

COUNTRY BRIEF: **SUDAN**

OVERVIEW OF RESTRICTIONS TO CIVIC FREEDOM



Photo credit: Sudan (AFP)



This report covers civic space developments between April 2023 and November 2025

INTRODUCTION

In April 2023, fighting between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, commonly known as Hemedti, and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, erupted in the capital, Khartoum, and spread rapidly across Sudan.

Since then, thousands of civilians have [been killed](#), with many more subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence, forced displacement, starvation and the destruction of homes, health facilities, markets and other civilian infrastructure. An unknown number of Sudanese people remain missing, while humanitarian workers and human rights defenders (HRDs) are being threatened, attacked and killed. Various non-state armed groups and militias are involved in the conflict and wider violence, at times allied to either the RSF or SAF.

FROM THE 2018 REVOLUTION TO MILITARY COUP

War has come in the wake of the Sudanese revolution, which started in December 2018 and toppled dictator Omar al-Bashir and his government, and a military coup on 25 October 2021, following [tensions](#) between civilian and military factions in the transitional government. The coup, which dissolved the transitional government and Sovereign Council, sparked mass protests that the state met with lethal and brutal force. Security forces [arrested](#) 63 government officials, including Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, six ministers and several members of the country's civilian leadership, including members of the transitional government and Sovereign Council, placing them under house arrest or taking them to unknown locations. General al-Burhan [declared](#) a state of emergency.

A political agreement was [signed](#) on 21 November 2021, with Hamdok reinstated as prime minister, the transition to civilian rule restored and an agreement made for the release of political prisoners. However, on 2 January 2022, Hamdok [announced](#) his resignation as prime minister due to continuing political deadlock between the civilian and military factions, sparking further political uncertainty. In December 2022, the military and some civilian groups [signed](#) an agreement that was supposed to lead to a transition to democracy.

ABOUT THE CIVICUS MONITOR

The CIVICUS Monitor, an online platform that tracks threats to civil society in countries across the globe, rates civic space – the space for civil society – in Sudan as **Closed**.

The data provides the basis for civic space ratings, which are based on up-to-date information and indicators on the state of freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Countries can be rated as:

CLOSED**REPRESSED****OBSTRUCTED****NARROWED****OPEN**



WAR, ATROCITIES AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The war that erupted in April 2023 resulted from a power struggle between the RSF and SAF. It has had a devastating [impact on civilians](#). Despite multiple ceasefire declarations, fighting has continued and intensified. Both forces have a [history](#) of perpetrating serious human rights violations, including in Darfur and during the crackdown on protests at the time of the revolution and following the 2021 coup. [According](#) to human rights groups, both the RSF and SAF have committed war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. In July 2025, the International Criminal Court (ICC) [told](#) the United Nations (UN) Security Council there are ‘reasonable grounds’ to believe war crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed in western Sudan, including targeted sexual violence against women and girls of specific ethnicities in Darfur.

The RSF have [committed](#) crimes against humanity, including through an ethnic cleansing campaign in West Darfur in 2023, and [widespread acts of sexual violence](#) in areas of Khartoum since 2023. In January 2025, the USA formally [declared](#) that the RSF had committed genocide during the conflict.

As of October 2025, at least 150,000 people have been [killed](#) in the conflict. Around [14 million](#) people have been [displaced](#), including over four million who have fled to neighbouring countries and some 30.4 million – over two-thirds of the total population – [need](#) assistance. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the conflict, and the UN has [declared](#) it to be one of the ‘most devastating humanitarian and displacement crises in the world’.

El Fasher, a city in North Darfur, epitomises the extent of the atrocities. On 26 October 2025, after a siege of 18 months, the RSF entered and [captured](#) the city. Reports followed of unimaginable atrocities [committed](#) by the RSF, including the massacre of hundreds, potentially thousands, of civilians, among them hundreds of patients and staff killed at a hospital. In the immediate aftermath, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) said it had [received](#) appalling reports of summary executions, with indications of ethnically motivated killings. During the siege, civil society organisations (CSOs) [warned](#) of systematic violations against an estimated 250,000 trapped civilians, including mass killings, sexual violence, starvation and targeting of health and other civilian infrastructure. In a devastating [starvation campaign](#), the RSF blocked vital supplies, including food and medicine, from entering the city and stopped civilians leaving.

As the war continues, civic space has [deteriorated](#) rapidly, with the detention and killing of HRDs, humanitarian workers and journalists, internet and communication shutdowns, raiding and looting of CSOs and attacks on freedom of expression, among other severe civic space violations. These brief outlines civic space trends and violations since the outbreak of the war.

ASSOCIATION

SYSTEMATIC ATTACKS ON HRDS: ARBITRARY DETENTIONS, ABDUCTIONS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Since the start of the conflict, both warring parties have systematically targeted HRDs and humanitarian workers, including through arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and judicial harassment. Between January and June 2025, the CSO Committee of Justice [documented](#) at least 31 cases of arbitrary detention and 23 enforced disappearances of HRDs, including doctors, humanitarian workers, journalists, lawyers and teachers, targeted because of their activism, ethnic identity, professional work or perceived political affiliation.

