Republic of the Sudan

Transitional Sovereignty Council

Advisory Board



Violations by the rebel Rapid Support Forces militia against Christians and churches in Sudan

The Church in the Militia's Line of Fire

Documentation and analysis of events in Khartoum, Gezira, Darfur and Kordofan from April 2023 to October 2025, and State policy on protecting and rehabilitating places of worship

Documentary and Analytical Report

Khartoum · November 2026

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Abbreviations

ACN	Aid to the Church in Need	RNS	Religion News Service
ARIJ	Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism	SAS	Small Arms Survey
CIR	Centre for Information Resilience	SUNA	Sudan News Agency
CSW	Christian Solidarity Worldwide	TIMEP	Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum	USCIRF	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross	WCC	World Council of Churches

Foreword

In Sudan the church, like the mosque and the khalwa, is a school, a clinic and a shelter in hard times, and one of the oldest community institutions on which coexistence in this country was built. Whoever attacks it wounds the whole national fabric before wounding any single denomination.

This report documents what churches and Christians in Khartoum State endured during the twenty-three months in which the rebel Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia controlled the capital, traces the same pattern in Gezira, Darfur and Kordofan, and analyses it in light of the militia's structure, its recruitment methods and its declared discourse. It then sets out what the State has done to protect places of worship and to rehabilitate them.

The evidence drawn from the reliable sources reviewed in this report shows that the militia targeted Sudanese Christians on religious grounds, as the words and acts of the perpetrators attest. Its documented practices against them fall into seven patterns: detention and intimidation; abuse, beatings and killing; systematic looting of property; religious insults; coercion to renounce their faith; the use of places of worship as barracks and their desecration; and declared intent to sexually assault girls.

This record has reached the international institutions concerned with religious freedom. In its annual report released in March 2026, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended, for the first time, that the RSF militia be designated an "Entity of Particular Concern", a designation reserved for non-state groups engaged in particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The Commission reported that the militia's fighters looted and destroyed churches and mosques in the areas under their control.[1]

The report draws on investigations, reports and testimonies published up to 25 November 2026. It places before national decision-makers, international partners and religious and human rights institutions a file that can serve as a basis for accountability, reparation and reconstruction.

[1] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 2026 Annual Report, chapter on Entities of Particular Concern, March 2026. https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2026-08/2026ARUSCIRF%20-%20EPC.pdf

Executive Summary

On the third day of the war ignited by the RSF rebellion on 15 April 2023, militia members stormed All Saints Cathedral in Khartoum and forcibly removed forty-two civilians who had taken refuge there, among them the Archbishop of the Episcopal Church and his family.[2] Over the following four weeks the Coptic cathedral, the Mar Girgis bishopric and other church compounds in Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North fell in turn, following a fixed pattern: forced entry, looting, expulsion of those inside, and conversion of the site into a barracks.

The report documents twenty-two church sites damaged in Khartoum State during the war. The militia is proven to have stormed and used thirteen of them, and its members or affiliates were observed in the grounds of at least seven.[3] By mid-2024 the National Investigation Committee had recorded fifty-one churches in the state as looted or robbed.[4] The analysis concludes that the church served three purposes in the militia's calculations: a fortified military position near the Republican Palace, the airport and the bridges; a source of plunder where the first question asked was about gold; and an arena of humiliation where worshippers were called infidels and told, under threat, to abandon their faith (Figure 1).

The assault went beyond church walls into the daily lives of Christians. Coptic families in Omdurman recounted that militia members held relatives captive in their own homes and prevented them from going out to fetch water.[5] Officials of the Sudanese Church of Christ reported that its secretary general was stopped on his way to Shendi, taken to Soba prison, and held for ransom.[6] These testimonies combine religious humiliation, extortion and looting.

The pattern recurred outside the capital wherever the militia took control or laid siege. In Gezira it turned the Coptic monastery of Wad Madani into a base, burned the state's largest church, and stormed the Church of Christ in Hasaheisa while worshippers were inside.[7] In El Fasher it shelled three churches between 9 and 11 June 2025, killing at least five people and fatally wounding the Catholic parish priest, and

[2] Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Sudan briefing, 17 November 2025. https://www.csw.org.uk/2025/11/17/report/6662/article.htm

[3] ARIJ and Muwatin, "Shrapnel on the Altar", investigative report, 9 October 2025. https://arij.net/investigations/sudan-churches-conflict/en/

[4] Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Sudan to the United Nations Office at Geneva, note verbale dated 15 June 2024 transmitting the interim report of the National Committee to Investigate Crimes and Violations of National Law and International Humanitarian Law, UN document A/HRC/56/G/4. https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/178/24/pdf/g2417824.pdf

[5] Al Jazeera Mubasher, "Copts in Omdurman recount scenes of RSF abuses during its control of the city" (in Arabic), video report, 30 June 2025. https://www.ajmubasher.net/news/2025/6/30/دفنت-أمي-وأختي-بالبيت-أقباط-في-أم

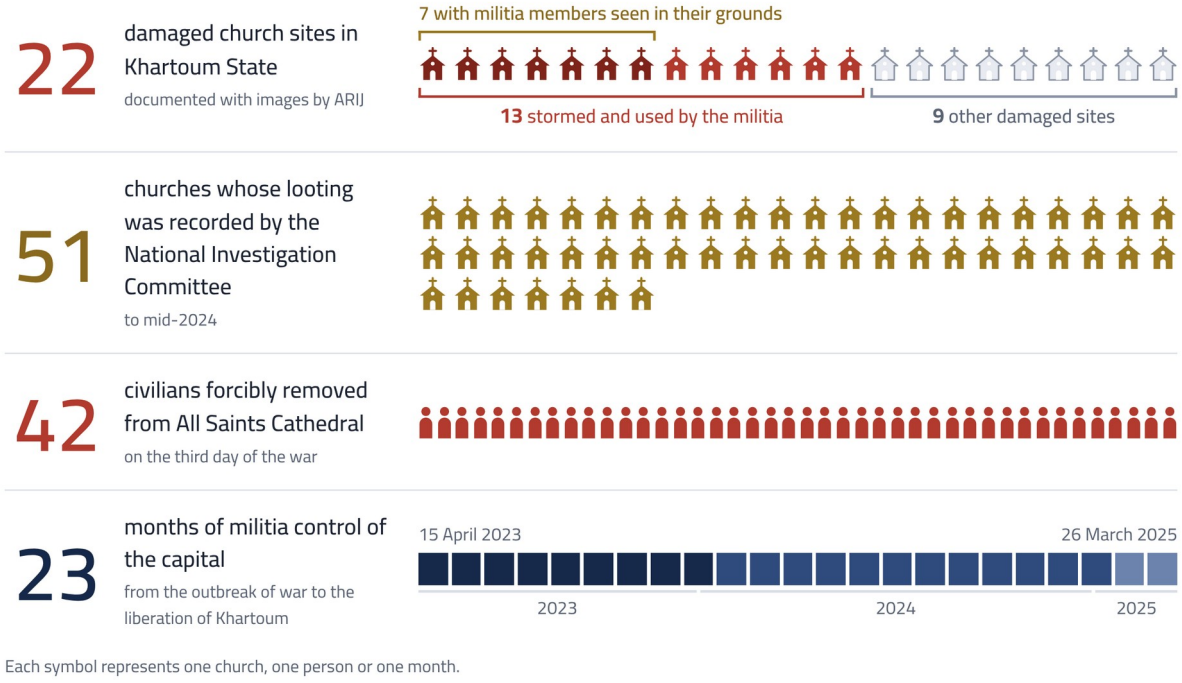
[6] Morning Star News, "Militants detain church leader in Sudan, demand ransom", 16 April 2024. https://morningstarnews.org/2024/04/militants-detain-church-leader-in-sudan-demand-ransom/

[7] Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), statement on the raid on a church service in Hasaheisa, 7 January 2025. https://csw.org.uk/2025/01/07/press/6406/article.htm

later forced the last remaining pastor out of the city.[8] In Kordofan the Bishop of El Obeid was beaten and led towards execution before being released.[9]

The report sets this conduct against the conduct of the State in the same war. In Al-Shajara, south of Khartoum, the Armed Forces protected the Catholic compound of Dar Mariam for sixteen months under militia siege, supplied those inside with food, water and medicine, and in July 2024 evacuated the sisters, the priest and those with them across the White Nile. After the liberation of the capital, the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council pledged to rehabilitate the Coptic church in Omdurman and ordered the restoration of the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary in Khartoum. In June 2026 he ordered four churches to be repaired and rebuilt at State expense, and the work is under way.

Figure 1: The toll in numbers



Source: ARIJ investigation (2025); National Investigation Committee (2024); Christian Solidarity Worldwide (2025).

[8] Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), "Rapid Support Forces bomb three churches in El Fasher", press release, 18 June 2025. https://www.csw.org.uk/press/rapid-support-forces-bomb-three-churches-in-el-fasher-6546/

[9] Fredrick Nzwili, "Sudanese Catholic bishop narrowly escapes execution", OSV News via National Catholic Reporter, 6 December 2024. https://ncronline.org/news/sudanese-catholic-bishop-narrowly-escapes-execution

Key findings

- The militia stormed, occupied and looted at least thirteen churches in Khartoum State, including the Episcopal, Coptic and Catholic cathedrals.
- The assault extended beyond the churches: families held in their homes and denied water, killings and looting in Ombada and Omdurman, and a church leader detained for ransom.
- The pattern recurred outside the capital: a monastery and churches in Gezira occupied and burned, three churches in El Fasher shelled within three days and the Catholic parish priest dying of his wounds, and the Bishop of El Obeid led towards execution.
- Religious insults and demands that Christians renounce their faith recurred in Khartoum and then in Gezira, and the militia has not announced a single act of accountability.
- In this targeting, motives of overt religious coercion combined with calculations of military positioning, the pursuit of spoils and predatory looting. It is fed by a sense of ethnic and religious supremacy and enabled by impunity.
- The militia projected a "secular" discourse aimed at foreign audiences while occupying churches for twenty-three months.
- Wherever the Armed Forces were present, the church and those inside it were protected; after liberation the State took charge of rehabilitating what the militia had destroyed.
- The documented acts amount to war crimes under international humanitarian law and require accountability and reparation.

Part One · Documentation

Chapter One

Methodological Framework

01

The report covers what churches and Christians in Khartoum State endured between 15 April 2023 and 26 March 2025, the scale of damage to church property, an explanation of this conduct in light of the militia's structure and discourse, and the State's treatment of Christian places of worship during the war and after the liberation of the capital. It devotes a chapter to events outside the state, in Gezira, Darfur and Kordofan, up to the fall of El Fasher in October 2025.

It draws on published field investigations; official, human rights and church reports; direct testimonies of victims and witnesses; and the records of the National Committee to Investigate Crimes and Violations of National Law and International Humanitarian Law. Each incident in the tables carries a confidence level for its attribution: "High" where independent sources concur, "Medium" where one reliable source documents it, and "Inferred" where it is deduced from the militia's control of the neighbourhood at the time. Religious motive is recorded where the testimonies state it, and figures and video clips proven to be fabricated have been excluded.[10,11]

A comprehensive field survey of the sites has not yet been completed, so the toll contains no financial estimate. The report uses "the militia" for the rebel Rapid Support Forces, and "the capital" for the three cities of Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North.

[10] Middle East Eye, on Beam Reports' tracking of a disinformation campaign about Christians in Sudan, November 2025. https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-israel-far-right-influencers-invented-christian-killings-sudan-says-report

[11] Factly, "Viral video alleging that Christians are being buried alive in Sudan is actually from a 2016 assault incident in South Africa". https://factly.in/viral-video-alleging-that-christians-are-being-buried-alive-in-sudan-is-actually-from-a-2016-assault-incident-in-south-africa; see also Al Jazeera Net, "The truth behind the video of a young man placed alive in a coffin in Sudan" (in Arabic), 5 November 2025.

Part One · Documentation

Chapter Two

The Capital under Militia Control

02

The militia controlled most of Khartoum from 15 April 2023 until March 2025, some twenty-three months. The Armed Forces liberated the Republican Palace on 21 March 2025, and the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council declared the capital liberated on 26 March.[12] The ARIJ investigation estimates that the militia controlled the surroundings of the damaged churches in Khartoum and Khartoum North for between eighteen and twenty-two months.[13]

The capital's historic churches are spread across three areas, and this distribution explains how quickly they fell:

- **Central Khartoum:** the Coptic Cathedral of the Virgin Mary, about 981 metres west of the Republican Palace; the Melkite Church of the Annunciation, 750 metres from it; St Matthew's Cathedral by the Mek Nimir Bridge; and All Saints Cathedral and the Armenian church near the airport.
- **Khartoum North (Bahri):** home to the highest concentration of Christians in the country, with the Evangelical Church, the Coptic compound of Mar Girgis and Anba Abram, the Comboni house, and congregations of the Sudanese Church of Christ.
- **Old Omdurman (Al-Masalma and Al-Mazahir):** the Mar Girgis bishopric, the Church of Mar Mina, and the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

The major churches lie inside the square the militia sought to seize from the first hours, next to the palace, the airport and the bridges (Figure 2).

[12] Religion News Service, "After Khartoum recaptured, badly damaged Anglican cathedral still stands", 2 April 2025. https://religionnews.com/2025/04/02/after-khartoum-recaptured-badly-damaged-anglican-cathedral-still-stands/

[13] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.

