



Protection Alert: El Fasher City, Zamzam IDP Camp and Um Kaddada Town, Darfur, Sudan

16 April 2025

The GPC is issuing this Protection Alert given the marked worsening of protection risks and threats to people in North Darfur, particularly in the area of El Fasher, Zamzam IDP camp and Um Kaddada. 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.

The past several days have been marked by a stark intensification of the conflict in North Darfur, most severely impacting Um Kaddada town, El Fasher city including Abu Shouk IDP camp, and Zamzam IDP camp. The escalating violence and attacks have caused enormous harm to civilians, including those seeking safety in IDP camps. Humanitarian and medical staff have also been targeted and killed, against the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law (IHL).

Recent incidents amidst this escalation in the conflict include reported attacks by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on Um Kaddada town on 9 April, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 39 civilians, numerous injuries and the looting of civilian homes, the main market and the hospital. Patients and staff at the hospital were exposed to severe levels of violence, and an on-duty medical doctor was killed. It is estimated that about 80% of the population of Um Kaddada town fled the attacks, in search of safety in the nearby towns of Um Sidra and Na'em. In both locations, lack of access to water, health services and other life-saving supports are key concerns of the displaced populations.

On 10 April, heavy shelling by RSF hit Abu Shouk IDP camp in El Fasher city, reportedly resulting in the deaths of at least 27 civilians and injuries to a further 25, including a number of women and children. The shelling also caused damage and destruction to camp infrastructure including IDP shelters and the local market.

Multiple, coordinated ground and air attacks that saw the use of drone strikes and sustained artillery shelling were reportedly launched by RSF across El Fasher city and Zamzam camp on 11 April. This triggered intense clashes with catastrophic consequences for civilians. A total of 81 civilian deaths were reported in Zamzam IDP camp, including the deaths of ten humanitarian and medical staff working in the camp clinic. Reports from the ground indicate that IDPs attempting to flee the violence faced barriers to movement out of Zamzam IDP camp on 11 April, with key roads remaining effectively blocked to civilian movement. It is estimated that about 2,000 civilians fled the camp into surrounding bushland. Shelling of the camp continued on 12 April. On 13 April, with no physical protection in place for the remaining civilian population in the camp, significant movement out of the camp, predominantly towards El Fasher city, was reported.

The outflow of IDPs from Zamzam IDP camp towards El Fasher city, at a time when the city remains besieged and heavily impacted by the conflict, substantially increases the risk of the civilian population

being subjected to further violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation amidst clashes between the parties to the conflict. It must be underlined that IHL prohibits using the presence or movement of civilians to shield military objects from attack. The increased presence of civilians in El Fasher city must now compel urgent efforts to ensure that the conflict affected, displaced population is able to access the humanitarian assistance and protection to which they are entitled.

Given the patterns of violence amidst this escalation in the conflict, it bears recalling the UN Secretary General's recommendations for the protection of civilians in Sudan, issued on 21 October 2024:

- *“Civilian objects... must be protected. [...] [C]ivilians wishing to flee areas of hostilities must be allowed safe passage, and those who remain must still be protected.”*
- *“In areas of fighting, the parties should agree to humanitarian pauses and commit to their unconditional implementation. These pauses must allow the safe passage of civilians and facilitate the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid, on the basis of need and without discrimination.”*

Parties to the conflict are urged to adhere to their obligations under IHL and cease the targeting of civilians and civilian objects, enable civilians to flee conflict affected and besieged areas to locations of their choosing, and immediately remove all arbitrary impediments to the delivery of life saving humanitarian aid. These clear, foundational requirements for the protection of civilians in Sudan are further reinforced through Security Council Resolution 2736 and the Jeddah Declaration Commitments.

Two years into this devastating conflict, an immediate ceasefire is needed. Protection for civilians is needed. Accountability is needed.

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