

# Sudan's Digital Battleground

*How social media narratives lead to  
real-world violence*

**BUILD UP **

## About this report

This report analyzes how social media have shaped Sudan’s ongoing conflict. It draws on data collected between February 2024 and February 2025 across major platforms and centers on two key events in Al Jazeera state: the massacre in Wad al-Nura (June 2024) and the targeting of Al-Kanabi communities (January 2025), and the subsequent violence in South Sudan. The report is part of ongoing efforts to understand and respond to digital harms and address online conflict dynamics in Sudan. Other reports can be found on [our website](#).

## Authors & Acknowledgments

This report was written by Hussam Abualfatah and Mahmoud Bastati. It was edited and developed with guidance from Helena Puig Larrauri. This report was edited for clarity in January 2026.

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# INTRODUCTION

The ongoing civil war in Sudan is being fought not only on the battlefield but also across social media platforms. This report examines the critical role of social media in shaping narratives, fueling animosity, and directly contributing to real-world violence. Both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), through accounts they control, use social media to craft systematic narratives aimed at normalizing and justifying crimes, criminalizing democratic and neutral voices, and fueling social polarization. Other accounts that are not connected to either at times use language and weave narratives that contribute to further polarization. Together, these narratives contribute to a digital ecosystem that can stereotype and dehumanise communities, militarize the public imagination or even at times justify violence.

The report focuses on two events in Al-Jazeera state - the Wad al-Noura massacre on June 5th 2024 and the targeting of Al-Kanabi communities in Jan 2025. The report explores the link between online discourse and real-world violence in these incidents. We outline the media tactics used in these two cases, in the hope that understanding them can help build critical awareness, support responses to digital harms, and inform policies that limit polarization and violence online.

## METHODOLOGY

The findings in this report draw on social media data collected between February 2024 and February 2025: 3.97 million posts from X, based on context-specific keywords; 147,000 posts from Facebook, using a combination of account and keyword tracking; and 42,300 TikTok videos, sourced from a curated list of accounts.

We used keyword-based classification to analyze the content. Classifications were guided by keywords related to the two main actor groups: the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). We also identified hate speech and violence-inciting content using a combination of existing lexicons for hate speech in Arabic and Sudan-specific terms collected through a series of interviews. Other classifications were applied to identify references to tribes and regions. In addition, we developed a classification model based on the affiliation of the content author, assessing whether users appeared to support or align with SAF or RSF.

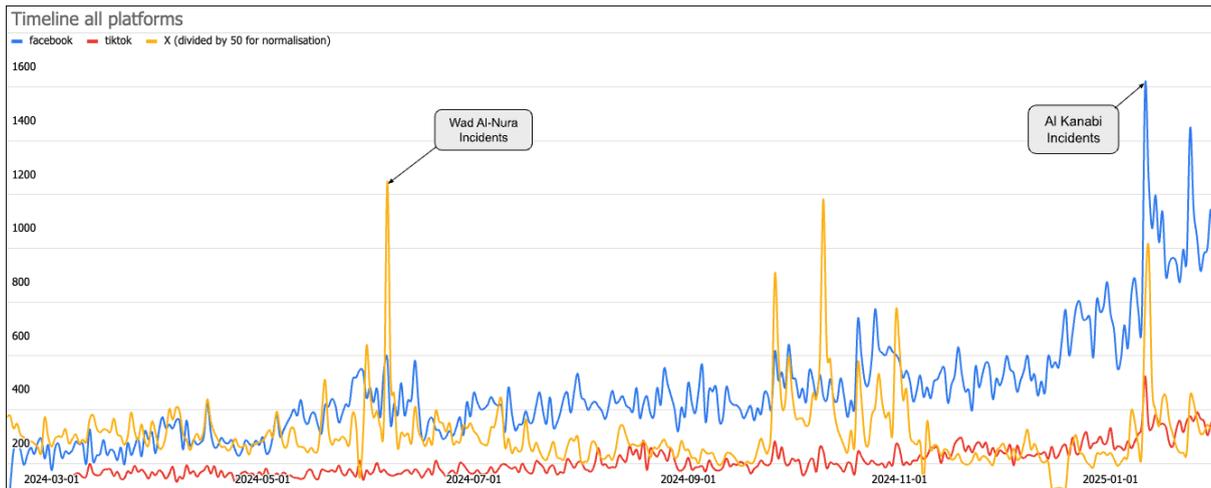


Figure 1: Volume of posts by platform over time

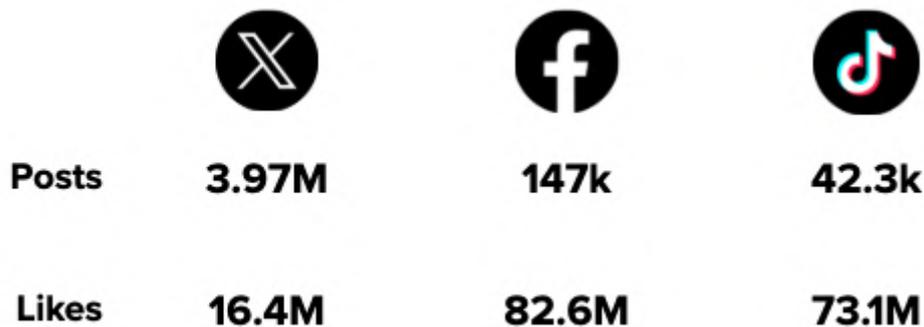


Figure 2: Total volume of posts and likes by platform

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Sudan's current conflict has its roots in historical divisions created or exacerbated by the British and Egyptian rulers. The legacy of colonial rule and political complexity created a country with about 600 tribes, including 19 main ethnic groups, and over 100 languages. The British and Egyptian rulers split the country into a "civilized Muslim North" and a "primitive non-Arab South," a hierarchy that was reinforced by the Inqaz regime, who seized power in 1989 and ruled Sudan for 30 years.

