

## **Canadian and Sudanese civil society call on Canada to respond urgently to the world's biggest humanitarian crisis**

December 11, 2024

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister

*See below for a list of government officials who will be copied*

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you out of deep concern over the surging crisis in Sudan, to urge the Canadian government to take strong measures to address what is the world's largest humanitarian crisis by numbers. October 2024 was [one of the deadliest months so far](#), with hundreds killed in Al-Jazeera, Darfur and Khartoum states. The scale of human suffering and atrocities, already horrific, is expected to worsen in the coming weeks and months. It has now been 20 months of brutal war between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Since then, 11 million people have been forced to flee their homes, and 3 million have fled to neighbouring countries. This is the largest displacement crisis in the world. Recently published figures place the number of people killed due to the violence in [Khartoum alone to be 26,000](#). Others [estimate that around 150,000 civilians around Sudan have died](#) from conflict, starvation, disease, and the consequences of the collapse of infrastructure. [Up to 25 million – half the country's population – are in need of aid. UN experts warned last month](#) that 97 percent of Sudan's internally displaced (IDPs), as well as civilians in their homes, are facing severe hunger, and have accused the SAF and RSF of using 'starvation tactics' against 25 million civilians.

Diplomatic efforts and peace talks since April 2023 have had little effect. Humanitarian actors have limited access and funding to reach those most in need. There is a disconcerting lack of attention from the world and the world's media, which enables the warring parties and their supporters to continue committing atrocities and violations of international humanitarian law with impunity. Both warring parties are using food as a weapon of war by routinely blocking humanitarian aid, [including to besieged and displaced populations](#) already suffering famine conditions. Atrocities include [ethnically-targeted violence and massacres](#) and the [widespread use of rape and conflict-related sexual violence](#). The [UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Sudan has indicated that many of the violations may amount to crimes against humanity](#). Women and girls are experiencing the worst [impacts of the conflict](#), including sexual violence used as a weapon of war.

The longer the international community collectively fails to address the war in Sudan, the more entrenched, complex, and catastrophic the crisis will be. Decisive action by the international community is urgently needed now.

We note the complexity of this conflict, and acknowledge Canada's efforts to respond to humanitarian needs and to ensure women's voices are included in dialogues. Nevertheless, it is clear that the SAF and RSF have no interest in peace. SAF and RSF agreements to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access have had little impact on the ground, and the warring parties have not respected any ceasefire agreements. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community, including Canada, to put pressure on the external actors that are arming and supporting the warring parties, creating conditions for a prolonged conflict, and to take other measures, detailed below, to address violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by warring parties.

## **Recommendations**

We, the undersigned Canadian and international organizations and Sudanese civil society organizations and diaspora groups, call on the Government of Canada to urgently support an end to the fighting, and enhance its political and material support for the Sudanese people and for Sudan's path toward a peaceful and democratic future.

- We acknowledge the support that the Government of Canada has provided over the years for Sudan's civil society, and recent efforts to re-establish some Canadian diplomatic presence in the region.
- We acknowledge and pay respect to Sudan's organized and resilient civil society movements, and urge Canada to engage with Sudanese peacebuilders and frontline humanitarian actors.

## **We urge the Government of Canada to:**

1. **Appoint a Special Envoy for Sudan** to push for political momentum to end the war. The Envoy's mandate should include leading Canada's diplomatic engagement and coordination with international partners related to Sudan, and serving as a focal point for engagement with Sudan's civil society. The Envoy should work with all mechanisms working towards peace, and with the African Union to pursue collaborative regional solutions, taking into account the severe regional impacts. The Envoy's mandate should also be consistent with the goals and spirit of Canada's national action plan on Women, Peace and Security, including explicit attention to the protection and participation of women (in all their diversity) and LGBTQI+ people.
2. **Participate in a Parliamentary 'Friends of Sudan' group.** Canadian civil society organizations are advocating for the formation of **an all-party, non-partisan Parliamentary 'Friends of Sudan' group**, to act as an ongoing forum for Parliamentarians to share knowledge and advocate for a peaceful future for Sudan, propose actions parliamentarians and government can take, and engage with civil society and experts on Sudan.
3. **Name and work to hold to account [the external actors fueling the war – primarily the United Arab Emirates](#)**, as well as Russia, Egypt and Iran. U.N. experts have found

[credible](#) evidence that the UAE is supplying large quantities of weapons and ammunition to the RSF via eastern Chad.

