

# Sudan

Overview: Sudan [Access the press release on South Sudan's independence here.](#)

Sudan was Africa's largest country and has been at war with only a brief reprieve (1971-1982) since its independence from Great Britain in 1956. With power centralized in the north around its capital Khartoum and natural resources concentrated in the South, Sudan was further divided by religion, ethnicity, tribal differences, and economic disparities. Lasting over two decades, the second civil war between the North and South resulted in the deaths of an estimated 2 million people and displaced 4 million others. An on-going conflict in the western region of Darfur was marked by a period of intensive, systematic targeting of the civilian populations from the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masaalit ethnic groups. In 2004, a genocide emergency in response to this violence was issued.

Today, Sudan includes the 15 states that were formerly known as northern Sudan, notably including the capital area around Khartoum, the conflict-ridden western region of Darfur, and newly violent Southern Kordofan. Previously, Sudan also included a southern region, against which it waged war for decades. The north-south conflict ended through negotiations in 2005, and the Republic of South Sudan formally declared its independence on July 9, 2011.

The concern for Sudan today stems from:

- The Sudanese government's established capacity and willingness to resort to violence against civilians in order to pursue its agenda. This violence has included genocide and related crimes against humanity, as evidenced by actions the government has taken against entire ethnic groups in the western region of Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and the South.
- On-going conflict, massive displacement, and human rights abuses in the Darfur region, disputed Abyei area, and Southern Kordofan.
- Uncertainty and instability generated by current political changes, specifically the independence of South Sudan, but also the marginalization of minority groups and opposition parties in the north.
- History of inter-group tensions and presence of armed forces associated with ethnic groups.
- Use of mass starvation and mass forcible displacement as a weapon of destruction;
- Pattern of obstructing humanitarian aid;
- Harassment of internally displaced persons;
- Bombing of hospitals, clinics, schools, and other civilian sites;
- Use of rape as a weapon against targeted groups;
- Employing a divide-to-destroy strategy of pitting ethnic groups against each other, with enormous loss of civilian life;
- Training and supporting ethnic militias who commit atrocities;
- Destroying indigenous cultures;
- Enslavement of women and children by government-support militias;
- Impeding and failing to fully implement peace agreements.

These patterns were evident in the north/south wars, and in Darfur. The war between the north and south resulted in the deaths of an estimated 2 million people and displaced 4 million others. The primary victims were the people from the Dinka, Nuer and Nuba ethnic groups. An on-going conflict in the western region of Darfur included a period of intensive, systematic targeting of the civilian populations from the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masaalit ethnic groups, resulting in the deaths of at least 200,000 people between 2003 and 2005 alone. In 2004, a genocide emergency was issued in response to this violence.

While rebel groups in the south and Darfur have also committed abuses, the Sudanese government, led by Omar Al-Bashir, who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity, bears primary responsibility for atrocities against and continued danger to civilians.

Today, Sudan's civilian population faces threats from continuing and potentially new violence. Conflict continues in the Darfur region, where over 2 million people--a third of the population--are displaced. The government has shown few signs of willingness to address the rights of southerners who reside in the north, northern groups who previously fought with the south (in the Nuba mountains and Southern Blue Nile), and the people of other marginalized areas, like the east, where an estimated 420,000 people are internally displaced. Additionally, it remains unclear if the government in Khartoum will pursue peaceful policies that respect the sovereignty of its new neighbor, South Sudan. All of these concerns exist on a political landscape altered by the independence of the South.

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