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UPR 54 Accountability

Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review

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Universal Periodic Review of Sudan | Joint Stakeholder Submission

Submitted by the International Coalition of Human Rights Organizations (ICHRO) and Omnim des Libertés (ODL)

I. Introduction and Methodology

1. The International Coalition of Human Rights Organizations (ICHRO) and Omnim des Libertés (ODL) (hereinafter "the submitting organizations") respectfully submit this joint stakeholder contribution to the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Republic of the Sudan.

The submitting organizations comprise independent non-governmental organizations engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights, the protection of civilians, accountability, and humanitarian access in the Horn of Africa. Several member organizations have maintained continuous monitoring of the human rights situation in Sudan throughout the period following the third UPR cycle.





This submission pursues three principal objectives:

- (a)** to recall the commitments accepted by Sudan during its third Universal Periodic Review in 2022;
- (b)** to assess the extent of implementation of those commitments and to document the significant shortcomings observed since the previous review; and
- (c)** to draw the attention of the Working Group to concerns regarding procedural impartiality and the selective treatment of documented human rights violations in the context of the ongoing conflict in Sudan, including issues arising during the deliberations of the Human Rights Council at its sixty-second session concerning the draft resolution on the humanitarian situation in El Obeid.

2. The present submission is based on publicly available United Nations documentation relating to the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, including:

- Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Sudan (A/HRC/50/16);
- Addendum to the report containing the views of Sudan on the recommendations and voluntary commitments (A/HRC/50/16/Add.1);
- Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/WG.6/39/SDN/2);
- Summary of stakeholders' submissions prepared by OHCHR (A/HRC/WG.6/39/SDN/3); and
- Human Rights Council Decision 50/112 of 4 July 2022.

These sources have been supplemented by information collected and verified by member organizations of the submitting organizations and their field-based partners operating in Sudan and neighbouring countries. Information that could not be independently corroborated has been identified accordingly and is presented with appropriate caution.

3. The submitting organizations reaffirm their commitment to the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, and non-selectivity that underpin the international human rights system. They welcome all genuine efforts aimed at protecting civilians, ensuring accountability for violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and promoting access to justice for victims.

At the same time, the submitting organizations express concern regarding what they consider to be an increasingly selective and narrowly framed approach reflected in certain international initiatives addressing the situation in Sudan, including the draft Human Rights Council resolution concerning the humanitarian situation in El Obeid. In the view of the submitting organizations, sustainable accountability requires that all alleged violations committed by all parties to the conflict be examined according to the





same legal standards, supported by credible evidence, and assessed through impartial and independent mechanisms.

4. Against this background, the submitting organizations respectfully submit the following observations and recommendations for consideration by the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review.

The Sudan was reviewed under the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 9 February 2022 during the sixteenth meeting of the fortieth session of the UPR Working Group. The State delegation was led by the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice, while the troika facilitating the review comprised the Gambia, the Marshall Islands, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Forty-five stakeholders submitted written contributions, which were summarized in document A/HRC/WG.6/39/SDN/3.

5. During the interactive dialogue, 97 States delivered statements and a total of 283 recommendations were made. According to the addendum to the report of the Working Group, Sudan supported 244 recommendations and noted 39. The Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the review without a vote on 4 July 2022 (decision 50/112).

6. During the review, Sudan presented a number of legislative and institutional reforms undertaken by the transitional authorities. These included the repeal of the Public Order and Public Morals Laws, the criminalization of female genital mutilation, the decriminalization of apostasy, the abolition of corporal punishment, the ratification of the Convention against Torture, and accession to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Sudan also highlighted the establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) country office in 2019, the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), and the creation of investigative mechanisms, including commissions of inquiry into the killing of protesters and a Special Prosecutor for crimes committed in Darfur.

