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## Human Rights Violations in Gezira State

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### *Terror, Humiliation and Constant Degradation*



July 2024

The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM)

[www.suhrm.org](http://www.suhrm.org)

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## Glossary

ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICPPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons From Enforced Disappearance
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MTN	Mobile Telephone Network
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
ACLED	The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
RSF	The Rapid Support Forces
SHRM	The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan

## About the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor and Its Activities

The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM) is a non-governmental organisation established in 2005 and registered with the Humanitarian Aid Commission in Sudan. SHRM's work focuses on protecting, promoting and advocating for human rights in Sudan. Its mission is to call for the respect and guarantee of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Sudan for all citizens residing within its territory, as stipulated by relevant international human rights covenants covering economic, political, social and cultural rights.

SHRM's membership includes a number of human rights defenders and academics who have contributed to the field of human rights in Sudan since the mid-1980s. SHRM is a member of several national, regional and international human rights networks, such as the Confederation of Sudanese Civil Society Organizations, the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the International Federation for Human Rights and the Coalition for an Effective African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor wishes to extend its gratitude to the numerous human rights defenders and the residents of Gezira State who, despite being displaced, have communicated with us under exceedingly challenging conditions. We also express our appreciation to the many expatriates and migrants from Gezira State who have helped us connect with survivors across various localities and villages. Furthermore, we thank the small team of volunteer researchers who have collaborated with us in compiling material for this report since the end of December 2023. It is important to recognise that the violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law perpetrated by the Rapid Support Forces in Gezira State are so widespread that it is exceedingly challenging to document them fully under the current conditions. The instances cited in this report are illustrative examples sufficient to demonstrate that these violations are systematic and patterned, amounting to war crimes and offences against humanity, as has been and continues to be the case in other parts of the country.

## Introduction

More than a year has passed since the outbreak of confrontations between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the capital city of Khartoum on 15 April 2023. The fighting and attacks on civilians have spread to multiple areas across Sudan, including the Darfur region and the states of South Kordofan, North Kordofan, West Kordofan, Sennar, White Nile, Al Qadarif, River Nile and Gezira. The widening of the conflict has significantly deteriorated the humanitarian situation in the country. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project reported that from 15 April 2023 to 10 May 2024, there were 6,050 political violence events that took place and more than 16,650 reported deaths in Sudan.<sup>1</sup> According to the annual report of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in Geneva, the number of displaced persons worldwide reached a record high of 79.9 million by the end of 2023 due to escalating conflicts in Sudan, the Gaza Strip and the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>2</sup> Sudan accounted for the largest portion of this increase in regional displacement with the conflict that erupted in mid-April 2023, leading to the displacement of 9.1 million people by the end of the past year. This figure is the highest ever reported for a single country globally since 2008.

One of the most significant consequences of the catastrophic war in Sudan is the mass displacement of millions, both internally and externally, resulting in scattered families and widespread impoverishment due to the looting of savings and properties and the destruction of livelihoods. The infrastructure across all affected regions, particularly in Khartoum State, has suffered extensive damage, making restoration efforts exceedingly difficult. Numerous vital facilities have been destroyed, disrupting water and electricity supplies in many areas. Government institutions have been wrecked, and banks, markets, warehouses, homes, properties and vehicles of citizens have been looted. The majority of productive economic sectors, including livestock, have been severely impacted. These dire conditions have been exacerbated by the deliberate policies of both combatant parties, including the intentional destruction of infrastructure and prolonged communication blackouts in certain areas, which have effectively starved large segments of the population, who depend entirely on mobile banking applications for financial transfers. Additionally, these deliberate policies encompass the looting of crops and the initiation of organised misinformation and hate campaigns.

The armed conflict has been accompanied by serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross breaches of international human rights law by both parties involved. What transpired in the

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<sup>1</sup> The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'Sudan Situation Update: The RSF Sets its Eyes on North Darfur', 17 May 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/Fv18v>

<sup>2</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 'Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024', Geneva: 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/D6obH>

Darfur region, which has been bleeding since 2003 and to which the RSF transported the war from the first weeks of fighting in Khartoum, starkly exemplifies the violations that have occurred during this conflict. The RSF committed numerous widespread crimes in West Darfur, some of which amount to war crimes and ethnic cleansing, while other atrocities can be classified as crimes against humanity and possibly genocide. The most notable violations and crimes include the killing of hundreds of civilians and the displacement of hundreds of thousands from West Darfur State in battles that continued intermittently between June and November 2023. The result was the forced displacement of more than half a million people to neighbouring Chad, most of whom were from the Masalit tribe that resided in West Darfur.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the armed forces frequently engaged in indiscriminate shelling that did not distinguish between military targets and civilian objects and targeted populated areas, resulting in civilian casualties. For instance, on 29 December 2023, SAF perpetrated a massacre in the city of Nyala in South Darfur State by dropping explosive barrels, killing dozens of people, the majority of whom were civilians.

Additionally, numerous instances of rape committed by RSF have been documented in Khartoum, Darfur, South Kordofan and, recently, Gezira, along with threats of rape used for extortion and intimidation. These acts of rape fall under the category of crimes against humanity, subjecting perpetrators to international humanitarian law.

In this report, we document the violations committed by RSF in Gezira State since their takeover of the region in mid-December 2023, following the withdrawal of SAF from the city of Wad Madani and other towns in Gezira. We also examine the deliberate strategy employed to terrorise, insult and humiliate the population. The documented violations include extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, humiliation, forced disappearances, rapes and the systematic looting of private property and civilian assets.

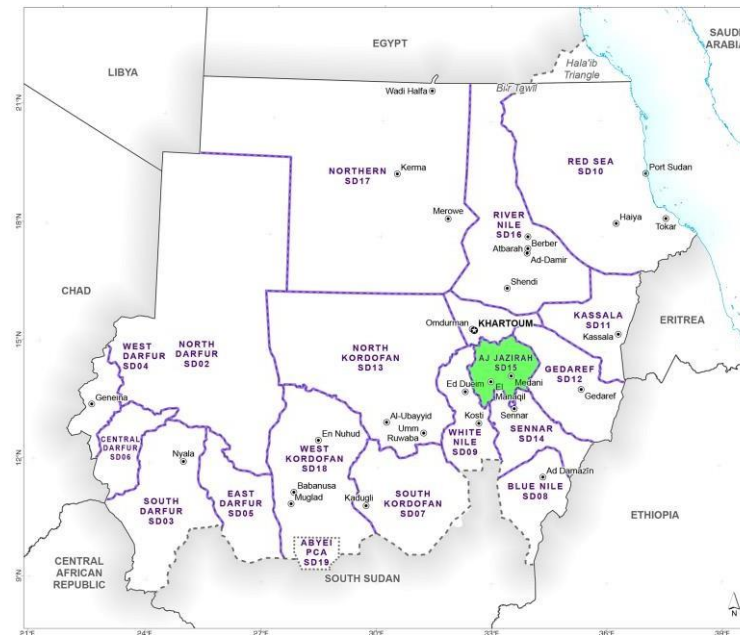
It is important to note that we have altered all the names of witnesses and individuals who consented to provide their testimonies for the purposes of this report, even though they have since left the area, either as part of displacement waves to safer regions or outside the country. This measure is being taken to ensure their protection.

