UNHCR EGYPT
SUDAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE
17 May 2023

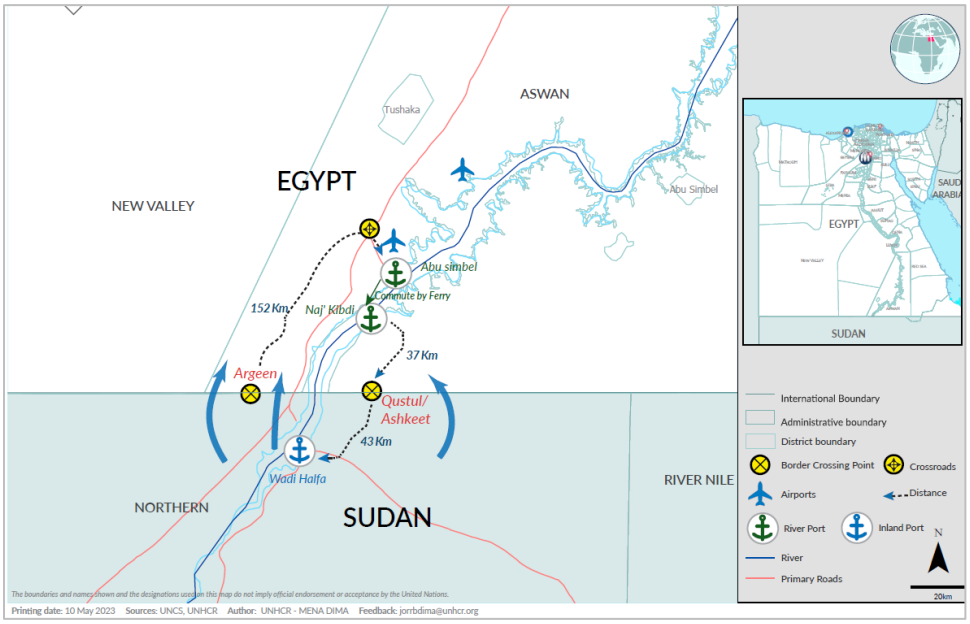
Buses seen lining up to take the ferry to the Egyptian city of Abu Simbel after crossing from Sudan to Egypt. ©UNHCR/Christine Beshay

107,826

Sudanese have entered Egypt from Sudan via the two official border crossings, Argeen and Qustol, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
As of 17 May

$25.2 million

UNHCR's financial requirements for the Sudan emergency response in Egypt.



OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS

- The scale and magnitude of displacement within Sudan and into neighbouring countries has continued to increase since the conflict erupted in Khartoum, Sudan, in mid-April 2023, between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The current fighting has led to over to 113,000 individuals crossing into Egypt to seek safety including **107,826** Sudanese and **5,364** third-country nationals.
- The Government of Egypt has been providing protection and humanitarian relief to those in need and the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has reiterated its commitment to keeping the border open and to not implementing an encampment policy. The MFA has also highlighted the support required for host communities across Egypt, who are receiving the large number of recent arrivals.
- While Egypt is applying the Four Freedoms Agreement for Sudanese in Egypt, some people fleeing are unable to meet the entry requirements and therefore need a visa to cross to Egypt, despite their need for international protection. UNHCR has emphasized that Sudanese fleeing in the wake of hostilities erupting need international protection.
- The MFA initial clearance for UN staff to be at the two entry points at the border is currently valid for one month. UNHCR continues to coordinate future plans with the MFA, which has assured UNHCR rolling access to each cross point. UNHCR continues to advocate for the formalization of its presence in Aswan. This remains crucial for the assessment and provision of an adequate response, which includes the need for registration and data collection to enable proper planning and the provision of assistance.
- The Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan was launched on 17 May and seeks $470.4 million to support refugees, returnees and host communities in the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. In Egypt, the plan seeks $114 million to assist 350,000 refugees and 8,000 third-country nationals. UNHCR's supplementary appeal for the Sudan emergency seeks $253.9 million, including **$25.2 million** for Egypt, to l support government-led efforts to address the protection and urgent needs of refugees.

A few days ago, Sajud (third from the left), a university student in Khartoum, aspired of graduating with excellence and securing a prestigious job. However, dreams have little place amidst the chaos of the battlefields. Sajud and her family left Sudan with just their backpacks and passports. After a lengthy journey, they reached Cairo, where they sought international protection from UNHCR. Currently, they are staying with relatives in Cairo on a temporary basis and have no immediate plans to return to Sudan. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

UNHCR Emergency Response

UNHCR is strengthening engagement and coordination with partners in the south and border areas, establishing mechanisms for the coordination of the interagency response on the ground, and continuing to engage local authorities and community-based organizations to assess the needs and scope of the response.

