

**UNHCR**
The UN Refugee Agency

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Approximately 4.4 million Sudanese were uprooted at the end of 2001, including an estimated 4 million internally displaced persons and some 440,000 Sudanese living as refugees and asylum seekers.

Sudanese refugees primarily lived in eight countries, including about 150,000 in Uganda, some 80,000 in Ethiopia, 70,000 in Kenya, 70,000 in Congo-Kinshasa, about 35,000 in Central African Republic, 18,000 in Egypt, 15,000 in Chad, and 1,000 in Eritrea. In addition, more than 3,000 filed new asylum applications in Western countries during the year.

An estimated quarter-million or more Sudanese became newly uprooted during 2001, although the actual number might have been significantly higher. A huge population of Sudanese exiles lived in Egypt and elsewhere, many of whom considered themselves to be refugees despite lack of official refugee status from host governments.

Sudan hosted nearly 310,000 refugees, including about 300,000 from Eritrea, at least 5,000 from Uganda, and up to 2,000 from Ethiopia. An additional 10,000 Ethiopians lived in Sudan in refugee-like circumstances.

Pre-2001 Events

Sudan's civil war has persisted for 18 years. Rebel armies in southern Sudan have continued to fight against Sudanese government forces and pro-government militia in a bid for political autonomy or independence for southern Sudan and its estimated 5 million people.

Violent ethnic and military divisions among southerners have complicated the civil war. Schisms have also occurred in the north, where some groups opposed to the government have formed a military alliance with southern rebels. The long war has also taken on religious and cultural overtones. Most southern Sudanese are black Christians or adherents to local traditional religions, while northern Sudanese are predominantly Arab Muslims.

The civil war has left an estimated 2 million persons dead in southern and central Sudan since 1983. Serious food shortages caused by the war, population displacement, and drought have remained a chronic threat in many areas of the south, resulting in widespread famines in 1988, 1992, and 1998.

Combatants have regularly manipulated the massive amounts of humanitarian relief sent to Sudan. Government officials have placed tight controls on aid deliveries, often blocking food shipments to needy populations, while many rebel commanders regularly have confiscated a percentage of food relief distributed in the south.

Sudan has been one of the world's leading producers of uprooted people since the mid-1980s. In recent years, more than 10 percent of the world's uprooted population has been Sudanese.

New Displacement and Violence in 2001

An estimated 250,000 Sudanese became newly uprooted during 2001, including some 25,000 refugees who fled to neighboring countries.

"The armed conflict ... continues to create widespread displacement of civilian populations, destroy infrastructure, and obliterate assets such as livestock and crops," a UN inter-agency report declared late in the year.

Some 50,000 persons or more fled their homes when the main rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), launched a military offensive in Bahr el-Ghazal Province in the south. Some families raced 200 miles (350 km) northward to escape the violence. Others fled to local villages that already were struggling to feed themselves because of pervasive food shortages. Child mortality rates among newly displaced families were five times higher than among other residents of the province, according to one survey.

Counterattacks by the government later in the year caused more upheaval in Bahr el-Ghazal Province as several villages captured by the SPLA shifted back to government control. As in previous years, pro-government militia destroyed homes and killed, raped, abducted, and displaced large numbers of local residents along the province's railway line.

In a second conflict area, southern Sudan's Upper Nile Province, at least 50,000 persons fled their homes during the year, according to reports. Clashes continued near the province's large oil fields, pitting government forces, pro-government militia, rebels, and anti-rebel southern groups against each other. Splits within the local ethnic Nuer population also fueled violence in the province.

The government continued to extract oil in Upper Nile Province, providing substantial new revenue that reportedly enabled Sudan to double its military expenditures compared to 1998. "Across the oil-rich regions of Sudan, the government is pursuing a 'scorched earth' policy to clear the land of civilians and to make way for the exploration and exploitation of oil by foreign oil companies," a report by Christian Aid, a British agency, stated during the year.

In a third conflict zone, the Nuba Mountains area of central Sudan, a major government military offensive displaced 25,000 to 50,000 residents from 11 villages during the year, according to estimates.

Warfare and localized violence also occurred in other areas of the country, including the provinces of Eastern Equatoria and Blue Nile. In addition, communal conflicts over land and cattle have become increasingly deadly in recent years, fueled by the proliferation of small arms during nearly two decades of civil war.

