

Chad aid groups brace for Darfur refugees

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Reuters
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Aid agencies in Chad are preparing for a possible influx of tens of thousands of refugees from Darfur as fears grow that Sudan's expulsion of major relief organisations will

worsen the humanitarian crisis there.

Some aid workers in Chad said agencies were making contingency plans for up to 100,000 new arrivals from the western Sudanese region. But they stressed it was too early to tell if there would be a major exodus.

Sudan kicked out 13 international aid agencies last week after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for President Omar Hassan al-Bashir for war crimes in Darfur.

Aid workers fear the move could prompt refugees to cross into Chad as food, water and medical supplies dwindle. They also say people could move if insecurity worsens now that the relief groups have left.

"It's really speculative to even guess how many might come at this point," one aid worker in Chad said. "We are looking at what may happen -- we're looking at 50,000 to 100,000 -- but I don't think

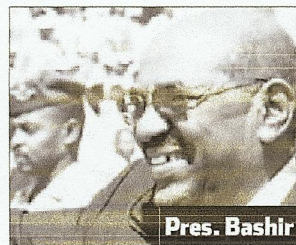
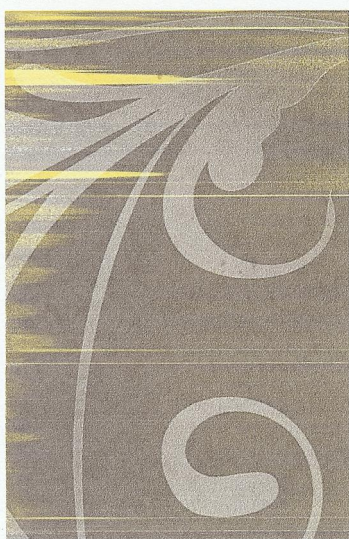
it will happen for a couple of months unless insecurity increases."

"If the humanitarian situation deteriorates, and I think it will, people may take a decision to move before the rainy season -- you might get 10,000 or 20,000 who come over at a time," the aid worker said on

'If the humanitarian situation deteriorates, people may decide to move,'

Aid worker

condition of anonymity.



Pres. Bashir