7. Of particular relevance to the present submission, Sudan accepted recommendations calling for full cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms, including OHCHR, the Independent Expert, and the special procedures (recommendations 137.57–137.60 and 137.65); enhanced protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas, including Darfur and Southern Kordofan (137.127); an end to indiscriminate attacks against civilians (137.124); protection of humanitarian personnel and facilities (137.117); the conduct of prompt, effective, independent, and impartial investigations into alleged violations of international law and the prosecution of those responsible (137.131, 137.133, and 137.137); the restoration of civilian rule in accordance with the 2019 Constitutional Document (137.83); implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement (137.78 and 137.79); and the strengthening of the national mechanism for implementation, reporting, and follow-up of human rights recommendations, including continued implementation of UPR recommendations (137.68 and 137.69).

8. Sudan noted 39 recommendations relating, inter alia, to the abolition of the death





penalty or the establishment of a moratorium on its application, the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations, full cooperation with the International Criminal Court, including with respect to outstanding arrest warrants, the extension of a standing invitation to all special procedure mandate holders, and the decriminalization of consensual same-sex relations. The Coalition recalls that recommendations which have been noted remain an integral part of the UPR outcome and encourages Sudan to give them further consideration and progressively implement them during the current review cycle.

9. During the review, Sudan also acknowledged the significant challenges affecting the implementation of its human rights obligations, including the economic crisis, political instability, and recurring armed violence in several regions, and requested technical assistance from the international community. While recognizing these challenges, the Coalition emphasizes that they do not diminish the State's obligations under international human rights law. Rather, they underscore the importance of sustained engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms, effective implementation of accepted UPR recommendations, and strengthened international cooperation and technical assistance to support meaningful human rights reforms.

Follow-up to the Third Cycle: Persistent Gaps in Implementation

10. The third-cycle review took place under exceptional political circumstances. On 25 October 2021, approximately three and a half months prior to the review, the military seized power, bringing the civilian-led transitional process to an abrupt halt. During the interactive dialogue, numerous delegations, including Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, expressed concern regarding the military takeover and the reported use of excessive force against peaceful protesters. Consequently, the commitments undertaken during the review in February 2022 were made in the context of an unconstitutional change of government, a factor that has had significant implications for their subsequent implementation.

11. The outbreak of armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces on 15 April 2023 further undermined the implementation of Sudan's UPR commitments. The legislative reform programme presented during the third-cycle review was effectively suspended, the 2019 Constitutional Document ceased to provide a functional framework for governance, and many institutions responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights became unable to operate across large parts of the country. Likewise, legislative and treaty commitments that remained pending at the time of the review, including the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, have not been advanced.

12. The Coalition is concerned by the absence of meaningful follow-up to the recommendations accepted during the third review. Sudan has not submitted a voluntary mid-term report on implementation, and the National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF), whose strengthening was accepted under recommendation 137.68, no longer appears to be operational. Furthermore, no





transparent or inclusive national consultation process involving civil society organizations has been initiated in preparation for the fourth-cycle review.

13. Cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms has deteriorated considerably since the adoption of the third-cycle outcome. Following a request by the Sudanese authorities, the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) was terminated by the Security Council in December 2023. In addition, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, established by Human Rights Council resolution 54/2 of 11 October 2023, has been unable to conduct investigations within Sudanese territory. OHCHR and the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan have likewise encountered restrictions on access and engagement imposed by the de facto authorities in Port Sudan. These developments are inconsistent with Sudan's acceptance of recommendations 137.57–137.60 and 137.65 concerning full cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms.

14. Sudan's engagement with the international human rights treaty system has similarly weakened. Initial and periodic reports due under several international human rights treaties since 2022 remain outstanding. Moreover, the OHCHR country office, whose establishment in 2019 was highlighted during the third-cycle review as an important institutional achievement, continues to operate under significant operational constraints that limit its ability to monitor and engage throughout the country. As a result, much of the institutional framework for cooperation with international human rights mechanisms established during the 2019–2022 transitional period has been substantially eroded.

15. The commitments relating to accountability and the fight against impunity have likewise seen little progress. The commissions of inquiry referenced during the third-cycle review, including those established to investigate the killings of protesters and incidents in El Geneina, Krinding, and Kalma camps, have not published findings or reported tangible progress since the outbreak of the armed conflict. Similarly, the memorandum of understanding concluded with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has not resulted in meaningful cooperation or demonstrable follow-up. These developments raise concerns regarding the implementation of recommendations 137.51, 137.134, and 137.139, which Sudan supported during the third-cycle review.

