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# BETWEEN CONFLICT AND EXODUS:

A Survey Report on the War in Sudan and  
Migration to Egypt

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# Introduction

This report documents the experiences of Sudanese refugees in Egypt who—in the face of sudden war in Sudan—abruptly departed their homes, leaving behind all their earthly possessions and the very fabric of their lives

On the morning of April 15, 2023 families in Khartoum woke up to the unsettling sounds of air raids and gunfire. Within days, they were compelled to abandon their homes and embark on an arduous journey in search of safety. Struggling with the sudden onslaught, they underwent perilous voyages by land, facing extreme challenges and obstacles at every turn—the threat of armed robbery, hunger, lack of sanitation, the challenge of caring for elderly relatives or young children, and the inexplicable horrors of armed conflict itself.

Since the conflict, over 1.4 million Sudanese have crossed borders in haste to find refuge in neighboring countries—the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. Approximately 450,000 ended up in Egypt. This report delves into their stories.

In the coming pages, we will recount the trials they faced upon leaving home, and the new set of challenges they are forced to navigate in pursuit of a new life in Egypt—from housing and employment to overcoming perceptions in a host community already reeling from economic instability.

Beyond narrating individual stories, this report also spotlights the magnitude of the Sudanese crisis, urging the international community to pay close attention to the unfolding tragedy and galvanize an urgent call to action.

# Author's Note

This work is the product of 951 interviews conducted with the Sudanese refugee community in greater Cairo in the wake of the ongoing war in Sudan. The interviews reveal a spectrum of sentiments ranging from anger and mistrust towards the international community; ongoing trauma; reluctance to share personal information; a desire to preserve personal dignity; and a prevailing belief that, ultimately, no one will care.

Despite these perceptions, a significant number of individuals felt inclined to participate in the survey, seeing it as an opportunity to share their untold stories and contribute to a meaningful analysis that could shed light on the current situation—and that of refugees everywhere.

Data was collected from Sudanese refugees across the vast and densely populated landscape of greater Cairo, a city of over 22 million with more than 4 million Sudanese residents. We traversed suburbs of Cairo such as *Faisal*, *Hadyig Alharam*, *Alhram Albaini*, *Ard Alewa*, and *Ain Shams*, knocking on doors and engaging with groups at community events, cafés, and other locales.

Navigating through skepticism and reluctance, we persisted because we recognized the profound importance of every voice. In this work, we aim not only to document these narratives but to contribute to meaningful change by highlighting the specific and expressed needs of the Sudanese refugee community in Cairo.

Lastly, the learnings gathered from this report, while specific to the Sudanese conflict, can be universally applied to migration events worldwide. By understanding the expressed needs of refugees and adopting proactive listening approaches, the NGO community can enhance its ability to serve displaced populations globally.

**Amna Omer Yassin**  
Author



# Sudanese Perspectives: What happened in April 2023?

On April 15, 2023, a violent clash erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)—shattering the tranquility of Sudan's capital city, Khartoum, before spreading to peripheral towns. What began as a localized incident swiftly escalated into a nationwide crisis, leaving a trail of unprecedented devastation.

The consequences of this conflict are nothing short of catastrophic, marked by widespread atrocities committed against innocent civilians. Khartoum and Darfur, two densely populated regions, bore the brunt of the violence. In Khartoum, over 80% of the population was forced to flee their homes. In Darfur, ethnic violence and massacres led to a civilian death toll exceeding 12,000.

Personal statements gathered from respondents in Cairo provide a glimpse into the harrowing experiences of those who survived this period. To the right are just a few of those sentiments.



“ *Our lives turned upside down overnight.*

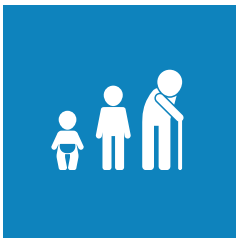
*Stepping out from one's house to the street became a horrifying experience.*

*We could hear the unsettling echoes of bombing and firing, heavy artillery penetrating our neighborhoods, striking fear in our homes.*

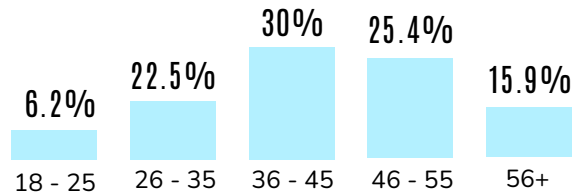
*Random shootings were taking place and we had no choice but to run for our lives.*

*Our once vibrant neighborhoods have turned into ghost towns.*

# Demographic profile of those surveyed



## AGE



## GENDER



72% identify as women



28% identify as men



## INCOME LEVEL PRIOR TO WAR

Less than 1,000 USD per mo	45%
1,000 - 4,000 USD per mo	38%
4,000 - 8,000 USD per mo	11%
8,000 - 10,000 USD per mo	5%
Over 10,000 USD per mo	1%



