



CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO ACCESS EDUCATION IN SUDAN

AMIDST ONGOING CONFLICT
FROM APRIL 2023 TO JUNE 2026

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Executive Summary

Overview

The armed conflict that erupted in Sudan on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces exacerbated an education crisis recognized as the most severe in the world in modern history.[1] Often described as invisible compared to other aspects of the war, this crisis has profoundly affected the education system and ranks among the most serious humanitarian disasters. Within months of the outbreak of fighting, an entire generation of children found themselves excluded from education and deprived of their right to learn.

This report documents numerous violations of children's right to education in Sudan following the outbreak of war. It also examines the state of education and the future of children in Sudan and offers recommendations for addressing the current crisis in the education system.

The report was prepared in accordance with human rights investigation standards concerning the right to education. It is based on interviews with a diverse sample of teachers, students, their families, human rights activists, and education specialists within Sudan and neighboring countries, as well as more than thirty reports issued by international and local organizations.[2] The report adhered to internationally recognized human rights documentation standards, including the trauma-sensitive interviewing principles of the Istanbul Protocol and the “do no harm” principle.[3]

This report reveals that the war not only halted the educational process but also led to its collapse across large areas of Sudan. With nearly nineteen million children out of the education system, more than ten thousand schools closed, and many children missing over five hundred school days, the report documents numerous direct violations against educational facilities, including the use of schools as military bases and shelters, as well as their targeting through bombing, destruction, and looting.

These documented violations fall into three categories:

- Direct violations against educational facilities;
- Violations against teachers; and
- The impact on the entire education system.

[1]The war began on 15 April 2023 with armed clashes in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), later spreading to Darfur, Kordofan, Al Jazirah, Sennar and Blue Nile.

[2]This report draws on sixteen primary interviews and more than thirty reports issued by international and local organizations. See Section 3 (Methodology).

[3]Documentation followed internationally recognized human rights standards, including the trauma-sensitive interviewing principles of the Istanbul Protocol and the “do no harm” principle.

The report concludes that these violations constitute a breach of international humanitarian law and human rights law, particularly the provisions protecting the child's right to education during armed conflict and the protection of educational facilities as civilian objects.

Key Indicators		
13 million Child out of school by the end of 2025	10,400+ Damaged or suspended schools	500+ day The longest school closure in modern history
280,000 Students in Darfur and Kordofan unable to sit for the exam	370,000 Students unable to sit for the high school Certificate exam in states under SAF control	30+ Teachers were killed in the AL-hilaliya area alone (Al-Jazeera)
65% Of the Darfur students who are unable to take the exam are girls	Two years of Teacher salary pay delay across most states	\$ 962,9M UNICEF's humanitarian appeal for Sudan 2026 education as a key priority

Documented Substantive Violations

1. Attacks on and destruction of educational facilities, including schools.
2. Use and conversion of schools into military barracks and weapons depots, in clear violation of international humanitarian law regarding the use of civilian objects for military purposes.
3. Killing and detention of teachers by armed forces on both sides.
4. Systematic denial of access to the Sudanese Certificate examinations, affecting thousands of students in Darfur and Kordofan.
5. Non-payment of salaries to education-sector employees.
6. Forced recruitment and use of children in conflict.

As a result of the above, several consequences have driven the collapse of the education system in Sudan, most notably:

- The conversion of schools into shelters for internally displaced people creates a compounded crisis for both displaced families and host communities.
- Early marriage of girls, child labor, and other forms of exploitation.
- Long-term psychological damage to children, exacerbating school dropout rates.

Summary of Recommendations

- Cease the armed conflict and begin peace processes.
- Immediately halt all attacks on schools and staff.
- Remove all military presence from educational facilities.
- Rehabilitate educational facilities.
- Pay teachers' overdue salaries and stop illegal deductions.
- Fund emergency education programs and integrate psychosocial support into the curriculum.
- Establish a mechanism for standardized and comprehensive examinations for all students in all states of Sudan.
- Ensure justice and accountability for perpetrators of attacks on education personnel and educational facilities.

Background and Context

The Educational Reality Before the Conflict

Interviews conducted with experts, teachers, and others from various regions and disciplines revealed genuine problems in education before the 15 April war, particularly the inadequacy of education funding, which barely covered the minimum requirements of the system. There was also a clear deterioration and decline in school infrastructure, especially in the states of Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile.

