

# **Sudan Civil War: After El Fasher**

*Access, Logistics and Security  
Management*

The civil war in Sudan started in April 2023 when a power struggle broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the powerful paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The fighting has led to famine and claims of genocide in the Western Darfur region, the location of the city of El Fasher.

## After El Fasher

- The fall of El Fasher on 26 October 2025, after an eighteen-month siege, marked a decisive shift in Sudan's war.
- The RSF now controls almost all of Darfur (around one-third of the country).
- Meanwhile, the SAF hold Khartoum and much of the east.

## Hard to reach

- Humanitarian access in Sudan has historically proven difficult
- Sudan is vast and hard to reach, with only 300 km of tarmacked roads and few functioning airports.
- The RSF's recent drone attacks on Khartoum's airport triggered temporary shutdowns in Port Sudan, further restricting mobility.
- Borderlands with Chad, Libya, South Sudan, and CAR offer no easy logistical alternatives.

The ongoing conflict and recent developments have further hindered access, making it near impossible for many humanitarian, NGO and foreign media groups.

# Access Challenges: Information and Logistics

- Journalists struggle to access Sudan, leaving real-time information scarce.
- Logistical and administrative access is costly, slow, and complex.
- Trade route access is limited to private businesses, many of which maintain transactional relations with armed groups.
- Actors must assess how reliance on these intermediaries shapes perceptions and feeds the conflict economy.

With logistics, the concept of “do no harm” is near impossible: the question becomes *what harm might occur, and is it outweighed by lifesaving benefit?*

## Access Challenges: Restricted Civilian Movement

- Needs are immense; however, access is not simply a question of organisations reaching people; it is whether people can reach services.
- Tawila hospital (one of the only functioning facilities near El Fasher) has far fewer patients than expected under unrestricted movement.
- Humanitarian actors must advocate for civilian movement and avoid being instrumentalised, utilising strong context analysis.

## Access Challenges: Negotiating with armed stakeholders

- Cross-border operations face deep suspicion from warring parties, given fraught relations with neighbours. Even legal operations may be perceived as clandestine.
- The RSF governs through fluid alliances and extractive practices, not structured administration.
- The Sudanese government, now a wartime military government with strong Islamist currents, suffers from opacity, factionalism, and unclear chains of command.
- Access can be lost overnight: several organisations withdrew from El Fasher during the siege due to depleted supplies.

## Strong Risk Management is Essential

- Meaningful access requires robust risk-management cultures and capacities.
- During the El Fasher siege, around 250 RSF attacks were repelled by SAF and allies.
- **Conflict risks are hazards that require strong procedures, quick adaptations, and teams trained to operate under pressure.**
- Volatility fuels opportunistic criminality, with all armed actors exploiting chaos to loot, extort, or impersonate rivals.

## Access and Security

- Safe operations require trusted networks and face-to-face negotiations with armed stakeholders.
- This depends on experienced local staff, flexible hierarchies, and rapid decision-making from HQ.
- After post-fall war crimes in El Fasher, fear of future ICC investigations has made weapons bearers more evasive, worsening transparency challenges.
- Risk management must include safe programming, safeguarding, fraud mitigation, and internal integrity, not only security.

## What Now?

- The war is likely to be protracted, as the government rejects talks and seeks to reclaim all national territory.
- To reach civilians outside the safer main towns, in Darfur and rural peripheries, INGOs must invest early and significantly in:
  - Networking for local context analysis and access negotiation
  - Local threat mitigation, including conflict risks and contingencies
  - Incident and crises management capacity

Donors must understand these needs: proposals must explain, justify, and budget for the full spectrum of risk-management measures.

# **At ILS, we are supporting humanitarian and development actors to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan.**

We are helping develop tailored and effective risk management structures, security plans and contingency plans, including delivering bespoke training solutions.

We can do this in various languages and in accessible formats, including online and face to face.

👉 Let's talk. If your organisation is planning to respond in Sudan, we'd love to work with you.