The December 2018 revolution ended with the overthrow of the Inqaz regime under Omar Al Bashir. The "Forces of Freedom and Change" (FFC) representing the revolution, reached an agreement with the Transitional Military Council. This council represented the regime's security committee and included personalities from the official Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which is a paramilitary ethnic militia created by Al-Bashir that has grown into an army-scale force with significant economic and political influence. The FFC and the TMC signed a constitutional declaration and agreed on a transitional period of

four years.

There was a sense of hope when a civilian-led government was formed under Prime Minister Dr. Abdalla Hamdok as a result of the constitutional declaration, but that hope was shattered by the October 2021 coup, led by military generals from both SAF and RSF, which overthrew the civilian government, effectively nullified the constitutional declaration, and reinstated figures from the former regime.

Soon after that, internal conflicts within the coalition of the October coup began to grow, especially after they faced wide public rejection and mass protests demanding a return of the civilian government. Tensions between the SAF and the RSF continued to rise even after facilitated negotiations and the signing of the “framework political agreement”, ultimately leading to deadlock and mutual mobilization that ended in the outbreak of full-scale war between the two sides on April 15, 2023.

Despite this being a war between military generals, the current conflict cannot be viewed in isolation from Sudan’s complex realities, the fragility of the state, the volatility of society, and the long-standing manipulation of social divisions by military regimes. The war builds on these unresolved tensions, which continue to shape the dynamics and direction of the conflict.

## THE SOCIAL MEDIA BATTLEFIELD

Social media is central to the ongoing conflict, with both sides aggressively trying to control the narrative around the war. The RSF portrays itself as a democratic force fighting a state controlled by "northerners" and remnants of the former Islamist regime. They also have adopted a "center and periphery" discourse to claim that they are against the historical power imbalances, and they frame northern/central Sudanese as elites who have dominated the country since independence in 1956 — a system they refer to as "دولة ٥٦" (state of 56).

SAF named the war the "War of Dignity." This term was first used in marches called "مواكب الكرامة" ("Marches of Dignity") during the revolution. The naming was taken up by the dissolved National Congress Party (previous regime) in order to support the outcomes of the military coup in October 2021. The SAF narrative imposes an exclusionary definition of the national identity, casting certain groups as non-Sudanese, claiming that RSF members were of West African origin, and framing them as outsiders. They also worked on positioning the civilian forces — the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) at the time — as a political backer of the RSF because they did not take their side in the war, spreading hashtags like #جنجويد\_فحانة which means the FFC is the Janjaweed/RSF, and hence claiming that the democratic civilian entities politically supported the RSF. They also promoted the concept of “social incubators,” suggesting that entire communities or tribes sympathize with or support the RSF, and therefore violence against them is justified.

The impact of this narrative warfare – unfolding primarily on social media – is evident in the data we collected from February 2024 to February 2025, where we found 75,700 posts containing hate speech across all three platforms monitored. On Facebook alone, we found

that 3,740 posts, or 2.73% of all posts gathered in this period, contained hate speech; 1,550 posts (or 1.13% of all posts) incited violence in that period. Figure 3 shows that hate speech on social media is most closely linked to al-Jazeera (5.3%), then Darfur (4.98%) and Khartoum (3.8%), which are areas where the military conflict was most intense.

Online narratives manifest differently across platforms. Facebook is the SAF’s strongest platform, dominated by nationalist and militaristic narratives backed by legacy media and army-aligned influencers. Around 58% of content is generated by pro-SAF accounts, with emotional content — like tributes to soldiers and commanders — going viral. Civilian forces have low visibility, and RSF content is largely absent (most likely taken down by Meta).

The RSF’s digital stronghold is TikTok, where short battle clips and emotive speeches frame its fighters as heroic. Key speeches by Hemedti and the February 2025 Nairobi conference boosted RSF-linked content. TikTok’s fast-paced, dramatic style aligns well with RSF’s media strategy.

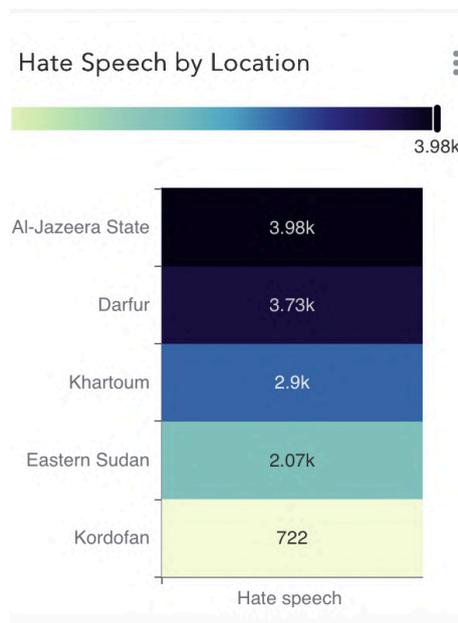


Figure 3: Hate speech by location

**Abdalla Gafar**  
11 July 2023

دقيقة التفهم ...  
يعني أسس ملي وفد من الحزبة والتغيير لاقى وفد من الدعم السريع، فعدوا مع زعماء أفارقة، وطلعوا بموجهات لحماية المدنيين، من ضمنها حظر طيران ومدفعية الجيش؟! هم دايرين بحموا المدنيين من متوعي؟! حاميتها حراموها؟! قاعدين في بيوتنا شان يحموها من الجيش ولا كيف؟! بحب أدكر الجميع إله أول من طالب بحظر الطيران كان أحد أحزاب الحزبة والتغيير، الأفة تقريباً! وبس يعني 🇸🇩

#حميدتي\_انتهي  
#قحت\_لاتملي  
#جنجويد\_قحاة

**Save Sudan** · 25/03/2025

إنسحابات اللقطاء من المسيرية و الرزيقات يتواصل من جنوب الخرطوم و غرب أمدردمان هروباً إلى دارفور، معركة السودانيين ضد الغزاة و المجرمين مستمرة نحو حواضنهم في الضعين و نيالا و تشاد. معركة السودانيين مستمرة لتحرير كل أرجاء الوطن.

#الطريق\_الى\_الضعين

Translation: “Let’s get this straight...”

So yesterday, a delegation from the Forces of Freedom and Change met with a delegation from the Rapid Support Forces. They sat down with African leaders and came out with directives to protect civilians, including a no-fly zone and a ban on army artillery fire?!

