

# Medical Diaspora Engagement during Conflicts

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In the U. K. there are a large number of Sudanese medical professionals working in the NHS

The links between Sudan and U. K. continued following the independence in 1956, for example, the Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health works closely with the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Khartoum in postgraduate education.

Following independence, Sudan went through long periods of dictatorships and military rules and very short periods of democratic transitions.

Armed conflicts and poor governance resulted in a fragile state affecting social justice, in particular health access, education, and food security. With significant medical professionals' immigration to the Middle East, UK, and North America.

For those following the African and Middle Eastern developments, will be aware of the historical nonviolent movements in Sudan since 2018 by pro-democracy forces towards a democratic civic state calling for peace, freedom, and justice, stressing on the security sector reform and silencing the guns.

In April this year, 2023, an armed conflict erupted in Sudan between the military and paramilitary forces. It is very difficult to confirm casualties, injuries, and missing civilians. An emerging environmental health crisis is anticipated as result of water supply shortages and unburied dead bodies in the streets.

The UNICEF reported that at least 190 children were killed, and thousands injured. Children and families are trapped inside homes fearing the attacks by security forces. These numbers will continue to increase when reporting and internet access is restored.

Significant numbers of families fled Khartoum and Western Sudan, UNHCR, have reported serious humanitarian crisis at the borders. Evacuated British families arrived in UK in an emergency operation. Few of these families, although British Sudanese, they lived in Sudan for a longtime, and they are back with no jobs, shelter or social security, some of them were not able to collect their professional certificates up departure from Sudan. They are struggling to settle and secure jobs in U. K.

Despite the dire situation in Sudan, the Sudanese diaspora in different countries initiated a transnational community

emergency response in areas of humanitarian assistance and advocacy.

- One of the primary goals of the medical diaspora's global initiatives was to raise money for Sudan's health system by organizing numerous fundraising drives that targeted various hospitals and teamed up with Sudan's various doctor unions to make it easier to deliver this support. By reaching out to its counterpart Sudanese Paediatric Association in Sudan, the British Sudanese Association of Paediatric and Child Health, for instance, targets the child health institutes in Sudan. It aims to run as many paediatric emergency centers as feasible throughout the Capital City's Khartoum and its three main sectors, improve neonatal nurseries, and ensure that they are well-equipped to accept ill infants and children when necessary. There are ongoing challenges regarding reaching to few centers on the ground due to security issues.

- Fundraising link attached below:

<https://preview.mailerlite.io/emails/webview/381569/86614249475933402>

- When this deadly armed conflict erupted at least 75 NHS doctors who held BRPs were stranded in Sudan, unable to fly back to the UK. They were visiting relatives back home during Easter holidays which coincided with Ramadan and Eid El-fitr. To address this, the medical diaspora in the UK met with the international BBC media and wrote a letter to the NHS England in that regard which yielded a very positive outcome.

- Link for BBC interview

<https://twitter.com/bbcnewsnight/status/1651705595420893185?s=48&t=275WaDSjpQUuzapAK10hcg>

- One of the essential and early measures the Sudanese Paediatric Diaspora in the UK took was to contact the RCPCH. That was in the form of an open letter outlining the health care situation in Sudan during this era and its impact on Sudanese civilian population and innocent children. The letter call for the support of the RCPCH to advice line managers and trust directors to provide support to Sudanese doctors and trainees on a case-by-case basis as well as to support the doctors' mental health by pointing them in the proper way within their healthcare facilities.

Copy of letterhead-Final copy copy [1].pdf

- The Telemedicine services started immediately and medical diaspora in collaboration with Sudanese specialists association back home started telecare services via Meta platforms; this was established to provide remote health services for families trapped and unable to access care.

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Sudan E-Health & Telemedicine – Sudan Doctors Union – UK Branch (sdu.org.uk)

- The mental health impact of witnessing such serious conflict or being worried about relatives and friend is significant. Numerous sessions run by professional psychiatrists and psychologists that were organised by the medical diaspora and targeted impacted Sudanese health professionals who were living in the UK, arriving from conflict areas, and evacuees. For instance, the Sudanese Doctor Union-UK branch is now running a well-being virtual session on various platforms via a shared safe space they called it SDU-Cafe.



