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## Sudan. Human Rights Watch, “Sexual violence, gang rape and forced marriages in Khartoum, war crimes”

Hundreds of girls, adolescents and adult women (aged 9 to 60) have been raped in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, during the year-long conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). RSF militiamen, who control the area, are responsible for most cases of sexual violence, including gang rape. Many women were abducted and forced into marriage, sexual and domestic slavery. Human Rights Watch (HRW) denounced this in a report based on interviews with victims and medical workers who provided assistance to the survivors of sexual violence. Healthcare workers themselves have been attacked and violently assaulted by both armies, while SAF government forces are preventing the delivery of humanitarian aid to a population of more than 24 million people who lack food, medical care, and basic necessities. Children make up more than half of the population. **“Conflict-related sexual violence is a war crime”**, HRW states in its report. The “willful obstruction or arbitrary restriction of humanitarian aid” is also a war crime, as are the “deliberate attacks on medical facilities, healthcare personnel and local responders.” All of these crimes are subject to prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC). To compile the 88-page report, the human rights organisation conducted 42 interviews with healthcare providers, social workers and lawyers between September 2023 and February 2024. About 20 reported providing direct medical care and psychosocial support to survivors: they said they had cared for a total of 262 survivors of sexual violence, aged between 9 and 60, from the start of the conflict in April 2023 to February 2024. At least four women died as a result of the physical injuries they suffered. All survivors showed symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress and depression, including suicidal thoughts, anxiety, fear and insomnia. Many of these women discovered they were pregnant: “If my family finds out about my condition, they will kill me,” one victim confided to the psychiatrist. **Many survivors said they were raped by multiple perpetrators**, including up to five RSF fighters. Sometimes in front of family members. RSF members abducted the women and confined them to their homes in Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman, where they were subjected to continuous abuse. Fewer cases were attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), but there were reports of rape of men and boys, including in prison. **The SAF have deliberately restricted humanitarian supplies**, including medical supplies, and access by aid workers, including by imposing a de facto blockade on medicines entering RSF-controlled areas of Khartoum since at least October 20. The capital is de facto controlled by the RSF and humanitarian organisations have moved their activities to Port Sudan. **Human Rights Watch calls on the African Union and the United Nations** to jointly “prepare options for a civilian protection mission for Sudan that will prevent sexual and gender-based violence, ensuring provision of comprehensive services to all survivors; and documentation of conflict-related sexual violence.” International donors are asked to “impose targeted sanctions” against those “targeting humanitarian and health workers and local responders.”

Patrizia Caiffa