Call for inputs on women, girls and enforced disappearances (concept note for CED General Comment n°2)

Introduction

The Committee for Justice (CFJ), a Geneva-based human rights organization, is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee on Enforced Disappearances' (CED) call for input on its forthcoming General Comment on women, girls, and enforced disappearances. CFJ works across North Africa and the Sahel to document and monitor enforced disappearances, provide legal and advocacy support to victims and their families, and push for structural reforms to combat impunity. Drawing on its monitoring, documentation, legal interventions, and ongoing engagement with UN mechanisms, including submissions to special procedures, treaty bodies, and the Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan, this submission highlights the gendered dimensions of enforced disappearances in Burkina Faso, Egypt, and Sudan.

In these three contexts, enforced disappearance functions not only as a violation of liberty and security but also as a driver of broader social and economic breakdown. Women and girls are affected both as direct victims subjected to arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, and physical or psychological abuse and as indirect victims, bearing the disproportionate burden of navigating opaque and often hostile systems to search for their disappeared loved ones. Wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of the disappeared face secondary victimization, including intimidation, reprisals, economic marginalization, and social stigma.

In Burkina Faso, prolonged armed conflict and counter-terrorism operations have led to a disturbing pattern of enforced disappearances, with women from ethnic minorities and internally displaced communities facing heightened risks. In Egypt, enforced disappearance has become institutionalized, targeting women not only for their activism but also for their familial ties to perceived dissidents. In Sudan, particularly in Rapid Support Forces (RSF)-controlled areas, enforced disappearance is used as a strategic tool of domination amid ongoing conflict, with women human rights defenders and family members of victims facing threats and reprisals for their advocacy efforts.

This submission draws on CFJ's direct documentation of individual cases, profiles published in the *Justice Watch Archive*, and field reports from affected regions. It seeks to inform the CED's General Comment by highlighting intersectional vulnerabilities, gender-specific harms, and the need for States to adopt comprehensive, gender-responsive approaches to prevention, protection, investigation, and reparation.

The Gambia

1. Gender-Specific Forms and Consequences of Enforced Disappearances

In Burkina Faso, the context of prolonged armed conflict and state counter-terrorism operations has led to a disturbing pattern of enforced disappearances. While men remain the most frequent direct victims, women and girls are disproportionately affected by the consequences.

Women have also been subjected to enforced disappearance, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas where Fulani communities have been stigmatized and targeted under suspicion of collaboration with armed groups. The UN Human Rights Office has reported cases of Fulani women forcibly disappeared during military operations without charges or judicial oversight.

Family members, especially women - suffer from secondary victimization, including intimidation, social exclusion, economic marginalization, and gender-based violence. Widows of the disappeared often face legal uncertainty in claiming inheritance or accessing public benefits, in the absence of official recognition of their spouse's disappearance**.**

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2. Legal Gaps and Challenges in Ensuring Protection of Women and Girls

Burkina Faso ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance[1] in 2009. However, enforced disappearance has not yet been criminalized as a standalone offense under national criminal law.

While Law No. 039-2017/AN[2] on the protection of human rights defenders includes provisions criminalizing enforced disappearance in that context, it falls short of providing comprehensive protection to the wider population-particularly women and girls.

Furthermore, the lack of gender-sensitive legal procedures, such as the presence of female investigators or tailored victim support services, deters women from reporting cases or participating in legal proceedings. Traditional norms often further discourage women from engaging with state authorities, particularly where disappearances are linked to accusations of terrorism or insurgency.

3. Intersectional Vulnerabilities of Women and Girls

Women from ethnic minorities, internally displaced women, and girls in conflict zones are at heightened risk of enforced disappearance and related violations.
Fulani women, in particular, have been subjected to collective punishment by security forces, especially in the Sahel, Nord, and Est regions. Accused of being family members or supporters of insurgents, these women have faced arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, and physical and psychological abuse. These patterns have been well documented in civil society reports and highlighted in the CED's observations on Burkina Faso.
Internally displaced women face additional risks of disappearance, sexual exploitation, and trafficking in camps. The IOM Emergency Tracking Tool[3] regularly highlights the growing number of displaced girls and women living without documentation, making them vulnerable to abuses by both state and non-state actors.

