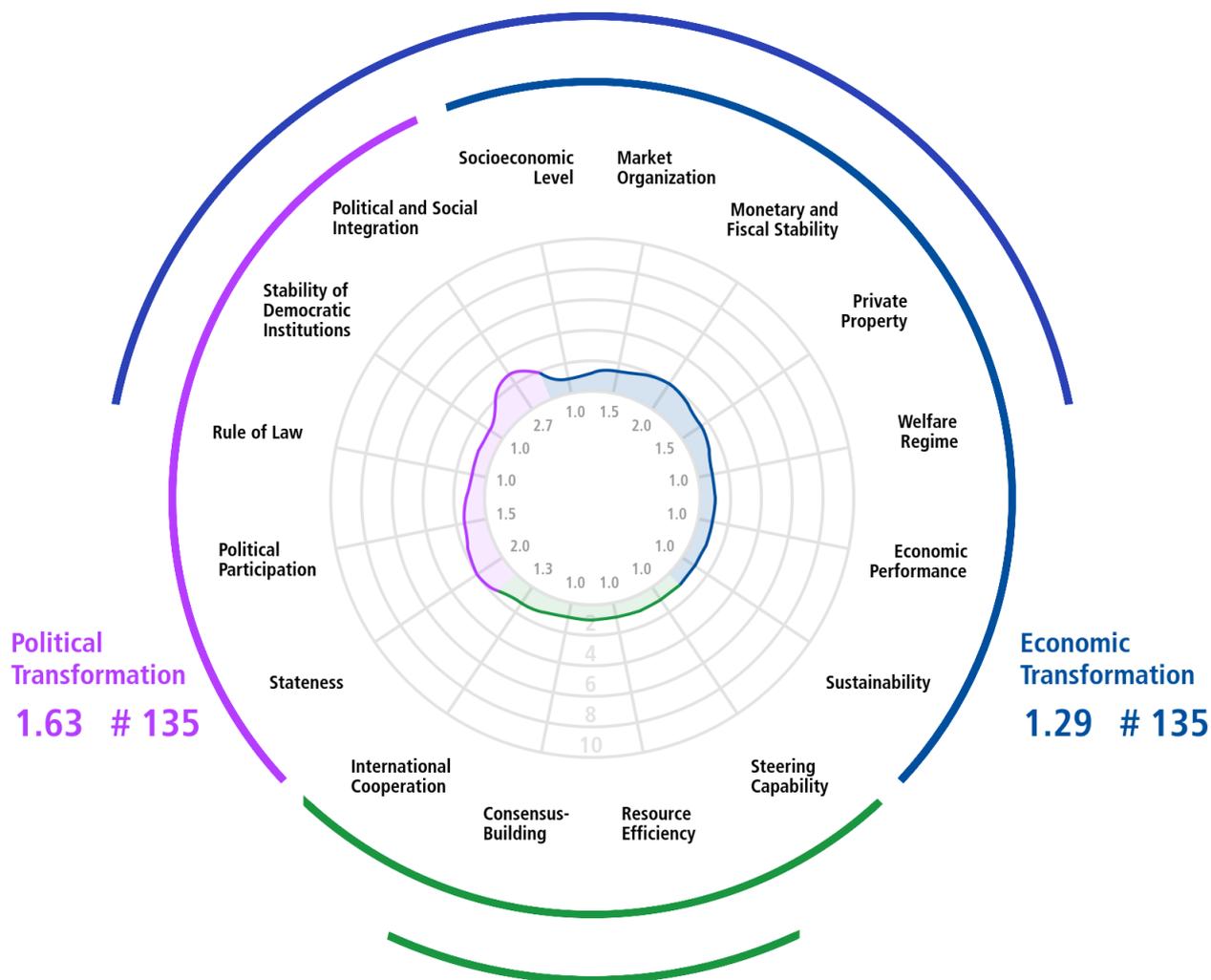


# Sudan

## Status Index

**1.46 # 136**

on 1-10 scale out of 137



**Political Transformation**  
**1.63 # 135**

**Economic Transformation**  
**1.29 # 135**

## Governance Index

**1.06 # 136**

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2026**. It covers the period from February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2025. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

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**Key Indicators**

Population	M	<b>50.4</b>	HDI	<b>0.511</b>	GDP p.c., PPP \$	<b>2127</b>
Pop. growth <sup>1</sup>	% p.a.	<b>0.8</b>	HDI rank of 193	<b>176</b>	Gini Index	<b>34.2</b>
Life expectancy	years	<b>66.3</b>	UN Education Index	<b>0.372</b>	Poverty <sup>3</sup>	% <b>49.7</b>
Urban population	%	<b>36.8</b>	Gender inequality <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.588</b>	Aid per capita \$	<b>27.8</b>

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2025. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

## Executive Summary

Between 2023 and 2025, Sudan experienced the eruption of a power struggle between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (known as “Hemedti”). The April 2023 war has received little global attention, but has devastated the country’s infrastructure and left the civilian population in a dire situation. Around 25 million people are facing acute hunger, 14 million have been displaced and the death toll has reached more than 50,000. The United Nations has described the Sudan war as the “world’s largest hunger crisis.” In May 2023, the RSF committed genocide and war crimes against the Masalit ethnic groups in Western Darfur. While formally still one country, Sudan has factually fallen into two parts: one controlled by the SAF and the other controlled by the RSF.

While the SAF narrative has portrayed the conflict as “the war of dignity” against its former ally and accused the RSF of an “anti-state rebellion,” the RSF’s public discourse has used anti-Islamist and pro-democracy rhetoric to legitimize its war. Both sides have committed grave atrocities against civilians, yet have also managed to mobilize popular support for their cause. In many instances, the political leadership exploited existing cleavages and structural conflicts to entice groups within society to take up arms and join the war.

Over the course of the review period, the RSF brought many areas under its control, including Khartoum, Gezira, Kordofan and Darfur. As a result, the government and the ministries moved from the capital to Port Sudan, where they remained under the control of the SAF.

However, the Sudanese state’s failure to perform its duties to protect citizens, provide basic services, and uphold law and order called its legitimacy into question. The 2019 Constitutional Declaration scheduled general elections for 2024. Instead, the ongoing war reinforced the authoritarian nature of the regime and intensified the concentration of political power in the hands of the generals, resulting in severe violations of civil rights, corruption and breaches of the rule of law.

Meanwhile, people have lost their property, businesses and livelihoods, resulting in high unemployment rates and skyrocketing poverty, especially among women and children. Minority groups and people from marginalized communities have been most affected by the war, having been subjected to daily human rights violations by combatants. As the capacity of state institutions to enforce regulations has been limited, the informal sector has expanded, the banking system has been adversely affected and inflation has remained uncontrolled. The destruction of educational infrastructure has not only resulted in up to 17 million Sudanese children being deprived of education, according to a UNICEF estimate, but also in unprecedented rates of emigration and brain drain. In this context, sustainability concerns have received no consideration; environmental regulations have been ignored; and war efforts have drained Sudan's human, financial and organizational resources.

Polarization and fragmentation among the political class and civilian population limited their ability to mobilize societal unity against the war. Nevertheless, Sudanese society has demonstrated considerable resilience and solidarity simply in order to survive. While the role of international humanitarian actors has been constrained by the warring parties' use of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war, local and grassroots self-help initiatives, such as the Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), have responded to citizens' needs for food, shelter and medicine through mutual aid and cooperation. Their actions have proved one of the few effective mechanisms for addressing humanitarian challenges during the war. These ERRs rely on the local grassroots action model, which refers to collective action initiated by different groups of male and female citizens freely and independently. In Sudan, these groups are described as local actors who aim to meet humanitarian needs and provide protection for civilians through various forms of solidarity and participation, and which are distinguished by their lack of political or ideological bias. However, civil society and volunteers have faced numerous challenges and crackdowns from authorities who feel threatened by civic engagement.

## History and Characteristics of Transformation

The April 2023 war is not Sudan's first war. Since the country's independence on January 1, 1956, war and conflict have been almost omnipresent features in Sudanese politics, interrupted by occasional peace agreements (such as the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement that ended the first South Sudanese secession war) and periods of relative peace in the following years. Between 1983 and 2005, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) waged South Sudan's longest rebellion against the central government. This second South Sudanese secession war resulted in the deaths of more than 2 million people and ended with the internationally mediated Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which granted the South Sudanese the right to self-determination. In 2011, South Sudan became independent after 99% of South Sudanese people voted for independence in the referendum. This resulted in Sudan losing 75% of its resources, as they were located in this southern territory.

While peace was being negotiated in South Sudan, another rebellion erupted in Darfur in 2003, led by the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), an umbrella group of different Darfur-based tribal militias that united as the SLM in 2002, alongside the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). As part of its counterinsurgency strategy, the government recruited the Janjaweed militia to curb the rebel armies, a strategy that resulted in 300,000 deaths, mass displacement and countless human rights violations. In 2009, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for former President Omar al-Bashir for crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Darfur. A series of peace negotiations in Chad, Libya, Nigeria and Qatar took place between the government and the Darfur rebel groups. The only tangible outcome of these agreements was the appointment of rebel leaders to nominal government positions, while the rest of the agreements remain unimplemented.

