

Unveiling the Crisis: South Kordofan's Urgent Protection Needs Amidst Escalating Conflict



A comprehensive analysis of humanitarian assessments reveals the dire protection conditions and critical challenges facing civilians in South Kordofan.

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Key Insights into South Kordofan's Humanitarian Catastrophe

- **Escalating Conflict and Widespread Displacement:** South Kordofan is plagued by intense conflict, resulting in significant displacement and severe protection risks, particularly for IDPs, women, and girls.
- **Critical Humanitarian Access Blockages:** Ongoing hostilities severely restrict humanitarian aid delivery to hard-to-reach areas, exacerbating food insecurity, malnutrition, and a lack of essential services.
- **Severe Basic Needs Gaps and Protection Failures:** Assessments highlight a pervasive inability for displaced families to meet basic needs, coupled with ethnically motivated violence and the absence of effective civilian protection mechanisms.

The humanitarian situation in South Kordofan, Sudan, has reached a critical juncture, characterized by relentless conflict, mass displacement, and a profound deterioration of protection conditions for its civilian population. Recent assessments, spanning from 2022 to mid-2025, paint a grim picture of communities caught between warring factions, facing dire shortages of essential resources, and subjected to alarming levels of violence and human rights abuses.

The Unfolding Crisis: Conflict, Displacement, and Humanitarian Access

South Kordofan continues to reel from the devastating impacts of prolonged armed conflict, primarily between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), additionally to SPLM North (Abdalaziz Alhelo) **Tasis Forces** often involving allied militias. This conflict, exacerbated by political instability and the ending of ceasefires, has created a catastrophic environment for civilians, forcing hundreds of thousands from their homes and leading to widespread suffering.

A Region Under Siege:

The conflict dynamics have profoundly impacted the protection environment. The ending of the unilateral ceasefire in December 2021 and the 2021 Sudanese military coup ushered in a new phase of intensified hostilities. Throughout 2022 and 2023, the region experienced a severe deterioration in security, leading to escalating violence and a surge in civilian casualties. Specific incidents, such as attacks in Habila and Fayu between December 2023 and March 2024, have seen the RSF and allied militias accused of war crimes, including killings, injuries, rape, and abductions. These actions demonstrate a blatant disregard for international humanitarian law and highlight the severe protection failures. The ongoing conflict in South Kordofan has unleashed severe and far-reaching humanitarian consequences, devastating the lives of countless civilians. One of the most pressing outcomes has been the large-scale displacement of populations. Families fleeing violence in Kadugli have moved toward the eastern part of the state, particularly into localities such as Altadamoun, Gadeer, and Abujebaiha. These same areas have also received waves of displaced communities from Aliri, further intensifying the strain on already fragile host communities.

The convergence of displaced populations into these limited geographic areas has triggered a dire humanitarian crisis. The sheer number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), many of whom left their homes with nothing but what they could carry, has overwhelmed available resources. These

families are now living in extremely precarious conditions and are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance across multiple sectors. Food insecurity is escalating, health services are scarce and overstretched, and access to clean water and sanitation (WASH) is alarmingly inadequate. Moreover, protection concerns remain paramount, as displaced women, children, and other vulnerable groups face heightened risks of exploitation, violence, and neglect. Without immediate and coordinated interventions, the situation risks deteriorating even further, deepening suffering and undermining the resilience of both displaced families and the host communities struggling to support them.

This report presents findings from both observation data and secondary data review. The chapter has been organized according to subcategories that have an interplay with the protection of people in the communities they live. on Child Protection, SGBV, Tracing Identification and Reunification. The findings are huge on the arrival of IDPs from Dilling and Kadugli to Al Liri and IDPs from Famir camp in Aliri locality are displacing to Talodi and Gadeer Localities. Groups of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have arrived in Al Liri locality from the areas of Dilling and Kadugli, after enduring extremely difficult conditions. Their journey lasted over a month on foot, through rough terrain, heavy rains, and lack of food and shelter, a total of 7050 families have arrived, including: 4000 children 5% pregnant women 1573 individuals with chronic illnesses 10% elderly persons 3% persons with disabilities. These families are in a critical humanitarian situation. Many of them lost their belongings, some have lost children along the way, and there are unaccompanied children among the arrivals. So far, no humanitarian organizations have intervened to provide assistance.

Urgent Needs: Food: Essential food supplies for children, women, and those with health conditions. Health: Immediate medical services, particularly for chronic cases and pregnant women. Shelter: Tents or temporary housing to protect families from rain and cold. Clothing: Basic clothing, especially for children and women, to ensure human dignity.



The human cost of conflict in Sudan, underscoring the urgent need for protection.

