

"HISTORY IS REPEATING ITSELF IN DARFUR IN THE WORST POSSIBLE WAY"

Halting Genocide in Sudan

POLICY BRIEF JANUARY 2025



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teaches that the Holocaust was preventable and that by heeding warning signs and taking early action, individuals and governments can save lives. With this knowledge, the **Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide** works to do for the victims of genocide today what the world failed to do for the Jews of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. The mandate of the Simon-Skjodt Center is to alert the United States' national conscience, influence policy makers, and stimulate worldwide action to prevent and work to halt acts of genocide or related crimes against humanity, and advance justice and accountability. Learn more at ushmm.org/genocide-prevention.

COVER: Sudanese girls who fled the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, walk beside makeshift shelters holding each other's hands in Adre, Chad July 29, 2023. *REUTERS/Zohra Bensemra*

Quote attributable to United States Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, speaking at the United Nations Security Council Stakeout on the Situation of Sudan on April 29, 2024.

List of Acronyms

AU	African Union
ALPS	Alliance for Advancing Lifesaving and Peace in Sudan
CRSV	Conflict Related Sexual Violence
HRL	Yale School of Public Health Humanitarian Research Lab
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
FFM	International Independent Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council



Key Points

- A war in Sudan that began as a clash between generals quickly became a war on the Sudanese people. The increase in identity-based targeting by both warring parties increases the risk of further mass atrocities.
- Understanding identity-based targeting is critical to formulating policy and taking action that responds to a dynamic and multidimensional conflict.
- In light of the US State Department's genocide determination, urgent action must be taken to halt the genocide and prevent its recurrence.

INTRODUCTION

Twenty years ago in Darfur, Sudan, the armed forces of Sudan, with the aid of the Janjaweed militias, committed crimes against humanity and genocide against civilians in Darfur. Today, those survivors are facing mass atrocities again. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied militias have engaged in widespread and systematic attacks against the same non-Arab communities in Darfur targeted twenty years ago – attacks that the United States (US) Secretary of State Antony Blinken determined on January 7, 2025, constitute genocide.¹ This builds on their earlier finding of crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.² The United Nations (UN) International Independent Fact Finding Mission for Sudan (FFM) has also found reasonable grounds to believe the RSF committed crimes against humanity, and the US Congress has recognized acts committed by the RSF and its allied militias as constituting genocide.³ Despite these findings and despite the outrage expressed over similar attacks twenty years ago, the global response to the current conflict has been disturbingly quiet.

On April 15th, 2023, fighting broke out in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), headed by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF, a powerful paramilitary group headed by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. In June 2023, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum warned of the risk of genocide in Darfur.⁴ One year later, in his remarks to Congress, US Special Envoy to Sudan Tom Perriello, shared an estimate of 150,000 people killed since the conflict began.⁵ The UN reports that 11 million people have been displaced.⁶ The international response to the crisis in Sudan has been muted thus far. A war that began as a clash between generals quickly became a war on the Sudanese people: the RSF and SAF are increasingly mobilizing and targeting civilians on the basis of ethnicity.

This brief focuses particularly on ethnically targeted mass atrocities in Darfur committed since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in April 2023. It also assesses future risks, particularly as the rise in identity-based targeting by both the RSF and the SAF increases the risk of further mass atrocities. While not a legal analysis, the brief's examination of mass atrocities adds to already documented concerns. Understanding the identity-based nature of these crimes and the motivations of these perpetrators will be critical in identifying avenues for prevention, mitigation, and accountability. The US government's findings of crimes against humanity, war crimes - and of genocide in Darfur - warrant the utmost seriousness, urgency, and investment, not yet seen from the international community, in keeping decades-long promises to the people of Sudan to protect civilians and end impunity.

