Returns to Khartoum

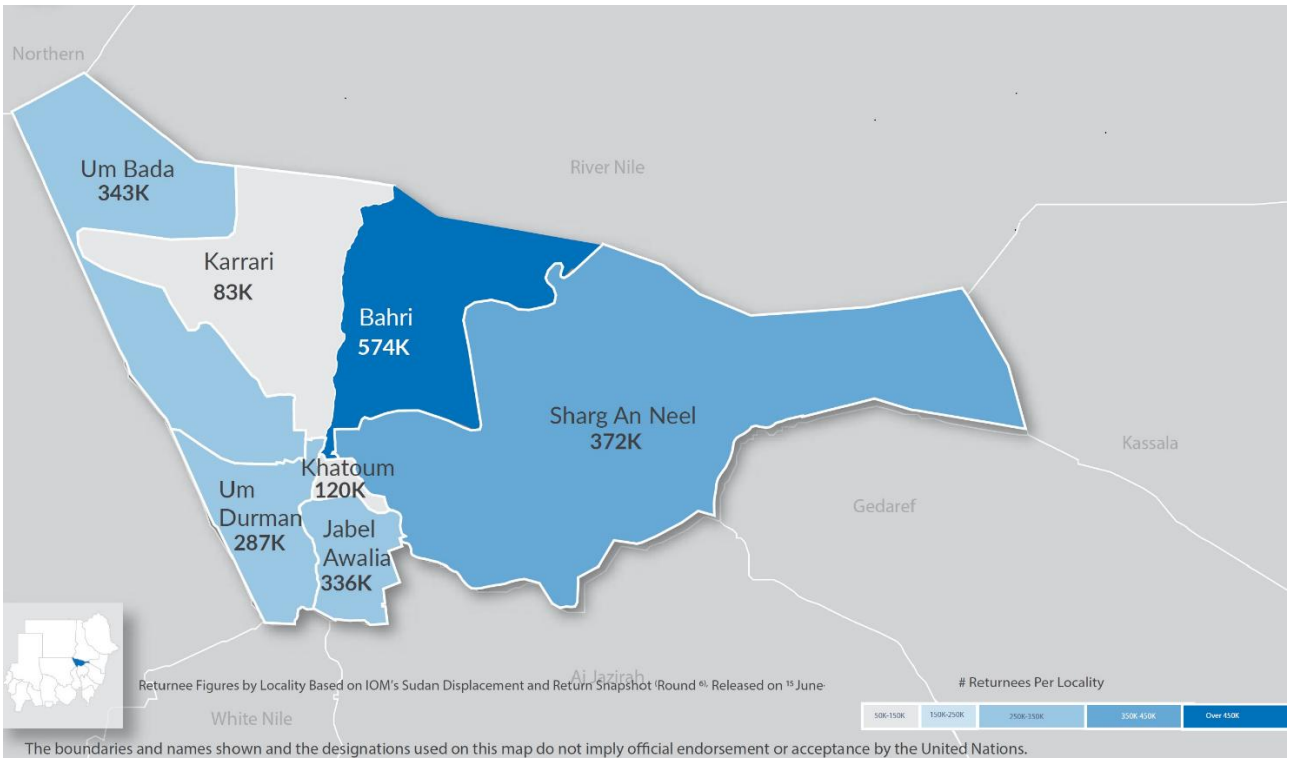
June 2026

2.1M*	4.7M**	9.4M***
People returned to Khartoum	**Returnees in Sudan**	**Pre-war population of Khartoum**

Source:
**UNHCR CORE Sudan: Sudanese return from neighbouring countries - 31 May 2026* and *DTM Sudan Displacement and Return Snapshot (6) |Displacement Tracking Matrix*
***DTM Sudan Displacement and Return Snapshot (6) | Displacement Tracking Matrix*
****https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/ocha-sudan-khartoum-state-profile-march-2023*

Number of Returnees to Khartoum State by Locality

(June 2026)