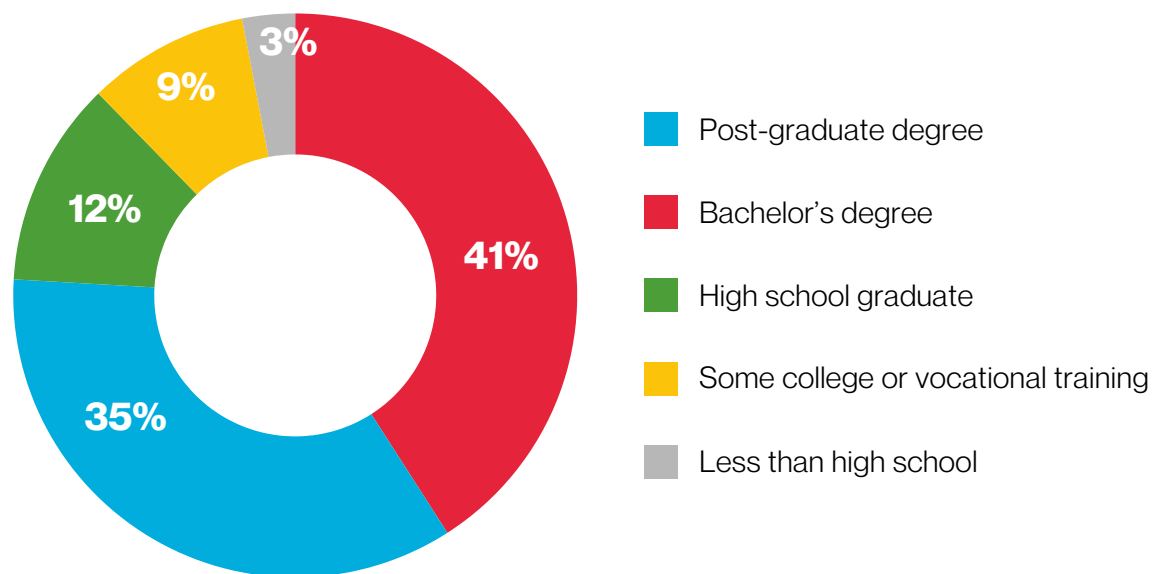
## HOUSEHOLD SIZE

- 470 respondents reported a household size of 5-7
- 881 respondents reported a household size of 3-4
- 123 respondents reported a household size of 8-9
- Larger Family Sizes were also reported, ranging from 10 to 27 members\*

\*The observed higher-than-usual family sizes can be explained by the co-residence of extended family members in the same household. Typically, the head of household, or primary breadwinner, assumes responsibility all family members residing under one roof.

# Educational Profile

We explored the educational backgrounds of the 951 respondents, providing insights, and shedding light on the educational diversity within the Sudanese refugee population.



The predominance of postgraduate and bachelor's degree holders indicates a significant portion of the refugee population comprises professionals who held stable jobs before the conflict. All evidence suggests this pool of highly educated individuals will likely face unique circumstances in securing suitable employment in Cairo's congested job market—which is not only highly competitive but tends to favor Egyptian nationals.

Understanding the educational profile is crucial for tailoring support programs that address the specific needs and aspirations of individuals with varying educational backgrounds.

# Survey Insights

## Sudanese sentiments about the war

Survey respondents share their views on the root-causes of the war, revealing the myriad perspectives and emotions stemming from a crisis that remains difficult for many to comprehend.

### Political complexity

- A war initiated by the RSF for personal gain, leading to the country's devastation
- Foreign meddling and support for different factions in the conflict

### Conspiracy theories

- RSF's attempt to seize control and pave the way for possible invasion by foreign troops
- A conspiracy to displace Khartoum's population

### Trauma

- Trauma, disbelief, and an inability to comprehend the scale of the conflict
- Feelings of nightmare, shock, and deep concern for the future of Sudan

### Betrayal

- Mention of the RSF's role in destroying the country and allowing foreign forces to exploit resources
- Ethnic and tribal tensions within the country turning citizen against citizen

## A diverse range of viewpoints regarding the global connections to the war

According to respondents, 65% view the conflict as intricately linked to regional power dynamics and international involvement, making it a multifaceted geopolitical issue or, as some would view it, a proxy war. 52% emphasize the role of international politics and the pursuit of resources in fueling the conflict, while another 50% cite factors such as the arms trade, economic interests, and humanitarian concerns as contributing to the war. Meanwhile, 19% attribute the war's origins and continuation to localized influences and internal conflicts.



# On the Ground

## We asked participants: What is the reality in Sudan now?

### **Widespread destruction and infrastructure damage**

An overwhelming 88% of respondents cited widespread destruction and damage to infrastructure—in addition to daily incidents of violence, instability, and a lack of access to basic services.

### **A protracted displacement and refugee crisis**

A notable 70% of respondents expressed deep concern regarding the state of displaced persons and refugees.

### **Limited evidence of reconstruction or recovery**

Unfortunately, none of the respondents reported any observable efforts towards reconstruction and recovery. This absence of visible initiatives suggests a challenging environment for rebuilding and recovering post-conflict.

