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# “They Were Shouting ‘Kill Them’”

Sudan’s Violent Crackdown on Protesters in Khartoum



**“They Were Shouting ‘Kill Them’”**

Sudan’s Violent Crackdown on Protesters in Khartoum

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## Map of Sit-in Area



## **Glossary**

FFC Forces for Freedom and Change

TMC Transitional Military Council

SAF Sudan Armed Forces

SPA Sudan Professionals Association

RSF Rapid Support Forces

NCP National Congress Party

NISS National Intelligence and Security Service

SC Sovereign Council

## Summary

“Shooting was clearly targeted and intentional...; they directed their guns at us... they were shouting ‘kill them, kill them’ all the time. I saw many bodies hit by bullets while I was running.”

– “Amir,” a witness to the June 3 violent dispersal of protesters, Khartoum, August 2019.

It was dark and rainy in the early hours of Monday, June 3, 2019, on eve of the last day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Sudanese protesters – whose months of protests prompted the ouster of Omar al-Bashir, Sudan’s President for 30 years, on April 11 – were still at their sit-in near the army headquarters, despite rumors that the government would soon disperse them. They remained even after al-Bashir’s ouster to protest rule by the transitional military council that took power and call for a handover to civilian rule.

Before dawn, a large number of government forces, including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – the paramilitary force established in 2013 which carried out highly abusive counter insurgency campaigns in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile – surrounded the sit-in area. After an initial attempt by men in police uniforms to move a barricade, witnesses said RSF soldiers opened fire on unarmed protesters, instantly killing many. The soldiers rounded up and beat protesters, subjecting them to various abuses and humiliation, burned tents and looted and destroyed property. They also raped protesters and committed other acts of sexual violence. Three days later, the African Union suspended Sudan’s membership.

Triggered by price hikes following austerity measures imposed by al-Bashir, nationwide protests started in December 2018 outside Khartoum, in the southern town of Damazin, in Blue Nile state; Atbara, in the northeastern River Nile state; El Obeid, in the central state of Northern Kordofan; and al-Gadarif, in the east. Women, who have challenged patriarchal policies and practices by al-Bashir’s government, joined in and provided leadership for protests. The sexual violence some of them faced should be understood in light of Sudan’s history of security forces using sexual violence to silence female rights activists.

From the beginning in December, government security forces, particularly the National Security and Intelligence Service (NISS), responded to the protests with excessive force, using live bullets to disperse unarmed protesters. They rounded up thousands of protesters, opposition leaders, organizers and activists, often violently, and detained hundreds without charge for months, beating and abusing many. They censored the media by confiscating newspapers, arresting journalists, blocking social media, and shutting down or expelling foreign media.

On April 11, about four months after the protests started, al-Bashir's first vice president and defense minister, Awad Ibn Ouf, announced on national television that a high security committee, composed of commanders of security, police and military forces, had overthrown al-Bashir and his regime and that al-Bashir had stepped down. The announcement came just days after protesters staged a sit-in around the army headquarters in Khartoum, demanding al-Bashir's resignation with chants of "*tasgut bass*" ("just fall, that's all").

Following al-Bashir's ouster, a Transition Military Council (TMC) of army generals led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan took over the government, with Mohamed "Hemedti" Hamdan Dagalo, as his deputy. Hemedti, the commander of the RSF, has been implicated by Human Rights Watch in serious crimes by the RSF against civilians in Darfur and elsewhere – including mass rape and burning villages. After April, RSF forces were more visible in Khartoum and led most of the subsequent violence against protesters.

Based on field research in Khartoum between July 28 and August 11, and interviews with more than 60 people in Khartoum and Omdurman including families of those killed, activists, staff of civil society organizations, and medical service providers, this report documents the most violent of these dispersals, including the attack on the June 3 sit-in, when security forces led by the RSF opened fire on unarmed protesters, killing scores, raping people, injuring hundreds, and committed a range of other serious abuses. The report also describes subsequent attacks on protesters including another violent crackdown on June 30, when protesters marched against the June 3 killings and again called for handover to civilian rule.

Human Rights Watch was not able to ascertain the total number of those killed during the attack on June 3 and in the following days. Independent doctors' groups reported credible

estimates of over 120 protesters killed between June 3 and 18 and over nine hundred injured, some severely. They also reported bodies were pulled from the Nile river, two of whom were tied to bricks showing gunshot wounds, pointing to possible execution. Dozens were reported missing. The official death toll, 87, was widely rejected as too low.

International and regional actors condemned the violence, calling for impartial and independent investigations and accountability for grave human rights violations by armed forces. The TMC’s initial response was to deny attacking the sit-in, claiming they only targeted an area across the street from the sit-in that they said hosted “illegal activities.” The TMC spokesman then expressed regret for “mistakes” made by officers while attempting to disperse the sit-in. Authorities sought to suppress information about the violence by restricting international media’s access to the country, and completely shutting down the internet for over a month from June 10. But within weeks, protesters in the capital again took to the streets, demanding civilian rule and justice for the June 3 killings. In response to the “millions march” in Omdurman on June 30, government forces again used live ammunition to disperse the protests, killing at least ten.

In early July, political negotiations between the TMC and the opposition Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), a coalition of political parties, professional associations and civil society groups, which had stalled for four weeks, resumed. On August 17, the parties agreed to a transitional government, headed by a sovereign council that will be led by the military for 21 months followed by 17 months of civilian leadership. They agreed to make reforms and ensure accountability for crimes committed under al-Bashir’s regime, and to form a national independent investigation into the June 3 violence.

The use of disproportionate, excessive force to disperse protests in violent repeated crackdowns, without ensuring that security operations pose a minimal risk to life, according to many people Human Rights Watch interviewed, was a deliberate attempt to intimidate the movement and break the resolve of protesters. These crackdowns have involved serious violations of domestic and international law, including some crimes that may constitute crimes against humanity. The crackdowns also violated basic freedoms of assembly and expression, protected in Sudan’s constitution and international obligations that guarantee Sudanese people the right to protest.

The abuses, and lack of transparency and accountability from authorities, have clearly fueled ongoing calls for justice by the protesters. The families of “martyrs” killed since December, and families of the missing continue to demand justice for the crimes against their loved ones.

To begin the process of undoing Sudan’s long history of entrenched impunity, there should be meaningful and genuine accountability. This will require a process that can effectively establish facts, preserve evidence and prepare for criminal prosecutions in a system that is truly independent. Such a process is only likely to be established if it has a significant international component, through UN involvement and support.

On September 21 the prime minister announced the formation of a national investigation committee, as envisioned in the August 17 agreement. Its mandate is limited to events on June 3. On October 21, the prime minister announced the names of committee members and which powers they would enjoy. Victims’ groups and rights groups have raised concerns about the lack of female members as well as the independence of the committee because members include representatives from the ministries of interior and defense, which oversee the forces responsible for the crimes.

Authorities should revise the mandate or create a new committee that can investigate all unlawful use of force and other crimes against protestors since December 2018, including sexual violence, and provide that the evidence should be available to the relevant bodies for use in pursuing prosecutions. Investigators should probe the roles of the TMC and all those involved in the planning of the June 3 operation, including RSF commander Hemedti.

Authorities should ensure involvement from civil society groups and families of victims and invite support from the AU and UN. Investigators should include persons with experience in documenting sexual violence in a survivor-centered manner and help survivors access services including long term healthcare. All investigations should provide referrals for medical assistance and other services for survivors and include special expertise on assistance for survivors of rape and sexual assault.

Sudan’s transitional government, although it is yet to appoint its legislative council, should embark on a much-needed reform process with clear benchmarks. The sovereign council and cabinet should swiftly form the numerous commissions envisioned in the

August agreement, prioritizing those related to human rights, law reform and transitional justice, and review existing national laws to bring them in line with international standards. The sovereign council should promptly ratify key international human rights treaties such as the Convention Against Torture (CAT) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). The government should also now cooperate with the outstanding warrants issued by the International Criminal Court against al-Bashir and other suspects.

# **Recommendations**

## **To the Transitional Government**

- The Prime Minister should revise the investigation committee it established on September 21 or form a new committee that is independent and empowered to investigate abuses against protesters committed since December 2018, including sexual violence. Ensure that the committee will be empowered to request, collect and preserve evidence that may be used in court by the appropriate bodies and that they have the power to implement measures to protect victims and witnesses who provide evidence.
- Ensure that families of the victims are involved in the investigation conducted by the committee and that the investigation is subject to public scrutiny.
- Invite support from both the African Union and the United Nations for the work of the committee, including experts with experience investigating crimes against humanity and cases of sexual violence.
- Establish the transitional commissions envisioned in the August 17 agreement and embark on a comprehensive reform agenda including for reforming national laws in line with international standards, and accountability. Ensure commissions have clear mandates, strategies and benchmarks, and invite civil society participation and international support.
- Ensure that the legislative council, when formed, is empowered to lift immunities for any official including members of the Sovereign Council as envisioned in the August 17 agreement.
- Allow unhindered access to all African Union (AU), United Nations and other international organizations including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to monitor the human rights situation across the country on an ongoing basis.
- Urgently move to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention Against Torture, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Cooperate with ICC's arrest warrants by turning over Omar al-Bashir and the four other war crimes suspects – Ahmed Haroun, Ali Kushayb, Abdallah Banda

and Abdel Rahim Mohammed Hussein, who are sought on charges of international crimes committed in Darfur – to the court.

## To the African Union

- Support Sudan’s domestic accountability efforts by publicly pressing for investigations into abuses against protesters since December 2018, with a view to identifying those responsible and holding them to account; and by monitoring any domestic accountability efforts.
- Encourage the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) to establish a fact-finding mission to Sudan to assess violations against protesters since December 2018.
- Monitor Sudan’s progress making reforms envisioned in the August 17 agreement, establishing key commissions and forming a legislative council and appointing a head of judiciary and attorney general.

## To the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights

- Establish a fact-finding mission to Sudan to assess violations against protesters since December 2018 and the accountability processes related to the violations.
- Collaborate with partners such as the UN’s OHCHR to provide technical support to the Investigation Committee.
- Urge Sudan to implement all pending Communications of the Commission and collaborate closely with regional and international accountability bodies, including the African Court and the International Criminal Court, and to ratify key treaties including the Rome Statute.

## To the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- Pursuant to the memorandum of understanding with the Sudanese government, signed in September, establish a fully mandated office in Sudan. The mandate should include monitoring and regular public reporting on human rights developments, including accountability efforts such as the investigation committee established on September 21.

- In collaboration with national authorities, support efforts to investigate and hold criminally accountable those responsible for abuses against protesters since December 2018 as well as past abuses under the al-Bashir government.
- Provide technical support for the reform agenda, including by helping to establish work plans and benchmarks for repealing and replacing national laws and procedures that are in violation of international law, and the urgent ratification of international human rights conventions and treaties.

## To the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council

- Ahead of the UN/AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) planned 2020 exit, ensure that the mission does not hand over any bases or assets to the RSF and allied militia, particularly in light of their continued abuses in Darfur and their role in the June 3rd attack. Maintain a flexible approach to UNAMID's drawdown, in order to ensure a responsible exit without creating a security vacuum. If necessary, the withdrawal should be delayed.
- Mandate a strong human rights component in the envisioned post-UNAMID political mission. It should collaborate closely with OHCHR to ensure robust monitoring and reporting of human rights violations across all of Sudan.

## To the European Union, the “Troika” (United States, United Kingdom, Norway) and Other Donor Governments

- Support all efforts to bolster accountability mechanisms, including through supporting the UN in providing experts and technical support to the national investigation committee announced September 21, with a view to upholding international standards for investigations.
- Encourage Sudan to swiftly form commissions envisioned in the August 17 agreement, particularly those on law reform and accountability, and form its transitional legislative council.
- If the transitional government fails to take meaningful steps toward genuine accountability, governments with sanctions regimes in place should consider imposing individual sanctions on those found responsible for grave abuses of

human rights, including but not limited to crimes committed on June 3, notwithstanding any immunities they may enjoy under current Sudanese law.

- Urge Sudan to cooperate with the ICC by turning al-Bashir and the other four fugitives over to the court.

## **Methodology**

This report focuses on the June 3 attack on protesters in Khartoum, which was the most violent of the crackdowns on protesters following the ouster of President Omar al-Bashir on April 11. It also describes subsequent attacks including on June 30 in Omdurman. It does not, however, document all the violence since the beginning of protests in December 2018 or following the formation of a transitional government on August 17, 2019, or violence against protesters outside the capital.

Human Rights Watch could not verify the full extent of casualties, but researchers documented the details of several of the most widely reported cases of killings and gathered credible eye-witnesses accounts in respect of many others.

The report is based on field research in Sudan between July 28 and August 11, and research conducted remotely from outside Sudan through telephone calls with witnesses and victims in Khartoum, media monitoring, and analysis of video clips and images. In Khartoum, researchers interviewed more than 60 people including victims of and witnesses to the crackdowns on protesters on June 3 and June 30, activists, professional associations, political analysts, and staff of civil society organizations, including those providing services to victims of the violence.

Researchers conducted interviews with individuals, usually one-on-one, in private places, such as homes and offices or in quiet public settings, in English or Arabic with the consent of the interviewees. All interviewees were informed of the purpose of the interview, its voluntary nature, that they would receive no financial reward, and ways in which the information would be collected and used. Given the fluid situation in Sudan, Human Rights Watch has replaced most names with pseudonyms and withheld other identifying information, to protect interviewees from possible reprisals.

Researchers collected and examined video clips and images circulated on social media or from sources on the ground and cross checked with witnesses to verify scenes of violence, including of soldiers shooting live ammunition, detaining protesters, and attacking hospitals and clinics on June 3 and June 30. Researchers also collected video interviews

given by consenting victims and witnesses to media or other sources including legal aid providers where in-person interviews were not possible. Some of the videos cited in this report contain disturbing images of violence and bloodshed and should be opened with caution.

On September 17, Human Rights Watch shared a summary of findings and questions with the offices of the Prime Minister and ministers of justice and interior to elicit response from authorities on the abuses documented in this report. At the time of writing, authorities acknowledged receipt of the letter but had not provided a formal response.

