

**GLOBAL  
PLURALISM  
MONITOR**

**SUDAN**



## **Global Pluralism Monitor: Sudan**

by Global Centre for Pluralism

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## ABOUT THE SERIES

This report was developed using the Global Pluralism Monitor Assessment Framework. The Global Pluralism Monitor's country assessments are conducted by a team of experts on diversity issues who are either country nationals or have significant experience in the country.

The scores presented in this report should not be interpreted as part of a universal scale or ranking system that applies to all countries in the same way. Instead, scores should be understood as a context-specific indication of the country's progress toward (or away from) a pluralistic ideal. For example, a post-conflict society that still experiences violence – but comparatively less than at the height of conflict – might have a similar score to a society that has been peaceful but has recently experienced a surge in hate crimes. The Global Pluralism Monitor aims to assess countries on their own terms to reflect the highly contextual nature of pluralism: there is no single route to success that all societies must follow.

For more information on the Monitor and its methodology, visit our website at [pluralism.ca/monitor](https://pluralism.ca/monitor).

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# ABOUT THE GLOBAL PLURALISM MONITOR

## What is pluralism?

**Diversity in society is a universal fact; how societies respond to diversity is a choice. Pluralism is a positive response to diversity. Pluralism involves taking decisions and actions, as individuals and societies, which are grounded in respect for diversity.**

## MEASURING INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN DIVERSE SOCIETIES

Living and engaging with differences in society is a challenge all societies face. As inequality, marginalization and divisions rise, building peaceful and inclusive societies is ever more urgent.

Vulnerable groups, including religious and ethno-cultural minorities, Indigenous groups, and women and girls, face ongoing political, economic and social exclusion. To foster more just, peaceful and prosperous societies, these exclusions must be addressed. To take meaningful action, policy makers and practitioners need a holistic understanding of these issues.

Launched by the Global Centre for Pluralism, the Global Pluralism Monitor is a measurement tool that assesses the state of pluralism in countries around the world. Across political, economic, social and cultural domains, the Monitor informs decision-making to address root causes of exclusion and improve the prospects for pluralism.

*Enhances existing efforts by governments, civil society and the private sector*

The Monitor enables:

- Gap analysis: to assess the state of pluralism in societies and identify areas in which intervention is needed to address exclusion;
- Trends analysis: to track a country's trajectory over time, either towards greater inclusion or exclusion;
- Intersectional analysis: to assess the treatment of women in societies, accounting for intra-group dynamics of inclusion and exclusion;
- Conflict prevention: to identify signs of exclusion and marginalization before crisis becomes imminent;
- Good practices: to identify initiatives that are having a positive impact that could be further developed, or serve as lessons for other contexts.

### *Approach rooted in both institutional and cultural responses to diversity*

The Centre's approach to pluralism focuses on institutions (hardware), cultural processes (software) and the complex interactions between the two. Institutional arrangements – such as constitutions, legislatures, courts, and systems of government – outline the legal and political spaces within which members of societies act. Cultural habits or mindsets shape our perceptions of *who belongs* and *who contributes*, and influence how we interact with one another every day.

The Monitor Assessment Framework is rooted in the interplay between institutional and cultural responses, and measures inclusions and exclusions across political, economic and social dimensions. Its 20 indicators cover the following:

1. Legal commitments in support of pluralism;
2. Practices by state institutions to realize commitments;
3. Leadership towards pluralism from societal actors;
4. State of group-based inequalities;
5. Intergroup relations and belonging.

### *Informed by expertise and data*

A team of national experts on diversity and inclusion in the country uses the Monitor Assessment Framework to produce a country report, drawing on a range of qualitative and quantitative data. The reports offer recommendations for policymakers and practitioners on how to advance pluralism, and offer a basis for dialogue with stakeholders across the society.

Each team of experts is encouraged to define the story *they* want to tell about pluralism. In this way, the reports are grounded in the local realities and designed to have the most potential impact on policy and practice.

The Monitor is guided by an international Technical Advisory Group of leading experts on indices and diversity issues.

# GLOBAL PLURALISM MONITOR

## ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

COUNTRY PROFILE

| COMMITMENTS               | PRACTICES                      | LEADERSHIP        | GROUP BASED INEQUALITIES | INTERGROUP RELATIONS + BELONGING |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| International Commitments | Policy implementation          | Political Parties | Political                | Intergroup Violence              |
| National Commitments      | Data Collection                | News Media        | Economic                 | Intergroup Trust                 |
| Inclusive Citizenship     | Claims-Making and Contestation | Civil Society     | Social                   | Trust in Institutions            |
|                           |                                | Private Sector    | Cultural                 | Inclusion and Acceptance         |
|                           |                                |                   | Access to Justice        | Shared Ownership of Society      |

RECOMMENDATIONS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ruinous war that has engulfed Sudan since April 2023 has dramatically altered the landscape of the country and the society. Intense levels of violence have caused countless loss of life and immense suffering. Millions have been displaced. Its impacts have further entrenched polarization and deep divides. While the research for this report was conducted prior to the conflict, the core themes of the report remain salient now, particularly if Sudan is to recover and rebuild once an end to the conflict can be secured. The opening paragraph of the full report reminds us of the issues at the core of the conflict, and the consequences of the failure to embrace Sudan's diversity as a source of strength and possibility for the country. Pluralism will be a necessary tool for the rebuilding of a Sudan that is both united and open to embracing its diversity and committed to addressing the inequalities and divisions that have been laid bare through this devastating conflict.

## OVERALL SCORE: 4

Sudan is a country with a rich diversity of cultures, religions, languages and ethnicities. However, successive governments have failed to honour that diversity and support groups to work together towards common goals. This has led to social and economic inequalities that fuel violent conflict. Previous governments have chosen a “unity in conformity” approach to its policies and practices. This excludes anyone who does not conform to the state-dominated narratives of the majority Arab and Sunni Muslim identities and practices, resulting in discrimination within and across forms of diversity such as gender, ethnicity and religion.

The majority of Sudan consists of rural areas with ethnically diverse farmers and pastoralists who have experienced displacement and unequal development. Local languages are threatened as cultural groups are required to speak Arabic in schools, when accessing public services or when seeking justice. Most Sudanese people work in the informal economy, facing low wages and precarious work. Women are negatively impacted by Islamist policies, displacement and over-representation in the informal sector. The *Global Pluralism Monitor: Sudan* explores the dynamics within and among these groups and how human rights for all have been in decline for decades, worsening with the most recent war beginning in April 2023.

## LEGAL COMMITMENTS

Sudan has signed many international treaties protecting human rights and attempted to include laws prohibiting discrimination in their national constitutions. However, the government has ignored these commitments and violated many agreements and policies. Attempts made to reform discriminatory laws like those around apostasy have been stalled due to continued conflict, especially after the 2021 military coup.

## PRACTICES AND LEADERSHIP

Sustained and successive conflicts have also made policy implementation challenging. Key officials from the government, military and armed groups face no consequences for failing to enforce politics and are often alleged to be committing human rights violations against civilians. There is a critical lack of data collected on demographics and group inequalities. Data collected by the government remains censored and inaccessible. Sudanese do make attempts to organize and advocate for their rights but are met with violence, especially women.

An elite group of wealthy Arab and Muslim men control political parties, news media and the private sector. While some parties are ethnically or regionally based and mobilize for their interests, the dominant national parties do not reflect the diversity that is characteristic of Sudan. Armed movements claim to work for the inclusion of marginalized groups. Through strict control of media, the state hides the realities of economic disparity, conflicts, violence inflicted on citizens and the experiences of displaced women working in the informal economy.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have traditionally faced hostilities in Sudan, as they experience many regulations and political monitoring. NGOs, particularly women and youth-led organizations focused on democracy and civic education, have been shut down under the accusation that their work was sabotaging Sudan's sovereignty. However, many civil society groups remain working to reduce exclusion and marginalization and to improve access to services for the communities they work in. While under threat of forced closure or violence, organizations working to support human rights, especially those focused on and led by women and youth, offer new approaches for addressing the needs of groups facing marginalization. In the aftermath of the conflict that commenced in April 2023, many in the civil sector have sought to re-establish offices in their countries of exile, experiencing new and significant challenges to reducing exclusion patterns.

## GROUP-BASED INEQUALITIES AND INTER-GROUP RELATIONS AND BELONGING

The elites who control political parties also control economic resources in Sudan, benefiting from unequal patterns of economic growth. Sudan's economy depends on agriculture, mining and animal husbandry, but farmers and pastoralists do not occupy leadership positions in politics and are often dispossessed of their lands. Most workers in Sudan are employed in the informal sector, lacking rights and decent wages. Many of these workers are youth and women. Businesses are centered in Khartoum and Port Sudan and require English language skills, making them inaccessible to populations living in the rest of the country that is largely rural and does not learn English (or any language other than Arabic) in public schools.

The justice system includes entrenched Sharia laws and judges who are loyal to the Islamist regime. Cases against the government, especially around human rights violations, are time consuming, costly, and are often outright dismissed. This corruption, coupled with impunity for political and military leaders, has eroded Sudanese trust in institutions. Trust among groups is also generally low: the Global Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* findings show that one third of respondents do not trust other ethnic groups and the remaining two thirds said they trusted others only "a little." However, having a common language can build trust across ethnicities and religions, which is the case for linguistically diverse or minority-language groups. In general, inclusion and acceptance in society are reserved for the majority Arab and Muslim populations.

## MONITOR TAKEAWAYS

Sudan has faced challenges in building a society that progresses on a pathway to pluralism. One of the major obstacles to pluralism in Sudan is that despite historical coexistence, there is currently widespread discrimination and marginalization among groups. This exclusion operates in many dimensions, such as ethnicity, gender, livelihood, religion and region. Since the diversity of its population changed after the conflict with and eventual separation of South Sudan, Sudan has maintained its exclusionary policies and attempted to redefine itself as a country without diversity. This has led to local languages and practices being threatened and continued intergroup conflict and instability. However, there are examples of ethnically, religious, and culturally diverse groups finding common ground in religious values, like solidarity, and in local common languages that diverse groups speak and wish to protect.

Continuous violence and armed conflict make it a challenging context to repeal laws limiting the rights of certain groups or pass laws to protect them. Attempts to reform restrictive laws have been made: the 2019 Constitutional Document aimed to prohibit discrimination, and the 2020 Juba peace agreement granted more authority to states to protect local culture and languages. Likewise, the Ministry of Justice has attempted to reform many repressive laws, but these efforts were stalled by the 2021 military coup. Even when Sudan has had policies in place to protect and support diverse groups, continued instability and a lack of political will and funding have resulted in gaps between policies and practice. Bodies that were entrusted with implementing reforms have not been created or fully activated, and some reforms were ignored entirely.

A cross-cutting theme across indicators and diversity types is that women face added hardship in navigating discrimination and inequality in Sudan. Women face internal displacement that leads them to working in urban areas in the informal economy or to unemployment. Women are especially impacted by Sharia laws which limit their social and economic rights, especially in comparison to men. Women experience menstrual stigma and poverty and have limited access to sexual and reproductive health services. Women also experience sexual and gender-based violence, including when they are playing leadership roles in protesting against the state.



# INTRODUCTORY NOTE

**The war between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) started on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, with devastating impacts.**

This report was undertaken during turbulent times in Sudan. The study commenced after the political change that ended 30 years of military dictatorship. Angry and disillusioned youth took to the streets in December 2018, and despite the brutal way in which the protesters were met, demonstrations continued. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the regime of President Omar al-Bashir was deposed.<sup>1</sup> Difficult negotiations began between the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC). Before these negotiations came to fruition, security forces brutally crushed the sit-in that was organized by youth at the military headquarters in Khartoum. Hundreds were killed, and many others were injured or went missing.

Negotiations resumed and were mediated by the Ethiopian prime minister, who was selected by the African Union (AU). A power-sharing agreement was signed between the military and civilians leading to the formation of a transitional cabinet in August 2019 headed by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. The new government was hailed by the international community, and the Sudanese were optimistic about a possible transition to democracy. The civilian–military power-sharing arrangement was seen as a unique one, and the prime minister commanded respect within and outside Sudan. He expressed his satisfaction with the civilian–military partnership, describing it as exemplary. He was dead wrong. The partnership was difficult and made the transition a tumultuous one.

The military contingent was not sincere and actively obstructed the transition. They orchestrated problems for the civilian cabinet, including blocking the port, sabotaging the supply of necessities, killing innocent civilians and inflaming the situation in Darfur. In October 2021, the military staged a coup, dissolved the civilian cabinet and arrested the prime minister and his team. In November 2021, Prime Minister Hamdok was released and reinstated, but again, the military was insincere in implementing the deal that brought back the prime minister. In the meantime, the killing of civilian protesters continued with impunity. In January 2022, the prime minister resigned, and the situation continued to deteriorate, with more killings and international isolation.

In February 2022, cracks became conspicuous within the military. The leader of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) publicly said that the October 2021 military coup, of which he was part, was a mistake and that the coup had brought back the Islamists who were ousted by the popular uprising in April 2019. Since then, fractures within the military have continued. The war between the RSF and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) started on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, with devastating impacts: more than 11 million persons were displaced; infrastructure was destroyed; livelihoods disrupted; and famine is looming in Sudan, such that more than 50 percent of the Sudanese are threatened with famine.

While Sudanese indices of human rights have been low for the past three decades, these indices have declined further since 2019. Killing innocent civilian protesters, imprisonment without trial, protecting corruption and economic hardships characterize post-2019 political change. The April 2023 conflict made the situation worse, and the right to life for millions of Sudanese was not preserved.

# COUNTRY PROFILE

**The intersection of race, livelihood style, ethnic background, class, urban–rural nexus, formal and informal economy, gender, religion and many other factors shape the reality of pluralism in the country.**

Pluralism in Sudan is best understood within an intersectional framework. Exclusion and marginalization are seldom practiced on only one diversity group. The intersection of race, livelihood style, ethnic background, class, urban–rural nexus, formal and informal economy, gender, religion and many other factors shape the reality of pluralism in the country. This report covers some of these diversity types, and it should be noted that each type is always connected with the others.

Sudan is one of Africa's largest countries, with an area of 1,868,000 km<sup>2</sup>, according to the World Bank.<sup>2</sup> Sudan's borders are shared with seven countries, which are Egypt and Libya from the north, South Sudan from the south, Chad and the Central African Republic from the west, Ethiopia and Eritrea from the east, and the Red Sea separates Sudan from Saudi Arabia. It has a population of 44,909,351 people.<sup>3</sup> The main languages in Sudan are Arabic (official), more than 100 languages and dialects of the Nilotic languages, Niger-Kordofanian languages and Nilo-Hamitic.<sup>4</sup> More than half of the population of Sudan classify themselves as Sudanese Arabs, with an African minority of more than 30 percent, resulting in a historical co-existence between the Arab and African peoples

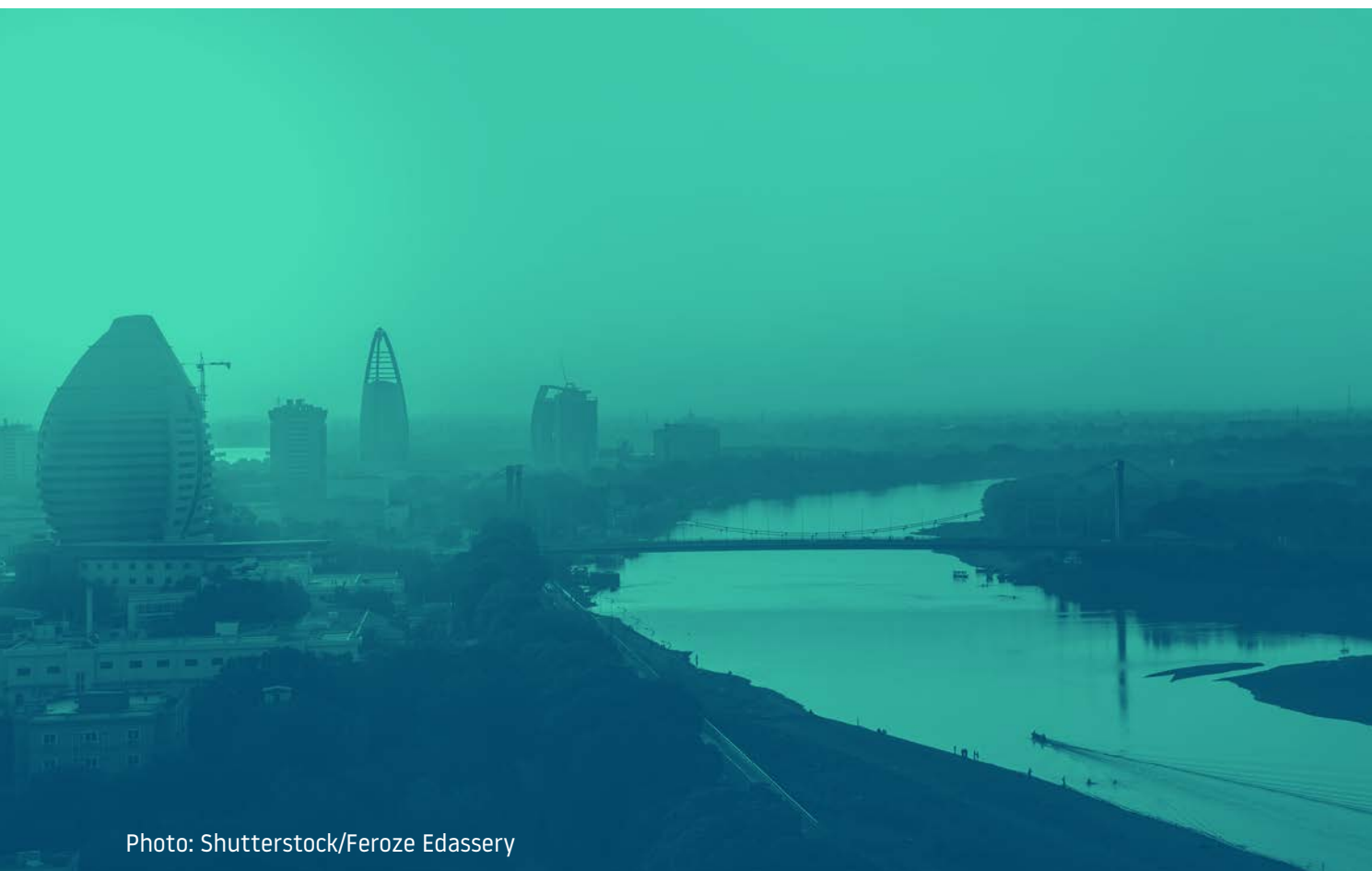


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**While regions or states were indeed allowed to exercise a great deal of power, much remained centralized, and states were not empowered financially.**

in Sudan, which has gradually blurred ethnic boundaries. However, these conflicts and challenges around Sudan's identity returned massively during the past decade in relation to an identity crisis.<sup>5</sup>

Culturally, the impact of Sudan's geographical location, that is, North sub-Saharan Africa, cannot be denied. It is clearly reflected in the contrast of cultures due to the ethnic and cultural interactions with the neighbouring countries, where the features of the Arab identity are clear in the north and centre, and most of the population speaks Arabic, follow Islam, and mostly claim an Arabic identity. The features of the African identity appear across the nation, celebrated among some groups and denied among others.<sup>6</sup> Sudan is characterized by cultural diversity and the predominance of a rural lifestyle.<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally, local communities shared many qualities of peaceful co-existence. Among these is the prevalence of a collective culture, co-operation and solidarity, which may extend to include many ethnic groups or to be internal within the same group. In most of these societies, with their different religious orientations, whether they are Christian, Muslim or with traditional beliefs, the elements of collective culture are linked to a religious dimension, and the religious elements intersect with cultural diversity and unite the goals of ethnically different groups—the values of solidarity and support are the basis of social and family life in Sudan.<sup>8</sup>

Before 1989, Sudan oscillated between centralized and decentralized systems of governance. In 1994, Sudan adopted a federal system of governance. The federal system went through different stages of development. At present, there are 18 states: Blue Nile, Central Darfur, East Darfur, Gedaref, Gezira, Kassala, Khartoum, North Darfur, North Kordofan, Northern, Red Sea, River Nile, Sennar, South Darfur, South Kordofan, West Darfur, West Kordofan and White Nile.<sup>9</sup> The federal system was meant as a vehicle for the devolution of powers in vast countries like Sudan. While regions or states were indeed allowed to exercise a great deal of power, much remained centralized, and states were not empowered financially. States that were not economically endowed faced challenges because the federal government seldom provides the necessary financial support. Additionally, the federal system of governance entrenched ethnicity as some states were established based on ethnic considerations.

In December 2018, Sudan entered a revolution/uprising that shifted the power dynamics of the country, and by April 2019, the Islamist government of President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown after 30 years of a tight power grip. Over the 30 years of the National Congress Party's (NCP) rule, Sudan faced increasing hostility against its neighbours, repression, ethnic and religious polarization, and a forced process of Arabization and Islamization. The NCP was born out of the Muslim Brotherhood movement and manifested the movement's vision of power. The history of Sudan is marked by conflicts, wars, discrimination, brutality and exclusion.<sup>10</sup>

## THE CONTEXT

Following the overthrow of al-Bashir's government after months of protests, army chief Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan was sworn in as head of the ruling TMC in Sudan on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Under the auspices of the AU and Ethiopia, a declaration and a constitutional document were agreed to in September 2019, along with the formation of a

**The coup imposed an atmosphere of insecurity, deepened by the imprisonment of activists and the brutal torture and killing of protestors.**

civilian–military government headed by Abdalla Hamdok. The agreement that was signed between the military junta and the FFC coalition is known as the Constitutional Declaration, and it governed the power allocated for each party as well as the relationship between them.<sup>11</sup> It also covered many constitutional elements among which were clauses stating that Sudan was committed to human rights and the rights of all people and minorities. The Constitutional Declaration was concluded after painstaking negotiations between the military and civilians, which took place against the background of the June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, sit-in massacre that led to the deaths of hundreds in front of the army headquarters.<sup>12</sup> A committee was established to investigate the massacre, but to date, the case is not resolved and remains a barrier to justice. The current military leader, Lieutenant General Al-Burhan, forcefully ended the transitional government period by staging a coup in October 2021, which took the country back 30 years to the cycle of coups and dictatorships.<sup>13</sup>

Following the October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 coup, the state of rights and freedoms in Sudan declined. Due to the declaration of a state of emergency, the suspension of the articles of the Constitutional Declaration, the internet being blocked, and the killing and imprisoning of protesters and civilians,<sup>14</sup> the AU's Peace and Security Council suspended Sudan's membership in the continental system.<sup>15</sup> The coup imposed an atmosphere of insecurity, deepened by the imprisonment of activists and the brutal torture and killing of protestors.<sup>16</sup>

## **SUDAN'S ECONOMY**

Sudan's geographical location allows it a range of economic resources; however, these resources are not fully used or appropriately managed. According to the Trading Economics website (compiled from World Bank data), the agriculture land in Sudan was 60.31 percent in 2022.<sup>17</sup> As of 2017, Sudan had an animal wealth population of 108,187,000,<sup>18</sup> in addition to the Nile River, which borders the country's east, and seasonal rivers. Various parts of the country have also seen recent gold mining, and according to *Africa News*, Sudan produced about 18 tons of gold in 2022.<sup>19</sup> Despite these resources, corruption is a major challenge to Sudan's economic prosperity. In 2019, Sudan was ranked 172 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index.<sup>20</sup>

The gap between the rich and the poor has been one of the causes of political, economic and social instability, and the rich class expanded in it and the gap between it and the popular majority increased. Because of the business class's overlap with the system, they did not see the sparks emanating from the furnace of that gap until it overthrew the whole system. Questions related to equality and narrowing the gap between the 'haves and have-nots' continue to require a lot of serious work to achieve a quantum leap in the issue of equality. In other words, making equality an issue of society and its political powers rather than a field for purely economic discussion.<sup>21</sup> Sudan has been characterized as a typical country with a "resource curse," which means Sudan has an abundance of economic resources, however, poorly managed to address the real challenges of the country.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to note that the former regime's (NCP) economic policies depended heavily on "fossil fuel resources" while shrinking investments in agriculture and industry. The National Congress Party (NCP), in addressing the economic gap, established reforms that included reducing public spending in health and education sectors.<sup>23</sup>

**Discrimination in Sudan happens on the grounds of racial origin, ethnicity, religion and gender, and it formed the basis for many policies in the subsequent national eras.**

According to the 2022 Arab Monetary Fund's (AMF) Joint Arab Economic Report, Sudan was one of the countries in the Arab region with the highest inflation rates, along with Yemen, Libya and Syria.<sup>24</sup> According to the AMF's 2022 report, the average per capita gross domestic product (GDP) reached \$1,151 (USD) in 2021 with a growth rate of -30 percent. Sudan also recorded a high inflation rate, reaching (359.1 percent) in 2021.<sup>25</sup> This increase is attributed to the impact of Covid-19 as well as the political atmosphere (instability) in the country that influenced the economic situation.<sup>26</sup>

According to the United Nations Sudan Results Report<sup>27</sup> (2018, 2019, 2020), in 2020, the inflation rate was recorded at 154 percent, and it was attributed to the continued depreciation of the Sudanese pound. This was all against the backdrop of the conditions that Sudan went through during 2019, as the rate of investment at constant prices shrank during 2019, reaching a saving rate of 5 percent and an investment rate of 12 percent. The poverty rate reached 46.1 percent against the lower-middle income countries poverty line (\$3.20 USD a day) with higher rates in rural areas.

