



## Escalation of risks faced by women journalists and the shrinking space for fieldwork

Report: **Female Journalists Network Sudan**

### Acknowledgment

The Female Journalists Network (FJN-Sudan) dedicates this report to the souls of the women journalists who were killed during the war, and those who lost their lives due to the collapse of health services and the fragile and dangerous conditions, as well as to the women journalists who were forced to live through difficult circumstances and remain in areas that were unsafe for themselves and their families.

The Network also dedicates this report to all resilient women journalists who have continued their arduous struggle despite exhaustion, suffering, and risks as they stand up for their right to life, work, and dignity.



## Introduction

This report aims to draw attention to the situation of Sudanese women journalists following the outbreak of the war, and its direct impact on their professional, physical, and psychological safety, as well as on their overall media performance.

The report also seeks to document the stories and lived experiences that reflect women journalists' experiences during the war, highlighting the impact of discriminatory practices and the resulting professional, economic, and social challenges, which have been exacerbated by the armed conflict.

In addition, the report aims to provide data and information that contribute to analyzing the media environment produced by the war and its impact on media content produced by women journalists.

## Background

The FJN was established in 2010 by a group of women journalists interested in rights-based and feminist issues. The Network includes women journalists working across various media platforms, including newspapers, radio, television channels, and digital platforms, and is distinguished by the geographic, age, and intellectual diversity of its membership. The FJN is a founding member of several feminist initiatives in support of the values of equality, justice, and peace. It also contributed to the establishment of the Sudanese Media Forum following the outbreak of the war, a body that brings together a number of independent media institutions.

## Executive Summary

Since the outbreak of the war on 15 April 2023, Sudanese women journalists have been subjected to numerous violations and have been targeted both because of their journalism work and their gender. These violations include killing, displacement, arrest, sexual violence, judicial harassment, confiscation of property, and travel bans. They have also been subjected to various forms of digital violence and abuse on social media platforms, including bullying, defamation, verbal abuse, and harassment.

According to earlier statistics by the Network during the first months of the war, 90% of women journalists lost their jobs. This report, issued by the FJN as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, confirms a significant increase in the risks faced by women journalists due to the war and a media environment that has never been friendly to women journalists. These risks include killing, arrest, torture, sexual violence, displacement, travel bans, and denial of access to official identification documents, in addition to a clear increase in

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exposure to social and domestic violence, bullying and defamation—especially on social media—online threats, repeated threats via phone calls and social platforms, raids on journalists’ homes in conflict areas, confiscation of work equipment such as smartphones and cameras, and organized smear campaigns against some women journalists.

The war has also led to a reduction in women journalists’ presence in field reporting, especially in areas experiencing military operations or assignments requiring passage through multiple checkpoints, where rates of sexual harassment against women are higher. This has limited the gender-sensitive coverage they previously provided, such as reporting on gender issues, humanitarian concerns, women’s suffering, and amplifying the voices of survivors of sexual violence, displacement, and other violations disproportionately affecting women and girls.

There is a significant gap in the provision of psychological support services for women journalists. Only 40% reported receiving psychological support after the outbreak of the war. A survey conducted by the FJN revealed that 52% of women journalists remain inside Sudan, while 48% have moved to other countries. The data also show that 32% have been internally displaced, while 48% are refugees in neighboring countries or outside the region. The remaining 20% confirmed that they are still living in their original areas despite the risks and challenges.

Despite the risks and suffering, there has been a slight improvement in the situation of women journalists for several reasons, most notably their rapid adaptability and professional commitment. The percentage of women journalists who continued to work rose to 72%, compared to only 10% in the first months of the war. Earlier statistics showed that 90% had lost their jobs and 89% had relocated within or outside Sudan. Nevertheless, 72% of the women journalists who participated in the survey, interviews, or focus group discussions reported that they are still practicing journalism, either partially (40%) or full-time (32%). They also highlighted the deterioration of the labor market and the exploitation of wartime conditions to reduce salaries and fees for journalism content.

Financial insecurity remains a major crisis threatening the continuity of journalism work, alongside electricity and internet outages and the lack of work equipment. About 56% of respondents reported job loss or income reduction affecting themselves and their families, particularly in light of the rising cost of living in displacement areas or host countries. This challenge is compounded by the fact that 56% of women journalists are the primary breadwinners for their families.

Some 40% of women journalists were subjected to some form of violence, most notably psychological and verbal abuse and threats. At the same time, there is a large gap in specialized training, as 72% of women journalists reported that they had not received any training on conflict or crisis reporting or safety training during the war.



Despite the fact that 56% lost their jobs, several international organizations concerned with human rights and the situation of journalists have shown increasing interest in providing psychological and financial support to women journalists affected by the war. This includes specialized safety training programs in conflict zones, provision of resources to ensure a safer working environment, and assistance with travel abroad. The Network considers these efforts an important step toward creating a safety net for the journalism community amid escalating risks such as physical and psychological violence and ongoing online threats.