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<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch, “‘The Massalit Will Not Come Home’: Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes Against Humanity in El Geneina, West Darfur, Sudan”, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/nTjRN>

## Gezira State

Gezira State holds a strategic position in Sudan, located south of Khartoum. It is bordered to the north and west by White Nile State, to the south by Sennar State and to the east by Al Qadarif State.<sup>4</sup> The region is abundant in natural resources and is notably home to the Gezira Scheme, the largest agricultural project in Sudan. Covering an area of 27,549 square kilometres, Gezira State is inhabited by more than five million residents. These residents are distributed across 2,200 villages and 2,150 'kambu',<sup>5</sup> which are managed through eight local administrative units.<sup>6</sup>



Gezira state colored green, source OCHA

Gezira State is endowed with abundant natural resources, particularly in agriculture. For nearly a century, its name has been closely associated with the Gezira Scheme, the largest irrigated agricultural project in tropical Africa, which has long been a pillar of the Sudanese economy. The employment opportunities provided by the scheme have attracted substantial numbers of people from across Sudan and beyond, resulting in a diverse demographic profile and transforming the region's urban centres into focal points of communal coexistence and integration. In addition to its agricultural prominence, a variety of industries have developed around the scheme's products, notably including sugar production, textiles and oils. These industries have further strengthened Gezira State's economic significance. Despite significant declines in the Gezira Scheme and the industrial sector over recent

<sup>4</sup> Gezira State, Gezira State Network, 20 April 2014, available at: <https://gezira2.wordpress.com/%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-3/>

<sup>5</sup> 'Kambu' is the Arabic adaptation of the English word 'camp' and refers to the settlements of agricultural workers primarily coming from Darfur.

<sup>6</sup> Hussein Saad, 'Residents ('Al-Kanabi') in Gezira... Deprived of Rights and Living on the Margins of Life (1)', Madaniya News, 19 January 2022, available at: <https://shorturl.at/Yihm9>



decades, Gezira State continues to be a vital agricultural hub and a major source of food for Sudan. The region remains densely populated and exemplifies societal diversity.

Since the outbreak of the war on 15 April 2023 in Sudan, Gezira State has witnessed the displacement of approximately half a million individuals fleeing the armed confrontations in Khartoum. The state capital, Wad Madani, has become an alternative hub for commercial, financial and humanitarian operations, replacing Khartoum. However, RSF control over the state has instilled a sense of insecurity and brutality reminiscent of the conditions experienced in Darfur for decades. The events in Gezira have destroyed the lives of millions of its residents, and the extensive violations committed by RSF across various regions of the state have led to the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of families, with some seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly Egypt.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), between 250,000 and 300,000 individuals had been displaced from Wad Madani and its surrounding areas by December 2023, merely four days after RSF entered the city.<sup>7</sup> The number of displaced persons continued to increase from various parts of Gezira following RSF's violent incursions into the region's villages starting in December 2023, leading to the complete evacuation of several entire villages.

A series of violations in Gezira State persist daily, with RSF having overrun its cities and villages since mid-December 2023. Additionally, some scattered areas have experienced indiscriminate aerial bombardments by SAF, which have resulted in civilian casualties. In July, eyewitnesses reported that SAF had planted landmines in certain areas, a reckless act in a region where the remaining citizens are constantly moving between their homes, farms and villages.

The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM) has encountered substantial challenges in determining the precise number of extrajudicial killings, hindered by RSF's attempts to obscure these incidents, the breakdown of the health system and its records, restricted mobility across villages due to the security situation, communication failures and widespread internet disruptions.<sup>8</sup> The three main service providers – Zain, MTN and Sudani – halted their operations across Sudan in early February. Although connectivity has been partially reinstated in certain states, it remains critically deficient in Gezira, suggesting a possible intentional disruption. RSF has instead relied on Starlink for communications. Amid these internet and communication blackouts, some of the most egregious violations have been perpetrated in Gezira State since December 2023.

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'The Displacement Crisis in Sudan Worsens as Fighting Spreads', 19 December 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/5FVF4>

<sup>8</sup> BBC Arabic, 'War in Sudan: Internet and Communications out of Service, Warnings of Hunger Outbreak', 7 February 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/ZgQV8>

Despite these challenges, SHRM has successfully documented numerous accounts through direct interviews with displaced individuals, refugees and eyewitnesses. The testimonies included in this report represent only a small portion of the widespread and systematic violations committed by RSF in the areas of Gezira under their control.

### Violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law

The ongoing conflict in Sudan has been marked by severe breaches of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. This report underscores the egregious crimes committed in Gezira State, which include deliberate killings; rape and sexual violence; torture and inhumane treatment; extensive destruction and appropriation of property; widespread looting; forced displacement of civilians; denial of access to food, healthcare, education and essential services not justified by military necessity; and assaults on civilian populations and objects. These acts constitute war crimes. Human Rights Watch's 2015 report, *Men With No Mercy*, similarly documented grave violations by RSF in Darfur, highlighting that 'serious violations of international humanitarian law, including murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and other mistreatment of persons in custody, when committed with criminal intent amount to war crimes'.<sup>9</sup>

Under international humanitarian law, the ongoing armed conflict in Sudan involving SAF, RSF and other participating groups is categorised as a non-international armed conflict. All parties engaged in this conflict are obligated to adhere to international humanitarian law, which is delineated in Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, as well as in Protocol II of 1977, pertinent to non-international armed conflicts and customary international humanitarian law.<sup>10</sup>

Common Article 3 emphasises the guarantee of humane treatment for all persons detained by the enemy and prohibits discrimination against them or exposing them to harm. Specifically, it forbids killing; mutilation; torture; cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; hostage-taking; and unfair trials. Additionally, Article 3 mandates the collection and care of the wounded, the sick and survivors of sunken ships. It also grants the International Committee of the Red Cross the right to offer its services to the parties in conflict.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Men With No Mercy: Rapid Support Forces' Attacks on Civilians in Darfur', 9 September 2015, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/ar/report/2015/09/09/280756>

<sup>10</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, 'Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols - International Committee of the Red Cross', 29 October 2010, available at: <https://www.icrc.org/ar/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

International humanitarian law, particularly Protocol II, specifically prohibits attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including food, agricultural areas, crops, livestock, water supply and irrigation facilities.

Furthermore, international human rights law forbids violations of the right to life, torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as arbitrary detention and unfair trials. It also stipulates the rights of individuals to the protection of their home and family, with special measures for the protection of children and women during armed conflict. Additionally, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights reinforces these protections.

Sudan acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on 18 March 1986. Additionally, since 2021, Sudan has ratified the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. By ratifying these instruments, the Sudanese government legally commits to taking adequate measures to prevent, protect against, prosecute and provide remedies for cases of arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearance of all individuals, whether in peacetime or during conflict.

Article 9 (1) of the ICCPR states, 'Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law'.

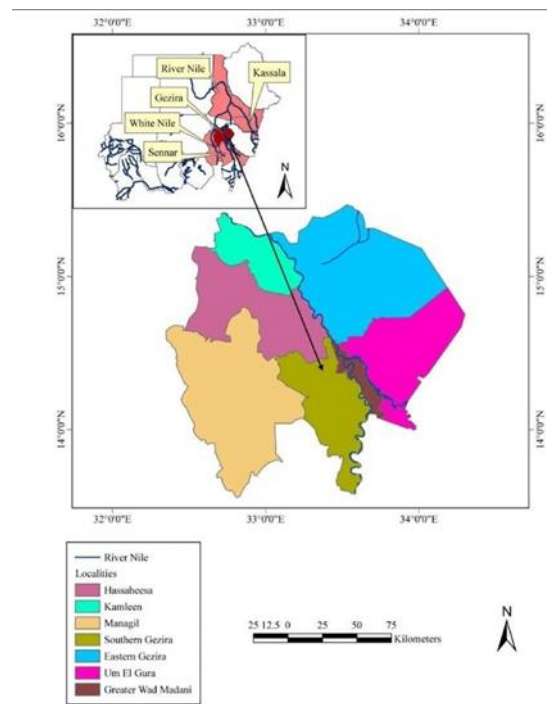
Article 2 (2) of the Convention Against Torture stipulates, 'No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability, or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for torture'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment', available at: <https://shorturl.at/anNVX>

## Targeting of Civilians and Civilian Objects in Gezira State

According to a statement by the Emergency Lawyers Group in March 2024, between 16 April 2023 and 7 March 2024, RSF conducted 154 attacks on villages and towns in Gezira State. These attacks resulted in the death of 248 individuals and injuries to 347 others.<sup>13</sup>



Gazira State localities: source OCHA

When RSF stormed the city of Wad Madani, the capital of Gezira State, on 19 December 2023, they committed numerous violations against civilians. These violations included extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detention under harsh and inhumane conditions, as well as rape and other war crimes and offences against humanity.

