

World News

UN investigators say the Darfur siege shows clear intent to destroy targeted communities.

BY REUTERS

A United Nations fact-finding mission has determined that atrocities committed during the siege and eventual takeover of the Sudanese city of el-Fasher bear the hallmarks of genocide.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) captured el-Fasher, in Sudan's western Darfur region, at the end of October after an 18-month blockade. The assault marked one of the most brutal chapters in Sudan's nearly three-year civil war.

"The body of evidence we collected — including the prolonged siege, starvation and denial of humanitarian assistance, followed by mass killings, rape, torture and enforced disappearance, systematic humiliation and perpetrators' own declarations — leaves only one reasonable inference," said Mona Rishmawi, a member of the UN fact-finding mission.

"The RSF acted with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Zaghawa and Fur communities in el-Fasher. These are the hallmarks of genocide," it adds.

The report concludes that at least three underlying acts of genocide were committed: killing members of a protected ethnic group; causing serious bodily or mental harm; and deliberately inflicting conditions calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction, in whole or in part.

Describing the findings as "truly horrific", UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper called for international criminal investigations to ensure accountability for perpetrators, justice for victims, and an end to the flow of arms fuelling the conflict.

Sudan's civil war erupted in April 2023 from a power struggle between the regular army and the RSF over the integration of the paramilitary force into the national security structure.

UN says Sudan war crimes bear hallmarks of genocide



Sudanese refugee children from al-Fashir share a free meal of pasta and meat in the Tine transit camp in eastern Chad on November 22, 2025. PHOTO/REUTERS

In Darfur, Arab militias forming the backbone of the RSF have targeted non-Arab communities they perceive as enemies, employing tactics reminiscent of the violence witnessed two decades ago. At that time, militias allied to the government of former president Omar al-Bashir massacred hundreds of thousands of Darfuris from indigenous African ethnic groups during a brutal counter-insurgency campaign.

According to the report, el-Fasher was deliberately starved and systematically destroyed during the prolonged siege.

"Thousands of persons, particularly the Zaghawa, were killed, raped or disappeared during three days of absolute horror," the report states, noting that RSF forces failed to distinguish between Zaghawa civilians and armed groups defending the city.

Investigators described the RSF's conduct in el-Fasher as an escalation of previous patterns of abuse, but on a far more lethal scale. They warned that the failure to prevent the atrocities, despite clear warning signs, demonstrates the urgent need for accountability. Without decisive action,

they cautioned, the risk of further genocidal acts remains "serious and ongoing".

The Human Rights Council in Geneva mandated the investigative team to identify suspected perpetrators to ensure they are held accountable. The report names RSF leader Lt Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti, and spokesperson Lt Col Al-Fatih Al-Qurashi, citing their public statements claiming and celebrating the operation.

While General Hemedti acknowledged that some "violations" occurred and

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

Although the mission's mandate did not extend to investigating external actors, the report states that the RSF's campaign was reinforced by foreign mercenaries equipped with advanced weaponry and communications systems. Investigators are engaging several states over credible information regarding their involvement. The United Arab Emirates is widely reported to back the RSF, though it strongly denies the allegations despite prior UN assessments describing supporting evidence as credible.

described the fall of el-Fasher as a "catastrophe", he defended the assault as necessary. He also instructed fighters not to harm civilians or kill prisoners and promised investigations. However, investigators say the RSF did not respond to requests for clarification about steps taken or provide further information.

The report also names a notorious commander known as "Abu Lulu", who was reportedly arrested after viral footage exposed his brutality. However, the RSF provided no information on any judicial proceedings. Investigators further noted a lack of cooperation from Sudanese authorities, which Cooper described as "shameful and unacceptable" from both warring parties.

The investigators called on the international community to enforce and expand the existing arms embargo, impose targeted sanctions, cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court, and consider establishing a complementary judicial mechanism.