

SUDAN

Risk analysis (2026)



Thematic Report
13 May 2026

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Aim and scope

This report outlines seven risks of emerging or deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Sudan between June–December 2026. The risk analysis aims to support humanitarian decision makers in anticipating potential escalations in humanitarian needs, displacement, humanitarian access constraints, and service disruptions to inform proactive preparedness and response planning.

These seven risks were selected based on their relevance to humanitarian decision-making. They were identified based on emerging triggers, conflict and political developments, and deteriorating trends likely to worsen humanitarian outcomes over the next six months.

Data collection, triangulation, and validation

ACAPS used a combination of secondary data review, joint analysis, and targeted external consultation to identify risks and assess their probability and potential humanitarian impact through trends analysis, precedent analysis, and the triangulation of operational and contextual information.

- **Secondary data review:** the ACAPS team reviewed publicly available data and information to identify emerging developments, escalating trends, and deteriorating conditions likely to heighten humanitarian needs, including displacement, humanitarian access constraints, service disruptions, and food insecurity. The review included reports, datasets, and knowledge products from humanitarian organisations, research institutions, and media sources covering Sudan.
- **Key informant interviews (KIIs) and external reviews:** ACAPS conducted a limited number of KIIs and external reviews with operational responders working in humanitarian INGOs and NNGOs in Sudan. These consultations were used as a supplementary input to gather insights, collate operational perspectives, and validate findings.

- **Joint analysis meeting (JAM):** ACAPS facilitated a joint analysis session with over 15 participants working in humanitarian implementation and advocacy in Sudan, including participants from local and international organisations, as well as UN agencies. The JAM served as a key component of the risk identification and assessment process by supporting the identification of emerging developments, operational concerns, and potential humanitarian impacts. It also contributed to the probability and impact assessment by allowing for a comparison of perspectives across organisations, sectors, and geographic areas, helping identify areas of convergence, divergence, and uncertainty in available information. The session also helped to triangulate validation by providing a structured forum to sense-check preliminary findings, challenge assumptions, and refine the credibility of key information.

Risk analysis framework

This report follows the *ACAPS Risk Analysis Methodology*, assessing the probability and potential humanitarian impact of future events or developments that could worsen humanitarian conditions in Sudan between June–December 2026. The analysis is forward-looking and focuses on potential deterioration rather than current humanitarian conditions alone.

Risk level is determined through the combined assessment of:

- the probability of a risk materialising
- the expected humanitarian impact if it occurs.

Risk levels are classified as low, medium, or high, with the risk level increasing as either the expected severity of the impact of the event or its probability of happening increases, as presented in *Annex A*.

Impact level is the humanitarian consequences of a risk, including effects on displacement, humanitarian access constraints, service disruptions, and needs such as food, health, WASH, etc. It can be an increase in the number of people needing assistance, the severity of their needs, or both. The impact level is mainly based on the assessment of the following components:

- **Exposure** is the estimated number of people likely to be affected within the anticipated impact area or hazard zones. Exposure number is estimated using spatial and population analysis, drawing on current population distributions, displacement patterns, and population movement trends, including demographic and displacement data (e.g. IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix). The level of exposure is assigned based on the exposure table shown in [Annex B](#).
- **Intensity** is the degree, level, strength, or magnitude of the humanitarian consequences of a risk. The level of intensity is selected based on the intensity table in [Annex D](#).

ACAPS classifies impact on a five-point scale: very low, low, moderate, significant, or major based on the levels of exposure and intensity, with the impact level increasing as either the exposure or intensity increases, as shown in the impact matrix in [Annex C](#).

Impact level is also adjusted through expert judgement, informed by context knowledge and triangulated through qualitative and quantitative data, to account for a population's vulnerability to shocks, coping strategies, and local, national, and international response capacities to deteriorating living and humanitarian conditions.

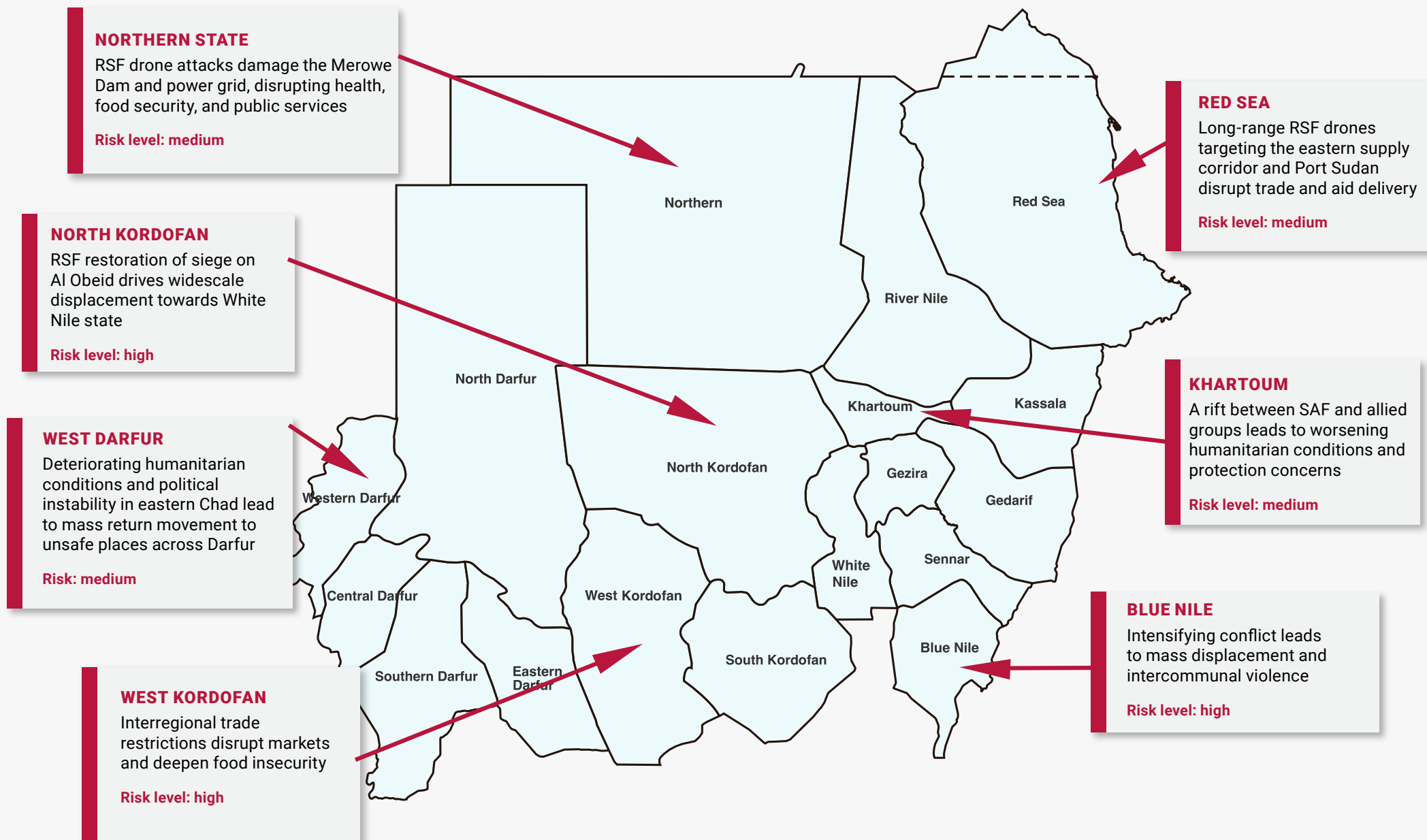
Probability is the chance of a hazard materialising. ACAPS assesses probability on a five-point scale: very low, low, medium, high, or very high. Risk probability is not mathematically calculated but assigned through expert judgement based on the triangulation of available data, historical patterns, forward indicators, and context knowledge. A hazardous event with a low probability of occurring is still included in the analysis if the expected impact is medium, high, or very high, as the overall risk level may warrant operational responders' prioritisation in planning and preparedness efforts.