RSF also engaged in extensive looting of vehicles, money, homes, relief warehouses, commercial and industrial facilities, and farmers' grain stores throughout the towns and villages of the state that they overran and fully exploited. In every area stormed by RSF, chaos and insecurity were instigated, leading to a breakdown of law and order. This situation facilitated further looting of property and markets by existing or newly formed criminal groups. Additionally, the entry of RSF into the state led to the looting and destruction of several facilities within the Gezira Scheme in Barkat, Maringan and Al-Hasahisa, as well as some public and private sector projects in Gezira, such as sugar factories and farms in Al-Junied and Sennar. This looting, combined with the widespread forced displacement of the population, most of whom are farmers, caused significant damage to the agricultural season. The impact of these actions

<sup>13</sup> Madamik Newspaper, 'Shocking Report on Crimes by Rapid Support Forces and the Army in Gezira Reveals 248 Civilians Killed', available at: <https://shorturl.at/SzKfh>

has weakened the food security situation in the region and adversely affected the overall situation in the country.

In its aforementioned statement, the Emergency Lawyers Group reported that following RSF's takeover of Wad Madani on 19 December 2023, the city's neighbourhoods were subjected to severe aerial bombardment by SAF's warplanes. This resulted in 28 fatalities and 52 injuries. The airstrikes targeted 39 locations within the state. For instance, parts of the University of Gezira, the Agricultural Research Corporation headquarters and the Court Complex in Al-Hasahisa were destroyed.<sup>14</sup>

The scope of violations by RSF includes targeting civilians and civilian objects; forced displacement of civilians; looting of property, markets, vehicles, money and mobile phones; systematic sexual violence and rape; extrajudicial killings; arbitrary arrests; torture; humiliation; and enforced disappearances. However, accurate statistics regarding these violations are not available due to the reasons outlined in the introduction of this report.

### **Forced Displacement in Gezira State**

As a result of the violent attacks launched by RSF on certain villages, coupled with the deteriorating security situation, the humanitarian and health conditions worsened, with a significant shortage of medical services. Civilians faced threats of death as well as mistreatment and verbal abuse, including physical assaults, such as flogging and insults. This led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands to the states of Sennar and White Nile or towards the northern states and eastern Sudan.

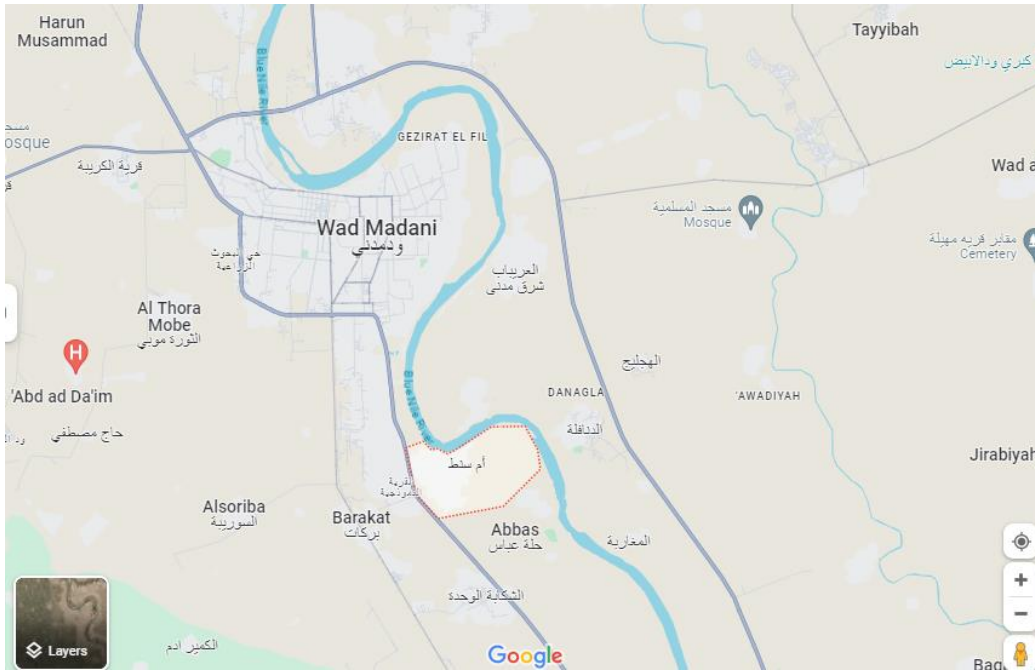
SHRM received a testimony from a displaced person from Umm Sonot near Wad Madani, Adam, 66 years old, a vegetable vendor and former employee.

#### **Adam's Testimony**

'On 15 December 2023, RSF entered Wad Madani and began indiscriminate shooting. We were sitting in *Al-Soug Al-Markazi* (central market) in Wad Madani and initially did not pay much attention to the situation. After a while, we saw bullets hitting sacks of potatoes. No one was injured at that moment. We then decided to leave the market. We managed to leave on foot towards Umm Sonot, which is nine kilometres from Wad Madani (see the map below).

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<sup>14</sup> Emergency Lawyers Group Report, 'Tragedy of Cities and Villages in Gezira', March 2024.



I have many displaced people staying at my house, including unmarried girls; those people painted a notorious image of themselves, so we decided to leave the house. I left wearing only a *Jalabia* and *Araqi* (traditional men's clothing), and my wife left in her *Tobe* and dress (traditional women's clothing). We left our packed suitcase behind at the house. We had three cars at home, which we took to my friend's place in Wad Al-Nau. The road was congested with cars heading from Wad Madani to Sennar (145 kilometres south of Wad Madani). "The blind was carrying the paralysed" (a Sudanese proverb meaning everyone). We stayed in Wad Al-Nu but had no fuel. On 17 December, we called Ahmed (one of our acquaintances) and told him we needed fuel because I had elderly people and about 20 others with me. Ahmed sent someone (Majdi, the groom) with four jerrycans of fuel. However, during his journey, he was stopped by RSF, and they gave him a hard time. They even wanted to pour fuel on him and burn him. They accused him of intending to deliver the fuel to the army (SAF) but eventually released him. I sent my son on a motorcycle with another person to the ferry site to check on what happened to Majdi. They didn't find him, but when they came back, they encountered the RSF and were interrogated. They told the soldiers they were only farmers, and the soldiers released them.

