

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 62nd SESSION

Urgent Debate on the situation of human rights in and around El Obeid, North Kordofan, in the context of the ongoing conflict in Sudan

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Mr Volker Turk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR, addressed the Council by saying that the signs from El Obeid are clear and unmistakable: another human rights catastrophe is unfolding in Sudan, this time in the capital of the strategic state of North Kordofan. Civilians have been subjected to siege-like conditions for 18 months, battered by relentless drone strikes as the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces battle for control over areas surrounding the city. These attacks, and fuel shortages, have a compound impact, making it difficult for civilians to access clean water, food, transport and healthcare, and to communicate with each other and the outside world. Shortages of clean water are reaching a critical point in El Obeid. As the rainy season starts, this puts people at serious risk of waterborne diseases, including cholera.

The Office of the High Commission has documented patterns of summary executions, abductions, torture and ill-treatment, sexual violence, and looting along the routes taken by displaced people across the Kordofan region.

This Urgent Debate called for strong action at the highest level. The UN Security Council needs to fulfil its responsibilities to prevent atrocity crimes. There also needs to be accountability for the crimes that have been committed. The High Commissioner welcomed the continued engagement of the International Criminal Court on Sudan as a path to that end, in addition to efforts based on universal jurisdiction. The safe and voluntary movement of civilians out of El Obeid must be guaranteed. He urgently needed a humanitarian pause to allow for the unhindered delivery of food and humanitarian aid into the city and its surroundings.

Mr George Katrougalos, the Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures highlighted the rapidly deteriorating situation in El Obeid, North Kordofan. Reports of a significant military build-up, intensified artillery shelling and drone strikes, together with the prolonged siege-like conditions endured by the city's population, point to an imminent risk of another catastrophic assault on civilians.

The attacks on El Fasher city and Zamzam IDP camp demonstrated the devastating human rights consequences that follow when military operations are conducted in disregard of the fundamental principles of international law. The UN Security Council also warned of the "imminent risk of mass atrocities". The international community cannot claim to be unaware of the risks facing the civilian population of El Obeid. The warning signs are unmistakable, and they demand urgent preventive action.

He further affirmed that the situation in El Obeid must be understood within the broader context of a conflict that has become characterised by widespread and recurrent attacks against civilians, indiscriminate violence, forced displacement, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, destruction of civilian infrastructure and grave restrictions on humanitarian access. The increasing use of explosive weapons, including drones, in populated areas has compounded the suffering of civilians, damaging essential infrastructure and further limiting access to food, water, healthcare and other indispensable services. Siege tactics and repeated attacks on civilian infrastructure have left entire communities trapped in increasingly desperate conditions. Women and girls continue to bear a disproportionate burden of this conflict. Children continue to be exposed to unimaginable violence, deprivation and displacement. Older persons, persons with disabilities and other individuals in

situations of heightened vulnerability face additional barriers to accessing safety, humanitarian assistance and essential services.

He underlined that one of the most troubling features of this conflict is not only the scale of the violations, but their repetition. The patterns documented over the past three years demonstrate that many of these abuses are no longer isolated incidents. They have become recurrent features of the conduct of hostilities. This repetition underscores the devastating consequences of persistent impunity. Indeed, he recalled that serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law may constitute war crimes and, where applicable, crimes against humanity. Accountability is not only essential to provide justice to victims. It is indispensable to preventing further violations and to laying the foundations for a sustainable peace.

The Human Rights Council, Member States and all those with influence over the parties must act with urgency to help prevent another human rights catastrophe. He called upon neighbouring States and the wider international community to continue to provide protection and assistance to those fleeing the conflict, to maintain access to asylum, and to support humanitarian operations responding to one of the world's gravest displacement and protection crises.

Ms Mona Rishmawi, member of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Sudan reported that currently El-Obeid is a critical civilian, administrative, and humanitarian hub linking central Sudan, Darfur, and South Kordofan. The RSF now has control over all routes surrounding it, except towards the East. Residents described growing military movements around the city by the RSF and increasing insecurity with drone attacks along exit routes.

Drone attacks by the RSF are increasing in and around El-Obeid, targeting power stations, fuel depots, water facilities, transport routes, and military positions. Hospitals, markets, schools, and residential areas have also reportedly been struck, causing civilian casualties and disrupting essential services. Women and children are among those killed and injured. Food, fuel, and transportation costs have risen dramatically. Water shortages are severe, electricity is limited, and access to healthcare is deteriorating.

