

Mandates of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Ref.: AL OTH 6/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

27 April 2026

Dear Mr. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on minority issues and Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 60/5, 60/8, 53/7, 52/9, 52/5 and 59/20.

We are independent human rights experts appointed and mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council to report and advise on human rights issues from a thematic or country-specific perspective. We are part of the special procedures system of the United Nations, which has 59 thematic and country mandates on a broad range of human rights issues. We are sending this letter under the communications procedure of the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council to seek clarification on information we have received. Special Procedures mechanisms can intervene directly with Governments and other stakeholders (including companies) on allegations of abuses of human rights that come within their mandates by means of letters, which include urgent appeals, allegation letters, and other communications. The intervention may relate to a human rights violation that has already occurred, is ongoing, or which has a high risk of occurring. The process involves sending a letter to the concerned actors identifying the facts of the allegation, applicable international human rights norms and standards, the concerns and questions of the mandate-holder(s), and a request for follow-up action. Communications may deal with individual cases, general patterns and trends of human rights violations, cases affecting a particular group or community, or the content of draft or existing legislation, policy or practice considered not to be fully compatible with international human rights standards.

In this connection, we would like to bring to your attention information we have received **regarding foreign military and logistical support and foreign interference, including the use and direct funding of mercenaries and mercenary-related actors in the armed conflict which have been contributing to destabilize the situation in the country and to affect the result in the commission of atrocities and serious human rights violations of the people in Sudan.**

Rapid Support Forces

According to the information received:

On 25 October 2021, [REDACTED], Commander-in-Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and Chairperson of the Transitional Sovereignty Council and General [REDACTED], Commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had jointly carried out a military takeover against the transitional civilian government in Sudan. On 15 April 2023, hostilities broke out in Khartoum between the RSF and SAF and quickly spread to other parts of the Sudan. The conflict extended to most of the states in Sudan, with a devastating impact on the civilian population and civilian infrastructure across the country. An estimated 7, 259 million people have been forced from their homes within Sudan, and approximately 4,348,544 million more have left the country and allegedly rape and sexual violence have been utilised as a tool of war.

Since the very early state of the conflict, the RSF has reportedly relied on military and logistical support by foreign powers, including the use of mercenaries and mercenary-related actors. This has been contributing to destabilizing the situation and to extending the hostilities, and consequently, to adversely impacting the human rights of people in Sudan.

Allegedly, the RSF senior leaders, directly and through intermediaries, recruited large numbers of fighters and forces in Darfur, as well as other areas captured from the SAF, and fighters from neighboring Sahel States in exchange for money, weapons and other incentives, including the prospect of looting. Many of the newly recruited men, including minors, serve in auxiliary militias that remain under the overall command of the RSF senior leadership.

The RSF reportedly established recruitment networks in Chad, among Arab communities in particular, based on tribal affiliations. Reportedly, RSF fighters were also trained in camps in Lybia. In late May 2023, four cars of the RSF came to the area of Marada, the stronghold of the Rizeigat community in Chad and subsequently returned to the Sudan with several dozen recruits. On 17 May 2023, the RSF after the capture of Am Dafok, the main border post in Central African Republic, recruited members from Arab border communities to join its forces. Foreign fighters from Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Central African Republic, Ethiopians and South Sudanese have also been mobilized by the RSF.

Involvement of Foreign support

Allegedly, there is also foreign support to the RSF involved in its conflict with SAF, such as from Wagner Group and from UAE's corporation GSSG.

In 2023, the Wagner Group helped to coordinate deliveries of weapons to the RSF via Chad and the Central Africa Republic. The support also included military training, and protection of the RSF's gold mining in Songo area in South Darfur.

Reportedly, the RSF has received ongoing logistical, military, and material support from its networks in the region, inclusive of the UAE. Thousands of

RSF injured fighters were reportedly airlifted to be treated in a military hospital in a Sudanese border city in Chad, Amdjarass, where cargo planes from the UAE have been landing on a near-daily basis since 2023.

The Emirati support has also taken the form of sending large quantities of weapons and ammunition have been sent to the RSF via Abacia and Amdjarass in Chad. Since June 2023, various flight-tracking experts have observed a heavy rotation of cargo planes coming from Abu Dhabi International Airport to Am Djarass airport in eastern Chad, with stops in regional countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. Reportedly the aircraft have been transporting weapons, ammunition, and medical equipment to the RSF. Further, thousands of injured RSF fighters have been reportedly airlifted for treatment to a military hospital in Amdjarass, a city in Chad near to Sudanese border, where cargo planes from the UAE have been landing on a near-daily basis since 2023.

