

## CRISIS OVERVIEW

The Sudanese capital of Khartoum has been the epicentre of the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that started on 15 April 2023 (IRC 25/06/2024). Khartoum state has since been largely contested between these two major parties, with the SAF gaining armed support from the Sudanese Liberation Movement – Minni Minawi and the Justice and Equality Movement, indicating conflict intensification in the state (ACLED 14/04/2024).

The eruption of violence in the capital effected a widespread disruption of social and administrative order. At the onset of the violence, which rapidly escalated into the current conflict, the RSF took control of much of the state (ICG 11/04/2024). Consequently, the SAF transferred its military headquarters, ministerial units, and country-level administrative units from Khartoum to Port Sudan, where the country's decision-making bodies currently sit. On account of heightened insecurity and the need to be in proximity to decision-making authorities, international organisations, including UN agencies, also moved to Port Sudan. In the wake of their departure, Khartoum is grappling with reduced humanitarian assistance and constraints to the provision of essential services concurrent with increased humanitarian needs.

The state's population faces multiple crises simultaneously taking shape to deepen the impact on civilians. Food insecurity and the risk of famine overlapping with displacement and armed violence expose populations to more than one system of crises (IPC 27/06/2024; OCHA 29/07/2024). While this complex crisis is majorly human-made, there is also the added risk of climate and environmental hazards, such as floods that have already worsened the current situation (OCHA 29/07/2024).

## CRISIS IMPACT

### Food insecurity

Between June–September 2024, an estimated 3,008,400 people in Khartoum are projected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity levels (IPC 27/06/2024). This is a decrease from around the same reporting period in June 2023, when 3,364,813 people were projected to face IPC 3 or worse conditions, although the decrease can be attributed to the overall population decline in the state (IPC 02/08/2023). Of the current projection, 90,317 of the people in Bahri, Khartoum, and Um Durman localities are expected to enter Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) conditions – a marked increase compared to none in the same reporting period in 2023. There is a risk of famine in Tuti Island, which the RSF have besieged since the early stages of the war, and in Jebel Awlia and Alingaz localities (WHO 17/07/2024; ST 02/10/2023). These projections point to deteriorating food security conditions in Khartoum on account of continued violence, the disruption of economic activity and livelihoods, and reduced access to humanitarian assistance.

The destruction and damage of food storage facilities and production factories concentrated in Khartoum have compounded food insecurity, especially in the middle of the lean season (typically between June–September) (FEWS NET accessed 06/08/2024). 57–60% of agrofood processing companies in Sudan were based in Khartoum (IFPRI 15/12/2023; FSD Africa 23/12/2023). Armed militia have damaged, destroyed, or looted these companies, which included the Samil Foods factory responsible for the production of ready-to-use therapeutic food for the management of severe acute malnutrition (UNICEF 12/05/2023). The situation has hampered the management of malnutrition cases among children, particularly in Khartoum, with catastrophic food shortages reported.

To counter the impact of deteriorating food insecurity, emergency response rooms have set up about 700 communal soup kitchens in various neighbourhoods of Khartoum (TNA 26/06/2024). The initiative was geared towards sustaining the regular provision of meals for the population remaining in the state. Recently, however, the paucity of food supplies and dwindling funding have shut them down, erasing a critical lifeline for the food-insecure population (TNH 24/06/2024; ST 13/07/2024).

Wheat is the staple food of Khartoum, as consumption is generally high in urban areas. Sudan is a net importer of wheat, much of which is sourced from bulk wheat-producing countries, such as Russia and Ukraine. The war between these two countries has also disrupted the delivery of wheat supplies to Sudan (UNHCR 24/11/2023).

The initial months of the war subjected markets and shops to looting, severely degrading the ability of vendors to meet supply demands. Soaring food prices accompanying hyperinflation (145.5% by April 2024) and the rapid depreciation of the Sudanese pound have eroded the purchasing power of civilians in Khartoum state (UN 23/07/2024; IMF accessed 24/07/2024; Dabanga 23/07/2024; WFP 23/07/2024).

