

BESIEGED, ATTACKED, STARVED



MASS ATROCITIES IN EL FASHER AND ZAMZAM, SUDAN



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ABSTRACT

Ever since fighting between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), supported by the Joint Forces, intensified in April and May 2024 in El Fasher, North Darfur, civilians have been caught in the crossfire. The warring parties have consistently and indiscriminately bombed areas where civilians live. Additionally, the RSF and their allies have systematically targeted non-Arab communities, and particularly the Zaghawa: the violence has included shelling, looting, mass killings, sexual violence, and abductions, and most-recently culminated in the assault on Zamzam camp for internally displaced people (IDP). Access to healthcare has collapsed due to repeated attacks on medical facilities, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has been forced to cease activities in El Fasher and Zamzam camp. Non-Arab communities have been left without food, water, or medical care, contributing to the spread of famine. MSF warns of ongoing ethnic violence and calls on the warring parties and international actors, including United Nations (UN) agencies, to take urgent action to protect civilians, implement UN Security Council Resolution 2736, and launch a large-scale humanitarian response.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April and May 2024, fighting between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on one side and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) allied with the Joint Forces on the other, escalated in El Fasher, the last of Darfur's five state capitals that was not under the control of the RSF. As the conflict has intensified, civilians have continued to be the main victims: their neighbourhoods and infrastructure have been repeatedly shelled, bombed and attacked by the warring parties.

The RSF and their allies have deliberately targeted non-Arab communities. Survivors of ground operations have reported systematic looting, the random or deliberate killing of civilians, and the burning of civilian buildings including private houses and markets. Sexual violence has been perpetrated on a large scale, while reports of numerous abductions of men and women suggest that disappearances have been a source of income for the RSF and their affiliates.

As this report goes to press, widespread violence against civilians continues on a daily basis. On April 11, 2025, the RSF and their allies launched a large-scale ground offensive on Zamzam camp, located around seventeen kilometres south of El Fasher and estimated to host over 500,000 people. The number of people killed and injured is unknown, but with no functional hospital within the camp, most of the wounded had no access to life-saving medical assistance. In less than three weeks, over 400,000 people were displaced according to the International Organization for Migration. A large proportion of the population fled to El Fasher, where they remained trapped, out of reach of humanitarian aid and exposed to attacks and further mass violence. On April 16, the RSF launched an operation on the capital of North Darfur, leading to dozens being wounded and killed. Between April 13 and May 10, a total of 528 wounded people received care at the MSF-supported hospital in Tawila, a town located around 60 kilometres from Zamzam.

Numerous interviewees reported that they had been targeted for being non-Arabs, and many stated that the Zaghawa were particularly at risk. The Zaghawa community constitutes the core of the Joint Forces, who were neutral until late 2023 and began fighting alongside the SAF in the defence of El Fasher and Zamzam in early 2024. Self-defence forces, largely recruited from the Zaghawa community, also began to support the Joint Forces and the SAF. Many of the villages and neighbourhoods that the RSF and their allies targeted during their ground operations were well-known to be home to the Zaghawa. In light of the ethnically motivated mass atrocities committed on the Masalit in West Darfur, and of the recent ethnic violence and massacres perpetrated in Zamzam camp in North Darfur, MSF fears such a scenario will be repeated in El Fasher – notably because witnesses report that RSF soldiers spoke of plans to 'clean El Fasher' of its non-Arab, and especially Zaghawa, community.

Aside from the direct violence exerted on civilians, residents from El Fasher and surrounding areas have been prevented from meeting their basic needs. Access to healthcare has been rendered near impossible, as most healthcare infrastructure has been partially or completely damaged. When fighting intensified in El Fasher in May 2024, health facilities supported by MSF endured at least seven incidents of shelling, bombing or shooting from both sides. In June 2024, no less than four such incidents were reported. Attacks on healthcare facilities continued and, as a consequence, in August 2024, MSF was forced to end its support to Saudi Hospital, which was the last remaining public hospital in the city with the capacity to treat the wounded and perform surgery. In December 2024 and January 2025, MSF ambulances were targeted on two occasions. As of mid-April 2025, only one hospital with surgical capacity remained partially functioning, for an estimated catchment population of over one million. Over the past year, many patients and their caretakers have been killed while inside a medical facility supported by MSF. Humanitarian workers have been repeatedly threatened, sometimes murdered. On April 11, the last international aid organisation still operating in Zamzam camp, Relief International, confirmed that nine staff were killed in a health clinic in the camp during the ground operation carried out by the RSF. Two additional staff later died from the injuries they sustained during the attack.

Civilians have been deprived of food and water, one of the deadly consequences being the spread of famine, confirmed in August 2024 by the Integrated Food Security Phase (IPC) Famine Review Committee. Markets have been repeatedly targeted by the warring parties. A rapid needs assessment conducted by various non-governmental organisations – including MSF – and government institutions in IDP gathering sites located in El Fasher in March 2025 provided catastrophic figures: about 38 per cent of children under five were found to be suffering from acute

malnutrition, with 11 per cent having severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and 27 per cent having moderate acute malnutrition (MAM). Additionally, over the past year, the majority of water towers and water pumps in El Fasher and Zamzam IDP camp have either been destroyed or become non-functional due to the lack of maintenance and fuel to run the generators. This lack of access to water coupled with low vaccination coverage has increased the risk of outbreaks and is a major cause of the deterioration of people's health.

This report is based on quantitative and qualitative data collected between May 2024 and May 2025. It includes direct observation, MSF quantitative data, and over eighty interviews with people who were displaced from El Fasher and Zamzam, conducted in North Darfur and in refugee camps in eastern Chad. Through first-hand testimonies of patients who reached our medical facilities, MSF is uniquely positioned to document the suffering and atrocities committed against the population to whom it provides care.

As MSF continues to respond to urgent medical needs and to the consequences of the ongoing violence in North Darfur, **MSF calls urgently for the warring parties and international actors, including UN agencies, to prevent further mass atrocities – both indiscriminate and ethnically motivated. MSF additionally urges the UN and its member states to use their leverage in order to ensure that the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2736 demanding that the RSF end the siege of El Fasher and calling for an immediate halt to the fighting in and around the city is implemented. Lastly, MSF is making an urgent call for a large-scale humanitarian response to be launched, as the lean and rainy seasons start, with the priority given to areas where famine has been confirmed.**

To the warring parties

- Cease attacks on civilians, uphold commitments made in Jeddah in May 2023 – that have been restated on numerous occasions – and respect their obligations under International Humanitarian Law, in particular to protect civilians, enable humanitarian access, and protect the medical mission.
- The RSF and their allies must immediately stop ethnic violence perpetrated against non-Arab communities, and especially the Zaghawa.
- The RSF and their allies must lift the siege of El Fasher and guarantee safe routes for civilians fleeing violence. Humanitarian agencies must be granted unrestricted access to El Fasher immediately, ensuring life-saving aid reaches civilians.

To states with influence over the warring parties

- End their military, economic and diplomatic support to the warring parties and exert pressure on them to stop violence against civilians. Civilian safety must be at the core of any engagement with the warring parties.
- Engage with the warring parties to enforce mechanisms enabling people who wish to flee combat zones to safely do so.

To the United Nations, African Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other relevant international actors

- Support bodies and mechanisms to monitor violations of human rights and effectively protect civilians, holding parties to the conflict accountable for the violence perpetrated against civilians.
- Ensure civilians are protected and able to access humanitarian assistance.

To donors, humanitarian actors and UN agencies

- Expand their presence in relevant hubs to ensure the effective delivery of aid. At least 150,000 tons of food are needed per month for the nine million people in an Emergency or Famine situation in Sudan. For North Darfur, 19,000 tons of food are needed per month for the 1,116,000 people in Emergency and Famine situations.
- Deploy all possible means to provide urgently needed aid. Complementary to road access or when roads are impassable, airbridge and airdropping operations for food and medical supplies need to be launched.

INTRODUCTION

Shortly after fighting started in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023, violence spread to other parts of Sudan, including Darfur. The RSF and their affiliates launched offensives on the same non-Arab communities as the ones assaulted by the central government and its allied Arab forces – then known as the *Janjaweed* – two decades earlier. Between April and November 2023, West Darfur's main community, the Masalit, were trapped in a renewed cycle of violence at the hands of the RSF and their allies. Meanwhile, various localities in North Darfur were attacked, for instance Tawila during the summer of 2023.

In April and May 2024, fighting escalated in El Fasher, the last of Darfur's five state capitals that was not under the control of the RSF. While the conflict intensified, the civilian population was the main victim of the violence, as the warring parties did not discriminate between civilians and military targets. The RSF imposed a siege on the capital of North Darfur, where over one million people were living, including on nearby Zamzam camp, which hosted an estimated 500,000 IDPs. They deliberately targeted non-Arab communities, neighbourhoods and localities, carrying on large scale looting, abductions, sexual violence and executions. On April 11, 2025, the RSF and their allies launched a large-scale attack on Zamzam camp. Over 400,000 people were displaced according to the IOM¹, while many were killed or injured in the camp and as they fled.

Since May 2024, the needs of the population have drastically increased, as the fighting has led to a major deterioration in living conditions. In 2024, Famine was confirmed by the IPC Famine Review Committee (FRC) in five areas of Sudan, including Zamzam, Abu Shok and Al Salam IDP camps. Most healthcare infrastructure has been partially or completely damaged. Numerous patients and their caretakers have been killed while inside a medical facility supported by MSF. Humanitarian workers have been repeatedly threatened, sometimes killed.

Despite the immense challenges, MSF has strived to maintain its operations. In August 2022, MSF opened a primary health clinic in Zamzam IDP camp, where general, nutrition and maternity consultations, as well as vaccinations, were carried out. In March 2024, a second primary health clinic was opened, as MSF scaled up its response to the major malnutrition crisis witnessed in the camp, with a field hospital functional from April 2024 onward. In February 2023, MSF started to support the maternity ward in South Hospital in El Fasher, with plans to begin obstetric surgery in July of that year. However, when fighting broke out in April 2023, these plans were upended and MSF reoriented itself, establishing an emergency department and surgery for war-wounded patients in the same hospital. Yet, because of the repeated attacks on the medical facility, MSF was forced to end its activities on June 8, 2024, and began supporting Saudi Hospital for trauma and surgery for war-wounded. Attacks on healthcare facilities continued and, as a consequence, MSF was compelled to end its support to Saudi Hospital, which was the last remaining public hospital in the city with the capacity to treat the wounded and perform surgery, in August 2024. In December 2024 and January 2025, the two health clinics in Zamzam were suspended following continuous shelling on the camp. Mid-February, activities in the field hospital were suspended following the massive escalation of violence in Zamzam.

¹ IOM reports that about 406,300 people have been displaced from Zamzam camp, near El Fasher, North Darfur State between April 13 and May 2, 2025. OCHA, 2025, 'SUDAN: Displacement from Zamzam camp, North Darfur State Flash Update No. 03', May, available here: [Sudan: Displacement from Zamzam camp, North Darfur State - Flash Update No. 01 \(As of 15 April 2025\) | OCHA](#)

SUDAN - NORTH DARFUR



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE

2003

Insurrection across Darfur by two local armed groups - Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) against the central government. The government, backed by local Arab forces known as the *Janjaweed*, responded with a violent counter-insurgency campaign.

