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UN Women – UN Entity for
Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women
(replaces UNIFEM, DAW,
INSTRAW, OSAGI) (Author)

Press briefing by UN Women on the
humanitarian needs of women and girls in
Sudan after two years of war

When women lead, when women are heard,
humanitarian needs are met.

Remarks by Anna Mutavati, UN Women Regional Director for East and Southern Africa and Salvator Nkurunziza, UN Women Country Representative in Sudan, speaking at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva, from Port Sudan.

Remarks by Anna Mutavati, UN Women Regional
Director for East and Southern Africa:

I speak to you from Port Sudan, on the day we mark the second year of the horrific war in Sudan.

I am here to express solidarity with the women of Sudan who are bearing the brunt of one of the world's worst humanitarian emergencies, to listen to their concerns, and to reassure them that they are not alone.

Just a few days ago, 400 civilians lost their lives in the attack in Darfur. We condemn, in the strongest terms, this unwarranted attack on civilians which goes against international humanitarian law.

Thousands of civilians who are trapped in the Darfur region have no access to crucial lifesaving services including food and healthcare. We call for humanitarian access and the protection of humanitarian aid workers who are providing lifesaving support to civilians in the region.

The war's toll is devastating:

- **288 per cent increase in demand for lifesaving support following rape and sexual violence.**
- **Women's bodies have become battlegrounds in this conflict**, with sexual violence and rape being systematically used as a weapon of war.
- **Yet these numbers don't capture the pain and fear** I hear in the stories of women I have met in displacement camps and protection centres in Port Sudan.

Every woman fled her home with nothing, escaping violence and personal tragedies. I have heard their accounts of horror, the sexual abuse they suffered, and the constant need to move from one place to another, with nowhere safe to go. Lack of food, medical care, and drinking water has become the norm, while their children have lost access to education and live now in constant fear.

The testimonies of women survivors of sexual violence will remain with me forever. How their bodies became battlegrounds, as there are strong indications of gender-based violence being used as a weapon of war.

I visited, two days ago, an internally displaced persons site here in Port Sudan—Saada and Salam Gathering Site (which means "Happiness and Peace"). It is a school turned into a displacement camp for those who escaped from Khartoum and other areas under attack in the past two years. Eighty-eight families live there, with only three latrines for women and two for men, and no access to drinking water or healthcare. A woman told us how she gave birth alone on the floor of her tent.

Sudanese women's organizations are at the frontline of the response. Many have been pillars of Sudanese civil society for decades, promoting women's rights, education, and leadership in political decision-making.

We cannot abandon them now. Now is when they need us most.

- **Women demand a place at the table** to shape the peace and future of their country.
- **They demand justice and accountability** for the violations they have suffered.
- **They demand an end to the war** and sustainable long-term peace to return.

- They demand a chance for their children to dream and pursue those dreams like the rest of the children.
- They demand that we do not keep quiet about the sexual violence that they are enduring, as the perpetrators would want them to.
- They demand that we use our spaces and voices to help them tell the story of the gross human rights violations that they are experiencing.
- They demand that we spotlight the underfunding of local women's organizations that are helping women bear the brunt of this conflict with very little funding.
- They demand that we act now and not wait another day longer.

Remarks by Salvator Nkurunziza, UN Women Country Representative in Sudan:

All the work that UN Women does in Sudan is with, for, and through women's organizations. They are at the forefront of our response to gender-based violence, access to humanitarian services, and building livelihoods for women's economic empowerment.

UN Women is—and will remain—here, staying and delivering, standing with these organizations, giving them a voice in humanitarian assistance, demanding lasting peace, and championing a leading role for women and girls in shaping the future of this country.

Empowering local women's organizations is essential to everything UN Women does in Sudan.

In our humanitarian action, these organizations help identify urgent needs in displacement camps, support survivors of gender-based violence, and provide psychosocial care and livelihoods training. They work within their own communities to support those who need it most—including women with disabilities, pregnant women, and women-led households. They are resilient, continuing their work and mobilizing communities to stop this war despite unimaginable challenges.

These women-led organizations urgently need long-term support, well beyond short-term emergency funding. Yet they receive under 2 per cent of humanitarian assistance in Sudan.

Supporting women in Sudan must be at the heart of the humanitarian response. **When women lead, when women are heard, humanitarian needs are met.** When they are included in assessments and decision-making, we multiply the impact of our collective efforts. **We cannot abandon the women of Sudan now.**

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