

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	760
Land:	Sudan
Kilde:	Human Rights Watch
Titel:	World Should Rally to Halt Unfolding Atrocities in Darfur. As Darfur Burns, Civilian Protection Mission Needed
Udgivet:	17. maj 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	18. juni 2024

World Should Rally to Halt Unfolding Atrocities in Darfur

As Darfur Burns, Civilian Protection Mission Needed



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Damage to Babiker Nahar Pediatric Hospital in El Fasher, capital of North Darfur following an airstrike, May 11, 2024. © 2024 Ayin Network

Hundreds of thousands of civilians are at risk of again becoming victims of atrocities, this time in the North Darfur city of El Fasher, amid fighting between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), as well as allied militias. Fighting began in April, and the last week has seen fierce clashes in and around the city, including deliberate attacks on civilians, burning of residential neighborhoods, and indiscriminate bombing and shelling.

Tens of thousands of people in El Fasher have already been displaced, with many civilians trapped in the city without access to aid. A telecommunications blackout is also hampering real-time reporting.



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Damage to Babiker Nahar Pediatric Hospital in El Fasher, capital of North Darfur following an airstrike, May 11, 2024. © 2024 Ayin Network

Observers within the United Nations, governments, and civil society have warned an attack on El Fasher would cause immeasurable suffering. On May 15, the United States [sanctioned](#) two high-level RSF commanders, one for involvement in leading the attacks on El Fasher, but greater focus on civilian protection is needed.

Satellite imagery [indicates](#) fires in the eastern part of the city since at least April 18, with an increase from May 10 to 12, days when fighting in the city spiraled. The images show burn marks

in the city that suggest targeting of non-Arab neighbourhoods. We also geolocated videos posted online of RSF soldiers close to residential areas [ablaze](#). This is consistent with the RSF and allied forces' modus operandi in West Darfur last year.

Bombing and shelling in the city is also costing lives. On May 15, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders or MSF), one of the only aid groups present in El Fasher, [said](#) the South Hospital, which it supports, had received 454 casualties, 56 of them succumbing to their injuries since May 10. MSF also [reported](#) that on May 11, a SAF airstrike 25 meters from a pediatric hospital had killed two children and at least one caregiver and forced the hospital to stop operations. The strike left an approximately 5 meter-wide crater near the hospital visible on satellite imagery.

Last week Human Rights Watch released a [report](#) documenting war crimes and crimes against humanity by the RSF and allied militias in West Darfur's El Geneina. The ongoing assault in El Fasher bears stark similarities to these findings and warns of a tragedy which may repeat itself.

Concerted global action is needed now. The UN Security Council and the African Union's Peace and Security Councils should meet, deploy a civilian protection mission to Sudan, and call on their respective institutions to press warring parties to ensure trapped civilians can safely flee.