Sudan's War and its Devastating Impact on Infrastructure

Sudan's current conflict, marked by violence and displacement, has left a trail of destruction that extends far beyond immediate casualties. This comprehensive analysis delves into the multifaceted impact on crucial infrastructure, emphasizing the violation of international laws designed to protect civilians.

Targeting Schools: The impact on education has been devastating, with at least 10,400 schools shuttered in conflict-affected areas. On 9 October 2023, UNICEF [reported](https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/19-million-children-sudan-out-school-conflict-rages-unicef-save-children), that an estimated 19 million children in Sudan are out of school as the brutal conflict approaches the six-month mark. 6.5 million lost access to school due to increased violence and insecurity in their region, with at least 10,400 schools shuttered in conflict-affected areas. Meanwhile, over 5.5 million children who reside in areas less impacted by war are waiting for local authorities to confirm whether classrooms can be reopened. Mr. Mandeep O’Brien, the UNICEF Country Representative in Sudan stated that “*Sudan is on the brink of becoming home to the worst education crisis in the world*”. *“Children have been exposed to the horrors of war for nearly half a year. Now, forced away from their classrooms, teachers, and friends, they are at risk of falling into a void that will threaten the future of an entire generation.”* The closure of schools disrupts the education of millions of children, denying them not only academic opportunities but also essential social and emotional skills crucial for coping with violence and trauma. Furthermore, schools serve as hubs for critical services such as nutrition, healthcare, and psychosocial support, all of which become inaccessible in times of conflict.

Breakdown of Healthcare Infrastructure: The healthcare system is in disarray, with approximately 80% of hospitals non-functional as of 1 August 2023. Deliberate attacks on health facilities and professionals have resulted in widespread casualties and forced evacuations. The breakdown of healthcare infrastructure intensifies the humanitarian emergency, leaving millions without access to essential medical services. The most [recent](https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudans-warring-factions-must-end-attacks-hospitals-protect-civilians-joint-statement) situational report released on April 26, 2023 by the Preliminary Committee of Sudan’s Doctors’ Trade Union reported that over 19 hospitals had been forced to evacuate in Khartoum and surrounding cities. As of April 26, 59 out of a reported 82 hospitals in Khartoum and surrounding cities are non-operational, at least six ambulances have been fired upon, while others had been prevented from transporting injured or critically ill patients. At least 12 health care personnel and health sciences students had been killed. As of April 22, only 15 out of 81 primary care centers had reportedly been operational in Khartoum State. Six dialysis centers out of 24 were out of service.

Disruption of [WASH](https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20230911_ACAPS_thematic_report_Sudan_impact_of_current_conflict_on_WASH_needs.pdf) Services: The conflict's toll on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services is staggering. The number of people in need of WASH assistance surged from 11 million (November 2022) to 15 million (November 2023). Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities has become a critical issue, posing severe threats to public health.

Aerial Bombardment and Water Crisis: [Aerial](https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20230911_ACAPS_thematic_report_Sudan_impact_of_current_conflict_on_WASH_needs.pdf) bombardment and explosive ordnance have caused extensive damage to water pipes and treatment plants, creating a water crisis. Over 300,000 people in Khartoum faced water shortages between April and October 2023. Infrastructure damage has led to intermittent water services, forcing civilians to resort to potentially contaminated water from the Nile River.

Violations of International Law: Sudan is a party to a range of relevant human rights instruments, including the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention Against Torture, and the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Deliberate targeting of schools is a flagrant violation of international standards, including Resolution 2601 (2021) adopted by the UN Security Council, which mandates the protection of schools and civilians connected with schools during armed conflict.

The destruction of infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and water facilities, during the Sudan conflict also constitutes a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Parties involved in the conflict are obligated under the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II to safeguard medical facilities, personnel, and humanitarian access. Deliberate attacks on hospitals and healthcare workers are unequivocally condemned by these international agreements. A PHR fact sheet on medical impartiality explains states’ duties and obligations under international law to respect the impartial provision of health care and the principle of noninterference with medical services in times of armed conflict and civil unrest. Governments have the obligation to protect health professionals’ impartiality and ability to heal the sick and treat the injured without discrimination.

In conclusion, the devastation caused by Sudan's conflict is not confined to immediate casualties but extends to essential infrastructure, including hospitals, schoolsn and essential needs like water. This violation of international standards underscores the urgent need for concerted efforts to address the escalating humanitarian crisis, safeguard the rights of the affected population, and rebuild a shattered nation.

Urgent Recommendations

* Immediate Ceasefire: To stop the devastation and alleviate suffering, the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces must cease hostilities and allow humanitarian agencies and their workers to support the Sudanese people, Sudanese medical workers to access hospitals and receive vital medical supplies, and civilians to access life-saving assistance.
* Compliance with International Law: Adherence to international legal obligations outlined in the Geneva Conventions, Additional Protocol II, and UN Security Council Resolution 2286 is imperative.
* Safe Passage for Supplies: Ensure the safe passage of critical supplies to hospitals, primary care centers, and dialysis units, including water, power, gas, and oxygen cylinders.
* Protection of Schools: Strict adherence to international standards protecting schools and civilians connected with schools, as mandated by Resolution 2601.
* Cease Targeting Schools: All parties must immediately cease targeting schools and ensure the protection of educational institutions and civilians connected with them.
* Implementation of Resolution 2601: Full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2601, which emphasizes the protection of schools and their occupants during armed conflicts.

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