Often, arbitrary detentions and arrests occur on accusations of collaboration with the opposing warring party. In a 2025 report, the OHCHR [notes](#) that checkpoints and Starlink satellite internet connection locations are regularly used for arrests, often following telephone searches that reportedly uncover content deemed to be in opposition to the war or to indicate collaboration with the opposing warring



party. Members and volunteers of resistance committees, neighbourhood grassroots groups that have been [mobilising](#) and organising communities since the protest movement of 2018, are among those targeted. Members and volunteers of Emergency Response Rooms (ERR), community-led local initiatives that grew out of resistance committees and provide life-saving humanitarian assistance, also face arbitrary detentions, smear campaigns and threats.

For example, in May 2025, the OHCHR [received](#) information on the detention of at least 14 HRDs, including members of resistance committees, by security forces in Kadugli, South Kordofan. In March 2025, an ERR member in Khartoum received death threats on social media and in person from an armed group member. On 20 June 2025, security forces reportedly [arrested](#) Bahaa El-Din Suleiman, a member of the Third Degree Extension Resistance Committees in Khartoum. On 25 August 2025, it was [reported](#) that Barir Al-Toum, a volunteer in the Red Sea Emergency Room, which provided humanitarian assistance to war-displaced communities, was arrested in Port Sudan. Between April 2023 and December 2023 alone, the SAF General Intelligence Service and Military Intelligence arrested at least 109 members of resistance committees, [according](#) to a March 2024 OHCHR report.

HRDs have been prosecuted, with state authorities using restrictive provisions and laws to charge people with offences such as espionage, offences against the state, undermining constitutional order and waging war against the state under the Sudan Criminal Act 1991 and provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act and Cybercrimes Act. In May 2023, the Sudanese Sovereign Council [reinstated](#) the National Security Laws, which had previously been [used](#) to censor, criminalise and repress the work of activists and CSOs, and were suspended after the revolution.

On 5 October 2025, the Singa Criminal Court [sentenced](#) Abubakr Mansour Abdela, a human rights defender and lawyer, to death by hanging. He was convicted for offences against the state and waging war against the state under articles 50 and 51 of the Sudan Criminal Act. The charges are believed to be related to the humanitarian assistance Mansour Abdela has provided since the start of the war by handing out medicines from his brother's pharmaceutical company, with authorities claiming he has collaborated with the RSF. Earlier, on 30 April 2025, the Singa General Court handed down a 20-year prison sentence and a fine of 10 million Sudanese pounds (approx. US\$16,600), a sentence rejected by Mansour Abdela's lawyers, who filed an appeal. On 1 October 2025, one of his lawyers, Abubakr Elmahi, was also arrested.

On 20 October 2025, human rights lawyer Montasir Abdallah was [released](#) from prison after the Criminal Court of Port Sudan acquitted him of all charges under the Criminal Act, including espionage, undermining the constitutional order and waging war against the state under articles 53 and 85 of the Criminal Code. Abdallah was [arrested](#) in Port Sudan on 7 September 2024, reportedly after requesting investigation records of political detainees, and was [charged](#) on 3 October 2024. The Criminal Court [convicted](#) him under the Cybercrimes Act and sentenced him to a year and four months in prison and a fine of one million Sudanese pounds (approx. US\$1,660), but released him due to the time he had already served since his arrest. Abdallah [represents](#) the defence team for prosecuted leaders of the Taqaddum, the Sudanese Coordination of Civil Democratic Civil Forces, a coalition of civil society groups, political parties and professional groups calling for an end to the war.

In April 2024, the acting Attorney General and the Office of the Public Prosecutor [filed](#) criminal charges against Abdalla Hamdok and 15 other Taqaddum leaders, many of whom are abroad. Charges included crimes against humanity, inciting war against the state and undermining constitutional order. Some charges carry the death penalty.

On 23 September 2025, General Intelligence Service officers arrested and [disappeared](#) HRD and trade union leader Abdelwahab Ahmed Mohamed Hashem, widely known as Bob, from his office in Al-Obeid, North Kordofan. Hashem, the head of the Workers' Coordination Committee, an independent body representing public sector employees, was held incommunicado for three weeks and interrogated twice without being charged. [According](#) to Frontline Defenders, his arrest could be linked to an audio message, shared in a private professional group, in which he discussed the situation of the trade union movement in North



Kordofan, confirming the legitimacy of the Workers' Coordination Committee established after the repeal of the 2010 Trade Unions Act, while also expressing concerns about the non-payment of salaries for 16 months.

In February 2025, Amnesty International said it had [received](#) reports of lists being circulated in Khartoum including the names of civilian activists, HRDs, humanitarian workers and medical workers to be targeted in retaliatory SAF attacks for alleged collaboration with the RSF and allied armed groups.

Monitoring human rights abuses has become a risky endeavour since the outbreak of the war. In March 2024, the Youth Citizens Observers network [reported](#) that it has faced detention threats and harassment from security forces as its members attempt to move around Sudan to document violations. A member of the Missing Initiative, a local group that provides a platform where people can post information about missing people, also reported facing threats.