Confidence level in impact and probability assessments varies depending on data availability, source agreement, and context volatility. Assessments are based on expert judgement informed by triangulated data and contextual knowledge, with the analysis focusing on risks supported by sufficiently consistent and robust evidence, where multiple sources and analytical approaches indicate consistent findings and trends.

Limitations

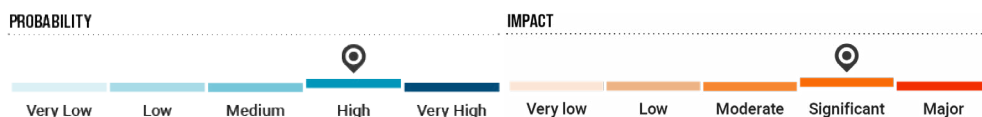
- Data availability in Sudan is uneven, with limited coverage in areas facing conflict and access constraints, particularly in areas under the control of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, and parts of Blue Nile. This may contribute to the underidentification or underestimation of risks in these areas given limited reporting and verification capacity. Data is also skewed towards urban and accessible locations, which may prioritise risk identification and analysis in better-reported areas and underrepresent specific population groups, including women, children, nomadic communities, and people with disabilities. As a result, some risks affecting less visible or less accessible populations, particularly protection risks, gender-based violence, and rural food insecurity, may be underreported in the analysis.
- While the analysis reflects information available at the time of publication, the fluidity of the situation in Sudan means conditions can change quickly. Reporting delays and underreporting (e.g. of violence in conflict-affected areas) may result in outdated or incomplete information, increasing uncertainty in the identification of emerging risks and the assessment of their probability and potential humanitarian impact. This may limit the timely detection of emerging risks, and reduce the reliability of projections over the full six-month outlook period.
- The analysis draws on a small number of KIIs for a national-level product, which may limit the depth and granularity of contextual insights captured. This is partially complemented by input from a JAM attended by over 15 operational responders from NGOs and UN agencies, as well as two external reviews, which supported data collection, triangulation, analysis and validation.

SUDAN RISK ANALYSIS



BLUE NILE : INTENSIFYING CONFLICT LEADS TO MASS DISPLACEMENT AND INTERCOMMUNAL VIOLENCE

RISK LEVEL: HIGH



Rationale

The RSF offensive launched in early 2026 against Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) positions in Baw county opened a new front in Blue Nile state. This has significantly increased the likelihood of conflict spreading to previously unaffected areas to the north, particularly Ed Damazine, the state capital, as well as the strategic corridor leading to the Roseires Dam. By advancing in Blue Nile state, RSF seeks to strengthen its position to recapture and control central Sudan, by later opening a route through Sennar state (ACLED 26/01/2026; MEE 26/01/2026).

Following heavy territorial losses in 2025, including entire states in central Sudan, RSF has reconstituted its operational capacity through its alliance with Abdelaziz Adam al Hilu's Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N/Al Hilu). Access to terrain under its control has provided RSF with defensive depth, cross-border supply lines, and logistical continuity. This enables it to sustain multifront operations and power its advance in Blue Nile, positioning the RSF for a prolonged and expanded offensive rather than a short-term tactical push and increasing the likelihood of escalation beyond the current front lines (AJ 19/08/2025; ACLED 15/04/2025; ICG 07/04/2025).

External facilitation further compounds these dynamics. SAF has repeatedly accused South Sudan and Ethiopia of enabling this mobilisation, with satellite imagery from February 2026 showing a logistics camp near the Ethiopian border in Benishangul Gumz despite official Ethiopian denial. If sustained, such external support would significantly raise the possibility of a scaled-up offensive by insulating RSF operations from battlefield setbacks (ST 25/01/2026; Reuters 10/02/2026).

Impact

INTENSITY: SEVERE
EXPOSURE: 50,000-100,000

If fighting expands north in Blue Nile state, particularly to the state capital Ed Damazine, it is likely to drive large-scale displacement to urban centres in northern Blue Nile and neighbouring states. Precedents from clashes in At Tadamon and Baw counties in Blue Nile state in early 2026 show conflict escalation leads to rapid increases in shelter and WASH needs, particularly among newly displaced populations. Reported impacts include overcrowding in informal settlements, limited access to safe drinking water, and insufficient sanitation facilities, increasing the risk of deteriorating living conditions if displacement continues at scale. Areas at risk of further escalation, such as Ed Damazine, are already facing significant pressure on limited services and resources following the influx of more than 100,000 people displaced since early 2026 from areas affected by escalating fighting, such as At Tadamon and Baw counties (ST 05/02/2026 and 25/01/2026; WVI 05/02/2026).

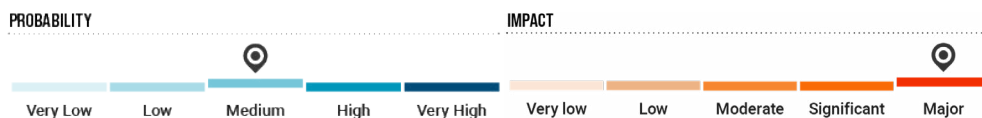
Patterns from previously affected areas in Blue Nile state, as well as comparable frontline contexts, suggest that fighting is likely to involve the use of drone strikes in populated areas, resulting in civilian casualties and damage to critical infrastructure, including health, power, and water facilities. Protection risks are also likely to deteriorate, including heightened exposure to violence, gender-based violence, child protection violations, and psychosocial distress, particularly among newly displaced populations, women, and children. Patterns observed in previously affected areas of Blue Nile state show that conflict escalation leads to these protection concerns, as well as trauma associated with displacement and insecurity (Protection Cluster 03/04/2026; Protection Cluster 02/04/2026; World Vision 05/02/2026).

