

# The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM)



## The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM) Condemns the Attack on the ICRC Convoy in Khartoum

Khartoum, 11 December 2023

An armed attack on a convoy of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) took place in Khartoum, on December 10<sup>th</sup>. The incident coincided with the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document charted in the wake of a large-scale global war that inflicted enduring ramifications on humanity. The [ICRC](#) and the two warring parties i.e. the [Sudanese Armed Forces \(SAF\)](#) and the [Rapid Support Forces \(RSF\)](#), have issued statements confirming the incident. The ICRC said that the incident, which took place in Al-Shajara neighborhood “claimed lives of two people and injured seven more, including three ICRC staff members”. The ICRC added that the humanitarian convoy, consisting of “three ICRC vehicles and three buses, all clearly marked with the Red Cross emblem” was due to “evacuate over a hundred vulnerable civilians from Khartoum to Wad Madani when it came under attack upon entering the evacuation area”. The statements of the SAF and the RSF acknowledged that the operation was coordinated between the three parties, and that the two parties of the conflict provided the necessary security guarantees, including approval of the convoy’s routes.

While SAF, RSF, and ICRC confirmed prior coordination for the purpose of evacuating civilians from the Al-Shajara area, the SAF statement claimed that the convoy was exposed to fire because it was accompanied by an armed RSF vehicle, and it approached the defense locations of the SAF. “[A]s a result, the convoy was exposed to gunfire and a number of injuries occurred among the organization’s representatives” the statement said.

Despite the pledge of both parties of the conflict to continue their cooperation with humanitarian agencies, whereas the SAF affirmed their “unequivocal commitment to cooperate with all international organizations working in the humanitarian field”, and the RSF stressed their “continuous and strict commitment to the rules of international humanitarian law”, both parties did make any commitments to investigate this incident, or hold accountable the perpetrators of this crime. In fact, it amounts to a war crime that must not be tolerated as it violates the common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, and Article 18 (2) of Additional Protocol II. Both articles prohibit attacking civilians in situations where the ICRC offers its services as an impartial humanitarian body. Both parties have an obligation under international humanitarian law to “protect civilians and keep them safe from harm or injury” in situations of armed conflict.

Humanitarian work in general, and the work of the ICRC in particular, is of crucial importance in protecting civilians, notwithstanding the complexity of the current situation. The warring parties themselves benefit from such interventions through, for example, providing medical treatment to their injured and facilitating the release of war prisoners, as happened in previous cases.

Numerous reports have documented attacks on civilians since April 15, 2023, including air strikes on residential neighborhoods and civilian facilities, indiscriminate artillery and missile shelling, detention and torture, rape of individuals of both sexes, and the exposure of women to crimes of sexual violence, kidnapping, forced disappearance, and enslavement. In addition to the attacks on civilian facilities, such as hospitals, electricity and water supply facilities, as well as interference in relief routes, control of food supply routes, and other crimes and patterns of behavior that have made the lives of civilians in Khartoum and many parts of Darfur an unbearable suffering. Hence, the Sudanese Human Rights Monitor calls on both sides of the conflict to strictly adhere to the rules of international humanitarian law, refrain from attacking civilians, and hold their members involved in these crimes accountable to prevent recurrence.

## **Background**

This attack occurred in context of a widespread campaign on social media platforms, in which some officials and influencers have participated. This campaign called into question many humanitarian efforts aimed at helping civilians, whether carried out by grassroots volunteers or international bodies. The simplistic, but relentlessly reiterated false pretext, was that medics, volunteers, and relief agencies gave sided one side of the war. This campaign was also accompanied by a drive against independent journalism, with the clear aim of preventing independent reporting and truth-seeking efforts. This frenzied climate resulted in recurrent attacks, including, for example, the [killing of a female journalist](#) while performing her duty in Omdurman, the [sexual assault of a female relief volunteer in Khartoum Bahri](#), an attack on an [ICRC convoy](#) working to evacuate some of the injured in Khartoum Bahri, and the arrest of many people in various cities as they worked to provide relief to civilians, in addition to [bombing a volunteer center](#) that provides medical treatment and food services to large numbers of the residents of Old Omdurman.

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