Furthermore, access to education was imbalanced by gender and geographical location. Low and delayed salaries were a pre-war characteristic; as Teacher A.M. stated, “We view our profession as a humanitarian mission rather than a paid job due to the low wages.” This accumulation of problems left the educational system fragile and unable to withstand the challenges of the conflict.

Sudanese Teachers' Committee: “The problem of education is structural, linked to pre-war state policies, but the fundamental collapse is linked to the current war (15 April 2023).”

Students' families: “Education in Sudan was already progressing at a very slow pace, and the impact of the war on it was very clear.”

A teacher in Kassala State: “The problems in education didn't start with the war; they existed before it and worsened significantly afterward.”

From the interviews

Analytical Overview — The 15 April 2023 Conflict

Armed clashes erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in the capital, Khartoum, and subsequently spread to all of Darfur's states, all Kordofan's regions, Al Jazirah, Sennar, and Blue Nile. The conflict caused massive displacement and a near-total collapse of public services in the affected states. Consequently, education was suspended for more than 500 consecutive days, a world record for school closures in the history of contemporary armed conflict, according to international organizations.

Separately, the Ministry of Education announced the suspension of classes at the end of the first semester of 2023 before the curriculum was completed, creating a learning gap for students by the end of 2023, with millions of Sudanese children having lost more than 180 school days.

Furthermore, warring forces on both sides used schools as bases and for other military purposes. In some relatively stable states, schools were converted into centers and shelters for internally displaced people and those fleeing the war, depriving schools of their ability to fulfill their primary function.

Legal Framework

1. International Humanitarian Law

- The Geneva Conventions (1949) and their two Additional Protocols (1977) concerning the protection of civilian objects, including schools.[1]
- Prohibition of deliberate attacks on protected civilian sites.
- Prohibition of the use of schools for military purposes.
- Article 4(3)(c) of Additional Protocol II: prohibition of the recruitment and use of children under the age of fifteen.[2]

2. International Human Rights Law

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Articles 28, 29, 38, 19, and 39.[1]
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Article 13.
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights Article 17.
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child Article 11.

3. Security Council Resolutions and Mechanisms for the Protection of Education

- Resolution 1612 (2005) monitoring and reporting mechanism identifying six grave violations against children.[1]
- Resolutions 1882 (2009) and 2225 (2015) treating attacks on schools as a criterion for inclusion on lists of perpetrators.
- Safe Schools Declaration (2015) international commitment to protect education in armed conflict.
- “Education Cannot Wait” (ECW) education funding commitments in emergencies.

[1] Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977, concerning the protection of civilian objects, including schools.

[2] Article 4(3)(c) of Additional Protocol II prohibits the recruitment and use in hostilities of children under the age of fifteen.

[1] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Articles 19, 28, 29, 38 and 39; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 13.

[1] UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on six grave violations against children; Resolutions 1882 (2009) and 2225 (2015) extended it to attacks on schools.

Methodology

Research Methodology

This report employed a dual methodology, combining primary sources, such as interviews with specialists, teachers, families, and students, with reliable open sources, including reports from global and local organizations and platforms. The methodology adhered to internationally recognized human rights documentation standards, particularly the “do no harm” principle and sensitivity to trauma.

Primary Sources (Interviews)

Sixteen interviews were conducted with affected individuals and interested parties from diverse backgrounds to represent a variety of geographical contexts, including areas of direct conflict, internally displaced persons, host communities in safe states, and diaspora communities abroad.

Secondary Sources (Open-Source Reports)

More than thirty reports were collected from UN agencies (UNICEF, OCHA, UNHCR, UNESCO, World Bank), human rights organizations (HRW, Amnesty International, GCPEA, Insecurity Insight, ACLED), NGOs (Save the Children, NRC, IRC, World Vision, CARE International), monitoring platforms (TRACE, Sudan Witness), and local sources (Sudanese Teachers' Committee, Dabanga, Ayin, Daroub, Al-Khatim Adlan Center).[1]

Research Ethics

- Informed consent was obtained before conducting interviews.
- Consent was obtained from the parents of children under 18.
- All violations documented in this report are supported by at least two independent sources (an interview or an open-source report).
- For the safety and security of sources, all real names have been withheld from the report and replaced with symbols.

[1]Secondary sources include UN agencies (UNICEF, OCHA, UNHCR, UNESCO, World Bank), human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, GCPEA, Insecurity Insight, ACLED), NGOs (Save the Children, NRC, IRC, World Vision, CARE International), monitoring platforms (TRACE, Sudan Witness) and local sources.