4. Access to Truth, Justice, Reparations, and Guarantees of Non-Repetition

Burkina Faso lacks a national register of disappeared persons, and victims' families, particularly women, are denied access to justice due to fear of reprisals, lack of legal aid, and prolonged judicial inaction.
The Burkina Faso Constitution (1991, amended 2002)[4] provides guarantees of personal liberty, but in practice, these protections are not enforced in cases involving state-led counterterrorism.
There is no established reparation program to compensate the harms suffered by women and girls resulting from enforced disappearances. Nor are there psychosocial or economic support structures in place to help them recover from trauma or reintegrate into society. Victims' families also lack access to truth-telling mechanisms, memorialization, or state acknowledgment.

Finally, guarantees of non-repetition are weak. Security forces continue to operate with impunity, and there is no civilian oversight mechanism to investigate or prevent enforced disappearances, particularly those with a gendered impact

Recommendations

To the State of Burkina Faso:

a. Criminalize enforced disappearance as a distinct crime in the Penal Code, with provisions acknowledging gender-specific aggravating circumstances.
b. Integrate gender-sensitive investigation procedures, including training for police and prosecutors, and protections for female witnesses and survivors.
c. Establish a national registry of disappeared persons, with clear procedures for search and notification, accessible to the families—especially women.
d. Create reparations programs that address the unique harms suffered by women and girls, including financial support, legal recognition, and community reintegration.
e. Enforce Law No. 039-2017/AN[5] in a broader context, ensuring protections are extended beyond human rights defenders to all at-risk populations.
f. Implement civilian oversight mechanisms to monitor state compliance and prevent the recurrence of enforced disappearances.

To the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED):

a. Include in General Comment No. 2 a section explicitly addressing State obligations concerning women and girls affected by enforced disappearance.
b. Emphasize intersectional risks, including ethnicity, displacement, and rural isolation, as key factors shaping women's vulnerability.
c. Recommend that States ensure participation of women at all stages of the search, investigation, truth, and reparation processes.
d. Develop indicators and guidance on how States can operationalize gender-responsive approaches to prevention, response, and redress.

Conclusion

The enforced disappearance of women and girls in Burkina Faso—whether as direct victims or through the broader harms inflicted on female relatives of the disappeared—remains a largely invisible and unaddressed crisis. Despite Burkina Faso's ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, systemic gaps in national legislation, inadequate protections for survivors, and a lack of gender-sensitive policies continue to hinder justice and perpetuate impunity.

A meaningful response must go beyond acknowledgment. It requires the urgent adoption of legal reforms, the criminalization of enforced disappearance as an autonomous offense, and the institutionalization of gender-responsive investigation, protection, and reparation mechanisms. Women and girls must be seen not only as victims, but as active rights-holders entitled to truth, justice, and redress.

The development of General Comment No. 2 presents a timely and critical opportunity for the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to set clear, binding interpretive standards that reflect the lived experiences of women and girls in conflict-affected and repressive environments such as Burkina Faso. By embedding gender and intersectionality at the core of its guidance, the Committee can help shape State practice and accountability frameworks that are both inclusive and effective.

I. Patterns and Trends of Enforced Disappearance Affecting Women and Girls

A. Egypt

In Egypt, enforced disappearance has evolved into a systematic policy to suppress dissent and instill fear across society. Between January and June 2025 alone, we monitored 18 new cases of enforced disappearance, three of which involved women: Shaimaa Taha Abdelhamid, Salma Abdelmageed Abdullah, and Marwa Sami Abou Zeid[2]. These women were arrested from their homes in the city of Mansoura on November 3, 2024. Their only known "offense" was expressing solidarity with their detained fathers, both of whom were already imprisoned under politically motivated cases. Despite having been previously detained and later released, Shaimaa and Salma were again subjected to enforced disappearance, this time for over 100 days, with no access to lawyers or communication with their families.

Their case is emblematic of a growing trend in Egypt: women are not only targeted for their political engagement but also for their familial connections. The use of enforced disappearance as a retaliatory tool against the relatives of detainees violates international norms and further entrenches patterns of gendered oppression. Another illustrative case is that of Marwa Abou Zeid, who was arrested at Cairo International Airport in early 2025 while preparing to travel to Saudi Arabia for Umrah[3]. Marwa's only association with any political activity is that she is the wife of Abdelrahman Dabi, a detained activist who has been imprisoned since April 2014 and sentenced to life imprisonment in a protest-related case. Marwa disappeared for two days before reappearing at the SSSP, which ordered her pretrial detention without offering legal justification or due process.

