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The Reckoning
Project

FROM MARKETS TO WEDDINGS

SYSTEMATIC AIRSTRIKES ON
CIVILIANS IN DARFUR



KAMPALA, 2026

SUMMARY

In the early afternoon of February 3, 2026, Mushtaha was working at her tea and coffee stall on Cinema Street in Nyala, as she did every day. It was barely past 2:00 pm, and the street was at the peak of its commercial bustle: rickshaws carrying passengers, pedestrians shopping, and young men sitting at the neighboring ice cream parlor.

In a nearby grocery store, a young woman named Masajed, one of Mushtaha's regular clients, heard two loud explosions less than a minute apart. She lived to tell how she survived the attack, but Mushtaha, along with many others at the market that day, did not. Among those who died were two young men working at an ice cream parlor, the rickshaw driver and his three passengers.

Witnesses confirmed that a white plane, which they believed belonged to the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), dropped at least three other bombs that day in Nyala: first on the Nour al-Ayun hospital, then two on Cinema Street. The explosions killed at least 22 civilians, including men, women, elderly people, and children. In addition, dozens of people were injured, some very seriously, and shops and vehicles were completely destroyed.

This bombing incident is not an exception in Darfur, where air strikes on civilian areas have become once again commonplace. The Sudanese government's past wars in the region featured mass atrocities and persistent bombing of civilians, leading the UN to impose an arms embargo that remains in place today.

This report documents 17 air and drone strikes that took place in Darfur between October 2024 and April 2026, in which hundreds were killed and injured, livelihoods destroyed and communities terrorized. The evidence suggests that the belligerents failed to uphold basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) because they deliberately attacked civilians, failed to discriminate between military and civilian targets, and failed to protect civilians from the harms arising from their military operations.

Munitions were dropped or shot into civilian-populated areas at times when civilians were sure to be present. These include markets at their busiest hours, a mosque during prayers at dawn, hospitals, a wedding, and a shelter for displaced persons bombed while its residents slept. In several examples, the bombers used the "double tap" tactic, whereby a first bomb is closely followed by a second in the same location, often hitting first responders.

Far from causing mere "collateral damage," evidence suggests the belligerents deliberately targeted civilians and first responders. Beyond the death tolls and injuries, this violence has far-ranging and profound impacts on communities, their livelihoods, access to healthcare, and safety.

International actors including the UN, AU and their member states should condemn the use of air strikes and drone attacks and do far more to enforce the existing arms embargo and sanctions regime in place in Darfur. They should also increase support for civil society groups that monitor and document these attacks, as well as track the supply chains of weapons, and those providing support to affected communities, including psychosocial support.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on the testimonies of 31 direct witnesses to air or drone strikes incidents across Darfur between late 2025 and April 2026. Interviews were conducted between December 2025 and May 2026; researchers also reviewed news reports, reports from non-governmental organizations and human rights groups, hospital records, posts and images on social media platforms, and geolocation data. Interviews were conducted in Arabic in person or remotely, using secure telecommunications. Witnesses gave their full informed consent, and received no compensation in exchange for their account. The full names of the victims have been withheld for their safety.

BACKGROUND

Darfur, in western Sudan, has experienced armed conflict for decades. The region is notorious for the atrocity crimes committed by the Sudanese government and allied militias between 2003 and 2006 against mostly non-Arab communities the government accused of supporting rebel groups. The resulting violence killed hundreds of thousands of people and forced millions into displaced persons camps. In 2005, the UN referred the situation to the ICC which issued warrants of arrest for then-president Omar al-Bashir and others.¹ It also imposed an arms embargo and sanctions regime against those found responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and set up a panel of experts to monitor it.²

More than twenty years later, a new war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) is consuming Sudan. Shortly after erupting in Khartoum in April 2023, the war ignited new waves of violence in Darfur. The RSF, whose forces consist mostly of fighters from Arab communities in Darfur, quickly took control of the region, carrying out mass atrocities against non-Arab communities, initially in El Geneina, West Darfur, in 2023.³

By December 2023, the RSF had seized control of most of the army's garrisons in major cities, including Nyala, El Geneina, Zalingei, and El Da'ein. According to local accounts, this resulted in a relative lull in direct confrontations between the warring parties.⁴ The conflict then entered a new phase of intense aerial bombardment and drone strikes. By the end of 2024, SAF was targeting markets, displacement camps, hospitals, and residential neighborhoods, according to eyewitnesses and local human rights monitors. In March 2025, for example, SAF airstrikes on Tora market in North Darfur killed up to 450 civilians.⁵

1 International Criminal Court, Darfur, Sudan at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/darfur>

2 UN Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/1591>

3 Human Rights Watch, "The Massalit will not come home: ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in El Geneina, Sudan," May 9, 2024, at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/05/09/massalit-will-not-come-home/ethnic-cleansing-and-crimes-against-humanity-el>

4 ACLED, "Sudan Situation Update: December 2023 | Unraveling the Conflict Dynamics in Darfur on Dec.1, 2025," at <https://acleddate.com/update/sudan-situation-update-december-2023>

5 OHCHR, "Sudan crisis deepens amid rising civilian casualties, growing ethnic violence and grim humanitarian situation," September 19, 2025, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releasrs/2025/09/sudan-civilian-casualties-growing-ethnic-violence>

On October 26, 2025, the RSF seized control of El Fasher, North Darfur, the last SAF stronghold after imposing a siege on the city since May 2024. The UN Human Rights Office found that the RSF's final offensive on El-Fasher amounted to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity, with more than 6,000 people killed in over three days, and the UN Fact Finding Mission found "hallmarks of genocide."⁶

"Drone strikes are not limited to military targets, sometimes with multiple follow-ups strikes on the same location, and are causing devastating harm: civilians, including children, are being killed or severely injured in blatant disregard of international humanitarian law."