# Background

## Protests Since December

Protests against soaring bread prices started in several locations in mid-December 2018, including the southern town of Demazin in Blue Nile state, El-Obeid in Northern Kordofan, Atbara in the River Nile state, al-Gadarif in eastern Sudan, and the cities of Khartoum, Bahri, and Omdurman. In response, security forces shot live bullets and tear gas at unarmed protesters and bystanders, killing and injuring dozens, according to rights groups and media reports.<sup>1</sup> Authorities rounded up and detained protesters, activists and journalists, often violently, and restricted reporting on the protests by arresting and harassing journalists as well confiscating newspapers and blocking access to social media. On December 25, the date of mass protests countrywide, the government expelled the correspondent of *al-Araby TV*, a private Arabic news network, from the country. Medical professionals, including doctors were harassed and detained.<sup>2</sup> Doctors have played a significant role in the protest movement.<sup>3</sup>

The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), a coalition of professional and trade organizations including doctors, engineers, lawyers and journalists, was formed in 2016 and became prominent campaigning for increasing the minimum wage. It quickly emerged as the body spearheading the protest movement.<sup>4</sup> When protests started in December, the SPA broadened its approach and called on protesters to demand al-Bashir and his regime step down. As protests gained momentum, local neighborhood groups known as “resistance committees” composed mainly of young protesters, organized neighborhood-

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<sup>1</sup> “Sudan: Killing of peaceful protesters and a wave of arbitrary arrests and detention by Sudanese authorities, December 14 – 24, 2018,” African Center for Justice and Peace Studies, December 31, 2018, [http://www.acjps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Killing-of-peaceful-protesters-December-2018\\_31-December-2018-converted-1.pdf](http://www.acjps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Killing-of-peaceful-protesters-December-2018_31-December-2018-converted-1.pdf) (accessed September 16, 2019); “Several killed in Sudan as protests over rising prices continue,” *Al Jazeera*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/protests-rising-prices-spread-sudan-khartoum-181220132130661.html> (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> “Sudan: security forces killing, detaining protesters,” Human Rights Watch news release, January 7, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/07/sudan-security-forces-killing-detaining-protesters>.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Goldstein, “The Revolutionary Force Behind Sudan’s Protest Movement? Doctors”, *New York Times*, April 20, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/20/world/africa/sudan-doctors-protest.html> (accessed September 30, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Reem Abbas “How an illegal Sudanese union became the biggest threat to Omar al-Bashir’s 29-year reign,” *The National*, January 28, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/africa/how-an-illegal-sudanese-union-became-the-biggest-threat-to-omar-al-bashir-s-29-year-reign-1.819159> (accessed September 18, 2019); Sudanese Professionals Association website, <https://www.sudaneseprofessionals.org/en/about-us/> (accessed September 30, 2019).

based protests. The Sudan resistance committee has since become a national coalition of local groups with its own Facebook page<sup>5</sup>

On January 1, 2019, the SPA and a group of civil society organizations and opposition groups signed the “Freedom and Change Declaration” calling for an end to al-Bashir’s regime, the formation of a national transitional government that addresses the root causes of Sudan’s conflicts and ensures welfare and progress of all Sudanese without discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

The protests continued in January with near-daily demonstrations and chants of “just fall, that’s all,” as protesters demanded al-Bashir’s ouster in cities across the country. The security forces continued to use violence, beating protesters and bystanders, dispersing protests with live ammunition, tear gas and rubber bullets, running over protesters with vehicles, and attacking medical facilities.<sup>7</sup> On January 9, they killed at least three people and injured several others in Omdurman, Sudan’s second largest city, and shot bullets and teargas in Omdurman Teaching Hospital.<sup>8</sup> Between late December and mid-March, security forces targeted medical personnel and facilities and attempted to arrest wounded protesters. According to Physicians for Human Rights, between December 19 and March 17, the forces attacked seven healthcare facilities, arresting 136 healthcare personnel, and firing at hospitals with tear gas and bullets.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Reem Abbas, “In Sudan, neighborhoods mobilized against al-Bashir,” *Al Jazeera*, May 7, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/sudan-neighbourhoods-mobilised-al-bashir-190506182950504.html> (accessed October 2, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> See Declaration of Freedom and Change, <https://www.sudaneseprofessionals.org/en/declaration-of-freedom-and-change/> (accessed September 9, 2019). The Sudan Call and National Consensus Forces are opposition party coalitions that include most of the opposition parties. Sudan’s government fought southern rebels in then-southern Sudan for 22 years, until parties signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005; it has fought armed opposition groups in Darfur since 2003 and in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile since 2011. The government and parties to these conflicts have yet to reach a peace deal.

<sup>7</sup> “Sudan: security forces killing, detaining protesters,” Human Rights Watch news release, January 7, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/07/sudan-security-forces-killing-detaining-protesters>; and “Sudan: video footage shows extreme violence, abuse,” Human Rights Watch news release, February 10, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/02/10/sudan-video-footage-shows-extreme-violence-abuse>.

<sup>8</sup> Jehanne Henry, “Bloody day of protest in Sudan,” Human Rights Watch Dispatch, January 10, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/10/bloody-day-protest-sudan>; “Sudan uprising: unprecedented march in Omdurman despite live bullets and tear gas,” *Radio Dabanga*, January 10, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/unprecedented-march-in-omdurman-despite-live-bullets-and-tear-gas> (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> “Sudanese Government Violating Human Rights on Massive Scale Through Campaign of Intimidation, Persecution, and Torture,” Physicians for Human Rights, April 5, 2019, <https://phr.org/news/sudanese-government-violating-human-rights-on-massive-scale-through-campaign-of-intimidation-persecution-and-torture/> (accessed September 16, 2019).

During this period, national security forces rounded up hundreds of protesters, activists, and opposition figures across the country, subjecting many detainees to abuses including torture.<sup>10</sup> Detainees told researchers they endured harsh conditions, such as poor ventilation, extremely cold air conditioning (they refer to the facility in Bahri as “the refrigerators,”) or being made to sit outside under the sun for long periods, and lack of medical care.<sup>11</sup> Women released from detention in Khartoum in March told Human Rights Watch they had been beaten, groped, and threatened with rape by NISS officers.<sup>12</sup>

Authorities continued to restrict media by banning distribution of some newspapers including *al-Jareeda* and *al-Tayar* without prior NISS approval.<sup>13</sup> They also revoked work permits of foreign journalists including those working for *Al-Arabiya* and *Al-Jazeera*, which had been providing regular live coverage of the protests.<sup>14</sup> (Both national and international media were permitted to resume coverage in April, immediately after al-Bashir’s ouster.)

On February 23, al-Bashir declared a state of emergency, dissolved the government at federal and state levels and appointed military state governors.<sup>15</sup> The move did not stop the protests. Many protesters were arrested and tried in summary courts set up by the Chief Justice pursuant to the emergency declaration.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Sudan: hundreds of protesters arrested,” Human Rights Watch joint news release, January 18, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/18/sudan-hundreds-protesters-arrested>; Interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch between April and May 2019 in Khartoum and remotely by telephone.

<sup>11</sup> “Sudan: hundreds of protesters arrested,” Human Rights Watch joint news release, January 18, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/18/sudan-hundreds-protesters-arrested>; Interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch between April and May 2019 in Khartoum and remotely.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch between April and May in Khartoum and remotely. See also “Sudan’s al-Bashir orders release of detained female protesters,” *Al-Jazeera*, March 9, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/03/sudan-bashir-orders-release-detained-women-protesters-190309055103598.html> (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, “Sudan responds to anti-Bashir coverage with censorship and arrests,” Committee to Protect Journalists, January 17, 2019, <https://cpj.org/blog/2019/01/sudan-responds-to-anti-bashir-coverage-with-censor.php>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> “Al Jazeera says Sudan withdraws journalists’ work permits,” *Daily Mail*, January 22, 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-6618659/Al-Jazeera-says-Sudan-withdraws-journalists-work-permits.html> (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> “Sudan’s Bashir dissolves government and declares state of emergency,” *France 24*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190222-sudan-president-bashir-state-emergency>, (accessed September 10, 2019). Sudan has a federal system of government and is comprised of 18 states, each with its governor, ministers, and legislative council.

<sup>16</sup> Jehanne Henry, “Emergency decrees bring more repression in Sudan,” Human Rights Watch, Dispatch, March 5, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/05/emergency-decrees-bring-more-repression-sudan>.

The protests reached a significant turning point on April 6, when protesters converged at the Sudanese army headquarters in Khartoum and created a sit-in camp near the army compound, other military buildings and the NISS headquarters.<sup>17</sup> National security, police officers, and unidentified security personnel in plain clothes used lethal violence to disperse the April 6 sit-in.<sup>18</sup> A media report said that some soldiers and low-ranking officers however protected protesters by shooting back at attackers, shielding protesters inside military barracks, a clear indication of division within the ranks of the security organs.<sup>19</sup>

There are no authoritative civilian casualty figures from when the protests started in December until al-Bashir's ouster on April 11. According to a doctors' group, about 140 protesters were killed by security forces between December 2018 and April 11.<sup>20</sup> Another doctors' group reported on social media that 26 were killed between April 6 and 11 alone.<sup>21</sup>

## Al-Bashir Ousted

In the early hours of April 11, national television and radio stations announced that al-Bashir had stepped down. Hours later, Awad Ibn Ouf, al-Bashir's defense minister and first vice president announced that commanders of military and security forces had ousted the president and arrested him and some of his associates. Ibn Ouf announced the suspension of the constitution, imposition of a night curfew, adding that the military would rule for two years before organizing a general election.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Sudan: protesters killed, injured," Human Rights Watch news release, April 9, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/09/sudan-protesters-killed-injured>.

<sup>18</sup> ibid.

<sup>19</sup> "Sudan protests: clashes among armed forces in Khartoum sit-in," *BBC News*, April 8, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47850278> (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Sudan Doctors Syndicate, Martyrs of the uprising 2018-2019 Report, July 19, 2019, on file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>21</sup> "Sudan: With al-Bashir Ouster, End Authoritarianism," Human Rights Watch news release, April 11, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/11/sudan-al-bashir-ouster-end-authoritarianism> (accessed September 10, 2019). Citing the list posted by the Sudan Central Doctor's Committee at <https://www.facebook.com/gandhi.alminhaj.3/posts/314077412610811>

<sup>22</sup> "Sudan military seizes power from Omar al-Bashir: Full statement," April 11, *Al-Jazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/sudan-military-seizes-power-omar-al-bashir-full-statement-190411150844806.html> (accessed September 10, 2019).

Following demands by protesters, Ibn Ouf stepped down as the head of the TMC on April 12.<sup>23</sup> He was replaced by Lieutenant General Abdel Fatah al-Burhan, who at various times was commander of the army's ground forces, army inspector general, and commander of the Sudanese forces in the Yemen war.<sup>24</sup> The same day, al-Burhan appointed Lt. Gen. Mohamed "Hemedti" Hamdan Dagalo, the commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) as his deputy. Salah Gosh, NISS director who oversaw the violent crackdown on protesters since December 2018, was forced to resign from his post and replaced by a successor.<sup>25</sup>

As Human Rights Watch has documented, RSF forces have waged brutal and abusive counter-insurgency operations in Darfur, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile since 2013, in which they destroyed hundreds of villages and killed and raped civilians, forcing thousands to flee their homes.<sup>26</sup> The RSF are still operating in Darfur and have continued to attack civilians, even as the United Nations African Union mission in Darfur (UNAMID), following years of pressure to leave by Sudan, plans to exit by June 2020.<sup>27</sup> The government has also used RSF to interdict migrants and refugees and RSF have participated as combatants in the Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen.<sup>28</sup>

On December 25, soon after the protests commenced, Hemedti had publicly supported the protesters' demands when he called on the government to provide services and living

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<sup>23</sup> "Awad Ibn Auf, the head of Sudan's new ruling council," April 11, 2019, *Al-Jazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/awad-ibn-auf-face-sudan-coup-190411163025083.html>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> "Sudan's Ibn Auf steps down as head of military council," *Al-Jazeera*, April 13, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/sudan-military-council-ruler-ibn-auf-steps-190412194737727.html>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> "Sudan's Feared Intelligence Chief Resigns in Another Victory for Protesters," *New York Times*, April 13, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/13/world/africa/sudan-intelligence-chief-resigns.html>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch, "'Men With No Mercy': Rapid Support Forces Attacks against Civilians in Darfur, Sudan," September 9, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/09/men-no-mercy/rapid-support-forces-attacks-against-civilians-darfur-sudan>.

<sup>27</sup> The mission halted its handing over of assets to the Sudanese government after news emerged that the RSF occupied 11 of its bases. Human Rights Watch has urged the mission to consider further delaying its exit in view of ongoing protection concerns in Darfur. See "UN: Halt Handover to Abusive Forces in Sudan" news release, June 11, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/11/un-halt-handover-abusive-forces-sudan>

<sup>28</sup> "Head of Sudan's rapid support forces appointed deputy head of transitional military council," *Reuters*, April 13, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-politics-military-council/head-of-sudans-rapid-support-forces-appointed-deputy-head-of-transitional-military-council-idUSKCN1RPoMS> (accessed September 10, 2019). See also, Jerome Tubiana, "The Man Who Terrorized Darfur Is Leading Sudan's Supposed Transition," *Foreign Policy*, May 14, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/14/man-who-terrorized-darfur-is-leading-sudans-supposed-transition-hemedti-rsf-janjaweed-bashir-khartoum/> (accessed September 11, 2019).

wages.<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch does not know of any reports that indicate the RSF participated in the NISS crackdowns against protesters prior to April 11.<sup>30</sup>

## Mounting Tensions

Protesters continued the sit-ins with chants of “*medaniya*” (“civilian”). On April 13, opposition political groups under the FFC began negotiations with the military council over the terms of transition to civilian rule.<sup>31</sup> TMC leader Abdel Fatah al-Burhan on April 23 promised to protect protesters and said that the sit-in would not be forcefully dispersed.<sup>32</sup>

But signs of tensions started to emerge. On April 30, Hemedti accused protesters at the sit-in of being infiltrated by “drug addicts.” He criticized protesters for establishing barricades around the sit-in area near the army headquarters, arguing that it was the TMC’s duty to safeguard life and property and that the barricades were paralyzing business in Khartoum and promoting criminal activity.<sup>33</sup>

On May 13, six people were killed as RSF soldiers forcibly removed barricades on Nile street – a main road running through the sit-in area and bordering the University of Khartoum – while protesters resisted them.<sup>34</sup> The TMC accused the protesters of provoking the violence by building barricades, and thereafter suspended talks with

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<sup>29</sup> See “Hemedti full speech to his troops,” (Arabic) posted on December 25, 2019, video clip, YouTube, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>30</sup> “Hemedti - the warlord who may control Sudan’s future,” *BBC News*, June 5, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48512465>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> “Sudan’s military holds talks with protesters as curfew lifted,” *Al Jazeera*, April 13, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/sudan-military-begins-talks-protesters-curfew-lifted-190413150125313.html>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> “Sudan army chief says soldiers ‘will not attack protesters’”, *BBC News*, April 23, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48021824>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> “VP of Transitional Military Council threatens to resolve chaos, accused FFC negotiators of lying,” (Arabic) *al-Taghyeer*, April 30, 2019, <https://www.altaghyeer.info/ar/2019/04/30/%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AB/>, (accessed October 2, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Zeinab Mohammed Salih, “Sudanese security forces kill six in clashes with protesters,” *The Guardian*, May 14, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/14/sudanese-security-forces-clashes-protesters>, (accessed September 11, 2019). “Ali,” (not his real name), a 30-year-old witness to the attack on May 14 told researchers: “RSF became in control of the area. First shots were near the eye hospital were two people killed. RSF started withdrawing while protesters moving forward barricading further. This where rest of killings happened.”