In recent decades, conflicts have also occurred in other regions of Sudan, including Kordofan and Blue Nile, where the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) controls areas such as Kauda. In Eastern Sudan, opposition forces of the National Democratic Alliance fought the central government in the late 1990s. Similarly, the Eastern Front, a coalition of rebel groups operating along the border with Eritrea, fought the central government over claims of underdevelopment and underrepresentation. A defining characteristic of these rebel movements is their own fragmentation into smaller factions, which has led to lengthy negotiations with the central government that in turn result in peace agreements that remain largely unimplemented, and do not bring positive change to the lives of affected communities in the war zones.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), an offshoot of the Janjaweed militia originally recruited to fight rebels in Darfur, was formally established in 2013 and generously supported by the state budget. Former President Omar al-Bashir empowered the RSF at the expense of the SAF in an attempt to counter potential coup threats. It was also a key ally of the European Union in its "Khartoum Process," which beginning in 2014 was meant to curb irregular migration from East Africa toward Europe. The RSF was chosen to provide "boots on the ground" troops for this mission and, as a result, it obtained generous funding that increased its capacity and empowered it in the long run. Even in that period, members of the RSF committed human rights violations and exploited migrants for personal gain.

In December 2018, a popular uprising began in Sudan, with people taking to the streets to protest ongoing economic hardship and rising prices for basic commodities. However, the protests' demands quickly expanded to calls for regime change, citing structural corruption and human rights violations. The regime responded violently to the protests, causing hundreds of deaths, but the protests persisted despite the crackdown until the ouster of former President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. Al-Bashir had ruled Sudan for three decades. The Transitional Military Council (TMC) took power following al-Bashir's ouster, but the protests continued, demanding full civilian rule in the country. The Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), a coalition of political and civil groups, entered into negotiations with the TMC on behalf of the protesters, resulting in the signing of the Constitutional Declaration in August 2019. This established a power-sharing government between the military and civilians, with the Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC) at its head. Its president, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who was already highly

decorated under al-Bashir, signed the Juba Peace Agreement in October 2020 on behalf of the transitional government, along with several armed groups under the banner of the Revolutionary Front, including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Movement/Minni Minnawi faction (SLM/MM) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N). As a result, JEM leader Gibril Ibrahim was appointed minister of finance, and SLM/MM leader Soliman "Minni" Minnawi was appointed governor of Darfur, both in 2021.

However, two key armed groups were absent from the signing of the agreement: the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu and the Sudan Liberation Movement/al-Nur faction (SLM/al-Nur) led by Abdel Wahid Mohamed al-Nur.

The members of the former al-Bashir regime remain active, operating both inside and outside Sudan. The leaders, who mostly reside in Türkiye and Qatar, played a key role in mobilizing support for the October 2021 military coup against the transitional government, which was eventually orchestrated jointly by the SAF and RSF. They also worked intensively to undermine the political process and the Framework Agreement, ultimately inciting the war.

In the interim time, the RSF has expanded both economically and politically, establishing international connections through trade and mercenary services.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

## Transformation Status

### I. Political Transformation

#### 1 | Stateness

Since the war between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) erupted in April 2023, the state's monopoly on the use of force has existed only in key parts of the country, such as Port Sudan and eastern Sudan. Large areas of the country, including Khartoum, Kordofan and Darfur, are controlled by the RSF. As a result, the Sudanese state has failed to fulfill its duties to protect citizens and enforce law and order, as manifested in the establishment of a state within the state. The civilian population has been most affected by the deterioration of state services. This deterioration results in the absence of the rule of law, food insecurity, the spread of epidemics, brain drain, communal disputes and economic failure.

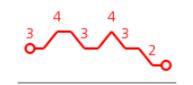
The current war erupted in April 2023 as a power struggle between the two generals: Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, commander of the SAF, and Mohamed Hamdan Daglo ("Hemedti"), commander of the RSF. In October 2021, they jointly orchestrated a military coup that toppled the transitional government, which was facing serious challenges including an economic crisis and deeply flawed security sector. However, tensions between the generals grew after they failed to form a government. An internationally mediated political process led to the Framework Agreement, which included security-sector reforms. The two generals clashed over these security-sector reforms, especially the chain-of-command issue. The war began in Khartoum and spread to other regions, including Gezira, Kordofan and Darfur. The war has devastated the country and destroyed infrastructure, causing mass displacement of civilians and a high death toll.

Question  
Score

Monopoly on the  
use of force

2

'06 '26 10



Since the outbreak of the “April 23 War,” new narratives questioning the state’s legitimacy have emerged. For example, members of the RSF and their sympathizers have described the conflict as a war against the 1956 state, meaning the post-independence state of Sudan. According to this narrative, successive national governments have exploited certain regions and have not guaranteed citizens equal access to development, which has remained centralized in the capital and the northern regions. Regions such as Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile have remained neglected by successive postcolonial governments that have failed to provide adequate services or invest in infrastructure, while extracting resources from these regions.

Citizens from these regions have felt marginalized because they have been denied access to government positions, education and employment. Consequently, they claim the war is a tool to dismantle the oppressive state and replace it with a new system in which all Sudanese will enjoy equal rights.

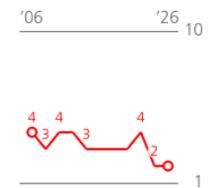
In postcolonial Sudan, citizenship is practiced through an ethnic hierarchical order that is biased toward ethnic groups from northern and central Sudan and discriminates against groups from western and southern Sudan, including Darfur, Kordofan and the Blue Nile region. This practice of citizenship is reflected in the development gap and imbalance between these regions, with development concentrated in northern and central Sudan while the rest of the country remains neglected. In the context of the current war, the government uses deprivation of citizenship as a weapon against political opponents who are denied the right to renew their passports.

Most high-ranking officers in the SAF, which has been the de facto ruler of Sudan since the war erupted in April 2023, are affiliated with the Islamist movement. When the former Islamist regime came to power in 1989, it sought to Islamize all aspects of life and ensure that only Islamists were hired across government institutions, including the army. As a result, most of the current leadership is influenced by Islamist ideology and deploys religious dogma in public speeches. Pro-SAF Islamist militias define the war as “jihad” (understood as a “just war”) to protect Islam, although all the warring parties are mostly Muslim.

Although the 1998 constitution ostensibly guaranteed the freedom of religion in Sudan, the state adopted Islam as the state religion and imposed Islamic law as the source of legislation. Sudanese law implemented Islamic penal codes, including punishment for alcohol consumption, as well as Islamic family law that discriminates against women. These laws imposed Islamic dress codes on women, and changing religion from Islam is considered apostasy. The government does not address discriminatory practices against Christian minorities in Sudan, such as forcing Christian students to study Islam in public schools.

#### State identity

2



#### No interference of religious dogmas

2



Before the war, most of the state's administrative structures were concentrated in the capital, Khartoum, or to a lesser extent in other cities. This left the majority of the population unserved. Nationwide, World Bank data from 2022 showed that 64.9% of the population had access to a basic water source, with 63.2% having access to electricity. In 2020, just 36.9% had access to basic sanitation.

This already insufficient situation has deteriorated significantly since the outbreak of the April 2023 war, which began in Khartoum and spread to other regions. The war has destroyed a great deal of infrastructure and paralyzed the economy. Most ministries and government institutions have moved their headquarters to Port Sudan, an SAF-controlled area, where they provide services to a limited segment of the population.

Therefore, the state fails to fulfill the most basic civil functions of a state apparatus with regard to regulation, administration and implementation. Most of the population now relies on self-help organizations and Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) established during the war to provide basic services and relief to civilians.

Despite the challenges of providing basic services to civilians during the conflict, the state did make significant efforts to deliver administrative services by activating administrative centers in the provinces controlled by the military. Many of these services, especially those related to education, were facilitated through self-help and volunteering.

## 2 | Political Participation

The Constitutional Declaration, signed in 2019 after seven months of popular uprisings, stipulated that the transitional period should last three years and end with general elections in 2024, leading to civilian rule. However, in November 2020, the Constitutional Declaration was amended to include the Juba Peace Agreement, thus extending the transitional period to start from the date that the Juba Agreement was signed (October 2020).

The Constitutional Declaration gave the Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC) the right to appoint the head and members of the Independent Election Commission. In 2021, the Transitional Government began discussions to implement this step but made little progress before the military coup in October 2021 halted the process entirely. Since the war erupted in April 2023, holding an election has appeared impossible unless the war ends.

Basic administration

2

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1

Free and fair elections

1

'06 \_\_\_\_\_ '26 10



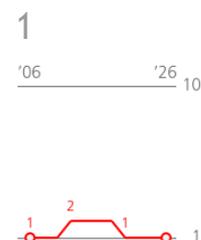
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The military is the most significant veto power in Sudan, and has systematically undermined the country's democratic transition. In October 2021, it orchestrated a coup against the transitional government, arrested the transitional cabinet, fired all civilian members of the sovereignty council and declared a state of emergency. The military leader justified the move by calling it a "corrective action" due to fragmentation among civilian forces. However, many people denounced the move and held mass demonstrations against the military coup. Security forces met these protests with violence, causing dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries, and arresting many activists and members of political parties. The international community condemned the military coup and stopped financial aid to the transitional government, and the African Union (AU) suspended Sudan's membership. The military continued to rule Sudan until war broke out in April 2023 between the SAF and the RSF.