The presence of diverse ethnic groups, including the Ingessana, Berta, and Hamaj, may increase the potential of intercommunal violence if escalation expands, particularly where displacement places additional pressure on already-limited resources and services. Competition over land, livelihoods, and resources between IDPs and host communities may heighten tensions, especially in areas experiencing rapid population influx.

Existing political and ethnic tensions may further increase protection risks for some communities. The displacement of Ingessana populations in particular may become increasingly politicised if armed and political parties frame demographic shifts and population movements as altering local power dynamics in Blue Nile state. Such dynamics could increase the exposure of these communities to targeting, while also encouraging greater community mobilisation and armament in response to perceived insecurity (KII 05/05/2026). Precedent from intercommunal clashes between Berta and Hausa groups in 2022, triggered by resource competition, suggests the risk of renewed tensions if these pressures persist (ST 25/01/2026; Protection Cluster 03/04/2026; IOM 28/10/2022).

NORTH KORDOFAN: RSF RESTORATION OF SIEGE ON AL OBEID DRIVES WIDESCALE DISPLACEMENT TOWARDS WHITE NILE STATE

RISK LEVEL: HIGH



Rationale

Since October 2025, RSF has mobilised troops near Al Obeid's borders, including deploying combat vehicles along the western side. The sustained mobilisation and positioning of these forces indicate preparation for a renewed offensive to reinstate a siege of the city (UN 19/12/2025; Darfur24 13/11/2025; YSPH HRL 16/01/2026; BBC 06/01/2026; Sudan War Monitor 24/02/2025). A previous siege of the city between May 2023 and February 2025 demonstrated RSF's operational ability to isolate Al Obeid for prolonged periods, resulting in a significant deterioration in humanitarian conditions, including severe food insecurity (Sudan War Monitor 24/02/2025; OHCHR 19/09/2025).

RSF has a strong strategic incentive to restore the siege because of Al Obeid's role as a key logistic and commercial hub linking western and southern Sudan to Khartoum and central Sudan (MEE 24/02/2025). Control of the city would provide RSF with greater leverage over supply routes, trade flows, and access to corridors into SAF-controlled areas, particularly central Sudan. Al Obeid's role as a major crop and livestock market and a gate for Kordofan exports further increases its strategic and economic importance to RSF (The National 09/12/2025; AJ 14/11/2025; TNH 29/04/2026).

Despite recent SAF advancements and repositioning in North Kordofan, fluid conflict dynamics and continued shifts in areas of control between SAF and RSF increase the likelihood of renewed attempts to siege the city over the next six months. This likelihood is further reinforced by increasing logistical and technical support provided to RSF by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which may improve the group's operational capacity to sustain offensive and siege tactics (AJ 06/03/2026; Le Monde 22/03/2026; DW 13/02/2026 and 06/01/2026; TRT World 21/02/2026).

Impact

INTENSITY: EXTREME
EXPOSURE: 100,000-250,000

A consolidated RSF siege on Al Obeid could trigger a spike in primary and secondary displacement among people who had fled violence in South and West Kordofan states. Displaced populations are likely to move towards relatively more stable neighbouring localities, such as Kosti, which remains connected through key transport routes and has served as a destination for people fleeing conflict in Kordofan (UN 19/12/2025; Le Monde 30/12/2025; AJ 01/01/2026; Logistics Cluster accessed 07/05/2026). Displacement patterns are likely to mirror those observed during previous periods of siege and heightened insecurity, when deteriorating humanitarian conditions, movement restrictions, and fear of ground assault drove large-scale population movement. Given Al Obeid's large population size and its role as a displacement hub for surrounding areas, renewed siege conditions could displace tens of thousands of people if insecurity and access constraints persist (UN 19/12/2025; Le Monde 30/12/2025; OCHA 14/01/2024).

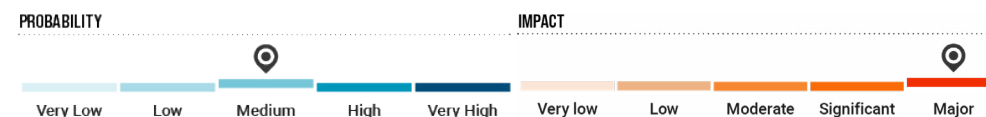
Following intensified RSF attacks and drone strikes on Al Obeid in late 2025, around 2,250 people fled Sheikan locality, where Al Obeid is located, between 25 October and 30 December 2025, despite fighting remaining relatively localised at the time (IOM 05/01/2026; BBC 23/07/2025). This demonstrates the sensitivity of displacement dynamics in and around Al Obeid, where even localised escalation can trigger population movements. A renewed siege or assault on Al Obeid could affect a substantial proportion of the city's population of more than half a million people through displacement, reduced access to services and markets, and worsening humanitarian conditions (World Population Review accessed 18/02/2026; UN 19/12/2025; Le Monde 30/12/2025).

Al Obeid already faces inflation in the prices of essential commodities, particularly food and fuel, given inconsistent and disrupted supply chains, among others. A renewed siege would likely further disrupt commercial and aid flow into the city, causing shortages and sharp price increases that would significantly reduce household purchasing power and worsen food insecurity (Ultra Sudan 19/01/2026; FEWS NET 06/02/2026). The city also functions as a major agricultural and commercial market linking Greater Darfur with eastern and northern Sudan. Prolonged disruption to trade flows into and out of the city could affect the movement and availability of commodities across wider parts of Kordofan and Darfur, contributing to broader market disruptions and additional inflationary pressure in surrounding areas (KII 05/05/2025). IDPs are expected to be among the populations most vulnerable to food insecurity as many already face inadequate access to food, health services, and shelter owing to overcrowding, infrastructure strains, and limitations to livelihood opportunities in host areas (IPC 03/11/2025; FEWS NET 06/02/2026). Al Obeid hosts tens of thousands of IDPs fleeing the conflict, with North Kordofan hosting more than 2.3 million displaced people by March 2026, increasing pressure on already-overstretched services and markets (IOM accessed 30/04/2026; IOM 05/01/2026; AJ 14/11/2025).

A siege would also interrupt the delivery of medical supplies and further strain the city's limited health infrastructure, including one of the few remaining functioning public hospitals in the state, which has a capacity of around 450 beds. The facility is already managing recurrent outbreaks of diseases such as dengue fever and cholera, while receiving patients from conflict-affected areas in neighbouring states and responding to repeated mass casualty incidents within North Kordofan (Le Monde 30/12/2025; UNFPA 27/03/2026; ST 02/03/2026).

