# War vet’s mission rescues and restores lions from Sudan conflict



Amid the turmoil of war, a vital yet often overlooked aspect comes to light: the suffering of innocent animals caught in the crossfire. The story of the lions rescued from conflict-ridden Sudan by the animal welfare organisation Four Paws serves as a poignant reminder of the necessity to protect these vulnerable creatures. This mission not only highlights the resilience of wildlife in dire straits but also underscores the urgent call for global attention to their plight.

Dr Amir Khalil, director of Reveal and Rescue Response at Four Paws, has dedicated his life to ensuring the survival of animals trapped in crisis zones. Known as the "war vet," Khalil’s remarkable journey began in El Fayoum, Egypt, where he studied veterinary medicine before receiving scholarships to further his education in animal care across the globe. His passion for animal welfare has seen him involved in various rescue missions in regions afflicted by conflict, such as Syria, Gaza, and Libya.

The evacuation of eleven lions from Sudan—a country embroiled in conflict—last year stands testament to Khalil's and his team's unwavering commitment. These lions had been subjected to severe neglect, starvation, and a life fraught with the fear of violence. After spending months in brutal conditions, they were successfully relocated to Lionsrock Big Cat Sanctuary near Bethlehem in South Africa. This sanctuary has taken on the monumental task of rehabilitating these majestic creatures.

The echelons of challenges faced by Four Paws during this mission were considerable. They included securing travel permits amidst a precarious political landscape and ensuring the safety of both the animals and the rescue team while navigating active conflict. Fiona Miles, director of Four Paws South Africa, remarked on the complexities of coordinating such an operation, which also involved stabilising traumatised and malnourished animals during their transfer.

Once at Lionsrock, the lions required extensive veterinary care for their injuries and malnutrition, being in poor physical condition upon arrival. The team meticulously managed their recovery, administering nutrition and medical treatment to help restore their health. One lion, named Moody, exemplified this transformation; he arrived weak and traumatized but gradually regained his strength and vitality under the sanctuary's care. “Moody’s transformation from a starving, traumatised lion in Sudan to a thriving resident at our sanctuary is a powerful testament to the resilience of big cats,” noted Miles.

Four Paws' efforts extend beyond just these eleven lions. In late 2023, the organisation successfully evacuated nearly fifty wild animals from the persistent danger of Khartoum, including hyenas and wildcats. This ongoing commitment highlights the scale of the humanitarian crisis not only affecting humans but the animals in these areas as well. As the situation in Sudan remains fluid, with millions displaced and the risk of further violence ever-present, Four Paws continues to advocate for the animals left vulnerable in the wake of human conflict.

As Khalil poignantly captured, the story of the Sudan lions illustrates the often-overlooked victims of war—the animals that suffer in silence. The efforts to rescue these creatures not only involve the physical act of securing their safety but also raise awareness about the moral imperative to protect wildlife in such dire circumstances. Animal welfare organisations play a crucial role in this narrative, addressing the complex needs of both people and animals in the aftermath of conflicts.

