



**MAY 2023
FLASH REPORT**

VIOLENT CONFLICT IN SUDAN

NO END IN SIGHT

Nonviolent  Peaceforce



1. National Context

The situation for civilians in Sudan is dire.

Violent clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continue, including indiscriminate attacks targeting both military and civilian infrastructure. Civilian casualty numbers are feared to be high and mounting. Survivors are suffering from extreme protection risks due to the conflict such as exposure to unexploded ordnance (UXOs). These risks further exacerbate existing vulnerabilities.

The armed conflict has caused a significant humanitarian crisis with over one million people having been displaced within Sudan or to neighbouring countries in just a month.¹ Despite an escalating number of internally displaced people, pervasive levels of insecurity make aid delivery almost impossible in many areas.² Many neighbouring countries are themselves fragile and poorly equipped to respond to large numbers of refugees. As a result, conditions are deteriorating in border areas and rumours are emerging of tension between new arrivals, host and pre-existing refugee communities.

International efforts to broker ceasefires have shown little impact on the ground so far. There is currently no end to the conflict in sight and, consequently, little chance of preventing further displacement and suffering amongst vulnerable populations.

[1] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136837>

[2] Sudan: Revised Humanitarian Response Plan 2023



2. Escalating ethnic conflict and humanitarian crisis in Darfur

The Darfur region has again become a hotspot for violence and the humanitarian crisis as localised intercommunal tensions erupt within the broader national conflict. Whilst international attention is focused on Khartoum and the longer conflict continues unaddressed in Darfur, the greater the chances of large-scale interethnic and intercommunal violence occurring, as groups see this as an opportunity to increase or regain control over land and resources.

Already in El Geneina, West Darfur, the national violence has transformed into massive intercommunal violence with thousands having been killed or injured over the last three weeks.³ The city of El Fasher in North Darfur has now been divided into three different areas of control under various armed groups whilst, outside of this urban space, armed groups are reportedly evicting people from their homes. Civilians are facing catastrophic humanitarian conditions in both these localities.⁴

The risk of Darfur descending into a brutal conflict similar to the one it endured in the early 2000s is real, and rising.

[3] <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/as-many-as-2000-dead-in-west-darfur-violence>

[4] Sudan: Revised Humanitarian Response Plan 2023

3. Nonviolent Peaceforce's Emergency Response

Despite escalating conflict, NP is continuing its programming on the ground in North Darfur. Programmes in West Darfur are currently suspended but will resume as soon as possible. NP's mobile teams work using an adaptive and flexible programming model, responding promptly to changing conflict dynamics, evaluating and assessing needs in real time and adjusting its strategies and activities to respond. For example, in response to an escalation of violence in a certain area, NP may choose to increase its presence there to concentrate its efforts on dialogue facilitation or protective accompaniment, as appropriate.

At the heart of NP's approach is its emphasis on community-led solutions. NP believes that those living within conflict zones are best equipped to understand the threats they face and devise strategies to mitigate them. NP's role, therefore, is to support and facilitate these community-designed protection mechanisms, rather than impose external solutions. This may involve training community members in nonviolent protection techniques, supporting local peace committees, or helping communities to set up early warning systems.

Since the outbreak of nationwide conflict, NP has carried out the following activities in North Darfur:

Delivering direct protection and essential services in insecure areas

NP is providing direct physical protection to vulnerable populations by crossing the different lines of territorial control in El Fasher and providing protective presence at various health centres. Several have been opened and are being run by local community initiatives. Through patrols, community engagement and dialogue, NP is supporting these centres with activities such as crowd control and case referrals to prevent and mitigate protection risks and needs. The team has also been delivering psychological first aid (PFA) and PFA training to health volunteers, ministry staff and community members across El Fasher and this much needed and appreciated activity will be replicated in other health centres throughout the region.

