UN refugee agency: 200,000 have fled Sudan

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Some 200,000 people have fled from Sudan to neighbouring countries since violence erupted last month, a spokesperson for the U.N. refugee agency said on Friday, including many malnourished children arriving in Chad.

Some 60,000 have arrived through the desert to Chad, including about 30,000 in the past few days, U.N. refugee agency (UNHCR) spokesperson Olga Sarrado told a Geneva press briefing. Nearly 90% of the new arrivals are women and children, she said, and one fifth of the young children are malnourished.

"UNHCR calls for immediate financial support for all actors involved in the response to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe, prevent tensions over strained resources and support those forcibly in a dignified manner," she said.

"Support from the private sector has been slow compared to other emergencies, despite the urgency and severity of the crisis," she added, saying a new appeal was expected after the agency called for $445 million last week.

At the same briefing, a spokesperson from the U.N. children's agency said that a factory in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, producing food for malnourished children had burnt down.

"This is the darkest, most distinct illustration to date of how this conflict threatens the lives of children through multiple means," said UNICEF spokeperson James Elder. He did not know whether the factory, which produces 60% of the ready-made food cartons in Sudan, was deliberately torched.