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# Sudan: Country Report

The situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile – An Update (3<sup>rd</sup> edition with addendum)

March 2021 (COI included between 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 and 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020)

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## Explanatory Note

This report presents country of origin information (COI) on Sudan specifically in relation to the situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile (also known as the ‘Two Areas’) between 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 and 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 on issues identified to be of relevance in refugee status determination for Sudanese nationals. This report marks the third edition in the series and follows ARC’s [Sudan: Country report – an update: The situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile](#), published on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018. In June 2016, ARC published its first report on [Sudan: Country Report: The situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile](#).

It should be borne in mind that, as detailed for example by Redress in December 2019, “Prior to the Sudanese Uprising, Sudan was one of the most difficult operating climates for HRDs [Human Rights Defenders] globally. They were systematically harassed, singled out and abused, in order to prevent the monitoring and reporting of the prevalent practices of extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture and other human rights violations.”<sup>81</sup>

Furthermore, as documented mainly in section [3.5. Humanitarian access and freedom of movement, particularly humanitarian access to the Two Areas, is extremely limited if possible at all](#). This makes human rights reporting and assessing the humanitarian situation on the ground very difficult. The Human Rights and Development Organization (HUDO) Centre, an “independent, non-government, non-partisan and non-profit Sudanese organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights, peace building and development”<sup>2</sup>, has for example identified the following limitations and challenges in its own reporting as detailed in its latest annual report covering 2020:

- Due to security threats, some of the victims and witnesses could not easily reveal information
- The government’s imposition of state of emergency in the two states and the insecurity hindered the field monitors in gathering information
- The COVID-19 pandemic and restriction measures (lockdown) had limited field monitors in terms of movement
- The MI and RSF generally suspect any person that talks about human rights.
- The limited number of monitors compared to the big geographic area of coverage implies that certain incidents happen without being noticed/ reported
- Poor means of transport especially within the rainy season.
- The general fear by the monitors in case the interviewed victims were subjected to torture and forced to reveal their (monitor’s) identity.
- The poor network (internet) and the very limited power/ electricity coverage in conflict areas.<sup>3</sup>

The COI presented is illustrative, but not exhaustive of the information available in the public domain, nor is it determinative of any individual human rights or asylum claim. All sources are publicly available and a direct hyperlink has been provided.

A list of sources and databases consulted is also provided in this report, to enable users to conduct further research and to conduct source assessments. Research focused on **events** from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 until 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020. All sources were accessed in December 2020 and January 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> REDRESS and African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, [A Way Forward? Anti-torture reforms in Sudan in the post-Bashir era](#), 19 December 2019, p. 16

<sup>2</sup> HUDO Centre, [About HUDO](#), Undated, Last accessed: 8 October 2018

<sup>3</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 1.8 Limitations and challenges, p. 5

In February 2021 Bushra Rahama, Director of the Sudanese Human Rights and Development Centre (HUDOC Centre) was interviewed for this report on the specific situation faced by the Nuba, IDPs and returnees in South Kordofan. The full transcript can be accessed [here](#).

The following reports which post-date the cut-off point have been included given that they address issues of relevance addressed in this report:

- HUDO Centre, [Residents rioted because of insecurity in Kadogli, Sudan](#), 4 January 2021
- HUDO Centre, [Update on Arrest of Travellers by SAF in Al-Abbasiya, Sudan](#), 5 January 2021
- UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 7 January 2021
- HUDO Centre, [Discrimination Conduct By Authorities in South Kordofan State, Sudan](#), 10 January 2021
- HUDO Centre, [Update on Arrest of Civilians by Military in Talodi, Sudan](#), 12 January 2021
- HUDO Centre, [Two Activists Attacked By Armed People In Kadogli, Sudan](#), 17 January 2021
- Radio Dabanga, [Increased violence in Darfur and South Kordofan continues](#), 19 January 2021
- ACLED (Dr. Dan Watson), [Red Lines: Upheaval and containment in the Horn of Africa](#), 21 January 2021
- Radio Dabanga, [Student protests against increased bread prices in Sudan enter third day](#), 21 January 2021
- HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021

This document is intended to be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to in this report can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. **This report is not a substitute for individualised case-specific research and therefore this document should not be submitted in isolation as evidence to refugee decision-making authorities.** Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, the authors accept no responsibility for any errors included in this report.

## Sources and databases consulted

Not all of the sources listed here have been consulted for each issue addressed in the report. Additional sources to those individually listed were consulted via database searches. This non-exhaustive list is intended to assist in further case-specific research. To find out more about an organisation, view the 'About Us' tab of a source's website.

### Databases

[Asylos's Research Notes](#)

[EASO COI Portal](#)

[European Country of Origin Information Network \(ECOI\)](#)

[Relief Web](#)

[UNHCR Refworld](#)

### News

[Afril News](#)

[All Africa](#)

[Al Jazeera](#) [Sudan pages]

[The East African](#)

[Inter Press Service](#)

[Middle East Eye](#)

[The New Arab](#)

[The New Humanitarian](#) [Sudan pages]

[Radio Dabanga](#)

[Radio Tamazuj](#)

[Reuters Africa](#) [Sudan pages]

[Sudan Tribune](#)

### Sources

[28 too Many](#)

[Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project \(ACLED\)](#) [Sudan pages]

[Article 19](#)

[Aegis Trust](#)

[African Arguments](#) [Sudan pages]

[African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights - Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Africa \(CPTA\)](#)

[African Studies Centre Leiden](#)

[Africa Center for Strategic Studies](#)

[African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes \(ACCORD\)](#)

[African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies \(ACJPS\)](#)

[African Union Peace and Security Council](#)

[Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#)

[Amnesty International](#) [Sudan pages]

[Assessment Capacities Project \(ACAPS\)](#) [Sudan pages]

[Association for the Prevention of Torture](#)

[Atlantic Council](#)

[Atlas of Torture](#)

[Brookings Institution](#)

[Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies](#) [Sudan pages]

[Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

[Centre for Security Governance](#)

[Centre for Strategic and International Studies](#)  
[Child Rights International Network](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#)  
[The Christian Post](#)  
[CHR Michelsen Institute](#) [Sudan pages]  
[CIA World Factbook](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Combatting Terrorism Center](#)  
[Committee to Protect Journalists](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Death Penalty Worldwide \(Cornell Law School\)](#)  
[Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Doctors Without Borders](#)  
[The Economist Intelligence Unit](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Eldis](#)  
[Enough Project](#)  
[Equal Rights Trust](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Equality Now](#)  
[Eric Reeves, Sudan Research, Analysis, and Advocacy](#)  
[European Council on Foreign Relations \(ECFR\)](#)  
[European Institute of the Mediterranean \(IEMed\)](#)  
[Foreign Affairs \(published by Council on Foreign Relations\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Freedom House – Freedom in the World 2020](#) and [Freedom on the Net 2020](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Frontline Defenders](#)  
[Fund for Peace](#)  
[Girls Not Brides](#)  
[Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Global Initiative on Psychiatry](#)  
[GlobalSecurity.org](#)  
[Governance Social Development Humanitarian Conflict \(GSDRC\)](#)  
[Hands off Cain](#)  
[Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research](#)  
[Hot Peach Pages](#)  
[Hudo Centre](#)  
[Humanitarian Response](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Hudson Institute](#)  
[Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Humanity & Inclusion \[formerly Handicap International\]](#)  
[Human Rights Watch](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada](#)  
[Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa](#)  
[Institute for Economics & Peace – Global Peace Index 2020](#)  
[Institute for the Study of War](#)  
[Institute for War and Peace Reporting](#)  
[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Inter-African Committees on Traditional Practices](#)  
[International Alert](#)  
[International Bar Association](#)  
[International Commission of Jurists](#)  
[International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#)  
[International Crisis Group](#) [Sudan pages]  
[International Disability Alliance](#)  
[International Federation for Human Rights](#) [Africa pages]

[International Federation of Journalists](#)  
[International Freedom of Expression Exchange](#)  
[International Institute for Strategic Studies](#)  
[International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[International Refugee Rights Initiative](#)  
[International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims](#)  
[International Rescue Committee](#)  
[IPI Global Observatory](#)  
[Jamestown Foundation](#)  
[KACE](#)  
[Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor](#)  
[Long War Journal](#)  
[Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Minority Rights Group International](#)  
[Minorities at Risk Project](#)  
[National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism \(START\) – Global Terrorism Database \(GTD\)](#)  
[Nuba Reports](#)  
[Oakland Institute](#)  
[OECD’s Social Institutions & Gender Index](#)  
[Open Doors](#)  
[Open Society Foundations](#)  
[Orchid Project](#)  
[Overseas Development Institute \(ODI\)](#)  
[Oxfam](#)  
[Peace Women](#)  
[Penal Reform International](#)  
[Physicians for Human Rights](#)  
[Prison Insider](#)  
[Refugees International](#)  
[Rift Valley Institute](#)  
[Reporters Without Borders](#)  
[Right to Education](#)  
[Saferworld](#)  
[Save the Children](#)  
[Small Arms Survey](#)  
[Small Arms Survey’s Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan](#)  
[Sudan Democracy First Group](#)  
[Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa](#)  
[Sudan Consortium](#)  
[Sudan Social Development Organisation \(SUDO \(UK\)\)](#)  
[Sudanese Women Rights Action](#)  
[Sayara International](#)  
[Their World](#)  
[Transparency International](#)  
[UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) [Annual Human Rights Report 2019]  
[United Nations Children’s Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation](#)  
[United Nations Committee Against Torture](#)  
[United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

[United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#)  
[United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances](#)  
[United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)  
[United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)  
[United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)  
[United Nations Human Rights Council](#)  
[United Nations Human Settlements Programme \(UNHABITAT\)](#)  
[United Nations Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan](#)  
[United Nations News Centre](#)  
[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#)  
[United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#)  
[United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)  
[United Nations Population Fund \(UNPFPA\)](#)  
[United Nations Secretary General](#)  
[United Nations Women](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children](#)  
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences](#)  
[United Nations World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#)  
[United States Institute of Peace](#) [Sudan pages]  
[United States Congressional Research Service](#)  
[United States Department of State](#) [Annual human rights report; annual religious report; annual labour report; annual trafficking report; annual terrorism report]  
[Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation](#)  
[Uppsala Universitet – UCDDP Conflict Encyclopedia](#)  
[Validity](#)  
[Waging Peace](#)  
[Walk Free Foundation > The Global Slavery Index](#)  
[Women Under Siege Project](#)  
[World Bank](#) [Sudan pages]  
[World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#) [Sudan pages]  
[Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#)  
[World Organisation Against Torture](#)  
[World Prison Brief](#)  
[Women Living Under Muslim Laws](#)

[Women News Network \(WNN\)](#)  
[Women's Refugee Commission](#)  
[WorldWatch Monitor](#) [Sudan pages]

#### Interview

On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021 Bushra Rahama, Director of the Sudanese Human Rights and Development Centre (HUDOC Centre) was interviewed by ARC's Director, Stephanie Huber. The interview transcript was thereafter shared and signed off by Bushra Rahama, as was the final draft report.

## List of Acronyms

<b>ACAPS</b>	Assessment Capacity Project
<b>ACLED</b>	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
<b>ACJPS</b>	African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BGs</b>	Border Guards
<b>CLTG</b>	Civilian-led Transitional Government
<b>CMR</b>	Cluster Munitions Remnants
<b>CPJ</b>	Committee to Protect Journalists
<b>CoH</b>	Cessation of hostilities
<b>COI</b>	Country of Origin Information
<b>DMI</b>	Directorate of Military Intelligence
<b>ERW</b>	Explosive Remnants of War
<b>FEWS NET</b>	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
<b>FFC</b>	Forces of Freedom and Change
<b>FGM/C</b>	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
<b>FIDH</b>	International Federation for Human Rights
<b>GIS</b>	General Intelligence Service
<b>GoS</b>	Government of Sudan
<b>HAC</b>	Humanitarian Aid Commission
<b>HART</b>	Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>HIHK</b>	Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research
<b>HUDO Centre</b>	Human Rights and Development Organisation Centre
<b>ICU</b>	Intensive Care Units
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>MI</b>	Military Intelligence
<b>NCP</b>	National Congress Party
<b>NHRMO</b>	Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation
<b>NISS</b>	National Intelligence and Security Service
<b>NMAC</b>	(Sudan's) National Mine Action Centre
<b>OMCT</b>	World Organisation Against Torture
<b>PAG</b>	Peace Activist Group
<b>PCP</b>	Popular Congress Party
<b>PDF</b>	Public/Popular Defense Forces
<b>RSF</b>	Rapid Support Forces
<b>SAF</b>	Sudanese Armed Forces
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>SKBNCU</b>	South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit
<b>SLM</b>	Sudan Liberation Movement
<b>SPLA-N</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Army-North
<b>SPLM</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
<b>SPLM-A/N</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army/North
<b>SRCS</b>	Sudanese Red Crescent Society
<b>SRF</b>	Sudan Revolutionary Forces
<b>SUJ/SJU</b>	Sudanese Union of Journalists/Sudanese Journalists' Union
<b>SUNA</b>	Sudan News Agency
<b>SWRA</b>	Sudanese Women Rights Action
<b>TLC</b>	Transitional Legislative Council



<b>TMC</b>	Transitional Military Council
<b>TPC</b>	Transition Partners Council
<b>TSC</b>	Transitional Sovereign Council
<b>UNAMID</b>	African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNITAMS</b>	UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
<b>(UN)OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>UXO</b>	Unexploded Ordnance
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

## 1. Background information

### 1.1. Geographical information

#### South Kordofan

A detailed administrative map of South Kordofan published in February 2015 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) can be accessed [here](#).<sup>4</sup>

UNOCHA's map detailing the 'Programme and Physical presence' of humanitarian organisations in South Kordofan State also shows South Kordofan's districts and can be accessed [here](#).<sup>5</sup>

The HUDO Centre noted that "South Kordofan state consists of seventeen (17) localities, some are located within a territory controlled by SPLA-N and others are under government control".<sup>6</sup>

The following extract, taken from the 2016 report by the Sudan Consortium African and International Civil Society Action for Sudan, provides a useful summary with regards to the Nuba inhabitants of the Nuba mountains in South Kordofan:

The Nuba Mountains are located within Southern Kordofan State, bordering South Sudan. Under current administration the region is divided into five provinces, namely Kadugli, Dilling, Rashad, Abu Jibeha and Talodi. The conflict ridden state is home to an estimated population of one million inhabitants, the vast majority of whom are either displaced or severely affected by the ongoing conflict. [...]

The inhabitants are commonly known as the Nuba, comprised of an ethnically diverse people, who speak at least 50 different local languages and have three dominant religious beliefs, Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion. Despite this significant heterogeneity, the Nuba share a number of fundamental common cultural practices and beliefs, and, widely recognize themselves as Nuba.<sup>7</sup>

#### Blue Nile

The International Refugee Rights Initiative issued a map of Blue Nile in 2016 including a demarcation line of the then approximate SPLA-N/SAF frontline, which can be accessed [here](#).<sup>8</sup> The Small Arms Survey provided a map indicating the SAF/SPLA-N front line as well as SAF, SPLA and SPLA-N bases, though it did not provide a year for the map though its publication covered the years 2015-2019.<sup>9</sup>

A detailed administrative map of Blue Nile published in September 2012 by OCHA can be accessed [here](#).<sup>10</sup>

UNOCHA's map detailing the 'Programme and Physical presence' of humanitarian organisations in Blue Nile State, also shows Blue Nile's districts, and can be accessed [here](#).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See OCHA, [Sudan: South Kordofan State Administrative map \(February 2015\)](#), 4 February 2015

<sup>5</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, South Kordofan – Programme & Physical presence \(3Ws\) as of August 2020](#), 15 September 2020

<sup>6</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 1.6 Scope of the report, p. 4

<sup>7</sup> Sudan Consortium African and International Civil Society Action for Sudan, [Gender Under Bombardment: Gender Disparities in SPLM/A-North Controlled Areas of Nuba Mountains, Southern Kordofan](#), 2016, Last accessed: 29 January 2021, *Nuba Women's Struggle for Rights and Equality*, p. 11

<sup>8</sup> International Refugee Rights Initiative, [A Crisis Normalised: Civilian perspective on the conflict in Sudan's Blue Nile State](#), September 2016, *Background to the paper*, p. 3

<sup>9</sup> Small Arms Survey/HSBA, [Spilling over, Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan's Blue Nile State](#), 2015-19, March 2020, *Map 1 The conflict in Blue Nile State, 2015-19*, p. 21

<sup>10</sup> See OCHA, [Sudan: Blue Nile State – Administrative Map](#), September 2012

<sup>11</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Blue Nile – Programme & Physical presence \(3Ws\) as of August 2020](#), 26 August 2020

The HUDO Centre noted that “Blue Nile State consists of seven (7) localities under government control with the presence of SPLA-N in four (4) localities”.<sup>12</sup>

With regards to who is settled in Blue Nile State, the International Refugee Rights Initiative in 2016 reported:

In recent decades, a considerable population of immigrants has settled in Blue Nile State, and distinctions have been made between those who are seen to be “indigenous” to the territory and those who are seen as “non-indigenous” or “newcomers”. The “indigenous” groups of Blue Nile include, among others, the Ingessana (Gamk) people, from the centre of the state and the Ingessana Hills, the Berta and the Gumuz peoples, from the state’s north and close to the border with Ethiopia (with many living in Ethiopia as well), and the Uduk, the Jumjum and the Koma peoples, living in the southern part of Blue Nile, closer to South Sudan. Each group has its own distinct language. The “indigenous” people in Blue Nile were, and many still are, agro-pastoralists, meaning that their livelihoods are based on animal herding and cultivation, the latter including sorghum, sesame, cotton and okra. The “non-indigenous” populations of Blue Nile include members of Sudanese Arab (or “Arabised”) and nonArab communities, as well as West Africans that migrated to the area. Members of northern Sudanese Arab communities often came to Blue Nile as traders, business owners or administrators. Arab (in particular, Rufa’a Al-Hoi), as well as West African (mostly Fulani, or “Fellata”, in Arabic) nomadic groups have increasingly settled in Blue Nile State during the second half of the 20th century. To a large extent their migration to Blue Nile has been the result of the state’s climate, which is suitable for livestock husbandry. In addition, Blue Nile’s large commercial agricultural schemes also attracted both Sudanese from other parts of the country and foreigners.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.2. Overview of the security situation

This section should be read in conjunction with sections [1.2.1 Tribal/communal violence](#), [1.3. Peace negotiations/ceasefires](#), [2.1.10. Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces](#), [2.2.3. Human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups](#), and [3.4. Forced displacement](#).

The Small Arms Survey provided the following brief background to the conflict in the ‘Two Areas’ since its start in 2011:

In September 2011 in Sudan’s Blue Nile state, war broke out between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/ A-N). This was an extension of the fighting that had started in June the same year in South Kordofan—together the conflicts in these Sudanese states would be known as the ‘Two Areas’ conflict. The Two Areas conflict led to widespread insecurity and the large-scale civilian displacement [...] while armed conflict between the GoS and SPLM/A-N paused in 2016, violent incidents affecting civilians continued—and even increased—in and around Blue Nile into 2019 due to the civil war in South Sudan and the SPLM/A-N’s split into two competing factions.<sup>14</sup>

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2019 provided the following summary of events affecting Sudan as a whole:

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<sup>12</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, *1.6 Scope of the report*, p. 4

<sup>13</sup> International Refugee Rights Initiative, [A Crisis Normalised: Civilian perspective on the conflict in Sudan’s Blue Nile State](#), September 2016, *Background*, pages 9/10

<sup>14</sup> Small Arms Survey/HSBA, [Spilling over, Conflic Dynamics in and around Sudan’s Blue Nile State](#), 2015-19, March 2020, *Executive summary*, p. 9

Sudan began the year as a republic with power concentrated in the hands of authoritarian President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and the National Congress Party (NCP). The NCP, which ruled for three decades with nearly absolute political authority, remained in power until early April [2019] [...]

On February 22 [2019], President Bashir declared a state of emergency, which the National Assembly endorsed on March 11, for a period of six months. The Bashir regime then issued a series of decrees prohibiting the holding of public gatherings, processions, strikes, and similar activities without permission of the competent authority and gave security forces sweeping powers of arrest, search, and restriction of movement. Emergency courts were established to try arrested protesters [...]

On April 11 [2019], Omar al-Bashir was removed from his position as the president. A self-appointed Transitional Military Council (TMC) took over, with Lieutenant General Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf as de facto head of state. The TMC announced the suspension of the country's constitution, dissolved the cabinet, the national legislature, state governments, and legislative councils and announced a threemonth state of emergency, to be followed by a two-year transition period [...]

On July 5 [2019], the TMC and FFC verbally agreed to form a civilian-led transitional government (CLTG), and on August 17, signed a political agreement and a constitutional declaration formally establishing a new government. [...]

On August 20 [2019], Dr. Abdalla Hamdok was sworn in as prime minister, thus dissolving the TMC [...] Under the constitutional declaration, general elections are to be held in 2022.<sup>15</sup>

The Uppsala Conflict Database summary of conflict involving the Sudanese government noted that during 2019:

The halting peace negotiations between the Sudanese government and the SRF, gained new momentum after these political changes [in 2019]. The parties, including SPLM/A-North, no longer part of the rebel alliance, met for peace talks on several occasions during the fall of 2019 in Juba in neighboring South Sudan. Several peace agreements, including political roadmaps and cessation of hostilities agreements, were signed.

For the first time since 1983 there was no active conflict over government in Sudan in 2019. The SLM/A was the only armed group that continued to fight the government in 2019, however, the fighting, mainly located in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur, did not reach the UCDP criteria of 25 battle-related-deaths.<sup>16</sup>

In an email exchange with the Belgian Cedoca, the Documentation and Research Department of the CGRS [Commissariaat-Generaal voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen] in December 2019, Enrico Ille, researcher of the LOST Research Network stated with regards to security in the Two Areas:

The question of violence cannot be reduced to incidents of physical violence. If done so, the areas seem 'at peace', as we enter the third year without large-scale clashes between GoS [Government of Sudan] and SPLA-N, subsided infighting between the two SPLA-N wings etc. The only widely reported incidents this year have been in Habila which has been about conflict over agricultural resources (pastoralists / farmers), and there is low probability that the war parties have been directly involved. The involvement is rather indirect through a lack of response to militia attacks belonging to the former regime.<sup>17</sup>

The same researcher further noted:

Another kind of violence stems from the former government's brutal response to anti-mining protests in several parts of South Kordofan, especially Kalogi, Talodi and Kadugli, where protesters against cyanide pollution have been attacked, arrested, tortured. While this has been less the case after the ouster of the Bashir regime, the local military intelligence and RSF forces have responded violently to

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *Executive Summary*

<sup>16</sup> Uppsala Conflict Database, [Government of Sudan – SLM/A – MM](#), Undated [Last accessed: 17.12.2020]

<sup>17</sup> Belgian CEDOCA, [COI Focus, Soedan, Veiligheidssituatie in de Two Areas](#), 20 February 2020, 2.3. *De huidige toestand van het conflict*, p. 16/17

protests as recent as October. In general, the same violent response to the revolution starting in December 2018 has been experienced in South Kordofan and Blue Nile as well. Less is known about Blue Nile, which is rarely in the news, whether on the governmental side or SPLA-N areas. But from research conducted by colleagues recently in Blue Nile's gold mining areas, we can say that the populations of both sides have been suffering for years from forced relocation, robbery and exploitation around gold mines for years. Nothing indicates that this has improved, as military personnel of both organizations are directly involved in mining; in SPLA-N areas, there seems to be a system of levies. There are no specific incidents to be reported here but a general atmosphere of fear.<sup>18</sup>

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) report compiled by ACCORD reported that there were 89 'conflict incidents' in South Kordofan in 2019 of which 22 were "incidents with fatalities in which 50 people died".<sup>19</sup> Data on Blue Nile reported 25 'conflict incidents' of which 1 incident with fatalities during which 2 people died.<sup>20</sup> The same report noted the following locations of those incidents in the Two Areas:

In Blue Nile, 25 incidents killing 2 people were reported. The following locations were among the affected: Bashir Nugu, Bout, Ed Damazin, Ingessana Hills, Qeissan, Sinja [...]

In South Kurdufan, 89 incidents killing 50 people were reported. The following locations were among the affected: Abri, Abu Jubaiha, Abu Kershola, Al Abbasiya, Al Hadra, At Terter, Banat El Moreib, Dalami, Delling, Deri, Dilling, El Habila, El Leri, Fayu, Habila, Hajar-Jawad, Kadugli, Kalogi, Kauda, Keilak, Khor El Daliab, Nyukur, Rashad, Shag El Kitir, Tab az Zaraf, Talodi, Wakara, Waral.<sup>21</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that "Ethnic tensions also remained high in some areas in South Kordofan due to the conflict and political polarization [...] Localized armed clashes by different tribes in Blue Nile, South Kordofan [...] continued to pose major risks for children, making them vulnerable to abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect".<sup>22</sup> See also section [3.4. Forced displacement](#).

In a February 2020 email exchange with the Belgian Cedoca, the Documentation and Research Department of the CGRS [Commissariaat-Generaal voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen] Tajeldin Adam, a Sudanese journalist living in Brussels, stated:

The area of Blue Nile is witnessing a relative calm. This is provided by the halt of military operations and fighting in the area. The current stability in South Sudan also helped to stabilize conditions in Blue Nile.

However, the situation in South Kordofan/Nuba Mountain remains somehow complicated. This is catalysed by a number of factors, including the presence of Misseriya tribal fighters. They have been causing frictions and deadly confrontations with SPLM-N fighters led by Abd al-Aziz al-Hilu. [...] The insecurity in the neighbouring disputed Abyei region is also affecting the security situation in Nuba Mountain. That is, in the contiguous areas between Abyei and South Kordofan, tribal raids and deadly attacks involving Missiriya tribal fighters against Dinka-Ngok have been taking place. This makes it rather perilous for activists and ordinary people alike when it comes to freedom of movement. Despite

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<sup>18</sup> Belgian CEDOCA, [COI Focus, Soedan, Veiligheidssituatie in de Two Areas](#), 20 February 2020, 2.3. *De huidige toestand van het conflict*, p. 16/17

<sup>19</sup> ACCORD, [Sudan, Year 2019: Update on incidents to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#), 23 June 2020, p. 4

<sup>20</sup> ACCORD, [Sudan, Year 2019: Update on incidents to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#), 23 June 2020, p. 4

<sup>21</sup> ACCORD, [Sudan, Year 2019: Update on incidents to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#), 23 June 2020, p. 4/5

<sup>22</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.3 FSL and 3.6 Protection

the recent visit by Sudan's new Prime Minister Hamdouk to Kawda (the fortress of the SLM-N in Nuba Mountain), free movement and accessibility to the area remains a risk.<sup>23</sup>

A UN report covering the period from 1 July 2019 through 30 June 2020 noted that "Sporadic outbreaks of conflict continued in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States".<sup>24</sup>

Reviewing the period January to June 2020, the HUDO Centre observed:

The first six months of the year 2020 were associated with many challenges since those were the early months of the transitional government whose jurisdiction was heavily entangled with the former regime. For instance, there was disobedience within NISS' operation department in Khartoum. Also, the presence of PDF in conflict areas and the dominance of RSF in Sudan's political life and the SAF acts in conflict areas remain the same as before within the former regime.

The visibility of the transitional government is generally limited to Khartoum but the other parts of Sudan are still governed by the same state governors of the former regime. For instance the "state of emergency" declared by the former president (AlBashir) is still on in the states/regions under conflict and the violations are still going on mainly committed by RSF and other governmental militias like PDF. Although the peace process is still disorderly (shambolic) and the two main armed groups were not included in the process, there were repeated announcements and extensions of ceasefire by the Sudan government and the armed groups. Noticeably, there was a visit of Sudan prime minister to SPLA-N territory.

On the other hand, the economic situation is not good within the population/public. This has been worsened by the measures (like the lockdown) put in place by government to control the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>25</sup>

The same report further noted that "The violations in conflict areas continued mainly because of the presence of the fully armed/equipped RSF and PDF and the absence of the central government. The former regime agents/members who used to ignore abuse and violations are still active within the public administration. RSF and PDF killed and injured many people/civilians by shooting them directly and sometimes they looted or confiscated property from civilians".<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, according to "young activists and Native Administration leaders in South Kordofan" the continuing tribal conflicts in South Kordofan are attributable to "armed herders and to the presence of militias formed by the regime of ousted President Omar Al Bashir", specifically "the Public Defence Forces (officially dissolved), the Central Reserve Police (Abu Teira), and the Rapid Support Forces are the main militias present in the state. Tribal armament of herders, violations of reconciliation agreements, and the spread of hate speech were also mentioned as important reasons for the continuing tribal violence in South Kordofan".<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Belgian CEDOCA, [COI Focus, Soedan, Veiligheidssituatie in de Two Areas](#), 20 February 2020, 8.5. *Bewegingsvrijheid*, p. 38

<sup>24</sup> UN General Assembly, [Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa](#), 24 August 2020, II. *Subregional overviews, B. East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes*, para. 18

<sup>25</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, 1.3 A brief Background, p. 6

<sup>26</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, 1.3 A brief Background, p. 6

<sup>27</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Young Sudanese activists: 'Tribal violence in South Kordofan caused by armed herders and militias'](#), 23 November 2020

Reporting on the situation in the Sudan between 3 June and 8 September 2020 a UN report noted that “Pockets of violence in Southern Kordofan [...] in July and August [2020] led to displacements, loss of life and damages to houses, markets and other key infrastructure, increasing humanitarian needs”.<sup>28</sup>

In June 2020 the UN Security Council established the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) with the aim of beginning operations in early 2021.<sup>29</sup> According to the IPI Global Observatory, the “special political mission (SPM) has four mandated tasks: supporting the democratic transition, the peace process, peacebuilding, and the mobilization of aid”.<sup>30</sup> At the same time the UN Security Council “extended the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) mandate until December 31, freezing the mission’s troop and police ceilings in light of the impact of COVID-19 on the prospects for a responsible drawdown and exit”.<sup>31</sup>

In August 2020 Dr. Dan Watson, Senior Researcher at ACLED, stated:

Since the fall of the NCP regime in April 2019, small-scale incidents of violence against civilians have remained a common occurrence in parts of South, North and Central Darfur states as well as South Kordofan, and increasingly in West Kordofan (*see maps above*). Such acts are mostly carried out by pastoralist groups against civilians, often targeting internally displaced persons (IDPs), whilst Popular Defence Forces paramilitaries (an Islamist paramilitary force established in the early 1990s, and officially dismantled this year) have been implicated in a spate of attacks in South Kordofan.<sup>32</sup>

Reflecting on the situation in 2020, the same source noted that “deadly clashes in the Kadugli area of South Kordofan state have pitted SAF and RSF personnel against each other at several points during 2020. Much like Mayom county south of the border, Kadugli has become a tinderbox in which ethnic fighting involving Nuba and Arab-identifying Baggara groups has spilled over into the security forces”.<sup>33</sup>

In mid-December 2020 HUDO Centre reported that “Currently, there is a lot of insecurity in Nuba Mountains/ South Kordofan State than before. For instance, within this month (December) many incidents took place around the state”.<sup>34</sup>

Reviewing the year 2020, the HUDO Centre observed:

in conflict areas, violations went on with limited or no intervention from the authorities. The police did not execute their duties well and for this reason, the perpetrators carried on with violations and abuses unrestricted. However, cases of abuses and violations in BN [Blue Nile] were generally low compared to SK [South Kordofan].<sup>35</sup>

The same source further noted: “The year 2020 was associated with many challenges for the transitional government in Sudan. This is mainly because the government’s jurisdiction was deeply

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<sup>28</sup> UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan](#), 17 September 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 24

<sup>29</sup> IPI Global Observatory, [How the New UN Mission in Sudan Can Succeed](#), 25 August 2020

<sup>30</sup> IPI Global Observatory, [How the New UN Mission in Sudan Can Succeed](#), 25 August 2020

<sup>31</sup> IPI Global Observatory, [UN Security Council Walks Tightrope with Creation of New Mission in Sudan](#), 10 June 2020

<sup>32</sup> ACLED (Dr. Dan Watson), [Riders on the storm: Rebels, Soldiers, and Paramilitaries in Sudan’s Margins](#), 27 August 2020

<sup>33</sup> ACLED (Dr. Dan Watson), [Red Lines: Upheaval and containment in the Horn of Africa](#), 21 January 2021

<sup>34</sup> Urgent appeal, [SAF and RSF soldiers attacked and injured residents of Bobaya village, Sudan](#), 21 December 2020

<sup>35</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, Executive summary, v



intertwined with the former regime. For instance, there was noncompliance within NISS' operations department in Khartoum. Also, the presence of PDF and SAF in conflict areas and the dominance of RSF in Sudan's political life did not change even after the fall of the former regime".<sup>36</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported in January 2021: "People in Kadogli organized a public demonstration protesting the state of insecurity. This was because of the worsening security status especially in form of murder and robbery incidents towards the end of year 2020. Police office did not do much to arrest the anonymous perpetrators".<sup>37</sup>

### 1.2.1 Tribal/communal violence

This section should be read in conjunction with section [3.4. Forced displacement](#).

The following are illustrative examples of tribal/communal violent incidences in South Kordofan.

With regards to inter-tribal conflict, Radio Dabanga had reported in October 2019 that "During the start of the rainy season in April and early May [2019], clashes erupted between the Ghulfan and Dar Naele in Delling locality [South Kordofan], after livestock began damaging farmlands during their migration to the north. Several tribesmen were killed. The conflict escalated last week [October 2019], when farmers blocked passage tracks to the herders which increased the hostility between the two parties".<sup>38</sup> In early November 2019 "Clashes between herders and farmers in Habila locality in South Kordofan [...] claimed the lives of eight people. About 30 were wounded, some of them seriously".<sup>39</sup>

In April 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that "At least two people were killed, seven others wounded, and five were kidnapped in Habila and Abu Kershola in South Kordofan, in a series of tribal conflicts".<sup>40</sup>

In May 2020 the HUDO Centre noted that "on 12th May 2020, there was a conflict in Kadogli town between members from division 254 of Sudan Armed Forces (which mainly consist of Nuba Ethnic/Angulu) and RSF (which mostly consist of Arab ethnic/ Dar Nealla), that trigger the conflict between the whole two groups in direct armed confrontation. Resulted in more than hundred people have been killed from the two groups including other civilians basing on ethnicity. Unfortunately the reported attack was a revenge on the ethnic classification".<sup>41</sup>

Reporting on the same outbreak of conflict, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan provided the following information:

The Independent Expert received information that a tribal armed conflict erupted in the city of Kadugli in South Kordofan on 11 May [2020] between the Nuba (Angolo) and the DarNaela Arab tribe that allegedly resulted in the killing of more than 60 people, including 15 soldiers from the Rapid Support Forces, and 19 injured. Sources suggest that the death of 15 soldiers were allegedly the result of clashes

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<sup>36</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 1.3 A Brief Background, p. 2

<sup>37</sup> HUDO Centre, [Residents rioted because of insecurity in Kadogli, Sudan](#), 4 January 2021

<sup>38</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Farmers, herders agree on migration tracks in Sudan's South Kordofan](#), 8 October 2019

<sup>39</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Eight dead in South Kordofan violence](#), 4 November 2019

<sup>40</sup> Radio Dabanga, [South Kordofan tribal tension escalates as two killed, seven injured](#), 14 April 2020

<sup>41</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Miserable conditions of the recently displaced people in Kadogli, Sudan](#), 21 May 2020



between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces who intervened, each aligning itself with one of the tribal groups across ethnicity lines.<sup>42</sup>

Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre and interviewed for this report in February 2021 explained with regards to the May violence:

In May 2020 there was a big confrontation between the Jao group and RSF/PDF. And I think three or four from the RSF were killed by those Nuba militias. And then revenge killings happened which continue till now. To me, the existence of these militias will trigger a conflict at any time and especially the existence of the ethnic divisions within Nuba Mountain between the Arabs and the Nubians.<sup>43</sup>

As a result of this violence, Radio Dabanga stated that despite initial reporting that the violence “had no tribal and ethnic background”, “fighting erupted between people from Nuba tribes in South Kordofan who settled in Kassala and members of the eastern Sudanese Beni Amer tribe in Kassala town”, where “The death toll in the clashes reached 11 people, eight from the eastern Sudanese Beni Amer tribe, two men from the Nuba Mountains, and another person. About 70 Beni Amer tribesmen, and 30 Nuba sustained injuries. Most of them have recovered”.<sup>44</sup>

The Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan further reported: “Another tribal clash reportedly took place in El Fagara, Lagawa, in South Kordofan on 6 June between the Nuba and Misseriya tribes; several people were allegedly killed or injured. No response was taken by security forces, sources alleged”.<sup>45</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported in July 2020 that “Fighting between Beni Amer and Nuba tribesmen erupted”, lasting for three days and resulting in “mass arrests in the districts of the town” New Halfa in Kassala.<sup>46</sup> In the same area, in August 2020, “Two people were killed and 28 others injured in tribal clashes in New Halfa in Kassala [...] between people originally from Halfa (who were transferred to New Halfa in 1964 because of the construction of the Aswan Dam in southern Egypt) and Zaghawa, who are originally from North Darfur”.<sup>47</sup>

The Insecurity Insight newsletter for July 2020, basing its information on an IOM Sudan’s Twitter message, noted that “20 July 2020: In Kadugli, South Kordofan state, clashes between Arabs and Nuba tribesmen killed and wounded an unconfirmed number of people and displaced about 6,350 people from Kulba, Marta North, Marta East and Hila Al Gadeeda”.<sup>48</sup> Reporting on the same violence Radio Dabanga stated:

Members of the Forces for Freedom and Change and other activists in Kadugli demand the dismissal of the acting military governor because of his failure to stop the increasing insecurity in South Kordofan. They warned of the danger of the deteriorating situation on peace coexistence in the region and called for “firm measures to stop this chaos”.

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<sup>42</sup> UN Human Rights Council, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 30 July 2020, *H. Human rights situation in conflict-affected areas*, 2. *South Kordofan and Blue Nile*, para. 62

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

<sup>44</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Measures taken in Sudan’s Kordofan and Kassala after tribal clashes](#), 16 May 2020

<sup>45</sup> UN Human Rights Council, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 30 July 2020, *H. Human rights situation in conflict-affected areas*, 2. *South Kordofan and Blue Nile*, para. 62

<sup>46</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Mass arrests end tribal fighting in eastern Sudan](#), 8 July 2020

<sup>47</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Two killed in eastern Sudan tribal clashes](#), 3 August 2020

<sup>48</sup> Insecurity Insight, [Protection in Danger, Monthly News Brief](#), July 2020, p. 2

The past few months, South Kordofan, and in particular the area of Kadugli, witnessed an increase in violent incidents and (tribal) clashes.<sup>49</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported in August 2020:

Kassala town and surroundings witnessed widespread violence. Protests against the new Kassala governor took place again in Kassala [...]

Four people were killed in tribal clashes in Kassala [...] Dozens of others were wounded, witnesses reported.

Hundreds of people armed with knives and sticks plundered the Kassala Grand Market and set fire to a large number of shops. Police and military forces initially withdrew from their position at the market. They returned later with reinforcements, and fired in the air to disperse the crowd.

People in other parts of the town barricaded the entrances to their neighbourhoods in an attempt to prevent further spread of the violence.

The fighting coincided with a march organised by opponents of the new governor. Thousands of Beja tribesmen, headed by Hadendawa Nazir Sayed Tirik, walked and vehicles drove in a long procession toward Freedom Square in the town, calling for replacement of Ammar.

Activists hold the Kassala security committee responsible for the violence, and have expressed their astonishment about allowing protest marches despite the curfew.<sup>50</sup>

In November 2020 Radio Dabanga reported on “Clashes between the Kenana Arifab and Hawazma Dar Ali herders’ clans”, which broke out in Talodi locality in South Kordofan with no reported loss of lives.<sup>51</sup> According to the same source “Omda El Neel Hussein, mayor of Abu Jubeiha, told Radio Dabanga that the the El Hawazma Dar Ali clan insists on using the tracks of the El Kenana Arifab clan to herd livestock. This has led to tensions in the past and is the cause of the latest conflict, according to the mayor”.<sup>52</sup>

### 1.3. Peace negotiations/ceasefires

This section should be read in conjunction with section [2.2.1. Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army – North \(SPLM/A-N\)](#).

Covering 2019, the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research’s (HIIC) *Conflict Barometer 2019* provided the following overview with regards to ceasefires agreed by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N):

On February 8 [2019], SPLM/A-N-Agar extended a unilateral ceasefire for three months. On April 17, SPLM/A-N-al-Hilu declared a unilateral cessation of hostilities until July 31, which was then extended again to December 31. [...]

on September 11 [2019], the government and both SPLM/A-N factions agreed on starting peace negotiations from October 14 on. The negotiations needed to be held separate with both SPLM/A-N factions due to SPLM/AN-al-Hilu’s unwillingness for a joint delegation. On October 16, SPLM/A-N-al-Hilu suspended these negotiations as government troops attacked civilians in the Nuba Mountains and detained 13 people. The faction returned to the negotiations two days later. [...] On November 13, SPLM/A-N-Agar called for greater regional autonomy in the Two Areas. On December 19, they agreed to cease hostilities and allow the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Two Areas.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Dozens killed in tribal clashes in South Kordofan capital](#), 22 July 2020

<sup>50</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Violence and chaos in eastern Sudan’s Kassala](#), 28 August 2020

<sup>51</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Herders clans clash violently in South Kordofan](#), 1 November 2020

<sup>52</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Herders clans clash violently in South Kordofan](#), 1 November 2020

<sup>53</sup> Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2019](#), August 2020, *Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)*, p. 94

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 provided the following summary about the status of the ceasefires affecting the Two Areas:

The Bashir government repeatedly extended its 2016 unilateral cessation of hostilities (COH) agreement in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states (the "Two Areas") [...] Nevertheless, the COH did allow for periods of increased stability and an overall improvement in the human rights situation in Darfur and the Two Areas. [...] In June the TMC [Transitional Military Council] and two main armed movements agreed to extend the COH agreement. The CLTG [Civilian-led transitional government] and various Sudanese armed groups launched multitrack negotiations on October 14 in Juba to achieve comprehensive peace within six months of the transition.<sup>54</sup>

The same source further noted that "States of emergency continued in [...] Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan, North Kordofan, West Kordofan, [...] to facilitate the Bashir regime's national arms collection campaigns".<sup>55</sup>

Reporting on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile throughout 2019, the HUDO Centre noted that "there were repeated announcements and extensions of ceasefire by the Sudan government and the armed groups. However the "state of emergency" declared by the former president (al-Bashir) is still on in the states/regions under conflict and the violations mainly committed by security agencies and militias".<sup>56</sup>

The Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur covering the period end of June – end of September 2019 noted:

There has been a realignment of national actors and the consolidation of groups and/or movements in the Sudan in preparation for the peace negotiations. In this context [...] Three other groups, SPLM-N Abdelaziz Al-Hilu faction, the Beja Congress of Zeinab Kabbashi, and the Sudan Liberation Forces Alliance of Tahir Hajar, reorganized themselves in early August [2019] in the newly created Kush Alliance, calling for the "formulation of a new national project, based on the recognition of ethnic, culture and religious diversity" in the Sudan.<sup>57</sup>

With special reference to the SPLM/A-N factions in the aftermath of former President Bashir's ouster, the Small Arms Survey's Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan project provided the following overview:

In October 2019 Sudan's transitional government started a peace process with the armed groups, including the SPLM-N groups, mediated by South Sudan. The positions of the two factions, however, remain divergent. The SPLM-N-Agar operates within the Sudan Call umbrella and SRF groups and has articulated a vision of increased autonomy for Darfur and the Two Areas that would include the sharing of power and wealth. The Sudan Call was one of the signatories of the Declaration of the Forces for Freedom and Change signed on 1 January 2019, which set the objectives for the opposition in Sudan that led to the fall of President Bashir. The SPLM/A-N-Agar called for expanded autonomy and self-

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<sup>54</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *Executive Summary*

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1., e. Denial of Fair Public Trial*

<sup>56</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, *1.3 A brief Background*, p. 2

<sup>57</sup> UN Security Council, [Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur](#), 15 October 2019, *A. Context, 2. National actors and framework of negotiations*, para. 35

government in Blue Nile under a unified Sudan.<sup>69</sup> The Agar faction has dropped its demands for secularism, which are considered to be unattainable through the peace process—a position that contributed to the SPLM/A split in 2017. The faction also opposes the idea of self-determination, a sentiment shared by most Blue Nile constituencies and other marginalized groups in Sudan. During recent political events the Agar group claimed to represent all the marginalized communities in Sudan.<sup>70</sup> [...]

The SPLM-N-al-Hilu is taking part in these talks as part of a separate individual track. In October [2019] al-Hilu and the Sudanese government delegation agreed to discuss political issues first, followed by humanitarian issues, and then security arrangements. On 9 January 2020, Sudan Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok visited al-Hilu in Kauda in the Nuba Mountains. While the meeting marked an important step towards achieving peace in the region, al-Hilu described the government as ‘reluctant’ to discuss his demands to end the region’s conflict (Magdy, 2020). Those demands include calls for Sudan’s constitution not to be based on Islamic law (sharia), increased local control over political and military power, and an increased say in the use of local resources. It is possible that al-Hilu will include the right to self-determination as part of his faction’s negotiation demands. A demand for self-determination, however, needs to accommodate the milder demands of al-Hilu’s support base in Blue Nile. Their demands are more likely to include calls for greater autonomy in the Two Areas, at least in the short term. The positions of the two SPLM/A-N factions align in terms of demands for greater autonomy for the Two Areas, and the mediators should support discussion of this shared objective. [...]

69 Undated statement signed by Lt. Gen. Ahmed al-Umda, commander of the 2nd Front; internal message labelled ‘not for circulation’ signed by Malik Agar, SPLM-N-Agar chairman, 23 July 2017; both seen by the authors.

70 In May 2019 the SPLM-N-Agar group sent a delegation to Khartoum to support the peaceful protests taking place there and the civilian opposition to the Bashir government. The deputy chairman of the SPLM-N-Agar, Yasir Arman, arrived in Khartoum on 26 May 2019, despite having previously been given a death sentence when Bashir was in power (Sudan Tribune, 2019). He was detained and forcibly deported in June [...].<sup>58</sup>

Reporting on the same events of October 2019 the International Crisis Group in its *CrisisWatch*, a global conflict tracker, noted:

Govt and rebel groups opened peace talks in South Sudan’s capital Juba 14 Oct [2019] brokered by South Sudan’s President Kiir. Talks stumbled when rebel group Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu 16 Oct [2019] withdrew, accusing govt of violating ceasefire by bombing several areas in Khor Waral, South Kordofan state. Sovereign Council head General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan same day decreed nationwide ceasefire. SPLM-N rejoined talks 18 Oct [2019] and same day agreed with govt outline agenda.<sup>59</sup>

In January 2020 it was reported by the UN that “the transitional Government and the SPLM Malik Agar faction signed a peace agreement covering governance and regional autonomy, wealth-sharing and security arrangements for the Two Areas”.<sup>60</sup> During the same month it was reported by the International Crisis Group in its *CrisisWatch*:

Abdelaziz al-Hilu, leader of rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) faction, 1 Jan extended ceasefire in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, but govt continued to resist his wish that talks address question of state secularism. Malik Agar, leader of another SPLM-N faction, 17 Jan concluded talks with govt on political agenda; 24 Jan signed preliminary deal granting special status to South Kordofan and Blue Nile, paving way for militants to integrate into army.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Small Arms Survey/HSBA, [Spilling over, Conflic Dynamics in and around Sudan’s Blue Nile State](#), 2015-19, March 2020, *Prospects for peace and reconciliation*, p. 41/42

<sup>59</sup> International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Sudan](#), October 2019

<sup>60</sup> UN Security Council, [Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and a follow-on presence](#), 12 March 2020, II. *Update on the situation in Darfur and implementation of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, para. 7

<sup>61</sup> International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Sudan](#), January 2020

Mohamed El Hacem Lebatt, African Union Commission Chairperson's Principal Strategic Adviser and Special Envoy to Sudan, wrote in a feature piece published by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) in July 2020 that “the peace process between the transitional government and the armed movements in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile has been suspended, despite the best efforts of President Salva Kiir to mediate between the parties. The implementation of the political agreement reached on 17 August 2019 under the auspices of the AU and Ethiopia has been paralysed by the spread of COVID-19 in Sudan, as mediation efforts were curtailed by the restriction of movement, and the ban on air travel”.<sup>62</sup>

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2020 the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan was signed:

which was the formalization of the peace agreement reached in Juba at the end of August between the transitional Government, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)-Minni Minawi. The Agreement is a crucial step forward in the implementation of the political benchmarks of the transitional period as outlined in the Constitutional Document. It includes several region-specific protocols and one protocol on national issues. The national protocol notably stipulates that the 39-month-long transition envisaged in the Constitutional Document is to start from the signing of the Agreement. It also stipulates how positions in the transitional institutions are to be allocated to the signatories.<sup>63</sup>

According to a UN report the region-specific protocols pertain to, respectively, “Darfur, the Two Areas as relating to the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) Malik Agar faction, East Sudan, North Sudan and Central Sudan, and a separate protocol on national issues [...] The protocols on Central, East and North Sudan address economic, political, social and cultural issues in each region. The protocol involving SPLM-N/Agar stipulates power- and wealth-sharing and security arrangements that include the reform of the national army, a permanent ceasefire and monitoring mechanism, and a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme”.<sup>64</sup>

The Middle East Eye reported with regards to the Juba Agreement for Peace:

The Juba peace deal covers the five states in Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile, and armed conflicts in central, northern and eastern Sudan.

The agreement included nine protocols covering power sharing, wealth sharing, humanitarian access to all conflict areas, security arrangements, justice - including cooperation with the International Criminal Court (ICC), land ownership, the return of refugees and IDPs to their home lands, reconciliation and the compensation of the war victims.

The main rebel factions who signed the deal were the SPLM-N headed by Mali Agar, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Movement faction under the leadership of Minni Minawi (SLM-MM), and the SLM-Transitional Council, among other minor groups.

The power-sharing deal gave the rebels 25 percent of the make-up of the cabinet (Council of Ministers) and of the upcoming legislative assembly.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Lebatt, M. E. H. (ACCORD), [African mediation in the shadow of COVID-19](#), 29 July 2020

<sup>63</sup> UN Security Council, [Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 1 December 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 3.

<sup>64</sup> UN Security Council, [Special Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and a follow-on presence](#), 13 November 2020, II. Situation in Darfur, A. Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan, para. 3

<sup>65</sup> Middle East Eye, [Sudan's civilian rulers fear new body's powers may derail democracy hopes](#), 10 December 2020

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) reported in October 2020 that “On October 18, 2020, the Sudanese transitional government and the SPLM-N El Hilu signed an agreement to resume peace talks and develop a roadmap for South Kordofan peace negotiations. However, SPLM-N El Hilu is one of two rebel groups that did not sign the recent comprehensive peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the Sudan Revolutionary Front rebel alliance on October 3, 2020, in the South Sudanese capital of Juba”.<sup>66</sup>

The Institute for Security Studies’s analysis on *Sudan’s transition* raised its concern on the credibility of the peace process:

While El-Hilu [of the SPLM-N] has been part of the initial talks, he is yet to sign the peace agreement as his position on secularism, self-determination and the request to maintain his army during the transition period have been rejected by parties to the negotiations. [...]

Yasir Arman, Malik Agar and Ismail Jalab have joined the Sudan Liberation Front and have participated in the peace process representing the Blue Nile and South Kordofan in the absence of El-Hilu, who has armed forces on the ground in these areas. This makes the peace agreement that results from the current peace process almost impossible to implement on the ground unless some level of coordination is secured.

The credibility of the peace process was compromised when the High Council of Peace, chaired by Lt General Abdelfattah El Burhan, assumed leadership of the facilitation of peace negotiations. The leading role of the council, which consists of both military and civilian members, is contrary to provisions of the Constitutional Document that stipulates an independent national peace commission lead the peace process. Putting an independent commission in charge was meant to guarantee the neutrality and inclusiveness of the process and ensure that experienced technical experts would lead the negotiations. Instead, the role of the independent commission has been assumed by a council composed of political appointees, including representatives from the military and political parties that have a direct stake in the outcome of peace negotiations. Thus parties to the negotiation also act as facilitators of the peace process. This is a false start with serious negative implications for the success of the whole peace process.<sup>67</sup>

Referring to the High Council of Peace, the Middle East Eye reported:

The risks of a military coup in Sudan appear to have heightened amid disputes between the civilian and military elements of the transitional government following the creation by the country's military chief of a new body with broad powers.

Several civilian elements, including the prime minister and the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) alliance, have rejected the powers conferred to the new Transition Partners Council (TPC) and urged General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan to review his decision.

Burhan heads Sudan’s Sovereign Council, a military-civilian body established in August 2019.

It is Sudan’s highest executive authority and is overseeing a fragile three-year transition to civilian rule after the April 2019 overthrow of former President Omar al-Bashir.

Burhan issued a presidential decree last week to form the TPC, which would comprise the FFC, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF), who are a coalition of rebel forces, the military component of the transitional government and the council of ministers.

The body is formed of 29 members, including 13 from the FFC, seven from the SRF, six from the military, along with two other community leaders from Eastern Sudan.

According to the decree, the TPC will have the powers of directing the transitional period and to serve the high interests of Sudan, resolving any differences among the government partners and helping to implement a recently signed peace agreement with the rebels.

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<sup>66</sup> FEWS Net, Sudan, [Food Security Outlook, October 2020 to May 2021](#), September 2020, p. 9

<sup>67</sup> Institute for Security Studies, [Sudan’s transition, What are the chances of success?](#), November 2020, p. 7/8



Rejecting the move, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said Burhan had overstepped his prerogatives by conferring excessive powers on the new body.<sup>68</sup>

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 “the Chair of the Sovereign Council, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, granted a general amnesty to all people who fought in Sudan’s armed conflicts, in line with the Juba Peace Agreement, with the exclusion of those for whom arrest warrants had been issued by the International Criminal Court or who were wanted for genocide and crimes against humanity, or for war crimes falling under the jurisdiction of the Special Court for Crimes Committed in Darfur whose establishment is part of the Juba Peace Agreement”.<sup>69</sup>

According to a UN report published in December 2020:

The signing of the Juba Peace Agreement was a milestone for human rights and the rule of law in the Sudan. It reinforced the centrality of justice, accountability and reconciliation to the country’s transition process. The Agreement provides for institutional reforms to create more representative and responsive rule of law institutions in conflict-affected areas. In it, the signatories reaffirm their commitment to nationally led transitional justice processes and accountability mechanisms, including through the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission (in which it is agreed that there should be at least two women) and the Special Court for Crimes Committed in Darfur, and recognize the important role of the International Criminal Court in that process. In addition, the Agreement creates a comprehensive regime for the consideration of land ownership and hawakeer (lands traditionally used by a particular tribal group), with a strong emphasis on issues affecting internally displaced persons and refugees in Darfur. Furthermore, the national Security and Defence Council is entrusted with devising a plan for the transformation, development and modernization of the security sector, and the transformation of the security sector is identified as a priority agenda item for the upcoming constitutional conference.<sup>70</sup>

Looking forward, International Rescue Committee’s *Watchlist 2021* stated:

Sudan is entering 2021 navigating a fragile political transition and major economic challenges that are hampering the country’s recovery after decades of conflict and under-development. 2021 will test the ability of Sudan’s young transitional government – the first new leadership in the country in three decades - to address the concerns of opposition groups and the needs of the population, including a recent fragile peace deal with some of the armed groups active in Darfur and Blue Nile/ South Kordofan. The transition is further complicated by the need to overcome decades of large-scale conflict and under-development and the likelihood that refugees, and possibly instability, will flow into the country from Ethiopia. The government’s ability to effectively adopt critical political and economic reforms will be further strained by a set of complex humanitarian crises, including the highest level of people in need in a decade, some of the worst climate-related disasters in decades, an economic crisis deepened by COVID-19, the highest levels of food insecurity in a decade and millions of people still displaced in the country.<sup>71</sup>

Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre and interviewed for this report in February 2021 provided the following outlook:

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<sup>68</sup> Middle East Eye, [Sudan's civilian rulers fear new body's powers may derail democracy hopes](#), 10 December 2020

<sup>69</sup> UN Security Council, [Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 1 December 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 6

<sup>70</sup> UN Security Council, [Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 1 December 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 24

<sup>71</sup> International Rescue Committee, [Watchlist 2021](#), Sudan, p. 53

that the Head of the RSF, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who is now also part of the Sovereign Council – that’s a real challenge for peace in Sudan. There is now a military component within the Sovereign Council. Now they are controlling the government and they are controlling Sudan the way they want [...]

For me the situation in Darfur and in Nuba Mountains will be worse in the coming months. Now you see Darfur deteriorating day by day. The Nuba Mountains, these three militias groups [Note: Kadugli has three militias, one from Arab origin and the other two of Nuba origin], we don't know when it will explode, but it won't be long. And for sure, they will fight each other.<sup>72</sup>

## 2. Actors involved in the conflict

### 2.1. Government forces

For information on human rights abuses committed by government forces and their supporting paramilitary militias view sections [2.1.10 Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces](#), [6. Women and girls](#), and [7. Children](#). For information on rule of law abuses committed by the security forces, see sections [4. Rule of Law and access to justice](#) and [5. Human rights situation: civil and political rights](#).

In a UK Country Guidance case that focused on the situation and treatment of Nuba in Sudan, Dame Rosalind Marsden, a former British Ambassador and EU Special Representative to Sudan, provided a written report following her visit to Khartoum between 28 September and 9 October 2019.<sup>73</sup> Based on excerpts included from this report in the published determination, she stated at paragraph 14 of her original report:

At para 14, Dame Rosalind stated that a number of elements of the “old regime” are still in place:

“14. However, the process of change has only just started and many elements of the old regime are still in place. For example:

- Apart from the removal of Under-Secretaries, the entire civil service is still controlled by the deep state.
- The same applies to the judiciary, apart from the Chief Justice and Attorney General
- The army, police and security apparatus from the old regime are still in place.
- The presence of the RSF in the centre of Khartoum is much smaller and less visible than before but they are still deployed around strategic and military installations and resentment about their role in the 3 June [2020] massacre continues to simmer. Many Sudanese are worried that they could be reactivated at any time.
- The Islamist shadow militias have not been disbanded.
- The Defence and Interior Ministers are generals who were appointed by the Transitional Military Council.
- The impact of the revolution has not yet been felt at all outside Khartoum. The people running the state governments are still the senior army officers appointed several months ago by General Burhan.”<sup>74</sup>

#### 2.1.1. Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)

This section should also be read in conjunction with sections [2.1.2. Rapid Support Forces \(RSF\)](#) and [2.1.6. Popular Defence Forces \(PDF\)](#).

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

<sup>73</sup> [KAM \(Nuba - return\) Sudan CG \[2020\] UKUT 269 \(IAC\) \(01 September 2020\)](#), para. 29 and A50

<sup>74</sup> [KAM \(Nuba - return\) Sudan CG \[2020\] UKUT 269 \(IAC\) \(01 September 2020\)](#), A57



No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information about the structure of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) stationed in South Kordofan or Blue Nile, with the exception of illustrative examples of human rights abuses as included in section [2.1.10. Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces](#). Information has therefore been included on the status of the SAF in general in Sudan.

