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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency  
To: Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP)  
Subject: Migratory situation in Sudan

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**Context**

On April 15, fighting began between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the regular army: the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). That time UNHCR warned that more than 1 M people could flee the country due to the ongoing conflict. By today more than 1M did flee Sudan. Fighting continues in several locations, including the capital: Khartoum, Zalingi (Central Darfur), Al Fasher (North Darfur), El Geneina (West Darfur) and Al Obeid (North Kordofan). There were multiple ceasefire attempts but none worked. The conflict has so far resulted in more than 5.000 deaths and more than 12.000 wounded, according to UN figures, although the actual figures are probably much higher.

The increased tension left in uncertainty 1.1 M refugees who were living in Sudan already before the war, as well as the more than 4,21 M internally displaced persons (IDPs), mostly in the Darfur region. According to the latest integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) on the war-torn nation, at least 20.3 million people across Sudan are acutely food insecure and need food and livelihood assistance between July and September 2023. This, in turn, could lead to increased displacement and migration.<sup>1</sup>

The inflation rate projected by World Bank for 2023 is 250% (in 2022: 140%).

### **Background to the conflict**

Since the independence of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan has been in a difficult economic and social situation. The split of the southern part of the country meant for Sudan the loss of most of its public revenues from the oil extracted in the area. Furthermore, political instability following the popular revolution that began in December 2018 and led to the overthrow of al--Bashir in 2019 has led to various social movements, and street contestation has been constant. In 2020, the Juba Peace Agreement was signed between the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF), which comprises various rebel groups, in order to end the civil war in which the country was embroiled.

The current war is a result of disagreements between the two militaries regarding the process of integrating the RSF into the SAF. SAF wanted a fast integration, while the RSF proposal was for a decade.

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<sup>1</sup> Since mid-April, prices of basic commodities such as bottled water, food and fuel have increased by 40% to 60% in conflict-affected areas. According to the World Food Programme, the price of a local food basket — which was already 28% higher in March 2023 than in March 2022 — is expected to rise by another 25% in the next three to six months, should the conflict continue. If this increase in food prices materializes, up to 18 M people are expected to be unable to meet their basic food needs. This is compounded by the serious problem of shortages in Khartoum.

The RSF is a paramilitary force created by former Islamist President Omar al-Bashir. Since their conversion in 2013, their leader is General Hemedti, who was vice president of the Sovereign Council and number two in the Army after the fall of Al-Bashir in 2019. The RSF were born from the Janjaweed militias, promoted by al-Bashir himself to repress — unsuccessfully — the Darfur revolt (2003-2008), where they were accused of committing war crimes, which led to the intervention of the International Criminal Court. Years later, after the overthrow of al-Bashir in April 2019, they grew stronger and became a military force reluctant to submit to Khartoum's discipline.

The deteriorating situation in Sudan is having dramatic repercussions in neighbouring countries. Sudan shares borders with seven states, spanning three regions, and is a major migration and transit country at the intersection between the countries of the East and Horn of Africa and Libya and Egypt along the Central Mediterranean route.

### **Data on migration and forced displacement**

In 2023 so far, there has been a modest increase in Sudanese migrants arriving to Italy, mostly departing from Tunisia. On May 27, the Tunisian National Guard intercepted the first group of Sudanese migrants on their way to the EU after the start of the conflict. In addition, Morocco has expressed concern about the increased flow of Sudanese fleeing the conflict.. This recent surge of irregular arrivals is likely to be followed by an increase in return orders if the persons concerned have no right to stay in the EU. Sudan's level of cooperation on readmission is assessed in the Commission's yearly report under Article 25a of the Visa Code.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Sudan on April 15, the scale of displacements within the country and into neighbouring countries has been steadily increasing. IOM, in its latest report, informed that over 4.2 M people are internally displaced within Sudan and 1,180,626 Sudanese, third-country nationals and returnees had crossed the border into neighbouring countries. The risk of displaced people falling victims of traffickers will also increase.

IOM estimates that 4,232,840 Individuals (845,779 Households) have been recently internally displaced (IOM DTM Sudan, 19 September 2023). The number of new IDPs in just over eight weeks (April 15 to Jun 21) is comparable to that recorded for all displacements in the country between 2020 and 2022. The majority of IDPs are leaving Khartoum (66%), West Darfur (17%) and the states of South Darfur (9%), Central Darfur (6%), North Darfur and North Kordofan. 64.1% fled to urban areas, while the rest (35.9%) fled to rural areas.

