



“WE HAVE NOTHING TO GO BACK TO” – TWO YEARS OF DEVASTATION IN SUDAN

A FOCUS ON THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AFFECTING MILLIONS OF SUDANESE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SUDAN

APRIL 2025

INTRODUCTION

When the conflict in Sudan broke out on 15 April 2023, it sparked intense media coverage and a wave of concern worldwide. Two years on, as the unbearable human suffering continues to grow, the conflict has fallen largely outside the headlines. More than a forgotten crisis, Sudan is becoming an ignored crisis.

In just two years, thousands of civilians have been killed and wounded. More than three million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, while Sudan now hosts the single largest internally displaced population ever reported. In total, more than 12 million people have been uprooted from their homes. While these numbers are shocking, they only begin to capture the immense suffering and individual tragedies that millions of Sudanese people are enduring.

During a visit to Sudan, ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric stressed that “the humanitarian crisis in Sudan is first and foremost stemming from the disrespect of the laws of war. The consequences of the conflict could last for decades if no action is taken urgently”.

In May 2023, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces made a commitment in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to uphold the principles of international humanitarian law and to facilitate the access of humanitarian

organisations to people in need. Yet, attacks on hospitals and other civilian infrastructure continue to severely compromise access to essential services. At the same time, disturbing reports of attacks on civilians, including widespread sexual violence, continue to emerge.

While the fighting continues, adherence to international humanitarian law prevents a lot of suffering and destruction, preserves human dignity, and offers a glimmer of hope. We saw a positive example of both parties abiding by their obligations under international humanitarian law in the summer of 2023, when 300 orphans and 70 caretakers were evacuated from areas of heavy combat. The ICRC was given the necessary security guarantees for this life-saving action.

Today, we call on parties to uphold these principles. It is vital that the people whose lives and livelihoods have been shattered by the conflict have access to the essential services and to lifesaving humanitarian aid, and that humanitarian actors like the Sudan Red Crescent Society (SRCS) and the ICRC can access communities in need. The Sudanese people have endured a lot in the past two years – they cannot continue bearing the brunt of this conflict.





BROKEN HEALTHCARE

An estimated 70–80% of health facilities in conflict-affected areas are no longer functioning, leaving two out of three civilians without access to medical care. This is more than a statistic—it means mothers giving birth without skilled assistance, children missing vital vaccinations, and people with life-threatening conditions left without treatment. Sudan’s healthcare system, already frail before the outbreak of the conflict, is collapsing, and lives hang in the balance.

Reports of looting and vandalizing healthcare facilities, threats and physical violence against staff and patients, and the denial of healthcare services to civilians have all been commonplace since the conflict began. As a result, people must travel long distances in search of healthcare and are often unable to reach medical facilities due to roadblocks and insecurity.

At the same time, we see that the remaining 20% of hospitals and clinics face severe shortages of medicines, equipment, and trained personnel. As the crisis deepens, the most vulnerable – women, children, and the elderly – will continue to struggle to access the healthcare many of them desperately need.

The town of Al-Fasher in North Darfur is a striking example of the devastating impact the conflict has had on medical services. In January 2025, dozens of people were reportedly killed in an attack on Al Saudi – the last functioning civilian hospital in Al Fasher. The ICRC had been supporting the hospital with supplies and running costs – a lifeline for thousands of

people in the town that has been trapped in the fighting for many months. The attack severely damaged the hospital building and left its personnel deeply traumatized and in fear for their safety.

The ICRC has repeatedly reminded all parties to the conflict about their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect hospitals and healthcare workers, including the volunteers of the Sudanese Red Crescent. We have also substantially increased our medical response in the country, deploying mobile surgical teams in areas most affected by fighting.

In January 2025, an ICRC surgical team started working at Atbara Teaching Hospital, River Nile State, approximately 300 km north of Khartoum. In the weeks after its deployment, the team treated over 200 patients. Some of the patients travelled a staggering 2,000 km to receive specialized surgical treatment.

In the past year, the ICRC donated trauma care supplies to 88 frontline hospitals to treat over 42,000 patients. We have kept six hospitals running by supplying medical resources and covering operational costs.

With Sudan’s healthcare system buckling, more wounded people have been forced to seek medical treatment in neighbouring countries. The ICRC deployed a mobile surgical team in Renk, South Sudan, and is working with the South Sudan Red Cross Society to respond to the growing humanitarian needs.