The data and testimonies confirm that Sudanese women journalists today are not only struggling to convey the truth, but also fighting for their personal and professional survival amid the erosion of financial and psychological support. These findings underscore the urgent need for interventions aimed at creating job opportunities, strengthening psychological and social safety nets, and providing specialized safety training to bridge the gaps exposed by the war.

## General Context

For more than three decades, the Sudanese journalism sector has faced successive crises that have negatively affected the working environment, freedom of expression, and the independence of media institutions. Since the outbreak of the war on 15 April 2023, media institutions have been destroyed, with offices and property bombed and looted, journalists displaced, and many institutions forced to cease operations, while others continue to function at minimal capacity, sometimes not exceeding 1%.

These violations have severely affected the situation of women and men journalists and the media sector as a whole. Independent journalism, in the eyes of the warring parties, is no longer merely a “profession of hardship,” but has become a crime, with practitioners exposed to killings, arrests, and accusations of collaboration with the opposing side.

The war has further complicated the media working environment in Sudan, especially for women journalists who face additional gender-related and security challenges, leading to reduced capacity for field reporting. As women practicing a high-risk profession, women journalists endure compounded suffering, prompting some families to exert pressure on their daughters to stop working as journalists out of fear—particularly in light of increasing cases of sexual violence, bullying, and defamation targeting women journalists.

The war has resulted in widespread violations of human rights law, international humanitarian law, and regional human rights treaties that guarantee freedom of expression and press freedom and protect women’s rights and prohibit discrimination, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against



Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (known as the Maputo Protocol).

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The already flawed domestic legal framework regulating journalism work has become largely inoperative. Multiple politicized authorities now prosecute journalists, amid the dominance of force and weapons. Amendments introduced after the war to the General Intelligence Service (GIS) Law have granted it expanded powers, threatening public freedoms and complicating procedures for obtaining work permits for journalists and correspondents. Amendments were also made to the Cybercrime Law in an attempt to silence voices calling for peace and an end to the war and to control information circulating through media and digital platforms.

Prevailing discriminatory social norms continue to shape the media workplace within most media institutions. Discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion of women journalists have long been practiced, with most institutions lacking gender-sensitive policies, anti-violence regulations, and safe reporting and accountability mechanisms. This is compounded by significant inequality when it comes to access to training, capacity-building, and promotion.

## Methodology

To prepare this report, a survey was conducted targeting a limited sample of women journalists working in different regions, media outlets, age groups, and levels of professional experience. Interviews were also conducted to reflect women journalists' stories and suffering as a result of the war and to document the realities faced by women journalists in displacement and asylum contexts.

The report also drew on selected data from the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate and involved communication with the Syndicate to verify certain information.

## Violations

According to the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate (SJS), the personal social media accounts of 26 women journalists were targeted and hacked, and fake pages were created using their names.

The violations documented here do not represent the full scope of abuses committed, due to the significant challenges facing documentation and information gathering amid the ongoing conflict and internet shutdowns in several parts of the country.



## Cases of Killing

### Samaher Abdel Shafi

On 30 June 2023, journalist Samaher Abdel Shafi, who worked at Zalingei Radio, was killed when a shell hit the house where she was staying in Al-Hasahisa camp in the city of Zalingei, Central Darfur State.

### Halima Idris Salem

On 10 October 2024, Halima Idris Salem, a correspondent for Sudan Bukra Channel, was on her way home after completing information for a report on victims of clashes in Old Omdurman neighborhoods. She was run over by a vehicle belonging to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and died instantly.

### Hanan Adam

On 8 December 2024, journalist Hanan Adam, who worked at the Ministry of Culture and Information in Al-Jazira State and as a correspondent for Al-Midan newspaper, was killed along with her brother Yousif Adam by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in a village in South Al-Jazira locality.

### Bakhita Adam Masoud

On 9 December 2024, journalist Bakhita Adam Masoud, who worked at Sudan National Radio, died after being injured by shrapnel in Khartoum North (Bahri).

## Death Due to Deteriorating Health and Environmental Conditions

The deterioration of environmental and health conditions has caused serious health problems for many Sudanese inside the country. The case of Huda illustrates the suffering of women journalists under the war amid fragile economic, health, and social conditions.

Huda Hamed Ibrahim is a journalist and she died in Khartoum in June 2024 after being bitten by a snake and being unable to access appropriate medical treatment.

## Death Threats and Malicious Charges

### Rasha Awad

Rasha Awad, the Editor-in-Chief of Al-Taghyeer online newspaper, received death threats and faced criminal charges filed by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) carrying penalties up to the death sentence.



