

# Sudan Humanitarian Flash Update #6



31 OCTOBER 2023

## INTRODUCTION

Between **14 September** and **16 October 2023**, Internews collected **224 rumors, perceptions, and comments** in **Arabic** and **English** shared by people affected by conflict in Sudan on social media platforms like **Facebook, Reddit, TikTok, Twitter, and WhatsApp**. In this edition of the Sudan Humanitarian Flash Update, we explore how misinformation about safe routes affects decision-making, and how individuals are using social media to trace their missing loved ones.

## TOP SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS, 14 SEPTEMBER TO 16 OCTOBER 2023

1. Treatment rumors are circulating for different diseases, including cholera, dengue fever, diabetes, diarrhea, and malaria
2. Rumors and fear of infant vaccinations
3. Shelling AlNaw hospital in Omdurman
4. Reports of unidentified dead bodies on the street of Wad Ashana in North Kordofan
5. Looting of homes, banditry, and forced displacement of people from Al'Aylafun, Khartoum

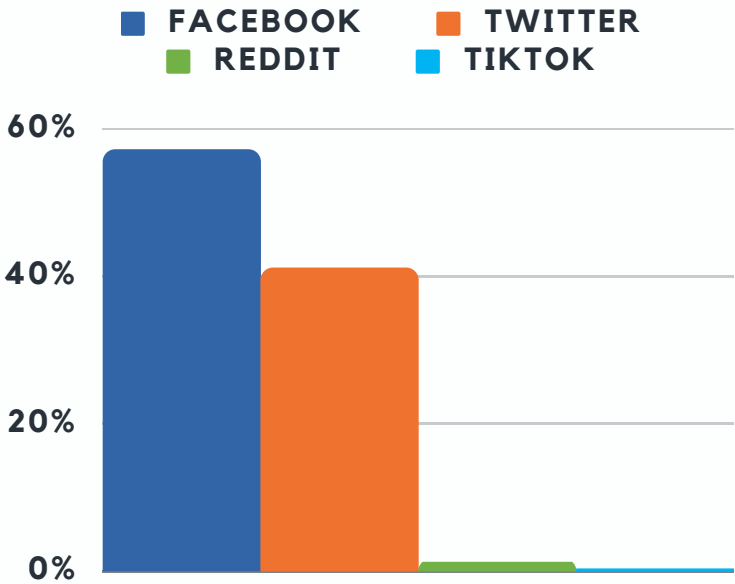
**20**

posts collected from  
private accounts/  
groups

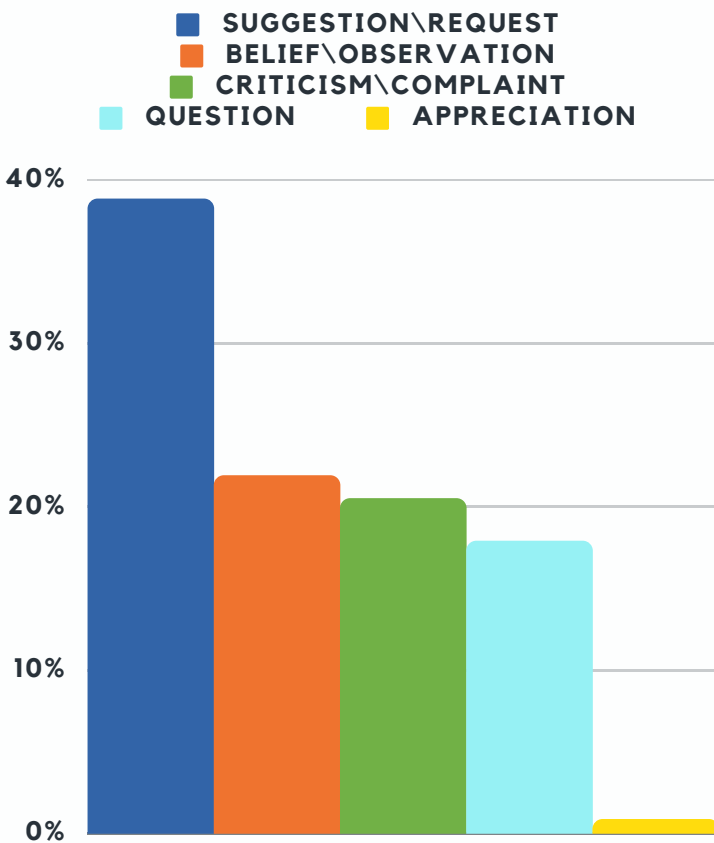
**204**

Posts collected from  
public accounts/  
pages/groups

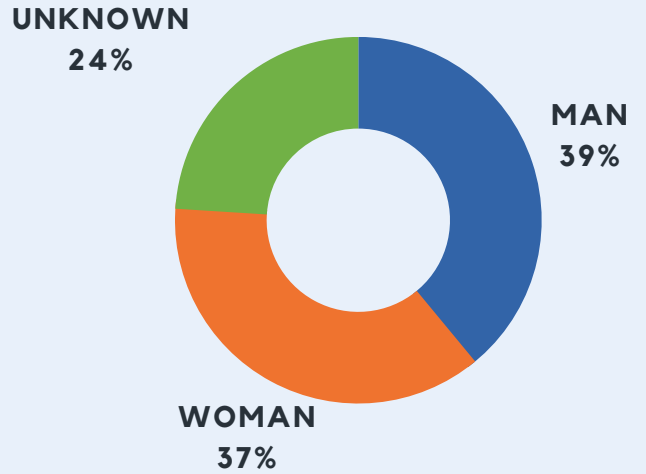
## PLATFORMS



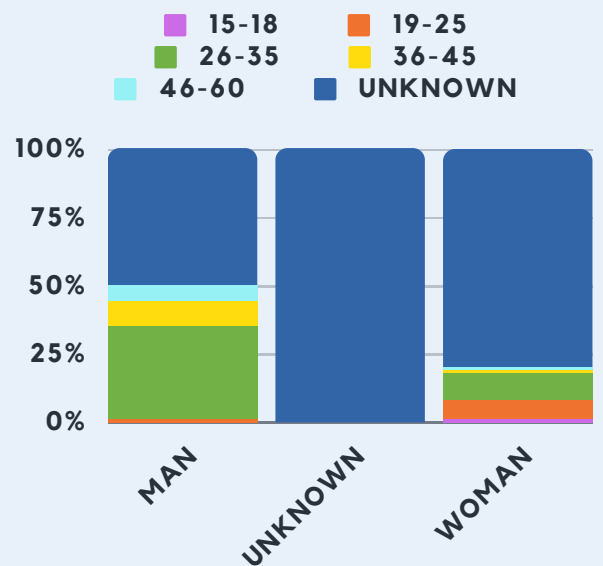
## DATA TYPE



## GENDER



## AGE VS GENDER

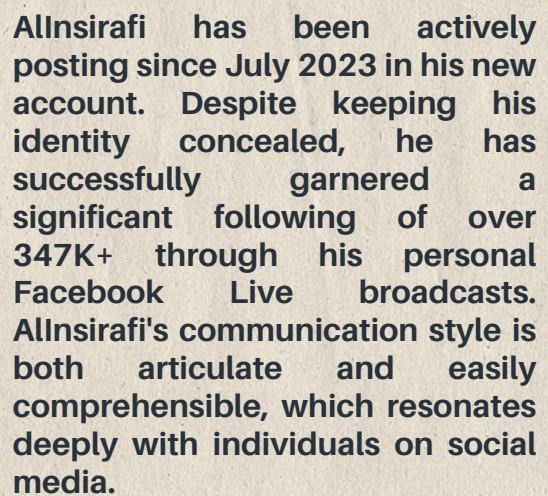


Although this chart illustrates the age and gender of those sharing humanitarian needs and complaints on social media, it may not accurately reflect the demographics of those who hold these concerns.

## MISINFORMATION ABOUT SAFE AREAS

The "**We're Coming Back**" (راجعين) campaign is inspired by a Sudanese influencer who posts under the alias **Allnsirafi** (الإنصرافي). The campaign has grown into a virtual community focused on discussing the current situation in Khartoum, with an aim to help and encourage people to return to their homes. This effort mainly operates through a Facebook group, initially named "You and Me" in 2012, but

recently in September 2023 rebranded to "We're Coming Back" with a membership of over 147K+ members. This online platform is a hub for discussions about the security situation in Khartoum and safe roads leading to the capital, availability of essential services, and conditions on the ground.



