# Conflict Snapshot
## December 2023 & January 2024

This conflict snapshot report offers insight into both offline and online conflict trends in Sudan from December 1, 2023 to January 30, 2024. It encompasses instances of violence and their repercussions on various population groups, infrastructure, essential services, as well as offline and online polarization dynamics. The data draws from 40 responses gathered by embedded observers, reflecting the perspectives of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), host communities, and service providers in regions including Gadarif, Kassala, Blue Nile, West, and South Kordofan. Additionally, public social media data from Facebook has been analyzed. The report also identifies emerging risks and opportunities, alongside providing actionable recommendations.

## Key Trends – Conflict Dynamics

In South Kordofan State, the period was marked by tribal conflicts and increased hate speech among local community factions, leading to widespread insecurity. The escalating conflict between RSF and SPLM as well as the closure of roads and proliferation of banditry worsened the economic situation, leading to increased begging and child displacement. A notable incident involved members of the Hawazma tribe looting 36 cows from the Kiga tribe, which escalated into violence, members of the Kiga tribe targeted Wabour Ziraa, killing one of the passengers, wounding another, and taking control of Wabour.

In an effort to restore security and stability, the Al-Adaeyat Endowment Committee held a meeting in Dilling with the local security committee, followed by a meeting with RSF in Al-Goaz locality. The outcomes included the reopening of the Al-Obeid-Dilang road, a commitment to prevent RSF entry into Dilling, void any contact with the SPLM or the army, the return of IDPs from Al-Goaz, and efforts to curb the spread of misinformation.

West Kordofan experienced ongoing conflicts between the armed forces and RSF, with an RSF attack on an army camp leading to casualties, looting, and temporary displacement. A land dispute in Al-Adiya locality between members of the Hamar tribe escalated into violence, halted by native administration mediation. Furthermore, the RSF's siege on the 22nd Infantry Division in Babanusa resulted in civilian and military casualties, underscoring the intense conflict.

In West Kordofan, the state was engulfed in persistent conflict between the armed forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). A notable incident involved an RSF force launching an attack on an army camp in Adiyah, resulting in the deaths of 2 army personnel and injuries to others. The assault led to the army's withdrawal, with the RSF seizing control of the camp and looting the market, a bank, and several houses. After 4 hours, the RSF withdrew, leading to a temporary stabilization of the situation. This episode prompted a minor displacement of residents to nearby villages, who returned once conditions improved. Additionally, a tribal dispute in the Al-Adiya locality's Donki Al-Hur area between members of the Hamar tribe led to 16 casualties and 9 injuries over a land conflict. The native administration's intervention successfully halted the hostilities between the two parties. Furthermore, the RSF besieged the 22nd Infantry Division in Babanusa, resulting in 7 civilian deaths and 24 injuries. This confrontation continued into the third day, with ongoing casualties on both sides. Community members in Al-Fula organized a march supporting the armed forces, emphasizing unity and peace, which faced opposition from RSF supporters.

In Gadarif State, several members of the resistance committees were arrested. The state government has extended curfew hours and specifically targeting the mobility of youth, conducting raids on gatherings in cafes, and arresting those suspected of Rapid Support cooperation. Concerns rose that the conflict could spread eastward, potentially leading to the arming of civilians, igniting new conflicts and civil war.
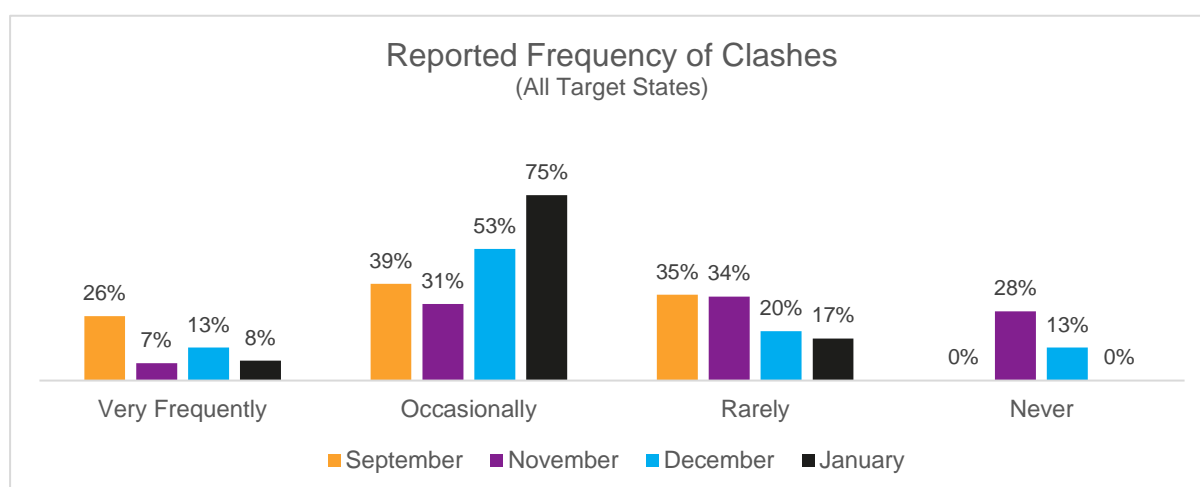
Following the assault on Gezira State, Gedaref State saw the arming of its mobilized personnel, escalating the threat of civil war and personal vendettas. The period saw widespread arrests within state institutions, notably the Ministry of Health. Rapid Support Forces entered Gedaref via an area known as Kilo Six, where weapons were subsequently confiscated in the local market.