Chapter 1: The Scope of the Educational Crisis

1.1 Children Out of School

Reports and interviews have revealed shocking figures confirming the collapse of education, which has become a genuine disaster, driving an entire generation out of the educational system.

Schooling was suspended for a full year across Sudan, resulting in an entire generation being excluded from the educational process.

Teacher and member of the Sudanese Teachers' Committee, interview April 2026

Data	Indicator
13 million children	Total school-age children out of education (by the end of 2025)
10.8 million children	Children deprived of education and safety (UNICEF 2026)
10,400 schools	Schools damaged, destroyed, or no longer performing their educational function
280,000 students	Darfur and Kordofan students eligible for the exam but unable to take it since April 2023
370,000 students	Students unable to sit for the Sudanese Certificate exams even in areas controlled by the Sudanese Armed Forces
250,000 students	Children in Kordofan and Darfur outside the education system (Sudanese Teachers' Committee)

1.2 Damaged and Destroyed Schools That Have Lost Their Educational Function

- More than 10,400 schools have been completely or partially damaged or have lost their educational function (Radio Dabanga).[1]
- GCPEA documented hundreds of direct attacks on schools in Khartoum and Darfur, including aerial bombardment and the burning and looting of Ministry of Education offices in Nyala.[2]
- Sudan Witness published satellite imagery showing the extent of the damage to universities and schools.[3]

[1]Radio Dabanga reporting on damage to schools and disruption of the education system in Sudan.

[2]Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), documenting direct attacks on schools in Khartoum and Darfur, including aerial bombardment and the burning and looting of Ministry of Education offices in Nyala.

[3]Sudan Witness, 2024, satellite imagery documenting the destruction of universities and schools.

- In West Kordofan, only 15% of schools remain functioning, while the rest have been destroyed or converted into shelters.
- In Gezira State, a teacher reported that many schools were turned into military bases for the Rapid Support Forces and were subsequently bombed because of this use.
- In Blue Nile State, a teacher reported that almost all schools have been converted into shelters for displaced people, making their use for education impossible.

1.3 The Sudanese Certificate Examination Crisis

The Sudanese Certificate examination crisis is one of the most prominent manifestations of the wider educational crisis. Hundreds of students have been systematically deprived of their right to sit for the examinations because of their geographical location, affecting their academic futures and their enrollment in universities.

Data	Indicator
570,000 students	Students who took exams before the war (2022)
200,000 students	Students from Darfur who took exams before the war (2024)
150,000 students	Students unable to take exams since April 2023
8,000 students	Students from Kordofan are unable to take exams
2,000 students	Students who arrived from Darfur for the April 2026 exams
550,000 students	Total students taking exams abroad in April 2026 (33 countries)

The National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students was established in February 2026 following a plea from female students at Al-Wahda School in Nyala, whose widely circulated video demanded their right to sit for the secondary school certificate exam.[1] The initiative seeks to ensure a unified and geographically inclusive exam that removes the educational process from the context of armed conflict, unlike the current practice, which requires students to cross front lines, a practice its founders describe as financially costly, educationally unjust, and a security risk.

In the year preceding the war, 570,000 students sat for the Sudanese Certificate examinations, but this number dwindled to only 200,000 by December 2024, meaning that 370,000 students were unable to take the exams.

National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students in Darfur and Kordofan

This year's exams are the last chance to sit the exams under the current curriculum and educational system. Failure to ensure student participation will result in an irreparable academic loss for an entire generation.

National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students in Darfur and Kordofan

[1]The National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students in Darfur and Kordofan, established February 2026 following an appeal by female students at Al-Wahda School in Nyala.

Chapter 2: Violations of the Right to Education

2.1 Attacks on Schools and Educational Facilities

2.1.1 Aerial and Artillery Bombardment

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) documented hundreds of direct attacks on schools in Khartoum and Darfur, including airstrikes, artillery shelling, and the burning of educational facilities. In Nyala, South Darfur, the Ministry of Education offices were bombed and academic records were burned. Plan International (March 2026) also documented aerial and artillery attacks that resulted in deaths among schoolchildren in White Nile State,[1] while World Vision condemned attacks targeting schoolchildren in areas of direct military operations.

- GCPEA: hundreds of direct attacks documented in Khartoum and Darfur.
- Plan International (March 2026): deadly air and artillery attacks on schools in White Nile.
- World Vision (2026): schoolchild deaths in conflict zones.
- Sudan Witness (2024): satellite imagery confirming widespread destruction of universities and schools.

