



## **Public Policy Paper: Human Rights in Sudan: Enhancing International Advocacy and Support**

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the persistent human rights violations in Sudan amid the ongoing conflict. It highlights historical injustices and the lack of effective justice mechanisms that perpetuate impunity. It highlights the critical role of international frameworks and NGOs in documenting abuses and advocating for reforms. Key recommendations include fostering regional cooperation, empowering local civil society, and ensuring accountability through legal frameworks. The paper calls for urgent global support to uphold human rights standards and improve the lives of Sudanese.

**Executive Summary:** Sudan has been plagued by political turmoil and conflict, resulting in widespread human rights violations. This paper examines these violations, focusing on historical contexts, and how the absence of effective justice mechanisms prolongs impunity, hindering efforts to reduce violations. And how the 15th April war has escalated the violations, necessitating urgent international intervention and advocacy. International frameworks and NGOs play crucial roles in documenting violations and advocating for reforms.

Key recommendations include enhancing regional cooperation, promoting inclusivity, and reinforcing legal frameworks to ensure accountability and justice. Empowering local civil society organizations and maintaining political pressure are critical for achieving long-term change. In conclusion, addressing Sudan's human rights challenges requires international cooperation, legal reforms, and sustained advocacy. This paper highlights the necessity for constant global support to uphold human rights standards and improve conditions for all Sudanese.

## Introduction

Sudan has endured persistent political instability and widespread armed conflict over the past decades, resulting in severe human rights violations as documented by organizations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International. Highlighting the urgent need for advancing human rights within the country. This paper seeks to analyze the violations of human rights in Sudan, drawing from international reports. It aims to shed light on recent developments in the country's human rights landscape.

- **Contextual Analysis: Understanding Human Rights Issues in Sudan**

**Historical Context:** The historical context of human rights in Sudan is deeply entangled with its unsystematic political landscape. Exacerbated by political unrest and ethnic conflicts. Major events, including Darfur genocide and civil war in South Sudan, have contributed to the current human rights crisis.

The Darfur genocide in 2003 involved extensive atrocities by government-supported "Janjaweed" militias, resulting in the mass killing of approximately 50,000 people and displacing over one million individuals, representing one of Sudan's severest crises (HRW,2004). Similarly, South Sudan's civil war, resulting in its 2011 independence, was marked by severe human rights violations, including massacres, forced displacement, and child soldier recruitment. HRW has extensively documented these violations, revealing a pattern of systematic violations that have been exacerbated by successive conflicts and authoritarian regimes (HRW,2024). These events have not only shaped the current crisis but also highlighted the systemic nature of violations under successive authoritarian regimes.

Moreover, the absence of justice and accountability mechanisms has allowed violations and war crimes to go unpunished, undermining the efforts of rights' organizations (Waging Peace,2020). Sudanese' legal system

is deeply rooted with a lack of justice and criminal accountability, allowing widespread impunity for such crimes. Notably, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) included no provisions for accountability or transitional justice, reflecting the primacy of political considerations over the rule of law (CMI,2012). Efforts to ensure accountability, including initiatives by the International Criminal Court and African Union High Level Panel on Darfur, have been largely ignored (CMI,2012). The lack of robust legal and human rights frameworks has exacerbated these issues, creating a cycle of abuse and impunity (CMI,2012).

**Recent Developments:** During the Sudanese revolution (2018-2022), Amnesty International reported severe restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. The government brutally cracked down on peaceful protests, using excessive force, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances, resulting in hundreds of protesters being shot dead by security forces, with hundreds more injured and subjected to beatings. Numerous journalists faced persistent harassment, intimidation, and censorship, while individuals defending human rights, were threatened with the death penalty, creating a climate of fear and repression (Amnesty International,2023).

The outbreak of war on April 15, 2023, has led to an alarming escalation of rights' violations, including; up to 150,000 deaths nationwide (Genocide Watch,2024), internal displacement of more than 8.2 million people (Center for Preventive Action,2024), with 1.4 million fleeing to neighboring countries facing severe conditions, some asylum seekers were denied entry, putting them at risk of forced return. Moreover, hundreds of sexual violations were reported which heightened insecurity (Amnesty International, 2024). Thus, the need for international intervention and advocacy has become increasingly urgent. The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) emphasized the necessity for the Human Rights Council to establish an international investigation. This call for action is driven by the urgent need for accountability and justice, which are crucial for addressing the systemic violations and alleviating the suffering of Sudanese people (SAPA,2023).