Allnsirafi has been actively posting since July 2023 in his new account. Despite keeping his identity concealed, he has successfully garnered a significant following of over 347K+ through his personal Facebook Live broadcasts. Allnsirafi's communication style is both articulate and easily comprehensible, which resonates deeply with individuals on social media.

Individuals share pictures and videos to encourage others to return to Khartoum, signaling that specific areas are safe, eliciting<sup>1</sup> a range of reactions. Some individuals contend that these claims are untrue, citing ongoing clashes in the area, and classify these posts as misinformation. Meanwhile, there are those filled with optimism about the prospect of returning. Others adopt a more cautious approach, advising others to wait until there's an official statement from reliable sources confirming that the area is indeed safe before taking any decisive action. Notably, we did not record any posts from authorities including humanitarian relief agencies sharing any guidance related to safe travel. For AAP actors, this could be a good avenue to share precautionary information about the need to verify any information and only proceed with great caution.

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“It is a lie, today a house was robbed in Shambat, and the day before yesterday my family was beaten and their phones were stolen. Stop misleading.”

**Woman, Facebook, Shambat - Khartoum North**

“Those who want the truth these days will not think about coming to Omdurman, south, north, and east of Omdurman. Every day there is a bombing and people are dying. Wait for an official statement from reliable pages and real sources.”

**Woman, Facebook, Omdurman - Khartoum**

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The information shared within this platform might not always be up to date or accurate, given the rapidly changing nature of the situation. What appears safe today might be under threat tomorrow. This dynamic environment raises concerns about potential misinformation circulating within the Facebook group, which, combined with the longing of many to go back home, may lead to life-changing decisions that may put people at risk. A discerning and cautious approach to the information shared is crucial to safeguard the well-being of those considering returning to Khartoum.

“

“There is a campaign to return to Khartoum. There are inaccurate videos and false information... The people behind this campaign do not care about your life or your home, whether you die or get injured. The important thing is that they make these posts and that's it.”

