****

**African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights**

**77th Ordinary Session**

**20 October - 7 November 2023**

**Arusha, Tanzania**

**ORAL STATEMENT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN**

*Mr Chair, Commissioners, State delegates and dear participants,*

*The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) and the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM), wish to draw your attention to a number of worrying developments relating to the human rights situation in Sudan:*

Our organisations continue to express deep concerns about gross human rights violations that are being perpetrated against civilians in Sudan by the Sudanese Armed Forces, Paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and armed militia groups.

Since the war erupted on 15th April 2023, we have raised serious concerns about the indiscriminate killing of civilians, with the country-wide death roll reaching over four thousand, as of September 2023. Activists and human rights defenders are being targeted with arbitrary arrest and *incommunicado* detention for their advocacy work against the ongoing armed conflict; for advocating for the release of detainees, engaging with the local ceasefire committees and providing legal aid services to detainees. In September 2023, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that “hundreds – and likely thousands – are being held incommunicado in appalling conditions” including political activists, human rights defenders and members of the resistance committees.[[1]](#footnote-1) The lack of access to lawyers and family members for the detainees, together with the well-documented use by the Sudanese Army and Rapid Support Forces of torture and other forms of ill-treatment against detainees, particularly whilst held in unknown locations, gives rise to serious concerns for their safety. Furthermore, detainees are being charged with baseless offences including those that carry the death penalty.

Other human rights and international humanitarian violations such as conflict-related sexual violence; violation of freedom of expression; restriction of movement; including new trends such as recruitment of child soldiers; abduction; extortion; kidnapping and slavery which have emerged have further exacerbated the crisis. We are deeply concerned by the significant worsening of the humanitarian situation, and conflict dynamics in Darfur have yet again taken an ethnic turn, with the deliberate targeting and killing of non-Arab populations that appear to amount to ethnic cleansing. Thousands have been killed in El Geneina, West Darfur, and more than 20 neighbourhoods have been plundered and torched.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Honorable chairperson, these violations have continued to take place in a climate of total impunity. The push for accountability must remain key in any processes working towards the resolution of the conflict, and to democratic leadership. We therefore call on this Commission to urge the authorities in power to take specific, demonstrable and measurable steps towards ensuring indiscriminate attacks on civilians not party to the conflict cease. That they restrain their forces from attacking civilians, their properties and infrastructure for services. Additionally, in the climate of repression that blocks independent monitoring and reporting in Sudan, we urge the African Commission to fulfill its mandate on civil wars and armed conflicts by monitoring and reporting on violations of international human rights and humanitarian law being committed across the country.

Finally, we applaud the Commission, for the two resolutions it has adopted in May and August 2023 on the human rights situation in Sudan, but urge for continued vigilance on the situation as it continues to intensify, leading to immense suffering by civilians. We encourage the Commission to re-view all the tools available for it to effectively respond to the crisis in Sudan and to act in a timely manner including paying an in country visit to assess the human rights and humanitarian situation.

I thank you

1. UN, Sudan: Türk says conflict must stop before it is too late to pull the country back from disaster, 12 September 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/09/sudan-turk-says-conflict-must-stop-it-too-late-pull-country-back> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The conflict in West Darfur that has heightened since 24 April, is reported to have already claimed over 5,000 lives and injured over 8,000. See, Sudan: More than 5,000 Reportedly Killed in El Geneina ‘Genocide’ at <https://allafrica.com/stories/202306210012.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)