Sudan also recorded the highest rates of gender inequality in terms of inequality in human development. Access to education and health services is still unequal with regard to quantity and quality among members of society, along with the absence of policies that facilitate access to basic services for isolated classes, the improvement of financial inclusion, and increasing access to finance and decent work. The United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia reports showed that the Sudanese economy contracted in 2019 by about 2.5 percent. Political instability led to a contraction of growth in the services sector and to a decline in real estate and business investments, while agriculture suffered from a shortage of inputs, especially fuel.<sup>28</sup>

The military coup on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, caused a major economic setback for Sudan, which had been in the early stages of recovery in 2021 because of reforms implemented by the transitional government. The coup resulted in paralysis across all vital sectors, increasing the suffering of citizens.<sup>29</sup>

## **CONFLICTS AND DISCRIMINATION IN SUDAN**

It is important to note that Sudan suffered from inequalities between its regions and internal conflicts since 1956 when it achieved independence. Historically, many analysts claim that Sudan suffers from an identity crisis between Arabs and Africans; hence, many of the conflicts within Sudan are seen as identity conflicts.<sup>30</sup> Despite the simplicity of such analysis, identity remains a main issue in Sudan.

Discrimination in Sudan happens on the grounds of racial origin, ethnicity, religion and gender, and it formed the basis for many policies in the subsequent national eras,<sup>31</sup> which ignited civil wars in 1955; in 1983, in South Sudan (a former state in Sudan); in 2003, in the Darfur region; and in 2011, in the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan; and the Blue Nile. It should be noted that governments have reneged on their commitments to undertake necessary reforms, which have undermined the realization of economic and social rights for many groups.

The major conflict that coloured Sudan's history is the long war between what are now Sudan and South Sudan (a former Sudanese state).<sup>32</sup> The media showed this conflict

**Several peace agreements have been mediated over the course of the Darfur conflict, but none were deemed satisfactory until recently.**

as religious, between Muslims and Christians.<sup>33</sup> However, the war was also a result of discrimination and the colonial policy of “closed areas” that left many regions excluded from development and national imaginations.<sup>34</sup> In 2005, the NCP and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (the main party fighting for the South back then) signed a comprehensive peace agreement<sup>35</sup> (CPA) and issued a new constitution. The CPA granted South Sudan a referendum for independence, which happened in 2011. Since then, Sudan has become stricter on the issue of diversity, as South Sudan had a majority of Christians and other religions, in addition to hundreds of ethnic groups and local languages. After the separation, former president Omar al-Bashir<sup>36</sup> gave a famous speech in Gedarf in eastern Sudan, announcing Sudan as a homogenous country without diversity or minorities. The speech was a red flag against pluralism because before secession, South Sudan represented a large share of the country’s diverse groups. While the situation has changed now politically, the practices and exclusionary policies largely remain the same.

The second prominent conflict in Sudan is the war in Darfur,<sup>37</sup> which started in 2003, in western Sudan. The conflict started as clashes between farmers and pastoralists before it politically escalated. The conflict escalated gradually into a war between ethnic groups known as “Arabs” and “blacks” (also known as *Zourga*, see note).<sup>38</sup> The conflict was again simplified and misrepresented by media. As Sikainga explains, “The current Darfur conflict is a product of an explosive combination of environmental, political, and economic factors.”<sup>39</sup>

It is important to mention that the Darfur region enjoys a very diverse ethnic population with inter-marriages among them. It is also very pluralistic on a linguistic level. Groups such as the *Fur*, *Masalit*, *Zaghawa*, *Tunjur* and *Daju* are not Arabic speakers, while the *Rizeigat*, *Misseriya*, *Ta’isha*, *Beni Halba*, and *Mahamid* are Arabic speakers. These are just a few of the groups, in addition to others, who come from West Africa, such as the Hausa, Fulani and Borno. According to Sikainga, all parties in the conflict were “equally indigenous, equally black, and equally Muslims.”<sup>40</sup>

The conflict made it easier for many armed groups to emerge demanding equal rights for Darfur’s population and making claims on behalf of the non-Arabic speaking groups, in particular. These armed groups include the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice and Equality Movement. The Sudanese Army and the paramilitary RSF, previously known as Janjaweed, were active in violence against non-Arabic communities.<sup>41</sup> Several peace agreements have been mediated over the course of the Darfur conflict, but none were deemed satisfactory until recently.

Against the backdrop of these conflicts, many analysts and intellectuals tried to come up with solutions and evaluations. The conflicts are, in some part, seen as an identity crisis that Sudan has suffered from since 1956. Sudan is neither an Arabic nor African nation in terms of identity. Despite its geography, Sudan has undergone a serious process of Arabization and Islamization by various rulers and governments. After Sudanese independence, the rulers sought refuge with the Arab League against the polarization of the Cold War.<sup>42</sup> Subsequent governments did not change this political identity but rather emphasized it. When the Islamists took power in the 1989 coup, they imposed a “civilization project” aimed primarily at Arabizing and Islamizing the nation. They implemented the project via education, media, economy and legal reforms. The NCP’s project restructured notions of tribes, ethnic groups and family, amongst other values, and they re-politicized traditional leadership between tribes and ethnic groups.<sup>43</sup>

**The failure of successive Sudanese governments since independence to manage diversity has dragged the country into repeated cycles of wars, intergroup violence and instability.**

## SUDAN'S IDENTITY WITHIN THE POLITICAL-INTELLECTUAL SPHERE

The failure of successive Sudanese governments since independence to manage diversity has dragged the country into repeated cycles of wars, intergroup violence and instability,<sup>44</sup> where the intellectual and political debate crystallized into two lines of thought: the bloody conflict on the identity between the school of Arabism and the African or Sudanese schools<sup>45</sup> and the school of national fusion, such as the “School of the Forest and the Desert.”<sup>46</sup> These schools of thought both affected and were affected by the political discourses of governments as well as by opposition and armed groups. Finally, the concept of the New Sudan<sup>47</sup> emerged, which spoke of a Sudan with new power formations and a novel identity; that of just the Sudanese without the inflections of the Arab and African dilemma. Language, religion, identity and citizenship are at the forefront of the agenda that currently occupies a position in the aims of the political forces that still bear arms in the Nuba Mountains/South Kordofan region, such as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)-Abdelaziz al-Hilu, which adheres to the discussion of “supra-constitutional principles” as an entry point for engagement in any peace process, and the Abdel Wahid al-Nur movement in the Darfur region, which is entrenched behind slogans of equal citizenship and lifting historical injustices against nationalities.

## THE JUBA PEACE AGREEMENT, 2021

During the transitional government, a new peace agreement was signed in 2020 between the transitional government and various armed groups. The agreement seemed to be a good step toward peaceful living in Sudan. Nonetheless, it was criticized for its lack of clarity on some issues, such as the power each state would enjoy as well as the future of constitution-making. A report issued by International IDEA in 2021 about the Juba Agreement stated that

The future Darfur region will exercise a different set of powers to Blue Nile and Kordofan, and it is unclear what powers will be exercised by the rest of the federal regions. The Agreement contains a large amount of detail on the powers that specific regions will exercise but is close to silent on a range of issues including but not limited to the national government's structure, the internal structure of federal regions and the composition of revenue sharing commissions. The Agreement provides that significant additional agreements on the federal system will have to be reached in the coming few months, which will be a major challenge.<sup>48</sup>

The main parties involved in this agreement are the following:

- The transitional government before the 2021 coup, comprised of elements from the FFC and SAF. The FFC is the civilian opposition coalition responsible for the constitutional charter signed after al-Bashir's ouster in 2019 along with the military partner (the Sudanese Army and the paramilitary RSF that was active in the Darfur conflicts).<sup>49</sup>
- The Armed Struggle Movements–Darfur Path, which is a “coalition of the main armed movements in the Darfur region.” The coalition includes “the Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudan Liberation Movement (Minni Minawi), the Sudan

**The different vested interests of external actors shaped Sudan conflicts, and as such, its conflicts were never merely internal.**

Liberation Movement-Transitional Council, the Sudanese Alliance Movement, the Sudan Liberation Forces Alliance, and the Sudan Liberation Movement.”<sup>50</sup>

- Sudan Liberation Movement-North-SRF is “connected to the South Sudanese Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) and remained active in Sudan after South Sudan seceded in 2011. In 2017, the movement split into two main factions: the Malik Agar faction which signed the Juba Agreement and the Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction which has still not signed into the Agreement [...]. Both factions are in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile area.”<sup>51</sup>
- Masar al-Shariq (Eastern Path) is associated with the “Beja Congress, which is a political group comprising several ethnic groups. The group has splintered, which contributed to a lack of consensus within Masar al-Shariq on the Juba Agreement. Osama Saeed [leader of the Beja Congress] signed the Eastern Sudan Track on behalf of two Beja Congress splinter groups (United People’s Front for Liberation and Justice and the Beja Congress in Opposition).”<sup>52</sup>
- Masar al-Shamal (Northern Path) refers to “the Kush Liberation Movement and the North Entity [...]. The Masar’s objectives include development, and displaced persons in north Sudan, Merowe and Wadi Halfa who were displaced because of dam construction.”<sup>53</sup>
- Masar al-Wasat (Central Path) is a coalition of political parties and Sufi groups. The coalition was headed by the Revolutionary Democratic Front Party. Masar al-Wasat is concentrated in al-Jazira state, the White Nile, Sennar and the state of Khartoum.”<sup>54</sup>
- Al-Jabaha al-Thalitha-Tamazuj (Third Front) is a “faction/wing of the SPLM.”<sup>55</sup>

The transitional government aimed to start a new era for Sudan in which every group of people would be represented and seen by the state. However, the agreement did not work in this regard. One of the important challenges in terms of recognizing pluralism within the agreement was its failure to include SPLM-North, led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu. This faction of the SPLM insisted on separating religion from the state and having a secular state to compensate for the previous government’s Islamization processes. Also, the Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM) faction led by Abdel Wahid al-Nur refused any negotiations with the army faction of the transitional government. These two groups did not take part in the Juba Agreement, yet remain important for any recognition of peace in Sudan, particularly the processes of negotiating marginalization and attempts at reconciliation and compensation.

## **SUDAN’S REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has not had stable relationships with its neighbours. How Sudan conducts its regional and international relations has implications on conflict and pluralism in the country. Two central factors need to be considered. First is the ambivalent status of Sudan within the AU and the Arab League, which has shaped Sudan’s relationships with its neighbours from these two blocs. For instance, Egypt perceives its national interest to be affected by developments in Sudan, and for historical reasons, Egypt looks at Sudan as its backyard. Second, Sudan’s relationships during the Cold War were affected by its ideological leanings. During the 1980s, Sudan was the biggest recipient of US foreign aid in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>56</sup> This means that the different vested interests of external actors shaped Sudan conflicts, and as such, its conflicts were never merely internal. This was highlighted by the fact that all peacemaking efforts and agreements signed during the al-Bashir regime were brokered by external

**Civil society invested in a heritage of togetherness rooted in Sudan's citizens' rural backgrounds of shared responsibility and ownership of lands and resources.**

actors. Sudan has, in recent years, been drawn into Gulf politics and the rivalry between Qatar, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, on the other. Sudan's relationship with Iran has also impacted its relations with the Gulf countries. Sudan's relationship with the United States has been quite difficult, especially during the reign of the Islamists. The Trump administration's announcement in December 2018 of its new Africa strategy, which included stopping the influence of China and the Russian Federation on the continent, meant that Sudan represented a challenge to this strategy, as it maintained good relations with both countries.<sup>57</sup>

Relations with neighbouring countries, led by Ethiopia (e.g., the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam dispute) also play a role, especially in the aftermath of the war on the Tigray region on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and the conflict with Sudan over the lands of "al-Fashaqa." The Tigray conflict was directly reflected in the size of the refugee flow to Sudan and the humanitarian and human rights conditions of these refugees.<sup>58</sup> Following the April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 war, Tigray refugees were forced to leave Sudan along with hundreds of thousands of Sudanese who crossed the border into Ethiopia. Eritrea also plays a pivotal role in the stability of the states of eastern Sudan in terms of ethnic overlap and cross-border groups between the two countries. These have become of paramount importance with the regional conflicts on the Red Sea coast, and the sharp internal polarization between the local components on the guidance of the conflicts of the Horn of Africa.

## **SUDAN'S CIVIL SOCIETY**

In Sudan, civil society has historically been intertwined with politics and activism.<sup>59</sup> Civil society, as defined by Assal, are non-state actors and include "NGOs, professional associations, trade unions, and even opposition political parties[...]."<sup>60</sup> Within that scope, it is useful to shed light on the nature of civil society in Sudan in earlier times. Prior to the attainment of independence, the citizens of Sudan initiated the formation of a civil society that functioned independently of what the state dictates. Civil society invested in a heritage of togetherness rooted in Sudan's citizens' rural backgrounds of shared responsibility and ownership of lands and resources. This cultural foundation fostered a communal sense of responsibility for development, evident in practices such as shared harvests, governance, and crisis management. This cultural foundation manifested in the establishment of schools, reading circles, vocational training schools, trade unions, among other types of organizations. This surge of civil engagement resonated with diverse social groups, encompassing men, women, farmers, laborers, and more. This period coincided with a postcolonial initiative aimed at establishing a state. The salient point here is that for an extended period in both history and geography, Sudanese society has been characterized by a civil society based on the sharing and collective management of resources.

A sense of solidarity among Sudanese communities is deeply rooted in Sufi religious modes of thought and institutions such as Nafeer, where individuals seek the support of their tribal members, neighbours, and other community members to undertake various tasks, including construction, harvesting, and agricultural activities. This collectivity and support among the Sudanese people are grounded first in the basic tribal organization, and with urbanization transformed into a residential form of solidarity. With modernity, this collectivity also became professional.

## Islamists have actively restricted and monitored civil society in Sudan.

However, Sudanese civil society underwent significant transformations in both its nature and its organizational structure, evolving from a folk development space to a politically active space, particularly during anti-colonial struggle. The conceptualization of civil society in modern times can be traced back to organizations such as the White Flag League, which laid the foundation for a “politically oriented civil society.”<sup>61</sup> Civil society, through trade unions, reading circles, student unions, and other organizations, has played a significant political role during various periods of Sudan’s history. In light of this historical context, it is crucial to note that Islamists have actively restricted and monitored civil society in Sudan. Islamists cultivated a parallel Islamic civil society, fostering institutions such as monazamat alda’wa al islamia (Islamic Appeal Organization known as MADA), Quranic teaching centres, and orphans’ assistance organizations. Simultaneously, the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) imposed constraints on civic space, particularly with regard to NGOs.<sup>62</sup> The HAC persistently restricted civil interventions for national and international organizations. It is important to note that control over civil society and humanitarian aid in Sudan took various forms under various bodies since 1989.<sup>63</sup> When the Islamists took power in Sudan (1989) they started by dissolving and banning trade unions, national civil society organizations and various associations. Many organizations had to re-register under more control established by the 1991 Criminal Act. In 2006, new legislation was issued that gave HAC even more control over civil society organizations and it became more of a “security body.”<sup>64</sup>

Subsequent to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) in 2005 and to the Darfur Peace Agreement in 2006, there was a proliferation of civil society organizations, donors, and funds from around the world.<sup>65</sup> A significant aspect of NGO interventions during this period was the emphasis on civic education, democracy, human rights, and peacebuilding. This era is remembered among Sudanese as an era with a margin of freedom for civil society activities. Unfortunately, it ended immediately when South Sudan seceded in 2012. However, it is important to note that despite the restrictions that were imposed on civil society, the sector remained attractive for opposition activists. Several activists joined the NGO space and, according to Hale and Kadoda,<sup>66</sup> women and youth activists started to self-identify as activists rather than as members of political parties.

This shift is of particular pertinence to youth who did not appreciate party politics. Since 2008, several youth groups have emerged as new actors within the sphere of civil society. These groups have taken various forms, including humanitarian initiatives such as Nafeer, Emergency Street, and Education Without Borders, as well as youth political initiatives such as Girifna (lit. “We are fed up”) and Sudan Change Now.<sup>67</sup> In the wake of youth initiatives in Khartoum, the civil society landscape underwent a transformation, giving rise to two distinct trajectories. On one trajectory, youth-managed entities emerged, while on another, established NGOs were seen as representing a more traditional civil society. This distinction became more pronounced following the 2018 uprisings that led to the overthrow of former President Omar al-Bashir. The existence of limited spaces and programs within the conventional NGO structure has meant that young people remain predominantly excluded from leadership roles. Consequently, the youth frequently characterized conventional NGOs as exclusionary, elitist and centered on Khartoum.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, the civil society sector with NGOs in particular have been criticized as focusing on “symptoms” rather than “causes” given that most of their work is response oriented. The reliance on external donors had made NGOs compete amongst themselves instead of cooperate.<sup>69</sup>

**In the aftermath of the armed conflict that commenced in April 2023, the civil society sector experienced significant destruction.**

In the aftermath of the armed conflict that commenced in April 2023, the civil society sector experienced significant destruction. A significant number of organizations were compelled to relocate or suspend their operations due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan. According to El Mahdi et al.,<sup>70</sup> approximately 2,900 national organizations were forced to cease their activities in the country. A limited number of organizations operated from relatively secure locations within Sudan, including Kassala, Gedarif, and Port Sudan. Nonetheless, in conflict-stricken regions such as Khartoum, youth-led initiatives persisted in their endeavors. A notable example is a group that emerged from the remnants of the uprising, known as Emergency Response Rooms, which prioritizes humanitarian aid. Another initiative, dubbed Hadreen (ḥāḥrīn), has emerged from the antecedents of youth humanitarian initiatives<sup>71</sup> and is instrumental in facilitating humanitarian aid processes.

NGOs that have vacated Sudan encounter significant challenges in re-establishing their offices in the countries of exile, especially smaller organizations such as Sudanese Solidarity for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The challenges encountered by these organizations vary according to the host countries selected. For instance, those in Egypt are confronted with a constricted civic space in the country, while others in Uganda, for example, encounter obstacles in terms of financial resources.<sup>72</sup> International donors have restricted their support to human rights-focused NGOs, thereby fostering a sense of competition among these NGOs and further complicating their work. The majority of the financial resources are allocated to addressing humanitarian needs in regions affected by conflict. Consequently, a number of NGOs have transitioned to providing humanitarian assistance, despite their primary areas of expertise being human rights and civic education.<sup>73</sup>

In light of the ongoing war in Sudan, it is imperative to explore the role of civil society in peace processes. Notwithstanding the aforementioned critiques concerning the difficulties faced by civil society, it is imperative to acknowledge its pivotal role in promoting peace during the preceding conflicts in Sudan. Numerous NGOs have implemented initiatives focused on peacebuilding among grassroots communities, including the Sudanese Initiative for Human Rights, the Sudanese Writers Union, and the Sudanese Organization for Research and Development (SORD). Nonetheless, Sudanese civil society has historically been excluded from peace negotiations. For instance, this exclusion was evident during the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Abuja Peace Agreement negotiations between the Sudanese government and the armed groups from Darfur.<sup>74</sup> Currently, despite encountering polarization, NGOs have increasingly collaborated with political figures to bring an end to war. These organizations have also utilized their networks with donors and the international community to garner support for the cessation of hostilities.<sup>75</sup> It is noteworthy that these organizations depend on funding from the international community, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which in 2024 provided approximately 70 percent<sup>76</sup> of the funding for NGOs and humanitarian aid. The recent suspension of USAID funds and activities have had a significant impact on Sudanese NGOs. A number of NGOs that received support from USAID were compelled to cease their operations and lay off employees due to their inability to maintain payroll.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, this is contributing to the struggles of NGOs in exile and poses a significant challenge for maintaining their work.

**Pluralism in terms of language in Sudan has been closely linked to the conflict over culture and identity and was one of the factors of the civil war.**

## DIVERSITY GROUPS FOR THE REPORT

**Livelihood styles:** Sudan has various diverse groups who are mainly pastoralists or farmers. This diversity type reflects many of the root causes for conflicts outside urban areas. Accordingly, when we speak about pastoralists and farmers, we also speak about people who have long suffered from unequal development patterns, marginalization, internal conflicts and displacement.

**Languages:** As an ethnically diverse country, Sudan is also linguistically diverse. There is a connection between those who do not use Arabic as a mother tongue and marginalization. Many groups suffered from language discrimination as they were forced to adopt Arabic as an official language to get an education and jobs. Thus, groups, such as the Nubians in the North, Nuba in South Kordofan and Beja in the east, have suffered from linguistic discrimination in the state's policies. This diversity type reflects connections between marginalization and the enforcement of Arabic and loss of languages over time. There have been several attempts by communities to preserve and teach their local languages, such as the Moro group (a subgroup from Nuba) and the Nubians in the north; however, these attempts have not been very promising. On top of this, and since the NCP made education in the Arabic language only, speaking English remained a privilege. This directly reflected who has been engaged in political processes and who got good jobs, that is, mostly those who could afford private schools. When grouping together the ethnic groups who do not use Arabic as a mother tongue, then one is referring to marginalized groups as well. Pluralism in terms of language in Sudan has been closely linked to the conflict over culture and identity and was one of the factors of the civil war.<sup>78</sup> This is also a dynamic left by the colonial language policies in Africa, and African elites identified with it in the national eras.<sup>79</sup> Local languages face threats that originate in wars and displacement migration, education and media, and in the media not responding to local languages, along with the poor quantity and quality of documentation.