Reports of enforced disappearances and torture during detention are commonplace. On 22 December 2024, RSF personnel reportedly [abducted](#) lawyer Khaled Omar Al-Sadiq outside his home in Khartoum and held him incommunicado, amounting to an enforced disappearance. In its latest report, the OHCHR [said](#) it has received numerous accounts of torture and ill-treatment in formal and informal detention facilities maintained by all warring parties, including 'severe beatings, electric shocks, burning with hot metal rods and sexual violence'. Between January and June 2025, the OHCHR confirmed at least 10 deaths in custody of individuals detained by the RSF and SAF, including local humanitarian volunteers and volunteer medics.

SYSTEMATIC VIOLATIONS AGAINST WOMEN AND WOMEN HRDS

In May 2025, a group of independent UN human rights experts [said](#) that widespread and systematic violations were being committed against [women and girls in Sudan](#), including abductions, killings and conflict-related sexual violence. Women HRDs (WHRDs) and women frontline workers have reportedly been harassed, killed and raped for assisting survivors or documenting abuses. In a [statement](#) on 14 April 2025, International Service for Human Rights, Sudanese Women's Rights Action (SUWRA) and WHRDMENA Coalition highlighted that at least 25 women are imprisoned within SAF-controlled areas on accusations of collaboration with the RSF, with some receiving execution sentences. Their families and lawyers have also been threatened. They have reportedly been charged under articles 50 and 51 of the Sudanese Criminal Law, referring to crimes of undermining the state and treason.

On 19 April 2025, military authorities [arrested](#) journalist and WHRD Imtithal Abdelfadeel at a bus station in Kassala when she was about to travel to Port Sudan. Abdelfadeel intended to travel from Port Sudan to outside Sudan on an assignment for the Aljareeda Alsudaia newspaper, for which she often reports on the economic and social rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs). During the arrest, authorities covered her eyes and confiscated her phone. They held Abdelfadeel incommunicado at a detention facility for three days, interrogated her and under threats and duress finally coerced her into signing an agreement that includes a travel ban.

WHRDs have been killed. On 26 October 2023, an unidentified person [shot and killed](#) WHRD Bahjaa Abdelaa Abdelaa while she was attending a relative's funeral in Kalma IDP camp in Nyala, South Darfur. Abdelaa, a member of the Darfur Collation of Women Human Rights Defenders and the Women Revolutionary group, had previously reported receiving death threats due to her work.

KILLING OF HRDS AND HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

During the conflict, several HRDs and humanitarian workers have been killed due to their work. On 4 August 2023, the tortured body of HRD and lawyer Ahmed Mohamed Abdella [was found](#) in Nyala, South Darfur, less than 24 hours after a group of unknown armed people kidnapped him. The perpetrators called Abdella's family that day to demand a ransom of 30 million Sudanese pounds (approx. US\$50,000) to release him. Abdella worked as a lawyer for the Darfur Bar Association and provided legal aid to victims of



human rights violations. His neighbour, Adam Omer Jad Elrab, who worked with the International Medical Corps in Darfur, was also found dead. Both men had severe torture marks on their bodies.

On 17 and 18 June 2023, three HRDs [were killed](#) in El Geneina, West Darfur. Abd Elrazeg Adam Mohammed, who worked for the Darfur Network of Monitors, was killed alongside his family. Tareg Hassan Yagoub Elmalik was a [member](#) of the Darfur Bar Association and the Sudanese Bar Association. El Sadeg Mohammed Ahmed Haroun was a lawyer at the Darfur Bar Association and was part of a group of lawyers who filed cases against the RSF, accusing them of horrific attacks on the Krinding IDP camp in El Geneina. In May 2023, the Darfur Bar Association reported that its members were receiving death threats from military personnel.

On 28 May 2023, RSF personnel [killed](#) lawyer Mohammed Ahmed Kudia and looted and burned down his property. Ahmed Kudia defended victims of attacks on IDP camps in El Geneina and provided legal aid to victims of human rights violations in Darfur. On 30 May 2023, Khamis Arabab, a lawyer and member of the Darfur Bar Association, was [killed](#) when RSF members attacked his house in El Geneina. On 11 June 2023, Khidir Sulieman Abdelmageed, head of Afkar, a human rights organisation, was attacked and [killed](#) on the road in El Geneina while trying to leave his house after receiving death threats. He worked with several national and international human rights organisations that monitored human rights violations in Sudan. The Darfur Bar Association reported that all three of those killed had received death threats from militia members while working on cases related to attacks on IDP camps in El Geneina.

Health and humanitarian workers and other volunteers have also been killed. [According](#) to an OHCHR report, at least 30 health and humanitarian workers were killed and eight injured in Al Jazirah, Khartoum, North Darfur and West and South Kordofan between January and June 2025. At least 11 of those were summarily executed in April 2025, including 10 staff members of an CSO that provided healthcare in Zamzam IDP camp, North Darfur, executed by RSF fighters while seeking shelter during an attack on the camp. On 2 June 2025, five aid workers were [killed](#) when their humanitarian convoy carrying vital nutritional supplies was attacked by drones 80 km away from El Fasher. [According](#) to the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission, at least 85 Sudanese humanitarian workers have been killed between April 2023 and April 2025.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

The Sudanese government has extended its crackdown on dissent beyond its borders, targeting anti-war figures and political opponents abroad. This includes the prosecution of Abdalla Hamdok and 15 other Taqaddum leaders.