Figure 2: Damaged churches and militia objectives in the Three Towns

Central Khartoum and the airport area

1. Coptic Cathedral of the Virgin — 981 m from the palace
2. Melkite Church of the Annunciation — 750 m from the palace
3. St Matthew's Cathedral — by the Mek Nimir Bridge
4. All Saints Cathedral
5. Armenian church — near the airport

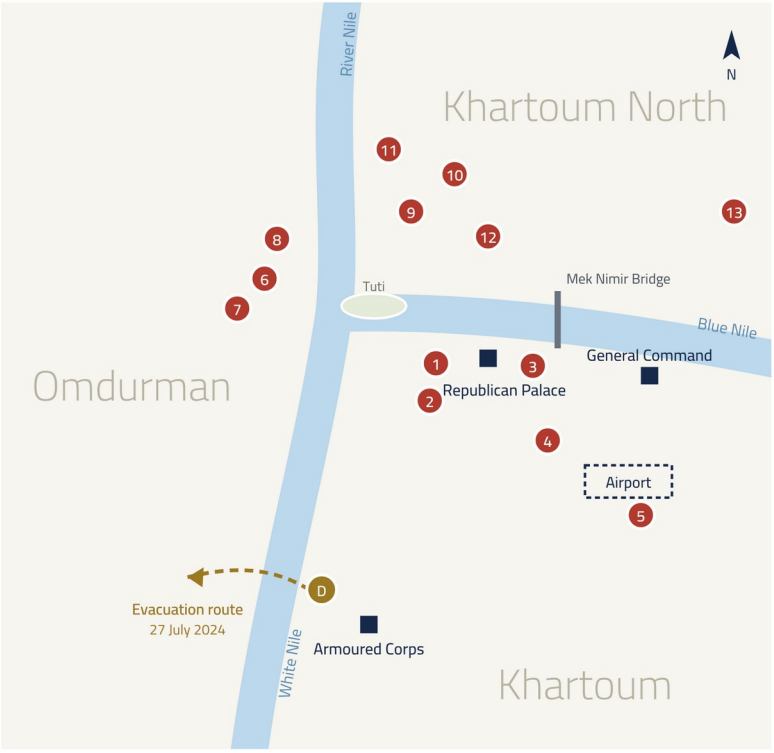
Old Omdurman

6. Mar Girgis bishopric, Al-Masalma
7. Immaculate Conception, Al-Masalma
8. Mar Mina church, Al-Mazahir

Khartoum North and East Nile

9. Evangelical Church
10. Mar Girgis Coptic compound
11. Comboni house
12. Sudanese Church of Christ
13. Convent (East Nile)

- Church site stormed by the militia or damaged
- D — Dar Mariam, Al-Shajara: protected by the Armed Forces for 16 months
- Military or state site targeted by the militia



Schematic diagram, not to scale; positions are approximate to show spatial relationships

Source: Schematic map prepared by the Advisory Board, based on the ARIJ investigation (2025) and the sources of Chapter Three. Distances from the palace are taken from ARIJ.

Part One · Documentation

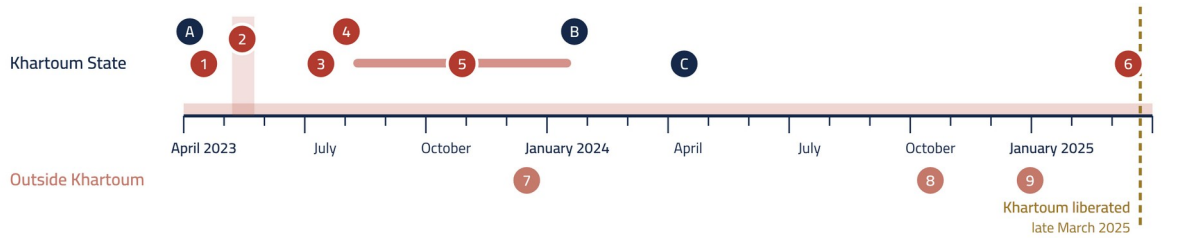
Chapter Three

Record of Violations

03

The attacks on churches began on the third day of the war and peaked between 7 and 22 May 2023, when five major church institutions fell in less than two weeks (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Timeline of attacks on churches, April 2023 to March 2025



1 — 15–17 April 2023
All Saints Cathedral seized and 42 civilians forcibly removed

3 — 12 July 2023
Attack and raid on the Sudanese Church of Christ, Khartoum North

4 — 1 August 2023
Video of militia members pressing Copts to change their religion

5 — August 2023 – January 2024
Immaculate Conception church used as a militia base, altar broken

6 — March 2025
On withdrawal: archbishop's residence destroyed, pews burned as firewood, courtyard a graveyard

2 — Peak of May 2023: five major church institutions fell in under two weeks

- **7–14 May** — Daily intimidation at the Cathedral of the Virgin, then Anba Elia and the priests expelled and the site turned into a base
- **13 May** — Mar Girgis compound, Khartoum North: five shot and wounded, a gold cross stolen
- **13–14 May** — Al-Masalma bishopric: worshippers shot at, a bishop beaten, demands to convert
- **16 May** — Episcopal and Catholic buildings: gates broken, two cars stolen at gunpoint
- **22 May** — Mar Mina church, Al-Mazahir: stormed, then turned into a base

7 — 16 December 2023 · Wad Madani
Coptic monastery occupied; five priests, five monks and four workers unaccounted for

8 — October 2024 · Al-Thawra Mobe
Relief made conditional on changing religion

9 — 30 December 2024 · Hasaheisa
Christmas service raided: 177 worshippers driven out, 14 injured

Attacks on Christians outside places of worship

A — 15 April 2023 · Arab Market
Coptic student and his cousin stopped and called infidels and agents of Egypt

B — 20–22 January 2024 · Ombada and Omdurman
Haidar al-Amin killed at home; merchant Al-Taher Kafi beaten, his shop and house looted

C — 12 April 2024 · Omdurman–Shendi road
Secretary general of the Sudanese Church of Christ held in Soba prison for ransom

Throughout the occupation: St Matthew's Cathedral a base and weapons store, the Armenian church looted, cables melted inside 7–8 churches, Coptic families in Omdurman confined to their homes and barred from fetching water

Source: Prepared by the Advisory Board based on Amnesty International, ARIJ, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Radio Dabanga, Reuters, the 2023 U.S. State Department religious freedom report, Raseef22 and Morning Star News.

All Saints Cathedral: the third day

Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo was inside the cathedral with other church leaders and their families, preparing for Sunday worship, when the fighting broke out.[14] Two days later militia members stormed the cathedral, assaulted some of the forty-two people sheltering there and drove them all out, and wrecked six vehicles.[15] On 16 May they broke down the gate of the Episcopal Church building and offices on Street 1, threatened the guard at gunpoint, seized the diocesan car, and turned the site into a base.[16]



All Saints Episcopal Cathedral in Khartoum before the war.
Photo: Fredrick Nzwili / RNS



An opening and rubble in one of the compound's buildings after it was recovered.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin



Graves in the compound courtyard.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin

Cathedral of the Virgin Mary: a week of intimidation

On 7 May 2023 militia members entered the Coptic Cathedral of the Virgin Mary on Nile Street and ordered the staff to keep its doors open, according to a priest's account and an audio recording by one of its workers. From then on they came in every day, taking water, using the facilities and charging their phones, and asked Bishop Anba Elia whether there were girls on the premises.[17] They then told him the site would become a camp, and expelled him together with the priests and nuns on 14 May.[18] The Coptic College and St Mark's Hospital were looted at the same time.[19] After liberation, burnt cables were found inside the building, the altar had been desecrated, and the militia's emblem was painted on one of the walls.[20]

[14] RNS, 2 April 2025, op. cit.
[15] CSW, briefing of November 2025, op. cit.
[16] Radio Dabanga, report on the occupation of cathedrals in Khartoum, May 2023. https://www.dabangasudan.org/en?p=20040071
[17] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
[18] Dabanga, May 2023, op. cit.
[19] Mohanad Elnour, "The Forgotten War on Sudan's Christians", Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP), 9 May 2024. https://timep.org/2024/05/09/the-forgotten-war-on-sudans-christians/
[20] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.

Mar Girgis: two attacks in Khartoum North and Omdurman

On the night of 13 May 2023, between twelve and fifteen gunmen, wearing a mix of uniforms and driving a vehicle of the type used by the militia, stormed the Coptic compound of Mar Girgis in Khartoum North. They opened fire, wounding five men from the church, beat others with rifle butts, asked about the girls at the orphanage, and left with a gold cross, cash and phones. They came back to loot several times afterwards.[21]

Within the same hours the Mar Girgis bishopric in the Al-Masalma district of Omdurman was attacked. The assailants fired on the worshippers, wounding four or five, among them Father Arsanios and his son, and beat the auxiliary bishop, Anba Sarabamon, until he suffered fractures. They looted the residence for elderly women, the student hostels and a safe containing gold and cash, and stole a car, while calling those present infidels and demanding that they convert to Islam. They returned days later.[22,23] Father Arsanios recounted that the gunmen beat young men as they left the church and then attacked those inside.[24]

Some coverage conflated the two incidents, but the statement issued by the Sudan Council of Churches on 20 May 2023 listed each separately, and they were most likely two distinct incidents.[25]



A building in the Mar Girgis bishopric compound in Al-Masalma bearing bullet marks, after the site was recovered.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin



A hole in the roof of one of the bishopric buildings, still from a video recording.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin

Khartoum North and Ombada: the National Investigation Committee's records

The National Investigation Committee recorded the storming of a church in Khartoum North in June 2023, listed in the English text of its report as "Angel Church", and the destruction of the Coptic church in Ombada

[21] Amnesty International, "Death Came to Our Home", AFR 54/7037/2023, 3 August 2023. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/7037/2023/en/
[22] Reuters via The New Arab, "Witnesses recount gunmen's raid on church in Sudan's capital", May 2023. https://www.newarab.com/news/witnesses-recount-gunmens-raid-church-sudans-capital
[23] Radio Dabanga via allAfrica, on the attack on the Al-Masalma bishopric, 15 May 2023. https://allafrica.com/stories/202305150528.html
[24] Abdelaziz Abu Waddah, "Shelling and looting of churches: were Sudan's Copts targeted in the war on religious and sectarian grounds?" (in Arabic), Raseef22, 5 February 2024. https://raseef22.net/article/1096443
[25] Watani, statement of the Sudan Council of Churches, 20 May 2023. https://en.wataninet.com/?p=41714

and theft of its property on 15 July 2023.[26] The Committee also recorded an assault on worshippers inside the Mar Girgis church in Al-Masalma, and the looting and burning of a church in Wad Madani.

Beyond the walls: homes, shops and roads

Christians were not safe outside their churches either. On the first day of the war a militia vehicle stopped a Coptic student and his cousin near the Arab Market, and the gunmen called them infidels and agents of Egypt.[27] On 10 May 2023 militia members broke into the home of the secretary general of the Armenian community, adjoining the church, and robbed it at gunpoint.[28] In January 2024 Haidar al-Amin was shot dead in his home in Ombada, and the merchant Al-Taher Kafi was beaten unconscious in Omdurman while his shop and house were looted.[29] In April 2024 the secretary general of the Sudanese Church of Christ was detained on the Shendi road and held for ransom.[30] Chapter Five presents these incidents through the testimonies of those who lived them.

Chronological record of incidents

Table 1: Chronological record of documented violations in Khartoum State

Date	Location	Documented violation	Confidence
15 April 2023	Arab Market road, Khartoum	A Coptic student and his cousin stopped and called infidels, traitors and agents of Egypt[31]	Medium
15-17 April 2023	All Saints Cathedral, Al-Amarat	Seizure, forcible removal of 42 civilians, and 6 vehicles destroyed[32]	High
7-14 May 2023	Coptic Cathedral of the Virgin, Nile Street	Staff forced to keep doors open, daily intimidation, expulsion of the bishop and priests, conversion into a base, looting of the Coptic College and St Mark's Hospital[33,34]	High
10 May 2023	Home of the secretary general of the Armenian community, adjoining the church	Home broken into and robbed at gunpoint; family forced to leave[35]	High
13 May 2023	Mar Girgis compound, Khartoum North	5 shot and wounded, questions about the orphanage girls, theft of a gold cross and cash[36]	High

[26] National Investigation Committee, A/HRC/56/G/4, op. cit.
[27] Raseef22, 5 February 2024, op. cit.
[28] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
[29] Morning Star News via Christian Daily International, "Christian slain, another beaten unconscious in Sudan", 26 January 2024. https://www.christiandaily.com/news/christian-slain-another-beaten-unconscious-in-sudan
[30] Morning Star News, 16 April 2024, op. cit.
[31] Raseef22, 5 February 2024, op. cit.
[32] CSW, briefing of November 2025, op. cit.
[33] Dabanga, May 2023, op. cit.
[34] TIMEP, 9 May 2024, op. cit.
[35] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
[36] Amnesty International, "Death Came to Our Home", op. cit.

