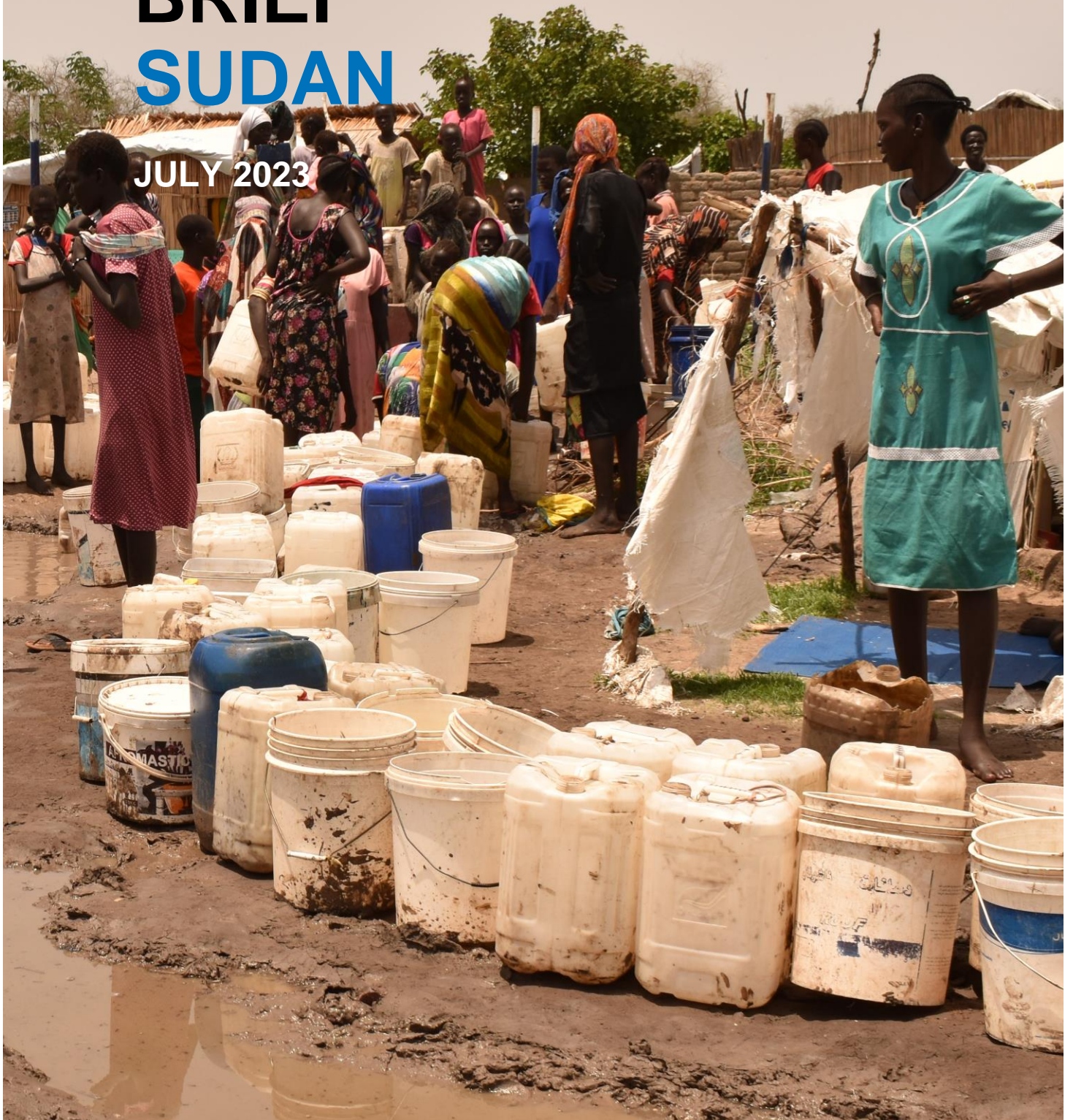


PROTECTION BRIEF SUDAN

JULY 2023

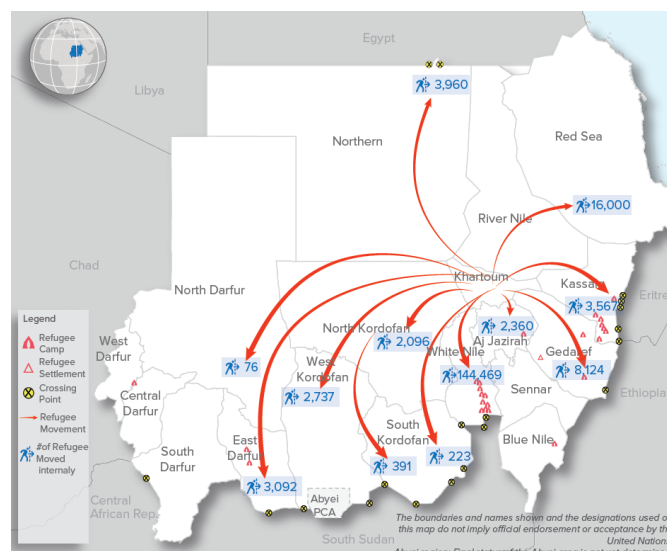


Women and children line up to fetch water from the tap stands in Um Sangour camp, White Nile State. Services in the camp have been stretched as a result of the influx of new arrivals from Khartoum and other conflict areas. Photo: UNHCR/Isadora Zoni

