

THE HUMANITARIAN AND DISPLACEMENT SITUATION IN SUDAN DECEMBER 2024



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Sudan is entering the new year still gripped by a war that erupted on April 15, 2023, between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Allied forces and external powers also fuel this brutal civil war. Alarm, shock, unfathomable, catastrophic, appalling, devastating—all terms used to describe the 20 months and counting of war that ensued.

Sudan is now the largest displacement crisis in the world, the largest child displacement crisis in the world, and one of the largest hunger crises in the world. Looking to 2025, there is little to no respite in sight. For the second year in a row, Sudan has topped the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) [Emergency Watchlist](#), deemed the largest humanitarian crisis ever recorded.

The following update details the humanitarian and displacement situation in Sudan as of December 2024.

Displacement Crisis

Widespread attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure have forced millions from their homes and communities across Sudan. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) [recorded](#) over 11 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sudan as of December 2024. Over 8 million of whom were displaced after April 2023. Many have been displaced multiple times over and about 54 percent of IDPs were women. IOM reported that most IDPs were hosted in South Darfur (16 percent), North Darfur (14 percent), and Gedaref (10 percent) states.

Although much of the displacement crisis is taking place within Sudan, the ongoing war has forced over 3 million people to cross borders seeking safety in neighboring countries.

Most cross-border movement was into Egypt (37 percent), Chad (29 percent), and South Sudan (27 percent). On December 10, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [expressed](#) alarm over tens of thousands of people arriving in South Sudan in need of protection following escalating violence in border areas. The agency reported over 20,000 Sudanese crossed into South Sudan in one week, “tripling the number of daily arrivals compared to previous weeks.” South Sudanese refugees who resided in refugee camps in Sudan were also among those crossing—going back to South Sudan, fleeing violence once again. In Chad, HIAS [reported](#) that, since April 2023, over 500,000 refugees have crossed into the country from Sudan—86 percent of whom were women and children.



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Sudan is the largest child displacement crisis in the world. Over half (53 percent) of Sudan’s IDP population are children.

IOM [found](#) that states with the highest numbers of displaced children were Red Sea (60 percent) and Central Darfur (57 percent). Over [5.8 million](#) children are now displaced—[2.8 million](#) of them are under the age of five years old. At least [3.2 million](#) of these displaced children are girls, facing “particular threats of sexual violence, rape, or early or forced marriage.”

The war’s brutality has left many children separated from their parents or unaccompanied. They arrive in displacement camps or transit centers exhausted and traumatized. In August 2024, Save the Children [reported](#) that nearly 500 unaccompanied and separated children arrived in Blue Nile and Gedaref states over the course of six weeks. This was the highest number recorded in that short of a period since the war began. Displaced children in Sudan, particularly those unaccompanied or separated from their caregivers, are at heightened risk of experiencing violence, trafficking, kidnapping, recruitment into armed groups, exploitation, and sexual violence. They are also [out of school](#), as the war has left 90 percent of Sudan’s 19 million school-aged children without access to formal education.

Failure to Protect Civilians

The suffering of civilians in Sudan is relentless. There is a significant need for greater protection of civilians both in Sudan and for those fleeing across borders.

Warring parties continue to perpetrate [targeted attacks](#) on civilians - killing people, inflicting sexual and gender-based violence, attacking hospitals, looting property, and other violations. On December 9, the SAF reportedly [bombed](#) a crowded market in an airstrike attack in Kabkabiya, North Darfur. The attack killed at least 42 civilians and injured many more. Amnesty International [noted](#) that at least 15 of those killed “were displaced civilians who had previously fled to Kabkabiya to escape attacks elsewhere...” The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [reported](#) that the following day the RSF allegedly attacked Sabrin market and a bus station in Omdurman. At least 22 people were killed and more than 25 were injured at the bus station. An unspecified number of people were killed at the market.



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A recent wave of attacks by the RSF have targeted displacement camps, turning spaces meant to be a last hope for safety into the frontlines. Zamzam displacement camp, which hosts around half a million IDPs in North Darfur outside El Fasher, was inundated with shelling in December.

On December 1 and 2, Zamzam was reportedly attacked by the RSF. At least five people were killed and 18 were injured. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/Doctors Without Borders [reported](#) that, after the attack, MSF teams received “eight injured people, including women and children as young as four years old with severe injuries such as chest trauma and fractures.” Many IDPs were forced to flee once again.

International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) operating in Sudan [condemned](#) the targeted attacks, citing that INGOs were forced to evacuate their staff and that the attacks further obstructed humanitarian aid. On December 5, the U.S. Government released a [statement](#) condemning the attacks and calling on the warring parties to “halt all military activity in and around Zamzam camp and other such camps...” Indiscriminate attacks continued, and five people were killed in Zamzam following [reported attacks](#) on December 10. On December 16, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [expressed](#) alarm over increased civilian casualties in El Fasher and cited the “repeated shelling” of Zamzam throughout December.

Various UN Security Council [resolutions](#) provide a framework for the protection of civilians, as do existing resolutions from the African Union (AU). The [Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Sudan](#), for example, from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) calls on the warring parties in Sudan to end hostilities, safeguard civilian lives, and facilitate humanitarian access. Yet warring parties and the international community at large have failed in their obligation to protect civilians. On November 18, the UN Security Council put forth a [resolution](#) co-authored by Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom that aimed to strengthen measures to protect

civilians and increase access to humanitarian aid. The resolution, which would have been legally binding,

“Demanded that the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces honor and fully implement their commitments made in the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, including to take all feasible precautions to avoid and minimize civilian harm, refrain from using civilians as human shields and safeguard the needs and necessities indispensable to their survival.”