**Economy:** The formal economy in Sudan is only a small section, while those in the informal market represent the majority. This report also uses the term 'informality' to refer to those who exist in this space of the economy. Taking the internal displacement that happened because of conflicts into consideration, most of those displaced would join the informal sector in big cities, especially Khartoum. These are largely the same groups that suffered from marginalization, poverty and displacement. The element of urban versus rural life is connected to this diversity type. In the rural areas, the focus is more on pastoralists and farmers, despite the presence of informal forms of both. In cities, the distinction becomes one between the formal and informal economy. It is about which groups work in the margins of the state, and a multi-layered process of marginalization is practiced against them either because of displacement, lack of education, language (i.e., not Arabic), colour, ethnic background, among other factors, or because of poverty. Sudan's economy has been performing badly for many decades, except for the period 2003–10 when the economy was growing in double digits because of oil revenue and the peace agreement that was signed in 2005. Before the oil, the economy suffered under high inflation rates and US sanctions that were imposed in 1993 and continued for over two decades (they were finally lifted by President Barack Obama in 2017). Yet, the October 2021 military coup put Sudan back into international isolation, and the 2023 war shattered all hopes for the economy.

**Religion here reflects the conflict not only with South Sudan before secession in 2011 but also with the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile areas that have significant non-Muslim populations.**

**Religion:** Despite suggestions to the contrary, Sudan is religiously diverse. Despite being portrayed as a Muslim country, there are groups who are discriminated against in Sudan because of their religion, such as the Nuba from South Kordofan. Also, religion intersects with marginalization in urban areas with informality and formality. There are large numbers of refugees whose identities connect to religion; for example, the South Sudanese and Ethiopians. Religion here reflects the conflict not only with South Sudan before secession in 2011 but also with the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile areas that have significant non-Muslim populations. Pew Research Center data<sup>80</sup> indicated that 91 percent of the population of Sudan is Muslim, 5.4 percent Christian, 2.8 percent follow traditional religions (such as ancestral worship) and the rest follow other religions or do not belong to any religion.<sup>81</sup> It must be noted that there is religious diversity among Muslims, and as such, there is conflict within the Muslim population. While Sunni Islam is the order in Sudan, within it there are many groups, including the Sufi orders and Salafi groups (this group is divided into several subgroups). Sufi and Salafi groups have differences that, at times, have led to violence.<sup>82</sup> For instance in 2012 a violent incident was recorded between Salafi groups and Sufi groups during the Mawlid celebrations (The Prophet Mohammed's birth celebrations) in Omdurman as reported on the Sudanese Online website.<sup>83</sup>

In 2020, some religious advocacy groups estimated that non-Muslims make up more than 13 percent of the population; most Muslims (in the absence of accurate official statistics) follow the Sunni sect, although there are great differences between the followers of the different Sunni traditions. There are small communities of the Shiite sect in Khartoum, along with a small Baha'i community, and there is still at least one Jewish family in the Khartoum area.

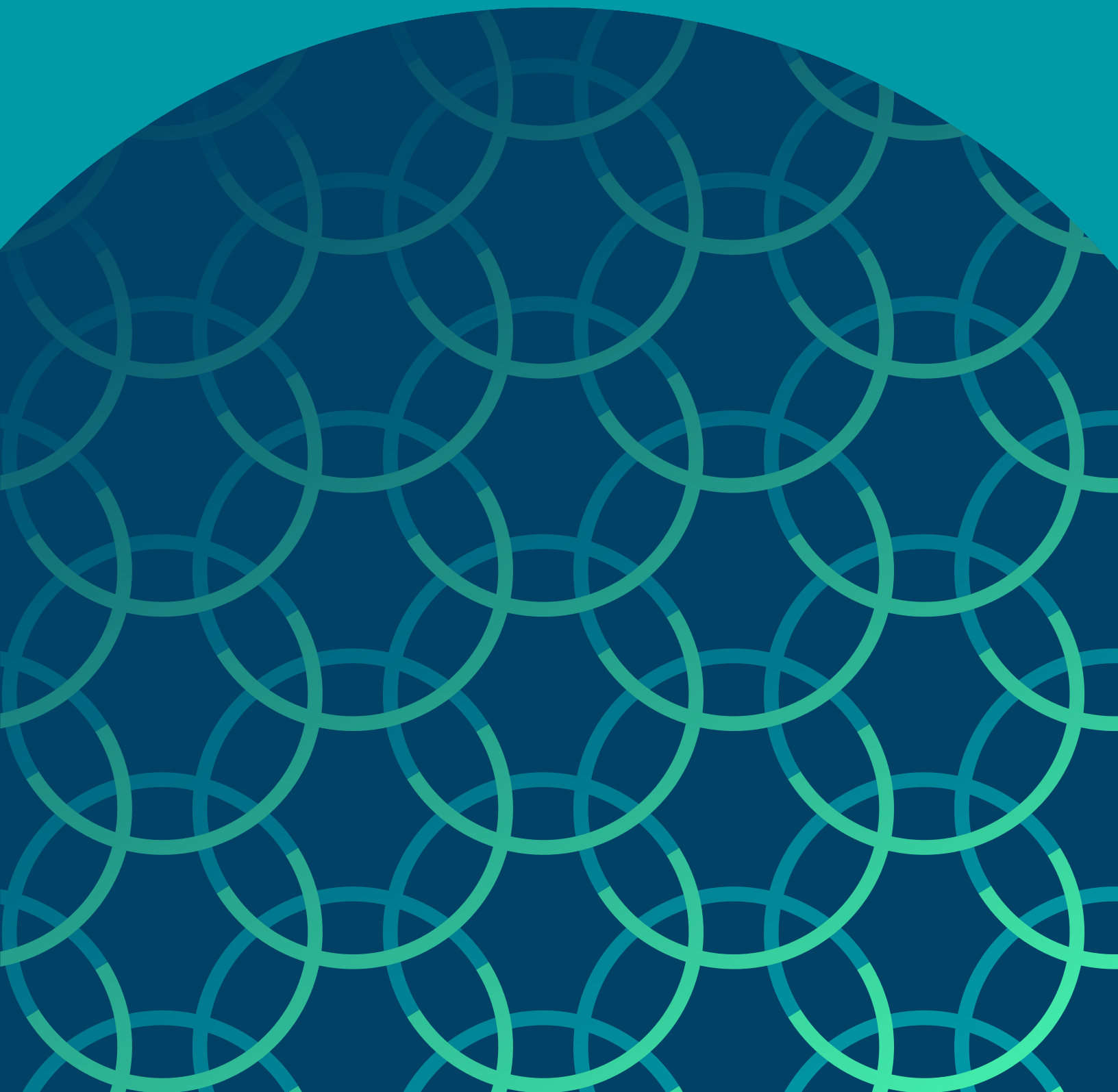
The Sudanese Council of Churches estimates that there are 36 Christian denominations, of which 24 are registered, and there are relatively small but well-established groups of Coptic Orthodox and Greek Orthodox in Khartoum, El Obeid in North Kordofan, River Nile State, Gezira State and the eastern parts of the country. The Ethiopian and Eritrean orthodox communities consist mostly of refugees and immigrants in Khartoum and the eastern parts of the country. Other larger Christian groups include the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Episcopal Church, the Special Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sudan, and the Presbyterian Church in Sudan. Smaller Christian groups include the African Inland Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Sudanese Interior Church, the Sudanese Pentecostal Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Jehovah's Witnesses.

**Gender:** Gender remains as a cross-cutting type throughout this report. Women are often much more discriminated against. This is very relevant when thinking of the process of Islamization that imposed one type of Islam on all people, and women were the most affected. Also, on displacement and the informal sector, women are among the largest categories that are negatively affected.

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- August 18, 1955 (Torit): The outbreak of the first civil war in South Sudan.
- March 16, 1965 (Khartoum): The Round Table Conference to Solve the Problem of the South.
- February 27, 1972 (Addis Ababa): Agreement on Autonomy for the Region of Southern Sudan.
- May 16, 1983 (Bor, South Sudan): The outbreak of the second civil war in southern Sudan.
- January 25, 1992 (Frankfurt): Frankfurt Declaration grants the south the right to a referendum on self-determination.
- July 1994 (Nairobi): Intergovernmental Authority on Development Principles–Third Round, Adoption of the Right to Self- Determination for the South.
- June 23, 1995 (Asmara): The Asmara Declaration on Fundamental Issues.
- April 21, 1997 (Khartoum): Khartoum Peace Agreement (Peace from within) with factions from South Sudan.
- January 9, 2005 (Naivasha): Comprehensive Peace Agreement.
- May 5, 2006 (Abuja): Darfur Peace Agreement.
- October 14, 2006 (Asmara): Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement.
- July 14, 2011 (Doha): The Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.
- December 2018: The start of the uprising's demonstrations.
- April 2019: The ousting of the Omar al-Bashir regime.
- June 2019: The Khartoum Massacre of protesters, which crushed the sit-in at the army headquarters.
- July 2019: Signing of a power-sharing agreement between civilians and the military junta.
- October 3, 2020 (Juba): Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan.
- October 2021: Military coup.
- April 2023: War between Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

# PART I. COMMITMENTS



# 1. INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

## AVERAGE SCORE: 4

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 5

ECONOMY | SCORE: 5

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 3

**Sudanese governments have deliberately ignored international commitments and committed widespread violations.**

Sudan has ratified and acceded to many international human rights instruments, including those related to non-discrimination. During the transitional period, an agreement was signed in September 2019 between the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Government of Sudan to establish a country office for the OHCHR in Sudan with a full mandate. The OHCHR launched its work on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and the mandate of the Independent Expert appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) was changed to “technical assistance.” Sudan faces major challenges related to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights due to the continuation of the policies of discrimination and inequality that plague Sudanese society and negatively affect the enjoyment of these rights, especially in the areas affected by the conflict, “which constitute root causes of civil unrest and conflicts in Sudan,” in addition to the challenges of reforming the legal and judicial systems.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the international commitments undertaken by the Sudanese governments, the governments have deliberately ignored international commitments and committed widespread violations,<sup>85</sup> especially after Sudan was divided into two states in July 2011. Former General al-Bashir declared the unilateralism of the state that “the era of dipping has ended”<sup>86</sup> in reference to the lack of diversity, which opened the door to massive violations based on religion against the right of religiosity for individuals and against groups/sects.<sup>87</sup>

Despite Sudan’s signing of relevant agreements, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008<sup>88</sup> and the efforts of the National Council for Cultural Heritage and the Promotion of National Languages, some languages are still threatened. This again shows a lack of serious interest from governments to protect languages. The Arabic language is still the official language in Sudan, and thus, children need to master it for school. They cannot, for example, receive education in their local languages or get to universities with them.

Sudan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Both include sections on religion; however, Sudan does not protect religious diversity or honour its ratification of the covenants. Christians stated that they were punished for selling alcohol, despite amendments to the law exempting non-Muslims from the ban, except in cases where alcohol was supplied to Muslims. It was reported that the police imposed penalties, usually in the form of a fine or a limited prison period if the original fine was not paid, and the penalties varied based on the place of arrest and the judge’s discretion.

During the period between April and July 2020, the Ministry of Justice made legal reforms, including 35 amendments to the Criminal Code and other amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of 1991, the Sudan Political Parties Act of 2007, the National Security Act of 2010, and the Traffic Law of 2010, the Passport and Immigration Act, and the Public Prosecution Act of 2017. The government amended Article 141 of the Criminal Law Act to criminalize female genital mutilation (FGM).<sup>89</sup> Article 154 related to prostitution has been amended, and there are still recommendations from civil society related to “reforming the criminal law to ensure that there is no conflict with international laws and conventions” and “reviewing the amended articles in the criminal law to respect women’s rights.”<sup>90</sup> Despite the old recommendations (2014) of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, all require the provision of updated information and statistical data on the existing obligations of the Government of Sudan and their recommendation to “inform the Committee on the effectiveness of steps taken to address the cultural and social factors that limit women’s aspiration to occupy senior positions, as referred to in paragraph 146 of the State party’s report.”<sup>91</sup> However, the process of allocating a percentage (40 percent) stipulated in the 2019 Constitutional Document for women, failed to assign the covenant equivalent to this percentage when forming the transitional government headed by Abdalla Hamdok, especially in the appointment of “state/governors” of the states.<sup>92</sup>

The following is a selection of relevant instruments that Sudan has acceded to:

- 1) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): Ratified with exceptions in April 2021.<sup>93</sup> Article 2, 16, 29/1 of the CEDAW was exempted from the ratification because it gives women equality in matters of marriage, parenting and inheritance, which contradicts Muslim law.
- 2) Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: Accession on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003.<sup>94</sup>
- 3) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Accession on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1986.
- 4) International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: Accession on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1986.
- 5) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: Accession on March 21<sup>th</sup>, 1977. A draft law was under consideration until before the coup that works against racial discrimination.
- 6) Convention on the Rights of the Child: Ratified on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1990, with governmental units working for children’s and women’s rights.
- 7) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees: Accession on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1974 and May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1974, respectively.
- 8) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families: Not ratified.
- 9) International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries: Not ratified.

**The military coup led to a sharp and dangerous decline in the level of Sudan's commitment to civil and political rights.**

10) UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: Ratified on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008.<sup>95</sup>

11) UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: Ratified on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008.<sup>96</sup>

Sudan is subject to mechanisms that promote respect for human rights, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism at the HRC (the first in May 2011, the second in May 2016 and the third in June 2022) and the African Union's African peer review mechanism, and its recent ratification of international instruments such as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in August 2021. National institutions, however, are still unable or unwilling to perform their functions, as is the case with international criminal mechanisms (for example, Sudan is not a state party to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) Rome Statute). The ICC is currently considering the "Darfur case" through the principle of referral from the UN Security Council in accordance with Resolution 1593 (2005), dated March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005. Despite the accusations against Omar al-Bashir and his ousting, the legal system in Sudan did not send him to the ICC, which shows that regimes are not taking this issue seriously enough.

The UN Integrated Transition Support Mission in Sudan has facilitated consultations on Sudan's political process by engaging more groups from all states of Sudan under the auspices of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Volker Peretz.<sup>97</sup> This can be seen in repeated international appeals to the military authorities that seized power and undermined the transitional civilian rule, to deal with the protests in line with Sudan's international obligations in the field of human rights, and to conduct independent and comprehensive investigations into the violations committed, especially in cases of killing, injury and sexual violence.<sup>98</sup>

The military coup led to a sharp and dangerous decline in the level of Sudan's commitment to civil and political rights, including the right to equality (Article 3); regulations for implementing a state of emergency (Article 4); and protection from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 7); the treatment of detainees and persons deprived of their liberty (Article 10); the right to freedom of movement and choice of residence (Article 12); the right to a fair trial (Article 14); freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to receive information and ideas (Article 19); the prohibition of propaganda for war or advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred (Article 20); and the right to assemble (Article 21).<sup>99</sup>

According to the United Nations News website (Arabic) during the UPR of Sudan's human rights record,<sup>100</sup> states called on Sudan to "restore a transitional government led by civilians, organize free and fair elections" and to lift the state of emergency and ensure the protection of peaceful demonstrators.<sup>101</sup>

## 2. NATIONAL COMMITMENTS

### AVERAGE SCORE: 4

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 5

ECONOMY | SCORE: 4

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 4

**Pluralism and diversity have been ignored or overlooked in the interest of assimilation and emphasizing an image of an Arab-Muslim country.**

Since its independence from British–Egyptian Condominium in 1956, Sudan has suffered from structural and systematic discrimination due to the weak commitment of its successive governments to the principle of citizenship and the failure to manage diversity.<sup>102</sup> As mentioned in this report’s country profile, since South Sudan’s secession in 2011, Sudan’s politicians (notably, former president Omar al-Bashir) have declared that Sudan is a homogeneous country in terms of religion and culture. Hence, pluralism and diversity have been ignored or overlooked in the interest of assimilation and emphasizing an image of an Arab-Muslim country.

The legal system in Sudan is based on a hybrid model: some aspects, such as personal affairs, are governed by Sharia law for Muslims; other matters are governed by laws modelled on British and Egyptian laws. In other parts of the country, the customary laws govern via a system of traditional leaders’ courts. As such, there is no one conforming reference for the cases before the courts. Law practitioners, such as judges, have a wide discretion to judge not only according to law but also as they see fit. This is relevant for personal matters, such as divorce and gender-based violence, more so than other cases.<sup>103</sup>

In terms of the human rights situation, since 1989, Sudan has been a territory of concern for human rights abuses. However, the Constitutional Charter signed in 2019 included several provisions protecting pluralism and prohibiting discrimination, though “in accordance with the requirements of law and public order.” The laws issued under the previous constitution remained in effect while the civilian-led transitional government worked to amend or repeal those laws and enact new legislation within the framework of the Constitutional Declaration. The 2019 Constitutional Document stipulates that rights and duties are based on citizenship without discrimination based on race, religion, culture or colour. The River Nile State has made remarkable progress by enacting, in April 2021, a legal (state) decree that criminalizes racial and tribal discrimination and imposes prison penalties and fines. It also prohibits the formation of blocs based on race or calling for racial discrimination that leads to lawlessness.<sup>104</sup>

As of 2020, for example, the former Minister of Justice declared a legal reform known as the Miscellaneous Amendments (Fundamental Rights and Freedoms) Act. The amendments included in it covered many important issues within the legal system; however, it also failed to address other issues. Apostasy law, for example, was removed, which makes it easier for people to change their religion, at least on paper. There are several cases of people accused of apostasy and who were then imprisoned. One example is the Sudanese government’s case against Mariam Yahya and her husband in 2011. Mariam Yahya married a non-Muslim man, and thus, according to the law, she was an apostate. Mariam was sentenced to flogging based on the adultery law and then sentenced to

**Many of the conflicts in Sudan are due to the exclusion of local cultures and languages; thus, many non-Arabic speaking groups find themselves unrecognized by the state unless they use the Arabic language.**

death based on apostasy. The charges were made based on Article 145 of the Sudanese Criminal Act (1991). Because she was a Muslim, any consensual sexual relation outside marriage could be charged as adultery. Also, as a Muslim woman, she is prohibited from marrying a non-Muslim man. Therefore, according to the law, Mariam Yahya was having a sexual relationship in an unrecognized marriage (i.e., the marriage does not exist for the state). Legal amendments in 2020 during the transitional government omitted the apostasy law in a positive step for the freedom of belief.

Similarly, when it comes to religion, Sudan is recognized as a Muslim country, with Christians and other religious groups seen as secondary. Yet, the Blue Nile and Kordofan path within the Juba Agreement<sup>105</sup> included explicit provisions on the issue of citizenship: Article 1 of the Blue Nile Agreement stipulated that the state should stand at an equal distance from religions and cultures without any religious, ethnic or cultural bias; and as indicated in Article 9.2 of The Blue Nile and Kordofan Agreement, both regions will exercise powers based on the provisions of the 1973 constitution (amended in 1974), which means that the two regions will allow the enactment of legislation that is not based on Sharia, regardless of what happens in the rest of the country.

In March 2020, General Al-Burhan, the chair of the Sovereignty Council, and the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) Abdelaziz al-Hilu signed a Declaration of Principles that set priorities for peace talks. The declaration gave priority to unifying the armed forces and the separation between religion and state as a basic demand of the SPLM-N. In September 2020, al-Hilu and Prime Minister Hamdok also signed a Declaration of Principles that includes the separation of religion and state.

When it comes to livelihood styles and the legal framework, it is difficult to mention a particular law that discriminates against these groups. However, there are sets of laws and agreements that govern the relationship between the ethnic groups from pastoral or farming backgrounds. Among these are, for example, the Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance of 1922,<sup>106</sup> which is a law that applies to any tribe or branch of it through its tribal leader, his agent or the village mayor, between nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. Also, the Sheikh's Power Act of 1928 and the Native Courts Ordinance of 1932. These courts consist mainly of Native Administration members.<sup>107</sup>

In relation to language, as stated in this report's country profile, Sudan's official language is Arabic. All other languages are not "seen" by the state; thus, all identity documents and communication are issued in Arabic (and English if requested). Nonetheless, the recent Juba Peace Agreement stipulated the powers of the legislative states, especially those related to culture and languages (Article 9) and its subtexts that grant the authority to establish institutes to teach local languages, encourage local culture and participate in "rewriting the history of Sudan." Many of the conflicts in Sudan are due to the exclusion of local cultures and languages; thus, many non-Arabic speaking groups find themselves unrecognized by the state unless they use the Arabic language.

Regarding the formal and informal economy, the main violating laws here are those directed against informal labour in cities such as Khartoum. Key among these laws is the public order section of the Criminal Act (1991).<sup>108</sup> The Act, which was abolished in the 2020 Miscellaneous Amendments, was used to discriminate against women in the informal sector who work as street vendors and other women. The Ministry of Justice initiated a process for a law against all types of racism; however, there is no approved

law so far. In fact, the Ministry has initiated a process to reform many laws, but the October 2021 military coup sabotaged the process.

