

# Sudan

President Omar al-Bashir has ruled Sudan with an iron fist for nearly 26 years. The government continued to use repressive tactics and legislations to silence political opposition and clamp down on civil society. The 2010 National Security Act grants the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) extensive powers to arrest and detain people for up to four and a half months without judicial review. Detained opponents and human rights defenders have been often held in NISS cells that fall outside the jurisdiction of prisons laws and regulations, where they have also suffered ill treatment and torture.

The human rights and humanitarian violations committed in the war zones of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile have reached alarming levels. The Sudanese government has engaged in indiscriminate aerial bombardments, targeting civilians and civilian property - including villages, health facilities, schools, and places of worship, leading to massive forced displacement. Civilians are often subjected to arbitrary and incommunicado detentions, torture, sexual violence, and other forms of ill treatment, amidst deliberate obstruction of humanitarian assistance by the authorities.

The al-Bashir regime continues to defy the indictment issued by the International Criminal Court regarding the war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes of genocide committed in Darfur, where arbitrary shelling continues to target towns and villages and brutal attacks and massacres are committed against civilians by tribal militias loyal to the regime.

### **General Elections:**

The 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections were the first to take place after the establishment of the Republic of South Sudan following secession.<sup>1</sup> The elections were heavily criticized as being even worse than the 2010 elections, which were somewhat competitive, although neither fair nor free. The election process was mostly dominated by internal dynamics and politics, and little or no influence was exerted from the international community.<sup>2</sup>

The main opposition parties and some civil society organizations boycotted the elections. The opposition's "Irhal" or "leave" campaign urged Sudanese people not to vote. Opposition parties protested against the restrictions imposed on them and the press, and about the ongoing conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile region.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Bashir made promises for an inclusive national dialogue in January 2014, following the unaddressed consequences of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and South Sudan's 2011 independence as well as the large, violently repressed nationwide September 2013 protests in Khartoum and other cities, followed by a

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<sup>1</sup>UN Security Council, *Resolution 1996 (2011)* / adopted by the Security Council at its 6576th meeting, on 8 July 2011, 8 July 2011, S/RES/1996(2011), [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmis/documents/sres1996\\_2011.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmis/documents/sres1996_2011.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Cristina Barrios, "Elections in Africa: Half-Full, Half-Empty?" European Union Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Issue Alert 29, June 2015, [http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert\\_29\\_Africa\\_elections.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_29_Africa_elections.pdf)>

<sup>3</sup>James Copnall, "Sudan: The Election Will Not Change Anything", *The Guardian*, Apr. 13, 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/apr/13/sudan-election-omar-al-bashir-opposition-boycott>

costly, unsuccessful and unpopular military campaign in South Kordofan.<sup>4</sup> However, several opposition leaders were detained and a crackdown on the press was intensified; the talks never really got going. The situation has prompted doubts as to whether free and fair polls can be held amidst these conditions.<sup>5</sup>

These concerns were reiterated in a statement by Federica Mogherini on behalf of the 28 EU member states: “When dialogue is bypassed, some groups are excluded and civil and political rights are infringed, the upcoming elections cannot produce a credible result with legitimacy throughout the country.”<sup>6</sup>

According to Sudan’s National Electoral Commission (NEC) nearly six million (6,091,412) out of the 13 million (13,126,989) registered voters have participated in the elections, amounting to 46.4 percent.<sup>7</sup> However, the African Union Election Observation mission reported<sup>8</sup> that there was “a generally low turnout of voters” throughout the voting days in both rural and urban polling stations. It further added that “most polling places visited by AU observers had short queues,” and attributed the low turnout to the boycott by some opposition parties and civil society organizations.

Some sources suggested that the low voting turnout is not associated with the opposition’s boycotting campaign. It rather argued that people are simply not engaging because they do not see that the

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<sup>4</sup>Crisis Group, Sudan: The Prospects for “National Dialogue,” Mar. 11, 2015, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan/b108-sudan-the-prospects-for-national-dialogue.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> “Sudan: The Election Will Not Change Anything,” *The Guardian*.