The overwhelming patient load has led to shortages of beds, mattresses and ward space. At times, we have no choice but to have patients sleep under trees when all available beds are occupied.

Sometimes, we even place them on beds without mattresses. However, regardless of their location within the hospital, we try hard to provide care for every patient. It is essential to emphasize that targeting hospitals, health centres, or healthcare facilities is a severe breach of international law. Medical personnel working in these facilities adhere to the principle of neutrality and must be kept from harm's way.

– Dr Abdulaziz Asw
Al Saudi Hospital, Al Fasher, Sudan

I was sitting in front of the door on a chair and a gunshot hit me in the back on the left, so I fell on my face. It was a stray bullet from one of the fighting groups.” Mohamed received life-saving treatment, but he didn't have the resources to get the surgery he desperately needed to remove the bullet.

“They said that the surgery would take place after 21 days. But it was difficult for me to stay 21 days in a hospital bed with nothing to hope for. The bullet entered the left shoulder and went directly under the left breast. I feel it now and whenever I apply pressure.

– Mohamed Khalel
Kassala, Sudan



42,000
PATIENTS

In 2024, 88 hospitals received emergency ICRC medical supplies to treat over 42,000 patients



WIDESPREAD SEXUAL ATTACKS

Reports of sexual violence are widespread in Sudan. With most healthcare facilities no longer functioning, many survivors cannot access lifesaving medical services and psychosocial support. The lack of services makes it extremely difficult to estimate the true scale of the problem. The testimonies that do emerge, however, paint a grim picture and indicate an insidious pattern of dehumanization.

Sexual violence is both a cause and consequence of forced displacement. Some people reported they immediately fled their homes because of sexual violence, while others were targeted as they were trying to reach safety.

Some of those affected are now in neighbouring countries where they often struggle to receive basic care. For example, earlier this year the influx of over 100,000 people fleeing the conflict in Sudan into Renk, in the Upper Nile State of South Sudan, completely overwhelmed the few existing services that address sexual violence.

At the same time, a lack of awareness of available services and fear of community

stigma, which in extreme cases could result in honour killings, prevented survivors from seeking help.

To respond to this situation, the ICRC trained community and health workers and partnered with the South Sudan Red Cross Society to scale up community outreach to raise awareness and tackle stigma.

Sexual violence has a long-term physical, psychological, and social impact that may continue to impact survivors and communities well beyond the incident itself. Humanitarian actors, both local and international, must acknowledge this stigma and take active steps to reduce the risk of revictimization by providing survivor-centred support.

The ICRC continuously reminds warring parties that any act of sexual violence is a serious violation of international humanitarian law. The prohibition of sexual violence is clear and absolute under international and Sudanese law. It is also one of the oldest and most basic rules of war.

More than 70 survivors have shared their experiences with us, and many of them, particularly those who became pregnant, hesitated to seek early medical care due to concerns about stigma. As their pregnancies progressed, they often found themselves without support, sometimes facing distance from their families, who, despite witnessing the traumatic events, struggled to come to terms with what had happened.

This highlights the need for greater awareness and support to ensure that survivors are met with compassion and care. Addressing the stigma surrounding sexual violence is essential to fostering an environment where survivors feel safe seeking the medical and psychological assistance they need. Strengthening community dialogue and support systems can play a key role in creating a more understanding and protective environment for those affected.

– Zainab Abdulkhaliq Zahir

ICRC sexual violence operations manager, Port Sudan

REPEATED ATTACKS ON CRITICAL CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Power plants, water stations, dams, and hospitals have been repeatedly targeted cutting millions off from electricity, clean water, and medical care.

Damage to power facilities in some areas has led to extended electricity and water outages, forcing communities to rely on unsafe water sources. This has contributed to the emergence of water-borne diseases such as cholera, with thousands of cases and hundreds of lives lost. When essential services are disrupted, the impact extends far beyond the immediate damage, affecting health, livelihoods, and the daily ability for people to survive. Protecting critical infrastructure is vital to safeguarding civilian well-being.

Long-term internet and connectivity restrictions and cuts have also had a mounting negative impact on populations – from limiting the communication with their loved ones to curtailing their access to humanitarian information and services.