She mentioned that all parties must take feasible precautions to protect civilians. The SAF (Sudanese Armed Forces) and its allies are also increasingly resorting to arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention and intimidation of individuals suspected of supporting the RSF (Rapid Support Forces), including those criticising the war, advocating for peace, or expressing views on social media.

She called on all parties to comply fully with international law, cease hostilities, and protect civilians and civilian objects. The RSF must immediately stop attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including fuel depots, water facilities, transport routes, hospitals, markets, schools, and residential areas. The SAF and its allies must avoid locating military personnel and objects within or near civilian areas and stop intimidating civilians. This is not only a humanitarian imperative; it is essential to regional and international peace and security.

Sudan (Concerned Country), Mr. Mohildin Salim Ahmed Ibrahim, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Sudan, affirmed the will of positively interact with genuine initiatives that aim at stopping this war by proxy, defined by the High Commissioner in this council, as long as these initiatives are in accordance with the roadmap that was deposited by the President of the Transitional Sovereign Council at the UN on the 10th of March 2025, and as supported by the initiative for the government to achieve peace and deposited by the Prime Minister at the Security Council in December 2025.

The roadmap is based on dismantling the militia and to gather its weapons and collect them in an area to be decided upon and then to start security arrangements for a cease fire in accordance with the Sudanese-owned political process with the support of the international community. Protecting human rights is a first priority.

On the humanitarian level, he expressed his gratitude to states that have hosted refugees (4.3 million refugees and IDPs, according to IOM's reports) and to the efforts made by the government in spite of the limited resources in order to provide an environment conducive to voluntary return.

Interactive Dialogue

Among the Delegations that took the floor, **MENA countries** strongly condemned the worsening humanitarian situation in El Obeid while placing particular emphasis on Sudan's sovereignty, non-interference, and the need for a Sudanese-led political solution. **Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Türkiye, Iran** explicitly condemned the RSF, although they generally avoided broader discussions on accountability mechanisms.

Saudi Arabia highlighted its mediation efforts through the Jeddah Declaration; and called for immediate ceasefire, protection of civilians, and a Sudanese-led political process preserving national institutions. **United Arab Emirates** condemned violations committed by both warring parties; supported expanding the UN arms embargo nationwide; advocated an immediate ceasefire and civilian-led political transition. **Jordan** focused on the humanitarian catastrophe, civilian protection, humanitarian access, and Sudan's sovereignty. **Iraq** condemned attacks on hospitals, schools and essential infrastructure; emphasized peaceful negotiations, sovereignty, and rejection of foreign interference.

Algeria called for respect for Sudan's unity and territorial integrity; condemned external actors fueling the conflict; supported Sudanese-led reconciliation. **Morocco** expressed solidarity with Sudan; emphasized humanitarian assistance, strengthening national institutions, dialogue, and sovereignty.

European countries warned that El Obeid must not become another El Fasher, repeatedly stressing that the international community has a responsibility to prevent another cycle of mass atrocities. They focused on the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire, the protection of civilians, and unrestricted humanitarian access. They strongly condemned the RSF's attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, while also underlining that both the RSF and the SAF bear responsibility for ending the conflict, together with those providing them with military or financial support.

The Netherlands, Cyprus and Belgium placed particular emphasis on conflict-related sexual violence and the protection of survivors, while Belgium also stressed the importance of safeguarding human rights defenders. **Switzerland, Germany, Greece and Liechtenstein** drew attention to the role of external actors in fueling the conflict and called for an end to arms transfers, with **Switzerland** additionally supporting an expansion of the UN arms embargo. **Germany and the United Kingdom** highlighted their humanitarian contributions and the outcomes of the Berlin Conference, while **Portugal** underlined the importance of an inclusive civilian-led political process involving women, youth and civil society.

Albania while aligning with the EU statement, reaffirmed their support for the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and, arguing that documenting violations and ensuring justice are essential both to ending impunity and preventing future atrocities. **Moldova** additionally

stressed the need to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and urged external actors to refrain from fueling the conflict, while **Montenegro** emphasized that accountability is inseparable from sustainable peace.

The Russian Federation criticized the Human Rights Council's practice of establishing and expanding country-specific monitoring mechanisms, arguing that these politicize the Sudan file rather than contribute to resolving the conflict. Instead, it called for greater international support to strengthen Sudan's state institutions and restore stability. Similarly, **Belarus** opposed country-specific resolutions and non-consensual human rights mechanisms, emphasizing that any international action should be undertaken with the full consent of Sudan.

