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Sudan: Mass Atrocities in Captured Darfur City

Rampant Abuse of Fleeing Civilians by Rapid Support Forces
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(Nairobi) – Dozens of videos posted on social media in recent days show Rapid Support Forces (RSF) carrying out extrajudicial killings and other serious violations against people fleeing North Darfur's capital, El Fasher, Human Rights Watch said today.

Thousands of people are leaving following the RSF takeover of the city on October 26, 2025. The takeover is the culmination of the 18-month siege of the city and relentless attacks by the armed group that triggered famine in displacement camps in and around the city. The unlawful attacks on fleeing people raise alarm over the fate of the tens of thousands of civilians who, as of last week, remained in the city.

“The horrific images from El Fasher bear the hallmarks of the Rapid Support Forces’ record of mass atrocities,” said Federico Borello, interim executive director at Human Rights Watch. “If the world doesn’t act urgently, civilians will bear the full brunt of more heinous crimes. The RSF’s backers, notably the United Arab Emirates, should press its leaders to rein in their forces, while global leaders should take robust measures against the RSF leadership.”

The United Nations Security Council should urgently act to prevent further atrocities, Human Rights Watch said. Officials from the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE, known as the Quad, who recently gathered in Washington, DC, should make clear that the RSF leadership will be held to account, including through immediate asset freezes and travel bans.

On October 26, reports began to circulate that the RSF had taken over the military garrison hosting the Sudanese Armed Forces’ (SAF) 6th infantry division of El Fasher and the city’s airport. The RSF already controls all other major cities in the Darfur region.



Displaced Sudanese people who fled El Fasher after the city fell to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) arrive in the town of Tawila, North Darfur, Sudan, on October 28, 2025.

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In recent months, the RSF had dug a trench and built a sand berm encircling the city, and RSF fighters have largely prevented traders and aid groups from reaching the city, leaving civilians to resort to eating animal fodder. The medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) reported that 75 percent of the 165 children under 5 it screened from El Fasher on October 18 and 19 were acutely malnourished.

Local responders and media reported a spike in drone strikes since September which killed and injured civilians. On October 15, an activist told Human Rights Watch that he had survived a drone attack that day that killed two civilians and injured two others.

Civilians fleeing El Fasher have faced serious abuses along the way, including rape, pillaging, and killings.

These abuses escalated with the RSF victory. Videos circulating on social media since October 26, analyzed and verified by Human Rights Watch, show RSF fighters celebrating over large numbers of dead men and women, both in uniform and civilian clothes, executing apparent civilians, and taunting, abusing, and killing severely injured people.

Human Rights Watch geolocated eight videos filmed next to the berm encircling the city, roughly 8 kilometers northwest of El Fasher. One video, filmed from atop the berm, shows dozens of bodies, some in military fatigues, in the trench below. In another video, an RSF fighter wearing a white scarf crouches next to a man in civilian clothing with a bandage on his upper right leg lying on the ground. As the man begs for mercy, the fighter says, “I will have no mercy on you ... we are here to kill.” Then the fighter stands and shoots the man five times with an AK-pattern rifle. In another video filmed around the berm, an RSF fighter is heard shouting, “We won’t give guarantees to prisoners.”

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk warned on October 27 that the “risk of further large-scale, ethnically motivated violations and atrocities in El Fasher is mounting by the day.” His office said that hundreds of fleeing people had reportedly been detained. The RSF detained a journalist, Muhammad Ibrahim, on October 26.

The RSF has a track record of carrying out mass atrocities against civilians in the aftermath of military victories. Human Rights Watch had documented in June 2023 that the RSF and its allies opened fire on a kilometers-long convoy of civilians and Sudanese Armed Forces and allied armed groups fighters



Location of the videos verified and geolocated by Human Rights Watch next to the berm encircling the city.

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fleeing West Darfur's capital, El Geneina, killing large numbers. In November 2023, the RSF killed hundreds of civilians in Ardamata, a suburb of El Geneina, the last haven for ethnic Massalit, following its takeover of the army garrison there. Human Rights Watch concluded that the RSF had carried out crimes against humanity and widespread war crimes as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing targeting the Massalit and other non-Arab populations of El Geneina. The context and the widespread, ethnically targeted nature of the killings, also raise the possibility that the killings were acts of genocide.

In April 2025, as international actors prepared to hold a conference on Sudan in London, the RSF carried out a large-scale attack on the Zamzam displacement camp, 15 kilometers south of El Fasher.

The RSF has ignored repeated calls by the security council to end its siege on El Fasher.

The RSF's takeover of El Fasher took place as informal talks between the warring parties were reportedly underway in Washington, DC, under the auspices of the Quad. In September, the Quad called on warring parties to implement a "humanitarian truce" for an initial three months, to allow humanitarian assistance in throughout the country.

Since the conflict's onset, UN experts as well as international media and organizations have reported that the RSF, despite its heinous human rights track record, receives military support from the UAE. Human Rights Watch and France 24 documented that the RSF used arms previously in the possession of the UAE military. International and Colombian media have reported that a UAE-based company recruited and deployed former Colombian military personnel to Darfur to train RSF fighters and fight on their side. Social media videos verified and geolocated by Human Rights Watch show Spanish-speaking foreign fighters engaged in heavy gunfights in El Fasher.

The security council should immediately meet with and hear from Sudanese people directly affected by the events in El Fasher and impose sanctions on the RSF leader, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (known as "Hemedti"), and his brother, Abdel Raheem Hamdan Dagalo, the RSF's deputy commander, for serious violations of international humanitarian law. Abdel Raheem was in Ardamata during large-scale abuses against civilians and around El Fasher, mobilizing forces, ahead of the decisive attack on the Zamzam camp.

The European Union, the United Kingdom, and other countries should urgently impose targeted sanctions on both men. The UAE should immediately use its leverage to demand the RSF end their attacks against civilians.

"The international community needs to make clear to the RSF leadership that its attacks on civilians will have serious consequences," Borello said. "The UN Security Council and key states should act immediately against this criminal conduct, including by sanctioning the RSF leadership."

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