

Annex I: Human Rights Watch Letter to the Rapid Support Forces, July 10, 2024

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July 10, 2024

Lieutenant Colonel El Fatih Gurashi
The Official Spokesperson of the Rapid Support Forces

Transmitted via email

RE: Request for Response to Human Rights Watch Findings on Conflict Related Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Khartoum

Dear Lieutenant Colonel, El Fatih Gurashi,

We write from Human Rights Watch to share with you the main findings of our research into sexual and gender-based violence by Sudan's warring parties that has been taking place in Khartoum since April 2023, and the challenges survivors face in accessing critical emergency care.

To ensure our reports are as comprehensive and accurate as possible, we value input from all relevant perspectives. Therefore, we would highly appreciate your response by **July 22** to the queries outlined below to ensure we can accurately reflect your viewpoint in our upcoming reporting.

Our research, based on 42 interviews with service providers including medical professionals, indicates widespread conflict-related sexual violence is taking place in Khartoum and its sister cities of Bahri and Omdurman since the conflict's onset. It finds that warring parties have subjected women and girls to widespread sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, forced marriage, and child marriage.

Women and girls who had been deprived of their liberty by warring parties, also gave accounts to service providers of being subjected to sexual violence and being forced to engage in sexual activity during confinement, in what could constitute sexual slavery. Men and boys have also been victims of sexual violence. It describes the impacts of sexual violence on survivors including health impacts. It also details the lack of emergency post-rape health care, psychosocial support, and other services due to warring parties' attacks on health care and healthcare workers, ongoing fighting in populated areas, and deliberate obstruction of aid.

Service providers interviewed by Human Rights Watch, attributed most of cases they were aware of to the RSF members in the context of their



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widespread occupation of residential areas of Khartoum. Fewer cases were attributed to SAF members. However, several service providers said that survivors and community members were scared to report incidents involving SAF forces, notably because they were concerned the SAF-aligned authorities would dismiss their claims. We received reports of an uptick in cases of sexual violence by SAF following its take-over of parts of Omdurman in January 2024.

The report also documents the impact of the warring parties' attacks on healthcare facilities, including their occupation, and health care workers, humanitarians and local volunteers, as well as the unlawful obstruction of aid, and how this hampers survivors access to critical emergency care.

We would appreciate your answers to the following questions by July 22:

1. Since the conflict's onset, what measures have you taken to prevent your forces from committing sexual violence in Khartoum and elsewhere? Please provide any relevant statements or material.
2. What measures have you taken to prevent the use of civilian and residential areas and property by your forces?
3. Please describe the rules of engagement of your forces in urban areas? Please share any relevant documentation.
4. At time of writing, how many hospitals do your forces occupy in Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri?
5. Have there been any investigations into the following allegations against your forces:
 - i. Incidents of sexual violence;
 - ii. Attacks on healthcare including occupation of hospitals;
 - iii. Cases of intimidation and threats and other attacks against health care workers and local responders;
 - iv. Looting of humanitarian warehouses and medical facilities in Khartoum;
6. What steps have you taken to comply with the recommendations of the office of the secretary-general on conflict related sexual violence?
7. What steps will you take to collaborate with the international independent investigations into cases of sexual violence, notably by the UN Fact-Finding Mission, established by the UN Human Rights Council?

Yours Sincerely,

Laetitia Bader
Deputy director,
Africa Division
Human Rights Watch