The conflict in Gezira State has exacerbated pressures on shelter centers and residential accommodations, further burdening them with the influx of already displaced individuals from Khartoum State and Madani. Numerous affiliates of the Rapid Support Forces within the state, both female and male, were detained, along with the ongoing abductions of resistance committee members by unidentified masked groups.

In Kassala, several tribes voiced support for the armed forces, contributing to the rise of a new faction dubbed the Eastern Liberation Movement. The spread of firearms by various local tribes has heightened tensions in the state. A curfew was enforced to regulate movement, particularly affecting those in transit, with special forces deployed from 7 o'clock to maintain order. An intensified state of alert was noted in the Hamish Koreib locality near the border, hinting at the potential establishment of new armed factions.

**Frequency:**
- Clashes occurred mostly in South and West Kordofan, with respondents reporting their occurrence as occasional or rare.
- Gadarif saw frequent clashes, whereas Kassala experienced them rarely (Dec 2023 – Jan 2024).
- About 67% of respondents noted occasional clashes between SAF, SPLAM, and RSF.
- Roughly 12% reported rare clashes between government institutions and IDPs.
- 13% mentioned very frequent clashes during this period.
- 8% reported no clashes.

**Reported Frequency of Clashes**
(All Target States)

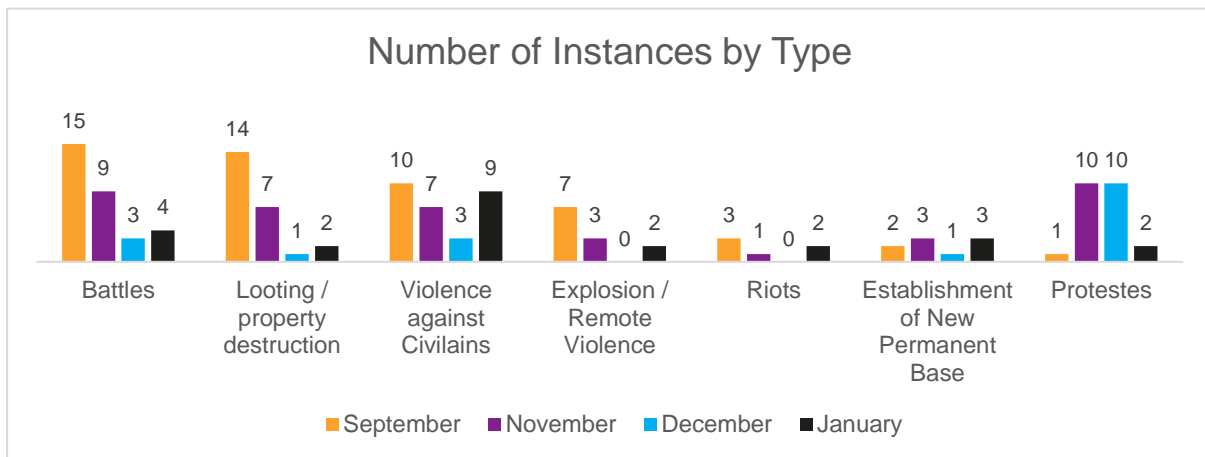| | Very Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| September | 26% | 39% | 35% | 0% |
| November | 7% | 31% | 34% | 28% |
| December | 13% | 53% | 20% | 13% |
| January | 8% | 75% | 17% | 0% |

