



THE SUDD INSTITUTE

RESEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL, JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOUTH SUDAN

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Weekly Review

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Sudanese Refugee Influx into South Sudan

Security and Bilateral Relations Implications

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Earlier this month, the UNHCR reported a potential arrival of over 30,000 additional Sudanese refugees in South Sudan. This refugee migration into the nascent state is necessitated by armed violence and human rights violations sponsored by the Khartoum Government against the peoples of the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. The circumstances of Sudanese refugees in the Yida camp appear to be extraordinarily dire, the UN agency reports. While the displaced Sudanese suffer humiliation, disease, starvation, poor living conditions, and death, their experience also presents serious neighborhood effects for South Sudan. Continued violence in the Sudan and the increasing refugee population in the neighboring South Sudanese states of Upper Nile and Unity, for instance, pose, among other consequences, security, political, humanitarian, and basic services obstacles in the world's newest nation.

The prominent uncertainty of the Sudanese conflict and its refugee crisis for South Sudan is a possible spillover of violence to South Sudan as the Sudanese armed forces attempt to encroach into South Sudan in search of rebels. Because these refugee settings may provide sanctuary for Sudanese rebel organizations—enabling them to propagate their political agenda and garner military support—this refugee reception appears to be a risky business for South Sudan. As well, the proximity of the refugee camps to the conflict zones readily creates security fears for the two countries. For instance, border and security relations between the two Sudans have been exceptionally sour in the recent period in part due to rebel activities along the borders, with Khartoum accusing Juba of hosting its rebels and providing armed assistance.

As a result of refugee inflows, South Sudan also faces increased pressure on social services, including food, medical services, sanitation, and the diversion of international development assistance to South Sudan into emergency humanitarian programs for the refugees. More specifically, the conflict in the Sudan threatens South Sudan's stability in a range of ways, namely:

- Spillover conflict and insecurity

- Refugee influx depresses resources and creates residential problems in the receiving states
- Environmental impacts and
- Breakdown of trans-border economic activities

To this, the deserving or rather stimulating questions the Sudd Institute advances include: what implications have Sudanese refugee influx into South Sudan on recently signed Addis Ababa Cooperation Agreements, as there is a general fear that the Sudanese rebel institutions might be utilizing the refugee camps as their bases for operations and recruitment and as the presence of refugees poses security and other threats to South Sudan? More generally, what are the key consequences of the conflict and its resultant refugee crises for the two nations' bilateral relations? Given that the presence of Sudanese refugees in South Sudan may clearly source instability there, this ultimately elevates security and political tensions, which in turn strain the two sides' bilateral understandings.

These consequences are not without possible policy or remedial suggestions. Chief among these is the need for the two nations to seek international refugee protection security program that assists in monitoring and securing the camps. As well, increased and strengthened humanitarian programs may protect South Sudan from social and environmental burdens the country faces as a result of this refugee influx. Finally, the issue of refugees requires incorporating into the cooperation agreements for further security arrangements between the two Sudans. Perhaps there is need to consider the moral and strategic reasons that South Sudan, despite the risk of jeopardizing bilateral relations, is obligated to host Sudanese refugees. The South Sudanese dilemma is over international law about refugees and the historical obligations toward the populations of Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile on the one hand, and the commitments to the recent security arrangements, on the other.

About Sudd Institute

The Sudd Institute is an independent research organization that conducts and facilitates policy relevant research and training to inform public policy and practice, to create opportunities for discussion and debate, and to improve analytical capacity in South Sudan. The Sudd Institute's intention is to significantly improve the quality, impact, and accountability of local, national, and international policy- and decision-making in South Sudan in order to promote a more peaceful, just and prosperous society.

About the Author

Augustino Ting Mayai is the Director of Research at the Sudd Institute. His major research interests include childhood mortality differentials in the Sudan and South Sudan, applied quantitative methodology (econometrics), applied development research, social accountability and public service delivery, and the demography of conflicts and violence.