

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Ref.: AL SDN 5/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

20 November 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights; Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 53/7, 52/17, 60/10, 52/26 and 59/20.

In this connection, we write to your Excellency's Government to seek clarification of serious concerns regarding ongoing and potential human rights violations arising from Sudan's severe fiscal and debt crisis as well as the specific situation of women and girls and their direct impact on the State's capacity to fulfil fundamental human rights obligations.

According to the information received:

Sudan is experiencing what has been characterised as the world's largest humanitarian crisis, occurring in the context of unprecedented fiscal collapse that directly undermines the State's capacity to protect basic human rights. The following specific information about the fiscal and economic situation is of particular concern:

Reports indicate that real GDP has contracted by 29.4 per cent in 2023 and a further 13.5 per cent in 2024, representing one of the world's most severe economic contractions. Government revenues have collapsed from approximately 10 per cent of GDP in 2022 to just 4.7 per cent of GDP in 2024, whilst inflation reached 170 per cent in 2024. The currency has depreciated by 355 per cent on the parallel market, with unemployment rising to 47 per cent. Sudan's external debt burden is reported at approximately \$56 billion, representing a debt-to-GDP ratio of 147.4 per cent. The assessment concludes that the country has "essentially no capacity to issue new debt," whilst debt service obligations continue to crowd out social spending needed for humanitarian response.

Additionally, the introduction of new banknotes in December 2024 has created a “two-currency country” with different denominations accepted in different areas, effectively fragmenting the economy. Cash withdrawal limits of 200,000 SDG daily (\$80) prevent citizens from accessing savings, whilst 90 per cent of the money supply now circulates outside the banking system. This has delayed humanitarian cash assistance worth \$11.5 million, affecting 500,000 people dependent on aid. The Paris Club debt restructuring agreement, which would have provided \$14.1 billion in immediate debt cancellation, remains suspended since the October 2021 military actions, preventing fiscal space creation for humanitarian response.

According to information received, military and security spending consumes approximately \$6.3 billion (90 per cent of the national budget), whilst health and education combined receive only \$6.5 million. This represents a stark prioritisation of military expenditure over basic social services during a humanitarian emergency.

These reports indicate that over 80 per cent of hospitals in conflict-affected areas are non-operational, whilst the health sector faces systematic underfunding. A cholera outbreak has affected all 18 states, with 48,768 cases and 1,094 deaths recorded between January and August 2025, reflecting a case fatality rate of 2.2 per cent. Verified attacks on healthcare facilities were documented, noting that less than 25 per cent of these facilities are functional. A 46 per cent surge in severe acute malnutrition treatments across Darfur states in the first five months of 2025 were reported, with Al Jazirah State experiencing a 683 per cent increase in severe acute malnutrition admissions. An estimated 3.2 million children under 5 are projected to experience acute malnutrition in 2025, with famine confirmed in 5 areas and projected for 5 additional areas. 24.6 million people facing acute hunger were reported, this is over half Sudan’s population. Female-headed households face triple the risk of severe food insecurity compared to male-headed families. 75 per cent of female-headed households cannot meet the basic food needs and severe food insecurity has nearly doubled in one year.

Furthermore, concerning the specific grave human rights abuses committed against women and girls, both special procedures and the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan have documented systematic and large scale acts of sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, abduction, sexual slavery and forced marriage committed predominantly against women and girls, with some victims also being men and boys. Women and girls that are survivors of violence, exploitation and abuse face insurmountable barriers, including the collapse of health systems resulting in unsafe birthing conditions and soaring maternal mortality, limited humanitarian access due to insecurity, attacks on displacement camps and shelters, and the targeting of women human rights defenders providing aid and medical staff, exacerbating a profound mental and physical health crisis where many contemplate suicide without psychological support. These violations not only inflict long-lasting physical, mental, and sexual trauma but also underscore a protection vacuum that contravenes international humanitarian and human rights law.

In the protracted conflict in Sudan, which has displaced over 12 million people in and outside of Sudan, including more than 6 million women and girls, the chronic underfunding of humanitarian aid has critically undermined protection and assistance for victims of rampant gender-based violence, with reports documenting a 288 per cent surge in demand for services amid an 80 per cent rise in those at risk. Shockingly, in 2024, donors provided less than 20 per cent of the \$62.8 million required for gender-based violence prevention and response, while local women-led organizations – vital for delivering survivor-centered care – receive under 2 per cent of the Sudan Humanitarian Fund, forcing the closure of safe spaces, scaling back medical and psychosocial support, and leaving hundreds of thousands without emergency protection, obstetric care, legal aid, or trauma counselling. This funding shortfall, persisting into 2025 despite the crisis affecting over half of Sudan's population, directly exacerbates the protection vacuum, enabling impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence used as a weapon of war and condemning survivors to compounded physical, mental, and reproductive health crises without recourse. Civil society organizations, including women's organizations operating in Sudan remain grossly underfunded and remain excluded from key decision-making.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we express serious concern that these issues contravene Sudan's commitments under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and obligations as a State party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. According to article 4(g) of the Declaration, women subjected to violence must receive specialized assistance, such as rehabilitation, assistance in childcare, treatment, counselling, and health and social services, facilities and programmes, as well as support structures, and should take all other appropriate measures to promote their safety and physical and psychological rehabilitation.

