



# Sudan 2019 Crime & Safety Report



This is an annual report produced in conjunction with the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan.

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses Sudan at Level 3, indicating travelers should reconsider travel due to crime and armed conflict.

## Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The U.S. Embassy in Khartoum does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The ACS Unit cannot recommend a particular individual or location and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

Review OSAC's [Sudan-specific webpage](#) for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.

Despite the October 2017 lifting of most U.S. economic sanctions against Sudan, the country's economy has not improved. Over the past year, Sudan has experienced a large depreciation in its currency, exacerbating double-digit inflation. There have been persistent shortages in fuel, bread, and other food staples, as well as restrictions on the availability of hard currency, both Sudanese and foreign. In December 2018, protests against Sudan's economic crisis occurred in a number of cities. The protests quickly transformed into persistent demonstrations calling for President Bashir to step down. Despite these challenges, Sudan has seen a modest increase in interest from international companies exploring trade and investment opportunities. While the government should use all resources at its disposal to ensure safety for foreign interests, businesses should remain informed of the security situation and plan accordingly.

## Crime Threats

There is moderate risk from crime in Khartoum. Crime rates have increased significantly in the country since May 2018, most likely connected to the deteriorating economic situation. Criminal activity is generally non-violent and non-confrontational. The Embassy received reports in 2018 of criminal targeting of UN personnel and other Westerners for car break-ins and other crimes of opportunity.

The vast majority of reported and unreported crimes impact the local population, as opposed to the international community. The majority of local crimes reported are property crimes (e.g. motor vehicle theft, burglary, larceny-theft, arson). Pickpocketing, bag snatches, smash-and-grabs, and car break-ins have also been reported. In the rare instances of armed assaults in cities, handguns seem to be the most common weapon of choice.

Throughout the Darfur region, criminals victimize local communities with assault and theft, generally related to inter-communal clashes. Pro-government tribal groups and Darfuri armed groups have carried out criminal attacks against internally displaced persons, vulnerable migrants, and other foreigners. Carjacking by gangs and armed groups continue throughout the Darfur region. The threat of other violent crimes (e.g. home invasions, armed robberies, kidnappings) is particularly high in Darfur, as the government has limited capacity and resources to combat crime there. As the African Union-UN peacekeeping mission for Darfur (UNAMID) continues to decrease its size and scope, it is likely that such crime will increase.

In the eastern region, individuals and organized crime networks are engaged in smuggling and trafficking activities through the country's porous borders with Eritrea and Ethiopia. The government is attempting to address these problems through anti-trafficking efforts, declarations of states of emergency, and occasional border closures; however, authorities do not have the resources to stop these activities.

### Cybersecurity Issues

Poor information infrastructure leads to a wide range of risks in cyberspace. Cyber actors, with varying levels of sophistication, are developing capabilities to commit crime and to support terrorism activities. Terrorist groups are known to use platforms in cyberspace, mainly through social networks, to promote their agendas in Sudan and to support their recruitment efforts.

The Government of Sudan censors internet activity through the National Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) and the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Cyber-Crimes Unit. These agencies block proxy servers judged to have violated norms of public morality. In December 2018, in response to ongoing anti-government protests, Sudanese authorities blocked WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and other sites. The government also slows or stops all internet traffic as a countermeasure to protests. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Cybersecurity Basics](#).

### Other Areas of Concern

The ability of U.S. Embassy Khartoum to provide services to U.S. citizens in emergency situations outside of the Khartoum area is very limited and dependent on security conditions. The ability to provide assistance is particularly limited in southern Sudan and in Darfur.

Avoid all Sudanese states under an official state of emergency (all of Darfur, Kassala State, Blue Nile State, and South Kordofan State) unless the traveling party has business with either a Sudanese government agency, UN programs, or a well-established humanitarian NGO; even then, pay close attention to security considerations. Areas of Darfur in particular can become dangerous on short notice, given the presence of anti-government armed groups and pro-government armed tribal groups.

Travel outside of metropolitan Khartoum can be challenging. Before traveling anywhere outside of Khartoum, check news reports and local conditions. You may be required to obtain the proper travel authorization from the government prior to departure. If travel is approved, you must carry multiple copies of the authorization and your passport with you, as authorities will require them at checkpoints across the country.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Over the past year, Sudan has experienced periods of extreme shortages of fuel -- mostly of commercial diesel, but at times also gasoline. The availability of fuel can change with no notice; shortages can last for weeks or longer.

