



BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE: Humanitarian organisations urge participants of the Paris Conference for Sudan and its Neighbouring Countries to take immediate action to prevent further suffering and death.

Nairobi, April 9, 2024 – One year from the outbreak of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), representatives of humanitarian organisations working in Sudan and its neighbouring countries are sounding the alarm that Sudan is balancing on the precipice of one of the world's worst hunger crises, urging all actors to immediately scale-up efforts to prevent famine and avoid the potential loss of hundreds of thousands of lives.

Four months ago, more than 37% of the population—or at least 18 million people—were reported to be acutely food insecure (IPC3+), with nearly 5 million people on the brink of famine. Since then, the conflict—which is one of the main drivers of food insecurity—has expanded into traditional food-surplus areas. Without immediate action, and as Sudan enters an early lean season, the situation is expected to deteriorate rapidly in the coming weeks.

Children, women, and people with disabilities are disproportionately and severely affected by the hunger and malnutrition emergency in Sudan and neighbouring countries. Already, nearly 4 million children under 5 years old are acutely malnourished, of which 730,000 are projected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition. A child who is severely malnourished is ten times more likely to die from common diseases like malaria or diarrhea than a healthy child. With over 70% of health facilities shut down in conflict areas, limited access to services, dropping child-vaccination coverage and looming disease outbreaks compound the threats faced by these highly vulnerable groups.

In a context where widespread sexual and gender-based violence has already destroyed so many lives, hunger will only increase reliance on desperate coping mechanisms. There are deep concerns regarding reports of families already resorting to forcibly marrying off younger girls, or of women engaging in sex for money, simply to survive.

The deteriorating hunger crisis unfolding today is the direct result of the conflict and represents total disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law by all parties of the conflict. Sudan is rapidly becoming a stark illustration of conflict-induced hunger. Those facing the most acute food insecurity live in areas where violence has been most intense. Fighting has disrupted harvests and whilst markets continue to function in many locations, people's purchasing power has plummeted, and families forced to leave their homes and without income simply not afford spiraling food prices. At the same time, access to humanitarian assistance continues to be severely restricted by administrative barriers, restrictions on civilian movement, insufficient border crossing points, and insecurity, with the movements of essential supplies and personnel obstructed both into and within Sudan.

The crisis in Sudan also poses significant challenges to regional security and economic stability. More than 1.8 million people have fled Sudan since April 2023, with the majority seeking refuge in neighbouring countries—Chad, South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Central African



Republic—placing an incredible strain on already fragile countries with humanitarian crises of their own.

With famine looming, refugee numbers are likely to significantly increase as hunger drives people across international borders in search of food—often to areas that find themselves in dire food situations. In Chad, which is currently hosting more than half of all Sudanese refugees in the region, the Government declared a state of food and nutrition emergency on 15 February 2024 and forecasts suggest that more than 3 million will face acute food insecurity this year. At the same time, close to 130,000 Sudanese individuals have sought refuge in South Sudan since April 2023, and over 500,000 South Sudanese who had previously fled conflict decades ago and sought refuge in Sudan have been forced to return, further straining resources and support systems. The influx has also intensified humanitarian needs in South Sudan, where three-quarters of the population require assistance. Additionally, South Sudanese oil exports through Sudan, accounting for 90% of its GDP, are now severely disrupted by the conflict in Sudan, causing a massive economic crisis further putting at risk the already fragile country and its population. What is at stake today is an entire region, from the Red Sea to the Sahel.

Ahead of the 'International Humanitarian Conference for Sudan and its Neighbors' taking place in Paris, France, on April 15, organizations speaking at a media briefing today urged donors, United Nations agencies, as well as parties to the conflict—and their regional backers—to immediately facilitate a scaling-up of the humanitarian response. Conference participants must renew efforts to bring about an end to the hostilities through an immediate ceasefire and an inclusive peace process. In addition, NGOs working in the region call on those attending the Paris Conference to increase funding for all humanitarian actors, including local organisations 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.

Eatizaz Yousif, Sudan Country Director, International Rescue Committee

“As we speak about the scale of the crisis, the role of local actors in this response cannot be overstated. Since April last year, it has been everyday Sudanese who have—often at great personal risk—stepped up to support each other and become a lifeline for millions of Sudanese. However, without sustainable, flexible, and predictable funding this lifeline remains under constant threat.”

Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Secretary-General, CARE International

“We need global leaders in Paris to take this opportunity to come up with immediate, concrete solutions to the human tragedy that continues to unfold and is spilling over across the region. This is the time to turn the tide on this crisis, and world leaders need to stand by the very courageous, determined people of Sudan. We cannot see another month of violence, brutality, and increased suffering. The Paris Conference cannot be one of empty and hollow promises. It must result in decisive, meaningful, and inclusive commitments to respond to this devastating crisis to prevent farming, as has been said here, and bring an end to this war on women and girls.”

Dominic MacSorley, Humanitarian Ambassador, CONCERN Worldwide



“Hunger and suffering are at unprecedented levels, and yet we know Sudan has not hit its worst level of suffering. We can use words like ‘famine-like conditions’, but to be brutally frank, this does mean children are already dying. And the situation in Darfur and neighboring states where Concern is working is particularly worrying our teams. There are reports of a rapid deterioration in the condition of children presenting at the various health facilities.”

Anette Hoffman, Senior Research Fellow at the Conflict Research Unit at the Clingendael Institute in the Netherlands

“We are very concerned that the global early warning system is failing Sudan. It was designed to address such crises by allowing for comparability to other crises around the world. But in the case of Sudan, the system is not working, so we published our analysis to urge global leaders to ensure that early warning can still enable early action. It might be too late to prevent famine in Sudan, but a concerted, timely response can still save hundreds of thousands of lives.”

Fatima Ahmed, from Zenab for Women in Development, a Sudanese NGO.

“As local responders, we know there are many ways inside Sudan to get food for those in need. People need basic types of food—lentils, sorghum—which are available in the country. As local NGOs, we have been receiving funds from international NGOs, and this is saving lives on the ground. We should focus on supporting and empowering local responders so they can scale-up what they’re doing.”

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