruction. Medical emergencies, journalists, civil society actors, and human rights activists had been subjected to threats, attacks, arbitrary arrests, torture, detention, and forced mass killings.

By virtue of its mandate, the FFM was also required to examine the **root causes of all alleged violations and abuses of human rights**. Since then, the FFM has identified a number of structural and systematic issues related to policies and conduct, which encompassed the continued arming of civilians without meaningful control, the mobilization and distribution of militia on an ethnic basis, and the shielding from accountability of persons and entities responsible for atrocious crimes. The **national legal system seemed unable** to conduct strong, independent, and credible investigations in line with international human rights standards. The FFM stressed the imperative need for an **immediate ceasefire**, as mandated by UNSC resolution 2720 of May 2024. The FFM further reiterated the **obligation to protect civilians** against any acts, including killings, looting, sexual violations, and forced displacement, and the **obligation to punish** such crimes as mandated by international law.

**Sudan (concerned country)** took the floor through its Public Prosecutor, who stressed that the world had witnessed violations and crimes perpetrated by the RSF against unarmed civilians such as killings, displacement, systematic attacks against civilians amounting to genocide as well as the massacre in Al-Jazira governorate which was also condemned by the UN High Commissioner. The RSF killed the Governor of West Darfur, Mr. Khamis Abkar, and mutilated his corpse; and further committed crimes and serious violations against women and children, such as rape and sexual violence as well as forced conscriptions of children. Continued RSF attacks against civilian infrastructure and houses led to the displacement of more than 15 million citizens inside and outside the country. In addition, RSF attacked religious and cultural sites, courts, and archive centres; hampered activities of more than 120 hospitals; obstructed the distribution of humanitarian assistance, and targeted humanitarian staff. Sudan's Public Prosecutor was keen to engage in technical cooperation and requested the international community to provide Sudan with technical assistance in criminal law; to facilitate his institutional work against impunity, and to establish an international fund for redress and compensation.

### Interactive dialogue

**58 country delegations** took the floor during the interactive dialogue. All the countries were supportive of the urgent need for a sustained ceasefire to pave the way for humanitarian relief and political negotiations for restoring social peace and stability. The majority of the countries expressed grave concern at the continued disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law, corroborated by attacks against health facilities, civilians, and civilian infrastructure. Several countries voiced concern at reports of ethnically motivated violence as well as conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. Calls for accountability and cooperation with the FFM were voiced in order to shed light on the alleged violations and abuses.

The **EU** expressed alarm over the continued escalation of the conflict in Sudan and appalling accounts of ethnically motivated killings and sexual and gender-based violence, especially targeting women and children. The severe deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation was also alarming. As both parties showed utter disregard for any protection of civilians and human life, the EU reiterated

its call for the protection of civilians and an immediate ceasefire. **Pakistan** expressed deep concern over the continued loss of innocent lives and the ensuing dire humanitarian situation, while reiterating its support for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They urged the international community to enhance aid programmes and technical assistance; and called upon parties to exercise restraint and move towards a ceasefire.

**Jordan** emphasized that a ceasefire and humanitarian aid were the highest priority, while calling for the protection of civilians and welcoming all diplomatic efforts to end the conflict and put the country back on the peace track through the holding of free, fair, and democratic elections. **Gambia** emphasized the principles of complementarity, solidarity, and African solutions to African problems. The African Group stressed the need for a single coordinated international effort under the auspices of the AU and the immediate priority to silence guns so as to pave the way for humanitarian relief and dialogue towards a peaceful transition. **Egypt** would pursue its efforts towards a peaceful settlement and solutions to the humanitarian crisis while stressing that at the end of June, it would host a conference with civilian and political Sudanese forces to reach a sustainable peace based on an exclusive Sudanese vision.

**UN Women** explained that violations and abuses of women's and girls' rights in Sudan continued to worsen, with reports showing an increase in all forms of violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. It further expressed concern over the new security law shrinking civic space and exposing women's rights activists to detention for doing their work. UN Women echoed the demands of Sudanese women to put pressure to protect women and girls, female activists, and to respond to the needs of IDPs and refugees, most notably by ensuring security, access to relief, and safe passage of women and girls across borders.

**NGOs** voiced the imperative to put an end to civilians' suffering through a sustained ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access as well as to hold those responsible to account. **Committee for Justice** denounced human rights defenders' fear of being prosecuted for documenting abuses and violations committed by warring parties. **East Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project** stated that 80 NGOs urged States to adopt a resolution extending the FFM's mandate for at least one year. In the same vein, **Human Rights Watch** appealed to all UN member states to support the critical mandate of the FFM.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (58 country delegations):

*Sudan, European Union, Norway (on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries), Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC), Qatar (on behalf of the GCC), Jordan (on behalf of the League of Arab States), New Zealand (on behalf of a group of countries), United Kingdom (on behalf of the core group for Sudan), Gambia (on behalf of the African Group), Liechtenstein, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Ireland, Qatar, Japan, UN Women, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Algeria, Belgium, Spain, Ethiopia, China, the Netherlands, USA, Kuwait, Iraq, Russian Federation, Nigeria, Malta, Belarus, Syria, Bahrein, Tunisia, Albania, DPRK, Yemen, Jordan, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ghana, Eritrea, Libya, Venezuela, South Africa, Morocco, Mauritania, Chad, Cameroon, Senegal, Uganda, South Sudan, Ukraine, Bangladesh.*

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (10):

Elizka Relief Foundation, Committee for Justice, Centre du Commerce International pour le Développement, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Réseau de Formation, de Recherche et d'Action sur les Migrations Africaines (REFORMAF), Caritas International, Human Rights Watch, Maat for Peace, Interfaith International.

To watch the full meeting refer to the UN WEB TV: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).