Who are they trying to protect civilians from?!

Are they the protectors themselves?!

Are they sitting in our homes to protect us from the army or what?!

I must remind everyone that the first to call for a no-fly zone was one of the Forces of Freedom and Change parties, the Umma Party, I think; and that's all.

#HemedtilsFinished

#FFCDoesNotRepresentMe

#TheFFCAretheJanjaweed”

Translation: “The exodus of the Misseriya<sup>1</sup> and Rizeigat<sup>2</sup> tribesmen continues from south of Khartoum and west of Omdurman, fleeing towards Darfur. The Sudanese people's battle against the invaders and criminals continues towards their strongholds in Al-Daein, Nyala, and Chad.

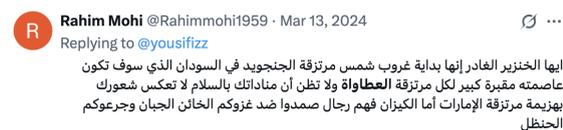
The Sudanese people's battle continues to liberate all parts of the homeland.

#TheRoadToAlDaein”



Translation: “Long live the great kebab maker! From this moment, the plan of the Atawa state<sup>3</sup> ends.

The state of '56 is established. Long live the sons of the river and the sea! Long live the Arabs!”



Translation: “You treacherous pig, this is the beginning of the end for the Janjaweed mercenaries in Sudan, whose capital will be a graveyard for all the mercenaries of the Atawa. Don't think that your calls for peace don't reflect your feeling of defeat at the hands of the UAE mercenaries. As for the Islamists, they are men who stood firm against your treacherous,



Translation: “He saw in his eyes the "new state" and the #NewSudan project #TheFFCAretheJanjaweed”TheTheThe

<sup>1</sup> The Misseriya: An ancient Arab pastoralist tribe (Baggara) in Sudan, settling in the South Kordofan and Darfur regions. Some accuse them of being a "social incubator" (support base) for the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

<sup>2</sup> The Rizeigat: One of the largest Arab Baggara tribes spread across Sudan (especially Darfur and Kordofan) and Chad. It branches into major clans such as the Mahamid and the Mahriya.

<sup>3</sup> The State of Attawata (Dawlat al-Attawata): A political term used by some groups to refer to a narrative suggesting that groups of tribes of Arab origin (specifically pastoralists) are seeking, or are believed to be seeking, to establish their own political/regional entity based on ethnicity.

cowardly invasion and made you drink the bitterest of poisons.”



A. Rahman Amasib عبدالرحمن

عمسيب

2 Dec · 🌐

البعض يروج لبعض القصص عن جنجويد طيبين.. الخ .

لا وجود لجنجويدي جيد.

الجنجويدي الجيد هو فقط الجنجويدي الميت .

#بل\_بس — 😊 .feeling positive

👍👍👍 1.5K

359 comments • 12 shares



Like



Comment



Share

Translation: "Some people are spreading stories about good Janjaweed, etc.

There are no good Janjaweed. The only good Janjaweed is a dead Janjaweed."



Shadi Ali

@shadi\_ali\_1

Follow

إسمها قوات الدعم السريع : ميليشيا الرزيقات والمسيرية وعموم العطاوة الذين تحالفوا مع الإمارات لضرب النظام السياسي الموجود في الخرطوم.

العطاوة يحاسبوا على المشاريب زي ما الإمارات عبر مجلس الأمن تحاسب على مشاريب الحصل لينا دا.

الأمر كذا ببساطة

Translation: "Its name is the Rapid Support Forces: the Rizeigat and Misseriya militias and all the Atawa tribes, who allied with the UAE to overthrow the existing political regime in Khartoum. The Atawa will be held accountable for the drinks, just as the UAE, through the Security Council, is being held accountable for the drinks that happened to us. It's that simple."

Figure 4: Examples of Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) narratives



ادلا محمد الدود

1d · 🌐

مساكين عيال مناوي البوايين لا في زول بنعيمهم

ولا زول بتضامن معاهم 🙄🙄🙄

👍👍👍 ابو عبدة احمد and 90 others 50 comments 1 share

Translation: "Poor children of Manawi, the doormen—no one mourns them, and no one stands in solidarity with them."



الرز يقي

25m · 🌐

بنات شندي خليكن جاهزات للعرس 🙄🔥🙄

👍👍👍 175

90 comments • 4 shares

Translation: "Shandi girls, get ready for the wedding!"



Translation: "The 'Women's River State' is bringing in thousands of women to provide pleasure for the falnqayat<sup>4</sup>, under the pretext that they are 'mobilized volunteers.' By God, in a few months every one of them will end up giving birth to dark-complexioned falnqayat for you."



Translation: "By God, look at this dog! He said to the brave men, 'You sons of dogs!' This is the kind of work that makes you happy! How great this killing is! Give us more 'dinari' and 'shirya,' Rapid Support Forces soldiers! Give us more holy killing, Rapid Support Forces soldiers!"



Translation: "It was a day filled with the killing of the accursed 'Dinari'<sup>5</sup>"



Translation: "These are the 'Dinari' forces who withdrew yesterday from Jebel Moya to Sennar.

After the "Shirya<sup>6</sup>" incident at Jebel Moya, they are now in Sennar, displaying their weapons and engaging in a show of force."

<sup>4</sup> Falnqay: A term of insult and racial contempt, referring to a person who conveys his master's instructions to others or carries the water pitcher (ebriq) on behalf of his master. (Implies subservience or being a lackey).

<sup>5</sup> Dinari: A racist term targeting people descending from tribes in Northern/Central Sudan.

<sup>6</sup> Sheriya: A racist term targeting people descending from tribes of African origin in Sudan.