Executive Summary

Since August 2024, with changing conflict dynamics and areas of control, UNHCR has observed a growing number of forcibly displaced people from within Sudan and abroad returning to their areas of origin. However, some have instead relocated to areas of relative stability rather than their areas of origin, which respondents described as still affected by insecurity or in need of significant rehabilitation. According to IOM DTM estimates, Khartoum State currently records the largest number of reported returns, with an estimated 2.1 million people recorded as having returned from internal and cross-border displacement as of 30 May 2026. The majority of returnees had been displaced within Sudan with a significant number returned from abroad. Returns are often linked to a combination of perceived improvement of conditions in areas of return and worsening of situation in places of displacement, a pattern particularly applicable to people returning from abroad.

Monitoring at border entry points shows that people face difficult conditions during their journey and upon arrival in Sudan. People returning to Khartoum from Egypt and Libya frequently report strenuous journeys under harsh conditions, exposure to extreme weather, limited basic services along the route and some experienced luggage restrictions in organized movements and family separation. Further, many returning from Egypt report being stranded for prolonged periods at the Argeen border before onward travel. Once in Sudan, perceptions of safety vary across locations, with some respondents reporting concerns related to the presence of armed actors and uncertainty around local security conditions.

On arrival in Khartoum State, returnees encounter a range of interlinked challenges that constrain their ability to reintegrate sustainably. Safety risks from unexploded ordinances remain present in some areas. Separately, in some areas, a lack of electricity, service disruptions and power shortages are affecting daily life and the coping capacity. Access to basic services, income generating opportunities, and adequate housing is limited, particularly where infrastructure damage is extensive. Many returnees report being unable to access or repair damaged homes due to the presence of mines or unexploded ordnance (UXO) and often rely on rented accommodation or extended family support to meet their basic needs. These conditions place sustained pressure on returnees and host communities alike limiting prospects for durable reintegration.

Methodology and limitations

The findings presented here are based on monitoring conducted of returnee households by UNHCR in May 2026 using a mixed methods approach, combining analysis of data collected at discussions with households at twelve UNHCR-supported multipurpose community centers throughout the month of May 2026,

and key informant interviews with community-based partner staff. The information was complemented with eleven phone interviews conducted with recent refugee returnees from Libya. An exact count of individual households and key informants consulted across the twelve community centres was not systematically recorded during data collection

The phone interviews conducted during the month of May were selected through a non-random sample. They were purposively drawn from available lists of Sudanese refugees in Libya who returned through government assisted processes, as well as Sudanese returnees from Egypt who were first identified at the land border and were later called for phone follow-up. As participation depended on inclusion in the available lists and continued access to the registered phone number or WhatsApp account, the sample may exclude unregistered returnees, people who travelled independently, and individuals with limited connectivity or heightened protection concerns. The findings from these interviews should therefore be treated as indicative and not representative of all refugee returnees.

Returnees who could be reached by phone or who accessed UNHCR supported community centres may differ from those living in less accessible areas, without reliable telecommunications, or not connected to humanitarian services. The findings may therefore underrepresent people facing the most severe access, protection, or mobility constraints.

The analysis also relies substantially on self-reported information, which may be affected by recall difficulties, perceptions of safety, expectations of assistance, or reluctance to disclose sensitive protection concerns. Conditions in areas of return remain highly dynamic, and security, services, population movements, and access may have changed since data collection in May 2026. Key informant perspectives provide important contextual information but may reflect localized experiences or institutional viewpoints. The findings should therefore be interpreted as indicative of emerging patterns rather than as statistically representative estimates or a comprehensive assessment of return and reintegration conditions across Khartoum State.

Key Findings

Respondents consulted at the border with Egypt often linked their decision to return to challenging conditions while in displacement rather than improved conditions in areas of origin, where they report facing insecurity and limited access to services. However, upon arrival in the areas of origin, returnees find a range of challenges which affect their ability to sustainably reintegrate and restart their daily lives. Below are some of the key findings from interviews undertaken with returnees in selected localities in Khartoum State which is complemented by

findings of regular protection monitoring and consultations with visitors of multi-purpose community centres and local authorities.

