

Conflict Snapshot

NOVEMBER 2023

This round of the conflict snapshot series offers insight into both offline and online conflict trends in Sudan throughout November. It encompasses instances of violence and their repercussions on various population groups, infrastructure, essential services, as well as offline and online polarization dynamics. The analysis draws from data gathered by embedded observers, reflecting the perspectives of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), host communities, and service providers in regions including Gadarif, Kassala, Blue Nile State, and West and South Kordofan. Additionally, the team analyzed public social media data from Facebook. The report also identifies emerging risks and opportunities, alongside providing actionable recommendations.

Key Trends - Conflict Dynamics

In **Blue Nile State**, operations between Sudanese armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudanese Liberation Army Movement North (SPLM-N) in South Kurmuk locality caused casualties and affected the stability of the communities in the area. In the South Samsur village, there were signs of tribal conflict between the Ingsana and the Fallata tribes, reactivating an ongoing conflict between the two groups that started two years ago, and which is expected to turn violent if no intervention takes place.

Already in September, Blue Nile data had showed that a significant number of SPLM-N soldiers belonging to the Ingsana tribe had joined the RSF, led by Abu Shotal. Other soldiers, however, joined the SAF under the leadership of Malik Aggar. Consequently, conflict escalated in Kurmuk locality and created high tensions between military forces and local communities. Although the tribal conflict between Ingsana and Fallata is historical and erupted almost two years back, it still has an impact due to Fallata's support of the SAF and Malik Aggar.

South Kordofan State experienced intense clashes between the armed forces and SPLM-N in its capital Kadugli, which led to the massive displacement of families to another part of the town. No casualties were reported. In Dilling locality, the last week of November witnessed important instability, with members of the RSF attacking Al Tukma village 10km North of Dilling and burning it down, and the SPLM-N reacting by burning Arab villages (pro- RSF) near to Aldibabat. Local admirations from both communities (Nuba and Arabs) intervened and convinced the two sides to avoid more action and not to attack Dilling town that is considered a center for both communities.

Local administrations together with local authorities are initiating the opening of the road between Kadugli and Dilling to ease the movement of people and commodities. They also discussed opening routes for nomads' migration to the south as it is now the dry season. The ongoing conflict has affected people's lives as the prices of goods and commodities have increased immensely, while the state is facing a scarcity of water and basic services.

Comparing conflict dynamics in South Kordofan in September, data shows that in September the main actors for war clashes were SAF and SPLM-N and operations surrounded Kadguli town and the road between Kadugli and Dilling. In November, the war expanded, and actors shifted to become SPLM-N against SAF and RSF. Also, in September the attacks were limited around Kadugli, while in November they extended to Dilling town and surrounding areas.

In **West Kordofan**, the state witnessed intense fighting between Sudan military forces and RSF in Babanoussa, resulting in 3 people being killed. The clash escalated to most villages and violence against women and children increased. Al-Mairam locality witnessed conflict and clashes between the armed forces and supporters of the RSF, resulting in 11 civilian injuries. Local community leaders held meetings with RSF and their families in an attempt to protect the region and civilians from war.

Comparing conflict dynamics in West Kordofan in September, data shows that the clashes between SAF and RSF expanded and new communities in different localities were involved. In September the clashes were reported in Balila and Elfula communities, while in November the clashes extended to Babanoussa and Al-Mairam.