**Man, 26-35, Twitter**

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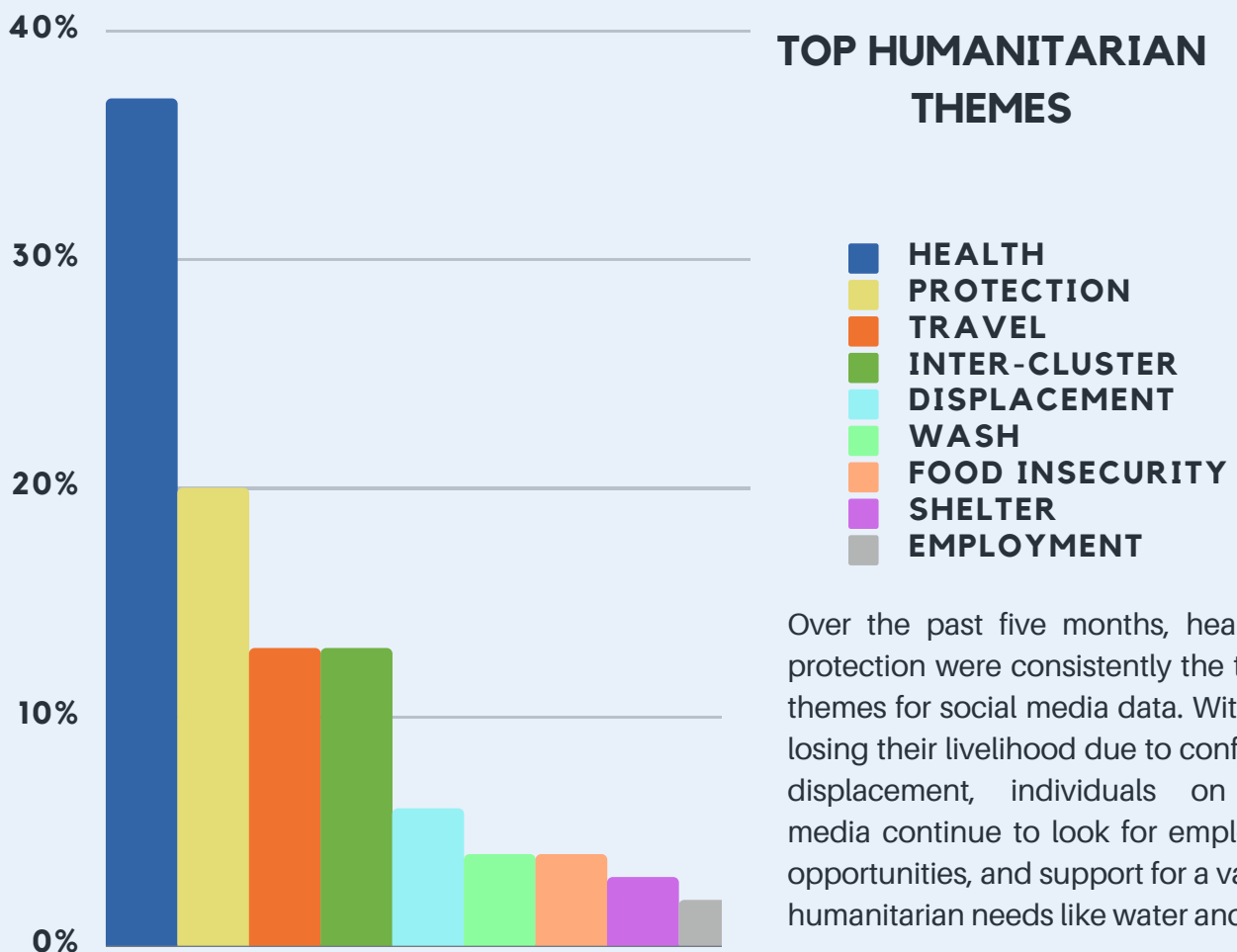
Conversations in the closed Facebook group "We're Coming Back" and other social media spaces also discussed the challenges displaced people face in living with host families.

Loss in livelihood and savings has not only limited their capacity to seek housing elsewhere, but also displaced people’s ability to contribute to **host families**. Some individuals expressed on social media their discomfort and felt that they were a burden to the host family. This frustration and emotional distress can make them particularly susceptible to the messaging of this campaign. The desire to return home can also be deeply emotional and rooted in a longing for stability and security.



"We have been suffering for six months. I swear to God, we can sleep on the floor, and stay without electricity and water, it is better than the humiliation we face in people’s homes..."

**Woman, TikTok, Kosti - White Nile**



Over the past five months, health and protection were consistently the top two themes for social media data. With many losing their livelihood due to conflict and displacement, individuals on social media continue to look for employment opportunities, and support for a variety of humanitarian needs like water and food.