ود البحر  
 @wdalbehair  
 Parody account

شباب الحزام : عبر القوات المسلحة السودانية يسيطر أبناء الشمال علي كل السودان اقتصاديا وسياسيا وامنيا" ويقهرون كل الاصوات المنادية بالمساواة من عهد حرب الجنوب مروراً بحرب جبال النوبة والانقسنا والشرق ودارفور كل هؤلاء كانت ثورتهم في حقيقة الامر ضد تسلط الشماليين

Translate post



Translation: "Youth of the Belt: Through the Sudanese Armed Forces, the sons of the North control all of Sudan economically, politically, and in terms of security, and they suppress all voices calling for equality, from the era of the war in the South, through the war in the Nuba Mountains, Ingessana, the East, and Darfur. All of these revolutions were, in reality, against the domination of the Northerners."


ود البحر  
 @wdalbehair  
 Parody account

يا الأشاوس القائد قال مافي تصوير مافي تصوير ..  
 كثرة البلاغات دا ما زمنها بعدين انت كل الأشاوس بميدان المعركة وانت بتصور داير توري منو يعني؟  
 اسمعوها مبي العبد الفقير لله والله الكيزان الحراميه الارهابيين ناس كرتي وشوية الشوايقه باستخبارات الديش ديل موضوعهم إنتهى تاني غير الطقع يس ما عندنا ليهم شئ ..  
 كان جونا قبيله او كان جونا كجهه او كان معاهم اجانب زاتو ..  
 والله نيلكم بل  
 ونكنس ذريتكم زاتو ..  
 التبيقي تبيقي ..

Translate post

Translation: "“Oh brave ones,” the commander said no filming, no filming!” "This excessive documentation isn't the time for it. Besides, all the soldiers are on the battlefield, and you're filming? Who are you trying to show off to?

Listen to me, a humble servant of God: By God, those thieving, terrorist Islamists, the likes of Karti and those few Shaiqiya in the army intelligence, their story is over. We have nothing to do with them but fight them. Whether they come as a tribe, or as an entity, or even if they have foreigners with them... By God, we will fight you and wipe out your very lineage. Let whatever happens, happen. Thieving Islamists Sons of women”

Figure 5: Examples of Rapid Support Forces (RSF) narratives

## FOCUS ON AL-JAZEERA STATE

In the remainder of this report, we focus on two incidents in Al-Jazeera State — Wad al-Nura (June 2024) and Al-Kanabi (January 2025) — examining how they unfolded on social media and on the ground.

### About AL-Jazeera State

Al-Jazeera State, located in central Sudan between the Blue and White Niles, is one of the country’s most vital and densely populated regions with around 5 million residents. Known as Sudan’s agricultural heartland, it is home to the historic Gezira Scheme — once the largest irrigated agricultural project in Africa. Its capital, Wad Madani, has long been a center of trade, education, and civil mobilization, with a rich history of union activism and political engagement.

The state is inhabited by tribes from northern and central Sudan, primarily in villages and small towns, as well as communities from Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and South Sudan who

have lived for generations in agricultural settlements. Despite their longstanding presence and contributions, many of these communities remain excluded from the full benefits of citizenship, lacking access to basic services, formal recognition, and political representation.

## Wad al-Nura Massacre

Wad al-Nura is a village located in Al-Jazeera State and is inhabited by various tribes from the north and center, including the Shukriya, Rifai, Rakabiya, Batahin, Ja'aliyin, and Kawahla, in addition to tribes that migrated to Al-Jazeera to work in agriculture. The RSF attacked civilians in Wad al-Nura village after taking control of the area on June 5, 2024, killing at least [100](#) civilians, including 35 children<sup>7</sup>. Videos shared by Madani's Resistance Committees and several activists showed the burial of dozens of victims in a public square. Survivors reported executions of the wounded and assaults on women and children. The RSF later justified the attack on its official X account<sup>8</sup>, claiming the village hosted Burhan and Mujahideen Brigades preparing an offensive.

MEDIA STATEMENT

Earlier this week, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and its allied terrorist militias linked to the former regime began to mobilize significant forces across three enemy camps in western Mangil in Wad al-Nour in Gezira State. Their objective is to launch an attack on our soldiers in Jebel al-Awla.

In light of these movements, the RSF attacked yesterday morning three strategic camps belonging to the opposing force in the west, south, and north of Wad al-Nour. The enemy forces based in these areas included SAF soldiers, the General Intelligence Service, and a battalion of radical Islamist fighters known as Zubair bin al-Awam, along with their supporters.

Our courageous soldiers engaged the enemy in these locations outside the city and successfully seized four fully equipped combat vehicles, 70 Kalashnikov rifles, and four Qurnov guns. We mourn the loss of eight martyrs and several wounded personnel.

The RSF will not stand idly by in the face of enemy movements or gatherings. We will actively pursue and resolve these threats, countering all attempts by the former regime to mislead the public and conceal the truth that is already well known to all, including the people of the region.

Office of the Official Spokesperson  
Rapid Support Forces

<https://t.me/RSFSudan>



الناطق الرسمي باسم قوات الدعم السريع يكشف التفاصيل الكاملة بشأن أحداث "ود النورة" بولاية الجزيرة

The RSF spokesman reveals full details about the events of "Wad al-Nowra", in Gezira State

#معركة\_الديمقراطية  
#حراس\_الثورة\_المجيدة  
20.5K 01:20

sky news عربية سكاى نيوز عربية - ماجل @SkyNewsArabia\_B · Jun 6, 2024

قوات الدعم السريع تنفي أن تكون استهدفت أي مدنيين في منطقة ود النورة بولاية الجزيرة

1 1 30 11K

Figure 6: RSF statement regarding the attack on Wad al-Nura

<sup>2</sup><https://apnews.com/article/rapid-support-forces-sudan-military-qezira-d9432885669564a745e9005fe4e63cb7>

<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing this report, the official RSF account on X was deleted; you can find a version of the statement on RSF's Telegram page: <https://t.me/RSFSudan/6392>

Content about the massacre went viral on social media in a way that is not comparable to other similar atrocities committed in this period. The Resistance committees<sup>9</sup> in Madani published real-time videos of mass burials; RSF fighters themselves also circulated videos celebrating the massacre and portraying it as a justified victory. These were rapidly picked up across platforms, helped by stable internet access and the viral nature of violent content online. Hashtags such as *#وَد\_النورة* and *#مجزرة\_وَد\_النورة* (and their English counterparts *#Wad\_Al\_Nura* and *#Wad\_Al\_Nura\_Massacre*) quickly trended, creating an emotionally charged digital space and escalating public outrage.