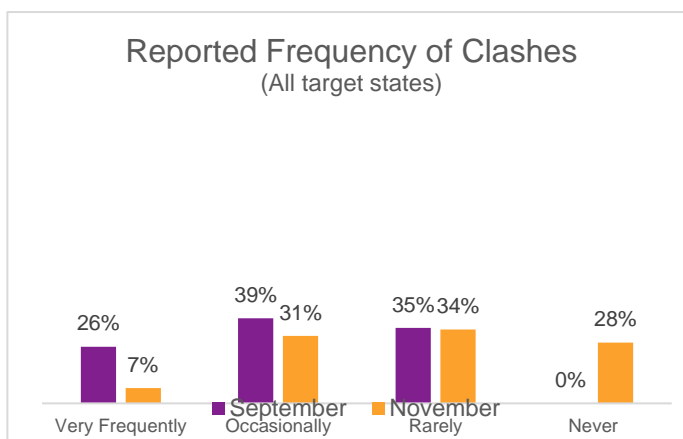
In November **Gadarif State** witnessed no violent conflict in general, but experienced large demonstrations against the local authority’s decision to evacuate schools from IDPs. The government mobilized the police, who used tear gas to force IDPs to leave their gathering points. Children, women, and the elderly were impacted and there were death cases reported among newborns. A demonstration was also held against the Bank of Khartoum for a new procedure that charges additional fees for customers for all banking services. Customers protested to voice their refusal of this decision to bank management.

In **Kassala**, there were also no serious conflicts reported within this period. However, the state experienced outbreaks of infectious diseases such as dengue fever, malaria, and cholera, as well as the deterioration of healthcare services. There are also signs of emerging tribal disputes between Hadandawa and the Benaamer and Habab. This usually happens when the government announces new structures for state governance, because in this region of Sudan tribes are clan-based and believe they should be consulted when any decision on local government is appointed.

Comparing conflict dynamics in Gadarif and Kassala States this month with September, findings show that while there were no significant signs of direct clashes between SAF and RSF, the current clashes in the country have negatively affected services and infrastructures in both States.

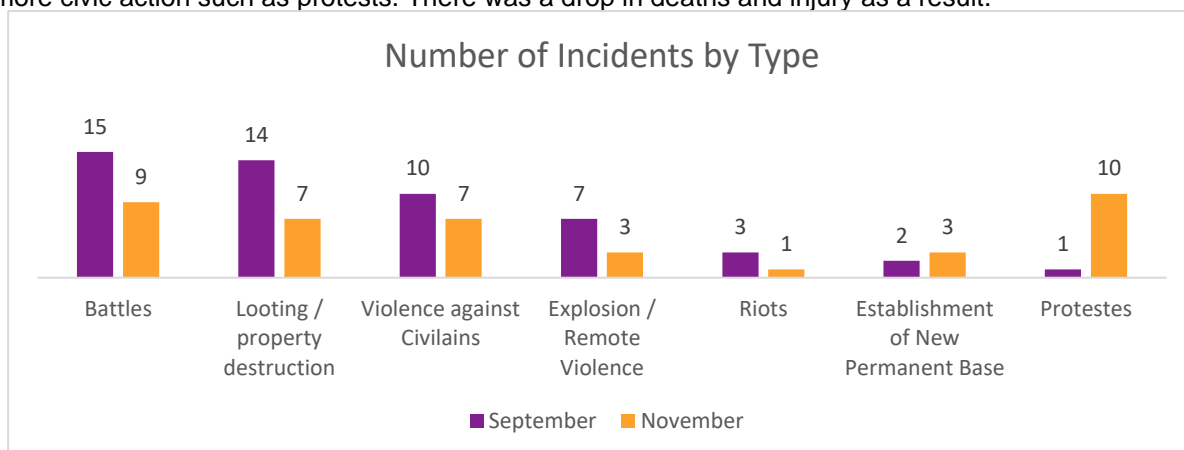
Frequency

- Clashes were most commonly reported in Blue Nile, South and West Kordofan. Around 32% of the respondents reported occasional clashes between SAF, SPLM-N and RSF.
- Gadarif rarely experienced clashes during this reporting period.
- Kassala did not experience clashes during this reporting period.
- Approximately 35% of the respondents indicated “rare” clashes happened against IDPs from the local State government.
- 25% of the respondents indicated that no clashes took place during this reporting period.
- Overall, reporting from September and November indicates that reported clashes are on a downward trend across target states.



