



ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE - APRIL 2024

A YEAR OF HORROR IN SUDAN

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INTRODUCTION: CHAOS, BLOODSHED AND A LOOMING FAMINE

On 15 April 2023, the lives of millions of Sudanese people were brutally ripped apart.

In the usually peaceful capital city of Khartoum, as families celebrated the final days of Ramadan, fierce street battles broke out between two former allies, the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Bodies piled high in the streets, markets and hospitals burned, and indiscriminate shelling tore through heavily populated neighbourhoods.

As bullets whizzed around their small house on the edge of Khartoum, 23-year-old Gesma scooped up her two young children and ran for their lives. Hitching a lift on a passing car, they joined a stream of terrified people fleeing the city. Gesma's husband was out at work in the market, and she hoped to reunite somewhere safer. But she never heard from him again. To this day she doesn't even know if he's still alive. Gesma and her children spent the first nights of the war sleeping on bricks, hugging each other for comfort.

A year later, the war has spread and a tornado of chaos, bloodshed and starvation has engulfed the country. There is a very real and growing risk that Sudan could soon collapse as a functioning state, with enormous regional and global impact.

The war has created the world's largest internal displacement crisis. Gesma and her children are among 8.4 million people – including 2 million children under 5 years old – who have been forced from their homes. They fear they will not be able to return home for a long time.

A mass famine is imminent, with children now starving to death. Every single day, another 30,000 people fall into crisis levels of food insecurity. Farmers cannot safely access their fields and this year's harvests are projected to be among the worst ever. The economy is collapsing at a staggering rate. Much of the health system is destroyed and deadly diseases are spreading. 24.8 million people – almost half the entire population – now need humanitarian assistanceⁱ.

Every corner of this vast country is affected. Much of the capital is now a ghost town. Airstrikes, shelling and heavy fighting have turned whole neighbourhoods into rubble and destroyed infrastructure and public services. In Darfur, villages have been burnt to the ground, women and girls raped, and ethnic minorities targeted. Homeless orphaned children now beg in the streets, while others are given a gun and forced to fight. In Kordofan, fighting rages and people

report regular intimidation and abductions. In Al Jazirah, a previously peaceful breadbasket region, intense fighting rocked the biggest city, forcing people to flee further east with farmers abandoning crops in their fields and families sleeping along the roadside.

Officially, almost 15,000 people have been killedⁱⁱ – but many fear the real death toll is far higher and mass graves continue to be uncovered. One United Nations report estimates between 10-15,000 people were massacred in a series of attacks in the city of El Geneina aloneⁱⁱⁱ.

The violence recalls the atrocities in Darfur 20 years ago, when entire villages were wiped out in what governments such as the USA declared to be the first genocide of the 21st century. In 2004, the Darfur crisis became the most prominent in the world – global leaders convened summits, A-list celebrities led huge public rallies, and eye-witness reports made TV headlines and front pages. In comparison, today's crisis is being forgotten or ignored.

This lack of attention has deadly consequences. A quarter of the way through the year, the UN-led 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan for Sudan has received just five per cent of the \$2.7 billion it needs^{iv}. The 2023 appeal ended up less than half funded. Yet, when humanitarian agencies have funding and safe access, aid is saving lives. Islamic Relief has helped more than 600,000 people over the past year. Sudanese community groups are also playing a leading role in the response, distributing food and sheltering displaced families.

Gesma was heavily pregnant when she fled Khartoum, and a few months later she gave birth to twins in a sprawling camp in eastern Sudan. She named them Watan (meaning Home) and Salaam (meaning Peace) – two things that millions of people in Sudan crave more than anything else.

After a year of unimaginable horror, the people of Sudan urgently need more international attention and support. There must be renewed efforts to secure an immediate ceasefire and a negotiated political settlement. Civilians must be protected. Parties to the conflict must ensure safe humanitarian access to people in need, and international governments must step up humanitarian assistance. As famine looms, the cost of inaction is too grave to consider.