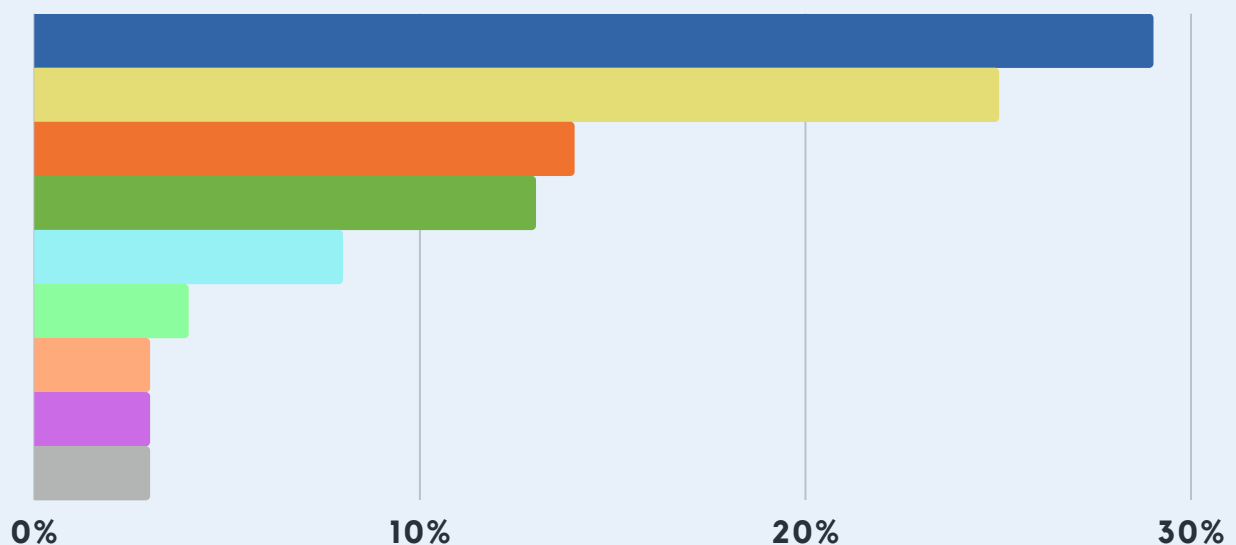
## HERBAL REMEDIES AND TREATMENT RUMORS

The conflict in Sudan has severely impacted healthcare infrastructure, supplies and healthcare workers. Rumors have surfaced about the **theft of medicines** from pharmacies and humanitarian warehouses, which are [allegedly being sold in markets](#) in Khartoum.

“The treatment of diabetes especially Insulin, was provided as humanitarian assistance, is it being sold in pharmacies...? Because now the price of insulin at the pharmacy is 4,000 and is subject to increase. They bring you humanitarian assistance and you sell it in markets...insulin is also being sold in the black market?”

Man, Facebook

### BREAKDOWN OF HEALTH POSTS




As of September 2023, there is a noticeable increase in treatment rumors. With medicine shortages, and limited access to medicine, individuals are seeking affordable and accessible remedies to manage illnesses, like dengue fever and malaria at home.

During the conflict, individuals on social media continue to promote traditional remedies or common household ingredients as potential treatments for various illnesses, like diabetes, malaria, diarrhea, and dengue fever. Between **September 14 to October 12**, health emerged as the top theme, representing **37%** of the overall social media data. Appeals for medicine account for **28%** of all health-related data. This highlights the acute demand for medical supplies and medication among individuals impacted by the conflict. [Previous Internews flash updates](#) have highlighted instances where individuals suffering from kidney failure lost their lives due to the unavailability of dialysis services.

**Tragically, a post recently shared by a man aged between 26 and 35 on Facebook, underscores the impact in the allegedly besieged Tutti Island in Khartoum: "...the death of a child due to the lack of insulin, and the spread of watery diarrhea on the island".**

Amid this health crisis, some healthcare professionals are taking the initiative by sharing alternative solutions. For instance, a **pharmacist**

shared a remedy using common household foods to help lower blood sugar levels in a Facebook group entitled (Three pills are not a cure for a cold) **الثلاث حبات ما علاج للنزلة** with **663k members**. Individuals were thankful for the advice, and so far, the post has received 969 likes and around 60 positive comments.



The Facebook group (Three pills are not a cure for a cold) was founded by a pharmacist who noticed an increasing number of individuals visiting the pharmacy asking for the three pills, which is a well-known nonprescription medication many use to alleviate symptoms of a severe cold or flu. The group's primary objective is to create a space for dialogue about health and improve the quality of health information that goes beyond fads and popular remedies, such as addressing the overuse of antibiotics.

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"[For] people who use medications to lower blood sugar...and have stopped taking their medications...due to current events...I hope you can go to the emergency pharmacies closest to you if the situation is safe...But if the situation is not safe...there are options available at home that lower blood sugar...Like cinnamon... Make tea without sugar, take a cup of it, and check yourself after a while if you are feeling well or not?!... There is also another option available at home...Okra...Studies show that it has a very big role in reducing blood sugar in a good way...Take two pieces of okra, mix them and drink them..."

**Man, Facebook**

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In these health-oriented groups, members are vulnerable to the spread of health-related rumors, misinformation and misguided advice. The Facebook group, **Guide Me Kosti** وصف لي كوستي which has around 130k members, is one of the spaces where individuals post queries or share a wide array of general information, including on health. For example, after home remedies failed, one individual sought a recommendation from others for medication they could use to treat heat rash, however members ignored the request and continued to share only food-based remedies.

“Bicarbonate after a bath”

**Woman, 19-25, Facebook**

Other treatment rumors are also being shared on Sudanese social media, including potential remedies for diseases such as Dengue fever, malaria, diarrheas, and methods for lowering blood sugar levels.