Types of incidents and intensity

Overall, protests and strategic developments were reported more frequently than in the September reporting period. Respondents indicate a notable shift away from incidents of violence and crime toward more civic action such as protests. There was a drop in deaths and injury as a result.



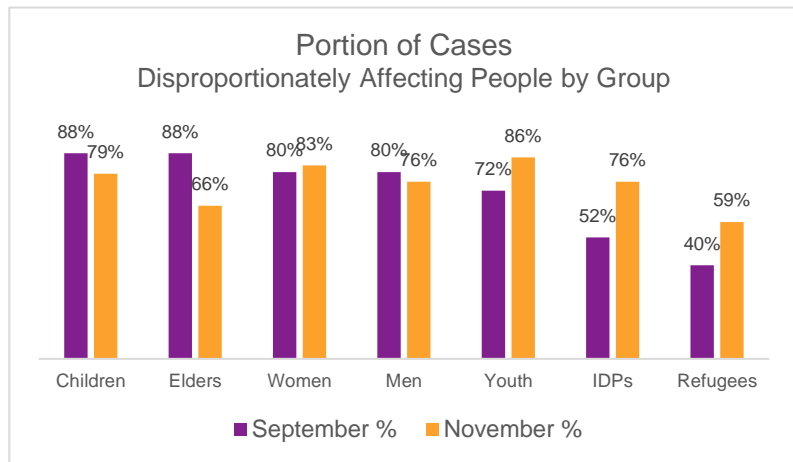
- Both strategic developments (such as looting/property destruction or establishment of new permanent bases) and battles reported in Blue Nile State.
- Both battles and Explosion/Remote Violence were the most common type of clashes reported in South Kordofan.
- Violence against Civilians and Riots was reported in Gadarif state.

The intensity of clashes varied based on location. In Gadarif the intensity was reported as lower than in Blue Nile State and West and South Kordofan.

Key actors and most affected groups

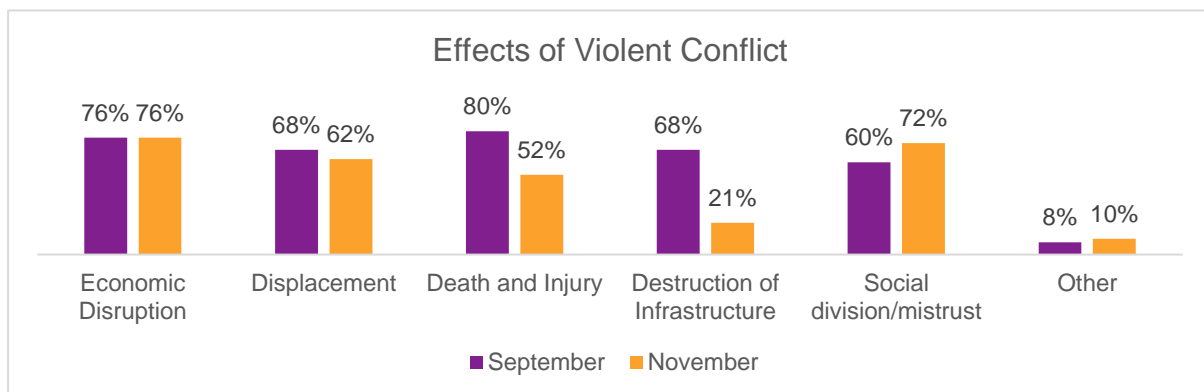
The data shows that armed groups remain the key actors in the clashes (46% responses), specifically SAF and RSF and SPLM-N which are consistently identified across various states (West Kordofan, Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and Kassala). In 4% of responses, civil society was identified, specifically in Kassala. In Gadarif, 20% identified local government and IDPs, and 30% identified "Others" (such as "lawbreakers") as primary actors.

A comparison of these figures reported in September and those from November, suggests respondents viewed the disproportionate effect of the violence on children, elders as shrinking, while youth, IDPs and Refugees are reportedly more affected by the clashes between the two time periods. In November "youth" were reported to be the most disproportionately affected by the clashes.