Community engagement, conflict resolution and violence reduction

NP has established more than 15 protection committees throughout the region. Some of these committees are formed by diverse members of community members and work to identify and mitigate protection threats to their communities. Four of these groups are Women's Protection Teams (WPTs) working in Zamzam IDP camp, one of the largest camps in Sudan and home to over 450,000 people. Throughout the recent surge in violence, NP has been in constant contact with these WPTs, supporting them to analyse and respond to threats of violence such as when disagreements between youths recently began to escalate into violence involving knives. In the coming weeks the team will intensify engagement with these committees, using their reports as a basis for the development of future work plans – a real-time example of community-led and adaptive working.

Advocating for and supporting conflict-sensitive humanitarian aid

NP is working with other humanitarian actors and state ministries to deliver conflict-sensitive aid in North Darfur. The organization supports the emergency committee formed by the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) to conduct needs assessments, map IDP locations, and coordinate humanitarian interventions. NP has also advocated to the Ministry of Health and secured the opening of a health centre in the south of El Fasher, to address the overwhelming needs of IDPs in the area.

Digital accompaniment

Since the onset of the conflict, NP's team has leveraged the power of digital technology and social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, to gather real-time information about unfolding incidents. These digital platforms have been instrumental in amplifying awareness of current issues, mobilising support, and providing communities at risk with timely information, such as safety advisories and evacuation orders. The team has been actively engaged in monitoring, documenting, and responding to threats or acts of violence against civilians. This includes online reporting of incidents, advocacy to raise awareness, issuing safety alerts in real-time, and cultivating online communities that provide support and solidarity.

4. The Way Forward

The risk of Darfur descending into a humanitarian catastrophe is high and it becomes higher with each passing day. Urgent intervention is needed to support violence prevention and reduction as well as strengthen community security and cohesion. In the coming weeks and months NP's team will focus on delivering the following interventions:

1. Direct protection for violence prevention: providing direct protection is key to reducing tensions. NP's teams will continue to deploy a protective presence in areas identified by local communities as being at high risk of violence. These sites might include IDP settlements, markets, clinics and aid distribution locations. NP will also provide protective accompaniment to vulnerable individuals, especially those at risk of targeted attacks, to ensure their safety during movements and access to essential services.

2. Strengthening the environment in which peace can thrive: achieving and maintaining peace at local levels contributes to an improved overall sense of security, and increases communities' confidence in and commitment to dialogue processes. NP actively engages with local communities, tribal leaders, government authorities and armed groups, to promote dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation efforts. It also works with local civil society groups, building their technical ability to build peace and security, and maintain civil society influence in a period of political turmoil. NP also focuses on enhancing security management and risk assessments for civil society organisations (CSOs) operating in volatile environments. This includes providing training and support to ensure the safety and preparedness of CSO staff. By strengthening their security protocols, NP helps CSOs navigate challenging circumstances and carry out their peacebuilding activities effectively.

3. Supporting the delivery of humanitarian aid: NP will continue to work closely with humanitarian actors operating in the region to ensure the effective delivery of critical humanitarian assistance. This includes collaborating with organisations involved in food distribution, medical support, and the provision of temporary shelters. NP can play a vital role in facilitating access to the most insecure areas and ensuring that aid reaches the most vulnerable populations.

Photos

- Cover: "Bullets are falling on houses like rain." El Fashir, Darfur, April 27, 2023. ©NP
- Page 2: Women serving breakfast at a health centre. They asked NP to provide a session/training for them. El Fashir, Darfur, May 17, 2023. ©NP
- Page 3: NP staff at a health centre reopened and run by community members since the April escalation of violence. El Fashir, Darfur, May 4, 2023. ©NP
- Back cover: NP conducts Psychological First Aid training with ~90 participants, the fourth session since the escalation of violence. El Fashir, Darfur, May 20, 2023. ©NP




Funded by
the European Union

CONTACT

ANNA STEIN

HEAD OF PROGRAMMES, NP SUDAN

astein@nonviolentpeaceforce.org 

www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org 

NONVIOLENT PEACEFORCE
MAY 2023 | FLASH REPORT