



SUDAN

Thinking Peace and Humanitarian Protection from a Civilian Perspective Key Messages and Policy Recommendations

The war in Sudan which started on 15 April, 2023, has set off the world's largest humanitarian catastrophe. On 18 September 2025, a broad alliance of humanitarian, development and human rights NGOs, political foundations and think tanks hosted the conference **"Sudan – Thinking Peace and Humanitarian Protection from a Civilian Perspective"** in Berlin. The event centered on dialogue with Sudanese actors, highlighting the initiatives and resilience of Sudan's active civil society, as well as their expectations of the international community.

Around 230 participants attended, including representatives from the media, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO), staff from the German Parliament as well as NGOs and CSOs. Around the conference, bilateral and small-group meetings were also held with high-level policymakers and parliamentarians.

Prior to the conference, two civil society workshops held in Nairobi/Kenya focussed on strengthening convergence among civil society opposed to the war. Among other steps, the actors conducted a mapping of more than 100 organisations, co-designed the second workshop, defined their advocacy messages and selected 10 individuals to represent them on the panels in Berlin.

The key messages below are drawn from the substantive and candid discussions on peace, protection and humanitarian action in Sudan held during the conference.

This war has devastating consequences for the civilian population. Sudanese colleagues made it very clear that they need more international support - both financial and diplomatic - to sustain their humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts. As the conference took place in Germany, the participants directed their messages to the European Union and its member states, including the German government .



Key Messages and policy recommendations:

All parties to the conflict must immediately end their violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

They need to adhere to IHL, ensuring unrestricted humanitarian access throughout the country as well as the protection of civilians and of civilian infrastructure. The EU and German government should use all instruments of humanitarian diplomacy to demand adherence to IHL. At the same time, they should exert pressure on third-party states to refrain from any form of support to the parties to the conflict in Sudan that could contribute to IHL and human rights violations in the conflict.

A ceasefire is an urgent priority, but humanitarian assistance cannot wait. Life-saving humanitarian assistance must be scaled up immediately. Humanitarian access must not be made contingent on the achievement of a ceasefire and access negotiations must be kept separate from ceasefire talks to avoid further politicization of aid.

Humanitarian diplomacy, grounded in the protection of civilians and unhindered access, must deliver tangible progress by stepping up engagement and prioritising besieged areas. The international community, including the EU and the German government, should intensify coordinated diplomatic engagement with the conflict parties and their regional sponsors to achieve access of all humanitarian actors in all parts of Sudan regardless who is in control. Urgent attention must be kept on besieged areas, including El Fasher in North Darfur and cities of South Kordofan. Time is running out for the estimated 260 000 civilians, including 130 000 children, who remain trapped in the El Fasher. El Fasher has been besieged and largely cut off from aid for the past 16 months. Participants at the conference called for humanitarian access and safe evacuation routes for civilians.

An urgent increase of funding volume and more multi-year, flexible funding that covers direct and indirect costs is essential, especially for local responders.

Emergency Response Rooms, other mutual aid groups and local organisations such as Women's Rights and Women-led Organisations (WROs/WLOs) are providing aid in a highly effective and decentralised manner, including in areas inaccessible to international humanitarian actors. The EU and German donors need to respond to their ask for increased, direct and flexible funding. Sexual violence is being used systematically as a wea-

pon of war, underscoring the need to scale up funding for gendered protection and GBV programs, especially to WROs/WLOs. The war is also devastating an entire generation, with over 14 million children in Sudan urgently requiring humanitarian assistance. All humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts should therefore include child protection, psychosocial care, and education-in-emergencies components.

Long-term peace must come from within, fully separated from ceasefire talks. While armed actors are key to halting hostilities, the process to achieve lasting peace must be driven by civil society actors. Political decision makers should differentiate between ceasefire talks and the comprehensive peace process. Sudanese have to collectively agree on how to address the root causes of the war and arrive at civilian rule. Sudan's vibrant civil society remains a powerful agent for change in this process, but they need safe spaces, trust and resources from the EU and the German government to drive the peace process forward. Donors need to actively support and fund dialogue processes between politically independent Sudanese civil society groups—both inside and outside Sudan—and ensure the meaningful participation of diverse civil society actors.

Women and young people are the backbone of community resilience. They are playing critical roles in sustaining life and supporting those affected. Despite this, they are consistently sidelined in the response and peace processes. Yet without their direct, safe and meaningful participation, any peace will remain unsustainable. Thus, the EU and Germany need to ensure the equal and active participation of women and young people at all stages of the aid interventions, as well as in all peace processes and negotiations.

The key messages and policy recommendations presented are based on the views expressed by panelists and participants during the conference. They do not necessarily represent the official position of all the organizing organisations.