In January 2025, the Public Prosecutor General for Economic Crimes [published](#) a list of 24 people considered fugitives under the 1991 Criminal Act and the Empowerment Removal Law, including activists, journalists and former Taqaddum leaders. Some of these targeted [told](#) the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission that Sudan's harassment included difficulties in renewal of passports, preventing them travelling.

Other reported cases of transnational repression include threats to journalists, lawyers and WHRDs. On 19 May 2025, Sudanese activist and asylum seeker Mohammed Adam Arbab, also known as Tupac, was [subjected](#) to enforced detention for 24 hours at the Sudan Embassy in Tripoli, Libya. He was unlawfully handed over without any legal procedure to Libyan authorities in preparation for his forced deportation to Sudan. In July 2024, the Sudanese embassy in Uganda [denied](#) renewal of the passport of Hanan Hassan Hussein, a prominent activist, human rights lawyer and member of the Emergency Lawyers group.

RESTRICTIONS ON CSO OPERATIONS

The war has [led](#) to the destruction and looting of offices and supplies and displacement of staff, while CSOs have had to cease operations or establish themselves in safer areas or abroad.

Emergency orders and other security-related measures imposed by both the RSF and SAF [constrain](#) the work of CSOs. As of April 2025, at least 115 emergency orders had been [imposed](#) or renewed, regulating curfews and restrictions on freedoms of expression, movement, opinion and peaceful assembly. Most of these orders failed to meet international human rights standards applicable to a state of emergency,



including requirements of legality, necessity and proportionality. A January 2025 OHCHR report [noted](#) that the organisation of activities across a range of areas by CSOs were subject to prior approval by relevant authorities, with requests requiring an agenda and list of facilitators and participants. In some cases, authorities denied approvals, particularly for human rights-related activities. In other cases, Sudanese authorities or intelligence services cancelled events, interrogated organisers or asked to be present. In one case documented by the OHCHR, a women's rights organisation in Kordofan region was asked to suspend an activity, previously authorised, and intelligence officers questioned its staff.

In January 2024, Federal Governance Minister Mohamed Saleh issued a decree [dissolving](#) all grassroots committees that had been set up during the revolution. Prior to this, authorities in regions including Gedaref, Northern State and River Nile introduced similar regulations, accusing them of collaborating with RSF. The decree stated that alternative committees would be set up.

Meanwhile, bureaucratic administrative requirements impede the operation of CSOs and humanitarian aid organisations. The Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) is the government body that coordinates humanitarian aid and issues permits to operate. The RSF set up the Sudanese Agency for Relief and Humanitarian Operations (SAHRO), a licensing and registration body in RSF-controlled areas.

Both HAC and SAHRO are [accused](#) of imposing measures that restrict the operations of CSOs and humanitarian organisations and [weaponising](#) humanitarian aid. Registration with HAC entails a fee of US\$800 and the submission of a list of names of employees and volunteers. HAC registration is an [expensive and labour-intensive process](#) that can lead to state scrutiny. Several organisations [told](#) the OHCHR in 2024 that they experienced challenges in the requirements for renewing their registration with HAC, particularly in meeting the high fees for national CSOs and the associated costs of submitting the registration in person in Port Sudan.

In April 2025, a HAC directive [suspended](#) the operations of around 30 humanitarian organisations, including three international organisations. In May 2025, the State of Khartoum [stated](#) that all relief initiatives in the state must register with the HAC. In July 2024, HAC [said](#) that all local, national and international groups in Sudan registered with SARHO would not be allowed to operate in SAF-controlled areas. SAF has [expelled](#) and refused visas for humanitarian aid workers and tried to obstruct famine research. HAC and SAHRO have also been [accused](#) of obstructing and impeding the delivery of humanitarian aid.

In another worrying development, in July 2025 authorities reportedly [ordered](#) the dissolution of the leadership of all trade unions and replaced them with preparatory committees, appointed by the Registrar General of Labour Organisations, under Decision 9. Observers [commented](#) that the decision offers no clear path or timeline for new elections, grants the registrar undefined discretionary powers and opens the door for government encroachment on union independence. The Sudanese Professionals and Syndicates Coordination [said](#) that, as of July 2025, it had documented 290 violations against trade unionists and workers since the war began, including arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, forced labour, gender-based violence, mass dismissals, torture and withholding of salaries. This has led to a what the body calls 'near-total paralysis of independent trade unions'. General al-Burhan previously [issued](#) an order dissolving all professional associations and trade unions following the October 2021 military coup.

PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Emergency orders imposed since war began have severely restricted the right to peaceful assembly. As of April 2025, at least 115 emergency orders had been [imposed](#) or renewed, regulating curfews and restricting movement.

On 21 July 2025, women and girls in Kadugli city, South Kordofan, [organised](#) a protest urging the Sudanese military to release food from its storage facilities to address the city's food shortage. Sudanese police detained at least eight women for two days following the protest. Hunger levels have reached acute levels,



particularly in the hardest-hit areas, which have [endured](#) a systematic starvation policy engineered [through](#) inconsistent access and targeting of humanitarian workers and supplies, while aid convoys face delays, denials and security threats.