We drove the truck and left Wad Al-Nu (a village in southern Gezira), heading to Sennar. We reached Wad Al-Haddad and stopped at one of RSF's checkpoints. One of the soldiers started talking to one of the girls, and I decided to confront him if he asked her again, but we moved on. We then stayed in a village called Reba, west of Sennar, because the army (SAF) refused to let us enter Sennar at night. On the following day (18 December 2023), we rented a passenger vehicle (known as a "Shariha") from Sennar, but the army (SAF) prevented us from crossing Sennar Bridge, so we went to Senga (about 56 kilometres south). After crossing the bridge, we arrived in Al-Faw, exhausted after a two-day journey

from Wad Al-Nu, with elderly and disabled people with us. We followed the news and learned that RSF had set up a base on the roof of my house because the house across was occupied by a member of the “Kizan” (Islamists) who used to recruit people to collect intelligence, but he and his family disappeared afterwards. According to our neighbour, they searched the entire house, opened the wardrobes for clothes and attempted to steal a car belonging to the judiciary authority left by one of my relatives at the house, but they failed. All members of my family have gone to Egypt. But I will not leave Sudan, even if I die here’.<sup>15</sup>

### Attack on Al-Madina Arab

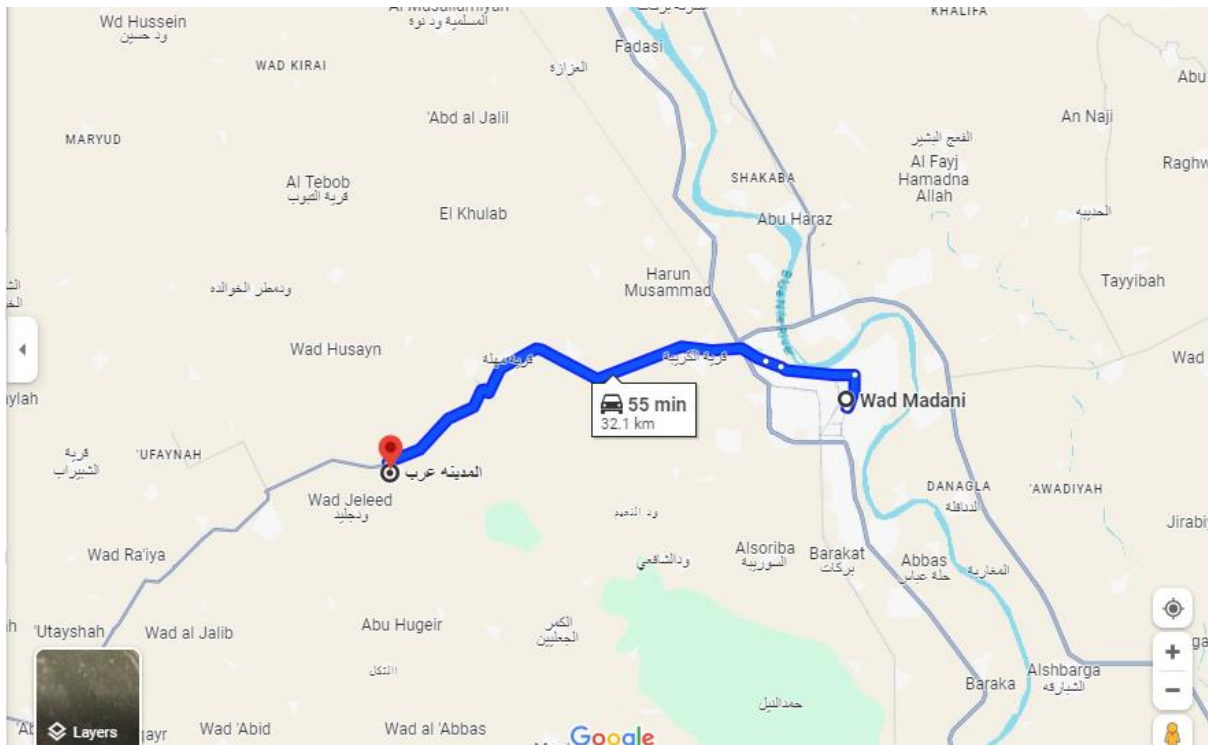
Al-Madina Arab is located in the southern Gezira region, approximately 24 kilometres southwest of Wad Madani. It is situated along the road connecting Wad Madani and Al-Manaqil. It is an administrative unit under the South Gezira locality, encompassing more than 45 affiliated villages. It is the largest administrative unit in South Gezira in terms of resources. The population of Al-Madina Arab is estimated to be around 10,000 people. These residents rely primarily on agriculture as their main economic activity, and the land is considered one of the best in the Gezira Scheme. Additionally, an increasing number of residents are engaged in trade, with the market becoming the largest commercial hub in the southern Gezira region, attracting wholesale and retail traders, as well as consumers from various parts of the state, especially on Saturdays and Tuesdays. The area also features permanent shops, workshops, pharmacies and other commercial and productive activities. The village houses some of the oldest schools in the state, including three secondary schools, four primary schools and several intermediate schools, in addition to a teacher training institute.

Perhaps the most notable feature of Al-Madina Arab is its highly diverse demographic composition. Thanks to the Gezira Scheme and the services that followed, the small village began to receive migrants from all over Sudan in the 1920s. Gradually, it transformed into a lively and active town that attracted new migrations driven by commercial and agricultural activities. The integration of work, agriculture, education and trade among the residents (as seen in other small towns and cities throughout the Gezira Scheme) fostered a significant degree of tolerance and coexistence, reduced tribalism and decreased crime rates.

See the map below illustrating the location of Al-Madina Arab.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview by the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor, online, April 2024.



Residents reported to SHRM that shortly after RSF entered Wad Madani, the village was attacked by three soldiers on a motorcycle, armed with a single rifle and apparently insufficient ammunition, with the clear intent to loot. However, people present in the market managed to repel them. The residents reported the incident to RSF's leadership in Madani. Field Commander Abdul Rahman Al-Bishi (killed in July 2024 near Sennar City) arrived and addressed the citizens, assuring them that these soldiers did not belong to their forces and were merely thieves. Al-Bishi confirmed that his forces are disciplined and always operate under the command of a responsible officer. He urged them to resist any thieves of this kind.

A few days later, soldiers returned in similar fashion but with better weaponry. Once again, the citizens managed to repel them, and it is reported that one of the attackers was killed in the confrontation. On 30 December, the town was shocked by a large-scale attack by RSF soldiers, this time in vehicles known to belong to the RSF in addition to motorcycles. The soldiers terrorised the citizens by firing randomly on the streets, looted some shops in the market and immediately killed four civilians who were market traders. Later, it was discovered that these soldiers had hijacked a passenger bus from the main road linking Al-Manaqil and Madani, which passes through Al-Madina Arab's market. They stopped the bus in the village of Mahla, where they killed a number of passengers, including Dr Ahmed Al-Siddiq Ahmed Al-Abbas, who was returning from his work at Al-Manaqil Hospital to his village of Portabil, near Al-Madina Arab. The RSF soldiers announced that they were avenging the killing of the soldier (an RSF fellow soldier) in Al-Madina Arab. One of the soldiers, who was the most aggressive in attacking the



civilians, declared that he was seeking revenge for his brother's death and would take his revenge on 50 citizens, threatening to return and kill more if the village did not evacuate’.

This threat and such events led to the displacement of a large number of civilians from Al-Madina Arab on the night of 30 December and the morning of 31 December, fearing the extensive armed looting taking place in southern Gezira at that time. There was a significant movement of displacement from the surrounding villages, with several citizens being killed while trying to defend their villages and properties. While RSF are accused by civilians of committing these crimes, RSF claim that other outlaws are responsible for the looting. The following testimonies illustrate the security breakdown and chaos that ensued.

A witness, a 53-year-old farmer, informed SHRM that RSF returned to the villages of Al-Madina Arab in February 2024 and seized everything they could find, including food crops, cash, gold jewellery, mobile phones, televisions, other electrical appliances, cattle, sheep and cars. Some citizens were beaten with whips. The residents decided to leave due to the lack of security and the widespread looting of homes. Those who remained in these villages were facing severe shortages of food, medicine and means of transportation (due to the theft of citizens' vehicles).<sup>16</sup> The region, like most areas in Gezira, continues to suffer from food shortages and the absence of any medical facilities after hospitals ceased operations and private clinics and laboratories were closed. They also face significant challenges in providing drinking water due to power outages and fuel shortages. The residents have not received any aid and continue to rely on sharing the little they have or manage to obtain from available markets, depending on remittances from their children abroad, which are received through complex and lengthy methods at high financial costs due to the disruption of internet networks.<sup>17</sup>

**Testimony from a resident of Al-Madina Arab, Gezira State, to SHRM<sup>18</sup>**

On 28 February 2024, RSF entered Al-Madina Arab and engaged in a battle with a mobile army unit (SAF) in the area at around 10:30 AM. A significant portion of the local population was present, as many had returned after the displacement of December 2023, believing that the town had become safe. The battle involved both heavy and light weapons, including artillery, sniper rifles and machine guns. This resulted in widespread panic among the residents, including myself. I have a family with two children. As soon as the shooting and the loud sounds of the weapons began, my children were terrified. I placed them under the beds and gathered some items to create a protective barrier in case

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<sup>16</sup> Interview by the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor, online, May 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Interview by the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor, online, March 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Interview by the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor, online, March 2024.

a shell or ammunition fell into the house to safeguard them. Despite this, the children were still frightened and crying from the noise of the shells and gunfire. The fighting continued for over an hour before the RSF entered the residential neighbourhoods. During the clash, I observed RSF combat vehicles, motorcycles and foot soldiers beginning to enter the homes of the residents.