**Types of incidents and intensity**
- In South Kordofan, types of clashes included battlefield engagements, explosions and remote violence. Notable incidents included the assassination of the director of a

national CSO "The Martyr Organization" in Dilling, citizens assassination and looting of livestock in the village of Shair, east of Kadugli, in the Tash area of the eastern countryside, and in the Marta neighborhood within Kadugli city. The RSF entered the village of Al-Takma, clashed with the SPLM, leading to the burning of citizens' homes and widespread displacements.
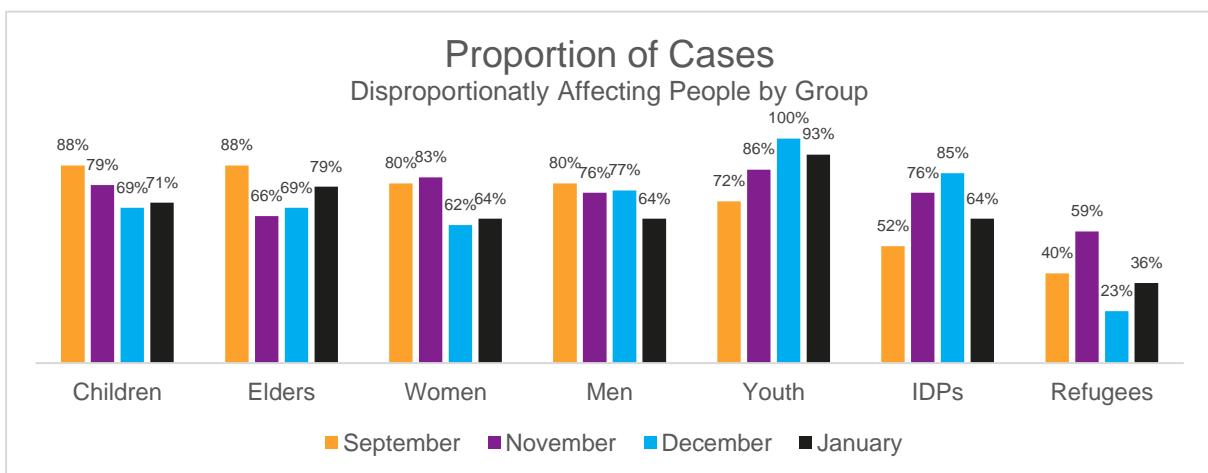
- Gadarif witnessed a military parade with extensive gunfire in residential neighborhoods, as well as the arrest and detention of resistance committees.
- In West Kordofan state, reports primarily detailed battlefield clashes and peaceful demonstrations, including clashes between the army and Rapid Support Forces members arriving from Khartoum, involving both light and heavy weaponry, including aviation.

The intensity of clash incidents varied based on location. West and South Kordofan experienced very frequent clashes occurring intermittently. Gadarif reported occasional clashes with lower intensity, while in Kassala, no clashes were reported.

## Number of Instances by Type



Legend: September, November, December, January

**Key actors and most affected groups**

Data indicates that 46% of clashes involve armed groups, mainly SAF, RSF, and SPLM, across West and South Kordofan and Kassala. In Kassala, 4% of incidents involve armed groups and political parties, while Gadarif sees 21% of clashes attributed to governmental institutions and 25% to "others" like lawbreakers.

## Proportion of Cases
### Disproportionately Affecting People by Group



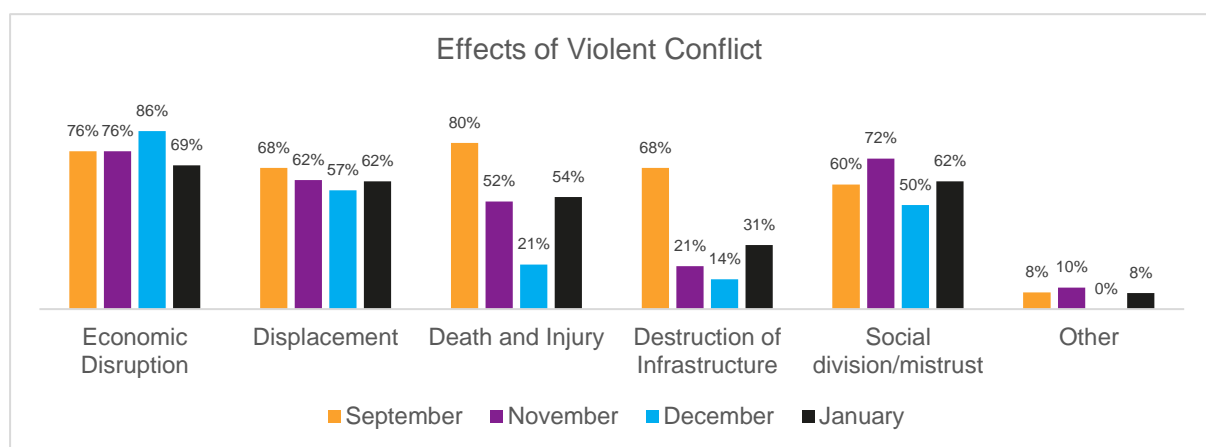Legend: September, November, December, January

Furthermore, the impact varies, with 83.7% of children, 70.3% of elders, 89% of women and youth, 77.5% of men, 77.95% of IDPs, 67.6% of refugees, and 3% of other groups such as diplomatic corps.