Operational Context & Analysis

The security situation in Sudan continues to deteriorate, with increased armed confrontation, including in urban centres such as Khartoum, Geneina, Zalingei, Nyala, El Fasher and rising criminality reported in various locations following the general breakdown of law and order¹. The overall situation continues to severely impact the lives of civilians, who remain exposed to repeated violations in the conduct of hostilities by all parties to the conflict. The disregard for basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) has led to estimated casualties of more than 3,000 civilians, including several refugees and IDPs in attacks in Khartoum and North Darfur². Safe passage to secure areas within and outside the country remains highly problematic, with first hand credible reports of hundreds of civilians, including refugees, being denied safe exit from urban and semi-urban areas of Khartoum by armed groups and prevented from crossing the borders to seek international protection.

The security situation in Sudan and the consequent collapse of State institutions has resulted in the lack of basic services, food, medical supplies, fuel, communications and cash. Negotiated humanitarian ceasefires or self-declared truces, have been repeatedly violated by the parties as the fighting rages on. When a lull in fighting enables civilians to access markets, little primary commodities are available due to widespread looting of civilian and public places. This also affected humanitarian premises and warehouses and impeded the delivery of much needed assistance to the displaced population. Illegal occupation of and attacks on public institutions, notably health and education facilities, governmental offices, banks, and other structures essential for the survival of the population continue to be reported, depriving all civilian population of access to the most essential and life-saving services. Escalation of conflict in Khartoum and in the Darfur region, including inter-communal clashes, as well as the re-ignition of other conflict dynamics between the Sudanese Armed Forces and other non-State armed groups in the Kordofan region have triggered additional massive internal displacement of civilians. As of 11 July 2023, over 2.4 million individuals have been displaced within Sudan³ including an estimated 187,000 displaced refugees. Such figures are largely estimations, as a significant number are in areas not safely accessible to humanitarian actors.



Internal movement of refugees in Sudan as of 16 July 2023

¹ Sudan Situation - UNHCR External Update #13 – 8 June 2023, available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101297>

² See UNHCR Press Release - 4 July 2023 - [After 28 refugee deaths in Khartoum, UNHCR urges Sudan's warring parties to allow safe passage for civilians](#)

³ IOM-Sudan. *Regional Sudan Response Situation Update* 11 July 2023, available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/sudan-situation-report-12>



Refugees and asylum seekers fleeing fighting in Khartoum and other conflict areas continue to arrive in White Nile State in search of safety and security. Photo: UNHCR/Ibrahim Mohamed

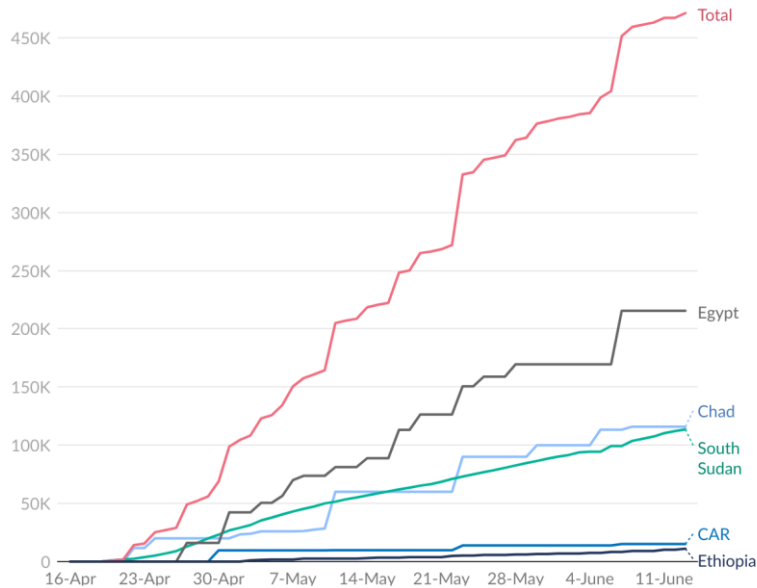
In Darfur, the confrontation between the Sudanese Army and the RSF has unleashed a markedly ethnic or intercommunal dimension igniting tribal rivalries. This situation affected particularly El Geneina with reports of widespread ethnically motivated killings and deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects, as well as other severe human rights violations. Also in West Darfur, mass killings have been reported in Misterei during attacks that led to the complete destruction of the town. Given the lack of information from West Darfur due to the absence of reliable means of communication and the lack of access for humanitarian partners, the reported incidents of human rights violations from West Darfur, gathered through the accounts of refugees in neighbouring Chad, likely represent a fraction of the overall devastating effects of the conflict. In addition, the past months have seen a significant escalation of violence in North Darfur, which, amongst others, has resulted in the complete destruction of the Kassab IDP camp in Kutum, with a significant number of fatalities, injuries, several reported cases of sexual violence and the displacement of 22,000 people. Clashes in Tawila town, resulted in the displacement of large numbers of IDPs to El Fasher. In South Darfur, areas in and around Nyala saw fierce clashes, the destruction of government and humanitarian facilities and severe challenges in reaching the population with humanitarian assistance. 15 people were reportedly killed by unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Otash IDP camp. In Zalingei, Central Darfur, aerial attacks as well as tactics adopted by parties to the conflict have left the city under military siege. This, coupled with the suspension of telecommunications has severely hampered humanitarian access. This situation is the same in other cities and locations (Geneina, Garsila, Habila, Foro Baranga and Masterei), where freedom of movement for the civilian population has been severely curtailed, with populations unable to meet their basic needs. As a result, almost 180,000 Sudanese, mainly from Darfur, have sought asylum in Chad, enduring perilous journeys and reportedly at times denied safe passage by parties to the conflict.

