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Sudanese doctors say dozens of people raped during sit-in attack

Hospitals in Khartoum record more than 70 cases of rape in aftermath of attack on protest

By Zeinab Mohammed Salih and Jason Burke

The Guardian (11.06.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2WVYKna> - Doctors believe paramilitaries carried out more than 70 rapes during an attack on a protest camp in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, a week ago.

More than 100 people were killed and as many as 700 injured in the attack last Monday on a sit-in and clashes afterwards, as paramilitaries from the Rapid Support Forces spread through the city to quell sporadic unrest.

Harrowing details of rapes by the RSF have emerged in recent days despite restrictions on communications in Sudan, but the extent of the sexual violence has remained unknown.

One doctor with access to data compiled by the central committee of doctors, a pro-reform group, said hospitals in Khartoum had recorded more than 70 cases of rape in the attack and its immediate aftermath.

A doctor at the Royal Care hospital said it had treated eight victims of rape – five women and three men. At a second hospital in the south of Khartoum, a medical source said it had received two rape cases, including one who was attacked by four RSF paramilitaries. Several witnesses have also described similar cases on social media.

Many victims have not sought medical treatment, either because of fear of reprisals, insecurity in the city, or because care has been limited. Human rights activists and experts have described the reports of sexual violence as reliable.

The crisis in Sudan continued on Monday with the second day of a general strike aimed at relaunching an opposition movement battered by a brutal crackdown, and forcing the country's military leaders to resign.

Shops were closed and streets were empty throughout Khartoum and in the neighbouring city of Omdurman, though there was visibly more traffic in the streets than on Sunday, when the strike began. Four protesters were killed in sporadic violence in the two cities over the weekend.

A top US diplomat will head to the country this week to urge an end to the crackdown. Tibor Nagy, the US assistant secretary of state for African affairs, plans to meet both members of the military leadership and protest leaders in Khartoum.

Sudan's military leaders have refused to make any concessions since the start of the strike, blaming the country's protest movement for what they describe as a major threat to the nation and its security.

Lt Gen Jamaledine Omar, from the ruling transitional military council, said late on Sunday that by closing roads and setting up barricades, the protesters had committed a crime.

"The technique of closing the roads and building barricades ... is a fully-fledged crime as it deprives people from being able to go about their normal life," he said.

Omar said the Forces for Declaration of Freedom and Change, a coalition of pro-democracy groups, was to blame for "all the regrettable events" of the past days.

The protest leaders, by their actions, have "crossed the line of peaceful practices ... and have become a major liability for the country and the people's security," he said.

Omar also said the military and the RSF had reinforced their presence across the country "to restore life back to normal".

The military took power after ousting the then president, Omar al-Bashir, in April after months of mass rallies. The ruling council has since refused demonstrators' demands for an immediate move to civilian rule, instead pushing for a transitional power-sharing arrangement.

Talks between the opposition and the council ground to a halt last month then collapsed altogether after the raid on the protest camp.

The Sudanese Professionals Association, an umbrella group of unions that has been spearheading protests since December, urged the Sudanese to continue the general strike, part of a civil disobedience campaign to press the military.

The SPA posted videos and photos on social media it said showed deserted streets and closed shops and businesses in Khartoum's Gabra neighbourhood and the eastern city of Wad Madani.

According to the protest leaders, participation in the strike on the first day exceeded their hopes. They vowed on Monday to continue their "peaceful resistance" until the military council was toppled.

The SPA urged people to close roads again, rebuild dismantled barricades across the country and avoid clashes with the RSF. Security forces on Sunday removed barricades from main roads and ended the sit-in area outside the military's headquarters.

"The solution is to get life paralysed," the protest leaders said.

Activists say professionals including bankers, doctors, air-traffic control staff, pilots, electrical engineers and economists have been targeted by intelligence services in what they say is an obvious attempt to break the strike.

The internet remains cut off in Khartoum, with other communications significantly restricted.

Sudan teen who killed rapist husband faces new calls for death penalty

Noura Hussein got a jail sentence after an international outcry. Prosecutors seek to overturn the ruling that spared her execution.

By Zeinab Mohammed Salih

The Guardian (24.08.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2w40Z9l> - State prosecutors in Sudan are calling for the death penalty to be reinstated for a young woman who was sentenced to five years in jail for killing her abusive husband.