2005

The UN Darfur Commission of Inquiry found that between 2003 and 2005, the Sudanese government and the *Janjaweed* committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that likely amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Late 2000s and 2010s

Although less frequent, attacks by Arab forces on non-Arab communities continued.

2013

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – rooted in the *Janjaweed* – were formed by the Sudanese Government to combat the remaining armed groups in the Darfur region, in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

April 2019

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir was ousted following a popular uprising. The army formed a Transitional Military Council, then transferred executive power to a mixed civilian-military Sovereignty Council and a civilian cabinet.

October 2020

A peace agreement was signed in Juba between the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) – a coalition of mostly armed groups – and the Sudanese government, to end hostilities in the western region of Darfur and in the southern regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

October 2021

A military government was reinstated following a coup.

April 11, 2025

The RSF and their allies launched a large-scale ground operation on Zamzam. Hundreds of civilians were killed, and most of the camp population was displaced.

August, 2024

Famine was confirmed by the IPC Famine Review Committee in Zamzam IDP camp. SAF authorities consented to the opening of the Adré border crossing from Chad to Sudan. However, the humanitarian response remained grossly insufficient.

June 13, 2024

The UNSC adopted Resolution 2736, demanding that the RSF end the siege of El Fasher and calling for an immediate halt to the fighting in and around the city.

May 10, 2024

Fighting between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, the latter supported by the Joint Forces, erupted in El Fasher.

April 2024

The Joint Forces announced that they were no longer neutral and aligned themselves with the SAF.

June 15, 2023

After two months of fighting between Masalit and Arab armed groups, including RSF units, the Masalit governor of West Darfur was murdered in the state capital, El Geneina, leading to the defeat of Masalit fighters and mass violence against Masalit civilians by the RSF and their allies. A UN report estimated that 10,000 to 15,000 people were killed in El Geneina between April 15 and November 2023.

End of April 2023

Darfuri armed groups who were signatories to the Juba peace agreement set up a defensive force called the Joint Forces, initially presenting themselves as neutral.

April 15, 2023

Following prolonged tension within the military apparatus, fighting broke out in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The conflict rapidly spread to other parts of Sudan, including the Darfur region.

In 2003, an insurrection was launched in Darfur against the central government. The Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), two local armed groups, primarily blamed the Sudanese authorities under Omar Al Bashir for the marginalisation of Darfur. They also accused the central government of fuelling tribal conflicts, in particular between Arab and non-Arab communities, supporting the former against the latter. The government responded with a violent counter-insurgency campaign, involving aerial bombings of villages that were home to non-Arab communities, the latter being systematically accused of supporting the insurrection. These were coupled with ground operations carried out by both the regular army and local Arab armed groups backed by Khartoum who became known as the *Janjaweed*. The situation in Darfur was referred to the International Criminal Court by the UN Security Council in March 2005. Investigations regarding genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur started in June of that same year and are ongoing². Meanwhile, the 2005 UN Darfur Commission of Inquiry found that between February 2003 and mid-January 2005, the Sudanese government, along with the *Janjaweed*, committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that likely amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity³. Nearly two million Darfuris fled their homes, out of a total population of 6 million in Darfur, while an estimated 400,000 civilians died from violence, disease and starvation. The vast majority of the victims were non-Arabs, mainly from the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa tribes. Although they became less frequent, attacks by Arab armed groups on non-Arab communities continued throughout the 2000s' and 2010s'. Many of the displaced did not return to their villages, for fear of repeated attacks.

In 2013, the Rapid Support Forces – rooted in the *Janjaweed* – were officially formed by the Sudanese Government in order to combat armed groups still operating in the western region of Darfur and in the southern regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

In April 2019, the Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir was ousted following a popular uprising. The army formed a Transitional Military Council, then transferred executive power to a mixed civilian-military Sovereignty Council and a civilian cabinet, under Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok.

On October 3, 2020, a peace agreement was signed in Juba between the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) – a coalition of mostly armed groups – and the Sudanese government, to end hostilities in the regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

In October 2021, a military government was reinstated following a coup. On April 15, 2023, following prolonged tension within the military apparatus, fighting broke out in Khartoum between the SAF – headed by the President of the Sovereignty Council Abdel-Fattah Al-Burhan – and the RSF – led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo aka “Hemedti”, then deputy of Al-Burhan. The conflict rapidly spread to other parts of Sudan, including the Darfur region. At the end of April, former Darfuri armed groups and signatories to the Juba peace agreement set up a defensive force called the Joint Forces formed by SLA, led by Minni Minnawi, JEM, led by Jibril Ibrahim and the Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces (GSLF), led by Abdallah Yahya and Abdallah Janna. These Joint Forces presented themselves as neutral.

Shortly after the eruption of fighting in Khartoum, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and their allied armed groups launched attacks on the same non-Arab communities in Darfur as the ones targeted twenty years ago by the *Janjaweed*, in particular in West Darfur. On June 15, after two months of fighting between Masalit and Arab armed groups, including RSF units, the Masalit governor of West Darfur was murdered in the state capital, El Geneina. Masalit residents, who had already faced decades of war and forced displacement, were trapped in a renewed cycle of violence at the hands of the RSF and their allies. They were forced to leave El Geneina and many tried to seek safety in Ardamata, a town located on the city's outskirts and home to the SAF garrison. MSF teams in eastern Chad treated 858 war-wounded people from June 15 to June 17, most of them Masalit fleeing the city and surroundings of El Geneina. In early November, the RSF and their allies took Ardamata, facing very limited resistance from the SAF. A UN report estimated that 10,000 to 15,000 people were killed in El Geneina between April 15 and November, 2023⁴.

North Darfur was not spared from violence. For instance, on June 9, 2023, Tawila was attacked by the RSF and their affiliates. Survivors recalled how systematic looting took place for several weeks, before the town was left empty, its residents being mostly displaced to El Fasher and IDP camps around the city.

² International Criminal Court, [Darfur, Sudan | International Criminal Court](#)

³ UN News, 2005, 'UN commission finds Sudanese Government responsible for crimes in Darfur', February 1, available here: [UN commission finds Sudanese Government responsible for crimes in Darfur | UN News](#)

⁴ United Nations Security Council, 2024, 'Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan', January 15

In mid-April 2024, the RSF took control of Mellit, located around 90 kilometres north-east of El Fasher. As a consequence, the last major entry point to North Darfur's capital was cut off, with the RSF besieging the city. In response to the escalation of violence in North Darfur, the Joint Forces declared war on the RSF and aligned themselves with the SAF⁵. Fighting between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, the latter supported by the Joint Forces, erupted in El Fasher on May 10, 2024. On June 13, 2024, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2736, demanding that the RSF end the siege of El Fasher and calling for an immediate halt to the fighting in and around the city.

In August 2024, famine was confirmed by the IPC Famine Review Committee in Zamzam IDP camp. Following lengthy negotiations, SAF authorities located in Port Sudan – who are not exerting direct control over most of Darfur – announced the opening of the Adré border crossing with Chad on August 15 for three months, in order to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid delivered by the UN. The decision was renewed for three months from November 2024, then again from February 2025 and from May 2025. The humanitarian response remained, however, grossly insufficient, in part because of the bureaucratic barriers imposed by the belligerents that continued to impede the delivery of aid.

While fighting went on without interruption between the SAF, the Joint Forces and the RSF, aerial bombardment by the SAF and artillery attacks by the RSF took place on an unprecedented scale in El Fasher, including in the surrounding IDP camps of Abu Shok and Al Salam between October 10 and 20, 2024⁶.

From June 2024 onward, the road between El Fasher and Tawila was open to civilians for a few hours on Fridays under the protection of the Sudan Liberation Army's faction led by Abdelwahid Al-Nur (SLA-AW). Attacks on non-Arab civilians by the RSF and allied armed groups continued outside of Fridays, and tensions eventually led SLA-AW to put an end to the corridor⁷. In January, the Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces' faction under the command of Taher Hajer (GSLF-TH) and the SLA-AW formed the Neutral Force for the Protection of Civilians. However, on January 16, a civilian convoy of around 50 cars escorted by the Neutral Force from Tawila was attacked by the RSF near Kebkabiya, a town located approximately 180 km west of El Fasher. Following this, no convoy traveled out of El Fasher or Zamzam IDP camp until April 2025.

Between January 21 and 25, 2025, the RSF launched their largest attack on the SAF and their allied forces in El Fasher. The RSF encircled the city from both east and west. Shelling in Zamzam IDP camp had already begun to intensify from early December, and in February, the RSF surrounded Zamzam and repeatedly conducted ground operations on nearby villages and inside the camp. After six weeks of relative calm, shelling resumed on April 5. On April 11, the RSF and their allies launched a large-scale attack on Zamzam. Hundreds of civilians, including many children, were killed, and most of the camp population was displaced. By April 16, the camp was reportedly under the control of the RSF.

At the time of writing, fighting between the SAF, their allied Joint Forces and the RSF continues, with the RSF shelling El Fasher and conducting further ground attacks on villages nearby.

5 Sudan War Monitor, 2024, 'Darfur Joint Force declares war on Rapid Support Forces; Former rebels renounce neutrality and align with Sudanese army', April 12, available here: [Darfur Joint Force declares war on Rapid Support Forces](#)

6 Howarth, C. N., Khoshnood, K., Raymond, N. A. et al., 2024, 'Continuing Bombardment in El Fasher: Attacks on Civilian Infrastructure and IDP Camp', Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven, 22 October, p. 4

7 Tubiana, J. 2025, 'Darfur: A War Within a War', The New York Review, February 2

I. CIVILIANS CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE



a. Bombing, shelling, and ground operations failing to discriminate between military targets and civilians

The warring parties have consistently and indiscriminately bombed areas where civilians live.

As fighting escalated in North Darfur capital in May 2024, 1,347 casualties were received in the MSF-supported South Hospital in El Fasher, including 214 who succumbed to their injuries, between May 10 and June 8. Following the closure of South Hospital on June 9, the emergency department and surgery for war-wounded patients were transferred to Saudi Hospital. From June 9 to July 6, 624 casualties were received at Saudi Hospital, including 87 who passed away. Wounded people arrived with abdominal injuries, chest wounds, brain trauma and open fractures. Some had been wounded by bomb fragments, while others had been wounded by shelling. Over the month of June, 21% of the casualties were

women and 16% were children. Many witnesses report having lost one or several family members and their houses in the fighting.

"The SAF bombed our neighbourhood by mistake, then came to apologise to the people. SAF planes sometimes bombed civilian areas without any RSF, I saw it in different places where there was no RSF. [...] Many people died from SAF aerial bombing."

Woman, 50⁸

⁸ For all testimonies, date and location were withheld for safety reasons

"We used to see the RSF using the main road in our neighbourhood to attack the SAF, then on their way back running through our area, shooting randomly. The police came from the south and the SAF from the west to face the RSF, then the RSF ran away through our area. During those attacks, they shot a lot with a 23 mm gun to clear the way."

Woman, 33

"When the RSF started to attack El Fasher in May, I saw the[m] enter from the south of the town, then they opened fire and everyone started to run away to the north. People were killed in the shooting."