The report of the UN Secretary-General on *Children and armed conflict in the Sudan* covering the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019 reported: “The Sudanese Armed Forces are the military forces of the Sudan, consisting of the Land Forces, the Sudanese Navy, the Sudanese Air Force, and the Popular Defence Forces”.<sup>75</sup> The CIA’s *The World Factbook* also adds the paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Force (RSF).<sup>76</sup> According to the same source “size assessments for the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) vary widely, ranging from about 100,000 to more than 200,000 active personnel, including approximately 1,500 Navy and 3,000 Air Force; est. 30-40,000 paramilitary Rapid Support Forces; est. 20,000 Reserve Department (formerly the paramilitary Popular Defense Forces)”.<sup>77</sup> The CIA also reported that in August 2020 “Sudan and the major rebel group Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) signed an agreement to integrate the group’s fighters into the Sudanese Army by the end of 2023”.<sup>78</sup>

In October 2019 the International Crisis Group reported that “Sudan’s professional military weakened so drastically under Bashir that it is now just one power among many in the security sector. The reasons for the Sudanese Armed Forces’ decline are many. Bashir lost trust in the military following his 1999 falling-out with Hassan al-Turabi, Sudan’s leading Islamist, who had hand-picked much of the top brass. Bashir’s suspicion of the generals hardened after the military failed to prevent the stunning assault on Khartoum by the Darfuri rebel Justice and Equality Movement in 2008. Also, the lengthy insurgencies in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile largely precluded the army from recruiting soldiers from those regions, eroding its claim to be a unifying national institution”.<sup>79</sup>

In another report issued that same month, the International Crisis Group stated that “the once-powerful Sudanese Armed Forces has in recent years been weakened and supplanted by the Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group formed from the remnants of the Janjaweed militia accused of atrocities in Darfur. Its leader, Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo ‘Hemedti’ is widely regarded as the most powerful man in Sudan, commanding substantial resources and styling himself as kingmaker and the primary decision-maker behind the scenes of the transitional process”.<sup>80</sup>

Middle East Eye reported in January 2020:

Sudan's transitional government has pledged to build a new national army that aims to represent the country's diversity, according to a copy of a peace agreement seen by Middle East Eye.

The agreement was signed in Juba on Friday with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) group headed by Malik Agar.

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<sup>75</sup> UN Security Council, [Children and armed conflict in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 29 June 2020, II. Political and security situation and parties to conflict, B. Parties to the conflict, Government security forces, para. 11

<sup>76</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook: Sudan](#), Undated [Last accessed: 19 January 2021], *Military and Security*. According to the information found on the webpage it is taken from 2020.

<sup>77</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook: Sudan](#), Undated [Last accessed: 19 January 2021], *Military and Security*. According to the information found on the webpage it is taken from 2019.

<sup>78</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook: Sudan](#), Undated [Last accessed: 19 January 2021], *Military and Security*. According to the information found on the webpage it is taken from 2019.

<sup>79</sup> International Crisis Group, [Safeguarding Sudan’s Revolution](#), 21 October 2019, A. Key Players and Power Centres, 1. Burhan and the military

<sup>80</sup> International Crisis Group, [Watch List 2019 – Third Update](#), 15 October 2019, A Tough Road Ahead

Agar heads one of the two factions of the SPLM-N. The SPLM-N split into two groups after Abdul Aziz Alhilu, leader of the other SPLM-N faction, called for the creation of a secular state in Sudan. [...] Copies of the agreement seen by Middle East Eye state that Agar's SPLM-N army would be integrated within the national army, with bases being agreed upon by a joint committee that is formed between the two sides.<sup>81</sup>

### 2.1.2. Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

This section should also be read in conjunction with section [2.1.1. Sudanese Armed Forces \(SAF\)](#).

No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information about the structure of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) stationed in South Kordofan or Blue Nile, with the exception of illustrative examples of human rights abuses as included in section [2.2.3. Human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups](#). Information has therefore been included on the status of the RSF in general in Sudan.

By way of background, the joint December 2019 report by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) provided the following background summary information on the Rapid Support Forces (RSF):

Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as “Hemeti”, today a military member of the SC, was amongst the few Janjaweed leaders to remain loyal to the authorities and was chosen to lead the force named the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The RSF were initially placed under the command of the NISS, and then officially integrated into the SAF. However, the RSF gradually started functioning as a distinctive branch of the security apparatus, placed under the direct command of Sudan’s former President, Omar Al-Bashir. [...]

Experts from Darfur confirmed to FIDH and ACJPS that prior to his overthrow, and given his growing mistrust of the army, Omar Al-Bashir was almost entirely relying on RSF for his protection against any form of protest.

At the time of their creation, members of the RSF mostly came from Hemeti’s tribe, the Rizeigat (originating from South Darfur State).

Recruitment later extended to other tribes, including among Darfurian African tribes, and areas outside Darfur, such as South Kordofan. The total number of RSF troops is unknown but is estimated at between 30,000 and 40,000.

It is alleged that these troops include child soldiers, aged between 14 and 17 years, some of whom have been deployed to Yemen to fight alongside the Saudi-led coalition [...]

Since their creation, the RSF have been responsible for serious human rights violations committed in various regions, including Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. [...]

The RSF are considered to bear primary responsibility for the massacre which took place in Khartoum on 3 June 2019, when, together with riot police and national security officials, they used live ammunition against protesters who had been participating in peaceful sit-ins, killing at least 128. During the massacre, they committed rapes and other forms of sexual violence, threw bodies into the Nile and attacked at least three hospitals. Such extreme violence is reminiscent of RSF’s involvement in the September 2013 repression of peaceful protesters during which at least 185 protesters were killed and 800 were detained without charge, many of whom were allegedly subjected to acts of torture. [...]

In several regions, the RSF have granted themselves powers going beyond their prerogatives as security forces, including the power to confiscate goods and products from merchants or farmers and to sell them for themselves; or the power to interfere within family affairs. [...]

The law (including the 2007 Armed Forces Act, the 1999 Police Act, the 2010 National Security Act) provides for immunity to Sudanese officials, including security forces. In practice, such guarantees of immunity have led to total impunity for Sudanese officials, including in respect of serious human rights violations, and legal remedies for victims have remained unavailable or ineffective. A 2015

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<sup>81</sup> Middle East Eye, [Sudan transitional government to build new national army with rebel groups](#), 26 January 2020

constitutional amendment granted NISS, and thereby the RSF, the status of “regular forces”, enabling them to benefit from the immunity provisions. Hence, no RSF member has ever faced prosecution for alleged involvement in serious human rights violations.<sup>82</sup>

The report of the UN Secretary-General on *Children and armed conflict in the Sudan* covering the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019 reported: “The Rapid Support Forces, a major security player in Operation Decisive Summer and composed of members of the former Border Guards and Governmentallied armed Arab militias, continued to emerge as a major security entity. In January 2017, the Parliament passed the Rapid Support Forces Act, integrating them into the Sudanese Armed Forces. Some 30,000 members of the Rapid Support Forces were reportedly absorbed into the Sudanese Armed Forces”.<sup>83</sup>

The RSF is headed by General Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo, “the most powerful man in the security forces”, according to the International Crisis Group’s October 2019 report.<sup>84</sup>

In September 2019 the HUDO Centre noted that:

Rapid Support Force is a militia that generated from Border Guard Force which originated from Janjaweed militia that had committed crimes in Darfur which were condemned internationally. Since the former president was overthrown in April 2019 by a peaceful civil revolution, the RSF commander Mohammed Hamdan Daglu (Hemedti) was nominated as member in Sudan Sovereign Council after the Transitional Military Council member. The RSF have taken the lead in violating civilian rights particularly in conflict areas like in the gold mines at Talodi. Nevertheless, More than twenty five (25) detainees from Nuba Mountains have been deliberately left in custody since June 2011 regardless of the recent declared release pardon-orders.<sup>85</sup>

As Maddy Crowther, Co-Executive Director of Waging Peace noted in her August 2019 report for a UK Country Guidance case:

The new leadership body includes individuals involved in the commission of mass atrocities in the conflict areas of Sudan, notably Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, or ‘Hemetti’, formerly deputy within the TMC, and now a member of the 11-strong Sovereign Council. As leader of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), itself the re-branded ‘Janjaweed’ forces responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Darfur, Hemetti also oversaw campaigns of violence in the Nuba Mountains.<sup>86</sup>

She assessed for the Court that:

now is not the time to say whether attitudes towards Nuba individuals have improved, especially considering the very recent fall of the Bashir regime and its replacement by a new transitional system [...] There is ample evidence that attitudes among the TMC, chiefly originating in the RSF and its leader

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<sup>82</sup> International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) / African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, [Will There Be Justice For Darfur?, Persisting impunity in the face of political change, Fact-finding mission report](#), December 2019, *The Rapid Support Forces (RSF)*, p. 26-28

<sup>83</sup> UN Security Council, [Children and armed conflict in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 29 June 2020, II. Political and security situation and parties to conflict, B. Parties to the conflict, Government security forces, para. 13

<sup>84</sup> International Crisis Group, [Safeguarding Sudan’s Revolution](#), 21 October 2019, 2. Hemedti and the Rapid Support Forces, p. 12

<sup>85</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Action, Arrest of Eltoum Osman by RSF in Hajar-Jawad, Sudan](#), 10 September 2019

<sup>86</sup> Maddy Crowther (Waging Peace), [Report on the risk to Nuba individuals in Sudan](#), 27 August 2019, para. 19

Hemedti, are anti-Nuba, both on ethnic/racist grounds, and because individuals are assumed to have existing anti-government political opinion.<sup>87</sup>

In October 2019, Maddy Crowther reiterated her conclusion made in August 2019 that:

The recent change in government should not be exaggerated, it is simply too early to tell whether early stated commitments to peace and respect for diversity will be respected, and initial progress is discouraging, particularly as the administrative apparatus of the Bashir era remains mostly intact. Popular discontent is growing among the Nuba communities both on the ground and within the diaspora amid fears that the conflict, persecution, discrimination, and Arabisation of the Bashir era will continue while its administrative apparatus and racist ideology remains in force. This affects Nuba communities in South Kordofan, those who have been displaced to Khartoum, and individuals who arrive in the urban area as a result of refused asylum claims.<sup>88</sup>

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) indicated in July 2019 that although the RSF are part of the security forces, “it has demonstrated a different pattern of violence than the Sudanese police and military. More than half of the events in which the RSF have been involved since the protest wave began are instances of violence against civilians. This is compared to 25% of events involving the military ... and fewer than 10% of events involving the police”.<sup>89</sup> According to the same source:

Hemedti has refused to take responsibility for the RSF’s activities, attributing the violence to “imposter troops among the Rapid Support Forces” (CityNews, June 20, 2019). Yet, the RSF’s violence against civilians in Khartoum echoes the force’s history in Darfur, where the militia is accused of sexual violence, extralegal killing, and other war crimes (Amnesty International, June 11 2019).<sup>90</sup>

ACAPS similarly reported in June 2019 that “Members of the group [RSF] are generally considered as responsible for having committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war in Darfur” and that “The RSF is mainly responsible for the human rights violations against protesters since December 2018”.<sup>91</sup>

Re-emphasising this point, Amnesty International documented with regards to the violence that erupted against protesters in Khartoum on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019 [emphasis added]:

Following Al-Bashir’s overthrow, the military formed a Transitional Military Council (TMC) which ruled Sudan between 12 April and 17 August 2019. During this period, the Sudanese security forces committed numerous human rights violations. The violations came to a crescendo with the attack on the sit-in outside the military headquarters in Khartoum on 3 June. That morning, the Security forces carried out unlawful killings and other uses of unnecessary and/or excessive force; torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detention; sexual violence and enforced disappearances. **Survivors of the attack told Amnesty International that the attacks were carried out by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the NISS, and the police, and that they had used live ammunition, teargas, whips and sticks.** Many of those present at the scene during the attack described acts that amount to indiscriminate killing, torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment [...]

Based on data received from various sources, including the Committee of the Families of the Martyrs of the December 2018 Revolution. Amnesty International believes that at least 100 people were killed,

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<sup>87</sup> Maddy Crowther (Waging Peace), [Report on the risk to Nuba individuals in Sudan](#), 27 August 2019, para. 20 and 35

<sup>88</sup> Maddy Crowther (Waging Peace), [Addendum report – risk to Nuba individuals in Sudan](#), 17 October 2019, p. 21

<sup>89</sup> ACLED, [The Rapid Support Forces and the escalation of violence in Sudan](#), 2 July 2019

<sup>90</sup> ACLED, [The Rapid Support Forces and the escalation of violence in Sudan](#), 2 July 2019

<sup>91</sup> ACAPS, [Sudan, Escalation of violence](#), 17 June 2019, Key Stakeholder, p. 5

and over 700 people injured. Hundreds more were arrested, while many were released, and an unknown number of people remain missing, including at least 20 confirmed cases.<sup>92</sup>

### 2.1.3. National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) / General Intelligence Service (GIS)

No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information about the structure of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) operating in South Kordofan or Blue Nile.

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 provided the following summary of events affecting Sudan and which lead to changes to the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS):

Under the Bashir regime, responsibility for internal security resided with the Ministry of Interior, which oversaw the police agencies: the Ministry of Defense; and the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS). [...]

Under the CLTG, this structure changed. NISS was renamed the General Intelligence Service (GIS), and its mandate was narrowed to protecting national security, limiting its duties to gathering and analyzing information and submitting information and analysis to concerned authorities, whose functions and duties are prescribed by law.<sup>93</sup>

The report of the UN Secretary-General on *Children and armed conflict in the Sudan* covering the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019 reported: "The General Intelligence Service, created in July 2019 by the Transitional Military Council, replaced the former National Intelligence and Security Service. The agency was renamed in response to demands by protesters for the dissolution of the National Intelligence and Security Service because of its involvement in the violent response to popular demonstrations in late 2018 and 2019".<sup>94</sup> According to Radio Dabanga "The Sudan News Agency (SUNA) reported on July 29 [2019] that TMC chairman Abdelfattah El Burhan issued a constitutional decree to amend several articles of the National National Security Act of 2010, in order to restructure the NISS. The new intelligence service is reportedly no longer authorised to detain people or carry out search operations".<sup>95</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported in October 2019 that "Attorney General Tajelsir El Hibir has taken measures to lift the immunity of members of Sudan's now defunct National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), allowing them to face charges from the Public Prosecution".<sup>96</sup> In September 2019, it was already reported that "The prosecution is preparing charges against ousted president Omar Al Bashir and the former chief of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) ["Salah Abdallah, aka Salah Gosh"] under Article 130 of Sudanese criminal law".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Amnesty International, ["They descended on us like rain", Justice for victims of protest crackdown in Sudan](#), 10 March 2020, 1. Executive Summary, p. 7

<sup>93</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, Executive Summary

<sup>94</sup> UN Security Council, [Children and armed conflict in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 29 June 2020, II. Political and security situation and parties to conflict, B. Parties to the conflict, Government security forces, para. 14

<sup>95</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan court prepares murder charges against Al Bashir and NISS chief Gosh](#), 22 September 2019

<sup>96</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan's Attorney General to lift immunity of former NISS members](#), 24 October 2019

<sup>97</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan court prepares murder charges against Al Bashir and NISS chief Gosh](#), 22 September 2019

In January 2020 Reuters reported that the Transitional Sovereign Council appointed General Jamal Abdul Majeed as the new head of the GIS, following General Abu Bakr Dumbab's resignation.<sup>98</sup>

#### 2.1.4. Law enforcement

No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information about the structure of law enforcement operating in South Kordofan or Blue Nile, with the exception of illustrative examples of human rights abuses as included in section [2.1.10. Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces](#).

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 stated that "Under the Bashir regime, responsibility for internal security resided with the Ministry of Interior, which oversaw the police agencies: the Ministry of Defense; and the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS). Ministry of Interior police agencies include the security police, Special Forces police, traffic police, and the combat-trained Central Reserve police. There was a police presence throughout the country. Under the CLTG, this structure changed".<sup>99</sup>

In January 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that:

According to the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), the administrative structure of police and security services must be changed to avoid any potential violence.

In a statement on Friday, the SPA said that the violence and insecurity the country has recently witnessed are "well organised acts rather than coincidences". The SPA holds members of the security service, the police, and other law enforcement forces responsible regarding the deterioration of the security in the country, because of their obligations to protect and to provide security across the country [...]

The Police Administration Authority has issued a number of decisions to enhance security in the country. These include the establishment of a separate department to secure the health sector, and the allocation of sufficient law enforcement to secure hospitals to address the frequent assaults on health personnel. This will be led by a high-ranking officer.<sup>100</sup>

#### 2.1.5. Paramilitary militias

This section should be read in conjunction with section [2.1.6. Popular Defence Forces \(PDF\)](#).

##### South Kordofan

In August 2020 Dr. Dan Watson, Senior Researcher at ACLED, stated:

Since the fall of the NCP regime in April 2019, small-scale incidents of violence against civilians have remained a common occurrence in parts of South, North and Central Darfur states as well as South Kordofan, and increasingly in West Kordofan [...]

Such acts are mostly carried out by pastoralist groups against civilians, often targeting internally displaced persons (IDPs), whilst Popular Defence Forces paramilitaries (an Islamist paramilitary force established in the early 1990s, and officially dismantled this year) have been implicated in a spate of attacks in South Kordofan [...]

There has been a change in the type of actors involved in the clashes, with a move away from rebel groups toward irregular militias and paramilitary forces.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Reuters, [Sudan appoints new intelligence chief in wake of failed revolt](#), 16 January 2020

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *Executive Summary*

<sup>100</sup> Radio Dabanga, [SPA: 'Structural changes needed for Sudan's police and security services'](#), 5 January 2020

<sup>101</sup> ACLED (Dr. Dan Watson), [Riders on the storm: Rebels, Soldiers, and Paramilitaries in Sudan's Margins](#), 27 August 2020



Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre and interviewed for this report in February 2021 provided the following overview:

Kadugli has three militias, one from Arab origin and the other two of Nuba origin. And when you say Nuba origin, it is a tribal origin within Nuba. Because Nuba is (like) a nation. It is a very big nation with various languages. Nubian tribes are divided into 10 groups of languages. There are more than 50 tribes of Nubians.

Two tribes were included by former president Bashir in order to fight against the SPLM [Sudan People's Liberation Movement] and also to divide them/Nuba. One of them from Angolo tribe, and this is led by Major. JAO, he was a sergeant in the SAF [Sudan Armed Forces] before he had joined the SPLM. After that, there was a peace agreement. A special one made for him. And he managed to join the Sudan military – the SAF. And they promoted him from a sergeant to a major. The other tribal militia is led by Kafi Tayara, a community leader, and he's from a tribe called Shatt (He was promoted to a general rank by al Bashir). Because there is a misunderstanding between him and the SPLM the government of Sudan also used him. So all those are kinds of militias. After then, we have the most powerful tribal militia which is the RSF/PDF.<sup>102</sup>

### Blue Nile

The Small Arms Survey's Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan project provided the following summary with regards to the Kobaji militia operating in Blue Nile state:

In the run-up to the April 2010 elections in Blue Nile the GoS [Government of Sudan] attempted to mobilize parts of tribes that made up the SPLM's traditional support base. The GoS thus exploited a rift between the Jabalaween (part of the Berta tribe) and Malik Agar, which involved an SPLA officer named Zaidan Yassin accusing Agar of organizing the killing of his uncle, the chief of the Jabalaween, in 1998. In early 2010 the GoS supported Yassin with funding and small arms to create a militia with the goal of organizing proNCP votes during the election. After the war in Blue Nile broke out in September 2011 the GoS continued to support the militia and Yassin continued to recruit disgruntled SPLA-N officers and soldiers—many of whom held personal grudges against Agar, who was by then the SPLM-N's chairman. The GoS's original mobilization tactic that relied on resentment towards Agar became less effective, however, after the SPLM/A-N split (see below), because Kobaji militia leaders did not have the same hostility towards Joseph Tuka and his senior command. Since 2011 the Kobaji militia has fought alongside SAF against the SPLA-N in most of the main battles in the Kurmuk area. It was especially active in the 2015 and 2016 fighting seasons. The militia has a standing force of fewer than 500 men, but can raise as many as 1,500 for specific battles. In 2015 Brig. Gen. Mohamed Yunus from the Hamaj tribe in the Roseires locality defected from the SPLA-N and is now one of the Kobaji militia's main leaders. It is unclear, however, just how strongly this militia really supports the GoS, but rather uses its relationship with the government to obtain small arms as a means of defending its members against Arab and Fellata pastoralists in Geissan and Roseires.<sup>103</sup>

The same source with reference to the 'Maban Heros' reported:

This militia is based in Bout in Tadamon county, Blue Nile, and comprises mostly ethnic Mabanese, but also includes some Nuer and Fellata (who rarely take part in battles, however). Since its formation it has had a standing force of around 200 men—which can increase to 1,500 during the fighting seasons—all of whom are recruited from Maban county. Recruitment periods are often short term and occur on a seasonal basis (Gramizzi, 2013, p. 40). The militia's political leader is Abdallah Monti, a long-time member of the NCP and former NCP Maban county commissioner (2005–10), when Upper Nile was an NCP-controlled Sudanese state [...]

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

<sup>103</sup> Small Arms Survey/HSBA, [Spilling over, Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan's Blue Nile State](#), 2015-19, March 2020, Box 1 The main GoS proxy forces in and around Blue Nile, p. 29/30

The GoS has capitalized on Mabanese grievances against the SPLM by attempting to direct Mabanese anger against the SPLM/A-N in support of GoS efforts to defeat the SPLM-N in Blue Nile.<sup>104</sup>

#### 2.1.6. Popular Defence Forces (PDF)

This section should also be read in conjunction with section [2.1.1. Sudanese Armed Forces \(SAF\)](#).

Almost no COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information about the structure of the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) operating in South Kordofan or Blue Nile with the exception of illustrative examples of human rights abuses as included in section [2.1.10. Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces](#).

The Small Arms Survey's Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan project provided the following summary on the PDF:

The PDF was created in the aftermath of the 1989 coup to serve as an instrument of the new Islamist regime (Salmon, 2007, p. 8; HSBA, 2011). The PDF in Blue Nile has historically drawn the bulk of its forces from the non-indigenous Fellata and Hausa communities, but also includes fighters from some indigenous groups such as the Berta (Gramizzi, 2013, p. 35). Mobilizing the PDF serves GoS [Government of Sudan] interests by popularizing the war among traditionally pro-GoS communities in northern Blue Nile. The two main PDF mobilizers in Blue Nile are Governor Hussein Yasin and the Funj paramount chief, Mek al-Fatih al-Mek Yusif Hassan Adlan, although all of the various NCP-affiliated Blue Nile governors retained this function. The PDF coordinator is Atif Yousif al-Bashir, a Berta from Geissan, who liaises between the PDF and SAF—especially in terms of salaries and arms distribution. The PDF was very active in fighting the SPLA-N during the early years of the war, but this decreased over time, and the GoS now appears to rely more on the Maban Heroes and the Kobaji militia (both described below), as well as pro-GoS militias from other parts of Sudan and South Sudan.<sup>105</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported that “Under international law, it is considered part of Sudan's military because it was created by statute. However, the militia was defined by the regime of Al Bashir as a semi-military force of Sudanese citizens. Its members receive training, uniforms, guns, ammunition, and food, but no salaries. The Popular Defence Forces also operated as a reserve force for the Sudan Armed Forces. The militiamen were mainly mobilised from Darfur, to fight against rebels in present South Sudan. The militia is still operational, in Darfur, and, mainly, in South Kordofan. It also plays a major role in the distribution of weapons to, and military training for, tribal militias”.<sup>106</sup>

The report of the UN Secretary-General on *Children and armed conflict in the Sudan* covering the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019 reported: “The Popular Defence Forces, a paramilitary group established in 1989 through the Popular Defence Forces Act to support the Sudan Police Force, was dissolved by the Transitional Military Council in May 2019”.<sup>107</sup>

In February 2020 Radio Dabanga reported:

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<sup>104</sup> Small Arms Survey/HSBA, [Spilling over, Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan's Blue Nile State](#), 2015-19, March 2020, *Box 1 The main GoS proxy forces in and around Blue Nile*, p. 30

<sup>105</sup> Small Arms Survey/HSBA, [Spilling over, Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan's Blue Nile State](#), 2015-19, March 2020, *Box 1 The main GoS proxy forces in and around Blue Nile*, p. 29

<sup>106</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Nuba call for disarmament of Sudan's Popular Defence Forces militia](#), 27 February 2020

<sup>107</sup> UN Security Council, [Children and armed conflict in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 29 June 2020, *II. Political and security situation and parties to conflict, B. Parties to the conflict, Government security forces, para. 12*



Residents of the eastern part of the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan have called on the state government to disarm the Popular Defence Forces deployed in the region.

Nuba activists pointed out to Radio Dabanga that the eastern localities of South Kordofan are marked by an absence of law enforcement forces.

The commercial and agricultural activities in the region are threatened by the proliferation of weapons, and the frequent occurrence of killings and robberies on the roads.

They appealed to the South Kordofan governor to dissolve the militias in the state, and to disarm the militiamen in the state.<sup>108</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported in June 2020 that “The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) has confirmed that the decision to dissolve the paramilitary Popular Defence Forces (PDF) was final, rebutting previous media reports that the militia has been reintegrated into the army”.<sup>109</sup>

### **2.1.7. Military service**

No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information on military service in South Kordofan or Blue Nile States.

In general, the CIA World Factbook on Sudan reported with regards to ‘military service age and obligation’ based on information from 2013: “18-33 years of age for male and female compulsory or voluntary military service; 1-2 year service obligation (2013)”.<sup>110</sup>

### **2.1.8. Defection from government forces**

No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing information on the situation and treatment of defectors from government forces stationed specifically in South Kordofan or Blue Nile States, or generally in Sudan.

### **2.1.9. Forced recruitment of young men**

No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information on the forced recruitment of young men in Sudan in general and specifically from South Kordofan or Blue Nile States. See section [7.1. Recruitment and use of children](#) on the forced recruitment of children by both state and non-state actors.

Providing background to the conflict in Blue Nile State, a March 2020 Small Arms Survey report covering 2015-2019 explained with regards to recruitment in general (not forced):

The GoS’s [Government of Sudan’s] counter-insurgency strategy has mostly made use of locally recruited militias and paramilitary forces from Blue Nile, other parts of Sudan, and South Sudan that were sometimes recruited only a few months ahead of an offensive to support the regular armed forces defending garrisons or to act alone as local proxies and agitators. Total numbers are therefore difficult to estimate and changed over time, but it seems that, at the very least, 17,000 men were involved in GoS-directed operations in and around Blue Nile. By relying on several militias the GoS was likely attempting to sow discord and increase local violence between pro-GoS tribes and the SPLM/A-N in southern Blue Nile and neighbouring Maban county in Upper Nile, South Sudan (see Map 1) as a way of distracting the SPLM/A-N from its fight with the government. In fact, using local militias appeared to become the GoS’s main policy as the war progressed, so that by early 2016 militias of this type from

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<sup>108</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Nuba call for disarmament of Sudan's Popular Defence Forces militia](#), 27 February 2020

<sup>109</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan Armed Forces: 'Popular Defence Forces dissolved, not absorbed'](#), 9 June 2020

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, [World Factbook, Sudan](#), Last updated: 26 January 2021, *Military and Security*

Sudan and South Sudan made up the bulk of the government's fighting forces before the GoS deployed the RSF in May of that year (see above).

Each of the GoS's proxy forces is organized and supported for specific purposes. [...]

The SPLA-N-Agar's forces are mainly Ingessana. Many of these forces are reserves and recruitment campaigns regularly occur in the refugee camp.<sup>111</sup>

Also reporting with regards to recruitment in general to the Sudanese military, the International Crisis Group noted that:

Sudan's professional military weakened so drastically under Bashir that it is now just one power among many in the security sector. The reasons for the Sudanese Armed Forces' decline are many. Bashir lost trust in the military following his 1999 falling out with Hassan al-Turabi, Sudan's leading Islamist, who had hand-picked much of the top brass. Bashir's suspicion of the generals hardened after the military failed to prevent the stunning assault on Khartoum by the Darfuri rebel Justice and Equality Movement in 2008. Also, the lengthy insurgencies in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile largely precluded the army from recruiting soldiers from those regions, eroding its claim to be a unifying national institution. Rather than rebuild the military, Bashir increasingly opted to fund and arm local paramilitary groups, leading to the proliferation of groups such as Hemedti's RSF, which [...] started out in Darfur and has grown more powerful than the army itself. [...]

The RSF's ranks were swelled by recruits from many impoverished families who were highly motivated by the financial rewards, which could reach up to \$10,000 each per offensive deployment. Some even paid bribes to go.<sup>112</sup>

#### **2.1.10. Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces**

For information on abuses committed against particular profiles, see information included in sections [5. Human rights situation: civil and political rights](#), [6.1. Sexual and gender-based violence \(SGBV\)](#), [6.4 State response to SGBV](#), and [7.1. Recruitment and use of children](#).

##### Human rights violations committed by government forces in the Two Areas

Documenting human rights violations against civilians, the Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO) reported, covering the period April to June 2019, that:

Civilians in the two areas have not noticed any meaningful change following the toppling of Al-Bashir and the struggle for power between the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and civilian opposition forces. Although the number of attacks still have not reached the level prior to the sharp diminution that began in June 2016, there were more human rights violations incidents perpetrated by the Sudan government in the Two Areas during the first six months of 2019, compared to the prior two years. Similarly, as a result, there were more people injured and killed during the first six months of 2019 than during the last six months of 2018.<sup>113</sup>

Similarly, during the period July to October 2019, the same organisation reported that "Despite the start of a peace process between the Sudan ruling council and the SPLM/A-N, communities in the SPLM/A-N controlled areas are still undergoing violent attacks and human rights violations by Sudan government forces and their allied forces in the Two Areas".<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Small Arms Survey, [Spilling Over: Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan's Blue Nile State](#), 2015–19, March 2020, Box1 The main GoS proxy forces in and around Blue Nile p. 29 and p. 38

<sup>112</sup> International Crisis Group, [Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution](#), 21 October 2019, III., A. Key Players and Power Centres p. 11 and p. 14

<sup>113</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: April – June 2019](#), August 2019, p. 1

<sup>114</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: July – October 2019](#), December 2019, p. 1

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 provided the following summary on the human rights abuses committed in the Two Areas:

In [...] the Two Areas, paramilitary forces and rebel groups continued to commit killings, rape, and torture of civilians throughout the year. Local militias maintained substantial influence due to widespread impunity. There were reports of both progovernment and antigovernment militias looting, raping, and killing civilians [...]

Throughout the year military personnel, paramilitary forces, and tribal groups committed killings in [...] the Two Areas. Most reports were difficult to verify due to continued prohibited access to conflict areas, particularly [...] SPLM-N-controlled areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States [...]

Under the Bashir regime and the TMC, human rights groups continued to report government forces and militias raped, detained, tortured, and arbitrarily killed civilians in [...] government-controlled areas of Blue Nile [...]

Under the CLTG, human rights groups reported armed individuals committed rape and arbitrarily killed civilians in [...] government-controlled areas of the Blue Nile. While some wore government paraphernalia, i.e., uniforms, it is not clear that the individuals were actual official government security forces or militia.<sup>115</sup>

Reporting on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile throughout 2019, the HUDO Centre noted that "The violations reduced significantly in Khartoum but slightly in conflict areas. The violations in areas under conflict go on with limited (almost no) intervention from the state or central government (authorities)".<sup>116</sup> It further summarised that the human rights violations it documented in 2019 were "arbitrary arrest/ security of persons, sexual violence, unlawful killing, right to fair trial (court observations) and rights of civilians within conflict areas (insecurity status, misuse of authority, excessive use of power and environmental issues)" and that "Many times, the authorities (police in particular) refused or failed to carry out investigations of cases brought before them especially where RSF and PDF were involved".<sup>117</sup>

Freedom House reviewing 2019 reported that "Neighborhood committees in the state [South Kordofan] alleged that security forces arbitrarily arrested individuals during the state of emergency" and that "neighborhood committees in South Kordofan State warned that security forces were seizing property while enforcing the state of emergency there".<sup>118</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that between January and June 2020, whilst "in conflict areas of SK [South Kordofan] and BN [Blue Nile], violations went on with limited or no intervention from the state or central government (authorities)".<sup>119</sup> It further summarised the human rights violations it documented in that time period as: "arbitrary arrests, unlawful killings (more than thirty civilians were shot dead) and other violations which were mainly carried out by RSF/PDF against civilians in the two conflict areas. On regular incidents, police deliberately refused or failed to carry out investigations of cases brought before them. The report also includes court observation notes for specific trials with human

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<sup>115</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *Executive Summary and section 1., g. Abuses in Internal Conflict*

<sup>116</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, *Executive summary, p. iv*

<sup>117</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, *1.4 Statement of the problem, p. 3*

<sup>118</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2020 Sudan](#), 4 March 2020, *G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights*

<sup>119</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020

rights aspect”.<sup>120</sup> The same source recorded between January and June 2020, 9 injured civilians and 31 unlawful killings in South Kordofan, and 2 injured civilians and 3 deaths in Blue Nile.<sup>121</sup>

Reviewing the year 2020, the HUDO Centre provided the following overview of violations in Blue Nile and South Kordofan:

in conflict areas, violations went on with limited or no intervention from the authorities. The police did not execute their duties well and for this reason, the perpetrators carried on with violations and abuses unrestricted. However, cases of abuses and violations in BN [Blue Nile] were generally low compared to SK [South Kordofan][...]

The violations and abuses included in this report are; Arbitrary arrests, whereby more than eighty four (84+) civilians were arbitrarily detained. Unlawful killings, whereby, more than forty (40+) civilians were shot dead. Towards the end of the year 2020, armed robberies were rampant mainly in SK and this was attributed to presence of very many troops of RSF and PDF soldiers. There were other kinds of violations that were mainly committed by government’s security organs and militias.

On a regular basis, police deliberately refused to respond or failed to carry out investigations of cases that were brought before them.<sup>122</sup>

The same source further observed:

The violations in conflict areas continued mainly because of the presence of armed RSF and PDF soldiers, the failure to act by the authorities/government or public administrators at the state and central levels. RSF and PDF killed and injured many people/civilians by shooting them directly. They confiscate/loot property from civilians and recently they started to engage in armed robbery especially along the roads(robbing travelers) in South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains. The MI/SAF resumed arresting civilians with no action or reprimand from the authorities/government to combat it.

Rights were violated in form of arresting people arbitrarily, unlawful killing, denying people rights to fair trial (rule of law) and rights of civilians within conflict areas(insecurity, abuse of authority and excessive use of power). Many times, the authorities (police in particular) refused or failed to carry out investigations of cases brought before them especially where RSF and PDF were involved. This is a challenge to good governance, rule of law and an indication of impunity.<sup>123</sup>

The HUDO Centre also compiled the following table, which “gives the numbers of some reported violations committed within year 2020”<sup>124</sup>:

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<sup>120</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, *Executive Summary*, p. 3

<sup>121</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, 2.2 *Unlawful Killing*, p. 13

<sup>122</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, *Executive summary*, v

<sup>123</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 1.4 *Statement of the problem*, p. 3

<sup>124</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 2 *Section Two: The incidents*, p.6

Kind of violation	Area	Committed by		Remarks
		RSF/PDF/SAF	anonymous	
Arbitrary Arrest	SK	78		Police involved while PDF aren't
	BN	9		
Extrajudicial Killing	SK	27	24	Two of them were policemen
	BN	1	2	
Injuries	SK	14	5	
	BN	0	0	
Armed Robbery	SK	8	5	
	BN	0	0	

#### Human rights violations committed by government forces in South Kordofan

Documenting human rights violations against civilians in the period April to June 2019, the Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO) reported that:

Most of the human rights violations reported in this update took place in Delami County, Nuba Mountains. Significantly, almost all the attacks were perpetrated by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) rather than by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) or the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), the SAF-allied militias who had previously been more visible in perpetrating such attacks in the Two Areas [...].<sup>125</sup>

Covering the period July to October 2019, the same organisation reported that “Recently, Delami has been specifically targeted by SAF and its allied militias and the residents live in constant fear. As a result, agricultural activities, particularly those in far-flung fields, have been affected as people are wary of venturing far from their homes in fear of being injured, abducted or even killed by SAF soldiers or militiamen”.<sup>126</sup>

In October 2019 Radio Dabanga reported that “Security forces in rural South Kordofan reportedly continue to violate the rights and freedoms of residents and confiscate their property in the name of the emergency security measures applicable in the state. According to neighbourhood committees in Hajeri Djawad south of Delling, the violations include curfews, arbitrary arrests, and the confiscation of consumer goods in rural areas of the Nuba Mountains through checkpoints stationed at Abujebel Bridge and Hajeri Djawad”.<sup>127</sup>

The following non-exhaustive illustrative examples show the nature of human rights violations committed against particular profiles by government forces and their supporting paramilitaries:

<sup>125</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: April – June 2019](#), August 2019, p. 1

<sup>126</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: July – October 2019](#), December 2019, p. 2

<sup>127</sup> Radio Dabanga, [‘Security forces abusing emergency measures’ in Sudan’s Nuba Mountains](#), 10 October 2019

- 3 May 2019: “for unknown reasons a group of Rapid Support Force (RSF) soldiers came to Altugula goldmine market and started to shoot randomly. As a result, five people sustained injuries [...] one of the injured people died. No investigations have been carried out yet”.<sup>128</sup>
- 10 May 2019: “an unspecified number of SAF men in military uniform looted 65 cows in Deri village, Aberi Payam, injuring a 17-year old herder”.<sup>129</sup>
- 1 June 2019: “14 SAF soldiers from Habila military barracks, riding on seven camels, looted 57 cows from Abiyat village, Nyukur Payam. According to eyewitnesses, the soldiers all wore SAF military uniforms and carried light weapons. As the soldiers made their way back to Habila with the cows, armed herders, including some SPLM/A-N personnel, pursued them. Following an exchange of fire, they managed to recover the cows but three of the cows died and four were injured in shooting”.<sup>130</sup>
- 26 June 2019: “about ten SAF soldiers from the government barracks at Sarafai village, Delami Payam, ambushed two civilians in an SPLM/A-N controlled area and shot one of them, a 29-year old man, in the back, killing him. The two were walking to the market in Odura village, Sabat Payam, Delami County. The attackers also stole over 60,000 Sudanese Pounds (equivalent to USD 1,200) from him. The victim was a well-known mechanic”.<sup>131</sup>
- 14 September 2019: “in Hadra village, Umhetan Payam, 33 SAF soldiers looted 17 cows from two households in the SPLM/A-N controlled areas. SAF soldiers attacked the herders, shooting at them, and killing one. Villagers later tracked the soldiers who appear to have taken the cows to the Dundor area, where SAF has a big military barracks”.<sup>132</sup>
- 18 September 2019: “Mr. Abdalla Ismail and Ms. Mahaseen Edriss were killed by PDF soldiers in Garada village of Al-Abbasiya locality. No punitive action had been taken by authorities”.<sup>133</sup>
- 21 September 2019: “the military intelligence (MI) in Dilling arrested Mr. Ismail Baleeya, 35 years old. They took him to MI office at Dilling military headquarters and later released him the same day evening. They detained him for seven hours, physically and psychologically tortured (beating and insulting) him. The arrest of Mr. Ismail was due to a personal dispute between him and a military soldier at a commercial bakery”.<sup>134</sup>
- 7 October 2019: “more than two hundred (200) armed RSF soldiers came on twenty seven (27) vehicles and invaded Altugula and Al-Laffa gold mines of Talodi. They beat up people randomly (men and women), looted four (4) motorbikes, smart phones and money. They also arrested more than ten civilians and detained them in an iron container”.<sup>135</sup>
- 14 October 2019: “in Khor Waral village, Umhetan Payam, RSF militiamen attacked and wounded 17 civilians who were travelling from the Western Jebels in the area controlled by the SPLM/A-N7 to Delami County. RSF looted nine motorbikes and 600,000 SDG (equivalent

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<sup>128</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.3.3 Civilian murdered and others injured by RSF at Altugula gold mine of Talodi, p. 22

<sup>129</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: April – June 2019](#), August 2019, p. 2

<sup>130</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: April – June 2019](#), August 2019, p. 2

<sup>131</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: April – June 2019](#), August 2019, p. 2

<sup>132</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: July – October 2019](#), December 2019, p. 2

<sup>133</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Two people murdered by PDF in Abu-Kershola, Sudan](#), 11 May 2020

<sup>134</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.1.9 Arrest of Ismail by MI in Dilling, p. 11

<sup>135</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.1.10 Arrest operation by RSF in Talodi, p. 11



to 7,500 US dollars) from the civilians. During the attack, a civilian was wounded and several went missing".<sup>136</sup>

- 15 October 2019: "RSF militiamen attacked travellers on the road between Delami County and Western Jebels. They abducted 16 civilians with all the belongings they had and later released three, keeping the other thirteen".<sup>137</sup>
- 20 October 2019: "Rapid Support Force (RSF) in Altugula gold mine of Talodi polluted some water canals with the prohibited cyanide. They did this before their departure from the area. As a result, a donkey and a cow died because of drinking the polluted water".<sup>138</sup>
- 17 November 2019: "Members of the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) militia are attacking people in Habila in South Kordofan's Nuba Mountains while police and army troops remain silent, the Sudanese human rights watchdog HUDO reported [...] In the early morning of November 17, three members of the PDF raided the farm of Bashir El Zein, 9 km southeast of Habila. As they assaulted the farm's guard, they were confronted by a group of army soldiers who happened to be passing by. The ensuing fight resulted in the injury of the three attackers. In response, relatives of the wounded men gathered in the area, threatening the residents with their presence. In the evening, a group of 45 armed men wearing PDF uniforms torched the homes of El Zein, his brother, and his sister, HUDO said in a statement today. The same militiamen plundered the shop of Abdelrahman Joumey at the market of Habila town during the day. They robbed him at gunpoint of his money and goods, and left".<sup>139</sup>
- 21 November 2019: "Mr. Mohammed Eissa was shot dead and Mr. Mohammed Osman was injured by six armed PDF soldiers in Abu-Kershola. The case was reported at Abu-Kershola police office against anonymous but, no further investigations have been carried out yet".<sup>140</sup>
- 22 November 2019: "Mr. Mohammed Ishaq was shot on his right leg and the harvest from his garden was looted by eleven (11) armed PDF soldiers who came on camels at Habilla, Nuba Mountains. The case was reported at Habilla police office but the police did not conduct further investigations".<sup>141</sup>
- 4 December 2019: "Mr. Mohammed Ahmed Eltahir was shot dead by PDF soldiers in his far at Shaq-Elkitir of Umbrembeta. After shooting him, they also looted his sesame harvest. The case was reported at Umbrembeta police office against anonymous but, no further investigations have been carried out yet".<sup>142</sup>
- 29 January 2020: "one PDF soldier shot at a gathering of civilians, killed two people and injured other three at Abu-Kershola. The case was reported at Abu-Kershola police office against him (PDF soldier) but no further action was taken by police".<sup>143</sup>
- 22 February 2020: "three masked armed men in PDF uniform near Rashad town killed a civilian. The case was filed at Rashad police office against anonymous".<sup>144</sup>
- 31 March 2020: "a group of PDF soldiers in Dalami locality kidnapped farmers with their tractor and robbed them of their money and mobile phones. The relative of the kidnapped

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<sup>136</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: July – October 2019](#), December 2019, p. 2

<sup>137</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: July – October 2019](#), December 2019, p. 2

<sup>138</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, RSF polluted sluiceway/channel with cyanide in Talodi, Sudan](#), 28 October 2019

<sup>139</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Militiamen wreak havoc in Sudan's Nuba Mountains](#), 26 November 2019

<sup>140</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Two people murdered by PDF in Abu-Kershola, Sudan](#), 11 May 2020

<sup>141</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Robbing of a civilian by PDF soldiers in Habilla, Sudan](#), 25 November 2019

<sup>142</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, PDF Shot/Killed a civilian in Umbrembeta, Sudan](#), 10 December 2019

<sup>143</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Two people murdered by PDF in Abu-Kershola, Sudan](#), 11 May 2020

<sup>144</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Two people murdered by PDF in Abu-Kershola, Sudan](#), 11 May 2020

people managed to pursue and rescue them. The case was reported but no investigations were conducted”.<sup>145</sup>

- 11 April 2020: “Mr. Elsafi Eldegain was arrested by SAF soldiers from Aleri Ghareib town and the following day, he was taken to Talodi town. No reason was given for his arrest [...] Mr. Elsafi was transferred to Talodi military base (where he is still confined). He has been denied access to his visitors, family and lawyers, this raises the fear that he could be undergoing torture”.<sup>146</sup>
- 20 April 2020: “a group of PDF members kidnapped child/ Osama Elsadiq (13 years old) and child/ Muamar Tariq Hamid (12 years old) from the main road between Dilling and Elhegairat village (the children’s home village). The two children were on their way home from shopping in Dilling market. They were obstructed by the kidnappers and taken under gunpoint to a nomad camp. The two children were tortured/ beaten, threatened to be killed, pointing guns to their mouths and given one poor meal a day with little water. They were held in that state for three days till when the kidnapers released them to community leader on 23rd April 2020 under pressure of Dilling community. The reason for the kidnap was that, the kidnapers claimed they had twenty seven goats which were stolen and they accused/suspected the Elhegairat people”.<sup>147</sup>
- 1 May 2020: “For unknown reason a SAF soldier in Dilling locality shot at family members as they were back to their village from Al-Farshaya weekly market. As a result, two people died and three others sustained injuries. A case was reported at Dilling police office but the process against the perpetrator is tarrying”.<sup>148</sup>
- 8 May 2020: “Mr. Hamza Ramadan and Mr. Mohammed Elias were killed by PDF members and their possessions were looted. The two incidents happened in Abu-Kershola locality. The murder cases were reported at Abu-Kershola police office but no further step was taken”.<sup>149</sup>
- 13 May 2020: “Armed RSF soldiers attacked Albardab village and killed nine (9) unarmed people, looted and burned down houses basing on ethnicity”.<sup>150</sup> HUDO Centre’s report covering events between January and December 2020 further highlighted that when the RSF soldiers arrived at the village “they started to ask about the ethnicity of the residents they came across and it turned out that they were targeting the Nuba. Whoever said that they were from Nuba ethnicity had to be assaulted / beaten or killed and their houses had to be looted and burnt down”.<sup>151</sup>
- May 2020 “displaced Nuba living in Tello camp in the southern part of Kadugli complained that elements of the Rapid Support Forces were terrorising them. One of them told Radio Dabanga that they faced heavy shootings and plundering, which forced them to flee to the eastern part of the town. According to *Omda* Khamees Badur, 775 families from various tribes have been affected by the violent events. 17 people have been killed, he said. The district’s health unit has been plundered completely, and the only water source in the area has been destroyed”.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Two people murdered by PDF in Abu-Kershola, Sudan](#), 11 May 2020

<sup>146</sup> HUDO Centre, [Arrest of Mr. Elsafi Eldegain by SAF in Aleri Ghareib](#), Sudan, 14 April 2020

<sup>147</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 2.4.2 Two children kidnapped by PDF members in Dilling, p. 33

<sup>148</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Two people murdered and others injured by SAF soldier in Dilling, Sudan](#), 5 May 2020

<sup>149</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Two people murdered by PDF in Abu-Kershola, Sudan](#), 11 May 2020

<sup>150</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Miserable conditions of the recently displaced people in Kadoqli, Sudan](#), 21 May 2020

<sup>151</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, 2.4.4 Miserable conditions of the recently displaced people in Kadugli, p. 26

<sup>152</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan: Homes of Kadugli displaced stripped](#), 3 June 2020



- 2 June 2020: “a group of armed PDF soldiers shot dead Mr. Ebaid Abdalla and injured Mr. Mubarak Eltoum with gunshots. The attack was at the victims' farm in Kujurria village. The victims were shot because of failure to answer questions about the whereabouts of the village's cattle”.<sup>153</sup>
- 5 June 2020: “three (3) farmers were shot dead by RSF soldiers after torturing them at their farms in Kadogli. A case was reported at Kadogli police but there was no significant response/reaction yet the survivors recognized some of the attackers and know their names”.<sup>154</sup>
- 15 June 2020: “RSF attacked policemen on duty, shot one dead and injured another. The policemen were guarding a telecom mast (station) in Kadogli. The RSF soldiers first attempted to steal the fuel which runs the station and when they were blocked, they shot at the policemen. The case was filed at Kadogli police but nobody was apprehended”.<sup>155</sup>
- 30 June 2020: “Mr. Edriss Ismail Daoud Jabouna was killed by PDF soldiers at his house in Elfaid Um-Abdalla for unknown reason. The case was reported at Elfaid Um-Abdalla police against the perpetrators. The perpetrators' names were given to police but the police's attempt to arrest them was unsuccessful”.<sup>156</sup>
- 18 August 2020: “Mr. Baraka Yassin Dahab was injured by gunshots from three people dressed in RSF uniform. He was shot from a place near Abu-Jibaiha town while on the road as he was driving his commercial vehicle. The case was reported at Abu-Jibaiha police office against anonymous”.<sup>157</sup>
- 1 September 2020: “Nora Rihan, a tea seller in Kadugli in Southern Kordofan was shot dead by an army officer after she refused to serve him before others. The officer took refuge in the army base in the city, and police wasn't able to arrest him to date despite the number of witnesses who saw the incident”.<sup>158</sup>
- 22 November 2020: “more than twenty passengers on a commercial vehicle travelling from Abu-Jibaiha to Talodi were robbed of their money and smart phones under gun point at a place called Gardood Torro. They were robbed by four armed people dressing Rabid Support Force (RSF) uniform. Immediately, the victims reported the robbery case at Gardood Torro military intelligence (MI) office and filed the case at Talodi police office on 23rd November 2020 but no further investigation was carried out”.<sup>159</sup>
- 2 December 2020: “two farmers were shot dead and another one was seriously injured by RSF soldiers at Elefain village near Kadogli. They were killed because they did not allow the perpetrators to graze cattle on their gardens. The case was reported at Kadogli police”.<sup>160</sup>
- 6 December 2020: “more than twenty passengers traveling on a truck from Haiban to Khartoum were blocked by Sudan Armed Force/ Military Intelligence at Al-Abbasiya town and forced to drive to the military base in town. All passengers were detained and their truck was packed at the military base. On the evening of 7th December 2020, the women and children were released after spending a night in a cell. The men stayed under detention with little amount of food and poor conditions. The reason behind their arrest is unknown and no case against them was filed”.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> HUDO Centre, [Civilian murdered and another one injured by PDF in Kujurria](#), 7 June 2020

<sup>154</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Murder of three farmers by RSF in Kadogli, Sudan](#), 8 June 2020

<sup>155</sup> HUDO Centre, [RSF murdered and injured policemen on duty in Kadogli](#), Sudan, 23 June 2020

<sup>156</sup> HUDO Centre, [Murder of Mr. Edriss by PDF soldiers in Elfaid, Sudan](#), 6 July 2020

<sup>157</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Mr. Baraka injured by gunshots near Abu-Jibaiha, Sudan](#), 27 August 2020

<sup>158</sup> Sudanese Women Rights Action (SUWRA), [In Sudan, women are still facing the deadly threat of the military](#), 5 October 2020

<sup>159</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Passengers robbed by RSF soldiers in Talodi, Sudan](#), 30 November 2020

<sup>160</sup> Urgent appeal, [SAF and RSF soldiers attacked and injured residents of Bobaya village, Sudan](#), 21 December 2020

<sup>161</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Arrest of travellers by SAF in Al-Abbasiya, Sudan](#), 9 December 2020

- 7 December 2020: “Mr. Ali Mohammed Zaitouna (a driver) was shot dead and the passengers onboard were robbed by armed PDF soldiers in Al-Abbasiya locality. This case was filed against anonymous at Al-Abbasiya police”.<sup>162</sup>
- 16 December 2020: “Within three days, a group of SAF and RSF soldiers attacked Bobaya village twice and as a result, three people (residents) were injured. These cases were reported at Dilling police but there was no response. The residents fear that more attacks may occur”.<sup>163</sup>

Radio Dabanga noted in January 2021 the shooting of a man in the Nuba Mountains by the Sudanese Armed Forces, “while he was riding his motorcycle on the road towards the town of El Tirtir. Witnesses told Radio Dabanga that members of the armed forces tried to arrest Hasan Mohamed but when he resisted, one of the gunmen opened the fire and wounded him in the leg”.<sup>164</sup>

According to the same source, “South Kordofan witnessed various armed robberies, attacks, killings, and looting. Because of the ongoing violence, residents organised a demonstration earlier this month [December 2020/January 2021] to protest against the deteriorating security”.<sup>165</sup>

#### Human rights violations committed by government forces in Blue Nile

HUDO Centre reported that since 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019 “the security agencies in Kurmuk locality issued movement permits (pass) for Sudanese/ citizens who are moving within Blue Nile state especially between Kurmuk to Damazin” and further explained that this was “unconstitutional”.<sup>166</sup>

The following non-exhaustive illustrative examples show the range of human rights violations committed by government forces and their supporting paramilitary militias:

- 5 May 2019: “in Bashir Nugo village, Alkurmuk Payam, Alkurmuk County, nine armed men in SAF uniform looted 500 sheep from Falata nomads. The Falata nomads tried resist, but two herders of the group were shot dead in the exchange of fire”.<sup>167</sup>
- 19 May 2019: “Medical staff members of various hospitals in Ed Damazin and El Roseiris in Sudan’s Blue Nile State laid down their tools [...] in protest against the assault on doctors at Ed Damazin Royal Hospital earlier that day” by “a force wearing military uniforms”.<sup>168</sup>
- 25 October 2019: “SAF at Singa Nabak village unlawfully confiscated a commercial vehicle belonging to Mr. Muntasir Ali. His vehicle was impounded because he had earlier reported the assault case against one of the soldiers who had assaulted him. To date, the vehicle is still at the military base and he’s intimidated to withdraw the suit”.<sup>169</sup>
- 5 November 2019: “a group of armed SAF soldiers in two vehicles mounted with machine guns commanded by Major/ Elhaj Abduelwahab arrested Mr. Ahmed Galab Dafaalla, Abdalla Elsheikh and Nasir Ahmed Elmagoub from Banat village and took them to Sinja Nabak Bridge check point where they detained them. Immediately after their arrest, the residents gathered

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<sup>162</sup> Urgent appeal, [SAF and RSF soldiers attacked and injured residents of Bobaya village, Sudan](#), 21 December 2020

<sup>163</sup> Urgent appeal, [SAF and RSF soldiers attacked and injured residents of Bobaya village, Sudan](#), 21 December 2020

<sup>164</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Increased violence in Darfur and South Kordofan continues](#), 19 January 2021

<sup>165</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Increased violence in Darfur and South Kordofan continues](#), 19 January 2021

<sup>166</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.5.13 Violation of the constitution, p. 34

<sup>167</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: April – June 2019](#), August 2019, p. 2

<sup>168</sup> Radio Tamazuj, [Sudan: Doctors on strike in Blue Nile](#), 19 May 2019

<sup>169</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Action, SAF unlawfully impounds a vehicle in Blue Nile, Sudan](#), 3 November 2019

at the checkpoint and protested the arrest. This forced the commandant to release them. The cause of arrest was because SAF armed soldiers had earlier come to arrest people whom they accused to be criminals [...] It turned out that the three arrested people had earlier confronted them/ SAF hence the arrest".<sup>170</sup>

- 17 November 2019: "about forty five (45) armed men in PDF uniform attacked and looted the shop of Mr. Abdulrahman Ibrahim Joumey at Habilla Market. They put Mr. Abdulrahman on gunpoint, took the available money and some goods from him and then moved away. He reported a case against them but no action or investigation was done by police yet the attackers are known. The same day evening, the same attackers went to Mr. Bashir Elzain's home and burnt/ scorched three (3) houses. They burnt Mr. Bashir's house together with that of his brother and his sister".<sup>171</sup>
- 16 March 2020: "while organizing the distribution of fuel at petrol station in Roro under observation of Roro resistance committee and number of SAF soldiers headed by First Lieutenant, a verbal argument came up between a civilian and one of the SAF soldiers. The First Lieutenant shot two bullets from his pistol and the other SAF soldiers started to shoot on air and towards the civilians. Three civilians were injured by direct gunshots, one of them died two days after due to gunshot injuries. His name was Mr. Ahmed Bakheit. No investigation was carried out up to date".<sup>172</sup>
- 9 April 2020: "Three miners were reportedly captured by Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and their whereabouts are still unknown".<sup>173</sup>
- 16 April 2020: "It was reported that SAF killed a 22-year-old boy in Qolnugura, Chali Payam".<sup>174</sup>
- 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020: "Rapid Support Force (RSF) in Damazin of Blue Nile State re-arrested Mr. Edriss Elbur [a trader, social and political activist] and detained him at RSF office. He was released the following day after interrogating and torturing him [...] Mr. Elbur was earlier arrested (on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020) by the same RSF in Damazin and released on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2020. After his release, Mr. Elbur opened a case against RSF base for having arrested him illegally. According to their interrogation, the second arrest was meant to intimidate him so that he drops the case. But, he insisted on following the due course of the law. Mr. Elbur is supported by some volunteer lawyers".<sup>175</sup>

#### Justice and accountability for government forces' human rights violations across Sudan

Reporting generally on the lack of justice and accountability for unlawful killings in Sudan, Amnesty International stated in its May 2020 report:

Testimonies collected from a group of 13 lawyers in Sudan indicates that the current legal environment is not suitable for the victims of unlawful killings to find justice. Firstly, despite the change in government, our research revealed a lack of will in various cases of unlawful killings, "there is reluctance/obstruction, delay from the prosecution office to file criminal charges especially if the perpetrators are members of the armed forces, the security, the police or the RSF [Rapid Security Forces]." Secondly, there are cumbersome bureaucratic hurdles such as delays and obstruction in the

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<sup>170</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.1.25 Arrest of three civilians by MI in Banat, p. 16/17

<sup>171</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.5.6 The PDF looted and burnt houses in Habilla, p. 30

<sup>172</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, 2.2.19 Killing of a civilian by SAF in Roro, p. 21

<sup>173</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, Protection, access and security, p. 4

<sup>174</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, Protection, access and security, p. 4

<sup>175</sup> HUDO Centre, [Repeated arrest of Mr. Edriss Elbur by RSF in Damazin, Sudan](#), 6 May 2020

investigation by the police and the prosecuting attorney once a case has been reported to them. In many instances, cases do not go beyond the office of the Prosecutor.<sup>176</sup>

Human Rights Watch explained in a September 2020 letter to the UN Human Rights Council that “Justice and accountability remain elusive for the egregious violations and abuses committed under the 30-year Al-Bashir dictatorship, including violations that may amount to crimes under international law, especially in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan [...] Commissions on human rights, law reform, and transitional justice also need to be established”.<sup>177</sup>

Human Rights Watch noted in June 2020 that “Attorney General Tajelsir El Hibir, who took up his post in October, has indicated that his office is investigating several cases involving past human rights abuses for possible prosecution: the torture and death of Dr. Ali Fadul in response to his participation in a doctors’ strike in 1990; the 1998 al-Eilafour military camp murders; the killing of unarmed protesters in 2005 at Port Sudan; the violent breakup of protests against Kajbar dam; the 2013 and 2018-19 violent crackdowns on peaceful protesters; and the more recent violence in Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Darfur”.<sup>178</sup> The events referred to by Human Rights Watch in South Kordofan are explained in greater detail further below, but mainly refer to the mid-May 2020 “violent clashes” between “different armed groups affiliated with two tribes”, which led to displacement and “loss of lives from both sides, physical injuries, burning of houses, looting of household goods and destruction of public infrastructure”.<sup>179</sup>

## 2.2. Armed opposition groups

For information on human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups view section [2.2.3. Human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups](#).

By way of context, in August 2020 Dr. Dan Watson, Senior Researcher at ACLED, reported:

After a tumultuous 18 months, Sudan is on the edge of another reorganization of power. Rebel groups from the marginalized regions of Darfur and the “Two Areas” of Blue Nile and South Kordofan are preparing to enter the transitional power-sharing government. They will join the ranks of military and paramilitary elites, operating alongside a fractious civilian coalition, who are governing an increasingly unstable country. The interaction between the military establishment, paramilitary elites from Sudan’s semi-periphery, and rebel elites from the periphery will have a decisive influence on the outcome of Sudan’s revolution, though perhaps not in the way that protesters who led the uprising would have hoped for [...]

The number of rebel groups and splinter factions has declined significantly since the height of the violence in Darfur in the mid-2000’s, and has been whittled down to the remnants of the Justice and Equality Movement; two factions of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement – North; and the two separate SLM/A rebel groups under the respective control of Abdul Wahid and Minni Minawi, with a number of offshoot groups and splinter factions surrounding the Abdul Wahid group.