Noura Hussein, 19, was found guilty of premeditated murder in May and had faced execution. But a month later, after a high profile campaign, the verdict was quashed and she was given a jail sentence and fined for manslaughter.

However, it has emerged that prosecutors are seeking to overturn the latest ruling and reinstate the death penalty.

Hussein was forced to marry at 16. She fled the marriage, but was tricked into returning to her husband by family members. She stabbed him as he tried to rape her.

Judy Gitau, a human rights lawyer at Equality Now, which is campaigning on Hussein's behalf, said the development was extremely concerning. "We reiterate our calls to the Sudanese authorities to ensure that the rule of law is observed," said Gitau. "The Sudanese government took a positive step forward for women's and girls' rights by overturning Noura's death sentence. There should be no regression on this."

Equality Now is asking Hussein's supporters to send letters of concern to Sudan's attorney general, Omer Ahmed Mohamed, the justice minister Dr Idris Ibrahim Jameel, and the National Commission for Human Rights of Sudan.

Asked how she was coping in prison, Hussein told the Guardian she had applied to study law at university. Her lawyers said she had been offered a scholarship to study at the Open University of Sudan.

Sudan allows girls as young as 10 to be married. More than a third of girls in Sudan are married before 18 according to the UN, and 12% are wed before they reach 15.

Since the case, Hussein's family have been forced to leave their home in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, fearing reprisals from the dead man's family.

His father told al-Tayyar daily newspaper in Khartoum that the family were not going to forgive Hussein. He added that even if she were executed they would still seek revenge because Hussein was only a woman who had killed a man, and women were not equal to men.

The No to Women's Oppression group is mediating between the two families.

Hussein's lawyer said he did not know when a decision on this latest appeal would be made.

Pressure mounts on Sudan to pardon teen bride for killing 'rapist' husband

By Nita Bhalla

Thomas Reuters Foundation (14.05.2018) - <https://reut.rs/2IDa2WU> - The United Nations and international rights groups have called on Sudan to pardon a 19-year-old girl sentenced to death after she killed her husband as he tried to rape her, saying that she is a victim of child marriage and acted in self-defense.

Noura Hussein is facing death by hanging after a Sharia court, which follows Islamic religious laws, found her guilty of premeditated murder for stabbing her husband as he raped her in April. On Thursday, the court sentenced her to death.

The UN Women, UN Population Fund and UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa on Sunday appealed to President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's government for clemency for Hussein.

"Reports indicate that she was forced against her will into marriage at the age of 16. She was raped by her husband while his three male relatives held her down," said a joint statement.

"Speaking as the voices of women and girls of the world, we plead with the government of Sudan to save the life of Hussein."

Noura Hussein said her father made her contractually marry her cousin when she was 16, but she refused to accept and sought refuge with a relative for three years.

She returned to her family home on the outskirts of the capital Khartoum in April this year after her father said the marriage was canceled, but found that she had been duped and preparations for her wedding ceremony were under way.

Hussein said she refused to have sex with her husband after the ceremony, but on the sixth day, he raped her as three of his male relatives restrained her.

The following day, he attempted to rape her again and as she struggled to stop him, she stabbed him, killing him.

Campaigners said Hussein sought help from her family, but fearing reprisals from her dead husband's relatives, her father handed her over to the police.

Hussein's lawyers said they are preparing to appeal against the court's decision and have until May 25 to do so.

The case has attracted international attention. Social media users on Twitter and Facebook are sharing her story under the hashtag #JusticeForNoura, and a petition on change.org has attracted almost 300,000 signatures.

Amnesty International has started a campaign asking people to appeal to Sudan's Minister of Justice Idris Ibrahim Jamil.

"The courts are saying Noura is guilty of premeditated murder - even though she was defending herself from being raped by a man she was forced to marry when she was just a young teenager," said Amnesty International in a statement.

Sudan is ranked 165 out of 188 countries on the U.N.'s Gender Inequality Index, which measures how women fare compared to men when it comes to access to health, education, political participation and employment opportunities.

UN Women says violence against women and girls is prevalent in Sudan. Marital rape and child marriage are not considered crimes in the predominately Muslim African nation.
