



## **The Rapid Support Forces' revenge offensive kills dozens and displaces tens of thousands in eastern Gezira**

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The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM) condemns, in the strongest terms, the tragic series of events affecting approximately 30 villages and towns across the Eastern Gezira region and the Butana Plain. Since 21 October 2024, the area has seen a critical escalation in assaults on civilians, both within their communities and along displacement routes. These attacks have resulted in dozens of fatalities and injuries, displacing an estimated 46,700 individuals, [according](#) to the United Nations estimates. The majority of those displaced are from the town of Tamboul and surrounding villages, including substantial numbers of children, elderly people, and the sick. Relief organizations have recorded the arrival of 39,600 displaced people in the cities of Kassala and Gadaref, while an indeterminate number remain on the roads, seeking safe refuge.

These villages had previously hosted displaced individuals from Khartoum, and many among the current displaced have been forced to move repeatedly between villages since the onset of the ongoing Rapid Support Forces campaigns. The Sudanese Human Rights Monitor (SHRM) previously documented similar attacks in the southern, western, and northern parts of Gezira in a [comprehensive report](#) issued in July of this year.

SHRM holds the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), including its senior and field leadership—foremost among them Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, his brother Abdul Rahim Dagalo, and the head of operations, Major General Othman A'maliyat—directly responsible for these serious violations, which represent blatant breaches of all national laws and international standards. Additionally, SHRM holds the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) leadership accountable for employing military

tactics that endanger civilian lives and dignity, exposing them to immediate risks without implementing any protective or security measures.

This was evident when SAF announced the defection of Abu Aqla Keikel, former RSF commander in Gezira, without taking precautions to protect residents of the targeted area from foreseeable retaliatory attacks, thereby constituting intelligence and operational failure. This troubling failure and negligence have recurred in multiple areas across Gezira state, with civilians bearing the full cost.

Reports obtained by SHRM confirm that RSF have conducted systematic retaliatory attacks across the northern and eastern regions of Gezira state. For instance, RSF forces targeted civilians in the villages of Al-Sireiha and Azraq in the north and northwest of Gezira, as well as the town of Tamboul and its surrounding villages in the east. These attacks have resulted in the deaths of over 125 people and injuries to dozens more. Additionally, the widespread assaults on villages in eastern Gezira have led to the deaths of dozens and the displacement of more than 46,000 people within just five days.

RSF forces deliberately target children, women, and the elderly, committing acts that clearly violate the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which require all conflicting parties to respect and protect civilian dignity.

Reports from the region reveal, alongside extrajudicial killings, cases of torture, humiliation, as well as incidents of rape and sexual harassment of women committed by these forces. RSF has also forcibly displaced citizens, looted markets and homes, and confiscated personal and family property, including money and vehicles. Videos filmed and circulated by RSF soldiers themselves confirm numerous cases of violence, torture, and abuse against unarmed civilians. Accounts from individuals and families who have fled the region describe assaults encountered on escape routes. One family reported that RSF soldiers commandeered their vehicle, forcibly removing family members, including a sick woman they were attempting to transport to a location for continued medical treatment. Tragically, this woman passed away shortly after the attack, having been abandoned on the roadside.

These crimes reflect a recurring pattern of abuse that the RSF Commander, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, has repeatedly pledged to end, along with commitments to safeguard civilians from such violations. The latest of these promises came in August, when he issued yet another directive to establish a special force tasked with civilian protection. Yet, in practice, these repeated assurances have amounted to nothing more than hollow promises, failing to materialize. This reality underscores both the unchecked conduct of these forces and the weak oversight exerted by their leadership.

In the face of these worsening conditions, the SAF leadership has resorted to recurring tactics that exacerbate civilian risks instead of ensuring their protection. SAF has entered certain areas with displays of celebratory force, only to subsequently withdraw, leaving civilians—who had initially hoped for military protection—exposed to direct and disproportionate confrontations with the RFS.

A striking example of these tactics is the defection of Abu Aqla Mohamed Ahmed Keikel, the RSF commander in Gezira and a native of Eastern Gezira, to SAF on 20 October 2024. Through this move, SAF leadership sought to project a false sense of victory without a concrete plan to shield civilians from expected retaliatory actions, which led to tribal-based targeting and forced displacement. As with numerous previous incidents, this campaign of retribution was accompanied by hate speech and incitement along tribal lines.

Given the ongoing atrocities against civilians in every area entered by the RSF, the SHRM calls on the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to broaden investigations to encompass RSF crimes in Gezira, Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan, as well as crimes committed by SAF, militias under its command, and its security and intelligence agencies. The events unfolding on the ground amount to war crimes and may constitute crimes against humanity, owing to their widespread and systematic nature, necessitating an expansive international investigation, accountability for perpetrators, and a clear stance against impunity.

We also urge the Fact-Finding Committee established by the Human Rights Council in June of last year to pursue its work with the utmost thoroughness and call on the United Nations to provide

it with the financial and technical support required, commensurate with the gravity of the ongoing crimes.

## **Recommendations**

### **To the Leadership of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)**

- The RSF must immediately cease all attacks on peaceful towns and villages in Eastern Gezira State, as well as the systematic targeting of civilians, civilian infrastructure, and private property. All forms of looting, which have become a defining characteristic of their operations, must end without delay.
- All forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment inflicted on detainees in RSF custody must be halted immediately.
- Immediate investigations must be conducted into all allegations of unlawful killings, extrajudicial executions, rape, torture, and unlawful detention throughout the country, with the findings made public and accountability ensured for those responsible, regardless of their position.
- The RSF must withdraw promptly from all towns and villages it has invaded and redeploy its forces to the outskirts of major cities, away from residential neighborhoods and civilian sites.

### **To the Leadership of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)**

- Reorganize recruitment practices in alignment with international law and the Armed Forces Act, ensuring recruits serve under the unified command of the army rather than as fragmented militias, which only increase civilian targeting. This would prevent the misuse of legitimate self-defense rights as a means of perpetrating killings and depopulating villages. Distinctive uniforms should be mandated for combatants to facilitate monitoring of engagement rules during battles and to uphold the principle of distinguishing between civilians and military personnel.
- Immediately cease all indiscriminate aerial bombardments, which have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians across Sudan, including in Gezira State.

- End unlawful arrests and trials in eastern and northern cities targeting politicians, youth activists, and vulnerable citizens. All arrests and investigations must adhere to the law, including respecting conditions for detention and the accused's right to legal assistance. Additionally, harassment of humanitarian workers not only infringes on their rights but also jeopardizes the rights of war victims to receive humanitarian aid.

#### **To the United Nations and International and National Organizations**

- We urge humanitarian organizations and relevant UN agencies to provide immediate aid to all affected populations, with particular emphasis on the injured and wounded across Gezira state, and especially in its eastern regions.
- Apply international pressure on the RSF to halt their crimes against civilians and to withdraw promptly from populated areas. Explore innovative technological methods for protecting civilians, including inviting satellite internet providers to extend services to areas that have been without communication networks for months.
- We call upon the United Nations to supply the Fact-Finding Committee, established by the Human Rights Council, with the necessary financial and technical support commensurate with the scale of ongoing crimes.

#### **To the Fact-Finding Mission and the Independent Expert on Human Rights in Sudan:**

- Continue the mission's work with the utmost comprehensiveness and expedite investigations into crimes committed in Eastern Gezira and other regions. Efforts should focus on identifying those responsible for violations to ensure accountability and justice.

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