My school was destroyed and burned. I heard that the guard died when a shell hit his house inside the school in Burri, Khartoum State.

Secondary school student, Krinadungo Pyali Camp, Uganda

2.1.2 Systematic Looting and Destruction of School Property

The states of Gezira, Darfur, and Khartoum witnessed widespread and systematic looting of school buildings. Doors, windows, electrical wiring, fans, and student desks were stolen. The looting extended beyond physical property to the destruction of academic records and educational documents, as confirmed by satellite imagery from Sudan Witness. This has created significant difficulties for rebuilding the education system. A teacher from Blue Nile State noted the shutdown of printing presses, which left textbooks unavailable except for limited quantities from pre-war warehouses.

2.2 Military Use of Schools

The military use of schools is one of the most consistent and widespread findings of the investigation. Testimonies from multiple regions corroborate reports from credible international organizations. Schools were used as barracks to house soldiers, as weapons and ammunition depots, and as command-and-control centers, a clear violation of the Safe Schools Declaration and international humanitarian law.

[1]Plan International, March 2026, documenting aerial and artillery attacks resulting in child deaths in White Nile State.

- Human Rights Watch (2024) documented the military use of schools in Khartoum by both sides of the conflict.[1]
- Amnesty International, in its 2024 report, cited the military use of schools and the violation of the right to education.[2]
- The Norwegian Refugee Council (2025) addressed the conversion of schools into military barracks and its impact on the displacement of children.[3]

Some schools were converted into military sites by the Rapid Support Forces and were subsequently bombed from the air.

Teacher Sudan Al Jazirah

My school was a military base during the war; it was partially destroyed and hasn't reopened yet.

Student, Khartoum East Nile

2.3 Converting Schools into Shelters

In states that remained relatively untouched by direct confrontation such as Red Sea, Northern River Nile, and Kassala hundreds of schools were converted into shelters for displaced people. In Gezira, Kordofan, and Blue Nile, many schools combined the two functions: classrooms in the morning and shelters in the evening, a situation one expert termed a “double crisis.”

- In West Kordofan, only 15% of schools remain functioning; the rest are destroyed or used as shelters (UNICEF).
- Schools that became shelters failed to uphold children's right to education (ECW).

Almost all schools have been converted into shelters for displaced people, making their use of education impossible.

Teacher, Blue Nile

Specific schools have been converted into shelters, such as Mahira School, Al-Mu'minin School, Al-Nur School, and the Technical School.

Teacher, South Darfur

2.4 Denial of the Right to Take Exams

Depriving students from Darfur and Kordofan of their right to sit for the Sudanese Certificate examinations is one of the most systematic violations of the right to education. These students, the majority of whom are female, are forced to choose between crossing the front lines to reach safer states or abandoning their academic futures forever.

[1]Human Rights Watch, 2024, documenting the military use of schools in Khartoum by both parties to the conflict.

[2]Amnesty International, 2024, citing the military use of schools and violations of the right to education.

[3]Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 2025, on the conversion of schools into military barracks and its effect on the displacement of children.

A student from East Darfur traveled vast distances, passed through checkpoints, and was subjected to abuse, only to discover she had no exam registration number.

From the students' families, Khartoum East Nile

Student S.E. arrived in Kosti from Darfur after an arduous journey of more than ten days and entered the examination hall just ten minutes before the start of the exams.

National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students in Darfur and Kordofan

2.5 Attacks on Education Staff and Violations of Their Rights

Teachers across Sudan have been subjected to multifaceted violations that collectively constitute a catastrophe for the staff working in the education system.

- Teachers have died after being denied life-saving medication amid the collapse of the conflict-linked health system.
- Arbitrary arrests and torture of teachers by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces.
- Teachers have been accused of collaborating with the Rapid Support Forces simply for continuing to teach children during the period of RSF control, despite this being a purely individual and humanitarian effort (Teacher, East Nile, Khartoum).
- Deliberate killings of members of the teaching staff, documented by the Sudanese Teachers' Committee.
- In the Hilaliya area (Gezira State) alone, more than thirty teachers have been killed (teacher's testimony, Gezira State).

Some teachers have died due to a lack of life-saving medications, and have faced arrests, torture, and killings by the army and the Rapid Support Forces, leading to a decline in the professional role of teachers.

Teacher and member of the Sudanese Teachers' Committee, interview April 2026

The Sudanese Teachers' Committee revealed that 41 teachers have been killed because of the ongoing war.