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<sup>176</sup> Amnesty International, [“They descended on us like rain”: Justice for victims of protest crackdown in Sudan](#), 10 March 2020. 9. *Justice and Accountability*, p. 38

<sup>177</sup> Human Rights Watch, [The Human Rights Council should support systemic human rights reforms in Sudan](#), 10 September 2020

<sup>178</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Q&A: Justice for Serious International Crimes Committed in Sudan](#), 22 June 2020

<sup>179</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 14/15. For more detailed information on the scale of destruction and the needs of those left behind see the Inter-Agency Assessment mission’s report: Inter-Agency Assessment, [Assessment Report: Kadugli, South Kordofan State](#), 19 May 2020.

Most of these rebellions have been dormant for several years, in part because they have long-standing ceasefire arrangements with government forces from before the uprising of December 2018, whilst the SLM/A under Abdul Wahid adopted a “de facto ceasefire” after the fall of Bashir.<sup>180</sup>

### 2.2.1. Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army – North (SPLM/A-N)

The Middle East Eye provided the following overview of the various SPLM fractions [original emphasis]:

#### **SPLM: Sudan People's Liberation Movement**

Founded by the iconic rebel leader John Garang, who aimed for a democratic Sudan, the SPLM fought a war against the Sudanese state that eventually led to the secession of South Sudan in 2011. It is now South Sudan's ruling party, led by President Salva Kiir.

#### **SPLM/N: Sudan People's Liberation Movement - North (Agar faction)**

Garang's allies formed a northern branch of the SPLM after South Sudan's independence to focus on establishing the SPLM's vision of equality in Sudan. In 2011, SPLM-N chairman Malik Agar was removed by Bashir from his elected position as governor Blue Nile state and launched a rebellion that saw him take control of part of the region.

#### **SPLM/N (Alhilu faction)**

The group's vice-chair Abdel Aziz Alhilu splintered to create a faction focused on the grievances of South Kordofan, which borders South Sudan, and has become the most influential Sudanese rebel faction, fighting from the Nuba mountains and controlling large amounts of territory.<sup>181</sup>

In August 2020 Dr. Dan Watson, Senior Researcher at ACLED, reported:

The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-N) comprise rebels mainly drawn from Blue Nile and South Kordofan states along the border with South Sudan, who fought alongside southern rebels during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005), but were left marooned in the north as a result of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, which paved the way for South Sudanese independence in 2011. The secession of the South led to renewed government assaults on SPLM-N rebels, culminating in an intense counterinsurgency campaign from 2014-16, which reduced the SPLM-N’s area of operations, particularly in Blue Nile. The movement then fractured in 2017 when leadership tensions between Abdelaziz al-Hilu and the long-standing leaders Malik Agar and Yasir Arman boiled over, amid general dissatisfaction with the performance and direction of the rebellion under Malik Agar (Young, 2018). Barring serious clashes between the two factions of the SPLM-North in Blue Nile state in February 2018 that killed dozens, the only other event in the past two years involving the SPLM-N took place in December 2018 in Blue Nile, when members of the Malik Agar faction clashed with government forces and paramilitaries resulting in 7 deaths.<sup>182</sup>

The report of the UN Secretary-General on *Children and armed conflict in the Sudan* covering the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019 reported: “In July 2017, SPLM-N split into two factions, led by Malik Agar and Abdelaziz Al-Hilu [...] The Malik Agar faction was present in parts of Blue Nile State, while the Abdelaziz Al-Hilu faction held territory in parts of Blue Nile State and in the Nuba Mountains of Southern Kordofan”.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, the International Crisis Group reported that the Sudan

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<sup>180</sup> ACLED (Dr. Dan Watson), [Riders on the storm: Rebels, Soldiers, and Paramilitaries in Sudan’s Margins](#), 27 August 2020

<sup>181</sup> Middle East Eye, [Who are Sudan’s rebel groups](#), 21 October 2019

<sup>182</sup> ACLED (Dr. Dan Watson), [Riders on the storm: Rebels, Soldiers, and Paramilitaries in Sudan’s Margins](#), 27 August 2020

<sup>183</sup> UN Security Council, [Children and armed conflict in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 29 June 2020, II. Political and security situation and parties to conflict, B. Parties to the conflict, Government security forces, para. 17

People's Liberation Movement-North faction led by Hilu "has a secure stronghold in the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan and commands the largest rebel faction in Blue Nile".<sup>184</sup>

Covering 2019, the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research's (HIIC) *Conflict Barometer 2019* provided the following overview with regards to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N):

The conflict over autonomy and resources between the banned political party and armed group Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N) and the government de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. The government was led by Omar al-Bashir until he was overturned by the military in April [2019] [...]

SPLM/A-N continued to operate in the so-called Two Areas, comprising the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The SPLM/A-N remained split into two factions, one led by Malik Agar and the other by Abdelaziz al-Hilu. In 2019, the SPLM/A-N was majorly involved in the Sudan opposition conflict. On February 8, SPLM/A-N-Agar extended a unilateral ceasefire for three months. On April 17, SPLM/A-N-al-Hilu declared a unilateral cessation of hostilities until July 31, which was then extended again to December 31. [...]

After the coup against al-Bashir on April 11, SPLM/A-N-Agar refused to deal with Transitional Military Council (TMC), the new military government, criticizing them for holding meetings with several members of the old government. On May 30, a SPLM/A-N-Agar delegation met with the representatives of the government in the capital Khartoum, stressing the need to reach an agreement between the government and the Freedom and Change forces to achieve peace. On June 10, the government deported three detained high-rank SPLM/A-N-Agar members to Juba, South Sudan, without further explanation. On August 8, the government pardoned two convicted leaders, Agar among them. On August 17, the Freedom and Change forces, among them SPLM/A-N-Agar, and the TMC signed both a political and a constitutional declaration instituting for a transitional period in Sudan. On September 9, 17 members of SPLM/A-N-Agar were released by the government and on September 11, the government and both SPLM/A-N factions agreed on starting peace negotiations from October 14 on. The negotiations needed to be held separate with both SPLM/A-N factions due to SPLM/AN-al-Hilu's unwillingness for a joint delegation. On October 16, SPLM/A-N-al-Hilu suspended these negotiations as government troops attacked civilians in the Nuba Mountains and detained 13 people. The faction returned to the negotiations two days later. The same day, 26 POWs were released, including three members of SPLM/A-N-Agar. On November 13, SPLM/A-N-Agar called for greater regional autonomy in the Two Areas. On December 19, they agreed to cease hostilities and allow the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Two Areas.<sup>185</sup>

With special reference to the SPLM/A-N factions in the aftermath of former President Bashir's ouster, the Small Arms Survey provided the following summary:

In May 2019, in the aftermath of the fall of President Omar al-Bashir in Sudan, it was announced that Salva Kiir's efforts to reunite the two SPLM/A-N factions had failed. Kiir's attempts to reconcile the two groups was prompted by the signing of the R-ARCSS in November 2018 (Dabanga, 2018b), which Khartoum mediated, and which called for an end to the proxy wars between Sudan and South Sudan (IGAD, 2018).<sup>67</sup> [...]

With the inauguration of a new civilian–military government in Sudan, Kiir's interest in protecting the SPLM-N factions has possibly increased, especially with regard to the issue of controlling the strategic border areas. In October 2019 Sudan's transitional government started a peace process with the armed groups, including the SPLM-N groups, mediated by South Sudan. The positions of the two factions, however, remain divergent. The SPLM-N-Agar operates within the Sudan Call umbrella and SRF groups and has articulated a vision of increased autonomy for Darfur and the Two Areas that would include the sharing of power and wealth. The Sudan Call was one of the signatories of the Declaration of the

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<sup>184</sup> International Crisis Group, [Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution](#), 21 October 2019, *B. Splintered Rebels*

<sup>185</sup> Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2019](#), August 2020, *Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)*, p. 93/94



Forces for Freedom and Change signed on 1 January 2019, which set the objectives for the opposition in Sudan that led to the fall of President Bashir. The SPLM/A-N-Agar called for expanded autonomy and self-government in Blue Nile under a unified Sudan.<sup>69</sup> The Agar faction has dropped its demands for secularism, which are considered to be unattainable through the peace process—a position that contributed to the SPLM/A split in 2017. The faction also opposes the idea of self-determination, a sentiment shared by most Blue Nile constituencies and other marginalized groups in Sudan. During recent political events the Agar group claimed to represent all the marginalized communities in Sudan.<sup>70</sup> [...]

The SPLM-N-al-Hilu is taking part in these talks as part of a separate individual track. In October [2019] al-Hilu and the Sudanese government delegation agreed to discuss political issues first, followed by humanitarian issues, and then security arrangements. On 9 January 2020, Sudan Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok visited al-Hilu in Kauda in the Nuba Mountains. While the meeting marked an important step towards achieving peace in the region, al-Hilu described the government as ‘reluctant’ to discuss his demands to end the region’s conflict (Magdy, 2020). Those demands include calls for Sudan’s constitution not to be based on Islamic law (sharia), increased local control over political and military power, and an increased say in the use of local resources. It is possible that al-Hilu will include the right to self-determination as part of his faction’s negotiation demands. A demand for self-determination, however, needs to accommodate the milder demands of al-Hilu’s support base in Blue Nile. Their demands are more likely to include calls for greater autonomy in the Two Areas, at least in the short term. The positions of the two SPLM/A-N factions align in terms of demands for greater autonomy for the Two Areas, and the mediators should support discussion of this shared objective.

67 A mediation committee of SPLM generals and leaders was formed in South Sudan in 2018, which included Kuol Manyang, James Hoth Mai, and Rebecca Garang, and which was respected by the two factions. Several bilateral meetings and a first face-to-face discussion between Agar and al-Hilu occurred in February 2019 in Juba, followed by a meeting in May with Salva Kiir, after which the mediation efforts were called off [...]

69 Undated statement signed by Lt. Gen. Ahmed al-Umda, commander of the 2nd Front; internal message labelled ‘not for circulation’ signed by Malik Agar, SPLM-N-Agar chairman, 23 July 2017; both seen by the authors.

70 In May 2019 the SPLM-N-Agar group sent a delegation to Khartoum to support the peaceful protests taking place there and the civilian opposition to the Bashir government. The deputy chairman of the SPLM-N-Agar, Yasir Arman, arrived in Khartoum on 26 May 2019, despite having previously been given a death sentence when Bashir was in power (Sudan Tribune, 2019). He was detained and forcibly deported in June [...].<sup>186</sup>

In June 2019 UN human rights experts expressed concern “about reports that three opposition leaders from the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM/N Malik Agar faction) were allegedly deported from Sudan [to South Sudan] at the weekend. The men were arbitrarily arrested by the National Intelligence and Security Services” the previous week.<sup>187</sup> It appears from the previous source that one of them was “deputy chairman of the SPLM-N-Agar, Yasir Arman”.<sup>188</sup>

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that:

On August 8 [2019], former TMC president General Abdel al-Fatah Burhan issued a decision cancelling the death sentences issued in absentia against 17 SPLM-N leaders, including Malik Agar and Yassir Arman. In 2014 a special court in Sinja, Sennar State, had issued a death-by-hanging sentence in absentia against SPLM-N chairperson General Agareral Agar, secretary general Arman, and 17 others following the outbreak of violence in South Kordofan and Blue Nile in June and September 2011, respectively.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Small Arms Survey/HSBA, [Spilling over, Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan’s Blue Nile State](#), 2015-19, March 2020, *Prospects for peace and reconciliation*, p. 41/42

<sup>187</sup> UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioners, [Sudan: UN human rights experts call for independent investigation into violations](#), 12 June 2019

<sup>188</sup> Small Arms Survey/HSBA, [Spilling over, Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan’s Blue Nile State](#), 2015-19, March 2020, *Prospects for peace and reconciliation*, p. 42

<sup>189</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1., e. Denial of Fair Public Trial*

The CIA's *World Factbook* reported that in August 2020 "Sudan and the major rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) signed an agreement to integrate the group's fighters into the Sudanese Army by the end of 2023".<sup>190</sup>

A UN report reported that "On 3 September [2020], Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) faction that bears his name, and Prime Minister Hamdok, signed a joint agreement on principles. On 8 October, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, in his capacity as Deputy Chair of the Sovereign Council, and Mr. Al-Hilu met in Juba, where they agreed that workshops would be organized to take stock and share best practices with participants from both sides, after which the talks would resume to discuss outstanding issues. This was a step forward, as on 20 August, Al-Hilu had withdrawn from earlier negotiations in protest against Mr. Dagalo's involvement in the peace talks".<sup>191</sup>

However, in October 2020 Al Jazeera reported in October 2020 that Sudan's transitional government and "several rebel groups" signed a peace agreement, but "two powerful rebel groups – the Darfur-based Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) faction led by Abdelwahid Mohamed al-Nour and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu did not sign, reflecting the challenges still facing the peace process".<sup>192</sup>

### 2.2.2. Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)

Covering events in 2019, the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research's (HIIC) *Conflict Barometer 2019* provided the following overview with regards to the Sudan Revolutionary Front, which "has been fighting the government since 2003, accusing it of oppressing the Darfur population and of cooperating with Arab armed groups":

The SRF comprises the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and its two main factions led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur (SLM-AW) and by Minni Minnawie (SLM-MM), the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council (SLM-TC), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), primarily active in the states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan.<sup>193</sup>

The Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur covering the period end of June – end of September 2019 noted:

There has been a realignment of national actors and the consolidation of groups and/or movements in the Sudan in preparation for the peace negotiations. In this context, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front, comprised of three Darfur armed groups – SLA-MM, JEM, SLA Transitional Council, and one group from the Two Areas, SPLM-N Malik Agar faction – has reorganized its structures under the leadership of Al-Hadi Idriss and has actively engaged with the Forces for Freedom and Change on their participation in the transition during meetings in Cairo and Addis Ababa in August [2019].<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook: Sudan](#), Undated [Last accessed: 19 January 2021], *Military and Security*. According to the information found on the webpage it is taken from 2019.

<sup>191</sup> UN Security Council, [Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 1 December 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 12

<sup>192</sup> Al Jazeera, [Sudan's government, rebel groups sign landmark deal](#), 3 October 2020

<sup>193</sup> Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2019](#), August 2020, *Sudan (Darfur)*, p. 90

<sup>194</sup> UN Security Council, [Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur](#), 15 October 2019, A. Context, 2. National actors and framework of negotiations, para. 35



Sudan Tribune similarly reported in September 2019 that “Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) groups announced [...] the reunification of the two factions of the rebel umbrella and decided to hand over the organization’s leadership to the head of the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council Hadi Idriss Yahia” following the October 2015 split of its factions.<sup>195</sup> The same source further noted that “Hadi Idriss Yahia [was selected] as a chairman, Malik Agar as his deputy and Gibril Ibrahim as secretary-general”.<sup>196</sup>

Al Jazeera reported in October 2020 that Sudan’s transitional government and the SRF had signed a peace agreement.<sup>197</sup>

In December 2020 the Middle East Eye reported:

The risks of a military coup in Sudan appear to have heightened amid disputes between the civilian and military elements of the transitional government following the creation by the country's military chief of a new body with broad powers.

Several civilian elements, including the prime minister and the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) alliance, have rejected the powers conferred to the new Transition Partners Council (TPC) and urged General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan to review his decision.

Burhan heads Sudan’s Sovereign Council, a military-civilian body established in August 2019.

It is Sudan’s highest executive authority and is overseeing a fragile three-year transition to civilian rule after the April 2019 overthrow of former President Omar al-Bashir.

Burhan issued a presidential decree last week to form the TPC, which would comprise the FFC, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF), who are a coalition of rebel forces, the military component of the transitional government and the council of ministers.

The body is formed of 29 members, including 13 from the FFC, seven from the SRF, six from the military, along with two other community leaders from Eastern Sudan.

According to the decree, the TPC will have the powers of directing the transitional period and to serve the high interests of Sudan, resolving any differences among the government partners and helping to implement a recently signed peace agreement with the rebels.

Rejecting the move, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said Burhan had overstepped his prerogatives by conferring excessive powers on the new body.<sup>198</sup>

### **2.2.3. Human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups**

See also information included in sections [6.1. Sexual and gender-based violence \(SGBV\)](#) and [7.1. Recruitment and use of children](#) and [7.2. Rape of children](#).

Very little specific incidences were reported on attributable to armed opposition groups. The HUDO Centre reported a number of human rights abuses on its [website](#), which were however not attributable to a specific group or individual(s) and therefore could not be included here.

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2019 provided the following summary on human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups in the Two Areas:

In [...] the Two Areas, [...] rebel groups continued to commit killings, rape, and torture of civilians throughout the year. Local militias maintained substantial influence due to widespread impunity. There were reports of [...] antigovernment militias looting, raping, and killing civilians [...]

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<sup>195</sup> Sudan Tribune, [Sudanese Revolutionary Front reunites factions, elects new chairman](#), 3 September 2019

<sup>196</sup> Sudan Tribune, [Sudanese Revolutionary Front reunites factions, elects new chairman](#), 3 September 2019

<sup>197</sup> Al Jazeera, [Sudan’s government, rebel groups sign landmark deal](#), 3 October 2020

<sup>198</sup> Middle East Eye, [Sudan’s civilian rulers fear new body’s powers may derail democracy hopes](#), 10 December 2020

Throughout the year [...] tribal groups committed killings in [...] the Two Areas. Most reports were difficult to verify due to continued prohibited access to conflict areas, particularly [...] SPLM-N-controlled areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States [...]  
Rebel groups in [...] the Two Areas reportedly detained persons in isolated locations in prison-like detention centers.<sup>199</sup>

In November 2019 the HUDO Centre reported that “SPLM/A-DC soldiers confiscated a vehicle belonging to Mr. M. A. Fazari as he was traveling from Gedied to Elmqeins of South Kordufan. They confiscated his vehicle because of failure to pay a tax imposed by them (SPLM/A-DC) on/to civilians in this region. Mr. Fazari reported the case to police and military but both could not take action or respond positively”.<sup>200</sup>

### 3. Security situation: Impact of the conflict on civilians

See also information included in section [1.2. Overview of the security situation](#). This section should also be read in conjunction with sections [2.1.10. Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces](#) and [2.2.3. Human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups](#).

#### 3.1. Aerial bombing campaigns and ground attacks

In October 2019 the International Crisis Group in its *CrisisWatch*, which is a global conflict tracker, noted that the “rebel group Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu 16 Oct withdrew” accused the government of “violating ceasefire by bombing several areas in Khor Waral, South Kordofan state”.<sup>201</sup> Voice of America similarly reported that “The SPLM-North (Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North) faction based in Sudan’s Nuba Mountains suspended peace talks in Juba with Khartoum officials after military forces allegedly bombed several areas in the region and killed a sheik “.<sup>202</sup>

The Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, following its visit to Abyei, Blue Nile State and South Sudan, reported in January 2020 that “We were relieved to hear that aerial attacks have not occurred [in Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile] since the beginning of 2017. However, the government continue to fly Antonov aircraft over the Two Areas to cause fear and dissuade refugees from returning home”.<sup>203</sup> The same source noted that:

There are also reports that, although levels of violence have decreased, the government of Sudan remains committed to strengthening their military capability. We heard several reports of a build-up of armed forces close to the Two Areas. This is fueling suspicion of a renewed government offensive and has increased fears among the local people, which could result in further internal displacement and outflow of refugees.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *Executive Summary* and *section 1., g. Abuses in Internal Conflict*

<sup>200</sup> HUDO Centre, [SPLA-DC unlawfully confiscated/impounded a vehicle in South Kordufan](#), Sudan, 28 November 2019

<sup>201</sup> International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Sudan](#), October 2019

<sup>202</sup> Voice of America, [Sudan Talks Delayed After Attacks in Nuba Mountains](#), 16 October 2019

<sup>203</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, “There was no-one to protect us”](#), January 2020, 2. *Sudan*, p. 13

<sup>204</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, “There was no-one to protect us”](#), January 2020, 2. *Sudan*, p. 13

### 3.1.1. South Kordofan

IOM's *Displacement Tracking Matrix* covering the period July to September 2019 reported that "Registration of IDPs in Kadugli town (Kadugli locality) was ongoing during the three-month period – 216 individuals (71 households) were registered in July, 141 individuals (55 households) in August, and 181 individuals (80 households) in September. These IDPs were displaced from Alburam, Heiban and Um Dorain (surrounding localities in South Kordofan) due to violence between SPLM-N and government forces, and the lack of subsequent services available".<sup>205</sup>

In October 2019 Radio Dabanga stated that:

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North faction in South Kordofan led by Abdelaziz El Hilu (SPLM-N El Hilu) has suspended negotiations with Sudan's transitional government [...] accusing government forces of violating the agreed ceasefire.

A statement issued by Ammar Daldoum, head of the movement's delegation to the negotiations in Juba – that were scheduled to resume today - said that yesterday, elements of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) government militia driving Land Cruisers reportedly ambushed civilians on the road which connects the western and eastern regions, near Khor Waral in Habila locality, which is part of the "liberated areas". The RSF detained 16 people. They released three of them later, but still hold 13 people including their goods and belongings.<sup>206</sup>

The same source covering the period October to December 2019 reported that it had "registered 660 IDPs (279 households) in Dalami town (Habeila locality) during October 2019, having been displaced from surrounding villages in Dalami, Alburam, Heiban and Um Dorain localities due to tensions between SPLM-N and government forces, and the subsequent lack of services available".<sup>207</sup>

In August 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that:

In a statement yesterday, Ammar Daldoum, Secretary General of the SPLM-N El Hilu, accused Sudan's government forces of again attacking residents in the area of Khor El Waral, south-east of Delling.

Daldoum referred to a violent incident on October 14 last year, when elements of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) government militia reportedly ambushed people near Khor Waral, the most western area controlled by the rebel group that is based in Kauda.

The violence prompted the delegation to temporarily withdraw from the peace negotiations with the Sudanese government in Juba in South Sudan.

According to the statement on Friday, members of a government militia under the leadership of officers known by the names Sheeriya and Abi Rabet, again used military force against residents of the area – which caused many people living in Rejoul El Marfaein, El Zalataya, and other places in the neighbourhood to flee, Daldoum stated.<sup>208</sup>

### 3.1.2. Blue Nile

Amongst the sources consulted within the timeframe for this research no information was found on aerial bombing campaigns or ground attacks occurring in Blue Nile State.

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<sup>205</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [July – September 2019](#), 1 December 2019, *South Kordofan*, p. 2

<sup>206</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan rebels suspend Juba peace talks after militia ambush in South Kordofan](#), 16 October 2019

<sup>207</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [October – December 2019](#), 25 February 2020, *South Kordofan*, p. 2

<sup>208</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan military, SPLM-N El Hilu accuse each other of attacking civilians](#), 8 August 2020

## 3.2. Casualties caused by aerial bombing campaigns and ground attacks

### 3.2.1. South Kordofan

Amongst the sources consulted within the timeframe for this research very little information was found on civilian casualties caused by aerial bombing campaigns or ground attacks in South Kordofan.

In August 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that:

The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North faction headed by Abdelaziz El Hilu (SPLM-N El Hilu) on Friday exchanged accusations of using violence against civilians in the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan.

In a statement yesterday, Ammar Daldoum, Secretary General of the SPLM-N El Hilu, accused Sudan's government forces of again attacking residents in the area of Khor El Waral, south-east of Delling. Daldoum referred to a violent incident on October 14 last year, when elements of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) government militia\* reportedly ambushed people near Khor Waral, the most western area controlled by the rebel group that is based in Kauda.

The violence prompted the delegation to temporarily withdraw from the peace negotiations with the Sudanese government in Juba in South Sudan.

According to the statement on Friday, members of a government militia under the leadership of officers known by the names Sheeriya and Abi Rabet, again used military force against residents of the area – which caused many people living in Rejoul El Marfaein, El Zalataya, and other places in the neighbourhood to flee, Daldoum stated.

He said that the forces were deployed to protect Baggara cattle herders belonging to the Hawazma tribe during their movement to El Goz in the north via the eastern herders' passage route. After they passed the conflict-torn area of Onsho, they ambushed the road to El Waral and detained a number of people.

The rebel leader expressed his serious concern about "this aggressive behaviour", and emphasised that the SPLM-N "will not hesitate to defend and protect" civilians in the areas under its control.<sup>209</sup>

### 3.2.2. Blue Nile

Amongst the sources consulted within the timeframe for this research very little information was found on civilian casualties caused by aerial bombing campaigns or ground attacks in South Kordofan.

## 3.3. Unexploded ordnance (UXO)

### 3.3.1. Two Areas

UNOCHA's *Humanitarian Response Plan* stated in January 2020: "While three states were cleared of mine contamination in 2019, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states remain two of the most landmine contaminated states".<sup>210</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that "Over 3.1 million people are exposed to the threat of landmines and contamination in Blue Nile, South Kordofan, West Kordofan and Darfur states. In addition, according to the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) 2,151 victims of landmines/ERWs [Explosive Remnants of War] and their families were found to be psychologically, physical and socioeconomically affected, including 585 children directly affected".<sup>211</sup> The same report further stated:

<sup>209</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan military, SPLM-N El Hilu accuse each other of attacking civilians](#), 8 August 2020

<sup>210</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Response Plan, Sudan](#), January 2020, 4.11 Protection – Mine Action, p. 51

<sup>211</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.3 FSL and 3.6 Protection

Children and caregivers in areas with ERWs and UXOs [Unexploded Ordnance], particularly in Jebel Mara, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, remain at risk of being injured or killed by explosive remnants of war and need critical knowledge on how to prevent or mitigate the risk of injuries and death. To date, IMSMA has registered 2,151 victims of landmines or ERW victims, including 1,532 people who have been injured and 619 fatalities. The highest number of victims was registered in South Kordofan state, followed by Kassala and Blue Nile. During the first half of 2019, children accounted for approximately 87 per cent of the known victims of ERW's and UXO's. Although 38,134 km of roads have been opened since 2002, there are still thousands of kilometers of roads suspected to be contaminated with landmines/ERWs blocking access to services, socioeconomic activities, or delivery of humanitarian services.<sup>212</sup>

### 3.3.2. South Kordofan

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that "South Kordofan has the highest recorded concentration of landmines and ERW".<sup>213</sup>

On 12-13 May 2020 "violent clashes" between "different armed groups affiliated with two tribes" occurred, which led to displacement and "loss of lives from both sides, physical injuries, burning of houses, looting of household goods and destruction of public infrastructure".<sup>214</sup> The report further reported that "Most of the displaced people – about 18,000 – fled from sites of Tillo IDPs camp, Albardab, Alban-Jadid and Burnuo" and that many of those "are not willing to return to Tillo site" as it was also "affected by UXOs in dangerous conditions".<sup>215</sup>

On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that "A 12-year-old boy died [...] while playing with a piece of live ammunition he found in the southern part of Delling in South Kordofan".<sup>216</sup>

In its *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2020* report, the Mine Action Review reported:

As at April 2020, Sudan's National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) informed Mine Action Review that only one area suspected to contain CMR [Cluster Munitions Remnants] contamination remained in Sudan. The NMAC reported that the area, with an unknown size in South Kordofan state, was located in an area not under government control.<sup>217</sup>

### 3.3.3. Blue Nile

No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information on unexploded ordinances in Blue Nile.

## 3.4. Forced displacement

This section details mainly forced displacements in South Kordofan and Blue Nile as a result of community/tribal conflict. Only limited information was found on forced displacement due to government attacks. For information on displacement figures and the humanitarian situation of those

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<sup>212</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.3 FSL and 3.6 Protection

<sup>213</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.3 FSL and 3.6 Protection

<sup>214</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 14/15. For more detailed information on the scale of destruction and the needs of those left behind see the Inter-Agency Assessment mission's report: Inter-Agency Assessment, [Assessment Report: Kadugli, South Kordofan State](#), 19 May 2020.

<sup>215</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 15

<sup>216</sup> Radio Dabanga, [South Kordofan boy dies playing with UXO. Three killed in tribal clashes](#), 16 June 2020

<sup>217</sup> Mine Action Review, [Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2020](#), Sudan, p. 163

forcibly displaced consult sections [8.2.3. Situation for IDPs \(Two Areas\)](#), [8.3.3. Situation for IDPs \(South Kordofan\)](#) and [8.4.3. Situation for IDPs \(Blue Nile\)](#).

### 3.4.1. South Kordofan

IOM's *Displacement Tracking Matrix* covering the period July to September 2019 reported that "Registration of IDPs in Kadugli town (Kadugli locality) was ongoing during the three-month period – 216 individuals (71 households) were registered in July, 141 individuals (55 households) in August, and 181 individuals (80 households) in September. These IDPs were displaced from Alburam, Heiban and Um Dorain (surrounding localities in South Kordofan) due to violence between SPLM-N and government forces, and the lack of subsequent services available".<sup>218</sup>

The same source covering the period October to December 2019 reported that it had "registered 660 IDPs (279 households) in Dalami town (Habeila locality) during October 2019, having been displaced from surrounding villages in Dalami, Alburam, Heiban and Um Dorain localities due to tensions between SPLM-N and government forces, and the subsequent lack of services available".<sup>219</sup>

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 "Armed RSF soldiers attacked Albardab village and killed nine (9) unarmed people, looted and burned down houses basing on ethnicity".<sup>220</sup> HUDO Centre's report covering events between January and December 2020 further highlighted that when the RSF soldiers arrived at the village "they started to ask about the ethnicity of the residents they came across and it turned out that they were targeting the Nuba. Whoever said that they were from Nuba ethnicity had to be assaulted / beaten or killed and their houses had to be looted and burnt down".<sup>221</sup> According to the HUDO Centre, as a result more than "two thousand people were displaced" and settled in "two schools near the military base of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in Kadogli town while others went to al-Kewaik and Dameek village in search of protection. The government officials requested the IDPs to return home without offering any protection or rehabilitation. Yet the attackers are still threatening to attack again".<sup>222</sup>

On 12-13 May 2020 "violent clashes" between "different armed groups affiliated with two tribes" occurred as a result of which 5,000 people were displaced reported UNOCHA.<sup>223</sup> According to the same source, "As of 31 May, the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in South Kordofan registered 20,400 people who have been displaced. The clashes led to loss of lives from both sides, physical injuries, burning of houses, looting of household goods and destruction of public infrastructure".<sup>224</sup> The report further reported that "Most of the displaced people – about 18,000 – fled from sites of Tillo IDPs camp, Albardab, Alban-Jadid and Burnuo" and that "This is their second displacement as they were initially displaced from their original areas of Al Buram and Heiban administrative units during the conflict between the former government security forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-N) that started in June 2011".<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan*, [July – September 2019](#), 1 December 2019, *South Kordofan*, p. 2

<sup>219</sup> IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan*, [October – December 2019](#), 25 February 2020, *South Kordofan*, p. 2

<sup>220</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Miserable conditions of the recently displaced people in Kadogli, Sudan](#), 21 May 2020

<sup>221</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, 2.4.4 *Miserable conditions of the recently displaced people in Kadogli*, p. 26

<sup>222</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, 2.4.4 *Miserable conditions of the recently displaced people in Kadogli*, p. 27

<sup>223</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 14

<sup>224</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 14/15

<sup>225</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 15



In another event that occurred in May 2020 HUDO Centre reported “Armed RSF soldiers attacked Albardab village and killed nine (9) unarmed people, looted and burned down houses basing on ethnicity. As a result, more than two thousand people were displaced from their village. The displaced people have not received any humanitarian aid and are in a miserable state”.<sup>226</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in its May 2020 report: “A total number of 192 households and 1056 individuals (70 in Um Durain County, 84 in Thobo and 38 in Western Kadugli) were displaced in Kadugli, as a result of clashes between the communities and armed Missiriya. They are in need of food, temporary shelters, water containers and cooking utensils”.<sup>227</sup>

In June 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported “Over 1500 households have reportedly fled their homes in Western Kadugli and taken refuge in Um Durain and Thobo county following a recent escalation in violence between communities and the Missiriya”.<sup>228</sup>

The Insecurity Insight newsletter for July 2020, basing its information on an IOM Sudan’s Twitter message, noted that “20 July 2020: In Kadugli, South Kordofan state, clashes between Arabs and Nuba tribesmen killed and wounded an unconfirmed number of people and displaced about 6,350 people from Kulba, Marta North, Marta East and Hila Al Gadeeda”.<sup>229</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 “more than two thousand people were displaced from their homes in Kadugli and settled in school premises. This was because of the threats and shootings by Rapid Support Force (RSF) in their neighbourhoods [...] The displacement came as a result of deployment and shootings by RSF soldiers in response to the demonstration/ protest by residents”.<sup>230</sup>

Referring most likely to what the International Crisis Group called “intercommunal clashes” on 21-22 July 2020, which left “dozens dead”<sup>231</sup>, the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that “continued clashes in Kadugli have led to a large influx of IDPs – over 45 households, into Um Durain and Thobo, which increased the demand for food”<sup>232</sup>. The same source further reported that “Around 283,000 including women and children were registered in Kadugli following clashes in Rashad. The distribution of NFIs [non-food items] is ongoing, but it is not enough to meet the demand”.<sup>233</sup>

In August 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported that “There was a high displacement into the areas particularly in Thobo and Western Kadugli. This was primarily as a result of tensions and insecurity in Kadugli”.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Miserable conditions of the recently displaced people in Kadugli, Sudan](#), 21 May 2020

<sup>227</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, May 2020](#), 15 June 2020, *Protection, Access and Security, South Kordofan*, p. 4

<sup>228</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, June 2020](#), 21 July 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 5

<sup>229</sup> Insecurity Insight, [Protection in Danger, Monthly News Brief](#), July 2020, p. 2

<sup>230</sup> HUDO Centre, [Further wave of displacement within Kadugli, Sudan](#), 25 July 2020

<sup>231</sup> International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Sudan](#), July 2020

<sup>232</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Food security and agriculture*, p. 2

<sup>233</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 4

<sup>234</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, August 2020](#), 22 September 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 6

### 3.4.2. Blue Nile

Very limited information was found on the impact of the violence on forced displacement in Blue Nile State.

Reporting on the situation in the Sudan between 27 September 2019 and 16 July 2020, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan reported that “Civilians continue to face the burden of conflicts in the Blue Nile. Many people were displaced and lost their land, which was their main source of income”.<sup>235</sup>

## 3.5. Humanitarian access and freedom of movement

For the most up-to-date maps on access constraints, consult Reliefweb’s Sudan page and search for ‘Physical Access Constraints’; see for example the map published on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 [here](#).

### 3.5.1. Two Areas

Reporting on its activities in 2019, UNICEF’s *Health 2019* report noted: “Since 2011, children in the armed-conflict zones of Jebel Marra, Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains have been denied access to most basic services, such as education, polio and measles vaccinations, nutrition services, and water and sanitation facilities and child protection. With the transitional government’s focus on peace, and the possibility of the inaccessible areas opening-up, many of these people could now be reached with humanitarian assistance in 2020”.<sup>236</sup>

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2019 noted that “Throughout the year military personnel, paramilitary forces, and tribal groups committed killings in [...] the Two Areas. Most reports were difficult to verify due to continued prohibited access to conflict areas, particularly [...] SPLM-N-controlled areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States.”<sup>237</sup> The same report further reported:

The former regime impeded the work of UN agencies and delayed full approval of their activities throughout the country, particularly in the Two Areas; however, there were fewer such restrictions than in prior years. NGOs also alleged the Bashir government impeded humanitarian assistance in the Two Areas. The SPLM-N also restricted access for humanitarian assistance in the Two Areas due to concerns over the security of commodities crossing from government-held areas into SPLM-N-controlled areas.<sup>238</sup>

Reporting on the situation of children in armed conflict between January and December 2019, a UN report found that “Access restrictions hindered monitoring and reporting by the United Nations” in South Kordofan, Blue Nile [and Abyei].<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> UN Human Rights Council, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 30 July 2020, H. Human rights situation in conflict-affected areas, 2. South Kordofan and Blue Nile, para. 63

<sup>236</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Health 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 5

<sup>237</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, Section 1., g. Abuses in Internal Conflict

<sup>238</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, Section 2., d. Freedom of Movement

<sup>239</sup> UN General Assembly, [Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 9 June 2020, *The Sudan, South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*, para. 164



UNICEF Sudan noted with regards to humanitarian assistance in the Two Areas in an annual report covering 2019 that:

The 'Two Areas' territories controlled by the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement North (SPLMN) in Blue Nile and South Kordofan (Nuba Mountains) states remained largely inaccessible until late 2019 when UN agencies were granted access and several meetings and supply delivery took place. Caveats remain on access, for example only international personnel are permitted to visit, land mines prevent road-based cross-line access from Sudan and supplies coming from government-controlled Sudan will not be accepted. Delivery of supplies in collaboration with the UNICEF South Sudan office has occurred to both Blue Nile and South Kordofan SPLM-N controlled territories. The newly accessible 'grey areas' in Blue Nile, South Kordofan and West Kordofan in which control and influence belongs to neither the Government of the SPLM-N have also begun to receive more humanitarian attention.<sup>240</sup>

In December 2019 it was reported by the UN that "the SPLM-N Malik Agar faction and the transitional Government signed an agreement on the provision of humanitarian assistance and the cessation of hostilities for the Two Areas. The agreement provided for the establishment of a joint humanitarian committee to coordinate humanitarian-related efforts, as well as a mechanism to monitor the cessation of hostilities".<sup>241</sup>

In January 2020 UNHCR reported that "Since last year [2019], the transitional government has facilitated the delivery of aid to areas which were out of reach to humanitarians previously including in parts of South Kordofan and Blue Nile and Darfur's Jebel Marra".<sup>242</sup>

Reporting on the situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile between 27 September 2019 and 16 July 2020, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan reported that "Even today, humanitarian organizations struggle to get access and provide aid to most people in the regions".<sup>243</sup>

According to a UN report published in December 2020 reporting on developments related to human rights and the rule of law in the Sudan from 9 September to 23 November 2020:

Humanitarian access continued to improve as the transitional Government pursued its reform of the humanitarian framework in the Sudan. Humanitarian workers were able to access previously inaccessible areas under the control of armed groups in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states.<sup>244</sup>

In response to COVID-19 the Sudanese government "declared a nationwide health emergency and introduced mitigation measures in March 2020 to reduce the transmission of the virus. These measures include restrictions on travel due to closure of airports, points of entry (POE) along land

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<sup>240</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Humanitarian Assistance Annual report 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 8

<sup>241</sup> UN Security Council, [Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and a follow-on presence](#), 12 March 2020, II. Update on the situation in Darfur and implementation of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, para. 6

<sup>242</sup> UNHCR, [UNHCR seeks international solidarity for refugees and hosts in Sudan](#), 14 January 2020

<sup>243</sup> UN Human Rights Council, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 30 July 2020, H. Human rights situation in conflict-affected areas, 2. South Kordofan and Blue Nile, para. 63

<sup>244</sup> UN Security Council, [Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 1 December 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 27

borders and maritime boundaries, as well as domestic movement restrictions”.<sup>245</sup> In its latest available *Mobility Restriction Dashboard* of 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020, IOM noted that “COVID-19 has now spread to all of Sudan’s 18 states” and that specific movement restrictions in place included:

Khartoum International Airport (KRT) is partially open for domestic and international flights, barring flights to and from Saudi Arabia which are expected to resume on 1 October 2020. COVID-19 testing prior to all departures and arrivals is mandatory, and a negative COVID-19 test certificate (valid for 96 hours) is required before travel. Port Sudan New International Airport (PZU) is partially open for entry and exit, in accordance to KRT regulations.

All land border crossing points between Sudan and neighbouring countries are now open for entry and exit, and transportation services have resumed. All internal state borders are open and domestic bus travel between states has resumed.<sup>246</sup>

ACAPS’s *Humanitarian Access Overview*, which covered the period since its previous overview of July 2020, noted that Sudan is categorised as a “high constraints” country and that its humanitarian access has remained “stable” since the last report.<sup>247</sup> With regards to South Kordofan and Blue Nile it specifically reported that “a peace agreement, signed in September 2020 between the government and some armed groups, aimed to resolve conflict in the country, namely in the Darfur region and in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Despite the agreement, humanitarian activities are still disrupted because of the recent escalation of violence across the country, particularly in Darfur. COVID-19 measures have also impacted the delivery of aid to people in need [...]”<sup>248</sup>

### 3.5.2. South Kordofan

Reporting on events in October 2019 the International Crisis Group in its *CrisisWatch*, a global conflict tracker, noted that “Council of ministers 23 Oct [2019] granted World Food Programme access to hitherto off-limits areas of South Kordofan”.<sup>249</sup> Similarly, Jacob Kurtzer, Interim Director and Senior Fellow and Nadia Schaaphok, Intern, at the Center for Strategic & International Studies reported that “WFP Executive Director David Beasley’s visit to Kauda, South Kordofan, in October of 2019 marked the first visit by UN personnel to the region since 2011 and had the support of Hamdok, the government of South Sudan, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), and other security forces”.<sup>250</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported in December 2019 that “The government of South Kordofan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North faction under the leadership of Abdelaziz El Hilu have agreed to open a number of roads in the Nuba Mountains. In particular, the main roads of Heiban and Kauda, that are partly held by SPLM-N El Hilu, will be accessible for all traffic”.<sup>251</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “In South Kordofan, areas hosting displaced persons and returnees are increasingly accessible to humanitarian actors, with assessments indicating high needs”.<sup>252</sup> At the same time the same report stated that

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<sup>245</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Sudan – Mobility Restriction Dashboard 19 \(24 September 2020\)](#), 24 September 2020

<sup>246</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Sudan – Mobility Restriction Dashboard 19 \(24 September 2020\)](#), 24 September 2020

<sup>247</sup> ACAPS, [Humanitarian Access Overview](#), December 2020, *Sudan*, p. 16

<sup>248</sup> ACAPS, [Humanitarian Access Overview](#), December 2020, *Introduction*, p. 2

<sup>249</sup> International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Sudan](#), October 2019

<sup>250</sup> Kurtzer, J. and Schaaphok, N. (Center for Strategic & International Studies), [Sudan at a Crossroads: A Humanitarian Opening?](#), 5 August 2020

<sup>251</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Rebel-held areas in South Kordofan open for traffic, humanitarian aid](#), 22 December 2019

<sup>252</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.3 FSL and 3.6 Protection

“Available information suggests that children living in inaccessible areas or with limited access by humanitarian partners are believed to be in extreme need (severity level 4), particularly in [...] parts of South Kordofan (Nuba mountains, Al Buram, Heiban and Umm Durein localities)”.<sup>253</sup>

In April 2020 UNOCHA reported that as a result of COVID-19 measures:

The Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), the Sudanese government body which oversees humanitarian work, gave all nonessential staff leave until 29 March [2020]. Some NGOs have reported delays in administrative procedures, including the approval of technical agreements. These technical agreements are required to implement humanitarian projects. In South Kordofan, HAC informed the humanitarian community that it will stop registering NGOs, cancel all HAC meetings, field assessments and visits. Exceptions have been given for critical food and NFI distributions and in the event of the need for rapid intervention in case of emergency.<sup>254</sup>

The commentary by Jacob Kurtzer and Nadia Schaaphok, both from the Center for Strategic & International Studies, of August 2020 highlighted that:

Interviews with multiple stakeholders operating in the country have confirmed that while the WFP and other UN agencies have substantially increased freedom of movement, restrictions remain for local and international NGOs. Access to South Kordofan continues to be a challenge from Khartoum. While the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in Khartoum has demonstrated exceptional openness to assist in the reregistering of NGO's expelled under al-Bashir, HAC offices in the southern states report directly to state governors (previously appointed directly by the military) and have been much less receptive to the renewed presence of international and domestic organizations. Bureaucratic impediments, a legacy of al-Bashir's regime, continue to be a challenge for lower-profile NGOs.<sup>255</sup>

### 3.5.3. Blue Nile

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) reported in December 2019 that its Executive Director, David Beasley, “accompanied by teams from WFP’s Sudan and South Sudan operations and leaders of the UN country team in Sudan have achieved a significant breakthrough in humanitarian access, by landing in Yabus, a town in the Southern Blue Nile State where they witnessed a food distribution to its war and flood-stricken residents for the first time in nearly a decade [...] Parts of southern Blue Nile State have been inaccessible to UN agencies and most humanitarian groups since conflict began there and in the Nuba mountains of South Kordofan in May 2011”.<sup>256</sup>

In September 2020 the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reported on its emergency appeal “on behalf of the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) to deliver assistance to 210,000 people in eight states affected by flooding in Sudan”.<sup>257</sup> With special reference to the Blue Nile state it stated:

Blue Nile state: Security risk HIGH

Of the 8 states supported through the Emergency Appeal, the security conditions in Blue Nile present the highest risks.

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<sup>253</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.1 Education

<sup>254</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 21 April 2020, p. 9

<sup>255</sup> Kurtzer, J. and Schaaphok, N. (Center for Strategic & International Studies), [Sudan at a Crossroads: A Humanitarian Opening?](#), 5 August 2020

<sup>256</sup> UN World Food Programme, [WFP Executive Director in breakthrough visit to Yabus in the Blue Nile State following decade of inaccessibility](#), 18 December 2019

<sup>257</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), [Emergency Plan of Action Operation Update, Sudan Floods](#), 16 October 2020, *Summary of Operational Activities*, p. 1

The state is affected by clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N), particularly in the Nuba Mountains. Although, a peace agreement was signed on 3 October [2020], its impact and reach still need to be assessed. Access in many areas is extremely limited by government forces, and the presence of landmines, notably on the Kadugli–Kauda and Kadugli–Talodi roads (South Kordofan), and the road linking Kurmuk (Blue Nile) with the Ethiopian border. Although SRCS has presence and access in the area that allows them to carry out activities, a more detailed security assessment will need to be carried out before any significant increase in action to ensure proper mitigation measures are in place.<sup>258</sup>

#### 4. Rule of Law and access to justice

##### 4.1. Local conflict resolution mechanisms

For information on peace accords see [1.3. Peace negotiations/ceasefires](#).

###### In general

The U.S. Department of State Sudan report for 2019 on human rights practices noted that “Due to long distances between court facilities and police stations in conflict areas, throughout the year, local mediation was often the first resort to try to resolve disputes. In some instances tribal courts operating outside the official legal system decided cases. Such courts did not provide the same protections as regular courts”.<sup>259</sup>

###### South Kordofan

In October 2019 Radio Dabanga documented that “Leaders of the Ghulfan and Dar Naelee tribes reached an agreement about seasonal migratory tracks in Delling in South Kordofan”.<sup>260</sup> The same source further explained that a “reconciliation conference” took place, following which:

Dar Naelee tribesmen will be allowed to pass their livestock through the old tracks of Wati, Shamnaka and Waral in eastern Delling locality. [...]

The two parties agreed to allow the pastoralists to use the eastern tracks, on the condition they pass the area with their livestock within 48 hours. The Ghulfan farmers pledged not to hinder them when they are passing agricultural areas, while the herdsmen committed themselves not to carry their weapons in full sight and attack farmers.

The reconciliation conference took place under the supervision of Lt Gen Shamseldin Kabashi, member of Sudan’s Sovereign Council, the federal Minister of Agriculture, South Kordofan Governor Rashad Abdelhameed, and 14 native administration leaders from the warring tribes.

Omda Hamid further explained that it was agreed that those violating the agreement will be sent to prisons outside South Kordofan, as happens as well in Darfuri conflicts during the dry season, between farmers and herders concerning pastures and migration tracks.

Kabashi instructed Governor Abdelhameed to immediately form a security committee to follow up the implementation of the agreement.<sup>261</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported in February 2020 that “The Dilamiyya tribe of Masar and the Nuba tribe of Rahma Abdelbari signed a reconciliation document in Kadugli, capital of South Kordofan [...]. The

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<sup>258</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), [Emergency Plan of Action Operation Update, Sudan Floods](#), 16 October 2020, A. *Situation Analysis*, p. 7

<sup>259</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1.e. Trial Procedures*

<sup>260</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Farmers, herders agree on migration tracks in Sudan’s South Kordofan](#), 8 October 2019

<sup>261</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Farmers, herders agree on migration tracks in Sudan’s South Kordofan](#), 8 October 2019

ceremony is meant to mark the end of disputes that occurred between the tribes”.<sup>262</sup> The same source further noted that:

The two parties agreed to hand over blood money in kind, estimated at 186 cows to be divided between the two parties. 26 cows miscarried during the conflict. Compensation for that will be divided equally. The parents of the victims will waive rights. Prisoners were released, and will be kept away from each other the coming year.

The native administration agreed that in case of a violation of the reconciliation document, the violator will be subject to a “deterrent penalty”, which is a fine that starts at SDG 5,000 (\$ 94,3) and can be up to SDG 200,000 (\$ 3,774), and imprisonment for a period not exceeding a month.

Governor of South Kordofan Maj Gen Rashad Abdelhamid affirmed that the state government will implement the reconciliation document and the penalties set in it. He will also “involve the youth and guide them to carry out the construction and reconstruction process”.<sup>263</sup>

As detailed by Radio Dabanga, a “Cessation of Hostilities and Restraint agreement” was signed in May 2020 between native administration leaders and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) in South Kordofan, in the presence of the Chairman of the state's Security Committee, Gen Abdallah El Bashir and the Acting Wali (Governor), Maj Gen Rashad Abdelhamid.<sup>264</sup> Furthermore:

Gen El Bashir told the official Sudan News Agency (SUNA) that the consecutive meetings and the efforts of the native administration leaders, the FFC and the Security Committee in South Kordofan resulted in the signing of the “agreement on cessation of hostilities and restraint to stop the bloodshed besides, the principle for good intention”. [...]

In a press conference on Friday, Maj Gen Abdallah Idris, member of the Security Committee of the Joint Armed Forces told reporters that the authority deployed adequate security forces in the town. The local government lifted some of the precautionary social distancing measures to ease the tension. “All parties agreed that the government authority must be reinforced in the region,” Idris said. [...]

Governor Abdelhamid said that the local government has taken precautionary measures to prevent any potential violence in the area.

He confirmed the arrival of a fact-finding committee headed by the Inspector General of the Sudan Armed Forces, Lt Gen Abbas Hasan, in Kadugli. The government deployed enough security forces in the city to maintain the security situation, and thus they advised people to return to their homes.

Maj Jaw Kafi stated that those responsible for the recent violence will stand trial. “From now on, the law enforcement and judicial mechanisms will be the only possible resolution tool to resort to,” Maj Kafi said.<sup>265</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported that during August 2020 in South Kordofan, “Peacebuilding groups have been established to mitigate tensions between Angolo and Shat tribes”.<sup>266</sup> The same source noted that in November 2020 “Relations between Kulfan (Nuba tribe) and Dar Niela (Arab nomads) improved after a local agreement aiming at improving livestock North-South migrations. Cattle migration through Khor Waral has been a point of conflict between the two groups as a result of grazing tensions that have elevated into clashes”.<sup>267</sup>

### Blue Nile

No COI was located within the time frame of this report amongst the sources consulted providing specific information on local conflict resolution mechanisms in Blue Nile.

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<sup>262</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Tribal reconciliation in Sudan's South Kordofan](#), 19 February 2020

<sup>263</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Tribal reconciliation in Sudan's South Kordofan](#), 19 February 2020

<sup>264</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Accord signed to end violence in South Kordofan](#), 17 May 2020

<sup>265</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Accord signed to end violence in South Kordofan](#), 17 May 2020

<sup>266</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, August 2020](#), 22 September 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 6

<sup>267</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, November 2020](#), 28 December 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 6

## 4.2. Arbitrary arrest and detention

This section documents the legal provisions that provide for arrest and detention in Sudan and how they are used against the civilian populations in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. For illustrative incidents of arbitrary arrest of persons perceived to oppose the government, see the relevant profiles addressed in section 5. *Human rights situation: civil and political rights*, [5.1. Freedom of expression, association, and assembly](#), in particular:

[5.1.1. Political opposition parties, activists and dissidents](#)

[5.1.2. Lawyers as political opposition members and activists](#)

[5.1.3. \(Suspected\) members of the SPLM/A-N](#)

[5.1.4. Individuals \(perceived to be\) associated with or supportive of the SPLM/A-N](#)

[5.1.4.1. Treatment of critical journalists, citizen-journalists, bloggers, etc.](#)

[5.1.5. Civil society organizations and civil society activists, including women's rights activist](#)

According to the U.S. Department of State's 2019 report on human rights practices, "The Interim National Constitution as well as the 2019 constitutional declaration prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and required individuals be notified of the charges against them when they are arrested. Arbitrary arrests and detentions, however, were widespread during the first few months of the year under the Bashir regime, which allowed for arrest by NISS without warrants and detention without charge for up to four and one-half months. This period was reduced to 24 hours under the TMC. Authorities often released detainees when their initial detention periods expired but took them into custody the next day for an additional period. During the first few months of the year, authorities, especially NISS, arbitrarily detained political opponents, protesters, human rights defenders, journalists, students, and professionals [...]. The law does not provide for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. There were no reports of arbitrary arrest or detentions under the CLTG [Civilian-led transitional government]".<sup>268</sup>

### Two areas

The HUDO Centre noted that "On the morning of 7th October 2019, more than two hundred (200) armed RSF soldiers came on twenty seven (27) vehicles and invaded Altugula and Al-Laffa gold mines of Talodi. They beat up people randomly (men and women), looted four (4) motorbikes, smart phones and money. They also arrested more than ten civilians and detained them in an iron container. Soon after the attack, Talodi residents organized a demonstration march up to Talodi military headquarters where they sat as they sought for the military intervention to stop the actions of RSF and protect of civilians".<sup>269</sup>

Also in October 2019 Radio Dabanga reported that "Security forces in rural South Kordofan reportedly continue to violate the rights and freedoms of residents and confiscate their property in the name of the emergency security measures applicable in the state. According to neighbourhood committees in Hajeri Djawad south of Delling, the violations include curfews, arbitrary arrests, and the confiscation of consumer goods in rural areas of the Nuba Mountains through checkpoints stationed at Abujebel Bridge and Hajeri Djawa".<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1.d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention*

<sup>269</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January-December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, *para 2.1.10*

<sup>270</sup> Radio Dabanga, ['Security forces abusing emergency measures' in Sudan's Nuba Mountains](#), 10 October 2019



In its report on the *Human Rights Situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States* between January-June 2020 the HUDO Centre noted that “Rights were violated in form of arbitrary arrests (security of persons), unlawful killing, denying people rights to fair trial (court) and rights of civilians within conflict areas (insecurity, abuse of authority and excessive use of power). Many times, the authorities (police in particular) refused or failed to carry out investigations of cases brought before them especially where RSF and PDF were involved. This is a challenge to good governance, rule of law and an indication of impunity”.<sup>271</sup>

HUDO also noted in its annual report covering events in the full year of 2020 that:

This report covers some incidents that occurred between January and December 2020 in the government controlled territories of South Kordufan (SK) and Blue Nile (BN) States and among IDPs from the two states. In Khartoum state, the violations reduced significantly but in conflict areas, violations went on with limited or no intervention from the authorities. The police did not execute their duties well and for this reason, the perpetrators carried on with violations and abuses unrestricted. However, cases of abuses and violations in BN were generally low compared to SK. [...] The violations and abuses included in this report are; Arbitrary arrests, whereby more than eighty four (84+) civilians were arbitrarily detained.<sup>272</sup>

Of these arbitrary arrests in 2020, HUDO documented 78 in South Kordufan and 9 in Blue Nile and that “The arbitrary arrests generally increased during the year 2020 in the two states of South Kordufan and Blue Nile. This was mainly committed by SAF/MI [Military Intelligence]”.<sup>273</sup>

Radio Dabanga noted in an April 2020 article that “The Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) reported yesterday that 42-year old farmer El Safi El Degein was taken from his home by eight army officers in Aleri Ghareib in South Kordofan on Saturday evening. HUDO fears he is being tortured. El Degein was first held at the army base in Aleri Ghareib. On Sunday he was taken to the army base in Talodi, 55 kilometers away. No reason was given for his detention. He has been denied access to his visitors, family and lawyers. A reliable source informed HUDO that the detention is related to El Degein’s political activities in the past”.<sup>274</sup> In July 2020 the HUDO Centre noted that “Mr. Elsafi Eldegain was arrested by Sudan Armed Force/ Military Intelligence unit (SAF/ MI) more than three (3) months back but had never been presented before courts of law and he has been held incommunicado. No reason was given for his arrest and he is likely to be undergoing torture”.<sup>275</sup>

In December 2020 Radio Dabanga noted that “Ali Elameen from the Delling Chamber of Commerce told Radio Dabanga that Aboud Saboun and Saleh El Jumabi were arrested inside the market and taken to the police station because they refused to pay the increased taxes on consumer goods imposed by the South Kordofan Ministry of Finance”.<sup>276</sup>

### 4.3. Unlawful or disproportionate punishment for crimes

For information on the use of torture in detention, see section [4.5.1. Torture in detention](#).

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<sup>271</sup> HUDO Centre, [The Human Rights Situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January-June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, para 1.4

<sup>272</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan January-December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, Executive Summary p. v

<sup>273</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan January-December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 2.1 Arbitrary Arrests p. 6

<sup>274</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan army officers detain Nuba farmer](#), 15 April 2020

<sup>275</sup> HUDO Centre, [The Arrest of Mr. Elsafi Eldegain by SAF in Aleri Ghareib, Sudan- Update \(3\)](#), 22 July 2020

<sup>276</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Two Sudanese tradesmen detained by GIS at Delling market](#), 17 December 2020

The U.S. Department of State Sudan report for 2019 on human rights practices noted that “In accordance with the government’s interpretation of sharia (Islamic law), the Bashir penal code provided for physical punishments, including flogging, amputation, stoning, and the public display of a body after execution, despite the constitution’s prohibitions. Bashir government courts routinely imposed flogging, especially as punishment for indecent dress and the production or consumption of alcohol. In December the CLTG [civilian-led transitional government] repealed the public order laws regarding indecent dress and behavior and started the process to amend the relevant criminal laws.”<sup>277</sup> Freedom House explained in its report covering events in 2019 that “Sudanese criminal law is based on Sharia (Islamic law) and allows punishments including flogging and cross-amputation (removal of the right hand and left foot)”.<sup>278</sup>

According to a March 2020 Briefing from the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa:

The frequent arrest detention as well as trial and punishment of women under Sudan’s public order regime ostensibly designed to protect morality, are key features of the criminal justice system. The public order laws incorporate strict moral codes designed to exclude and intimidate women from actively participating in public life, for instance by restricting their presence in the public sphere and controlling what they wear. Public order police and public order courts are the main institutions responsible for enforcing those laws. The public order laws owe their origin to the introduction in 1983 of Sharia laws and include the imposition of Sharia *huddud* punishments such as crucifixion, amputation, cross amputation, flogging and death by stoning. [...]

The public order regime embodies and imposes a particular set of values designed to control gender relations within society and to control the necessity of state engagement in the regulation of personal “morality”. Overall, the public order laws contain a mix of criminal and moral prohibitions, which blur the distinction between the enactment of law for public interest and the imposition of moral precepts based on religious convictions. The public order laws are vague and open-ended leaving them exposed to exploitation as a social control tool by the authorities.

The laws comprising the public order regime include the Khartoum Public Order Act of 1998, provisions of the Sudanese Criminal Act of 1991 as well as the Organization of Prisons and Treatment of Prisoners Act of 1992. These laws are applicable to Sudanese men and women, yet categories of women such as female alcohol brewers and sellers, tea sellers, female students and women human rights defenders are disproportionately affected. These groups of women are especially vulnerable owing to their origin and social status and/or because of the repression or criminalization of their activities. These laws also affect women because they aim to criminalize and restrict public presence – public spaces where of necessity, women conduct their trade.<sup>279</sup>

Human Rights Watch explained in a letter to the UN Human Rights Council that in July 2020, the Sudanese authorities have “scrapped public flogging for non-hudud offenses”.<sup>280</sup>

In January 2021 Radio Dabanga noted that “In the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan, the Sudanese Armed Forces shot a man named Hasan Mohamed while he was riding his motorcycle on the road towards the town of El Tirtir. Witnesses told Radio Dabanga that members of the armed forces tried to arrest Hasan Mohamed but when he resisted, one of the gunmen opened the fire and wounded him in the leg. He was then transferred to the El Tirtir Hospital for treatment”.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1c c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*

<sup>278</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2020 – Sudan](#), 4 March 2020

<sup>279</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Gender Briefing- Sudan](#), 10 March 2020, p.6

<sup>280</sup> Human Rights Watch, [The Human Rights Council should support systemic human rights reforms in Sudan](#), 10 September 2020

<sup>281</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Increased violence in Darfur and South Kordofan continues](#), 19 January 2021



Amongst the sources consulted no further information was found specific in relation to South Kordofan and Blue Nile States. For further information on human rights abuses committed by the security forces, [2.1.10. Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces](#).

