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**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN
FOR THE 54TH SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) was founded in 1998 and is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the Republic of Sudan (Sudan) for the 54th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

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Status of Human Rights in Sudan for the 54th Session of the Universal Periodic Review

Background

1. Sudan is a country located in northeastern Africa and has a population of approximately 50.2 million people.¹ The country is predominantly Muslim, with approximately 97% of the population identifying as Sunni Muslim and 3% as Christian.²

2. Sudan's last review was held on February 9, 2022.³ As a result of the review, Sudan received 283 recommendations, 244 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Indonesia, and supported by Sudan, that the government "[c]ontinue to enhance the promotion of interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance"(137.149).⁵ It was also recommended by Paraguay, and supported by Sudan, that the government "[e]nsure the safety of humanitarian workers and humanitarian facilities"(113.117).⁶ In our last report, we expressed concern over violence being perpetrated against Christians. In its 2026 World Watch List, Open Doors ranked Sudan as the 4th worst country for Christians.⁷ This ranking stems from the fact that Christians are oppressed by the Islamic majority.⁸

Legal Framework

3. Sudan is currently operating under the Constitutional Charter for the Transitional Period of 2019. Under Article 56:

Every person has the right to freedom of religious belief and worship. They shall have the right to profess or express their religion or belief through worship, education, practice, performance of rituals, or celebrations, in accordance with the requirements of the law and public order. No one shall be compelled to convert to a religion they do not believe in or to practice rites or rituals they do not voluntarily accept.⁹

4. Additionally, under Article 126 of the Penal Code:

Anyone who publicly declares the apostasy of a person, sect or group of persons to express their religion or beliefs, or announces the expiation of that person or that group or declares killing someone lawful, shall be punished with imprisonment for a period not exceeding ten years, or with a fine or both.¹⁰

5. However, Article 125 of the Penal Code stands in stark contrast to the above religious liberty protections as it punishes acts of blasphemy with up to six months in prison.¹¹

6. In addition to the religious liberty protections under Article 56 of the Constitutional Charter and Article 126 of the Penal Code, Sudan is also a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹² Under Article 18 of the ICCPR:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or

belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.¹³

7. Further, under Article 27:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.¹⁴

Christian Persecution

Failure to Implement Previous UPR Recommendations

8. During the last UPR cycle, Sudan was ranked as the 13th worst country for Christians. During the last UPR cycle, we also expressed concern over the treatment and persecution of Christians and urged Sudan to take action to protect Christians from persecution. Additionally, Sudan received a recommendation from Indonesia, which it supported, to “[c]ontinue to enhance the promotion of interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance” (137.149).¹⁵ Unfortunately, Sudan has not implemented these recommendations, and the persecution of Christians has only worsened. As noted above, Sudan is now considered to be the 4th worst country for Christians, a drastic increase from where Sudan was ranked during its previous review.

Attacks on Christians and Places of Worship

9. Since the outbreak of armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023, the human rights situation in Sudan has deteriorated. The conflict has displaced nearly fifteen million people and has left much of the population in dire need of humanitarian assistance.¹⁶ Religious minorities, including Christians, have been disproportionately affected by the violence as nearly 150,000 Christians have died so far.¹⁷ According to a Christian persecution monitoring organization “[n]either side is sympathetic to Christians, and the conflict has given Islamist extremists more opportunity to target them.”¹⁸

10. One Christian convert, who was forced to flee his home for safety, shared what it is like for Christians living in Sudan: “When the fighters go on slaughtering non-Muslims and the non-Arab population, Christian and Muslim converts to Christianity suffer the most . . . Vandalized, occupied, torched, and abandoned churches are testimonies of brutality, especially in Khartoum, Kordofan, and Darfur.”¹⁹ Since the outbreak of the conflict, more than 150,000 people have been killed.²⁰ Rafat Samir, the General Secretary for the Sudan Evangelical Alliance, stated that the “Nuba Mountains now, where the majority of our church members are coming from, is under siege and bombing every day”²¹

11. The conflict has also impacted Christian places of worship and other institutions. Churches, schools, and other Christian buildings have been damaged, looted, or destroyed

during military operations. More than 165 churches have been forced to close as a result.²² For example, on April 6, 2026, the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) in South Morta, Kadugli, in the Nuba Mountains was damaged during an arson attack.²³ The church was destroyed and has not yet been rebuilt.²⁴ Additionally, during Christmastime 2025, an airstrike on the predominantly Christian village of Julud in the Nuba mountains killed twelve people and injured nineteen.²⁵ Since this attack, Church leaders moved their services to early in the morning or late at night in order to avoid mass killings. Earlier that year, in July 2025, a Pentecostal church in the Haj Yousef area of Khartoum was demolished.²⁶ The church has not been rebuilt, and congregants do not have an alternative place to meet.²⁷ Further, in January 2024, RSF set fire to an Evangelical church in Wad Madani. This church was the largest religious building in Gezira State.²⁸

12. Restrictions on rebuilding damaged churches have further impacted Christian communities. Following the recapture of Khartoum by the SAF in March 2025, church leaders reported that authorities were preventing churches from reconstructing.²⁹

Arbitrary Arrests and Detention of Christians

13. Legal restrictions, like its ban on blasphemy, further limit the freedom of religion and belief. These types of laws are generally used by the Muslim majority to silence minority religions like Christianity and leads to Christians being arbitrarily detained.