In early June 2025, police fired rubber bullets and teargas to [disperse](#) a peaceful sit-in in Wadi Halfa city, where residents protested against electricity cuts.

EXPRESSION

DESTRUCTION OF SUDANESE MEDIA

Media freedom and journalists have suffered greatly under the war. [According](#) to reports, around 90 per cent of media infrastructure has been destroyed, including 27 newspapers that have [stopped](#) operating. Both the RSF and SAF have [targeted](#) journalists, leaving no safe zones for journalists in the areas they control. SAF forces have been [accused](#) of arbitrary detentions, interrogations and torture of journalists they accuse of false information or collaborating with RSF. The RSF have been accused of abductions, extortion and killing of journalists in areas they control. The Sudan Journalists' Syndicate has [documented](#) over 550 violations against media workers.

Many journalists have been displaced or forced to flee into exile amid the violence and the war, and most media infrastructure including offices has been destroyed or looted. Journalists that remained have been subjected to attacks, detentions, enforced disappearances, killings and other abuses. Internet disruptions and shutdowns have restricted access to information while social media has become a battleground of disinformation and propaganda by both warring parties.

The Sudan Media Forum, a network of journalists in Sudan and in exile, [says](#) that the number of active journalists inside Sudan is somewhere in between 250 and 300, while before the war an estimated 1,500 journalists were active. The Forum further says that only an estimated 70 journalists are working in conflict zones, and journalists need to hide and work anonymously. Free movement of journalists is extremely limited, particularly in eastern Sudan where journalists need special SAF permits.

KILLING OF JOURNALISTS

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, as of October 2025 at least 15 journalists have [been killed](#) since the start of the war. Mohamed Abdelaziz, Secretary General of the Sudan Journalists' Syndicate, [told](#) Reuters that 31 journalists have been killed. Since the conflict began, Sudan has become one of the most [dangerous](#) countries in the world for journalists.

Many journalists have been killed in the fighting. On 4 October 2025, journalist Al Nour Suleiman [succumbed](#) to his injuries following a drone strike on his home in El Fasher the previous day. The RSF reportedly carried out the attack. Suleiman [worked](#) as an editor and presenter at El Fasher Radio and was previously a media director at the Governor's Office. On 14 April 2025 in El Fasher, journalist Ahmed Mohamed Saleh Sayyidna [was killed](#) in a shelling attack amid fighting between the RSF and SAF.

Freelance photojournalist Al-Shykh Al-Samany Saadaldyn Mousa Abdullah, also known as Sheikho, was killed in a drone strike on 18 May 2025 as he covered an event organised by Sudan Shield Forces, a pro-RSF paramilitary group, in Al-Butna, Central Eastern region. On 2 May 2025, Hassan Fadl Al-Mawla Mousa, presenter for West Kordofan Radio and a correspondent for Beladi 96.6 FM and Sudan National Radio Corporation, was [killed](#) amid gunfire when RSF forces took control of Al-Nuhud, West Kordofan.

[According](#) to the International Federation of Journalists, four media workers from Sudanese National Television were killed on 1 March 2025 in Khartoum. Farouk Ahmed Mohamed Al-Zaher, Magdy Abdel Rahman Fakhr El-Din, Ibrahim Mohamed Mudawi and Waji Jaafar Mohammed Onwar were covering events at the presidential palace when they were hit in a drone attack. On 5 June 2024, the RSF [killed](#)



journalist Makawi Mohamed Ahmed, a reporter at the official state news agency of Sudan, and his brother Shamseddine Mohamed Ahmed, during an attack on the village of Wad Al-Noura, Al Jazirah, in which they killed around 100 people.

The RSF and SAF have deliberately killed journalists and media workers. On 13 February 2025, prominent journalist Yahya Hamad Fadlallah [died](#) in hospital a month after SAF arrested him and his son in Khartoum. SAF personnel reportedly tortured Fadlallah, falsely accused him of collaborating with the RSF and denied him medical treatment for his diabetes. On 4 June 2024, the RSF [shot dead](#) journalist Muawiya Abdel Razek and three family members in a raid on his home.

On 1 March 2024, armed soldiers in El Fasher [shot and killed](#) Khalid Balal, media director at the Sudanese government's Supreme Council for Media and Culture. The Committee to Protect Journalists said it was unable to establish which paramilitary group was responsible for the killing. On 10 October 2023, the RSF [killed](#) journalist Halima Idris Salim from independent news outlet Sudan Bukra, running her over with a vehicle. Reporters Without Borders [called for](#) an independent investigation into her death.

DETENTION, ABDUCTION, PHYSICAL ASSAULT AND INTIMIDATION OF JOURNALISTS

Journalists are subjected to abductions, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, threats and other abuses. Both warring partners have been accused of perpetrating abuses against journalists. SAF forces have been [accused](#) of arbitrary detentions, interrogations and torture of journalists they accuse of false information or collaborating with RSF. The RSF have been accused of abductions, extortion and killing of journalists in areas controlled by them.