#### 4.4. Death penalty

No information published between 1 May 2019 and 16 December 2020 on the awarding or implementation of the death penalty specifically in South Kordofan or Blue Nile was located amongst the sources consulted. More general information on the use of the death penalty in Sudan has been included below.

The Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide lists the crimes punishable by death in Sudan.<sup>282</sup> Freedom House noted that “The transitional government’s constitution permits the use of the death penalty, which has already been imposed at least once when 27 security officers were given death sentences for their involvement in torturing and killing a protestor in a December 2019 trial”.<sup>283</sup>

Amnesty International recorded one execution by hanging in 2019.<sup>284</sup> Amnesty International documented that in 2019, “In Sudan, the at least 31 death sentences recorded were a significant increase on the eight death sentences recorded in 2018. Sudan’s Transitional Military Council (TMC) issued 25 pardons as ‘part of the implementation of the measures aiming to create confidence-building measures aiming to achieve peace in Sudan as provided in the agreements reached by the TMC and the Forces for Freedom’.”<sup>285</sup> For example in September 2019, “The Sovereign Council repealed the death penalty for eight leaders of the Sudan Liberation Movement faction of Abdelwahid El Nur”.<sup>286</sup> The Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide detailed that as of 31 May 2019 there were at least 109 people on death row.<sup>287</sup>

In July 2019 Amnesty International issued an urgent action following the Constitutional Court of Sudan’s confirmation of the death sentence against Abbas Mohammed Nur Musa on 20 May 2019.<sup>288</sup> It further noted that “Abbas had appealed his death sentence after being convicted of stabbing a 17-year-old boy to death. The incident happened on 27 August 2013 when Abbas was 15 years old. International human rights law strictly prohibits the use of the death penalty for offences committed by persons below 18 years of age”.<sup>289</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of State’s 2019 report on human rights practices, “By law any person may request legal assistance and must be informed of the right to counsel in cases potentially involving the death penalty, imprisonment lasting longer than 10 years, or amputation”.<sup>290</sup>

In July 2020 Sudan’s Sovereign Council approved new laws which voided the death penalty for apostasy, cancelling Article 126 of Sudan’s 1991 Criminal Code<sup>291</sup>, and ended the death penalty against

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<sup>282</sup> Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, [Sudan](#), regularly updated

<sup>283</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2020 – Sudan](#), 4 March 2020

<sup>284</sup> Amnesty International, [Death Sentences and Executions 2019](#), 21 April 2020, p. 10

<sup>285</sup> Amnesty International, [Death Sentences and Executions 2019](#), 21 April 2020, p. 50

<sup>286</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Death sentences for Sudanese rebel leaders repealed](#), 20 September 2019

<sup>287</sup> Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, [Sudan](#), regularly updated

<sup>288</sup> Amnesty International, [Urgent Action: Young Man at Imminent Risk of Execution](#), 31 May 2019

<sup>289</sup> Amnesty International, [Urgent Action: Young Man at Imminent Risk of Execution](#), 31 May 2019

<sup>290</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, Section 1.d. Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

<sup>291</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, [Death penalty for apostasy abolished](#), 15 July 2020

children and persons over the age of 70.<sup>292</sup> Furthermore, Article 148 of the 1991 Penal Code (the Sodomy Law) was amended to remove the death penalty and floggings for gay sex.<sup>293</sup>

#### 4.5. Detention conditions

The information contained in this section relates to government administered detention facilities. The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 noted that "Rebel groups in Darfur and the Two Areas reportedly detained persons in isolated locations in prison-like detention centers. [...] The state of detention facilities administered by the SLA/AW and SPLM-N in their respective rebel-controlled areas could not be verified due to lack of access".<sup>294</sup>

##### Detention conditions in general throughout Sudan

The World Prison Brief reported that according to national prison administration figures as of July 2017, the prison population was approximately 21,000.<sup>295</sup> The same source noted that according to the most recently available occupancy level statistics, the occupancy level as of mid-2009 was 255.3%.<sup>296</sup> As of 2013, the percentage of pre-trial detainees as a percentage of the total prison population was 20.4%, female prisoners made up 2% of the prison population, and juveniles a further 2%.<sup>297</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of State's 2019 report on human rights practices, "Throughout the year, prison conditions throughout the country remained harsh and life threatening; overcrowding was a major problem".<sup>298</sup> The same source further described:

The Ministry of Interior generally did not release information on physical conditions in prisons. Information about the number of juvenile and female prisoners was unavailable throughout the year. [...] Authorities generally provided food, water, and sanitation, although the quality of all three was basic. Prison health care, heating, ventilation, and lighting were often inadequate but varied from facility to facility. Some prisoners did not have access to medications or physical examinations. Family members or friends provided food and other items to inmates. Most prisoners did not have beds. Former detainees reported needing to purchase foam mattresses. These problems persisted throughout the year.

Under the Bashir regime, there were reports of deaths due to negligence in prisons and pretrial detention centers, but comprehensive figures were not available. Local press reported deaths resulting from suspected torture by police (see section 1.a.). Human rights advocates during the Bashir regime reported deaths resulted from harsh conditions at military detention facilities, such as extreme heat and lack of water.

Some former detainees reported security force members under the Bashir regime held them incommunicado; beat them; deprived them of food, water, and toilets; and forced them to sleep on cold floors. Released detainees under the Bashir regime also reported witnessing rapes of detainees by guards.

Political prisoners were held in separate sections of prisons. Kober Prison contained separate sections for political prisoners, those convicted of financial crimes, and those convicted of violent crimes. NISS holding cells in Khartoum North prisons were known to local activists as "the fridges" due to the

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<sup>292</sup> Hands Off Cain, [Sudan: Death Penalty Removed for Gay Sex, Apostasy](#), 16 July 2020

<sup>293</sup> Hands Off Cain, [Sudan: Death Penalty Removed for Gay Sex, Apostasy](#), 16 July 2020

<sup>294</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *1.g., Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture*

<sup>295</sup> World Prison Brief, [Sudan](#), undated [accessed 30 December 2020]

<sup>296</sup> World Prison Brief, [Sudan](#), undated [accessed 30 December 2020]

<sup>297</sup> World Prison Brief, [Sudan](#), undated [accessed 30 December 2020]

<sup>298</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1.c. Prison and Detention Centre Conditions*

extremely cold temperatures and the lack of windows and sunlight. There were no reported political prisoners under the CLTG.

Political detainees reported facing harsher treatment, although many prominent political detainees reported being exempt from abuse in detention. Numerous high-profile political detainees reported being held next to rooms used by security services to torture individuals. There were no reported political detainees under the CLTG. [...]

Suspects in common criminal cases, such as theft, as well as in political cases were often compelled to confess guilt while in police custody through physical abuse and police intimidation of family members.<sup>299</sup>

A UNICEF Sudan publication covering 2019 noted that “Children in conflict with the law (offenders) continued to benefit from alternative measures to detention, including diversion of pre-trial detention. In 2019, 2,753 of 7,608 child offenders (36.2 per cent) were diverted outside the judicial system. Legal, medical and psychosocial services were provided to 36,603 children in contact with the law (11,371 girls and 25,232 boys)”.<sup>300</sup>

A March 2020 Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa report noted that “Jails across Sudan are often overcrowded with up to 50 persons in one cell, whereas the average capacity is for between 5- 10 persons. These conditions have severe impacts on sanitation and hygiene for the detained. Research suggests that overcrowded detention facilities have major impacts on the spread of communicable disease such as tuberculosis among others”.<sup>301</sup>

The African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) reported that “the Sudan Sovereign Council passed a resolution on 23 March 2020 to release prisoners as a measure to prevent COVID-19 from spreading in jails across the country”.<sup>302</sup> ACJPS noted the release of 4,217 male prisoners from Al-Huda prison located in the city of Omdurman, but did not provide details on detainees from other regions.<sup>303</sup> The same source noted:

With the outbreak of COVID-19, ACJPS also calls on the transitional government to review the conditions of detention centers across the country to ensure it meets the minimum standards set by international treaties to which Sudan is party. The office of the Attorney General, in collaboration with the Ministry of health and Ministry of Internal affairs should urgently come up with a health plan that guarantees the safety and wellbeing of all detainees amidst the outbreak of COVID-19. Authorities should adopt the recent guidelines set by the World Health Organization to prevent and control COVID-19 in prisons and other places of detention.<sup>304</sup>

In a July 2020 briefing paper ACJPS and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) described detention conditions in general in Sudan:

In addition to torture, Sudanese detainees are also forced to live in inhumane conditions, including rudimentary infrastructures, overcrowded cells, insufficient ventilation, no proper nutrition or hygiene. These conditions have particularly been highlighted in the pandemic context which has exacerbated

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<sup>299</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1.c. Prison and Detention Centre Conditions and 1.d Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees*

<sup>300</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Child Protection 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 14

<sup>301</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Human Rights Conditions of Female Detainees and Prisoners in Sudan](#), 13 March 2020, p. 3

<sup>302</sup> ACJPS, [Sudan: Free Border Guard Detainees and Review the Condition of Detention Centres to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 Amongst the Prison Population](#), 9 April 2020

<sup>303</sup> ACJPS, [Sudan: Free Border Guard Detainees and Review the Condition of Detention Centres to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 Amongst the Prison Population](#), 9 April 2020

<sup>304</sup> ACJPS, [Sudan: Free Border Guard Detainees and Review the Condition of Detention Centres to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 Amongst the Prison Population](#), 9 April 2020

the vulnerability of inmates. Indeed, parallel to many other countries, Covid-19 has exposed the structural fault lines in Sudan detention centers.

Covid-19 pandemic has placed a light on the urgent necessity to reform the penitentiary system in Sudan. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, prison conditions throughout the country were already harsh and overcrowded. Health care was often below standard; prisoners sometimes relied on family or friends for food. There were reports of deaths due to negligence in prisons and pretrial detention centers. “Cells in Khartoum North prisons were known as “refrigerator”.

The conditions of prisons and detention centers across Sudan still remains the same as they were during al Bashir’s regime. The prisons and detention centers are overcrowded and insanitary with inadequate medical facilities. Detainees with serious health conditions are referred Military and Police hospitals.

The transitional government had already taken steps to limit the carceral population. On April 11, 2019, hundreds of civilian detainees were released following the ouster of President Omar Al Bashir after months of anti-government protests which started on 18 December 2018.<sup>305</sup>

The same source noted with respect to COVID-19 in prisons that “The only efforts by Sovereign Council to protect detainees is the release of 4,633 prisoners from overcrowded prisons all over the country hosting more than 21000 detainees, with a congestion rate of 255%”.<sup>306</sup>

#### Detention conditions in the Two Areas

Radio Dabanga reported in September 2019 that “HUDO, a Sudanese NGO dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights, has issued an urgent calls to the authorities to release South Kordofan detainees who have been in custody for more than eight years. [...] They have been kept incommunicado to-date by Military Intelligence (MI) authority. [...] They were denied any visits by family or lawyers and whoever asked this, was subjected to detention themselves or bad treatment”.<sup>307</sup>

#### **4.5.1. Torture in detention**

The information contained in this section relates to government administered detention facilities. The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2019 noted that “Rebel groups in Darfur and the Two Areas reportedly detained persons in isolated locations in prison-like detention centers. [...] The state of detention facilities administered by the SLA/AW and SPLM-N in their respective rebel-controlled areas could not be verified due to lack of access”.<sup>308</sup>

#### Torture in detention in general throughout Sudan, including of ethnic minorities

In its annual report covering events in 2019 Amnesty International detailed that “Security forces used live ammunition against demonstrators, beat them on the streets and in hospitals and arbitrarily detained thousands who faced torture and other ill-treatment in detention”.<sup>309</sup> Freedom House noted that “The July 2019 decision to restructure the feared National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)—which harassed, detained, and tortured perceived opponents of al-Bashir’s regime—was nevertheless considered a welcome early development. The NISS was replaced by the General Intelligence Service (GIS), which will focus on counterterrorism and anticorruption efforts”.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020, p. 8

<sup>306</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020, p. 9

<sup>307</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan NGO calls for release of South Kordofan detainees](#), 3 September 2019

<sup>308</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *1.g., Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture*

<sup>309</sup> Amnesty International, [Human Rights in Africa: Review of 2019 – Sudan](#), 8 April 2020

<sup>310</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2020 – Sudan](#), 4 March 2020

According to the U.S. Department of State's 2019 report on human rights practices:

Security forces detained political opponents incommunicado and without charge. NISS held some political detainees in isolation cells in regular prisons, and many were held without access to family or medical treatment and reportedly suffered physical abuse. Human rights activists asserted that NISS ran "ghost houses," where it detained opposition and human rights figures without acknowledging they were being held. Such detentions were prolonged at times. [...]

Under the Bashir regime, and continuing under the TMC, security forces reportedly tortured, beat, and harassed suspected political opponents, rebel supporters, and others. Reports of such behavior largely ceased under the CLTG, although there were isolated reports of intimidation by some potentially rogue elements of the security apparatus, particularly the RSF. [...]

The law requires police and the attorney general to investigate deaths on police premises, regardless of suspected cause. Under the Bashir regime, reports of suspicious deaths in police custody were sometimes investigated but not prosecuted. Under the CLTG, security forces were prosecuted for deaths in police custody.<sup>311</sup>

A December 2019 report from REDRESS and the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies on 'Anti-torture reforms in Sudan in the post-Bashir era' considered that:

torture and ill-treatment are endemic within security service detentions. Political opponents are held without charge or trial and routinely tortured in unacknowledged secret detention centres known to the Sudanese public as 'ghost houses'.<sup>28</sup> The NISS runs these centres without judicial oversight, and victims are usually held incommunicado, without access to a lawyer, doctor, or any family members, thereby providing the necessary deniability to carry out rights violations. The conditions in the ghost houses are reportedly so poor, that the mere act of detention itself amounts to ill-treatment. Detainees are forced to occupy dirty, small unventilated spaces, where they are usually deprived of rest, sleep, food, and water.<sup>29</sup> [...]

Torture has been perpetrated by police and prison staff to extract confessions or to extort money.<sup>33</sup> [...] The list of torture methods practised in Sudan is vast, brutal and diverse. They include but are not limited to:

"routine beatings, kicking and stamping detainees, electric shocks, harsh regimes of physical exercise, prolonged exposure to the sun, pouring cold water on the naked body, rape in custody and threatening with rape, sleep deprivation, refusal of food and medical treatment and forcing some detainees to witness the torture of others."<sup>43</sup>

Reports have been made of the application of hot metal and burning chemical substances to the skin, pulling out of teeth and nails, coercive inhalation of toxic and irritating fumes, hanging from the feet upside down,<sup>44</sup> whipping, slashing of the skin,<sup>45</sup> along with the breaking of bones and the injection of detainees with unknown substances.<sup>46</sup>

Sexualised torture is endemic, and human rights organisations have documented several cases of sexual violence against male and female detainees, including rape, the threat of rape, inserting solid objects into the mouth, the anus, and the crushing of testicles.<sup>47</sup>

Psychological forms of torture include prolonged solitary confinement, mock executions and witnessing the torture of others.<sup>48</sup> <sup>312</sup>

22 Nasif BE Ahmed, *Torture in Sudan 1989-2016* (New Horizons Research Centre 2017) 127; Fathi Aldaw, *Spider House: Unravelling the secrets of Sudanese Islamist Security* (1 edition, Jazeera Al-ward/ Egypt 2016) 235; Interview with Fath El-Alaim Abd-Alhai, 'Leader of the Elsayhoon: Torture and Murder of Captives in "Civilisation Project" Based on Religious Fatwai' (12 March 2015). [...]

27 'Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan - Report of the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights on His Visit to Sudan - Comments by the State (A/HRC/42/63/Add.1) - Sudan' 28 August 2019 <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1925592.pdf>> accessed 8 October 2019.

28 Ibid.

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<sup>311</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1b Disappearances and 1.c. Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment*

<sup>312</sup> REDRESS and African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, [A Way Forward? Anti-torture reforms in Sudan in the post-Bashir era](#), 19 December 2019, p. 16-18

29 Ahmed (n 22) 265. [...]

33 African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, “‘I Was Electrocuted’”: Torture in Sudan from 2011 – 2015 – African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies’ 12–15 <<http://www.acjps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/TORTURE-IN-SUDAN-v4.pdf>> accessed 8 October 2019. [...]

43 Ahmed (n 22) 171.

44 Ibid.

45 Redress, ‘National and International Remedies for Torture:

A Handbook for Sudanese Lawyers’ (2005) 3 <<https://redress.org/publication/national-and-international-remedies-for-torture-a-handbook-for-sudanese-lawyers/>> accessed 8

October 2019.

46 Ahmed (n 22) 11.

47 ‘National and International Remedies for Torture’ (n 45) 3;

Human Rights Watch, “‘They Were Shouting Kill Them’”: Sudan’s

Violent Crackdown on Protesters in Khartoum’ (2019) 32–34

<<https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/11/17/they-were-shouting-kill-them/sudans-violent-crackdown-protesters-khartoum>>

accessed 20 November 2019.

48 ‘National and International Remedies for Torture’ (n 45).

A March 2020 Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa report noted that:

The use of torture across Sudan is endemic. Sudanese authorities use torture, physical abuse and other forms of ill-treatment to intimidate and silence perceived political opposition, human rights defenders, women, political and other social activists, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and students are particularly vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment. [...]

Sexual violence ranging from threat of rape to actual rape by soldiers, security forces and prison wards, is endemic in Sudan’s detention facilities and demonstrates the clear gender bias of the Sudanese regime towards the rights of women. Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual assault have turned into a measure of the strategic crackdown on women, whereas generally perpetrated by security forces with impunity. [...]

Additional layers of discrimination and vulnerability presented when looking at tribal affiliation, social and economic status, and type of crime the detainees are charged for or inherit. Ethnic and racial factor, largely contribute to vulnerability, with POR, specifically targeting those hailing from Nuba Mountains, Darfur or South Sudan or those who are internally displaced. Ethnicity again, plays an important role in physical and sexual patterns of abuse, as the below quotes demonstrates:

“They said “you are just a Nuba woman, you are worthless and we will rape you” and they touched me all over my body”.<sup>313</sup>

In a July 2020 briefing paper the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) considered that “The use of torture across Sudan has been endemic during the last 3 decades”.<sup>314</sup> In the same briefing the ACJPS described that it had documented and monitored the following four main contexts that have “served as a pretext to develop a torture system in Sudan”.<sup>315</sup> Two of these are relevant in the detention context [emphasis added]:

The first category includes **cases in which torture has been perpetrated with the goal of extracting confessions mainly by the National Intelligence Security Services (NISS) in unofficial detention centers and inhumane prisons called 'ghost houses'.**

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<sup>313</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Human Rights Conditions of Female Detainees and Prisoners in Sudan](#), 13 March 2020, p. 3

<sup>314</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020, p. 3

<sup>315</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020, p. 3



**The second refers to cases in which torture has also been used to discriminate against marginalized groups, members of ethnic minority groups; including Darfuris, and people hailing from Sudan’s Blue Nile and South Kordofan states.**

A third group represents circumstances where torture has also been used to allegedly enforce public order laws which were recently repealed by the Transitional government.

A last category refers to the use of torture, including sexual violence as a tool of war mainly in Darfur region.<sup>316</sup>

The same source stated that “The torture apparatus remains deep rooted and needs a long term and structural reform process” and that “Although the transitional government had shown a will to eradicate the NISS as a torture symbol and to improve human rights standards, the philosophy of punishment by detaining people remains the same”.<sup>317</sup> The source continued:

Accountability for torture in Sudan remains a big challenge and near impossible for many victims given existing legal barriers in particular laws granting immunities to officials, statutes of limitation, lack of adequate victim and witness protection and a system of special courts for the police and security forces. Authorities have repeatedly failed to ensure prompt, thorough, impartial and effective investigations into allegations of torture and ill-treatments and have failed to ensure effective remedies or provide reparation to the victims. [...]

There is not a single case where an alleged perpetrator of torture has been held accountable in Sudan.<sup>318</sup>

In July 2020 Sudan’s Sovereign Council passed new laws which “ban the “infliction of torture” and forced confessions, human rights violations that have been well documented by Human Rights Watch and others, and clarify that the General Intelligence Service (formerly the National Intelligence and Security Service) no longer has the power to arrest and detain people, but solely to gather intelligence”.<sup>319</sup>

In December 2020, 29 human rights organisations sent a letter to the Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and to the Sovereign Council and Council of Ministers expressing encouragement at the approval of the ratification of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED).<sup>320</sup> The letter emphasised the importance of ratifying both conventions in their entirety and encouraged the ratification of the Optional Protocol to UNCAT (OPCAT) and to opt in to UNCAT’s individual communications procedure under Article 22.<sup>321</sup>

### *Torture in detention in South Kordofan*

In July 2019 Radio Dabanga reported that “One of seven soldiers, who were arrested and taken to Delling garrison in South Kordofan, has died after alleged torture. The soldiers were arrested in connection with the disappearance of a machinegun in El Dabkar two weeks ago. They were reportedly subjected to brutal torture by military intelligence officers, which caused the death of Ahmed Sharafeldin”.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020, p. 3

<sup>317</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020, p. 11

<sup>318</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020, p. 11

<sup>319</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Sudan’s Law Reforms a Positive First Step](#), 16 July 2020

<sup>320</sup> Amnesty International et al, [Ratification of UNCAT and ICPPED](#), 3 December 2020

<sup>321</sup> Amnesty International et al, [Ratification of UNCAT and ICPPED](#), 3 December 2020

<sup>322</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Soldier tortured to death in South Kordofan](#), 22 July 2019



The HUDO Centre noted that “On 21st September 2019, the military intelligence (MI) in Dilling arrested Mr. Ismail Baleeya, 35 years old. They took him to MI office at Dilling military headquarters and later released him the same day evening. They detained him for seven hours, physically and psychologically tortured (beating and insulting) him. The arrest of Mr. Ismail was due to a personal dispute between him and a military soldier at a commercial bakery”.<sup>323</sup>

A Radio Dabanga article noted that in October 2019:

A man held by the South Kordofan police at the market of El Abbasiya Tagali was brutally tortured, according to Justice Africa Sudan.

In a press statement on Thursday, the Sudanese NGO reported that Adam Yagoub was held by policemen at the El Abbasiya Tagali market on October 27.

After beating him “in front of everyone at the market”, he was taken away for questioning. The reason for the detention is not clear.

In custody, he was tortured and a bottle was entered into his rectum. Later he was transferred, bleeding, to a hospital in the neighbourhood, where a doctor treated him, and recorded his injury.

After Yagoub was released on bail, lawyers wanted to file an official complaint. Yet the police refused to accept the complaint, saying that they enjoy immunity from prosecution.<sup>324</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported on a November 2019 incident thus:

Residents of El Abbasiya in South Kordofan staged a protest in front of the police station on Monday after a suspect was hospitalised after allegedly being severely beaten in custody last week.

Protestors told Radio Dabanga that a man was detained by anti-narcotics police who suspected him of possessing hashish. While in custody, he was subjected to severe torture, which necessitated that he be transferred to hospital in El Obeid, they said.<sup>325</sup>

Radio Dabanga noted in an April 2020 article that “The Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) reported yesterday that 42-year old farmer El Safi El Degein was taken from his home by eight army officers in Aleri Ghareib in South Kordofan on Saturday evening. HUDO fears he is being tortured. El Degein was first held at the army base in Aleri Ghareib. On Sunday he was taken to the army base in Talodi, 55 kilometers away. No reason was given for his detention. He has been denied access to his visitors, family and lawyers. A reliable source informed HUDO that the detention is related to El Degein’s political activities in the past”.<sup>326</sup>

### *Torture in detention in Blue Nile*

In May 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that:

The Kampala-based Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) reported in a press statement yesterday that RSF militiamen took Idris El Bur from his shop on April 27. He was taken to the RSF office in Ed Damazin, where he was questioned by RSF captain Goja.

During the questioning El Bur was beaten by Goja. He was released the following day. He was threatened that he could be detained again.

Idris El Bur, a shop owner and social and political activist aged 40, was first detained on April 8 by the RSF in Ed Damazin for criticising the local RSF commander on Facebook. After his release, two days later, El Bur filed a complaint against the RSF in Ed Damazin for detaining him illegally.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January-December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, para 2.1.9

<sup>324</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Justice Africa Sudan: Detainee tortured in South Kordofan](#), 8 November 2019

<sup>325</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Suspect ‘tortured’ by South Kordofan drug police](#), 5 November 2019

<sup>326</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan army officers detain Nuba farmer](#), 15 April 2020

<sup>327</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan activist re-detained by Rapid Support Forces militia](#), 6 May 2020

## 5. Human rights situation: civil and political rights

### 5.1. Freedom of expression, association, and assembly

#### 5.1.1. Political opposition parties, activists and dissidents

##### In general throughout Sudan

Freedom House explained the general 2019 political situation in Sudan thus:

al-Bashir was himself ousted in a coup d'état in April 2019 after sit-in protests were held near his compound and army headquarters in the capital city of Khartoum. [...]

The military first attempted to rule without civilian support, culminating in a violent crackdown of a Khartoum protest in early June that killed 127 people. The military officers who deposed President al-Bashir then held negotiations with the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), the opposition alliance that protested for al-Bashir's removal. After fraught negotiations, the two sides signed a power-sharing deal in August that established an interim government with a three-year mandate.

Those talks led to the creation of an 11-member Transitional Sovereign Council (TSC), which replaced the Transitional Military Council (TMC) responsible for the June massacre in Khartoum. The TMC's leader, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, was named the TSC's chair for a 21-month term, after which a civilian will lead the council for 18 months. The deal also allowed the military to name five of its members, while the FFC named five. The eleventh member, a civilian, was named by acclamation by both sides. [...] civilian members of the TSC nominated prominent economist Abdalla Hamdok to serve as prime minister. Hamdok presides over a cabinet of 20 technocratic ministers, who wield day-to-day executive power under the transitional agreement. The military, however, has maintained control of the defense and interior ministries under the power-sharing deal.

Sudan's revolution swept away the old bicameral National Legislature, whose members were last elected in 2015 in polls that did not uphold democratic standards and were largely boycotted by the opposition. Al-Bashir's political party, the National Congress Party (NCP), held 323 of the lower house's 426 seats before it was dissolved. The party itself was disbanded on orders of the TSC in November 2019.

Parties to the August 2019 talks instead created a Transitional Legislative Council (TLC) with 300 members, with the FFC selecting two-thirds of its members and other political parties choosing the rest in lieu of an election. The TLC's members, who remained unselected by year's end, are expected to hold office until elections are held in 2022. [...]

While the transitional government has worked to disband the NCP, a competitive multiparty system has not been instituted in 2019, and some political groups have found themselves outside the transitional system. In April, members of the Popular Congress Party (PCP), whose Islamist founder was a prominent supporter of al-Bashir's 1989 coup, were attacked by protesters as they held a meeting in Khartoum in late April 2019. The PCP reported that at least 64 people were wounded during the incident, which was condemned by the TMC. The party subsequently decided not participate in talks to form a transitional government.

The Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), which played a significant role in the protest movement, refused to sign the power-sharing deal, objecting to the military's presence on the TSC. In November 2019, the RSF filed a complaint against Communist Party leader Siddig Yousef over his criticism of the paramilitary group's involvement in the June massacre in Khartoum.<sup>328</sup>

Reporting on the situation of opposition party members in general in Sudan the same source noted:

Under al-Bashir, opposition parties were hindered from gaining power through harassment, intimidation, and the arrests of their leaders. A small number of opposition politicians participated in a

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<sup>328</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2020](#), 4 March 2020

unity government formed in 2017, but al-Bashir dissolved it in 2019 in favor of an NCP-dominated government.

However, opposition groups saw early success during the protest movement that displaced al-Bashir, and have maintained influence as the transitional government took shape in August 2019. The interim constitution has also enshrined the right to form political parties, though they will not be able to contest an election until 2022, when the transitional period is scheduled to end.<sup>329</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of State's 2019 report on human rights practices, "In the first few months of the year, NISS called individuals to report to NISS offices for long hours on a daily basis without a stated purpose in lieu of formal detention. Many human rights observers considered this a tactic to harass, intimidate, and disrupt the lives of opposition members and activists, prevent "opposition" activities, and avoid the recording of formal detentions. These practices largely ended under the CLTG [Civilian-led transitional government]".<sup>330</sup>

The same source further noted that "Individuals who criticized the Bashir regime publicly or privately were subject to reprisal, including arbitrary arrest. The Bashir regime attempted to impede such criticism and monitored political meetings and the press. There were no reports of this occurring under the CLTG".<sup>331</sup> Furthermore, "Bashir government security agents occasionally attended opposition meetings, disrupted opposition rallies, or summoned participants to security headquarters for questioning after meetings. Opposition political parties claimed they were almost never granted official permits to hold meetings, rallies, or peaceful demonstrations".<sup>332</sup>

In a July 2020 briefing paper the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) considered that "Sudanese authorities have used torture and other forms of ill-treatment to intimidate and silence political dissent. Victims of torture and ill-treatment included Human Rights Defenders, indigenous groups (known as Dams victims), migrants, political and other social activists, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and students".<sup>333</sup>

In its 2020 *Freedom on the Net* report, Freedom House detailed that "While Sudan has a vibrant online media landscape, the government has frequently manipulated internet content to advance its agenda, spreading disinformation and manipulating social media discussion through a so-called cyberjihadist unit. [...] The unit collected information about dissidents and reportedly orchestrated technical attacks against independent websites, especially during political events [...]. In 2019, the unit was especially active on Facebook and Twitter, using human-run accounts to target opposition figures and protesters through harassment".<sup>334</sup> Furthermore, "The cyberjihadist unit has engaged in disinformation campaigns surrounding COVID-19, reportedly sharing stories claiming that the virus has not reached Sudan and that the transitional government was using the pandemic lockdown to stifle dissent. The unit reportedly sought to mobilize people to protest the lockdown".<sup>335</sup>

Human Rights Watch reported in July 2020 that:

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<sup>329</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2020](#), 4 March 2020

<sup>330</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1d Arbitrary Arrest*

<sup>331</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 2.a Freedom of Expression, including for the Press*

<sup>332</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 2.b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly*

<sup>333</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020, p. 3

<sup>334</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net](#), 14 October 2020

<sup>335</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net](#), 14 October 2020

On July 18, the Sudanese army issued a statement saying they had appointed a special commissioner to bring lawsuits against individuals who “insult” the army, including activists and journalists, both in and outside of Sudan, who write online.

The army spokesperson invoked the troublesome Cybercrimes Act, an overly broad law introduced in 2007 that has been used by the former regime to target online critics. The act criminalizes the vague concept of the “spread of false news” and publication of “indecent materials.” Recent amendments did not correct the law’s problematic provisions, but instead increased prison sentences.

The army also threatened to use the Publication and Newspapers Act and “crimes against the state” provisions in the Criminal Act of 1991. Both were often used by the former regime to harass real or perceived opponents.

The army’s move – despite recent positive law reforms – underscores that far too many problematic laws remain in place and can be used to restrict basic freedoms, contravening Sudan’s constitutional declaration.<sup>336</sup>

### South Kordofan

Radio Dabanga reported in June 2019 that “the intelligence authorities in Delling in South Kordofan released Dr Samani El Saeed and Dr Nasreldin Kafi, lecturers at the University of Delling who have been held for two days in their detention centres on charges of destabilising the country’s security”. The same report further explained:

Abdallah Abuhum of the leadership of the Alliance for Freedom and Change (AFC) in Delling told Radio Dabanga, the arrest took place after they issued a statement on Tuesday demanding administrative reforms at the University of Delling and criticism of the Transitional Military Council.

He pointed out that Military Intelligence detained the lecturers in Delling military garrison from Tuesday until Thursday evening and released them after being transferred to the Delling police station, where they filed complaint under article 159 of destabilising the country.<sup>337</sup>

In October 2019 Radio Dabanga reported that “protesters against the use to toxic substances in gold mining in Talodi in the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan, gave the Sudanese government 96 hours to respond to their demands. Paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) beat-up an activist near the town. [...] ‘Hussein Noureljalil was at the market of the El Togola mine for a mission related to the anti-mining protesters in Talodi, when an RSF force riding in a vehicle assaulted him,’ a protester told this station. ‘They severely beat him with rifle butts, causing him serious head injuries,’ he said. ‘Fortunately, an army force intervened, freed Hussein from their grip, and took him to Talodi Hospital’”.<sup>338</sup>

A further article from the same source noted in an April 2020 article that “The Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) reported yesterday that 42-year old farmer El Safi El Degein was taken from his home by eight army officers in Aleri Ghareib in South Kordofan on Saturday evening. HUDO fears he is being tortured. El Degein was first held at the army base in Aleri Ghareib. On Sunday he was taken to the army base in Talodi, 55 kilometers away. No reason was given for his detention. He has been denied access to his visitors, family and lawyers. A reliable source informed HUDO that the detention is related to El Degein’s political activities in the past”.<sup>339</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported in September 2020 that “A Nuba activist was beaten-up by members of the Military Intelligence in Abu Jubeiha, South Kordofan”.<sup>340</sup> The same source further explained that:

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<sup>336</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Sudan’s Army Threatens Activists, Journalists with Lawsuits](#), 24 July 2020

<sup>337</sup> Radio Dabanga, [South Kordofan academics released](#), 16 June 2019

<sup>338</sup> Radio Dabanga, [South Kordofan protests against toxins, militia presence continue](#), 21 October 2019

<sup>339</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan army officers detain Nuba farmer](#), 15 April 2020

<sup>340</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan: Nuba activist beaten by MI officers in South Kordofan](#), 24 September 2020

El Sheikh Mohamedein, member of the Comprehensive Peace Forces Association, told Radio Dabanga that they preparing the launch of a political seminar on Freedom Square in Abu Jubeiha yesterday, when a military force in six vehicles prevented them.

“They ordered us to stop the forum, saying we did not have a permit from the General Intelligence Service (GIS)\* nor from the Abu Jubeiha military garrison,” he reported.

“We explained to them that we had notified the director and the security committee of Abu Jubeiha locality, but they insisted that we need an approval from the commander of the garrison.

“When they wanted to detain us, Hozeifa Shankeran, who is a leading member of the Association, intervened. He was severely beaten.”

The Comprehensive Peace Forces Association condemned the action, calling it “an infringement and suppression of freedoms”.<sup>341</sup>

### Blue Nile

The HUDO Centre reported that in April 2020 Mr. Edriss Elbur Ahmed, a “trader, social and political activist” was arrested on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020 by the Rapid Support Force (RSF) in Damazin [Blue Nile] and released two days later.<sup>342</sup> Following his release he pressed charges against the RSF for “having arrested him illegally”, following which he was re-arrested on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020 “and taken to their office in Damazin town where he was detained and interrogated by RSF Captain/ Gouja. During the process of interrogation, he was beaten/ assaulted by Captain/ Gouja himself. The following day (28<sup>th</sup> April 2020) Mr. Elbur was released with threats of being re-arrested again”.<sup>343</sup>

In April 2020 Radio Dabanga reporting on what appears to be the same incident noted that “The Coordination of the Forces for Freedom and Change in Blue Nile state reported the detention of Idris El Bur by members of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Sudan’s main government militia, yesterday. ‘An armed force from the Rapid Support Forces detained Idris El Bur, member of the FFC Executive Office in the state, from his shop at the Grand Market of Ed Damazin on Thursday morning, and took him to the militia’s headquarters in the town,’ the FFC said in a statement”.<sup>344</sup>

In November 2020 Radio Dabanga noted that “On November 6, two members of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) held Muntasir Ali when he was on his way to attend a court session in Ed Damazin, capital of Blue Nile state. Ali was detained to prevent him to attend a court session against an army soldier, Sudanese human rights watchdog HUDO reported [...] On October 25, army officers confiscated Ali’s commercial vehicle in Sinja Nabak village in Blue Nile state, after he had reported an assault by an SAF member at the police. They repeatedly told him the vehicle would be returned if he would withdraw his complaint against the soldier. Yet, Ali insisted to demand his rights in a court case. On the day of the court session, two SAF members and a policeman intercepted him. He was transferred to Medina-10, more than 50 km south of Ed Damazin, where he was held until midnight. The next day, Ali returned to Ed Damazin, where he was informed that the court session had been adjourned to November 17”.<sup>345</sup>

#### **5.1.1. Lawyers as political opposition members and activists**

The U.S. Department State Sudan report for 2019 on Human Rights Practices noted that “Lawyers wishing to practice were required to maintain membership in the government-controlled Sudanese Bar Association; the CLTG [Civilian-led transitional government] dismantled this union in December.

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<sup>341</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan: Nuba activist beaten by MI officers in South Kordofan](#), 24 September 2020

<sup>342</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Repeated arrest of Mr. Edriss Elbu by RSF in Damazin, Sudan](#), 6 May 2020

<sup>343</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Repeated arrest of Mr. Edriss Elbu by RSF in Damazin, Sudan](#), 6 May 2020

<sup>344</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan officials nearly killed in West Kordofan, activist held in Blue Nile](#), 10 April 2020

<sup>345</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan army officers intimidate complainant in Blue Nile state](#), 16 November 2019

The Bashir government arrested and harassed lawyers whom it considered political opponents; there were no reports of such arrests under the CLTG”.<sup>346</sup>

No further information was found on the treatment of lawyers in the Two Areas within the research timeframe.

### 5.1.2. (Suspected) members of the SPLM/A-N

This section should be read in conjunction with the totality of section [5.1.3. Individuals \(perceived to be\) associated with or supportive of the SPLM/A-N.](#)

#### South Kordofan

In February 2020 Radio Dabanga noted that “The Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation HUDO reports today that military intelligence officers arrested 63-years old tailor Adam Suliman at his workplace in Rashad, South Kordofan, on February 12 for being a member of SPLM-N. He was threatened, and released in the evening”.<sup>347</sup> The same source further described that:

Following his arrest Adam Suliman was taken to the Military Intelligence Office at Rashad military base, where he was interrogated about his political activities nine years ago, when he was a member of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and candidate for the South Kordofan legislative council elections in 2011.

Suliman was released that same evening, after being threatened that he will be detained and tortured if he expresses any kind of association with the SPLM-N.<sup>348</sup>

In December 2020 Radio Dabanga detailed that “The General Intelligence Service (GIS) in El Abbasiya in South Kordofan is holding 17 members of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North faction under the leadership of Abdelaziz El Hilu (SPLM-N El Hilu) in their offices”. The same source further described:

Heavily armed military forces stormed a seminar in Gumburiya village south of El Abbasiya town on December 4. The seminar was organised by supporters of the armed rebel movement SPLM-N El Hilu. GIS officers then detained 17 people and took them to their offices in the town.

The topic of the seminar was the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, signed by the Sudanese government and the Sudan Revolutionary Front rebel alliance on October 3.

Relatives of the detainees were told that the detention of the 17 activists was justified because the SPLM-N El Hilu did not sign a peace agreement with the government yet, and therefore their supporters do not have the right to hold seminars.<sup>349</sup>

#### Blue Nile

No further information was found on the treatment of (suspected) members of the SPLM/A-N within the research timeframe.

#### Outside of the Two Areas

Illustrative of the Transitional Military Council’s treatment of the SPLM-N outside of the Two Areas, Radio Dabanga reported that in July 2019, “The Transitional Military Council (TMC) has deported three leaders of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North under the leadership of Malik Agar (SPLM-N Agar) to the South Sudanese capital Juba against their will. They had come to Khartoum last month

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<sup>346</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#), 11 March 2020, Section 1.e

<sup>347</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Man detained by Sudan military intelligence for being SPLM-N member](#), 24 February 2020

<sup>348</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Man detained by Sudan military intelligence for being SPLM-N member](#), 24 February 2020

<sup>349</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan intelligence service raids seminar, detains 17 SPLM-N members](#), 7 December 2020



“to discuss all issues with the TMC and the movement’s allies within Sudan” and were arrested last week”.<sup>350</sup>

### **5.1.3. Individuals (perceived to be) associated with or supportive of the SPLM/A-N**

This section should be read in conjunction with [4.5. Detention conditions](#) and [4.5.1. Torture in detention](#).

#### **5.1.3.1. Two Areas**

In November 2019 the HUDO Centre reported that “In conflict areas there are many checkpoints conducted under security concerns in which SAF soldiers and other government militias intimidate people especially drivers. Sometimes they are threatened with arrests or arrested under false accusations of being affiliated to the armed groups”.<sup>351</sup>

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that “Unlike in prior years, there were no reports during the year of women detained because of their association with men suspected of being supporters of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N)”.<sup>352</sup>

#### **5.1.3.2. South Kordofan**

The HUDO Centre, covering the period January to December 2019 noted that “A reliable source informed HUDO that, people in Nuba Mountains from the government controlled area which borders SPLA controlled areas are only allowed to buy stuff for home which can be used per day unless they get permission from security agencies, otherwise they will be accused of taking merchandise to SPLA area”.<sup>353</sup>

In September 2019 the HUDO Centre noted that “On 11th September 2019, Mr. Eltoum Osman was released by Rapid Support Force (RSF) soldiers after detaining him for two days at their checkpoint. The RSF interrogated him through torture (beating) and confiscated his motorbike, accusing him of taking goods to SPLA controlled area”.<sup>354</sup>

The HUDO Centre further reported that in October 2019 “while Tajeldin Yousif (34 years old farmer) was on his way back to his village Aljabalab (7km Southwest Al-Abbasiya) from Al-Abbasiya town market, he was arrested at the town’s checkpoint. Mr. Tajeldin was asked by the MI soldiers to come down of the vehicle (public means/transport). When he was down, they started beating him and kick him with their boots, and then they arrested him and took him to Al-Abbasiya military base. The MI accused him that he was taking goods to SPLA-N controlled area. On 31st October 2019, he was released without any charges”.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Arrested SPLM-N leaders deported to South Sudan](#), 10 June 2019

<sup>351</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Action, SAF unlawfully impounds a vehicle in Blue Nile, Sudan](#), 3 November 2019

<sup>352</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, *1.d. Arbitrary arrest*

<sup>353</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.1.8 Arrest of Eltoum Osman by RSF in Hajar – Jawad, p. 10/11

<sup>354</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Action, Arrest of Eltoum Osman by RSF in Hajar-Jawad, Sudan](#), 10 September 2019

<sup>355</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.1.11 Arrest of Tajeldin Yousif by MI in Al-Abbasiya, p. 12



Radio Dabanga reported in October 2019 that “Military Intelligence agents briefly held a group of people, who they said they suspected of being Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) supporters, in El Abbasiya in South Kordofan”.<sup>356</sup> The same source further described:

One of the victims told Radio Dabanga said that members of Military Intelligence halted a passenger vehicle returning shoppers from the Grand Market of El Abbasiya market to their villages west of the town on Thursday.

“They accused us of supporting the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) in the area and that, they needed to inspect the vehicle and our purchases,” he reported, “but they just stole most of our belongings.”

When passenger El Taj Yousef protested the inspection, they took him to the garrison of El Abbasiya.<sup>357</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported in February 2020 the arrest of Suliman Adam Suliman by the “military intelligence (MI) in Rashad of South Kordofan State/ Nuba Mountains [...] based on allegations that Mr. Suliman is a member of SPLM. He was detained for the whole day and released in the evening. [...] The same day (evening hours), Mr. Suliman was released after being threatened that he will be arrested and tortured if he expresses any kind of association with Sudan People Liberation Army – North (SPLA-N)”.<sup>358</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that in April 2020:

On the night of 11<sup>th</sup> April 2020 around 08:30 PM, eight (8) armed soldiers of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) came on land cruiser vehicle to the house of Mr. Elsafi Eldegain (42 years old) the farmer based in Aleri Ghareib/ Aleri West town and arrested him without giving a reason. They took him to their base in the town where he spent the night. The following day (12<sup>th</sup> April 2020), Mr. Elsafi was transferred to Talodi military base.

He was not allowed to be accessed by visitors including family and lawyers. His prolonged detention raises the fear that he could be undergoing torture. Since then Mr. Elsafi has been held incommunicado until recently (10<sup>th</sup> June 2020) when he was allowed once to communicate (via phone) with his family. The reason for Mr. Elsafi’s arrest was related to his past political activities when he was a member of Sudan People Liberation Movement–North (SPLM-N).<sup>359</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that “On 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020, twelve (12) civilians including an underage were arrested by SAF and RSF soldiers in Al-Abbasiya of Nuba Mountains. They were arrested for participating in a public address gathering at Gambaraya village talking about peace process. They were intimidated before being released on 5<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020”.<sup>360</sup> The same source further noted that:

On 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020, Peace Activist Group (PAG) organized a public address in Gambaraya village where they were talking about peace process. Suddenly, a group of armed soldiers some dressed in Sudan armed force (SAF) uniform and others in Rapid Support Force (RSF) uniform raided the gathering.

The soldiers came on eleven vehicles mounted with machine guns, they shot bullets in the air, arrested twelve people including an underage and took them to Al-Abbasiya military base where they had been confined for two days. During detention, they were intimidated and verbally insulted by calling them “NYAKAT” (it is a local word used by those in authority against Nuba people referring to them as rebels). They were also interrogated on accusations of being affiliated to SPLM-N. They were released on 5<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Radio Dabanga, [‘Rebel supporters’ assaulted in South Kordofan](#), 21 October 2019

<sup>357</sup> Radio Dabanga, [‘Rebel supporters’ assaulted in South Kordofan](#), 21 October 2019

<sup>358</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Arrest and intimidation of Suliman by Mli in Rashad, Sudan](#), 24 February 2020

<sup>359</sup> HUDO Centre, [The Human Rights Situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January-June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, para 2.1.3 p.11

<sup>360</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Civilians detained for two days by SAF in Al-Abbasiya, Sudan](#), 9 December 2020

Dec 2020 after being threatened and warned not to organize or participate in such gatherings anymore. Otherwise, they will be arrested and tortured.<sup>361</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that:

On 6th December 2020, (SAF/MI) more than twenty passengers traveling on a truck from Haiban to Khartoum were arrested by Sudan Armed Force/ Military Intelligence at Al-Abbasiya town and their truck was packed at the military base. On the evening of 7th December 2020, the women and children were released after spending a night in a cell. The men stayed under detention with little amount of food and poor conditions up to their release. [...]

On 12th December 2020, Sudan Armed Force/ Military Intelligence in Al-Abbasiya released the detained people: Kuku Abdalla, Rashid Younis Osman, Steven Adam Ajaweed, Elsir Adam Ajaweed, William Musa Ajaweed and Mamoun Abdalla Elamein together with their truck. They were released after one week in custody (in poor conditions and daily intimidation). There was no case preferred against them. They were interrogated and warned not to go back to their home town (Haiban). The interrogation was about SAF suspecting them to be affiliated to SPLA-N.<sup>362</sup>

On 12 January 2021 the HUDO Centre noted that “Mr. Taj-Elsir Abdalla Mesaibeil and Mr. Hussein Ibrahim Abu-Jarra were arrested by Four (4) armed soldiers of Sudan Armed Force (SAF) on 18th December 2020 in Talodi. Since then, they have been kept incommunicado in Military Intelligence (MI) custody at Talodi military base. They are denied visits from relatives or lawyers and are detained in very bad conditions. This raised the fear that they could be undergoing torture. It’s presumed that the reason for their arrest is because they were coming from the area controlled by Sudan People Liberation Army – North (SPLA-N) to the government controlled territory/ area”.<sup>363</sup>

#### **5.1.3.3. Blue Nile**

In August 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “Military Intelligence officers held seven students affiliated with the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North El Hilu faction in Blue Nile state”.<sup>364</sup> The same source further detailed:

The Blue Nile students were detained when they were addressing the public at the market of East Guneis in Roseires locality. They used loudspeakers to defend the position of the rebel faction under the leadership of Abdelaziz El Hilu (SPLM-N El Hilu) at the peace negotiations, currently held in the South Sudanese capital Juba.

Military Intelligence officers who were riding in a Land Cruiser without number plates, took El Tom Abeini, Ahmed Abujumeila, Noureldin Abdallah, Ali Babiker, Khattab Farajallah, Abuzar Saadallah, and Abdelshafi to an unknown destination.

The detention of the students at the market was documented on video and published on social media. According to a statement issued by SPLM-N El Hilu yesterday evening eight of its student members were held in East Guneis.<sup>365</sup>

No further specific incidents in relation to Blue Nile State could be located within the research timeframe.

#### **5.1.3.4. Nuba (South Kordofan)**

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<sup>361</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Civilians detained for two days by SAF in Al-Abbasiya, Sudan](#), 9 December 2020

<sup>362</sup> HUDO Centre, [Update on Arrest of Travellers by SAF in Al-Abbasiya, Sudan](#), 5 January 2021

<sup>363</sup> HUDO Centre, [Update on Arrest of Civilians by Military in Talodi, Sudan](#), 12 January 2021

<sup>364</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Protestors detained in Sudan](#), 26 August 2020

<sup>365</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Protestors detained in Sudan](#), 26 August 2020

Limited information was found on the treatment of the Nuba owing to their perceived association or affiliation with the SPLM-A/N. Information has also been included on the treatment of the Nuba owing to their ethnicity.

Minority Rights International provided the following profile of the Nuba in Sudan:

A group of 50 or more autonomous and ethnically diverse communities, numbering some 3.7 million people, Nuba inhabit the mountainous Kordofan region in central Sudan. Nuba speak several dialects of the Cushitic group of the Hamito-Semitic languages. Some traditional religions survive but most Nuba have been converted to Islam or Christianity. These diverse peoples have found a common identity as 'Nuba' through their shared mountain homeland and a history of shared oppression.<sup>366</sup>

Dame Rosalind Marsden was called to give evidence in the UK Country Guidance case [KAM \(Nuba - return\) Sudan CG \[2020\] UKUT 269 \(IAC\)](#). The determination explains that "She served as British Ambassador to Sudan from 2007 until 2010 and she was the EU Special Representative for Sudan from October 2010 until October 2013. From 2014 to 2018, she was the Senior Advisor to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, a US-funded Sudanese programme and she advised the US government on the Sudanese peace process. She is currently an Associate Fellow at Chatham House where she is a political analyst advising on Sudan and South Sudan issues. She has first-hand experience of Sudan. In July 2019, she attended a 3-day meeting with 30 Sudanese civil society representatives in Nairobi. Between 28 September and 9 October 2019, she visited Khartoum to help organise and chair a Chatham House conference during which time she met with a number of local individuals".<sup>367</sup> In an August 2019 report produced as evidence for the case she gave the following answers:

**Is there recent evidence of targeting of Nuba?**

[...] (b) In the Nuba Mountains

Although the level of violence against civilians in the SPLM-North controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains is substantially lower than it was prior to June 2016 when aerial bombing stopped, attacks on civilians by government security forces have continued since the TMC took over in April 2019. Human rights monitors report that there have been a number of cattle-raiding attacks against civilians, particularly in Dalami, Heiban and Thobo counties, which are said to have been committed by men in SAF uniform.

According to the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit, the humanitarian situation in the Nuba Mountains continues to be serious. Food stocks are reported to be depleted and the food security outlook uncertain. Essential medicines are in short supply and there is limited access to health clinics."

[...]

**Has the perception of Nuba changed? Are there parallels between current perceptions of Nuba and Darfuris?**

Individuals of non-Arab Darfuri or Nuba ethnic origin are both identifiable because of their darker skin colour and have historically been looked down upon by lighter-skinned Sudanese from tribes in central Sudan and referred to by insulting terms such as "Abid" (the Arabic term for slave). Civilians in the new transitional government are likely to try to take a more progressive approach to dealing with ethnic stereotypes but this racist prejudice is deep-seated in Sudanese society and is unlikely to disappear overnight.

Indeed, many Sudanese living in the marginalised areas feel aggrieved that they are under-represented in the transitional government. If it had not been for the Sudan Revolutionary Front, which initiated a meeting with other FFC members in Addis Ababa in late July, there would have been no substantive chapter in the Constitutional Declaration dealing with the peace agenda and the issues of the marginalised, IDPs and refugees. The armed movements have complained that this is a sign that Sudanese living in central Sudan still want to monopolise power at their expense and complain that their mindset has not yet changed. It remains to be seen whether the Sovereign Council, and particularly the military who are responsible for the security sector, will be ready to make concessions

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<sup>366</sup> Minority Rights Group International, [Nuba: Profile](#), last updated June 2018

<sup>367</sup> [KAM \(Nuba - return\) Sudan CG \[2020\] UKUT 269 \(IAC\)](#), para. A2

in the peace talks that will give the armed movements and their constituencies appropriate political representation in the transitional institutions.

### **Are Nuba likely to be targeted today on account of ethnicity and perceived involvement with rebel groups?**

As one reason for targeting Nuba is their perceived involvement with rebel groups, the situation for Nuba (and Darfur) is likely to improve if it is possible to reach a comprehensive agreement with the armed movements. This is supposed to be a top priority for the transitional government. The Constitutional Declaration stipulates that a peace agreement should be concluded within six months from the signing of the agreement (ie by February 2020). The new Prime Minister also vowed to prioritise peace at his inaugural press conference on 21 August. However, it is uncertain if the February 2020 target will be met, given that Abdel Aziz al Hilu, the leader of the largest SPLM/N faction in the Nuba Mountains, is calling for the right to self-determination and two armies and Abdel Wahid Nour, whose Sudan Liberation Movement still has a significant military presence in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur, has denounced the power-sharing deal as a “betrayal of the revolution”.

It is too early to say how the security organs such as NISS and the RSF will treat marginalised groups such as Nuba and Darfur until we know whether civilians in the transitional government will be able to exercise effective control over their behaviour and progress can be made in implementing security sector reform. [...]

### **Targeting of Nuba in the Nuba Mountains**

A unilateral ceasefire by both parties to the conflict has been in place in the Nuba Mountains since 2016. Following the formation of the transitional government, Abdel Aziz al Hilu, the leader of the largest SLM/N faction, signed an agreement with the new government on 11 September 2019 declaring his readiness to take part in peace talks in Juba starting in mid-October.

However, not much has changed on the ground until now. Southern Kordofan is still under a state of emergency. The military Governor is still in place, the Popular Defence Force (an Islamist militia created by the National Congress Party) is still operational and the police are still the same.

There are still reports of continuing insecurity. For example, on 4 October, RSF forces recruited from the Hawazma and Salamat (Arab nomadic tribes), attacked the Nuba village of Tongal in Habila locality, using 25 pick-up trucks with mounted machine guns. General Himiti, the Deputy Chair of the Sovereign Council and RSF Commander, and Shamseddin Kabbashi, a military member of the Sovereign Council (who is himself a Nuba from the Gulfan tribe) have been busy since May recruiting youth from both Arab tribes and Nuba tribes in government-controlled areas to join the RSF. Kabbashi and Yasir Al Atta, another military member of the Sovereign Council, have also been trying to encourage the nomadic Arab Dar Naele (a branch of the Hawazma tribe) to change their migration path southwards during the dry season from their traditional route through government-controlled areas to a route through Habila, which is the territory of the Gulfan, a Nuba tribe, and which is very close to the SPLM/N front line. Kabbashi is also reported to have tried to bring in SAF soldiers to accompany the Arab pastoralists on their migration route. SPLM/N sources thought that this looked like a ploy to provoke a conflict and give SAF a pretext to capture some of their territory ahead of the peace talks starting in Juba. On 5 October, Kabbashi is reported to have met with Chiefs from both the Gulfan and Dar Naele and given each of them SDG 500,000 to unite against the SPLM/N.

On 16 October Abdel Aziz al Hilu's spokesman announced that RSF soldiers in 25 Landcruisers had ambushed civilians inside SPLM/N-controlled territory near Khor Waral in Habila locality, abducting 13 people, and killing two, including a local Sheikh who had objected to the local nomads passing through farmland. Abdel Aziz accused the government of supporting the Hawazma against other tribes in the region and violating the ceasefire and announced that he was therefore suspending negotiations until there was an immediate ceasefire, a full investigation and detainees were released. General Burhan responded immediately by announcing a ceasefire throughout the country. Mohamed el Taishi, a civilian member of the Sovereign Council and spokesman for the government's negotiating team in Juba, strongly condemning the incident, pledging to investigate and hold the perpetrators accountable. This incident shows that the security situation on the ground is still extremely volatile.

In a separate incident on 7 October, the RSF mounted an attack on people living near the gold mines at Talodi, using 27 armed pick-up trucks. They beat and arrested civilians, injuring ten people, and looted their property. Demonstrations by local residents had been going on for months over the use of mercury and cyanide by gold-mining companies which they said had caused serious health and environmental problems. Most of these companies are owned by the RSF and the security apparatus. Under pressure from these protests, the Governor of Southern Kordofan had ordered the companies

to close their factories but when they refused to do, angry protestors stormed the gold mining plants and burnt down four of the factories and the vehicles of the companies operating them. On 4 October, the spokesman of the Sovereign Council condemned the environmental protestors as “armed groups of saboteurs”. Residents of Talodi staged a big march on 7 October to denounce the statement by the Sovereign Council on the grounds that it had not acknowledged the justice of their cause and had falsely accused them of being armed. The six young Nuba men I interviewed in Omdurman were particularly angry about this statement because they thought it showed that the Sovereign Council were ignoring the grievances of the Nuba and defending the vested interests of their own members.

Tom Catena, the well-known American doctor who has worked in a hospital in the Nuba Mountains for the last decade, said in an interview in September 2019 that “the region remains a war zone”. There are several reports from the HUDO Centre, that, because of the state of emergency in Southern Kordofan/Nuba Mountains, Sudanese security forces and militias have been carrying out arrests at will even since the formation of the new government.<sup>368</sup>

In an August 2019 report prepared by Maddy Crowther, Co-Executive Director of Waging Peace for the same Country Guidance case, she cited Mohaned Elnour, a human rights lawyer as stating that:

As a human rights lawyer, I am fully aware of injustice that non-Arab are facing based on their ethnicity and religion, especially, people with background from Darfur and the two areas (Blue Nile and Nuba mountains). [...] After the war took place in the two areas (Blue Nile and Nuba mountains), the situation has become worse as Sudanese Government launched aerial bombardments targeting the civilians in Nuba Mountains. [...] I could tell NISS believes any one from the two areas or non-Arab Darfuris belongs to rebel movements unless they prove the opposite. The ethnicity is encounter and very much linked to politics, especially when it comes to the formation of rebel movements, for instance, most of the fighters of rebel groups are non-Arab Darfuris or belong to Nuba and Angasna ethnicities, therefore, it is most likely that anyone from these areas is suspected to belong to rebels or cooperating with them by way or another.<sup>369</sup>

The report also cited the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sudan & South Sudan as noting in response to the following question:

What is your assessment of the fact that Nuba individuals are targeted in Sudan on the basis of their ethnicity, and that they suffer discrimination amounting to persecution, for instance concerning access to healthcare, housing, employment, education, or religious freedom?