A Sudanese protester builds a barrier on Khartoum's Street 60 as government security forces attacked the protesters' sit-in camp next to the army headquarters, June 3, 2019. © 2019 Ashraf Shazly/AFP via Getty Images.

opposition parties for 72 hours allegedly to reduce tensions.<sup>35</sup> The SPA and protesters blamed the TMC for the violence, directly pointing the finger at members of the RSF for the killings.<sup>36</sup> On May 19, the FFC and the TMC agreed to form a joint investigation committee to determine what happened and who was responsible for the killings.<sup>37</sup> It is not clear if this committee was ever formed or if formed, whether it conducted any investigation.

The SPA announced a two-day general strike nationwide on May 28 and 29.<sup>38</sup> Hemedti criticized the move, saying protest leaders were trying to side-line the military.<sup>39</sup> Credible

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<sup>35</sup> Mohammed Amin, "Sudan's TMC suspends talks with opposition for 72 hours," *Anadolu Agency*, May 16, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/sudan-s-tmc-suspends-talks-with-opposition-for-72-hours/1479418>, (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>36</sup> "Sudan opposition urges independent probe into protester killings," *Al Jazeera*, May 14, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/sudan-opposition-urges-independent-probe-protester-killings-190514191105362.html>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Sudan Professionals Association Facebook post, Statement on the negotiation round between FFC and TMC, Sunday May 19, May 20, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/SdnProAssociation/posts/2730342830325720>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>38</sup> "Understanding and Gearing up for Our Announced Political Strike," Sudan Professionals Association press release, May 26, 2019, <https://www.sudaneseprofessionals.org/en/understanding-and-gearing-up-for-our-announced-political-strike/>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

media reported that on May 29 and 30, security forces shot dead three more protesters, among them a pregnant woman on Nile street in Khartoum.<sup>40</sup> The TMC issued a statement blaming a drunk soldier. As tensions rose in the Nile street area, SPA asked protesters to withdraw from the “Colombia” area to avoid further confrontation with armed forces.<sup>41</sup>

TMC also sought to suppress information about the situation, shutting down a regional media organization, the *Ramtan News Agency* and the *Al-Jazeera* office in Khartoum.<sup>42</sup> On May 30, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to embassies and diplomatic missions asking them not to go to the sit-in area without prior permission from the ministry, citing respect for sovereignty and safety concerns.<sup>43</sup>

Also on May 30, the SPA warned the military council against dispersing the sit-in.<sup>44</sup> The following day, General Bahar Ahmed Bahar, head of the army in the Khartoum region, warned that “the protest site has become unsafe and represents a danger to the revolution and the revolutionaries and threatens the coherence of the state and its national security.”<sup>45</sup>

By the night of June 2, rumors of a possible attack on the sit-in camp widely circulated among protesters and on social media. While their numbers had dwindled, hundreds remained living at various locations in the sit-in or very near it. It was only two days before the *eid al-fitr*, a religious holiday marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

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<sup>39</sup> “Sudan: TMC confirms ongoing negotiations with strike leaders at the end of first day of strike”, *France 24*, May 29, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/ar/20190529-اضراب-السودان-احتجاج-الجيش-لجنة-مفاوضات-حميدتي-29>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>40</sup> “1 Killed, 10 Wounded in Clash at Khartoum Sit-In Site,” *Agence-France Presse*, June 1, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/1-killed-10-wounded-clash-khartoum-sit-site>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>41</sup> Colombia is an area beneath the Blue Nile bridge that authorities say is known for sale and use of illegal drugs. See Mohammed Amin, “Sudanese forces violently crack down on Nile-side Neighborhood,” *Middle East Eye*, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudanese-forces-violently-crack-down-louche-nile-side-neighbourhood>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>42</sup> “Al Jazeera TV channel banned from Sudan,” *Radio Dabanga*, June 2, 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/al-jazeera-tv-channel-banned-from-sudan>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated May 30, 2019, available at <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10211131529644468&set=pcb.10211131530084479&type=3&theater>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>44</sup> “Open Call for urgent action,” Sudanese Professionals Association news release, May 30, 2019, <https://www.sudaneseprofessionals.org/en/open-call-for-urgent-action-risk-of-escalating-violence-in-the-sit-in-area-in-khartoum/>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>45</sup> “Sudan army says protest site a threat, closes Al Jazeera office,” *Al-Jazeera*, May 31, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/sudan-army-protest-site-threat-closes-al-jazeera-office-190530234405647.html>, (accessed September 16, 2019). The army is organized by regions including the Khartoum central region.

## Political Negotiations After the Attack

After the violence on June 3, the TMC cancelled all negotiations and threatened to form a transitional government without civilian involvement. International and regional groups were quick to condemn the violence and on June 6 the African Union suspended Sudan's membership.<sup>46</sup> The following day, Ethiopian prime minister Abiy Ahmed arrived in Khartoum to jumpstart a fresh mediation effort.<sup>47</sup> The FFC agreed to cancel a planned strike if certain conditions were met including the release of political prisoners. This paved the way for the resumption of negotiations.<sup>48</sup> The AU, despite its suspension of Sudan, was also involved in the mediation, bringing the parties together to resume direct talks on July 3.<sup>49</sup>

On July 4, the AU mediator announced a political agreement on a rotating presidency between civilians and military and "detailed, transparent, national, independent investigation into all the regrettable violent incidents that the country faced recently."<sup>50</sup> The agreement was formalized and signed on July 17.<sup>51</sup> On August 3, the parties also signed a preliminary agreement on a constitutional framework, containing detailed provisions for the new transitional government and institutions. A "sovereign council" heads the government, led by the military members for the first 21 months followed by civilian members for the next 18 months.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "Sudan Crisis: African Union membership suspended," *BBC News*, June 6, 2019 at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48545543>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>47</sup> "Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed begins mediation talks in Sudan," *AlJazeera*, June 7, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctfL3pXPlis&vl=en>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>48</sup> Patrick Smith, "Sudan's talks on civil rule to restart says Ethiopia's mediator," *the Africa Report*, June 12, 2019, <https://www.theafricareport.com/13884/sudan-after-the-massacre/>, (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Fay Abuelgasim and Samy Magdi, "Sudan protesters resume talks with military," *AP News*, July 3, 2019, at <https://www.apnews.com/d691c59bdf3f407885803bd97cece7a3>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>50</sup> "Sudan military and opposition agree on power-sharing deal," *DW*, July 5, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/sudan-military-and-opposition-agree-on-power-sharing-deal/a-49479620>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> "Sudan: What have military and opposition coalition agreed to?" *AlJazeera*, July 17, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/sudan-military-opposition-coalition-agreed-190717103837276.html>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>52</sup> "What does Sudan's constitutional declaration say?" *AlJazeera*, August 5, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/sudan-constitutional-declaration-190804182241137.html>, (accessed September 16, 2019). See also, Sudan: Draft Constitutional Charter for the 2019 Transitional Period, August 6, 2019, <http://sudanreeves.org/2019/08/06/sudan-draft-constitutional-charter-for-the-2019-transitional-period/> (accessed November 11, 2019).

The parties signed the finalized power-sharing agreement on August 17, as many in the streets celebrated a new chapter of history.<sup>53</sup> Within days, Abdallah Hamdok, an economist and former deputy executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, was appointed prime minister. He in turn appointed most of the cabinet on September 8 and is expected to form transitional commissions envisioned in the agreement, including on human rights, law reform, and transitional justice. The legislative council is to be established within three months of the agreement.<sup>54</sup> In October, the Sovereign Council appointed a new head of judiciary, Africa's first female in that role, and an attorney-general, positions seen as key for delivering justice.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Declan Walsh, "Sudan Erupts in Celebration After Army and Civilians Agree to Share Power," *New York Times*, August 17, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/17/world/africa/sudan-agreement-signed.html>, (accessed September 16, 2019).

<sup>54</sup> "Abdalla Hamdok: Who is Sudan's new prime minister?" *AlJazeera*, August, 2019 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/abdalla-hamdok-sudan-prime-minister-190821104935717.html>, (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>55</sup> "Sudan appoints its first woman Chief Justice", *Radio Dabanga*, October 10, 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-appoints-its-first-woman-chief-justice>, (accessed October 10, 2019). See Sudanese Professionals Association, Statement calling for marches to support appointment of attorney-general and chief justice, September 10, 2019, <https://www.sudaneseprofessionals.org/%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A9%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%BA/>, (accessed October 10, 2019).

## Violent Dispersal of the Sit-in on June 3

“The forces were coming by foot with sticks, so we started throwing stones. We were very close to them. We repelled them and then they [returned and] started shooting directly. Many people got shot and fell.”

Musa, 21, witness to the June 3 attack on the sit-in.<sup>56</sup>

After a rainy night and in the dark early hours of June 3, the last day of Ramadan, a large procession of vehicles and trucks carrying security forces moved from Khartoum and Bahri, the neighboring city to the north, to the edges of the sit-in area near the army headquarters and along Nile street.<sup>57</sup> Protesters at Nile street later told Human Rights Watch they saw forces approaching the nearby University of Khartoum campus and started chanting: “*salmiya, salmiya*,” (“peaceful, peaceful”). Sensing danger, doctors and medical volunteers at the sit-in started preparing for the worst.<sup>58</sup> Witnesses described the approaching forces as including armed men in police uniforms, RSF uniforms, and some with unidentified black uniforms.

Eyewitnesses said the police forces first came into the sit-in area on foot, armed with batons, and tear gas and tried to dismantle the barricades but protesters threw stones at them and so they initially retreated. They returned shortly thereafter; this time led by the RSF. The forces opened fire on protesters at numerous locations around the sit-in area, just after the Muslim morning prayers at around 5 a.m. One witness, a 26-year-old man, told Human Rights Watch:

“People woke up as soldiers came from Nile street near the bridge [...] We fought them with stones -they were wearing police uniform [...] they turned back to the bridge, giving us time to prepare. RSF came after and started shooting.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Musa (pseudonym), August 1, Khartoum.

<sup>57</sup> “Details of Sudan armed forces HQ massacre,” video clip (Arabic) posted on June 6, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-gmU3QEs3o>, (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>58</sup> Video interview by an activist with witness, names withheld, on file with Human Rights Watch. “I saw vehicles moving around in the area near Navy/Airforce buildings. I saw them while I was standing near vocational training institute, they were around 200 RSF vehicles.”

<sup>59</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Hassan (pseudonym), 26, August 1, Khartoum.

Several protesters said they saw the armed forces shooting live bullets directly at protesters, killing and injuring them on the spot. One witness said, “Shooting was clearly targeted and intentional... they directed their guns at us...they were shouting ‘*kill them! kill them!*’ all the time. I saw many [people] hit by bullets while I was running.”<sup>60</sup>

The violence soon spread across the sit-in area and lasted for several hours as soldiers shot at, beat, rounded-up, and forced protesters to move out of the area. They burned their tents and looted extensively. A protester said, “I ran to the Arabic language department after the attack started and hid there. I could see RSF people looting TVs and mobile phones [from businesses in the area] and stored them in a room there [in the language department].”<sup>61</sup>

As protesters fled the scene or found places to hide, they carried the dead and the injured from the streets to clinics and a nearby hospital amid gunfire.<sup>62</sup> Witnesses and medical professionals at the scene described many serious, bloody injuries inflicted by gunshots, whips, metal sticks, and sharp objects such as bayonets.<sup>63</sup>

News of the attack spread quickly via SMS, phone, and on social media. The SPA called for protests and a nationwide civil disobedience.<sup>64</sup> Protesters who fled the sit-in and those who lived in other parts of Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman soon erected new barricades and burned tires.<sup>65</sup> The RSF and other forces who patrolled these neighborhoods pursued and attacked protesters and bystanders on June 3 and in following days, as documented below. Some witnesses believe what they saw demonstrates that security forces deliberately targeted individual protesters who they identified as playing leadership roles or recording the events, and shot them, injuring or killing them on the spot.

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<sup>60</sup> Human Rights Watch telephone Interview with Amir (pseudonym), June 6.

<sup>61</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Ali (pseudonym), August 4, Khartoum

<sup>62</sup> -Human Rights Watch Interview with Abbas (pseudonym), August 4, Khartoum.

<sup>63</sup> One doctor told HRW researchers that he treated a number of protesters from the sit-in who sustained wounds caused by sharp items, saying number of them told him that the wounds caused by bayonets. Human Rights Watch Interview with Abdalla (pseudonym), by telephone on June 23, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> “Urgent call: killing and burning at the sit-in,” Sudanese Professionals Association news release, June 3, 2019, <https://www.sudaneseprofessionals.org/en/urgent-call-killing-and-burning-at-the-sit-in/>, (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>65</sup> Michael Georgy, “Sudanese forces storm protest camp, more than 35 people killed: medics,” *Reuters*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-politics/sudanese-forces-storm-protest-camp-more-than-35-people-killed-medics-idUSKCN1T4oF2>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

The Sudanese Doctors Syndicate, a group that monitored casualties from the start of the protests, reported 124 killed between June 3 and June 18, including one in al-Gadarif, Eastern Sudan and eight in Delaij, Central Darfur state.<sup>66</sup> Another doctor's group reported over 900 injured during the same period.<sup>67</sup> However, the actual numbers may be higher because dozens are reported missing (see below).

