When Voices Are Silenced An Examination of the Truth in Sudanese Media Under the Flames of War (April 2023 – 2025)

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Abstract

This study is guided by the central research question: How does armed conflict transform media structures, truth production, and public trust in Sudan between 2023 and 2025? Methodologically, the article adopts a qualitative analytical approach combining document analysis of international media reports, discourse analysis of official and parallel media outputs, and comparative interpretation grounded in conflict communication theory.

The article examines the transformation of the Sudanese media landscape between 2023 and 2025 under conditions of armed conflict. Drawing on international reports, journalist testimonies, and media-content analysis, the study explores how war has reshaped information flows, journalistic practice, and public trust. It argues that Sudan represents a paradigmatic case of post-truth communication in conflict zones, where media institutions are simultaneously targets, tools, and arenas of war. The article as well contributes to media and diplomacy studies by linking conflict journalism, propaganda, and post-war media reconstruction.

Keywords: Sudan, War Journalism, Media, Conflict, Post-Truth, Digital Propaganda

Introduction – Voices Silenced in War and the Price of Truth

Sudan has been the scene of one of the most devastating humanitarian crises in its modern history since April 2023, when war broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces militia (RSF). With the outbreak of war, Sudan's media environment also underwent a dramatic transformation, with journalistic activities facing both physical and structural obstacles. The destruction of infrastructure, power and internet outages, violent incidents targeting members of the press, and systematic censorship have severely limited the media's capacity to produce and distribute information (Reporters Without Borders, 2025).

The role of the media in times of war and conflict has long been a focus of communication and political science literature. While fulfilling its functions of informing the public, ensuring transparency, and promoting accountability, the media also carries the risk of becoming a propaganda tool for the warring parties or being silenced under state pressure (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). The Sudanese case provides an important case study in terms of showing how these theoretical frameworks manifest in practice. In particular, the physical damage to traditional media institutions and the forced displacement of journalists have led to the emergence of digital platforms and social media as alternative information channels. However, this digital transformation has also brought new challenges, such as the spread of disinformation and misinformation. Therefore, the process undergone by the Sudanese media since April 2023 allows us to understand both the limits of crisis journalism and the resilience capacity of the media.

This study comprehensively examines the transformation of the media in Sudan between 2023 and 2025. The aim is not only to describe the destructive effects of war but also to examine forms of resistance to truth. The methodology is based on national and international reports (UNESCO, RSF, IMS), local journalist testimonies, and media products. The research seeks to answer the question, "How does the media survive in war and preserve social consciousness?" The findings of the study will not only document Sudan's current situation but also contribute to the development of policy recommendations for the protection and support of the media in regions where similar wars may occur in the future.

The Outbreak of War and the Collapse of Communication Infrastructure

The moment the first explosions echoed in the skies over Khartoum on the morning of April 15, 2023, Sudan's information ecosystem began to fragment. Around 9:00 a.m., as gunfire erupted in different parts of the capital, the infrastructure of internet service providers was targeted. Fiber optic lines were cut, and mobile operators' base stations came under fire (NetBlocks, 2023). Access Now's (2023) real-time monitoring data shows that internet access dropped by 87% within the first 48 hours. This situation was not merely a technical failure but constituted a systematic communication blockade. The parties to the conflict have realized that controlling the flow of information is as critical as military superiority. While city residents were unable to get news from their families, the international community also struggled to understand the events unfolding in Sudan. All three of Sudan's main internet service providers were completely shut down amid the ongoing conflict, according to reports citing internet-monitoring data, severely disrupting communication for civilians trapped in conflict zones as well as for those attempting to flee violence (JURIST, 2024). The collapse of the communications infrastructure has been etched into the collective memory as an experience as traumatic as the war itself.