Mass Displacement and the Plight of IDPs

South Kordofan is a region grappling with immense displacement. Over 250,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and nearly 130,000 IDP returnees reside within the state, with additional populations in SPLM-N controlled areas. The sheer scale of displacement underscores the pervasive insecurity and the civilian population's desperate search for safety. These displaced communities often find themselves in precarious conditions, lacking adequate shelter, food, water, and healthcare, thereby amplifying their vulnerability to further protection risks.

Humanitarian Access: A Persistent Barrier to Aid

One of the most critical challenges is the severe restriction on humanitarian access. Heavy fighting has repeatedly obstructed key routes, isolating towns like Al Obeid, Kadugli, and Dilling. Many areas are described as experiencing a "siege-like" situation, making it nearly impossible for aid organizations to reach those in greatest need. For years, parts of South Kordofan have been inaccessible due to the security situation and the presence of landmines, further complicating humanitarian efforts. This blockage of access not only hinders the delivery of life-saving assistance but also limits protection monitoring, leaving vulnerable populations unseen and unaided.

Profound Protection Risks and Unmet Basic Needs

The protection concerns in South Kordofan are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis. Civilians face a barrage of threats, from direct violence to the systemic denial of basic rights and services.

Direct Violence and Ethnically Motivated Attacks

The most immediate protection risk stems from ongoing violence. Reports indicate ethnically motivated violence, particularly targeting Nuba residents in towns like Habila and Fayu. Such attacks include killings, indiscriminate shooting, and abductions, with harrowing accounts of sexual slavery. The targeting of specific ethnic groups adds a grave dimension to

the conflict, increasing fear and fragmentation within communities. Furthermore, attacks on humanitarian responders underscore the extreme dangers faced by those attempting to provide assistance.



Stories of human rights abuses from South Kordofan, depicting the severe impact on civilians.

Vulnerabilities of Specific Groups

Internally displaced persons (IDPs), women, and girls are disproportionately affected by the protection crisis. Displaced families often lack stable shelter and livelihoods, making them highly susceptible to exploitation and abuse. Women and girls face heightened risks of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and abduction, especially in conflict zones and displacement camps. The absence of functioning protection mechanisms and limited state capacity further compounds these vulnerabilities.

Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition

The conflict has severely disrupted agricultural activities and supply chains, leading to acute food insecurity and rising malnutrition rates. Many families are surviving on extremely limited supplies, with displaced populations particularly vulnerable. Crop failures, combined with restricted access to markets and humanitarian aid, have created a looming hunger crisis. A June 2025 rapid needs assessment in Kadugli Locality revealed that an alarming 96% of displaced families cannot meet basic needs, a stark indicator of the severity of food and nutritional deficits.

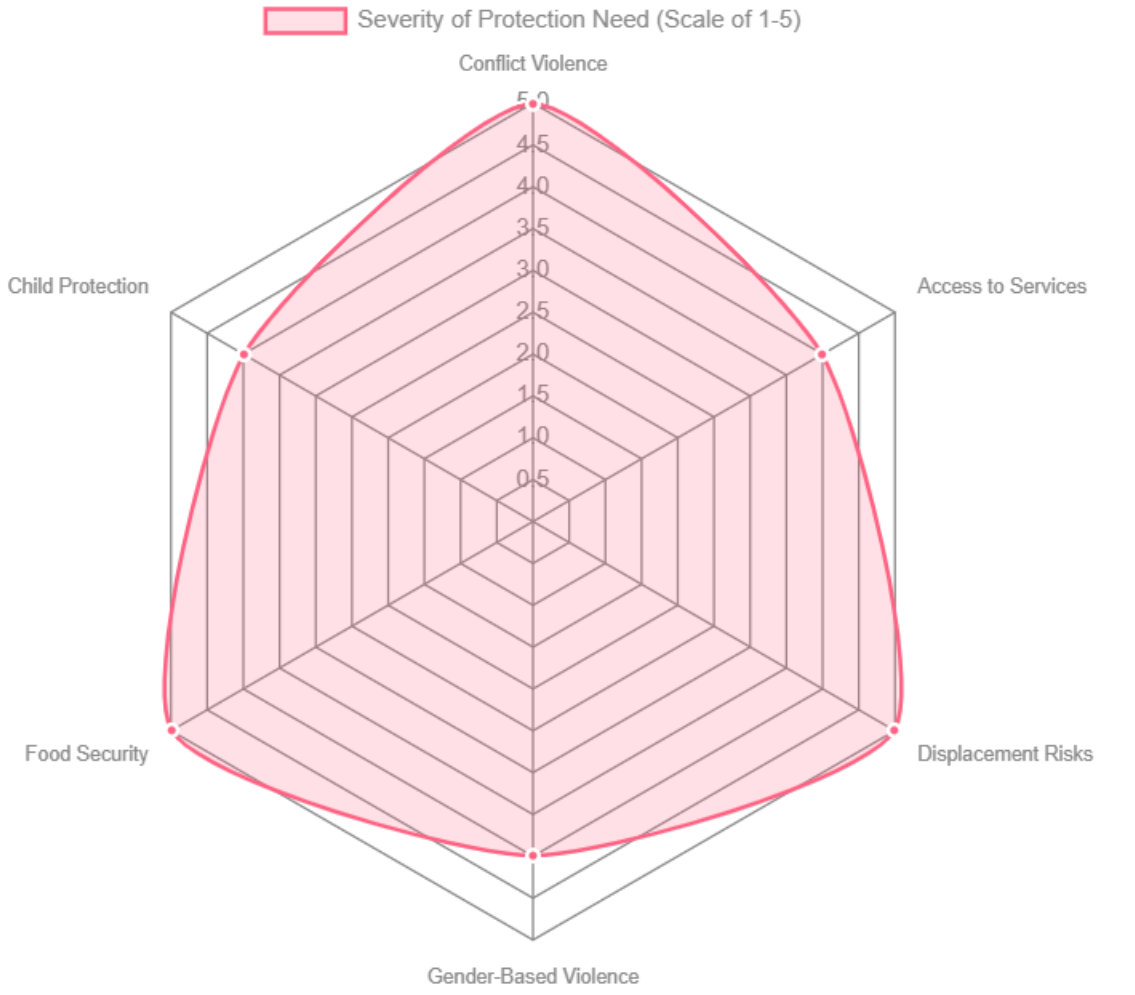
Collapse of Basic Services: Health, WASH, and Education