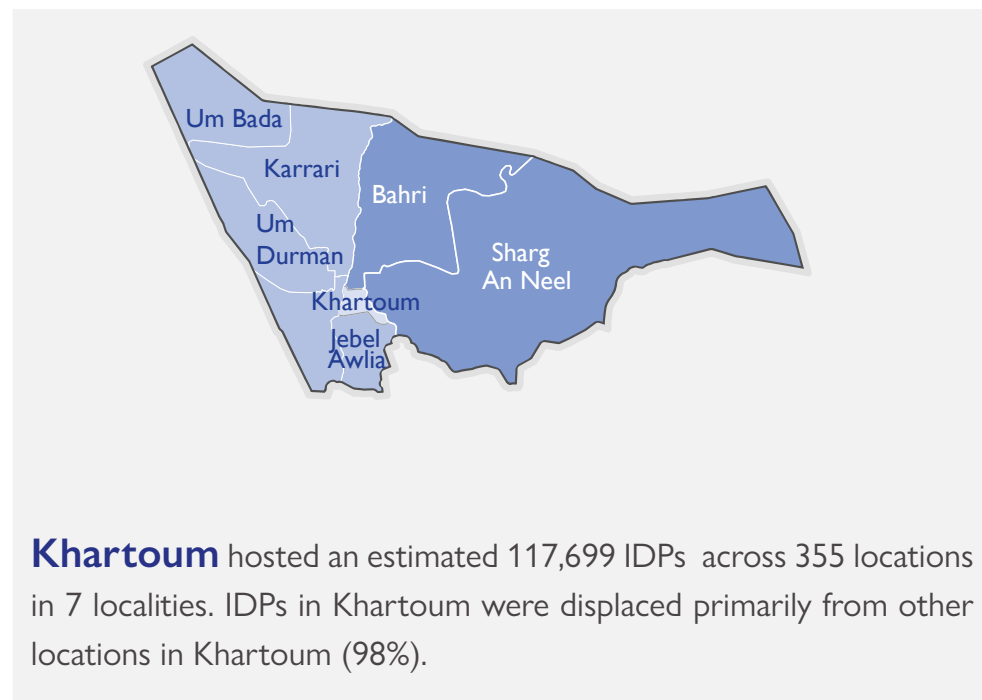
## Displacement

Khartoum state remains the largest source of displacement for IDPs within Sudan since the beginning of the war in April 2023. Persistent violence and hostilities are the major drivers of this displacement. By 16 July 2024, the war had displaced 3,753,446 people from Khartoum, accounting for 35% of the country's total displacement (IOM 16/07/2024). In 2022, Khartoum had an estimated population of 8,936,300; the scale of displacement had led to a 42% reduction of the state's population (UNFPA 22/11/2022). Given that some displaced individuals have sought refuge with family and are not registered as displaced, the total number of people displaced out of Khartoum is projected to be higher (IRC 25/06/2024). By 16 July 2024, 117,699 of the 3.7 million IDPs in Khartoum had been displaced within the state's seven localities (IOM 16/07/2024). Sharg An Neel (17,420), Karrari (14,876), and Bahri (14,195) localities were the largest contributors to intrastate displacement by April 2024 because of intense conflict between the SAF and RSF at the time (IOM 09/05/2024).

Conflict-induced displacement primarily stems from the hostilities between the RSF and the SAF as they contest control over Khartoum. Bahri and Um Durman have been at the centre of armed violence by the two parties, subjecting the cities to mortar shelling and aerial bombardments (IOM 30/04/2024; ACLED 15/03/2024).

Displacement within and out of Khartoum has affected not only Sudanese nationals but also refugees, migrants, and third country nationals. By 25 April 2024, Khartoum state had only 235 non-Sudanese nationals compared to approximately 314,000 refugees and migrants in March 2023, one month prior to the eruption of the conflict (IOM 16/07/2024; UNHCR 02/05/2023). The significant reduction in refugee and migrant populations within Khartoum has primarily resulted from the hostilities, heightened insecurity, and the overall degradation of living conditions. On 11 July 2024, state officials ordered the expulsion of foreign nationals residing within Khartoum by 26 July, claiming that the majority of RSF fighters were foreign nationals (ST 11/07/2024; Crisis24 12/07/2024).

