

Failure of the international community could leave millions at risk of famine in Sudan.

Following 14 months of escalating conflict, Sudan has become the world's largest hunger crisis with over half of the country experiencing severe food insecurity. 25.6 million people are projected to face acute food insecurity or worse (IPC 3+) during the upcoming lean season. This is almost a 40% increase in the number of food insecure people over the last 4 months. The newly published Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) alert has classified 755,000 people as living in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), the most severe classification on the IPC scale. These people are experiencing destitution and starvation, having exhausted avenues to access food and proper nutrition. The report also warns that millions of people living in Darfur, North and South Kordofan, Khartoum and Gezira States are at an immediate risk of famine. INGOs responding in Eastern Chad already report that thousands of people, mostly women and children, are fleeing from Darfur across the border every day in search of food.

The Sudan INGO Forum has regularly sounded the alarm that continued and escalating conflict and active denial of humanitarian access was driving Sudan to the brink of famine. In April 2024, the international community pledged 2.2 billion USD to address the suffering of the Sudanese people in Sudan and across the region. The promises of solidarity and support by international donors remain largely unfulfilled. The Humanitarian Response Plan remains severely underfunded with only 17% of the required funding received to date.

Sudan's unprecedented hunger crisis is the direct result of the conflict and disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law by all parties of the conflict. Those experiencing and facing the worst of the country's hunger crisis live in areas where violence has been the most intense. Fighting has disrupted harvests and whilst markets continue to function in many locations, many families fleeing their homes and without income can simply not afford food. Women and children continue to be disproportionately impacted by the hunger crisis and malnutrition rates among children under-five and pregnant and breastfeeding women is particularly concerning. Indiscriminate and targeted attacks on population centres have pushed millions into displacement and have severely damaged critical civilian infrastructure including water treatment plants and hospitals.

At the same time, access to humanitarian assistance continues to be severely restricted by administrative barriers, restrictions on civilian movement, and looting or violence targeted at humanitarians. Areas like El Fasher in North Darfur and Kadugli in South Kordofan have effectively been placed under siege, leaving hundreds of thousands of civilians without access to food and water for months on end. Since the withdrawal of consent from SAF-backed authorities, the UN has been unable to move supplies from Chad to Darfur via the Adre border crossing. Whilst approximately 100 trucks of food have since entered Darfur via the more northern Tine crossing, such supplies often take weeks to reach their destinations across Darfur, hampered by insecurity and poor road infrastructure – weeks that many of those in the most critical situations cannot afford to wait.

In many of these areas, local community mutual aid initiatives, including the emergency response rooms, have been leading food delivery efforts, serving millions of meals a day, despite the constant threat of detention and death. Dozens of activists and local volunteers have been arrested, threatened and prosecuted in recent weeks and at least eight young volunteers were killed in El Fasher delivering life-saving assistance to those in need in the city. These



brave efforts are further undermined by a lack of flexible and predictable funding. Over the last 6 months, many of these community organised kitchens in Khartoum and the Kordofans have been forced to close due to a lack of funding.

After over a year of crisis, the traditional humanitarian approach is failing the people of Sudan and creative solutions are needed. In addition to scaling-up support to local-level mutual aid initiatives, many INGOs have pivoted to scale-up multi-purpose cash assistance to quickly address the most urgent food and other basic needs. Evidence gathered by members of the Sudan INGO Forum indicates that cash is currently the quickest – and sometimes the only – way to save lives in conflict-affected areas of Sudan. INGOs have the operational capacity to reach nearly 2 million people with life-saving cash assistance in the next 3 months – however despite advocacy efforts, cash-based approaches are still not prioritised in the response.

After months of inaction by the international community, the situation in Sudan may be reaching the point of no return. Urgent action is required with time rapidly running out. Considering the criticality of the current situation it is imperative to:

- Reconvene the international community at the earliest possible opportunity to scale-up efforts to bring about an end to the hostilities and address barriers to scaling up humanitarian response;
- Coordinate diplomatic efforts to push for unfettered humanitarian access using all cross-line and cross-border routes;
- Increase the access of mutual aid initiatives and other local responders to flexible and predictable funding through the removal of burdensome compliance processes and ensuring transparency in the amounts of funding delivered in support of local actors;
- Support INGOs to urgently scale-up multi-purpose cash initiatives as the first line response to famine;
- Ensure that pledges made in Paris are dispersed in the next month, prioritising funding to those with a functional presence in areas of highest need.

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