Man, 32

MSF reported several mass casualty incidents in El Fasher over the month of August 2024. On August 4, at least 32 people were killed and 75 were injured, many of them civilians, by RSF shelling around Saudi Hospital. On August 10, more than 40 were killed and 90 injured during clashes between the SAF and Joint Forces on one side, and the RSF on the other.

Shelling, bombing and ground operations by the RSF, the SAF and their affiliated armed groups have since continued on a very regular basis. Despite the lack of comprehensive data over 2024, intermittent figures provided by the Ministry of Health on casualties received at Saudi Hospital show the immense impact of violence on civilians.

Between September 15 and 23, 2024	Between December 1 and 22, 2024
283 people were received at Saudi Hospital, including 24 dead on arrival	644 casualties arrived at Saudi Hospital, including 97 dead on arrival
From January 1 to February 23, 2025	Between April 11 and May 11, 2025
1,129 casualties were received at Saudi Hospital, including 150 dead on arrival	2,614 wounded people were admitted to the hospital, including 226 dead on arrival

Despite being bombed and hit by shelling on numerous occasions, Saudi Hospital has been the only health facility with a functioning operating theatre since June 2024, serving a population estimated to exceed one million people. Because of the prevailing insecurity, most people, however, are unable to reach the few

remaining functional medical facilities in the capital of North Darfur.

Nearby localities were not spared by the warring parties. While the RSF carried out systematic ground attacks, SAF airstrikes also provoked civilian deaths. For instance on February 2, 2025, 21 wounded patients were received at MSF's field hospital in Zamzam, more than half of whom were children. They had been injured near Shagra, approximately 20 km from El Fasher, by a SAF airstrike. Since the MSF field hospital in Zamzam camp was not equipped to deal with injuries requiring surgical treatment, the patients needed to be referred to Saudi Hospital. However, because of intense clashes and shifting frontlines, the road between Zamzam and El Fasher was impossible to use. As a result, four of the patients who needed to be referred passed away.

On March 24, 2025, a SAF aerial attack on a market in Turra village, about 40 km north-west of El Fasher, took place during peak hours and resulted in the death of hundreds of people, according to Emergency Lawyers⁹.

b. Pressure on civilians to fight and fund war effort

Civilian men have been under pressure to take part in the war effort. While many spoke of abductions of men by the RSF to recruit them by force, others highlighted the pressure exercised on households by the Joint Forces and Self-defence forces to join or support the fight. Such pressure mostly fell on men, but also on women in some instances, and entire households reported being pressured to contribute financially.

"Abu Shok community leaders or sheikhs mobilised the community saying everyone, even women should take part in the defence of the camp. Every household was supposed to contribute SDG 2,000 [about \$1¹⁰ monthly] or have men and youth join the force. Every family was expected to send one man to the force. I was against my husband joining the Joint Forces but he didn't listen to me."

Woman, 31

9 Plett Usher, B., Booty, N., 2005, 'Sudan army accused of killing hundreds in airstrike on Darfur market', BBC, March 26, available here: [Sudan army accused of killing hundreds in airstrike on Darfur market](#)
10 Average exchange rate generally applied in the informal market in May 2025



In El Fasher city, Self-defence groups¹¹ requested some men to take up arms in order to defend specific neighbourhoods.

"[They] gave my young brother, around 30 years old, a rifle and tasked him to protect the area with other youths. That was also one of the reasons we left, with him."

Woman, 50

c. Detention of men on allegations of collaboration with the opposing warring party

Several witnesses recalled detention by the Sudanese Armed Forces on the grounds that detainees had allegedly collaborated with the RSF.

"[In June 2024] I was imprisoned by the Sudanese Armed Forces as I was wrongly accused of being part of the RSF. I was detained for a while, but I proved that I was not part of the RSF. They did not believe me; they told me to find another person who

could testify that I was not part of the RSF. I found someone in charge of El Fasher, who testified that I was a civilian. They told me that I had to pay [...] to be released."

Man, 38

"When the SAF came to our area, they accused people of being in the RSF. The SAF arrested 3 civilians, then released them. The SAF entered our house, scattered all our belongings and looted some. [...] I used to trust the SAF but they did a lot of bad things."

Woman, 50

Many witnesses reported that men from non-Arab communities, especially the Zaghawa, were accused by the RSF of collaborating with the Joint Forces and the SAF, and then being investigated, beaten, or killed based on that allegation.

"They are targeting men and boys. They kill them because they think they are military and enemies."

Woman, 25

¹¹ Independent armed groups recruited among local civilians, also referred to as « popular resistance »

II. DELIBERATE TARGETING OF NON-ARAB COMMUNITIES BY THE RAPID SUPPORT FORCES



a. Systematic ground attacks

Multiple ground operations have been carried out by the RSF on El Fasher and nearby localities. Survivors of such attacks report systematic looting, the random or deliberate killing of civilians and the burning of civilian infrastructure including private houses and markets.

Before the escalation of fighting in El Fasher, surrounding localities witnessed direct attacks from the RSF. This was the case of the attack on Tawila in June and July 2023, that went largely unreported. As highlighted by several witnesses, markets and houses were looted and burnt, while many civilians were killed.

When fighting then escalated in El Fasher in May 2024, ground operations were also carried out by the RSF. As everywhere else, residents and their houses were systematically looted.

"The RSF stole many things in Al-Wahida [neighbourhood in El Fasher], including my uncle's car, as well as televisions and fridges in people's houses. Two RSF military trucks were filled with all the belongings they could find in my aunt's house. We saw them but couldn't say anything. When we went there, we found the house empty."

Woman, 30

While the SAF and Joint Forces repelled the RSF, the latter continued shelling the town, including civilian areas such as markets.

Ground attacks by the RSF also took place in IDP camps neighboring El-Fasher. This was the case in Abu Shok and Al Salam IDP camps in May 2024. Victims of such attacks recall how the RSF systematically stole the population's belongings, including their cars and livestock, while destroying their means of livelihood.

Several survivors also spoke of abductions of both civilian men and women.

"In May, the RSF attacked the camp, shot randomly, killed and looted people's belongings, vehicles. In one house, they saw men playing cards and shot them dead. They also kidnapped 4 men and boys."

Man, 50

"In May, the RSF attempted many times to enter Abu Shok. They clashed with the Joint Forces and SAF. As mothers, we stayed inside homes. One day, we saw two children shot dead by the RSF [...]. That day, after seeing they were shooting civilians, some scared people left their homes and the RSF looted those homes."

Woman, 31

Until the beginning of December 2024, Zamzam was considered by many civilians to be a relatively safe place. As a result, massive population movements were reported from nearby villages as well as from El Fasher towards Zamzam.

When fighting erupted in Zamzam in December 2024 and then intensified at the end of January and in February 2025, the camp was hosting many more IDPs than before, possibly up to 700,000. Attacks on Zamzam started from Saluma, located in the north and close to MSF's field hospital. Following the attack, Saluma was left empty.

"When the attack was in the northern part of Zamzam, the civilians moved to the south. It was then only the MSF hospital that remained there, everything around it was empty. [...] They knew [these were civilian areas] [...] They stated clearly that they wanted all civilians to move."

Man, 30

"When the first [attack] which took place in the north, after Friday prayers, happened, people stayed in the mosque and they said that when they were there, the RSF came and started to attack. Some people told us that they faced them, and said "Do you have any guns here?", and that they started shooting randomly."

Man, 27

Shortly afterwards, the RSF and affiliated forces launched attacks on the southern part of the camp,

where the main market was located. According to Yale School of Public Health, over half of the main market in Zamzam was razed to the ground between February 9 and 13¹². Several IDPs present at the market during the attack recall the looting and burning of shops, in addition to the killing of civilians.

"We saw them, the market was the target, they wanted the market because it meant a lot of wealth, they could take people's vehicles and use them, they could take all the sheep, cows..."

Man, 30

"During the second attack, there was fighting in the streets from 2 pm until sunset. It was when the market was burnt [...]. Everyone was running around, you could see injured and dead people everywhere."

Woman, 42

Further ground attacks were reported by interviewees in localities south of Zamzam, such as Um Hejalij in late February 2025, and in Tabit and Dar es Salam in early March 2025. IDPs who arrived in Tawila after having fled these localities also recalled beatings, houses being burnt and attacks on markets, as well as systematic looting.

"In March 25, the RSF attacked the area around Dar es Salam and looted everything. I saw them looting a lot of animals and killing 27 people, the majority were Zaghawa."

Male, 62

As highlighted by Yale School of Public Health, between December 12, 2024 and February 4, 2025, 23 communities in El Fasher, Dar es Salam, and Tawila suffered from "thermal scarring consistent with intentional razing to structures"¹³. Between February 19 and March 16, the Yale School of Public Health identified thermal scarring consistent with intentional razing of structures in 18 communities located in the areas around El Fasher and Tawila. 12 out of the 18 localities had already been attacked by the RSF¹⁴.

12 Howarth, C. N., Khoshnood, K., Raymond, N. A. et al., 2025, 'SPECIAL REPORT: RSF Ground Assault on Zamzam IDP Camp', Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven, 13 February, p. 3

13 Howarth, C. N., Khoshnood, K., Raymond, N. A. et al., 2025, 'RSF Shells Abu Shouk IDP Camp and Attacks Communities Near El Fasher', Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven, 18 March, p. 4

14 Ibid., p. 3

RSF ATTACK ON ZAMZAM CAMP, LAUNCHED ON APRIL 11, 2025

Between mid-February and the beginning of April 2025, the situation remained relatively calm in Zamzam camp. New waves of IDPs reached the camp from surrounding villages where ground operations were being carried out by the RSF. On April 11, a large-scale assault was launched by the RSF and allied forces on Zamzam. All survivors interviewed by MSF teams reported that many civilians were killed, including many women and children.

"We started to hear the shooting at nine, and it never stopped until after sunset. There was so much shooting and shelling on our houses, in the streets, everywhere. There were so many people injured and killed, even very small children. [...] We heard some stories from people who stayed behind. They told us that on Sunday our neighbours were all killed and that the houses were burnt."

Woman, 21

"Every single person they were seeing, they shot at them, no matter if it was a child, a woman or an elderly person."

Woman, 40

"One mortar shell fell on us, I was injured and my daughter too. [...] 12 civilians died, including 3 relatives and 44 were injured, including my daughter and myself, by only one mortar shell."

Woman, 55

"I reached that woman shot in her hand and another part of her body, and told her: 'I'll take care of the child'. She said: 'no it's my child!' I told her: 'please be quiet, they think you're dead but may come back to kill you!'", and I took her child. [...] After some time, I gave the mother her child back. They were lying beside us with their dead relatives. She breastfed the child."

Woman, 48

"Zamzam became like hell, there was shelling and shooting from all sides except the northwest. Many were just lying on the road, some injured, even some children, but there was no way to rescue them, there was nowhere to take them. There was no medicine for them, so many kept bleeding until they died."

Man, 38

"Some men were hiding in their house, they dug holes and covered themselves with wood to try to protect themselves. Six men were hiding in a hole, and when the RSF found them, they killed them."

Woman, 21

On Friday April 11, Sheikh Farah Koranic school was attacked by the RSF. IDPs who had recently arrived in Zamzam after having fled violence in other villages were living in the school, and many were reportedly killed.

"Many RSF cars entered the school and [they] killed 13 people. When they saw anyone, men or male children, they killed them."