Date	Location	Documented violation	Confidence
13-14 May 2023	Mar Girgis bishopric, Al-Masalma	Shooting at worshippers, assault on a bishop, looting, demands to convert[37]	High
16 May 2023	Episcopal Church buildings and the Catholic Archdiocese of Khartoum	Gates broken, two vehicles stolen at gunpoint[38]	High
Mid-May 2023	Coptic Church of the Two Martyrs Mar Morqos and Mar Girgis	Stormed during a prayer gathering, then set on fire[39]	Medium
22-23 May 2023	Church of Mar Mina, Al-Mazahir; and a convent inside the Mar Girgis compound	Stormed, church turned into a base, cross desecrated and graves dug up[40]	High
June 2023	A church in Khartoum North ("Angel Church" in the National Committee's records)	Stormed[41]	Medium
12 July 2023	Sudanese Church of Christ, Khartoum North	Attack and raid, according to Bishop Yonathan Hamad[42]	Medium
15 July 2023	Coptic church in Ombada	Church destroyed and its property stolen[43]	Medium
1 August 2023	Unspecified	Video of militia members threatening Copts and pressing them to convert to Islam[44]	Medium
August 2023 - January 2024	Church of the Immaculate Conception, Al-Masalma	Militia base, altar broken, statues of Christ desecrated[45]	High
20 January 2024	A house in Ombada	Haidar al-Amin, a member of the Presbyterian Evangelical Church, shot dead and his property looted[46]	Medium
22 January 2024	A shop and a house in Omdurman	Christian merchant Al-Taher Kafi beaten unconscious, his shop and house looted[47]	Medium
12 April 2024	Omdurman-Shendi road	Rev. Abbas Antar Abu Hadaya, secretary general of the Sudanese Church of Christ, detained, taken to Soba prison and held for ransom[48]	Medium

[37] Reuters, May 2023, op. cit.
[38] Christianity Today, report on churches in Omdurman and Khartoum, November 2023. https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2023/november/sudan-church-bombing-omdurman-evangelical-episcopal-saf-rsf.html
[39] CBN News, report on churches damaged in Sudan's war. https://cbn.com/news/world/christians-caught-crossfire-sudans-brutal-civil-war-160-churches-damaged-or-destroyed
[40] Amnesty International, "Death Came to Our Home", op. cit.
[41] National Investigation Committee, A/HRC/56/G/4, op. cit.
[42] U.S. Department of State, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Sudan. https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2111963.html
[43] National Investigation Committee, A/HRC/56/G/4, op. cit.
[44] U.S. State Department, 2023 religious freedom report, op. cit.
[45] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
[46] Morning Star News, 26 January 2024, op. cit.
[47] Morning Star News, 26 January 2024, op. cit.
[48] Morning Star News, 16 April 2024, op. cit.

Date	Location	Documented violation	Confidence
Throughout the occupation	St Matthew's Catholic Cathedral	Base and weapons store, two altars destroyed, a statue and a cross desecrated, pews gone[49]	High
Throughout the occupation	Armenian church near the airport	Church looted, a silver cross brought from Jerusalem stolen, garden used as a car park[50]	High
Throughout the occupation	Evangelical Church (Al-Gamhuriya Street), Comboni College church, Comboni house (Khartoum North)	Cables melted down, fighters living on site, fire; Comboni College "looted and vandalised"[51]	High
March 2025 (on withdrawal)	All Saints Cathedral	Archbishop's residence, deanery and offices destroyed, pews chopped for firewood, courtyard turned into a graveyard and its crosses smashed[52]	High

These attacks did not stop at the state's borders. Chapter Six presents those that occurred in Gezira, Darfur and Kordofan.

[49] Vatican News (in German), citing Aid to the Church in Need, April 2025. https://www.vaticannews.va/de/welt/news/2025-04/sudan-christen-fliehen-gewalt-khartum-kin-buergerkrieg-papst.html
[50] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
[51] Avvenire (in Italian), "Perché il Sudan dopo due anni di guerra rischia di spaccarsi a metà". https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/perche-il-sudan-dopo-due-anni-di-guerra-rischia-di-spaccarsi-a-meta_87380
[52] Religion News Service, "Khartoum Anglican cathedral comes to life three years after war forced its closure", 28 January 2026. https://religionnews.com/2026/01/28/khartoum-anglican-cathedral-comes-to-life-three-years-after-war-forced-its-closure/

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Chapter Four

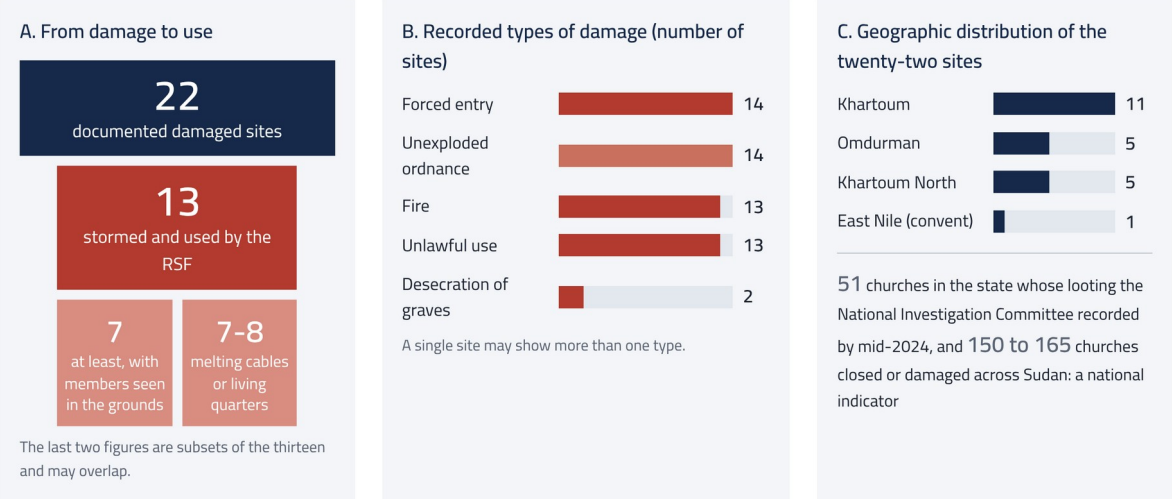
Toll of Damage to Church Property

04

The toll rests on two firm figures: twenty-two damaged church sites in Khartoum State whose damage is established by field photographs and satellite imagery, and thirteen churches among them that the militia stormed and used.[53] Nationwide, estimates of churches closed or damaged since the outbreak of war range from 150 to 165; these are national indicators and not specific to Khartoum.[54,55] Figure 4 sets out the types of damage and their geographic distribution.

Alongside this photographic inventory, the National Committee to Investigate Crimes and Violations of National Law and International Humanitarian Law, chaired by the Attorney General, recorded fifty-one churches in Khartoum State as looted or robbed. It also counted fifty-three residences of nuns and priests, Christian schools and colleges, without specifying their locations. This appears in the interim report that the Government of Sudan submitted to the Human Rights Council in June 2024.[56] The ARIJ investigation counts sites whose damage is documented by images, while the Committee's register counts the complaints filed with it, and is therefore broader.

Figure 4: Toll of damage in Khartoum State



Source: ARIJ investigation (2025); National Investigation Committee (2024); USCIRF (2024, 2025).

[53] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
[54] Christian Post, "USCIRF: Over 150 churches attacked in Sudan war", April 2024. https://ChristianPost.com/news/uscirf-over-150-churches-attacked-in-sudan-war.html
[55] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Sudan issue update, August 2025. https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2025-08/2025%20Issue%20Update%20Sudan.pdf
[56] National Investigation Committee, A/HRC/56/G/4, op. cit.

Levels of enumeration

Table 2: Levels of damage enumeration and their degree of confidence

Indicator	Figure	Scope	Confidence
Damaged church sites documented with evidence	21 churches and one convent (Khartoum 11, Omdurman 5, Khartoum North 5, and a convent in East Nile)[57]	Khartoum State	High
Churches stormed and used by the militia	13 churches; militia members or affiliates observed in the grounds of at least 7; 7-8 used for melting cables or as living quarters	Militia-controlled areas	High
Churches whose looting was recorded by the National Committee	51 churches, and 53 clergy residences, Christian schools and colleges (to mid-2024)[58]	Khartoum State	Official register
Recorded types of damage	Forced entry (14), unexploded ordnance (14), fire (13), unlawful use (13), desecration of graves (2)	Mainly Khartoum	High
Churches forcibly closed since the outbreak of war	More than 165[59]	Sudan	National indicator
Churches damaged or attacked	More than 150 (April 2024)[60]	Sudan	National indicator
The disrupted Catholic network	13 parishes in the capital, and schools that had more than 25,000 pupils in the Khartoum region before the war[61,62]	The capital	Medium

Damage at the main sites occupied by the militia

Table 3: Damage at the main sites occupied by the militia

Location	Buildings	Movable and sacred objects	Vehicles and cash
All Saints Cathedral	Archbishop's residence, deanery and offices destroyed; the cathedral stands, badly damaged	Pews chopped up, altar vandalised, cemetery crosses smashed	6 vehicles destroyed, diocesan car stolen
Coptic Cathedral of the Virgin	Most church buildings destroyed according to a witness; Coptic College and St Mark's Hospital looted	Altar desecrated, cables burnt inside the building	Not documented

[57] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
[58] National Investigation Committee, A/HRC/56/G/4, op. cit.
[59] USCIRF, August 2025, op. cit.
[60] Christian Post, April 2024, op. cit.
[61] Comboni Missionaries, newsletter (in Italian). https://www.comboni.org/app-data/files/allegati/4823.pdf
[62] Avvenire (in Italian), on the reopening of Comboni College. https://www.avvenire.it/chiesa/in-sudan-grazie-alla-cei-e-rinato-il-comboni-college_101809

Location	Buildings	Movable and sacred objects	Vehicles and cash
Mar Girgis bishopric, Al-Masalma	Bell tower hit by a rocket, dozens of bullet marks, auxiliary bishop's residence destroyed	Repeated looting (13 and 23 May 2023)	Safe with gold and cash, and a car
Mar Girgis compound, Khartoum North	Buildings vandalised, convent stormed	Gold cross	"A large sum" and phones
St Matthew's Cathedral	Damage to the roof and adjacent buildings	Two altars destroyed, a statue and a cross desecrated, pews gone	None
Armenian church	Fire, garden trees cut down	Silver cross brought from Jerusalem and given to the church at its consecration in 1958	Contents of the community secretary general's home

Photographic evidence from three sites

The following photographs show the state of three sites after their recovery, as documented by ARIJ and Muwatin.

Churches of the Immaculate Conception and Mar Mina, Omdurman



Debris and pieces of furniture in front of the altar.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin



The façade of a church building bearing bullet and shell marks.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin

Melkite Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation, Khartoum



The hall from inside, its contents ransacked.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin



Beds and personal belongings in the compound, where the investigation believes militia-linked individuals lived.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin

Armenian church, Khartoum



The church seen from the garden.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin



An inner room with scattered contents.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin



A religious painting in a fire-scarred corridor.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin

Financial estimate

As of the date of this report, no financial estimate for any individual site has been published, other than Archbishop Kondo's statement that repairing All Saints Cathedral alone would require "millions of dollars".[63] The report refrains from giving a total figure before the field survey is complete, because an impressionistic estimate cannot serve as a basis for reparation claims. To complete this aspect, the following steps are to be taken:

1. A field survey of the twenty-two sites and of those not covered by the ARIJ investigation, with the participation of the Sudan Council of Churches and the owning denominations.

[63] RNS, 2 April 2025, op. cit.

2. Classification of damage on a uniform scale (structural, partial, contents, looting) in line with the World Bank's damage and needs assessment methodology.
3. A separate item for historic assets, such as St Matthew's Cathedral built in 1908, as cultural heritage protected under the 1954 Hague Convention.
4. Linking each item to the perpetrator and to the confidence level, in preparation for reparation and accountability files.

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Chapter Five

Testimonies of Victims and Witnesses

05

The following testimonies come from victims, clergy and direct witnesses, and were relayed by independent bodies. Their evidential value lies in their consistency: witnesses from different denominations, in distant neighbourhoods, speaking to different organisations, described the same conduct.

From inside the churches

The two survivors from the Mar Girgis compound in Khartoum North spoke to Amnesty International on 23 May 2023. They identified the attackers as RSF and reported their shouts: "You Egyptian dogs, get out of here for good." Amnesty considered the attackers' questions about the orphanage girls to indicate an intent to commit sexual assault.[64]

Two witnesses from the Al-Masalma bishopric told Reuters of four hours of looting, during which the attackers kept shouting: "Where is the gold? Where is the money? Where are the dollars?" The gunmen marched the priest to his residence with a dagger at his back and demanded that those present convert to Islam.[65] Father Arsanios Abu Saif and the cantor Seifein Nagi were each shot in the leg; the former accused the RSF of the assault and of vandalising the church.[66] The Democratic Lawyers Front reported that the auxiliary bishop, Anba Sarabamon, suffered several fractures, that his residence was destroyed and his car stolen.[67]

Father Arsanios Abu Saif, one of those wounded in Al-Masalma, told Me Sat TV in June 2023 that a gunman pointed his rifle at his head and demanded that he declare himself a Muslim, that a nun was threatened into reciting the Islamic profession of faith, and that the attackers called them infidels and traitors and labelled them Egyptians.[68]

Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo wrote in May 2023 that the gunmen had threatened the guard and stolen the diocesan car, and demanded that they leave immediately.[69] The ARIJ investigation reports that he was held for three days. When he saw the cathedral after liberation he said: "The damage is enormous."[70]

64 Amnesty International, "Death Came to Our Home", op. cit.
65 Reuters, May 2023, op. cit.
66 ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
67 Dabanga, 15 May 2023, op. cit.
68 Hayat Washington, "Sudanese pastor recounts RSF atrocities against his church: they tortured us to make us declare Islam" (in Arabic), citing Me Sat TV, 11 June 2023. https://hayatwashington.org/ar/news/2023/06/11/65971/
69 Dabanga, May 2023, op. cit.
70 RNS, 2 April 2025, op. cit.