The severe escalation of the conflict has led to significant destruction of UNHCR property. During the month of June, both UNHCR offices in Khartoum were destroyed, the UNHCR warehouse in Al Obeid was looted, and other UNHCR warehouses remain inaccessible or have recently been looted such as in South Darfur. In locations accessible to humanitarian workers, UNHCR and partners continue to scale up humanitarian delivery despite capacity limitations. UNHCR has established a small operational presence in Wadi Halfa while scaling up its footprint in Wad Madani, Kosti, Gedaref, Kassala and Port Sudan. Further in North Darfur, in collaboration with the sectors, UNHCR has been able to continue delivering NFIs to IDP sites in El Fasher as well as conduct protection monitoring of new arrivals from Kutum and Tawilla.

Key Trends & Figures

The conflict in Sudan continues to steadily trigger waves of population outflows to neighbouring countries. At the beginning of July, based on registration and government statistics, almost 490,000 newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers were recorded in neighbouring Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan, and almost 142,000 South Sudanese were recorded as returnees in their country of origin.

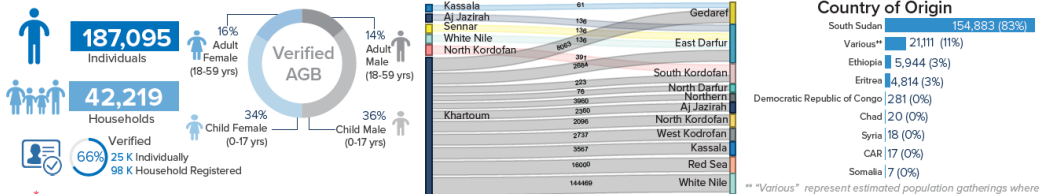
New arrivals from Sudan



Source: UNHCR Sudan Situation, Operational Data Portal <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation>

Within Sudan, the internal movement of refugees fleeing insecurity and active conflict continued unabated, particularly from Khartoum, which traditionally hosted the highest numbers of refugees, mainly from Eritrea and Ethiopia⁴. UNHCR estimates that more than 187,000 refugees may have left their areas of residence to seek safety in other regions of Sudan unaffected by the conflict. UNHCR continues to work with concerned authorities, including the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) to identify their locations to provide the needed support. The tracking and registration so far conducted highlighted how White Nile State has been one of the main areas of initial destination, followed by other States of East Sudan, notably Gedaref and Kassala, where refugees continue to seek shelter in the existing sites, as well as the Red Sea State.

ESTIMATED REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS INTERNAL MOVEMENT (POST 15 APRIL 2023) *:



Source: UNHCR Internal movement of refugees in Sudan as of 16 July 2023

⁴ See Sudan Protection Brief, June 2023 and UNHCR Sudan- Overview of refugees and asylum seekers distribution and movement in Sudan Dashboard as of 16 July 2023

Registration activities to track movements remain a priority for UNHCR and the authorities. An estimated 77% of new arrivals, mainly South Sudanese nationals coming from Khartoum, require refugee registration. In the Kordofan region, COR is registering refugees newly displaced from Khartoum into North and South Kordofan states, with challenges in West Kordofan due to the security situation and lack of fuel. In East Darfur, the arrivals of more than 1,000 South Sudanese, predominantly from Khartoum, has been reported with smaller numbers of new arrivals to Al Lait settlements in North Darfur.