WEST KORDOFAN: INTERREGIONAL TRADE RESTRICTIONS DISRUPT MARKETS AND DEEPEN FOOD INSECURITY

RISK LEVEL: HIGH



Rational

The continuation or expansion of trade bans imposed in late 2025 by Khartoum, Northern, and North Kordofan states on the transport of goods into RSF-controlled areas would likely further restrict the movement of essential commodities, particularly food, fuel, and medical supplies, aggravating shortages and food insecurity across West Kordofan state. In November 2025, the governor of Northern state issued a decree banning the transport of goods and commodities to RSF-controlled areas. Similar emergency decrees were later issued by the governors of Khartoum and North Kordofan states in December 2025, restricting the transfer of goods to RSF-controlled areas, particularly those bordering North Kordofan state (Darfur24 23/12/2025; ST 20/12/2025; SMF 31/12/2025).

The continuation of the trade bans would likely increase the reliance on informal routes to supply West Kordofan markets with food, medications, fuel, and other essential commodities. These routes are typically longer, more insecure, and more operationally costly because of insecurity, checkpoints, unofficial taxation, and transport delays, increasing the risks and costs associated with moving goods. Higher transportation and transaction costs would likely be passed on to consumers through rising market prices, further reducing purchasing power and access to essential commodities (FEWS NET 11/03/2026; REACH 05/03/2026).

As a landlocked state with one international border with South Sudan, West Kordofan has historically depended on supply chains from northern and eastern Sudan, including through Egypt, Khartoum International Airport, and the Red Sea ports (FEWS NET 18/12/2023). Following disruptions to trade routes from central and

northern Sudan, local markets in West Kordofan have increasingly relied on Al Na'am Market in northern Abyei near the border as an alternative trade hub supplying food, fuel, and pharmaceutical products (Atar 01/12/2025 a).

That said, Al-Na'am Market has limited capacity to replace trade supplies from northern and central Sudan as it operates largely outside formal financial and trade regulatory frameworks for robust commercial activity, increasing its vulnerability to supply disruptions and price volatility (KII 13/02/2025; Atar 01/12/2025 b). These vulnerabilities were further exposed in February 2026 when a fire damaged parts of the markets and destroyed multiple shops, likely reducing trading capacity (Darfur24 06/02/2026). Persistent tensions surrounding Abyei and cross-border dynamics between Sudan and South Sudan may further increase the instability affecting trade routes and border markets in the area. Emerging reports of shifts in the composition and deployment of armed parties operating in West Kordofan and nearby border areas could also increase the potential for localised tensions and insecurity, particularly given longstanding disputes over territory, resources, and population movements around Abyei (KII 05/05/2026).

Impact

INTENSITY: SEVERE
EXPOSURE: 250,000+

The continuation of the ban would likely tighten supply lines for food, fuel, and medical goods by reducing commercial flows into RSF-controlled areas, increasing transport delays and costs, and limiting the volume of commodities reaching local markets at a time when markets already face acute shortages and price inflation (SDT 03/12/2025; Darfur 24 23/12/2025). In November 2025, the IPC projected that more than one million people (around 46% of the population) in West Kordofan state will face high acute food insecurity levels (IPC Phase 3 or above) between February–May 2026, with Lagawa and As Sunut localities facing the risk of Famine (IPC 30/11/2025). In 2024, West Kordofan ranked first in the Food Insecurity Experience Scale with a raw score of 4.92, 70.5% of households moderately or severely insecure, and 20.9% severely insecure (IFPRI 08/07/2024).

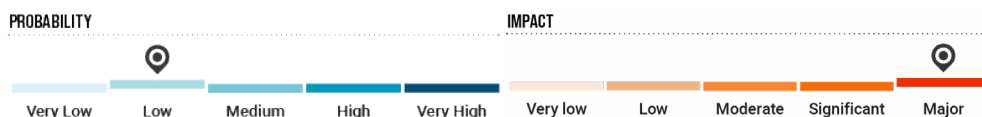
A continuation of the goods transport bans likely further weaken household purchasing power at a time when many already struggle to afford basic goods. The prices of essential goods, including sugar, flour, and fuel, would likely continue to rise and become increasingly inaccessible for economically vulnerable households (Darfur 24 23/12/2025). This ban is also expected to affect access to already-scarce agricultural inputs, such as seeds and machinery, posing an additional obstacle to the limited agricultural activity in areas under acute food insecurity levels. The disrupted supply of both human and veterinary vaccination would also cause a surge in zoonotic diseases and infections, leading to health concerns and losses in food production and livelihoods (KII 13/02/2025; FAO 15/04/2025; Sudan Events 09/08/2025).

The bans would likely deepen existing market and financial pressures characterised by inflation, currency depreciation, and cash shortages linked to conflict-related disruptions to trade and supply chains, further reducing households' ability to access food and basic services (WFP accessed 04/02/2025; The Eastleigh Voice 19/08/2024). This would likely cascade into further acute malnutrition, reduced dietary diversity, and increased morbidity and mortality rates, particularly among children under five. Households facing severe shortages may increasingly resort to potentially harmful coping mechanisms, such as reducing meal frequency, consuming seeds reserved for planting, and selling productive assets to access food and income. Deepening food insecurity would also likely increase protection risks for women and children, including exposure to exploitation, early marriage, and other coping strategies with negative consequences (CARE 04/09/2025; Dabanga 01/10/2024; FEWS NET 14/01/2026; Protection Cluster 01/10/2025).

Deteriorating living conditions and reduced access to essential commodities could increasingly trigger displacement, particularly for households in rural and conflict-affected areas, pushing them to move towards urban centres within the state in search of food, services, markets, livelihood opportunities, and humanitarian assistance. This would likely mirror displacement patterns already observed in West Kordofan, where protection concerns, food insecurity, and limited access to services have driven population movements from rural localities towards urban areas and locations perceived to have better access to assistance. Increased population pressure in areas already facing severe food insecurity could further increase the risk of deterioration towards Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity conditions, particularly in localities already identified as at risk of famine (FEWS NET 06/02/2026; IPC 30/11/2025; IOM 12/04/2026).

KHARTOUM: A RIFT BETWEEN SAF AND ALLIED GROUPS LEADS TO WORSENING HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS AND PROTECTION CONCERNS

RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM



Rationale

SAF faces increasing pressure from key allies, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to distance itself from armed groups with political Islam leanings that support its fight against RSF, such as Al Baraa Bin Malik Brigade (BBMB). This pressure creates the potential for internal rifts within SAF's alliance, as undermining these groups to balance external demands may provoke resistance and confrontation, increasing the likelihood of fragmentation and interfighting (Atlantic Council 26/01/2026; CT 12/03/2026).