BACKGROUND

The violence that has wracked Darfur over the last two decades and the long history of ethnic tensions in the region raised warning signs of future mass killings, even before the 2023 conflict began.⁷ The 2005 UN Darfur Commission of Inquiry found that between 2003-2005 the Sudanese government and Janjaweed, a group of Darfur Arab militias, were responsible for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that likely amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The majority of the victims belonged to non-Arab tribes, particularly the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa.⁸ The US Government found that the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed had committed genocide.⁹ More than 200,000 people were killed and more than two million were displaced.¹⁰ Even as the violence ebbed, thousands of Darfuris remained displaced, non-Arab and Arab tribes continued to fight over resources and unresolved grievances, and the majority of the perpetrators of mass atrocities remained at large.¹¹ The RSF paramilitary group evolved from the Janjaweed, and the RSF today uses a tactic historically used by the Sudanese government: recruiting and arming local militias along ethnic lines to assist in carrying out violent attacks.¹² When the war began in April 2023, the RSF and its allied Arab militias in Darfur resumed targeting the same communities as twenty years ago.¹³

After years of interethnic conflict, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the RSF and its allies are finishing what they started in 2003, seeking to erase non-Arab communities from Darfur. The majority of RSF attacks to date have targeted the Masalit community, but the Zaghawa and Fur are increasingly under threat. Such goals or ideology are not necessarily shared by all Arab communities in Darfur. However, the purposeful use of ethnicity by belligerents to mobilize and target civilians increases the likelihood that more communities will be drawn into identity-based violence, as victims and/or perpetrators.

MASS ATROCITIES IN DARFUR

“We will make you, the Masalit girls, give birth to Arab children.” –A perpetrator in El Geneina

The RSF has targeted civilian groups in Darfur on the basis of their ethnic identity through the commission of extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, deliberate starvation of civilians, and pillage and destruction of property, notably through arson. High-ranking RSF leadership and militia leaders have been identified and documented as being present at sites where mass atrocities were committed.¹⁴ There are abundant, consistent

accounts from survivors, as well as video evidence, of the RSF and militias using dehumanizing language and speaking of targeting the Masalit people in particular for death.¹⁵ Perpetrators used racial slurs while committing attacks against Masalits and other non-Arab groups, describing them as “umbay/slave” and “nuba/black”, and claiming that Darfur belongs to Arabs and that they would remove the Masalit.¹⁶

Targeted killings

In June 2023, when the RSF and its allied Arab militias attacked El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, they met resistance from the SAF and allied Masalit militias. According to the FFM, “[i]nitially, clashes in El Geneina started as part of the conflict between these military forces but quickly descended into ethnically charged violence.”¹⁷ In the attack on El Geneina, RSF soldiers and allied militias gunned down civilians in the streets, actively targeted Masalit men and boys for execution, and targeted lawyers, doctors, human rights defenders, and community leaders for violence.¹⁸ According to the FFM, the RSF issued orders to “comb the city” for these targets.¹⁹ In El Geneina, 10,000-15,000 people were killed.²⁰ Months later, the RSF and its militias launched an attack on Masalit-majority areas in the town of Ardamata in northeast El Geneina, particularly the Al-Kabri neighborhood, and nearby internally displaced persons (IDP) camps Ardamata and Dorti.²¹ The RSF detained and summarily executed Masalit men and boys, committed widespread rape and sexual violence, burned people alive, and razed Masalit homes.²² Approximately 800 civilians were killed in a matter of days.²³

Masalit civilians fleeing to Chad were accosted at RSF checkpoints, made to declare their tribal affiliation, and forced to pay bribes.²⁴ Many of those identified as Masalit were detained, tortured, raped, and/or killed.²⁵ Survivors describe RSF and allied militias actively targeting Masalit men and boys for execution, including beating to death male children and infants, while using slurs and speaking of removing non-Arabs from Darfur.²⁶ By contrast, Arab families fleeing the fighting in these areas, including men and teenage boys, were able to pass through checkpoints safely.²⁷

In early 2024, a truce between the SAF, Joint Forces (a group of local armed movements), and the RSF broke down in the North Darfur capital of El Fasher. The RSF laid siege to the city, and fighting between the warring parties has resulted in tremendous suffering for the civilian population.²⁸ Verifying identity-based killing in El Fasher is challenging at present due to the ongoing battle, but as the conflict escalated in El Fasher, so too did fighting outside the city, where the RSF targeted Zaghawa villages and civilians.²⁹ These attacks involve killings, sexual assaults, arbitrary arrests, and destruction of civilian infrastructure.³⁰ The UN found that violations committed by the RSF and its affiliates against civilians fleeing El Fasher “were often ethnically motivated, based on real or perceived tribal identity.”³¹ Throughout Darfur non-Arab communities remain vulnerable to targeted killings, disappearances, rape, assault, and detention.³²