<sup>6</sup> Federica Mogherini, Declaration by the High Representative on Behalf of the European Union on the lack of a Conducive Environment for the Upcoming Elections in Sudan, Brussels, Apr. 9, 2014, [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sudan/documents/press\\_corner/2015/20150409\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sudan/documents/press_corner/2015/20150409_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> National Electoral Committee, “The Announcement of the Results and Statistics of General Elections,” Apr. 2015, [nec.org.sd/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/-نتائج-و-احصائيات-الانتخابات-2015.pdf](http://nec.org.sd/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/-نتائج-و-احصائيات-الانتخابات-2015.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> African Union, Preliminary Report of the African Union Election Observation Mission to the April 2015 General Elections in the Republic of Sudan, Apr. 13, 2015,

process will address their problems or serve their interests, confirming that “it’s a one-sided election.”<sup>9</sup>

In a repeated pattern, President al-Bashir’s ruling National Congress Party (NCP), controlled 90 percent of the 450 parliamentary seats prior to its 94 percent win in the April 2015 elections.<sup>10</sup>

## **Media Freedoms:**

Although the interim constitution of 2005 recognizes the freedom of press, the authorities continued to censor the media by confiscating newspapers and targeting journalists. The government-appointed Press Council, founded as part of the 2009 Press and Publications Act to “oversee the overall performance of the journalistic institutions and companies,”<sup>11</sup> continued to limit freedom of expression and the press.

Members of the NISS intensified their raids<sup>12</sup> on printing facilities and confiscated print runs of newspapers considered to be in violation of the Act. The NISS has instructed editors and media institutions not to cross certain “red lines” in their coverage, including publishing articles that portray the elections negatively, report low voter turnout, or criticize the armed forces, economic policy, the situation in Darfur, or the armed conflicts in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. These patterns have particularly increased a few months before the scheduled general elections. The escalated restrictions were believed to be a tactic by the NISS to circumscribe the already restrictive space for freedom of expression in Sudan and prevent dissemination of news deemed critical of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Sudan: The Election Will Not Change Anything,” *The Guardian*.

<sup>10</sup> African Democratic Institute, “Omar al-Bashir –Sudan’s Almighty Constitution,” <http://www.african-di.org/omar-al-bashir-sudans-almighty-constitution>.

<sup>11</sup> Press and Publications Act (2009), Article 8(A), <http://moj.gov.sd/content/lawsv4/12b/6.htm>

<sup>12</sup> East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders, “Caught up in a Bitter Contests; Human Rights Defenders Working in the Context of Elections in Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi and Uganda,” September 2015.

<sup>13</sup> A ican Center for Justice and Peace Studies, “Sharp Increase in Media Restrictions 5 frWeeks Before Sudanese General Elections,” 26 February 2015,

<http://www.acjps.org/sharp-increase-in-media-restrictions-5-weeks-before-sudanese-general-elections>

Security officials continued to arrest and obstruct journalists' work. On January 17, 2015, Ms. Madiha Abdulla, Chief Editor of Al Midan and another two journalists faced charges relating to "criminal conspiracy" and the "publication of false news," brought forward by the Prosecutor of Crimes against the State. The charges are believed to be related to articles about the economic situation facing the Lagawa people in West Kordofan and the burning of palm trees by the government to clear land in Northern Sudan.<sup>14</sup>

On January 18, 2015, the NISS summoned Ms. Nada Ramdan, a journalist working with al-Gereeda newspaper, to their offices in the Khartoum 2 area. She remained at the office for three hours before she was released. She was not interrogated or informed of the reason for the summons, but was told that she would likely be called to report back. On February 11, 2015, the NISS of Khartoum summoned Ms. Enaam Adam, a female journalist working with al-Tayar newspaper, and interrogated her about an article she wrote on containers of radioactive material. She was released the same day.<sup>15</sup>

### **Restrictions on Political Opposition:**

Authorities continued to impose heavy restrictions on political parties and their members. Despite promises on April 6, 2014 by al-Bashir to release all political detainees and alleviate restrictions on the opposition, al-Bashir issued decree No. 158 on April 15, 2014, forbidding political parties from organizing meetings in their own venues without approval and requiring permission for public meetings 48 hours in advance.<sup>16</sup>

The NISS continued to target and detain prominent leaders of political opposition parties. While some of them have been detained incommunicado, often without charge, others have been charged with serious criminal offences for speaking out against government policy.