With El Fasher in RSF hands, the group consolidated control over the entire Darfur region, including its gold deposits and critical supply routes to Libya and Chad.⁷ SAF has since escalated drone strikes on RSF controlled territories across Sudan including in Darfur, but also around active frontlines in Kordofan and Blue Nile. The conflict monitoring group, ACLED, calls Sudan's war "a drone-dominated conflict, characterized by both sides rapidly adapting their aerial tactics and supply chains."⁸ According to investigators, the SAF have used drones from Iran, Turkey, and Egypt.⁹ The RSF have used drones from the United Arab Emirates, supplied through Libya and Chad, as well as Chinese-manufactured drones first identified at Nyala Airport in December 2024.¹⁰

Drones strikes are now a leading cause of death in Sudan.¹¹ Following strikes in February 2026, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) observed that "Drone strikes are not limited to military targets, sometimes with multiple follow-ups strikes on the same location, and are causing devastating harm:

6 OCHCR, "Report on the RSF final offensive and capture of besieged El Fasher (Oct. 24-30, 2025)," February 13, 2026, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ohchr-report-rsf-final-offensive-and-capture-besieged-el-fasher-24-30> and UN Independent International Fact-finding Mission for the Sudan, "Hallmarks of genocide in El Fasher," February 19, 2026, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc6177-sudan-hallmarks-genocide-el-fasher-report-independent>

7 Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan, April 2025, at <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/239>

8 ACLED, "How has Sudan's drone war adapted to shifting supply lines?" June 4, 2026, at <https://acleddata.com/report/how-has-sudans-drone-war-adapted-shifting-supply-lines>

9 Katharine Houreld and Elizabeth Dwoskin, "A Turkish Arms Firm Helped Fuel Sudan's Brutal Civil War, Records Show," The Washington Post, March 7, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/03/07/sudan-war-turkey-baykar-rsf-saf/>; Alexander Dziadosz et al., "Egypt's Drone Deployment to Border Raises Stakes in Sudan's Civil War," Africa, Reuters, February 2, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/egypts-drone-deployment-border-raises-stakes-sudans-civil-war-2026-02-02/>.

10 Amnesty International, "Sudan: Advanced Chinese weaponry provided by UAE identified in breach of arms embargo – new investigation," 8 May 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/sudan-advanced-chinese-weaponry-provided-by-uae-identified-in-breach-of-arms-embargo-new-investigation>

11 UN News, "Armed drones leading cause of civilian death in Sudan war: rights chief," May 11, 2026, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/05/1167479>

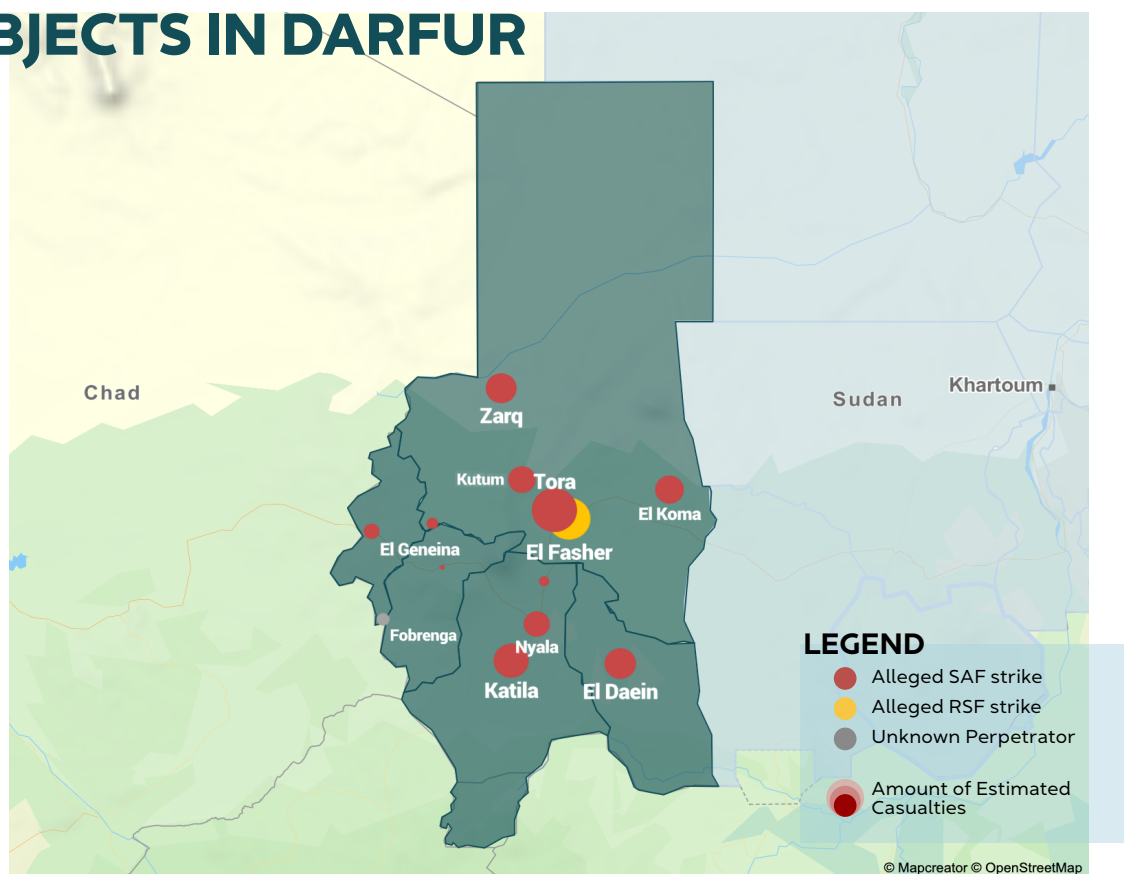
civilians, including children, are being killed or severely injured in blatant disregard of international humanitarian law.”¹²

As indicated by incidents documented in this report, the belligerents targeted civilian-populated areas such as markets, fuel tankers, neighborhoods and mosques, healthcare facilities and social gatherings. In some examples they used the “double tap” tactic, whereby an initial bombing is followed by a second one, often hitting first responders trying to help victims of the first strike.

The impact on communities has been dire. Strikes have resulted in large numbers of deaths and injuries, and have resulted in the loss of livelihoods, the destruction of health care and shelters, and have instilled insecurity for people going about their daily activities.

The following sections detail accounts of air or drone strikes on civilians and civilian objects, the far reaching impacts on communities, and the international humanitarian law principles that apply.

MAP OF STRIKES ON CIVILIAN OBJECTS IN DARFUR



This map shows the geographic distribution of drone strikes on civilian objects analyzed in this report with the size of the circle representing the amount of estimated casualties and its color representing the alleged perpetrator of the bombings.