The absence of effective justice and accountability mechanisms has significantly hindered rights organizations' efforts to make meaningful progress. Rights' violators continue to act with impunity, preserving a cycle of abuse and injustice (ReliefWeb,2023).

In conclusion, Sudan's current human rights situation is rooted in a historical context of systematic violations, worsened by political unrest, ethnic conflicts, and authoritarian regimes. The lack of justice and accountability mechanisms has severely undermined organizations' efforts, highlighting the urgent need for international intervention and advocacy to address the ongoing crisis and ensure justice for victims.

### ● **Role of International Human Rights Organizations**

**International Human Rights Framework:** Sudan is a participant in several international treaties and conventions aimed at promoting human rights, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention Against Torture (CAT). Despite formal commitments, Sudan has failed to uphold its treaty obligations. The ICC issued arrest warrants for Sudanese officials accused of atrocities and war crimes, however, Sudan has not cooperated, which highlights the gap between its international commitments and domestic practices (ReliefWeb,2023).

UNHRC has consistently urged for Sudan's compliance with international obligations, emphasizing the need for access for human rights observers and independent investigators (ReliefWeb,2013). However, the progress was hindered by the lack of implementation mechanisms and political will.

**Contributions of NGOs:** International NGOs like Amnesty International and HRW play critical role in documenting and advocating against rights' violations in Sudan. They conduct field research, produce detailed reports, and engage in global advocacy to raise awareness. For instance, HRW has reported systematic violations, including ethnic cleansing and war crimes in Darfur and Blue Nile state. (HRW,2024). These reports provide vital evidence for international bodies like the UN and ICC to take action against offenders. NGOs also collaborate with local civil society groups to support victims and push for legal reforms (FIDH,2024). Moreover, UN established a fact-finding mission (FFM) in 2023 to investigate violations, reinforcing these efforts (ReliefWeb,2023). FFM plays a critical role in investigating and documenting violations, providing essential evidence for international accountability measures (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect,2023).

**Grassroots and Civil Society (CS) Contributions:** National NGOs and grassroots groups in Sudan are crucial for human rights advocacy and documentation. Groups as Darfur Network for Human Rights (DNHR)<sup>1</sup>, Sudan War Monitor (SWM)<sup>2</sup>, and Sudan Human Rights Hub (SHRH) investigate violations, providing crucial data to international bodies, for instance, SHRH conducts research, provides legal assistance, and reports on issues like child soldier recruitment and recent attacks since the war outbreak (SHRH,2024a;2024b). local NGOs work with international bodies to influence global policies. (Refugees International,2024).

**Challenges and Opportunities:** Despite NGOs' efforts, addressing human right issues face persistent challenges. Access to conflict zones and affected populations remains a major hurdle, as the government restricts international observers and humanitarian organizations, due to sovereignty and security concerns (OHCHR,2023). Political resistance and sovereignty issues further complicate international efforts, as Sudan has been reluctant to cooperate with mechanisms like ICC and UNHRC, which hindered justice for rights' violations (Redress,2023). However, there are opportunities to advance human rights in Sudan. Diplomatic pressure and conditional aid from the international community can encourage compliance with rights' obligations. Supporting local CSOs and human rights defenders can also strengthen accountability (OHCHR,2023). Overall, despite challenges, international cooperation and support for local efforts remain crucial to promote human rights (OHCHR,2023).

Likewise, FFM faces challenges, including being severely under-staffed, which hinders its effectiveness. Additionally, it encounters obstacles as restricted access to conflict zones and inadequate funding, limiting its capacity to conduct comprehensive investigations (SHRH,2024).

Moreover, Local NGOs face government restrictions, security concerns, and limited funding, risking their lives to document abuses (The New Humanitarian,2024). However, increased international support,

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<sup>1</sup> DNHR identifies, documents, and investigates human rights violations, providing crucial data to international bodies (OHCHR,2023).

<sup>2</sup> Sudan War Monitor reports on the conflict and its impact on civilians, keeping the international community informed. (SWM,2024)

diplomatic pressure, and technology can enhance their impact and global reach (SHRH,2024c). Overall, despite challenges, these groups are crucial for justice advocacy in Sudan.