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<sup>14</sup> ACJPS, "Sharp Increase in Media Restriction."

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> ACJPS, "Sudan's Political Parties Affairs Council Bans Republican Party Amidst Calls for National Dialogue," <http://www.acjps.org/sudans-political-parties-affairs-council-bans-republican-party-amidst-calls-for-national-dialogue>.

Prominent human rights defender Amin Mekki Medani, political opposition leader Farouq Abu Eissa, and political activist Farah Ibrahim Alagar, were detained for over four months after returning from political negotiations<sup>17</sup> in Addis Ababa. They were detained in December 2014 and held incommunicado for 15 days before being charged with “waging war against the state,” the charge that carries the death penalty. They were released on April 9, 2015 after the Minister of Justice decided to freeze the case against them pursuant to his discretionary powers.<sup>18</sup>

Between February and April, the authorities arrested and detained dozens of people both before and after the general elections.<sup>19</sup> On April 12 alone, the eve of the elections, at least 22 people were arrested across Sudan, in connection with their outspoken views on the elections.<sup>20</sup> In North Darfur, students at al-Fasher University held a protest on April 14, 2015 calling for a boycott of the presidential elections and a change of government. Police and NISS arrested and charged 20 students for demonstrating. They showed marks of severe beating and their clothes were stained with blood on the first day of their detention.<sup>21</sup>

In August, at least 17 members of opposition parties were arrested, detained, and interrogated by the Sudanese security agents. Most of those arrested are affiliated with the Sudanese Congress Party (SCP), which has an active student and youth wing and conducts public rallies and events. Several of those detained were reportedly subjected to violence and other abuse, including severe beatings.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “Sudan Call, A Political Declaration on the Establishment of a State of Citizenship and Democracy,” Dec. 3, 2014, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article53263>

<sup>18</sup> Front Line Defenders, “Human Rights Defender Amin Mekki Medani Released,” Apr. 10, 2015, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/28493>.

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Sudan: Surge in Detention, Beatings, Around Elections,” 28 April 2015

<sup>20</sup> ACJPS, “Sudan’s Electoral Period Marred by Arrests and Incommunicado Detention; Insecurity in Darfur,” Apr. 17, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty, “State Sponsored Assault.”

<sup>22</sup> HRW, “Wave of Opposition Arrests,” Aug. 28, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/08/28/sudan-wave-opposition-arrests>

## **Crackdown on Civil Society Organizations and Human Rights Defenders:**

The crackdown on civil society intensified after the decision of the International Criminal Court on March 4, 2009 to issue an arrest warrant against President Omar al- Bashir. Authorities, including the NISS and government regulatory bodies, such as the Ministry of Culture and the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC), have continued to impose severe restrictions on the operation and mandates of civil society organizations and a number have been forcibly closed.

On January 18, the NISS of Omdurman, Khartoum state, raided the Mahmud Mohamed Taha Cultural Centre, whilst a ceremony commemorating the life of Mahmud Mohamed Taha was taking place. The ceremony marked the thirty-year anniversary of the execution of Mahmud Mohamed Taha, founder of the Republican Party in Sudan, which opposed Islamic fundamentalism and promoted secularism. The NISS informed the Centre's chairperson that the Centre was being closed because its license had not been renewed by the Ministry of Culture in Khartoum and that formal notification would be received shortly. On January 21, 2015, the Centre received letter No. 1/2015 from the Ministry of Culture, cancelling its registration.<sup>23</sup>

On January 29, 2015, the Registrar of Cultural Groups within the Sudanese Ministry of Culture cancelled the registration of the Sudanese Writers Union (SWU) without citing reasons or relevant legislation.<sup>24</sup> The SWU works through culture to promote dialogue and seek solutions to conflicts, with an emphasis on freedom of expression and diversity. It convenes meetings of writers and its members publish in print and online media.

