

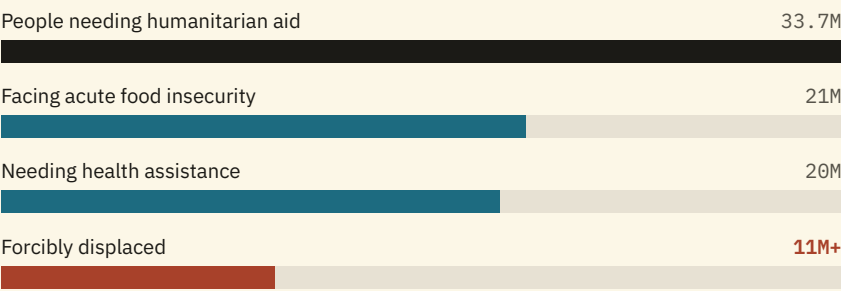
The World's Blind Spot: Africa's Wars and the Politics of Global Attention

THE HIERARCHY OF SUFFERING IN
GLOBAL MEDIA
WORTHY & UNWORTHY VICTIMS

As wars in Iran, Ukraine and Gaza dominate the world's front pages, Sudan has become the **largest humanitarian crisis on earth** — 33.7 million people in need — while Africa's wars draw a fraction of the attention their *human toll* demands. **What is to be done:** African states and the AU need to work with existing African media outlets, providing financial and technical support, as well as access, paired with a commitment to genuine media freedom at home. This would enable coverage of pressing continental, national, and local issues, offering an African narrative on both African and global affairs.

FIG. 1 – SUDAN · SCALE OF HUMANITARIAN NEED

Two-thirds of the Sudanese population in need of aid



Up 3.3M in need since 2025. Source: UN 2026 Humanitarian Needs & Response Plan · OCHA · UNHCR · WHO

33.7M

PEOPLE IN NEED – THE MOST
OF ANY CRISIS ON EARTH

1 in 5

SUDANESE FORCED FROM HOME –
THE WORLD'S LARGEST DISPLACEMENT

Ahead of Gaza and Yemen in absolute numbers
affected – yet far behind them in coverage.

Key Observations

SUDAN · BY THE NUMBERS

01 LARGEST CRISIS ON EARTH
Ahead of Gaza & Yemen ↑

UN agencies rank Sudan the world's largest humanitarian emergency by absolute numbers — 33.7M in need, up 3.3M in a single year.

02 DISPLACEMENT
13.6M people uprooted

9.3M displaced inside Sudan; 4.3M have fled to neighbouring countries — the world's largest displacement crisis.

03 DEATH TOLL
150,000+ killed since 2023

Widespread reports of indiscriminate attacks on civilians as the war spread from Khartoum into Darfur and Kordofan.

04 HEALTH SYSTEM COLLAPSE
~40% of health facilities non-functional

Cholera, measles, malaria and dengue spread amid low immunisation coverage.

05 HUNGER
21M face acute food insecurity

More than 20M also require health assistance — most of a population of roughly 50 million.

ORIGINS · APRIL 2023
SAF v RSF +3.3M

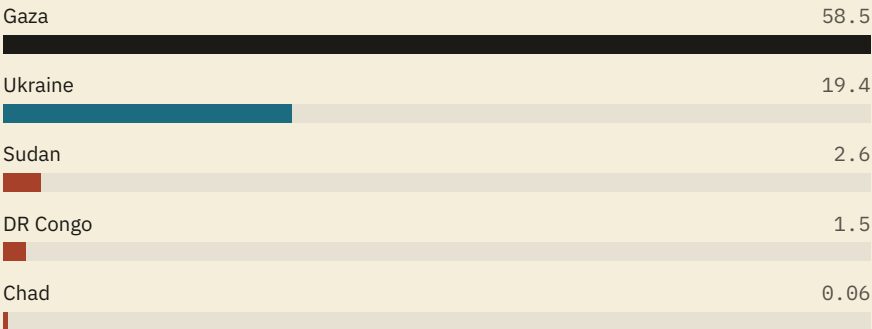
a power struggle that became a war more people in need since 2025 alone

From Khartoum into Darfur and Kordofan. Source: OCHA, 2026.

THE DISPARITY IN NUMBERS · DEADLIEST YET LEAST SEEN

The war on Tigray caused **ten times** the deaths in Gaza, nine times those in Sudan and twice those in Ukraine. UCDP recorded 165,025 deaths in Tigray in 2021 — against 92,629 in Ukraine — yet it drew only **0.96%** of global coverage. A press that sees ten times the deaths and looks sixty-one times away is not merely uneven — it lays bare how deeply global journalism still values certain lives over others.

FIG. 20 — MEDIA COVERAGE PER DAY OF CRISIS
Articles per day, by conflict

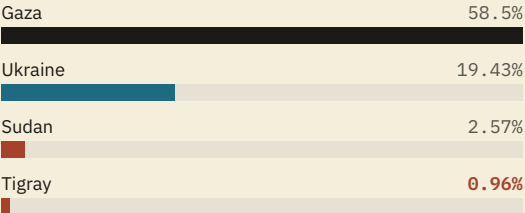


The deadliest crises draw near-zero sustained coverage. Source: PAAI 2025 · Media and Journalism Research Center

61×

LESS COVERAGE FOR TIGRAY THAN GAZA —
20× LESS THAN UKRAINE

FIG. 19 — SHARE OF COVERAGE



Why the Wars Go Unseen

FOUR STRUCTURAL DRIVERS

1

Imposed communication blackouts
A blackout imposed by the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments sealed Tigray off from independent reporting for much of the war, starving the story of evidence.

2

The logic of newsworthiness
Coverage rewards geopolitical proximity, elite involvement, dramatic visuals and ideological resonance over humanitarian need — shaping which crises become stories.

3

‘Worthy’ and ‘unworthy’ victims
A long-standing hierarchy in global journalism renders suffering in the Global South structurally invisible — valuing certain lives, and certain deaths, above others.

4

A receding commitment to Africa
Attention has declined even against earlier eras — Sudan in the early 2000s, Ethiopia in the 1980s — signalling a broader retreat from Africa's wars and atrocities.

What is to be done: African states and the AU need to work with existing African media outlets, providing financial and technical support, as well as access, paired with a commitment to genuine media freedom at home. This would enable coverage of pressing continental, national, and local issues, offering an African narrative on both African and global affairs.