14. For example, on August 16, 2025, police in North Khartoum arrested a Christian pastor and four others who were gathered for a funeral prayer.³⁰ The Christians were taken to Omdurman Prison, where at least one of the prisoners was told to pay a fine or face six months in jail.³¹ Additionally, between January and February 2025, nineteen Christians were arrested in Madani, with many of them being denied access to legal assistance and have yet to receive formal charges.³² In October 2024, twenty-six men, most of whom were Christian and members of the Sudanese Church of Christ, were arbitrarily detained by the SAF Military Intelligence unit in Shendi, in the River Nile State.³³ Further, on June 22, 2022, police raided a Christian church and arrested four men who were praying.³⁴ They were released a few days later.³⁵

Humanitarian Access

15. The persecution of Christians is exacerbated by the lack of and restrictions on humanitarian workers and facilities. Further, Christians are discriminated against by being prohibited from receiving humanitarian aid. One church leader shared that:

“When even NGOs (non-governmental organisations) want to distribute food, the category of people who will receive this relief is controlled by Government. So, Government in these places doesn’t give it to minorities. Often Christians here have been told: ‘Unless you leave your Christianity, no food for you.’”³⁶

16. Sudan has also failed to implement the recommendation made by Paraguay to “[e]nsure the safety of humanitarian workers and humanitarian facilities” (137.117).³⁷ Sudan has an obligation to protect its citizens and allow for the distribution of aid and humanitarian assistance to its civilians. Unfortunately, neither the SAF nor the RSF has allowed for aid to reach the civilians who need it the most.³⁸ As stated above, the ongoing conflict has displaced millions of people who need refuge and aid.

17. Unfortunately, armed factions have restricted international aid from reaching parts of Darfur. Although some access from Chad has been permitted, it is subject to periodic closures and the RSF has not allowed the UN to establish a ground presence. What aid is allowed into the country is frequently subjected to blockades, checkpoint fees, and interference by armed personnel at distribution areas. Aid convoys have also been attacked. In June 2025, a convoy carrying food and supplies was attacked, and five people were killed.³⁹

Recommendations

18. Sudan must guarantee religious freedom for all its citizens by preventing attacks against Christians. To do this, Sudan should provide rapid police response threats, increase intelligence gathering capability to identify and prevent planned attacks against Christians. Further, Sudan must establish an independent oversight committee to publish public reports on attacks, investigations, and prosecutions.

19. Additionally, Sudan must allow Christians to rebuild their churches and buildings by implementing a transparent process to quickly approve reconstruction permits for damaged and destroyed churches. The process for obtaining permits must be transparent and not discriminatory against Christians trying to rebuild churches. Additionally, the agency responsible for granting permits must regularly publish data on permit approvals, denials, and processing time.

20. We also ask that Sudan immediately repeal its blasphemy law.

21. Sudan must end the arbitrary arrests of individuals because of their faith by ensuring that no one is detained for the peaceful practice of their faith and release those who are currently being detained. We also ask Sudan that Christians who have been arrested are informed in a timely manner of their charges and afforded legal counsel and due process. Further, Sudan must provide training to police and educate them on the rights of its citizens to freely exercise their freedom of religion and punish those who violate that right. This is important to ensure so that the arbitrary arrests of Christians will stop.

22. Lastly, Sudan must guarantee the unhindered distribution of humanitarian aid. To do this, Sudan must allow for the free movement of aid into the country so that it can reach those in need. We also ask the Sudan provide humanitarian aid convoys with armed personnel to protect the convoys from being attacked. Further aid must be freely given to those in need and the distribution of aid should not be dependent on one's religion.

¹ Ahmad Alawad Sikainga et al., *Sudan*, BRITANNICA, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sudan> (last updated July 12, 2026).

² *Sudan*, MIDDLE EAST CONCERN, <https://www.meconcern.org/countries/sudan/> (last visited July 15, 2026).

³ *Universal Periodic Review – Sudan*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/sd-index> (last visited July 16, 2026).

⁴ *Infographic – Sudan*, OHCHR, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session39/sd/2022-12-21/Sudan_Infographic_39th.pdf (last visited July 16, 2026).

