



Please cite as: EUAA, '[1.3.3. Access to information, misinformation and media landscape](#)' in *Sudan: Country Focus*, October 2026.

1.3.3. Access to information, misinformation and media landscape

○ (a) Control over access to information and digital communication

Since April 2023, both the SAF and the RSF imposed internet shutdowns as a mean to block information flows. The UN OHCHR noted that the recurring blackouts and internet shutdowns – often justified by authorities on security grounds but reportedly imposed arbitrarily – have significantly constrained access to information, restricted free expression, and isolated communities.¹⁹⁴ Besides this, widespread internet infrastructure failures and power outages have affected access to internet, hampering the delivery of aid and worsening the humanitarian crisis. For example, Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), volunteer-led community initiatives which relied on Whatsapp groups and other social media for processing humanitarian requests - such as evacuation needs, identification of safe routes and exits, transportation options, and access to basic needs - were unable to function during shutdowns leaving requests unprocessed.¹⁹⁵ For additional information on ERR see sections [2.1 on Perceived political opponents](#) and [2.4 on Humanitarian and health personnel](#).

Between 2024 and 2025, multiple nationwide outages were observed, mostly government- directed,¹⁹⁶ leaving citizens without phone or internet access for months at a time.¹⁹⁷ The SAF ordered the [suspension](#) of internet services in areas under RSF control, particularly across Darfur and Kordofan.¹⁹⁸ On July 2025, the Sudanese Telecommunications and Post Regulatory Authority (TPRA) announced the blocking of WhatsApp's voice and video call features, starting from 15 July 2025 until further notice. TPRA cited 'security concerns' and the need to protect the 'higher interests of the state'.¹⁹⁹

In February 2026 Access Now – a non-governmental global organisation working in the field on digital civil rights – reported that both warring parties have seized devices, damaged servers, and ordered companies to restrict access in parts or all of Sudan,

documenting four communication shutdowns in 2025, including one during the RSF final offensive on El Fasher in North Darfur.[200](#) Due to the restrictions, many users use virtual private networks (VPNs), satellite services like Starlink, or foreign SIM cards to stay connected, which involve high costs, technical barriers, and legal uncertainty.[201](#)

Despite being unlicensed in Sudan and subject to a 2024 ban on the import, possession, and use, Starlink devices reportedly entered the country through informal and illegal channels, largely controlled by the RSF. [202](#) The Sudanese army confiscated thousands of devices in areas under its control while, in territories controlled by the RSF, a 'black market quickly developed'.[203](#) Starlink internet services came at high costs[204](#) with single terminals reportedly sold for 2500 USD and a 500 USD annual tax per device enforced in many areas, especially in Darfur. A number of temporary internet cafés also emerged, where users could access the service for hourly fees ranging from two or three to six USD, depending on the location.[205](#) A COI report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands published in December 2025 noted that, based on consulted confidential sources, in some areas of the country 'Starlink cafés were under the control of one of the warring parties and the private ownership of a Starlink modem could arouse the suspicion of the same actors'. [206](#)

Media landscape

Sudan's media environment has shifted from 'a pluralistic and diverse post-revolutionary environment to a "parallel battlefield"' in which information warfare proceeds alongside the armed conflict.[207](#) Many of the warring groups have established their own media outlets,[208](#) causing independent journalists to be absorbed into partisan platforms or forced into silence. At the same time the information landscape was flooded with war propaganda, disinformation, rumours, and hate speech to fuel violence, racism, and division.[209](#)

Poor or absent internet connectivity, along with military control of online content in some areas, has created a significant digital divide across the country deepening 'social and geographic fragmentation'. Community radio stations represent key sources of information at local level, despite constraints in connectivity and resources.[210](#)

Press freedom in Sudan is 'under unprecedented strain' as journalists are 'arrested, intimidated or forced to flee'.[211](#) As of November 2025, more than 400 journalists had fled the country since the beginning of the conflict in April 2023.[212](#) In 2025, the Sudan Media Forum (SMF), a network of Sudanese journalists in Sudan and in exile, estimated that only 250 – 300 journalists remained active inside Sudan, compared with at least 1 500 journalists before the war. Journalists still operating in the country, including around 70 still reporting from conflict zones, were often working in hiding or anonymously.[213](#)