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“They say fenugreek lowers sugar rate, right?”

**Woman, Facebook**

“Tamarind and oranges and Grapefruit, Malaria will be gone”

**Man, Facebook**



“... If anyone feels symptoms of malaria, drink Tamarind.

If there is an apothecary shop next to you, get a small chunk of something called Quinine, take from it a small drop, about the size of a fingernail, and throw it in a cup of water and drink from it 3 to 7...”

**Man, 26-35, Facebook**

“Someone in AlGedaref spread a lie that Rozana juice [juice concentrate] is the strongest treatment for dengue fever and it can heal you by taking it with taking 8 Panadol pills as a maximum, so its price rose in the market days later... from a thousand and 800 pounds to five thousand pounds and ran out from the markets and the price of the Panadol box rose to three thousand pounds instead of a thousand and it ran out in shops”

**Man, 36-45, Facebook**

The above social media posts highlight the need for increased accessible and relevant public health information, including information that can meet specific needs when health services are limited. Moreover, it’s vital to address misinformation promptly.

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“Treating diarrhea for people who cannot go to the doctor

- Boiling cardamom on a stove as tea
- Boiling Guava leaves on a stove as tea
- The water of bitter dough
- Charcoal: Yes, charcoal grinding until it gets soft, take about a tablespoon and swallow it with or without water...”

**Woman, Facebook**

”

Rumors concerning vaccines surfaced within the comments section of official posts announcing infant vaccinations on the [Federal Ministry of Health Facebook page, which boasts around 1.1 million followers](#). A couple of social media posts shared rumors about these specific vaccines, citing they were harmful and may pose health risks or even death.

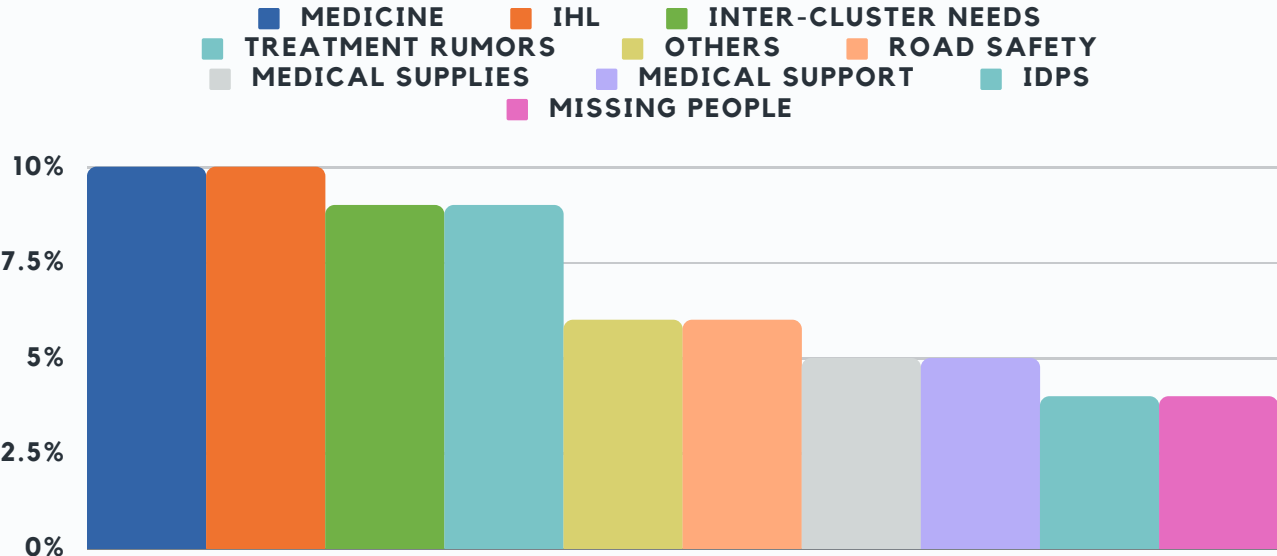
These rumors can have serious implications, as they may discourage parents from vaccinating their babies, making them vulnerable to preventable diseases. With limited access to healthcare, vaccinations can be lifesaving.

Mistrust in vaccinations is not a new phenomenon and was widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic. Internews Sudan [Rooted in Trust project](#) (2022 to 2023) highlighted rumors and misinformation regarding the potential impact of vaccines on babies. One concern raised was the fear of COVID-19 vaccine transmission through breastfeeding from a vaccinated mother to her baby. Moreover, parents' concerns and hesitations towards vaccinating children are often amplified by rumors, such as misconceptions about vaccines being poisonous for infants.

“Don't get vaccinated, they are criminals who kill people and are keen about vaccinations”  
**Woman, Facebook**

“No one goes to it this is the exact thing that leads you to God”  
**Man, 26-35, Facebook**

### KEY SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



This is a breakdown of social media posts collected from 14 September to 16 October 2023, by key areas.

## ACCESS TO WATER AND OTHER SERVICES

Individuals on social media also discussed other concerns such as displacement, unexploded ordnance, gender-based violence, searching for information about mental health specialists in Egypt and Sudan, and access to clean drinking water. Social media users are also looking for information about whether there are special considerations for people with cancer and their families to expedite their Egyptian visas.

