

Position Paper ZOA regarding situation in Sudan – April 2025

Current Situation

The war in Sudan is largely taking place outside the spotlights of the global media coverage or political discussions, but within less than two years has caused the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. The dreams and ideals of a peaceful Sudan under civilian rule that fueled the revolution that ousted Omar Bashir in 2019 seem farther away than ever.

More than 12 million persons have had to leave their homes and livelihoods, more than 25 million persons are severely food insecure, atrocities against civilians, ethnic violence and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) are taking place on a large scale, more than 10 million children have lost almost two school years, the national currency has devaluated by about 400% and large cash shortages, infrastructures and business have been destroyed, homes have been looted, agricultural production has fallen back, and international trade has plummeted. One of these points would already be disastrous in any country, the accumulation of it, unfathomable.

Recent developments in the conflict show that the war is far from over. On the one hand we see a strong comeback from the army (SAF) in the Eastern part of the country. During the last couple of months large parts of Sennar and Gezira States have been reconquered and in the last weeks Khartoum has been taken over after a two-year battle with the RSF.

On the other hand, the RSF with allied partners presented a charter for a constitution of a 'new Sudan' early March in Kenya. They still control vast parts of the south, center and west of the country, in Blue Nile, Kordofan and Darfur states, while there is fierce fighting in various places.

Operational Context

This 'split' causes large operational challenges for international humanitarian organisations, local NGOs and Emergency Response Rooms. Bureaucratic impediments include slow visa and (centralized) travel permit processes, scrutiny of bank transactions for organisations, the absence of GSM network in the western part of the country.

Especially for organisations (both international and national) who are working across the country and having to deal with both the Federal Humanitarian Coordination Mechanism (HAC), but in other areas also with the equivalent set up by RSF (SARHO), it is a precarious situation.

Nevertheless, ZOA has been on the ground in both Darfur as well as in the East of the country, to provide relief support to internally displaced persons (IDPS), and at the same time focusing on resilience of both IDPs, host communities, and to support food systems in the different areas of operations.

Funding from the Dutch Government, a.o. through the Dutch Embassy to Sudan (EKN) as well as through different modalities of the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA) have been vital. The flexibility in this funding and the cooperative stance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Embassy have been of crucial importance to quickly adapt and address urgent new needs.

It has enabled us and our local partners to support thousands of farmers to have sufficient inputs for the past two agricultural seasons, as well as provide food aid to those who could not access this. We have provided hygiene kits, built and restored water infrastructure, and built schools so children could resume schooling where possible, as many schools were used as shelter by IDPs.

Currently, we are piloting support to displaced persons who are wanting to return to their homes in the East of the country through this flexible funding.

Sadly, we also see declining funding trend across the board, from the Netherlands, Germany and the UK to recently also the implosion of aid funding through USAID (and BHA).

This stop work order and cancellation of contracts (despite recently seeing a number of reinstated contracts) have severely affected the work of Emergency Response Rooms and communal kitchens, important and lifesaving programmes of various INGOS, and we are starting to see the effects on reduced funding to the UN.

At the time where Sudan would need drastically higher support for humanitarian aid to prevent the still developing famine situations, and early recovery where possible, this is a hard blow to the Sudanese people.

Challenges

It is also clear that in Darfur, where the most places with severe food insecurity are found, we as ZOA (and many other international and national organizations) must deal with on the ground realities for access, and that this includes maintaining certain working relations with SARHO.

The dilemma in this is, that there is a demand to formally register with SARHO, but that this could lead to implications for operating in the SAF controlled areas. SAF have designated the RSF as a terrorist organisation and have been stating that the Federal HAC is the only official humanitarian aid coordination authority in the country.

Attempts to secure this acceptable working relation with SARHO and maintained unhindered operations in SAF controlled areas, either through engagements of the UN or the Sudan INGO Forum as a collective have not yet led to clear commitments from RSF/SARHO and/or SAF/HAC for gaining and maintaining unrestricted access on both sides.

Asks:

- 1) Continue and strengthen efforts to call for a cease fire, as well as unhindered humanitarian access both in the areas under SAF control as in areas under RSF control.

We commend the efforts of Ministers Veldkamp and Klever to date, but more needs to be done, in all diplomatic arenas; bilateral, the EU, the UN, Donor Working Groups, but also in bilateral exchanges with countries who would have leverage and influence on the parties to the conflict

In relation to unhindered humanitarian access we would like to emphasize that this is not only about open border crossings, visa and travel permits, but also a specific attention to the continued possibilities for organisations to work both in SAF and RSF controlled areas with possibilities to have necessary working relations with various entities on the ground to ensure this (continued) humanitarian access.

- 2) Reconsider funding cuts for Relief and Recovery work and prioritize direct and flexible funding through mechanisms such as the DRA over funding through the UN system. Also call on other countries to ensure solidarity with the people of Sudan is not only lip service, but that this should be backed up by allocating more funds to Sudan.

A concrete opportunity would be the upcoming Sudan conference in London on the 15th of April, the second anniversary of the start of the war.

We boldly ask the Dutch government to allocate more funds to the DRA for Sudan.

- 3) Lastly, to all: remember the people of Sudan, the displaced, the suffering, and all those who are longing for peace and a chance to start rebuilding their livelihoods and dream again of reviving the ideals of the revolution of 2018/2019. *#KeepEyesOnSudan*