In addition, El Fasher, capital of North Darfur in western Sudan, after more than 18 months under siege by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the city fell to the RSF on 26 October 2025. Since then, credible reports describe mass killings, sexual violence, and attacks on civilians and reportedly, foreign accents were heard during the attacks on Zamzam and El Fasher. The RSF also intensified drone strikes around al-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, a strategic city held by SAF. These strikes have increasingly targeted civilian areas as well as military positions. On 5 November 2025, a particularly deadly strike reportedly hit a funeral in the village of al-Luweib, killing dozens of civilians including women and children. There were reports that at least 40 civilians were killed in another drone attack near al-Obeid earlier in November 2025.

In addition, an Emirati corporation, Global Security Services Group (GSSG), has been recruiting foreign forces, namely “the Desert Wolves”, to fight alongside the RSF, and to provide training to its forces.

“The Desert Wolves”

As the war in Sudan rages on and the Rapid Support Forces’ (RSF) killings of civilians in the western city El Fasher continues, reports have emerged of Colombian mercenaries, who call themselves “the Desert Wolves”, joining the fighting and training child soldiers to partake in the fighting, on behalf of the brutal RSF paramilitary group.

These former and current “Desert Wolves” Colombian mercenaries deployed to Sudan, have reportedly been trained in drone warfare in Abu Dhabi and rotated to Sudan through a UAE-controlled military base at Bosaso in Puntland, Somalia. The Global Security Services Group (GSSG), a UAE-registered company, has facilitated the deployment of Colombian mercenaries to Sudan.

“The Global Security Services Group (GSSG)”

The GSSG describes itself as “the only armed private security services provider for the UAE government” and lists its clients as the Ministry of Presidential Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, and the Foreign Ministry.

The GSSG was first set up in 2016 by [REDACTED], the longstanding secretary general of the Presidential Court in the UAE. In 2017, [REDACTED] transferred all of GSSG's shares to his longtime business associate, the Emirati businessman [REDACTED]. Allegedly, since 2024, GSSG contracted with a Colombian security recruitment agency, International Services Agency to supply hundreds of former soldiers to work in Sudan. This Colombian security recruitment agency, International Services Agency is known as the Academy for Security Instruction, or A4SI. The A4SI is reportedly controlled by [REDACTED], a retired Colombian colonel based in the UAE, although it is owned by his wife, [REDACTED].

Furthermore, contracts signed by Colombian mercenaries authorize GSSG to transfer their salaries through Panama and a registered company called 'Global Staffing'. The Panamian Global Staffing pays the soldiers via offshore accounts. [REDACTED] is the director of both A4SI and Global Staffing which share overall hosting infrastructure. The leadership of the RSF owns a major gold producing company, and there have been persistent reports that conflict gold is smuggled out of Sudan for sale in the UAE. After two years of war, the RSF is being forced back to its core business: exporting gold from Darfur to Dubai and the UAE is said to be the main beneficiary of the gold smuggled from Sudan during the conflict. It has been providing necessary avenues of exchange of gold to cash and has become a hub for laundering trafficked gold into the global market.

In light of the involvement of these actors in the conflict in Sudan, we are extremely concerned about the impact of their activities impacting human rights and the life and security of local civilian population. We received information on targeted attacks of camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and many IDPs have been trapped in areas that experienced heavy fighting and long cuts to electricity and water, particularly in areas of Khartoum. We are further concerned by the arbitrary arrest of civilians, suppression of freedom of information and expression, attacks against media, journalists and human rights defenders, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, physical violence and acts tantamount to enforced disappearance during looting of their homes particularly against women and girls¹ as well as obstruction of access to humanitarian aid for civilians has contributed to severe deterioration of humanitarian situation². We are particularly concerned about rape and sexual violence allegedly being used as a tool of war by the RSF fighters, including mercenaries and foreign fighters.

We are also gravely concerned at reports of the predatory recruitment of children as fighters, deaths and injuries of non-combatant children, sexual and physical violence and enforced disappearance of girls³. The shortage of food and drinking water and the lack of infrastructure of the internally displaced persons and the trauma that this conflict has inflicted on them have extremely severe and immeasurable impact on the local population. We are further worried about the intentional killings of civilians and targeted attacks on people belonging to minority groups. Some of the acts referenced

¹ See [OTH 101/2023](#).