4. Actively work towards establishment of a **mechanism for protection of civilians with a strong mandate to protect women and girls** under the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 specifically addressing women's human rights in conflict, and **create a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the widespread conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)** in the Sudan war.
5. **Work with international partners to refer the situation of Sudan to the International Criminal Court (ICC)** so that the ICC's jurisdiction is extended to include all conflict areas in Sudan where war crimes and crimes against humanity were allegedly committed. And commit to extend support to the work of the independent fact-finding mission to document and investigate widespread violations across Sudan.
6. **Advocate for an extension of the arms embargo on Darfur [to the whole of Sudan](#)**. It has been [verified](#) that large quantities of recently manufactured or transferred weaponry from China, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, the UAE and Yemen are being imported into Sudan, and in some cases diverted into Darfur.
7. **Extend and strengthen its [current sanctions regime](#)** to target more of the extensive business and financial networks of the armed groups perpetuating the war. Gold is playing a critical role in fuelling the war in Sudan. As recommended by Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, [any gold sourced from Sudan should be designated as a Conflict Mineral](#).
8. **Urgently address the discriminatory delays and restrictions on the family reunification program for Sudan**. The failures of this program's structure and implementation have been [widely reported](#). To date, not a single Sudanese citizen has been brought to Canada under this program, which was launched in February 2024. This stands in sharp contrast to the 960,000 Ukrainians affected by war who were granted visas. Canada should implement an expansive humanitarian pathway for Sudanese refugees.
9. **Bolster Canada's humanitarian response and action**, through:
  - **Scaling up funding**. As we approach the end of 2024, the Sudan humanitarian appeal, which requires \$2.7 billion to assist 14.7 million people, is only 57% funded. Canada must urgently step up to disburse its commitments and identify new funding in order to prevent a large-scale famine from taking hold. This must include funding to address the regional humanitarian responses.
  - **Directing at least 25% of Canada's humanitarian funding towards local frontline responders and initiatives**. Volunteer-run community kitchens, health services, and emergency response rooms have enabled many Sudanese people in conflict or

displacement zones to survive the war so far. With few exceptions, international organizations and NGOs have limited access to conflict regions, or face conditions that make operations impossible. International donor organizations [are beginning to recognize](#) that [mutual aid initiatives](#) in Sudan have access to many of the populations most in need. These groups are funded mostly by the Sudanese diaspora, and run under extreme pressure, with few resources. (See: [Why mutual aid initiatives are the best approach of financing communal service provision in war and post war Sudan. Atar English, 3rd issue, April 22, 2024.](#))

- **Advocating for the inclusion in humanitarian aid structures** of Sudanese civil society organizations working cross-border that are able to channel aid to populations most in need.
- **Improving access to humanitarian aid for especially vulnerable groups of Sudanese civilians**, including LGBTQI+ people and people with disabilities.

**10. Support the survival of Sudanese civil society, particularly women's organizations, women's peacebuilding initiatives, and human rights groups** working in exile in places like Egypt, Uganda, and Chad, **as well as grassroots actors** that will be the building blocks of any future democratic inclusive government in Sudan. Canada has previously supported Sudanese civil society – particularly women's rights organizations – to build their capacity during the 2019-2021 political transition period. Specifically, financing for women's rights and women-led organizations should be prioritized.

We request a response to this letter and a meeting to follow up on the recommendations. For further information please contact Amani Khalfan ([akhalfan@inter pares.ca](mailto:akhalfan@inter pares.ca)) of the [Canadian Civil Society Working Group on Sudan](#).

Cc: Hon. Melanie Joly, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Hon. Ahmed Hussen, P.C., M.P., Minister of International Development  
Hon. Marc Miller, P.C., M.P., Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
David Morrison, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Christopher MacLennan, Deputy Minister of International Development  
Ali Ehsassi, M.P., Chair, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAEE)  
Fayçal El-Khoury, M.P., Chair, Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the FAEE  
Rob Oliphant, P.C., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Anita Vandenbeld, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development  
Jacqueline O'Neil, Canada's Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security