SAF depends heavily on these armed groups to sustain combat operations across multiple fronts, making containing these groups operationally difficult and increasing the likelihood of tensions escalating into open confrontation. These groups function not only as allies but as core components of the army's operational survival. Groups such as BBMB and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) contribute manpower, funding channels, and ideological mobilisation (The Interpreter 26/11/2025).

Recent tensions between SAF and some groups, including factions affiliated with JEM and the Joint Forces (Mushtaraka), further indicate the growing fragility of SAF's alliance structure. The increased presence of allied armed groups in civilian areas in Khartoum, including around strategic commercial areas and markets, has contributed to tensions with other security groups and increased the potential for localised confrontations (KII 05/05/2026).

SAF also faces pressure from the US, which is reinforcing broader external demands to undermine armed groups with political Islam leanings. On 16 March 2026, the US Department of State designated the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, alongside the Treasury sanctioning of BBMB.

The designation accuses some of these groups of, among other things, receiving training and other forms of support from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. This designation adds additional scrutiny and pressure on SAF to disengage from these groups. Broader tensions from the military escalations between Iran and the US, alongside regional allies such as Saudi Arabia, may intensify the pressure on SAF to distance itself from these armed groups accused of receiving support from Iran (US DOS accessed 19/03/2026; USDT 12/09/2025; US DOS 09/03/2026).

In 2025, SAF attempted to limit the influence of armed groups with political Islam leanings, including BBMB, by restricting their supply of weapons and seeking to integrate them into its command structure. The process has remained stalled after these groups leveraged SAF's reliance on their battlefield capabilities to resist integration, highlighting the difficulty of enforcing such measures and the potential for renewed attempts to trigger confrontation (CT 12/03/2026; US DOS 09/03/2026; National Security New 28/07/2025; ADF 19/11/2024). Institutional tensions between civilian executive authorities and armed movement leaders over the control and scope of key state institutions and financial structures may further contribute to fragmentation within SAF-aligned governance and security networks (KII 05/05/2026).

Following the recent war in Iran and increased pressure on SAF from allies and the US to contain these groups, SAF has stated that it would increase its efforts to integrate these groups into SAF's command structure (ST 07/03/2026). Statement by groups such as BBMB, however, has described earlier efforts as catastrophic and called for the replacement of senior SAF officials. This indicates a high level of resistance that increases the likelihood of fragmentation and confrontation if integration or undermining efforts are pursued (ACAPS 19/11/2025; CT 12/03/2026; The Conversation 28/05/2024). The recent defection of RSF commanders and the reported presence of some of their associated forces in Khartoum may further complicate the balance of power among SAF and allied armed groups, increasing mistrust and the potential for localised security incidents (KII 05/05/2026).

Impact

INTENSITY: SEVERE
EXPOSURE: 250,000+

A rift between SAF and allied armed groups with political Islam leanings could trigger localised clashes between them, particularly around key installations such as garrisons, military headquarters, and logistical infrastructure in Khartoum, as they seek to consolidate strategic positioning and control over trade routes and commercial centres. Fighting around these locations could fragment areas of control in Khartoum and parts of central Sudan, particularly if competing factions establish parallel checkpoints or seek to control key transport and supply corridors. This would likely disrupt the movement of commercial goods, humanitarian assistance, and fuel supplies, with impacts extending beyond conflict-affected areas owing to Khartoum's central role in trade and logistics networks. This is likely to cause shortages and price hikes for essential goods, such as food and fuel, worsening humanitarian conditions in Khartoum and across central Sudan (ACAPS 19/11/2025; Atlantic Council 26/01/2026; CT 12/03/2026).

Insecurity and deteriorating humanitarian conditions would also likely drive displacement patterns similar to those witnessed early in the conflict when clashes erupted in Khartoum, particularly if fighting occurs in densely populated urban areas and around key infrastructure and service centres. As during earlier phases of conflict, people are likely to seek safety, access to services, and livelihood opportunities in relatively more stable areas eastwards, where key transport corridors and access to assistance remain comparatively more accessible, as well as across borders to neighbouring countries, such as Egypt (ACAPS 19/11/2025; UN 21/04/2026; IOM 10/09/2024).

Clashes between SAF and allied armed groups would also pose significant protection risks to the populations in Khartoum and central Sudan, including looting, ethnic targeting, sexual violence, abduction, and detention. Fragmentation among the SAF alliance may also increase competition over recruitment and territorial control, leading multiple groups to intensify the enlistment and forced conscription of young men and boys into competing factions (ACAPS 19/11/2025; HRW 28/07/2024 and 2025; Steptoe 05/11/2025).

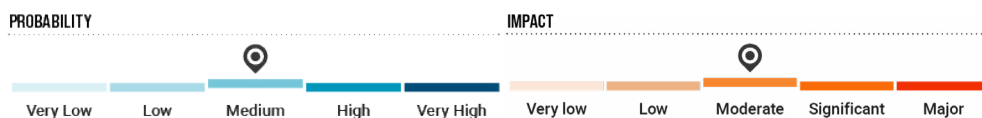
Aid workers would also face heightened security and protection concerns resulting from the spread of conflict, including abduction and the targeting of aid convoys, warehouses, and hospitals. Fragmentation within the SAF alliance could lead to territorial fragmentation, resulting in increased humanitarian access constraints and forcing humanitarian responders to negotiate access with each local armed group individually (ACAPS 19/11/2025; HPN 24/11/2025; OCHA 13/10/2025). These protection concerns, combined with tighter territorial control by armed parties, would further restrict humanitarian movement and access to affected communities. Such constraints are likely to increase reliance on civil society organisations and mutual aid groups for their embeddedness in communities and ability to negotiate access and navigate operational restrictions (ACAPS 19/11/2025 and 16/10/2025; NRC 13/04/2026; TNH 15/04/2025).

Current efforts to encourage population returns and the reopening of state institutions in Khartoum without parallel rehabilitation of infrastructure and basic services could further strain humanitarian response capacity if clashes erupt, particularly in areas already affected by limited health, WASH, and shelter services (KII 05/05/2025).

**** For a more detailed analysis,** please refer to the Disintegration scenario in the 2026 Scenarios Report ACAPS published in November 2025.

RED SEA: LONG-RANGE RSF DRONES TARGETING THE EASTERN SUPPLY CORRIDOR AND PORT SUDAN DISRUPT TRADE AND AID DELIVERY

RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM



Rationale

RSF tactics have increasingly shifted from ground offensives in SAF-controlled areas to long-range strikes using drones. Following the May 2025 drone strikes on Port Sudan's fuel reservoirs, RSF has demonstrated the ability to strike positions far from its areas of control, including eastern and northern Sudan, using long-range kamikaze drones with an estimated range of 2,000km (Reuters 12/09/2025; Milton et al. 09/11/2025).