The virality of this event created a suitable environment for spreading polarizing content, malinformation, stigmatizing specific groups, and disinformation, all aimed at reshaping the narrative in favor of those spreading it. During this period, we found 5,900 pieces of content containing hate speech, of which 20% were linked to Al Jazeera State. Across the year, only 5.3% of hate speech posts were from Al-Jazeera. We also saw a surge in content on June 6 (the day after the massacre), where daily posting jumped from 13,000 to 58,000, a 346% increase.

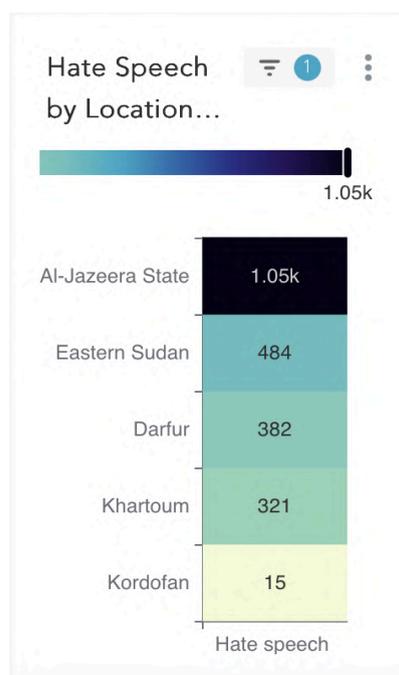


Figure 7: Hate speech by location during June 2024

The massacre was used by parties for their political agendas. While the RSF tried to justify and shift the blame, SAF-affiliated accounts amplified online hate and spread divisive content, calling for retaliation, inciting violence against civilians, portraying entire ethnic groups as complicit, and in some cases openly calling for acts of collective punishment and genocide.

<sup>9</sup> Resistance Committees are local political pressure groups that initially formed under the name “Neighborhood Committees” in 2013. They evolved into what is now known as Resistance Committees and played a key role in the fieldwork during the December 2018 revolution. Over time, especially after the October 25, 2021 coup, they became a more organized and influential political actor.

Many anti-civilian voices also seized the moment to link the RSF to Tagadom (Coordination Body of the Democratic & Civil Forces), using the Wad al-Nura events to discredit the civilian movement, just days before its Founding Conference was due to take place. This narrative manipulation was evident in widespread posts blaming Tagadom for the massacre, portraying them as aligned with RSF violence. In this way, the images and videos that shocked the public also became tools in a broader political war against democratic forces.

## Al-Kanabi

Al-Kanabi are informal settlements of agricultural laborers in Al-Jazeera state, long inhabited by generations of people descended from tribes in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and South Sudan. For months after the massacre in Wad al-Nura, social media campaigns — especially on SAF-aligned accounts — portrayed Al-Kanabi's residents and other non-northern residents of Al-Jazeera state as RSF collaborators, dehumanizing the community and casting them as traitors to justify violence against them.

When the army regained control of Al-Jazeera in January 2025, multiple violent incidents took place between January 11 and 15, particularly in areas like the Kambo Tayba farming settlement, where at least 13 people were killed<sup>10</sup>. The entry of the armed forces into the state was accompanied by widespread violence, some of it documented in video footage captured by SAF soldiers and allied militias, including the Al-Bara Bin Malik and Sudan Shield militias. These clips showed citizens being executed based upon accusations of cooperation with the Rapid Support Forces, including scenes of individuals being shot and thrown from bridges into the Nile. Videos of arrests, beatings, and extrajudicial killings circulated widely on social media, often shared by SAF-aligned accounts and amplified by influential online figures who openly celebrated the violence.

The army condemned the “ethnically targeted killings” that occurred during this period, as reported by Reuters<sup>11</sup>. They also announced the formation of an investigation committee on January 15, 2025, to look into the events that took place in the Kanabi areas. However, to date, the committee has not released any findings, despite the initial decree mandating it to submit a report within one week.

In the online narratives, an entire community was framed as complicit in RSF crimes without any evidence of involvement. Crimes committed by the RSF — such as the massacre in Wad al-Nura — were instrumentalized to justify violence against communities like Al-Kanabi. This framing ignored the fact that most residents were civilians uninvolved in any combat. Their mere presence in RSF-held areas, or their social and geographic affiliations, made them targets for violent retribution and collective punishment.

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<sup>10</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudans-army-condemns-ethnically-targeted-killings-civilians-el-g ezira-2025-01-14/>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudans-army-condemns-ethnically-targeted-killings-civilians-el-g ezira-2025-01-14/>

The impact of this digital narrative went beyond direct violence. It helped silence voices that might question the dominant military narrative, as many feared being labeled collaborators and facing violent reprisals. This atmosphere of fear reinforced pro-SAF discourse and made it harder for alternative perspectives to be expressed.

## Beyond Borders: South Sudan

The social media imagery and content from Al-Kanabi showing South Sudanese individuals being targeted quickly reached South Sudan, causing widespread outrage. On January 16, retaliatory riots broke out, calling for violence against Sudanese people (650,000 Sudanese had taken refuge in South Sudan at the time). People started protesting in front of the Sudanese embassy, and angry youth looted and burned Sudanese-owned shops in Juba and other cities. These events resulted in the deaths of at least 16 Sudanese across four South Sudanese states<sup>12</sup>. In response, the South Sudanese government shut down access to social media platforms, including Facebook and TikTok, in an attempt to curb further violence<sup>13</sup>.

## DIVISIVE MEDIA TACTICS

The tactics described below should be understood both as deliberate media strategies and as recurring narrative patterns observed across social media. While some posts originate from accounts aligned with the Sudanese Armed Forces or the Rapid Support Forces, many of these patterns also appear in content shared by unaffiliated users. Once widely circulated, these narratives take on a life of their own, reproduced and amplified beyond their original sources.

As these narratives spread, they shape how people interpret events, assign blame, and decide who deserves protection — and who does not — making them particularly dangerous in contexts of active conflict.