Having mentioned several examples in relation to the diversity types, it is still important to shed light on the legal amendments made in 2020. It is important because it allows and limits a certain level of freedoms that can control pluralism in general. One of these amendments was the cybercrime law.<sup>109</sup> During the transitional period, the Cybercrime Law of 2020 was issued, and after the military coup on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, an amendment was issued in 2022. That law, and all its amendments by the al-Bashir regime, transitional government or the military coup, were inconsistent with Sudan's obligations in this regard under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These laws limit groups from freely expressing themselves over media, the media landscape itself is controlled as well, with a set of laws that limits freedom of expression.<sup>110</sup>

The legal framework does, in some aspects, agree with international conventions such as laws criminalizing human trafficking (Articles 7, 8 and 9 of the 2014 Act) and provisions against slavery in the 2005 constitution (Article 30 (1)).<sup>111</sup> Among the major amendments that serve to address the issue on genocide, is repealing the articles contradicting co-operation with the ICC.<sup>112</sup>

The Constitutional Document stipulated that all international covenants and instruments signed and ratified by Sudan are an inseparable part of the document.<sup>113</sup> The document also included provisions protecting the right to freedom of religious belief and worship, while several old laws remained in effect until the transitional government amended or abolished them and could enact new legislation within the framework of the Constitutional Declaration. The Miscellaneous Amendments Act of 2020 cancelled a set of articles in various laws that contradict Sudan's obligations and prevent the harmonization of national law with international covenants, but the Act remained criticized on some technical aspects.<sup>114</sup> In addition to Sudan's failure to harmonize national legislation, especially with the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2017, adequate harmonization with the Convention was not met.<sup>115</sup>

## 3. INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP

### AVERAGE SCORE: 5

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 4

RELIGION | SCORE: 4

ECONOMY | SCORE: 6

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 6

Sudan has historically suffered from structural imbalances in citizenship policies as the dimensions of the concept of citizenship overlap with the nature of the problems and conflicts of Sudanese groups and their relationship with the existing regimes.<sup>116</sup> In Sudan, both law and common discourse focus on nationality (*jinsiyya* in Arabic) rather than on citizenship (*muwatana* in Arabic). Because it is based on ancestry, the concept

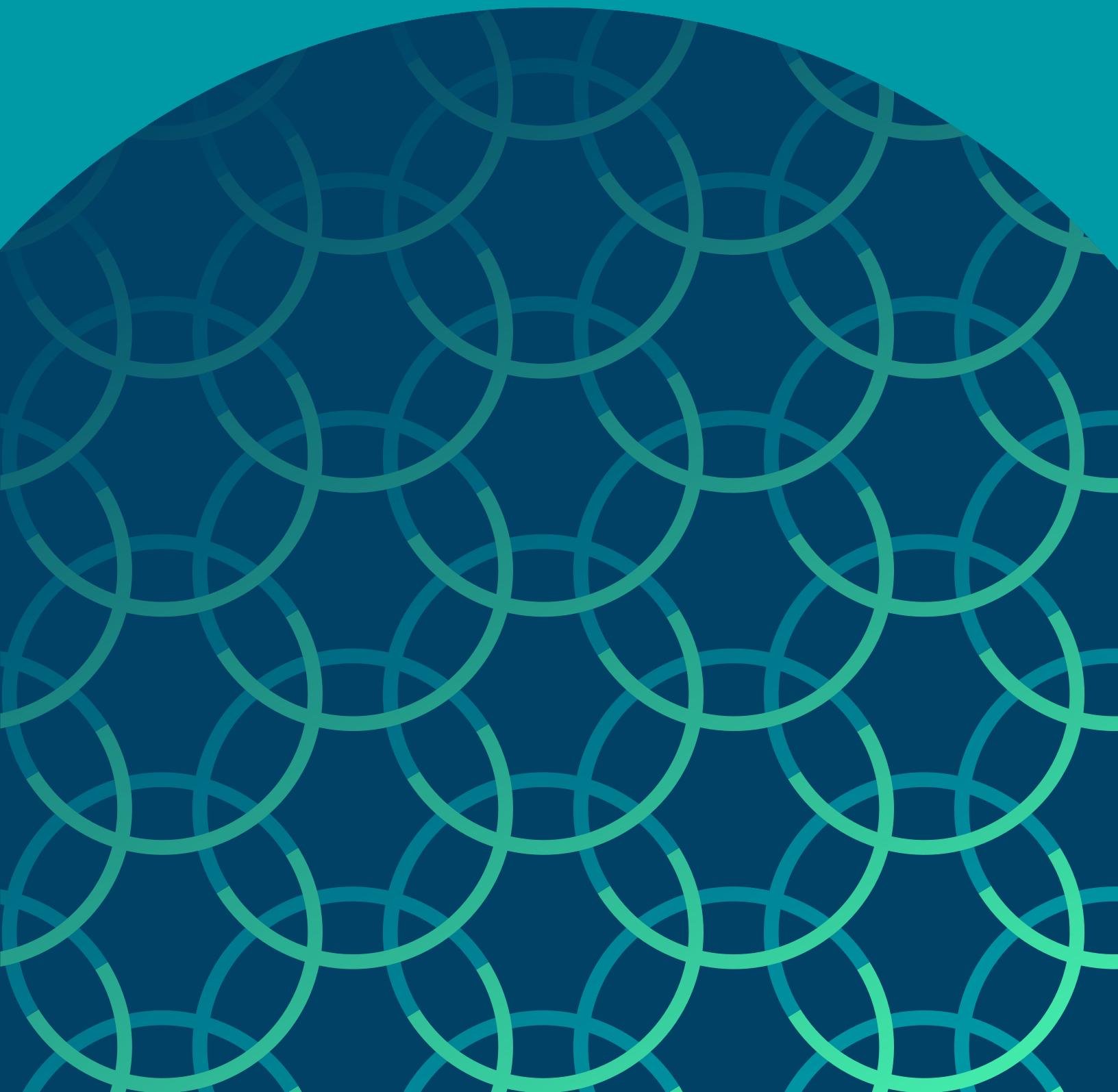
**Amendments to the Nationality Act are not sufficient to remove historically entrenched problems related to the hierarchical ordering of Sudanese society based on ethnicity, religion and regional origin.**

of nationality valorizes ethnicity. In multi-ethnic countries like Sudan, where ethnicity provides a basis for stratification, emphasizing nationality instead of citizenship results in disenfranchising the less privileged segments of the population. Under the Nationality Act of 1957 (amended in 1974), nationality is based on descent, although there is also a provision for naturalization. To qualify as Sudanese by descent, birth in Sudan is not sufficient. In the case of persons born after 1957, to qualify as Sudanese by descent, one must have been born in Sudan to at least one parent who is Sudanese by descent or by naturalization.<sup>117</sup>

Citizenship in Sudan is marked by political, ethnic, religious, linguistic and gendered markers. As an example, in November 2010, the newspaper dailies in Khartoum reported on a case that illustrates how the system discriminates against certain segments of society. A young Sudanese woman, a housemaid in Khartoum, was arrested by the police in Omdurman while on her way to transfer money to her family. The police suspected that she was a foreigner living illegally in the country. The young woman, who is of West African descent, presented the authorities with all the necessary documents to show that she is Sudanese. (There is a large community of West African origin in Sudan, scattered across the country, generally known as Fallata). But, the police doubted the documents' authenticity. The woman had to travel to where her family lives and get an affidavit from local authorities confirming her identity. To her dismay, the police were still not convinced, and the case was referred to court.<sup>118</sup>

Recent amendments to the Nationality Act in 1994 and 2005 give more rights to nationals and foreigners when they apply for citizenship. For instance, the time required for naturalization of foreigners was reduced from ten to five years, and women were allowed to pass citizenship to their children, though they must apply. Yet, these amendments are not sufficient to remove historically entrenched problems related to the hierarchical ordering of Sudanese society based on ethnicity, religion and regional origin. In addition to these problems, bureaucratic red tape deprives people of their citizenship rights. The documents or requirements needed for proof of eligibility disenfranchise many people. Added to this, some people cannot afford the fees needed for issuing identity documents.

# PART II. PRACTICES



## 4. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

### AVERAGE SCORE: 3.5

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 4

ECONOMY | SCORE: 3

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 4

Discrimination happens on the grounds of racial origin, ethnicity, religion and gender. All civil wars in Sudan since 1955 have been fought on the grounds that discrimination is practiced against some segments of the society. Even when these wars ended through negotiations, as happened in 1972, 2005, 2006 and 2011, central governments have reneged on their commitments to undertake necessary reforms, which have undermined the realization of economic and social rights for many groups. A key issue here is that what has been agreed upon is not implemented, and, at a general level, policies are not implemented.

Policy implementation is challenged by the existing culture, while those involved in policy implementation do not get the necessary training. An example from the primary education policy showcases the exclusion of pastoralists and farmers, or at least, the obstacles of implementing the fair primary education policy all over Sudan. In areas affected by the conflict, Darfur, for example, many children are left out of schooling either because of cultural barriers among the nomad pastoralists or because of the lack of schools. Also, many ethnic groups prefer to marry girls at early ages; many reports show the high rate of child marriage in Sudan (according to the child marriage data portal, in 2014, 34.2 percent of girls younger than 15 were married).<sup>119</sup> These factors negatively influence groups' access to education on top of the structural challenges, including lack of funding and lack of training for teachers.<sup>120</sup> A 2022 report by UNICEF Sudan shows, for example, that in East Darfur, only 52.9 percent of girls and 52.6 percent of boys were enrolled in schools, while about 207,376 children were not getting an education.<sup>121</sup> The UNICEF report mentions that most of these children were either nomads, conflict affected, or were from refugee camps.<sup>122</sup> The report cited a local education officer, who stated that "In East Darfur, we have people with nomadic lifestyle and socially, many communities do not want to send their children to school or keep them in school because it is expensive. It costs five cattle heads to send a child to school, this is how it is measured by the community. We need to make education attractive and work on the mindset," said Ali Ahmed, the head of the Adults and Adolescent's Unit at the Ministry of Education and Guidance in East Darfur state."<sup>123</sup> In a 2018 report, UNESCO mentioned that there is a challenge of co-ordination between entities such as the Ministry of Education and teacher training centres.<sup>124</sup> It also stated that policies are not properly implemented because of lack of funding and lack of political will.

The same UNESCO report, for example, noted that the more there is a linguistic gap between the spoken language at home and the ones in schools, the more challenges there are for education. Thus, the policy of teaching in the Arabic language also renders children and groups with mother tongues other than Arabic with fewer opportunities for education. Hence, the issue here might not be the existence and implementation of the

**A major policy problem when it comes to pluralism in Sudan is that successive governments adopted the slogan of “unity in conformity” instead of “unity in diversity.”**

policy but rather the wider political project implemented. Even the groups that speak Arabic face challenges because their daily interaction differs from that used in schools. Normally, people would use vernacular forms that significantly differ from the official Arabic language, which is said to negatively influence adult classes in some areas.<sup>125</sup>

A major policy problem when it comes to pluralism in Sudan is that successive governments adopted the slogan of “unity in conformity” instead of “unity in diversity.” This is apparent in imposing Arabic and projecting Islam as a sole religion.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, on religious exclusion and policy implementation, the transitional government, for example, approved laws allowing non-Muslim banking to operate,<sup>127</sup> as well as lifting the penalties on alcohol consumption for non-Muslims. These policies were promising; however, they were not applied. There are many reasons for this non-application, among which is the 2021 coup and the resulting declared state of emergency. One of the major problems is the absence of the rule of law brought about and propagated by the Islamists’ long and corrupt rule.

When it comes to the economic diversity type, policies are also rendered weak in implementation. The law reforms on prostitution, for example, are said to “criminalize the poor” rather than helping them, according to scholar Magdi el-Gizouli in an interview with *DW*.<sup>128</sup> He noted, “If you’re a well-off client, who drives a big car and has a nice apartment, the law will not apply to you,” as the law criminalized sex work only in brothels and similar places.

Similarly, the reform in criminalizing FGM might criminalize the mothers and midwives, who are among the poor populations. According to el-Gizouli, law enforcement in this regard is not effective and does not work in fighting such a cultural practice.<sup>129</sup> Policy implementation is thus challenged by cultural barriers as well as by a lack of clarity in the policies themselves.

Furthermore, lack of accountability and the immunity many officials enjoy (e.g., the army, RSF and police) also makes laws vulnerable and can be easily overlooked.<sup>130</sup> This is relevant when looking at the abolishing of the Public Order Act (1991) that was repealed with the legal reforms in 2020. Despite the removal of the law that was long used against women and against the poor population (e.g., those working in the informal sector), the public order police continued to work against the law of social security, which also monitors people’s public and private behaviour.

None of the amendments taken up by the transitional government were fully realized. The bodies entrusted with implementing these reforms have either not been created or have not been fully activated, as some reforms have simply been ignored by the army and security forces. For example, the response of the security forces to the Public Prosecution Office regarding the lifting of immunities or co-operation in providing evidence related to grave violations by the military or security forces under the transitional government remained low, including violations related to the dispersal of the General Command sit-in massacre. Lack of implementation of reforms means that the situation of discrimination remains the same and more so when it comes to the military, security services and the police whose members act with impunity. This affects all types of diversity in the country.

## 5. DATA COLLECTION

### AVERAGE SCORE: 4

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 5

ECONOMY | SCORE: 5

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 4

**Sudan lacks periodic and continuous updating of national data and indicators for the categories and vocabulary of Sudanese society, as seen in critical sectors like agriculture.**

Sudan faces a serious challenge with data collection in terms of the quality of available data, the accessibility of the data and its availability. There are few governmental offices for data provision in addition to public university libraries that are only accessible to students. The main data centres are the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the Ministry of Health (via its household survey) and local administrative units in neighbourhoods and localities. These units do not give any data without permission from their higher management, and one must have an official affiliation with another institute. In short, there must be proof that the data will be used with reasonable justification before permission is granted. However, the practices for data collection, particularly demographic data, are obtained from UN agencies, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and international development organizations, including the World Bank. The existing data is, in most cases, confined to the urban areas, and little, if any, is available for the countryside. There is also lack of inclusion when it comes to data collection. And there is also discrimination when it comes to accessing data.

There are no accurate demographic data for Sudan. Previous censuses are widely regarded as poor quality because data is only collected in Arabic. However, there are more than 500 ethnic groups who speak more than 400 languages within Sudan. These languages include Arabic (official), Nubian and more than 100 diverse dialects, which include Nilotic, Nilotic Hamitic and Niger-Kordofanian, especially in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains and parts of the east. The use of only Arabic as a data collection language is problematic as it disqualifies those for whom Arabic is not their mother tongue, and the data collected will not accurately represent their reality. This also means that there is no quality data on group inequality.

The CBS supervises many data-collection projects and reports,<sup>131</sup> including: the Sudan Family Health Survey 2006; the 2008 Population and Housing Census (the fifth such census); the National Baseline Household Survey 2009; the national survey of information technology, communications and postal services for the household and institutional sectors 2016; and Sudan's report on the Millennium Development Goals 2012.<sup>132</sup> These surveys generally take place in partnership and in cooperation with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization.<sup>133</sup>

Sudan lacks periodic and continuous updating of national data and indicators for the categories and vocabulary of Sudanese society, as seen in critical sectors like agriculture.<sup>134</sup> This is in contrast to statistics and data provided by UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society.

The need for the Government of Sudan to commit to updating its national information, including statistical data, was mentioned in a number of government reports, and highlights the progress made in allocating federal and local resources to sectors such as health, education, social security and the implementation of related rights.

For research purposes, one needs permission from local authorities to collect any data. This is true even for urban and central areas in Khartoum as well as in peripheral areas. However, in peripheral areas, authorities have implemented much more monitoring and control. On top of this, all refugee camps and internal displacement camps require permission from the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) and from local authorities to enter them.

The National Records Office in Khartoum also requires permission to access it, along with a letter of introduction for any data to be collected. It does not allow any sort of photocopying for old newspapers or documents. There are exclusionary practices in both data collection and dispensation; discrimination ensues as a result. The ultimate result is that there is no reliable data on group inequality.

## 6. CLAIMS-MAKING AND CONTESTATION

### AVERAGE SCORE: 4.5

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 5

RELIGION | SCORE: 5

ECONOMY | SCORE: 4

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 4

The very fact that Sudan has been in a state of several protracted conflicts since 1956 indicates that groups are not able to make claims and engage in peaceful contestation to advance their interests. This has been the case because civil and political rights face significant legal restrictions such that many groups are subject to restrictive controls. The state has historically looked at peripheral areas with an eye of hostility, and the dominant elites in the centre suppress people at the periphery. Groups find it difficult to contest in front of state authorities due to serious threats from the state against these groups. The findings from the Global Centre for Pluralism's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey*, conducted in partnership with Afrobarometer during 2022 and early 2023, prior to the conflict erupting, indicated that 58 percent of respondents would never attend a protest (rural women being most likely to say this).

Peaceful protests are more common in urban centers than in other areas and this might be related to earlier peaceful protests that overthrew two presidents: Ibrahim Abboud in 1964 and Jafa'ar Nimeiri in 1985.<sup>135</sup> Additionally, attending protests means jeopardizing one's safety, as the former regime used extreme violence<sup>136</sup> against protests and against political activities.<sup>137</sup> During the 1990s, the regime had what is known locally as Ghost houses, where political activists would be detained and subjected to various sorts of torture.<sup>138</sup> Thus, such practices of violence against people certainly prevent

**People can and do organize themselves to contest the state and demand certain things for their communities; however, these demands are met by state violence and other means of tribal/ethnic conflicts.**

them from joining protests, unless it is mass protests such as in 2018. According to the Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey*, nearly 23 percent of respondents mentioned that they have not joined others in raising issues but would do if given the chance. Thus, people are willing to join and participate in democratic processes if the circumstances are available to them.

Often people at the periphery resort to violence to express their concerns or grievances. While this has been the case for a long time, it became clearer during the years that followed the political change in 2019. This is evident first in the ethnic/tribal contestations via blocking main goods roads outside of Khartoum and/or blocking the road to and from the port in eastern Sudan. For instance, in August 2022, citizens in Kordofan closed the national road linking the states of Kordofan and Darfur to the capital, Khartoum, and disrupted official work in some localities (i.e., administration units). They also prevented government collection in crop markets and closed the Zarqa Um Hadid oil field.<sup>139</sup> These events took place as citizens called for the demarcation of a new state of Central Kordofan.<sup>140</sup> Also of note, in 2021, the state of West Kordofan witnessed fierce fighting between the Hamar and Misseriya ethnic groups due to a dispute over agricultural lands that left large numbers of dead and wounded. Thus, the issue of states' demarcation is connected to both livelihood styles as well as ethnic backgrounds.<sup>141</sup> People can and do organize themselves to contest the state and demand certain things for their communities; however, these demands are met by state violence and other means of tribal/ethnic conflicts. The type of contestation also differed after the December 2018 uprisings particularly in Darfur (a population of farmers and pastoralists) where people started to organize sit-ins in localities including Nertiti, El Geneina and Boram.<sup>142</sup>

Regarding the religious groups' ability to contest, among the Muslims themselves, the majority remains conservative. For example, after the uprising, there was an attempt to reform the school curricula by the former director of the National Center for Curricula and Educational Research, Omer El Garai. The reform attempt faced a social and media campaign, and he had to resign in early 2021.<sup>143</sup> The campaign against him reached a point in which some sheikhs in mosques denounced him as an infidel.

While religious groups faced social pressures against their organization, the groups from the informal economy sector did not face such pressure. One example is the organization of "the Committee of the Industrial Zone in Khartoum North,<sup>144</sup>" an organization consisting of workers (craftsmen) and the owners of labour workshops (mechanics and other workers).<sup>145</sup> They organized during a continuous demand movement toward the operation and maintenance of the "Workers' Hospital for Occupational Health in the Industrial Zone." The movement contributed to the establishment of a nucleus of awareness and a trade union movement among the craftsmen sectors in the capital, Khartoum, and in Khartoum North, in particular. This developed into a grassroots movement toward labour and worker issues, and having their rights guaranteed under Sudan's international obligations and the charters of the ILO.<sup>146</sup>

Linguistically, and as a result of the "unity in conformity" policy, people are not allowed to make claims to preserve their own languages. Thus, the ability of non-Arabic speaking communities, in northern Sudan (Nubian region), is still suffering because of language policies that do not consider either Sudan's duties or its obligations under international covenants and its national obligations. The Nubian language is considered one of the

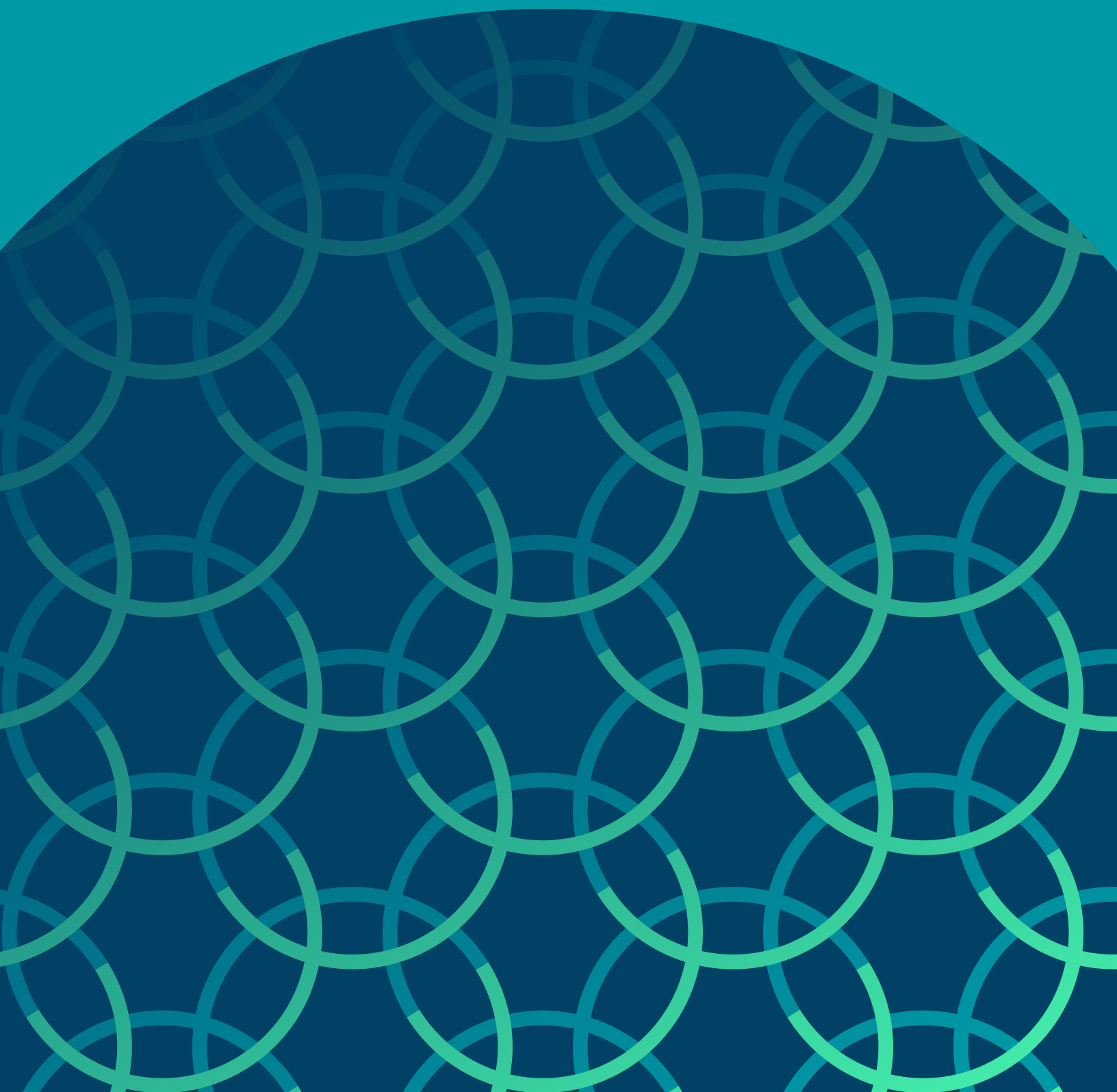
**Women represented themselves via not only joining the protests but also through supporting the uprisings within their social media groups.**

endangered languages.<sup>147</sup> Also, the Zaghawa language is officially neglected at the level of state policies in education, media and linguistic equality.<sup>148</sup>

On top of the diversity types adopted for this report, it is important to note that, after the coup, large numbers of revolutionaries (from all groups of society) are unable to contest peacefully. The protestors are faced with a great deal of state violence, killing, disappearances and imprisonment.

Women were also an integral part of the political process during the uprisings. Women represented themselves via not only joining the protests but also through supporting the uprisings within their social media groups.<sup>149</sup> This is on top of the role women played within the armed movements despite the scarcity of documentation on that front. Politician and researcher Ihsan Abdel Aziz highlighted the experience of the women fighters on the borders of eastern Sudan and explained the type of ethnic, class and sectarian discrimination they suffered.<sup>150</sup> The role of women and their participation in the uprisings was less appreciated<sup>151</sup> within the transitional government, despite Prime Minister Hamdok's efforts.<sup>152</sup> After the coup, many women faced rape<sup>153</sup> as a weapon against them to stop them from protesting, and they encountered various incidents of harassment, even from their fellow male protestors.<sup>154</sup>

# PART III. LEADERSHIP FOR PLURALISM



## 7. POLITICAL PARTIES

### AVERAGE SCORE: 4

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 3

ECONOMY | SCORE: 3

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 6

**The political parties in Sudan are either sectarian, regionally associated, religious-based or ideological.**

Most Sudanese political parties put forward the principles of equal citizenship, non-discrimination and respect for human rights, rejecting and condemning racism and ethnic or religious hatred. They do this in the face of a legacy of traditions and values of a society in which tribal formations are still in control, and where traditional cultural values still distinguish between citizens on the basis of ethnic, tribal or regional origin. The Sudanese Congress Party (SCP) took the initiative in 2021 to organize a campaign for the adoption of a national law against racial discrimination,<sup>155</sup> alongside civil society initiatives such as the Sudanese Solidarity Organization Against Racial Discrimination (TASAMI).<sup>156</sup> This effort advocated for the draft law against racial discrimination, and the Sudanese Human Rights Initiative which conducted multiple activities before and during the transitional period to advocate for an anti-discrimination law.<sup>157</sup>

As of 2018, the Political Parties Affairs Council listed about 92 registered political parties, according to the US Department of State Human Rights Report on Sudan.<sup>158</sup> The political parties in Sudan are either sectarian, regionally associated, religious-based or ideological. The two biggest and oldest opposition political parties are sectarian, that is, they are associated with Sufi orders, and traditionally, they are also regional. The National Umma Party is known to have followers in areas of western Sudan, and it was central to the development of the historical Mahdist movement. The Democratic Unionist Party is associated with areas in eastern Sudan and has roots in anti-colonial movements. Thus, both parties, regardless of their engagements with colonial structures and elites' politics in Khartoum, do not exclude members based on race, religion, ethnic background or livelihood style. However, the question of parties' internal structure and party leadership is very elitist. Both parties are led through family lines, and the rest of the members from outside the families can be deputies or occupy marginal positions and play marginal roles. It is important to note that neither of the two parties, despite being active in pastoralists and farmers areas, have had leadership from there. The internal structures are elitist and based on education as well.<sup>159</sup> For more than 70 years, only one woman has ascended to the position of party leader in these two sectarian political parties.