Essential services have largely collapsed in South Kordofan. Healthcare infrastructure is damaged or non-existent, leading to poor maternal health outcomes, high rates of home births, and low child immunization coverage. Preventative care for diseases like malaria is inconsistent, contributing to public health risks. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services are inadequate, increasing the risk of vector-borne diseases and other health crises. Furthermore, the disruption of education systems threatens to create a "lost generation" as children are deprived of schooling.

A Snapshot of Protection Needs: A Radar Chart Analysis

This radar chart illustrates the perceived severity of various protection concerns in South Kordofan, based on recent humanitarian assessments. Each spoke represents a critical area of

protection, with a rating from 1 (minimal concern) to 5 (extreme concern). This visualization provides a quick overview of the most pressing issues identified by humanitarian agencies.



Humanitarian Response and Recommendations

In response to the escalating crisis, humanitarian organizations and international bodies have issued urgent calls for action, emphasizing the need for enhanced access, coordinated protection, and integrated assistance.

Strategic Interventions and Aid Prioritization

The humanitarian community is striving to provide life-saving assistance, but efforts are severely hampered by the volatile security situation. The 2025 Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan aims to support millions, highlighting the immense scale of the crisis. Priority interventions include culturally appropriate food aid, seed distribution for agricultural recovery, borehole drilling for clean water, latrine expansion, and mosquito net distribution to mitigate health risks. Education and WASH programs for refugees and host communities are also critical.