### **Attack on Homes and Looting of Food Supplies**

They came to my house and broke the outer door. I was watching from inside one of the rooms with my wife, who advised me not to go outside. When they reached the door of the room, I was very close. They forcefully knocked on the door with their weapons, so I told them I would open it, and I did.

As soon as I opened the door, they were pointing Kalashnikov rifles at me and told me that they had two enemies. The first was the SAF army, and the second was the cars!

The car tyres were removed but were still in the storage room. One of them ordered me to bring the tyres and install them. Meanwhile, the battle outside was still ongoing. I went to the storage room, fetched the tyres and began installing them. I tried to deny having a key to the car. He told me to act quickly and bring the key, so I told them it was inside the cupboard. Two of them entered with their weapons while my children watched from a distance, crying.

I brought the key and handed it over to them. There were about four armed men, and the street was full of soldiers and motorcycles. From every house, at that moment, you could hear doors being struck as they entered. They had a cannon firing from a nearby location, as evidenced by the debris falling around us while I was installing the tyres. When they saw the debris falling into the house, they warned me that their cannon's shell was malfunctioning and might hit us. They instructed me to finish the installation, and they would withdraw from the cannon's direction. Afterwards, they would come back to check if I had installed the tyres. I told them to give me the key because others (other RSF soldiers) would not believe that we had given them the key. They told me to use the name Musa Mohamed Ahmed, or something similar; I'm not sure now. They said, 'If another group comes, tell them that the key was taken by Musa Mohamed's group'. Then, they withdrew from our house.

I started installing the car tyres, and after about 10 minutes, another group arrived. They surrounded the house and told me to open up. I told them the door was open and that they should come through it instead of climbing over the wall. They then accused me of being a supporter of the regime, asking where I was going with the car. I explained that I was not fixing the tyres to escape, as the car was actually put into storage due to a malfunction. I also mentioned that another group had already taken the key.

They told me they did not believe such claims and threatened to set the house on fire if I did not bring them the key. At that moment, my children and wife were extremely frightened. Thankfully, I remained calm and assured them that I would provide a solution if the group that took the key did not return; they could hotwire the car. They agreed to this.

Before we could finalise this arrangement, they took my wife and held a knife to her throat, threatening me to hand over the key or face dire consequences. One of them pointed a Kalashnikov at my back and confirmed that hotwiring the car was possible. They released my wife, and I went back inside the house, finished attaching the last tyre and moved away from the car, telling them it was ready.

Before I could step away, the first group that had taken the key returned, and they argued with the second group inside my house. Eventually, they reached an agreement that the car belonged to the last group. The first group then left. When the second group tried to start the car and failed, they said they would bring someone to repair it. Before they left, they took my phone and the money that was in the house.

I took my children out of the house and brought them to a neighbour's house, where other neighbours had gathered. However, the second house also had a small shop. Afterwards, large numbers of RSF soldiers began arriving, and the same thing happened at the neighbours' place. They arrived, banging on the door forcefully. When we opened the door, they would ask where the soldiers, the army and the 'regime supporters' were. We responded that there were no soldiers, no militia, no weapons and no regime supporters with us. They then demanded money, which they took, along with all the phones. They broke into the shop by shooting the lock and stole all the goods inside.

We found ourselves in a continuous confrontation with them. One group would come, then leave, followed by another group. They repeatedly asked the same questions, always ending with demands for the location of the cash safe. Another group occupied the neighbours' house, searched the rooms for gold and money, and created chaos within the house. We left our home, anticipating that another group might come.

That day, we did not have breakfast, lunch or any food or drink. We remained in a constant state of exposure. We left the doors open and continued receiving one group after another. This situation lasted from 10:30 AM on Wednesday until 4:00 AM, with the sound of gunfire never stopping. At that time, they had completely taken control of the town.

They had entered the town, and you could hear the sounds of doors being broken into houses, shops and stores. A large vehicle arrived near us, and there was a bakery nearby. They broke the bakery's door and took the flour inside. All the grocery stores were open, and everything in them was loaded

onto the large trucks, including the crops. I had about five gas cylinders and a television; all were taken immediately. The looting began. There was no food available, only water.

Until 4:00 AM, we tried to sleep, but they came in force, even into the rooms where we were sleeping, waking us up: 'Get up, and you, what are you doing?' They asked the same questions repeatedly. We told them this was the situation; please come and see for yourselves. A group had already come before you, taking the phones and money, and we had nothing to eat or drink except for this water. We neither ate nor slept until morning.

### **Mass Displacement**

At 6:00 AM, we began to leave our homes, and the mass displacement started. The entire town was poured into the streets, some in clothes and others without, and children in the same state they were in. We eventually reached an open area. Then, a unit from RSF within the city started to follow us. They arrived on motorcycles and told us to return, assuring us that they would not harm us and that no one would attack us again. No one paid any attention to their words. People no longer cared about their homes or money. We began a walking journey of about 30 kilometres. We walked for an entire day, remaining without food for nearly 48 hours. We reached some distant villages where we found means of transportation, including transport vehicles and donkey-drawn carts. We used these to reach the army-controlled area in the Managil area.

As we began to leave the state, more than 90% of the town's population had been displaced. We met in the displacement areas, where people began to share stories about those who were injured, attempted rapes and cases of rape. According to the accounts of those we met, some women were raped, and others were also subjected to attempts of rape, but the attempts failed; one person was forcibly taken into a vehicle and bound; another was beaten with a whip until they revealed information about money or vehicle keys. According to those who were with us, there were violations against people's honour and property, and some individuals were held inside Al-Madina Arab and prevented from leaving to be used as human shields. The reality was that people suffered greatly, especially the elderly and the disabled, who were carried on wheelbarrows, with some carrying their parents or grandparents because they could not move on their own.

We travelled long distances. Afterwards, in every village we fled to, once they arrived, we would leave it to them and move on to the next village. Perhaps their goal was to enter the villages for cars, money and gold (meaning people's money). There was someone who opposed giving them his car key, so they killed him, like the doctor who was shot in Wad Gileid, neighbouring Al-Madina Arab, and died because he refused to give up his car key; they killed him and eventually took the car. There were streets

covered with water where they spread out freshly harvested and bagged onion crops on the waterlogged areas so their vehicles could pass over them.

