



Joint Statement submitted by VIVAT International, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Congregation of the Mission, International Presentation Association, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Medical Mission Sisters, Fondazione Proclade Internazionale-onlus, Sisters of Notre dame de Namur, Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Loreto Generalate, and UNANIMA International, *non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

VIVAT International and other NGOs express deep concern about the ongoing and prolonged conflict in Sudan. The recent conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) from April 15 to May 31st, 2023, led to cumulative refugees and displaced people. Reportedly, a total of 73,625 individuals take refuge in South Sudan because of the ruthless war. These include 68,809 South Sudanese returnees (93.5%), 1,829 Sudanese (2.5%), 1,478 Eritreans (2.0%), 1,478 Somalis, and others (2.0%).

The refugees are forced to move out to various borders for safety and security. It includes the Joda border. Fifty thousand five hundred forty-five (50,545) individuals crossed the border in the Upper Nile State. The living condition of the refugees is quite concerning. They struggle to access enough ration, education, health services, and jobs in the long run. The ongoing war brings them to isolated areas lacking infrastructure, roads, food, and electricity.

As the rainy season has started, the displaced people in the refugee camps face threats of floods and sickness. At the same time, snakes and scorpions are plenty during the rainy sessions. Furthermore, extending an existing camp for mostly Urduk people from the Blue Nile to accommodate the new arrivals has its own challenges. Seeing many guns circulating among existing refugees is shocking for new arrivals who tried to flee from guns in Khartoum.

As the conflict continues, the most affected group by the brutal war is the Eritrean people. Fleeing from Eritrea, they reached Sudan only to encounter an ongoing civil war, which in turn forced them to take refuge in South Sudan. Nine hundred forty-one from Eritrea have expressed their willingness to go to refugee camps in Maban District in South Sudan.

Although their homeland is closer to Khartoum, the Eritreans do not want to return home because they fear political backlash. They can face life imprisonment in their land with brutal punishments. An Eritrean human rights activist reported that 3,500 Eritreans had been forcibly

deported over the border. Of those allegedly deported, 95 were imprisoned, including eight women. Some of those detained were political activists who opposed the Eritrean dictator's regime.

Referring to the International Refugee Law of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees in conjunction with the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, the refugees have the right to stay in the host country and not be returned to the land of origin (e.g., non-refoulement), together with the right to education, health care, housing, employment, and family among other issues. In alignment with the 1951 convention, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, says, "People escaping violence or persecution must be able to cross borders safely. They must not face discrimination at borders or be unfairly denied refugee status or asylum due to their race, religion, gender, or country of origin."

As the International community celebrates World Refugee Day on 20 June 2023, under the theme "Hope away from home," it is critical to hold a ceasefire in Sudan without delay and take care of the rights of refugees in compliance with International Humanitarian Law, Refugee law, and Human Rights Law.

Therefore, we urge

1. Halting the ongoing and prolonged conflict in Sudan, especially the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).
2. The Eritrean government guarantees full amnesty with accountability for breaches for every returnee, as the fear of torture, imprisonment, and forced labor stops many Eritreans from returning to their home country.
3. UNHCR to improve the living conditions of the new arrivals. All new arrivals, refugees, and third-country nationals face multiple integration challenges in a weaponized camp.