

## **West Darfur: Nine Sudanese men arbitrarily arrested and tortured by RSF and allied militia in Arzin**

African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) condemns the arbitrary arrest and torture of Nine male Sudanese citizens by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Arzin, West Darfur. We call upon the warring parties to desist from arbitrarily arresting and torturing civilians. They must respect civilian's human rights as guaranteed by the Constitutional Charter, and national and international human rights treaties ratified by Sudan. ACJPS further calls upon the Sudanese authorities to carry out independent and impartial investigations into the allegation of torture of the nine men to hold perpetrators to account and guarantee their access to free medical care.

On 11 January 2024, the ACJPS obtained a short video clip (23 seconds long) from a WhatsApp group of residents in West Darfur. The muted video shows several male civilians lying on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs. Other men dressed in plain clothes and others in RSF uniforms are seen standing around the group. A few moments into the video, one person among a group is seen lying on the ground being beaten with a baton and kicked in the head by one of the men who were standing.

ACJPS went ahead and launched an investigation into the facts surrounding the incident and discovered that the incident happened in West Darfur State in the Azrni village located approximately 15 Kilometers East of Elgenina in December 2023 at around 11:00 Am. At least eight RSF officers armed with automatic guns known as Kalashnikovs and pistols under the command of a sergeant called Suleiman Barsham were involved. They were also joined by 12 men from the Arab militia who were dressed in plain clothes, eight of whom were armed with Kalashnikovs while the other four were armed with sticks and batons. The perpetrators subjected the group of nine adult men to physical torture as they were beaten with sticks and gun butts on different body parts whilst their hands were tied behind their backs as they lay on the ground on their bellies. The group spent at least 7 hours in that position and were later released after the intervention of the Native Administration of both Gimer and Messeria Jebal tribes.

All the nine the victims are tricycle (tuk-tuk) riders dealing in the transportation of goods and people in rural areas. They were arrested while heading to the Azrni weekly market at a checkpoint established by RSF. Although a total of six passengers were also arrested on that fateful day, they were released unharmed.

### **Victims' testimonies**

Mr. Ahmed (not real name) told ACJPS that *"we were stopped by RSF officers while on our way to Azrni and they demanded entrance fee. When we refused to pay the required sum, they accused us of spying for the Sudanese Military forces and kept calling us Abuldah Umgash, a term used to refer to SAF soldiers which we denied. They also called us killers who worked with SAF before the seizure of division 15 in Ardmata, West Darfur by RSF but we denied these accusations as well....,"*

Mr. Hassan (not real name) told ACJPS that the video was filmed by one of the perpetrators dressed in an RSF uniform. The perpetrators threatened to release the video

if we failed to comply with the orders. However, they published the video in January 2024

Mr. Adel (not real name), aged 21 testified that *“we were stopped at a checkpoint and asked to pay a sum of 2,000 Sudanese Pounds per tuktuk as a condition to accessing Azrni. When we told them that we were unable to pay the money, we were arrested and taken to an RSF detention center located a few meters from the checkpoint. As soon we reached the detention center, our hands were tied behind our backs using plastic ropes and clothes before being pushed to the ground. We were beaten with wooden sticks and gun butts on all body parts including the face. I was kicked in the face and also sustained an injury on the right shoulder. I was unable to work for three weeks after my release and later moved to Elgenina for medical treatment.....”*

### **Background**

On 4 November 2023, RSF seized and took control of the SAF headquarters in Ardamata also known as Division 15 in West Darfur following intense gunfights between RSF supported by allied militias such as the Masalite Forces, armed Arabs, Tama tribal force, and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Sudanese Alliances against the SAF. ACJPS [documented](#) a range of human rights violations that we committed against the residents of Ardamata during the incidents such as loss of life and property.