The rehabilitation journey for these lions is just the beginning. Plans are in place to relocate them into larger enclosures designed to meet their species-specific needs, reflecting a dedication to their long-term well-being. This evolving story not only serves as an example of resilience in the face of adversity but also stands as a rallying cry for increased global action in caring for all victims of war, human and animal alike.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2025/05/24/war-vet-says-thriving-sudan-lions-show-their-resilience/), [[2]](https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/press-releases/november-2023/four-paws-rescues-nearly-50-wild-animals-trapped-in-conflict-zone-in-sudan)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2025/05/24/war-vet-says-thriving-sudan-lions-show-their-resilience/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2025/05/24/war-vet-says-thriving-sudan-lions-show-their-resilience/), [[2]](https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/press-releases/november-2023/four-paws-rescues-nearly-50-wild-animals-trapped-in-conflict-zone-in-sudan), [[6]](https://www.four-paws.org/campaigns-topics/topics/rapid-response/emergency-rescue-of-animals-in-sudan)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2025/05/24/war-vet-says-thriving-sudan-lions-show-their-resilience/), [[3]](https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/press-releases/february-2024/lions-sudan-new-home-south-africa), [[5]](https://www.fourpawsusa.org/our-stories/rescues/rescue-lions-kandaka-and-mansour), [[6]](https://www.four-paws.org/campaigns-topics/topics/rapid-response/emergency-rescue-of-animals-in-sudan)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2025/05/24/war-vet-says-thriving-sudan-lions-show-their-resilience/), [[3]](https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/press-releases/february-2024/lions-sudan-new-home-south-africa), [[7]](https://www.fourpaws.org.uk/our-stories/press-releases/lions-rescued-from-conflict-zone)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2025/05/24/war-vet-says-thriving-sudan-lions-show-their-resilience/), [[2]](https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/press-releases/november-2023/four-paws-rescues-nearly-50-wild-animals-trapped-in-conflict-zone-in-sudan), [[4]](https://www.four-paws.org.uk/our-stories/press-releases/sudanese-lions-finally-call-al-ma-wa-home)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2025/05/24/war-vet-says-thriving-sudan-lions-show-their-resilience/), [[6]](https://www.four-paws.org/campaigns-topics/topics/rapid-response/emergency-rescue-of-animals-in-sudan)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2025/05/24/war-vet-says-thriving-sudan-lions-show-their-resilience/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/press-releases/november-2023/four-paws-rescues-nearly-50-wild-animals-trapped-in-conflict-zone-in-sudan> - In November 2023, FOUR PAWS evacuated nearly 50 wild animals, including lions, hyenas, wildcats, birds, and deer, from the conflict zone in Khartoum, Sudan. The mission was initiated due to the escalating humanitarian crisis and the increasing risks to both humans and animals. The surviving animals received veterinary care and were relocated to a safe area in Um Barona National Park. The Sudanese Wildlife authorities are now responsible for their long-term care and are collaborating with FOUR PAWS to find sustainable solutions for the animals.
3. <https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/press-releases/february-2024/lions-sudan-new-home-south-africa> - In February 2024, eleven lions rescued from the conflict zone in Sudan were transferred to LIONSROCK Big Cat Sanctuary in South Africa. These lions had spent nine months in war-torn conditions, leading to trauma, malnutrition, and injuries. Under the care of FOUR PAWS, they received specialized treatment and rehabilitation. The sanctuary prepared interconnected enclosures to monitor and group the lions based on gender and behavior, ensuring their well-being and recovery in a peaceful environment.
4. <https://www.four-paws.org.uk/our-stories/press-releases/sudanese-lions-finally-call-al-ma-wa-home> - In November 2022, after extensive preparations, FOUR PAWS, in collaboration with the Princess Alia Foundation and support from Sudan Animal Rescue and the Sudanese Wildlife Authority, successfully transferred two Sudanese lions, Kandaka and Mansour, to Al Ma’wa Wildlife Reserve in Jordan. These lions had been malnourished and emaciated at Al Qurashi Family Park Zoo in Khartoum. The transfer aimed to provide them with the necessary long-term medical treatment and rehabilitation in a species-appropriate environment.
5. <https://www.fourpawsusa.org/our-stories/rescues/rescue-lions-kandaka-and-mansour> - FOUR PAWS faced significant challenges in rescuing lions Kandaka and Mansour from Al Qurashi Family Park Zoo in Khartoum, Sudan. The mission was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability in Sudan. Despite these obstacles, in November 2022, the lions were successfully transferred to Al Ma’wa for Nature and Wildlife in Jordan. Since their arrival, they have adapted well to their new environment, experiencing snow for the first time and receiving professional care from an experienced team.
6. <https://www.four-paws.org/campaigns-topics/topics/rapid-response/emergency-rescue-of-animals-in-sudan> - FOUR PAWS initiated an emergency rescue mission in Sudan to save over 30 animals from the conflict zone. The mission was prompted by the ongoing humanitarian crisis, which had led to 5.5 million people fleeing the country. The animals, including lions, were at high risk due to starvation and potential attacks. FOUR PAWS' experienced team was tasked with evacuating the animals to a safe location, highlighting the organization's commitment to animal welfare in crisis situations.
7. <https://www.fourpaws.org.uk/our-stories/press-releases/lions-rescued-from-conflict-zone> - In November 2023, FOUR PAWS evacuated 48 wild animals from the conflict zone in Khartoum, Sudan. The team returned in January for the emergency rescue of some of the animals after fighting broke out in the designated safe area near Wad Madani. On February 16, eleven lions were transferred to LIONSROCK Big Cat Sanctuary in South Africa. These lions had spent nine months in war-torn conditions, leading to trauma, malnutrition, and injuries. They have responded positively to the treatment and care they received in the last weeks.