In hosting states such as Kassala and Gadarif, children, elders, women, and IDPs face the most significant impact. Whereas in West and South Kordofan, youth, men, and elders are notably affected.
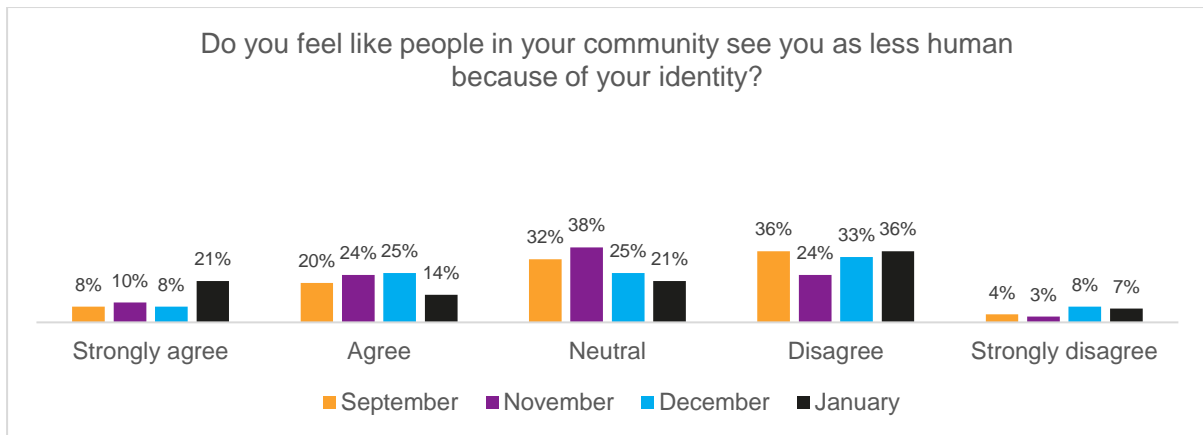
**Effects of the conflict**
The data reveals various significant effects from clash incidents, with economic disruptions and infrastructure destruction being the most reported consequences, cited by 33% of respondents. Displacement of people (IDPs, refugees) and the loss of lives or injuries were also noted as critical impacts, reported by 20% and 16% of respondents, respectively. Furthermore, 26% of respondents mentioned social divisions or mistrust as significant outcomes.



The most significant effects of clashes differed across states. In Kassala, South Kordofan, and Gadarif, the displacement of people emerged as the primary consequence, with Gadarif also noting social division or mistrust as significant. Meanwhile, in West Kordofan, the major impacts were economic disruptions and destruction of infrastructure.

## Collective Polarization

Data shows varied perceptions among communities on collective polarization, with some feeling neutral or disagreeing with the idea of being perceived as less human, while a notable portion agrees or strongly agrees with such perceptions. Contributing factors include tribal issues, racism, and an unequal distribution of services. However, there are also comments indicating solidarity and collaboration opposing this notion. Regarding perceptions, 26% of respondents feel neutral, 39% agree or strongly agree, and 35% disagree or strongly disagree with being seen as less human due to their identity.

**Do you feel like people in your community see you as less human because of your identity?**

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| September | 8% | 20% | 32% | 36% | 4% |
| November | 10% | 24% | 38% | 24% | 3% |
| December | 8% | 25% | 25% | 33% | 8% |
| January | 21% | 14% | 21% | 36% | 7% |

**Examples from States**

Disagree/Strongly disagree:
- In Gadarif, IDPs report feeling compelled to request services, especially after being forced to vacate their assembly points.
- In West Kordofan, where most of the population belongs to a single tribe, the community is organized into verticals and sheikhs, with each group possessing specific lands.

Strongly agree/agree:
- In South Kordofan the clashes in Dilling heightened tensions based on ethnicity and saw the spread of hate speech.
- In West Kordofan, individuals are often associated with certain factions of the clashes based on nationality, even those who oppose the conflict.