Map. 1. IDP localities of displacement in Khartoum



Source: IOM DTM (16/07/2024)

## Mounting protection concerns

The population in Khartoum faces a complex multidimensional crisis that is exposing people to multiple protection concerns. Both the RSF and the SAF have indiscriminately attacked civilians. On 3 August 2024, the RSF raided several neighbourhoods in Bahri, where cases of torture, arbitrary arrest, and detention were reported (Dabanga 05/08/2024). Cases of indiscriminate shelling by the SAF and the RSF have also been active across the state (Dabanga 23/01/2024). On 7 June, RSF shelling in Um Durman killed 40 civilians and injured 50 others (AJ 07/06/2024). Between June–September 2023, RSF shelling killed 15 people; in September, shelling hit a bus station in Um Durman, killing another ten people (OHCHR 23/02/2024).

At the same time, the crisis has precipitated large-scale sexual and gender-based violence and abuse, disproportionately affecting women and girls (HRW 28/07/2024). Both the SAF and the RSF have used sexual violence as a weapon of war in Khartoum, resulting in the

rape, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation and abuse of civilians (HRW 28/07/2024; SIHA 01/08/2023). In Um Durman, soldiers associated with the army have solicited sexual favours from women in exchange for food access (The Guardian 22/07/2024). In Khartoum, the war is heightening the risk of sexual violence, especially for people on the move and those lacking shelter options (UNFPA 18/06/2024 and 24/07/2023). Sexual violence in Khartoum has not affected women exclusively; men and boys, particularly those in SAF and RSF detention, have also experienced sexual assault, including rape (HRW 28/07/2024). Concurrently, despite the scale of sexual violence, healthcare, protection, and legal services for survivors have rapidly declined, partly because of collapsed health capacity and legal systems and the targeting of health facilities, including reproductive healthcare clinics (IPPF 11/09/2023).

### Damaged civilian infrastructure

The hostilities, especially involving the use of heavy weaponry, have damaged or destroyed civilian infrastructure in Khartoum (DRC 04/04/2024). By 25 October 2023, six months of fighting had destroyed an estimated 33,000 buildings in Khartoum state (The Sudan Times 25/10/2023). The warring parties have targeted roads and bridges, impeding the ease and freedom of movement of people and supplies within and out of the state. On 11 November, the SAF destroyed the Shambat Bridge, a key supply route for the RSF connecting Um Durman and Bahri. On 18 November, bombing also severely damaged the Jabal Awlia Bridge connecting Khartoum and Um Durman over the River Nile, further straining civilian movement and worsening food shortages (ACLEDD 01/12/2023).

### Limited access to services

Consequent to the state-wide disruption of service provision, Khartoum is grappling with crisis-induced shortages of essential services, such as access to food, water, and healthcare. The financial systems and banking infrastructure in the state have largely ceased to function. While the Bank of Khartoum announced the resumption of operations in its El Hattana branch, Um Durman, on 10 March 2024, the majority of other branches in the state and other banks remain closed (Dabanga 23/07/2024). In light of bank closures and physical cash circulation challenges, people have been extensively using banking software such as the Bankak mobile app to access and transact with cashless money. This money is majorly reaching people through foreign remittances from the diaspora and cash-form assistance from humanitarian organisations, providing a lifeline for populations still in Khartoum (TNH 07/02/2024).

Both conflict parties engineer frequent and intermittent communication outages and internet interruptions, which continue to pose a challenge to service access (Access Now 21/03/2024). On 2 February 2024, the RSF's takeover of local network providers MTN Sudan and Sudatel triggered a Khartoum-wide internet shutdown, consequently disrupting banking and access

to information and communications (Access Now 09/02/2024). In the past, communication shutdowns have affected communal soup kitchens run by mutual aid groups, which primarily use internet access to crowdsource for funds and receive and access money to facilitate their programmes (TNH 24/06/2024). The deliberate obstruction of communications has compromised these efforts. Both major warring parties have equally been reported to have shut down telecommunication lines, with the SAF facing accusations of doing so in areas under RSF control, including Khartoum, which happen to be the same areas of significant humanitarian needs. Such shutdowns have had a far-reaching impact on humanitarian operations and programming, such as the recent discontinuation of community soup kitchens in Khartoum (NRC 13/05/2024; IR 01/03/2024). The RSF have moved in to fill network outages with the use of Starlink, a mobile satellite internet connectivity device, for which civilians pay fees between SDP 3,000 (4.98 USD) and SDP 4,000 (6.64 USD) per hour (ET 04/04/2024).