These figures varied among different states. In hosting states such as **Kassala** and **Gadarif**, children, the elderly, women, and IDPs were the most disproportionately affected by the clashes. In **Blue Nile** and **South Kordofan**, IDPs were disproportionately affected by the clashes. In **Blue Nile, West Kordofan, and South Kordofan**, youth, men, and the elderly were the most disproportionately affected by the clashes.

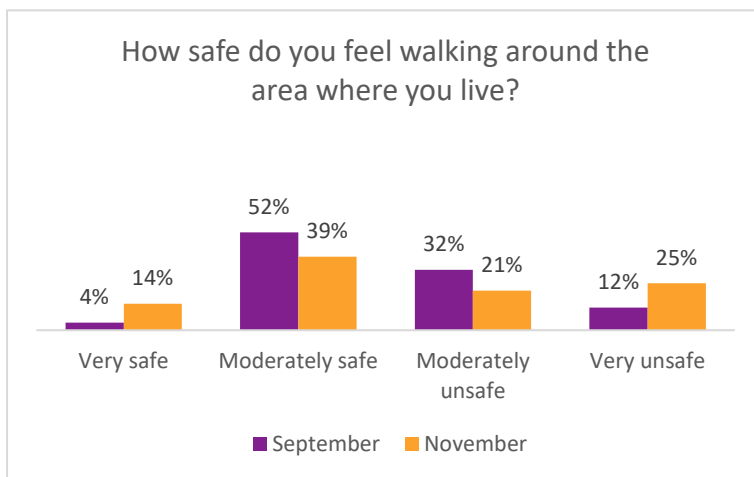
Effects of the conflict



The data indicate that clashes have various significant effects. The most commonly reported consequences are economic disruptions and destruction of infrastructure, with 77% of the respondents mentioning these. 62% mentioned the displacement of people (IDPs and refugees) and 50% reported the loss of lives or injuries as significant impacts. Social divisions or mistrust were mentioned by 69% of the respondents. When compared to the September period, many of these reported effects have

remained the same or slightly declined, but with notable overall declines in reports of deaths, injuries and the destruction of infrastructure.

- In West Kordofan state, respondents reported economic disruptions and destruction of infrastructure as a significant effect of the incidents.
- In Kassala state displacement of people (IDPs, refugees) was identified the most as the significant impact.
- In Gadarif state the respondents highlighted social division or mistrust as a notable consequence of the clashes
- In South Kordofan the Displacement of people (IDPs) was identified as the most significant impact.
- In Blue Nile the economic disruptions and loss of lives or injury were identified as the most significant impact.