In a statement issued on Labor Day, the committee explained that 11 teachers were killed by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), 5 by the army, and 25 in clashes. The statement also noted the arrest of 13 teachers by the army and 13 by the RSF, and the dismissal of 49 teachers by the government. The committee confirmed that the total number of violations reached 116, demanding an immediate end to all violations, protection for teachers, independent investigations, and accountability for those responsible.

Sudanese Teachers' Committee, May 2026

2.6 Non-Payment of Salaries and Illegal Deductions

The teachers' salary crisis represents one of the most persistent and far-reaching violations within the education system. Interviews revealed that teachers in most states have not received their salaries for periods ranging from 14 months to two consecutive years. The Teachers' Committee also documented illegal deductions under the guise of “popular mobilization.” This financial pressure has forced some teachers into marginal jobs such as driving rickshaws and selling goods in local markets. A teacher from Al Jazirah reported that approximately 60% of salaries were paid intermittently and irregularly.

Salaries are very low and do not cover basic living expenses.

Teacher, Blue Nile

The loss of teachers' salaries has sometimes led to the sexual exploitation of female teachers, and some teachers have been forced into marginal jobs such as driving rickshaws or working as street vendors in markets.

Teacher and member of the Sudanese Teachers' Committee, interview April 2026

2.7 Child Recruitment

The UN Panel of Experts on Sudan has documented the recruitment and use of children within, or in the immediate vicinity of, schools in Darfur. This is one of the most serious long-term violations, as it deprives children of their right to education and draws them into a cycle of violence.[1]

The involvement of children and adolescents in conflict poses a long-term threat to the future of society.

Teacher, Sudanese Organization for Educational Development

It is noted that some secondary school students have slipped towards participating in fighting or carrying weapons.

Teacher, Al Jazirah

[1]UN Panel of Experts on Sudan, documenting the recruitment and use of children within, or in the immediate vicinity of, schools in Darfur.

Chapter 3: Impact on Specific Categories of Children

3.1 Girls

Interviews reveal a gender gap in the impact of the conflict on education when comparing the situations of girls with those of their male peers. This gap centers on two issues.

A. Disparity in the Number of Test-Takers

Female students accounted for 65% of those eligible to take the exam in Darfur but unable to sit for it. This figure clearly demonstrates that the restrictions on movement and the protection concerns faced by girls are greater than those faced by boys, and it reveals the extent of gender discrimination in access to education.

B. Early Marriage as a Coping Mechanism

Interviews in several areas revealed a wave of early marriages arranged by families as a means of protection and to alleviate economic burdens in the absence of schools. CARE International has published detailed reports documenting violations of girls' right to education in the context of the Sudanese crisis.[1]

The girls' psychological state is very poor, directly affecting their will to learn.

Teacher, Khartoum, East Nile

Among the most prominent negative changes are the spread of child marriage and the exodus of female students from middle school into marginal jobs.

Teacher, Al Jazirah

Girls face rising rates of early marriage and exposure to various forms of violence, which families justify as a means of protection in the absence of education.

Teacher, Sudanese Organization for Educational Development

3.2 Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities represent the weakest link in the system for protecting the right to education in times of crisis. A teacher at the Sudanese Teachers' Committee described this group as one of the most affected, stressing the complete absence of any government support for them after the war.

Neither the interview data nor the reviewed reports include any quantifiable or qualitative data on the number of children with disabilities affected. Independent field research is recommended to fill this significant gap.

[1]CARE International, detailed reporting documenting violations of girls' right to education in the context of the Sudanese crisis.

3.3 Internally Displaced Children

The mass displacement of millions of children has created a dire educational reality for both those who remained in conflict zones and those who fled to safer states. Children who remained in conflict zones were exposed to violence amid a near-total lack of education, with some teachers attempting to teach children for nominal fees. Meanwhile, children displaced to safer states faced overcrowded schools because existing schools had been converted into shelters.

Children in war zones have developed a different perception of education; their conversations now revolve around war, weapons, violence, aircraft, shells, troops, and militias.

From the gaps and shortcomings

3.4 Refugee and Diaspora Children

Families fleeing to neighboring countries face several obstacles that directly limit access to education, as documented by UNHCR (2025).[1] The most prominent of these obstacles are:

- Curriculum gap: several students have been forced to repeat entire school years, or several years, due to the difference between the Sudanese curriculum and those of host countries.
- Transportation costs: many refugee families cannot afford to send their children from Krindango camp to Kampala to sit for the primary, intermediate, and Sudanese Certificate exams. Sending children to support schools in the camp can cost 10,000 shillings per day (about US\$2.50), which many families cannot afford (Teacher, Krindango Camp, Biale).
- Language barriers: most host countries use English as the official language.
- Complex registration procedures in some host countries.
- High tuition fees in host countries and difficulty finding schools.
- Some Sudanese schools have switched from traditional study to e-learning in response to the war, but this poses another challenge for families given the high cost of internet access and the availability of study equipment.

