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NEWS

'RAPE ME, NOT MY DAUGHTER' - WOMEN TELL BBC OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SUDAN'S CIVIL WAR

[1] 'Rape me, not my daughter' - women tell
BBC of sexual violence in Sudan's civil war

BBC / Hassan Lali

Sudan is at breaking point.

After 17 months of a brutal civil war which
has devastated the country, the army has
launched a major offensive in the capital
Khartoum, targeting areas in the hands of its
bitter rival, the paramilitary Rapid Support
Forces.

The RSF seized most of Khartoum at the start
of the conflict, while the army controls the
twin city of Omdurman, just across the River
Nile.

The military attacked across two bridges
which up until now have been closed and
contested. Reports say it has secured a
bridgehead on the eastern side for the first
time since the conflict began.

But there are still places where people can,
and do, cross between the two sides.

At one such point, I met a group of women
who had walked for four hours to a market
in army-controlled territory at the edge of
Omdurman, where food is cheaper.

The women had come from an area in Sudan
called Dar es Salaam, which is held by the
RSF.

Their husbands were no longer leaving the

house, they told me, because RSF fighters
beat them, took any money they earned, or
detained them and demanded payment for
their release.

"We endure this hardship because we want
to feed our children. We're hungry, we need
food," said one.

And the women, I asked, were they safer
than the men? What about rape?

The chorus of voices died down.

Then one erupted.

"Where is the world? Why don't you help
us?" she said, her words coming out in tor-
rents as tears ran down her cheeks.

"There are so many women here who've
been violated, but they don't talk about it.
What difference would it make anyway?"

"Some girls, the RSF make them lie in the
streets at night," she went on. "If they come
back late from this market, the RSF keeps
them for five or six days."

As she spoke her mother sat with her head
in her hand, sobbing. Other women around
her also started crying.

"You in your world, if your child went
out, would you leave her?" she demanded.
"Wouldn't you go look for her? But tell us,
what can we do? Nothing is in our hands, no
one cares for us. Where is the world? Why
don't you help us!"

The crossing point was a window into a
world of desperation and despair.

Travellers described being subjected to law-
lessness, looting and brutality in a conflict
that the UN says has forced more than 10.5
million people to flee their homes.

But it is sexual violence that has become
a defining characteristic of the protracted
conflict, which started as a power struggle
between the army and the RSF but has since
drawn in local armed groups and fighters
from neighbouring countries.

The UN's High Commissioner for Human
Rights, Volker Turk, has said rape is being
used as "a weapon of war".

documented several cases of rape and rape
threats from members of the army, but found
that large-scale sexual violence was commit-
ted by the RSF and its allied militias, and
amounted to violations of international law.

One woman the BBC spoke to blamed the
RSF for raping her.

We met her in the market at the crossing,
aptly named Souk al-Har - the Heat Market.

Since the war began the market has ex-
panded across the barren land on a desert
road out of Omdurman, attracting the poor-
est of the poor with its low prices.

BBC / Ed Habershon

The conflict in Sudan has caused a massive
humanitarian disaster

Miriam, not her real name, had fled her
home in Sudan's Dar es Salaam to take
refuge with her brother.

She now works in a tea stall. But early in the
war, she said, two armed men entered her
house and tried to rape her daughters - one
17 years old and the other 10.

"I told the girls to stay behind me and I said
to the RSF: 'If you want to rape anyone it has
to be me,'" she said.

“They hit me and ordered me to take off my clothes. Before I took them off, I told my girls to leave. They took the other children and jumped over the fence. Then one of the men laid on me.”

The RSF has told international investigators that it has taken all the necessary measures to prevent sexual violence and other forms of violence that constitute human rights violations.

But the accounts of sexual assault are numerous and consistent, and the damage has a lasting impact.

Getty Images

Air strikes and street battles have caused heavy destruction in Sudan

Sitting on a low stool in the shade of a row of trees, Fatima, not her real name, told me she had come to Omdurman to deliver twins, and planned to stay.

