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Oral update by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan
At the 59th session of the Human Rights Council

17 June 2025

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates

I am honoured to deliver this oral update on the work of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolutions 54/2 and 57/2. I do so in my capacity as Chairperson of the Fact-Finding Mission, joined by my esteemed colleagues, Ms. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo and Ms. Mona Rishmawi.

Since the release of the first comprehensive report last September, the Fact-Finding Mission has been working relentlessly to fulfill every facet of our mandate in the context of a brutal, multifaceted and increasingly complex conflict that has now entered its third year. As you are aware, we have been entrusted with a solemn 5 key responsibilities: to investigate violations and their root causes; to collect and preserve evidence; to identify those responsible; to cooperate with judicial and other entities; and to make recommendations on accountability and support for victims.

Since the extension of this mandate in October last year, and with the support of our Secretariat, which is based in Nairobi, Kenya, we have conducted 240 interviews, received 110 submissions, verified 30 videos, geolocated 8 attacks, and compiled dossiers identifying possible perpetrators. We have also initiated confidential cooperation with relevant judicial entities.

Notwithstanding some persistent challenges, most notably the lack of access to Sudan and some neighboring countries, despite repeated requests, we have carried out investigative

missions to Uganda and Chad and engaged in high-level conversations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with African Union officials. We have cooperated and shared best practices with the Joint Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and African Union Peace and Security Council. Last month, and with the support of the Kenya Section of the International Commission of Jurists, we organized a three-day consultation on accountability that which we will refer to at this briefing.

We are deeply grateful to the many Sudanese survivors and civil society who have placed their trust in us. Despite major challenges, including a severely under-resourced Secretariat, we are working tirelessly to honour their trust and amplify their voices.

Excellencies,

We would like to turn to the shifting dynamics of the conflict. It is unconscionable that this devastating war is entering its third year with no sign of resolution. We all know, but it is worth repeating, civilians continue to bear the brunt of escalating violence and hostilities between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), along with their respective allied militias. What began as a political and security crisis has become a grave human rights and protection emergency, marked by international crimes, that stain all involved. Since our last update, some cities, towns and villages have changed hands, but the manner in which hostilities are conducted, including cycles of revenge killings, have brought no relief to the people of Sudan.

Both sides have escalated the use of heavy weaponry in populated areas. Airstrikes and shelling have caused mass civilian casualties. Around El Fasher, violence has intensified. Civilians are being killed, injured, assaulted, or detained by the RSF. Villages have been burned, property looted, and displaced persons' camps—like Zamzam and Abu Shouk— attacked also by the RSF. During an RSF attack from 10 to 13 April 2025 alone, more than 100 civilians were reportedly killed.

SAF has also attacked civilians. One verified example is the SAF airstrike on a market in Kabkabiya, North Darfur, in December 2024. Just last month, another SAF bombing in Al Koma killed at least 15 civilians. In areas retaken by the SAF, such as Khartoum, Gezira, and Sennar, we have documented widespread retaliatory violence between late 2024 and mid-2025. Individuals perceived to have supported the RSF—including human rights defenders, medical workers, and aid personnel—have faced arbitrary arrest, torture, and in some cases, summary execution. In Gezira, the Kanabi community, with roots in Nuba and Darfur, were specifically targeted. These acts are attributed to SAF and affiliated groups, including those known as the Sudan Shield Forces and the Al-Baraa ibn Malek battalion.

The RSF has also carried out reprisals. In eastern Gezira, beginning 20 October 2024, and more recently in Omdurman's Al-Salha neighborhood on 27 April 2025, where over 31 civilians were reportedly executed.

Humanitarian relief is being weaponized. The SAF has imposed bureaucratic restrictions; the RSF has looted convoys and blocked aid entirely. These actions are driving famine, especially in Darfur. In Zamzam camp, children are dying of hunger due to the total aid blockage, according to the World Food Program. Since the conflict began, over 100 humanitarian and medical workers have been killed. On 2 June 2025, a UN convoy was bombed in Al Koma en route to El Fasher, killing five staff members. Each party blames the other.

Hospitals and medical facilities are under siege. The RSF has shelled the Saudi Hospital in El Fasher a dozen of times. In May, an RSF drone strike on Obeid International Hospital in North Kordofan killed six civilians and shut down one of the region's last functioning clinics.

The sharp rise in sexual and gender-based violence is a cause of grave concern. Women and girls are being subjected to rape, gang rape, abduction, sexual slavery, and forced marriage, mostly in RSF-controlled areas, particularly in displacement camps. From December 2023 to December 2024, there was a 288% increase in those seeking SGBV services according to UN Women. We also received credible reports of sexual violence against men and boys. Sexual violence remain vastly underreported due to stigma and fear.

Excellencies,

Against this bleak backdrop, the imperative for justice has never been more urgent. As mentioned, last month, and with the support of the Kenya Section of the International Commission of Jurists, we organized a 3-day accountability consultation in Nairobi, one day of which was devoted to sexual and gender-based violence and related crimes. Hundred and forty-five participants came together to share their vision for justice in Sudan. With almost an equal number of men and women, participants included survivors, legal practitioners, civil society actors from Sudan, the region and internationally. We were particularly pleased that the AU Special Envoy on the Prevention of Genocide and Other Mass Atrocities, members of the Joint Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan of the African Commission, IGAD, the AU, and the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor on the Responsibility to Protect have joined the conversation.

One message emerged with resounding clarity: peace without justice is an illusion. Accountability is not a luxury; it is a prerequisite for a sustainable peace in Sudan as its very absence is amongst the key root causes of conflict. The preparations for justice should therefore begin now, and any peace agreement must address issues of justice.

In that context, participants stressed the importance of documenting and preserving evidence with integrity. The consultation also called for capacity building across Sudanese civil society, the legal profession, and judicial institutions.

Crucially, participants urged the creation of safe spaces for women and girls, improved access for international monitors, and an international protection presence.

These are not abstract demands. They are pragmatic, principled, and necessary.

Excellencies,

Let us be clear: the conflict in Sudan is far from over. The scale of human suffering continues to deepen. The fragmentation of governance, the militarization of society, and the involvement of foreign actors are fueling an ever-deadlier crisis.

In this respect, we urge all States to uphold and enforce their legal obligations, particularly the arms embargo mandated by Security Council Resolution 1556 and subsequent resolutions. States with influence on the parties to the conflict are reminded of their obligations under Common Article 1 of the Geneva Conventions to respect and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. This is the best way they can avoid risking complicity in violations that may amount to international crimes.

As we press ahead with this vital mandate, we count on the continued support and meaningful cooperation of all stakeholders. Together, we can translate our shared commitment into lasting and tangible impact for the civilian population in Sudan.

Thank you for your attention.