

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 ARE 1/2026
(Please use this reference in your reply)

27 April 2026

Excellency,

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.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government 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.**

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 the 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 stage of the conflict, the RSF has reportedly relied on military and logistical support by foreign powers, inclusive of the use of mercenaries and mercenary-related actors. This has been contributing to destabilizing the situation and to extending the hostilities, and consequently, to affecting the human rights of people in Sudan.

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

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, 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, Al Humairi 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.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we are deeply disturbed and express serious concern about the role of your Excellency’s government involvement in the conflict between SAF and RSF, particularly providing military and logistical support to RSF, and your contribution to escalating the humanitarian crises and human rights violations in Sudan.

We are particularly preoccupied with the impact of the foreign entities’ contribution to the fueling and sustenance of the conflict and its catastrophic impact in the human rights and humanitarian situation in Sudan, resulting in serious atrocities such as extrajudicial killings, deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, maiming, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, rape and gang rape, forced marriages, and extensive destruction of homes, hospitals, schools. Furthermore, the RSF has reportedly besieged several towns and civilian areas depriving the civilian population, food, drinking water, and electricity particularly in areas of Khartoum, including in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). In addition, RSF fighters have carried out large scale arbitrary arrest of civilians, abduction of civilians, trafficking, particularly of women and girls, suppression of freedom of expression and access to information, attacks against media, journalists and human rights defenders, looting of homes and agricultural produce as well as machinery, livestock and furniture. Some of the acts referenced above, along with other human rights violations, have already been addressed in detail in previous communications, such as [OTH 130/2023](#), [OTH 17/2024](#), [OTH 116/2024](#), [OTH 47/2025](#) and [OTH 114/2025](#).

We are particularly concerned by the interference and military and logistical foreign support to the RSF, through the provision of weapons, ammunition, air-missiles, military training, supplies and aid, motivated by the exploitation of gold and other mineral resources. Notably, we are concerned about the GSSG’s activities and the reported hiring of Colombian mercenaries (“the Desert Wolves”) to fight as part of the RSF, actions that have contributed to further fuel the deadly conflict in Sudan, including their use of rape and sexual violence as a tool of war.

We are also gravely concerned about the consequences of the documented reported support provided by your government to RSF despite the well documented and large-scale evidence regarding the RSF’s perpetration of atrocities in the form of war crimes and crimes against humanity. No government can reasonably claim to be unaware of these crimes.

We remain deeply worried about the RSF's intentional killings of civilians and targeted attacks on people belonging to minority groups.

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 your Excellency's government support to RSF.
2. Please provide clarification regarding the involvement of the UAE-registered company, the Global Security Services Group (GSSG) with the RSF, including its recruitment and supply of foreign military personnel, notably of Colombian contractors ("Desert Wolves") to operate alongside RSF.
3. Please clarify the involvement of the Global Security Services Group (GSSG) in the training of foreign military personnel and contractors, notably of Colombian contractors ("Desert Wolves") on the use of drones in Abu Dhabi.
4. Please explain what measures exist to regulate, oversee and monitor GSSG's offshore activities, as well as the activities of foreign personnel operating on behalf of GSSG in foreign territories such as Sudan.
5. Please indicate what measures exist to prevent GSSG and their personnel from engaging in acts and activities that contribute to human rights violations, such as recruitment and use of children, as well as rape and sexual violence as a tool of war, and/or impede the rights of people's to self-determination, including impeding the right of people to their full enjoyment of human rights in Sudan. Please also indicate any measures taken to ensure the investigation, prosecution, and hold accountable those responsible for such violations, including the applicable legal framework and any penalties imposed.
6. Please provide information regarding other entities and companies in the UAE providing services for RSF, notably with regard to the nature of their activities, their owners, and how they are compensated for their services.
7. Please highlight the steps that your Excellency's government has taken or is considering to take, in protecting civilians against humanitarian and human rights violations committed by RSF as above-described.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government 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 your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please be informed that a copy of this letter has been sent to Chad, Colombia, Panama and Somalia as well as GSSG, A4SI and Global Staffing. A similar letter on this subject matter has also been sent to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) involved in the abovementioned allegations, with a copy to Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Lybia, Niger, Panama, Somalia, South Sudan in addition to GSSG, A4SI and Global Staffing; and another related letter has been sent to Sudan.

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

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 the attention of Your Excellency's Government 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 your Excellency's Government to the international customary law consolidated on the common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, ratified by the UAE on 10 May 1972, ruling about non-international armed conflicts and the Additional Protocol II of 1977 of the Geneva Conventions, ratified by the UAE on 9 March 1983. 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.

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), which the UAE has not yet ratified, 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, accessed by the UAE on 3 January 1997, 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).

Regarding the violations of the right to freedom of expression, we note that article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of the press as one of its

core elements and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend. In its general comment No. 34, the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR have a duty to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression. Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that “all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress” ([CCPR/C/GC/34](#), para. 23).

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”

Moreover, States are required to enact legislation to provide effective penal sanctions, to search, and to bring before its courts persons alleged to have committed or ordered to be committed the wilful killing or wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health of a civilian.

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).