

## The Situation in Sudan After One Year of Conflict

One year ago, Sudan erupted into widescale conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. Since then, the country has spiraled into an unmitigated catastrophe, one that has now displaced more people within its borders than any other crisis in the world.

This report provides an overview of country conditions in Sudan after a year of the current crisis and conflict. It serves as an update on the humanitarian situation in Sudan, as well as internal displacement, cross-border displacement, and impacts on children. It concludes with recommendations to ameliorate the situation in Sudan and to meet the widespread needs generated or exacerbated by the conflict.

### Background

In April 2019, Sudan President Omar al Bashir was overthrown in a military coup after three decades in power. A civilian-led transitional government was established in August 2019, but Sudan continued to face rising political tensions between different elements of its governing parties. Dueling factions of Sudan's military forces—long decentralized during al Bashir's rule—staged another military takeover in October 2021, putting an end to any notion of a civilian-led transition.

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were one of those factions, the remnants of the infamous Janjaweed militias that committed genocide and other grave human rights violations in Darfur in the early 2000s. While the RSF had orchestrated the coup with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), [tensions mounted](#) over how and whether to incorporate the RSF into the state's main security sector. On April 15, 2023, clashes erupted between the SAF and RSF in the capital Khartoum, then spreading across the country.

The RSF appeared to gain the upper hand in the conflict in the latter part of 2023 by dealing the SAF a series of successive defeats and by capturing Wad Madani, the capital of al-Jazirah state in the country's east, according to the [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#). However, the SAF has begun "to reclaim control over territory in the capital Khartoum after adopting offensive tactics and capitalizing on the scattering of RSF forces in other states," ACLED [reported on March 15](#).

### Humanitarian needs

While there is no clear winner on the battlefield, the people of Sudan have suffered unmitigated losses and harm throughout the intervening 12 months. Almost 25 million people in Sudan are expected to need humanitarian assistance in 2024, according to the country's [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#). The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports the fighting has led to the destruction of critical infrastructure, the collapse of banking and financial services, and the cratering of the country's public healthcare system.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reports that access constraints, security risks, and logistical challenges are hampering the humanitarian response. "Without incomes, and amid disrupted aid

deliveries and harvests, people cannot get food, prompting warnings of worsening hunger and malnutrition in parts of the country,” [according to UNHCR](#).

Catastrophe levels of food insecurity [are now expected](#) in households in parts of West Darfur and Khartoum and among displaced populations, particularly in hard-to-reach parts of Darfur.

## Internal displacement

Sudan had widespread rates of internal displacement before the conflict, but now has the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world.

According to the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix](#), an estimated 6.5 million people have been displaced internally since the outbreak of the conflict between the SAF and the RSF. While internal displacement has been reported across all 18 of Sudan's states, the South Darfur, River Nile, and East Darfur states have experienced the highest rates of internal displacement.

IDPs across Sudan face challenges due to cash shortages, lack of livelihoods, food insecurity, and security and protection, including widespread reports of robbery, looting, and gender-based violence. While food remains the highest priority need, health and non-food items are growing concerns among IDP populations.

## Cross-border displacement

While most displacement from the crisis is occurring within Sudan, the conflict has also driven around 2 million people across international borders. “While the war started one year ago, thousands are crossing borders daily as if the emergency had started yesterday,” [UNHCR](#) reports.

Egypt has received about 500,000 refugees from Sudan in the crisis, according to [UNHCR data](#). South Sudan has received 135,085 Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers, as well as more than 500,000 South Sudanese returnees who had previously fled South Sudan to Sudan.

Chad has experienced the largest influx of refugees in its history, [according to UNHCR](#). Despite multilateral and partner efforts to relocate refugees away from the Chadian-Sudanese border, more than 150,000 displaced individuals “remain in border areas in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, largely due to funding shortfalls.”

The Central African Republic (CAR) and Ethiopia have also received tens of thousands of refugees displaced by the crisis.

Even when refugees find shelter outside of Sudan, they are frequently relocating to areas that are hard-to-reach for humanitarian actors—such as remote parts of South Sudan, the CAR, and Chad.

## Impact on children

Before the crisis, the situation for children in Sudan was dire— with one of the highest rates of malnutrition among children in the world, according to [UNICEF](#). Sudan is now home to the [largest child displacement crisis in the world](#).

[UN experts say](#) that grave violations of children’s rights in Sudan amount to a “generational catastrophe”—leaving 14 million children in need of humanitarian support, 19 million children out of school, and 4 million children displaced. Children face unique protection risks amid the carnage and chaos of the conflict, which has featured indiscriminate attacks against civilian populations.

## Recommendations

The European Union, France, and Germany [announced](#) the “International Humanitarian Conference for Sudan and its Neighbors” will be held on April 15, 2024—the one-year anniversary of the crisis.

USCRI affirms [the joint statement](#) by new U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan Tom Perriello and representatives of the United Kingdom, European Union, Norway and France to call for an immediate, sustained ceasefire and the fulfilment of all parties to their obligations under international humanitarian law.

USCRI supports the [calls of non-governmental organizations \(NGOs\) working in Sudan](#) urging Paris Conference attendees to “increase funding for all humanitarian actors, including local organizations and mutual aid groups; strengthen diplomatic pressure to push for the provision of unfettered humanitarian access; elevate efforts to address violations against civilians; defend the critical role of local responders; and enhance diplomatic and donor coordination on Sudan and the wider region.”

More specific to displacement trends in Sudan, USCRI recommends:

*Protection against refoulement:* Neighboring states, particularly Egypt, should respect the international norm of non-refoulement and cease any tactics that arrest, arbitrarily detain, and result in other pushback policies against Sudanese refugees.

*Robust humanitarian funding:* The United States must continue its strong record of leadership in humanitarian funding through robust appropriations to accounts such as International Disaster Assistance (IDA), Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA), and Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) that provide essential support to displaced populations.

*Child friendly spaces:* Displaced and conflict-affected children should have safe spaces to access trauma-informed care, learning support, and psychosocial services. Donors should ensure that flexible funding is designated for [Child Friendly Spaces](#) to provide immediate care to displaced children and their families.

*USRAP (U.S. Refugee Admissions Program) processing for Sudanese, South Sudanese:* In its [Fiscal Year 2024 report to Congress on proposed refugee admissions](#), the Department of State noted the United States had increased interviews of Sudanese refugees in Chad. This momentum should continue through targeted circuit rides to interview Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees for potential USRAP referral and resettlement.