“MY COUNTRY IS AT IMMINENT RISK OF COLLAPSE”

**Elsadig Elnour is Islamic Relief’s
Country Director in Sudan:**



Since 15 April 2023 I’ve seen my country descend into violence, madness and destruction, neglected by the rest of the world. No one expected this to happen.

I was living in Khartoum when the war erupted. Now I’m in Port Sudan, on the Red Sea coast, in one of the few parts of the country still free from the violence. After this there is nowhere else to go other than into the sea. Unless there’s a change very soon, the country may collapse.

Everyone has lost everything. Everyone is traumatised. That’s how it feels to be Sudanese at this moment. We have lost loved ones, property, jobs, and the futures that we planned. Even the rich have become poor.

I spent the first four weeks of the war in Khartoum, barricaded under a bed with my family as shelling, airstrikes and street combat raged around us. My two-month-old granddaughter came from the United States to visit us just before the fighting started. I had to watch her and her mother huddle with the rest of the family under the bed. It was very painful for me to see that.

Bodies lined the roads. Going outside at any time was risky because these armed groups can simply decide to shoot you. Armed men went into houses, killing people, taking their belongings, raping women and carrying them away. We knew this could happen to us. I was terrified for the girls in our household and the thought of my two sons, aged 26 and 27, being taken away and forced to fight.

We decided we had to leave Khartoum for the city of Gedaref in the southeast. This road was extremely dangerous. Armed men stopped us at a checkpoint and began harassing me in front of my family. I knew they wanted our car and they needed me to become angry so they had an excuse to take it. They could have killed us all. I told my two sons not to react to the insults. After some time we were allowed to leave, but that incident – after all the stress of the weeks before – has left scars on all of us. My sons have refused to discuss that checkpoint since then.

The conflict has spread during the year. In December I was in Sudan’s second largest city, Wad Madani, when it was attacked. Hundreds of thousands more people were displaced. I managed to escape but those attacks have changed the dynamics of the conflict. As the fighting has moved further east we had to move Islamic Relief’s main office again, first from Khartoum to Gedaref and now from Gedaref to Port Sudan.

I have thought many times about leaving Sudan. But I love my country and I want to help my people through this terrible war. I am so proud of my team, who continue to serve our country despite everything we have lost ourselves. My own home in Khartoum is occupied by an armed group right now. The homes of two of my colleagues were hit by airstrikes. We are displaced people, serving other displaced people. Aid agencies like Islamic Relief are doing vital work but ultimately, we need peace.

Please don’t forget us. Please don’t forget Sudan.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Gesma gave birth to twins, Watan (Home) and Salaam (Peace), after escaping Khartoum. "The day I had to give birth in the camp was very difficult for me. There was no family to support me. My children had nothing to eat."



I first worked in Sudan in 2005, managing a water project in Darfur at the height of the crisis there. Every day more people streamed into the camp, fleeing the most horrific violence, and we could barely keep pace. When people arrived, they built their own shelters on the land we prepared for them – I quickly learned that the communities here want to support themselves and each other, but they need peace.

I see the same spirit today, with impoverished Sudanese families taking displaced people into their homes and sharing their food and water with them. As rich nations increasingly shut their borders and cut international aid, it is both humbling and heartening to see the generosity of some of the world's poorest communities.

I'm inspired by our staff in Sudan who have suffered so much but remain dedicated to helping their country. Most of them have made perilous journeys to flee their homes and have lost relatives and friends. Sudan has become one of the most dangerous places to be a humanitarian worker. But despite the dangers, it is possible to deliver aid. Islamic Relief's team has saved countless lives by providing vital food, medicine, water and other aid to people across the country.

The resilience and generosity of the Sudanese people show the enormous potential of the country. They deserve a peaceful and prosperous future, and the international community has a crucial role to play in making that a reality.

Waseem Ahmad,
Chief Executive, Islamic Relief Worldwide



40 years of Islamic Relief began in Sudan

In 2024 Islamic Relief marks its 40th anniversary of serving humanity. Our long journey started in 1984 when a group of doctors and activists in Birmingham, United Kingdom, were moved by reports of famine in the Horn of Africa and wanted to help.