² See [A/HRC/57/23](#), 7 November 2024, [Report released by OHCHR Sudan](#) in November 2024 and [AL SDN 3/2024](#).

³ See [A/HRC/54/29](#), 12 July 2023, thematic report on the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination on "Recruitment, including predatory recruitment, of mercenaries and mercenary-related actors", particularly paragraph 33.

above, along with other human rights violations, have already been addressed in detail in previous communications submitted to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), such as [OTH 130/2023](#), [OTH 17/2024](#), [OTH 116/2024](#), [OTH 47/2025](#) and [OTH 114/2025](#).

Notably, we are concerned about GSSG's activities and the reported hiring of Colombian mercenaries ("the Desert Wolves") to fight alongside the RSF, actions that have contributed to further fuel the conflict with SAF in Sudan.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we are deeply disturbed and express serious concern about the role of the foreign actors' involvement in the conflict between RSF and SAF and their contribution to escalating the humanitarian crises and human rights violations in Sudan.

We are further concerned by the interference and military and logistical support by different foreign actors in Sudan to RSF, through provision of fighters - including children -, auxiliary militia, weapons, ammunitions, air-missiles, military training, supplies and humanitarian aid, motivated by private gain, such as gold exploitation for business or smuggling.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations, particularly with regard to any foreign support to the hostilities.
2. Please provide any additional information about foreign fighters originating from neighbouring countries and measures that have been taken to prevent their recruitment and participation.
3. Please provide clarification regarding the involvement of RSF with the Global Security Services Group (GSSG) as well as detailing the role of Colombian contractors ("Desert Wolves") operating alongside the RSF.
4. Please also provide information regarding other entities and companies providing services for the RSF, notably with regard to the nature of their activities, their owners, the provision of services and how they are compensated for their services.
5. Please highlight the steps that your RSF has taken, or is considering to take, to protect civilians against humanitarian and human rights violations during the conflict between RSF and SAF.
6. Please provide any additional information regarding the recruitment and involvement of children by RSF in the conflict, including as foreign

fighters or mercenaries, as well as any measures taken to prevent their recruitment and participation.

7. Please provide information about measures that have been taken to prevent rape and sexual violence committed by RSF fighters, including foreign fighters and mercenaries. Please also provide information on measures taken to ensure the investigation, prosecution, and hold accountable those responsible for such violations, including the applicable legal framework and any penalties imposed.
8. Please provide information on the measures undertaken or envisaged to prevent the use of mercenaries, mercenary-related actors, foreign fighters and private military and security companies (PMSCs) by RSF in the current armed conflict with SAF.

This communication and any response received from you will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with you to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please be informed that a copy of this letter has been sent to Sudan as well as to Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Lybia, Niger, Panama, Somalia, South Sudan in addition to GSSG, A4SI and Global Staffing. A similar letter on the matter has been addressed to the United Arab Emirates, involved in the above mentioned allegations, with copy to Chad, Colombia, Panama and Somalia as well as GSSG, A4SI and Global Staffing; and a related letter on the matter has been addressed to Sudan.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Small

Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination

Ganna Yudkivska

Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Farida Shaheed
Special Rapporteur on the right to education

Irene Khan
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion
and expression

Nicolas Levrat
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Reem Alsalem
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw your attention to the relevant international norms and standards that are applicable to the issues raised by the situation described above.

In relation to the above-mentioned allegations, we would like to refer to the international customary law consolidated on the common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, ratified by Sudan on 23 September 1957, ruling about non-international armed conflicts and the Additional Protocol II of 1977 of the Geneva Conventions, ratified by Sudan on 13 July 2006. These laws state that persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely without any distinction.

Moreover, articles 7, 9, 10, 19 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded to by Sudan on 18 March 1986, which prohibits torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and provide that persons deprived of their liberty are to be treated with dignity and humanity, as well as liberty from arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Particularly regarding the arbitrary arrest and detention, article 9 of the ICCPR provides that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention or deprived of their liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law. In this regard, we wish to emphasize that in accordance with the jurisprudence of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, enforced disappearances constitute a particularly aggravated form of arbitrary detention. Further, as stated in the jurisprudence of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and in general comment No. 35, arrest or detention of an individual as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights guaranteed by the ICCPR, including freedom of opinion and expression, is arbitrary.

