

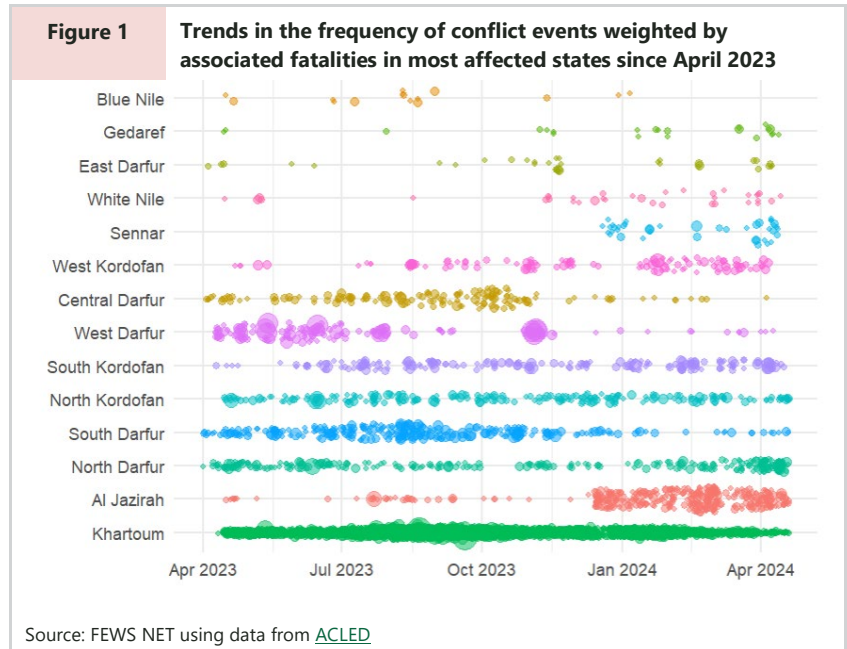
Sudan faces a risk of Famine as conflict threatens access to food for millions

Over twelve months of warfare between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) is driving a devastating deterioration in acute food insecurity across Sudan, and parts of the country face a [risk of Famine \(IPC Phase 5\)](#). Millions of people are

experiencing severe hunger, and available evidence suggests high and rising levels of acute malnutrition and hunger-related mortality among internally displaced populations. In parts of West Darfur, Khartoum, and areas of Greater Darfur with high concentrations of displaced persons – such as around El Fasher in North Darfur – there is a credible risk that parties to the conflict may take future actions that substantially worsen or fully cut off households’ ability to access food and income for an extended time, as detailed in FEWS NET’s recent [Food Security Outlook](#) report. This could occur either through deliberate, prolonged isolation of households – a tactic armed actors have already used to a lesser degree in a periodic, temporary manner – or as a byproduct of further escalation of conflict, such that populations are isolated from access to food assistance, community support, and remittances, and informal cross-border trade flows are blocked. If such a scenario were to materialize, then levels of hunger, acute malnutrition, and hunger-related mortality would likely increase even further than currently projected and breach the [Famine \(IPC Phase 5\) thresholds](#).

The assessment of a risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5) warrants great alarm at the same time as underscoring the severity of acute food insecurity anticipated in Sudan under [FEWS NET’s most likely scenario](#). In the most likely scenario, levels of hunger and malnutrition are expected to reach Emergency (IPC Phase 4) with some households in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), and humanitarian food assistance needs will rise sharply through the lean season. Following more than one year of conflict (Figure 1), Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are already widespread across Sudan. Through September, Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are anticipated to expand significantly across Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, and parts of eastern Sudan. Finally, some households are expected to face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) outcomes in the areas worst affected by conflict, including parts of West Darfur, Khartoum, and among displaced populations in hard-to-reach areas of Greater Darfur. In particular, the displaced populations in and around El Fasher are of increasing concern amid the recent escalation of conflict and heightened tensions that have followed declarations of support for SAF by multiple Darfur armed groups and the amassing of RSF troops around the city. [Seizure of El Fasher by the RSF](#) would likely lead to escalating intracommunal violence, deaths, and widespread displacement while enabling RSF to consolidate control over the entire Darfur region.

National food availability is already tightening rapidly due to the impact of the conflict on both domestic production and imports. The national cereal availability gap is anticipated to be over 2 million metric tons, based on estimates of domestic production and anticipated formal wheat imports through Port Sudan. While informal cross-border trade is expected to mitigate the cereal gap to some extent, formal import flows remain constrained by the official closure of the Sudan-Chad border and the South Sudan government’s placement of restrictions on exports of food and fuel to Sudan. Moreover, conflict is severely impeding domestic trade flows from more productive areas of the southeast to the rest of the country, further diminishing the food supply in already deficit-producing areas of Greater Kordofan and Greater Darfur.