Islamic Relief's first ever project was in eastern Sudan, where we set up farms and clinics for refugees fleeing across the border from Eritrea. We've been committed to supporting vulnerable people and communities in Sudan ever since.

In 1988 we sent vaccines, tents and water purification tablets after deadly floods. In 1994 we opened a community centre in Kordofan where women learnt computer skills, and then built our first school in a poor settlement on the edge of Khartoum. In the following years we built and repaired hundreds of schools across the country, and in the 2000s we scaled up our emergency response in Darfur and helped people fleeing into neighbouring Chad. In 2021 we provided aid as thousands fled into eastern Sudan to escape attacks in Ethiopia's Tigray region. We've helped Sudanese farmers adapt to climate change and established a centre for survivors of sexual violence in Darfur. Now we are saving lives and livelihoods affected by the war.

How did we get here?

In 2019, as Sudan faced a mounting economic crisis, months of public protests led to the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir, the country's ruler for 30 years. A new civilian-headed government was set up, but it struggled to improve the economy without international support and investment. In 2021 the military seized control again through an alliance between the Sudanese army (SAF) and the RSF, a paramilitary group originating in Darfur. A power-sharing agreement was reached between SAF leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti. But in 2023 this fragile agreement collapsed and quickly dissolved into all-out war and a bloody power struggle.

The war has become increasingly complex. Frontlines and areas of control rapidly shift and other armed groups such as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) have become involved and seized territory. The war is now impacting the wider Africa and Middle East region and drawing in multiple players who are reportedly supplying arms, funds or political support to sustain the conflict.

Since April 2023 there have been multiple international initiatives to broker peace talks, such as the US and Saudi-facilitated Jeddah Declaration, under which both SAF and RSF committed to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access; as well as other initiatives by Egypt and African bodies such as the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). But none of these have succeeded, and most regional actors are now perceived as favouring one side over the other. In January, Sudan suspended its membership of IGAD, alleging bias. Other peacebuilding mechanisms such as the Sudan Consultative Forum, set up over a decade ago by the UN and AU to encompass a range of Sudanese perspectives, have been starved of funding and political support and can no longer play a meaningful role.

MASS FAMINE IS IMMINENT

In cities, villages and displacement camps across Sudan, young children are now starving to death. The country is on the verge of a mass famine.

Islamic Relief staff are seeing a rapid increase in malnourished children in the health and nutrition clinics that we support, with infants so emaciated they can barely breathe. A recent Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) assessment^v in just one North Darfur camp found a child dying every two hours, with 40 per cent of children under two years old malnourished – far exceeding emergency thresholds.

Across the country, 17.7 million people (almost 40 per cent of the population) are now suffering high levels of acute food insecurity, with 5 million of them just one step away from famine. More than 3.4 million children are malnourished^{vi}. These figures are rising daily – an additional 2.7 million people fell into crisis levels of hunger in just three months. Food production has declined, transportation routes are disrupted, and people's income and access to cash have collapsed.

In parts of Khartoum and Darfur, catastrophic famine conditions are expected within weeks^{vii} and the most recent report by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) found the highest levels of food insecurity it has ever recorded in Sudan during the harvest season^{viii}.

In Darfur many families told Islamic Relief staff that they have cut down on the size and frequency of meals, eating just one small meal of boiled sorghum a day. Adults are frequently sacrificing their own food just so their children can have a few extra mouthfuls.

Sorghum, millet and wheat are the main staples of the Sudanese diet, with sorghum preferred in the centre and east, and millet most popular in the west. But in the main 2023 harvest, millet production was 50 per cent lower than normal, and sorghum 24 per cent lower. Now the 2024 cereal harvest is forecast to be even worse.

Around 80 per cent of people in Sudan rely on agriculture for their income but the country's breadbasket regions are particularly badly affected. In the mountainous Jebel Marra region of Darfur, farmers used to produce a variety of crops such as millet, sorghum, groundnuts, onions and potatoes, and were renowned for their delicious apples, mangoes, guavas and oranges. Now many markets there are empty. In recent months the fighting has spread into Al Jazirah state in central Sudan, which produces about 50 per cent of the country's wheat and other key cash crops such as cotton. Since then it has spread into other big cereal-growing states such as Sennar and White Nile, and towards areas such as Gedaref, where many of the country's biggest grain stores and the Agricultural Bank of Sudan reserves are located.