The rainy season has started to affect registration operations in several locations. During the second half of June, access to hosting sites in the west part of White Nile State has been hindered by weather conditions, while in Gedaref notably in Um Rakuba, strong storms have damaged the registration centre and some equipment, affecting the planned registration activities. It is anticipated that disruptions to registration activities will persist and access will remain constrained for the period of the rainy season which is expected to last a few more weeks.

On the internal displacement front, the number of IDPs continues to surge, including secondary or tertiary movements. Current interagency estimates for internal displacement are higher than the recorded IDP movements of the last four years combined. It is estimated that over 2.4 million people have been displaced within Sudan since the onset of the current conflict, mainly from the most severely hit States of Khartoum and Darfur. The fleeing population is currently recorded predominately in River Nile (16.57%), Northern (14.71%), White Nile (10.82%), and Sennar (8.66%) states.⁵ The conflict in the Darfur Region has led to massive displacement within the region, and particularly in West Darfur, where the majority of the population remain at heightened risk of violence. Given the significant escalation of localised violence in certain locations, the Kordofan Region has also become both a hosting area particularly for IDPs who fled Khartoum, and an area of origin of newly displaced population.

Protection Risks

Safety and security

Civilians caught up in conflict. Despite high level advocacy and several attempts to call parties to the conflict to respect the basic rules of international humanitarian law, the neglect towards imperative principles on the protection of the civilian population remains a constant feature of the situation in Sudan. Coupled with a security vacuum also conducive to increased criminality, the situation in Sudan continue to claim lives and to take a toll on the security and safety of the population. According to the Federal Ministry of Health by mid-June, more than 3,000 fatalities and at least 6,000 injuries were recorded because of the conflict⁶. Actual figures are undoubtedly higher, with unverified reports of deaths in El Geneina alone exceeding that figure.

The past weeks have witnessed serious incidents affecting civilians across the country, largely stemming from the confrontation between the SAF and the RSF, but also linked to the inter-communal conflict affecting particularly West Darfur. Over 100 IDPs lost their lives in the clashes in and around IDP sites in Kutum, North Darfur, where tribal dynamics augmented the level of violence, including incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. Reportedly, attempts to evacuate injured civilians to nearby health facilities were thwarted by hostile acts and carjacking of vehicles and ambulances⁷.

⁵ Displacement Tracking Matrix, Sudan Situation Report 11, July 2023 <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/sudan-situation-report-12>

⁶ UNHCR-led Protection Sector Sudan, At a Glance: protection impacts of the Conflict, Update no. 8, 2 July 2023. Available on request.

⁷ UNHCR-led Protection Sector Sudan, Darfur Protection of Civilians Flash Update North Darfur: Attacks on Kutum town and Kassab IDP camp, 8 June 2023. Available on request.



UNHCR and partners conducted a protection assessment in Abu Shouk camp, North Darfur, where IDPs from Tawilla and Kutum are in dire need of food, NFIs, health, water, and security. Photo: UNHCR

Between 15 to 17 June, clashes took place between RSF, SAF and other armed elements in and around Tawila in North Darfur, leading to the destruction of homes, massive looting, the killing of dozens of IDPs and the displacement of scores of other civilians, including preventively from neighbouring villages⁸.

Since the onset of the conflict, the urban area of Khartoum continued to see the highest levels of violence and grave breaches of international humanitarian. On 25 June, 28 refugees hosted by Sudan were killed, and additional refugees injured, in the outskirts of Khartoum, when the area in which they lived was suddenly engulfed by the fighting⁹. According to reports received by UNHCR from the refugee communities, during the month of June at least 14 refugees lost their lives in Khartoum, and more refugees were injured in three separate incidents in Mayo, Sports City and Bahri areas. Such incidents are emblematic of urban warfare, particularly when explosive weapons are used in populated areas, and where precautions and the basic principle of distinction of the civilian population are not observed.

Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based Violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Reported incidents of conflict-related sexual violence continues to rise alongside the escalation of the conflict, in an atmosphere of total impunity. On 10 June, the Sudanese Unit for Combating Violence Against Women and Children (CVAW) reported that since the outbreak of the conflict, several documented cases of sexual assault in Khartoum and in Darfur were recorded, with most survivors being between the ages of 12 and 17 years¹⁰. They warned how foreign women and girls, notably Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees or migrant women and girls, were considered at heightened risk in Khartoum-North and Omdurman. In the Kordofan region, at least 12 incidents of GBV against refugees and IDPs were reported by community leaders in one day, all allegedly perpetrated by the warring parties against women and girls between the ages of 15 and 60, including one pregnant refugee woman. Multiple reports of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by parties to the conflict but also as a result of the escalating inter-communal violence coupled with the collapse of law and order are emerging in the Darfur region, including from refugee women and girls who have crossed into Chad and Egypt.