As for the suppression of freedom of expression, media en information, article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right of all persons to freedom of expression, encompassing the freedom to seek, receive and information and ideas of all kinds. Any restrictions on freedom of expression must be strictly limited and meet the high threshold set out in article 19 (3) of the Covenant, following which any limitations must be determined by law and conform to the strict tests of necessity and proportionality. As underlined by the Human Rights Committee in its general comment No. 34, attacks on persons because of the exercise of their freedom of expression, including in the form of arbitrary arrest, cannot under any circumstance be compatible with article 19. As highlighted by the Committee, persons engaged in gathering, analysing and reporting on human rights are frequently subjected to such acts of intimidation because of their activities.

Regarding the shortage of food and drinking water, the destruction of homes, schools and hospitals as well as lack of medical facilities in the detention centers and the lack of infrastructure of the internally displaced persons, we recall the articles 11, 12 and 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (ICESCR), acceded by Sudan in 18 March 1986, which states that the right to housing, education and health shall be ensured by its States Parties.

Regarding the acts of rape and sexual and gender-based violence against women in conflict affected areas, we would like to stress that these acts of gender-based violence are strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law and constitute a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. When committed in the context of armed conflict, such acts are prohibited through (i) grave breaches provisions such as article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and article 85 of Additional Protocol I, which prohibit torture, inhuman treatment, and willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body and health; (ii) Common article 3, which prohibits violence to life and person, cruel treatment and torture, and outrages upon personal dignity; and other provisions, such as article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, articles 75-77 of Additional Protocol I and article 4(2) of Additional Protocol II, which explicitly prohibit attacks against women, including rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault. Moreover, the article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, ratified by Sudan on 3 August 1990, engage the States Parties to protect the child from all forms of sexual abuse.

As well, regarding the recruitment of children as fighters as well as the physical violation and deaths, the Convention on the Rights of Child recognizes that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding and should be ensured the right to health (article 27) and right to education (article 28).

We also would like to recall the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan of 11 May 2023, agreeing that the interests and well-being of the Sudanese people are our top priority and the Security Council Resolution ([S/RES/2736](#), of 13 June 2024) requesting for the full implementation of the Declaration and that parties to the conflict allow and facilitate the rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need.

We would like to draw your attention to the Montreux Document on pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for States related to operations of private military and security companies during armed conflict recalls existing legal obligations of States and private military and security companies and their personnel and draws on various international and human rights agreements and customary international laws, including the references above. In particular, the document reaffirms in its paragraphs 9 and 10 that “Territorial States have an obligation, within their power, to ensure respect for international humanitarian law by PMSCs operating on their territory, in particular to:

- a) disseminate, as widely as possible, the text of the Geneva Conventions and other relevant norms of international humanitarian law among PMSCs and their personnel;

- b) not encourage or assist in, and take appropriate measures to prevent, any violations of international humanitarian law by personnel of PMSCs;
- c) take measures to suppress violations of international humanitarian law committed by the personnel of PMSCs through appropriate means such as military regulations, administrative orders and other regulatory measures as well as administrative, disciplinary or judicial sanctions, as appropriate”

We also wish to refer to the global study of national regulations of private military and security companies published by the former Working Group on the use of mercenaries ([A/HRC/36/47](#)) and the Working Group’s report on the evolving forms, trends and manifestations of mercenaries and mercenary-related activities ([A/75/259](#)), which pointed to the difficulties in preventing and holding private military and security personnel accountable for their actions, including in situations of armed conflict. In another thematic report, on the role of mercenaries, mercenary-related actors and private military and security companies in the trafficking and proliferation of arms, the Working Group highlights that most vulnerable regions enabling environment for mercenaries and private military and security companies are those involved in prolonged armed conflicts and/or have vulnerable political situation ([A/HRC/57/45](#), para. 42).

On the gold smuggling, we would like to refer to the Working Group’s 2019 thematic report, Relationship between private military and security companies and the extractive industry from a human rights perspective ([A/HRC/42/42](#)), it refers that “a private military or security company and its personnel providing services to an extractive company in a situation of armed conflict is therefore bound by the rules set out under international humanitarian law, and should respect human rights”(para. 38).