Access to Health Care Services

Locations\s: Al Kalakla, Jabal Awliya, Um Baddah, Jabra, Khartoum Bahri, Soba Al Hila, Al Shuhada

The most widely reported issue among respondents and localities is access to and cost of health care services in Khartoum. Respondents consistently cited high costs for consultations and medication, long distances to functioning health facilities, and limited specialised care. Some respondents cited having access to only one clinic in their immediate area further increasing costs of travel and cost of receiving treatment. Further households mentioned that such obstacles are further exacerbated when household members need regular or specialised treatment for disabilities or conflict-related injuries.

As the rainy season approaches, there are noted community concerns on the manageability of outbreaks, particularly cholera and acute watery diarrhoea, which are recurrent in Sudan. According to discussions in the field, there are existing issues related to the lack of free testing and medication for mosquito-borne illnesses such as malaria. Separately, respondents are concerned that a cholera outbreak will have major consequences. With limited availability of health-care services, children, older people and people with pre-existing health conditions will be most vulnerable in this situation. Furthermore, frequent electricity outages disrupt already insufficient health care facilities and cold chain management, affecting timely treatment and increasing public health risks.

Shelter & Basic Needs

Locations: Al Kalakla, Jabal Awliya, Um Baddah, Jabra, *Al Salha, Khartoum Bahri, Soba Al Hila,* Al Shuhada

A recurring finding among returnee households is the extensive damage and looting of homes, ranging from theft of furniture and household items to structural destruction. Some respondents reported significant destruction from explosive projectiles, while other households returned to homes stripped of nearly all belongings, in some cases also personal documents and certificates. Respondents whose homes were damaged or rendered unsafe have been forced into rented apartments and lots with minimal finishing and furnishing, including makeshift ceilings and no connection to electricity at costs described as unsustainable, ranging from approximately 300,000 SDG per month in Jabal Awliya to approximately 600,000 SDG (ca. 150 USD) per month in Khartoum Bahri. Others rely on the generosity of friends or relatives. In addition, respondents highlighted frequent electricity outages ranging from six hours per

day to extended periods with no electricity at all. In one case, a household reported lacking basic sleeping supplies, food, and clothing, with family members forced to sleep on the floor. These conditions add pressure on hosting families, contribute to overcrowding of existing accommodation, and exacerbate risks of gender-based violence and social tensions between families. These conditions can lead to disputes and increase the risk of eviction or secondary displacement.

Key informants indicated that returnees attempt to verify the condition of their homes through relatives before deciding to return. However, the time lapse between this verification and actual return can leave properties vulnerable to looting, particularly in insecure areas. In some locations, concerns about crime and looting have contributed to reluctance to reopen businesses for fear of looting when unoccupied.

WASH:

Locations: Al Kalakla, Jabal Awliya, Um Baddah, Soba Al Hila, Al Shuhada

Returnees interviewed highlighted the significant decline in clean and regular water supply, with returnees interviewed by phone and community members met in-person in Um Baddah reporting that the available supply through the national system is much less when compared to pre-war levels. In some areas, scarcity of safe drinking water has forced households to purchase water from the market despite already limited financial resources, and the cleanliness of this water is not regulated. The lack of solid waste management services was also mentioned as a growing concern. The combination of lack of access to safe, clean water, insufficient health care service provision, frequent power outages, and inadequate solid waste management can contribute to a deterioration in the overall public health situation in Khartoum, particularly in the rainy season and beyond.

Loss of Income and Livelihoods

Locations: Al Kalakla, Jabal Awliya, Um Baddah, Al Salha, Jabra, Khartoum Bahri

Households frequently reported job loss, destroyed work tools, or a complete absence of income-earning opportunities since the conflict. In Jabal Awliya, a returnee lost the tools required to resume daily labour activities while having insufficient financial resources to replace these tools. In Al Salha and Jabra, respondents specifically cited the loss of formal employment as their primary hardship, ahead of service gaps, which affected their ability to reintegrate after displacement. Returning households reported being compelled to rely heavily on the support of relatives, host families, and community to make ends meet. Respondents indicated that their limited financial resources are utilised for rent, food, water, transport, and health care.