RSF has a strong strategic incentive to target Port Sudan, as the city continues to host the technical and logistical apparatus of SAF's aligned government despite its announced return to Khartoum on 11 January 2026 (SCR 01/02/2026; ICWA 13/06/2025; MEE 09/01/2026). Port Sudan and the Port Sudan–Kassala–Gedaref corridor remain critical to Sudan's civilian economy and humanitarian response. Before the conflict, this corridor handled around 90% of Sudan's international trade and continues to facilitate the vast majority of imports, fuel supplies, and international aid supplies entering SAF-controlled areas (UN 18/01/2026; EPC 08/09/2023; Lloyd's List 26/04/2023; NZIIA 23/07/2025). By targeting eastern Sudan, particularly the Port Sudan–Kassala–Gedaref corridor, RSF could undermine SAF's primary military supply chain routes while also constraining commercial and humanitarian flows (UN 18/01/2026; EPC 08/09/2023). Sustained drone attacks targeting fuel infrastructure, warehouses, ports, or transport corridors could enable RSF to significantly disrupt the movement of commercial goods and humanitarian assistance, driving shortages, price increases, and the deterioration of humanitarian conditions, increasing pressure on SAF (ACAPS 23/05/2025).

The likelihood of increased RSF drone attacks targeting Port Sudan and the eastern corridor would rise if the UAE continues to increase its logistical and weaponry supply to RSF, including the potential expansion of cross-border supply routes through neighbouring countries that could strengthen RSF's ability to sustain long-range operations and increase the frequency or scale of attacks. Indicators such as the rise in cargo flights suspected of transporting weapons and military supplies to neighbouring countries and the increased presence of fighter camps near Sudan's borders point to a potential expansion of these supply networks and an increase in RSF's operational reach and capabilities (Le Monde 22/03/2026; DW 02/13/2026; TRT World 21/02/2026; DW 06/01/2026).

Broader regional tensions following the escalation of conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the US since early 2026 may also increase the strategic sensitivity of the Red Sea corridor and surrounding logistics networks. As Port Sudan remains a critical maritime and logistical hub along the Red Sea, increased regional competition and securitisation could affect external support dynamics, supply routes, and the operational environment surrounding eastern Sudan (KII 05/05/2026).

Impact

INTENSITY: MODERATE
EXPOSURE: 250,000+

RSF's escalation of drone attacks targeting Port Sudan could disrupt key trade routes and humanitarian supply flows entering SAF-controlled areas through eastern Sudan. Port Sudan remains an important entry point for food, fuel, medical supplies, and humanitarian assistance, particularly for more than 20 million people in central and northern Sudan (WHO 09/01/2026; Protection Cluster 13/01/2026; Insecurity Insight 12/01/2026; IBC 10/12/2025). Attacks on critical infrastructure in Port Sudan, such as fuel depots, warehouses, port facilities, or transport routes, would likely strain supply chains and service provision in the short to medium term, particularly if disruptions persist over several weeks and alternative routes remain limited or less operationally viable (Logistics Cluster 11/02/2026; BBC 10/05/2025; OHCHR 19/05/2025; LUA 01/02/2026). This would deplete limited reserves and contribute to localised shortages and rising prices, particularly affecting urban populations and IDPs, as they are more reliant compared to rural areas on markets for essential commodities,

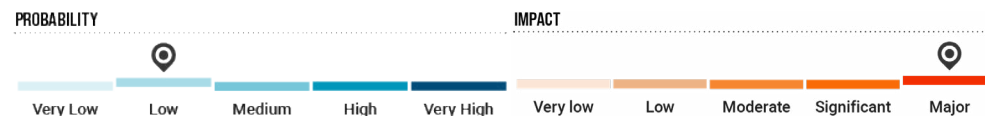
such as food (ACAPS 23/05/2025; FEWS NET 22/10/2023; IPC 27/06/2024). Constraints on routes from Port Sudan would likely affect areas in eastern and northern Sudan first as to southern and western Sudan are already constrained (Logistics Cluster 11/02/2026).

Port Sudan serves as the main entry point for fuel imports into Sudan and the primary hub for national fuel storage, particularly as the war has reduced the operational capacity of oil and gas facilities in Khartoum and Al Obeid (Radio Tamazuj 07/05/2025; Elnourani et al. 15/08/2024). A reduction in fuel availability, compounded by power outages from continued attacks, would reduce the capacity to manage WASH infrastructure, worsening health conditions and increasing the risk of disease outbreaks, as observed during power outages following earlier attacks in 2025 on the dam's associated electricity grid infrastructure (UNICEF 21/07/2025; MSF 06/03/2025). Reduced fuel availability would also strain humanitarian operations, as fuel reserves are critical to transporting humanitarian supplies across Sudan. Fuel shortages would likely delay the movement and distribution of food, medical supplies, and other relief items from Port Sudan's storage facilities to operational hubs and affected areas, while also increasing transportation costs and limiting humanitarian operations (UN 07/05/2025).

****For a more detailed analysis,** please refer to the 'Risk of Continued Drone Strikes on Port Sudan' ACAPS report published in May 2025.

NORTHERN STATE: RSF DRONE ATTACKS DAMAGE THE MEROWE DAM AND POWER GRID, DISRUPTING HEALTH, FOOD SECURITY, AND PUBLIC SERVICES

RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM



Rationale

Since 2025, RSF has increased drone capabilities by acquiring long-range kamikaze munitions that can target infrastructure in previously safe areas far within SAF-controlled areas, including the Merowe Dam in Northern state (ADF 14/10/2025). Between October 2024 and March 2025, 50 RSF drone attacks targeted infrastructure in Northern and River Nile states, including repeated strikes on Merowe Dam in January, April, and November 2025 and attacks on the power plant between February–March 2025. These attacks have largely involved intermittent or harassment-style strikes that caused temporary disruptions rather than sustained structural damage to the dam's core infrastructure (CT 10/04/2025; ST 13/01/2025, 06/04/2025, and 13/11/2025; TNA 06/03/2025).

The likelihood of attacks damaging the Merowe Dam may increase if fighting between SAF and RSF intensifies further and RSF continues to expand its long-range drone capabilities through external support networks, particularly its main backer, the UAE (Le Monde 22/03/2026; DW 02/13/2026 and 06/01/2026; TRT World 21/02/2026).

RSF has strong strategic incentives to target the Merowe Dam because of its importance to electricity generation, irrigation systems, and the functioning of SAF-controlled areas. As Sudan's largest hydroelectric dam, Merowe generates an estimated 40–60% of Sudan's electricity, providing around 1,250MW of power to an estimated ten million people across Sudan, as well as irrigation for around 400,000 hectares of agricultural land (Failer et al. 01/07/2011, ADFD accessed 11/02/2026). Sustained disruption or structural damage affecting the dam's operational capacity

would likely have significant implications for electricity access, irrigation systems, agricultural production, and livelihoods, particularly in Northern state and other areas dependent on power generated by the dam. This could allow RSF to increase pressure on SAF governance, disrupt economic activity, and undermine public confidence through insecurity and service disruptions in relatively stable areas away from active front lines.