The categories outlined here are therefore analytical tools: they capture how certain narrative logics operate in practice, regardless of the author's formal affiliation or intent. The inclusion of a post in a certain category does not imply formal affiliation, but illustrates narrative patterns observed in RSF or SAF-aligned discourse.

We examine these tactics in an attempt to untangle how the division online is leading to offline violence, and to inform the design of strategies to address these dynamics.

### Tactic 1: Collective Blame

A central tactic in this narrative war is the portrayal of entire communities as complicit. It has been used by actors affiliated with both the SAF and the RSF, as well as by non-affiliated actors, each in their own way.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://aja.ws/46vtz>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/south-sudan-blocks-social-media-following-recent-violence/3459861>

For example, the post below states that there are mercenaries from South Sudan fighting with the RSF and accuses South Sudan of initiating “a very ugly act.” By conflating combatants with the nation or people of South Sudan, the language implies their collective alignment with the RSF and responsibility for its “ugly acts.” This language can be perceived as justifying violence against South Sudanese, generating a pattern of collective blame evident in the replies.

Another post claims that Al-Kanabi communities are responsible for all the violations in Al-Jazeera state, says they are all in the RSF, and explicitly calls for violence and cleansing.



**Mishal**  
@OffMishal



[Translate post](#)

في كمية كبيرة من المرتزقة من جنوب السودان دخلوا الدعم السريع و قتلوا و نهبوا و اغتصبوا اهل سنار و الجزيرة و كانوا حتى في الإذاعة.  
و الان الانباء متواترة عن حرق محلات لتجار شماليين في جوبا.  
جنوب السودان بادرت بالشينة شديد و اهل الجنوب ما ختوا اعتبار لي اي شي.

10:39 PM · Jan 16, 2025 · 44K Views



Translation: “A number of mercenaries from South Sudan infiltrated the Rapid Support Forces and killed, looted, and raped people in Sennar and Gezira. They were even present at the radio station. Now, there are reports of shops belonging to northern merchants being burned in Juba. South Sudan initiated this horrific act, and the people of the South showed no regard for anything.”



**Mòhàñàd** ✨ @hnoo\_sid · Jan 13



الكنابي في الجزيرة لا مكان لنا بيننا غدرونا اكثر من الجنجويد علماً نحن اسياذ الارض والبلد  
نعلم من تعاون وقتل وتجرير  
اين انتم من القتل والنهب في قرى الجزيرة بدايه دخول الدعم والله وتالله لن نرحم صغيرهم  
لا كبيرهم السريحه تمت ابادتهم بواسطه شباب الكنابي المنتمون للدعم



5



2



44



2.6K



Translation: “The Kanabi in Al-Jazira have no place among us. They betrayed us more than the Janjaweed. We are the masters of this land and country. We know who collaborated, who killed, and who oppressed. You are the ones who killed and looted in the villages of Al-Jazira at the beginning of the Rapid Support Forces' entry. By God, we will show no mercy to their young or old. The "Sariha" were exterminated by Kanabi youth affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces.”

## Tactic 2: Identity-based Attacks

Ethnic and racial slurs, as well as stereotypes, were frequently used to portray “others” as outsiders. References to “foreigners” and “West Africans” appeared in many posts, especially

in relation to Kanabi communities in Al-Jazeera state. This framing dehumanizes people by casting them as invaders or infiltrators rather than Sudanese civilians. It justifies violence not as retaliation, but as a form of cleansing — reclaiming land from those framed as illegitimate or impure.



Translation: “The era of excessive kindness is over. There will be no more "Kanabi" The people of the Al-Jazirah generously provided the Kanabi with land, crops, and food, but they were ungrateful, and the poet's words applied to them: "If you are kind to a mean person, he will rebel." But from today onward, the people of Al-jazirah will not be bitten twice by the same snake.”



Translation: “The world is in an uproar over the Southerners in #AlKanabi. We couldn't believe God had finally rid us of those troubles, and now they're still here in our beloved island. Please, get lost! Yesterday's demonstrations in Juba were nothing more than a gathering of drunks and lost souls—that's their specialty, without a doubt. By the way, We can reach you (Tut Galwak).”



Translation: “The Kawahlah<sup>14</sup> brigades in Na'imah, we advise you regarding the Quraan of Chad. Those who surrendered today in Na'imah are the same ones who killed our people in eastern Gezira and Wad al-Nura and killed and displaced all the villages north of the White Nile, al-Sariha, Azraq, and Umm Adham. They stuffed them into the sea. The Kawahlah are calling for help for those who cry out.”

### Tactic 3: Framing Others as an Existential Threat

This tactic targets communities already cast as “other,” portraying them not just as different,

<sup>14</sup> The Kawahlah: one of the largest Arab tribes in Sudan, and they are spread across wide areas, especially the White Nile, Kordofan, Al-Jazirah, and throughout central and northern Sudan.

but as inherently dangerous. It frames them as a threat to society — their mere existence seen as a risk to security. In this logic, violence becomes not just justified but necessary for security.

In the case of al-Kanabi, this framing was widely used. One post called for holding the Kanabi accountable as a community, not as individuals, describing them as part of a broader organized plan to destabilize Al-Jazeera. Another called for the removal of Kanabi and their settlements altogether, claiming it was necessary to restore order and prevent crime and disease.



Translation: "Removing informal settlements and Alkanabi is essential to restoring security and preserving residents' rights; informal settlements breed crime and disease."



Translation: "Expelling the Kanabi and Holding Communities Accountable"

The Kanabi must be held accountable as a community, not as individuals, because what is happening is not merely isolated acts committed by people, but rather a systematic and organized approach adopted by ethnic or political groups to achieve destructive goals.

There is a significant difference between a random act committed by an individual and a systematic plan implemented by groups aiming to destabilize the island and sow chaos.

Collective prosecution is not simply a punishment for individuals but a necessary mechanism for holding communities or entities accountable for adopting systematic approaches that lead to major crimes.

International law recognizes the principle of "collective responsibility" and allows for holding collective entities accountable for committing systematic crimes."