> "The damage is enormous"
>
> Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo, on seeing All Saints Cathedral after liberation

A witness from the Cathedral of the Virgin described how militia members kept entering the church at will for a whole week, before telling the bishop that the site would become a camp and a likely battleground.[71]

Father Joseph John of the Catholic Archdiocese of Khartoum described the militia members entering the cathedral and asking to use its facilities. Grair Bozadjian, secretary general of the Armenian community, recounted that on 10 May 2023 militia members broke into his home adjoining the church and robbed it at gunpoint, forcing him to leave with his family. A silver cross brought from Jerusalem and given to the church at its consecration in 1958 was stolen. After liberation, Girgis Mounir documented the theft, the fires and the stripping of cables from the walls.[72] Father John Gbemboyo confirmed that St Matthew's Cathedral still stands, but without a single pew, its nave filled with rubbish.[73]

Rafat Samir, secretary general of the Sudan Evangelical Alliance, recounted that militia members beat people sheltering in his church in Khartoum North, whose congregation has since scattered across six countries, and that the church refused to deal with the militia because of its crimes in the Nuba Mountains and Darfur.[74]

At the institutional level, on 20 May 2023 the Sudan Council of Churches condemned the RSF's seizure of five churches and their conversion into operations centres, describing a single pattern: doors broken, contents and vehicles looted, and those inside driven out with beatings or gunfire.[75,76] In April 2025 Aid to the Church in Need received a recording showing the altar of St Matthew's destroyed and the cross smashed, with a report that the militia had used the cathedral as a weapons store.[77] The Comboni Missionaries recounted that three Catholic priests remained in Khartoum throughout the militia's control and found Comboni College looted and vandalised.[78]

From outside the churches

The following testimonies are given by named individuals, or relayed by church officials and correspondents about incidents with a specific date and place. They describe what Christians suffered in their homes, their shops and on the roads.

[71] Dabanga, May 2023, op. cit.
[72] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
[73] RNS, 2 April 2025, op. cit.
[74] Christianity Today, interview with Rafat Samir, April 2024. https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2024/april/sudan-christians-civil-war-arab-africa-evangelical-alliance.html
[75] Watani, Council of Churches statement, op. cit.
[76] Onda Vasca citing EFE (in Spanish), "Iglesias de Sudán denuncian que los paramilitares convierten templos en bases militares". https://www.ondavasca.com/iglesias-de-sudan-denuncian-que-los-paramilitares-convierten-templos-en-bases-militares/
[77] Vatican News, April 2025, op. cit.
[78] Avvenire, op. cit.

The homes of Omdurman

After Omdurman was recovered, three of its Copts told Al Jazeera Mubasher what they had lived through under militia control, in a video report broadcast on 30 June 2025.[79] Janet Naeem said that RSF members entered her family's home and held them captive there. She was hit by sniper fire when she went out to look for water, and her mother and sister died during the siege and were buried near the door of the house because the cemetery could not be reached.

Wafaa Henry said that militia members prevented them from going out to fetch drinking water, and that her mother died in those conditions and was buried in the house. Hani Fayez described militia members firing over residents' heads, children hiding under beds, and people being prevented from praying in church and from mourning and burying their dead in the customary way.



Janet Naeem, still from her interview at 01:56.
Photo: Al Jazeera Mubasher



Wafaa Henry, still from her interview at 03:08.
Photo: Al Jazeera Mubasher



Hani Fayez, still from his interview at 01:02.
Photo: Al Jazeera Mubasher

Killing and looting in Ombada and Omdurman

On 20 January 2024 Haidar al-Amin, a man in his thirties and a member of the Presbyterian Evangelical Church, was shot dead inside his home in Ombada and his property was looted. A relative told a Morning Star News correspondent that the militia members insulted him for being a Christian. Two days later militia members beat the Christian merchant Al-Taher Kafi in Omdurman until he lost consciousness, and looted his shop and house.[80]

Detention of the secretary general of the Sudanese Church of Christ

On Friday 12 April 2024 militia members intercepted Rev. Abbas Antar Abu Hadaya, secretary general of the Sudanese Church of Christ, as he was leaving Omdurman for Shendi to attend his church's annual meeting. He was taken to Soba prison, and his family were asked for a ransom of two million Sudanese pounds for his release, according to lawyer Mutawakil Ibrahim Kambal, chair of the church's advisory council.[81,82] He was released at the end of the same week without the ransom being paid, and the head of the church confirmed his arrival in Shendi.

[79] Al Jazeera Mubasher, 30 June 2025, op. cit.
[80] Morning Star News, 26 January 2024, op. cit.
[81] Morning Star News, 16 April 2024, op. cit.
[82] Al-Rai Al-Sudani, "RSF detains a Christian pastor and demands ransom in Sudan" (in Arabic), 15 April 2024. https://sudaray.com/116377

Checkpoints in the first days

On the first day of the war a militia vehicle stopped Benjamin, a twenty-year-old Coptic student, and his cousin near the Arab Market as they were on their way to university. He said the gunmen called him an infidel and accused him of treason and of working for Egypt, and let them go only when the unit moved off to chase a military vehicle. Sandy, aged twenty-five, recounted that she stayed with her classmates for four days in the Coptic College building before a bus picked them up. At a militia checkpoint the gunmen ordered the girls off the bus; the school supervisor intervened, and the bus drove on after a search and an interrogation that lasted about an hour.[83]

In an episode broadcast by SAT-7 on 3 May 2023, Rev. Hafiz Desta said that militia members searched and questioned him and two companions when they went out in the church car to fetch water and supplies. Philip Abdelmasih said the militia members had taken over nearby houses, so that those who remained in the neighbourhood were trapped in their homes.[84]

What these testimonies show

The testimonies converge on three points. In Khartoum and Omdurman, fetching water became a risk that could end in detention or a bullet. Looting and extortion appear in most of them. And religious humiliation is expressed in the perpetrators' own words: infidel, traitor, agent of Egypt.

[83] Raseef22, 5 February 2024, op. cit.

[84] SAT-7, "Sudan Christians tell SAT-7 of desperate situation in Khartoum", 3 May 2023. https://sat7.org/sudan-christians-tell-sat-7-of-desperate-situation-in-khartoum/

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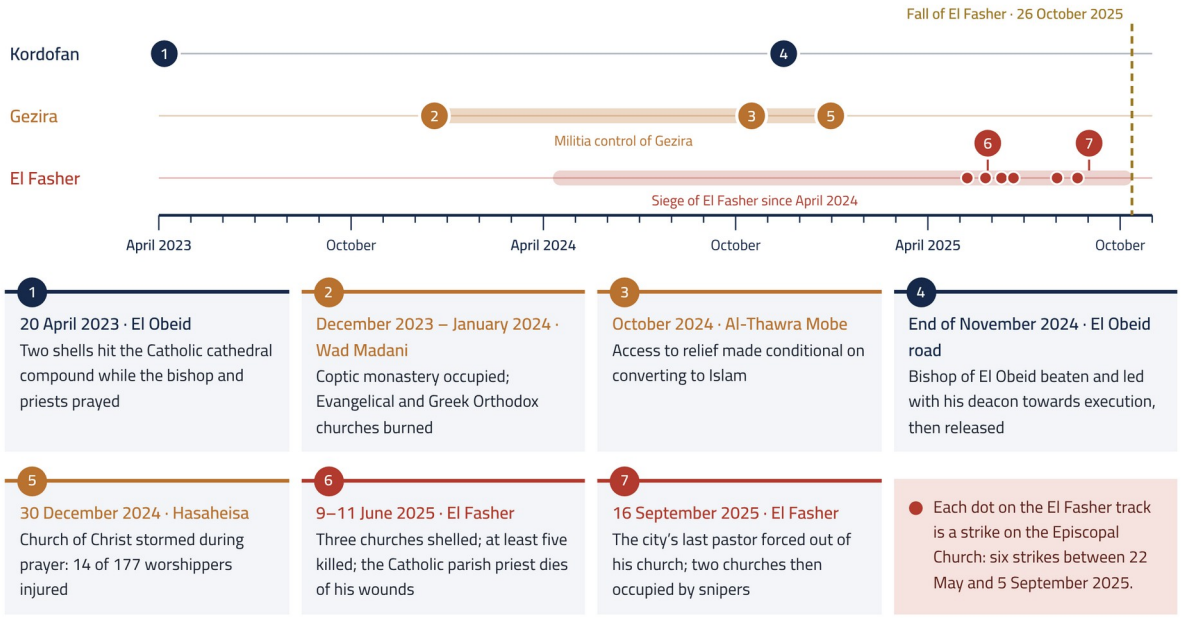
Chapter Six

Beyond Khartoum State: Gezira, Darfur and Kordofan

06

The militia's attacks on Christians did not stop at the borders of the capital. Wherever it took control or tightened a siege, what happened in Khartoum was repeated: a monastery turned into a base, a church set on fire, worshippers beaten and threatened, a priest killed and a bishop led towards execution. This chapter presents the documented incidents in Gezira State, the cities of El Fasher and Nyala, and the Kordofan region, from April 2023 to the fall of El Fasher in October 2025 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Attacks on Christians outside Khartoum State, April 2023 – October 2025



Source: Prepared by the Advisory Board based on Christian Solidarity Worldwide, ARIJ, OSV News, Religion News Service and Morning Star News.

Gezira State: from the Wad Madani monastery to the Hasaheisa church

The militia entered Wad Madani in mid-December 2023 and consolidated its control over the state on the 18th of that month. On 16 December its members attacked a Coptic monastery in the city and turned it into a military base, holding a number of church members there before releasing them. Five priests, five novice

monks and four workers went missing after the militia itself published a video showing its gunmen harassing the monastery's residents.[85,86]

On 1 January 2024 militia members in the city assaulted Karbino Bla, a member of the Presbyterian Evangelical Church; he died of his injuries four days later, leaving a wife and an infant daughter.[87] On 12 January they set fire to the Evangelical Church, the largest church in the state and one of its oldest, built in 1939. The fire destroyed part of the building along with Bibles, hymnbooks and records.[88,89] Three days later the Greek Orthodox church building in the city was burned while the city was in the militia's hands.[90]



Fire damage around a window of the Evangelical Church in Wad Madani after it was set alight on 12 January 2024.
Photo: Christian Solidarity Worldwide

In October 2024 access to relief in the village of Al-Thawra Mobe was made conditional on converting to Islam, and anyone trying to leave the area came under suspicion of disloyalty.[91] Open Doors reports that the militia's presence in Gezira brought church demolitions, forced closures and abductions of clergy.[92]

At ten in the morning on 30 December 2024 militia members stormed the Sudanese Church of Christ in Hasaheisa, where 177 worshippers were fasting and praying for the war to end. They beat the worshippers on suspicion of supporting the Armed Forces, injuring fourteen, among them women, children and an eighteen-year-old girl whose condition was described as critical. They looted the church, smashed its benches and threatened to kill all the Christians in the area.[93,94] The General Union of Christian Youth reported that church property was confiscated.[95] The church's secretary, Joseph Suliman, said its members had repeatedly tried to leave the area and the militia had stopped them.[96]

85 Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), "RSF attacks and occupies Coptic monastery in Wad Madani", 19 December 2023. https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/12/19/press/6134/article.htm
86 Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), "Evangelical Church set on fire by Rapid Support Forces in Wad Madani", press release, 15 January 2024. https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/01/15/press/6147/article.htm
87 Morning Star News via Christian Daily International, "Militants in Sudan kill Christian, set church building ablaze", 18 January 2024. https://www.christiandaily.com/news/militants-in-sudan-kill-christian-set-church-building-ablaze
88 CSW, statement of 15 January 2024, op. cit.
89 Morning Star News, 18 January 2024, op. cit.
90 Morning Star News, 26 January 2024, op. cit.
91 Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), statement on forced conversion in RSF-held areas, 14 October 2024. https://csw.org.uk/2024/10/14/press/6331/article.htm
92 Open Doors, World Watch List 2026: Sudan Country Dossier, January 2026. https://opendoors.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Open-Doors-World-Watch-List-2026-Sudan-Country-Dossier.pdf
93 CSW, statement of 7 January 2025, op. cit.
94 Morning Star News, "Church prayer service attacked in Sudan, injuring 14 Christians", 31 December 2024. https://morningstarnews.org/2024/12/church-prayer-service-attacked-in-sudan-injuring-14-christians/
95 Radio Tamazuj, "RSF accused of assaulting members of the Church of Christ in Hasaheisa" (in Arabic), 1 January 2025. https://www.radiotamazuj.org/ar/news/article/اتهامات-لقوات-الدعم-السريع-بالاعتداء
96 Morning Star News, 31 December 2024, op. cit.

El Fasher: churches under siege and shelling

The militia besieged El Fasher, capital of North Darfur, from April 2024, and in April 2025 seized the Abu Shouk and Zamzam camps and turned them into military bases.[97] As its assault on the city intensified, the churches came under its fire. Its shelling hit the Episcopal Church six times between May and September 2025: on 22 May, 9 June, 24 June, 5 July, 16 August and 5 September.[98]

In May five members of St Matthew's Episcopal Church who were living in its compound were killed when it came under fire.[99] On 9 June the militia shelled the Episcopal Church, and on 11 June the African Inland Church and the Catholic church. At least five people were killed in the three attacks and dozens were injured. Father Luka Jomo, the Catholic parish priest, was critically wounded and died in the early hours of 13 June; two young men staying with him were also killed.[100,101] In the shelling of 5 September two people sheltering in the Episcopal Church were killed, five were injured and seven went missing.[102]



Father Luka Jomo, Catholic parish priest of El Fasher, who died of his wounds during the siege of the city in June 2025.
Photo: Aid to the Church in Need, citing the Diocese of El Obeid

On 16 September the militia advanced into the city and its gunmen attacked St Matthew's Church, killing two people and seriously injuring others. Its pastor, Rev. Daramali Abudigin, the last pastor remaining in El Fasher, was forced to leave. He left with forty-five people, among them seventeen children and seventeen women, for open ground on the outskirts of the city. He had been caring for between 130 and 150 Christian families of various denominations after all other clergy had left.[103] The pastor later recounted that three trucks carrying dozens of militia members arrived at the church, followed by gunmen on foot, who fired on the building and on those fleeing it. They abducted two church members; one, aged twenty-five, was killed and the other escaped.[104]

97 CSW, statement of 18 June 2025, op. cit.
98 CSW, briefing of November 2025, op. cit.
99 Fredrick Nzwili, report on the last pastor in besieged El Fasher, Religion News Service, August 2025. https://religionnews.com/?p=4217524
100 CSW, statement of 18 June 2025, op. cit.
101 Religion News Service, report on the killing of the first Catholic priest in Sudan's war, June 2025. https://religionnews.com/?p=4208717
102 CSW, briefing of November 2025, op. cit.
103 Fredrick Nzwili, report on the last pastor forced out of El Fasher, Religion News Service, September 2025. https://religionnews.com/?p=4222602
104 Christianity Today, "The World's Largest Displacement Crisis", November 2025. https://www.christianitytoday.com/2025/11/sudan-civil-war-pastors-displacement-churches-hospitals/

> "We are out of the church. We are now homeless."
>
> Rev. Daramali Abudigin, pastor of St Matthew's Episcopal Church in El Fasher, September 2025

Christians evacuated the last two churches in the city. Sources cited by Christian Solidarity Worldwide report that the militia occupied the Pentecostal and Episcopal churches in the Al-Nasr district, used them for military purposes and placed snipers in them.[105] El Fasher fell to the militia on 26 October 2025, and the pastor walked out with a group of Christians, including women and children, to the town of Tawila.[106] There is as yet no reliable count of the city's Christians killed or missing.