Conflict-related sexual violence

Perpetrators use rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in wartime to terrorize and punish civilians, and can use CRSV to target on the basis of identity.³³ The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has observed that the war in Sudan is being waged “on the bodies of women and girls.”³⁴ In Darfur, the UN has recorded ethnically or racially motivated sexual violence

against non-Arab women and girls by the RSF.³⁵ The FFM documented the use of racist slurs and pejoratives during sexual violence, and noted targeting on the basis of identity as “often entailing more violent assault.”³⁶ There are also indications that the RSF may be using sexual violence as a tool to intimidate and expel non-Arab groups, as the RSF and their allied militias have threatened Masalit women and girls to leave or risk assault.³⁷ RSF assailants are reported to use the term “slave” to refer to non-Arab women, and the UN human rights office found evidence of women and girls held and sold in “slave-like conditions” in Darfur.³⁸ In addition, perpetrators have threatened to forcibly impregnate victims based on ethnicity. A survivor from El Geneina told the FFM that her rapist told her, “We will make you, the Masalit girls, give birth to Arab children.”³⁹

Sexual violence can be employed as a genocidal strategy when it aims to destroy the victim as an incremental step to annihilating the group. It is simultaneously an assault on the victim, and on the existence, identity, and cohesiveness of the group. Sexual violence may leave survivors with profound physical and mental wounds. Campaigns of rape directed towards conceiving mass forced pregnancies can, if the pregnancies are carried to term, result in demographic changes to the protected group.

Pillage and destruction of property

The RSF has systematically looted and destroyed civilian infrastructure to feed its war machine, and appears to have committed widespread and systematic attacks on civilian communities and infrastructure in Darfur.⁴⁰ Sudan Witness has found that the majority of villages targeted with fire in Sudan are in the Darfur region.⁴¹ The Sudan Conflict Observatory documented “the continuation of historical patterns of attacks and violence towards specific ethnic groups in Darfur,” noting that the RSF has returned to the “playbook that the Janjaweed utilized in 2003-2004” by destroying critical civilian infrastructure to make it impossible for targeted communities to remain or return.⁴² In the attack on El Geneina, the RSF and its allied militias pillaged, burned, and shelled Masalit neighborhoods,⁴³ and in West Darfur they have looted and razed dozens of Masalit majority towns.⁴⁴ In the town of Misterei, assailants were overheard saying, “We burned the Massalit, we burned the zorga [Black people].”⁴⁵

When the battle for El Fasher began, the RSF and their allied militias targeted nearby Zaghawa villages. The Yale School of Public Health’s Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) has identified arson attacks in “an established pattern of systematic ethnic targeting of Zaghawa communities by Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and aligned forces.”⁴⁶ HRL has also documented villages that had been attacked multiple times, and where the RSF would return to villages to complete the razing of remaining structures, which is consistent with the Janjaweed’s attacks on communities in the 2003/4 period. Since the start of the war, HRL has confirmed the razing of at least 84 villages across Darfur.⁴⁷

Forced starvation and aid restrictions

UN experts have said that “[b]oth the SAF and the RSF are using food as a weapon and starving civilians.”⁴⁸ Both parties have deliberately restricted civilian access to food and targeted critical infrastructure, including hospitals, with airstrikes and artillery fire, resulting in the collapse of the health system in Sudan. The SAF has made control over vital aid a part of its military strategy; targeting civilian aid workers in SAF territory and placing restrictions on aid flows into territory controlled by the RSF.⁴⁹ In August 2024, the SAF agreed to

allow aid into North Darfur, but delays in issuing travel permits and other restrictions from SAF-controlled Port Sudan hamper effective aid delivery.⁵⁰ The RSF uses looting to motivate, recruit and resource its forces.⁵¹ It drives a hunger crisis as it seizes new territory, looting and destroying civilian infrastructure. Both the RSF and the SAF perceive aid as political, and (often with different tactics) use access to food as a weapon, with fatal consequences for civilians.