⁸ UNHCR-led Protection Sector Sudan, *Darfur Protection of Civilians Flash Update - North Darfur: Attacks on Tawila town*, 19 June 2023. Available on request.

⁹ UNHCR Press Release - 4 July 2023 - [After 28 refugee deaths in Khartoum, UNHCR urges Sudan's warring parties to allow safe passage for civilians](#)

¹⁰ Sudan: top UN officials sound alarm at spike in violence against women and girls, 5 July 2023

<https://www.who.int/news/item/05-07-2023-sudan-top-un-officials-sound-alarm-at-spike-in-violence-against-women-and-girls>

While underreporting is thought to be common, due to the fear of stigma and marginalisation, an increased number of women and girls, reaching safer locations in neighbouring countries disclose episodes of violence and cite the risk of conflict-related sexual violence as one of the main reasons for flight. Accounts of combatants looting civilians' homes and deliberately targeting women and girls, as well as cases of harassment at checkpoints, and of sexual violence and exploitation during their journeys to neighbouring countries are emerging in Chad, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Egypt.

Within Sudan, the rising number of survivors have limited possibilities to approach service providers and report incidents, given the lack of public health services, closure of many facilities and the unavailability of specialised staff and health personnel, from both the government and the humanitarian community sides. Consequently, there is considerable delay in providing medical services to survivors, including clinical management of rape and administration of PEP kits, with detrimental effects on possible HIV transmission and on the rate of unwanted pregnancies.

While several UN agencies and other humanitarian actors strive to maintain or re-establish services, including through courageous local organisations that remain active in conflict-affected areas, critical gaps remain in human resources for much needed psychosocial support interventions, availability of safe and confidential spaces for women and girls as well as medical supplies. Amidst this overall stretched capacity, service providers remain operational in Blue Nile, White Nile, Kassala, Gedaref, Port Sudan and Wad Madani.

Impact of violence on children. While child protection issues predated the current crisis, the situation of children caught up in the ongoing conflict is now considered alarming. Children have been caught up in the fighting, killed and injured in aerial attacks in Darfur and Khartoum. They are put at risk due to the widespread presence of unexploded ordnances and other remnants of war in urban areas and near IDP sites. Children who survived attacks, such as the one against the IDP site in Kutum in North Darfur, and managed to reach safety, suffer from the psychological consequence of having witnessed deadly violence, and their needs often remain unattended due to lack of functional services and social protection structures.

Children and youth have reportedly been abducted and forcibly recruited into armed forces and groups. Unverified but credible reports of abduction of children from hosting sites have emerged from West Darfur, as well as from the Kordofan region, from where UNHCR received information that at least 25 refugee youth of unverified age were kidnapped by a warring party in early June 2023.

Involuntary family separation due to the killing of family members, or because of the flight, remains a widespread child protection risk. In pre-conflict times, protection partners estimated that 3 to 5 % of IDP children in Sudan were unaccompanied and this figure is now believed to have exponentially increased. Opportunities for alternative care arrangements are precarious, given the disintegration of social and community-based safety nets. Children in institutional care, generally not a solution in the best interests of the child, are even more at risk due to the conditions of these social institutions, mostly left unattended, with power outages, and with lack of resources and personnel.

The humanitarian needs of children in all locations continue to grow, due to the collapse of social services and the halting of humanitarian assistance. In the Darfur region, the death of children in camps due to food insecurity and malnutrition is frequently reported by local organizations. A surge in the number of measles cases was also reported in the East and North Darfur regions, with ten deaths reported so far and with families resorting to traditional medicine in the absence of access to functioning hospitals.

Conflict and displacement continue to have a devastating impact on the health and psychological well-being of children and to hamper their access to education. School attendance and access have been completely disrupted, also due to the reported destruction and occupation of several education facilities. Course of studies have been interrupted, with children deprived of the possibility to attend final exams in many areas of Sudan.

Access to safety

Situation at the borders. Increased access restrictions to some neighbouring countries risk to further aggravate the humanitarian situation and needs within the country. At the border with Egypt continuous flows of displaced Sudanese continue to arrive with the hope of being authorised to cross into Egypt after obtaining the necessary visa documentation. Given the length of the process, the situation of the stranded population in Wadi Halfa is increasingly concerning due to the absence of accommodation, facilities, medical services and other adequate humanitarian services. Considering the visa restrictions imposed by neighbouring countries, it is anticipated that more individuals will make their way to Wadi Halfa and Port Sudan to access available consular services with the risk of remaining stranded until they are granted entry visas and arrange onward transportation via land or air. Very little information is available on the route to Libya due to the escalation of conflict in North Darfur and the remoteness of the border areas.