## Arrest and Incitement to Kill

### Sabah Mohammed Al-Hassan

Sabah Mohammed Al-Hassan was detained by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Al-Hasahisa in March 2024 and later her home was raided and she was arrested by SAF in River Nile State in August 2024. She also received death threats on social media, accusing her of supporting the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and calling for her killing.

## Arrest and Travel Ban

### Imtithal Abdel Hafiz

Imtithal Abdel Hafiz was detained for three days by security authorities in Kassala State and was subsequently banned from traveling abroad.

## Sexual Assault and Harassment

Women journalists reported in focus group discussions that they were subjected to sexual harassment and verbal abuse at checkpoints, during movement between locations, and during detention and interrogation.

## Digital Violence

Several women journalists were systematically subjected to fierce digital attacks, including bullying, defamation, privacy violations, and insults. Fake accounts were created in their names to disseminate misleading and harmful content.

Journalists, Maha Al-Tilib and Fadwa Al-Khazraji, were among those targeted. Maha faced a defamation campaign, while Fadwa received phone threats and had images of her circulated online.

In February 2025, unidentified actors issued a post inciting violence against Maha Al-Tilib, calling for her killing based on accusations that she reported on armed groups and militias.

## License Revocation

### Lina Yaqoub

On 20 November 2025, the Ministry of Culture, Information, and Tourism issued a decision to suspend Lina



Yaqoub, the Director of the Sudan offices of Al-Arabiya and Al-Hadath channels. A subsequent decision by Prime Minister Kamil Idris later allowed her to resume work.

## Survey Results

As part of the report's methodology, a limited survey targeted a diverse sample of women journalists inside and outside Sudan. Twenty-five Sudanese women journalists participated, describing extremely difficult professional and psychological realities.

More than half of respondents (52%) are refugees outside Sudan, while 48% remain internally displaced or in conflict-affected areas.

Despite harsh conditions, 72% of women journalists continue to work in journalism, either part-time (40%) or full-time (32%). Most have over seven years of professional experience (56%).

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### Key indicators include:

- Location after the war: 52% inside Sudan, 48% outside Sudan
- Employment status: 72% are working (40% part-time)
- Primary breadwinners: 56%
- Lack of safety training: 72%

## The Triple Crisis: Support, Income, and Safety

### Psychological Breakdown and Lack of Support:

The absence of psychological support ranked as the top challenge. About 68% reported lack of support, while 72% described their psychological state as stressed (40%) or extremely exhausted (32%). Some 60% received no psychological, professional, financial, or legal support.

### Loss of Income and Breadwinner Burden

Financial insecurity represents a second major crisis. Fourteen respondents cited job or income loss as a major challenge, compounded by the fact that 56% are the main providers for their families.



### Violence and Lack of Safety Training

About 40% experienced some form of violence, primarily psychological and verbal abuse and threats. Meanwhile, 72% reported not receiving any conflict or safety training during the war.

### Current Needs

Women journalists identified the following priorities:

1. **New job opportunities** as a priority to secure sustainable income.
2. **Protection and safety** came in second place alongside professional support.
3. **Training and professional development** to address gaps in crisis reporting skills.

Their messages focused on two key themes:

1. **Resilience and Professionalism:** Calling for “resilience and perseverance” and “documenting their experiences,” while emphasizing “professionalism and impartiality” toward any party in the conflict.
2. **Solidarity and Safety:** The call to “support each other,” the need to “protect themselves” and “follow protective measures,” because “your safety and security come first.”

### The Challenge of Professionalism

The survey shows that Sudanese women journalists are fighting not only to report the truth, but also to survive personally and professionally amid diminishing financial and psychological support. Urgent interventions are needed to provide employment opportunities, strengthen psychosocial safety nets, and deliver specialized safety training.

### Stories and Experiences

The following stories reflect the lived realities of women journalists. Names used are pseudonyms to protect identities.

#### Hiba Bakhit

We fled the city of El Geneina in West Darfur after it came under heavy attack by the Rapid Support Forces. Our house was repeatedly attacked and shelled. After 40 days of continuous fighting and one of my family members being injured, we decided to leave the city. The journey of displacement was the worst moment my family and I have



ever experienced. We never expected that the day would come when we would be forced to leave our hometown on a perilous journey of displacement. We traveled from the far west of the country to the far east, living in fear and insecurity. I continued to work despite the dangers in the displacement camp, and was arrested by the security forces, who told me not to move without their knowledge. I also received direct threats over the phone and numerous messages.

Since her displacement to that city, Hiba confirmed that she has not received any support, either professional or psychological, nor any support from institutions that provide support to journalists.