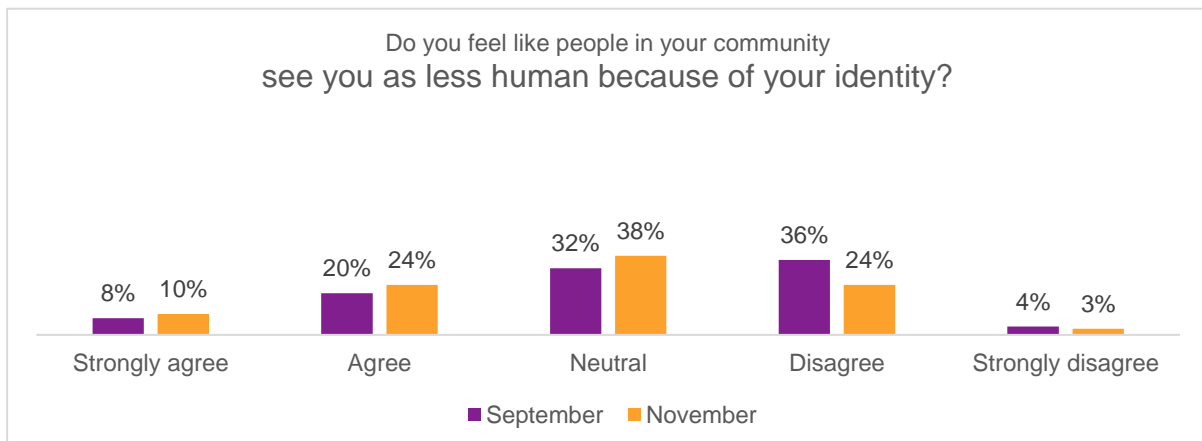


Respondents in the November data collection period are more divided than in the previous period. In the current period there is an increase in the proportion of respondents who felt “very unsafe” walking around the areas where they live; in fact, the proportion doubled since the last period. The proportion of respondents who felt “very safe,” however, also increased. The proportion of those who felt moderately safe or moderately unsafe both decreased suggesting a bifurcation toward the two extremes among respondents. While 39% of

respondents feel moderately safe while 21% of respondents feel moderately unsafe, 12% of respondents express that they feel very safe while 25% of respondents feel very unsafe and 4% of respondents said they are not sure or didn't answer.

Collective Polarization

The data suggests a diverse range of perceptions among different communities regarding collective polarization. While some individuals feel neutral (38%) or disagree/strongly disagree (27%) with the notion of being perceived as less human because of their identity, a considerable percentage agrees/strongly agrees (34%) with this. When compared to the aggregate figures from the September data collection period, there is a slight but noticeable uptick in this feeling of dehumanization among respondents; slightly more people agree and slightly less people disagree that they feel dehumanized by members in their communities because of their identity, as illustrated in the accompanying graph. Specific examples from states highlight that factors such as tribal problems, racism, and unequal



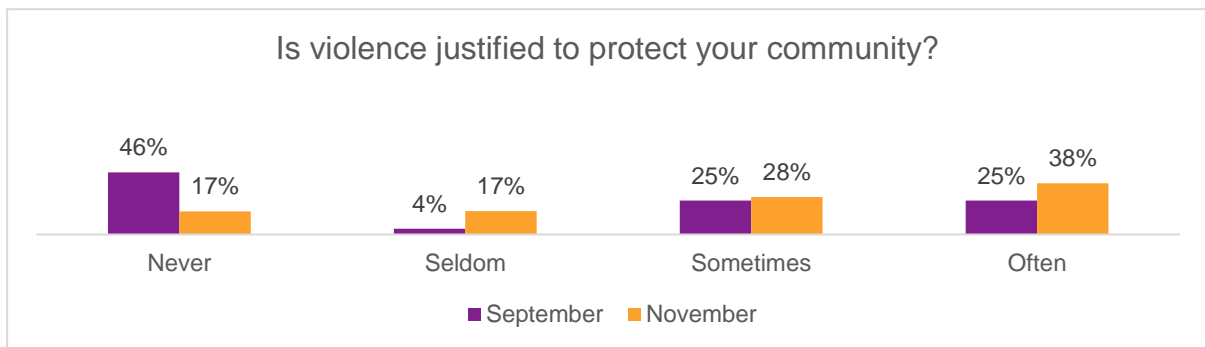
distribution of services contribute to these perceptions. In contrast, comments also indicate [efforts toward solidarity and collaboration](#) that contradict the notion of being seen as less human based on identity.

Comparing this polarization with the September data shows us that there is an increase in the “neutral” sentiment (24% in September), and a decrease in the “agree/strongly agree” and “disagree/strongly disagree” sentiments (36% and 40% in September, respectively).