The APPG for Sudan and South Sudan have seen evidence on numerable occasions that people face institutionalised racial discrimination throughout Sudan. Officers of the APPG have seen first-hand that “black” Sudanese are considered to be lesser races and are described as “slaves”.<sup>370</sup>

In an October 2019 Addendum report for the Tribunal, Maddie Crowther stated that:

Concerns continue to centre on the role taken by the military in the process, and particularly of individuals implicated in atrocity crimes under the previous administration. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, or ‘Hemetti’ - whose Rapid Support Forces (RSF) are the re-branded Janjaweed responsible for the worst abuses in Darfur at the height of the genocide there; whose forces have fought in South Kordofan; and who served on former President Omar Al-Bashir’s security committee - maintains his position, as does Abdel Fattah al-Bourhan, who held a high rank in the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) under Bashir. But more relevant still is the presence of hundreds and thousands of officials who served under Bashir in the transitional authorities. It remains an open source of tension of what to do with those individuals with affiliations to Bashir’s political party, the National Congress Party (NCP), and who were on the government payroll. Short of a total purge, this administrative apparatus will be maintained. This apparatus was employed by Bashir during his rule to conduct a brutal policy of Arabisation, during

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<sup>368</sup> [KAM \(Nuba - return\) Sudan CG \[2020\] UKUT 269 \(IAC\)](#), para. A46, para. 45 & 46 and para. 147, para. 50-5, para. A59 26-31 and A71

<sup>369</sup> Maddy Crowther (Waging Peace), [Report on the risk to Nuba individuals in Sudan](#), 27 October 2019, p. 11

<sup>370</sup> Maddy Crowther (Waging Peace), [Report on the risk to Nuba individuals in Sudan](#), 27 August 2019, p. 14

which black, African, animist, or other religious expressions of Sudanese culture were suppressed in favour of Arab and Muslim identities. Many Nuba on the ground and within the diaspora see disparaging and racist ideologies as the most pernicious and persisting legacies of the Bashir era – it is still common for jokes to be made about an individual’s blackness, using words like ‘abid’ which means slave. I expanded on this in my March 2018 report and wish to draw your attention to these remarks. It remains the case that an individual will be readily identified as Nuba because of their skin tone; that they will suffer discrimination in equal citizenship, employment, religious freedom, education, healthcare, and housing, especially because of inability to obtain official documentation that entitles them to government services; and that in addition they will be subject to the unchanged and hostile administrative apparatus of the state. [...]

I have also heard reports that while the Public Order Laws, the so-called ‘morality laws’, have been suspended in central Khartoum, that they remain enforced in the ‘black belt’ where most Nuba live, specifically in the Al Haj Yousef and Mayo neighbourhoods. Police have been raiding houses accusing them of producing local alcohol called merisa, and confiscating belongings, but without any judicial oversight, as these cases do not reach the courts. [...]

The recent change in government should not be exaggerated, it is simply too early to tell whether early stated commitments to peace and respect for diversity will be respected, and initial progress is discouraging, particularly as the administrative apparatus of the Bashir era remains mostly intact. Popular discontent is growing among the Nuba communities both on the ground and within the diaspora amid fears that the conflict, persecution, discrimination, and Arabisation of the Bashir era will continue while its administrative apparatus and racist ideology remains in force. This affects Nuba communities in South Kordofan, those who have been displaced to Khartoum, and individuals who arrive in the urban area as a result of refused asylum claims.<sup>371</sup>

16 Bushra Gamer, director of HUDO Centre, in phone conversation on 16 October 2019

A November 2019 article explained that “The PDF is a government militia, established in late 1989 by the new Islamist regime that came into power by a military coup on June 30 that year. The force is defined by the 1989 Popular Defence Forces Act as a semi-military force to be formed from Sudanese citizens. The PDF in the Nuba Mountains are mostly composed of Arab herders’ tribes that are known to look down on African Nuba farmers”.<sup>372</sup> For further information on human rights abuses committed by the PDF, see section [2.1.10. Human rights abuses committed & impunity enjoyed by government forces](#).

According to Minority Rights Group International’s *Peoples Under Threat 2020*, Sudan is ranked at number 8 out of 115 countries assessed, with the following communities at risk “Fur, Zaghawa, Massalit and others in Darfur, Ngok Dinka, Nuba, Beja”.<sup>373</sup>

In February 2020 Radio Dabanga noted that “a bus passenger from the Nuba Mountains was insulted and briefly detained by security personnel in Kosti in White Nile state. He was released after pressure from fellow passengers who refused to proceed to Khartoum without him”.<sup>374</sup> Documenting the same incident the Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) noted that:

On 17th February 2020, Mr. Hassan Elamein Suliman was traveling from Abu-Gebaiha town of South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains to Khartoum with public transport (a bus). When the bus stopped at the western checkpoint of Kosti town, three security personnel in civilian clothes entered the bus for the regular checks. On reaching Mr. Hassan’s seat, one of them (security personnel) started bullying him by asking questions like, “why are you so black”...“are you a Sudanese”? Thereafter, Mr. Hassan showed them his identity card but they insisted on taking him to their office. While at their office, he was

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<sup>371</sup> Maddy Crowther (Waging Peace), [Addendum report – risk to Nuba individuals in Sudan](#), 17 October 2019, para. 5, 6, 14, 21

<sup>372</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Militiamen wreak havoc in Sudan’s Nuba Mountains](#), 26 November 2019

<sup>373</sup> Minority Rights Group International, [Peoples Under Threat 2020: Sudan](#), 25 June 2020

<sup>374</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan: Security officers detain, insult ‘black’ Nuba man](#), 25 February 2020



insulted further and was referred to as a slave (Abid). He was detained at the security checkpoint office for two hours and released after the passengers and their bus refused to go/ leave without him. Mr. Hassan Elamein Suliman Natu (29 years) is from Teera/ Nuba tribe and a university graduate.<sup>375</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that on 13 May 2020 “Armed RSF soldiers attacked Albardab village and killed nine (9) unarmed people, looted and burned down houses basing on ethnicity. As a result, more than two thousand people were displaced from their village. The displaced people have not received any humanitarian aid and are in a miserable state. On arrival, they started to ask about the ethnicity of the residents they came across and it turned out that they were targeting the Nuba. Whoever said that they were from Nuba ethnicity had to be assaulted / beaten or killed and their houses had to be looted and burnt down. As a result, nine (9) people were killed, more than two hundred (200) huts/houses were burnt down and more than two thousand people were displaced”.<sup>376</sup>

In late May 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “a man was killed by armed men wearing uniforms of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) near the South Kordofan capital of Kadugli, after he stated he belonged to the Nuba Reika tribe”.<sup>377</sup> The same source further stated:

The Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) reported in a press statement yesterday that Awad El Wakeel (33) was travelling, together with three others, in a vehicle from El Keweik, 40 km north of Kadugli, to the capital on May 21.

When they reached El Berdab, five armed men dressed in RSF uniforms of Rapid intercepted them. They ordered them to get out of the car and asked them about their ethnic background.

When El Wakeel answered he belonged to the Reika tribe from the Nuba Mountains, they shot him dead on the spot. The other travellers were allowed to continue their journey.<sup>378</sup>

In January 2021 the HUDO Centre noted that “On 3rd January 2021 morning hours, authorities in South Kordofan conducted a biased/partial and discriminative inspection in Hajar Almac neighbourhood undermining the announcement made to the general public. They deliberately neglected the suspected areas and exhibited partiality in the inspection exercise”.<sup>379</sup> The same source further explained that:

On 3rd January 2021 (From 03:00 AM to 12:00PM), many armed soldiers of Sudan Armed Force (SAF), Police and Rapid Support Force (RSF) accompanied by a prosecutor conducted a selective inspection exercise in Hajar Almac area specifically in square 1 and 2. The inspection process was not conducted according to the public announcement made by the military personnel using loud speakers. According to the announcement, the inspection was to take place in both Hajar Almac and Algardood neighbourhoods of Kadugli town. But, the inspection was only carried out in Hajar Almac’s square 1 and square 2 and it was only done on selected ethnicity houses. During the search/inspection, soldiers confiscated some commodities/items from houses. On that same day (evening), the state governor appeared in an official video produced by the state television (TV) appreciating the inspection exercise. [...]

Hajar Almac and Algardood are neighbourhoods in Kadugli. Hajar Almac is composed of four squares (from 1 up to 4). Square 1 & 2 are generally occupied by Nuba ethnicity (farmers/cultivators) while 3 & 4 are mostly occupied by Arab ethnicity (nomads/ cattle keepers) of whom some are members of the RSF and PDF as many of reported incidents were approved to be committed by their members and mostly the farmers were victims.

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<sup>375</sup> HUDO Centre, [Passenger Detained and Insulted at a Checkpoint in Kosti, Sudan](#), 25 February 2020

<sup>376</sup> HUDO Centre, [Urgent Appeal, Miserable conditions of the recently displaced people in Kadoqli, Sudan](#), 21 May 2020

<sup>377</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Man ‘killed for being Nuba’ in Sudan’s South Kordofan](#), 26 May 2020

<sup>378</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Man ‘killed for being Nuba’ in Sudan’s South Kordofan](#), 26 May 2020

<sup>379</sup> HUDO Centre, [Discrimination Conduct By Authorities in South Kordofan State, Sudan](#), 10 January 2021



The inspection campaign was a reaction by the state government to the earlier demonstration march organized by Kadugli's residents on 27 December 2020. The residents demonstrated while complaining about the state of insecurity demanding for safety and they delivered a message to the state government.<sup>380</sup>

In response to the question whether Nuba are likely to be targeted in South Kordofan today on account of their ethnicity, Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre and interviewed for this report in February 2021 responded:

They are targeted everywhere in South Kordofan or outside South Kordofan [...]

The most recent is the person in Atbara who was killed by police. So when we talk about South Kordofan and the number of people killed extra judicially or unlawfully, it's above fifty (50) people. Out of these 50 killed people, forty-one (41) are Nubians and nine (9) are non-Nubian. So, this is almost 82% and if you critically look at these cases, you will find that twenty-one (21) of the murdered people came from the eastern part of Nuba Mountain.

(Here I'm talking about the killed people not even the injured), in Kadugli alone, 25 people were killed in 2020. So why Kadugli and the eastern part of Nuba Mountain? The eastern part of the Nuba Mountain is where the majority of the Popular Defense Force (PDF) soldiers are based. This force was created by former president Al-Bashir. PDF has a bad reputation and historical violations towards Nuba ethnicity since the war erupted in 2011. And now, most of them joined or were integrated into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). When we talk about PDF, they are mainly composed of individuals from Arab tribes (the nomads). They are now targeting the black ethnicities in Nuba.

In May 2020 RSF soldiers asked people, "Are you Nuba?" in Al-Bardab. They were targeting Nuba suburbs or Nuba neighborhoods within that village. Whoever said "Yes I am Nubian" was either killed or injured. [...]

Nowadays, in Kadugli there is an increase in armed robberies and even around Nuba Mountains. And these are mainly committed by the RSF and the PDF mainly targeting people from the Nuba ethnicity. Basing on our annual reports of 2019 and 2020, there is an increase in the number of deaths and injuries by direct gunshot. And currently, there are armed robberies going on which makes the situation worse. In some articles (incidents reports), we often indicate that the perpetrator is 'anonymous' because we cannot be certain whether they are from RSF or PDF. But there is something you need to consider – usually when we talk about farmers being targeted, they are mostly Nuba. And when we talk about nomads or cattle keepers they are mostly Arabs. So if you go back to our reports and try to find out the number of farmers who were killed, all those farmers were Nuba.

There was also a statement made last year, in May 2020, by one of the RSF Commanders. He said, "We are not going to let you cultivate". I think there is even a video about this. The same message was delivered the year before in Habila and in other towns in South Kordofan. As if it was something organised. So immediately when the cultivation season started in May and June, the number of killings of farmers started too. [...]

The RSF (and the PDF) act with impunity. They enter the gardens/farms and say that the cattle are free to graze everywhere. Currently, this is the conflict between the farmers/cultivators and the nomads/cattle keepers.<sup>381</sup>

He further emphasised that "now you see many Sudanese human rights activists coming back to Sudan or visiting Sudan. I can't do that. I can't because I am sure I will be treated differently because I am Nubian. It is a mindset [against the Nuba] that cannot be changed within one or two years. It is a very long process".<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> HUDO Centre, [Discrimination Conduct By Authorities in South Kordofan State, Sudan](#), 10 January 2021

<sup>381</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

<sup>382</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

To the question whether Nuba are targeted in South Kordofan today due to their perceived involvement with rebel groups, Bushra Rahama answered:

This is actually one of the reasons.

When we go back to the '90s when al-Bashir announced the war as a holy war, after that, even the imams in the mosques asked people to join the armed forces (PDF) in order to kill the Nuba because they are rebelling.

It is after this revolution that people thought of changing the mindset. In November or December-2020, twenty (20) people who were traveling on a truck and coming from a SPLA-N area were arrested. Among them women and children (women and children had spent a night there and were released the following day, while the mature men were kept for days before releasing them). After that they were warned not to go back

There were also two people in Talodi who were arrested because they came from this area [SPLA-N]. They've been in detention now for almost two months.

When a Nubian is under detention, nobody is allowed to visit them (denying them any visits). It is complete incommunicado. It is inhuman.

This does not happen against any other person in Sudan except against the Nuba people [...]

So this is the kind of mentality we have and which still exists today. Many young Nuba men were forced or pushed into the violence and to take up arms with the arm groups because of mistreatment.<sup>383</sup>

#### **5.1.3.5. Other ethnic groups**

No information was found on the treatment of other ethnic groups owing to their perceived association or affiliation with the SPLM-A/N.

For information on the treatment of persons owing to their ethnicity in the Two Areas, see [5.3 Discrimination against ethnic minorities](#).

#### **5.1.3.6. Christians**

No information was found specific to the treatment of Christians in South Kordofan and Blue Nile perceived to be associated with or supportive of the SPLM-A/N.

This section should be read in conjunction with [5.2. Freedom of religion](#) and specifically section [5.2.1. Christians](#).

#### **5.1.4. Freedom of the Media**

Limited information was found specific to the freedom of the media in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Information has therefore been included on the situation in Sudan more generally but the situation specific to other areas of Sudan has not been addressed.

Sudan is ranked 159 of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2020 World Press Freedom Index.<sup>384</sup> This marks an improvement of 16 places since 2019.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

<sup>384</sup> Reporters Without Borders, [Sudan](#), undated (accessed 18 January 2021)

<sup>385</sup> Reporters Without Borders, [Sudan](#), undated (accessed 18 January 2021)

In July 2019 UN human rights experts “denounced measures taken by the authorities to shut down the Internet in Sudan, saying it stifles free expression and association”.<sup>386</sup> They further noted that “The Internet shut down is in clear violation of international human rights law and cannot be justified under any circumstances. [...] The internet shutdown forms part of a larger effort to stifle the free expression and association of the Sudanese population, and to curtail the ongoing protests. [...] Access to information and communication services is crucial at times of protests. Restricting or blocking access to Internet services not only adversely affects the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and participation, but it also has severe effects on protesters demands’ regarding economic and social rights”.<sup>387</sup>

In an April 2020 article Reporters Without Borders stated that “The persecution of journalists and media outlets critical of Sudan’s former regime officially ended with the installation of a civilian-led government, but the media are still devastated by three decades of censorship and harassment, and the long-awaited changes have yet to materialize. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) urges the interim authorities to do what is necessary to ensure that press freedom can become a reality in Sudan”.<sup>388</sup> The same source further described the situation thus:

On the first anniversary of President Omar al-Bashir’s ouster on 11 April 2019, after a four-month-long popular uprising, the new authorities have gradually wound down the systematic harassment of the media and journalists that prevailed during Bashir’s 30 years of dictatorial rule. At the height of the uprising, RSF registered more than 100 press freedom violations, mainly arrests of journalists and various forms of newspaper censorship.

The National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) no longer raids newspapers or their printing presses to control the content of their articles or to confiscate entire issues as they come off the press. Institutional censorship has declined dramatically without disappearing altogether. News control is now exercised more insidiously, sometime from within newsrooms, as was seen with Lubna Abdella’s dismissal by the newspaper Al Sudani Al Dawlia after an investigative story about corruption within the human rights commission. “Most of the 18 daily newspapers that cover politics continue to be affiliated or close to supporters of the former regime and economic condition prevent the arrival of new actors,” said Hassan Ahmed Berkia, a member of the executive secretariat of the Sudanese Journalists Network (SJN). Around 300 journalists demonstrated outside the information ministry in December to demand changes at the top of the public broadcaster SRTC and the removal of the intelligence agents who were infiltrated into many news organizations.

The interests of the former regime and its allies are defended online and on messaging services by the Cyber Jihadist Unit, a troll army that the intelligence services created after the Arab Spring in 2011 to spy on the opposition and journalists. It pumps out disinformation designed to defend former regime figures and has been included in RSF’s list of Digital Predators of Press Freedom.<sup>389</sup>

In June 2020 the International Federation of Journalists reported that “21 newspapers have been suspended, leaving hundreds of journalists without income and the country deprived of newspapers in a critical moment. According to SUJ [Sudanese Union of Journalists], the government currently controls several media outlets through appointed “administrative supervisors,” while national media organizations are being heavily penalized, with more than 500 journalists likely to be dismissed soon, according to a plan drawn up by the Empowerment Removal Committee (ERC), created to dismantle former president Bashir’s system”.<sup>390</sup> The same source also described that:

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<sup>386</sup> OHCHR News, [Sudan: UN experts denounce Internet shutdown, call for immediate restoration](#), 8 July 2019

<sup>387</sup> OHCHR News, [Sudan: UN experts denounce Internet shutdown, call for immediate restoration](#), 8 July 2019

<sup>388</sup> Reporters Without Borders, [Sudan: Press freedom still in transition a year after Omar al-Bashir’s removal](#), 10 April 2020

<sup>389</sup> Reporters Without Borders, [Sudan: Press freedom still in transition a year after Omar al-Bashir’s removal](#), 10 April 2020

<sup>390</sup> International Federation of Journalists, [Sudan: Media crackdown escalates amid Covid-19 pandemic](#), 10 June 2020

The latest blow against press freedom was struck last week when the authorities announced legal changes which would result in jail terms of up to 10 years for criticising the actions of the Committee. The new provision has already claimed its first victims, among them Atiyb Mustafa Abdelrahman, an SUJ member, columnist and publisher, who was arrested for his critical stance, the union claims. [...] These restrictive measures have grown during the Covid-19 crisis. According to SUJ, journalists have been repeatedly threatened, harassed, and summoned over in recent weeks. Journalists Lana Awad Sabil and Aida Ahmed Abdelgadir were arrested after publishing reports about the number of Covid deaths.

No journalists have been allowed to cover the proceedings of the High Committee for the Emergency of Corona and the relevant authorisations and permits have been removed from accredited journalists and correspondents, hindering their movement during the curfew period.<sup>391</sup>

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that in July 2020 “the army had announced on Facebook that it had appointed a Special Commissioner in May to sue anyone who insults or defames the military on the internet”.<sup>392</sup> The same source further described in a November 2020 article that:

The army’s announcement coincided with a spate of threats to prosecute journalists under Sudan’s cybercrime law, according to CPJ interviews. That law—a relic from the repressive era of former President Omar Al Bashir—criminalized spreading false information online.

Sudan’s joint civilian and military transitional government made the law more punitive in an amendment this summer. Military officials and their supporters frequently dismiss reporting that puts them in a bad light as “fake news,” and Sudanese journalists and activists told CPJ that they fear the army is weaponizing the charge to silence criticism, rather than fight disinformation.

Mohamad Nyala, a member of the secretariat of the local press freedom group Sudanese Journalists Network, told CPJ that eight journalists have reported receiving threatening calls from people claiming to be military officers since May. All described being told to delete online articles and social media posts that criticized the army, or else they would be hurt or sued, he said. [...]

Prison sentences for numerous offenses in the 2018 Law on Combating Cybercrimes were increased in a July 13 amendment, according to a memo on the Ministry of Justice website. The maximum prison term under Article 23, which analysts say includes vague prohibitions on “spreading fake news” to threaten public safety, was raised to four years instead of one.<sup>393</sup>

In July 2020 the International Federation of Journalists noted that “The Sudanese army has threatened activists and journalists with lawsuits for “insulting the military”.<sup>394</sup>

The International Federation of Journalists reported in December 2020 that “On 10 December, 84 journalists of the state National Authority of Radio and TV were dismissed due to alleged loyalty to the regime of former president Omar Al-Bashir and administrative irregularities in their hiring process. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate, the Sudanese Journalists Union (SJU) condemn this decision and demand the immediate re-integration of all the media workers. [...] The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) had condemned the blanket threat and called on military forces to stop intimidating the press and respect freedom of expression”.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> International Federation of Journalists, [Sudan: Media crackdown escalates amid Covid-19 pandemic](#), 10 June 2020

<sup>392</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, [Sudan tightens cybercrime law as army pursues “fake news”](#), 23 November 2020

<sup>393</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, [Sudan tightens cybercrime law as army pursues “fake news”](#), 23 November 2020

<sup>394</sup> International Federation of Journalists, [Sudan: Army threatens journalists and activists with lawsuits](#), 22 July 2020

<sup>395</sup> International Federation of Journalists, [Sudan: 84 broadcast workers fired over alleged loyalty to former regime](#), 15 December 2020

#### 5.1.4.1. Treatment of critical journalists, citizen-journalists, bloggers, etc

Freedom House reported on the general situation for journalists in 2019 thus:

The TSC [Transitional Sovereign Council] has refrained from the most aggressive tactics used by the al-Bashir government, though journalists have criticized its activities. The SJU and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) condemned the government's decision to close trade union organizations associated with the old regime, including the SJU, in December 2019.

The RSF has remained active in its targeting of journalists since the rise of the transitional government. In November 2019, it filed a complaint against Hanadi el-Siddig, editor in chief of the newspaper Akhbar El-Watan, over her newspaper column. El-Siddig was subsequently charged with violating the Information Crimes Act.<sup>396</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of State's 2019 report on human rights practices, "The Bashir regime arrested, harassed, intimidated, and abused journalists and vocal critics of the regime. [...] There were no reports of the CLTG using these tactics. [...] There were no reports of government censorship or print confiscations under the CLTG".<sup>397</sup>

In its 2020 *Freedom on the Net* report, Freedom House assessed that "Internet freedom in Sudan has improved under the reforms of a technocratic cabinet led by Abdalla Hamdok. [...] The TSC's interim constitution, the Sudan Constitutional Charter, safeguards rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right to access the internet, and the transitional government has signalled it will liberalize the regulatory environment. The practical extent of these reforms remains to be seen, as Sudanese internet users continue to face arrest, harassment, and intimidation for their online activities".<sup>398</sup> The same source further noted that:

Compared to the highly restrictive space in the traditional media sphere, which is characterized by prepublication censorship, confiscations of entire press runs of newspapers, and warnings from GIS agents against reporting on certain taboo topics, the internet remains a relatively open space for freedom of expression. Many voices express discontent with the government on various online platforms. Online news outlets such as Al Tareeq, Al Taghyeer, Radio Dabanga, Hurriyat, and Al Rakoba cover controversial topics such as corruption and human rights violations. [...]

Blogging is also popular, allowing journalists and other writers to publish commentary free from the restrictions leveled on print newspapers while providing women and ethnic and religious minorities a platform to express themselves. The more active Sudanese bloggers write in English. [...]

Arrests, prosecutions, and interrogations for online activities continued during the coverage period, particularly as heavy-handed censorship of the print and broadcast sectors led journalists to migrate online to disseminate news. Internet users continued to fear arrest for online dissent under the transition government, particularly after the June 2019 massacre. [...]

Online journalists and activists often face extralegal intimidation, harassment, and violence in retaliation for their online activities. The frequency of such incidents decreased during the coverage period, in comparison to the many protesters who reported harassment from security agents after posting on social media around the mass demonstrations in early 2019.<sup>399</sup>

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) reported that:

On April 8 2020, a group of RSF officers of Alta Damon locality in Blue Nile State arrested Mr. Idris Albur Ahmed, a 37 year old blogger and member of Baath Political party from the village of Alsilik. Mr. Idris,

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<sup>396</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2020](#), 4 March 2020

<sup>397</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 2.a Freedom of Expression, including for the Press*

<sup>398</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net](#), 14 October 2020

<sup>399</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net](#), 14 October 2020

was arrested after sharing a post on his Facebook account where he accused the management of a petrol station owned by Mr. Faiz Balla, an RSF officer for hiking fuel prices above the official prices set by the Sudanese authorities. Mr Idris was detained at the RSF headquarters and released on April 11, 2020 but was re-arrested after he attempted to file a complaint about his arrest at the office of the attorney general in Blue Nile.<sup>400</sup>

#### **5.1.5. Civil society organizations and civil society activists, including women’s rights activists**

This section should be read in conjunction with section [3.5. Humanitarian access and freedom of movement](#).

##### *Situation in general in Sudan*

According to the U.S. Department of State’s 2019 report on human rights practices, “The Bashir regime was uncooperative with, and unresponsive to, domestic human rights groups. It restricted and harassed workers of both domestic and international human rights organizations. According to international NGOs, Bashir government agents consistently monitored, threatened, prosecuted, and occasionally physically assaulted civil society human rights activists. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that the Bashir government arrested NGO-affiliated international human rights and humanitarian workers. Under the CLTG, cooperation with NGOs greatly improved”.<sup>401</sup> The same source further noted that:

The CLTG responded positively to overtures from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to re-establish an office in the country. On September 25, the CLTG signed what the United Nations called a “milestone agreement” to open a UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Khartoum, with field offices in Darfur, the Two Areas, and East Sudan. The Khartoum office was scheduled to open in January 2020.<sup>402</sup>

In its 2020 *Freedom on the Net* report, Freedom House considered that in Sudan in general “Civic space is slowly opening to individuals and opposition parties, but security personnel associated with the abuses of old regime remain influential, and their commitment to political freedoms and civil liberties is unclear”.<sup>403</sup> The same source further noted that “Activists and protesters detained during the coverage period often experienced long pretrial detentions and torture by the authorities”.<sup>404</sup>

Human Rights Watch explained in a September 2020 letter to the UN Human Rights Council that:

The civic and democratic space has opened, with Sudanese citizens, including HRDs and civil society, enjoying greater respect for their rights to freedom of opinion and expression (including freedom of the media and access to information), freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of movement. Several of the signatory organisations have been able to visit the country since the formation of a Transitional Government. They have witnessed first-hand an over-whelming sense of

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<sup>400</sup> ACJPS, [Sudan: Continued Violations of Human Rights by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces](#), 14 May 2020

<sup>401</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, Section 5. *Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights*

<sup>402</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, Section 5. *Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights*

<sup>403</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net](#), 14 October 2020

<sup>404</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net](#), 14 October 2020



pride that the Sudanese people reclaimed their space and rights and now have a Government that works for all citizens and is responsible before them.

However, as Sudan faces a multi-faceted crisis with economic, social and human rights dimensions, and as the Covid-19 pandemic is taking its toll, its political transition remains fragile. A history of comprehensive sanctions, the United States administration's continued listing of Sudan as a "State sponsor of terrorism," and endemic corruption and mismanagement have added to these challenges by negatively affecting livelihoods and recovery.<sup>405</sup>

### South Kordofan

In March 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that "The manager of the Islamic Daawa organisation in South Kordofan was shot dead by unknown gunmen in the state capital of Kadugli".<sup>406</sup> The same source further noted:

According to a press statement by the Kampala-based Sudanese Human Rights and Democracy Organisation (HUDO) on Wednesday, Ismail Idris (54), manager of the Islamic Daawa organisation in South Kordofan, was shot dead by two masked men for an unknown reason.

In the evening of March 15, Idris returned home in Kadugli. When he got out from his car, two masked men called him by his name, and shot him in the chest.

Relatives and neighbours rushed to take him to a hospital but he died before arriving.

A case was filed at the Kadugli police office, and the police visited the crime scene, HUDO states. No further investigations or arrests have been done yet.<sup>407</sup>

In an October 2020 article, the Sudanese Women Rights Action (SWRA) reported that "Since July 2020 at least 30 women were injured or killed during protests and other incidents of violence around Sudan, all of them in the conflict areas of Darfur and the Nuba Mountains. At least 7 women were arrested or faced lawsuits for participating in public events or expressing their opinion in public. Women activists, journalists, and artists remain under threat by the military and its militias using their resources to shrink the public space and obstruct the rights to freedom of assembly and expression".<sup>408</sup> The same source further stated that:

The continuous reported incidents of violence against women protesters and the crackdown on peaceful protests in conflict areas, in addition to the army and police use of lethal weapons against peaceful protesters is an alarming sign of the deteriorating situation of freedom of assembly and expression in these areas in particular, and Sudan as a whole, one year after the revolution.

Freedom of expression has also been under attack by the new actions of the military and its militias to threaten online activists, especially women in an attempt to silence them. The military is using the former regime law framework and fundamental Islamist base to threaten women freedom of assembly and expression and close the public space for women activists.<sup>409</sup>

The source described the following incident in South Kordofan:

The Sudanese army intelligence officers and the police arrested 31 people from a public event on 23 September in Abujbeiha city, in Southern Kordofan. Among the detainees there were 5 women peace activists. The public event which was organized in order to address the situation in the state of South Kordofan was attacked by the military intelligence officers who deemed the gathering illegal without permission from the army base leader of the city. The attacking force injured some of the participants and arrested over 30 among them who were taken to the army base.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Human Rights Watch, [The Human Rights Council should support systemic human rights reforms in Sudan](#), 10 September 2020

<sup>406</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudanese NGO manager, army soldier killed in South Kordofan](#), 19 March 2020

<sup>407</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudanese NGO manager, army soldier killed in South Kordofan](#), 19 March 2020

<sup>408</sup> Open Democracy, [In Sudan, women are still facing the deadly threat of the military](#), 5 October 2020

<sup>409</sup> Open Democracy, [In Sudan, women are still facing the deadly threat of the military](#), 5 October 2020

<sup>410</sup> Open Democracy, [In Sudan, women are still facing the deadly threat of the military](#), 5 October 2020



The HUDO Centre noted in its annual report covering events in 2020 that:

On 6th December 2020, a number of policemen accompanied by a prosecutor and the former manager of Kadogli Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS), arrested seven (7) SRCS workers basing on an accusation filed by the former manager. They were released on bail nine hours later after interrogation and forced to sign a pledge not to counteract with the accuser (the former manager).<sup>411</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that “On 11th January 2020 at 09:00 pm (Sudan local time), while two community activists Mr. Zuki Adam Ahmed and Mr. Burhan-Eldin Mohammed Ghaboush were walking back home, they were attacked by three armed and masked people. The attackers had disappeared after badly injured Mr. Zuki on his left leg and Mr. Burhan-Eldin in his right arm. The two injured activists were taken to Kadogli hospital where they received a medical care. A police case against anonymous was filed at Kadogli central police office. The reason behind the attack and the nature of the perpetrators is unknown yet”.<sup>412</sup>

### Blue Nile

In November 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “Members of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) briefly detained a number of activists in Blue Nile state twice”.<sup>413</sup> The same source further described that:

The Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) reported [...] that army officers held five people returning to the state capital of Ed Damazin after attending a socio-political event in Masfa village.

The Masfa Youth Association organised a “cultural day on the peace agreement” in the village on Friday. The event was attended by senior state officials from Ed Damazin.

Dr Hasan Hamza, one of the speakers invited, said in his speech that basic education should be free of charge, in order to reduce the high drop-out rates resulting from poverty.

As their parents are no able to pay school fees and in many cases even their meals, the uneducated youth are forced to join the military or become labourers at agricultural schemes, he said.

When Dr Hamza was on his way back to the Blue Nile state capital, accompanied by Abdallah Mahjoub, Deputy director of Bau locality, Mujahed Mustafa, Blue Nile satellite TV photographer, the four men and driver Ali Eisa were intercepted by SAF soldiers and taken to Lt Abubakir Hasan who questioned Hamza and accused him inciting hatred against the military.

The others were insulted and threatened to be tied. They were all released after one hour and resumed their journey back to the state capital. They however were obstructed again and taken to a higher-ranking officer, who once again questioned Hamza about this speech.

After more than one hour, they were released again under pressure from the deputy director of Bau locality, the HUDO statement reads.<sup>414</sup>

#### **5.1.5.1. Demonstrators, protestors and persons speaking out**

This section only addresses the situation for demonstrators in the Two Areas in the reporting period of 1 May 2019 - 16 December 2020. It therefore doesn't include information on the nationwide protests, the security forces response thereof which led to the fall of Omar al-Bashir. For information on this and the subsequent violent repression of protesters in Khartoum in July 2019 by the transitional military council in summer 2019, see:

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<sup>411</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in South Kordufan and Blue Nile States of Sudan January-December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 2.1.6 *The arrest of SRCS workers* p. 10

<sup>412</sup> HUDO Centre, [Two Activists Attacked By Armed People In Kadogli, Sudan](#), 17 January 2021

<sup>413</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan army officers harass activists in Blue Nile state](#), 25 November 2020

<sup>414</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan army officers harass activists in Blue Nile state](#), 25 November 2020

- Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 26 July 2019
- Human Rights Watch, [“They Were Shouting ‘Kill Them’” Sudan’s Violent Crackdown on Protesters in Khartoum](#), 17 November 2019
- Amnesty International, [“They descended on us like rain”: Justice for victims of protest crackdown in Sudan](#), 10 March 2020

### South Kordofan

In early May 2019 Radio Dabanga noted that “Military Intelligence (MI) agents in Delling in South Kordofan arrested about 15 people and took them to the military garrison”.<sup>415</sup> The same source further noted that:

Activists told Radio Dabanga from Delling that yesterday a group of youths carried out a protest in the centre and raised banners calling for freedom and change.

The supporters of the Declaration of Freedom and Change forces pointed out that an MI force in three vehicles confronted the demonstrators with excessive violence using batons and kicking with military boots before taking them to the military garrison, then the force returned to the gathering place and arrested three of the leaders, “among them Mohamed Mekki Torshein”, took them to the military garrison where the total number of detainees reached about 15 people.<sup>416</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported that in October 2019 “A force of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) attacked people living near gold mines in Talodi locality in South Kordofan”.<sup>417</sup> The same source further described that:

Environmental protection activist Khalid Mohamed told Radio Dabanga from El Tagola that members of the RSF government militia arrived in 27 vehicles from the South Kordofan capital of Kadugli yesterday, and attacked the residents living near the El Tagola and El Laffa mines.

“They frightened them by shooting in the air and beat them with whips,” he said. “They detained six men, Salah El Riyal, Ibrahim El Sheikh, Somi Ahmed, Humeidan Omdala and two others, and took them to the RSF offices in El Tagola. [...]”

South Kordofan Governor Maj Gen Rashad Abdelhameed ordered the closure of all mining plants in the state on September 11, in reaction to pressure from environmental health activists and protesting residents worried about the hazards of the highly toxic mercury and cyanide used to extract gold from ore. The mining companies however refused to implement the governor’s order. Concerned residents of Talodi and Kalogi continued to protest.

On Thursday last week, angry protestors stormed four gold mining plants in the area and torched offices and vehicles of the companies operating them. The director of the Information Department of the Sovereign Council commented on Friday that “armed sabotage groups” attacked mining companies and an RSF base near Talodi. [...]

The Communist Party of Sudan (CPOS) expressed its solidarity with the residents of Talodi locality in a statement on Monday. The party’s Political Bureau offered its “full support for the continuation of the peaceful sit-ins and protest marches until the departure of the disastrous mining companies that use toxic substances harmful to the environment in the area and the rest of Sudan”.

Furthermore, the “criminals who opened fire on peaceful protesters” must be held accountable.<sup>418</sup>

Following up on the incident the same source noted that “a joint committee of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and anti-gold mining committees in Talodi locality in South Kordofan managed to release 14 people detained by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) government militia on Tuesday in the El Tagola

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<sup>415</sup> Radio Dabanga, [15 arrests at South Kordofan protest](#), 2 May 2019

<sup>416</sup> Radio Dabanga, [15 arrests at South Kordofan protest](#), 2 May 2019

<sup>417</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan paramilitaries attack, detain public after anti-mining protests](#), 8 October 2019

<sup>418</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan paramilitaries attack, detain public after anti-mining protests](#), 8 October 2019

mine. The RSF reportedly placed the, detainees in a closed container as a makeshift detention centre where they stole their belongings and the property of others”.<sup>419</sup> Furthermore:

Dr Bushra Gamar, director of the Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO), said in an interview with Radio Dabanga that the joint committee was formed after the people living near gold mines in El Leri, Kalogi, and Talodi resorted to the army for protection and protested in front of the garrison in Talodi.

He said that SAF officers apologised to the people for what happened to them and promised them to return their stolen property, including four motorcycles and cash. He said, four of the women were severely beaten and were robbed of their property. [...]

The director of HUDO strongly denied reports of some protestors carrying weapons.

He said, “The beneficiary group of these factories is trying to find justification for the excessive use of force against peaceful protestors”. He pointed out that the RSF militiamen, after they fled from angry protestors on Monday, abandoned their weapons. “The people in turn handed them over to the Military Intelligence unit in the area, which indicates conclusively the lie of these reports.”

Gamar explained that three wounded were taken to hospitals in Khartoum. One man had his leg amputated [...].<sup>420</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2019:

Rapid Support Force (RSF) in Altugula gold mine market of Talodi arrested and tortured Mr. Hussein Nourelgaleil before he managed to flee. Thereafter they fired gun shots which threatened the civilians and caused many to flee the market.

Mr. Hussein Nouelgaleil (31 years) who is known by the nickname ‘ of Oulo is a civil servant, together with other two members of Talodi Youth Association for Development (TYAD) Mohammed Yagoub and Elsaid Mohammed GadKareem, formally/officially visited Altugula gold mine. RSF soldiers arrested them as they were discussing with the community leaders around the gold mine. RSF physically assaulted Mr. Hussein brutally but he managed to flee from them and entered the nearby Military Intelligence (MI) office. The MI soldiers protected him and later sent him to Talodi hospital where he had been admitted due to the assault wounds caused by RSF.<sup>421</sup>

Enrico Ille, a researcher with the LOST Research Network was cited as stating in a December 2019 email to the Belgium *Centre de documentation et de recherche* with regards to protests in the Two Areas:

Another kind of violence stems from the former government's brutal response to anti-mining protests in several parts of South Kordofan, especially Kalogi, Talodi and Kadugli, where protestors against cyanide pollution have been attacked, arrested, tortured. While this has been less the case after the ouster of the Bashir regime, the local military intelligence and RSF forces have responded violently to protests as recent as October. In general, the same violent response to the revolution starting in December 2018 has been experienced in South Kordofan and Blue Nile as well.

Less is known about Blue Nile, which is rarely in the news, whether on the governmental side or SPLA-N areas. But from research conducted by colleagues recently in Blue Nile's gold mining areas, we can say that the populations of both sides have been suffering for years from forced relocation, robbery and exploitation around gold mines for years. Nothing indicates that this has improved, as military personnel of both organizations are directly involved in mining; in SPLA-N areas, there seems to be a system of levies. There are no specific incidents to be reported here but a general atmosphere of fear.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Radio Dabanga, [14 people detained in container in South Kordofan freed by joint force](#), 9 October 2019

<sup>420</sup> Radio Dabanga, [14 people detained in container in South Kordofan freed by joint force](#), 9 October 2019

<sup>421</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.4.3 Assault and intimidation of civilians by RSF in Talodi, p. 29/30

<sup>422</sup> Belgian CEDOCA, [COI Focus, Soedan, Veiligheidssituatie in de Two Areas](#), 20 February 2020, 2.3. De huidige toestand van het conflict, p. 17

The HUDO Centre noted that “On 5th January 2020, there was a peaceful demonstration in Kadugli calling for the dismissal of some high ranking officials from the public service for hindering reforms because they were members of the former regime party (NCP). The demonstration was dispersed by police using tear gas and four (4) youth were arrested by the MI. They were detained at a police cell and released the next day (6th January 2020) without any charges”.<sup>423</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported on the 7 January 2020 that “People in Kadugli carried out two vigils against the South Kordofan authorities on Sunday, in protest against the detention of resistance committee members. They were released on bail later that day. The vigils lasted for several hours without any interference from the authorities, one of the protestors told Radio Dabanga. [...] The members of the resistance committees from the various districts of Kadugli were detained because they accused the acting military governor, Gen Rashad Abdelhameed, of refusing to implement the law and dismantle the former regime. They have been charged with provoking riots and public nuisance”.<sup>424</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 “more than two thousand people were displaced from their homes in Kadugli and settled in school premises”, which came as a “result of deployment and shootings by RSF soldiers in response to the demonstration/ protest by residents. The residents demonstrated because of the frequent murder incidents that had taken place in recent months targeting farmers while they are at their farms”.<sup>425</sup>

The HUDO Centre noted that “On 23rd September 2020, SAF in Abu-Jibaiha of Nuba Mountains arrested thirty one (31) people from a public demonstration and released them later due to public pressure”.<sup>426</sup> The same source further noted that:

On 23rd September 2020, residents of Abu-Jibaiha launched a public demonstration in support of the peace framework agreement signed in Addis Ababa by Sudan prime minister/ Abdalla Hamdok and Sudan People Liberation Army – North (SPLA-N) chairperson/ Abduelaziz Elhelu. The Sudan Armed Force soldiers came on nine (9) vehicles and obstructed the demonstration march and randomly arrested thirty one (31) people and took them to Abu-Jibaiha military base. The gathering of demonstrators followed them up to the gate of the military base and demanded for the release of the arrested people. After waiting for six hours, the detained people were released.<sup>427</sup>

In a September 2020 report, Sudanese Women Rights Action noted that “Since July this year at least 30 women were injured or killed during protests and other incidents of violence around Sudan, all of them in the conflict areas of Darfur and Nuba Mountains”.<sup>428</sup> The same source further described that:

The Sudanese army intelligence officers and police arrested 31 people from a public event on September 23rd in Abujbeih city of Southern Kordofan state, among the detainees 5 women peace activists. The public event which was organized to address the process in the state of south Kordofan was attacked by the military intelligence officers who deemed the gathering illegal without permission

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<sup>423</sup> HUDO Centre, [The Human Rights Situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January-June 2020](#), 27 July 2020, para 2.1.1 Arresting of youth from a Public demonstration in Kadugli p. 10

<sup>424</sup> Radio Dabanga, [South Kordofan protestors released on bail](#), 7 January 2020

<sup>425</sup> HUDO Centre, [Further wave of displacement within Kadugli, Sudan](#), 25 July 2020

<sup>426</sup> HUDO Centre, [Peaceful Demonstrators arrested and discharged by SAF in Abu-Jibaiha, Sudan](#), 27 September 2020

<sup>427</sup> HUDO Centre, [Peaceful Demonstrators arrested and discharged by SAF in Abu-Jibaiha, Sudan](#), 27 September 2020

<sup>428</sup> Sudanese Women Rights Action, [Sudan Women Freedom of Expression & Assembly Threatened by Military and Militias](#), 28 September 2020

from the army base leader of the city. The attacking force injured some of the participants and arrested over 30 of them among them and took to the army base.<sup>429</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that “On 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020, twelve (12) civilians including an underage were arrested by SAF and RSF soldiers in Al-Abbasiya of Nuba Mountains. They were arrested for participating in a public address gathering at Gambaraya village talking about peace process. They were intimidated before being released on 5th Dec 2020”.<sup>430</sup> The same source further noted that:

On 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020, Peace Activist Group (PAG) organized a public address in Gambaraya village where they were talking about peace process. Suddenly, a group of armed soldiers some dressed in Sudan armed force (SAF) uniform and others in Rapid Support Force (RSF) uniform raided the gathering. The soldiers came on eleven vehicles mounted with machine guns, they shot bullets in the air, arrested twelve people including an underage and took them to Al-Abbasiya military base where they had been confined for two days. During detention, they were intimidated and verbally insulted by calling them “NYAKAT” (it is a local word used by those in authority against Nuba people referring to them as rebels). They were also interrogated on accusations of being affiliated to SPLM-N. They were released on 5th Dec 2020 after being threatened and warned not to organize or participate in such gatherings anymore. Otherwise, they will be arrested and tortured.<sup>431</sup>

### Blue Nile

In June 2019 Radio Dabanga reported that “in conjunction with the violent dispersal of the sit-in in front of the General Command in Khartoum, paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) government militia simultaneously broke-up sit-ins in front of the army units in Ed Damazin, capital of Blue Nile state, En Nahud in West Kordofan, and Atbara in River Nile state”. It further noted with regards to the incident in Blue Nile that:

Abdelaziz Soreiba, leading member of the Alliance of Freedom and Change (AFC) in Blue Nile state, told Radio Dabanga from Ed Damazin that the RSF stormed the sit-in on Monday morning, seized and burned all the tents of the sit-in amid reports of arrests among the protestors.<sup>432</sup>

A further article from the same source described that “Dr Shiraz Ahmed of the leadership of the Sudanese Professional Association in Ed Damazin told Radio Dabanga that RSF are deployed in markets and main roads to hospitals. She pointed out that the residents were beaten and harassed by RSF militiamen in the roads and markets, causing great panic among them”.<sup>433</sup>

Enrico Ille, a researcher with the LOST Research Network was cited as stating in a December 2019 email to the Belgium *Centre de documentation et de recherche* with regards to protests in the Two Areas:

In general, the same violent response to the revolution starting in December 2018 has been experienced in South Kordofan and Blue Nile as well.

Less is known about Blue Nile, which is rarely in the news, whether on the governmental side or SPLM-N areas. But from research conducted by colleagues recently in Blue Nile's gold mining areas, we can say that the populations of both sides have been suffering for years from forced relocation, robbery and exploitation around gold mines for years. Nothing indicates that this has improved, as military

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<sup>429</sup> Sudanese Women Rights Action, [Sudan Women Freedom of Expression & Assembly Threatened by Military and Militias](#), 28 September 2020

<sup>430</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Civilians detained for two days by SAF in Al-Abbasiya, Sudan](#), 9 December 2020

<sup>431</sup> HUDO Centre, [Press Statement, Civilians detained for two days by SAF in Al-Abbasiya, Sudan](#), 9 December 2020

<sup>432</sup> Radio Dabanga, [RSF disperse three more sit-ins in Sudan states](#), 4 June 2019

<sup>433</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Arrests in Sudan states, roads opened by force](#), 6 June 2019

personnel of both organizations are directly involved in mining; in SPLA-N areas, there seems to be a system of levies. There are no specific incidents to be reported here but a general atmosphere of fear.<sup>434</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported that in February 2020, “the authorities arrested three residents who protested against the decision by Blue Nile state to establish a Sudanese army base in El Mazmoum in the capital of Sennar”.<sup>435</sup>

In August 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “Military Intelligence officers held seven students affiliated with the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North El Hilu faction in Blue Nile state”.<sup>436</sup> The same source further detailed:

The Blue Nile students were detained when they were addressing the public at the market of East Guneis in Roseires locality. They used loudspeakers to defend the position of the rebel faction under the leadership of Abdelaziz El Hilu (SPLM-N El Hilu) at the peace negotiations, currently held in the South Sudanese capital Juba.

Military Intelligence officers who were riding in a Land Cruiser without number plates, took El Tom Abeini, Ahmed Abujumeila, Noureldin Abdallah, Ali Babiker, Khattab Farajallah, Abuzar Saadallah, and Abdelshafi to an unknown destination.

The detention of the students at the market was documented on video and published on social media. According to a statement issued by SPLM-N El Hilu yesterday evening eight of its student members were held in East Guneis.<sup>437</sup>

Radio Dabanga further reported in August 2020 that “Thousands took to the streets in El Gezira and River Nile states in the Marches of Millions under the slogan ‘Settling the Accounts’ called for by the Resistance Committees in the country. They demand the return of the principles of the revolution”.<sup>438</sup>

In January 2021 Radio Dabanga reported that “In Ed Damazin, the capital of Blue Nile state, the student demonstrations against a 250 per cent increase in bread prices continued for the third day in a row since Monday. The protesters were joined by students from El Roseires, which prompted the authorities to close schools indefinitely. Speaking to Radio Dabanga, Abdelaziz Souriba pointed to the continuation of violence from the security services against the demonstrators and explained that the decision to indefinitely close schools was taken by the state authorities. Security forces confronted the demonstrators with violence, using rubber bullets and tear gas, a protestor told Radio Dabanga”.<sup>439</sup>

## 5.2. Freedom of religion

This section should be read in conjunction with [5.1.3. Individuals \(perceived to be\) associated with or supportive of the SPLM/A-N](#) and [5.1.3.6. Christians](#).

The 2019 U.S. Department of State *Report on International Religious Freedom* explained that the constitutional declaration “includes several provisions protecting the right to freedom of religious belief and worship ‘in accordance with the requirements of the law and public order’. It makes no reference to sharia as a source of law, as was the case under the former 2005 constitution. [...] In

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<sup>434</sup> Belgian CEDOCA, [COI Focus, Soedan, Veiligheidssituatie in de Two Areas](#), 20 February 2020, 2.3. *De huidige toestand van het conflict*, p. 17

<sup>435</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Three held at Blue Nile protest](#), 23 February 2020

<sup>436</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Protestors detained in Sudan](#), 26 August 2020

<sup>437</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Protestors detained in Sudan](#), 26 August 2020

<sup>438</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan Marches of the Millions extend to El Gezira, Blue Nile](#), 18 August 2020

<sup>439</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Student protests against increased bread prices in Sudan enter third day](#), 21 January 2021



September newly-appointed Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said his administration would address “religious discrimination,” and the minister of religion invited Jews and Christians who had left the country to return”.<sup>440</sup>

According to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s 2019 annual report:

There were positive developments with regard to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in Sudan, with a UK co-hosted event in Khartoum leading to the lifting of restrictions on the opening hours of Christian schools in January. Later in the year, the new Sudanese Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdok, issued a decree allowing employees of public institutions to leave work on Sundays to attend church, and declaring Christmas Day a national holiday for the first time in a decade. However, there were still causes for concern, with legislative hurdles for the operation of non-Muslim religious buildings, which resulted in the prosecution of members of minority groups, including of 8 church leaders who faced charges of trespass during 2019. At the end of the year, the UK was concerned by reports that 3 churches in Blue Nile State had been burned down. Through project work, the UK worked to strengthen the effectiveness of the National Assembly in developing policies that better serve minority religious groups, and to ensure that Sudanese policies and legislation regarding FoRB are brought in line with international standards.<sup>441</sup>

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in its annual report covering events in 2019 that “Religious freedom conditions in Sudan improved significantly in 2019, although serious challenges remain”.<sup>442</sup> The same source further noted:

[...] Within the first several months of assuming power in August, the transitional government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, made concrete moves to improve religious freedom. It informally allowed the Muslim-minority Republican Party to operate openly for the first time, and extended improved representation to what it deems “traditional” Christian communities, including the appointment of a Coptic Christian woman as a member of the Sovereign Council. Most notably, the government announced in December the repeal of a public order law that the former regime had used to enforce—often violently—its Islamist vision of severe constraints on Sudanese society, with the harshest restrictions directed toward women and other vulnerable segments of the population.

Transitional government officials also launched an ambitious program of outreach to domestic and international stakeholders to seek support for reforms. Senior officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments and the Ministry of Education, among others, visited some of Sudan’s long-marginalized peripheral areas. A high-ranking delegation visited Washington, DC, in December 2019; in the group’s meeting with USCIRF, Prime Minister Hamdok expressed his government’s commitment to implementing substantive improvements to religious freedom, including repealing the notorious blasphemy and apostasy laws—articles 125 and 126 of the Penal Code, respectively—in the near future. Later that month, the transitional government announced the designation of December 25 as a national holiday in celebration of Christmas, out of respect for the country’s sizeable Christian community. In February 2020, shortly after the reporting period, USCIRF visited Sudan to assess religious freedom conditions—meeting with Prime Minister Hamdok, other senior officials, and representatives of religious communities and civil society. Based on this visit, USCIRF determined that the transitional government has ended the former regime’s most egregious forms of religious repression and reaffirmed its commitment to substantive change. [...]

In August, civilian and military leaders signed the Draft Constitutional Charter for a 39-month transitional period, including the formation of a Sovereign Council and Council of Ministers to oversee the process in lieu of elected leadership or an independent legislative branch. The new charter prioritizes transitional justice and legal reforms, and it protects freedom of religion or belief while notably excluding reference to Islam as the primary source of law, signaling a fundamental—if still

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<sup>440</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Report on International Religious Freedom: Sudan](#), 10 June 2020

<sup>441</sup> UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Human Rights and Democracy: the 2019 Foreign and Commonwealth Office report](#), 16 July 2020

<sup>442</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [2020 Annual Report: USCIRF – Recommended for Special Watch List: Sudan](#), April 2020



ongoing—shift in the relationship between religion and state. However, it continued to reference Shari’a enforcement, and the Transitional Military Council said in May before its agreement to share power in a transitional government that it still planned to rely on Islamic law to inform legislation—suggesting that this entrenched Islamic framework is likely to still influence Sudanese governance in the short to medium term.<sup>443</sup>

Reporting on the human rights situation in the Sudan between 3 June and 8 September 2020 a UN report noted that “In upholding its commitment to improving the justice system and reforming national laws in compliance with international standards, the Joint Council – the current transitional legislative body in the Sudan – in July adopted several amendments to the penal code of 1991. The adoption constituted significant progress towards achieving the goals of the transition until a new penal code could be adopted as indicated in the Constitutional Declaration. The latest amendments improved the legal protection for the most vulnerable categories of people, including [...] combating discrimination and promoting respect for the freedom of religion and belief by decriminalising apostasy”.<sup>444</sup>

However, World Watch Monitor noted in December 2020 that “a group of 29 Sudanese NGOs says that its transitional government’s amendments to many of its laws do not go far enough”.<sup>445</sup> Furthermore “One example is that an amendment now allows non-Muslims to buy, sell and drink alcohol. But enforcement on the grounds of ‘religion’ may, the group says, ‘pave the way for a new wave of racism and discrimination between citizens’”.<sup>446</sup>

Moreover, Christian Solidarity Worldwide noted in July 2020 that “Sudan’s Criminal Code contains several other provisions which limit personal freedoms and criminalise blasphemy. There was no indication that these provisions had been amended”.<sup>447</sup>

In 2020, Sudan was moved to the US Department of State’s *Special Watch List*, up from the *Country of Particular Concern* which it had been since 1999 given “significant steps taken by the civilian-led transitional government to address the previous regime’s “systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom”.<sup>448</sup> In December 2019 Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok met with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the first visit by a Sudanese head of state in three decades.<sup>449</sup> Reportedly assurances were made that Sudan “is working to improve liberty and human rights” and that “the government plans to publish new laws and procedures for houses of worship”.<sup>450</sup> Furthermore “Additionally, a ministry office for church affairs has been established to ensure churches are self-administered without government interference, commissioners were told”.<sup>451</sup> Christian Post explained that “Before the transition of power, Open Doors USA ranked Sudan

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<sup>443</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [2020 Annual Report: USCIRF – Recommended for Special Watch List: Sudan](#), April 2020

<sup>444</sup> UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan](#), 17 September 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 18

<sup>445</sup> World Watch Monitor, [NGOs say changes to Sudan’s Islamic laws don’t go far enough](#), 18 December 2020

<sup>446</sup> World Watch Monitor, [NGOs say changes to Sudan’s Islamic laws don’t go far enough](#), 18 December 2020

<sup>447</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, [Death penalty for apostasy abolished](#), 15 July 2020

<sup>448</sup> World Watch Monitor, [NGOs say changes to Sudan’s Islamic laws don’t go far enough](#), 18 August 2020

<sup>449</sup> Christian Post, [Sudan prime minister meets with USCIRF, shares plans to improve religious freedom](#), 9 December 2019

<sup>450</sup> World Watch Monitor, [NGOs say changes to Sudan’s Islamic laws don’t go far enough](#), 18 August 2020

<sup>451</sup> World Watch Monitor, [NGOs say changes to Sudan’s Islamic laws don’t go far enough](#), 18 August 2020

as the sixth-worst country in the world for Christian persecution for its annual World Watch List”.<sup>452</sup> As of Open Door’s 2021 World Watch List, Sudan had been moved down to 13<sup>th</sup> place.<sup>453</sup>

In May 2020 Christian Solidarity Worldwide reported that “Sudan’s transitional government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (Agar) have jointly agreed to the creation of an independent national commission for religious freedom and a Ministry for Peace and Human Rights”.<sup>454</sup> It cited SPLM-N (Agar) Deputy Leader and chief negotiator, Yasir Arman, as stating “Today we have agreed to establish the religious freedom commission because the Two Areas have a considerable number of Sudanese Christians, so this is an important issue that has been resolved”.<sup>455</sup>

In September 2020 the Christian Post reported that “The top official of Sudan’s education regulatory body claims he erroneously omitted Christian education on a list he sent to all public schools in August directing them to teach only the subjects on the list. Christian leaders have raised concerns that Christianity won’t be taught in schools, despite the admission, because educators qualified to teach the subject haven’t been hired. In Sudanese schools, Christian students are required to study Islam and some educators have forced students to convert”.<sup>456</sup>

### 5.2.1. Christians

This section should be read in conjunction with [5.1.3. Individuals \(perceived to be\) associated with or supportive of the SPLM/A-N.](#)

Freedom House noted with regards to the situation in 2019 in general in Sudan:

Sudan is 97 percent Muslim, with a small Christian minority. Under al-Bashir, Christians were persecuted and churches were shuttered, often under the pretext that they lacked appropriate permits. Sudanese repression of Christian groups accelerated after the conflict in Darfur escalated, and NGOs that supported this minority were forced out of the country.

The TSC’s [Transitional Sovereign Council] interim constitution, by contrast, has enshrined freedom of worship, and notably did not identify Islam as the country’s preferred religion. The TSC also agreed to issue clear guidelines for those seeking planning permission for new churches, and overruled a Khartoum State regulation forcing Christian schools to hold classes on Sundays. Christians also welcomed the appointment of a Coptic Christian judge to one of the TSC’s civilian seats.<sup>457</sup>

The 2019 U.S. Department of State *Report on International Religious Freedom* noted that “The government reports the presence of 36 Christian denominations in the country. Christians reside throughout the country, primarily in major cities, such as Khartoum, Port Sudan, Kassala, Gedaref, El Obeid, and El Fasher. Christians also are concentrated in some parts of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State”.<sup>458</sup> The report further noted that:

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<sup>452</sup> Christian Post, [Sudan removed from State Dept. list of worst religious freedom violators after dictator ousted](#), 23 December 2019

<sup>453</sup> Open Doors, [Sudan](#), undated (accessed 21 January 2021)

<sup>454</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, [Government agrees to create a national commission for religious freedom](#), 22 May 2020

<sup>455</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, [Government agrees to create a national commission for religious freedom](#), 22 May 2020

<sup>456</sup> Christian Post, [Sudanese official says dropping Christian education was ‘error,’ but church leaders don’t believe it](#), 12 September 2020

<sup>457</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2020](#), 4 March 2020

<sup>458</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Report on International Religious Freedom: Sudan](#), 10 June 2020

Local parishioners reported that compared to Islamic institutions, Christian places of worship continued to be disproportionately affected by zoning changes, closures, and demolitions. The government said places of worship that were demolished or closed lacked proper land permits or institutional registration and that mosques, churches, schools, hospitals, and residences were all affected equally by the urban planning projects. Observers estimated that the government “systematically closed,” demolished, or confiscated at least 24 churches, Christian schools, libraries, and culture centers between 2011 and 2017. In 2018 observers reported one church demolition.

In April the government issued a decree allowing Christian schools to close on Sundays. Since 2017 all schools except Coptic Christian schools were required to operate from Sunday to Thursday. [...]

In September, shortly after taking office, Minister of Religious Affairs Nasreddine Mufreh in a press interview appealed to Jews and Christians who had left the country to return. The minister said the country was “pluralistic in thought, culture, ideology, and religion.” He also stated the government would return confiscated properties to Christian churches and said Christians experienced “persecution” and “very bad practices” during the previous administration. The minister told international press he would fight terrorism, extremism and “takfiri” ideology that calls for those who leave Islam to be punished. [...]