Woman, 48

"They came to the fence, pointed at my husband across the fence, and shot him dead with 2 bullets in the back, near the shoulder. They also shot dead my 5-year-old son who was lying between us, in the back. The blood ran onto my 3-year-old son, who then came towards me. Both my husband and son died immediately. Then they shot me in the right leg and the right hand. [...] My blind uncle was lying on his side, they also shot him dead in the back. [...] I don't have any hope. When they shot my son, parts of his body fell in my hand."

Woman, 25

On that same day, nine staff of Relief International were killed while inside a health clinic in the camp. Two additional employees later passed away from their injuries¹⁵. Relief International was the last international aid organisation still operating in Zamzam IDP camp.

¹⁵ Relief International, 2025, 'Zamzam Camp, Sudan: A profound tragedy for Relief International as eleven colleagues mercilessly killed', April 13, available here: [Zamzam Camp, Sudan: A profound tragedy for Relief International - Relief International](#)

"Relief International staff were hiding in a foxhole. The RSF shouted: 'come out, falangayat [slaves]!' They put them under a zinc shelter, lined them up, and shot them all. I saw it with my own eyes"

Woman, 25

Entire areas of the camp were reportedly burnt on the following day, according to several survivors.

"On Saturday, from morning to evening, all houses in southern Zamzam were burnt, intentionally, with matches. [...] My cousin was burnt alive as he was trying to escape from another room of the house where we were."

Man, 34

As reported by several interviewees, the SAF did not intervene during the RSF assault on Zamzam camp.



"In February, the Joint Forces and the SAF came to support Self-defence forces in Zamzam, but this time the Self-defence was mostly left alone and lacked ammunition."

Man, 34

"During the previous RSF attack on Zamzam, when they burnt the market, the SAF and the Joint Forces intervened and repelled the RSF but this time [the SAF] did not intervene. They were aware, as they had some police present in the camp, but were not willing to come."

Man, 40

As reported by Yale School of Public Health, "between 11-16 April 2025, a total of 1.719 square kilometers of Zamzam has been destroyed."¹⁶ While hundreds of civilians were killed, many were injured. From April 13 to May 10, 528 people with wounds related to violence received care at MSF-supported Tawila Hospital. Many were children, the youngest being a seven-month-old baby with a bullet wound that went under his chin and into his shoulder. With no functional health facility within Zamzam camp, most injured people were not able to reach life-saving medical assistance.



An important share of Zamzam's population was said to have fled to El Fasher, where they remained trapped, out of reach of humanitarian aid and exposed to attacks and further mass violence. IOM reported that over 400,000 people were displaced from Zamzam camp between April 13 and May 2, 2025. MSF team in Tawila witnessed the arrival of over 73,000 people, of which 23% were children, in the two IDP camps of Tawila Umda and Dabatnaira, between April 13 and 21. According to UNHCR, over 68,000 Sudanese have arrived in Chad's Wadi Fira and Ennedi Est provinces in May 2025, the majority of them coming from El Fasher and Zamzam¹⁷.

16 Howarth, C. N., Khoshnood, K., Raymond, N. A. et al., 2025, 'Human Security Emergency: Ongoing RSF Arson Attacks and Force Swell in Zamzam IDP Camp', Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven, 16 April, p. 3

17 UNHCR, 2025, 'UNHCR warns crisis reaching breaking point as Sudanese refugee numbers triple in Chad', June 3, available here:

b. Widespread sexual violence

Survivors of ground attacks said that sexual violence was widespread. According to OHCHR, “the number of victims of sexual violence reaching service providers in El Fasher surged significantly from May 2024, reaching between 20 to 40 cases per month. This is considered to be significantly under-reported due to stigma, and also as artillery shelling restricted the movement of people in general and survivors of sexual violence in particular, preventing them from accessing medical care.”¹⁸.

“When the RSF began besieging El Fasher in May, some of them [...] settled in some of the blocks in El Salam IDP camp like block 12, inhabited mainly by the Zaghawa. They took that area by force, and kidnapped many women, some already married, who were in the streets, some of them from Abu Shok, who had come for work. I know of six of them. You can guess what they did with them. Up to now we don’t have any news. They also killed the men who were trying to protect them.”

Woman, 28

“Women were victims of a lot of violence. As a psychologist I used to go to gathering sites, to give support to the victims. In [a] centre I met three sisters who were raped by the RSF [...], and I tried to help them to forget about it. It was very difficult for them to talk about it.”

Woman, 33

In Al Wadi, sexual violence by the RSF and their allies reportedly led residents to leave the area and take refuge in Zamzam camp.

“There were some people living around Al Wadi, after they saw that there were rape cases there, they all moved. Some came to Zamzam and said: ‘it’s better that we die than see our daughters taken in front of us and raped.’”

Woman, 42

[UNHCR warns crisis reaching breaking point as Sudanese refugee numbers triple in Chad | UNHCR](#)

18 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2024, ‘Under siege: the situation of human rights in El Fasher, North Darfur since May 2024’, December, p. 8, available here: [20241220-ohchr-sudan-country-office-on-siege-in-el-fasher-north-darfur.pdf](#)



Further, the scale of sexual violence around Zamzam camp hindered women’s ability to fetch water and wood.

“Rape cases take place when women go to farm outside, each farming season. This year, two Zaghawa women went to Um Hashab, 7 km west of Zamzam. The Janjaweed raped them and left them there.”

Man, 21

Survivors of the ground operation launched on Zamzam camp by the RSF on April 11 also reported sexual violence:

“On the south side of the camp, which they were able to occupy, [...] they started raping women”

Man, 45

“In Zamzam, I heard the RSF chatting, saying ‘Yesterday we raped women’, and one mentioned he had raped young girls.”

Man

“One of them took my 15-month-old son and the other took me under a rakuba [shelter]. He did what he wanted to me and threatened me with a knife, saying that if I tell this to anyone, he will kill me.”

Woman, 25

As a consequence of both the destruction of health facilities and the increasing difficulty in accessing healthcare as a result, added to the cost of traveling to facilities, survivors of sexual violence have faced major challenges when it comes to receiving timely medical assistance.

c. Abductions for ransom and forced recruitment

Numerous witnesses reported that men and boys were abducted and then forcibly recruited by the RSF.

"The RSF entered at night, shot any man they saw, and kidnapped any teenage boys they found to recruit them by force. Many of our neighbours' sons were forcibly recruited. They took many youths with them. We don't have any news about them. Nobody has seen them again."

Woman, 37

"In El Salam and Abu Shok [IDP camps], the RSF often came and recruited men and boys by force, regardless of their age and their tribe. Three sons of my aunt, aged 17, 20 and 28, were recruited by force in Abu Shok by the RSF. We have no news of them."

Woman, 28

Some witnesses explained how men, and boys sometimes younger than ten-years-old, were abducted by the RSF and their allies and forced to herd the animals they had stolen from people from non-Arab communities.

"They took donkeys, sheep and goats, including 9 goats and 2 sheep from my aunt. They also took young men, and even old men, to use them as shepherds and take those animals away."

Man, 24

Many others spoke of kidnappings for ransom, with the amount demanded varying between SDG 250,000 [about \$128] and 3 million [about \$602]. While most witnesses spoke of abductions of men, cases of women being kidnapped were mentioned as well.

"In neighbouring El Salam IDP camp, a cousin who was fifteen years old was kidnapped by the RSF to recruit him in May and now they're asking for a ransom of SDG 3 million [about \$602]. We don't know where he is. Two days ago, my cousin's son, moving from El Fasher to Korma, was kidnapped and we don't

know what happened to him. About 50 IDPs from El Fasher, Abu Shok and El Salam have disappeared."

Man, 39

"If they [Arab armed groups] find men in the farms, they take them as hostages and demand huge ransoms. It happened twice. Two or three months ago, at the beginning of the rainy season, [They] from Gallab captured 15 Zaghawa shepherds, adults and children, from Zamzam, in Donki Sharafa, 17 km south-west of Zamzam, stole all their livestock, and took the shepherds to Gallab, and asked SDG 1 million [about \$513] each for their release. The omdas [traditional leaders] of Zamzam collected the money, paid and those 15 were released after a month."

Man, 21

Such reports therefore suggest that the abductions of men and women have been a source of income for the RSF and affiliated forces. Because of the fear to be forcibly recruited, witnesses spoke of young men being afraid to leave their area and cross the frontline.

d. Neighbourhoods, civilian gatherings and infrastructure under repeated shelling

Civilian neighbourhoods, gatherings and infrastructure have been repeatedly shelled by the RSF. Some specific neighbourhoods of El Fasher have been particularly affected:

"Thawra, Hay al Jil, Hay al Salam, Tadamun neighbourhoods, suffered a lot. In some houses, one RSF shell killed a whole family. The shells entered our house, some walls collapsed, and the iron roof was partly broken. We were very frightened."

Woman, 37

IDP camps surrounding El Fasher have been especially impacted by shelling. This was the case for Abu Shok, which came under shelling in March 2024. As explained by residents of the camp, numerous civilian buildings, such as schools, mosques, playgrounds and shops, were damaged or destroyed.

"From that time, shelling took place almost every day. These attacks caused huge destruction to houses, markets, hospitals, schools, even mosques, and private properties. Everything was destroyed. Some entire families were killed, and many families lost members: children, fathers, mothers. Shelling is what caused the most deaths."

Man, 50

"In April [2024], tensions escalated and the RSF shelled with mortars, 120 mm guns, and other heavy guns directed at Abu Shok IDP camp. They killed more than 250 civilians and injured more than 2,000. I used to receive those who reached the emergency [department] and refer them to South Hospital and sometimes to Saudi Hospital. RSF shelling also destroyed houses and shops in Abu Shok. [...] The shells on Abu Shok came from the north, meaning they were shot by RSF, not the SAF."

Man, 39

"In June [2024], 3 RSF bombs fell on our neighbourhood and killed and injured many people. Another bombing round of 5 bombs took place three days later, falling on Abu Shok market, and another close to our house, one on the playground, one on the nutrition centre not far from our house, burning the stocks of Plumpy Nut, milk and drugs. One bomb on the market killed 17 people, including my cousin, and 2 other cousins were injured. [...] I saw RSF drones. Some had bombs and were bombing. I saw them from away, they bombed another block of the camp, where a celebration of a new birth was being held, and 3 women were killed. I went to see the bodies and the drone itself, which had fallen on the ground."

Woman, 31

Zamzam IDP camp has been under shelling from the RSF since the end of 2024. Between December 1 and January 21, 2025, MSF team recorded 11 days of shelling and at least 129 shells. 66 casualties were received at the MSF field hospital, including 14 dead on arrival. Additionally, 67 deaths were reported in the community. These figures likely failed to capture the true extent of the death toll, since many could not access care. The RSF were identified by IDPs as being the perpetrators of these attacks based on the direction the shelling was coming from.

"The first phase of the bombing was very random, it was on many areas like markets. [...] After every bombing, we would receive many trauma cases, some of them severe and all types, like men, women, children. The majority were children."

Man, 27, NGO staff

"Some bombs fell on schools where displaced people used to stay. Some bombs fell on the market. These were places where civilians were gathering."

Man, 27

"All the patients who came were civilians. Also, we had community health workers who were doing their work in the area, so we got the information that it was only civilians in the areas that were under attack."