Sudanese school fees reached US\$800–\$900 annually, an amount beyond the means of most refugee families

From the families of students, Uganda, Kampala

Registration procedures at schools outside Sudan are complicated and can delay children's enrollment.

Lawyer, mother of a child, Egypt

[1]UNHCR, 2025, documenting the education challenges facing displaced and refugee Sudanese in neighboring countries.

3.5 Psychological Impact on Children

Interviews and reports from international and local organizations converge to paint a unified picture of the collective psychological trauma inflicted on Sudanese children by the war, reflected in their striking reactions and behaviors. The psychological damage caused by the conflict is immense: children suffer from constant stress that has severely hampered their ability to concentrate and comprehend.

Children without family support are more vulnerable to getting lost and to a lack of supervision.

Teacher (Krinadungo Camp, Kampala)

Children talking about death and war so casually is a very dangerous indicator of the normalization of trauma in the minds of an entire generation.

Teacher, South Darfur

Children experience severe fainting spells upon hearing artillery, aircraft, and ammunition, and are affected by distressing news such as the death of neighbors.

From the families of students, Khartoum, East Nile

Before the exams, I felt my future was lost and uncertain. After going through the experience, I felt hopeful and capable of achieving something. I aspire to score above 90% so I can apply for a scholarship.

Student Kiryandongo Camp Bweyale Uganda

Chapter 4: Testimonials and Case Studies

4.1 Student, Sudanese Certificate, 18 years old — Krinadungo Camp, Biyale, Uganda

- Studies were suspended two weeks before the outbreak of war due to frequent strikes. The family was then forced to flee their home through Rufa'a and Shendi before finally reaching Uganda. Throughout this journey, which lasted nearly a year, there was no formal schooling, and the student relied solely on individual study at home amid the near-total closure of schools.
- She relied on self-study and passed exams for only two months before taking the certificate exams. She was admitted to a support center, but overcrowded classrooms and limited resources negatively affected her experience. Her school in Khartoum had been destroyed and burned.

What I miss most about school is the morning assembly; it was so energetic and vibrant. Before the exams, I felt my future was lost and uncertain, but after going through the experience, I felt hopeful and that I could achieve something.

Student Krinadungo Camp, Biyale, Uganda

4.2 Displaced Student, 16 years old — East Nile, Khartoum, Sudan

This student describes a sharp decline in his academic performance. While he could read and write before the war, he now struggles with Arabic spelling; some children his age have even had to be re-taught from the alphabet. His school was converted into a military base and partially destroyed, and it has not yet reopened. He longs to return to school but is hesitant to go, fearing it might be unsafe or contain landmines.

4.3 Teacher, 40 years old — Al Jazirah, Sudan

This interview documents the repercussions of an accumulating and intertwined war: the early marriage of girls; the slide of middle-school students into marginal work such as agriculture, blacksmithing, and fishing; the conversion of schools into military headquarters and their destruction; and the theft and burning of educational records. In Al Hilaliya alone, the killing of more than thirty male and female teachers was documented. The teacher indicates that about 60% of salaries were paid intermittently, while volunteers and student associations launched informal educational initiatives to fill the void left by the complete absence of the state.

4.4 Teacher, 45 years old — Sudanese Teachers' Committee, Kampala, Uganda

This interview documents the comprehensive structural collapse: a year-long suspension of education across Sudan, the exclusion of 250,000 students in Kordofan and Darfur from the education system, the postponement of exams for 600,000 students, the sexual exploitation of female teachers due to financial hardship, and the illegal deduction of salaries. It succinctly summarizes the reality: "Education has been transformed from a fundamental right into a class privilege."

4.5 The National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students in Darfur and Kordofan

This interview documents the case of female students at Al-Wahda School in Nyala who, in February 2026, released a widely circulated video pleading for their right to take the secondary school certificate exams.

In response to this appeal, the National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students was formed, supported by an alliance of three major youth networks, trade unions, professional organizations, and various political parties. Approximately 280,000 students in Darfur remain unable to sit for the exam, while only about 2,000 from Darfur reached the exam centers in areas under army control in April 2026. The initiative confirms that the 2026 exams represent the last opportunity under the old curriculum and educational ladder.