## SECTORAL UPDATES

### Health

The conflict crisis has severely affected health systems and infrastructure in Khartoum. Until 16 July 2024, 93% of the IDPs in the state were in need of health services, yet less than 10% of healthcare facilities remained functional because of staffing issues. These issues included the displacement of workers, the non-payment of salaries, a lack of access to medicine and equipment, and damage to hospitals (IOM 16/07/2024; WHO et al. unpublished). The overlapping impacts of the war, severe acute malnutrition, and displacement have overwhelmed the existing healthcare system in Khartoum.

Armed groups continue to target hospitals and health workers, impeding service delivery. On 17 and 18 June 2024, RSF combatants attacked a Turkish hospital supported by Médecins Sans Frontières, prompting the organisation to evacuate their staff and draw down activities at the hospital (MSF 10/07/2024). This hospital is one of the two remaining functional hospitals in southern Khartoum. The SAF also continue to deliberately deny and obstruct the access of humanitarian assistance (personnel and supplies) to Khartoum given the RSF's control over much of the state, further constraining healthcare access (MSF 19/10/2023; HRW 12/04/2024). A blanket ban on specialised surgical equipment and kits aimed at ensuring that RSF combatants do not receive medical interventions is also affecting the general population, particularly wounded civilians and patients requiring maternal surgery (MSF 14/11/2023).

The degraded health system has limited the capacity to prevent, detect, diagnose, and treat diseases, leading to a surge of outbreaks. On 1 July, Bahri locality confirmed recording 15 new cases of dengue fever in just one week; 384 suspected cases were recorded in April (ST 01/07/2024).

## WASH

Bombardment, shelling, and looting have damaged WASH infrastructure, such as water pipes, consequently limiting access to WASH services (UNICEF 13/12/2023; ACJPS 24/11/2023). Only 1 of the 13 water treatment plants in Khartoum remains functional. The Al Manara treatment plant in Um Durman typically serves a population of 300,000, but by 15 March, it was functioning at only 75% capacity (UNICEF 15/03/2024). Because of infrastructure and service failures, piped water output in Khartoum is at risk of depletion, compounding challenges of access to clean water and increasing the risk of waterborne diseases (UNICEF 13/12/2023). As a result, people in Khartoum are mostly relying on small wells that are more susceptible to contamination because of the lack of water treatment options (IOM 16/07/2024). The war has also disrupted basic sanitation and hygiene services, such as garbage collection and sewage services, resulting in the piling of uncollected waste and exposing the population to potential diseases. Compounding this, the bodies of the dead are not being disposed of or interred sanitarily; there have been cases of decomposing bodies being left uncollected in the streets, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks (IOM 16/07/2024; STC 08/08/2023; CNN 09/08/2023).

## Education

The conflict and related displacement have been disrupting school and general education access. Until 7 November 2023, Khartoum had an estimated total of 3,796 schools, all of which the hostilities had affected (Sudan Education Sector 07/11/2023). By 16 July 2024, IDPs were occupying 86 public buildings, including schools. At the same time, shelling is targeting the schools that armed groups are also using as military outposts. Consequently, IDPs have had to seek alternative shelter options (IOM 16/07/2024). School closures and a lack of learning opportunities have exposed children to opportunistic protection threats, such as child marriage and recruitment into the war by the conflict parties (HRW 28/07/2024; UN SC 07/06/2024).