## Tactic 4: Undermining the Incident

Another tactic used was to undermine incidents by downplaying the scale and gravity of the violence that occurred. Specifically in Al-Kanabi, the crimes were framed by SAF as either fabricated or exaggerated by civilian forces, who were accused — alongside the Janjaweed, or Rapid Support Forces — of using these events for political gain. This narrative shifts attention away from the perpetrators and casts doubt on the victims’ accounts, reducing the incidents to mere propaganda.



Translation: “After their militia was defeated, the Qahata<sup>15</sup> are now trying to incite racial conflict in Al Jazeera... God forbid.”



Translation: “This Kanabi issue is the work of the Qahata, the Janjaweed, and the rest of the people whose understanding is limited”



Translation: “That state conspiracies to destabilize the security and stability of neighboring countries in general, and the visit of Lieutenant General Shams al-Din Kabbashi and the Vice President of the Sovereignty Council, Malik Agar, to contain any alleged and funded dispute. I honestly did not see any video, but I came across a video shared on the pages of the southerners, and it turned out to be in Somalia, so the matter involves fabrication by the Qahata against the state.”



Translation: “Bury them in blood on the gallows—until the last Qahati with the intestines of the last Janjaweed.”

Quoted tweet: “By God, if they had only stopped at FFC’s grudge against the Sudanese people and their hatred of free Sudanese and simply gone into exile with their own people, and if it weren’t for FFC’s support for the militia and FFC standing with the militia, and most recently the incitement involving the southerners, then the souls of those who died in the South would be on your necks (you bear responsibility).”

## Tactic 5: Whataboutism

Rather than acknowledging the incident, many posts attempted to shift the conversation to other events — specifically atrocities committed by groups other than the one the writer is defending. In the example below, one user asks, “Where was this call for the international community when army planes were wiping out Darfur? ...” This tactic engages with the event.

<sup>15</sup> Qahata/Qahati: A term used to distinguish members of political parties and civil groups that were affiliated with the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) alliance. Sometimes, the term is used by their enemies to target anyone associated with the glorious December Revolution in Sudan.

and works to undermine its significance by deflecting attention and creating false equivalence.



Translation: “Where was your call to the international community when the terrorist regime's air force was massacring Darfuri citizens in their villages, towns, and farms, and when they continued their terrorist operations against Darfuri citizens wherever they were found?!”

The war continues wherever a cowardly, thieving, hypocritical, godless terrorist is found.”



Translation: “Where were you when the residents of Kanabi and the Janjaweed committed these crimes, you Janjaweed, you Qahata, you filthy ones?”

## Tactic 6: Shifting Blame to the Victims

Specifically in Wad al-Nura, some posts shifted responsibility by claiming the SAF had used civilians in Wad al-Nura as human shields — and that this tactic made them, not the RSF, responsible for the deaths. This framing implies that civilian casualties are the fault of those who were “hiding among them,” not the forces who carried out the attack. It reframes the massacre as a tragic but unavoidable consequence of warfare, rather than a deliberate targeting of non-combatants.



Translation: “In Al-Hilaliyah<sup>16</sup>, the Muslim Brotherhood poisoned the water sources; this is their method of biological warfare, as warned by Jibril Ibrahim when he was an opponent of them. The battle of Wad Al-Noura was a war, as acknowledged by Al-Ansari, whose statement I previously published. It is true that the Rapid Support Forces acted with excessive force, but war against armed groups requires no leniency. Indeed, the cowardly soldiers and those who had been mobilized fled and took refuge among innocent civilians, exploiting their blood for



Translation: “They hurled insults at us. They cursed our religion. Others rejoiced. Still others prayed against us.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Hilaliyah is a village in the eastern part of Al-Jazirah State.

political gain. If the Rapid Support Forces were politically astute, they would not have stormed the village with heavy weapons.”

عمر رحمن @Rahmon83 · Jun 11, 2024  
 يصب تنظيم #الإخوان المسلمين جام غضبه على السودان والسودانيين ويكرس كل قواه لتخريب #السودان وتمزيقه وتفتيته واتهام الآخرين بما يقوم التنظيم به من جرائم بحق الإنسانية ، وما فعله وحوش التنظيم الارهابية في قرية #وَد\_النورة من مجازر معروف للفاصي والداني ، وان حاولوا إلقاء التهم على #الدعم\_السريع



13 46 107 57K

Translation: “The #Muslim\_Brotherhood organization pours out its full wrath on Sudan and the Sudanese and devotes all its powers to sabotaging #Sudan, tearing it apart, and fragmenting it while accusing others of the very crimes against humanity that the organization itself commits. What the organization’s terrorist beasts did in the village of #WadAINura in terms of massacres is known to everyone near and far, even if they try to pin the blame on the #Rapid\_Support\_Forces”

And some even threatened us with social ostracism.

All this because we said that what happened in Wad al-Noura was a battle between combatants—the army, the mobilized forces, and the Rapid Support Forces (meaning it wasn't a massacre of civilians). This video proves the accuracy of our account in detail. A force comprised of the army and the mobilized forces, stationed in this village, engaged the Rapid Support Forces in a battle. They were defeated by the Rapid Support Forces. The army commander, named Abdul Rahim, ordered a withdrawal, as usual. The mobilized forces then concentrated to confront an armed force equipped with the latest weapons and fled into the village. This resulted in the deaths of civilians, in addition to those who drowned in the canal. It's worth noting that Abdul Rahim is one of the (army) commanders who withdrew from Madani. The remnants of the old regime bear the greatest responsibility. The Rapid Support Forces bear the responsibility for pursuing the mobilized forces with heavy weapons into a simple village.”

Join · سوق الحماحيما  
 Anonymous participant · 25 October 2024  
 كل ما يفعله الملافيط وخونة الكنابي والمتعاونين من بني جلدتنا ؛ وزره سيصب كله على رأس ماهرية الرزيقات والمسيرية مدى الحياة.. وسيدفعون ثمنه عاجلاً وأجلاً  
 الان مايقوم به سكان العشوائيات و الكنابي في ام دقريسي وغيرها من قرى الجزيرة من هجوم على القرى هو نيابة عن مرتزقة الجنجويد الذين هربوا وتركوا الاسلحة لهؤلاء الاوباش من سكان الكنابي للهجوم وخطف السكان وطلب الفدية بعدما ما انتهوا من سلب البيوت ونهبها..  
 فعلوا هاشتاغ #الجزيرة\_بدون\_كنابي  
 مدى الحياة

Translation: “Everything that the bastards, the traitors of Alkanabi, and the collaborators from among our own people are doing—its burden/sin will all fall on the heads of the Mahariya of the Rizeigat and the Misseriya for life... and they will pay its price sooner or later.

