



Update on the refugee situation

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I. Context of the Sudanese war

The Sudanese army and the RSF have long competed for power and relevance dating to the rule of the onetime autocratic leader President Omar al-Bashir.

In the early 2000s, Bashir armed and recruited Arab tribes to wage a brutal counteroffensive against mostly non-Arab armed groups, who were rebelling against government neglect and exploitation in Darfur (more than 300,000 people were killed there from 2003 to 2009). By 2013, Bashir repackaged these Arab tribal militias from Darfur into the RSF. Mohamad Hamdan Dagalo — universally known as Hemedti — was put in charge of the force.

Over the years, the RSF grew stronger by consolidating control over lucrative gold mines while earning hundreds of millions of dollars in exchange for sending mercenaries to fight for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Hemedti also deepened his ties with the United Arab Emirates and — like the army — he cooperated with the notorious Russian private military company the Wagner Group. Flush with wealth and support from foreign patrons, **the RSF quickly became a formidable rival to the military**, setting the scene for the conflict today.

Not long ago, military leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Hemedti were partners. After Bashir was toppled four years ago, Burhan became the head of the Sovereign Military Council — then the highest state body — with Hemedti as his deputy. Hemedti and Burhan submitted to internal and international pressure to join with a broad coalition of political parties now known as the Forces for Freedom and Change — Central Council (FFC-CC). **Bound together, the army, the RSF and the FFC-CC formed a military-civilian transitional government in August 2019.**

On Oct. 25, 2021, Burhan and Hemedti organized a coup to take power. In August 2022, Hemedti said that the country was worse off from the coup since it had emboldened Bashir-era Islamists. Indeed, Burhan had brought back Islamists from Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) to run the state bureaucracy, since he lacked any other constituency¹.

On Dec. 5, 2022, both men inked the U.N.-backed Framework Agreement, which launched a new political process to restore Sudan's transition to democracy. Nevertheless, the Framework Agreement

¹ Other NCP loyalists reportedly occupy senior positions in the military and detest Hemedti for turning against Bashir in 2019. More broadly, army generals from all ideological strands feared that the RSF could turn the military into a de facto secondary force if Hemedti got any stronger.

had a number of problems from the start. It was not inclusive, had little popular support and was overly ambitious. **The most contested issue between the two forces was the RSF's integration into the army. Hemedti called for his forces to integrate in 10 years, yet Burhan wanted the RSF to integrate in two.**

Conflict erupted on 15 April, 2023.

II. Situation in Sudan

Today, **8,71 million people have been displaced by this war.** Some 6.68 million are internally displaced, and 1.81 million have fled to neighboring countries².

At the end of January 2024, **the death toll was estimated at between 13,000 and 15,000.**

Humanitarian needs in Sudan are reaching record levels: **24.8 million people, or one person in two, will need humanitarian aid in 2024.** That's 9 million more than in 2023. Millions of people lack access to essential goods and services such as food, water, shelter, electricity, education, healthcare and nutrition.

The need for food aid has only increased with the recent spread of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudanese Security Forces (RSF) in the south-east of the country. The opening of this new front is further disrupting trade and agriculture in the area, considered Sudan's breadbasket, and jeopardizing access to food for many households on a national scale. The escalation of hostilities, combined with large-scale population displacements, atrocities against civilians, destruction of property and infrastructure, widespread looting and limited access for humanitarian aid, is exacerbating an already serious food security situation.

Around one in eleven health facilities run by humanitarian agencies is not functioning. Various difficulties - insecurity, looting, bureaucratic obstacles, poor network and telephone connections, lack of cash and shortage of technical and humanitarian staff on the ground - have affected the delivery of humanitarian aid in many parts of the country. Fuel shortages are also affecting the movement of humanitarian personnel and supplies, as well as the production of energy needed for operations (maintaining the cold chain, water supply, etc.). Sudan is also currently experiencing massive Internet and communications blackouts.

