



Port Sudan, 21 December 2023 – Access to health and other basic services has been disrupted since the escalation of violence spread to Al Gezira State on 15 December 2023. The situation in Wad Madani, the capital of the state, is particularly concerning. The few hospitals that are still operational are facing a critical shortage of staff and are overcrowded as most health workers have had to flee from the town.

For the past eight months, Al Gezira, the bread basket of Sudan, had been a safe haven for half a million people displaced mostly from Khartoum seeking safety from the conflict that started on 15 April 2023 in Khartoum and spread to the Darfur Kordofan states plunging the nation into a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

WHO has an operations hub and a warehouse in Wad Madani, which served Al Gezira, Khartoum and surrounding areas since the start of the conflict in April 2023. The hub's operations have been suspended since 15 December and WHO staff are coordinating with partners for alternate mechanisms of continuing the health emergency response. The disruption of health services is putting the lives of patients at risk, including hundreds of cholera patients in cholera treatment centres, as the centres will soon run out of medical supplies.

Al Gezira State has reported over 1,800 cases of cholera and 26 deaths. Gains made in containing the cholera outbreak in the State could be lost due to interruption of disease control and surveillance coupled with large population movement, risking further cholera spread. The planned oral cholera vaccination campaign in Khartoum has currently had to be put on hold.

Due to the escalation of conflict in Al Gezira, at least 300,000 internally displaced persons have once again been displaced, most of them unsure where to find refuge next. They are once again without access to safe water, food, and healthcare at a time when outbreak-prone diseases are circulating. They also face other imminent threats to their health from injuries, trauma, and gender-based violence in the face of large-scale displacement. Sudan now has over 7 million displaced people, 5.5 million internally and 1.5 seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

Several healthcare facilities in Wad Madani have been subject to attacks, and WHO is verifying reports of the killing of two health workers in Roufaa Hospital.

The deliberate targeting of healthcare, which includes patients, healthcare professionals, and facilities, is reprehensible and must immediately stop. Patients should not die in the very place they hoped to get protection for their life and well-being, and health workers should not die as they selflessly work to save lives.

The WHO is closely monitoring developments in Al Gezira state to initiate our emergency response plan. We are also monitoring the situation in Sennar, Gedaref, White Nile, and Blue Nile states as well as Darfur.

We call on our partners and the global community to stand with us with renewed resolve to restore health and hope for Sudan's people. Above all, we call on parties to the conflict to put the people of Sudan first. Sudan needs peace.

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