Traditional media institutions also found themselves at the center of this chaotic process. The central building of the national news agency SUNA in Khartoum was bombed in the early days of the conflict; archives, equipment, and decades of accumulated document collections were either completely destroyed or ren-

dered unusable). Television studios were caught between the front lines, while transmission towers were knocked out by power cuts and physical attacks. Established institutions such as Sudan TV, Al-Nilein TV, and Omdurman Radio were forced to suspend broadcasting. According the Sudanese Journalists' Union (Sudanese Journalists Syndicate, 2024). With the escalation of violence as a result of the ongoing conflict, 2024 saw a huge increase in the number of victims. Sixteen journalists were killed, a 300% increase over the previous year, 2023. The number of journalists assassinated since the beginning of the war has risen to 20, and the crimes are not limited to murder, but also include blackouts and defamation. Many of the assassinations were accompanied by systematic smear campaigns and the withholding of information about the circumstances of the incident. The most heinous forms of torture and abuse are also practiced against journalists, with the aim of intimidating them and silencing their voices. Assassinations are no longer limited to journalists, but have extended to include anyone suspected of collaborating with them. These crimes are committed out of revenge and a desire to control information, and they underscore the extent to which the right to life and human dignity are disregarded (Sudanese Journalists Syndicate, 2024).

As a result of the war, more than 90% of media outlets have ceased operations. Of the 22 local radio stations, only three remain in intermittent operation. The total number of violations against journalists and media outlets since the outbreak of the conflict has reached 509 documented cases, each of which testifies to the magnitude of the crime committed against truth and freedom of expression. They are classified and documented according to the nature of each violation in the reports of the Sudanese Journalists' Union (Sudanese Journalists Syndicate, 2024).

Data detailed in UNESCO's (2024) report concretizes the scale of the destruction. Of the 180 media outlets active when the conflict began, 126 ceased operations within the first three months. This represents

a 70% loss and creates an unprecedented void in Sudan's media history. The threats faced by journalists are multifaceted. According to reports documented by Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2025), at least 23 journalists were killed in the 2023-2024 period, more than 40 were detained, and dozens faced threats of torture and enforced disappearance. Some journalists were injured by bomb fragments in the midst of clashes, some were targeted by armed groups, and some were arrested while simply trying to conduct an interview. In this context, being a journalist means not only practicing one's profession but also putting one's life at risk. Media freedom indices have placed Sudan at the top of the "dangerous areas for journalists" category.

Beyond the physical devastation, a more insidious collapse has occurred — the erosion of epistemic trust. With the disappearance of traditional news sources, Sudanese society has lost its ability to discern what to believe (Harsin, 2015). WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages, and anonymous Telegram channels have emerged as primary sources of information; yet most of the content circulating on these platforms could not be verified. Videos purportedly showing the bombing of a neighborhood were later identified as footage captured months earlier in different regions. Figures concerning civilian casualties were routinely adjusted to serve the propaganda needs of each warring faction. The line between fact and fabrication has become almost impossible to draw.

This situation triggered what social scientists conceptualize as "epistemic insecurity"—a condition in which the public loses fundamental confidence in its sources of knowledge, and skepticism becomes the default epistemological stance (Sismondo, 2017). Sudan has thus lost not only its physical infrastructure but also its very capacity to define and share truth. The war operates on deeper, less visible layers, corroding society's relationship with knowledge itself.

The Three Layers of Sudanese Media During the War: Official Media, Parallel Field Media and Exiled Independent Media

Official media relocated to Port Sudan and increasingly functioned as a state propaganda apparatus. Programming centered on patriotism, heroism, and "defending the homeland." Victories were amplified; losses minimized. Classical propaganda techniques structured output. Reach remained limited by infrastructure collapse and restricted connectivity. In RSF militia -controlled areas, a flexible media network emerged via livestreams and social platforms. Content resembled citizen journalism, relying on mobile footage and drones. Visual strategies maximized emotional impact through scenes of destruction and suffering. Authenticity was often uncertain, but propaganda value persisted. Regarding exiled independent media, Independent journalism inside Sudan became nearly impossible. Exiled platforms in Cairo, Nairobi, Istanbul, and Doha filled the gap, gathering information through networks and correspondents. While claiming relative independence, funding and location shaped perspectives. Nevertheless, exile media documented violations, casualties, and displacement.

Together, these layers reveal a pluralistic yet fragmented system: official propaganda, armed-group narratives, and constrained exile journalism. Fragmentation deepened polarization and complicated peace-building.

