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Switzerland suspends MSF funding after reports of sexual exploitation



The humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is accused of failing to adequately inform the Swiss authorities of the scale of reports of sexual misconduct by MSF staff in Chad. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has now suspended funding of CHF1.25 million ($1.52 million) to MSF.

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October 26, 2026 - 09:19

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The frozen amount represents one tranche of the CHF6.25 million pledged to MSF for the current year.

According to the newspaper *NZZ Am Sonntag*, an internal investigation by MSF revealed 59 reports of sexual violence and exploitation, particularly involving women and young girls who are refugees from neighbouring Sudan. Eighteen staff members have been dismissed, including six employees from the NGO's Swiss branch.

The NZZ explains that this constitutes "widespread sexual exploitation", adding: "Money, jobs or humanitarian aid in exchange for sex: staff members are alleged to have taken advantage of the distress of refugee women and girls".

The German-language newspaper notes that "the Confederation's aid workers were effectively operating in the dark". Although the SDC received the first indications as early as November 2024, it only became aware of the true scale of the problem following articles published in the press in June 2026 by the AP news agency.

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"Internal emails now reveal just how reluctant the Swiss Confederation was to act, even though it was already aware of the facts," reports the NZZ.

Whilst fighting rages in Central Africa, which has been experiencing a major humanitarian crisis since 2023, hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing the civil war in Sudan to seek refuge in neighbouring Chad.

The first alert from MSF staff at the Geneva headquarters reached the SDC by email on a Friday in November 2024, “shortly before the end of the working day”. Three female refugees “are reported to have described cases of sexual exploitation in Chad; the allegations are reportedly already under investigation”, the NGO stated.

A very slow response

In mid-December 2024, it was agreed at the Swiss foreign ministry “that a meeting with MSF would take place in January”. But it was not until June and July 2025 that the department resumed discussions on how to handle the case.

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Meanwhile, dozens of allegations of abuse were brought to MSF’s attention and disciplinary measures were taken; however, the SDC was kept in the dark (see box).

It was not until February 2026 that representatives of the SDC and MSF “met to discuss protection against sexual exploitation; once again, the Confederation received no new information”.

Breach of contractual obligation to report

When the scandal broke in June 2026 following revelations by the AP news agency, the SDC “demanded documents” from MSF.

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According to the foreign ministry, MSF breached its contractual reporting obligation; mistrust of the NGO is “now immense within