Parties must take immediate measures to protect critical civilian infrastructure and services such as hospitals, water, and electricity installations against the effects of hostilities. It is in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law and the commitment they made through the Jeddah Declaration of May 2023. Unless such measures are taken swiftly, civilians already severely affected by the conflict risk losing access to

We are witnessing a disturbing pattern of attacks on critical civilian infrastructure so essential for people's survival. We urgently call on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and their Jeddah commitments and protect these vital facilities.

– ICRC



**2 million
SUDANESE**

Between 2023 and 2024
the ICRC helped improve
access to clean water for 2
million Sudanese

FAMILIES SEARCHING FOR THEIR LOVED ONES

Two years of conflict in Sudan have led to a major displacement crisis. We've seen families torn apart as people flee violence, are forcibly relocated, or cross borders in search of safety. Thousands are now searching for missing relatives, unsure whether they have been killed, detained, or displaced to different regions or neighbouring countries. This uncertainty causes deep anguish, and people have turned to the ICRC in search for their loved ones.

As of December 2024, the ICRC has received close to 7,700 requests to help locate a missing person. This figure represents a small fraction of missing people but is already 66% higher than our caseload at the end of 2023.

The number of requests the ICRC has received from inside Sudan increased by 27% in 2024 to 4,361. Outside the country the number of requests has almost doubled – from 843 requests in December 2023 to 1,659 by the end of 2024. This is a region-wide crisis, with families displaced into more than ten

neighbouring countries, including Egypt, South Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic, and Ethiopia.

Behind every such case, there is unbearable pain for an entire family. And this pain only grows with every day, month and year that goes by without any piece of precious information.

ICRC teams, together with their Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners, collect tracing requests and allegations of arrests to help family members reestablish contact. In 2024, the ICRC helped 457 people who had lost contact with their loved ones reconnect or learn the fate of a missing family member. Additionally, we facilitated more than 45,000 phone calls between family members inside Sudan, helping them stay in touch despite severe disruptions in communication networks affecting millions across the country. Helping people hear the voice of a relative can be a lifeline, and it is an essential service that the ICRC and its Movement partners provide.




66%
INCREASE

In 2024, the number of demands of Sudanese looking for a missing loved one registered by ICRC has increased by 66%



It is not easy to lose a son. His memory is with us every day and touches us deeply. The loss was difficult for us, especially for his mother. She has left the house for a year now. The neighbours have been very supportive. They ask about him every day. They ask if there is any news. When someone asks, “what’s new?” We say, “we hope God will bring us together.”

His siblings also left the house and went with their mother. Whenever we have the chance to ask about him, we don’t hear anything.

The last time he was seen was in November 2023. We haven’t heard from him since. Every time I dream, I see him. Every now and then I meet him in my dreams. May God bring us together.

I hope that he will come back to us, safe and sound, unharmed. When he returns, God willing, we will prepare for his wedding, and people will come to share his joy.