One post on Twitter highlighted the difficult conditions that refugees in Zalingei, Central Darfur are facing: “Tragic conditions for refugees in Zalingei, where they depend on unclean sewage water for drinking, after drinking water sources were destroyed...#Sudan”. In addition, **Umbada Emergency Room** posted on Facebook under the hashtags **#Alsabeel\_Is\_Dying\_Of\_Thirst** (السبيل\_تموت\_عطشاً) and **#Umbada\_Alsabeel\_Emergency\_Room** (غرفة\_طوارئ\_أمبدة\_السبيل) stating:

“...For more than two months now, water was cut off from household taps in most of the neighborhoods of Umbada ALSabeel due to a problem that is unknown to the citizens. Since then, they have been suffering from a severe shortage of water to the extent that they have been forced to dig underground to access it through the main water pipes...”.

The situation brings to light a series of concerns about water quality and safety. In Umbada, residents faced an immense burden in transporting water over long distances, and the high costs imposed by donkey cart owners for water transportation.

## #MY\_PERIOD\_IN\_WAR

In conflict areas, women and adolescent girls face difficulties in obtaining sanitary pads due to closed stores and pharmacies, forcing them to use alternative solutions, which can result in discomfort and health issues. This need is particularly pronounced in shelter centers. One woman shared on Facebook that she made pads out of a bed sheet which caused an uncomfortable reaction. Another woman also highlighted that she was unable to find painkillers or herbs that are consumed as tea to help alleviate menstrual cramps. One displaced woman living in a crowded space shared that limits on privacy and bathroom use can make periods more challenging.



"#My\_period\_in\_war ...: I'm in an operations area. The sounds of the fighting are very scary...until we got accustomed to them and getting used to them is a problem...With the continuous sound of rockets, shelling, and bullets and sounds that we don't understand. With hearing these sounds continuously I've started to feel menstrual pain and very painful lower abdominal cramps, without bleeding.

- Obtaining sanitary pads thank God in the first month I had remaining [pads] that I was able to use. Unfortunately, my sister used pieces of cloth, and this is another pain. The shops and pharmacies are closed. There are no painkillers or medications, you just take the pain and keep calm. During or before menstruation, the body may want something that contains a lot of sugar or sour, and sometimes a person may want to eat a lot, but these are luxuries that are not accessible in this war.

-During wartime, we were able to use sanitary pads, but of lower quality, and these were available in a shop behind our neighborhood that was open. Going out to go to the shop... was dangerous.

-The water shortage is another pain during menstruation, and the use of water is very costly! This is all a matter of psychological exhaustion before and during the period. Girls and women in war have another war that no one knows about!

#Displaced\_sanitary\_pads

#Pad\_for\_peace

#A\_sanitary\_pad\_satisfies\_the\_need"

**Woman, Facebook**

**#My\_period\_in\_war: As a woman with polycystic ovary syndrome ... Last month, we were trapped in our area. It came to me with unbelievable pain. There were no painkillers available, nor mint or anise, to relieve pain there was no solution but to use bed sheets which caused me allergies and it was uncomfortable. There was nothing available except for me to curl up in bed and cry.**

**This month, we found ourselves displaced... But with the economic capabilities, it's hard to buy sanitary pads or cotton. My choice was to drink cold and iced drinks in large quantities so that it decreases. I started drinking sugar in large quantities to avoid it next month...**

**Other than the lack of water and the difficulty of using the bathroom to change in a house with 9 people. I spent hours cutting the bed sheets and thinking about the women and girls in the refugee camps and shelter centers and not from our recent war but years and years ago.**