### **Pessimism regarding peace efforts**

A common sentiment among respondents is the apparent impossibility or lack of visible progress toward the restoration of stability and peace. This sentiment reflects a widespread skepticism about the prospect of peace in the immediate future.

### **Daily plunder and theft by roaming gangs**

Widespread looting and theft occur daily, contributing to a destructive environment, lack of security, and the forced displacement of residents, leading to a general state of upheaval.

### **Major humanitarian crisis**

The situation has escalated into a major humanitarian crisis, characterized by widespread hunger, the prevalence of diseases and epidemics, and a lack of response from international humanitarian organizations. There is no clear solution on the horizon.

### **The possibility of the country dividing**

There is a bleak vision for the future, marked by complete collapse and the looming possibility of Sudan's division into separate states. This adds a dimension of uncertainty and instability to the overall outlook.

### **Occupation of citizens' homes and lack of security**

Citizens' homes have been occupied, especially in Khartoum, along with a complete absence of security. The Rapid Support Forces have taken full control of the city, exacerbating the crisis and crippling all essential services.

# Perspectives on the Global Response

This section summarizes the respondents' understanding of the conflict, international response, media coverage, and global linkages.

## What could the international community have done better?

Respondents expressed deep frustration with the international community's reaction to the war in Sudan. In their view, the international community could have played a more constructive role. Many prioritized the topics below as areas where the international community could have offered more effective assistance:

**63%** A swifter and more immediate response to the unfolding crisis

**66%** More effective peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts

**61%** Collaboration among international bodies to ensure a cohesive response

**66%** Stronger measures to safeguard human rights and prevent atrocities

**65%** Increased and more effective aid to support those displaced by the conflict

**59%** Tackling the underlying issues contributing to conflict and instability

**50%** Fostering initiatives that facilitate reconciliation and long-term peace

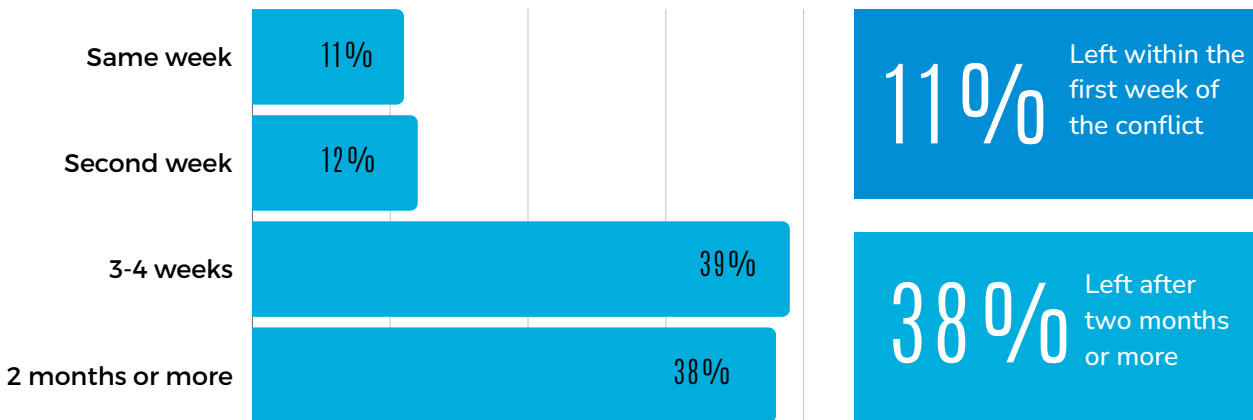
**65%** Vigilant oversight to ensure accountability for those responsible

**42%** Tailoring interventions to address the challenges faced by women and girls

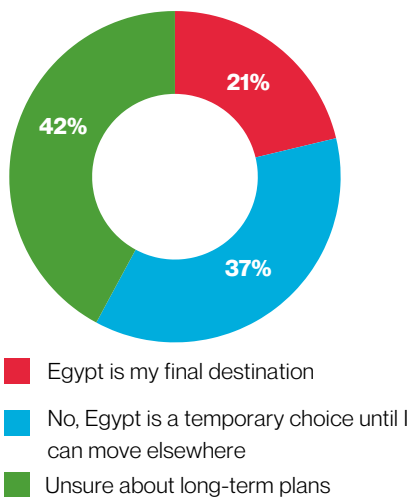
# Migration Decision Factors: Navigating Perilous Choices

This section explores the critical factors influencing people's decisions to leave their homes in response to the conflict. Understanding their motivations sheds light on the urgency and rationale behind the decision to leave home.

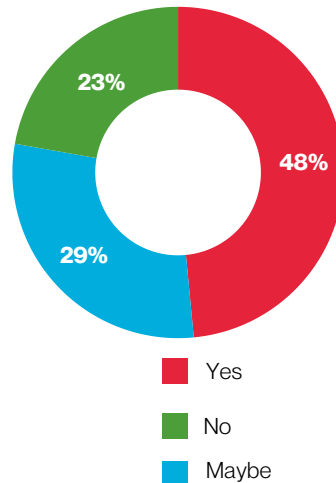
## How soon after the start of the conflict did you decide to leave the country?