Information production and information access have remained vulnerable to frequent disruption due to violence, internet blackouts, threats to journalists, and ‘coordinated information manipulation campaigns.’²¹⁴ Since the beginning of the conflict in 2023, 90 % of domestic media infrastructure has been destroyed,²¹⁵ forcibly closed or brought under the control of the warring parties.²¹⁶ At the very beginning of the war, RSF forces seized state television and other media outlets in Omdurman, later looting equipment from state, local, and international broadcasters²¹⁷ and destroying media archives.²¹⁸ According to the Sudanese Journalists' Syndicate (SJS), after the war began, some 27 newspapers ceased operations, along with 32 radio stations and 8 television stations.²¹⁹ As a result, Sudanese increasingly rely on social media and Arab TV channels for news.²²⁰

○ (b) Online propaganda and disinformation

Disinformation and propaganda campaigns in Sudan can be traced back to 2019 and 2021.²²¹ In 2026, the proliferation of informal information networks including ‘propaganda hubs, fake pages and influencer hubs,’ was reportedly filling the void left by formal media, ²²² with large use of social media to circulate fabricated or misleading news to shape the public opinion.²²³

The 2026 report from Thomson Foundation concluded that ‘information manipulation is not a side effect of Sudan’s war but part of its strategy.’²²⁴ Even ordinary citizens face severe punishment for posting on social media.²²⁵ Internet freedom declined sharply, as security forces carried out widespread arrests in retaliation for people's online activity.²²⁶

In May 2025, so called ‘Report a Collaborator’ pages began appearing on Facebook.²²⁷ These pages claimed to provide a space for reporting alleged RSF collaborators, allowing for individuals to be identified on the basis of suspicion, ethnic or geographic affiliations.²²⁸ The human rights group Emergency Lawyers described it as a ‘tool for persecuting civilians’.²²⁹

According to a study on the media ecosystem in Sudan by Internews, published in October 2025, both the SAF and the RSF maintained sophisticated media operations, funding television stations, social media campaigns and digital platforms. A wide range of media manipulation techniques were being used by both, including deepfakes, recycled footage, false casualty reports and propagandistic content, including graphically horrifying images of violence. Meanwhile, ethnic-based incitement, particularly targeting Darfuri and Nuba communities, was circulating widely on social media. According to the same study, disinformation campaigns, orchestrated by

multiple actors, including the SAF, the RSF and remnants of the former regime, aimed to undermine opposition voices, discredit journalists and media outlets and spread misleading content about both the conflict and the humanitarian conditions throughout Sudan's digital ecosystem.[230](#)

According to an analysis conducted by Build Up, a global non-profit organisation specialising in digital conflict and peacebuilding research, a divergence in platform usage between warring parties was noted, with the RSF reportedly more active and popular on TikTok, and the SAF relying primarily on Facebook while civilian actors were absent online.[231](#) As reported by the study by Internews, the RSF produced high-quality multimedia content, reportedly with support from lobbyists and public relations firms. While their presence on Facebook was removed by Meta in August 2023 for violation policies on dangerous organisations, the RSF has remained active across other platforms, including X, TikTok, WhatsApp and Telegram. Their tactics reportedly included trolling campaigns targeting pro-revolution accounts and using automated accounts. The group has been accused of appropriating more than 900 dormant accounts on X. Their content is often produced in English.[232](#) The study found that Islamist groups have escalated their propaganda efforts, employing coordinated messaging strategies and systematic campaigns targeting political leaders and civilian organisations. These narratives frequently accused such actors of collaborating with the RSF and seeking political gain, while those advocating for an end of hostilities or maintaining neutrality were framed as 'traitors' and conspirators.[233](#)

The SAF appeared to be employing conventional online authoritarian tactics. It frequently countered RSF narratives while promoting claims of military success and positioning itself as a defender of Sudan's unity and information. The authors of the Internews study further noted the dissemination of misleading information, including inaccurate representations of designed safe zones and the downplaying atrocities.[234](#) Sudanese civilians have reportedly relied on social media channels as a key source of information for safety and planning movement. However, disinformation campaigns have reportedly undermined the reliability of these sources. Some individuals reported that they based their movements in conflict-affected areas on online content only to discover it was part of deceptive narratives that exposed them to higher risk of violence.[235](#)

Fabricated narratives targeting humanitarian actors became increasingly common.[236](#) Disinformation has also hindered humanitarian efforts as both warring parties accused local and international humanitarian organisations of siding with one or the other party, affecting their funding and operational capacity.[237](#) For additional information see section [2.1 on Perceived political opponents](#).

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