Man, 30, NGO staff

Bombing and shelling in El Fasher have continued daily. Between May 12 and 15, the Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab assessed that "damage [was] observed at the Al Saudi Hospital, the Mawashi (livestock) market, two mosques, and other likely civilian dwellings in El Fasher and Abu Shok IDP Camp. The majority of this damage in El Fasher is consistent with munition impacts from artillery shelling."¹⁹

e. Ethnic targeting

Interviewees reported a targeting of people from non-Arab communities by the RSF and their allies.

"The RSF does not treat tribes equally, they treat Arabs better than non-Arabs, light skinned people better than darker people, and those speaking the nomads' type of Arabic better than those speaking the city style or another language."

Man

19 Howarth, C. N., Khoshnood, K., Raymond, N. A. et al., 2025, 'Protected Civilian Infrastructure in El Fasher Shelled as Zamzam Burns', Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven, 15 May, p. 3

"[The RSF] appear suddenly and can distinguish between different groups of people based on their skin colour. If you are white, you belong to them and if you are black, you belong to the Sudanese military. In that case, they interrogate you, punish you and kidnap you. This happens if you are a black boy."

Man, 18 or 20

The term "*falangay*", amounting to "servant" or "slave" of the SAF, was reportedly used by the RSF on a systematic basis to speak of the Zaghawa. Additionally, several interviewees spoke of the word "*qurud*", amounting to "monkeys" being said to speak of the Zaghawa.

Most Zaghawa interviewed reported being targeted by the RSF and their allies due to their Zaghawa ethnicity. The same was expressed by people from other ethnicities, who stated that Zaghawa people were more at risk of being killed by the RSF and their allies than other ethnic groups. The Zaghawa community constitutes the core of the Joint Forces, which gave up their neutrality and fought alongside the SAF, in particular in the defence of El Fasher and Zamzam. Additionally, Self-defence forces from El Fasher and Zamzam, largely recruited from the Zaghawa community, have been supporting the Joint Forces and the SAF.

"The RSF target all black tribes, but more the Zaghawa than others. Because they're saying the Torabora [rebels] are all Zaghawa."

Woman, 45

"They were threatening people: 'You are falangay, we will chase you even if you reach Tawila!'. We heard some of them speaking in their walkie-talkies saying: 'wipe out all the Zaghawa, those falangay'."

Man, 70

"They look for Zaghawa women in order to do bad things to them."

Man, 35

Many of the villages and neighbourhoods that were targeted during RSF's ground operations were well known to be home to Zaghawa communities. This was the case for the Thawra and Al Wahida neighbourhoods in El Fasher, as well as Saluma and Zamzam camp, among others. Numerous accounts state that the

RSF systematically asked civilians about their tribe, and that people found to be Zaghawa were killed.

"Zaghawa couldn't get out of El Fasher. Nobody could get out if they said they were Zaghawa. If I denied my ethnic group, I could get through. [...] I was afraid that [...] someone would reveal that my husband was a Zaghawa and that they would kill him in front of me."

Woman, 28

"Most areas and public spaces they [the RSF] targeted were inhabited by Zaghawa and it seems they were targeting Zaghawa. Some of them also think all of Zamzam is Zaghawa and it is why they attacked it. They target Zaghawa more than other tribes."

Man, 45

"They were asking people if they belonged to the Zaghawa, and if they did, they would kill them."

Man, 39

"They arrested him, asked his tribe and once they understood he was a Zaghawa, they shot him dead and took his tuktuk. We [...] talked with the Arabs [...]. They told us clearly: 'We asked his tribe, he said Zaghawa, and we killed him. Arabs are not going to pay any diya [compensation money for a death] for a Zaghawa.'"

Man

"They asked: 'are you Zaghawa?' We told them 'yes', and then they began insulting us: 'You're slaves, you're falangayat. Don't blame us, your problems are not caused by us but by your sons fighting us. We'll chase you and kill you, we'll reach you wherever you go, even in Tawila!'"

Woman, 55

"They ask you: 'what's your tribe?' If you say Zaghawa, you'll be more targeted and humiliated than others. They were busy looting and forgot to ask me. They asked many of my colleagues. Most denied being Zaghawa, they said they are Tunjur or Berti. Some said they were Zaghawa and were beaten or shot dead."

Man, 40

Several interviewees preferred not to mention their ethnic group, nor to speak about the ethnic dimension of the conflict, possibly suggesting that ethnicity might have become a more sensitive topic as the conflict escalated.

In June 2023, shortly after the RSF and their allies stormed El Geneina in West Darfur, MSF teams in Chad treated over 800 war-wounded patients in just three days, most of them Masalit who had fled the city and its surroundings. In their stories, survivors reported to MSF teams that they were targeted because of their ethnicity.

MSF conducted a retrospective mortality survey in refugee camps in eastern Chad and the results corroborated the testimonies. In Ourang camp, where 91% of the refugee population was from El Geneina, the mortality rate peaked in June 2023. As stated in the survey, "Over 11% of all men aged 30 and over died of violent causes and 4.9% of men aged 15-44 were reported missing during the recall period [April 15 to August 2023]." 82% of the deaths that occurred were violence-related. Out of these, 83% of the victims were men²⁰.

In light of the ethnically motivated mass atrocities committed on the Masalit community in West Darfur, and of the recent ethnic violence and massacres perpetrated in Zamzam camp in North Darfur, MSF

20 Ouedraogo P., Simons, E., Grellety, E., 2023, 'Cross-sectional retrospective mortality, nutrition and measles vaccination coverage surveys among Sudanese refugees and Chadian returnees in Toumtouma, Ourang and Arkoum camps, Ouaddaï province, Chad, August – September 2023', November, p. 23

is afraid that such a scenario will be repeated in El Fasher. This is especially the case as witnesses reported that RSF spoke of plans to 'clean El Fasher' of its non-Arab, and especially Zaghawa, population:

"They [the RSF] spoke a lot, saying that if they take El Fasher, they will kill all falangay, especially Zaghawa. [...] They used to say that if you kill fifty falangay, your face will glow in the morning. They believe in that."

Man

Survivors of the assault launched by the RSF on Zamzam camp on April 11 expressed deep concerns regarding the potential fall of El Fasher:

"If El Fasher falls, the RSF will come, rape, abduct, kill and humiliate us, and then we [Zaghawa] will have no more land in this country. It is about being part of Darfur or not."

Man

"Only God knows what will happen in El Fasher. But if the RSF take El Fasher, they will carry out ethnic cleansing and genocide, like what happened in El Geneina."

Man, 41



III. ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE RENDERED NEAR IMPOSSIBLE DUE TO THE DECIMATED HEALTH SYSTEM



a. Health infrastructure repeatedly attacked

Health facilities in El Fasher and surrounding IDP camps have either been directly targeted by the warring parties or have sustained major collateral damage. When fighting intensified in El Fasher in May 2024, health facilities supported by MSF endured at least seven incidents of shelling, bombing or shooting by both the SAF and their allied Joint Forces, and by the RSF. Over the month of June 2024, no less than four such incidents were reported. From May 2024 to August 2024, at least 10 people were killed and 42 injured while being at a medical facility supported by MSF.

In December 2024 and January 2025, MSF ambulances were targeted on two occasions. On December 27, an MSF ambulance was hit by bullets in El Fasher, while patients were referred from Zamzam camp to Saudi hospital. On January 10, an ambulance was shot at in El Fasher by an unknown gunman. It was referring a female patient in labour from the MSF field hospital in Zamzam to Saudi hospital in El Fasher because she required an emergency surgical procedure. One of the caretakers was fatally injured.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS ENDURED BY MSF SUPPORTED MEDICAL FACILITIES

10.05.2024	Heavy bombing and shooting took place close to Babiker Nahar Paediatric Hospital, as the SAF targeted an RSF position not far from the facility. 115 children were receiving treatment in the hospital at the time, suffering from conditions like malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea and malnutrition. Most of the patients and their caregivers vacated the premises in search of safety. Ten children remained in the intensive care unit, and three in the neonatal unit. MSF's medical team continued working in the hospital in order to provide treatment for these 13 children.
11.05.2024	An airstrike by the SAF in front of Babiker Nahar Paediatric Hospital resulted in the collapse of the roof of the Intensive Care Unit, killing two children and one caregiver. The hospital has been non-functional since then. It was one of the few specialising in the treatment of sick children that had remained open since the start of the war on April 2023.
12.05.2024	Shooting by the SAF and Joint Forces inside South Hospital took place, as RSF snipers were suspected of being positioned on the roof of the medical facility, targeting Joint Forces, SAF and civilians.
19.05.2024	Maternity ward of Saudi Hospital was hit by shelling.
25.05.2024	South Hospital was hit by a mortar, which landed on the ante-natal care unit, killing one person and injuring eight patients and caregivers.
26.05.2024	A shell landed inside South Hospital and injured three more people, while fragments from the explosion broke the windows of the delivery room and of the ambulance. Three other shells landed outside the hospital.
31.05.2024	Shelling impacted South Hospital.
03.06.2024	Shelling on South Hospital resulted in the death of one patient, injuring another one.
08.06.2024	South Hospital was attacked by the RSF, who opened fire and looted the medical facility, stealing an MSF ambulance. At the time of the attack, only ten patients were in the facility, along with a reduced MSF medical team. Indeed, due to intensified fighting, MSF and the Ministry of Health had already started to transfer patients and medical services to other facilities earlier that week. Because of the chaos, MSF's team was unable to verify whether anyone was killed or wounded during the attack. South Hospital was the main referral hospital for treating war-wounded people in El Fasher, the only one equipped to manage mass casualties, and one of only two hospitals with surgical capacity. All activities in the hospital came to an end.
21.06.2024	RSF shelling hit the pharmacy of Saudi Hospital. A pharmacist on shift was killed, while the pharmacy building was damaged.
27.06.2024	Saudi Hospital was hit once again. A bomb landed inside the hospital compound, breaking the windows and damaging the water tank. Additionally, two bombs landed 20 metres outside the facility.
29.07.2024	Two shells hit Saudi Hospital, killing three people and injuring 25.
11.08.2024	The surgical ward of Saudi Hospital was hit, killing a caretaker and injuring five others. The maternity unit was also damaged. In addition, several hospital offices were hit, and a nurse sustained injuries while working inside. MSF was forced to suspend its support to Saudi Hospital.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS ON SAUDI HOSPITAL CONTINUED AFTER MSF STOPPED ITS SUPPORT

10.10.2024 to 17.10.2024	Shelling on Saudi Hospital.
28.11.2024	Saudi Hospital was significantly damaged following shelling by the RSF.
December 2024	Saudi Hospital was hit at least three times by the RSF. - On December 13, a drone attack on Saudi Hospital killed 9 people and wounded 20 others, according to the WHO. - On December 16, a RSF drone attack hit Saudi Hospital, resulting in the death of 8 people and injuring over 20. It also caused severe damage to the hospital infrastructure. - On December 18, Saudi Hospital was shelled by the RSF. According to the Sudanese Doctors Network, 18 people were killed and 21 injured.
25.01.2025	Bombing by the RSF on the emergency department of Saudi Hospital resulted in the deaths of at least 30 people. The emergency department and blood bank were destroyed. According to the hospital director, 234 wounded were received at the hospital, out of whom 34 were dead upon arrival.

