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UNHCR – UN High
Commissioner for Refugees
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News comment: Two years on, Sudan is a
catastrophe the world cannot afford to ignore

This statement is attributable to Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Sudan is bleeding. Its people have been suffering for too long.

Civilians are being bombed every day. Millions are trapped between conflict, neglect and the dilemma of flight.

Two years of war have created what is now the world's worst humanitarian and displacement crisis, intensified by extreme cuts to international aid. In the past few days, we have seen brutal attacks on vulnerable people in North Darfur. Aid workers were among those killed. These are flagrant violations of humanitarian law.

The Sudanese are besieged on all sides – war, widespread abuses, indignity, hunger and other hardships. And they face indifference from the outside world, which for the past two years has shown scant interest in bringing peace to Sudan or relief to its neighbours.

I have just returned from Chad, a haven for nearly a million Sudanese refugees fleeing this carnage.

People I met at the border shared stories of experiences no one should have to live. Yet despite the pain, they told me they no longer felt in danger. That is the quiet strength of asylum.

But severe funding shortfalls mean we will struggle to alleviate the suffering. Supplies of food and medicine are dwindling. Shelter is already rudimentary. We cannot move refugees to safer areas.

It's not just the Sudanese who have become invisible. The world has largely turned its back on the countries and communities that have taken in so many refugees. Chad has scarce resources yet has allowed refugees to seek safety on its territory. A huge number – 1.5 million – have fled to Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese, themselves once refugees, have returned to escape the violence in Sudan, only to find their homeland again on the brink of war.

The stability of the entire region is threatened. There is not just an urgent need for humanitarian protection, but also for development aid so that host governments can offer refugees and their own people better futures. They need an investment in peace, prosperity and stability, and they need it now.

But the impact of this emergency is being felt even further afield. Sudanese refugees are arriving in Uganda, and traversing through Libya – making journeys fraught with danger – to Europe. These refugees need and deserve their basic rights – to safety and dignity, to education and employment, to health and housing, to peace. Many have made these journeys in search of those rights, and many more will follow suit.

After two years of unrelenting suffering, the world can no longer afford to ignore this emergency. We must make every effort to bring peace to Sudan. Humanitarian and development support must be stepped up. Continuing to look away will have catastrophic consequences.

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Statement by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on the impact of the conflict on the civilian population and neighbouring countries

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