UNHCR in Egypt maintains continuous communication with UNHCR Sudan. The Representative in Sudan plans to travel to Wadi Halfa to assess the scale of the challenge and the needs.

UNHCR has led the development of an interagency border healthcare provision tracking tool to help track health activities and service provision at the border. It includes a list of activities by actor and location and a rudimentary set of monitoring indicators.

Sector highlights

Protection

Families continue to cross the border to find safety in Egypt with some **4,000** new arrivals a day according to the MFA. Discussions with the Sudanese community in Aswan indicate that a significant number of people are planning to flee Sudan, likely presenting even greater vulnerabilities compared to the initial wave of arrivals. Additionally, it was noted that many individuals are actively gathering resources to facilitate their departure.

UNHCR and other UN agencies jointly moderate a focus group discussion to learn about the needs of Sudanese women who have just crossed in Egypt. ©UNHCR/Christine Beshay

Since the start of the emergency, UNHCR has conducted Focus Group Discussions in Cairo, Aswan, and Alexandria, involving more than **120** refugee leaders and community members, including recently arrived individuals from Sudan. Shelter, cash assistance, psycho-social support, and healthcare are among the priorities identified for newcomers. The community also expressed feelings of anxiety, frustration, and sadness, which were widely reported among the Sudanese community, particularly among those who still have family in Sudan. Sudanese refugees who previously relied on financial support from their families in Sudan are now facing challenging living conditions and are unable to meet their basic needs.

UNHCR partner Caritas moreover conducted two focus group discussions in Aswan and Daraw on 10-11 May, engaging approximately **60** Sudanese individuals who had recently arrived in Egypt. Participants, which included female heads of households, shared details of their arduous journeys to Egypt. They described a dire situation at the Sudanese border, characterized by overcrowding and a lack of essential resources which has led to deaths of family members *before* reaching Egypt.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the UNHCR Egypt Infoline has received a significant increase of calls from Sudanese newly arrived. UNHCR has strengthened the Infoline capacity enhancing practical information sharing through interactive voice response system and updated the network system infrastructure for the improvement of Infoline functions.

Registration

Over **4,600** individuals seeking international protection have approached UNHCR Egypt for registration, the vast majority of whom are Sudanese nationals, since 18 April. All asylum-seekers have been given registration appointments and UNHCR has scaled up registration capacity to respond to the demand.

Almost all new arrivals in Cairo interviewed by UNHCR had family members or strong community links in Cairo, and a few already had flats rented through their family or friends. All new arrivals indicated that they were planning to stay in Cairo for the time being.

Core relief items

UNHCR, through the Egypt Red Crescent (ERC), is providing emergency assistance at the border. This includes supporting the ERC to scale up the range of services they can offer at the border, including the distribution of water and hygiene items. As of 17 May, UNHCR assistance to the ERC includes a total of **140,800** bottles of water (40,000 1,5L bottles and 100,000 0.6L bottles), **10,000** hygiene kits[1] and **5,000** packs of sanitary napkins.

UNHCR is scaling up its assistance with the upcoming delivery of rub halls, family tents, mattresses, floor mats, blankets, and more sanitary packs. UNHCR will also provide material support to the border authorities.

Main needs and gaps

The situation on the Sudanese side of the border remains concerning, as conditions continue to deteriorate. The Egyptian authorities have taken the necessary measures to expedite the entry process, although the large numbers of new arrivals remain a challenge in terms of processing capacity. UNHCR observations also indicate that conditions at the Sudanese side of the border are rapidly deteriorating with a lack of water, food, WASH facilities, and speculation on the costs of the buses for crossing the area between the Sudanese and Egyptian borders, all resulting in people being held for long periods of time in dire conditions. The ERC reported an increase in medical cases arriving at the border due to the failure of the health system in Sudan. To that end, the Ministry of Health and Population has deployed equipped ambulances to the border to assist with health care.

Nyarik a South Sudanese widow refugee with three children who had found safety in Sudan is now forced to flee again. She spent around three days to reach the border at Qustol to seek international protection in Egypt. ©UNHCR/Rula Amin

Financial information

UNHCR is grateful to the donors who have contributed to its operations in Egypt, including in response to the Sudan situation. Ongoing support is critical to help families rebuild their lives. UNHCR is urgently appealing for **$151.4 million** to support its response, including to the emergency across Egypt, of which only 8.7% is currently funded.

DONATE NOW

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[1] *A kit contains a small towel, soap, tissues, wipes, a razor, medical alcohol, and toothbrush with toothpaste*