Notably, authorities have not, to Human Rights Watch's knowledge, carried out any searches for bodies of victims allegedly thrown into the river by soldiers. Human Rights Watch has watched video footage produced by protesters at the sit-in and later disseminated over social media, that it considers credible, which corroborates witness accounts of armed forces targeting hospitals and makeshift clinic facilities at the sit-in, and extensively burning and looting property.<sup>68</sup>

On June 6, a health ministry official acknowledged that 61 people were killed on June 3 in crackdowns on protests in Khartoum and other locations: 9 were from other parts of the country and 52 in Khartoum, including 49 civilians killed by gunfire and three security personnel who died from stab wounds.<sup>69</sup> On July 27, the chair of a government investigation committee – which had been announced by the attorney-general on June 3 – said only 17 were killed at the sit-in in Khartoum and a total of 87 were killed between June 3 and 10.<sup>70</sup> The government has not provided evidence to support these numbers.

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<sup>66</sup> Sudan Doctor's Syndicate, Field Report Number 9, updates of martyrs' names from June 3 to June 18, dated June 24, 2019, on file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>67</sup> Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, inventory of wounded and injured (sit-in events), undated, on file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>68</sup> "Security forces attacks a medical staff at Royal Care hospital," (Arabic) video clip, June 3, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwoBz8HXio8> (accessed September 10, 2019)

<sup>69</sup> "Death toll rises to 61: health ministry," *Reuters*, June 6, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-politics-casualties/death-toll-from-violence-in-sudan-rises-to-61-health-ministry-idUSKCN1T717S>, (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>70</sup> "Sudan Protesters Reject Prosecutor report into June Sit-In Raid", *Al Jazeera*, July 28, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/sudan-protesters-reject-prosecutor-report-june-sit-raid-190728062135797.html>, (accessed September 11, 2019)

## Unlawful Killings at the Khartoum Sit-in Area

Protesters at the sit-in area described how the RSF opened fire on them after the first attempt by the police to dismantle the barricades.

“Amir,” a 29-year-old man who was at a barricade near the Blue Nile bridge, described seeing RSF soldiers advancing toward the barricade in large numbers after protesters at the barricade pushed back police forces: “They had their guns pointed towards us and when they started shooting, people started falling. I saw two falling down next to me with gunshot wounds.”<sup>71</sup>

Security forces advanced on the sit-in area from different directions, with a significant number of forces approaching along the street from the al-Imam al-Mahdi (East) bridge. “Osman,” a 30-year-old man who was present at the sit in said he saw RSF shoot his relatives at the sit-in:

“Around 5 a.m. we were near the HAC (the humanitarian aid commission, a government body that oversees all civil society and humanitarian organizations) office and tried to repel the Janjaweed (a common term for the RSF) when they came and surrounded the area. We threw stones. They shot back. Three of my relatives died then in front of me: two men 21; 26; and a woman, age 27. When I was trying to take the body of one of them, I got shot in the head and immediately fell down unconscious. After 3 days I woke up in Royal Care hospital.”<sup>72</sup>

Another group of forces moved to the tunnel leading to *al-Jama'a* street and shot at protesters at the vocational training institute, a cultural center and exhibition space for protesters’ artwork, which became a make-shift clinic to treat the wounded.<sup>73</sup> A 29-year-old man said:

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<sup>71</sup> Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Amir (pseudonym), June 6.

<sup>72</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Osman (pseudonym), August 10, Khartoum. His head was still bandaged at the time of the interview.

<sup>73</sup> Mohanad Hashim, “In pictures: The art fueling Sudan's revolution”, BBC, May 5, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48126363>, (Accessed September 17, 2019).

“We carried bodies away first near the vocational training center. I just kept running afterwards. I could hear people screaming, bullets just passing by me in the air and hitting the walls of building around me.”<sup>74</sup>

Witnesses said soldiers fired at protesters trying to escape the sit-in area. “Khalid,” 36, who was detained by an RSF soldier near Blue Nile bridge at the beginning of the June 3 operation said from where he was standing, he could see soldiers shooting at protesters trying to escape the area. “I saw people climbing the wall of the 7<sup>th</sup> infantry division to run away [escape] but RSF kept shooting at them. Some, as I could see, did not move and some were killed.”<sup>75</sup>

In one case that was also widely reported in the media, witnesses told Human Rights Watch that a soldier executed Mohamed Hashim Matar, a 26-year-old man. “Khaled” recalled: “I saw Matar fighting with an RSF soldier. This was outside the vocational training institute [a university building adjacent to the sit-in area]. The soldier just put his gun to Matar’s head and shot him.”<sup>76</sup> Media reports also said that Matar was protecting two women who appeared to be at risk of being abducted by RSF soldiers before he got shot.<sup>77</sup> Matar’s death became a symbol and sparked the “Blue for Sudan” social media campaign to raise solidarity, using blue, his favorite color, as a profile image.<sup>78</sup>

*Al-Jazeera* reported that a young man who saw soldiers stabbing protesters with their bayonets near the HAC office said: “We returned to the backyard of HAC building. There were injured people gathered in a group by RSF with a covering over their bodies... I saw the RSF soldiers stabbing the injured with their guns’ bayonets. RSF then burned the tent and everyone under it.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Abbas (pseudonym), August 4, Khartoum.

<sup>75</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Khalid (pseudonym), August 7, in Khartoum.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Rym Bendimerad and Natalia Faisal “#Blue for Sudan: why is social media turning blue for Sudan?” *Al-Jazeera*, June 13, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/blueforsudan-social-media-turning-blue-sudan-190613132528243.html>, (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> “Eyewitness on sit-in dispersal,” (Arabic), *Al-Jazeera* video clip, posted on July 10, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxaaosXRxoc>, (accessed on September 17, 2019).



Sudanese protesters sit in front of a recently painted mural during a demonstration near the army headquarters in the capital Khartoum, April 24, 2019. © 2019 Ozan Kose/AFP via Getty Images.

Other widely reported cases from the sit-in venue, which family members or witnesses confirmed to Human Rights Watch, include Abdelsalam Kisha, a 25-year-old activist, who soldiers shot in the chest and leg, and Abbas Farah, 28, who soldiers shot and was filmed falling over a barricade shortly before he died. The video was widely circulated on social media and covered in media.<sup>80</sup> Sudanese protesters have memorialized those killed in public art and wall portraits, described them as martyrs, and renamed streets after them. *Inqaz* (“salvation,” a reference to the former ruling party’s political philosophy) street was renamed Matar street, for example.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Kisha Abdelsalam Kisha, August 11, 2019, Khartoum; interview with family member of Farah, August 8, Omdurman; Kaamil Ahmed, “The Martyr at the Barricades,” *The Middle East Eye*, July 3, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudan-protests-khartoum-life-and-death/>, (accessed September 17, 2019) The video of Farah’s last minutes, widely circulated, can be found here (discretion advised), “29 Ramadan massacre, freedom martyr Abbas Farah, dispersal of sit-in” video clip (Arabic), posted on June 4, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maLFPu4dPg>, (accessed on September 17, 2019).

<sup>81</sup> See Zeinab Mohammed, “Sudanese campaigners ‘rename’ streets after protesters killed in uprising,” *The Guardian*, September 2, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/02/sudanese-campaigners-rename-streets-after-protesters-killed-in-uprising>, (accessed September 10, 2019). After al-Bashir’s government took power in a bloodless coup in 1989, the ruling party referred to its coup as the “national salvation revolution.”

## No Armed Forces Protection of Civilians

Although there were accounts of individual soldiers from the army, RSF, and other armed forces intervening to stop ongoing abuses, the army did not protect protesters as they had done in April before al-Bashir's ouster. This time, some soldiers from the army and the RSF together dismantled barricades and did not allow protesters seeking refuge into army headquarters during the attack.

Witnesses said that when on June 3 RSF soldiers shot and killed protesters in front of the air force, navy, and 7<sup>th</sup> infantry division barracks, other forces in the vicinity did not intervene to protect protesters. Army soldiers and officers in some cases beat and pushed away protesters who were trying to seek refuge inside the barracks, they told Human Rights Watch.<sup>82</sup> A video shared on YouTube, which Human Rights Watch researchers found credible after interviewing witnesses and visiting the site, shows army soldiers pushing protesters seeking refuge away from the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry division barracks.<sup>83</sup> A soldier told Human Rights Watch that he and other SAF soldiers were ordered to stay in their barracks to stop them from intervening: “We saw hundreds of vehicles of RSF and police just around, surrounding our bases and splitting us from protesters. We had orders to stay put.”<sup>84</sup>

“Musa,” a 21-year-old student, said the navy would not allow him and other protesters into their compound:

“We tried to go to the navy building, but soldiers beat us hard and didn’t want to let us in. The RSF cars made a circle around the navy and army and then shot at people in front of the navy. We decided to go back into the sit in area to save people who were shot. There were a lot of bodies on the street.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Khalid (pseudonym), August 7, Khartoum.

<sup>83</sup> “ Circulated video shows land forces kicks protesters away in sin-in massacre, (Arabic) video clip, posted on July 9, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GX-815fxtLo>, (accessed on September 10, 2019).

<sup>84</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Rami (pseudonym), SAF soldier, August 6, Khartoum.

<sup>85</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Musa (pseudonym), August 9, Khartoum.

## Killings Outside the Sit-in Area

After the attack started on June 3, protesters who vacated the sit-in site, joined protesters in other locations in the city and erected more barricades. RSF set up makeshift checkpoints around the capital, closing off streets, while many people took refuge in homes or hospitals. Protesters continued to take to the streets, fueled by anger over the violence at the sit-in, and security forces responded with more violence.<sup>86</sup>

Khatir Hussein Khatir, a 21-year-old student, was killed on the morning of June 3 in Omdurman. According to his mother and witnesses, Khatir had tried to join the protests in Khartoum but the streets were blocked so he remained in Omdurman. He joined protesters in his neighborhood, Abassiya, and at around 10 a.m. RSF soldiers patrolling Street 40, a main street, shot him. “He was taken by his friends from the place where he was shot to a nearby house, but they could not get him to the hospital in time to save his life. Khatir is my only son,” his mother lamented.<sup>87</sup>

According to a report issued by Darfur Bar Association, Khatir was targeted because he was the head of the neighborhood “resistance committee” and was chased before he was killed.<sup>88</sup> Human Rights Watch could not independently verify this conclusion. One of Khatir’s friends, Mahmoud Mohamed Abdalla al-Amir, 22, was also killed in Omdurman around the same time. A protester who was with Mahmoud and a group of 12 other protesters said he saw an RSF soldier aiming and shooting at Mahmoud: “I think the soldiers targeted him because he was recording on video [on his phone].”<sup>89</sup>

In Khartoum, RSF soldiers shot dead a 31-year-old man while he was standing with two other people near a barricade on Inqaz street, in South Khartoum. According to witnesses, an RSF vehicle came near and soldiers in the vehicle started shooting, hitting him and another man.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> In addition to the protests in Khartoum and Omdurman, protesters were killed by security forces in Algadarif, in east Sudan, and Central Darfur.

<sup>87</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Fatma Fitiyo, August 9, Omdurman.

<sup>88</sup> Resistance committees refer to local neighborhood groups that organized protests. See footnote 5 above. See Darfur Bar Association, “On the Prosecutor General’s Committee (PGC) Report about the Sit-In’s Dispersal,” (Arabic) July 30, 2019, p.1. On file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>89</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Yassir (pseudonym), August 9, Khartoum.

<sup>90</sup> Witness accounts, medical reports and other evidence collected by the legal aid organization, PLACE, shared with Human Rights Watch August 3 in Khartoum. On file with Human Rights Watch. The name of the deceased has been withheld due to security concerns for the family.

Also, in south Khartoum, the RSF attacked and apparently executed a 29-year-old man, while he was standing outside his house chatting with a friend. A witness to the killing told a legal aid organization's staff that two RSF armed vehicles and a personnel carrier stopped nearby. An officer got out of one of the vehicles and hit the man with his gun butt, then shot him dead at close range. Forensic reports seen by Human Rights Watch confirms two entry wounds in middle and right part of chest, and two exit wounds on the back caused by gunshot.<sup>91</sup>

In the days following the June 3 crackdown, protests were held in various locations. According to one witness, RSF soldiers in vehicles stationed in south Khartoum on June 4, shot at protesters, killing a 37-year-old man while he attempted to help a woman who had fallen on the street. He later died in the hospital.<sup>92</sup>

On the early morning of June 9, in Bahri, Walid Abdulrahman Salem Saeed, 41, was killed after RSF and riot police attacked a barricade erected by protesters in al-Mazad area in Bahri. “The police, in blue uniforms, were shooting so Walid told the protesters to move. That is when he was shot,” recalled his older brother, Khaled, who collected medical reports and video evidence of the killing and is a member of a group of victims’ families, now known as the “association of families of the martyrs of the December revolution.”<sup>93</sup>

A witness to Walid’s killing told researchers that he believes the gunmen clearly targeted Walid and did so because he was a known community leader. “They did not shoot any other protesters. He was very out-spoken and this shooting was definitely targeted.”<sup>94</sup> One day before, Walid appeared on a video on social media arguing with a police officer to let

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Khaled Abdelrahman Salem Saeed, August 10, Khartoum. For more information about the association, see its Facebook page, [https://www.facebook.com/Fomosudan/?epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/Fomosudan/?epa=SEARCH_BOX) (accessed November 3, 2019).