Information Wars: Perception Management, Propaganda, and Disinformation

In 21st-century conflicts, victory is measured not only by territorial gains or military achievements but also by control of the narrative (Bjola and Pamment, 2018). The war in Sudan stands as one of the starkest illustrations of this fact. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces militia (RSF) have clashed not only on the battlefield but across digital platforms. Both sides have developed sophisticated media strategies to construct legitimacy, delegitimize the opponent, and influence international opinion.

The army has positioned itself as the guardian of the state and defender of the homeland; concepts such as "sovereignty," "the flag," "honor," and "constitutional order" dominate its official statements and social-media messaging. The RSF militia, conversely, has framed itself as the voice of the people and the vanguard of change, emphasizing themes of "justice," "civilian protection," and "resistance against dictatorship." This discursive battle has not been limited to words: both parties have deployed visual material, short video clips etc. By tying "defense of the homeland" to "religious duty," both camps increased public acceptance of the war while suppressing critical thought. Within this context, the media ceased to be a neutral provider of information and instead turned into an ideological battlefield.

Social-media platforms became the most intense arenas of this information war. Coordinated inauthentic-behavior (CIB) campaigns flourished across Facebook, Twitter (X), TikTok, and Telegram. Through fake accounts, bots, and troll farms, thousands of posts were disseminated daily. According to Abbas's (2025) comprehensive report, between April 2023 and June 2024, at least 250 coordinated disinformation campaigns were identified. These campaigns included manipulated videos allegedly showing massacres committed by the opposing side, fabricated stories of fallen heroes, invented victory reports, and edited images "proving" the moral corruption of rival groups.

In many cases, footage filmed years earlier in Syria, Yemen, or Libya was re-captioned and circulated as if depicting current events in Sudan. Although independent fact-checking organizations attempted to debunk such content, the speed of misinformation dissemination vastly outpaced that of corrections. Reports from the Digital Forensics Lab and the Atlantic Council (2023), Sudan's fragile information environment has played a critical role in undermining democratic processes and public trust. The Atlantic Council revealed that many of these campaigns were orchestrated by professional media teams and, in some instances, received logistical or financial backing from foreign actors.

This environment crystallized the notion of a "post-truth era" within the Sudanese context. As defined by the Oxford Dictionary (2016) — when objective facts become less influential than appeals to emotion and personal belief (Lewandowsky et al., 2017) — post-truth politics took hold. During the two years of conflict, what mattered most was not factual accuracy but the persuasiveness of competing narratives. Individuals gravitated toward information that confirmed their ideological positions; rather than confronting cognitive dissonance, they confined themselves to one-sided sources.

In such an atmosphere, critical reasoning became a social luxury. Truth turned into one of the first casualties of war (Hamilton, 2020). As media credibility eroded, polarization deepened. Information wars ceased to be a by-product of armed confrontation and instead became a strategic domain at its very center.

Sudan, in this sense, has become a modern laboratory for studying how knowledge itself can be weaponized. This process has led to the materialization of the concept of the "post-truth era" within the Sudanese context. Chosen by the Oxford Dictionary as the Word of the Year in 2016, post-truth describes a condition in which objective facts become secondary to statements appealing to emotions and personal beliefs (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). Throughout the two years of war in Sudan, what mattered most was not what was true but which narrative appeared more convincing. Individuals preferred to believe news that confirmed their own ideological positions; faced with contradictory information, rather than experiencing cognitive dissonance, they clung to one-sided sources. In this environment, critical thinking became a social luxury. Truth itself turned into one of the first casualties of war (Hamilton, 2020). As the credibility of the media declined, social polarization deepened. Information wars ceased to be a mere by-product of military conflict and evolved into a strategic domain at its very core. Sudan has thus become a modern laboratory in which knowledge itself has been weaponized.

Case Study – TRT Arabi's "Under Siege: The General Command" Documentary

Released in 2025, the TRT Arabi documentary Istiqrari Under Siege: The General Command portrays, through the language of documentary cinema, the two-year siege of the Sudanese Army's General Command building in Khartoum. By combining eyewitness testimonies, archival footage, and on-site imagery, the film explores both the physical and symbolic dimensions of the war.