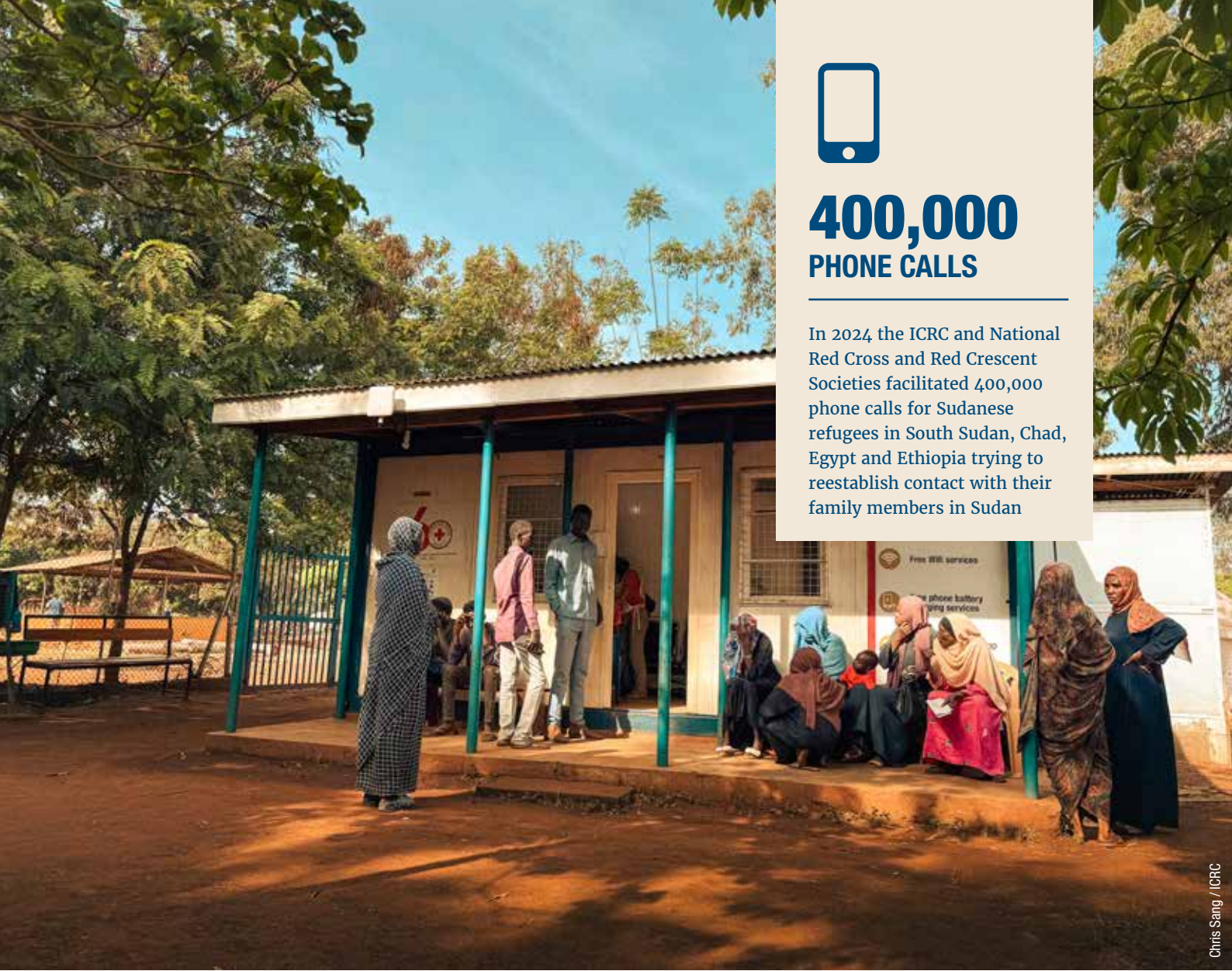
Othman Moussa Hassan – Sudan





400,000 PHONE CALLS

In 2024 the ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies facilitated 400,000 phone calls for Sudanese refugees in South Sudan, Chad, Egypt and Ethiopia trying to reestablish contact with their family members in Sudan



Chris Sang / ICRC

They killed my father in the mosque after the evening prayer. When I heard what happened, I ran to the mosque. He died in my arms. My husband always away for work, he was like a father to my children.

When we arrived here, I tried working at a construction site, but it was physically hard, and they wouldn't let me breastfeed the baby. Now, I do laundry in people's houses. They don't mind me coming with the baby.

We had a good life and enough food back in Darfur. Here in the camp, it's very different. At one point, I lost breastmilk because I wasn't eating enough. I don't know what I want to do. Life in the camp is tough, but we have nothing to go back to. My house burnt down. I lost everything I owned. Even if I could return, I would have to start life from scratch. It is not easy.

Someya – Adré, Chad

SUDAN RED CRESCENT VOLUNTEERS ON THE FRONTLINE OF THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

The Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) is at the forefront of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's efforts to ensure civilians receive the humanitarian protection and assistance they need. Among much else, their vital work includes the provision of first aid services and psychosocial support in hospitals, running family reunification services for people who have been separated from their loved ones, and the safe and dignified management of the dead.

With branches in 18 states and over 9,000 volunteers spread across the country, the

SRCS is uniquely placed to reach vulnerable populations not served by other humanitarian actors, including in highly remote areas and those severely affected by conflict.

This unrivalled reach has brought with it a cost. Since the start of the conflict, Sudan has been one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a Red Cross Red Crescent worker. Both the ICRC and SRCS have lost colleagues in the line of duty, most recently in February 2025 when an SRCS volunteer was killed by artillery shelling.



230,000
PEOPLE

Between 2023 and 2024, the ICRC worked closely with the SRCS to distribute food to more than 230,000 people. We also provided necessities to nearly 100,000 people and financial assistance to nearly 380,000 people.