In Darfur, the RSF has been documented not only destroying civilian property, but also actively targeting non-Arab groups by seeking to restrict aid, food, water, and other life essentials.⁵² In the attack on El Geneina, Human Rights Watch documented that the RSF actively deprived the Masalit community of food and water.⁵³ This included shooting people who went to collect water, widespread looting, and burning shops. As part of their attack on El Fasher, the RSF has blockaded aid, not only to areas where the battle was raging but also restricting aid delivery to IDP camps in which the majority of residents are from non-Arab tribes.⁵⁴ Famine has been declared in the Zamzam IDP camp outside the city, which predominantly houses individuals from non-Arab communities, where pregnant women and children are already dying of preventable causes.⁵⁵ In December 2024, the RSF shelled the Zamzam camp.⁵⁶ The RSF has targeted essential infrastructure supplying the civilian population of El Fasher and nearby camps, attempting to cut off the area's only water supply⁵⁷ and actively attacking and opening fire on the last functioning civilian hospital in the city.⁵⁸ This deliberate starvation of a civilian population may amount to a crime against humanity and to genocide if the RSF is deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction, in whole or part, of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups.

FUTURE RISKS

The US State Department has determined that members of the RSF and allied militias have committed genocide in Sudan. It will be critical for states to take urgent measures to fulfil the legal obligation to prevent and suppress the genocide, consider future risks and dynamics that exacerbate these risks, and to map communities most vulnerable to international crimes. For example, both the SAF and the RSF actively recruit along ethnic and tribal lines, which continues to stoke ethnic tension and risk further local and community-based violence based on identity.⁵⁹ This creates an extremely tense environment in which mass violence can be triggered against a wide range of identity groups over a wide geographic area, including outside of areas where conventional battles between the warring parties are taking place. The following areas and developments deserve particular attention in the coming months in order to mitigate growing mass atrocity risks:

Escalation in Gezira

When the RSF commits mass atrocities with impunity in Darfur, this may signal both expanding areas of risk and a green light for the RSF to commit similar attacks elsewhere, including on Arab communities and members of previously allied tribes. In October 2024, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan noted human rights violations previously witnessed in Darfur, such as mass killing and sexual violence, were now being repeated in Gezira, this time against Arab communities.⁶⁰ The RSF seized Gezira in east-central Sudan, a state far from RSF strongholds in Darfur, in December 2023. RSF forces and allied militias have attacked and looted villages, resulting in killings, CRSV, and displacement.⁶¹ Following the defection of RSF commander Abu Aqla Keikal to the SAF on October 10, 2024, the RSF carried out scorched earth attacks on villages and towns affiliated with Keikal's tribe as collective punishment for his defection.⁶² UN experts

condemned the attacks in Gezira which included displacement, torture, sexual violence, executions, and detention based on ethnicity as adding to “a growing pattern of atrocities against ethnic minorities that may amount to crimes against humanity.”⁶³

Spread of mass atrocity risk

In cases of perceived loss or vulnerability, perpetrators may choose to use more violent tactics to counter gains by the opposing force, and in the case of perceived success, perpetrators may choose to commit mass atrocities to secure gains.⁶⁴ In Gezira, for example, the RSF arguably chose to respond to the defection of a commander by seizing the territory of groups affiliated with that commander to keep these areas under RSF control. In Darfur, the RSF has sought to consolidate its victories in Darfur by targeted non-affiliated groups long perceived as threats or competition.

Going forward, these shifts in conflict dynamics in Sudan could trigger an escalation in civilian targeting and identity-based targeting from the RSF, and possibly the SAF. While Darfur is clearly at risk given its history and its importance to the RSF militarily and culturally, outside Darfur the spread of the conflict and constellation of tribes allied with the SAF and the RSF increases the number of ethnic or racial groups at risk of being targeted following shifts in alliances or territorial control. These risks are particularly high in the Kordofan region, where the state of South Kordofan in particular has a history of mass atrocities committed with impunity and Human Rights Watch reported war crimes committed by the RSF in 2023 and 2024, primarily against ethnic Nuba communities.⁶⁵ The active identity-based mobilization and rise in fighting could exacerbate longstanding divisions in a diverse region with unresolved grievances.⁶⁶

Darfur

UN Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide has raised the alarm about a risk of genocide in the city of El Fasher.⁶⁷ While the outcome of the battle for El Fasher is hard to predict, RSF patterns of behavior up to this point indicate that if the defenses in El Fasher fall, the RSF will commit a genocidal attack against the largely non-Arab population. Given prior RSF attacks on IDP camps, they are also likely to target civilians sheltering in nearby camps Zamzam, Abu Shouk, and Al Salam.⁶⁸