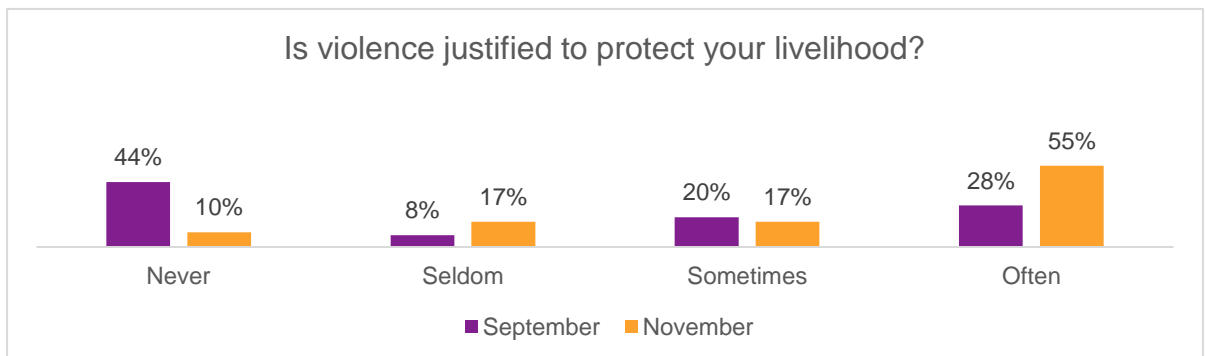
Examples from States

- West Kordofan: Disagree/Strongly disagree. Most of the population is from one tribe. However, tribes are considered affiliated with certain parties in the clashes even if individuals are against war.
- Gadarif: Strongly agree/agree. IDPs experimented with local government in accommodation centers and felt a strong sense of injustice and humiliation

The data reveals varied perceptions on the justification of violence in certain situations. When compared to the same question asked in September, the November figures suggest an increasing inclination to believe that violence is justifiable. A sizable percentage of respondents believe that violence to protect their community is often (38%) or sometimes (28%) justified, while a smaller percentage believe it is seldom (17.6%) or never (17%) justified. Respondents who said violence is often justified increased by 13% percentage points from the September snapshot.



There is a more drastic shift between respondent attitudes in September versus those in November in regard to whether violence is justifiable as a means to defend one’s livelihood. In this data collection period 55% of respondents said such violence is justifiable while two months prior the figure was approximately half of that. Conversely, 44% of respondents in September said violence is never justified to protect one’s livelihood, and in the latest data collection period that sentiment is only shared by 10% of the respondent.



In November, there was a notable increase in the volume of hate speech posts on Facebook in Sudan, totaling 10.6k. This is a rise from October's 9.1k, though still lower than observations in September and August, which were closer to 13k. November posts garnered significant engagement, generating 252k

comments and a remarkable 2 million interactions. Notably, 46% of emoji reactions on these posts were "love," indicating a substantial degree of endorsement or agreement among users.

The sentiment analysis of the hate speech posts revealed that only 38% carried a negative sentiment. This suggests that the expression of hate speech is varied and complex. While some posts might overtly express negativity, others employ sarcasm, coded language, or indirect references, which may not be immediately apparent as negative to sentiment analysis tools. The fact that not all posts categorized as hate speech are overtly negative in sentiment implies that such speech can often be subtle, masked in language that appears neutral or even positive.

In November, the majority of hate speech content on Facebook in Sudan still originated predominantly from accounts affiliated with the warring factions. Yet, as a direct consequence of [Facebook's removal of RSF-affiliated accounts](#) in August, hate speech on accounts associated with the RSF significantly dropped. To illustrate the impact of this action, in July, we observed 12.6k posts generated by RSF accounts and those unofficially supporting the RSF, but by November, this number had decreased significantly to just 3.22k. However, there are still numerous posts that favor the RSF narrative, but they are less explicit in their affiliation or are shared by accounts that do not openly declare their support for the RSF. This shift in the landscape of hate speech on social media underscores the evolving nature of online discourse, especially in response to platform moderation policies and real-world events.

Regarding incitement to violence on social media, November saw a significant uptick, with 1.65k posts engaging audiences deeply, with 32k comments and a total of 193k interactions. This marked an increase from October, which recorded 1.3k posts, but remained consistent with September 1.67k posts. Notably, there was a spike in activity on the 16th, 17th, and 18th of the month, correlating with battles occurring on those days. The engagement with these posts was particularly high, as indicated by the substantial ratio of comments to the number of posts. This reflects the intensity with which users interacted with this content, pointing to a heightened interest and involvement in discussions around violence. Strikingly, 50% of the emoji reactions to these posts were "love" reactions, surpassing the percentage observed for hate speech posts. This higher rate of "love" reactions could signify a stronger resonance or agreement among the audience with the content of these posts, potentially indicating a concerning level of endorsement or support for violent narratives.

