**Central Darfur: 51 women and girls sexually abused in Garsilla and Zalingi towns**

African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) continues to document human rights violations committed by both the warring parties including sexual violence during the ongoing armed conflict in Sudan. ACJPS strongly condemns the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and therefore calls upon the perpetuators to desist from such acts. In this release, ACJPS has documented 51 incidents of sexual violence against women and girls in Zalingi and Garsilla localities in Central Darfur. The victims/survivors identified men dressed in the Rapid Support Forces’ (RSF) uniforms, allied Arab militias and in some cases men in Sudanese Armed Forces’ (SAF) uniform as the perpetuators.

We reiterate our calls to the **Sudanese authorities to:**

* To issue a public statement condemning conflict related sexual violence and issue orders that it shall not be tolerated.
* Conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into all reports of sexual violence, whether committed by state or non-state actors with a view of holding perpetrators accountable.
* Repeal laws that provide immunity from prosecution to perpetrators including the Armed Forces Act.
* Ensure that medical and other appropriate support services are available to victims.
* Grant the regional and international actors full and unhindered access to investigate allegations of sexual violence within their mandate.
* Ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and domesticate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women

During the period between 17 to 20 May 2023, ACJPS documented incidents where three women were raped by unknown gunmen in Garsilla locality whilst they had gone to fetch water.

Between 5 May to 2 July 2023, there were nine incidents where women and girls were sexually violated from Alestsd Stadium, Alwehda, Althewra neighborhoods and Alhasahisa IDP camp. The survivors said that perpetuators were men dressed in RSF uniform and others in plain clothes. The perpetuators were riding on motorcycles and armed with automatic guns known as "Kalashnikovs".

Between 15 September to 25 October 2023, a total of seven women and girls were raped in Zalingi town. Seven women including a 12-year-old girl from Center 1 within Alhasahisa IDP camp by armed men in dressed in SAF uniform. Alhasahisa IDP camp is located approximately 1500 meters from the SAF headquarters. This goes to show the level of impunity and lawlessness in the country.

After SAF had withdrawn from the area (Zalingi), RSF and affiliated armed Arab Militia accessed Alhasahisa IDP camp through Zalingi High School and a cemetery in Dodo village and raided camp. During the raid, the attackers sexually violated 32 women and girls from center 1,5,6, 7 and 10 within the camp. The violations occurred between the period of 29 October to 3 November 2023.

Between 5 May to 2 July 2023, there have been at least four cases of sexual harassment (improper touching of bodies) in the same neighborhoods of Zalingi by the same perpetrators against the women and girls whom were found in the streets heading to get water source or for other services.

**Survivor’s testimony**

ACJPS was able to speak to one of the survivors a one Ms. Aisha (Psuedo name) 28-years-old who painfully narrated her traumatic experience *“…. On 29 October 2023, at about 11:00am while I was moving from Alhashisa IDP camp in Zalingi heading to Nyala town in South Darfur, I was stopped by two armed men, one was dressed in RSF uniform and the other in plain clothes. The men asked me where I was from and where I was headed and I answered. They then asked me whether I am married and I told them that I am widowed and that my husband died last year. I was then forcefully taken to a building (that appeared to be a clinic/medical facility) where I was raped by both of them. I was also verbally abused as they called me a prostitute used by SAF soldiers. After the gruesome acts, the men left me in bad shape as I was unable to leave the premises until about 04:00 or 05:00pm….”*

**Background**

Rape was used as a weapon of war in Darfur when fighting began in 2003 as mostly non-Arab rebel groups rose against the central Sudanese government. The ongoing armed conflict and lawlessness in Sudan currently has created breeding ground for widespread violation perpetuated by the warring parties and allied militia as authorities are seemingly unable/unwilling to hold them accountable. The perpetuators continue to use rape and sexual violence against women to humiliate them, instill fear and control them. Women have been raped in their homes in front of relatives and while fleeing so safer areas. Khartoum and Darfur have registered the highest numbers of sexual violence since the eruption of the armed conflict in Sudan. As of 2 November 2023, the Joint Human Rights Office in Sudan had [received credible reports](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/11/sudan-alarming-reports-women-and-girls-abducted-and-forced-marry-held) of more than 50 incidents of sexual violence linked to the hostilities, impacting at least 105 victims - 86 women, one man and 18 children. Twenty-three of the incidents involved rape, 26 were of gang rape and three were of attempted rape.