<sup>94</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Bakhit (pseudonym), 20, in Bahri, August 10. Another witness who told *Al Jazeera* about the killing, also spoke of Walid’s leadership in the protests. *Al Jazeera Live* (Arabic) Facebook page, “Targeting Walid Abdulrahman in Sudan” video, June 10, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/ajmubasher/videos/%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%81-%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86/2259196397724139/>, (accessed on September 17, 2019).

them protest.<sup>95</sup> Family members said the bullet passed through Walid's shoulder and neck. The Sudanese doctors' committee also confirmed he was killed by gunshot.<sup>96</sup> A video, seen by researchers, shows people attempting to save Walid's life after he was shot.<sup>97</sup>

## Beatings, Stabbings

The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, a professional doctors' organization, said over 900 people were wounded during the June 3 attack and subsequent days of violence.<sup>98</sup> Many of the worst injuries were gunshot wounds but doctors also reported evidence of stabbing and harsh beatings. "They [soldiers] used a stick to beat if you are close...they shoot if you are far from them," one protester reported.<sup>99</sup>

One doctor, who treated injuries on June 3, confirmed that among those he treated "many endured injuries from sharp items, and many told me the RSF stabbed them with bayonets."<sup>100</sup> A witness told *Al Jazeera* that he saw RSF chasing people around the sit-in and stabbing them with bayonets: "They did so because if they started shooting at that time, they will shoot each other as they were all over the place."<sup>101</sup>

Human Rights Watch researchers received several accounts of the security forces beating protesters harshly with metal sticks, batons and whips. Bakheet, a 20-year-old protester, told researchers he was badly beaten by RSF soldiers who pulled him out of hiding in the Blue Nile dormitory at the University of Khartoum.

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<sup>95</sup> "Conversation between Walid Abdulrahman and a police officer one day before he was killed", June 9, 2019, Video Clip YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhUZEAYmhg>, (accessed on September 17, 2019).

<sup>96</sup> The doctor's committee report confirmed he died from bullet in chest. Doctor's Committee Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/Sudandoctorscommittee/posts/2342066586079244/> (accessed on September 17, 2019).

<sup>97</sup> "Last Moment of attempting to save life of, the martyr Waleed Abdulrahman," video clip, posted June 9, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=domBKHqKHI> (accessed on September 17, 2019).

<sup>98</sup> Sudan Doctor's Syndicate, field report number 9, updates of martyrs' names from June 3 until June 18, dated June 24, 2019, on file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>99</sup> ""Eyewitnesses to sit-in dispersal massacre", video clip (Arabic) posted by Ayin Netowrk July 17, 2019, (witness speaking from 2:41), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3H96QeiLc&feature=youtu.be> (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>100</sup> Human Rights Watch telephone interview with "Abdalla" (pseudonym)<sup>19</sup> and 23 June.

<sup>101</sup> Eyewitness to sit-in dispersal in Khartoum, *Al Jazeera* (Arabic), video clip published July 10, 2019, (2:25), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxaoXRxc> (accessed September 17, 2019).

“They made us sit down in front of the dorm and beat us hard with butts of guns and sticks and pipes. We were about 20 people, including 2 small children ages 8 to 10. The beating lasted for an hour or more. They even beat the children.”<sup>102</sup>

Alaaeldin Ibrahim Ahmed, a 48-year old resident of the Daim neighborhood was beaten with sticks by soldiers on the morning of June 3. He told Human Rights Watch he was standing near Jawda hospital, in his neighborhood, where injured people were arriving from the sit-in. He recalled:

“Some women came out and told us the *Janjaweed* were coming. Then about 22 vehicles came [...] The soldiers started firing their guns. Then a group of 5 of them came down from the cars, surrounded me and whipped me.”<sup>103</sup>

## Sexual Violence

Human Rights Watch could not confirm the extent of sexual violence during the attack on the sit-in camp, but according to survivors, activists, protesters, and civil society organizations specialized in responding to sexual violence, security forces raped, gang raped, attempted to rape, and sexually assaulted female and male protesters, including medical workers. Most of those who reported their experience to civil society groups said they were raped or assaulted in the area around the mosque and university clinic and dormitory.

Sudanese women, who have fought for years against patriarchal policies and practices by al-Bashir’s government, played an important role in leading protests and in the sit-in camp. The fact that some of them then faced sexual violence is consistent with prior

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<sup>102</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Bakhit (pseudonym), August 10, Bahri.

<sup>103</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Alaaeldin Ibrahim Ahmed, August 6, 2019, Khartoum; See also, “RSF attacks a senior Sudanese man,” video, posted June 3, 2019 on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lkXdb1FN9A> (accessed September 17, 2019).

documentation of how security forces used sexual violence to silence outspoken women demanding respect for their human rights in Sudan.<sup>104</sup>

Several healthcare workers or staff of organizations aiding victims, all of whom Human Rights Watch found to be credible, provided information about rapes, which took place during the attack on June 3. One responder told Human Rights Watch her organization confirmed 16 cases of rape including 4 incidents of gang rape.<sup>105</sup> Another aid worker said she interviewed 4 women and a man in his 30s who said they were raped during the attack.<sup>106</sup> The director of a women's rights organization said her group had received 18 cases of rape that had taken place during the violence on June 3 and following days.<sup>107</sup> Human Rights Watch was unable to ascertain if the same cases had been documented by different organizations.

"Reem," a 20-year-old woman, described how she was raped while seeking shelter from the attacking forces in a female dormitory:

"There were bunk beds in the rooms and I hid behind one. I heard the voices of [RSF soldiers] while they were looting goods. [...] A man in black uniform came and told them to stop looting. Since he sounded good, I came out and told him I wanted to go to the hospital. [...] He said he would protect me and took me to another building in the compound. Then he unzipped his trousers and forced himself on me. [...] I was in pain. Then he acted like we were friends and tried to be nice and took me to the hospital holding my hand."<sup>108</sup>

Another woman, who sought help from an activist after she was attacked and then agreed to record her story on video, seen by Human Rights Watch, said RSF soldiers caught her and other women, took their clothes and phones, beat them with electrical cables, then

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<sup>104</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Good Girls Don't Protest: Repression and Abuse of Women Human Rights Defenders, Activists and Protestors in Sudan," March 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/03/23/good-girls-don-t-protest/repression-and-abuse-women-human-rights-defenders>.

<sup>105</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with staff from a trauma center, August 4, Khartoum.

<sup>106</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with a humanitarian aid worker, name withheld, August 9, Khartoum.

<sup>107</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with women's rights activist, name withheld, August 4, Khartoum.

<sup>108</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Reem (pseudonym), August 10, Khartoum.

raped them violently. “They called us prostitutes and communists,” she recalled.<sup>109</sup> Another woman, who also documented her experience on a video seen by Human Rights Watch, described how, while hiding in the radiology building on the university campus, RSF soldiers entered, searched her and took her phone. The RSF soldiers tried to rape her but military police intervened.<sup>110</sup>

The RSF attacked female medical personnel in some cases. For example, RSF soldiers assaulted “Laila,” a 28-year-old pharmacist, near the central clinic at the sit-in, then threatened her with rape: “[The soldier] said to me ‘we don’t want doctors here,’ They pushed and grabbed me [...] One said, ‘today is rape.’ I was so scared. They were obviously looking around to beat everyone, loot everything they find. [...].<sup>111</sup>

Many activists emphasized the lasting psycho-social impacts of sexual violence. At least one rape survivor killed herself, media reported.<sup>112</sup>

## Roundups, Abuses and Humiliation

Human Rights Watch found that soldiers pursued protesters into their hiding places inside buildings, rounded them up, and held them for hours, many in open spaces. Soldiers verbally insulted them, beat them, shaved their heads or cut their hair (a common way for security forces to humiliate young activists and prisoners by in Sudan), and in some cases instructed them to crawl in and drink sewage water.

Witnesses said the security forces rounded up hundreds of protesters on Nile Street under the Blue Nile bridge in the morning of June 3, not long into the operation.<sup>113</sup> Photos and videos posted on social media, including a video possibly shot by an RSF soldier, show dozens of protesters sitting on the ground, surrounded by many soldiers, being mocked, and insulted.<sup>114</sup> A soldier in the video can be heard saying: “We are RSF, we faced Darfur

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<sup>109</sup> Video clip, received from activists on August 8, 2019, in Khartoum. On file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>110</sup> Video clip received from activists on August 8, 2019, in Khartoum. On file with Human Rights Watch

<sup>111</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Laila (pseudonym) 28-year-old pharmacist, August 7, Khartoum.

<sup>112</sup> “Raped activist commits suicide in Sudan,” *Radio Dabanga*, September 29, 2019, at

<https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/raped-activist-commits-suicide-in-sudan> (accessed October 2, 2019).

<sup>113</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Dr. Sarah Ali Abdullah, telephone, August 29; and one witness account, shared with Human Rights Watch by PLACE organization in Khartoum on August 3, 2019.

<sup>114</sup> “‘Say madaniya,’ new video, acts of RSF against revolutionaries 29 Ramadan,” (Arabic), posted on July 12, 2019, video clip, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pq1-Pgi-AdQ> (accessed on September 17).

rebels, even with their vehicles...you thought you could overcome us?”<sup>115</sup> Another video shows RSF soldiers beating protesters, forcing them to crawl in water on the street near the sit-in.<sup>116</sup> One witness, a pharmacist, told researchers: “I saw RSF soldiers ordering young men to crawl on the ground. I could see RSF soldier standing over one protester and peeing on him.”<sup>117</sup>

Witnesses hiding on the top floor of Teacher’s Hospital told Human Rights Watch they saw how RSF soldiers were rounding people up by pushing them into a mosque.”<sup>118</sup> Ahmed, 27, told Human Rights Watch how RSF soldiers had pulled him out of the Teacher’s Hospital where he and many others were hiding, then made them sit in an open area outside the hospital for several hours:

“They called me a drug dealer and infidel. They said that I am not a man. One RSF officer ordered us to move the stones on the street. They beat me and cut my dreads [hair locks] with knives. [...] They kept making us say ‘askariya’ (soldier) [...] The ones with black uniform were aggressive and beat us with sticks. At some point, RSF soldiers started yelling at us to run away, and when we did, they ordered us to stop, then run again.”<sup>119</sup>

“Bakhit,” a 20-year old protester who was arrested in front of Khartoum University’s Blue Nile dormitory with a group of about 20 others, said soldiers picked him out of the group: “They said I was a terrorist and cut my hair off. They spoke very rudely to me.” He showed researchers photos of his backside bearing welts and signs of the beatings the soldiers inflicted that day.

One protester recounted how soldiers captured him and others in the university’s White Nile dormitory on June 3: “They ordered us to crawl in the mud and a couple of times gave me electroshocks with a baton. They took our phones and clothes, even my sandals. They took everything.” Following this, the soldiers made the group march west in the direction

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<sup>115</sup> “Say madaniya’ new video, acts of RSF against revolutionaries, 28 Ramadan,” video clip (starting from 1:57)

<sup>116</sup> Ayman Ahmed’s Facebook page, untitled, posted on July 17, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/aymanallord.aymanahmadown/videos/2535464196517202/> (accessed on September 17, 2019).

<sup>117</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Laila (pseudonym), August 7, Khartoum.

<sup>118</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Imad and Iman (pseudonyms), August 7, Khartoum.

<sup>119</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Ahmed (pseudonym), August 3, Khartoum.

of the *souq al arabi*[the Arabic market]. “I kept collapsing but they kept beating me to stand up and continue to *al-Fitihab* Bridge [...] I was beaten at two checkpoints and [soldiers] again shaved [the hair on my head].”<sup>120</sup>

One woman, a civil society leader, described a similar experience of RSF soldiers looting the belongings of protesters and thereafter forcing them to walk long distances:

“We were hiding in the radiology college area for safety. [...] A bullet went through the window. Then the RSF came in and got all of us out, separated us into groups of men and women. They put people literally into heaps. They had nasty words for us. [...] They took all our valuables. After one hour, they pushed us out into the street and made us walk down *sharia al balady* (a street) and forced us to walk long distance out of the sit in area. They ordered us to run with their whips at our backs [...].”<sup>121</sup>

## Restricting Access to Healthcare and Attacks on Healthcare Workers

Witnesses and victims told Human Rights Watch that during the June 3 attack, security forces sometimes allowed doctors or protesters with medical training to examine or treat injured protesters, especially during the round-up under the Blue Nile bridge.<sup>122</sup> However, on many occasions during the attack and following days, security forces prevented or hindered access to medical care by wounded protesters including during round-ups at the sit-in and at various clinics and hospitals.<sup>123</sup>

“Nour,” 30, recounted experiences of her brother, 22, who was detained by the RSF at the sit-in. He saw them preventing the injured from being treated: “My brother told me he saw many injured when they were gathered under Blue Nile bridge...he said that one protester

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<sup>120</sup> Eyewitness on sit-in dispersal,” (Arabic), *Al-Jazeera* video clip, posted on July 10, 2019, YouTube, (4:37), at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxaosXRxoc> (accessed on September 12, 2019).

<sup>121</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Nahid Jabrallah, August 4, Khartoum.

<sup>122</sup> Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Dr. Sarah Ali Abdullah, August 28, 2019.

<sup>123</sup> For example, Amir, 21, and other injured protesters went to the police hospital near the sit-in area but “staff told us to go because they were afraid of RSF coming back into the hospital. We tried to get to Royal Care but RSF guys were beating us, so we had to return to the police hospital.” Human Rights Watch interview with Amir, August 9, Khartoum. See also. Physicians for Human Rights statement, June 3, 2019, <https://phr.org/news/sudanese-rapid-support-forces-are-targeting-hospitals-peaceful-sit-in-dozens-of-civilians-reported-killed/> (accessed September 10, 2019).

next to him was injured and bled to death without RSF allowing any medical care for him.”<sup>124</sup>

According to the Sudan Doctors Central Committee, the RSF surrounded the entrances to three hospitals on June 3, preventing doctors and the injured from entering.<sup>125</sup> A video posted on YouTube on June 3 shows police forces attacking a doctor at the hospitals’ entrance.<sup>126</sup> Wounded protesters at Royal Care hospital told media RSF attacked them when they sought treatment on June 3 and shot at the entrance of the hospital on the morning of June 4.<sup>127</sup> Witnesses confirmed the attack to Human Rights Watch; one doctor recalled how RSF told him as he entered the hospital, “we don’t want doctor’s here, let them die.”<sup>128</sup>

A medic told media how soldiers surrounded the hospital on the morning of June 4 then ordered hospital staff to evacuate all wounded protesters. “The soldier said they don’t want the patients here,” the medic told *AlJazeera*. He said soldiers arrested one of the doctors, identified as Waleed Abdullah, after shooting him in the leg.<sup>129</sup>

Video taken from inside the Teacher’s Hospital, near the sit-in area also shows men wearing uniforms of RSF and riot police attacking protesters at the entrance of the hospital.<sup>130</sup> One witness, a 27-year-old man, told researchers: “We got in the hospital and RSF shot at us from behind. Inside the hospital people were crying and scared. RSF shot at the glass entrance of the hospital and glass shattered. They were beating people trying to

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<sup>124</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Nour (pseudonym), by telephone, June 25.