16. The Coalition remains concerned by the limited implementation of recommendations relating to the protection of civilians. Reports continue to document indiscriminate attacks against civilians, sieges of populated areas, and attacks affecting camps for internally displaced persons in Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile. Humanitarian personnel and civilian infrastructure have also continued to face serious risks. These developments raise concerns regarding the implementation of recommendations 137.117, 137.124 and 137.127, which Sudan accepted during the third-cycle review. At the same time, Sudan has experienced an unprecedented displacement crisis, with millions of people forced to flee their homes and famine conditions reported in parts of North Darfur, underscoring the limited implementation of commitments aimed at preventing further displacement, including recommendation 137.282.





17. While recognizing the severe institutional and humanitarian challenges resulting from the armed conflict, the Coalition considers that the implementation gap cannot be explained solely by limitations in State capacity. The Coalition is concerned by the continued reduction in cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and accountability processes, which has further weakened the implementation of accepted UPR recommendations. In this context, the Coalition emphasizes that sustained engagement with the Universal Periodic Review process requires genuine implementation of accepted recommendations and continued cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms.

IV. Structural Drivers of the Human Rights Crisis

18. The Coalition considers that the current human rights crisis in Sudan extends beyond the ongoing armed confrontation between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. In its assessment, the conflict is also influenced by longstanding political and ideological dynamics that have shaped governance, security institutions, and decision-making processes over several decades. The Coalition expresses concern regarding the reported influence exercised by actors affiliated with the Islamic Movement and associated armed formations, including the Al-Baraa ibn Malik Brigade, within elements of the military establishment.

19. According to the Coalition's assessment, the continuation of the armed conflict has been exacerbated by the repeated failure of political and military actors to engage constructively with regional and international ceasefire initiatives and mediation efforts. The Coalition is concerned that the absence of meaningful progress towards a negotiated settlement has contributed to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, resulting in one of the world's largest displacement crises, the spread of famine conditions in several localities, and the severe disruption of essential public services, including healthcare and education.

20. The Coalition further notes that political and institutional dynamics which impeded the democratic transition between 2019 and 2021 continue to affect prospects for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In the Coalition's assessment, the continued influence of entrenched political and military networks has constrained opportunities for an inclusive political process and has complicated efforts to achieve a sustainable ceasefire and civilian-led governance.

21. The Coalition is further concerned that several legislative and institutional reforms highlighted by Sudan during its third-cycle review have experienced significant regression. In areas under the control of the de facto authorities, civil society organizations reportedly face increasing restrictions, concerns have been raised regarding the protection of women's rights, and safeguards relating to freedom of religion or belief have reportedly weakened. These developments, if sustained, risk undermining reforms previously presented by Sudan as evidence of progress during the third-cycle review.

V. Comprehensive Documentation of Human Rights Violations

22. The Coalition emphasizes that effective human rights monitoring requires comprehensive, impartial and nationwide documentation of violations. It is concerned





that an exclusive or disproportionate focus on violations committed in a single geographical area, including El Obeid, risks providing an incomplete assessment of the human rights situation in Sudan. In accordance with the principles of universality, impartiality and objectivity underpinning the Universal Periodic Review, the Coalition encourages all United Nations human rights mechanisms to continue documenting alleged violations and abuses wherever they occur throughout the territory of Sudan, irrespective of the identity of the alleged perpetrators or the area under their control.

23. The Coalition is concerned that the draft resolution does not adequately reflect the broader geographical scope of the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in Sudan. Serious violations continue to be reported in several regions, including Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile. The Coalition notes, in particular, reports of civilian casualties, including children, following the events in Kulbus, West Darfur, on 29 June 2026. Likewise, the prolonged siege of El Fasher and the repeated attacks affecting camps for internally displaced persons in North Darfur warrant sustained attention and should be comprehensively reflected in the Council's assessment of the situation.