Driving conditions are hazardous throughout most of Sudan. Drivers should always be aware of unsafe, poorly maintained road surfaces, unskilled drivers, and the presence of non-roadworthy vehicles. In general, the main roads in Khartoum and north/central Sudan are paved but haphazardly maintained. A turn off a main road could lead to blocks of unpaved dirt and potholes. At night, most streets are poorly illuminated or not illuminated at all, and many drivers do not use headlights. Drivers frequently do not comply with traffic regulations. Driving excessively fast or very slowly is common on the main roads. Drivers commonly ignore traffic signals, stop in traffic lanes without warning, make turns from the opposite lane with complete disregard for oncoming traffic, and drive against traffic in lanes meant for one direction. In addition, roads can contain poorly-maintained vehicles, three-wheeled motorized taxi vehicles, donkey carts, unrestrained livestock, overloaded tandem-axle cargo trucks, and pedestrians. For more information, review OSAC's reports, [Driving Overseas: Best Practices](#) and [Road Safety in Africa](#).

Those involved in traffic accidents should summon police assistance. Do not make restitution at the scene, especially if livestock or pedestrians are involved. Remain aware of potential crowds gathering at the scene of an accident and depart the scene if you perceive an imminent threat to your safety.

Make arrangements with your in-country business partners or your hotel to secure trusted transportation.

### Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation is dominated by three-wheeled motorized vehicles, taxis, and mini-buses. Bus travel is normally limited to within and between major towns; schedules are often unpublished and subject to change without notice. Vehicles are often poorly maintained. Passenger facilities are basic and crowded.

Taxi services provided by hotels, and the ride-sharing services Tirhal and Meshwar are generally safe. While there is some public transit to rural communities, most areas lack standardized and well-maintained public transportation.

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), there are 12 airports in Sudan with paved runways. Besides the main air gateway, Khartoum International Airport (KRT), these are at Damazin, Dongola, Ed Daein, El Fasher, El Obeid, Geneina, Kadugli, Kassala, Nyala, Port Sudan, and Zalingei.

Maintain constant contact with your baggage and ensure it does not contain illicit items (e.g. alcohol, pornography, and objects that could be used as weapons). Authorities have removed and detained U.S. citizens from international flights when detecting suspect items in checked baggage. Authorities may also search for and question passengers regarding the transport of currency out of Sudan. As of this report's publication, the maximum amount of foreign currency an individual can take out of Sudan without declaring it is 10,000 euro. This monetary regulation is available for view at KRT.

## **Terrorism Threat**

There is considerable risk from terrorism in Khartoum. Terrorist groups in Sudan have stated their intent to harm Westerners and Western interests through suicide operations, bombings, shootings, and kidnappings. They may attack with little or no warning, targeting foreign and local government facilities, and areas frequented by Westerners.

### Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Elements of ISIS, al-Qa'ida, and many other terrorist organizations are believed to recruit in Sudan. The Government of Sudan has taken steps to limit the activities of these terrorist organizations and has worked to disrupt foreign fighters' use of the country as a logistics base and transit point. Sudan enacted legislation to combat organized crimes (human trafficking) and is no longer on the Financial Action Task Force watch list related to terrorism financing.

## **Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

### Civil Unrest

There is considerable risk from political violence in Khartoum. In recent years, Sudan has experienced periodic and localized demonstrations. Since December 2018, several sectors of society, such as youth groups, professional associations, neighborhood organizations, and political activists have called for and organized persistent nationwide protests and demonstrations. Other forms of civil disobedience could occur with little warning. This protest movement has widespread civilian support.

The demonstrations began against rising bread prices and cash and fuel shortages, and included violence against security forces and public and private property. The protests quickly turned into nationwide demonstrations demanding the President Omar al-Bashir step down. Since the initial days, however, the protests and demonstrations have been nonviolent. The response by government security forces has included use of teargas, batons, rubber bullets, and at times the firing of live ammunition. Government forces also frequently abuse protesters physically and arrest protesters en masse. Authorities release some of those detained within days, but some remain in custody. There are credible reports that authorities mistreat many of the detained while in custody. It is a dynamic and unpredictable situation; the tactics employed by protestors and security forces are constantly changing. Neither the protestors nor the security forces are targeting Western interests; however, given the large scale and unpredictability of the demonstrations, it is possible to find oneself suddenly in the middle of protest activity.