Security Concerns

Locationss: Um Baddah, Jabal Awliya, Soba Al Hila

While most areas were described by respondents as relatively stable during the day, nighttime insecurity, such as burglaries, gunfire, drones and other criminal activities, was raised in several localities by returnee respondents. Returnees in Jabal Awliya reported the most acute threat, with multiple drone attacks in April and May, including one on a hospital that resulted in five civilian deaths.

Further, mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) are said to be prevalent in many residential areas, posing a risk to life and physical safety of returnees and making homes uninhabitable until humanitarian clearance is completed. Respondents reported concerns regarding the presence of mines and UXO in some residential areas, which may affect perceptions of safety and access to housing in affected locations. These risks are further exacerbated by limited access to mine risk education, reducing the ability of returnees, particularly children, to identify and avoid explosive hazards. The combination of ongoing contamination and low awareness increases the likelihood of accidents and undermines the safety of returns

Resumption of Education

While not cited by many respondents as the most pressing, immediate concern, the limited resumption of education services was highlighted in at least two localities as contributing to overall household concern. Many children did not benefit from any learning during displacement, with over three years of schooling disrupted. Authorities report that more than 200 schools in Khartoum state are non-operational, significantly constraining access to education. Enabling children to attend schools which are farther away, increases costs of transport and may lead parents to choose to move closer to areas with functioning schools, both of which strain already limited and highly prioritised financial means.
Parents raised concerns on how to engage children in learning activities to avoid them being idle and at risk of resorting to harmful strategies. Given the situation of most returnee families, respondents reported concerns that economic pressures may negatively affect school attendance, in favour of more basic needs expenditures.

Psychosocial stress and family separation

Returnees, particularly those arriving from abroad, report experiencing psychosocial stress linked to difficult journeys out of and back to Sudan. Those who were deported to Sudan after periods of detention report distress linked to detention experiences, including poor conditions, confiscation of documents by country of asylum authorities, family separation and, in some cases, physical abuse, resulting in heightened psychological vulnerability upon arrival. These challenges are further exacerbated by family separation during return movements,

including cases where relatives remain behind due to staggered travel arrangements. Respondents indicated that family separation has affected household stability and increased anxiety, particularly where separated family members have specific vulnerabilities, such as medical needs, undermining returnees' ability to stabilise after return.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Khartoum State is experiencing returns at a significant scale, the findings suggest that many interviewed returnees face significant obstacles to sustainable reintegration. Access to health care is the most consistently reported as a concern among returnees interviewed which will disproportionately affect children, older people, and those with pre-existing health conditions. Housing and shelter conditions are a central constraint on return. Many returnees arrive to find their homes looted, damaged, or destroyed, leaving them unable to access or repair their properties leading them to rely on friends and family or other unaffordable rental arrangements for accommodation. Further, a reduced absorption capacity in the city is placing sustained pressure on already limited housing stock and basic services, while the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance in some residential areas, combined with slow clearance progress and limited risk education, leaves parts of Khartoum insufficiently secured for safe return.

These pressures are compounded by reduced access to clean water, with some areas reporting supply at less than a third of pre-war levels, and by a weak livelihoods environment in which many returnees have lost jobs, tools, or business premises and have no immediate source of income. The limited financial resources that remain are directed almost entirely toward rent, food, water, transport, and healthcare, leaving little capacity to replace lost household items or invest in recovery. For children, the disruption of over three years of schooling and the non-operational status of more than 200 schools across the state further compound the risk of prolonged exclusion from education, with knock-on effects for child protection.

Underlying these findings is a pattern of psychosocial stress and family separation, particularly among those returning from abroad, that affects household stability well after arrival. Without a scale-up of service provision, mine action, and livelihoods support, sustained pressure on both returnees and host communities is likely to persist, with implications for social cohesion and the durability of returns.

Financial Information

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