Beyond these specific incidents, enforced disappearance in Egypt increasingly targets broader civil society, including dismissed public sector workers, student activists, lawyers, journalists, human rights defenders, and any ordinary citizens who criticize the government or share their opinions on social media platforms. In 2023, CFJ documented the disappearance of five individuals who had participated in a political conference, among them a woman, after being dismissed from public service under Law 73 of 2021[4]. Human rights lawyer Fatima al-Zahraa Gharib also experienced enforced disappearance in late 2023, before being brought before prosecutors without formal charges[5]. CFJ's Justice Watch Archive documented that from mid-2023 to early 2025, 164 individual cases of enforced disappearance were documented, of which at least two involved women[6]. Yet, this number underrepresents the full scope, as many families are reluctant to report disappearances due to fear of retaliation.

The Egyptian authorities continue to employ this practice with full impunity, in violation of multiple obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. This impunity extends to cases where victims had already been released and then forcibly disappeared again, which is a tactic used to punish families for advocacy, communication with regional and international human rights mechanisms. Enforced disappearance has thus become normalized in Egypt as an everyday reality used to dismantle social cohesion, instill fear, and punish both political expression and family affiliation.

In several recent communications by UN Special Procedures to the Egyptian Government, they noted that they are seriously troubled by the information received that the human rights defenders have reportedly been subjected to enforced disappearance, mistreated and/or tortured while in custody and denied appropriate

access to the necessary medical care that they have applied for, which may amount to a violation of the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of enforced disappearance and against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment[7]. They further noted that they express grave concern at the multiple allegations of enforced disappearance in Egypt recently, and the failure and/or refusal of the authorities to inform the individuals' relatives of their fate and whereabouts[8].

B. Sudan

In Sudan, we documented the growing use of enforced disappearance by the RSF, particularly in territories under its control since the outbreak of the conflict in April 2023. While both parties to the conflict have committed grave human rights abuses, we documented a systematic pattern in RSF controlled areas in which they systematically used enforced disappearance as a tool of repression and retaliation against civilians who are accused of helping the Sudanese Army Forces.

We documented the enforced disappearance of Sudanese journalist Abd El-Galil Mohamed Abd El-Galil under circumstances amounting to enforced disappearance, following his abduction from his home in the city of Kassla early on Sunday, May 25, 2025, by an unidentified armed group, without notifying his family or lawyer of the reasons for his arrest or the nature of any charges brought against him[9]. The journalist's family reported that an unknown security force raided their home unexpectedly and took Abd El-Galil away without allowing him to take his phone or personal medication, and his hands were tied before being taken to an unknown location. The family confirmed that contact with him has been cut off since then, and all attempts to inquire about his whereabouts through local and security authorities have failed. Some sources indicated that the incident may be linked to recent investigative reports published by Abd El-Galil exposing alleged corruption in the Hajj and Umrah file in Kassla state, which reportedly angered several local officials, including the deputy governor.

The pattern of disappearance in Sudan also disproportionately affects women human rights defenders (WHRDs), particularly those advocating for displaced populations, documenting RSF abuses, or leading local relief networks. In one documented case, a young group of WHRDs in Kordofan providing medical support and sexual health supplies was accused of spying and foreign funding, and several women were arrested and threatened with rape, defamation. In another case we documented, a digital platform founder who collected names of the disappeared was subjected to cyberbullying and death threats from RSF-affiliated personnel. Online targeting, surveillance, and intimidation of WHRDs have become commonplace, especially against those operating in conservative or tribal regions.

II. Impact on Women and Girls in Egypt and Sudan

A. Egypt

In Egypt, the consequences of enforced disappearance extend far beyond the disappeared individual. When men forcibly disappeared, it is most often their wives, mothers, daughters, or sisters who carry the burden of searching for them. These women become de facto investigators, legal advocates, emotional pillars, and breadwinners. The psychological, social, and economic impact of this burden is devastating. Families live in a state of suspended grief, with no information about whether their loved ones are alive or dead. This condition of chronic uncertainty, referred to by many families as "the torture of waiting," causes extreme