## Is Egypt your final destination or do you plan to move elsewhere?



## Are you actively seeking opportunities to resettle in a third country?



# Grouped Reasons for Departure: A Mosaic of Concerns

## 01 \_\_\_\_\_ Insecurity/threat of violence

Respondents expressed a pervasive sense of insecurity and fear due to the ongoing conflict. Specific threats, such as invasion by RSF and the presence of armed militia, contributed to the decision to leave. Incidents of assault and random shootings by the RSF were reported.

## 02 \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of basic services

The absence of essential services like electricity, water supply, and medical facilities heightened concerns about well-being and safety. Families with loved-ones requiring medical care faced challenges due to the lack of healthcare facilities and medicine.

## 03 \_\_\_\_\_ Protection of family

The safety of family members, particularly children, was of paramount concern, with respondents expressing fears of harm, kidnapping, and even fatalities. Concerns for elderly family members and those with chronic illnesses influenced decisions to seek safer locations. The perception that entire neighborhoods were evacuating also contributed to the decision.

## 04 \_\_\_\_\_ Economic factors

Economic hardships, including job loss, financial instability, and an overall lack of livelihood opportunities, influenced the decision to relocate. Instances of RSF seizing homes and belongings, resulting in displacement, were reported as a key factor.

## 05 \_\_\_\_\_ Socio-political factors

Political instability, civil unrest, and the deteriorating political climate were cited as motivators for departure. The perception of a lack of government protection and the involvement of armed forces in civilian areas contributed to heightened insecurities. Tensions arising from ethnic and cultural differences, exacerbated by the conflict, further diminished people's sense of belonging.

## 06 \_\_\_\_\_ Human rights concerns

Respondents expressed concern about the humanitarian crises and the need for humanitarian aid and international intervention. Disruptions in education, with children unable to attend school due to the conflict, were mentioned as a factor influencing departure.

# The Journey into Egypt: Living Conditions and Future Considerations

Respondents were asked whether Egypt was their initial choice, or whether they had considered staying in peripheral towns in Sudan



63% Said Egypt was their first destination choice

35% Resettled on the peripheries before moving on to Egypt

## Most prevalent reasons for choosing Egypt as a destination

- Proximity to nearest border
- Egypt being one of the few nations that opened its doors to Sudanese refugees
- Egypt as a temporary move until the war subsides
- Lower cost of living in Egypt
- Reuniting with family
- Ease of entry into Egypt

# Barriers and Challenges

## Conditions reported at the border

Survey respondents reported a series of distressing experiences during their border crossings. Many were forced to spend the night in their cars while waiting entry across the border, enduring uncomfortable sleeping conditions and a shortage of basic necessities. The absence of sanitary facilities and limited amenities, including bathrooms, rest areas, food, and water, exacerbated their challenges. Many reported the added difficulty of not receiving sufficient government protection, or encountering shooting incidents during their journeys. Additionally, individuals reported waiting for days without adequate facilities, experiencing financial struggles, sleep deprivation, and continuous fear. Many reported family separation at the border, as males over 16 years of age were unexpectedly sent back to obtain visas, while disabled individuals struggled with the absence of accessible facilities. These accounts highlight the need for improved humanitarian services and support for those undergoing border crossings.

## Risks or dangers reported during the journey

During their journey, individuals encountered various risks and dangers. These included the constant threat of being shot, as well as the peril of staying overnight on the streets where they were exposed to the elements. Many reported frequent stops and checks by RSF and SAF members in Khartoum, and some were even stopped by hostile forces along the way. The lack of shelter compounded the challenges, and access to necessities such as washrooms, water, and medical assistance was severely limited. One respondent shared the heartbreaking experience of losing their youngest child during the journey, highlighting the profound emotional toll of the migration journey.

# Experience in Dealing with the Immigration and Residency Processes in Egypt



## Procedural changes, high fees, fines

Many reported the immigration process changing often and substantial financial fines imposed for violations.



## Bureaucracy and lack of support

Many found the immigration and residency process to be cumbersome, bureaucratic, tiring, time-consuming, and completely unsupportive.



## Chaos at the Sudanese embassy

The Sudanese embassy was described as chaotic, with authentication procedures that are lengthy, unhelpful, and/or unresponsive.



## Discrimination

A majority of respondents reported discrimination and poor treatment at immigration centers.



## Stringent requirements

Certain requirements are impossible or very difficult for migrants to meet, such as providing documentation that was left behind, lost, or simply unavailable due to the war.