Localised insecurity involving SAF-allied armed groups and the growing strategic sensitivity of areas such as the Muthalath border zone may further increase the importance of Northern state within broader SAF–RSF military dynamics and regional competition. While these dynamics do not currently indicate imminent large-scale escalation in Northern state, they may increase the area’s vulnerability to future instability, including intensified drone attacks (KII 05/05/2026).

Impact

INTENSITY: SEVERE
EXPOSURE: 250,000+

Damage to the Merowe Dam or its associated electricity grid infrastructure would likely cause prolonged widespread power outages across northern, central, and eastern Sudan, including Khartoum and Port Sudan, as well as cities and towns in Northern state, such as Ad Dabbah, Atbara, and Dongola (The National 05/04/2025; TNA 19/12/2025; AIDDATA accessed 30/04/2026; Gafar ElBashir 04/2016). Depending on the extent of damage, disruptions could persist for days or weeks, particularly if repair capacity and replacement infrastructure remain limited.

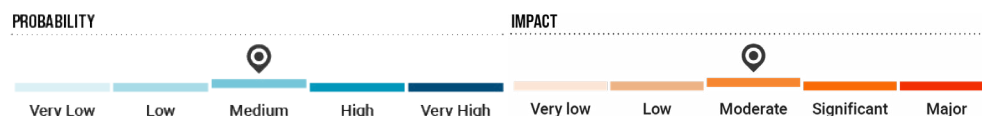
These blackouts would significantly reduce the functionality of health facilities, affecting surgeries, dialysis, vaccine preservation, and other services dependent on electricity (France 24 28/02/2025; UNHCR 22/09/2025; Reuters 10/04/2025). Damage to the Merowe Dam and associated electricity grid infrastructure could also disrupt WASH systems and water pumping services, increasing the potential of waterborne disease outbreaks. Similar disruptions following RSF attacks on Rabak power plant contributed to the cholera outbreak declared in August 2024, which lasted until March 2026 and resulted in more than 124,400 recorded suspected cases and around 3,600 deaths (MSF 06/03/2025; WHO 08/03/2026; UNICEF 2025). IDPs living in overcrowded shelters and areas with limited access to safe water and sanitation services would

likely be among the most vulnerable populations, particularly in displacement sites reliant on already-strained WASH infrastructure (UNICEF accessed 2025).

Prolonged power outages lasting days or weeks would likely disrupt systems and agricultural activities reliant on electric-powered water pumps, particularly during cultivation periods. Disruptions to irrigation linked to the Merowe Dam would also affect agricultural schemes such as Al Hamdab, Al Manasir, Amri, and Kihaila, affecting more than 200,000 acres of agricultural lands. Reduced irrigation capacity and water access would likely contribute to crop losses, lower agricultural yields, and reduced household incomes among farming communities dependent on irrigated agriculture, worsening food insecurity and livelihood conditions in affected areas (ADFD accessed 11/02/2026; OHCHR 19/05/2025).

WEST DARFUR: DETERIORATING HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN EASTERN CHAD LEAD TO MASS RETURN MOVEMENT TO UNSAFE PLACES ACROSS DARFUR

RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM



Rationale

Deteriorating humanitarian conditions and aid shortfalls in eastern Chad are increasingly pushing Sudanese refugees to return to unsafe areas in Darfur, particularly to West Darfur state, in areas close to the border crossing and communities of origin (IOM 13/04/2026;; RFI 24/03/2026). Since the beginning of 2026, returns from Chad to West Darfur have increased significantly, indicating growing pressure on refugees, with around 39% of returnees citing access to resources, services, and humanitarian assistance as the main driver of return. In April 2026, around 13,900 returnees arrived in West Darfur state from Chad, compared to around 7,900 refugees in November 2025, representing a near doubling in return movements (IOM 26/01/2026 and 13/04/2026).

Underfunding of the humanitarian response in Chad is reducing access to food, services, and humanitarian assistance for Sudanese refugees, weakening household coping capacity and increasing pressure on refugees to return to unsafe places in West Darfur state (IOM 09/01/2026; British Brief 08/10/2025; UN 17/02/2026). Following major funding cuts in early 2025 by major donors, including the US, the Humanitarian Country Team reduced the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) requirement from USD 1.45 billion to around USD 835.7 million. As such, humanitarian responders in Chad scaled back response plans and implemented efficiency reforms and prioritised life-saving interventions in the highest-need areas. In 2026, the HNRP requirement was set at USD 975 million, including for the response to the 1.35 million refugees in Chad in April 2026. These reductions in assistance have strained already-overstretched refugee-hosting areas, and the deteriorating access to assistance and basic services is increasingly pushing some refugees to consider return to areas of origin in Darfur despite continued insecurity and limited conditions for safe return (UNHCR accessed 27/05/2026; OCHA accessed 27/02/2026; UNICEF 09/02/2026;).

In March 2026, following recent RSF cross-border attacks, Chad announced plans to relocate some refugees away from its border with Sudan further inland as the army prepares to deploy to the area, increasing uncertainty among refugee populations and pressure on some households to return to Sudan despite insecurity in Darfur. Initial plans involved moving around 2,300 refugees, more than half of them women and children, and may indicate the beginning of broader relocation measures if insecurity along the border continues or expands (Reuters 23/03/2026; RFI 24/03/2026).

President Mahamat Déby's administration also faces internal fractures, particularly among Zaghawa military elites who are discontent over the Government's alleged facilitation of UAE-backed arms shipments to RSF, which is accused of committing atrocities against Zaghawa and other non-Arab groups in Darfur (Debug Lies 17/12/2025). This political instability could increase local tensions and insecurity in refugee-hosting areas near the Sudan border, including intercommunal tensions and targeting by state and local groups, making Chad a less predictable and secure environment for Sudanese refugees (Early Warning Project 15/12/2025; Debug Lies 17/12/2025; HRW 12/08/2025; ICG 01/09/2025). These dynamics could further increase pressure on some refugees to return to unsafe areas in Darfur despite continued protection risks.