Despite declared cessation of hostilities since 2016, the situations in Darfur, Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and the disputed area of Abyei remain dynamic due to sporadic armed conflict among rebel groups, tribes, and government forces. Violent flare-ups break out between armed militia groups and military forces with little notice, particularly in the Darfur region. Hostilities between security forces and armed opposition groups in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states, including the disputed area of Abyei, are also possible at any time.

#### Religious/Ethnic Violence

The African Union-UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) reports on frequent incidents of ethnic violence throughout the five Darfur states. Rapid Support Force, a government military unit formed from former militia, continues to clash with rebel factions in Darfur. Regular violence occurs between ethnic tribes in and around the numerous Internally Displaced Persons camps, primarily in Darfur. UNAMID is decreasing its overall size and its reach as part of a planned June 2020 mission termination.

#### Post-specific Concerns

##### Environmental Hazards

Areas adjacent to the Nile River are subject to flooding during the rainy season (July-September). In June-July 2017, the Nile reached levels not seen in nearly a century, causing floods throughout Sudan. The flooding resulted in loss of life and destruction of homes and property.

During the summer, Sudan experiences many *haboobs* (dust storms). These *haboobs* move in as a wall of sand, extending upward 3,000 feet, and can contain winds of up to 70 mph. *Haboobs* generally last no more than three hours, but can severely hamper road/air travel for many hours afterward.

##### Critical Infrastructure

Power outages and interruptions to the water supply system are a common occurrence in Khartoum. Transportation infrastructure, specifically the railway system, is heavily deteriorated. Most of the historical infrastructure is run-down and clearly shows a lack of maintenance.

The telecommunications infrastructure appears to be the most vulnerable. Currently due to ongoing civil unrest, local access to Facebook and WhatsApp have been shut down. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Satellite Phones: Critical or Contraband?](#)

##### Economic Concerns

With lax laws protecting intellectual property rights, and the rise of digital technologies, some local businesses promote their services, products, and establishments with clear references to U.S. companies' trademarks. Commercial and contractual disputes can be influenced by Sudanese political actors. Public tenders are not always managed with appropriate transparency and objectivity.

## Privacy Concerns

There is no expectation of privacy and no legal protection against you or your personal effects being searched or seized. Additionally, the government may monitor phone conversations and internet usage.

## Personal Identity Concerns

Sudan is an extremely conservative society, particularly in the capital and other areas with a Muslim majority. Modest dress and behavior is expected for everyone, including foreigners. Loose, long-sleeved shirts and full-length skirts/slacks are recommended for female visitors. Men may wear short-sleeved shirts in public, but short pants are not common.

Same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Sudan. Despite a lack of active enforcement, the death penalty for male same-sex sexual activity remains part of Sudanese law.

## Kidnapping Threat

Kidnapping foreigners for ransom is a risk, particularly in Darfur. An experienced international humanitarian worker was kidnapped in Darfur in 2017. The primary motives behind the kidnappings appear to be financial. Some abductees have been released unharmed after being held for as little as a few hours. Despite terrorist calls for violent jihad against UN forces in Darfur, there is no indication that the reported kidnappings have been motivated by extremist religious ideology. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Kidnapping: The Basics](#).

## Police Response

While most police officers are generally helpful, language/cultural barriers sometimes lead to misunderstandings between Sudanese law enforcement and Westerners. Very rarely will a police officer assigned to patrol duties or a checkpoint speak English. In addition, several security elements, to include NISS do not wear uniforms and can be difficult to identify. To varying degrees, all government security forces have been involved in responding to the ongoing protests; some do so in civilian clothes, including unofficial government-supported groups.

If you break local laws in Sudan, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest/prosecution. Persons violating Sudan's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Photography requires a photo permit, but even with this permit, the government prohibits photographing security forces, government buildings, poor neighborhoods, and anything else that may cause it embarrassment. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Picture This: Dos and Don'ts for Photography](#).