AIRSTRIKES ON CIVILIANS AND CIVILIAN OBJECTS

Airstrikes and drone strikes have had a devastating impact on civilian life in towns and villages across Sudan since the war began in 2023, with a heightened intensity since 2025. This report focuses on the Darfur region and describes 16 strikes that occurred between October 2024 and April 2026. Although these strikes represent just a fraction of the total air and drone strikes in Darfur since the war started, they are indicative of a wider pattern of deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian objects, the consequences of which go beyond the immediate destruction at the site of the impact.

I. ATTACKS ON MARKETS

In Darfur, markets are not just economic spaces; they are centers of life where medicine is purchased, food supplies are secured, news is exchanged, and relationships are forged. Consequently, bombing a market does not merely inflict material losses; it strikes at the very heart of society at a time when society is in its direst need of cohesion.

Nyala (South Darfur): Hai Cinema, February 3, 2025

On February 3, 2025, SAF airstrikes hit several locations in one of Nyala's busiest commercial areas, killing at least 22 people and injuring many more.¹³

According to eyewitnesses, a bomb hit 500 meters north of the Cinema roundabout, near the Nour al-Ayun Hospital, and another hit the al-Faris supermarket on the main road to the east of the Cinema.

13

Human Rights Watch, Sudan: Armed Forces Airstrikes in South Darfur | Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/04/sudan-armed-forces-airstrikes-south-darfur>.

Masajed, a university student who worked at a shop near the supermarket, had already left work when she heard the aircraft overhead, which she identified as a white Antonov airplane. "I recognized it by its sound. We've known them for a long time," she recalled.¹⁴

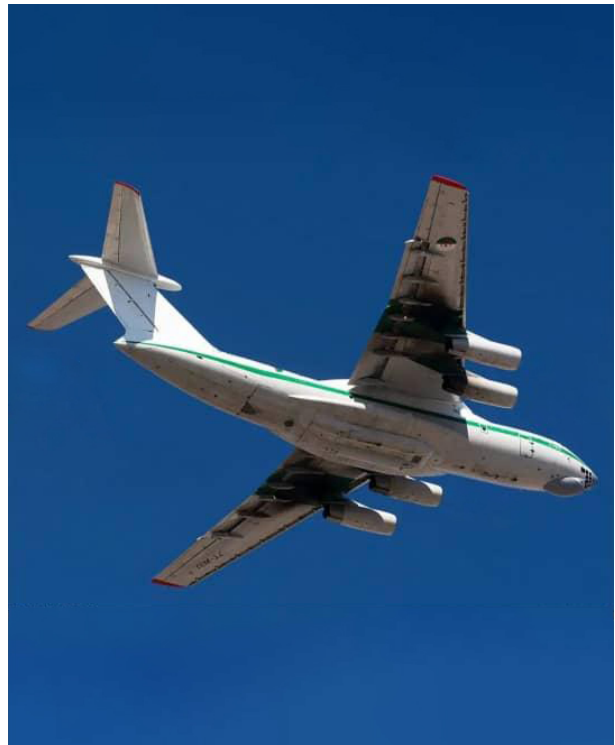
A shop-owner, Tajeldin, recalled how, after hearing a first explosion, he and his colleagues rushed to close their shop but could not escape the area before a second strike hit their area. "While we were closing up, the plane came a second time. It hit right in front of us, about six meters in front of the store," he recalled.¹⁵

Tajeldin knew many people who died or sustained serious injuries in the explosions. "The young man working with us was hospitalized for nearly fifteen days. The injury to his neck affected the nerves in his left arm. To this day, he hasn't found a treatment to help him recover."¹⁶

Among those killed were two young men working at an ice cream shop, the owner of a Wi-Fi shop, and a rickshaw driver along with his three passengers. The wounded were transported to Al-Abrar Al-Amara hospital, which was quickly overwhelmed by the arrival of large numbers of wounded far exceeding the center's capacity.

A member of the Nyala Teaching Hospital staff told *Darfur 24* that 32 dead bodies had arrived at the hospital and morgue, while dozens of wounded individuals were transported to other health centers and hospitals.¹⁷

While the SAF continued its bombing campaign for several days, local monitors report that the RSF arrested dozens of civilians accused of collaborating with the SAF.¹⁸



The image, taken in the city of El Kuma in early 2025, shows an aircraft believed to be an Antonov, which was spotted approximately 20 times in the city.

14 Interview with Masajed, Dec. 27, 2026.

15 Interview with Tajeldin, Dec. 23, 2026

16 *Ibid.*

17 Darfur 24, "مدنيًا في نبالا بدارفور" موقع دارفور ٢٤ الاخباري, February 3, 2025, <https://darfur24.com/2025/02/03/مدن-20-قتلت-جوية-بغارات-جوية-قتلت-20-مدن/>.

18 *Ibid.*

Tora (North Darfur), March 24, 2025



A picture from the Tora market, the site of the accident, taken on 3/24/3035, after the accident, at the moment of evacuating the victims. The picture shows a number of victims who have turned into pieces and whose bodies have been charred from the intensity of the burning and the flames. The search teams obtained this picture from one of the witnesses during the interview.

On the last Monday of Ramadan on March 24, 2025, the Tora weekly market was teeming with people coming to shop in preparation for Eid. Since the war started, the Tora market, situated 35 km north of the then-besieged regional capital al-Fasher, had become a lifeline for dozens of towns and villages across North Darfur.

At approximately 2:10 p.m., an aircraft appeared in the sky. According to survivors, it was an Antonov-model plane, presumed to belong to the SAF. It did not circle for long before dropping three explosives on the market. According to a witness who visited the site, the bombs fell within a 500 square meter area, "in the busiest section of the market."²⁵

The first bomb landed in the northeastern sector of the market, hitting the area where people hitch their donkeys, horses, and camels. The strike reportedly killed 600 animals, which were buried in a mass grave to the northeast of the market. Two more struck the middle of the market, landing on clothing stalls and near tobacco shops. The explosions ignited a fire that swept through the market.

Initial reports estimated that around 450 people, mostly women and children, died. Local residents were able to identify 350 of the bodies, the remaining 100 could not be identified because they were too severely burned or dismembered. All were buried in mass graves in Tora.²⁶

TRP researchers were able to collect testimonies from witnesses, as well as images, videos and a list of identified dead including 39 children and 79 women.