The stories I lived through at the beginning of the war, the evacuations of people who were disfigured by bomb fragments, the stories of fathers who lost their daughters, mothers who lost their children, parents who lost all their family members. All these stories have not left my memory, and I cannot forget them no matter how hard I try.

– Wajdan Hassan Ahmed
Volunteer, Sudan Red Crescent
Society, Port Sudan



THE LOOMING THREAT OF REGIONAL SPILLOVER

Since the conflict erupted, millions of people have crossed Sudan's borders to seek safety in the neighbouring countries, in particular Chad, South Sudan and Egypt.

In many neighbouring areas, the inflow of refugees has severely strained essential services and resources, such as water, sanitation, and healthcare. Displacement and insecurity have reportedly disrupted critical trade routes, caused rampant inflation, and exacerbated social tensions. The situation is rapidly deteriorating as international aid to Sudan has been drastically reduced. This has forced community kitchens feeding millions to be discontinued even as food insecurity rates continue to climb.

Adré, a border town of 12,000 inhabitants in neighbouring Chad, had to absorb 150,000 refugees. Almost 90% of them are women and children who crossed the border on foot, fleeing brutal violence in their native Darfur. Following the sharp increase in the population, food prices skyrocketed. Essential services such as water and healthcare – which were in short supply even before the influx – came under enormous stress. Despite Chad being one of the poorest countries in the world, resources to address the crisis are scarce and getting scarcer.

The situation is similar in Boro Medina, a town of some 5,000 inhabitants in South Sudan, where thousands of families from Sudan also took refuge. Most of them crossed the border in poor health, which is a major concern in an area where most resources and services were already limited.

Unless sustained humanitarian effort to address these challenges is undertaken, the Sudan conflict threatens to destabilize an already fragile region, with cascading effects on security, economies, and social tensions. Vulnerable communities living in areas with limited resources cannot face this massive crisis alone.



9,000
WEAPON BEARERS

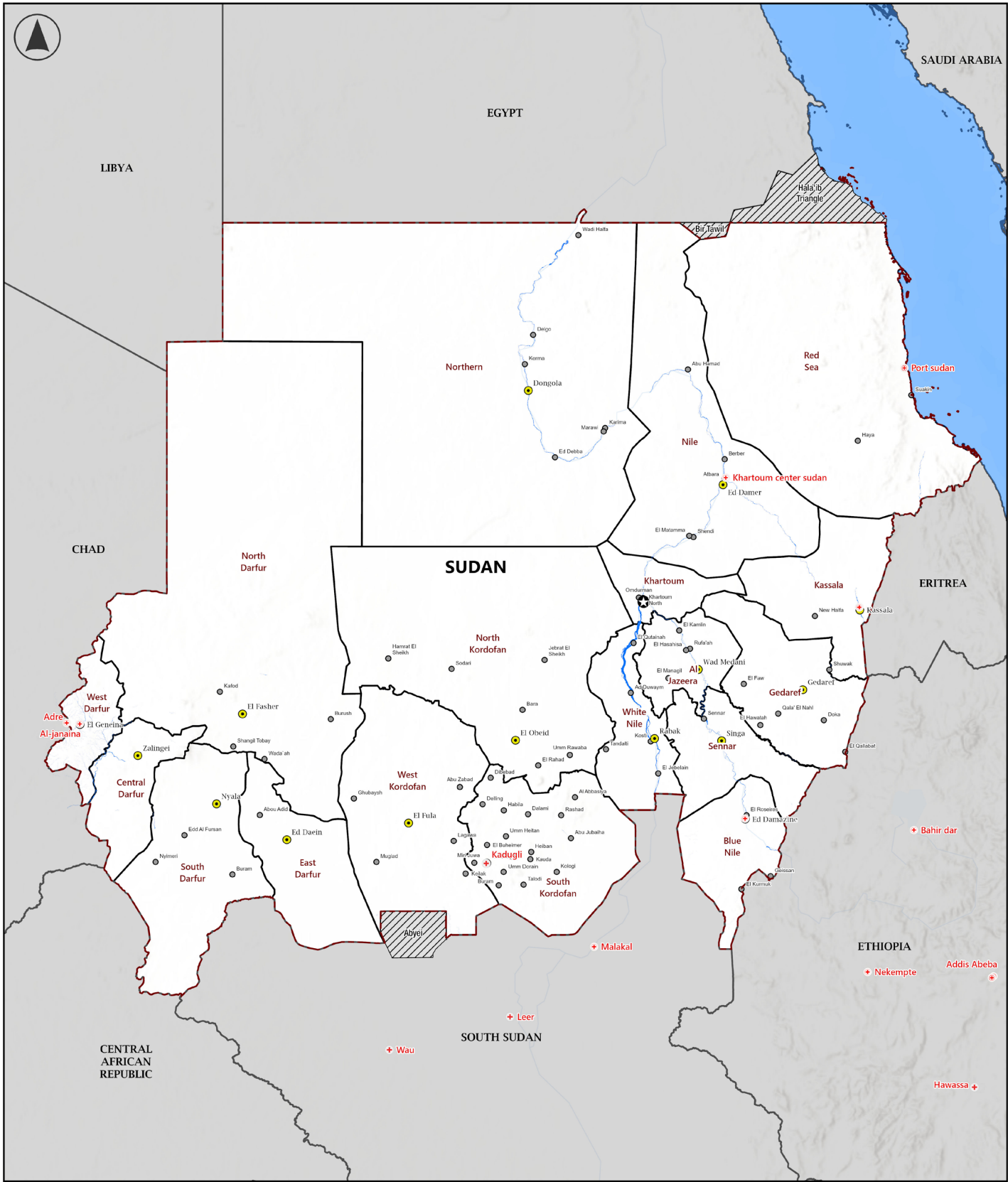
In the past two years, the ICRC trained over 9,000 weapon bearers on the rules of war and maintained a dialogue with the parties to remind them of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