Food production has been decimated due to numerous factors:

- The massive displacement of civilians has forced farmers and food producers to flee their land. Many farmers who stayed now face attacks, threats or coercion by armed groups that leave them too afraid to plant or harvest their fields.
- The 2022 harvest was relatively good, but the food stocks built up and stored by families, farmers and traders have been looted by armed groups. Farmers' main assets, such as tools and equipment, have also been extensively looted.
- Even when they can access their fields, small-scale farmers are struggling to find and buy agricultural inputs such as seeds, tools and fertilisers – which have become scarce and expensive over the past year. With the banking sector barely functioning, farmers also struggle to access finance, as well as extension services such as technical advice and real-time information.
- The conflict has cut off pasture and water sources from pastoralists and cattle herders, as well as blocking traditional migration routes. Many livestock vaccination campaigns have been suspended, leading to growing fears of cattle disease.
- The fighting has damaged or destroyed many factories, with deadly consequences. For example, the Samil factory in Khartoum – which produced 60 per cent of Sudan's ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) for treating malnourished children – was burnt to the ground, destroying thousands of RUTF boxes and disrupting supplies ever since.
- On top of all that, Sudan is greatly affected by climate change, and uneven and below-average rainfall has also contributed to the crisis.

Even when food is produced, trade and supply routes are severely disrupted. The rise in banditry and looting means there is virtually no movement on some key roads. Armed groups have set up checkpoints that intimidate and extort 'taxes' from passing trucks. An Islamic Relief assessment in Darfur in late-2023 found 75 per cent of food trucks were no longer operating due to the risk of hijackings and the rising cost of fuel.

Warehouses, storage facilities, shops and transport companies have all been destroyed or had to close or reduce business. Humanitarian food aid has also been heavily looted at times. In just the first few weeks of the conflict, armed men looted at least \$13 million worth of UN food aid – almost a quarter of the entire stock^x.

Sudan relies a lot on imports, especially for wheat, and that reliance is now even greater as domestic production is disrupted. But the Ukraine crisis has affected global wheat supply, and now, since the crisis in Gaza broke out, attacks on ships in the Red Sea have further limited imports and food aid into Port Sudan, the country's largest port. In 2023, wheat imports into Sudan fell to half the usual level.

The result of all this is that the price of food has rocketed out of reach for most people. Overall food prices have increased by 83 per cent over the past year, while in some places the price of staples has more than doubled – for example, in parts of southern Kordofan a kilo of sorghum has risen from 325 to 800 pounds and a kilo of millet from 600 to 1400 pounds. In Omdurman a kilo of wheat has more than tripled in price from just over 400 to 1350 pounds^x.

With poverty and unemployment increasing, many people can now barely afford to eat. 95 per cent of displaced people say food is available but unaffordable^{xi}.



Islamic Relief provides canned meat to displaced families in eastern Sudan, with which health workers cook nutritious meals for malnourished children.

SOARING POVERTY AS ECONOMY COLLAPSES

Sudan's economy is collapsing at a startling rate. It shrank by 12 per cent during 2023 and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects that gross domestic product (GDP) will contract by a further 18.3 per cent in 2024^{xii} as the war has impacted production, industry, agriculture and commercial services. The pace of economic contraction is rapid even by comparison with other war-affected countries. In Yemen and Syria, for example, the economies have shrunk by about 5 per cent per year on average.

The impact of the war is felt across almost all industries. Sudan grows about 70 per cent of the world's supply of gum Arabic – which is used as a key ingredient in food including confectionery and soft drinks such as Coca-Cola, as well as in painting, ceramics and printing. About 5 million Sudanese people make their living through gum Arabic and it's one of the country's key exports. But in Kordofan – the biggest producing region – farmers recently told us that they are unable to access fields due to attacks and threats by armed groups.