# Employment Status

The high percentage of Sudanese refugees actively seeking employment in Cairo indicates a pressing need to facilitate job placement, skills development, and vocational support to enhance the economic integration of the refugee community

**70%**

Unemployed/seeking employment

**17%**

Not seeking employment

**13%**

Currently employed

- The responses reflect a rich diversity of professional backgrounds including corporate professionals, engineers, educators, doctors, and lawyers
- A notable portion of respondents expressed a desire for independent work
- Positions respondents are actively seeking include teachers, bankers, project managers, accountants, medical professionals, and more



# Key Challenges

## Faced by the Sudanese community in Egypt

### ● Visa volatility

Sudanese in Egypt face the challenge of frequent changes in visa requirements. Many seek tourist visas as a temporary solution, but those come with short durations and renewal challenges

### ● Mental health

Trauma, along with uncertainty about the future, leads to mental health struggles, with some, particularly children, experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

### ● Low income

The inability to work legally amplifies the feeling of insecurity. This financial strain affects individuals and families, making it challenging to meet basic needs

### ● Education

Curriculum changes have created hurdles for many, leading to academic setbacks. High schoolers and college students face uncertainty about the future

### ● Xenophobia

Discrimination is reported in various aspects, including employment, housing, and even in day-to-day interactions such as purchasing goods from shops or pharmacies

### ● Unemployment

Employment opportunities are scarce for non-Egyptians, with stringent documentation and verification processes. This limits the ability of Sudanese individuals to access job opportunities

# Recommendations

## What respondents have said they need

### Advocacy

The Sudanese government should advocate for inclusive policies to address the challenges its citizens are facing in Egypt, including more stable residency options and opportunities for legal employment

### Mental health

NGOs should provide free or low-cost mental health support services, group therapy, and counseling—all of which are vital to addressing the psychological impact of displacement and uncertainty, particularly for children

### Education

The Sudanese embassy and/or the Egyptian social services sector must encourage collaboration between Sudanese and Egyptian educational systems to facilitate the smooth transition of students and ensure the recognition of their previous academic credentials

### Embassy services

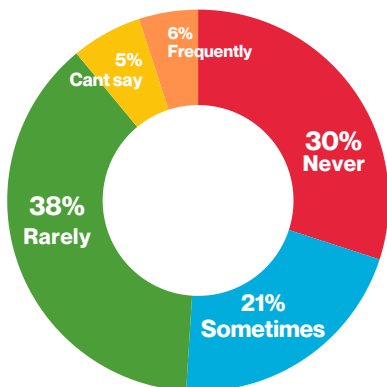
The Sudanese Embassy in Cairo must enhance its responsiveness to the needs of its citizens, who often turn to their embassy for assistance in authenticating or validating documents, only to encounter long queues and burdensome, untenable requirements

# Community Integration

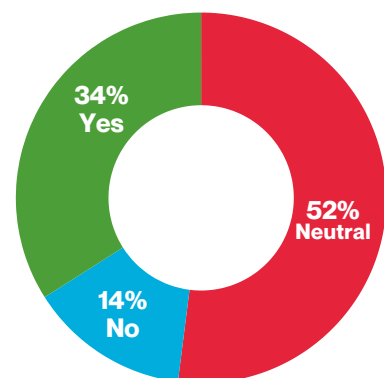
Survey results indicate a moderate level of success in the integration of Sudanese individuals into the Egyptian community. This can be attributed to several factors, including a sense of shared identity. For some, Egypt's cultural landscape and way of life holds a degree of familiarity, contributing to a smoother assimilation process. Additionally, the geographical proximity of the two nations, coupled with a common language and religion, facilitates communication and mutual understanding. These elements collectively contribute to a sense of connectedness and ease in navigating the social landscape, fostering a level of integration for the Sudanese within the Egyptian community.

The majority of respondents reported positive experiences within the Egyptian host community, which they regarded as generous, welcoming, and accepting. That said, some incidents of discrimination were reported:

**Have you or your family members faced discrimination or hostility due to your status?**



**Do you feel that refugees are generally accepted and welcomed in the Egyptian community?**



# Navigating Xenophobia and Discrimination

## Experiences reported by Sudanese refugees in Egypt

Despite Egypt's physical and cultural proximity to Sudan, some Sudanese refugees reported discriminatory practices and tendencies. While this was not widely observed, some instances of xenophobia are captured below.

### Discrimination at Immigration

Some respondents noted clear discrimination between Sudanese nationals and other nationalities at immigration offices.

### Hostility in Public Places

Several incidents were reported of direct hostility towards Sudanese in public spaces, with little to no objection from onlookers.

### Economic Scapegoating

Respondents highlighted blame and accusations towards Sudanese residents for rising inflation in the country. Many mentioned the perception that Sudanese refugees have contributed to the increased cost of living in Cairo.

### Exclusion and Othering

Instances of negative stereotypes were reported, in addition to expressions of disapproval towards Sudanese refugees and, in some cases, a desire for them to leave.

### Bias in Business Dealings

Reports of mistreatment in business transactions were shared, including several incidents where Sudanese vendors are treated poorly by Egyptian customers.

### Verbal Altercations

Frequent verbal altercations were reported, expressing disapproval of Sudanese individuals and, in some cases, a desire for them to leave.