24. The Coalition further notes that the documentation of violations has been significantly constrained by the limited access available to international human rights mechanisms. Restrictions on access imposed by the de facto authorities have impeded the ability of independent mechanisms to conduct on-site investigations in several affected areas. The Coalition emphasizes that such limitations may affect the completeness of documentation and underscore the importance of ensuring that restrictions on access do not hinder independent, impartial, and comprehensive human rights monitoring.

25. The Coalition recalls that the principles of universality, impartiality, and non-selectivity require that all alleged violations be documented and assessed on an equal basis, irrespective of the geographical location in which they occur or the parties allegedly responsible. A geographically limited approach to monitoring risks creating disparities in protection and accountability for victims affected by the same conflict. Such an approach would also be inconsistent with the objective of recommendation 137.127, accepted by Sudan, concerning the protection of civilians in all conflict-affected areas.

26. The Coalition therefore encourages the Human Rights Council, the sponsors of relevant resolutions, and, in the context of the fourth-cycle Universal Periodic Review, the Working Group, to ensure that the human rights situation throughout the entire territory of Sudan is assessed in a comprehensive, balanced, and impartial manner. The Coalition further calls for all regions affected by the conflict to receive equal attention in monitoring, reporting, accountability, and protection efforts.

VI. Procedural and Representation Concerns

27. The Coalition wishes to draw attention to procedural concerns regarding the representation of Sudan before United Nations human rights bodies. It notes that the de facto authorities based in Port Sudan continue to participate in international fora despite the decision of the African Union to suspend Sudan's participation following the unconstitutional change of government of 27 October 2021. In this regard, the Coalition considers that questions relating to representation and legitimacy warrant careful





consideration in order to preserve the integrity, impartiality, and credibility of United Nations human rights processes.

28. The Coalition further notes that recognition of representatives exercising de facto authority may have broader implications for ongoing political and peace processes. It therefore recalls Sudan's acceptance of recommendation 137.83, which called for the restoration of civilian rule in accordance with the 2019 Constitutional Document, and emphasizes the importance of ensuring that international engagement remains consistent with this commitment and with efforts aimed at achieving an inclusive and sustainable political transition.

29. In preparation for the fourth-cycle Universal Periodic Review, the Coalition encourages the Working Group and the Office of the President of the Human Rights Council to give due consideration to questions concerning the representativeness of any delegation appearing on behalf of Sudan. The Coalition considers that maintaining the impartiality and credibility of the review process requires careful attention to these issues, particularly in light of the continuing political and constitutional crisis.

30. The Coalition further recalls the regional dimensions of the Sudanese crisis. Efforts undertaken by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and neighbouring States to facilitate dialogue and promote a peaceful resolution underscore the importance of coherent international engagement. The Coalition emphasizes that clarity regarding representation and participation in international processes may contribute to strengthening mediation initiatives and supporting efforts aimed at achieving a durable ceasefire and a peaceful, civilian-led resolution of the conflict.

VII. Grave Issues Requiring Greater Attention by the Human Rights Council

31. The Coalition expresses grave concern over the omission from the Human Rights Council's agenda of several matters of exceptional seriousness, and calls for an urgent and independent international investigation into documented allegations concerning the use of internationally prohibited chemical weapons by the Sudanese Armed Forces.

32. The Coalition further draws attention to the indiscriminate aerial bombardment of civilians and civilian infrastructure under the pretext of targeting alleged social support bases; to the obstruction of humanitarian relief operations, including convoys of the World Food Programme; and to the reported involvement of foreign cross-border armed groups, including Seleka elements from the Central African Republic, whose presence further internationalizes the conflict.

33. Each of these omissions carries measurable humanitarian consequences. The obstruction of relief has contributed to the confirmation of famine conditions in displacement camps and to the loss of humanitarian personnel; the bombardment of markets, hospitals and water infrastructure has multiplied the secondary victims of the conflict; and the persistence of unexamined allegations of prohibited weapons erodes the normative barriers whose enforcement is the common responsibility of the international community.