We further recall that the right to education is a critical safeguard against atrocity crimes and grave human rights violations. As highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education (A/80/479; A/74/243), education must be inclusive, non-discriminatory, and grounded in human rights values to foster social cohesion and prevent violence. International standards—including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)—affirm the importance of ensuring equal access to quality education for all, including displaced children, girls, and persons living in vulnerable conditions, especially during armed conflict.

We are concerned that the chronic underfunding of Sudan's education sector, particularly in conflict-affected areas, undermines the protective and transformative role of education, deepens exclusion and instability, and risks enabling further violations. Education must be treated as a humanitarian and peacebuilding priority, not sidelined by fiscal decisions that favour military spending over human rights.

We recall that under international human rights law, States have primary obligations to their populations that cannot be suspended during emergencies. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasised that resource constraints cannot justify failure to fulfil minimum core obligations, and that States must demonstrate they have used all available resources to satisfy minimum essential levels of rights as a matter of priority. The UN Basic Principles on External Debt and Human Rights emphasise that debt service should not compromise a State's capacity to fulfil human rights obligations, particularly during humanitarian emergencies when the right to life is at immediate risk.

Furthermore, the repeated and grave violations committed against civilians in Sudan in the context of the ongoing war, including torture, abductions, forced disappearances, and rape and other forms of gender-based violence, constitute grave breaches of the Geneva convention. The Sudanese authorities and all warring parties are thus reminded of their unequivocal obligations not only to cease atrocities committed without delay, ensure safe and unhindered access to medical, legal, and psychosocial services for victims, facilitate humanitarian corridors, and hold perpetrators accountable to prevent further impunity and enable comprehensive reparations.

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 any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide details of the specific debt service payments made since April 2023, including amounts paid to which creditors, and clarify how the Government determined these payments took priority over emergency health and nutrition spending as well as attending to victims of violence, abuse and exploitation, including children. What fiscal criteria did the Government use to decide that debt servicing should continue whilst hospitals remain non-operational and famine spreads?
3. Please specify the exact budgetary line items and amounts allocated to military and security expenditure compared to health including reproductive health, psychosocial and mental health support as well as assistance and protection for survivors of abuse, violence, and exploitation, as well as the education sectors in the 2024 and 2025 budgets. Could the Government explain the fiscal decision-making process that resulted in this allocation pattern during a humanitarian emergency where children are dying from preventable malnutrition?
4. Please detail the Government's assessment of how currency restrictions and banking limitations have affected its ability to receive, process and

distribute humanitarian funds, including for the assistance and protection of women and children who are victims of abuse, violence and exploitation in the context of the current conflict. What specific fiscal mechanisms has the Government established to ensure that monetary policy decisions do not prevent emergency aid from reaching affected populations, and how are these mechanisms currently performing?

5. Please provide details of the daily cash withdrawal limits policy, including the rationale for restricting citizens to 200,000 SDG daily when 90 per cent of the money supply now circulates outside the banking system. How does the Government justify a fiscal policy that prevents citizens from accessing their own savings for survival needs during a humanitarian crisis, and what alternative mechanisms has the Government established to ensure citizens can access their resources for essential purchases?
6. Please clarify how the current debt modalities are affecting the ability of the Government to provide protection and assistance to those displaced, including alternative adequate housing, water, essential food and medical services, and other forms of humanitarian and/or legal assistance.
7. Please elaborate how your Excellency's Government provides support for women-led food initiatives with flexible, direct, and predictable financing and integrate women-led organizations into decision-making at all levels of the humanitarian response and conflict resolution mechanisms.
8. Please provide detailed information on the budgetary allocations to the education sector in the annual budgets, including primary, secondary, and emergency education for displaced children and communities affected by conflict. In light of international standards, how does the Government ensure that education remains accessible, inclusive, and adequately funded during armed conflict? What measures have been taken to prevent disruption of education services, support safe learning environments, and integrate education into humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts?

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.

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

Farida Shaheed
Special Rapporteur on the right to education

Attiya Waris
Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights

Tlaleng Mofokeng
Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Mama Fatima Singhateh
Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children

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

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In light of the above mentioned allegations, we would like to recall Sudan's obligations as a State party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ratified in 1986, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified in 1986, the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified in 1990, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ratified in 1963, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child ratified in 2005 and the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. According to article 4(g) of the Declaration, women subjected to violence must receive specialized assistance, such as rehabilitation, assistance in childcare, treatment, counselling, and health and social services, facilities and programmes, as well as support structures, and should take all other appropriate measures to promote their safety and physical and psychological rehabilitation.

We further recall that the right to education is a critical safeguard against atrocity crimes and grave human rights violations. As highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education (A/80/479; A/74/243), education must be inclusive, non-discriminatory, and grounded in human rights values to foster social cohesion and prevent violence. International standards—including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)—affirm the importance of ensuring equal access to quality education for all, including displaced children, girls, and persons living in vulnerable conditions, especially during armed conflict.

Finally, we recall that under international human rights law, States have primary obligations to their populations that cannot be suspended during emergencies. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its general comment No. 3, has emphasised that resource constraints cannot justify failure to fulfil minimum core obligations, and that States must demonstrate they have used all available resources to satisfy minimum essential levels of rights as a matter of priority. The UN Basic Principles on External Debt and Human Rights emphasise that debt service should not compromise a State's capacity to fulfil human rights obligations, particularly during humanitarian emergencies when the right to life is at immediate risk.