<sup>125</sup> “Khartoum sit-in massacre: death toll rises to 35,” *Radio Dabanga*, June 4, 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/khartoum-sit-in-massacre-death-toll-rises-to-35> (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>126</sup> “RSF and police storm Royal Care hospital and beat doctors,” video clip (Arabic) published June 3, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwoBz8HXio8> (accessed on September 10, 2019).

<sup>127</sup> Jason Patinkin, “Survivors of Sudan’s security crackdown describe brutal attacks,” *Voice of America*, June 5, 2019 <https://www.voanews.com/africa/survivors-sudans-security-crackdown-describe-brutal-attacks> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>128</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Ahmed, August 3; Osama, August 2; Imad and Iman, August 7; and telephone interview with doctor “Shawgi” (pseudonym), 34, on, June 21, 2019.

<sup>129</sup> “Sudan army ‘expels wounded protesters’ from hospital after attack,” *AlJazeera*, June 4, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/sudan-military-attacks-hospital-expels-wounded-protesters-190604200747631.html> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>130</sup> “Attacking wounded inside Teacher’s hospital” video clip (Arabic) posted June 3, 2019 on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuiPVwzHyiU> (accessed September 11, 2019).

get inside the hospital from the front entrance. I saw around six of them beating one protester and many injured outside.”<sup>131</sup>

The witness said that although military intelligence officers tried to stop the attack, two RSF soldiers came in anyway and threw an explosive device into the hospital and fired shots at the ceiling. He said the soldiers forced him and others out of the hospital, beat them and took their phones.

A report by *Ayin*, an independent media network focusing on news from Sudan’s conflicts, also documented accounts of witnesses who confirmed attacks led by RSF and police on hospitals. The media group quoted activist Nazim Siraj who coordinates medical help for protestors as saying, “security forces comprising of police and RSF units surrounded Royal Care Hospital and Teacher’s Hospital (the *Mo’alim* medical complex), ordering patients and medical workers to evacuate the premises. He said that one patient in the intensive care unit died in the process.”<sup>132</sup>

## Missing and Disappeared

Since the June 3 attack, families, activists and others have called on authorities to reveal the whereabouts of their missing ones. A Facebook group called “MISSING” is actively sharing posts with details of dozens of missing people since June 3.<sup>133</sup>

On September 5, Sudanese police announced they had not received any official complaints from families of missing persons and accused “parties” of seeking political gain by circulating what they described as “inaccurate numbers” of missing people since the June 3 attack.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Ahmed (pseudonym), August 3, Khartoum.

<sup>132</sup> “Massacre in Ramadan: The June 3 military assault on Sudan’s largest protest site Ayin Network report, June 26, 2019, <https://3ayin.com/june-3-massacre/> (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>133</sup> “Missing”, Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/392935134763820/> (accessed September 17, 2019); and Mohamed Amin, “Missing after the massacre: Sudanese families still searching for loved ones 100 days on,” Middle East Eye, September 11, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/missing-after-massacre-100-days-searching-sudans-families> (accessed October 10, 2019).

<sup>134</sup> “First official comment from Police on the missing during sit-in dispersal,” *Sudan Akhbar* (Arabic) September 5, 2019 <https://www.sudanakhbar.com/565796> (accessed September 10, 2019).

In August, Sudanese activists told Human Rights Watch they had confirmed 17 people were missing in Khartoum since the attack on June 3, including women working as tea or food sellers at the sit-in camp.<sup>135</sup> A lawyer initiated legal proceedings to open investigations into cases of 11 missing people.<sup>136</sup> However, activists point out that the real number of missing people could be higher, as some families may not have reported cases; and some of the missing may not have any family searching for them.<sup>137</sup>

Activists told researchers they fear RSF could have detained people in unofficial detention sites and were still holding them. Human Rights Watch is not aware of any official efforts to confirm the existence of or access to RSF detention sites. Others worry protesters were burned during the attack inside their tents, and their bodies never identified.<sup>138</sup> Others worry their loved ones were killed and thrown into the Nile.

Shortly after the attack on the sit-in camp, witnesses reported to media that they had seen RSF soldiers throwing bodies into the river.<sup>139</sup> Two witnesses told Human Rights Watch researchers the same. One of the witnessess, age 30, said: “I saw bodies thrown into the river. It was near the vocational training center. I saw soldiers tying rocks to legs of several bodies, maybe eight of them, and throwing them in.”<sup>140</sup> A third witness who was arrested by RSF near the university clinic area, said he heard an officer from RSF ordering his soldiers to throw “people” in the river.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Human Rights Watch interviews with activists leading the committee for the disappeared, August 6-7, 2019, Khartoum; interview with Awadiya Mahmoud Koko Ahmed, president of the tea and food sellers’ association, in Mayo district, August 9, Khartoum.

<sup>136</sup> “Investigation to open into 11 reported missing after Sudan sit-in bloodbath,” *The New Arab*, August 8, 2019, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/8/7/investigation-to-open-into-11-reported-missing-in-sudan>.(accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>137</sup> “Where are they? Families lament missing Sudanese after attack,” July 27, 2019, *AlJazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/families-lament-missing-sudanese-attack-190727185403197.html> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>138</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Hassan (pseudonym), August 1, Khartoum. One witness told media he saw RSF soldiers gathering dead bodies at the back of HAC building, covered them with a tent, then set it on fire with gasoline. “Eyewitness to sit-in dispersal,” *AlJazeera Live Video* (Arabic), posted July 10, 2019, to YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxaaosXRxoc> (accessed on September 10, 2019).

<sup>139</sup> “Sudan: security forces ‘hiding corpses’ of protesters dumped in the Nile and ‘raping doctors’ amid brutal crackdown,” the Independent, June 5, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/river-nile-sudan-death-toll-crackdown-military-khartoum-latest-a8945871.html> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>140</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Osman, (pseudonym) August 10, in Khartoum, and Mohamed, (pseudonym) August 8, in Khartoum.

<sup>141</sup> Interview of witness, collected by PLACE, shared with Human Rights Watch in Khartoum, August 3, 2019.

Some bodies were pulled from the river and later identified. On June 26, the body of a tea seller, Amal Gous, who was missing after the June 3 sit-in attack, was found floating in the Nile.<sup>142</sup> In October, the family of a protester, Gusai Hamato, missing since June 3, told media that after four months of searching they located and identified his body at a morgue in Omdurman.<sup>143</sup> Hamato's body was among two found in the river in early June with bricks tied to them and gunshot wounds, strongly suggesting they were killed before being thrown into the river.<sup>144</sup> A video posted on social media shows Hamato, with other protesters, running as RSF and police forces shot at them.<sup>145</sup>

The case underscores the difficulties family members have encountered accessing information from morgues. On October 3, three bodies, also identified as victims of the June 3 attack, were buried without proper authorization from medical officials or communication with the families. The news prompted an investigation into the handling of bodies.

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<sup>142</sup> "Body of killed tea seller in Sudan's Nile river," *Radio Dabanga*, June 26, 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/body-of-killed-tea-seller-found-in-sudan-s-nile-river> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>143</sup> "Body of missing protester found in morgue after DNA testing," Radio Dabanga, October 4, 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/body-of-missing-protestor-found-in-morgue-after-dna-testing> (accessed October 11, 2019).

<sup>144</sup> A video shows the bodies at the morgue. See Screenshot Sudan's Facebook page, video clip showing two bodies tied to bricks delivered at the morgue (Arabic) n.d. <https://www.facebook.com/screenshotssudan/videos/756683444728093/> (accessed September 11, 2019)

<sup>145</sup> Video from June 3, sit-in attack, shows martyr Gusai, Facebook (0:11), posted on October 3, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/100004890700052/videos/1273231472849864/> (accessed on October 10, 2019)

## Authorities' Responses to the June 3 Attack

### Denial of Responsibility for the Crimes

Authorities denied they dispersed the sit-in. The TMC spokesperson, Lt. Gen. Kabbashi, initially said on television that security forces did not attack the sit-in, and only targeted the Colombia area, which they said was known for illegal activities. He claimed protesters were still there at the sit-in.<sup>146</sup> Later, he admitted that the sit-in dispersal was “planned” but that some “mistakes” occurred in implementation.<sup>147</sup>

In July, Hemedti, the deputy TMC head and RSF commander, denied his forces were involved, saying their uniforms could be easily bought from the market and that “anyone can claim they are RSF.”<sup>148</sup> But on August 6, he expressed “regret” for the conduct of the operation to clear Colombia and said that operation escalated into a wider dispersal of the sit-in.<sup>149</sup>

In an effort to defend the legality of the sit-in dispersal operation, Lt. Gen. Kabbashi said TMC members met with the head of the judiciary and the attorney general – key legal advisers—prior to the operation and then “directed the military leadership to plan for dispersing this sit-in, in accordance with security and military procedures.”<sup>150</sup> The head of the judiciary, Abbas Ali Babiker, however denied endorsing the attack, and said the operation “would not fall within the judiciary’s competency and had then left the meeting.”<sup>151</sup> The attorney-general, Walid Said Ahmed, also denied that he was consulted

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<sup>146</sup> Michael Georgy and Khaled Abdelaziz, “Sudanese forces storm protest camp, nine people died-medics,” *Reuters*, June 3, 2019, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1T41GH-OZATP> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>147</sup> “Sudan military admits it ordered brutal crackdown on protesters,” *Al Jazeera*, June 14, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/sudan-military-admits-ordered-brutal-crackdown-protesters-190614042623354.html> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>148</sup> “Facing international condemnation, Hemedti has denied responsibility for the killings of June 3rd, blaming the violence on rogue elements and imposters,” *BBC News*, July 12, 2019, <https://twitter.com/bbcAfrica/status/1149616332809261062> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>149</sup> “Hemedti regrets bloody attack on Sudan’s pro-democracy sit-in,” *Sudan Tribune*, August 6, 2019, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67899> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>150</sup> “Sudan’s military authorities admit to ordering crackdown on sit-in,” *Middle East Eye*, June 13, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudans-military-authorities-admit-ordering-deadly-crackdown-sit> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>151</sup> “Sudanese judiciary denies TMC’s narrative on sit-in dispersal,” *Al Jazeera* (in Arabic), June 15, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/politics/2019/6/15/السودان-القضاء-المجلس-ال العسكري-الاعتصام> (accessed September 11, 2019).

on dispersing the sit-in.<sup>152</sup> On June 20, TMC sacked the attorney-general, Waleed Said Ahmed, citing his “slowness” in investigating and prosecuting figures of former regime.<sup>153</sup>

## Responses from the TMC, the Attorney-General, and the National Human Rights Commission

On June 3, the attorney-general, Waleed Said Ahmed, told media that a committee had been set up to investigate the “events” that took place very early that morning.<sup>154</sup> On June 10, the TMC spokesman announced that an investigation committee had reached preliminary findings, and said authorities had arrested members of regular forces, though it is not clear to which forces he was referring.<sup>155</sup> Opposition groups rejected the probes and called for an international investigation.<sup>156</sup>

At a July 27 press conference, the head of the attorney-general’s investigation committee, Fatih al-Rahman Saeed, said RSF personnel and other forces disobeyed orders to clear only the Colombia area where illegal drugs are sold, and attacked the sit-in. He said an “anti-riot” force affiliated with RSF was part of the attack, and that unknown, masked snipers shot at the protesters from atop the Bashir Medical City building near the sit-in, leading to several casualties.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> “Sudanese attorney-general denies military council’s narrative on sit-in dispersal, threatening to resign,” *Al-Ghad TV*, video clip (in Arabic), posted June 15, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3UWQl6D7uA> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>153</sup> Ahmed Asem, Bahran Abdel-Monem, “Sudan’s military fires attorney general over crackdown,” *Anadolu Agency*, June 20, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/sudans-military-fires-attorney-general-over-crackdown/1511324> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>154</sup> Julia Hollingsworth et al, “At least 35 killed as Sudan military storms Khartoum sit-in,” June 3, 2019, *CNN*, at <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/06/03/africa/sudan-gunfire-khartoum-intl/index.html> (accessed September 11, 2019)

<sup>155</sup> “Sudan TMC announces preliminary findings for sit-in investigation,” *Sky News Arabia* (in Arabic) June 10, 2019, <https://www.skynewsarabia.com/middle-east/1258401-%D8%A8%D8%AC%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A1> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>156</sup> “Sudan junta rejects international inquiry into Khartoum massacre,” *Radio Dabanga*, June 16, 2019 <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-junta-rejects-international-inquiry-into-khartoum-massacre> (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>157</sup> “Press conference announcing findings and recommendations of investigation committee in sit-in dispersal”, posted on July 27, 2019, video clip (in Arabic), YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyjoRYHLQFs&t=840s> “Sudan opposition rejects committee report blaming sit-in attack on rogue security officers”, *Mada Masr*, July 28, 2019 <https://madamasr.com/en/2019/07/28/feature/politics/sudan-opposition-rejects-committee-report-blaming-sit-in-attack-on-rogue-security-officers/> (accessed September 17, 2019)

The committee found 87 people were killed between June 3 - 10, and only 17 of them were killed at the sit-in on June 3. They said 48 people were wounded by bullets. They did not find any evidence of rape or sexual violence. It recommended dismissing, detaining and bringing charges against eight officers for crimes against humanity, murder and assault.<sup>158</sup>

The findings were widely rejected.<sup>159</sup> The Sudan Forensic Doctors Union, another professional doctor's group, described the report as "poor and defective, and disproportionate to the size of the crime committed as witnessed by all." The SPA and FFC also rejected the findings and called for accountability, "not only for dismantling of the sit-in and the subsequent massacre, but also in all crimes committed from April 11 [when President Omar Al Bashir was ousted] until today."