In West Darfur, where conflict has been particularly intense, there have also been confirmed reports provided by refugees in Chad that civilians were prevented from leaving El Geneina for their safety and security to safe locations, including across the border into Chad. Several reports of looting, assaults, harassment, and other violations against civilians seeking to flee the violence in El Geneina, West Darfur, into Chad have also been received. These incidents underscore the immense challenges faced by civilians seeking safety and security away from conflict zones.



The situation in the gathering sites in Wadi Halfa is becoming increasingly dire due to the lack of humanitarian activities. The continuous arrival of individuals hoping to cross into Egypt is exerting immense pressure on local resources. Photo: UNHCR/Rached Cherif

Key Elements of the Protection Response

Scale-up of registration and verification activities. UNHCR and COR continued the verification of refugees that have self-relocated from Khartoum and other states to East Sudan and White Nile State. So far, over 38% of new arrivals have been recorded, while registration activities have resumed in Kassala state after a period of suspension. UNHCR teams on the ground continue their efforts in supporting authorities on population fixing, verification, and registration, including to ensure proper identification and unhindered access to services.

Support to new arrivals from Khartoum. UNHCR has increased its operational presence and protection activities in Wad Madani as a first point of contact for refugees fleeing Khartoum. The operational presence in Wad Madani will continue to grow and serve as a hub to support those fleeing ongoing conflict in Khartoum. In White Nile State, UNHCR is coordinating with WFP the food assistance for all refugees arriving from Khartoum, estimated to be around 144,000.

Support in border areas. Through frequent missions, UNHCR is increasing its field presence in Wadi Halfa, actively engaging communities stranded in this border area while waiting to process their documentation for entry into Egypt with the consular authorities. Protection monitoring and awareness activities are being carried out on relevant issues such as risks of GBV and trafficking in persons. The team distributed NFI kits to 410 households at ten spontaneous gathering sites and further distributions are ongoing, targeting the most vulnerable households and individuals. Interventions for persons with specific needs in those sites also include the provision of mattresses, repair and installation of fans, as well as lighting.

Protection monitoring. Where security and mobility permit UNHCR continues to monitor the situation of persons of concern through direct visits. UNHCR also strives to access hard-to-reach areas remotely, connectivity allowing. UNHCR has also monitored the movement of refugees and IDPs within Darfur and Kordofan region through phone calls or interactions with peers who fled to the same areas. In East Sudan, protection monitoring was conducted on the ground in Babikri, Shagarab and Wad Sharifay camps. It includes the provision of information on available services and means to access them to new arrivals as well as older refugees. Remote protection monitoring is ongoing in the Darfur region but hampered by connectivity challenges. Physical protection monitoring is done where possible, such as in El Fasher, North Darfur and sporadically in South Darfur. In East Darfur, together with refugee communities and COR, the protection situation for refugees is also being monitored.



Child Protection and Education. Partners on the ground in Eastern Sudan and White Nile state continue to work on identifying and providing support to refugee and asylum seeker children at risk. In Gedaref, identification of children at risk continues through a variety of means including house to house protection monitoring, community-based protection networks, community volunteers, protection desks, referrals from partners including Government and at the point of registration. Case management is done in line with the Best Interests Procedure through BID panels and case management taskforces, whose members have undergone training either by UNHCR or partners. Children in need of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) are supported through Child Friendly Spaces and Child Rights Clubs, in collaboration with the Education Working Group which provides recreational activities. Procedures are in place for onward referral for more specialist medical care where required. On IDPs, UNHCR engages with partners through relevant coordination bodies, at national and state levels, mainly through State level Councils for Child Welfare (with SCCW, Child Protection partners, UNICEF and other stakeholders) and with the Education cluster and Child Protection AOR led by UNICEF at national level. These structures continue highlighting the dire situation of children and advocate for additional support, including through targeted funding in the field of child protection and education, as well as in health and MHPSS. In Eastern Sudan, the Telling the Real Story project continues to work with adolescent boys and girls, sensitizing them on the risks of irregular onward movement and their vulnerability to trafficking.

Gender-based violence. In Eastern Sudan, services to support GBV survivors are ongoing. In Gedaref, 100% of survivors who approached service providers have received counselling and services in accordance with case management procedures. In the Kordofan region, El Obeid, UNHCR is working with community leaders to find alternative locations for women who have experienced conflict-related sexual violence, along with their families. Due to lack of access, UNHCR is not able to relocate refugees to safer areas out of Khartoum, the Darfur or the Kordofan region but the Office continues to establish linkages between survivors and Community-Based Protection Networks to help them reach the support needed.