**#Pad\_for\_peace**

**#Displaced\_sanitary\_pads**

**#A\_sanitary\_pad\_satisfies\_the\_need"**

**Woman, Facebook**

**"#Need for shelter center: all kinds of soap and sanitary pads"**

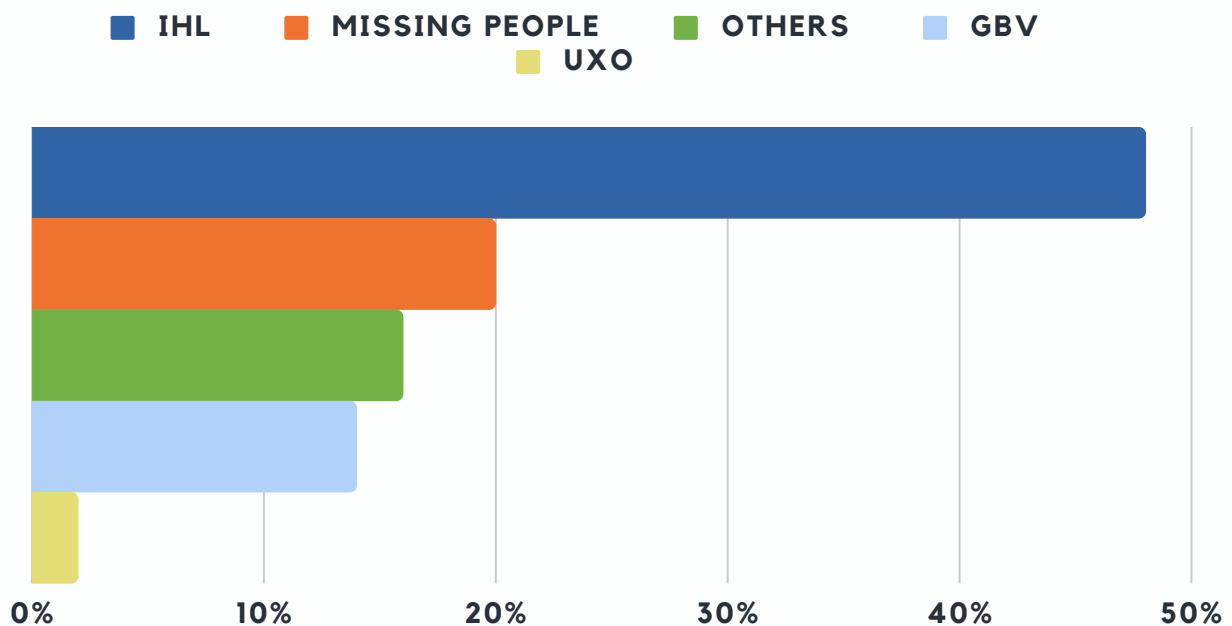
**Woman, Facebook**



## PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

The protection of civilians and civilian objects during conflict is a priority for people affected by conflict and displacement. Social media posts continue to highlight the effect of conflict on healthcare facilities. For instance, in early October there were posts about the shelling of AlNaw Hospital in Omdurman, one of the few hospitals offering care to the war-wounded, and two hospitals in Jebel Awliya in Khartoum. There were also reports of forcible displacement of civilians from Al'Aylfun town in Khartoum state.

### BREAKDOWN OF PROTECTION CONCERNS



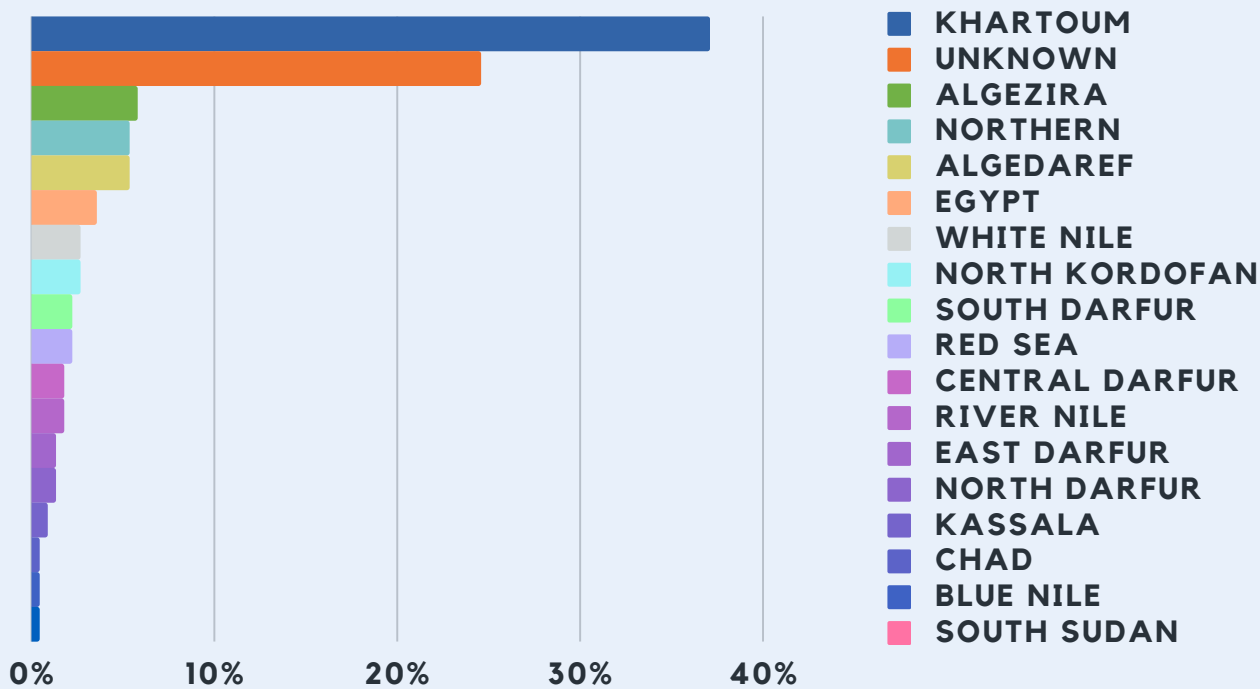
Individuals on social media continue to highlight the need for protection of civilian lives and objects.

People continue to call for dignified burials and identification of dead bodies. Corpses left out in the streets were reportedly seen in Nyala, South Darfur, and Wad Ashana, North Kordofan. Reports of gender-based violence were also shared on social media from Central Darfur, Khartoum, and North Kordofan States.

Moreover, social media users also highlighted the plight of displaced Sudanese individuals on the border, with many waiting for visa approvals to enter Egypt. With limited shelter options, some have been compelled to live in a school that has been repurposed as a shelter center for the displaced. Additionally, some posts highlighted the return of displaced Sudanese from Egypt, which is mostly due to the high cost of living in Egypt.