² HCR data, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation>

III. Sudanese refugees in Egypt

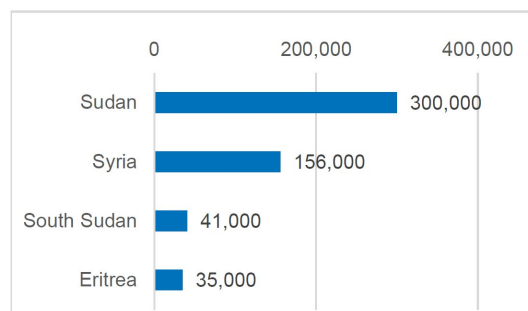
➤ Global situation³

Among them, according to the UNHCR data⁴, more than 500,000 refugees from Sudan are thought to have fled to Egypt since April 15, 2023.

The countries hosting the most refugees are: South Sudan (651,496 refugees as of April 21 2024), Chad (579,222 refugees as of April 19 2024), Egypt (575,000 refugees as of April 17, 2024), Ethiopia and the Central African Republic.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS REGISTERED WITH UNHCR IN EGYPT, AS OF 07 APRIL 2024

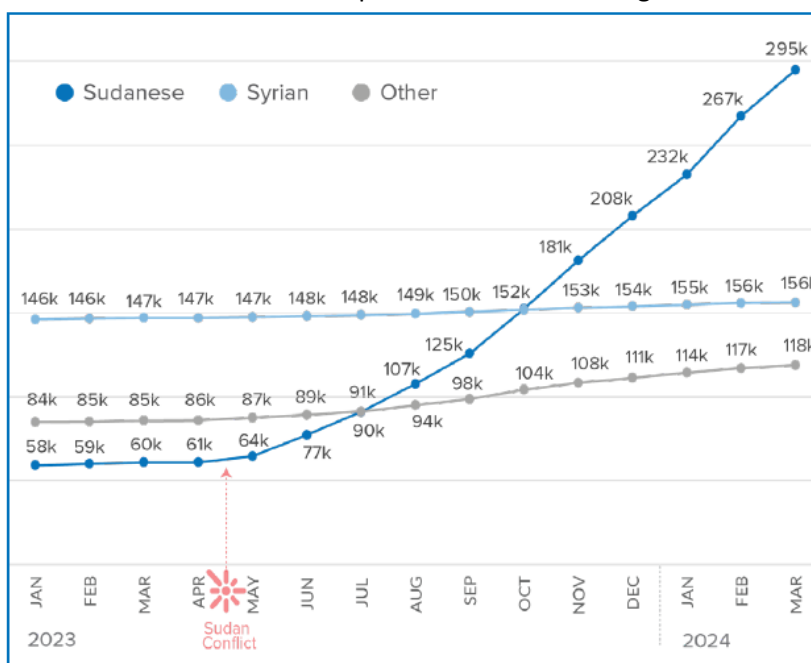
Top 4 Countries of Origin



Of the asylum seekers registered in Egypt, 52% are Sudanese. The remaining 48% are mainly Syrians (27%), South Sudanese (7%) or Eritreans (6%).

To have an idea of how the situation has dramatically evolved, a UNHCR report dated 31 January 2022 counted 52,446 Sudanese refugees, 20,970 South Sudanese and 21,105 Eritreans in Egypt. Over the last 2 years, the populations of these refugee communities have increased by **472% for Sudanese refugees, 96% for South Sudanese refugees and 66% for Eritreans.**

39% of new arrivals are minors. 53% of the displaced are women and girls.

