



NHSMUN

UNHRC

BACKGROUND GUIDE

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Delegate Experience
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Global Partnerships
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Anshul Magal
Analucia Tello

Sofia Velasco
Renata Venzor

Dear Delegates,

My name is Pravalika Chintakindi, and I am so excited to serve you as the Director for Session 1 for NHSMUN 2025! This is going to be my second year as a staff member, but it will be my fifth year attending NHSMUN! Last year, I served as the Assistant Director for UNHRC as well, so I am very excited to be returning as a director now! I attended the conference three out of my four years in high school as a delegate in IFAD, CCPCJ, and UNRWA, and I loved my experience in them so much that I wanted to come back!

I am a second-year student at Rutgers University in New Jersey, USA. I major in computer engineering with a double minor in computer science and mathematics. I am interested in innovations that completely change the world and improve people's quality of life. Ever since I was a kid, I have been deeply interested in space exploration and technology, so I eventually hope to get a job that ties both interests together! Aside from these, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends whether it is through playing games, watching a movie, listening to music, or just sitting and talking with each other. I am also a huge foodie and always want to try new cuisines and restaurants! I enjoy cooking and baking, so I find myself often turning to these to de-stress and relax.

After being involved in Model UN for a few years now, I can confidently say that it has contributed to my life in so many ways that I had not initially thought of. I originally joined my high school's Model UN team so I could better improve my public speaking and communication skills. Not only did I understand how to do these better, but I also learned how to present myself to others and be more confident. Researching and discussing current global challenges has also kept me in the loop with how quickly our world is changing. I have become more open-minded and understanding of different cultures and viewpoints, which has been eye-opening. Model UN has been a big part of my personal and intellectual growth, giving me tools I use every day, both in school and beyond.

This year, our committee will be tackling two crucial topics: "Upholding Human Rights in Darfur" and "Addressing the Human Rights Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo." Both issues are incredibly important and relevant to what's happening in the world today. Your role as delegates is to highlight these situations, debate them from all angles, and come up with creative, well-rounded solutions that will make a difference. I am eager to witness the intense level of debate you all will hold during the conference and the unique solutions that will be created! Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any help or support along the way. Best of luck, and I look forward to meeting you all soon!

Sincerely,

Pravalika Chintakindi

United Nations Human Rights Council

Session I

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Isabela Alano, and I am very excited to welcome you to the United Nations Human Rights Council committee for the 2025 NHSMUN Conference! I will be your director for Session II, and I am forward to seeing your productive and valuable debates regarding a topic that is of utmost importance to the international community. I hope this background guide serves as a basis for your further research on this global issue.

I have been participating in MUN for many years now, ever since I was in high school. In 2021, I completed an online high school course with the International Columbia College, which allowed me to gain a dual high school diploma, one Canadian and one Brazilian. Amid this program, in 2021, I participated in NHSMUN as a delegate, and I had never been more inspired. MUN is a valuable experience and has brought amazing moments to my life, yet NHSMUN was the most exhilarating of all. In 2024, I served as Assistant Director for the International Organization for Migration committee, and it was even greater. It brought me great joy to witness the enticing and interesting debates that came from our delegates. This is why this year I decided to come back as a director so that I could make this an even greater experience for all the delegates on this committee.

I am a senior at the University of the Vale do Rio dos Sinos, in Brazil. Within my program of International Relations, I have participated in a great number of other projects which, along with MUNs, have helped me to strengthen my communication skills and meet wonderful people. Aside from my studies, I enjoy reading, playing tennis, watching sitcoms, and playing video games. I also love my three cats and hope to get more soon.

The topics that will be discussed in this committee are: “Upholding Human Rights in Darfur” and “Addressing the Human Rights Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo.” These are both massively important topics, and the Background Guides written with care by me and Pravalika, will help you understand just how critical it is to debate and research about them. Both target specific regions that require immediate attention and initiatives, which can be developed through cooperation. I am eager to see all your fruitful and knowledgeable discussions, and I will do my best to facilitate this for you and create a wonderful experience, just like my own. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or support you may need; we are here to help you. I look forward to meeting you soon!

Sincerely,

Isabela Alano

United Nations Human Rights Council

Session II

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A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! We are Terry Wang and Jordan Baker, and we are this year's Secretary-General and Director-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse Model United Nations conference for secondary school students. We are thrilled to welcome you to New York City in March.

As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. Our organization provides a uniquely tailored experience for all through innovative and accessible programming. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience, and this idea permeates throughout numerous aspects of the conference:

Realism and accuracy: Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. Each NHSMUN committee is a simulation of a real deliberative body so that delegates can research what their country has said in the committee. Our topics are chosen from the issues currently on the agenda of that committee (except historical committees, which take topics from the appropriate time period). We also strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. Our delegates have the incredible opportunity to conduct first-hand research, asking thought-provoking questions to current UN representatives and experts in their respective fields of study. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

Educational emphasis, even for awards: At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN so special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN as an activity. NHSMUN seeks to reward students who excel in the arts of compromise and diplomacy. More importantly, we seek to develop an environment in which delegates can employ their critical thought processes and share ideas with their counterparts from around the world. Given our delegates' plurality of perspectives and experiences, we center our programming around the values of diplomacy and teamwork. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership that strives towards consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

Debate founded on strong knowledge and accessibility: With knowledgeable staff members and delegates from over 70 countries, NHSMUN can facilitate an enriching experience reliant on substantively rigorous debate. To ensure this high quality of debate, our staff members produce detailed, accessible, and comprehensive topic guides (like the one below) to prepare delegates for the nuances inherent in each global issue. This process takes over six months, during which the Directors who lead our committees develop their topics with the valuable input of expert contributors. Because these topics are always changing and evolving, NHSMUN also produces update papers intended to bridge the gap of time between when the background guides are published and when committee starts in March. As such, this guide is designed to be a launching point from which delegates should delve further into their topics. The detailed knowledge that our Directors provide in this background guide through diligent research aims to increase critical thinking within delegates at NHSMUN.

Extremely engaged staff: At NHSMUN, our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Before the conference, our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained rigorously through hours of workshops and exercises both virtual and in-person to provide the best conference experience possible. At the conference,

delegates will have the opportunity to meet their dais members prior to the first committee session, where they may engage one-on-one to discuss their committees and topics. Our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained and empowered to be experts on their topics and they are always available to rapidly answer any questions delegates may have prior to the conference. Our Directors and Assistant Directors read every position paper submitted to NHSMUN and provide thoughtful comments on those submitted by the feedback deadline. Our staff aims not only to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

Empowering participation: The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions most likely to make a meaningful impact on the world. That is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. We believe that to properly delve into an issue and produce fruitful debate, it is crucial to focus the entire energy and attention of the room on the topic at hand. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of each delegate's country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. MUN delegates are well researched and aware of the UN's priorities, and they can serve as the vanguard for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are proud to connect students with other action-oriented organizations to encourage further work on the topics.

Focused committee time: We feel strongly that face-to-face interpersonal connections during debate are critical to producing superior committee experiences and allow for the free flow of ideas. Ensuring policies based on equality and inclusion is one way in which NHSMUN guarantees that every delegate has an equal opportunity to succeed in committee. In order to allow communication and collaboration to be maximized during committee, we have a very dedicated administrative team who work throughout the conference to type up, format, and print draft resolutions and working papers.

As always, we welcome any questions or concerns about the substantive program at NHSMUN 2025 and would be happy to discuss NHSMUN pedagogy with faculty or delegates.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Terry Wang
Secretary-General

Jordan Baker
Director-General

A Note on Research and Preparation

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to NHSMUN in March.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#) and [Advanced Delegate Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are prepared to debate no matter which topic is selected first. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the NHSMUN Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections:

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Country Policy – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and font size. **We recommend 3–5 pages per topic as a suitable length.** The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for sending a copy of its papers to their committee Directors via [myDais](#) on or before **February 21, 2025**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 31, 2025**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at info@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.

Committee History

The UNHRC assists governments in fulfilling their human rights obligations and speaks out objectively in the face of human rights violations worldwide. UNHRC provides a forum for identifying and responding to current human rights issues, which meets at least three times a year. Overall, the UNHRC is mandated to help promote human rights, highlight its most dire issues, and push for them to be discussed in other UN organs.¹

The UNHRC addresses human rights violations and provides recommendations on how to tackle said violations. The UN Charter governs this committee, particularly articles related to human rights, such as articles 1, 55, and 56. Additionally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a major guiding factor for the committee, outlining the human rights the committee strives to maintain for all individuals. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism is one of UNHRC's most notable achievements, allowing for the peer review of human rights practices in all UN Member States every four years. The UPR is a cooperative, state-driven project that helps states to present measures taken and challenges to be met for each nation to achieve its international obligations and improve their internal human rights standards. Additionally, the UNHRC involves itself in investigating the numerous human rights violated by many states, including Israel, Yemen, Rwanda, and South Sudan.²

The UNHRC collaborates with other UN bodies, NGOs, and many different bodies and individuals to achieve its goals. It is committed to continuing its current partnerships and developing future ones.³ The UNHRC also has special mandates, which include independent human rights experts who report on human rights from a country-specific view. These experts are elected by the current members of the UNHRC for three years and work without pay. Decisions are made by a majority vote among its elected Member States. The UNHRC's power is limited to putting political pressure on nations, but in session, there are votes to launch investigations on nations that may be committing violations, passing resolutions offering means of change and condemning violators. Proceedings involve interactive dialogues and formal debates with participation from states, NGOs, and civil society. Resolutions, which reflect the Council's stance on specific human rights issues, are adopted by consensus or voting. The Council operates under formal rules of procedure, ensuring structured debates and transparent decision-making processes.

1 Mandate of UN Human Rights | Ohchr, accessed September 21, 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/mandate-un-human-rights>; What we do: An overview | OHCHR, accessed September 21, 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/what-we-do>.

2 "Human Rights Council Discusses Situation of Human Rights in Sudan and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem," OHCHR, accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/03/human-rights-council-discusses-situation-human-rights-sudan-and-occupied-palestinian>.

3 "Additional Partnerships," UNHCR UK, accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-unhcr/our-partners/additional-partnerships>.



UNHRC

NHSMUN 2025

TOPIC A:

UPHOLDING HUMAN RIGHTS IN DARFUR

Photo Credit: Chansey

Introduction

Upholding human rights in Darfur is a topic of great concern and importance. Political fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in Darfur and across wider Sudan has been ongoing for almost two decades.¹ The fighting came after many months of tensions between these two groups over matters of security force reforms. It was originally proposed as part of negotiations for a new transitional government, among multiple other issues. At least 400,000 people have been killed and about three million have been displaced from their homes because of joint efforts from the army and militias.² More than eight thousand people who have managed to escape across borders have fled to Chad.³ This high and rapid influx of people has caused concerns from the United Nations Refugee Agency as these refugees are living in unideal refugee camps. In areas of conflict, aside from poor living conditions, the reports show continued sexual violence, torture, arbitrary killings, extortion of civilians, and targeting of specific ethnic groups taking place.

Even though multiple ceasefires have been declared, the fighting continues to intensify. The United Nations warned that more than twelve thousand people have been killed between April and December 2023 across the country.⁴ In addition to these attacks, the situation in the western Sudanese region is characterized by multiple other events. There have been repeated attacks on civilians by the Government of Sudan's military force and their proxy militia forces. Additionally, there has been usage of disproportionate force and total impunity for those who are using it on civilians due to the collapse of the judicial system. Corruption is also a widespread problem. Sudan holds the rank of 172 out of 180 countries in the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index.⁵ This drastic difference in scores shows the deep level of corruption and political instability that is affecting the area. It is also reported that there is a pattern of attacks that includes rape, pillage, destruction of livestock and farming land, and looting and damage of property and water sources.⁶ Trends have also been shown of gender-based violence, particularly on women and children, who are often

left vulnerable in conflict areas and are unable to receive the proper treatment they require.⁷

Clashes between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces started again in April 2023. Heartbreaking atrocities have occurred in West Darfur where reports have been made of mass graves, summary executions, and burned villages that have been documented and verified by the United Nations and other human rights groups.⁸ The survivors of these atrocities have come forth and expressed their opinions that the Authoritarian government has failed to protect their civilians when such violence is taking place.⁹ In this conflict, both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces are trying to vanquish and push the other out of the area in Sudan, leading to the capital, Khartoum, and Darfur having to deal with and bear the violence.

Among the recommendations, in May 2004, the High Commissioner publicly called on the Government of Sudan to condemn all actions and crimes committed by the Janjaweed

1 Jay Spaulding and Mohy el Din Sabr, "Sudan|History, Map, Area, Population, Religion, & Facts," Britannica Encyclopedia, July 10, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sudan/Conflict-in-Darfur>.

2 Jérôme Tubiana, "Darfur: Between two wars," Al Jazeera, June 30, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/longform/2023/6/30/between-two-wars-20-years-of-conflict-in-sudans-darfur>.

3 "Sudan: UNHCR warns of increasing violence and human rights violations against civilians in Darfur," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, press release, November 10, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/press-releases/sudan-unhcr-warns-increasing-violence-and-human-rights-violations-against>.

4 Amnesty International, "Sudan."

5 Ardigo, "Sudan: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption."

6 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Violations in Darfur may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, says UN Rights office report."

7 Amnesty International, "Sudan."

8 Mat Nashed, "RSF atrocities pile up in Darfur after 100 days of Sudan fighting," Al Jazeera, July 24, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/24/after-one-hundred-days-of-sudan-war-rsf-atrocities-pile-up-in-darfur>.

9 Nashed, "RSF atrocities pile up in Darfur after 100 days of Sudan fighting."

militia.¹⁰ He also expressed the urgency that all militias and forces be immediately disarmed and disbanded. He urged that full access must be given to humanitarian workers to ensure aid is properly delivered. Even though these calls have been made, they were not implemented and executed as originally hoped for and therefore did not act as much of a solution to the conflict.¹¹ The situation has worsened over time primarily due to continuous ethnic and tribal tensions.

The conflict was continuous and became so restricted that it was hard for advancements to be made. As a result, delegates must act now to care for the people who require urgent assistance. Despite all the warnings that human rights groups, agencies, and countries may have expressed, the United Nations Security Council terminated the joint United Nations and African Union peacekeeping mission mandate in 2020.¹² This unfortunately left the local population in a hopeless situation and put them vulnerable to attacks. This twenty-year ongoing conflict is causing immense pain, suffering, and trouble to the people of the Darfur region. Ensuring that people everywhere around the world have access to their basic rights is extremely important and requires global collaboration.

History and Description of the Issue

Historical Background of Darfur and the Emergence of Conflict

In Western Sudan, the people of Darfur have undergone continuous brutal living conditions for over two decades. The name Darfur originates from “dar fur” which in Arabic translates to “the land of the Fur”.¹³ Historically, the location

used to be an Islamic country that was ruled by a sultan, and had the Fur being the main ruling ethnic group in the region before 1916.¹⁴ The Fur had a long history of gaining their independence through various conflicts that unfolded in Sudan. In 1596, the sultanate was established, and Islam was declared to be the state religion.¹⁵ There was then a conquest through Sudan made by the Anglo-Egyptians in 1898 before the region was taken under British domination in 1916.¹⁶ These repeated conflicts and involvement from multiple groups of people caused Darfur’s history to be complicated and intense. This historical background reflects what is happening in Darfur as it shows the deep struggles for independence the Fur have undergone. Not only has this helped them form a sense of shared ethnic identity, but it also, unfortunately, caused increased marginalization of certain groups of people since the high intensity of violence was present from prior interference.

The majority of the wars have risen in areas where rebels have resided and being an area with around 80 tribes and ethnic groups, there have been many places in Darfur where conflicts broke out.¹⁷ Many civilians have experienced life in a war zone and have chosen to flee from the area and seek shelter elsewhere. Nearly 700,000 people total have now fled from the extreme violence in Darfur to neighboring countries such as Chad.¹⁸ It is said that the conflict that broke out in Darfur in 2003 resulted in about 200,000 people leaving for Chad for sixteen months.¹⁹ This number then went on to increase to about 400,000 over the next few years, and most of those people continue to live in Chad still to this day. It is reported that now in Chad there are nearly more than three times as many people who arrived in the first year of the 2003 war. In total, more people have crossed into Eastern Chad in the

10 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Violations in Darfur may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, says UN Rights office report.”

11 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Violations in Darfur may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, says UN Rights office report.”

12 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Violations in Darfur may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, says UN Rights office report.”

13 “Explainer: How Darfur became a ‘humanitarian calamity and catastrophic human rights crisis’,” UN NEWS, last modified December 14, 2023, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2023/explainer-how-darfur-became-%E2%80%98humanitarian-calamity-and-catastrophic-human>.

14 Understanding Darfur Conflict,” ReliefWeb, Last modified January 19, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/understanding-darfur-conflict>.

15 ReliefWeb, “Understanding Darfur Conflict.”

16 “Darfur,” Encyclopedia Britannica, September 14, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Darfur>.

17 ReliefWeb, “Understanding Darfur Conflict.”

18 “Survivors of Sudan’s brutal war have been forgotten.” Norwegian Refugee Council. February 14, 2024. <https://www.nrc.no/news/2024/february/chad-refugees-from-sudan/>.

19 “Darfur,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/darfur>.

last ten months than in the entirety of the 20 years of the Darfur conflict. However, with this high influx of people in exponential growth, there have been multiple strains and difficulties that Chad has been experiencing to try and accommodate everyone.²⁰

Refugees in Chad are in such a difficult situation that they are finding themselves lacking even the most basic and necessary support that is required for basic survival. New arrivals to the country have no other choice but to improve their shelters in makeshift and informal camps and hope for better housing conditions later. Thousands of refugees lack sufficient food and safe drinking water, and the majority even lack plastic containers to carry whatever clean water they can find. As a result of this, aid agencies are warning that with these conditions and lack of support, there is a very strong risk for a humanitarian catastrophe to unfold.²¹ The people of Darfur and surrounding regions have usually lived peacefully. There were no major conflicts. However, things changed when resources became scarce. Food, water, and shelter became harder to find. As tensions grew, peacefulness turned into conflict. Ethnicity and race, once unimportant, started to play

a key role.²²

Darfur's relative location also did not help with how many resources they had access to. Historically, it is one of the most remote and hard-to-reach areas in Sudan, since it is so far from the capital, Khartoum.²³ In the area, tribal and ethnic conflicts are not uncommon, as there have been records of small and large-scale conflicts to have been carried out since 1939.²⁴ From experiencing recurrent droughts, crop yields have dropped and remained low for many years. Consequently, it also affected the livestock due to a scarcity of clean water. A combination of all these factors over multiple years has led the region to have lowered capacities for its communities.²⁵

Darfur has many climatic zones. The climate varies from hot and humid to regions with decent rainfall. These climate zones affect where people live. Areas with favorable climates can support agriculture and a higher population. In contrast, desert regions struggle to sustain people. The southern part of Darfur has a rich savanna with plenty of rainfall. The central part features a plateau and mountains. The northern part is desert, stretching to the Egyptian and Libyan borders.²⁶

20 Norwegian Refugee Council, "Survivors of Sudan's brutal war have been forgotten."

21 Norwegian Refugee Council, "Survivors of Sudan's brutal war have been forgotten."

22 ReliefWeb, "Understanding Darfur Conflict."

23 Encyclopedia Britannica, "Darfur."

24 ReliefWeb, "Understanding Darfur Conflict."

25 ReliefWeb, "Understanding Darfur Conflict."

26 Ahmad Sikainga, "'The World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis': Understanding the Darfur Conflict," Ohio State University, last modified

A village in Sudan

Credit: Pier Luigi Bertola



Most of the population relies on farming.²⁷ About 60 to 80 percent of people depend on agriculture for income.²⁸ Crop cultivation and livestock maintenance rely heavily on rainfall and fertile land. This makes the population sensitive to climate change and vulnerable to natural disasters. In the 1980s and 1990s, drought, desertification, and population growth caused a sharp decline in food production, leading to famine.²⁹ As the conflict spreads, farmers face new challenges. Many will not have the money or supplies to plant this year. Looting destroys markets and farmlands. Disruptions in trade routes limit access to seeds, fertilizer, and insecticides. Farmers lack the equipment needed for a successful harvest. Even if they manage a small harvest, water shortages make it hard to keep plants healthy. Emergency agricultural assistance is crucial for Darfur. This aid could transform the situation and bring immense benefits to the nation.³⁰

The Darfur conflict began in early 2003. Africans in Darfur started fighting against the country's Arab Muslim leadership.³¹ They demanded changes in several areas, including better infrastructure, a share of oil wealth, and an equal, power-sharing government. However, the response was harsh. The Sudanese government sent in forces to suppress the rebellion. It is reported that the government also enlisted third-party individuals, such as the Janjaweed militia, to combat the rebels.³² The Janjaweed is a group of Arab partisans with roots in Chad's long-running civil war.³³

Libya, a neighboring country, had involved itself in this conflict in the 1980s. Libya provided support to Arab nomads in eastern Chad.³⁴ In Darfur, the Sudanese government armed Arabic-speaking Abbala nomads to counter Chadian

incursions. These groups later merged to form the Janjaweed militia. A typical Janjaweed raid started with an attack by the Sudanese air force. Helicopter gunships or bombers would target civilian settlements. Within hours, mounted Janjaweed fighters would sweep through the area. They killed the men, assaulted the women, and killed or kidnapped the children. Then, they destroyed the village's necessities. Fields and houses were burned down. Wells were poisoned with chemicals. Anything of value was seized to prevent survivors from rebuilding. Despite their brutality, the Janjaweed militia members are also Muslim, like their victims.³⁵

The killings of mostly black African Muslims are often blamed on the Janjaweed militia.³⁶ This group is accused of burning and destroying entire villages in Darfur. There have also been reports of them slaughtering men, women, and children.³⁷ Many refugees and human rights groups accuse the militia of mass rape. They classify these actions as ethnic cleansing and genocide. The Janjaweed have also reportedly blocked international aid organizations from delivering food and medical supplies.³⁸ A ceasefire was declared in 2004, and African Union troops were sent in. However, the impact was less than expected.³⁹ The people of Darfur had high hopes for these troops. They wanted protection from the violence and for those responsible to be held accountable. They also hoped the troops would mediate peace talks between the Sudanese government and rebel groups. But the troops' mandate was limited. They were only meant to monitor the 2004 ceasefire, not to provide civilian support.⁴⁰ The mission also faced funding and logistical issues. It lacked proper vehicles, communication tools, and other necessary equipment. This

February 1, 2009, https://origins.osu.edu/article/worlds-worst-humanitarian-crisis-understanding-darfur-conflict?language_content_entity=en.

27 Sikainga, "The World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis: Understanding the Darfur Conflict."

28 "5 things you should know about how conflict in Sudan is devastating agriculture and people's food security," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Accessed July 18, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources-repository/news/detail/5-things-you-should-know-about-how-conflict-in-sudan-is-devastating-agriculture-and-peoples-food-security/>.

29 Sikainga, "The World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis: Understanding the Darfur Conflict."

30 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "5 things you should know about how conflict in Sudan is devastating agriculture and people's food security."

31 "Origins of the Darfur Crisis," PBS News, July 3, 2008, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/africa-july-dec08-origins_07-03.

32 PBS News, "Origins of the Darfur Crisis."

33 Micheal Ray, "Janjaweed," Britannica Encyclopedia, October 30, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Janjaweed>.

34 Ray, "Janjaweed."

35 PBS News, "Origins of the Darfur Crisis."

36 PBS News, "Origins of the Darfur Crisis."

37 PBS News, "Origins of the Darfur Crisis."

38 Spaulding and Sabr, "Sudan|History, Map, Area, Population, Religion, & Facts."

39 Spaulding and Sabr, "Sudan|History, Map, Area, Population, Religion, & Facts."

40 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Imperatives for Immediate Change."

made it difficult to plan and maintain peacekeeping efforts. By 2007, the conflict had left hundreds of thousands dead and over two million displaced.⁴¹

In July 2008, along with the International Criminal Court (ICC), many international leaders and aid agencies claimed that the president of Sudan, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, bore criminal responsibility for the ongoing crisis in Darfur.⁴² They accused Bashir of letting severe crimes unfold and not interfering in the earlier stages of the conflict. More specifically, Bashir received a warrant for his arrest based on arranging genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The Sudanese government denied these charges and fought for Bashir's innocence. In March 2009, the ICC issued another arrest warrant for Bashir on the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This event and warrant marked the first time that the ICC sought the arrest of a sitting head of another state.⁴³ This warrant was significant for many reasons and it had a lot of consequences on Sudan. For example, this warrant isolated Bashir and Sudan from the overall international community and caused many countries to shy away from interacting with Bashir and Sudan to show that they are not supporting his actions.⁴⁴ This led to political instability with foreign involvement since other countries were worried about Sudan under Bashir's leadership. Aside from this, after the warrant was issued, the Sudanese government removed any international aid agencies which caused the people of Darfur to not receive adequate care.⁴⁵

The conditions that villages in Darfur were in, prove the actions done against them. Multiple villages were targeted based on the ethnic groups residing there, and the level of destruction remained high throughout. It has been reported

that on a wall of the king of Am Boru's house, an officer had traced the words "clear it all" in Arabic, which was an order that he gave his troops to pillage and destroy the area.⁴⁶ Still to this day, there are remains of the burned houses even though new ones have been built as a replacement.⁴⁷

Darfur can be seen as a multi-level conflict. In other words, this conflict is actively affecting and causing the involvement of multiple groups of people. At the local level, the conflict comes down to having access to basic resources, such as food and clean water.⁴⁸ Regarding the Arab government, they want land from the Africans. Looking at it from the regional level, the conflict is seen to be more of a tribal or an ethnic conflict, with the government encouraging tensions and conflict with the Arabs against the Africans.⁴⁹ And at an even further national level, the situation is political. Oil is the foreign direct investment that acts not only as an income source but also brings the power and ability to strike attacks on people and take their land away from them. It comes down to the fact that whoever has the most resources and oil under their ownership has the most power and control.⁵⁰

Major Incidents Aggravating the Humanitarian Crisis

Since 2003, civilians in Darfur and other regions of Sudan have been subjected to extreme violence. Constantly being attacked by armed groups, mainly the Janjaweed militia, the Sudanese government's forces have responded to this by not only targeting the fighters in the groups but by also targeting the civilian populations of certain ethnic groups who have been accused of supporting the insurgents.⁵¹ This counter-strategy that the government continues to carry out, has resulted in tremendous amounts of death, destruction, and displacement

41 Spaulding and Sabr, "Sudan|History, Map, Area, Population, Religion, & Facts."

42 Spaulding and Sabr, "Sudan|History, Map, Area, Population, Religion, & Facts."

43 Spaulding and Sabr, "Sudan|History, Map, Area, Population, Religion, & Facts."

44 "Omar al-Bashir," Coalition for the International Criminal Court, accessed July 18, 2024, <https://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/cases/omar-albashir>.

45 Coalition for the International Criminal Court, "Omar al-Bashir."

46 Tubiana, "Darfur: Between two wars."

47 Tubiana, "Darfur: Between two wars."

48 "Sudan - Darfur - South Sudan," World Without Genocide, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts/darfur-genocide>.

49 World Without Genocide, "Sudan - Darfur - South Sudan."

50 World Without Genocide, "Sudan - Darfur - South Sudan."

51 "Sudan: New conflict escalation exacerbates 20 years of suffering for civilians in Darfur," Amnesty International, last modified April 24, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/04/sudan-new-conflict-escalation-exacerbates-20-years-of-suffering-for-civilians-in-darfur/>.

for over three million civilians.⁵² Conflict-included starvation, dehydration, disease, rape, and sexual violence are just to name a few. It has been reported that in 2016, government forces have even used chemical weapons against civilians in the Jebel Mara region of Darfur.⁵³ This has raised a lot of issues and debates against the government for letting these events. It also shows that they do not care for their citizens as they are not holding the perpetrators accountable. In December 2022, civilian leaders and the military signed a “framework agreement” to create a two-year civilian transitional authority.⁵⁴ This agreement is intended to hold accountability for crimes under international law. In addition, it gives power to the authorities to launch a process to provide justice to victims and to hold perpetrators of serious crimes responsible for their actions. More and more people in Sudan are living in fear every day, and all of those who have suffered violations or losses of human rights must be given remedies and reparations, and cannot have time be a limitation to their justice. The Sudanese government and authorities must utilize this agreement to protect and save their people.

