According to the Egyptian authorities, as of 19 May 2023, nearly 132 000 people have crossed the border from Sudan into Egypt, with Sudanese migrants representing 91% of this population. Credit: WHO/Egypt

Cairo, 24 May 2023 – Over 248 000 people have crossed the border from Sudan into neighbouring Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan, to flee the insecurity resulting from the fighting in the country and lack of access to health services due to repeated armed attacks on health facilities. Below is a brief conversation between WHO and a Sudanese man who, along with his parents and siblings, spent 17 days on the journey getting from Khartoum to Cairo.

If you had to choose one word to describe the situation in Khartoum, what would it be?

Nightmare.

Is everyone you know unharmed?

Unfortunately, not. My extended family is still there; some of their homes were looted.

What was a particularly hard moment for you?

Leaving our house with all the memories without knowing if we were ever going to come back again. It's a hard decision, especially when you realize that you are leaving behind everything you parents worked for.

In crises, we often have mixed emotions. What were yours?

There was no hope, only anger and fear. Fear of losing one of my family members or friends, and fear of being robbed – which eventually did happen to me.

Have the attacks on health facilities affected you or anyone you know?

The attack on the National Medical Centre impacted all the pharmacies, and I could no longer find my parents’ regular medicines. We took this long journey specifically due to their medical condition. They would not have made it if they’d stayed in the country.

Did anyone need to see a regular doctor but couldn’t?

My father is diabetic. We could only consult the doctor by phone, since getting to him was impossible.

Does anyone you know have a chronic condition requiring regular treatment that was not available?

Yes, repeatedly! My cousin has kidney failure and couldn't make it to the hospital.

What made you decide it was time to leave?

It was the only option left on the table. We either leave or die.

What were your experiences during the journey from Khartoum to Cairo?

An armed man searched me while pointing his automatic rifle at me. He took all my money and said: “If you don't like it, we can search further and see.” I replied “No, it’s OK.”

How do you feel now?

To be honest, I don't know. Mixed feelings. I like Egypt so much that I used to come every year; but this time it’s different, I don't know why.

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