In response to the catastrophe, the community formed committees to compile lists of victims — including the deceased, the wounded, and the missing — and to document the material losses incurred by merchants, citizens, and livestock owners.

Over 223 were injured. Dozens were taken to surrounding towns of Melit in North Darfur and El Dabbah and Merowe in northern Sudan, under extremely difficult circumstances.²⁷ With no state authority or official institution stepping in to cover the costs of treatment, members of the local community living abroad organized a fundraising campaign that ultimately covered the medical expenses for all those injured.

Here again, an SAF spokesperson denied targeting civilians.²⁸ This is consistent with a broader pattern: in all incidents in this report, the SAF has either denied responsibility in blanket statements or simply refused to comment.

For Baranga (West Darfur), March 13, 2026

Early morning on Friday, March 13, 2026, Hamed, a trader, was on his way to the mosque for the dawn prayer (*fajr*) when he heard the sound of a low-flying aircraft followed by a loud burst “so powerful that my legs shook as an explosion rocked the entire area.”²⁹

The first air strike hit the west side of the market, near an RSF office. Shortly after, a second bomb dropped on the center of the market, hitting civilians and causing extensive damage to property. “All the victims were civilians and so were the [material] losses,” recalled Hassan, another witness.³⁰

According to witnesses at the scene, the blast killed at least five civilians — including a 12-year-old boy — and injured at least 26 others. The resulting fires destroyed the vehicles and trucks loaded with merchandise. “The material losses were enormous; years of hard work and the traders’ supplies gone in an instant,” he recalled.

26 Interview with Salah, March 17, 2026.

27 Darfur 24, “أوضاع ‘مأساوية’ لمصابي الغارة الجوية على سوق ‘طرة’ شمال دارفور،” موقع دارفور ٢٤ الاخباري، March 26, 2025, <https://darfur24.com/2025/03/26/ع-الغارة-الجوية-للمصابي-المأساوية-للمصابي-الغارة-الجوية-ع/>.

28 Barbara Plett Usher and Natasha Booty, “Sudan Army Accused of Killing Hundreds in Airstrike on Darfur Market,” BBC News, March 26, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgz5kxy8d2o>.

29 Interview with Hamed, March, 23, 2026

30 Interview with Hassan, March 23, 2026

Manawashi (South Darfur), March 21, 2026

The Manawashi market, an important hub located between Nyala and El Fasher, was relatively quiet during the Eid al-Fitr holiday that marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. On March 21, the second day of Eid, Jamal, a small-scale merchant who worked in the market, closed his shop early to drink coffee with a friend before heading home.

"I heard the sound of a drone approaching from the east. I recognized it because I had heard it more than once in Nyala and in al-Fasher during the siege. I alerted my companion, shouting, 'Drone! Drone!' We immediately took cover, lying flat on the ground. Less than a minute later, we heard the roar of the explosion."³¹

The bomb hit the vegetable market, a cluster of stalls in the center of the market, and killed four people on the spot: Nasim Musa, age 27, Mubarak Ahmad Muhammad Adam, age 17, Badriya Salih Hassan, age 35, and Ahmad Sanousi Ahmad, age 26. Witnesses said at least eight others were injured with burns, shrapnel wounds, and fractures.³² The explosion also destroyed property and livestock. *Darfur24* quoted a witness who said the drone could have aimed at an RSF convoy passing near the market, but stressed that it instead targeted the market and all the casualties were civilians.³³

Saraf Omra (North Darfur), March 25, 2026

On the morning of Wednesday, March 25, 2026, Omar, a truck driver, arrived at the market of Saraf Omra at 5:00 a.m. after an overnight journey. Omar, his 15-year-old son and his nephew, who worked as his assistants, slept for four hours until the market opened.

Around 10:15 a.m., Omar said he heard a drone approaching, followed by two explosions. He said he could feel the ground shaking and heard the roar of the two consecutive explosions.³⁴

On the other side of the market, Eltahir, a trader, was loading a cart with merchandise when the bomb struck: "For a moment, it felt as though the earth had buckled beneath us. The sheer density of the dust and the air pressure knocked us to the ground. There was nothing but the smell of gunpowder and smoke."³⁵

Witness accounts, corroborated by other sources of evidence, confirm the two strikes. The explosions killed at least five people, including a tea seller and a truck driver; destroyed a fuel tanker, four cargo trucks, and several shops in the market.

31 Interview with Jamal, April 15, 2026

32 Interview with Kamal, March 24, 2026

33 Darfur 24, "موقع دارفور يوقع قتلى وجرحى", موقع دارفور ٢٤ الاخباري, March 22, 2026, <https://darfur24.com/2026/03/22/موقع-قتلى-وجرحى-موقع-قتلى-وجرحى-موقع-قتلى-وجرحى/>.

34 Interview with Omar, April 14, 2026

35 Interview with Eltahir, April 9, 2026

"We carried people with our own hands and tried to beat back the flames with handfuls of dirt. My brother, Idris, went to fetch a donkey cart so we could load the wounded onto it, as there weren't enough ambulances to go around."³⁶

About 20 wounded people were transported to the town hospital but there were insufficient doctors, no medications, and no equipment. Residents had to transport the critical cases in pickup trucks 100 km to Kabkabiya town. Local human rights groups condemned the attack and appealed to the UN Security Council, calling for an immediate intervention to ensure the protection of civilians in the region.³⁷

Zalingei (Central Darfur), March 28, 2026

In one of the many bombings in Zalingei since the beginning of the war, a witness who lives in the east side of town told TRP how at 10:30 a.m. on March 28, 2026, he heard a buzzing "and saw a small aircraft, which turned out to be a drone," coming from the northeast and heading toward Zalingei.

The aircraft changed course then fired a munition at a house, killing a teacher and her daughter who were inside.