Government planes continued to bomb civilian and humanitarian sites in southern and central Sudan. Up to 60 aerial bombings occurred during the first seven months of the year, including attacks against camps for displaced persons and relief operations. Bombings continued later in the year after a brief lull. (See *Long-Term Displacement and Conditions* below.)

The SPLA drew criticism for what a UN human rights investigation called "serious disregard for humanitarian and human rights law." The SPLA "continued to loot food – including relief provisions – from the population, sometimes with civilian casualties, recruit child soldiers, and commit rape," the UN report charged. The report also criticized the SPLA for "burning down villages" in Upper Nile Province.

The United States stepped up efforts to reduce the violence and mediate an eventual end to the conflict. "Sudan is a disaster for all human rights. We must turn the eyes of the world upon the atrocities in Sudan," U.S. President George W. Bush declared in September.

President Bush appointed a special presidential envoy for Sudan, former senator John Danforth, who immediately proposed a cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains, an end to aerial bombings by the Sudanese military, and improved access for humanitarian deliveries.

Long-Term Displacement and Conditions

International policy-makers and aid officials generally agreed that humanitarian conditions in Sudan were among the worst in the world.

"There is perhaps no greater tragedy on the face of the earth today," U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell asserted in March. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reported that "the situation in Sudan has grown worse."

The World Food Program (WFP) warned that "we have a looming crisis on our hands," with 3 million Sudanese facing food shortages. "The food security situation is worsening more quickly than expected," WFP reported.

Between 1.5 million and 2 million persons were believed to be internally displaced in the south, including about 300,000 in government-held towns. Some 1.5 million to 2 million people remained displaced in and around Khartoum, the capital, most of them southerners who had fled or migrated northward because of the war. An additional half-million people were uprooted in the Nuba Mountains area of central Sudan.

Many displaced families in the south have fled from place to place during the course of the war. Few lived in camps, but rather in destitute conditions that were often indistinguishable from those of other impoverished residents.

As warfare dragged on throughout 2001, relief workers acknowledged that humanitarian aid programs could not improve the population's overall condition; at most, they could only stave off worse misery.

"Without humanitarian assistance, it is expected that tens of thousands more would die, [and] hundreds of thousands more would move," a report by UN humanitarian agencies concluded. Aid workers expressed concern about potential famine in Upper Nile Province, the scene of some of the year's worst violence, where malnutrition rates were 24 percent in a town sheltering large numbers of displaced persons. Religious leaders elsewhere in the south urged aid agencies to establish emergency feeding centers to assist newly uprooted people.

"The persistence of malnutrition among the very young and the elderly is of particular concern" throughout southern Sudan, UN relief officials reported. Malaria remained a major cause of death, killing an estimated 35,000 people annually in government-controlled areas alone, according to health assessments.

A consortium of relief agencies known as Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) delivered tens of thousands of tons of food to needy populations year-round, much of it by air because of poor or nonexistent roads. Inadequate food distribution triggered violence among competing populations and competing armies in Upper Nile Province, prompting some local traditional leaders to request that food deliveries be suspended. In November, Sudanese officials allowed deliveries of relief supplies to rebel-held areas of the Nuba Mountains for the first time in a decade.

Funding shortages, security risks, and Sudanese government restrictions continued to impede humanitarian efforts during the year. Government planes bombed scores of civilian and humanitarian targets, including health clinics, food aid distribution sites, and UN planes delivering relief items.

In June, bombs dropped by a Sudanese military plane nearly hit a food-laden UN plane in mid-air over a distribution site. Combatants also fired on a plane operated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, killing a pilot. Sudanese authorities routinely banned relief flights to needy locations, particularly to Upper Nile Province, where malnutrition was rising.

"The operating environment ... is ... often dangerous for both humanitarian workers and beneficiaries," a UN humanitarian report noted. Combatants killed and kidnapped relief workers during the year.

Donor nations provided \$155 million to OLS relief efforts during 2001, nearly 40 percent less than the \$251 million requested by relief officials. The U.S. government provided nearly \$105 million to OLS, and additional monies to other aid efforts. UN officials complained that programs to integrate displaced populations into safe areas of southern Sudan were "very poorly funded, to the extent that virtually no action was possible."