The conflict is not only causing instability in the country, but in the entire region as well. Neighbouring countries - as are result of mixed cross border movements- have started to host numerous Sudanese refugees and foreign nationals (including returnees). Since the beginning of the conflict: 323,230 have fled to Egypt, 479,953 to Chad, 273,395 to South Sudan, 81,393 to Ethiopia, 18,545 to Central African Republic and 4,110 to Libya. These countries are asking for help from the international community to be able to cope with this growing human influx. In Chad, for example, they have exceeded 400.000 people, especially in the provinces of Ouaddai, Sila and Wadi Fira. Before the outbreak of the conflict, the country was already hosting some 588.770 refugees, including nearly 410.000 Sudanese who fled the conflict in Darfur in March 2023.

The Sudanese are not the only ones affected. Sudan is host to 1.1 M refugees, the second largest refugee population in Africa. South Sudanese account for over 70% (800.000) of the refugees in Sudan, followed by 126.000 Eritrean refugees (11%), in addition to Syrians, Ethiopians, Yemenis, etc. The country also has more than 3 M IDPs, mostly in the Darfur region, which has been experiencing an unstable security situation for almost two decades and where refugee conditions are of great concern. As of September 11, there have been 262.298 arrivals in South Sudan, of which 91,26% are returnees.

Sudan's Push Factor Index (PFI),<sup>2</sup> aggregated by the EUAA, has escalated due to its status as a country in turmoil. With regard to asylum applications, FR and DE have begun to warn of the increase in applications submitted by Sudanese asylum seekers.

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<sup>2</sup> The Push Factor Index (PFI) is an indicator that measures conditions or circumstances in a country of origin that drive or stimulate emigration. Such events may include conflict, economic hardship, deteriorating governance, political tensions and social exclusion of marginalized groups.

## **EU Action**

In response to the crisis, the EU has mobilized funds and resources to address the immediate needs of Sudanese refugees and returnees.

- On May 10, the EU established a Humanitarian Airlift to transport essential supplies such as water, sanitation, hygiene and shelter materials from UN warehouses in Dubai to Port Sudan. The initiative is part of the European Humanitarian Response Capacity and is expected to include additional flights. However, Sudan is restricting the granting of visas to humanitarian personnel, citing security concerns. This poses an added difficulty.
- The European Commission has allocated €73 M to humanitarian aid in Sudan. It is working with humanitarian partners to adapt existing programs to the new situation. EU funding has supported the Sudanese Red Crescent with first aid, evacuation services and psychosocial support, helping some 70,000 people in Khartoum and other affected areas. Emergency assistance has been extended to the Egyptian, Ethiopian and South Sudanese Red Crescent Red Cross Societies in support of Sudanese refugees.
- EU humanitarian experts were rapidly deployed along Sudan's border crossings, working with partners to assess the situation of refugees and returnees.
- The EU has mobilized €350,000 in additional aid for Chad to provide emergency assistance to vulnerable people affected by the Sudanese crisis. Moreover, the EU allocated an additional €1.66 M from existing funds to addressing the consequences of the crisis in Chad, bringing the total assistance to €2.01 M. All this funding is on top of the more than €73 M already allocated by the EU to Sudan in 2023 for humanitarian aid.
- The EU made available €20 million to Egypt in response to the situation in Sudan.
- An EU action (€ 30 M) to support Chad, South Sudan and Ethiopia to address the Sudanese displacement situation, to be funded under the Flexible Mechanism, was discussed at the NDICI Coordination Group on Migration on 27 July 2023. The action will support national and sub-national institutions and systems of the respective countries to address the challenges of forced displacement.

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to closely monitor how the situation is evolving, whether the Sudanese hosted in neighbouring countries are considering engaging in secondary movement or the newly displaced within Sudan will also decide to flee to neighbouring countries because of lack of aid and dire humanitarian situation.

The Presidency presents the following questions intending to steer the discussion on the way forward:

1. *How do EUMS assess the migratory implications for the EU of the crisis in Sudan?*
  2. *In light of the preventive nature of the ongoing reflection on the migratory consequences of the Sudanese crisis, how can we better leverage the already existing human and material resources in the region to avoid duplication?*
  3. *Can we expect the migratory flows to reach Europe? If so, how should the EU better anticipate or react to this challenge?*
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