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News media silenced and at least seven journalists killed in Sudan's two years of war

In the war between the regular army and the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary that has rocked Sudan for the past two years, at least seven journalists have been killed, one is missing, some fifteen media professionals have been detained and two of them are still behind bars. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has documented the unpunished crimes committed by the warring parties and calls on the international community to urgently pressure both sides to protect journalists.

"There is a real dissonance between the humanitarian tragedy of two years of war in Sudan and the lack of media coverage. In North Darfur, access to the terrain is so difficult that the media are struggling to confirm the number of deaths after attacks on civilians. Both sides are equally guilty of abuses against media professionals that have been met with complete impunity. The regular army must immediately release reporter Hassan Hamed and the Rapid Support Forces must release media contributor Mamoun Hassan Hamid. Until peace is restored, the international community must pressure both warring parties and their allies to guarantee that journalists can work independently and securely throughout country.

Martin Roux

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Article on the impact of the war on journalists

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- **Seven journalists killed due to their work**

According to RSF information, at least seven journalists were killed between July 2023 and November 2024: *Sudan National Broadcasting Corporation (SNBC)* journalists **Issam Hassan Morjan** and **Sami Abd el-Hafidh**; [Halima Idris Salim](#) from the independent television channel *Sudan Bukra*; **Ahmed Youssef Arabi** from *Blue Nile Channel* television; **Khaled Balel**, journalist and media director at the Sudanese Supreme Council for Media and Culture; investigative journalist **Muawiya Abdel Razek**, a contributor to the Sudanese online newspapers *Al-Jarida*, *Akhir Lahza* and *Al-Akhbar*; and cameraman [Hatem Maamoun](#), a contributor to *Sudania24*.

Five of the murders took place near Khartoum, the capital, a sixth took place in El Fasher, a city in the state of North Darfur, and a seventh in Gebeit, a camp in the Red Sea State. Four of these crimes were attributed to the Rapid Support Forces, the other three to unidentified armed groups.

Abdel Rahman Warab, a journalist with the Sudanese news agency *SUNA*, remains missing. He was reportedly abducted from his home in Khartoum by fighters from the Rapid Support Forces in June 2023.

- **Seventeen media professionals imprisoned, two still in custody**

"I was terrified that my jailers would find a copy of *Al-Midan*," recalls **Haitham Dafallah**, who was held for more than two months between January and March 2024 by the Rapid Support Forces in the Khartoum suburbs. Before the war, Dafallah wrote a column for this daily newspaper in which he was an outspoken critic of the paramilitary group. His colleague **Sidig Dalaï**, who was imprisoned for a similar period in May 2024, also had experience with military intelligence cells in Ad-Damazin, a city in Blue Nile state, when he was "blindfolded and put into a van" while on his way to an administrative appointment.

In all, 17 media professionals have been imprisoned and arbitrarily detained by the Rapid Support Forces or the regular army since 15 April 2023. They include freelance journalists and employees of the Sudanese public network *SNBC*, the Qatari channel *Al-Jazeera*, the Egyptian television station *Al-Ghad* and the Lebanese news website *Tayyar*. In most cases, the detention lasted several days,

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although the detention of **Ali Tarek Arash**, a reporter from the daily *Al-Jarida* who was arrested by regular army soldiers following an article on the abuses suffered by internally displaced persons, lasted almost ten months. Freelance journalist **Aladdin Abu Harba** was captured for eight days by an armed group presumed to be close to the Rapid Support Forces, then released in exchange for a ransom delivered by his relatives.

Two journalists remain behind bars to this day. **Hassan Hamed**, a reporter for *Independent Arabia*, the Arabic-language version of the British news website *Independent*, was arrested by government forces on 9 October 2023 while reporting from Port Sudan, a stronghold of the regular army on the Red Sea. Media contributor **Mamoun Hassan Hamid**, currently held at an unknown location, was arrested by the Rapid Support Forces in January 2024.

- **Journalists injured, surveilled, threatened, and harassed online**

At least four media professionals have been injured either while they were reporting or due to their coverage of events, including photojournalist **Muhammad Nour el-Din**, *SNBC* journalist **Walid Shahlabi**, columnist **Ismat Ibrahim** and freelance journalist **Aïcha Sammani**. **Fath Al-Rahman Hamouda**, a journalist with the Sudanese online media *Al-Taghyeer*, was held at gunpoint by armed forces fighters in the town of El-Obeid in August 2023. Journalist **Fatima Ali Saeed**, employed by the pro-Islamist newspaper *Al-Wifaq*, told Reporters Without Borders that she had been sexually assaulted and harassed by the Rapid Support Forces because of her work.

According to RSF information, some fifteen media professionals have also been victims of cyber-harassment campaigns because of their reporting. Several foreign journalists sent to report from Sudan have told RSF that their movements are constantly monitored by the regular army, which is the only administrative entity that can issue travel permits to the country.

- **All quiet on the El-Fasher front as journalists flee**

North Darfur appears to be one of the worst areas in the country for media professionals, with both the Rapid Support Forces and the army committing massacres against civilians. "This war has forced El-Fasher's best journalists to flee for security and economic reasons," **Mohamed Chouaib** told RSF. Although the reporter for the local Facebook News page *Salateen News Network* left the North Darfur capital himself in September 2024, he chose to stay as physically close to El-Fasher as possible. He

continues providing the public with information from the nearby camp of Zamzam, which has been hit by famine and is frequently invaded by the Rapid Support Forces as the surrounding area is the last part of Darfur controlled by the regular army.

RSF sources in North Darfur also report issues of censorship, constant surveillance, threats against journalists' sources and internet blackouts. Of the eight regional Arab news channels with correspondents inside the country (*Al-Qahera News*, *Al-Araby*, *Al-Ghad TV*, *Al-Hurra*, *Al-Ekhbariya*, *Al-Jazeera*, *Al-Sharq* and *Al-Hadath*), only the Saudi channel *Al-Hadath* works with a journalist based in North Darfur. The other local correspondents for these channels are based in Port Sudan and the Khartoum area. Yet, despite the danger, Mohamed Chouaib refuses to leave North Darfur. "It is our duty as professionals and humans to remain in El-Fasher to inform the world and give a voice to the victims under siege," he asserts, before concluding that "this is the very essence of journalism."

RSF reached out to the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces but, at the time of this writing, neither had responded to the request for comment.

Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and
Asylum Research and Documentation
(ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T +43 1 589 00 583

F +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

Contact

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