## Social Hierarchy

A perception of social hierarchy was noted, where locals are given priority, followed by other Arab imrefugees, and Sudanese imrefugees receiving the least favorable treatment.

## Challenges in Housing

Instances of discrimination in housing, with some landlords refusing to rent to Sudanese tenants, were reported.

## Bias in Schools

Many respondents noted discriminatory behavior towards Sudanese children in school environments.

## Racial Slurs

Reports of racial slurs and physical threats, such as rocks being thrown, were shared, indicating heightened hostility.

## Lack of Cultural Savvy

Individuals with a long history in Cairo mentioned having insights into Egyptian culture, allowing them to navigate and/or avoid spaces where potential discrimination might occur. For more recent refugees, this lack of cultural awareness leaves them exposed to mistreatment.

# Recommendations

## Sudanese refugees' expressed needs

### ● Cultural Sensitivity

Integrate cultural sensitivity education in schools, mosques and other public spaces to promote understanding. Implement anti-discrimination training for officials, especially at immigration offices, to ensure fair treatment of refugees.

### ● Community Awareness

Launch community awareness programs to foster understanding and reduce negative stereotypes about refugees. Establish dialogue platforms for open conversations between refugee communities and locals to address misconceptions and build bridges.

### ● Legal Protections

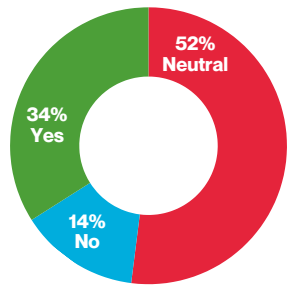
Strengthen legal protections against discriminatory practices, providing recourse for victims. Advocate for tenants rights to prevent discrimination in housing and ensure fair treatment for Sudanese individuals.



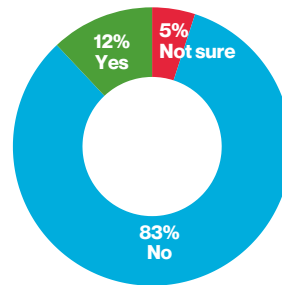
# The NGO Response

Participants were asked about the type of support they received in Egypt and shared the following data:

How would you assess the emergency response to the conflict and displacement?



Did you receive any monetary support from any NGO or emergency response agency?



While the majority of respondents (75%) reported not receiving any monetary support, a few mentioned receiving very limited contributions from the below entities:

- World Food Programme (WFP): 15%
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): 10%
- Caritas: 8%
- Emergency Response Programs: 5%
- International Organization for Migration (IOM): 7%
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS): 6%
- Islamic Organizations (Red Crescent, etc.): 3%
- European Union (EU): 4%
- Health-focused Organizations (WHO, cancer-related): 2%
- Children's Aid (UNICEF, etc.): 6%
- Local Egyptian Organizations (Egyptian Red Crescent, Women of the South, etc.): 4%
- Educational Support (CRS, EU, etc.): 3%
- Caritas, UNICEF, others (winter clothing assistance): 5%

## Types of support reported

Some respondents mentioned receiving psychological support or counseling.

Some received food items, meals, or food packages.

A few respondents mentioned receiving medical support or assistance.

A few responses indicated support in the form of training or educational programs.

Some received winter clothing, blankets, or assistance to cope with cold weather.

Some reported miscellaneous support from local organizations and churches.

A handful of respondents mentioned assistance related to housing or rent.

A number mentioned support from local relatives and international remittances.

# Women and girls ♀

**72% of respondents to this survey were women. Their responses reveal a wide range of emotions among women refugees—from anger and devastation, to complete shock and confusion.**

During our interviews with Sudanese women in Cairo, it became evident that women elders, including mothers and grandmothers, were particularly affected psychologically. Their reluctance to talk without careful prompting indicated a sense of shattered faith, fear, and helplessness. In addition to physical health complications, this group reported significant mental suffering.

The conflict has cast a shadow over the lives of women and girls, manifesting in various ways. The increased risk of gender-based violence and limited access to healthcare, particularly maternal care, poses health risks. Disruption of education, particularly for girls, has become a concerning issue, limiting future opportunities.

Forced displacement has torn families apart—and has taken an especially heavy emotional toll on women and girls. Economic challenges and income disparities have disproportionately affected women, aggravating already precarious power dynamics within the home and society. Psychological trauma and mental health issues stemming from the conflict have emerged as silent adversaries, severely impacting the well-being of women and girls.

A significant proportion of women survivors in Cairo are now actively engaged in independent, income-generating activities such as cooking, baking, babysitting, tutoring, selling handmade products online, and caregiving for the elderly. Despite societal expectations, these women have become crucial contributors to their families' financial well-being, challenging traditional social guidelines that once determined the kind of work women can or cannot do. The pressure on women to serve as the primary breadwinners, coupled with the challenges highlighted earlier, underscores the immense strain on their overall well-being.