On March 26, 2015, armed NISS officers raided the Khartoum-based TRACKS for Training and Human Development whilst it was

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<sup>23</sup> ACJPS, Sudan's Security Services Raid and Order Closure of Mahmoud Mohamed Taha Cultural Centre, Jan. 23, 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/sudans-security-services-raid-and-order-closure-of-mahmoud-mohamed-taha-cultural-centre>

<sup>24</sup> ACJPS, "Sudan's Ministry of Culture Orders the Closure of the Sudanese Writer's Union," Feb. 3, 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/sudans-ministry-of-culture-orders-the-closure-of-the-sudanese-writers-union/>

hosting a training session. Participants were accused of discussing the boycott of the upcoming general elections. Four laptop computers and the central computer server were seized.<sup>25</sup> Three weeks later, the NISS arrested human rights defender Adil Bakheit at the Tracks Training Centre in Khartoum. He was released on bail after being held in police custody for 17 days. Serious criminal charges previously leveled against him were not completely dropped.<sup>26</sup>

On April 12, unidentified men kidnapped human rights defender Sandra Kodouda from her car. Kodouda, an outspoken advocate for youth, women, and environmental rights, returned home four days later with multiple injuries. Local rights groups and family members publicly blamed the NISS for her disappearance.<sup>27</sup>

On April 20, NISS agents went to Sandra's home and detained her colleague Dr Galal Mustafa Mohamed Yusuf. Dr Jalal, a prominent member of the opposition Sudanese Congress Party (SCP), was on the phone to Sandra at the time of her abduction and reported the incident to police the following day.<sup>28</sup>

### **Human Rights Violations in the Context of Armed Conflict:**

In 2015, there have been rising hostilities, mass displacement, and a deepening food crisis in Sudan's conflict areas of Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. There are currently 1.7 million internally displaced persons in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states<sup>29</sup>, and more than 2.5 internally displaced in Darfur. The conflicts have been

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<sup>25</sup> ACJPS, "Sudanese Human Rights Defender Detained on Baseless Charges and Others at Risk After Armed Raid on Khartoum Training Centre," Apr. 18, 2015, <http://www.acjps.org/sudanese-human-rights-defender-detained-on-baselesscharges-and-others-at-risk-after-armed-raid-on-khartoum-based-training-centre/>

<sup>26</sup> Front Line Defenders, "Sudan – Adil Bakheit Conditionally Released," May 6, 2015,

<https://frontlinedefenders.org/node/28654>

<sup>27</sup> Front Line Defenders, "Sudan HRD Sandra Kodouda Injured During Four Day Disappearance," Apr. 16, 2015, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/28557>

<sup>28</sup> Amnesty, "Sudan: State-Sponsored Assault."

<sup>29</sup> USAID, "Sudan – Complex Emergency," Feb. 12, 2015,

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/02.12.15%20-%20USAID-DCHA%20Sudan%20Complex%20Emergency%20Fact%20Sheet%20%232.pdf>

characterized by direct and indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets, killings, sexual violence, destruction of property, and loss of livelihoods.<sup>30</sup>

The government's indiscriminate aerial bombing and ground attacks in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, sent thousands of women and children into crowded camps in Darfur and neighboring Chad and into refugee camps in South Sudan and Ethiopia. Government forces, rebels, and other armed men have raped and assaulted women and girls with near-total impunity across several conflict zones in the region.<sup>31</sup>

About 400,000 new internally displaced people (IDPs) were registered between January and August 2014 in the country. According to UN figures, 6.9 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Sudan.<sup>32</sup>

## **Darfur:**

The security situation in Darfur remains very serious. The ongoing conflict has created obstacles for the protection of innocent civilians and hindered humanitarian assistance. Many civilians in Darfur were killed by violence or conflict-induced disease, starvation, or dehydration. Thousands of villages and countless livelihoods have been destroyed. Sexual violence against women and girls has been widespread.