**How safe do you feel walking around the area where you live?**

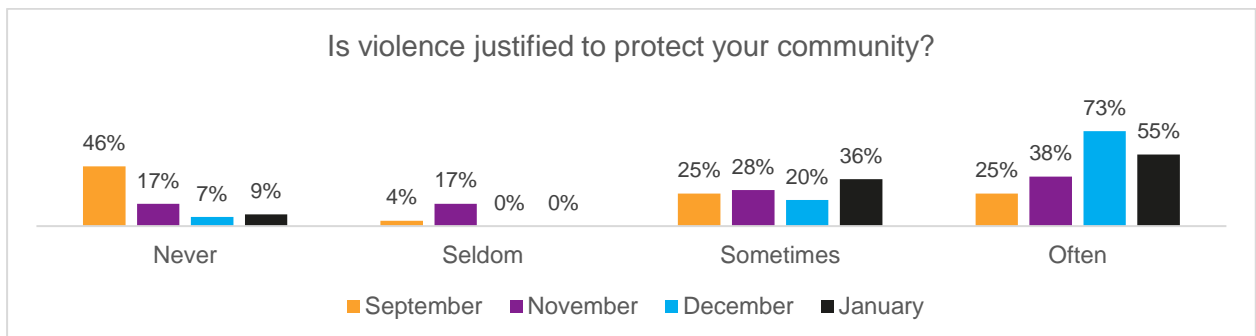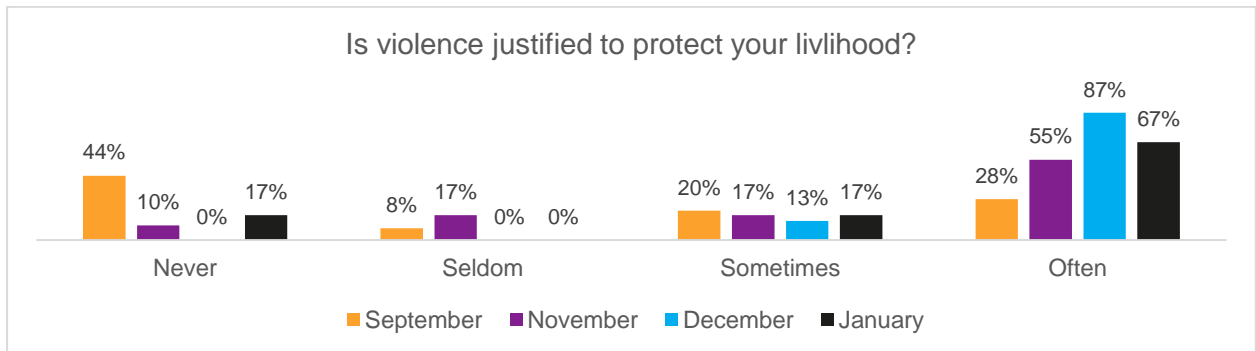|  | Very safe | Moderately safe | Moderately unsafe | Very unsafe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| September | 4% | 52% | 32% | 12% |
| November | 14% | 39% | 21% | 25% |
| December | 7% | 73% | 0% | 20% |
| January | 0% | 50% | 33% | 17% |

Regarding safety perceptions, the data reveals diverse feelings among respondents from different states about walking alone in their living areas. Specifically, 58% feel moderately safe, and 17% feel moderately unsafe. Moreover, 4% report feeling very safe, while 21% consider themselves very unsafe.

The data shows diverse views on the justification of violence under certain circumstances. A notable portion of respondents across various states think violence is justifiable to protect their community, with opinions varying significantly on whether it is sometimes, often, or seldom/never justified. Opinions on violence to defend livelihood

sources also vary widely, with some seeing it as often justified, while others view it as seldom or never justified.

- On protecting the community, 30% of respondents feel violence is "sometimes" justified, 61% view it as "often" justified, and 9% believe it is "never" justified.
- On defending livelihood sources, 33% think violence is "sometimes" justified, 58% say it is "often" justified, and 8% consider it "never" justified.