Ukraine condemned attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, warned of the imminent risk of large-scale atrocities, called for immediate de-escalation and humanitarian access, and reaffirmed its support for Sudan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

African countries framed the crisis primarily through the principles of African ownership, regional leadership and respect for Sudan's sovereignty. While expressing deep concern over the escalating violence and humanitarian situation in El Obeid, they consistently stressed that there is no military solution and called for an immediate ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian access and an inclusive Sudanese-led political process under the leadership of the African Union (AU) and IGAD. The African Group also strongly condemned external interference and reaffirmed the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and "African solutions to African problems."

While sharing these common priorities, some countries placed additional emphasis on specific issues. **South Africa, Ghana and The Gambia** called for accountability, prevention of further atrocities and an end to external support fueling the conflict, whereas countries such as **Mali** focused more on supporting the Sudanese Government and existing peace initiatives. Overall, African delegations sought to balance humanitarian concerns and accountability with a strong insistence that peace efforts remain African-led, Sudanese-owned and respectful of national sovereignty.

Asian countries generally combined humanitarian concerns with a strong emphasis on Sudan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political dialogue. Most delegations called for an immediate ceasefire, the protection of civilians and unhindered humanitarian access, while supporting a Sudanese-led political process. **Japan, the Republic of Korea and Timor-Leste** also expressed strong support for preventing further atrocities and endorsed the work of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (IFFM), whereas **Indonesia, Pakistan and India** placed greater emphasis on regional mediation, national ownership and complementarity with Sudanese institutions.

China opposed the expansion of international accountability mechanisms without Sudan's consent and reiterated its opposition to country-specific mechanisms imposed without the agreement of the concerned State.

Latin American delegations adopted a generally balanced approach, centred on humanitarian protection, respect for international humanitarian law and the need for accountability. Most countries condemned attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, called for an immediate ceasefire and emphasized the urgency of ensuring safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. Countries such as **Chile, Brazil, Mexico, Peru and the Dominican Republic** highlighted the particular vulnerability of civilians—especially women and children—and stressed the need to investigate violations of international humanitarian law, including sexual violence and the use of siege tactics and starvation.

Support for accountability mechanisms was broadly strong, with **Brazil and Peru** explicitly reaffirming their backing for the Fact-Finding Mission.

At the same time, all delegations reiterated respect for Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, with **Venezuela** placing particular emphasis on non-interference and consent-based international engagement.

Civil society and UN entities focused primarily on the urgent need to prevent further atrocities and strengthen civilian protection. They warned of the imminent risk of large-scale atrocities in El Obeid and urged the Human Rights Council to act decisively; and called for an end to siege conditions, unhindered humanitarian access, protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel, and continued support for the Fact-Finding Mission as a key tool for accountability.

UN Women highlighted the disproportionate impact of the conflict on women and girls, warning of increasing risks of conflict-related sexual violence and deteriorating access to essential services. It called for stronger protection measures, survivor-centred responses, greater investment in gender-responsive humanitarian assistance, and meaningful support for Sudanese women's organizations, emphasizing that women must play a central role in humanitarian response and future peacebuilding efforts.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (75 country delegations):

EU (on behalf of a Group of Countries), Finland (on behalf of the Nordic Baltic Countries), Ireland (on behalf of the Coalition for Atrocity Prevention and Justice for Sudan), Kenya (on behalf of the African Group), Kuwait, Qatar, Bulgaria, Egypt, Spain, Chile, Japan, the UK, France, Indonesia, Kenya, Slovenia, South Africa, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Mexico, Albania, the Netherlands, Ghana, Brazil, Dominica Republic, China, Italy, Iraq, The Gambia, India, Cyprus, Switzerland, Belgium, Iran, Austria, Luxembourg, Lichenstein, Saudi Arabia, Belarus, Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, Canada, Malta, Peru, Ireland, Greece, Moldova, Germany, United Arab Emirates, Australia, Rwanda, Ukraine, Portugal, Venezuela, Türkiye, Mali, Timor Leste, Montenegro, Russian Federation, Eritrea, South Sudan, Somalia, Zambia, Nigeria, Slovakia, Sierra Leone, Lebanon, Oman, Argentina, State of Palestine, Holy See, Yemen, Libya, Tunisia.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (11):

Elizka Relief Foundation, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, Human Rights Research League, Amnesty International, Partners for Transparency, Human Rights Watch, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, International Bar Association, International organization for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, International Federation for Human Rights, International Services for Human Rights, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights, Plan International, Rencontre Africaine pour la Défiance de Droit de l'Homme.

International Organizations: UN Women.

To watch the full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).

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