During the civil unrest leading to the ouster of the president and the subsequent three months of military rule, observers said demonstrators displayed mutual respect for each other’s religions and rites. Media reported Muslims joined in singing Christian hymns during Christian services organized by protestors while Christians held protective tarps over Muslims as they prayed during the day.<sup>459</sup>

In an October 2019 report, Maddy Crowther, Co-Executive Director of Waging Peace stated that:

In a clear example of the unchanged nature of the judicial system and its animus against Nuba Christians, criminal charges against eight leaders of the Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC), which is a primarily Nuban denomination, were confirmed on 7 October 2019, after the case against them was re-opened in July 2019. They stand accused of failing to hand over administrative control to a Bashir era unelected church committee. In a statement, Christian Solidarity Worldwide’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “The renewal of this case is emblematic of the judicial harassment of ethnic and religious minorities in Sudan.” It shows that the simple appointment of a fresh Minister with responsibility for guidance and religious endowments is not enough to change an administrative apparatus [...].<sup>460</sup>

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in its annual report covering events in 2019 that “Pew Research estimates that 90.7 percent of the population is Muslim; 5.4 percent is Christian; and the remaining groups include Buddhists, Hindus, Baha’is, followers of indigenous religions, and others”.<sup>461</sup> The same source further described that “the former regime consistently and egregiously violated religious freedom. It systematically oppressed religious minorities, including some Christian groups whose churches, businesses, and other properties it targeted for confiscation and demolition, and whose leadership it systematically harassed and arrested”.<sup>462</sup> Moreover:

Protestant Christian groups who bore the brunt of the former regime’s persecution of Christians—including oppressive surveillance, property confiscations, church destructions, and the creation of shadow church councils to obfuscate its actions—continued to have concerns, despite some improvements. They have acknowledged that the transitional government decisively ended the most egregious forms of persecution, but they insisted that it has not yet dismantled the convoluted system of zoning restrictions, bureaucratic impasses, and other obstacles that prevent them from reclaiming

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<sup>459</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Report on International Religious Freedom: Sudan](#), 10 June 2020

<sup>460</sup> Maddy Crowther (Waging Peace), [Addendum report – risk to Nuba individuals in Sudan](#), 17 October 2019, para 7

<sup>461</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [2020 Annual Report: USCIRF – Recommended for Special Watch List: Sudan](#), April 2020

<sup>462</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [2020 Annual Report: USCIRF – Recommended for Special Watch List: Sudan](#), April 2020

property, receiving formal recognition, and otherwise trusting that their situation has irrevocably changed.<sup>463</sup>

Furthermore, “the transitional government announced the designation of December 25 as a national holiday in celebration of Christmas, out of respect for the country’s sizeable Christian community”.<sup>464</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported that in December 2019 “In a speech to mark Christmas, Sudan’s Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments has expressed his apology to Christians for ‘the unjust and clumsy policies’ that their families and their religion were subjected to during the deposed Al Bashir regime’. Minister Nasredin Mofreh also apologised to Sudanese Christians ‘for the oppression and harm inflicted on your bodies, the destruction of your temples, the theft of your property, and the unjust arrest and prosecution of your servants and confiscation of church buildings’”.<sup>465</sup>

Christian Solidarity Worldwide reported that in January 2020 Sudanese Christian businessman Ashraf Samir Mousad Obid was detained on return to Khartoum Airport under the orders of the General Intelligence Service (GIS).<sup>466</sup> The same source further noted that:

Mr Obid left Sudan in 2015 after NISS forced him to sign a letter handing over 2000 hectares of land to the agency. The land is located in Burti, close to Soba Aradi district. Mr Obid, who had a business in commercial farming, had sold the land to a Baptist Church in 2014. The church used the land for social projects, including feeding and providing care for homeless children. However, NISS banned the church from using the land, believing that their social programs were designed for evangelism. The Baptist Church sold the land back to Mr Obid as it was not able to use it, which was when NISS began its campaign of harassment against the businessman.

While in NISS detention in 2015, Mr Obid was forced to draft and sign a letter handing over ownership of the land to NISS. Afterwards, he was released and instructed to obtain ownership documents from the Land Authority and submit them to the Administrative Court to formally complete the sale. However, Mr Obid fled Sudan before completing the sale. In 2017 his lawyers submitted a case against NISS to formally return the land. In October 2019 the Administrative court dismissed the case, but lawyers representing Mr Obid appealed the decision and are awaiting a response from the Supreme Court.<sup>467</sup>

According to Open Doors reporting on the general situation of Christians in Sudan its 2021 *World Watch List*:

Though Sudan has taken significant steps towards religious freedom in the past year, including a commitment to end 30 years of Islamic law, Christians from a Muslim background still face extreme persecution from their families and communities. These believers no longer face the death penalty for leaving Islam, but may be attacked, ostracised or otherwise discriminated against if their faith is discovered. Church buildings are often attacked or even demolished.

Many still keep their faith secret, for the safety of them and their family. This includes Christian women and girls being forced to dress like Muslims, to avoid being harassed for ‘indecent dressing’. Some converts even choose not to raise their children as Christians, wary of retribution from community

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<sup>463</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [2020 Annual Report: USCIRF – Recommended for Special Watch List: Sudan](#), April 2020

<sup>464</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [2020 Annual Report: USCIRF – Recommended for Special Watch List: Sudan](#), April 2020

<sup>465</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Christmas message: Minister apologises to Sudan’s Christians for their suffering](#), 26 December 2019

<sup>466</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, [Christian businessman detained at airport upon return from exile](#), 28 January 2020

<sup>467</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, [Christian businessman detained at airport upon return from exile](#), 28 January 2020

leaders. This fear of exposure even means some Christians from a Muslim background have Islamic funerals in Muslim cemeteries.<sup>468</sup>

Christian Solidarity Worldwide noted that on 10 July 2020 the Sovereignty Council of Sudan officially abolished the death penalty for apostasy with the Chairman of the Council, Lt Gen Abdelfattah El Burhan, signing several new laws and amendments.<sup>469</sup>

The Christian Post reported that the amendments give “Christians hope for the future following the toppling of the Islamist regime of President Omar al-Bashir”.<sup>470</sup> In response Faith McDonnell, the director of religious liberty programs and the Church Alliance for a New Sudan at the Washington, D.C.-based Institute on Religion & Democracy, told The Christian Post that “it appears Sudan’s new transitional government is working to change things”.<sup>471</sup> The same source cited her as stating “For Sudan to make real strides for freedom and improvement of human rights it needs to establish rule of law based in international norms of religious freedom and democracy — not Sharia — and to give equal status and rights to the marginalized people groups, [such as] the black African Sudanese, who comprise the majority of the country.”<sup>472</sup> McDonnell explained that indigenous people groups such as the Nuba, the Darfuri, the Beja and the Nubians “still face discrimination and persecution”.<sup>473</sup>

#### South Kordofan

No information specific to the treatment of Christians in South Kordofan was located amongst the sources consulted.

#### Blue Nile

The 2019 U.S. Department of State *Report on International Religious Freedom* noted that “On December 28, unknown assailants burned a Sudan Interior church, Catholic church, and Orthodox church in Blue Nile State, according to international media. The government said a suspect was arrested and released due to lack of evidence”.<sup>474</sup>

In January 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “Three churches in Bout, Blue Nile state, were set on fire twice in the past four weeks, the Kampala-based Sudanese Human Rights and Democracy Organisation (HUDO) reported”.<sup>475</sup> The same source further noted that:

On the evening of December 28 last year, unknown persons simultaneously torched church buildings belonging to "the Sudan Internal Church, the Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Church" in the town. The incidents were reported to the police in Bout, who did not move to investigate the case or put preventive measures, HUDO says.

Church members managed to rebuild the three churches with local materials. Yet, in the evening of January 16, the churches were torched again.

Again, the case was reported to the police, and again, no further steps were taken.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Open Doors, [Sudan](#), undated (accessed 21 January 2021)

<sup>469</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, [Death penalty for apostasy abolished](#), 15 July 2020

<sup>470</sup> Christian Post, [Sudan abolishes death penalty for apostasy, reforms Islamist laws after 3 decades](#), 14 July 2020

<sup>471</sup> Christian Post, [Sudan abolishes death penalty for apostasy, reforms Islamist laws after 3 decades](#), 14 July 2020

<sup>472</sup> Christian Post, [Sudan abolishes death penalty for apostasy, reforms Islamist laws after 3 decades](#), 14 July 2020

<sup>473</sup> Christian Post, [Sudan abolishes death penalty for apostasy, reforms Islamist laws after 3 decades](#), 14 July 2020

<sup>474</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Report on International Religious Freedom: Sudan](#), 10 June 2020

<sup>475</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Three churches torched twice in Sudan’s Blue Nile state](#), 20 January 2020

<sup>476</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Three churches torched twice in Sudan’s Blue Nile state](#), 20 January 2020

According to a Morning Star News article “Islamists in Bout, Tadamon District were suspected of burning down the structures”. The article cited a pastor in Maban, as stating that “Some Bout area Muslims were upset about the presence of the churches there, and they are suspected in the fires”.<sup>477</sup> Reporting on the same incident World Watch Monitor noted that they had been rebuilt after arson attacks in December.<sup>478</sup> Furthermore, “Minister of Religious Affairs Nasr al-Din Mufreh said that, contrary to HUDO’s report, the police are investigating. ‘If it is proven that it occurred as a result of a criminal offence, the perpetrators will be identified, pursued and brought to justice,’ he said in a statement, reaffirming Sudan’s full commitment to protecting religious freedoms and “houses of worship from any threats””.<sup>479</sup>

In February 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “Lawyer Demas Marjan has accused the Sudanese government authorities of practicing a media blackout on the burning of three churches in Blue Nile state, allegedly by an extremist group two months ago”.<sup>480</sup> The source further noted that “In an interview with Radio Dabanga, Marjan described the government silence on the burned church buildings as “not in line with the glorious aims of the December revolution” and explained that the intention of the government’s obscurity is to keep the matter secret so that it does not affect the issue of religious freedoms in Sudan”.<sup>481</sup>

Radio Dabanga reported that on 9 March 2020 “militants set fire to the Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Bout, El Tadamon local in Blue Nile state. The church was destroyed completely, including the furniture and books within it”.<sup>482</sup>

### 5.3. Discrimination against ethnic minorities

This section should be read in conjunction with [5.1.3. Individuals \(perceived to be\) associated with or supportive of the SPLM/A-N](#), and particularly [5.1.3.4. Nuba \(South Kordofan\)](#).

Providing context on the situation of ethnic minorities in Sudan, the Bertelsmann Stiftung Country report on Sudan covering the period February 1, 2017 to January 31, 2019 explained that:

Since the country won independence, marginalized groups in Sudan have fought for equality of opportunity and an equal distribution of wealth and power. However, the Islamist regime that came to power in 1989 adopted an Islamic and Arabic identity in a multiethnic, multi-religious society. This has systematically discriminated against individuals and groups who, despite being citizens of Sudan, do not share the ethnic and religious identity of the state. Instead of citizenship, a combination of ethnic, religious and political affiliation became a determinant for access to employment, education, health care and public office in Sudan.<sup>483</sup>

The U.S. Department of State report for 2020 on human rights practices noted that “The population includes more than 500 ethnic groups speaking numerous languages and dialects. Some of these ethnic groups self-identify as Arab, referring to their language and other cultural attributes. Northern Muslims traditionally dominated the government. [...] Discrimination occurred in employment and occupation based on gender, religion, and ethnic, tribal, or party affiliation. Ethnic minorities reported that government hiring practices discriminated against them in favor of “riverine” Arabs from

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<sup>477</sup> Morning Star News, [Church Buildings Burned Down in Southeastern Sudan](#), 23 January 2020

<sup>478</sup> World Watch Monitor, [Sudan: Three churches burned down twice within one month](#), 3 February 2020

<sup>479</sup> World Watch Monitor, [Sudan: Three churches burned down twice within one month](#), 3 February 2020

<sup>480</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Lawyer: ‘Sudan govt covering-up church arson’](#), 14 February 2020

<sup>481</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Lawyer: ‘Sudan govt covering-up church arson’](#), 14 February 2020

<sup>482</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Two churches torched in Sudan](#), 18 March 2020

<sup>483</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2020 Country Report Sudan](#), 29 April 2020, 9. Welfare Regime



northern Sudan. Ethiopians, Eritreans, and other refugees or migrants were often exposed to exploitative work conditions”.<sup>484</sup>

In a November 2020 report the Institute for Security Studies noted a number of challenges in relation to a consensus based national constitution and noted with regards to ethnic and religious minorities:

Another major challenge for addressing these issues in post-transitional periods in the past has been opting to base constitutional provisions on simple majoritarian democracy. Political parties and governments have in the past controlled and co-opted previous constitution-making processes for political gain. Such processes will not be acceptable to segments of society that find themselves constantly in the minority or on the margins of power.

This will especially be of concern to smaller ethnic groups, historically marginalised groups including women,<sup>47</sup> non-Muslims,<sup>48</sup> non-religious groups, and non-Arab tribes<sup>49</sup> in Darfur and southern regions, and especially those that find themselves in the intersection of these identities.<sup>485</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Author interview with rebels from Nuba Mountains on the issue of secularism, March 2020. For non-Muslims in the Nuba Mountains and other states, war was waged against non-Muslims in the name of Islam by successive governments. Their major request is therefore that the ‘new’ Sudan becomes a secular state, where non-Muslims have equal rights. They fear a majoritarian democracy may institute sharia law in post-transition Sudan. The alternative to secularism according to the armed rebels is to continue fighting for self-determination. The major rebel group asking for a secular state is the one led by el-Hilu.

### 5.3.1. Two Areas

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in its annual report covering events in 2019 that “the former regime also directed particular disdain, neglect, and violence to peripheral areas of the country, such as Darfur and the “Two Areas” of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The regime’s antagonism toward those regions resulted in massive underdevelopment, severe repression of traditional religious communities and ethnic minorities, and a series of brutal civil conflicts that remained unresolved at the time of al-Bashir’s deposition in April 2019”.<sup>486</sup>

Providing background to the conflict in Blue Nile State, a March 2020 Small Arms Survey report covering 2015-2019 explained that:

Though often overlooked, the conflict in Blue Nile plays a key role in both national and regional stability due to the presence of multiple armed groups with varied and often short-term interests operating in the state and across the borders with South Sudan and Ethiopia. For those on the ground, the conflict and subsequent tensions have resulted in a deep division of Blue Nile communities, often along ethnic lines, and the humanitarian situation remains at a critical level, with approximately one fifth of the population living in refugee camps.<sup>487</sup>

The UNOCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan published in January 2020 noted that “Ethnic tensions also remained high in some areas in South Kordofan due to the conflict and political polarization [...] Localized armed clashes by different tribes in Blue Nile, South Kordofan, Sennar, Port

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<sup>484</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sudan](#), 11 March 2020, Section 6 and 7d

<sup>485</sup> Institute for Security Studies, [Sudan’s transition What are the chances of success?](#) November 2020, *Consensus based national constitution*, p. 21

<sup>486</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [2020 Annual Report: USCIRF – Recommended for Special Watch List: Sudan](#), April 2020

<sup>487</sup> Small Arms Survey, [Spilling Over: Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan’s Blue Nile State](#), 2015–19, March 2020, *Executive Summary* p. 9



Sudan and parts of Darfur continued to pose major risks for children, making them vulnerable to abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect”.<sup>488</sup>

The Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan documented in May 2020 that:

The Independent Expert received information that a tribal armed conflict erupted in the city of Kadugli in South Kordofan on 11 May [2020] between the Nuba (Angolo) and the DarNaela Arab tribe that allegedly resulted in the killing of more than 60 people, including 15 soldiers from the Rapid Support Forces, and 19 injured. Sources suggest that the death of 15 soldiers were allegedly the result of clashes between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces who intervened, each aligning itself with one of the tribal groups across ethnicity lines.

Another tribal clash reportedly took place in El Fagara, Lagawa, in South Kordofan on 6 June between the Nuba and Misseriya tribes; several people were allegedly killed or injured. No response was taken by security forces, sources alleged.<sup>489</sup>

HUDO documented the following unlawful killing in Blue Nile:

On 11th May 2020, some herdsmen were grazing their cattle at Amura jungle, a group of four armed men attacked and kidnapped two of them. Those who were kidnapped are Mr. Ramadan Hamid Eldaw (18 years) and Mr. Khamees Hamid Eldaw (20 years) and the two were selected because they belonged to Angasana tribe. Their fellow herdsmen from other tribes (falata and Arab) were left free. On 13th May 2020, the kidnapped men (Ramadan and Khamis) were found dead and their bodies were near Khartoum Belail village slaughtered.<sup>490</sup>

UNICEF reported in its mid-year report for 2020 that “The weakened Rule of Law has given inter-communal tensions the opportunity to escalate into ethnic violence across Sudan. This is often sparked by criminal activities driven by resource contention such as cattle rustling and land disputes. Violence has occurred in Red Sea State, Kassala, Sennar, Blue Nile, South & West Kordofan, and across all Darfur states. Fleeing from violence, displaced people have often occupied schools or public buildings. While there have been government efforts to intervene and resolve disputes and tensions, the prevalence of firearms, thin police presence, resource scarcity and underlying ethnic fissures indicate that this will remain a concern in the near future”.<sup>491</sup>

UNICEF reported that during the third quarter of 2020, “Ethnic tensions have continued in parts of the country and eruptions of violence are recurrent. [...] The capital of South Kordofan, Kadugli suffered clashes between ethnic groups which escalated as members of armed forces joined either party resulting in displacements of people back to SPLM-N controlled territories, protesters blocking the road into the town, and looters pillaging public facilities, schools and health centres”.<sup>492</sup>

ACLEED explained the role of ethnicity in conflict dynamics in Sudan thus:

Since the fall of the NCP regime in April 2019, small-scale incidents of violence against civilians have remained a common occurrence in parts of South, North and Central Darfur states as well as South Kordofan, and increasingly in West Kordofan [...]. Such acts are mostly carried out by pastoralist groups against civilians, often targeting internally displaced persons (IDPs), whilst Popular Defence Forces

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<sup>488</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, p. 49

<sup>489</sup> UN Human Rights Council, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 30 July 2020, H. Human rights situation in conflict-affected areas, 2. South Kordofan and Blue Nile, para. 62

<sup>490</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan January-December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 2.2.35 Two herdsmen killed near Khartoum Belail village p.29

<sup>491</sup> UNICEF, [Sudan Humanitarian Situation Report, Mid-Year Report 2020](#), 18 August 2020

<sup>492</sup> UNICEF, [Sudan Humanitarian Situation Report NO. 19 Q3](#), 30 September 2020

paramilitaries (an Islamist paramilitary force established in the early 1990s, and officially dismantled this year) have been implicated in a spate of attacks in South Kordofan. [...]

There has been a change in the type of actors involved in the clashes, with a move away from rebel groups toward irregular militias and paramilitary forces. This shift has been underway over the past decade and has accelerated in pace since the fall of Bashir. However, the principal shift has been in the geography of the conflict, with serious violence increasingly taking place in and around towns and cities. This contrasts to the predominantly rural fighting of the past, and is now taking a more explicitly ethnic form. In some cases, notably in Kadugli (South Kordofan) and El Geneina (West Darfur), members of the security organs have been actively involved in the fighting, splitting along ethnic lines.

The primary reason such violence now involves more urban flare-ups is because systematic displacement resulting from attacks by government and pro-government forces over several decades has forced large numbers of non-Arab groups into large IDP camps near urban centers.

Some of these adjoin major towns and cities, notably in El Geneina. The reasons why violence proceeds along ethnic lines is due to the government's and the Sudan Armed Forces' historic preference to outsource violence in the peripheries to paramilitary groups from specific ethnic groups of the semi-periphery (Small Arms Survey, 2017). The government became increasingly dependent on turning parts of the semi-periphery of impoverished Arab-identified pastoralist groups such as the Rizeigat or Baggara against the poorer and weaker non-Arab groups across large parts of Darfur, Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Abyei. This served to transfer both risks and responsibility for violence to semi-peripheral groups, and encouraged a misdirection of grievances by such groups away from the government and towards those who were not responsible for their declining fortunes. It has also created zero-sum contests between peripheral and semi-peripheral groups over land and resources in already tense areas (Craze, 2013).

In the post-Bashir era, these factors have combined to create a set of tinderboxes scattered across peripheral towns and cities, which are sparked when the dominant, state-aligned group feels their power or access to resources is threatened by a dispossessed group reasserting its claims on territory, resources or formal representation. The violence is often better understood as being ethnicized resource disputes and viscous attempts at asserting group security -- often driven by national-level changes and fears around the outcome of the ongoing peace process -- rather than being "ethnic conflicts" per se. [...]

Although the specific instances of violence vary in their form, many follow ethnic contours which had been sharpened in the previous decades of NCP rule. An increasing number of events involving violence being initiated by members of the peripheral group (such as the Nuba, Masalit or Ngok Dinka) who are often subject to abuses by the more dominant, government-aligned group of the semi-periphery (including Baggara and Rizeigat pastoralists), as has happened in the run-up to episodes of mass violence in Abyei in January of this year and El Geneina in West Darfur in late December 2019. This has tended to be followed by disproportionate reprisal attacks from the dominant group, often leading to dozens of deaths in lopsided fighting or massacres. Such fighting has typically followed along ethnic lines, specifically pitting members of the periphery against the recently dominant semi-periphery, becoming particularly serious when security forces get involved. For example, this pattern is evident in violent events involving marginalised Nuba against Beni Amir in Port Sudan and urban areas of Kassala state in eastern Sudan; Rizeigat Arab-identified pastoralists clashing with ethnic Masalit in West Darfur; Arab-identified Baggara of the Hawazmah clan against ethnic Nuba in the Kadugli area of South Kordofan; and with Ngok Dinka against Arab-identified Misseriya in Abyei.<sup>493</sup>

For further information on inter-tribal conflict see [1.2.1 Tribal/communal violence](#).

## 6. Women and girls

### 6.1. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

This section should be read against [6.4 State response to SGBV](#) and [7.2.Rape of children](#).

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<sup>493</sup> ACLED, [Riders on the Storm: Rebels, Soldiers and Paramilitaries in Sudan's Margins](#), October 2020

### Situation in Sudan in general

According to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's 2019 annual report:

Women played a significant role in the protest movement, and the civilian government made commitments to ensure their continued role during the transition period. The UK welcomed the decision to repeal public order laws, which had long been used by the authorities to violate human rights, specifically those of women. There was long-standing concern about sexual and gender-based violence in Sudan, with the issue often being overlooked or denied. Through project funding the UK worked on preventing such violence, along with the promotion of women's rights, tackling stigma and improving the support available to victims.<sup>494</sup>

Reacting to the decision to repeal the public order laws in November 2019, Seif Magango, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes stated that:

This is a big step forward for women's rights in Sudan. The repeal of the public order laws was long overdue. Many women were arbitrarily arrested, beaten and deprived of their rights to freedom of association and expression under this discriminatory law.

The transitional government must now ensure that the entire oppressive public order regime is abolished. This includes repealing the articles dictating women's dress code that are still in the criminal law, disbanding the public order police and the dedicated courts, and abolishing flogging as a form of punishment.<sup>495</sup>

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that "There were no reliable statistics on the prevalence of rape and domestic violence. [...] Monitoring groups reported the incidence of rape and sexual assault increased as the economic situation worsened during the year and intercommunal violence increased".<sup>496</sup> The U.S. Department of State's 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report considered that "The Government of Sudan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. [...] Criminal groups exploit Sudanese women and girls—particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs) or those from rural areas—in domestic work and in sex trafficking".<sup>497</sup>

The UNOCHA 2020 *Humanitarian Needs Overview* summarised that:

GBV [gender-based violence] is a key concern in Sudan, including by armed groups and within communities. Refugee and IDP women and children face heightened risk of sexual violence amid overcrowding in both IDP and refugees' camps and out-of-camp refugee locations. The farming season, which coincides with the migration of armed nomadic herders from the north of the country, registered high attacks on IDPs - including rape – and increased tensions over land. [...]

There are 1.8 million people at risk of Gender based violence (GBV). Women and girls continue to suffer disproportionately from GBV, poverty and violations of basic rights due to insecurity; low economic status and lack of livelihood opportunities; and lack of community awareness on women's rights due to cultural and societal norms. About 55 per cent of displaced people are women and girls, with 27 per cent of those women below the age of 18. They are particularly exposed to protection risks, such as threats, harassment, and sexual violence from armed men, as they engage in daily chores such as farming and fetching water and firewood.

According to available information on GBV cases in Sudan, women and girls account for over 90 per cent of survivors, and although grossly underreported, cases of sexual violence against men and boys have also been reported. [...]

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<sup>494</sup> UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Human Rights and Democracy: the 2019 Foreign and Commonwealth Office report](#), 16 July 2020

<sup>495</sup> Amnesty International, Sudan: Decision to repeal public order laws a step forward for women's rights, 29 November 2019

<sup>496</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, 6., *Women*

<sup>497</sup> U.S. Department of State, [2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 25 June 2020

Domestic violence rates are high. According to the MICS 2014 findings, 34 per cent of women across Sudan agreed that it is permissible to be beaten by a husband. Displacement and poverty heighten cases of domestic violence, which has been reported to have increased in IDP camps as husbands demand income from wives involved in income-generating activities (IGAs). Women also suffer reprisal attacks for their participation in IGAs or for their new-found mobility and voice in local communities. [...] UNHCR's 2018 Participatory Assessment findings indicate that the primary concern for refugees across all populations is the prevalence of SGBV in their communities. Data collection on SGBV is challenging, as is establishing prevention, referral and treatment services, with a service gap affecting over 560,000 children and women at risk. SGBV risk is aggravated by inadequate lighting in camps and settlements, and access to energy and water supply gaps that require women and girls to travel long distances to collect water and firewood, exposing them to harassment and violence. [...]

In areas with lack of economic resources and livelihoods opportunities, women's financial status forces them to work in harmful and insecure environments by venturing into the forest to collect firewood or straw for sale, which exposes them to potential attacks and violence. The current economic conditions in the country are likely to exacerbate exposure of vulnerable women and girls to further risks, as they may be seen as a way to increase income for the household. Rape, physical violence, FGM, early or arranged marriages, denial of opportunities and verbal abuse are some of the commonly reported violations against women and girls.<sup>498</sup>

According to a March 2020 Briefing from the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa:

Throughout Sudan, from the battlegrounds of Darfur to the streets of Khartoum, women are at risk of sexual violence in the form of rape and other criminal acts that are typically enabled by a strong culture of silence and shame. The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in Darfur has garnered the most attention nationally and internationally. It is however, by no means unique to the region. Women who are involved in political or human rights activism have been subjected to sexual violence and assault. Women who speak up are at risk of retaliation from government actors who leverage the fear and shame of rape as a method of silencing these women.<sup>499</sup>

In May 2020 the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa sent an urgent memo to the Attorney General of Sudan which stated that:

the lockdown policies implemented in response to the COVID -19 pandemic have triggered further violence against women and girls. The scale of violence has risen dramatically, putting hundreds of women and girls across the country at risk of losing their lives or suffering serious injury. According to our research, the lockdown measures have also increased the prevalence of forced, female-child marriage and the sexual exploitation of children.<sup>500</sup>

In its July 2020 Situation report, UNOCHA noted that "In the context of COVID-19, there are increasing risks of increased gender-based violence (GBV) and heightened risk of exploitation such as trafficking, child labor or early marriage for the approximately 1.87 million IDPs, and 1.1 million refugees, asylum seekers and returnees who live in congested areas. Groups particularly at risk of protection and exploitation include unemployed male, female youth, female heads of households, unaccompanied and separated children, elderly persons and person with disabilities, people with underlying medical conditions, sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors, and people with legal protection needs".<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020](#), 8 January 2020, p. 49-52

<sup>499</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Gender Briefing- Sudan](#), 10 March 2020, p. 10

<sup>500</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [An urgent memo to deter gender-based violence \(GBV\) in Sudan](#), 27 May 2020

<sup>501</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Situation report](#), 16 July 2020

Sudan remains one of three countries in the world not to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).<sup>502</sup> However, Human Rights Watch explained in a September 2020 letter to the UN Human Rights Council that “The Transitional Government announced a “full cooperation” policy towards the United Nations, which includes cooperation with the Council and its mechanisms, as well as ratifications, namely of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Con-ven-tion ag-ainst Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). The Govern-ment committed to reviewing legis-lation to bring it fully in line with inter-na-tional human rights stan-dards and the Constitutional Do-cument”.<sup>503</sup>

The same Human Rights Watch letter noted that:

Respect for women’s and girls’ rights has also improved with the repeal of the Public Order Law, the imposition of a ban on female genital mutilation (FGM), and the fact that women no longer need permission from a male relative to travel with their children. Legal reform, including criminal justice reform, is underway. In July 2020, authorities scrapped the apostasy law. They have also scrapped public flogging for non-hudud offenses.<sup>504</sup>

### 6.1.1. Two Areas

In his July 2019 report, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan noted that “In conflict-affected regions, women are deprived of equal rights with regard to decision-making, access to education, control of family resources and employment opportunities. Women and girls continue to face violence, including sexual and genderbased violence and conflict-related sexual violence, entrenching them in deep stigma and silence. In addition, they face being ostracized by the community and being denied access to justice by local authorities, a problem that is exacerbated by impunity, especially when the crime has been committed by national security forces”.<sup>505</sup>

In July 2019 African Arguments interviewed 64 female protestors about why they were demonstrating.<sup>506</sup> It noted that “Many female protesters said that the state must be held accountable for injustices committed during their 30 years in power. Some, especially those from war zones, talked specifically of sexual violence”.<sup>507</sup>

In October 2019, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa held a three day convening in Khartoum to provide “a much-needed platform for women to share their experiences before, during and after the Revolution”.<sup>508</sup> The resulting publication noted with regards to women from the conflict areas:

The struggle for women in the conflict areas has been categorically different. Women have been subjected to massive violence, including rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, many

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<sup>502</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [A Joint Letter on Sudan’s ratification of the Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), 2 January 2020

<sup>503</sup> Human Rights Watch, [The Human Rights Council should support systemic human rights reforms in Sudan](#), 10 September 2020

<sup>504</sup> Human Rights Watch, [The Human Rights Council should support systemic human rights reforms in Sudan](#), 10 September 2020

<sup>505</sup> Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 26 July 2019, *para. 48*

<sup>506</sup> African Arguments, [“I’m against all of the laws of this regime”: What Sudan’s women want](#), 2 July 2019

<sup>507</sup> African Arguments, [“I’m against all of the laws of this regime”: What Sudan’s women want](#), 2 July 2019

<sup>508</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [The Women’s Convening: Rebuilding Sudan “Nothing About Us, Without Us”](#), undated (accessed 10 January 2020), *p. 9*

are displaced from their homes, have limited access to health and education services, and face ongoing food security issues. Women have been speaking out about their issues and have been demanding the right to participate in peace processes and negotiations. Women from the conflict zones participated widely in the protests and sit-in. The space was an important opportunity for women to speak about their grievances, not only as women, but as members of a marginalized group. Their position speaks to the intersectionality of women's subordination, where multiple forms of discrimination are present. [...]

Women from the conflict regions have experienced levels of violence and economic exclusion disproportionate to other regions. [...]

Women from conflict zones, even those who live in Khartoum, have a host of different problems compared to average urban women. The priorities of an uneducated woman from a conflict region are distinctly different than that of an illiterate woman from the centre who did not experience the wounds of war. Both might experience poverty and a lack of access to education and health services, but women from conflict zones will face additional discrimination based on a conflict-related identity. Similarly, gender-based violence (GBV) is treated differently depending on the context. Cases of harassment in an urban setting are often recognized and can go viral, prompting quick response and attention. But this is not the case when it comes to rape in conflict zones or other forms of GBV in the periphery. Distance and unfamiliarity make people less sympathetic to incidents of sexual abuse in a war context. It is the job of an inclusive women's platform to bring those cases to light and urge the raising of collective consciousness in the centre to bring about actions and directly address the issues.<sup>509</sup>

### 6.1.2. South Kordofan

Reporting on the situation of children in armed conflict between January and December 2019, a UN report found that "Two girls were raped by the Sudanese Armed Forces and unknown armed elements (1 each) in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. In the case attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces, the perpetrator was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison".<sup>510</sup>

In July 2019 African Arguments interviewed 64 female protestors about why they were demonstrating.<sup>511</sup> It noted that "'Justice to me is that all of the parties in the previous regime should pay for what they put our nation through,' said a woman from South Kordofan, where accusations of sexual violence are also coming to the surface".<sup>512</sup>

### 6.1.3. Blue Nile

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that "There were no reliable statistics on the prevalence of rape and domestic violence. [...] Monitoring groups reported the incidence of rape and sexual assault increased as the economic situation worsened during the year and intercommunal violence increased".<sup>513</sup> The same source further noted that "Under the CLTG, human rights groups reported armed individuals committed rape and arbitrarily killed civilians in the five states of Darfur and government-controlled areas of the Blue Nile. While some wore government paraphernalia, i.e., uniforms, it is not clear that the individuals were actual official government security forces or militia".<sup>514</sup>

Reporting on the situation of children in armed conflict between January and December 2019, a UN report found that "Two girls were raped by the Sudanese Armed Forces and unknown armed elements

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<sup>509</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [The Women's Convening: Rebuilding Sudan "Nothing About Us, Without Us"](#), undated (accessed 10 January 2020), p. 17 and 22

<sup>510</sup> UN General Assembly, [Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 9 June 2020, *The Sudan, South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*, para. 166

<sup>511</sup> African Arguments, ["I'm against all of the laws of this regime": What Sudan's women want](#), 2 July 2019

<sup>512</sup> African Arguments, ["I'm against all of the laws of this regime": What Sudan's women want](#), 2 July 2019

<sup>513</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, 6., *Women*

<sup>514</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, 6., *Women*



(1 each) in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. In the case attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces, the perpetrator was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison”.<sup>515</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported that in December 2019:

in Guisan town a police officer lured the victim N. KH (16 years old and student) to a house of a police sergeant where he raped her from. The same day, the girl informed her family and was subsequently taken to the village health centre. The medical investigations confirmed the rape incident by finding semen and blood in her vagina (appendix – 1). When the family attempted to report/ file a case at police, they were not allowed. The police forced them to send the victim to Damazin on the following day for medical investigation where the medical findings came out different. Again the rape victim was not allowed to open a case basing on the new medical report/ findings regardless of her allegations. Since then, she has been traumatized/psychologically. According to her testimony, the accused person is a lieutenant police officer (M. M. A) Head of Madinah-12 police post.<sup>516</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported that “A worrying increase in sexual violence, especially in Yabus Bala and Moguf has been reported. 12 cases of alleged rape were reported to local authorities in October [2020]”, but no further information was provided as to the perpetrator(s).<sup>517</sup>

## 6.2. FGM

### In general throughout Sudan

UNICEF reported in February 2020 that FGM “remains prevalent in Sudan, affecting 87 per cent of women aged 15-49 years old, and 32 per cent of girls 14 or younger” and “is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15”.<sup>518</sup> However it should be noted that in the datasets FGM data was self-reported.<sup>519</sup> 28 Too Many explained that:

In general, UNICEF emphasises that self-reported data on FGM ‘needs to be treated with caution’, since women may be unwilling to disclose having undergone the procedure because of the sensitivity of the topic or the illegal status of the practice. They may also be unaware that they have been cut, or the extent to which they have been cut, especially if FGM was carried out at a young age. In Sudan specifically, it has been noted that misunderstandings by both women and midwives reporting FGM statuses show that ‘statistical research alone cannot tell us the whole story and can in fact throw up an inaccurate picture. Given the huge diversity of Sudan, it is no surprise that this is the case[,] not least because cultural understanding of the practi[c]e varies.’<sup>520</sup>

A November 2019 28 Too Many *Country Profile* noted that “The data reveals a distinct trend towards lower FGM prevalence among younger women. The highest prevalence (91.8%) is among women aged 45–49 and the lowest (81.7%) is among those aged 15–19. This suggests that the practice is declining at a faster rate than might be apparent from considering only the overall prevalence”.<sup>521</sup> The same source also explained that “In Sudan, FGM is referred to in two ways: the more severe form (Type III)

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<sup>515</sup> UN General Assembly, [Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 9 June 2020, *The Sudan, South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*, para. 166

<sup>516</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.2.2 Rape of underage girl by police officer in Guisan, p. 19

<sup>517</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, November 2020](#), 28 December 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 6

<sup>518</sup> UNICEF, [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\), Sudan](#), 6 February 2020

<sup>519</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 10

<sup>520</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 10

<sup>521</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 12



is referred to as pharaonic or infibulation; Types I and II are referred to by the Islamic term sunna. The majority of Sudanese women aged 15–49 (77%) have been ‘sewn closed’ (infibulated)”.<sup>522</sup>

According to the UNICEF “Although FGM/C has not been banned nationally, six states have issued legislations to prohibit the practice. These are South Kordofan, Gedaref, South Darfur, Northern State, Blue Nile and North Kordofan”.<sup>523</sup> However, 28 Too Many detailed that these were “South Kordofan, Gadarif, South Darfur, Red Sea, North Kordofan and Northern”.<sup>524</sup> Equality Now explained that “Earlier, while certain States in Sudan had passed laws against FGM, the criminal penalties for FGM did not apply across the country”.<sup>525</sup>

In a November 2019 28 Too Many *Country Profile*, former President of Malawi Joyce Banda observed that “The few recent published studies have confirmed that Sudan is undergoing several shifts, including increased medicalisation, driven by social, religious, professional and legal norms, economic benefits and increasing awareness of FGM’s health impacts. Despite national, local and community efforts made to date, Sudan still has a very high prevalence of FGM. Unfortunately, the medicalisation of FGM, especially by trained midwives, is predicted to support the continuation and normalisation of FGM in the country”.<sup>526</sup>

UNICEF Sudan’s 2019 Gender report noted with regards to FGM:

Thanks to collective efforts, the abandonment of female genital mutilation (FGM) is gaining ground. This can be seen in the recent findings of S3M survey, which reveals 25 per cent FGM prevalence in children aged zero to fourteen years and 83 per cent among fifteen and 49 years (S3M Survey 2019); pointing to a significant decrease in the practice.

The Saleema campaign efforts promoted awareness and community engagement on female genital mutilation (FGM). The campaign capitalised on partnerships with young people and those respected in the community and continued promoting common values. More than 8,600 schoolgirls are more engaged and empowered leading the change at the local level. The regional adoption of Saleema as a collective approach to decrease FGM/C in all African Union (AU) members countries will contribute to the reduction of FGM/C prevalence at the regional level.

Community engagement and social movement to abandon female genital mutilation/cutting were scaled-up as more communities declared abandonment of the practice (from 995 communities in 2017 to 1,163 communities in 2019).<sup>527</sup>

In April 2020 the transitional government approved a landmark draft law criminalising FGM which was ratified in July 2020.<sup>528</sup> The practice of FGM is now punishable by up to three years in prison and doctors or healthworkers carrying out the practice penalised as well as hospitals or clinics shut down.<sup>529</sup>

In response, Equality Now stated that:

However the law alone will not be sufficient to end FGM in Sudan, where the practice is rooted in gender inequality and deeply embedded in culture and social norms – as it is in other countries where FGM occurs. Thus, it is critical for the Sudanese government to ensure effective enforcement of this

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<sup>522</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 13

<sup>523</sup> UNICEF, [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\), Sudan](#), 6 February 2020

<sup>524</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 11

<sup>525</sup> Equality Now, [The global movement to end FGM: Promising developments in Sudan & the United Arab Emirates](#), 8 June 2020

<sup>526</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 3

<sup>527</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Gender 2019](#), 30 March 2020

<sup>528</sup> Al Jazeera, [Sudan ratifies law criminalising female genital mutilation](#), 10 July 2020

<sup>529</sup> Al Jazeera, [Sudan ratifies law criminalising female genital mutilation](#), 10 July 2020

groundbreaking law and prosecution of offenders. Enforcement of criminal penalties must also be accompanied by the introduction of sufficiently funded and resourced programs that educate communities about why FGM is harmful. Achieving systemic and lasting change requires altering attitudes and behavior towards women and girls.<sup>530</sup>

The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa noted that “Whereas the criminalization of FGM in Sudan might seem well-intended, it actually does not address the root causes of women’s subordination in Sudan which are deeply ingrained in misogynistic attitudes”.<sup>531</sup> Furthermore:

SIHA’s Regional Director – Hala Alkarib seconds this by expressing concern about criminalising FGM. “On the surface a law criminalizing FGM in Sudan, a country with one of the highest FGM prevalence rates in the world, appears to be an incredible victory for women. On reflection, however, one has to wonder whether the piece-meal reform of the legal framework in Sudan is going to bring about the transformative change needed to actually bring a halt to the practice. Sudan’s legal framework is notoriously patriarchal and discriminatory against women. Without addressing the framework as a whole as well as the misogynistic beliefs and practices that maintain and reproduce it, it is unlikely that criminalisation of FGM alone will resolve the issues”.<sup>532</sup>

Reporting on the new law the Council on Foreign Relations noted that “Activists say it is a start, but enforcement and eradication of FGM will be difficult”.<sup>533</sup> Insaf Abbas noted for BBC News that:

This feels like a momentous day for Sudanese women, although many are treating it with caution for fear that FGM could be driven underground. But it's hard for me to say how my close friends and family in Khartoum are feeling. Although I know how widespread the practice is in Sudan, it's also very taboo. I've never spoken to female relatives about FGM, and I don't even know which of them have gone through it. Maybe that will change with this news. I'm hoping that if anything, it shakes the taboo and gets more women and girls in Sudan talking about FGM.<sup>534</sup>

Faiza Jama Mohamed, Africa Office Director of Equality Now, told CBS News that ““New legislation outlawing FGM should be accompanied by positive community engagement, awareness raising on the dangers of this harmful practice, and support for women and girls who have been cut or are at risk. In addition, authorities need to collect and circulate reliable data, and providing adequate funding to eliminate this harmful practice once and for all. Sudan's new law against FGM will be particularly beneficial to girls who have not been cut”. Furthermore CBS noted that “Mohamed urges that communities and law enforcement officials in Sudan who still believe in this draconian practice may not uphold the law and many cases may still go unreported”.<sup>535</sup>

In a 2020 publication the Chr Michelsen Institute noted with regards to shifts to less severe types of FGM that:

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<sup>530</sup> Equality Now, [The global movement to end FGM: Promising developments in Sudan & the United Arab Emirates](#), 8 June 2020

<sup>531</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [“Outlawing FGM” is only the tip of the iceberg considering a deeply misogynistic legal framework in Sudan](#), 4 May 2020

<sup>532</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [“Outlawing FGM” is only the tip of the iceberg considering a deeply misogynistic legal framework in Sudan](#), 4 May 2020

<sup>533</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, [Women This Week: Sudan Passes Landmark Law on Female Genital Mutilation](#), 8 May 2020

<sup>534</sup> BBC News, [Sudan criminalises female genital mutilation \(FGM\)](#), 1 May 2020

<sup>535</sup> CBS, [Sudan outlawed female genital mutilation. But experts warn it will take more to end the practice](#), 2 May 2020

For example, in Sudan there has been a shift from “pharaonic” FGM (type 3, infibulation) to Sunna FGM (type 1, clitoridectomy) in some parts of the country and among various ethnic groups. Sunna cuts, being of lesser severity, are believed to avert the health risks associated with more severe forms of the practice (Bedri et al. 2019). It is believed that the focus of anti-FGM campaigns on the health risks of FGM may have played a key role in driving this change, combined with religious discourses (including from state institutions) and encourage the abandonment of pharaonic and the adaptation of Sunna as a religious obligation (ibid.; Tønnessen and al-Nagar forthcoming).<sup>536</sup>

In November 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “The Sudanese Director General of Police has instructed police forces nationwide to enforce the criminalisation of female genital mutilation (FGM). ‘Police officers will have a major responsibility to intervene and curb this crime against humanity,’ Police Chief Lt Gen Ezzeldin El Sheikh said in his address at a seminar on the incrimination of FGM organised by the National Council for Child Care at the Corinthia Hotel in Khartoum”.<sup>537</sup>

### 6.2.1. South Kordofan

The most recent Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 2014 (published in 2016) revealed a 88.8% prevalence rate of FGM in South Kordofan.<sup>538</sup> According to the November 2019 28 Too Many Country Profile, the Merreriya ethnic group in South Kordofan practices FGM between the ages of 7-12, whilst the Dinka and Nuba of South Kordofan do not.<sup>539</sup> Furthermore, the prevalence of reinfibulation [(also known as adal) is the process of re-sewing the genitals following childbirth, and it may be done repeatedly during the lifetime of a married woman] is 7% in South Kordofan.<sup>540</sup>

UNICEF reported in February 2020 that “Although FGM/C has not been banned nationally, six states have issued legislations to prohibit the practice” one of which is South Kordofan.<sup>541</sup> The November 2019 28 Too Many Country Profile noted that South Kordofan was “first Sudanese state to adopt legislation. The Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2008) places responsibility on parents and guardians to protect girls (up to 18 years of age) from FGM. Reporting incidents of FGM is the responsibility of all. This law also provides for the payment of compensation to the victim of FGM by the person who performed the act”.<sup>542</sup> The Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2008) includes a range of penalties, from three years’ imprisonment and compensation payable to the “victim, to up to ten years’ imprisonment and compensation payable to the victim’s family in the case of the victim’s death”.<sup>543</sup> The same source further noted that:

It is understood that, in South Kordofan, the Ministry of Health has issued a code of conduct for midwives, instructing them not to perform FGM, and implemented reproductive health programmes to raise awareness of the effects of FGM and why it should not be practised. Furthermore, South Kordofan’s Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation Act calls for life imprisonment, cancellation of medical licences for doctors and nurses, and confiscation of property for repeat offenders. 28 Too Many is not aware, however, of any cases of doctors or midwives being prosecuted under this law.<sup>544</sup>

### 6.2.2. Blue Nile

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<sup>536</sup> Chr Michelsen Institute, [Prevalence, drivers, and review of the literature on the effects of interventions to reduce the prevalence of female genital mutilation](#), 2020, Section 3.2 Shift to less severe types of FGM

<sup>537</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan police to enforce criminalisation of ‘pharaonic circumcision’](#), 24 November 2020

<sup>538</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 32

<sup>539</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 37

<sup>540</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 54

<sup>541</sup> UNICEF, [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\), Sudan](#), 6 February 2020

<sup>542</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 32

<sup>543</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 33

<sup>544</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 33

The most recent Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 2014 (published in 2016) revealed a 68% prevalence rate of FGM in Blue Nile.<sup>545</sup> The November 2019 28 Too Many *Country Profile* noted that all the ethnic groups residing in Blue Nile practice FGM between the ages of 5-11: Anuak, Fellata, Nuba.<sup>546</sup> Furthermore, the prevalence of reinfibulation [(also known as adal) is the process of re-sewing the genitals following childbirth, and it may be done repeatedly during the lifetime of a married woman] is 31.8% in Blue Nile.<sup>547</sup>

UNICEF reported in February 2020 that “Although FGM/C has not been banned nationally, six states have issued legislations to prohibit the practice” one of which is Blue Nile.<sup>548</sup> However 28 Too Many listed six states which did not include Blue Nile.<sup>549</sup>

### 6.3. Forced/early marriage

Limited information specific to the Two Areas was located amongst the sources consulted. Information on the general situation in Sudan has therefore been included.

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that “The legal age of marriage was 10 years for girls and 15 years or puberty for boys”.<sup>550</sup> For information on the overarching legal framework for marriage in Sudan, see the OECD’s 2019 Social Institutions & Gender Index.<sup>551</sup>

The most recent Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in Sudan of 2014 revealed that 34.2% of women aged 20-24 were married or in union before the age of 18.<sup>552</sup>

UNICEF Sudan’s 2019 Gender report noted that Data on child marriage shows an increasing trend of children marrying before their fifteenth birthday, with the highest prevalence in South Darfur state with 36 per cent. The increase might be due to factors such as rising poverty, and family honour. Nationally, around 38 per cent of girls marries before their eighteenth birthday, however recent numbers from the Simple Spatial Survey Method (S3M, 2018), show that 64 per cent of women with children younger than five years were married when still a child. Further, one fifth of women, aged 20-24, in Sudan had her first child before she reached eighteen years”.<sup>553</sup>

The UNOCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview summarised with regards to the general situation in Sudan that:

According to UNICEF, Sudan has the 16th highest rate of child marriage in the world, with approximately 34 per cent of girls married before the age of 18, and 12 per cent married before the age of 15. Child marriage is most prevalent in South and East Darfur (56 per cent of girls), Central Darfur (55 per cent), Blue Nile (50 per cent) and Gedaref (49 per cent).<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 47

<sup>546</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 37

<sup>547</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 54

<sup>548</sup> UNICEF, [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\), Sudan](#), 6 February 2020

<sup>549</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, p. 11

<sup>550</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, 1., g. *Abuses in Internal Conflict*

<sup>551</sup> OCED, [SIGI 2019: Sudan](#), 2019 p. 2-3

<sup>552</sup> UNICEF Data, [Sudan](#), undated (accessed 26 January 2021)

<sup>553</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Gender 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 6

<sup>554</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020](#), 8 January 2020, p. 50

A November 2019 28 Too Many *Country Profile* noted that “forced marriages – which are agreed between the father and the husband – do occur in Sudan”.<sup>555</sup> It further noted that “Child marriage is driven by many factors, some of which include poverty, power dynamics and traditional customs, including FGM”.<sup>556</sup>

According to a March 2020 Briefing from the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, “early marriage has increased substantially in the past 20 years”.<sup>557</sup>

In May 2020 the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa sent an urgent memo to the Attorney General of Sudan which stated that:

the lockdown policies implemented in response to the COVID -19 pandemic have triggered further violence against women and girls. The scale of violence has risen dramatically, putting hundreds of women and girls across the country at risk of losing their lives or suffering serious injury. According to our research, the lockdown measures have also increased the prevalence of forced, female-child marriage and the sexual exploitation of children.<sup>558</sup>

In December 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “In South Kordofan, incidents of child abuse increased during the long vacation period because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a press conference in Kadugli on Wednesday, South Kordofan Governor Hamid El Bashir said that the numbers of underage marriage of girls doubled this year. Many school children are reluctant to continue their education as well, because they need to work in order to financially support their parents or themselves”.<sup>559</sup>

#### 6.4. State response to SGBV

In October 2019, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa held a three day convening in Khartoum to provide “a much-needed platform for women to share their experiences before, during and after the Revolution”.<sup>560</sup> The resulting publication noted:

Women at the Convening frequently raised the issue of unjust laws and discrimination that target and oppress women. Justice and redress for the violations suffered by women across Sudan, including rape, killing, harassment, beating and imprisonment were also key priorities for women. Women were united in the need to reform the legal framework of Sudan to remove all discriminatory laws, protect women’s rights and to seek justice for violations.<sup>561</sup>

The UNOCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview summarised with regards to the general situation in Sudan that:

Protection services remain extremely weak across Sudan. Most localities lack specialized gender-based violence (GBV) services including basic referral systems; and the majority of health facilities do not provide clinical management of rape services (CMR). This is mainly due to lack of government

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<sup>555</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, *Resources and Entitlements*, p. 41

<sup>556</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, *Resources and Entitlements*, p. 42

<sup>557</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Gender Briefing- Sudan](#), 10 March 2020, p. 5

<sup>558</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [An urgent memo to deter gender-based violence \(GBV\) in Sudan](#), 27 May 2020

<sup>559</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Reports about child abuse increasing in Sudan](#), 26 December 2020

<sup>560</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [The Women’s Convening: Rebuilding Sudan “Nothing About Us, Without Us”](#), undated (accessed 10 January 2020), p. 9

<sup>561</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [The Women’s Convening: Rebuilding Sudan “Nothing About Us, Without Us”](#), undated (accessed 10 January 2020), p. 27

investment, political and cultural sensitivities on the issue of GBV, lack of awareness, low capacity of service providers, and lack of resources. [...]

Over 90 per cent of Sudan's localities lack specialized GBV services (such as clinical management of rape, specialized psychosocial support and counselling, and case management). Health centers are often the first point of call where people seek help, and they are inadequately equipped to support and suffer from lack of trained staff especially due to high turnover.[...]

GBV is a key concern in Sudan, including by armed groups and within communities. Refugee and IDP women and children face heightened risk of sexual violence amid overcrowding in both IDP and refugees' camps and out-of-camp refugee locations. The farming season, which coincides with the migration of armed nomadic herders from the north of the country, registered high attacks on IDPs - including rape – and increased tensions over land. [...]

Women and girls lack access to quality specialized lifesaving GBV services, such as the clinical management of rape (CMR), and psycho-social support (PSS), legal aid, case management and referral mechanisms, which are unavailable in over 90 per cent of localities in Sudan. [...] Community structures are weak with only a few localities with functioning community-based protection networks and women's centers offering GBV services. [...]

Further, access to justice for GBV survivors is very low due to lack of community awareness on legal and justice issues related to GBV; lack of legal aid; shortages of female police officers; community distrust of formal legal mechanisms; centralized handling of cases at state capitals which disadvantage survivors from poor backgrounds due to transport costs and legal fees; and weak referral mechanisms. The fear of sexual violence also impacts opportunities for women and girls, as they will cautiously or at times not engage in some livelihood activities.

Lack of GBV awareness among communities makes it challenging to ensure prevention, mitigation and access of survivors to the relevant multi-sectoral services where available. [...]

Partners working on GBV response are hesitant to collect data on GBV cases, and assessments have not been possible for several years. Sexual violence continues to be chronically underreported due to a culture of denial, social stigma, fear of harassment, physical and psychological trauma, the lack of protection afforded to victims and witnesses, and the perceived inaction of law enforcement and justice institutions. The lack of succinct information and data affects programming as well as advocacy. Gaps highlighted in other sectors involved in the provision of multi-sectoral services, especially health and livelihoods, poses a challenge to GBV response.<sup>562</sup>

UNICEF Sudan's 2019 Gender report noted that "In part following the sustained economic crisis and the sociopolitical instability last year – which increased families' and children's vulnerabilities – there has been an increasing demand for social and protection services which continue being limited or non-existent in many localities. This is particularly true for gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response services including basic referral systems".<sup>563</sup>

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that "Human rights organizations cited substantial barriers to reporting sexual and gender-based violence, including cultural norms, police reluctance to investigate, and the widespread impunity of perpetrators".<sup>564</sup>

A March 2020 Physicians for Human Rights report noted that "Social stigma results in under-reporting of SGBV in Sudan, and Sudanese SGBV victims are less likely to report because of legal hurdles and a conservative culture that penalizes sexual activity outside of marriage, even punishing and stigmatizing victims of rape".<sup>565</sup>

Reporting on the human rights situation in the Sudan between 3 June and 8 September 2020 a UN report noted that "In upholding its commitment to improving the justice system and reforming

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<sup>562</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020](#), 8 January 2020, p. 49-52

<sup>563</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Gender 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 6

<sup>564</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, 6., *Women*

<sup>565</sup> Physicians for Human Rights, ["Chaos and Fire"; March 2020 An Analysis of Sudan's June 3, 2019 Khartoum Massacre](#), March 2020, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, p. 40



national laws in compliance with international standards, the Joint Council – the current transitional legislative body in the Sudan – in July adopted several amendments to the penal code of 1991. The adoption constituted significant progress towards achieving the goals of the transition until a new penal code could be adopted as indicated in the Constitutional Declaration. The latest amendments improved the legal protection for the most vulnerable categories of people, including by contributing to the eradication of harmful cultural practices against women and girls by prohibiting female genital mutilation”.<sup>566</sup>

The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa described that in February 2015, Sudan passed a number of amendments to the 1991 Criminal Act concerning rape and sexual violence.<sup>567</sup> A March 2020 Briefing from the source considered that “Despite this Amendment, existing evidence does not suggest its effectiveness in preventing or providing redress for sexual violence for women in Sudan”.<sup>568</sup> The primary reasons for this are as follows [emphasis from original source]:

**a. Ambiguity between “victims” and “perpetrators”:** The new provision on sexual harassment within the existing law on “gross indecency” introduced ambiguity about who the victims and the perpetrators actually are in sexual harassment cases. It refers to acts, speech or behaviour that cause seduction or temptation, and is likely to serve as a further deterrent to women reporting sexual offences, owing to a risk they could be accused of “gross indecency.”

**b. Conflation of rape and ‘zina’:** Until 2015, rape was defined under the 1991 Sudan Criminal Law Act as zina without consent.<sup>17</sup> The amended Article 149 unfortunately, created legal uncertainty relating to the possible continuing conflation of the offence of rape with the offences of “adultery” and “sodomy” because the penalty for rape, set out under Article 149(2), remains unchanged and still refers to rape by way of those acts. This has resulted in a continuing risk that rape claimants could face prosecution for adultery or sodomy if they fail to prove a rape case. There is a lack of clarity concerning the evidence standards that will apply in rape cases.

**c. Conflict with Muslim Personal Law Act of Sudan (1991):** Considering rape as a sub-type of zina excludes the possibility of marital rape, since zina is defined as sex between unmarried people. The notion that rape cannot occur inside marriage is further reinforced by the 1991 Muslim Personal Law Act, which provides that a woman “shall always obey her husband,” provided that he has paid the dowry and provides her a home. The Personal Law Act discourages prosecutions in practice.

**d. Ambiguity on age of consent:** There is also a lack of clarity about the age of consent and whether this is determined by the definition of an adult under the 1991 Criminal Act, which refers to puberty, or the 2010 Child Act, which dictates that a child is any person under 18 years of age. Further, the 1991 Muslim Personal Law Act provides that marriage can take place at puberty (ages 9-15 years for a girl), raising serious questions about the possibility of consent in early marriages.

**e. Consent:** Although the new legislation usefully elaborates and expands on the circumstances where a lack of consent may be demonstrated, including not only the use of physical force, but also psychological coercion and incapacity to consent, it provides what appears to be an exhaustive list of circumstances where consent cannot be deemed to have been given. This list may prove too narrow to address all rape cases.

**f. State immunity:** Sudanese law allows for immunity of a broad range of state officials. These laws include Article 33 of the 1998 National Security Forces Act, Article 46 of the 1999 Police Forces Act and Article 8 of the 1986 People’s Armed Forces Act which, was expanded by a 2005 presidential decree that grants immunity to military actors in the performance of their official duties and grants immunity to government law enforcement personnel, including security, police, military, militias and guards. In practice, this means that women raped by government personnel stand very little chance of receiving justice.

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<sup>566</sup> UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan](#), 17 September 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 18

<sup>567</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Gender Briefing- Sudan](#), 10 March 2020, p. 10

<sup>568</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Gender Briefing- Sudan](#), 10 March 2020, p. 10



**g. Procedural limitations** (“Form 8” requirement): Many women do not report sexual violence because of fear of re-victimization at the hands of the police authorities. While a ministerial decree, effective 21 August 2004, allows women to access medical treatment without Form 8 under certain circumstances, this form is still required under the Sudanese Criminal Procedure Act. The majority of health care providers also still require it.<sup>569</sup>

In May 2020 the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported that it had created a gender-based violence hotline in Sudan to help women and girls.<sup>570</sup> Sulaima Elkhailifa, the General Director of the combating violence against women unit at Sudan’s Ministry of Social Development stated that “The idea for the hotline comes from the restricted movement from COVID-19. Most of the violence happens inside homes”.<sup>571</sup> The same source further noted that:

Funded by UNFPA and the Swedish government, the hotline has a dedicated number for seven states in Sudan with the intention to expand to every state in the country. The service is free to use and is expected to continue after the COVID-19 pandemic is over. The hotline is staffed by trained social workers and provides psychological counseling, social support and legal advice.

“Even though COVID-19 has stopped us from traveling, we expect GBV cases to increase across the world because more people are staying at home. We need to innovate to protect women and girls,” said Massimo Diana, the UNFPA representative in Sudan.

In Sudan, research has not been done to track specifically how the lockdown impacts GBV cases. While the helpline is receiving more calls each day about domestic violence cases that might just mean that more people are aware of the service, Elkhailifa said. [...]

Elkhailifa said that tackling the stigma of GBV is one way to lower incidents. [...]

Elkhailifa also said that law enforcement needs specific training to GBV cases. Often the police do not get involved in GBV cases because they think it is a family dispute, Elkhailifa said.

But there are signs that the culture around GBV in Sudan is changing. The country’s 2019 revolution was led by young people and women. “The revolution made people more outspoken — especially women and girls,” Elkhailifa said. They talk much more about violence from their fathers and uncles.”<sup>572</sup>

#### **6.4.1. Two Areas**

In an October 2019 statement at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on “Women and peace and security”, Ms Alaa Salah, student, activist and a member of MANSAM and on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security stated that:

For the last 30 years, women’s bodies and our rights have been policed; backlash has been swift and violent when patriarchal norms have been challenged. Women activists, politicians, human rights defenders, and peacebuilders continue to be, systematically attacked and targeted, including through sexual violence, which has forced many out of the country entirely. Additionally, women’s organizations are at the front line of meeting basic needs and protecting rights in conflict-affected areas, but security restrictions and obstructive administrative requirements prevent critical work from being carried out in areas such as Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains. [...]