The main two political parties that are ideological are the Communist Party and the National Congress Party (NCP). The Communist party claims to work for fair economic policies where all people can benefit from the wealth in the country. Thus, it takes into consideration the poor and those who work within the informal sector of the economy when it comes to its programs. The party says it is against policies of privatization and World Bank neo-liberal recommendations.<sup>160</sup> The Communist Party opposed the transitional government and left the FFC coalition in 2019. It is worth mentioning that the party has not had leadership from the impoverished population since its foundation in

**Overall, some political parties promote respect for diversity, but many of these political parties lack internal democracy and are indifferent to diversity issues.**

1946.<sup>161</sup> Rather, its leadership is comprised of elites from Khartoum. The Communist Party engages mostly in urban politics.

The NCP is the second ideological party, and it has transformed itself and changed names many times. In 1999, the NCP split, and the Popular Congress Party was established. These two parties are Islamic-based and use religion to control the state. The two parties only promote pluralism under Sharia law, that is, non-Muslims are effectively considered second-class citizens.

Another party that advocates for inclusion of the marginalized is the SCP. It was established based on cultural marginalization and worked for inclusion. The party is described as centre-left and calls for the separation of religion and state.<sup>162</sup> Separation between religion and state works in favour of religious groups' inclusion and the recognition of their rights. Despite this, its leadership did not include leaders other than Muslims from Northern Central ethnic groups. The practices of the party, however, incorporated the inclusion of members from marginalized ethnic groups from Darfur, and it gained popularity there too.<sup>163</sup> With regard to the inclusion of religious groups other than Muslims, there is no regulation in any party against this; however, the leadership always remained with Muslims. Few parties have had Christian leadership; an example is the National Sudanese Party, led by Father Philip Gaboush.<sup>164</sup>

In addition to these political parties, there are many armed movements who claim to be working for the marginalized in Darfur, Blue Nile and other areas. There are armed movements; chief among which is the SPLM-N, with leadership from the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, representing a population who are both pastoralists and farmers. Most importantly, the SPLM-N's vision for a "New Sudan," where nodes of power are reconfigured for all groups, not just those in Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile for example, reflects an inclusive vision. Also, the SLM is active in Darfur and works for the inclusion of Darfuri people in the power structure. The movement comprised of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa; three ethnic groups who do not use Arabic as a mother tongue. The leadership of the movement is from these ethnic groups and as such, represents the linguistically and otherwise marginalized groups.<sup>165</sup> These groups and movements do not address types of marginalization separately, as such they work for more than one diversity type.

There are also parties that are regionally based and advocate for certain ethnic groups' inclusion, including the recognition of local languages. For example, the Beja Congress in eastern Sudan also enjoys leadership from the Beja ethnic group. Again, here it is unclear how internal politics are run and who gets to be in leadership positions.<sup>166</sup>

Overall, some political parties promote respect for diversity, but many of these political parties lack internal democracy and are indifferent to diversity issues. The representation of women across the different political parties is weak, and none of the mentioned political parties have had a woman as its chairperson.

## 8. NEWS MEDIA

### OVERALL AVERAGE SCORE: 3.5

#### A. Representation | Average Score: 3.5

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 3

ECONOMY | SCORE: 3

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 5

#### B. Prominence of Pluralistic Actors | Average Score: 3.5

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 3

ECONOMY | SCORE: 3

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 5

The state controls most of the news media, and so there is little or no room for diverse voices. Also, there is a strong Arabic/Muslim bias in existing news media that is actively exclusionary of minority voices. Recruitment to the state-owned media outlets is a monopoly for central Sudan and Arab-speaking groups. Those who appear on TV as news anchors represent certain categories such as having a lighter skin tone.<sup>167</sup> Television stations mostly host programs in Arabic. In recent years, a few private TV and radio stations appeared, but they are no different: the same structural problems are present.

When the state directly and indirectly owns media houses, it leaves media exclusively representative of the state's vision. Thus, over the years, the local public media houses ignored the war in Darfur, muting voices of all diversity types. The official language is Arabic language; television airs the Muslim prayer times, and most of the images reflect a sedentary lifestyle for mostly ethnic groups from North and Central Sudan. But the problem is not only related to the bias of TV and radio programs, the bias is also prevalent in other media outlets such as newspapers. Like TV and radio, newspapers reflect the mainstream thinking and is uninterested in the problems and concerns of the peripheries. The atrocities that took place in Darfur between 2003 and 2018 were rarely mentioned in the newspapers. In addition to self-censorship, there is state control of newspapers, and newspapers that are critical of government policies are either shut down or commandeered. The National Congress Party (NCP) was in a state of high alert, as it quickly—at that time—imprisoned activists and imposed censorship on journalists, flooding the airwaves with propaganda campaigns revolving around a crisis in Darfur and a war in the south.

During 2018, the restrictions imposed on the civilian sphere in Sudan were increasing, as journalists, human rights defenders and political activists were arrested, newspapers closed and confiscated. Travel bans were imposed on journalists as well as the revocation of licenses granted to them by the National Council for Press and Publication (which is directly under the supervision of the President of the Republic), and the NISS

**The state of media freedoms and rights witnessed a sharp decline following the dissolution of the transitional government after the coup on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and the complete blocking of the internet in the country.**

imposed restrictions on public gatherings.<sup>168</sup> The state of media freedoms and rights witnessed a sharp decline following the dissolution of the transitional government after the coup on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and the complete blocking of the internet in the country. The subsequent periods witnessed restrictive internet access, blocking of social media platforms, and attacks and arrests of journalists and media activists. This has deepened inequity and discrimination in the field of media and contributed to the low percentage of women accessing the internet regularly (48 percent) compared to men (58 percent)<sup>169</sup> according to a survey conducted by Afrobarometer in 2018. Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report, *Countering an Authoritarian Overhaul of the Internet* mentioned that the freedom of internet in Sudan has decreased by four points after the 2021 coup and digital repression highly increased.<sup>170</sup>

The Ministry of Information manages television and radio directly. It presents its programs in Arabic, in a complete absence of cultural and religious equality in the program map, in addition to private digital (FM) radio programming which mostly offer a variety of programs or specialized religious (Islamic) radio programming. There are several private satellite channels, and there are TV and radio channels in the different states, but they are subject to the authority of the governor and the political leadership of the region's ruling party, as well as regional radio stations that follow the same approach in tracking and covering the governmental and political activities of the ruling party in the form of direct political 'propaganda.' At the level of alternative media, we find Radio Dabanga, which broadcasts from the Netherlands to listeners in Darfur, using a number of national dialects of Darfur nationalities, Arabic and English via short wave radio. Due to general economic hardship, many electronic newspapers were active during and after 2018, because of the economy and due to the restrictions imposed on traditional media and censorship.

Global internet freedom declined for the 12th consecutive year in 2022 as governments worked to dismantle the global internet to create more controllable online spaces.<sup>171</sup> This global attack was reflected on wider freedoms being controlled by states, such as Sudan, where it witnessed the most severe decline in internet freedom in the world.

The political economy of the media sector suffered during the transitional period under two governments formed by Prime Minister Hamdok; that is, from the persistence of structural problems related to the orientation of the al-Bashir regime and its policies toward freedoms and media rights. This included the persistence of economic inequality and control of the political-business elite over private media ownership, in a way that "distort[ed] the possibilities of equitable and sustainable development," as noted in a London School of Economics Conflict Research Programme report that discussed these issues.<sup>172</sup>

The media sector in Sudan includes the official media (state-owned), the screen, audio, print, the new media and private media (commercial/civil), under the umbrella of censorship laws. The transitional government's Ministry of Information, in co-operation with UNESCO, prepared three media laws on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021:<sup>173</sup>

- The Press Publications Law of 2021
- The Radio and Television Law of 2021
- The Right to Information Law of 2021

The October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 coup cut off the opportunity for public and open discussions of these laws to pass them. This became possible through NISS's ownership of the

**Those in the informal sector of the economy are rarely represented in the media given that (especially in Khartoum) most of them are displaced women, and they fall behind the image the state wants to emphasize.**

international press and major television stations. Also, the use of propaganda campaigns and dissemination of misinformation in a calculated manner became deliberate and widely practiced after 2005.<sup>174</sup>

Since the secession of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan has witnessed a decline in the level of Sudan's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was adopted in 1965 and came into force in 1969. The ICERD constitutes the normative basis on which all international efforts to eliminate racial discrimination are based, especially (Article 4). Hate speech expanded during the years that followed South Sudan's secession. Various forms of hate speech increased during the wars that erupted in Southern Kordofan/Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, eastern Sudan and the Darfur region, raging since 2003. This occurred alongside the attack on freedoms and democracy on social media. Nor did the traditional media escape the trap of spreading hate speech. The absence of the rule of law and, consequently, the absence or weakness of constitutional protections for human rights, also helped worsen the situation. This trend continued whether with regard to guaranteeing the rights themselves (i.e., equality and non-discrimination) or the availability of mechanisms to ensure their protection, non-violation and the independence of the judiciary, until the fall of the al-Bashir regime in April 2019.

In such an atmosphere, and regarding the diversity types we are exhibiting here, the media sphere does not reflect a diverse country. When it comes to religion, all religious programs on national television were about and for Muslims, because the previous government wanted a total Muslim country. However, during the transitional government, television aired Sunday prayers for the Christian population.

As for language plurality, the media uses Arabic as a main communication language. It does not use other languages or even dialects of Arabic from other ethnic groups that are not from North and Central Sudan. On top of this, the media presented comedy shows that involved mocking other dialects and the groups that speak them for a long time. The farmers and pastoralists' issues are rarely reflected on national television. Both groups are either represented as a source of income (farmers) with Sudan being presented as rich in agriculture fields, or they are represented as a symbol of remote folkloric cultures (mostly pastoralists) in programs about Sudan as a big country.

National television also rarely conveys the economic disparities of groups. The representation of poverty is often depicted within crime and not within a rights perspective. Also, during serious economic hardships in the country, television would present ministers stating inaccurate facts about the economy, especially during the former regime. In other cases, television would not mention the suffering of citizens at all. Those in the informal sector of the economy are rarely represented given that (especially in Khartoum) most of them are displaced women, and they fall behind the image the state wants to emphasize.

The war of April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, made things worse as the media pushed propaganda that fanned the flames of war. The African Digital Democracy Observatory (ADDO) report about war propaganda in Sudan explained that National television was involved in the spread of false information. In January 2021 for example, Sudan TV showed a clip exhibiting that the Sudanese Army have seized a shipment of drones that was on its

**The war of April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, made things worse as the media pushed propaganda that fanned the flames of war.**

way to the Rapid Support Forces. Later on, it was discovered that the clip was taken in another country and had no connections to Sudan at all.<sup>175</sup>

It is worth mentioning that according to Reporters Without Borders, the war has resulted in the exile of 400 Sudanese journalists to neighbouring countries living under challenging conditions economically and politically. Media outlets that started to work from exile are facing harassment, threats and raiding of offices after the Sudanese Army established allies with host countries' governments according to a report by Reporters Without Borders.<sup>176</sup> This is on top of large campaigns, particularly online, of publishing false information and war propaganda about the war situation according to ADDO and Reporters Without Borders.

The war propaganda campaigns included hate speech and racist content against certain tribes in western Sudan according to the ADDO report. The online platforms such as social media are frequently used by the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces in what has been termed 'digital warfare.'<sup>177</sup> Within these platforms, each party works through campaigns to control the narrative of the war and gain legitimacy.<sup>178</sup> This is further emphasized by the algorithm bias that tends to show users the content which aligns with their views, thus, consolidating their pre-existing biases and opinions.<sup>179</sup> Thus, social media platforms work in agitating the atmosphere of war in Sudan, particularly with the lack of resources and the challenges that journalists are facing, creating a space for false and inflammatory information to spread.

## 9. CIVIL SOCIETY

### AVERAGE SCORE: 4

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 4

RELIGION | SCORE: 5

ECONOMY | SCORE: 5

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 3

Civil society sector in Sudan is one of the most vibrant and diverse spaces, despite the internal challenges and limitations explained in the country profile. According to a report by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in 2014, there were 15,000 organizations registered under the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) with 4,000 working in Khartoum. In addition to between 400 and 500 organizations registered as cultural associations. According to the report, despite this large number of organizations, only a fraction of about ten percent were actually active.<sup>180</sup>

Before delving into the representation and leadership question of the organizations, it is important to provide context for the civil society working atmosphere. The NCP was strict with civil society and controlled their work through various forms such as forced registration within HAC. HAC, for a long time, worked not only to regulate the civil society sector but also to politically monitor it. Many NGOs were shut down for their work in democracy and civic education.<sup>181</sup> In 2009, for example, the former president expelled

**There are several organizations and initiatives that are active in preserving their folk languages.**

some 13 international aid organizations, accusing them of espionage and sabotaging Sudan's sovereignty. Then, in 2012, about four organizations were banned from working in Eastern Sudan.<sup>182</sup> The regime created an atmosphere in which it was difficult for organizations to function. Despite these restrictions and hostile environment, civil society remained diverse, especially national organizations, unions and associations.

While there are no accurate data about numbers of organizations and associations with specializations and a typology of ethnic groups, the observer's eye is still relevant. In Khartoum, for example, and regarding the economic diversity type, few organizations support the informal sector. Among those that do are the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, which supported women tea and food sellers in creating their own union and co-operative that negotiates with the state around their needs and the challenges they face. Many of these women come from backgrounds of internal displacement and from ethnically marginalized groups (Darfur, Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile). Another organization, Nuba Mountains Women for Education and Development, works primarily with groups from the Nuba Mountains who have been displaced, as well as those in Kordofan. They are also active in advocating for Sudan's democratic future.<sup>183</sup> The head of this organization is a woman from Nuba Mountains herself.

It is difficult to pinpoint the organizations working directly on livelihood styles. However, there are some organizations that are active in Darfur, for example, and that provide services as well as civil education programs for the population there who come from both the pastoralist and farmer backgrounds. One of these organizations is Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO). The organization was shut down in 2009 by the previous regime and reopened again within the transitional period. SUDO is active in Kordofan and Darfur in peacebuilding and human rights. Similarly, the international Life & Peace Institute's (LPI) office in Sudan works on areas of peacemaking among groups in conflict, who are pastoralists and farmers. Similarly, Practical Action Sudan works in peacebuilding and on services and environmental issues. Practical Action is also active in the Blue Nile and Kassala regions. Both LPI and Practical Action have a fully Sudanese leadership and staff.

Religion is also recognized within civil society, though indirectly. There are some organizations that work for freedom of belief and human rights protection. Among these organizations is the Sudanese Human Rights Initiative (SHRI). SHRI was very active, in particular, during the transitional period in working for the inclusion of religious minorities and held a series of activities in that regard. On top of that, the Coptic Christians, for example, run their own civil activities within the churches; however, they work in some isolation from the broader civil society. In addition to this, the Council of Churches is very active in pointing out the abuses against religious groups and against churches. In July 2022, the Council condemned abuses against Christians and mentioned that the restrictions returned after the coup.<sup>184</sup> The Council remains one of the bodies that is very active on religious issues in Sudan.

The issue of languages, particularly ethnic groups and tribal languages, has less attention within civil society. Yet, there are several organizations and initiatives that are active in preserving their folk languages. Among these is the Moro Language Project that seeks to document and preserve the language. Moro, from the Nuba Mountains, is a threatened language, and the project holds conferences and papers about the Nuba languages in general. Other sets of languages are also threatened; however, there are no organizations

**Despite the vibrant civil society and its openness to adopting inclusivity in its work, it still suffers from latent forms of discrimination.**

working on these languages, though there are activists and researchers, such as those working on the group of Nubian languages in the Northern region of Sudan. There are also some groups working against the dams and the forced migration of ethnic groups in North Sudan, such as the Manasir areas.

Most of the ethnic groups in Sudan have their own initiatives and co-operate on development in their areas. This is particularly evident in universities in Khartoum where students come from other cities to study, but the government(s) provide minimum-to-no support at all for those students. In these cases, the ethnic and tribal initiatives and associations support the students during their studies.

Despite the vibrant civil society and its openness to adopting inclusivity in its work, it still suffers from latent forms of discrimination. Most of the people employed by the organizations come from relatively educated backgrounds and were able to get higher education. While those who belong to displaced families or are more affected by poverty cannot afford a quality education, and thus, they are left out of the civil society employment market.

Having delineated the various types of diversity in relation to civil society, it is imperative to acknowledge the internal challenges it faces. As previously stated, civil society organizations, specifically NGOs, have been characterized as Khartoum-centric due to the concentration of NGOs in Khartoum and the focus of their projects in that city. It has also been posited that the reliance on external donors can impede the capacity of NGOs to implement their own priorities. A further issue is the absence of contextualization and the use of local methodologies that are pertinent to the situation, as opposed to the importing of methodologies that are not aligned with the local context. In addition, a significant number of NGOs are lacking in the development of long-term strategic plans and visions. In the context of the constrained political discourse in Khartoum, NGOs have been subject to the influence of political actors and parties, which has led to a polarization of these entities within the political landscape.<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, a number of young people indicated that they had been excluded from leadership roles within civil society. They also expressed discontent with the elitist approach exhibited by the leadership of NGOs. Although these organizations work in a restrictive environment, civil society needs an intersectional lens within its structures to achieve inclusiveness.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, the diasporic civil society sector is confronted with the issue of polarization among the warring parties' allies. Some organizations have been accused of siding with one party, with some activists being accused of supporting the RSF, which further exacerbates exclusion patterns. This ideological rift has given rise to latent regionalism, a phenomenon that predated the war. The emergence of these exclusionary notions is attributable, at least in part, to the prevailing political polarization. However, it is also important to consider the role of Khartoum centrism in this context. For instance, in Kampala, activists displaced from regions other than Khartoum have reported experiencing exclusion within NGO spaces in Kampala. This notion has been expressed on numerous occasions in the period preceding war, and it has been employed as a basis for criticism of the customary practices of NGOs.<sup>186</sup>

Having briefly mentioned some of the challenges faced by activists and NGOs in exile, it is important to note that these notions are a continuation of Khartoum-influenced patterns. Khartoum has historically dominated and exerted its authority over other

states, leveraging its concentration of services, its capacity for power, and the majority of the nation's economic revenues.<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, a considerable number of individuals in Sudan depend on their networks for social and political capital in a state that has proven incapable of providing for its citizens.<sup>188</sup> Consequently, it is anticipated that during periods of war and resource scarcity, individuals would prioritize the maintenance of their networks. This is undoubtedly an instance of exclusion. Nevertheless, in the context of a prevailing atmosphere characterized by polarization, fear, and insecurities, maintaining networks for resources functions as a coping mechanism.

## 10. PRIVATE SECTOR

### AVERAGE SCORE: 3

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 3

ECONOMY | SCORE: 3

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 3

**The private sector in Sudan, despite governmental support, is marked by the domination of certain groups.**

Sudan has seen an increased rush toward the privatization of goods and services since 1993. The policies of liberalization and privatization adopted during the early 1990s were encouraging for the private sector although they led to the pauperization of the middle class and impoverishment of poorer segments of society. But, the way in which privatization policies were introduced and implemented has not contributed to the creation of a healthy and vibrant private sector. It can hardly be said that Sudan has a healthy and competitive private sector. Many of the privatized institutions were sold to certain individuals that were deemed supportive of the Islamists during their early days. At the same time, some well-established private sector actors were blocked or forced to leave the market on the pretext that they did not support the orientation of the regime.

The private sector in Sudan, despite governmental support, is marked by the domination of certain groups. Among these groups are those from north and central Sudan who speak Arabic as well as those who allied with the previous regime. The sector has become more and more controlled by the military and their investments, even though the revenues of these investments do not reach the Ministry of Finance.<sup>189</sup> While the economic policy is one of encouraging the private sector, in reality the government is competing with the private sector through the involvement of the military and security services in economic activities.

On the level of religious diversity, the new constitutional amendments opened the door for people of religions other than Islam to demand economic participation. The Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments returned church properties and called on the minorities who left Sudan during the NCP's rule because of religious and political harassment and the confiscation of property, lands and movables, to return to the country. Some commercial activities, such as trading in alcoholic beverages, remained prohibited by law despite the amendments made by the Ministry of Justice and the transitional government to basic rights. Sudan was, for many years, on the U.S. Commission for

**Most of the big companies are in Khartoum and Port Sudan, while other states are left behind.**

International Religious Freedoms list of ‘Countries of Particular Concern’ with regard to religious freedoms and related rights.<sup>190</sup> Also, HAC was supervising NGOs and non-profit organizations (NPOs). Religious groups that participate in humanitarian or development activities were required to register as NGOs and NPOs. Only registered religious groups are entitled to apply for administrative benefits, such as land ownership, tax exemptions or work permits. Religious affairs and endowments with state government agencies grant permission or permits to establish religious buildings, places of worship or any other institutions (educational and commercial) affiliated with them. Such regulations limited the participation of non-Muslim groups in the private sector. Despite this, many Copts own their own small businesses; this remains an individual effort.