emotional distress, sleep disorders, physical exhaustion, and long-term trauma[10]. The uncertainty is compounded by the total absence of state cooperation and the constant threat of retaliation. In seeking information about their disappeared relatives, women are confronted with a state apparatus that operates with legal opacity and institutional intimidation, systematically obstructing access to truth and remedies and deterring lawful inquiry. They travel from police stations to prisons, from prosecution offices to morgues, frequently being told to "come back and ask again tomorrow" or denied entry entirely. This behavior is well documented as well in cases of prisoners on politically motived cases or prisoners of conscience[11]. These visits often require inter-governorate travel, which is financially draining and physically demanding, especially for older mothers or women caring for children. In many cases, we documented that women were forced to quit their jobs or borrow money to fund these efforts, often sacrificing their well-being and safety in the process. They are met not only with silence but with harassment. Some have been threatened with arrest simply for asking too many questions about the whereabouts of the disappeared family members or visiting too frequently.

A particularly disturbing pattern we documented involves the exploitation of desperate families by security personnel affiliated with the National Security Agency. In several instances, they offered to reveal the location of a disappeared relative in exchange for money[12]. Families, driven by despair, paid these bribes, only to receive false information or be met with silence afterward. One mother paid repeatedly to an intermediary claiming to be in contact with National Security officers, only to discover later that her son had been transferred to a different facility without her knowledge. These forms of extortion deepen the families' suffering and further entrench corruption within the system.

The social stigma associated with having a disappearing relative adds another layer of suffering. In conservative or rural areas, women may be blamed for their sons' or husbands' arrests or disappearances, accused of being "troublemakers" or politically affiliated themselves. Some women were subjected to stereotyping and marginalization, leading to their isolation from their communities. Moreover, their daughters denied marriage proposals, and their own reputations were permanently damaged among neighbors and relatives. Furthermore, when they seek help by speaking publicly or engaging with civil society organizations, they carry the risk of further reprisals, including surveillance, defamation, and even enforced disappearance or arrest.

Women whose husbands have been disappeared are forced into roles they may not have been prepared for. Some must become sole providers, taking on multiple jobs to feed their children while also pursuing legal remedies or human rights campaigns. Others lose access to property or inheritance rights because they cannot produce a death certificate or legal confirmation of their husband's fate. This legal issues has particularly severe consequences for women in rural communities, who often lack the legal literacy or institutional access to defend their rights. The state provides no support or recognition of their suffering, reinforcing their marginalization. Despite the hostile environment, many of these women have become powerful advocates. They document violations, contact civil society and human rights organizations, submit complaints to international bodies, and speak to media outlets. Yet this activism comes at a high cost. Families who speak out often face retaliation. Some are placed on travel ban lists, others are harassed at home or work. In some cases, entire families have disappeared. In December 2023, we documented the disappearance of five individuals from a single family, all of whom had attended a political conference, as part of a broader pattern of collective punishment.

B. Sudan

In Sudan, enforced disappearance has become a widespread practice employed by the Rapid Support Forces in areas under their control since April 2023. Women and girls have been directly affected, but they also carry the emotional and material burden of searching for their missing male relatives. The absence of functioning institutions and the collapse of legal structures have made the search for the disappeared nearly impossible. In RSF-controlled areas, the risks faced by women who speak out or ask questions are particularly high. They may be met with threats, surveillance, or online targeting. We documented cases and submitted them to the Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan, where women were harassed or threatened for publishing information about their missing relatives or for leading local advocacy efforts. The forced disappearance of male relatives has displaced thousands of families and created a generation of women-headed households living in precarious and unsafe conditions. Mothers, wives, and daughters now make efforts to find the disappeared, document cases, and seek justice. These efforts, however, often result in reprisals. In one case we documented, a woman running an online platform to collect names of the disappeared was cyberbullied and threatened with rape by individuals affiliated with the RSF. Her posts were reported and removed, and she was forced to cease her work for fear of physical retaliation.

The economic consequences are also severe. Many of these women were not primary breadwinners before the conflict. With the disappearance of husbands or fathers, women must now provide for their families in an environment where jobs are scarce, inflation is rampant, and humanitarian aid is limited. Several women interviewed by CFJ reported selling their possessions, moving in with extended family, or risking dangerous border crossings to seek asylum in neighboring countries such as Egypt, Chad, and South Sudan. Displacement has only deepened their vulnerability. In refugee camps or temporary shelters, they often lack privacy, protection, and access to legal or psychosocial services[13].