The people of Darfur have faced many attacks, from targeting individuals to entire communities. The Rapid Support Forces, an independent military group, are responsible for a campaign of ethnic cleansing. They target the Massalit people and other non-Arab communities in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur. Reports say the Rapid Support Forces and their allies have targeted unarmed civilians, especially boys and men. They have unlawfully killed those who were already injured or facing health issues.⁵⁵ Evidence also shows abuse of lawyers, doctors, human rights defenders, community leaders, religious figures, and local officials.⁵⁶ These forces have destroyed entire neighborhoods in waves of attacks, burning down buildings and demolishing them with heavy machinery. As a result, nearly half a million refugees from West Darfur have fled to Chad since April 2023.⁵⁷

Survivors of the attacks in Kulbus have revealed that assailants had forcefully pulled civilians out of their homes and shot them.⁵⁸ They then went and burned those who might have still been inside their homes or in the streets as they fled the

52 Amnesty International, “Sudan: New conflict escalation exacerbates 20 years of suffering for civilians in Darfur.”
 53 “Sudan: Credible evidence of the use of chemical weapons to kill and maim hundreds of civilians including children in Darfur revealed,” Amnesty International, last modified September 29, 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/09/sudan-credible-evidence-chemical-weapons-darfur-revealed/>.
 54 Amnesty International, “Sudan: New conflict escalation exacerbates 20 years of suffering for civilians in Darfur.”
 55 “Q&A: War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity, Ethnic Cleansing in West Darfur,” Human Rights Watch, May 9, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/09/qa-war-crimes-crimes-against-humanity-ethnic-cleansing-west-darfur>.
 56 Human Rights Watch, “Q&A: War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity, Ethnic Cleansing in West Darfur.”
 57 Human Rights Watch, “Q&A: War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity, Ethnic Cleansing in West Darfur.”
 58 “Sudan: New Deadly Attacks in West Darfur,” Human Rights Watch, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/22/>

A Sudanese refugee camp in Chad
 Credit: Henry Wilkins



scene. The International Organization for Migration in May reported that almost 60,000 people remained displaced in Kerenik.⁵⁹ This required the majority of them to seek shelter in open areas, schools, or other public buildings.⁶⁰ With only 7 percent of them stating that they had intentions to return to their homes, it is clear that there are still severe security concerns.⁶¹ Even today, even though this conflict started two decades ago, the people of Darfur are living in a low-quality-of-life environment. Countless refugees live in makeshift tents and shelters in the border town of Adre, Chad.⁶² They suffer from starvation, lack of water, poor hygiene, and poor sanitation.⁶³ Returning to Darfur is not a good option for many as there are few areas there that are safe to live in and there are no essentials there either.

Hospitals and medical staff have also repeatedly come under attack during violence in West Darfur, which not only puts their lives at great risk but also hampers the level of health care the injured receive.⁶⁴ One such incident of a hospital attack is that done on South Hospital in El Fasher, North Darfur. Here, fighters from the Rapid Support Forces stormed into the facility, opened fire, looted it, and also stole a Doctors Without Borders ambulance.⁶⁵ This hospital was the only one in the region that was equipped to deal with mass casualties and was said to be the main referral hospital for treating those who were war-wounded. A video posted on a Rapid Support Forces account shows at least one man firing an AK-style weapon while on hospital grounds. Images posted to social media showed damaged medical equipment strewn in and around the hospital. The medical facility had already been hit by mortar shells and bullets multiple times in the previous

weeks between May 25th and June 3rd resulting in two deaths and fourteen injuries among the individuals present such as the patients and caretakers.⁶⁶ On May 11, a nearby hospital, Babiker Nahar Paediatric Hospital, was also impacted by an airstrike about 50 meters from the facility, which led to the deaths of two children and a caregiver in the intensive care unit when the roof collapsed.⁶⁷

Government responses to these attacks are not enough for the civilians who are undergoing this conflict.⁶⁸ It is said that the international community has not exerted enough pressure on the parties who are responsible for this conflict to stop violating the human rights of people who are caught up in this war. More specifically, the African Union has not displayed the appropriate level of leadership nor has taken strong actions that match the intensity of the conflict to make some sort of progress in aid or prevention.⁶⁹ It took almost a year for the United Nations Security Council to adopt a resolution on Sudan that called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and unhindered humanitarian access.⁷⁰ Yet, even though this resolution was enforced, the fighting continues throughout the country with no measures established in place to protect civilians from any harm.⁷¹ Two survivors from Kerenik said that the Sudan Armed Forces fired shots to warn the attackers away from approaching their garrison, where many people were taking shelter.⁷² However, this was not enough, and the attackers continued, but the Sudan Armed Forces did not intervene to deter them or to protect civilians who were unable to reach the garrison in time.⁷³

Attacks conducted against the Massalit and other non-Arab

sudan-new-deadly-attacks-west-darfur.

59 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Deadly Attacks in West Darfur."

60 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Deadly Attacks in West Darfur."

61 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Deadly Attacks in West Darfur."

62 "2 decades on, new atrocities in Darfur trigger a mass influx of refugees into Chad," European Commission, April 29, 2024, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/2-decades-new-atrocities-darfur-trigger-mass-influx-refugees-chad_en.

63 European Commission, "2 decades on, new atrocities in Darfur trigger a mass influx of refugees into Chad."

64 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Deadly Attacks in West Darfur."

65 Eve Brennan, "Medics flee as rebels attack and shut down North Darfur's main hospital," CNN, June 12, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/06/10/africa/sudans-al-fashir-main-hospital-shut-intl/index.html>.

66 Brennan, "Medics flee as rebels attack and shut down North Darfur's main hospital."

67 Brennan, "Medics flee as rebels attack and shut down North Darfur's main hospital."

68 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Deadly Attacks in West Darfur."

69 "Sudan: One year since conflict began, response from international community remains woefully inadequate," Amnesty International, last modified April 12, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/sudan-one-year-since-conflict-began-response-from-international-community-remains-woefully-inadequate/>.

70 Amnesty International, "Sudan: One year since conflict began, response from international community remains woefully inadequate."

71 Amnesty International, "Sudan: One year since conflict began, response from international community remains woefully inadequate."

72 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Deadly Attacks in West Darfur."

73 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Deadly Attacks in West Darfur."

civilian populations also constitute crimes against humanity of murder, torture, persecution, and forcible transfer. The violence started to culminate in a large-scale massacre on June 15, when the Rapid Support Forces and their allies opened fire on nearly a kilometers-long convoy of civilians trying to flee.⁷⁴ They rounded up and shot men, women, and children who were running in all directions down the streets or even trying to swim across the rapid-flowing Kajja river. Nearly twenty-five individuals drowned in the river and countless others who were older or injured were not spared under any circumstances. A survivor recalls the event unfolding and revealed how the forces would grab children from their parents, shoot them, and throw them and their belongings into the river as a way of disposal.⁷⁵

Chilling narrations of survivors further emphasize strict rules needing to be enforced. Rapid Support Forces fighters would break into homes, sexually assault and beat women and girls while dragging men and other family members out of the house, beating and attacking them. 27-year-old Yahiya Adam was one of these individuals. Rapid Support Forces fighters barged into his home and shot his brother and father dead. They then sprayed him with bullets and tossed his body out onto the road while they went and took turns assaulting his sisters. Not having control to do anything, Adam was helpless over the situation. He vaguely recalls how Rapid Support Forces fighters loaded his body on the back of a pick-up truck and dumped him over the border in Chad.⁷⁶ He says that he was lying there with blood all over his body as the fighters left him there to die. Adam then later woke up in a small clinic being run by Doctors Without Borders. He does not know how he ended up there but he was very happy to discover that his mother and sisters were all still alive. He later found out that they fled to an internal displacement camp for safety and

then headed to Chad once the roads were clear and a bit safer for them to travel.⁷⁷

Attacks have been conducted over multiple years. In April 2023, the Rapid Support Forces attacked positions in Khartoum and key military sites.⁷⁸ Not only did these attacks spark another wave of violence between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudan Armed Forces, but they also led to an increased risk of attacks in Darfur. Both the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudan Armed Forces have multiple accusations made against them for committing crimes against civilians. According to the United Nations, the fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces is responsible for the killing of more than 12,000 people as of December 2023.⁷⁹ This violence has led to the displacement of 6.5 million total, with nearly more than 1.2 million people being sent as refugees to surrounding countries.⁸⁰ This large scale of atrocities has been officially acknowledged by many countries such as the United States. On December 6, 2023, the United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken determined that from April 2023 to December 2023, the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudan Armed Forces committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing in Darfur.⁸¹

The role of the international community in this crisis is to step in ideally when the conflict just started, or when there is a strong need for humanitarian protection. What makes the tragedies occurring in this area more saddening is that policy-makers and leaders around the world are very aware of what events are unfolding in the region. One such example of this is the African Union and as said before, due to the limitations the mission is restricted to, the troops are unable to even proactively protect civilians.⁸² The mandate is very tight, so much so that the Union can only protect civilians when they

74 "Sudan: Ethnic Cleansing in West Darfur," Human Rights Watch, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/09/sudan-ethnic-cleansing-west-darfur>.

75 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Ethnic Cleansing in West Darfur."

76 Nashed, "A massacre, an exodus from Darfur and years of rehab for Sudanese refugees."

77 Nashed, "A massacre, an exodus from Darfur and years of rehab for Sudanese refugees."

78 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Darfur."

79 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Darfur."

80 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Darfur."

81 Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, "War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity, and Ethnic Cleansing Determination in Sudan," U.S. Department of State, December 6, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/war-crimes-crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-determination-in-sudan/>.

82 Nick Grono, "Darfur: The International Community's Failure to Protect," International Crisis Group, September 30, 2006, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/darfur-international-communitys-failure-protect>.

are being attacked in the Union's presence and only then if they feel that they have enough troops to intervene.⁸³ Unfortunately, often it does not. The international community has not donated proper funds for such missions to be properly carried out. Funding and support for the African Union mission is drying up with most of the soldiers not being paid in recent months while being expected to do more with less. However, it is not with small and local changes will major changes in Darfur occur. It is only a power that the United Nations can ensure by establishing a coordinated, properly resourced, and legitimate peacekeeping effort in a conflict of this high magnitude. The UN has been slow to put any real pressure on the Sudanese government.⁸⁴ It was only in March 2005, which was about two years after the conflict already started, and with repeated provocations from the Sudanese government, did the Security Council moved to impose sanctions against those who are impeding the peace process and are committing those human rights violations.⁸⁵ Furthermore, it took another year on top of that to specifically target individuals, and it was then in August 2006 that the Security Council finally passed a resolution to provide for the deployment of UN peacekeepers to Darfur.⁸⁶ Such delays are not to be tolerated when it comes to such severe matters as this, and effective and maintainable solutions must be strictly enforced as soon as possible.

Human Rights Violations

There are many records of human rights violations occurring in the conflict areas of Darfur. From innocent killings of civilians in inhumane manners such as through starvation and the destruction of buildings and homes, the people of Darfur have undergone multiple crises and disasters. According to the people who fled Ardamata to go to eastern Chad, there was a spree of killings taking place.⁸⁷ They recalled events such as

shelling, unlawful detentions, sexual violence, ill-treatment, and looting.⁸⁸ Some videos and images were posted on social media that revealed the Rapid Support Forces detaining over 200 men and boys in Ardamata, with one video showing the fighters beating up a group of men.⁸⁹

Gender-based violence plays a large part in the crimes committed in Darfur. Compounding the full catastrophe of the terror of violence that is targeting women, the United Nations Population Fund estimates that nearly 6.7 million Sudanese people, mostly women, are at risk of gender-based violence.⁹⁰ There are incidents of kidnapping, rape, and abuse that stack on top of the deaths of about 13,000 civilians that have been killed since April 2023.⁹¹ A local media outlet, called Gladiator Sudan, reported at least 189 cases of rape between April 2023 to December 2023, of which just four of these were against men.⁹² The total recorded number of cases is very likely to be higher than what is reported since the country has severely limited infrastructure and a broken healthcare system. Between the ongoing violence for many decades now and the limited attention that is being brought to this crisis, the inhumane actions that are taking place against women and girls are often neglected. Living in daily fear of assault is one of the daily traumas that civilians are facing amid the war.

Getting access to psychological care and counseling for women who are raped in this conflict is even less available than getting access to medical care. The refugee camps in Chad are better staffed in this regard, but in Darfur, some very limited professionals are trained in mental health, trauma, or gender-based violence who are currently working in the camps.⁹³ Even if the resources were made available, another issue arises when it comes to the fact of actually going and attending the help centers. Many women feel shy, ashamed, or disgusted to admit

83 Grono, "Darfur: The International Community's Failure to Protect."

84 Grono, "Darfur: The International Community's Failure to Protect."

85 Grono, "Darfur: The International Community's Failure to Protect."

86 Grono, "Darfur: The International Community's Failure to Protect."

87 "Sudan: New Mass Ethnic Killings, Pillage in Darfur," Human Rights Watch, last modified November 26, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/26/sudan-new-mass-ethnic-killings-pillage-darfur>.

88 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Mass Ethnic Killings, Pillage in Darfur."

89 Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: New Mass Ethnic Killings, Pillage in Darfur."

90 Nahid Widaatalla, "Bodies into Battlefields: Gender-Based Violence in Sudan," Think Global Health, March 25, 2024, <https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/bodies-battlefields-gender-based-violence-sudan>.

91 Widaatalla, "Bodies into Battlefields: Gender-Based Violence in Sudan."

92 Widaatalla, "Bodies into Battlefields: Gender-Based Violence in Sudan."

93 Tara Gingerich and Jennifer Leaning, "The Use of Rape as a Weapon of War in Darfur, Sudan," (Physicians For Human Rights, October 1, 2004) <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/the-use-of-rape-as-a-weapon-of-war-in-darfur-sudan/>.

that they have been assaulted and therefore don't bother to make an effort to recover or to seek medical help. Most of these health centers face barriers regarding continued violent acts or lack of medical resources. There is also a lack of food, clean water, and proper sanitation for patients. Many women chose to keep their assault a secret from others in their family to avoid any shame they might experience, but also to avoid any consequences that they might have to go through as a result such as abandonment or further violence. Survivors keep facing high levels of insecurity and personal jeopardy in the camps, towns, and settlements in Darfur.⁹⁴ Leaving any sort of safe space to go and try to secure firewood, food, or water puts women and girls at risk of being taken by Janjaweed militia and fighters.⁹⁵ The effects of experiencing such extreme traumatic effects put a lot of pressure and shame on an individual. It is reported that women who have undergone assault carry an added significant burden of shame and stigma and the extent to which they might be abandoned by their family is very unclear.⁹⁶ This is mostly due to the cultural fact that unfortunately, victims of such crimes are often the ones who are blamed for the assault, and what they have experienced is seen to be bringing dishonor and shame to the family. There are cultural beliefs that women who have been raped are seen to now be "impure" therefore making them difficult to marry or become married. It is used to humiliate the woman, her family, and the wider community.⁹⁷

Agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund have been able to provide some kind of gender-based violence prevention and treatment services for women and girls in Sudan, with about sixty-four safe spaces being set up.⁹⁸ These

safe spaces have provided women and girls with awareness services, vocational training for health workers, medicines, dignity kits, and psychosocial support for survivors of sexual violence. There is a huge need for increasing support areas but a major challenge has been reaching out to those in hard-hit areas. Some services were able to be provided remotely via the telephone, WhatsApp, and local radio messages, but having limited phone and internet access makes this process more difficult.⁹⁹ Some state that the war in Sudan has caused women's bodies to become turned into battlefields, with sexual assault being one of the most traumatizing war weapons being used.¹⁰⁰ Over the past year, the United Nations Population Fund has reached more than 600,000 people with gender-based violence response services and supported about 112,000 people with access to medical, sexual, and reproductive health services.¹⁰¹

Additionally, there have been increased concerns about reports about human trafficking, especially women and girls, child and forced marriage, and the recruitment of boys for forced participation in hostilities.¹⁰² These children, most commonly boys, are very frequently subjected to abuse and most of them repeatedly witness death, killing, and sexual violence.¹⁰³ Many are forced to commit crimes against other children and civilians, which puts them in a situation where they suffer from serious long-term psychological consequences from such violations.¹⁰⁴ Sometimes these children are used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies, or for sexual purposes.¹⁰⁵ Experts reveal being shocked at the reports of women and girls being sold at slave markets in areas that are controlled by Rapid Support Forces and other armed groups in North Darfur.¹⁰⁶

94 Gingerich and Leaning, *The Use of Rape as a Weapon of War in Darfur, Sudan*.

95 Gingerich and Leaning, *The Use of Rape as a Weapon of War in Darfur, Sudan*.

96 Gingerich and Leaning, *The Use of Rape as a Weapon of War in Darfur, Sudan*.

97 "Sudan: Darfur: Rape as a weapon of war: sexual violence and its consequences," Amnesty International, last modified March 26, 2011, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/sudan-darfur-rape-as-a-weapon-of-war-sexual-violence-and-its-consequences/>.

98 ONE YEAR OF WAR IN SUDAN (United Nations Population Fund UNFPA: April, 2024), https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Sudan%20-one%20year%20of%20war%20-Sitrep_%20April%202024.pdf.

99 Widaatalla, "Bodies into Battlefields: Gender-Based Violence in Sudan."

100 Widaatalla, "Bodies into Battlefields: Gender-Based Violence in Sudan."

101 United Nations Population Fund, "Sexual violence and conflict in Sudan: A war on the bodies of women and girls," <https://www.unfpa.org/news/sexual-violence-and-conflict-sudan-war-bodies-women-and-girls>.

102 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Sudan: Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts," press release, March 22, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/sudan-trafficking-sexual-exploitation-and-recruitment-children-rise-warn-un>.

103 "Stolen Innocence: Children Forcefully Recruited Into Armed Conflict in Sudan," African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, November 16, 2023, <https://web.acjps.org/stolen-innocence-children-forcefully-recruited-into-armed-conflict-in-sudan/>.

104 African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, "Stolen Innocence: Children Forcefully Recruited Into Armed Conflict in Sudan."

105 African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, "Stolen Innocence: Children Forcefully Recruited Into Armed Conflict in Sudan."

106 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Sudan: Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts."

They have also made concerned claims about the increase in child and early forced marriages, reportedly a result of family separations.¹⁰⁷ Since the outbreak of the armed conflict in April 2023, approximately one million children have been displaced by the fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, leaving the children vulnerable to many violations conducted against them.¹⁰⁸

Many humanitarian, civil society and aid agencies have attempted to step in and offer aid. However, this becomes much more difficult since it has become harder to operate in and access areas that are affected by conflict as a result of continuous interference.¹⁰⁹ This continued interference is affecting humanitarian aid operations since there are targeted attacks being carried out on aid workers.¹¹⁰ In the first half of 2008, ten humanitarian workers were killed in Darfur, seventy-four humanitarian premises were attacked, and by August more than ten humanitarian vehicles had been hijacked.¹¹¹ The situation and importance of the issue have risen to a point where the targeting of at-risk populations is very severe and particularly women, children, refugees, internally displaced people, and trafficking is being added to the ongoing cruelty and hostels in Sudan.¹¹²

UN humanitarian agencies left Darfur when the conflict began and severely escalated in April 2023 leading to many of their facilities being broken, looted, or destroyed.¹¹³ War conditions were so extreme with no safety or proper resources being available causing agencies to have to leave. After some time, some agencies have chosen to return on an occasional basis to provide some humanitarian relief and aid when the security situation allows it. In November 2023, UN partners were able to reach Central Darfur State which brought to the

population important medical supplies.¹¹⁴ This was the first time this has been done since the fighting outbreak. Many aid workers who have come to Darfur have been killed, while many others are being forced to work and operate their services under extremely challenging conditions to be able to support the civilians there. The United Nations Humanitarian Affairs Office states that Sudan is representing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, but the response plan that they are currently receiving is only thirty-three percent funded.¹¹⁵ There are many reasons as to why this crisis is not receiving proper media attention. If the condition of the natives who are living in the area is so bad to a point where they have to flee the area and seek shelter in another country, it is safe to say that the area is not very safe for external individuals to be coming in such as new reporters to try and gain information. There might be logical or governmental restrictions that might be preventing them from showcasing the news. As a result of this limited media coverage, gathering funds becomes much more difficult. It reduces how much information the public knows about what is going on, which causes limitations in gathering full funding. Overall, this shows that it is imperative for more continuous support to be given as thousands of innocent civilian lives are at stake.¹¹⁶

Key Actors and International Involvement

Many organizations, aid agencies, political groups, and countries have been involved in this conflict. In July 2007, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 1769 to send a joint force with the United Nations and the African Union peacekeeping force.¹¹⁷ This is known as the African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur and had

107 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Sudan: Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts."

108 African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, "Stolen Innocence: Children Forcefully Recruited Into Armed Conflict in Sudan."

109 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Sudan: Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts."

110 "Failing Darfur," Human Rights Watch, September 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/features/darfur/fiveyearson/qanda.html>.

111 Human Rights Watch, "Failing Darfur."

112 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Sudan: Trafficking for sexual exploitation and recruitment of children on the rise, warn UN experts."

113 Africa Renewal, "Explainer: How Darfur became a 'humanitarian calamity and catastrophic human rights crisis,'" UN News, December 14, 2023, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2023/explainer-how-darfur-became-%E2%80%98humanitarian-calamity-and-catastrophic-human>.

114 Africa Renewal, "Explainer: How Darfur became a 'humanitarian calamity and catastrophic human rights crisis.'"

115 Africa Renewal, "Explainer: How Darfur became a 'humanitarian calamity and catastrophic human rights crisis.'"

116 Africa Renewal, "Explainer: How Darfur became a 'humanitarian calamity and catastrophic human rights crisis.'"

117 PBS News, "Origins of the Darfur Crisis."

less than 10,000 members who were deployed in 2008.¹¹⁸ According to Jan Eliasson, who is a former United Nations special envoy to Darfur, there were a combination of many factors that were contributing to the slow deployment, such as reluctance from the international community to send equipment.¹¹⁹ The Sudanese government was skeptical to accept peacekeepers from certain countries, along with having some logistical problems like having a lack of proper roads, lodging, and water.¹²⁰

The police, military contingents, and staff volunteer groups of the African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur had used their resources and personal salaries to build schools and donate other educational materials.¹²¹ They have also improved water infrastructure, and donated health-related equipment and supplies across Darfur. As a result, they have built a close connection with the communities they helped and served. Such infrastructure improvements have been very successful such as the building of roads as they helped build access to remote areas. Health and education efforts have also been helpful as they provide stability and take care of civilians. This joint mission originally started in December 2007 by assuming authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan.¹²² It then grew by incorporating its troops into the United Nations' first and only hybrid operation with a regional organization. This is significant in terms of the conflict since it shows that there has been solid international recognition with a large-scale commitment, planning, and execution. Civilians are benefitting from this as they are given some protection and access to features that improve their quality of life. Over time, the African Union Hybrid Operation grew to become one of the largest peacekeeping operations in the history of the United Nations.¹²³

In resolution 2559, the United Nations Security Council

decided that the African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur's mandate would end by December 31, 2020. There are multiple reasons for the ending of this operation. Mainly, there was a perception between international actors and the United Nations Security Council that the operation had accomplished what it had set out to do and had helped improve the situation to a point where they could withdraw. The end of this operation was projected to lead to a transition from a peacekeeping focus to a peacekeeping approach. An emphasis on supporting the political process, reconstruction, and development efforts was also projected. They therefore requested that the mission be commenced and withdrawn by all personnel by June 30, 2021. Thus, over the next six months, over 6,000 troops and police personnel have returned to their home country.¹²⁴ Even though the mandate was ended, the United Nations was not necessarily leaving Sudan. There has been a United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan, which is a new special political mission that started in June 2020. The mission works along with the Transitional Government and the people of Sudan.¹²⁵ The goal of this is to support the democratic transition and to eventually get to a point of medium and long-term peacekeeping via a country-wide mandate.¹²⁶ The implemented mechanisms include lots of focus on political support, security sector reform, and economic development. During their entire time of operating, the African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur successfully achieved a lot.¹²⁷ They had reduced the number of armed clashes, and improved access to areas that were previously denied as a result of active conflict, government restrictions, as well as rebel and militia activity. Additionally, they improved support to media between the Sudanese government and armed movements.¹²⁸ They had also strengthened traditional community-based mechanisms in internally displaced person camps and protected thousands of short, medium, and

118 PBS News, "Origins of the Darfur Crisis."

119 PBS News, "Origins of the Darfur Crisis."

120 PBS News, "Origins of the Darfur Crisis."

121 "Darfur: UN transition to peacebuilding," United Nations, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/delegate/darfur-un-transition-peacebuilding>.

122 United Nations, "Darfur: UN transition to peacebuilding."

123 United Nations, "Darfur: UN transition to peacebuilding."

124 United Nations, "Darfur: UN transition to peacebuilding."

125 United Nations, "Darfur: UN transition to peacebuilding."

126 United Nations, "Darfur: UN transition to peacebuilding."

127 "Protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian aid & helping political process in Darfur," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unamid>.

128 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian aid & helping political process in Darfur."

long-range patrols to remote, isolated, and high-risk areas as well as inside the internally displaced person camp.¹²⁹ They focused on providing successful campaigns for peace and reconciliation, human rights and gender-based violence, and health and hygiene. It is important to highlight from their time in service that although they have helped in responding to various threats, ultimately it is the government's responsibility to protect its citizens.¹³⁰ The transitional government has given its firm resolve to assume its protection responsibilities.¹³¹ The transitional government was established in April 2019 after the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir and was designed as a compromise between civilian opposition groups and the military. It is composed of the Sovereignty Council, the Prime Minister, and the Cabinet.

The United Nations has maintained a significant presence in Sudan ever since the beginning of the conflict. When the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, the United Nations Security Council authorized a peacekeeping mission. This was done to support the implementation of this agreement and provide humanitarian assistance where necessary. The United Nations established the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in 2011, which was meant to support the new country in establishing peace and security. This was going well, but when the civil war broke out in 2013, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan then shifted its focus to the protection of civilians.¹³² However, since its establishment, the mission has been facing rather harsh criticism for failing to implement its mandate. One report even detailed several instances where peacekeepers have abandoned their posts and failed to protect civilians from dangerous situations. In response to some of these criticisms, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan's commander, Lt Gen Johnson Mogoia Kimani Ondieki, was fired from duty in November 2016.¹³³ Afterward, Lt Gen Frank Mushyo

Kamanzi took charge and had a strong background in peacekeeping since he previously worked in the African Union Hybrid Operation. Following the leadership change, there was more emphasis placed on civilian protection. In situations such as these, the top priority of the Council should be to reduce the violence and loss of life in Sudan. Unfortunately, many observers have openly criticized the United Nations for its responses to previous humanitarian crises, such as the 1994 Rwandan genocide or the 1995 genocide in Bosnia.¹³⁴ Sudan is in a similar situation as Rwanda and Bosnia since the United Nations has delayed taking appropriate action based on early warning signs, reducing their deployed troops, and failing to protect civilians. They have argued that the peacekeeping forces that the United Nations should establish in those areas were mismanaged. The United Nations Security Council now deliberates on how to respond to the recent uproar of violence in South Sudan.¹³⁵

Before late July 2004, the United Nations Security Council's only action taken on Darfur was a statement in May 2004 calling on the Sudanese government to disarm the Janjaweed militias.¹³⁶ Two months later, after multiple appeals made by humanitarian and human rights groups, as well as visits to Darfur by Secretary-General Annan, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1556. This resolution demanded the disarming of the Janjaweed militia and to bring justice to the leaders who had carried out human rights abuses.¹³⁷ The Council even threatened to consider further economic, political, or military sanctions if the Sudanese government failed to comply with the demands. It has endorsed the deployment of an African Union force to monitor the April 2004 ceasefire agreement and also imposed a ban on the sale of all arms to all "non-governmental entities and individuals" in Darfur.¹³⁸

Unfortunately, this did not work as the United Nations Security

129 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian aid & helping political process in Darfur."

130 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian aid & helping political process in Darfur."

131 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian aid & helping political process in Darfur."

132 "Humanitarian Intervention in South Sudan," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://education.cfr.org/teach/simulation/humanitarian-intervention-south-sudan-unscc/educator-overview>.

133 Council on Foreign Relations, "Humanitarian Intervention in South Sudan."

134 Council on Foreign Relations, "Humanitarian Intervention in South Sudan."

135 Council on Foreign Relations, "Humanitarian Intervention in South Sudan."

136 "The United Nations and Darfur," Human Rights Watch, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k5/darfur/3.htm>.

