



Protection Cluster Alert- South Kordofan, Sudan

Date: 18 April 2026

Geographic focus: South Kordofan, Dilling and surrounding areas, including Habila corridor, Al Rahad route and Eastern Displacement Corridor (Abu Jubayhah)

This alert aims to draw urgent attention to escalating protection risks facing civilians in Dilling locality, and to reinforce collective advocacy for the protection of civilians and humanitarian access.

1. Situation overview:

Since April 2023, Greater Kordofan has experienced sustained instability marked by fragmented control, disruption of key supply routes, and recurrent armed confrontation across North, West, and South Kordofan. South Kordofan remains the most affected, with major population centres including Dilling and Kadugli under sustained pressure and increasing isolation.

Throughout this period, Dilling has experienced prolonged disruptions to access, recurrent insecurity, and periods of isolation that have at times, resembled siege conditions. Following the escalation of hostilities in February 2026, the town has evolved into an active conflict environment characterized by ongoing urban warfare, repeated attacks on civilian areas, and severe restrictions on movement and access. While Dilling remains under the control of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), it is encircled by contested frontlines and subjected to recurrent attacks by Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and SPLM/A forces. Despite reports of a partial easing of siege conditions earlier in 2026, the overall situation has continued to deteriorate, leaving civilians exposed to persistent violence and with limited access to essential goods, services, and humanitarian assistance.

Currently, over **37,000** individuals are estimated to still reside in Dilling, along with around **14,000** newly displaced from nearby regions. Displacement is primarily within the area, with civilians moving from heavily impacted neighborhoods to the town's central areas. Additionally, the influx of people moving towards eastern locations, such as Abu Jubayhah locality, further strains the already limited resources and services available.

The approaching rainy season is expected to further restrict movement, deepen isolation of affected areas, and complicate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

2. Protection risks:

The security situation in Dilling remains highly volatile and unpredictable, with frequent drone strikes, indiscriminate artillery shelling, and ground offensives occurring on a near-weekly basis, affecting residential areas and public spaces.

Civilians are facing acute and overlapping protection risks, including direct exposure to hostilities, increased exposure to explosive hazards, gender-based violence (GBV), grave child protection risks, and the near collapse of essential services. Humanitarian access remains severely constrained, including due to insecurity along key supply routes and the presence of armed actors in civilian areas.

While access constraints temporarily eased in February 2026 following the reported lifting of siege conditions, the situation has since deteriorated, with Dilling currently experiencing renewed siege-like conditions characterized by severe movement restrictions, insecurity along key routes, and limited inflow of essential goods and humanitarian assistance. The disruption of key supply routes linking Dilling to El Obeid, Habila, and surrounding localities has further reduced the availability of essential goods and contributed to increasing isolation of the town. Despite reports of partial reopening of some routes, civilian movement remains heavily restricted, and humanitarian access continues to be significantly constrained.

Civilians are directly impacted by these dynamics, as reflected in reported civilian casualties and continued attacks on populated areas. Immediate, coordinated, and adequately resourced protection and multisectoral action is urgently required.

Population movement and gendered risks:

Population movements remain highly restricted. Displacement is occurring primarily within Dilling, with civilians relocating from heavily affected neighborhoods including Al-Tumat, Al-Turuq, and Al-Hilla Al Jadida toward relatively safer areas in central Dilling including Qow, Al-Ma'ser and Al Nasri. Displaced families, predominantly women and children, are sheltering in mosques, schools, and with host communities under increasingly precarious conditions, with prolonged exposure to insecurity further

affecting their well-being and coping capacities. At the same time, new arrivals continue to move towards eastern areas such as Abu Jubayhah locality where services are already limited.

Men and boys are at severe risk of arbitrary arrest and detention by the parties to the conflict based on their perceived affiliation with other parties as well as serious risk of abduction for ransom, forcing women and children to leave behind men and boys of the family, resulting in increased risk en-route. Movement out of affected areas remains highly constrained due to insecurity, risks along transport routes, and the high cost of transportation, affecting civilians attempting to flee the conflict. All civilians are exposed to significant risks, including shelling, drone strikes, and violence along movement routes. Women-led organizations (WLOs) report that “the risks on the road are no less than those of shelling and drones.” In addition to these threats, women and girls face heightened risks of harassment, questioning at checkpoints by parties to the conflict, and, in some cases, detention. Reports also indicate risks of sexual violence, looting, and intimidation along movement routes when crossing between areas controlled by different actors. These risks, combined with prohibitive transportation costs, are forcing many civilians, including women, men, and children, to remain trapped inside Dilling and Habila.