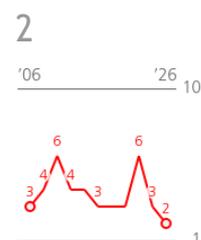
Since the war erupted in April 2023, authorities have cracked down on civil society actors, political party cadres, members of the resistance committees, humanitarian and voluntary workers, ERRs, medical doctors and any voices raised in opposition to the war. All these groups have been accused of collaborating with the RSF and labeled " sleeper cells " that facilitate its advance. For instance, in April 2024, army intelligence forces arrested civilian and political activists and attacked political party offices, including the Communist Party office in the city of Sinjah in southeast Sudan. In the same month, the general prosecutor issued arrest orders for former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and the leaders of the Sudanese Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces, or Taqadam ("Progress"), the civilian coalition that called for an end to the war, accusing them of "undermining the constitution and committing war crimes." In July 2024, the intelligence service arrested 60 activists in West Kordofan, accusing them of being supporters of the RSF. The authorities that implemented these detentions included the intelligence service, the military intelligence service and other military forces. They used violence during these detentions against unarmed civilians. All these attacks and arrests have violated the freedom of association and assembly, and represent severe restrictions on assembly and association for civilian activists opposed to the war, resulting in the deterioration of civic and political efforts in Sudan.

SAF and RSF, the two parties to the conflict, have classified civilians into two categories: "Mutawin" (متعاون; collaborators), who, according to the armed forces' classification, work with the RSF and seek protection from them, and "Fillo" [فلول; remnants (of the old regime)], meaning civilians who, according to the RSF's classification, do not cooperate with them, even if they are neutral. By referencing these classifications, each party asserts the right to violate civilians' rights of civilians under this classification.

Effective power to govern



Association / assembly rights



Since the eruption of the April 2023 war, the freedom of expression has been grossly violated in Sudan, with authorities harassing independent media that present any perspective critical of the SAF. For instance, in December 2024, the minister of information ordered the closure of Sudania 24's offices in Cairo after the channel broadcast an interview with a leader of the Sudanese Congress Party. The interview, which was widely shared by many Sudanese on social media, presented a viewpoint that was critical of the war and dispelled many misconceptions about the role of Taqadam, the civilian coalition against the war, angering Islamists and supporters of the SAF.

Both warring parties have used telecommunications as a weapon of war, interrupting internet and telecommunications in many areas and depriving the civilian population of information and of their right to express themselves freely. This has led to the spread of misinformation in Sudan.

### 3 | Rule of Law

In theory, all Sudanese constitutions have included the separation of powers. However, this principle has never been realized. Instead, power has consistently been concentrated in the hands of the president, which has resulted in prolonged political violence, a lack of freedom and the absence of the rule of law. Many political forces have called for a constitutional conference at which all forces would participate in developing a fixed constitution that enforces the separation of powers, but no such event has as yet materialized.

The ongoing war has severely undermined Sudan's justice system. Judicial facilities, including the presidency of the judiciary and several trial chambers, have been bombed, looted and destroyed, resulting in the system's collapse.

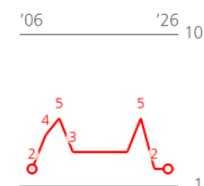
In May 2024, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan met with a delegation from the judiciary to review the judiciary's performance and its efforts to establish the rule of law in the country. The meeting addressed plans to establish new courts and a Supreme Court in the city of Ad-Damazin, the capital of Blue Nile state in southeastern Sudan.

The parliament has not met since its dissolution after the 2019 coup.

Justice was one of the slogans of the December 2018 revolution, which called for judicial reform as a means of combating corruption and achieving an independent judiciary. There have been continuous calls to restructure the judiciary, as the former Islamist regime, which ruled Sudan for 30 years until 2019, systematically destroyed it by firing qualified judges and replacing them with Islamist loyalists. Violations of judicial independence reached a point at which decisions on certain controversial cases were being made at the presidential palace. After the ouster of the former regime, serious discussions about judicial reforms took place, especially among independent judges. However, all these efforts were derailed by the October 2021 coup and the outbreak of war in April 2023.

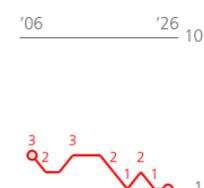
Freedom of expression

2



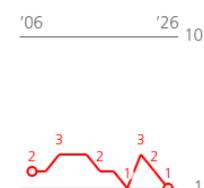
Separation of powers

1



Independent judiciary

1



In March 2023, the cases concerning the killing of protesters during the December 2018 revolution were transferred from the suspended special courts to ordinary criminal courts in Khartoum. This move not only exposed the corruption within the justice system, but also showed that the junta lacked the will to achieve justice for the martyrs.

The Sudanese army's generals have ruled the country single-handedly since they orchestrated the October 2021 coup. The military's absolute grip on power has been reinforced since the war erupted in April 2023. As a result, mechanisms to hold public servants and politicians accountable have been completely obstructed. In cases where the generals engage in corrupt practices or break the law, they face no consequences with respect to legal prosecution or public contempt. Until the war ends and power is handed to civilians, officeholders who break the law and engage in corruption can do so without fear of legal consequences or adverse publicity.

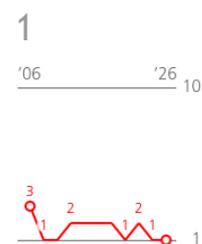
Since the war erupted in April 2023, civil rights have been systematically violated by the state and non-state actors, including the SAF and the RSF. The rights to life and security are severely threatened, with civilian casualties treated as mere collateral damage in the course of the war. For instance, in RSF-controlled areas, civilians have faced kidnapping, arbitrary executions, detention and torture, resulting in thousands of deaths. Sexual violence and rape are widespread, well-documented and used as weapons of war by both warring parties. Since the start of the war, many civilians have been killed by SAF airstrikes targeting residential areas of Khartoum and Darfur. No mechanisms or institutions exist to protect residents from these violations of their rights.

Civilians have also been subjected to human rights violations because of their ethnicity, including during massacres committed by the SAF against the Canabi population in Gezira state and in Khartoum's marginalized South Belt. The SAF justified these crimes by asserting that these groups were collaborators with the RSF. In May 2023, the RSF committed genocide and war crimes against African ethnic groups, such as the Masalit in West Darfur.

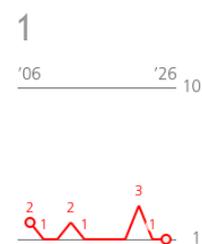
The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 15 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) are spread across Sudan, a situation considered one of the world's worst displacement crises. Because of the war and the lack of an adequate humanitarian response, IDPs face dire conditions, including famine, collapsed infrastructure and a lack of health services.

LGBTQ+ people in Sudan face legal and social challenges that heterosexual people do not experience. Homosexuality is criminalized in Sudan, and LGBTQ+ people face social discrimination.

#### Prosecution of office abuse



#### Civil rights



#### 4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

After the end of al-Bashir's 30-year regime, the TMC and the FFC signed a constitutional declaration in August 2019. A transitional government composed of civilians and the military was formed and given the goal of leading the country toward democracy. The constitutional declaration laid out a road map for the establishment of democratic institutions, including a legislative council, local and regional governments, the judiciary, and a public administration. However, none of these institutions were established, and in October 2021 the military orchestrated a coup that derailed the democratic transition. Since April 2023, the country has been embroiled in a devastating war, and no democratic institutions have been established since.

Although political actors' rhetoric has consistently referenced democracy as a desirable political system in Sudan, this has not been matched by concrete action. Even during the transitional government period, civilian political forces showed little enthusiasm for establishing democratic institutions, despite having claimed to be committed to democracy before the uprising. Military generals also said they wanted to hold elections and ensure that people could choose their leaders. In the event, they orchestrated a military coup that seized power and derailed the transition to democracy.

#### 5 | Political and Social Integration

Most traditional Sudanese political parties were established in the 1940s, during a period of national movements against colonial rule in Sudan. At that point, the parties were united around the goal of ending colonialism and gaining independence. However, this unity shattered when Sudan became independent. Fragmentation came to characterize the political parties' struggle for power. For instance, Sudan's oldest political parties – the Umma Party and the Unionist Party – originated in the Ansar and Khatmiyya religious orders and later split into several smaller parties. The Muslim Brotherhood, which aimed to implement Islamist rule in Sudan, arrived in Sudan from Egypt in the 1940s and later split in 1999 into the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Popular Congress Party (PCP), with the PCP led by Islamist ideologue Hassan al-Turabi. While the NCP ruled Sudan for 30 years, the PCP joined the opposition, and its leader was imprisoned for several years. One characteristic of the Islamist movement's rule was that it consolidated power by promoting Islamist loyalists to state positions while dismissing anyone who was not Islamist. During its rule, the country split in two, economic deterioration and corruption reached unprecedented levels, and human rights violations were widespread.

Performance of democratic institutions

1

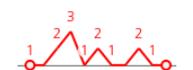
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Commitment to democratic institutions

1

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Party system

3

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The Communist Party, the main rival of the Islamist movement, advocates socialism and social justice and opposes Islamist rule. The party is active among workers and in professional unions. Another significant party is the Republican Party, whose main goal is to establish a secular political system.

