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Freedom on the Net 2025 - Sudan



Key Developments, June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

Internet freedom declined in Sudan, as security forces carried out widespread arrests in retaliation for people's online activity amid an ongoing civil war between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Destruction of internet infrastructure and deliberate internet disruptions during the war continued to exacerbate the country's humanitarian crisis, hamper the delivery of aid, and prevent residents from documenting crimes against humanity that have left thousands of people dead and millions displaced.

- Telecommunications infrastructure remained severely damaged across the country, impeding access to the internet.¹ While satellite-based internet service provided by Starlink enabled some people to connect, it remained prohibitively expensive for many in Sudan, particularly in areas controlled by the RSF, which charged exorbitant prices for access (A1 and A2).²
- The RSF takeover of telecommunications infrastructure caused long-term disruptions in several areas during the coverage period,³ including a year-long internet blackout in the city of Wad Madani that was lifted in January 2025.⁴ Also that month, internet service was temporarily disrupted in Khartoum amid clashes between the SAF and RSF, and similar localized outages linked to active fighting were common in other parts of the country (A3).⁵
- The RSF and SAF both used social media platforms to promote war propaganda, and researchers identified networks of accounts that spread false information to manipulate online narratives about the conflict (B5).⁶
- Online media outlets experienced cyberattacks that were designed to delete their content. They were also targeted with mass-reporting campaigns, in which a coordinated group of people report a given account to a social media platform for allegedly violating terms of service with the aim of triggering account suspensions and other disruptions (B2, B6, and C8).⁷
- Sudanese journalists faced severe repercussions for their work, as security forces regularly engaged in arbitrary detention to suppress critical reporting.⁸ Several people were killed while on assignment for digital news outlets, including Muawiya Abdel Razek, who was assassinated by the RSF in June 2024 (C3 and C7).⁹

Political Overview

After military commanders and a prodemocracy protest movement ousted the repressive regime of longtime President Omar al-Bashir and his National Congress Party (NCP) in 2019, Sudan was ruled by a transitional government in which military and civilian leaders agreed to share power until national elections could be held. The process was thrown into turmoil in late 2021 when the military leadership dissolved the transitional government in a coup and cracked down on the ensuing prodemocracy protests. In April 2023, hostilities broke out between the SAF and the RSF, a group originally formed by al-Bashir, and the fighting quickly spread across the country. The ongoing conflict has been characterized by extreme levels of violence, including ethnic violence in Darfur, and has led to mass killings and displacement of civilians.

This report has been abridged for Freedom on the Net 2025 due to [ongoing budget constraints](#). Please consider making a [donation](#) to support future editions of this vital resource.

For additional background information, see last year's [full report](#).

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?	1 / 6
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A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons?	0 / 3
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A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?	1 / 6
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A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?	3 / 6
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A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner?	0 / 4
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B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights	5 / 6
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standards?	
B2 0-4 pts	
Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?	2 / 4
B3 0-4 pts	
Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process?	2 / 4
B4 0-4 pts	
Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship?	1 / 4
B5 0-4 pts	
Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest?	0 / 4
B6 0-3 pts	
Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online?	0 / 3
B7 0-4 pts	
Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability?	2 / 4
B8 0-6 pts	
Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues?	2 / 6

C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts	
Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence?	0 / 6
C2 0-4 pts	
Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?	1 / 4
C3 0-6 pts	

Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?	2 / 6
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Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the SAF and RSF carried out widespread arrests in response to people’s social media activity during the coverage period,¹⁰ and because a court handed down a four-year prison sentence for online defamation in February 2025.¹¹

C4 0-4 pts

Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption?	3 / 4
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C5 0-6 pts

Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users’ right to privacy?	1 / 6
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C6 0-6 pts

Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users’ right to privacy?	0 / 6
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C7 0-5 pts

Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities?	0 / 5
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C8 0-3 pts

Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack?	1 / 3
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Footnotes

- 1“ETC Sudan Factsheet 2025,” Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, May 28, 2025, <https://www.etcluster.org/document/etc-sudan-factsheet-2025>.
- 2Digital Rights Lab, “Starlink in Sudan: A lifeline or war facilitator?,” GlobalVoices, August 20, 2024, <https://globalvoices.org/2024/08/20/starlink-in-sudan-a-lifeline-or-war...>; Salma Ahmed, “Starlink in Sudan: a thriving black market during times of war,” SMEX, October 15, 2024, <https://smex.org/starlink-in-sudan-a-thriving-black-market-during-times...>
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- 6Hamid Khalafallah, “Beyond the Battlefield: Sudan’s Virtual Propaganda Warzone,” The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, January 14, 2025, <https://timep.org/2025/01/14/beyond-the-battlefield-sudans-virtual-prop...>; مرصد بيم» يكشف عن شبكة تضليل «إسرائيلية – إماراتية» على منصة «إكس» تتهم الجيش السوداني بالتورط»

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- 7 “Online newspaper Sudanile back online after ‘serious hack’,” Dabanga, October 24, 2024, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/online-newspaper-sudan...>; “الهجمات السيبرانية .. حرب أخرى لاسكات وسائل الإعلام المستقلة” [“Cyberattacks: Another war to silence independent media”], November 10, 2024, Sudanile, <https://sudanile.com/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%87%d8%ac%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%a7%...>; “Cyberattacks Target Sudan Media’s Independent War Reporting,” ADF Magazine, December 10, 2024, <https://adf-magazine.com/2024/12/cyberattacks-target-sudan-medias-indep...>
 - 8 “Sudan: Protect civilians’ lives, end mass arrests, targeting of lawyers, doctors, activists,” International Service for Human Rights, July 26, 2024, <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/sudan-end-killing-mass-arrests-and-targe...>; “اعتقال غامض للصحفي عبدالجليل محمد” [“Journalist Abdul Jalil Mohammed Abdul Jalil was mysteriously arrested for exposing corruption during the Hajj pilgrimage.”], Sudan Barq, May 26, 2025, <https://sdnbarq.com/%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%BA%D8%A7%D...>; “Sudanese military arrests journalist after he criticized governor on water crisis, sources say,” Committee to Protect Journalists, July 24, 2024, <https://cpj.org/2024/07/sudanese-military-arrests-journalist-after-he-c...>
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