Two-way Communication with Communities and feedback mechanisms. Hotlines remain functional but dependent on the network connectivity. 1,072 calls were attended during the reporting period through active hotlines dedicated to Khartoum, the Darfur Region, the Kordofan Region, East Sudan and the Southern Corridor. Orientation training for hotline operators was held to further strengthen capacities to respond and make effective referrals. Nevertheless, providing information on access to services in areas of conflict remains a major challenge. Apart from the hotlines, UNHCR's [Help Page for Sudan](#) continues to be updated on a regular basis, and the [Telegram channel](#) provides helpful information in English and Arabic. UNHCR is working to improve the complaints feedback mechanism across all offices and is engaged with the inter-agency AAP working group in the planned conduct of community consultations to further improve the response across the country. Measures will be put in place to enable remote consultations exercise (by phone) in areas where there is no physical presence.

Durable solutions. UNHCR Sudan continues to capitalize on outreach efforts to identify refugees who may have been already identified and considered for resettlement and complementary pathways options, some who may have been already in an advanced stage of the procedures, including scheduled for imminent departure. Prior to the conflict, 3,250 individuals had been submitted to various resettlement countries for consideration, and 849 individuals were under various stages of resettlement processing. Cooperation with UNHCR neighbouring offices to track those refugees who were in the resettlement process and have crossed the border continue, to ensure that pathways towards solutions are not interrupted. In parallel, the office in Sudan has used the information collected to advocate for continued acceptance of cases from Sudan and is closely coordinating with relevant partners the way forward, including on exit procedures the situation permitting.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). UNHCR Sudan continues to work with partners and government counterparts in areas where operations are ongoing, to ensure that the IASC's Six Core Principles Related to SEA and the Secretary-General's

Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13, Special Measure (2003) are adhered to and that UNHCR's activities uphold integrity standards, including the personal and professional conduct of its staff. UNHCR continues to disseminate information and to sensitize persons of concern, partners and government staff on PSEA, referral pathways and reporting mechanisms. UNHCR is also an active member of the PSEA network.

Coordination and advocacy. In response to the significant conflict-driven internal displacement that has occurred, UNHCR has begun scaling up protection coordination in areas where new IDP responses are now underway. UNHCR and partners are also taking pragmatic approaches to address the mixed nature of displacement flows, i.e. refugees and IDPs. Protection Sector coordination platforms have been established in White Nile, Kassala, Gedaref, Madani, and Wadi Halfa. Additionally, in areas where protection sector coordination platforms were already present, outreach to protection partners planning to initiate responses in new areas affected by conflict and displacement is underway. In addition, since the outbreak of the conflict on 15 April, UNHCR-led Protection Sector has issued nine flash updates titled 'At a Glance: Protection Impacts of the Conflict'. These weekly updates, primarily based on desk review of secondary data, highlight the severity of the protection impacts experienced by the civilian population as a result of the conflict. The specific protection concerns around the intensity of the violence and its intercommunal dimension in Darfur were underscored in dedicated Darfur Protection of Civilians Advocacy Notes. These have included two regional-level advocacy notes and one focused specifically on West Darfur. Flash updates were also issued in relation to the attacks on Kutum and Tawila in North Darfur. Finally, key advocacy messages related to urgent protection of civilians' priorities were drafted in preparation for the high-level pledging event to support the humanitarian response in Sudan on 15 June, in collaboration with the Global Protection Cluster.

Challenges & Opportunities

Security and other constraints for humanitarian operations. The security situation continues to deteriorate putting the civilian population more at risk. Aerial attacks and bombardments have increased, affecting infrastructures, services, health facilities necessary for the implementation of humanitarian activities, notably offices, warehouses, accommodations of humanitarian staff. As a result, despite the determination to deliver assistance where needs are most acute, more humanitarian services continue to be suspended, especially in Darfur and Kordofan regions, aggravating further risks of deprivation and death. Communication blackouts continue to hamper operations in the Darfur region, with several locations completely cut-off for more than a month.

Returns under adverse circumstances. In their quest for safety, and with increased border restrictions, many refugees see no other options but to flee the ongoing conflict in Sudan and are eventually opting to return to their country of origin under adverse conditions. While many of those individuals continue to fear return, they see no other options but to flee the ongoing conflict in Sudan.

Civil documentation. Registration of vital events and delivery of civil documentation continue to be suspended in many parts of the country, affecting new-born registration and access to public services where available. Many Sudanese, refugees and asylum seekers have either left documentation behind or lost it during flight.

Safe passage and freedom of movement. As a result of the current humanitarian situation, refugees have engaged in self-relocation in various parts of the country to escape risks of conflict and seek safety. Regulations in place requires refugees to request a permit prior to leaving their place of registration. UNHCR has undertaken strong advocacy with authorities in the East to lift this requirement, considering the current context. UNHCR has successfully advocated for the release of 49 refugees from detention in Gedaref after they

were arrested in police roundups because they did not have permits to be in Gedaref. Refugees in other locations, such as Wad Madani, are concerned that similar police roundups will happen in their locations. In Kassala state, the local authorities requested the Commissioner of Refugees (COR) to relocate some 8,000 South Sudanese refugees from Kassala state to White Nile state, where the vast majority are hosted, with a view of regrouping them all in one location.