In addition to economic and emotional strain, the disappearance of male relatives has legal implications. In many parts of Sudan, women cannot make binding decisions about family property, child custody, or even school registration for their children without the consent or signature of the male head of household. The disappearance of a husband or father thus renders the family legally and administratively paralyzed. Attempts to access assistance or public services are routinely blocked due to the lack of legal documentation proving the family member's fate. With no centralized registry of disappeared persons and no functioning government to petition, families are trapped in a cycle of administrative invisibility. Furthermore, the social stigma surrounding disappearance also plays a powerful role. In Sudanese tribal and rural communities, the loss of a male family member can bring shame or suspicion upon the women left behind. Some are accused of being associated with rebel groups or foreign entities. Others are pressured to remarry quickly, even without official confirmation of their husband's fate. The loss of a male protector places women at the mercy of predatory local actors, especially in RSF-controlled areas, where informal militias, tribal authorities, or even neighbors may exploit or harass them with impunity.

Cases such as that of Rawan Yousif Nour Hamed, the university student who was disappeared and interrogated for her tribal identity and Facebook post, demonstrate how disappearances in Sudan are not just political but also social tools of repression[14]. Women like Rawan are then held for days or weeks in unknown locations, without legal charges or access to lawyers. Their families, fearing retaliation, often avoid publicizing the case or filing formal complaints, resulting in even greater invisibility.

In both Egypt and Sudan, enforced disappearance places women in impossible situations. They must fight for justice without protection, speak for the voiceless while fearing for their own safety, and carry families forward while suffering deeply personal loss. These women are not just secondary victims; they are central targets of a system that seeks to control, silence, and dismantle opposition. Their suffering demands international recognition, institutional support, and reparative justice tailored to their specific needs and realities.

III. Barriers to Justice and Accountability

A. Egypt

In Egypt, accountability for enforced disappearance remains almost entirely out of reach for victims and their families. The judiciary is not independent, and the agencies responsible for disappearances -particularly the NSA and the SSSP-operate without effective oversight or transparency. Victims and their families face immense legal and procedural obstacles when seeking information, lodging complaints, or challenging unlawful detentions. Most complaints submitted to the public prosecution are either ignored or formally dismissed without investigation. In many cases, when lawyers submit complaints to the prosecution or send a telegraph complaint to the attorney general regarding the disappearance of a client, they are never given a registration number or written confirmation that a complaint was filed, making it impossible to follow up or appeal. Even when they approve of registering the complaint, it remains unanswered. In most cases that Amnesty International has documented about ED, NSA officers accompanied by members of the security forces armed with automatic weapons, detained people after raiding their homes during the hours of darkness, demanding entry or forcing their way into homes[15]. In no case did the NSA officials produce judicial arrest or search warrants, nor did they tell detainees' families why they were taking their relatives or where to. They searched detainees' homes, seizing computers, books and other personal possessions, and examined their mobile phones to find out who they had been in contact with, what messages they had sent and received and what use they had made of social media. They handcuffed and blindfolded those they took away and, in some cases, threatened to beat or arrest family members who protested or demanded to know why they were taking their relatives away and where to. In other cases, NSA officers warned families against reporting their relative's detention to the Public Prosecution or seeking to find out where their relative was detained[16].

The Special Terrorism Circuits in Egypt frequently rely on classified security reports to justify extended pretrial detention or indefinite disappearance. These reports are rarely disclosed to the defense and cannot be independently verified. In cases documented by CFJ, women who forcibly disappeared later appeared before a terrorism circuit judge without any explanation for the gap in custody or the conditions of their detention. The court proceedings fail to address the period of disappearance, and the victims are often charged with vague or fabricated offenses. For example, in the case of Shaimaa Taha Abdelhamid and Salma Abdelmageed Abdullah, both disappeared for more than 100 days before being referred to the prosecution, yet the legality of their arrest and the conditions of their incommunicado detention were never addressed in court[17].

Access to legal counsel is routinely denied or severely restricted. Lawyers representing victims of enforced disappearance are often prevented from attending interrogations or denied access to case files. In some cases, lawyers themselves become targets[18]. Several human rights lawyers who have spoken publicly about enforced disappearance have been arrested, disbarred, or subjected to travel bans. The case of Fatima al-

Zahraa Gharib, a lawyer who disappeared and then brought before the SSSP, demonstrates how the legal profession is directly targeted when it challenges state impunity[19].

