



## **Recommendations from Sudanese Women Leaders**

**May 10, 2024**

Sudanese women have been transformative leaders in Sudan for centuries. Today, they are the majority of the displaced, critical service providers on the ground, and survivors and victims of heinous gendered crimes. They must be direct participants in all decision-making around humanitarian aid, accountability, conflict resolution efforts, implementation of any accord, transitions to peaceful governance, and post-conflict reconstruction. It is essential that Sudanese women are integrated in decision-making and have an absolute right to directly engage in peace processes, recovery, and post-conflict transition.

Further, Sudanese women leaders would like to underline that:

1. Guarantees of humanitarian access and civilian protection should be pre-conditions to talks. Accountability must remain a priority. It is clear from previous negotiations that these concerns will otherwise not be taken seriously.
2. In Sudan today famine, starvation, blocked access to medical care, women's health care, rape, and subordination of women and girls are tactics of war and must be acknowledged and treated as such.
3. Sexual violence must be recognized as a central component of wars in Sudan. It is a combat tactic and a means of oppression, and as such must be addressed in any effort to halt violence.
4. Any ceasefire must encompass guarantees around civilian protection, including from rape, torture, targeted atrocities, and bondage, as well as access to basic government services.
5. All future political processes must recognize the history of genocide, marginalization, and impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity by military and militia forces in Darfur and in the Nuba Mountains and include clear guarantees for the protection of civilians and accountability.

## Inclusive Decision Making

Building on experiences from around the world (e.g. Guatemala, Syria, Colombia), Sudanese women need to be enabled to participate as members of negotiating parties; as technical experts who provide input to negotiators, as mediators, and as observers who provide direct testimony and input to the negotiating table. To enable such a structure:

**Multilateral, bilateral, and private donors** should support the creation of an inclusive civil society women's advisory group that draws from the broad diversity of Sudanese society (inclusive of different ethnic identities, ages, and varied ability statuses). The group would work throughout the process of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and be mandated to:

- Advocate for women's access to decision-making throughout the transformation of Sudanese society from war to peace.
- Present directly to talks and to parties to talks, presenting diverse perspectives and views, wisdom from the ground.
- Identify women positioned to represent varied interests in talks.
- Advise and provide input to any negotiations to return security and prosperity to Sudan.
- Consult on the implementation of any accords and implementing mechanisms.

**Any potential mediating parties and observers** to delegations must:

- Ensure women's inclusion in all decision-making fora; Ensure women are included in negotiating parties; women must be represented directly in negotiations, and mediators must call for inclusive negotiating parties from the inception of talks and in all invitations to talks.
- Create a structure for negotiations and subsequent accord implementation bodies that enables women's advisory group testimony and representation throughout talks to provide input from across the country and to provide diverse perspectives on the transformation of Sudan. The structure for negotiations must also create space for input to talks from broader civil society, youth leaders, marginalized groups, IDPs and refugees, and people with disabilities.
- Include in all discussions regarding an accord and its implementation the issues of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants and security sector reform.
- Inform the general public of the status of political dialogues and negotiations to ensure transparency and accountability of the parties to the Sudanese public.
- Create an agenda that reflects the lived realities of women, including the crimes against women, forced displacement, and inequality under the law.

**All stakeholders must seek to stop violence in Sudan and must** immediately begin meeting regularly with local women leaders and other stakeholder groups, including marginalized groups, youth leaders, displaced people, and people with disabilities to ensure awareness of diverse perspectives of leaders working nationwide and on the ground. Donors should fund visits and dialogues with local voices from Sudan to speak with governments, multilaterals, and donors to share lived experiences, expertise, and local context updates.

**All media and social media companies** (e.g., Meta (Facebook), X (Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, local radio, TV and newspapers, etc.) should be engaged to help curb hate speech and support online monitoring. Sudanese leadership bodies, including warring parties, political parties, and media companies should sign a code of conduct pledging not to shame and personally abuse leaders, especially women leaders, involved in efforts to govern and resolve the conflict in Sudan. Women can provide advice on locally sensitive terminology and images.

## **Humanitarian Aid**

**Donor Nations and Organizations** must recognize the depth of the crisis and increase support for basic services across Sudan, amongst IDPs, and in neighboring countries where there are refugees. Specifically:

- A famine declaration by the UN and at local levels is needed to drive a larger response that comprises increased food distribution, accelerated distribution of seeds and equipment, and the rapid and extensive expansion of kitchen gardens and other similar programs.
- An enhanced focus on water, sanitation, health, and nutrition is needed, including increased provision of sexual and reproductive health services, primary health care for women and girls, and services for victims of rape.
- To avoid a lost generation, funding for temporary education in Sudan for IDPs and refugee communities should be supported.
- Short-term livelihood projects and small grants should be prioritized to support women and girls.