Our analysis identified 2.79k posts that mentioned various tribes in Sudan, indicating the significance of tribal dynamics within the social media discourse. While many of these posts discussed tribes in a general context, a notable subset of 785 posts were specifically labeled as hate speech. Additionally, 170 posts were categorized as incitement to violence, pointing to a concerning trend where tribal identities are being leveraged to foster division and hostility. Among these, posts gaining notable attention covered conflicts involving different tribes.

The city of Khartoum featured prominently in social media discussions throughout November, referenced in approximately 6.8k posts, while other areas of Sudan were mentioned in fewer than 4k posts. This pattern of underrepresentation is consistent across recent months; October saw 6.5k mentions for Khartoum compared to less than 3k for other areas, and September showed nearly 10k mentions for Khartoum and only 2.6k for other regions. This ongoing trend underlines a sustained focus on the capital in social media discourse, independent of the specific events occurring each month. This is largely attributed to greater access to digital tools and a higher level of digital literacy in the capital.

Outside of Khartoum, the focus of social media posts predominantly revolves around news updates and developments related to on-the-ground conflicts. Key events that have captured attention include the extension of the emergency state in the Blue Nile state, as well as the incident on November 8th in Gedaref, where a child's life was tragically lost during the deportation of IDPs. Additionally, there have been updates from various states on protests. Particularly notable was the one in front of the Gedaref mayor's house following the deportation of IDPs, and the police's response to these demonstrations.

In this context, a noteworthy development has been the release of a public statement by a group known as the "Emergency Lawyers." This statement, while not indicative of significant online mobilization, represents a crucial instance of digital advocacy. It reflects the growing importance of online platforms for raising awareness and voicing concerns about issues in regions outside Khartoum. Such instances

of online engagement, though not widespread, are important steps towards more balanced representation and discourse concerning all areas of Sudan on social media.

In November, the expression of solidarity on social media in Sudan was evident in 1.96k posts, slightly lower than October's 2.6k and September's 3.2k but still significantly higher than in August and previous months, which saw less than 1k posts. These posts sparked substantial engagement, generating 27.4k comments and a total of 133k interactions. Notably, the ratio of comments to posts in this category was the highest among all categories, underscoring the relevance of this content to the audience.

A key theme in these posts was the Jeddah Conference and its potential to foster peace, with a positive perception of the process. Discussions frequently centered around the idea that the ongoing conflict in Sudan cannot be resolved through military means alone. This sentiment was echoed in the frequent use of the hashtag [#لا للحرب](#) (No to War), employed in more than 1.3k posts, reflecting a deliberate and intentional push for peace.

The proportion of 'haha' reactions to these solidarity posts stood at 36%, a notable decrease from the 49% observed in July. This 13% drop is significant. While it's acknowledged that there will always be some level of trolling and that peace language might not always resonate during active conflicts, this decrease is a strong indicator of a shift in the narrative. It suggests that messages of peace and unity are resonating more with the public, potentially signaling a growing collective desire for peaceful resolution and harmony amid ongoing turmoil.

