**HDPI ‘Being Human” Stories**

**Women in conflict zones: Sudan Story: What has been happening in Sudan and how have the women there been responding?**

On April 15, 2023, conflict broke out between two armed groups the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This came about because of political tensions that had been developing since 2019. Starting in Khartoum the capital of Sudan, the violence was sudden and intense causing the mass displacement of over 12 million people. 8.6 million within Sudan and 3.8 million seeking refuge in

neighboring countries such as Egypt, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

It has become the world’s largest center of internally displaced people facing a humanitarian crisis characterized by food insecurity, lack of health care and escalated attacks on civilians in the displaced camps with sexual violence specifically targeted to women and girls. Millions of children have been forced to abandon schooling and are also facing increasing rates of malnutrition and disease.

Displaced populations and their needs have overwhelmed local resources and services. The situation is of most concern on Sudan’s borders, where thousands are left in harsh conditions with no guarantees of safety. Rains flooding and other natural hazards to which the country is prone has also added to these burdens. The economic toll of the conflict has intensified women’s marginalization, depriving them of financial independence and livelihoods and pushing them into extreme economic insecurity, particularly those who have been displaced. Destruction of markets, looting of businesses, and the devastation of agricultural areas have stripped countless women of their primary sources of income, pushing them further into poverty.

**Women have Not been Taking it Lightly: Response and Actions:**

* Sudanese women have long had a history of being active in political resistance and taking leadership in movements for social change and humanitarian actions despite not being recognized or supported in formal processes. They have established community kitchens and localized feeding centers as well as emergency rooms to treat critical mental, health and sexual violence issues. This has included treatment and support to those still being subject to harmful traditional practices such as FGM. Examples include:
  + Almanar Voluntary Organization, providing life-saving health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and food aid.
  + Rayra for Awareness and Development Organization, setting up community kitchens for dignified food access.
  + Zenab for Women Development, distributing emergency kits, providing medicine for pregnant women, and offering food and cash assistance.
  + Sudan Family Planning Association, offering sexual and reproductive health services and psychosocial support for survivors of gender-based violence.

On the political front they have established the platform ‘Peace for Sudan” to demand 50% inclusion in future peace and conflict resolution mechanisms and other initiatives to criminalize sexual violence and protect survivors and the establishment of safe spaces for women and girls. Throughout the world Sudanese women in the Diaspora such as those in the United States, UK, Europe, the Gulf States are continuing to organize fund raising events and working with universities, and human rights groups to raise awareness of the situation in Sudan.

**Sudanese artists can’t stop being creative amidst conflict**

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