A Sudanese lawyers association in the United Kingdom said the committee's report was biased and should be treated as evidence for "obstructing justice" by the authorities.<sup>160</sup> A report by Darfur Bar Association found that the TMC was responsible for the attack and abuses on June 3 and days following, including on June 30. The DBA said that it "talked to over 500 persons including families of victims and all denied that the government committee have reached out or visited them to obtain their testimonies."<sup>161</sup>

On September 27, six weeks after the transitional government formed and the TMC dissolved, Sudan's national human rights commission, a quasi-governmental institution, issued a 35-page report with similar findings to that of the committee.<sup>162</sup> It found that those responsible had defied orders to clear the Columbia area adjacent to the sit-in, and urged the judiciary to set up courts for prosecuting the perpetrators and recommended a

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. The names of perpetrators were withheld and only referred to with initials. In 2009, Sudan amended the 1991 Criminal Code to include crimes against humanity as defined in the Rome Statute: a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack. To Human Rights Watch's knowledge these prosecutions would be the first time the provision would be invoked; however, authorities have not released information about the cases.

<sup>159</sup> Sudan opposition rejects committee report blaming sit-in attack on rogue security officers," *Madam*, July 28, 2019, <https://madamasr.com/en/2019/07/28/feature/politics/sudan-opposition-rejects-committee-report-blaming-sit-in-attack-on-rogue-security-officers/> (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>160</sup> "Sudanese army headquarters massacre," report by the Sudanese lawyers and legal practitioner's association in the UK, August 10, 2019 on file with Human Rights Watch, p.20.

<sup>161</sup> On the Prosecutor General's Committee (PGC) Report about the Sit-In's Dispersion, by Darfur Bar Association, July 30, 2019, on file with Human Rights Watch, p.1.

<sup>162</sup> Sudanese national human rights commission report (in Arabic), September 27 2019, on file with Human Rights Watch.

series of other reforms including law reform and ratification of international treaties.<sup>163</sup> The association of families of the martyrs of the December revolution, formed in August by the families and relatives of all those killed since December 2018, rejected the human rights commission’s findings.<sup>164</sup>

Meanwhile, families of victims and their lawyers have faced obstacles seeking justice for killings and other crimes in court. A lawyer involved in efforts to prosecute the crimes told Human Rights Watch that both police and prosecution have shown lack of cooperation by denying access to files and through intimidation of victims and witnesses. “They are either unwilling or scared of [the] RSF. The problem is that we would need a long time for legal and justice reform in order to have proper justice delivered to victims of June 3 and all other abuses,” the lawyer said.<sup>165</sup>

## Calls for an International Investigation into the Violence

International and regional actors responded quickly to the violence. On June 3, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, condemned the violence, called for an “immediate and transparent investigation” into the events to hold those responsible to account and called on the army to protect protesters.<sup>166</sup> On June 6, the African Union (AU) suspended Sudan’s membership.<sup>167</sup> The European Union (EU) and Troika governments (the UK, United States, and Norway) also condemned the attack and blamed the TMC for ordering it.<sup>168</sup> A group of United Nations independent experts voiced concern that Sudan was sliding into a “human rights abyss”, and called on the UN’s

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<sup>163</sup> “Sudan’s National Human Rights Commission: junta played no role in June 3 massacre”, *Radio Dabanga*, September 27, 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-s-national-human-rights-commission-junta-played-no-role-in-june-3-massacre> (accessed at October 1, 2019). The report recommended amending criminal laws to include torture and enforced disappearances and adopt a code of conduct for law enforcement, among other law reforms.

<sup>164</sup> See Facebook page of the Association of the Families of Martyrs of the Sudanese Revolution of December 2018, video of press conference, September 26, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/Fomosudan/>, (accessed October 2, 2019).

<sup>165</sup> Human Rights Watch interview in Khartoum with a lawyer, name withheld, Khartoum, August 1.

<sup>166</sup> African Union statement, June 3, 2019, at <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20190603/statement-chairperson-situation-sudan>.(accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>167</sup> “African Union suspends Sudan, demands civilian administration,” *VOA News*, June 6, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/african-union-suspends-sudan-demands-civilian-administration>.(accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>168</sup> Sudan: Foreign Affairs Council statement, June 17, 2019, Council of the European Union, at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/17/sudan-foreign-affairs-council-statement/>; [and Joint Statement on development in Sudan, June 4, U.S. Department of State, at:](https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-developments-in-sudan/) <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-developments-in-sudan/> (accessed September 11, 2019).

Human Rights Council in Geneva to establish an independent investigation into violations against protesters on June 3 and subsequently.<sup>169</sup>

Immediately after the June 3 attack, the FFC demanded an international investigation into the killings and other abuses as a condition to resume talks with the TMC.<sup>170</sup> Waleed Said Ahmed, then attorney-general, rejected the call, and made assurances that the ongoing national investigation would be independent.<sup>171</sup> Soon thereafter, the FFC signed a political agreement with the TMC (initially agreed on July 4, then elaborated in a Constitutional Charter, signed August 3) in which parties agreed to form a “national independent investigation into June 3 events, to be supported by the AU “if necessary.”<sup>172</sup>

On September 21, the Prime Minister announced formation of the investigation committee, composed of 7 members including representatives from the ministries of defense, interior, and justice, two independent lawyers and an independent “national figure.”<sup>173</sup> The committee’s mandate is limited to June 3 events and evidence it gathers may not be used in court; if authorities wish to pursue criminal justice, they would need to form another, judicial investigation committee that may gather evidence to be used in court. The association of family members of those killed during the protests, formed in August, raised concerns about the independence and effectiveness of the investigation committee.<sup>174</sup> On October 21, the prime minister named the committee members and clarified its mandate,

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<sup>169</sup> “Sudan: UN human rights experts call for independent investigation into violations,” June 12, 2019, UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24689&LangID=E> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>170</sup> “Sudan crackdown: All the latest updates,” *Al Jazeera*, June 12, 2019 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/cloneofsudan-crackdown-protesters-latest-updates-190606083751943.html> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>171</sup> “Sudanese attorney-general: I don’t support international investigation in Sudan’s sit-in dispersal,” *Al Arabiya*, video (Arabic), posted June 15, 2019 on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9uWLxsRuxzk> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>172</sup> Sudan: Draft Constitutional Charter for the 2019 Transitional Period, August 6, 2019, <http://sudanreeves.org/2019/08/06/sudan-draft-constitutional-charter-for-the-2019-transitional-period/> (accessed November 11, 2019).

<sup>173</sup> “Hamduk forms investigation committee into attacks on pro-democracy protests,” *Sudan Tribune*, September 1, 2019, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article68168> (accessed October 1, 2019).

<sup>174</sup> Human Rights Watch dispatch, “Sudan’s new investigation committee raises concerns,” September 24, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/24/sudans-new-investigation-committee-raises-concerns>.

time-frame, and powers.<sup>175</sup> Rights groups have raised concerns about the lack of female members.<sup>176</sup>

As argued elsewhere in this report, authorities should modify this committee or create a new one, ensuring its impartiality and independence and mandating it to investigate all attacks on protesters since December 2018 while ensuring that evidence it collects may be used by relevant authorities in criminal proceedings. Authorities should ensure members include women and men with relevant expertise and should invite international experts to support their work. The experts should include persons with experience in how to document sexual violence in a survivor-centered manner and help survivors access services including long term healthcare.

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<sup>175</sup> “Nabil Adeb is a head of investigation committee in sit-in dispersal”, *al-Youm al-Tali*, October 22, <https://alyoumaltali.net/%D9%86%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A3%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A8-%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%8B%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82-%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%A7/> (accessed October 31, 2019)

<sup>176</sup> “Sudan activist: ‘Committee of Inquiry should include women,’” *Radio Dabanga*, October 23, 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-activist-committee-of-inquiry-should-include-women> (accessed October 31, 2019)

## Protests and Crackdowns Continue

The protests continued after the June 3 attack, with protesters chanting, “blood for blood, we will not accept blood money,” and calling for justice for victims and for speedy transition to civilian government.<sup>177</sup> On several occasions RSF continued to use excessive, lethal force to disperse protests.

On June 30, a historically significant day marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of al-Bashir’s regime, protesters took to the streets demanding civilian rule and accountability for the June 3 attacks.<sup>178</sup> It was the first mass demonstrations since the crackdown. A day earlier, SPA reported that TMC security forces had stormed their office and disrupted a press conference.<sup>179</sup> The military warned that protest leaders would be punished as “vandals” who caused property damage or blocked roads.<sup>180</sup>

On the day of the protest, RSF and other forces patrolled Khartoum.<sup>181</sup> Large crowds marched toward the Republican Palace, where the president resides, over the White Nile bridge that connects Omdurman to Khartoum. Information gleaned from videos and witnesses indicate that around 3:20 p.m., soldiers on foot and in vehicles blocked the Omdurman bridge and fired shots at the crowd, causing protesters to scatter. Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that the gunmen were RSF and they fired live ammunition at the protesters and whipped and beat many. This information was corroborated by video on social media.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> “Deadly start to first day of ‘civil disobedience’ campaign in Sudan,” *France 24*, June 9, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190609-sudan-khartoum-omar-al-Bashir-omdurman-civil-disobedience> (accessed September 11, 2019); Blood money is a compensation paid to family of a killed person under Islamic traditions.

<sup>178</sup> “Sudan braces for millions march as defiant protesters regroup,” *Aljazeera*, June 29, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/sudan-braces-millions-march-defiant-protesters-regroup-190629063005440.html> (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>179</sup> Sudan security forces raid opposition group office in Khartoum, *Reuters*, June 29, at <https://de.reuters.com/article/sudan-politics-idAFL8N2400O0> (accessed September 10, 2019).

<sup>180</sup> “Sudan: mass rallies turn deadly in quest for civilian rule,” *DW*, June 30, 2019, at <https://www.dw.com/en/sudan-mass-rallies-turn-deadly-in-quest-for-civilian-rule/a-49416866> (accessed on September 10, 2019).

<sup>181</sup> “Sudan protests: deadly unrest as masses oppose the military,” *BBC News*, June 30, 2019, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48812578> (accessed on September 10, 2019).

<sup>182</sup> “Omdurman millions march June 30,” video clip (Arabic), posted July 4, 2019 to YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAHvijqotPY&t=1267s> (accessed September 10, 2019); Sudanese Archive, video investigation, from minute 2:08, posted August 19, 2019 to YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjqFEMcidRg> (accessed on September 10, 2019).

Media reported that Hemedti said on television that unknown gunmen shot and injured three RSF soldiers and five or six civilians.<sup>183</sup> Seven protesters were killed and 181 injured, including 27 by gunshots, according to a health ministry official.<sup>184</sup> An opposition doctors' group told media that 11 people were killed on June 30. This number included three corpses with bullet wounds found on the street in Omdurman the next day, and one person in Atbara, where government forces also violently dispersed protests.<sup>185</sup> Hundreds of protesters gathered in Omdurman the next day to denounce the military council after residents found the three dead bodies.<sup>186</sup>

On July 29, high school students in the central town of El Obeid protested against price hikes and poor transportation services. They marched peacefully, chanting: "no transport, no bread."<sup>187</sup> RSF soldiers shot at them, killing five high school students, media reported.<sup>188</sup> The United Nations Children's Fund condemned the July 29 violence in a statement and called on authorities to investigate.<sup>189</sup> The killings of the students caused anger across the country, with protesters in Khartoum calling for justice for the victims.<sup>190</sup>

On August 1, the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, a professional doctors' organization, reported that four protesters were killed in Omdurman while calling for justice for the al-Obeid victims.<sup>191</sup> TMC immediately denounced the violence and said that

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<sup>183</sup> "Sudanese protesters killed during 'million man march'", *France 24*, June 30, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190630-sudan-braces-million-man-protest-march-against-military-rule> (accessed October 2, 2019).

<sup>184</sup> Yasser Abdullah, et al, "At least 7 dead as tens of thousands protest in Sudan, demanding civil rule," *CNN*, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/06/30/africa/sudan-mass-protest-intl/index.html> (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>185</sup> Bel Trew, "Sudan death toll rises to 11 after violent clashes as protesters vow 'not to back down,'" the Independent, July 1, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/sudan-protests-death-toll-khartoum-omdurman-million-man-march-a8983416.html> (accessed October 1, 2019).

<sup>186</sup> "Hundreds gather across the Nile from Khartoum after deadly clashes," *Reuters*, July 1, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-politics/hundreds-gather-across-nile-from-khartoum-after-deadly-clashes-idUSKCN1TW22Q> (accessed September 17, 2019).

<sup>187</sup> "North Kordofan: Urgent call to investigate the killing of six peaceful protesters including 3 minors in El Obeid," African Center for Justice and Peace Studies, August 2, 2019, <http://www.acjps.org/north-kordofan-urgent-call-to-investigate-the-killing-of-six-peaceful-protesters-including-3-minors-in-el-obeid/> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>188</sup> "Calls for protests as student deaths stir anger ahead of Sudan talks," *France 24*, July 29, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190729-students-shot-dead-protests-sudan-obeid-kordofan> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>189</sup> "No child should be buried in their school uniform," UNICEF, July 29, 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/sudan/press-releases/no-child-should-be-buried> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>190</sup> "Calls for protests as student deaths stir anger ahead of Sudan talks," *France 24*, July 29, 2019.

<sup>191</sup> Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, August 1, 2019, statement, Twitter, at: [https://twitter.com/Sd\\_Doctors/status/1156974139808391168?ref\\_src=twsrct%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwter](https://twitter.com/Sd_Doctors/status/1156974139808391168?ref_src=twsrct%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwter)

nine RSF soldiers involved in the violence in both El Obeid and Omdurman had been dismissed from service and referred for prosecution.<sup>192</sup>

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m%5E1156974139808391168&ref\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.france24.com%2Fen%2F20190801-gunfire-protest-sudan-student-killings (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>192</sup> “Sudan detains nine RSF members over killing of protesters,” *Aljazeera*, August 2, 2019, at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/sudan-detains-rsf-members-killing-protesters-190802064916161.html> (accessed September 10, 2019).

## Applicable Legal Standards

### Freedom of Assembly and Use of Force

While the rights to assemble and peaceful protest are not absolute and may be subject to proportionate regulation and policing, governments have an obligation to respect and protect those rights and resort to use of force to prevent, disperse or disassemble a protest is subject to strict scrutiny under international law for its necessity and lawfulness. There is no question but that in the course of policing the protests after April 11, and in particular on and after June 3, Sudanese authorities went beyond the bounds permitted by international, African regional human rights and domestic law governing the use of force.

Peaceful assembly can only be restricted through laws that are “necessary in a democratic society in the interest of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”<sup>193</sup> Any restrictions on national security grounds should be strictly construed, necessary and proportionate to address a legitimate threat.