Abdallah, who was standing just fifteen meters from the strike site when the attack occurred, recalled: "I paused for a moment to identify the sound. At that very instant, the drone fired its missile. I felt a violent tremor, and dust was everywhere. We tried to retrieve the bodies, but we found only severed remains."³⁸

Witnesses said they are certain that an SAF drone conducted the attack, because the area was under RSF control at the time. One elder remarked how the army has changed tactics in recent years: "The army has been bombing us from the air since 2000. Back then it was just Antonov planes. But nowadays strikes are much more frequent and intense than they were before. In the past month, there were three bombings. The truth is, we expect death at any moment. Even our grief has become trivial."³⁹

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36 *Ibid.*

37 Darfur Victims Support Organization post at <https://www.facebook.com/reel/2079188036223656>

38 Interview with Abdallah, April 15, 2026

39 Interview with Juma on, April 18, 2026

El Geneina (West Darfur), April 12, 2026

On the evening of April 12, 2026, Adam, a mechanic, and his friend, Yousif, were making their way along the main road in al-Jamarik neighborhood, returning from the city's main market.⁴⁰

Just before 7:00 pm, they heard a buzzing sound and saw a small white drone approaching from the southeast, then heard the sound of the blast. They rushed to the scene and helped take twelve injured people to the hospital. They later learned that 9 people were killed., all of them civilians including women.

The SAF carried out other strikes on that same night, including in a nearby town, and resulted in more casualties.⁴¹ Earlier that day, SAF drones reportedly killed five environmental health workers in El Geneina's market as part of the campaign.⁴² The wounded were treated at the El Geneina Teaching Hospital, which itself had previously been hit many times throughout the conflict.

II. ATTACKS ON MOSQUES

Religious and cultural sites are protected civilian objects under international humanitarian law and can be prosecuted as war crimes.

El Fasher (North Darfur), September 19, 2025

On Friday, September 19, 2025, while worshippers were performing the dawn prayer (fajr) at Al Safiya mosque in the Darija Oula district of El Fasher, a drone allegedly deployed by the RSF hit the mosque, reducing it to rubble and killing more than 70 people including 11 children.⁴³ The attack was widely condemned internationally, including by the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.⁴⁴

40 Interview with Adam, May 1, 2026; SudanTribune, "Sudan Army Drone Strikes Kill 20 in Darfur, Officials Say," Sudan Tribune, April 13, 2026, <https://sudantribune.com/article/312756>.

41 Interview with Mousa, March 30, 2026

42 Sudan Tribune, "Sudan Army Drone Strikes Kill 20 in Darfur, Officials Say."

43 CSW, "At Least 70 People Killed in RSF Attack on Darfur Mosque," CSW, September 23, 2025, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2025/09/23/press/6611/article.htm>.

44 Qatar News Agency, "Saudi Arabia Condemns Attack on Mosque in El Fasher, Calls for Immediate Halt to War in Sudan," Qatar News Agency, September 20, 2025, <https://qna.org.qa/en/news/news-details?id=saudi-arabia-condemns-attack-on-mosque-in-el-fasher-calls-for-immediate-halt-to-war-in-sudan&date=20/09/2025>.

The UN's Fact-Finding Mission called it the worst attack on a religious site in the conflict to date, noting that "[k]illing civilians, including children, while in prayer in a mosque shows a blatant disregard for the most fundamental principles of international law," and that places of worship "should be sanctuaries, not targets."⁴⁵

Places of worship are afforded absolute protection under international humanitarian law. The mosque was targeted at a moment when civilians were gathered and at their most vulnerable, and there was no evidence of any legitimate military target.

The RSF did not acknowledge nor deny responsibility for this attack.

III. ATTACKS ON MEDICAL FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL

Attacks on medical facilities and their staff or patients are prohibited under international humanitarian law. Yet across Sudan, warring sides have repeatedly attacked medical facilities, personnel and patients, killing hundreds and destroying essential services.

El Da'ein (East Darfur): Attack on Hospital, March 20, 2026

One of the worst attacks on hospitals was the attack on El Da'ein's main hospital, which serves around 3.5 million people, including displaced and refugee populations.

On Friday, 20 March 2026, the first day of Eid al-Fitr, at around 8:30 PM, a drone dropped two bombs on the El Da'ein hospital. Mazin, a 29-year-old human rights activist, was returning from visiting his family when he heard the drone, followed by explosions.

"The scene was catastrophic," he recalled. "The bombs hit the emergency, maternity, and children's wards, destroying the hospital."⁴⁶

45 OHCHR, "Sudan: UN Fact-finding mission urges immediate action," September 24, 2025, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/sudan-un-fact-finding-mission-urges-immediate-action-after-deadly-mosque?sub-site=HRC>; Massad Boulos, "Shortened text of the tweet, up to about 20 words," X, October 29, 2025, 4:32 p.m., https://x.com/US_SrAdvisorAF/status/1969433480980546021; News of Bahrain, "The Kingdom of Bahrain strongly condemned the attack on a mosque in Sudan's El Fasher city...", Facebook, September 21, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/NewsOfBahrain1/posts/the-kingdom-of-bahrain-strongly-condemned-the-attack-on-a-mosque-in-sudans-el-fa/1546365720150757/>; United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "UAE Strongly Condemns Attack on Mosque in Darfur," September 20, 2025, accessed July 2, 2026, <https://www.mofa.gov.ae/en/mediahub/news/2025/9/21/21-9-2025-uae-uae>.

46 Interview with Mazin, on, March 23, 2026

Elhaj, a first responder, recalled: "It was heart-wrenching. The casualties consisted of severed limbs, blood, and scattered body parts. People were rushing about frantically, searching for their loved ones. We sifted through the bodies, finding nothing but mutilated remains, clothing, and blood."⁴⁷

The blast killed up to 70 people including 13 children, two nurses, a doctor and five other medical workers, according to the World Health Organization.⁴⁸



An image showing the extent of the destruction inflicted upon El-Da'ein Hospital taken after the attack on March 20, 2026.

According to satellite analysis conducted by the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab, there were "multiple, precise impacts" within the hospital compound. These would have likely been carried out by long-range Bayraktar Akıncı drones which are used by the SAF and use laser-guided munitions. The State Ministry of Health of East Darfur confirmed that the attack followed a "double-tap" pattern, whereby a second strike is sent to target the people responding to the first strike.⁴⁹

The SAF denied carrying out the strike, accusing the RSF of multiple attacks on healthcare in other cities across Sudan.⁵⁰

47 Interview with Elhaj, March 25, 2026

48 Dominika Tomaszewska-Mortimer, "Sudan: Hospital Strike Highlights Surge in Drone Attacks on Civilians | UN News," UN News, March 24, 2026, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/03/1167189>.