**Signed by the following Canadian, international, and Sudanese and regional organizations and individuals:**

**Canadian and International Organizations**

1. AidWatch Canada
2. Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention
3. AQOCI (Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale)
4. Alongside Hope
5. Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
6. BC Council for International Cooperation
7. Canada for Africa Group
8. Canada's Feminist Forum for Afghanistan
9. Canadian Foodgrains Bank
10. Canadian Labour Congress
11. Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR)
12. Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief
13. Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
14. Cooperation Canada
15. Equality Fund
16. Health Partners International Canada
17. Hungry For Life International
18. Inter Pares
19. International Women's Rights Project
20. International Service for Human Rights
21. John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights
22. KAIROS Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
23. Kentro Christian Network
24. Manitoba Women for Women of South Sudan Inc.
25. Manitoba Council for International Cooperation
26. McLeod Group
27. OCASI (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants)
28. Ontario Council for International Cooperation
29. Presbyterian World Service & Development
30. Public Service Alliance of Canada – Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada
31. Rainbow Railroad
32. Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights
33. Refugees International
34. Rooftops Canada - Abri International
35. Rural Refugee Rights Network
36. Saltspring Island United Church, Social Justice Committee
37. Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation
38. SHE Associates
39. Sudanese Canadian Association of Waterloo Region and Wellington County
40. Sudanese Community Association of Ontario (SCAON)
41. Sudanese Community of Windsor & Essex
42. Sudanese Cultural League of Edmonton
43. Sudanese Montreal Group
44. There Management Consulting Inc.

45. WILPF Canada (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom)
46. World Renew Canada

### **Sudanese and Regional Organizations**

1. Almostaqbal for Enlightenment and Development
2. Bunyan Sudan
3. Bunyan AlSudan Women's Platform
4. Fikra for Studies and Development
5. Governance Programming Overseas (UK/Sudan)
6. ITUC Africa - Africa Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation
7. National Sudanese Women Association
8. Nora organization for combating violence against women
9. SAGIA (Sudanese Association for Gender Inclusion and Advocacy)
10. SIHA Network (The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa)
11. SORD (Sudanese Organization for Research and Development)
12. Sudanese Women Rights Action
13. Sudanese Artists Group
14. SWRC
15. Sudan Peace and Security Monitor
16. The Regional Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders in South West Asia and North Africa (WHRDMENA)
17. Women Against War Initiative /Sudan

### **Individuals**

1. Adila Salih Elobeid, Associate Professor, Ahfad University for Women
2. Alex Neve, Senior Fellow, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa
3. Dr. Amal Abdalla
4. Amani Al Khabir
5. Amel Gorani, Independent consultant
6. Beth Woroniuk
7. Bonnie Campbell, Professor Emeritus, Université du Québec à Montréal
8. Brian K Murphy, NGO policy analyst, refugee advocate
9. Dia Da Costa, Professor, University of Alberta
10. Dip Kapoor, Professor, University of Alberta
11. Douglas Scott Proudfoot, Former Chair of the GAC Sudan Task Force
12. Durria Hassan Khair, Human rights & gender activist
13. Elfadil Elsharief
14. Elizabeth Aluk Andrea Chol, Human rights advocate
15. Gamila Elkarib, Women's rights activist
16. Faisal Albashir
17. Firoze Manji, Publisher, Daraja Press

18. Iman Elkhatim
19. Laura Macdonald, Professor, Carleton University
20. Dr. Lynn Judith Gillespie
21. Maha Babeker
22. Dr. Mark Kersten, University of the Fraser Valley
23. Dr. Nahid Azad, MD
24. Nicholas Coghlan, First Head of the Canadian Office (Sudan); ex-Ambassador of Canada (South Sudan)
25. Pablo Idahosa, Professor Emeritus, York University
26. Patrice Cineus
27. M Emad Tahir, McGill University
28. Dr. Makere Stewart-Harawira, University of Alberta
29. Marvin Koop, Long term peacebuilding work in Sudan
30. Maryam Hussien
31. Mohamed Bashir, McGill University
32. Mohamed Elfaki
33. Mohamed Kodi
34. Omer Abbas Salih Hussein
35. Omar Ahmed Bashir
36. Rabab Elkarib
37. Ranjan Datta, Faculty, Bangladeshi-Canadian Organization
38. Samah Ata El Manan
39. Samah Alseddeg, MD
40. Sami Atabani
41. Samia Ahmed Nihar, Activist and member of women's initiatives
42. Stephen Brown, Professor, University of Ottawa
43. Suha Elamin
44. Tag Elkhazin, Professor, Nubian Heritage Society Canada (NUSAC)
45. Xan Dagenais, Human rights campaigner
46. Zainab Doleeb, MD, Physician