137 Human Rights Watch, "The United Nations and Darfur."

138 Human Rights Watch, "The United Nations and Darfur."

Council had hoped. On September 18, 2004, the Sudanese government still failed to protect its citizens and has not fulfilled its commitment to disarm the Janjaweed and prosecute perpetrators. Thus, it led the United Nations Security Council to pass Resolution 1564. Saying that it is a serious concern that the Sudanese government had not met its obligations, the Security Council reiterated its call for the government to end the issue in Darfur.¹³⁹ Some examples of how they failed are the inadequate implementation of sanctions, failure to prevent further crises, ineffective peacekeeping, and failure to maintain accountability and pressure. Additionally, it has also called for the expansion of the African Union monitoring mission in Darfur and established a commission of inquiry to investigate the reports of international humanitarian law violations. It has also threatened the government that if they fail to comply again with this resolution, there will be additional measures taken such as actions that will target the overall government of Sudan or specific high-ranking members of the government to increase pressure for compliance.¹⁴⁰

The international community has shown consideration and attention to the Darfur crisis, specifically in the humanitarian and security sectors. There have been visits conducted by the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the United States Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Ministers from many other countries such as Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, and Canada.¹⁴¹ Some implications of these visits to Sudan were increased international pressure and attention, diplomatic engagement, and humanitarian development and support. Throughout the conflict, the Chadian government has been very positive. In 2003, the Chadian government's offers to mediate between the rebels and the Sudanese government were accepted.¹⁴² The Chadian government is involved at a higher level due to geographic reasons being nearby and also because they have cared for refugees from the beginning of

their displacement. Later on April 9, 2004, the Sudanese government and two rebel movements in Darfur agreed to a forty-five-day ceasefire to allow humanitarian assistance to reach several hundred thousand people affected by the current fighting.¹⁴³ This agreement also included the release of prisoners of war and other detainees arrested as a result of the conflict and pledged to allow for the free movement of people and goods.¹⁴⁴

In a speech in the General Assembly in September 2008, Prime Minister Gordon Brown of Britain urged for strong support for peacekeeping in Darfur, calling it as being the greatest humanitarian disaster the world is facing.¹⁴⁵ Brown asked member nations to support and call for the deployment of peacekeeping forces in order towards achieving a cease-fire.¹⁴⁶ He called for an end to aerial bombing of civilians and for a greater effort to support peace talks and reconstruction.¹⁴⁷ This is one such example of how foreign leaders have stepped up, showing their attention to the ongoing crisis and demanding change. After Brown, also in 2008, the United States former President George Bush expressed his support towards Darfur and emphasized greater international involvement and peacekeeping operations. Ideally, resolutions work perfectly after being established, however, it is often that are often a lot of challenges that arise that have to be resolved. The efforts to mediate the conflict are influenced by various regional and global players, and understanding these complexities will be the key to getting proper knowledge of one of the war's most severe aspects.¹⁴⁸

Impact on Broader Society

The effects of this conflict are far more intense than what might seem to be at first glance. Looking at the conflict from an isolated point of view, it is clear that the civilians who are

139 Human Rights Watch, "The United Nations and Darfur."

140 Human Rights Watch, "The United Nations and Darfur."

141 ReliefWeb, "Understanding Darfur Conflict."

142 ReliefWeb, "Understanding Darfur Conflict."

143 ReliefWeb, "Understanding Darfur Conflict."

144 ReliefWeb, "Understanding Darfur Conflict."

145 John Sullivan, "U.N. Approves Peacekeepers for Darfur," *New York Times*, August 1, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/01/world/africa/01nations.html>.

146 Sullivan, "U.N. Approves Peacekeepers for Darfur."

147 Sullivan, "U.N. Approves Peacekeepers for Darfur."

148 Jonathan Campbell-James, "Curbing Outside Intervention in the Sudan War," April 4, 2024, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/curbing-outside-intervention-sudan-war>.

living in the area have been forced to flee elsewhere and seek humanitarian aid and shelter such as in Chad and the Central African Republic.¹⁴⁹ The countries that the refugees have fled to are being put in a situation where they have to manage a sudden influx of a lot of people.¹⁵⁰ One such instance was in 2007. At the time, there was fighting along the border between Sudan and Chad.¹⁵¹ This led to about 200,000 people from Darfur to flee to Chad, and more than 100,000 Chadian villagers had to leave their homes and become displaced themselves.¹⁵² As a response, Chad established more refugee camps and also made changes in their diplomatic and economic efforts to support the people.

The violent and long conflict in Sudan has caused a lot of damage, both physically and culturally. There have been long-term impacts that this conflict has left on education, general culture and heritage, and the media. The conflict is a multifaceted crisis, with the education sector being one of the most severely affected areas throughout, nearly affecting the future and further development of millions of children. Reports have stated that this ongoing conflict is responsible for forcefully closing over 10,400 schools, which are mostly located in conflict-ravaged regions, which has left nearly nineteen million children without access to education.¹⁵³ This is important because not only does it completely stop their academic progress and growth, but it also puts a risk of possible exposure to armed groups and gender-based violence. This situation is then further compounded by the fact that the displacement of 3.3 million children in Sudan has left the nation with the highest number of displaced children globally.¹⁵⁴ The media sector in Sudan is also severely impacted. It can be argued that this sector is the one that is the most important, as having weakened media would cause less

information to be spread out about what is truly happening in the conflict and what people are experiencing. Since the conflict started in April 2023, at least forty-seven out of fifty-seven media houses have been forced to close, with only a few journalists being left to actively report on the ground.¹⁵⁵ It is reported that according to a recent survey that was conducted by international NGO Media in Cooperation and Transition and supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, almost ninety out of more than two hundred Sudanese journalists have said that they have encountered psychological threats and acts of violence conducted on them.¹⁵⁶ They face risks and threats of physical violence and attacks, taunts and trauma, and legal repressions.

Additionally, the cultural heritage of the people has also been damaged badly. Being at significant risk of destruction and looting, including valuable areas such as World Heritage sites, museums, and archives. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has called on all parties to not target or use any cultural or valuable sites for military purposes. They are closely monitoring this request by frequent inspections and are looking after reports of damage conducted on several cultural sites such as the Sudan National History Museum, the Sudanese National Museum, the National Ethnographic Museum, the Republican Palace Museum in Khartoum, and several other community museums in the Darfur region.¹⁵⁷ This conflict is also placing risk on artists and cultural professionals, leading them to displacement and disruption of livelihoods.

To help treat this situation, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has launched some initiatives that are specifically aimed at targeting the immediate

149 “The lasting scars and pain of the war in Darfur,” Al Jazeera, February 23, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/2/26/photos-the-lasting-scars-and-pain-of-the-war-in-darfur-sudan>.

150 Al Jazeera, “The lasting scars and pain of the war in Darfur.”

151 Al Jazeera, “The lasting scars and pain of the war in Darfur.”

152 Al Jazeera, “The lasting scars and pain of the war in Darfur.”

153 “Sudan conflict one year on: a long-term impact on education, culture and the media,” The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, April 14, 2024, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/sudan-conflict-one-year-long-term-impact-education-culture-and-media>.

154 “Number of children displaced across Sudan now highest in the world,” Relief Web, last modified 8 Sep 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/number-children-displaced-across-sudan-now-highest-world>.

155 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Sudan conflict one year on: a long-term impact on education, culture and the media.”

156 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Sudan conflict one year on: a long-term impact on education, culture and the media.”

157 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Sudan conflict one year on: a long-term impact on education, culture and the media.”

needs and laying the necessary groundwork that is required for long-term recovery. Starting, in the education sector, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has mobilized and sent national and international experts to Sudan in the efforts to revitalize education.¹⁵⁸ Their main focus was put on reopening schools, starting online education, focusing on teacher’s salaries, and establishing school infrastructure.¹⁵⁹ Specifically for online education, barriers consisted of having access to a device, electricity, and an internet connection. This was also followed up by organizing a Technical and Vocational Education and Training workshop, which was able to highlight the importance of adjusting the Sudanese training system by using Egyptian experts and experiences for support.¹⁶⁰ Another sector that was prioritized was the protection of journalists. Journalists need to be protected so they can correctly execute their jobs and showcase what is truly happening in the area. Without them, it becomes very difficult to understand the severity of the conflict and what challenges are being faced. With the support from the Media in Cooperation and Transition NGO, the relocation of eighty journalists and their families to safe Sudanese regions and neighboring countries was able to become possible.¹⁶¹ This helped them gain safety and allowed them to continue reporting what was happening. Through the Heritage Emergency Fund, the protection of nine components at the World Heritage sites of “Gebel Barkal and the Sites of the Napatan Region” and the “Archaeological Sites of the Island of Meroe,” along with five priority museums designated by the National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums is being done.¹⁶² By supporting emergency inventories of valuable museum collections, having comprehensive risk assessments, and raising awareness through campaigns with communities to prevent illicit trafficking of cultural properties, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization is working to create safe spaces.

Important pieces and Sudanese artists must be kept safe to preserve Sudanese history and culture.

This conflict has caused a lot of disruptions to unfold within Sudan itself. When the war first broke out, the rebels demanded modest support for local economic development and the creation of employment opportunities to be made in Darfur. With a mainly informal economy, unemployment rates in Darfur are high, however, it is difficult to get an exact estimate due to instability and civilian crisis. Entirely, this was a package that was approximately in the range of nearly USD 60 million.¹⁶³ The government rejected this request and instead chose to orchestrate a military response. Over eleven years, from 2003-2017, the total cost fell to USD 88.7 billion, which is nearly USD 5.9 billion per year.¹⁶⁴ This cost consists of the prices for the destruction of infrastructure, burned villages, stunted economic growth, and the loss of lifetime earnings for the war victims, along with the costs of peacekeeping operations. As a result, the economic priorities of Sudan have become completely distorted. For more than two decades, the Sudanese government has spent only 1.2 percent and less than 1 percent of its GDP on public health and the education sector respectively.¹⁶⁵ The costs of the Darfur conflict have become a serious public policy issue now and have come to a point where it is an unaffordable drain on Sudan’s resources. Additionally, military expenditures in Sudan have been rising. Before the war started, in 2003, the government was spending an average of USD 845 million per year on the military, but since then, the military spending has nearly doubled. This total increase throughout 13 years is estimated to be about a total of USD 23.8 billion, showing how the war effort has consumed the biggest share of this total pending. Not only within the country, but it is reported that this war has cost Sudan and the international community a combined total of

158 “UNESCO Tackles Educational Crisis in Sudan with New Strategic Priorities,” UNESCO, last updated April 15, 2024, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-tackles-educational-crisis-sudan-new-strategic-priorities>.

159 UNESCO, “UNESCO Tackles Educational Crisis in Sudan with New Strategic Priorities.”

160 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Sudan conflict one year on: a long-term impact on education, culture and the media.”

161 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Sudan conflict one year on: a long-term impact on education, culture and the media.”

162 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Sudan conflict one year on: a long-term impact on education, culture and the media.”

163 “The Darfur Conflict: Estimated Impact of Military Spending,” Vision of Humanity, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/darfur-estimated-impact-military-spending/>.

164 Vision of Humanity, “The Darfur Conflict: Estimated Impact of Military Spending.”

165 Vision of Humanity, “The Darfur Conflict: Estimated Impact of Military Spending.”



Chadian soldiers at the Chad-Sudan Border
Credit: Henry Wilkins and Arzouma Kompaoré

USD 88.7 billion, and the cost is still mounting day by day.¹⁶⁶

Looking at the neighboring country that has perhaps experienced the direct after-effects of the conflict is Chad. Chad was already facing a rather turbulent time before April, and when fighting broke out in 2023 Darfur on the eastern border, things only got worse from there.¹⁶⁷ In February 2024, the United Nations refugee reported 553,150 new refugees from Sudan in Chad, some 48,000 Chadian citizens who have fled Darfur.¹⁶⁸ Chad now hosts 1.1 million refugees due to the escalations in 2023, making it Africa's largest host per capita.¹⁶⁹ Chad has responded to this with President Déby closing the border from Sudan to everyone but refugees and deploying troops in the area. This increased migration as primarily refugees from Sudan were seeking shelter in Chad. He took a neutral stance on the issue and called for dialogue to take place between the warring parties in Sudan. France, which is Chad's main security ally, has given a helping hand in this by sending about 3,000 soldiers to N'Djamena that have been a part of a

different operation, has sent forces to the eastern part of Chad to help the national army with figuring out logistics.¹⁷⁰ The transitional government of Sudan has also swiftly responded to the refugee crisis as local authorities have made land unavailable to build refugee camps, while N'Djamena has allowed United Nations agencies and international NGOs that were previously based in Sudan to relocate their operations to eastern Chad.¹⁷¹

Still, eastern Chad is struggling to accommodate all of the new arrivals as it has further affected their economic condition, adding to political instability, and humanitarian needs. In Adré, Sudanese refugees outnumber the permanent residents in the area by a factor of three.¹⁷² Prices of fuel and charcoal have doubled and housing has become increasingly scarce which is causing refugees to camp on what should be working farmland. There are also some risks to Chad's stability and political transition. President Mahamat Idriss Déby is under increasing internal and external pressure from political leaders

¹⁶⁶ Vision of Humanity, "The Darfur Conflict: Estimated Impact of Military Spending."

¹⁶⁷ Enrica Picco, "The Fallout in Chad from the Fighting in Darfur," International Crisis Group, August 10, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/fallout-chad-fighting-darfur>.

¹⁶⁸ "UNHCR: Chad fears 'very real' prospect of more Sudanese refugee arrivals, needs support," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, last edited March 1, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/unhcr-chad-fears-very-real-prospect-more-sudanese-refugee-arrivals-needs>.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "UNHCR: Chad fears 'very real' prospect of more Sudanese refugee arrivals, needs support."

¹⁷⁰ Picco, "The Fallout in Chad from the Fighting in Darfur."

¹⁷¹ "Five things to know about the crisis in Sudan," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, September 22, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/five-things-know-about-crisis-sudan>.

¹⁷² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Five things to know about the crisis in Sudan."

within and other countries to handle the Sudan conflict and pick a side to support, such as with the Zaghawa elites in Chad who are using N'Djamena to support militias in Darfur. Multiple factors are making it hard for Déby to ignore, given that he needs certain groups such as the Zaghawa clan's political backing so that he can stay in a position of power. But, it is also reported that he might be being pulled in other directions such as with the United Arab Emirates who are powerful supporters of the Rapid Support Forces. The United Arab Emirates has supported the Rapid Support Forces by providing financial aid, military equipment, and training. They also supplied the delivery of armored vehicles and security equipment. Staying on the positive side might be a requirement for the President since in mid-June, he visited Abu Dhabi to sign a military cooperation agreement that resulted in the delivery of armored vehicles, security equipment, and the opening of field hospitals in north-eastern Chad.¹⁷³ Although not fully confirmed, these possibilities show how it is difficult to take a stance when other requirements might already be set in place.

At the local level, another risk to Chad's stability comes from the pressure that is exerted by the arrival of all the refugees. As the harvest season approached, the farmers lost access to their fields, which is now where refugee camps now sit.¹⁷⁴ This resulting socio-economic stress has not triggered a significant reaction from the local population yet. The country is already hosting around 400,000 Sudanese refugees from the Darfur war in the 2000s.¹⁷⁵ To accommodate new ones, the local authorities will likely have to take in more agricultural and livestock land, which puts them at a risk for increased tensions between herders and farmers and all of the refugees.¹⁷⁶ Some examples of lateralizations between farmers and refugees include loss of agricultural land, increased pressure on having resources, further economic strain and inflation, and land use conflicts.

Aside from this, there are security concerns that with such a large group of people, there is a possibility of hostilities spilling over into neighboring countries due to the lack of remaining space.¹⁷⁷ This increases the risk of the effects of this conflict feeding already existing regional rivalries.¹⁷⁸ There have been some initiatives to try and move refugees to various country locations or even to their country of origin, but this could include having third-country nationals returning to various countries or in the Horn of Africa.¹⁷⁹ However, some of these refugees, who are now potentially forced to be on the move, may be reluctant, unable, or unwilling to return to their country of origin.¹⁸⁰ Neighboring countries have also worked to provide necessities such as food and clean water to affected people who are at the borders or in refugee camps, but these efforts have been hindered due to security issues, poor infrastructure, and climate events.¹⁸¹

Protection Of Civilians

When people are caught in a situation out of their control, such as a natural disaster or violence, they are put into a state where they are very vulnerable and very commonly need protection from abuse, violence, coercion, and deprivation. In situations like these, Member States are the ones who are responsible for protecting people who live under their control. Especially in situations involving armed conflict, both States and organized armed groups must respect and protect civilians, such as by taking constant care to spare them in whatever military operations might unfold. Some international laws that obligate them to do so are the Geneva Conventions, International Human Rights Laws, Responsibility to Protect, and Refugee Protection Framework. Since 1999, the Security Council has considered and taken the protection of civilians in armed conflict into its own agenda.¹⁸² During a crisis, humanitarian organizations step into the situation to address

173 Picco, "The Fallout in Chad from the Fighting in Darfur."

174 Picco, "The Fallout in Chad from the Fighting in Darfur."

175 Picco, "The Fallout in Chad from the Fighting in Darfur."

176 Picco, "The Fallout in Chad from the Fighting in Darfur."

177 "The Sudan Crisis and Implications for Neighbouring Countries," National Centre for Social Research, September 12, 2023, <https://natscen.ac.uk/events/sudan-crisis-and-implications-neighbouring-countries>.

178 National Centre for Social Research, "The Sudan Crisis and Implications for Neighbouring Countries."

179 National Centre for Social Research, "The Sudan Crisis and Implications for Neighbouring Countries."

180 Aly Verjee, "Five potential global consequences of Sudan's escalating conflict," The Interpreter, last modified May 4, 2023, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/five-potential-global-consequences-sudan-s-escalating-conflict>.

181 National Centre for Social Research, "The Sudan Crisis and Implications for Neighbouring Countries."

182 "Protection of civilians," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/protection-civilians>.

people's protection needs, such as by providing safe spaces for women, girls, and boys.¹⁸³ These humanitarian protection efforts are aimed at reducing and preventing people's exposure to risks and ensuring that the basic rights and respect for any individual are constantly upheld and are not being neglected in times of crisis and war.¹⁸⁴ At the country level, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supports humanitarian coordination to ensure that there are effective and coordinated measures being taken that are aimed at protecting the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of all affected peoples, through many different formats such as advocacy and resource mobilization.¹⁸⁵ Some ways in which civilians in Sudan are protecting themselves is via engaging in humanitarian organizations and their efforts, seeking safer shelters and migration, adapting livelihoods, and engaging in peacebuilding efforts.

Focusing on the protection of injured persons, and having access to proper and well-functioning medical care in armed conflict is essential. Between January 2nd and March 31st, 2017, the World Health Organization recorded eighty-eight attacks against healthcare in fourteen countries, leading to eighty deaths and eighty-one injuries. In 2016, the World Health Organization recorded three hundred and two attacks against healthcare in twenty countries and territories, leading to three hundred seventy-two deaths and four hundred ninety-one injuries. From 2012 to 2014, the International Committee of the Red Cross recorded 2,398 incidents of violence against healthcare in countries dealing with armed conflict or another emergency.¹⁸⁶ This goes to show how proper protection of the public, as well as protection of necessities, are both equally required. As a result of these findings, in 2016 the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2286 and shared practical measures that all parties to armed conflict can implement to enhance the protection

of medical care.¹⁸⁷ The International Committee of the Red Cross works to protect civilians by providing medical care and services, supporting access to healthcare, and protecting health workers. Recommendations such as sticking to relevant international treaties including the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, key international human rights treaties, and the Arms Trade treaty, as well as enforcing domestic legislative frameworks. Additionally, other recommendations have been made like ensuring legal protection for medical personnel, conducting investigations into alleged serious violations against medical care, and providing reparations and assistance to victims of such attacks. Such violence can result in immediate loss of life, serious injury, destruction, and the loss of extremely essential healthcare. It can even lead to more severe long-term consequences as the closing of medical centers deprives entire communities of receiving vital care.¹⁸⁸

According to United Nations experts, Sudan must urgently implement strong measures that will enable the safety of their civilians, including those who might not be on their land as a result of being physically displaced.¹⁸⁹ They have also demanded that Sudan conducts thorough investigations to bring to justice those who are responsible for this deadly intercommunal violence and attacks in Darfur. Some limitations that the Sudanese justice system has include institutional weakness, strong political influence, and limited independence. Attacks in Darfur often seem as though there are no more bounds to where the consequences could reach. On the 16th and 17th of January 2024, intercommunal violence led to clashes between Arab nomads and the non-Arab ethnic Masalit in West Darfur, which has affected the Krinding and Abu Zar camps for internally displaced persons.¹⁹⁰ These clashes and violence have led to the killing of 163 people, injuring 217 people, and displacing nearly 50,000.¹⁹¹ Additionally, civilian property was completely damaged and looted. The next day, on January

183 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Protection of civilians."

184 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Protection of civilians."

185 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Protection of civilians."

186 "The protection of medical care in armed conflict," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/protection-medical-care-armed-conflict>.

187 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "The protection of medical care in armed conflict."

188 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "The protection of medical care in armed conflict."

189 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Sudan: UN experts call for enhanced protection of civilians, including internally displaced, in Darfur," press release, February 2, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/02/sudan-un-experts-call-enhanced-protection-civilians-including-internally>.

190 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Sudan: UN experts call for enhanced protection of civilians, including internally displaced, in Darfur."

191 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Sudan: UN experts call for enhanced protection of civilians,

18th, clashes between the Rezigat and Falata communities in El Gereida in South Darfur took place, reportedly resulting in the killing of seventy-two people, with more than seventy being injured and about one hundred families being displaced.¹⁹² As a result of these, United Nations experts urged the Sudanese government to investigate the violence in South Darfur along with past incidents. These experts have also expressed their deep concern for those who are living in internally displaced persons camps in Darfur, and even more so for what situation they are going to be in the long-term displacement.¹⁹³

According to Joyce Msuya, who is the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, the situation of the civilians in armed conflict in 2023 was very fearful. Referencing conflicts in Gaza, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Sahel, Somalia, Syria, and Ukraine, she reported that in total, the United Nations alone recorded an increase in 33,000 civilian deaths in armed conflict in 2023, which is a staggering seventy-two percent increase from 2022.¹⁹⁴ Looking at the origins of all of these deaths, records are pointing to violence being conducted against medical workers, facilities, equipment, transport, and patients, with record-breaking numbers of displacement and food shortages. The Council and Member States must demand and ensure compliance with the protection framework set in place. Several delegations have expressed how they are advancing the protection of civilians. For example, the United Kingdom's representative stated that they are supporting peacekeepers with training on preventing conflict-related violence as well as increasing the participation of women in uniformed roles and helping to address misinformation about these peacekeeping missions. They conduct these trainings to increase awareness

of the issue and also to teach the public what actions they can take to limit incorrect information from spreading and causing further tensions. Cuba's representative suggested the consideration of an urgent dispatch of a General Assembly-authorized international protection mission to protect the civilian population and facilitate the delivery of emergency aid such as food and water.¹⁹⁵ Morocco shared on behalf of the Group of Friends Of the Responsibility to Protect, pointed out that the international community along with the United Nations has the responsibility to protect civilian populations and the representative of Norway shared a similar idea, stating that there must be effective protection of civilians with civilian objects being a strategic priority.¹⁹⁶ Responsibility to Protect is a global political commitment aimed at helping in crisis events such as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. It can be implemented in Sudan by applying preventive measures, assistance to States, and international intervention.

To properly understand the tragedy of Darfur and establish ways to prevent further damages, the United Nations must find ways to deter potential threats such as human rights abusers and act on early warning signs to protect civilians.¹⁹⁷ If prolonged or necessary action such as humanitarian relief or increased security measures are not taken at the right time, the death toll will only continue to mount. The United Nations Security Council members must address the big gap between peacekeeping challenges that they are requesting from the African Union to conduct in Darfur and the extent to which their capacities or abilities lie to meet this challenge.¹⁹⁸ For the first time in twenty years, Sudan is without a UN peace operation that enables and supports the protection of its civilians, which is only further increasing the already severe

including internally displaced, in Darfur.”

192 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Sudan: UN experts call for enhanced protection of civilians, including internally displaced, in Darfur.”

193 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Sudan: UN experts call for enhanced protection of civilians, including internally displaced, in Darfur.”

194 United Nations Security Council, “We Must Go Above, Beyond Compliance, Fully Protect Civilians against ‘Harms They Are Suffering on Our Watch’, Senior Humanitarian Official Tells Security Council,” press release, May 21, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15702.doc.htm>.

195 United Nations Security Council, “We Must Go Above, Beyond Compliance, Fully Protect Civilians against ‘Harms They Are Suffering on Our Watch’, Senior Humanitarian Official Tells Security Council.”

196 United Nations Security Council, “We Must Go Above, Beyond Compliance, Fully Protect Civilians against ‘Harms They Are Suffering on Our Watch’, Senior Humanitarian Official Tells Security Council.”

197 Michael Clough, “Darfur: Whose Responsibility to Protect?,” Human Rights Watch, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2004/08/20/darfur-african-union-must-insist-more-troops>.

198 Clough, “Darfur: Whose Responsibility to Protect?”

protection gaps in the country. Work done by United Nations agencies in the country remains largely impeded by the volatile security situation that is being imposed by the conflict parties. As a result of this, United Nations agencies have been forced to scale back their presence and activities, especially in Darfur. One such example of this is the two World Food Programme humanitarian aid convoys, which were only able to cross the border from Chad into Darfur in early April 2024 after the de facto military authorities had previously blocked all passage of aid two months earlier.¹⁹⁹ The Human Rights Council's Fact-Finding Mission has urged parties to send humanitarian aid to civilians in need and has stated that it is investigating attacks on aid convoys and warehouses, as well as the blocking of humanitarian aid being reached.²⁰⁰

One mechanism that could drive the action is the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Sudan, Ramtane Lamamra of Algeria, appointed in late November 2023. This envoy is what is responsible for providing good offices to the conflict parties and working to coordinate and lower the conflict in political dialogues. However, some Sudanese civilian representatives have expressed their dissatisfaction with Lamamra's approach to date, which has brought up concern about the envoy's lack of engagement with civil society. Others have even expressed worry that the envoy is privileging consultations with the de facto military authorities, which could completely bias the outcome of a negotiated settlement and cause further conflict dynamics with the Rapid Support Forces.²⁰¹ Centering civilians into the envoy's work is very essential to integrate protection issues into political discussions and ensure that civilian leaders and civil society can be seen as formative stakeholders.²⁰²

Discussions of the protection of civilians are at risk of appearing to be deprioritized with various initiatives that are being planned and implemented, with member state attention being

focused on ending hostilities. By focusing on having a ceasefire as an immediate output of these talks, the UN member states are opening under the general assumption that the protection of civilians will be a natural by-product of a pause or halt to the war. Most importantly, leaders and civil society from all across Sudan should be consulted and represented in all talks with the conflict parties, to ensure that there is a proper discussion of needs and also to make sure that the final goal of safety and security is reached.

Current Status

The Impact on Food Security

The crisis in Sudan has spread so much that it no longer only has effects on the displacement of citizens but has also greatly impacted food security in the country. Every year, an NGO called the International Rescue Committee's Emergency Watchlist analyzes which countries are most likely to experience a humanitarian crisis that is deteriorating. In 2024, Sudan makes it to the top of the list.²⁰³ As a result of the war and the level of impact it has had on Sudan, the country is experiencing growing conflict, mass displacement, and an economic crisis, and healthcare services are on the edge of collapsing completely. Looking at the situation at a glance, it is clear that over ten million people internally have been displaced since April, a total of 9.6 million total internally displaced people.²⁰⁴ It is also stated that over two million refugees have fled to neighboring countries since April, leaving over half the population, which is nearly twenty-five million people to be in desperate need of humanitarian aid.²⁰⁵ The situation has come to a point where people are now in physical pain from the extreme hunger and their bodies can no longer fight off disease.²⁰⁶ Children are at the highest risk and are

199 Julie Gregory, "One Year Ago, War Broke Out in Sudan. What Can Be Done to Prioritize Protection of Civilians?," Stimson, April 15, 2024, <https://www.stimson.org/2024/one-year-ago-war-broke-out-in-sudan-what-can-be-done-to-prioritize-protection-of-civilians/>.

200 Gregory, "One Year Ago, War Broke Out in Sudan. What Can Be Done to Prioritize Protection of Civilians?"

201 Gregory, "One Year Ago, War Broke Out in Sudan. What Can Be Done to Prioritize Protection of Civilians?"

202 Gregory, "One Year Ago, War Broke Out in Sudan. What Can Be Done to Prioritize Protection of Civilians?"

203 "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help," International Rescue Committee, April 17, 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-sudan-what-happening-and-how-help>.

204 International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."

205 International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."

206 "Over 750,000 people in Sudan face catastrophic levels of hunger; IRC calls for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded access to populations in need," International Rescue Committee, June 27, 2024, <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/over-750000-people-sudan-face-catastrophic-levels-hunger-irc-calls-immediate>.

reported to have been dying at twice the rate of adults.²⁰⁷ Those who do survive will most likely suffer from ill health for the rest of their lives.²⁰⁸ More than 2.9 million children in Sudan are acutely malnourished and an additional 729,000 children under the age of five years are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, which is the most dangerous and deadly form of extreme hunger.²⁰⁹ It is expected that nearly 230,000 children and new mothers will die due to extreme hunger.²¹⁰ The power struggle and forces between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces have blown into a massive, large-scale conflict in April 2023. Since then, there has been a constant need for strong humanitarian support in the country. Conservative estimates reported that the conflict could have been responsible for the deaths of about 15,500 people, while some estimates have numbers going as high as 150,000, and counting.²¹¹ The differences are so high due to multiple unrecorded deaths from extreme hunger and malnutrition, unsafe living conditions, conflict, or not receiving medical care. An important fact to keep in mind is that before the conflict began, Sudan was already experiencing a severe humanitarian crisis. As a result of long-term political instability and there being tense economic pressures, nearly 15.8 million people needed humanitarian aid.²¹² This previous condition for Sudan was also due to many other factors such as extreme weather shocks and rising food prices that continued to drive poverty, hunger, and displacement. Sudan is greatly affected by climate injustice, and this has continued to get worse over the years due to droughts and desertification, flooding, and rising temperatures. This conflict has only further increased these conditions, leaving almost twenty-five million people, which is measurably more than half of Sudan's

population, in need of humanitarian aid.²¹³

Sudan is facing extreme levels of food insecurity, with about eighteen million people, almost thirty-seven percent of the population, continuously experiencing severe levels of hunger and food insecurity.²¹⁴ Sadly, it has become a norm for millions of mothers and fathers to go many days without food to feed their children and families. It has come to a point where having a hunger crisis in extreme and unimaginable proportions is no longer a thought or a future concern for Sudan but is instead one that they are going through right now.

