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1.1.4. Security incidents and civilian deaths estimates

Due to the ongoing conflict, the task of collecting data was difficult[118] and many deaths have gone unreported.[119] Several sources explained how the insecurity caused by the conflict generally affected the reporting across the country: journalists being intimidated, harassed, arrested,[120] killed or driven into exile, as well as interruptions of internet and mobile services affected journalistic reporting in the conflict zones.[121] Internet blackouts rendered the task of monitoring violations on the ground difficult.[122] The dangerous environment for journalists has led to self-censorship,[123] lack of reporting on the ground[124] and underreporting of events.[125] International media coverage of the conflict was limited.[126] Foreign journalists faced difficulties accessing Sudan[127] and few managed to enter the country,[128] let alone spend significant amounts of time observing the conflict there.[129] Moreover, it was noted that there was a general lack of global media and geopolitical attention to the conflict.[130]

Estimates of the death toll for the conflict vary widely.[131] Several sources have stated that the death counts for the conflict were significantly underestimated.[132] Besides telecommunication blackouts and insecurity reportedly hampering the recording of fatalities,[133] many indirect cases of death resulting from war-exacerbated factors – such as lack of emergency care, essential food, medicine and vaccination programs – were not recorded.[134]

While no data apart from those collected by ACLED (detailed further below) could be found on conflict-related incidents and fatalities during the reference period, several sources provided estimates on fatality figures for the entire period since the outbreak of the conflict on 15 April 2023. The UN's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan reported in October 2024 that over 18 800 persons had been killed across the country since that date,[135] while ACLED recorded 28 608 fatalities resulting from battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians as of November 2024.[136]

Other sources gave significantly higher fatalities estimates, including by also taking into account deaths arising from conflict-exacerbated factors. As early as May 2024, the US government's special envoy for Sudan, Tom Perriello, pointed to some estimates suggesting that up to 150 000 people had been killed in the conflict.[137] An October 2024 report by a group of

academic researchers from the USA and Belgium estimated that the conflict had caused more than 62 000 fatalities when taking into account such indirect fatalities resulting from factors exacerbated by the conflict such as lack of emergency care, vaccinations, essential food and medicine, in addition to the direct conflict-related fatalities recorded by ACLED.[138] Meanwhile, the Sudan Research Group of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), focusing exclusively on Khartoum state, estimated that, between 15 April 2023 and 4 June 2024, there had been 61 202 all-cause wartime deaths (which also included deaths from accidents, disease and starvation) and 26 024 deaths from intentionally inflicted injury in that state. These deaths from intentionally inflicted injuries surpassed those documented by ACLED for the entire country during the same period.[139] Given that more than 90 % of both all-cause and intentional-injury deaths in Khartoum state had gone unrecorded according to this estimate, the LSHTM suggested that the death toll in other parts of the country must have also been considerably higher than the respective recorded figures.[140]

From 1 February 2024 to 30 November 2024, ACLED observed 4 230 security incidents (battles, explosions/remote violence, and violence against civilians) at national level for a total estimate of 12 144 fatalities, both combatants and civilians.[141] However, such figures are likely to be underestimates, ACLED[142] and other sources explained.[143] Among the 4 230 security events recorded by ACLED, 1 464 (35 %) were coded as battles, 1446 (34 %) as explosions/remote violence and 1 320 (31 %) as incidents of violence against civilians. In 1 688 instances (40 %), civilians were the primary or only target.[144] While ACLED recorded 458 security incidents in February 2024, the number dropped to between 316 and 418 from March to August but then increased to 502 in September and 616 in October before dropping to 398 in November.[145]

picture2

Figure 1: Evolution of security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Sudan, 1 February 2024 - 30 November 2024, based on ACLED data[146]

Security incidents were recorded in all regions, with Khartoum, Darfur, and Al Jazirah registering the highest numbers during the reference period. Khartoum reported the highest overall number of incidents (1 610, accounting for 38 % of all incidents). The Darfur region reported 1 024 (24 %) incidents, the vast majority of which occurred in North Darfur (770). This was followed by Al Jazirah (821 incidents, 19 %) and Sennar (208 incidents, 5 %).[147] The Darfur region accounted for 37 % of the overall fatalities (with 89 % of the fatalities in the region registered in North Darfur), followed by Khartoum (18 %).[148]

picture3

Figure 2: Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians by region in Sudan, 1 February 2024 – 30 November 2024, based on ACLED data[149]

picture4

Figure 3: Fatalities as a result of armed conflict in Sudan, 1 February 2024 – 30 November 2024, based on ACLED data150

With regards to casualties solely attributable to explosions/remote violence, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) recorded 148 incidents and 3 078 civilian casualties (including 1 307 fatalities) in Sudan between February and October 2024. Of 3 001 civilian casualties recorded between March151 and October 2024, 925 (31 %) were recorded in urban residential areas, 663 (22 %) across multiple urban areas, 689 (23 %) in markets and 205 (7 %) in villages. Ground-launched weapons have caused most cases of civilian harm, accounting for 1 635 civilian casualties (54 %). Meanwhile, air-launched weapons including air strikes accounted for 1 261 civilian casualties (42 %).152

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