Unemployment is rapidly increasing and almost half of working-age adults (47 per cent) are now unemployed, up from 32 per cent a year ago^{xiii}. Even people who still have jobs are not being paid – many public sector employees have gone up to six months without receiving their full salary, pushing many more families into poverty. All national social security schemes have been suspended.

Sudan is a cash-based society but many people are now unable to access cash. Banks have been looted and damaged, forcing many to close for long periods of time. Families are now getting trapped in debt as they have to take out loans from informal lenders just to buy food, medicine or other essentials. An Islamic Relief survey found that 84 per cent of people have taken a loan since the war began, with 68 per cent taking multiple loans.

With unemployment rocketing, there is an urgent need for alternative livelihoods. In Blue Nile, Islamic Relief is training fishermen and providing nets.



THE WORLD'S BIGGEST DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

The war has turned Sudan into the world's largest internal displacement crisis. An astounding 13 per cent of all internally displaced people worldwide are Sudanese^{xiv}.

Around 8.4 million people have been forced to flee their homes – three quarters of them (6.4 million) displaced within Sudan's borders. Many have been uprooted multiple times as the fighting has spread, quickly turning states previously considered safe into bloody battle zones.

The capital city has virtually emptied, with at least 3.5 million people fleeing Khartoum State. Islamic Relief staff have met displaced families walking for days with little food or shelter, sleeping under trees or at the side of roads. People have fled to all corners of the country – 45 per cent of the displaced are in Darfur and Kordofan in the west, while 55 per cent are in the north, east and central regions.

Unlike in many countries, most internally displaced people (IDPs) are not staying in vast tented camps. The majority, 66 per cent, have been taken in and given refuge by local host communities, with another 13 per cent sheltering in public buildings such as schools.



In Gedaref in eastern Sudan, Salim* watched thousands of desperate people stream into his hometown, searching for somewhere safe. He and his wife decided to open their home to four other families: "The men sleep on mattresses on the floor in the living room and the women are divided between the two other rooms," Salim told Islamic Relief staff. "As a Sudanese, it's my duty to provide shelter and support to those in dire need. The situation has affected everyone and it's crucial for us to support each other as much as we can."

But many of the host families are themselves impoverished and struggling to afford the basics. "It's incredibly tough," says Salim. "It's exhausting for us, and the weight of the situation bears down on us mentally and financially. But I firmly believe in upholding our commitment to our guests."

Most IDPs have no alternative. With unemployment sky high, most can't find jobs to support themselves and have no source of income. In the east, the influx of people has left cities like Port Sudan so overcrowded that rental prices have rocketed to around US\$4,000 a month for an apartment – far out of reach for most of the population.

**"THE SITUATION
HERE IS CATASTROPHIC.
WE LACK FOOD, DRINKS
AND CLEAN WATER."**



People also struggle to access basic services such as healthcare or education. More than half of IDPs (53 per cent) are children, yet three quarters of IDP families say that no education is available to them, and even the few who can access it say classes are extremely overcrowded or poor quality^{xv}. Many schools have closed while at least 170 campuses^{xvi} have become shelters for the huge numbers of displaced families. Across the country, 19 million children have now had their education disrupted, which will have enormous impact on the future of the nation.

In a school shelter in Al Jazirah, 55-year-old Intisar told us: "The situation here is catastrophic. We lack food, drinks and clean water. It's crowded – the average room is three by three metres, with between five and seven families in each room. Our only meal is porridge. We don't have enough food and there is no work. The water pipe is not stable due to power outage and the water is polluted. There's no hospital near us."

Not everyone has stayed within Sudan. At least 1.9 million people have fled to impoverished neighbouring countries which are struggling to cope, such as Chad (which has received 37 per cent of people fleeing Sudan), South Sudan (31 per cent) and Egypt (25 per cent)^{xvii}. Like IDPs within Sudan, these refugees face a lack of food, healthcare and basic services – with parts of eastern Chad and South Sudan already among the poorest places in the world. Last month the UN World Food Programme warned that it will soon have to suspend food aid for hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees in Chad due to lack of funding^{xviii}.

The current situation is unsustainable. But while the war continues, most displaced people don't expect to return home any time soon.