49 Sudan War Monitor, "The tragedy of El Daien Teaching Hospital," March 27, 2026, <https://sudanwarmonitor.com/p/the-tragedy-of-el-daein-teaching>

50 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم القيادة العامة للقوات المسلحة بيان السبت ٢١ مارس ٢٠٢٦م [SudaneseAF], "القوات المسلحة السودانية تابعت قيادة القوات المسلحة السودانية باستغراب الاتهامات التي تبثها مليشيا آل دقلو الإرهابية وداعميها بهجوم مستشفى https://t.co/JDM9y5D1LX," Tweet, Twitter, March 21, 2026, <https://x.com/SudaneseAF/status/2035483137942421819>.

The SAF had previously attacked the El Da'ein hospital on August 20, 2024, destroying several structures within the medical complex, and forcing some departments to shut down. An eyewitness, who was standing near the hospital at the time of the 2024 strike said that the attack killed 22 people and wounded 12 others.⁵¹

El Zuruq (North Darfur): Attack on a Health Center, January 3, 2026

El Zuruq is a town in the northwest corner of North Darfur, near the borders with Libya and Chad, located 180 kilometers north of El Fasher. On the afternoon of Saturday, January 3, at approximately 1:15 pm, Mohamed was walking with his younger brother, Omar, toward the El Zuruq health center, where he volunteered.

Mohamed saw a drone flying at low altitude overhead when it began shooting munitions, which struck the health center and surrounding neighborhood. He then found his brother on the ground, his back riddled with shrapnel and his left leg severely fractured.⁵²

The attack destroyed the healthcare center and hit a nearby market, reportedly killing 52 people in the center,⁵³ including a prominent sheikh, his relatives, and a medical nurse known to be a pillar of the community. Additionally, 20 people including women and children were wounded. The RSF accused the SAF of carrying out the attack using a Turkish-made Akıncı drone.⁵⁴

The UN condemned the attacks, and reiterated its call for the protection of civilians and the unimpeded access of humanitarian aid.⁵⁵

51 Interview with Husam, March 10, 2026

52 Interview with Mohamed, February 6, 2026

53 "114 قتيل خلال أسبوع واحد بدارفور وتصادع الهجمات في 3 ولايات"، الجزيرة، January 4, 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2026/1/4/114-قتيل-خلال-أسبوع-واحد-بدارفور-وتصادع-الهجمات-في-3-ولايات>.

54 Rapid Support Forces, "The RSF Condemns the Terrorist Attack Carried out by SAF Aircraft on Al-Zuruq Hospital and the Gurair Market in North Darfur," Rapid Support Forces, March 24, 2026, <https://rapidsupportforce.com/en/news-details/Al-Zuruq-the-Gurair>.

55 أخبار الأمم المتحدة، "الأمم المتحدة: قلق بالغ إزاء استمرار معاناة المدنيين في دارفور وكردفان"، أخبار الأمم المتحدة، January 5, 2026, <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2026/01/1143986>.

IV. ATTACKS ON THE SOCIAL GATHERINGS

SAF air strikes have also targeted gatherings, including weddings and celebrations, undermining the social fabric of Darfuri communities at a time when people need it most.

El Kuma (North Darfur): Return of the Sheikh, October 11, 2025

On Saturday, 11 October 2025, at 11:00 am, in the Iram neighborhood on the northern edge of El Kuma, a drone struck a civilian gathering of family and neighbors welcoming Sheikh Ahmed Rabih Bashish back from a medical trip abroad. The explosion killed 16 people, most of whom were children between the ages of 12 and 18.⁵⁶

The image shows a mass grave in the city of El Kuma; it is a screenshot taken from a video obtained by the research team from a witness in the city. The incident occurred on Saturday, October 11, 2025, in the Iram neighborhood—located in the northern part of the city—when a drone targeted civilians who had gathered to welcome back the neighborhood elder, Ahmed Rabih Bashish, following his return from a medical trip.



Katila (South Darfur): The Governor's Visit, December 8, 2025

On the afternoon of December 8, the head of the South Darfur state's civil administration — an equivalent to a governor, appointed by RSF authorities — arrived at the Katila locality for an official visit. As he prepared to address a gathering of civilians at the police station, a drone dropped bombs on the market, returning ten minutes later to bomb the gathering which had formed near the police station.

This image shows a mass grave resulting from an incident in the Katila locality of South Darfur on December 8, 2025; the research team obtained it from a witness.

Source:



Witnesses said that six bombs were dropped, killing more than 100 civilians, including women and children, and injuring scores of others who later had to be transported to Nyala and other towns. RSF soldiers who accompanied the governor were also killed in the blast.⁵⁷

Fakhareldin, a 25-year-old medical assistant who had been inside the ceremonial tent just moments before the strike, recalled: "It was devastating. In a single instant, nearly 120 civilians lost their lives in a truly gruesome manner. People were torn into shreds, mutilated beyond recognition. I have never, in my entire life, witnessed bodies scattered in such a horrific fashion."⁵⁸

One woman who helped prepare food for the event recalled: "I could see the dust and the blast and everyone was blown up... you see people lying there with nothing left of them ... If you recognize your brother's finger or leg you go and pick up the pieces."⁵⁹

The Darfur Victims Support Organization reports that the aircraft was a Turkish Akıncı drone and reportedly injured 80 civilians.⁶⁰ TRP has collected and confirmed the names of 28 of those killed, as well as photos and videos of the impact.

Kutum (North Darfur): Wedding Celebration, April 8, 2026

On the evening of April 8, between 7:00 and 8:00 pm, a drone struck the house where a wedding was taking place at a house across from the al-Um girls school in the al-Salaam neighborhood of Kutum. Around 200 people had gathered for the celebration. The explosive killed scores of people, including children, women, and young adults, and left dozens of others injured, according to witnesses at the scene.

"The drone fired a single missile toward the house, killing 55 people and injuring 20 others. I myself witnessed the burial of 35 people," recalled one witness.⁶¹

The death toll is not clear: media sources report that there were at least 40 killed, with



The image appears to be a screenshot from a video obtained by the research team from a witness to the incident in the town of Kutum—specifically, an attack on a celebration there on August 4, 2020. The image shows a child who was killed when debris collapsed upon them during the incident.