**Is violence justified to protect your livlihood?**

| | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| September | 44% | 8% | 20% | 28% |
| November | 10% | 17% | 17% | 55% |
| December | 0% | 0% | 13% | 87% |
| January | 17% | 0% | 17% | 67% |

■September ■November ■December ■January

**Is violence justified to protect your community?**

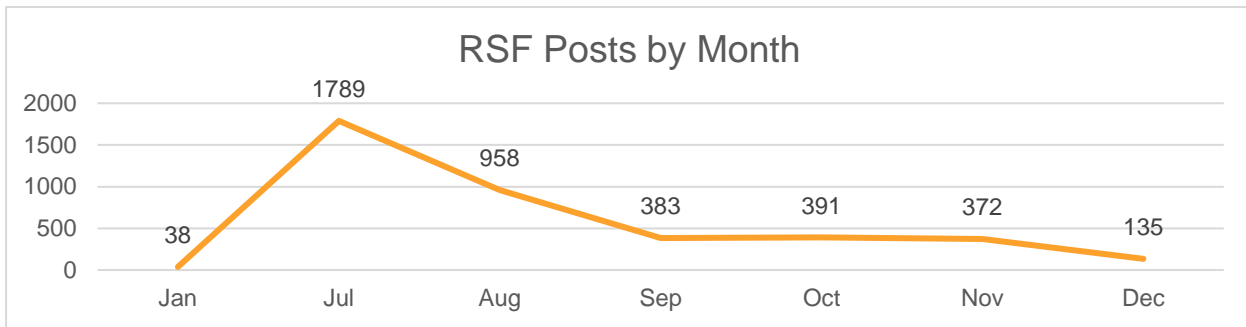| | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| September | 46% | 4% | 25% | 25% |
| November | 17% | 17% | 28% | 38% |
| December | 7% | 0% | 20% | 73% |
| January | 9% | 0% | 36% | 55% |

■September ■November ■December ■January

## Social Media

In the reporting period spanning December 1, 2023, to January 30, 2024, the prevalence of **hate speech** posts on Facebook in Sudan remained relatively stable, registering at 9.8k in December and approximately 9k by the end of January. The engagement these posts garnered was notably high, with a staggering 2.5 million comments and 12.6 million total interactions in December, and similarly high figures in January. Remarkably consistent across both months was the nature of audience reactions; 40% of emoji reactions were "love," indicating notable audience endorsement of these sentiments.

The data highlights a marked increase in daily posting on December 15, attributed to escalations on the ground, with an increase of 50% on that day, continuing to rise over the following five days. This reflects the community's concern, as people exchanged updates and called for aid. Unfortunately, hate speech and violent language also spiked, showing a 74% increase, indicating escalating tensions within the community.

The trend identified in previous months, highlighting the predominant origin of hate speech content from armed actors continued into December and January, yet with the platform continuing its moderation efforts and the evolving dynamics of online discourse, particularly on Rapid Support Forces (RSF) affiliated accounts.

## RSF Posts by Month



The figure illustrates a peak in content from accounts affiliated with the RSF following a speech by RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo on July 28, 2023. Then, content declined after Facebook started shutting down RSF accounts on August 4th.

Some key narratives from these posts:

- Unsurprisingly, discussions are heavily laden with military references, particularly focusing on the RSF and SAF. Numerous posts delve into the roles, actions, and purported misconduct of the armed actors.
- The discourse surrounding Taqadom, the Coordination Body of the Democratic & Civil Forces, is notably polarized. While a considerable segment of the conversation acknowledges it as a peace initiative, there's a parallel narrative steeped in skepticism. Critics question its autonomy, casting doubts over its legitimacy and alleging foreign influences, which adds layers of complexity to its public perception.
- Tribal dynamics also feature prominently, with discussions often degenerating into hate speech. Notable mentions include tribes such as Nuba, Hawazmeh, and Masiriah, indicating that tribal affiliations and tensions continue to be significant and sensitive topics within the broader social discourse.

In December and January, the social media landscape concerning **incitement to violence** showed a steady state in engagement metrics, maintaining levels similar to those observed in November. December recorded 1.52k posts, accompanied by 25.7k comments and 151k total interactions, while January saw a slight decrease to 1.45k posts, 22k comments, and 107k total interactions. The consistency in these numbers indicates a sustained level of discourse around violent narratives, without significant escalation or reduction in user engagement.

The "love" reactions for these posts consistently hovered around 49% in both months, mirroring the high level of audience engagement seen in November. This stable percentage of positive reactions suggests a continued, significant endorsement of the content.

During the reporting period, our analysis identified 5.5k posts that referenced various

Sudanese tribes, underscoring the prominent role of tribal dynamics in social media conversations. Of these, 1.3k posts were categorized as hate speech and an additional 202 as incitement to violence. This pattern, akin to observations from November, highlights a troubling trend where tribal affiliations are increasingly exploited in online discourse to propagate division and incite hostility.