Accessibility & Basic Services

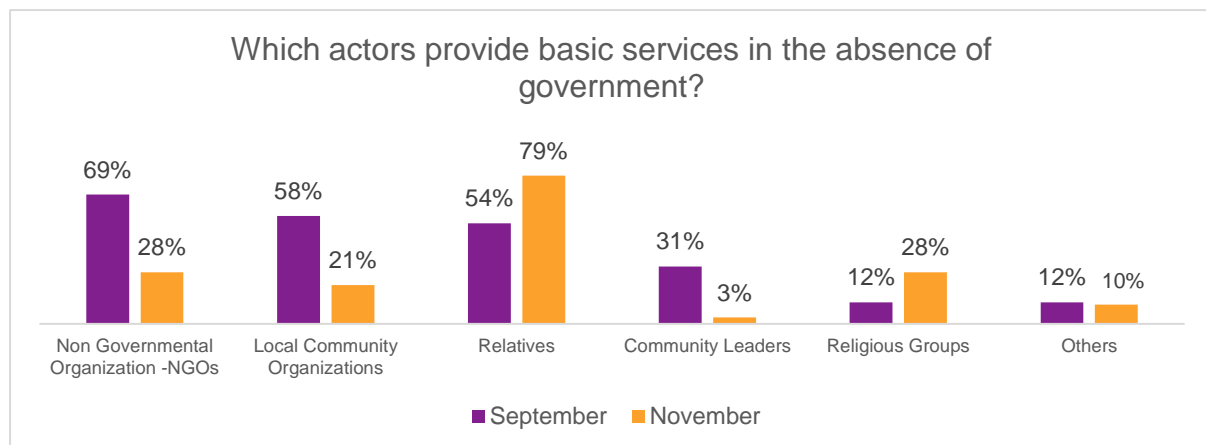
Accessibility

The data shows that in some states, certain areas or locations became inaccessible due to the clashes between SAF, RSF and SPLM.

- In Blue Nile State, Dindro area (Khor Bodi, Jarat, Bashir-Nogo, and Yabus) of Kurmuk locality was reported inaccessible.
- In South Kordofan, areas controlled by the SPLM, as well as the outskirts of the city, Miga area and surrounding farms, and the outskirts of the Algoez and Tillow were reported as inaccessible.
- In West Kordofan State, there is limited access to the Abuzabad and Elsonot localities.

Basic services

Based on the data collected, 44% of the respondents indicate that basic services such as electricity, water, health, and communication networks are not accessible during the ongoing conflict, while 56% indicated that some or all of these are accessible. There were no significant changes in the data between September and November regarding the accessibility of services. The data also indicates that when government services are unavailable, various actors and informal networks play crucial roles in providing these to affected communities.



From September to November, there is a large shift in who respondents say they rely on for basic services in the absence of government. This shift seems to be moving away from formal actors, as people turn to their families or religious groups for help meeting their basic needs. In the November period, “relatives” were indicated by 79% of respondents, which increased by 25 percentage points since September. The proportion of people receiving help from informal religious groups has more than doubled between the two time periods. Meanwhile, those reportedly relying on NGOs, CSOs and community leaders for basic services have dwindled massively.

Risks and Opportunities

The influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees into already populated areas leads to overpopulation, straining basic services like healthcare and sanitation, and increasing the risk of disease spread. At the same time, the persistent conflict in Sudan has caused substantial destruction of infrastructure and economic resources, impacting not only current living conditions but also hindering long-term national recovery and development. Additionally, the conflict has led to an increase in sexual violence, with victims often lacking access to essential services such as medical care, psychological support, and legal aid.

On the other hand, there are opportunities to mitigate these risks. Community reconciliation committees can play a crucial role in mediating conflicts at the grassroots level, offering a platform for peaceful resolution. The international community's active involvement can facilitate negotiations to resolve conflicts and create a more stable environment. Civil society initiatives can promote messages of peaceful coexistence and combat tribal mobilization, contributing to reduced communal tensions and fostering a more harmonious society. Finally, providing job opportunities, health services, and conducting needs assessments for IDPs can help in their stabilization and integration, addressing both immediate and long-term needs.

Recommendations

1. Create spaces for dialogue across dividing lines to promptly address issues of material and physical exploitation stemming from the clashes.
2. Support community initiatives that promote peace and conflict resolution, ensuring the efficient delivery of humanitarian aid to affected citizens, including through community reconciliation committees.
3. Establish and equip camps to receive IDPs, providing safe havens with necessary services and resources for displaced individuals and families, and establishing support networks.