57 Interview with Walid, Dec. 20, 2025

58 Interview with Fakhareldin, Feb. 2, 2026

59 Interview with Mahasin, Dec. 29, 2025

60 Darfur Victims Support Organization, "Drone Strike by Army Aircraft in South Darfur Kills 100 Civilians, Majority Women and Children," [Arabic] Dec. 9, 2025, at <https://darfurvs.org/-/ضربة-بطائرة-مسيرة-تابعة-للجيش-في-جنوب>.

61 Interview with Abbas, April 26, 2026

Ta'asis officials — the governing body supported by the RSF — putting that number at 56, including 17 children.

The attack occurred in the context of rising internal tensions within the RSF's coalition, and the strike reportedly killed RSF soldiers.⁶² However, even if RSF soldiers were in the area, this fact would not justify an attack on a large wedding celebration attended by families and children. *Darfur 24* reported the air strikes continued and the local rural hospital was overwhelmed by the surge of casualties, with medical personnel fearing that they themselves might be targeted during operations to evacuate the wounded.⁶³

V. ATTACKS ON THE DISPLACED

Attacks on displacement sites are unlawful attacks on civilians that violate international humanitarian law and can be prosecuted as international crimes. The incident described below is just one example of a wider pattern of displacement sites being targeted by both warring parties, which includes the RSF's major offensive on the Zamzam camp in North Darfur in April 2025, killing over a thousand people and forcing hundreds of thousands to flee.⁶⁴ The RSF also attacked displacement sites repeatedly during the siege of El Fasher between April 2024 and October 2025.

The SAF has also attacked internally displaced people's (IDP) camps. In April 2026, residents of Hamidya camp in Zalingei accused the SAF of conducting drone strikes. UN officials, for their part, also condemned a drone strike on an aid convoy destined for displaced populations in Tawila, a major destination for people displaced by the siege of El Fasher.⁶⁵

El Fasher (North Darfur): Abu Talib shelter, Abu Shouk camp

At 11:30 pm on May 7, 2025, an RSF drone struck the school of the Abu Talib shelter in the Abu Shouk camp, located on the northern side of El Fasher, according to witnesses. The shelter's residents,

62 Sudan Tribune, "Drone Strike Kills over 40 at Wedding in North Darfur's Kutum Drone Strike Kills Over 40 at North Darfur Wedding," Sudan Tribune, April 9, 2026, <https://sudantribune.com/article/312585>.

63 *Darfur 24*, "ارتفاع حصيلة ضحايا قصف مناسبة الزواج بـ'كتم' شمال دارفور," موقع دارفور ٢٤ الاخباري, April 9, 2026, <https://darfur24.com/2026/04/09/ب-ارتفاع-حصيلة-ضحايا-قصف-مناسبة-الزواج-ب-كتم-شمال-دارفور/>.

64 OHCHR, "Three Days of Terror with No Safe Refuge": RSF Offensive on Zamzam IDP Camp, El Fasher (11-13 April 2025) (OHCHR, 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/report-ohchr-sudan-country-office-offensive-rapid-support-forces-zamzam>.

65 Sudan Tribune, "Sudan Army Accused of Drone Strike on Zalingei Displaced Camp," Sudan Tribune, April 27, 2026, <https://sudantribune.com/article/313209..>

mostly women and children who fled violence in Zamzam, Kutum, and Shuqrat, were asleep at the time.

The bomb struck a room inside the school, instantly killing two children, one man, and one woman. Approximately twenty others sustained injuries.

At the time, El Fasher remained under the RSF's siege, during which the militia regularly attacked, bombed, and shelled the camp. Members of the RSF reportedly carried out executions of people living inside the Abu Talib shelter and elsewhere in Abu Shouk camp.⁶⁶

Elnur, a volunteer who worked nearby, counted fifteen attacks on the shelter, which he attributed to the RSF. Because of the persistent bombing and shelling, people sought refuge in underground shelters: "You might find as many as two hundred people crammed inside the shipping containers we use as shelter, with a lack of oxygen and a stifling heat. And if you suffer from a severe chronic illness, the suffering is compounded, he said."⁶⁷

VI. THE FAR-REACHING IMPACTS

The Double Tap: When Rescuers Become Targets

In four of the incidents documented in this report, aircraft or drones strike once, then return to strike the same site a second time — in Nyala, less than a minute later; in Katila, ten minutes later; in El Da'ein, half an hour later; and in El Kuma, approximately fifteen minutes later. In all these instances, civilians flocked to the site of the initial strike — whether to provide aid or to seek information. But as first responders, they were vulnerable to any subsequent attack. People like Osman, in El Kuma, who rushed to every strike site out of a sense of duty, is most in danger of a secondary strike.

Undermining Darfur's Social Fabric

Airstrikes do not merely destroy buildings; they dismantle the bonds that enable communities to endure. In every such incident, there is a ripple effect that extends beyond the day of the strike itself. In Nyala, the targeting of Cinema Street devastated the city's primary commercial district. The shops, which served as the source of livelihood for entire families, were not just businesses; they were the fabric of daily social interaction. In Al-Da'ein, the destruction of the city's only hospital

66 Sudan Tribune, "RSF Accused of Executing Displaced Civilians in Darfur Shelter," Sudan Tribune, October 7, 2025, <https://sudantribune.com/article/305785>; News Agencies, "Sudanese RSF Fighters Kill More than 40 People in Darfur Camp," Al Jazeera, August 12, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/12/sudanese-rsf-fighters-kill-more-than-40-people-in-darfur-camp>.

67 Interview with Elnur, Feb. 4, 2026

left the entire population deprived of healthcare. In El Kuma, a schoolteacher described how the town, once bustling with life, now grinds to a halt at the mere sound of an aircraft; streets become paralyzed for two hours at a time during a single aerial sortie.

Livelihoods

The strikes on markets destroyed cargo trucks and fuel depots igniting fires which exacerbated the damage, sweeping through markets and destroying merchandise and killing large numbers of livestock. The loss of property is devastating, not just to the merchants and their families, but also to the entire community that relies on those supplies.

Psychological Impact

Witnesses interviewed by TRP did not just recount the facts; many showed emotion, faltering as they spoke and were drawn back to still-vivid scenes.

Ahmed, who has documented dozens of airstrikes in El Kuma, says that when he hears the sound of any aircraft he instantly recalls: “bodies torn into shreds, the smell of blood, and the screams of survivors. Whenever I hear the sound of aerial bombardment, that image returns.”