As this body well knows, accountability and access to justice have been all but absent in my country. The existing discrimination and inequality women face, coupled with conflict and violence over decades, has resulted in women being subjected to a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence on an epic scale. These crimes contributed to the indictment of our ousted President for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. But violence against women did not end with the end of Al-Bashir’s reign.<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Gender Briefing- Sudan](#), 10 March 2020

<sup>570</sup> UNFPA, [How a phone number is preventing GBV in Sudan](#), 20 May 2020

<sup>571</sup> UNFPA, [How a phone number is preventing GBV in Sudan](#), 20 May 2020

<sup>572</sup> UNFPA, [How a phone number is preventing GBV in Sudan](#), 20 May 2020

<sup>573</sup> Ms. Alaa Salah, [Statement by Ms. Alaa Salah at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security](#), 29 October 2019

## 7. Children

### 7.1. Recruitment and use of children

Without specifying the location or perpetrator, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore noted in June 2019 that “I am gravely concerned at the impact of the continuing violence and unrest in the country on children and young people, especially the reported use of excessive force against peaceful protestors. We have received information that children are being detained, recruited to join the fighting and sexually abused”.<sup>574</sup>

#### 7.1.1. By government forces

The U.S. Department of State’s 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report explained that “Article 14 of the Sudan Armed Forces Act of 2007 criminalized recruiting children younger than 18 years old by members of the armed forces, enslaving civilians, or coercing civilians into prostitution and prescribed penalties between three years’ imprisonment and death”.<sup>575</sup> The same source further noted that:

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) officials launched a unit to lead the government’s child protection efforts in conflict areas and provided training to more than 5,000 members of its military on child protection issues, including child soldiering.

However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. A semi-autonomous paramilitary branch of the government’s security apparatus—the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)—allegedly recruited child soldiers in May 2019 under the former military-led government; officials did not report investigating the alleged recruitment, nor making efforts to identify, demobilize, and rehabilitate the potential victims.<sup>576</sup>

A UNICEF Sudan publication covering 2019 noted that “As part of the implementation of the UN/Sudan Action Plan on Protection of Children in Armed Conflict, a total of 1,216 Rapid Support Forces (RSF) troops were screened and 37 cases were identified for further verification through the age-assessment mechanism. Thirty technical committee members and UN staff gained skills and knowledge on age verification and were able to effectively participate in two age verification exercises among RSF troops. The results of the verification missions revealed that thirty of the identified cases were proven to be above eighteen years-old, whilst seven cases needed further verification based on a three-step assessment. In the end, none of them was found to be below eighteen years of age”.<sup>577</sup>

The same source further noted that “During 2019, the country task force documented 222 violations affecting 217 children (79 girls and 138 boys). This represents a 23 per cent decrease compared to 267 children (138 girls and 129 boys) affected in 2018. Majority of the incidents were attributed to unknown armed men, usually identified as Arab nomads or Arab militias. Among the government security forces, the RSF remained the main perpetrator of grave violations against children and committed acts of sexual violence and killings and maiming of children”.<sup>578</sup>

The report noted with regards to reintegration of children associated with armed conflict:

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<sup>574</sup> UNICEF, [Children killed, injured, detained and abused amid escalating violence and unrest in Sudan](#), 11 June 2019

<sup>575</sup> U.S. Department of State, [2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 25 June 2020

<sup>576</sup> U.S. Department of State, [2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 25 June 2020

<sup>577</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Child Protection 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 12

<sup>578</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Child Protection 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 12

The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) are increasingly aware of the consequences of the recruitment of children. In 2019, 1,600 officers renewed their commitment to end the recruitment of children in their ranks and to protect children. Only 43 children associated with armed groups and armed forces were reunified and reintegrated with their families and communities in 2019. UNICEF expects that the number of children associated with armed groups is higher, and with the Government of Sudan's new focus on peace more children are expected to be released in 2020. Released children received a structured psychosocial support and reintegration package and four boys are still being mentored and provided with support. As part of the community re-integration of children who were released from armed groups in 2017 in Gezira state (Goz Dango area), children graduated from livelihoods training and were employed in different institutions, including a sugar factory, thereby taking into consideration their abilities and the right to education.<sup>579</sup>

#### **7.1.1.1. Two Areas**

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that "Allegations persisted that armed rebel movements and Bashir regime-aligned militias had child soldiers within their ranks. Many children continued to lack documents verifying their age".<sup>580</sup>

The July 2020 report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict focuses on trends in and patterns of violations committed against children in Darfur, the Two Areas and Abyei between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2019.<sup>581</sup> The report did not detail any incidents of recruitment of children in the Two Areas but did note that:

Access to areas controlled by SPLM-N in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile was constrained throughout the reporting period, despite ceasefires declared by the parties to the conflict and advocacy by the country task force and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for monitoring access to those areas. Therefore, the information contained in the present report does not reflect the full impact of armed conflict on children in the Sudan. [...]

I welcome the progress made by the Government of the Sudan in the implementation of the prevention and accountability mechanisms foreseen in their action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, which led to the delisting of the Sudanese Armed Forces from the annexes of my annual report on children and armed conflict as of 2018. I am, however, concerned about continued violations committed against children by Government security forces and about recurrent reports of child recruitment by the Rapid Support Forces.<sup>582</sup>

#### **7.1.1.2. South Kordofan**

No information on the forced recruitment of children by state actors specifically in South Kordofan was found amongst the sources consulted in the timeframe.

#### **7.1.1.3. Blue Nile**

The HUDO Centre reported in its annual report covering 2019 that "PDF boosted recruitment of the underage [...] using them in military operations all over the Blue Nile state".<sup>583</sup>

The Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation noted that:

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<sup>579</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Child Protection 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 12

<sup>580</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, 1., g. *Abuses in Internal Conflict*

<sup>581</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, p. 1

<sup>582</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, para. 17 and 19

<sup>583</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.5.14 *Military training centre at a school in Dering*, p. 35

On 20 June 2019, at 12.15pm, two children from an area controlled by the Sudan government in Delami Town in, came into SPLM/A-N controlled areas in Hawkur village, Sabat Payam, and stole eight goats. While the children were initially undetected, civilians soon recognised the children as thieves and ran after them. According to eyewitnesses, however, the children escaped towards the SAF [Sudanese Armed Forces] barracks in Aberi, leaving behind the eight goats. It was not clear whether the children were child soldiers or if they may have been used as proxies by the SAF. This may be the first reported incident where children are used to loot civilians' cattle in the Two Areas since the aerial bombardments stopped in mid-2016.<sup>584</sup>

## **7.1.2. By armed opposition groups**

### **7.1.2.1. Two Areas**

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that "Allegations persisted that armed rebel movements and Bashir regime-aligned militias had child soldiers within their ranks. Many children continued to lack documents verifying their age. Children's rights organizations believed armed groups exploited this lack of documentation to recruit or retain children. [...] Due to access problems, particularly in conflict zones, reports of the use of child soldiers among armed groups were limited and often difficult to verify".<sup>585</sup>

Furthermore, "Representatives of armed groups reported they did not actively recruit child soldiers. They did not, however, prevent children who volunteered from joining their movements. The armed groups stated the children were stationed primarily in training camps and were not used in combat. There were reports of the use of child soldiers by the SPLM-N, but numbers could not be verified, in part due to lack of access to SPLM-N-controlled territories".<sup>586</sup>

Without specifying the location, UNOCHA noted in its 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview that "Forced recruitment of children continues. [...] Boys and girls recruited by armed groups are subject to detention and separation from their families, and experience acute psychosocial distress. They also face challenges with reintegration into their communities, and barriers in access to education and other services".<sup>587</sup>

Providing background to the conflict in Blue Nile State, a March 2020 Small Arms Survey report covering 2015-2019 noted that with regards to recruitment campaigns in general without specifying age that "The SPLA-N-Agar's forces are mainly Ingessana. Many of these forces are reserves and recruitment campaigns regularly occur in the refugee camps".<sup>588</sup>

The July 2020 report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict focuses on trends in and patterns of violations committed against children in Darfur, the Two Areas and Abyei between 1

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<sup>584</sup> Nubsud Human Rights Monitors Organisation (NHRMO), [Human Rights Update: April – June 2019](#), August 2019, p. 3

<sup>585</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, 1., g. *Abuses in Internal Conflict*

<sup>586</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, Section 1., g. *Abuses in Internal Conflict*

<sup>587</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, *CRITICAL PROBLEMS RELATED TO PROTECTION*, p. 50

<sup>588</sup> Small Arms Survey, [Spilling Over: Conflict Dynamics in and around Sudan's Blue Nile State](#), 2015–19, March 2020, *The SPLM/A-N internal split*, p.38

January 2017 and 31 December 2019.<sup>589</sup> The report did not detail any incidents of recruitment of children in the Two Areas but did note that:

Access to areas controlled by SPLM-N in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile was constrained throughout the reporting period, despite ceasefires declared by the parties to the conflict and advocacy by the country task force and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for monitoring access to those areas. Therefore, the information contained in the present report does not reflect the full impact of armed conflict on children in the Sudan. [...]

SPLM-N is listed for recruitment and use of children in annex I to the most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525) as a party that has not put in place measures to improve the protection of children.<sup>590</sup>

## 7.2. Rape of children

### In general throughout Sudan

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 reported that "There is no minimum age for consensual sex or a statutory rape law. [...] The government tried to enforce laws criminalizing child abuse and was more likely to prosecute cases involving child abuse and sexual exploitation of children than cases involving adults. Some police stations included 'child friendly' family and child protection units and provided legal, medical, and psychosocial support for children".<sup>591</sup> The U.S. Department of State's 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report explained that "inconsistent with international law, Sudan's anti-trafficking legal framework required a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion to constitute a child sex trafficking offense, and therefore did not criminalize all forms of child sex trafficking".<sup>592</sup>

A UNICEF Sudan publication on Child Protection covering 2019 noted that:

According to family and child protection unit (FCPU) data, a total number of 2,796 children was subjected to sexual violence. In general, there is a decrease of offenses committed against children in 2019 compared to 2018. A 50 per cent decrease in sexual offences was reported from 2018 to 2019. The below chart indicates that there is a 32.6 per cent decrease in the number of non-sexual victims from 2018 to 2019 and a 36.1 per cent decrease in the number of sexual victims from 2018 to 2019. The FCPUs – particularly in Khartoum – intensified their outreach activities to reach communities but also children in schools.<sup>593</sup>

The same source further reported that "Through the family and child protection units (FCPUs), comprehensive and disaggregated data on crimes committed against, witnessed by or by children as perpetrators is available. An independent evaluation of the justice system and FCPUs revealed areas needing improvement, which consequently will advance the quality of services provided to the children. It recommended critical restructuring to establish a general directorate for FCPUs and additional financial and human resources".<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, p. 1

<sup>590</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, para. 17 and 19

<sup>591</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, 6., *Children*

<sup>592</sup> U.S. Department of State, [2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#), 25 June 2020

<sup>593</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Child Protection 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 11

<sup>594</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Child Protection 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 11

In his July 2019 report, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan noted that “Conflict-related rape and sexual violence against children remain a concern, especially as children are exposed to sexual violence during livelihood activities”.<sup>595</sup>

The UNOCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview summarised that:

Children, especially those affected by conflict and natural disasters, continue to experience grave violations of their rights, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Multiple factors such as localized displacement, tribal clashes, cyclical floods, malnutrition, social and political instability, gender inequality, and the effects of the current economic situation, contribute to the absence of protective environments and monitoring mechanisms. [...]

Children with disabilities, 15 per cent of the child population, continue to experience physical and social barriers in accessing essential services, and are more vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. [...]

Risks to children, such as child labor, trafficking, and physical and sexual violence – have been exacerbated by prolonged displacement; loss of property and livelihoods; and limited access to basic services as a result flash floods and localized armed conflict. [...]

Violence at home is reported both in IDP and returnee locations across Sudan, which indicates the need to strengthen family and community-based care for children. According to the Family and Child protection unit of the police (FCPU) over 5,000 children (30 per cent of which are girls) suffer from domestic violence, with the highest percentages in South Darfur, Blue Nile and Khartoum. Children in these states reported experiencing physical violence including violent discipline. Caregivers and children, especially adolescent boys and girls, need life skills support, quality psychosocial support or social protection services to help them cope. [...]

Pre-existing systemic weaknesses in delivering quality protection services such as psycho social support, legal assistance and health assistance have been exacerbated by high staff turnover among social workers; ailing case management systems; poorly maintained social service facilities; and lack of capacity of key child protection workers. [...]

Multiple other factors also contribute child protection risks, including limited availability of data to inform analysis and planning across all sectors to monitor and mitigate child protection risks; limited funding; restrictions on the scope of humanitarian programs and access which hampers the ability of child protection actors to assess and support children and caregivers. Poor quality of services is, within itself, a protection risk to children as they may cause further harm.<sup>596</sup>

In May 2020 the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa sent an urgent memo to the Attorney General of Sudan which stated that:

the lockdown policies implemented in response to the COVID -19 pandemic have triggered further violence against women and girls. The scale of violence has risen dramatically, putting hundreds of women and girls across the country at risk of losing their lives or suffering serious injury. According to our research, the lockdown measures have also increased the prevalence of forced, female-child marriage and the sexual exploitation of children.<sup>597</sup>

In December 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “According to the Sudanese coordinator of the international My Body Is My Body Child Abuse Prevention Programme, the number of reports about children being abused and molested in the country is growing. Coordinator Ghada Hussein told Radio Dabanga that during her recent field tour in the country, she found an increase in the rates of

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<sup>595</sup> Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 26 July 2019, *para. 59*

<sup>596</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020](#), 8 January 2020, *p. 49-51*

<sup>597</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [An urgent memo to deter gender-based violence \(GBV\) in Sudan](#), 27 May 2020



complaints filed in centres for the protection against child abuse. ‘In particular in rural areas, the number of reports is rising’<sup>598</sup>.

Also in December 2020 the BBC reported on the undercover filming at 23 Islamic educational institutions in Sudan, known as khalwas, of which there are 30,000 in Sudan.<sup>599</sup> It noted that “Some of the children who did not appear in our documentary told me they had been raped or experienced other forms of sexual abuse”.<sup>600</sup> Furthermore, “in recent years, videos of children being beaten in the schools have been widely shared on social media, and there have been stories in local media of sheikhs accused of rape in the khalwas. The media, the government and even human rights organisations have ignored this”.<sup>601</sup>

### 7.2.1. Two Areas

According to the U.S. Department of State’s 2019 report on human rights practices, “There were continuing reports that government security forces, progovernment and antigovernment militias, and other armed persons raped women and children throughout the year”.<sup>602</sup>

The UNOCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview summarised that:

Localized armed clashes by different tribes in Blue Nile, South Kordofan, Sennar, Port Sudan and parts of Darfur continued to pose major risks for children, making them vulnerable to abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect.<sup>603</sup>

The July 2020 report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict focuses on trends in and patterns of violations committed against children in Darfur, the Two Areas and Abyei between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2019.<sup>604</sup> It noted that “Access to areas controlled by SPLM-N in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile was constrained throughout the reporting period, despite ceasefires declared by the parties to the conflict and advocacy by the country task force and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for monitoring access to those areas. Therefore, the information contained in the present report does not reflect the full impact of armed conflict on children in the Sudan”.<sup>605</sup>

The same source further detailed that “During the reporting period, the country task force verified 20 grave violations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States and the Abyei Area, affecting 17 boys, 2 girls and 1 baby whose sex was unknown. The violations were attributed to unknown armed elements (18) and the Sudanese Armed Forces and SPLM-N (1 each). The violations occurred in 2017 (16), 2018 (1) and 2019 (3) in Southern Kordofan (16), Abyei (3) and Blue Nile (1)”.<sup>606</sup>

### 7.2.2. South Kordofan

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<sup>598</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Reports about child abuse increasing in Sudan](#), 26 December 2020

<sup>599</sup> BBC, [Going undercover in the schools that chain boys](#), 7 December 2020

<sup>600</sup> BBC, [Going undercover in the schools that chain boys](#), 7 December 2020

<sup>601</sup> BBC, [Going undercover in the schools that chain boys](#), 7 December 2020

<sup>602</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2019](#), 11 March 2020, *Section 1g Abuses in Internal Conflict*

<sup>603</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020](#), 8 January 2020, p. 49

<sup>604</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, p. 1

<sup>605</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, para. 19

<sup>606</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, para. 21

The July 2020 report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict focuses on trends in and patterns of violations committed against children in Darfur, the Two Areas and Abyei between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2019.<sup>607</sup> The same source further detailed that:

Two cases of rape affecting two girls were verified and attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces and unknown armed elements in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, both in 2019. On 28 April 2019, a 15-year-old girl was threatened at gunpoint and then raped on her farm by two unidentified armed men dressed in military uniform and riding camels at Elfaid Um Abd Allah town, Abu Kershola locality, Southern Kordofan.<sup>608</sup>

In December 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “In South Kordofan, incidents of child abuse increased during the long vacation period because of the COVID-19 pandemic”.<sup>609</sup>

### 7.2.3. Blue Nile

The UNOCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview summarised that:

Violence at home is reported both in IDP and returnee locations across Sudan, which indicates the need to strengthen family and community-based care for children. According to the Family and Child protection unit of the police (FCPU) over 5,000 children (30 per cent of which are girls) suffer from domestic violence, with the highest percentages in South Darfur, Blue Nile and Khartoum. Children in these states reported experiencing physical violence including violent discipline. Caregivers and children, especially adolescent boys and girls, need life skills support, quality psychosocial support or social protection services to help them cope.<sup>610</sup>

In December 2019 the HUDO Centre noted that “On 12th December 2019, police officer raped an underage girl in Madinah-12 of Geisan, Blue Nile. The police did not allow filing / opening the case”.<sup>611</sup>

The July 2020 report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict focuses on trends in and patterns of violations committed against children in Darfur, the Two Areas and Abyei between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2019.<sup>612</sup> The same source further detailed that:

Two cases of rape affecting two girls were verified and attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces and unknown armed elements in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, both in 2019. [...] On 12 August 2019, a 13-year-old girl was raped by a Sudanese Armed Forces soldier, in Damazine, Blue Nile. The soldier threatened the girl with his rifle while she was on her way home from the market, then raped her in a nearby empty house and left her bleeding. The incident was reported to the police and the victim received medical and psychosocial support. The perpetrator was arrested a day after the report and discharged of his duties. He was later sentenced to 20 years in prison.<sup>613</sup>

## 7.3. Access to education

For information on IDPs access to education, see [8.2.3.5. Access to education for IDPs](#).

### Situation in general throughout Sudan

<sup>607</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, p. 1

<sup>608</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, para. 41

<sup>609</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Reports about child abuse increasing in Sudan](#), 26 December 2020

<sup>610</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020](#), 8 January 2020, p. 49

<sup>611</sup> HUDO Centre, [Rape of Underage Girl By Police Officer in Guisan, Sudan](#), 30 December 2019

<sup>612</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, p. 1

<sup>613</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, para. 41

In an annual report covering 2019 UNICEF Sudan noted that “Approximately three million school-age children (around one third of the school-aged population; children between six and thirteen years) do not go to school. There are high disparities between the eighteen states in Sudan. The most vulnerable groups are girls, children affected by conflict, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), children in rural areas, and children from poor households. In addition, there are high drop-out rates, especially for girls and children living in rural areas”.<sup>614</sup> The same source described the following seven key challenges in detail [original emphasis]:

**Less than half of six-year-old children are eligible to start grade one and enroll in schools:** Poor access, poor retention and poor learning outcomes in basic education come from complex and mutually reinforcing patterns of disadvantage including: poverty, geographical disparities, gender inequities, disability, conflict, and displacement which all raise barriers to schooling in Sudan. Social-cultural beliefs related to child marriage, girls’ education and domestic work also pose a great threat to young girls in accessing, transitioning and completing the primary school cycle. Poverty and school fees also negatively affect retention and significantly contribute to high drop-out rates. The majority of schools in rural and nomadic areas suffer from a shortage of clean water and/or gender-sensitive sanitation facilities, which affects both attendance and learning. The scarcity of food also hinders retention and completion of basic school education in remote and refugee areas.

**Low government expenditure in education [...]**

**The quality of education is generally poor [...]**

**There is a shortage of basic school infrastructure, notably classrooms, school furniture, water and sanitation facilities [...]**

**School environments are often unsafe, with cases of bullying, gender-based violence, abuse, and corporal punishment happening in schools, but seldom officially reported [...]**

**There is an acute shortage of qualified teachers in Sudan with just over a quarter of teachers in primary schools meeting the minimum requirement for teaching [...]**

**Adolescents and youth present a new series of challenges [...].**<sup>615</sup>

A November 2019 28 Too Many *Sudan Country Profile* summarises the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey MICS data with regards to literacy and describes the structure of education in Sudan.<sup>616</sup>

Amnesty International reported that in July 2019 Sudan’s then ruling military authorities “ruled that schools must close indefinitely barely a month into a new school term, after security officers reportedly opened fire on 29 July during student protests killing six people, including four students under 18 years of age”.<sup>617</sup> Joan Nyanyuki, Amnesty International's Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes stated “It’s astonishing that the authorities in Sudan are attempting to deal with the recurring issue of armed officers using lethal force against protesters in this way. Closing schools and preventing children from receiving an education is misguided and unfair – pupils should not be punished because of the actions of an out-of-control paramilitary unit”.<sup>618</sup> According to Save the Children, there were 18 attacks on schools in Sudan in 2019.<sup>619</sup>

UNICEF reported in July 2020 that “Over 8.1 million students across Sudan have been hit hard with the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sudan has both the largest number and the highest rate of out-of-school children in the Middle East and North Africa region. Up to 3.6 million children aged 5 to 13 years are out-of-school – more than half are girls”.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>614</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Education 2019](#), 30 March 2020

<sup>615</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Education 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 7

<sup>616</sup> 28 Too Many, [Country Profile: FGM in Sudan](#), November 2019, *Education*, p. 72

<sup>617</sup> Amnesty International, [Sudan: Close down trigger-happy paramilitary force not schools](#), 31 July 2019

<sup>618</sup> Amnesty International, [Sudan: Close down trigger-happy paramilitary force not schools](#), 31 July 2019

<sup>619</sup> Save the Children, [Stop the War on Children: Killed and Maimed](#), 2020, p. 16

<sup>620</sup> UNICEF, [Fact Sheet, Sudan](#), July 2020, *Education within COVID-19*

Human Rights Watch noted also in July 2020 that “Girls everywhere are at a heightened risk of not resuming their education following school closures. They face unique pressures including gender bias, child marriage, and sexual violence and harassment in schools. In Sudan, these factors, among others, have kept 49 percent of primary school-age girls out of class. The prolonged closure of this school, first because of the pandemic, and now because of the military, means some girls may never go back to their classrooms again”.<sup>621</sup>

In its 2020 report the Global Coalition to Prevent Education from Attack (GCPEA) noted that:

GCPEA received four reports of military use of schools in 2019. For instance:

- A UN interagency humanitarian assessment mission to Abu Khasholar locality, South Kordofan state, was informed in June 2019 that the Khorieloleed Basic School for Boys had been used for military purposes by SAF since 2011, affecting 550 male students and six teachers. After prolonged negotiations with local community leaders, SAF partially vacated the school and learning resumed. However, the government forces continued to use three rooms in the school, which were meant to be two classrooms and an office. Due to the continued military use of a portion of the school, grade seven and eight pupils were relocated to the girls’ school. In addition, seven nearby schools were vandalized by unknown individuals; of the seven, two schools had what appeared to be bullet holes in the walls.<sup>622</sup>

In September 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that the Sudanese Minister of Education Mohamed El Amin El Tom announced that the opening of the new school year would be postponed until November 22, as the schools were “not ready yet”.<sup>623</sup> Reportedly “He specifically mentioned shortages of teachers desks, seats, and textbooks, and more in general a bad infrastructure”.<sup>624</sup> In November 2020, “Acting Minister of Health, Osama Abdelrahim, ruled out a second lockdown on Thursday, meanwhile the High Committee for Health Emergencies decided to postpone the opening of schools until further notice. The decision to keep schools closed was made during a committee meeting at the Republican Palace, to guarantee that health precautions are implemented by the educational institutions and logistics are in place to create a safe and healthy school environment”.<sup>625</sup>

An October 2020 UNOCHA map indicated that “In the context of COVID19, significant humanitarian assistance is required to ensure that children can attend school in a safe learning environment. In Sudan, approximately 30% of schools do not have any functional latrines and fewer than 50% of schoolchildren have access to soap and water for handwashing at school. Temporary handwashing stations, latrine and handwashing construction and long-term sustainable solutions for the provision of clean water to schools are required. This map shows the localities of Sudan most in need of WASH in Schools assistance, ranked by severity level according to the below indicators”.<sup>626</sup>

The World Bank reported in November 2020 that “approved an education program supported by a \$61.5 million grant from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for the Sudan Basic Education Support Project (BESP). This constitutes the largest education financing project in Sudan. The project will enable Sudan to sustain and improve basic education for children, with significant support to teachers, schools and communities, while strengthening government capacity to formulate policies and monitor progress at system level”.<sup>627</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Sudanese School Closed by Pandemic, Kept Closed by Armed Forces](#), 29 July 2020

<sup>622</sup> Global Coalition to Prevent Education from Attack, [Education Under Attack 2020](#), 2020, p. 223

<sup>623</sup> Radio Dabanga, [New Sudan school year postponed for two months](#), 16 September 2020

<sup>624</sup> Radio Dabanga, [New Sudan school year postponed for two months](#), 16 September 2020

<sup>625</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan school year postponed until COVID-19 precautions are in place](#), 21 November 2020

<sup>626</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Education Sector: WASH in schools infrastructure severity map](#), updated October 2020

<sup>627</sup> World Bank, [World Bank Project to Boost Reforms and Quality Education in Sudan Approved with \\$61.5 Million Grant from the Global Partnership for Education](#), 18 November 2020

### 7.3.1. Two Areas

According to a UNICEF Sudan publication covering the situation in 2019, “Since 2011, children in the armed-conflict zones of Jebel Marra, Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains have been denied access to most basic services, such as education, polio and measles vaccinations, nutrition services, and water and sanitation facilities and child protection”.<sup>628</sup>

In its September update 2019 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported that “Primary schools will re-open in October in South Kordofan and in November in Blue Nile after the three-month break taken for the cultivation season in the Areas. More than 50 percent of teachers are untrained, and a survey conducted in 2017 found that on average there was one teacher to 54 students’ ratio. Moreover, infrastructure in the Areas do not support the number of students with adequate teaching facilities and materials. Education is one of the top priorities for the people of the Two Areas and consistently one of the main reasons for leaving the areas for neighbouring countries. Not only does this separate child from their families for long periods of time but impacts the cultural exposure of these children”.<sup>629</sup>

In October 2019, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa held a three day convening in Khartoum to provide “a much-needed platform for women to share their experiences before, during and after the Revolution”.<sup>630</sup> The resulting publication noted with regards to women from the conflict areas “The struggle for women in the conflict areas has been categorically different. Women have been subjected to massive violence, including rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, many are displaced from their homes, have limited access to health and education services, and face ongoing food security issues”.<sup>631</sup>

The UNOCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview summarised that:

Concerns about the functionality and accessibility of schools remain, and the already weak education infrastructure has been worsened by the current economic situation. The political unrest and transition delayed the opening of the new school year by 2-3 weeks. Parents were concerned to send children to school in the immediate aftermath of the June events. Occupation of schools by displaced families and, in some cases, armed groups, remains a concern in parts of South and Central Darfur as well as South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Additionally, between May and September 2019, floods and heavy rains destroyed and damaged nearly 1,000 schools, including classrooms, teachers’ offices, fences, etc. Sanitation in schools is poor, with lack of clean drinking water and absence of minimum WASH standards contributing to water-borne diseases. The 2018 national WASH survey conducted by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF showed that only 51 per cent of schools had access to improved sanitation; 46 percent of schools had access to improved water sources; and handwashing facilities with soap were available in only 10 per cent of schools surveyed.

Literacy is particularly low among young women. Country-wide, some 45 per cent of women between 15 – 24 years are illiterate, with different levels across states (CCA 2016). Some 1.5 million school aged children need assistance to access or continue their education, particularly in Darfur, West and South Kordofan, Blue Nile, White Nile, Sennar, Kassala, and Gedaref. The variance in enrolment rates across the country is large, with the lowest pre-school enrolment rates in East Darfur (19 per cent) and West Darfur (24 per cent). Nomadic populations have even higher rates of out-of-school children. [...] An estimated 1.5 million children 4 - 16 years old need assistance to access or continue their education, mainly in Darfur, West and South Kordofan, Blue Nile, White Nile, Sennar, Kassala, and Gedaref. This

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<sup>628</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Social Policy 2019](#), 30 March 2020

<sup>629</sup> SKBN Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update September 2019](#), 19 October 2019, *Education*, p. 3

<sup>630</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [The Women’s Convening: Rebuilding Sudan “Nothing About Us, Without Us”](#), undated (accessed 10 January 2020), p. 9

<sup>631</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [The Women’s Convening: Rebuilding Sudan “Nothing About Us, Without Us”](#), undated (accessed 10 January 2020), p. 17 and 22

includes over 786,000 children in an extreme or catastrophic situation (severity level 4 and 5) and approximately 674,000 children in a severe situation (severity level 3). Approximately 55 per cent of children at pre-school age (4-5 years) are not in school because of lack of educational spaces, teachers, and learning and play materials. The major gaps are in the Darfur states, Blue Nile, Kassala, Gedaref and West Kordofan. Enrolment rates stand at 19 per cent in East Darfur, 24 per cent in West Darfur, and 29 per cent in Gedaref. Additionally, children with disabilities are particularly at risk, with a lack of well-equipped learning facilities with qualified staff to work with children with disabilities, and their vulnerability has increased further with the deteriorating economic situation. [...] Available information suggests that children living in inaccessible areas or with limited access by humanitarian partners are believed to be in extreme need (severity level 4), particularly in Jebel Marra, and parts of South Kordofan (Nuba mountains, Al Buram, Heiban and Umm Durein localities). [...] Access to and quality of education services in Sudan remains weak across the country. School facilities are in poor condition and very fragile when exposed to natural hazards. [...]

In South Kordofan, South Darfur, and West Darfur, 22 per cent of schools remain closed due to insecurity. Three schools were reportedly used by armed forces in Abu Karshola (South Kordofan), and Nertiti and Rokero localities (Central Darfur). In Kurmuk (Blue Nile), Dindro school is occupied by returnees who arrived from Ethiopia in 2019. [...]

The ongoing economic situation and lack of purchasing power continues to have a negative impact on education. With other expenses rising, families are less able to bear schooling costs, including school fees, learning materials, uniforms, and school meals. This increases the likelihood of de-prioritizing education to pay for food and medical expenses. In this context, girls are more at risk of dropout as families may seek alternatives for them, such as early marriage, domestic work, and other unsafe income-generating activities. Similarly, boys may drop out from school to engage in unsafe and exploitative labor to financially support their families.<sup>632</sup>

The July 2020 report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict focuses on trends in and patterns of violations committed against children in Darfur, the Two Areas and Abyei between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2019.<sup>633</sup> The same source further detailed that:

No attacks on schools or hospitals were verified during the reporting period. However, the military use of five schools and two hospitals was verified, all attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces in Southern Kordofan (2 schools, 1 hospital) and in Blue Nile (3 schools, 1 hospital). For instance, in May 2017, the Sudanese Armed Forces in Kurmuk locality, Blue Nile, used three schools (Kurmuk Secondary School for Boys, Kurmuk Secondary School for Girls, and Basic School in Sali village) and one health clinic in Jurt West village. The facilities were vacated in 2018 after the country task force's advocacy with the Ministry of Defence.<sup>634</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in its *South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot* of December 2019 that "In both the Two Areas, 202,000 school-age children are in need of education".<sup>635</sup>

The Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, following its visit to Abyei, Blue Nile State and South Sudan, reported in January 2020 that "Education is still repeatedly emphasised by people in [...] The Two Areas (Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile State) as the priority, particularly regarding female access to education and the availability of secondary education".<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020](#), 8 January 2020, p. 12, p. 18 and p. 37

<sup>633</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, p. 1

<sup>634</sup> UN Secretary-General, [Children and armed conflict](#), 29 June 2020, para. 46

<sup>635</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Sudan: South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot (Dec 2019)*

<sup>636</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, "There was no-one to protect us"](#), January 2020, *Executive Summary*, p. 4



The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “Occupation of schools by displaced families and, in some cases, armed groups, remains a concern in parts of South and Central Darfur as well as South Kordofan and Blue Nile”.<sup>637</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit noted that in April 2020 “Due to COVID-19 preparedness and response measures, all schools have been closed which has affected over 70,000 learners across the Two Areas. However, the huge gaps in this sector are still existent: scholastic materials, trained teachers, school feeding and teacher incentives. Communities struggle to keep schools running. Intervention is highly required”.<sup>638</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in August 2020 that “the education sector in the Two Areas faces lack of trained teachers, school supplies and learning materials, feeding and teacher incentives”.<sup>639</sup>

### 7.3.2. South Kordofan

Reporting on the situation of children in armed conflict between January and December 2019, a UN report found that “The military use by the Sudanese Armed Forces of two schools and one hospital in South Kordofan was verified”.<sup>640</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “In some areas, concerns remain about the functionality and accessibility of schools due to insecurity and schools being occupied by displaced families or armed groups. In South Kordofan [...] 22 per cent of schools remain closed due to insecurity. Three schools were reportedly used by armed forces in Abu Karshola (South Kordofan)”.<sup>641</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in its December 2019 update that “Schools opened for academic year 2020, but the lack of learning materials and school-feeding programmes, as well as parents’ inability to pay school fees remain barriers to access to education”.<sup>642</sup> Its January 2020 update considered that “Although the quality of education in South Kordofan is above that of other regions under the SPLM-N, the education sector continues to face challenges; for instance, transportation of candidates to examination centers, teacher incentives and other scholastic materials are lacking. Out of 268 schools, only 53 are being supported same with the secondary sector; out of 14 secondary schools in the area only 9 are receiving support”.<sup>643</sup>

The same source reported that in March 2020 “Schools closed due to COVID-19 as a measure to mitigate the spread of the virus. Education in the region is still poor and communities struggle to keep schools functioning. Support is needed in terms of teachers’ incentives, construction of classrooms, teachers’ training and empowerment parents to keep the schools running”.<sup>644</sup> Radio Dabanga

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<sup>637</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 1.2 *Impact of the Crisis*

<sup>638</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, *Education*, p. 4

<sup>639</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, August 2020](#), 22 September 2020, *Education*, p. 4

<sup>640</sup> UN General Assembly, [Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 9 June 2020, *The Sudan, South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*, para. 167

<sup>641</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.1 *Education*

<sup>642</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update December 2019](#), 31 December 2019

<sup>643</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update January 2020](#), 17 February 2020

<sup>644</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 202, *Education, South Kordofan*

reported that “After the easing of Covid-19 measures, schools reopened in South Kordofan on July 2 [2020]”.<sup>645</sup>

According to the HUDO Centre, in June 2020 the “RSF in Kadugli occupied the facilities of Elzahraa school for girls and turned them into a military training centre. The RSF soldiers intimidated civilians so that they do not come nearby. Yet, the pupils are meant to be at school since the term began on 2nd July 2020. This case was reported to the state governor but no measures were taken”.<sup>646</sup> Reporting on the same incident Human Rights Watch noted that:

On vehicles mounted with machine guns, armed paramilitaries took over a girls’ primary school on June 14, 2020, according to a local human rights organization.

The armed men, from Sudan’s Rapid Support Forces, dug a trench around the school, which is in Kadugli, the capital of Sudan’s Southern Kordofan state, and began using it as a training base.

Luckily, the school was not in use at the time. Like countless others around the world, it is currently closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the school was supposed to reopen for students to sit secondary-school entrance exams. The paramilitaries have still not let residents near the school, and the state governor has taken no action.<sup>647</sup>

An October 2020 UNOCHA map indicated that of 597 schools surveyed in South Kordofan, two of 17 localities shown were classified as having ‘catastrophic’ WASH needs.<sup>648</sup> This was calculated on two indicators; the first being that less than 70% of schools have an available water source (weighted at 60%) and the second being that less than 50% of schools have functional latrines (weighted at 40%).<sup>649</sup> Six other localities were described as having ‘extreme’ WASH needs.<sup>650</sup>

In November 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “The governor of South Kordofan, Hamid El Bashir, described the condition of education in his state as ‘tragic’ and said that only 12 per cent of those who enter basic school complete the eighth grade. The proportion of students who enrol in secondary school and universities is very low and South Kordofan secondary school students obtained the lowest scores in Sudan over a period of ten consecutive years”.<sup>651</sup>

### 7.3.3. Blue Nile

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit Coordination Unit reported that as of July 2019 “Most schools are now out of session, closing as usual from the end of June until October so children can participate in cultivation. Communities struggle to keep schools open and functioning in Blue Nile. At least two schools, one in Komo Ganza and one in Yabus, are known to have recently closed due to a lack of financial and community support. Without a financial incentive to remain in schools, teachers often leave during this time to make use of the planting season in order to provide for their families”.<sup>652</sup> The same source noted in November 2019 that “Primary Leaving Examinations for 2018/2019 were not held due to lack of paper. Communities struggle to keep schools functioning [...]

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<sup>645</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan’s Rapid Support Forces occupy school in South Kordofan](#), 12 July 2020

<sup>646</sup> HUDO Centre, Urgent appeal, [RSF forcefully occupied school facilities and used them for military training in Kadugli, Sudan](#), 9 July 2020

<sup>647</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Sudanese School Closed by Pandemic, Kept Closed by Armed Forces](#), 29 July 2020

<sup>648</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Education Sector: WASH in schools infrastructure severity map](#), updated October 2020

<sup>649</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Education Sector: WASH in schools infrastructure severity map](#), updated October 2020

<sup>650</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Education Sector: WASH in schools infrastructure severity map](#), updated October 2020

<sup>651</sup> Radio Dabanga, [South Kordofan Gov calls education system 'tragic'](#), 27 November 2020

<sup>652</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2019](#), 18 July 2019, *Education*, p. 3

Lack of scholastic materials, the fact that more than 50 per cent of teachers are untrained, and parents' inability to pay school fees remain challenges to education services".<sup>653</sup>

The HUDO Centre reported in its annual report covering 2019 that "For more than three (3) years, the authorities in Bau locality allowed PDF to set up a training centre in the premises of the only school in Dering village ignoring the rights of children. This forced some parents to send their children to Bakouri village school (approximately 30 km away)".<sup>654</sup>

In December 2019 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that "Resources for education in Blue Nile are scarce, likely creating a situation worse than South Kordofan for boys and girls. Teacher training opportunities are rare, poor community mobilization, incentives and scholastic materials are lacking. As per the previous report, 72 per cent of the students did not sit for 2018/ 2019 South Sudan National Exam and this impacted on the official opening of schools for 2019/ 2020 academic calendar in November".<sup>655</sup> The same source reported in its January 2020 update that "Education in Blue Nile is a challenge: communities struggle to keep schools functioning and this requires urgent intervention. While some schools are functioning, through community effort, scholastic materials, qualified teachers and teachers' incentives are lacking. Overall education sector in the region needs massive long term and quality support to sustain current communities' effort to keep the schools running. 5000 exercise books were donated to the Secretariat of Education by the Maban Education Bureau, although this quantity falls far short of demand when one considers the number of schools available in the region".<sup>656</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that "Approximately 55 per cent of children at pre-school age (4-5 years) are not in school because of lack of educational spaces, teachers, and learning and play materials. The major gaps are in the Darfur states, Blue Nile, Kassala, Gedaref and West Kordofan".<sup>657</sup>

In a report following its mission to Abyei, Blue Nile State and South Sudan, the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART) interviewed Samuel John, a village elder in Chali el Fil, Blue Nile, who stated: "The schools in the area have no books, no trained teachers, no blackboard, chalk or supplies. There is also no food at school so the children that do go to school often end up leaving halfway through to search for food".<sup>658</sup> Similarly, Unan Saman, Secretary of Information for Blue Nile was cited as stating: "The biggest problem in these areas [Blue Nile] is illiteracy as there are no trained teachers. Children are just scattered all day playing in the bush as there is no school for them to go to".<sup>659</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit noted that "On March 25 [2020], the governor announced measures on Covid-19 in the region among them was the closure of schools. This will impact the delivery of services in this sector. The status of education in Blue Nile region remains poor.

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<sup>653</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, November 2019](#), 16 December 2019, p. 3

<sup>654</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2019](#), 27 January 2020, 2.5.14 *Military training centre at a school in Dering*, p. 35

<sup>655</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update December 2019](#), 31 December 2019, *Education*, p. 3

<sup>656</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update January 2020](#), 17 February 2020

<sup>657</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.1 *Education*

<sup>658</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, "There was no-one to protect us"](#), January 2020, 2. *Sudan*, p. 16

<sup>659</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, "There was no-one to protect us"](#), January 2020, 2. *Sudan*, p. 17

There are 47 primary schools in region, but they lack trained teachers, teachers' incentives, scholastic materials and secondary schools are non-existent".<sup>660</sup>

An October 2020 UNOCHA map indicated that of 339 schools surveyed in Blue Nile state, three of seven localities were found to have 'severe' WASH needs.<sup>661</sup> This was calculated on two indicators; the first being that 80-89% of schools have an available water source (weighted at 60%) and the second that 66-79% of schools have functional latrines (weighted at 40%).<sup>662</sup>

In its September 2020 Humanitarian Update, the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit Coordination Unit noted that "Education in Blue Nile remains underfunded. There are 47 primary schools, as per 2020 report, but secondary and tertiary education is non-existent".<sup>663</sup> In its November 2020 Humanitarian Update, the same source noted that "The education sector in the Blue Nile is in need of learning materials, qualified teachers, and teacher incentives among others. Communities continue to struggle to keep the schools functioning".<sup>664</sup>

## 8. The socioeconomic / humanitarian situation

### 8.1. In Sudan

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.2. In the Two Areas](#), [8.3. In South Kordofan](#) and [8.4. In Blue Nile](#).

Reporting with regards to the situation in Sudan as a whole in an annual report covering 2019 UNICEF Sudan noted that "Socio-economic indicators remain low in a context of deep economic crisis. In the last decade, Sudan attained a lower middle-income country status. This standing, however, masks the disparity in child-specific social indicators between states. Sudan ranked 168th out of 189 countries and territories in the 2019 Human Development Index (HDI). More than 2.7 million children are malnourished – one of the highest numbers of malnourishment in the world – and a staggering three million children in Sudan are out-of-school".<sup>665</sup> The same report further highlighted:

National poverty levels rose drastically and while the vast majority of the population felt the effects of the crisis, the most vulnerable bore its brunt. Incomes, wages and purchasing power fell, driving six million people to food insecurity, with 58 per cent of households not able to meet basic daily food requirements. Vulnerable communities resorted to reducing meals, switching to cheaper and less nutritious foods, borrowing, and selling livelihood and household assets, to the detriment of future generations and at the risk of creating poverty traps. Others spent less on health and education and some also withdrew their children from schools.<sup>666</sup>

To put it into context, the source reported that "Since 2011, children in the armed-conflict zones of Jebel Marra, Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains have been denied access to basic services, such as

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<sup>660</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update](#), March 2020, *Education, Blue Nile*

<sup>661</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Education Sector: WASH in schools infrastructure severity map](#), updated October 2020

<sup>662</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Education Sector: WASH in schools infrastructure severity map](#), updated October 2020

<sup>663</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, November 2020](#), 28 December 2020

<sup>664</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, September 2020](#), 26 October 2020

<sup>665</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Education 2019](#), 30 March 2020, *Situation in Sudan*, p. 6

<sup>666</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Education 2019](#), 30 March 2020, *Situation in Sudan*, p. 6

education, polio and measles vaccinations, nutrition services, and water and sanitation facilities and child protection”.<sup>667</sup>

In February 2020 Radio Dabanga reported that “A shortage of fuel and high prices for petrol and diesel halted transportation between cities and villages in South Kordofan. Witnesses from Delling reported to Radio Dabanga that long queues of vehicles have lined up in front of petrol stations for more than a week”.<sup>668</sup> Moreover, the same source further noted: “Prices of food increased all over Sudan recently”.<sup>669</sup>

Middle East May reported in May 2020:

The cost of living in Sudan has soared over the past month, with key foods becoming more expensive just as the impact of the coronavirus pandemic increases concerns about health and hunger in the country.

A year since the tripling of the price of bread inflamed grievances against the 30-year rule of Omar al-Bashir, propelling protests that led to him being deposed, living costs have remained high and queues for bread are still a common sight in the country.

The inflation rate in April shot up to 99 percent, up from 82 percent the previous month, due to increased prices of grains, meat, milk and bread, according to the Sudanese Central Bureau of Statistics. Many in Sudan could soon face a food crisis, according to the US government's famine warning system, especially in Sudan's conflict zones in Darfur and South Kordofan, as well as the Red Sea and Kassala states.<sup>670</sup>

Reporting on the socioeconomic situation in the Sudan between 3 June and 8 September 2020 a UN report noted that “The socioeconomic situation, which remained dire and was compounded by the pandemic, continued to fuel instability”.<sup>671</sup> The same report further highlighted that “Women, children and elderly people in low-income households, as well as refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons have been disproportionately affected by the socioeconomic crisis. Despite the existence of a direct cash transfer scheme under the Sudan Family Support Programme, the country's social protection schemes are still scattered”.<sup>672</sup>

With regards to the humanitarian situation in the Sudan the same report stated: “The global COVID-19 pandemic has compounded deep-rooted poverty, the ongoing economic crisis and climate shocks and has generated rising humanitarian needs in the Sudan. Hunger has increased across the country and over 9.6 million people are severely food-insecure, an increase of 65 per cent compared with the same period in 2019”.<sup>673</sup>

The International Crisis Group further noted in its June 2020 report:

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<sup>667</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Education 2019](#), 30 March 2020, *Situation in Sudan*, p. 6

<sup>668</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Fuel shortage in South Kordofan, commodity prices rise in Sudan](#), 4 February 2020

<sup>669</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Fuel shortage in South Kordofan, commodity prices rise in Sudan](#), 4 February 2020

<sup>670</sup> Middle East Eye, [Sudan inflation jumps as country faces food crisis amid pandemic](#), 16 May 2020

<sup>671</sup> UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan](#), 17 September 2020, *II. Significant developments*, para. 12

<sup>672</sup> UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan](#), 17 September 2020, *II. Significant developments*, para. 14

<sup>673</sup> UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan](#), 17 September 2020, *II. Significant developments*, para. 21

Mounting economic turbulence is rocking Sudan's delicate political transition. Citizens yearning for an upturn in living conditions, following the popular revolt and military coup that toppled Omar al-Bashir in April 2019, may find their frustrations reignited. The installation of a civilian-military power-sharing government in August raised hopes of a dividend, but today's civilian cabinet led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok is struggling with a near bankrupt treasury. Meanwhile, his military partners in government retain the balance of real power, clinging to sources of money for which there is no accounting to Sudan's people. Unless Hamdok finds funds to boost social spending, he could see a resumption of destabilising protests.<sup>674</sup>

In addition the report noted that "Even with Bashir gone, life for ordinary Sudanese has grown only tougher over the past year, with citizens facing rampant inflation, long queues for basic commodities and major power outages" and that "COVID-19 is meanwhile crippling the economy and worsening the plight of many Sudanese. Lockdown measures, including a ban on mass gatherings and closure of the international airport, markets, schools and universities, have badly hurt the millions of Sudanese who work in the informal sector and rely on daily subsistence wages".<sup>675</sup>

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN reported that "Since July 2020, torrential rains and flooding combined with the historical overflow of the River Nile and its tributaries have affected 17 states out of 18 in the Sudan. Among the hardest hit are Blue Nile, Khartoum, North Darfur, River Nile, and Sennar States, while serious damage has also been reported in the Gadarif, Gezira, South Darfur and West Kordofan regions. In addition to taking place in the middle of the main agricultural season, these floods are the worst seen in decades".<sup>676</sup> UNOCHA reported in October 2020 that "More than 560 schools and thousands of health facilities have been damaged, compromising essential services to the population, especially in Blue Nile, North Darfur, Khartoum, West Darfur and Sennar" and that "Sudan continues to face its worst flooding in decades. Several weeks of torrential downpours have caused deaths, displacement, and massive destructions to key infrastructure and livelihoods across the country, with Blue Nile, Khartoum, North Darfur, Sennar, and West Darfur states amongst the hardest-hit".<sup>677</sup>

Reporting on the first six months of 2020, UNOCHA highlighted that "The humanitarian situation in Sudan has deteriorated rapidly in the first six months of 2020. The devastating combination of recurrent climate shocks, conflict, economic downturn, disease outbreaks, exacerbated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, has driven rising hunger across the country".<sup>678</sup>

In ACAPS's October 2020 *Risk Analysis* it reported:

Sudan has been in an economic crisis since 2018 (ACAPS 14/02/2019). Continuing violence, disease outbreaks, and fluctuating food security have created a baseline of serious vulnerability. 9.3 million people (23% of the total population) were projected to be food insecure during 2020 (OCHA 01/2020) – even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and related impacts, and the second wave of the regional desert locust outbreak (FAO 26/10/2020). In July, the IPC increased this number to 9.6 million people facing food insecurity, 65% more than the same period in 2019 and the highest hunger levels ever recorded in Sudan (IPC 07/2020). This estimate did not take into account the impact of severe nationwide flooding between July and September 2020, which affected 875,000 people (OCHA 28/10/2020). The combination of these factors has placed increasing economic pressure on Sudan and

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<sup>674</sup> International Crisis Group, [Financing the Revival of Sudan's Troubled Transition](#), 23 June 2020, I. Overview

<sup>675</sup> International Crisis Group, [Financing the Revival of Sudan's Troubled Transition](#), 23 June 2020, II. Economic Woes and the Threat to the Transition

<sup>676</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), [The Sudan, 2020 Flood Response Overview](#), 9 October 2020, Key points, p. 1

<sup>677</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 1 October 2020, p. 2

<sup>678</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Humanitarian Response Monitoring \(January to June 2020\)](#), p. 1



put it at high risk of acute food insecurity at unprecedented levels in the coming six months (Radio Dabanga 06/08/2020).<sup>679</sup>

The same source further highlighted through its analysis:

Almost a quarter of the total population is already food insecure. Dire levels of food insecurity could extend to more than a quarter of the population within the next six months, as a result of flood damages, COVID-19 and related measures, violence, and the desert locust outbreak (yet to reach its peak). The impact of these combined factors goes beyond a lack of adequate nutrition and could result in the disruption of all aspects [sic] of regular functioning of society".<sup>680</sup>

According to a UN report published in December 2020 reporting on developments related to the socioeconomic situation in the Sudan amongst others from 9 September to 23 November 2020:

The economic situation continued to deteriorate during the reporting period. Lockdowns due to the pandemic resulted in a severe decline in economic activity, a lowering of the gross domestic product and the loss of approximately 42 per cent of fiscal revenue. In urban areas, the pandemic also had a negative impact on the large informal economic sector, increasing the precarious situation of daily-wage earners, especially women, who grapple with poverty. [...]

Demonstrations against the dire economic situation and related hardships continued throughout the reporting period. Given continuing queues for bread, fuel and cooking gas, the resistance committees announced the escalation of mass protests. Demonstrations took place in the states of [...] Southern Kordofan [...] with protesters demanding the dismissal of the Minister for Trade, whom they blamed for the shortages.<sup>681</sup>

The same report further noted with regards to humanitarian assistance:

Since the beginning of the year, over eight million people have received some form of assistance. Across the country, approximately 3.68 million people received humanitarian assistance between July and September 2020. A total of 2.5 million people received food and livelihood assistance; 1.44 million people received water, sanitation and hygiene assistance; 1.13 million people received education assistance; 708,000 people received health-care services; and 29,000 survivors of gender-based violence were provided with services. Children also received essential nutrition and protection support.<sup>682</sup>

Reviewing the year 2020, the HUDO Centre provided the following analysis:

The general economic situation has not been good and it was worsened by the measures (like the lockdown) put in place by government to control the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the first half of the year. This plus government mismanagement of public resources and injustice all contributed to the hard economic situation.<sup>683</sup>

The International Rescue Committee's *Watchlist 2021* stated:

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<sup>679</sup> ACAPS, [Global Risk Analysis](#), October 2020, p. 9

<sup>680</sup> ACAPS, [Global Risk Analysis](#), October 2020, p. 10

<sup>681</sup> UN Security Council, [Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 1 December 2020, II. Significant developments, paras. 18/19

<sup>682</sup> UN Security Council, [Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 1 December 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 28

<sup>683</sup> HUDO Centre, [Report on the human rights situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan, January – December 2020](#), 28 January 2021, 1.3 A brief Background, p. 3

COVID-19 will put further pressure on the fragile political transition process and hamper Khartoum's ability to address the deepening economic crisis, which is driving record levels of food insecurity. Sudan has been ruled by a transitional government since August 2019, when a power-sharing agreement was reached. COVID-19 is exacerbating the country's economic crisis, further complicating the transition and driving up humanitarian needs. Inflation rates reached 212% in September 2020, compared to 57% at the start of the year [...]

The price of the local food basket increased by 200% in 2020 [...] in a country where 90% of families already spent most of their income on food before the pandemic [...]

As a result, Sudan is seeing record levels of food insecurity.<sup>684</sup>

### 8.1.1. Access to health care (in Sudan in general)

In May 2020 Human Rights Watch noted that "Sudan's health sector already faced serious challenges of corruption, underfunding, and mismanagement. Even before COVID-19, there was a shortage of nurses, critical care beds, and reportedly only 80 ventilators in the whole country. Donations of testing kits, masks, and protective gear from Chinese billionaire Jack Ma and the Alibaba foundation could ease the challenge but won't be sufficient".<sup>685</sup>

A July 2020 Amnesty International report on the failure to protect healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic cited a healthcare worker from Khartoum State noting with regards to the situation in Sudan:

In Sudan, the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors (CCSD) reported that they had recorded 28 attacks on health workers across the country between March and May 2020. One doctor told Amnesty International, "I was witness to an incident ... during the COVID 19 measures. The hospital staff ordered the patient's companion to not enter the hospital because of the virus. The companion is a member of security force, attacked the medical doctor and injured him".<sup>686</sup>

Another healthcare worker from Khartoum State added:

"During the past three months, there is a noticeable increase in the number of attacks on the medical staff. COVID-19 related stress, anxiety, and panic among the population could be significant factors. If there is a shortage of ventilators, doctors were to blame. If the patient is suspected of having COVID-19, doctors were to blame. Relatives of the patients usually attribute any mistakes and shortages by the MoH [Ministry of Health] directly to the doctors and physically and verbally attack them". Doctor, Sudan<sup>687</sup>

The latest UNOCHA *Sudan Situation Report* of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021 noted that:

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sudan in mid-March [2020], the Government confirmed that 26,898 people contracted the virus, including 1,798 who died from the disease, as of 27 January 2021. All 18 states have reported cases, with Khartoum, Aj Jazirah, and Gedaref amongst the hardest-hit. Although Khartoum State accounts for most of all reported cases in the country, the majority of all COVID-19-related deaths have been reported from outside the capital. Recently, Sudan has seen a significant increase in the number of cases being reported each day up from about 10 cases per day at the start of November to between 200-300 cases a day later in November and early December. By the end of December 2020, the number of average cases per day reduced to about 200. From the second

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<sup>684</sup> International Rescue Committee, [Watchlist 2021](#), Sudan, p. 54

<sup>685</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Sudan Should Not Let COVID-19 Scuttle Transition](#), 1 April 2020

<sup>686</sup> Amnesty International, [Exposed, Silenced, Attacked: Failures to Protect Health and Essential Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), 13 July 2020, p. 39

<sup>687</sup> Amnesty International, [Exposed, Silenced, Attacked: Failures to Protect Health and Essential Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), 13 July 2020, p. 38

week of January 2021, the average number of daily cases went down to about 100, according to FMoH data.

Sudan's health system was under extreme stress prior to the pandemic and has been further stretched to prevent, contain and treat COVID-19. Approximately 81 per cent of the population do not have access to a functional health centre within two hours of their home and the situation is getting worse, as many clinics are closing during the pandemic. [...]

Sudan has only 184 beds in intensive care units (ICU) and approximately 160 of them have ventilators, according to WHO. Only four ICU doctors—three in Khartoum and one in Gezira State— are prepared to deal with patients infected with the virus, according to WHO.

Across Sudan, clinics and hospitals lack critical medicines, as they can no longer afford to stock them due to the economic crisis and also due to disruption in the supply chains. The situation makes it extremely challenging for the Government and aid organizations to respond to the pandemic and maintain essential services. Women and children have been especially affected. Maternal health clinics have closed, reproductive health services have been interrupted and over 110,000 children are missing out essential vaccines.

Prevention to COVID-19 is also a challenge in Sudan, as 63 per cent of the population do not have access to basic sanitation, 23 per cent do not have access to a hand-washing facility with soap and water and 40 per cent do not have access to basic drinking water services. The risk of transmissions and increased humanitarian needs are especially high amongst the nearly 2 million internally displaced people (IDP) and 1.1 million refugees living in collective sites or host communities across the country and the population living in urban slums.<sup>688</sup>

### **8.1.2. Food insecurity (in Sudan in general)**

A July 2020 article by Save the Children reported that:

1.1 million children in Sudan are going hungry, as the country faces its worst food crisis in recent years. The number of children who are living through emergency levels of food insecurity has doubled since 2019, with half a million more children at risk of suffering the severe consequences of extreme hunger compared to the same time last year.

A combination of spiralling food prices, inflation, and job losses due to the impact of COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on Sudanese families. In total, an estimated 9.6 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from

The lockdown measures designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have disrupted markets and cross-border trading, crippling livelihoods and pushing-up prices. As of June 2020, cereal prices tripled compared to last year and are around four times higher than the last five-year average.

Save the Children staff say even the most basic food items are out of reach.<sup>689</sup>

Reporting on the first six months of 2020, UNOCHA highlighted that “More than 9.6 million people, almost a quarter of the entire population of Sudan, are expected to be severely food insecure during the lean season (June to September), according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report. The figure, the highest ever recorded in the history of the IPC analysis in the country, represents an increase of 65 per cent compared with the same period last year”.<sup>690</sup>

The latest UNOCHA *Sudan Situation Report* of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021 noted that:

COVID-19 is having direct and indirect impacts on food access in Sudan, according to the latest food security alert report from FEWS NET. Some families lost their incomes at a time where they also face higher living costs, including due to increasing medical costs related to the pandemic, as well as the

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<sup>688</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Situation Report](#), Last updated: 17 January 2021, *Sudan – Trends, The country continues to face the health and humanitarian consequences of COVID-19*

<sup>689</sup> Save the Children, [NUMBER OF SUDANESE CHILDREN FACING EXTREME HUNGER DOUBLES TO 1.1 MILLION DUE TO IMPACT OF COVID-19](#), 9 July 2020

<sup>690</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Humanitarian Response Monitoring \(January to June 2020\)](#), p. 1

ongoing economic crisis. The necessary COVID-19-related containment measures have also indirect negative impacts, limiting many poor households' physical access to areas where they typically earn income from daily labour.

Before COVID-19, about 9.3 million people were already in need of humanitarian support across Sudan. Years of conflict, recurrent climatic shocks and disease outbreaks continue to affect the lives and livelihoods of many Sudanese. The situation is worsening and now over 9.6 million people are facing severe hunger, in a country with already high malnutrition rates. Because of the fragile economy, more and more people are unable to meet their basic needs, as high inflation continues to erode families' purchasing power. An average local food basket takes up at least 75 per cent of household income.<sup>691</sup>

## 8.2. In the Two Areas

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1. In Sudan](#), [8.3. In South Kordofan](#) and [8.4. In Blue Nile](#).