Contacts with communities. Connectivity in Sudan is becoming more challenging daily, due to the widespread damage to telecommunications infrastructure. In most States, only one of the three network providers continues to have coverage, albeit severely limited and prone to interruptions. Communication blackouts continue to hamper operations in the Darfur region, with several locations completely cut-off for more than a month. This situation severely limits regular contacts and interactions between UNHCR staff and displaced as well as host communities and it hampers efficient communication and coordination among staff. In conflict areas where physical access is constrained, the unstable communication infrastructure also represents an obstacle to resort to remote monitoring or consultations with the stranded communities.

Severe economic constraints. As the conflict enters its third month, banking systems have yet to resume. Thousands of people who have savings in Sudanese banks continue to be unable to access them and rely on in-kind support or on selling personal assets. Humanitarian assistance is also challenged, especially with the inability to disburse cash assistance due to the unavailability of banking. Liquidity challenges hamper the efficient delivery of most forms of humanitarian assistance, even where partners are fully operational.

Rainy season and its effect on humanitarian operations. The rainy season started in many parts of Sudan, with risks of floods in many areas where refugees and IDPs are settled, and humanitarian operations are ongoing. During the rainy season, roads become largely impassable, preventing access and assistance delivery to refugee camps, notably in Eastern Sudan and White Nile State. Flash flooding can also lead to the destruction of shelters and other infrastructure. Further, in Darfur, areas where refugees and IDPs live, have become inaccessible due to poor road conditions and seasonal flooding.



Key Messages

- Sudan is facing a complex, large-scale protection crisis characterised by unprecedented levels of violence and human rights violations inflicted on civilians. The situation requires an urgent and comprehensive response that has as primary focus the protection of civilians including IDPs, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- The parties to the conflict should immediately comply with their obligations to protect civilians as prescribed by international humanitarian and human rights law, including by bringing an end to the conflict and by restoring peace and security across the country.
- Parties to the conflict are urged to ensure the commitment by all persons acting under their instructions, direction or control to abide by their core obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. This includes, inter-alia, upholding at all times the principle of proportionality and distinction between military and civilian objects; refraining from attacks expected to cause excessive civilian harm in relation to the military; allowing civilians to voluntarily and safely leave areas of active conflict and guaranteeing the protection of those that may not be able to do so; facilitating civilians' access to humanitarian assistance and enabling unhindered access to humanitarian organisations.
- As stressed recently and jointly by all humanitarian actors operating in the country, there is an immediate need to put an end to all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence being used in armed conflict as a weapon of war. Parties to the conflict are urged to immediately end rape and other forms of sexual violence and respect the integrity of women and girls. Equally, parties to the conflict must refrain from recruiting children and from exploiting the vulnerable conditions of those without parental care and support.
- There is an urgent need to scale up GBV prevention, mitigation and response services within Sudan, for survivors of various forms of conflict-related GBV, including through the provision of specialized and survivor-centred support. These efforts should also capitalize on the presence and strength of local organizations – including those led by women – who continue to courageously provide frontline responses in the conflict affected areas.
- The protection of all children affected by the conflict remains a priority and needs to be reinforced. Increased outreach to identify and support children at risk is required, also for sensitisation purposes on the presence of explosive hazards. Strengthened family tracing and alternative care arrangements are urgently needed, as well as investment in specialized services for children at heightened protection risks, particularly survivors of violence, children in need of alternative care and family tracing/reunification

Reinforcement of interventions and services to address the critical mental health and psychosocial distress of children and caregivers, including through community-based support mechanisms, is also required.

- UNHCR continues to appreciate the efforts made by the Government of Sudan to facilitate the upscaling of humanitarian response in areas not affected by the conflict, including refugee-hosting areas in the Southern and Eastern parts of the country. UNHCR encourages national and local authorities to continue granting freedom of movement to refugees and other civilians on the move, to help them reach and stay in safe areas within or outside Sudan, and to monitor and curb exploitative activities by unscrupulous smuggling and trafficking rings.
- UNHCR is appealing to all neighbouring countries and those further afield to continue allowing those fleeing conflict and persecution to find safety across borders by keeping their borders open. The reduction of bureaucratic or financial requirements that hinder access to asylum for persons with international protection needs is needed.
- UNHCR expresses gratitude for the pledges made by several donors in support to the humanitarian efforts in Sudan. Donor support to the requirements of the Protection Sector and its partners, including local partners and community-based organisations who remained active throughout the conflict is particularly needed.

PROTECTION BRIEF SUDAN

July 2023



UNHCR Sudan

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