Chapter 5: Institutional Response and Gaps

5.1 International Humanitarian Response

The international response to the education crisis has been limited: despite the announcement of large funding appeals, the impact on the ground remains very weak.

Organization	Response
UNICEF (2026)	US\$962.9 million HAC appeals for safe learning spaces, teacher incentives, and support for 13.8 million people
Education Cannot Wait (ECW)	Education programs in emergencies, limited structural impact, according to respondents
Global Partnership for Education (GPE)	Emergency funding for education in Sudan, 2024
UNESCO	Sudan Education Transition Plan 2025–2027
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Documenting the impact of displacement on the loss of educational opportunities (2025)
Save the Children	Documenting the loss of 500 school days, the longest closure in history
UNHCR	Supporting the education of displaced and refugee Sudanese in neighboring countries

5.2 Civil Society and Grassroots Initiatives

In contrast to the government's absence, the interviews revealed several inspiring community initiatives, though they remained limited in impact and unsustainable:

- Informal classrooms were established through community initiatives in various neighborhoods in Al Jazirah, Khartoum, South Darfur, and Blue Nile.
- Quranic schools (khalawi) in some areas of Al Jazirah have contributed positively to improving students' Arabic-language skills.
- The National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students enjoys broad support, including from the Youth Networks Alliance, the Teachers' Committee, the Sudanese Women's Union, the Darfur Lawyers Association, and various professional associations.
- Sudan Emergency Rooms: grassroots youth networks that emerged after the outbreak of war and are among the largest responders to the crisis, mitigating its effects by providing services to citizens, including support for the continuation of education.

We rented Sudanese educational centers for use at nominal costs.

Volunteer teacher in Kampala, Uganda

We have support centers in the Krinadungo camp in Uganda, teaching the Sudanese curriculum.

Teacher, South Darfur

5.3 State Response

Interviews and documented reports clearly reveal a near-total absence of the state in fulfilling its role within the education system. The Ministry of Education announced the suspension of classes at the end of the first semester of 2023 before the curriculum was completed, creating a significant knowledge gap that persisted even at the state level. Notably, some local authorities took initiatives such as transporting students from Kurmuk to Damazin to sit for the Sudanese Certificate examinations.

There are 250,000 students in Kordofan and Darfur who are out of school. This confirms the state's lack of equal opportunities, in addition to the postponement of the secondary school certificate exams, which prevented 600,000 students from sitting for them.

Sudanese Teachers' Committee

5.4 Gaps in the Role of NGOs

Through interviews, experts and specialists from different positions expressed concern about the limited role of civil society organizations on the issue of education, noting that they focus on supporting projects and emergency humanitarian response related to food, health, and sometimes protection.

There is a clear lack of support for teachers; most organizations have not provided direct support, which has exacerbated their suffering, especially given the low salaries and lack of incentives.

Teacher, Al Jazirah

Despite its theoretical existence, there is no tangible impact on the ground. Its work focuses on emergency humanitarian response (health, food), while communities need psychosocial support, cultural projects, and curricular and extracurricular educational programs.

Teacher, Sudanese Organization for Educational Development

Chapter 6: Legal Analysis

6.1 Violations of International Humanitarian Law

Documented attacks on schools, the military use of educational facilities, the targeting of education personnel, and the denial of students' right to sit for the Sudanese Certificate examinations constitute clear violations of international humanitarian law and the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants relating to the protection of civilian objects. Both parties to the conflict, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, bear responsibility for these violations.

- Attacks on schools in Khartoum and Darfur violate the Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocol II concerning the protection of civilian objects.
- The military use of schools exposes them to targeting, in violation of the declaration of schools as safe havens.
- The recruitment of children near or within schools violates Additional Protocol II (Article 4(3)(c)) and Security Council Resolution 1612.

6.2 Violations of International Human Rights Law

- The systematic denial of education violates Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- Denying 280,000 students in Darfur and Kordofan, access to examinations constitutes a discriminatory denial of the right to education based on geographical location and group affiliation.
- The non-payment of teachers' salaries and the imposition of unlawful deductions violate international labor standards.
- The failure to protect children from psychosocial harm violates Articles 19 and 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (recovery and reintegration).
- The sharp rise in early-marriage rates violates Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (harmful practices) and perpetuates gender-based discrimination.