Other medical facilities, not supported by MSF, have been targeted as well, as was the case in Abu Shok IDP camp as early as April 2024.

"In April, one RSF shell fell on Haytham private clinic in Abu Shok and killed 17 civilians. The majority of them were children, their bodies were scattered and we had to use their clothes to try to identify them." -

Man, 39

Human Rights Watch further stated that an emergency clinic run by volunteers and located in the southern part of the camp was hit by at least one mortar projectile and two other explosive weapons on June 8, 2024. According to the organisation, four to five people inside the facility were injured. Witnesses indicated that the projectile had come from the east, where the RSF were based²¹. At the end of the same month, the malnutrition treatment facility in the camp was damaged by RSF shelling.

Other instances of attacks on medical structures have been reported. OHCHR highlighted that "the Tumbasi Medical Centre, in southern El Fasher, was also struck by RSF shelling on August 3, 2024, resulting in the death of at least 23 people and injury of 60 others. The attack also caused severe damage to the medical centre, putting it out of service and forcing patients to evacuate the hospital."²².

In mid-March 2025, OCHA reported that over 200 facilities in El Fasher were not functioning anymore²³.



21 Human Rights Watch, 2024, 'Sudan: Unlawful Attacks on Civilians, Infrastructure', June 19, available here: [Sudan: Unlawful Attacks on Civilians, Infrastructure | Human Rights Watch](#)

22 Op.cit., United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2024, 'Under siege: the situation of human rights in El Fasher, North Darfur since May 2024', p. 5

23 United Nations, 2025, 'Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General', March 11, available here: [Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases](#)

b. Access to healthcare rendered near impossible

As a result of the systematic attacks on healthcare facilities, access to healthcare has been rendered near impossible for the residents of El Fasher and surrounding IDP camps.

«My children got a disease in their eyes [...]. Before the war, one saw a doctor in Khartoum for surgery. For the second one, his disease started during the war but there was no hospital to go to. He became blind because he couldn't go to a hospital»

Man, 41

Added to the blatant lack of health infrastructure, multiple barriers hamper access to healthcare. For instance, referrals from MSF field hospital in Zamzam to Saudi Hospital in El Fasher became extremely difficult due to insecurity on the road in January 2025, which resulted in the death of four children who could not be referred to Saudi Hospital.

"We used to receive patients, stabilise them and refer them to El Fasher, but the road was blocked so we could not. So we were stabilising the patients, and then the patients would go home, then come back to the hospital and die in the hospital or in the community because we could not refer them."

Man, 38, NGO staff

Additional barriers included the unavailability of drugs, and their high cost when they were available. As a result, people with minimal resources could neither afford consultations nor medication.

After MSF suspended its activities in Zamzam in February 2025, IDPs reported that access to healthcare had become nearly impossible.

"Nothing was available, even private pharmacies and clinics were not open. The only option was if you knew someone who had some drugs. Even if he was your relative, he would sell it to you. If you were not his relative, he would not give you. There were so many people with chronic diseases who passed away, old people and children."

Woman, 21

c. MSF medical mission under threat

Since May 2024, medical needs have increased, while access to medical care has become almost impossible. MSF has adapted its response on multiple occasions in an attempt to maintain provision of medical care in El Fasher and Zamzam IDP camp.

Following the partial destruction of Babiker Nahar Paediatric Hospital, MSF stopped its activities. 30 beds for paediatric patients were set up in Sayed Al Shohada health centre until mid-July 2024. Meanwhile, MSF started to support the maternity, the emergency department and surgery for war-wounded patients in Saudi Hospital in June, following the closure of South Hospital immediately after the attack carried out on the facility by the RSF. However, in mid-August 2024, MSF was forced to cease all activities in El Fasher, because the surgical and the maternity units of Saudi hospital were damaged and because it had become too unsafe for patients and staff to remain in a facility that had been hit on numerous occasions.

In 2024, MSF scaled up its response in Zamzam camp, opening a 79-bed field hospital in April to treat the most critical paediatric and maternity cases that were previously treated in El Fasher. The MSF hospital had 20 beds in the inpatient therapeutic feeding centre, 42 beds in the children's ward, 7 beds in the paediatric intensive care unit and 10 maternity beds. MSF also ran two health clinics providing general

consultations, malnutrition consultations, maternity care and vaccinations. In 2024, over 80,000 general consultations, more than 33,000 vaccinations and over 17,000 maternity consultations were carried out, while more than 50,000 people received ready-to-use therapeutic food.

Two MSF trucks carrying aid supplies, including therapeutic food to treat acutely malnourished children in Zamzam camp, were blocked by the RSF in Kebkabiya on the road between the Chadian border and El Fasher from the end of June to early October 2024. As a consequence, on September 30, MSF's medical team in Zamzam was forced to stop treating outpatients for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) for three weeks due to the shortage of therapeutic food. Until this date, MSF had treated 2,900 children under the age of five who were diagnosed with SAM, and who could die within three to six weeks if they failed to receive appropriate medical care. Due to the supply shortage, MSF had already had to stop treating children with moderate acute malnutrition at the beginning of August 2024 in order to prioritise the most severe cases. The number of children requiring immediate care was actually much higher than 2,900, but due to the limited and rapidly diminishing stock, it simply was not possible for MSF to treat every child in need.

In December 2024 and January 2025, the two health clinics were suspended following continuous shelling. Mid-February, activities in the field hospital were then suspended following the massive escalation of violence.



IV. SYSTEMATIC ATTACKS ON MARKETS AND BLOCKADE OF SUPPLY



a. Food deprivation

Shops, markets and food sources have been repeatedly attacked. Markets have been either directly targeted or suffered collateral damage due to fighting on numerous occasions. In late April 2024, Abu Shok market was severely damaged²⁴. Umm Defso market was targeted in May²⁵, and again in October. Less than a month later, the Grand Market in El Fasher was attacked²⁶. On three occasions in July 2024, the RSF shelled Al Mawashi livestock market and its surrounding areas, resulting in the death of at least 43 civilians, and injuring more than 97 others²⁷. Abu

Shok's livestock market was targeted multiple times by the RSF, especially in September and October 2024²⁸. Systematic looting was an integral part of the ground operations carried out by the RSF and their allies on markets. On February 11, 2025, the RSF attacked Zamzam IDP camp from four different axes, reaching its main market. Shops, including all food stocks, were burnt and animals belonging to IDPs were stolen.

Markets in other North Darfur localities supplying El Fasher and Zamzam have not been spared either. On December 9, a SAF airstrike on Kebkabiya market, located around 180 kilometres west of El Fasher, resulted in the death of dozens of civilians according to Amnesty International²⁹. On March 24, another

24 Insecurity Insight, 2025, 'The Sudan Crisis; How Over a Year of Violence and Humanitarian Access Restrictions Have Produced Famine Conditions', January

25 Op.cit., Howarth, C. N., Khoshnood, K., Raymond, N. A. et al., 2024, 'Continuing Bombardment in El Fasher: Attacks on Civilian Infrastructure and IDP Camp', Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven

26 Op.cit., Human Rights Watch, 2024, 'Sudan: Unlawful Attacks on Civilians, Infrastructure'

27 Op.cit., United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner,

2024, 'Under siege: the situation of human rights in El Fasher, North Darfur since May 2024', p. 5

28 Op.cit., Howarth, C. N., Khoshnood, K., Raymond, N. A. et al., 2024, 'Continuing Bombardment in El Fasher: Attacks on Civilian Infrastructure and IDP Camp', Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven, p. 4

29 Amnesty International, 2024, 'Sudan: SAF airstrike on crowded market a flagrant war crime', December 12, available here: [Sudan: SAF airstrike](#)

SAF airstrike hit Turra market, causing the death of several hundreds of people according to Emergency Lawyers³⁰.

As a consequence of the repeated attacks on markets, it was reported that both consumers and traders feared being present at markets. Hence, some markets limited their operating time to only a couple of hours per day, further restricting civilians' access to food.

Since May 2024, the RSF have been imposing a near-total blockade of aid on El Fasher and Zamzam, despite the famine declaration and UN Security Council resolution 2736 demanding the lifting of the siege. Several interviewees reported that the denial of lifesaving aid to Zamzam and El Fasher was tightened by RSF leaders following the death of Grein Shatta, a RSF officer killed mid 2024 in El Fasher.

"They [the RSF] told us: 'if you want to go to Zalingei, Nyala, Ed Da'ein, El Kuma, and RSF areas, no problem, you can go. But not Zamzam or El Fasher.'"

Trader

"They [the RSF] said: '[...] if we find trucks carrying food to El Fasher, we'll attack them. '"

Trader

Early April 2025, several men injured by gunshots and admitted in the MSF-supported Tawila Hospital reported having been targeted by the RSF and their affiliates while trying to bring food to Zamzam camp. Additional interviewees spoke of the RSF deliberately targeting people trying to bring food to Zamzam.

"In February, the RSF attacked the market, and because of this, prices became very high. [...] People started to come to Tawila on camels, donkeys and donkey carts to buy food and bring it to Zamzam. If the RSF caught them, they would kill them. 5 or 6 people were killed on the road as they were trying to bring food. Others had to abandon their goods and camels."

Man, 34

Due to the blockages of supplies, the looting of livestock and the destruction of shops and markets, food prices have consequently increased. The lack of cash, coupled with the 30 to 40% fees for transfers through the widely used phone-based money transfer Bankak system, have further complicated access to food.

"Prices have more than doubled. One 50kg sack of sugar was SDG 90,000 [about \$46] during Ramadan in 2024 and is now 250,000 [about \$128] in cash."

Man, 21

"Food is available in El Fasher and Zamzam, but it is too expensive. Oil, sugar and grain became more expensive. 1 kg of millet rose from SDG 1,500 [about \$0.76] before June 2024 to SDG 7,000 [about \$3.6] now. Bank transfers are making things even more expensive."

Woman, 48

All interviewees mentioned the increase in prices in El Fasher following the escalation of fighting in May 2024, and also highlighted the fact that prices further raised in Zamzam at the beginning of 2025, as a result of the ground operation carried out by the RSF, along with the destruction of the main market in its southern area.

"In the normal situation [prior to February 2025, while prices had already been multiplied by 3], meat was SDG 6,000 [about \$3.1] but when the situation got worse [beginning of February], it reached SDG 12,000 [about \$6.2] or 10,000 [about \$5.1]"

Man, 27

While most food products have seen their prices skyrocketing, some food items, especially vegetables, have simply become unavailable.

"There are two categories. Some items, like sugar, flour or oil are in very limited quantity and are very expensive. Some other items like vegetables and fruits disappeared completely because there was no access."

Man, 30

[on crowded market a flagrant war crime](#)

30 Op.cit., Plett Usher, B., Booty, N., 2005, 'Sudan army accused of killing hundreds in airstrike on Darfur market', BBC

IDPs recently arrived in Zamzam camp following ground attacks carried out in nearby localities and survivors from attacks in the camp have been particularly affected.

"Some people started to eat anything, for example ambaz [residue of peanuts ground for oil]. Many people were just going house by house, knocking on doors to get some food, especially the ones from the market area and the people from Shagra, because they had lost everything, they only managed to come with the clothes they were wearing so they had no other option than to ask for support. There was no NGO, no support, there was no work."