Its central statement — "The General Command is not merely a building, but the heart of resistance" — establishes the headquarters as more than an architectural space: it becomes a symbol of national identity and military pride.

The documentary's narrative strategy relies on emotional appeal and heroic discourse.

The daily lives of soldiers under siege, their struggles, and stories of endurance aim to elicit empathy from the audience. Statements by commanding officers emphasize themes of "defending the homeland" "honor" and "sacrifice" resonating with Turkey's own military culture and historical experience.

The film's factual credibility is reinforced by its overlap with verified information from international outlets such as Al Jazeera and BBC Africa. Independent sources confirm that the General Command had indeed been besieged, that soldiers inside maintained resistance under dire conditions, and that the building held deep symbolic importance for both sides (Al Jazeera, 2024; BBC Africa, 2024).

In this sense, the documentary can be viewed not as mere propaganda but as a production that reflects a documented reality. It offers a cinematic archive of endurance and national symbolism, contributing to the collective memory of the Sudanese conflict and to the broader study of war representation in Middle Eastern media.

Women Journalists and the Gender Dimension

The war in Sudan has created a contradictory experience for women journalists—one that has produced both destruction and visibility. According to data from UN Women Sudan (2024), 60 percent of women work-

ing in the media sector lost their jobs during the first year of the conflict, and many were forced to flee the country due to security concerns. Yet, paradoxically, the visibility of women journalists on digital platforms increased by 40 percent. This phenomenon can be explained by the collapse of traditional media structures and the subsequent filling of this void through digital tools (Byerly and Ross, 2006).

Women journalists found opportunities to make their voices heard through social-media accounts, independent blog platforms, and podcasts. However, this increased visibility also brought greater risk. Cyber-harassment, threatening messages, and gender-based violence became systemic challenges for women working in media (International Women's Media Foundation [IWMF], 2023). Journalists such as Iman Fathi (Al Jazeera Mubasher) and Maha Abdelrahim (Sudan Post) carried out significant journalistic work during the conflict. Fathi drew international attention with her reports documenting the civilian tragedies in Darfur, giving voice to the stories of displaced women and children and making the human dimension of the war visible. Abdelrahim, on the other hand, investigated the experiences of women living in refugee camps, cases of gender-based violence, and women's survival strategies. The work of these journalists embodies the concept of "witness journalism" bringing empathy, ethical sensitivity, and social responsibility into the practice of reporting (Peters, 2011). As Ellison, E. (2013) notes, women correspondents introduce a distinctive perspective to war coverage—treating violence and conflict not merely as military phenomena but as social and human traumas. Their work has also made gender inequalities more visible. During wartime, women have been both direct targets of violence and victims of displacement, poverty, and the increased burden of care (UN Women, 2024). While documenting this multi-layered victimization, women journalists have simultaneously highlighted women's active roles in resilience, solidarity, and community reconstruction.

In post-war media-reform debates, equal representation of women and their participation in decision-making mechanisms have come to be viewed as prerequisites for sustainable peace. In Sudan's case, the content produced by women journalists underscores the critical importance of ensuring that women occupy both productive and decision-making positions in the post-conflict restructuring of the media sector. The experiences of Sudanese women journalists demonstrate that the future of Sudanese media must be shaped not only by technical infrastructure or legal regulations but also by the principle of gender equality (Van Zoonen, 2003).

The Social-Media Ecosystem: Digital Resistance or Digital Chaos?

The collapse of traditional media infrastructure and the restriction of internet access have placed social-media platforms at the center of information flow in Sudan. Throughout the war, Twitter (X), Facebook, and Telegram functioned both as sources of news and as tools for social mobilization. Yet these same platforms simultaneously became arenas where disinformation, manipulation, and digital propaganda campaigns were most intensely conducted.

On one side, journalists and citizen reporters on the ground instantly shared footage captured with their mobile phones; on the other, coordinated fake accounts, bots, and troll networks systematically ran campaigns manipulating the conflict. This dual dynamic illustrates the tension between social media's liberating potential and its use as an instrument of control and manipulation.