- **Cases of Effective Advocacy**

Cases from the African Human Rights Policy Papers (AHRPP) and UNDP's program in South Sudan highlight effective strategies and challenges in human rights advocacy. AHRPP emphasizes regional cooperation and inclusive policies but highlights challenges in implementation and political will. Yet, despite challenges, it has resulted in reforms protecting women and children's rights. The UNDP's program focuses on building justice institutions post-conflict, including community engagement and legislative advocacy. Challenges included judicial resistance and security concerns, yet it has improved access to justice and institutional strength. Both cases highlight the importance of regional cooperation, inclusivity, community engagement, legal frameworks, and sustained advocacy efforts. Lessons for Sudanese advocacy include leveraging regional and international support, inclusive approaches, legal reforms, community empowerment, and sustained pressure for political commitment to human rights reforms, aiming for effective and long-term change.

- **Recommendations**

**Short-term Actions:**

1. **Strengthen Regional and International Cooperation:** Efforts to enhance implementation of human rights standards through regional and international collaboration are essential. Leveraging regional frameworks like the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights is crucial for ensuring compliance and accountability. This collaboration is expected to pressure Sudan to fulfill its obligations and enhance regional monitoring and implementation mechanisms.
2. **Promote Inclusive and Participatory Approaches:** Implementing policies that integrate vulnerable populations into decision-making process is essential. Facilitating platforms for such groups to voice their needs and participate in policy formulation, as highlighted by the Centre for Human Rights, aims to create more effective and equitable human rights policies reflecting the diverse needs of all community groups.
3. **Ensure Sustained Efforts and Political Will:** Sustaining pressure on the government to comply with human rights reforms is critical. Actions include applying international diplomatic pressure and conditioning aid to compliance with these obligations. Continuous advocacy and monitoring by international and regional rights organizations are essential, as suggested by the Centre for Human Rights (2023). The expected outcome is increased political will and commitment to human rights reforms, thus resulting in systemic changes and improved human rights conditions.  
Actionable Steps: Advocating for targeted sanctions against rights violators, coordinated by the UN and African union (AU)<sup>3</sup>.
4. **Empower Local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):** Initiatives such as creating community monitoring platforms and Victim Support Groups aim to engage locals directly in the justice process. The overall objective is to foster a bottom-up approach to human rights advocacy through community involvement.

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<sup>3</sup> Sudan has been suspended from AU due to political instability (AU,2024). Yet, efforts must be made to revoke the suspension by restoring democratic governance and stability. Retrieved from [here](#).

### Long-Term Actions

5. **Strengthen Legal and Institutional Frameworks:** Establish strong legal and institutional mechanisms to protect human rights, prioritizing judicial reforms for an independent judiciary. Focus on developing institutions dedicated to justice and security, drawing on successful models from South Sudan (UNDP,2023). These measures are expected to lead to improved accountability, reinforce the rule of law, and enhance access to justice.  
Actionable Steps: (1) Reforming judiciary independence and amending restrictive laws to safeguard freedoms. (2) Establishing Transitional Justice Mechanisms such as a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address historical grievances and promote accountability.
  6. **Building Local CSOs Capacity:** By providing education and support structures, communities are empowered to identify and address violations effectively (UNDP,2023). Actionable Steps: (1) Investing in educational programs to raise awareness and empower communities on human rights issues. (2) Prioritizing support and capacity-building for local CSOs to effectively monitor abuses and advocate for reforms.
- **Implementation Strategies:** Effective implementation of these recommendations includes coordinated efforts among international organizations, governments, and CS, including joint task forces with the UN and AU. Moreover, ensuring inclusivity from victims to local communities and governments is crucial. Furthermore, robust monitoring, accountability frameworks, diplomacy, security measures, sustained funding, and technology use, are crucial to support human rights efforts and enhance accessibility.

**Conclusion:** Addressing Sudan's human rights challenges require international cooperation, legal reforms, and sustained advocacy. Promoting inclusivity, empowering civil society, and ensuring accountability through effective monitoring are crucial. Moreover, commitment to these recommendations, alongside diplomacy and innovation, is essential for systemic long-term change and justice improvement. Continued international support is critical for maintaining human rights standards and securing Sudan's future.

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