## How to Handle Incidents of Detention or Harassment

If police stop you, remain calm and do not respond with aggression. Present your identification documents and answer questions fully. Sudanese security forces are known to detain individuals arbitrarily and without warrants for arrests. Authorities have arrested and detained dual Sudanese-U.S. citizens without notification to the U.S. Embassy and without affording consular access; the Sudanese government does not recognize dual citizenship for consular purposes, and does not provide the U.S. Embassy with courtesy notifications for dual Sudanese citizens. Authorities may delay Embassy access to detained dual nationals for weeks, or may not allow it at all. Sudan does not routinely detain U.S. citizens without dual citizenship, but all are subject to detention at any time.

If detained, immediately request a consular notification to the U.S. Embassy's Duty Officer.

## Crime Victim Assistance

- 999 - Reserve Police: Call this number to report a crime or seek assistance in an emergency. An English speaking man answers each shift, although unreliably. The dispatcher can transfer calls as necessary.
- 998 - Fire Brigade (Civil Defense Police)
- 333 - Central Ambulance

## Police/Security Agencies

- Police General Administration of Passports, Immigration and Identity Cards: Altair Mard St., Khartoum / Tel: 1-837-82338.
- Police General Administration of Central Investigations: Abed Khatim St., Khartoum / Tel: 999.
- Police General Administration of Prisons and Reformation: Alzaber Basha St., Khartoum / Tel: 999.
- Police General Administration of Civil Defense: Katrina St., Khartoum / Tel: 1-834-67777 or in case of a fire please dial 998. Police General Administration of Wildlife Protection: Madni St., Khartoum / Tel: 999. Police General Administration of Customs: Haray St., Khartoum / Tel: 999. Police General Administration of States' Affairs: Nile St., Khartoum / Tel: 1-837-83508.
- Police General Administration of Public Order: Jamhory St., Almogran area, Khartoum / Tel: 999.
- Police General Administration of Central Traffic: Madni St., Soba area, Khartoum / Tel: 777.
- General Administration of Popular Police: Jamhory St., Almogran area, Khartoum / Tel: 999.

## **Medical Emergencies**

All substantial medical services are located in Khartoum. In all other states, local medical assistance is limited. Though economic sanctions have been lifted, credit cards and most checks cannot be used for payment of medical services.

Carry an adequate supply of any necessary prescription medications when traveling. For more information, refer to OSAC's report, [Traveling with Medications](#).

### Contact Information for Available Medical Services

For medical assistance, refer to the Embassy's [Medical Assistance page](#).

### Insurance Guidance

Arrange air ambulance/medical evacuation (medevac) insurance coverage before visiting Sudan. For more information, refer to OSAC's report, [Medical Evacuation: A Primer](#).

### Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The U.S. Embassy suggests that travelers carry a laminated card listing blood type and any medical conditions. Include in the card a request, in Arabic, for transport to a hospital with higher standards in case of medical emergency.

Strongly consider malaria prophylaxis

Carry an updated vaccination card with evidence of Yellow Fever vaccination.

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for [Sudan](#).

## **OSAC Country Council Information**

There is no Country Council in Khartoum. Interested private-sector security managers should contact OSAC's [Africa team](#) with any questions.

## **U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information**

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Road, Kilo 10, Soba, Khartoum  
Hours of operation: 0800-1630 Sunday-Thursday.

### Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy Operator: (249) 1-870-22000  
Embassy Duty Officer: (249) 912-141-483  
Consular section: [ACSKhartoum@state.gov](mailto:ACSKhartoum@state.gov).  
Website: <http://sudan.usembassy.gov/>

### Embassy Guidance

Review expiration dates and validity of your travel documents before traveling to Sudan. Authorities may prohibit entry to passengers with evidence of travel to Israel in their passports. Always travel with extra copies of your documents and vaccination records. Authorities require permits and health inspection records for all pets.

You must have an exit visa to leave Sudan. Travelers staying past their visa's expiration date will be required to pay the Sudanese government overstay charges before being allowed to leave.

U.S. citizens living or traveling in Sudan should register their presence in the country through the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP). By registering, U. S. citizens will be included in the Embassy's warden e-mail message distribution list.

### Additional Resources

[Sudan](#) Country Information Sheet