South Darfur: the Nyala parish and Kalma camp

On 19 May 2023 the militia swept into Nyala, capital of South Darfur, with dozens of armed vehicles and motorcycles, and the offices of aid organisations and shops were looted that day.[107] On the same day its members attacked and looted the Catholic parish church of St Joseph in the city and seized two vehicles used by the parish for its pastoral work.[108] Weeks later a displaced Christian who had moved to Kalma camp, near Nyala, recounted that militia soldiers threatened to kill all the Christians in the camp.[109]



Kalma camp for displaced people near Nyala, South Darfur (archive photograph, 9 March 2014).
Photo: Albert González Farran, UNAMID

Kordofan: the cathedral and the bishop

On the fifth day of the war two shells struck the compound of the Cathedral of Mary Queen of Africa in El Obeid, seat of the Catholic diocese, while the bishop and his priests were at prayer. They destroyed the main gate and part of the priests' residence; no one was hurt.[110] The ARIJ investigation considers it likely that they were fired by the militia, which was shelling the headquarters of the 5th Infantry Division, five hundred metres west of the cathedral.[111]

[105] CSW, briefing of November 2025, op. cit.
[106] World Council of Churches, "Hope for peace keeps Sudanese Anglican priest among his people", May 2026. https://www.oikoumene.org/news/hope-for-peace-keeps-sudanese-anglican-priest-among-his-people
[107] BBC via Saudi Gazette, "Sudan villages burned down by marauding Darfur militias", 29 May 2023. https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/632867
[108] Fredrick Nzwili, "Sudan Catholic bishop shepherds his flock despite falling bombs, heavy artillery", OSV News via Angelus, 13 June 2023. https://angelusnews.com/news/world/sudan-bishop-shepherds-stays-amid-bombs/
[109] Darfur Network for Human Rights, "The Plight of Darfur's Christians", research report, January 2025, testimony 3. https://dnhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Draft-Christian-Report-2024.pdf
[110] ACI Africa via Catholic World Report, "Catholic bishop in Sudan seriously injured in assault by Rapid Support Forces", 6 December 2024. https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2024/12/06/catholic-bishop-in-sudan-seriously-injured-in-assault-by-rapid-forces/
[111] ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.

At the end of November 2024 the Bishop of El Obeid, Yunan Tombe Trille, fell into the hands of militia members as he was returning to his diocese from the Eucharistic Congress in Juba, accompanied by a deacon. They rained blows on his neck, face and the sides of his head until he could no longer chew his food. He wrote to his fellow bishops that weapons were handed to young fighters who were told to do "their usual business", and he was certain that he and his deacon were being led to execution. Then a commander came out of his office and ordered that the two churchmen be released.[112,113]



Bishop Yunan Tombe Trille, Bishop of El Obeid.
Photo: Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)

Record of incidents outside the state

Table 4: Documented incidents outside Khartoum State

Date	Location	Documented incident	Confidence
20 April 2023	El Obeid, North Kordofan	Two shells strike the compound of the Cathedral of Mary Queen of Africa, destroying its gate and part of the priests' residence[114]	Inferred
19 May 2023	Nyala, South Darfur	St Joseph's Catholic parish church attacked and looted, two parish vehicles seized[115]	High
After June 2023	Kalma camp, South Darfur	Militia soldiers threaten to kill all the Christians[116]	Medium
16 December 2023	Wad Madani, Gezira	Coptic monastery occupied and used as a base; 14 of its priests, monks and workers unaccounted for[117]	High
1-5 January 2024	Wad Madani	Assault on Karbino Bla, member of the Presbyterian Evangelical Church, who died of his injuries[118]	Medium
12 January 2024	Wad Madani	Evangelical Church, the state's largest, set on fire[119]	High
15 January 2024	Wad Madani	Greek Orthodox church building set on fire[120]	Inferred

112 OSV News, 6 December 2024, op. cit.
113 ACI Africa, 6 December 2024, op. cit.
114 ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.
115 OSV News, 13 June 2023, op. cit.
116 Darfur Network for Human Rights, "The Plight of Darfur's Christians", op. cit.
117 CSW, statement of 19 December 2023, op. cit.
118 Morning Star News, 18 January 2024, op. cit.
119 CSW, statement of 15 January 2024, op. cit.
120 Morning Star News, 26 January 2024, op. cit.

Date	Location	Documented incident	Confidence
October 2024	Al-Thawra Mobe, Gezira	Access to relief made conditional on converting to Islam[121]	Medium
End of November 2024	Renk-El Obeid road	Bishop of El Obeid beaten and led with his deacon towards execution, then released[122]	High
30 December 2024	Hasaheisa, Gezira	Church of Christ stormed during prayer, 14 of 177 worshippers injured, church looted[123]	High
May 2025	El Fasher, North Darfur	Five members of St Matthew's Episcopal Church shot dead inside its compound[124]	Inferred
22 May - 5 September 2025	El Fasher	Episcopal Church shelled six times; two killed and seven missing in the last strike[125]	Medium
9-11 June 2025	El Fasher	Three churches shelled (Episcopal, African Inland and Catholic); at least five killed; Fr Luka Jomo dies of his wounds[126]	High
16 September 2025	El Fasher	St Matthew's Church attacked and the city's last pastor forced out; two members abducted and one killed[127]	High
After 16 September 2025	Al-Nasr district, El Fasher	Pentecostal and Episcopal churches occupied and snipers placed in them[128]	Medium

These incidents bear the same hallmarks as those in the capital: occupation of places of worship for military purposes, burning and looting them, beating and threatening worshippers, and making relief conditional on a change of religion. They span three regions and thirty months, from El Obeid in April 2023 to El Fasher in September 2025. In March 2026 the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended, for the first time, designating the militia an "Entity of Particular Concern", and reported that its fighters looted and destroyed churches and mosques in the areas under its control.[129]

[121] CSW, statement of 14 October 2024, op. cit.
[122] OSV News, 6 December 2024, op. cit.
[123] CSW, statement of 7 January 2025, op. cit.
[124] RNS, August 2025, op. cit.
[125] CSW, briefing of November 2025, op. cit.
[126] CSW, statement of 18 June 2025, op. cit.
[127] RNS, September 2025, op. cit.
[128] CSW, briefing of November 2025, op. cit.
[129] USCIRF, 2026 Annual Report, op. cit.

Part Two · Analysis

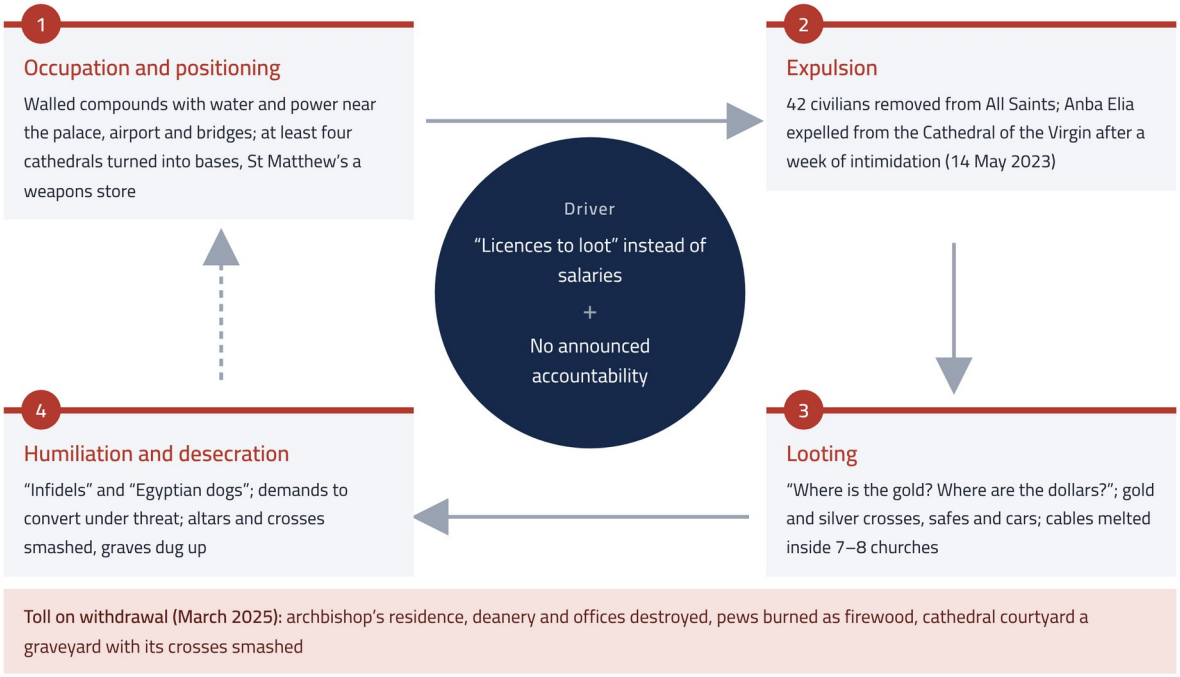
Chapter Seven

The Church in the Militia's Logic

07

The militia treated churches as it treated every neighbourhood of the capital, and churches were less protected than most places. It is a coherent pattern of predatory violence: occupy the site, empty it of its people, loot its contents, then leave it in ruins (Figure 6). Table 5 sets out the evidence for each stage in the churches and its counterpart in the militia's general conduct.

Figure 6: The cycle of predatory violence as applied to churches



Source: Prepared by the Advisory Board based on the testimonies and investigations in Chapters Three and Five, and the Small Arms Survey (2025).

Table 5: Stages of the cycle of violence and their evidence

Stage	Evidence in the churches	Counterpart in the militia's general conduct
1. Occupation and positioning	Walled compounds with water and electricity near the palace, the airport and the bridges; at least four cathedrals turned into bases, one of them a weapons store	The Shambat mosque turned into a barracks and ammunition store until September 2023; hospitals turned into barracks[130]

[130] U.S. State Department, 2023 religious freedom report, op. cit.

Stage	Evidence in the churches	Counterpart in the militia's general conduct
2. Expulsion	42 civilians removed from All Saints, Anba Elia expelled after a week of intimidation, near-total displacement of Khartoum North's Christians	Residents driven from their homes and fighters housed in them
3. Looting	Repeated questions about gold and dollars; theft of gold and silver crosses, safes and cars; cables melted down inside 7-8 churches	More than 60,000 cars looted according to police reports[131], and "Dagalo markets" set up to sell the plunder[132]
4. Humiliation and desecration	Insults such as "infidels" and "Egyptian dogs", demands to convert, questions about girls, desecration of altars, crosses and graves	Systematic sexual violence in Greater Khartoum aimed at terrorising civilians, according to the UN mission[133]

Looting as a pay system

Looting is usually read as indiscipline; the evidence points elsewhere. The Small Arms Survey notes that salaries in the RSF have declined since 2023 and been replaced by "licences to loot".[134] The RSF's former media adviser, Yaqoub al-Domuki, says Abdelrahim Dagalo explicitly called on fighters to loot institutions and homes.[135] In this economy the church becomes a coveted target, because fighters widely believe it hides gold, a belief the U.S. State Department report recorded, citing local organisations.[136]



Cables and materials scattered in the courtyard of All Saints Cathedral after the site was recovered.
Photo: ARIJ and Muwatin

Mosques violated too

The militia turned the Shambat mosque into a barracks and ammunition store until September 2023.[137] It desecrates places of worship whatever the faith of those who pray in them, which refutes its claim to be fighting a particular religious current.

The Copts: targeted on two counts

Copts were targeted both as Christians and as "Egyptians". The insult repeated at Mar Girgis ties the community to Egypt, and it came weeks after the militia detained Egyptian soldiers in Merowe on 15 April 2023. Amnesty International saw in this a possible political motive.[138]

131 Al Jazeera Net, "RSF violations in Sudan" (in Arabic), 24 July 2024. https://www.ajnet.me/politics/2024/7/24/انتهاكات-الدعم-السريع-في-السودان-هل
132 Arabi Post, "Dagalo markets" (in Arabic), 16 July 2023. https://arabicpost.net/تحليلات/2023/07/16/أسواق-دقلو/
133 Radio Dabanga, Fact-Finding Mission: sexual violence in Greater Khartoum. https://dabangasudan.org/en?p=20105469
134 Small Arms Survey, briefing paper on the Rapid Support Forces, 2025. https://smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-HSBA-Briefing-Paper-2025-RSF-EN.pdf
135 Al Jazeera Net, July 2024, op. cit.
136 U.S. State Department, 2023 religious freedom report, op. cit.
137 U.S. State Department, 2023 religious freedom report, op. cit.
138 Amnesty International, "Death Came to Our Home", op. cit.