The displacement that is occurring because of Sudan's conflict is leading to labor shortages throughout the country. There are rising costs for so many necessities such as fuel, which is impacting agricultural production.²¹⁵ Additionally, the high food prices and the low purchasing power of the people are further driving humanitarian needs. The latest assessment done on people's access to adequate food revealed that people facing acute hunger and food insecurity increased by ten million after the war had started.²¹⁶ The conflict has severely disrupted the people's ability to grow and cultivate crops, disrupted markets, led to massive displacement, impacted people's earnings, and restricted their access to aid.²¹⁷ All of these combined have left millions of people without access to food and with very few choices. According to Shashwat Saraf, International Rescue Committee's East Africa regional emergency director, not taking any action until a famine is officially declared is simply unacceptable and will only lead to further suffering.²¹⁸ Famines are not declared until acute malnutrition in an area drops below thirty percent when there are high mortality rates, and severe food insecurity and impairment of livelihoods.

207 International Rescue Committee, "Over 750,000 people in Sudan face catastrophic levels of hunger; IRC calls for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded access to populations in need."

208 International Rescue Committee, "Over 750,000 people in Sudan face catastrophic levels of hunger; IRC calls for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded access to populations in need."

209 "Sudan: Nearly 230,000 children and new mothers likely to die from hunger without critical action," Save the Children, March 13, 2024, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/sudan-nearly-230000-children-and-new-mothers-likely-die-hunger-without-critical-action-save>.

210 Save the Children, "Sudan: Nearly 230,000 children and new mothers likely to die from hunger without critical action."

211 International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."

212 International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."

213 "Sudan: 25 million people in dire humanitarian need, say UN experts," Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), February 5, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/sudan-25-million-people-dire-humanitarian-need-say-un-experts>.

214 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Sudan: 25 million people in dire humanitarian need, say UN experts."

215 International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."

216 International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."

217 International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."

218 International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help."

A government should declare a famine and it might not be declared earlier because of access issues, political challenges, and data collection and analysis.

The most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report reveals that in areas where the conflict has been more intense, such as West Darfur, Khartoum, and South Kordofan, all have populations facing the highest food insecurity.²¹⁹ This is all being labeled with Phase 3 or above.²²⁰ Phase 3 means that there is a crisis and that there is a big gap between food needs and available food resources. In this case, immediate and substantial humanitarian assistance is required. They emphasize that without urgent humanitarian assistance and access to basic commodities, the people who are experiencing emergency levels of acute hunger, classified as Phase 4, could go into catastrophic food insecurity and become a severe emergency.²²¹ Here, the situation is said to be critical, with widespread acute malnutrition and famine being very high. It is also said that that situation is so dire that people are resorting to eating grass or peanut shells.²²² Sudan's economy

relies very heavily on agriculture, with about sixty-five percent of its population being engaged in this sector. However, due to the ongoing conflict, agriculture production has been restricted and major infrastructure and livelihoods have been damaged such as the burning down of many crop fields and the destruction of farming tools. Additionally, trade flows have been very disrupted and prices of all goods and necessities have significantly increased. Inflation rates increased from 7.2 percent in 2007 to skyrocketing 359.09 percent in 2021, and then dropping a little to 145.54 percent in 2024.²²³ Citizens are not in an environment to work as they are just trying to survive in the crisis, and with the poor economy, there is not a natural margin between people's earnings and prices. The conflict has also spread to the state of Al Jazirah, which produces about fifty percent of wheat and ten percent of sorghum, both of which are very essential crops for the country.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations issued its annual Crop and Food Supply Assessment on Sudan, which examined the food production in 2023 and

219 "Sudan: FAO issues stark warning over "deeply concerning" scale of hunger," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, March 20, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/sudan-fao-issues-stark-warning-over-deeply-concerning-scale-of-hunger/en>.

220 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Sudan: FAO issues stark warning over "deeply concerning" scale of hunger."

221 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Sudan: FAO issues stark warning over "deeply concerning" scale of hunger."

222 "Sudan," World Food Programme, accessed July 30, 2024, <https://wfp.org/countries/sudan>.

223 "Sudan: Inflation rate from 1989 to 2029," Statista, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/727148/inflation-rate-in-sudan/>.



Farmer Kuay Makuach showing the current situation of his available farming land

Credit: Oxfam East Africa

assessed the food supply throughout the country.²²⁴ Some of its key findings revealed that the performance of the 2023 main cereal production season was very poor due to the impact of the conflict, at about forty-six percent below what the harvests of the previous year were at. It showed that the sharpest reductions were recorded in the Greater Kordofan and the Greater Darfur regions since the conflict is more intense there. In those areas, cereal production is estimated to be up to eighty percent below average. Even more alarmingly, widespread insecurity in the West Darfur State prevented farmers from accessing their fields, causing a total failure of the entire cropping season. This completely prevented them from making any sort of progress with their produce. Cereal import requirements in 2024, are currently forecasted at about 3.38 million tonnes, which is raising lots of concerns about the capacity that Sudan has to meet these import needs around the world.²²⁵ The high production costs of cereals are likely to further inflate market prices, which not to forget, are already at exceptionally high levels, with prices in December 2023 being double of one year earlier. This has a ripple effect, causing other dependent countries such as those in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region to be experiencing increased pressure on their food systems as they deal with food shortages and higher prices.

With Sudan's main planting season being primarily from October to December, the outlook for food production in 2024 seems to be very bleak.²²⁶ However, it is good to be optimistic as experience shows that wherever farmers can access land and inputs, they will plant and try to produce food. Even during the fighting that took place last year, the Food and Agriculture Organization was able to distribute enough seed kits to enable one million farmers to produce enough food to feed over 13 million people for an entire year.²²⁷ These kits contained things like seeds, fertilizers, and tools, which

enabled planting, supporting food production, and mitigating food insecurity. This further emphasizes why time-sensitive and life-saving agriculture assistance is crucial to tackling the hunger crisis. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is calling on donors such as the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Germany, and more, to fund time-critical and urgent agricultural activities to prevent further worsening food security.

Sudan's conflict has escalated so much that people are starving in their homes for fear of venturing out and the condition deteriorates every day. The lack of market access has left farmers with no fuel or supplies, crippling agriculture, and accelerating food system collapse.²²⁸ The fierce fighting has also devastated agricultural production in Sudan, causing farmers, traders, and the public to be constantly facing many challenges. Some challenges they go through are the threat of intimidation, blackmail, and even death, which is causing many people to limit their movement therefore causing a severe impact on food production.²²⁹ Hawa, who is a mother of five children and a farmer from East Darfur, revealed that they often fear being robbed, sexually harassed, or even worse.²³⁰ She explains how the conflict is affecting their lives because they have nothing at all and don't have money to buy the things they need. Women, who often play a main role in agricultural production, are being disproportionately impacted by all of the disruptions, causing them to lose vital livelihoods and resources. They are also facing more challenges trying to access markets due to security concerns such as an increased risk of experiencing violence or trauma. Additionally, as a result of societal norms, they are usually the last to eat within their families, but with the already limited food they have access to, this becomes difficult. It is reported that food insecurity further increases the threat of gender-based violence, making it even harder for women to feed themselves and their families.²³¹ The relation

224 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Sudan: FAO issues stark warning over "deeply concerning" scale of hunger."

225 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Sudan: FAO issues stark warning over "deeply concerning" scale of hunger."

226 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Sudan: FAO issues stark warning over "deeply concerning" scale of hunger."

227 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Sudan: FAO issues stark warning over "deeply concerning" scale of hunger."

228 CARE International, "Famine looms in Sudan as conflict decimates fragile food systems."

229 CARE International, "Famine looms in Sudan as conflict decimates fragile food systems."

230 CARE International, "Famine looms in Sudan as conflict decimates fragile food systems."

231 CARE International, "Famine looms in Sudan as conflict decimates fragile food systems."

between gender violence and food insecurity is that women are expected to be responsible for family care, causing them to become more dependent on others for survival. Conflict and food insecurity disrupt social and family structures and can even lead to desperation in extreme cases, putting women and girls more vulnerable to exploitation.

Considering that prices of what can be found on market shelves have gone up by nearly eighty-three percent, people are not able to afford and keep up with the drastic changes in price.²³² Marie David, who is the CARE Country Director for Sudan, explains that while humanitarian organizations are working tirelessly to deliver aid and do their best to take care of the people, their efforts are often being hampered since they have limited funding and do not have access to conflict areas. She states how CARE is calling on governments to meet the pledges they made to the Humanitarian Response Fund, which at five percent for Sudan, is grossly underfunded.²³³ As a result, it is imperative that governments not only come together to help aid in this humanitarian crisis but also that they continue to adhere to pledges they have made when the time is required.

During the war in 2000, the locally grown food and livestock were exported, while many Sudanese people starved. This point is rather unusual since among the African nations that get food aid, Sudan is not usually one of them. As a result of this, many have blamed the government for using food exports to ensure their economic survival instead of caring for the people.²³⁴ The reaction to these claims in 2002 was filled with anger and frustration over the government's priorities, and this is seen in 2024 as well with the government facing backlash for caring about exports instead of domestic needs. While this happened, the marginalized regions that were already in opposition to the central government kept suffering from food shortages. As previously discussed, agriculture in Sudan is the biggest and most important economic sector. People who had not been

able to get any food or feed themselves were forced to flee to refugee camps. In these camps, they are completely dependent on food aid from outside sources. Accessing food in a refugee camp is already much more difficult for these refugees than it is for them to grow and get it themselves. And living in a camp with thousands of other refugees further limits the amount of food that reaches their hands. Even though many camps have developed into permanent settlements with their food systems and markets, they still rely on food assistance.²³⁵ With the extreme shortage of food, it is known that everyone is facing malnutrition, mainly children.²³⁶ Without access to a healthy or complete diet, Sudanese children are at a higher risk of stunted development and growth issues.²³⁷ Health issues could be weakened immune systems, cognitive impairments, muscle weakness, anemia, chronic diseases, and mental health issues.

There have been multiple efforts being made to help aid in the hunger crisis in Sudan. Even though there is widespread insecurity and limited access, the World Food Programme has been greatly helping out.²³⁸ Since the start of the conflict in 2023, they have delivered life-saving food and nutrition assistance to over 6.5 million people.²³⁹ This support has reached very far and has made it to some very hard-to-reach areas in Darfur. The World Food Programme has multiple options for refugees to pick from to provide some flexibility in determining what is best for them. Such programs are emergency food assistance, food for work, cash-based transfers, school feeding programs, and more. As a first lifeline, they offer food assistance and make sure that people in shock areas have food access. Specifically, vulnerable refugees, internally displaced peoples, returnees, and shock-affected communities are given the choice to pick from food or cash to fulfill their immediate food gap.²⁴⁰ As a return, community members collaborate on projects like building or fixing infrastructure such as roads or schools.²⁴¹

The International Committee of the Red Cross conducted two

232 CARE International, "Famine looms in Sudan as conflict decimates fragile food systems."

233 CARE International, "Famine looms in Sudan as conflict decimates fragile food systems."

234 Nobel Peace Center, "Hunger in the Darfur conflict."

235 Nobel Peace Center, "Hunger in the Darfur conflict."

236 Nobel Peace Center, "Hunger in the Darfur conflict."

237 Nobel Peace Center, "Hunger in the Darfur conflict."

238 World Food Programme, "Sudan."

239 World Food Programme, "Sudan."

240 World Food Programme, "Sudan."

241 World Food Programme, "Sudan."

household surveys to better understand the areas affected by the violence.²⁴² Respondents revealed that they are spending over sixty-five percent of their income on food, while nearly seventy percent said that they are poorer than how they were a year ago.²⁴³ In 2023, Sudan's GDP per capita was estimated to be around USD 1,000 to USD 1,200 US. As a result of these findings, from January to March 2022, the economic security team from the Red Cross implemented several actions to support the people. They have helped in registering and providing nearly 25,4000 families to receive agricultural support to help cultivate during the main farming season.²⁴⁴ By doing such, the goal is that these families and farmers will be able to utilize this help as a means to resume their practices again. Along with agriculture decreasing, livestock was another pillar that was greatly damaged. Livestock vaccination campaigns took place in three localities where 100,000 animals were vaccinated and treated. Additionally, 2,400 people received payments to work on the rehabilitation of a water pond in Tawila, North Darfur.²⁴⁵ Being vaccinated and having clean water is important for good human health because it leads to disease prevention, immunity, and control of outbreaks, and also has an economic impact. Having clean water will improve hygiene, reduce malnutrition, and support agriculture and livestock growth.

The International Rescue Committee has also been adapting to the growing need for humanitarian aid. They have supported people who have been internally displaced by providing them with cash assistance, health and nutrition, clean water, sanitation, and hygiene programs.²⁴⁶ Additionally, they have also been implementing protection and empowerment services for women and children, including gender-based violence survivors in various states.²⁴⁷ By launching many offices in new regions, the International Rescue Committee hopes to provide

a safe and healthy environment for many internally displaced people and refugees.

The Impact on Healthcare

While experiencing difficult times with a lack of food, proper shelter, and necessities, the people of Sudan are also going through a deteriorating healthcare system. With attacks being conducted on hospitals, medical centers, and clinics, sick people are unable to receive proper treatment. Aside from the destruction of buildings, there are also attacks being carried out on medical staff such as killings, kidnaps, and assaults. There have been more than two hundred violations conducted against medical staff all over the country, and have led to the deaths of thirty-eight healthcare workers in 2023.²⁴⁸ Unfortunately, most of these attacks are traced back to being conducted by the Sudanese government. The government has previously been accused of targeting doctors such as in the case of Dr. Ali Fadul Ahmed in April 1990. Dr. Ahmed died after experiencing torture by the National Intelligence and Security Service in the aftermath of Omar al-Bashir's coup.²⁴⁹ Reasons for persecution are unclear but could likely be due to political repression and state targeting. The outcome of this case highlighted the dangers faced by those who spoke out, fought, or were suspected of opposing the regime. Since civil unrest started in Sudan in December 2018, medical professionals have been victims of police brutality for giving treatment to people who have experienced government violence. Past incidents show that there have been cases of doctors disappearing, such as five cases in 2009 and two in 2007 from Kalma internally displaced persons camp.²⁵⁰ It is said that those individuals have allegedly been abducted by pro-government militias for treating people who have been injured by security forces.²⁵¹ Not only does this cause clear

242 "Sudan: Violence exacerbating poverty and food insecurity," International Committee of the Red Cross, March 5, 2022, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/sudan-violence-exacerbating-poverty-and-food-insecurity>.

243 International Committee of the Red Cross, "Sudan: Violence exacerbating poverty and food insecurity."

244 International Committee of the Red Cross, "Sudan: Violence exacerbating poverty and food insecurity."

245 International Committee of the Red Cross, "Sudan: Violence exacerbating poverty and food insecurity."

246 International Rescue Committee, "Over 750,000 people in Sudan face catastrophic levels of hunger; IRC calls for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded access to populations in need."

247 International Rescue Committee, "Over 750,000 people in Sudan face catastrophic levels of hunger; IRC calls for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded access to populations in need."

248 Badri and Dawood, "The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy."

249 Badri and Dawood, "The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy."

250 Osama Mahmoud, "The brutality of the Sudanese government against doctors is determined by policy rather than isolated events," *Tropical Doctor* 49, no. 3 (2019):157-158, doi:10.1177/0049475519838159.

251 Badri and Dawood, "The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy."

safety concerns for the disappearance of these people, but it raises multiple questions and concerns. Naturally, one must assume that doctors and other medical staff are there to treat and take care of patients as their duty. However, their unexplainable disappearance causes doubts about why they are being restricted from their practice.

After multiple weeks of heavy fighting, Doctors Without Borders Médecins Sans Frontières were able to reopen their health clinic in Zamzam camp in North Darfur in 2023. This camp hosts about 120,000 people who were displaced earlier due to conflicts and were unable to stay operating due to insecurity.²⁵² Now after reopening, the team has been treating about 160 patients per day, including some who have required urgent medical attention.²⁵³ Since there is severe food insecurity, patients receiving care have had to reduce the number of meals they eat per day from three to one. Eating only one meal a day affects the healing process of these patients by not supporting their nutritional deficiencies, causing them to have reduced energy levels, a weakened immune system, and delayed healing rates. Aside from this, some hospitals have had to make changes to adapt to treat the influx of wounded individuals. One such example is South Hospital in El Fasher, which serves the wider region and has treated more than four hundred people between April and May 2023. Here, all 108 hospital beds were fully occupied and required additional patients to be treated on the floor including those who were pregnant or required other medical needs.²⁵⁴ The war has also brought an increase in gender-based violence. Numerous reported cases of rape and sexual assault by Rapid Support Forces soldiers are very commonly combined with the lack of access to abortion services, family planning, and HIV medications.²⁵⁵ Women were still greatly embarrassed and threatened to report about it, due to the possibility of others knowing and bringing shame and disappointment to

the family.

Not only are there unsafe hospital conditions, but many hospitals and other medical centers have been looted or destroyed. Events like the looting of El Geneina Teaching Hospital, made headlines in April 2023 showing widespread looting, destruction, and burning of property taking place.²⁵⁶ Seeing such events unfolding clearly shows that there is a lack of respect for the protection of the hospital and the kind of work that is taking place there. The repercussions of this event were loss of medical equipment, displacement of health workers, and a worsening humanitarian crisis. The international laws violated by this are the Geneva Conventions, International Human Rights Laws, and the International Criminal Court regulations. Looting and destroying the area symbolizes how the safety, well-being, and security of the people are not a priority at all. The city of El Geneina, much like in other areas in Sudan and Darfur, has been a victim of widespread violence since the start of this current conflict. Targeted areas of attack have drastically varied. Private homes, shops, pharmacies, several international non-governmental organizations, as well as the Ministry of Health premises and the market, have all faced attacks and destruction.²⁵⁷ On April 26, 2023, when the El Geneina Teaching Hospital was looted, machinery and tools such as the hospital pharmacy, the X-ray, and the Blood Bank were damaged.²⁵⁸ This creates additional challenges for the medical staff when they try to resume their regular activity. Patients are at risk for not receiving the proper care they require and this can lead to further complications.

The impact of this conflict on the public health system is very high, considering the already fragile condition of the country. Maternal mortality rates are high, with most of the deaths resulting in home deliveries occurring.²⁵⁹ The United Nations reports 295 maternal deaths per 100,000 livebirths

252 "Darfur fighting disrupts medical care and nutrition programs," Doctors Without Borders, May 12, 2023, <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/darfur-fighting-disrupts-medical-care-and-nutrition-programs>."

253 Doctors Without Borders, "Darfur fighting disrupts medical care and nutrition programs."

254 Doctors Without Borders, "Darfur fighting disrupts medical care and nutrition programs."

255 Alhadi Khogali and Anmar Homeida, "Impact of the 2023 armed conflict on Sudan's healthcare system," Wiley 2, no 4 (October 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1002/puh2.134>.

256 "El Geneina Teaching Hospital, West Darfur: 5 key points on the recent violence and humanitarian needs," ReliefWeb, May 14, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/el-geneina-teaching-hospital-west-darfur-5-key-points-recent-violence-and-humanitarian-needs-enar>.

257 ReliefWeb, "El Geneina Teaching Hospital, West Darfur: 5 key points on the recent violence and humanitarian needs."

258 ReliefWeb, "El Geneina Teaching Hospital, West Darfur: 5 key points on the recent violence and humanitarian needs."

259 Nicholas Aderinto and Deji Olatunji, "The consequences of Sudan's armed conflict on public health: a closer look at the devastating impact," *International Journal of Surgery: Global Health* 6, no 4 (July 2023), 10.1097/GH9.0000000000000179

and 54.9 infant deaths per 1,000 livebirths.²⁶⁰ This is a concern since in most cases, regular homes are not equipped with the proper tools and equipment that are necessary during a birth. There was a lack of skilled birth attendants and a lack of emergency obstetric care in medical facilities. The World Health Organization has documented eleven attacks in 2023 on health facilities with nine children being killed, and more than fifty being injured.²⁶¹ This ongoing conflict can potentially exacerbate the spread of infectious diseases as a result of disruptions of social structures, proper healthcare centers, and the displacement of populations. This results in overcrowding and limited access to clean water, sanitation, and health care facilities. Staying in or receiving treatment in medical centers without proper sanitation further increases the risk of transmitting diseases including cholera and typhoid fever, with women and children being the most vulnerable. Cholera outbreaks have occurred in refugee camps that are close to conflict zones such as in Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia.²⁶² Considering the breakdown of health systems, a shortage of health workers, and inadequate treatment of patients, diseases such as measles and polio spread very easily.²⁶³ Many of these diseases are preventable with vaccines, but the vaccination rate in Sudan is only around fifty percent for both measles and polio.²⁶⁴ Both measles and hepatitis B outbreaks are common among displaced populations from Yemen and Syria.²⁶⁵

At the beginning of the conflict, there were reports sent from hospitals in Khartoum stating that they were receiving injured people with shortages of blood, fluids, and other life-saving commodities. Meanwhile, they had shortages of water, electricity, fuel, and food for patients. This was happening at the same time as the destruction of one million polio vaccines, cold chain facilities, and immunization program premises.²⁶⁶

Such damages have been expensive for aid agencies and other organizations that try to make up for it. For example, the World Food Program reported that in 2023 they lost nearly 13 to 14 million US dollars worth of supplies.²⁶⁷ There have also been challenges with making sure supplies and aid are reaching the intended recipients. Some countries have responded to these damages and conflict by sending emergency medical supplies that have arrived in Port Sudan. However, there is no solid evidence that shows that these supplies were delivered to health facilities in other states.²⁶⁸

Human resources for health are also being affected by this conflict. All universities and other academic institutions in Sudan were forced to shut down for the production of different healthcare cadres. Making sure that the deployment and distribution of the health workforce became a very difficult task. Doctors and other medical professionals have remained to their duty even under difficult conditions such as stress, supply shortages, and lack of safety. Commonly, they threaten their lives to save their patients. Not only is working in such an environment not sustainable in the long run, but it also causes mental strain and pressure for these healthcare professionals. It increases the risk of brain drain of these workers and might push them to seek better financial and professional opportunities elsewhere.²⁶⁹

Aside from physical diseases people are experiencing, they are also at an increased risk of chronic conditions and other non-communicable diseases. Chronic conditions are very important in conflict settings because of the general rise of non-communicable diseases in low-income areas. In middle-income countries, the spread of conflict has non-communicable diseases often being the leading cause of death.²⁷⁰ The collected evidence regarding the effects of armed conflict on these

260 Sefiu Olalekan Olaleye, "Sudan's maternal health needs urgent attention amid armed conflict," *The Lancet* 402, no. 10405 (September 2023): 848-849, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)01697-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01697-5).

261 Aderinto and Olatunji, "The consequences of Sudan's armed conflict on public health: a closer look at the devastating impact."

262 Eran Bendavid, "The effects of armed conflict on the health of women and children," *The Lancet* 397, no. 10273 (February 2021): 522-532, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)00131-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)00131-8).

263 Aderinto and Olatunji, "The consequences of Sudan's armed conflict on public health: a closer look at the devastating impact."

264 "Sudan Reported cases of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs)," World Health Organization, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://immunizationdata.who.int/dashboard/regions/eastern-mediterranean-region/SDN>.

265 Bendavid, "The effects of armed conflict on the health of women and children."

266 Khogali and Homeida, "Impact of the 2023 armed conflict on Sudan's healthcare system."

267 Khogali and Homeida, "Impact of the 2023 armed conflict on Sudan's healthcare system."

268 Khogali and Homeida, "Impact of the 2023 armed conflict on Sudan's healthcare system."

269 Khogali and Homeida, "Impact of the 2023 armed conflict on Sudan's healthcare system."

270 Bendavid, "The effects of armed conflict on the health of women and children."



18-month old James and his mother Margaret, holding sachets on Ready to Use Therapeutic Food to help treat their acute malnutrition

Credit: UK Department for International Development

non-communicable diseases is limited, both in immediate and long-term effects. Looking at it in theory, it is possible to have unpredictable effects on major behavioral risk factors for non-communicable diseases. It can lead to increased or decreased tobacco use, alcohol consumption, poor diet, and lack of physical exercise. There are also events surrounding armed conflict in the economic, social, logistical, and mental health aspects. These might lead to stressors such as cancer, respiratory diseases, or risk factors such as hypertension. Poor access to continuous health care in these conflict settings can result in disruption to cardiovascular and cerebrovascular conditions, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, cancers, and other non-communicable diseases.²⁷¹

Kidney dialysis patients have been severely affected by these damages. Despite volunteers and aid workers trying to keep the healthcare system operating, kidney dialysis patients are dying and dead bodies are being left to decompose in a morgue and even in city streets. More than sixty hospitals in conflict zones have been put out of service, and the remaining twenty-nine are being threatened by closure caused by power and water shortages and shortages of staff. Dr. Mohammed Wahbi, who manages one of Sudan's largest children's hospitals, said that

²⁷¹ Bendavid, "The effects of armed conflict on the health of women and children."

²⁷² "Sudan's War Takes Deadly Toll on Dialysis Patients," Reuters, Voice of America, last modified June 14, 2023. <https://www.voanews.com/a/sudan-s-war-takes-deadly-toll-on-dialysis-patients/7137560.html>.

²⁷³ Reuters, "Sudan's War Takes Deadly Toll on Dialysis Patients."

²⁷⁴ Reuters, "Sudan's War Takes Deadly Toll on Dialysis Patients."

it normally receives up to 300 patients a day.²⁷² But once the war broke out, this completely changed. Recalling, Dr. Wahbi said that Rapid Support Forces would station their vehicles in front of the hospital. Soldiers would then enter the building, and make the facility unsafe for patients. As a result of this, many people stayed away except those who were desperate for dialysis treatment. The international community has spoken about this, showing that violations were made against the Geneva Convention saying that hospitals and other medical areas should be respected and kept safe during these attacks. Other organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International called for accountability in the situation and urged all the involved parties to hold neutrality. However as supplies started to decrease, the hospital stopped providing treatment to these patients. In El-Obeid, southwest of Khartoum, a power outage in 2023 that lasted more than two weeks put a kidney dialysis unit at risk of shutting down.²⁷³ This led to the deaths of twelve patients. According to the International Society of Nephrology, an estimated 8,000 people in Sudan depend on dialysis to survive.²⁷⁴ It is reported that roads that lead to the city are blocked, leading to food and medicine shortages. Some engineers have tried to reach a

power station to try and restore electricity but were assaulted before they could arrive.

Attacks being conducted on healthcare workers have unfortunately become a normal and familiar issue. The Shaheed Hospital in Khartoum North City was reportedly attacked by Rapid Support Forces soldiers on June 30, 2023.²⁷⁵ This attack resulted in the death of a laboratory specialist, the assault of patients, and the destruction of the hospital's laboratory. Additionally, four doctors and a pharmacist are said to have been killed as well. This is not the only event where this has happened. On July 3, 2023, in Khartoum state, a Rapid Support Force soldier is said to have killed a second-year student at the Hayat University's Faculty of Medical Laboratories. Then, on the next day itself, in Omdurman City in Khartoum state, a Health Ministry employee was fatally shot inside the Saudi Maternity Hospital.²⁷⁶ This led to the closing of the hospital and the staffers having to seek a safer location to continue working and provide their services. On September 6, 2023, three doctors and five other people were detained at a Rapid Support Forces base in the Jebel Aulia village while they were on their way to volunteer at Ban Jadeed Hospital in Khartoum.²⁷⁷ This hospital was the only operational hospital in the whole East Nile suburb area. Then, just a week later, on September 13, 2023, a hospital director was reportedly abducted by the Rapid Support Forces in Al Azhari from a hospital building and was later released on an unspecified date. Looking at events like this raises serious concerns about the safety of these medical staff. Encountering such situations causes the remaining medical staff to be too afraid to go to work due to safety concerns, be overworked, or be struggling without a lack of medical supplies and specialized professionals.²⁷⁸ Looking at data from the World Health Organization about Universal Health Coverage, it can be seen that during the period from 2000 to 2021, the coverage

in Sudan has increased from 19/100 in 2000 to 44/100 in 2021.²⁷⁹ Although this increase is good, it is still relatively low compared to being 57/100 in the Eastern Mediterranean and 68/100 throughout the world in 2021.²⁸⁰

A factory in Khartoum which has been producing therapeutic food for children suffering from malnutrition, has been burnt down.²⁸¹ Therapeutic food is food that is specially formulated to treat and manage severe malnutrition and comes in forms such as pastes or other formulas. It contains high calories and nutrients, it is ready to use, and it has a long shelf life. The fire destroyed about 14,500 cartons of Ready to Use Therapeutic Food, which was set to be transported to locations of need.²⁸² The factory was used to treat sixty percent of the Ready to Use Therapeutic Food which was used to treat children with severe acute malnutrition in Sudan in 2022.²⁸³ The fire resulted in the destruction of the machinery in the factory, causing the entire production line to be fully stopped. As a result of this, the timely delivery of nutrition supplies to thousands of children is going to be negatively affected. In response to the severe malnutrition crisis, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund has 34,000 cartons of Ready Therapeutic Food coming in a shipment from France, with an additional 81,000 cartons coming afterward.²⁸⁴ These quick actions taken as a response to the constantly changing crisis, shows how organizations are doing their best to get children closer to receiving treatment. It is imperative that children, and their families, have access to basic humanitarian needs and are no longer in a constant vulnerable state.