There are also indications that the fighting around El Fasher will spiral, drawing in other Arab and non-Arab factions and even pulling fighters from neighboring Chad, where the Zaghawa tribe extends.⁶⁹ The Chad-Sudan border has already witnessed fighting between the RSF and Joint Forces,⁷⁰ and arguably, the overfilled and desperate IDP camps on the border housing Sudanese refugees are also vulnerable to recruitment and targeting. Joint Forces operating outside of El Fasher are already engaging RSF forces in West and South Darfur, increasing tensions between communities in those states.⁷¹ There is also no guarantee that the RSF will always mediate infighting between the Arab tribes that it relies on to hold territory and combat other armed groups in Darfur.⁷²

The RSF have announced a new “peace government” they are developing to oversee RSF-controlled territories, stressing that the government would be civilian-led and independent.⁷³ Not only does the prospect of an RSF-backed government raise concerns about the partition of Sudan, it also raises the risk of mass atrocities and reduces the likelihood of accountability for violations committed by the RSF or its local allied

militias. The pattern of behavior exhibited by the RSF indicates that they would continue to target, denigrate, and disenfranchise communities on the basis of ethnicity or perceived affiliation with opposing forces. Its fighters have told victims that the land belongs to Arabs.⁷⁴ In Central Darfur, there are already accounts that the RSF is attempting to eliminate the presence of the Fur community and forcibly establish an Arab settlement in Fur territory by silencing traditional authorities, breaking traditional governance systems, and razing Fur villages and handing over the land to Arab groups in Chad and the Central African Republic-affiliated with the RSF.⁷⁵

Risks in SAF-controlled territory

Warning signs for mass atrocities also exist in the SAF-controlled areas, including the use of irregular forces to target civilians, the use of polarizing and dehumanizing language, and impunity for atrocities.⁷⁶ SAF operations have long been marked by ethnic discrimination but this conflict has seen an expansion “in the use of racial characteristics as a basis” for violence.⁷⁷ The SAF and its allied militias appear to be targeting individuals on the basis of ethnicity for extrajudicial killing, detention, and torture, including targeting members of Arab tribes in Darfur and Kordofan.⁷⁸ Sudanese authorities have also begun cracking down on South Sudanese citizens for arrest, detention, and deportation.⁷⁹ The SAF has, until very recently, refused to allow humanitarian aid to reach RSF-controlled territory, even as famine was declared, and even where aid has been permitted is hampered by bureaucracy.⁸⁰ In addition, the SAF targets civilians affiliated with the RSF for aerial bombardment, including targeting markets, schools, and IDP camps.⁸¹ These patterns could worsen as conflict dynamics shift.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The international response to mass atrocities in Sudan has been ineffective. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is reported to be arming and funding the RSF,⁸² and Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt are reported to be supporting the SAF.⁸³ Multiple mediation initiatives have been launched since the war began, all failing to secure a ceasefire or meaningful civilian protection. One such initiative - the Jeddah process - facilitated by the US and Saudi Arabia, resulted in the warring parties signing the Jeddah Declaration on civilian protection.⁸⁴ In February 2024, the US appointed a Special Envoy to Sudan to coordinate its diplomatic efforts, and in August 2024 negotiations in Geneva led to the creation of the Alliance for Advancing Lifesaving and Peace in Sudan (ALPS) group meant to coordinate diplomacy and humanitarian delivery.⁸⁵ The US Special Envoy has recently indicated that no “political appetite” exists on the part of belligerents to end the conflict.⁸⁶

Concerned governments have issued sanctions targeting individuals and entities affiliated with both warring parties. The US Department of the Treasury has sanctioned individuals affiliated with the RSF and SAF,⁸⁷ including RSF members who took part in atrocities in West Darfur⁸⁸ and the siege of El Fasher⁸⁹ as well as companies linked to the warring parties. In January 2025 the US Department of State announced it would sanction RSF leader Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, as well as seven RSF-owned companies located in the UAE.⁹⁰ A UN Security Council (UNSC) arms embargo on Darfur has been in place since 2004,⁹¹ and in November 2024 the UNSC recommended sanctions targeting RSF members.⁹²

