

Escalation of Conflict in Sudan

Overview

- On 15 December 2023, intense fighting broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) close to Wad Madani city in Al Jazirah state. After days of clashes, RSF entered Wad Madani on 18 December. The situation is tense and unpredictable, with clashes reportedly still ongoing. Night-time curfews have been imposed in most eastern States.
- Renewed clashes have also been reported in El Fasher, North Darfur, close to Abu Shouk and Al Salam IDP camps, with many people reportedly displaced as a result.
- Wad Madani, which lies some 136km southeast of Khartoum, has been a place of refuge for many displaced individuals from Khartoum due to its proximity to the capital. Humanitarian agencies including UNHCR also established offices and warehouses in the city.

Access and Security Update

- On 15 December 2023, international staff in Wad Madani were authorised to reposition to White Nile State, while national staff were authorised to relocate to safer areas as feasible. On 18 December, the evacuation of international staff present in White Nile State to Renk, South Sudan was authorised by the UN Designated Official. The inter-agency convoy comprising both international and some national staff took place on the morning of 19 December, with no incident reported. National staff and their dependents are authorised to relocate to safer areas and are encouraged to provide updates on their plans and movements to security focal points and receiving offices to facilitate support.
- Reportedly, looting has started in Wad Madani city, affecting civilian structures and humanitarian facilities. There are also anecdotal reports of looting of personal and commercial belongings during flight. UNHCR has informed the authorities of the locations of its facilities to mitigate against potential looting.
- Anecdotal reports of sexual and gender-based violence and difficulties faced in seeking safety due to lack or high cost of transport and security checks along the routes have been received. It has been observed that the majority of people displaced from Wad Madani to Sennar are women and children, increasing their vulnerability profile.

Displacement

- According to [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#), approximately 250,000 – 300,000 people have moved out of Al Jazirah State to other areas in search of safety, many travelling on foot, due to lack of transport options.
- Al Jazirah State hosts a sizeable number of the displaced population in Sudan. [IOM DTM](#) estimates that there were close to 500,000 internally displaced people in 1,391 locations across Al Jazirah State as of 12 December 2023.
- Prior to the events of 15 December, state authorities estimate in total some 30,000 refugees and asylum-seekers were present in Al Jazirah state, which includes 17,471 who were living there prior to the start of the conflict in April 2023. Of the refugee and asylum-seeker population estimated to have relocated from Khartoum since April 2023, UNHCR had verified 7,138 individuals (82% South Sudanese, 14% Ethiopian, 3% Eritrean, 1% other nationalities) in 23 locations in Medani Al Kubra and Al Hasahisa localities. In addition, UNHCR and the Commission for Refugees (COR) in previous months supported over 500 refugees and asylum-seekers in Medani Al Kubra and Al Hasahisa to relocate to refugee camps in Gedaref state to be registered and receive protection and assistance.



Displaced individuals gather for NFI distribution in Jazirah state in July 2023. Photo: UNHCR

UNHCR Response

- UNHCR is [responding to new displacement from Al Jazirah State to Gedaref State](#) as a result of the hostilities while also planning to [activate an emergency response in Sennar State](#), to where many people have fled. While UNHCR does not have an established presence in Sennar, the Damazine Field Office has previously carried out activities there. Partners and agencies are responding to the new needs within the limits of the available items and access restrictions.
- In the initial response, UNHCR is planning to send [1,000 non-food item kits to Sennar State](#) comprising blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets, solar lamps, mosquito nets, jerry cans and plastic sheets. Partners are also planning to send an additional 2,500 kits to Sennar and Gedaref States.

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CONTACT

UNHCR Sudan External Relations Unit | Email: sudkhextrel@unhcr.org

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