One of her neighbours, she said, a 15-year-old girl, had also become pregnant, after she and her 17-year-old sister were raped by four RSF soldiers.

People were awakened by screams and came out to see what was going on, she said, but the armed men told them they would be shot if they did not go back into their houses.

The next morning, they found the two girls with signs of abuse on their bodies, and their elder brother locked in one of the rooms.

“During the war, since the RSF arrived, immediately we started hearing of rapes, until we saw it right in front of us in our neighbours,” Fatima said. “Initially we had doubts [about the reports] but we know that it’s the RSF who raped the girls.”

The other women are gathering to begin the trek back home to areas controlled by the RSF - they are too poor, they say, to start a new life like Miriam has done by leaving Dar es Salaam.

For as long as this war goes on, they have no choice but to return to its horrors.

More BBC stories on Sudan's civil war:

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Getty Images/BBC ■

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MYANMAR REBELS REJECT EMBATTLED JUNTA'S PEACE OFFER

[2] Rebel groups have rejected a peace offer from Myanmar's embattled junta, which is reeling from battlefield losses and defections in a civil war that has dragged on for more than three years.

This is dictatorship's first such outreach since it seized power in 2021. It also comes after a ceasefire brokered by China in the northern Shan state fell apart.

The junta called on ethnic armed groups and "terrorist insurgent groups" to "communicate with us to solve political problems politically", also urging them to join elections planned for next year.

The exiled National Unity Government (NUG) said the offer was not worth considering, adding the junta had no authority to hold an election.

The junta extended an olive branch Thursday as it struggled to fight on multiple fronts and stem a widespread rebellion.

Some reports say the junta now has control of less than half of Myanmar's territories.

In June, an alliance of three ethnic armies renewed an offensive against the military, seizing territory along a key highway to China's Yunnan province, which borders Myanmar.

The fighting near the border in Shan state has blocked China's ambitious plan to connect its landlocked south-west to the Indian Ocean via Myanmar.

Beijing's top diplomat, Wang Yi, is thought to have delivered a warning to the country's ruler Min Aung Hlaing during a visit to Myanmar last month.

Armed groups should follow "the path of party politics and elections in order to bring about lasting peace and development", the junta said in its statement on Thursday.

"The country's human resources, basic infrastructure and many people's lives have been lost, and the country's stability and development have been blocked [because of the conflict]" it said.

But the rebel groups are sceptical of the offer.

The Karen National Union (KNU), which has been fighting for decades with the military for more autonomy along the border with Thailand, told AFP news agency that talks were only possible if the military agreed to

"common political objectives".

"Number one: no military participation in future politics. Two [the military] has to agree to a federal democratic constitution," KNU spokesman Padoh Saw Taw Nee told AFP.

"Number three: they have to be accountable for everything they have committed... including war crimes and crimes against humanity," he said. "No impunity."

If the junta does not accede to these demands, the KNU will "keep putting pressure on [the junta] politically and militarily," he added.

Maung Saungkha, the leader of the Bamar People's Liberation Army, told Reuters news agency that his group is "not interested in this offer".

"They are hanging goat's heads but selling dog meat," Soe Thu Ya Zaw, commander of the Mandalay People's Defense Forces, wrote on Facebook.

After the military ousted Myanmar's democratically-elected government in 2021, peaceful protests were met with killings and arrests.

This led ethnic armed groups to join forces with anti-coup militias across the country to fight back, plunging the country into a civil war.

At least 50,000 people have been killed since the coup and more than two million people displaced, according to the United Nations.

The UN warned last week that Myanmar was "sinking into an abyss of human suffering". Eyewitnesses had previously told the BBC about, including by pouring burning petrol on them and forcing some to drink their urine. ■

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KEY FED INFLATION GAUGE AT 2.2% IN AUGUST, LOWER THAN EXPECTED

[3] Inflation moved closer to the Federal Reserve's target in August, easing the way for future interest rate cuts, the Commerce Department reported Friday.

