United Nations (UN) experts alarmed by reported widespread use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls by Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan

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UN experts\* today expressed alarm at reports of brutal and widespread use of rape and other forms of sexual violence by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) during the four-month-old internal armed conflict in the Republic of Sudan and called for an end to the ongoing violence.  
  
“The conflict has led to massive humanitarian consequences. Thousands of civilians have been killed, millions have been forcibly displaced from their homes. Nearly 700,000 refugees and asylum-seekers have been forced to flee to neighbouring countries,” the experts said.  
  
While calling on both parties to the conflict to end violations of humanitarian and human rights law, the experts expressed specific concern at consistent reports of widespread violations by the RSF, including reports that women and girls have been subjected to enforced disappearance and acts tantamount thereto, forced to work, and sexually exploited. Reportedly, hundreds of women have been detained by the RSF, held in inhuman or degrading conditions, subjected to sexual assault, and are vulnerable to sexual slavery.  
  
“Sudanese women and girls in urban centers as well as in Darfur have been particularly vulnerable to violence. The lives and safety of migrant and refugee women and girls, primarily from Eritrea and South Sudan, have also been seriously affected,” they said.  
  
“It is alleged that men identified as members of the RSF are using rape and sexual violence of women and girls as tools to punish and terrorise communities. Some of the reported rapes appear to be ethnically and racially motivated,” the experts said.  
  
The experts said that the capacity to support and tend to victims of violence has been significantly hampered by the fighting, which has impeded access to the victims, communities and areas affected by the conflict. They noted that it has been challenging for local and international actors to reach affected persons and those seeking or qualifying for international protection, and to provide assistance, including reproductive and sexual health care, and that there is evidence that local women human rights defenders have also been directly targeted.  
  
The experts noted that despite the RSF’s declared zero-tolerance policy for sexual and gender-based violence, the commission of these alleged crimes, among others, have repeatedly been attributed to the RSF.  
  
“The RSF must demonstrate its commitment to upholding humanitarian and human rights obligations, including preventing sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, facilitating humanitarian access and holding perpetrators accountable”, the experts said.  
  
“Assistance and protection to victims and access to effective remedies must be provided to women and girls.”  
  
The experts reminded all parties to the conflict that their combatants must strictly follow applicable international humanitarian and human rights law and urged the peaceful resolution of the conflict. They also called on the international community to investigate alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.  
  
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