The Imperative of Civilian Protection

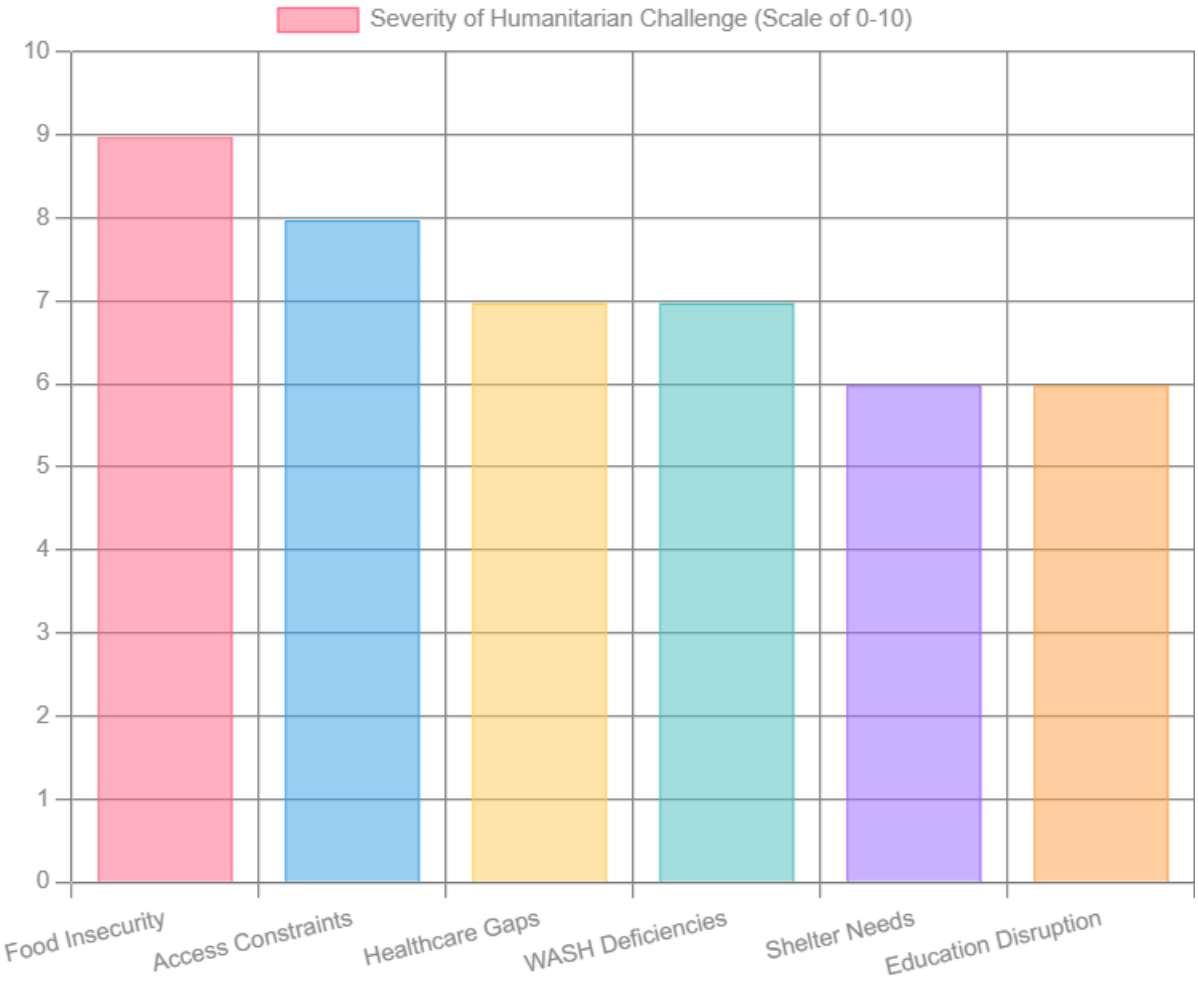
There is a strong consensus on the urgent need to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure in line with international humanitarian law. Recommendations include de-escalation of

tensions, prevention of attacks on humanitarian workers, and the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission to protect at-risk populations.

The strategic capture of Al-Dabaibat by the Sudanese army in May 2025 is seen as a potential step towards breaking the siege on Dilling city, which could improve humanitarian access.

Understanding the Challenges: A Bar Chart Perspective

This bar chart illustrates the magnitude of various humanitarian challenges in South Kordofan on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 representing the highest severity. This provides a comparative view of the different sectors requiring urgent attention and intervention.



Key Protection Concerns and Recommendations

The following table summarizes the overarching protection concerns and key recommendations derived from various assessment reports.

Protection Concern	Description	Key Recommendations
Escalating Violence	Ongoing armed conflict, ethnically motivated attacks,	De-escalation of tensions, adherence to international humanitarian law,
Humanitarian Access Constraints	Road blockages, "siege-like" situations, and security risks limiting aid delivery to vulnerable populations.	Negotiate safe passage for humanitarian aid, establish humanitarian corridors, ensure protection of aid workers.
Mass Displacement	Hundreds of thousands of IDPs and returnees facing precarious living conditions and secondary protection risks.	Provide adequate shelter and non-food items, ensure access to basic services in displacement sites, facilitate voluntary and safe returns.
Gender-Based Violence	Increased risks of sexual violence, abduction, and exploitation for women and girls in conflict zones and camps.	Implement GBV prevention and response programs, provide safe spaces, ensure access to psychosocial support and legal aid.
Food Insecurity & Malnutrition	Acute shortages of food, crop failures, and rising malnutrition rates, especially among IDPs.	Deliver culturally appropriate food aid, distribute agricultural inputs, provide nutritional support for vulnerable groups.
Inadequate Basic Services	Collapse of healthcare, WASH, and education systems, leading to public health crises and long-term developmental setbacks.	Rehabilitate and establish health facilities, drill boreholes and expand latrines, provide educational support and safe learning environments.

Conclusion

The humanitarian and protection crisis in South Kordofan demands immediate and sustained international attention. The synthesis of recent assessment reports unequivocally demonstrates a region in profound distress, where conflict, displacement, and the breakdown of essential services have created an untenable environment for civilians. Urgent efforts are needed to secure humanitarian access, protect civilians from violence, and address the acute basic needs gaps. Without a concerted and coordinated response, the suffering in South Kordofan will only deepen, leading to further loss of life and a protracted humanitarian catastrophe.

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