Schools offer safe spaces for children and foster mental development. The absence of education facilities has an opposite and negative impact on them. Not only has stalled education affected children; about 30 higher institutions of learning, such as universities and colleges, situated within the state have also sustained damage and subsequently closed, eroding higher learning capacity (TIMEP 15/04/2024; UAEU 31/08/2023).

## CRISIS DRIVERS

### Hostilities and violence

Armed violence and the use of heavy weapons within Khartoum's urban setting have significantly deepened insecurity for residents (ICG 11/04/2024). The violence has further resulted in the infiltration of weapons, allowing civilians and non-state armed groups, such as gangs, access to guns. Khartoum holds several military armouries, such as Al Bayarg, which had an estimated import portfolio of 5.1 million guns between 2020–2023 (AI 25/07/2024). Weapons reported to have been in armouries have been identified to be in the possession and use of RSF combatants.

### Political instability

Fundamentally, political instability contributed to the escalation of hostilities between the RSF and the SAF on 15 April 2023. More than one year since, the warring parties continue to struggle for control over the capital Khartoum, which bears major political significance to the country (ICG 11/04/2024). Until the political standoff between the SAF and the RSF is resolved and political stability regained, hostilities and armed violence will persist in the state.

## ANTICIPATED DEVELOPMENTS

As conflict and violence expand to the east of the country, Khartoum will likely experience an influx of IDP returns involving people originally displaced out of the state. Since December 2023, the conflict has expanded to Aj Jazirah and Sennar states, triggering the secondary or tertiary displacement of IDPs back to Khartoum. Previous patterns and trends show that new battle sites are experiencing sudden intense violence (including killings, forced displacement, looting, and conflict-related sexual violence) from the warring parties. In contrast, areas with prolonged armed violence, including Khartoum, are experiencing sporadic outbursts of violence, creating moments of lull and calm in other areas within the state.

As the multiple complex crises persist throughout the country and sustenance costs, such as rent and food prices, increase in other states, populations will gradually seek to return to the capital (Dabanga 23 01/2024). Many IDPs and refugees originally from Khartoum will likely return to the state on account of reduced financial capacity and the inability to secure livelihoods to sustain shelter needs, food, and medicine (IOM 16/07/2024).

## COMPOUNDING FACTORS

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### Floods

Khartoum is prone to flooding when it experiences above-average precipitation during the July–September rainy season (STC 08/08/2023; UNHCR 30/03/2023). This risks further displacement of people living in open spaces or temporary shelters, and an increased risk of waterborne diseases. Floods displaced 25 individuals in the villages of Geili and Kabbashi, Bahri locality, between 1–3 August and 45 people in Sharg An Neel on 3 August (IOM 05/08/2024). Buildings in Khartoum that have sustained damage in the war are structurally compromised and risk collapsing if exposed to further damage from the floods. Since the onset of the rainy season, landmines buried in areas such as Bahri have also been unearthed, exposing civilians, especially children, to the threat of unexploded ordnance (Radio Tamazuj 05/08/2024). Both the RSF and the SAF have planted mines to defend their positions; with most Khartoum dwellers being civilians, they risk exposure to life-threatening outcomes should the mines explode.

## CURRENT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND CONSTRAINTS

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Humanitarian access in Khartoum is challenging and restricted. By 11 July, access constraints had prevented the provision of humanitarian assistance to 114,000 people. The failure of both the RSF and the SAF to establish safe humanitarian corridors in the state has contributed to persisting access challenges, leading to many international humanitarian organisations relocating to either Port Sudan or other states. Besides insecurity, SAF-imposed restrictions and humanitarian blockades to areas under the control of the RSF also hinder humanitarian access (OCHA 07/07/2024). The issuance of travel permits throughout the country is under the mandate of SAF-affiliated institutes and military intelligence (OCHA 15/05/2024; MSF 14/11/2023). This jurisdiction undermines humanitarian operations as the SAF, and affiliates deliberately deny or obstruct permits as a counterattack against the RSF. To fill the gap, community-based grassroots organisations have implemented and programmed assistance in various Khartoum neighbourhoods, although not at scale because of funding and capacity constraints (CSF 19/12/2023; Shabaka 30/11/2023).