**West Darfur: Justice for seven university girls abducted and subjected to sexual slavery in Elgenina**

The African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) expresses deep concern over the increasing trend of sexual violence during the ongoing armed conflict in Sudan. Survivors have identified armed actors as perpetrators including the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Arab militia, and Sudanese Alliance Forces. Scores of women and girls have been subjected to sexual violence including rape. Some have been held for several days in conditions of sexual slavery. In this release, ACJPS has documented an incident where seven university girls were abducted by the Sudanese Alliance Forces and sexually violated for 14 days.

On 25 May 2023, Sudanese Alliance Forces created a checkpoint near Alzahra girls’ hostel near Elgenina University located west of Elgenina town. At around 10:00 pm, a group of soldiers dressed in plain clothes led by Mr. Abdallah alias Abutalateen raided the hostel that was occupied by 17 students originally from North, South, East, and Central Darfur states who had stayed and were unable to return home because of the armed conflict.

The girls were divided into two groups. Ten girls stayed in the hostel while seven girls were moved to a vacant five-bedroomed house that had been abandoned by its owners in the Alnahda neighborhood. The girls who were moved to the private house in Alnahda were sexually abused from the day of their abduction. Their nude pictures/videos were recorded and the perpetrators threatened to publish them on social media. The girls were also forced to do chores like cooking and washing clothes.

On 9 June 2023, RSF launched heavy attacks in the area forcing the Sudanese Alliance Forces to withdraw, allowing the detainees/victims (the seven girls) to escape. The group sought refuge in the house of one of the victim’s relatives in Elgenina where they received medical attention. Through fundraising and donations from well-wishers, they were able to go to their respective homes. ACJPS was able to contact some survivors who narrated their traumatic experiences. All the names used in testimonies are not real to protect the victims.

Ms. Najiah, one of the survivors shared with ACJPS that *“… we were sexually abused from day one when they raided the hostel and this was done in the presence of others. We went through this every other day even while on our menstrual period. The perpetrators used arms to coarse us into compliance….”*

*“We were subjected to physical torture including beatings with gun butts and I sustained injuries on the head as a result”* Ms. Fatima narrated

Ms. Amina said she was unable to escape because there was tight security at the premises as the perpetrators were armed with automatic guns inside and around the house. She stated that one of the guards was called Idris alias Jinja (because he is skinny). Additionally, the house was located in an area where there were serious gunfights between the warring parties making it even more difficult to escape.

*“Most of our phones were confiscated after the raid and although one of us still had a phone, it was impossible to communicate to our families because telecommunication services had been shut down. We were forced to cook huge amounts of food daily and when we ran out of maize flour, we had to manually grind maize. We were also forced to stay naked to prevent us from escaping. Medical attention was never provided despite our pleas,”* Ms. Miriam recollected.

Ms. Salma said *“We were often beaten and forced to sleep on the floor without bedding. I even lost my hair as a result of the harsh living conditions. I was also able to identify one of the perpetrators called Abutalateen”*

ACJPS was reliably informed that Mr. Abutalateen is an ex-convict who was jailed in Ardmata prison for drug possession until April 25, 2023, when he joined Sudanese Alliance Forces shortly after the outbreak of the war.

Information regarding the ten girls who remained at hostel is still unknown.

ACJPS condemns the arbitrary arrest and sexual violence against the seven university girls and all civilians in Sudan. We therefore call on:

**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

**Sudanese Armed Forces, Rapid Support Forces, and Arab Militias to:**

* To end sexual violence as a tactic of war.
* Allow victims full access to humanitarian support including medical, psychosocial, and legal aid.
* Abide by the rules of international humanitarian law.

**International community to:**

* Condemn the ongoing conflict-related sexual violence and publicly and privately press the Sudanese authorities to meet their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law

**Background**

Although the armed conflict between the Sudanese Army and RSF erupted on 15 April 2023 in Sudan, Elgenina, West Darfur continued to enjoy peace until 24 April when the warring parties extended fights to the city in a bid to capture and control it. However, the situation was different as other parties joined the armed conflict; the Arab militia joined RSF, and the Sudanese Alliance Forces led by the Late Governor of Darfur Gen. Khamis Abubaker joined SAF. The Sudanese Alliance Forces are mainly comprised of people from the Massalite thus turning the conflict in Darfur into an ethnic one.