Religious coercion and command responsibility

No central order to target Christians as Christians has been published. But demands to convert recurred in Khartoum in May 2023 and in Gezira in 2024, and the militia has not announced that anyone was held to account. This shifts the question from individual misconduct to the responsibility of commanders and superiors for acts committed by their subordinates. Christian Solidarity Worldwide concluded that pressure to convert in militia-controlled areas is "widespread and systematic".[139]

Legal characterisation

These acts are governed by the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to non-international armed conflicts. Additional Protocol II prohibits acts of hostility directed against places of worship that constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples as well as their use in support of the military effort, and it prohibits pillage.[140] Customary international law extends the same protection to cultural and religious property and likewise prohibits pillage.[141] Under the Rome Statute, intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, pillaging a town or place, and intentionally attacking civilians are war crimes in non-international conflicts; the Statute also holds commanders and superiors responsible for crimes committed by their subordinates when they know of them and fail to prevent or punish them.[142] International law professor Marko Milanović has said that deliberate attacks on religious buildings in Khartoum may constitute a war crime.[143]

Two consequences follow from this characterisation. First, the militia's use of a church as a barracks or weapons store is a violation in its own right, and it is what exposed the building to the dangers of military operations. Second, responsibility for looting, desecration and attacks on civilians inside churches cannot be excused by any claim of military necessity, since these acts took place at sites under the militia's full control.

139 CSW, statement of 14 October 2024, op. cit.
140 Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions (1977), Articles 4(2)(g) and 16. Sudan deposited its instrument of accession with the Swiss Federal Council on 13 July 2006.
141 International Committee of the Red Cross, Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rules 38, 40 and 52.
142 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998), Article 8(2)(e)(i), (iv) and (v), and Article 28.
143 ARIJ, "Shrapnel on the Altar", op. cit.

Part Two · Analysis

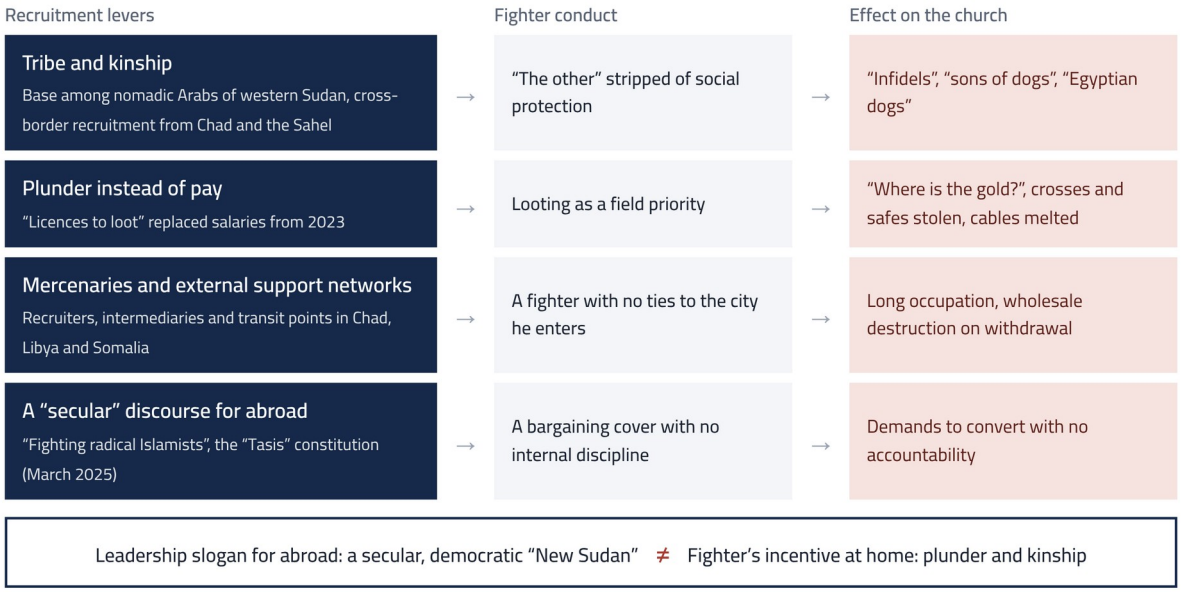
Chapter Eight

Recruitment Structure and Its Effect on Fighters' Conduct

08

The conduct of a fighter inside a church is explained by the way he was recruited. The militia recruits through three levers: tribe, plunder and a sense of ethnic supremacy. "Secularism", the "1956 State" and "fighting the Kizan" are slogans the leadership uses for external audiences and play no part in the fighter's motives. Figure 7 traces the path from the recruitment lever to what happened inside the church.

Figure 7: From recruitment to the church: how recruitment levers shape fighters' conduct



Source: Prepared by the Advisory Board based on the UN Security Council Panel of Experts (S/2024/65), the Small Arms Survey (2025), the European Union Agency for Asylum (2026) and the Fact-Finding Mission (2026).

A cross-border tribal base

The core of the force consists of nomadic Arab groups from western Sudan, joined by fighters from Chad and the Sahel and recruits from urban peripheries.[144] The UN Panel of Experts documented that the militia's control of Darfur rests on allied communities and on financial networks and supply lines running through

[144] Sudan War Monitor, "Battle for Khartoum continues". https://sudanwarmonitor.com/p/battle-for-khartoum-continues-to

Chad, Libya and South Sudan.[145] The European Union Agency for Asylum records tribal recruitment inside Sudan and in Chad and Niger.[146]

Mercenaries and an external support network

In September 2026 the Fact-Finding Mission concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that entities, intermediaries and recruiters operating from Colombia and the United Arab Emirates used transit points in Chad, Libya and Somalia to move fighters and weapons and for training.[147] A foreign fighter has no social bond with the city he enters, and his real pay is whatever he can take from it.

Plunder in place of salary

Many are drawn by the lure of plunder and influence,[148] and "licences to loot" have replaced salaries.[149] This explains the fighters' first question in every church they entered: where is the gold?

Ethnic and religious supremacy

The language of humiliation recorded in the churches stems from a sense of supremacy documented in the militia's conduct elsewhere. In Darfur the UN Panel of Experts recorded ethnic slurs against the Masalit,[150] and in El Fasher the Centre for Information Resilience documented fighters calling their captives slaves.[151] In the churches of Khartoum and Gezira, Christians were called infidels and told to abandon their faith. In both cases the fighter starts from the premise that the other, by race or by religion, is beneath him, and so treats his property and his body as fair game. Plunder explains the looting of the church; supremacy explains the humiliation of those inside it.

In the church all these levers converged: loot believed to be valuable, a community the fighter regards as inferior, and a fighter who is a stranger to the city, restrained there by neither custom nor neighbourliness.

145 UN Security Council Panel of Experts on the Sudan, final report, S/2024/65, January 2024. https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/005/64/pdf/n2400564.pdf

146 European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Sudan report: recruitment into the RSF, October 2026. https://www.euaa.europa.eu/coi/22-conscripts-draft-evaders-forced-recruitment-armed-groups/222-recruitment-and-forced-recruitment-rapid-support-forces

147 Al Jazeera English, report of the Fact-Finding Mission on foreign fighters and external support, 3 September 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/3/foreign-fighters-and-external-support-fuel-sudans-war-un-backed-probe

148 Sudan War Monitor, op. cit.

149 Small Arms Survey, 2025, op. cit.

150 S/2024/65, op. cit.

151 Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), "How the RSF seized El Fasher". https://www.info-res.org/sudan-witness/reports/how-the-rsf-seized-el-fasher-mass-detentions-executions-and-the-glorification-of-violence/

Chapter Nine

Declared Discourse and Documented Practice

09

The militia addresses Western capitals in English under the banner of a "war on radical Islamists", while its fighters in the field order Christians, under threat, to change their religion. Al Jazeera English described the former discourse as part of a public relations campaign presenting the militia leader as the country's saviour from extremists.[152] Table 6 sets each declared statement against the practice documented in the same period.

Table 6: Declared statements and practice documented in the same period

Date	Declared statement	Practice documented in the same period
5 May 2021	The militia leader calls for a campaign to explain secularism and says religion is not up for bargaining[153]	Early groundwork for the "secular" narrative two years before the war
17-18 April 2023	English-language tweets claiming the militia is fighting "radical Islamists"[154]	In the same days All Saints Cathedral was seized and the civilians inside were beaten and driven out
14 May 2023	Statement attributing the attack on Mar Girgis to a "terrorist extremist group"[155], adding that the militia's ranks include many Christians[156]	Survivors identified the attackers as RSF, the gunmen returned to loot repeatedly, and no investigation was announced
May 2023	The perpetrators are "criminals who stole RSF uniforms"[157]	In the same week the militia expelled the Coptic Bishop of Khartoum and openly occupied two cathedrals
July 2023	Announcement of an "intensive campaign against looting and vandalism"[158]	Cable melting and living inside churches continued until the withdrawal in March 2025
December 2023	Video published by the militia of a commander embracing the priests of the Wad Madani monastery and giving them money	TIMEP describes the scene as staged against their will[159]; afterwards 14 of the monastery's men went missing

[152] Al Jazeera English, "The soft power campaign of Sudan's RSF leader Hemedti", 20 April 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/20/the-soft-power-campaign-of-sudans-rsf-leader-hemedti

[153] Radio Dabanga, Hemedti calls for a campaign to explain secularism, 5 May 2021. https://dabangasudan.org/en?p=171457

[154] Radio Dabanga, Hemedti's tweets in the first days of the war, April 2023. https://www.dabangasudan.org/en?p=20036779

[155] Al-Quds Al-Arabi, "The Sudanese army and the RSF trade accusations" (in Arabic), May 2023. https://www.alquds.co.uk/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d9%8a%d8%b4-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%86%d9%8a-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d8%b9%d9%85-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%b9-%d9%8a%d8%aa%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%af%d9%84%d8%a7/

[156] Watani, the RSF response to the attack on the Mar Girgis church, May 2023. https://en.wataninet.com/?p=41641

[157] Reuters, May 2023, op. cit.

[158] Asharq Al-Awsat, "RSF announces campaign against looting" (in Arabic), July 2023. https://aawsat.com/node/4500451

[159] TIMEP, 9 May 2024, op. cit.

Date	Declared statement	Practice documented in the same period
4 March 2025	The "Tasis" charter: a "secular democratic" state separating religion and state[160]	Two months after the raid on the Christmas service in Hasaheisa and the threat to wipe out the Christians
October 2025	"Our instructions to all our forces are that people's property must not be touched", after the storming of El Fasher[161]	Fighters filming executions and calling captives slaves; Pentecostal and Episcopal churches occupied as sniper posts
28 May 2026	Eid al-Adha speech: the war is a "historic battle" between the Islamists' project and the "New Sudan" project[162]	About three months earlier USCIRF recommended, for the first time, designating the RSF an Entity of Particular Concern[163]

Two conclusions follow from the table. First, every announcement the militia made concerning religion or the protection of property was matched in the same period by a documented act that contradicted it. Second, across five years of this discourse, the sources reviewed for this report record no instance of the militia announcing the outcome of a single investigation or a single act of accountability for an attack on a church. In its discourse, secularism is a bargaining tool aimed at foreign audiences; it has never appeared as a rule of discipline binding its fighters.

[160] Sudan Tribune, the transitional constitution of the "Tasis" alliance, March 2025. https://sudantribune.com/article/298129

[161] Middle East Eye, RSF fighters film themselves killing people fleeing El Fasher, October 2025. https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/rsf-fighters-film-themselves-massacring-sudanese-fleeing-el-fasher

[162] Sky News Arabia, the militia leader's Eid al-Adha speech (in Arabic), 28 May 2026. https://www.skynewsarabia.com/middle-east/1871858

[163] Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), welcoming USCIRF's recommendation to designate the RSF an "Entity of Particular Concern", 6 March 2026. https://www.csw.org.uk/2026/03/06/press/6748/article.htm

Part Three · The State and Places of Worship

Chapter Ten

Dar Mariam: When the Armed Forces Protected the Church

10

In Al-Shajara, south of Khartoum, stands the Dar Mariam compound: a church, a convent and a school, close to the headquarters of the Armoured Corps.[164] It is run by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters) and before the war cared for some seventy children, most of them from South Sudan.[165] As the fighting intensified it became a refuge for about eighty women and children.[166] The analytical importance of this case is that it shows the conduct of the Armed Forces and the conduct of the militia towards one and the same church in the same war.

Sixteen months of siege

Dar Mariam lay inside an area controlled by the Armed Forces, but the militia encircled it from 15 April 2023.[167] It placed snipers facing the entrance, so that leaving meant risking one's life.[168] On 3 and 5 November 2023 shells hit the convent and the school, and a child named Daniel was wounded by shrapnel; the Armed Forces' statement held the militia responsible.[169] In December 2023 a first evacuation attempt was coordinated through the International Committee of the Red Cross, but it was thwarted when the militia targeted the convoy, according to the Armed Forces' statement.[170] When the sisters tried to organise their own departure, they could not cross the militia's lines.[171]

The Armed Forces, by contrast, kept Dar Mariam supplied with the means of survival throughout the siege. The government and the Armed Forces provided food, medical care, solar power and fuel,[172] dug a well, and made a satellite communication device available.[173] The commander of the Armoured Corps, Major General

[164] Al-Shorouk, "Hiding the moon: the story of the evacuation of the Catholic nuns from Khartoum" (in Arabic), 16 November 2024. https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=16112024&id=95114464-c7b5-412a-acfa-cb25ed6da4c9

[165] Al Jazeera Net, "A mission in pitch darkness: how the Sudanese army evacuated the nuns of Khartoum" (in Arabic), 7 August 2024. https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2024/8/7/مهمة-في-الظلام-الدامس-كيف-أجلى-الجيش

[166] Reuters via Arab News, "Women and children trapped in a church in Sudan's capital endure hunger and shelling", July 2024. https://www.arabnews.com/node/2542836/middle-east

[167] Agenzia Fides, testimony of Sister Teresa Roszkowska after the evacuation from Dar Mariam, August 2024. https://www.fides.org/en/news/75759-AFRICA_SUDAN_Keep_praying_for_Sudan_so_that_this_senseless_and_tragic_war_comes_to_an_end_missionaries_evacuated_from_Dar_Mariam

[168] Reuters via Christian Science Monitor, 3 July 2024. https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2024/0703/Sudan-refugees-war-displaced-hunger-crisis

[169] Al Jazeera Net, 7 August 2024, op. cit.