The, a measure the Fed focuses on to measure the cost of goods and services in the U.S. economy, rose 0.1% for the month, putting the 12-month inflation rate at 2.2%, down from 2.5% in July and the lowest since February 2021.

Economists surveyed by Dow Jones had

been expecting all-items PCE to rise 0.1% on the month and 2.3% from a year ago.

Excluding food and energy, core PCE rose 0.1% in August and was up 2.7% from a year ago, the 12-month number 0.1 percentage point higher than July. Fed officials tend to focus more on core as better measure of long-run trends. The respective forecasts were for 0.2% and 2.7% on core.

"All quiet on the inflation front," said Chris Larkin, managing director of trading and investing at E-Trade from Morgan Stanley. "Add today's PCE Price Index to the list of economic data landing in a sweet spot. Inflation continues to keep its head down, and while economic growth may be slowing, there's no indication it's falling off a cliff."

Though the inflation numbers indicated continued progress, the personal spending and income numbers both came in light.

Personal income increased 0.2% on the month while spending rose 0.2%. The respective estimates were for increases of 0.4% and 0.3%.

Stock market futures were positive following the report while Treasury yields were negative.

The readings come a little more than a week after the Fed took down its benchmark overnight borrowing rate by half a percentage point to a target range of 4.75%-5%.

The progress in August came despite continued pressure from housing-related costs, which increased 0.5% on the month for the largest move since January. Services prices overall increased 0.2% while goods declined by 0.2%.

It was the first time the central bank had eased since March 2020 in the early days of the Covid pandemic and was an unusually large move for a Fed that prefers to move rates in quarter-point increments.

In recent days, Fed officials have switched their focus from inflation fighting to an emphasis on supporting a labor market that has shown some signs of softening. At their meeting last week, policymakers indicated a likelihood of another half percentage point in cuts this year then a full point in reductions for 2025, though markets expect a more aggressive path. ■

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UK PM KEIR STARMER TOUTS PRO-BUSINESS AGENDA AS HE WOOS TOP WALL STREET CEOs

[4] British PM Keir Starmer speaking on CNBC's Squawk Box on Sept. 27th, 2024.

CNBC

The United Kingdom is pursuing investment from America's biggest banks and tech giants, as the country looks to infuse growth in its stagnant economy.

"We now have a Labour government whose number one priority is wealth creation," U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer told CNBC's Andrew Ross Sorkin in an exclusive broadcast interview Thursday.

"We are a Labour party that is proud to say we are pro business just as much as we are pro worker."

In July, Starmer became the first leader from the center-left Labour party to win a U.K. national election since Tony Blair — ending 14 years of Conservative rule. Since being elected, he has said his top priority is economic stability.

During his visit to New York City amid the United Nations General Assembly, Starmer met with business leaders including Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan, Citi CEO Jane Fraser, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, Microsoft President Brad Smith, and Blackstone President Jonathan Gray.

This week, to build a data center in the northeast of England. The investment aims to create 4,000 jobs and lead to power the surging demand for artificial intelligence.

"It's a big signal of confidence," Starmer told Sorkin about the deal. "It's also in the northeast of England, which matters to us, because I want economic drive outside of London."

Starmer said the industries in particular he's working to attract investment in include renewables, artificial intelligence and life sciences. This call for investment comes as the Labour government is getting ready to unveil its budget plan in October, while dealing with a

Starmer's government, in the early days of its tenure, flagged after his administration performed an audit. Former Finance Minister Jeremy Hunt, for the Conservative Party, in July, the head of the British civil service, labeling Labour's claims about the public finances "deeply troubling."

Starmer has, more recently, been accused of being too negative on the U.K. economy, and Labour's plans to axe them also been criticized.

"We will stabilize the economy," said Starmer

Thursday. "There are going to be more hard decisions to be made when it comes to the budget."

Earlier this week, Starmer's plan to cut payments that offset fuel costs for pensioners was rejected by his own party in a symbolic vote at the Labour Party's Annual Conference.