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) has fought successive governments in the South since 1983. In 2005, the SPLM became a political party after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the government of Sudan. Initially, the SPLM sought to unite all marginalized groups in Sudan around the New Sudan vision, led by the late John Garang. However, this vision ended when the South split off following a referendum in 2011. After the South's secession, a branch of the SPLM was established in the north under the name Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which is based mainly in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states. Like other political parties, the SPLM-N suffers from fragmentation, and has split into three parties and armed groups: one led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, the second led by Malik Agar, and a third led by Yassir Arman. In 2023, Agar joined the military government as the deputy chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council.

In recent years, there have been several initiatives, such as the Sudan Call and the National Democratic Alliance, seeking to unite political parties around certain goals. However, these fragile alliances quickly collapsed amid severe political differences. The main challenge to the stability of Sudan's party system is the army's frequent encroachment on power, which has weakened political parties and contributed to severe fragmentation and polarization.

In recent years, there has been a range of interest groups claiming to mediate between society and the political system, but their role has been limited by polarization and fragmentation. One example is the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), an organization that includes various Sudanese trade unions, including those of journalists, medical doctors and lawyers. Established in 2012, the SPA calls for raising the minimum wage and standards of living for workers. The SPA gained momentum during the December 2018 revolution, when it led protests until the regime's ouster in April 2019. However, after the regime's ouster, disagreements, fragmentation and splits surfaced, which diminished its role in the Sudanese political scene.

The Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) is a political and civilian alliance composed of several political parties and civil society organizations from various political and intellectual backgrounds and schools. Established in January 2019, the FFC entered into negotiations with the Military Council that ruled Sudan following the ouster of Omar al-Bashir. The negotiations ended with the signing of the Constitutional Declaration, which initiated the transitional period – a fragile partnership between civilians and the military. However, fragmentation and disagreements emerged within the FFC, including the withdrawal of the Communist

Interest groups

2

'06 '26 10



Party and the SPA and a split among the armed groups that formed the FFC-Democratic Alliance. The latter split paved the way for the October 2021 coup and the April 2023 war.

The Sudanese Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces, or Taqadam (“Progress”) is a political alliance established in April 2023, after the war erupted between the SAF and the RSF. Composed of political and civilian forces and led by former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdoug, Taqadam aims to stop the war and achieve sustainable peace and civilian rule in Sudan.

Taqadam’s activities include participation in international conferences and regional initiatives aimed at ending the war in Sudan and improving the humanitarian situation. However, Taqadam faces severe criticism and has been accused of collusion with the RSF. This accusation followed a political agreement between Taqadam and the RSF, signed in Addis Ababa in January 2024. Taqadam declared that it had invited the SAF to this initiative without receiving any response, but it is seen as biased toward the RSF, as it does not condemn the group’s violations. All of these factors have isolated Taqadam, and it is not seen as representing the Sudanese people’s interests.

In the ongoing war between the SAF and the RSF, the RSF has justified its fight against the SAF as an effort to change the old authoritarian system of government with a new governance system providing equal rights to all citizens. It has further declared that it is committed to implementing democracy. Many think that this rhetoric is deployed only to appeal to the West and the pro-democracy movement in Sudan, and that since the RSF is a militia based on family and tribal ties, it cannot be genuine in its avowed support for democracy. This rhetoric has eroded support for democracy as a system among many Sudanese citizens, who believe that Sudan is not ready for democracy and can only be ruled by the military. The war has also affected the pro-democracy voices in Sudan, as they are often accused of being traitors to the state and sympathizers with the RSF.

In addition, many Sudanese do not altogether approve of liberal democratic norms, especially those that conflict with citizens’ religious orientations and social customs and traditions, as Sudanese society is still considered to be conservative. This tension was highlighted after women requested the transitional government to sign the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW agreement) in 2020, a move that was widely opposed within Sudanese society more broadly.

In 2019, the year of the Sudanese revolution, the Arab Barometer reported that only 42% of Sudanese said that democracy was preferable to any other system of governance. According to the survey, democracy was most popular among older generations and the highly educated segment of society.

Approval of  
democracy

n/a

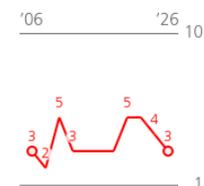
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Since the war erupted in April 2023, polarization and mistrust among the population have escalated as society has split in its support between the two warring parties, the SAF and the RSF. Despite this, self-help initiatives based on cooperation and mutual aid have emerged, reflecting a strong sense of solidarity and trust among citizens. For instance, the ERRs that emerged during the war are a societal initiative developed by the Resistance Committee that led the revolution in 2019. ERR volunteers have helped evacuate thousands of people from war zones; provided social services such as shelter, water and medicine; and maintained hospitals. ERRs manage community kitchens that provide food to thousands of families trapped by the war and have also helped respond to cases of conflict-related sexual violence. ERRs are funded by donations from Sudanese living abroad, local NGOs and INGOs, but such funds are not always available. ERRs have also been harassed by the parties to the conflict, which have sought to exploit them in the war. Their members have furthermore been subjected to torture, kidnapping and murder.

Social capital

3



## II. Economic Transformation

### 6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

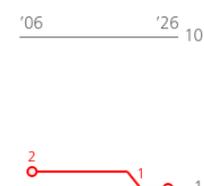
The overall level of socioeconomic development in Sudan has deteriorated significantly since the outbreak of the war between the SAF and the RSF in April 2023. The war has devastated the country and destroyed infrastructure and all social services. More than 14 million people have been displaced, and more than 50,000 have lost their lives. The majority of the population has lost their means of livelihood, and the economy is collapsing. As a result, the poverty rate has skyrocketed, especially among women and children – in total, around 25 million Sudanese are facing acute hunger. Those with access to sufficient funds have managed to escape war zones, either as internally displaced people in safe areas or by fleeing the country as refugees and settling abroad. People from marginalized communities have been most affected by the war, and have been subjected to human rights violations by combatants.

Question

Score

Socioeconomic barriers

1



The Human Development Index (2022) measures Sudan as having “low” human development ranking it 170th of 193 countries with a score of 0.516. Both the ranking and the absolute score have declined in recent years due to the war. In 2022, the overall loss in the HDI score due to inequality was 35.9%. On the Gender Inequality Index, Sudan scored 0.548, indicating high inequality.

In the most recent available Gini index, from 2014, Sudan scored 34.2. In the same year, 49.7% of the population was considered poor and lived on less than \$3.65 a day. No more recent data are available.

Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP	\$ M	34229.5	51666.9	39898.3	<b>49909.8</b>
GDP growth	%	-1.9	-1.0	-29.4	<b>-13.5</b>
Inflation (CPI)	%	359.1	138.8	-	-
Unemployment	%	11.0	7.5	-	-
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	1.5	1.1	1.4	-
Export growth	%	8.0	12.0	-37.1	<b>16.4</b>
Import growth	%	-0.5	8.7	-12.7	<b>-21.5</b>
Current account balance	\$ M	-2620.2	-4442.8	-	-
Public debt	% of GDP	189.6	186.9	259.9	<b>261.4</b>
External debt	\$ M	22976.2	22440.5	22580.6	-
Total debt service	\$ M	3064.7	188.5	207.5	-
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	11.0	17.9	17.4	<b>16.5</b>
Public education spending	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	0.8	1.2	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	0.9	-	-	-

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

## 7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

The outbreak of war in Sudan in April 2023 served to expand the dominance of the informal sector, particularly amid the war-induced absence of an institutional framework for market organization. The war brought imports to a standstill and obstructed production and manufacturing. Marketplaces were physically destroyed, and shops closed in fear of looting.

Facing the uncertainty of war, civilians tried to stock up on essential goods. However, goods quickly disappeared from the market, becoming scarce. In many areas, many traders and shop owners exploited the crisis by raising prices on previously stored goods, as most of the population had lost their livelihoods and faced conditions of famine.

According to 2022 statistics, 94.4% of all employment was informal at that time. However, the situation can be assumed to have deteriorated further since the outbreak of the war.

Regulations and laws to protect competition and prevent monopolization are not enforced. Since the eruption of the “April 2023 war,” the work of state institutions responsible for competition policy in Sudan has been disrupted. Along with other government institutions, ministries have partially relocated from Khartoum to Port Sudan, the current seat of government. However, these ministries have limited capacity to enforce competition policy and legal frameworks efficiently and consistently. This chaotic situation breeds abuses, such as predatory pricing and concentration, which put the civilian population at risk of famine and starvation.

Sudan’s traditional exports have included gold, livestock, gum arabic, oil and cotton. After South Sudan’s secession in 2011, which led to the loss of oil resources that comprised 70% of Sudan’s exports, the country’s ability to import capital goods was greatly reduced. Sudan’s trade balance shows that food imports exceed food exports. Challenges to the liberalization of foreign trade in Sudan include a lack of policies to expand export-oriented industries; inadequate infrastructure, including roads linking Sudan with neighboring countries; insufficient regulations to limit imports; and limited international movements of goods and people.

Sudan has trade agreements with neighboring countries including Eritrea, Chad, Egypt and Libya. Since the outbreak of the war in April 2023, foreign trade has been significantly disrupted. However, two exceptions apply: The country saw increased trade with Ethiopia, with Ethiopian goods coming to fill Sudanese markets, even though insecurity at the border between Sudan and Ethiopia disrupted the flow of goods. Trade with neighboring Chad has also flourished since the war erupted, especially in the Darfur region.