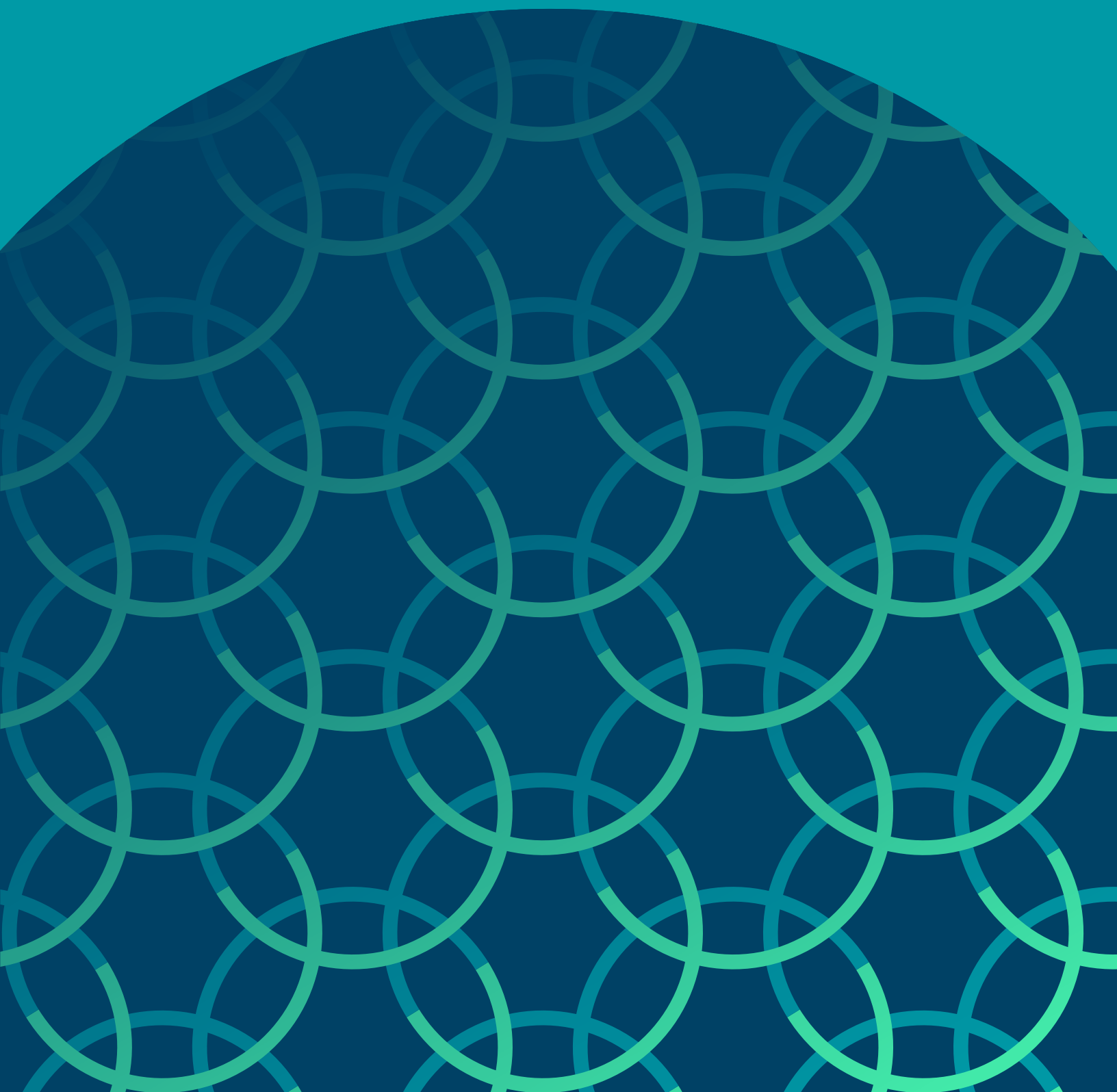
No data is available to get information on the actual level of participation of non-Muslims within the private sector as employees or as investors. Sudan enjoys considerable economic opportunities, especially after removing its name from the list of countries supporting terrorism, as well as its membership in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. Despite this, the internal distribution of private sector activities is unequal. Most of the big companies are in Khartoum and Port Sudan, while other states are left behind. This also limits the ability for an inclusive private sector and leaves some people behind.

When it comes to plurality of investments between farming and supporting pastoralists, the private sector is also lagging. The two sectors are controlled primarily by the state, which is active in exporting raw material instead of involving the sectors in industries. This makes Sudan rely on imports of even basic goods, with many limitations facing small businesses in farming or herding. On top of this, the informal economy is functioning outside the private sector as well as the state’s financial system. It relies mostly on small street vendors and other types of smuggled goods, which act as a parallel market. Most of those engaged in the informal sector come from ethnic and linguistic backgrounds other than Arabic and other than North and Central Sudan. For example, in Nyala, the second largest commercial city in Sudan after Khartoum,<sup>191</sup> there is one of the biggest markets for smuggled goods from Chad and other countries.

The private sector in Sudan, particularly big companies such as DAL Group, use English as an essential language for communication.<sup>192</sup> Almost all big companies require fluency in English for jobs. Such a dynamic leaves large numbers of people out of this competition, Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic-speaking alike. Since the NCP’s policy in education was to use Arabic as an official language, those who are fluent in English normally come from richer family backgrounds. Only parents who can afford educating their children in private schools have children who can speak fluent English, and thus, they are the ones who mostly get the jobs.

When it comes to women’s participation in the private sector, the percentage of companies headed by women does not exceed 3 percent in Sudan, and companies whose original owners are women is 8 percent.<sup>193</sup> The private sector in Sudan is diverse, but the core businesses in the sector are dominated by certain historically entrenched groups from central Sudan, where the leadership is homogeneous and does not reflect the diversity that is characteristic of Sudan.

# PART IV. GROUP-BASED INEQUALITIES



## 11. POLITICAL

### AVERAGE SCORE:

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 3

ECONOMY | SCORE: 3

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 2

**Lack of political representation and/or discrimination are entrenched in Sudan.**

The political disparities and inequalities between various groups in Sudan are embedded within the overall socio-cultural system. Theoretically, the various constitutions in Sudan guarantee the right of establishing a political party for everyone. However, the realities in Sudan are much more complex than constitutions. Constitutions often fail to recognize and embrace the country's diversity by insisting on imposing language and religion (Arabic and Islam) on diverse groups that have their own languages and profess different religions than that declared by the state. There is no religious or linguistic tolerance in Sudan.

Among the religious groups, we find that, for example, the Republican Brotherhood, a religious faction, were banned from forming a political party until 2019. The same party returned to the circle of exclusion and targeting based on 'political opinion' and 'intellectual orientation,' against the backdrop of the party's criticism of the political situation of the transitional government as a "state without a constitution" and criticism of the peace agreement that was signed in Juba as being "unconstitutional," as well as the party's bold stance toward relations with Israel.<sup>194</sup>

Lack of political representation and/or discrimination are entrenched in Sudan. People rarely get the chance to participate in political decisions relating to their lives and communities. For instance, findings from the Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* show how a third of respondents (32.5 percent) would attend a community meeting if given the chance, signaling the lack of opportunities for increased political participation for those interested in doing so.

Grievances about these types of inequalities emerged as early as the 1950s and 1960s by groups in Darfur and Eastern Sudan.<sup>195</sup> The Beja Front was established in 1958 and the Darfur Development Front in 1964. Both demanded equality in political representation and development projects. But since independence and up to the present, successive governments have failed to address these grievances. When the transitional government signed the peace agreement with a group of Eastern Sudanese (from the Liberation and Justice Movement), the Hadendowa tribes contested the move and mentioned that the front does not represent all of East Sudan. The Hadendowa are a mainly pastoral ethnic group, while the peace agreement was signed with the Beni-Amer, with whom the Hadendowa are in an historical disagreement.<sup>196</sup>

On another level of language as a diversity type and political participation and representation, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA)<sup>197</sup> made a positive step. The SPA included youth vernacular (street language) as a medium of communication but also as an inclusion tool. It is important to mention that the language here represented

youth and is known as Randowk. It is also the language used and initiated in Khartoum shantytowns. As Bakhit explains, there is a “clear disconnect between peripheral areas or shanty towns and ‘upscale’ neighborhoods, whether they are popular, middle or upper-middle-class residential areas.”<sup>198</sup> The majority of residents within these areas are internal migrants who are seen as less than citizens. They mostly see themselves as coming from African origins, while other ethnic groups see themselves as coming from Arabic backgrounds that are superior socially and politically.<sup>199</sup>

Another case of inequality and lack of political representation is the case of Al-Kanabi, the settlements of agriculture labourers around the Gezira Scheme. These settlements have been in the area since the establishment of the Gezira Scheme in 1925 but, as of yet, are not integrated, and their inhabitants have no rights compared to other groups in the area. They suffer isolation and are deprived of the right to public services, despite their role in production and in spite of the exploitation they endure that has historically occurred since the establishment of the agricultural companies and the Gezira Scheme. They gathered under the General Conference of Al-Kanabi, established in the state of Gezira in March 2013. It included all existing entities in Al-Kanabi: youth, sheikhs, civil administration and popular committees to include all states after that. This issue is still unsettled; however, people are advocating for the cause.<sup>200</sup>

Another group-based inequality relates to women. It is important to mention that women are not represented within leadership structures in all the political parties and armed groups. The exception is within the National Umma Party, in which women are found in high leadership positions. This is attributed to the family ties that govern internal party politics. All the parties have policies for women’s inclusion, however unrealized. Even during the transitional government when the FFC had a share in power women were left out of the political deal. The Constitutional Charter promised women 40 percent representation after women were active participants during the uprisings.<sup>201</sup>

## 12. ECONOMIC

### AVERAGE SCORE: 4

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 4

RELIGION | SCORE: 4

ECONOMY | SCORE: 4

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 3

Since independence Sudan has gone through various economic systems including socialism and neoliberalism, and it has been described recently as kleptocracy.<sup>202</sup> The economy of Sudan has been negatively influenced over the years by mismanagement, corruption, reliance on aid and loans, as well as a “consumerist mindset.”<sup>203</sup> This was particularly so when in 1972 Sudan adopted an open-door policy to encourage investments. It resulted in a widening the gap between people and created two classes, the “affluent” and the “rest.”<sup>204</sup>

**Sudan is challenged with unbalanced development among the various states which resulted in conflicts and high rates of displacement on top of natural crises.**

The overall economic indicators in Sudan are the GDP rate of \$52.718 million (USD), with an average GDP per capita of \$1,151 (USD) and the labour force which amounts to 49.6 percent of the population.<sup>205</sup>

The rural–urban nexus is most connected to livelihood styles (i.e., pastoralists and farmers). Sudan is challenged with unbalanced development among the various states which resulted in conflicts and high rates of displacement on top of natural crises. These factors resulted in high rates of internal migration from rural to urban centers, and high rates of internal displacement. The rural areas (home of most farmers and pastoralists) were impoverished over the years, with Khartoum being the hub of development, services, and potential economic opportunities. Thus, many people who reside in Khartoum in search of opportunities and safety, end up filling limited paying jobs, particularly within the informal sector. On top of this, economic policies over the years show an “urban bias” through provision of comparatively better “social and economic infrastructure” than in rural areas. Additionally, most of the goods that were subsidized by governments were mainly consumed by the urban population, and are unaffordable for the urban poor.<sup>206</sup>

Sudan’s economy heavily depends on the traditional sector (farming and animal husbandry), which represents the mainstay for people in the countryside. Urban areas depend on what is produced in the countryside. The agriculture sector in Sudan, despite its importance, suffered a systematic problem of two coexisting methods of farming: one that is traditionally maintained and irrigated, and one using modern irrigation. The traditional sector was less productive and had limited access to markets, however it is the bigger sector. The modern one had more support and access to markets, even though it is smaller compared to traditional farming.<sup>207</sup>

Moreover, the traditional sector has been neglected since the exploration and export of oil in Sudan in 2000. There is an incipient industrial sector, but its contribution to the Gross National Product is not significant. The downturn of the economy started in the late 1970s and deteriorated rapidly during the reign of the Islamists (1989–2019). The secession of South Sudan in 2011 negatively affected the economy since the bulk of oil fields are in the south. The US economic sanctions that were imposed in 1993 and the resulting international isolation further damaged the economy. Austerity measures undertaken after the secession of South Sudan, particularly in 2013, led to riots in September 2013 where more than 200 protesters were believed to have been killed by the security forces.<sup>208</sup> These austerity measures and the hard economic conditions contributed to the downfall of the regime in 2019.

After the political change in 2019, inflation rates continued to rise due to the depreciation of the local currency against foreign currencies. This period saw disruptions in supply baskets/chains and the continued shortage of food commodities and fuel, in addition to the loss of agricultural production due to instability and natural disasters, with a significant rise in the general level of prices. The Sudanese pound decreased by about 687.7 percent, while growth witnessed a slight improvement during 2021, amounting to 0.5 percent. This was a result of the improvement in the agricultural sector after the decline it witnessed during 2020 due to floods and locust invasions. However, it remained limited because of internal conditions, high inflation and fluctuations in exchange rates. The inflation rate increased significantly during 2021 due to the continued depreciation of the currency as a result of fluctuations in supply chains, continuous protests, food

**Austerity measures, high inflation rates and COVID-19 affected vulnerable segments of society, especially workers in the informal sector of the economy.**

and fuel shortages due to the rise in global prices for both, and the widening of the difference between the official exchange rate and the black market.<sup>209</sup>

Austerity measures, high inflation rates and COVID-19 affected vulnerable segments of society, especially workers in the informal sector of the economy. The transitional government spent 8.5 billion Sudanese pounds on supporting the informal sector and families affected by the COVID-19 closure measures in Khartoum. Despite these investments, findings from the Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* indicate that nearly 54 percent of respondents in Khartoum indicated that their present living conditions were very bad compared to others. This could be due to the fact of increased prices of basic goods and services, to the extent that the Sudan price bulletin noted a challenge of food insecurity in 2021.<sup>210</sup> In addition, the programs that the transitional government adopted were "short-term interventions" and did not cover all those in need.<sup>211</sup>

The Ministry of Trade and Industry has also spent 10 billion Sudanese pounds on providing basic commodities for local cooperatives. The Ministry of Finance also signed an agreement with the European Union and the World Bank to provide \$110 million (USD) for the Sudan Family Support Programme (known as the Thamarat program), which supports Sudanese families with direct cash transfers to alleviate the economic difficulties the country was going through. The Thamarat program is an important part of the reforms program implemented by the transitional government to alleviate some of the economic challenges facing citizens, including in rural areas, especially by women and poor families, to strengthen the permanent social safety net and increase financial inclusion.<sup>212</sup>

There have been increased unemployment rates among young people, which by 2021 reached 40 percent in urban areas, and these rates are even higher among young women, as women are severely marginalized in the labour market in general.<sup>213</sup> The participation of women in the labour force reached 33 percent in 2014, compared to 76 percent among men, and women were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as men. Thus, it is unsurprising that 62 percent of respondents of the Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* described their living conditions as very bad or fairly bad compared to others, of which 35 percent were women.

Women and youth living in rural areas are four times more likely to be employed than those living in urban areas. About half of the unemployed Sudanese are under 25 years old,<sup>214</sup> which corresponds to the Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey*, as 34.72 percent of respondents aged 18-24 said their living conditions were very bad. Women make up the largest proportion of them, as young women are 55 percent less likely to be employed compared to older women.<sup>215</sup>

Males, regardless of their age, geographic location or level of education, have better chances than females to find work. Sudanese women enjoy less than a third of the legal rights enjoyed by men in key areas related to accessing economic opportunities, placing Sudan near the bottom of the World Bank's 2021 *Women, Business and the Law Index*.<sup>216</sup> However, women face many constraints that go beyond the legal framework and social norms, such as access to finance and decision-making power.

Corruption is a menace to Sudan's economy. For example, within the gold and oil fields, the Global Financial Integrity organization exposed corruption between 2012 and 2018.

**Sudanese women enjoy less than a third of the legal rights enjoyed by men in key areas related to accessing economic opportunities.**

The reports mentioned that the Government of Sudan officially disclosed the export of 62.3 million barrels of oil, while Sudan's trading partners revealed that they imported 112.2 million barrels. There is a gap of 49.9 million barrels, representing 80.1 percent out of the total that was disclosed from Sudan's oil exports. Similarly, between 2012 and 2018, the Bank of Sudan reported the export of 205,446 kg of gold, while its trading partners reported that their imports of Sudanese gold amounted to 404,732 kg, with a gap of 199,286 kg (equivalent to 200 tonnes), which equals 97 percent of the amount declared by Sudan.<sup>217</sup>

Migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as women working in the informal sector and marginal jobs (food and beverage vendors, 'tea ladies'), suffer from poor access to land and inclusion in urban housing schemes. Also, residents of slums on the outskirts of cities, especially Khartoum, suffer from unfair "removal" decisions. The authorities do not provide any justification for the population, claiming that the area was originally not allowed to be inhabited, and sometimes planning takes place in the same area according to the estimates of the authorities. Other population groups, based on ethnicity, also suffer from dispossession and deprivation of their lands, as happened in the Nuba Mountains region with the arming of the Arab tribes and the launch of a campaign to dispossess the Nuba of their lands and to plunder their natural resources from forests. The Indigenous people depend on it for their economic life, a pattern that has also been repeated against other Darfuri groups since 2003 through crimes of genocide and forced displacement.<sup>218</sup>

Economic inequality does not necessarily and/or separately correspond to religion or language. It can be seen and understood from within the context of the accumulation of power and wealth. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, groups' access to quality education that supports quality employment, for example, is about certain classes that could afford it. While many IDPs come from conflict zones, such as the Nuba Mountains, Darfur and Blue Nile, they have no access to quality education, minimum access to housing and limited access to decent jobs.<sup>219</sup> These groups face a combination of exclusion factors: some of them are non-Muslims and non-Arabic natives. It is safe to say that there are fairly high levels of economic inequality between groups in Sudan.

## 13. SOCIAL

### AVERAGE SCORE: 4

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 4

RELIGION | SCORE: 5

ECONOMY | SCORE: 4

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 4

Social inequality is entrenched in Sudan, and it is caused by several interconnected factors. Historically, elites of different types (merchants, clerics, men in the Native Administration and military leaders), despite their diversity throughout the historical eras, controlled resources and exploited the masses in order to achieve surplus production

**People who work in the informal sector and who also mostly reside in informal settlements (e.g., in Khartoum) pay twice the rates to get social services, such as water.**

to maintain a standard of living far above that of the vast majority of the country's population. These elites have controlled power centres in society, which paved the way for control over the masses. Getting close to the elite groups became a desirable matter for other groups and individuals, notwithstanding that Sudan is culturally diverse with a predominance of a rural lifestyle.<sup>220</sup>

According to UNICEF Sudan,<sup>221</sup> the overall poverty rate in 2020 was 97 percent. Against this background, and regarding both lifestyle and the proximity from power centres, many groups suffered a lack of state consideration of their lifestyles. Among these groups, for example, are the Manasir in Northern Sudan, a group that traditionally lived on farming and fishing, who were forcefully removed from their lands. Much of this has taken place under the shadow of development projects, such as constructing dams. The effects of displacement that accompanied the construction of the Merowe Dam are still facing the residents living in those areas. In the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights files in the case against the Republic of Sudan are forced evictions, inadequate compensation and the suppression of protests against the Merowe Dam in the Northern region.<sup>222</sup> Two more dams are planned (Dal and Kajbar) that fueled heavily mobilized protests by local communities. The communities believe the dams will displace them from agricultural lands, and they do not get any development projects in return, such as better access to schools, hospitals or any other social services.<sup>223</sup>

On the diversity type of informality, we find the taxation system is influential in access to social services. The tax system in Sudan plays an influential role in discriminating against different groups and ignoring the foundations of social justice. A rentier economic pattern entwined with a collection system that is biased towards "indirect" taxes at the expense of "direct" taxes prevails. Taxation studies indicate the inability of citizens charged with payment to pay annual taxes because of suspicion of how government agencies use tax revenues,<sup>224</sup> and fraud by traditional methods or through networks of corruption and nepotism, which are not devoid of kinship and ethnic ties. Tax exemptions also contributed to deepening the developmental disparities between local communities and small farmers, despite the importance of this segment in addressing poverty (it represents 70 percent of agricultural production in Sudan), and given that they are the majority in the rural economy.<sup>225</sup> Despite this, people who work in the informal sector and who also mostly reside in informal settlements (e.g., in Khartoum) pay twice the rates to get social services, such as water.<sup>226</sup>

Religious groups also face difficulties, such as with the education system. Christians put their children in private and missionary schools for them to get quality education and get Christianity taught in schools. All governmental schools (to which less economically advantaged Christians send their children) do not teach Christianity at all. Members of religious minorities continue to express concern about the education system, which lacks enough teachers qualified to teach Christianity. Members of religious minorities, including Shi'a and other Muslim minorities, avoid expressing beliefs or discussing religious practices that differ from the Sunni majority. The schools only teach Islam to children, and the collaborative schools would only exempt Christian students from religion class. Christian students sit for examination on religion in the church where they also receive religious education (as a separate group from other students) that reflects their identity and belonging to the nation.<sup>227</sup>

**Many civil and volunteer organizations have been established since 2009 to cover the gaps within health and education services.**

With the language policies in Sudan and access to education, groups need to learn Arabic to get an education. All schools use Arabic as a teaching language, and the school curricula is written in Arabic. All curricula are produced in relation to the political situation, and thus, it serves an ideology rather than accessibility to the population.<sup>228</sup> There are a few private schools that use languages other than Arabic (e.g., English), but these are quite expensive and poor and middle-class families cannot afford to enroll their children in these schools.

Theoretically speaking, social services are available to everyone despite their social, political and religious background. Nonetheless, in practice, public hospitals, for example, are centralized in Khartoum and lack basic health consumable materials, such as cotton and syringes used for injections. Private hospitals are available but are too expensive. Many civil and volunteer organizations have been established since 2009 to cover the gaps within health and education services. Groups such as Shari' al-Hawadith (Emergency Street) and Education Without Borders provide services to poor and excluded communities via donations and aid provision.

In accessing health care systems, women suffer the most. Regarding sexual and reproductive health in Sudan, on top of the social stigma for unmarried women to visit gynecologists, is the burden created due to the lack of such services in many areas. In 2020, among women aged between 15 and 49, 2.9 million wanted to avoid pregnancy. Among them, only 32 percent got their needs met via contemporary methods,<sup>229</sup> according to the Guttmacher Institute. Furthermore, 980,000 women did not deliver their babies in a health care facility, and 370,000 did not get medical care after obstetric complications, according to the same report. Also, according to UNICEF, many school-aged girls suffer menstruation stigma, which can sometimes leave them out of school.<sup>230</sup> Menstrual stigma is also related to menstrual poverty, which again affects women and girls going to school or even engaging in their daily activities.<sup>231</sup>

## 14. CULTURAL

### AVERAGE SCORE: 3

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 2

RELIGION | SCORE: 2

ECONOMY | SCORE: 3

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 5

As mentioned in the country profile, Sudan has suffered from a state of unequal cultural recognition of groups since its independence. There is ethnic and racial superiority and social hierarchy in Sudan, which has created discrimination and cultural privileges. The Arabic and Islamic culture were adopted by different governments throughout Sudan's history, making these two key cultural and identity markers that people are supposed to conform with. Other aspects of cultural expressions have become less recognized by the state power. For example, Sudan's main dress code that is represented in media and songs (in the central areas and Khartoum) are the *toub* for women and the *jalabyya*

**The state has put little effort into protecting languages or even providing education material in local languages.**

for men. A toub is a piece of fabric wrapped around a woman's body and that covers her head. The jalabyia is a long white dress worn by men. These two symbols only represent groups with Arab and Islamic backgrounds, but they were used by the state to represent the country's identity. The hegemony of Arabic and Islam led to the exclusion of diverse groups who do not see themselves as belonging to these two cultural markers.