Morozov's (2012) concept of the "net delusion" becomes particularly evident in the Sudanese case: digital technologies can easily be instrumentalized by authoritarian structures, reversing their emancipatory potential. During this process, the notion of "digital resistance" acquired new meaning within Sudan's context. To overcome internet shutdowns, young Sudanese activists and technologists established VPN networks, used Tor browsers, and developed alternative communication channels. Alternative news portals operating on local servers, mesh-network technologies, and offline content-sharing systems became tangible instruments of digital resistance. At the same time, cyber-activists sought to educate the public on information security—producing guides on encryption techniques, secure-communication applications, and digital-privacy strategies. However, the reach of this resistance remained limited; these methods required technical literacy and therefore could not extend to the broader population.

The Regional and Global Visibility of Sudanese Media

The war in Sudan has been described in international media as a "forgotten crisis".

Global news organizations such as BBC Africa, TRT World, Al Jazeera English, and CNN International paid limited attention during the first months of the conflict; as the war dragged on, its news value declined and Sudan faded from the global media agenda.

Hawkins's (2008) concept of "media saturation" helps explain this phenomenon.

High-profile conflicts—such as the war in Ukraine or the crisis in Gaza—have dominated the global attention economy, pushing Sudan further down the hierarchy of news relevance.

As a result, a humanitarian catastrophe in which tens of thousands have been killed and millions displaced has vanished from the radar of global public consciousness.

According to Freedland (2024), wrote in Guardian; Sudan represents the most severe humanitarian crisis globally, but it remains largely overlooked by the international community. This observation highlights that the issue is not merely international indifference but Sudan's inability to project its own narrative onto the global stage. Western media representations of Africa have long been framed through stereotypes of helplessness, chaos, and primitivism, neglecting the continent's structural problems, historical contexts, and political complexities. Because Sudan has failed to communicate its perspective internationally, it has become the object of an Orientalist gaze—depicted as passive, voiceless, and devoid of agency. In Western coverage, Sudan has been reduced to an image of humanitarian despair rather than a political actor capable of defining its own destiny. This lack of representational agency underscores a deeper crisis of media diplomacy and narrative sovereignty in Sudan's post-colonial trajectory.

The Future of Sudanese Media and the Diplomatic Communication Dimension

In post-war Sudan, media must be viewed not merely as a vehicle of information but as a strategic instrument of diplomatic communication and public diplomacy. Within this context, the role of the media extends beyond news reporting to become central in national image reconstruction and the restoration

of trust with the international community. Sudanese embassies abroad and journalists within the diaspora are now tasked with re-narrating Sudan's story, amplifying the voices of civil society, and legitimizing peace processes. We can take, the relations between Turkey and Sudan as an example. Cause this relations serve not only bilateral interests but also function as a strategic bridge for sustainable cooperation across Africa. This partnership enhances Turkey's regional legitimacy under its "Africa Opening Policy," while offering Sudan new diplomatic spaces on international platforms (Tirab, 2022). Collaborative programs in media education and technical capacity-building with Turkey, Qatar, and the African Union could significantly strengthen Sudan's institutional capacity. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) has already implemented media-development projects across the Middle East and Africa, providing a model for Sudan. Qatar's Al Jazeera Media Institute offers specialized training in conflict reporting and digital safety (Al Jazeera Media Institute, 2024). The African Union's "Strategy for Information and Communication in Africa 2020–2025" emphasizes media freedom and professionalization among member states (African Union, 2020).

Academic exchange programs between Selçuk University and Khartoum University in fields such as crisis communication, peace journalism, and digital literacy exemplify this model of knowledge transfer. Such collaborations reinforce the emerging concept of "post-war media diplomacy." In this paradigm, the media becomes not only an information carrier but also a diplomatic actor—building peace, supporting national reconciliation, and mobilizing international solidarity (Gilboa, 2023).

The diplomatic communication dimension is crucial for shaping the future of Sudanese media across three main axes: i) Establishing strategic partnerships with international news agencies to ensure that stories from Sudan are told from a Sudanese perspective; ii) Building alliances with regional media net-

works to develop a Pan-African narrative of solidarity; iii) Using digital platforms to democratize the flow of information between the diaspora and local communities (Stremlau, 2018).