### Market organization



### Competition policy



### Liberalization of foreign trade



Sudan's government publicly announced a halt to relations with the United Arab Emirates, alleging that it supported the RSF in the war. Yet gold exports to the UAE have continued as usual and may even have increased. Both the formal and informal sectors are involved in Sudan's lucrative gold production, with official foreign and local companies producing gold alongside informal miners and manufacturers. A portion of this production is exported through official channels, while the majority is smuggled to the international market. Currently, a significant portion of Sudan's gold production is located in areas controlled by the RSF, but substantial quantities continue to be extracted from areas controlled by the SAF.

Of the 37 banking and non-bank financial institutions operating in Sudan, five dominate the market. One, the Industrial Development Bank, is owned by the government. The largest private bank is the Bank of Khartoum. Other private banks are partly foreign owned, according to the Bank of Sudan's last published annual report from 2018. All banks operate according to Islamic principles.

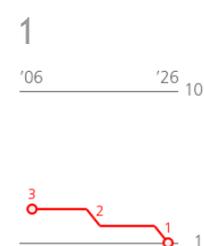
Sudan's banks have lost half their capital in the ongoing war that began in April 2023. Many have been looted and destroyed, and the Sudanese pound has lost value. Consequently, many banks have stopped operating, and up to 70% of branches have closed. Many have laid off staff, and the entire banking system is on the brink of collapse, as many cannot repay loans after losing their investments. In general, the banking system suffers from structural issues related to long-term policies, but the war has further worsened the situation.

Even before the war, only 15% of Sudan's population had access to a bank account, and large parts of the country, home to millions of people, lacked any bank branches. In these areas, traditional Hawala networks have provided basic financial services and have continued to do so since 2023, according to a 2024 report by the World Bank-affiliated Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP).

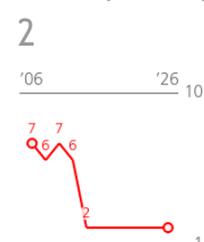
## 8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

The Central Bank of Sudan (CBS) is in charge of monetary policy in Sudan, particularly in SAF-controlled areas. The RSF has not established a central bank in areas it controls. The Sudanese government is unable to pursue monetary stabilization policies because of the war that erupted in April 2023. Widespread insecurity across the country has halted local production, which has severely affected the state budget and the banking system. Monetary stability in Sudan has been undermined by several factors: the disappearance of cash reserves at the CBS, elevated inflation, exchange rate instability, and high demand for hard currency resulting from instability in import and export processes. The inflation rate reached 194% in August 2024, up from 138.8% in 2022 (World Bank CPI data). This rapid inflation is associated with the devaluation of the local currency and declining purchasing power for the local population.

Banking system



Monetary stability



Although war and the destruction of infrastructure have created a devastating situation, these issues are not new. Sudan has suffered from structural problems such as political instability, the inability of the state to control resources, and weak monetary institutions for most of its existence as an independent country.

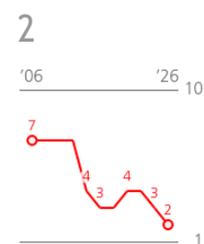
In December 2024, CBS introduced new SDG 1,000 bills in an effort to revitalize its looted banking sector, mandating that old bills be exchanged for the new ones through official bank accounts. The government argued this would also help strip the RSF of funds the militia had looted since the outbreak of the April 2023 war. However, critics warned that the new bills would hurt the millions of Sudanese living under RSF control, putting their savings at serious risk.

In parallel with this step, the CBS also announced its fiscal policy for 2025, which includes revising its currency categories, issuing new ones and continuing exchange rate liberalization policies. The new fiscal policy prioritizes microfinance, seeks to reduce inflation rates and aims to support commercial banks in overcoming the destructive effects of war. The policy targets total reserves at 10% of GDP. In the same vein, CBS identified entities barred from commercial bank financing, including federal and regional governments, foreign exchange companies, and money transfer companies. However, the implementation of these policies is constrained by long-term structural deficiencies and corruption within the banking system.

State finances are beyond effective control. Sudan is heavily burdened by external debt that, in the IMF's 2019 Chapter IV consultations, was forecast to reach \$61.6 billion in 2025, equal to 213% of GDP. For more than five decades, Sudan has failed to service its debt for various reasons, including structural economic problems, unsound economic policies, and increased borrowing by successive governments that did not invest the loans in development projects or infrastructure. The burden of external debt is aggravated by structural corruption and the mismanagement of public funds, which has led to the failure to service it. In 2021, Sudan was on track for inclusion in the IMF and World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which would have provided debt relief. However, this step was blocked by the 2021 military coup, which ousted the transitional government led by former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

In the latest available statistics, the World Bank noted that in 2023 – the year the war broke out – the current account balance showed a deficit of \$4.4 billion, total annual debt service was \$207.5 million and government consumption amounted to 17.4% of GDP.

Fiscal stability



## 9 | Private Property

Property rights, which were already previously poorly protected, have been grossly violated since the outbreak of the April 2023 war. For instance, the RSF has broken into civilians' houses, taken them over, and looted and vandalized private property. The violations have also extended to government buildings, university campuses, hospitals and businesses. During the war, RSF members have taken photos and posted videos of themselves and their families relocating to the homes of displaced civilians.

Dispossession of farmers from their land has been a serious problem, aggravated by the war. Credible reports from local sources and international organizations such as La Via Campesina estimate that about 70% of the country's farmers have been displaced. In areas under RSF control, vast tracts of land have been sold or simply given to international agricultural corporations, especially those based in the UAE, the RSF's closest ally.

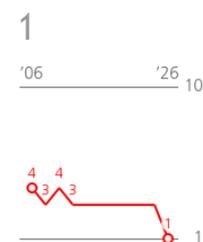
Members of the RSF argue that stealing and looting citizens' property, which they consider war booty, is justified as part of their struggle toward "democracy."

The April 2023 war has created adverse conditions for Sudan's private sector, as many private enterprises have suffered destruction, looting and capital losses. Many private enterprises in Khartoum have closed or relocated to safer areas within Sudan or abroad. For example, many private companies have found it safer to relocate to neighboring or regional countries such as South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, the UAE, Saudi Arabia or Egypt. Some private companies have resumed some elements of their operations in safe provinces of Sudan controlled by the military, such as Port Sudan and Atbara.

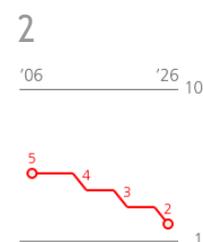
## 10 | Welfare Regime

As a result of the April 2023 war, many Sudanese citizens have come face-to-face with the absence of social safety nets in the country. When the war broke out, most people who thought they had stable jobs suddenly lost their livelihoods and income, and found themselves unemployed and facing poverty. Despite this desperate situation, neither the government nor the private sector has provided citizens with any form of compensation such as cash transfers, subsidies or food programs. The few state-funded welfare structures and social safety nets that operated before the war, such as the retirement fund and the Zakat Chamber, have stopped functioning since the war erupted. However, local grassroots self-help groups such as the ERRs have stepped in to bridge this gap, providing support and shelter to people facing dire situations. Members of the Sudanese diaspora have played a key role in supporting the ERRs, regularly sending remittances to fund key projects such as community kitchens and medical assistance.

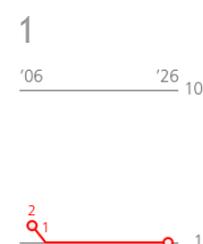
Property rights



Private enterprise



Social safety nets



The health care system, both public and private, has largely collapsed. Both the number of medical facilities and the quality of treatment are often insufficient with respect to existing demand. The emigration of doctors and caregivers is also a serious problem. In 2022, life expectancy in Sudan was estimated at 65.6 years. However, because of the war's high mortality among children, women, young people and other people at risk, this figure is probably much lower now. Public health expenditure amounted to 0.8% of GDP in 2021 and 1.2% of GDP in 2022. Currently, this percentage is significantly lower because of high levels of spending on the war.

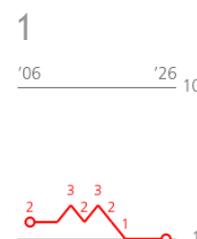
The ongoing war has exposed severe levels of discrimination. Access to quality education is limited to families that can afford to travel and relocate to other countries, either because they have sufficient savings or support from family members living abroad. Within Sudan, education is available only in limited areas controlled by the SAF, while the rest of the population is denied access. Unemployment rates have skyrocketed since the war began. However, the few available jobs go to those with connections to the military. Women in Sudan have been the most affected by discriminatory conditions, particularly due to conflict-related sexual violence committed by RSF soldiers in Darfur and Gezira.

Sudan's LGBTQ+ community faces widespread discrimination under the law and due to societal norms. Following the outbreak of war, such individuals have faced the risk of being killed if their sexual orientation were to be exposed. Individuals from non-Arab ethnic groups face discrimination in education and employment. However, since the outbreak of war, they have also faced a higher risk of being accused of collaborating with the RSF, which can lead to torture or execution.

Non-Muslims also face many risks. In River Nile State, for example, a group of Christians and church staff were arrested by military intelligence and accused of being RSF collaborators. Members of opposition political parties also face discrimination and detention because of their political affiliation. Refugees from Ethiopia, Eritrea and South Sudan face daily discrimination and are categorized as enemies. In the context of the war, existing legal frameworks are neither implemented nor enforced.