Fundamentally, the conflict has compounded challenges for women and girls, intensifying the intersectional obstacles they encounter across different facets of their lives. Addressing mental health issues, providing specialized support, and creating avenues for sharing experiences are vital measures in alleviating the lasting impacts of the war.



# Gender-specific Challenges

The conflict has disproportionately affected women and girls, giving rise to a myriad of challenges including:

## Vulnerability to Gender Based Violence



The conflict has heightened the risk of gender-based violence, particularly during the journey out of Sudan, where women and girls were exposed to physical harm from RSF militias, gangs, and other armed groups.

## Restricted Access to Essential Healthcare



Women have limited access to critical healthcare services, especially maternal care, and face barriers particularly related to cost and the unfamiliarity of navigating a complex healthcare system in a new country.

## Disrupted Education, Particularly for Girls



Educational opportunities have been disrupted, with girls facing challenges in accessing and continuing their education. Limited resources, cultural adjustments, and the exorbitant cost of private education further hinder girls' academic pursuits.

## Displacement and Family Separation



Forced displacement has caused family separations, creating emotional and practical hurdles for women and girls. In certain instances, women, lacking vocational experience and separated from their sons, find themselves as the primary breadwinners.

## Economic Challenges and Loss of Income



Economic challenges as a result of war have contributed to severe income insecurity, leaving many women struggling to provide for their families. Moreover, the loss of family wealth in the form of gold and other heirlooms, traditionally seen as a source of personal wealth for women, has further exacerbated financial instability.

## Trauma and Mental Health

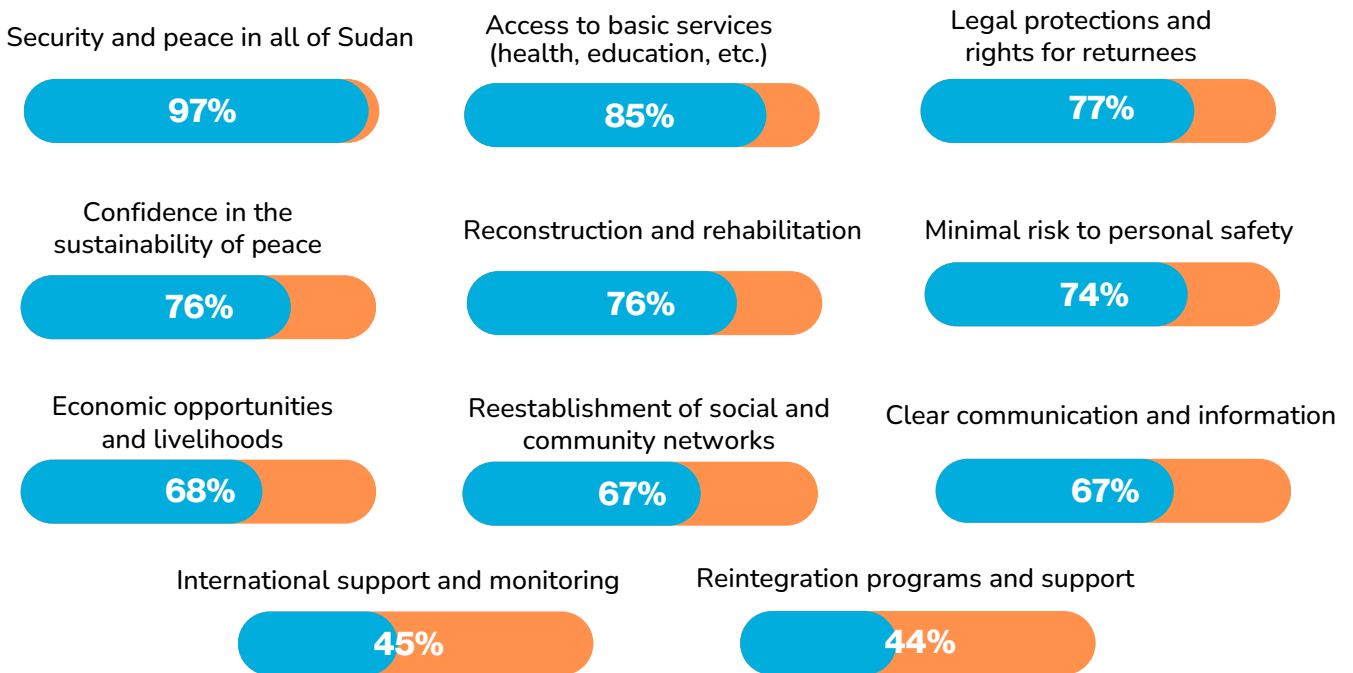


The conflict has caused significant psychological trauma and mental distress among women, many of whom have either experienced or been in close proximity to sexual violence before fleeing Khartoum. Many have also been witness to violent acts and are grappling with profound and long-lasting emotional scars.

# Pathways Home

## The Dream of Repatriation

**60%** of respondents expressed the intention to return to their hometowns in Sudan. However, their willingness to do so is contingent on the conditions below.



