

#KeepEyesOnSudan



Activists use **#KeepEyesOnSudan** on social media to advocate for international attention toward the war in Sudan. And in war's early days, all eyes were on Sudan as foreigners raced to leave the capital, Khartoum. Now, 10 months into the conflict that "turned previously peaceful Sudanese homes into cemeteries ... **the world is scandalously silent,**" said the UN. For 20 years, Inter Pares has partnered with organizations in Sudan working on women's rights and gender justice. Our colleagues from Khartoum have fled their homes and are scattered and regrouping across Sudan and neighbouring countries. **They are asking the world not to forget about them.**



Photo courtesy of Ilham Ibrahim

"The international community doesn't really talk about what's happening here," says Ilham Ibrahim, head of Inter Pares counterpart SORD.

"Sudanese people are just forgotten"

Q&A with Ilham Ibrahim



The war in Sudan has been particularly vicious to women. To better understand the war's impacts on women, we spoke with Ilham Ibrahim, executive director of the Sudanese Organization for Research and Development (SORD), Inter Pares' longtime counterpart. Ilham spoke to us from Uganda. ►

“... women’s needs are totally absent from peace negotiations because the parties at war are 100 per cent men and they will never talk about women’s agendas”.

◀ **Q: What key challenges has SORD faced since the war began?**

A: There are so many challenges. Our office in Khartoum was looted and staff have relocated outside Sudan or to our eastern Sudan offices. We shifted our programs to respond to this emergency and started distributing food and hygiene kits, supporting women’s shelters. We can’t even meet the demand.

These are areas of work we are not familiar with... Normally, SORD is a research-based organization involved in documenting gender-based violence cases and providing counselling services for survivors.

But under such conditions, it is more about how we can reduce women’s risk of exposure to violence, by distributing whistles and flashlights, for example.

But the hardest challenge is we feel that Sudanese people are just forgotten. The international community doesn’t really talk about what’s happening here.

Q: How is the conflict impacting Sudanese women?


A: Sudanese women’s bodies have been used as a weapon of war. There is forced labor, forced prostitution, human trafficking, kidnapping and economic exploitation. On top of that, women’s needs are totally absent from peace negotiations because the parties at war are 100 per cent men and they will never talk about women’s agendas.

Q: What is the role of Sudanese women in this war?

A: Wherever you go, you will find women resisting despite all these difficulties. Regardless of the war and the very high cost women have paid, they’re the ones supporting other women, providing necessities, counselling and legal aid, helping pregnant women and victims of rape get medical services.

Even before the war, it was youth and women who led the 2019 revolution. But when it came to the representation, men were there in their beautiful suits, talking about the revolution that we led, using our efforts for their own benefit. For us, it’s a daily battle, but we will continue.

Q: What can the international community do to support the people of Sudan right now?

A: The international community should put more pressure on the warring parties who are negotiating for a permanent ceasefire. We must open safe corridors for humanitarian aid to reach people in need and take all measures possible to stop gender-based violence. 

This interview was edited for length and clarity. Read more on our website.



A different time: in 2019, women and youth led the revolution in Sudan.

Photos: Sari Omer

What is happening in Sudan?


When war broke out in Sudan on April 15, 2023, it was sudden, unexpected and decades in the making.

In 2019, a popular revolution brought down Omar al-Bashir's 30-year dictatorship that saw decades of oppression, conflict and genocide. The revolution ushered in a joint military-civilian government. For a moment, there was hope that this transitional government would soon lead to democratic civilian rule. But a coup cut that hope short in 2021 when the military ousted its civilian governing partners and took control of the country.

It was vestiges of the long, brutal dictatorship that sparked the war that rages today. Twenty years ago, Bashir-backed militias committed genocidal crimes in Darfur, a region in western Sudan. These militias later became the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that would clash with the Sudanese military on April 15 in Khartoum. These confrontations quickly escalated into an all-out war in many parts of the country, especially Khartoum and Darfur.

The conflict has only intensified since. Thousands of civilians have died caught in the crossfire. Women are at huge risk of sexual violence,

with reports of forced marriage, kidnapping and sexual slavery. More than 6 million people have been forced from their homes, with many now living in refugee camps – some of which are rife with disease.

The horrors go on. But so does the resistance. Thanks to individual donors, we have been able to provide flexible financial support, including for emergency needs, to our Sudanese counterparts as they respond to this crisis. We are committed to supporting our counterparts for the long term as they regroup and continue to work for women's rights, gender justice, peace and democracy. 

Holding onto hope: Sudanese youth continue to resist

When the shooting started in Khartoum, Ghadir focused on one thing: getting herself and others somewhere safe. She fled her home, leaving everything behind, and managed to cross the border into Egypt.

“At the beginning, we had no time to even think about what's coming next,” she said. It was just about survival.

In a way, Ghadir's job is to concentrate on what comes next – she helps nurture Sudan's next generation of activists, especially young women and girls. As a coordinator with Inter Pares' counterpart SWRC (pronounced “source”), she works with networks of youth to build their skills, knowledge and confidence to take part



in social justice movements. With SWRC's support, these activists fight for women's rights and gender justice, and peace and democracy. ►

◀ When the war started and she and her colleagues were forced to leave Khartoum, the organization lost touch with its network of youth activists.

“The main challenge is losing everything and having to start all this over again,” Ghadir told us from Cairo. The war has also meant SWRC stopped having access to support from its funders. “We’re used to having limited resources,” but this is a new low, she added.

“But my situation is better than a lot of other Sudanese women who are still inside Sudan. At least I made it to safety,” said Ghadir. “I feel obligated to work for them while I can.”

And that is what she is doing. As the violence in Sudan continues, Ghadir is already organizing SWRC’s next steps.

One big hurdle to overcome: communication. SWRC’s network is now spread across Sudan, eastern Africa and beyond. To reconnect activists, Ghadir is developing a virtual communications hub

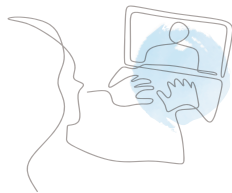



Photo: SWRC
Before war broke out, young activists often gathered at SWRC’s facility to learn together, as pictured here. After the war began, the offices were bombed.

– a workspace that isn’t restricted by geographical borders. The platform will support the exchange of ideas and information among the dispersed activists in a secure way. It will also mean they can continue the work the war interrupted: providing training for young women, advocating for women’s rights and supporting women with disabilities, people in the LGBTQI+ community and sex workers.

Ghadir says Sudanese youth still have hope for the future.

“They don’t want to lose what they had before the war and what they gained during the revolution. They are refusing to let go of all of that,” she says. “For me, myself, I still feel there is a need for people to resist no matter what happens as long as we live.” 

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With the support of thousands of Canadians, Inter Pares works in Canada and around the world with social change organizations who share the analysis that poverty and injustice are caused by inequalities within and among nations, and who are working to promote peace, and social and economic justice in their communities and societies.

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