Woman, 42

As a consequence, most people reported general hunger and negative coping mechanisms, such as eating fewer meals and in smaller quantities, as well as surviving on alternative food items that do not provide significant nutritional value, such as ambaz, in El Fasher and surrounding IDP camps.

"Last month in Zamzam, we sometimes had 2-3 days a week without eating. We mostly depended on the money sent by our brothers [abroad]. We also borrowed money from richer relatives in the camp and promised to pay them back after harvest."

Man, 21

"[In El Fasher], we lacked money, we had no work. We had only one meal a day, no meat, no milk. Chicken and fish are not available anymore. Some people only survived with tea."

Woman, 50

"Children died from malnutrition. We were eating ambaz, like everyone, although usually it's used for animals."

Woman, 25

"Children were crying all day long: 'I want to eat!'. Those with millet gave to those who had nothing and whose children were crying. As we didn't have money to grind it, we made belila [boiled millet]. Some neighbours' children died from hunger. Those who ran from El Fasher had nothing and begged, sometimes without success."

Woman, 45

b. The spread of famine

Famine was confirmed by the IPC Famine Review Committee (FRC) in Zamzam in August 2024. In December of the same year, it was declared in five areas of Sudan, including Zamzam, Abu Shok and Al Salam IDP camps, and was projected in five additional areas between December 2024 and May 2025, including El Fasher city. In addition, the IPC Famine Review Committee still considers there is a risk of famine in areas likely to experience large influxes of IDPs, including Tawila. Malnutrition has reached unprecedented levels despite the mitigating effects of the ongoing harvest season from October to December.

MSF conducted a mass screening to detect severe and moderate acute malnutrition (SAM and MAM) in Tawila on December 13 and 14, 2024. Among the 9,564 children screened, the global acute malnutrition estimate was 35.5% (7.5% SAM plus 28% MAM). Another mass screening was conducted on January 17, 2025. Out of 10,007 children screened, 14.6% were found to be acutely malnourished (2.1% SAM plus 12.5% MAM). Both screenings were conducted during a registration for ready-to-use therapeutic food. The decrease in terms of malnutrition rates between both mass screenings can be explained by several factors. January is the time of the year when malnutrition rates are generally lower due to the completion of harvest and greater food availability. In addition, the improved access to healthcare and the mass distribution of therapeutic food carried out by MSF in December had a positive impact, in parallel with the reinforcement of therapeutic feeding centres run by Patients Helping Fund (PHF) and MSF.

Prior to this, MSF had been raising the alarm on multiple occasions. In February 2024 already, a rapid nutritional and mortality assessment conducted by MSF in Zamzam camp had revealed that 23% of children under five-years-old and 40% of pregnant and breastfeeding women were suffering from acute malnutrition. In September 2024, 34% of the 29,355 children screened by MSF during a mass vaccination campaign in Zamzam camp were found to be suffering from acute malnutrition (10.2% SAM plus 23.8% MAM). The escalation of the conflict limited MSF's ability to collect additional data in Zamzam. However, the trend strongly suggests that the acute malnutrition levels have likely deteriorated in Zamzam since the most recent malnutrition assessment conducted by MSF in September 2024.

Following the confirmation of famine in Zamzam IDP camp and the reopening of the Adré border in August 2024, the United Nations sent 1,618 trucks of food aid and humanitarian items across the border, according to May 2025 UN figures³¹. However, only forty-two trucks made it to Zamzam. Due to constant blockage of trucks carrying humanitarian aid, alternative options have been implemented. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), 200,000 people in Zamzam, Abu Shok and Al-Salam IDP camps have received assistance with food vouchers of SDG 105,000 [about \$54] per person. The level of food assistance reaching Zamzam remains, however, grossly insufficient. At the end of February, WFP had to stop providing food assistance to the camp due to intensified fighting, while MSF suspended its activities in the field hospital.

A rapid needs assessment conducted by various clusters, non-governmental organisations and government institutions in IDP gathering sites located in El Fasher took place between March 22 and 23, 2025, and provided catastrophic figures: about 38 per cent of children under five were found to be suffering from acute malnutrition: 11 per cent with SAM and 27 per cent with MAM³². The emergency threshold for acute malnutrition combined (the Global Acute Malnutrition rate – GAM), which indicates that urgent action must be taken, is 15 per cent.

c. Water deprivation

Water infrastructure has been under repeated attack, and people have been prevented from accessing water on numerous occasions. On April 15, 2024, when the RSF launched their attack on Abu Shok IDP camp, IDPs recalled how the RSF positioned themselves near water sources outside the camp, preventing residents from fetching water.

“Since April 15, 2023, Abu Shok has been attacked several times by the RSF, who entered the camp. First, as early as April, they entered the camp on foot and shot people, they stayed some hours then the SAF intervened and pushed them out. They settled near water sources outside the camp, between Abu Shok and El Salam IDP camps, and sometimes they prevented IDPs from taking water.”

Man, 50

31 OCHA, 2025, ‘Sudan: Adre Border Crossing Snapshot (May 2025)’, May, available here: [Sudan: Adre Border Crossing Snapshot \(May 2025\) | OCHA](#)

32 Inter-Cluster Rapid Needs Assessment Report, 2025, ‘IDP Gathering Sites in El Fasher Town, North Darfur State’, March 22-23, p. 7

“In [El Fasher] late May, [...] the RSF shelled our neighbourhood and hit the water pump. 3 women and 4 children were killed. Bullets were coming from all directions.”

Woman, 33

At the end of May 2024, the RSF briefly took control of the Golo water reservoir, which was the main source of drinking water for El Fasher, located a few kilometres west of the city. As people reported to OHCHR, “RSF commander Ali Rizkallah, aka “Al Savana”, arrived with his troops at Golo reservoir, shut down water purification stations and cut off the water supply to El Fasher.”³³. As a consequence of the fighting, the UN reported that at the end of May 2024, part of the city was left without electricity or water³⁴.

Damage to the water infrastructure reportedly continued, for instance in October 2024 a school with a water provision facility in eastern El Fasher was damaged in an airstrike and the water stations in Saudi hospital were damaged by shelling³⁵. During that same month, Abu Shok water station was shelled.

In El Fasher and surrounding localities, Solidarités International reported the systematic looting of generators, solar panels, invertors and submersible pumps in water towers, as well as the destruction of water pumps. While the looting of spare parts for water towers generates income, the destruction of water pumps does not. Its only consequence is that it deprives the population of water. At the end of February 2025, only 3 out of the 41 hand pumps in



33 Op.cit., United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2024, ‘Under siege: the situation of human rights in El Fasher, North Darfur since May 2024’, p. 10

34 UN News, 2024, ‘Sudan: ‘Noose of war’ tightens on civilians in El Fasher, UN official warns’, May 30, available here: [Sudan: ‘Noose of war’ tightens on civilians in El Fasher, UN official warns | UN News](#)

35 Op.cit., Howarth, C. N., Khoshnood, K., Raymond, N. A. et al., 2024, ‘Continuing Bombardment in El Fasher: Attacks on Civilian Infrastructure and IDP Camp’, Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health: New Haven, p. 4



El Fasher were functional, while only 12 water tanks out of the 28 were operational³⁶.

In Zamzam IDP camp, access to water became extremely difficult. While water pumps were in most cases not functioning anymore due to a lack of maintenance or as a result of the fighting, the pressure on the few remaining water sources had increased due to the higher number of IDPs present in the camp.

"In the last period, it was very difficult, because Zamzam was completely blocked. Water wells depend on fuel and there was no access to fuel, so all of them stopped working. Water was very limited and very expensive."

Man, 30

"Many of the water sources need maintenance and because of the security situation, no one could come to maintain them."

Man, 27

"For the water, we used to take some jerrycans and we would go to a line, starting at 4 am. We would reach the front at 2 pm and get water. It was because the population had increased, and because there was no fuel, so many of the wells were not functioning, and the water was very expensive to buy."

Woman, 42

After the RSF launched their ground attack on Zamzam IDP camp in February 2025, several IDPs reported having to go towards the north of the camp to access water, despite the area being notoriously dangerous due to the RSF being positioned nearby.

"They would go very far, even very close to areas controlled by the RSF to try to go to the wells there, next to Saluma. Many times, they would go at night."

Man, 38

What MSF witnessed on the ground therefore suggests that starvation may have been used as a method of warfare against the civilian population.

V. NO SAFE ROAD TO ESCAPE



Shortly after the escalation of fighting in El Fasher in mid-May 2024, waves of people left the city in cars heading towards Chad. The vast majority were women and children, as men were at higher risk of being killed or abducted by the RSF and their allies at checkpoints while leaving the city. Most of the survivors who spoke to MSF in Adré, eastern Chad, mentioned going through Nyala, then El Geneina. Likely larger numbers crossed the Chadian border further north in Tine. Since journeys reportedly cost around SDG 200,000 [about \$103], these first displaced people were likely the most well-off, while people with fewer resources could not afford the journey. They either remained in El Fasher or went to nearby villages, more exposed to the violence than they would have been in Chad.

Since then, additional waves of people have continued to leave. The opening of a corridor under the protection of SLA-AW from June to November made it possible for many to leave to Tawila, and some continued their journey, including up to Chad.

Numerous displaced people report moving back and forth between locations on multiple occasions over the past year in an attempt to flee the violence.

a. Widespread violence on the road

People who have left El Fasher and Zamzam have provided countless accounts of violence on the road. When waves of displaced people left El Fasher in mid-2024, they reported that the road to Nyala was the most dangerous due to intense fighting between the warring parties, and to abductions or shooting of men by the RSF at checkpoints shortly before reaching Nyala.

Subsequent waves of displaced people also experienced violence at the hands of the RSF, including robbery, kidnapping and sexual violence.

"On the road, they were asked to take off their clothes to make sure they were not carrying anything such as gold. If someone was wearing nice clothes, they would take them. This happened on the road four or five times. They would even take your water or your food from you. [...] It was the RSF."

Woman

All interviewees additionally mentioned the presence of multiple checkpoints along the road to Chad. Taxes had to be paid to the armed groups in control of each checkpoint, adding to the high cost of the journey.

"At each barrier, there were compulsory taxes that each person had to pay until they reached the border. We exhausted our resources. When I got here, I had nothing left. "

Woman, 58

Displaced people from El Fasher and Zamzam who reached Tawila at the end of 2024 also reported numerous checkpoints, some of which were controlled by the RSF, some by SLA-AW and some by the SAF and the Joint Forces. Most taxes were included in the price asked ahead of the journey by the driver, and drivers then negotiated the price to be paid at each checkpoint with whichever forces were in control. Except for those who travelled along the corridor under the protection of SLA-AW during the second half of 2024, people fleeing El Fasher were systematically robbed.

Following ground operations by the RSF on Zamzam camp in February 2025, some IDPs managed to leave for Tawila. They reported that the RSF were surrounding the camp and subsequently preventing IDPs from fleeing. As a result, they left Zamzam at night, using side roads in order to avoid RSF checkpoints.

"They are sitting in the middle of the road, if anyone comes to them, they shoot them. If you come walking or by car, they will shoot you. The only option is not to use the main road."

Woman, 42

"For us it was easier, maybe because we moved during the night. But for the others, mainly those who moved during the day, the RSF killed many young men, they just slaughtered them. The women, they took everything from them, even their clothes."