When put to a vote, [Russia blocked](#) the resolution using its veto power. Russia’s reasoning was that it believed the text did not provide the Government of Sudan the proper authority over border and security control.

Sexual Violence

Reports of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) wielded as a weapon in Sudan have surged. In an October 29 [report](#), the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan found all warring parties responsible for committing CRSV, calling the scale of sexual violence “staggering.” The RSF were found responsible for committing sexual violence on a large scale—such as gang rapes, torture, and sexual slavery. The Mission highlighted the situation in Darfur, where “acts of sexual violence were committed with particular cruelty with firearms, knives and whips to intimidate or coerce the victims while using derogatory, racist or sexist slurs and death threats.”

On November 12, OCHA [briefed](#) the UN Security Council on the situation in Sudan, calling sexual violence “a sickening hallmark” of the conflict. OCHA underscored that “women and girls continue to be at the center of the horrendous suffering, as displacement and hunger put them at increased risk of gender-based violence and sexual violence, exploitation and abuse.”

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) [detailed](#) that, during November attacks in Aj Jazirah state, parents were killed while protecting their daughters from being raped. Women and girls aged 6 to 60 were subject to rape and sexual assault. On November 15, Plan International [condemned](#) the use of targeted sexual violence against women and girls in Sudan, and underscored accounts of women and girls dying by suicide to avoid such heinous attacks.

On December 15, following in-depth investigations, Human Rights Watch (HRW) [found](#) that the “Rapid Support Forces fighters and allied militias have raped scores of women and girls, including in the context of sexual slavery, in Sudan’s South Kordofan state since September 2023.” The report underscored that these acts of sexual violence constitute war crimes and may constitute crimes against humanity.

Humanitarian Needs

Nearly 25 million people need [humanitarian assistance](#) in Sudan. This is [projected](#) to grow to 30.4 million people in 2025.

Warring parties continue to deliberately [obstruct aid](#) from reaching millions of people who desperately need it. In September, humanitarian organizations cited that, not only have the warring parties committed heinous acts of violence and triggered mass displacement, but they have also weaponized food, brought the medical system to the verge of collapse, and inserted bureaucratic impediments that make it near impossible for humanitarians to reach those suffering.



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Sudan is experiencing a hunger crisis, and [famine was confirmed](#) in Zamzam in August. On December 2, Save the Children [detailed](#) the situation for families living in Zamzam, forced to eat one meal a day or even eating animal feed to survive. Water shortages forced many to survive with less than two liters of water per day, when the daily requirement is 20 liters per person. Ongoing attacks have kept humanitarian workers from reaching civilians with food and other essential resources they need. On December 19, three World Food Programme (WFP) staff members were [killed](#) in Blue Nile State when their field office was hit by aerial bombardment.

As displacement, hunger, and water shortages increase, so does disease. Cholera outbreaks worsened with flooding across the country. In November, OCHA's aid coordination office [reported](#) over 28,000 cases of cholera and 836 deaths in 11 states between July 22 and October 28.

IDPs and refugee populations in Sudan are highly impacted by [disease outbreaks](#) due to the inhumane living conditions they experience—lack of sanitary facilities, little to no medical care, no shelter and infrastructure, etc.

Medical infrastructure in Sudan has been destroyed due to the war—targeted attacks on health facilities and health workers, occupation of hospitals by warring parties, looting of medical supplies, and more. In September, the World Health Organization (WHO) [reported](#) that Sudan surpassed 100 attacks on healthcare since the war began, with 108 WHO-verified incidents. This figure is likely higher due to reporting constraints. On September 8, following a visit to Sudan, WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros [revealed](#) that Sudan's health system is "near collapse," with 70-80 percent of the country's health facilities not operating at full capacity. Civilians suffering both war-related injuries and other medical conditions have been left without care. This includes children and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Recommendations

1. Peace is the primary solution for the people of Sudan. **All warring parties must reach a permanent cessation of hostilities.** However, protection of civilians cannot wait for a ceasefire. **All warring parties must uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals.** External actors fueling this war should immediately end supplies of arms and ammunition. The UN Security Council, AU, and other influential regional and international bodies should prioritize the protection of civilians and support efforts to end the war.
2. Humanitarian aid must reach all who need it. **All warring parties must allow the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations through all crossline and cross-border routes.** This includes full and unfettered airspace access for both humanitarian cargo and workers. Visas for humanitarians should not be left pending indefinitely. Ensuring timely and efficient issuance of visas for humanitarian INGO staff will help the successful delivery of lifesaving aid.
3. **Financial resources must be allocated to adequately respond to escalating needs.** The 2024 [Humanitarian Response Plan](#) for Sudan had a 1-billion-dollar funding gap. The OCHA country team is currently preparing the 2025 response plan. **Governments and other donors must immediately prioritize funding for the humanitarian response in Sudan.**
4. **Neighboring states should respect the principle of non-refoulement** and refuse any tactics that arrest, arbitrarily detain, and result in other pushback policies against Sudanese refugees.
5. **All perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence must be held accountable**—it is a war crime—and survivors must have access to justice. **All survivors should have access to comprehensive medical care and psychosocial support.** Any mission deployed for the protection of civilians should include the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.
6. There is no safe place for children in Sudan. **All stakeholders must remember that no matter their situation, displaced children are, first and foremost, children and they are entitled to rights to protection, education, participation, and inclusion among others. Funding for child protection and education should be prioritized within the humanitarian response in Sudan.** 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 be able to provide immediate care to displaced children and their families.