HEALTHCARE UNDER ATTACK

Throughout the conflict, hospitals and health facilities have been bombed, looted, and overrun by armed groups. Today, three quarters of hospitals are no longer operating, and two in three people don't have access to healthcare^{xix}.

Even when health facilities are open, they struggle to stay functional. Many are massively overcrowded, with two or three patients sharing a bed. Local doctors, nurses and midwives are doing everything they can to keep services going, but they are exhausted from working around the clock and often go months without pay. Most pharmacies are running out of essential medicine – and prices of medication have risen so much they are unaffordable for those who need them. People with cancer or kidney disease are unable to get treatment and dialysis facilities have shut down, with people dying as a result.

With so many people displaced and living in extremely overcrowded shelters without safe water and sanitation, this is a recipe for deadly disease outbreaks. More than 11,000 suspected cholera cases are now reported across 11 of the country's 18 states, with over 300 deaths so far^{xx}. Thousands of cases of dengue fever have also been recorded.

Rural access to healthcare has always been poor – when people got sick many went to Khartoum for treatment, as three quarters of Sudan's health services are in the capital city. But health facilities in Khartoum have come under the most severe attack over the past year and services there have effectively collapsed, affecting the entire country.

Another major challenge is the disruption to power supply and severe fuel shortages. Sudan's main oil refineries have been damaged by shelling and the Khartoum refinery set ablaze, and insecurity along main roads has limited distribution of both national and imported fuel. Doctors and nurses have sometimes been forced to carry out treatment by candlelight. In some areas water pumps have shut down due to lack of fuel, further exacerbating risks of disease. Vaccines for immunisation campaigns against polio and other diseases have gone to waste when the cold chain storage has been interrupted.

In recent years Sudan made great strides on healthcare, such as a significant reduction in maternal deaths and child malnutrition. But tragically the war now risks undoing years of progress.

Islamic Relief staff test the water quality in Sennar state, to try and prevent the spread of disease.





WOMEN AND GIRLS AT GRAVE RISK

A year into the war, the violence shows no sign of abating. In fact, violence against civilians increased by 89 per cent again over the past month^{xxi}, ranging from bombing and armed conflict to arbitrary arrests and assaults at checkpoints, robbery, abduction, and general lawlessness.

Women and girls face heightened risks, with widespread reports of rape, sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence. Official data on this are almost always under-reported as many rape survivors face stigma from within their communities and families.

There are very few services available for survivors. An Islamic Relief survey in Central Darfur in late-2023 found that 92 per cent of women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are not getting support. Some 82 per cent of the women we surveyed feared attack as they walk to collect firewood or fetch water. Islamic Relief runs a recovery centre for SGBV survivors in one town in Darfur, but most areas lack similar facilities.

In North Kordofan, farmers have told Islamic Relief staff that the threat of rape and abduction has left many women afraid to go to their fields, further restricting food production. Often only men make journeys because it is too dangerous for many women to travel alone.

The horrific violence has led to a mental health crisis, but again services are extremely limited. The same Islamic Relief survey found that while 73 per cent of respondents said they or people they know need mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), 81 per cent said they had nowhere to access such services.

The extreme hunger and rising poverty are pushing many families to make difficult choices. Some families are arranging early marriages for their young daughters, just to obtain a dowry with which they can buy food or to marry the girl into a wealthier family that can afford to feed her.

We are also seeing a rise in child labour and begging among families who otherwise cannot afford to eat. One mother told us, "We have no option but to send our son to beg in the local market for money and food. If we had any food or money then I would not have sent him out there, given all the insecurity and risks involved."

While women and girls are often most at risk, men and boys also face specific threats. Boys are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, with hundreds forcibly recruited in Darfur and eastern Sudan^{xxii}. There are frequent reports of men being abducted for ransom.

In 2020 the UN Security Council established the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) to support Sudan's transition to democratic rule and assist with peacebuilding, civilian protection and the rule of law. But in February 2024 UNITAMS shut down on demand from the Sudanese government, leaving a huge gap at a time when these things are needed more than ever.