Platforms such as Twitter/X, Facebook, and WhatsApp facilitate the participation of the Sudanese diaspora in post-war reconstruction efforts and play a key role in public-diplomacy campaigns.

However, for this form of digital diplomacy to succeed, media professionals must receive comprehensive training in disinformation management, ethical journalism, and intercultural communication. In this respect, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) guidelines for reporting in conflict zones and UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy programs provide essential resources for Sudan (UNESCO, 2024).

Reconstruction and Reform Proposals: A New Vision for Peace Journalism

Building a sustainable media ecosystem in Sudan requires institutional reform and normative transformation. The first step is to establish a National Council for Media and Peace, whose independence must be constitutionally guaranteed. This council should oversee press freedom, journalist safety, and ethical standards—while remaining free from government interference . The model could draw inspiration from South Africa's post-apartheid Independent Communications Authority (ICASA), which strengthened the media's democratic role through its dual regulatory and protective functions (Duncan, 2017).

Creating capacity-building funds for women and young journalists would increase the demographic and perspective diversity of Sudanese media. During

the war, women reporters took the lead in covering issues of sexual violence, refugee women, and gender-based discrimination, yet faced immense challenges related to safety, access to resources, and cultural pressure (Khartoum Centre for Human Rights, 2024). Special fellowships, mentorship programs, and safe workspaces for women journalists are essential.

Young journalists, meanwhile, must be trained in digital literacy, mobile journalism, and social-media verification techniques—with projects like those led by UN Women and Gender Links in Africa providing useful models (UN Women, 2023). Universities should also incorporate Peace Journalism modules as compulsory courses, ensuring that future media professionals are equipped with conflict sensitivity, trauma awareness, and ethical responsibility. According to Johan Lynch, & Galtung, (2013) concept, peace journalism challenges the causes of violence, emphasizes solution-oriented approaches, and gives voice to all sides. In Sudan's fractured society, this approach is indispensable for reconciliation and social healing.

A National Archive and Documentary Center should be established to systematically document the memory of the war. This center would preserve journalists' work, eyewitness accounts, civil-society reports, and audiovisual materials through digital archiving systems.) (Ciorciari, 2012). (Examples such as the Rwanda Genocide Archive and the Bosnia War Crimes Documentation Center demonstrate how such initiatives contribute to justice and collective recovery.

In Sudan, such an archive would not only serve as a historical record but also as a vital data source for future truth and reconciliation commissions. Similarly, creating Media Ethics and Digital Verification Boards would enhance operational capacity in the fight against disinformation (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017). These boards should operate under the standards of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and provide multilingual (Arabic, English, and local dialects) content verification services.

Ultimately, these reforms represent more than technical restructuring—they constitute the communication pillar of national reconciliation. Media must become an instrument of reckoning with the past, pursuing justice, and collectively rebuilding the future.

Journalism Education and the Crisis of Professional Ethics in Sudan

Before the war, journalism education in Sudan was predominantly theoretical, offering little room for practical experience. The communication faculties of Khartoum University, Omdurman Islamic University, and Sudan University of Science and Technology had, for decades, relied on outdated curricula dating back to the 1980s. This stagnation hindered the development of multi-platform reporting, data journalism, and verification techniques required by the digital age (Skjerdal & Ngugi, 2007). Course content focused primarily on print and radio journalism while neglecting contemporary topics such as social-media dynamics, algorithmic news distribution, cybersecurity, and digital ethics. In addition, technical deficiencies—aging computer labs, limited internet access, and lack of modern software—prevented students from gaining practical skills. Consequently, young graduates often found themselves unprepared for labor-market demands. When the war broke out, many faculty members fled the country, laboratories were shut down, and campuses became non-operational due to security concerns. Thus, journalism education in Sudan experienced both a physical and epistemological rupture.

In response, members of the Sudanese diaspora—academics and journalists—launched emergency online-learning initiatives. For example, the "Sudan Me-

dia Initiative" organized webinars for young journalists on digital security and verification techniques (Sudan Media Initiative, 2024).

