

Aid Organizations call for Humanitarian Corridor and Protection of Civilians in West Darfur

The Sudan INGO and NNGO Forums raises alarm, expresses deep concern over conflict, violence, & increased displacement

International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and national organizations (NNGOs) delivering humanitarian action in Sudan reaffirm their call for all parties of the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law. This includes 1) the protection of civilians; 2) facilitating the safe, rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to those in need; and 3) allowing all civilians in West Darfur to leave areas of active hostilities voluntarily and safely.

Despite the signing of the **Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan** on 11 May, fighting resumed for the second time in three weeks in Al Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, a few hours later, marked by three days of heavy artillery in residential areas, indiscriminate shooting, widespread looting, and destruction of at least 18 displacement sites housing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

IDPs have been forced to flee across the city and have severely limited access to shelter or safety. The violence is increasingly taking an ethnic dimension, with the involvement of local armed groups, house-to-house raids, targeted lootings, and killing based on tribal affiliation.

Since April 15: One-Million Internally Displaced, Majority Displaced in West Darfur.

One month on from the eruption of conflict in Khartoum and other areas of Sudan, over 936,000 people have been displaced within the country, with West Darfur seeing the second largest number of displaced people¹. About 200,000 people fled to neighbouring countries, such as Chad, South Sudan, Egypt, Central African Republic, and Ethiopia.

INGOs and NNGOs are deeply concerned at the disregard for protection of civilians demonstrated in West Darfur and warn the international community once again of the potential for conflict and ethnic violence to spill over into other Darfur states.

Across the Darfur region, many households are running out of food stock, particularly those who live in IDP camps and those households who are generously supporting those who have been displaced.

Humanitarian Context in Al Geneina is “Catastrophic”

The humanitarian context inside Al Geneina is catastrophic. As of May 15, 2023, at least 280 people are reported as killed and 160 others injured. Civilians hardly have any access to water and food. The healthcare system has all but collapsed after doctors and other medical personnel as well as healthcare facilities were directly targeted. Damage to the Al Geneina market directly impacts those civilians, often with low incomes and whose livelihoods depend on daily labour in the market.

Several INGO and NNGO facilities and medical facilities have been attacked and looted, severely limiting civilians' access to assistance and health services.

Many INGOs and NNGOs have been forced to cease operations.² Although humanitarian services in Geneina are all but suspended over the past three weeks, the INGO and NNGO community remains committed to responding to the unraveling humanitarian crisis in West Darfur – one of Sudan's most vulnerable states.

¹ DTM, Sudan Situation Report (9th of May 2023)

² Prior to the recent conflict, at least 23 International NGOs were operational in West Darfur.

The Sudan INGO and NNGO Forums jointly call for:

- **All conflict parties uphold International Humanitarian Law including the protection of civilians, health care workers and facilities, and humanitarian aid workers.**
- **Establish Humanitarian corridors and take all steps to ensure safe passage for civilians to leave areas of active hostilities voluntarily and safely, and facilitate the safe, rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief.**
 - As outlined in the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, parties to the conflict should urgently operationalize commitments to take all feasible precautions to avoid and minimize civilian harm and allow voluntary evacuation of civilians.
 - Parties to the conflict must protect and respect humanitarian workers, supplies, offices, warehouses, and other facilities allowing INGOs, National NGOs, and Local responders to access those desperately in need of humanitarian support.
- **The UN should expedite efforts to establish a specific mechanism to coordinate humanitarian response and protection activities across the Darfur States.**
 - The developing situation across the Darfur States will require a tailored response from the international community, including urgent negotiations to facilitate the delivery of aid from neighbouring countries and advocacy with parties of the conflict to address violations and prevent further civilian harm.
 - The UN, as part of its collective operational strategy, must expedite efforts to establish humanitarian hubs to support response to the crisis across the Darfur states.