OUR CALLS

CREATING ROOM FOR HUMANITY: SAFEGUARDING HUMANITARIAN SPACE

- As this conflict continues, its toll on civilian life deepens. It is fundamental to reaffirm the universal principle of humanity and the need to comply with IHL to save lives and preserve a level of dignity.
- Following the Jeddah Declaration, and the parties' stated commitment to respect international humanitarian law, there must be space where minimum humanitarian standards are upheld and de-linked from political agendas. The protection of civilians and unhindered humanitarian access are not negotiable, they are legal duties under IHL and must be treated as such.
- In times of hostilities, aid must reach those who need it most, in line with international humanitarian law. Humanitarian organizations must be allowed to work safely to guarantee that assistance and protection are delivered to those affected by conflict, with humanitarian principles remaining at the heart of every response.
- Hospitals, water systems, power grids and communications are not just infrastructure, they are lifelines for entire communities. Preserving them is one of the clearest, most immediate ways the parties can demonstrate respect for IHL and begin translating legal obligations into real, life-saving action on the ground. When hospitals go dark, water stops flowing, or power grids collapse, it is civilians who suffer first and most.
- To support this, the ICRC, playing a neutral intermediary role, stands ready to establish a platform in order to facilitate a neutral and structured humanitarian dialogue between the parties. This platform is focused solely on humanitarian priorities such as those covered in this report, grounded in the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. With the backing of trusted third parties acting as guarantors, such a space can help build trust, reduce harm, and uphold the essential protections that victims of armed conflict are entitled to.
- The international community cannot turn away. Millions of lives are at stake, and with them, the stability of an entire region. Diplomatic and humanitarian efforts must work in concert to bring a measure of relief to civilians and open the way for timely, effective assistance. Now is the time to invest in respecting IHL and preserving a humanitarian space, not only as a legal imperative, but as a shared commitment to protection human dignity and lives amidst conflicts.

ICRC Presence in Sudan



- | | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Delegation | Sudan Country Boundary |
| Office | States |
| Sub-Delegation | Neighboring Countries |
| Capital | Contested Areas |
| State Capital | River |
| Principal Town | Waterbody |

0 50 100 200 300 400 500
Kilometers

This map compiles locations of the state capital, principal towns and ICRC presence in in Sudan and neighboring countries.

Data Sources: ICRC Sudan Gazetteer, ICRC referential, Open Street Map

The boundaries, names and designations used in this report do not imply official endorsement, nor express a political opinion on the part of the ICRC, and are without prejudice to claims of sovereignty over the territories mentioned.




The ICRC helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything it can to protect their dignity and relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. The organization also seeks to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.

People know they can count on the ICRC to carry out a range of life-saving activities in conflict zones and to work closely with the communities there to understand and meet their needs. The organization's experience and expertise enables it to respond quickly, effectively and without taking sides.

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