

Direct telephone: +44 (0)20 7772 6200
Email: jpriest@rcog.org.uk



Royal College of
Obstetricians &
Gynaecologists

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6 June 2019

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

By email: huntj@parliament.uk; edward.jones@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Dear 

I am writing to draw your attention to the RCOG's serious concerns at recent reports from Sudan of multiple sexual and physical assaults on women and medical staff amid violence in the capital Khartoum.

[UK media](#) has reported attacks by members of military forces on medical staff and volunteers in clinics, looting and destruction of hospital property and threats of reprisals to doctors and other healthcare workers attempting to care for the wounded.

Credible reports from UN sources and the Sudan Doctors Union (UK branch) have confirmed that their teams have documented the rape of at least seven female doctors and other female protesters. Last week a young pregnant protestor was shot dead, the first documented loss of life of a pregnant woman and an unborn child under the Transitional Military Council (TMC). Sources on the ground also report restriction and obstruction of rescue and clinical care for the wounded, as well as prevention of urgent and emergency care to other patients.

I am certain you share our condemnation of the use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls as a weapon of war. Mass rape is used to systematically torture women and girls and destroy communities through the rejection of raped women and the perceived humiliation of their husbands, fathers and brothers. In addition to lasting psychological scars, many women face incapacitating physical injuries from brutal assaults and sexually transmitted infections.

Furthermore, doctors and other healthcare workers must be free to carry out their work free from the threat of reprisal or attack. Access to health care is a fundamental human right and it is essential that healthcare workers are at liberty to provide assistance in conflict zones without fear of being targeted.

The RCOG is calling for the instant and urgent cessation of all attacks on medical staff and women and for independent and transparent investigations of all sexual and physical assaults. We urge you to raise with the TMC the critical issues of safeguarding women and girls from violence and protecting doctors to allow them to work in safety, free from threats and reprisals.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Lesley Regan MD DSc FRCOG
President**

Cc Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care; Rt Hon Rory Stewart MP, Secretary for International Development