DIGNITY KITS

Islamic Relief distributes dignity kits for women and girls, including things like menstrual hygiene items, which are often scarce in the shelters.

Salma, 30, (pictured) says:

“The items were very beneficial to me, especially the sanitary pads. Previously I had to use an old cloth at that time of the month, which was starting to cause hygiene problems.”

Another woman, Intisar, told us the lack of electricity in her camp means many women are afraid to go out at night: “I received a solar flashlight with my dignity kit that helped me move safely after dark. My teenage niece benefited from the sanitary pads and underwear. Getting her period was a challenge – she felt embarrassed and wouldn’t move confidently around the camp.”



THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Sudan has become one of the most difficult and dangerous places to deliver humanitarian aid.

By the end of 2023, at least 52 aid workers were killed and 60 injured^{xxiii}, and at least 147 humanitarian warehouses and offices looted. At least two of Islamic Relief’s own offices, in Khartoum and Central Darfur, were among the many to be looted^{xxiv}, with staff assaulted by armed men. The insecurity has forced most humanitarian organisations to relocate from Khartoum to Port Sudan in the east, which has now become the aid and administrative hub.

One of our staff in Darfur recalls: “The fighting was intense. Armed men broke into our office. We were terrified they would kidnap or kill us. They looted humanitarian offices, taking vehicles and supplies, and looted food from the main market.”

Humanitarian organisations also face a range of bureaucratic impediments that delay or obstruct the response. Travel permits are required to access many areas and these face significant delays of weeks or even months. International aid workers ready to deploy and support the response are also waiting months for visas.

Delivering ‘crossline’ aid – between areas controlled by different warring parties – has become increasingly difficult. Since December 2023, authorities in Port Sudan have not granted permission for humanitarian supplies intended for civilians in RSF-controlled areas. Desperately needed aid has now been stuck for almost four months.

Efforts to expand ‘cross-border’ aid from neighbouring countries, especially via eastern Chad, have helped agencies get aid to many rural communities. But in February SAF announced an end to cross-border aid from Chad, alleging that the route is also used for transporting weapons. In March a convoy of 60 aid trucks was allowed through one entry point (Tina), but this is a fraction of what is needed. Other entry points remain closed and cross-border access remains uncertain and unpredictable.

The fuel and power shortages also create challenges, making it hard to maintain cold storage facilities for medicine or keep water pumping. In February and March 2024, armed groups cut off the internet supply for several weeks – blocking access to e-banking platforms and mobile cash payments, which people increasingly depend on to buy basic goods given the extreme insecurity and cash shortages.

There have been numerous announcements to improve humanitarian access. In May 2023 both SAF and RSF signed the Jeddah Declaration, committing to “allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief”^{xxv}. Last month the UN Security Council passed

Resolution 2724 which “calls on all parties to ensure the removal of any obstructions and enable full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access, including cross-border and crossline”^{xxvi}. Yet on the ground little has changed.

Despite all the challenges, a huge amount is being achieved. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and UN agencies have managed to reach millions of people with lifesaving food, medicine, shelter, water and other critical assistance.

Sudanese civil society is playing a leading role in the response. As well as local communities sheltering displaced families, many neighbourhood committees have set up emergency response rooms and community kitchens that distribute food to vulnerable people. But gradually, despite the best efforts of those involved, some of these lifelines have had to close due to lack of funds.

Far too many people are still not receiving aid. There is a massive shortfall in funding – the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) got less than half the funding it needed, while the 2024 HRP is currently just five per cent funded, with almost a quarter of it coming from the European Commission.