In this reporting period, social media mentions shifted notably, with 9k references to Khartoum and an unprecedented 10k mentions of areas outside the capital. This departure from the previous trend, where Khartoum consistently dominated the discourse, reflects the impact of recent escalations in various regions of Sudan. The increased focus on non-Khartoum areas marks a notable shift in online discussions, reflecting the public's expanding engagement with national developments beyond the capital. This change highlights the responsive and evolving nature of social media narratives to the country's unfolding events.

Echoing the trends observed last month, state-level updates continue to pivot around reports of military victories and defeats, often interwoven with misinformation, as well as discussions about displacement, and pleas for assistance.

In Aljazirah state, increased mentions on social media highlighted the escalating situation in Wad Madani city and surrounding areas, particularly noted by mid-December due to military escalations. The discourse also featured calls for solidarity, offers to assist displaced persons, and discussions about hosting and aid. It's also worth mentioning that the attacks on Wad Madani was called a violation of human rights because of the already high IDPs population there.

In January, the spotlight turned towards Kordofan, where the volume of content specifically about the region jumped from 204 and 228 mentions in November and December to 729 in January. The discourse from this area was multifaceted, encompassing reports from towns like Babnousa, Al Fula, and Al Dilling. Central themes included discussions on arming local populations and the formation of popular resistance groups, some siding with the SAF and others with the RSF. A notable element of the narrative was the mention of escalating conflicts between tribes, namely, Nuba, Masiriahand Hawazmeh. However, amidst these reports of tribal clashes, there was a call within the online discourse urging a shift away from tribal conflict towards a unified national identity, underscoring the complex interplay of local and national allegiances in the region's evolving conflict landscape.

Additionally, in other states such as Sennar and the Blue Nile, January saw heightened discussions on social media about escalating tensions. In Gedaref state, the discourse was particularly focused on the arming of residents, a development driven by Governor Mohamed Abdel Rahman Mahjoub's announcement encouraging the local populace to arm themselves in support of the Sudanese army and against the Rapid Support militias.

During December and January, the expression of solidarity on social media in Sudan

witnessed a steady increase in peace and solidarity posts, rising to 2,007 and 2,543 for each month respectively, from November's count of 1,936. This increment brought the total to 4,550 posts throughout the reporting period, drawing significant engagement with around 59k comments and 252k total interactions.

We have discovered a number of posts by individuals opposing the arming of civilians against other tribes by various armed groups and conflicting parties. These two examples reflect that narrative, and the fact that they each garnered more than 500 total interactions indicates the narrative resonates with some, despite not reaching the higher interaction numbers seen in polarizing posts. [Post 1] [Post 2].

A noteworthy observation is the emergence of the "Missing" Facebook groups. These platforms serve as a communal space where individuals post information about loved ones with whom they've lost contact amid the turmoil. While many continue to search, there are heartening instances of success. This post below highlights one such touching case, showcasing the group's role in reconnecting separated family members and friends amidst the chaos.

The hashtags #لا_للحرب (No to War) and #لازم_تقيف (The war should stop) dominated the discourse, with 3,823 and 1,592 occurrences respectively. The prominence of these hashtags underscores a growing momentum towards peace, mirroring a collective yearning for the cessation of hostilities and a resolution to the conflict.

The community's engagement with messages of solidarity remains strong, as reflected in the reaction breakdown: 40% "love" and 19% "care." This distribution underscores the effectiveness of these messages in resonating with and engaging the audience. Notably, the proportion of "haha" reactions has decreased to 26%, down from 36% in November, indicating a shift in how the audience perceives these messages. This trend, especially when compared to the 49% "haha" reactions in July, suggests a significant change in sentiment. Initially, peace-related content often faced trolling, but the steady decline in such reactions suggests that messages of peace and unity are resonating more with the public, potentially signaling a growing collective desire for peaceful resolution.

## Accessibility & Basic Services

### Accessibility

Clashes between the SAF, RSF, and SPLM have rendered various areas and locations inaccessible. Specific examples from states like Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and West Kordofan illustrate how markets, hospitals, and government institutions have been particularly affected.