- In a unique sequence, diaspora from many areas of the world, including Qatar, America, and the UK, formed a multi-international child psychosocial support system where each team takes the lead in a particular area to support its arm financially, practically, and if possible, psychologically. American team was caring for the youngster with behavioral difficulties when Qatar team became involved with disabled children. In the UK, the team's primary goal is to create a safe atmosphere physically or virtually for children. Collaboration with the Safe Sudan Unit and the Sudanese Psychiatric Association would be necessary for that.

Psychosocial healing and post conflict reconstruction  
Somayya Proposal.pdf

- An innovative effort aims to restore normality of life for those disadvantaged medical students in Sudan who were forced to leave universities and interrupt their education. Crisis Rescue Foundation, a recently established foundation, has started lecturing medical Sudanese students in live and recorded sessions. A few weeks after the initiative's launch (on May 9th, with more than 1100 students enrolled thus far and roughly 100 students attending each lecture with a 100% Feedback rate), results began to show.



<https://www.crisisrescuefoundation.co.uk/>

- In order to help parents in Sudan treat children at home for the most basic needs, a team from Qatar recently released a very compact pamphlet. In the UK, a similar process is being replicated, and a series of videos will be released soon on the same topics.

اطفال بلدا.pdf

- Paediatric Diaspora developed a shortcut poster that includes freely accessible online clinical guideline links in paediatrics along with free subscribed pharmaceutical websites such as Toxbase and BNF + BNFc as a response to requests made by some medical and pharmaceutical professionals in the UK.

Useful guidelines ^0 Resources v1.0.pdf

- To give the reader a sense of the requests paediatric diaspora receives via WhatsApp from families stranded in conflict zones, we will list some of the requests received, including questions about managing fever, hydration, fluid intake, skin rashes, infant feeding, accidental ingestions and minor injuries, asthma management, and medication and drugs dosing questions. If junior doctors in remote medical centers are unable to contact their senior team members, they may occasionally seek advice from medical diaspora specialists.

Through links and networking, the medical diaspora abroad is serving as a source of information sharing via twitter platforms and Meta e. g. open neighborhood pharmacies and medicine supply.

It is imperative to draw attention to the fact that electrical supplies, digital access, and internet connection have all been negatively impacted.

This will hinder telecommunications and support within Sudan and communication with diaspora communities.

[https://twitter.com/sudan\\_doctors?s=20](https://twitter.com/sudan_doctors?s=20)

- The Sudanese diaspora contributing to advocacy campaigns in different ways. Petitions to the government and legislature to establish a family strategy visa for Sudanese individuals affected by, as was one of the other endeavors made by the medical expatriates.

Among the petitions created was one urging the end of the war and the establishment of peace, which has received 29682 signatures as of now.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/636881?fbclid=PAaaSgY1gWeVc7vgavOLRw15Xog5LeB7oAMWcmbq8tG436jteEI68SSUzq8dFns>

Petition · Stop War in Sudan and Bring Peace Now · Change.org

- Sudan Doctors for Human Rights is a transnational organisation that monitor and reports human rights violations and abuses against civilians in Sudan working in close link with physicians for human rights organisation



The number of Sudanese refugees crossing borders is increasing but mainly at the north and to the west. Sudan Medical Diaspora provided support and is planning more engagement around the borders.

SDU-UK Sends Medical Support for the Clinic at Ashkit Border Crossing (North Sudan) – Sudan Doctors Union – UK Branch

The situation in Sudan is dire and there is no respect for the ceasefire agreement by either side, the humanitarian needs are evolving rapidly as we enter the second month of this armed conflict.

Children in Sudan and those displaced internally in Sudan or elsewhere face serious humanitarian crises and Human Rights violations. Interruption of vaccination services, nutritional support and other health services including psychosocial care and education will have serious impacts on their lives. The medical diaspora advocates for ending this conflict and securing safe corridors to protect civilians urgently

## References

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- [3] <https://shabaka.org/emergency-response/>
- [4] Sudan's Doctors for Human Rights ([at]sudan\_doctors) / Twitter
- [5] Donate Now | International Rescue Committee (rescue-uk.org)
- [6] Sudan appeal: donate now to protect children-UNICEF UK
- [7] Petition · Stop War in Sudan and Bring Peace Now · Change.org

[8] The heavy fighting in Sudan is putting pregnant women in danger, making it perilous to leave their homes to seek urgent care | United Nations Population Fund (unfpa.org)

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[11] <https://www.crisisrescuefoundation.co.uk/>

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#KeepEyesOnSudan