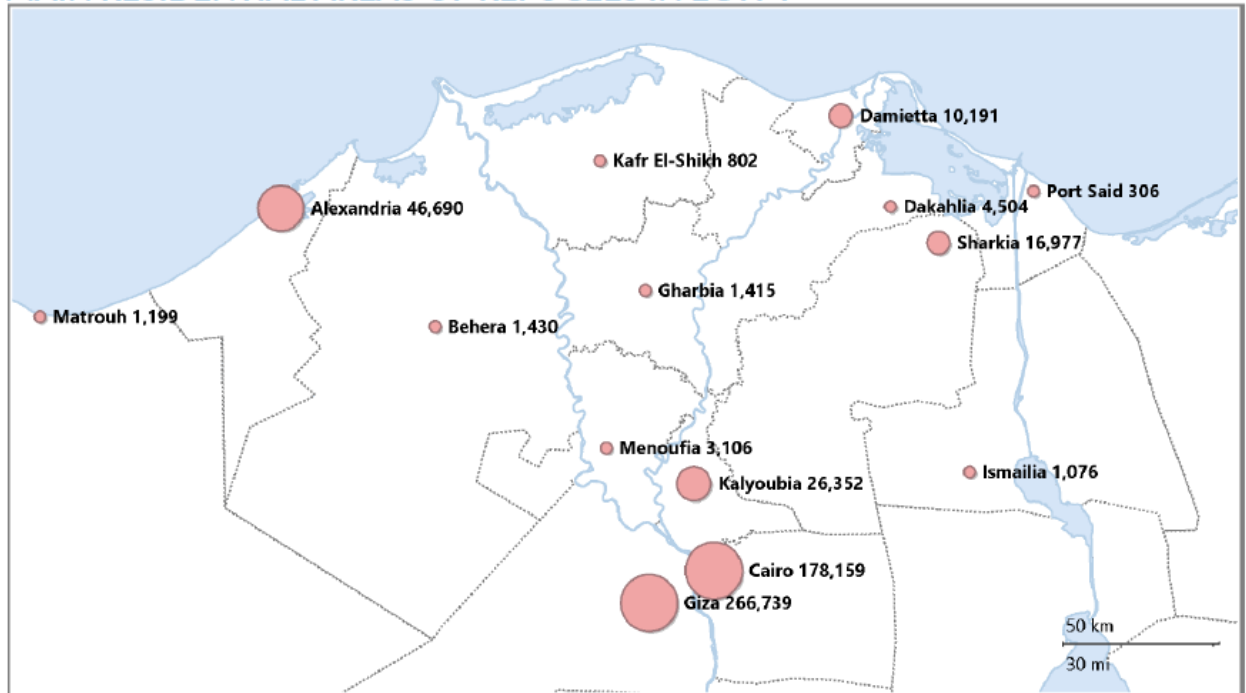


Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR Egypt (January 2023-April 2024)

³ HCR data, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation> ; UNHCR Egypt, [UNHCR Egypt: Sudan Emergency Response Update](#), 19 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/fr/documents/details/107936>

MAIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF REFUGEES IN EGYPT



➤ Situation in our parishes

In our Vicariate, seven churches or centers are in charge of displaced people (five for Sudanese, one for Eritreans and an occasional one for Egyptians from Sudan). **More than 15,000 people** were registered so far for assistance with food, medicines, lodging and education.

➤ The needs

Many families are currently arriving in Cairo and northern Egypt, having left behind their homes, possessions and jobs. They find themselves in a very precarious monetary situation. Their needs are manifold, but the priority remains basic necessities: food, health, housing, education and access to transport.

- **Food:** food is the first necessity of life. Without work and having left everything behind, many families find themselves without a subsistence income. Meeting their food needs becomes a daily challenge.
- **Health:** many people displaced by the war in Sudan are ill or elderly. Refugees are scarred by the physical and psychological consequences of war and their flight from Sudan. They need appropriate care and medicines, which are often impossible to obtain for lack of money.
- **Housing:** families are large, often with 8, 9 or 10 members, crammed into small apartments. Sometimes, they take in a second or even a third family who have fled the war, which creates a problem not only in terms of sanitation, but also with the landlords, who threaten to evict them all. Due to inflation and the war, rents have risen in recent months, making the situation even more complicated for new arrivals.
- **School fees:** schools resumed in September and are overwhelmed by applications. In addition, families have to pay school fees (often between 5,000 and 10,000 Egyptian pounds) which they cannot always afford.

- Transport: families often live in remote outlying areas, far from administrative infrastructures and potential workplaces. They therefore need financial support to be more mobile, available and integrated into Egyptian society.