Now, what the residents of the slums and the kanabi in Um Daqrasi and other villages of Al-Jazira are doing—attacking villages—is on behalf of the Janjaweed mercenaries who fled and left the weapons to these scum from the Kanabi residents to attack, abduct residents, and demand ransom after They finished looting the houses and robbing them.”

“Activate the hashtag: #AlJazira\_Without\_Kanabi.”

## Tactic 7: Displacing Responsibility

A similar tactic involved redirecting blame for the massacre onto a different enemy while claiming that the perpetrators were being falsely accused. For example, the post below (and many others) falsely claims that the Muslim Brotherhood was behind the Wad al-Nura attack

and had framed the RSF for it. This tactic aims to muddy the responsibility, deflect blame, and confuse public perception in favor of the poster’s political alignment.

Another variation of this tactic was used to attack civilian actors. Several posts condemned individuals and groups for not immediately denouncing the massacre — even when they had already done so — or accused them outright of supporting it. The narrative that Tagadom is the political branch of the RSF was already being pushed by SAF-aligned voices but was being aggressively spread by SAF accounts after the Wad al-Nura massacre and again after the violence in South Sudan, turning grief into a political tool, using moments of collective mourning to discredit civilian forces and portray them as complicit in violence.



Translation: “The village of Wad al-Noura: History will record and not forgive...”

Following the massacre committed by the Rapid Support Forces, a statement is required from (Tagadom), the political wing of the Rapid Support Forces.”



Translation: “The Sudanese Congress Party



Translation: “Hamdok’s terrorist militia during the siege of Wad al-Noura village”



Breaking news: Khalid Omar’s forces bombard Wad al-Noura in Al-Jazirah



cadres incited the Southerners against the Northerners, and what happened, happened. The reckoning is coming, you Qahata! #Tagadom\_represents\_the\_Rapid\_Support\_Forces #FFC\_sedition”

Dr- Hana Amin @hanaelmeent

Translate post

#الفيديو دفن الضحايا من الجالية السودانية في #جوبا. بعد استهدافهم من الأوباش في جنوب #السودان بسبب نشر قادة حركات #دارفور وقادة #تقدم و #فحت و نشاطاتهم #كذبا حدوث #مجازر الكنابي أعقبت تحرير #ودمدني عاصمة #ولاية الجزيرة فجميعهم لهم كفل من دماهم البريلة وغياب سفارتنا بجوبا!



Translation: “#Video The burial of victims from the Sudanese community in #Juba after they were targeted by thugs in South #Sudan, because leaders of the #Darfur movements and the leaders of #Progress and #Forces of Freedom and Change, and their activities, falsely promoted the occurrence of the #Kanabi\_Massacres following the liberation of #Wad\_Madani, the capital of #Al\_Jazirah\_State. All of them bear a share of responsibility for their innocent blood—along with the absence of our embassy in Juba!”

Translation: “The Strife happening in South Sudan is because of you, you despicable ones Every drop of blood spilled in Juba and every assault is on your necks ... you all, from your big one Hamdok to your small one Khalid Silk and Muhammad Khalifa and any person who participated, even with a word, in trying to stir division between us and the Southerners You want to score political points?!

Oh, the Sudanese in Juba are currently being targeted even in their homes—are you happy about that, you sons of dogs? Happy while you're lounging from hotel to hotel in Kampala and Entebbe and Addis?

Sleeping in hotels, you illegitimate ones, after you've left the honest ones targeted in their lives and property?!

May God's curse be upon you in both worlds—may God's curse be upon you all”

ابوغدير العامري 518 @aboghadeer22 · Jan 17

اي مواطن اضرار في جنوب يجب ان ياخذ حقه من الجنجويدي خالد سلك والجنجويدي كامل كريمات مسؤولين عن أحداث جنوب السودان @KHOYousif



Translation: “Any citizen harmed in the South must seek justice from the Janjaweed militiamen Khalid Salik and Kamal Karimat, who are responsible for the events in South Sudan”

## CONCLUSION

Othering and dehumanization have long been tools of war propaganda — well-documented, well-studied, and devastating in effect. But in the age of social media, these tactics are easier to create, faster to spread, and harder to contain. Today's digital infrastructure makes it incredibly difficult to challenge harmful narratives once they take root.

This report is an attempt to document how these dynamics are playing out in Sudan's ongoing war. We do not make assumptions about the intent or authenticity of the accounts featured in the examples in the report. Our analysis focuses solely on the text itself, applying our classification criteria and examining the reception and impact of the content. We recognize that individuals can shift their perspectives and communication approaches over time, and this snapshot analysis should not be taken as a permanent characterization.

The two events examined in detail are evidence of a more widespread trend that we will continue to track in subsequent social media analysis. Social media has become a weapon for division, spreading hatred and legitimizing violence. Traditional biases reappear in new formats - posts, hashtags, and viral videos - without a strong, cohesive counter-narrative. This digital animosity has tangible repercussions: from the massacre in Al-Jazeera to assaults on refugees in South Sudan, violence is often disregarded if it aligns with a particular agenda. Public opinion is manipulated, identities are distorted, and communities are targeted. Social media is not just reflecting the conflict — it's intensifying it. At times, the war is unfolding as much on screens as in the streets.

In this context, it is clear that social media should be a governed space — shaped by community guidelines, not propaganda. We can make that happen. This report is also an invitation. We invite social media companies, researchers, practitioners, and those working on social media and conflict in Sudan or beyond to collaborate with us. Let's pool our resources and knowledge to respond collectively to this urgent, complex challenge. Let's work together towards a safer, more responsible digital environment.

