

Sudan: El Fasher civilians suffer unlawful killings, detention and torture one year after city's capture by the RSF – new testimony

- *Surveillance and detentions rife in city*
- *With limited humanitarian aid, risks of child malnutrition remain high*
- *“A pervasive pall of fear hangs over El Fasher today” – Agnès Callamard*

Civilians in El Fasher in North Darfur, Sudan, are still suffering detention, torture and limited access to humanitarian aid one year after the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) captured the city and committed brutalities against civilians, Amnesty International said today.

In new testimony, residents who recently escaped the city told Amnesty International how schools had been turned into detention centres, how their movement was strictly controlled, and that unlawful killings were rife.

According to figures gathered by humanitarian organizations working in the city, fewer than 70,000 people are present in El Fasher, compared to its pre-war population of more than one million. Humanitarian access remains limited, and humanitarian workers and other civilians in the city are constantly surveilled or monitored. Arbitrary detention risks, for both civilians and humanitarian workers, remain extremely high.

“The RSF’s claims that El Fasher is safe for civilians to return to after the horrific massacres that took place one year ago could not be further from the truth,” said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

“A pervasive pall of fear hangs over El Fasher today. Men and women live under constant RSF surveillance, and with the ongoing threat of detention, torture and killing.

“One year since El Fasher fell to the RSF, the international community has failed to take the necessary actions to address the desperate plight civilians face as the conflict rages. There has been little accountability for abuses in North Darfur. The moves towards a ceasefire have been half-hearted, and Amnesty International is not aware of any diplomatic attempts to establish an international force that would meaningfully protect civilians.

“Crucially, the United Arab Emirates has continued to support the RSF, while governments with the required influence have largely failed to name and denounce their role or hold them to account.

“Without a ceasefire, accountability, and a protection force, civilians will continue to suffer in El Fasher and across Sudan. The Sudanese Armed Forces have consistently opposed the extension of an arms embargo and a ceasefire, continuing to believe that a military ‘solution’ to the conflict remains possible, thereby also setting aside the suffering of the Sudanese people.”

In August and September 2026, Amnesty International interviewed 25 civilians, including 19 residents and six humanitarian workers, regarding the situation in El Fasher. Of the residents, 15 left El Fasher between July and August 2026 and one was still in the city; the other three had fled earlier.

On 9 October, Amnesty International wrote to the RSF regarding the findings. At the time of publication, no response had been received.

In July 2026, Amnesty International released a major report that documented how the RSF committed [crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing](#) during its campaign to seize El Fasher, with certain ethnic groups, including the Zaghawa, singled out for abuse. Amnesty International continues to document flagrant abuses committed by both parties to the conflict in Sudan, including in El Obeid, North Kordofan, as well as in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States.

Detention, torture, and unlawful killings in prisons

Of the 19 residents interviewed, 17 were detained by the RSF. Most were arbitrarily detained during the RSF capture of the city, while several were detained when they returned to retrieve belongings from their homes or to search for missing family members. They were all held in captivity for months. Several noted that people of particular ethnic groups, notably Zaghawa and Masalit people, were more likely to be detained and abused.

Most men were held in detention centres or prisons, where they witnessed unlawful killings, suffered torture and other ill-treatment, and were given minimal food or water. All were released only after family members paid ransom, or by escaping.

Modathir*, a 29-year-old Zaghawa man, was detained in Shala prison. He was regularly beaten and witnessed unlawful killings. He told Amnesty International: “Torture is something which is permanent in any [RSF] detention. They executed people who tried to look at them... If you sleep a lot, they don’t like that, they will execute you. They ask, ‘You want to take a rest? We will give you permanent rest!’” In July 2026, Modathir escaped, fleeing from house to house in order to reach safety.

Mamoun*, a 33-year-old Zaghawa man, was also held in Shala prison until July 2026. He said he witnessed the RSF shooting prisoners, and the death of a man with untreated diabetes who the RSF refused to help. Mamoun was regularly beaten, and said: “They take people out [of the cell] randomly, they accuse you of being with the Joint Forces or the military... And they beat you until you faint... Sometimes I was beaten four times a day... It just depends on their mood.” Mamoun was eventually released after his family paid a ransom.

Paying ransom was not always a guarantee of freedom. Musa*, a 23-year-old Zaghawa man, said that he and his father were detained at El Fasher Children's Hospital in October 2025. They were released more than a month later after they paid a ransom. However, instead of being allowed to leave the city, Musa said the RSF took them to an RSF-guarded house and held there until around May 2026 when they were able to escape.