Law enforcement authorities, who include police and armed forces personnel acting in a law enforcement capacity, may regulate assemblies in accordance with international policing standards. The UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials states that: “law enforcement officials may use force only when strictly necessary” in the line of duty.”<sup>194</sup> The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms (the “Basic Principles”) provide that law enforcement officials “shall, as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force” and may use force “only if other means remain ineffective.”<sup>195</sup> When the use of force is necessary, law enforcement officials should “exercise restraint in such use and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offense.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted December 16, 1966, G.A. Res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 999 U.N.T.S. 171, entered into force March 23, 1976, art. 21.

<sup>194</sup> United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, adopted December 17, 1979, G.A. res. 34/169, annex, 34 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 46) at 186, U.N. Doc. A/34/46 (1979), art. 3.

<sup>195</sup> Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, 27 August to 7 September 1990, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.144/28/Rev.1 at 112 (1990), principle 4.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, principle 5(a)

The Basic Principles also place limits on the use of force in dispersing “unlawful assemblies.” Principle 13 states that, “In the dispersal of assemblies that are unlawful but non-violent, law enforcement officials shall avoid the use of force or, where that is not practicable, shall restrict such force to the minimum extent necessary.”<sup>197</sup>

The Basic Principles provide that “intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.” Principle 9 states that “[l]aw enforcement officials shall not use firearms against persons except in self-defense or defense of others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury, to prevent the perpetration of a particularly serious crime involving grave threat to life, to arrest a person presenting such a danger and resisting their authority, or to prevent his or her escape, and only when less extreme means are insufficient to achieve these objectives.”<sup>198</sup>

Principle 10 provides that law enforcement officials should “give clear warning of their intent to use firearms.”<sup>199</sup> The Basic Principles make clear that there can be no departure from these provisions on the basis of “exceptional circumstances such as internal political stability or any other public emergency.”<sup>200</sup>

Sudanese security forces use of live ammunition against unarmed protesters is a clear disproportionate and unjustified use of force. Even if some protesters sought to repel the forces by throwing rocks at them, use of live ammunition would not be justified.

## Crimes Against Humanity

The violence by Sudanese forces in the lead up to, during and following, the June 3 attack has killed hundreds of people, and was part of a pattern of using excessive force to disperse protests. Authorities did not use proportionate force or take feasible measures to ensure that operations posed a minimal risk to life.

The commission of systematic or widespread intentional unlawful killings of protesters and other inhumane acts in successive dispersals as part of a government policy to attack unarmed persons could constitute crimes against humanity. CAH can be committed during peace or armed conflict and consist of acts committed on a widespread or systematic

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid, principle 13

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, principle 9

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, principle 10

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, principle 8

basis as part of an attack on a civilian population, meaning there is some degree of planning or policy to commit the crime. Such acts include murder, persecution of a group on political grounds, and “other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.”<sup>201</sup>

There is circumstantial evidence that the attack on June 3 was planned by the TMC. TMC and opposition had argued about the validity of the sit-in ahead of the June 3 crackdown, and the negotiations between the two sides broke down over the killing of protesters by the RSF at one of the barricades on May 14.<sup>202</sup> Talks resumed after the opposition parties asked protesters to move the barricades.<sup>203</sup> On June 3 the number of forces deployed in the operation against the sit-in – estimated in the thousands – suggests official operational planning.

Human Rights Watch found that soldiers deliberately killed unarmed protesters and took repeated statements from witnesses who recounted how security forces aimed and shot at them. Doctors and forensic reports show that the majority of wounds were by gun shots. Following the June 3 crackdown, witnesses heard soldiers celebrating the success of the dispersal and mocking the protesters, insulting them, and coercing them to embrace military rule. Human Rights Watch documented reports of racial slurs, insults, head-shaving, sexual assaults, gang rape, and urination on protesters, indicating intentional infliction of physical harm and humiliation of protesters. The killings since December were widespread. The Sudan Doctors Syndicate said protesters were killed in 20 different cities and villages.<sup>204</sup>

Liability is not limited to individuals who carried out the acts, but also those who order, assist, or are otherwise complicit in the crimes. Under the principle of command responsibility, military and civilian officials up the chain of command can be held criminally responsible for crimes committed by their subordinates when they knew or should have known that such crimes were being committed and failed to take reasonable measures to stop them.<sup>205</sup> As such, investigators should probe the roles of RSF

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<sup>201</sup> International Criminal Court, “Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,” United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 2187, No. 38544, <http://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/PIDS/publications/RomeStatutEng.pdf>

<sup>202</sup> “Sudan’s junta suspends dialogue with Alliance for Freedom and Change,” *Radio Dabanga*, May 16, 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-s-junta-suspends-dialogue-with-alliance-for-freedom-and-change> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>203</sup> “Sudanese military and opposition resume talks after street violence,” *Reuters*, May 20, 2019, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1SQoLS-OZATP> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>204</sup> Sudan Doctors Syndicate, Martyrs of the uprising 2018-2019, report, July 19, 2019, on file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>205</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, “Rule 153. Command Responsibility for Failure to Prevent, Repress or Report War Crimes,” Customary International Humanitarian Law, [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1\\_rul](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul).

commander, Hemedti, the TMC and all those present during planning meetings ahead of the dispersal operation.

## Investigations and Accountability

Articles 2(1) and 2(3) of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Sudan is party, requires State Parties to “undertake to respect and ensure” and provide effective remedies for violations of the rights in the Covenant.<sup>206</sup> The UN Human Rights Committee which oversees state compliance with the ICCPR has emphasized that the remedies must be “accessible and effective remedies” and take into account “the special vulnerability of certain categories of person.”<sup>207</sup> The committee has also told state parties that they have “to allow the victims of human rights violations to find out the truth in regards to acts committed, to know who the perpetrators of such acts are and to obtain appropriate compensation.”<sup>208</sup>

Further, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a set of principles relating to states’ obligations to the victims of serious violations of international human rights law. that makes clear that states are obligated to “[i]nvestigate violations” of international human rights law “thoroughly and impartially, and where appropriate, take action against those allegedly responsible in accordance with domestic and international law.”<sup>209</sup> States also have “the duty to investigate and, if there is sufficient evidence, the duty to submit to prosecution the person allegedly responsible for violations.”<sup>210</sup>

In Sudan, the investigation announced by the attorney-general was widely rejected and did not result in effective remedies for victims. There has been no public information about the fate of the soldiers who, according to Hemedti were charged with crimes including possible crimes against humanity. Sudan’s new transitional government, to fulfill its duty to investigate and provide effective remedies, should ensure the investigation into the

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<sup>206</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted December 16, 1966, United Nations Treaty Series, vol.999, p.171, entered into force March 23, 1976, [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang_en).

<sup>207</sup> UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), General comment no. 31 [80], The nature of the general legal obligation imposed on States Parties to the Covenant, 26 May 2004, CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, para. 15.

<sup>208</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, “Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee Under Article 44 of the Covenant, Guatemala,” CCPR/C/79/Add.63, April 3, 1996.

<sup>209</sup> Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, G.A. Res. 60/147, para 3 U.N. Doc. A/RES/60/147, adopted and proclaimed December 16, 2005.

<sup>210</sup> ibid., para. 4.

June 3 and subsequent attacks fulfils international standards. An effective investigation needs to include the power to collect and preserve evidence, take testimony, and prepare files for criminal prosecution in courts that uphold due process and fair trial rights.

## **International Criminal Court**

The ICC has jurisdiction over international crimes committed in Darfur, Sudan. Though Sudan is not a party to the court, the Security Council referred Darfur to the ICC in 2005 in Resolution 1593. Resolution 1593 expressly obligates Sudan to cooperate with the ICC, providing in paragraph 2 that the council: “Decides that the Government of Sudan and all other parties to the conflict in Darfur shall cooperate fully with and provide any necessary assistance to the Court and the Prosecutor pursuant to this resolution.” Some of the ICC’s warrants for crimes committed in Darfur have been outstanding for more than a dozen years.

## Acknowledgments

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## Annex: HRW Letter to Justice Minister Abdulbari

September 17, 2019

Honorable Nasredeen Abdulbari  
Minister of Justice  
El Gamhuriya Avenue  
Khartoum  
Sudan



HRW.org

Transmitted via email to: [minister@moj.gov.sd](mailto:minister@moj.gov.sd)

Hon. Nasredeen Abdulbari,

Congratulations on your appointment as minister of justice in the transitional government at this critical time. We very much look forward to continuing our work on Sudan in collaboration with your government.

I am writing to share the preliminary findings of research Human Rights Watch conducted on violence against protesters at the sit-in on June 3, 2019, as well as in days following. The research is the subject of a forthcoming report. We wish to offer you the opportunity to review and respond to our findings, so that we may reflect the current government's perspectives in our reporting. We would also like to seek clarification on a number of factual questions.

As you may know, Human Rights Watch is an independent, international nongovernmental organization that documents human rights abuses by states and non-state actors in more than 90 countries around the world. We do this by impartially investigating abuses, reporting facts widely, and making realistic policy recommendations to promote respect for rights and secure justice. We are committed to producing material that is comprehensively documented, verified, and objective.

Since December, we have documented excessive use of force and other rights violations by government security forces against protesters and called on the transitional government to ensure accountability for all unlawful killings and other abuses (see our statements at [www.hrw.org/africa/sudan](http://www.hrw.org/africa/sudan)).

The forthcoming report is based on research conducted in Khartoum in August. We interviewed more than 60 victims of and witnesses to abuses against protesters and others in Khartoum, with a focus on the June 3 violence and its aftermath.

Our research found that on June 3, government security forces including the Rapid Support Forces used lethal force against peaceful demonstrators at a sit-in in Khartoum. They fired live ammunition at the protesters, killing more than 100 and wounding several hundred others. Security forces also used batons and sticks to beat protesters. They arrested hundreds of protesters and subjected some/many to serious abuses, including sexual violence and other ill-treatment. Security forces forcibly entered hospitals and clinics and, in some cases, prevented the wounded from obtaining necessary health care. At least two bodies with gunshot wounds were pulled from the river Nile; we received credible reports of others, possibly still submerged.

We understand that your government is yet to form the proposed national investigation commission. Nevertheless, some of the information we seek may be available to you. If you respond to the questions attached, as well as any other information you care to provide, your views will be reflected in our forthcoming reporting.

We kindly request that you communicate your response to Jehanne Henry, East Africa director at Human Rights Watch, by October 1, 2019. She can be reached at [henryj@hrw.org](mailto:henryj@hrw.org) and +1 917 443 2724.

We would also be pleased to discuss our research findings and broader human rights issues in person should you be available to meet with us in Khartoum. In that case, we would kindly request guidance on how to secure visit visas for a small delegation from our organization.

Sincerely,



Mausi Segun  
Executive Director  
Africa Division

CC: Hon. Abdalla Hamdok, Prime Minister of Sudan,  
[officeofprimeminister@sudan.gov.sd](mailto:officeofprimeminister@sudan.gov.sd)

CC: Lt. Gen. al-Traifi Idriss, Minister of Interior, Sudan

## **Questions to the Sudanese Government regarding June 3, 2019 Demonstrations**

### **Use of force**

1. On what basis was the decision made to forcibly disperse the sit-in? Which forces were ordered to disperse the sit-in? Who ordered the dispersal?
2. The then-transitional military council leadership sought to justify the dispersal to clear the area known as “Colombia” because of criminal activities there. Has anyone been arrested or charged with criminal activities at Colombia? If yes, kindly provide the names, the alleged charges, and the location of those being held.
3. What were the grounds for the shutdown of Al Jazeera and Ramtan Media Agency offices in Khartoum the day before the dispersal of the sit-in? Were these shutdowns connected to the decision to disperse the sit-in?

### **Investigation into the violence**

1. What is the total number of people killed and injured at the Khartoum sit-in? What was the basis for using lethal force?
2. Can you share with us a written copy of attorney-general report that was orally shared on July 27, 2019?
3. According to the attorney-general report, the authorities arrested officers and soldiers and charged them with crimes against humanity. Who was arrested, to which forces do they belong, and if they are in detention, where are they being held?
4. Does the government have a timeline for the promised new national investigation to be formed and operationalized? What will be its mandate, scope, and composition? Will it have capacity to collect and preserve evidence for the purposes of criminal prosecutions?
5. Will your government seek regional or international support for a mechanism to investigate alleged abuses committed on June 3 as well as those reported since December 2018?

### **Missing and detained persons**

1. Have authorities initiated search operations for the missing since June 3, including searching the Nile River? And, if so, have authorities recovered and identified any bodies?

2. Are any June 3 protesters being detained in any government facility, including those by the RSF? Who are they, what have they been charged with, where are they being held, and by whom?



# “They Were Shouting ‘Kill Them’”

## Sudan’s Violent Crackdown on Protesters in Khartoum

On April 11, 2018, following four months of sustained, peaceful protests culminating in a sit-in near the army headquarters in Khartoum, Sudan’s autocratic president of 30 years, Omar al-Bashir, stepped down. A transitional military council assumed power, but as political tensions mounted between the military and opposition groups, protesters continued their sit-in calling for civilian rule, peace, and justice.

In the weeks that followed, security forces including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) attacked and dispersed protests with live ammunition, killing scores. “*They Were Shouting ‘Kill Them’*” documents the most violent of these crackdowns, on the early morning of June 3, when the RSF led an attack on the protesters’ sit-in near the army headquarters in Khartoum, where protesters had camped out in the lead-up to al-Bashir’s ouster. The forces opened fire on unarmed protesters, beat and subjected protesters to various abuses including rape, and burned and looted property. Around 120 were killed on June 3 and days followed, hundreds injured, and dozens remain missing.

The report calls on the Sudanese government to take steps toward genuine accountability by ensuring the national investigation committee, announced on September 21, is mandated, empowered, and resourced to be effective. The government should swiftly undertake human rights reforms and establish clear benchmarks for progress in these areas, and allow experts from the African Union, United Nations and other international organizations to provide technical support.

(above) Sudanese protester runs past a recently painted mural during a demonstration near the army headquarters in the capital Khartoum, April 24, 2019.

© 2019 Ozan Kose/AFP via Getty Images

(front cover) Protesters chanted slogans and called for peace, justice, and civilian rule, as a young man recites a poem, June 19, 2019.

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