Man, 30

Following the attack carried out on Zamzam by the RSF on April 11, survivors who reached Tawila also reported widespread violence on the road.

"We were stopped at the exit of the city by the RSF: they searched every single one of us, even the smallest children. They were looking for anything that had value. Some of them were beaten at that moment, beaten so harshly that they were not able to move anymore."

Man, 42

b. The deprivation of food and water

Due to the RSF attack on Zamzam launched on 11 April 2025, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that over 3,000 households were displaced from Zamzam to El Fasher and Tawila localities on April 11 and 12, and that an additional 60,000 to 80,000 households left the camp on April 13 and 14. Displaced people reaching Tawila arrived in a very poor condition, the majority of them being in an advanced state of dehydration and exhaustion. On the road between Tawila and Kwem, there are now several cemeteries where the bodies of adults and children who died of thirst have been buried.

"RSF in uniforms stole everything we had, which was not much – the clothes we didn't wear. They also took our water and dropped it on the ground. They did that to many people, which is why people on the way were very thirsty, and even children and old people died of thirst on the road. You could see many people lying down and a lot of belongings scattered. Many moved from Zamzam but didn't reach Tawila."

Man, 70

"We saw old women and children on donkey carts, and they shot the donkeys, to make them die on the way. I saw it with my own eyes. They took many donkeys and left people without any means of transport. I saw them emptying the water people were carrying onto the ground."

Man

"On the road, we saw the bodies of those who died of thirst in their attempts to reach Tawila"

Man

c. Men at risk on their way out: abductions, beatings and executions

Witnesses who fled El Fasher at the start of the fighting spoke of the widespread abductions and summary executions of men and adolescents.

"They would only let mothers with small children under the age of five through. [...] Other children and adult men didn't go through. Men over fifteen can hardly cross the border [into Chad]. They take them, they push them aside and then we only hear a noise, gunshots, indicating that they are dead, that they have been killed [...] 50 families came along with me. Not even one boy of 15 years old or above was among us."

Woman, 38

"They snatched the sons of the other families I came with. One was 10, one 17 and one 20. They made them get out of the vehicle and prevented them from following their mothers. So the mothers were forced to leave these children behind, and continued with the other children."

Woman, 35

"A lot of men left but couldn't make it to Adré. They were arrested beforehand or even killed."

Woman, 38

Following the ground operation carried out by the RSF on Zamzam camp in February 2025, a few men who reached Tawila mentioned being detained for several hours at a checkpoint under RSF control, with one man being interrogated and beaten for as much as five hours. He was threatened with death on several occasions. Other men, accused by the RSF of supporting the SAF or Joint Forces, also reported undergoing intense investigations, beatings and threats.

"At the end I was detained for about five hours. They said "you are an enemy, and we don't have to let you go."

Man, 27



The majority of survivors who reached Tawila after the RSF attacked Zamzam camp on April 11 were women and children. According to witnesses, it was particularly dangerous for men to leave the camp – they were systematically killed if they tried to.

"All the men, they were hiding. They knew that if they moved, they would instantly be killed, so only women and children left. [...] Our neighbours' son tried [to leave] and he was killed immediately. The people who moved before us were killed. The RSF killed them."

Woman, 21

"We hid, or if they saw us, as men, they would shoot us. They kidnapped women and children, but when they saw men, they killed us, which was why we travelled off-road."

Man, 35

d. Sexual violence perpetrated on a large scale

Many displaced people spoke of sexual violence perpetrated on a large scale by the RSF.

"There were cases of sexual violence against six girls and women, aged between 16 and 24. They were asked to get out of the car and were raped in front of our eyes."

Woman



One survivor experienced it directly, as retaliation for being suspected of supporting the SAF³⁷.

"We got stopped by a group of RSF. They had 2 cars and 4 motorbikes. They tried to kidnap me, and they raped me. [...] I have a certificate for first aid nursing. [When they stopped us], the RSF asked me to give them my bag. When they saw the certificate inside, they told me, "You want to heal the Sudanese army, you want to cure the enemy!" Then they burnt my certificate and they took me away to rape me."

Woman, 27

As waves of civilians tried to escape Zamzam and El Fasher in April, many reported that the RSF had raped women and girls.

"They were beating the men, especially young men, and raping women."

Man, 70

"Some men and women were captured. Women were released after being raped."

Man, 70

"We saw very bad things. They were taking people's daughters to rape them."

Man

Many civilians had to pass by Shagra, under the control of the RSF. Women and girls were said to be particularly exposed to sexual violence in this locality:

"Many rapes took place in Shagra. Two RSF soldiers came at night [...] by motorbike, took two girls and brought them somewhere. The next day, RSF soldiers took an old woman and we heard her shouting."

Man

From April to May 17, 61 survivors of sexual violence presented at the MSF-supported hospital in Tawila, the vast majority of them being from Zamzam and El Fasher. Yet, sexual violence remains largely under-reported, as the lack of services prevents many survivors from accessing medical care and protection, while the cost of traveling to facilities and a reluctance to speak about the abuse due to shame, fear of stigma or retaliation constitute additional barriers.³⁸

e. Attacks on civilian convoys

From June to November 2024, the road from El Fasher to Tawila was open for a few daylight hours on Fridays, under the protection of SLA-AW. To protect the corridor, 10 to 20 armed cars were deployed around the junction of the main road and the secondary road between the two militarised Arab settlements of Um Jabakh north of the road, and Kolge south of the road. However, by late November, incidents, including attacks on non-Arab civilians by the RSF and allied armed groups continued outside of Fridays, and tensions eventually led SLA-AW to put an end to the corridor. These clashes were mainly due to the fact that the corridor was not only used to evacuate civilians - traders and humanitarian vehicles carrying food, as well as civilians going to El Fasher to trade, look for their belongings and even fight, had been using the corridor. Between April-May and December, about 15,000 families - or an average of 400 families per week - reached Tawila from El Fasher through the corridor. When the corridor was open on both Mondays and Fridays, in June and July, it rose to 700 families using it per week, before decreasing to around 60 families a week on Fridays only, during the rainy season in August and September, then increasing again in October³⁸.

In January 2025, GSLF-TH and SLA-AW briefly formed the Neutral Force for the Protection of Civilians. They were able to organize two convoys of civilians from Tawila to Kebkabiya. However, on January 16, a third convoy of around 50 cars escorted by the Neutral Force leaving from Tawila and heading to Chad was attacked by the RSF and their affiliates at the entrance of Kebkabiya. According to five survivors, the RSF

37 Médecins Sans Frontières, 2025, 'Sexual violence in Sudan: "They beat us and they raped us right there on the road in public", May 28, available here: [Sexual violence in Sudan: "They beat us and they raped us right there on the road in public" | MSF](#)

38 Estimates from local authorities and MSF direct observation



refused to let the convoy pass, despite previous negotiations stipulating the contrary. One interviewee reported that orders to block the convoy had come from higher up in the RSF hierarchy, since the commander who had made the deal with the Neutral Force had been replaced by another RSF commander who had the order not to let them pass. Eventually, the SLA-AW commander of the convoy told the RSF that the convoy would return to Tawila, but the RSF shot him dead. Shooting then escalated between the RSF and the Neutral Force. Many civilians were killed in the incident.

"We were stopped at a checkpoint of the RSF just before Kebkabiya for 2 hours. In the beginning there were 5 RSF cars and a lot of motorbikes. Then more RSF arrived, more than 20 cars, and also more motorbikes. [...] They surrounded us. The RSF and the Neutral Force started shooting at each other. People tried to run away from the shooting. [...] Some people were shot."

Man, 41

"They [RSF] started killing the armed men with knives and guns. [...] They told all the women and children to stay on the floor. We were on the floor and they told us to put our heads down. If you raised your head they would shoot you. The children were really afraid. Some ran away, including my six children. We found them two days later. [...] Some men were killed, and some were kidnapped. They threatened my daughter with a knife, telling her: "if you don't give us your phone, we will cut your neck"."

Woman, 37

"They asked people "are you with the SAF?" if you replied or said "no", they would shoot you. There was one old woman [and] an RSF man asked her why she was wearing an army scarf. He directly shot her in the head and killed her. More people were killed, I don't know how many. Blood was flooding to us like water."

Woman, 26

"That attack was directed against Zaghawa, as a retaliation for Dreshige battle."

Man, 41

The RSF were defeated by the Joint Forces in Dreshige, located south of Malha, in January.

Most of the civilian passengers of the convoy were Zaghawa. The kidnapping of both men and women, in order to later ask for ransom, was mentioned by several people who were part of this convoy.

"They kidnapped two men, one from my family and one I didn't know. They asked for money, SDG 10 million [about \$5.128] for them. All the families collected the money, and I sent them by phone transfer. They released them. They got beaten and still have some scars now."

Man, 41

"More cars and camels arrived. For those coming later there was nothing left to take. So they took people with them and asked for money to release them. [...] But after they paid, they told them that a woman has been dead for a week. This woman was injured and died from her injury shortly after."

Woman, 37

Additionally, witnesses recalled that the RSF were later joined by women from Arab tribes, who stole from the women and children who were traveling in the convoy.

"Some of their women came to us, told us to give them our clothes and phones. After that they said, 'run or our brothers will come and kill you'."

Woman, 23

"We saw a group of women and girls from this Arab clan that came towards us with knives. They started shouting and beating people. Some shouted 'we will kill you'. They took all our clothes, shoes and cars."

Woman, 26

After the RSF attacked Zamzam on April 11, the GSLF-Taher Hajer offered safe and free transportation to civilians fleeing the camp from the crossroad near Kwem village to Tawila.

All the people who became displaced and who could reach their destination did so in an extreme state of vulnerability, after having experienced high levels of violence on the journey, having had no access to food or water, sometimes for several days, and having been stripped of all their belongings.



CONCLUSION

Throughout this intensifying conflict, civilians have been the main victims. Caught in the crossfire, their homes and neighbourhoods have been shelled, bombed and attacked. Additionally, they have been pressured or coerced into taking part in the fighting, and numerous testimonies point to civilians, especially men, being accused by the warring parties of collaborating with the opposing belligerent, leading in many cases to detentions or executions.

Non-Arab communities, in particular the Zaghawa, have been deliberately targeted by the RSF and their allies, protracting the ethnic violence that has ravaged Darfur for over twenty years. At the same time as the RSF and their affiliates repeatedly shelled neighbourhoods and gathering places of civilians known to be from non-Arab communities, ground attacks were systematically carried out, involving the looting of belongings, killing of civilians and razing of houses and infrastructure. Sexual violence was widely perpetrated, and numerous abductions were reported.

In parallel to the direct violence exerted on civilians, residents from El Fasher and surrounding areas have been intentionally prevented from meeting their most basic needs. Access to healthcare has been rendered near impossible, and civilians have been deprived of food and water, a deadly consequence of this being the spread of famine, which was confirmed in August 2024 and again in December that same year.

Survivors who managed to flee have undergone further violence along the road, with men being specifically targeted, women and girls being raped and civilian convoys attacked.

Waves of people already displaced by the violence in the 2000s have been forced to move once again, some going back to old IDP camps or to the villages they had left twenty years ago and having to start everything anew once more. They are building precarious shelters on the ashes of their former homes, supporting growing numbers of displaced people and family members from nearby villages fleeing similar violence. All share their weariness at the seemingly eternal repetition of the past.