At the beginning of March, the Sudan War Monitor website posted a video showing the entry of RSF led by Officer Abdul Rahman Al-Bishi (later killed in the battles of Sennar on 20 July 2024). The video depicts a group of RSF forces moving towards the southwest direction (from Wad Madani) near Al-Madina Arab in Gezira State. Based on the sounds of explosions, it is expected that they are engaged in combat.<sup>19</sup>



*The image above is from the Sudan War Monitor video. Abdul Rahman Al-Bishi, second from the right, is seen with some of his soldiers at the entrance of Al-Madina Arab.*

### Looting of Citizens in the Villages of Al-Halaween

Amer, 65 years old, a farmer and father of four sons and daughters, is from the village of Mustafa Qurashi, which was taken over by RSF at the end of December 2023. RSF soldiers looted cars and entered the homes of some members of the security forces, robbing them as well. The village has been looted multiple times by RSF forces. Currently, they are stationed at the police centre and in two citizens' homes. When contacted, the RSF denied that their forces were responsible, claiming it was a group of rogue elements. Citizens trying to leave the village were robbed 'of everything they had, including money, mobile phones, etc. Some of these citizens fled to Gedaref'. Those who remained in the village lacked the financial means to afford travel expenses and did not possess identification documents, such as passports and national ID numbers. Amer went to collect money transferred to him via the 'Bankak' app before the start of Ramadan. His relatives had sent him money to cover the costs for the month. Due to the lack of Internet in the village, he had to travel to the city of Rufaa on the eastern bank of the Blue Nile to collect the amount, which was around 300,000 SDG, after RSF deducting 30,000 SDG. After receiving the money, he was confronted by armed men when crossing

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<sup>19</sup> Yasin, M., 'Al-Madina Arabi in Gezira State Witnesses Clashes', Sudan War Monitor | Substack, 2 March 2024, available at: <https://sudanwarmonitor.com/p/c40>

the Rufaa bridge. They beat him, stripped him of the money and his mobile phone, and did the same to his companion. It has been challenging to get Amer and his small family out of the village due to the events he and his fellow villagers have faced.<sup>20</sup>

### **Arbitrary Arrest, Detention and Torture in Gezira State**

Incidents of enforced disappearance, abduction and repeated cases of arbitrary arrest and torture by RSF have continued and increased since their takeover of Gezira State in mid-December 2023. SHRM, along with its partners, has documented several instances of arbitrary arrest and exposure to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment committed by the RSF in various localities of Gezira State.

According to the testimonies of some survivors, the reasons for the arrests range from suspicion of having some connection with the SAF army or other regular forces, suspicion of joining the mobilised forces, refusal to comply with RSF demands, withholding information about the location of money or property or identifying affluent individuals in the area and their homes or businesses. Torture is often used to extract the desired information. Testimonies from some former detainees indicate that the RSF has converted a building at the Suwar Textile Factory into a detention and interrogation centre, where dozens of individuals are held under poor conditions in overcrowded rooms and subjected to daily torture. It appears that this detention centre at the factory holds detainees from the city of Al-Hasahisa and from villages outside the city.

Additionally, survivor testimonies suggest that the RSF has appointed 'legal advisors', most of whom seem to be lawyers, to whom detainees are presented after being interrogated by an investigator, who could either be an RSF officer or a police officer forced or choosing to cooperate with the RSF. After examining the detainee and reviewing the investigator's report, the legal advisor decides either to release the detainee or order their imprisonment. In cases of imprisonment, detainees are transferred to Soba Prison in Khartoum State. SHRM does not have sufficient information about the legal framework under which these advisors operate and issue their judgments, but they appear to be attempting to apply articles of the Sudanese Criminal Code.

It is essential to emphasise here that the presence of these legal advisors in detention centres does not legitimise these arrests; RSF are not legally authorised to arrest or detain individuals under the 2019 Constitutional Document or the relevant applicable laws. From the perspective of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, these arrests are considered arbitrary. Moreover, the accompanying torture constitutes crimes against humanity, as it is carried out systematically and on a wide scale.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Amer's sister, 1 May 2024.

## Violations by the RSF in al-Hasahisa

Al-Hasahisa is located in the Gezira State on the western bank of the Blue Nile, approximately 121 kilometres south of Khartoum and about 56 kilometres north of Wad Madani. It is the second-largest city in the Gezira region.

RSF entered the city of Wad Madani on 18 December, and by 19 December, they had taken control of the city. According to IOM, between 250,000 to 300,000 people fled Gezira State following RSF's takeover of Wad Madani.<sup>21</sup> On 20 December, RSF entered Al-Hasahisa.<sup>22</sup>

According to accounts from some displaced residents of the city, after RSF took control of Al-Hasahisa, they proceeded to forcibly seize all vehicles in the city under armed threat, collecting them from various homes and locations. One resident reported that RSF groups stormed their home and repeatedly threatened them so that they hand over a relative's vehicle that was parked there, but they did not have the key. Eventually, they brought a mechanic to start the car and took it.

Subsequently, they began raiding specific homes under the pretext of searching for 'the remnants' (Al-Fulul), but in reality, they were searching for money, gold and other valuables. They forced the residents or someone in the household (often young people) to reveal the locations of the money. These young individuals were commonly beaten or tortured until they provided the required information or until it was confirmed that no hidden valuables were present. During this time, criminal gangs looted traders' warehouses located west of the market, moving the contents to other locations. Later, it was reported that RSF had become aware of this and launched a campaign against these gangs to seize the stolen goods for themselves.

After a period following RSF's takeover of the city and the displacement of a significant portion of the population, the stock of valuable looted items began to dwindle. At this point, members of RSF started targeting passersby on the streets, at market entrances or near reopened shops, seizing whatever money they were carrying, no matter how little, and, of course, confiscating any phones they had with them. One witness even reported that members of RSF stopped an individual who was carrying goods from the market to his home. When they found no money on him, they ordered him to leave behind the items he was carrying.

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<sup>21</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan (OCHA), 'Sudan: Clashes in Wad Madani City Between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces', Urgent Update No: 04 - Until 20 December 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/mfCQN>

<sup>22</sup> Al Jazeera Net, 'Fall of "Wad Madani" Brings Gezira State into the Sudanese War Circle', 12 December 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2wvaf49z>

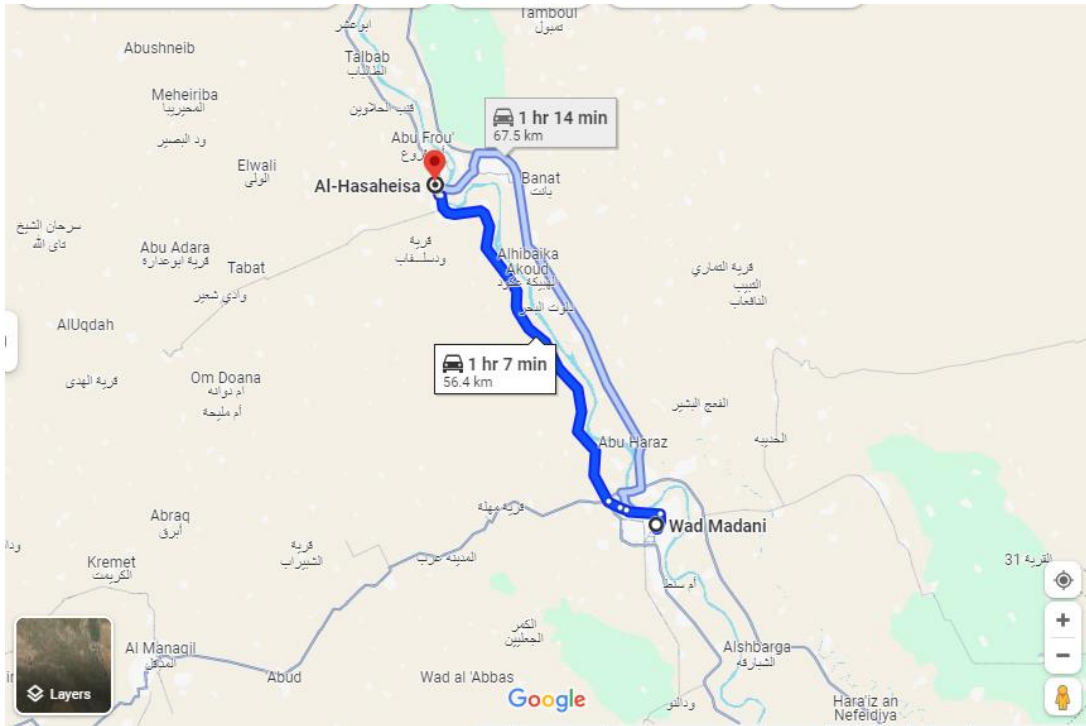
A report from the Resistance Committees of Al-Hasahisa dated 26 March 2024 confirmed that the situation in the city is characterised by ‘a lack of security and an increase in criminal cases, in addition to a shortage of cash and goods. The city’s residents have turned into an army of unemployed individuals. The population is facing difficult conditions marked by food and medicine shortages, fluctuating electricity and water supplies, and the disruption of communication networks, which are the only means for receiving financial aid through banking apps. The report also highlighted a case of mass rape that occurred on the evening of Thursday 7 March, just days before Ramadan, where a group of RSF assaulted three girls working at the hospital adjacent to the market under the threat of weapons’.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, RSF have arrested dozens of citizens in the city and detained them for varying periods. As mentioned above, some are released after a few days, while others are transferred to Soba Prison. SHRM has documented several cases, including that of a government employee in his 60s who was arrested in January after attempting to retrieve some important items from his office. He was detained for three days, during which he was subjected to beatings and continuous torture, resulting in a head injury, in an effort to force him to admit that he was working with military intelligence. SHRM has recently learned of the release of three citizens from Al-Hasahisa, who had been detained for more than three months and transferred to Soba Prison. All testimonies agree that every detainee was subjected to torture, ill treatment and detention in harsh and inhumane conditions.