In South Kordofan, areas under SPLM control, including the outskirts of the city, the Mica area, surrounding farms, and the peripheries of Algoez and Talw, have been reported as inaccessible. Furthermore, access to Abuzabad and Elsonot is limited.
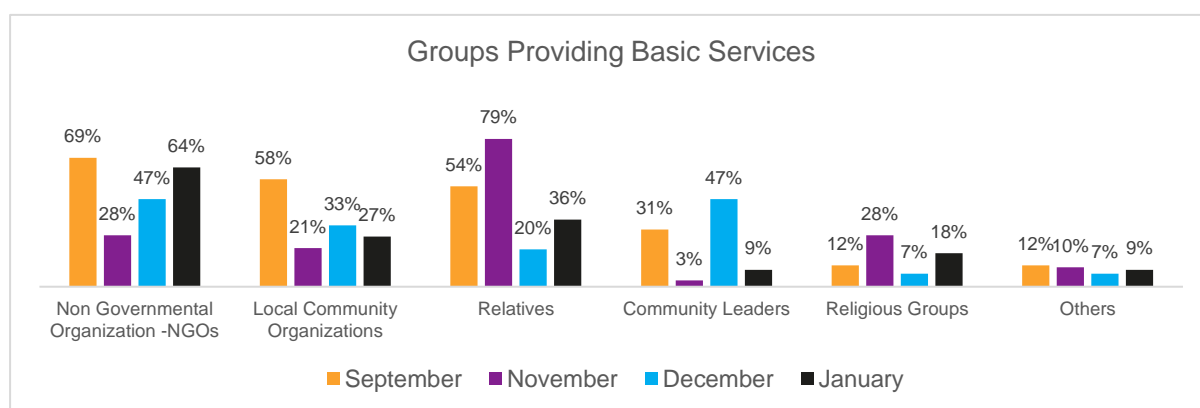
### Basic services

Based on the data collected, 33% of the respondents indicate that basic services such as electricity, water, health, communication networks and also cash in the banks are not

accessible during the ongoing conflict. The data also indicates that during clashes and incidents when government services are unavailable, various actors and informal networks play crucial roles in providing basic services to the affected communities.

Local community organizations (12%) and NGOs (48%) are prominent providers, offering essential items like food, medicine, shelter, and support for IDPs. Religious Group Organization (4%) and community leaders (17%), 15% Relative, 4% other (Volunteers and Resistance Committees) also contribute by providing material and financial assistance.

- Local Community Organizations:
    - In Gadarif, Kassala, and South Kordofan, they conduct awareness-raising sessions on health, nutrition, and psychosocial support for IDPs.
    - In West Kordofan, they provide shelter for those fleeing war.
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):
    - In Gadarif, Kassala, and South Kordofan, NGOs offer food, medicine, hygiene kits, and support for water supply, along with assistance in IDP registration.
    - In Gadarif and Kassala, they organize cleaning campaigns at IDP gathering points.
- Relatives:
    - In Gadarif, Kassala, West, and South Kordofan, relatives aid their family members by sharing food, accommodation, financial assistance, and clothes.
- Community Leaders:
    - In Gadarif, West Kordofan, and South Kordofan, community leaders distribute meals, food, non-food support, medicine, and shelter. They collect food and clothes for distribution and mediate between conflicting parties to halt clashes, also providing ready-made meals for children.
- Religious Group Organizations:
    - In Kassala State, religious groups offer advice and guidance, aiding the well-being and resilience of the population.

**Groups Providing Basic Services**



| | September | November | December | January |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non Governmental Organization -NGOs | 69% | 28% | 47% | 64% |
| Local Community Organizations | 58% | 21% | 33% | 27% |
| Relatives | 54% | 79% | 20% | 36% |
| Community Leaders | 31% | 3% | 47% | 9% |
| Religious Groups | 12% | 28% | 7% | 18% |
| Others | 12% | 10% | 7% | 9% |

## Risks and Opportunities

During December and January, Sudan has faced significant challenges due to ongoing and new clashes in different parts of the country. Safer areas have become overcrowded, contributing to the spread of diseases and fierce competition for basic necessities such as water and pasture. The widespread destruction and displacement have severely impacted the economy, causing famine in some regions. Additionally, the risks of civil and tribal wars increased fueled by the proliferation of weapons, tribalism, and racial discrimination.

However, opportunities for mitigating these risks exist. Internal initiatives to stop the war along with international efforts to pressure conflicting parties to negotiate offer hope for an agreement. The involvement of young people and activists, improved access to affected areas following the fall season, and administrative changes at the Humanitarian Aid Commission signal potential positive shifts.

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. Develop and implement a rapid emergency action plan to support displaced persons and refugees, focusing on conflict resolution and establishing support networks.
2. Conduct awareness dialogues to highlight the importance of coexistence and address issues of material and physical exploitation stemming from the clashes.
3. Assist community initiatives that promote peace and conflict resolution, ensuring the efficient delivery of humanitarian aid to affected citizens.
4. Establish and equip camps to receive IDPs, providing safe havens with necessary services and resources for displaced individuals and families.