The government has made no tangible progress in providing accountability for crimes committed in Darfur since 2003, the killing

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<sup>30</sup> ACJPS, "Sudan Forcibly Displaces and Sets Villages on Fire in Blue Nile; Civilians Presumed to be Affiliated with Rebels Detained Incommunicado, Jun.17, 2015,

<http://www.acjps.org/sudan-forcibly-displaces-and-sets-villages-on-fire-in-blue-nile-civilians-presumed-to-be-affiliated-with-rebels-detained-incommunicado/>

<sup>31</sup> HRW, "Dispatches: Sudan's War on Women and Girls," Oct. 12 2015,

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/12/dispatches-sudans-war-women-and-girls>

<sup>32</sup> UNHCR, "2015 UNHCR Country Operations Profile – Sudan,"

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483b76.html>

of more than 170 protesters in September 2013, or other serious abuses.<sup>33</sup>

On December 23, 2014, President al-Bashir announced the resumption of “Operation Decisive Summer,” with the aim of eliminating those armed movements that did not heed the government’s call for dialogue. The announcement was followed by intensified fighting between government forces and SLA/AW in East Jebel Marra and with SLA/MM near Tawilla, North Darfur.<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a government force, under the command of NISS and consisting largely of former militias created in mid-2013, led two brutal counterinsurgency campaigns in 2014 and 2015. The RSF repeatedly attacked villages, burned and looted homes, beating, raping and executing villagers. The RSF received support in the air and on the ground from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and other government-backed militia groups, including a variety of proxy militias, commonly known as Janjaweed.<sup>35</sup>

Humanitarian organizations have verified over 104, 000 newly internally displaced persons in 2015 and received unconfirmed reports of an additional 69, 000 persons, most of whom are in inaccessible areas in and around Jebel Marra. Approximately 50, 000 people displaced since the beginning of the year have returned to their places of origin. More than 2.6 million persons remain displaced across Darfur.<sup>36</sup> Sudanese army forces raped more than 200 women and girls

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<sup>33</sup> HRW, Universal Periodic Review Submission, Sept.2015,

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/21/universal-periodic-review-submission-sudan>

<sup>34</sup> SC, "Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur," Feb. 26, 2015, S/2015/141,

[http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2015\\_141.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_141.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> HRW, “Men With No Mercy: Rapid Support Forces Attacks against Civilians in Darfur, Sudan,” Sept. 9, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/node/280756/>.

<sup>36</sup> UN Security Council, “Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur,” Sept. 25, 2015, S/2015/729, [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_PV\\_7545.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_PV_7545.pdf)

in an organized attack on the north Darfur town of Tabit in October 2014.<sup>37</sup>

The situation is further marked by deeply concerning<sup>38</sup> increase in violent attacks by armed assailants against United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel. On May 24, unknown gunmen aboard a motorcycle killed a UNAMID national staff member near the mission's base in Zalingei, Central Darfur. The motive behind the attack has not been determined.

### **Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile:**

The conflict between Sudanese Government forces and the armed opposition, the Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N), which began in June and September 2011, continued throughout the year. The four-year campaign of ground and indiscriminate aerial attacks launched by the Sudanese government continued to target rebel-held areas in the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.<sup>39</sup>

The government of Sudan's "decisive campaign" to eradicate the SPLA-N rebels intensified significantly during May 2015, as the government attempted to gain ground ahead of the coming rainy season.<sup>40</sup> The fighting caused the displacement of approximately 50,000 people in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile (known as the "Two Areas") this month.<sup>41</sup> Many of the displaced suffered loss of

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<sup>37</sup>HRW, "Sudan's War on Women and Girls,"