Cultural symbols and practices, particularly the ones related to aspects of folklore, have always been neglected or otherwise modified during cultural festivals by the enforced Arab-Islamic culture in Khartoum. This meant that many cultures and cultural practices have been seen as marginal and less of national identity markers. For example, a cultural marker of some pastoralist groups in Darfur has been announced as illegal to wear. The *Kadmol*, a turban-like headpiece, was forbidden among the pastoralists in southern Darfur. In 2013, the *Kadmol* was outlawed by the governor as a threat to security. State officials have said that *Kadmol* are worn by criminals and looters.<sup>232</sup> Similar decisions were taken in 2022 in North Darfur forbidding the wearing of the *Kadmol* as a security measure by the state.<sup>233</sup>

In the formal and informal economy, while inequality is indirect, we can refer to the Nuba wrestling practice. The Nuba groups who were forcefully displaced from their villages in the Nuba Mountains because of the conflict were relocated to Khartoum. Many of them live in the peripheral areas around Khartoum. The Nuba in the Nuba Mountains practiced wrestling as a culture but also as a lifestyle-necessity sport. In Khartoum, the practice was rebranded as a cultural expression. Despite the fact that wrestling is a sport, it is not recognized by the state as a national sport, nor does it have a union or any form of state representation. Thus, the sport remains within the realm of the informal sector, despite there being a margin of cash for the wrestlers themselves.<sup>234</sup> When it comes to the religious aspect, celebrating Christmas and having a national holiday for Christmas happened only in 2019, after 10 years without. Since 2011, Christians were not allowed to celebrate Christmas publicly. All celebrations remained behind closed doors of churches and households.<sup>235</sup>

Linguistically speaking, protecting minority languages is not forbidden but is also not supported by the state. Language as a cultural symbol is practiced among ethnic groups, yet as mentioned several times throughout this report, ethnic languages are endangered.<sup>236</sup> In terms of language as another parameter, many groups with tribal and ethnic languages exert their own efforts in preserving their languages. The state has put little effort into protecting languages or even providing education material in local languages. Here again, we bring the example of the Moro language. The Moro branch of the Nuba Mountains tribes established their own community methods for preserving the language. They have their Moro Language Project<sup>237</sup> and attempts have been made to have a dictionary.<sup>238</sup>

Women as a group, however diverse they are, also face certain difficulties with practising some cultural ceremonies that are traditionally held by women. For example, *Zar*<sup>239</sup> is a cultural/belief ceremony practiced by women (and a few men) to communicate with the spirits in many parts of Sudan. Since the Islamization project and the introduction of the Public Order Law<sup>240</sup> (1996), women *Zar* practitioners were not free to hold the ceremonies. The Public Order Law forbade some aspects of *Zar* and thus there has always been a threat to the *Zar* ritual.<sup>241</sup>

## 15. ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### AVERAGE SCORE: 4

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 5

ECONOMY | SCORE: 4

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 4

**One element that stands between people and accessing justice, especially in conflict areas affecting pastoralists and farmers, is the impunity of officials like the police, army and RSF.**

The justice system in Sudan cannot be seen as independent. Until 1983, the legal system in Sudan was, in a way, pluralist and secular, although aspects of its personal status law were based on Islam. In 1983, the regime of Jafa'ar Nimeiri imposed Sharia law,<sup>242</sup> whereby Islamic laws were imposed in the country. The short-lived democratic government of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi (1986–89) failed to undo Sharia law,<sup>243</sup> and the Islamist regimes (1989–2019) further entrenched these laws and completely transformed the judiciary into a system that serves the ideological orientation of the regime, not justice. Judges whose loyalty to the Islamists was in doubt were fired, and the entire justice system is compromised. The Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Public Prosecutor were merged, making it difficult for ordinary people to sue the government. Cases against the government are either dismissed or take such a long time that people forget about them. In some cases, the government imposes fees that people cannot afford to pay to have their cases taken up. Cases related to human rights violations and war crimes, for instance, seldom find their ways to the courts. It is on these grounds that the former president, Omar al-Bashir, was indicted by the ICC in 2009.

Sudan received many recommendations to improve the justice system in the UNHRC. These recommendations included strengthening the independence of the judiciary and guaranteeing the right to a fair trial, establishing national institutions and institutions for receiving complaints, developing existing ones in line with the Paris Principles (1992) and strengthening community institutions. There has been a quantitative development of complaints-reporting institutions in Sudan within the framework of its commitment to the Ombudsman through the Public Grievances Chamber, and other institutions.<sup>244</sup> Nonetheless, the transitional government failed to bring the perpetrators in Darfur, or even in Khartoum, to any level of justice. This has eroded the victims' trust in the Sudanese legal system, including those displaced in camps and families of the dead and injured.

One element that stands between people and accessing justice, especially in conflict areas affecting pastoralists and farmers, is the impunity of officials like the police, army and RSF. These are the main forces that commit crimes against civilians in conflict zones.<sup>245</sup> The immunities these groups enjoy<sup>246</sup> are in stark conflict with the duty to investigate and prosecute gross human rights violations and the right to obtain effective reparation. These laws effectively prevent victims of torture and other human rights violations from seeking compensation and/or other forms of reparation. In July 2020, the transitional government abolished Article 52 of the National Security Law of 2010 and revoked some of the immunities enjoyed by members of the NISS. Yet, authorities that arose under the coup of October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, returned to restoring 'immunities' and restoring the authority of the Security and General Intelligence Service<sup>247</sup> in arresting

**There were hopes that the justice system would be reformed after the political change in 2019, but this did not happen in significant ways.**

and detaining individuals, conducting searches and confiscations, and prohibiting or regulating the movement of persons.

When it comes to groups from the informal economic sector in cities, there is no information available. Hence, their work is organized by the police in cities and governed by various legal acts such as the Public Order Law. In November 2022, a group of women street vendors were subjected to a police raid under claims that the women had no permission to work in that area. The police confiscated their utensils and banned them from working. These women cannot file a complaint to the police because, in this case, the police are the abuser. They organized a protest in front of the HRC offices and filed their requests to get justice and be allowed to work. Even though Khartoum has the largest number of police stations, the question is about the quality of services rather than quantity.

Most of those who are in the informal sector come from marginalized or conflict-affected areas. When they practice their jobs within the informal sector, they face police raids, and they are often limited in practising their economic activities. This is a multi-discrimination process where the marginalized and IDPs are poorly educated, have little access to the formal job market and are outlawed by police. Many women, for example, travel and relocate to the big cities (such as Khartoum) and work in selling food or beverages informally. However, they constantly face police brutality and are either fined or imprisoned. The state is abusing citizenship rights when it does not guarantee those people the right to work. Bearing in mind that, in 2020, those in the informal sector represented 87 percent of the employed in Sudan.<sup>248</sup> This is particularly relevant when read against the bigger scheme of exclusion and the marginalization of certain regions in Sudan since independence.

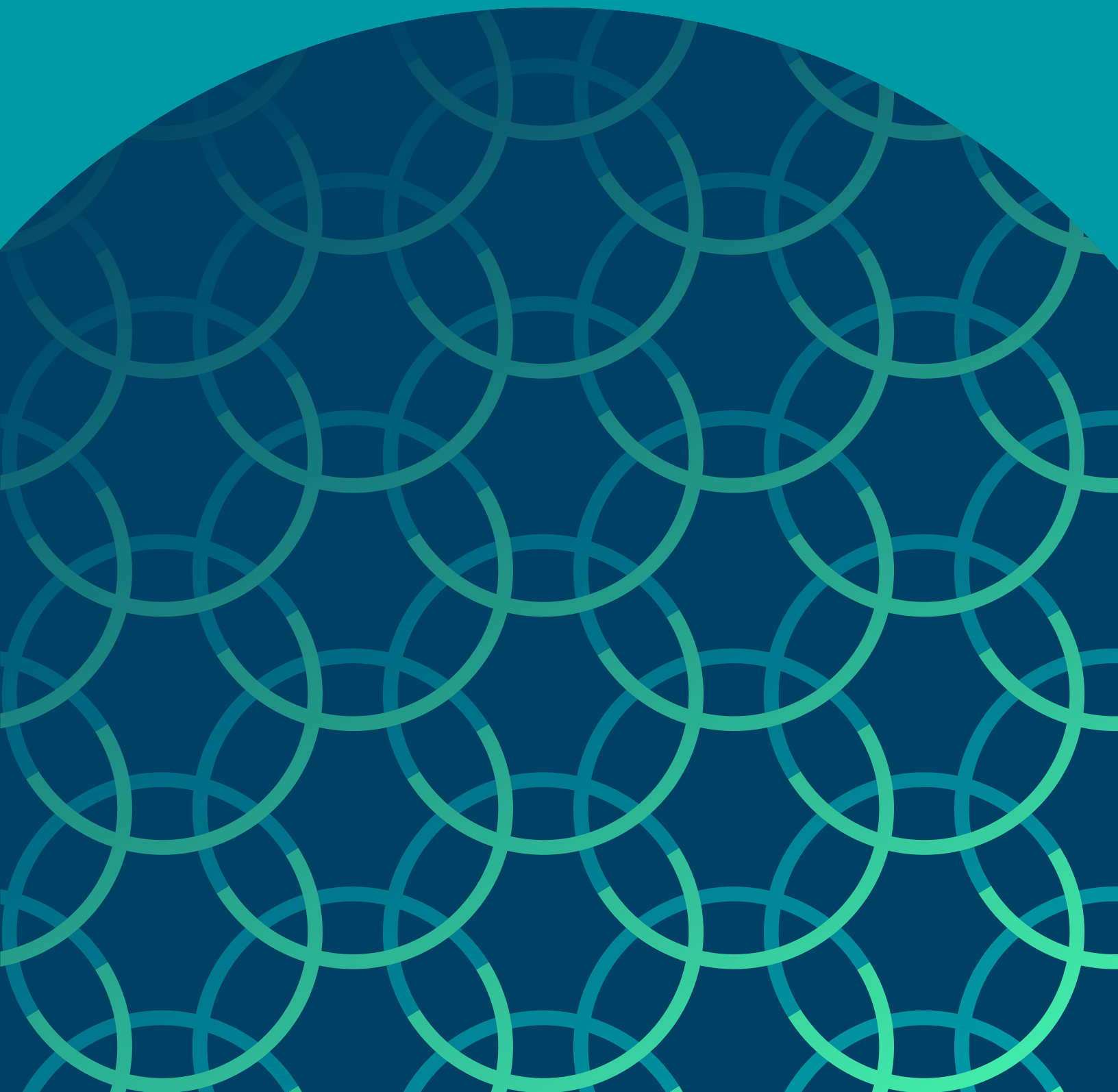
The judiciary does not treat religions equally. In 2022, as mentioned earlier in this report, the Council of Churches condemned limitations on their activities. This happened after a citizen filed a charge against one of the churches in Omdurman under the Article 77 of the Criminal Act (1991) on public disturbance referring to prayers.<sup>249, 250</sup> It is challenging for the two people accused in this case (a priest and a teacher) to get justice because of the rampant culture of corruption within the police.<sup>251</sup>

The linguistic diversity type can also hardly be directly detected here. It is important to mention that people who do not speak Arabic can only access justice through a translator despite being Sudanese. The police do not provide special services in ethnic languages, particularly not in Khartoum. It might be the case in other cities that some individuals within the police are from these areas and thus speak the local languages.

One of the key issues impacting access to justice is police corruption. Many reports mention the corruption of the Sudanese police that prevents people from accessing justice.<sup>252</sup> In 2012, a report by Transparency International and the Christian Michelsen Institute discussed issues of corruption in Sudan in depth. This included the judiciary system being attached to the state as well as the police system. There were hopes that the justice system would be reformed after the political change in 2019, but this did not happen in significant ways. Despite the marginal legal reform, the practices of the police remained corrupt and, in some cases, racist.<sup>253</sup>

A clear example of impunity in the justice system is that after the June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 massacre of peaceful protestors at the sit-in in front of the army headquarters, and still today, the families of the martyrs have not received any justice. Even the former president, who has an ICC warrant for his arrest and is accused of genocide in Darfur, was not handed to the ICC after the uprisings and instead is held in Sudan. The process of justice, beginning with charging someone through taking a person to trial, is very difficult for several groups, and there is no available data that explains, for example, how many police stations exist in each state or locality.

# PART V. INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND BELONGING



## 16. INTERGROUP VIOLENCE

### AVERAGE SCORE: 3

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 3

ECONOMY | SCORE: 5

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 3

**Most conflicts in Sudan are explained through the lens of competition over natural resources.**

Violence has roots within the diversity grouping of livelihoods more than others. However, as discussed in the country profile, the intersectionality of discrimination and inequality crosscuts language, economy and religion. Violence between groups is also caused by environmental degradation and competition over resources. In fact, most conflicts in Sudan are explained through the lens of competition over natural resources. Sudan shows how environmental shocks and fragility are linked to conflict, including population displacement, resource exploitation and underinvestment in development. Indeed, environmental issues continue to fuel conflict, including competition over oil and gas reserves, Nile water and timber, and agricultural land use. Darfur exemplifies the socio-economic breakdown that can result from environmental collapse, given the strong link between land degradation, desertification and conflict.<sup>254</sup>

The Native Administration plays a vital and influential role within the framework of violent relations between the various groups in Sudan. Native Administration refers to tribal and ethnic leaderships among “identity groups” or basically among tribes and ethnic groups.<sup>255</sup> The Native Administration can be understood as a form of decentralized governance and it is described as “native” to distinguish it from “administration by expertise.”<sup>256</sup> The main tasks of the Native Administration is to provide the group members with protection, and solidarity.<sup>257</sup> Over the years, the Native Administration has been initiated and reinitiated to play political roles by different regimes in Sudan. Nonetheless, the essence of the Native Administration lies in their engagement with the judiciary system recognized as early as 1931-32 by the British administration establishing the Native Courts Ordinance.<sup>258</sup> This move gave the Native Administration (with its hierarchy of Nazirs, Omdas, and sheikhs) a wide range of power including organizing the agriculture and grazing systems.<sup>259</sup> One of the main challenges of this power was the entanglement of the native structure with land rights where the larger tribe would gain control over the land. Smaller ethnic groups within a state would thus be seen as ‘inferior’ to the large controlling group in terms of “rights to land and water.”<sup>260</sup>

In 1971, the government of Nimirie abolished the Native Administration, which resulted in a chaos in governance and court systems as well as confusion and conflicts.<sup>261</sup> The abolition of the Native Administration was contested by professional officers in administrative positions, highlighting the vital role of the Native Administration in local governance.<sup>262</sup> The Native Administration was reinitiated by the Islamists in the 1990s and it was seen as a move by the Islamists to gain supporters but also to feed ‘inter-ethnic competition and conflict,’ or to have a ‘divide and rule’ strategy.<sup>263</sup>

When the Islamists took power in 1989, they strengthened the Native Administration and gave it a religious aspect. With the interference of the Islamists, some Native

## **After the 2018 uprisings, intergroup violence escalated on many fronts.**

Administrators chose to undo their traditional alliances with other tribes. This shift also influenced the traditional mechanisms of resolving conflicts between groups such as *Aljoudiyya*. *Aljoudiyya* is a mechanism whereby all conflicting groups sit together and negotiate the conflict in a mediation-like process. This mechanism worked for centuries before some of the Native Administration were co-opted by the Islamists' NCP. As a consequence, the process was also given a religious aspect as being authentically Islamic in the Shura tradition, which is a consultation process emphasizing the word of the majority rather than a democratic process.<sup>264</sup> This automatically made the process seem Islamic and not traditional, which might have given a sense of exclusion to non-Muslims.

Other factors of intergroup violence are land and resources. Land is a big issue among pastoralists and farmers, bearing in mind the environmental degradation affecting areas such as Darfur. Traditionally each group had their own territories as either farmers or pastoralists. These territories are managed by the Native Administration.<sup>265</sup>

In relation to livelihood styles, a key event explains the unequal groups' rights particularly toward nomads crossing the borders, east and west of Sudan. In 2020, the City of Kassala saw a dramatic violent incident against the backdrop of the nomination of Saleh Ammar<sup>266</sup> by the transitional government to the position of governor, and his swearing in before Prime Minister Hamdok. The Hadendowa tribe opposed Saleh Ammar, who belonged to the Bani Amer tribe, assuming the position of governor. This led to a tribal conflict breaking out between the Hadendowa, whose lives are pastoral in the countryside, and the Bani Amer, whose lives are sedentary and have more wealth, killing and injuring dozens. This was the Hadendowa reaction to the appointment of a representative from the farmer-sedentary livelihood community after their years of exclusion.

Similarly, livelihood patterns have negatively influenced the full citizenship rights in Darfur. Through the years, the resource conflict took the form of a conflict between the nomadic pastoral tribes of Arab origins as a whole and the settled agricultural peoples of African tribes, thus the conflict took on an ethnic form, which later became closely related to the 'identity struggle.'<sup>267</sup> One of the long-term effects of that conflict is a change in the pattern of land distribution, as nomadic Arab groups have come to control the agricultural lands that were owned by farming communities of the Fur.<sup>268</sup> Also, Kassala (Eastern Sudan) saw frequent acts of tribal violence between the Nuba and the Bani Amer in 2020, with many people killed. In August 2019, similar fighting killed 37 people and injured 123 others. Another tribal conflict took place in the cities of Roseires and Damazin in Blue Nile state between July 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, resulting in 105 dead and 291 injured. Such confrontations represent a pattern of conflict over land and sovereignty. The conflict arose from an objection by the Indigenous tribes in the Blue Nile region, headed by the Berta<sup>269</sup> ethnic group, to the integration of the Hausa into the region's Native Administration, with claims that the Hausa are coming from West Africa and not from native tribes that have the right to participate in the civil governance of the region.<sup>270</sup>

After the 2018 uprisings, intergroup violence escalated on many fronts. The violence has come not only between farmers and pastoralists over land but also over gold mining.<sup>271</sup> The uprisings allowed various groups to express their frustration, and latent conflicts came to the surface.

More areas and regions in Sudan have been equally marginalized and excluded from power as well as from development and services. Eastern Sudan, for example, has been continuously ‘forgotten’ in peace agreements and power-sharing deals. However, the region saw small clashes over the years between ethnic groups, sedentary groups and pastoralists. There have been clashes between the Beni Amar and the Nuba who live in Port Sudan, but it was contained.<sup>272</sup> Eastern Sudan, according to some analysts, remained a potential place for a serious conflict.<sup>273</sup> The Eastern region (Red Sea state and Kassala) is dominated by the Beja, Hadendowa, Beni Amer and migrants from other regions, such as the Nuba from South Kordofan.<sup>274</sup>

Such conflicts tie together diversity types of livelihood style and access to land, as well as indirectly to linguistic and religious discrimination. This is also evident in cities like Khartoum. Religious groups have not experienced violence since the separation of South Sudan. The last big incident was in 2012 when a group of extremist Muslims burned down a church in a Khartoum neighbourhood. Nonetheless, violence is seen against groups such as refugees from South Sudan residing in Khartoum. In 2022, a neighbourhood in Khartoum North hosting a refugee camp was attacked by other groups residing in the area. The camp consisted of South Sudanese refugees, and it was set on fire after a fight between two people, one from South Sudan and the other from Sudan. While it is unclear if the incident was done based on religious, linguistic or economic reasons, refugees from South Sudan remain one of the vulnerable groups in Khartoum today.

## 17. INTERGROUP TRUST

### AVERAGE SCORE: 3

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 4

RELIGION | SCORE: 3

ECONOMY | SCORE: 4

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 3

Intergroup trust is challenged by many factors such as the previous government’s manipulation of groups, ensuing conflicts, the historical exclusion present between regions, and most importantly, the long history of slavery in some areas. It is important to understand that the trust between diverse groups is rooted in attempts for a national identity. Historically, attempts to create a sense of national belonging go back to the 1924 revolution among the group described by scholar Yoshiko Kurita as the ‘tribally unbelonging blacks.’<sup>275</sup> The group tried to politically emphasize a national consciousness that was inclusive of all Sudanese people despite ethnic belonging and religion, but they could not achieve this goal.<sup>276</sup> Nonetheless, traditional mechanisms of peaceful co-existence between groups are valid and, in some cases, instill trust. The failure of governments and elites in building a national project of equal citizenship, resulted in limited notions of political trust among citizens.<sup>277</sup> The Centre’s *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* shows that nearly half of citizens surveyed, 48 percent, trust fellow citizens just a little.

**Among the farmers and pastoralists, trust is often governed by ethnic alliances and often related to land use and land ownership.**

In rural areas, some cultural and social patterns and customs contributed to crystallizing a history and a common memory among groups in Sudan, such as the co-existence of Abrahamic religions that came to Sudan, ancient and modern, and the overlapping of rituals between the religious and the social. In some groups, it reaches the degree of religious pluralism within the same family, such as in the Nuba Mountains.<sup>278</sup> This works along with traditional customs regulating the process of land ownership and usufruct, which are based on the existence of a 'historical right' to the land, despite repeated amendments to the land laws in Sudan (during colonialization and formation of the national state), whereby any group that owns the land (as a public right) still has the right to host other groups on its land or to prevent it.<sup>279</sup> It is essential to understand that these systems do not work separately from each other. Moreover, socially, there was barely any violence based on religion against some groups, despite the framing of the South Sudan War as a religious conflict.

Groups, from Muslims and Christians, rarely intermarry (except in the Nuba Mountains), for both theological and socio-political reasons. Theologically, a Muslim woman is not allowed to marry a non-Muslim man, otherwise she would be convicted of apostasy. Muslim men are allowed to marry non-Muslim women; however, it is socially unwelcome. Most non-Muslim groups also descend from either marginalized ethnic groups (such as the Nuba) or from the Copts, who are socially closed. In such cases, the hegemonic Arab-Muslim culture marks its socio-political territory.

Among the farmers and pastoralists, trust is often governed by ethnic alliances and often related to land use and land ownership. Marriages, for example, typically occur between tribes that claim a mutual ancestor or between those who have mutual interests. This is true in some parts of Sudan but cannot be generalized to urban areas. In fact, nearly 63 percent of respondents to the Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* said that they would not care if a family member married someone from a different ethnic group. This finding indicates a change in the common mainstream culture towards marriage.

Nonetheless, some factors affect trust between pastoralists and farmers/sedentary groups such as environmental degradation. In June 2020, in Nertiti (western Darfur), citizens organized a sit-in to demand safety because of clashes between groups. It is important to mention that farmers and sedentary groups demanded a stop to the daily attacks on civilians, the disarmament of militias and the protection of the agricultural season, in the face of the aggressor groups (for example, nomadic pastoralists).<sup>280</sup>

In Eastern Sudan, it is notable that the traditions of some Bedouin groups, such as the Hadendowa who live around Sinkat and south of the Qash Delta region, play a negative role in building trust with other groups.<sup>281</sup> The Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* shows how nearly 20 percent of respondents from Eastern Sudan do not trust other ethnic groups at all, while 42 percent trust them just a little. They hold their own inherited customs and traditions close to the extent that they are suspicious of dealing with others.<sup>282</sup> Similarly, the Rashaida<sup>283</sup> group, who are camel herders, remain completely isolated from the rest of the groups that share the region with them. They lead a "hybrid" lifestyle. Rashaida are active in the trade of race camels, while some of them work smuggling goods and weapons, and sometimes human trafficking.<sup>284</sup> Yet, there are other groups who share the same geographical area with the Hadendowa who were more tolerant and open. These are the Shukriya and Beni Amer. The Shukriya are an Arabic-speaking group, while the Beni Amer speak Tigrinya. Although they speak

**Although the Shukriya and Beni Amer speak different languages, the fact that they share similar cultural traditions helped them build trust and mutual co-existence. This means that diversity by itself is not a significant factor in lack of trust.**

different languages, the fact that they share similar cultural traditions helped them build trust and mutual co-existence.<sup>285</sup> This means that diversity by itself is not a significant factor in lack of trust.