The impact of armed conflicts on mental health and the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence are both significant concerns. In Sudan, both direct and indirect effects of conflict can have severe and long-lasting impacts on mental health and sexual violence.²⁸⁵ The direct impacts could include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Additionally,

275 Badri and Dawood, "The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy."

276 Badri and Dawood, "The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy."

277 Badri and Dawood, "The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy."

278 Badri and Dawood, "The implications of the Sudan war on healthcare workers and facilities: a health system tragedy."

279 "UHC service coverage index," World Health Organization, January 8, 2024, <https://data.who.int/indicators/i/3805B1E/9A706FD>.

280 World Health Organization, "UHC service coverage index"

281 "Another Bitter Blow for Children in Sudan," United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, press release, May 12, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/another-bitter-blow-children-sudan-1>.

282 United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, "Another Bitter Blow for Children in Sudan."

283 United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, "Another Bitter Blow for Children in Sudan."

284 United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, "Another Bitter Blow for Children in Sudan."

285 Aderinto and Olatunji, "The consequences of Sudan's armed conflict on public health: a closer look at the devastating impact."

the trauma of witnessing or experiencing violence, injury, or death can have long-term effects on the individual. Indirect impacts could include forced displacement, loss of homes and livelihoods, and breakdown of social networks. By no longer having a developed social circle and safe environment, individuals can begin to experience isolation, depression, and anxiety.²⁸⁶ These feelings can persist for many years even after the conflict has ended, which shows the urgent need for mental health services and community-based support. The conflict also poses a big risk of conflict-related sexual violence including sexual assault, rape, forced marriage, and prostitution.²⁸⁷ Both women and girls are vulnerable to sexual violence in these armed conflict areas and are at risk of having severe medical, psychological, and social repercussions. Survivors of sexual violence may not only suffer from physical injuries, but also sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and long-lasting psychological injuries.²⁸⁸ Social consequences around this may include stigma, ostracism, and the breaking of social relationships. The impacts of sexual violence can easily extend beyond the individual survivors themselves and can impact their families, communities, and even future generations. Besides the conflict, there are some other barriers to accessing mental health services such as stigma and cultural norms, lack of infrastructure and resources, limited trained personnel, and economic constraints. Some international campaigns are being run to help fix this issue such as by the World Health Organization called Mental Health Gap Action Program. Additionally, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund has helped through their Mental Health in Emergency campaign. Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Global Mental Health Action Network have also been involved.

Fertility in conflict settings might decrease due to many factors such as demographic changes and biological effects. Additionally, having reduced access to modern contraceptives while having increased violence might increase unintended

pregnancies without having many options.²⁸⁹ The prevalence of unwanted pregnancies is significantly increased due to lack of access to health facilities and the inability to receive the rape protocol within the designated time frame of seventy-two hours.²⁹⁰ Although there are hospitals in Khartoum State that do have the proper equipment to provide this rape protocol to patients, the protocol is not being put to use because the majority of these hospitals are under the control of armed groups. It is these armed groups that are the primary perpetrators of sexual violence in this war. Now survivors in the hospitals are at risk of facing retaliation or even being raped again while seeking care, which greatly limits their ability to seek necessary medical attention. According to information by the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, there have been seven documented cases of suicide resulting from unwanted pregnancy in Khartoum, Al-Gezira, and Sennar.²⁹¹ This highlights the severe risks associated with unwanted pregnancies and the lack of necessary psychological and medical support. Rape and unwanted pregnancies have a devastating impact on both the survivor and the child. These experiences can lead to major life decisions such as choosing to have an abortion, keeping the child, or giving up the child for adoption. Unfortunately, most of the institutions that take in these children in Sudan often don't have the necessary funding or are unable to provide care. If a survivor of sexual violence does decide to raise a child, they might face various risks. Both the mother and the child could be exposed to social issues such as harassment and intimidation from their community as well as suffering from social stigma and lack of acceptance.²⁹² Too many times, survivors of sexual violence are the ones who are blamed, crimes are denied, and the survivor's situation is neglected within Sudan's complex social, legal, and political systems.²⁹³

Studies have shown a decrease in fertility during the active phase of conflict, such as seen in Angola, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. Common reasons for these fertility decreases were the

286 Aderinto and Olatunji, "The consequences of Sudan's armed conflict on public health: a closer look at the devastating impact."

287 Aderinto and Olatunji, "The consequences of Sudan's armed conflict on public health: a closer look at the devastating impact."

288 Aderinto and Olatunji, "The consequences of Sudan's armed conflict on public health: a closer look at the devastating impact."

289 Bendavid, "The effects of armed conflict on the health of women and children."

290 "The Aftermath of Rape: Unwanted Pregnancies and Abandoned Children," Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, April 25, 2024, <https://sihanet.org/the-aftermath-of-rape-unwanted-pregnancies-and-abandoned-children/>.

291 Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, "The Aftermath of Rape: Unwanted Pregnancies and Abandoned Children".

292 Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, "The Aftermath of Rape: Unwanted Pregnancies and Abandoned Children".

293 Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, "The Aftermath of Rape: Unwanted Pregnancies and Abandoned Children".

separation of spouses, reductions in marriages, lower fecundity, and an increased risk of spontaneous abortions.²⁹⁴ In virtually all of these settings, it can be seen that the decrease in fertility was usually temporary and a post-conflict rebound had occurred. By doing a systematic review of adolescent marriage and fertility patterns in conflict areas has shown both increases and decreases. There was an increase in adolescent marriages during the active conflict phase in Palestine, Syria, Nepal, and Tajikistan, whereas in areas such as Cambodia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Lebanon, these rates decreased. For example, according to data from the Jordanian Population and Health Surveys, the percentage of Syrian girls under the age of eighteen being married in Jordan increased from thirty-three percent in 2010 to forty-four percent in 2015. This emphasizes the need for modern family planning and resources to be implemented in high-conflict areas to protect these individuals. Such fertility patterns are also seen in Sudan as a result of the separation of families, reductions in marriages, or an increased risk of spontaneous abortions. In some areas of Sudan, the opposite might be happening, such as with child marriages, since some families might believe that it will help save their daughter by not being unwed during a time of conflict, although there is no guarantee of its benefit.

Those who have passed away are often unable to be buried properly. In the outskirts of Omdurman, there was a local morgue that was unable to keep its refrigeration system working, which led to 450 bodies decomposing, and blood seeping onto the floor.²⁹⁵ The Sudanese army has accused the Rapid Support Forces of forcibly evacuating and taking over key hospitals. The condition has now come to a point where no death certificates can be issued. The dead are unable to be buried away as a result of the constant fight in the area.²⁹⁶ Moussa Ibrahim, a logistics supervisor in El Geneina for medical aid group Médecins Sans Frontières, supported the operations of the hospital. But as a result of the fighting in

the city, it had become very dangerous to fetch necessities or retrieve dead bodies from the streets.²⁹⁷ Later, access was finally gained, but by this point, the bodies had already started to decompose to the point where they could no longer be removed. Ibrahim spoke on this matter and said in a statement that the best thing that can be done is to solely gather all the bodies in a single location.²⁹⁸ It is crucial to understand the extent to which the conflict has been escalated. It has gotten to the point where those who are deceased are unable to receive the proper burial process they deserve. This process shows how basic human rights and respect are not being given, which is a non-negotiable requirement of change.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all of the member states of the United Nations agreed to adopt the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.²⁹⁹ They are developed and set in place as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all people. These goals in the Sustainable Development Agenda focus on the challenges faced all over the world such as those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, peace, and justice.³⁰⁰ These goals are all interconnected with each other, and all issues must be treated with urgency and respect. It is important to remember that this can only be achieved with collaboration and contribution from all member states.

Looking at the conflict in Darfur and in Sudan as a whole, it can be seen that it is inconsistent with the second Sustainable Development Goal, which is about working towards having zero hunger.³⁰¹ The global issue of hunger and food insecurity has been shown to have increased since 2015, which is most likely a result of many factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict, climate change, and other deepening inequalities. By 2022, it is said that about 735 million people, which is about 9.2 percent of the world's population, will

294 Bendavid, "The effects of armed conflict on the health of women and children."

295 Reuters, "Sudan's War Takes Deadly Toll on Dialysis Patients."

296 Reuters, "Sudan's War Takes Deadly Toll on Dialysis Patients."

297 Reuters, "Sudan's War Takes Deadly Toll on Dialysis Patients."

298 Reuters, "Sudan's War Takes Deadly Toll on Dialysis Patients."

299 "The Sustainable Development Agenda," Sustainable Development Goals, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>.

300 Sustainable Development Goals, "The Sustainable Development Agenda."

301 "Goal 2: Zero Hunger," Sustainable Development Goals, accessed August 3, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>.

be in a state of chronic hunger.³⁰² Specifically in Darfur, in 2021, more than 6.2 million people lacked secure access to food.³⁰³ Malnutrition is also a significant challenge with more than fourteen percent of the population suffering from acute malnutrition.³⁰⁴ Considering this issue, we can see that it is inconsistent with target 2.1 since it does not tackle the issue of ending hunger, especially for those who are poor and in vulnerable situations.³⁰⁵ Extreme hunger and malnutrition create a barrier to sustainable development since it creates a tight trap that many people are not able to escape from easily. Most times, the reason for them to enter that stage of food insecurity is not within their control but is often a result of outside influences. The world is back at a hunger level that has not been seen since 2005, and most food prices remain higher in countries than from 2015 to 2019.³⁰⁶ This shows the inconsistency with target 2.2 which aims to reduce all forms of malnutrition, especially for children, women, girls, and the elderly.³⁰⁷ Along with the conflict, there are also climate shocks such as sudden droughts, monsoons, or hurricanes. These drastic climate differences in Sudan create an unstable environment for farming. It becomes challenging in terms of having water to grow crops or to prevent damage from severe heat. This issue also shows the inconsistency with target 2.4, which states that help will be given to maintain ecosystems and strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change events.³⁰⁸ Additionally, there is civil insecurity and declining food production that have all played their part in contributing to food scarcity and high food prices. Working towards having a zero-hunger world will not only better the lives of those who are facing starvation and insecurity, but it can also have impacts that extend beyond those communities. Having a

world with zero hunger will positively change our economies, health, education, equality, and social development.³⁰⁹ Plans of action to work towards this require social protection and transforming food systems. It is only through helping people have proper necessities in such conflict areas, will progress towards fulfilling these global sustainable development goals be made.

Additionally, the conflict has also affected the achievement of the sixteenth SDG: Peace, justice, and strong institutions. This goal looks to provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.³¹⁰ Looking at this conflict, there is clear usage of extreme violence and war, showing that the aspect of having a peaceful society is broken.³¹¹ People everywhere have the right to be free from experiencing violence and have a sense of safety in their regular lives, regardless of their ethnicity, faith, or sexual orientation. However, as a result of ongoing and new violent conflicts around the world, the path and progress being made towards fulfilling goal sixteen is not being met at all. More specifically, target 16.1 is not met as it aims to reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere.³¹² 2021 was the year of the highest number of intentional homicides that has ever been seen in the past two decades. In 2022, the world witnessed more than a fifty percent increase in conflict-related civilian deaths, and the number is continuing to grow every day.³¹³ As of the end of 2022, about 108.4 million people around the world were forcibly displaced, which is an increase of 19 million from the end of 2021.³¹⁴ Such high levels of armed violence and insecurity have greatly destructive impacts on a country's development and it is the responsibility of the

302 Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 2: Zero Hunger."

303 Nobel Peace Center, "Hunger in the Darfur conflict."

304 Nobel Peace Center, "Hunger in the Darfur conflict."

305 "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed August 14, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2#targets_and_indicators.

306 Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 2: Zero Hunger."

307 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture."

308 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture."

309 Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 2: Zero Hunger."

310 "Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies," Sustainable Development Goals, accessed August 3, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

311 Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies."

312 "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed August 14, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16#targets_and_indicators.

313 Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies."

314 Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies."

government to protect those who are being affected, with the aid of other member states if necessary. This is also showing an inconsistency with target 16.4 since the flow of arms is still happening and organized crime is not yet combatted.³¹⁵ The rule of law must be strengthened while adhering to basic human rights need to be promoted to create a safe community. In the aspect of the conflict in Darfur and Sudan, millions of people have been killed over the years since the beginning of the conflict. Countless civilians were forced to flee their homes and communities and rush to seek shelter elsewhere to protect their lives. Even in internally displaced people camps and refugee camps, people are still not entirely safe, as they are still experiencing violence and abuse. Governments and institutions that do not adhere to their laws are prone to abuses of power and influence and become less and less capable of taking care of their people. It is only by stopping this war and allowing civilians to return to their regular lives, that will progress be made in achieving this goal.

Bloc Analysis

Points of Division

Although the human rights crisis and war are occurring specifically in Darfur and Sudan, the situation has effects ranging far from this specific region. For example, neighboring countries such as Chad have been hosting most of the refugees that have come from Sudan seeking shelter. Human rights laws have been violated with the continuation of the conflict and with the lives of countless innocent people. With the killings of many people and their quality of life being drastically changed, it is the responsibility of every country to offer whatever aid, support, and assistance they can. They should not ignore it or push it to the side because it might not directly affect them. Many countries fall into different categories as to how much they have been involved and affected by the Darfur conflict. Each country has its policies, laws, and opinions on

what is happening in Darfur, who to hold responsible, and who to help.

Every country has its own choices on how much to be involved in the conflict. In regards to this, each country can generally be divided into three separate blocs. The first bloc is for countries that have offered direct assistance and support to Darfur. The countries that fall under this category are countries that have supported Darfur and Sudan in general throughout their time in war. This kind of support ranges from sending troops for military assistance and growth, sending food packages, or hosting refugees in their country.³¹⁶ The second bloc is for countries who have not offered direct help to help alleviate the situation but might have been involved on a much broader scale. These are countries that have voiced their support for the situation and may have given mild to moderate humanitarian aid, which could include helping their country's citizens.³¹⁷ In other words, these countries could have expressed their feelings on the conflict and may have helped out in a small manner. And lastly, the third bloc is for countries that remain neutral or distant from the situation. These are countries that have not disclosed any information about how they feel. They might have complicated relations such as with arms or trade, or could have chosen to stay neutral.³¹⁸ Delegates should research their country's stance and previous actions to determine which of the three blocs their country would fall under.

Countries that Offered Direct Support

The countries that fall in this bloc are those that have directly offered their support to Darfur in the conflict. They could have given support by sending troops to help with military assistance, sending food and clean water to help out in the hunger crisis, or hosting refugees who have fled the country. Some examples of countries that fall into this bloc are Chad and the Central African Republic.

For example, throughout the entire conflict, Chad has supported Sudan and its people. They have sent military troops

³¹⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

³¹⁶ European Commission, "2 decades on, new atrocities in Darfur trigger a mass influx of refugees into Chad."

³¹⁷ "UK response to unrest in Sudan," UK Parliament - House of Commons Library, May 12, 2023, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9778/>.

³¹⁸ "China-Sudan Trade Relations Complicate Darfur Crisis," PBS News, April 25, 2006, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/politics-jan-june06-china-darfur_04-25.

and gave shelter to hundreds of thousands of refugees.³¹⁹ Even though the drastic influence of these large amounts of people has caused inconvenience and trouble to Chad, they have continued to help and offered their support to Sudan. Chad's president, President Déby closed the border with Sudan the day the conflict broke out but still allowed for refugees to come and enter. Although he adopted a neutral stance on who was the one to blame in the conflict, he collaborated with France to send troops to the East to help the national army with logistics in 2008.³²⁰ Even though Chad is not directly involved in Sudan's conflict, their action shows that they support Sudan and the crisis they are going through.

Another country that has helped Sudan during its time of crisis is the Central African Republic. Since the escalation of the conflict in April 2023, the Central African Republic has received 28,158 refugees.³²¹ NGOs, United Nations agencies, and other international organizations have distributed food in the area, provided essential household items, ensured clean water, built emergency shelters and latrines, and provided health care, and education.³²² This shows how they are aiding in the Sudanese crisis by hosting refugees and giving them the proper necessities and support they need.

Both Chad's and the Central African Republic's governments play a role in these conflicts. The Chadian government supports the Darfur rebel groups and allows them to operate from their bases within Chad. A lieutenant told Human Rights Watch that there is technically no formal agreement, but there is a strong bond established between them and the Chadian government. This relationship is so that if Chad is attacked, they are obligated to respond.³²³ On the other hand, the Central African Republic has no direct reports linking its government to conflicts outside of its borders.³²⁴ They do not influence what political and governmental matters occur in Sudan. Some other countries that have been either directly

or indirectly involved in the conflict are Libya, Eritrea, and South Sudan.

Countries that Voiced Opinions but Did Not Offer Major Support

Countries that fall into this bloc of those who have voiced their opinions but did not offer major support to the crisis are those like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. In these countries, the political leaders of these countries have come forth and expressed their opinions about the ongoing crisis. Some have called for sanctions in Sudan, while others have sent humanitarian aid or military troops to help. Sanctions are policies that restrict the freedom that a state has, that was a result of a decision by several states.

The United States has called for the end of sanctions, but it did not have as much benefit as they might have hoped for. When they originally removed sanctions in 2007, Sudan's government was very ecstatic with their new freedom and capabilities.³²⁵ However, instead of regaining its footing, the economy has further fallen off, with inflation continuing to rise each day. The sanctions that were removed stopped any transactions that were occurring using US currency or products. For years, international banks would not operate in Sudan, but now with these lifted regulations, many claim that the Sudanese government had used the sanctions to mask its responsibility for the deteriorating living standards.³²⁶ Overall, the effect and contribution done by the United States was to lift a sanction that was previously imposed on Sudan.

Another example of a country in this bloc is the United Kingdom. The UK has released a research briefing discussing its response to the unrest in Sudan. Their response has been two-fold, one to support any British nationals in Sudan, and to also pursue diplomatic efforts to end the fighting and enable more humanitarian support.³²⁷ The United Kingdom

319 Picco, "The Fallout in Chad from the Fighting in Darfur."

320 Picco, "The Fallout in Chad from the Fighting in Darfur."

321 "Central African Republic - Impact of Sudan Crisis in the Central African Republic," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, July 22, 2024, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/car/card/1tO5tUt0QK/>.

322 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Central African Republic - Impact of Sudan Crisis in the Central African Republic."

323 Council on Foreign Relations, "Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic."

324 Council on Foreign Relations, "Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic."

325 "Why the end of US sanctions hasn't helped Sudan," BBC, July 10, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44711355>.

326 BBC, "Why the end of US sanctions hasn't helped Sudan."

327 UK Parliament - House of Commons Library, "UK response to unrest in Sudan."

is calling for the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to establish a ceasefire to de-escalate tensions, allow access to humanitarian aid to help those in need, comply with international humanitarian law, and ensure the protection of the people.³²⁸ They are calling for change and supporting the diplomatic efforts being done by the African Union, the United Nations, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. The United Kingdom has given 5 million pounds in aid to meet the urgent needs of those who are fleeing the violence. Combined with the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, the United Kingdom has contributed more than 250 million pounds in humanitarian aid from 2018 to 2023.³²⁹ This is different from countries that fall into the first bloc since these countries are not necessarily supporting refugees from Sudan, but are still helping out by sending money and other aid.

Another country that falls in this bloc is Germany, which strongly condemns the ongoing fighting in Sudan.³³⁰ Germany's foreign minister Annalena Baerbock has called for more pressure to be applied to both sides to find a negotiated solution. She has stated that pressures through sanctions must be applied to hold them accountable for the crimes conducted against the civilian population and by influencing their supporters abroad.³³¹ Baerbock will call on neighboring countries from the regional Intergovernmental Authority and the African Union to play an important role. She also highlighted Germany's role and involvement by saying that they are the second-biggest provider of humanitarian aid to Sudan. In April 2023, several Western countries, such as Germany, launched operations to evacuate their citizens from Sudan during a shaky cease-fire, and the German air force had flown out 600 people.³³² This shows how Germany has voiced their opinions about the conflict and has supported their people during the conflict.

Neutral Countries or Against the Conflict

Countries that fall into this bloc are those who have remained neutral or against the conflict. They may or may not offer any direct or indirect aid to help Sudan's crisis. Such countries that go into this category are China and Russia. China has been a key player in Sudan for many years, particularly in the oil sector as they are a major investor in Sudan's oil infrastructure. Even today, Sudan is very important to China due to their influx of natural resources, which are very important for China's energy needs and consumption. These economic ties between the countries have helped both but have also caused China to take a step back and remain cautious in this conflict. Similarly, Russia has also maintained relations with Sudan in its arms trade and military cooperation. Russia has been a supplier for many years and has helped Sudan sustain their military relations. Russia has shown interest in Sudan's gold reserves and other natural resources, however, it is now causing more indirect or inconsistent support for the conflict.

China and Sudan previously had trade relations that have now further complicated the Darfur crisis. In the past, such as in 2004, China has blocked attempts made by the Security Council to place sanctions on Khartoum and members of Sudan's government who have been involved in the atrocities that have occurred. They have refused to speak against the government's role in the massive killings, while the Sudanese government has denied involvement in the fighting. China has significant interests in Sudan as they have invested about USD 10 million in Sudan since the 1960s, in return to match China's thirst for oil ownership.³³³ Now China is in a particular situation where they do not want to lose Sudan's capital since it would mean a loss of their oil supply, but at the same time they are uneasy with Khartoum's policy on Darfur.³³⁴ Some evidence such as eyewitness accounts and media reports recall that China has previously supplied Sudan's forces with arms in the past to use in their conflict.³³⁵ China must take part

328 UK Parliament - House of Commons Library, "UK response to unrest in Sudan."

329 UK Parliament - House of Commons Library, "UK response to unrest in Sudan."

330 "Sudan: German foreign minister demands solution to conflict," DW, January 24, 2024, <https://www.dw.com/en/sudan-german-foreign-minister-demands-solution-to-conflict/a-68071988>.

331 DW, "Sudan: German foreign minister demands solution to conflict."

332 DW, "Sudan: German foreign minister demands solution to conflict."

333 PBS News, "China-Sudan Trade Relations Complicate Darfur Crisis."

334 PBS News, "China-Sudan Trade Relations Complicate Darfur Crisis."

335 PBS News, "China-Sudan Trade Relations Complicate Darfur Crisis."

in larger negotiations and properly use its economic and diplomatic heft to influence Khartoum and try to mediate the conflict.

Another country in this bloc is Russia which has had an eye on securing a port on Sudan's Red Sea coast for many years.³³⁶ They are interested in this area because influencing a port in this area would mean a lot for Russia due to the high trading of as much as ten percent of the world's oil and eight percent of its liquified natural gas passes through this point.³³⁷ Considering the extent and severity of the conflict, it is said that Russia is just trying to stand away. But now, due to the conflict, they want one side to prevail and then maintain power throughout. However, if a democratic government takes hold, then Russia's influence will quickly disappear. Hence, Russia does not want the government to change, even though it could mean further destabilizing for Sudan.

Committee Mission

The United Nations Human Rights Council is primarily responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights within the international community.³³⁸ Its 47 Member States discuss the fundamental freedoms that every person should have. Therefore, it provides a forum to address human rights violations and country situations. Members of the Council include non-member States, inter-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, and non-governmental organizations.³³⁹ Meeting in the United Nations Office in Geneva, the Council holds no fewer than three regular sessions in a year, for a total of about ten weeks. The Council adopts resolutions or decisions that are made during regular sessions that showcase the will of the international community on specific human rights issues or situations.³⁴⁰

By doing so, a strong political signal is sent, which motivates governments to take appropriate action. Even though the United Nations Human Rights Council is technically not able to enforce policies or sanctions for countries, it is extremely relevant. UNHRC is one of the most powerful bodies in the United Nations due to global visibility, moral authority, monitoring, and engagement with civil society. The Council's tasks are to maintain laws that are set in place, along with policies and practices that enhance them.³⁴¹ They withdraw or amend measures that are destructive to rights and take appropriate action when a State has failed to promote or protect such rights.³⁴²

The discussion of the human rights crisis happening in Darfur and Sudan should revolve around proposing and implementing long-term solutions for the issue. Considering that the conflict has been ongoing on and off for the past two decades, permanent or very long-term solutions must be enforced. The situation must be understood from all perspectives of those who are involved, such as the government, militia, armed groups, and most importantly the civilians who have experienced and are dealing with the effects. The United Nations Human Rights Council must focus on ensuring that no further discrimination is being imposed on the people of Darfur and that all of their rights are being protected. Solutions to this issue must also focus on how to promote and protect human rights worldwide and what actions can be taken to ensure no future conflicts like this arise again.

The Resolution 31/20 in 2016 gave powers to investigate all aspects of crime and violence carried out on civilians with the view to end impunity and provide accountability.³⁴³ Therefore, the Commission on Human Rights in Sudan was created. This mandate specifically covers monitoring and

336 Mike Eckel, "Sudan Slips Into Chaos. Russia Lurks In The Background," RadioLiberty, April 18, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/sudan-civil-war-russia-wagner/32369273.html>.

337 Eckel, "Sudan Slips Into Chaos. Russia Lurks In The Background."

338 United Nations Human Rights Council, "Welcome to the Human Rights Council."

339 United Nations Human Rights Council, "Welcome to the Human Rights Council."

340 United Nations Human Rights Council, "Welcome to the Human Rights Council."

341 "Introduction to the Committee - Human Rights Committee," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/ccpr/introduction-committee>.

342 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Introduction to the Committee - Human Rights Committee."

343 "Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan," United Nations Human Rights Council, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/co-h-south-sudan/index>.

reporting on the situation of human rights in South Sudan, and making improvements to prevent further deterioration.³⁴⁴ Furthermore, it is aimed to determine, report, and collect evidence of human rights violations and abuses and provide appropriate recommendations on how to resolve them and build fundamental freedoms. Such mandates allow for more detailed and close monitoring and investigations of the crisis to occur and allow for a clearer understanding of what is truly happening.

It is the responsibility of the United Nations Human Rights Council to analyze and understand all aspects of the conflict such as how and why it first started, why it has continued to occur for so long, and how to stop it from prolonging. While the Council cannot force any changes to be made for this crisis, it can help create and show the importance of protecting human rights in all of the recommendations it puts forth. It is non-negotiable that every person deserves to be treated with respect and have protection of their basic human rights.

³⁴⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council, “Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.”



UNHRC

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TOPIC B: ADDRESSING THE HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN THE DRC

Photo Credit: MONUSCO Photos

Introduction

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is home to almost 100 million people. It is characterized by a vast number of natural resources. This includes the second-largest rainforest in the world, biodiversity, and minerals like copper and cobalt.¹ Due to these vast resources, the country's history is marked by violence and territorial disputes. The situation in the DRC, especially in the eastern region, has reached an urgent shape since 2023. As a result, the country entered one of the world's worst crises.²

Currently, many people are facing issues such as poverty, hunger, being forced to leave their homes and violence. In 2023, President Tshisekedi was elected once more and promised to help protect the rights of the people in Congo. He had made similar promises before, but not much has changed since then.³ Violence has been getting worse because of ongoing fights and the rise of more rebel groups. The president, with help from other countries, needs to act quickly. He must protect people in danger, make sure those who commit serious crimes are held accountable, manage the country's resources well to improve living conditions and find real solutions to improve life for the people in Congo.

The problems with the DRC's government and political system, such as instability and distrust, mainly come from its history of colonization and wars. The harsh rule by Belgium left the country with struggles of identity and governance.⁴ This chaotic political scene allowed over 120 armed groups to be formed. Some of which are more prevalent. These groups cause destruction and suffering for the people in the DRC, especially vulnerable groups such as women and children.⁵ Women have faced significant rates of gender-based violence (GBV), while children have suffered from abductions and forced participation in militias.⁶

The need to discuss ways to help the DRC is getting more urgent because of ongoing international efforts, including a United Nations peacekeeping mission. Many people have been forced to leave their homes in areas like North and South Kivu due to fights between armed groups. Yet, aiding organizations find it hard to reach these people because they can not easily get to the areas where help is needed.⁷ This is due to ongoing violence and damaged roads. This makes it tough for displaced people to get food, education, and healthcare. According to the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, most human rights violations in 2021 happened in places where armed groups were active, especially in North Kivu and Ituri. The constant fighting is a major reason for these human rights abuses and makes it hard to protect people in the DRC.⁸

Despite being one of the worst crises at present, the situation in the DRC is neglected by a large portion of the international world. This is not only because this crisis remains mostly unreported to the world community, but also because initiatives are greatly underfunded. Indeed, several measures have been implemented in the country to mitigate the harm being done to civilians. Yet, they haven't been effective due to the advances of rebel groups and the lack of funding and instruments put in place for their functioning. Meanwhile, issues such as the spread of diseases and overcrowding in

1 "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview," World Bank, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>.

2 "Democratic Republic of the Congo," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/democratic-republic-congo>.

