

Conflict and Hunger in Sudan: an NGO call to action

The conflict in Sudan has already created the world's largest displacement crisis. Now fighting, displacement and lack of humanitarian access to the most vulnerable population places millions at risk of sliding into emergency levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition

As humanitarian organisations working in Sudan, we are making a call to action about the increasing levels of conflict, organised violence, sexual violence and growing evidence of conflict-induced hunger faced by the people of Sudan. Strong, evidence-based diplomatic action is needed to protect civilians and demand unhindered humanitarian access through all available entry points. We call for the respect of International Humanitarian Law and compliance with the demands of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2417 and 2573 which condemn conflict-induced food insecurity and the destruction of objects indispensable to civilian life.

Since hostilities broke out on the 15th of April 2023, the people of Sudan have been caught in a conflict of major proportions. This has deeply exacerbated the pre-existing hunger and child malnutrition crisis and displaced [8.5 million people](#). Today, [over 25 million people across Sudan, South Sudan, and Chad are trapped](#) in a spiral of deteriorating food security, violence and displacement. The IPC reports warned that hunger has reached the highest level ever recorded during [the harvest season](#)—a time that is usually the most food secure period of the year.

The estimated population facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) increased from 15 million to [17.7 million people](#) (37 per cent of the population), an increase of 18 per cent compared to the previous projection. The IPC analysis released in December 2023 projected [4.9 million people](#) (10 per cent of the population) to be in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency). Sudanese arrivals risk facing catastrophic conditions in [Chad](#) and [South Sudan](#), as they put extra pressure on already overstretched resources and limited funding. Time is running out to prevent a rapid deterioration in the conflict-induced food insecurity crisis. The international community and conflict parties must take immediate action to alleviate hunger and prevent a catastrophic malnutrition emergency.

[Humanitarian agencies' ability to reach people in need is deteriorating](#) due to the heightened violence and interference by warring parties. The prevention of sufficient food aid from reaching the population and targeting food production and distribution infrastructure and means for food transportation are a **direct violation of [United Nations Security Council Resolution 2417](#)**. This resolution was unanimously approved in 2018 to condemn the use of hunger and starvation as a weapon of war.

The people bearing the brunt of the conflict are those who are most likely to have exhausted their means and strategies to avoid harm, such as women, children, older adults, and people with disabilities. Roughly [2.9 million children are already acutely malnourished](#) and 729,000 children under five are suffering from severe acute malnutrition – the most dangerous and deadly form of extreme hunger. Children [are already dying of malnutrition](#) and according to the Sudan Nutrition Cluster, about [222,000 severely malnourished children](#)

and more than 7,000 new mothers are likely to die in the coming months if their nutritional and health needs remain unmet.

The growing hunger crisis has strong gendered impacts, with women and girls, facing increased risk of **gender-based violence**, including sexual violence. Already before the conflict, social norms dictated that women have little control over resources and that women and girls eat last and least in their households, [leading to 79% of women not meeting their daily minimum dietary requirements](#). Today, women and adolescent girls must continually choose between starvation and safety as they face [violence or harassment](#) when attempting to access markets, fields, livelihood opportunities, humanitarian distribution sites, or other zones. There are also reports of women and girls being forced to resort to survival sex to access food, and of increased early and forced marriage.

The escalation of hostilities has caused **extensive damage and disruption to essential infrastructure and services**, including that necessary for food production, processing and distribution and water and healthcare facilities. Across the country, multiple food production factories and markets have been [burned and destroyed](#) and food aid has been looted on a large scale. While local markets continue to function in many areas of the country, the loss of purchasing power caused by the conflict is putting them at risk of collapsing. Equally worryingly, there have been at least 284 reported [attacks on health care](#) since 15 April 2023—including the killing of 61 health workers and the damage of health facilities on 62 occasions. The attacks undermine civilians', especially women and children's, access to essential services including nutrition and health.

On the 15th of March 2024, the UN Secretary General triggered Resolution 2417 by submitting a White Note to the Security Council on the hunger emergency in Sudan, which subsequently met to discuss the emergency. This is an important first step, which needs to be followed up by concrete action by the parties to the conflict and by UN member states and the international community to ensure conflict parties abide by their obligations.

To protect civilians and prevent catastrophic hunger:

- **We urge all parties to the conflict to take immediate measures to prevent the escalation of the hunger crisis in Sudan.** This includes not targeting, looting or incidentally damaging sites or infrastructure vital to food systems such as markets, land used for agriculture or livestock, or food storage facilities like siloes or warehouses.
- **We call on the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to abide by their promises set out in the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan**, and to ensure their dissemination and adherence along the different chains of command to the local level. Vital for reducing food insecurity, these commitments include agreements to allow civilians safe, regular, and principled access to humanitarian assistance, including cross-border access, and to protect humanitarian personnel and assets. It is also imperative that all parties to the conflict take steps to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict, to ensure a sustained cessation of hostilities in the short term, and to address the underlying causes of conflict.

- **We call on the international community to urgently increase funding for the [humanitarian response in Sudan](#)** and to consider the comprehensive impact of the hunger crisis. Wherever possible, existing food systems and local markets must be supported to keep functioning, especially through cash-based programming. Financial support for the humanitarian response must also be designed to consider the extensive ramifications of the hunger crisis which requires a multisectoral response. Adequate funding for food security, nutrition, WASH, sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, and protection clusters (including child protection and GBV prevention and response) is essential to mitigate the escalating impacts of rising food insecurity in the short and long term, and must reach national and local organisations, including women's organisations and mutual aid networks.
- We also urge the international community and all conflict parties including the Sudanese authorities to **ease undue bureaucratic or administrative impediments to humanitarian assistance**. Funding must be accompanied by unfettered access to the most vulnerable population, to ensure a response scale-up driven by the humanitarian needs. International actors must also ensure that humanitarian exemptions are guaranteed on any potential sanctions.
- **We call on the Security Council to hold regular, open briefings to monitor the implementation of the provisions in UN Security Council Resolution 2724**, and the recommendations to address food insecurity put forward by the UN Secretary General's Resolution 2417-related White Note on Sudan.
- **We call on the Security Council to uphold its commitments under the Women Peace and Security Agenda to take action to prevent conflict-related sexual violence that is [widespread across Sudan](#)**. Multiple UNSC resolutions (1820, 1888, 1960 and 2467) condemn sexual violence against women and children in armed conflict and urge Member States to adopt a survivor-centred approach to its prevention and response, whilst also strengthening access to justice for victims, including through the prompt investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators.
- We also recall that, before the ongoing crisis, Sudan faced a dire humanitarian situation affecting 30% of the population. We are now alarmed by the fact that the ongoing violence may continue to exacerbate the rapid and dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The rainy season, due to start in June, risks further limiting access to remote areas. We urge the international community to anticipate these needs, promote collective action and swiftly mobilise the necessary resources to save lives and protect affected communities.



Signatories

1. Action Against Hunger
2. ADRA
3. Alight
4. ALIMA
5. CAFOD
6. CARE
7. Concern Worldwide
8. Coopi
9. Humanity for Development and Prosperity Organization
10. Insecurity Insight
11. International Rescue Committee
12. LM International
13. MedGlobal
14. Medical Teams International
15. Mercy Corps
16. Nonviolent Peaceforce
17. Norwegian Church Aid
18. Norwegian Refugee Council
19. Plan International
20. Premiere Urgence Internationale
21. Save the Children
22. Solidarités INTERNATIONAL
23. Triangle génération humanitaire
24. Welthungerhilfe
25. Word Vision
26. ZOA