### Why some refugees are choosing to return to Sudan amidst war

Given the dire circumstances faced by some Sudanese refugees in Egypt, returning to Sudan is a real consideration. However, despite the challenges in Egypt, repatriation at a time of war poses significant risks and should be weighed carefully. The decision to return is often driven by desperation rather than a viable solution. It's about choosing dignity over humiliation. Many Sudanese feel trapped, and for some, homelessness in Cairo is a looming possibility. The absence of viable alternatives exacerbates their dilemma, compounding the desire to return home.

### Anti-Refugee Sentiment

Rising anti-refugee sentiment in Egypt further complicates the situation for Sudanese refugees. Discriminatory practices by landlords and increased incidence of societal hostility contribute to their marginalization, making repatriation seem like the only viable option for some. Refugees deserve a life of dignity and therefore, there must be a system of comprehensive support to facilitate their repatriation—including assistance with legal documentation, a strong family support system, access to basic necessities and, at the very least, some guarantees of safety.

# Recommendations

## On-the-Ground Humanitarian Support

Humanitarian aid, tailored to the explicit requests and expressed needs of the refugee community, is crucial. This requires a foundational emphasis on deep listening on the part of NGOs and institutions providing services. Based on the findings in this report, the expressed needs of Sudanese refugees encompass financial assistance, mental health/psychosocial support and help with school placement, legal representation, and job placement.

Acknowledging the profound toll on mental well-being, urgent action is needed to implement initiatives and programs dedicated to providing psychological support, particularly to children, many of whom have reported ongoing trauma, fear, and profound psychological scars as a result of the experience of surviving war.

Feedback from the Sudanese community further reveals a clear imperative to establish programs that support and enhance the entrepreneurial aspirations of Sudanese newcomers. Recent changes to Egyptian immigration law, however, threaten to obstruct their ability to legally start businesses, potentially perpetuating cycles of poverty. Advocacy efforts from the Sudanese government, NGOs, and institutions are urgently needed to block these detrimental changes and provide Sudanese refugees with the opportunities they need to pull themselves out of poverty.

The Sudanese refugee community is facing immense challenges in navigating the complex and ever-changing landscape of immigration policies. Many individuals find themselves in legal limbo, unsure of their rights and unable to access essential services. Legal support is urgently needed to help normalize refugees' legal status, providing clarity and stability. Furthermore, legal status can open up pathways for employment and empower individuals to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to the host community.

## The Big Picture: International Advocacy for Sudan

Given Sudan's strategic and geopolitical significance, the international community can and should play a key role in rebuilding infrastructure, fostering stability, and promoting sustainable development in the region.

We consistently heard from the refugee community in Cairo a resounding call for the international community and NGOs, along with regional players, to fervently advocate for peace, actively engage in diplomatic solutions, and address the underlying causes of the conflict in Sudan.

There's also a need for a systemic, long-term approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict and contributes to healing and rebuilding in the country. This comprehensive approach is essential for fostering lasting stability and security.

# Actionable Insights

## Expand protection for refugees

We urge the UNHCR and Egyptian authorities to utilize the broader definition of refugee status outlined in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention to grant protection to Sudanese refugees fleeing generalized violence and disturbances of public order in Sudan. A reexamination of the cases of Sudanese individuals in Egypt whose refugee status was previously denied is necessary, also utilizing the broader definition of refugee status outlined in the OAU Convention,

Transparent communication and clear explanations for asylum decisions must be provided to applicants, including those rejected, to improve trust and understanding of the process.

## Fund Sudanese-led organizations

We recommend that funders provide urgent, financial and logistical support to local Sudanese-led organizations in Egypt that play a crucial role in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees, including housing, medical care, and psych support. We also recommend funding for NGOs offering humanitarian aid to Sudanese refugees near the Sudanese/Egyptian border to improve conditions for refugees and asylees in border towns.

## Promote livelihood opportunities

We recommend that the Egyptian government improve access to the labor market for Sudanese refugees in Egypt by implementing domestic legislation to operationalize the Four Freedoms Agreement signed with Sudan. Additionally, providing legal protections and workplace rights for refugees in the informal job market would prevent exploitation and vulnerability.

## Initiate grassroots, community-based solutions

Recognize and bolster the role of community-based organizations (CBOs) run by Sudanese migrants and refugees, which play a crucial role in providing immediate assistance to new arrivals. These CBOs are well-positioned to offer culturally sensitive services, including temporary shelter, psychological/psychosocial support, and practical assistance in navigating life in Egypt. Providing financial support and technical assistance to these grassroots initiatives can help them expand their reach and effectiveness in meeting the diverse needs of refugee women and girls.

## Create work opportunities for women

Prioritize education and livelihood opportunities tailored to the needs of Sudanese refugee women and girls. Initiatives like community schools, vocational training, and skill-building workshops not only provide essential knowledge and practical skills but also empower women economically. Supporting initiatives that offer vocational training, such as handicraft workshops, can enable women to generate income while working from home, thereby enhancing their financial independence and resilience in the face of economic challenges.

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