The international community has launched several international processes for documenting atrocities in Sudan, including the FFM, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced in 2023 that it would be

investigating new crimes in Darfur through its existing mandate.⁹³ The African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council has requested that the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights investigate atrocities in Darfur.⁹⁴ In October 2024, the UN Secretary-General issued a report on civilian protection to the UNSC, encouraging diplomatic efforts and local mediation processes but not recommending a UN peace operation, despite the FFM raising “an urgent need to deploy an independent force with a specific mandate to protect civilians in the Sudan.”⁹⁵

Unfortunately, mediation efforts and sanctions do not appear to have meaningfully changed the behaviors of the warring parties. Armed Conflict Location and Effect Data (ACLED) has pointed to foreign efforts, particularly the UAE’s support for the RSF, as “further prolonging the conflict and hindering the effectiveness of US sanctions.”⁹⁶ International responses would be more effective if they meaningfully address the role of external actors, such as the UAE, providing the arms and political cover that enable these mass atrocities to take place.

A WAY FORWARD

For the RSF and the SAF, this battle is both existential and profitable. The RSF and SAF see civilians as a resource or an obstacle rather than constituents deserving protection. The belligerents are shifting the burdens of war onto the backs of starving civilians to keep their war machines well-fed. As described above, the RSF is also using this war as a way to settle scores and deepen its control over Darfur through widespread and systematic violence toward non-Arab groups. Absent significant pressure, their conduct is unlikely to change.

The finding of genocide by the US State Department should spark the US to take a holistic approach to end the ongoing genocide, pursue accountability, and prevent the recurrence of atrocities. The international community should urgently seek to protect civilians from widespread, systematic attacks directed against the civilian population, including on the basis of identity, and understand that these attacks are both connected to the war and also related to objectives that are separate from short-term military objectives. These objectives include the elimination of communities on the basis of identity. This distinction should not be used to create hierarchies of suffering. Rather, recognizing mass atrocities can help ensure that strategies for prevention, protection, and accountability are responsive to a dynamic context with particular risks and triggers. Investigative bodies should be given sufficient resources to gather information that could be used in future potential criminal proceedings.

This report presents policy recommendations on how to add political and financial costs to targeting civilian populations. Given the role of actors at the local level in either escalating or defusing identity based conflict, attention should be paid to recognizing and supporting local and traditional mediation structures, and including civilian-led mediation processes, early warning mechanisms, and civilian protection measures.

In multilateral and bilateral diplomacy, policy makers should not assume that a ceasefire would automatically end the targeting of civilians. Governments should be extremely wary of relying on the RSF or SAF to protect civilians absent external pressure or monitoring. Agreements like the Jeddah

Declaration or promises of new codes of conduct are unlikely to be upheld while belligerents actively engage in widespread, systematic attacks and, arguably, incentivize increased violence through racialized propaganda. If the RSF has ideological motives to attack communities in Darfur, negotiations or policies that do not address these motives will not stop them.

The FFM recommended that the UN establish a civilian protection force. While the UN Secretary-General indicated he felt that the timing was not right for this step, and the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) are unlikely to take action, political obstacles do not change the fact that patterns of civilian targeting indicate that physical protection is desperately and urgently needed.

Policy options for governments looking to support the people of Sudan:

Dissuade potential perpetrators from committing mass atrocities and ensure the basis for accountability and other justice processes

- Engage or invest in private mediation at the community, local, and regional level, linked in a meaningful and indirect way with more formal negotiations.
- Ensure predictable and adequate funding for the FFM for Sudan.
- Through the UNSC, expand the mandate of the ICC to cover all of Sudan.
- Establish an AU commission of inquiry into the situation in Sudan.
- Establish monitoring mechanisms in both RSF and SAF-controlled areas to identify human rights violations, detentions, and the targeting of humanitarian aid.
- Publicly recognize starvation as a weapon of war by the RSF and the SAF.
- Increase funding for the use of satellite monitoring to support documentation efforts.
- Engage bilaterally with influential third parties to reduce support to key belligerents.
- Dedicate funds to support CSO capacity to document atrocities in line with international best practices, and to support survivor interactions with justice actors, including the ICC, AU, and FFM.