### 8.2.1. Access to health care (Two Areas)

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1.1. Access to health care \(in Sudan in general\)](#), [8.3.1. Access to health care \(South Kordofan\)](#) and [8.4.1. Access to health care \(Blue Nile\)](#).

Reporting on its activities in 2019, UNICEF Sudan's *Health 2019* report noted with regards to life-saving vaccinations that "an estimated 161,000 children under the age of five in three conflict-affected and inaccessible areas in Blue Nile, Jebel Marra (Darfur) and the Nuba Mountains (South Kordofan) have not been reached systematically, if at all, with immunizations and other basic services since 2011".<sup>692</sup>

In an October 2019 statement at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on "Women and peace and security", Ms Alaa Salah, student, activist and a member of MANSAM and on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security stated that:

Women and girls, especially in rural, poor and conflict-affected communities and displaced camps, have had limited access to education, health, and livelihoods for generations [...] Women and girls lack access to adequate, high-quality health care, as illustrated by high rates of maternal mortality. This is all made worse by a lack of sexual and reproductive rights, which undermines bodily autonomy and women's right to choose when and how many children to have; women in Sudan have an average of 4 children, many having their first child before the age of 18—when they are still children themselves.<sup>693</sup>

The Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, following its visit to Abyei, Blue Nile State and South Sudan, reported in January 2020 that "After 3 decades of civil war, access to healthcare and education in the Two Areas is extremely limited or non-existent. Preventable illnesses such as malaria, diarrhoea and coughing continue to pose life-threatening risks, mostly to pregnant women and children".<sup>694</sup> The same report further noted that "Access to reproductive health services and safe childbirth facilities remains extremely limited and women and girls continue to be exposed to unwanted pregnancy, teenage pregnancy, sexually-transmitted infections and the risk of maternal mortality".<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Situation Report](#), Last updated: 17 January 2021, *Sudan – Trends, The country continues to face the health and humanitarian consequences of COVID-19*

<sup>692</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Health 2019](#), 30 March 2020, p. 6

<sup>693</sup> Ms. Alaa Salah, [Statement by Ms. Alaa Salah at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security](#), 29 October 2019

<sup>694</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, "There was no-one to protect us"](#), January 2020, 2. *Sudan*, p. 15

<sup>695</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, "There was no-one to protect us"](#), January 2020, 2. *Sudan*, p. 15

With regards to COVID-19 and the situation in the Two Areas, Jacob Kurtzer, Interim Director and Senior Fellow and Nadia Schaaphok, Intern, at the Center for Strategic & International Studies stated in August 2020 that:

Covid-19 has also worsened the humanitarian situation in Darfur and the Two Areas (the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states). The first case of Covid-19 in Sudan was confirmed on March 13, 2020; as of July 8, there are 10,250 confirmed cases, including 650 fatalities across all 18 states. The majority of cases and fatalities are concentrated in Khartoum, but several reports have cautioned that the virus has spread unchecked in the rest of the country. Questions abound regarding the accuracy of official numbers; outside of Khartoum, there is very limited testing capacity. The risk posed to the Two Areas and Darfur is especially high due to decades of disinvestment, conflict, and isolation that has left populations more vulnerable and with limited access to a very weak health infrastructure. The economic fallout from Covid-19 mitigation measures and Sudan's agricultural lean season (June through September) have coincided, leaving more people at risk for famine, especially among IDPs in Jebel Marra and the Two Areas.<sup>696</sup>

### **8.2.2. Food insecurity (Two Areas)**

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1.2. Food insecurity \(in Sudan in general\)](#) and [8.3.2. Food insecurity \(South Kordofan\)](#) and [8.4.2. Food insecurity \(Blue Nile\)](#).

A July 2020 article by Save the Children reported that:

1.1 million children in Sudan are going hungry, as the country faces its worst food crisis in recent years. The number of children who are living through emergency levels of food insecurity has doubled since 2019, with half a million more children at risk of suffering the severe consequences of extreme hunger compared to the same time last year.

A combination of spiralling food prices, inflation, and job losses due to the impact of COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on Sudanese families. In total, an estimated 9.6 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from

The lockdown measures designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have disrupted markets and cross-border trading, crippling livelihoods and pushing-up prices. As of June 2020, cereal prices tripled compared to last year and are around four times higher than the last five-year average.

Save the Children staff say even the most basic food items are out of reach.<sup>697</sup>

Reporting on the first six months of 2020, UNOCHA highlighted that "More than 9.6 million people, almost a quarter of the entire population of Sudan, are expected to be severely food insecure during the lean season (June to September), according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report. The figure, the highest ever recorded in the history of the IPC analysis in the country, represents an increase of 65 per cent compared with the same period last year".<sup>698</sup>

The latest UNOCHA *Sudan Situation Report* of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021 noted that:

COVID-19 is having direct and indirect impacts on food access in Sudan, according to the latest food security alert report from FEWS NET. Some families lost their incomes at a time where they also face higher living costs, including due to increasing medical costs related to the pandemic, as well as the ongoing economic crisis. The necessary COVID-19-related containment measures have also indirect

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<sup>696</sup> Kurtzer, J. and Schaaphok, N. (Center for Strategic & International Studies), [Sudan at a Crossroads: A Humanitarian Opening?](#), 5 August 2020

<sup>697</sup> Save the Children, [NUMBER OF SUDANESE CHILDREN FACING EXTREME HUNGER DOUBLES TO 1.1 MILLION DUE TO IMPACT OF COVID-19](#), 9 July 2020

<sup>698</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Humanitarian Response Monitoring \(January to June 2020\)](#), p. 1

negative impacts, limiting many poor households' physical access to areas where they typically earn income from daily labour.

Before COVID-19, about 9.3 million people were already in need of humanitarian support across Sudan. Years of conflict, recurrent climatic shocks and disease outbreaks continue to affect the lives and livelihoods of many Sudanese. The situation is worsening and now over 9.6 million people are facing severe hunger, in a country with already high malnutrition rates. Because of the fragile economy, more and more people are unable to meet their basic needs, as high inflation continues to erode families' purchasing power. An average local food basket takes up at least 75 per cent of household income.<sup>699</sup>

### 8.2.3. Situation for IDPs (Two Areas)

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.3.3. Situation for IDPs \(South Kordofan\)](#) and [8.4.3. Situation for IDPs \(Blue Nile\)](#).

Not mentioning specifically IDPs based in South Kordofan or Blue Nile, the July 2020 briefing paper published by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) considered that "Sudanese authorities have used torture and other forms of ill-treatment to intimidate and silence political dissent. Victims of torture and ill-treatment included [...] internally displaced persons (IDPs)".<sup>700</sup>

#### 8.2.3.1. Displacement figures for IDPs

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that in Sudan "There were 2.1 million people living in displacement in the country as of the end of 2019 [...] More than 83,000 new conflict displacements were recorded in 2019, and around 272,000 new disaster displacements, most of them triggered by floods".<sup>701</sup>

According to figures assembled by the German Bundeszentrale fuer politische Bildung and based on figures taken from "Sudan Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) (2019). Official Figures for Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees in Sudan 2019, A Report by the Office of the General Commissioner", Sudan had 1,864,195 million IDPs at the end of 2019, of which 168,084 (9%) were in South Kordofan and 47,392 (2.5%) in Blue Nile.<sup>702</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that "As in recent years, in 2019 there has been a reduction in new displacement, mainly due to lower levels of conflict and the government's disarmament of militias in Darfur. However, there are still pockets of conflict and localized displacement in South Darfur, Central Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan [...] In Kurmulk (Blue Nile), Dindro school is occupied by returnees who arrived from Ethiopia in 2019".<sup>703</sup>

The same report further noted that Sudan has 1.8 million IDPs and 298,000 returnees.<sup>704</sup> Of the 1.8 million IDPs, 170,000 are situated in South Kordofan and 80,000 in Blue Nile.<sup>705</sup>

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<sup>699</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan Situation Report](#), Last updated: 17 January 2021, *Sudan – Trends, The country continues to face the health and humanitarian consequences of COVID-19*

<sup>700</sup> ACIPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020

<sup>701</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), [Overview](#), Undated [Last accessed: 11 January 2021]

<sup>702</sup> German Bundeszentrale fuer politische Bildung, [More than a Side Effect: Internal Displacement in Sudan](#), 21 April 2020

<sup>703</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.2 ES/NFIs

<sup>704</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 1.7 Severity of Needs by Vulnerable Group

<sup>705</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 1.7 Severity of Needs by Vulnerable Group



### **8.2.3.2. Access to basic services for IDPs**

Very limited information was found specific on the situation of IDPs and their access to basic services (incl. food, shelter, health services and education) in the Two Areas.

In an October 2019 statement at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on “Women and peace and security”, Ms Alaa Salah, student, activist and a member of MANSAM and on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security stated that:

Women and girls, especially in rural, poor and conflict-affected communities and displaced camps, have had limited access to education, health, and livelihoods for generations [...] Women and girls lack access to adequate, high-quality health care, as illustrated by high rates of maternal mortality. This is all made worse by a lack of sexual and reproductive rights, which undermines bodily autonomy and women’s right to choose when and how many children to have; women in Sudan have an average of 4 children, many having their first child before the age of 18—when they are still children themselves.<sup>706</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “The most severe needs [in the areas of emergency shelter and household items] are in Tawila (North Darfur) and Heiban (South Kordofan). Other localities in extreme need (severity level 4) are in Central, East, North, South, and West Darfur, and West Kordofan”.<sup>707</sup>

### **8.2.3.3. Access to shelter for IDPs**

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2019 noted that “As in previous years, neither the Bashir government nor the CLTG government established formal IDP or refugee camps in Khartoum or the Two Areas”.<sup>708</sup>

### **8.2.3.4. Access to health care services for IDPs**

In April 2020 the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) noted its ‘deep concern’ “about the potential impact that COVID-19 could have on the already vulnerable thousands of Sudanese internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Sovereign Council together with armed resistance movements must work together to find solutions to contain the outbreak. We call upon the Sovereign Council and Sudanese armed movements to urgently come up with an agreed action plan designed to protect internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the conflict zones of Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan from the spread of COVID-19”.<sup>709</sup>

### **8.2.3.5. Access to education for IDPs**

Despite not reporting about IDPs in the Two Areas specifically, in an annual report covering 2019 UNICEF Sudan noted that “Approximately three million school-age children (around one third of the school-aged population; children between six and thirteen years) do not go to school. There are high disparities between the eighteen states in Sudan. The most vulnerable groups are girls, children affected by conflict, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), children in rural areas, and children

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<sup>706</sup> Ms. Alaa Salah, [Statement by Ms. Alaa Salah at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security](#), 29 October 2019

<sup>707</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.2 ES/NFIs

<sup>708</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, Section 2., e. Internally Displaced Persons

<sup>709</sup> African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS), [Sudan, An urgent call to protect internally displaced persons from COVID-19 threat](#), 20 April 2020

from poor households. In addition, there are high drop-out rates, especially for girls and children living in rural areas”.<sup>710</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “The availability of skilled teachers remains a concern. Most teachers in IDP camps are volunteers, and there is an uneven distribution of teachers. This is also the case for schools in refugee camps in [...] the Kordofans”.<sup>711</sup>

UNOCHA’s *Humanitarian Response Plan Sudan* published in July 2020 noted with regards to the effect of COVID-19 on food security: “Increased numbers of people, including protracted IDPs in [...] Blue Nile and South Kordofan, and poor households in urban and rural areas most affected by COVID-19 control measures, are expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food security outcomes through September 2020. Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are expected among IDPs in conflict-affected areas of [...] SPLM-N areas of South Kordofan [...] during the peak of the lean season between June and September 2020, according to FEWSNET”.<sup>712</sup>

#### **8.2.4. Situation for Returnees (Two Areas)**

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1. In Sudan](#), [8.2. In the Two Areas](#), [8.3.4. Situation for Returnees \(South Kordofan\)](#) and [8.4.4. Situation for Returnees \(Blue Nile\)](#).

In response to the question what the current situation is like for returnees to South Kordofan, Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre and interviewed for this report in February 2021 responded:

Those who moved to SPLM areas (because there was no IDPs camp within the government territory and Nuba people were targeted by them they preferred to go to the SPLA areas) had started to return back to their villages after the revolution thinking it’s safe now but, they have faced arrests. This hindered the move of others after hearing the arrest of arrivals  
These returnees who managed to settle – they have nothing. Nothing to access.<sup>713</sup>

##### **8.2.4.1. Access to basic services for returnees**

Very limited information was found specific on the situation of returnees and their access to basic services (incl. food, shelter, health services and education) in the Two Areas.

The Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, following its visit to Abyei, Blue Nile State and South Sudan, reported in January 2020 that “The increase in returnees to the Two Areas (partly driven by events in Khartoum) is expected to put pressure on already over-stretched resources”.<sup>714</sup>

Reporting on the situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile between 27 September 2019 and 16 July 2020, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan reported that “some internally displaced persons have returned to their homes voluntarily, despite the lack of basic services including water, electricity, adequate housing, health facilities and education. Reportedly, some

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<sup>710</sup> UNICEF Sudan, [Education 2019](#), 30 March 2020

<sup>711</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.1 Education

<sup>712</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Response Plan Sudan](#), 19 July 2020, *Context of the Crisis, Impact on People*

<sup>713</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

<sup>714</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, “There was no-one to protect us”](#), January 2020, 2. Sudan, p. 16

returnees found that their lands had been sold by the ousted Government to large-scale farmers who have power and wealth, leaving the small-scale farmers empty-handed”.<sup>715</sup>

### 8.3. In South Kordofan

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1. In Sudan](#) and [8.2. In the Two Areas](#).

In September 2020 UNHCR reported that heavy “caused flash floods [*sic*] and rivers like the Nile [...] bursting its banks and leaving thousands – including refugees [...], internally displaced people and locals - homeless and in desperate need of humanitarian support. The UN estimates that at least 800,000 people have been affected with over 100 people killed. Extensive assessments by UNHCR have revealed that some 125,000 refugees and internally displaced people are among those affected. The most affected states are West, South and North Kordofan [...] Vulnerable refugees and locals alike have been hardest hit by the extreme weather. Many houses, critical water points and latrines across the country have been destroyed or damaged”.<sup>716</sup>

#### 8.3.1. Access to health care (South Kordofan)

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1.1. Access to health care \(in Sudan in general\)](#) and [8.2.1. Access to health care \(Two Areas\)](#).

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “The lowest availability of medicines was in [...] South Kordofan (31 per cent)”.<sup>717</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in March 2020 that “The healthcare system in the region remains fragile. There are significant shortages of essential drugs across the region”.<sup>718</sup>

According to a March 2020 Briefing from the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa:

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Sudan’s maternal mortality rate has fallen from 744 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 311 in 2015. However, women and girls in conflict-affected areas like rebel-held Southern Kordofan do not have access to donor supported government health services that have contributed to this decline. No recent data on maternal mortality is available for the region, but a joint research effort by the UN and the Sudanese government in 2006, put Southern Kordofan’s maternal mortality rate at 503 per 100,000 live births, compared to 91 per 100,000 births in the Northern state and 213 per 100,000 births in Southern Kordofan’s neighboring Northern Kordofan state. [...]

There is a high rate of maternal deaths in the marginalized states of Darfur and in South Kordofan state. Women and girls living in rebel-held areas of the Nuba mountains of Southern Kordofan have little or no access to contraception, adequate antenatal care or emergency obstetric care, leaving them unable to control the number and spacing of their children, and exposing them to serious health complications and sometimes death. Reduced access to health services is one of the many devastating consequences of six years of armed conflict between Sudanese government forces and the armed wing of the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-North), a spin-off of the former southern Sudanese liberation movement and now ruling party of independent South Sudan. Healthcare access is

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<sup>715</sup> UN Human Rights Council, [Situation of human rights in the Sudan Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan](#), 30 July 2020, *H. Human rights situation in conflict-affected areas, 2. South Kordofan and Blue Nile, para. 63*

<sup>716</sup> UNHCR, [Massive floods in Sudan impact thousands of refugees](#), 24 September 2020

<sup>717</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.4 Health

<sup>718</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Health and nutrition, South Kordofan*

low in the four areas currently under the control of rebels and worse than in other parts of Sudan because of marginalization by Sudan's government and earlier conflicts.

Healthcare access is low in the four areas currently under the control of rebels and worse than in other parts of Sudan because of marginalization by Sudan's government and earlier conflicts. This is not a new phenomenon and was the case before the current war began in 2011. The poor humanitarian situation there cannot be entirely blamed on the conflict, however, unlawful government bombardment, destruction of clinics, poor distribution of medicines, and hard-to-cross frontlines have all further reduced access to healthcare.

In rebel-held Nuba areas of Heiban, Delami and Um Dorein, antenatal care from skilled and equipped health workers is available at two hospitals and their outreach clinics, both operating without government authorization. However, many women and girls live too far away to access emergency care or live on the other side of frontlines of the conflict, making it too hazardous to travel to the facilities. Most pregnant women must rely on local birth attendants who have no formal training, or trained midwives who have not been able to acquire new or sterile equipment since the conflict began. Women and girls experiencing complications during labor may have to travel for days, often on dangerous routes including across frontlines, to get emergency obstetric care. Family planning is not available except in rare instances. The rebel SPLM/A-North administration provides the bulk of health care through a network of some 175 clinics, but these do not distribute contraception, including condoms. One agency provides three-month injectable contraception but restrictions imposed on them by the local rebels require patients' husbands to give permission before they can provide the contraception to women.<sup>719</sup>

In June 2020, "Local clinics have reported being overwhelmed by high migration of returnees and IDPs from Kadugli. Access to trained medical staff and drug supply is highly limited for the population. Communities are walking long distances in search of medical care. More medical capacity is sorely needed to address the needs of over a million people in SPLM-N areas of South Kordofan", reported the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit.<sup>720</sup>

In July 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that "According to the Secretariat of Health, malaria, diarrhea, coughing and STDs have been registered across South Kordofan. The increase in malaria cases is due to the onset of the rains. Some clinical facilities have been equipped with drugs, however, these are not enough to meet the high demand exacerbated by the influx of returnees, IDPs and people coming from government-controlled areas who find services in SPLM-N controlled areas affordable".<sup>721</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in November 2020 that "Based on the report from the Secretariat of Health (SoH), the region has run out of essential drugs for malaria treatment, antibiotics, RUTF, penicillin among others".<sup>722</sup>

### **8.3.2. Food insecurity (South Kordofan)**

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1.2. Food insecurity \(in Sudan in general\)](#) and [8.2.2. Food insecurity \(Two Areas\)](#).

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<sup>719</sup> Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, [Gender Briefing-Sudan](#), 10 March 2020, p. 15

<sup>720</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, June 2020](#), 21 July 2020, *Health and nutrition*, p. 3/4

<sup>721</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Health and nutrition*, p. 4

<sup>722</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, November 2020](#), 28 December 2020, *Health and nutrition, South Kordofan*

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2019 noted that "Significant numbers of farmers were prevented from planting their fields due to insecurity, leading to near-famine conditions in parts of South Kordofan".<sup>723</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that "The highest prevalence of food insecurity is in 6 states that - for the first time - have been classified as IPC phase 3 and above: South Kordofan (40 per cent prevalence)".<sup>724</sup> Similarly, UNOCHA's *Humanitarian Response Plan* stated in the same month: "Some of the highest prevalence of food insecurity is in the conflict-affected states of South Kordofan, and Central, North, South, and West Darfur".<sup>725</sup>

In April 2020, the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit noted that "The food security situation remains poor among the entire population due to previous poor crop production, heavy rain and floods that damaged crops [...] In addition, a high influx of returnees (49,561 in total, of which 22,049 are male and 27,512 are female) in March [2020] from government-controlled areas and camps in South Sudan has exacerbated food insecurity. As a result, the population is in dire need of humanitarian aid".<sup>726</sup>

In July 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that "most households have run out of food stocks as prices of food commodities continue to rise due to COVID-19 related restrictions, making it a challenge for the most vulnerable and low-income households to afford food items from local markets".<sup>727</sup>

### 8.3.3. Situation for IDPs (South Kordofan)

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.2.3. Situation for IDPs \(Two Areas\)](#).

Not mentioning specifically IDPs based in South Kordofan or Blue Nile, the July 2020 briefing paper published by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) considered that "Sudanese authorities have used torture and other forms of ill-treatment to intimidate and silence political dissent. Victims of torture and ill-treatment included [...] internally displaced persons (IDPs)".<sup>728</sup>

In response to the question what the current situation is like for IDPs in South Kordofan, Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre and interviewed for this report in February 2021 responded:

Since this war erupted again in 2011, President Al-Bashir and his government had a very clear policy - no IDP camps. They refused any kind of IDP camps. At the same time the Nuba Mountains were a no-go area for NGOs  
Government forced IDPs to stay within towns/ villages' neighbourhoods. If you have family there you need to stay with your family. If you have relatives to stay with you are expected to stay there with your

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<sup>723</sup> U.S. Department of State, [Sudan 2019 Human Rights Report](#), 11 March 2020, Section 1., e. *Internally Displaced Persons*

<sup>724</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.3 FSL

<sup>725</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Response Plan, Sudan](#), January 2020, 2.1 *Humanitarian Consequences Prioritized for Response*, p. 12

<sup>726</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, *Food security and agriculture*, p. 1

<sup>727</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Food security and agriculture*, p. 2

<sup>728</sup> ACIPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020

relatives. If you don't have relatives there, you have to rent a house and stay there. Sometimes you can find a house with only two huts occupying not less than six families because they're forced to do so yet they don't have resources [...]

even the current government will not give anything to those IDPs because they consider them as inhabitants of those villages where they have settled for so long now and not see them as IDPs. But they are not the original inhabitants.<sup>729</sup>

### 8.3.3.1. Displacement figures for IDPs

IOM's *Displacement Tracking Matrix* counts the number of registrations of IDPs and returnees from internal displacement in Sudan.<sup>730</sup>

In its 2019 *Registration Factsheet* IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix Sudan reported that it had "registered 186,813 individuals across five states of Darfur and South Kordofan - – 155,117 (83%) of which were returnees and 31,696 (17%) internally displaced persons (IDPs)".<sup>731</sup> Of those the total number of registered IDPs in South Kordofan were 10,950, and no returnees.<sup>732</sup> In a July 2020 report IOM noted that there were 15,280 IDPs in South Kordofan in 2019 and that South Kordofan was the second State with the "greatest number of IDP locations".<sup>733</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that Sudan has 1.8 million IDPs, of which 170,000 are situated in South Kordofan.<sup>734</sup>

Extrapolating information on South Kordofan from its quarterly reports in 2020, the following table emerged (reverse chronological order):

	South Kordofan
<b>2020</b>	
<i>July – September 2020</i> <sup>735</sup>	
Total registered in whole of Sudan: 12,316 individuals of which:	
IDPs	2,910 individuals (816 households)
<i>April – June 2020</i> <sup>736</sup>	
Total registered across three states: 6,549 individuals of which:	
IDPs ("all registered IDPs were situation in Kadugli")	3,186 individuals (1,010 households)
<i>January – March 2020</i> <sup>737</sup>	
Total registered across four states: 52,631 individuals of which:	

<sup>729</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

<sup>730</sup> For a full list of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix reports and background to its methodology click [here](#).

<sup>731</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Registration Factsheet](#) 2019, 10 March 2020, p. 1. For quarterly reports on the registration numbers of IDPs and returnees see IOM's DTM page on Sudan [here](#).

<sup>732</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Registration Factsheet](#) 2019, 10 March 2020, p. 1

<sup>733</sup> IOM, [Mobility Tracking, Sudan Round one, April 2020](#), 7 July 2020, p. 3

<sup>734</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 1.7 Severity of Needs by Vulnerable Group

<sup>735</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Registration and Flow Monitoring Report, July – September 2020](#), 10 November 2020, Overview, p. 1

<sup>736</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Registration and Flow Monitoring Report, April – June 2020](#), 20 August 2020, South Kordofan, p. 2

<sup>737</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Registration and Flow Monitoring Report, January – March 2020](#), 30 June 2020, Overview, p. 1



IDPs (“South Kordofan hosted the largest proportion of IDPs”)	11,223 individuals (3,329 households)
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In May 2020 “displaced Nuba living in Tello camp in the southern part of Kadugli complained that elements of the Rapid Support Forces were terrorising them. One of them told Radio Dabanga that they faced heavy shootings and plundering, which forced them to flee to the eastern part of the town. According to *Omda* Khamees Badur, 775 families from various tribes have been affected by the violent events. 17 people have been killed, he said. The district's health unit has been plundered completely, and the only water source in the area has been destroyed. Halima Abdelsamad, one of the women who returned to the district, said that her home was plundered and that she lost all her furniture, household utensils, and food. She appealed to the state government to improve the security situation and their living conditions”, reported Radio Dabanga.<sup>738</sup>

According to the July – September 2020 IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix Sudan report, “The recent evacuation of displacement camps in South Sudan (namely, Ida, Agung and Faamir) have resulted in the largescale return of affected populations to northern Sudan (their country of origin). Consequently, the high prices of food commodities (especially sorghum) and the scarcity of available services, transportation and infrastructure in areas of return have resulted in secondary displacement to Kadugli, South Kordofan. This accounts for the high caseloads of IDPs registered”.<sup>739</sup> The same was reported in the April – June 2020 IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix Sudan report.<sup>740</sup>

UNDP reported in August 2020 that “IDP and returnee figures continue to fluctuate in South Kordofan with population movement and low-intensity conflict, but have exceeded 110,000, and currently sit around 11,000”.<sup>741</sup>

### 8.3.3.2. Access to basic services for IDPs

Very limited information was found specific on the situation of IDPs and their access to basic services (incl. food, shelter, health services and education) in South Kordofan.

On 12-13 May 2020 “violent clashes” between “different armed groups affiliated with two tribes” occurred, which led to displacement and “loss of lives from both sides, physical injuries, burning of houses, looting of household goods and destruction of public infrastructure”.<sup>742</sup> The report further reported that “Most of the displaced people – about 18,000 – fled from sites of Tillo IDPs camp, Albardab, Alban-Jadid and Burnuo”, which an assessment team found was now “vandalized and destroyed”.<sup>743</sup> According to the same source “The service facilities were badly affected including two health centers in Tillo” and “The displaced persons are not willing to return to Tillo site as the area is very close to an area occupied by the conflicting party and will be exposed to attacks and insecurity threats. Tillo was also affected by UXOs in dangerous conditions”.<sup>744</sup>

### 8.3.3.3. Access to shelter for IDPs

<sup>738</sup> Radio Dabanga, [Sudan: Homes of Kadugli displaced stripped](#), 3 June 2020

<sup>739</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Registration and Flow Monitoring Report, July – September 2020](#), 10 November 2020, *South Kordofan*, p. 2

<sup>740</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan, [Registration and Flow Monitoring Report, April – June 2020](#), 20 August 2020, *South Kordofan*, p. 2

<sup>741</sup> UNDP, [Enhancing agricultural livelihoods for internally displaced persons in South Kordofan](#), 27 August 2020

<sup>742</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 14/15

<sup>743</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 15

<sup>744</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 4 June 2020, *Emergency Response*, p. 15

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “There are substantial gaps in NFIs in out-of-camp refugee settlements, particularly in dispersed self-settlements in South and West Kordofan States”.<sup>745</sup>

#### 8.3.4. Situation for Returnees (South Kordofan)

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1. In Sudan](#), [8.2. In the Two Areas](#), and [8.2.4. Situation for Returnees \(Two Areas\)](#).

##### 8.3.4.1. Returnees figures

In November 2019 UNOCHA reported that “hundreds of people who were affected by conflict in South Kordofan have been arriving from areas controlled by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM-N) seeking access to basic services, according to the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC). The arrivals were prompted by improved security situation and the conducive environment created by ongoing peace negotiations between the Government of Sudan and armed movements, including SPLM-N, according to community leaders [...] There have also been reports of the arrival of an estimated 2,500 people in El Moreib village in El Abbasiya locality, according to humanitarian partners. These numbers have yet to be registered. They had reportedly fled to areas controlled by the SPLM-N when the conflict started in 2011 and are now returning to their home areas due to the improvement in the security situation. Government security forces in El Moreib area are allowing all people from SPLMN-controlled areas to access the market”.<sup>746</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in its *South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot* of December 2019 that “about 4,167 individuals from the rest of Sudan and refugee camps in South Sudan have returned to the SPLM-N controlled areas of Heiban and Um Durain Countries in South Kordofan, mainly due to difficult living conditions and lack of food”.<sup>747</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that Sudan has 298,000 returnees of which 10,000 returnees.<sup>748</sup>

In April 2020, the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit noted that “a high influx of returnees (49,561 in total, of which 22,049 are male and 27,512 are female) in March [2020] from government-controlled areas and camps in South Sudan has exacerbated food insecurity. As a result, the population is in dire need of humanitarian aid”.<sup>749</sup>

Between May and June 2020, South Kordofan “registered more than 2000 returnees from Sudan and South Sudan due to the deteriorating security situation in both countries and lack of basic services as a result of COVID-19 measures. Household dependence on coping strategies has increased compared to the same time last year where the harvest was good”.<sup>750</sup>

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<sup>745</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.2 ES/NFIs

<sup>746</sup> UNOCHA, [Sudan, Situation Report](#), 28 November 2019, p. 4/5

<sup>747</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Sudan: South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot (Dec 2019)*

<sup>748</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 1.7 Severity of Needs by Vulnerable Group

<sup>749</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, *Food security and agriculture*, p. 1

<sup>750</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, June 2020](#), 21 July 2020, *Food security and agriculture*, p. 2

In July 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that “560 returnees were registered in Dilling while 424 were registered in Lagawa from different parts of Sudan”.<sup>751</sup>

In August 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported that “An assessment conducted in August [2020] to verify returnee figures reported that the total number of returnees was 21,989 - Eastern Rural 745, Thobo15,492, Um Durain 4,075, and Western Kadugli 1,677. The returnees are in urgent need of food and NFIs”.<sup>752</sup>

UNDP reported in August 2020 that “IDP and returnee figures continue to fluctuate in South Kordofan with population movement and low-intensity conflict, but have exceeded 110,000, and currently sit around 11,000”.<sup>753</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in October 2020 that “Nearly 600 people were reported to have returned to different payams in Thobo County and more are expected to arrive in the coming months due to the peace process”.<sup>754</sup>

#### **8.3.4.2. Access to basic services for returnees**

Very limited information was found specific on the situation of returnees and their access to basic services (incl. food, shelter, health services and education) in South Kordofan.

In August 2019 the SKBN Coordination Unit reported that:

There is an ongoing return of refugees from Unity State in to South Kordofan, an area which has recently received returns of displaced people from Khartoum since the political instability started in December. The flow of people from both the South and the North is adding to the strain on communities’ resources. The ongoing data collection is expected to inform current and projected food security outcomes in this atypical season, further exacerbated by the poor macro-economic conditions.<sup>755</sup>

In December 2019 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that “December saw a high influx of returnees to the region and there is urgent need for more NFIs. The NFIs distributed recently were not enough for those affected by heavy rain, floods and fires that destroyed a number of houses in different counties”.<sup>756</sup>

In April 2020, the same source reported that “49,561 people who returned in January to March are in need of non-food items, especially emergency shelters, because grass for construction has been destroyed by bush fires and what is available costs 700 SSP per bundle, a fee high for a returnee. As such, it has been reported that most of the returnees are living with their relatives leading to overcrowding and are prone to diseases”.<sup>757</sup>

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<sup>751</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 4

<sup>752</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, August 2020](#), 22 September 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 6

<sup>753</sup> UNDP, [Enhancing agricultural livelihoods for internally displaced persons in South Kordofan](#), 27 August 2020

<sup>754</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, October 2020](#), 22 November 2020, *Protection, Access and Security, South Kordofan*

<sup>755</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, August 2019](#), 16 August 2019, *Food security and agriculture*, p. 1

<sup>756</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update December 2019](#), 31 December 2019, *Protection and security situation update*, p. 3

<sup>757</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 4

Between May and June 2020, South Kordofan “registered more than 2000 returnees from Sudan and South Sudan due to the deteriorating security situation in both countries and lack of basic services as a result of COVID-19 measures. Household dependence on coping strategies has increased compared to the same time last year where the harvest was good”.<sup>758</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in November 2020 that “Around 1019 (Males 503 and Females 516) returnees were reported from different towns in the Government-controlled areas to Delami, Um Durain, and Thobo counties. The reported reason for this movement is poor living conditions in the Government-controlled areas. These returnees are in dire need of food, emergency shelters, plastic sheets, blankets, mats, cooking utensils, health, and sanitation services”.<sup>759</sup>

#### **8.3.4.3. Access to shelter for returnees**

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “An estimated 491,984 people have spontaneously returned between 2017 and 2019, in Umm Dukun, and localities within Jebel Marra in Central Darfur; El Fasher, Kornio and Melit in North Darfur; El Geneina and Jabal Moon in West Darfur; and in South Kordofan. Vulnerable returnees often need NFI kits and support in constructing shelter. There is also need for environmentally friendly transitional shelters for IDPs, together with community training on building techniques and livelihood opportunities to promote self-reliance and resilience”.<sup>760</sup>

#### **8.3.4.4. Access to health care services for returnees**

In April 2020, the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit noted that “health facilities lack drugs as a result of a high influx of returnees and people from government-controlled areas reportedly seeking medical services in the region. As a result, the facilities are overwhelmed with numbers and run out of drugs and unable to meet the increasing demand, hence there is an urgent need for drugs and medical supplies”.<sup>761</sup> In Western Jebel, “health authorities have registered no drug supply for the last 3 months”.<sup>762</sup>

### **8.4. In Blue Nile**

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1. In Sudan](#) and [8.2. In the Two Areas](#).

According to a UN report published in December 2020 covering 9 September to 23 November 2020:

the Sudan continued to be affected by the worst floods since 1988. At least 16 states experienced water levels unseen in nearly a century. By October, close to 900,000 people were affected in all 18 states and more than 170,000 houses had been destroyed or damaged, and 559 schools, more than 2,600 health-care facilities and more than 1,800 water sources had been damaged. Floods affected 2,988,445 people

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<sup>758</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, June 2020](#), 21 July 2020, *Food security and agriculture*, p. 2

<sup>759</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, November 2020](#), 28 December 2020, *Protection, Access and Security, South Kordofan*

<sup>760</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.2 ES/NFIs

<sup>761</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, *Health and nutrition*, p. 3

<sup>762</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, *Health and nutrition*, p. 3

in almost 600,000 farming and pastoral households, of which 42 per cent were female-headed. About 2.2 million hectares of land were flooded in 15 states, representing 26.8 per cent of the cultivated areas, and 108,000 head of livestock belonging to 20,521 households were lost. The states most affected were [...] Blue Nile.<sup>763</sup>

UNICEF further noted that “Many displaced from their homes are being accommodated in public buildings, however, some survivors have been left out in the open” with Blue Nile being one of the “most severely impacted” states together with five others out of 18.<sup>764</sup>

#### 8.4.1. Access to health care (Blue Nile)

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1.1. Access to health care \(in Sudan in general\)](#) and [8.2.1. Access to health care \(Two Areas\)](#).

Radio Tamazuj reported on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2019 that “Medical staff members of various hospitals in Ed Damazin and El Roseiris in Sudan’s Blue Nile State laid down their tools [...] in protest against the assault on doctors at Ed Damazin Royal Hospital earlier that day” by “a force wearing military uniforms”.<sup>765</sup>

In July 2019 the SKBN Coordination Unit reported that “only 5 out of 28 health clinics in areas regularly monitored by the CU [Coordination Unit] have an adequate supply of basic drugs at this time”.<sup>766</sup> One month later the same source noted:

Whole communities in Blue Nile are cut off from accessing health clinics by flooding rivers. Furthermore, the supply of essential drugs has significantly reduced, a problem which is compounded by the fact that malaria cases are expected to rise as usual during this time of year.<sup>767</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in its *South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot* of December 2019 that “in Blue Nile, with no health facilities able to handle emergencies, people have to travel to South Sudan for medical care”.<sup>768</sup>

In its report, following its mission to Abyei, Blue Nile State and South Sudan, the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART) interviewed Unan Saman, Secretary of Information for Blue Nile who stated: “We do not have medicine. When people are sick, they have to walk for 12 hours to the Samaritan’s Purse hospital in Doro – walking that distance when they are ill. Otherwise, our people are resorting to using natural medicine and as a result people are dying”.<sup>769</sup>

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<sup>763</sup> UN Security Council, [Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General](#), 1 December 2020, II. Significant developments, para. 27

<sup>764</sup> UNICEF, [Floods Situation Report No. 1, Sudan](#), 22 September 2020, Situation

<sup>765</sup> Radio Tamazuj, [Sudan: Doctors on strike in Blue Nile](#), 19 May 2019

<sup>766</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2019](#), 18 July 2019, Health, p. 2

<sup>767</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, August 2019](#), 16 August 2019, Health, p. 2

<sup>768</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Sudan: South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot (Dec 2019)*

<sup>769</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, “There was no-one to protect us”](#), January 2020, 2. Sudan, p. 17

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “On 8 September 2019, the Federal Ministry of Health announced an outbreak of cholera in Blue Nile state, following recent floods and a deteriorating health and WASH situation in the state”.<sup>770</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in March 2020 that “Some PHCUs [Primary Health Care Units] are underequipped to cope up with and respond to increased demand”.<sup>771</sup>

In July 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that “Across the region, clinics lack essential medicines due to funding gaps. This is challenging for the clinics to respond to the high demand for services. For instance, 453 cases of malaria were reported in Yabus Kubri and facilities do not have the capacity to handle such numbers. Communities don’t have medical services within two hours of their home, so they must travel for two to six hours to access medical care”.<sup>772</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in November 2020 that “out of 28 PHCUs in the area, 23 registered a shortage of drugs”.<sup>773</sup>

#### **8.4.2. Food insecurity (Blue Nile)**

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1.2. Food insecurity \(in Sudan in general\)](#) and [8.2.2. Food insecurity \(Two Areas\)](#).

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in its *South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot* of December 2019 that “food insecurity is comparably worse in Blue Nile due to the underdevelopment and widespread flooding in October [2019]”.<sup>774</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that “In Blue Nile state, 67 percent of the surveyed households adopted food based coping strategies, the highest among the 13 surveyed states”.<sup>775</sup>

In its report, following its mission to Abyei, Blue Nile State and South Sudan, the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART) interviewed Samuel John, a village elder in Chali el Fil, Blue Nile, who stated: “Here in the liberated areas of Blue Nile, our greatest need is clean and safe drinking water. Currently we are drinking from stagnant ground water that the animals also use. This brings disease”.<sup>776</sup> Similarly, Unan Saman, Secretary of Information for Blue Nile was reported as stating: “Basic needs, even clean water are not available in the liberated areas of Blue Nile. We do not have enough water pumps for the people”.<sup>777</sup>

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<sup>770</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 3.4 Health

<sup>771</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Health and nutrition, Blue Nile*

<sup>772</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Health and nutrition, p. 4*

<sup>773</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, November 2020](#), 28 December 2020, *Health and nutrition, Blue Nile*

<sup>774</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Sudan: South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot (Dec 2019)*

<sup>775</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 1.4 Humanitarian Consequences

<sup>776</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, “There was no-one to protect us”](#), January 2020, 2. *Sudan*, p. 16

<sup>777</sup> Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), [Visit Report: Abyei, Sudan and South Sudan, “There was no-one to protect us”](#), January 2020, 2. *Sudan*, p. 17



The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in March 2020 that “Reports indicate that the food shortage in the region was exacerbated by food sharing with returnees, immediate families and neighbors. Reports suggest that food stocks will not last until April [2020] and, as a result, households with no food stocks have already resorted to sharing with neighbors, depending on markets, and other coping strategies [...] This year [2020], food aid distribution targeted Wadaka payam (8,362 households), which was heavily affected by floods and heavy rain. However, the distribution only covers 25% of Blue Nile”.<sup>778</sup> In April 2020, the same source noted that “Clearing and preparation of farms for the next planting season is ongoing across all localities of Blue Nile, in response to early food shortages. The food shortages are due to a poor harvest as a result of previous rains, floods, as well as the closure of cross-line markets to minimize the spread of COVID-19. As a result of a poor harvest, farmers were not able get seeds to plant. Most households across Blue Nile are now food insecure with no food stocks left”.<sup>779</sup> A month later, in May 2020, the same source highlighted that “the region has experienced the highest food shortage and hunger compared to any other area under SPLM-N control”.<sup>780</sup>

In June 2020, the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported that “Cultivation continues for staples including short duration sorghum, maize, beans, and groundnuts on the jibraka farms (near farms). Heavy rainfall in some localities has damaged seedlings which will increase serious risk of food insecurity in many parts of Blue Nile. This increases the vulnerability of people already facing increasing hunger due to a previous poor harvest and closure of markets due to COVID-19 containment measures”.<sup>781</sup>

In July 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that “Food security is moderate across Blue Nile except for Deran, Gondolo, Ishkab, Hilajadit and Madit villages in Komo Ganza Payam compared to the same time last year. This is due to depleted food stock levels and few households can afford to buy food from the markets”.<sup>782</sup> Moreover, the same source reported that “Food items were scarce due to partial functionality of markets as a result of COVID-19 containment measures coupled with inaccessible roads especially in Wadaka payam. This resulted into high prices for the available food items from cross-borders of Ethiopia and South Sudan”.<sup>783</sup>

#### **8.4.3. Situation for IDPs (Blue Nile)**

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.2.3. Situation for IDPs \(Two Areas\)](#).

Not mentioning specifically IDPs based in South Kordofan or Blue Nile, the July 2020 briefing paper published by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) considered that “Sudanese authorities have used torture and other forms of ill-

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<sup>778</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Food security and agriculture, Blue Nile*

<sup>779</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, *Food security and agriculture, p. 1*

<sup>780</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, May 2020](#), 15 June 2020, *Food security and agriculture, p. 1*

<sup>781</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, June 2020](#), 21 July 2020, *Food security and agriculture, p. 1*

<sup>782</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Food security and agriculture, p. 1*

<sup>783</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Food security and agriculture, p. 1*

treatment to intimidate and silence political dissent. Victims of torture and ill-treatment included [...] internally displaced persons (IDPs)".<sup>784</sup>

In response to the question what the current situation is like for IDPs, Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre and interviewed for this report in February 2021 responded:

For example, in 2020 while Juba Peace negotiations was running, items were sent for the IDPs in Blue Nile State but the aid was 'discriminated aid' since it was distributed by SPLA-N (SRF) which is headed by Malik Agar (currently, after the peace agreement signed, he is a member of the sovereign council). The food was only distributed to his tribe Angasana while ignoring the others.<sup>785</sup>

#### **8.4.3.1. Displacement figures for IDPs**

According to figures assembled by the German Bundeszentrale fuer politische Bildung and based on figures taken from "Sudan Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) (2019). Official Figures for Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees in Sudan 2019, A Report by the Office of the General Commissioner", Sudan had 1,864,195 million IDPs at the end of 2019, of which 47,392 (2.5%) in Blue Nile.<sup>786</sup>

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that Sudan has 1.8 million IDPs of which 80,000 in Blue Nile.<sup>787</sup>

#### **8.4.3.2. Access to basic services for IDPs**

No information was found specific on the situation of IDPs and their access to basic services (incl. food, shelter, health services and education) in Blue Nile.

#### **8.4.4. Situation for Returnees (Blue Nile)**

This section should be read in conjunction with [8.1. In Sudan](#), [8.2. In the Two Areas](#), and [8.2.4. Situation for Returnees \(Two Areas\)](#).

##### **8.4.4.1. Returnees figures**

The UNOCHA *Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan* published in January 2020 noted that Sudan has 298,000 returnees, but did not specify how many of these had returned to Blue Nile.<sup>788</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in March 2020 that "In February and March [2020], the region registered 1560 returnees (312 HHs): Chali 260, Komo Ganza 290, Wadaka 360 and Yabus 650. These were mostly students who returned after closure of schools in Ethiopia due to COVID-19. Other returnees were farmers who came to clear their farms and others returned to their homes because of stability and security in the region".<sup>789</sup>

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<sup>784</sup> ACJPS and OMCT, [\(Post\)-Covid19 era in Sudan: The urgency to unravel the torture and inhuman treatments system one year after the Transition](#), July 2020

<sup>785</sup> Interview with Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Interview transcript included in this report

<sup>786</sup> German Bundeszentrale fuer politische Bildung, [More than a Side Effect: Internal Displacement in Sudan](#), 21 April 2020

<sup>787</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 1.7 Severity of Needs by Vulnerable Group

<sup>788</sup> UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan](#), January 2020, 1.7 Severity of Needs by Vulnerable Group

<sup>789</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Protection, access and security, Blue Nile*

In April 2020, the same source reported that “A high migration to SPLMN-controlled areas was registered in April. 2,500 individuals were recorded by the administration in Chali payam and 500 in Wadaka payam. However, reports indicate that these returnees commute regularly between Blue Nile and refugee camps in Maban during the rainy season for cultivation purposes. But with COVID-19 containment measures in place, this movement is likely to be affected”.<sup>790</sup>

In July 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit stated that “As usual, there is an influx of returnees from Maban, South Sudan for cultivation purposes. However, these movements have been affected by COVID-19 containment measures that require they must quarantine for 14 days at the points of entry. 30 returnees from Ethiopian camps of Benashangul, Gumuz, Gure shambolo, Tongo, Tsore and Sherkolle, were registered at Yabus Bala check point and quarantined for two weeks. They are in dire need of emergency shelters, food, urgent need for drinking water and latrines. 1500 and 250 returnees were registered in Wadaka and Yabus payams respectively. Their main reason of coming back is to work in the gold mines”.<sup>791</sup>

In August 2020 the South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported that “As usual, there was a high influx of returnees from camps in Maban, but for just cultivation purposes”.<sup>792</sup>

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in October 2020 that “A total of 100 returnees from Ethiopia were recorded. Their main reason was to visit their separated families after the lock down. Others came in search of jobs and livelihoods”.<sup>793</sup>

#### **8.4.4.2. Access to basic services for returnees**

Hardly any information was found specific on the situation of returnees and their access to basic services (incl. food, shelter, health services and education) in Blue Nile.

The South Kordofan Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported in March 2020 that “This year [2020], food aid distribution targeted Wadaka payam (8,362 households), which was heavily affected by floods and heavy rain. However, the distribution only covers 25% of Blue Nile. For instance, returnees as well as communities in Amora and Zosko (isolated areas) were not included in the distribution plan”.<sup>794</sup>

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<sup>790</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, April 2020](#), 15 May 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 4

<sup>791</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, July 2020](#), 15 August 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 4

<sup>792</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, August 2020](#), 22 September 2020, *Protection, access and security*, p. 6

<sup>793</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, October 2020](#), 22 November 2020, *Protection, Access and Security, Blue Nile*

<sup>794</sup> South Kordofan Blue Nile (SKBN) Coordination Unit, [Humanitarian Update, March 2020](#), 19 April 2020, *Food security and agriculture, Blue Nile*

## Interview transcript

### Bushra Rahama, Director of the HUDO Centre (11<sup>th</sup> February 2021)

According to its website the Human Rights and Development (HUDO) Centre is “an independent, non-government, non-partisan and non-profit Sudanese organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights, peace building and development”.<sup>795</sup> It was:

established and confined to South Kordufan (SK) state in Sudan [...] On 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 2009 HUDO was officially recognized as a non-governmental organization NGO. In June 2011 when South Kordufan conflict started, HUDO’s certificate was revoked by the Sudanese Government. However, HUDO continued to work under very tight and threatening conditions. [...] on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017, HUDO Centre has been registered in Uganda NGO Board as a foreign NGO. Nevertheless, the mandate has been extended to cover the entire Sudan and Sudanese refugees in Uganda, South Sudan and special program for other refugees. HUDO Centre is highly committed to achieving sustainable development, promoting human welfare without racial, religious, gender discrimination or political affiliation.<sup>796</sup>

ARC **Are the Nuba likely to be targeted in South Kordofan (or elsewhere) today on account of their ethnicity?**

Bushra Rahama They are targeted everywhere in South Kordofan or outside South Kordofan. I believe, within this period [since April 2019], that you have heard about the incidents in Port Sudan and Gadareif. So this is the kind of target everywhere in Sudan. The most recent is the person in Atbara who was killed by police. So when we talk about South Kordofan and the number of people killed extra judicially or unlawfully, it's above fifty (50) people. Out of these 50 killed people, forty-one (41) are Nubians and nine (9) are non-Nubian. So, this is almost 82% and if you critically look at these cases, you will find that twenty-one (21) of the murdered people came from the eastern part of Nuba Mountain.

(Here I’m talking about the killed people not even the injured), in Kadugli alone, 25 people were killed in 2020. So why Kadugli and the eastern part of Nuba Mountain? The eastern part of the Nuba Mountain is where the majority of the Popular Defense Force (PDF) soldiers are based. This force was created by former president Al-Bashir. PDF has a bad reputation and historical violations towards Nuba ethnicity since the war erupted in 2011. And now, most of them joined or were integrated into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). When we talk about PDF, they are mainly composed of individuals from Arab tribes (the nomads). They are now targeting the black ethnicities in Nuba.

In May 2020 RSF soldiers asked people, "Are you Nuba?" in Al-Bardab. They were targeting Nuba suburbs or Nuba neighborhoods within that village. Whoever said “Yes I am Nubian” was either killed or injured.

The reason why there is a big number of unlawful killings in Nuba mountains is because currently there is a high concentration of PDF or RSF forces. This is also the same issue in Kadugli which has experienced many deaths/killings. Many people are killed and HUDO Centre sometimes is not able to report

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<sup>795</sup> See Hudo Centre, [About Hudo](#), Undated [Last accessed: 26 February 2021]

<sup>796</sup> See Hudo Centre, [About Hudo](#), Undated [Last accessed: 26 February 2021]

about all the incidents due to limited number of monitors and other security challenges.

Kadugli has three militias, one from Arab origin and the other two of Nuba origin. And when you say Nuba origin, it is a tribal origin within Nuba. Because Nuba is (like) a nation. It is a very big nation with various languages. Nubian tribes are divided into 10 groups of languages. There are more than 50 tribes of Nubians.

Two tribes were included by former president Bashir in order to fight against the SPLM [Sudan People's Liberation Movement] and also to divide them/Nuba. One of them from Angolo tribe, and this is led by Major. JAO, he was a sergeant in the SAF [Sudan Armed Forces] before he had joined the SPLM. After that, there was a peace agreement. A special one made for him. And he managed to join the Sudan military – the SAF. And they promoted him from a sergeant to a major. The other tribal militia is led by Kafi Tayara, a community leader, and he's from a tribe called Shatt (He was promoted to a general rank by al Bashir). Because there is a misunderstanding between him and the SPLM the government of Sudan also used him. So all those are kinds of militias.

After then, we have the most powerful tribal militia which is the RSF/PDF.

In May 2020 there was a big confrontation between the Jao group and RSF/PDF. And I think three or four from the RSF were killed by those Nuba militias. And then revenge killings happened which continue till now. To me, the existence of these militias will trigger a conflict at any time and especially the existence of the ethnic divisions within Nuba Mountain between the Arabs and the Nubians.

Nowadays, in Kadugli there is an increase in armed robberies and even around Nuba Mountains. And these are mainly committed by the RSF and the PDF mainly targeting people from the Nuba ethnicity.

Basing on our annual reports of 2019 and 2020, there is an increase in the number of deaths and injuries by direct gunshot. And currently, there are armed robberies going on which makes the situation worse.

In some articles (incidents reports), we often indicate that the perpetrator is 'anonymous' because we cannot be certain whether they are from RSF or PDF. But there is something you need to consider – usually when we talk about farmers being targeted, they are mostly Nuba. And when we talk about nomads or cattle keepers they are mostly Arabs. So if you go back to our reports and try to find out the number of farmers who were killed, all those farmers were Nuba.

There was also a statement made last year, in May 2020, by one of the RSF Commanders. He said, "We are not going to let you cultivate". I think there is even a video about this. The same message was delivered the year before in Habila and in other towns in South Kordofan. As if it was something organised. So immediately when the cultivation season started in May and June, the number of killings of farmers started too.

Previously the nomads, who are Arabs, passed from North to South and had specific places to rest and pause and fetch water in agreement between the community leaders.

Currently, there is imbalance of power. Now the RSF feels like the balance of power has shifted towards them especially in the last two years and with PDF being recruited into the RSF and being equipped with very advanced machine guns and even vehicles.

So they never respect whatever the rules or the customary law is. Now, they are using the cattles to graze on the farms and gardens of the Nuba. So this is another conflict because previously they could just pass by the farms to their grazing places avoiding contact between nomads and the farms, but now they arrogantly graze their cattle on the farms of the Nuba.

The RSF (and the PDF) act with impunity. They enter the gardens/farms and say that the cattle are free to graze everywhere. Currently, this is the conflict between the farmers/cultivators and the nomads/cattle keepers.

ARC

**Are the Nuba likely to be targeted in South Kordofan (or elsewhere) today due to their perceived involvement with rebel groups?**

Bushra Rahama This is actually one of the reasons.

When we go back to the '90s when al-Bashir announced the war as a holy war, after that, even the imams in the mosques asked people to join the armed forces (PDF) in order to kill the Nuba because they are rebelling.

It is after this revolution that people thought of changing the mindset. In November or December-2020, twenty (20) people who were traveling on a truck and coming from a SPLA-N area were arrested. Among them women and children (women and children had spent a night there and were released the following day, while the mature men were kept for days before releasing them). After that they were warned not to go back.

There were also two people in Talodi who were arrested because they came from this area [SPLA-N]. They've been in detention now for almost two months.

When a Nubian is under detention, nobody is allowed to visit them (denying them any visits). It is complete incommunicado. It is inhuman.

This does not happen against any other person in Sudan except against the Nuba people.

In 1956, when we got our independence, the single group in Sudan that remained to pay taxes, *dignia*, were the Nubians. This was only dissolved in late 1965 after pressure from the Nuba. For example if you are a Nuba man living in Nuba Mountains but have a son working in Khartoum, the father was still expected to pay taxes for his son who is in Khartoum (because they can't ask the son in Khartoum to pay for himself). If he didn't and the father refused to pay taxes the state would take whatever crops he had.

So this is the kind of mentality we have and which still exists today. Many young Nuba men were forced or pushed into the violence and to take up arms with the arm groups because of mistreatment.

And now you see many Sudanese human rights activists coming back to Sudan or visiting Sudan. I can't do that. I can't because I am sure I will be



treated differently because I am Nubian. It is a mindset [against the Nuba] that cannot be changed within one or two years. It is a very long process.

ARC **What is the current situation like for IDPs in South Kordofan in terms of access to basic services? Are they being specifically targeted with violence?**

Bushra Rahama Since this war erupted again in 2011, President Al-Bashir and his government had a very clear policy - no IDP camps. They refused any kind of IDP camps. At the same time the Nuba Mountains were a no-go area for NGOs.

Government forced IDPs to stay within towns/ villages' neighbourhoods. If you have family there you need to stay with your family. If you have relatives to stay with you are expected to stay there with your relatives. If you don't have relatives there, you have to rent a house and stay there. Sometimes you can find a house with only two huts occupying not less than six families because they're forced to do so yet they don't have resources.

There is a place called Um-Mareh. This is in the eastern part of Nuba Mountains. There is a sheikh there who runs a religious school. He has many huts around the small village (where he used to host his students) so people moved there. They joined that sheikh, and that sheikh, he started to feed those IDPs and even gave them some non-food items.

Now, many displaced people after those long years, from 2011 still live there and in other villages. Also, there are many villages that have been evacuated inside the town. And they are inside the town now in a very miserable condition where they have nothing. The WFP [World Food Programme] gave them some support but the main distributing organisation was the Red Crescent. The government at that time used the list of the Red Crescent to select and arrest people, especially those who came from rebel-held areas to the town to collect their food rations.

For example, in 2020 while Juba Peace negotiations was running, items were sent for the IDPs in Blue Nile State but the aid was 'discriminated aid' since it was distributed by SPLA-N (SRF) which is headed by Malik Agar (currently, after the peace agreement signed, he is a member of the sovereign council). The food was only distributed to his tribe Angasana while ignoring the others.

And even the current government will not give anything to those IDPs because they consider them as inhabitants of those villages where they have settled for so long now and not see them as IDPs. But they are not the original inhabitants.

ARC **What is the current situation like for returnees in South Kordofan in terms of access to basic services? Are they being specifically targeted with violence?**

Bushra Rahama Those who moved to SPLM areas (because there was no IDPs camp within the government territory and Nuba people were targeted by them they preferred to go to the SPLA areas) had started to return back to their villages

after the revolution thinking it's safe now but, they have faced arrests. This hindered the move of others after hearing the arrest of arrivals.

These returnees who managed to settle – they have nothing. Nothing to access.

In Sudan, we have two types of education. We have the public one and we have the private one. The private one is good/preferred, but it's very expensive. The public one, has many challenges. So those people who are coming from the SPLM areas, who moved there as IDPs, it is difficult for them to access the private schools. Usually they are those from poor communities and they have six, seven or ten children. If they are able to pay for one, they cannot pay for two. This issue, is even the case for the IDPs from Nuba Mountain who went to Khartoum.

ARC

**Can a person from South Kordofan relocate to Khartoum or another city easily? How important would tribal and/or family networks/support be?**

Bushra Rahama

Now you have people displaced from Nuba Mountains who went to Khartoum. The previous regime called the area they moved to the 'black belt'. A very racist name. These are actual slums around Khartoum. They call it the 'black belt', because this is where people from Nuba Mountain, from Darfur and those other African ethnicities settled. So they call them 'black'.

People still move there now. I have an example of a family who moved there recently after their son was shot and they moved to Khartoum from Kadogli. It doesn't mean that Khartoum is better.

You can say Khartoum is better than being in Nuba Mountains, but this is not the perfect situation. And those people who are forced to stay in these slums, when you say slum, which means there is no electricity, there is no water. Even they used to bring water from a distance. No schools, even the children, they have to walk for hours to attend school in the neighbouring suburbs. We cannot talk about the basic rights at all, because it is not there.

Even those people who move to Khartoum, you can categorise people into two groups: Very poor people who will go for these slums, and these slums are actually created on an ethnical basis. You will find that in the slum of the Nuba majority will be Nuba. And even, you will find they organise themselves as a community and they have a shared community leader, something like that. So it is a kind of assisting each other. The same applies to Darfurians. And when we talk about Darfur, it can be a certain tribe, like Fur or Zaghawa or something like that. So they give kind of support to each other, for their people there.

There is another group that moves and who may be a little bit wealthy. Those can manage to rent a house, or they have relatives there with a house within Khartoum they can settle in. They can be hosted by them. So this is the kind of support they can get.

In Khartoum there are some local NGOs working there and assisting people living in these slums. And there are also some CBOs [Community-based organisations]. These CBOs are established by the local community within the slum. For example by some elite from those tribes who are trying to give

some support. But the IDP number is very huge. You will never have NGOs providing the necessary support for all.

And for these IDPs to get a job that's a real issue. They may get a very low-paying job like cleaning. So you can find a lady working with a certain family within Khartoum, and she has to walk for one hour or more in order to reach that house where she's working. For a whole month, they may pay her like €20. And she's glad that she will get meal and some used clothes during her stay in that house as she works.

ARC

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Bushra Rahama

Maybe just that the Head of the RSF, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who is now also part of the Sovereign Council – that's a real challenge for peace in Sudan. There is now a military component within the Sovereign Council. Now they are controlling the government and they are controlling Sudan the way they want. The international community insists on dealing with them and it looks like they are empowering them. Secondly, anyone in Sudan now knows the kind of support given to this military component from Saudi Arabia for example. Also this is another kind of challenge. It needs to be revisited. And even the international community, they need to deal with this issue in a very cautious manner. Even the international community is celebrating the Juba Peace Agreement which was signed by powerless parties. It means nothing.

For me the situation in Darfur and in Nuba Mountains will be worse in the coming months. Now you see Darfur deteriorating day by day. The Nuba Mountains, these three militias groups, we don't know when it will explode, but it won't be long. And for sure, they will fight each other. For that, we are recommending that all militias should be dissolved, unlicensed weapons should be collected from people and they should all be disarmed.