However, such voluntary efforts were insufficient to fill the systemic and accredited educational vacuum.

Journalists remained ill-equipped to confront the algorithms of the social-media era, lacking the methodological tools, technical resources, and institutional backing needed to combat misinformation. This deficiency facilitated the uncontrolled spread of fake images, manipulated videos, and provocative content via Facebook and WhatsApp, deepening societal polarization.

Ethically, a similar void persisted. The core journalistic principle of "do no harm" was frequently replaced by emotional sensationalism, partisanship, and the unfiltered publication of traumatic imagery (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2013).

The International Federation of Journalists' (IFJ, 2023) "Reporting in Conflict Zones Guide" and the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma's (2024) trauma-awareness training modules could offer guidance in this field. Moreover, adopting UNESCO and the African Journalists Union's Peace Journalism Principles within local professional bodies—particularly the Sudanese Journalists Network—could mark the first step toward rebuilding trust in the post-war era (UNESCO, 2024). Journalism education in times of war increasingly emphasizes ethical responsibility, empathy, and human-centered reporting, particularly when covering victims of violence and humanitarian crises. Rather than sensationalizing suffering or amplifying hostile narratives, students highlighted the importance of responsible language use, conflict sensitivity, and awareness of the psychological impact of reporting on both journalists and affected communities. In this context, universities are encouraged to adapt their curricula by integrating training in psychological resilience, trauma awareness, critical thinking, and digital and information literacy. Such curricular adap-

tations aim to prepare future journalists to operate safely and ethically in extreme conditions marked by disinformation, emotional pressure, and physical risk, while maintaining professional integrity and public trust (Fiialka & Kornieva, 2024).

Overcoming Sudan's crisis of media ethics requires not only the adoption of normative principles but also their integration into daily practice, institutional policy, and journalism education.

Only then can Sudanese media emerge as a professional, credible, and socially responsible pillar in the nation's democratic reconstruction.

The Role of the Sudanese Diaspora and New Media Networks

Although the war in Sudan has resulted in large-scale displacement and forced migration, it has simultaneously facilitated the emergence of a transnational digital media sphere shaped by the Sudanese diaspora. Since the outbreak of the war in 2023, Sudanese journalists operating from global hubs such as Istanbul, Cairo, Doha, Nairobi, London, and Washington have increasingly relied on blogs, independent digital platforms, YouTube channels, and podcast networks to document events inside Sudan and communicate them to international audiences. This diasporic media ecosystem functions not only as an alternative source of information in the absence of domestic media infrastructure, but also as a space for political engagement, identity reconstruction, and narrative contestation beyond national borders, reflecting broader patterns of digital diasporic activism and mediated transnationalism (Bernal, 2006). Unlike the traditional model of "foreign correspondence," these networks have cultivated a model of collective witnessing, op-

erating not under a single institutional authority but through a multi-voiced, horizontal, and participatory ecosystem of news production. Sudanese journalists have assumed the responsibility of serving as both the voice and conscience of the nation—publicizing the war's brutal realities while also highlighting Sudan's cultural richness and resilience. Visual-first platforms like Instagram and TikTok have enabled young Sudanese creators to share the everyday impacts of war, refugee experiences, and struggles over identity (Leurs and Ponzanesi, 2024).

An independent platform known as the Sudanese Voices Network has become a digital memory bank, systematically archiving audio testimonies, written statements, and visual materials from victims—resources that can serve as evidence in future justice processes. The platform has functioned as an important source for the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other human-rights organizations documenting war crimes in Darfur and Khartoum (Sudanese Voices Network, 2024). By combining oral-history methodology with digital archiving technologies, this initiative demonstrates the power of civil society in preserving the memory of collective trauma and combating injustice. Similarly, the Africa Media Initiative operating in Türkiye has provided scholarships and technical support to young Sudanese journalists, offering a concrete example of "media diplomacy." The program has delivered training in digital content production, data analysis, mobile journalism, and social-media strategy, while building cultural and professional bridges between Türkiye and Sudan (Africa Media Initiative, 2024). Projects conducted in cooperation with TRT World are seen as part of Türkiye's soft-power strategy toward the African continent. Another critical contribution of diasporic media networks is their role in sustaining cultural transmission and supporting identity formation (Yuksel, 2025).