Degrade potential perpetrators' capacity to commit atrocities

- Press states, including the UAE, that provide financial, technical, or political support to the belligerents to abide by arms embargoes and sanctions.
- Place additional targeted sanctions on belligerents, including RSF and SAF leadership and their families' companies, where implicated in the commission of mass atrocities, with explicit reference to the mass atrocities in the sanction designation.
- Place targeted sanctions on belligerents identified as having had a role in the commission of mass atrocities, including CRSV.
- Adopt and enforce an all-of-Sudan arms embargo at the UNSC.
- Enforce the existing UNSC arms embargo on Darfur.

Protect vulnerable civilian populations

- Urgently explore the deployment of a regional or sub-regional peace operation for Darfur with a mandate to protect civilians and IDPs, and to prevent atrocities in El Fasher.

- Pursue Track 2 efforts, or unofficial negotiations between non-governmental actors in Darfur, to build trust, identify and address early warning signs, and discuss routes for fleeing civilians and humanitarian delivery.
- Recognize and allow for flexible funding to support local conflict resolution and de-escalation, community protection, and early warning efforts – including by young people and women's groups.
- Establish safe routes for the evacuation of civilians and ensure civilians will be able to return to their homes when they can do so safely and voluntarily.
- Support safe refugee resettlement and pathways for asylum.
- Increase flexible funding to support local mutual aid networks that are providing humanitarian assistance to hard-to-reach areas.
- Investigate whether forced starvation is being used to target communities based on their identity.
- Ensure adequate humanitarian assistance for refugee camps in Chad.
- Fund civil society efforts to tackle disinformation and the spread of hate.
- Ensure social media companies have the capacity to respond to violations of their policies on hate speech and misinformation around the Sudan conflict.

Facilitate leadership or political transition

- Provide resources for diverse representatives from Sudanese civil society, including young people, women's organizations, and survivors and victims' groups, to organize efforts to promote a political transition and design a future transitional justice process.
- Provide resources and a platform for victims of crimes to meaningfully participate in peace talks and a political transition.

ENDNOTES

¹ Note: The terms Arab and non-Arab are commonly used to differentiate between communities in this context. The use of these terms does not imply a value judgment or independent assessment by the Simon-Skjoldt Center. “Genocide Determination in Sudan and Imposing Accountability Measures,” US Department of State, January 7, 2025, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/genocide-determination-in-sudan-and-imposing-accountability-measures/>.

² The US Department of State also determined that the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) had committed war crimes. According to the FFM, “The evidence collected by the Fact-Finding Mission shows that both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Response Forces (RSF), and their respective allied militias, have committed large-scale human rights and international humanitarian law violations, many of which may amount to war crimes and/or crimes against humanity. See:

“War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity, and Ethnic Cleansing Determination in Sudan,” US Department of State, December 6, 2023, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/war-crimes-crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-determination-in-sudan/>.

³ “Findings of the investigations conducted by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan into violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law,” United Nations Human Rights Council, A/HRC/57/CRP.6, October 23, 2024,

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>;

The resolution also called for the atrocity determination to be reviewed and updated every 180 days. See: “H.Res.1328 - Recognizing the actions of the Rapid Support Forces and allied militias in the Darfur region of Sudan against non-Arab ethnic communities as acts of genocide,”

118th Congress (2023-2024), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/1328>. A companion bill in the Senate was introduced: “S.Res.559 - A resolution recognizing the actions of the Rapid Support Forces and allied militia in the Darfur region of Sudan against non-Arab ethnic communities as acts of genocide,” 118th Congress (2023-2024), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-resolution/559>.

⁴ “Museum Warns Risk of Genocide in Darfur,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, June 29, 2023,

<https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/museum-warns-risk-of-genocide-in-darfur>

⁵ Most casualty figures for the Sudan conflict are widely agreed to be an undercount. ACLED has documented 27,120 reported fatalities, while new research posits at least 61,202 violent deaths have taken place in the capital city of Khartoum alone. In his remarks to Congress, the US Special Envoy to Sudan Tom Perriello shared projections of 150,000 killed. See: “Defection and violence against civilians in Sudan's al-Jazirah state - November 2024,” ACLED, 2024, <https://acleddata.com/2024/11/18/defection-and-violence-against-civilians-in-sudans-al-jazirah-state-november-2024/>;

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