#### Manal Al-Nour

Manal al-Nour says: "I am a journalist working in Khartoum, and I practice my profession in a highly complex and dangerous security situation. With the heavy security presence and the absence of legal guarantees, I face great challenges every day as an independent journalist. After Khartoum was retaken and remained under army control, obtaining a media permit became extremely difficult, in addition to constant harassment from some army volunteer groups and joint forces, who intimidate citizens and journalists in particular. The security situation is constantly deteriorating and the risks are increasing, forcing me to work secretly and covertly for fear of harm. In the current context, any journalist who does not support the army is considered a "collaborator" with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and is labeled a "Janjaweed." I personally experienced this two weeks ago, when I was accused of being a "Janjaweed" simply because I was an activist during the revolution, because I reject war, or because I reported on some of the violations committed during the war.

Not long ago, a rumor spread in the area that I had returned from Uganda and was working with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and have military coordinates, a serious allegation that could have put me in direct harm. I was about to file a complaint against the person who started the rumor, but I backed down after remembering that there is no actual law that can protect me in the current circumstances."

#### Inas Ali

Journalist Inas Ali reported that she was forced to leave her job as a journalist after the outbreak of war, when newspapers and radio stations in her city shut down and all media institutions ceased operations. As conditions deteriorated, the city fell to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which increased her fears and prompted her to flee to Salia, an administrative unit in Eastern [Darfur](#), in search of safety.

Inas Ali explains that the situation for journalists in most states is extremely difficult, as most of them have left for other countries to escape the dangers, while others have stopped working altogether or have been forced to take up jobs unrelated to journalism in order to secure their basic needs. She adds that neutral journalists or those who do not

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belong to any party live in a state of constant fear and cannot reveal their professional identity for fear of being targeted.

She notes that journalists who declare their support for the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) can move around and do their work freely, while independent or neutral journalists face direct and indirect threats that make returning to work risky. "I've been out of work for two years," she says. "Even if I tried to work with outside organizations, it would put me at risk because of the sensitive security situation here."

#### Shaimaa (Libya)

Shaima reported that she is experiencing extremely difficult conditions in Libya, where she has to pay high rent, in addition to daily expenses that have become a heavy burden on her. She explains that she is very cautious in her daily life because of the harassment faced by refugees, including constant demands to show their registration cards and health cards, and now they are required to obtain residence permits at very high prices. She points out that schools are very expensive, which is beyond the means of many families, and that this compounds the sense of pressure and instability. She added that she is unemployed because there are no suitable opportunities for her, especially in a country she describes as a "shopping country," where it is particularly difficult for women to find employment that guarantees a minimum level of stability.

She emphasizes that the situation of refugees in Libya is extremely harsh, and that she personally suffers from these conditions on a daily basis, making her life exhausting and economically and socially insecure. Before the war, Shaima worked at a radio station in Darfur as a broadcaster, program producer, and news editor. She describes the suffering of displacement and the search for a safe place, saying:

"I left the city where I live in extremely difficult circumstances, and the war caught up with me in Omdurman. I was returning from a medical trip with my mother, and I left Cairo on the 10th of Ramadan. On the day the war broke out, I was in the city of Al-Muhandiseen and was threatened, after which I was forced to travel to Darfur under very difficult circumstances. We were looted, chased, and shot at. We witnessed fighting from morning until 10 p.m. It was a very difficult battle. Our house was in the middle of the cross-fire. We only stayed for a few days, but unfortunately, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) snipers were positioned on the roofs of our houses and threatened us not to leave our rooms. We stayed until my daughter, who was 11 years old at the time, was injured. We were forced to leave and stay in a shelter in one of the schools. My daughter suffered from psychological trauma as a result of the situation in the shelter and the war, and there was no adequate treatment available, so we had to take her on a journey that lasted more than seven days to reach a city in Al Jazirah state. During that journey, we were subjected to searches and harassment. Al Jazirah was not our final destination after the war, as we were forced to flee again to the



cities of Kassala, Gedaref, and River Nile, and then we moved to the Northern State. After the Northern State, I went to Libya, where I stayed for about two years. The war affected my health. I broke my ankle, developed diabetes, and suffered from an enlarged heart. After that, I worked at a media platform. Unfortunately, opportunities there are very limited and the work is very difficult, but God helped me and I found a job six and a half months after arriving in Libya, although the pay was low.

### Conclusion

This report confirms that Sudanese women journalists face extremely dangerous conditions amid the war, where security risks intersect with gender-based discrimination, the collapse of media institutions, and the absence of protection and support networks. Despite this, many women journalists continue to perform their professional roles with remarkable determination.

### Recommendations

- Provide sustainable psychosocial support programs for women journalists affected by the war.
- Support safe and dignified income and employment opportunities for women journalists inside and outside Sudan.
- Expand training programs on professional safety and conflict reporting.
- Strengthen legal protection and combat digital violence.
- Support independent feminist media initiatives.