"No one wants to change the winter fuel allowance for pensioners. But by doing that, we stabilize the economy," Starmer told Sorkin.

"We can commit to what we call the triple lock, which means that they get more money year-on-year." The U.K.'s "triple lock" is where the state pension rises each year by either 2.5%, the inflation rate, or earnings growth — whichever is highest. ■

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NEWS - INTERNATIONAL

BARCELONA FANS BANNED FOR ONE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GAME FOR NAZI-STYLE FLAG

[5] *Barcelona fans banned from Red Star Belgrade trip following UEFA 'racism and/or other discriminatory conduct' charge.*

UEFA has banned Barcelona from selling tickets to fans for its next away game in the Champions League for displaying a banner with Nazi overtones about the team's new German coach.

A black flag with the words "Flick Heil" in apparent tribute to coach Hansi Flick was displayed during a 2-1 loss at Monaco last week.

UEFA said on Friday the club was charged with "racism and/or other discriminatory conduct," and the disciplinary sanction will apply on November 6 when Barcelona plays at Red Star Belgrade.

The ticket sales ban activated a UEFA-ordered probationary sanction against Barcelona last season. In April, fans made Nazi salutes at Paris Saint-Germain in a Champions League game.

UEFA said its disciplinary judges also fined Barcelona \$11,000 and ordered a new probationary sanction for a repeat offence in the next year. That will activate another ticket sales ban for one away game in a European competition.

The defeat at Monaco was the only blip in Barcelona's season with victories recorded in all seven of their Spanish top-flight

matches. The Catalan club will travel to Osasuna in their next fixture on Saturday. ■

YEMEN’S HOUTHIS CLAIM TO HAVE TARGETED ISRAEL’S TEL AVIV AND ASHKELON

[6] *Iran-aligned group says it will continue its attacks on Israel until its ‘aggression on Lebanon and Gaza stops’*

Yemen’s Houthi rebels claim they fired a ballistic missile towards southern Tel Aviv and launched a drone at the coastal city of Ashkelon.

The Iran-aligned group pledged on Friday to continue its attacks on Israel until its “and Gaza stops” after it emerged that its attempt to hit Tel Aviv had been foiled by air defences.

“We will carry out more military operations against the Israeli enemy in victory for the blood of our brothers in Palestine and Lebanon,” said Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree in a televised speech.

The Houthis have repeatedly fired at Israel and have carried out on Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait since November in what they describe as a campaign of solidarity with Palestinians under Israeli attack in Gaza.

Now, as the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah escalates, with Israeli strikes killing more than 700 people since Monday, the Houthis are also demanding that Israel halt its assault on Lebanon.

The Israeli military said on Friday that it had intercepted a missile that was fired from Yemen after sirens and explosions were heard across Tel Aviv early in the day.

“Following the sirens that sounded in central Israel, the surface-to-surface missile that was launched from Yemen was intercepted by an ‘Arrow’ interceptor outside of Israeli territory,” the military said in a statement.

In July, the Houthis fired a drone at for the first time, killing a man and injuring at least 10 people.

In response, the Israeli Air Force Yemen’s port city of Hodeidah that month, causing a massive fire and six deaths.

Houthi leaders subsequently announced a new phase in the fight against Israel.

Earlier this month, the Houthis reached central Israel with what they described as a,

causing fires, triggering air raid sirens, and sending residents running for shelter in the area around Ben Gurion airport.

Israeli responders put out a fire in the area of Lod, near Tel Aviv, after a missile fired from Yemen crossed into central Israel on September 15 and ‘fell in an open area’, according to the military [File: Menahem Kanaha/ AFP] Israel said the Houthi missile was damaged, but not destroyed, by an Israeli interceptor missile. It claimed that the missile was not hypersonic, adding that it “did not manoeuvre in flight”, according to The Times of Israel.

The Houthis have effectively been under a United Nations arms embargo since 2015. According to a UN report by sanctions monitors, the group has received help from Iran’s elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Lebanon’s Hezbollah and Iraqi groups. ■

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