IV. Testimonies

Two interviews with two fathers in charge of two different parishes are transcribed here.

- Interview with Father Mina, priest of the Sakakini parish, one of 5 Sudanese parishes in Cairo.

Between April 2023 and January 2024, 7,000 new people were registered in Sakakini and Arbaa Wa Nus.

Has the number of refugees stabilized or are there still new arrivals?

Sakakini has started supporting Sudanese refugees who have settled in the Faysal area, west of Cairo. The challenge is to assess the exact needs, who is most in need and to prioritize in such a dramatic situation.

At present, the parish of Sakakini has registered 7,000 people who have fled the war (since April 2023). Between January 1 and January 11, 2024, Sakakini registered 2,500 new people.

What are the priority needs?

- The first need is food. Inflation has seen prices rise, worsening the situation for refugees, and aid is both more in demand and more expensive. Every month, the parish helps around 200 people with a basic food kit (rice, pasta, lentils, flour, sugar, tea, tomato sauce and oil).
- The second need is blankets and clothes.
- The third, which is not a material need, but on which emphasis must be placed, is psychological support. The parish organizes activities and games for the children, who need to be distracted. A workshop project on psychological challenges is being set up to support adults who have suffered from the war.
- As for the schools, 72 children who fled the war were enrolled in September 2023 at Sakakini and 42 at Kilo Arbaa wa Nus.

A story to share?

Father Mina comes across a Sudanese woman, looking prostrate, waiting at a parish food distribution. He calls out to her:

"Hey my friend, smile a bit!

- I smile for what?"

By talking to her, he learns that the woman is a pharmacist. When she arrived in Egypt, she worked with an Egyptian who treated her like dirt. He made her scrub the floor, addressing her with contempt. But she had to put up with it, because she needed the salary to live. Eventually, he accused her of theft.

"This is our life now. We're doctors, we're educated, we're qualified. But we've lost everything, and now we find ourselves begging for sugar."

➤ Interview with Father Claude, head of the Eritrean parish in Cairo

Between April and October 2023, 746 new people were registered in our parish. All are Eritreans who fled the war in Sudan.

What are the prospects for the future?

More and more Eritreans are arriving.

Unlike the Sudanese, the majority of them do not know Arabic, but speak Tigrinya or another dialect. Finding a job is an obstacle course. The situation was already not good before the war in Sudan, but since the war and the wave of refugees it has brought to Egypt, cheap labor has exploded, and refugees are even more exploited than before, in conditions that are less and less respectful of human rights. As their refugee status does not grant them the right to work, the only jobs they can do are unofficial and undeclared. The work they are most in demand for is that of housework or cooking. It is therefore easier for girls to find work, as Egyptians prefer women for this type of task. Working conditions are very tough, with some Egyptian employers sometimes requiring housekeepers to be present from early morning until 2-3am. The cost of living has also risen, increasing the challenges. Most of them stay at home, idle and unemployed.

The majority of Eritreans are registered with the UNHCR. This registration does not entitle them to any monetary aid, but it does allow them to remain in the country legally. The only hope these thousands of refugees have is that their case will be accepted by one of the host countries (USA, Canada, Australia...) and that they will be sent there.

What are the needs?

- The first need is health and access to care, in quality hospitals. Some hospitals are recognized by the UNHCR, giving refugees access to care free of charge (thanks to a partnership between the hospital and the UNHCR). But these hospitals are often of very poor quality, with absent doctors, and delays that can take hours, even for emergency cases.
- The second need is education, since refugee children cannot attend Egyptian public schools. Without education, there's no future, and no stimulation or activities for the children, who stay at home watching their screens. Community schools can no longer cope with the growing demand, and have to limit the number of pupils for lack of space.
- The third need is food and access to basic nutrition. Malnutrition is rife among refugee children, who often suffer from severe deficiencies, particularly in milk, with repercussions for the rest of their lives.
- The fourth need is transport, the price of which has risen. Some children miss school because they can't afford the fare.