In 2018, literacy rates were 65.4% for males and 56.1% for females. The female-to-male enrollment ratio (GPI) was 0.9 at the primary education level, 1.0 at the secondary level and 1.0 at the tertiary level. The gross enrollment ratio was 77.8% at the primary level, 48.4% at the secondary level and 17.2% at the tertiary level. In 2023, women made up 29.6% of the total labor force.

Equal opportunity



## 11 | Economic Performance

The war has devastated the economy, weakening overall performance. Most civilians have lost their sources of income, and up to 90% of the population has fallen into poverty. The unemployment rate has skyrocketed from an estimated 11.4% before the war. The war has paralyzed numerous economic sectors, including trade, agriculture and industry. Government revenues have fallen sharply, rendering it unable to pay salaries in many sectors, including for teachers and service-sector employees. Most economic institutions, including factories and markets, have been partially or completely destroyed.

The closures of Khartoum International Airport and various ports and border trade points have led to a decline in exports, especially with regard to gold and gum arabic. While Sudan previously accounted for around 70% of total exports of this latter good, it is now moved out of the country almost entirely through illegal channels. Although there are no precise figures for the losses caused by the war, U.N. Security Council estimates put the economic losses from the collapse of the legal gum arabic trade since the outbreak of the war at \$200 million as of early 2025.

The banking system has suffered looting and destruction, resulting in the loss of local currency and increased prices for goods and services. The failure of the agricultural sector has left the civilian population facing conditions of famine. Overall, the stoppage of production and the destruction of human capital has significantly worsened economic performance.

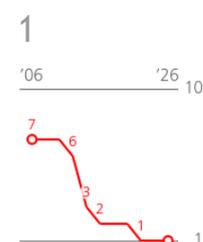
In 2023, GDP per capita was 3.137 current international dollars, a dramatic 14.3% decrease from the previous year, while gross capital formation was still 2.0% of GDP (down from 14.3% of GDP in 2019). There are no up-to-date available data on inflation, foreign direct investment or current account balances.

## 12 | Sustainability

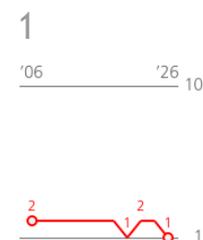
Key environmental legislation exists, such as the 2019 Sudan National Forestry Policy Statement. That document was prepared with the support of the Food and Agricultural Organization with the goal of updating Sudan's forestry policy. The policy seeks to create a "greener Sudan" by countering the deforestation and degradation of forest cover caused by illegal cutting, the misuse and mismanagement of cutting permits, agricultural expansion, and demand for wood as fuel. This goal is to reverse the loss of forest cover by addressing the issues of deforestation, desertification and environmental degradation. In 2020, a Solar Transformation Program was launched to capitalize on decentralized renewable energy opportunities, and to provide new options for the expansion of electricity access to rural communities in Sudan.

However, in the nearly two years since the war began in April 2023, environmental concerns have been dropped altogether from the public agenda, and environmental regulations have been ignored. Aerial bombardments by the SAF and RSF have

Output strength



Environmental policy



harmed the environment; displaced people and animals; and destroyed infrastructure such as sanitation facilities, settlements, forests, agricultural projects, water networks, transportation and marketplaces. The massive displacement of populations has put pressure on host communities' environments, leading to degradation such as deforestation, water pollution and waste accumulation. Both warring parties have cut trees to finance the war. The bombing and burning of factories and oil refineries have caused leaks of toxic chemicals, and the resulting CO2 emissions have harmed the natural environment, which has negatively affected the population's livelihoods and health. The failure of the agricultural seasons has led to malnutrition and famine. Landmines used by combatants in various areas of Sudan harm soil and kill wildlife and people.

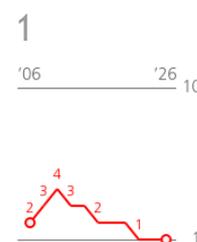
Sudan has suffered a serious setback in its education, research and development sectors since the outbreak of war in April 2023. The war has destroyed most educational infrastructure in affected regions including Khartoum, Gezira, Darfur and Kordofan. The destruction has spanned university campuses, secondary and primary schools, public libraries, and research institutions. In relatively safe states, schools have been used as shelters for internally displaced persons who have fled war zones. These developments have partially halted education in the country. UNICEF estimates that up to 17 million Sudanese children have been deprived of education because of the war.

Some universities attempted to continue teaching online, but the destruction of telecommunications infrastructure and the lack of reliable internet connections posed serious challenges to staff and students' ability to continue. Some private universities tried to open branches outside Sudan in neighboring countries such as Egypt, Rwanda and Saudi Arabia, but this did not prove practical, as many families could not afford to travel to the universities. Moreover, the high fees charged were beyond most families' budgets. In December 2024, the High School Certificate examination was held in areas controlled by the SAF, while the RSF refused to allow the exam in the areas under its control. Some students had to travel long distances – in some cases thousands of kilometers – to take the tests at the few exam centers designated by the authorities. Students in eight regional states were deprived of the right to sit for the exam because of the war.

Many teachers and university staff have not received their salaries since the beginning of the war, but have continued to work voluntarily under poor conditions. The biggest challenge is the ongoing brain drain, as many teachers and university staff have relocated outside Sudan and are not expected to return after the war.

Sudan scored 0.366 on the U.N. Education Index in 2022, already among the lowest such figures worldwide. In 2018, the estimated literacy rate was 60.7%. However, the situation has deteriorated substantially since the war. No data on current public expenditure for education and R&D are available, but it is expected that all available funds will be channeled toward the war.

Education policy /  
R&D



## Governance

### I. Level of Difficulty

The governance capacity of Sudan's political leadership is limited by structural constraints inherited from past regimes' policies, which cannot be corrected overnight. Extreme poverty is one of these constraints. The Multidimensional Poverty Index estimates that in 2024, 70% of Sudan's population was considered poor or vulnerable to poverty. This is the result of decades of underdevelopment and conflicts that have displaced large swathes of the population and undermined economic activity. Because poverty is a deeply rooted social, economic and political problem, it fuels high rates of crime and corrupt behavior by those in a position to act accordingly, and has prevented the country from progressing. It has also contributed to high rates of emigration among Sudan's skilled population. The resulting brain drain has posed further challenges to the provision of necessary private and public goods.

Sudan's uneven development has exacerbated these issues. Services have been concentrated in the capital, Khartoum, and a few other large cities and towns, while the rest of the country has remained underdeveloped with limited service provision. This pattern has disadvantaged regions such as Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile, leading to grievances and conflicts. Because of long-term disputes and wars, the government has prioritized military spending, reducing infrastructure investment in such a way as to generate severe infrastructure deficiencies.

In addition to its own internal conflicts and political instability, Sudan is surrounded by unstable neighbors such as Libya, the Central African Republic, Chad, South Sudan and Ethiopia. The fragile security situation in these countries poses a serious threat to Sudan's stability and has contributed to prolonging the war in Sudan.

Sudan is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change globally. It is already exposed to rising temperatures, erratic seasonal rainfall, prolonged droughts and recurrent floods that increasingly threaten both the environment and humans, destroy vital infrastructure, and place huge pressures on the government.

The secession of South Sudan in 2011 negatively affected Sudan's economy, as Sudan lost more than 70% of its former oil resources with the split. The COVID-19 pandemic further undermined economic activity and exposed the weaknesses of Sudan's health care system.

Structural  
constraints

10



1

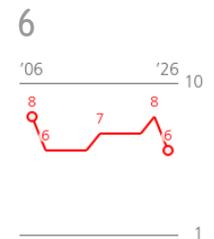
Sudan has a well-established tradition of civil society that formed before Sudan's independence. Groups from this tradition led the national movement for independence in 1956, with examples including the Graduate Congress and the White Flag Association. Since independence, civil society has contributed to many aspects of public life, including within the political, social and cultural spheres. For example, women's associations have promoted girls' education and sought to reduce harmful practices in society such as female genital mutilation. Many trade unions and professional associations helped organize society to revolt against dictatorships in 1964, 1985 and from 2018 to 2019.

The country's culture of civic participation has long been robust, encompassing political parties and various social and charitable associations that contribute to the transformation of society. For example, the majority of the infrastructure built and services developed in rural northern Sudan has been realized by self-help associations using contributions and remittances from villagers. Active civic associations engage in areas such as environmental protection, human rights, civic education and the promotion of democracy. In times of crisis and disaster, Sudanese society shows strong resilience and solidarity – such as during the ongoing war, when local ERRs have responded to fulfill people's needs for food, shelter and medicine. However, civil society faces numerous challenges and even crackdowns from authorities who feel threatened by civic engagement.