3 "DRC: President Tshisekedi must use second term to tackle human rights crisis," Amnesty International, June 24, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/06/drc-president-tshisekedi-must-use-second-term-to-tackle-human-rights-crisis/>.

4 Lebesse, Priscilla, "The Impact of the Belgian Colonization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," Honors Theses, (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2023).

5 Shola Lawal, "A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo," Al Jazeera, last modified February 21, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo>.

6 World Bank, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview."

7 "DRC: Alarming increase in trafficking for sexual exploitation, say experts," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, July 04, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/drc-alarming-increase-trafficking-sexual-exploitation-say-experts>.

8 "48th session of the Human Rights Council Enhanced Interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, October 05, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/10/48th-session-human-rights-council-enhanced-interactive-dialogue-situation-human>.

displaced people's camps continue to develop as a consequence of armed conflicts and take the lives of the population.

It is of utmost urgency that those responsible for protecting human rights fight for them in a country facing so many violations and a multi-sided crisis. These issues can not be targeted on a surface scale, long-term solutions must be applied. The promotion of existing initiatives is also of value in tackling this complex case. More than anything, as violence has risen in the last years, effective measures must be created in a context of collaboration, so that the Congolese population finally has the peace they deserve.

History and Description of the Issue

History of Political Instability

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is the largest country in Sub-Saharan Africa. The region houses a vast number of resources. Yet, it is facing one of the most worrying humanitarian crises in the world.⁹ It is vital to analyze the country's past to understand the current situation. Thus, realizing the consequences that came from a long and violent history of colonization and disputes.

The colonization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was one of the most brutal periods in the world. It is characterized by the looting of resources, countless human rights abuses, arbitrary killings, and repression.¹⁰ In its entirety, this period took place between the years of 1885 and 1960. However, it can be separated into two different phases of colonization. Firstly, by King Leopold II between 1885 and 1908. Secondly, by the Belgium State itself, from 1908 to 1960, when the African country finally got its independence.¹¹ King Leopold's domination began in 1884 when he coerced Congolese kings into relinquishing their lands for him. King Leopold II named

the DRC the "Congo Free State" and began to explore its territory and people, to increase his wealth. Through forced labor and torture, the King obligated the Congolese population to meet his extraction quotas. He focused on rubber and ivory since they resulted in a vast number of gains and generated wealth for the king. Leopold II and his forces applied massive violence, resulting in more than 10 million Congolese people dead. Some scholars argued that this number amounted to more than half of the Congolese population.¹²

During the 90s, different scholars and journalists traveled to the DRC and wrote about their experiences and the atrocities they saw in the country. They exposed this situation that had been, so far, kept under secrecy. As a result of this new rise of knowledge, the Congo Reform Association (CRA) was constructed in 1904. CRA is one of the 20th century's first international human rights movements, which attempted to cause change in Congo.¹³ Due to international and internal pressure, Leopold II was finally forced to hand over power to the Belgian State. The State took over the colony, renaming it Belgian Congo.¹⁴ During the Belgian reign in Congo, spanning from 1908 to 1960, atrocities continued. Forced labor also continued, along with extreme racial segregation which banned Black people from engaging in politics.¹⁵ A great deal of the abuse that happened in the DRC during its colonization was not reported. Thus, much of the world is still ignorant of it.

During the 1940s, the first labor strikes happened, as citizens protested the unfair labor practices they were forced under by the Belgians. This amplified the fight for human rights. In 1959, anti-colonial riots in Kinshasa began. Calling for independence from Belgium, these protests continued throughout the year.¹⁶ In 1960, the people of the Belgian Congo achieved their independence from Belgian control, under the lead of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba.¹⁷ This independence began as an

⁹ World Bank, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview."

¹⁰ Shirambere Tunamsifu, "The Colonial Legacy and Transitional Justice in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," Accord, December 12, 2022, <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/the-colonial-legacy-and-transitional-justice-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

¹¹ Tunamsifu, "The Colonial Legacy and Transitional Justice in the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

¹² Priscilla, "The Impact of the Belgian Colonization in the Democratic Republic of Congo."

¹³ "DR Congo: Chronology," Human Rights Watch, August 21, 2009. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/08/21/dr-congo-chronology>

¹⁴ Tunamsifu, "The Colonial Legacy and Transitional Justice in the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

¹⁵ Lawal, "A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo."

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Chronology."

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Chronology."

image of hope and belief in new opportunities. Yet, during the next five years, there was discontent throughout the country with Lumumba's leadership. This led to revolts and the start of a political disorder that remains to this day. These protests were mostly supported by the Belgian regime since this would benefit their approach to rubber extraction in the DRC.

However, seven months after his election, there was a coup d'état led by Col. Joseph-Désiré Mobutu and supported by Belgium and the US. Lumumba was then overthrown and murdered, immersing the DRC in a brutal and complex crisis.¹⁸ Mobutu proclaimed himself the head of state and established a one-party system. He assumed the title of president and became a ruthless governor. Although he also defended the nationalist view and attempted to promote African values and culture, even changing the name of the DRC to "Zaire", his empire was to blame for political repression, human rights abuses, and corruption.¹⁹

From 1965 to 1997, Mobutu was the ruler of Zaire and got funding and help from Western countries. His rule was marked by great mistakes with the economy and corruption, favoring his allies. Mobutu and his close associates made money from Zaire's natural resources such as diamonds, copper, and cobalt.²⁰ He committed fraud and state funds were used for personal gain. Mobutu's rule came to an end in 1997, amid a violent context, the Rwandan genocide. The genocide happened between April and July 1994. During these 100 days, nearly one million ethnic Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed by Hutu radicals. The Rwandan genocide was a product of colonialism, just as the crisis that currently exists in the DRC.

It must be noted that Rwanda was also under the control of the Belgian government. Hence, both countries' stories have been

linked for a very long time. This dreadful incident revolves around two ethnic groups, the Tutsi and the Hutus. The Tutsi were an ethnic minority compared to their counterparts, the Hutus, who made up 85 percent of the population in Rwanda.²¹ During the colonialist period, the Tutsis were strongly favored by the Belgian state, excluding the Hutus from access to education or economic opportunities. With Rwanda's independence in 1962, the revolt that was raised by the Hutus against the Belgian State included the Tutsi elite as well, now associated with their colonial oppressors. This forced Tutsis to take refuge in neighboring countries, such as the DRC.²² As the country became independent, a Hutu government emerged but faced threats from Tutsi refugees who had organized in exile. The Uganda-based Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) aimed to seize power and return exiled refugees by attacking civilian and military targets in Rwanda. A civil war broke out between the RPF and the Rwandan government. The UN has estimated that 800,000 Rwandans were killed during the three-month genocide.²³

The everlasting effects that this had on the DRC come from the fact that it sparked the two Congo wars, impeding the country from finding peace. The first Congo war began after nearly two million moderate Hutu refugees crossed the Congolese border. The majority of Hutu took up residence in the camps in the provinces of North and South Kivu.²⁴ A small number of these Hutus were radicals who formed militias in Congo. With time, Tutsi militias gathered against Hutu groups and foreign countries began to take sides. Thus, Rwanda's new Tutsi-led government became involved in Zaire.²⁵ Rwanda fought the First Congo War against Zaire with the assistance of other African countries, such as Uganda, Angola, and Burundi. Thousands died, including former Hutu militants and members of armed organizations, as well as refugees

18 Isaac Chotiner, "The Real Story Behind Patrice Lumumba's Assassination," *The New Yorker*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/11/06/the-lumumba-plot-the-secret-history-of-the-cia-and-a-cold-war-assassination-stuart-a-reid-book-review>

19 Chotiner, "The Real Story Behind Patrice Lumumba's Assassination."

20 "Kleptocracy and Anti-Communism: When Mobutu Ruled Zaire," Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, accessed July 10, 2024. <https://adst.org/2016/09/kleptocracy-and-anti-communism-when-mobutu-ruled-zaire/>

21 "The Rwandan Genocide — The View from Ground Zero," Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, accessed July 10, 2024. <https://adst.org/2014/03/the-rwandan-genocide-the-view-from-ground-zero/>

22 Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, "The Rwandan Genocide — The View from Ground Zero."

23 "Numbers," Human Rights Watch, July 10, 2024 <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno1-3-04.htm>

24 "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Global Conflict Tracker, June 20, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>

25 Global Conflict Tracker, "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo."

and non-combatant Congolese in the eastern DRC.²⁶ The combination of Kabila and Kagame won the First Congo War in 1997.²⁷ Kabila was inaugurated as president of Zaire, and the country's name was restored to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Second Congo War started in 1998, shortly after the first one.²⁸ President Kabila wanted to show he was in charge and not controlled by Rwanda. He claimed that Rwanda did not win the first war for him. Kabila told Rwandan soldiers to leave Congo and removed Tutsi people from his government while promoting negative feelings towards them. This was to show he was independent from Rwanda.²⁹ In 1998, soldiers from Rwanda and Uganda invaded Congo to help rebels who wanted to overthrow Kabila. Still, Kabila got support from Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Angola, which helped push the Rwandan and Ugandan forces away from the capital, Kinshasa. Even though they lost, these countries and the rebels still controlled a lot of eastern Congo. The fighting continued as a Rwandan militia, the Army for the Liberation of Rwanda, joined Kabila's side.³⁰

After a year of violence involving several African countries and groups, in 1999, the DRC, Uganda, and Rwanda signed a set of ceasefires. Firstly, the Lusaka Agreement, and in 2002 the Luanda Agreement. These accords were meant to put a complete stop to all military or combat actions. However, they had limited success, prompting the United Nations Security Council to establish the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO). Thus, the UN sent troops to track and guarantee the peace process.³¹ Yet, fighting has persisted in many areas, mainly those rich in minerals and disputed resources. In fact, over the last 20 years, other disputes have arisen in states on the Congo-Rwanda border. For instance, the Ituri, mostly fought by ethnic and militant groups with pretenses that date back to the Congo

Wars. In addition, the world's reliance on cobalt, copper, zinc, and other minerals has grown. As a result, local and foreign institutions are more motivated to interfere in the Congolese war.³²

There are lasting impacts that came from the Belgian colonization and the actions of Western countries who sought to seize portions of Congo for their gains. These impacts are seen beyond the military area. The DRC's economic and social crisis also resulted from the system that was applied during the colonial period. Hence, despite the DRC's ample natural riches, the region is experiencing a grave humanitarian crisis. With child soldiers and civil wars, the Congolese people face a daily fight.

The DRC's long history of conflict has resulted in an unstable political scenario. This has led to the emergence of armed groups fighting to control certain areas. Especially those mineral-rich regions, because they are battling for control of said resources.³³ Moreover, arming and counter-arming rebel militias, which is being done by the Congolese government and foreign actors means there are now between 120 to 140 rebel groups operating in the DRC.³⁴ Most of these groups work in the resource-rich east and northeast areas. Although peace agreements have been established with many different groups over the years, the overwhelming fighting has yet to come to an end.

The unstable political framework in the DRC can be traced throughout the country's history. The widespread government corruption, lack of action, and political mistrust of the opposition and the public led to the weakening of state institutions and the emergence of rebel groups.³⁵ Among the many groups in the DRC, one of the most prominent is the March 23 Movement (M23). The M23 operates in the North Kivu province and claims to be fighting for Tutsi's rights in the

26 Global Conflict Tracker, "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo."

27 Teresa Pinto, "Is the Third Congo War approaching?" GIS, last modified April 12, 2023, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/drc-war/>

28 Pinto, "Is the Third Congo War approaching?"

29 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Chronology."

30 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Chronology."

31 Lawal, "A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo."

32 Global Conflict Tracker, "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo."

33 Shola Lawal, "As Rwanda votes, tensions with neighbouring DR Congo deepen over M23," Al Jazeera, last modified July 15, 2024 <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/7/15/as-rwanda-votes-tensions-with-neighbouring-dr-congo-deepen-over-m23>

34 Lawal, "A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo."

35 Lawal, "A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo."



M23 fighters move along the road towards Goma
 Credit: MONUSCO Photos

DRC. In 2012, the group launched an attack, seizing Goma as well as many other towns.³⁶

Along with the Congolese military, a special UN force, under the mandate of MONUSCO, pushed the rebels back into the eastern hills on the border with Rwanda in 2013.³⁷ After this defeat, the M23 spent years without resurfacing. Until 2021, when the movement began its insurgency campaign in the east of the DRC. Rapidly, it made territorial wins across this area of the country, which borders Rwanda and Uganda.³⁸ By 2022, the M23 had violently seized more than four towns in North Kivu. To fight the M23, the Congolese army formed a coalition with Congolese militia, as well as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, at times providing these groups with direct support.³⁹

The alliance of the Congolese army with local militias and rebel groups is causing concern for organizations such as the Human Rights Watch.⁴⁰ Thomas Fessy from Human Rights

Watch says the Congolese government should stop this support because it allows abuses to happen by the military, and those responsible should be punished.⁴¹ By grouping up with these armed forces, the Congolese army is also making the country's official institutions look weak. The ongoing conflict with the M23 group in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has made the situation for people very dire.⁴² A UN report mentions that even though there are efforts to calm things, the M23 is still gaining land and attacking citizens. This fighting has led to over 1 million people being forced to leave their homes in North Kivu Province.⁴³ Recently, there have been attempts to fix the crisis, with the East African Community and Angola trying to help. However, ceasefires that were supposed to stop the fighting were quickly violated.⁴⁴

There are accusations that the M23 group is getting money and support from Rwanda and Uganda, which is causing more problems in the region. In 2023, a group of experts made a

36 Lawal, "A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo."

37 Lawal, "A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo."

38 Judith Verweijen and Christoph Vogel, "Why Congo's M23 Crisis Lingers On," The Global Observatory, last modified May 30, 2023, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2023/05/why-congos-m23-crisis-lingers-on/>

39 "Rwanda backing M23 rebels in DRC: UN experts," Al Jazeera, accessed August 04, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/4/rwanda-backing-m23-rebels-in-drc-un-experts>

40 "DR Congo: Army Units Aided Abusive Armed Groups," Human Rights Watch, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/18/dr-congo-army-units-aided-abusive-armed-groups>

41 Al Jazeera, "Rwanda backing M23 rebels in DRC: UN experts."

42 Verweijen and Vogel, "Why Congo's M23 Crisis Lingers On."

43 Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (New York: Security Council, 2022), <https://prod.cdn-medias.theafricareport.com/medias/2023/06/22/un-drc-report-final.pdf>

44 Verweijen and Vogel, "Why Congo's M23 Crisis Lingers On"

report for the UN Security Council about the situation in the DRC.⁴⁵ They found strong evidence that Rwanda was helping the M23 group. The report said that the Rwanda Defence Force was involved in military actions in the DRC, either by helping M23 fighters or by fighting themselves. The experts warned that during the time of elections, attacks on civilians could get worse. They expressed concern that the ongoing fighting and issues with neighboring countries could threaten peace and stability in the DRC.⁴⁶

Despite these complex circumstances, in 2024, there have been important changes. In early August, the UN announced a ceasefire between the DRC and Rwanda that started on August 4. This agreement was led by Angolan efforts. Stéphane Dujarric, a UN spokesman, said that a special team will be set up to make sure the ceasefire is followed, and the UN peacekeepers in the DRC will help with this.⁴⁷ He expressed hope that this ceasefire will reduce tensions between the DRC and Rwanda and help people who were forced to leave their homes return safely.⁴⁸

Humanitarian Crisis and Challenges

The United Nations General Assembly defined the category of Humanitarian Crisis as an event or a series of events that represent a critical threat to a community. This can include risks to the health, safety, security, and well-being of the group of people. Many factors can involve or lead to a humanitarian crisis. Such as armed conflicts, epidemics, hunger, natural disasters, and other problems. These crises are usually too large for one agency to handle alone.⁴⁹ The UN also sets apart three

types of humanitarian crises: Natural disasters; man-made disasters; and complex emergencies. The first type can include factors such as earthquakes, floods, and storms. The second one refers to conflicts, air and rail accidents, and fires, among others. Finally, the third type occurs when a series of factors combine preventing a community from accessing its basic needs.⁵⁰ The situation Democratic Republic of Congo has been referred to as a humanitarian crisis for over thirty years.⁵¹ The DRC region encloses many of the factors mentioned, resulting in a complex emergency.

The UN has set off its highest emergency level for the DRC, granting great resources to be directed to it.⁵² The UNHCR defines three levels of urgency. A Level 1 emergency means the country can not handle the situation with its primary reaction and needs to step up its efforts. Level 2 happens when the country lacks funding, people, and experience to help during a fast-changing crisis. This means it must ask for more assistance. Level 3 is when the situation is unusually serious and too great for the local response to manage.⁵³ At this level, there is extra support available to help ensure a strong response.⁵⁴ Ulrika Blom, Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council in the DRC, says that Level 3 tools are only used for the toughest emergencies. She believes the whole aid system needs to do more in these urgent situations.⁵⁵ The DRC is, therefore, considered one of the biggest humanitarian emergencies in the world.

One of the most relevant aspects of the humanitarian crisis in the Congo is the displacement. It is primarily caused by

⁴⁵ Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

⁴⁶ Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

⁴⁷ United Nations Press, “Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General,” noon briefing, July 31, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/db240731.doc.htm>

⁴⁸ United Nations Press, “Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General,” noon briefing, July 31, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/db240731.doc.htm>

⁴⁹ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 28/76, Final research-based report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on best practices and main challenges in the promotion and protection of human rights in post-disaster and post-conflict situations, A/HRC/28/76, ¶ 7 (Feb. 10, 2015), <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/28/76>.

⁵⁰ A/HRC/28/76, 7

⁵¹ “The facts: The humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” Mercy Corps, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/drc-humanitarian-crisis>.

⁵² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Emergency Management FAQs (Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023), <https://emergency.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Emergency%20Management%20FAQs.pdf>

⁵³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Emergency Management FAQs. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023. <https://emergency.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Emergency%20Management%20FAQs.pdf>

⁵⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Emergency Management FAQs.

⁵⁵ Norwegian Refugee Council, “UN ‘Level 3 emergency’ declared in DR Congo highlights scale of crisis.”

the constant conflicts. As of October of 2023, there were nearly 7 million people displaced across the country.⁵⁶ This is one of the highest numbers noted in the world and the most recent escalation of the conflict has uprooted more people in less time than was rarely seen before.⁵⁷ It is of urgent need that this displacement crisis is managed. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has remained committed to providing critical assistance to these displaced persons, as well as to those returning and host countries affected by the crisis.⁵⁸

People who have been forced to leave their homes face many dangers, especially because of nearby conflicts and weapons being used in proximity to them. In 2024, there were sixteen accidents in places where displaced people were allocated, killing at least 37 people.⁵⁹ Displaced women are especially at risk for violence and exploitation. Most displaced people are living with host families, while some are in camps managed by the IOM, which provides basic needs like shelter, water, and sanitation. However, these places are crowded and mostly unsafe, and the support provided is often not enough.⁶⁰ Getting access to food, housing, and healthcare is very vital for these people. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also explains these people also struggle with mental health issues.⁶¹

The situation in the DRC is truly dire, especially when it comes to health care. Conflicts, mainly in the eastern part

of the country, have caused many people to get hurt, and hospitals can not keep up with the number of patients.⁶² Robert Mardini, the leader of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said that there's been a quick rise in the number of seriously injured people because of heavy weapons.⁶³ This is making it hard for hospitals to assist all those in need. Since early February, hundreds of badly injured people, including many women and kids, have been reaching hospitals in North Kivu. About 40 percent of these injuries are from heavy weapons used in crowded areas.⁶⁴ This adds to the suffering of many people who have already been living through years of conflict. For example, the Ndosho hospital in Goma, with help from the Red Cross, is seeing so many patients that it is over twice its normal capacity.⁶⁵

Likewise, the difficulties that are being imposed in DRC's health care system have been widely exacerbated by recurrent disease outbreaks such as cholera, measles, Mpox, and Ebola, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁶ Firstly, Mpox spreads via close contact, resulting in flu-like symptoms and a skin rash. Scientists sounded the alarm in 2024 about the growth of a severe new strain of Mpox in South Kivu, fearing it would spread to overcrowded camps in and surrounding Goma.⁶⁷ Yet, military action near such camps has made it impossible for health officials to contain the infection if security is not provided.

UNICEF's situation Report n.9 on the DRC points out that

56 International Organization for Migration, "Record High Displacement in DRC at Nearly 7 Million," news release, October 30, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/record-high-displacement-drc-nearly-7-million>

57 International Organization for Migration, "Record High Displacement in DRC at Nearly 7 Million," news release, October 30, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/record-high-displacement-drc-nearly-7-million>

58 International Organization for Migration, "Record High Displacement in DRC at Nearly 7 Million," news release, October 30, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/record-high-displacement-drc-nearly-7-million>

59 International Organization for Migration, "Alarming Humanitarian Crisis in Eastern DRC Calls for Urgent Action to Protect Vulnerable Populations," news release, July 02, 2024, <https://www.iom.int/news/alarming-humanitarian-crisis-eastern-drc-calls-urgent-action-protect-vulnerable-populations>

60 International Organization for Migration, "Alarming Humanitarian Crisis in Eastern DRC Calls for Urgent Action to Protect Vulnerable Populations," news release, July 02, 2024, <https://www.iom.int/news/alarming-humanitarian-crisis-eastern-drc-calls-urgent-action-protect-vulnerable-populations>

61 "DR Congo: Civilians in the firing line as use of heavy weapons signals alarming new phase of armed conflict in the east," International Committee of the Red Cross, March 06, 2024. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/dr-congo-civilians-firing-line-use-heavy-weapons-signals-alarming-new-phase-armed-conflict>

62 International Committee of the Red Cross, "DR Congo: Civilians in the firing line as use of heavy weapons signals alarming new phase of armed conflict in the east."

63 International Committee of the Red Cross, "DR Congo: Civilians in the firing line as use of heavy weapons signals alarming new phase of armed conflict in the east."

64 International Committee of the Red Cross, "DR Congo: Civilians in the firing line as use of heavy weapons signals alarming new phase of armed conflict in the east."

65 International Committee of the Red Cross, "DR Congo: Civilians in the firing line as use of heavy weapons signals alarming new phase of armed conflict in the east."

66 World Bank, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview."

67 "DR Congo: Conflict escalation linked to deadly Mpox threat," UN News, July 12, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/07/1152031>

between January and April 2024, there have been 15,183 suspected cholera cases, with 239 deaths.⁶⁸ The report also shows UNICEF's emergency response plan, revealing its lack of funds. The health scope had reached only 12 percent of its funding status. In addition, Doctors Without Frontiers claims health structures in the region have long been overwhelmed with the increased numbers of patients.⁶⁹ Also, they state that they are now seeing a growing number of cases of sexual violence and war wounded. In addition, the agency states that before the restart of this conflict, the health scenario in several provinces was already severe, with low immunization rates among children under the age of five.⁷⁰ Poorly working healthcare systems, mainly due to a shortage of medication and a lack of educated health workers, also worsen the situation.

At the health level, there is a concern about a resurgence of illnesses, particularly cholera, as conflict has forced many to live in overcrowded and unclean conditions. Combined with a lack of access to clean water, this creates the ideal

circumstances for the spread of cholera. Hence, the institution calls other humanitarian organizations to action, to avoid a health catastrophe.⁷¹ Although this issue is of primary urgency and should be addressed as quickly as possible, it is also impacted by all the other factors engulfed within DRC's crisis. Firstly, climate change affects citizens who were once in stable conditions and become displaced due to the need to escape certain climate conditions. It also affects those who are already in dire situations. For instance, flooding in early 2024, affected 36 health facilities in North Kivu, South Kivu, Kasai, and Tshopo provinces, worsening their capacity to attend to health needs.⁷²

The World Health Organization has stated that during a surge of violence in North Kivu in 2022, at least 32 health facilities were damaged, further limiting access to basic services.⁷³ In turn, in Mai-Ndombe, Kasai, and Tshopo provinces, flooding and violence have forced nearly 100,000 people to move.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, around 18,000 measles cases and 444 deaths have

68 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, Democratic Republic of the Congo (New York: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2024), <https://www.unicef.org/media/157731/file/DRC-Humanitarian-SitRep-April-2024.pdf>

69 "Massive humanitarian response needed to avoid health catastrophe in DRC," Medecins Sans Frontieres, March 12, 2024, <https://www.msf.org/massive-humanitarian-response-needed-avoid-health-catastrophe-drc>

70 Medecins Sans Frontieres, "Massive humanitarian response needed to avoid health catastrophe in DRC"

71 Medecins Sans Frontieres, "Massive humanitarian response needed to avoid health catastrophe in DRC"

72 "Democratic Republic of the Congo faces acute health crisis amid rising violence," World Health Organization, June 23, 2023, <https://www.afro.who.int/countries/democratic-republic-of-congo/news/democratic-republic-congo-faces-acute-health-crisis-amid-rising-violence>

73 World Health Organization, "Democratic Republic of the Congo faces acute health crisis amid rising violence"

74 World Health Organization, "Democratic Republic of the Congo faces acute health crisis amid rising violence"

Kibati camp during emergency measles vaccination as shooting began on the other side of the camp less than a kilometer away

Credit: Julien Harneis



been recorded in the three provinces.⁷⁵ Beyond this, the health issue is not limited to its physical aspect, but also to well-being and mental health.⁷⁶ For one, ICRC-trained psychologists have been providing mental health and psychosocial support for those in need. Yet, it seems as if the needs of the population exceed ICRC's limited response capacity.⁷⁷ Hence, it becomes clear that even when looking specifically at the health aspect, the crisis in DRC is multi-sided. For this reason, it will require efforts from many international actors to achieve efficient solutions.

Moreover, hunger and poverty have become harsh and vast problems. The World Food Programme (WFP) explains the DRC now faces one of the world's worst hunger crises.⁷⁸ The agency exposes that there are an estimated 23.4 million people in emergency levels of food insecurity in the DRC.⁷⁹ To prevent these people from reaching famine-like states, the WFP has planned to provide food, money, and assistance to 3.6 million people in need, especially IDPs.⁸⁰ The WFP has stated that their funding from July to December 2024, needs to be USD 388 million. Hence, they require international support. In Goma, as many displaced people arrived, food shortages and rapid increases in food prices have made it out of reach for many. The WFP has increased its emergency actions in the east to mitigate this scene. They tripled their reach with food assistance to those in need from around 400,000 in May 2023, to about 1.3 million in March 2024.⁸¹ Still, it should be noted that while the conflicts continue and force citizens to continue fleeing, more and more people will settle in camps that are already too crowded. This will further

make the work of the WFP and other agencies to feed those in need, as humanitarian aid fails to keep pace with the constant growth of the crisis.⁸²

Humanitarian aid is truly fundamental right now since many people needs urgent assistance. Yet, facilitating this access seems to be a big problem. In November 2023, two UN representatives, Grant Leaity and Angele Dikongue-Atanga, discussed how everyday people in the DRC are suffering. They pointed out that many of these people cannot get the aid they need because important roads are blocked. At that time, about 200,000 people who had to leave their homes were left without help.⁸³ The UN has built shelters for over 40,000 people near Goma and has given out lots of supplies such as tents and cooking pots. Still, they say the world must find a way to get help to almost 7 million people affected by the fighting in eastern DRC at once.⁸⁴ Attacks on peacekeepers and transport also make it harder for the UN and aid groups to assist those who need it, which makes cooperation even more important.⁸⁵

Realizing the multi-sided crisis that exists in the country also means grasping the need for more investment and duty to actions that seek to mitigate this tragic situation. It must also be underlined that in this context of general suffering, some groups are more vulnerable to certain risks. This includes women and children, who should receive special focus.

Women and Children's Human Rights Infringements

In the context of war and conflict, all civilians are affected

75 World Health Organization, "Democratic Republic of the Congo faces acute health crisis amid rising violence"

76 "Crisis in North Kivu: mobile clinics providing essential care," HI Institute on Humanitarian Action, April 10, 2024, <https://www.hi.org/en/news/crisis-in-north-kivu-mobile-clinics-providing-essential-care>

77 International Committee of the Red Cross, "DR Congo: Civilians in the firing line as use of heavy weapons signals alarming new phase of armed conflict in the east."

78 "Emergency: Democratic Republic of the Congo," World Food Programme, accessed in July 10, 2024, <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/drc-emergency>

79 World Food Programme, "Emergency: Democratic Republic of the Congo,"

80 World Food Programme, "Emergency: Democratic Republic of the Congo"

81 "DRC's hunger crisis deepens as families once again flee fighting," World Food Programme, March 22, 2024, <https://www.wfp.org/news/drcs-hunger-crisis-deepens-families-once-again-flee-fighting>

82 World Food Programme, "DRC's hunger crisis deepens as families once again flee fighting"

83 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, "UNHCR and UNICEF express grave concern over the humanitarian toll on civilians in eastern DR Congo," press release, November 24, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unhcr-and-unicef-express-grave-concern-over-humanitarian-toll-civilians-eastern-dr>

84 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, "UNHCR and UNICEF express grave concern over the humanitarian toll on civilians in eastern DR Congo," press release, November 24, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unhcr-and-unicef-express-grave-concern-over-humanitarian-toll-civilians-eastern-dr>

85 Lisa Schlein, "UN experts warn violence in eastern DRC getting worse, threatens to spill throughout region," Voice of America, last Modified April 03, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-experts-warn-violence-in-eastern-drc-getting-worse-threatens-to-spill-throughout-region/7555189.html>

and suffer from the consequences. Still, women and children tend to face issues and violence particular to their gender and vulnerability. In the DRC, women face human rights infringements with staggering gender-based violence indexes.⁸⁶ As for children, they must suffer from terrible circumstances that come from the conflicts in the country. They are victims of forced recruitment and kidnapping from militias. Hence, both groups require immediate and strong actions to mitigate their daily suffering.