RSF forces were [reported](#) to have detained freelance journalist Muammar Ibrahim on 26 October 2025. A video circulated on RSF social media groups showed Ibrahim, who identified himself and confirmed he had been detained while attempting to leave El Fasher. [According](#) to Article 19, Ibrahim, who had been reporting from El Fasher while it was under siege, was accused of defamation over his coverage of atrocities.

Some other cases of detention documented by press freedom organisations the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Without Borders and the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate include:

- In July 2025, RSF forces [abducted](#) journalist El-Rashid Mohamed Haroun from the Ardeiba market in El-Geneina, West Darfur and detained him for unknown reasons. Prior to this, RSF forces [raided](#) Haroun's home and confiscated his equipment. Haroun, who works as the director of local radio station Darfur 90.3, was reportedly transferred from a detention centre to Dages Prison, southwest of Nyala, South Darfur in August 2025, despite the absence of formal charges.
- On 7 July 2025, members of the Sudan Liberation Movement – Transitional Council (SLM-TC), a SAF-affiliated armed group, [arrested](#) freelance journalists Mohamed Ahmed Nazar and Nasr Yaqoub at the Abu Shouk Camp market in El Fasher. The arrest [came](#) after Yaqoub alleged on social media that a member of the armed group shot at him after he refused to hand over his Starlink satellite internet device, an essential tool for internet connectivity in the region. Both were reportedly held at SLM-TC headquarters in El Fasher and were [released](#) on 9 July 2025.
- On 25 May 2025, SAF-affiliated security forces [stormed](#) the home of blogger and veteran journalist Abduljalil Mohamed Abduljalil and arrested him in the eastern city of Kassala, without a warrant. They held him incommunicado for a few hours before his family received information about his arrest. Abduljalil's arrest is believed to be linked to his social media posts alleging corruption in the pilgrimage authority, a public body overseeing the logistics, permits and travel for Muslims travelling to Saudi Arabia on pilgrimage.



- On 10 May 2025, SAF members [arrested](#) freelance journalist Mounir Al-Taraiki at his home in Nuri, Northern State. They reportedly [held](#) him for 36 hours without charge. A military investigator interrogated him and criticised his public statements calling for an end to the war.
- On 19 April 2025, SAF soldiers [arrested](#) Emthithal Abdel Fadil, journalist for local newspaper Al-Jarida, in Kassala, when she was about to travel to Port Sudan. SAF soldiers reportedly blindfolded her, searched her phone and social media accounts and questioned her for three days. They released Fadil without charge but banned her travelling outside Kassala, as she could be summoned for questioning at any time.
- On 18 May 2024, Tarik Abdallah, editor-in-chief of independent newspaper Al-Ahram al-Youm, was [arrested](#) at his home and taken to an unknown location.
- On 30 April 2024, RSF soldiers [arrested](#) and raided the home of Abdelaziz Mahmoud Arja, a photographer with state-owned Sudan TV.
- On 16 May 2024, SAF soldiers [arrested](#) freelance journalist Siddiq Dalay over a social media post related to his relative, the [head of a local branch of the Sudanese Congress Party](#), who died from injuries allegedly inflicted when the SAF detained him.
- On 17 July 2024, the SAF military intelligence arrested Omar Mohamed Omar, after he criticised the governor of North Kordofan on his personal Facebook page for the [lack of services](#) and the worsening water crisis in the state due to the conflict.
- On 18 January 2024, RSF soldiers [arrested](#) freelance journalist Ogail Ahmed Naime in Khartoum, without disclosing the reason for his arrest or the place of detention. They released him a few days later.
- On 22 January 2024, RSF soldiers [searched](#) the home and confiscated the phones of journalist Haitham Dafallah, editor-in-chief of local independent news website al-Maidan, and his brother Omar Dafallah, before arresting them both.
- On 30 May 2023, RSF soldiers [detained](#) journalist Nader Shulkawi at a checkpoint in Omdurman after he identified himself as a journalist.

In June 2025, Reporters Without Borders [reported](#) that it had documented the arbitrary detention of some 15 media professionals since April 2023, with two of them still being held. The media professionals include freelance journalists and employees of the Sudanese public network SNBC, Al-Jazeera, Egyptian TV station Al-Ghad and the Lebanese website Tayyar. Most of these arbitrary detentions lasted several days, although Al-Jarida journalist Ali Tarek Arash was held for almost 10 months after his arrest by SAF soldiers for his articles on abuses of internally displaced people. As of June 2025, Reporters Without Borders [said](#) that journalists Hassan Hamed and Mamoun Hassan Hamid remained behind bars. Government forces arrested Hamed, a reporter for Independent Arabia, on 9 October 2023 while he was reporting from Port Sudan. RSF forces arrested media contributor Hassan Hamid in January 2024. He is being held in an unknown location.

In some cases, armed groups have abducted journalists and demanded ransoms for their release. On 23 August 2024, RSF-affiliated armed men [took freelance](#) journalist Aladdin Abu Harba from his home in the East Nile region of Khartoum and detained him in an unknown location. They initially demanded a ransom of 1 million Sudanese pounds (approx. US\$400). After receiving the ransom, they demanded another million and threatened to kill him. On 16 August 2024, a group of armed men [raided](#) the home of freelance journalist Abdulrahman Haneen in East Nile, [held him](#) at gunpoint and [stole](#) his belongings, including his laptops, mobile phones and money.