Direct and sustained exposure to hostilities

Civilians continue to face direct and sustained exposure to hostilities, including indiscriminate artillery shelling, drone strikes, and missile attacks impacting residential areas without warning. These attacks have affected civilian infrastructure, including schools, markets, and health facilities. For example, on 11 April 2026, artillery shelling reportedly struck a market in Dilling, resulting in civilian casualties.

Since February 2026, at least 100 civilians have reportedly been killed across Dilling locality, including in Dilling town and surrounding villages, among them women and children. Since early April alone, at least 35 civilians have reportedly been killed and over 25 injured in incidents involving shelling and arbitrary killings.¹

The repeated use of explosive weapons in populated areas, combined with the reported presence of military assets within civilian locations, further heightens risks to civilians and undermines the civilian character of these sites.

¹ **Source:** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reporting on civilian impact in Dilling locality, April 2026. Figures remain under verification due to communication outages and access constraints.

Forced displacement and unsafe shelter conditions

Ongoing hostilities continue to drive internal displacement. Overcrowded conditions in schools, mosques, and host community shelters increase protection risks, particularly for women, girls and children.

Collapse of essential services

Basic services are near collapse. Dilling Teaching Hospital is non-operational, while only Tumat Hospital and Al-Um Bakhita Hospital are functioning at limited capacity. Fear of targeting and repeated attacks severely restrict access to health care. Schools are completely closed, with some used as shelters for displaced populations.

Severe shortages and economic constraints

Civilians face acute shortages of essential commodities, including food, fuel, and medicines. Market prices have risen sharply, with staple goods significantly more expensive than in accessible areas. Limited cash liquidity and reliance on digital transactions further restrict purchasing power, particularly for displaced and female-headed households. Limited movements and shortages of basic food items led to an increase in daily security incidents, such as theft, altercations and armed attacks, as households struggle to meet basic needs. In Abu Jubayhah IDPs reported higher levels of property loss compared to host communities. This situation may further exacerbate negative coping mechanisms, particularly among already vulnerable households already facing extreme severe food insecurity.

Child Protection risks

Children are disproportionately affected, with widespread school closures, which shifted from temporary closures to a structural collapse after schools multiple schools were damaged by drone strikes, increasing child labour and limited support for unaccompanied and separated children. Exposure to violence and displacement is contributing to visible distress among children, including normalization of conflict in behavior, play and communication. Risks of recruitment and exploitation are heightened in the current environment. The recruitment of children is increasingly driven by the economic situation rather than ideological alignment with armed groups are often seen as the only reliable providers of food and protection, making child-headed households and unaccompanied minors particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

Women and girls face increased risks of GBV due to insecurity, displacement and restricted movement. Access to essential services is limited and reports of sexual violence in remote areas indicate heightened concern. More than two years of siege fragilized further the community especially women and girls. “(...) Lack of food reportedly pushes some women to exchange sex for food, overcrowding in shelters and camps results in lack of privacy for women and adolescent girls, and surveyed WLOs report increases in child marriage linked to the absence of education and economic hardship. Increased stressors felt by men can also lead to domestic violence against women (...)”²

Explosive ordnance (EO) contamination

Ongoing hostilities are adding to existing EO contamination, posing serious risks to civilians and humanitarian actors, restricting safe movement and hindering the delivery of aid.

3. Recommendations

- All parties to the conflict are urgently called upon to cease attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure and to fully comply with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. Parties must refrain from the use or presence of weapons in civilian areas, ensure the Protection of civilians, and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.
- All parties must facilitate the safe, voluntary, and informed movement of civilians wishing to leave Dilling and surrounding areas to areas of their choice, including by ensuring safe passage and preventing harassment, detention, gender-based violence, and other violations at checkpoints and along the routes.
- Donors are urged to maintain and increase flexible funding to support the scale-up of life-saving protection interventions in Dilling and surrounding areas, prioritizing local actors and women led organizations. There is an urgent need to expand critical services, including support to functioning health facilities, mobile health responses, child-friendly spaces, women and girls safe spaces and emergency assistance to vulnerable households alongside strengthened protection risk mitigation measures across all sectors.
- Humanitarian actors, including UN agencies, international and national NGOs, are urged to strengthen coordinated protection responses in Dilling and surrounding areas, prioritizing sustained presence where feasible, support to local and community-based actors, and the

² GIHA WG “Some were killed, others were raped” Gender Alert: Escalation of Hostilities in Kordofan, March 2026

expansion of mobile and remote modalities to reach affected populations. Efforts should focus on reinforcing protection monitoring, strengthening referral pathways, and systematically integrating protection risk mitigation across all sectors, in line with access and resource constraints.