[170] Radio Dabanga, "Sudanese Armed Forces evacuate Catholic nuns and priest from Khartoum refuge", 6 August 2024. https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudanese-armed-forces-evacuate-catholic-nuns-and-priest-from-khartoum-refuge

[171] Religion Unplugged, "Exclusive: Plight of nuns highlights growing humanitarian crisis in Sudan's devastating civil war", February 2025. https://religionunplugged.com/news/exclusive-plight-of-nuns-highlights-growing-humanitarian-crisis-in-sudans-devastating-civil-war

[172] Dabanga, 6 August 2024, op. cit.

[173] Al Jazeera Net, 7 August 2024, op. cit.

Nasreldin Abdelfattah, visited the compound repeatedly,[174] soldiers carried food to the children, and those with serious illnesses were taken to a hospital in Omdurman.[175] The Armed Forces spokesman explained that the Armoured Corps soldiers had done their duty in protecting and assisting those trapped, as they do in other conflict areas.[176]



A damaged room at Dar Mariam, from a report published in January 2024.
Photo: Salesian News Agency (ANS), via Sudan Tribune



Damage inside the compound, from material published on 13 June 2024.
Photo: Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)

Sister Teresa Roszkowska, a seventy-year-old Polish nun, says the soldiers were "generous and kind beyond description", sharing their food and drink with the people of the compound.[177] She testifies that the Armed Forces protected and cared for them, and that they never saw a single militia fighter inside their walls.[178] The Armed Forces offered more than once to take the priest and the sisters across the river, but the priest and the sisters refused to leave the families behind.[179]

> "We knew the mission required the moon to be hidden"
>
> Sister Teresa Roszkowska, on the night of the evacuation

The evacuation

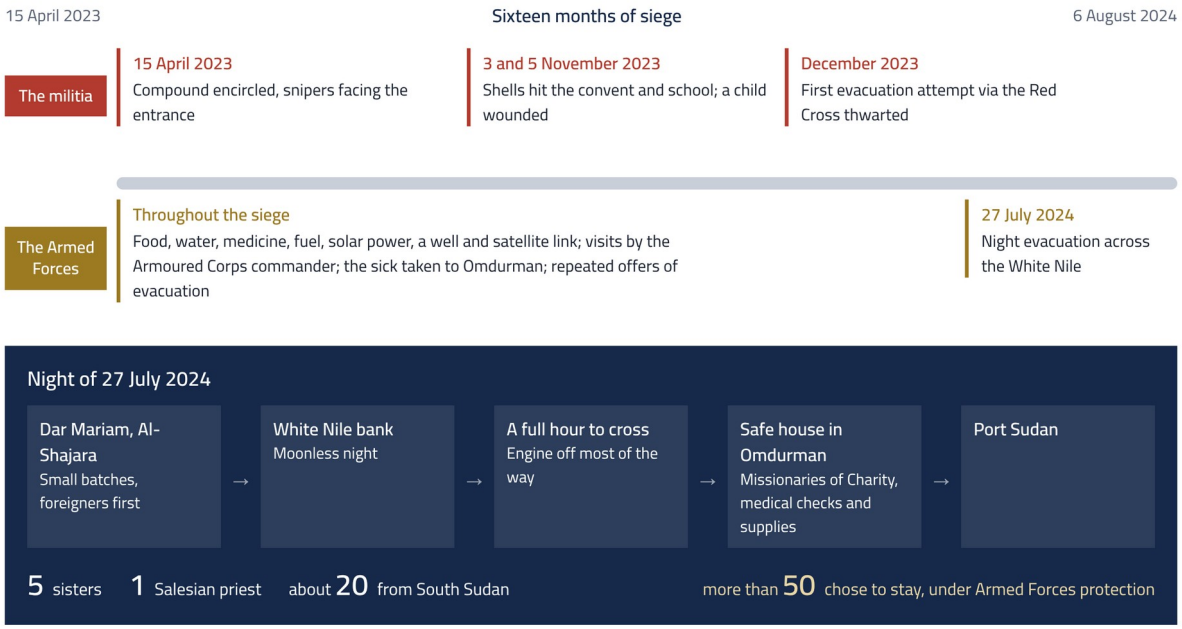
On the evening of 27 July 2024 the sisters were told that the evacuation would take place at nine that night and that the foreigners would leave first.[180] The operation was carried out jointly by the Armed Forces and the General Intelligence Service, whose counter-terrorism unit played a decisive role,[181] and the

174 Religion Unplugged, February 2025, op. cit.
175 Fides, August 2024, op. cit.
176 Reuters, July 2024, op. cit.
177 Al-Rai Al-Sudani, citing Al-Mohaqiq agency, "Details of a special operation to evacuate nuns from Al-Shajara to Omdurman" (in Arabic), 6 August 2024. https://sudaray.com/123557
178 Fides, August 2024, op. cit.
179 Reuters via CSMonitor, op. cit.
180 Fides, August 2024, op. cit.
181 Religion Unplugged, February 2025, op. cit.

Commander-in-Chief and the Director of Intelligence followed it directly until the team reached Omdurman.[182] The group moved in small batches to the bank of the White Nile on a moonless night, and the boat took a full hour to cross, its engine switched off for most of the way.[183] On the west bank they were taken to a safe house run by the Missionaries of Charity, where they received medical checks and supplies.[184]

The Armed Forces announced the operation in a statement on 6 August 2024: five sisters, a Salesian priest of the Don Bosco Society and some twenty South Sudanese nationals were evacuated after sixteen months of siege and then moved to Port Sudan.[185] More than fifty people who chose to stay remained at Dar Mariam,[186] under the protection of the Armed Forces.[187] Figure 8 sets the actions of the militia and of the Armed Forces side by side on a single timeline.

Figure 8: Dar Mariam: sixteen months between militia siege and Armed Forces protection



Source: Prepared by the Advisory Board based on Al Jazeera Net, Agenzia Fides, Radio Dabanga, Reuters and Religion Unplugged.

Sister Teresa also recounts what was happening during those same weeks in other churches in Khartoum: there, militia fighters smashed the large statues of the Virgin and of Christ in search of money and gold, and seized the churches' cars, computers and medicines.[188] In this war the fate of a church was decided by the identity of the force controlling its surroundings.

[182] Al-Rai Al-Sudani, 6 August 2024, op. cit.
[183] Al Jazeera Net, 7 August 2024, op. cit.
[184] Fides, August 2024, op. cit.
[185] Dabanga, 6 August 2024, op. cit.
[186] Fides, August 2024, op. cit.
[187] Al Jazeera Net, 7 August 2024, op. cit.
[188] Fides, August 2024, op. cit.

Similar cases

Wad Madani, January 2025

When the Armed Forces liberated the capital of Gezira State on 11 January 2025, they freed detainees whom the militia had held for months in its prisons without food or treatment, and the General Command ordered that their transport and medical care be secured before they were handed over to their families.[189,190] It is the same city in which the militia had occupied the Coptic monastery a year earlier and where its priests went missing.[191]

Khartoum, March 2025

Egyptian merchants held by the militia for months in Khartoum in harsh conditions were released in an operation coordinated by the Sudanese and Egyptian authorities to locate them and transfer them to Port Sudan and then home.[192]

Shendi

In Shendi, which the Armed Forces protected, the Copts stayed put when the militia overran Wad Madani. Mariam Hizqiyal, who runs a clinic named after her late father, says she never thought of leaving because she trusted that the Armed Forces would not let the militia enter the city. The Copts of Shendi say they have never felt discriminated against, and that Copts from the capital whose homes and cars were looted have begun returning to the liberated areas, especially Omdurman.[193]

The two approaches compared

Table 7: Conduct of the Armed Forces and of the militia towards churches

Dimension	Where the Armed Forces were present (Dar Mariam and similar cases)	Where the militia was in control (the churches of Khartoum)
Civilians inside the church	Sixteen months of protection for about eighty women and children	42 civilians beaten and driven out of All Saints; bishop and priests expelled from the Cathedral of the Virgin
Resources	Food, water, fuel, solar power, a well and medicine	Gold crosses, safes, cars and medicines looted; cables melted down
Clergy	Visits by the Armoured Corps commander and repeated offers of evacuation	Clergy shot at, a bishop assaulted, demands to convert

189 Youm7, "The army frees prisoners held in RSF jails in Wad Madani" (in Arabic), 12 January 2025. https://www.youm7.com/story/2025/1/12/التطورات-الميدانية-فى-السودان-الجيش-يبسط-سيطرته-على-مدينة-ود/6843324

190 Al Jazeera Net, "The liberation of Wad Madani followed a precise plan along three axes" (in Arabic), 12 January 2025. https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2025/1/12/كيف-تمكن-الجيش-السوداني-من-استعادة-ود

191 CSW, statement of 19 December 2023, op. cit.

192 Daily News Egypt, "Egyptians freed after months of RSF detention", 6 March 2025. https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/?p=829257

193 Al Jazeera Net, "The Copts of Shendi: coexistence overcomes the fears of Sudan's war" (in Arabic), 28 September 2025. https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2025/9/28/أقباط-شندي-التعايش-يهزم-مخاوف-حرب

Dimension	Where the Armed Forces were present (Dar Mariam and similar cases)	Where the militia was in control (the churches of Khartoum)
Sacred objects	Not a single fighter inside the walls, according to the sisters	Altars desecrated, statues smashed, graves dug up in search of gold
Departure	A safe night-time evacuation across the Nile, monitored by the Commander-in-Chief	Snipers at the entrance, an evacuation convoy targeted, roads cut off

Part Three · The State and Places of Worship

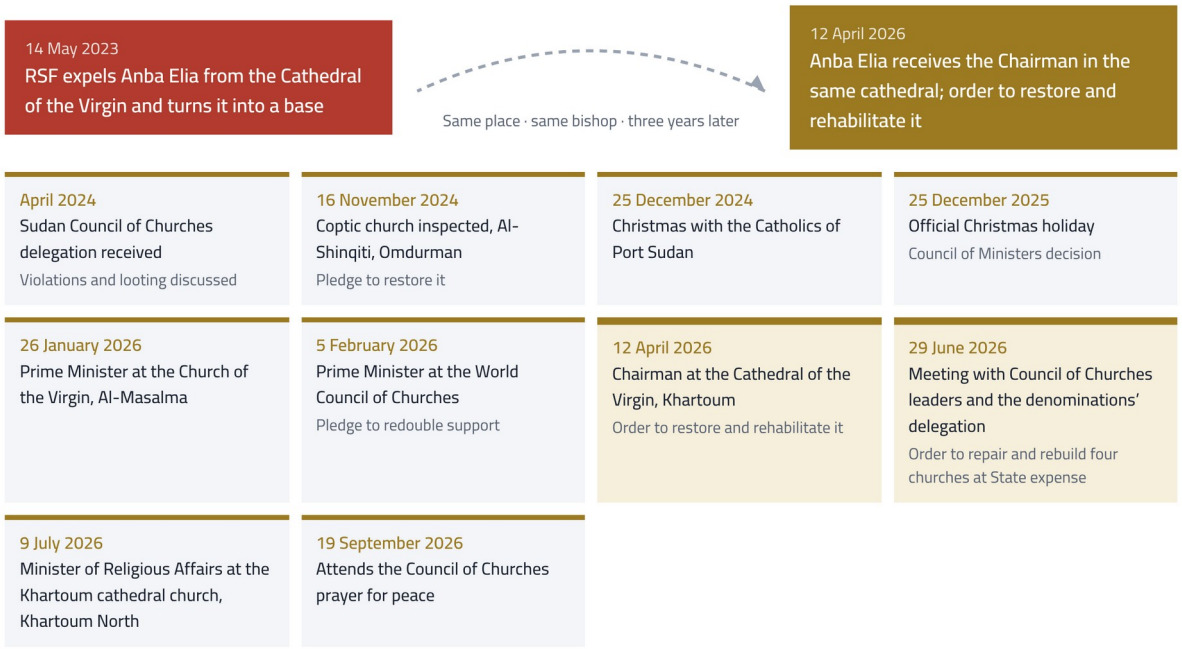
Chapter Eleven

State Policy towards the Christian Community and Its Places of Worship

11

The State has treated the rehabilitation of churches destroyed by the militia as part of the recovery and reconstruction of the capital. Since April 2024 its measures have followed three tracks: regular contact with church leaders, on-site inspection of the damage, and a commitment to repair and rebuild with public funds. Figure 9 sets these measures out in chronological order.

Figure 9: From the bishop's expulsion to the restoration directive: State measures towards the Christian community



Source: Sudan News Agency, Sovereignty Council media office, Radio Tamazuj, Al-Sabah News, Al-Ahd Online, and Advisory Board statements.

