

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS • SEXUAL VIOLENCE • ARMED CONFLICTS

Sexual Violence in the Darfur and Eastern DRC Conflicts: A Major Humanitarian Crisis Exacerbated by Climate Dynamics

Thousands of survivors recorded in Sudan and the DRC between 2024 and 2026. Behind the numbers lies a systematic strategy of terror, worsened by climate disruption and persistent impunity for perpetrators.

By Me Landry CUMA BASHIZI | Lawyer, GBV Consultant | Founding Member of Baraka Climat | Published April 4, 2026

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <h2>3 396</h2> <p>survivors – Darfur janv. 2024 – nov. 2025 <i>MSF, march 2026</i></p> | <h2>35 000</h2> <p>child victims – DRC janv.. – sept. 2025 <i>UNICEF, déc. 2025</i></p> | <h2>128/day</h2> <p>Average cases reorded in DRC <i>UNICEF, déc. 2025</i></p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

I. A Crisis of Alarming Proportions

According to the MSF report of March 31, 2026, **3,396 survivors of sexual violence** were treated in Darfur between January 2024 and November 2025 (≈ 5 cases/day). The situation worsened in late 2025: **732 additional cases around Tawila in just two months**, averaging 24 cases per day. These figures remain underestimated—many victims lack access to care due to insecurity and stigma. **MSF (31 march 2026)** : <https://www.msf.org/sexual-violence-darfur>

In Eastern DRC, UNICEF documented approximately **35,000 cases of sexual violence** against children between January and September 2025, averaging **128 victims per day**. **UNICEF (30 déc. 2025)** : <https://www.unicef.org/drc/violence-against-children>

«These acts of violence are no longer counted by the month, but by the day»

II. A Systematic Tactic of Terror

These acts are not isolated incidents. Perpetrated by militias, government forces, and rebel armed groups, they represent a **deliberate strategy of forced displacement and community destruction**—often carried out publicly to maximize collective humiliation. The consequences are long-lasting: psychological trauma, unwanted pregnancies, STIs, stigmatization, and lack of access to justice.

| Area | Period | Documented Cases | Avg./Day | Source |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|-------------|
| Darfur | Jan. 2024 – Nov. 2025 | 3,396 survivors (MSF) | ± 5 | MSF 2026 |
| Darfur (Tawila) | Dec. 2025 – Jan. 2026 | 732 cases | ± 24 | MSF 2026 |
| Eastern DRC | Jan. – Sept. 2025 | 35,000 children | ± 128 | UNICEF 2025 |

III. Climate Change as an Aggravating Factor

Pressure on natural resources (water, land, forests) and the effects of climate disruption intensify tensions, trigger displacement, and exacerbate conflicts. **Women and children are the primary victims**, as documented by the World Bank in its work on fragile states, climate, and conflict.

World Bank : <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/climatechange/brief/climate-conflict-and-fragility>

IV. Unfulfilled International Legal Obligations

The Rome Statute of the ICC and the Geneva Conventions classify rape in wartime as a **war crime and crime against humanity**. Command responsibility can be invoked when superiors knew—or should have known—that these crimes were being committed. The Bemba case at the ICC is a landmark precedent. **Persistent impunity fuels the cycle of violence**.

ICC – Rome Statute : <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>

V. Recommendations

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prevention | Strengthen civilian protection in conflict zones and integrate climate factors into conflict prevention mechanisms. |
| Access to Care | Ensure survivors have safe access to medical, psychosocial, and legal services, and facilitate humanitarian access to affected areas. |
| Targeted Sanctions | Freeze assets and impose travel bans on political and military leaders involved. |
| Justice | Guarantee access to justice for survivors and strengthen national and international prosecutions to end impunity. |
| Documentation | Intensify documentation of the climate-conflict-GBV nexus, applying the Nexus Plus framework to guide interventions. |

« Rape, as a war crime or crime against humanity, is imprescriptible. Perpetrators must be held accountable. Now is the time to act. »

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Landry CUMA BASHIZI

Lawyer | Humanitarian Protection and GBV Consultant

Trained by BIOFORCE in Humanitarian Program Coordination

Founding Member of Baraka Climat - <https://baraklaclimat.org>

landrybash@gmail.com

Note : The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions of affiliated organizations.. Original French version. English translation assisted by AI.