



Statement: GPC calls for concrete action to protect civilians in Sudan amidst political crisis

29 October 2021

The political crisis unfolding in Sudan will have severe human costs for millions of conflict-affected and displaced people across the country if leaders do not uphold their duty to protect civilians. There is an urgent need to ensure the continued delivery of humanitarian aid and a sustained commitment to the rights and wellbeing of civilians at a time of increased insecurity.

A total of 13.4 million people in Sudan, more than half of whom are children, are already experiencing urgent humanitarian and protection needs.¹ During more than a decade of conflict, civilians have often been targeted with violence and today, 2.5 million people remain internally displaced. Economic crisis and weak services have left people highly vulnerable and issues of continued violence, including gender-based violence, displacement, and conflict over the use of resources all represent already existing protection risks.

Additional challenges in accessing essential services, including due to internet and telecommunications shutdowns, as well as increased security threats and restricted movements, are all expected in the current context. The delivery of life-saving and protective supports that enable women, girls and vulnerable groups to stay safe, including gender-based violence prevention and response services, must be prioritized. Past incidents where health and other providers of life-saving services were attacked, as well as current reports of hospitals coming under fire, underline the importance of maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of infrastructure where civilians, including displaced populations, can stay safe, find shelter and access humanitarian assistance.

The Global Protection Cluster's Coordinator, William Chemaly stated: "it is vital that humanitarian operations continue unimpeded to both prevent the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and to address the growing protection needs of people across the country. Local and national

¹ Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/sdn_2021hno.pdf

protection actors, particularly women's rights organizations, must be further supported to continue their leading roles in responding to this multidimensional crisis."

The Global Protection Cluster calls for:

- The immediate cessation of violence along with clear commitments from all stakeholders to protect civilians, including those affected by displacement, and uphold human rights.
- Continued and sustained humanitarian access and the facilitation of the import and movement of humanitarian supplies, ensuring humanitarian aid can reach people in need.
- Continued and safe access to basic services, including hospitals and schools, the protection of civilian and humanitarian infrastructure and the restoration of vital communications networks.
- Flexible, scaled up support for local and national protection stakeholders, especially women's rights leaders and organizations, to ensure their continued leadership with response efforts.

The Global Protection Cluster will continue to work closely with the full range of humanitarian partners to support the delivery of life-saving assistance and advance durable solutions for internally displaced and refugee populations in Sudan.

For further information, please contact William Chemaly, Global Protection Cluster Coordinator, at gpc@unhcr.org.

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