6.3 State Obligations and Accountability

The Sudanese state bears a direct, non-conflict-related responsibility to provide education and protect educational facilities, as well as to protect areas under its control. The Rapid Support Forces are likewise responsible for all violations attributed to them. International actors are responsible for ensuring accountability and providing humanitarian and development assistance.

UN Panel of Experts on Sudan: mandate to investigate, document, and recommend sanctions.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education: special update on the collapse of the education system in Sudan, 2025.

Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) pursuant to Resolution 1612: monitoring the six grave violations against children.

TRACE / GCPEA platform: real-time tracking of attacks on education in Sudan.

International Accountability Framework

Summary and Conclusion

The evidence gathered from sixteen interviews and more than thirty open-source reports demonstrates that the armed conflict that erupted on 15 April 2023 has created one of the most severe education crises in the history of contemporary armed conflict, and that Sudan now holds the record for the longest school closure in modern history.

What is happening in Sudan is a systematic, multi-dimensional structural collapse characterized by the destruction of schools, the loss of qualified personnel, and an entire generation deprived of its right to education.

Sudan is on the verge of producing an entire generation of children permanently excluded from the education system, with disastrous consequences for the social fabric, gender equality, child protection, the labor market, and the possibility of building sustainable peace. Addressing this reality requires treating education not as a sector, but as a priority of justice and a cornerstone for peacebuilding.

A joint warning from experts

The most pressing concern is the window of opportunity for the 2026 Sudanese Certificate examinations, the last chance under the current curriculum, which threatens to close permanently for 280,000 students in Darfur and Kordofan unless emergency measures are taken to preserve their future.

Recommendations

1. Parties to the Conflict (Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces)

- Immediate ceasefire.
- Immediate cessation of all attacks on educational facilities and adherence to the laws and legislation protecting civilian (educational) objects.
- Refraining from using educational institutions for military purposes (barracks, military bases, and ammunition and weapons depots).
- Compliance with international laws criminalizing the recruitment of children.
- Allowing emergency education systems to operate without restriction in all areas under control.
- Early warning of imminent dangers that may affect educational facilities, thereby reinforcing the principle of protection.

2. Ministry of Education

- Commitment to paying teachers' salary arrears and ceasing all unlawful deductions.
- Conducting the 2026 Sudanese Certificate examinations fairly for all candidates, regardless of geographical location or whether they reside in areas controlled by the warring parties.
- Avoiding references to the context of the war in Sudan in all exams and curricula.
- Refraining from any discriminatory practices based on gender, tribe, or region that deprive individuals of their fundamental rights.
- Developing a phased plan to restore the educational process across all affected states.
- Integrating emergency education into comprehensive social-justice programs to address pre-existing structural inequalities.
- Rehabilitating damaged schools in safe states.

3. United Nations and International Organizations

- Prioritizing funding for the UNICEF 2026 appeals for action and improving the conditions of teachers.
- Establishing a mechanism to receive reports of the various forms and patterns of violations against educational institutions, as well as the serious violations committed against teachers.
- Facilitating access to emergency education programs for the most vulnerable groups (internally displaced people, refugees, people with disabilities, and girls).
- Supporting the localization of the education-in-emergencies concept and building community capacity.
- Providing technical, logistical, and financial support to the National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students.

4. NGOs and Civil Society

- Enhancing the integration of psychosocial support into all education programs.
- Supporting and strengthening existing local initiatives instead of creating unsustainable parallel structures.
- Supporting teachers with financial incentives, professional development, and psychosocial support.
- Contributing to the provision of educational resources for students.
- Prioritizing girls' education and implementing programs to prevent early marriage, ensure safe transportation, and facilitate access to examination centers.
- Addressing the gap between education systems within Sudan and those abroad.
- Contributing to the payment of examination fees for refugee students abroad.

5. Donors

- Classifying education as a priority for building peace and justice and financing it on that basis, rather than treating it merely as one human-services sector.
- Supporting strategic plans that ensure a long-term operational process, addressing previous problems and improving future conditions.
- Financing a plan (the National Emergency Initiative to Save Sudanese Certificate Students in Kordofan and Darfur) to conduct unified exams in 2026.
- Providing long-term (multi-year) and flexible financing for Sudanese civil-society initiatives in the field of education.



The African Center for justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) is a non-profit non-governmental organization working to monitor and promote respect for Human Rights and legal reform in Sudan. The center has a vision of a Sudan where all people can live and prosper free from fear and want in a country committed to justice, equality and peace.



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