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<sup>23</sup> Resistance Committees of Al-Hasahisa, ‘Extensive Report by Al-Hasahisa Resistance Committees Reveals Widespread Violations by the Rapid Support Militia’, Human Rights Violations in Sudan, Sudan Violations, 26 March 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/b75mvnsf>





SHRM met with one of the survivors of RSF's violations in Al-Hasahisa, Abu Ibrahim, a 42-year-old married man with four children. He worked as an administrator at a private school in the city of Al-Hasahisa and resided in the Central District.

### Testimony of Abu Ibrahim

'I was active in the Change and Services Committees in the city since 2019, following the December 2018 revolution. Al-Hasahisa was not affected by the war initially, except for the displacement of a large number of people from Khartoum to Al-Hasahisa, where reception centres accommodated around 4,000 displaced individuals after the war in Khartoum. However, the developments following the fall of Wad Madani had a significant impact on the city, as thousands of people fled to it from Wad Madani. On 20 December, RSF entered Al-Hasahisa. Since the entry of RSF, security in Al-Hasahisa has deteriorated. There has been an increase in criminal activities, including murder, looting, theft, threats, road blocking, rape and abduction. The market, warehouses and citizens' homes were looted'.

Abu Ibrahim added about the circumstances of his arrest:

'I was arrested by a Rapid Support Forces unit led by an officer on 23 February from our home at around 1:00 AM. I was blindfolded, beaten with a whip and subjected to verbal abuse. The accusation against me was that I was a friend of one of the army officers (SAF) in the neighbourhood and that I was cooperating with military intelligence – a claim made by someone I know. I was taken with two others to a detention centre, which was a residential house in the neighbourhood. We were beaten severely until 4:00 AM, after which we were blindfolded again and taken to another place, which I later

learned was an office belonging to the Swar Textile Factory, used by RSF as a detention centre. There, I found dozens of detainees, and we were placed in a “container,” a room in the factory with two rooms. One of these rooms, which was no larger than two square metres, was overcrowded with about 20 to 30 detainees. I was interrogated by a police officer cooperating with RSF, who fabricated a story that I was cooperating with military intelligence. One of the police officers, who recognised me, informed my family, who did not know where I was detained. He also helped me by tearing up the report and promised to secure my release as soon as possible. The next day, I was referred to a legal advisor affiliated with RSF in the same building, and under threat, I was forced to sign a declaration to halt cooperation with military intelligence and pledge to cooperate with RSF. I was released around 4:00 PM. After that, I decided to leave Al-Hasahisa, as it had become unsafe. I travelled from Al-Hasahisa to Atbara by bus, a gruelling journey during which we were repeatedly stopped and searched at Rapid Support Forces checkpoints up to the Al-Faw area and later by SAF checkpoints. The journey continued for days until we reached Atbara in the Nile River State. Afterwards, I entered Egypt illegally in March and applied for political asylum’.<sup>24</sup>



*Marks of torture on Abu Ibrahim's back ©Private*

### **Extrajudicial Killing and Mutilation of Corpses**

In June 2024, RSF killed at least 100 civilians from the village of Wad Al-Nura in the Gezira State in a brutal manner. This occurred following the assault by RSF on the town located in the locality of 24 Al-Qurashi on 5 June 2024. This incident escalated to a war crime. The Sovereign Council, representing the de facto government in Sudan, issued a statement accusing RSF of committing a horrific massacre against unarmed civilians in Wad Al-Nura.<sup>25</sup> RSF, in their statement,<sup>26</sup> claimed that the SAF had

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<sup>24</sup> Sudanese Human Rights Monitor’s interview with Abu Ibrahim, 14 February 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Anadolu Agency Websites, ‘Sudan Sovereignty Council Accuses “Rapid Support” of Committing “Massacre”’, Anadolu Ajansı, 6 June 2024, available at: [shorturl.at/Fjt2Q](https://shorturl.at/Fjt2Q)

<sup>26</sup> Al Bayan, ‘Fierce Battles in Central Sudan With Fatalities’, Al Bayan, 6 June 2024, available at: <https://www.albayan.ae/world/arab/2024-06-07-1.4885503>

mobilised large forces in the three largest camps west of Al-Mangil, in the village of Wad Al-Nura, with the intent to attack it in Jebel Awliya in the capital, Khartoum.<sup>27</sup>

On 7 June, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, issued a statement regarding the killings in Wad Al-Nura village in Sudan. He expressed his 'deep shock' at reports of brutal killings of civilians in Wad Al-Nura, Gezira State, which was attacked by RSF. The information gathered by his office indicates that RSF used weapons with widespread effects during the attack, including artillery shells. The High Commissioner further stated that these killings raise significant concerns 'about the adherence of the parties involved in the conflict to the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution under international humanitarian law'. He called on RSF and all relevant parties to conduct a swift, independent investigation in line with their obligations under international law. Those responsible for the unlawful killings must be held accountable.<sup>28</sup> SHRM also demands an investigation into the circumstances of the incident and accountability for those responsible for the unlawful killings in Wad Al-Nura village.

In the Gezira State, Hamdan Mohamed Ali Al-Badawi, a 36-year-old married man and father of six children who worked as a trader in the outskirts of Gezira, was killed in a brutal crime that was horrifically displayed on social media on Sunday 5 May. The crime was based on ethnic motives and allegations of his affiliation with RSF, which his family completely denied.<sup>29</sup>

Salahuddin Al-Tayeb Moussa, a 33-year-old married man with a one-year-old child, worked as a lawyer, political activist and leader of the Sudanese Congress Party. Salahuddin was arrested by a force affiliated with the military intelligence from his home, blindfolded, handcuffed and gagged with a cloth, then thrown into a pickup truck in front of his family in a humiliating manner, causing them extreme panic. He had been detained at Al-Azazi School since 17 April 2024. In early May, Salah's family learned that he had died under torture.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Sudan Tribune, 'Gruesome Massacre by Rapid Support Forces in Gezira State With at Least 100 Dead', Sudan Tribune, 5 June 2024.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Human Rights Commissioner Expresses Deep Shock at Attack on Wad Al-Noura Village in Sudan, Warns of Worsening Humanitarian Situation', United Nations Geneva, 7 June 2024, available at: <https://www.ungeneva.org/ar/news-media/news/2024/06/94221/mfwd-hqwq-alansan-yrb-n-alsdmt-almvgt-aza-alhjwm-ly-qryt-wd-ainwrt-fy>

<sup>29</sup> Sudanese Human Rights Monitor, 'Extrajudicial Killings and Mutilation of Bodies Are War Crimes', Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM), 14 May 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/qrAZ8>

<sup>30</sup> Radio Dabanga, 'Shocking Facts About the Killing of Lawyer Salah Al-Tayeb by a Sharp Instrument in the Head', 12 May 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/dikmF>

## Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Violence

Reports emerged about numerous cases of sexual violence in the city of Wad Madani following the entry of the RSF into the city. Over the subsequent months and weeks, the spread of these crimes extended to many areas entered by RSF in the state. Sudanese women bore the brunt of this tragedy.