Efforts to pursue international accountability are also hindered by the Egyptian government's rejection of cooperation with UN mechanisms. Although Egypt has recently engaged in formal treaty reporting, it has not signed or ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Furthermore, the government routinely fails to respond to communications from UN Special Procedures, including the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. This obstructionist approach reinforces domestic impunity and leaves families with no meaningful path to justice. Attempts by civil society to fill the accountability gap face enormous pressure. Grassroots organizations documenting enforced disappearance are subjected to raids, asset freezes, and criminal prosecution under anti-terrorism laws. Even human rights defenders affiliated with diaspora-based organizations face indirect reprisals, as their family members inside the country are routinely subjected to intimidation, harassment, or arrest in retaliation for their work. Public advocacy campaigns are censored, and families who speak out face harassment and retaliation. The combination of state repression, legal barriers, and institutional silence creates a landscape where justice is not only denied but criminalized. The ongoing criminalization of victims, lawyers, and their advocates reflects a state policy of erasure—not only of the disappeared but of the very concept of legal accountability.

B. Sudan

In Sudan, the pursuit of justice and accountability for enforced disappearances is virtually impossible in RSF-controlled territories, where the state has either collapsed or ceded power to armed actors. The RSF operates with total impunity, controlling local checkpoints, detention facilities, and in some cases, judicial buildings. Victims' families are unable to report disappearances through any official channel, and in many regions, even informal mechanisms have broken down. There is no functioning national registry of missing persons, and many relatives fear that searching for information could result in their own disappearance or death.

CFJ has documented cases where individuals attempting to file reports about disappeared relatives were turned away by police or local administrators, who claimed to have no jurisdiction over RSF-controlled zones. In other cases, family members were advised not to pursue legal action for their own safety. This was evident in the case of Khalid Al-Sadiq, the prominent human rights lawyer who was abducted in December 2024 in an RSF-controlled area[20]. Despite widespread awareness of his disappearance, no official investigation has been launched, and his family has been unable to obtain any information about his whereabouts until the day of submitting this report.

The legal framework in Sudan offers no protection. The country has not ratified the International Convention on Enforced Disappearance, and its domestic laws do not define or criminalize the practice. Even during the democratic transition period from 2019 to 2021, legal reforms addressing enforced disappearance were never passed. With the return to military conflict, any progress made has now been reversed. Courts in SAF-controlled areas are barely functioning, and those in RSF-held territories have been largely dismantled or are operated under RSF influence. In such conditions, victims' families have no recourse and no access to legal remedy. Even when documentation is available, there is no mechanism to compel investigation or prosecution. Civil society groups attempting to document enforced disappearances are forced to operate underground. Even grassroots data collection on disappearances can place volunteers at risk. In one case, a

youth group in Kordofan was raided and arrested by RSF-linked militias after being accused of being spies for SAF.

Conclusion

The experiences of women in Egypt and Sudan in relation to enforced disappearance are marked by systemic exclusion, targeted punishment, and the denial of justice. Whether as direct victims or as family members of the disappeared, women are rarely granted formal roles in search processes or access to official information. In Egypt, authorities often deny mothers, wives, and daughters even basic confirmation of a loved one's detention. In Sudan, especially in RSF-controlled territories, the total absence of institutional structures has pushed women into informal and highly dangerous roles as searchers and community documenters. Across both contexts, the state treats women's participation as a threat, rather than a right. The act of seeking truth or justice often triggers further retaliation. Women who advocate publicly for the disappeared face harassment, digital surveillance, arrest, or social stigmatization. In Egypt, relatives who organize awareness campaigns or reach out to regional or international human rights mechanisms are routinely punished, including through intimidation, arrests or travel bans. In Sudan, women-led initiatives -whether physical networks or online platforms- are criminalized or violently dismantled, especially in RSF areas where impunity is widespread. This targeting of women, both as grieving family members and as advocates, reveals a deliberate strategy to silence and fragment communities of resistance.

Protective measures must be put in place for women who document or advocate. Reparation systems must reflect the gendered impact of disappearance and include economic, psychosocial, and symbolic dimensions. And above all, the silence and stigma surrounding these crimes must be broken. The pain endured by women in Egypt and Sudan is not incidental; it is structural, systemic, and it demands structural reform.