⁵ *UPR of Sudan (3d Cycle-40th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations*, OHCHR 49 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session40/sd/2022-12-08/MatriceRecommendationsSudan.doc> (last visited July 16, 2026) [hereinafter OHCHR, UPR of Sudan].

⁶ *Id.* at 40.

⁷ Sudan, OPEN DOORS INT’L, <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/sudan/> (last visited July 16, 2026).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ CONSTITUTIONAL CHARTER FOR THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF 2019, art. 56 (Sudan), <https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/legislation/details/19705>.

¹⁰ *General Administration of Legislation – Department of the Official Gazette*, REPUBLIC OF SUDAN MINISTRY OF JUST. 6 (July 13, 2020), <https://redress.org/storage/2020/07/2-Sudan-Amendments-July-2020-English-REDRESS-translation.pdf>.

¹¹ Sudan, END BLASPHEMY L., <https://end-blasphe-my-laws.org/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/sudan/> (last updated Oct. 13, 2020).

¹² *Ratification Status for Sudan*, OHCHR, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=165&Lang=en (last visited July 16, 2026).

¹³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 18, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights> [hereinafter ICCPR].

¹⁴ *Id.* art. 27.

¹⁵ OHCHR, UPR of Sudan, *supra* note 5, at 49.

¹⁶ Dan McDonald, *Christians Told: ‘Renounce Jesus or STARVE’ in Brutal Islamist Repression Campaign*, GREAT BRITAIN NEWS, <https://www.gbnews.com/news/world/sudan-civil-war-christians-renounce-jesus-starve> (last updated Mar. 24, 2026, at 9:38).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ Daniel Sitole, *Christians Suffer Tribulation in Sudan*, THE LIVING CHURCH (May 6, 2026), <https://livingchurch.org/news/news-anglican-communion/christians-suffer-tribulation-in-sudan/>.

²⁰ Paul Tilsley, *Another Christian Community at Risk in Africa as Extremists and War Take Their Toll*, FOX NEWS (Jan. 24, 2026, at 12:55 EST), <https://www.foxnews.com/world/another-christian-community-risk-africa-extremists-war-take-toll>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *UN Report Suggests Possible Genocide in Sudan*, INT’L CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Feb. 20, 2026), <https://persecution.org/2026/02/20/un-report-suggests-possible-genocide-in-sudan/>.

²³ *Reports Emerge of Arson Attack on Church in Kadugli*, CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE (July 8, 2026), <https://www.csw.org.uk/2026/07/08/press/6856/article.htm>.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Terror Strike Shatters Christmas Worship*, SUDAN RELIEF FUND (Jan. 9, 2026), <https://sdnrlf.com/terror-strike-shatters-christmas-worship/>.

²⁶ Sudan, OPEN DOORS INT’L, <https://www.portesouvertes.fr/persecution-des-chretiens/profils-pays/soudan> (last visited July 16, 2026).

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Sudan: Persecution Dynamics*, OPEN DOORS INT’L 8 (2024), https://www.opendoors.org/persecution/reports/Sudan-Full_Country_Dossier-ODI-2025.pdf.

²⁹ Emmanuel Nwachukwu, *The Civil War in Sudan Has Destroyed Hospitals and Churches*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY (May 18, 2026), <https://fr.christianitytoday.com/2026/05/urgent-guerre-civile-soudan-destruction-hopitaux-eglises-fr/>.

³⁰ Nayana Mena, *Five Christians Arrested in Sudan Amid Growing Fears of Persecution*, PREMIERE CHRISTIAN NEWS (Sep. 1, 2025), <https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/five-christians-arrested-in-sudan>.

³¹ *Id.*

³² *World Watch List 2026: Sudan*, OPEN DOORS INT’L 6 (2026), https://www.opendoors.org/persecution/reports/Sudan-Country_Dossier-ODI-2026.pdf.

³³ *Christians Arrested After Fleeing Conflict, Others Report Being Pressured to Convert*, CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE (Oct. 14, 2024), <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/10/14/press/6331/article.htm>.

³⁴ *Sudan: Four Christians Charged with Apostasy in Central Darfur*, AFR. CTR. FOR JUST. AND PEACE STUDS. (July 10, 2022), <https://web.acjps.org/sudan-four-christians-charged-with-apostasy-in-central-darfur/>.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ McDonald, *supra* note 16.

³⁷ OHCHR, UPR of Sudan, *supra* note 5, at 40.

³⁸ *Sudan’s Aid Crisis is Also a Crisis of Accountability*, THE NEW HUMANITARIAN (July 8, 2026), <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2026/07/08/sudan-aid-crisis-accountability>.

³⁹ *Id.*