Impact

INTENSITY: MODERATE
EXPOSURE: 100,000-250,000

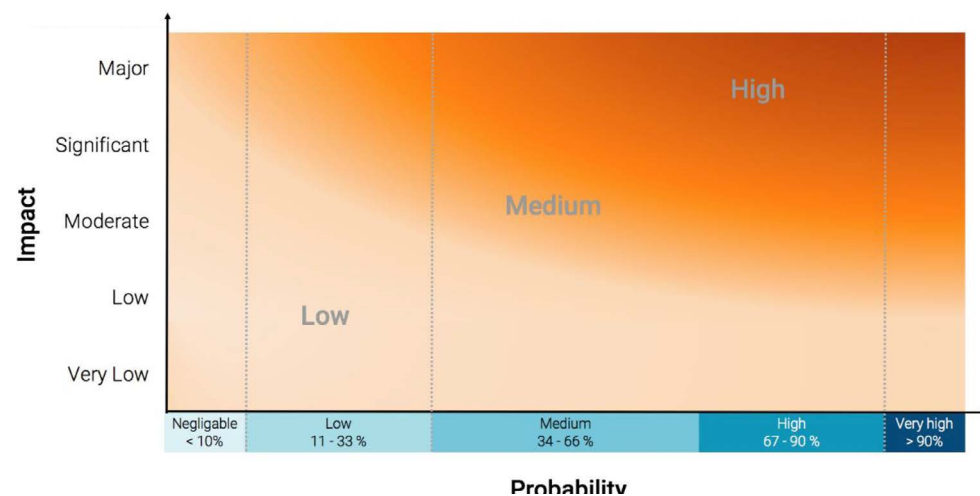
Returnees would enter a humanitarian landscape that is already strained, further worsening humanitarian conditions across Darfur, particularly in West Darfur state, which remains the destination of the vast majority of returnees from Chad (IOM 09/01/2026; UN 30/03/2026). Health and WASH services remain limited, with substandard vaccination and supplementation coverage, restricted water access, and poor sanitation increasing disease outbreak risks. Economic conditions are also likely to constrain the capacity of households and local markets to absorb additional population pressure. Inflation, high fuel costs, and bank closures continue to reduce purchasing power and limit food access, while IPC projections for West Darfur in November 2025 for February–May 2026 estimated that around 38% of the population will face acute food insecurity of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels (IPC 30/11/2025).

Additional return movements would likely increase overcrowding in displacement sites and urban areas, further straining already-overstretched shelters and basic services, and intensify pressures on local markets and humanitarian assistance systems. Increased population pressure in areas already dealing with limited services and food insecurity would likely heighten disease outbreak risks, worsen food insecurity, and further deteriorate humanitarian conditions in affected communities (IPC 30/11/2025; IOM 30/04/2026; Shelter Cluster 19/02/2026).

Refugees returning to Darfur from Chad would enter a landscape where RSF dominance poses protection concerns during transit and upon arrival (Protection Cluster 01/10/2025; TNH 02/06/2025). RSF and allied armed groups systematically subject returning populations to coercive control, including movement restrictions, the looting of assets, and intimidation en route and at destination. In West Darfur, non-Arab groups, such as the Masalit and Zaghawa, continue to face persistent ethnically motivated violence. Returnees belonging to these groups would likely be particularly vulnerable to violence while travelling through RSF-controlled corridors and upon attempting to return to contested and reclaimed property. The absence of effective protection mechanisms and the continued presence of armed parties increase exposure to abuses. These dynamics could expose returnees to patterns

of violence similar to those documented during the earlier phases of the conflict, including arbitrary killings, summary executions, and attacks targeting civilians (Darfur 24 19/01/2026; ACJPS 22/04/2025; UNHCR 29/12/2025). Returnees would also likely face significant challenges in resettling because of the widespread destruction of roads, services, markets, and infrastructure affecting movement and access to livelihoods. Many returning households would likely find their homes occupied, damaged, or destroyed, increasing shelter needs and the potential for tensions over housing, land, and property (UNHCR 20/11/2025; The Jerusalem Post 27/01/2026).

ANNEX A. RISK MATRIX



ANNEX B. EXPOSURE TABLE

We calculate exposure both as an absolute number and a proportion of the total population simply because contexts are very different. An increase of 40,000 people in need in a small country such as Vanuatu is far more significant than in India. For both countries the absolute scale gives an exposure of 2 but on the proportional scale Vanuatu would score 3 and India 1. Expert judgement is required to decide which score to use: likely 3 for Vanuatu and 1 for India.

| Score | Total increase in population estimated to be in need (PIN) | Proportion of PIN of total population |
|-------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | < 10,000 | <5% |
| 2 | 10,000–50,000 | 5–15% |
| 3 | 50,000–100,000 | 15–30% |
| 4 | 100,000–250,000 | 30–50% |
| 5 | > 250,000 | >50% |

ANNEX C: IMPACT MATRIX

| Exposure | Intensity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 5 | Very low | Low | Moderate | Significant | Major | Major |
| 4 | Very low | Low | Moderate | Significant | Major | Major | Major |
| 3 | Very low | Low | Low | Moderate | Significant | Major | Major |
| 2 | Very low | Very low | Low | Moderate | Significant | Significant | Significant |
| 1 | Very low | Very low | Low | Low | Moderate | Significant | Significant |

ANNEX D. INTENSITY TABLE

| Intensity – vulnerability level | | Description of future ‘imagined’ state | |
|---------------------------------|----------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Minor | People are facing none or minor shortages or/and accessibility problems regarding basic services, such as food, health, shelter, and WASH. People are able to meet basic needs without having to apply to irreversible coping strategies. There may be some needs but these are not life-threatening. | Monitor situation |
| 2 | Stressed | People are facing some shortages or/and some availability and accessibility problems in regard to basic services, but they are not life-threatening. Needs are more increased but are still not life-threatening. Affected people can meet their needs by applying coping strategies. There may exist localised/targeted incidents of violence and/or human rights violations. | |
| 3 | Moderate | People are facing shortages and/or availability and accessibility problems in regard to basic services that cause discomfort and/or high levels of suffering, which can result in irreversible damages to their health, but they are not life-threatening. Significant gaps are visible, or people are marginally able to meet minimum needs only with potentially irreversible coping strategies. As a result of shortages of and disruption to services, many face potentially life-threatening consequences if not provided with assistance. People may also face malnutrition. There may be physical and mental harm among populations, resulting in a loss of dignity. | Assistance required |
| 4 | Severe | People are facing life-threatening conditions and significant shortages and/or availability and accessibility problems in regard to basic services, causing high levels of suffering and irreversible damages to their health. People may face severe food consumption gaps and have started to deplete their assets or already face an extreme loss of assets. This may result in very high levels of acute malnutrition and excess mortality. People face risk of irreversible harm and heightened mortality as well as widespread grave violations of human rights. | Immediate assistance required |
| 5 | Extreme | People are facing extreme shortages or availability and accessibility problems in regard to basic services. Deaths are directly caused by the current conditions, and there is widespread mortality. People face a complete lack of food and/or other basic needs, and starvation, death, and destitution are evident. Acute malnutrition may be widely reported. They may face grave human rights violations. | |