Soaring food prices and steep reductions – if not outright loss – of both rural and urban household income sources due to conflict are simultaneously driving a sharp decline in the ability of households to purchase food, a trend that will worsen as the 2024 lean season progresses. In April, staple food prices were already higher than that observed during 2023 lean season and in some markets reached roughly double their 2023 peak. In rural areas, rising livestock prices have not kept pace with the rate of increase in cereal prices, which has eroded the value of income earned from livestock. Additionally, rural households' income from other typical sources – such as off-own-farm labor and the sale of own-produced groundnuts and sesame, livestock products, and bush products – are also limited by conflict. Of particular concern is the impact of conflict on access to credit and agricultural inputs, which will severely diminish agricultural labor income in the near-term and harm long-term prospects for the 2024/25 cereal production year. In heavily impacted urban areas, many households have lost their private sector and salaried jobs and are increasingly turning to informal labor, petty trade, and remittances. Overall, access to food is lowest among the poorest pastoral and agropastoral groups; displaced populations across Greater Darfur and Greater Kordofan who were uprooted from their typical livelihoods; and displaced urban households who have lost their source of employment.

Humanitarian access remains severely limited by active conflict, generalized insecurity, insufficient humanitarian corridors, bureaucratic and logistical hurdles, and direct obstruction by both the SAF and RSF. Currently, food assistance remains on hold in Al Jazirah state and no movements across conflict lines have occurred since the mid-December attacks on Wad Madani. [In late March](#), two humanitarian convoys were able to deliver assistance in North, Central, and West Darfur following the re-opening of one border crossing with Chad at Al Tina in North Darfur; however, humanitarian partners lack clarity on the future use of this route, and all other border points with Chad remain closed. Additionally, escalating conflict in South Kordofan and North Darfur, and particularly RSF's capture of areas such as Malit outside of El Fasher which is a critical access point for assistance into El Fasher, will further impede humanitarian access to these areas. Finally, while the government of Sudan has approved three humanitarian supply delivery routes – including a corridor from Port Sudan to El Fasher via Atbara; cross-border flows of assistance from South Sudan; and the use of airports for aid delivery – insecurity has interfered with use of the former, and the latter two have yet to be operationalized. It is imperative that government actors take further steps to operationalize and safeguard humanitarian corridors, which are essential to facilitating the necessary scale-up in food assistance and to reach the populations most in need.

Acute malnutrition has already sharply increased, with [available SMART surveys](#) from four out of eight accessible localities in the east suggesting a doubling or tripling of the prevalence of acute malnutrition compared to the most recent prior surveys from 2018. Meanwhile, limited surveys in western areas suggest acute malnutrition levels have already reached the Critical to Extremely Critical range (≥ 15 percent); in Zam Zam camp in North Darfur, nearly 25 percent of children under five were acutely malnourished in February. In addition to food consumption gaps, the collapse of the health care system, anticipated increase in morbidity in the upcoming rainy season, and unsanitary living conditions for the displaced, are likely to further exacerbate the severity of acute malnutrition over the coming lean season.

In the coming months, rising levels of hunger and severe acute malnutrition are anticipated to result in increasing levels of hunger-related mortality. As the lean season intensifies through September, FEWS NET expects Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes to spread across Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, and in some areas of eastern Sudan, while pockets of households will face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) outcomes in parts of West Darfur, Khartoum, and among the displaced population in Greater Darfur. To cope, populations are expected to increasingly resort to consuming wild foods and seeds that would have been used for planting; liquidating their assets (including livestock and productive assets) to purchase food; relying on the sale of natural resources and already [thinly stretched family and community support](#); begging; and undertaking risky migration through conflict zones in search of food and income. Against this backdrop, there is a credible risk that armed parties in parts of West Darfur, areas with high concentrations of displaced persons in Greater Darfur, or Khartoum may take action to further worsen or prevent households' access to already minimal sources of food and income for a sustained time. If this scenario were to materialize, then levels of acute malnutrition and hunger-related mortality would likely accelerate even further than currently projected, and Famine (IPC Phase 5) would likely occur.

Recommended citation: FEWS NET. Sudan Food Security Alert May 3, 2024: Sudan faces a risk of Famine as conflict threatens access to food for millions, 2024.