<sup>38</sup> UN Security Council, 7460th Meeting (AM), SC/11924, Edmond Mulet, 10 June 2015,

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11924.doc.htm>

<sup>39</sup> Letter to Permanent Representatives of Members and Observer States of the UN Human Rights Council, "Gravely deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in Sudan," Sept. 3, 2015, <https://www.defenddefenders.org/2015/09/un-human-rights-council-gravely-deteriorating-human-rights-and-humanitarian-situation-in-sudan/>

<sup>40</sup> The Sudan Consortium, "Human Rights Update - May 2015,"

[http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur\\_consortium\\_actions/reports/2015/SK-BNUupdateMay15FINAL.pdf](http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_consortium_actions/reports/2015/SK-BNUupdateMay15FINAL.pdf)>

<sup>41</sup> SKBN CU, "Humanitarian Update," May 2015,

most of their household goods and food stocks, which were looted or burnt by government aligned militias - mainly Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Popular Defense Forces (PDF).

The government forced around 12,000 people in Blue Nile to move to the outskirts of the capital Damazin. The new IDPs are now living in critical humanitarian conditions, having lost their food stocks and assets including seeds, and will be unable to plant in the rainy season. Many newly displaced in South Kordofan are expected to move to the refugee camps in South Sudan. Neither international organizations nor the CU are able to assess the situation of the IDPs in government-held areas due to government prohibitions on access.<sup>42</sup>

Three villages inhabited by members of the Ingessana ethnic group, in Blue Nile region, have been burned to the ground by the SAF. The armed forces have also ordered residents of four villages to relocate from their homes, threatening that those who stay behind will be presumed to be members of the SPLM-N.<sup>43</sup>

Indiscriminate and targeted aerial bombardment and shelling continue to create fear and stress for the civilian populations. Between January and April 2015, the Sudanese air force dropped 374 bombs in 60 locations across South Kordofan.<sup>44</sup> In March 2015, 21 bombs were dropped in different areas of Blue Nile State, with two of the bombs detonating at altitude, indicating the use of cluster bombs.<sup>45</sup> An estimated 180 bombs, including four cluster bombs, and about 300 shells were dropped on civilian locations in the Two Areas, in May 2015, resulting in the death of five people and injuring nineteen.<sup>46</sup>

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<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SKBN-CU-Humanitarian-Update-May-2015.pdf>>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> ACJPS, "Sudan Forcibly Displaces and Sets Villages on Fire in Blue Nile."

<sup>44</sup> Amnesty, "Don't We Matter?: Four Years of Unrelenting Attacks against Civilians in Sudan's South Kordofan State," Aug. 4, 2015,

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/2162/2015/en/>

<sup>45</sup> ACJPS, Sudan Forcibly Displaces and Sets Villages on Fire in Blue Nile

<sup>46</sup> SKBN CU, "Humanitarian Update"

Reportedly, at least 100 civilians including 26 children were killed in 2014 and 2015 from aerial bombardment or after the initial attack by unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war in Southern Kordofan.<sup>47</sup>

The increase in aerial bombardment of civilian locations in May and June has been a consistent strategy of the Sudan Armed Forces since the start of the civil war, to disrupt cultivation and planting activities, with visible negative impact on the war affected populations in the Two Areas.<sup>48</sup>

### **Torture and Ill Treatment:**

The use of torture across Sudan is endemic.<sup>49</sup> Sudanese authorities use torture and other forms of ill treatment to intimidate and silence opposition. Human rights defenders, political and other social activists, internally displaced persons and students are particularly vulnerable to torture and ill treatment. The NISS have the powers to arrest and detain people for up to four and a half months without judicial review. Detained opponents and human rights defenders have been often held in NISS cells that fall outside the jurisdiction of prisons laws and regulations, where they have also suffered ill treatment and torture.

