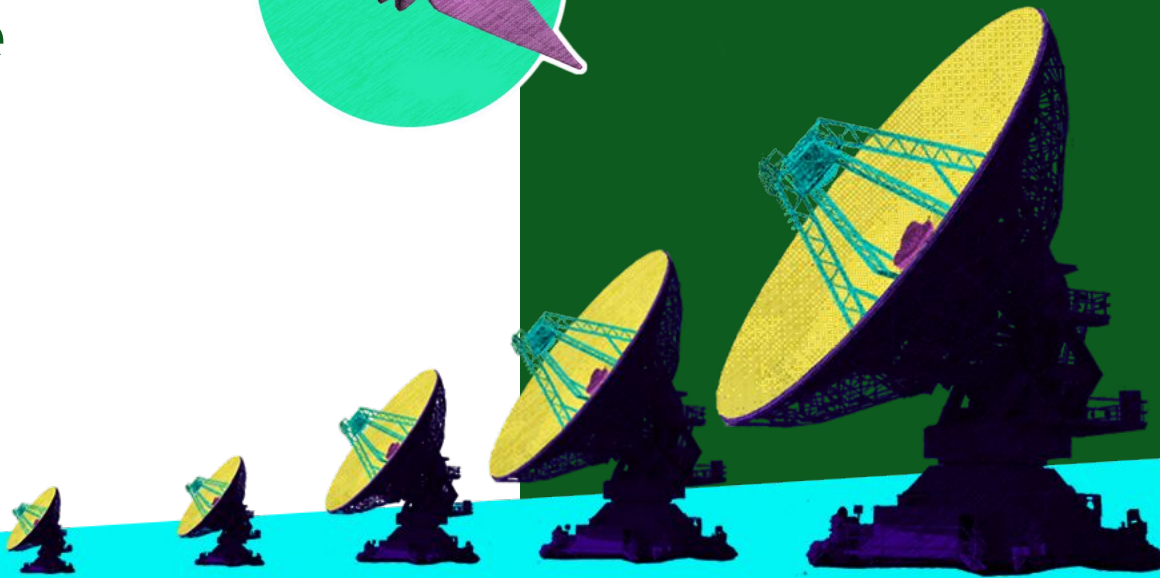
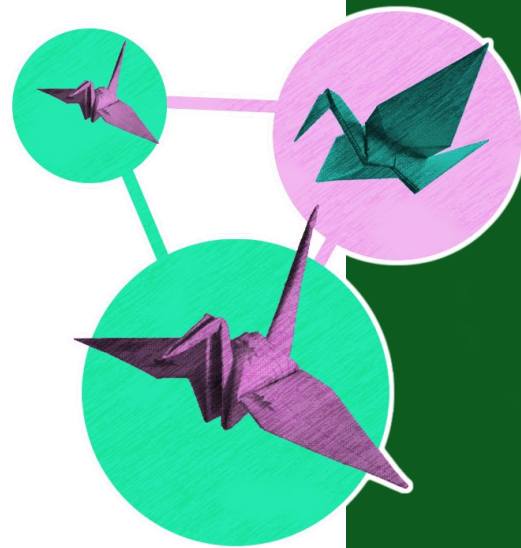


BUILD UP A

Understanding information warfare in Sudan

London & online, June 29 2026



What is information warfare?

It's bigger than what's illegal or banned on a platform



Manipulation tactics

Coordinated behavior, inauthentic accounts, and engineered virality designed to deceive.

Narrative threat

Stories that dehumanise, legitimise violence, or erode the conditions for peace, even when each post is technically legal.

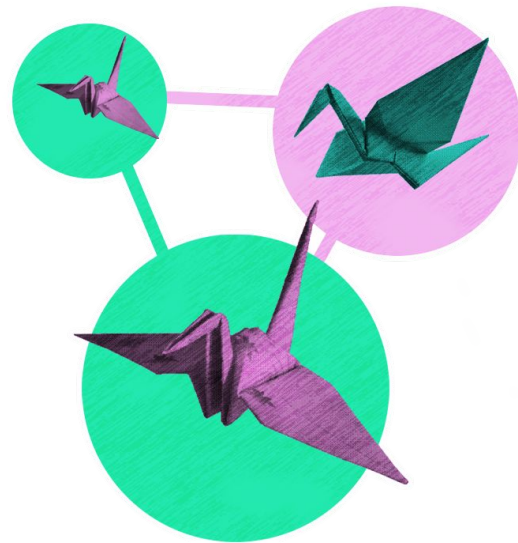
Polarisation

Content that hardens group identities and forecloses dialogue, often mixed with accusations of affiliation with political positions or armed groups that fuels offline harm to civilians.

PHOENIX a social media analysis tool helping peacebuilders and mediators understand information warfare globally — across languages, platforms, and contexts.

Five thematic reports

- 01 **“River & Sea” divisive separatist narratives** *Musa Idrees*
- 02 **Digital expression as a response to collective trauma** *Tohfa Elkamil*
- 03 **Rebranding the RSF: image-washing & renaming** *Ethar Ahmad*
- 04 **Digital incitement networks & calls for violence in Nyala** *Mkarim Mohammed*
- 05 **Sudan’s digital battleground** *Hussam Abualfatah & Mahmoud Bastati*



01

THEMATIC REPORT · RIVER & SEA DISCOURSE

Divisive Separatist Narratives

By Musa Idrees

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ **Exclusion by identity** : Narratives target Sudanese on the basis of non-Arab ethnicity — a growing threat to national unity.
- ▶ **Reinventing vocabulary** : Terms for cultural groups are reinvented and recirculated in ways that normalize violence against them.
- ▶ **Manufacturing a lexicon** : Systematic repetition builds a new racist language that hardens into everyday speech.
- ▶ **Shielded hate speech** : Coded language disguises incitement, amplified through platforms and echo chambers.



