



Protection Alert: El Fasher and Zamzam IDP Camp, North Darfur, Sudan

20 December 2024

The GPC is issuing this Protection Alert given the further worsening of protection risks and related threats to people across North Darfur, particularly in the area of El Fasher and in Zamzam IDP camp. Based on a range of deeply distressing reports from community networks, protection and humanitarian partners and the Sudan Protection Cluster, this Alert seeks to draw attention to and mobilize action in support of the protection of civilians in these areas.

Since the beginning of December, there has been an ongoing escalation and expansion of conflict across the besieged city of El Fasher and neighboring localities. This has included a range of attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, such as with the repeated shelling of Zamzam IDP camp, located 12km outside El Fasher town. With between 500,000 and 1 million people estimated to be sheltering in the camp after fleeing violence in other areas of Darfur, multiple civilian deaths and injuries, including of women and children, are being reported from the ongoing bombardment. These attacks on a protected site have also forced humanitarian actors to temporarily suspend or scale-down their life-saving activities. This has severely impacted an already vulnerable displaced population in the only location globally where famine has been officially confirmed, leaving thousands of children facing life-threatening malnutrition.

Despite the growing severity and frequency of attacks on the camp, a reported lack of safe exit routes has left most IDPs unable to leave and seek safety elsewhere. The heavy presence of armed actors and the proliferation of checkpoints along key routes connecting the camp to El Fasher city and other localities heighten the risks for many IDPs sheltering in Zamzam camp. Attempting to leave exposes them to significant dangers, including death, gender-based violence, particularly for women and girls, and looting by armed elements.

Alongside the shelling of Zamzam camp, there have been a range of serious attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure touching different localities around El Fasher over recent weeks. A drone strike on Saudi Hospital in El Fasher on 13 December reportedly caused damage to key parts of the facility, further degrading the medical services available, while also causing deaths and injuries among patients and those tending to them. Nearby Kebkabiya town has been severely impacted by a recent aerial bombardment, which hit the main market as well as nearby residential neighbourhoods on 9 December, reportedly causing the deaths of at least 86 people and wounding more than 100 others. Impacts of the aerial bombardment have been exacerbated by the lack of available medical supplies to treat the wounded and the population inside Kebkabiya town has also been affected by increased movement restrictions and arbitrary arrests following the bombardment. While some civilians have managed to flee Kebkabiya town, reports indicate that others attempting to leave have been blocked by armed elements based on their presumed political affiliation. The widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas and along roads used by civilians fleeing conflict zones has resulted in extensive explosive hazard contamination, hindering safe movement of civilians and hampering safe access to affected areas for humanitarians.

A full cessation of hostilities is needed, now. Echoing the calls issued by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and the UN Secretary General, and in line with the protection of civilians-related recommendations put forward in the recent Report of the Secretary General, parties to the conflict are urged to:

- Cease all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including displacement sites;
- Confirm that clear command orders and codes of conduct are in place and enforced;
- Cease the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas;
- Establish a compliance mechanism in support of Jeddah Declaration commitments;
- Enable increased humanitarian access and safe passage of civilians out of conflict affected areas.

For more information on the protection situation in Sudan, please contact:

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