Elnur, from EL-Fasher, remembers the night of the strike on the shelter: “Everyone was plunged into shock, panic, and terror by the sheer horror of the situation. I don't think anyone managed to sleep that night. Everyone was terrified. Everyone was afraid.”

Abdallah, from Zalingei — who was standing just fifteen meters away from the strike — describes not merely fear, but numbness in the face of cumulative loss: “we anticipate a bombardment at any moment. Consequently, we have simply resigned ourselves to the situation and keep on living. Yet, honestly, even our grief has become trivial.”

VII. LEGAL ANALYSIS

International humanitarian law (IHL), known as “laws of war,” applies to the conflict ongoing across Sudan. It refers to a body of international law that regulates the conduct of armed conflict, including rules to minimize harm to civilians and civilian structures, and treatment of captured and injured fighters.⁶⁸ IHL prohibits attacks that target civilians, are indiscriminate because they fail to distinguish between civilians and military targets, or are expected to cause disproportionate harm to civilians compared to the anticipated military gain.

Violations of these laws may constitute international crimes, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide as defined in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. International human rights law also applies in times of armed conflict; violations may give rise to obligations of state and non-state actors. Finally, if certain acts are committed as part of a widespread, systematic attack on civilians they may qualify as crimes against humanity.

The ongoing air and drone strikes in Darfur appear to violate these principles. The targeted areas are civilian in nature: popular markets, shelters for displaced persons, hospitals, clinics, commercial areas, and residential areas. The use of explosives in civilian populated areas and their impact in these cases raises serious questions as to whether the warring sides took into consideration the impact on civilians, or took any measures of precaution to protect civilians.

In several of the documented incidents, unguided munitions were dropped from a cargo aircraft, such as an Antonov, on densely populated areas. These are likely indiscriminate. In other cases, drones were likely guided in real time and fired munitions in a targeted manner, hitting hospitals, clinics and homes and gatherings.

In most cases, witnesses said there was no military presence in the area. If the RSF were present, such as near the market in Manawashi or in Katila when the official visited, strikes caused significant civilian casualties and damage that would not be justified under the proportionality requirements in IHL.

There is increasing international recognition of the devastating consequences of using explosives in civilian populated areas. As of mid-2026, over 90 countries have endorsed the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) adopted in 2022.⁶⁹

In addition to reiterating their duty to comply with international humanitarian law, countries that endorse the Declaration pledge to take extra steps to strengthen the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Sudanese authorities have not signed the Declaration.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

To SAF and RSF

- Immediately cease air and drone strikes on civilians and civilian objects in violation of IHL, and commit to upholding international humanitarian law;
- Acknowledge the devastating impact of explosive weapons in civilian populated areas and investigate alleged unlawful attacks and their impacts;
- Give access to investigators from all mandated agencies such as the UN and ICC.

To the International Criminal Court

- Investigate all alleged air or drone strikes on civilians in Darfur, and to take action against those responsible for ordering or carrying them out.

To the UN Security Council

- The UN Panel of Experts on Sudan should investigate all alleged air and drone strikes as violations of IHL and the provenance of the weapons as violations of the arms embargo on Darfur; the UN Security Council should make the Panel's reports public and impose new sanctions as recommended by the Panel;
- The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission should investigate alleged unlawful air and drone strikes and identify those responsible for international crimes.

To Donors and Humanitarian Actors

- Support stronger early warning systems across Darfur and especially in the current frontlines in Kordofan region;
- Support the work of civil society monitors to document human rights abuses including air and drone strikes;
- Support civil society monitoring of supply chains for weapons used in air strikes against civilians;
- Humanitarian actors should provide emergency healthcare and psychosocial support to survivors and their families in areas frequently targeted by air and drone strikes; and rehabilitate destroyed medical facilities.

ANNEX I

Location	Date	Type of Attack	Victims	Alleged Perpetrator(s)
Nyala, Cinema Street	3 Feb 2025	Aerial bombardment (Antonov aircraft)	22+ killed, 30+ injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Nyala, Secondary School (shelter center)	20 Nov 2024	Warplane attack (Antonov aircraft)	2 women killed, 21 injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Nyala, Al-Geneina Bus Market	8 Mar 2026	Drone strike	10 killed, 7 injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Tora area, north of El Fasher	24 Mar 2025	Aerial bombardment (Antonov aircraft)	450+ killed	Sudanese Armed Forces
Saraf Omra, Main Market	25 Mar 2026	Drone strike	5+ killed, 20 injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
El Fasher, Abu Shouk Camp	7 May 2025	Drone strike	15+ killed, 20+ injured	Rapid Support Forces (RSF)
El Fasher, First-Class District Mosque	19 Sep 2025	Suicide drone attack	75–78 killed and injured	Rapid Support Forces (RSF)
Al-Koma locality, North Darfur (4 areas)	Late Dec 2024	Aerial bombardment (Antonov aircraft, 4 barrel bombs)	34+ killed and injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Al-Koma locality, Arm neighborhood	11 Oct 2025	Drone strike	16 killed (mostly youth aged 12–18)	Sudanese Armed Forces
Zarq, Health Center	3 Jan 2026	Akıncı drone strike	64+ killed, 20+ injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Forbrengea, Chad border	13 Mar 2026	Drone strike / shelling	6 killed, 26 injured	Unspecified
Manawashi Market, South Darfur	21 Mar 2026	Drone strike	4 killed, 8 injured	Sudanese Armed Forces (indications)
Zalingei, Eastern District	27 Mar 2026	Drone strike	A woman and her daughter killed, 10+ injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Al-Daein, Teaching Hospital	20 Mar 2026	Two consecutive drone strikes	64 killed, 89 injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Al-Daein, Environmental Health Workers	13 Apr 2026	Drone strike	10+ killed, 17 injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Katila locality, South Darfur	8 Dec 2025	Drone strike	120–150 killed	Sudanese Armed Forces
El Geneina, Customs District	12 Apr 2026	Drone strike	9 killed, 12+ injured	Sudanese Armed Forces
Kutum locality, Wedding celebration	12 Apr 2026	Drone strike	40–56 killed, many injured	Sudanese Armed Forces (indications)