Musa and his father were forced to work for the RSF including collecting corpses, and were sometimes forced to speak on camera to say that the city was inhabitable, encouraging people to return. He said: "They paraded us inside the city and told us to talk [about how] El Fasher is good and safe."

Detention in schools

Women, children, and some older or injured men were held in schools that were *de facto* detention centres. They described high rates of malnutrition, including among their own children.

Amnesty International interviewed nine people who were detained by the RSF in schools. They had extremely limited access to food and medical treatment; some women said that their children became malnourished during their detention there. All of these individuals were released or managed to escape by July or August 2026.

Haram*, a 45-year-old Zaghawa woman, and her young children were detained at a school in the Daraja Oula neighbourhood. She told Amnesty International: "[The RSF] were verbally abusing people... Zaghawa people were beaten, [the RSF] would just select and randomly beat [people]. They called us *falangayaat* women [a slur that indicates slavery or servitude]."

Hadia*, a 30-year-old Gimir woman whose husband was shot by the RSF during their capture of El Fasher, was detained in a school with her children, along with hundreds of other women and children. The RSF provided them very limited food and water.

Hadia was too malnourished to provide her youngest child, aged 18 months, with sufficient breast milk. When she finally escaped and reached Tawila in August 2026, all three of her children were diagnosed with malnutrition; one was hospitalized. Hadia told Amnesty International: "My children were very skinny and weak."

Aloya*, a 54-year-old Zaghawa woman, spent several months detained in a school. She was afraid that her Zaghawa identity would be discovered and so never spoke the language while there. She said: "Daily there were four to five people dying... mostly from lack of food."

Hatim*, a 38-year-old Berti man with a serious shrapnel injury in his jaw, was detained by the RSF when he returned to El Fasher to retrieve personal belongings from his house in spring 2026. He was taken to a school where he was kept for about four months with

an estimated 300 people, mostly women. He told Amnesty International: “You could not move freely, you had to stay there... [The RSF] beat me up two times I tried fleeing... including on my wounds.” On his third attempt, Hatim was able to escape.

Amnesty International analysed satellite imagery of school detention sites between October 2025 and September 2026. While several sites indicated signs of human activity in previous months, by September 2026 there was little daily activity, suggesting that these detention sites may have been closed. Shala prison and Mina al-Bari detention centre, another facility where residents were held, still showed significant signs of human activity.

‘Everybody is terrorized’: RSF surveillance and limited humanitarian access

El Fasher residents told Amnesty International that while a small number of humanitarian organizations were operating in the city again as of September 2026, the RSF closely monitored their movements and prevented residents from speaking freely to them.

One resident who had returned to El Fasher in June 2026 told Amnesty International: “The El Fasher I knew is gone, it is a completely destroyed city. The public infrastructure, the schools, government institutions, hospitals, all are destroyed... It seemed like everybody is watched very closely, they don’t give humanitarian workers any private space to talk... Everybody is terrorized.”

Another resident said: “There is no complete blockage of [humanitarian] access, but... when organizations are implementing activities [the RSF] will monitor implementation... There are no pictures, no interviews, no interactions of any kind.”

Humanitarian workers expressed concerns about malnutrition, particularly amid a poor harvest season. According to [official assessments](#), IPC Level 5 famine, the highest threshold possible, is highly likely in North Darfur, including in El Fasher, in the months ahead.

Forced labour

Both men and women were subjected to forced labour, such as collecting dead bodies and rubble from El Fasher’s streets, or cooking and cleaning for the RSF without pay.

Misbah*, a 32-year-old Zaghawa man, was detained by the RSF in October 2025. He was brought to a house in the Daraja Oula neighbourhood, where he was forced to cook and clean for RSF officers. He was tied up and given very little to eat. He said he was beaten every day, and said: “I never thought I would survive.”

The RSF should immediately release all those who have been arbitrary detained, and end torture and unlawful killings in detention and elsewhere. The use of forced labour, which is prohibited by international law, must also end.

Amnesty International is again calling for an [immediate ceasefire and for the urgent deployment of an international force](#) to protect civilians. All countries must also immediately stop providing arms and ammunition to all parties to the conflict in Sudan. In particular, all countries must cease arms transfers to the United Arab Emirates until it stops supplying weapons to RSF in violation of the UN embargo on Darfur. The UN Security Council must also expand the existing arms embargo on Darfur to the rest of the country.

ENDS

Note to Editors: *Names have been changed.