Cyberattacks, intimidation, physical attacks and surveillance have also been documented. On 1 May 2023, the [RSF shot](#) Sudanese photographer Faiz Abubaker in the back while he was covering clashes in Khartoum. They held him for three hours at a checkpoint, where he was threatened at knife point and beaten. Between 16 and 18 May 2023, the RSF beat and robbed [three journalists](#): freelance journalist Eissa Dafaallah, Ahmed Fadl, an Al-Jazeera reporter, and Rashid Gibril, an Al-Jazeera photographer, and detained Fadl and Gibril overnight.



According to [Reporters Without Borders](#), at least 15 journalists have been subjected to cyber-harassment campaigns due to their reporting. Foreign journalists who have reported from Sudan told the organisation that RSF soldiers monitored their movements.

INTERNET SHUTDOWNS SEVERELY HAMPER ACCESS TO CRITICAL INFORMATION

The RSF and SAF have [imposed](#) internet shutdowns to block information flows. Alongside deliberate disruptions by warring parties, widespread internet infrastructure failures and power outages have [affected](#) internet access. This has worsened the humanitarian crisis, [hampered](#) the delivery of aid and prevented communities, civil society and media from documenting crimes against humanity and other human rights violations. For [example](#), the frontline humanitarian work of ERRs has been [affected](#). Their processing of humanitarian requests via WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms has been harmed by shutdowns. In addition, Sudanese people abroad and those coordinating emergency responses in Sudan have been unable during shutdowns to send money to Sudan and within Sudan via banking apps.

A months-long internet shutdown [began](#) on 2 February 2024, after the RSF seized control of the data centres of several internet service providers in Khartoum. Even as connectivity was partially [restored](#) in some SAF-controlled areas after two months, most RSF-controlled areas [lack](#) consistent internet connectivity through Sudan's mobile network operators.

Beyond the February 2024 shutdown, there have been reports of other internet access disruptions. For example, in April 2023, just hours after the conflict began, MTN Sudan reportedly [cut off](#) internet services at the request of the government telecommunications regulator. Between 7 and 10 July 2025, near-complete outages at MTN Sudan and SDN Mobitel and regular drops in internet traffic at Sudatel were [observed](#). Localised internet disruptions in areas of ongoing armed conflict have also occurred, for example between June 2023 and May 2024 in Khartoum, Omdurman, and cities across the Darfur and Kordofan regions, with some shutdowns lasting months.

On 21 July 2025, the Sudanese Telecommunications and Post Regulatory Authority [announced](#) the blocking of WhatsApp's voice and video call features, starting from 15 July until further notice. The authority cited security concerns and the need to protect the 'higher interests of the state'.

In response to internet restrictions, many people and organisations, including journalists and aid groups, started relying on satellite internet systems such as Starlink, the satellite arm of Elon Musk's Space X. However, reports [indicate](#) that the RSF has weaponised Starlink in the areas it controls, [charging](#) high prices – a staggering 3,000 Sudanese pounds (approx. US\$5) per hour – to connect. The RSF reportedly [gained](#) access to Starlink through black markets in the United Arab Emirates, which [backs the RSF](#), despite Sudanese authorities having requested proper regulation. On 30 April 2024, Musk's threatened to suspend Starlink's use on grounds of 'violations of the terms of use'. This was met with [protest](#) by humanitarian and human rights groups. In a statement, 94 groups, including Islamic Relief Worldwide and Sudan Human Rights Network, warned of the dangers of a complete communication blackout, [calling](#) it 'a collective punishment' and saying the potential shutdown would have a 'disproportionate impact on civilians and the aid organisations who are trying to reach them'.

DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS AND HATE SPEECH

Social media has become a battleground of disinformation and propaganda for both warring parties. In its 2024 Freedom on the Net report, Freedom House stated that the RSF and SAF have weaponised online space by spreading disinformation and propaganda through social media channels.

While disinformation is [not new](#) in Sudan, both the RSF and SAF are seeking to shape opinion to their advantage, improve their image and [whitewash](#) their role. According to an October 2025 [Internews study](#) on the media ecosystem in Sudan, the RSF and SAF maintain sophisticated media operations, funding digital platforms, social media campaigns and TV stations. Both are using a wide range of media manipulation



techniques, including deepfakes, false casualty reports, propagandistic content and recycled footage, including graphically horrifying images of violence. Ethnic-based incitement, particularly targeting Darfuri and Nuba communities, is circulating widely on social media.

[According](#) to the same study, disinformation campaigns, orchestrated by multiple bodies, including the RSF, SAF and remnants of the former regime, aim to discredit journalists and media outlets, undermine opposition voices and spread misleading content about the conflict and the humanitarian conditions.

SAF is seeking to overwhelm users' feeds on Facebook and Twitter/X through mass tweet production and retweets. SAF often produces reactive content to counter RSF statements, exaggerates its military victories and positions itself as protecting the unity and sovereignty of Sudan. According to the study, SAF also published misleading information on safe zones and understated the extent of atrocities.