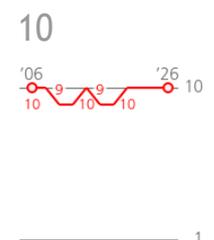
Since independence in 1956, Sudan has witnessed many long and intense conflicts. The ongoing conflict between the SAF and the RSF, which started in April 2023, has further elevated the confrontational nature of Sudan's politics, with the government refusing to compromise or reach a settlement with rebel groups. Polarization is widespread along political, social, ethnic and religious lines. In particular, society is divided between supporters of the military, the RSF or civilian forces. Both warring parties, the SAF and the RSF, have mobilized large segments of society to take up arms and join the war, using hate speech directed at opponents (or even “neutrals”) and thus inciting further violence. This inflammatory rhetoric has normalized high levels of violence against the civilian population. Both sides have committed serious human rights violations. The RSF, in particular, has launched attacks on civilians, revived genocidal campaigns against the African Masalit tribe in Western Darfur and expanded its war crimes to the rest of the country.

More than 20 years ago, the SAF and the RSF jointly led genocidal campaigns against African ethnic groups in Darfur. The war in Darfur (2003 – 2008) left 300,000 dead and 2 million people displaced. The International Criminal Court (ICC) charged government officials and leaders of the Janjaweed militia with genocide and war crimes committed in Darfur. In 2009, the ICC issued a warrant for the arrest of former President al-Bashir. In 2013, President al-Bashir formalized the Janjaweed militia and renamed the group the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) under the command of Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, known as “Hemedti.” The RSF was generously funded by

#### Civil society traditions



#### Conflict intensity



the government and took a lead in the second Darfur conflict (2014 – 2015), during which it committed war crimes including murder, torture and rape, as well as engaging in the looting and plundering of property. In 2017, the RSF became part of the national security forces and gained control of the gold mines in Darfur, expanding the militia's economic empire. In 2019, after the ousting of al-Bashir, Hemedti became the deputy head of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, the highest governing authority in the country.

A number of armed rebel groups are active in Darfur, including the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), which has split further into the SLM/al-Nur, led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur, and SLM/MM, led by Minni Minnawi. Another movement active in Darfur is the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), led by Gibril Ibrahim, the current finance minister.

## II. Governance Performance

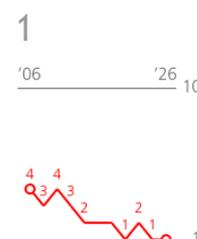
### 14 | Steering Capability

Sudan's military leadership, which has been the de facto ruler since the October 2021 military coup, does not set strategic priorities for the country, relying instead on ad hoc measures. This is evident in the government's management of its external relations, which are extended to countries willing to supply its war efforts with weapons, regardless of the high price the country pays in resource extraction. Government policies lack guiding concepts, focus on reaping maximum short-term political benefit and prioritize the preservation of power over longer-term strategic priorities. This has been evident in the failure to protect civilians caught in the middle of the war, whose displacement, injuries or deaths are treated as no more than collateral damage – a stance that will have a long-term negative impact on the country's development.

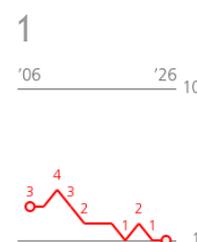
The military leadership is unable to implement any of its policies in Sudan. At the beginning of the war in April 2023, the military leadership declared that it would need one to two weeks to end the war so people could return home. After nearly two years, the war has not ended, and more than 50,000 Sudanese have lost their lives and 14 million have been displaced. Many people have lost trust in the military government's ability to implement its plans.

Question  
Score

Prioritization



Implementation



The ongoing conflict in Sudan demonstrates the government's lack of innovation and flexibility in policy learning. In the months before the war, many academic experts and practitioners warned the military leadership about the need to implement innovative policies to prevent a war between the SAF and the RSF. The government ignored these reports and did not learn from the country's past experiences with war or from the experiences of other countries in the region that have experienced conflict. Had the government been flexible enough to take advantage of the political process that was in progress before the war, the country might have avoided this devastating conflict. The government's continual choice to prioritize the preservation of power over the realization of social progress raises questions about its ability to replace failed policies with innovative ones.

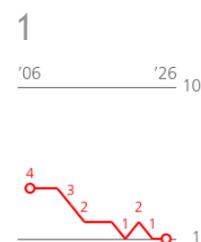
### 15 | Resource Efficiency

Since the outbreak of the war in April 2023, most government resources have been redirected to finance the war effort, limiting state services. Government administrative personnel have been displaced or have fled war zones, resulting in inefficiency and an inability to carry out their work. Over the past two years, information on the state budget has not been made public, and no effective independent audit has taken place. Given the high cost of the war effort, state debt is expected to have increased substantially. Like government personnel, the public administration has been paralyzed since the start of the war.

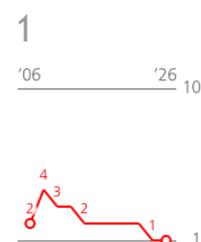
Policy coordination and the ability to align conflicting objectives into a coherent government policy require conditions of stability and peace. Currently, Sudan is divided between areas controlled by the SAF and other areas controlled by the RSF. Each has its own government and policies, leaving citizens caught between conflicting directives. A stark example of this was in December 2024, when the Central Bank of Sudan introduced a new currency in the hope of restricting the flow of cash into the hands of the RSF. As a result, use of the old currency was banned, and carrying the old currency in areas controlled by the SAF was considered a legal offense. Meanwhile, any individual found carrying the new currency in areas controlled by the RSF was liable to be tortured and killed.

As a result of the outbreak of war in Sudan in April 2023, corruption has flourished, and the government has failed to contain it due to the absence of integrity mechanisms. As fighting between the RSF and the SAF has spread across Sudan, the capacity of anti-corruption institutions to contain corruption has diminished, and the government has failed to implement any anti-corruption policies. This includes a lack of auditing of state spending, an absence of accountability for officeholders, and a lack of transparency in or access to information. In RSF-controlled areas, the militia has established numerous checkpoints that levy daily taxes on the population. Citizens who fail to pay may be tortured or killed. The government has raised fees for all government transactions to exorbitant levels. In this chaotic situation, citizens are subjected to abuses of power by government officials who exploit this situation for purposes of rent-seeking.

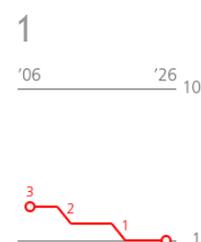
#### Policy learning



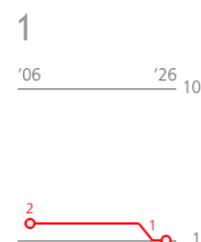
#### Efficient use of assets



#### Policy coordination



#### Anti-corruption policy



## 16 | Consensus-Building

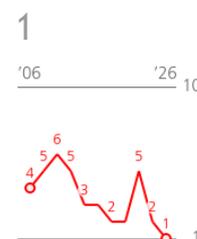
The political history of Sudan since independence has been characterized by extended periods of military dictatorship followed by short-lived civilian democratic governments. The various transitions from dictatorship to civilian rule through elections indicate a genuine desire among the Sudanese people to establish democracy, which was the goal of the popular uprising in December 2018. However, after the regime was ousted in April 2019, the SAF and the RSF acted against the revolution and undermined the democratic transition. Finally, the April 2023 war between these two forces altogether derailed the transition to democracy. Military authoritarianism now defines the current political orientation of the Sudanese state.

There are deeply rooted differences among political actors in Sudan over which economic policy the country should adopt. Some political parties, such as the Communist Party, call for national solutions to economic issues and a central role for the state in the economy. Other parties advocate on behalf of more liberal economic visions based on collaboration with international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and have called for the implementation of policies such as lifting state subsidies on basic commodities and fuel. The current state of market organization in Sudan can be described as a centralized authoritarian kleptocracy.

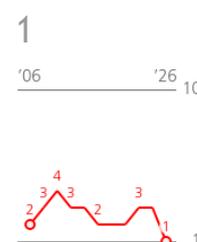
In April 2019, after months of protests, the pro-democracy movement in Sudan succeeded in ousting the Omar al-Bashir dictatorship that had ruled the country for three decades. However, the Transitional Military Council subsequently seized power and obstructed the transition toward full civilian rule. After months of negotiations between civilian political forces and the military, a fragile partnership agreement brought a military-civilian transitional government to power in April 2019. This was meant to lead the country toward a democratic transition at the end of the transitional period. However, the military orchestrated a coup in October 2021 that derailed the democratic transition. With the outbreak of the war between the SAF and the RSF in April 2023, advocates of democratization were unable to overcome the anti-democratic veto actors – namely, the military and security forces.

The political leadership in Sudan exploits existing and long-term conflicts and cleavages in society. Since the start of the 2023 war, many leading SAF officers and figures associated with the former Islamist regime have deployed inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech against civilian political forces, associating them with the RSF. These repeated accusations have placed extreme pressure on civilian activists, putting their lives at risk and undermining civil society. During the review period, military officers openly used hate speech to target particular ethnic groups allegedly sympathetic to the RSF, inciting sympathizers to commit violence against them.

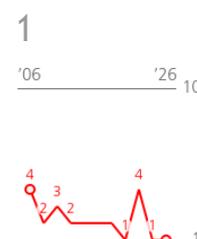
Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors



Cleavage / conflict management



As a result of the political leadership's failure to manage conflicts and bring society together, many people have been detained, tortured or killed. Large numbers have lost their lives. Efforts to bridge deep divisions and cleavages and overcome hostilities, whether made by domestic or international actors, have been dismissed and discredited by the leading figures on both sides.