“Return of some displaced Sudanese from Egypt due to the high cost of living and housing, as the number of returnees per day reached approximately 450 individuals. #It\_Must\_Stop”  
**Woman, Twitter, Egypt**

### SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA



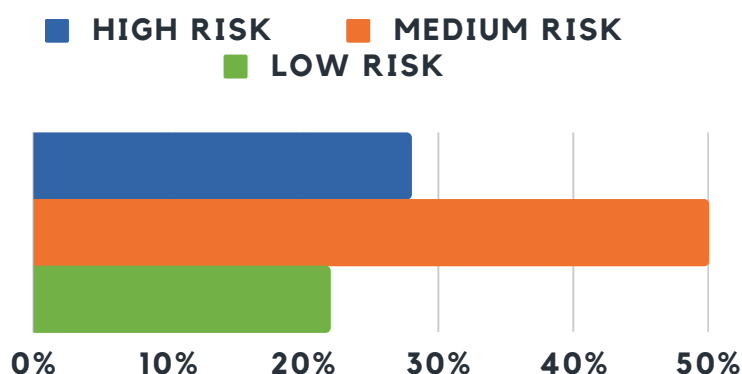
Social media posts from Darfur states are scarce, which is likely due to an internet blackout in certain areas in the region.

## THE SEARCH FOR MISSING PEOPLE

Since the outbreak of conflict, several families have resorted to social media in search of their missing loved ones. Individuals seeking assistance in locating missing persons often provide details, such as the person’s name, age, gender, a photograph or a detailed description, and the last known location. The post usually includes a contact number for the family, permitting those with information to reach them directly.

On Facebook, there are several groups dedicated to this, such as **Sudan’s Missing “مفقودين السودان”** which is a private group with 24,800 members created in December 2021, and **“مفقود MISSING”** which is a public Facebook group created in June 2019, and has 321,100 members. These groups facilitate searches in hospitals, police stations, and detention centers. Individuals also post in Facebook groups with a large follower base, like **Guide Me “وصف لي”** which has 529,400 members, where people can ask questions and seek support for a range of issues, like bus ticket prices, notarization of identity documents, food assistance, and safe routes. While on Twitter, individuals often resort to influencers and accounts with a large follower base to post about their missing loved ones.

### BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS BY RISK LEVEL



Between 14 September and 16 October, nearly 28 percent of social media data was designated high-risk. A high risk post about an unexploded ordnance in Nyala, South Darfur can pose a risk of injury or death.



## #MISSING

Individuals use the hashtag “#مفقود” (**#missing**) to bring visibility to their posts on Twitter and Facebook. Between 14 September and 12 October, 409 posts were shared on Twitter in Sudan under the hashtag **#missing** in Arabic, including 913 engagements and an estimated reach of 8.7 million.

Although most of the engagement relates to resharing the original post about a missing person, or expressing prayers, sometimes people are also able to access useful information through these interactions. For instance, an individual on Facebook inquired about bodies or institutions that can help facilitate the release of detainees and provide information about their whereabouts and well-being. One response cited that the Red Cross could help find detained persons. People also engaged with this post by sharing their personal stories, that they also have loved ones who are detained and are worried about them especially because of health conditions, such as a brother with disabilities, or a father with a chronic condition like diabetes.



"Peace be upon you

I want an entity number that can get out the arrested people or give details about their whereabouts💔

Is it true that detained people are treated badly 😞💔"

**Woman, Facebook**

"Hey people I'm asking about the headquarters of the Red Crescent or Red Cross or the number for them, my brother was arrested ... for more than a month"

**Facebook**



In some cases, people have shared updates about their missing loved one's whereabouts, that they had returned to their families or that they were detained and released. Typically, when a missing person is found, the posts usually don't explain how they were found. Sometimes individuals may share an update mentioning where an individual was found, such as a hospital, or, in some cases, family members may share the tragic news that their loved one has passed away. However, some individuals report that they receive conflicting reports on the whereabouts of their missing loved ones. This can result in misinformation and heighten families' feelings of distress and confusion.

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“My brother is also arrested for two months, we don't know anything about him, and he is disabled.”

**Woman, Facebook**

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“An appeal to someone currently in Arkweet next to the WFP offices. We have a family with whom we have lost contact, and yesterday the house next to them was hit by a missile and their house was severely damaged. Please, love, it is very urgent. Help us through a retweet #retweet #Necessary\_need”

**Woman, Twitter, Arkweet - Khartoum**

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## How can Social Media listening contribute to Accountability?

Internews' timely social media listening activities can help humanitarian organizations plan and adapt their programs and activities, to ensure they are responding to communities' needs and priorities and identifying harmful misinformation or information gaps. Listening attentively to people's concerns through social media, and understanding their priorities allows people affected by the conflict to influence and shape the humanitarian response to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to needs that are voiced. Social media listening is one way to ensure accountable humanitarian support is being provided.

## Internews Methodology

Internews' analysts gather feedback and concerns posted on social media by individuals affected by conflict and displacement in Sudan. The example posts featured in this report are representative of the most common concerns seen across the data set. All data is collected in the original language and categorized by theme to support analysis that aligns with and supports humanitarian coordination mechanisms and response.

To access the anonymized data set that supports this analysis, please contact Asia Kambal, [akambal@internews.org](mailto:akambal@internews.org).