Contact with church leaders

In April 2024 the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council received in Port Sudan a delegation of the Sudan Council of Churches led by Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo, and discussed with them the prospects for peace and the violations and looting the churches had suffered.[194] On 25 December of the same year he

[194] Radio Tamazuj, "Council of Churches, Gen. Burhan discuss peace prospects in Sudan", 10 April 2024. https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/council-of-churches-gen-burhan-discuss-peace-prospects-in-sudan

joined the Catholic community in Port Sudan in its Christmas celebration, met the Missionaries of Charity, the Visitation Sisters and the Comboni priests, and praised the Church's contribution to education.[195]

With the government's return to Khartoum this track widened. On 25 December 2025 the Council of Ministers declared an official Christmas holiday throughout the country.[196] On 26 January 2026 Prime Minister Dr Kamil Idris visited the Church of the Virgin in Al-Masalma, conveyed the greetings of the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council to the Copts, and affirmed that they are partners in civic responsibility and national loyalty.[197] On 5 February 2026, meeting the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, the Prime Minister described the destruction and looting of churches by the militia that he had witnessed, and pledged that the government would redouble its attention to, and support for, Christians and all religious communities.[198] On 29 June 2026 the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council received in his office in Khartoum the leaders of the Sudan Council of Churches and a delegation of the Christian denominations. The head of the Karari Union of Churches, Rev. Angelo Al-Zaki Angelo, said the meeting had addressed the churches' concerns, that the churches reaffirmed their rejection of the destruction and vandalism committed by the militia, and that both sides stressed the need for joint reconstruction efforts.[199] The presidential directive to repair and rebuild four churches followed the meeting; it is detailed at the end of this chapter. On 19 September 2026 the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council and his deputy Malik Agar attended the Sudan Council of Churches' prayer for peace at the Khartoum International Fairground; the Chairman called for confronting hate speech among Sudanese, and the head of the church council thanked the government for its efforts to restore security.[200]

On-site inspection and the commitment to rehabilitation

On 16 November 2024 the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council, accompanied by Council member Yasir Al-Atta and the Governor of Khartoum, inspected the Coptic church on Al-Shinqiti Street in Omdurman. He heard a report on the looting of its historic artefacts and the digging up of its graves in search of gold, and announced that he would underwrite its restoration to its former state.[201]

[195] CISA News Africa, "Al-Burhan joins the Catholic community in celebrating Christmas", 6 January 2025. https://cisanewsafrica.com/?p=21107
[196] Sudan News Agency (SUNA) via allAfrica, announcement of the Christmas holiday, 26 December 2025. https://allafrica.com/stories/202512260367.html
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[201] Al-Tayar, citing the Sovereignty Council media office, "Al-Burhan inspects the Coptic church in Omdurman and pledges its rehabilitation" (in Arabic), 16 November 2024. https://al-tayar.net/البرهان-يتفقد-الكنيسة-القبطية-في-امدر/

On 12 April 2026, Easter Sunday, the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council visited the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary in Khartoum, accompanied by the Minister of Finance, Dr Gibril Ibrahim, and the Director of the General Intelligence Service. He was received by Anba Elia, Bishop of Khartoum, the same bishop the militia had expelled from this cathedral on 14 May 2023. The Chairman congratulated Christians across the country and ordered the cathedral to be restored and rehabilitated "to its former state".[202] Between the two dates, in the same place and with the same bishop, lies the difference between a militia that drives a cleric out of his church and a State that brings him back and commits to rebuilding it.



The Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council and Anba Elia at the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary in Khartoum, Easter Sunday, 12 April 2026.
Photo: Al-Ahd Online

On 9 July 2026 the Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments, Bashir Haroun Abdelkarim, inspected the Khartoum cathedral church as part of a tour of places of worship in Khartoum North.[203]

The Chairman's directive to repair and rebuild four churches at State expense

Following his meeting with the leaders of the Sudan Council of Churches and the delegation of Christian denominations on 29 June 2026, the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council ordered four churches to be repaired and rebuilt at State expense:[204]

1. The Episcopal Church (Al-Nizamiya), Al-Thawra, Block 48.
2. The Sudanese Church of Christ, Al-Thawra, Block 29.
3. The Evangelical Episcopal Church, Al-Shuhada, Omdurman.
4. The Sudan Interior Church, Bant.

Work is currently under way at all four sites to rehabilitate them as complete church compounds (Figure 10). The choice of these sites reflects two directions in State policy: rehabilitation covers neighbourhood churches that serve their congregations directly, alongside the historic cathedrals in the centre of the capital; and it benefits several denominations, Episcopal, Evangelical and indigenous.

[202] Sudan News Agency (SUNA), "Chairman of the Sovereignty Council visits the Church of the Virgin Mary in Khartoum and offers Easter greetings" (in Arabic), 12 April 2026. https://x.com/SUNA_AGENCY/status/2043434615894052927; see also Tag Press, 12 April 2026. https://www.tagpress.net/170367/

[203] Al-Sabah News, "Minister of Religious Affairs inspects six mosques and a church in Khartoum North" (in Arabic), 9 July 2026. https://www.sabah-news.com/17221/

[204] Statements of the Advisory Board of the Transitional Sovereignty Council on the Chairman's directive and progress at the four sites, November 2026.

Figure 10: The four churches the Chairman ordered to be repaired and rebuilt



Source: Statements of the Advisory Board of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, November 2026.

This brings the declared presidential commitments to three: the Coptic church on Al-Shinqiti Street (November 2024), the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary in Khartoum (April 2026), and the four churches (June 2026). Documenting implementation with before-and-after photographs, costs, contractors and completion dates turns these commitments into a record of achievement that can be presented to international partners.

Part Four · Findings

Chapter Twelve

Conclusions and Recommendations 12

Conclusions

1. **Established by high-confidence evidence:** the militia stormed, occupied and looted at least thirteen churches in Khartoum State, including the Episcopal, Coptic and Catholic cathedrals, fired on clergy, and drove out civilians who had sheltered in the churches.
2. **Established by concordant testimonies:** the attacks were accompanied by religious insults and demands to convert, and the pattern recurred on a wider scale in Gezira State.
3. **Established by named testimonies:** the assault extended beyond the churches, reaching Christians in their homes, their shops and on the roads: confinement and denial of water, killing and looting, and detention for ransom.
4. **Established by concordant sources:** the pattern recurred outside the capital: a monastery and churches in Gezira occupied, burned and stormed, three churches in El Fasher shelled within three days and the Catholic parish priest dying of his wounds, and the Bishop of El Obeid beaten and led towards execution.
5. **Analytical conclusion:** this targeting combined motives of overt religious coercion, attested by the insults, the pressure to convert and the desecration of altars, with calculations of military positioning, the pursuit of spoils and predatory looting. It is fed by a sense of ethnic and religious supremacy documented in Darfur, Gezira and Khartoum, and enabled by the absence of accountability.
6. **Documented contradiction:** a "secular" discourse aimed abroad, set against an occupation of churches lasting twenty-three months without a single announced act of accountability.
7. **Legal characterisation:** the documented acts amount to war crimes, and responsibility for them lies with the perpetrators and with the militia's leadership.
8. **Institutional contrast:** wherever the Armed Forces were present the church and those in it were protected, and after liberation the State committed to rehabilitating what the militia had destroyed and has begun implementing that commitment.

What remains to be completed

- A reference list of churches in Khartoum State before the war, to calculate the share that was damaged.

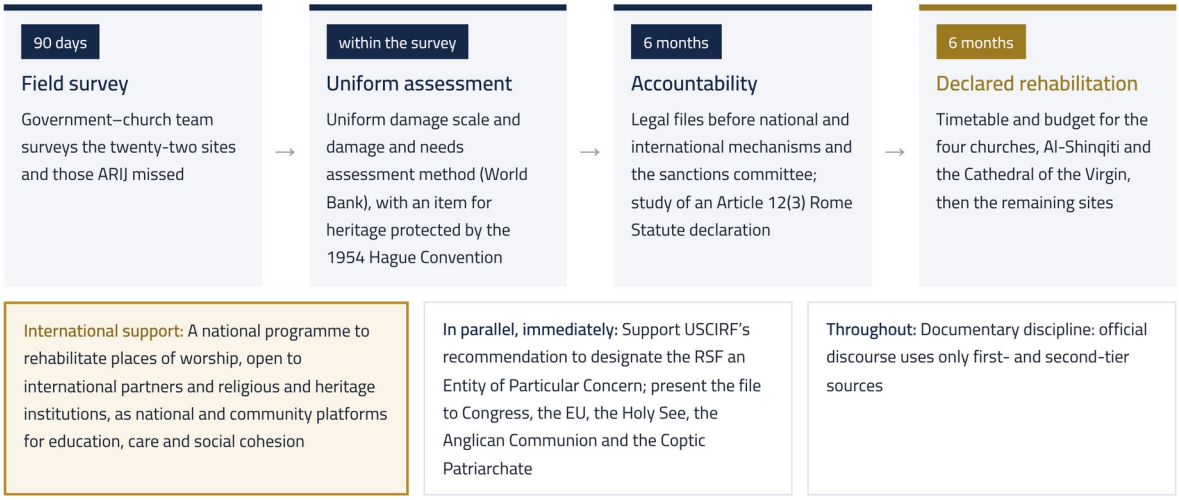
- Matching the National Investigation Committee's register against the sites documented with images, and the victims' names reported by foreign sources against parish records.
- A financial assessment of damage, site by site.
- A field survey of damaged churches in Gezira, Darfur and Kordofan once access permits.
- Verification with the Coptic bishopric to distinguish the two Mar Girgis incidents in Khartoum North and Al-Masalma.
- Signed and protected witness statements suitable for judicial use.

Recommendations

1. **Field survey (90 days):** form a joint team of the competent government bodies, the Sudan Council of Churches and the owning denominations to survey the twenty-two sites, together with those recorded by the National Investigation Committee but not covered by the ARIJ investigation, using an internationally recognised damage assessment methodology and linking each item to the perpetrator and the evidence.
2. **Accountability (6 months):** prepare complete legal files on the attacks on churches and on Christians outside them, in the capital and the states, in coordination with the National Investigation Committee, and place them before the competent national and international mechanisms, and before the sanctions committee established by Security Council resolution 1591 and its Panel of Experts. The International Criminal Court's current jurisdiction under Security Council resolution 1593 is limited to Darfur; extending it to crimes committed in Khartoum requires a declaration under Article 12(3) of the Rome Statute, and the Advisory Board recommends studying the option of issuing one.
3. **Diplomatic action (immediate):** support the recommendation of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom to designate the RSF an Entity of Particular Concern, and present this file to the U.S. Congress, the European Union, the Holy See, the Anglican Communion, the Coptic Patriarchate and the World Council of Churches.
4. **A declared national rehabilitation programme (6 months):** publish a timetable and budget for rehabilitating the four churches, the Al-Shinqiti church and the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary, and extend the programme to the remaining sites in partnership with the Sudan Council of Churches.
5. **Mobilising international support for the rehabilitation of places of worship in Sudan:** invite international partners, UN heritage agencies, global religious institutions and donors to contribute to rehabilitating places of worship damaged in the war, churches and mosques alike, through a national programme supervised by the State with the participation of the denominations. Places of worship are national and community platforms of great importance: they provide education, health care and relief and preserve social peace, and restoring them to service is a condition for the return of the displaced and the stability of neighbourhoods.

6. **Documentary discipline (ongoing):** limit official discourse to what is stated in first- and second-tier sources. Exaggerated figures hand the militia and its supporters the opening they seek to discredit the entire file.

Figure 11: Roadmap for implementing the recommendations



Source: Prepared by the Advisory Board.

Conclusion

The Cost of Looking Away

The militia presents two faces to the world. In its statements addressed to Western capitals it is a "secular" force fighting extremism and protecting minorities; in the churches it entered, it is gunmen asking for gold, calling worshippers infidels and demanding, under threat, that they abandon their faith. This report has shown that the two faces are simultaneous: the tweets about fighting extremists were written in the very days when civilians were being driven out of All Saints Cathedral, and the "secular state" charter was signed two months after the raid on the Christmas service in Hasaheisa.

The militia practises this contradiction with calculated political opportunism; it would be a mistake to read it as a lapse in discipline that training can correct. It knows that Western capitals listen to those who speak of secularism and fighting extremism, so it offers them that discourse. It knows that its fighters are driven by plunder and tribal solidarity, so it gives them free rein. Combining the two costs it nothing so long as no one holds it to account for the gap between its words and its deeds. Had secularism been a genuine commitment, it would have shown in a single order to protect a church or a single investigation into an attack on a priest. Nothing of the kind has been recorded in five years.

The militia's record shows that its violations against the Christian denominations are part of a pattern of ethnic and religious supremacy that it practises wherever it rules. The force whose fighters called the Copts infidels and ordered them to abandon their faith is the same force that called the Masalit and the people of El Fasher slaves, and made relief in Gezira conditional on a change of religion. The premise is the same throughout: that the other, by race or by religion, is of lower standing, and that his property, dignity and life are forfeit. The danger therefore extends beyond Christians to other minorities and to Sudanese at large: the militia that turned the cathedral into a weapons store turned the mosque into a barracks.

The international community bears its share of responsibility. Every platform given to the militia to present its charters, and every statement that equated those who occupy the church with those who protect it, told the militia that words suffice and that deeds carry no price. The chronology shows what followed. The violations began in the churches of Khartoum in 2023 and no one was held to account. They then spread in Gezira in 2024 to the point that relief was made conditional on a change of religion, and in El Fasher in 2025 they reached the shelling of three churches within three days and the execution of captives on camera. Impunity at each stage removed whatever might have deterred the next. Tolerating and ignoring this contradiction encourages further violations against the Christian denominations, against other minorities, and against Sudanese in general.

What is required is to judge the militia by its documented acts rather than by its published charters. On 14 May 2023 it expelled the Coptic Bishop of Khartoum from the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary and turned it into

a base. On 12 April 2026 the same bishop received the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council in the same cathedral, and the order was given to rebuild it. Preserving religious diversity in Sudan means supporting the State that is rebuilding the churches and holding to account the militia that destroyed them.

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