



9 April 2024

PARTNERS:



Dismas Nkunda, CEO
Atrocities Watch Africa (AWA)



Shuvai Nyoni, Executive Director
African Leadership Centre
(ALC)



Sandrah Akello, Ag ED
International Refugee Rights
Initiative (IRRI)



Donald Deya, CEO
Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)

H.E. Ms. Jainaba Jagne
Ambassador of The Gambia to the African Union
Embassy of The Gambia in Addis Ababa
Kifle Katema, K 13
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Your Excellency,

Subject: Urgent Appeal to Prioritize discussion on the sexual and gender-based crimes and other human rights violations being committed in the Situation in Sudan on the PSC Agenda and to issue an outcome statement

Greetings from the Africans for the Horn of Africa (Af4HA) Initiative, a coalition of Pan-African civil society organisations committed to working collectively on the crises in the Horn of Africa region.

We congratulate the Republic of the Gambia for being assigned by its Sister States to chair the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU-PSC) in the month of April 2024, and solemnly note that halfway through this month, precisely on Monday 15th April 2024, the world will be sorrowfully marking the first anniversary of the outbreak of violent conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan.

As we approach this sad milestone, we write to you to express our deep concern regarding the situation in Sudan, and the impact it is having in its neighbouring countries in the Horn, Northern and Central Africa. With more than 15,000 people killed and an estimated 10 million displaced since the fighting began, the challenges faced by the Sudanese people demand the unwavering attention, commitment and resolute action by the regional and international community. It is with this urgency in mind that we respectfully request you, in your capacity as the Chair of the month, to ensure that the scheduled discussion on Sudan in this month's calendar prioritizes discussion on the heightened commission of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) crimes and other serious crimes against women, children and civilians in Sudan.





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The situation of women and children

Women in particular, have borne the brunt of the war which is being waged on their bodies. The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) and other human rights organizations report widespread sexual violence against women and children. Women and girls have been kidnapped from Khartoum and Northern Sudan, transported to Darfur, to then be ransomed back to their families or sold as slaves. Lack of sexual and reproductive health services have increased maternal mortality with women losing their pregnancies as well as their lives. There are also reports of high levels of infant mortality and malnutrition among children. This is happening in violation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo) Protocol, and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Serious Human Rights Violations against the Civilian Population

Af4HA has monitored several alarming trends, including but not limited to, the deliberate targeting of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Darfur region; the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence against women and children; the persistent use of child soldiers; and deliberate blockage of humanitarian aid, despite the deteriorating humanitarian crisis across the country, which has now reached a critical juncture with 18 million people facing acute hunger and more than a million civilians projected to die from the famine, with both SAF and RSF accused of disrupting food aid delivery to the needy populations; and the distressing reality of daily attacks on community activists, particularly those providing food kitchens and support to communities raising serious concerns about the state of civic freedoms and the need for enhanced protections for the emergency response rooms working to support communities.



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Against the backdrop of these concerning trends, it is imperative that the African Union, through the Peace and Security Council, support ongoing initiatives aimed at bringing peace, fostering stability, promoting justice, and addressing humanitarian needs and an eventual establishment of civilian rule. It is crucial to emphasize that these efforts must prioritize and amplify the voices of a wide and inclusive group of Sudanese civilians, placing their concerns at the forefront. This is the only way we can forge meaningful and effective paths towards sustainable solutions that genuinely resonate with the aspirations of the Sudanese civilian population.

Specifically, we call on the AU Peace and Security Council to:

- Prioritize discussion on the serious human rights and humanitarian violations being committed against the Sudanese civilian population during the month;
- Ensure that it is appraised of the horrific situation of escalated commission of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) crimes committed against women and children in Sudan;
In partnership with UN agencies, international organizations and
- NGOs, call for and support the AU's facilitation for the delivery of humanitarian aid to address the immediate needs of the affected population, including food, medical assistance, and shelter, particularly, through the effective intervention by African Humanitarian Agency; Request and facilitate the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to conduct a fact-finding mission to investigate the massive violations of human rights in Sudan; Issue an outcome statement that is specific on pathways for addressing these human rights and humanitarian
- violations; Ensure the AU's leadership in resolving the crisis in Sudan including in coordination with other ongoing processes,
- focuses on the need to urgently address the human rights and humanitarian violations, including sexual and gender-based violence against women and children.



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We commend the efforts of the African Union in addressing the situation in Sudan since the outbreak of the conflict on 15 April 2023, and we trust that under your leadership, the AU PSC will provide guidance on addressing the critical human rights and humanitarian violations highlighted in this letter.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter.

Please accept, your Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Sincerely,

Dismas Nkunda, CEO Atrocities
Watch Africa (AWA)

Shuvai Nyoni, Executive Director
African Leadership Centre (ALC)

Sandrah Akello, Ag. ED
International Refugees Rights Initiative (IRRI)

Donald Deya, CEO
Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)

CC:

Hon. Commissioner Janet-Sallah Njie
Vice President, African Commission on Human and Peoples'
Rights (ACHPR)

Hon. Commissioner Hatem Essaiem,
ACHPR Country Rapporteur for Sudan

H.E. Mme Bineta Diop
Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union
Commission on Women, Peace & Security

H.E. Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas
Chairperson, High-Level Panel on Sudan