News



A Sudanese refugee girl from al-Fashir, Sudan, rests next to a burnt tree in the middle of the Tine transit camp in eastern Chad, Nov. 23, 2025, amid the conflict in Sudan between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese army. (OSV News/Reuters/Amr Abdallah Dalsh)



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Catholic sisters are growing increasingly worried about colleagues whose whereabouts remain unknown in Sudan. Renewed fighting and communication breakdowns have cut off contact with missionaries on the ground, even as several congregations flee violence and shut down ministries that once served thousands of displaced families.

The worsening conflict has forced the closure of schools, hospitals and pastoral outreach programs run by sisters. The violence has cut off services that many vulnerable residents relied on for food support, shelter, trauma healing and spiritual care, sisters said.

Renewed fighting in recent weeks has left dozens dead, damaged hospitals and displaced thousands more, adding to the country's spiraling emergency. Drone strikes on civilian areas and attacks on health facilities in Darfur have further underscored the growing danger facing both residents and aid workers.

The conflict, which began on April 15, 2023, erupted after a bitter power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces under Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti.

The war stemmed from tensions over a planned transition to civilian rule and the proposed integration of the RSF into the national army following the 2021 military coup.

Since then, more than 12 million people have been displaced, making Sudan one of the world's largest and fastest-growing displacement crises.

For Catholic sisters, the latest escalation has brought not only the suspension of ministry but also deep uncertainty over the safety of fellow missionaries.

> 'We continue to pray for peace and for the day our sisters can once again walk with the people of Sudan.'
> —Sr. Felicita Humwara
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Sr. Gisma Youstina Altairi Ismail Amia, a member of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart based in Egypt, said some of her colleagues who had been based in Khartoum and neighboring towns left Sudan in 2023 when the violence escalated.

She said since then, she's heard from sisters and superiors from some congregations that they have also been withdrawing as the conflict worsened and insecurity spread to more parts of the country.

"Some sisters from other congregations told us they had to leave because of the insecurity and abandon their ministries," Amia said. "Others who remained in Sudan are now difficult to reach, and we are worried because we do not know where they are."

She said communication with some sisters she knows remained in Sudan has broken down, leaving many outside the country anxious about their safety.

Amia's account reflects what church leaders outside Sudan say they have been hearing from congregational networks, though the situation remains difficult to independently verify because communication with missionaries inside Sudan has become increasingly unreliable.



Sudanese refugee children from al-Fashir stand at sunset at the Tine transit refugee camp in eastern Chad Nov. 23, 2025, amid the ongoing conflict between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese army. (OSV News/Reuters/Amr Abdallah Dalsh)

Sr. Angelina Ebrahim Trilly Koko of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd said her congregation shut down several schools and hospitals in 2023 that had served thousands of residents. They also halted its pastoral work because of the conflict.

Koko, who served as a teacher in El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan state in central Sudan, said communication with sisters from other congregations who remained in Sudan has become difficult, leaving many worried about their safety as the fighting intensifies.

Sr. Felicita Humwara, superior general of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, said some members of her congregation had recently traveled to Sudan for mission work, but communication with them has since become difficult.

"They have not yet called me," Humwara told Global Sisters Report in a WhatsApp message. She said that she remains deeply worried about their safety after not hearing from them since they traveled to Sudan a few weeks ago.

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The communication breakdown has left religious superiors and fellow sisters unable to determine the whereabouts of some missionaries, raising fears that colleagues who remained in Sudan may be trapped in areas affected by fighting.

For years, Catholic sisters remained on the front lines of service in Sudan, running schools, health centers, pastoral ministries and outreach programs for families uprooted by conflict.

Even after the war began in 2023, some sisters stayed behind to continue ministry that addressed trauma healing, feeding programs and youth support in refugee and displacement camps.

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Now, as hunger worsens and displacement continues to rise, much of that ministry has been severely disrupted.

Convents, schools and health centers that once served as places of refuge for women fleeing violence, displaced families and children in need of education and care have in many places fallen silent, sisters say.

The sisters who once walked alongside Sudan's most vulnerable communities are now scattered across neighboring countries, their colleagues say, many still trying to account for fellow missionaries and the people they left behind.

"We continue to pray for peace and for the day our sisters can once again walk with the people of Sudan," Humwara said.