34. The omission of these matters from the Council's agenda deprives victims of the





protection of international law and weakens the evidentiary record that the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review will be called upon to assess. VIII. Conclusion :-

35. Four years after its third review, the record of the Sudan is characterized by the near total non-implementation of the recommendations it supported, the reversal of its cooperation with international mechanisms, and the deliberate restriction of access that has made the comprehensive documentation of violations impossible. The selective treatment of the crisis — geographical, institutional and procedural — compounds the suffering of victims and contradicts the principles of universality, impartiality and equal treatment that underpin the universal periodic review.

36. The Coalition stands ready to cooperate with the Working Group, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the members of the troika in the preparation of the fourth review, and to make available the documentation gathered by its member organizations.

37. The fourth review will constitute a defining test: either the universal periodic review confines itself to a formal exercise in which commitments are recorded and forgotten, or it becomes the framework within which the gap between the commitments of February 2022 and the reality of July 2026 is named, measured and redressed. The Coalition urges all participating States to seize this opportunity. IX. Recommendations 38. In light of the foregoing, and recalling the recommendations supported by the Sudan at its third review, the International Coalition of Human Rights Organizations submits the following recommendations to the Sudanese authorities:

Recommendations

The Coalition calls upon the Sudanese authorities and all parties to the conflict to:

1. Ensure access for international human rights mechanisms

Grant immediate, safe, sustained and unhindered access throughout the Sudan, including Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile, to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, and all Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Issue a standing invitation to all Special Procedure mandate holders, in accordance with supported recommendations 137.57–137.60 and 137.65, and taking into consideration noted recommendations 137.61, 137.63 and 137.64.

2. Ensure independent investigations and accountability

Establish, or fully cooperate with, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law committed since April 2023, including allegations concerning the use of internationally prohibited chemical weapons, indiscriminate aerial bombardment of civilians, and the events of 29 June 2026 in Kulbus, West Darfur. Ensure that all those responsible, irrespective of rank or affiliation, are brought to justice through fair and credible proceedings consistent with international standards, in line with supported recommendations 137.131, 137.133 and 137.137.





3. Protect civilians

Immediately cease all indiscriminate and unlawful attacks against civilians and civilian objects, comply fully with obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and take all necessary measures to ensure the effective protection of civilians in all conflict-affected areas, including Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile, in line with supported recommendations 137.124 and 137.127.

4. Ensure humanitarian access

Guarantee safe, rapid, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access throughout the Sudan, including for World Food Programme convoys and other humanitarian operations, and ensure the protection and security of humanitarian personnel, facilities and relief supplies, in accordance with supported recommendation 137.117.

5. Engage in a ceasefire and inclusive peace process

Engage immediately, unconditionally and in good faith in regional, international and United States-facilitated ceasefire initiatives, without imposing unreasonable preconditions, and take concrete steps towards a permanent cessation of hostilities to enable effective mediation and a sustainable political settlement, in line with supported recommendations 137.78, 137.79 and 137.232.

6. Strengthen follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review

Re-establish an effective national mechanism for implementation, reporting and follow-up of international human rights recommendations; ensure the meaningful participation of civil society in the preparation of the fourth-cycle Universal Periodic Review; and submit a voluntary mid-term report on the implementation of third-cycle UPR recommendations, in accordance with supported recommendations 137.68 and 137.69.

7. Restore civilian-led governance

Take immediate and concrete steps to restore a civilian-led transitional government based on the 2019 Constitutional Document, consistent with supported recommendation 137.83 and the relevant decisions and principles of the African Union.

8. Cooperate with the International Criminal Court

Resume full and effective cooperation with the International Criminal Court, including by executing outstanding arrest warrants and facilitating judicial cooperation, and ensure accountability for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes under international law, in line with supported recommendations 137.51, 137.134 and 137.139.

9. Recommendations to the Human Rights Council

The Coalition further recommends that the Human Rights Council:

(a) Ensure that any resolution concerning the Sudan is comprehensive, balanced and fully reflective of the armed conflict.