ISLAMIC RELIEF'S RESPONSE

Despite the huge challenges, Islamic Relief has reached more than **600,000 people** all over Sudan, supporting both IDP and host communities. We have provided over **£3 million** of vital aid, including:



Food distributions



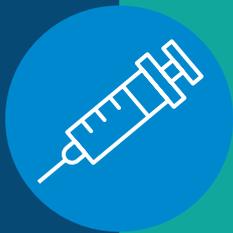
Special Ramadan and Eid distributions



Hygiene and dignity kits that include items such as soap, shampoo and menstrual hygiene items



Unconditional cash payments for families to buy food, medicine, shelter or other critical things



Health and nutrition services through nine health centres and outpatient therapeutic programmes (OTP), providing malnourished children with therapeutic food and basic medical treatment



Supplies for 18 hospitals and six health clinics, including fuel, food, saline, paracetamol, syringes, bandages and sterile gauzes



High quality sorghum and sesame seeds for 20,000 farmers



Mental health and psychosocial support, especially for women and girls

RECOMMENDATIONS

All parties to the conflict bear primary responsibility for ensuring that civilians are protected and can access assistance. We call on all parties to:

- Commit to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, and seek a sustainable resolution to the conflict through dialogue. To start with, parties should recommit to upholding the pledges made in the Jeddah Declaration to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access.
- Uphold international humanitarian law (IHL) by ensuring that civilians are protected from violence, civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools are never targeted, and explosive weapons are not used in populated areas.
- Facilitate safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to people in need, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2724. All parties must cease and prevent attacks on humanitarian workers and property; remove bureaucratic impediments that obstruct or delay humanitarian work; and ensure safe and timely crossline and cross-border access for humanitarian agencies. Access must be provided impartially and based on need, regardless of factors such as territorial control, ethnicity or political alignment.
- Ensure that trade routes are safe and accessible and that commercial suppliers can transport goods such as food without fear of intimidation, attack or extortion. In addition, parties should collaborate with international partners to secure unhindered access to global food markets and facilitate the import of essential food commodities, and advocate for the protection of humanitarian shipments and uninterrupted flow of food aid through international waters and ports.
- Prioritise the protection of women and girls, especially against sexual and gender-based violence.
- End grave violations against children, especially the recruitment of children into armed forces.

We call on international governments to:

- **Demonstrate stronger political leadership:**
 - o Increase diplomatic engagement and reinvigorate efforts to reach a ceasefire and durable political settlement. Sudanese civil society – representing a range of regions, ethnic groups and including youth and women-led groups – must be supported to play a key role in any peace process.
 - o Ensure strengthened coordination between regional and international mediation efforts, such as by supporting the new African Union High Level Panel on Sudan which commenced work in February 2024.
 - o Sustain support for civilian protection, peacebuilding and the rule of law following the recent closure of UNITAMS.
- **Ensure the humanitarian response reflects the scale of the crisis and addresses people's core needs:**
 - o Fully fund the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan. Most urgently, provide immediate food assistance, especially in areas of acute food insecurity.
 - o Increase funding and technical assistance for grassroots community networks, particularly women-led groups and civic committees. Donors should fund and empower local community-led food and shelter initiatives.
 - o Support small and medium-scale agricultural production through improving access to financial services, hermetic storage facilities, inputs such as tools, seeds and fertilisers, and veterinary services for livestock. Such inputs must be timed to match the agricultural calendar and in place for the next planting season in mid-2024.
 - o Support sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities, especially for displaced and host communities, including vocational training and income-generating activities.
 - o Strengthen social protection programmes and safety nets to protect vulnerable households from falling deeper into poverty and food insecurity.
 - o Cash and voucher assistance should be an integral part of the humanitarian response in locations where markets and supply chains are functional. This should help improve access to cash and help stimulate local markets. Cash transfer programmes should utilise electronic or mobile money platforms where traditional banking services are limited.
 - o Introduce measures to stabilise food prices, including subsidies for essential food items and market interventions to prevent price spikes.
 - o Rehabilitate damaged infrastructure such as warehouses, storage facilities and transportation networks to improve market functionality.
 - o Explore opportunities to expand multi-sectoral programming. For example, where schools are functioning, providing school meals could simultaneously improve children's nutritional status and also improve school enrolment and retention.
- **Support Sudanese refugees:**
 - o Ensure adequate funding for response plans in impoverished neighbouring countries such as Chad and South Sudan, which are hosting most refugees.
 - o Uphold the right to asylum and ensure that Sudanese asylum seekers in third countries are protected and assisted.



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- ii <https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard>
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- iv <https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1188/summary>
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- xv <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-monthly-displacement-overview-06>
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