Through radio programs, online literary magazines, digital art exhibitions, and social-media campaigns, the languages of Sudan (Arabic and Nubian languag-

es), along with its music, poetry, and artistic memory, are being kept alive. This can be understood as a form of cultural resistance to the war's physical destruction. For example, the "Sudan Sounds" podcast series carries the voices of Sudanese musicians, poets, and storytellers to the world while encouraging younger generations to reconnect with their cultural roots (Sudan Sounds, 2024).

Public Trust and Media Literacy

According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2025), 68% of Sudanese do not believe that national media outlets report impartially, and 72% are uncertain about the accuracy of information encountered on social media. For this reason, media-literacy education must be treated as a strategic priority in rebuilding democratic society after the war. Media literacy encompasses the skills required to critically engage with media content, evaluate sources, recognize disinformation, and consume information consciously (Hobbs, 2023). Workshops conducted in schools, NGOs, women's centers, and community libraries can strengthen the public's capacity to identify fake news, verify sources, and understand manipulation techniques on digital platforms. In rural areas and communities with lower levels of formal education, media literacy should be disseminated using visual and interactive materials (UNESCO, 2024).

In addition, public service broadcasting must be structurally reformed. Amid growing uncertainty and competing narratives surrounding the reality of the war, the Sudanese public has increasingly turned to digital platforms to meet its information needs and navigate the ambiguity of conflict. At the same time, state-affiliated institutions—particularly the National Radio and Television Corporation and the Sudan News Agency—have sought to reinforce their role in shaping public opinion under conditions marked by extreme political and informational pressure (Al Jazeera Media Institute, 2024).

A new public broadcaster modeled on the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) or TRT (Türkiye Radio and Television Corporation) could serve as a voice for national reconciliation in Sudan. The BBC model represents an entity supported by public funding yet safeguarded by editorial independence, with a governing board composed of representatives from civil society, academia, and professional bodies (BBC Trust, 2023). The TRT model emphasizes nation-building and cultural diversity while playing an active role in global diplomacy through international broadcasting (Güner, 2024). A new Sudanese public broadcaster that combines the strengths of both models should produce content in the languages and cultures of local communities (e.g., Nubian, Fur, Beja) and help shape Sudan's narrative on international platforms. Such a model is essential not only to restore public trust but also to strengthen democratic participation and reconstruct national identity on the basis of pluralism rather than polarization.

For media-literacy programs to be effective, tailored interventions must be developed for different segments of society. For children and youth, school curricula should incorporate media-literacy courses that instill the principles of digital citizenship and critical thinking (Common Sense Media, 2025). For women, gender-sensitive media-literacy workshops should raise awareness across a broad spectrum—from women's representation in media to coverage of gender-based violence. For the elderly, alongside basic digital-literacy training, programs should teach strategies to guard against phone scams, fake health news, and manipulative content. International funders and development agencies should provide long-term, sustainable support for media-literacy programs in Sudan, while ensuring local leadership and ownership in their design. Ultimately, media literacy is not merely a technical skillset; it is a cornerstone of democratic citizenship, critical reasoning, and freedom of information. Without this foundation, a durable transformation in Sudan's post-war recovery and democratization will not be possible.

Conclusion

Sudan's war shows that media can become a direct victim of war—yet also a last bastion of truth. Despite destruction and exile, journalists continued documenting reality. Rebuilding media requires ethical renewal, safety, memory preservation, and trust restoration. Media reform is integral to transitional justice and democratic reconstruction.

Truth reconstruction is an epistemological and political challenge amid competing narratives. Independent journalism must commit to verifiability, inclusivity, transparency, and correction. A sustainable post-war media order depends on justice, ethics, and freedom—interdependent pillars. Sudan's future hinges on making silenced voices audible again, democratizing narrative production, and using media as a tool for social healing and democratic transformation. For Sudanese journalists, every report is testimony, and every word is an act of hope.

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