The RSF produce more high-quality multimedia content, reportedly with assistance from lobbyists and public relations firms. Meta removed their Facebook presence in August 2023 due to violations of its policies on dangerous organisations. However, the RSF still have an active social media presence, including on Telegram, TikTok, Twitter/X and WhatsApp. RSF tactics include use of bot networks and systematic trolling operations targeting pro-revolution accounts, flooding them with hashtags such as 'the battle for democracy' and 'guardian of the glorious revolution'. The RSF have been accused of appropriating over 900 dormant Twitter/X accounts for their disinformation campaigns. They publish in English and use the language of democracy and liberalism to attract the attention of the international community.

The study states that Islamist groups have also intensified propaganda, with coordinated messaging strategies and systematic campaigns targeting civilian organisations and political leaders, accusing them of collaboration with the RSF and the pursuit of political power, and branding those advocating neutrality and calling for an end to the conflict as traitors involved in a conspiracy with foreign powers.

A February 2025 [report](#) by Ground Truth Solutions demonstrates how online disinformation and harassment campaigns that falsely portray humanitarian organisations and workers in Sudan as being in line with the RSF are becoming more prevalent. In December 2023, SAF forces allegedly opened fire on two Red Crescent vehicles, killing two people and wounding three, and later claiming the vehicles were part of an RSF convoy. These false narratives put aid workers at greater risk, erode trust and interfere with the delivery of aid. In response, many humanitarian groups have been forced to limit public communication about their services, reducing their ability to reach affected communities.

MEDIA OUTLETS SUSPENDED AND TAKEN OVER

On 3 April 2024, Sudan's Ministry of Media and Culture [suspended](#) the Abu Dhabi-based Sky News Arabia news channel and Saudi Arabia's state-owned Al Arabiya and Al Hadath channels for allegedly failing to renew their licences and for 'their inability to uphold necessary standards of professionalism and transparency'.

On 15 April 2023, RSF forces raided and took control of state TV headquarters in Omdurman and stopped its broadcast. The Sudanese Journalists Syndicate [reported](#) that the RSF had turned buildings owned by the Sudan Broadcasting Corporation into detention facilities, and had been selling its broadcasting equipment in local markets.

On 15 April 2023, local independent radio station Hala 96 shut down due to signal interruptions. In a statement to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the station's employees [reported](#) that RSF forces occupied the building weeks later, when a widely circulated video showed armed people using the office equipment and threatening the military.

The Sudanese Journalists Syndicate also [reported](#) that the equipment of the BBC and local independent TV channels Al-Balad, Al-Neel Al-Azraq and Sudania 24 was looted from their offices and sold in local markets.



RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN / WARRING PARTIES (SAF & RSF)

1. PROTECT CIVILIANS AND UPHOLD INTERNATIONAL LAW

- Immediately cease all attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, markets and IDP camps.
- Comply fully with international humanitarian law, including prohibitions on ethnic targeting, starvation tactics and sexual violence.
- Allow safe evacuation routes and guarantee civilian protection in conflict zones such as Darfur.

2. END REPRESSION OF CIVIC SPACE

- Halt arbitrary arrests enforced disappearances and harassment of human rights defenders (HRDs), journalists and humanitarian workers.
- Repeal or suspend emergency laws and provisions used to criminalise dissent, including misuse of the Criminal Act, Anti-Terrorism Act and Cybercrimes Act.
- Release all individuals detained for exercising fundamental freedoms.

3. ENSURE HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

- Remove bureaucratic and financial barriers imposed on CSOs and humanitarian organisations by bodies such as HAC and SAHRO.
- Guarantee unhindered, impartial humanitarian access across all areas including crossline and cross-border aid.
- Stop the weaponisation of aid and starvation tactics.

4. RESTORE MEDIA AND DIGITAL FREEDOMS

- End internet shutdowns and restrictions on digital communication platforms.
- Protect journalists and media workers; investigate and prosecute attacks against them.
- Refrain from disinformation campaigns and incitement to violence.

5. ALLOW CIVIL SOCIETY OPERATIONS

- Reverse decisions dissolving grassroots committees, trade unions and professional associations.
- Allow CSOs to operate freely without prior security approvals or surveillance.
- Protect women human rights defenders and ensure accountability for gender-based violations.

TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

1. STRENGTHEN MEDIATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

- Use coordinated diplomatic channels to apply pressure for a ceasefire and inclusive political process.
- Condition engagement with parties to the conflict on measurable human rights benchmarks.
- Support investigations by international bodies, including UN mechanisms and the ICC, into war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.
- Impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for violations.
- Expand documentation and evidence preservation efforts.



2. INCREASE HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT

- Substantially scale up flexible, long-term humanitarian funding, including for local responders such as Emergency Response Rooms.
- Prioritise support for women, displaced populations and survivors of sexual violence.
- Apply pressure for sustained humanitarian corridors and access guarantees.

3. PROTECT AND SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

- Provide emergency visas, relocation pathways and protection programmes for HRDs, journalists and activists at risk.
- Fund independent Sudanese media in exile and secure communication tools to counter shutdowns.
- Support digital safety and anti-disinformation initiatives.

5. ADDRESS TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

- Monitor and respond to harassment of Sudanese activists abroad, including passport denial and forced returns.
- Ensure host countries uphold protections for asylum seekers and political exiles.