Methods of torture include the use of beatings with water pipes, gun butts, metal bars, sticks and fists, prolonged enforced standing, exposure to bright sunlight and heat, extremely cold temperatures, sleep deprivation, blindfolding, death threats against detainees and their families, threats of sexual violence and exposure to the torture and beatings of fellow detainees, as well as verbal and racist insults. Detainees have been held in inadequate facilities with no electricity,

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<sup>47</sup> HRW, "Sudan: Bombing Campaign's Heavy Toll on Children," May 6, 2015 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/05/06/sudan-bombing-campaigns-heavy-toll-children>

<sup>48</sup> SKBN CU, "Humanitarian Update."

<sup>49</sup> ACJPS, "On the International Day in Support of Torture Survivors, End Torture and Repeal Enabling Legislation," Jun. 26, 2015,, <http://www.acjps.org/sudan-on-the-international-day-in-support-of-torture-survivors-end-torture-and-repeal-enabling-legislation/>

bedding or sufficient ventilation. Some detainees were forced to provide their email, Facebook and Skype passwords.<sup>50</sup>

Sudan continues to implement a number of degrading physical punishments despite their being banned under the International Convention against Torture, including stoning, amputation, cross amputation and lashing. Sudanese courts orders lashing for punishments including adultery, wrongful accusation of adultery and drinking of alcohol, and for 18 other offences in the 1991 Criminal Act.

### **Religious Freedoms:**

Restrictions on religious freedoms have been increasing, particularly targeting members of Christian groups in Sudan. On December 2, 2014, the Evangelical Church of Khartoum Bahri was raided by police to disperse a sit-in concerning a corruption scandal. Police beat a number of peaceful demonstrators with pipes and water sticks and arrested 38 church members. Later in December 2014 and January 2015, two South Sudanese pastors were arrested by police and held for more than seven months, including more than two months incommunicado. They were charged with various serious crimes that carry the death penalty and flogging. They were arrested after making public remarks criticizing the corruption scandal at the Khartoum Bahri church and the treatment of Christians in Sudan.<sup>51</sup>

### **Women's Rights:**

The discriminatory interpretation and implementation of provisions of some laws, including the Criminal Law, the Public Order Law and the Personal Status Law, continues to be an issue of concern. Women and girls are often arrested and subjected to lashes if they commit acts considered by the authorities to be “disgraceful” or that “undermine

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<sup>50</sup> ACJPS & FIDH, “Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Sudan 2016,” Sept. 2015,

<https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/sudan/submission-to-the-universal-periodic-review-of-sudan-2016>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

public morals” under article 152 on ‘indecent behavior’ of the penal code.<sup>52</sup>

In May 2015, Sudan permitted a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The special Rapporteur reported<sup>53</sup> that a large number of women and girls live in a context of deep inequality, underdevelopment, poverty and conflict. The situation is further exacerbated by violence in both the public and private spheres, whether at the hands of state or non-state actors.

In the context of conflict, sexual and gender-based violence, including rape and sexual harassment and humiliation, is increasingly worrying. Women and girls, in particular asylum seekers and refugees, are subjected to trafficking either during transit or in the destination country. The insecurity prevalent in most IDP camps further renders women and girls vulnerable to violence, whether at the hands of criminal elements, rebel groups or the authorities.

The racial targeting of Darfuri women students, includes particular humiliations linked to their perceived racial identity, and includes the practice of cutting their hair and questioning their ‘Arab’ identity was documented during the UN Rapporteur visit. The special Rapporteur, at the end of her visit to Sudan, urged the Sudanese government to “set up a Commission of Inquiry, consisting of both national and international persons, to look into the reports of allegations of mass rapes in different regions, including recent allegations regarding the village of Thabit.”

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<sup>52</sup> Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, "Delivering Democracy Annual Report 2013: Sudan, <http://www.cihrs.org/?p=6590&lang=en>

<sup>53</sup> Special Rapporteur on violence against women finalizes country mission to Sudan and calls for more open and constructive dialogues on violence against women, its causes and consequences, May 24, 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16009&LangID=E#sthash.EyOcZ0KA.dpuf>