According to the World Bank, Congolese women face notable barriers to opportunities and empowerment, such as high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and prejudice.⁸⁷ This is seen in many ways within Congolese society. To begin, only 16.8 percent of women have finished high school. This is almost half the rate for men.⁸⁸ Furthermore, early marriage and high child-bearing rates provide a challenge. The database also shows that half of women report facing physical abuse, and over a third had suffered sexual assault, most of which was carried out by an intimate partner. To boot, even though almost 62 percent of women work, most of them are in agriculture, they earn much less than men and earn far less property.⁸⁹

This crisis is affecting women and children the most. Many authorities in the UN and other countries are starting to see how badly these groups are affected by violence. For one, when discussing the removal of MONUSCO forces out of South Kivu, Bintou Keita warned that this should be done carefully and over time. Stating that the eastern part of the DRC needs support at this time.⁹⁰ He pointed out that things

are getting worse in camps for displaced people because of ongoing fighting. Keita also stressed that women and children will suffer the most because of this conflict.⁹¹

As stated by the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) organization, gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most common and unseen human rights violations in the world.⁹² Gender-based violence refers to any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity.⁹³ GBV affects women disproportionately. It can be both the cause and the result of other issues, such as poverty and gender inequality. GBV is a problem that affects all areas within a society. It is influenced by sexist norms and ideas, discriminatory laws, and failed State policies.⁹⁴ Like many others, CARE has tried to help survivors of sexual violence and address the context that makes gender-based violence possible. They work with local organizations and groups to assist and support their response to gender-based violence in the local scenario.⁹⁵

There have been many publications that present how urgent this situation is regarding the protection of women's rights. One article written in 2011 explained how sexual violence against women has historically been used as a strategy of war, causing brutal damage to women. This tactic has become more common in recent years in the DRC.⁹⁶ In a country with over 70 million people, general reports throughout the years describe the number of rapes and sexual atrocities in around tens of thousands.⁹⁷ For instance, more than 1 million of the

86 World Food Programme, *Women, Girls And The Protection Crisis In Eastern Drc* (Rome: World Food Programme, 2024), <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/a136bb72-148c-4545-878d-f1422e5618c3/WFP%20-%20Women%2C%20girls%20and%20the%20protection%20crisis%20in%20eastern%20DRC%20%282024%29.pdf>

87 World Bank, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview."

88 World Bank, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview."

89 World Bank, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Overview."

90 United Nations Press, "Military Group's Expansion in Democratic Republic of Congo 'Carries Very Real Risk of Provoking Wider Regional Conflict', Mission Head Tells Security Council," press release, July 8, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15760.doc.htm>

91 United Nations Press, "Military Group's Expansion in Democratic Republic of Congo 'Carries Very Real Risk of Provoking Wider Regional Conflict', Mission Head Tells Security Council," press release, July 8, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15760.doc.htm>

92 "What we do," Care International, accessed in July 10, 2024, <https://www.care-international.org/what-we-do/gender-equality/eliminating-gender-based-violence>

93 "What is gender-based violence?" Council of Europe, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/what-is-gender-based-violence>

94 Care International, "What we do."

95 Care International, "What we do."

96 Amber Peterman, Tia Palermo, and Caryn Bredenkamp, "Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *American Journal of Public Health*, August 30, 2011. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2010.300070>

97 Peterman, Palermo, and Bredenkamp, "Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo."

DRC's women and girls are victims of sexual violence. This problem is made worse by the fact that most cases involve teenagers and children under the age of 18. With 10 percent of these victims being under the age of ten in 2011.⁹⁸

Furthermore, in recent years, one of the most prominent issues in the conflict has become gender-based violence (GBV). While it has always been a factor in the conflict in the DRC, the levels and rates of reported sexual violence have increased in the last two years in the eastern part of the country.⁹⁹ It is also possible that the complete withdrawal of MONUSCO and the continued advance of M23 in Goma will further increase the risks of GBV. According to a report by Refugees International, from 2021 to 2022, there was a 91 percent increase in reports of GBV in North Kivu, and in 2023 the numbers continued to rise.¹⁰⁰ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) highlighted how from May to August 2023, at least 46,000 cases of GBV were reported in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri.¹⁰¹ Finally, Médecins Sans Frontières reported more than 90,000 cases of GBV throughout 2023. The Director of the International Rescue Committee for the DRC has stated that: "Eastern DRC has become one of the most dangerous places in the world for women and children. They now face a protection crisis, on a scale never seen before, where gender-based violence happens all the time."¹⁰²

A major issue in this regard is the impunity that perpetrators have received, while the women suffer all the negative consequences. Most sexual violence happens in the hands of militias, notably M23. It happens when women are fleeing their homes, while living in IDP camps, and while outside the IDP sites working. The fact this happens in diverse contexts makes it difficult for women to ever feel safe again.¹⁰³ Still,

Refugees International points out specific aspects that can be targeted to mitigate this situation. First, they demonstrated that service providers understand how to combat GBV but lack the funds to do so. Second, they point out that coordination must improve. Teams must understand the diverse needs of IDPs' and how they suffer the risk of GBV. Third, the only way for GBV interventions to be sustainable is to end the war and offer long-term assistance to State institutions. It would be possible to coordinate efforts to address the needs of these women, whilst searching for long-term solutions to the humanitarian crisis.

As a vulnerable group, women face additional risks and distress in conflict situations. Like them, another group of individuals that face these extra challenges are children. When focusing on children's needs in this context, the uprising of M23, the rates of displacement, and their vulnerability have skyrocketed. In one week alone in 2022, 40,000 people fled from the towns of Rutshuru and Kiwanja, many of these were children traveling by foot or with overcrowded motorcycles.¹⁰⁴ Children in this context become extremely vulnerable since they are not yet able to fully defend themselves from those inflicting violence or seeking to recruit them. Especially in the Eastern part of Congo, these children are being exposed to high indexes of violence every day. This can be seen in levels of child violence appointed by the UN, which increased by 30 percent in 3 months of 2024, with over 1,000 violations just in three eastern provinces.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, the violence of separatist groups has worsened the situation, as they have targeted more than only military areas. They have also caused damage to civilian sites including schools, hospitals, and refugee camps. In this context, children are being killed, abducted to be used

98 Peterman, Palermo, and Bredenkamp, "Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo."

99 Devon Cone, and Abdullahi Halakhe, "Ensuring Women's Protection Amid Rising Conflict in Eastern DRC", Refugees International, last modified April 5, 2024, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/ensuring-womens-protection-amid-rising-conflict-in-eastern-drc/>

100 Cone, and Halakhe, "Ensuring Women's Protection Amid Rising Conflict in Eastern DRC."

101 Cone, and Halakhe, "Ensuring Women's Protection Amid Rising Conflict in Eastern DRC."

102 "Eastern DRC has become one of the most dangerous places in the world for women and children," Care International, November 14, 2023, <https://www.care-international.org/news/eastern-drc-has-become-one-most-dangerous-places-world-women-and-children>

103 Cone, and Halakhe, "Ensuring Women's Protection Amid Rising Conflict in Eastern DRC."

104 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, "Fighting in eastern DRC is having a devastating impact on children," press release, October 30, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/drcongo/en/press-releases/fighting-eastern-drc-devastating-impact-children>

105 Sarah Ferguson, "Grave Violations Against Children on the Rise in Democratic Republic of Congo", United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, last modified June 11, 2024, <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/grave-violations-against-children-rise-democratic-republic-congo>

as military assets, and suffering from gender-based violence on a bigger scale each year.¹⁰⁶

One huge concern regarding child human rights' infringements, is their abduction and forced acting as child soldiers. Child soldiers is a term referring to boys and girls who suffer from extensive forms of exploration and are manipulated to work as military soldiers.¹⁰⁷ These children, when associated with armed groups are more likely to be imprisoned, injured, or murdered.¹⁰⁸ They may also encounter challenges returning home. This is mainly a result of trauma and shame, along with barriers when reintegrating into their families and communities. According to the International Committee for the Red Cross, boys and girls respond differently to armed conflict and violence. Also, their families and communities may find it difficult to accept them when they return. Thus, not only do they endure suffering while they are used as weapons in conflict, but their suffering continues when

they leave this environment. According to the International Committee for the Red Cross, former child combatants can be found among those recovering from physical and mental trauma in regional hospitals.¹⁰⁹ The organization points out how the recruitment of children into armed groups has become an increasingly major concern. They expose there was a 45 percent boost recorded by the UN in the first six months of 2023 compared to the previous year.¹¹⁰ This happens even though it is established by UN regulations that the use of children as part of military forces is an infraction of the International Humanitarian Law.¹¹¹

In April 2024, UNICEF recorded more than 450 severe violations against children in the DRC's Eastern regions.¹¹² The most common violation was child recruitment for combat, followed by child abduction and child killing. UNICEF continues to work in the DRC, with field offices in Goma, Bunia, and Bukavu. As part of their response plan,

106 Ferguson, "Grave Violations Against Children on the Rise in Democratic Republic of Congo."

107 "Child Recruitment and Use," Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/>

108 "Protected persons: Children," International Committee of the Red Cross, July 10, 2024, <https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/protected-persons-children>

109 International Committee of the Red Cross, "DR Congo: Civilians in the firing line as use of heavy weapons signals alarming new phase of armed conflict in the east."

110 International Committee of the Red Cross, "DR Congo: Civilians in the firing line as use of heavy weapons signals alarming new phase of armed conflict in the east."

111 "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child," Save the Children, July 10, 2024, <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/childrens-rights/united-nations-convention-of-the-rights-of-the-child>

112 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, Democratic Republic of the Congo



Children risk abduction into militia

Credit: Oxfam East Africa

field presence has grown and emergency personnel have been deployed to reach children, women, and others in need.¹¹³ The organization, along with the Congolese Division of Social Affairs (DIVAS) and child safety networks in Congo have all played vital roles in granting life-saving services to children. This includes mental health support and help with documentation. For instance, they helped 15,000 children and caregivers get mental health services in safe places.¹¹⁴ UNICEF has also worked with the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery, and Stabilization Programme to support 180 former fighters.¹¹⁵ Thus, helping to reunite many children with their families in North Kivu province.

Thus, the DRC suffers from a context of displacement, food and health insecurity, and sudden conflicts. Within this, vulnerable groups suffer from issues that require urgent action. Although the numbers and the general scene seem to only get worse, major plans and new projects are being put in place. Hence, this shows there is a way to implement crucial initiatives despite budget and personnel limits.

International Initiatives and Future Prospects

The DRC has gone through a long history of harmful interventions and outside influences. Now, people in the region are facing serious issues, including safety problems and crises. This has created the need for local and international actions. Rebellions, radical groups, climate change, fraud, and diseases have all caused instability and pain for those living in the DRC. Hence, the global community admits that there is a need to work together to find solutions. The UN and

its partners are taking the lead in this effort to create lasting change.

When talking about plans for the DRC, it is overall agreed that diplomacy and aid are more crucial than using army forces. At a Security Council meeting, a U.S. agent stated that working in a union is the best way to achieve a peaceful solution.¹¹⁶ The official from Slovenia agreed, saying that using force will not stop the violence. She pointed out the need for all to work together politically and diplomatically, using current accords like the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Ergo, creating lasting peace and safety in the area.¹¹⁷

In turn, the IOM and United Nations Famine Prevention and Response Coordinator, declared their support for broad approaches that go beyond the military.¹¹⁸ They argued how urgent aid can not remain as the only solution. There is also the need to find better and long-lasting plans that tackle the real problems causing the crisis. They believe it is key to support programs that help communities come together and recover from their suffering. They mainly wish to empower women and girls to help fight hunger and create peace.¹¹⁹ Lastly, it was pointed out that work opportunities must be propped up in a way that supports vulnerable groups, allowing them to be self-sufficient.¹²⁰ As for the European Union, it has stated its support for the DRC's sustainable and inclusive development.¹²¹

In this regard, many scholars have pointed out ways to help solve the ongoing problems in the DRC. They believe the country needs both quick fixes and long-term plans. Firstly, it is very important to reduce the number of weapons in

113 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, Democratic Republic of the Congo

114 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, Democratic Republic of the Congo

115 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, Democratic Republic of the Congo

116 United Nations Press, "Escalating Violence in Democratic Republic of Congo Exacerbating Humanitarian Crisis, Special Representative Warns Security Council, Urging Durable Political Solution," news release, 10 February, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15596.doc.htm.htm>

117 United Nations Press, "Escalating Violence in Democratic Republic of Congo Exacerbating Humanitarian Crisis, Special Representative Warns Security Council, Urging Durable Political Solution," news release, 10 February, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15596.doc.htm>

118 International Organization for Migration, "We Must Maximize Opportunities for Sustainable Solutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Joint Appeal," news release, November 14, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/we-must-maximize-opportunities-sustainable-solutions-democratic-republic-congo-joint-appeal>

119 International Organization for Migration, "We Must Maximize Opportunities for Sustainable Solutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Joint Appeal," news release, November 14, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/we-must-maximize-opportunities-sustainable-solutions-democratic-republic-congo-joint-appeal>

120 International Organization for Migration, "We Must Maximize Opportunities for Sustainable Solutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Joint Appeal," news release, November 14, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/we-must-maximize-opportunities-sustainable-solutions-democratic-republic-congo-joint-appeal>

121 European Commission, "Democratic Republic of Congo."



UNICEF Back to School program in Congo arriving in Basali met by a crowd of school children

Credit: Julien Harnais

areas where there is conflict. This means giving information about how to safely engage in disarmament and help people who have used arms to make changes in their lives.¹²² Having conversations among countries in the region is also important for making peace. Dialogue can help deal with the main reasons for the conflicts, such as fighting over resources or weak governance. The ICGLR, for one, has helped countries work together to solve these problems¹²³. It helps address issues that cross borders, like armed groups wandering and illegal resource exploitation. By focusing on economic growth and better government, the ICGLR has also helped create a peaceful environment and make conflicts less likely.

Right now, many specific projects are being worked on, which look to ease the hardships forced upon Congolese persons. For one, CARE International has been fighting poverty and injustice in the DRC since 1979.¹²⁴ Since then, they have granted help to many people in need. When there was an Ebola outbreak in 2018, CARE quickly supplied groups and health centers with basics like water and sanitation. Now, CARE is also working on various critical issues, such as helping women

with economic affairs, offering food and nutrition, helping those with climate struggles, and combating gender-based violence.¹²⁵ CARE shows how international action can help during crises and meet the needs of the region.

On top of this, it is not possible to discuss missions in Congo without bringing up the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic (MONUSCO). MONUSCO was created by the Security Council in 1999 to plan for the ceasefire and preserve cooperation between all parties¹²⁶. Its mission expanded to include other military and political duties. Meanwhile, it was trying to resolve the ongoing conflicts in DRC provinces.¹²⁷ Furthermore, in July 2010 the UNSC approved Resolution 1925, changing the name from MONUC to MONUSO. With it, it also changes the organization's mission to reflect the new scenario reached in the country. The objective of the new mission was to help the DRC's peace efforts while safeguarding civilians, humanitarian workers, and human rights advocates. All this while supporting the DRC's peace efforts. Most recently, President Félix Tshisekedi has pushed

122 Gabarate Wadipeba, "Prospects for Peace in the DRC: Challenges and Opportunities," Masters thesis, (University of Botswana, 2016).

123 Wadipeba, "Prospects for Peace in the DRC: Challenges and Opportunities."

124 "Where we Work: Democratic Republic of the Congo," Care International, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.care-international.org/our-work/where-we-work/democratic-republic-congo>

125 Care International, "Where we Work: Democratic Republic of the Congo."

126 "Background," United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/background>

127 United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo, "Background."

for the complete withdrawal of MONUSCO by the end of 2024.¹²⁸ This request has been criticized as there have been growing reports of rebel attacks, displacing more Congolese citizens. Yet, the retreat of MONUSCO began in early 2024 and the mission is to be fully withdrawn from the region by the end of the year.

The United Nations has also played an important role in promoting peacekeeping in the DRC. Within UN entities, many vital projects must be mentioned. Firstly, there is UNICEF's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) initiative.¹²⁹ This project aims to provide access to clean water and sanitation to protect children from infectious illness. By joining forces with States, civil society organizations, and other groups, UNICEF rebuilds and restores WASH facilities. They also transport supplies for clean water and hygiene products to affected areas and camps. With this, they stand at the front line of support for health and nutrition.¹³⁰ In the DRC specifically, UNICEF identifies that the country has over 50 percent of the African continent's water reserves. Still, 33 million people in rural areas still lack access to quality water. With only 52 percent of the population having access to improved water sources.¹³¹ As a result of these efforts, UNICEF works to improve the water and hygiene sectors. With the program "Healthy School and Village", the agency also attempts to prevent diarrheal and other waterborne diseases. They do this by delivering improved water and hygiene services in schools, villages, and health centers.¹³² Many other UN projects can be studied as a basis for new and improved solutions. For instance, there is the DRC Health System Strengthening for Better Maternal and Child Health. This project attempted to improve the quality of maternal and child health services in violent areas.¹³³ There is also the Shelter and Non-Food Items

project by the UNHCR. The strategy has promoted local construction materials and communal approaches to ensure sustainable housing conditions. The committee's fact sheet, also established the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy project, which ensures refugees' access to energy for cooking and electricity.¹³⁴

On the other hand, the international community has also contributed to helping those affected by the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some countries have been working together to help people who do not have access to food. The US "Food for Peace" project aims to combat hunger and make sure everyone has safe and healthy food.¹³⁵ This project helps people who are struggling, especially those in poverty who face extra problems like droughts. It also provides them with the idea of how to grow their own food.¹³⁶ The U.S. also teams up with organizations such as the UN World Food Programme to provide emergency food to people in need, mainly refugees and families in crisis. Along with the UN Children's Fund, they also help provide special nutrition for children who need it.¹³⁷ Observing these and other efforts, such as the African Union Initiatives for Peace and Security Operations and its Continental Early Warning Systems, UN or global measures are not the only ones that may have an impact. Bilateral help, as well as regional initiatives, have proven to be equally crucial in mitigating this tragic disaster.

Thus, the current projects happening in the DRC are helping many people in need. However, a lot of these projects do not have enough money and support, especially since the DRC is facing a big humanitarian crisis that is not getting much attention worldwide. Different groups need to keep working hard to help during this tough time, focusing on the people who are most at risk and always trying to solve problems

128 Paul Nantulya, "Understanding the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Push for MONUSCO's Departure", Africa Center for Strategic Studies, last modified May 20, 2024, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/understanding-drc-monusco/>

129 "Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)," United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash-0>

130 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, "Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)."

131 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, "Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)."

132 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, "Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)."

133 "DRC Health System Strengthening for Better Maternal and Child Health," World Bank Group, February 27, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/loans-credits/2019/02/27/drc-health-system-strengthening-for-better-maternal-and-child-health>

134 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, DR Congo (Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019)

135 "Office of Food for Peace," United States Agency for International Development, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.usaid.gov/office-food-peace>

136 United States Agency for International Development, "Office of Food for Peace."

137 "Food Assistance Fact Sheet - Democratic Republic of the Congo," United States Agency for International Development, May 6, 2020, <https://www.usaid.gov/food-assistance/democratic-republic-congo>

peacefully.

Current Status

Rebel Groups Advancements on DRC Territories

The attacks by rebel groups and militias have been threatening the population of the DRC for the last 30 years.¹³⁸ One of the biggest issues that surface in this context is the implementation of long-term solutions, mainly because of rebel groups. These are organized factions that oppose the governments or political systems in a country. They mostly act due to perceived injustices or political discontent. They adopt a variety of methods, including coercion, armed clashes, and repression, with diverse motives.¹³⁹ In the DRC, these groups have been advancing into provinces and assuming all the control that should be primarily of the government. Some groups have powerful weapons and gear that help them take over places with valuable minerals.¹⁴⁰ They use these weapons to scare and hurt local people, making them leave their homes. After that, these groups take control of the empty areas. One of the biggest rebel groups in the DRC is the M23, formed mainly of ethnic Tutsi. M23 has advanced weapons and wants to control areas with minerals like gold, tungsten, copper, and cobalt, which are common in the eastern part of the country. Officials in Congo say that Rwanda helps this group, but country officials deny it.¹⁴¹ Currently, there are specific areas in the country, where rebel groups have gained ground and taken control, such as Kanyabayonga and Kayna.¹⁴² These rebel groups regaining territories has a huge impact on the population which is subjected to more violence. For instance,

after its reintegration, the M23 movement began its advances throughout the Congolese territory causing massive casualties and displacement.

According to a report by the International Peace Information Service, in March 2024, M23 gained control of Nyanzale, Kashalira, Kirima, Kikuku, and Kibirizi.¹⁴³ In areas under this armed group's influence, killings, sexual crimes, and the use of heavy artillery increase quickly.¹⁴⁴ Despite the FARDC and the government's attempt to regain these territories and ease the suffering, the progress of rebel groups has been growing.¹⁴⁵ Another region that has been impacted by heavy fighting and actions of M23 rebels is Masisi, in North Kivu. The group has been able to control two out of Masisi's four chiefdoms, Bashali and Bahunde. This chiefdom means the political and economic power of the local society is exercised by a chief.¹⁴⁶

The path that is being tracked by M23 makes it clear that the group is trying to reach the capital of North Kivu, Goma. This is also observed due to the group's violent attacks in the town of Mweso, just around 62 miles from the capital. According to the Action on Armed Violence institution, at least 19 individuals were killed and up to 27 were injured in these hostilities.¹⁴⁷ The only stronghold on M23's road to Goma that remains under government forces and allied armed groups is the town of Sake. However, it is also under immense pressure. Ever since the beginning of 2024, M23 structured its position in the hills that surround the city, such as Vuvano and Kiuli. This fits into the group's strategy to reach the capital. So far, there have been many attacks by M23 which continue to target Sake and make their way to Goma. This strategic crossroads on the road to Goma has been surrounded by M23 rebels for more than a month. Thus, international and national

138 "Democratic Republic of the Congo," Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, July 21, 2024, <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

139 "Rebel Group," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed in July 10, 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/spellcheck/english/?q=rebel+groups>

140 Margaret Besheer, "UN: Well-Armed M23 Rebels Resurgent in DRC," Voice of America, last modified June 29, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-well-armed-m23-rebels-resurgent-in-drc/6638775.html>

141 Besheer, "UN: Well-Armed M23 Rebels Resurgent in DRC."

142 "M23 seizes town in east DR Congo as rebels gaining ground," Voice of America, June 30, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/m23-continues-to-gain-ground-in-volatile-east-dr-congo-17678541.html>

143 Ken Matthyssen, "Shifting frontlines: Visualizing the evolution of the M23's territorial influence in early 2024," International Peace Information Service, last modified June 20, 2024, <https://ipisresearch.be/publication/shifting-frontlines-visualizing-the-evolution-of-the-m23s-territorial-influence-in-early-2024/>

144 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Democratic Republic of the Congo."

145 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Democratic Republic of the Congo."

146 Matthyssen, "Shifting frontlines: Visualizing the evolution of the M23's territorial influence in early 2024."

147 Matthyssen, "Shifting frontlines: Visualizing the evolution of the M23's territorial influence in early 2024."

governmental forces have shown strong concern.¹⁴⁸

So far, there have been several civilian casualties and peace mission soldiers' casualties from M23 advancements. This comes along with continuous waves of displacement of citizens who flee from the surrounding areas.¹⁴⁹ The government and military have not been able to contain these attacks. In fact, on August 04, the ceasefire between Congo and Rwanda was meant to be implemented. Yet, on the same day, rebels from M23 captured Ishasha, a town on DRC's border with Uganda.¹⁵⁰ This happened a day after the fall of Nyamilima. Locals from this large town stated that the M23 took it without resistance. There were a lot of external expectations regarding this long-awaited ceasefire. Thus, the violent attacks that happened the same day were seen with sadness and shock from the international community. Still, countries continue to fight for a lasting resolution.

It is also necessary to establish the complexity of resolving this issue of territorial control. Even if a region has not been taken by armed groups, it suffers the consequences that come from conflicts in its proximity. For instance, the capital of Goma has not been dominated by the M23 yet. However, its surrounding areas have created an isolation around the city that causes just as much danger.¹⁵¹ As the rebels proceeded with their siege of the roads to Goma, its population was exposed to circumstances that resemble a lawless town.¹⁵² There have been reports of constant robberies, attacks, and deaths. With the city being increasingly threatened, in April of 2024 alone, there were at least 29 people killed by criminals.¹⁵³ A specific offensive carried out in February 2024, had Goma's last overland supply route cut off.

In these circumstances of isolation, other general problems also arise. In November 2023 for instance, the main power lines to Goma were cut out, leaving hospitals and water systems without power. This hugely affects not only those living within the city but also the camps for displaced persons structured in its surroundings. These camps get their clean water from pumping stations which do not function without electricity. Hence, the effects of close-by disputes strongly impact the camp, according to the Virunga National Park.¹⁵⁴ This exemplifies how rebel groups cause massive distress with their movements while also creating humanitarian challenges. These issues worsen the circumstances even within cities that have not been taken by the groups. It is also one of the prime concerns regarding M23's advancement, seeing as Goma is the largest city in North Kivu, with over 2 million as its population.

Aside from the M23, other armed forces in the DRC are advancing and bringing chaos to the Congolese population. For example, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), is a rebel group created in 1995. It is in the mountainous DRC and Uganda border area. The group has committed various violations of international law. Despite the efforts of the FARDC and MONUSCO which weakened the group in the 2000s, it continues to target civilians, especially in the region of North Kivu.¹⁵⁵ Especially during the 2010s, the ADF's aggressive tactics resulted in steady territorial gains. They also pledged allegiance in 2019 to the Islamic State group.¹⁵⁶ Between May 4 and May 7, 2024, the attacks by the ADF in the villages of the Baswagha-Madiwe group, resulted in at least 80 casualties.¹⁵⁷ The ADF acted originally in Ugandan

148 Romain Gras, "DRC: Sake, ghost town at the mercy of the M23," *The Africa Report*, last modified May 23, 2024, <https://www.theafricareport.com/347674/drc-sake-ghost-town-at-the-mercy-of-the-m23/>

149 Matthysen, "Shifting frontlines: Visualizing the evolution of the M23's territorial influence in early 2024."

150 "M23 seizes town in east DR Congo as rebels gaining ground," *Turkish Radio and Television Corporation Afrika*, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://trtafrika.com/africa/m23-rebels-take-drc-uganda-border-town-18191735>

151 "Bullet wounds are common: crime rife in DRC's rebel-besieged city of Goma," *The Guardian*, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/may/17/goma-drc-rwanda-m23-rebels-wazalendo-militias-democratic-republic-congo>

152 "Total security incidents: Democratic Republic of the Congo," *International NGO Safety Organization*, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://ngosafety.org/conflict-data-dashboard/>

153 "Total security incidents: Democratic Republic of the Congo," *International NGO Safety Organization*, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://ngosafety.org/conflict-data-dashboard/>

154 "Rebel Fighting Cuts Power Lines to Congolese City of Goma," *Voice of America*, November 07, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/rebel-fighting-cuts-power-lines-to-congolese-city-of-goma-/7344981.html>

155 "Allied Democratic Forces," *United Nations Security Council*, October 29, 2014, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/1533/materials/summaries/entity/allied-democratic-forces-%28adf%29>

156 Kristof Titeca, and Daneil Fahey, "The many faces of a rebel group: the Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *International Affairs* 92, no. 5 (September 2016): 1189-1206, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12703>

157 "At least 80 people killed by suspected ADF rebels in DRC," *Africa News*, October 06, 2024, <https://www.africanews.com/2024/06/10/at-least-80-people-killed-by-suspected-adf-rebels-in-drc/>

territory but is now based in Congo. Due to its actions on Ugandan and Congolese grounds, the governments have been acting in unison in their attempt to eradicate the group. Since 2021, their armies have been engaged in Operation Shujaa, which targets the ADF rebels in Ituri Province. This territory has been especially suffering from its attacks.¹⁵⁸ Although this is not a group that threatens to advance into DRC territory as much as M23, their violent actions have resulted in many deaths and displacements. This furthers the complications of the current humanitarian crisis.