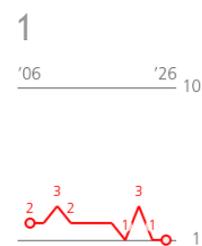
Throughout the history of Sudan, civil society has played a central role in the country, including in the realms of politics, development, culture and the economy. Civic, economic and professional interest associations; religious and charity organizations; intellectuals; scientists; and journalists have interacted with and actively engaged in social and political developments in Sudan. This was evident in civil society's significant contribution to the December 2018 revolution and the resistance to the 2021 military coup. However, over the course of nearly two years of war in Sudan, civil society actors faced an unprecedented crackdown by both the SAF and the RSF, which halted civil society's activities in Sudan. Many civic organizations limited their activities to humanitarian work and stopped performing the political and social roles they had previously played. Many members of civil society fled Sudan to neighboring countries such as Uganda and Egypt and established their activities there. There is a crucial need to involve civil society in postwar settlement and reconstruction efforts.

Given Sudan's violent past, which has featured serious human rights violations up to the point of genocide in Darfur, as well as more recently against the Masalit, it appears clear that the military leadership in Sudan lacks moral awareness of the importance of reconciliation for a democratic transition and that it does not recognize past or current injustices. The military leadership is implicated in impunity, war crimes and human rights violations against civilians. In recent years, there have been some attempts by civil society to initiate a reconciliation process in Sudan, and even to include it in the Constitutional Declaration of 2019, but these efforts were limited and remained only on paper. The massive violations of human rights committed by the parties to the current war make a reconciliation process necessary. However, to achieve any reconciliation in Sudan, it will also be necessary to stop the war, involve all stakeholders and reform the military.

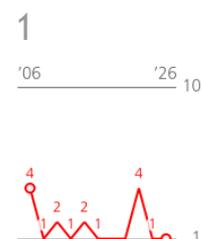
## 17 | International Cooperation

In the context of the ongoing April 2023 war, implementing any long-term strategy for development must be tied to achieving peace and ending the conflict. In recent months, there have been several initiatives by international actors to mediate and end the current war, such as the Sudan Peace Talks in August 2024 in Geneva, led by the United States. The SAF, the de facto political leadership in Sudan, was absent from these peace talks because their participation was contingent on implementation of the Treaty of Jeddah. That treaty was signed between the SAF and the RSF in May 2023, but was not implemented. Nevertheless, the government's absence from the Geneva

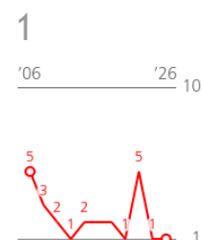
### Public consultation



### Reconciliation



### Effective use of support



peace talks indicated that it was not serious about ending the war. It also suggests that the government does not make use of international assistance that aims to end the war, and considers it to be undesired political interference.

The government of Sudan accuses the UAE of providing military, logistical and financial support for the RSF, and of thereby prolonging the war and destabilizing the country. A number of reports have indicated that the UAE uses its influence in neighboring countries to send support to the RSF via Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Libya. The UAE's interests in what Sudan has to offer include the country's vast agricultural land, animal resources, gold and, most importantly, control of the Red Sea. In November 2023, tension between Sudan and the UAE reached unprecedented levels when the assistant commander-in-chief of SAF, General Yasser al-Atta, openly accused the UAE and Chad of supporting the RSF. A U.N. expert report published in January 2024 confirmed that the UAE was providing military support for the RSF. Consequently, in March 2024, the government of Sudan filed a complaint with the U.N. Security Council regarding UAE aggression.

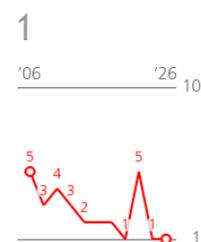
The government of Sudan does not act as a credible and reliable partner in its relations with the international community. In the context of the war that has been going on for nearly two years, the government has repeatedly obstructed humanitarian aid provided by international organizations aimed at supporting millions of Sudanese facing conditions of famine. The government often hinders the delivery of humanitarian aid by detaining aid convoys for months, imposing unreasonable requirements and accusing humanitarian aid workers of being biased toward the RSF.

In December 2024, amid fighting between the SAF and the RSF and in solidarity with the Sudanese people, the European Union imposed sanctions on individuals belonging to the warring parties in Sudan for threatening the country's peace, stability and security. The four individuals are known to have committed serious human rights violations against civilians and to have violated international humanitarian law.

In January 2025, the U.S. government (then led by President Joe Biden) imposed sanctions on SAF commander Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, accusing his forces of committing war crimes such as attacking civilians and targeting infrastructure. The United States has accused the SAF of repeatedly violating international humanitarian law and of neglecting commitments contained in the Jeddah Declaration. The SAF's strategy of obstructing humanitarian aid and refusing to participate in the Geneva peace talks indicates that the SAF is reluctant to cooperate with international efforts.

Despite Sudan's suspension from the African Union (AU) following the October 2021 military coup, the AU has prioritized the Sudan crisis by proposing a road map to end the country's war. This road map includes a permanent cease-fire, the deployment of troops to protect civilians and the creation of open humanitarian corridors. However, as Sudan's government declined to cooperate with the AU, this initiative failed to materialize.

Credibility



In recent years, the interests of Sudan's political leadership have shaped the country's regional cooperation and relations with its neighbors. Since the war began in April 2023, Egypt has been siding with the SAF against the RSF, and has provided military support such as fighter aircraft, pilots and training. In response, the RSF has banned the export of Sudanese goods to Egypt from the areas under its control. The UAE is seen as a supporter of the RSF against the SAF, providing military support to the militia. Analysts believe there is a hidden conflict between Egypt and the UAE going on in Sudan, as both have extractive and economic interests in the country; these are believed to be shaping their influence, with each siding with the warring party most able to advance these interests. Both Ethiopia and Libya are siding with the RSF, with Libyan General Khalifa Haftar providing military support to the RSF. Eritrea is interested in exploiting the war to renew its influence in eastern Sudan, and wants to push back against the UAE's increasing influence in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea is currently hosting SAF training camps. In November 2023, General Yasser al-Atta, the army's assistant commander-in-chief, accused Chad of supplying the RSF with weapons via its airports.

There have been several international initiatives to end the war, for instance mounted by the United States, Saudi Arabia, the African Union and Türkiye. However, all have failed to achieve a permanent cease-fire. In December 2024, Sudan's government requested the intervention of the League of Arab States (LAS) to support Sudan during the crisis, especially given the perceived negative role played by other regional actors such as the African Union and countries such as the United Arab Emirates. Despite these various local, national, regional and international efforts and initiatives to end the war, the humanitarian crisis in Sudan resulting from the war remains one of the most neglected crises of the present time.

## Regional cooperation

2



## Strategic Outlook

The war that began in April 2023 disrupted Sudan's transition to a civilian government as outlined in the Framework Agreement signed by the military and civilian actors in December 2022. The war has devastated the country's infrastructure, displaced more than 14 million people and left 25 million facing conditions of famine.

At this point, the country's urgent needs require immediate attention. The most pressing need is to end the fighting and ensure the protection of civilians, who have suffered under high levels of violence from both warring parties, with millions experiencing displacement and dire hunger. The political leadership should prioritize the provision of basic services to civilians trapped in war zones, including security, food, health care and social services. Minority groups facing discrimination and violence must be protected. Ethnic profiling and attacks on civilians based on their ethnic identity must end. Conflict-related and gender-based sexual violence must be addressed, and rape must never be used as a weapon of war. Urgent health services must be provided for women who have been subjected to sexual violence in various parts of Sudan.

The military leadership should demonstrate its commitment to transferring power to a civilian government by limiting the concentration of power, protecting civil rights, countering corruption and enforcing the rule of law. The political and civilian forces need to surmount their differences and unite to help end the war and create a vision for postwar reconstruction.

The displacement and movement of large numbers of people from the capital to the provinces as a result of the ongoing war, along with the transfer of health and commercial services, should be seen as an opportunity that could lead to accelerated development in the provinces after the end of the war. Within society, there is an urgent need to address and counter the hate speech that is today spreading through populations and on social media, which is dividing communities and fueling the war. It is essential to promote the values of equality, anti-discrimination, inclusivity and diversity in Sudanese society through media and via online platforms.

The international community needs to leverage its influence to exert greater pressure on the warring parties to end the war and halt the supply of weapons that prolong the conflict. International humanitarian actors need to intensify their efforts to assist the civilian population, which faces dire conditions in Sudan including hunger, displacement and a lack of basic services. Local initiatives such as the Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), which have responded to civilians' needs during the war, need to be promoted and supported by national and international actors alike.

The effective participation of women volunteer workers in humanitarian responses should be promoted further, as this can help reduce gender bias in communities whose prevailing popular structures are dominated by older men, and where restrictions are placed on women's participation in humanitarian responses.

Sudan's deteriorating economy urgently needs revival through national and international mechanisms. Immediate attention should be given to education and environmental concerns, which have been neglected over the past two years.

A crucial step toward sustainable peace must be a reform of the security sector in which the state limits the recruitment of militias to fight its wars. The territory's various military forces, including the RSF and the rebel groups fighting in Darfur, need to be integrated into a single national army. In addition, justice issues must be addressed, and an independent legislative council should be established. Achieving justice and ensuring accountability for those who have committed atrocities – past and present – will ultimately be crucial to Sudan's transformation.