**Bilateral, multilateral, and private donors** must better work with local Sudanese organizations that are already providing the bulk of services on the ground. This can be facilitated by:

- Increasing funding to local organizations and groups.
- More flexible funding mechanisms and reporting requirements in addition to and consistent with authorities that already exist for responding to emergencies.
- Improved coordination among international donors, local implementing partners, and other stakeholders, including efforts across Sudan, the Two Areas, and refugee zones.
- Increasing the capacity of local organizations to provide trauma-informed responses to gender-based violence, survivor-centered evidence gathering, and data collection and analysis must be improved and aligned with the reporting requirements of international donors.
- Listening more closely to local actors including women's groups and civil society regarding aid priorities and delivery challenges.
- Underwriting programs that advance coordination among diaspora communities worldwide to enable synchronized advocacy and engagement with local networks.

**Any potential mediating parties, conveners of subsequent talks, as well as other friends of Sudan,** must prioritize humanitarian aid on the agenda, without preconditions. Agreements must be reached regarding:

- Humanitarian access, including by putting pressure on the SAF/RSF/SPLA-N and other armed groups to open up humanitarian access across lines and borders.
- Guarantee safety and security for aid workers.
- The creation of an independent, apolitical, body to oversee aid delivery across Sudan in order to streamline efforts across multiple actors.
- Guaranteed protection of female farmers.
- Introduction of penalties for violations of agreements for access including sanctions, travel bans, and naming and shaming of violators.

**United Nations** aid agencies should coordinate with local actors, Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) on aid delivery and prioritization. Direct partnerships with local aid delivery groups should be prioritized in addition to partnerships with international organizations.

## **Civilian Protection & Support**

**The UN Security Council** should enforce the existing arms embargo on Darfur and expand it to all of Sudan to halt the provision of arms and prevent further mass killings, targeting of specific groups, and destruction of civil infrastructure.

**The UN Security Council and other foreign national governments** should sanction leaders of the armed groups in Sudan and leaders of foreign governments that are providing weapons or support to armed actors in Sudan. States should cease arms sales to governments that are supporting the SAF, RSF, and other armed groups. Targeted sanctions should also be imposed on the individuals who are responsible for human rights abuses and war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

**The international community** must advocate for authorization and establishment of civilian protection forces, under the auspices of the UN, AU, or a regional coalition of the willing. Civilian protection forces are needed on the ground, with an enhanced mandate for civilian protection. Civilian protection forces should:

- Incorporate monitoring and documenting mechanisms to track violations.
- Encompass special units dedicated to patrolling IDP areas, combating conflict-related sexual violence, and protecting CSOs, NGOs, women's rights defenders, farmers, and other essential members of the civil society.
- Have a mandate to monitor an eventual ceasefire agreement.
- Engage local community-level protection and support mechanisms, promoting dialogue and reconciliation processes.
- Create buffer zones that ensure separation and removal of armed forces from civilian areas.
- Establish community policing mechanisms and support security sector reform.

**AU, IGAD, & ECOWAS** must cooperate to limit the flow of militias from regional countries to Sudan and ensure civilian protection in refugee host communities.

## Accountability

**The UN Security Council**—including the US—and parties to the Rome Statute must better support the ICC in implementing the pending arrest warrants related to the investigations in Darfur and continue investigating current crimes within its jurisdiction. Further, the UN must establish a special tribunal to investigate current atrocities being committed in Sudan, including in El Geneina and El Fasher.

**Allies in the Human Rights Council**—particularly the US and Netherlands, the P3, and Slovenia during its presidency of the UN Security Council—must push for greater funding and political support for the current fact-finding mission on Sudan and the renewal of its mandate upon expiration in September.

**Existing humanitarian and protection agencies** working in neighboring countries must mainstream training and capacity building on taking testimonies and gathering evidence that is both 1) legally sound and admissible in a court setting, and 2) minimizes re-traumatization and prioritizes witness protection.

**Donor Nations and other funders** should invest in capacity building and logistical support for human rights defenders inside Sudan to aid in evidence collection and documentation of violations of human rights and humanitarian law. Training and support should be survivor-centered and to ensure evidence that is gathered is able to be used in criminal prosecutions either in Sudan or internationally.

**The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in collaboration with local NGOs** must establish, as soon as possible, a consultative process with victims and their families to inform the accountability mechanisms created during possible future talks and to promote victim-centeredness throughout any political process (similar to the Colombia transition). OHCHR has been tasked with consolidating mediation tracks.

**Response groups** need greater training and funding to mainstream trauma-sensitive approaches—such as that currently being implemented by CMI—across all fact-finding, investigative, and reporting efforts immediately.

**Sudanese transitional justice networks** (e.g., the Sudanese National Coalition for Transitional Justice) must be included in upcoming talks, to begin sensitizing Sudanese actors—including armed groups, civil society, and political elites—to the full ‘menu’ of transitional justice and accountability mechanisms (e.g., restorative, truth, customary, etc.).

**US partners and allies within the Human Rights Council** should leverage Darfur being under UN Chapter VI to hold accountable third-party states sending weapons to the RSF through shaming and pressure in order to encourage them to stop. Allies can capitalize on recent civil society reports that credibly label ongoing violations as genocide and that identify third-party states complicit in violations.