**INFORMATION
WARFARE LENS**

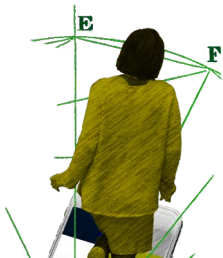
Language engineering:
weaponizing vocabulary so that
exclusion and the violence that
follows comes to feel normal and
even justified.

Digital Expression as a Response to Collective Trauma

By Tohfa Elkamil

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ **Anger in language:** The study maps the patterns through which Sudanese people express anger online.
- ▶ **Expected mostly** direct calls for violence; found mostly identity-based exclusion instead.
- ▶ **Grief peaks fast:** Collective grief and religious, symbolic expression spike in the days right after atrocities.
- ▶ **Reimagining comes later:** Symbolic reframing and the reimagining of reality emerge some time after the event itself.



INFORMATION WARFARE LENS

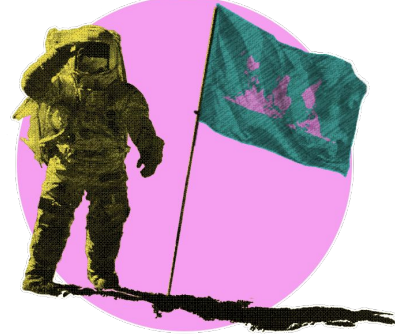
Trauma as fuel: grief, faith and identity (not only explicit threats) power the information war, and they move on a predictable timeline.

Image-Washing Through Renaming

By Ethar Ahmad

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ **Use ≠ endorsement:** Using the name “Ta’sis” does not necessarily mean a person agrees with or endorses it.
- ▶ **X over Facebook:** X is the widest, most accessible platform for Ta’sis-related content, ahead of Facebook.
- ▶ **Renaming opponents too:** The army becomes “the militia of the Islamic Movement”; Sudan becomes “the State of 56.”
- ▶ **A recurring pattern:** Rebranding is not new in Sudan — struggles over language are key to reading the present moment.



INFORMATION WARFARE LENS

Reputation laundering: controlling the names of self and enemy is a bid to control public perception of who is legitimate.

Digital Incitement Networks & Calls for Violence

By Mkarim Mohammed

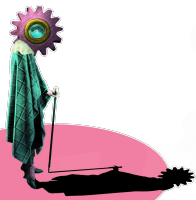
KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ **Reconnaissance & fire direction:** Platforms relay civilian movements used to identify airstrike targets.
- ▶ **A systematic cycle:** Pre-emptive incitement & dehumanization → aerial bombardment → “digital celebration.”
- ▶ **Mockery as dehumanization:** Slang like “kebab maker” recasts killing as a joke or a “military achievement.”
- ▶ **“Social incubators”:** Civilian neighborhoods are framed as combatant havens to justify wiping them out.
- ▶ **Real-world toll:** Dozens killed or injured, infrastructure destroyed, displacement and eroded trust in aid.



INFORMATION WARFARE LENS

From posts to airstrikes: the clearest, most operational link in the series between online incitement and offline killing.

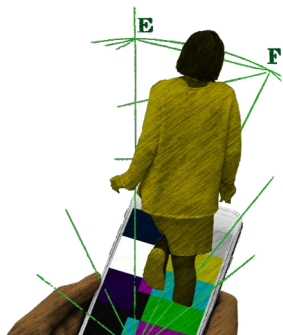


How Social Media Narratives Lead to Real-World Violence

By Hussam Abualfatah & Mahmoud Bastati

TWO SIDES, ONE WEAPON

- ▶ **Both forces weaponize narrative:** SAF and RSF alike normalize violence, justify crimes, dehumanize communities, and polarize the public.
- ▶ **SAF framing:** The “War of Dignity”; brands the civilians as RSF backers and uses “social incubators” to justify reprisals.
- ▶ **RSF framing:** Poses as democratic via “State of 56,” casting northern & central Sudan as oppressors.
- ▶ **Platform split:** Facebook is the SAF stronghold (militaristic); TikTok the RSF stronghold (emotive hero clips).



SEVEN RECURRING DIVISIVE TACTICS

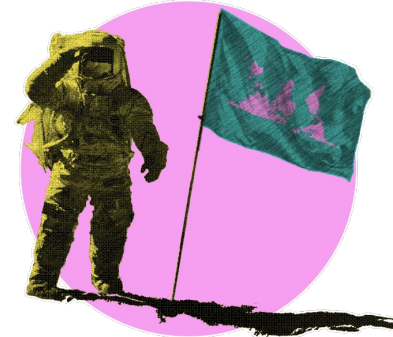
- 1 Collective blame
- 2 Identity-based attacks
- 3 Existential-threat framing
- 4 Undermining the incident
- 5 Whataboutism
- 6 Shifting blame to victims
- 7 Displacing responsibility



Reflections from Ethar Ahmed

Digital de-escalation in Sudan

Three approaches that are showing real traction.



1

Listen, together

Participatory social-media listening builds confidence between communities — and laid the ground for a cross-Sudan digital alliance.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING

2

Reach the hardest audiences

Working with influencers engaged in harmful narratives to land counter-narratives inside the communities most at risk of mobilisation.

INFLUENCING

3

Set the floor

Building shared interest in a code of conduct: a set of minimum standards for political and armed actors operating in Sudan's information space.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Questions & Reflections

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