Internal Displacement in Khartoum

Years of warfare in the south have pushed 1.5 million to 2 million persons to Khartoum, where they continued to live as displaced persons. Approximately 220,000 resided in four official camps; most other displaced families lived in 15 dilapidated squatter neighborhoods.

Conditions for displaced residents of the capital were generally substandard. Some 80 percent of the displaced population were "very poor" and typically spent four-fifths of their meager incomes on food purchases that met only half of their nutritional requirements, according to a 1999 survey by WFP. Fewer than 10 percent received food aid. Fewer than one in ten held formal jobs, according to a UN study completed several years ago. Three in ten had no access to medical services.

Displacement camps offered primary schools, but no secondary schools. UN studies reported that only one-third of displaced children in Khartoum attended school, and many of the capital's 10,000 or more street children were from displaced families.

Government officials discussed plans to improve roads and services at designated camps, and indicated a willingness to give some displaced families title to their own land. But fulfillment of the government's plans reportedly would require displaced households to move temporarily or permanently to new locations, and little progress occurred during 2001.

Refugees from Eritrea

Most of the 300,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan have lived there for up to 30 years. About half resided in 23 camps and settlements in eastern Sudan; the other half lived on their own in towns such as Kassala, Khartoum, and Gedaref.

The refugee camps offered 28 primary schools, attended by only 15,000 of the population's 57,000 school-age children. Thousands of refugee children instead attended Koranic schools organized by their parents or the local population. Three-quarters of the adult refugee population were illiterate and were reluctant to enroll their children in modern schools.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Eritrean government encouraged the refugee population to repatriate during 2001. The Eritrean and Sudanese governments restored diplomatic relations after years of tensions and met in March to lay the groundwork for a large-scale return program. UNHCR launched a publicity campaign to inform refugees of repatriation opportunities and predicted that 60,000 refugees would return voluntarily to Eritrea by year's end.

Only about half that number – 33,000 – chose to repatriate. Heavy rains washed out primitive roads and interrupted the repatriation process for three months, and many other would-be returnees chose to remain longer in Sudan to harvest their crops.

Most families that opted to repatriate traveled for two days to the border on dozens of truck convoys organized by UNHCR. More than 100 people repatriated by boat from Port Sudan,

while some chose to return home on foot with their livestock. UNHCR planned to continue the repatriation program for long-term refugees in 2002.

Refugees from Ethiopia

Most Ethiopian refugees fled to Sudan in the 1980s to escape civil war and human rights abuses in Ethiopia.

Improved political and human rights conditions in Ethiopia prompted UNHCR to declare in March 2000 that Ethiopian refugees who fled prior to 1991 no longer qualified for automatic refugee status. The declaration meant that Ethiopians in Sudan either had to repatriate, apply for individualized refugee status, or change their legal status in order to remain in Sudan.

Some 10,000 Ethiopians chose to repatriate in 2001 with UNHCR assistance. Returnees traveled in UNHCR-organized truck convoys, some of which journeyed as far as 600 miles (1,000 km) to reach the Sudan-Ethiopia border.

Approximately 85,000 Ethiopian refugees have returned home from Sudan since 1993. The virtual completion of the repatriation program in 2001 enabled closure of "some of the oldest refugee camps in the world," UNHCR announced.

Although about 3,000 Ethiopians chose to apply for individualized refugee status, a screening process by the Sudanese government granted refugee status to fewer than 300 applicants. Scores of refugees protested the allegedly unfair status determination process and UNHCR's decision to withdraw *prima facie* refugee status.

Most remaining Ethiopian refugees, perhaps including some who fled Ethiopia after 1991, lived in urban areas of Sudan. The government's Refugee Counseling Services helped urban refugees pay medical bills and school fees, and assisted those seeking employment.

Because of the controversial screening process and the end of automatic refugee status, the U.S. Committee for Refugees estimated that about 10,000 Ethiopians were living in "refugee-like" circumstances in Sudan.

Other Refugees

Most of the 5,000 Ugandan refugees in Sudan lived in the country's war-torn southern region. Little information was available about their living conditions.

A joint assessment mission by UNHCR and the Sudanese government traveled to remote western Sudan in July to examine the needs of an estimated 5,000 Chadian refugees believed to live there. The assessment team determined that the population had either returned to Chad or become integrated in Sudan, and that no Chadian refugees in need of protection remained in the country.