On the economic front, trust or lack of it, can easily be seen when we look at the relationship between citizens and refugees. Ethiopians and Eritreans represent the biggest refugee communities in Sudan. After the war in Syria in 2011 and beyond, and because Sudan does not impose entry permits on Syrians, Syrian refugees have become the third-largest group of refugees in Sudan.<sup>286</sup> Refugees face problems at multiple levels and of different natures. First, there is the simple mistrust of a foreigner or stranger, and seeing foreigners as competitors in the informal sector. Second, authorities look at refugees as staying in Sudan illegally and as potential criminals. All of this leads to mistrust. Other 'non-Sudanese' groups and early migrants such as the Indian community get on very well within the trade sector and other sectors. The Indian groups are not refugees and thus reflect a different dynamic within the economy; however, they remain distinct as a group. They have integrated with Sudanese but have kept their autonomy. Sudanese of Indian origin were living, as Hollingsworth described them, as "a quiet people who love to live in isolation because of their religious beliefs,"<sup>287</sup> despite their historical presence centuries ago. They benefited from the religious pluralism they came from in India which allowed for the formation of a network of mixed marriages. This helped form a number of joint families in cities such as the Port Sudan, Kassala, Wad Madani and Khartoum,<sup>288</sup> reflecting integration and trust across ethnicity, belief and national origin.<sup>289</sup>

Language can surely be a mechanism of trust-building among groups in Sudan. An example of language building trust is the use of youth street slang, called Randowk, in political discourse. It was unsurprising to groups of Sudanese, including youth groups, when the Sudanese army commander and head of the Sovereignty Council of the transitional government used the vocabulary of this youth language in Sudan in his speech to the nation in July 2019.<sup>290</sup> This is because Randowk represents daily linguistic practice that has turned into a field of unconscious resistance in the face of power and its language.<sup>291</sup> Since March 2019, statements published by the Sudanese Professionals Association (a key political actor during the uprising against al-Bashir) were written in Randowk. This represented an important indication that language had become one of the contested domains in Sudan, where Randowk became an expression of what the street demanded, which seemed isolated from the classical Arabic language in which the statements of the revolutionary movement were typically written.<sup>292</sup>

Data from the Centre's 2023 *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* for Sudan shed light on intergroup trust. When it comes to trusting other ethnic groups, almost a third of those in the survey said they do not trust other ethnic groups at all, while nearly 40 percent responded by saying "a little." When it comes to liking or disliking neighbours from different religions, 43 percent said they would not care, while 19 percent said they would strongly dislike it.

When it comes to attitudes such as having immigrants and foreign workers as neighbours, the Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* indicates that 45 percent said they would not care, while 18 percent said they strongly dislike the idea. Additionally, attitudes toward those who support a different political party reveal that, more than 50 percent said they would not care, while 17 percent said they would strongly dislike it. There is,

however, a positive attitude toward a family member marrying from a different ethnic group: 63 percent said they would not care. This is consonant with increasing rates of interethnic marriages, especially in urban areas, although it is difficult to statistically corroborate this trend. There is also a tendency to look at others as citizens like themselves, with 43 percent saying they agreed, while 34 percent strongly agreed with the idea of equality among citizens. Nonetheless it is likely to be an opinion rather than a practice, particularly under conditions of the current war, where certain ethnic groups are facing social stigma, as discussed in indicators 3 and 16.

## 18. TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

### AVERAGE SCORE: 3

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 4

ECONOMY | SCORE: 2

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 2

**The farmers, even after the uprisings, are still suffering from the state taking their lands and selling them to wealthy individuals. Such practices weaken the trust between state institutions and the people.**

Lack of trust in institutions is defined by Jack Citrin as “a state of hostility towards the political and social leadership and the institutions of governance and order,”<sup>293</sup> and it manifests as a lack of accountability within the government, weak government capabilities, withholding information and a lack of transparency and political corruption. This definition lays the ground for discussion in this indicator. As seen in the country profile, the state of Sudan is in chaos, which makes it even more difficult for all groups to trust public institutions. The lack of trust exhibited here describes the trust in state bodies, including political bodies, police, army, RSF, the judiciary system and the country’s leadership. We have seen the problems within the judiciary system and law enforcement institutions, and how this affects people’s access to justice. In such circumstances, it is most probable that people will not trust institutions.

Regarding the livelihood styles, for example, the farmers, even after the uprisings, are still suffering from the state taking their lands and selling them to wealthy individuals. Such practices weaken the trust between state institutions and the people. Small farmers gradually become agriculture labourers within bigger mechanized agricultural schemes, as opposed to smaller and traditional farmed lands. Most of the small farmers come from disadvantaged ethnic groups, which has historical and political roots in exclusion.<sup>294</sup> Hence, for example, the recent conflicts in Blue Nile can be attributed to the lack of trust in the state institutions to bring justice to the Hausa groups, as discussed in indicator 16. On top of this, most farmers and pastoralists ask their traditional leadership members to mediate for conflict resolution instead of addressing the state.<sup>295</sup>

On another diversity type, religious pluralism, in December 2022, an official from the regular forces burned down a church in Gadaref, a city in Eastern Sudan.<sup>296</sup> The case of attacking churches was not the first of its kind, as many churches have been burned since 1989, and investigations were not taken seriously by state authorities.<sup>297</sup> As such,

**Since the October 2021 military coup, civilians have lost trust in the country's leadership.**

Christian groups created their own human rights bodies, such as the Christian Youth Union, to advocate against the abuses they face.

When it comes to the formal and informal economy, the example of squatter settlements in Khartoum shows a lack of trust in state institutions. Most squatter settlements in Khartoum are located at the periphery of the city and are inhabited by migrants from the countryside or IDPs. Most of the inhabitants, in particular, older generations, came to Khartoum with little knowledge of urban job markets. Thus, most of them work in the informal sector of the economy, selling water, as domestic labourers, construction labourers, among other roles. In these types of neighbourhoods, the 'informal' workers established their own schools, water services, power supply, etc., by collecting donations from residents and by other self-help means. They did not trust state institutions to provide them with social services and thus took the mission upon themselves. This model of obtaining services is also common among residents of villages and rural extensions that became part of the city with urban expansion.<sup>298</sup>

Women, in general, have little to no trust in state institutions given their long history of discriminating against women.<sup>299 and 300</sup> This discrimination is well documented in the work of scholars, journalists and human rights reports.<sup>301</sup> Hence, after the uprisings, women aspired to a better relationship with the state, but their goal was not reciprocated.<sup>302</sup>

Since the October 2021 military coup, civilians have lost trust in the country's leadership. Both the military and the RSF have taken on roles that are not theirs, and thus, many groups have a feeling of federal/national state failure. For example, the Intelligence Department of the RSF, in coordination with the Drug Control Department and the Counter Trafficking Unit of the Ministry of Interior, announced that it carried out 539 different operations in 2022, during which it was able to seize weapons and drugs.<sup>303</sup> The RSF's intelligence service confirmed the readiness of its support forces for all the tasks assigned to them. Such interference happens when state bodies (especially the police) are in a weak position, and their power is compromised. The RSF is also known for its crimes in Darfur, and thus, it cannot be protecting and abusing people at the same time. Another example of the lack of trust resulting from national state incapacity is reflected in the work of the Native Administration. Since late 2020 and during 2021, it claimed a much more advanced role in intergroup conflicts that went beyond mediation. In Eastern Sudan, many of the Native Administration's leaders threatened the central government with closing the port and/or all other facilities, if their demands were not met.<sup>304</sup>

## 19. INCLUSION AND ACCEPTANCE

### AVERAGE SCORE: 3

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 3

RELIGION | SCORE: 3

ECONOMY | SCORE: 4

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 3

**Non-Muslims reported perceptions of exclusion rooted in experiences of violence during past peace processes and the forms of antagonism persisted into the present.**

There are several key factors that influence inclusion and acceptance among groups. Among the significant factors are internal migration, the economy, land tenure, language and religion. Among the linguistic minority groups, for example, various groups share the same language origin, and thus, it makes it easier for them to feel included. This is so between groups in the Nuba Mountains, Nubians, Midob and Birgid groups. The Midob are from the pastoral tribes of Darfur, who live in the northeastern part of North Darfur state.<sup>305</sup> They speak a language that is close to the Nubian language in the North, particularly the Kono and Danagla ethnic groups.<sup>306</sup> Nonetheless, on the national state level, as mentioned in many parts of this report, the hegemony of the Arabic language has made many linguistic minorities feel unaccepted.<sup>307</sup> Throughout the history of modern Sudan and more so during the NCP rule, the traditional cultural and social relations became part of politics and the power struggle. Identity and groups' consciousness of themselves also increased among people in Sudan as a direct result of the power struggle.<sup>308</sup>

Islam and the Arabic language became the state identity, and groups (particularly those in the minority) that do not conform to the model have been excluded and faced marginalization and exclusion from development.<sup>309</sup> The Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* indicated that 82 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had strong ties with other citizens. Nonetheless, only 12 percent of respondents from Darfur agreed that they had strong ties with other citizens. Non-Muslims reported perceptions of exclusion rooted in experiences of violence<sup>310</sup> during past peace processes and the forms of antagonism persisted into the present.<sup>311</sup> Thus, one may posit that both religion and region influence how people relate to their fellow citizens, particularly given that most of the respondents to the survey identify as Arab-Muslim Sudanese. On top of that, 68 percent from rural areas agreed they have strong ties with other citizens, which is understandable because people are closer to each other in rural areas as compared to urban centres.

The dominance of the Arabic language has also led to other effects toward non-Arabic-speaking groups. According to UNESCO's indicators of the vitality of languages,<sup>312</sup> the original languages in Sudan are heading toward disappearance, that is, as these languages are transmitted between generations, the percentage and number of their speakers decrease, and its ranges narrow. For instance, the Andandi language,<sup>313</sup> spoken by Danagla in North Sudan, is threatened by disappearance due to state disinterest in protecting it and with no policies toward its preservation. The focus on increasing the dominance of Arabic and the disinterest in protecting other languages only reduces the opportunities for inclusion and acceptance of Sudan's diverse population.

The livelihood diversity type reflects another form of inclusion and acceptance. Here, the land tenure system and relationships play a key role. Some groups do not feel accepted within their settlement in rural areas, particularly because of the connections between land ownership and citizenship. Some examples of intragroup conflicts between pastoralists and farmers reflect the issue of inclusion and land tenure. In Darfur, for example, the Ma'alia and Rizeigat groups entered into a conflict over lands; however, it was politicized. The NCP used cow herders with Arabic origins, such as the Beni Helba and Rizeigat, in its conflict with armed movements.<sup>314</sup> Then, the Rizeigat in North Darfur, who come from camel herders, were in a conflict against the Ma'alia (pastoralists and farmers) again between 2008 and 2010.<sup>315</sup> It is understood that the groups used by the NCP felt more belonging to the state and to the NCP's policies back then. Those groups targeted by these policies and the conflict do not have the same feeling of acceptance in their local areas.

When it comes to religion, many factors influence inclusion and acceptance, particularly the dominance of Sharia law that makes non-Muslims second-class citizens, as well as distinct Islamic groups that are also not accepted. In fact, the Centre's *Pluralism Perceptions Survey* shows how 21 percent of respondents, almost all of whom were Muslim, did not trust people from other religions at all. The survey also shows that 48 percent of Muslims had just a little trust in people of other faiths. This finding emphasizes the point that religion is a factor in levels of trust which exists in an environment of exclusion affecting religious minorities.<sup>316</sup>

For example, during the transitional period, the Sudanese Scholar's Association<sup>317</sup> which has a significant Islamic studies foundation, mentioned that the transitional government (even though it is composed of a Muslim majority) was destroying Islam. Also, the Youth and Sports minister during the transitional government, Walaa Al Boushi, was accused of apostasy<sup>318</sup> by a well-known Islamic extremist (who was the head of Islamic Affairs at the University of Khartoum<sup>319</sup>) because the minister belonged to the Republican Brotherhood sect in Sudan.

Whether someone is part of the formal or informal economy influences acceptance and inclusion. There is an example of a case from the Gezira Scheme. The labourers in the scheme, which is located in central Sudan, were mostly from western Sudan and from groups such as Fellata and Fulani, who have roots in West Africa. These labourers settled around the scheme and gradually were allowed to farm on small plots of land, though only for consumption. The groups settled and have grown over several generations. Today, however, they are still treated as outsiders. Their case is known as the Kanabi labourers' case.<sup>320</sup> The Kanabi population still suffers from a lack of basic services in their areas such as education, health care, which reduces the possibility of fostering inclusion and acceptance.

## 20. SHARED OWNERSHIP OF SOCIETY

### AVERAGE SCORE: 2

LANGUAGE | SCORE: 2

RELIGION | SCORE: 2

ECONOMY | SCORE: 4

LIVELIHOOD | SCORE: 2

**Many civil wars were fought because those who took up arms felt that they were not recognized or did not feel they were treated equally. Such a feeling led the South Sudanese to vote for secession in 2011.**

It is essential to first go through the political situation in the country that lays the basis for a sense of shared ownership of society between groups. Looking at the recent history of Sudan, from 1956 to the present, one can say that the feelings of a shared ownership of society are low. Many civil wars were fought because those who took up arms felt that they were not recognized or did not feel they were treated equally. Such a feeling led the South Sudanese to vote for secession in 2011.

The Constitutional Document of 2019 maintained the same rights for groups in relation to the state with reference to basic human rights, similar to the CPA constitution. Important issues, such as the constitution and land ownership (which connected directly to a sense of ownership of society), were postponed until the establishment of independent commissions. However, those same issues were discussed in a negotiation process through 'tracks' representing cultural and geographical regions, that were negotiated by the central authority in the Juba Peace Agreement (2020). This, in fact, reflects the problem of national integration in Sudan which faces continuous failure by the national state in managing diversity. Under the constitution, in the transitional period of 2005, states were granted the right to issue state constitutions and laws for local governance, Native Administration laws and other legal frameworks. The Native Administration Law in South Kordofan (2008) is an example of this authority.<sup>321</sup> The national government can, and at times, does disregard the authority of states, as reflected in the Juba Peace Agreement case.

On a national state level, it is also important to note that, after independence, certain groups controlled politics and wealth. These groups were the ones who speak Arabic, reside in cities (like the Khartoum elites) and descend from central-northern ethnic groups (such as the Ja'aliyin and Shaygia). These groups continued to influence the ideal image of an accepted citizen as a Muslim, with mostly lighter skin (from a center-north ethnic background). These forms of control resulted in continuous political unrest in other regions of Sudan where different groups are still complaining about the authoritative, cultural and economic grip of the centre.<sup>322</sup> The resulting developmental disparity reached a peak<sup>323</sup> during the era of President al-Bashir (1989–2019) when the state was in command of the Arab groups coming from certain areas of the Nile River.<sup>324</sup> The Riverain groups, who formed the government at the time, established different strategic alliances with other groups that became clients in marginal areas across different time periods. This process produced economic development largely favouring the groups in Khartoum and 'middle' groups (the clients) over the periphery. These structural reasons are central to the persistent disparity between rural and urban.<sup>325</sup>

**Among the factors that work for shared community ownership are internal migration and ethnic assimilation. This process happened through the years between ethnic groups that included both pastoralists and farmers.**

In this political context, and in a historical continuum, the Native Administration played a significant role in laying the grounds for community ownership. The Native Administration system crosscuts the idea of a modern state, and over the past 60 years, it has governed community ownership via its methods of being a connection between people and central governments.<sup>326</sup> Traditionally, the sense of ownership comes from the land tenure system in rural Sudan between farmers and pastoralists. However, those who do not have a communal/tribal land or territory do not 'belong.' Thus, with the conflicts and environmental degradation and internal migration, many groups do not feel a sense of belonging. Therefore, sharing of wealth and power at the national level has always been a key feature within peace agreements.

Among the factors that work for shared community ownership are internal migration and ethnic assimilation. This process happened through the years between ethnic groups that included both pastoralists and farmers. For example, *Al-Barqo* - a tribe of Chadian origin - merged or almost merged with the local and non-local population in Al-Kurmuta village near the city of Kassala in eastern Sudan. Similarly, *Al-Sinyar* - a tribe of Darfuri origin, its capital is Khor Baranga in Western Darfur merged with the Fur tribe in *Wadi Kaja* and *Azum* in Darfur. A process of continuous intermarriage<sup>327</sup> took place between them. Reports and studies conducted on the Fur communities indicate that there are continuous ethnic assimilation processes in the Fur by small groups of the Darfurian grouping.<sup>328</sup>

If we look at the situation in Darfur, we find three economic activities: agriculture, grazing and trade. In general, these correspond more or less with three main ethnic divisions: the Darfurian group, the Arab group and the *Jellaba*. Agriculture is the traditional activity of the first group, grazing for the second, while the *Jellaba* practice trade. This division of labour between the groups affords and the independence of each, partially and separately for the resources they control. This takes the form of agricultural land and technical expertise in agriculture, livestock and experience in grazing life, capital and experience in managing it, which contributed to maintaining these distinctions between these groups. However, it also maintained the traditional enmities between them latent and stable.<sup>329</sup> We find that the socio-economic transformations as a result of development and exploitation of resources has succeeded in transforming the form of property/production relations in society from subsistence economy to the increasing linkage to the market economy. For example, the city of *Nertiti* which was a village of the Fur ethnic group, transformed into a semi-urban centre. Its population structure has changed with the arrival of employment and labour migration. The structure of *Nertiti* society at the social, administrative and political levels changed with the shift of traditional work relations and the entry of services, and what it included in the foundations of the national administrative and political organization.<sup>330</sup> Thus, such changes also influence the notion of original groups versus newcomers at the local level resulting in tension at various times. *Nertiti* despite its growth, has been under constant violence, war, and neglect by the state.<sup>331</sup> Consequently, during the transitional government, the local resistance committees, the Native Administration, and internally displaced communities organized a sit-in demanding among other things, the protection of pastoral and farming communities.<sup>332</sup>

Similarly, internal migration and the transformation from a subsistence economy influenced the sense of ownership between those who worked in the formal economy versus those in the informal economy. An example of this would be the Gezira Scheme.

The Gezira Scheme received migrant farmers and their families, allowing women that were active in the informal sector. The scheme's economic relations were altered twice. First, because of the introduction of mechanized agriculture, many of the farmers (migrants) were left out of the expanding market economy. It also affected the rural women who lost their small jobs in the informal and rural economy. Second, they were altered with the privatization policies of the NCP, which again pushed out the farmers<sup>333</sup> who could not compete with the private sector. Along similar lines, the recent mining activities are also influencing relations between the villagers who have a great sense of ownership to their lands, and those who migrated for mining purposes, especially in northern and central Sudan.<sup>334</sup>

Linguistically, the issue of owning one's land and heritage comes in as well. The example of the Nubians in north Sudan and the issue of dam construction can explain this. The Nubians do not speak Arabic, and they were subjected to forced migration from their Indigenous lands. The Nubians, on the broader structure of state ownership, do not enjoy a sense of ownership of language in the context of their forced displacement and the increasing challenge of maintaining their language.<sup>335</sup>

On religion, the Copts in Khartoum, for example, live in relative isolation from other components of society. Many of the Copts live with a mixed feeling of belonging to both Sudan and Egypt. However, they express their solidarity and belonging at least on the superficial level to the Sudanese community while not fully belonging to Sudan.<sup>336</sup>

## PLURALISM OUTLOOK: ISSUES TO WATCH

The Global Pluralism Monitor: Sudan report underscores that there are multiple issues at work that are limiting or hindering progress for pluralism in the country and that, at the same time, are driving the conflict. Peace efforts and an end to the war today require urgent attention, action and discussion before other pluralism strengthening initiatives take place. The Centre invites you to consider the following questions and issues that are impacting how pluralism plays out in Sudan and in global efforts to support Sudanese-led peacebuilding:

- In a context marked by extreme and violent polarization, how are calls for the cessation of hostilities and an end to the war being made and received?
  - In digital and in-person spaces, calls for an end to the war are framed by both poles as a greater harm than the conflict itself. Those calling for an end to the war and advocating for peace face significant backlash, while those who promote pro-war narratives incite hate speech and violence.
  - Monitoring and combatting hate speech is essential for preventing future violence and deepening existing divisions, but pluralist approaches must be a part of these efforts. This can include efforts that enable individuals to engage in constructive dialogues and create spaces both in-person and online for exchanging perspectives and addressing grievances.
  - Efforts to end the violence associated with calls for peace might start with identifying and countering the framing of war and hate speech, its impact and the actors driving the current dominant narratives. This especially includes narratives that place all Sudanese into two camps and erase spaces for Sudanese who do not support either warring party. Identifying and countering this pattern is crucial.
- Pluralism and lasting peace are intricately linked. We are watching how pluralist approaches to peace are taken up and can contribute to more durable peace for diverse groups across Sudan.
  - ‘Unity in Conformity,’ as a societal norm, is identified in this report as a deeply rooted causal force behind the actions of armed actors, who are often not held accountable for the violence and crimes they perpetrated during current and past conflicts. A peace process that addresses this impunity and triumphs accountability can signal an institutional shift away from this norm and inspire a greater trust in institutions.
  - Economic inequalities linked to the centralization of resource control, the war economy, the lack of diversification of livelihood systems and different groups’ control over natural resources, can be part of peace discussions to help address and prevent sources of exclusion from emerging or re-emerging.
  - Peace processes that draw on diverse peoples’ experiences to shape deliberations and decisions can ensure that transitional justice measures incorporate the fullest reality of violence and persecution throughout the conflict and help

address the structural issues of exclusion that have persisted across multiple conflicts. This can inform Constitutional guarantees of diverse peoples' rights and help reduce or remove sources of tensions and conflict across different groups and regions.

- Political peace processes too often remain controlled by elites. We are watching the meaningful participation of women and youth in these processes.
  - Women-led organizations played an integral yet underreported role in previous uprisings, and they are building on and evolving previous efforts by advancing feminist humanitarian responses. Similarly, youth-led movements and initiatives have pushed for change and transformation since 2018, but often lack resources.
  - Women and youth's identities intersect with a myriad of others: many are internally displaced, refugees, in the informal sector, belong to minority religion or ethnic groups, among others. Engagement of women and youth from across Sudan's diverse communities (or peoples), selected in ways that enable them to have greater legitimacy to speak for their constituencies, can reduce the risk of harmful contributions in these spaces.
  - Noting that women and youth's groups are themselves diverse and have different perspectives on the best way forward for peace and governance in Sudan, they should not be expected to enter conversations as a united block or else risk exclusion altogether. Creating spaces where all groups, including women and youth in their diversity, can disagree in ways that enable creative and proactive responses is key to advancing negotiations for Sudan's path forward.
  - Engagement and meaningful participation of women and youth should go beyond consultative processes. To build a sustainable peace, pluralism requires that those most at risk of marginalization and exclusion due to conflict (in this case women and youth) be included from "day one" to ensure that their needs and concerns are represented and integrated into any and every peace and mediation effort and they can play a role in shaping the structure of these efforts.
- With civil society organizations and civilian-led initiatives playing a vital role in strengthening pluralism at local levels, we are watching how they emerge as leaders for building a peaceful, unified Sudan.
  - There are active, vocal civil society organizations and civilian-led movements that share the common vision and approach of adopting core principles related to anti-hate and anti-discrimination. These groups' practices and principles can be scaled up at the national level to design a governance system and constitution that fosters pluralism and inclusion.
  - While solutions should be Sudanese-led, civil society and civilian-led initiatives require the support of international actors to advance their objectives, including a commitment to help advance pluralistic peace processes.
  - Given the Native Administrations' influential role in communities and how their previous exclusion weakened the transitional government, it is important

that these key institutions, along with civil society and civilian leaders are all recognized as equal negotiation and implementation partners of the peace process and peace agreement. This approach can also help shift away from Khartoum-centric dynamics during peace negotiations to better include the whole of Sudan.

# NOTES

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