Another example is the Congo Development Cooperative (CODECO) was created in the 1970s, and its violent crimes began as a land dispute between Hema and Lendu ethnic groups. The continuous violence perpetrated by the armed group has caused subsequent effects in neighboring towns, with greater regional security concerns.¹⁵⁹ Over the years, the organization has carried out murderous attacks against members of the Hema ethnic community. Since 2020, the assaults have been wide and intense, with severe strikes on military locations, mainly in those involving FARDC.¹⁶⁰ In February 2024, CODECO's armed rebels killed 15 people in the Ituri province, with sources stating that it again targeted people from the rival Hema tribe.¹⁶¹ Many invasions and attacks made by these rebel groups are highly influenced by their interests in the vast resources that lay in DRC's ground. CODECO, for example, has repeatedly targeted areas rich in gold and minerals, particularly in areas in the Ituri province. In February 2024, the armed group attacked a gold mine near Djugu district.¹⁶²

Along with other armed groups, CODECO has implicated

non-stop suffering in the people of Congo. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), in 2023, CODECO killed at least 46 civilians and destroyed a displaced people's camp in the eastern Ituri province. This has repeatedly happened over the last three years.¹⁶³ Thomas Fessy, researcher at HRW stated that attacking people in camps where they seek a haven from conflict has been CODECO's awful mark.¹⁶⁴ Survivors and UN sources also stated that over a month later, thousands of camp inhabitants were still too afraid to stay at the Lala site overnight.¹⁶⁵ This has caused many to transfer to other camps and locations. The Kivu Security Tracker also shows that at least 945 civilians have been killed in Ituri province since the start of the year. Within this, CODECO has been implicated in almost half of the killings.¹⁶⁶ Due to this massive violence, the DRC and allied countries have attempted to reach peaceful accords with the militias. Efforts to reduce violence in the DRC also included the deployment of thousands of South African troops. This was part of a Southern African Development Community (SADC) mission to combat armed rebel groups in the east.¹⁶⁷

The gains of militias and armed groups within the DRC have caused massive casualties and humanitarian issues. Hence, conjunct efforts to reach a practical solution are now required. Yet, this issue has to be looked at and fought by more than one facet. Governmental efforts and its military forces must work along with global support. By this means, making access between basic services and the Congolese population, easier.

Growing Mistrust and Hostilities

The ongoing hostilities in the DRC, mainly in the regions

158 Musinguzi Blanshe, "DRC/Uganda: After 2.5 years of hunting the ADF, what have the armies achieved?" The Africa Report, last modified May 23, 2024, <https://www.theafricareport.com/348746/drc-uganda-after-2-5-years-of-hunting-the-adf-what-have-the-armies-achieved/>

159 Martins Abadias do Nascimento, and Richard Apau, CODECO Violent Extremism Activities in Eastern DRC: Analysis of Vulnerabilities, Response, and Resilience (Algeria: African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, 2023), https://archives.au.int/bitstream/handle/123456789/10463/42722-doc-CODECO_Violent_Extremism_Activities_in_Eastern_DRC_Analysis_of_Vulnerabilities_Response_and_Resilience.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

160 Nascimento and Apau, CODECO Violent Extremism Activities in Eastern DRC: Analysis of Vulnerabilities, Response, and Resilience

161 Lawal, "A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo."

162 "Gold Mine Attack in Eastern DRC Kills at Least 12 People," Voice of America, February 16, 2024, <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/gold-mine-attack-in-drc-kills-at-least-12-people/7489946.html>

163 "DR Congo: Deadly Militia Raid on Ituri's Displaced," Human Rights Watch, July 24, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/07/24/dr-congo-deadly-militia-raid-ituris-displaced>

164 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Deadly Militia Raid on Ituri's Displaced."

165 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Deadly Militia Raid on Ituri's Displaced."

166 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Deadly Militia Raid on Ituri's Displaced."

167 "CODECO Rebel Attack Kills 15 People in Eastern DR Congo," Al Jazeera, February 19, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/19/codeco-rebel-attack-kills-15-people-in-eastern-drc>

of North and South Kivu have devastated the country's population. Despite constant efforts by FARDC and MONUSCO, progress against human rights violations and civilian deaths has been slow and troubled. Much of this is because the Congolese government is not structured to deal with this crisis. Looking at the history of the DRC, a link between political instability and state vacuum becomes clear. The term "state vacuum" refers to the context in which the state institutions do not exercise their duty in a way that protects the citizens and solves problems that are affecting them.¹⁶⁸ These factors allow the advance of armed groups on Congolese territory. Above all, this happens when the country's army does not exercise strong control. Also, where it is not shown to have the support of the population.

For instance, when CONDECO attacked the Lala camp for displaced persons in Ituri, the Congolese soldiers and UN peacekeepers deployed nearby failed to step in. This non-stop cycle of violence in Ituri, which had its boost in 2017, comes from long-standing issues that were not addressed in the early 2000s. This includes the massacres that happened between 1999 and 2007, resulting in tens of thousands of civilian deaths.¹⁶⁹ Yet, the central issue has been the disputes inherited from the colonial era. Namely conflicts regarding injustices over land rights, ethnic relations, and the control of natural resources. The problem is that these factors were not addressed by the Congolese government, letting them become the huge issues they are today. Various armed groups have exploited the absence or weakness of state forces in eastern DRC to perpetrate attacks against citizens. The increase of these groups has been enabled by a pattern of impunity and strife for control of valued minerals.¹⁷⁰

There is also a growing lack of trust in the country's State tools, which weakens the government. This is not only due to the government's response to armed groups, but also to its

own violent decisions. Notably, under Tshisekedi, there has been a lot of repression against free speech, press freedom, and peaceful gatherings. The government has been harsh on journalists, human rights activists, and political opponents, using excessive force.¹⁷¹ As the government presents itself capable of repressing journalists' rights, but not of repressing armed invasions, the Congolese population has become more wary of their governors.

These issues were amplified when it was exposed that the government's armed forces have been accused of violating International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.¹⁷² While facing armed groups, FARDC and police forces received many charges. They included sexual assault, torture, and arbitrary murders. Some of which may entail crimes against humanity and war crimes.¹⁷³ When extending the mandate of MONUSCO, the Security Council urged the DRC to ensure their Army worked by regulations in place. The document sets out that members of the Congo National Army should be subject to disciplinary or judicial action when fitting. Voicing its concern with known army members responsible for serious human rights breaches and abuses.¹⁷⁴

The matter of impunity and lack of practical solutions are also of major importance. According to the Human Rights Watch, serious violations and crimes continue to be carried out with impunity. They also state there seems to be no improvement in citizens' lives.¹⁷⁵ In fact, in May 2021, martial law was declared in two conflict-ridden regions of the DRC. This was a means to put a stop to the chaos that was killing people across the country daily. With martial law in place, the military can search homes anytime, stop people from gathering or sharing certain information, limit travel, and arrest anyone who disrupts their order.¹⁷⁶ Military control puts at risk a wide variety of rights, yet it was considered a means to restrict conflict. Hence, the military took over control from civilian authority in North

168 Rabi Thapa, "State Fragility and Organized Crime," *Journal of APF Command and Staff College 2*, no. 1 (2019): 124-125, <https://csc.apf.gov.np/admin-panel/docs/20190307145026.pdf>

169 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Deadly Militia Raid on Ituri's Displaced."

170 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Democratic Republic of the Congo."

171 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Second Term Should Focus on Rights."

172 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Democratic Republic of the Congo."

173 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Democratic Republic of the Congo."

174 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2053, Adopted by the Security Council at its 6792nd meeting, S/RES/2053, ¶ 5 (June 27, 2012), <https://undocs.org/S/RES/2053>.

175 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Second Term Should Focus on Rights."

176 "Martial Law in Eastern Congo No Pretext for Abuse," Human Rights Watch, May 07, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/07/martial-law-eastern-congo-no-pretext-abuse>

Kivu and Ituri for an initial 30-day period.¹⁷⁷

Even though this measure was put in place, many armed groups carried on with their cruelty. Rebels killed about 672 civilians and Congolese security forces killed 67 civilians in Ituri and other areas from May 6 to September 10.¹⁷⁸ In August, a mass killing showed that the area was still very unsafe, and the military was not doing enough to protect people. On August 2, the Allied Democratic Forces killed at least 16 people in a village called Idohu.¹⁷⁹ Even though Congo's soldiers were nearby, they did not intervene and were not able to stop the violence.¹⁸⁰ Other armed organizations, as well as parts of the Congolese national army, have been linked to attacks in the region. Other groups and some Congolese soldiers have also been involved in attacks. This lack of action capacity makes people lose trust in the military and allows new armed groups to form. The president of Congo is being urged to take real steps to stop the cycle of violence caused by not holding people accountable for serious crimes.¹⁸¹ These concrete measures are also required to restore the Congolese people's faith in democratic institutions.

An additional hostile event that has worsened these circumstances was in Kibirizi. In May 2024, an attack took place at a coffee plantation in the agricultural town of Kibirizi in North Kivu province. The region had already been seized two months earlier by M23 and the suspected Rwandan army. The militia had a reunion with the people of the province, telling them to go on with their normal lives.¹⁸² However, at the end of April, the Congolese army, supported by the union of armed groups, the Wazalendos, launched an offensive to retake the city from the M23. The fighting that emerged from this, between the FARDC and the M23 destroyed houses and resulted in citizen deaths. After the dispute, the army failed to

retake Kibirizi. Kasereka, a 30-year-old who was caught in the middle of the conflict, said that when the army withdrew, the M23 started to "attack the population," as the residents were left at the mercy of the former.¹⁸³ In turn, Augustin Darwin, Front of Patriots for Peace spokesman, stated he had no prior confidence in the FARDC, considering it had failed to respect agreements with armed groups. He accused the Congolese army of "withdrawal after withdrawal" and "fleeing before the enemy".¹⁸⁴ As said before, impunity is also a factor that has been worsening these situations. Civil society leaders from Kibirizi, Kanyabayonga, and Kishishe have said in 2024, some FARDC officers have allowed rebels to move freely. "Impunity is what makes things not work in our Republic," Kasereka also argued.¹⁸⁵

Along with all these issues, there is still the egress of MONUSCO, which began after a formal presidential request. As the withdrawal began in 2024, the bases in DRC which were controlled by the UN mission were handed to national forces. Within weeks of this change, the posts in South Kivu province had fallen into bad conditions. This showed that the DRC's case, after the full exit of MONUSCO, might get even worse.¹⁸⁶ Over half of the 115 officials set to occupy a transferred base have deserted, and those who stayed face low morale due to a lack of pay and basic supplies. There are growing rebel attacks and displacement of an estimated 7 million citizens, with over 80 percent living in areas protected by the UN mission.¹⁸⁷ Yet, President Félix Tshisekedi's government has pushed for its complete withdrawal by the end of 2024. It has been brought up that the retreat of the mission from regions where peacekeepers frequently monitor may worsen an existing security and protection gap. This would place more civilians in danger, mainly when armed groups remobilize in

177 Human Rights Watch, "Martial Law in Eastern Congo No Pretext for Abuse."

178 "DR Congo: Massacres Persist Despite Martial Law," Human Rights Watch, September 15, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/15/dr-congo-massacres-persist-despite-martial-law>

179 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Massacres Persist Despite Martial Law."

180 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Massacres Persist Despite Martial Law."

181 Human Rights Watch, "DR Congo: Second Term Should Focus on Rights."

182 "'Living in fear' amid relentless battle for eastern DR Congo," Al Jazeera, May 16, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2024/5/16/living-in-fear-amid-relentless-battle-for-eastern-dr-congo>

183 Al Jazeera, "'Living in fear' amid relentless battle for eastern DR Congo."

184 Al Jazeera, "'Living in fear' amid relentless battle for eastern DR Congo."

185 Al Jazeera, "'Living in fear' amid relentless battle for eastern DR Congo."

186 Nantulya, "Understanding the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Push for MONUSCO's Departure."

187 Nantulya, "Understanding the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Push for MONUSCO's Departure."

South Kivu.¹⁸⁸ In particular, FARDC offensives often trigger retaliation by armed groups who target civilians.

Ongoing fighting and the government's failure to act have resulted in great issues in the DRC. The complete retreat of MONUSCO might result in more challenges for the local and global communities. Hence, government institutions must be made stronger and stable.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, are a body of priorities and issues that must be tackled as the world searches for peace and well-being. As stated by the United Nations, the 17 SDGs are an urgent call to action by all countries in international cooperation.¹⁸⁹ Although distinct, all SDGs work in a union, one cannot reach its full potential without the other. Seen as the crisis in the DRC is of ample scope and complexity, many of the SDGs can be applied to it. Yet, some appear to be more urgent than others.

SDG 16 is one of the main priorities within the country. It aims to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”¹⁹⁰ There are main factors within this SDG that raise its tie to the DRC. This includes the concern for abrupt rises in conflict-related civilian deaths, a matter that strongly relates to the DRC. Indeed, many sources pinpoint that around 5 to 6 million people have died since the beginning of the conflicts in the country in 1996.¹⁹¹ The Congolese leaders and those who support it must devise practical ways to reduce this rising number. This can be achieved by stressing efforts in

armed conflicts or their aftereffects, such as famine and illness. According to the OHCHR's SDGs indicator from 2023, other aspects from number 16 pertain to the context in the DRC.¹⁹² For instance, the organ tracked the proportion of women killed in conflicts since the adoption of Agenda 2030 in 2015. It also reveals the total count of victims of killings, enforced disappearances, and other attacks, to measure fundamental freedoms and human rights violations. A further indicator is the presence of discrimination. In general, it is exposed that women are twice as likely to be discriminated against compared to men.¹⁹³ Hence, SDG16 encompasses many of the main challenges that are being tackled in the DRC.

Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, and 3, are also of utmost value and intersect with the crisis in the DRC. These SDGs address, respectively: Ending Poverty; Zero hunger and food security; and healthy lives and well-being for all ages.¹⁹⁴ Thus, they mainly target challenges that have been affecting the population of the DRC beyond the armed conflicts. In 2007, the International Monetary Fund published the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for the DRC.¹⁹⁵ This was a cross-sectoral national policy plan with the central goal of achieving effective change in people's living situations by addressing the root causes of poverty.¹⁹⁶ Despite this and other major attempts to reduce poverty in the country, the ceaseless combats and forced displacement have halted much progress towards SDG 1. As it is connected with many others, this should be one of the main priorities within the SDGs for those who seek a long-term solution for the DRC's human rights crisis.

Furthermore, it is known that the DRC hosts one of the largest hunger crises in the world, which links the country to SDG 2.¹⁹⁷ There have been many attempts to amend this, with

188 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, “Democratic Republic of the Congo.”

189 “The 17 Goals,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

190 “Goal 16,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

191 Global Conflict Tracker, “Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.”

192 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2023 Infographics OHCHR Indicators (Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2023), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/hrindicators/2023_Infographics_OHCHR%20Indicators.pdf

193 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2023 Infographics OHCHR Indicators.

194 “Goal 1,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1>; “Goal 2,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2>; “Goal 3,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

195 International Monetary Fund, Democratic Republic of the Congo: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Washington, D.C: International Monetary Fund, 2007), <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/cng152214.pdf>

196 International Monetary Fund, Democratic Republic of the Congo: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

197 “Democratic Republic of the Congo,” World Food Programme, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.wfp.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo>

collaboration between institutions such as the WFP, FAO, UNHCR and UNICEF. Their projects aim to empower local communities in their struggle to deal with climate shocks, lack of opportunities for women and economic struggles, while also maintaining essential food-systems.¹⁹⁸ The WFP and its partners have also attempted to provide school meals in the DRC for over two decades. Mainly in post-conflict and chronic food insecurity areas.

On the other hand, there is a major tie with SD3, specially target 3.8, which has a focus on universal health coverage (UHC). According to the United Nations Development Programme, the DRC leaders believe UHC promotes social inclusion, equality, economic growth, and human dignity.¹⁹⁹ Still, as the country is going through chronic health problems, with massive health spending forcing millions of people into poverty, the health care goal of leaving no one behind has been impaired.²⁰⁰ The UN report also states that the country's vows to attain the SDGs are centered on improving people's well-being, with a special emphasis on access to essential services such as health, education, water, energy, and others.

All these goals have been noted by the Congolese government and Tshisekedi himself.²⁰¹ Delegates must also focus on them and attempt to find solutions for this issue. This can also include the focus and funding of initiatives that are already in place trying to cause change.

Bloc Analysis

Points of Division

With the deterioration of safety in the DRC and the rise in human rights violations, the international community has become divided regarding its perspective on the conflict. On the one hand, some countries often declare their views. They do so while offering direct support to the DRC in their attempt to protect their population. On the other hand, some countries have not supplied the DRC with direct instruments.

Still, they have attempted to assist through indirect initiatives and have declared their support for the country and its fight. Finally, some countries have remained neutral or have opposed international support in the region.

The main distinction between these blocs is based on how they stand regarding efforts that have been put into effect in the DRC. Those who have so far contributed to the missions, particularly UN peacekeeping, will try to develop programs that are like them. Perhaps even utilizing them as a model for further actions. For instance, the countries that make up the first bloc will continue to provide resources to support these initiatives in the future. As they have in the past, they will try to ensure that the plans achieve their goals.

Thus, this separation makes it easier to identify helpful allies. Delegates will be able to comprehend the solutions that their countries prioritize by studying the State's database, such as the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Even by looking through UN conferences, it is possible to see countries' assistance and views on the organization's incursions.

Some African countries, for example, have shown strong support for regional plans in a unified manner. On the other hand, European countries have mostly remained focused on indirect help and have voiced their support for the DRC. Although there are exceptions of a few that have shown themselves firmly certain to support international initiatives. Yet, some countries have remained neutral regarding this situation. They might even oppose the current actions being implemented in the DRC. These divisions can be the result of several factors, which will all later influence the resolutions that are formed and the support they receive. These factors include internal policies and values regarding interfering in external situations. Also, the capacity that countries have to offer resources in support to others. Even a country's history can influence its stances relating to this context.

¹⁹⁸ World Food Programme, "Democratic Republic of the Congo."

¹⁹⁹ United Nations Development Programme, Integrated Sdg Insights Democratic Republic Of Congo (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2023), https://data.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke476/files/2023-11/undp_-_sdg_drc.pdf

²⁰⁰ United Nations Development Programme, Integrated Sdg Insights Democratic Republic Of Congo.

²⁰¹ "DR Congo President outlines vision for a 'more representative' UN Security Council," UN News, September 26, 2019 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1047722> .

Countries that have offered direct support to the DRC

This first bloc consists of the countries that have maintained support for international projects aimed at resolving DRC's current challenges. This support may come in many forms, depending on the country addressed. This bloc includes those with the highest monetary and personnel support offered to UN initiatives in the DRC. It includes those that are in favor of MONUSCO. Countries that have publicly declared their backup plans in the DRC also fit into this section. This might have been done through their president or other official authorities.

In recent years, many regional forces, along with MONUSCO, have been deployed in eastern DRC. The East African Community Regional Force (EACRF), for one, spent a year stationed in eastern DRC. This was a result of the Nairobi process. This mission expired on December 8, 2023.²⁰² Yet, the Congolese State has also asked for and obtained assistance from the Southern African Development Community. The group agreed in May 2023 to deploy SAMIDRC in eastern Congo. According to the UN Security Council, the SAMIDRC structure includes 5,000 troops from Malawi, South Africa, and Tanzania.²⁰³ During the debates regarding this mission, several stances, mainly in favor of regional efforts, have surfaced. Above all, it appears that most members of the Security Council admit the need to reduce tensions between Rwanda and the DRC. Still, several nations, like the United States and France, have taken firmer stances against Rwanda's alleged activities. They reportedly said they wanted to see more coordinated action with other regional players.²⁰⁴

This bloc also includes the countries that have offered the most support to UN initiatives in various ways. Regarding MONUSCO, the main mission deployed in DRC, as of February 2024, it had 12,385 deployed troops and 591 police

personnel licensed to act on the ground.²⁰⁵ From this number, Pakistan was the biggest contributor, granting 1,908 military staff. India places second concerning troops, with 1,817 contributions. It is also the fifth country that has the most contributors with police crew. The other countries that have provided the mission with major support, proved their belief in missions of this nature, both military and others. And they intend to support ongoing initiatives of this nature. Hence, another aspect that can be considered to determine a country's stance in this regard is also their financial contribution to MONUSCO and UN projects focused on soothing humanitarian struggles.

Mostly, this bloc will include countries that believe foreign aid should be provided by the international community and the UN. Yet, they might differ when positioning themselves regarding the means that should be taken. For example, the US, France, and other European countries have stood strongly against the complete removal of MONUSCO. They have continuously provided monetary support for the mission. The Republic of Korea on the other hand has not been as engaged with this specific initiative. Still, it has contributed so far with 8 million US dollars in 2024, to a new programme for social cohesion and community-violence reduction in South Kivu.²⁰⁶ This is a project by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This way, delegates that find their countries contribute in any major way to the solutions put in place in the DRC will fit into this bloc. This is especially true if they have shown their positions through official declarations.

Countries that have voiced support for the DRC

The second bloc in this division consists of the countries that have stated their support for the DRC and the efforts made to mitigate the challenges in the region. Yet they have not provided much direct support for them. This can be due to

202 "In Hindsight: The Escalating Conflict in Eastern DRC and UN Support of Regional Forces, April 2024 Monthly Forecast," Security Council Report, March 31, 2024, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-04/in-hindsight-the-escalating-conflict-in-eastern-drc-and-un-support-of-regional-forces.php>.

203 "In Hindsight: The Escalating Conflict in Eastern DRC and UN Support of Regional Forces, April 2024 Monthly Forecast," Security Council Report, March 31, 2024, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-04/in-hindsight-the-escalating-conflict-in-eastern-drc-and-un-support-of-regional-forces.php>.

204 "In Hindsight: The Escalating Conflict in Eastern DRC and UN Support of Regional Forces, April 2024 Monthly Forecast."

205 United Nations Peacekeeping, "MONUSCO Fact Sheet," accessed July 10, 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/monusco>

206 United Nations Press, "Military Group's Expansion in Democratic Republic of Congo 'Carries Very Real Risk of Provoking Wider Regional Conflict', Mission Head Tells Security Council," press release, July 08, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15760.doc.htm>

many reasons. Firstly, the financial support that certain groups provide, relies on the fact that they have these resources to spare. Many countries, however, do not have this option. Particularly if they are developing countries or going through economic challenges. This bloc will also include countries that have stances of caution to external interventions. This is potentially due to their internal policies or historical traditions.

Many countries in this bloc have advocated for global involvement and aid, despite not offering direct military or monetary support. In a UNSC meeting, the representative of Ecuador, for one, showed his support for the SADC mission. He declared it is a vital display of regional support for peace and stability.²⁰⁷ Ecuador is not a major actor in the assistance of the DRC and has not provided strong direct aid. Still, representatives have voiced their support for regional and global projects and DRC's efforts. These are factors endorsed by many countries in this bloc.

There was also disagreement about how countries should assist others in emergencies. Some European countries are showing support for the Congo and are worried about the situation. Still, they have not taken direct action. Instead, they are mostly funding general projects through the European Union. One example of this is Germany. The country has expressed its commitment to support DRC, but it has focused its aid on long-term general projects that do not involve immediate financial assistance.²⁰⁸

It should also be noted that some countries in Europe have acted with caution due to their colonial past. Especially since many African countries have stood up against their hurtful oppressors. Actions by Western countries have considered the possible adverse backlash and reactions by the Congolese population. Mainly since they may present themselves as new brutal interventions. Hence it becomes clear that many countries have voiced their support for Congo, or have provided indirect assistance through general projects. Even

though they might not have offered direct support for the country and the deployed missions. States can still show their support by public calls to action and official stances.

Countries that have remained neutral towards the DRC

The countries in this bloc have not formally said how they feel about the DRC's circumstances. Plus, they have not provided direct or indirect assistance to international efforts made to address current problems. There will be countries who may opt to maintain their neutrality. Others assert that the challenged region will find a way to handle the issue on its own.

Even with ongoing efforts in the DRC, several countries across the world remain neutral as to the circumstances there. As a result, this grouping includes all States that have a policy of avoiding or keeping neutral when it comes to external disputes and activities. Likewise, because of their stance, which does not prioritize this, the States in this bloc will not offer instrumental support for future solutions.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has set in place parameters for a State to assume neutrality. According to the institution, neutrality describes the formal posture taken by a State that is not participating in an armed conflict or which does not want to become involved. This status implies specific rights and duties. The neutral State has the right to stand apart from and not suffer adverse effects from the conflict. On the other hand, it has a duty of not participating and remaining impartial.²⁰⁹ In this way, countries that remain loyal to their neutrality policy, such as Switzerland and Austria, will not get involved in any way in the Congolese context.²¹⁰

They may voice their support for diplomatic and humanitarian solutions to the region's problems. They will not devote their resources toward tactics or provide direct assistance to one party in a conflict over the other. In general, neutrality lets

207 United Nations Press, "Military Group's Expansion in Democratic Republic of Congo 'Carries Very Real Risk of Provoking Wider Regional Conflict', Mission Head Tells Security Council," press release, July 08, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15760.doc.htm>

208 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, "German Development Ministry increases support for poorest countries," press release, March 06, 2023, <https://www.bmz.de/en/news/press-releases/development-ministry-increases-support-for-poorest-countries-146562>

209 International Committee of the Red Cross, *The Law of the Armed: Neutrality* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2022), https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/other/law8_final.pdf

210 International Committee of the Red Cross, *The Law of the Armed: Neutrality* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2022), https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/other/law8_final.pdf

States protect their interests while avoiding the dangers and expenses caused by global wars.

Committee Mission

Within the framework of the United Nations, the Human Rights Council is a body tasked with addressing human rights breaches and offering guidance. It also works to promote and defend human rights worldwide. It can address all the year's pressing human rights concerns and urgent contexts. Their meetings happen in the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG).²¹¹ The UNHRC involves UN officials, experts, states, and civil society. The organ offers them a forum for dialogue on human rights issues. Through these debates, it adopts resolutions and plans to express the international community's stance on human rights issues. It also holds crisis meetings, reviews human rights records, appoints the Special Procedures, and enables fact-finding missions. The Procedures monitor and focus on specific countries or themes. While the missions try to produce acute evidence on crimes against humanity and war crimes.²¹² The Council consists of various tools and entities. Including the Universal Periodic Review, Advisory Committee, and platforms for dialogue.

Within the committee's specialties and methods, it targets themes such as education, health, free speech, and human trafficking. Their mandate focuses on these issues which are pertinent to the crisis in the DRC. The topic of the Human Rights Crisis in the DRC must be discussed in this committee. Considering it is a place that involves so many global actors that can work towards solutions. There are many ways the committee can assist the situation in the country. In October 2023, The Human Rights Council renewed the mandate of the Team of International Experts on the DRC. They asked for technical support for the government's transitional justice policy. As well as for its fight against impunity. This team's primary function was to monitor and provide support for the DRC's search for reconciliation and peace.²¹³ The group has

amassed an ample amount of evidence about violations of human rights. This included mass murders, sexual assault, and other types of violence. Their findings have served as a basis for advocacy and policy actions, also helping to draw concern to these concerns on a global scale.²¹⁴

Although the committee contains many functions, it also holds limitations regarding its mandate. Firstly, it must be noted that the UNHRC does not make legally binding decisions. Thus, its member countries are not obligated to comply with the council's recommendations. This also leads to the limitation of the committee's strength to take concrete action.

Despite having limited capacity, the UNHRC is a vital component of the international human rights structure. It has the tools to track, document, and raise awareness of human rights concerns. It serves as a platform for exchange, a guardian against wrongdoings, and a call for global action.

211 "About HRC," United Nations Human Rights Council, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/about-council>

212 United Nations Human Rights Council, "About HRC."

213 "International Team of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo," United Nations Human Rights Council, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/kasai-region/index>

214 "In DRC, Insecurity Is at Alarming Levels, Türk Reports," UN Human Rights Office, April 07, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/04/drc-insecurity-alarming-levels-turk-reports>.

Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

Topic A

1. What are the main human rights violations occurring to people in Darfur, Sudan, and why is it difficult to find concrete ways to address and overcome them?
2. What are the psychological and social consequences of protracted displacement for Darfur's children, and how can the international community, especially your country, provide support?
3. How can local organizations and peace-building efforts be strengthened to address human rights concerns? What role does Sudanese society play in advocating for these improvements?
4. How has your country responded to the human rights issues in Darfur?
5. Is your country involved in the conflict in any way? If so, how?
6. What means or resources does your country have that can be used to mediate, or end said violation?
7. What peacebuilding strategies have been implemented in Darfur?
8. What are the obstacles to limiting the violations in Darfur?

Topic B

1. What measures can be taken by your country to address the historical grievances stemming from colonial rule and promote reconciliation in the DRC?
2. What role has your country played in the dynamics of conflict and the activities of rebel groups in the DRC?
3. What barriers do humanitarian organizations face in delivering aid to affected areas, and how can your country better support these efforts?
4. How can the UNHRC assist women, children, and civilians considering different barriers, such as the limited power of peacekeepers?
5. What lessons can be learned from previous international interventions in the DRC that can inform better, future initiatives, that your country would be interested in?
6. What are the key international initiatives currently in place to address the humanitarian and security crises in the DRC? How is your country participating?
7. What roles do regional organizations, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), play in promoting peace and security in the DRC? What initiatives has your country participated in?

Important Documents

Topic A

- Africa Renewal. “Explainer: How Darfur became a ‘humanitarian calamity and catastrophic human rights crisis’”. UN News. December 14, 2023. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2023/explainer-how-darfur-became-%E2%80%98humanitarian-calamity-and-catastrophic-human>.
- Amnesty International. “Sudan: New conflict escalation exacerbates 20 years of suffering for civilians in Darfur.” Last modified April 24, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/04/sudan-new-conflict-escalation-exacerbates-20-years-of-suffering-for-civilians-in-darfur/>.
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