It is important to note that the various cases confirmed by SHRM, verified by other organisations or reported by the medical sector and service providers represent only a small fraction of the reality. Reporting sexual violence has always been a challenging issue fraught with stigma and social embarrassment. In the case of Gezira, the rapid collapse of the health sector and various state institutions, including law enforcement agencies, posed another barrier to systematically recording information from police reports and hospital and health centre statistics. Additionally, the problems of network outages and the looting of citizens' mobile phones further complicated the process of information gathering. Equally important is the profound shock experienced by local communities due to the frequency and severity of the crimes committed against them. Some victims waited many days to receive medical assistance, and some did not receive it at all.

In line with other violations, it was clear that the senior leadership and field commanders of these forces did nothing to stop these crimes, nor did they announce any results of investigations into citizens' complaints despite some verbal statements. For example, in January 2024, RSF dispatched Major General Essam Saleh Fedail on a tour in Gezira to address what he referred to as 'delinquents'. In a video-recorded meeting with residents of Um Dugarsi village,<sup>31</sup> he and his accompanying field commanders denied that the perpetrators of the violations in Gezira were from RSF and stated that he would not leave the area until these violations were stopped. In reality, the violations have continued to this day, and no serious actions have been observed against the perpetrators, except for one or two cases related to looting in northern Gezira, which seem to be little more than public relations exercises.

The 'Together Against Rape and Sexual Violence' campaign documented 51 cases of rape, including four cases involving children, in Sudan. Of these, 27 cases occurred in Gezira between 29 February 2024 and 30 April 2024.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, from 15 April 2023 to 29 February 2024, the same campaign documented 326 cases of rape across Sudan, including 137 cases involving children and seven cases involving men across the country.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKruGJTP3w>.

<sup>32</sup> Together Against Rape and Sexual Violence, Platform X, 3 May 2024, available at: <https://twitter.com/protectsdnwomen/status/1786296953875153062/photo/3>

<sup>33</sup> Together Against Rape and Sexual Violence, 'Press Statement', available at: <https://shorturl.at/h8Vv5>

Strategic Initiative for Women of the Horn of Africa (SIHA) confirmed that it received reports of incidents of sexual violence on 20, 21, 22, 24, 26 and 27 December, affecting 29 women of varying ages in different neighbourhoods of Wad Madani, in Al-Hasahisa and on the highway connecting Khartoum and Wad Madani. One of the victims, who was three months pregnant, was killed and buried in front of her home, while her mother sustained severe injuries. Among the survivors were two young women, aged 19 and 24, who were raped, and whose father and 12-year-old brother were killed when they attempted to resist the assault on the young women.<sup>34</sup> Some of these crimes were compound, as they were preceded or followed by acts of murder and theft.

In another report, SIHA Network identified three patterns of sexual violence committed by RSF in the Gezira region. The first pattern is associated with shock and occurs in the hours or days from an invasion of a town or village to the establishment of control. The second pattern emerges after full control of the area is established, involving ongoing negotiations with local residents, often including abductions, forced marriages or exchanging girls for money paid by militia members. The third pattern is somewhat similar to the previous one but occurs after the militia has settled in the area. It targets specific women, such as street food and tea vendors and women in public spaces and is accompanied by less negotiation and coordination with local residents.<sup>35</sup>

During the same period (after RSF controlled Wad Madani in December 2023), SHRM was informed by a mother in Medani that she had been pressured and tempted to marry off her daughter to a member of RSF, which compelled her to leave the city and relocate to a safer area. This testimony aligns with other reports from various parts of the Gezira region.

Almost all institutions providing medical, psychological and social support to survivors of sexual violence were forced to leave Medani, and thus the entire state, following RSF's assault on the city. Reports from different areas indicated that most medical services had ceased due to a lack of supplies, power and water outages, and insufficient staff to operate these services. A representative of the Sudanese Family Planning Association, a leader in providing sexual and reproductive health services, testified before the Security Council on 18 June 2024 that the organisation lost one of its staff members and that its clinics were burned, looted and damaged. The association was forced to relocate its headquarters to areas outside the control of RSF.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> SAIHA Network, 'Gezira State Under the Control of the Rapid Support Forces, Report on the Situation Between December 10, 2023 – January 10, 2024', 13 February 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/EuFab>

<sup>35</sup> SAIHA Network, 'Gezira State: Where Atrocities Are Forgotten (Report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence)', 21 July 2024, pp. 14–16, available at: <https://shorturl.at/zQKGG>

<sup>36</sup> UNSC, 'UN Security Council Briefing on Sudan by Dr. Limiaa Ahmed', 18 June 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/49My6>

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The information gathered by SHRM and its partners indicates that since RSF took control of the Gezira State in mid-December 2023, they have committed a broad range of violations and serious crimes, many of which fall under international humanitarian law as war crimes. Additionally, these crimes can be considered crimes against humanity due to their systematic and widespread nature in conflict areas or in regions with reduced military activity. Notably, this includes unlawful killings, extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detention, torture, ill treatment, enforced disappearances and documented cases of rape and sexual violence.

SHRM asserts that the primary source of these violations and humanitarian suffering is the ongoing war, which must be immediately halted and resolved through a peaceful solution to the Sudanese crisis. Until this war is stopped, all parties of the conflict must strictly adhere to the principles of international humanitarian law in protecting civilians and civilian objects and comply with international human rights law when dealing with populations in the areas under their control.

## **Recommendations**

### **To the Leadership of the RSF**

- The RSF must immediately cease attacks on safe cities and villages in Gezira State, as well as the systematic targeting of civilians, civilian objects and private property, including all forms of looting and plundering.
- The RSF should fully control their troops in all areas of deployment, particularly in Gezira State, and investigate the numerous assaults on civilians. Measures should be taken to bring suspected perpetrators to justice through fair trials.
- Immediate investigations should be conducted into all allegations of unlawful killings and extrajudicial executions in the country, and the results of these investigations should be publicly disclosed.
- All officers and soldiers responsible for crimes under international law should be suspended and held accountable.
- Actions that exacerbate the already dire food situation, such as looting relief supplies, obstructing their delivery, controlling their routes, seizing crops or attacking relief workers, must cease. Some of these actions constitute clear violations of international humanitarian law and international criminal law.
- There should be full cooperation with all bodies investigating allegations of violations and breaches, notably the international fact-finding mission established by the United Nations Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court.

### **To the De Facto Government in Sudan**

- Allow the entry of humanitarian aid into all regions of Sudan, including Gezira State. Cease all actions that exacerbate the already dire food situation, such as looting relief supplies, obstructing their delivery or controlling their distribution routes. Some of these actions constitute clear violations of international humanitarian law.
- Fully cooperate with all bodies investigating allegations of violations and breaches, notably the fact-finding mission established by the United Nations Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court.

### **To the United Nations**

- We call on the Human Rights Council, the fact-finding mission and the Independent Expert on Human Rights in Sudan to give adequate attention to the recurring reports of the dire situation in Gezira State. Take necessary measures to ensure the protection of civilians, especially given the indications that war crimes and potential crimes against humanity are currently being committed.
- The Security Council, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General and international and regional mediators should exert sufficient pressure on both warring parties to compel them to engage in negotiations to achieve a ceasefire.

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